

John Mannion: ODonel's Mission: Catholics in Newfoundland in the Eighteenth Century

Religious adherence was the defining characteristic distinguishing English from Irish in Newfoundland for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. When Fr. James Louis ODonel arrived in St. John's from Waterford in July 1784 to establish a formal, institutional Roman Catholic Church, he entered a harbour that had been shared roughly equally by Protestant English and Catholic Irish for four decades. The vast majority belonged to the ranks of the working poor. Since most were illiterate, and even those who were not left little written record, we have only a vague impression of what they really thought of religion, of denominational differences, or of ethnicity. By contrast, the small, literate middle-class minority who were largely responsible for directing and governing them—colonial administrators, clergy, merchants or their agents, to a lesser extent masters—have left a considerable documentary legacy to ponder. This chapter examines Catholics and Catholicism in Newfoundland, particularly over the crucial period of ODonel's tenure. Its focus is on the broad social, economic, demographic and cultural contexts within which Irish Catholicism was embedded rather than the nature of belief, doctrine, or creed. A cultural geography of Newfoundland Catholics examines their numbers, social structure, population characteristics such as marital status, age and gender, spatial distribution, ethnic identity, Old World antecedents, changes arising from migration and the encounter with a novel economy on the fishing frontier. Finally, the discussion here is focused on St. John's rather than on the remaining three pioneer Catholic parishes of Harbour Grace, Ferryland, and Placentia.

The Catholic Church: Newfoundland Prelude

Irish Catholics were present in Newfoundland for a century prior to ODonel's arrival. By the 1730s they were overwintering in such numbers as to alarm magistrates, visiting governors, commodores, admirals and even some Protestant planters. Although winter unemployment, scarcity of provisions, and fear of robbery and violence were the main causes of concern, many of the complaints centred on religious difference. In August, 1731, for example, the magistrates at St. John's informed Governor Clinton that more than 300 Irish Roman Catholics arrived there annually, "very ignorant and indolent and naturally prejudiced

against Englishmen and Protestants". They added that fully "¾ of the inhabitants on the S. and west part of the island" [south of St. John's] were Irish and had "very good reason to think, will to a man join the French" should they invade. In forwarding their comments to the colonial office in London, Clinton concurred, noting "there is not one...but has his firearms".¹

Religious nonconformity was linked from the outset in Newfoundland to political disloyalty. Through the early and middle decades of the eighteenth century Catholics were stereotyped as "Irish Romans," "Papists," "nonjurors," "rebells" and "fellons". Although there is little evidence that Catholics in Newfoundland were politically active or aware, British perceptions, particularly amongst officials, tended to place them apart. Governor Falkingham's succinct summary in 1732 set the tone:

I find in general the inhabitants of Newfoundland frequent the Church of England, but there are great numbers of Irish servants, Roman Catholics, who are not allowed or permitted to Exercise their Religion²

Concern over winter numbers prompted Falkingham to conduct the first census distinguishing Irish from English in Newfoundland. It was also, tellingly, the first such calibration in North America. Although incomplete, the census reveals that the Irish, even in summer, accounted for less than 15% of the total population (Mannion 3: 257-93).

British policy on Catholics in Newfoundland was deeply rooted in Irish and English experience. Between 1690-1710 the Penal Laws were introduced denying Catholics in both countries basic civil rights. Catholics in Ireland were precluded from owning land, the main source of wealth and status. There were clauses restricting land inheritance, and leases exceeding 31 years. Catholics, moreover, were prohibited from practicing law, participation in government, access to the military or the right to bear arms.

Most of the Penal Laws had little relevance for Catholics in Newfoundland. In sharp contrast to Ireland, Newfoundland did not have an agricultural economy. Most Irish there were young, unpropertied male servants who did not settle permanently. For those who did, and acquired property, issues of land were largely irrelevant in an overwhelmingly maritime region. By 1784 some Irish had advanced to planter or trader status, owning boats and fishing rooms, for example, or shops and taverns, but records of penal statutes being invoked are rare. There were even

1 20 August, 1731, Magistrates, St. John's, to Governor Clinton, Public Record Office, London (PRO), Colonial Office (CO), 194/9, p.104; 20 October, 1731, Clinton to London, "Responses", CO 194/9, pp. 112-113. All sources at the Public Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL) unless noted. 2 18 September, 1732, Captain Edward Falkingham, "Responses", CO 194/9, pp. 211-218; 4 October, 1732, "Scheme" CO 194/9, pp. 220-224.

Catholic Irish soldiers in the Newfoundland regiments since the beginning of the century. That said, most militias in the early and middle decades of the eighteenth century were exclusively Protestant, and some censuses of potential military recruits explicitly omitted Catholics. Nor could they become governors, commodores, admirals, or magistrates. By far the most significant penal clause in Newfoundland, however, was the total ban on Catholic worship. This was in stark contrast to Ireland where such an edict would be impossible to execute in the face of a huge and hostile majority. Fuelled by Irish clergy trained in continental seminaries, a Catholic reformation occurred after 1700. The church was still shackled and poor, but almost certainly most Irish migrants in Newfoundland departed parishes with resident clergy and chapels or masshouses, had been baptised, and had received some religious instruction. ODonel's mission must be seen in this particular historical context. It did take time. Amongst the royal instructions issued in London to Governor Henry Osborne in May, 1729, prior to his departure for the fishery was the clause, "You are to permit a Liberty of conscience to all persons except Papists." It was the first explicit reference to religion in the annual instructions governing Newfoundland and was designed, amongst other things, to grant freedom of worship to Dissenters from the Church of England. (Rollman: 34-52) It was also an implicit recognition of Irish Catholic migration to Newfoundland as Osborne and other governors had affirmed. Similar instructions were issued as far back as the 1680s for colonies in the British West Indies, and by 1705 for colonies in America.

In 1735, Fitzroy Henry Lee reported with characteristic exaggeration, that "there are more Irish Papists than of all sorts of people in the island"; his comment that "they have not a priest amongst them as ever I could hear of" is almost certainly correct.³ St. John's and the outharbours were monitored, especially by resident Protestant magistrates, and there is no mention of any Catholic priest until after mid century. By then Irish Catholics were almost as numerous as English Protestants in Newfoundland. Irish migration and overwintering had increased substantially through the 1740s, causing renewed concern amongst colonial authorities. In 1748 Governor Watson was instructed "to get the best he can on the number of Irish Roman Catholics in the respective towns in Newfoundland." Watson did not produce a census but reported "by the best information I can obtain, that in the Southern Ports the Irish far exceed in number the English, but in the Ports to the Northwards of this place not one-fifth the number of Irish."⁴

3 20 September, 1735, Fitzroy Henry Lee, Governor, "Answers", CO 194/10, p. 4. Lee also reported that apart from the "Public Churches" (Anglican), there was no evidence of any irregular assemblies or gatherings, always a concern of the British administration in Newfoundland, particularly in governing the Irish.

4 5 May, 1748, Further Instructions to Governor Watson, CO 194/12, p. 60.

Censuses distinguishing Irish in Newfoundland survive for each of nineteen years between 1753-1776. They contain the most detailed count of Catholics in all of pre-revolutionary Anglo-America. The island was divided into seventeen census units—districts, bays, clusters of harbours—in 1754, extending from St. Pierre in an easterly arc around by St. John's and north to Twillingate. The Catholic Irish comprised 46% of the total population of some 7,500 souls in the winter of 1754. They were substantial in all bays or districts as far north as Trinity.⁵ Young male servants dominated even in the winter, and their numbers more than doubled with the arrival of the passengers to prosecute the cod fishery in the spring.

Although greatly outnumbered by young male servants, Catholic families were established in every district or bay south of Bonavista. There is no explicit count, except in special censuses such as St. John's, but one can get some sense of Irish family formation from the numbers of Catholic women and children in each district. With more than 1,000 Catholics, western Conception Bay was the primary area of Irish settlement on the island in the winter of 1754. Around a quarter were women and children, members of family.

The development of a rooted, family-centred Catholic population, notably in Conception Bay, St. John's and the southern Avalon in the middle decades of the eighteenth century coincided with a period of reorganisation and revitalisation of the Catholic Church in Ireland, particularly in the southeast, homeland of the Newfoundland Irish. The modernising James Butler was appointed archbishop of Cashel (Province of Munster), William Egan, bishop of the diocese of Waterford and Lismore, Thomas Burke in Ossory (Kilkenny) and Nicholas Sweetman at Ferns (Wexford). All were committed to church reform based on the European Tridentine model, sustained primarily by Irish priests trained in continental seminaries. Despite the ban on Catholic worship in Newfoundland, it was almost inevitable that Irish priests would eventually appear. Their travel was greatly facilitated by the departure each spring from 1750 onwards of thirty or more vessels from Waterford and ports nearby with Irish fishing servants and provisions.

In summer 1755, an Irish priest celebrated mass in some leading centres of Irish settlement in western Conception Bay: Harbour Main, Harbour Grace, Mosquito, Carbonear, and Crocker's Cove. The venue in each case was the fishing room of an Irish planter, either at his fish store or dwelling house. These planters were well-to-do, with 10-20 summer servants engaged in catching and curing fish. They were

5 21 February, 1755, Hugh Bonfoy, Governor, "Scheme of the Fishery, 1754", CO 194 / 13, p. 152.

analogous to the big Catholic farmers prominent in lending support to the emerging early modern Catholic Church in southeast Ireland.

Michael Katen (Keating) was a prominent planter with at least fifteen male servants stationed at Harbour Main. He was one of at least six Irish planters established there in 1755. At a court held in the harbour in September, Katen confessed that he had "admitted a priest to celebrate public mass according to the Church of Rome in one of his fish rooms or store houses, and he was present himself." He was fined £50, his store house was demolished, he was ordered to sell all his possessions, and quit the harbour by 25 November. Fifteen of Katen's "Roman Catholic servants...who joined in celebrating Public mass in his fish room" were also fined sums of £1, £2, or £3. Typically, they would differ in expertise and the amounts were likely related to their total summer wages. All but two, Richard Slemmon and Richard Gushue, bore distinctively Irish Catholic names and were almost certainly migrants from the southeast. One of Katen's servants, reportedly his book keeper, was fined £7.

A sense of the maturing Irish Catholic community at Harbour Main is evident in the list of offenders. At least six other Irishmen involved were propertied and were heads of household. Michael Landrican (Lundrigan, Lonergan) was a planter who also hosted mass. His house and his stage were "burned to the ground," he was fined £20, and banished. Four other Irish householders, probably planters, "confessed to being Roman Catholics and inhabitants of Harbour Main, which is contrary to law that they should hold any property in this island." Two were fined £10, one £8, and one 50/- and were also banished.⁶ Interestingly, none of the unpropertied servants were ordered out; most were seasonal or temporary migrants who would return to Ireland in the fall.

The stark repression reported at Harbour Main was repeated in harbours to the north. Michael Stritch was a well-to-do planter in Harbour Grace in 1755. It was, with St. John's and Placentia, the leading centre of Irish Catholic settlement in Newfoundland. In contrast to Harbour Main, there were three resident magistrates in Harbour Grace. It is surprising that a priest would attempt to conduct a public service there. Shortly after his arrival at St. John's from London, Governor Dorill wrote George Garland, JP:

Whereas I am informed that a Roman Catholic priest is at this time at Harbour Grace, and that he publicly read mass which is contrary to law, and against the peace of our sovereign lord the king. You are

⁶ 15, 20, 25 September, 1755, Government Newfoundland (GN) 2/1/A/ Vol. 2, pp. 251, 256, 262.

hereby required and directed on the receipt of this to cause the said priest to be taken into custody and sent round to this place and in this you are not to fail.

