For J.C.

Second Edition

IRELAND
1798–1998
War, Peace and Beyond

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fruitlessly – in the 1790s. The result was a half-cocked uprising in the Dublin Liberties in July 1803, which was easily suppressed by the yeomanry, and which in the short term was notable only in so far as it claimed the life of the Lord Chief Justice, Arthur Wolfe, Viscount Kilwarden; Emmet, Thomas Russell and other leading conspirators were captured and, with only the respite of formulaic state trials, duly hanged. Emmet was subsequently enshrined in the pantheon of nation-builders, but in truth his actions subverted his professed ideals. The failure of the rising of 1803 helped to fuel the sectarianism of Irish politics, undermining the proponents of Catholic relief and weakening the possibility of a broadly based constitutional union. On the other hand, the rising was widely interpreted by Protestants as a prelude to a general massacre, and its easy defeat contributed to the bolstering of ascendancy morale. The rising therefore helped to make the union function in the ascendancy interest; and it contributed to the gradual identification of Catholicism with the national struggle. Neither outcome would have been welcomed by the 25-year-old idealist, who went to the gallows with his elitist republicanism unshaken, and with an emotionally charged message for posterity. Posterity, however, would take the form of a tenaciously Catholic democracy that had little time for Emmet's exclusivist convictions.

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Disuniting Kingdoms, Emancipating Catholics, 1799–1850

I am the tall kingdom over your shoulder
That you would neither cajole nor ignore.
Conquest is a lie. I grow older
Conceding your half-independent shore
Within whose borders now my legacy
Culminates inexorably.

Séamus Heaney, 'Act of Union'[1]

3.1 The Union, 1799–1801

The two issues that dominated Irish high politics in the first half of the nineteenth century were interconnected and had already assumed a recognizable shape in the 1780s and 1790s: the nature of the constitutional relationship between Britain and Ireland, and the civil rights of Catholics. A form of parliamentary union had been adumbrated in the 1650s, during the Commonwealth, and had been a matter of speculation for a number of political thinkers since that time: these colonial patriots saw that the best guarantee of their rights lay in effective legislative independence, but some (such as William Molyneux) were willing to consider a union as a substitute for a flawed or defective local parliament. If there was a strain of ascendancy thought that considered union as a tolerable, but second-rate, means of guaranteeing Irish liberties, then this strain grew weaker as the eighteenth century progressed. Still, it is possible to detect lines of influence connecting not only the late eighteenth-century parliamentary patriots with earlier ideologues such as Molyneux, but also late eighteenth-century Unionist ultras, such as Lord Clare, with earlier patriotic writers: Clare increasingly came to the view that union represented not a second-rate but rather the only effective defence for the Irish Protestant nation. Neither Clare's thoughts of union, nor those of Molyneux, extended to the issue of

Catholic representation: for both a parliamentary union was worth considering only as a means of guaranteeing the political rights of the Irish Protestant nation.[2]

William Pitt's view of a parliamentary union was predicated on rather different assumptions from these; but while there were important theoretical distinctions, in practice his vision differed little from that of the Irish loyalist defenders of the ascendancy. For Pitt a union was a means of consolidating British control over Ireland, a dependent kingdom, at a time when there was a general drift towards the centralization of legislative authority at Westminster. For Pitt, too, a union was a safe means of addressing the issue of Catholic emancipation, for within a united parliament Catholics could enjoy full political rights without threatening the essentially Protestant nature of the constitution. The feasibility of union had been investigated in the late 1770s by Lord North, but in the context of a heightened Irish patriotism the idea had not taken root. In May 1785, when in opposition, North defended a legislative union before the House of Lords, but Pitt, the Prime Minister, though probably already sympathetic, kept silent. A union was no more a practical proposition in 1785, in the wake of legislative independence, than it had been in 1779, in the midst of the agitation for free trade. In 1798, however, in the aftermath of the rising, the political prognosis for unionism was altogether more favourable: the country was still disturbed (as late as 1799 there was talk of a French invasion), British military reinforcements were in place and were needed, and the hitherto boundless confidence of the ascendancy interest was now badly bruised. Pitt, therefore, seized the opportunity to launch an idea which had evidently been gestating throughout his ministerial career: as early as May 1798, he wrote to Cornwallis urging 'the necessity of bringing forward the great work of union which can never be so well accomplished as now'.[3]

However, even allowing for the effects of the rising, Pitt and the Irish executive could not take for granted the acquiescence of the Irish parliament (although it seems that at first they were inclined to overestimate their own strength). The unionist case was therefore opened with some subtlety, as for example in the pamphlet *Arguments for and against the Union*, written by the undersecretary at the Castle, Edward Cooke, and published in December 1798: this work was, as R.B. McDowell has observed, 'the first shot in the great battle', and precipitated the rapid organization of anti-unionist opinion, especially in Dublin.[4] Dublin had prospered with legislative independence, and there was therefore a wide variety of commercial and professional interests in the city intimately tied to the anti-unionist cause: William Saurin, later an ultra-loyalist attorney general, led the Irish bar against the union in 1799. But the opponents of union were by no means confined to the city or to the legal profession. The Orange Order, rooted in (but by now spreading beyond) south and central Ulster, was committed to the Irish Protestant constitution, and thus to the Irish parliament, which had so trenchantly defended Protestant interests. Throughout Ireland the country gentlemen, who were well represented within the existing constitutional arrangements, were largely opposed to union. But this correlation between representation and support hinted paradoxically at the strength of the unionist case – for because the representative base of the Irish parliament

was narrow, so its support, though vocal, was ultimately limited. The anti-unionists might have broadened their appeal by embracing emancipation but, in contradistinction to their opponents, they made little effort to court Catholic opinion; they were further weakened by a circumstance beyond their control – the strength of the unionist position at Westminster. These factors, combined with widespread popular apathy, again partly a reflection on the limitations of the parliament – gave the government its opportunity.

By January 1799, when the lord lieutenant, opening the parliamentary session, referred obliquely to the desirability of a union, the House of Commons was utterly divided: an opposition motion removing this reference to union in the viceregal address was carried on 24 January by 109 votes to 104. For the moment, therefore, the government had failed, and ardent Unionists like Castlereagh and Cooke were forced to reconsider their strategy: Cooke blamed the defeat on a combination of British ignorance and (a related point) Cornwallis's 'total incapacity', while Castlereagh – with perhaps greater practical insight – ascribed the vote to the threatened self-interest of the country gentlemen.[5] Castlereagh's diagnosis underlay government policy for the rest of the year. Patronage that would normally have been spread over a decade was concentrated within one year and devoted to one purpose – the construction of a unionist majority in the Commons. Pitt's Home Secretary, the Duke of Portland, gave Cornwallis and Castlereagh virtually a free hand in the distribution of honours, with the result that 16 peerages were created, 15 promotions in the peerage promised, and a host of more minor pensions and places dangled in front of the loyal or undecided. Anti-unionists, even the relations of anti-unionists, were dismissed from office: among the more conspicuous casualties was Sir John Parnell, Chancellor of the Exchequer. In addition to these direct appeals to self-interest, the government (like the opposition) sought to bludgeon the political intelligence of the Commons through propaganda (in the form of pamphlet literature) as well as through the orchestration of public opinion (in the form of public petitions). On the whole the government outpaced the opposition in both contests, but the ferocity of its campaign, and the lavish resources deployed, indicate that the issue was finely balanced.

By January 1800, after over one year of political and psychological warfare, the Castle had created a parliamentary majority for the union. The opposition had from the beginning nothing to offer beyond an atavistic patriotism and the stale constitutional arguments of 1782, and by now their logical and emotional resources were spent: the government, defeated by five votes in January 1799, was now sustained by majorities that held consistently in the low to mid-40s. On 6 February 1800, the House of Commons formally agreed to consider the proposals for union, and on 17 February the committee of the House approved the idea. By 28 March both Houses of the now moribund Irish parliament had agreed to the union. On 6 June the Commons approved the committee report of the Union Bill, which was subsequently laid before the British parliament: here opposition continued, but here, too, the government prevailed. On 1 August 1800, the royal assent was given to the new Act of Union, which duly took force on 1 January 1801.

The eight articles of the Act of Union defined the relationship between Britain and Ireland in a manner which, with slight modifications, lasted until 1920. But the authors of the Act did not only look forward to the nineteenth century, they also addressed, or sought to address, some of the central political controversies of the 1780s and 1790s. The terms of the measure require some attention, therefore. The first four articles determined the political aspects of the British–Irish relationship, striking the level of Irish representation in the new united parliament. The Irish peerage was to be represented by 28 members within the House of Lords of the new United Kingdom. The 300 members of the former Irish House of Commons were to be replaced both in type and in number: 100 representatives were assigned to Ireland in the united parliament, 64 from the counties, 35 from the boroughs, and one from the University of Dublin. The Act of Union embodied, therefore, a reform of Irish representation, replacing a borough-dominated body of representatives (234 out of 300 Irish MPs in the Dublin parliament represented boroughs) with a county-dominated representation: the democratic aspect of Irish representation was therefore enhanced at the expense of the oligarchic. The fifth article of the Act created a united Church of England and Ireland, and the eighth article formalized the legal and judicial aspects of the new Union, confirming the existing legislation of the Irish parliament and the appellate jurisdiction of the House of Lords of the new United Kingdom.

The sixth and seventh articles of the Union dealt with commerce and finance, and were to prove, next to the principle of union itself, the most controversial aspects of the measure. The sixth article created a customs union to complement the political union of articles one to four (although in both cases perfect unity was neither sought nor attained). Article six was, as Ó Gráda has pointed out, shaped to meet the desires of the Irish manufacturing interest.[6] British duties on a variety of exports to Ireland and on some imports from Ireland were removed, while Irish duties on a range of foreign manufactured goods were to remain, but to be scaled down, and finally removed by 1826. Article seven of the Union provided for an Irish contribution to the revenue of the United Kingdom at a rate of two-seventeenths of the total, a figure which took account of the ratio of Irish to British foreign trade and the relative value of the main dutiable goods consumed in Ireland and Britain – a figure calculated, that is to say, with some reference to the standards of living in the two countries.

The Union and its mode of passage were a focus of controversy throughout the nineteenth century, with many of Ireland's later political, social and economic ills being traced back, with a crisp monocausal logic, to this great fall. Grattan's parliament was, in mid- and late nineteenth-century nationalist rhetoric, a prelapsarian idyll, a political and economic golden age: for Unionists the same parliament was as corrupt and parochial as the Home Rulers who sought to restore an assembly to College Green. On the whole, modern scholarly opinion places a much slighter burden of explanation on the Act of Union than did the polemicists of the Home Rule era. The short-term political fall-out from the Union was in certain respects profound: an independent parliamentary tradition dating back to the Middle Ages was interrupted, while the broader political culture of the island was temporarily

subdued. But in other respects it is easy to exaggerate the loss of the parliament. Irish parliamentary life did not, of course, die, but instead was transplanted to Westminster where the leading figures of the Irish parliament – Castlereagh, Grattan, Foster – found new seats and a renewed prominence. And, just as it is easy to exaggerate the extent of legislative independence, so it is easy to exaggerate the impact of its loss: the Irish parliament, even after 1782, was heavily influenced by the British government, acting through Dublin Castle. Dublin Castle, and a semi-autonomous Irish executive, remained in spite of the Union.

It is also possible to exaggerate the economic consequences of the Union. Despite 'free trade' and 'legislative independence', Ireland's economy had in fact grown more thoroughly intertwined with that of Britain in the later eighteenth century: the Union did not, therefore, create British economic ascendancy in Ireland, nor was it even the single most important influence over the early nineteenth-century Irish economy. The Napoleonic wars were a much more substantial factor, stimulating Irish agriculture, the provisions trade and some Irish manufactures over the years spanning the Union debate: equally, the wars brought higher levels of taxation and a quadrupling of the Irish national debt from £27 million to £107 million in the period 1801–16. This high level of debt was linked to the growth of Ireland's contribution to the revenue of the United Kingdom, as the cost of the war escalated: the debt burden was therefore linked to the financial relationship settled in article seven of the Union. But of course it is by no means clear that, without the Union, the level of debt would have been contained during the war: Irish state finances were in chaos before the Union, and there is no reason to believe that they would have improved without the Union. The war brought some benefits and some losses: it created a climate of financial instability for both the government and its citizens. Its precise impact on the Irish economy and on the welfare of the Irish people is therefore hard to decipher (Ó Gráda has acknowledged that 'the period was one in which lots of things were happening at once . . . making the analysis of any one single factor's role almost impossible').[7] Nonetheless, whether as an agent of growth or of economic chaos, the war was a much more immediate influence than the legislative union. And the end of the war would prove to be a much more traumatic economic experience than the end of the Irish parliament.

3.2 The Catholic Question, 1799–1829

Oh Wellington, sure you know it is true,
In blood we were drenched at famous Waterloo,
We fought for our king to uphold his crown,
Our only reward was – Papists lie down!

Irish ballad, *c.*1820[8]

The Union was designed to address a number of pressing political issues and to bolster an unstable Irish constitution. One source of instability lay with the Catholic

community and with its uniform exclusion from representative politics; and it was Pitt's intention that, just as the Union dealt with several subsidiary political questions (such as parliamentary reform), so it should incorporate or accompany some settlement of Catholic claims. Informal negotiations were conducted through 1799 between Cornwallis and the Irish hierarchy, and the outline of an agreement was sketched whereby emancipation would be traded for the concession to the crown of a negative veto over episcopal appointments. The government had apparently concocted a constitutional wonder-drug: an informal alliance between the crown and the hierarchy on the emancipation issue would enhance the loyalty of Catholic Ireland, while through the Union the ascendancy would be saved from its own limitations – but not at the cost of the Protestant constitution. Though on this occasion the Catholic Church in Ireland was amenable, Pitt's strategies were thwarted elsewhere: Lord Clare, an ardent Unionist and equally ardent opponent of Catholic aspirations, argued against any link between union and emancipation (and in fact on narrowly political grounds, given the tenacity of Protestant patriotism in the Irish parliament, he may have had a case). The Union therefore passed into law in the absence of any Catholic settlement, and though in 1801 Pitt sought to complete his constitutional architecture with the introduction of an emancipation bill, he met further opposition, this time from George III (though probably acting on the constitutional advice of Clare) and Lord Loughborough, the Lord Chancellor. If, as Oscar Wilde claimed, men destroy the things they love, then Clare's unforgiving logic preserved the integrity of his Protestant constitution for the slaughter. 'Few things in our history', Earl Stanhope, the biographer of Pitt, apostrophized in 1862, 'are perhaps more to be lamented than the inflexible determination of the King, in February 1801, against the Roman Catholic claims'.[9]

Clare's death in 1802 removed one of the most vituperative and intelligent ascendancy ultras, but it did not materially advance the cause of emancipation. In fact there remained formidable obstacles. The emancipationist case needed a powerful Protestant advocate in the United Kingdom parliament, and until 1805, when Grattan was returned for Malton, this was lacking. The ascendancy interest did not, of course, die with Clare, and there remained powerful advocates of the Protestant constitution in the United Kingdom parliament, both in the House of Commons and, especially, the Lords: a Catholic petition, presented by Grattan to the Commons in 1805, was rejected, and further petitions were presented (and dismissed) in 1808 and 1810. William Plunket's Catholic relief bill was defeated in the House of Lords in 1821. However, the parliamentary opposition to emancipation was beginning to flag by 1812, when Grattan garnered 215 votes in the Commons in support of a motion to consider the laws in force against Catholics. Indeed, in 1813 Grattan came close to obtaining a measure of emancipation, winning a number of divisions before being finally thwarted by the wrecking amendments of Castlereagh, George Canning and the Speaker of the Commons, Charles Abbot.

