The Fermanagh Question

I. The Irish Question

The Irish question has been a tough one. Obvious to both Irish and Englishmen, the question was not an easily solvable one. The future prime minister of Britain, Disraeli in a parliament speech in 1844, recognized the confusion the Irish question caused to the London government and its incapability of find a solution thereto:

He wanted to see a public man come forward and say what the Irish question was. One said it was a physical question; another, a spiritual. Now, it was the absence of the aristocracy; then the absence of railroads. It was the Pope one day; potatoes the next. Let them consider Ireland as they would any other country similarly situated, in their closets. Then they would see a teeming population, which with reference to the cultivated soil, was denser to the square mile than that of China; created solely by agriculture, with none of those sources of wealth which are developed with civilization; and sustained consequently upon the lowest conceivable diet, so that in case of failure they had no other means of subsistence upon which they could fall back.

He then pointed out the famous four elements of the Irish question:

[The] dense population in extreme distress inhabited an island where there was an established church which was not their church; and a territorial aristocracy, the richest of whom lived in distant capitals. Thus they had a starving population, an absentee aristocracy, and an alien Church, and, in addition, the weakest executive in the world. That was the Irish question. Well, then, what would hon. Gentlemen say if they were reading of a country in that position? They would say at once, "The remedy is revolution."¹

The four elements he recognized were a starving population, an absentee aristocracy, an alien Church and a weak executive. What agenda Disraeli had in mind we could not be certain, but his statement was insightful regarding the Irish question of the time leading up the great famine. With these four

fundamental questions in mind, we are able to understand all the events in Ireland in the pre-famine era. The statement that “the remedy is revolution” meant that the London government was not able to solve the questions and therefore the people had to figure out their own solution.

In this essay I will examine these spontaneous reactions of the people to the social, political and cultural events that arose in the pre-famine era with special respect to the Fermanagh context. Then I will discuss how these spontaneous solutions failed to solve the question, and how the famine, unexpectedly, changed the Irish question fundamentally and served as the revolution that Disraeli called for.

II. The Weakest Executive and The Absent Aristocracy

Since the essay focuses on the religious aspect of the Irish history, I will not attempt to capture the full scale and context of the incapability, inefficiency and the passivity of the Irish government at this time, but a brief reference to the social conflicts and the popularity of the secret orders at this time would reveal to us quite clearly how the local people found themselves helpless at the government and had to count on their own to defend themselves.

It would not a bad idea to begin with discussing what the three problems really were and how serious they were at the period prior to the great famine, and the first thing come to mind would the problem of a large, poor, starving Catholic population, which had been severely suppressed since the days of the penal era.

The seventeenth century saw the complete conquest of Ireland by the Great Britain. At the beginning of the eighteenth, a series of anti-Catholic laws were made by the Irish Parliament after the Treaty of Limerick. These laws aimed at concentrating power at the hands of a few powerful wealthy Protestants called the Irish Ascendancy, which would in return guarantee the influence of London.

By a law of 1697 all bishops and any priests of religious orders were ordered to leave Ireland and not to return. The parochial priests, however, were allowed to remain but they must register by a law of 1704. This is a very deliberate act of the government because, by this act, all those who actually have connection to Rome were to be ostracized, and by banishing the bishops, new priests
could not be ordained, and the Catholic Church as an institution in Ireland would die out eventually because there simply would not be anyone to succeed the office when the priests were all dead several decades later. This act of government, so it can be argued, actually aimed at shaking off the influence from Rome and from Catholicism that Britain just got rid of by sending James II to exile, as Lord Drogheda said when referring to a later anti-Catholic bill:

I shall be very glad to see the Protestant religion strengthened; but what shall we do for hewers of wood and drawers of water, for laboring men to plough our lands, threshing our corn?²

This shows the London government’s general fear of the Catholic population and authority because, at this time, early seventeenth century, Catholicism symbolized something of a despotic past that James II represented. The parliament was careful to ward off the potential Stuart influence anywhere in the Great Britain. In 1709, all of the priests were forced to swear in public court that the Stuart family had no right to the English throne. All priests in Fermanagh refused to take the oath and, as a result, they were all forbidden to administer any sacraments, but they continued to work in secret. Sometimes they had to say mass with a veil so that they would not be reported, or they said the prayers from an isolated room so that people would not see them.³

On the other hand, London was also incapable of converting the Catholic mass into Protestants given its limited efficiency of administration and influence in this area. As Livingstone noticed, “till 1715 many of the constables were Catholics⁴ who were largely underpaid and it was thus not really possible for them to enforce such anti-Catholic law on a large scale, and the London government was reliant on the magistrates to enforce anything that needed to be enforced in Ireland. Many of these magistrates were Protestant Clergy. In fact, this ineffective administration in a largely rural, underdeveloped, country like Ireland, would basically mean that none of the laws could be enforced, and this is why we see that, despite the official banishment, none of the bishops actually left Ireland, and this is why we see that even 200 years later, in 1861, the Church of Ireland only claimed

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² Livingstone, p. 109.
³ Livingstone, p. 110.
⁴ Ibid.
about 20% of the population. It could be argued that the government’s incapability of settling all the social and sectarian gave rise to the various groups and orders like the Defenders or Orange Order because the lack of law enforcement meant that the people had to settle their own deals on their own, and here we see that the religion functioned as civil services where people resorted to settle their legal or civil problems.

On the other hand, even though the penal laws might force the Catholics to abandon their roman faith, its Anglican counterpart still would not be so much an appeal to attract large-scale conversion because of the lack of religious motivation of the Anglican clergy. The convocation did not meet from 1714 to 1869, and all the archbishops of Armagh from 1702 to 1800 were Englishmen, who made no effort to master the Irish language and were isolated from the masses of the people.

Livingstone suggested that the Catholic population is this area was more submissive to civil order than their co-religionists elsewhere in Ireland. But this general tendency to submission does not mean that political discontent did not reach this area at all. In fact, many Fermanagh Catholics, including some priests, were involved in the political conspiracy leading up to the 1798 rebellion. For example, in 1797 three men from Roslea were hanged for their United Irishman insurgency. In 1825, four priests were also elected to a committee to petition the government for Catholic emancipation. The priests’ involvement in politics demonstrates the dynamism of Ireland’s religion in the nineteenth century, while each of the denominations aimed at strengthening and spreading its own faith, they are also fully aware of the political context and took their individual stance in each political event. Due to the underdevelopment of party politics in Ireland, the religion served as a line of political participation and a platform for the demonstration of common will.

