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Patrick Manning

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and the  
*Dublin Review*

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# Daniel O’Connell and the *Dublin Review*

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Heralded as the Great Liberator, much is known of the life of Daniel O’Connell – especially as a politician, an Irish nationalist, and for his perseverance in fighting for the rights of the Irish people. Less is known of his fervent Catholic faith, his concern for the education of Catholics, and his desire that they be politically and theologically literate.

The O’Connells, a devout Catholic family of Derrynane, County Kerry, like most Irish Catholics, were acutely aware of the ill-affect experienced by the Irish at the expense of the enactment of the Penal Laws.<sup>1</sup> The deplorable conditions at the time Daniel was raised afforded O’Connell ‘an understanding of their (the Irish peasants) hopes and fears, loves and hatreds, which one day was to make him a great lawyer and an agitator and leader of his people.’<sup>2</sup> In 1829, there was a significant turn in Irish politics when Daniel O’Connell was elected to Parliament from County Clare.<sup>3</sup>

In 1836 a unique and somewhat surprising joint literary effort, the *Dublin Review*, appeared. Its intent was to both hasten the Oxford Movement (encouraging Anglican converts to the Church of Rome), and to provide a much wanted (and needed) Catholic periodical for a laity bereft of tools to edify Catholics in and about

1 Cheveneux, Charles. *The Great Dan: A Biography of Daniel O’Connell*. London: Jonathan Capes, 1984, pg. 3.

2 Ibid. pg. 13

3 Turner, Frank. *John Henry Newman: The Challenge to Evangelical Religion*. New Haven, CT.: Yale U. Press, 2002. pg. 16. Turner writes: ‘The Test Act of 1679 effectively prohibited Roman Catholics from being seated in the Westminster Parliament, but not from being elected to it. Fearful of possible civil war in Ireland if O’Connell did not enter Parliament, the Duke of Wellington reversed long-standing Tory policy and sponsored Catholic emancipation. The emancipation measure permitted the seating of Roman Catholics while simultaneously restricted the electoral franchise in Ireland to relatively wealthy property owners.’

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their faith.<sup>4</sup> There is some disagreement about how the *Dublin Review* began. One author explains that a Catholic lawyer in London, Michael Quin, suggested the idea of publishing a Catholic periodical to Bishop Nicholas Wiseman who was, at the time, rector of the English college in Rome.<sup>5</sup> It was Mr. Quin who brought Daniel O'Connell on as a "silent" but important partner. O'Connell very much supported the idea and was almost exclusively the financial backer for the proposed quarterly. Quin was the first editor, Wiseman oversaw the project, and O'Connell provided the funding.<sup>6</sup>

Quin was the editor of the first two issues only and then left for a job in public service in Cuba. At this time a very able Quaker, William Howitt, was suggested for the position. Though O'Connell supported the editorship of Howitt, he was insistent on the importance of the religious nature of the review. O'Connell wanted to make certain that a Catholic should examine all articles before publication.<sup>7</sup>

O'Connell wrote to Wiseman: 'The *Dublin Review* is a Catholic publication, emphatically Catholic – I should say rather polemically so. This is quite consistent with its advocacy of the principles of civil as well as religious freedom, that is, the perfect freedom from Penal Laws, tests or legal restrictions, the separation, in short, of the kingdom of God from the kingdom of Caesar. But in point of religion, it must advocate the truth of the Catholic doctrines exclusively. I need not tell you that this is my own conviction. My firm belief is that it is the duty of every man to be a Catholic whilst I abhor every attempt either by direct penalty by any civil exclusions to bring the law in any way in aid of my creed'.<sup>8</sup> In 1837, with O'Connell and Wiseman's approval, H.R. Bagshawe became the editor (until 1863). Early on, though Wiseman maintained control of the review to insure the orthodoxy of Catholic teaching, both O'Connell and Wiseman were appreciative that Charles W.

4 The Oxford Movement is generally thought to have begun with the speech of the Assizes by John Keble in 1833.

5 Altholz, Josef L. *The Religious Press in Britain, 1760-1900*. Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1989, chapter 11.: 'Roman Catholics', under *The Dublin Review*, pg. 99. This outlines Altholz's version of the funding of the *Dublin Review*.