Grattan's relative parliamentary strength depended on his tireless eloquence, but also on several other less certain factors. To some extent the tractability of the British

government and parliament depended upon the European war (although there was certainly no simple correlation): in the absence of other forms of political pressure, the short-term prospects for emancipation were brighter before 1815 than after – because Catholic quiescence was of greater political value during the war than after. Daniel O'Connell, a rising star of the Catholic Committee (1804–11), seems to have accepted these calculations, because in 1812–13, when the European war was in the balance, he was arguing a much more extreme case than in 1819, when the broader political context was less favourable. Peace worked in two ways to disarm O'Connell: it stiffened official attitudes, but it also deflated popular anger – because with peace came severe economic disruption and the temporary redefinition of popular Catholic priorities: 'by no kind of means, by no manner of exertion, and he *did* look about for means, and he *did* use a thousand exertions, could he arouse the Catholics to action, or even to a defensive position', wrote John O'Connell of his father in these years after Waterloo.[10]

One further brake upon Catholic achievement lay within the movement for emancipation. The reformers faced not only intermittent government suppression, they were also hampered by their own divisions, and especially over the question of the veto: some Catholic activists were prepared to accept a royal veto over episcopal appointments as the price of mollifying Protestant suspicions, while others – O'Connell included (though not consistently) – took a more austere line, arguing for the integrity of the Irish Catholic Church. Grattan's speech in favour of the Catholic petition of 1808 helped to inflame this vetoist controversy, for he assumed that the hierarchy would accept the intervention of the crown (as they reportedly had done in 1799), while in fact they took exactly the opposite line: a national synod, held in September 1808, declared against the veto. Some comment has been made upon 'the degree of horror and the intensity of the passions' which the subject aroused; and indeed Tom Bartlett has gone so far as to suggest that 'in the veto controversy the Catholic nation of the early 19th century found its voice'.[11]

In the longer term, however, this episode exposed divisions that would restrain the reform movement until the 1820s: the main representative body of Irish Catholicism in the years 1812–14, the Catholic Board, fractured on the issue in May 1813, with a minority vetoist faction seceding, leaving the Board to the control of an O'Connellite rump. Neither O'Connell nor the Irish bishops (who maintained their opposition to crown interference) were moved by two papal rescripts, published in February 1814 and May 1815, each of which recommended the acceptance of a form of royal veto. In fact by this stage papal approval or disapproval mattered little, for it increasingly seemed as if the Catholic movement possessed little more than its divisions: the pro-Catholic press was silenced by the government in 1813–14, while the Board itself was suppressed in June 1814 – actions which certainly reflected the determination of the youthful Chief Secretary, Robert Peel, but which were also made easier by the schism among the reformers. O'Connell sought to keep the embers of an agitation alive through his Irish Catholic Association (1815–17) and a reorganized Catholic Board (1817–18), but the ending of the war and the uncompromising attitude of Peel merely compounded the

difficulties created by the veto controversy. As late as 1821, over the Plunket relief bill, the divisions between English Catholic opinion (on the whole vetoist), liberal Protestant opinion (vetoist), Irish Catholic vetoists, and O'Connellite and clerical anti-vetoists were paraded for the amusement of the ascendancy interest. Little wonder, then, that it has been said of O'Connell in these years that he had 'a significant political past, but seemingly no political future'.[12]

O'Connell assured his political future and restored unity to the emancipation movement through the medium of the Catholic Association and a Catholic 'rent', or general contribution, each created in May 1823. At first there was little to suggest that these were especially important or original initiatives: there had been other similar schemes both within Irish Catholic and British radical politics, and indeed O'Connell had headed an earlier, short-lived Irish Catholic Association between 1815 and 1817. Nor was the new Association at first strikingly successful: a high subscription fee (one guinea a year) kept the membership figures down, and meetings often fell short of a quorum. However, the Association attracted a publicity out of all proportion to its membership, for its protests were treated in lavish detail in the three or four national papers under O'Connellite influence (the issues that fired the body in 1823 were the demonstrations of the Orange Order and the burial-ground question – a zealous Church of Ireland sexton in Dublin had defied convention and created a furore in September 1823 by prohibiting a Catholic burial in a churchyard under Anglican control). This publicity paved the way for the successful launch in February 1824 of an associate membership of the Association, costing a penny a month: its numbers accordingly spiralled and a substantial fighting fund was garnered. Both O'Connell and Catholic Ireland were, by the end of 1824, teetering on the outer edge of a whirlwind transformation: 'before March 1824', MacDonagh has remarked, 'O'Connell had been merely much the best known of a group of well-known agitators. Now he towered over the remainder'.[13] Equally, the Catholic question had been hitherto merely one of a number of important issues irritating the ascendancy interest and British government: after 1824 it towered over all rival distractions.

Some preliminary assessment of O'Connell may be offered at this point, the fulcrum of his career as an agitator (though in fact he defies easy description, whether in personal or political – to say nothing of spiritual – terms). He was born in 1775 into a wealthy Catholic family at Derrynane, County Kerry, and was an early Catholic recruit to the bar (he was called in 1798). He became the leader of Catholic Ireland, yet was – probably until 1809 – at best an unconventional Catholic, at worst a deist (he seems to have over-compensated for this in later life through a meticulous – mildly neurotic, it has been suggested – religious observance).[14] He was simultaneously a loving husband and father but also financially reckless, and was therefore often forced to throw himself into his work, to the neglect of his family. He was capable both of an enveloping personal and political affection (Charles Gavan Duffy, an opponent, said that 'his instincts were generous and cordial'), yet he was renowned for the abuse which he offered to his enemies and, indeed, to friends who crossed him.[15] This has been explained as being a means of deflating proud

ascendancy or British political antagonists, and as a means of puncturing any popular deference that such figures might attract; but, while this may have been true in practice, O'Connell's rebarbative manner also threatened potential allies and diverted him into several wearing and personalized antagonisms. His personal-cum-political feud with the talented vetoist barrister Richard Lalor Shiel damaged the Catholic cause in the early 1820s, though a reconciliation was effected in 1823 (Shiel was a co-founder of the Catholic Association). And, though O'Connell was generally a highly cautious lawyer, he could be recklessly, indeed thoughtlessly, eloquent: Shiel commented (in 1825, after the reconciliation) that 'he is so confident in his powers that he gives himself little trouble in the selection of his materials, and generally trusts to his emotions for his harangues'.[16]

He had a powerful sense of his own political and legal talents – sometimes so marked as to speak of a defensiveness: he was certainly (in monetary terms) one of the most successful barristers of the age. His vitriolic temper may have been partly an expression of professional frustration for, while he laboured as a junior counsel, those of sometimes lesser merit but from a different confessional tradition or a different nationality won honours and preferment. Like Edward Carson at the end of the nineteenth century, O'Connell was ruthless in pursuit of his verdict, whether in the courts or in political life. But if the law underpinned his adversarial approach and his hardhitting eloquence, it also meant that he was an essentially constitutional agitator. O'Connell's political convictions will be examined later, but he has been tellingly described as 'a respectable, a rationalistic, and a moral force radical'.[17]

His ability was complemented by what Roy Foster has termed a 'protean energy': the institutions and stratagems which O'Connell created were rarely original, but the application of a ferocious energy to old ideas won unprecedented results (as in 1823–5 with the Catholic Association).[18] He was simultaneously a conviction politician and an opportunist: he was profoundly committed both to the Catholic cause and later to repeal of the Act of Union, but he could be strategically pragmatic. He could be scathing of trimming among his fellow Catholic activists (over the veto question, for example, or the disfranchisement of the 40-shilling freeholders) – but he was quite capable of condemning a strategy that he would later embrace: pragmatism was permissible, but only on his own terms.

Like later constitutional Irish radicals (Parnell, Carson), O'Connell combined a parliamentary and extra-parliamentary strategy in the years preceding emancipation. There was some evidence that the British government and parliament were growing more sympathetic to the Catholic cause: the Unlawful Oaths Act (1823) was designed to counter Orangeism, and the Suppression Act (1825), while it outlawed both the Orange Order and the Catholic Association, was at least demonstrating an evenhanded oppression (the Catholic Association reformed immediately as the New Catholic Association). In March 1825 O'Connell thought that, with Francis Burdett's relief bill, the Catholic millennium had arrived: Burdett's measure combined emancipation with 'wings' – disfranchisement of the 40-shilling freeholders and state payment of the Catholic clergy – but in effect offered less to ultra-Protestant

sensitivities than the old veto. While O'Connell could derive some satisfaction from the form of the bill and from its success in the House of Commons, disappointment came from a familiar source: the bill was ultimately defeated (in May 1825) in the Lords. Thus, though O'Connell and the Catholic Association had clearly impressed a growing body of British parliamentary opinion, it was equally clear that Westminster would not grant emancipation unprompted. The success of the Catholic Association between 1823 and 1825 had fired some – insufficient – parliamentary enthusiasm, but O'Connell and his lieutenants had to turn to Irish electoral politics to provide the necessary further stimulus.

The general election of 1826 offered the New Catholic Association an opportunity to test its electoral strength. This was a less obvious initiative strategy than might at first seem apparent, and indeed to some extent was forced onto the Association through local pressures. For, although O'Connell had created a popular emancipationist movement through the Association and the Catholic rent, this support did not automatically translate into votes: the Irish electorate remained small and – because of the system of open voting – susceptible to landlord pressure. Indeed O'Connell had thought so little of the 40-shilling freehold voters ('votes in the landlords' pockets') that he had been happy to acquiesce in their disfranchisement through the Burdett bill.[19] However, there were a few straws in the wind: Catholic freeholders, though often pliant, had sometimes been willing to defy the instructions of their landlord (as with the widespread electoral 'revolts' of 1818). And in a number of constituencies there was widespread resentment, fired by Association activists, at the anti-emancipationist politics, however paternalistic, of the local gentry clans. Among these constituencies was County Waterford.

The Waterford contest of 1826 was viewed by contemporaries as a great electoral test for the Catholic Association, and its significance has not been overlooked by historians. The outcome, declared on 1 July 1826, was the victory of a 23-year-old liberal Protestant landlord, Villiers Stuart, over Lord George Thomas Beresford, brother to the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Armagh and a son of the Marquis of Waterford, one of the most powerful proprietors in Ireland: it was a victory of an emancipationist, a member of the Catholic Association, over ascendancy Toryism. Indeed, it has been suggested that 'it would not be enough to say merely that the Beresfords were pillars of the ascendancy. To a real extent they were the ascendancy'.[20] But the outcome, though highly significant, only partly explains the significance attached to this contest. Stuart's contest certainly inspired later campaigns and may have fired parallel Catholic struggles in Counties Louth, Monaghan, Cavan and Westmeath, but (as Fergus O'Ferrall has remarked) 'the great defeat of the Protestant Ascendancy in Co. Waterford had been well planned long before the general election was called' – and the means to victory was as important as the result.[21] For this was no freak result, nor was it the product of a twentieth-century-style political swing: the Waterford result was echoed in other county constituencies and was produced by a profound electoral realignment. The normally passive 40-shilling freeholders, whom the Beresford and Tory interest regarded almost as a form of political property, had defied the instructions of their landlords and had plumped for Villiers Stuart and

emancipation. This rejection of political and social deference was all the more shocking because it was repeated in other constituencies where, like Waterford, a dominant ascendancy clan had represented the county for several generations. There was, however, a darker side to the contest, which, though fought between two landed gentlemen adhering to the established Church, was profoundly sectarian: at one level Waterford was a fight between the institutionalized and public sectarianism of the ascendancy and the abusive, rhetorical sectarianism of the agitators. As one of the most widely publicized contests of the nineteenth century, and one of the most divisive, the legacy of Waterford is ambiguous: it announced simultaneously the death-rattle of Protestant supremacism (at least in the south and west of Ireland) and the birth-pangs of its Catholic successor.

The Waterford contest and the general election of 1826 as a whole left some short-term problems for O'Connell and the Association. A great electoral agitation had been created, but given the normal seven-year life of parliament, it was not altogether clear how this might be sustained in a peaceful fashion if the opposition to emancipation continued. Moreover, there were numerous reports (some spurious) of landlords revenging themselves on their freeholders for the humiliations of the 1826 election: money was needed for tenant protection, and accordingly a New Catholic rent was launched on 7 July 1826. But of course the benefits of the victory – even the realizable, short-term benefits – were of incalculably greater significance than the problems, for O'Connell had secured the first of a series of significant victories over the ascendancy, and in doing so had copper-fastened a social alliance both within the Irish Catholic laity and between the laity and the clergy. Moreover, just as O'Connell's electoral authority in Ireland was being reinforced, so his opponents at Westminster were suffering reverses: the strongly Protestant Duke of York, heir to the throne, died in January 1827, while Lord Liverpool, the Prime Minister and a scarcely less tenacious opponent of Catholic claims, fell victim to a stroke in February. Liverpool's incapacity ('he may be reckoned as dead', noted Henry Goulburn, the Chief Secretary) helped to reinforce the importance of the Catholic question within British high politics while finally destroying the possibility of an exclusively ultra-Protestant administration; in addition the period of flux at Westminster which ended in April with the succession of Canning to the premiership seemed to O'Connell to augur well for his cause and brought a more conciliatory tone.[22]

But the Catholic hopes invested in the new administration were undermined, first, by the death of Canning in August, and later with the disintegration of the Goderich ministry at the end of 1827: O'Connell was forced out of the parliamentary game and back onto the playing fields of Irish politics. By the time the apparently unsympathetic Wellington had succeeded Goderich (on 22 January 1828), with 'Orange' Peel as Home Secretary, an agitation had already been launched in Dublin: a chain of Catholic meetings was held throughout Ireland on Sunday, 13 January. Wellington's elevation appeared merely to confirm the need for this renewed campaign in Ireland, since he was (wrongly) regarded as the most bitter and immobile opponent of emancipation: the prospect of his appointment a year before, in January 1827, had

created 'a great affright' for O'Connell, who believed (or who professed to believe) that 'all the horrors of actual massacre threaten us'.[23] In reality the parliamentary outlook remained relatively bright. The Marquis of Anglesey, originally – like Wellington – thought to be an antagonist, was appointed as lord lieutenant at the end of 1827 and remained in office under the Duke as a strong, if quirky, pro-Catholic. Wellington himself had already privately conceded the inevitability of emancipation and appears to have been probing the alternative paths to concession in the first months of his premiership: in April 1828 his government acceded to the repeal of the Test and Corporations Acts, an action which, while it removed disabilities on non-conformists, looked forward to Catholic emancipation. Moreover, in the following month the Suppression Act (1825), which had proscribed the first Catholic Association and forced a reorganization upon the movement, was allowed by the government to expire. There is little doubt that the agitation in Ireland since 1824 had impressed Wellington, and that he would not otherwise have been so willing to move on the Catholic question; equally, there is little doubt that, after years of parliamentary disappointment, O'Connell could not yet trust that he was pushing against an open door.