Nonetheless, the intractableness of the Catholic masses is not equivalent to a full-scale hostility between the Catholic cottiers and their Protestant landlords. In fact, many of the Protestant landlords were generous to the Catholic population during hard times or even quite supportive of the

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5 See table 1.1.
6 Despite an attempt to call for convocation, the convocation still did not meet in 1869.
7 As quoted in Ratterty, p. 125.
8 Ibid.
9 Rafferty, p. 136.
Catholic faith itself. Thomas Bogue, the curate of Tempo, once resided in the home of a rich Protestant family, which was then subject “to continuous persecution for harbouring him.”

Larger-scale conflicts were also rife. In the late 1700s, a Presbyterian group called the Oakboys emerged in discontent with the Road Act which entitled landlords to extract labors from their tenants. The Oakboys not only attacked landlords but also the Anglican ministers. The conflict between the protestant and Catholic population also became such a problem when the conflict between the Catholic group, the Defenders, and the protestant group, the Peep O’Day Boys were becoming aggravated. The establishment of the Orange Order in 1795 only adds to the problem. During this time, we also saw a semi-official alliance between the Presbyterians and the Catholics to fight against the aggressiveness of the Protestants as shown in the formation of the United Irishmen and its rebellion in 1798. This group was established by Presbyterians from the northern counties abut attracted many Catholics, including priests, to join.

Landlordism had also been a predominant feature of Irish life before the famine. In 1703, 86% of arable land was property of either English or Scottish landlords in Ireland, and by 1870, 97% percent of Irish land was managed in the interest of landlords, less than 50% of whom were actually resident. Close to half of the landlords lived and reinvested all the income he got from his land in England. This was a cause of capital in Ireland. While it is certainly not a reliable number, Arthur Young wrote in 1779 that about 732,000 pounds poured out of Ireland to landlords whom he condemned as “lazy, trifling, and negligent.”

III. A starving Population

The Catholic Church, however, was still at a greatly disadvantaged position. The Church was generally lack of any resources or material support; we will see how this is reflected in the Fermanagh context.

Most of Fermanagh, along with the county of Monaghan, is in the diocese of Clogher. The Catholic clergy at the end of the eighteenth century were not well educated and the ecclesiastical

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10 Rafferty, p. 138
11 Myrtle Hill, 389.
12 O Corrain, p. 224-225.
administration of County Fermanagh was in a mess. Until the late eighteenth century, bishops and priests were largely educated on the continent, and the fear of the influence of the French radicalism after the French revolution compelled the London government to establish Maynooth College to train Catholic priests. But this college was not large enough to train all the priests needed in Ireland and many priests had to be trained privately by their seniors. James Murphy, for example, opened a temporary seminary of his own. Murphy conceded that, however, the 12 priests who graduated from his seminary were at best “tolerably well instructed.”

The Church also had to deal with the problem of nepotism. As Rafferty noticed, “the exploitation of ecclesiastical position to further the interests of one’s own family was a regular and common feature of the Catholic Ireland.” By the time Murphy became a bishop in 1802, for example, Murphy’s immediate predecessor, Dr. Daniel O’Reilly, was the third O’Reilly to hold the see in succession, following his uncle.

The north of Ireland was not yet to recover from the impoverishing effects of the penal laws. As discussed above, there was a shortage of priests and of Catholic infrastructure. Especially in the west of the Ireland, not many people attended mass regularly because of the scarcity of churches. As David W. Miller noticed, in the 1840s:

In most areas west of a line from Dundalk to Killarney, mass attendance was less than 40 percent of the Catholic population while in areas south and east of such a line it is generally greater than 40 percent.

The masses were generally ignorant of even the most basic tenets of their faith. As Thomas Chisholme Antsey complained to Rome, the people, whom he met in the diocese of Elphin where he was attending the first communion of a group of children, were almost:

…First Communicants…and the Parents, and Grand parents and other adult and aged relatives of the Children had taken the opportunity of her coming to instruct the latter, to receive instructions themselves with a view to receiving their first Communion; and

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13 Rafferty, p.127.
14 Rafferty, p.127.
15 Rafferty, p.128.
16 D.W Miller, ‘Mass attendance in Ireland in 1834,’ as quoted in Rafferty, p. 133.
amongst others an old man then kneeling at the Rails, who only a fortnight before had been all his life ignorant of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, having never heard of the existence of such a Doctrine. Nevertheless he and all the rest were always Catholics and so had their Ancestors been before them.\textsuperscript{17}

This could also account for the swift spreading of the United Irishman organization among the Catholics despite the fact that it was originally a Presbyterian movement. It demonstrated the Church’s incapability of indoctrinating its adherents the Catholic idea of obeisance to civil order before the nineteenth century.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were not a decline for Catholicism. Quite the opposite, as time went on, people’s knowledge of the faith improved and the opportunity for access to the ministrations of a priest were multiplied. From 1835 onward, the holding of the ‘Station Masses’ in the homes of wealthier individuals in the diocese became a compulsory practice and this certainly increased the masses’ knowledge and practice of their faith.

This increased knowledge of the faith is reflected in the decline of superstition around this time. The popularity of holy wells had begun to diminish. The diocesan regulations also insisted that wakes and nocturnal dances were to be vigorously resisted by pastors with a view to their abolition. There were also heavy penalties for priests who assisted at funerals where they know that alcohol would be served.\textsuperscript{18} It was also during this time that the St. Patrick’s day began to become a major holiday.\textsuperscript{19}

The political activities of Daniel O’Connell also raised the morale of the Catholic population and brought the impoverished population together. Nonetheless, despite people’s increased interest in and zeal for religious matters, the ecclesiastical resources available to them made any large-scale reform within the rank of the Church impossible. As Larkin noticed,

\textsuperscript{17} Larkin, p 33.
\textsuperscript{18} Rafferty, p. 134.
\textsuperscript{19} On the other hand, it was also during this time that the Irish language was gradually abandoned by the people.
The pre-famine Irish Church was, in fact, frustrated in its pastoral efforts by a chronic shortage of clergy and an inadequate supply of space for worship.\textsuperscript{20}

And it was because of this shortage of material support that the Irish Church introduced the unique Irish religious custom of stations, which Cullen in the post-famine years would be aiming at eliminating from Catholic practice.

