AN AMERICAN RESPONSE TO IRISH CATHOLIC IMMIGRATION

THE METHODIST QUARTERLY REVIEW, 1830–1870

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Nineteenth-century American Methodists pursued a vision of Christianity and civilization which was axiomatically evangelical and Anglo-American. The Methodist Episcopal Church saw Irish Catholic immigration as a threat to that vision. Its response elaborated a pattern already established in Ireland, where Methodism identified with English hegemony. What in Ireland was a small, aggressive movement helping to undermine Catholic society, in the United States became a major part of the dominant culture, opposing a rapidly growing challenge to that dominance.

In The Methodist Quarterly Review, the scholarly journal of the Methodist Episcopal Church (ME), during the years 1830–1870, Methodism's intellectual leadership wrestled with issues surrounding Irish immigration and resisted an emerging cultural and religious pluralism. This cluster of issues developed alongside many others. The American context was more diversified than the Irish. Even the anti-Catholicism in Methodist publications went beyond Irish concerns. But an extensive body of Methodist writing centered on Irish Catholics, the largest and most influential group of Catholic immigrants in this period, and the implications of their presence here.¹

Since these concerns occupied considerable space in Methodist periodicals, their near absence from most twentieth-century denominational histories is baffling.² Perhaps in view of the ecumenical progress of United Methodism, past sectarian controversies have seemed best forgotten. Yet they were significant in the formation of church and society and remain part of our cultural tradition.

American Methodism was a child of British and Irish Methodism, and throughout the period the Americans remained "Labourers together

with our brethren in Europe." Leaders and members were generally drawn from British or Irish Methodist stock, or from other Protestants with roots in the British Isles. During the Centenary of American Methodism, Abel Stevens pointed to the continuing contribution of Irish Methodism to the ME Church:

There is hardly a corner of Methodism in the United States that has not been strengthened by Irish Methodism. There is not a conference which does not contain ministers from Ireland or of Irish descent. There are more Methodists from Ireland in our Church than are left in Ireland.4

Kerby Miller has described the success of Methodists in converting, among others, Irish Presbyterians. The impact of these conversions is suggested by the fact that "by 1800 only 15,000 adult Americans were members of Presbyterian churches, although during the preceding century perhaps twenty times that number had emigrated from Ireland alone."5 Since American Methodism's traditions and relationships were predominantly British, Anglo-Irish, and Scotch-Irish, it is not surprising that a struggle originating in the British Isles, reinforced by ongoing immigration and correspondence, would reappear in the United States.

Methodism saw Anglo-American evangelicalism as the key to America's future, the core of the national identity.6 Its missionary philosophy was perfectly suited to cultural imperialism. But missionary forays into Catholic communities were disappointing contrasts to the church's success among Anglo-Americans. William Cannon described the situation in New Orleans, where "The French were too prone to Roman Catholicism to be moved by a Methodist preacher to embrace the Methodist form of Christianity."7

By 1844, the Bishops of the ME Church were calling for greater wariness toward the "deep and hidden designs" of "popery" in America.8 They believed that Catholicism, through its press and its demands on public education especially, had "invaded Protestant communities with such success as should awaken and united the energies of the evangelical Churches."9

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Such unity as there was in what Walter Benjamin called "an era of 'rugged denominationalism,'" often came in response to this common enemy.\textsuperscript{10} Even after the Civil War, Methodists retained their "residual but strong religious nativism which regarded Catholics as outsiders and aliens by nationality, religion, custom, and class to the American dream."