Garland responded somewhat evasively that the mass was said at Caplin Cove, a small place south of Harbour Grace, and the priest then moved on to Harbour Main, adding that had he performed in Harbour Grace he would have been arrested. Dorill's surrogate proved Garland wrong.

At a court held 15 September in the town it was alleged that:

Public mass was celebrated according to the Church of Rome in one of Mr. Stritches storehouses on Sunday, 26 July, 1755, although it appears that Stritch was not in the harbour, but most of his men servants and maid servants were there and the door not being locked to prevent any such congregation to assemble, for which neglect in him we think proper to fine him £10 and burn his storehouse to the ground.

There is no mention of Stritch's servants being fined.

Stritch gives a glimpse of the intimate links between the embryonic Catholic planter society in Newfoundland and the Irish homeland. In 1755, Stritch was supplied by Walter Butler, a Waterford merchant whose ship, the "Catharine", took provisions and passengers to Harbour Grace from Waterford that spring. Stritch's account with Butler survives.⁷ Amongst the transactions are two shipments of cod on Stritch's account to Bartholomew Rivers and Dominick Farrell, two of the leading Catholic merchants in Waterford, both engaged in the Newfoundland trade. Rivers' mother was Mary Stritch of Clonmel. Dominick Farrell married Johanna Rivers, aunt of Bartholomew. Catharine Stritch was witness, then godmother to their eldest son Thomas Farrell, later a merchant in the Newfoundland trade.

The Farrell and Rivers families were major financial supporters of the Catholic Church in Waterford, as were the Stritches in Clonmel. Michael Stritch represented a transatlantic extension of this support network, although in his case much hampered by more stringent Penal Laws. There were 80 families in Harbour Grace in the winter of 1755. At least half were Irish. Irish men servants were more numerous than their English counterparts. Catholics comprised half the winter population. Although we do not have an ethnic breakdown for spring migrants, it is likely that the Irish were more numerous and formed a majority of the summer

⁷ Walter Butler Ledger, Waterford, Account of Mr. Stretch, Harbour Grace, 1755. Maritime History Archive (MHA), Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's.

population. There were enough planter families like Stritch and Katen, and enough Catholic servants, to support a parish. That institution, however, was still three decades away. Dorrill's deprivations—or more precisely those of his naval surrogates—in Harbour Main and Harbour Grace were repeated at Mosquito, Carbonear, and Crocker's Cove. No other settlements are recorded as targets. It is likely there was only one fugitive priest on the island that summer, and he was confined to this strip of shore in western Conception Bay. In Carbonear, mass was said in a house owned by a prominent English planter, William Pike. It was rented to two Catholics in the fishery, Morgan Hogan and Murtagh McGuire. They were fined £15 and £25 respectively, the house demolished, their planters banished. Pike was given £30 as compensation; the remainder of the fine was used for court expenses. One should note that two of the Catholic planters, Katen and Kennedy of Crocker's Cove, although banished, were given their servants' fines as partial compensation. As well as saying public mass, the priest also performed the sacrament of marriage between Terence Kennedy and his partner, Mary, at their house in Crocker's Cove. This was deemed illegal. Kennedy was fined £10, ten of his male servants, all Irish, who attended mass £18.10.0. As elsewhere, the house was burned, and Kennedy expelled.

Laws restricting Catholic proprietorship were invoked in Crocker's Cove. John Kennedy, a planter, was fined and banished, but not apparently for attending mass. Two English planters from Carbonear claimed they established a fishing room on Crocker's Cove Point in 1750, and accused Kennedy of unlawfully occupying it. At a court in Mosquito, the surrogate noted it "appears that Kennedy is a Roman Catholic and an inhabitant of Newfoundland which is contrary to law."⁸ He was summoned, but did not appear. Expulsion on suspicion of religious adherence was rare. Although John Kennedy does not appear in the archival record subsequently, it does not necessarily mean that the expulsion order was carried out. A total ban on Catholic property in Newfoundland was never seriously considered, and could not be implemented in any case. The Kennedys and the Keatings not only retained their properties but expanded. Their offspring were prominent planters in the 1780s when finally a Catholic parish was established in western Conception Bay. Michael Stritch was still in Harbour Main in 1763, his widow Ann in possession a decade later. This endurance, so characteristic of the Irish in the homeland, was at the heart of an enhanced Catholicism in both places in the late 18th century.

⁸ 5 September, 1754, GN 2/1/A/2, p. 161.

Dorrill's militant reaction to Irish Catholicism was both exceptional and local. It did not extend beyond a strip of shore in western Conception Bay and it did not happen again. It is possible that this was the only place where a priest celebrated masses and conducted a marriage or marriages on the island in the middle decades of the century, or at least the only place known to governors and naval surrogates. What is important is that Dorrill's edicts entered the Irish-Newfoundland collective consciousness and cultural memory. It heightened their sense of a distinct ethno-religious identity. Some British governors following Dorrill were staunchly anti-Catholic, but religion alone did not dictate official policy on Irish settlement. It centred primarily on overwintering servants and the problems of unemployment or underemployment for masterless men. High profile murders by the Irish, such as that of William Keen in St. John's in 1754, reinforced fears amongst English Protestant inhabitants, particularly the planters and others with property. Palliser's draconian decree against "Papists" was part of a broader anti-settlement policy, and reform of the regulations governing the relationships between masters and servants.⁹ Most English passengers coming out in the spring had seasonal contracts and returned home in the fall. Increasingly, Irish servants stayed on. Palliser's penal code was promulgated to reduce the numbers of Irish servants, especially in the resident fishery. Palliser's successors reiterated the restrictions promulgated in 1764 regarding Roman Catholics.¹⁰ Governor Byron added some interesting clauses, most notably that all Roman Catholic children born in Newfoundland be baptised according to law, that is in the Established Church. There is no reference to marriage or burials. Byron also emphasised the laws regarding Catholic settlement:

An Irish papist, a man without a wife or family, a servant, put up mark points on a fishing room in your district [Bonavista] with an intent to build a stage and flakes thereon and posses the same as his right and property. Papists [are] not allowed to mark off land for their use or property¹¹

Attempts at implementing such laws remained rare. Irish migration, overwintering, the formation of permanent family settlement and the acquisition of property increased steadily in the second half of the eighteenth century. Laws

9 31 October, 1764, Hugh Palliser, Governor, decree, GN 2/1/A/3, pp. 272-273. It stipulated 1) that no Papist servant man or woman shall remain in any place where they did not fish or serve during the preceding summer 2) that not more than two papist men shall dwell in one house during the winter except such as have protestant masters 3) that no Papist shall keep a publick house or vend liquor by retail. The designation "Papist" was not used in two further clauses regarding keeping dieters in winter, and the expulsion of all idle disorderly men and women. These were, however, overwhelmingly Irish Catholics.

10 31 October, 1770, John Byron, Governor, Orders, GN 2/1/A/4, p. 285.

11 14 October, 1771, Byron to justice Keen, GN 2/1/A/5, p. 23. The governor ordered that the marks be removed.

forbidding such development were largely ignored. The great majority of English merchants and planters supported the Irish; their labour was essential, their custom desired.

St. John's Parish: The Demographic and Cultural Background

Four decades prior to O'Donel's arrival, William Peaseley was appointed Anglican minister of St. John's. It was by then regarded as "the Chief place on the island." When compared to the population of an average West Country parish, St. John's was still tiny. Fewer than 900 inhabitants were recorded there in the winter of 1746, and in dramatic contrast to English parishes, half of these were Catholic Irish. The population swelled to 1500 with the arrival of passengers in the spring. They came almost in equal numbers from England and from Ireland.¹²

Peaseley was born in Dublin in 1714, and a graduate of Dublin University. (Jones) He was a descendant of prominent seventeenth-century New English planters there and, as such, was familiar with Irish Catholicism and sensitive to the threat it posed for Protestants. Even in Dublin, Catholics comprised the great bulk of the population. An echo of his anxieties are evident in his initial reports from St. John's:

...there is a great want of a Protestant School-master, a large number of children going to a Papist one, and consequently being in great Danger of imbibing the Corruption of Popery¹³

He did establish a school, and taught there, assuring London he would give "all possible Encouragement" to "Popish families" to have their children attend and to support his mission. Families constituted the demographic core of any Newfoundland mission, and Peaseley had fewer than fifty Anglican families in his congregation. High rent, loss of property through fire, and particularly the lack of local financial support meant Peaseley was gone by 1750.

Despite the difficulties of maintaining a parish in a society dominated by single, unattached, highly transient young men, Peaseley's successor, Edward Langman, served in St. John's for more than thirty years. He was an important source on Irish Catholics in the town and in some large harbours south of there. In contrast to the reports of governors, naval surrogates, admirals and resident magistrates which focused on political, social, and economic factors, Langman emphasised religion. Catholicism posed a threat to Anglican hegemony. There

¹² CO 194/46 (1746), p. 48. The Irish accounted for 52% of the population of St. John's in June, 1746.

¹³ Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to Foreign Parts (SPG), Series B13, letter 203, 6 December, 1744, Series B15, letter 3, 9 November, 1747, Rev. William Peaseley to London; R.J. Lahey, SPG Annual Reports, unpublished extracts, 1745-1749.

were 52 Catholic families in St. John's in 1752, the year Langman arrived, compared to 48 belonging to the Church of England. Most servants, moreover, were Irish. At one stage Langman complained he could not hire an English servant, so great was the scarcity in St. John's.

Like his predecessor, Langman was interested in converting the Irish. In the absence of a Catholic priest he offered them baptisms, marriage rites, burials, Divine Worship, and religious instruction. The latter included "Tracts against Popery." An examination of the parish registers suggests he met with some success. More than 1,000 baptisms were recorded between 1752-1769, and over 760 marriages were celebrated. Roughly 30% bore Catholic Irish surnames.¹⁴ Yet few of these surnames appear as Protestants in later lists. Much research remains to be done on family continuity in the late eighteenth century, on the impact of death and outmigration, but preliminary work suggests Langman's efforts had little lasting influence amongst the Irish. His written reports tend to confirm it. A distinction is made consistently between Anglican English and Catholic Irish families, and the latter increased relative to the English throughout his ministry.

...there are about 1030 Persons, beside the Soldiers in the Garrison, in St. John's Town, and of these about fifty Families are Members of our church, twenty-five Families Dissenters from it, and the Remainder consists chiefly of Irish Papists of the poorest and most ignorant sort, that transport themselves thither to get Bread... (1758)

"...there are in St. John's about 124 families...1100 souls great numbers of these Roman Catholics, of Irish descent, kept disciplined by the Magistrates...Some of these Irish Romans do come sometimes to the Church to Divine Worship." (1760)¹⁵

Langman sailed south the following summer, and spent ten days in Bay Bulls and Witless Bay.

...in the Harbour of Bay Bulls are 37 Families of Irish Papists, and 8 of Protestants; in all about 230 souls...baptized 4 of the Protestant children; but could by no means persuade the Roman Catholics to have their children baptized though [I] strongly urged the necessity of a Christian baptism for them...

In Witless Bay are 11 poor families, almost all Irish Roman Catholics...very ignorant, very bigoted...¹⁶

14 21 October, 1752 - December, 1759, Baptisms, Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, Anglican register, St. John's, 26 C.; 25 November, 1754 - December, 1769, marriages. For a reconstruction of Irish surnames in Newfoundland, see John Mannion, "Tracing the Irish: a Geographical Guide" The Newfoundland Ancestor 9:1 (1993), 4-18, www.inp.ie/tracing-irish.html.