The focal point of the 1828 campaign, indeed of the whole campaign for Catholic emancipation, came with the by-election for County Clare, held in June: Fergus O'Ferrall has claimed that 'it is no exaggeration to state that the Clare election began a new epoch in Irish politics, and in Anglo-Irish relations'.[24] Yet, while the earlier Waterford clash between the ascendancy and Catholic interests had been long prepared, the origins of this even more decisive election were curiously haphazard. In January 1828 the Catholic Association had, as part of its reactivated campaign, undertaken to oppose every supporter of the Wellington administration. In June William Vesey Fitzgerald, a Clare landlord and MP for his county, was appointed to the Presidency of the Board of Trade in Wellington's cabinet and was required, therefore, to seek re-election. The Association was bound to contest the election, but Fitzgerald was a formidable opponent: he was a gifted speaker, an experienced junior minister, an indulgent local patron and – above all – in favour of emancipation. No liberal Protestant, accordingly, would stand against him. O'Connell and his lieutenants grasped that the Clare election offered a golden opportunity to apply pressure to the administration, and pursuing an idea formulated in the 1790s by the Catholic activist John Keogh, it was agreed that a Catholic – O'Connell himself – should contest the seat. The inspiration was supplied by an earlier generation of activist and the organization was created by local activists, but the necessary charisma, energy and rousing, acerbic rhetoric – a calculated mix of historical allusion, exaggeration and chauvinism – were the contribution of O'Connell. The result was declared on 5 July, after five days' polling, and brought a further and – with the benefit of hindsight – decisive victory for the Catholic cause: O'Connell polled 2,057 votes to Fitzgerald's 982. Even contemporaries recognized the seismic significance of the contest. The formidable forces of Catholic Ireland had been paraded for the benefit of the government, and O'Connell was quick to point out that 'three hundred soldiers threw up their caps for me since I left Ennis'.[25] In fact the

government needed little persuasion that it was threatened at best with (as Peel called it) 'a revolution in the electoral system in Ireland', or, at worst (in the opinion of Wellington), with violent unrest: 'we have a rebellion impending over us in Ireland . . . and we have in England a parliament which we cannot dissolve [because of the 40-shilling freeholder revolt in Ireland], the majority of which is of opinion, with many wise and able men, that the remedy is to be found in Roman Catholic emancipation'.[26]

The Clare election stimulated further Catholic organization, especially in the form of new Liberal clubs and a more confident and assertive tone from the Association; equally, it provoked an increasingly coherent, if defensive, Irish Protestant response in the form of the Brunswick clubs. Catholics were beginning, in their frustration, to adopt 'military formation' (the parallel with the 'semi-constitutional' agitation of the Ulster Unionists in 1912–14 is once again suggestive). Faced with the prospect of another rising (and some Orange factionaries publicly hoped for a decisive showdown), and faced with a parliamentary impasse, the government planned for emancipation. An announcement was made in the King's speech in February 1829 and a bill introduced into the Commons on 6 March. There was no veto, and no 'wings', but there were some minor, if irritating, qualifications: most offices were now open to Catholics (except a small number, such as the Lord Chancellorship, at the intersection between crown, government and the Church of England); Catholic bishops were prohibited from using territorial titles. In addition the Catholic Association was suppressed. But the chief casualty of the victory was the 40-shilling freeholder, the footsoldier of the emancipation campaign and now disfranchised. O'Connell had affirmed that he would never accept emancipation with disfranchisement, but this 'Houdini of Irish Political Promises' was too skilled a political dealer to fret over the irritating small print of his victory.[27]

The emancipation of 1829 opened the way to Catholic participation in parliament and to public office, but of course these boons affected only a small educated and propertied elite. Emancipation represented, however, a great political victory for a people who had lived in the shadow of the military and political humiliations of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries: emancipation was a Catholic victory, planned by a Catholic leadership and won on the playing field of the Protestant constitution. The measure was passed not out of the magnanimity of the Wellington government but because the government feared – and was seen to fear – the consequences of resistance (the lessons of this for later Irish agitators, Unionist and nationalist, would not be missed): emancipation, which might in different circumstances have reinforced Irish Catholic commitment to the Union and to British government, in practice helped to loosen the bonds of political and social deference. Moreover, the measure was passed with minimal assistance from liberal Protestants, who had kept the issue before the House of Commons since the Act of Union, but who were now utterly overpowered by the strength of popular Catholic agitation. O'Connell paid lip service to the contribution of these allies, but in reality they had no more than a symbolic value: their support might once have helped to quell British Protestant fears, but in 1829 it was British Protestant

fears that permitted emancipation to pass. Emancipation, which might have foreshadowed a national secular alliance, focused not even a pale ecumenical sympathy but rather a glaring sectarianism.

It is sometimes argued that emancipation was more important as a psychological victory for Irish Catholics than as an immediate practical boon. Equally, it is claimed that the means by which the victory was won were to prove almost as significant as the victory itself. Certainly, for most Irish Catholics participation in a successful struggle mattered more than the direct political and professional gains promised by the Emancipation Act: O'Connell's mass movement empowered the hitherto powerless and gave Irish Catholics a sense of control over their own future. The Emancipation Act opened the way to Catholic domination of Irish representative politics, but the emancipation movement determined the nature of this domination. For, by creating the most successful popular mobilization of Catholic opinion in Irish history, O'Connell provided a working model for later nationalist activists: indeed, by reinforcing a sense of the Catholic past, of historical grievance, by reinforcing popular antipathy towards the 'Saxon', O'Connell exposed a bedrock of nationalist sentiment upon which he, and the inheritors of his constitutional tradition, would attempt to build.

However, if the emancipationists looked forward to the Home Rule movement, then equally they looked back to a long tradition of Catholic activism. Emancipation is significant not just as the foundation of constitutional nationalist politics but as the culmination of 70 years of organized Catholic agitation: it is significant, therefore, as a historical intersection. Emancipation was made possible not just by the astonishing energy and political talent of O'Connell, but also through the broader condition of the Irish Catholic community. Emancipation was not of course the economic liberation of Irish Catholics; it was the measure by which the prosperity of Catholics began to be converted into social and political recognition. Some Irish Catholics had prospered since the mid-eighteenth century, profiting from the expansion in Irish agriculture and commerce, but they had at first only cautiously tested the political effectiveness of this economic strength. With the agitation of 1791–3, the tenor of Catholic politics changed; a more middle-class, more vibrant and more assertive movement emerged, and it was this (rather than the renewed caution of the Catholic activists after the '98, or the florid gentility of liberal Protestant emancipationists) which provided a model for O'Connell. O'Connell, like John Keogh and the men of the Catholic Convention, built upon Catholic prosperity; O'Connell, like Keogh, was able to bypass Irish Protestant opinion in order to exploit a British parliamentary opportunity for Catholic gain (Keogh in 1793, against the background of a continental war, O'Connell in 1829, against the background of an unstable ministry). O'Connell, much more than Keogh, created his own political opportunities, and the size and scope of his agitation bear little relation to the more modest endeavours of the Catholic agitators in 1791–3. But, if emancipation was made possible by the Clare election victory, then the Clare victory was made possible by the enfranchisement of the 40-shilling freeholders achieved by the Catholics of 1793.

3.3 Justice for Ireland, 1830–41

The hesitation in O'Connellite strategy in the late 1820s had been caused by the uncertainties within British high politics, and by the uncertainty therefore of the Catholic position at Westminster: O'Connell had oscillated between frenetic diplomacy in London and frenetic agitation in Ireland, depending upon his perception of the parliamentary scene. But the accession of the Whigs to power in November 1830, and their domination of British politics until 1841 (except for the interlude of the first Peel administration in 1834–5), helped to anchor O'Connell at Westminster: in addition, after February 1835 he was bound to the Whig government and to Westminster through the informal agreement known as the Lichfield House compact. The ascendancy of the Whigs, ostensibly sympathetic to popular Irish demands, did not altogether eliminate this manic form of political endeavour – O'Connell throughout the 1830s either threatened to reactivate local agitation or actually did so – but on the whole this was a period when the British parliament was trusted to provide what O'Connell called 'justice for Ireland'. 'Justice for Ireland', like other O'Connellite objectives, was left ill-defined, but it included tithe reform and both municipal and parliamentary reform. If this 'justice' were not forthcoming, if the Whig reformers appeared tardy, then O'Connell made sure that he had the weapon of agitation ready to hand.

This – as later militant nationalists saw it – 'collaborationist' policy was made possible not simply because of the Whigs' hold on office, but because O'Connell devoted his lavish energy to electioneering and to the construction of a 'tail' of support in the Commons. There were initial problems: first, in February 1830 the Catholic hierarchy had urged priests to desist from further political activity, and – given the importance of local clergy in the electoral contests of the emancipation campaign – this was likely to prove highly damaging. Second, O'Connell had acquiesced in the disfranchisement of one of his best electoral weapons, the 40-shilling freeholder, and though he held hopes of their readmission to the franchise, these in fact were not realized during his lifetime: the existing £10 household franchise in combination with the preponderance of boroughs favoured the Tory interest. And third, like Parnell in the 1880s, he was inclined to ride roughshod over local sensitivities, most notably in the general election of 1830 when, in trying to find a seat, he 'had disturbed arrangements, strained supporters' loyalties, alienated [Thomas] Wyse, and offended potential colleagues in at least half a dozen constituencies'.[28] But the contest of 1830 was only a beginning, and in the next general election, held in 1832, O'Connell campaigned more successfully, harnessing his organizations and press effectively and imposing a repeal 'pledge' on sympathetic parliamentary candidates. In fact the election was the highpoint of his electoral success: 39 'repealers' were duly returned, including three of O'Connell's sons, two sons-in-law, one brother-in-law and one cousin. O'Connell's personal authority and the repeal pledge looked forward to Parnell and the Home Rule era, but his 'party' was in fact both a premonition of modern political organization and an echo of an older clientilism. If

O'Connell's party, like the Liberator himself, was an amalgam of ultra-modernity and the antique, then the strategies that it pursued were also a mixture of eighteenth-century 'connection' politics and the machine-style precision of the Parnellites and Redmondites. The sometimes wayward O'Connellites required a more tactful handling than Parnell was wont to supply, but equally the manner in which they were deployed by their commander in (for example) 1835 looked forward to Parnell in 1885 or Redmond in 1910: in each case a weak British government was sustained by Irish votes, but at a cost. That cost, however, did not yet amount to repeal.

Repeal was, appearances notwithstanding, a governing principle of O'Connell's political career. In common with other lawyers, he had been an anti-Unionist in 1800, but unlike others (W.H. Saurin, for example) he had retained this hostility: in a speech to Dublin corporation in September 1810, he had affirmed with characteristic gusto that, were the Prime Minister 'to offer me the Repeal of the Union upon terms of re-enacting the entire penal code, I declare it from my heart and in the presence of God that I would most cheerfully embrace his offer'.[29] Fortunately for O'Connell's conscience, no offer came upon these (or any other) terms, and in the 1830s he used repeal largely in order to intimidate otherwise truculent Whig ministries. In the late autumn of 1830 O'Connell fired a repeal agitation, but only apparently as an experiment and as a means of increasing his political capital: he and his supporters fought the election of 1831 as 'reformers' rather than repealers. The constricted nature of the Irish parliamentary reform bill of 1831 (only five additional seats were awarded to Ireland, and the 40-shilling freeholders remained disfranchised) and the generally cool demeanour of the Whig government helped to bring O'Connell back to repeal in 1832, as has been observed. But he still saw repeal as a means to an end, namely Whig pliability, even if some of his supporters took a different line (in November 1833 Fergus O'Connor, representing the radical wing of the movement, argued that the vacillating O'Connell had created a Frankenstein's monster through the repeal agitation).[30] At the time of the Lichfield House compact, February 1835, O'Connell made quite clear to the Commons the contractual nature of his commitment to repeal: 'if I am asked if I give up the repeal of the Legislative Union, my answer is that I suspend it. But for what? To give time for carrying into operation the three measures I have described [tithe reform and parliamentary and municipal reform]'.[31]

By the late 1830s, when the limits of the Whigs' willingness or capacity to offer 'justice' to Ireland were clear, O'Connell raised the spectre of repeal once again. At first he acted with caution: the Precursor Society (founded in August 1838) was designed not as a forerunner of a repeal agitation (despite its title) but rather as 'a society to prevent the necessity of seeking repeal'.[32] This strategy survived as late as April 1840 when, after a series of half-baked organizational initiatives, O'Connell created the National Association for Full and Prompt Justice or Repeal, a title which concisely summarized the purpose and priorities of the new body. By July 1840, when 'full and prompt justice' had not been forthcoming, and when it seemed probable that the Conservatives would regain power from the Whigs, O'Connell finally

abandoned the dilatory strategies of the last ten years. Even in plumping for repeal, however, he preserved an ambiguity, for his new organizational vehicle (the Loyal National Repeal Association) was not merely 'national' in scope but also 'loyal' as well.

This raises the question of the content of O'Connell's repeal convictions, and indeed of his relationship with Irish nationalism. That he has been claimed as a founder of the constitutional nationalist tradition is clear, and the reasons for this attribution are equally clear: he created a goal, devised political strategies and mapped political relationships for future nationalist leaders. Yet, characteristically, he never defined repeal, preferring to force legislative initiative onto the British government: he wanted a subordinate, Catholic-dominated parliament for (at least) Irish domestic concerns, but beyond these broad outlines he gave little clue as to his expectations. As always O'Connell was more full-blooded in denunciation than in advocacy, and it is easier to say what he did not endorse: he was not a physical force nationalist, nor was he a cultural nationalist. Irish was his mother tongue, but he was not an enthusiast for the language. He loved the increasingly common Irish national symbolism of the early nineteenth century: round towers, wolf-hounds, harps. He wore a green suit on some British speaking tours, and he wore 'the largest shamrock that could be had' when marooned in London on St Patrick's Day.[33] But though he embraced the national colours and the symbolism of Gaelic revival, he was no cultural ideologue and outlined no strategy for Irish cultural survival. Instead he inherited the eighteenth-century Catholic concern for loyalty: although his loyalty to the British crown has been compared to that of the Confederates and Jacobites, it might as well be seen as an inheritance from the genteel Catholic activists of the late eighteenth century, eager to pledge allegiance to George III in the hope of political concession. O'Connell was undoubtedly eager to demonstrate that the Orange interest had no monopoly over loyalty, and indeed took delight in the occasional displays of Orange unruliness and disloyalty. He was a devoted subject of Queen Victoria (she could only be an improvement on William IV, and her affection for her Whig ministers had an obvious political benefit): he and his sons were presented to the Queen in February 1838, and he was the author of a loyal address of gratitude in May 1839.

O'Connell practised the art of the possible, working within the bounds, though sometimes at the edge of, practical politics. Repeal was a sincere conviction, though equally it was a conviction that tended to surface when all else had failed. Despite O'Connell's flamboyant rhetoric of 1810, and despite his praise for Grattan's parliament, he did not seriously raise the issue of repeal until emancipation had been won – until, that is, the possibility of a restored Protestant parliament was out of the question: even then an agitation was raised only to be dropped. He toyed with repeal in the 1830s not out of cynicism, but because he believed both that Westminster might function as a useful assembly for Irish Catholics and that it needed to be spurred into action: repeal was simultaneously a desirable principle and a necessary goad. This constitutional ambivalence is well rooted in Irish politics (an inverted form is recognizable in modern Ulster Unionism), and it was famously expressed in 1836: 'the people of Ireland are ready to become a portion of the Empire . . . they are ready to become a kind of West Briton if made so in benefits and justice;

but if not we are Irishmen again'.[34] O'Connell, like the Ulster Unionists of 1912–14, urged local autonomy and regimented agitation when Westminster ceased to function in his interests (the Ulster Unionists of course went much further towards paramilitarism than the repealers, and they had an even slighter control over the pace of political change than O'Connell): O'Connell's nationalism was therefore as contractual as the loyalism of the Ulster Unionists. But for most of the 1830s it appeared to O'Connell that Westminster would indeed deliver reform, though – frustratingly – the Whig government wavered between lukewarm acquiescence and lukewarm hostility. There was never sustained, coercive opposition (which might have been successfully defied), but equally there was no flow of beneficence.