The Methodist Quarterly Review (\textit{MQR}) was published by the ME Church from its Book Concern in New York City. Like its popular counterpart, the \textit{Christian Advocate}, the \textit{MQR} expressed a range of views on Ireland, Catholicism, and Irish immigration. In both publications, anti-Catholic, anti-Irish attitudes predominated.\textsuperscript{12}

From 1830 to 1870, the \textit{Quarterly Review} was edited by six prominent Methodist scholars: John Emory (1830–31), Nathan Bangs (1830–36), Samuel Luckey (1836–40), George Peck (1840–48), John M’Clintock (1848–56), and Daniel Whedon (1856–70ff.). The \textit{MQR} tried with increasing success to involve the church’s intellectual community in scholarly dialogue on subjects both religious and secular.\textsuperscript{13} George Peck wanted "a Quarterly of high literary merit, one that should be worthy of being considered the standard of Methodist literature and theology in this country."\textsuperscript{14} Peck agreed with John Emory that the \textit{MQR} should "draw forth the most matured efforts of our best writers . . . in a record which shall endure for the inspection of posterity."\textsuperscript{15} Editors sought "to sustain . . . the doctrines, discipline, and institutions of the Methodist Episcopal Church," but also to welcome the views of "all other orthodox denominations," hoping to be fair, critical, charitable, and open to "timely and honest correction."\textsuperscript{16} Peck did not want to descend to the level of


\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., 332.


\textsuperscript{14}George Peck, \textit{MQR}, Vol. XXII; Third Series, Vol. XI, No. 3 (July 1840), 356. Circulation never approached that of the more popular \textit{Christian Advocate} (New York)—4,250 \textit{MQR} subscriptions in 1860, for example, compared to the \textit{Advocate}'s 29,500: Norwood, \textit{Story}, 311.


\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., 359.
some of the scurrilous literature of his day, even in the midst of heated controversy:

Those whose morbid appetites can only be satisfied with the creations of a disordered imagination can have little to hope for from our labors, or those of our correspondents. The Review will deal in sober realities. And though all due pains will be taken to gratify a well-disciplined taste, its great object will be to make its readers wiser and better.\(^17\)

It is not to be expected that this journal, or the church whose best thought it represented, was monolithic in the views provided by editors, contributors, and authors reprinted or reviewed. Its perspectives varied, reflecting individual differences and changing circumstances. Yet there are broad areas of agreement arising from Methodism's cultural heritage and evangelical ethos.

Given the multiplicity of issues facing the church, not every number or annual volume dealt with issues related to Irish immigration. At the beginning of our period (1830–32), evangelicals could not foresee the eventual impact of immigration and the \textit{MQR} gave its attention to other concerns. During the Civil War (1861–65), Irish Catholicism and immigration were sidelined by the more pressing matters of war, sectionalism, emancipation, and national reunion. With these exceptions, the \textit{MQR} actively monitored Protestant–Catholic relations and their implications for America's destiny, focusing much of this interest on Ireland and the Irish Catholics settling in America.

In July 1833, the \textit{Quarterly Review} began taking serious and extensive notice of a substantial Catholic, particularly Irish Catholic, minority, arguing for conversion rather than confrontation. In the spirit of John Wesley's "Short Method of Converting all the Roman Catholics in the Kingdom of Ireland," it urged "all the Protestants, ministers and people," to employ godly lives and apostolic words "as the most effectual way to bring the Roman Catholic professors to the knowledge of the truth." In this way, "there will be less of vituperation and more of the breath of prayer and praise, as well as of brotherly love."\(^18\) The writer deplored mutual recriminations of historical wrongdoing and admitted that the Protestant record is blemished.

Both parties, therefore, have reason to humble themselves before God, to confess the sins of bigotry and persecution, instead of endeavoring either to palliate the offense, or of retorting upon each other by arguments drawn from such an impure source. The deeds have been done. This it is useless to attempt to deny.\(^19\)

\(^{17}\)George Peck, "Introduction," \textit{MQR} (January 1841), 8.


\(^{19}\)"Controversy," \textit{Ibid.}, 333.
This call for moderation rejects "the many warnings . . . against the encroachments of the Roman Catholics upon our civil and religious liberties." It endorses "a cautious vigilance, that neither Catholics nor Protestants should be allowed gradually to undermine the fair fabric which has been erected," but trusts America's liberty to withstand any threat of "religious bigotry." 20 Such a calm, balanced, confident approach would not prevail.