15 10 November, 1760, Langman, St. John's, to London; letter 14, SPG.

16 4 November, 1761, letter 144, SPG.

British officials were more concerned about Catholic collusion with the French. It was a recurring theme throughout the eighteenth century, reaching its high point with the conquest of St. John's in June, 1762. Almost all the Protestant English families were expelled, and Langman's property plundered. During the occupation "Three French Priests and one Irish Romish Priest [were] baptizing and burying and performing other Religious Offices."¹⁷

Despite legal restrictions, Catholicism had emerged as the salient feature of Irish identity in Newfoundland. The great majority were in Newfoundland seasonally or temporarily, and could return to home parishes and resume religious practice. Some Newfoundland residents went to Ireland to have partnerships solemnised and children baptised. Registers from St. Patrick's chapel in Waterford city, for example, contain records of Newfoundland marriages and baptisms:

3 November, 1762. Robert Holly and Jane Broders, married about three years ago in Newfoundland according to the custom of the place, renewed and ratified their consent here this day in presence of William Broders and Catharine Broders, Waterford, 29 November, 1762. (Fr.) John Sr. Leger.¹⁸

In the absence of clergy, couples sometimes simply formed partnerships and such informal unions were probably dominant amongst both English and Irish in Newfoundland. According to Anglican ministers a magistrate, a naval officer, or even a literate adult male could conduct marriages.

Between 1752-1770 twenty-nine Newfoundlanders were recorded in St. Patrick's baptismal registry, the offspring of eighteen couples. Six of the entries involved 2-4 siblings. Two of the twenty-nine were seven years old, one ten and one twenty-two. At least five of the fathers were English, or bore English surnames: Drinkwater, Jackman, Norcott, Penney, and Simms. Two of the eighteen mothers had southwest English names. It reflects considerable interethnic mixing at a time when there was a shortage of marriageable women, and the absence of clergy, Protestant and Catholic, who normally discouraged mixed marriages. All of the sixty-seven godparents listed had southeast Irish Catholic names, probably residents of Waterford or environs. A few shared the same surname as a father, and were likely kin. Prominent Catholic merchant families in the Newfoundland trade acted as godparents; including Robert Eustace of Waterford and Renewes, and the Roches:

¹⁷ SPG, Lahey, Extracts, 1763. In his strongest condemnation Langman recounted "the whole number of Irish Roman Catholics in this place, also in neighbouring harbours, were aiding...the French [and] were the greatest plunderers of the English, and did the most mischief to the Protestants." He recommended "several disorderly...Roman Catholic families" be expelled. 8 November, 1766, SPG, B6, letter 67.

¹⁸ St. Patrick's Roman Catholic parish registers, Waterford, 1752-1770. The St. Legers were a prominent trading and mariner family in Waterford.

1762, Fr. John St. Leger baptized Mary, Anastasia, James and Anna, legitimate children of James Roche and Joan Dunphy of Newfoundland. Godparents Bryan Roche and Christina Wyse also known as Tonnerly, Henry Roche and Anastasia Langton also known as Tonnerly in the absence of whom, stood in Bryan Roche and Anne Fanning, Joanne Wyse and Helen Power also known as Meany and finally Joan Tonnerly and Marie Merry.

Henry Roche was one of three sons of James (died 1754) engaged in the Waterford salt provisions commerce to Newfoundland and other destinations through the eighteenth century. Bryan Roche was a shipmaster in the trade. James Roche of Newfoundland was almost certainly kin. The Wyses and the Tonnerlys, kin of the Roches, were also Waterford merchants. As in the case of Robert Stritch of Harbour Grace in 1755, kinship and mercantile links spanned the ocean and help explain this intricate transatlantic religious geography.

“Full Liberty of Conscience”: Catholics in Newfoundland

After five decades the clause “except Papists” in the religious instructions issued yearly to Newfoundland governors departing London for the fishery was removed. It was a response, as Ray Lahey and Hans Rollmann have convincingly argued, to general changes in the Penal Laws in England and in Ireland, and applied not just to Catholics in Ireland and in Newfoundland, but in other British colonies across the Atlantic.¹⁹ Since Ireland contained by far the greatest concentration of Catholics within the empire, it was strategic for reform. Momentum had been building there for some time. Progressive prelates such as James Butler of Cashel took advantage of British anxieties over French, Spanish, and American aggression to gain concessions for Irish Catholics. The debate centred on political loyalty. Britain needed Irish Catholics in the army but was not certain that they could all be trusted. And although the Jacobite era was politically over, fear of a French invasion of Ireland, and Catholic collusion, still lingered.

In 1774 Butler devised a Test Oath that would demonstrate loyalty, yet not compromise Catholic belief. It was accepted by the more conciliatory bishops and priests, particularly in southeast Ireland, and amongst the literate English-speaking Catholic middle classes: subgentry, merchants, traders, professionals, big farmers. (Wall) Declarations of loyalty were despatched to London. In June, 1778, the first

¹⁹ “Religious Instructions to Governors of Newfoundland: 1729-1786”, Hans Rollmann, ed. www.mun.ca/rels/ang/texts/instruct.html; *IBID*, 1987, pp. 34-52.

Catholic Relief Act was passed in Parliament. It removed restrictions on Catholic land inheritance, land purchase, and the prosecution or imprisonment of the Catholic clergy. It was a modest beginning, but a breakthrough nevertheless. Since Irish Catholics were more numerous in Newfoundland than in any comparable colony in British America, the Act of 1778 undoubtedly had some impact on the instruction to Governor Edwards the following year. Catholics joined his Volunteer defence force and Regiment in numbers to resist any American (or French) threat to St. John's.

Edwards was engrossed in arranging Newfoundland defences during his tenure and never publicised the new freedoms affecting Catholics. Hans Rollmann attributes the silence to the fact that, in the absence of a local assembly or legislature, there was no public debate, nor was the governor obligated to divulge the details of his fiat. Edwards was, moreover, a conservative Anglican, unsympathetic to Dissenters and Catholics alike. A resident priest could encourage Irish settlement, particularly the number of servants in winter. Memory of their behaviour in 1762 was still fresh in St. John's. They were perceived as a threat by most personnel in the colonial administration and by some merchants and planters. Demand for Irish labour, however, had increased during the war, partly a consequence of building Fort Townsend and repairing Fort William, partly because of a drop in English migration.

By the time Governor John Campbell arrived in St. John's to replace Edwards in summer, 1782, the war was over. The Treaty of Versailles settled the conflict between English and French over fishing rights and access in Newfoundland. A Presbyterian Scot, Campbell was less supportive of Anglican privilege. His appointment coincided with a second Relief Act for Ireland (1782) giving Catholics parity with Protestants on land leases, *de facto* recognition for freedom of worship, and Catholic schools. News of these latest concessions was rapidly transmitted to St. John's through Waterford merchants, shipmasters, and other migrants. It came as no surprise that in summer, 1783, Campbell agreed informally with Irish inhabitants in the town that a priest, chapel, and institutional Catholicism be introduced. Three Waterford merchants, John Cummins, Patrick Gaule and James Keating, returning home from St. John's in the fall, were commissioned to contact the relevant ecclesiastical authorities to approve and organise the mission.

Catholic merchants, their agents in Newfoundland, master craftsmen, planters and other Irish families of means were foremost in the introduction of a formal Catholic Church to the island. It was a replication of the Catholic reformation and resurgence, particularly in southeast Ireland. Nor is it coincidence that St. John's

should emerge as the first place in Anglo-America to be the nucleus of a Catholic parish. The town and its environs had one of the largest concentrations of Catholic Irish in North America. Contacts with the homeland, through regular annual seasonal migrations and a flourishing provisions trade, were more intense and more intimate than in any comparable region on the mainland. The total Irish population in St. John's in winter had reached 1,000 and accounted for around half of the total. Similar majorities had developed in outports nearby—Petty Harbour, Torbay, Portugal Cove—comprising the district of St. John's and the future Catholic parish. Close to 200 Catholic families resided in the district. Many were still poor and struggling, but a substantial lower middle class had emerged and it was primarily from this group, led by the Waterford merchant Luke Maddock, a resident, that informal discussions with Governor Campbell on the creation of a Catholic mission began.

Most Irish merchants and shipowners in the Newfoundland passenger and provisions trades lived in Waterford. Some resided in neighbouring ports: New Ross in Wexford, Youghal in Cork, and Cork itself. They usually appointed agents, sometimes kin, to handle affairs in Newfoundland harbours. Other merchants, such as the three emissaries of 1783, would come out on their vessels for the season, and, like the Irish male servants, go home in the fall. Still others overwintered; some, such as John Cummins and James Keating, did so for several winters.

All three delegates were shipowners, and were engaged as exporters of salt provisions from Waterford to St. John's and exporters of cod to Waterford or southern Europe over a period of 5-15 years.²⁰ They were closely connected with the church in their home parishes in the city of Waterford. John Cummins had a son baptised in St. Patrick's Chapel in 1773. Patrick Gaule was one of seven brothers, sons of a shipmaster who himself was engaged in the Newfoundland trade. In 1771 Patrick married Anastasia Maddock, a relative of Luke Maddock of St. John's, in St. Patrick's chapel in Waterford. Amongst the witnesses were James Wyse and Roger Cashin, leading merchants in the fishery. One of Gaule's vessels, "Anastasia" was probably named after his wife. The Gaule clan were prominent shipmasters and traders in Waterford's far-flung and diverse commerce. They typify the kinds of social connections and Atlantic networks underlying the creation of the Catholic Church in Newfoundland.

20 Finns Leinster Journal, 1772-1776; The Waterford Chronicle, 1771, 1776-7; Lloyds List of Voyages, 1770-1785; Llyod Register of Vessels, 1770-1790 (MHA); John Mannion 1980.

In December 1775 Patrick Gaule and James Keating took the oath of allegiance in Waterford. It was devised, as noted, in 1774 by James Butler, archbishop of Cashel, and was supported by William Egan, bishop of the diocese of Waterford and Lismore. Dr. Egan also took the oath, in Clonmel.²¹ Almost a decade later Cummins, Gaule and Keating submitted the petition from St. John's to Dr. Egan and to Dr. James Talbot, bishop of London who was officially responsible for Catholics in Newfoundland.²² In their address, the three Commissioners assured Talbot they represented;

...all the Roman Catholics of St. John's, Newfoundland, who have at last got full liberty and permission to build a chapel there and full exercise of our holy Religion from the governor, and with the approbation of all the Justices of Peace and Protestant inhabitants.

All the Roman Catholick inhabitants and merchants have unanimously invited and called for the Reverent Mr. James ODonell of this city of great abilities and exemplary conduct and possessing the knowledge of preaching in Irish and English, the former absolutely necessary, and to bring two other clergymen from this Diocese...

ODonel was then living at the Franciscan convent in Johnstown, just southeast of the city on the old road to Passage and Waterford harbour. Eight of the seventeen "Popish" priests recorded in the census for Waterford in 1766 were members of this community. They had a friary or residence on South Parade, then a narrow lane, and a chapel nearby at the corner of South Parade and Water Street. Banished from their imposing medieval church inside the walls in the 16th century, the Franciscans served the largely rural parish of St. John's Without under the jurisdiction of the secular clergy and the bishop of Waterford and Lismore. Despite their relatively humble position, ODonel was, in 1783, a man of considerable clerical status. A graduate of the Irish Franciscan College in St. Isodore's in Rome, he taught theology and philosophy for four years at the Irish Franciscan College in Prague.²³ ODonel returned to Ireland about 1767. A series of promotions led eventually in 1779 to head of the Irish Franciscans, a position he relinquished in 1783 just prior to the request from St. John's.