O'Connell's cautious attitude to repeal was determined not only by a conviction that it might be unnecessary, but also by the suspicion that it might be unattainable. The opposition forces were formidable. Although emancipation had attracted considerable sympathy in the Commons long before the Act of 1829, it was clear that repeal was an entirely different proposition. O'Connell's repeal motion, introduced on 22 April 1834, was defeated in the Commons by 523 votes to 38: there was thus a virtually complete unity of British opinion on the question. Equally, while liberal Irish Protestants had only a limited value to the campaign for emancipation, then at least they highlighted a division within Irish Protestant opinion and probably undermined the possibility of an effective Orange counter-assault. But, although O'Connell had successfully appealed to Orange anti-union sentiment in 1810, and sought to do so again in the 1830s, it had become a forlorn hope, and indeed partly because of his own success on other issues. The rise of Catholic influence, combined with O'Connell's own wide-ranging attacks on the Orange interest, ensured that the possibility of substantial Protestant support on the repeal question was remote.

Repeal in the 1830s, then, was an aspiration, a tool, an alternative, but it was not, like emancipation, a goal pursued with ruthless conviction. 'Justice for Ireland' was O'Connell's immediate ambition, and this, in so far as it was defined, meant tithe reform, municipal reform and parliamentary reform: that is to say, 'justice for Ireland' meant the gradual demolition of Protestant ascendancy. As has been noted, O'Connell was profoundly disappointed with Lord Grey's niggardly Irish reform bill, but equally this was only a part of his agenda for 'justice'. The Church of Ireland, as a keystone of the ascendancy which O'Connell so loathed, was an obvious target for his demands, but in fact here he merely had to harness an agitation that was already in full spate. From 1830 an agrarian protest movement had spread from the south-east throughout the Irish midlands: the grievance that was agitating in particular the middling and larger farmers was the tithe, a tax levied on certain types of agricultural income and applied to the maintenance of the state Church, the Church of Ireland. The immediate origins of the agitation seem to have lain with a tithe proctor in the parish of Graiguenemanagh, on the border of counties Carlow and Kilkenny, who seized the cattle of the local Catholic priest as compensation for non-payment of the tithe. But although religious feeling partly underlay the agitation – Catholics and dissenters were obliged to pay the tithe no less than members of the Church of Ireland – there was also a strong political and economic aspect. First,

the tithe applied largely to tillage, and thus the great pastoral farmers and landlords who had cleared their estates for livestock were unaffected. Second, the tithe, always an unwelcome additional tax, was an especially great burden when grain prices were low and profit margins constrained. This in fact was the case in 1830, at the beginning of the 'tithe war'.

With parts of rural Ireland in turmoil, the Whig government tested a variety of strategies. The agitation was immediately confronted with a harsh policing policy, which brought the crown forces and protestors into bloody confrontation on several occasions: in June 1831, at Newtownbarry, County Wexford, twelve demonstrators were killed by the yeomanry; later in the year eleven police and soldiers were killed in an ambush at Carrickshock, County Kilkenny, by tithe protestors. In 1833 a severe coercion bill was introduced in the House of Commons and – despite the opposition and disruptive tactics of O'Connell (again a premonition of Parnell) – placed on the statute book. But there were other approaches. The government was determined, before applying a political solution, to suppress disorder and to relieve the condition of the Church of Ireland clergy, some of whom had been reduced to destitution as a result of the agitation. In June 1832, through the tithes arrears bill, £60,000 was applied to the relief of tithe owners, predominantly the clergy, and through the same measure the government was empowered to collect the tithe arrears for 1831: this was (with the benefit of hindsight) a significant interference, for although it took the burden of collection from the tithe owners, it also annexed one of their rights. A further measure in 1832, the Tithe Composition Act, converted the tithe into a money payment and thrust responsibility for payment onto the landlord: this, too, would prove a significant initiative, since it highlighted the increasingly popular expedient of deflecting the attack on the Church onto the landlord class and it looked forward to the final legislative resolution of the issue. Both bills were opposed by O'Connell.

But the two measures which pointed to, indeed provided, a more lasting settlement both to the agitation and to O'Connellite opposition were the Irish Church Temporalities Act (1833) and in particular the Tithe Rent Charge Act (1838). Each of these tackled in some form the tithe question, but the approach in each case was quite different. The first of the measures, the Church Temporalities Act, pruned the luxuriant hierarchy of the Church of Ireland, suppressing ten out of the 22 sees, reducing the income of the remaining 12, and applying a graduated tax on benefices worth £200 a year or more. Catholic or dissenting tithe-payers would thus no longer be affronted by the task of supporting bishops from an alien church in princely style (O'Connell was fond of pointing to the Bishop of Derry, worth, so he claimed, between £25,000 and £30,000 a year). Furthermore, it was originally intended to create, under parliamentary control, a surplus fund out of the £60,000 or £70,000 released by these reforms (though this plan to 'appropriate' the income of the Church was later withdrawn). O'Connell was delighted with the original bill, recognizing (along with the High Church critics of the measure) that it represented a serious parliamentary incursion into the management of the Church: he laid great stress on the appropriation clauses, and was correspondingly horrified when they were

ditched. But if the Catholics sought appropriation, and in the long run sought the demise of the ascendancy interest, then Presbyterians were much more divided: many welcomed reform of the Church of Ireland and the curbing of its pretensions, but an influential minority, led by Henry Cooke, came increasingly to view the legislative assault on the Church as part of a concerted attack on Irish Protestantism as a whole. The Church Temporalities Act, though in the end a bitter disappointment to the Catholic supporters of the Whig government, both anticipated the final settlement of the Church question and helped to shunt some Irish Presbyterians towards a closer sympathy with their Anglican brethren. The measure thus looked forward both to disestablishment and to Unionism.

The Church Temporalities Act, though it clearly had a bearing on the tithe question, was not in itself an answer to the issue. A series of tithe bills, introduced in 1834, 1835 and 1836, sought a more direct approach, but all failed – the measures of 1835 and 1836 foundering on the question of appropriation. The instrument by which the issue was finally laid to rest was the Tithe Rent Charge Act of 1838, which scaled down tithe payments and incorporated them into a rental charge: landlords, mollified by a bonus, still bore the responsibility of paying, although they were also able to pass any charges on to their tenants (except those holding annual leases). The substantial arrears that had mounted over the period 1834–7 were written off. The success of the Act owed something to these provisions, although it is generally seen as a disappointingly limited response to eight years of agitation. Indeed the measure fell short of O'Connell's demands, and it did not incorporate the vital principle of appropriation. It was acceptable as a compromise, but only because O'Connell, while seeing the utility of the tithe issue, was never really fired by it: he used the tithe agitation for his own ends, but he was not (consciously at any rate) a social revolutionary, and as a landlord he did not want to see the tithe abolished because of a peasant agitation over which he had little direct control. This ambivalence, combined with the improved market conditions against which the bill was launched, helped to reinforce its effectiveness.

In the absence of repeal, O'Connell laid great stress on the reform of Ireland's antique municipal corporations: indeed, statutory reform of the Irish corporations, the tithe and of parliament had been his terms for suspending the repeal agitation and for supporting the Whig government in early 1835. Corporation reform, like the tithe issue, was part of O'Connell's broader campaign against Protestant ascendancy. The tithe agitation had been to some extent forced upon him, but it had represented nonetheless a welcome means of curbing the pretensions of the ascendancy Church. Municipal reform was a still more congenial occupation for the town corporations, like the Church of Ireland, were ascendancy strongholds, disproportionately Orange and Tory: in 1835 all but four of the 60 surviving corporations were exclusively Protestant. In addition, admission to the corporations in most cases was at best quirky, and their size was generally highly constricted. Although the political influence of the corporations had declined after the Great Reform Act, some (pre-eminently Dublin) retained a real electoral clout. They were also vested with formidable powers of local patronage, an issue which cannot have escaped the

attention of O'Connell, who was a bitter critic of Orange jobbery and the most devoted patron of his own, hitherto neglected, following. The corporations were simultaneously influential and – even by the standards of the 1830s – highly irregular institutions, and they were therefore of obvious concern to O'Connell.

However, if the tithe question were resolved in a manner that fell far short of Irish demands, then this was even more clearly the case with municipal reform. O'Connell had been – characteristically – bullish about the initial prospects of comprehensive reform: in February 1833 he had been invited to join a parliamentary select committee to enquire into municipal government throughout the United Kingdom, and he had brought over from Ireland as witnesses several highly critical commentators on the Irish corporations. The committee report highlighted abuses in the corporations of Belfast and Dublin and recommended a full commission of enquiry: this was set up in July 1833 and appears to have been packed with reformers, indeed with O'Connellite sympathizers. Its report echoed and amplified the findings of the select committee, offering a thoroughgoing condemnation of the state of Irish municipal government. But successive bills which sought to enact the findings of the commission met with strenuous opposition in the House of Lords; and the government, highly vulnerable after the Tory gains in the election of 1837, was not in a position to force through a radical measure. The Municipal Corporations Act of 1840, like the Tithe Rent Charge Act of 1838, was therefore unremarkable – except in the sense that it was astonishing that any type of reform should be enacted after the long and wearing parliamentary battles over the issue. The measure, in the words of Angus Macintyre, 'was in reality a scheme of municipal disfranchisement' rather than an intricate democratic revision: 58 corporations were dissolved and elective councils created in Belfast, Dublin and ten other boroughs.[35] Many of the detailed O'Connellite demands went by the board: the municipal franchise was restricted to the ten-pound rather than the more democratic eight-pound householder qualification; and the lord lieutenant, rather than the councillors, was awarded the right to appoint the sheriffs (who held great influence over the selection of juries and the conduct of parliamentary elections). The Act indeed created some 'islands of representative democracy' and permitted O'Connell to win a victory of some significance in 1841, when he was elected lord mayor of Dublin.[36] But it was a diminished version of the corresponding English measure of reform (passed in 1835); and it represented a poor return on the lavish hopes invested by O'Connell in 1833.

Of all the Whig reforms, the Poor Law Bill of 1837–8 was the one which O'Connell treated with the greatest asperity; and, unlike the tithe and municipal reform, it was never part of the price of his support. Poor law reform had a chequered history in the 1830s: in 1833 the Whig government of Earl Grey had appointed a commission to investigate the issue, chaired by the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, Richard Whately, but its findings, published in 1836, did not chime with ministers' expectations. The Whately commission argued against the English poor law system, which was organized around the workhouse, advocating instead that poverty might be alleviated through employment, and that employment might in

turn be created through public works. But the government, as in so much else, evidently wanted to apply English solutions to Irish problems, and in 1836 a second enquiry was launched. This provided the judgement that the government had clearly wanted all along. The new report, the work of an English poor law commissioner, George Nicholls, urged that the new English arrangements should be imported into Ireland; and this recommendation was speedily incorporated into legislation in early 1837. The Poor Relief (Ireland) Bill, introduced in February 1837, called for the organization of parishes into unions, each union being served by a workhouse: boards of guardians, using money raised from the rates, would administer both the new poor law unions and the new workhouses. The boards, in turn, were to be composed partly of elected representatives of the rate payers, and partly of the local magistrates.

O'Connell's response to the bill at first glance seems confused: in February he was welcoming, though by December – when the measure was reintroduced – this greeting had turned sour (he muttered darkly about 'social revolution' and complained about 'the new and heavy charge on property').[37] In reality neither the bill nor O'Connell's fundamental attitude had changed: it was the political context that had shifted. O'Connell had originally been prepared to support the Poor Law Bill as the price of effective municipal and tithe reform. However, both these measures now seemed to be slipping from his grasp, and in any event it was clear that the Tories were prepared to support the Whig Poor Law initiative: there was thus no tactical reason for O'Connell to mask his feelings, and he moved the rejection of the bill in February 1838. He believed that the new poor law would beggar the country, and in particular his own landed class: he believed, too, that the workhouses would serve both to weaken private charity and (in the absence of outdoor relief) to imprison the defenceless poor. In fact, in so far as it was political principle rather than humanitarian sympathy which underlay O'Connell's attitude, then his opposition was utterly misjudged. For the new boards of guardians, as largely elective bodies with increasing powers, helped to enhance the democratic influence over local government; and – in the absence of other fora – they proved to be an essential training ground for future nationalist politicians. On the other hand, and more importantly, neither the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act nor O'Connell's proposed remedies for Irish poverty had taken into account the possibility of a widespread crop failure: the new poor law system was certainly not designed for a cataclysm, and the threat of a disaster like the Great Famine would never have occurred to the Gradgrindian ideologues who were the architects of the system.

It should not, however, be supposed either that O'Connell's concerns were limited to his tripartite agenda of February 1835 or that his relative loyalty to the Whigs depended on a small number of half-hearted legislative initiatives (let alone unwanted measures such as the poor law reform). O'Connell had helped to curb, however modestly, the pretensions of the ascendancy Church and the influence of the ascendancy within the municipal corporations, but he also recognized the importance of undermining the 'Orange' dominance over official patronage and in the administration of the law. In fact, arguably the chief benefit of his relationship with

the Whigs came from a sympathetic executive in Dublin Castle, headed by the second Earl of Mulgrave as lord lieutenant (1835–9), and by Lord Morpeth as Chief Secretary (1835–41): completing this anti-Orange trinity, and perhaps the most talented of the three, was a young Scots engineer, Thomas Drummond, who in 1835 was appointed undersecretary and in effect head of the Irish civil service. Drummond earned a remarkable reputation within the constitutional nationalist tradition of the nineteenth century: 'His record is unique', proclaimed his nationalist biographer, R. Barry O'Brien (author, too, of a famous 'life' of Parnell and editor of the autobiography of Wolfe Tone); 'He was a success. Why? The answer lies on the surface. He knew Ireland. He loved the people, he had a policy, and he stood to his guns'.[38] Drummond, as a middle-class Scots Presbyterian and as a technocrat of a Benthamite tendency, had as little affection for the Orange and ascendancy interest as O'Connell, and set about curbing its influence at all levels of the Irish administration: this task was made somewhat easier after 1835, when a parliamentary select committee issued a scathing condemnation of the insidious influence of the Orange Order. Drummond and his political masters were particularly keen to reform the administration of justice and pursued a policy of centralization combined with a mild catholicization. Catholics were admitted to the judiciary for the first time: the appointment of magistrates was taken out of the hands of the local (and often ascendancy-dominated) magistracy and vested in the Castle (Charles O'Connell, Daniel's son-in-law, eventually won one of these positions). The local magistrates themselves came under scrutiny, with the increasing appointment of Catholics and the corresponding dismissal of Orange sympathizers (such as Colonel Verner, Deputy Lieutenant for Tyrone, removed from the magistracy after giving an Orange toast at a dinner to commemorate the Battle of the Diamond). Jury lists were compiled under new regulations. The police system was regularized and centralized, with the creation in 1836 of the Irish Constabulary: a considerable number of Catholics – including, pointedly, a brother of Michael Slattery, the Catholic Archbishop of Cashel – were appointed as officers of the new force. Four Catholics in succession held the office of attorney general for Ireland under the Whigs, appointments to which O'Connell attached particular importance: the reason for his anxiety is not hard to locate, for the attorney general, who offered legal advice to the executive and who represented the state in the courts, bridged the divide between government, the judicial system and the general public.