6 Maccauley, Ambrose. *Dr. Russell of Maynooth*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983, pp. 66-67. Maccauley writes: '... Wiseman immediately saw the advantage of having an organ not only for drawing Catholics into closer connection with Rome, and the Catholic Revival on the continent, enlarging their horizons and educating them on questions confronting their co-religionists in France and Germany, but also of communicating sympathetically and learnedly, to the Tractarians and interested Protestants'.

7 O'Connell, Maurice. *Daniel O'Connell: The Man and His Politics*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990 (finte. #26), pg. 37-38.

8 Ibid. O'Connell to Wiseman, 7 November, 1836, Pg. 37

Russell, professor at Maynooth, soon after effectively became an associate editor.<sup>9</sup>

In initiating a specifically Catholic review, Wiseman envisioned the possibility of reaching both Catholics and Tractarians more directly than the *Catholic Review*. Wiseman and O'Connell's hope was that 'the new review might stir the enthusiasm of the faithful for their own religion, and draw them from their years of isolation into renewed and vital contact with the papacy; to the more general audience of non-Catholics, and especially to the Tractarians, it could speak with breadth of learning and a ready persuasiveness'.<sup>10</sup>

The matter of finances was no small issue. Josef Altholz writes that Wiseman's personal papers '... reveal the curious nature of this proprietorship, which involved no investment of capital, held out no likelihood of profit, and required only a willingness to absorb losses.' He continues, 'While O'Connell was the financial saviour of the *Dublin Review*, he deferred to Wiseman in all financial (as well as theological) matters'.<sup>11</sup> The hope was that future subscriptions would offset the costs of publication.

There are a number of theories as to why the quarterly was titled the *Dublin Review*. One thought is that Wiseman, 'with his antipathy to controversy and his desire for conciliation, may have felt that the word 'Catholic' in the title would have suggested militant partisanship'; it was also suggested that Wiseman would have wanted to avoid any confusion with the *Catholic Magazine*.<sup>12</sup> Another thought is that the title may have been in deference to O'Connell and his valuable influence among Irish liberals – and his financial backing – that the name *Dublin* was chosen.<sup>13</sup> Altholz suggests that 'The title may have been a compliment to O'Connell, or it may have suggested a counterpoise to the two *de facto* Protestant quarterlies, the Whig *Edinburgh Review* and the Tory *Quarterly Review*.<sup>14</sup> Whatever may have been the true origin of the name, the *Dublin Review* was always intended for English readers ... yet it first appeared clad in green, and its first series bore the motto *Eire Go Braith*'.<sup>15</sup>

From the onset of publication, there was concern that the Review stay clear of the politics of O'Connell, something to

9 Altholz, *The Religious Press in Britain, 1760-1900*, pg.99.

10 Houghton, Walter E., ed., *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900*. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1972, v. 11, pg. 11.

11 Altholz, Josef L. "Early Proprietorship of the *Dublin Review*", *Victorian Periodical Review*. 1990, v. 23, Issue 32, pp. 55-56.

12 Houghton, Walter E., ed., *Wellesley Index*, pg. 12.

13 Ibid. pg. 12.

14 Altholz, *The Religious Press in Britain*, pg. 99.

15 *Wellesley Index*, pg. 12.

which O'Connell agreed: 'From the start, its line was moderate but for some paradoxically, it's very moderation detracted from its appeal'.<sup>16</sup> It was the intention of Wiseman, O'Connell and Quin that they simply provide a platform for Catholic writers, and an organ to disseminate Catholic thought. The topics were to be of general interest, non-polemical, but a way to make Catholic thought public on topics of religious interest, while providing those who had been (and would be) inspired by the Oxford Movement, clarity on Catholic opinion and teaching.