The shortage of priest has to be seen in light of an exponentially increasing Catholic population in the years leading up to the famine. In table 2, we see that, while the number of priests increased by 50 percent from 1770 to 1840, the population almost tripled, and this ratio is only going to get worse in 1846 right before the beginning of the famine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Priests</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1770</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>2,650,000</td>
<td>1,660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>1,860</td>
<td>4,200,000</td>
<td>2,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>6,600,000</td>
<td>2,750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2\textsuperscript{21}

The ratio for County Fermanagh was actually among one of the worst in the country, with only the diocese of Cloyne and Ross having a higher ratio, as Larkin’s research shows. Nonetheless, what is interesting about the diocese of Clogher is that it was also among the two dioceses that actually managed to have this ratio decreased in the years between 1800 and 1840, while all other places in Ireland saw a great increase of ratio. In Dublin, one of the best provided dioceses in Ireland, the ratio increased by 36 percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diocese</th>
<th>Ratio in 1800</th>
<th>Ratio in 1840</th>
<th>Change of percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Armagh</td>
<td>2380</td>
<td>2520</td>
<td>+6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{20} Larkin, p.16.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
All these numbers should be seen in comparison to the situation of the Church on the continent. As the Irish Catholic Directory noted, the ratio in France in 1839 was about 1 to 800, in Austria 1 to 750, and in Prussia 1 to 900, and yet the French bishops thought that the ratio was too high and that a ratio at 1 to 650 would be ideal for spiritual administration. This large discrepancy of the availability of clergy between Ireland and the continent explains why the reforms that had begun on the continent for more than 200 years had yet to begin in Ireland, and why the Tridentine reformations could not be carried out in Ireland without the so-called “revolution” that Disraeli referred to.

One reason for this horrible shortage of the priests was the complete poverty that most of the Catholic agriculturists were in. Michael Collins, a later bishop, in his report to a committee of the House of Commons was asked, “What number of coadjutors do you employ in that district?”, and his answer was that “Only one, I have not the means of supporting more.” There was also a huge shortage of chapels despite the period of chapel building between 1790 and 1847, and Larkin noticed that there were only 2 chapels per parish on average in 1834 and all the chapels in total were only capable of accommodating 3,400,000 people, which is only a half of the total population. All these problems meant that Ireland was not prepared for the Tridentine reforms or any large-scale reform that would tie Irishmen into an organized, strong body, and that the thrust of almost all the legislation enacted by the Irish bishops in pre-famine Ireland was the result of practical rather than Tridentine considerations.

Nonetheless, these setbacks of the Church was accompanied by a reawakening sense of religious energy and determination that was shown both within the clergy and amongst the people, as shown in the monster meetings, temperance processions, house stations, chapel building movements, and more.

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22 Larkin, p.22
23 Irish Catholic Directory, 1839, p.154, as quoted in Larkin, p.17.
24 Larkin, p. 25.
25 Larkin, p28-29.
secret societies and faction fighting. By 1820, the bishops as a body had begun to meet annually for
the next thirty years on a regular basis. These meetings were not mandatory and were almost
parliamentary, civil and majoritarian which was in direct contradiction to the hierarchical and
synodical formalized Catholic councils. These spontaneous actions of the clergy, causing much
suspect from Rome, demonstrate the uniqueness of the Irish Catholic Church and the special situation
of Ireland, but, what was unknown to the conservative and traditional Irish bishops was that all these
Irishness of the Irish Catholic Church were to be changed for a complete Romanness in the next 50
years.

IV. An Alien Church

The religious makeup of the county Fermanagh differs greatly from its Ulster neighborhood
that often features a predominant protestant population with mixed Anglicans, Presbyterians, and,
Methodists. The religious structure of Fermanagh is characterized by its balanced protestant and
Catholic population and its lower-than-usual Presbyterian population and its larger than usual
Methodist population. In fact, the county had the largest proportion of Anglicans and Methodists than
any other county in Ireland, and almost had no Presbyterian at all.

There are several factors that account for this disproportion. The county is one of the most
southern counties in the Ulster community where the Catholic population began to outnumber their
protestant counterpart. Facing a hostile Irish population, the “foreigners”, i.e. Scottish Presbyterians
and English Anglicans, were under greater social and religious pressure under which it might be
required of them to unite to counter the hostile Catholic population, and because the Presbyterians
were without official support, and in a largely rural area like Fermanagh they were without financial
capability to support a large population, so it should be the Presbyterians who joined the Anglicans

26 Larkin, p. 36.
27 Myrtle Hill, 388. See Table 1.
and not vice versa. The financial situation of the Presbyterians not only caused them to convert to Anglicanism, but also caused them to emigrate en masse to America and Canada.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Roman Catholics</th>
<th>Church of Ireland</th>
<th>Methodists</th>
<th>Presbyterian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>54.5(50.5)</td>
<td>38.4(20.4)</td>
<td>3.3(1.7)</td>
<td>1.8(26.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>55.8(47.8)</td>
<td>36.4(21.8)</td>
<td>5.7(2.0)</td>
<td>2.0(25.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

The Presbyterians were not the only group to join the Anglican Church during the penal era; the former Catholic landowners who managed to survive the penal era also did; they were sometimes known as the “Church Papists.” The Maguire family from Fermanagh converted to Protestantism to keep its estate intact. Nevertheless, despite this conversion, they claimed and successfully acquired the right to appoint local priest that the family had been a patron of. Lady Francis Maguire was able to convince Rome that her family’s conversion was only superficial on ground that it was the only way to keep their property, and she hinted at that they were still catholic at heart. This interesting incident would be a precedence to the later conversions during the great famine era when many people converted to Protestantism to get access to the soup kitchen and converted back to Catholicism when the famine was over.

One of the largest contrasts between the Anglican Church and its Methodist counterpart was the level of the resources its ministers enjoyed. A Methodist preacher often had to work under very limited conditions and had to give up most of the worldly pleasure to pursue his religious conviction, as Hanna remarked:

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28 This occurs a bit earlier than our topic here. As Livingstone mentioned, this occurred around the time of early eighteenth century.
29 Peader Livingstone, p. 123.
30 Myrtle Hill, 387. The number in brackets is the percentage for Ulster as a whole.
31 See Oliver Rafferty, p. 135-136.
The round took about eight weeks, during which time the preacher slept in nearly fifty beds 
and often the beds were damp and not very clean; often their only fare was potatoes and a 
little salted meat\(^\text{32}\).