21 Breandán Mac Giolla Choille, "Test Book, 1775-6" Appendix III, (Dublin: Fifty-Ninth Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records of Ireland), pp. 50-84, Waterford, Dec. 15, Clonmel, Dec. 18, 1775.

22 14 January, 1784, Waterford, "Catholic Commissioners to Talbot, "ODonel to Talbot"; 4 February, 1784, Clonmel "Egan to Talbot" in Cyril J. Byrne, 1984. All quotations are taken from this source, unless noted.

23 Raymond J. Lahey, James Louis ODonel in Newfoundland, 1784-1807: The Establishment of the Roman Catholic Church (St. John's: Newfoundland Historical Society Pamphlet 8, 1984). ODonels precise whereabouts in Ireland in the 1770s are not yet known but Michael Egan, bishop of Waterford and Lismore informed bishop Talbot in 1784 that he was "a Native of my Diocese, wherein he has resided these many years since his return from his foreign studies ... has been constantly since under my eyes ..." Egan lived in Clonmel.

Social Origins and Religious Culture: ODonel's Homeland

Much of the character of the Catholic Church in Newfoundland during the first century of its formal existence derives from Ireland through the medium of its clergy. ODonel was pivotal to this process. His social background and Irish clerical experience were strategic in the shaping of the parish of St. John's and the parishes founded by his fellow missionaries on the Avalon Peninsula. ODonel was the son of a large tenant farmer near Knocklofty, some four miles west of the town of Clonmel in the far south of county Tipperary. Such farms were nurseries for continentally-trained Catholic clergy in eighteenth-century Ireland. Newfoundland's first four Catholic bishops, ODonel, Lambert, Scallon, and Fleming, were products of the big farm. Not every large farm produced priests. Recruitment centred on particular families and was sometimes preserved patrilineally over generations through an uncle-nephew axis. At least four generations of the ODonel clan had a priest (Fig. 1). The silver urn given bishop ODonel by the merchants and principal inhabitants of St. John's in 1807 was entrusted to his nephew, then grandnephew, great grandnephew and thereafter to the nearest kinsman ordained priest and bearing the ODonel name. It symbolised family continuity, clerical succession, and conferred social status. At a conference mass celebrating the historic Irish-Newfoundland connection at the Cathedral in Waterford in 1987, the ODonel urn was carried in procession by members of the family.

The precise location of the ancestral ODonel farm has not been fully confirmed. Local tradition points to Garryntemple, a townland of close to 300 acres one mile north of the demesne at Knocklofty, and four miles west of Clonmel.²⁴ Tradition points specifically to An Bóithrín Glas (the little green road), running north from Knocklofty, as the entrance or access to the ODonel farmstead. Local lore states the family was succeeded by the Lambs. It is supported by some documentation. In 1826 three families of Lambs farmed some 200 acres in Garryntemple and their homesteads appear in a cluster on the Ordnance Survey (1837).²⁵ These lands were originally worked as a single large farm which had been split between male heirs. Garryntemple, and the adjoining townland of Monksgrange, were once monastic farms associated with the abbey of Inislounaght. The ruins of Garryntemple monastery survive, beside what is the likely location of the ODonel homestead.

24 Philip O'Connell, "Dr. James Louis O'Donnell (1737-1811), First Bishop of Newfoundland" *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Series 5, 103 (1965), pp. 308-324. References to ODonel being born "at Knocklofty", as in Howley, are incorrect since that townland was, and remains, an estate with no tenant farms. Knocklofty was given as a place of origin for immigrants in Newfoundland.

25 Title Applotment Book, Garryntemple, Parish of Inislounaght, County Tipperary, 1826; Ordnance Survey of Ireland: Garryntemple, Tipperary; 1837. Special thanks to Fr. Michael Ryan, Clonmel, for information collected in Garryntemple on the ODonels and the Lambs.

Michael ODonel apparently had sufficient funds and connections to provide private tutoring for two of his sons and to send them to Limerick city for higher education. Both opted for the Franciscan order. It is possible that a kinsman was already a friar, or perhaps the ODonels were in contact with the Franciscans at St. Mary's in Irishtown, Clonmel. Enrolment in Rome was a significant social advance, marking the ODonels as a family of considerable status.

Migration to Newfoundland

Between mid March and late April, 1784, some thirty vessels cleared Waterford harbour with servants and provisions for the transatlantic fishery. Roughly 20 of these ships came from the south west of England; the rest were local. They carried more than 3000 migrants, almost all young male Catholic labourers. Almost all came from the city of Waterford and its hinterland extending 20-30 miles around the port. Clonmel and the parishes nearby in ODonel's neighbourhood were source areas, on the western fringes of this distinctive migration basin. Writing from Waterford that January, ODonel informed bishop Talbot that "the bulk of the inhabitants of Newfoundland are ignorant labouring men from this neighbourhood...[Newfoundland] has been the general haunt of many people those 40 years." Elsewhere ODonel was careful to point out that it was the principal traders and [Catholic] inhabitants (i.e. settlers) of St. John's who requested the mission. Although a minority, they were the core group in the successful creation of a church. ODonel's characterisation of the Irish population was still harsh, perhaps deliberately so to persuade Talbot and the colonial administration that he be given full control and not allow unauthorised priests to challenge his hegemony.

In a letter of recommendation to Talbot, Bishop William Egan was also careful to note that it was "the Catholic merchants and settlers of Newfoundland" who had initiated the request for the formation of a mission. He could claim to know a good deal about them. Born in Waterford, educated at the Irish College in Seville, Egan belonged to an extended family long familiar with the Irish-Newfoundland trade. His sister was the wife of Philip Long, one of Waterford's leading Catholic merchants with a far flung overseas commission trade that included Newfoundland. John Cummins, mentioned above, was the family's agent in St. John's. Long's son-in-law, Robert Eustace of Waterford, was a merchant in Renew's. Three of Long's own sons were also merchants, most notably Peter (1741-), the eldest, who succeeded his father in 1774 as head of the family firm. William Egan was his godfather. Eight years prior to ODonel's appointment, Peter Long attempted to extend the merchant fishery to the Canadian mainland:

Hourly expected to Peter Long the *Lord North* 200 tons for Chaleur Bay. Mr. Long intends to ship there a number of good fishermen (boatkeepers, midshipmen, foreshipmen) and a number of good salmon fishermen. The inhabitants of Chaleur Bay are chiefly French Canadians. All religions are tolerated. There is a resident Roman Catholic clergy. The climate is wholesome and the region has an extensive fisheries and trade. For freight and passage apply to Peter Long, The Quay, Waterford.²⁶

Not all merchants were as concerned with the spiritual as well as the material welfare of Irish migrants but Long's close ties to Bishop Egan and some of Waterford's Catholic priests help explain the philosophy.

Egan was appointed pastor of Clonmel in 1752 and was based in Irishtown. For more than forty years he was assisted there by the Franciscans. Because of their clerical connections in the neighbourhood, and big farmer status, he would have known the ODonels well. Egan also informed Talbot that ODonel had the support of James Butler, the powerful and progressive archbishop of Cashel. These prelates were amongst ODonel's main mentors. They played a major role in directing his mission. No other Irish Catholic missionary in North America enjoyed a network of support, clerical and lay, out of eighteenth-century Ireland like James Louis ODonel.

A month or so after the fishing servants had cleared for Newfoundland, ODonel departed for St. John's. It is not clear if he did so directly from Waterford on one of the several sack ships transporting more supplies, or through a port in southern England. He arrived in St. John's early in July. It was still little more than a fishing station with a mere 250 families, the majority now Catholics. So were the male servants who, winter and summer, accounted for 2/3 to 3/4 of the total population.²⁷ Considering that he was the first authorised Catholic clergyman resident in St. John's, and that at least initially he laboured virtually alone, ODonel had work to do.

Building a Chapel

The chapel was the core of the Tridentine church and a surge of chapel building occurred in ODonel's homeland in the late eighteenth century. Most new constructions at home were replacements for humble one-storey thatched "penal" or "barn" chapels described in some detail by Kevin Whelan for Tipperary.²⁸

26 23 February, 1776, *Finn's Leinster Journal*, Kilkenny. Genealogical data came primarily from the Waterford Roman Catholic registers 1730-1780.

27 "...there are about 250 families in St. John's, and about 2000 people, the greatest part of whom are Irish Papists." Rev. Edward Langman, *St. John's, SPC, 1783*. "By far the greater number of the inhabitants of St. John's are Irish Roman Catholics." Rev. Walter Price, *St. John's, SPC, 1786*. The governor's return for St. John's in 1786 records only 1532 inhabitants in winter, 72% of whom were Catholic. Just under 2000 were reported arriving in the harbour that spring. Two-thirds of these were also Irish. CO194/21 (1786), p. 48.

28 Kevin Whelan, 1985, 215-255.

Whether recently built or not, chapels in southeast Ireland were embedded in parishes that were often centuries old—the civil parishes—although changing demographics could result in the subdivision or merging of these medieval units. The process of parish formation in Newfoundland began *de novo* with ODonel. Four parishes, each with a chapel and resident priest, were established in the first five years. They reflected the geography of Irish settlement which was primarily concentrated on the Avalon Peninsula.

The first step towards the Tridentine model of priest, chapel, and parish was the acquisition of land in a strategic location relevant to the Catholic congregation. Three months after his arrival, ODonel secured a lease of around 3/4 of an acre in what later became Henry Street, between Duckworth and Gower. St. John's harbour contained close to a mile of waterfront backed by two irregular paths, lower and upper, with myriad connecting lanes or walkways. Both English and Irish were dispersed irregularly along this mile-long crescent. (Mannion 2000) ODonel's site was up from the congested waterfront, on the edge of settlement, strategically placed midway along this arc:

John Rogers, captain in H.M., late Newfoundland Regiment leases to Rev. James ODonel, Andrew Mullowney, Garret Quigly, William Burke, Edward Cannon and Luke Maddock, all of St. John's, Gentlemen, his farms, dwelling house and messuage, all the linnies and outhouses, two small gardens, the cherry garden, and courtyard before the door commonly called Parson Langman's, lately occupied by John Rogers, now let to Rev. ODonel, together with all ways, paths, passages to the same tenement and messuage. The grantees to maintain, repair and uphold the property. For 99 years at £28 per annum, renewable for a further 99 years at the same rent.