By 1840–1 it has been estimated that one-third of the key legal and executive positions in Ireland were held by 'anti-Tories', as opposed to the virtual Tory and ascendancy monopoly at the beginning of the 1830s: O'Connell himself had emerged as a significant patron for petitioning Catholics (and indeed, occasionally, Protestants).[39] By 1840, however, Drummond was dead and had been succeeded in office by Norman Macdonald, a Scot, too, but 'out of sympathy with national feeling': Lord Mulgrave, the nominal head of the executive team which O'Connell so favoured, had already in 1839 been translated from Ireland to the War and Colonial Office.[40] If the increasingly embattled Whig government had delivered modest (if symbolically significant) reform at a snail's pace, then the

Mulgrave–Morpeth–Drummond troika had demonstrated the reality of Catholic emancipation with a brisk efficiency. But by the summer of 1840 this troika was broken, and their masters at Westminster looked set to fall victim to the Tories. The first instalment of 'justice for Ireland' had – viewed in the round – not been inconsiderable, but O'Connell's difficulty lay in knowing when, indeed if, the next instalment would be forthcoming. Little wonder, then, that with a Tory succession imminent, he should have reverted to repeal and to an extra-parliamentary agitation.

3.4 Utilitarians and Romantics, 1841–8

The creation of the Loyal National Repeal Association in July 1840 was the effective starting point for the repeal campaign, although neither with emancipation nor with repeal was an agitation instantly created. The success of the emancipation campaign in 1829 rested partly on the effort invested by agitators from the late eighteenth century; and, equally, the achievement of a mass agitation for repeal by 1843 was a long-term effort, depending on the (albeit uncertain) evangelism of the late 1830s and early 1840s. But besides this generic explanation, there were other reasons for the dilatory start to the repeal campaign. The fall of the Whig government and the accession of Peel and the Tories in June 1841 precipitated an election which, while it scarcely caught the repealers unawares, did catch them underfunded: only 18 firm repealers were returned at this election, and there were strategically significant Tory victories in Dublin city and in County Carlow (where O'Connell's youngest son was standing). This has been described as a 'comparatively respectable showing' by O'Connell's most sanguine modern biographer, but in fact it may well have helped to demoralize the repealers, rendering them both an unattractive proposition for the Whig opposition and an insignificant threat for the Tories.[41]

In addition to this setback, at once a reflection and a cause of weakness, O'Connell was temporarily diverted into the municipal arena. The corporation elections of October 1841 brought the repealers some local compensation for their earlier reverses, and particularly in Dublin where – thanks to O'Connell's meticulous generalship – they gained 47 out of 60 available seats. This assured him both the lord mayoralty of Dublin ('a legally recognised lordship from the people, utterly unconnected with court favour or aristocratic usage', enthused John O'Connell) and an opportunity to realize the (admittedly limited) benefits promised by the Municipal Corporations Act.[42] In fact O'Connell's year as lord mayor was the municipal equivalent of his parliamentary strategy in the 1830s, and a part of his broader assault on the bastions of the ascendancy: the year served as a political bridge linking emancipation with repeal, for as lord mayor O'Connell was simultaneously demonstrating the reality of emancipation and the potential of a repeal administration in Dublin. He promised to act impartially, and seems to have done so, although his earnest religious convictions and his strong sense of the theatrical led to some provocative gestures (he threw off his mayoral finery on New Year's Day 1842 before entering church because, as he explained, while he was a Catholic, his robes were

Protestant).[43] Such lapses were probably inevitable in the context of decades of Orange domination within the corporation and the heightened sectarian atmosphere of the early and mid-nineteenth century, but they reflected attitudes which contributed in the end to the demolition of the repeal movement and which sustained divisions about its legacy.

Success and domination within the local arena seem to have empowered O'Connell after years of an enervating dependence upon the Whigs. By the end of his term of office, in the autumn of 1842, he was ready to activate the plans for a repeal agitation which had been laid down in the early 1830s and, with apparently greater seriousness, in the years 1838–40. As with emancipation, so with repeal, the Catholic clergy were central to the organization of the agitation, and as an opening gambit in August 1842 O'Connell commanded that lists of the parish priests and leading Catholic laity in Leinster be compiled. But the repeal movement echoed the emancipation movement in other respects: the hierarchy of the Repeal Association, the repeal rent, the local repeal wardens, the associate membership fee of a penny a month – all these details were inherited from the emancipation movement. The idea of formal public debate, so enthusiastically pursued in the 1820s between Catholic and Protestant advocates, was revived in February 1843, with the great contest in the Dublin corporation between the repealers, led by O'Connell, and the Unionists, led by Isaac Butt. Naturally public meetings were of central importance to the emancipation and repeal agitations, but between March and September 1843 an unprecedented campaign of 'monster' meetings – the adjective was supplied by *The Times* – was held, attracting audiences of half a million and more (the largest was held at Tara, County Meath, on 15 August, with an attendance estimated at between half a million and three-quarters of a million). These meetings fulfilled the same significance in the repeal campaign as the electoral contests of the 1820s did for emancipation: the shock of Waterford or Clare could not be recaptured because there was no longer any novelty in electoral upsets, but the scale and discipline of the public meetings of 1843 were just as sensational, and even more intimidating. The meetings were entertainments, just as the election campaigns of the 1820s had been: there were 42 bands at the Tara meeting, 10,000 horsemen, a harpist, and above all a cathartic oratory. O'Connell's election rhetoric of the 1820s was reworked and elaborated at these rallies, with a strong emphasis on belligerence and on the historical grievances of Irish Catholics: two militant speeches, at Kilkenny and (famously) at Mallow, County Cork, in June 1843 followed an apparent hardening of attitude on the part of the government and looked forward to a bloody confrontation. But, as in the 1820s, so in the 1840s, there was an ambivalence in O'Connell's attitudes, whether as a result of careful political calculation or (equally probable) his fatal gift of fluency: a comparison might be made with the ambiguities of Carson's position in 1912–14, where there was a counterpoint of public defiance and private conciliation, and an oscillation between pellucid logic and hazy emotionalism. But Asquith was no Peel, and the Ulster Unionists' resolve was not tested in 1914 as was the militancy of the repealers in 1843. For the climax of O'Connell's campaign, which was to have been a meeting at Clontarf, County

Dublin, on 8 October, never occurred. The posters announcing this gathering suggested that it would have a paramilitary dimension, and the government seized the opportunity to issue a ban: O'Connell – true to his essential constitutionalism – acquiesced. His apparently unexceptional speech at Skibbereen on 22 June ('I am not determined to die for Ireland, I would rather live for her') had in fact revealed his convictions more honestly than the celebrated 'Mallow Defiance' of 11 June ('they may trample on me, but it will be my dead body they will trample on, not the living man').[44]

O'Connell's decision to abandon the Clontarf meeting had been an act of principle, one which was decried by choleric theoreticians of war such as John Mitchel: even the more constrained, if susceptible, Thomas Davis was moved to write that 'Earth is not deep enough to hide the coward slave who shrinks aside; / Hell is not hot enough to scathe the ruffian wretch who breaks his faith'. The allusion to O'Connellite rhetoric and, indeed, to O'Connell himself, seems clear.[45] However, it is all too easy to accept the argument that Clontarf represented a decisive, indeed a disastrous, turning point in O'Connell's fortunes and in those of his movement. O'Connell himself, no less than his difficult Young Ireland protégés, helped to affirm this view: he had decreed that 1843 was to be repeal year, and he continually proclaimed, even in private correspondence, his belief that repeal would be granted before the year was out. The Young Irelanders (Denis Gwynn compared them patronizingly but not unhelpfully to restless and impatient undergraduates) tended to accept O'Connell's messianic conviction at face value, and tended, too, to be persuaded by their own passion.[46] Even though Davis and other Young Irelanders were uneasy about the 'monster' meetings, it is clear that, by the summer of 1843, O'Connell had convinced many, possibly even himself, that he had achieved a political momentum similar to that won by 1828–9. The apparent surrender at Clontarf, followed by O'Connell's four-month imprisonment (May–September 1844) on a charge of sedition, seemed a pathetically meek dénouement to months of political protest and confident political prophecy: 'We promised loud and boasted high', intoned Davis, '"to break our country's chains, or die"; / And should we quail, that country's name will be the synonym of shame'.[47]

There are other perspectives on Clontarf. Clontarf may be seen as a decisive moment in the history of repeal, only if it is assumed that repeal was, in the 1840s, a realizable ambition. This, however, is to underestimate the strength of the opposition, and in particular to neglect the already tenacious Unionism of eastern Ulster. In fact, neither O'Connell nor the Young Irelanders attached any particular significance to the increasingly divergent political traditions of the north. Neither, however, can have been completely unaware that the north presented potential difficulties: during the emancipation campaign the levels of Catholic rent collected in Ulster had been unusually low, and in September 1828 an attempt by John Lawless, an O'Connellite lieutenant, to rouse support and to expose the weakness of Orange influence had led to a humiliating, and potentially disastrous, confrontation with Orangemen at Ballybay, County Monaghan. The episode demonstrates O'Connell's bullish conviction that dissent in the north could be managed no less than in the

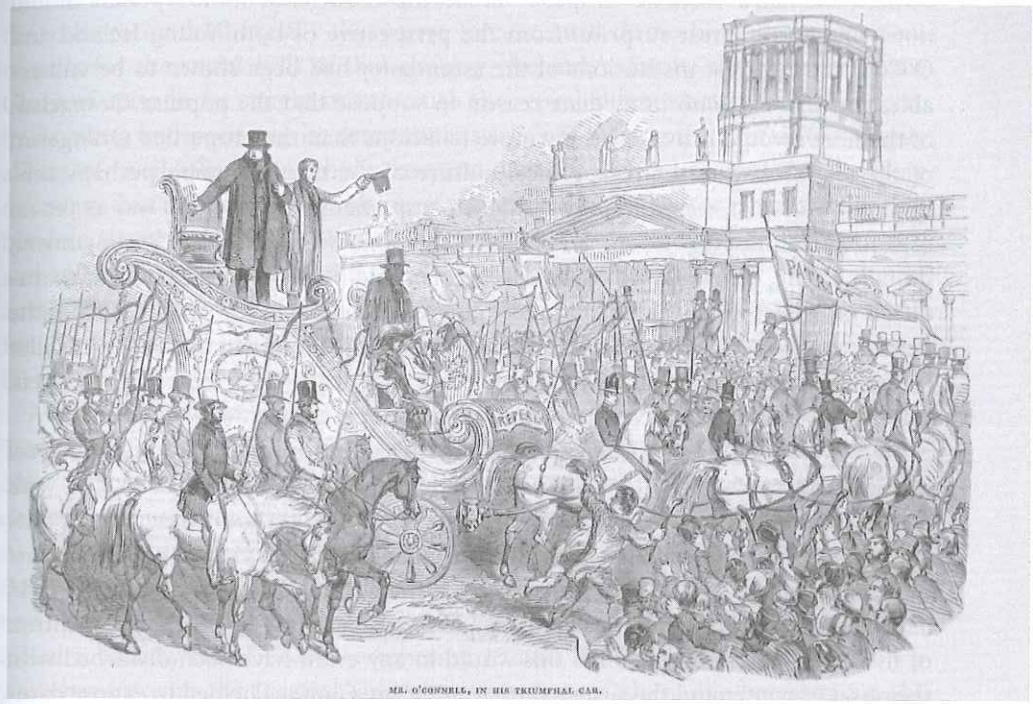

Plate 2 Daniel O'Connell acquitted, Dublin 1844.
Source: Mary Evans Picture Library.

rest of the country, and – characteristically – there is nothing to suggest that his confidence was damaged by the encounter. In January 1841, despite the still hesitant nature of the repeal movement in the south and west of Ireland, O'Connell planned a triumphal progress north into Belfast to evangelize for the cause; but, as so often in his career, rhetoric and reality diverged, and he had to be content with what his opponents saw as a skulking entry. He was snubbed by northern liberal Protestants, barracked by Orangemen, derided by the able northern Unionist leader, Reverend Henry Cooke, but still able to preen himself on 'so triumphant a result'.[48] This attitude was, of course, a genial provocation and typical of O'Connell's great ability to mask adversity, and it reflected an unwillingness to judge northern Unionism as anything other than a conventional, and therefore negotiable, problem.

The Young Irelanders, though comparatively well informed, appear to have taken much the same attitude. Several Young Ireland leaders – Charles Gavan Duffy, John Mitchel – were Ulstermen and there were northern contributors to the *Nation*, including one of the celebrated women poets, 'Finola' (Elizabeth Willoughby Treacy), but none treated Ulster as an impediment to their cultural or political ambitions: it was unfortunate, but scarcely surprising, that Mitchel, the only Ulster Protestant in the high command of the Young Irelanders, should have been so marginal, both in terms of his convictions (he was a lapsed Unitarian) and his personality (he was 'possessed

by hate' and had a 'volcanic' temper).[49] In fact the insouciance of the repealers should not come as any great surprise: from the perspective of both Young Ireland and O'Connell, the great institutions of the ascendancy had been shown to be vulnerable, and there was no immediate reason to suppose that the popular Orangeism of the north would prove to be any more tenacious than the propertied Orangeism of the south. And as yet the political culture of the north, though perhaps subliminally Unionist, was still not overtly or comprehensively so: there was as yet no organized Unionist movement, and political divisions within northern Protestantism, though easing, remained noticeable. Moreover, memories of the United Irish tradition in Belfast were still fresh – indeed, there were some hardy survivors from the period, such as Mary Anne McCracken – and the most influential northern secular leader of the period, William Sharman Crawford, while no friend to O'Connell, was equally neither an advocate of ascendancy nor a conventional Unionist.

