The Society of St. Vincent de Paul as an emerging social phenomenon in mid-nineteenth century Ireland.

James Gerard Martin

Master of Arts Thesis
National College of Industrial Relations

Supervisor: Mr. M. Maguire M.A.

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"ALMS, 'TIS NAMED, AND BEGGARS WE"

ABSTRACT

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A voluntary organisation inspired by the motivation of Christian charitable action which has - despite the competition of more sophisticated organisations and the development of the welfare state - survived for over a century and a half, deserves attention.

The fundamental work of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul was, and is, visitation of 'the poor' in their own homes. While this is a reasonable notion in present times, the lifestyle of the first members of the Society would have normally precluded such contact with the class that the nineteenth century Poor Laws branded as 'paupers'.

However there were also religious, economic and political factors in the establishment of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Ireland in 1844. In the aftermath of the granting of Catholic Emancipation, and in the rise of the 'Young Ireland' movement, the evolution of such a grouping comprised in the main of young educated and articulate Catholic middle, or upper-class, men was a phenomenon which, in this dissertation, has now been appraised from primary and secondary material.

Perhaps the most significant impact on the growth of the organisations was the Great Famine - which occurred within twelve month's of the Society's foundation, and caused the embryonic body to develop at a pace that could not have been anticipated. There was a subsequent hiatus, which took the form of a re-entrenchment following this calamitous event, but the Society subsequently extended its range of activities to encompass educational and allied projects.

This thesis found that the establishment of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Ireland was more than a social phenomenon reflective of mid-nineteenth century philanthropic or altruistic awareness.
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PREFACE

As we approach the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Ireland, we might pause to consider the number of men [and women, since the nineteen-sixties] who have given 'their time, their possessions and themselves' in an attempt to alleviate need - of any type.

The first President suggested, in 1845, that there was almost no limits to the progress of the Society - that this progress has been well achieved is due in no small measure to those members who, week in, week out, have carried on the role commenced in that first year of the Great Famine.

The work of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is generally invisible to the Irish people, until, that is, there is a call to the Society for help. It seems improbable that there will be any less need for such help in future years, and, as was said in the years immediately after the Famine, 'the mission is not come to a conclusion as yet'.

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In collecting together the records of these early members and the very limited archival material on which this thesis has been based, I acknowledge my debt to current members, and staff, of the Society for their generous help.

My thanks are also due to the library staff and archivists at the many locations listed in the Bibliography, and also to the members of the Woodlock and Willis families whom I now count as good friends.

I owe a particular debt to my Supervisor, Mr. Martin Maguire, for his patience, and for his advice which he gave so freely.

My family have 'lived' with the Society for so many years that this thesis is but another facet of their loyalty to, and admiration for, Saint Vincent; however they also deserve my thanks.

Gerry Martin,
Dublin,
30th September 1993
INTRODUCTION

The title, 'Alms, 'tis named and beggars we", is taken from a poem written by a co-founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, at the time of the Great Famine of mid-nineteenth century Ireland.

John O'Hagan, the author, was the archetypal 'Young Irelander', a member of the political grouping which saw Daniel O'Connell's repeal movement as stagnant and which offered revolutionary nationalism as an alternative. 1 Non-sectarian, in the mould of the United Irishmen of the late eighteenth century 2 , the Young Ireland movement was described as infusing O'Connell's campaign with a sense of 'passion and self-sacrifice rather than merely of reason and self-interest'. 3

O'Hagan was a regular contributor to the 'Nation', the Young Ireland journal, and was offered, but rejected, partnership in the 'Tablet' newspaper 4 , which Catholic publication features later in this thesis. John O'Hagan's friendship with Charles Gavan Duffy, Thomas Davis, John Dillon, has been well chronicled but not O'Hagan and Duffy's involvement with the Society of St.

2 Sean Cronin, Irish Nationalism. (Dublin, 1980). p.67
Vincent de Paul [hereafter referred to as 'SVP', or as 'the Society'].

To instance the close friendship it can be recited that, just months before the first meeting of the SVP in Dublin (1844), O'Hagan had taken a holiday with Gavan Duffy and Denis Florence McCarthy, the poet, touring the south of Ireland, and finishing their journey at Derrynane, Co. Kerry, the family home of Daniel and John O'Connell. Then, twelve months later - immediately after the Society's first general meeting in July 1845 - O'Hagan, Duffy, John Martin and John Mitchel went on holiday to county Donegal. 5

John O'Hagan was also, in many ways, the archetypal member of the early SVP, educated by the Jesuits and at Trinity College, qualified as a barrister, continued his membership of the Society when he went to London, became involved with Dublin's Catholic University, and who maintained his association with the SVP for, at least, thirty years. He was professionally successful, becoming a Judge of the Land Commission.

O'Hagan was credited with authorship of the first published SVP Report in 1846 6, and was identified as a

5 Ibid., pp.120-121: John O'Hagan ('Sliave Gullion'), 'Ulster in the Summer of 1845', in Irish Monthly, (1913), cited in Brendan O'Cathaoir, John Blake Dillon, Young Irishman, (Blackrock [Co.Dublin], 1990), p.199n
6 Irish Monthly, Vol.XX, No.227, (May 1892), p.258
member of the Council of Ireland, or Superior Council, of the Society, as late as 1874. 

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This thesis will show that, despite a very specific objective of 'self-sanctification' of the members through works of charity, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has been part of three distinct but complementary systems - religious, political and social.

Daniel Murray, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, who already had a significant role in each of these 'systems', was not present at the birth of the SVP, but can be given credit for creating the climate which made the introduction of the organisation possible. Dr. Murray's contribution to the Society is assessed later, as is the involvement of the other nineteen co-founders.

The SVP was, at least initially, a youthful organisation with the majority of its co-founders in their twenties, and the two eldest being not more than fifty five years old. As far as can be researched, all of the co-founders were born outside Dublin, and this rural influence completes our 'identikit' picture of well-to-do males, property-owning, college educated......and Roman Catholic.

7 SVP, Council of Ireland. Minutes, (hereafter referred to as 'SVP Minutes', unless otherwise noted), 1874
The latter attribute was, of course, particularly significant, just fifteen years after Catholic Emancipation had removed many restrictions on Catholics in Great Britain and Ireland. This new milieu, and the accompanying social conditions, is considered in this thesis, as is the 19th century legislative approach to 'relief' of the poor.

Many writers have addressed the notion of confident Roman Catholics in post-Emancipation Ireland but such enquiry is perhaps a half century too late since the emergent Catholic middle-class is rightly a feature of the late eighteenth century, where success - and wealth - was achieved through 'trade'. The persona of the first members of the SVP is reflective of a confidence acquired much earlier than 1844.

It is the influence of the middle-classes - both Catholic and Protestant - at this time which is of particular interest to our theme, and we have an opportunity.


through the reports of the Association for the Relief of Distressed Protestants [ARDP], as well as those of the SVP, to reflect on the similarities of aspirations and goals.

Many of the organisations set up by the 'new' Roman Catholics mirrored those already in place and operated by the Established and other churches, or those stated to be non-sectarian, and many hospital, school and welfare charities were for over a century to be described as either 'Protestant' or 'Catholic'. Perhaps the most laconic comment on this competitive feature comes from Louis M. Cullen, when he comments that the new Catholic confidence and belligerency may 'have owed something to the earlier confidence and belligerency of the Protestant churches. 11

The Dublin co-founders of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul had looked to the organisation in France, and to London, for the structure that was to be the Irish SVP; this fraternity, as we shall treat, had an established structure which would owe nothing to any other Irish group, and which had the particular value of being an internationally recognised charity.

The initial 'competition', with the Saint-Simoniens of France, and, in Ireland, with the other Christian

denominations, was significant to foundation but, was, in the event, short-lived, and the SVP went on to establish a long-term, and independent existence of its own.

The 'political' was often at variance with the 'religious' in the 19th century but, save for the period of suppression of the Society in France [1861-1870] 12, and in Spain [1868-1875] 13, there was co-existence between the voluntary group and the various civil authorities, even to the extent of personal contributions from state dignitaries 14, but there were to be accusations that the SVP operated as a secret society. 15

The social agenda - the work for the poor - is the most obvious aspect of the Society's work to consider. In many ways the successes in this area, both in the first decade of existence and in the late 20th century have been the cause of embarrassment; 'getting back to normal' after the Irish Famine typified the wish to relegate the alleviation of social need to a secondary status. This dichotomy, between the personal self-sanctification of the members through works of charity, and the philanthropic relief of the poor, is examined later.

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14 Donation of twenty five Guineas from Edward, Prince of Wales, in SVP Minutes, 12th June 1865
Sources

The Society in Ireland had not, in years past, seen the retention of documents as a priority - it may be that the emphasis on confidentiality in regards to families helped, had caused records to be destroyed, and the undoubted independence of Conferences [branches] was typified by a reluctance to place old papers in a central archive.

This said, the author of this thesis has had full co-operation from all sections of the Society in the attempt to locate early Minute books and other records.

An abortive attempt to write a history of the Irish SVP in 1945 did produce some short accounts of individual Conferences, but no full chronicle has yet been completed. Contained in the 1945 papers was a Minute book of the Irish Council of Ireland [Superior Council], 1851-1866, with a copy of the Minutes of the first twelve months of the Society's existence (1844/45) attached. This was a vital source for this current work.

Total access was permitted to the writer, at the Paris Archives, by the former President General of the Society, M. Amin de Tarrazi, and the papers therein revealed hitherto unknown details covering the 'missing' period
1845-1850 - with some important references to the Society's involvement in the Irish Famine.

It was hoped to find that local Conference records had been deposited in diocesan or parish archives for safe keeping, and the author contacted all the members of the Irish Roman Catholic Hierarchy, with a request for details of any such papers. While episcopal response was good, the exercise unfortunately confirmed the feared anticipation that little material existed. Down and Connor diocesan archive was an exception and this holds a particularly large quantity of SVP records, but relating exclusively to the 20th century; Dublin diocesan archives do, however, hold two very important letters from Redmund O'Carroll, the first President of the Society, to Archbishop Daniel Murray.

During the course of research for this thesis, a detailed biography for each of the nineteen co-founders was constructed; this was achieved with a varying degree of success. Acknowledgement has been made in the 'Preface' to various sources, sufficient here to state that the exercise produced the co-operation of a most helpful collection of individuals, all of whom responded generously, many being sourced, initially, from the telephone directory!

It is unfortunate that while most of the first members came from large families, and were married, little
contact was maintained by the SVP with their later
generations; indeed while the co-founders have left us a
thriving Society, they have not themselves left traceable
direct descendants!
CHAPTER 1
PROLOGUE

Introduction

Frederic Ozanam criticised a new Conference (branch) of the Society on one occasion when the members enquired about the records of other, earlier, Conferences; they sought the precedents of earlier days to guide their actions.

Ozanam retorted that such documents had been lost, but, in any event, this 'summary of our work contained, perhaps, a note of pride'. ¹ In essence, the members should look to the future, and not be a hostage to the ways other members had performed.

Despite this call for humility, the note of pride is still evident in the number of subsequent publications that have been issued which aspire to being true narrations of the origins of the French Society. However the absence of Minutes of the early meetings has presented a vacuum which various authors have addressed in different fashions.

The Irishman, Charles K. Murphy, is, perhaps, one of the few to approach the matter of foundation head-on, when he

¹ Murphy, Spirit of the Society, p.27
describes in some detail the controversy which arose after Frederic Ozanam's death (1853), in relation to 'who should rightly be called the founder'. Since the debate reached the press it was an embarrassment to the Society's Council General; however, following a meeting with M. Emmanuel Bailly, the first President, the Council published a note [in the Society's Bulletin] stating:

"...that from the beginning the Society has been an anonymous body, created, developed and continued by the collective zeal of all its members."  

Frederic Ozanam had, himself, loomed large over the work of the SVP in later years, mainly resulting from the considerable volume of his correspondence which has now been edited and published, and from his many biographers. Charles Murphy, again, is perceptive when he points out that relatively little of Ozanam's writings relates directly to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.  

A number of references in more recent times refer to the 'secret of Ozanam' or to 'Ozanam's mustard seed', with the implied suggestion of enigma or mystery, but few might dispute that the triumph of the Frenchman, and his

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2 Charles K. Murphy, Humble of Heart, (Cork, 1953), pp.8-9
3 Ibid., p.9
4 Ibid., p.4
5 Rev Mons Baunard, Ozanam in His Correspondence, (Australia, 1911), p.xxii. tells us that it was Pope Pius X who coined this phrase: 'the mustard seed sown by Ozanam in 1833 is to-day a mighty tree. It extends its branches throughout the entire world and is the rallying centre for all the missions of the earth'.
co-founders, was in the growth and permanence of the organisation which first met, in Paris, in April 1833, as the 'Conference of Charity' 6; the seven originators having now developed into one million members, in 126 countries world-wide. 7

The Co-founders

Later generations of 'Vincentians', but not Frederic Ozanam himself, have tended to elevate this man at the expense of the other initial members, but, indeed, we must remember that the role of first President of the fledgling organisation fell, not to Ozanam, but to Emmanuel Joseph 'Papa' Bailly, a father-figure to the young co-founders of the SVP. Bailly was the publisher of the Tribune Catholique, which merged, in 1834, with l'Univers Religieux. This was the origin of l'Univers of which Bailly was one of the chief editors until succeeded by the conservative, and reactionary, Louis Veuillot in 1842. 8 The office of the Tribune was the setting of the first SVP meeting.

Bailly had founded, under the Restoration, the Society of Good Studies (La Société des Bonnes Études), which became, after suppression in 1830, the Conference of

6 Kathleen O'Meara, Frederic Ozanam; His Life and Works, (New York, 1878), p.61
7 SVP International Plenary Meeting, Paris, November 1992
8 Rev. Mons Baunard, Ozanam, p.xxii
History, from whose ranks emerged the members of the future Society of St. Vincent de Paul. 9

These young members included Félix Clavé, Jules Devaux, François Lallier, Paul Lamache, Auguste Le Taillandier, Léon Le Prévost, and Frédéric Ozanam. However, there is some dispute about the number who attended the first meeting at Bailly's office, with some authors, particularly Schimberg, suggesting that Le Prévost was not then present.

The provocation of these godly students, in a climate of opinion which rejected Christianity as an outmoded concept, has long been told and retold. In a response to the challenge of being asked to 'Show us your works', these young men formed a group dedicated to 'the service of God in the persons of the poor, whom they were to visit at their own dwellings and assist by every means in their power'. 10

What has, perhaps, been missing from accounts of the formation of this 'Conference of Charity' is the fact that, as O'Meara (1878) reminds us, the students 'were somewhat perplexed at first from not knowing any poor people to visit' ! 11 However, Devaux already knew the

9 Ibid.; O'Meara, Ozanam, p.55
10 O'Meara, Ozanam, p.61; Albert Paul Schimberg, The Great Friend: Frederick Ozanam, (Milwaukee, 1946), p.77
11 Ibid., p.62
Sister of Charity, Soeur Rosalie Rendu 12, whom Bailly advised the students to visit 13:

"She received the young apostles of charity like the mother that she was, was overjoyed at their idea of the moral help they proposed, gave them much valuable advice as to the way of dealing with her beloved poor, and a list of needy and deserving families to visit."

The Society's commentators disagree on the relationship of the early SVP members with this exceptional Sister, who, we are told, had served the poor of Paris for more than thirty years 14, but 'Papa' Bailly's wife had already collaborated with Rosalie Rendu, so little introduction would have been needed. On a practical note, O'Meara 15 points out that the new organisation was too poor to have bons [tickets for provisions, coal, etc], so Soeur Rosalie sold them some of hers.

For more information, we should rely on the annals of the Sisters of Charity [later, the Daughters of Charity]:

"In the history of the Daughters of Charity it is related that among those who assisted them during the [cholera] plague of 1832 were the same young men who a few months later were to join in founding the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. All of this group were from the School of Law, with the exception of Devaux, who was a medical student." 16

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12 James Patrick Derum, Apostle in a Top Hat, (Michigan, 1960), p.53
13 O'Meara, Oszarom, p.62
15 Ibid., (such 'relief tickets' are discussed in Chapter 7, and illustrated in Appendix E)
16 Derum, Apostle, p.59
That these young men might have had some earlier experience in assisting the poor is not currently recorded in the Society's chronicles, but the author of this thesis has discovered that Auguste Le Taillandier and some of the early recruits of the embryonic organisation had attended the Royal College at Juilly, outside Paris, then, as now, run by the Oratorian Fathers, and that 'l'action charitable' - the visitation of the local poor in their own homes - was already a feature of that school.

There is, however, some confusion in the detail suggested by a commemorative window in the College chapel which celebrates the connection:

"Ozanam fonde la Societe de St. Vincent de Paul aidé par sept élèves de Juilly"

There is a notable link between the Dublin SVP and the same Royal College since Thomas Woodlock, nephew of Bartholomew Woodlock (the first Irish Spiritual Director), attended Juilly from 1842 to 1850. 17

The early Paris Conference members worked amongst the poor of the quartier Mouffetard 18 in streets, in the parish of Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, which had witnessed 'les barricades' of 1830, but we have little knowledge of the extent, or depth, of poverty found there, other than that

17 Student Register, in Archive of Royal College, Juilly, France
18 Agnes Richomme, Soeur Rosalie, (Paris, undated)
suggested by the work of the Society's members. For instance, we learn from the letters of Frederic Ozanam that:

"Each member visited two or three families a week. Receiving-places were established for old clothes, old furniture, etc., also medical services were given. Another principal labour was procuring work for those who had none. The members interested themselves in all classes of the poor and miserable, from the infants in the creches to the condemned to death in the prisons; and they followed the funerals of those who died. 19

Little has changed! In fact, this account is reflective of the work which has continued, world-wide, to this day.

There were, however, also some activities peculiar to the nineteenth century, with particular emphasis on apprentices, garrison soldiers, and 'patronage'. 20 Additionally, the work of the Society of St. Francis Regis, in regularising marriages, and that of the Society of St. Francis Xavier, in the instruction of workers, was also supported. 21

It is difficult, at this distance, to equate the extent and type of poverty in France, in 1833, with that of London or Dublin eleven years later, although Ozanam's comments, whilst in England for the Great Exhibition, are relevant, and are recorded in Chapter 2.

20 Ibid., p. 82
Ozanam

Profound consideration of the life and works of Frederic Ozanam is outside the scope of this thesis. However, it is appropriate to make reference to the contribution of this man to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, although Ozanam's influence and authority stretched beyond the Society, in a short but enigmatic life.

Professor of Law, writer and politician, Ozanam, who was born in Milan on 23rd April 1813, is coupled with many notable French figures of the post-1830 period, including Montalembert, Lacordaire, Lamartine, Lamennais, Veuillot, Guizot. However the man is not an easy character to assess, and the considerable volume of Frederic's personal correspondence left to posterity, coupled with the wealth of biographical detail available, paints a rather confused picture. Certainly at the time of the foundation of the SVP, Ozanam was, despite his age, a melancholy figure, and a letter to his mother tells us that at just twenty one years of age, he was already disillusioned by life, leaving him 'sombre and grave as a man of forty years', as:

"...the more one comes in contact with men, the more one meets of immorality and egoism, pride among learned men, conceitedness among men of the world, intemperance among the people."

22 Coates, Letters, p.101
Years later Frederic, writing to his friend of 1833, François Lallier, again recites his depression:

"It is a little more than a week ago that the prolonged thinking on my miseries, interior and exterior, so thoroughly upset my spirit that I had come to an absolute impossibility of thinking or acting." 23

But he censures himself:

"And, indeed, see how we take delight in melancholy; first, because it is one way of occupying ourselves with ourselves; second, because in default of merits which we would find in ourselves to admire, we are happy, at least, to manifest grief for not having them. It is a feeling in appearance honourable." 24

Ozanam, in his writings, conveys the idea of a man with a mission, and, away from 'our little Society', he finds himself in a political world inhabited by Montalembert, Guizot, Chateaubriand, and church-men such as Lacordaire, Lamennais, Quelen. 25 Montalembert was an early influence, but by 1839 roles had been somewhat reversed, and it was the noble Count who was writing to Frederic to appeal for journal articles:

"I implore of you, give us a few fragments of your work, a few splinters of the monument that you are chiselling; I ask this service as of a friend and brother-in-arms, on whose sympathy I can count, as you must always count on mine." 26
Whether Frederic Ozanam ever met Montalembert's hero, Daniel O'Connell, is not recorded, although Ozanam did acknowledge having attended, on 10th February 1848, the obsequies in Paris, for the Irish Liberator, where John O'Connell - like his father an honorary member of the SVP - was fested by the youth of Paris:

"These great demonstrations have revived the languishing eagerness of Christian youth. We try to take profit of this occasion to organise a charitable work of Pius IX pence." 27

Ozanam's later role in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul appears anomalous, although he was seen to deputize for Bailly, and, subsequently, Gossin, at general meetings of the Society. 28

Frederic was a candidate for the French National Assembly in 1848, and received 16,000 votes, but was not elected.
29 His manifesto which sought rights - and justice - for workers was an early social charter, and was written within months of Marx's 'Communist Manifesto', and was taken up by Leo XIII in 'Rerum Novarum'. This should, perhaps, be considered as Ozanam's final testimony to the disadvantaged. 30

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27 Letter No.782 (trans.), Ozanam Correspondence, p.376
28 SVP Bulletins
The close companionship of those early weeks of the new Society was to cause difficulties in the acceptance of new members, and we read of conflict, with some of the originators resisting the first new recruit who wished to join their ranks. Even more so when the number of members had reached one hundred, and Ozanam was proposing that the founding Conference should divide - the meeting place having already been changed to accommodate the numbers attending. What have been described as 'bitter hostilities' ensued, and it was only in 1835 that the division was agreed, but subject to the holding of a general meeting of all conferences at least every month, under Bailly's presidency.  