Witnesses: John Cummins, John Harris, John Rogers, James ODonel and other lessors. 18 October, 1784. (Mannion 2000)²⁹

The terms of tenure and the landscape content contain an interesting mix of Old and New World elements. Chapel sites in early modern Ireland were usually leased or donated by liberal landlords, by big farmers, or merchants and traders in the towns. Chapel construction and maintenance were funded by the Catholic middle class. St. Mary's chapel in Irishtown, Clonmel, lies closest to ODonel's family tradition, and is representative of homeland experience. In sharp contrast to frontier beginnings across the Atlantic, southeast Irish parishes were products of a

²⁹ 18 October, 1784, GN2/1/A/10, p. 106. The tenement or messuage measured 183' on the north, 159' on the south, 81' on the east, and 113' on the west. It is currently the site of the Roman Catholic Star of the Sea Hall which replaced the old chapel.

long and tortuous evolution. St. Mary's in Clonmel had its origins in the thirteenth century, with the foundation of a Franciscan friary inside the walled town. It was suppressed in 1540, and a century or so later the friars and other priests were banished from the municipality. Largely under the patronage of the Brennocks, a family of apothecaries, well-to-do and Catholic, a thatched chapel was established in Irishtown, in the western suburbs, "without" the walls. Thomas Hennessey, a Jesuit and native of Clonmel, served as pastor from 1712-1752. (Power)³⁰ The humble thatched chapel or "mass house" in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century was replaced with a larger slated structure by 1730. As the Catholic population expanded, the chapel was improved. Charles Smith could report in 1746 that "the Romanists have a very neat chapel at Clonmel, splendidly rebuilt a few years ago." In contrast to St. John's, the lease from the Corporation was a mere 20/- per annum, but for 31 years only, the maximum for Catholic tenants up to 1778. ODonel's lease, for 99 years and renewable at a fixed rent, reflected the new dispensation, part of the reform package that included liberty of conscience for Catholics. Both in Clonmel and in St. John's, chapels and ancillary structures and the lands on which they stood were financed by leading Catholic inhabitants. The five "gentlemen" cited in the lease of 1784 were year-round residents of St. John's. All five were natives of southeast Ireland, were literate, were married, and had children. Quigley was a merchant, Maddock a watchmaker, Cannon a stone mason, brick maker and publican, Maloney a clerk in the garrison, and Burke probably a planter. All but Maloney are on the list of householders in St. John's in September, 1780.³¹

Amongst the several leading inhabitants supporting ODonel's church, Luke Maddock (1748-1813) was pivotal. A native of Waterford, Maddock belonged to one of the foremost watchmaking families in southeast Ireland. At least five of his kinsmen carried on the trade in Waterford; another, also named Luke, was a watchmaker in New Ross, and a seventh member of the clan set up in Carrick-on-Suir.³² Most of their names appear in the Catholic registers of Waterford through the eighteenth century. Two of the family, both watchmakers, took the oath in Waterford in 1775. Luke Maddock settled in St. John's around 1770. A watch by him, assembled 1771-1772 in St. John's and numbered 32 is on display at the

³⁰ William P. Burke; www.parishpeterandpaul.net/franciscanfriary.

³¹ September, 1780, GN2/1/A/9, pp. 67-75, GN2/1A/9, List of Householders, St. John's. See also St. John's Anglican Registers, 1760-1800; 16 December, 1784, Principal Inhabitants, St. John's, CO 194/35, 1784, p. 276; Nominal Census for St. John's, 1795. GN 1/13; List of Volunteers, St. John's Regiment, 1794-1796, CO 194/39 (1796); Raymonde Gauthier, Edward Cannon, DCB V (1983), pp.139-40.

³² Registry of Deeds, Henrietta St., Dublin, 253610 (1767), 287136 (1771), 49716 (1795), 551524 (1802); Waterford Chronicle, 29 October, 14 December, 1771; Finn's Leinster Journal, 7 November, 1794; Richard Lucas, A General Directory of the Kingdom of Ireland II (Dublin, 1788), pp. 79-84.

Newfoundland Museum. An identical watch was produced in Waterford by William Maddock in 1783 and is on display at the Waterford Museum.³³ Luke Maddock's background was similar to that of the Brennock family in Clonmel who were given special status as apothecaries, another highly skilled craft, and allowed to live and work "within the walls" by the Protestant corporation. They took the lead in sustaining the chapel and clergy in Irishtown for more than a century. O'Donel and his family would be familiar with their contribution. By the time O'Donel arrived in St. John's, Luke Maddock had graduated to the status of trader, and by 1788 was a shipowning merchant primarily in the Waterford trade. Religious material was sent through William Bolan, a Waterford merchant and agent, to Maddock in St. John's as part of his regular shipments.

Little is known of the building process or architectural detail of O'Donel's chapel. Almost certainly the funding came from the local Catholic congregation:

I have built here a handsome chapel at the cost of a thousand guineas. It exceeds all other buildings on this island not only in size but also in adornment and elegance; within two years I hope this building will be free from all outstanding debt. There are only six Catholic merchants on the whole island; the rest are truly poor people who work continuously to earn their bread, but generous beyond their means as is clear from the chapel built to the highest admiration of the Protestants." [To Rome, 1785]

O'Donel's perceptions of Irish society in late-eighteenth century Newfoundland are always interesting. A detailed examination of merchant origins supports his view that Catholic merchant houses were few. Large shipowning firms engaged in overseas commerce were almost entirely English. There are no Irish Catholic merchants in the extensive list of householders for St. John's in 1780, and only five out of 45 in the census of 1795. But neither were the Irish uniformly poor labourers. Close to half of the 320 heads of households named in 1780 were Irish. All of them had property and the majority kept servants. There is no comprehensive census of occupations for the port until 1795. By then the Irish totally dominated the retail trades and the most popular crafts: publicans, shopkeepers, house carpenters, coopers, and tailors. They also outnumbered the English in less prominent crafts: blacksmiths, bakers, butchers, shoemakers. Most of these trades, engaging close to 100 Catholic heads of household, were humble and required little capital to enter. But most heads employed servants and they were owners of their operation, if not

33 Nominal Census of St. John's, 1795, Luke Maddock, 24 years in Newfoundland. My thanks to Mark Ferguson, Curator of History, The Rooms, St. John's, and Eamonn McEneaney, Director, Waterford Museum of Treasures, for details on the watches.

their premises. They ranked with their peers in Waterford, New Ross, Carrick-on-Suir, and Clonmel. Kevin Whelan has demonstrated the importance of urban artisans in funding the revitalised Catholic Church in southeast Ireland. St. John's, Harbour Grace, Placentia and Ferryland were extensions of homeland experience.

ODonel was correct about the sparsity of Catholic merchants, and many Irish families were "truly poor, earning their bread by the sweat of their brow." Close to 2/3 of the 390 Catholic heads of households in St. John's were fishermen and shoremen in 1795. Most were members of labouring families, working for English planters, boatkeepers and especially merchants. A minority had graduated to operating on shares or on their own account; even these were mostly tenants, renting dwellings and work spaces. It was the sheer volume of Catholic settlement in St. John's and the Avalon that gave ODonel and his fellow priests their dramatic start. From the outset, they had the support of liberal Protestants. Governor Campbell, as noted, favoured ODonel. He was a guest at ODonel's table and ODonel dined with him and his officers. Few priests in southeast Ireland could claim such intimacy with an official of this class. The cod economy had produced a very different type of society. It was dominated by single young men, mostly Catholics. They posed significant social problems for the small British administration. Violence was an ever-present threat, especially in winter and especially in St. John's where unemployed Irish servants gathered each fall to seek relief, swelling the numbers already there. Lacking leadership and in the absence of any social institution to care for them, an established Catholic Church with resident clergy were seen as a way of combating potential lawlessness. It worked. In his first year ODonel calmed an angry Irish mob that had attacked the congregational chapel or meeting house in St. John's. Its minister, John Jones, had allegedly preached a sermon there critical of Catholics. It is an early manifestation of ODonel's ecumenism, and his commitment to establishing good relations between English and Irish in Newfoundland. After just one winter Governor Campbell declared that ODonel had done more for the cause of peace and tranquillity in St. John's than any governor could hope to achieve in a term.

The nature and extent of ODonel's contacts with the great mass of transient Irish male servants remain unknown. Whenever he singled the migrants out for commentary, he was usually derogatory. Like the labouring poor in his homeland, they contributed little to the creation of a church. It is unlikely that they participated in religious worship in any regular way, although some English merchants argued otherwise. Certainly they were in a poor position to contribute financially to ODonel's mission. His focus was on Catholic settlers, particularly

members of families. Their numbers increased dramatically in St. John's and the Avalon during the first decade of O'Donel's tenure. He preached three times every Sunday in St. John's. Bishop Fleming later reported the chapel could accommodate 900 persons comfortably and close to twice that number when packed in. We know nothing of attendance but a full chapel on Sundays would mean a substantial congregation. O'Donel did note that "their attention to chapel duties surpasses all that I've seen at home."

Sunday masses, sermons, confession, communion, baptism, confirmation, marriage, and administering the last rites represented the core of O'Donel's religious duties. In St. John's he had "70 communicants" who lived there year-round and "were well trained in religion." It exceeded the number of Anglican communicants, despite the presence of a resident minister since 1752. Yet the number of Catholic communicants was only a small fraction of the total community, one member on average from every 2-3 Irish families. Either the rules for admission were strict, or people were indifferent. Catechists were trained to instruct inhabitants through the winter in nearby harbours. O'Donel also brought a schoolmaster out from Waterford to set up a Catholic school. It is likely that transient teachers from Ireland operated sporadically in St. John's since Rev. Peaseley's time. There were three teachers listed as heads of households in St. John's in 1795. Two were schoolmasters, one a school mistress. All three were Catholic. Although the dissenting minister John James, and the Anglican Walter Price both attempted to set up a school, nothing lasting developed. In St. John's the Protestant middle class was small. Most merchants lived in England and were represented by agents, usually single young men who did not stay. It is something of an irony that an established church, enjoying official support, struggled in St. John's and elsewhere while a church still not fully free grew.

A major part of Irish Tridentine reform was the keeping of parish records. It was implemented by O'Donel and his clergy from the outset. "Registers are kept according to the standard of strict Roman Ritual." O'Donel informed the Vatican late in 1785. Nominal lists do not survive for the first sixteen years of the Newfoundland mission—except for a handful of marriages in St. John's—but a summary of the first five years was dispatched to home and reveals a busy mission:

	Marriages	Baptisms	Fall 1784-Fall 1789
St. John's	142	637	
Harbour Grace	97	499	
Placentia	no data due to contrary winds, but about the same as St. John's		

Newfoundland was directly under the jurisdiction of the Vatican. But much of ODonel's correspondence continued to be with southeast Ireland. In 1785 John Troy (1739-1823), bishop of Ossory since 1776, sent ODonel decrees from Rome awarding him "full faculties." They had been conferred informally already by Bishop Egan. Troy replaced Egan as ODonel's main correspondent and mentor. The switch may have been initiated by ODonel. He complained in his first year that Egan assumed Newfoundland would be an extension of the diocese of Waterford and Lismore, based on reports that the great majority of Irish migrants came from there. ODonel correctly pointed out that just as many came from the dioceses of Ossory, Ferns and even Cloyne in southeast Cork. This debate on diocesan geography illustrates the intimacy of contact with the homeland. Apart from Troy, ODonel maintained a regular correspondence with Francis Phelan, his successor as Prior in Johnstown. Religious materials were shipped yearly from Dublin through Waterford using a mercantile agent and local sea captains. Fr. Phelan used the term "Irishman" and "Englishman" to distinguish vessels leaving Waterford for Newfoundland, and had a clear sense of the geography of migration.

British Responses

Freedom of religion "for Papists" drew mixed reactions from Protestants in England and in Newfoundland. Governor Campbell's enthusiasm was not matched by his immediate successors, although some were more tolerant than others. Most English merchants had little interest in Irish Catholicism unless it got in the way of their commercial ventures. Little is known of the attitudes of ordinary Protestants of English birth or descent. Reports of mass conversion are greatly exaggerated. There were exceptions, but Catholics and Protestants remained respectfully apart. Our best evidence of interdenominational harmony or hostility comes from the clergy themselves.

Within four months of ODonel's arrival, Walter Price, recently appointed Anglican minister, communicated his concerns to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in London. He claimed the priests, taking advantage of his old age, "have been very successful in their artifices and have made many adherents." Noting that ODonel brought out a schoolmaster, Price also alleged that "there are sundry Popish Schools in the Harbour; and Tracts and Catechisms of that Church are very plentifully dispersed among the people."³⁴ Prices' hostility tested ODonel's conciliatory stance:

³⁴ 25 October, 1785, Rev. Walter Price to SPG, C/Can 1, NO. 69.