This frugality was in direct contrast with the luxury that many of the Anglican ministers were 
enjoying. The Rev John Nixon, the rector of the parish of Inishmacsaint, was one who cared more 
about worldly pleasure than about his mission. On 4 May 1769, having a guest for dinner, he noted 
that the meal consisted of “Broiled and boiled salmon, a sirloin of beef, mutton broth, four beef 
stakes[sic]. Drank 6 bottles of claret, 3 of port. For supper stirabout, 1 bottle of white wine and 1 of 
port.” Both the large amount of alcohol disposed of and his detailed recording of his consumption 
were regular and frequent.\(^\text{33}\)

While the Catholic Church needed to deal with the scarcity of its resources to provide enough 
service to the people, the Church of Ireland was also facing its own problems of corruption and non- 
residency, and inefficient administration. Clogher described county Fermanagh as “one of the worst 
served diocese in the Church of Ireland” with its preachers “too much addicted to the cares of this 
world.”\(^\text{34}\) Dr. Lombe Atthill also described the Church of Ireland as:

Bishops were nearly all English men, selected not for their fitness but because they were 
related to some politician who demanded from the minister of the day a bishopric for a son, a 
brother, or a relative, in return for his vote and influence in Parliament. Most of the bishops 
disliked Ireland, in which they had to reside far from the attractions of London.\(^\text{35}\)

As in other areas, the clergy of County Fermanagh no doubt comprised a mixture of the efficient and 
the careless. Lord Robert Ponsonby Loftus, for example, was an efficient supervisor of his diocese 
with his clergy and writing elaborate reports on the state of the local church\(^\text{36}\). This lapse on the part

\(^{32}\) Hanna, p. 8.  
\(^{33}\) Hill, p. 392  
\(^{34}\) Myrtle Hill, 391.  
\(^{35}\) B. Cunningham, John, ‘Dr. Lombe Atthill and His Picture of Fermanagh Before the Famine’ in Clogher Record, xiv, no.3(1993), p. 30.  
of the state Church might account for the popularity of the Methodist Church in Fermanagh, given its purported aim of reforming the Anglican Church with greater religiosity.

The Oxford movement demonstrates the extent of frustration that many of the Anglican clergy felt towards the Church of England. John Newman, an Oxford professor and a well-known Anglican priest, attempted at conciliating the Anglican and Catholic theology in his series of publications called the *Tracts for the Times*, in which he argued for a “via media” of Anglicanism between Roman Catholicism and popular Protestantism. This movement caused such a scandal but failed to bring about the reform of the Church it aimed at and ended with the conversion of Newman converting to Catholicism, which caused even greater scandal.

This inner-denominational infighting was by no means limited to the State Church. To end this chapter with a brief discussion of a local incidence of inner-denominational religious controversy would suffice to illustrate the religious dynamism and the importance of religious matters at this time.

The Fermanagh Presbyterians, though small in number, were crucial in the so called controversy over the use of instrumental music in public worship which erupted in the 1860s. This controversy began in 1861, when women members of the congregation brought a harmonium for use in their meeting house. Many voiced their objections to this, but the problem was not resolved until 1896, when the Church decided that the instrument can be used in its meetings. A brief excerpt from a popular song from this time would illustrate this disturbing controversy:

“It nearly split the church in two,
Yet Started in a simple way.
The congregation had for years,
Fifteen as least, been known to come
And praise the Lord and have no fears
To use their new harmonium.
However, this use of harmonium caused a huge theological controversy when one of the General Assembly voiced his objection:

But Trouble loomed from Clogher came
Complaint on Presbyterial law,
T’was Doctor Robb, he was to blame
He made the people feel so sore.
‘Harmoniums should not be allowed
To sound in church with human voice,
…
You’ll be unscriptural- dread thought-
Its wrong to thus give your praise.”

Were it not because of the Presbyterian tradition of republicanism, the Presbyterian Church would have been actually split in two as the Anglican Church was during this tricial Methodist controversy:

Then Enniskillen Elders met,
They said “our Liberty’s at stake,
We’ll take a vote and don’t forget
We will our own decisions make.”

And a debate that follows finally resolves the controversy, with a self-righteous emphasis on a sense of infallibility of the vote and the decision of the Elders:

The strife was o’er, the battle won
By eighteen-ninety-six, we knew
Our music to be safe- We’d done
What it was seemly so to do.
Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him and let all creatures know
We’ve done what’s right, Ye Heavenly Host.
The fact that this seemingly trivial controversy caused an intense response and reaction from the whole Church shows how seriously people regarded religion at this time. This will help us understand how the religious labels would become symbols of political and national identities later on. When a Church can reach a crisis because of the propriety of using harmonium, it is not hard to imagine how grander religious divisions would serve to split a nation in two, and, ironically, even though the Presbyterian Church survived this dangerous moment of harmonium controversy, it did split into two in the end because of the New Light Controversy, foreshadowing that, in the end, the Irish nation, having survived so many crises, will become two in a similar way.

V. The Second Reformation

The rise of Methodism can be seen as the prelude to the later protestant revival called the “Second reformation.” From the 1740s, John Wesley, an Anglican priest, was disappointed with the lack of religious zeal of the Anglican Church. He then went on extensive religious journeys throughout Britain, putting special emphasis on personal salvation and conversion.

On the other hand, the popularity of Methodism can also be explained by its dedication to religious issues and its special strategies of spreading itself. In 1799, immediately after the botched 1798 rebellion, the Methodist Church appointed three itinerant missionaries, James McQuigg, Charles Graham, and Gideon Ouseley, to travel throughout the. Their choice to preach in both English and Irish to large crowds at markets, fairs and county assizes, along with an extensive distribution of literature contributed to their popularity. Graham, for example, was able to speak in Irish and his open air preaching won great crowds, and it was reported that there was an increase of eighty in membership that year, many amongst whom were Catholics.  