This led to the establishment of the first Conference outside Paris, at Nimes, which, however, was described as a 'short lived' achievement. Success did follow later, and by 1843, ten years after institution, there were thirty eight Conferences in Paris, for 4,000 families, or 'cases', with 1,500 members; and in France, overall, there were then 131 Conferences, for 9,600 cases, and 4,000 active members, and the Society had spread to other lands.

31 Fagan, Eye of a Needle, pp.68-9
32 Murphy, Humble of Heart, p.25
New Territories

1836 saw the emergence of the first Conference outside France, in Rome; however this failed, and was restarted in 1842, with separate groups for Romans and for foreigners. This location is pertinent to our discussion, since we are made aware 33 of the poverty of that city by the work of the Anglo-Irish Princess Gwendaline Borghese with the victims of the momentous cholera epidemic, and by the student days of the SVP's Bartholomew Woodlock.

Conferences followed later in Belgium (1842) and in Turkey (1843), apparently through the instigation of expatriate Frenchmen.

England

There is no evidence available to this writer to suggest that the commencement of the Society in London in January 1844, and the foundation in Dublin in December 1844, are connected facts, although hearsay within the SVP has for many years pointed to the relationship. Before we explore the special circumstances of the Irish foundation it might now be pertinent to consider the events leading

33 See Chapter 5
to the earlier institution of the Society in the first city of the kingdom.

The inaugural meeting in Britain was held on Monday, 29th January 1844 at the Sabloniere Hotel, Leicester Square, London 'to take into consideration the necessity of establishing......a society similar to the one existing in France called the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. 34

This bland introduction, however, minimises the build-up orchestrated through the pages of the 'Tablet' newspaper by its Editor, Frederick Lucas.

Lucas, born to Quaker parents, had converted to the Roman Catholic church in 1839. Never conciliatory - a sympathetic commentator has suggested that his 'immediate success would have been greater had his controversial phraseology been less plain and vigorous' 35 - Lucas was to become a source of embarrassment to his new co-religionists in England, and he became more and more embroiled in Irish matters, siding with Archbishop McHale in the matter of the "Godless Colleges" and the "Charitable Bequests Act". Frederick Lucas moved eventually to Ireland (1850), bringing his newspaper with him, and he became Member of Parliament, for Meath, in 1852. 36

34 Minutes of the Brotherhood of St. Vincent de Paul, 29th January 1844
35 Peter Finlay SJ, 'Frederick Lucas', in Irish Monthly, Vol.XIV, (1886)
36 Ibid., pp.368-376
That Lucas was a significant figure is underlined by the comment of Charles Gavan Duffy, the SVP honorary member who was later to be Premier of Australia:

"Of the laymen who have written on Catholic politics and theological questions in recent times there are only two, Veuillot and Brownson, who, in my judgement, can be compared to him [Lucas] for power, originality of genius, and profound integrity of purpose." 37

'The Tablet', described by Lord Clarendon, the infamous Viceroy at Dublin, as 'one of the most virulent and most offensive newspapers in Europe' 38 was, none the less, a campaigning journal and, as early as 29th July 1843, Lucas had started a crusade for 'Catholic Charities'. This was followed up, a week later, by a four-column piece on 'The Christian Organization of Large Towns'.

This appeal for a new approach to 'charity' was apparently aired in the face of financial stringency caused by the imposition of Poor Law Rates - in England following the 1834 Act, and in Ireland following the equivalent 1838 legislation. The reduction in voluntary alms-giving is addressed elsewhere in this thesis in the context of the Irish 'Association for the Relief of Distressed Protestants' [hereafter referred to as the ARDP], but the Tablet opined:

37 Charles Gavan Duffy. The League of North and South, (London, 1886), p.31
38 Finlay. Lucas, p.372
"The Finance of Charity is itself an incident, we were going to say a most unimportant one, in the business where it now usurps uncontrolled dominion. Where Charity is, there alms will not be wanting. Where the proper dispositions exist towards the class to be relieved, there will be no lack of the pecuniary instrument of relief. On the other hand, where the right temper prevails not, where the poor are not loved or respected, where the rich are not animated by a spirit of penance, and where luxury, ostentation and Epicureanism have usurped the place of Christian and unostentatious liberality, there the funds must be wanting, the whole finance department must be disorganised, and the treasury helpless." 39

Frederic Lucas challenged those of his countrymen who flattered themselves that they were well-disposed to alms giving ‘they have brought themselves to think that their duties to the poor can be transacted convivially, and that, with the payment of certain annual coins, they can make over all other care to the vicarious or hired labour of others’. 40

The French Society of St. Vincent de Paul was quoted as an example to be imitated, not as a curiosity or as a novelty, but as a practical instance of what may be done ‘in circumstances quite as desperate as ours, and by hands certainly as incompetent ......’ 41

This challenge to readers was again followed up one week later under the heading 'How to promote charity'. In this instance Lucas emphasised the responsibility of the laity. Since the officials of the empire could not be

39 Tablet. 5th August 1843
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
relied upon for aid or active measure of justice, and since their ecclesiastics could, as yet, not provide the means 'which are in full use in every well-constituted Catholic country', the 'Tablet' urged the need for increased exertions on the part of the laity:

"...increased exertion can only come from increased zeal; increased zeal from increased piety; and increased piety can only be expected from a great and decided increase in the means used to augment its amount and its fervour." 42

1844

The next tangible comments came in the two issues of the paper in January 1844, just ahead of the SVP first meeting, although one assumes that the arrangements for this gathering had already been made at that time. In the issue of the 'Tablet' of 20th January 1844 Lucas emphasises the need for Christian zeal, but one week later, feeling, apparently, that he had exaggerated the necessary qualifications for membership, the Editor restates the simple necessity for a 'clear notion', to have the venture succeed.

Frederick Lucas regarded the reality of the youthful nature of the original Paris Conference as 'an accident, or more truly - a Providence', and recites the Society's

42 Tablet, 12th August 1843
Report in regarding the advantage of youthful membership as a valuable training:

"The Society of St. Vincent de Paul habituates us early in life to the practise of Charity. It thus prepares a generation of men who will have learned, at the age of generous dispositions, to see in the world other things besides themselves; who will have taken a sufficiently near view of the miseries of humanity, to be able to apply a remedy when the time comes for them also to occupy a responsible position in the world." 43

'The Tablet' in the course of this last contribution suggested that this 'Brotherhood' had already put down roots in Dublin 'under the powerful patronage of the venerable Archbishop of that metropolis'. The journal had apparently mistaken the reintroduction of the Vincentian, or Lazarist, Fathers into Ireland as the arrival of the lay Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Father Ignatius Spencer and George Jonas Wigley

Some accounts of the foundation of the English SVP have ignored the prompting's of the 'Tablet', and have given honour to Fr. Ignatius Spencer and/or George Wigley.

Ignatius (George) Spencer was a Passionist Father, but, perhaps more significant to English Catholics, he was also brother of Lord Althorp, Chancellor of the Exchequer

43 Ibid., 27th January 1844
in Grey's Government 44 [and, incidentally, a kinsman of the present Princess of Wales.] Spencer had studied at the English College in Rome, ahead of Bartholomew Woodlock's time in that city. 45

Lord Althorp, who, unlike his brother, had not converted to the Roman Catholic Church, is remembered as introducing the Irish Church Temporalities Bill (1833), which proposed the radical overhaul of the tithe system in Ireland which had up to then benefited the Established Church. 46

Ignatius Spencer was Dean of St. Mary's College, Oscott, and in September 1842, Monsieur Adolphe Baudon (later to become President General of the SVP) when visiting England, sought a meeting with the priest, with the result that Father Ignatius wrote an account of the Society in the 'Catholic Magazine' of January 1843. Recommending the Society to English Catholics, he advised them not to be prejudiced because it was of French origin! 47

A subsequent account tells us that the article 'did not appear to have attracted a great deal of attention, for,

45 B. Woodlock to Mrs. Mary Woodlock ( his mother), Boulogne, 26th October 1836, Letters of Bartholomew Woodlock, Clongowes Wood College Archive.
47 Centenary Celebrations 1833-1933, (London. 1933), SVP
writing to M. Baudon on February 13th, 1843, Fr. Spencer says that he has received only one letter about it... 48

It may be of significance to note that the President of Oscott College, from 1843 to 1847, was the enigmatic Rev. George Errington 49, later to be coadjutor to the Archbishop of Westminster; Errington was brother of Michael Errington, third President of SVP in Ireland.

George Wigley is less known but, at nineteen, may have been the youngest founding member in London. An account written in 1913 tells us:

"He was born in Lancashire in 1825, and, his father and mother having died while he was a child, his aunt, Miss Wigley, took him to France. Later she sent him to Stonyhurst College, which he entered in 1837. After finishing his studies there, he went to Paris and entered 'Ecole des Beaux Arts' to study for his chosen profession of architect." 50

The author suggests that Wigley attended the lectures at the Sorbonne of Professor Frederic Ozanam, who was as at that time delivering a course on the 'History of Civilisation in the Fifth Century', and that, on returning to London, he commenced architectural practice, also acting as London correspondent for Louis Veuillot's l'Univers, to which journal reference has already been

48 Francis J. Doyle, The First Hundred Years 1845-1945, (Manchester, 1945). SVP
50 Report of National Celebrations for Ozanam Centenary, (Manchester, 1913). SVP
made. The 1913 biographer assumed that it was Wigley who wrote the various articles, outlined above, for the 'Tablet', but later commentators have agreed that the author was most likely Lucas himself. The 1913 account also recounts that 'Ozanam, having heard much of the restlessness of workmen in England, was very anxious that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul should be established here, and he urged Wigley to do so'. However, and this fact would be significant, it is not known if Wigley had been a member of a Paris Conference of the Society.

Wigley's age would suggest that he was studying in Paris in 1843 when, in that year, the 'Cercle Catholique' had been founded, and it may have been here that he encountered Ozanam. This organisation had as its objective the creation of a centre for Catholic young men coming to Paris for their studies. A library had been formed and lectures were given on literary and scientific subjects, where Ozanam, Lacordaire and Montalembert came in turn to contribute.

The Brotherhood of St. Vincent de Paul

Frederic Lucas attended the first London meeting of the Society at Leicester Square, and was encouraged to become

51 Centenary Celebrations 1833-1933. (London. 1933), SVP
52 SVP Manchester. 1913 Report: Ozanam was coupling his concern for workers with his antipathy for the English Protestant establishment - see Fagan Thesis pp.110-11
53 O'Meara, Ozanam, p.162
the inaugural President of the English organisation; however, though he chaired the gathering on that occasion, he declined the leadership role, and the proprietor of the Sabloniere Hotel, Charles Pagliano, a well respected figure in the Italian community in London, was proposed to lead the group.

By the time of the first General Meeting [June 1844] the Society of St Vincent de Paul in London had grown to an active membership of seventy seven men in five districts, viz. Warwick Street, Spanish Place, Lincoln’s Inn, Kensington, and St. George’s-in-the-Fields.

The time had also come for the Society's formation in Ireland . . . . .

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54 Finlay, Lucas, p. 371
55 Minutes of the Brotherhood of St. Vincent de Paul, 29th January 1844
56 Centenary Celebrations 1833-1933, (London, 1933), SVP
CHAPTER 2
IRELAND, 1844

Introduction

Charles Dickens's 'Oliver Twist' is a fictional account of London at the time of which we write. Dickens's biographer tells of the real background to the novel; the closely packed 'rookeries' and tenements, the dens and courtyards. Describing the London of the 1840's as very much the London of the eighteenth century, we are told of one survey which found:

"...that, in the area of St. Giles, the rookery close to the Seven Dials and immortalised by Hogarth in 'Gin Lane', 2,850 people crowded into just 95 small and decrepit houses." 1

Dickens's novels showed a preoccupation with sanitary conditions and the diseases which emanated from the 'cess lakes'; but the author was only one of a number of writers and observers with concern for, or fear of, the poor who existed with 'a vast open cloaca lying in their midst'.


1 Peter Ackroyd, Dickens. (London, 1990), p.402 (Survey source not defined)
awareness of social deprivation and remedy as already described in the prompting's of the 'Tablet' newspaper. 2

But how well informed were the early members of the Vincent de Paul Society in London, or in Dublin, of such conditions?

Dr. Simon, an English worker for public health reform, and not, as far as we are aware, a member of the SVP, saw the poor as a race apart '.....swarms of men and women who have yet to learn that human beings should dwell differently from cattle', but, again, Dickens's biographer points out that they were not a race apart:

"They lived in the next street or in an adjacent district, unseen and unknown by respectable men and women but there nevertheless, packed in houses very close to those of Regent Street or Hanover Square, the unseen host whose presence meant danger." 3

Dublin's 'Nation' newspaper, in reviewing the 'Christmas Carol, in 1844, set the tone of the time, and suggested that:

"Charles Dickens looks upon England, and he sees niggardly wealth and menacing poverty side by side, casting squints at each other, which promises battles." 4

Frederic Ozanam visited London at the time of the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace and while there he was brought to meet the Irish poor in their hovels in the

2 See Chapter 1
3 Ackroyd, Dickens, p.403
4 Nation, 6th January 1844
slums of the Metropolis. His subsequent letters describe his wonder 'at a wretchedness far worse than anything he had seen in Paris or in Rome'.

While the second Conference of the SVP in London was, indeed, at Regent Street, we are regrettably left without a description by the members of the conditions they experienced in their work; however we are more fortunate in having accounts of working conditions in Dublin.

Dr. Thomas Willis Senior, of whom we shall write in greater detail later, was, in many respects, the 'Papa Bailly' of the SVP in Ireland. The elderly Willis, an apothecary and a Fellow of the Statistical Society, had, like Chadwick, a particular concern with the sanitary conditions of, in this case, Dublin; and there was no 'unseen host' since Willis lived, and worked, in close proximity to the poverty of St. Michan's parish.

If outward appearances are important, Dr. Willis's house, situated just a few steps from the newly-built Four Courts, was well situated on Ormond Quay, but behind his house lay the teeming populace which had congregated around the Ormond and Smithfield markets.

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5 Letter of Frederic Ozanam, cited in Report of National Celebrations for Ozanam Centenary (Manchester, 1913), SVP, p.80
The housing situation had deteriorated since the 1800 Act of Union and the Reverend Thomas Jordan pointed out, in a paper to the Dublin Statistical Society in 1856, that 21,197 families were living in, so called, fourth-class accommodation in Dublin in 1841, and this had risen to 28,039 in 1851.  The Census Commissioners had defined fourth-class house accommodation as comprising 'all mud cabins having only one room'. 

Doctor Thomas Willis recited the detail of the 1841 enumeration when he tells us that of 49,511 families in the city of Dublin, 23,197, or very nearly one-half of the entire number of families, had the 'wretched and pestiferous accommodation' of a single room, and that of these families 12,050 had this accommodation in houses of the first class! 

We are fortunate in Willis's analyses of his parish, and of the other data available, in that the relative density of various areas is given, and we find St. Michan's to have been significantly disadvantaged:

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7 Cited in Helen Burke, *The People and the Poor Law in 19th Century Ireland*, (Littlehampton, 1987), p.159
8 Thomas Willis, *Facts Connected with the Social and Sanitary Conditions of the Working Classes in the City of Dublin*, (Dublin, 1845), p.28
9 Ibid., pp.30-1
## COMPARATIVE TABLE - LONDON AND DUBLIN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Inhabitants</th>
<th>Houses</th>
<th>Persons in each house</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London (within the walls)</td>
<td>54,626</td>
<td>7,791</td>
<td>7.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London city</td>
<td>1,873,676</td>
<td>250,908</td>
<td>7.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Andrew, Holborn, and St. George Martyr, Saffron Hill</td>
<td>38,790</td>
<td>3,876</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Giles, in the Fields and St. George, Bloomsbury</td>
<td>54,292</td>
<td>4,959</td>
<td>10.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin city</td>
<td>232,726</td>
<td>20,109</td>
<td>11.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Nicholas'</td>
<td>11,955</td>
<td>863</td>
<td>13.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Luke's Parish</td>
<td>4,808</td>
<td>331</td>
<td>14.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Catherine</td>
<td>19,871</td>
<td>1,365</td>
<td>14.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Michan's</td>
<td>23,793</td>
<td>1,381</td>
<td>16.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:**
Thomas Willis, *Facts Connected with the Social and Sanitary Conditions of the Working Classes in the City of Dublin*, (Dublin, 1845),

It is of particular value to compare Willis's figures with Whitelaw's 1798 census of the city of Dublin, where the average number of inhabitants per house showed St. Luke's Parish at 15.95; St. Catherine's at 13.62; and St. Michan's at 15.94. Clearly the housing situation in the Parish of St. Luke had improved, while in the other two parishes the position had deteriorated. 10

living patterns following the Union is emphasised by the reversal of densities.

The Poor

But did overcrowding generate 'poverty', and who, indeed, were 'the poor'?

We have no shortage of contemporary descriptions of poverty, of paupers, of the poor; but, so often the term was qualified, was rationalised - with the first report of the SVP in Cork telling of 'our deserving and industrious poor'. 11

Indeed such diverse recitals continue even to this day. Some Conferences had difficulty, however, in dealing with the onslaught of the poor, and the fledgling Sligo organisation reported that the 'objects of the Society were so little understood that immediately on its formation, applications from hundreds of people were received, the greater number of whom, were not those contemplated for relief by the Society'. 12

This is an instance of the very occasional use of the word 'relief' in the rhetoric of the SVP; it seems that

11 One Hundred Years of Charity 1846-1946. (Cork. 1946), SVP
12 One Hundred Years of Charity: 1860-1960. (Sligo. 1977) SVP
the word, so redolent of the language of the Poor Law, was replaced by the less emotive terms of 'assistance' or 'help'.

As an example of the contemporary living environment, we might refer to Mary Aikenhead, foundress of the Irish Sisters of Charity, who, in a letter to the Government's 1833 Commission of Inquiry, gave a vivid description of the conditions of the Irish poor in that year, shortly after another cholera epidemic:

"It would be painful to describe the instances of heartrending misery which we daily witness. Many in the prime of life are reduced to debility from want of food, subsisting for forty-eight hours on one meal, without sufficient clothes to cover them, their wretched furniture and tattered garments being pledged as a last resort....We found some in the agonies of death, without the means of procuring even a drink; many perished without medical aid......The wages are so low, and the rent of their wretched houses so high, that they have not the means to procure wholesome food....Excessive poverty produces a want of cleanliness which aggravates their misery. The lanes and streets are filled with filth in Ringsend and Irishtown; there are no sewers; no attention is paid to the ventilation of the houses, and the poor are obliged to buy even the water which they drink; it is of the worst description, and tends to promote disease as much by its scarcity as by its quality. The poor have no bed clothes; we have often seen them expire on dirty straw, and we are frequently obliged to furnish them with covering before we can approach to administer their wants. their suffering from want of fuel, want of water, and want of covering, can only be credited by those who have witnessed them." 13

Twelve years later Doctor Thomas Willis, the SVP co-founder, described a tour through St. Michan's Parish,

13 Emancipation Centenary Celebration Report. (Dublin, 1929), SVP
and, inevitably, concentrated on the sanitary conditions of the district. The good doctor wrote of the absence of 'necessaries', but even where these existed there often was not a sewer connection, but must be carried through the house:

"There are no public necessaries, nor urinaries; water-closets are scarcely known, unless in public buildings; there may not be above a dozen in the entire district." 14

Most tenants depended on the kettle and broken jar for a water-supply, and Willis commented that 'nothing marks their poverty more than when congregating round the public fountain'. The shortage of, and difficulty of collecting, water meant that a scanty supply had several uses. We are told that:

"I have frequently noticed this filthy stuff remaining within the rooms, and have been invariably told that it was yet wanted. It had first been used, perhaps, to wash the man's shirt, and some little white linen; it was then used on coarser things, and even again put in requisition to mop out the room floor, or stairs....the most offensive stench to be met with is that which emanates from these filthy suds; and I find that when these rooms or stairs are ever washed, it is with this noisome semi-fluid poison." 15

Unlike Mary Aikenhead, Thomas Willis gives plaudits to the city's scavengers who are 'incessantly at work in the streets occupied by the poor; indeed I believe they sweep

14 Willis, Social and Sanitary Conditions. p.42
15 Ibid., p.43
the streets of the entire parish daily, not excepting Sunday'. 16

Strangely, the advent of cholera or contagious fever caused some improvement in conditions, even if short-lived; 'boards of health are then formed, parochial officers, inspectors, and visitants nominated, who day after day, during the continuance of the alarm, visited the back courts and streets, caused the yards to be cleaned, the cess-pools emptied, etc.' 17

The Condition of the Poor

Poverty was, of course, often looked upon as akin to a criminal state, rather than a misfortune, and the workhouse, the absolute or ultimate refuge for paupers, was in many ways seen as being a more extreme abode than prison, and we deal with this aspect in more detail in Chapter 3.