In 1838, S. W. Coggeshall identified the essentials of our national life with British and American Protestantism. Britain and the U.S. were, for him, "the nations now the most actively engaged in the spread of the truth." Their symbiosis of imperialism and world mission seemed a sign of the coming millennium, and although "in the United States, popery is making vigorous exertions to establish itself," the Catholic "kingdom of antichrist" would inevitably collapse before the reign of God. 21

While the right kind of Christianity was "the means of civilization" and "the source of American liberty," Catholicism stood as an obstacle to both, although writers differed on just how formidable and fearsome it was. 22 Editor M'Clintock (January 1855) expressed what became the standard view that "the aims of Rome . . . are always inconsistent, fundamentally, with general liberty, whether religious or political." 23 For D. D. Lore, evangelicalism was the "pure and powerful Christianity" which "God in his providence has called . . . to lay the foundations of a great Christian empire." He saw Catholicism not merely as a rival or an irrelevancy, but a force cynically preparing for the "extermination" of Protestant churches, while those churches lie foolishly asleep. 24

The west was of particular concern to a denomination with heavy investment in the frontier. T. M. Eddy, editor of Chicago's North West Christian Advocate, described America's "Westward boundary" as "a changing line, moving toward the setting sun with the march of Anglo-Saxon 'manifest destiny.'" 25 Eddy saw Methodism as bringing order, morality, and civilization to the west's ethnically diverse population. But what of the immigrant-swelled American city, "the heaving bosom of . . . an

20Ibid., 339.
earthquake of moral corruption”? Lore lamented the inaction of Protestants, warning that failure to convert and reform “these ‘festering masses’” would jeopardize the existence of Church and State.26 Similarly, J. T. Crane complained that the growth of Catholicism through immigration threatened both Protestantism and “modern civilization itself.”27

In January 1860, historian Abel Stevens indicated just how seriously he regarded the nation’s peril:

The thoughtful man, who reminds himself of the ignorance and moral corruption of the European hordes arriving among us, can hardly suppose that the better moral characteristics of the nation, already sadly degenerating, can survive the contagion of such overwhelming vice, or the better institutions of the republic withstand such a flood of semi-barbarism. One thing we must be sure of, namely, that every moral resource at our command will be needed to maintain, in its present relative status, the moral and intellectual status of the country.28

The Protestant republic seemed besieged by Catholic immigrants, most of them Irish. Their religion and culture, poverty and sheer numbers, called into question Methodism’s vision of America. The alarm sounded.

Methodist attitudes toward Catholicism were informed by Anglo-American tradition, new and remembered experiences in Britain, Ireland, and America, the larger Reformation tradition, and political and religious developments in continental Europe. Some perceptions were stereotypical; others arose from actual differences.

Wilbur Fisk, elected as the first President of Wesleyan University in 1831, was a highly respected educator, theological controversialist, and anti-slavery spokesman.29 Fisk’s prestige within the connexion, enhanced by his “authoritative” reporting of foreign travels, made him an important influence on Methodist opinions and policies.30 His observations of European Catholicism were serialized in the 1836 *MQR*.31 He looked “with no other emotion than that of astonishment and disgust, at . . . the deep-rooted and all-pervading superstitions and idolatries of the Roman Catholic Church.”32

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26Ibid., 593.
In Fisk’s view, Romanism inhibited political and religious freedom and promoted immorality and poverty. This pattern would repeat itself here, he warned, should Catholicism gain significant influence.33 “Go to Ireland,” he said, “and there you will see Catholic Ireland most miserably degraded and poor, even to a state of starvation, and Protestant Ireland comparatively wealthy and comfortable.” His explanation—“THE ROMAN CATHOLIC RELIGION HAS A DIRECT TENDENCY TO IMPOVERISH A NATION AND IS CHARACTERISTICALLY OPPOSED TO THE SOUDEST PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL FREEDOM.”34 Fisk’s analysis was endorsed by his editor and reinforced by reports from many venues.35