Had O'Connell not encountered the convinced and militant Unionism of Peel at Clontarf, then – like later nationalist leaders – he would have had to deal with northern political dissent. The Clontarf incident, while certainly a personal political tragedy for O'Connell, cannot therefore realistically be viewed as 'the reason' why repeal failed (and all the more so, given the failure of the potato crop in 1845 and its impact on Irish political activity). Clontarf certainly broke the momentum of the repeal agitation, but then this would in any event have been disturbed with the onset of winter and the suspension of agitation. Clontarf helped to expose damaging divisions within the repeal movement between the O'Connellites and the Young Irelanders – but then these divisions were already present and ran deeper than mere matters of strategy. In fact the agitation, judged as a whole, was not without profit: while the Clontarf episode may have demonstrated the impossibility of repeal, the campaign of which it was a part helped to keep the problem of Irish government before the House of Commons and to energize British legislators. O'Connell's strategies had changed, as had the party in office, but the repeal issue served precisely the same function in the early 1840s as in the years of the Whig alliance. O'Connell had created repeal – his 'Frankenstein's monster', according to Fergus O'Connor – as a tool; and despite the elaboration of his ambitions, it remained a tool.[50]

The agitation highlighted both a problem and an opportunity for the Tory government: the mass meetings revealed the scale and social diversity of Irish disaffection, while the confusion among the repealers after Clontarf provided a chance to act. Peel, like his protégé Gladstone, believed in the efficacy of political timing, and after Clontarf he could offer judicious concession without being seen to surrender to the threat of violence (as ultra-Tories charged that he had done over emancipation). In fact the agitation had already goaded Peel into some (albeit quiet) conciliatory gestures: after June 1843 he urged on the reluctant lord lieutenant, Lord De Grey, that 'considerations of policy and also of justice demand a *liberal* and indulgent estimate of the claims on the favour of the Crown of such Roman Catholics as abstain from political agitation'.[51] Rewarding 'well-affected' and competent Catholics was only a part but nonetheless (given O'Connell's patronage concerns in the late 1830s) a significant part of a more ambitious strategy. Although Peel had declared that he would resist repeal and the dismemberment of the Empire by force, he recognized equally that 'mere force . . . will do nothing as a permanent remedy for the social evils of that country [Ireland]': despite the evidence of the Clontarf episode, he sought not to crush the repeal alliance but rather to undo it, by isolating and pacifying its component parts.[52] Satisfying the professional aspirations of 'well-affected' Catholic lawyers, doctors and policemen was therefore necessary, but a much more pressing, if related, problem was the close cooperation between the repealers and the Catholic clergy. 'Sever the clergy from the agitators, and agitation must cease' advised James Kernan, a Catholic resident magistrate, in a report submitted to the cabinet in May 1843: the suggestion did not go unheeded, for this 'severance' would prove to be a central ministerial objective over the next three years.[53]

After Clontarf, Peel, his Home Secretary Sir James Graham and the liberal Tory Chief Secretary Lord Eliot were united in promoting a policy of modest conciliation towards the Catholic clergy. Clontarf provided the opportunity, and the demolition of the repeal agitation provided a key motive, but in fact the origins of some of the initiatives long predated 1843. Peel's Charitable Donations and Bequests (Ireland) Bill (1844) addressed a longstanding Catholic grievance, which had been highlighted by O'Connell in 1830 and again in 1844: Peel's measure established a broadly based board, numbering 13 and including five Catholics, which was charged with the location and administration of charitable bequests for the Catholic clergy. Hitherto such bequests had been administered by a largely Protestant board, which had exercised unsatisfactorily wide discretionary powers and which accordingly had been distrusted by the Catholic laity. The new measure in fact did not satisfy either O'Connell, who favoured a board comprising the Catholic bishops, or his episcopal sympathizers (pre-eminently Archbishop MacHale of Tuam), but a significant body of clerics (including the Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin, and the Bishop of Down and Connor) were prepared to accept the bill as an improvement, however flawed, on the existing arrangements. Had the bill originated with a Whig ministry, doubtless O'Connell would have followed Archbishop Murray of Dublin in welcoming an 'instalment' of reform. As it was, the Tory government had successfully driven a wedge between the Repeal Association and a significant body of senior bishops. Little wonder that the new lord lieutenant, Lord Heytesbury, could gloat that 'we have erected a barrier – a line of Churchmen – behind which the well-thinking part of the Roman Catholic laity will conscientiously rally'.[54]

Peel's courtship of the Catholic Church continued in April 1845, with his Maynooth Bill. By this measure the annual grant to the seminary at Maynooth was trebled (to £26,360) and was rescued from an annual political controversy by being made a permanent charge: in addition a one-off payment of £30,000 was provided for building work. The political price paid for this act of conciliation was high (the resignation of Gladstone, the heightened anti-pathy of ultra-Protestants within both the Anglican and dissenting traditions, the renewed hurtful accusations of bad faith), but the bargain was not entirely one-sided: Peel hoped for a better-educated and more anglophile priesthood, and he gambled that his stand against English

Protestant fury would be repaid with Irish Catholic respect. In the short term (the only timespan within which it is possible to judge) Peel's gamble worked, and even his unrelenting political enemy, O'Connell, offered a muted and grudging approval (he had in fact little choice). But the intervention of the Famine destroyed the Irish political landscape within which both Peel and his O'Connellite critics operated, and his experiment in (what Donal Kerr has called) 'killing Repeal by kindness' was therefore cut short.[55] Neither the Charitable Bequests Act nor the Maynooth grant could in themselves satisfy the exuberant hopes that O'Connell had aroused in 1843: but these modest measures helped to demonstrate that Toryism was not wholly bound to the ascendancy interest, and that Tory reform was not crudely related to militant pressure. Peel had indicated that the Union might be made to work for Irish Catholics no matter what party was in power, just as his constructive Unionist successors 50 years later would seek to demonstrate that the Liberals had no monopoly over Irish reform. Each generation of Tory won an understandably sceptical response from the politicians; but each generated some (albeit ephemeral) popular goodwill.

Scepticism was, however, among the more favourable reactions won by Peel's third Irish initiative, the Academical Institutions (Ireland) Bill. As with the Charitable Bequests Act and the Maynooth grant, Peel's immediate political motivation in broaching the issue of university reform was the repeal movement, but – like these earlier measures – there was also a broader and more generous perspective. Ireland lacked an extensive system of higher education such as existed in Scotland, and Irish Catholics in particular possessed no university which was in keeping with their faith and culture. Peel's measure, introduced in May 1845, sought to balance generous educational provision with the non-denominational principle, and the creation of three new colleges was proposed from which the teaching of theology and religion would be excluded. As with charitable bequests, much hinged on the attitude of the Catholic bishops: at first they were disposed to bargain, presenting Heytesbury on 25 May with severe – though apparently negotiable – demands, but their attitude subsequently hardened. Led by the redoubtable MacHale of Tuam, with the assistance of the able Rector of the Irish College at Rome, Paul Cullen, a majority of the hierarchy came to condemn the 'infidel' colleges as a threat to the faith and morals of the Catholic laity: the two senior archbishops, Crolly of Armagh (who hoped for a college in his own city) and Murray of Dublin, were effectively isolated in their willingness to work with an amended version of Peel's proposal. A meeting of the hierarchy, held in Dublin in November 1845, although divided 18–6 in opposition to the bill, agreed to submit the measure to Rome for a decision: the majority's advice to Pius IX was pointed ('Time, Beattissime Pater, time Anglos et dona ferentes'), and the bill was duly condemned on 13 July 1846.[56]

There were similar, perhaps even more serious, divisions within the repeal movement over the issue: Davis in the *Nation* offered guarded approval, while the O'Connellite organ, the *Pilot*, followed the bishops' lead in condemning the colleges plan. These divisions came to a head on 26 May 1845 at a celebrated general meeting of the Repeal Association, when Davis and O'Connell sparred cruelly with

one another and were reconciled only after tears from Davis and an affectionate embrace from O'Connell ('more like the clumsy pantomime of an ox than any display of manly sincerity' grumbled one of Davis's friends).[57] Davis's early death (in September 1845) prevented the issue developing, but the damage had been done and there were other issues to which the bitterness of the colleges debate could be, and was, transferred.

Peel's bill provided no lasting solution to the vexed question of Irish university education – a lasting compromise came only with the Irish Universities Act of 1908 – and the failure of the potato crop in 1845 reduced the importance of the bill, and indeed the issue, even for the government. But if the measure failed to satisfy Peel's genuine aspirations for the better administration of Ireland, then it nurtured some political advantages: a temporarily divided hierarchy, and a repeal movement torn by internal political, indeed sectarian, tension. Peel's acute tactical sense should not, however, obscure his commitment to what he called in his resignation speech 'a complete equality of municipal, civil and political rights' in Ireland; nor should his contribution to the demise of the repeal movement detract from, as Donal Kerr puts it, 'the credit of being the first Tory premier to make a serious effort to solve the Irish problem by conciliation'.[58]

Peel's legislative programme laid the foundations for the 'coercion and conciliation' strategies of the late nineteenth century; the programme helped to define the political vocabulary of nineteenth-century Ireland ('godless colleges', 'Castle bishop', 'Castle Catholic', 'Young Ireland' were all formulations popularized as a result of the debate on Peel's measures).[59] But, while it is important to appreciate Peel's achievement, and important to grasp that he was pursuing a consciously divisive strategy, it should be emphasized that he did no more than precipitate the tensions within the repeal movement: the chasm between Young and Old Ireland was not excavated by Peel alone. The Young Irelanders and the O'Connellites were united by their commitment to repeal, but divided in almost every other respect: they had separate newspapers (the *Nation*, founded on 15 October 1842, was the focal point for the Young Irelanders), separate strategies (the Young Irelanders were sniffy about mass agitation, preferring to politicize through education) and – repeal aside – separate goals (the Young Irelanders were primarily cultural nationalists, though they helped to revitalize the Irish republican tradition). These comparisons merit some expansion. The *Nation* helped to define the Young Ireland grouping, for the leaders – Davis, Gavan Duffy, Mitchel – were intimately involved in the task of publication, while the large circulation achieved (10,000 copies were sold of each edition, with perhaps 250,000 readers) provided them with a wide political influence. The paper, though initially loyal to O'Connell (after Clontarf it proclaimed that 'the man who dares to adopt any policy not sanctioned by O'Connell will deserve the deepest execration') became increasingly sceptical, and there were divisions over several issues (including, as has been observed, the university question).[60]

The *Nation* was used to publicize other distinctive Young Ireland initiatives: 'educate that you might be free' was one of the most celebrated of Davis's injunctions, and he helped to provide both reading facilities (the repeal reading rooms) and a

nationally minded literature (the Library of Ireland, dubbed by George Boyce 'the Irish forerunner of the Left Book Club').[61] The Young Irelanders, despite some disingenuous and self-indulgent allusions to their plebeian credentials, were in some respects strongly elitist. Davis in particular seems to have been uneasy about the vulgar and dangerous nature of O'Connell's 'monster meetings', while cherishing a hope (like Parnell) that Protestants would retain a position of leadership in a free Ireland: like Parnell, Davis hoped to win over the Irish gentry to the cause of nationality. A revitalized Protestant leadership was not of course part of O'Connell's political agenda, but then neither was the wide-ranging cultural nationalism of the Young Irelanders. Davis was a Carlylean romantic, imbibing German nationalism through the writings of the sage of Chelsea: he was in addition bitterly anti-utilitarian, savaging what he called 'the horde of Benthamy'.[62] O'Connell shared some of Davis's prejudices (the two men plundered Irish history with a missionary zeal), but he professed himself a loyal Benthamite, and he had no interest in many of Davis's cultural passions – pre-eminently the Irish language. He was a grudging sponsor of some of Davis's initiatives (for example, the repeal reading rooms), but he was basically a practical agitator rather than a nationalist theoretician. Even setting aside the question of religion, there was a gap in understanding between the two men, which O'Connell's exuberant goodwill and Davis's propriety scarcely bridged.

Given these deep practical and ideological divisions, permanent schism within the repeal movement could have occurred over any one of a number of issues: the breakdown in fact came with the question of violence. The paradoxical relationship between Young Ireland and O'Connell is nowhere better illustrated than here: the Young Irelanders prided themselves, as Sinn Féin would do, on their austerity and discipline, yet in fact it was O'Connell, in their eyes grubbing and shambolic, who was more vigorously legalistic and a more effective, because a more subtle, authoritarian. O'Connell was convinced of the need for legality and order within the repeal movement, but equally he struck a balance between firm discipline and often highly militant rhetoric: the two features in fact were complementary, for invigorating, possibly incitative, speeches were only possible within the context of a carefully policed movement. On the whole Young Ireland echoed this position, though the ambiguities were undoubtedly more marked: both Davis and O'Connell referred vituperatively to the failings of the 'Saxon', and both promoted an expurgated reading of Irish military history. Davis wrote martial verse, but generally qualified his calls to arms with the suggestion that 'wisdom' or 'thought, courage, patience' would prevail.[63] Writing in the *Nation* after Clontarf, he decried the prospect of violence – yet at the same time he sublimated his anger in bitter, militant poetry. On balance, however, Davis was a moderating influence among the Young Irelanders: only after his death did the militancy of his colleagues become noticeably crude, culminating in November 1845 with a notorious article in the *Nation*, wherein John Mitchel ruminated on the techniques of guerrilla warfare. Mitchel sought to justify himself by explaining that he saw violence only as a last resort and as a response to official coercion – but this did not mollify O'Connell. Motivated partly by principle, but also doubtless by the desire to impose his authority on a

united movement, O'Connell demanded that the Repeal Association affirm its unqualified repudiation of violence. This stimulated a bitter debate within the Association in July 1846, after which William Smith O'Brien and the Young Irelanders withdrew. Despite some diplomatizing in December 1846, the secessionists formed their own rival organization, the Irish Confederation, in January 1847. But by this time the discussion of violence and its applications was becoming increasingly bizarre, for while the repealers talked metaphysics, Ireland starved.

O'Connell's strategies had depended upon combining a ferocious but constitutional agitation with sharp high-political skills. By 1846–7 neither of these was attainable: O'Connell himself was declining, both physically and intellectually, and his last parliamentary performances were rambling and tragic. Even had he had the ability, it would have been impossible to sustain an agitation in the context of the Famine. Even earlier he had stepped back from repeal (just as he had done in the 1830s), proposing alternatives in January 1844 to the 'present ardent desire for repeal', and toying with federalism in October 1844.[64] In the last months of his life he retreated to his estate and to matters of local patronage. One of his last political acts, in January 1847, was to call for greater Catholic admission to the Dublin magistracy. It was bathos, perhaps, but nonetheless appropriate – for even at the end he was chivvying the ascendancy interest and seeking the consummation of his great victory of 1829.

If the Repeal Association and O'Connellite gradualism were killed by the Famine, then the militancy of the Young Irelanders was both fired and destroyed. The desperate condition of the Irish cottiers and small farmers encouraged some in the Irish Confederation to hope that agrarian crisis would promote an enhanced national spirit (among the most influential of these theorists was James Fintan Lalor). Certainly Mitchel believed that the impoverished farmers might prove to be a political weapon, and in December 1847 he called on the peasantry to arm themselves in defiance of the government. He was still well in advance of the opinions of his fellow Confederates, however, and in an echo of the Repeal Association schism of July 1846 he and his allies withdrew from the Irish Confederation in February 1848, launching a newspaper, the *United Irishman*, to promote their militant convictions. The French revolution of 1848, like its predecessor in 1789, bolstered a generally more belligerent attitude, and Mitchel felt able to return to the Confederation in March 1848. But, ironically, this, the most aggressive of the repealers, was robbed of his martial ambitions by the government, who ordered his and other arrests in May 1848. The command of the Irish rebellion was left to the more genteel William Smith O'Brien, whose forces were crushed with a contemptuous ease by the Irish Constabulary at Ballingarry, County Tipperary, in July 1848. If there was a hint of bathos in O'Connell's last political acts, then this was all the more evident with the Confederation – for Davis's carefully honed martial verse and Mitchel's furious editorials had fired nothing more glorious than 'a cabbage-garden revolution', in the sneering description of a *Times* journalist.[65]

Viewed in a wider perspective, however, this bathos is less oppressive. The Young Irelanders provided a literature, role models and a vision of history to later generations of nationalist. They were influential, not primarily as failed revolutionaries but rather

as propagandists: it is a pleasing paradox that, through cogent journalism and the exploitation of the past – through perfecting an O'Connellite methodology – they simultaneously influenced later nationalists and marred the reputation of their original patron, O'Connell. The 'Library of Ireland' provided a curriculum for young nationalists throughout the mid- and late nineteenth century, and helped to keep alive the memory of Davis and the other contributors to the series. John Mitchel's bitter prose resonated long after his death, with his *Jail Journal* (1854), many times reprinted, emerging as one of the classics of modern Irish nationalism. Mitchel provided a coruscating view of O'Connell, which became an orthodoxy for young Sinn Féiners: 'Poor old Dan! Wonderful, mighty, jovial and mean old man, with silver tongue and smile of witchery and heart of melting ruth – lying tongue, smile of treachery, heart of unfathomable fraud'.[66] It was a view that complemented the Young Ireland self-image of discipline and integrity of purpose – an image that was also of course bequeathed to the Sinn Féiners; it was a view that was confirmed, albeit in a much more subtle guise, by Charles Gavan Duffy. The Young Ireland veterans of the 1848 rising, exiled on the continent, provided a vital personal link with the Fenian rebels of 1867; but Gavan Duffy's longevity and prolific output as an author ensured that the influence of Young Ireland reached not just the succeeding generation of militant nationalist, but more distant generations as well. Gavan Duffy, the founder of the *Nation*, died in 1903 having, in the last 20 or so years of his life, written sympathetic accounts of the Young Ireland movement and its personalities in his autobiography (*My Life in Two Hemispheres* (1896)), in his *Thomas Davis* (1890) and his *Young Ireland* (1880). Gavan Duffy's work ensured that, even had it not been for Davis and Mitchel, the influence of the cultural and militant nationalists of the 1840s reached the generation that won Irish independence. James Connolly, bitterly critical of O'Connell, and indeed equivocal about some Young Irelanders, wrote sympathetically of Mitchel and Lalor. Arthur Griffith pledged allegiance to the memory of Davis rather than to that of O'Connell. And it was a telling detail that on the centenary of Davis's death, in 1945, the Irish government published a celebratory volume (*Thomas Davis and Young Ireland*), where it was left to Professor Michael Tierney, the President of University College Dublin, to publish – two years after the event – a centenary volume for O'Connell.[67]