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37 As quoted in Hill, p. 400.
38 Hanna, Alan G., Enniskillen Methodism: issued in connection with the centenary of Darling Strry Church, 1967, Enniskillen, p. 11.
The person who actually brought Methodism to the County Fermanagh was Trooper William Price\textsuperscript{39}. He then successfully persuaded John Smith to carry out his mission in this area, which succeeded greatly. Another reason why Price was able to persuade Smith was because Wesley himself had also noticed the “religious destitution” of this area and he described the people form Enniskillen as “a large number of hearers – some civil and some rude, and almost all totally unaffected [by his sermon.]” In the 1760s, he appointed John Smith to journey through Counties Monaghan, Cavan, Fermanagh and Tyrone\textsuperscript{40}. Methodism then spread very quickly in this area because of his talent as a preacher. While the first reception of John Wesley in the Enniskillen area was mixed with antipathy, describing his entrance to the town as being saluted “first with bad words, and then with dirt and stones,\textsuperscript{41}” he was later greeted with religious zeal from the crowd:

Tears of joy and cries were heard on every side, only so far suppressed as not to drown my own voice.\textsuperscript{42}

From the 1780s onwards, the popularity of Methodism enjoyed a drastic increase. On three occasions the Methodist growth in Ireland exceeds 20% per year, but in this area there were ten such years.\textsuperscript{43} In fact, from Hempton’s figure, by 1830, more than 30% of the Methodist population in Ireland lived in the Fermanagh area.\textsuperscript{44}

However, the activities of the Methodists also angered the orthodox clergymen, such as Philip Skelton, who argued that they had no right to preach since they were not ordained. The potential of Methodism to undermine the influence of the Anglican Church was certainly great, as shown in the case of the conversion of Rev. James Ceighton. Before his conversion he was preparing for a sermon against Methodism, and he sent letters to Wesley inquiring about several questions on Methodism and then he converted upon receiving Wesley’s reply.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{39} Hanna, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{40} Hill, p. 394.
\textsuperscript{42} Hill, p. 395.
\textsuperscript{43} Hill, p. 395.
\textsuperscript{44} Hempton et al, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{45} Hanna, p.9.
The energy of Methodism certainly influenced its Presbyterian and Anglican counterparts, and by the mid of the 19th century, their religious zeal was no less intensive than the Methodist reformers. The clashes between the Methodist evangelism and the orthodox Anglican Church also turned urged the latter to pursue reforms in its own ranks, and their relationship was gradually normalized, as the Earl of Enniskillen remarked in 1865:

We owe much in this country to our brethren of the Methodist persuasion. Were it not for them, in many a wild and mountainous district, many a poor sheep would have strayed from the flock.\textsuperscript{46}

The establishment and the fast spreading of various religious institutions demonstrate the zeal of the “Second Reformation.” The Hibernian Sunday School Society is one of the examples. This society aimed at teaching its pupils the words of God and Protestant Theology. Sunday Schools often has a sectarian undertone in its frequent attempt at converting the Catholic population. The influence of the society was so strong that by 1818 there are 53 schools in Fermanagh with more than 3500 pupils.\textsuperscript{47}

Another movement that came with this new-found religious zeal was the temperance movement. The excessive consumption of the alcohol has been a problem for society for a very long time, as Livingstone commented, “any study of the county at this period will reveal, at once, that Fermanagh was drink-sodden.\textsuperscript{48}” It seems that liquor was a necessary item on every occasion, as Lewis noticed, “a poor cottier would sooner venture the ruin of this poor family before he would see his child christened without a good store of dram.\textsuperscript{49}”

This Protestant movement came to County Fermanagh in 1862 when the first Band of Hope and Total Abstinence Society was formed. Many people greeted this movement with unexpected enthusiasm, and Letterbreen Temperance Association, for example, had 178 members and met weekly in 1893. The Catholics, on the other hand, had begun a similar movement much earlier but only

\textsuperscript{46} Hanna, p. 13.  
\textsuperscript{47} Hill, p.398  
\textsuperscript{48} Livingstone, p. 126.  
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
sporadically because the administration and the practice of the Catholic faith were large at discretion of the individual bishops. For example, James Murphy, the aforementioned bishop, was one of the first Catholic bishops to prohibit his flocks the consumption of whiskey, wines, and ales “under pain of mortal sin.” However, this untimely Catholic incident can by no means match the scale and the religious zeal with which the Protestants carried out their movement about 50 years later. In fact, this prohibition of alcohol led to many bitter and irksome complaints of the bishop from his flocks. One of the exacerbated pastor actually wrote to the bishop in 1813:

I never knew any priest to question your lordship in establishing the statute, yet experience, the mistress of laws, seems to many to point out great inconvenience attending it.

One of the inconveniences, as Rafferty noticed, was that the laity were simply staying away from confession, since they could not abstain from alcohol and could not be convinced that the consumption of alcohol was a mortal sin. Nonetheless, the zeal of the Protestants in this movement also does not seem to be a long-lasting one as the Letterbreen Temperance Association ceased to operate only a few years later, and this pattern was common throughout the temperance movements.

The Catholic Church responded to this movement by reforming its own ranks. Many of the clergy aimed at reconverting the population back to Catholicism. This confrontation between the two Churches is illustrated by a report from the Erne Packet in 1827, which reported on the ‘conversions’ being claimed on both sides:

On Sunday last thirty-two persons… conformed to the Protestant faith in the church of Cavan… On the same day, twelve of the persons who had before conformed returned to the Catholic Church, and made public profession of their repentance in the Roman Catholic chapel of Cavan.

Later in the 1840s, the aggressiveness of the newly energized Protestant Church and the ever-increasingly politically-conscious Catholic population meant a more troublesome relationship and

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50 Rafferty. P. 128.
51 Hill, p.404.
52 Cunningham, p.33.
intensified conflicts. The evangelical proselytism was not a successful movement if we just look at the number of the population that it succeeded in converting, but the undeniable publicity with which these conversions were carried out only adds the already volatile conflict between the sections. Upon the passage of the Catholic Emancipation in 1829, many groups were established in defense of Protestantism. The Protestant Association had meetings held in Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Tyrone, Antrim etc. The Protestant Alliance, established in 1845, aimed at dealing with the “extreme and increasing peril” in which the interests of Protestantism were placed.\footnote{Hill, p. 398.}

It was also around this time that the Church of Ireland came to face an ever intensifying problem of its viability as a state church given that only 12% of the nation were its members. Disestablishment was finally brought about in 1869 provided that the London government will provide a large sum of compensation. This was possibly not the worst situation for the Church of Ireland if we realize that an Anglican Church disestablished after the independence would have been given much less than it received then. This disestablishment only helped to facilitate the reform of the church that had begun many years ago because government interference was removed. The clergy was also filled with a religiosity that was almost unseen in the corrupted years of the Anglican Church. The new bishop of Clogher, Charles Maurice Stack, was characterized by Archbishop Benson in 1896 as one who:

\begin{quote}
…knew every gentleman, farmer and labourer in his diocese and every haunt of pike and trout in the whole lough- every rock and island… and is a great gardener and withal a faithful pastor.\footnote{R.B. McDowell, The Church of Ireland, 1869-1969 (London, 1975), p. 73, as quoted in Hill, p. 402.}
\end{quote}

This religious zeal continued even to the beginning of twentieth century. The last manifestation of evangelicalism and Protestant revival in the Fermanagh era was the establishment a local Christian denomination, usually called Cooneyism.