Coggeshall generalized from the connection he saw between the papacy and reactionary European regimes, saying that “Popery has always, where she could, allied herself to the state, and lent her power and influence to crush the people.”36 Another writer applauded Europe’s 1848 revolutions as extensions of a Reformation-spawned movement toward liberty. The same article ignored the ’48 rebellion in Ireland, which would not have fit its Whig scenario, because the “despot” was a Protestant state. The conservatism of Pius IX, represented by the Syllabus of Errors and First Vatican Council, dramatically reinforced fears that Catholicism and democracy were mutually exclusive.37

For Fisk, Catholic advocacy of religious freedom was a pragmatic device, not a matter of genuine belief.38 An 1841 review accused Catholic apologists, especially Bishop Kendrick of Philadelphia, of misrepresenting their church’s doctrines in order to deflect Protestant criticism and public scrutiny.39 The MQR generally presents Catholicism as an historical monolith, unchanging over time and space, always hostile to the values cherished by free, Protestant peoples. Policies or practices from any time and place appear as if universal and immutable. Thus a decision of the Council of Trent or an act of the Inquisition demonstrated what Rome would do again, given the opportunity. Only the minority status of

34 Ibid., 113, 114.
36 Coggeshall, “Final Triumph,” 75.
American Catholicism prevented the full exercise of these perennial characteristics. Attempts to distinguish nineteenth-century American Catholicism from that of other times and places were dismissed as deception.⁴⁰ “Romanism now is precisely what Romanism was.”⁴¹

An 1844 article sounded the alarm which in 1833 had seemed unnecessary:

The warning voice of history seems to be unheeded; the solemn admonitions of patriotism are scarcely heard; the faithful notes of alarm, uttered by watchmen on the walls of our American Zion, have all failed to awaken the multitude of slumbering Protestants around us; such is the false security which their faith in the harmlessness of Romanism as it is, has inspired. And yet such ought to be assured, that the Romish Church is not now a whit less hostile to human knowledge and human liberty than it was in the days of Queen Mary, or in any other period of its blood-stained history.⁴²

Under whatever guise it may temporarily assume, “the Romish Church is at the present day actuated by the same persecuting spirit which, whenever it was possible, it has always exhibited.”⁴³ Here we see the same fear which animated much of Wesley’s approach to Irish Catholicism, and which in rougher hands erupted in Orangeism and nativist violence.

Rome’s true identity had been exposed, it was thought, in countries like Spain, Italy, and Ireland, which “exemplify her naked deformity,” whereas in the United States “she has been compelled to succumb to the supremacy of the civil power,” and therefore “has... assumed the mask of submission.”⁴⁴ The reference to Ireland suggests the dual fallacy of this attack, because in Ireland a Protestant power served as the oppressive regime, and it was precisely Irish Catholicism that formed the greatest influence upon the Catholic Church in America. This homogenization of history also fails to recognize changes in a Catholicism that was adapting to the requirements of a new, liberal, pluralistic society.

_The Methodist Quarterly Review_ commonly published and reviewed compilations of the errors and horrors of “popery.” An 1843 review commended Jacob Stanley’s _Dialogues on Popery_ as “a pleasant, and, withal, a cogent and a caustic little book” offering a timely “argument against


⁴¹“Ibid., 349.

⁴²_ Ibid._, 348.


⁴⁴“Ibid., 350.
that great corruption of Christianity.” Such reviews usually, sometimes enthusiastically, promoted these works, though an 1856 review distinguished its subject from “many worthless books upon the Roman controversy,” and applauded its “calmness of discussion and . . . fairness of argument.” The MQR also published more general historical pieces which served as background for opinion formation.