The less than homogeneous group that the members of the SVP visited could have had the appellation of 'idle, feckless, failures', or 'distressed', 'industrious', 'deserving'. 18

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16 Ibid., p. 45
17 Ibid., p. 47
18 Dee Cook, Rich Law, Poor Law, (Milton Keynes, 1989)
Patrick Colquhoun, a disciple of Jeremy Bentham, separates poverty, 'a most necessary and indispensable ingredient in society', from mere indigence, the latter condition implying 'want, misery and distress'. Indigence was stated to be:

"...that state of any one who is destitute of the means of subsistence, and is unable to labour to procure it to the extent nature requires. The natural source of subsistence is the labour of the individual; while that remains with him he is denominated poor; when it fails in whole or in part he becomes indigent." 19

This Benthamite view of social order was upheld by the 1834 English Poor Law, and the equivalent 1838 Irish Act. As May tells us 'while the Poor Law dealt with the pauperised, the impoverished were left to private charity'. 20

The work ethic of the day had produced this distinction, where work for its own sake was a virtue, and those without work were suspect, and the 'deserving poor' were, therefore, those:

"...who worked when they were able and would have been respectable if they could but were prevented from attaining this goal by no fault of their own. The undeserving poor were the chronically unemployed, the idle who ignored the commandments of society and sinned against the god of work." 21

19 Patrick Colquhoun, cited in Trevor May, An Economic and Social History of Britain 1760-1970. (Harlow (Essex). 1987). p.120
20 Ibid., p.121
These classifications did, of course, create frustration in the ranks of the poor, for, as we are asked, 'what incentive was there, after all, for workers to be sober, industrious and thrifty if, when recession struck, they received exactly the same treatment as those whose unemployment was apparently attributable to their personal faults?' 22

The language of the ARDP and the SVP was similar in addressing this difference, and in providing the 'incentive'. The deserving poor should be helped to restore their status, the undeserving poor being fit subjects only for the workhouse. 23

We are reminded that Edmund Burke made such a distinction about classification of the poor, but went further when he defined 'good charity' and 'bad charity':

"The poor are wage-earners who help to create the wealth of the community, they are well, and should, as far as material charity is concerned, be left alone. Bad charity tends to tempt into the indigent class; good charity, if they are in distress, prevents them falling into that class. The indigent are those who are habitually in want; good charity with adequate help raises them to self-support; bad charity with intermittent purposeless help degrades them to even lower degradation." 24

23 ARDP 7th Annual Report (1843); Report of SVP Conference of SS. Mary & Peter, Rathmines, dated 1st March 1846.
Despite what one might suppose, the new English Poor Law of 1834 did not create the word 'pauper' - Peter Laslett recites the earlier eighteenth century classification of 'labourer, cottager and pauper' 25. However it was seen as an English word, and not a designation used to any extent in Ireland. Various modern dictionaries define the word as 'a destitute person', or 'one who is supported by the public', but it seldom, if ever, came into the terminology of the Society, where it would have been seen as a pejorative term, and offensive to both the members and their 'cases'.

On this latter point, it may be of relevance to take, at random, the 1865 Report of the Society where we find the following expressions used - 'the poor', poor families', 'families deserted (or abandoned) by their fathers', 'very destitute poor'.

And in the 1875 Report - 'families', 'poor families', 'distress', 'relief of the sufferers (of flooding)', 'pitiable want', 'the honest poor', 'correcting the drunkard', 'poor inebriate', 'helpless widows', 'helpless children', 'the humbler classes', 'our unfortunate countrymen'.

This language was not perhaps as direct as the, earlier, objectives of the Sick and Indigent Roomkeepers who

25 Peter Laslett, The World We have Lost, (London, 1965), p.45
wished to relieve those who 'above all others, are the most pitiable objects of distress'.

But the Superior Council of the SVP was in no way ambiguous when it declared:

"The real aim of our Conferences is the relief of families suffering from that class of temporary distress, which is likely to be assuaged and eventually overcome by temporary assistance."

In reminding Conference members 'to discriminate carefully between those who were deserving and those who were not', attention was drawn to the prudent and vigilant message of the 1875 Lenten Pastoral of the Archbishop of Westminster:

"One of the boldest contradictions of the law of our Divine Saviour is the doctrine sedulously taught at this day, that almsgiving is inexpedient because it fosters idleness and imposture. Be prudent and vigilant, indeed, in giving alms; but do not let the theories of those who forget the Divine Lawgiver rob you of the grace and merit of this great evangelical precept."

The ARDP spoke for many voluntary bodies of the time when it observed that the destitute, the undeserving poor, cannot better himself in a poorhouse, 'he enters it a pauper and leaves it a pauper':

26 M.J. Tutty, 'Dublin's Oldest Charity', in Dublin Historical Record, Vol.XVI. No.3. (March 1961)
27 SVP [Irish] 1875 Report
28 Ibid., p.18
"In the workhouse he was a pauper, fed, clothed, sheltered and otherwise provided for; out of the workhouse he is a pauper, hungry, ragged, houseless and discarded." 29

This rejection of a goodly segment of the poor is clearly reflected in the Association's third Report:

"...the efforts and discrimination of the Committee have been directed to exclude as far as possible all undeserving cases, and such as would seem more suited to the workhouse". 30

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul was to be no less judgemental.
CHAPTER 3
THE POOR LAWS

Introduction

We must go back to the years immediately following the granting of Catholic Emancipation to consider the legislative programme which was to address poverty in nineteenth century Ireland.

The English Poor Law regime, though initiated in Elizabethan times, had never been introduced into Ireland, and there were those such as 'JKL', the renowned Bishop of Kildare & Leighlin, who spoke with conviction about the need for a legal basis for relief of the poor in this part of the Kingdom.

Bishop Doyle, in fact, argued for a reassessment of attitudes to assistance, pointing out that when tithes were first established by the Anglo-Normans in Ireland, one third of their produce was set apart for the support of the poor. ¹

Daniel O'Connell, wearing, with some difficulty, the two hats of liberator and landlord, opposed the legislative alleviation of the indigent:

"On the one hand, he argued that a poor law would obliterate Christian charity and compassion, and weaken the human interdependency which he idealized as the mark of his own sort of landed proprietorship. On the other, political economy told him that it was folly at the least to disturb the market forces; in particular, communal support of the able-bodied would be disastrous for themselves as well as the precarious Irish economy."  

We refer to the O'Connells' (father and son) involvement in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul elsewhere, suffice to state here that the 'Liberator', was at his pungent best when he grudgingly accepted the 1838 Act:  

"A poor law we must have. We are come to it. We must have it as the Repeal slumbers...We must have a poor law and poorhouses, and much of moral degradation and change in the mode of suffering."  

The 1838 Poor Law Act  

The 'genuineness' of mendicants, as already discussed, was a subject to exercise the mind of even Dean Swift, and he proposed that beggars be 'badged' to separate the deserving from the non-deserving. The merit marks to go to the local poor - there was obviously little sympathy for the 'foreign' poor. "Charity beginning at home" had found its advocate!  

2 MacDonagh, Daniel O'Connell, pp.439-440  
Bishop Doyle of Kildare & Leighlin, was initially [1825] in favour of the appointment of 'a Committee in each parish who would be legally entitled to ascertain the number and the conditions of paupers, and to distribute for their relief such collections as would be made on Sundays at the several places of worship, and such donations as they could obtain either from absent gentry or the resident gentry in times of more than ordinary distress'.

This view was startlingly close to the Scottish attitude and practice which is outlined elsewhere, but was perhaps not surprising given this prelate's openness to other faiths and ideas.

Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, 'JKL' did not live long enough to see the 'distress' of the Great Famine - he died in 1834 - but he had later been converted to the view that the relief of 'suffering humanity' could not be left to 'an agency so wayward and unstable as the impulse of the charitable'.

Whether this was the result of mature reflection, or the scepticism and melancholy of an ageing prelate, one cannot tell, but it was Doyle's influence on his friend and colleague in the ecclesiastical province of Dublin,

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5 Michael MacDonald. Bishop Doyle. JKL. (1896). p.151
6 Ibid., p.153
Archbishop Daniel Murray, that is of special interest to us in this study. Murray, and his Protestant opposite number, Archbishop Richard Whately, had been named to the 'Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Conditions of the Poorer Classes in Ireland', which published its first Report in 1835, and it is the underlying conclusion of this Commission that is particularly striking, even 160 years later:

"The difficulty in Ireland is not to make the able-bodied look for employment, but to find it profitably for the many who seek it......we see that the labouring class are eager for work, that work is not there for them, and that they are therefore, and not from any fault of their own, in permanent want."

The Government in London ignored the findings of this Commission, and imposed legislation modelled on the 1834 English Act, which, in essence, was a system 'to deter pauperism, not to reduce poverty'.

The 'Act for the More Effectual Relief of the Destitute Poor in Ireland', passed in 1838, divided the country into 130 districts called 'Poor Law Unions'. Each of these was to have a Workhouse for the relief of the destitute, and was to be managed by a Board, made up of elected and ex-officio 'Guardians'. A poor-rate was to

be levied, half to be paid by the landlord, half by the tenant.

Donal McCartney, in an assessment of the period 1800-1870, makes the perceptive point that, whatever the failings of the 1838 Poor Law, these elections introduced a considerable amount of democracy into local affairs:

"Catholic ratepayers all over the country gained their first experience of local government and administration as poor law guardians." 9

No 'out-door' relief was to be provided by the Boards of Guardians, and it was to be the necessity of entering the Union's Workhouse, to obtain such sustenance, that was to mark the epoch introduced by the 1838 Act.

The Workhouse

The threat of the 'workhouse' has been a pervading portent in literature; however the history, or structure, of what was often known as the 'poorhouse', has been seldom addressed. It might be mentioned that the word 'workhouse' did not appear until 1652 10, and it is suggested that the designation 'poorhouse' was an Irish benefaction to the English language. 11

9 McCartney, Dawning of Democracy, p.147
10 Simone de Beauvoir, Old Age, (trans: P.O'Brian), (London, 1972), p.200n
11 'The Poor Law in Ireland', in the Irish Quarterly Review, No.1, (1851), p.702n
The first Dublin workhouse had been established in 1703 as a means of controlling the 'sturdy poor' 12, or 'sturdy beggar' 13. There had been earlier [1689] consideration of such a refuge by the City Assembly, however this project had been interrupted by war. 14

By 1725, almost half of the inmates of the Dublin workhouse were children and all but seven of the adults were deemed incapable of working. This preponderance of young people was emulated in another Irish town over a century later when a report on the Newry Workhouse pointed out that of 988 inmates, 573 were children. 15

In the latter case, it had been recommended by Stanley, the Secretary to the Poor Law Commissions Office, that:

"...the [Newry] Guardians should at once make an entire revision of the inmates of the workhouse generally, with a view of discharging those who are not fit objects of relief therein and giving outdoor relief to any of the present inmates ........so as to make the workhouse available, to as great an extent as possible, for the relief of destitute able-bodied men...". 16

In view of the dominance of children in the early Dublin institution, it is perhaps not surprising that by 1772, the old workhouse had been divided into two separate

12 O'Carroll, Homeless Poor, p.70
14 Ibid., p.136 ; Maurice Craig, Dublin 1660-1860, (Dublin, 1980), p.75 1
15 A History of Newry Workhouse, (author and date unknown), Newry Public Library
16 Ibid.
establishments - the House of Industry near Oxmantown Green, and the new Foundling Hospital rebuilt in James Street. 17

Certain other towns provided for the 'destitute', viz., in the Belfast Charitable Institution 18, and, in England, in the quaintly named, 'Common-Houses on Alms'. 19

This said, the 1833 Commission of Inquiry found that there were only nine workhouses in Ireland at the time of its investigation. 20

Use of the terms 'industry' and 'work' in relation to the pauper's institution, gives some indication of the curative ethos of the workhouse, but little is now known about the range of the tasks imposed to obtain 'relief' - apart from stonebreaking, oakum picking, and washing. There was no financial reward or compensation for this work 21 - the price of maintenance was labour. 22 Neither, apart from basic schooling for children, was there any form of training - with a view either to their present support or future improvement - such training is disregarded, 'their case is viewed as hopeless.' 23

17 Somerville-Large, Dublin, pp.199-200
19 Laslett, World We Have Lost, p.95
20 Burke, Poor Law, p.10
21 Joseph V. O'Brien, Dear Dirty Dublin, (Berkeley, California, 1982), p.171
22 Gould, Workhouses, p.3
23 Irish Quarterly Review, No.1, (1851), p.702
That the workhouse was seen as a 'corrective institution' more stringent than imprisonment, was made clear in a mid-19th century comment:

"...the convicts in some of our jails have more charitable and more respectful treatment than the poor in our workhouses; hence, a notion prevails among the working classes that it is better to be a criminal than a pauper". 24

Separation was very much part of the post-1838 Workhouse, where families were split up according to sex and age, and we are told that there were separate quarters for able-bodied men and youths over 15, able-bodied women and girls over 15, the infirm of each sex, and children of various categories of age and sex. 25

Furthermore, O'Brien later tells us that:

"Discretion was allowed the Guardians to separate females of 'dissolute and disorderly habits' from those of superior character or to permit common living and sleeping quarters for married couples over 60 years...." 26

The differing perception of 'The Workhouse' in the eyes, and minds, of the poor, and of the affluent, is a feature of much writings of the nineteenth century. The facility for self-deception that landowners like Elizabeth Grant, 'The Highland Lady in Ireland', had in writing [1850] about her neighbours in County Wicklow:

26 Ibid., p.171
"They can't mind it [poverty], or they would go to the poorhouse." 27

- or in this encounter with a starving woman:

"'Sure,' said one of these decent objects to me once, 'if our children die in the ditch with us God will take them as Angels to heaven; they can only go to hell after the wickedness of the Poor House'." 28

The dichotomy between these values is the polarisation between the one who never had to consider the poorhouse as an option, and the other who would see death as a less compromising solution.

'Outdoor relief'

The English Poor Law of 1834, described by the historian Hobsbawm as a 'statute of quite uncommon callousness', gave relief only within the workhouse, where, it is narrated, the destitute had to separate from his wife and child 'in order to discourage the sentimental and unmalthusian habit of thoughtless procreation'. 29

Any 'outdoor' relief was also illegal under the Irish Act 30 - the Guardians of some Unions in Cork, Kilkenny

28 Ibid., p.464
30 Gould, Workhouses. p.3
and Tipperary had been reprimanded by the Poor Law Commissioners for providing aid of that kind 31 - and it was only when the facilities of the workhouses became totally overstretched, in early 1847, that the London Government introduced the 'Temporary Relief of Destitute Persons in Ireland Act', 1847, commonly known as the 'Soup Kitchen Act' 32. This was to be followed, later in 1847, by the Irish Poor Relief Extension Act, which set up a separate Poor Law Commission for Ireland, and sanctioned, for the first time, outdoor relief.

The operation of the 'Soup Kitchens' is more fully considered in Chapter 8, suffice to mention here that operation of such a remedy was not unique to Ireland, and Harrison informs us that, in Leeds, in April 1848, 15,000 people were receiving relief at similar public kitchens 33. Many of those who sought food in Yorkshire may have been Irish, but the many who did not emigrate, and who suffered the worst of the Great Famine at home, were to be provided with an 'Extension Act', the purpose of which was to regulate the availability of 'outdoor relief'.

Helen Burke makes the point that the legislative basis for such relief lived on until, at least, 1977, even if

31 13th Annual Report of the English Commissioners, 1847, p.28, cited in Burke, Poor Law, p.127
32 Somerville-Large, Dublin, p.236
33 J.F.C.Harrison, The Early Victorians, (St. Albans, 1973), pp.72-73
The 1847 Act, which came into effect in August of that year, was of particular importance to organisations such as the SVP, and was to influence the direction that organised charity moved, as can be seen by the SVP and ARDP Reports of the period. It also changed the impetus of helping the destitute, to the assistance of those who had temporarily fallen on hard times, and who were capable, in the opinion of those giving aid, of recovery. Thus the ARDP's idea of loans, which concept was never taken up by the SVP [although Penny Banks were later encouraged], was intended to give a fresh start to those with temporary problems.

The Government's provision for relief 'out of the Workhouse' was, however, restrictive, and applied only to:

1. Destitute persons who are permanently disabled from labour by reasons of old age, infirmity, or bodily, or mental defect.

2. Destitute poor persons who being disabled from labour by reason of severe sickness or serious accident, are thereby deprived of the means of earning a subsistence for themselves and their

34 Burke, Poor Law, p.131
families, whom they are liable by law to maintain.

3. Destitute poor widows having two or more legitimate children dependent on them. 35

Relieving Officers, funded by the Poor Law Guardians, adjudicated on need. While food, particularly cooked food, was the Commissioners' preferred mode of relief, there was a concession: 'For the present.....and until the administration arrangements are more matured, the Commissioners do not object to allowances of Money being made to the Destitute of these [above] classes..' 36

Paying for the Poor Law

The Act that set up the first Dublin workhouse in 1703 introduced a system of taxation to pay for the care of the inmates:

"A tax for the purpose was levied on sedan chairs and hackney coaches and, in addition, a rate of three pence in the pound was struck on every house within the city and the liberties" 37

The extent of voluntary almsgiving in Ireland at that time would be impossible to quantify, and, apart from

35 Circular of Poor Law Commissioners, dated 14th August 1847
36 Ibid.

56
recognised charitable organisations, there was private munificence which was impracticable to measure. The 1835 Report, to which reference has already been made, had made a calculation that indicated 'that between £1 million and £2 million was given each year by small farmers and cottiers to the people who came begging to their doors.' 38

That the payment of the Poor Law Rate, should be seen as a substitute for personal alms giving is evident from the fall off in contributions to established charities, such as ARDP [Appendix A]. The high point in income of this organisation was in 1838, but the low point, in 1841, indicates the effect of the imposed contributions, or rates, towards this 'compulsory charity'.

The diarist, Mrs. Elizabeth Grant was concerned about the rates on her Wicklow property, and wrote, in August 1840, with some satisfaction, that, after a meeting of the Poor Law Commissioners:

"We got our house lowered.....The tax will by no means fall heavily, it is not known, but the Commissioners suppose about three per cent....we expect to have to pay about £20 yearly, not so much as we spend now by many a good pound, doing but little either towards lessening the evils of poverty..." 39

38 1st Report of the Commissioners for Enquiring into the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, (London, 1835), p.625, cited in Burke, Poor Law, p.34
39 Grant, Highland Lady, pp.34-35
There was an additional burden to rate-payers, such as Mrs. Grant, in the fact that absent landlords who defaulted caused those remaining (and paying), to pay more. 40

To put the figures into perspective, it is noted that the implementation of the Irish poor law cost over nine million pounds between 1839 and 1851 41; against this, in one year, 1849, upwards of £2 million in poor rates was collected in Ireland. 42 On this evidence, and despite the initial cost of workhouse buildings, the rates represented a significant tax revenue.

SVP Involvement

There is no evidence of the involvement of early members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the initial operation of these Poor Law Boards, other than as medical officers - as we recite, in Chapter 4, in the case of Dr. Thomas Willis and Dr. Alexander McDonnell. We do, however, learn from the Report of the 1861 Select Committee on the operation of the Poor Law in Ireland that, at least, five witnesses had membership of, or family relationship with, the Society - of these, two were Poor Law Guardians.

41 Burke. Poor Law. p.80
42 Irish Quarterly Review, No.1, (1851), p.706n
The Society members, whom one assumes to have been diligent rate-payers, were less than forthcoming about their opinions on the tax, and it is only from a newspaper advertisement that we learn that the Society deemed that, through prudent assistance of the impoverished, help to the SVP was a sure way of diminishing the Poor Law Rates!