The reunion of the two Methodism branches in the 1870s stimulated a new wave of religious excitement. William Irvine was also one of the Scottish religious enthusiast who went on an
independent mission to bring this newly found religious zeal to the people, and Edward Cooney, an
Enniskillen man, was one amongst the converted. He gave up his business interests in 1901 and
donated 1300 pounds to the movement and devoted himself to preaching. He adopted the central
doctrine from Christ’s command to his disciples in Matthew Chapter 10 verse 7, “As ye go, preach.”
The Cooneyites gave up all worldly and material goods, rejected ecclesiastical titles, practiced
baptism by full immersion in Lough the Erne and held meetings every Sunday to break bread. They
called their way of life the “Jesus Way” and claimed that the Bible was a “dead book” unless “made
to live” through the mouths of one of their preachers.

This new denomination spread very quickly as, in 1907, over 400 adherents gathered at
Lough Erne for a popular convention.

VI. The Famine

The great famine was the cause of these changes that was unimagined. The Ireland before the
famine was a nation that might not necessarily become the Ireland that survived the famine. The
Ireland after the famine is no longer the same Ireland before. This famine was the revolution that both
destroyed and reestablished Ireland. This famine brought to Ireland the changes that was needed to
solve all the problems as Disraeli saw it.

While the export dropped by about 50% in the famine years, the import increased by almost
300% by 1852. In 1852, because the famine was already over, we should expect a gradual return of
import to its pre-famine value, but this is not the case as shown in the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1852</th>
<th>1851</th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1847</th>
<th>1846</th>
<th>1840</th>
<th>1839</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Import</td>
<td>7,099,543</td>
<td>5,208,349</td>
<td>6,031,569</td>
<td>2,896,179</td>
<td>1,951,349</td>
<td>1,657,934</td>
<td>1,389,415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Export</td>
<td>254,402</td>
<td>290,003</td>
<td>264,272</td>
<td>213,224</td>
<td>226,156</td>
<td>455,604</td>
<td>351,333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Estimated Irish Total Export and Import Value

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55 Hill, p.403
56 Hill, p.403
57 As measured in British pounds.
58 As measured in British pounds.
This huge increase in import suggests that the Ireland after the famine had already become a part of the global economy, different in essence from the pre-famine Ireland. This new Ireland was highly reliant on foreign goods and was tightly connected to the rest of the world in this way.

In contrast to this huge drop in export was a steady increase of the total value of property before and after the famine, while suffering a minor drop during the famine. Since no statistics on the property or GDP of the country before the famine is available, the estimation is based on the bank note circulation and bank deposit in those years. While this do not reflect the real living standard of the masses, it certainly reflects the level of economic prosperity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Jt. stock bank deposits</th>
<th>Bank note circulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec. 31</td>
<td>Annual avg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840</td>
<td>5568</td>
<td>5391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>8031</td>
<td>6949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1846</td>
<td>8442</td>
<td>7260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>6493</td>
<td>6009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1848</td>
<td>7071</td>
<td>4829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1849</td>
<td>7470</td>
<td>4310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>8269</td>
<td>4512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>15609</td>
<td>6840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>24366</td>
<td>6880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>29746</td>
<td>5727</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Irish banking statistics, 1840-1921 (£ thousands)

This trend can be confirmed by the steady increase of tax revenue in Ireland in this time. The steady increase of the income of Irish people after the famine is illustrated by the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gross Revenue(^61)</th>
<th>Net Revenue(^62)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

\(^{59}\) Jason Begley, Frank Geary and Kevin H. O'Rourke (eds.), HNAG Database of Irish Historical Statistics (http://www.tcd.ie/iiis/HNAG/HNAG_database.htm).


\(^{61}\) In British pounds.

\(^{62}\) In British pounds.
In contrast with this steady increase of income and trade was the drastic drop during the famine and the steady decrease after the famine of population. The following chart, extracted from the census archive, shows the decrease in population before and after the famine, with special regard to County Fermanagh.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fermanagh</th>
<th>Ulster</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>156,481</td>
<td>2,386,373</td>
<td>8,175,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>116,047(-26%)</td>
<td>2,011,886(-16%)</td>
<td>6,552,385(-20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>105,372(-10%)</td>
<td>1,910,408 (-5%)</td>
<td>5,764,543(-12%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Population in Ireland 1841-1861

This fast decrease in population along with the steady increase in living standard means that the Ireland after the famine was fundamentally different from the one before. Before the famine, Ireland had “a starving population, an absentee aristocracy, and an alien Church, and, in addition, the weakest executive in the world,” but the Ireland after the famine consisted of a population that was generally well-to-do. The hugely increased priest to laity ratio meant a better organized Church and more accessible spiritual resource. In 1840, the priest to population ratio was 1 to 2750, but, in 1870, this ratio increased to 1 to 1250. While more priests were available by this time, a large-scale pastoral reform that aimed that Romanizing the Irish Catholic Church based on a Tridentine model was also

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64 Enumeration abstracts of number of inhabitants in Ireland, 1841, 1851 and 1861. Religious profession, 1861. Number of Houses and families, 1841, 1851 and 1861 BPP 1861 L (2865) 8
underway, and the Archbishop Paul Cullen was crucial to this reform. Paul Cullen as not only a pious priest, but also a good politician. This allowed him to isolate the more conservative bishops and replace them with more reform-minded ones, as Larkin claims, “by 1875, therefore, there was hardly a bishop in Ireland, except MacHale, who did not zealously promote pastoral reform in his diocese.”

At this time the “alien Church,” while revitalized, was about to be disestablished, and the weakest executive, having survived the huge pressure during the famine, emerged much more sophisticated and organized. If fact, it can be argued that it was this famine that compelled government to organize itself, to mobilize its resources and to serve its people as well as it could. The government needed to enforce the poor laws, to organize soup kitchens, to collect rate and to distribute famine relief. It was through this intensive challenge that the government ceased to be the “weakest executive in the world.” Having faced this great challenge, not only the Irish people, but also its government, emerged much stronger and more civilized.