In the heat of battle, some drew conclusions about Rome’s status among the churches. They did not always agree, but the prevailing consensus was less then diplomatic or constructive. Coggeshall could “by no means acknowledge [Rome] as a church of our Lord Jesus Christ.” But another article recognized Catholics as “still our brethren” and “entitled to be treated as such.” Still another saw Catholicism as “the church of Satan,” though in a weak attempt at charity it advocated prayer “for our papal brethren.”

Occasionally, though not frequently, the Quarterly Review dealt in convent horror stories. A respected organ of a responsible denomination could not permit such items a major place, yet the fact that careful scrutiny could still admit some demonstrates the power of the genre. One review described the “nunneries of America” as “styes of pollution.” The writer was appalled that some Protestants would allow their children to be educated by “these ‘sisters,’ whose very touch is contamination.” Another writer believed that “conventual seclusion” in “the oppressive and stifling air of a nunnery” was “an outrage upon all the dearest and purest sensibilities of our nature,” because celibate religious life deprived women of the “nobler mission” of evangelical wife-and-motherhood. 1856 brought a favorable review of Josephine Bunkley’s The Testimony of an Escaped Novice from the Sisterhood of St. Joseph. The reviewer is careful to distinguish this book from less reliable works, because this one “carries conviction of its truth along with it to the mind of the reader.” Perhaps after the exposed exposés of an earlier period the reader needed some assurance.

47 Coggeshall, “Final Triumph,” 75.
News and articles on events in Europe, especially the British Isles, kept developments in Protestant-Catholic relations before MQR subscribers. An 1849 report revealed the essential glue holding the Evangelical Alliance together. The writer regretted that the Alliance might “dwindle into a mere anti-Popery association—an object which, however desirable, is more circumscribed an exclusive than that originally contemplated.” 53

And in 1870, E. L. Fancher’s “The Bible better than the Ecumenical Council” placed Vatican I in evangelical perspective. 54

Contributors often focused on religious, cultural, and political issues in Ireland and Irish-America. Irish poverty prompted several to “explain” the conditions they described. A temperance writer admits that the “wretchedness” of “the great mass of the people” in Ireland “is in part owing to absenteeism, want of leases, high rents, and in some trifling degree to tithes; but,” leaving causes behind and moving directly to the symptom, “I feel satisfied that drunkenness and whiskey drinking are a greater cause than all these put together.” 55 Fisk saw the “degraded” conditions of Irish Catholics as the result of their Catholicism, pointing to the relative prosperity of their Protestant neighbors. 56 Coggeshall believed that Catholicism made the Irish poor, and Irish poverty produced good Catholics: “Their shocking ignorance and degradation have been partly the cause and partly the effect” of their faith. 57

In October 1847, the MQR printed a lengthy narrative of a visit to Ireland by a group of American Methodists. Their report attributes “Irish ignorance and vice,” concomitants of poverty, to “their cause, Irish Romanism.” 58 But anti-aristocratic sensibilities produced contradictions in their analysis. On the way from Dublin to Belfast, they saw both the evidence of incipient famine (“but did not begin to anticipate the extent of the evil which has since followed”), and the holdings of an absentee landlord:

Poor Ireland! her people are starving for the want of ground to raise potatoes upon, while the best portions of the soil are enclosed within high walls . . . that some English lord . . . may cause it to be covered with trees to shade his deer and rabbits, and that he, with his hounds, may have a chase over it once in a year or two! 59

56 Fisk, “Character and Tendencies,” 114.
59 Ibid., pp. 622, 626, 627.
Their reaction might have had radical implications.