"Apart from the higher and nobler considerations of charity, the Committee takes leave to remind the citizens of Dublin that the operations of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul sensibly diminish the POOR RATES, by staying the first inroads of poverty, and thus in multiplied instances averting the necessity of a resort to the workhouse." 43

43 Advertisement for SVP 'Annual Charity Sermon', in Catholic Telegraph, 21st February 1857
CHAPTER 4
THE CO-FOUNDERS

Introduction

Monday, 16th December 1844

At the meeting in the White Cross Rooms, Charles Street, West, off Ormond Quay, in the City of Dublin, on 16th December 1844, the names of those 'who had signified their intention to become members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul' were entered in the Roll of the Society; these were, in the order listed in the first Minutes:

Rev. B. Woodlock DD All Hallows College
Rev. Stephen A. Farrell St. Nicholas
Redmund Peter O'Carroll 51 Gt. Charles Street
James O'Ferrall Lower Baggot Street
Charles Cavanagh Fitzwilliam Street
Thomas Willis Upper Ormond Quay
Alex. McDonnell MD Gardiner Street
John Alcorn High Street
John Ryan Francis Street
Bernard Murray Ushers Quay
John P. Seaver Cabra Road
John B. Murphy 18 Lr. Gardiner Street
John O'Hagan Upper Leeson Street
Stephen Curtis 3 Mountjoy Square West
These co-founders can, conveniently, be grouped as lawyers, doctors, clergy and 'others':

The lawyers - O'Carroll, Cavanagh, Murphy, O'Hagan, Curtis, Fottrell, Simpson, O'Connell.

The doctors - Willis (Thomas), Willis (Richard), McDonnell, Ryan, O'Ryan.

The clergy - Woodlock, Farrell.

The others - O'Ferrall, Alcorn, Murray, Seaver.

The, later, 'Aggregation Request' to the Council General in Paris [February 1845] included sixty two names of active and honorary members; in addition to those listed above we particularly note the names of Charles Gavan Duffy ('Editor of Newspaper'), and John Lewis More O'Ferrall ('Commissioner of Police').
The Lawyers

The proximity of the meeting place of the first Irish Conference to the Four Courts might suggest that barristers and attorneys represented the total membership of the early SVP; and one hundred years later there was to exist, just across the river Liffey, such a Conference, comprised solely of lawyers. However in 1844, whilst their numbers were substantial, they were not the sole vocation involved.

The lawyer had been, indeed, an early part of the SVP tradition; Frederic Ozanam had been a student of law in Paris, as had four of his co-founders, and by 1841, out of 2,531 active members of the Society in France, 700 of these were judges, barristers or law-students.

The availability of the newly constituted King's Inns, in Dublin, had encouraged many young Irishmen to look to the Bar as a way of life, and, since Catholics had, after 1792, been entitled to practise as lawyers this profession became a significant career opportunity for those who might otherwise have left the country.

Many such members of the Bar made significant contributions to Irish life - Daniel O'Connell, of

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2 The word 'solicitor', rather than 'attorney', is of more recent use.
3 Tablet. 5th August 1843
4 MacDonagh, Daniel O'Connell, pp.29-32
course, being the most notable. O'Connell might, in fact, be regarded as the first Irish member of the SVP since he was proposed, in March 1844, as an honorary member of the English Society, by the President, Pagliano. The next reference to the 'Liberator' occurred, in London, in 1846, when a subscription of £2 was presented.

Daniel's son, John O'Connell, is recorded as a co-founder of the Irish SVP, but, most likely, he, too, was an honorary member. We refer again, later, to this man when we consider the 'Young Ireland' influence, however it might be mentioned that John O'Connell was associated with many of those original SVP members who, in turn, were co-founders of the Catholic Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. The younger O'Connell subsequently became Honorary Secretary of the Institution, a post earlier filled by Rev. Stephen Anster Farrell of the SVP.

Redmund O'Carroll

The lawyer of greatest significance for us is the first President, Redmund Peter O'Carroll. In the absence of memories or diaries, O'Carroll is an enigmatic character; however, it is fortuitous that six of this man's letters have been located, but, while they are valuable in

See Chapter 10
assessing the direction of the young Society, they reveal little of his personality.

We do not even have a clear view of why he was proposed as first President of the Society in Ireland, other than he was an acquaintance, if not a confidant, of Archbishop Daniel Murray. O'Carroll would have worked closely with Dr. Murray on the 'Bequests Act' - he had been appointed Catholic Secretary of the Board in 1844 [for which post he received £500 per annum]. R.P. O'Carroll was also legal adviser [salary £300], to the Board of National Education 6, quite likely also a Murray nominee, and was known to Dr. Francis Joseph Nicholson, later Archbishop of Corfu, a supporter of Daniel Murray in matters educational. It was Dr. Nicholson who brought the formal Aggregation Request of the SVP in Dublin to the Council General in Paris. 7

O'Carroll, who was the eldest son of John O'Carroll of Ardagh, Co. Galway, had a tragically short life; he died in Bray on 8th October 1847 at the age of 43 [buried at Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin], a victim of the typhus epidemic then widespread in Ireland. We are not told if he caught this virus while attending to his SVP work, although there have been other recorded instances of members acquiring contagious diseases.

6 *Freeman's Journal*, 12th October 1847
7 SVP Minutes, 21st July 1845
Sean Farragher suggests that, fifty years later, Eamonn de Valera acquired an infection which affected his sight as a young SVP member in Dublin 8 - de Valera was Secretary, and later President (1901-1904), of the Holy Ghost Conference at Blackrock College - while George Wigley, co-founder of the English Society, contacted a fatal fever while working for the SVP in Rome. 9

Redmund O'Carroll had married Mary Catherine Goold, from county Cork, in 1834 10. The couple had two sons, both of whom became Jesuits. Fr. John James O'Carroll, the eldest, was a noted linguist - he was reputed to be a master of fourteen, perhaps seventeen, languages. John became Examiner at the Dublin's Royal University; Francis, the younger, joined the English Province of the Society of Jesus. 11

Mrs. O'Carroll, who was a niece of Sir George Goold Bart, and connected by marriage to the Segrave/More O'Ferrall clan, died in Dublin at the age of 75 years. 12

The French Council General paid tribute to the young Irish President:

8 Sean P. Farragher, Dev and His Alma Mater, (Dublin, 1984), p.54  
9 Report of SVP National Celebrations for Ozanam Centenary, (Manchester, 1913), p.22  
10 Burke's Peerage (1858 edition)  
11 Irish Monthly, Vol.XVII, (1889); Annals of the Irish Province, Jesuits  
12 Burke's Peerage (1965 edition)
".....la mémoire de M. O'Carroll, président des Conférences d'Irlande, dont la mort fut, comme la vie, au-dessus de tout éloge, et digne de ce pays offert en exemple de la patience de l'homme et de la patience de Dieu." 13

John O'Hagan

Another barrister, who, thankfully, had a long and full life, was John O'Hagan. If we have a sparsity of detail on the life and works of Redmund O'Carroll, we do not suffer this hindrance with John O'Hagan's life. O'Hagan, described as 'a man of great literary ability and fine poetic talent' 14, and as a 'tranquil, sagacious talker' 15, is probably best known for his first poem which appeared in 'The Nation' on 3rd December 1842 - "Ourselves Alone". [This title was to be taken up later by the 'Sinn Fein' organisation.]

O'Hagan was born in Newry in 1822, and studied at Belvedere College and Trinity College. He wrote for Thomas Davis's 'Nation' at an early age under the pen names of 'Slieve Cuilinn' and 'Carolina Wilhelmina' 16, and subsequently for 'The Irish Monthly'.

John O'Hagan was called to the Bar in 1842, took silk in 1865, was appointed Chairman of the Quarter Sessions for

15 Gavan Duffy, My Life, vol.i, p.63
County Leitrim in the same year, and, in 1881, he became first Judicial Commissioner of the Irish Land Commission, about which emplacement is quoted, in Chapter 5, Bishop Woodlock's remarks.

John O'Hagan married, in 1865, Frances O'Hagan, youngest daughter of Thomas O'Hagan, the first Catholic Lord Chancellor of Ireland, and god-daughter of Charles Gavan Duffy.

As mentioned in Chapter 9, John O'Hagan was named [1861] as a Commissioner of the Board of National Education, and, in accepting this position, he was opposed by Cardinal Cullen — although Mac Suibhne does relate, by way of rehabilitation, that it was O'Hagan who, later, drew up the Cardinal's Will.

O'Hagan's role with the SVP is not clearly charted. His biographer tells us that he went to England in 1845, some months after the Society's foundation in Dublin, and we are aware that a letter of introduction, from Redmund O'Carroll, was read at the London and Provincial Council on 2nd March 1846. The Minutes refer to 'Brother O'Hagan of one of the Dublin Conferences, who had come to reside

17 Irish Monthly, (August 1912), pp.426-427
18 Burke's Peerage
20 O'Sullivan, Young Irelanders, p.307
in London'. 22 This suggests that O'Hagan had kept up his membership of the Society; certainly he was known to Dr. Woodlock 'for over thirty five years in that admirable Society of St. Vincent de Paul'. 23

'The Irish Monthly' of May 1892 reprints part of the first formal Report [1846] of the SVP; in doing so the journal gives credit for its authorship to Judge John O'Hagan:

"He was a member of it [SVP], not an honorary but an active member, to the very end of his life; and his membership began in the first years of his manhood, so early that he wrote its first report in the year 1846." 24

John O'Hagan died at Howth in 1890, in his 69th year, and is buried at Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin..

John Baldwin Murphy

This man was possibly the most durable of the co-founders, and from his initial membership in Dublin, to his establishment of an early Conference in Clonmel, and to his role as Vice President of the Superior Irish Council in 1851, he had a full commitment to the Society. This involvement was carried into later generations since

23 Pastoral of Bishop Woodlock, 21st November 1881, Diocese of Ardagh & Clonmacnoise.
24 Irish Monthly, (May 1892)
his son was a member of a Conference in county Cavan, and his grandson, Lonan Murphy, was President of the Council of Ireland from 1941 to 1947.

John B. Murphy's mother came from a Tipperary family [Baldwin] with connections with Charles Bianconi:

"I was obliged to yield to the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Baldwin, who afterwards became my very dear friends. I stayed with them frequently and they treated me as one of their own children, except that they allowed me greater privileges." 25

Bianconi, a supporter of many Irish charities, became an honorary member of John Murphy's Clonmel Conference, and, later, was to be the purchaser of 86 St. Stephens Green, Dublin, for Woodlock's Catholic University. John Baldwin Murphy, who had also been President of the Marlborough Street, Dublin, Conference in 1845, died, in Dublin, in 1894.

Apart from John O'Connell MP, already mentioned, little is known of our remaining co-founder lawyers, other than bare biographical details.

Charles Cavanagh, an attorney, appears to have been one of the oldest members, and he died in 1862. He was a well established lawyer, and handled the legal affairs of the More O’Ferrall family. Following the division of the founding Conference, Charles Cavanagh was President of the Conference of St. Kevin, Francis Street, and then the new branch at Blackrock, Co. Dublin.

Stepen Curtis came from county Waterford; the family have been identified as living in Tramore in 1844. There were Jesuit connections in the family, and there was also involvement with Edmund Rice’s Christian Brothers. Stephen Curtis, a contemporary of John O’Hagan, was called to the Bar in 1844; significantly his Memorial to the King’s Inns was endorsed by Daniel O’Connell, who had been elected for Waterford in the General Election of 1830.

Following the establishment of the early Dublin Conferences, Curtis was appointed Vice-President to his friend, and colleague, John Baldwin Murphy, at Marlborough Street.

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26 Papers of the late Edward More O’Ferrall
27 O’Carroll to Gossin, dated 31st March 1847. SVP [Paris] Archives
28 SVP [Irish] Bulletin [various issues]
30 Memorials, King’s Inns Archives
31 MacDonagh, Daniel O’Connell, p.319
32 O’Carroll to Gossin, dated 31st March 1847. SVP [Paris] Archives
Little is known of Patrick Fottrell, an attorney, or Thomas Simpson, a barrister.

The Doctors

Since the first meeting of the Society was held close to the home of Doctor Thomas Willis, and in view of this man's interest in the disadvantaged as seen in his discourse on the social and sanitary conditions of his own parish, already mentioned in Chapter 2, we must assume that Willis had a particular influence on the foundation of the Society.

The writer of his obituary went further when he stated that:

"To Dr. Willis's efforts may be largely attributed the establishment of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and the Catholic Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, on lines modelled upon those of similar Continental societies." 33

The eldest son of John Willis of Ardee, Thomas Willis was an apothecary [L.A.H. (Dub) 1810], who later registered as a doctor - he had, at least, three sons in the medical profession, one of whom later practiced in Oughterard, Co. Galway. Thomas Willis, Snr, was a member of the Managing Committee of the Charitable Infirmary, Jervis

33 Freeman's Journal, 18th April 1881 [cf: RCPI obituary, 4th April 1881]
Street, and was an elected Guardian of the North Dublin Union (Linen-Hall Ward). 34

Willis's obituary also refers to his role as Poor Law Inspector at Bantry, Kanturk and Cavan. We find no evidence of his time in Kanturk or Cavan; however we know that the Bantry Board of Guardians was dissolved by the Poor Law Commissioners in 1847, and two Inspectors appointed from Dublin - Mr. Denis Clarke and Dr. Willis. A local account gives praise to the new Inspectors:

"Great credit is due to these two officials. The workhouse it was found could hold about 300 people, extensions were built and the capacity was increased to 1,100. Auxiliary Workhouses were established throughout the town. 35

The Bantry Union had particular difficulties since it had to take responsibility for the total Beara peninsula, with a population of 50,764 (1831 Census) No workhouse had been built at that time at Castletown, and it was usual for the starving population to reach Bantry town from a considerable radius, even by boat. 36

Perhaps Dr. Willis's greatest claim to fame lies with the later presentation of three 'Famine Crosses', one to A.M.Sullivan, another to the parish priest of Maynooth, Canon John O'Rorke, author of 'The History of the Great

34 Pettigrew & Oulton Directories
35 Seamus Crowley, The Famine in Bantry, (undated, unpublished manuscript), copy in possession of Sisters of Mercy, Bantry.
36 Ibid.
The Minutes of Bantry Union clearly testify to Thomas Willis's concern for the victims of the Great Famine, and we touch on this in Chapter 8; unlike the activity of some of his co-founders of the SVP, who seemed anxious to expand the Society's influence in rural areas, there is no evidence that the Doctor attempted to set up a Society Conference in Bantry - this was to happen many years later.

That Thomas Willis did not take up the duty of Poor Law Inspector for only the remuneration offered is highlighted by the fact that his salary, from the Union, for the quarter to 24th June 1848 was £62.10.0.

Redmund O'Carroll's emoluments for his public offices, noted above, put Willis's income into perspective, and may explain the 'job-seeking' evident when O'Carroll died.

For such a substantial character in the foundation of the organisation in Dublin Thomas Willis apparently took no part in the later development of the Society, and his

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38 Minutes Bantry Union, 24th June 1848, Cork County Archive
39 Gernon to Somerville, dated October 1847, Murray Papers [Dublin Diocesan Archive]
passing, at the age of 91 years, in 1881, was not marked by the SVP Bulletin.

Thomas Snr was apparently recognised as an authority on the 1798 period, although best estimates would have it, that he, himself, was born, only, in 1790.

Thomas Willis, senior or junior, identified the exact site, in Dublin, of the 'Croppies Acre' ['Croppy Hole'] on the Esplanade in front of what was then the Royal Barracks. The "Memorial of the Croppies' Acre" was later published privately. 40

Doctor Willis, the co-founder of the SVP in Ireland died, in Bray, in 1881; and the Freeman's Journal wrote:

"He remembered the troublesome time of '98, and was always a willing and unfailing reference for those who wished to have living evidence of the momentous events of the beginning of the century........." 41

Alexander McDonnell

Dr. Alexander McDonnell was born in county Antrim in 1812, educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and qualified as FRCSI in 1843. Formerly a demonstrator at the Richmond Hospital School of Medicine, McDonnell was, subsequently, appointed surgeon to Jervis Street Hospital.

41 Freeman's Journal, 18th April 1881
Dr. McDonnell died, in Dublin, in 1862, and his obituary told of him being one of the first, if not the very first, who obtained the College of Surgeon's Fellowship by examination 'at the time when a searching examination was substituted for pecuniary payments. 42

This man's career with the SVP is not recorded but there is little doubt that his experience as Medical Officer of the Talbot Dispensary would have qualified him for the Society's work. The dispensary is described as being connected with the House of Industry, afterwards the Brunswick Street, or North Union, Workhouse, 'and there he laboured for nine years among the poorest of the poor, visiting their wretched abodes....' 43

Ryan, O'Ryan

Again, little is recorded about these men; however we do know that Stephen O'Ryan was first cousin to Dr. David Moriarty, Bishop of Kerry, who had worked with Bartholomew Woodlock at All Hallows College. Another staff member at this College was the Rev. James O'Ryan, brother of Stephen, who, in turn, had studied with Woodlock at the Appollinare Seminary, in Rome. 44

42 Ibid., 26th November 1862
43 Ibid.
The O'Ryan brothers had been educated in France, Stephen studying medicine at the Sarbonne; details of his brief career, in a contemporary medical directory, show Dr. O'Ryan to have been an extern at the Hotel Dieu in Paris. However he returned to Ireland and was dispensary doctor in Tralee, Co. Kerry, when he died in 1857. He is buried in Cobh, Co. Cork.

The Clergy

The contribution of Rev. Bartholomew Woodlock to the Society, is detailed in Chapter 5. However, there was a second clergyman present at the meeting of SVP in Dublin in December 1844 – Rev. Stephen Anster Farrell, a curate in Francis Street parish.

Stephen Farrell like many of the co-founders was educated at Trinity College, Dublin. He had his early schooling with his father, Martin John Farrell, a teacher in Cork who had been a considerable supporter of the Charitable Society in its poor schools in that city.

The younger Farrell progressed to Maynooth College where he was ordained for the Dublin Archdiocese, being appointed to Francis Street parish by Archbishop Daniel

45 RCPI obituary
Murray. Later Stephen Farrell was to join the Jesuits, ministering at St. Ignatius (Galway), Belvedere College and Milltown Park (Dublin).

Apart from his role in the foundation of the SVP, Father Farrell was prominent in the Catholic Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, and was Honorary Secretary of that organisation ahead of John O'Connell. It seems that he withdrew from both groups when he left Dublin.

One intriguing aspect of Stephen Farrell's connections was the relationship with the Anster family, the best known of whom was his cousin, John Martin Anster, Professor of Civil Law at Trinity College, co-founder of the Dublin University Magazine, and the renowned translator, from the German, of Goethe's Faust.

The Others

James O'Ferrall

This man, who generally did not use the full family name of 'More O'Ferrall', succeeded Redmund O'Carroll as President of the Superior Council of Ireland, when the latter died in 1847. It was a difficult assignment, there were still many months of problems created by the Great

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Famine ahead, and then the subsequent anti-climax of a reduced demand for the services of the Society. O'Ferrall was not fluent in French, and his few letters that exist in the SVP Paris Archive are in English, this, in turn, would have hampered communications with the Council General.

James O'Ferrall's name appears as a member of several Catholic bodies - in the year 1844 he was the only SVP co-founder to be involved in other charitable organisations - and he was later nominated to the Boards of the Catholic University and Maynooth College, but these were Roman Catholic establishments, and James did not secure recognition outside this area, although, no doubt, the names of his brothers, Richard More O'Ferrall MP, and John Lewis More O'Ferrall (Commissioner of Police) would have been valuable assets.

James O'Ferrall was succeeded as President of the SVP Superior Council by his brother-in-law, Michael Errington. 49

Alcorn, Murray, Seaver.

John Peter Seaver remained as a member of the Society for many years after foundation, and his role has been identified as Secretary to the Marlborough Street

49 SVP Minutes, 19th October 1854
Conference, and, later, Secretary to the Council of Ireland, but, again, no personal writings have been discovered. The name Seaver is probably better recalled in relation to Rev. Matt Seaver S.J., John's older brother - a school companion of Bartholomew Woodlock, and later Rector of Belvedere College - and Rev. Elias Seaver S.J., John's eldest son.

Bernard Murray was Vice-President of the Conference in Francis Street, Dublin [1845], and John Alcorn was, subsequently, Vice President at James's Street, Dublin.  

The unmentioned 'co-founder' was Dr. Daniel Murray, but Archbishop Murray's contribution is considered elsewhere. Murray is distinct from the other co-founders in his age - he was seventy six years old in 1844 - but had many similarities, other than an apparent absence of direct family ties. As has been pointed out, there was a strong Jesuit connection in the schooling of the first members, and Dr. Murray was no exception. Indeed the history of the foundation of the SVP in Ireland, and, later, in the United States, is a commentary on the influence of the Jesuits in the development of Roman Catholic leadership - both lay and clerical.

51 SVP Minutes. 8th January 1855
52 Louis McRedmond, To the Greater Glory of God. (Dublin, 1991). p.128
CHAPTER 5
WOODLOCK-MAHONY

Introduction

There is one family name that comes to the fore in research into the early years of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, in Ireland, and that is 'Woodlock'.