The ground for Larkin’s argument was precisely this. The unexpected excess of all kinds of energy and resources made the Catholic population become concerned, many for the first time in many generations, with a spiritual life, and prepared the Catholic Church to provide such services as the Catholics demanded. This led Larkin to claim:

When Paul Cullen arrived in Ireland he therefore had a potentially more favorable situation than has been generally supposed. He also patently derived very great advantage from the psychological impact the famine had on those who remained in Ireland. The growing awareness of a sense of sin already apparent in 1840s was certainly deepened as God’s wrath was made manifest in a great natural disaster that destroyed and scattered his people. Psychologically and socially, therefore, the Irish people were ready for a great evangelical revival, while economically and organizationally the Church was now correspondingly ready after the famine to meet their religious and emotional need.

VII. The McGrath and Larkin Debate

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65 Larkin, Devotional Revolution, p. 644.
66 Larkin, Devotional Revolution, p. 639.
Despite the reception by which Larkin’s theory was welcomed, his theory seems to have suggested a sudden change that split the history of Ireland before the famine from that after the famine. He argues that:

…Paul Cullen, not only reformed the Irish Church, but, what was perhaps even more important, in the process of reforming that he spearheaded the consolidation of a devotional revolution. The great mass of the Irish people became practicing Catholics…67

This model of revolution, McGrath argues, ignores the “Tridentine evolution” that was already underway from 1775, and he termed this process of Catholic revival as the “institutional re-emergence”, putting emphasis on the continuity rather than change68, he states that:

If by revolution one understands something which takes place rapidly and is different to what has gone before and is sharp and severe in its consequences then the idea of a century long revolution is rather debatable.69

He goes on to pose five main objections to Larkin’s thesis. Firstly, McGrath doubts the insufficiency of the priest in the pre-famine era by arguing that “his examples might easily lead one to believe that the clergy, generally, as opposed to a very small minority, were drunken, immoral and avaricious.”70, He then went on to give a full scale of examples of priests having very good quality at preaching and fulfilling their Catholic duty. However, immediately after his argument on the insufficiency of clerical service before the famine, this is what exactly has been acknowledged by Larkin:

But if the shortage of priests was so serious, perhaps the numerical deficiency was compensated for in some measure by the quality of their performance.71

He also acknowledged that the reports on the “drunken, immoral and avaricious” natures of the priests demonstrate “a strong bias in the available evidence in favor of extreme presentations.” On the other hand, what is at core of Larkin’s argument is based on the numerical scarcity of the clergy but not

67 Larkin, The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, p. 625.
68 McGrath, p. 98.
69 McGrath, p. 88.
70 McGrath, p. 89.
71 Larkin, p. 627.
their quality. This is reflected in his numerous references to statistical data in his original essay “The Devotional Revolution in Ireland,” and was far more developed in one of this later essay “Before the devotional revolution”72, and this aspect McGrath never addressed, and it is reasonable to say, however good quality the pre-famine priests may have, they were yet able to provide a sufficient and satisfactory service to the people that greatly outnumbered the clergy and made any effective religious reform unwieldy, if not impossible.

The second problem of Larkin’s thesis, McGrath argues is that Larkin “has suggested that the best way to determine how many of the pre-Famine laity really cared about the Church is to determine how many actually attended mass,73” and that this is not a satisfactory indicator of people’s religiosity. McGrath first challenged the data Larkin presented74 by arguing that in the source of his data:

…Children under seven years of age, nursing mothers and those in ill-health were under no obligation to attend mass.75

What McGrath fails to clarify is that whether such a nuance could really cause difference, and whether this custom changed significantly after the famine. Did children under seven had to go to mass after the famine? Were the nursing mothers and those in ill-health under obligation to attend mass after the famine? The obvious answer is no. That is to say, the omission of these people from the data would not change the relative yet drastic difference of mass attendance rate before and after the famine. On the other hand, McGrath seems to argue that the Catholic population was already very devout before the famine as shown in the various traditional Irish form of religious practice in contrast to the ultramontane Catholicism that only began to prevail after the famine. McGrath says:

For it seems to me that Larkin has mistaken church like for religious life in a society which had many venerable religious customs but until a short time before had only semi-permanent Mass-

73 McGrath, p. 90.
74 That is, before the famine only 40% of the Catholic population went to Mass.
75 McGrath, p. 90.
houses for churches and an interrupted tradition of church-centred religious practice for two centuries in the early modern period.\textsuperscript{76}

What McGrath did here is to substitute the phrase for the un-Catholic practices with the euphemism, “many venerable religious customs.” In this sense, McGrath fails to discredit Larkin because Larkin was arguing a revolution that changed Ireland from a traditional heritage-based folk religion to a neo-Roman-based ultramontane Catholicism where “Rome was not only the theoretical but the actual source of their own and Cullen’s real power in the Irish Church.\textsuperscript{77}” McGrath’s discussion of these “venerable religious customs” seems to only add to the credibility of Larkin’s thesis because, for example, the station system, which McGrath argued to be a very important manifestation of pre-famine Catholicism, was not a form of the post-famine ultramontanism at all, as many church reformers complained; James Maher wrote to Paul Cullen:

\begin{quote}
Could not Rome do something to stimulate the zeal and watchfulness of the Bishops: the holding of Stations for Mass and confession at private houses is the very worst system.

Wretched filthy cabins have been lately honored with stations.\textsuperscript{78}
\end{quote}

Overall, McGrath seems to have attributed all the change toward ultramontane Catholicism to the lapse of the penal system:

\begin{quote}
The outcome of the penal centuries was that Catholic parochial life as envisaged by Trent could not be implemented and developed fully where permanent churches could not be built.\textsuperscript{79}
\end{quote}

If this is the case, then what accounts for the drastic change of the pattern of religious practice after 1850? McGrath then argues:

\begin{quote}
However, once the penal laws began to weaken in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, a Catholic renewal within a distinctly Tridentine context grew stronger.\textsuperscript{80}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{76} McGrath, p. 91.
\textsuperscript{77} Larkin, p. 648.
\textsuperscript{78} Jan. 2, 1842, Cullen Papers, Archives of the Irish College, Rome. As quoted in Larkin, p. 636.
\textsuperscript{79} McGrath, p. 95.
While the relaxation of the penal laws certainly aided the revival of the Catholic Church, McGrath’s attribution of this relaxation to the third quarter of the eighteenth century seems to be wrong. In fact, there are evidences suggesting that this dissolution of the penal system was already complete much earlier. As quoted by Rafferty, in Bishop James Murphy’s report to Rome in 1804, Murphy remarked that so far as the operation of Catholicism was concerned there was “no obstruction or hindrance of any kind from our mild government.” In this sense, if the dissolution of the penal system was already complete in by 1804, then it does not make sense why the peak of the “Tridentine evolution” did not coincide with the protestant “second reformation” in the 1820s.