In 1851, Ward Bullard's Whig ideas of liberty and anti-Catholicism became hopelessly entangled. Bullard saw in British history the evolution of "a few . . . leading principles" which "have operated to raise the great body of the English people from slavery to liberty, and to strike off the shackles of oppression wherever the British power has been extended." He cites the periods of Cromwell and William III as advancing "the universal establishment of liberty in the English dominions." How, then, does he explain the condition of Ireland? "Popery and the vices of the people, contribute largely to it." This answer coexists with his very different explanation of Irish oppression as due, in part, to "burdensome taxation; the remains of the Feudal system, . . . extensive manors, worked by tenants; the legal support of the established Church, so utterly inconsistent with liberty." Bullard could not reconcile these realities of imperialism with his view of England as standard-bearer for liberty. Anti-popery seemed to provide a release.

As early as 1837, Coggeshall defended Ireland's political arrangements as necessary to prevent Catholics from "disturbing, and, if possible, overthrowing the present government, and re-establishing popery." Catholic relief measures had only encouraged further and more dangerous demands.

Several reports assured readers that Irish Catholicism was "visibly on the decline." In April 1861, however, the MQR faced facts when it reported "significant signs of a revived vitality in Irish Romanism," and soon after provided actual statistics. Out of a population of 5,764,865, Catholics numbered 4,490,583, to the 1,273,960 Protestants of all denominations. Only 44,532 were Methodists. County and provincial breakdowns reinforced the message by demonstrating Catholic strength across the nation. Even so, as late as 1868, another contributor thought he could discern "the approaching doom of Romanism throughout the island."

1847's American Methodist travelers were especially hard on Daniel O'Connell. The group of four met him in Dublin. Before admitting the delegation, O'Connell first ascertained that they "were not slave holders, nor friends to the institution of slavery." This accomplished, they dis-

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61 Coggeshall, "Future Prospects," 174, 175.
62 Ibid., 174; see "Religious and Literary Intelligence," MQR, Vol. XXXVIII; Fourth Series, Vol. VIII, No. 3 (July 1856), 497-504.
63 Foreign Religious Intelligence," MQR, Vol. XLIII; Fourth Series, Vol. XIII, No. 2 (April 1861), 323 (full article, 322-328), and No. 4 (October 1861), 668 (full article, 666-673).
64 Mattison, "Decline of Romanism," 445-447.
65 Sketches of Matters and Things in Europe," (October 1847), 616.
cussed both slavery and the visitors’ itinerary: “Upon hearing that our pur-
pose was to travel north, Mr. O’Connell remarked, that to see Ireland
we must go south.”66 But the delegation would confine its tour to Dublin
and the northeast, areas of greatest Anglicization and the greatest con-
centration of Methodists. The visit to O’Connell, and later to a Repeal
meeting, left them unconvinced as to this cause and integrity, charging
that the real purposes of Repeal were “the extension of Romanism” and
“the temporal aggrandizement of O’Connell and his family.” Naturally
their opinions were influenced by “intelligent persons in Dublin” whose
interests were with the status quo.67

Other currents in American thought allowed differing views. A sympa-
thetic review of a book by John Durbin, President of Dickinson Col-
lege, placed responsibility for Ireland’s woes at England’s door.68 The
reviewer argued that “The Protestant ascendency . . . has been maintained
in Ireland at the expense of every principle of justice, and, as a conse-
quence, the spirit of Romanism in that devoted country is more vigorous
than ever.” The tradition which supported disestablishment, national self-
determination, republican government, and middle-class disdain for aris-
tocracy could sometimes challenge the quick application of anti-Catholic
assumptions. While Durbin’s liberal view of the Irish question” did not
“find general acceptance,” as his reviewer hoped, it was not without sup-
port.69 We noted the confusion on the 1847 Irish tour, where popery at
one point, and absentee landlords at another, were blamed for Irish pover-
ty. Another exceptional article commended Edmund Burke’s concern for
religious toleration and political freedom in Ireland.70