From the Rev. Bartholomew Woodlock, who has been described, with some adulation, as the Irish 'Ozanam' 1 - to William and Joseph, his brothers, an active and an honorary member of the Society, respectively - to William Jnr, one time Secretary, Vice President, and 'Bulletin' editor - the Woodlock family has written its name large in the annals of the SVP.

But this family, which came from rural roots in county Tipperary, had a wide contribution to make to Irish life in mid-nineteenth century Ireland, and, by way of a commentary on a Catholic middle-class family of the time, the extent of the Woodlocks' influence is outlined below.

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Bartholomew Woodlock (1819-1902)

A brief sketch of this man's life would tell how he was born in Dublin, was educated at the Jesuits' Hardwicke Street School [later Belvedere College] and Clongowes Wood College; studied for the priesthood in Rome, where he obtained his doctorate at the age of 22; was President (1854) of All Hallows College; was second Rector (1861) of the Catholic University in Dublin [after Newman]; and, finally, was Bishop (1879) of the diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise.

A prolific letter writer, we are, however, disappointed to find that he wrote little about the SVP. In fact he was rather a shadowy figure in the Society, appearing regularly at meetings - as Spiritual Director to the Council of Ireland, whilst in Dublin, and, later, to the local Conference, when Bishop in Longford - but at no time is he recorded as making a substantial contribution to the business of the organisation.

This may well have come from his belief in, and reliance on, the role of the laity - his clash with Cardinal Cullen on the necessity for the involvement of lay men in the management of the Catholic University would bear this out - but, even in other roles, such as Superior to High Park Convent, and adviser to Father Leman, founder of the

1 Clongowonian, (1903); The Belvederian, (1906)

Irish Holy Ghost Province, he played a non-intrusive role. 4

Leman and Woodlock had found common ground in the fact that they had been educated by the Jesuits, and that both had attended the Apollinare, in Rome. 5

Born [30th March 1819] the seventh of eight children of William Woodlock and Mary Cleary, Bartholomew had a comfortable upbringing in New Street West, off Thomas Street, in Dublin - the comfort mostly due, it would appear, to his father's success in property deals with Arthur Guinness. 6 In any event the two youngest boys had educational opportunities not available to their older brothers. Bart left Clongowes with the intention of studying for the priesthood, and departed Ireland for either Paris or Rome. This indecision is reflected in his letters home which dwelt on his choice of future studies, and, also, the fact that, he seemed to take advice from all sides. However, he eventually found his way to Rome and the Roman Seminary [Apollinare]. 7

One of his 'advisers', on the way, was 'Frank Mahony', and we can discern that this was Francis Sylvester Mahony, (alias 'Father Prout'), whose sister Ellen had

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5 Farragher, Pere Leman, p.97
6 Woodlock Family Records ; cf: Registry of Deeds. Dublin
7 Letters of Bartholomew Woodlock [various]. Clongowes Wood College Archive.
married Thomas Woodlock, Bart's older brother. The Mahony connection was to be doubly significant to the Vincent de Paul Society, as is outlined below.

We do not know whether Father Prout's erstwhile association with Clongowes Wood College influenced his advice to his young relation, who, in any event, had leanings towards the Jesuits, but 'Prout', the former Jesuit, suggests that Bart Woodlock considers 'some college in Paris' for his priestly education. The establishment of 'Saint Sulpice' was considered but Woodlock tells his mother that the discipline is 'very strict and accommodated to the French character and habits; so that I doubt very much if it would agree with me'. However, the young man, who was to be credited later with bringing the French SVP to Ireland, departed from Paris, and travelled on to Italy and the 'Pope's Seminary'.

We might expect Woodlock, in his many letters, to have made some observation, or comparison with Ireland, concerning the condition of the French or Roman people at that time, just twenty years after the hiatus caused by the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte, but any such reference is oblique. Even during the cholera epidemic of 1837 the remarks referred only to the exodus of the students from the city, although he did, in passing, pay tribute to the

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8 Ibid. 22nd October 1836
9 Ibid. 7th November 1836
Jesuits 'who did an immensity of good here....they all, fathers, students, laybrothers and, I believe, even the novices went out to assist the sick in the hospitals and through the city'.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, there was in Rome, at that time, another person, of Anglo-Irish origin, in the person of Princess Gwendaline Borghese, much more aware of the poor, and whose reputation for works of charity during the 1837 epidemic was to live on, in that city, for many generations, but there is no evidence of contact with the young Irish clerical student.

Neither is there indication to suggest that Bartholomew Woodlock came into contact with the local Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Rome, or in Paris; indeed, a letter of introduction in the Paris SVP Archive would confirm that the young priest was not known in 1847 to the French officers of the organisation. However, another former student in Rome, Rev. Ignatius Spencer [the Hon. George Spencer], had become more aware of the Society, and, as indicated in Chapter 1, was later (1843) to write an account of the French SVP which is regarded as being a

10 Ibid. 16th November 1836
11 Philippa Cesi, 'A Wexford Lady and Her Daughter on the Continent', in The Irish Ancestor, Vol.IV. No.2. (1972), pp.57-69
12 R.P.O'Carroll to M. Jules Gossin, President General, dated July 1847. SVP [Paris] Archives
significant contribution to subsequent developments in England. 13

Bartholomew Woodlock and the SVP

Father Woodlock had been ordained for the Archdiocese of Dublin, but his initial posting in that city is uncertain. We do, however, know that in 1843 he joined with Father John Hand and Father James O’Ryan 14 in the establishment of All Hallows Missionary College in Dublin.

Twelve months later Bartholomew Woodlock was present at the first meeting, in Ireland, of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

As will be discussed in Chapter 10, we are unsure about the catalyst which brought the founding nineteen men together on Monday, 16th December 1844, although the obituary of Doctor Thomas Willis Sr. gives specific credit to this man. On the other hand, a contemporary account gave the honour to Woodlock, and this version, in describing the process of institution of the Society, tells us that:

13 Centenary Celebrations 1833-1933. (London, 1933). SVP: See Chapter 1
14 See Chapter 4
"...those most anxious for its accomplishment, and apparently best fitted by station to succeed in the attempt, shrank away disheartened at the difficulties with which it seemed to them encompassed, and left its inauguration to a young and trustful ecclesiastic still breathing his first fervour, and too slightly acquainted with the world to be influenced by its chilling contact......With the pious disregard of consequences, characteristic of his zeal and years, he embarked fearlessly in the effort, and ere many days, astonished himself and the world at the facilities that met him, at almost every step of his progress, towards the happy consummation of his design." 15

Other colleagues have been a good deal less kind to Bart Woodlock. His single-minded pursuit of his goals for the Catholic University was not to the liking of many, and Cardinal Logue of Armagh writes later to Archbishop Walsh of Dublin, giving him good news:

"I have one item of good news for Your Grace - Dr. Woodlock is going to build and if this does not keep him from troubling you, nothing on this earth ever will. If he converts his pen into a stone-cutter's punch there will be peace." 16

Dr. Woodlock was certainly loyal to the friends that he had made in his years with SVP, and this may be evidenced by his Pastoral Letter [1881], from Ardagh, in support of John O'Hagan, newly appointed judicial commissioner under the Land Law Act;

"It has been my good fortune to be associated with Mr. John O'Hagan for over 35 years in that admirable Society of St. Vincent de Paul which is one of those wonderful institutions raised up in these latter day's by God's loving Providence for the benefit of His poor. And the practical lessons taught by

15 William Meagher, Notices of the Life and Character of His Grace, Most Rev. Daniel Murray, (Dublin, 1853),
16 Logue to Walsh, dated 31st January 1889, Logue Papers, Armagh Diocesan Archives
almost daily intercourse for so long a period with the poor, the afflicted, and the down-trodden have, assuredly, not been thrown away on the honourable judge; but it will lead him in dealing with the oppressed tenants to help them with a willing hand. Our people, then, are safe, as far as human prudence can make them so, in demanding their legal rights from the tribunal of which he is the chief." 17

Bartholomew Woodlock additionally recognised Redmund O'Carroll's contribution to the foundation of the SVP:

"There was a member who has gone, and of whom, therefore, I may speak - I mean the late Redmond [sic] Peter O'Carroll, the first President of the Society here - and I believe that his labours were the channel by which God poured His blessings on the Society in Ireland." 18

Bishop Bartholomew Woodlock died on 13th December 1902, and is buried at St. Mel's Cathedral, Longford. 19

William Woodlock, Jnr

Bart Woodlock's brother, William, was, as has been mentioned, an active member of the SVP, but it is this man's son, also William, who occupied more strategic roles in the Society.

Educated at Friburg in Switzerland, and at Trinity College, Dublin, William Jnr, like his father, became a

17 Pastoral of Bishop Woodlock. 21st November 1881. Diocese of Ardagh & Clonmacnoise.
lawyer. The older man had been attorney to Daniel O'Connell, but the scion trained as a barrister, eventually becoming Divisional, or Police, Magistrate in Dublin.

An active member of St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral Conference, and Secretary to the Council of Ireland, William Junior's later public position reduced his active work for the Society, and he was appointed Vice President in 1878. There is little evidence in the Minute Books now available of this man's influence and role; however it is through his memoirs, as personal diaries, that we get an unique glimpse into the life of a middle-class Dubliner in the second half of the nineteenth century. 20

A conservative figure, William Woodlock, lived a very orderly existence with a pattern of life that changed little from year to year. From the point of view of the researcher, his bland references, each Thursday, to "Council of Ireland" give few clues to the activities actually going on, but we do get very occasional insights. Woodlock's significance is, perhaps, in his back-ground comments to the cases appearing before him in Court. His empathy with the down-trodden is clear, as is his compassion for those of any 'class' who have fallen on hard times, but he does confide that 'my experience as

20 Diaries of William Woodlock Jnr, 7th June 1878. Mss. 4497/4521, NLI
a Police Magistrate is blunting my sympathy for the poor terribly'. 21

William paints a valuable picture of social life of the time, and, since he is a habitual walker, we are brought on many of his tours through Dublin, and, indeed, on his journeys further afield.

Later Woodlocks

Some later generations of Woodlocks have been identified as members of the Vincent de Paul Society, but it was Thomas Francis Woodlock, grand nephew to the Bishop, who achieved greatest fame. This man, whilst born in Dublin, and brought up in England, became an American citizen and resident of New York. T.F. Woodlock achieved fame as Editor-in-Chief (1905) of the 'Wall Street Journal', and as a writer on financial matters. An appointee of President Coolidge to the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1925, Woodlock was also a significant contributor to Catholic periodicals of the day, and to various organisations. Thomas Woodlock had two brothers who remained in England and who became Jesuits - one who served during World War I as a chaplain, was decorated

21 Ibid., 6th June 1873
with the Military Cross, and became a celebrated broadcaster in later times. 22

Mrs. Ellen Woodlock

Probably the best known Irish 'Woodlock' was, in fact, born Ellen Mahony of Cork. She was sister of Francis Sylvester Mahony ('Father Prout'), already mentioned, and Timothy Mahony who was to later become President of the SVP in Cork. Ellen married Thomas Woodlock, brother of the Bishop, in 1836, but her husband only lived three months after the wedding. A child was born eight months later. 23

Ellen Woodlock's life must subsequently have appeared bizarre, since she set off, in 1842, for Paris, with her young child, then five years of age. Having put the boy into the Royal College at Juilly, she entered the nearby Convent of the Sisters of St. Louis, where she was known as Soeur Helene. Here she was instrumental in recruiting postulants from Ireland - chiefly Cork - for the community. 24

22 Archives of English Jesuit Province; cf: National Cyclopaedia of American Biography; cf: Dictionary of Catholic Biography

23 Cork Daily Advertiser, 29th November 1836; Juilly College Archives, and family records

24 Annals of Sisters of St. Louis; cf: Juilly College Records
In 1850 she returned to Ireland for good, having apparently severed her ties with the Congregation, and her son, Thomas, father of Thomas Francis Woodlock (to whom reference has been made above), came home with her.

Her energy for work was undiminished and she set about making a new life which is well described in a letter directed to the 'Irish Quarterly Review' of 1858, but which is outside the scope of this thesis to recite.

Ellen Woodlock's enterprise was later to attract particular attention at the Cork Industrial Exhibition of 1852, and from Cork she later went on to Dublin, where she set up a school on Richmond Avenue, Fairview, quite close to her brother-in-law, then in residence at All Hallows. Sarah Atkinson, the essayist, and biographer of Mary Aikenhead, joined Ellen in this work. Mrs. Woodlock subsequently achieved fame as the only woman to give evidence to the House of Commons' 1861 'Select Committee on the Administration of the Poor Law in Ireland', and there are to be found many references to the SVP in her deposition. Not a member of the Society Ellen Woodlock was, however, a close observer and affiliate.

25 John Francis Maguire. The Industrial Movement in Ireland, as Illustrated by the National Exhibition of 1852. (Cork, 1853), p.215
This lady also worked with the Sisters of Charity and she has been described as the co-founder of the Children's Hospital, now in Temple Street, Dublin. It is, perhaps, not surprising that the initial list of governors of the hospital shows the names of several members of the SVP, including James More O'Ferrall and Michael Errington, the second and third Presidents. 26

In 1855 Mrs. Woodlock was at the bed-side of her brother, 'Father Prout' as he died in Paris, and she was executor to his Will, and was responsible for the return of his remains to Cork, and to 'Shandon'. 27

Mrs. Woodlock died in 1884, and her passing was marked by the 'Cork Examiner' with one hundred and thirty seven lines of obituary. 28

Timothy Mahony

This man died, we are told, returning from a meeting of the Vincent de Paul Society. Not the first President of the SVP in Cork - this honour goes to John Nicholas Count Murphy - Mahony, however, is given credit for the suggestion that the work be established, in Cork, in

26 Centenary Record of the Children's Hospital, Temple Street, Dublin [undated]
27 Probate Papers, Public Record Office, Dublin; Sarah Atkinson, Mary Aikenhead; Her Life, Her Work and Her Friends. (Dublin, 1879), p.212n
28 'Cork Examiner, 16th July 1884
March 1846. His initiative was celebrated as an endeavour:

"...which under God, and aided by the blessing and countenance of our Bishops and clergy and the munificent contributions of our fellow-citizens of various creeds...has been a source of vast benefit to members of the Catholic youth of this City, and of great seasonable aid, in terms of need, to our deserving and industrious poor." 29

Timothy Mahony (1814-1892) of the SVP should not be confused with his uncle, Timothy Mahony, who died 1818, and who played a significant role in the establishment of the Christian Brothers, and Mary Aikenhead's sisters of Charity, in Cork city, and in working with the 'Charitable Society' - in the later enterprise with Martin Farrell, father of Rev. Stephen A. Farrell, co-founder of the SVP in Dublin. 30

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The restrictions of the Penal days in Ireland meant that Roman Catholic families, such as Woodlock and Mahony, achieved wealth and prominence through trade - Maureen Wall's essay on an emerging Catholic middle-class in 18th century would confirm this fact. 31 Other writers have

30 Burke's Irish Family Records; Atkinson, Mary Aikenhead, p.189; A Century of Catholic Education, (Dublin, 1916), p.17
31 Maureen Wall, Catholic Middle Class, pp.91-115; also Gerard O'Brien (ed.)
also referred to the phenomenon. 32 However, by the mid-nineteenth century, with the removal of obstructions in entry to professions and other vocations, such Catholics had already emerged, and, either as clergy or laity, were working towards goals of improvement or self-sufficiency in their own lives or in the lives of those for whom they felt responsible.

The involvement of the Roman Catholic middle-class in the establishment of the SVP was but one instance in the need to mirror organisations and institutions already in place, but which catered primarily for adherents of the Established Church, or supporters of the Union.

32 McRedmond, Greater Glory, p.140; Caitriona Clear, Nuns in Nineteenth-century Ireland, (Dublin, 1987), p.4
CHAPTER 6
SVP AND THE CHURCH

Introduction

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has been, since foundation in 1833, a lay organisation, albeit paying due deference to ecclesiastic authority.

The first meeting in Paris was held without clergy present, but we learn that contact was soon made with Pere Faudet, the new priest of St. Etienne-du-Mont, in whose parish the young members commenced their work, 'He had no hesitation in entrusting to them the care of some poor families....who afterwards spoke to him most highly of the visitors'.

The date of this contact with the local clergy is not stated, but Baunard tells us that, in June 1833, Ozanam and his friends had presented to Monsignor de Quelen, the Archbishop of Paris, their first petition for the establishment of Conferences in Notre Dame. De Quelen was to be a significant figure in Ozanam's later work.

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1 Baunard. Ozanam. p. 75
2 Ibid., p. 73
3 O'Meara. Ozanam. p. 72
Laity

It seems that a number of new French Conferences saw no role for the clergy in the work of the Brotherhood, but President General Gossin admonished such members:

"...it has not been given to us who are mere laymen and Christians without authority, to search into the conscience of the poor, in order to know its wounds, to fathom and to heal them." 4

Conferences were to welcome the visits of priests who would 'deign to share in our little works and looking favourably at our zeal, consent to honour us with their presence and to enrich us with their blessings.' 5

It seems that the idea of the 'Spiritual Director', or adviser, was not a feature of the early French Society, and it was the English or Irish organisation that introduced the 'rule' - to be taken up later elsewhere - that each SVP Conference and Council should have such a Director, 'who is appointed by the Bishop of the Diocese in which the Conference or Council is situated; he is ipso facto a member of the Council or Conference, and also of its Board.' 6

However, the importance of the initial lay character of the SVP is reflected in President General Gossin's emphatic statement:

4 SVP Manual (1909 edition)
5 Ibid.
"The Society will preserve, as heretofore, its lay organisation and its lay direction, for its prosperity and even its existence depend on that condition". 7

From the writings available to us we can recognise that, as far as the Paris group were concerned, it was the challenge of the Saint-Simonians against Christianity rather than an immediate concern for the poor that motivated the first meeting of the Conference of Charity, and this fact is reflected in the view that:

"Bailly is insistent, religion alone has brought members together." 8

The followers of Count Claude de Saint-Simon, who was himself described as a 'utopian socialist' 9, sought to replace religion with science. 10 Technology and 'industrialism' was the new ideology - de Lesseps, who built the Suez Canal, was an adherent 11 - but, more succinctly, the Saint-Simonians attempted to create a lay 'bourgeois non-Christian' morality. 12

This challenge was answered in the formation of the SVP in Paris, which organisation was quickly assimilated into the social, religious and political structure of the

8 Murphy. Humble of Heart. p.28
9 Hobsbawm. Age of Revolution, p.344
11 Hobsbawm, Age of Revolution, p.178
12 Ibid., pp.268-9
time. The French Society then followed an unbroken road towards non-denominational Christian charity, with the single interruption of the political suppression of 1861.  

The Irish (and English) SVP, on the other hand, was faced with competing forms of Christianity, and, as will be discussed later in Chapter 10, one can speculate on the range of religious (sectarian?) reasons for the Society's foundation in the face of the new mission of the Reformed Churches, or, indeed, as a more positive consequence of Catholic Emancipation and of a self-confident middle-class Catholic laity.

It might be said, at this time, that the negative aspects of Catholic 'ascendancy' and 'religious apartheid' 14 is missing from the lives of the Dublin co-founders considered in Chapters 4 and 5 - although, as far as has been recorded, these earliest Irish members were conventional adherents to the Roman Catholic traditions, supportive of their clergy and bishops.

As was the 19th century custom 15, Holy Communion was received mainly on festive occasions - Easter, Christmas, SVP General meetings - preceded by Confession 16, but little other external, or ostentatious, signs of faith,

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13 See Introduction, p.5
14 Desmond Bowen, Paul Cardinal Cullen, (Dublin, 1983), pp.204-7
15 Sean Connolly, Religion and Society, p.48
16 Diaries of William Woodlock, Ms.4497/4521, NLI.
with the possible exception of the annual retreat at St. Francis Xavier's Church, Gardiner Street, the four 'Festival Meetings', and the basic Conference prayers, were evident.

Daniel Murray (1768-1852), Archbishop of Dublin

There was particular deference for the bishops, with members of the episcopacy presiding at meetings when present. One can, of course, detect conflict - or perhaps reflect on the fact that some relationships were merely warmer than others. Archbishop Daniel Murray, in particular, had an association with the Society which appeared to be more intimate than that of his immediate successor. For the 'always irenic' Murray, foundation of the Irish SVP was the culmination of a career of positive achievement, which had seen the introduction, to the Archdiocese, of the Sisters of Charity, the Loreto Sisters and the Sisters of Mercy [who collectively have been described as 'the Shamrock of Irish Sisterhood' ], the coming of a number of Congregations, including that of the Missions [Irish Vincentians] and the building of ninety seven churches.  