After the very first issues, the publication was recognized as being conducted "with remarkable ability." With O'Connell and Wiseman as its guiding spirits, it was a credit to the faith of its proprietors, addressing the most important questions of the day. But as F. M. Cusack writes "... polemics were not neglected, and were handled with singular ability and trenchant force." As he further notes, the subtleties of metaphysical theology were set aside to put forth Catholic truth "boldly and broadly".<sup>17</sup>

In terms of O'Connell's relationship with the hierarchy, he shared a significant correspondence with John MacHale, the Archbishop of Tuam.<sup>18</sup> A letter that O'Connell wrote to him candidly reveals his concern that Irish Catholics in Great Britain, as well as in Ireland, have a reputable quarterly to defend Catholic teaching against what he refers to in the letter as 'false liberality.' O'Connell addresses the issue of the *Dublin Review* (at this point having published its seventh number), his support of its mission, and requests the archbishop for his "aid and cooperation."<sup>19</sup> The tone of O'Connell's letter to the archbishop indicates O'Connell's great esteem for the archbishop and his office in the Church. In the letter, O'Connell explains how important it is that Catholics in Great Britain and Ireland have 'a fair and legitimate mode' for articulating the Catholic faith. To that end, such a review, he notes, is 'the shape most likely to produce a permanent as well as a useful effect'.<sup>20</sup> He also notes that the other quarterly publications are in the hands of the "enemies" of Catholicism. He goes on to insist that the journal is not intended for polemical purposes, and that its orthodoxy can be assured by the involvement of Bishop Wiseman.<sup>21</sup> O'Connell then, comes to the main point of the letter, and that is to ask

16 Ibid. pg. 12

17 Cusack, M. F. *The Liberator: His Life and Times*. Kenmore Publications (no location noted), 1872. Pg. 642.

18 Ibid. pg. 641. Cusack writes: 'During the year 1838, O'Connell kept up a constant correspondence with the Archbishop (John MacHale) of Tuam.'

19 Ibid, pg. 642. The letter is addressed to the Archbishop from Pall Mall 16, London, on 18<sup>th</sup> February, 1838.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

the Archbishop to assist in increasing interest, circulation and the number of subscriptions.<sup>22</sup> Archbishop MacHale responded favorably to O'Connell's letter on 27th February, and even offered some suggestions for increased circulation.<sup>23</sup>

Probably the most articulate vision for what both Wiseman and O'Connell intended in commencing the *Dublin Review* can be discerned in an article reflecting upon its founding, written by Wiseman himself, and published in the *Dublin Review* twenty years after its initial number. In an article entitled "The Present Catholic Dangers", Wiseman commends the review for its constancy of purpose through "vicissitudes and struggles not easily paralleled in the history of such publications." He continues noting that "... its conductors endeavoured gently and gradually to move forward the Catholic mind, ...". In reference to O'Connell, himself, and others involved in the publication, he notes "They avoided all the troubled waters and eddies of domestic contention; nor is it the least among many praises due to the illustrious O'Connell, who was one of its founders, that wrapped up as his whole external life was in politics, he consented that the new quarterly should not involve itself in their vortex, even to advocate his own views, but should steer its own course along a calmer stream and try to bear along with it peaceful and consenting minds".<sup>24</sup>

Though he was a silent partner until the end of his life, there is no reason to question his status as a co-proprietor until his death, which occurred on his way to Rome, in the spring of 1847. With all of his political and nationalist interests, O'Connell remained a faithful Catholic and was committed to the mission of the *Dublin Review*, refusing to allow his personal political leanings to cause the quarterly to be viewed merely as a tool for his republican convictions. O'Connell saw the changes in England involving the Tractarian and Oxford Movements, and the changes in Ireland with emancipation, and hoped, through literacy, that the Catholic Church would rise again in the minds and hearts of the British as well as the Irish nation.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 *Dublin Review*, Vol. XLI, Sept.-Dec., 1856, pp. 441 ff. Wiseman continues, praising the *Dublin Review*: 'Whatever seemed useful to forward the interests of catholics (sic) just released from the thralldom of ages, to suggest greater boldness, opener confession of faith, better taste, and especially greater familiarity with the resources of Catholic truth, Catholic devotion or Catholic feeling was diligently studied and carried on with a steady purpose, that did its work.'