The Quarterly Review gave some attention to the value and resilience
of Irish culture. A survey of Celtic peoples concluded that viability was
doubtful: “Almost all the Celtic nations have either been exterminated or
become blended with their conquerors.”71 Though overdrawn, this was
indeed the fear of cultural revivalists in Ireland. Anglicization was work-
ing. The author did not, however, recognize the active and dormant
resources of Irish culture, Catholicism’s role in maintaining separate iden-
tity, or Ireland’s tradition of assimilating its captors. A more hostile ar-
ticle sought to undercut nationalist claims to an ancient, indigenous culture
independent of English hegemony.72

66Ibid., 616, 617.
67Ibid., 617; see Peck, “Romanism False,” 207ff.
68Review of John P. Durbin, Observations in Europe (etc.), MQR, Vol. XXVI; Third Series,
Vol. IV, No. 3 (July 1844), 460-478.
69Ibid., 475, 476.
1858), 100-110.
4 (October 1850), 543 (full article, 531-571).
72J. O., “The Heathen and Medieval Civilization of Ireland,” MQR, Vol. XXXV; Fourth
Series, Vol. V, No. 3 (July 1853), 404-426.
Various contributors commented on the state of religion in Ireland, sometimes in matter-of-fact news, sometimes in strongly felt interpretations. An interesting contrast appears in the 1847 visit of American Methodists. When they talked with the Methodist pastor of Abbey Street Chapel (Dublin), they “felt as much at home as if we had met with old acquaintances from our own land.” But they observed Dublin’s Catholics as “poor deluded victims of a ghostly despotism, which seems destined to crush and break the throbbing heart of poor Ireland.”

Biographical and missionary articles expressed a dated, unworkable desire that Ireland might still be evangelized. An 1848 review saw in the eighteenth-century Methodist evangelist Gideon Ouseley a model that might still win Irish converts. Abel Stevens’ hagiography of Thomas Walsh celebrated the success of that convert from “popery,” whose “command of the Irish tongue gave him great advantage with the native papists.” But Walsh had died in 1758 and Catholics had become even more resistant to such incursions. Their intransigence was an unwelcome anomaly in an era of evangelical expansionism.

From the mid-thirties on, the MQR responded to an Irish immigrant tide that could neither be ignored nor assimilated. One report attributed the poverty of Irish-Americans to their faith, just as others spoke of the situation in Ireland itself. It pictured

their squalid poverty, dirty, destitute, ragged, hungry, oppressed condition, crowded into damp cellars and stifling garrets; ignorant, intemperate, beaten, bruised, and wretched, morally and physically. No poor are so poor as the Irish poor, and there are more of them in proportion to their whole number than any other people; and they are what they are in these respects because they are Romanists.

Very often, contributors warned of the political implications of Irish Catholic solidarity. Bloc voting fed “through emigration or proselytism” seemed “eminently dangerous to our free institutions.” In 1856 George Peck saw “the vast influx of Roman Catholics into this country” as “a virus making its way rapidly to the heart of the body politic,” which “has at length startled some who had long been disposed to regard [Catholics] as an oppressed class.”

D. D. Lore characterized urban ghettos as “sinks of sin,” which were “dangerous to world-wide Gospel triumph” and damaging to “our national

73“Sketches of Matters and Things in Europe,” (October 1847), 612, 613.
76 Lore, “American Missions,” 595, 596.
78 Peck, “Romanism False,” 198, 199.
and Christian character.” For him the Irish in particular were “anti-American, anti-Protestant, and anti-Christian,” controlled by an alien clergy “whose will is supreme and government absolute.” Lore recognized “no class of immigrants whose influence is so great, and brought to bear so immediately and directly upon our political and religious institutions.”

In 1868, an officer of the American and Foreign Christian Union set forth a scenario which had “Romanism established and sustained by law” and Protestants driven to revolution “within twenty years,” unless decisive Protestant action turned the tide. An earlier piece attacked the Catholic press as subservient to the hierarchy and antithetical to journalistic freedom. The article diverged, however, from the usual portrayal of Irish Catholicism as a monolithic, clerically directed force by exploiting tensions between the church and Irish nationalists, attempting to capitalize on actual conflict within the community.