I reached this port on the 4th of July last year where the most Excellent Governor of the Island not only greeted me in the most kindly fashion but even protected me from the traps of a Protestant Minister who contrived with all his power for my exile. This pseudo-minister did not fear to say to the military officials and to the magistrate that England now had something it should fear, namely lest the whole island would shortly become Catholic, and consequently in the event of a future war, would be betrayed by me and mine to the French.

Clearly angered by Prices' errors and exaggeration, it was a rare display of intemperate language for ODonel and stands in contrast to his generous response and exchanges with John Jones earlier that year. Price had been recruited at about the same time and in much the same way as ODonel. A curate in Dartmouth, the West Country equivalent of Waterford in St. John's, Price was recommended in 1783 by the merchants and traders of Dartmouth engaged in the Newfoundland trade. In contrast to ODonel, who was funded by his flock and had to found a church, Price inherited one, and he was paid a salary by the Society. Like ODonel, Price arrived in St. John's in 1784. Despite its established status, the Anglican mission was neglected and struggling. Rev. Langman, dismissed for ineptitude, left a church recently rebuilt but poorly furnished. There was no school, and fewer than forty communicants. Relations between the two church leaders remained cool, and to some extent extended to the two congregations. Ethnic distinctions became more marked than before. They were reinforced by conservative commodores, magistrates, and other officials who shared Price's perceptions of the Irish. A naval surrogate, Edward Pellew "a most bitter enemy to Roman Catholics" in ODonel's words had "publicly denounced Pope, Popery, Priests, & Priestcraft" at the court house in St. John's. He urged Governor Elliot to banish all priests. The outburst came following a riot in Ferryland between two Irish factions, one supporting an unauthorised priest opposed to ODonel. Elliot was dissuaded from such draconian action, won over by ODonel's reasoning and the advice of Aaron Graham, an enlightened civil servant.

The principal arguments against ODonel's church were economic and social, not doctrinal. A powerful Poole merchant, Benjamin Lester, took a hard line:

...it is generally known that a great number of our servants are Roman Catholics from Ireland who, when they could find time, were content to go to the Episcopal churches. The summer before last Admiral Campbell, by the King's order, gave permission for a priest to be sent for. Accordingly, last summer one arrived in St. John's and this winter a

chapel built for their worship. [It is] the worst policy ever adopted, for instead of attending to cure the fish on Sunday as usual (and necessary) they now refuse, allegedly they must attend mass. Of course, the fish is, and often will be injured for want of attention when the weather calls for it. Should this example extend itself to the outports where the fishery is more considerable I know not what the event may be. Besides, in war, the priest can even manage the Irish as he pleases, by this we may ultimately lose the Island...particularly as the present priest was during the last war Chaplain to a French regiment and of course I suppose continues to receive some kind of pay from the French King.³⁵

In a letter to the Board of Trade, Captain Lumdaire noted in this connection an increase "in the harbour of St. John's... there are too many buildings not useful to the fishery...little sheds...built by the Waterford people." Whenever they obstructed access to the waterfront they were removed on instruction from the governor.

Official British opposition to Irish Catholic settlement peaked in 1790. In response to a request from the Catholic inhabitants of Ferryland "for leave to build a chappell in that district" Governor Milbanke informed ODonel:

...far from feeling disposed to allow an increase of places of religious worship to the Roman Catholics of this island he very seriously intends, next year, to lay those already established under particular restrictions. Mr. ODonel must be reasonable that it is not in the interest of Great Britain to encourage people to winter in Newfoundland, and he cannot be ignorant that many of the lower orders of those who now stay would go home for at least once in two or three years, and the Governor has been misinformed of Mr. ODonel, instead of advising their return to Ireland, does not rather encourage them to winter in this country.³⁶

Milbanke departed St. John's before ODonel had an opportunity to plead his case. He enclosed a copy of the Ferryland memorial, and the governor's reply, in a letter to Troy in Dublin "...our numerous and increasing congregations" he explained "have brought the watchful eye of the enemies of our profession upon us...the country is not supposed by law to be inhabited except in summer."

35 27 December, 1784, Memorandum of Benjamin Lester to Francis Baring, Misc. Box 2021/9, Lester Papers, pp. 115-118; 14 May, 1785; CO. 194/36, p. 13). See also "Observations on Newfoundland," Board of Trade, London, 6/89 (1786), pp. 74, 78: "The Irish, predominantly Catholic, never bothered about religion till two years ago when [they got] permission to build a chapel at St. John's and sent for a priest. . . he is now here and has a large congregation. This can pose problems for the fishery as the Irish will not or are very reluctant to work on Sunday." The other extreme were reprimands for Irish who did work on Sunday.

36 2 November, 1790, GN2/1/A/12, p. 102, Governor Mark Milbanke, St. John's, to ODonel.

O'Donel's mission, and that of other churches, was based primarily on year-round settlement, particularly families. Anti-settlement legislation was archaic and outmoded, used mainly to limit the numbers of overwintering male servants. O'Donel dismissed the governor's claim that the Irish servants would, in the absence of a church and priests, choose to go home every two or three years for confession. They were not, he implied, sufficiently instructed in concepts of penance and absolution to consider it. Church or no church, the Irish would overwinter in numbers. O'Donel felt that on balance the presence of a church did influence Irish migrations to Newfoundland: "...many of those hardy fellows would never obtain their parents' consent to cross the seas if they had not the consoling prospect of the presence of a clergymen, in case of death or sickness..." It does beg the question why so many departed Ireland yearly prior to the formal establishment of a Catholic Church.

Consolidation and Expansion, 1791 – 1800

The final decade of the eighteenth century witnessed the virtual conclusion of a lengthy transition from a migratory to a resident fishery. Fewer and fewer spring migrants went home. Nowhere was it more evident than in the dramatic increase in the number of families, particularly in St. John's. During the first decade of O'Donel's mission the number of families in the town more than doubled. The increase, moreover, was disproportionately Irish. Close to 600 families were recorded in 1795, over 2/3 of them Catholic. Only a small minority of household heads—some 10%—were native born. It was not, however, primarily an immigrant society. Women and children accounted for half the winter population, and the great majority were Newfoundlanders. Unattached single young men remained the leading category, but by 1795 most were committed to setting down and marrying or moving to the mainland.

Official opposition to settlement, as expressed, for example, by Governor Milbanke, faded in the face of new demographic realities. A more enlightened administration succeeded. Governor King and chief justice Reeves supported O'Donel's mission. "Our present governor and the Judge Advocate have made very solemn profession of friendship to me." O'Donel informed Troy in 1792 "the former returned me publick thanks at his own table for the unremitting pains I've taken those 8 years in keeping the rabble of the place amenable to the laws..." Fr. Ewer was appointed resident priest in Ferryland. He built a house and a neat chapel there. It was the fourth and final Catholic parish centre established on the island during O'Donel's stay.

In 1794 the clergy and some leading Catholic inhabitants of the four Avalon parishes petitioned Rome to elevate ODonel to the episcopate. There were then only two Catholic bishops in North America, in Quebec and in Baltimore. It is a measure of the success of ODonel and particularly a reflection of the strong links that bound him, his fellow priests, and many members of his flock to their Irish homeland. Quebec was French, Maryland originally English albeit with a growing complement of Catholic Irish immigrants, particularly in Baltimore. Newfoundland's Catholics were almost entirely Irish in origin. Wherever the Irish came to dominate in eastern Canada, ODonel's church served as a precedent for parish formation and religious culture.

Written in Latin, the memorial of 1794 began by citing the precedent of John Carroll (1735-1815) of Baltimore, recently appointed as the first Catholic bishop in Anglo-America. It was sent by ODonel to Troy through William Coman, a Waterford merchant returning home from St. John's for the winter:

The bearer Mr. Coman as a good classical scholar is the gentleman who copied off the Memorial and procured me the different subscriptions. He has been the only friend who supported Father Ewer on his arrival in Ferryland [1789] tho very much to his own disadvantage as he thereby incurred the displeasure of Power's profligate party, and consequently lost their custom; however he took Mr. Ewer into his house, dieted, lodged and protected him at every risk, but that of a good conscience. He has advanced 27 guineas towards building the chappel of Saint John's; he has made a tour of the United States of America, France & Italy and has had an audience of Cardinal Antonelly at Rome; but meeting with some disappointments in his own trade, he is now manager in chief of the most extensive business in this island. I beg leave to introduce him to your grace as a sincere friend to our holy religion, a zealous abbetor of our priveledges, and a generous supporter of our interest.

Coman had close family ties to Protestant families in Waterford with branches in Ferryland and in St. John's: Keith, Edwards, Rommey, and Ludwig.³⁷ Presented by ODonel in 1799 as "a most zealous Catholic" with a son at the seminary in Quebec, Coman himself may have been Protestant in 1794. Whatever his religious background, he typified the emerging Irish middle class support for a maturing Catholic mission in Newfoundland. For a decade or more the Irish merchants,

³⁷ Registry of Deeds, Dublin, 345498 (1782), 60115 (1787), 50386 (1796), 523574 (1800); 30 October, 1787, Ferryland Court Records; 1-13 October, 1788 GN2/1/11, pp. 288, 405; Lucas, *Directory of Waterford, 1788*; 28 March, 1794 CO 194/23, p. 403; 12 October, 1795 GN2/1/A12, pp. 357-358; 18 July, 1821, *Freeman's Journal*, Dublin.

traders, artisans and planters, particularly those with families in Newfoundland, provided the essential financial and moral support for priest and chapel.

There were 21 signatures to the memorial of 1794 (Table 1). Included were the three priests brought out or sent to O'Donel. All three were born in Ireland. Only Ewer came from outside the southeast, and could not speak Irish. Two were Franciscans, the other a Dominican. Patrick Phelan arrived with O'Donel and established the chapel in Harbour Grace. Both men were friars in Johnstown in 1784. Francis Phelan was Prior. These Phelans may have been kin, part of a Waterford clerical family. Certainly the friary at Johnstown was at the core of O'Donel's Newfoundland mission. Francis Phelan was the main clerical contact in Waterford, and was succeeded as Prior in 1795 by John Phelan who was subsequently appointed to succeed Edmund Burke at Placentia. A native of Fethard, Tipperary, Burke was trained in Seville and was with the small Dominican community in Waterford in 1785 when recommended to O'Donel by Bishop Egan. Ewer came from outside this close-knit Waterford network. But like O'Donel he was trained at St. Isidore's and taught theology there and in Prague before returning to Dublin. He was Prior in the parish of Clane, Kildare, when he volunteered for the Newfoundland mission.³⁸

Ten of the eighteen laymen signing the memorial were residents of St. John's. They were representative of the expanding Catholic middle class there. Few had yet advanced to the status of merchant and shipowner. Some were agents for English houses, or clerks and accountants; others were publicans, shopkeepers and artisans who worked on their own account. There were more than 100 Catholic heads of household with men servants in St. John's in 1794. Some of those signing—Maddock, Ryan, Shea, Mara, Duggan—represented upwardly mobile families who were lifelong supporters of O'Donel and his church. They appear, for example, as founder members of the Benevolent Irish Society in 1806.