In fact, despite McGrath’s failure to challenge Larkin’s argument, McGrath is correct to say that the origins of the “devotional revolution” was already manifest before the famine, but it was only because of the famine that a drastic change brought about the sufficient condition for a religious “revolution.” This is exactly what Larkin had stated.

VIII. Conclusion

So here I am to answer the last question: Was famine the revolution that saved Ireland? Was famine the solution that satisfied the London government? To what extent did the famine change the structure of the starving population? To what extent it localized, or otherwise eliminated, the alien Church? How about the uncaring aristocracy? Did the government become stronger? To what extent can we see the changes as a result of the famine and to what extent not?

Generally speaking, the larger farmers grew more prosperous but landlords’ income fell. What is interesting is that the landlords as a class became a more careful one. They began to take a closer interest in balancing their budget than they had done before, and estate management improved. They also began to get rid of the middlemen and the agents who had incurred much resentment in the countryside. In this sense, one direct result of the famine was that the middlemen and subtenants were removed from the land system. Some landlords were bankrupted by the Famine and many, through the Encumbered Estates Act in 1848, put their lands to the open market, and land worth about

80 McGrath, p. 96
81 Rafferty, p. 136.
20,000,000 pounds were sold\textsuperscript{82}. This, by redistributing the land, caused the decline of the landlords as a class. In the years before the famine, the landlords used to form a self-perpetuating Protestant Ascendancy where the Anglican landlords monopolized the politics and the most of the Irish economy. Even after the Catholic emancipation the landlords continued to control much of politics by ordering his tenants to vote in his favor. Along with this loss of economic control was the loss of political power. Now the Irish masses, getting richer and having more time to take the advantage of the various forms freedom that just became available to them, were independent of anything, and began to participate in the ever-intensifying political struggle between Unionism and Nationalism, which will ultimately lead to the establishment of an independent Ireland, to the disappointment of both the Great Britain and the Irish Nationalists.

The famine also hastened the decline of the Irish language, as Myrtle claims, “The regions and the social classes where Irish was most prevalent were the hardest hit by the Famine, emigration and the subsequent process of change.”\textsuperscript{83} While the Protestant proselytizing missions boasted of their use of Irish language, they gave up using it by 1854.\textsuperscript{84} This is a strong indicator of the decline of Irish language. The prosperous farmers were now looking to more economic and social gain. They were turning to English, which they saw as the language of progress and of the future. At the same time, the Catholic Church, the strongest representation of the Irish identity also chose to use English universally because they were careful not to recall to the memory of a pagan past, where people practiced folk religions that were mixtures of Catholicism and pagan fairie tales, to which the charges of ignorance and impiety was often directed from the Protestants.

In fact, as we have seen in table 7, Fermanagh was amongst the most hit by the famine, and the assumption is that, the greater the level of destruction the famine had caused, the greater should be the transformation towards a modern, organized, and developed Ireland.

In fact, as we see in the previous chapters, as a result of famine, the absentee landlord class declined and the Catholic population was mobilized. The alien Church was reformed and ceased to be the state Church when the disestablishment was brought about, and the starving population also

\textsuperscript{82} O Corrain, 83. 
\textsuperscript{83} O Corrain, 55. 
\textsuperscript{84} O Corrain, 83.
became richer and independent. While three of the four Irish questions seem to be sufficiently answered, the weakest executive remained to be weak. In fact, as late as 1870s Randolph Churchill, the son of the Lieutenant of Ireland was to claim that the Disraeli government had no policy for Ireland. In fact, it is clear that this famine failed to serve as remedy to London’s government’s Irish question. It is clear that the famine failed to strengthen the government’s position in Ireland. The famine failed to change the government but changed the people. The famine actually politically and ideologically mobilized and organized the population into two mutually exclusive identities, thus bringing Ireland ever closer to mass political movement and secession from the Union.

The Fermanagh people were slow to be mobilized but when the time came, they were almost immediately politicized. This politicization of Fermanagh began with the land league movement, twenty years after the famine, in 1870s, when Fermanagh was badly affected by the agricultural depression. This movements demonstrates the scale of the politicization of Fermanagh, as Thompson claims:

In no county in Ulster did the Irish National Land League have a greater impact on landlord tenant relations than in Fermanagh. It was at Belleek in 1880 that Parnell announced the formal opening the league campaign in Ulster, and within months every part of Fermanagh had been penetrated by the movement.85

Support for the league was predominantly Catholic and many priests chaired and addressed meetings and frequently acted as organizers and presidents of local branches.86 But the denominational division was not yet shown at the beginning stage of the movement, as both the Protestants and the Catholics attended the meetings together. This collaboration between Catholics and Protestants met with strong opposition from the leaders of the Orange Order but of no avail. The scale of the movement caused the government to pass the 1881 land act, reducing rents on average by 18%,87 and it was at this time that the movement began to become exclusively Catholic, because the Protestant support for the league was immediately withdrawn when the act was passed, while the Catholics continued to support

85 Thompson, p. 287.
86 Thompson, p. 294.
87 Thompson, p. 298.
it. In this sense, the Protestants in Fermanagh saw this movement as a simple way to address their economic grievance, while the Catholics had already begun to use it as a political platform for the ever-intensifying political awareness throughout Ireland after the famine. As the land league died out by 1881, the National League, essentially an electioneering organization with a strictly constitutional purpose, soon took its place in Fermanagh. While the land league movement effectively politicized the population, the National League movement polarized the population, and of this movement there were almost no Protestant support at all. From this point, the division was clear, and without the famine to prepare the population, this division would be impossible.

In conclusion, the weakness and the passivity of the government mean that the people needed to find their own solution, especially by violent means. Their solution was to gather at the lines of religion. The famine brought the Catholic reformation but did not cause the Protestant reformation. The famine strengthened the Catholics but weakened the Protestant establishment. The famine prepared a population for political participation and provided political identities for them. At the same time, the London government failed to adjust itself to this newborn post-Ireland, and did nothing to resolve the ever-increasing division between the two Churches and two peoples, leading to a national divisions, to which there is no return.
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