A typed manuscript rests in the library of O'Connell Schools, Dublin, which, during the course of a lengthy sketch of the life of Daniel Murray, tells us that:

"Dr. Murray....... always followed with deep interest the post-Napoleonic resurgence of the Church in France, and had much confidence in the inherent Catholicism and re-organization fervour of the plain people of that country. It was to France, rather than to Italy or any other Catholic nation, that he looked for practical suggestion in his task of ecclesiastical re-construction in Dublin. Many of the French Catholic forces of the time were among his correspondents, including Frederic Ozanam..."  

Murray's admiration of the time for things, and people, French, comes to the fore again when a contemporary biographer, of the Archbishop, writes that the foundation of the SVP in Paris:

"......may well be cited amongst the most unexpected and most consoling marvels wrought by religion in our day - adding one more item to the already countless proofs of the past that, when the tendencies of the French mind have been directed towards worthy objects, in no manner of good works do they allow themselves to be surpassed by any people upon the earth."  

Paul Cullen (1803-1878), Archbishop of Dublin

Archbishop (later Cardinal) Cullen's relationship with the SVP members was very different to that of Dr. Murray, and was, most likely, influenced by the conservative figure of Sir John Bradstreet, fourth President of the

20 Carey, Daniel Murray.
21 Meagher, Daniel Murray, p.139
Society [1855-1890] - twenty three of these thirty five years being contemporaneous with Dr. Cullen's reign. The Archbishop's attitude to the SVP is perhaps best illustrated by his remarks:

"There was a dinner ere yesterday", he then noted, referring to his latest efforts on behalf of the poor, 'of the Society of S. Vincent de Paul. I attended and we had a gt Catholic display of about 200 of the most respectable gentlemen of Dublin.' 'I was consulted', he explained, 'about the toasts and made them put the Pope in 1° loco. The Lord Mayor, a Catholic, refused to attend because the Queen was not given the place of honour - at a religious society's meeting.' 'What a Catholic !'" 22

In view of Rev. Bartholomew Woodlock's involvement with the Society it may well be that Cullen delegated his responsibility to Woodlock, his Vicar General; however the Archbishop's views on the laity, enunciated through his correspondence about the Catholic University, was indicative of his attitude to such a lay society.

Dr. Cullen mistrusted 'Young Irelandism' - 'that manifestation of continental liberalism' 23, and 'Young Irelanders', whom he compared with followers of the Italian revolutionary, Mazzini. 24 John O'Hagan, already mentioned, and Dr. David Moriarty, Bishop of Kerry, were just two who were so named. 25 Dr. Moriarty's first cousin, Stephen O'Ryan, was a co-founder of SVP, and his brother, James O'Ryan of All Hallows College, was,

22 Cullen to Kirby, 29th January 1862, cited in Larkin Catholic Church 1860-70, p.82
23 O'Broin, Gavan Duffy, p.83
24 Gavan Duffy, League, p.174
25 Larkin, Catholic Church 1860-70, p.133
additionally, a former colleague of both Bishops Moriarty and Woodlock. 

However, it was for John O'Hagan's father-in-law, Thomas O'Hagan (later Lord Chancellor of Ireland), that Cullen reserved his considerable ire, and education was to be the platform for the Archbishop's displeasure. John O'Hagan had accepted, much against Dr. Cullen's advice, the position of a Commissioner of the National Education Board, and Thomas O'Hagan, in standing for Parliament - in Bishop Moriarty's diocese, no less, - had gone further in championing the cause of the new National Schools. 

Thomas O'Hagan and Dr. Cullen finally opened a public debate on the matter. 

The O'Hagans were not alone amongst middle-class Catholics in their particular views on education, and a listing in the 'Nation', in June 1845, gave the names of those who supported 'mixed' education. The following SVP members were included, Charles Gavan Duffy, John O'Hagan, William Gernon, John Baldwin Murphy - together with Dominic Corrigan and Michael O'Donnell, brothers-in-law of Bartholomew Woodlock.

26 Condon, All Hallows, pp.274-275
27 Larkin, Catholic Church, 1850-70, p.157
Since Dr. Woodlock was related to the O'Hagans by marriage, through the Teeling family, the circle of middle-class Catholics of whom Archbishop Cullen had reservations must have looked impenetrable. To compound matters still further, John O'Hagan had been appointed a lecturer at Woodlock's Catholic University, but, as if to purge his own years at Trinity, had written a pamphlet on the possible evils of attendance at the same Dublin University.

The Errington/More O'Ferrall dynasty was more amenable; Cullen had already campaigned for George Errington, Archbishop of Trebizond, to be appointed Apostolic Delegate for the Missions in Scotland. Errington's brother, Michael, had been third President of the Irish SVP, and his brother-in-law, James More O'Ferrall, second President.

But it was another brother-in-law, Richard More O'Ferrall MP, former Governor of Malta (1847-1851), to whom Archbishop Cullen turned for advice on many political issues, this Member of Parliament having achieved fame, and prestige in Cullen's eyes, by resigning the Malta Governorship in consequence of the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill. More O'Ferrall was well placed in London to

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29 History of the Woodlock Family [Copy in possession of author]
30 Papers of the late Edward More O'Ferrall [In possession of Gore & Grimes, Solicitors, Dublin 11]
influence and to lobby for church matters, and he had friendly contacts with Dr. McHale of Tuam, through their mutual responsibility as trustees of Maynooth College. 32

To enhance the Cullen/Mac O'Ferrall connection, we have the word of John Devoy that the two families were related. 33 — although there is no such reference in Mac Suibhne's much quoted multi-part biography of Cardinal Cullen. 34

Paul Cullen seemed suspicious of the laity, and regarded the idea of lay representation on the governing board of the Catholic University as a 'potentially divisive issue' 35, but Woodlock, an admirer of those laymen who had inaugurated the embryonic SVP, had proposed, in a carefully worded memorandum, the introduction of members of the laity to the University Board. However, Cullen's views were definite and unambiguous:

"I think it is not of any great importance to have the laymen in question. They do without laymen in Belgium. We have scarcely any great laymen, who could help to keep up the University and it is in the body of the people that we must rely." 36

Larkin points out that it was not only Cullen who had doubts on the value of the laity, and that it was not the Archbishop of Dublin solely 'who was responsible for the

32 Larkin. Catholic Church 1860-70, p.144
34 Mac Suibhne. Cullen.
35 Larkin. Catholic Church 1860-70, p.145
36 Ibid., p.169
intransigence of the bishops as a body in regard to lay representation.' 37

Bartholomew Woodlock's family connections must, as already suggested, have been an embarrassment to his Archbishop, as we have also clear evidence of Dr. Cullen 'keeping his distance' from Mrs. Ellen Woodlock, at the 1861 Royal Commission 38, clashing with Sir Dominic Corrigan on 'mixed education' 39, and being the subject of Francis Sylvester Mahony's gibe of 'Cullenisation'. 40

Clerical Involvement

In view of the emerging significance of the SVP, it is rather surprising that so little evidence exists in any diocesan archives about the relationship between the Society and the Bishops [1993 Correspondence of the writer with members of the Irish Hierarchy] and it may be a tribute that the SVP became, so quickly, simply 'taken for granted'.

It may also be an indication that the pastoral authorities felt 'safe' with the Society; for instance, no trace of ecclesiastical veto on the formation of a SVP

37 Ibid., p.145; Larkin, Catholic Church 1870-74, pp.387-388
38 House of Commons Select Committee on Poor Law Relief in Ireland, (1861)
40 Connolly, Religion and Society, p.15
Conference or Council, has been found, although, through the initiative of the organisation's Superior Council, some Conferences were put 'into abeyance', following disputes with local clergy, and, in one instance, at least, multiple resignations occurred following a confrontation with the local Bishop. 41

The SVP members, coming, as they mostly did, from the same social grouping as the clergy, could work easily with the priests in relieving the destitute. There were few obstacles to co-operation, and common values resulted, in many cases, in a parochial partnership. Family ties were often shared and one is not unduly surprised to find, in research, the number of priests, and other religious, who came from the homes of members of the Society - for instance Stephen Curtis had an uncle and a brother who were Jesuits, John Seaver had a son and a brother in the same Order, and both of Redmund O'Carroll's sons also joined the Society of Jesus.

Conflict

The support of many people of other faiths for the Society during its long years of existence, and particularly in those early years when sectarian conflict was otherwise evident, has been happy evidence of co-existence.

However, the word 'proselytism' raises a discordant note in the work of most voluntary and charitable bodies operating in mid-nineteenth century Ireland, and, depending on where one stood, the proselytiser was on the opposite side. One Roman Catholic cleric was accused of being the master of theological double-think: "Catholic 'missionaries' win 'converts', Protestant 'proselytisers' win 'perverts'" 42, but instances of 'double think' - from all sides - were evident.

The evangelical missions of the Reformed Churches, what some have called the 'Second Reformation' 43, or the 'New Reformation' 44 - particularly to areas badly hit by the Great Famine - had much to do with neglect by Catholic clergy 45, but opportunities to extend their denominational empire, by groups such as the Hibernian Bible Society, and others, caused much bitterness, verbalized in words such as perverts, converts, jumpers, etc.

The threat of the 'soupers' - clergymen who offered food to those who would adhere to the Established Church - has been well described by others, as were the retaliatory Missions of Roman Catholic congregations such as the

43 Connolly, Religion and Society, p.28; Jonathan Bardon, A History of Ulster, (Belfast, 1992), pp.249-252
44 Kerr, Peel, p.57
45 Connolly, Religion and Society, pp.10-11
Vincentians, whose presence was generally followed by the establishment of a Conference of the SVP. The celebrated mission at Dingle is such an example.

It is noticeable that those ensuing Conferences had a very limited life span, the Dingle branch folding after 3 years \(^{46}\), Oughterard after 15 years \(^{47}\), and Castletownbere after 17 years \(^{48}\), and it is likely that a combination of lack of members, reduced need from a diminished population, and - unlike establishment elsewhere - the confrontational nature of foundation mitigated against permanency.

Although the membership at that time was strictly Catholic, the SVP ethos was to adopt a non-sectarian approach to the provision of aid to the destitute, thus differing from, say, the ARDP whose objective was the relief of Protestants only. The ARDP's application form for assistance, indeed, had to be verified for church-attendance by a clergyman or member of the Association; the candidate for SVP help did not require such endorsement, although the Irish Superior Council did have to censure at least one rural Conference who insisted on attendance at the Sacraments before help was allocated, \(^{49}\) and the Paris Conferences did, at one time, look for marriage and birth certificates from their 'cases'. \(^{50}\)

\(^{47}\) SVP [Irish] Bulletin. Vol.XIII. (1868)  
\(^{48}\) Ibid., Vol.XV. (1870); Ibid., Vol.III. (1858). p.37  
\(^{49}\) SVP Minutes, 3rd August 1857  
\(^{50}\) SVP Manuals (various editions)
The SVP was, however, often seen as equally partisan in its objectives as ARDP, although members were frequently supported by Protestant neighbours in their work. The danger to children, particularly, of falling prey to 'proselytisers' was of concern to each congregation, and led to the emphasis on denominational schooling and orphanages.

The Superior Council of the SVP was not without its internal critics, and the Society's Council in Cork, in 1858, complained that publication of details of individual families or 'cases' was 'savouring too much of that spirit of proselytism which they disclaimed for the Society'.

Such sectarian aspects aside, there were remarkable similarities in the approach of many of these competing charities, and the reports of both SVP and ARDP have common language, referring to 'the industrious poor', to the need for 'moral values', and to the 'Christian charity of benefactors'.

Fund-raising was generally confined to one's co-religionists, and it was only with stated non-sectarian organisations, such as the 'Sick and Indigent Roomkeepers', that Catholics and Protestants are listed...
together as subscribers and benefactors. A Charity Sermon was held for the 'Roomkeepers' in a church of each faith on alternative years, but this was exceptional - and even then created occasional difficulties - and generally Charity Sermons, described as 'the great prop of the philanthropist' were confined to the churches of the relevant charity.

The Rule of the Society

At the third meeting of the Society held, in Dublin, on Monday, 13th January 1845, a set of Rules were read and adopted. These proposed, inter alia, that:

1. "The Society of St. Vincent de Paul receives as members all Catholics, who desire to unite in prayer and to cooperate in works of charity...."

2. "Laymen may become honorary members by making a yearly offering, and may attend and take part in the annual meeting on the first Monday after the feast of St. Vincent de Paul...."

3. "No work of charity of which it is in the power of lay Catholics to render, should be regarded as foreign to the Society, altho its more especial object is the visitation of poor families...."

---

53 Deirdre Lindsay. Dublin's Oldest Charity. (Dublin, 1990), p.8
These Rules are assumed to have been taken from a translation, from the French, by the recently formed English Society in early 1844, and, the writer, having had an opportunity of comparing the Dublin and London texts, found that the wording, if not the order, is similar. However, there is also available a series of SVP 'Manuals', reissued at various times between 1845 and the introduction of a new 'Rule' in 1973.  

There was, with the inclusion of more and more Presidential Circulars over the years, a need to edit, and re-edit, the text of these Manuals, and there is a certain 'revisionism' in some sections, an example being the initial requirement, as mentioned above, in the French Society of obtaining marriage certificates, and children's baptismal certificates before assistance was provided. This was modified to 'if not at our first visit, at least when we are sufficiently acquainted with the family' in the 1867 edition, and was removed entirely in the 1909 version.  

In the Society's Rule, the 'object' of a Conference was:

Firstly, to maintain its members, by mutual example and advice in the practice of a Christian life; secondly, to visit the poor in their dwellings, to bring them succour in kind, to afford them, also, religious consolations...... thirdly, to apply ourselves, according to our capabilities and the time which we can spare, to the elementary and Christian instruction of poor children, whether free or imprisoned....... fourthly, to distribute moral 

54 SVP International Plenary Meeting, Dublin, 1973
55 SVP Manual (1851, 1867 and 1909 editions)
or religious books; fifthly, to apply ourselves to all other kinds of charitable works for which our resources may be adequate, but which will not interfere with the chief object of the Society, and for which it may demand our aid.  

The differing emphasis in the wording of this 'chief object', particularly in the use of the appellation 'Christian' as opposed to 'Catholic', may owe as much to contemporary translation as to any notion of a different ethos between England/Ireland and France, but the inclusion, as members, of Christians of other traditions was not formalised until the 1973 International Plenary Meeting in Dublin.

Religion in 19th Century Ireland

The break-down in numbers of church-adherents before and after the Great Famine is of value in understanding the constituency of the SVP, and this is possibly best delineated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Roman Catholics</th>
<th>Church of Ireland</th>
<th>Presbyterian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>80.9%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>77.7%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

56 Ibid., (1935 edition), pp.16-17
57 Connolly, Religion and Society, p.3
Connolly tells us that 'the number of Catholics had fallen by 30 per cent since 1834, while the number of Anglicans and Presbyterians had fallen by only 19 per cent, in each case', and by 1901, the Roman Catholic share of the total population had fallen still further - to 74.2%. Thus it could be argued that the SVP had lost many of its potential 'clients', but that its contribution base was now, as Connolly describes the Church, 'a smaller but more prosperous population'.

The role of the Society would change in consequence of this new Catholic profile, and 'special works', relating particularly to education and religious teaching, were to acquire a much greater significance in the second half of the nineteenth century. This changing role is further discussed in Chapter 9.

58 Ibid., p. 54
CHAPTER 7
THE WORK

Introduction

We have looked at the people involved in the foundation of the Society, and the 'need', let us consider the way in which the embryonic organisation set about the task of relief.

The 'Rules' which had been translated in England from the original French give us certain clues as to the initial direction of the Dublin members.

Rule 3, as indicated in Chapter 6, declared that no work of charity 'which it is in the power of lay catholics to render, should be regarded as foreign to the Society, altho it's more especial object is the visitation of poor families'. The Rule continues:

"Thus the members may take every opportunity of affording consolation to the sick, the imprisoned and those in workhouses, of giving instructions to poor children and religious succour to those who need it at the hour of death." 1

It is unclear as to the precise direction of the first 'visitation of poor families' in Dublin - the size of family, special needs, source of introduction, etc, - but

1 SVP Minutes, 13th January 1845
we do know from the report to the first General Meeting of the Society that assistance in the form of tickets for relief were first distributed on 17th February 1845. ²

This arrangement of 'tickets' was to be a feature of SVP activity for well over a century and has only, since 1960, been replaced by cash grants. The early Minutes tells us that:

"One of the first cares of the Society was to enter into an arrangement with several provision dealers through the city who would give to the poor whatever amount of relief might be marked on the ticket presented to them and charge the value to the account of the Society."³

Hearsay within the Society tells us of many abuses of the tickets, with alcohol and cigarettes playing a significant role in the 'need' for restriction.

The early officers were not unaware of the dangers to the integrity of the Society of appointing specific 'agents', and a later procedure manual gives a cautionary warning about the undesirability of provision dealers being active SVP members.⁴ Yielding to temptation was a classless vice!

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² SVP Minutes, 21st July 1845
³ Ibid.
Provision

The needs of the poor in the years following the Society's foundation are very clearly shown in the statistics provided in early copies of the SVP Bulletin. What we are not told, regretfully, is the provincial or parish split of the foodstuff. However we can trace a significant change in available food over various periods, along with the particular growth of the network of Conferences and members. Tables 7.1 to 7.5 show the type and quantities of provision in the years from 1856 to 1864, and we can, in particular, detect the impact of the further potato failure in 1861 - Donnelly writes of yields of 60% below normal in Co. Cork. These Tables are discussed further below.

The diet of the 'outdoor' poor can further be matched with the workhouse regime of the period, and Appendix B shows the fare provided in the Lisburn Union.

E. Margaret Crawford's dietary study of the nineteenth century is particularly valuable to us in assessing the type of provision made available by the SVP. Crawford, in considering the post-Famine diet of the labouring classes, quotes C.G.Otway's 1859 study:

5 Donnelly. Land and People. p.146
7 E. Margaret Crawford, Diet and the Labouring Classes in the Nineteenth Century, in Saothar 15. (Dublin, 1990), pp.87-93.
"The diet of the labouring classes.... has, within the last seven or eight years been much improved, both as to quantity and variety.... Before the Famine potatoes, with occasionally milk was almost the sole diet of the great bulk of the class to whom I allude; now, wholemeal wheaten bread, Indian and oatmeal stirabout, and even tea and sugar, as well as milk, is used not merely occasionally and as a great luxury, but almost generally." 

Apart from coal, turf and straw, the Society's provision in kind can be roughly grouped as:

(a) Bread and meal.

(b) New milk and buttermilk, and

(c) Tea, coffee, cocoa.

(d) Sugar.

The provision of flour, potatoes, butter and rice was erratic, and has been disregarded for the purposes of the current analysis; there is no mention of eggs, fish or vegetables in Reports.

The increase in tea drinking {Tables 7.5} goes against the accepted view on consumption of this beverage.

Donnelly suggests that whilst, amongst farmers, tea was becoming immensely popular, few labourers or servants as yet took it. 9 One farmer, outraged by the mounting cost

8 Ibid., p.89
9 Donnelly, Land and People, p.246
of supporting his servants, remarked sarcastically in 1880, 'Now you must keep a grocery account open for them, that gives them tea twice a day'. 10

Donnelly is writing of county Cork; but that tea drinking was a recognised Irish phenomenon is confirmed by the view that 'the factor to the Earl of Stair in Wigtownshire [Scotland] even believed that the wives of Irish labourers in the county were so addicted to tea that they 'scrimp their families in food for the purpose of procuring it'.' 11

It may be that, despite Donnelly’s remarks, tea drinking was an urban habit; to quote a Poor Law Inspector 'In the towns, tea and coffee are a good deal used, but not at all so much in rural districts'. 12

The provision of milk and other non-alcoholic beverages was significant but, whilst it is likely that SVP members were conscious of the temperance movement, there are few references to what Davis called 'the luxury of despair - the saturnalia of slaves' 13, in early Minutes or Bulletins. Apart from Father Matthew's crusade, temperance seems to have been a stated ethos of the

10 Irish Times, 24th November 1880], cited by Donnelly, Land and People, p.246
12 Crawford, Diet, p.90
Protestant charities only. Other exceptions relate to the work of individual Catholic priests - with the money raised by the Vincentian, Fr. Thomas McNamara, through the Temperance Society at Phibsboro, well exceeding that raised for relief of the poor by the adjoining SVP Conference. 14

TABLES 7.1 to 7.5

The details of provision provided by the SVP in the earliest years of existence in Ireland, including the significant famine years, have not survived; however in the following decade it appears that there were several distinguishable patterns in relation to the 'relief-in-kind' provided by the Society, and these are highlighted in Tables 7.1 to 7.5:

TABLES 1/2. Bread/Meal.

There was an increase of 50% in the provision of bread in the two years period 1856-1858; this fell back during the following year. However, in 1860 there was a decline in potato yields in some areas, as already discussed, where meal was again used as a substitute, and both bread and meal rose to new heights in 1863, to reduce substantially thereafter.