At least four of the petitioners—Duggan, Delaney, Bulger and Power—worked for the military at Fort William or Fort Townsend. It is a reminder not just of Irish middle class loyalty, but the acceptance of Catholics in the garrison. Catholics dominated the volunteer regiments established in St. John's at the outset of the Napoleonic Wars. No doubt there were motivations other than feelings of loyalty amongst the rank and file—cash payments, food, clothes, shelter in winter—but typically O'Donel emphasised politics and religion:

³⁸ Raymond J. Lahey, "Edmund Burke" DCB VI, pp.122-23, "Thomas Ewer" DCB VI, pp. 243-47; Hugh Fenning, *The Waterford Dominicans 1226-1990* (Waterford: Dominican Community), p. 26; Thomas S. Flynn, *The Dominicans of Rosbercon (1267-c.1800)* (Dublin, 1981), pp. 31-32); *The Newfoundlander*, 14 February, 7 March, 1833; *Conception Bay Mercury*, 15 February, 1833; *Carbonear Star*, 27 February, 1833.

We had 300 French prisoners here during the summer, their officers were at liberty. I must own I did not like to see them coming every Sunday to my chappel with large emblems of infidelity and rebellion plastered on their hats; it was much more pleasing to see 3 companies of our volunteers headed by their Protestant officers with fifes and drums coming to the chappel to be instructed in the duties of Religion & Loyalty.

The remaining petitioners were supporters of their parish priests in Harbour Grace, Ferryland, and Placentia. Four were established outharbour merchants, and three were planters. These were the traditional occupations of the middle class outside St. John's. Planters were the backbone of Newfoundland society for two centuries, but the great majority were Protestant. ODonel lamented the lack of Irish planters north of Conception Bay, for example, too few to found and maintain a church. Fr. Phelan ministered to the servants in Trinity Bay and northwards, and Fr. Burke was engaged in similar missions in west Placentia Bay, Burin, and beyond. No parishes or chapels were established in these regions until after ODonel's time.

Exactly one year after initial submission from St. John's, the memorial was approved by the Vatican. ODonel was appointed vicar apostolic. Baltimore or Quebec were nominated as the venues for consecration. Partly because of the Napoleonic war, Quebec was chosen and in September 1796 ODonel became the third Roman Catholic bishop in North America, and the first native of Ireland. It was one of the most striking accomplishments in Newfoundland's eventful eighteenth-century cultural history. Geography, ethnicity and demography were important factors, but in the end ODonel's personality was decisive. On the eve of his departure from Quebec, 62 of the leading Protestant inhabitants and merchants in St. John's summarised his contribution in a formal address:

Permit us to take this opportunity of assuring you our good and sincere wishes for your safety and happy return, and how sensible we are of the many obligations we lie under for your very steady and indefatigable perseverance in attending to regulating with such address the morals of much the greater part of this community...we are not strangers to the many difficulties with which you have arisen time to time been obliged to encounter even at the risk of your life, in regularly visiting the different outports within your reach and in performing with cheerfulness and alacrity those functions from whence have arisen so many advantages to the inhabitants of this Island.³⁹

³⁹ Lahey, ODonel, 24.

A decline in the volume of seasonal migrants from Ireland during the last decade of the eighteenth century following the collapse of the banks fishery, and the advent of war, meant a reduction in the number of transient unemployed servants overwintering. Increasingly the nuclear family replaced the old Protestant planter and merchant fishing units, and artisans in service set up on their own account. These fundamental changes favoured the growth of a Catholic Church. They empowered O'Donel, making him more than a spiritual leader in the absence of Catholics in government. An address of thanks from the administration in St. John's accompanied that of the Protestant planters and merchants. O'Donel's proposed elevation to the episcopacy, moreover, had been approved by the colonial office in London. Official trust was not misplaced. A meeting amongst Catholic soldiers in the garrison in 1800 caused panic in St. John's; the bishop's intervention averted what may have escalated into a serious conflict. O'Donel's ardent loyalty was not unanimously supported by the Irish, particularly in retrospect, but at the time he had the approval of most of his flock. (Mannion 4)

If the consecration at Quebec marked a milestone in O'Donel's career, and the Newfoundland mission, the immediate aftermath was disappointing. Returning to St. John's in October, 1796, O'Donel was informed "that the whole island had been taken by the French." He returned to Quebec and set sail for Halifax. This time a storm forced the vessel off-course, and a frightened shipmaster made for Guernsey in the Channel Islands. From there O'Donel made his way to a port in southern England, proceeded by coach to Milford Haven in south Wales, and thence to Waterford. He later claimed more than £500 of his belongings had been taken by the French. Episcopal regalia, including a mitre, crozier, vestments, oil stocks, pixes, the certificate of consecration, clothes and other personal effects were shipped separately in a trunk to Bristol. The experience was a lesson on the hazards of maritime travel, particularly in wartime.

O'Donel, "amply requited by the singular attention of my friends" in Waterford, presumably stayed with the Franciscans there. He also travelled to Clonmel and met with family there. In letters to Troy the new bishop painted a bleak picture of Newfoundland. Because of French depredations, and the closure of Spanish and Italian markets, the cod fishery had been a disaster. Planters were moving en masse to the mainland. As a consequence "no servants will be employed and as it is on them the clergy solely depend for subsistence, they must either quit or starve." O'Donel complained of his age, his health, the stormy Atlantic, and the dreadful French. He claimed that he "suffered as much in mind and body as any human frame could bare." Should Troy so recommend, he would "face the horrors of a

French Prison together with the dangers to the sea" in an attempt to rejoin his flock. But he would much prefer a parish in his native diocese. Bishop Egan had recently died, and so it was rumoured that Clonmel may be vacant:

It is supposed here Mr. Hussey [the new bishop of Waterford and Lismore] will not keep the Parish of Clonmel nor be a constant resident in his Diocese; in that case I'd wish to become his assistant as knowing the Parish and Dioscesans well. This is what I meant in my letter to your grace...

Reports on Newfoundland, whether originating primarily with ODonel or not, were wild exaggerations. The French had made only one incursion, at Bay Bulls, during the entire war. Markets reopened and the resident fishery inshore expanded as never before. Servants were not the backbone of the church. There was still poverty, particularly amongst Irish families in an increasingly congested St. John's. It was no greater, however, than in Waterford, or indeed Clonmel. ODonel's pessimism was temporary. In May he sailed for Placentia, having spent "six of the most satisfactory months of my life" in the homeland. He was not to return for a decade.

Apart from the garrison mutiny, which the bishop blamed on Irish soldiers, not his flock, the final decade of his mission in Newfoundland was peaceful and constructive. The parish of St. John's experienced unprecedented growth. There were over 5,500 inhabitants in the town alone by 1805, 62% of them Catholics.⁴⁰ Irish immigrants and their offspring came to dominate Petty Harbour, Torbay, Portugal Cove and Bell Isle. New Catholic communities were being established in other coves within the parish. Between 1803-1807, the first five years of fairly complete registers, close to 250 marriages and 700 baptisms were recorded. While not on par with, say, Clonmel, St. John's was however a substantial parish. It appears that until 1802 the bishop toiled alone. In 1795 his household consisted of himself and two male servants. He recruited a fellow Franciscan, John Phelan, from Johnstown in Waterford to replace Fr. Burke at Placentia in 1798, and Ambrose Fitzpatrick for Patrick Phelan of Harbour Grace. A shortage of priests in his home diocese, and indeed in southeast Ireland generally, posed major recruitment problems for ODonel. Typically, he turned to members of his own family in Tipperary. In the first year of his mission, ODonel had enlisted his brother Michael, a Franciscan, for Newfoundland. Michael actually sailed for St. John's but the vessel was blown back and he did not attempt the crossing again. Now the bishop

⁴⁰ 29 April, 1806, CO 194/45.

persuaded a nephew, Michael (1777-1832) to come to St. John's. His father David ODonel, a farmer in Tullaghmelan, near Knocklofty demesne, died in 1789 but left money for his son's education (Fig. 1). He went to school "with priests" in Waterford, and then for a year to the new seminary in Maynooth, with the intention of serving as a secular in his home diocese. ODonel persuaded the bishop of Waterford to release his nephew on loan for the Newfoundland mission. Following further studies at the seminary in Quebec, funded by his uncle, Michael ODonel was ordained and served as assistant pastor in St. John's from 1802-1806. A second nephew, whom the bishop met on his visit home in 1797, was also recruited:

I have a very fine nephew at home who is now an orphan, and a very good figurist and bookkeeper, writes a very neat hand and is as complete an English scholar as any of his age in the Province of Munster; perhaps...you could get his diet and schooling in the seminary of Mount Real for 2 or 3 years by teaching the English language, arithmetick and bookkeeping...the boy is intended for the church and is now learning the Latin language...I've got great accounts of his abilities from his professors...

Now it is time I should introduce my other nephew Michael Sullivan to you. I recommend him to your Patronage, he is an orphan but can't be deemed fully so whilst under your paternal care. He is witty and mild and very capable of teaching the English grammar...He understands...arithmetick, bookkeeping, navigation and has a good notion of Algebra. He was only 9 months together learning Latin and still translates that tongue into English tolerably well...Be so good as to recommend him to your friends in the seminary or elsewhere in the town; it will be a deed of charity to help me rear and educate this boy who promises well for the Sacred Ministry [ODonel to Plessis, Quebec, 1801].

ODonel was a pathfinder, linking kin and neighbours from his homeland to destinations and opportunities in North America. It was no different conceptually to the merchants, agents, and masters who recruited Irish migrants and emigrants to serve in the fishery. Both ODonel nephews differed markedly in background to the vast majority of Irish migrants in that they were literate, numerate, and middle class. Sullivan did settle in Montreal, and went on to become judge and politician. A third nephew from Clonmel was placed in Boston. Through the sponsorship of ODonel, St. John's was a stepping stone for kinsmen in Tipperary to settle on the mainland. Children of leading Catholic inhabitants in St. John's were also placed in

seminaries, convents and schools in Quebec City through ODonel's personal contacts. Not all were "intended for the church." But clerical recruitment was of course the bishop's primary objective. In Ireland an uncle/nephew line of succession kept priests within particular families for generations. ODonel's represented a typical clerical family in the diocese of Waterford and Lismore. Irish missions in Newfoundland and later in England were incorporated into the system. (Fig. 1) Clerical recruitment in nineteenth-century Newfoundland was based on foundations laid out by ODonel. Ireland remained the main training ground. Michael Howley was the first Catholic Newfoundlander to become a bishop. He was educated in Dublin, and went to Clonmel in search of his roots and the ODonel clan. For more than a century after the appointment of ODonel, long after the transatlantic migrations and the provisions trade had vanished, these spiritual ties endured.

Return to the Homeland

In 1804 ODonel wrote to the Pope requesting he be allowed to retire:

I have laboured with all my strength for the past twenty years at cultivating the Lord's vineyard in this island...not without a great harvest of souls...I am now growing old, worn out with work and since I have only recently been afflicted with a slight stroke suggestive of apoplexy in the 67th year of my age, I humbly ask that your Holiness would deign to designate a Vicar Apostolic for this island with the right of succession...it is necessary that my successor be a man strong in doctrine, patience, suavity and urbanity of manner, lest he should lose the now long standing favour not only of the Governor, but also that of the General, the officers of the garrison and the fleet, but especially that of the merchants upon whom our whole precarious and poor subsistence depends...

It was a concise summary of how the bishop saw himself in relation to the Catholic mission in a colony governed by British Protestants, and an economy dominated by British merchants. Catholics formed a majority in the Avalon, the most populous region of the island. There were four parishes, each with its resident pastor. ODonel did not consider any of his clergy sufficiently sophisticated to succeed. They were in his view:

...men strong in zeal and morals and sufficient in the aforementioned doctrine, yet since they are scarcely more than simple unsophisticated men as the result of living so long a time in the outports of this

island...not one of them seems to me exceedingly suitable to be marked with the episcopal stamp...