And yet the achievement of O'Connell, however much disputed, remains inescapable. The problem of interpretation which O'Connell posed for contemporaries, and for historians, is akin to that presented by Parnell: but where Parnell veiled his convictions, if any, in taciturnity, O'Connell achieved the same effect through loquacity. Both were highly skilled and subtle tacticians, with bold demands, but with numerous fall-back positions. Both spoke dogmatically, but acted pragmatically: both were suspicious of doctrinaire rigidity. The political malleability of each explains the malleability of their respective reputations, and their lasting fascination. O'Connell's fame, though damaged by the historiographical ascendancy of Young Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century and of little value to the revolutionary generation, was gradually restored once the independent state was secured: the centenary of emancipation, in 1929, and Seán Ó Faoláin's *King of the Beggars: A*

Life of Daniel O'Connell (1938) brought a revival of popular appreciation, for O'Connell, no role model for revolutionaries, had an undoubted didactic value in the new conservative Catholic state. His individualism, his constitutionalism and his trenchant faith were also recognizable virtues after the Second World War, in a landscape scarred by death and by totalitarianism; Michael Tierney was keen to emphasize O'Connell's claim to be the 'creator' of Christian Democracy, 'which is today [1949] . . . the bulwark of Europe against the pagan doctrine of state supremacy'.[68]

If this was perhaps a bold assertion, then O'Connell certainly inspired the liberal Catholic movements of his day, and his contribution to a Catholic and constitutional nationalism in Ireland is equally beyond question. He was an influence on Montalembert and on French liberal Catholics for whom he was 'the man of all Christendom': Montalembert, Lamennais and Lacordaire created, in December 1830, the General Agency for Religious Freedom (the Agence Générale pour la Défense de la Liberté Religieuse), an association of militant Catholics modelled consciously on 'the miracles of the Catholic Association'.[69] O'Connell also attracted the interest of a wide range of German intellectuals and churchmen: the Katholischer Verein Deutschlands, founded in October 1848, like earlier French organizations, drew on the inspiration provided by O'Connell and the emancipation movement.[70] Peter Alter has suggested that the great mobilization of the Irish Catholic masses, which was O'Connell's central achievement, helped to inspire the revolutions of 1848–9 in central Europe.[71] There is, however, an irony here: it is a pleasing quirk that the Young Irelanders, who were strongly influenced by continental European romantic nationalism, and who were ultimately fired by the French revolution of 1848, should have had so slight an impact on Europe; while O'Connell, who – as Desmond Williams affirmed – was at best mildly interested in matters beyond Ireland and Westminster, had a lasting European significance.[72]

O'Connell politicized the Irish people using the most accessible tools: the Catholic faith and the Catholic clergy. He sought an independent parliament for all Irish people, using the same tools to effect this end. He was generous in his perspectives, but he was also a product of the penal era, and his ardent faith and his hostility to the ascendancy promoted a suspicion of, and defensiveness towards, all Protestants – even those nominally his allies. Catholic and Protestant emancipationists, and Catholic and Protestant repealers generally (not always) spoke the language of tolerance; but they were seeking the impossible – to marry a public generosity with the private conviction that they each held a monopoly of spiritual truth. Both O'Connell and Davis were products of an era of peculiarly bitter sectarian feeling, and neither completely rose above this – even if, within this context, they were each convinced both of their own benevolence and the lurking 'bigotry' of others. As Brian Girvin has pointed out, 'O'Connell's protestations that his politics were not sectarian can be taken seriously, yet he himself was always quick to denounce Protestant concerns as sectarian and not sincerely held': much the same sentiment might be applied to Davis.[73]

If the parentage of Christian Democracy is questionable, then the parentage of Parnellism is clear. O'Connell provided a political constituency for Parnell, and a political strategy. His 'tail' in the 1830s, his alliance with the Whigs, his relationship

with the Church, his gradualism – the willingness to accept 'instalments' of justice – all foreshadowed Parnell. They shared a broadly similar relationship to violence, communicating with the militants while channelling popular aggression into constitutional paths. They each successfully applied the lever of militancy to truculent British governments. Above all, O'Connell defined a goal, repeal, which Parnell inherited and mildly elaborated. They were apparently (and in respects actually were) worlds apart, the garrulous, pious Catholic lawyer and the taciturn, impious Protestant squire, but they were political clones.

3.5 The Orange Party, 1798–1853

Likewise yeze Presbyterians that for the truth contend
Come forward now and manfully your chartered rights defend
From Fenians and from Paypishes that fiercely youse assail
And hope throughout Green Erin's Isle to carry a repeal
'The Boys of Sandy Row' *c.*1870[74]

Daniel O'Connell was a political colossus and his influence – though interrupted in Ireland – has been both lasting and widespread. The repeal movement created a particular tradition of constitutional political involvement – what Tom Garvin has called 'a strong general understanding of the mechanisms of representative democracy combined ultimately with a disregard for, or unawareness of, the ethical principles that lie behind those mechanics'.[75] The broader repeal movement also helped to revive, through the agency of Young Ireland, the militant republican tradition within Irish nationalism. The competition between these distinct (though related) visions of Irish politics was bitter and has tended to dominate narratives of nineteenth-century Irish political history: this, in turn, has meant that what O'Connell saw as the true political opposition, what he called 'the Orange party', has been relegated to a position of negligible significance. But, while the achievements and tribulations of nineteenth-century nationalism have naturally formed the staple of Irish political historiography, the electoral success and political consolidation of this 'Orange party' were formidable and represent one of the more striking themes of modern Irish history. Only through the work of Theo Hoppen has this theme begun to receive an appropriately careful scrutiny.[76]

'Orange party' was a deliberately vague and pejorative formulation, but in essence it was a reference to Irish Toryism. O'Connell looked forward fondly to the demise of Toryism (and indeed to the demise of Protestantism), and there were clear grounds for optimism. The series of political victories which O'Connell secured in the 1820s and 1830s were also, at least ostensibly, defeats for the ascendancy interest and for its party political manifestation, Toryism. O'Connell, through the Catholic Association, liberated Catholic voters from their traditional subservience to their landlord – and, while this affected both Whig and Tory magnates, it was the Tories who were O'Connell's preferred victims. Catholic emancipation had been strenuously

resisted by leading Irish Tories, although, viewed in a wider perspective, it had also divided Irish Protestants (whose interests Toryism purported to represent). The passage of the Emancipation Act was both a humiliation and a material setback for the ascendancy interest, and it was capped by the passage of the two parliamentary reform measures, British and Irish, in 1832. Ecclesiastical and municipal reforms in the 1830s represented further, if more minor, affronts. The Orange Order, which enjoyed a close though often difficult relationship with Toryism, was forced into a humiliating dissolution in 1836.

But O'Connell's predictions of the death of 'the Orange party' were misjudged. Irish Toryism matured into a successful popular Conservatism which, as late as 1859, was the largest Irish party at Westminster. O'Connell himself proved to be not so much the assassin of Irish Toryism as its tutor; indeed (however paradoxical it might at first seem), it could well be argued that the two greatest influences over the birth of modern Irish Conservatism were O'Connell and his bête noire, Robert Peel. O'Connell's indirect but profound influence over Irish Tories operated at two levels: first, like Parnell at the end of the nineteenth century, he provided a model for his opponents to copy and adapt; second, and again like Parnell, his sweeping successes forced his opponents into defensive action. O'Connell therefore provided both a stimulus and a paradigm for his Tory opponents. Peel, a no less important if more distant influence, was reviled by many Irish Tories for his 'apostasy' over emancipation. However, he provided his nominal Irish allies with both a theoretical and practical political model, for he offered an accessible Conservative philosophy through the Tamworth manifesto, and demonstrated its successful application in the British Conservative recovery of the mid- and late 1830s.

If the achievements of O'Connell in many ways anticipated the Parnellite era, then equally the successful adaptation of Irish Toryism in the 1830s and 1840s was a precursor to popular Unionism. The outstanding features of this adaptation mirrored the achievement of O'Connell: the creation of a Conservative electoral organization and the creation of a Protestant political consciousness. O'Connell's electoral triumphs in the 1826 general election and after, and the challenge of parliamentary reform in 1832, each underlined the need for organization, and to some extent O'Connell supplied a blueprint for success. The early aspects of this organization are somewhat shadowy. The Brunswick clubs, formed in 1827–8 in the wake of the first dissolution of Orangeism, fulfilled different functions in different parts of the country, but they operated broadly as a popular anti-emancipationist organization and as an adjunct to Toryism. Certainly the Cork Brunswick Constitutional Club was effectively a Tory electoral organization and originally quite distinct from the Orange Order: like later Conservatives it appealed, at least nominally, to all 'constitutionalists', regardless of religious affiliation. The spread of the clubs in 1828 was, like the New Catholic Association, based upon a parish organization; and, again like the New Catholic Association, the clubs simultaneously recorded electoral triumphs (such as the victories of Gerard and Daniel Callaghan in Cork city in the by-elections of 1830) while providing a much-needed boost to Protestant political morale.[77]

But the Brunswick clubs, though functioning broadly in the Tory interest, were not fully coequal with Toryism. The first attempt at a popular 'Conservative' organization in Ireland – the Irish Protestant Conservative Society – came in 1831, in the prelude to the Reform Acts of 1832 and the general election of December 1832. The O'Connellite influence is clear: the denominational appeal in the title of the body echoed that of the Catholic Association, and the Society organized an appeal, a 'Protestant rent', which was an unmistakeable borrowing from the emancipationists.[78] The Society oversaw the creation of a network of local registration clubs, which were often – again, an O'Connellite feature – under the control of the (Protestant) clergy. If, as Tom Garvin has suggested, O'Connell bequeathed a passion for the form, if not the ethics, of representative democracy, then this was a legacy seized as much by Conservatives as by later nationalists: the Conservative registration drives were often defined by sharp practice, and nowhere more clearly than in Belfast, where the black arts practised by the party apparatchik John Bates ensured the ascendancy of his cause.[79] A characteristic scam involved the registration of £10 householders: Bates retained numerous Belfast architects in the Conservative interest, whose task was to place a low value on Liberal-owned houses and thereby to disfranchise their occupants.

The Irish Protestant Conservative Society marked the beginning of a successful elaboration of Conservative organization. The Society was superseded in 1836 by the Irish Metropolitan Conservative Society, created in the aftermath of the Tamworth manifesto and ostensibly a more moderate and thoughtful body. The Metropolitan Society possessed formidable intellectual and technical resources, bolstered as it was by the likes of Isaac Butt, and it helped to reinvigorate Irish Toryism throughout Ireland by supplying funds and (in the case of the Metropolitan Society) a consensual Peelite philosophy: anti-Catholicism was an additional electoral tool. Working in partnership with the Conservative Registration Society, the Metropolitan continued the tradition of electoral gamesmanship laid down by the Protestant Society. In 1837 the Tories were able to launch a broad electoral campaign, running candidates (as did the Irish Unionists at the end of the century) in no-hope constituencies to bolster local morale and to irritate their opponents. The fruits of this campaign were relatively modest (34 seats were won, as compared to 30 in December 1832), but even this showing placed the Conservatives ahead of their O'Connellite rivals (who won 31 seats, as compared to 39 in 1832). Moreover, the foundations for the more sweeping success of 1841 were laid, when it seemed – momentarily – that the Conservatives had emerged as the largest Irish party, winning 43 seats (this total was later pared to the still impressive figure of 40 as a result of successful election petitions).

This organizational revival was also effective within the realm of municipal politics. Here the challenge to the Tories was much the same as at the level of parliamentary politics – a combination of, on one hand, an effective O'Connellite opposition with, on the other, rule changes in an electoral game which had hitherto suited the Tory interest. O'Connell had viewed municipal reform as a priority, for it seemed likely to hasten the demise of the 'Orange' interest. But, while the Municipal Corporations

Act (1840) was unquestionably a serious setback to Irish Toryism, costing them the control of both Dublin and Cork, it was also a spur to local organization; and, while the Tories remained in a minority on both the Dublin and Cork corporations, they were equally a growing and influential minority. Efficient organization together with the comparatively high franchise qualification helped to spare Toryism from electoral annihilation in the south and west of the island, but the same combination of assets produced even more remarkable results in areas where the party had traditionally been strong. In Belfast the first election after the passage of the Municipal Corporations Act produced a clean sweep for the Tories: every place on the 40-strong corporation was captured by a Conservative, and John Bates, the astute and ruthless manager of the new Belfast Conservative Society, was returned to the strategically crucial position of town clerk. It was, as Cornelius O'Leary has remarked, the 'apogee' of his long political career.[80]

If Bates and the Belfast Tories peaked in 1842, then the national party reached its electoral summit in the period from the late 1850s through to the mid-1860s. The ultimate origins of this success were earlier, however, dating back to the shock of the new experienced by Tories in the era of emancipation and reform. After generations of apathy Conservative organization was created, modified and re-created with a scientific precision and an evangelical enthusiasm, the most frenetic tinkering coming in the early and mid-1830s. The last major overhaul before the invention of a new party structure in the 1880s came with the Central Conservative Society (1853) – what Theo Hoppen has judged as 'perhaps the single most significant development in the history of the party's electoral and political machinery'.[81] This appears to have been in part a response to the new electoral conditions created by the Irish Franchise Act (1850), and by the momentarily burgeoning Independent Irish Party, though there were also distant echoes of the National Repeal Association in its constitution and function. The new Society instructed (where necessary) local Tories in the gamut of political intelligence, promoting – like its predecessors – creative registration work, and gathering and collating all forms of relevant information. The Society simultaneously encouraged effective and coherent Irish Tory action at Westminster, while struggling to maintain friendly links with British Conservatism (some landed ultras had sought in the 1840s to break the connection with the British party). By the late 1860s it was flagging in confidence, 'stoic resolve' (in Hoppen's description) replacing 'erstwhile optimism' – but more than any other single organization the Central Society should be credited with the electoral success won by Irish Tories in the mid-nineteenth century.[82] Moreover, the achievements of the Society had a wider resonance: as a broadly representative Tory organization, with good local and cross-channel connections, the Central Conservative Society provided a model both for English party reformers in the late 1860s as well as Ulster Unionists in the era of Home Rule.