14 Archives of the Vincentian Fathers, Dublin
TABLE 3. Meat.

There were small volumes of meat provided each year, and in relatively prosperous times (up to 1860/1861) the percentage increase in this foodstuff was substantial (350% over five years). The austerity of 1862/1863 brought consumption down.

TABLE 4. Milk.

A change from 'buttermilk' to 'new milk' is highlighted by Table 7.4. Whereas new milk was only one third of the total milk supplied in 1856, the roles had reversed eight years later, with buttermilk now down to half its 1856 volume. Unlike the pattern in other Tables, new milk formed an increased portion of SVP assistance after 1863.

TABLE 5. Beverages.

The social changes reflected by tea-drinking, as already discussed, is confirmed in Table 7.5, where tea equalled cocoa provision in the abundant year, 1859. However, the more austere years following saw a revival in cocoa drinking. Provision of coffee was minimal.

Cost of Provision

The Minutes of the Ennistymon, Co. Clare, Union give valuable information regarding the cost of basic
TABLE 7.3

RELIEF IN KIND — MEAT

Source: SVP Reports

TABLE 7.3
TABLE 7.4

RELIEF IN KIND – MILK

Source: SVP Reports

TABLE 7.5

RELIEF IN KIND – BEVERAGES

Source: SVP Reports

TABLE 7.5
provisions - albeit in large quantities which may have involved some discount on cost.

However, the items common to the months of December 1845, 1846, 1847 are as follows (cost designated in old pence):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1845</th>
<th>1846</th>
<th>1847</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bread (per lb.)</td>
<td>1 7/16d.</td>
<td>1 3/4d.</td>
<td>3d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk (per qt.)</td>
<td>1 1/2d.</td>
<td>1 3/4d.</td>
<td>2 1/4d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat * (per lb.)</td>
<td>4 1/4d.</td>
<td>5 1/2d.</td>
<td>5 1/2d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Purchased in small quantities only, may have been for consumption by Guardian Board members, or Workhouse Master/Matron

The Ennistymon Minutes were written in informal fashion; however, by 1848, a standardised Minute Book had come into use in all Unions - with, regrettably, no provision for details of commodities purchased or price per unit.

The price of these basic foodstuffs can be readily put into context when the average weekly cost [old pence] of maintenance (exclusive of clothes) of a workhouse inmate is considered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1845</th>
<th>1846</th>
<th>1847</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17 3/4d.</td>
<td>20 3/4d.</td>
<td>25 3/4d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It might be mentioned that the average weekly cost for another county Clare workhouse (Kilrush) in 1847 was 20d, i.e. less than three old pence per day. This, in turn, suggests daily consumption of, roughly, a half pound loaf, and one pint of milk per individual - well under the diet scheduled for Lisburn Workhouse. [Appendix B]

We are not fortunate enough to be able to relate a comparable 'cost regime' to SVP provision in-kind, but we do know from the evidence to the, later, 1861 Select Committee on Poor Relief in Ireland, that weekly assistance by the Society, at least in Cork City, had a value of three shillings [36 old pence] per family visit, [an average of nine old pence per individual].

There are data available from the first Annual Report of the Society in Dublin [31.12.1845] of the quantity, value and type of provision granted by the three Conferences active at that date. However, since none of these had been operational for a full year and since comparative details are not available for subsequent periods, there is little basis for appraisal. What is of value is the knowledge that - pre Famine - meal, bread, potatoes, sugar, milk and tea were all common to these branches of the Society - 'meal' being, specifically, oatmeal.

15 Evidence of R.J.O'Shaughnessy to the 1861 Select Committee of the House of Commons on Administration of Poor Relief in Ireland.
Clothing

There are few details available about the clothing and bedding supplied by the SVP in the early years of operation; these were generally second-hand, and often a cart was sent through the streets to replenish the local 'salvage bureau'. 16

The necessity for the provision of clothing was accepted, and, as O'Grada points out, 'poor attendance at church and school was something explained away by the lack of presentable clothes', 17 and the SVP commented:

"[Clothing]...often means health, life and position; for many a poor person fails to find a place for want of decent clothes." 18

Visitors

The early Irish Rules, and subsequent practice, tell of the necessity of calling on the poor in pairs of visitors, 'as a preservation against the dangers which the visitors might meet in certain families' 19 No suggestion of any danger to the poor! However, the

17 Cormac O'Grada, Ireland Before and After the Famine, (Manchester, 1988), p.15
19 SVP Minutes, 21st July 1845
French rule is perhaps more oblique in informing us (in translation) that:

"It is not enough moreover to examine the claims of the poor families at the moment they present themselves, the truth does not come to light till afterwards; circumstances change and their necessities do not remain the same. The visitor, it is true, should scrupulously observe all the changes that occur in the families which are entrusted to him; but such is the force of Christian affection which binds him to his charge, that often unknown to himself, a spirit of partiality glides into his mind, and blinds him to the real necessities of the poor - in many of the Conferences a remedy has been found for this danger in combining the visits to be made by two members together; what the one has not seen, rarely escapes the vigilance of the other, and each finds in his companion a guide and adviser." 20

We might be surprised that the number of SVP calls in the mid-nineteenth century appears to be very much at variance with the pattern of recent times, with each pair of visitors then calling on, only, 1.5 cases per week. Whether this suggests that there were excess members for the necessary work, or that membership has to-day declined relative to the work-load, is a moot point. It certainly begs the question, considered in Chapter 10, of the availability of alternative sources of relief, and the, less than monopolistic, position of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

20 Ibid.
The growth of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, in Ireland, in the years 1844-1869 has been charted by this writer, and the results included in Appendix C. 21

Appendix C (1) shows the first five years of existence (1845-1849), with the initial development in Dublin followed by the growth in Munster emanating from the Great Famine, with Clonmel, Castlecomer and Kilarush being towns of particular significance for the Society. Contemporary statistics tell of large populations in those areas, and workhouse numbers confirm this fact.

There were some losses in the immediate post-Famine years in towns such as Dingle, but this was exceptional, and, while there were to be later defections, these mostly occurred in the period 1855-1859. Otherwise, the low-key presidencies of More O'Ferrall and Errington saw some initial growth in the northern counties [Appendix C (2) (1850-1854)], but this may have been due less to these gentlemen than to the efforts of the energetic Dr. Alex Harkin, President of the Particular Council of Belfast.

Appendix C (3) (1855-1859) indicates a regeneration in Dublin, due, it would appear, to the enterprise of Sir John Bradstreet, Bart., who was President of the Society.

21 Sourced from SVP Annual Reports, SVP Irish and French Bulletins, and SVP Dublin and Paris Archives
for the considerable term of thirty five years (1855-1890). Amongst the many innovations of this man's first years in office was the visit, to Ireland, of the President General of the Society, Adolphe Baudon, which event took place in 1855, and helped in the regeneration.

As with the initial foundation of the Society, in Dublin, in December 1844, we can only speculate with flimsy evidence on the proximate cause for the setting up of each later Conference. We learn, for instance, in the obituary of Richard O'Shaughnessy of Cork that it was the acquaintance of two members of a church choir in that city - and Dublin contacts - that alerted these men to the existence of the SVP. One might reasonably expect that the network of clergymen emanating from Maynooth would spread the 'word' as to the possibility, and advantages, of the Society. The fact of the existence of such a Conference in Maynooth College itself would lend credence to this view; a point which can also be made in relation to Dr. Woodlock's influence on later world-wide developments emanating from All Hallows Missionary College.

The 'Tablet' newspaper, no doubt, played a part in the awareness of the Society in Ireland, as it did in England, although the members of the Irish Society were less publicity-conscious than their confreres in Britain,

22 SVP [Irish] Bulletin. (1876), p.57
and accounts of Conferences meetings in the 'Waterford News', 'Tipperary Free Press', and 'Clare Advertiser' were to result in reprimands from Dublin during 1859. Indeed, it was to be some years before the Bazaar Committee and the Orphanage Committee had reason to use the advertising columns of papers such as the 'Freeman's Journal' to promote fund-raising events.  

The publisher of the Tipperary Free Press may have had a crisis of 'journalistic conscience' in not reporting the news of the Conference since he was Alderman John Hackett, President of the Society in Clonmel for, at least, fifteen years [c.1857-1872]  

Indeed, President General Baudon took the opportunity of his visit to Dublin, in 1854, to caution against press publicity for the Society, and, as late as the 1913 Lock-out 'relief' activity, hearsay tells us of press reporters being excluded from Society meetings.

The membership

The fact that all the initial members had rural backgrounds should not be ignored in considering the later growth of the SVP, and we have a specific, and well documented, example of the 'evangelical' ardour of these

24 SVP Minutes
TABLE 7.6
men in the Clonmel Conference founded in March 1847, as already mentioned in Chapter 4, by John Baldwin Murphy, a Tipperary-born barrister, later to be Judge to the Petty Sessions at Waterford. This man who, at the time of the December 1844 meeting, was resident in Dublin, had shared an address with Stephen Curtis, also a co-founder of the first Irish Conference. Murphy kept up his early connections with the Dublin headquarters and was identified as a Vice President of the Superior Council over a long period of years.

Family and business connections were apparently crucial to the development of the SVP in Ireland, but the early vocational links were to change in later decades. Regrettably, there is now only evidence of occupation in the formation, or 'Aggregation', papers in the Paris archive of the Society. * It seems that there was no cause or requirement to reveal job or business detail at any other time.

The Aggregation forms are worthy of study, and show some valuable detail; for instance, the honorary and active members, who, apart from the nineteen founders, were included in the 'Bulletin d'Aggregation' of the first Dublin Conference, reveal the names of 'Charles Gavan Duffy', and 'Hon. Colonel Southwell', together with

26 SVP [Paris] Archives
six medical practitioners, seven lawyers, and ten merchants. 27

Seven years later, the Conference of St. Malachi, Dundalk, included amongst its active members, two tobacconists, five apprentices, two excise officers, a Poor Rate collector, and a spirit dealer. 28

Seven years later, again, the Conference of SS. Michael & John, Exchange Street, Dublin showed its initial members to be an umbrella-manufacturer, a pawnbroker, a bookseller, a cork-manufacturer, a chandler, a jeweller, a boot-maker, two 'merchants', and a 'gentleman' (from Dublin Castle). 29

The acceptance of the 'spirit-dealer' and 'pawnbroker' as members, might, have caused some heart searching amongst the officers of the Society, as we find, in 1855, that there was a request to the Council of Ireland for confirmation that a pawn-broker's assistant might be admitted as member 'as a doubt existed as to the application of the [existing] Rule relating to spirit retailers'. 30

27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 SVP Minutes, 8th January 1855
Conference Size

The average number of members of a SVP Conference in the last decades of the 20th century is ten persons, male and female. In the earlier era, now being considered, of this all-male Society, one finds a significantly higher membership, even when honorary members are excluded, but non-attendance (and poor punctuality) was a problem and often an 'average attendance' figure was used in Reports. The Dundalk Conference, to which we have already referred, had an initial membership of 34 men, but this appears higher than the norm.

The numbers involved over a thirty five year period can be ascertained from Table 7.6 below, where the membership rose to a peak of 2,200 in 1861, a year of great deprivation, and then fall, but rose again to a new peak in a later period of need [1880].

Employment

It has been suggested in Chapter 3 that, despite the known hardship, and the separation, of the workhouse, many of those who paid Poor Rates saw life, in such an institution, as indolent and degrading without some activity - again, the work ethic, even in such circumstances! There was no suggestion that families should work for the assistance provided by the Society of
St. Vincent de Paul, however 'employment' schemes were sponsored by individual Conferences from an early date and many of these ventures continued up to the early years of this century.

Members would have been very aware of the work of Mrs. Ellen Woodlock, mentioned in Chapter 5, and it was similar craft work, or light industry, that was taken up in various parts of the country, viz. lace-making in Clonmel. However, not many Conferences were as enterprising as the group of members in Navan, county Meath, who wrote many years later to the Council General in Paris seeking sales opportunities for their lace-making amongst members or firms in France; a letter of introduction was provided which resulted in 'a good order for work'. 31

Emigration

It seems that it was a direct appeal from the Freeman's Journal that encouraged the SVP to set up a separate Committee to deal with this work. 32 This was to be a sensitive area, as the Council of Ireland found when they inadvertently and indirectly criticised their colleagues in the United States for the bad treatment of Irishmen.

31 August 1907 correspondence. SVP (Paris) Archives
32 Freeman's Journal, 30th October 1850, cited in Oliver MacDonagh, 'The Irish Catholic Clergy and Emigration During the Great Famine', in Irish Historical Studies, Vol. V. (1946-7), p. 300
and women in their new country \(^{33}\), and, while Society members such as James More O'Ferrall took a personal interest in emigrants, the work had a life separate from the SVP, and although operating from the SVP Offices, was known as the 'Emigrants Protection Society'. \(^{34}\)

Assistance for emigrants was not designated as a special work of the SVP, and this is reflected in the absence, in 1857, from a list of such 'works', of the Protection Society. \(^{35}\)

The concern of members in Ireland about those men and women who left for foreign parts was sustained by inclusion of American, English and Scotch (sic) 'Intelligence' in the Irish Bulletin, while the Canadian SVP had, so-called, 'Irish' Conferences for many years. Whether this latter feature was a facility, or arrangement, for non-French speaking members, or an indication of the extent of aid required by Irish emigrants, is not clarified.

**The Families Assisted**

Little detail has survived of the 'cases', or families visited - particularly data on family size. However, from

\(^{33}\) SVP Annual Report, (1864)
\(^{34}\) MacDonagh, Clergy and Emigration, p. 301 : Mac Suibhne, ii, Cullen, p. 75
the number of cases and the number of individuals included in each report, the average number per family can be calculated at 3.5 persons, and we can postulate the hypothesis that either (i) there were many single-person units, together with a small number of other larger family groups, or (ii) that the average family size was smaller than one might reasonably expect.

In fact, there is remarkable consistency in this detail in both the ARDP and the SVP data.

Where individual Conferences of the SVP are concerned, there was some deviation from this cohesion, for instance, in the 1845 Report to Paris, the Dublin data provide the following pattern:

St. Michan 3.8 persons per family
St. Kevin 3.9 persons per family
St. Mary 3.9 persons per family

With the 1856 Report giving a very much changed picture:

St. Michan 2.1 persons per family
St. Kevin 4.5 persons per family
St. Mary 4.8 persons per family

Regrettably, there is no further information from other reports to either establish the consistency of this pattern, to establish a trend, or to evaluate the
1845/1856 differences; however, the reduction in numbers per unit in St. Michan's Conference does suggest that the high density per house in that parish, already discussed in Chapter 2, had altered, with larger family groups moving to other parishes, leaving older people in their wake. Such movements have continued to be reflected in the growth in suburban areas in the past one hundred and fifty years of the Society's history.
CHAPTER 8

THE GREAT FAMINE

"Before us die our brothers of starvation
Around us are cries of famine and despair
Where is hope for us, or comfort, or salvation -
Where - oh! where?" 1

The Irish Famine of 1846-1849 presented the SVP with a challenge unimagined in Dublin in December 1844, or, indeed, in Paris, in 1833. Quite simply, the organisation was to face a widespread calamity, and a consequential development, with only months of experience, where new Conferences were founded to deal with the emergency, some of which put down deep roots, others which failed to survive 'normality' afterwards.

Those famine years presented the Society with its first international crisis, culminating with the Council General's appeal to Pope Pius IX 2, which was answered by the Roman Pontiff's encyclical of March 1847 [APPENDIX D]. However the underlying ethos of the SVP was challenged by those years, and many members saw dangers in the over-emphasizing of the 'material side of

2 SVP [Paris] Archives
the work', which 'deviation' 3 was noted for many years after. 4

The Potato Failure

In famine-torn parts of the African continent in the last decade of the twentieth century it is still possible to hear reference to the 'Irish' potato (as an alternative to the local sweet potato), and one is tempted to apologise to our friends in the Americas, or Spain, or wherever, from whence the potato came to Irish shores. 5 The potato is, however, world-wide, synonymous with Irish eating.

The potato has been saluted, often blamed, for providing a staple diet to a rising population; and some pre-Famine comments are worth noting:

"There is no greater fallacy than to suppose that the potato at that time was an uncertain crop.......My turnips were sometimes poor and thin in dry or parching weather; my wheat sometimes smutty, and did not turn out well under the flail; but, if I manured my land well, I was always certain of my potato crop." [Land Agent, Steuart Trench]

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3 Description used in a Circular from Irish Superior Council to Conferences, 9th February 1847, p.24
5 O Grada, Before and After the Famine, p.8
"Should a failure occur 'famine and pestilence will set in together and rid us probably of a million'." [Bishop James Doyle of Kildare and Leighlin] 6

Fortunately, Dr. Doyle did not live to see the outcome of his prophetic words.

Dr. Dominic Corrigan (brother-in-law of Rev. Bartholomew Woodlock), later to win honour as President of the College of Physicians, and subsequently to be created Baronet, deplored the fact that corn was abundant but out of reach of the poor:

"The potato has, I believe, been a curse to our country.....When a bad crop occurs there is no descent for them in the scale of food; the next step is starvation". 7

And that there should be fever following famine was inevitable, according to Corrigan, 'if there be no famine, there will be no fever....'. 8

By mid-nineteenth century the potato was the sole food of about one-third of the Irish people, and was a crucial component in the diet of a considerably larger number. 9

6 Ibid., p.10
7 D. Corrigan, 'On Famine and Fever as Cause and Effect in Ireland; with Observations on Hospital Location and the Dispensation in Outdoor Relief of Food and Medicine', (Dublin, 1846), (Corrigan Pamphlets RCPI), cited in O'Brien, Conscience, p.187
8 Ibid.
It was this dependency which was challenged by the disease, 'phytophthora infestans' - first noticed in the 1845 crop. 10 Ireland was not alone in this blight, and the effects were also felt in Scotland 11, in North America 12, and mainland Europe, a point often forgotten and of particular significance when the financial support to the Irish SVP from countries such as the Netherlands (which had lost two thirds of its own potato harvest in 1845 13), is considered later. 14

International Appeal

The Great Irish Famine has to be put into the context of what was happening, at the time, in Europe generally, and this has been well synopsised:

"This holocaust took place at a time of great turmoil throughout Europe. In Portugal and Poland there was civil war. In Italy, Giuseppe Mazzini was bringing together the disaffected and the ambitious under the banner of Young Europe. In England, the Chartist movement looked as if it might ignite a popular revolution. These stirrings of discontent came to a boil in 1848 when in February the poor of Paris took to the barricades; by May, Marx and Engels had published the Communist Manifesto, and by the year's end there had been serious uprisings in Berlin, Milan, Warsaw, Prague and Austria...........

10 Morash, Hungry Voice, p.15
12 O Tuathaigh, Before the Famine, p.203
13 Mary Daly suggests that the fungus originated in South America, and came to Europe 'on boats carrying guano, the newly-popular fertiliser'; Mary E. Daly, The Famine in Ireland, (Dublin, 1986), p.53
14 Ibid.
From its centre to its extremities, Europe has been convulsed." 15

Despite the competing crises, the Council General of the Society, in Paris, took action to help Ireland, and President-General Gossin, appealed world-wide for help:

It was not the first time that Paris had had to face a calamity - the River Loire had flooded in early 1847, and an appeal had gone out 'on behalf of the sufferers of the inundation'. 16 However, the subsequent petition for Ireland was the first launched outside France.

The SVP Bulletin for 1848 shows an amount of stg£6,004.1.6 received, by the Irish Society, from Conferences in France, Belgium, Holland, Italy and Turkey, with a further amount of stg£102.2.3 received from England. 17 This perhaps does not tell the complete story, for it should be noted that, of the above amount, 68,584 francs [stg£2,743] was collected in Holland alone. 18

Overall, the contributions to Ireland in 1847 represented about 11 per cent of the SVP's world-wide income in that year. 19

15 Morash, Hungry Voice, p.16
16 SVP Manual [1867 edition], p.457
18 Ibid., (November 1848), p.72
19 Ibid., (June 1848), p.43
The Dutch response is particularly significant, coming, as the Council General pointed out, in recognition of the involvement of the Irish in the evangelisation of their country, many centuries earlier. The Catholic journal 'DE TIJD' had reproduced the Circular of the President General of the Society, and commented:

"Oui ! les Neérlandais donneront comme on le leur demande 'de leur profusion et de leur besoin', pour soulager tant soit peu le malheureux sort de l'Irlande épuisée." 20

There was to be other assistance noted by the Bulletin, especially that of the President of the Society in Mexico, who, though wounded by the siege on his town during the US-Mexico War (1846-1848) had collected 1,000 francs for Ireland. 21 With many Irish Catholics in the army of the opposing United States, the gesture may be seen as especially beneficent, and the Irish SVP reciprocated later by sending prayer books, printed in English, for the Irish and American prisoners, and those wounded, in Mexican gaols and hospitals. 22

Reciprocation was also evident in the Irish response to the June 1848 Paris Revolution, when the sum of stg£300 (7,500 francs) was sent to the Paris Conferences by the Council of Ireland:

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20 De Tijd. Amsterdam. 20th February 1847: Correspondence in SVP [Paris] Archives
21 SVP [French] Bulletin. (June 1848), p.17
22 Ibid., (November 1849), p.325
"Elles se sont empressees de leur renvoyer une large part des aumones qu'elles avaient reuces pour leur extreme detresse." 23

Linen had also been sent to Paris for the poor and the wounded, and offers made to come and replace, in the ambulances, or in the service of the poor, those French members whose National Guard duties retain them under arms. 24

That there was continuing concern about conditions in Ireland is evidenced by a further sum of 50,000 francs [stg£2,000] received from foreign Conferences in 1848. 25 However, the emphasis had already moved from Paris to Rome, with the issue of the Encyclical of Pius IX.