No issue exercised the pens of contributors more than education. In 1840 (later Bishop) Edmund Janes called upon Methodists to vie for control of schools and their power to shape national identity. “The question is simply this,” he said,

Who shall possess and exert this power? Shall it be yielded up to the irreligious, to infidels, to Roman Catholics? Shall they employ it in the service of antichrist, and the overthrow of Christianity? No, in the name of God, we say, No!

From 1841 through the end of the period, the MQR reacted to attempts by New York’s Bishop Hughes and others to break the evangelical hold on public education. Many believed that Catholics were attacking the Word of God, motivated by fear of exposing their church to the scrutiny of Scripture. Said one writer, “Antichrist and atheism . . . together assail the teachings of the Bible, and endeavor to wrest it from our children.” Challenged, but undefeated, “Evangelical religion . . . will still live,” even if only “by the blood of the saints.”

Abel Stevens (1870) was confident that public schools could assimilate Catholic students through a social environment hostile to Catholicism’s alien culture. Though formidable, “Popery dissolves under the influence of American institutions.” He called on Methodism, largest of the Pro-

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80 Ibid., 593, 594.
82 Ibid., “Roman Catholic Press,” 72-75.
83 Ibid., 81-85.
86 The Claims of Romanism,” 552; see the review of George B. Cheever, Right of the Bible in our Public Schools, MQR, Vol. XXXVI; Fourth Series, Vol. VI, No. 3 (July 1854), 482.
87 Stevens, “Romanism and the Common School System,” 204, 205.
testant bodies, to lead the battle for common schools geared toward producing Protestant Americans.

Concerns over Irish immigration and Catholic expansion demanded resistance to "the devices of Romanism," in a "spirit of Christian patriotism." But resistance was not enough. Protestants must put aside their internecine quarrels and unite to "overthrow . . . the political-religious conspiracy of Rome." A monolithic Rome might overpower a fragmented Protestantism, but against a united front "Popery would soon go to destruction." In 1845 the Evangelical Alliance seemed to be a promising way to achieve such cooperation.

The juxtaposition of optimism and fear, triumphalism and hysteria, expressed the way Methodist writers saw their church, their nation, and their future. They ran a strong race in pursuit of their evangelical vision, but they were looking over their shoulders at other runners, whose contrasting visions seemed to endanger both the race and life itself.

T. M. Eddy saw Methodism as the integrating force which could transform the ethnically diverse population of the east. He believed that the spirit of Methodist worship produced "a fraternal union in the very depths of the heart. With that feeling passed away national and sectional prejudices." Beyond merely uniting the "chaotic elements of the new society," Methodist preachers "infused a sound morality" among people living "in a state of almost semi-barbarism." But this sanguine picture of Methodism's role on the frontier could not cope with the frustrating developments in urban America.

D. D. Lore cried out for an expanded mission to immigrant Irish Catholics. Acknowledging the special problems of Protestant urban ministry, Lore insisted that "difficulties in a way of access to Irish Romanists" not be "used as an excuse for doing nothing."

The Irishman is not so unapproachable as many suppose. He is warm-hearted, susceptible, and generous by nature, impulsive and excitable, it is true, but let us excite him and move his impulses toward the good and beautiful. We believe there are more open avenues to the Irishman's heart than to those which beat in the bosoms of other nations. We ought at this moment to have in every city of our land missions to the Irish.

Even at the end of this period, the vision of an evangelical republic remained strong, but always with the accompanying fear that Irish Catholic immigrants were undermining that vision. The similarities of this relation-
ship to that of Irish Methodism to its Catholic environment, even when differences and nuances are acknowledged, amounts to the transplanting of religious and cultural dynamics to the new world. The clash of visions was to be played out in a larger and more complex arena, but the fundamental relationship would remain.