Skilful registration work by bodies such as the Central Conservative Society depended upon, but did not in itself create, a flourishing supply of Tory voters. The broader missionary activities of the Society may have won a few to the cause, but there was clearly no mass conversion. The importance of the Society, and of

its precursors, rests primarily in the mobilization and invigoration of Tory support – in the exploitation of more fundamental realignments within Irish Protestant politics and society. These shifts occurred most obviously in the wake of the campaign for emancipation, and in the prelude to the Reform Acts of 1832 – just as the successful mobilization of Unionist opinion was originally a response both to Parnellite agitation and the parliamentary reform measures of 1884–5. In the late 1820s and after, Toryism began to develop from its origins as a remote establishment creed towards a more popular and consensual formulation. To an extent this popularization built upon the reaction to O'Connell, but some voters – particularly dissenters – needed a more positive inducement before being enfolded in the Tory embrace, and this, arguably, was supplied by Peel's new inclusivist vision of the party. Two obvious aspects of this new openness may be found with the accession of both Orangemen and (more tentatively) some Presbyterians to the Tory faith.

The relationship between Toryism and Orangeism in the early nineteenth century was thoroughly ambiguous. Certain convictions were held in common – there was, for example, an anti-Catholic sympathy binding many ultra-Tories and the Orange Order. But the plebeian origins of the Order, and its reputation for aggression (it was founded in September 1795 after a sectarian affray, the Battle of the Diamond) meant that it held an uncertain appeal for the 'respectable' classes. Its credibility was bolstered in 1797–8 because of its usefulness at a time of widespread conspiracy and eventual rebellion; and as a consequence it spread both geographically and socially. The membership of the Order was around 100,000 in the 1820s, drawn from all levels of the social hierarchy: it attracted many Conservative landowners in Ireland, and even came to enjoy royal patronage (in the shape of the Dukes of York and Cumberland, brothers to George IV), but it never completely shed its original, flawed reputation. The Order was a potential asset to Tory government but it was also (because of its rowdiness) a continual threat to political stability; and while it prospered under certain administrations (especially during the reign of William Saurin as attorney general (1807–22)), there was no uniform sympathy for its actions (it was dissolved for the first time along with the Catholic Association in 1825). Peel's attitude – cautious support for the principles of the Order, combined with suspicion of its secret oath-bound existence – is probably broadly indicative of the mind of parliamentary Toryism. However, both Orangeism and Toryism were, in the 1820s, diverse institutions encompassing (within admittedly clear parameters) a range of values and convictions; and, while there was a clear sympathy between some Tories and the Order, there was no coherent alliance such as existed during the Home Rule era.

These ambiguities were beginning to be resolved in the late 1820s. The pressures created by emancipation and reform helped to consolidate gentry support for the Order, and thereby to clear the way for a more complete (though still occasionally tense) relationship between Orangeism and Toryism. Orangemen, in turn, no less threatened by the legislative challenges to Protestant ascendancy than the gentry, found refuge within the developing institutions of Conservatism, and there was widespread Orange participation in Tory electioneering in the mid-1830s. After the

formal dissolution of the Order in 1836 (as the result of a highly critical parliamentary report), Orangeism maintained a half-concealed but often thriving existence, sometimes (as in Belfast) under the cover of the Protestant Operative movement. The prominent Dublin Protestant Operatives' Association, founded in March–April 1841, was characterized by a strong evangelical and apocalyptic Protestantism, and in part filled the gap created by the dissolution of formal Orangeism: the Association's driving force, the Reverend Tresham Gregg, had Orange contacts and sympathies. Some residual social tensions plagued the relationship between the Dublin Operatives' Association and local Conservatism, for, while the Operatives were clearly anxious to play a role in local Conservative electoral politics, the Conservatives were less anxious to admit plebeian representatives into their counsel. The revival of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland in 1845–6 brought a restoration, indeed an elaboration, of the active links with Toryism which had been so conspicuous in the early and mid-1830s. It has even been suggested that the key Central Conservative Society of Ireland (1853) was an Orange initiative.[83]

However, there had been a longstanding bond between (at least) ultra-Toryism and the Orange Order, and the consolidation of the links between the new Conservative institutions and the Order, though highly significant, was not, perhaps, very surprising. More remarkable, perhaps, was the growing relationship between a small but significant section of Irish Presbyterians and the developing Conservative movement of the 1830s. This tentative Presbyterian affiliation was remarkable on a number of grounds: first, the Church had traditionally been associated with political dissent, and second, its members had on the whole remained aloof from Orangeism. Presbyterians were therefore beginning to align themselves with what had for long been a repugnant political tradition, but they were also doing this at a time when Orangemen were becoming noisy proponents of Conservatism. The radical nature of this emerging political union underlines the extent to which a new Protestant political consciousness was being formed at this time – a new mentality incorporated within new party institutions. Catholic organization and politicization had therefore a Protestant equivalent; and equally Irish Protestantism gave birth to a political-cum-spiritual leader who shared some of the characteristics of Daniel O'Connell – Reverend Henry Cooke.

Cooke was one of the key strategists of this political realignment. Although he had been a moderate emancipationist in the mid-1820s, he was an opponent of the bill of 1829, and he viewed with alarm the rapid consolidation of the Catholic position. In particular he was disturbed by the cooperation between the Whig leadership and O'Connell, and he sought to counteract this by projecting a vision of a grand Protestant alliance, bound within a Peelite Conservatism. He was not in sympathy with the 'prelatical' forms of the Church of Ireland, but he saw the O'Connellite assault on its privileges as part of a broader assault on Irish Protestantism – and within these terms he was prepared to offer his support. At a famous united Protestant gathering at Hillsborough, County Down, in October 1834 (the form of a mass meeting and the strategic location suggest an O'Connellite inspiration), Cooke called for greater cooperation between the two main Protestant

denominations: 'a sacred marriage of Christian forbearance where they differ, of Christian love where they agree, and of Christian co-operation in all matters where their common safety is concerned'.[84] He acknowledged his Conservative convictions and was careful (with a view, presumably, to disarming Presbyterian criticism) to affirm the details of his creed: 'to protect no abuse that can be proved, to resist reckless innovation, not rational reform; to sacrifice no honest interest to hungry clamour; to yield no principle to time-serving expediency; to stand by religion in opposition to every form of infidelity'.[85] Nor were these Conservative convictions passive: Cooke was deeply involved in the formation of the Belfast Conservative Society and worked alongside John Bates, whom he warmly commended ('[he] never loses an opportunity of doing his duty').[86] In addition he corresponded directly with Peel on the subject of the regium donum (March 1835) and on various Scots and Irish Presbyterian issues in the early 1840s (though not always successfully). Cooke did not create Presbyterian Conservatism, nor did he overcome the inherent distrust of the majority of Irish Presbyterians for Toryism. But as the single most influential Presbyterian cleric of the first half of the nineteenth century his endorsement of Conservatism had a vital significance, for it helped to make respectable an alien creed: he capitalized on Presbyterian fears of the Catholic revival, and he popularized the political vision embodied in the Tamworth manifesto.

Nor did Cooke create Presbyterian Unionism, yet here again his prominence as a clergyman meant that his politics had a much broader resonance than would otherwise have been the case. In any event, he was unquestionably the most conspicuous Irish Unionist of the age. Presbyterian disillusion with radical politics had evolved in the aftermath of the '98, the result both of lurid accounts of the treatment of loyalists in Wexford and of the confusion and treachery which accompanied the rising in Ulster. Cooke fired the latent anti-repeal sympathies of a broad range of Protestant opinion, both Presbyterian and Church of Ireland, emerging as the single most prominent northern opponent of O'Connell. He was a leading spirit behind the resistance to O'Connell's Belfast visit of January 1841, and was perhaps the chief political beneficiary of O'Connell's failure on this occasion. He was certainly the star performer at a great Conservative victory celebration, where he defined his Unionist sympathies in an O'Connellite formulation: he alluded to the sufferings of Irish Protestants in the past, emphasized his own impeccable lineage as a descendant of one of the defenders of Derry, and appealed in patronizing and ambivalent terms for tolerance. The most famous passage of his speech celebrated the growth of Belfast under the Union: 'Look at Belfast, and be a repealer, if you can'.[87] Of course, even without Cooke repeal would have won few converts among northern Presbyterians, for distrust both of the principle and of its promoter was already widespread. But Cooke fired and rationalized these convictions. Moreover, he expressed Presbyterian Unionism in Conservative terms: he dominated the Conservative celebration and (according to one newspaper report) was supported by over 100 Presbyterian clergymen. As in the early 1830s, only a minority of his co-religionists as yet supported this flirtation with the old Tory enemy: but it was becoming increasingly clear, given the Whig alliance with O'Connell, that Cooke's

radical vision of a general Protestant alliance with the new Conservatism had merit. When he died in 1868, this vision still had not found general acceptance and the Presbyterian association with Liberalism remained vital. But, viewed through a wider lens, Cooke anticipated the Unionist architects of Protestant union in the early 1880s; and he forged a bond between Presbyterianism and Toryism and (ultimately) Ulster Unionism which retains a political significance to this day. As Ian McBride has remarked, 'Cooke fused together in his own person a particular combination of conversionist theology, social conservatism and anti-Catholicism which would eventually come to dominate popular politics in the north of Ireland'.[88]

Cooke contributed vitally to the creation of a broader Protestant political identity – but (like O'Connell with Catholicism) he was capitalizing upon several fundamental shifts of attitude within his community. Some of these are already clear: Cooke harnessed Protestant bewilderment at the rapid evolution of Irish Catholicism from political passivity and legal subjection in the late eighteenth century to political assertiveness and (at least nominal) legal equality in the 1830s. In particular Cooke expressed the general Protestant confusion with the multifaceted politics of O'Connell. Cooke's attempts to 'marry' the two main Protestant denominations had a negative, anti-O'Connellite stimulus, therefore, but these efforts were also rooted in some other centripetal tendencies within Irish Protestant politics. First, the Whig and O'Connellite critique of the Church of Ireland, though part of a broader assault on Protestant ascendancy, in fact addressed and corrected abuses within the Church and thereby ultimately removed it from political controversy: the Church emerged as a comparatively more effective and attractive institution, viewed whether by its own adherents or by Presbyterians. Second, the very tentative sympathy between Irish Presbyterians and the Church of Ireland that was publicized by Cooke in the 1830s was assisted by the consolidation of Presbyterianism itself. The fissile condition of Presbyterianism in the eighteenth century had given rise to the secessionist schism (over lay patronage in the Church), and the anti-burgher schism within the secessionist church (over the acceptance of the burgess oath enjoining loyalty to 'the true religion presently professed within this realm'). In addition there was a latitudinarian non-subscribing Presbyterian tradition as well as a reformed or covenanting church. Crucially, some of these divisions were being reconciled in the first half of the nineteenth century: the burgher/anti-burgher schism within the secessionists was resolved in 1818, and the secessionists themselves (numbering 141 congregations) were able to reunite with mainstream Presbyterianism in 1840. This union was, in turn, made possible by the campaign, urged by Cooke in the late 1820s, for a more rigorous and orthodox theology, and in particular for an Athanasian as opposed to an Arian view of the Trinity. The removal, in 1829, of latitudinarian and Arian elements within the Church cleared the way for a more precise definition of Presbyterian belief as well as a definition more comprehensible to Anglicans. As Finlay Holmes has cautiously remarked, Irish Presbyterianism emerged in 1840 and after as a more conservative institution, both in terms of its theology and its churchmanship.[89] And, while the majority of Presbyterians remained wedded to their suspicions of Anglicanism and to a Whiggish liberalism, it is clear that the origins

of the socially cohesive and conservative Protestant alliance of the 1880s were being formulated in the era of Cooke and O'Connell. The unification of Presbyterianism was thus an essential precursor to the unification of Protestant identity – and to the creation of those political institutions which rested upon a unitary Protestant identity.

Another important source of cohesion within early nineteenth-century Protestantism rests with evangelicalism: this shared interpretation of Christian spirituality (with its emphasis on the cross, on personal conversion, on the authority of scripture and on mission work) helped, arguably, to overcome traditional denominational boundaries within Irish Protestantism. It is important not to exaggerate this point, however. Evangelical Protestant religion arrived in Ireland in the mid-eighteenth century, an import from England and from the Hapsburg empire: the French revolution underpinned a popular evangelical passion, for it heightened political uncertainties and brought the apparent threat of godlessness. Evangelicalism had the capacity to create religious disorder, not simply between spiritually renewed and confident Protestants and their Catholic counterparts, but also within and between Protestant denominations. Evangelical zeal within the Church of Ireland in the early nineteenth century occasionally threatened to create division between the hierarchy and evangelical activists; the divisions within Presbyterianism in the 1820s were at one level a conflict about the supremacy of an evangelical wing over traditional 'broad church' intellectuals such as Henry Montgomery. The evangelical vanguard, the Methodists, originally a movement within the established Church, split in 1816 into, on the one hand, 'a church offering full ecclesiastical rites to its people', and, on the other hand, 'a religious society within the Church of Ireland'.[90] In addition to these internal divisions, there was a certain amount of competition between different forms of evangelical Protestant, and between evangelicals of one persuasion (such as the Methodists) and the non-evangelical clergy of another (the Church of Ireland).

How, then, given this evidence, did evangelicalism serve as a spiritual and political cement for Irish Protestantism? Despite its divisive potential, evangelicalism served in the long term to reduce the labyrinthine eschatological and liturgical divisions within Irish Protestantism to a simple, individualistic creed that stressed the primacy of personal salvation. Protestant denominations, hitherto divided by politics or by theology, could increasingly share the same spiritual language and experience (this was most obvious at the time of the 1859 revival). The efficacy of this evangelical bond was most clearly apparent at times of external threat, as in the 1820s and 1830s, in the context of a resurgent and assertive Catholicism. Evangelicalism bolstered Protestant confidence at a time of crisis, imbuing a sense of spiritual superiority – a confidence in the inevitability of salvation, as well as a sense of purpose and of mission.

But the broader importance of evangelicalism should not be missed. Its political benefits were, for example, quite clear: a shared spirituality helped to underpin evangelical overtures to the Anglican Tory establishment, while a robust evangelicalism shunted the Conservative party towards a more thoroughly Protestant, indeed anti-Catholic, posture (though there were variations in emphasis between the years of government and of opposition). The shared experience of conversion or, more

broadly, of revival helped to create a cohesive Protestant spiritual and political identity in the mid- and late nineteenth century. The influence of prominent evangelical and Tory landlords in south Ulster (the Annesleys, Crichtons and Farnhams) served to bolster the connection between Conservatism and evangelical spirituality: and the potent brew of a paternalistic and inclusivist Protestant Toryism which they distilled was widely exported and dangerously addictive. Irish Unionism was ultimately influenced, both in its political theology and its language, by its evangelical creators (men such as Edward Saunderson); to some extent Irish Unionism depended for its electoral survival on an evangelical Protestant consensus. The great paradox of Irish evangelicalism is therefore that it simultaneously encouraged an individualistic pietism as well as a communitarian form of politics.

The history of Ireland in the first half of the nineteenth century is therefore not simply the 'story' of emancipation and repeal, of the formation of the varieties of Irish nationalism. As always shifts in the perspective highlight obtrusive, but often overlooked, features of the historical landscape. From the vantage point of the third quarter of the century one of the most remarkable of the many Irish political edifices was Conservatism, which housed a minority constituency, certainly, but with effectiveness and (often) with flamboyance. A political ruin by the second quarter of the twentieth century, submerged partly under the gothic complexities of Ulster Unionism, Irish Toryism had in fact been threatened with destruction 100 years before, in the era of emancipation and reform. But it survived splendidly, and ultimately provided foundations for several new political constructs (the early Home Rule movement, the varieties of Unionism). The importance of Toryism in the history of Irish political artifice should be beyond question.