There is a hint of St. John's snobbery in ODonel's portrayal of the local priests, particularly Thomas Ewer. He had been in Ferryland since 1789, and was appointed vicar general in 1796. During ODonel's lengthy absence Ewer had been in charge of the mission. And in terms of social background and education he was the bishop's equal. Interestingly ODonel made no mention of the need for Irish, which Ewer did not have, in his short statement on the criteria for a successor. Indeed there is no mention of it since the attempt in 1791 to appoint a pastor at St. Mary's/Trepassey. Increasingly Catholics were native Newfoundlanders and Gaelic accordingly in relative decline. ODonel's successor Patrick Lambert of Wexford spoke no Irish.

A memorial to the governor, signed by fourteen Protestant merchants, leading inhabitants, and magistrates in St. John's, followed the bishop's letter to Rome.⁴¹ It summarised ODonel's contribution since his arrival in calming the Irish, particularly during the disaffection in 1800, and recommended he be awarded a government pension. This the governor secured. A successor was appointed and everything was ready for ODonel's final departure. He did so in late July, 1807, on board a British naval frigate bound for Portsmouth. In a letter to Michael ODonel, now pastor in the parish of Clashmore, west Waterford, the bishop described his departure:

The merchants of St. John's behaved with uncommon friendship and singular attention to me. They gave me a farewell dinner at the London Tavern; 47 people at table; among them were the heads of all departments; my nephew Sullivan, with his friend from Montreal. The President made an appropriate speech...The General, magistrates, merchants, and principal inhabitants of the town addressed me in very flattering terms on the morning of my departure. All the Protestant merchants waited on me in my own house, and escorted me in procession to Bell's Wharf...Messr. Elmes, Rennie, and MacBraire waited on me a little before my departure, and said they intended to present me with a silver cup at St. John's; but it did not arrive...It is now in my possession, and one of the finest pieces of plate that has ever been seen at Bristol.

41 9 August, 1804, GN/2/1/A/17, pp. 336-338 "...that Rt. Rev James ODonel chief Roman Catholic clergyman in this island, has resided among us for 20 years during which time he has strenuously and successfully laboured to improve the morals and regulate the conduct of the planters, servants, & lower classes of inhabitants of this and the neighboring districts..."

It is likely that the dinner was hosted by the Benevolent Irish Society, founded at a meeting in the London Tavern the previous year. A nondenominational charity set up primarily to help poor Irish migrants and immigrants, membership of the Society was open to all men of Irish birth or descent. ODonel and his four priests were all founding members, as were most of the leading Catholic inhabitants in St. John's. The Society's constitution and objectives epitomised ODonel's philosophy, and he had played a significant role in its formation. Fr. Michael ODonel was on the first committee on charity. Irish Protestants dominated the committees at the outset. These Irish were relatively few in number, and mainly middle class. Some were officers in the garrison, others merchants or agents and clerks. Elmes and MacBraire were prominent Protestant members. Both had Wexford roots and were leading merchants in the Irish passenger and provisions trades. It was through men such as these that ODonel reached out to liberal English Protestants and maintained relative harmony between the two traditions.

There was talk of ODonel retiring to Bristol, Bath, or even Lisbon, but he chose Waterford. The Franciscans were still in Johnstown, serving the parish of St. John's Without. Shortly after arriving, he visited the grave of his parents at Kilonan and erected a monument in their memory. Despite a life led far from home, ODonel was still deeply connected to the religious traditions of his native place. Kilonan cemetery was perhaps a thousand years old. Situated one mile from Knocklofty, across the Suir in County Waterford, it was once the centre of a large parish. Apart from the cemetery, all that remained in 1807 were the ruins of a medieval church. A century earlier, a James Daniell was pastor there. It is likely that Kilonan was the traditional burial place of the ODonels. The bishop's father was buried there in 1767, his mother in 1785. Several headstones to ODonels (Daniell) from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries survive.⁴²

In 1807 there was no Catholic cemetery in St. John's. Irish burials took place in the Anglican graveyard, under the authority of a minister. It represented a dramatic loss of tradition, a consequence of transatlantic migration and resettlement. Catholicism in ODonel's homeland was rooted in centuries of custom. There were holy wells and patterns, local saints and sacred spaces, and a folk religion embedded in the supernatural world. Little of this could be reproduced in New World settings. Almost every parish in southeast Ireland had some elements of religious culture that were unique. These could not be

⁴² My thanks to Michael Desmond for a copy of the headstone inscriptions in Kilonan, and to Donal Wylde for photographs of the church in ruins there and in Garryntemple.

transplanted in a society where migrants came from so many different parishes. Newfoundland was a *tabula rasa*. ODonel and his clergy constructed parishes from scratch. As in Ireland, each had a priest and chapel as the core. It seems that Harbour Grace, Ferryland, and Placentia had Catholic cemeteries from the outset. Priestly duties were similar to those in an Irish parish. For a century or more prior to ODonel, medieval churches and civil parishes such as Clonmel, Inislounaght, Kilronan and Tullaghamelan were being transformed into modern Roman Catholic equivalents. New chapels replaced suppressed abbeys and churches. For more than a century, a fugitive church continued within the walls of Clonmel. Around 1670 the Catholic clergy established a chapel on a greenfield site in Irishtown. It replaced the medieval Franciscan church of St. Mary's. The Franciscans continued to serve the parish as assistants to the secular clergy. The new chapel and resident clergy in Irishtown formed the core of the modern Catholic parish of St. Mary's. ODonel's chapel and parish in St. John's represented a transatlantic extension of early-modern St. Mary's.

ODonel died in Waterford in 1811. He was buried in St. Mary's in Clonmel. Twenty years earlier his brother Fr. Michael was interred there. Both had likely served as Franciscans in Irishtown. James ODonel had come full circle, his remains returned to his native place. The silver urn was passed on to his nephew, Fr. Michael ODonel, pastor at Clashmore, south of Clonmel. ODonel's only recorded inheritance from Newfoundland was a farm of eight acres in the west end of St. John's, granted him in 1797 by governor Waldegrave.⁴³ The "Bishop's Farm" in Riverhead was inherited by a sister, Mrs. Phelan, who collected a rent of £10 yearly. Both urn and farm were retained by the family (Fig. 1). Together with the tombstone in St. Mary's cemetery, they served as reminders in his homeplace of ODonel's transatlantic mission.

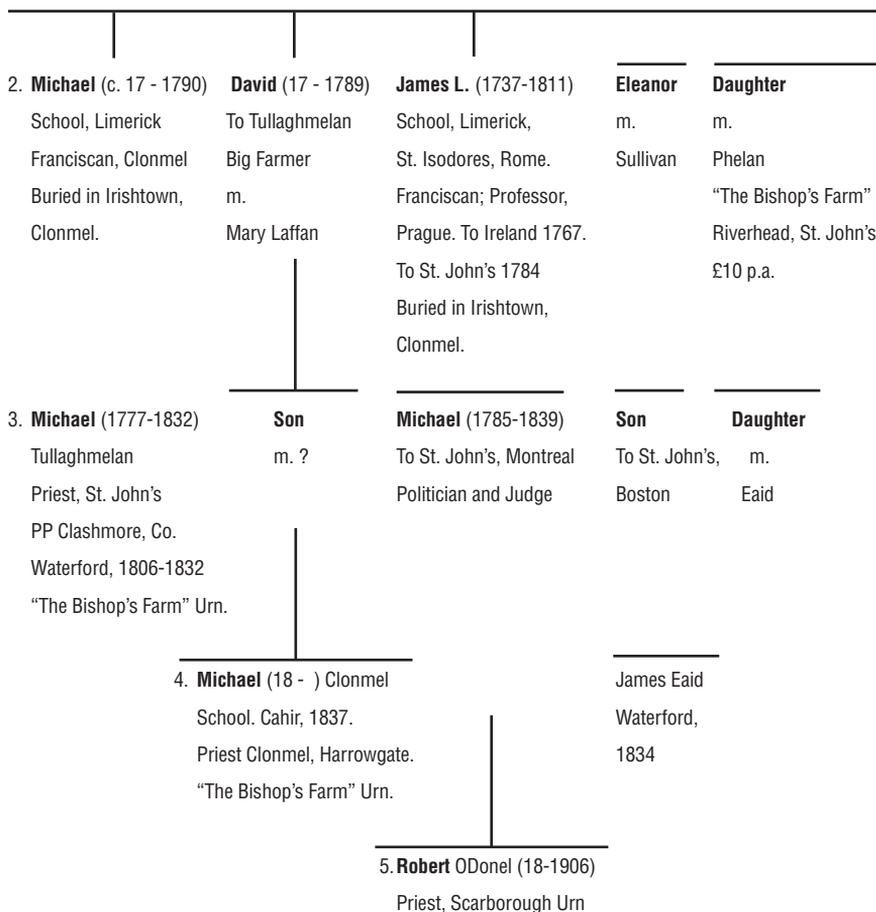
⁴³ 25 September, 2, 6, 13 October, 1797, GN/2/1/A/13, pp. 200, 261, 343-344. "Having no ground but the spot on which my house, chapel and garden stand, not exceeding in the whole 3/4 of an acre for which I pay £28 per annum induces me to solicit your Excellency for a grant of 8 acres of uncultivated ground situated above the old hospital... on the North side of the Main road..."

Fig. 1 Social Origins and Religious Reproduction: The ODonel Family in Ireland and St. John's

1. **Michael** ODonel (1699-1767) Garryntemple, Inislounaght, Co. Tipperary. Big Farmer

m.

Ann Crosby (c. 1710-1785). Both buried in Kilonan, Co. Waterford



*Years of birth sometimes estimated. Genealogy incomplete.

Table 1

30 November, 1794, Petition, Catholic Inhabitants of Newfoundland to Rome	
Fr. Patrick Phelan (17 -1799)	Waterford, Harbour Grace, Franciscan, arr. 1784
Fr. Thomas Ewer (1746-1833)	Dublin, Ferryland, Franciscan, arr. 1789
Fr. Edmund Burke (1751-1826)	Tipperary, Waterford, Placentia, Dominican, arr. 1785
St. John's:	
Luke Maddock (1748-1813)	Waterford, arr. c. 1770, watchmaker, merchant
Timothy Ryan (c. 1745-1830)	Tipperary, arr. c. 1770, shopkeeper, merchant
Henry Shea (1757-1830)	Tipperary, arr. c. 1785, clerk, agent, merchant
Patrick Power (17 -1809)	Waterford, arr. c. 1775, agent, trader, merchant
John Wall (17)	Waterford, agent
Michael Mara (1740-1827)	Tipperary, arr. c. 1767, fishermen, publican
Dr. David Duggan (17 -1826)	Ireland, arr. 1780, surgeon, military
Dr. Martin Delaney (17)	Ireland, arr pre 1775, surgeon, military
John Bulger (17 -)	Ireland, arr. pre 1778, clerk of works, military
James Power (17 -)	Waterford, arr. pre 1780, clerk, miliary, merchant
Conception Bay:	
William Mullowney (17 -)	Waterford, Bristol, Harbour Grace arr. c. 1786, agent, merchant
Darby Hartery (17 - 1814)	Waterford, Harbour Grace, arr. c. 1780, publican, merchant
John Quarry (17 -)	Waterford, Port de Grave, shopkeeper
Ferryland:	
William Coman (17 - 1821)	Waterford, Ferryland, St. John's, agent, merchant
James Coady (17 -)	Ireland, Ferryland, planter
James Shortall (17 -)	Ireland, Ferryland, planter, publican, trader
Placentia:	
John Power (17 -)	Waterford, Great Placentia, agent, merchant
John Kearney (17 -)	Ireland, Little Placentia, planter

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