Papal Intervention

Jules Gossin, President General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul from 1844 to 1847, had appealed to Rome for help during the worst days of the Irish Famine, and he must have been heartened when he received a letter from Cardinal Gizzi which read:

"The earnest wishes of the illustrious and charitable Society of St. Vincent de Paul, of which you are the worthy President, have been accomplished. Our Holy Father, Pope Pius IX, first

23 Ibid., (December 1849), p.332
24 Ibid., (November 1848), p.72
25 Ibid., (December 1849), p.331
by his example, and since by his Encyclical letter directed to all the Bishops of the Catholic World......has to the best of his power urged the faithful to prayer and alms, for the alleviation of the miserable condition of the Irish. The words of the common Father of the Faithful, will not fail to move their hearts, and the hands of all will be opened for the discharge of a duty, interesting equally to Religion, and to humanity. May God vouchsafe to fulfil our hopes, and may the days of famine, and of sorrow be shortened for the unhappy Kingdom of Ireland......." 26

The Archbishop of Paris, Denis Affre, had already had a collection in all the churches of his diocese, and had, Redmund O'Carroll told his members, 'directed that the Parish Priests should send all the sums collected to the Treasurer General of our Society in Paris whom he has charged with the duty of dividing these sums among the Bishops of Ireland for the poor.' 27

R.P.O'Carroll, we learn from his correspondence with Dr. Murray, Archbishop of Dublin, subsequently wrote to the members of the Irish Hierarchy, seeking details of the state of 'distress' in each region. O'Carroll had used the details of diocesan population from the 1834 Report of the Commissioners of Public Instruction, and asked the Bishops for comment on these details. 28

Distress was greatest, he supposed, in the provinces of Cashel and Tuam, and the dioceses of Raphoe, Derry, Down and Connor, Ardagh & Clonmacnoise, 'but that there was no

26 Gizzi to Gossin, 15th April 1847, [trans.], SVP [Paris] Archives
27 Circular of Superior Council, 12th May 1847, SVP [Dublin] Archives
28 O'Carroll to Murray, 27th May 1847, Murray Papers, DDA
part of Ireland that did not require great and considerable relief'.

As a result of Mons. Affre's intervention, the Treasurer General of the SVP had set up a committee 'principally composed of the Members of the Council General of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul through whose representations your Grace will perceive from the enclosed copy of a letter from Cardinal Gizzi to Monsieur Gossin that the Encyclical letter of His Holiness was obtained'.

Mr. O'Carroll concludes:

"The name of the Pope, Mons. Gossin writes to me, will be more powerful than the voice of a simple layman, the sums collected by the authority of the Head of the Church for all the poor of Ireland more abundant than the £6,000, which at the request of the President and Council General, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, this year collected for the poor under the care of the Society in Ireland." 29

This letter suggests that O'Carroll was not hesitant in suggesting that the SVP was the guiding force in the issue of the Papal Encyclical, and in the distribution of funds raised. Nor was the fact that the international SVP had already contributed handsomely to Ireland, overlooked. Since the letter was apparently issued to each Bishop and Archbishop in Ireland, it was also a very

29 Carroll to Murray. 27th May 1847, in Murray Papers, Dublin Diocesan Archives.
effective endorsement and promotion for the emerging Society.

The total amount collected under this later arrangement is not recorded - 100,000 francs (στς£4,000) had been raised by 20th July 1847 30 - but we learn from a subsequent letter that the Paris Committee proposed to allocate 40 per cent of the available funds to the province of Cashel, 30 per cent to Tuam, and the remaining thirty per cent to Ardagh & Clonmacnoise, Down & Connor, Derry, Dromore and Raphoe. 31

Early Notice

While Archbishop Murray played a leading role in the 1847 distribution, it might be recited that this man had also, in 1831, been an intermediary in the fund-raising efforts of the French journal, l'Avenir, for the famine sufferers of that year, in the western dioceses of Ireland. The Abbe Lamennais had been President of the French organising committee. 32

It seemed that, in particular, correspondence from the Conference in Cork had made a considerable impact on the President General, and Baudon refers constantly to

30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
reports from that county 33, with graphic accounts of the scenes narrated by the members being carried in the issues of the French 'Bulletin' in 1848 and 1849. 34

One such description:

"All our poor, writes the Conference in Cork [City], are attacked by fever. Two or three deaths a week from one family are ordinary events. The streets are congested with living skeletons." 35

- and another, where two members were called to visit a family who were just about to prepare the mother for death:

"They went into the house occupied by three families of sixteen people who had recently come from the country. In one room they found two dead and naked children lying on floorboards and the dying mother lying in a corner on a little straw........Naturally help promptly came, but it was too late, two weeks later the house was empty." 36

- and, finally, from the Conference at Westland Row, Dublin:

"It was a Sunday morning at eleven o'clock. The room was in darkness. The father and children were in bed. Our colleague asked why the room was in darkness, and found that it was to make the children think that it was still night-time, because he didn't have any food in the house........" 37

Any further such examples would be redundant.

34 SVP [French] Bulletin, (1848-1849)
35 Ibid., (15th December 1848), [trans.]
36 Ibid., (1st September 1848), [trans.]
37 Ibid., (15th December 1848), [trans.]
SVP Involvement.

Apart from the study of the conditions in St. Michan's Parish, Dublin, left to us by Dr. Thomas Willis, we have, additionally, been left evidence of the work of the good Doctor during the years of the Famine.

Willis was an elected member of the Board of Guardians of the North Dublin Union for the Linen-hall Ward 38; his surviving contribution to this Union being comments on a letter on the administration of the Workhouse hospital. 39

In 1847, however, the Board of Guardians of Bantry (Co. Cork) Union was dissolved and two Inspectors were appointed, as provided by the Poor Law Act 1838. 40 Thomas Willis was one of those Inspector; no doubt his previous experience as an elected Guardian, and his reputation as doctor and apothecary being assets in his appointment, but we know of no other connections with county Cork.

Later, Willis served in a similar capacity in Kanturk, Co. Cork, and at Cavan Union - however no Minutes of these Boards, relating to the relevant dates, exist.

38 Pettigrew & Oulton Directory. (1844)
39 Observations by Thomas Willis on a letter from the Central Board of Health on the Hospital expenses of the Workhouse. British Museum. 7687 bb 25
40 Minutes of Bantry Workhouse, 5th May 1849 (Cork County Archives): Crowley, Famine: 1848 Report of Irish Poor Law Commissioners.
We are more fortunate in regard to Bantry Union, and the Minutes of that Board of Guardians survive in the care of the Cork County Archive.

Even if our interest in these Minutes did not relate primarily to Thomas Willis, and his experience of the Famine years, these records would give us a graphic view of the workhouse regime of the years 1847/48 - in what was, probably, along with Skull and Skibbereen, the focal point of the worst of the Great Famine.

Within the space here available, one cannot do justice to a description of the extent of the disaster that Willis found, the deaths, the disease, the diet, the total underfunding of the administration.

However it was over-crowding which contributed greatly to these problems, and there was a simple, but plaintive, entry in the Bantry Minutes of 5th May 1849:

"It is hoped to reduce the numbers in the workhouse to 1,800 on Saturday, 12th inst."

This should be read in the light of the fact that the Bantry Workhouse had been originally built for a maximum number of 300 persons, and extended, during Willis's tenure, to accommodate 976, but that the stated 'average number of inmates' during the month of April 1848 was 866!
The average number of persons on the Out-door Relief List for Bantry at the 1848 date was 6,785. 41

Willis's difficult career as an officer of the workhouse is highlighted by the fact that both his postings were to Unions already in considerable debt - the only two such workhouses in county Cork - and there was significant underfunding of the administration, and - particularly, in the provision of food - there was persistent non-payment of provision merchants and other tradesmen. One such example had resulted in the serving of a Court Order for payment of a provision account, and the threat of seizure of goods by the Sheriff.

Despite a last minute effort by Thomas Willis to placate the plaintiff, the Sheriff seized furniture and kitchen-ware, which were subsequently sold back to the workhouse Guardians for a fraction of their original value. 42

Indeed, reading the weekly Minutes one is struck by the impossibility of imposing, and collecting, the Poor Law Rates, and non-payment of the Rate became, in some Unions, Mary E. Daly suggests, 'an almost academic

41 Minutes of Bantry Workhouse, 5th May 1849. Cork County Archives; Crowley, Famine in Bantry: 1848 Report of Irish Commissioners.
42 Minutes of Bantry Workhouse. 20th January 1849 to 16th June 1849
exercise', particularly so when the rate rose, as at Westport Union, to 10/- in the £!  

Many other members of the SVP served as Guardians to various Unions throughout the country - their involvement is described in Chapter 3. As an appointed Guardian, Thomas Willis probably had more scope for effecting administrative change than other, elected, Board members, however Willis had to work within the regime laid down by the Commissioners of the Poor Laws.

Relief Committees.

In the face of a major social and human disaster the Government introduced a system of dealing with the destitute under the Temporary 'Soup Kitchen' Act, and the Irish Poor Relief Extension Act 1847. 'Outdoor relief' was to be an emergency measure, and J.C. Beckett tells us that 'its continuation throughout 1848, and until the late autumn of 1849, reflected the continuing pressure of famine'. The original 1838 Poor Law Act had no provision for such relief, indeed such a proviso went against the ethos of the workhouse regime, and the workhouse 'test'. As recently as 1846 a Select Committee of the House of Lords had declared 'that the introduction

43 Daly, Famine in Ireland, p.95
44 Burke, People and Poor Law, p.130
of any system of outdoor relief would be dangerous to the
general interests of the community'. 46

The emergency legislation had restrictions, however, and
did not apply to those fortunate enough to avail of any
other Poor Law relief.

The government sponsored feeding centres were modelled on
the kitchens set up by the Society of Friends, and other
agencies, in the winter of 1846. 47 At the worst point,
three million people were receiving such government
rations, and this number was additional to those being
helped by the Quakers, the British Relief Association,
and, of course, the SVP. 48

The Quakers have a special place in the history of the
Great Famine, which has been well recorded; Mary E. Daly
making the valued point that this group had the benefit
of close links with:

"English and American co-religionists, similarly
philanthropic and prosperous communities which
provided access to substantial funds, and in the
American case, generous supplies of cheap food. Food
shipments from the American Society of Friends
provided almost two-thirds of all Quaker relief
supplies". 49

While the work of the Society of Friends is well known,
and respected, that of the British Association is

46 Burke, People and Poor Law, p.131
47 O Tuathaigh, Before the Famine, p.214
48 Ibid.
49 Daly, Famine in Ireland, p.90
comparatively unfamiliar, and it might be recited that the Association were feeding four thousand in the Ballyshannon Union, and over eight thousand in the Glenties Union each week in January and February 1848. 50

While these charities were the chief benevolent participants in the relief of distress in 1846-1848 it should not be forgotten that there were many compassionate individuals, including landlords, and clergymen of all denominations, who exerted themselves greatly for the starving mass of people. That their 'soup kitchens' were not always free of charge to the indigent is revealed by a 'Notice to the Labourers and Poor Householders on Lord Caledon's Estate', wherein bread and soup was to be supplied 'at a very moderate price'. 51

Subsequently, the Poor Law Amendment Act 1847 attempted to regularise the provision of outdoor relief, and by mid-1848 the masses who had attended the soup kitchens had been reduced to some 800,000 persons who were in receipt of benefit, with, in 1849, a further 930,000 men, women and children as inmates of the workhouses. 52 Mary E. Daly gives the 1848 figure for outdoor relief at 1,433,042 persons. 53

50 Bardon, Ulster, p.297
52 O Tuathaigh, Before the Famine, p.216
53 Daly, Famine in Ireland, p.94
The Great Famine was a hiatus in what might have been the orderly and even geographical development of the SVP. The organisation was forced to grow at an unprecedented rate and the institution of new Conferences in the period 1845-49, as indicated in Appendix C (i), is, in itself, a commentary on the emphasis of need. The drift of the destitute rural population to the towns as experienced in Kilrush, Clonmel, New Ross, was to create a demand for the services of the Society on a scale not seen in the growth experienced in France one decade earlier. The early development of the SVP in Ireland was influenced by the terrible poverty of the Famine years; the development in other countries, particularly the United States and Canada, was influenced by the attendant emigration — both by those in need, and by those who were to become SVP members, in these new communities.

And after the famine? — perhaps the last word might appropriately be left to the Cork Conference, in a report to the Council General:

"Notre pays, nous écrit-on de Cork, commence sa longue et pénible convalescence." 54

CHAPTER 9
AFTER THE FAMINE

Introduction

If the first years of the SVP in Ireland were dominated by the Famine, the matter of education dominated the next decades. The cause of this shift in emphasis is considered in the conclusion to this study, however it is of value, firstly, to detail the involvement of the Society and its members in participation in the growth of schooling in mid-nineteenth century Ireland.

Education in this context ranged from the Industrial Schools (after the model of Ellen Woodlock); the Reformatory at Upton, Co.Cork; Sunday [catechetical] Schools in Ulster; or work with orphans - which latter activity reached its zenith in the SVP Orphanage at Glasnevin, in the Dublin suburbs.

National Education

Irish education had been the subject of much scrutiny, and Royal Commissions on the subject covered the years 1788, 1791, 1806-1812, 1824-1827, with a Select Committee sitting in 1838.
The Report for 1824 showed "Pay Schools" as being the most significant portion of the education system, and Balfour opines that some of these must have been the old Catholic Hedge Schools, of which, the SVP co-founder, John O'Hagan, wrote:

"Still crouching 'neath the sheltering hedge or stretched on mountain fern, The teacher and his pupils met feloniously to learn." 2

1831 brought a new system of primary schooling to Ireland, well ahead of equivalent provision in England or Wales. 3 The Irish system provided for a centralised arrangement of undenominational elementary education, the provision of 'a system of education from which should be banished even the suspicion of proselytism, and which, admitting children of all religious persuasions, should not interfere with the peculiar tenets of any'. 4

These 'mixed' schools were initially welcomed by most Roman Catholics, strongly attacked by the Presbyterians, and regarded with cold suspicion by the Church of Ireland 5, but, without the resources of the Established Church, both the Presbyterians and the Catholic Churches undoubtedly welcomed this opportunity to participate in

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2 John O'Hagan, cited in ibid., p.80
3 Michael Bentley, Politics without Democracy; 1815-1914, (London, 1984), p.211
4 Stanley to the Duke of Leinster, 1831, cited in Beckett, Modern Ireland, p.313
5 Beckett, Modern Ireland, p.313
State funding. However each group, and even sub-group within a Church, had reservations about the new system, about the use of the Bible, about visiting Ministers, about the selection of texts, about the absence of the Irish language, history and literature, and consequently cracks emerged in the system. 6

The provision of primary education was to be a thorny item, particularly as there were regional variations in the Education Board's operations, with, perhaps, the ultimate deviation in the west, where, as O'Tuathaigh points out, the provision of primary education continued for some time to furnish a 'theatre of war for the rival activities of Catholic teaching orders and Protestant missionary societies'. 7

The Workhouse

The Irish Poor Law Commissioners made rules that a schoolmaster and mistress should be appointed by each Board of Guardians, and that the children should be educated for three hours at least every day. 8 The 1838 Poor Law Act had provided for religious instruction, and such 'schools' were accepted into the National Education system, on condition that the Guardians observed the non-discrimination rules.

6 O Tuathaigh, Before the Famine, pp.101-6
7 Ibid., p.105
8 Balfour, Educational Systems, p.116
Workhouse education was later extended to 'special schools', as we can see in the records of the Catholic Institution for Deaf and Dumb, and, where such children would otherwise be a part of the workhouse regime, the Guardians paid the per-capita charge for children with disabilities. 9

Religious Education

Central to the debate on education were the rules relating to religious instruction, and it will be of value to recite the changing dictates linked to this aspect of education.

In 1831, one or two week-days were set apart in every week entirely for religious teaching in schools receiving grants from the National Board; this was reduced to a day or part of a day in 1838, and henceforward such times might be during ordinary school hours 'if arrangements were made for separating the children who received it, in case of objection being raised by the parents'. 10

From 1855, religious instruction could take place before or after ordinary school hours, and after 1865, leave was granted to withdraw children to a limited extent from

9 Minutes of Catholic Institution for the Deaf and Dumb 10 Balfour, Educational Systems, p.87
ordinary instruction for separate religious teaching, provided that the secular education was not materially impeded. Notice had to be published of the hours when religious instruction was to be given. 11

In 1854, a further Select Committee was set up on the subject, and, later, in 1870, a Royal Commission, composed of seven Protestants and seven Catholics, under Lord Powis, presented a Report, which, although three Commissioners refused to sign, and three more objected to some detail, remained the final word on education to the end of the century.

The Powis recommendations favoured, inter alia, the principle of local contribution - and local management - such principle to be enforced with the local authority to have power to erect schools, and to levy a rate not exceeding three pence in the pound. But, as Balfour points out, there was to be a further breach in the system of combined education:

"It was recommended that in any school district or within any city or town where for three years there had been two or more schools, of which one was under Protestant and one under Roman Catholic management, having an average attendance of not less than twenty-five children, the National Board might, on application from the Patron or Manager, adopt any such school and award aid subject only to the exclusion of Protestants from religious instruction given by Catholics and of Catholics from religious instruction given by non-Catholics, and of children in general from any religious observances to which their parents objected." 12

11 Ibid., p. 87
12 Ibid., p. 98
SVP Members and Education

From the limited details available of the early Irish SVP members we find a significant personal involvement in education. Archbishop Daniel Murray had used his cohorts, the well-placed Dublin Catholic laity, who had been so loyal to him on the educational issue, in both the foundation of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and in the quota of participation on the National Education Board.

There are relevant connections which will bear out this point; R.P. O'Carroll, the first SVP President, was an adviser to the Education Board; John O'Hagan, a sometime lecturer at the, later, Catholic University, was a member of the Board. James O'Ferrall and Michael Errington were members of the Committee of the Catholic University, and O'Ferrall also a Commissioner of National Education, and of Maynooth College. 13

John Bradstreet, the fourth President, though childless, was a influential patron of Clongowes Wood College, 14 and Rev. S.A. Farrell was later, as a Jesuit, to be a teacher at Belvedere College, Dublin, and St. Ignatius College, Galway. 15

13 Burke's Irish Family Records; McGrath, Newmann's University, pp.97-8
14 Catholic Telegraph, 2nd August 1856
15 Archives of Irish Province, Society of Jesus
Richard Paul Carton Q.C. the fifth President, was Chairman of the Queen's Colleges (Ireland) Commission in 1884, and, after John O'Hagan, also a Commissioner of National Education. 

The person who is best remembered for his educational contribution is Rev. Bartholomew Woodlock, both as third President of All Hallow's Missionary College, as second Rector, after Newman, of Dublin's Catholic University, and, later, as Bishop, in the diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise.

Woodlock's dream for third level Catholic education in Ireland, also encompassed secondary schools as 'feeders' for the University, and this did not preclude his involvement with Pere Leman in the purchase of land at Williamstown (to be the home of Blackrock College), and, during his time as Bishop, the introduction of the Sisters of La Sainte Union to the Bower in Athlone, and the completion of St. Mel's Diocesan College in Longford.

Later Conferences of the SVP - particularly in the period 1855 to 1875 - were set up with the specific aim of providing catechetical instruction, and the autonomy in control, and independence of operation, by SVP members in

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16 Irish Monthly, (August 1907)  
17 Larkin, Catholic Church in Ireland 1860-70, p.147  
18 Kevin Condon, All Hallows, p.195
the role of educator is reflected in the, rather powerless, report of Dr. Dorrian, Coadjutor Bishop of Down and Connor when he reported to the Primate at Armagh that:

"Half the schools are managed and were opened by the Vincent de Paul Society... but received no aid and next to no encouragement from us, beyond a chance visit. Some of them are threatened to be given up [by the SVP], and notice has been served [on the diocese] for 1st November. I am in hopes it will not be carried out...." 19

That such independence was sometimes frustrated is suggested by the action of Dr. Dorrian's successor, who converted an SVP School into a chapel - no details are available of consultation, compensation or consensus! In another instance, the Council at Belfast, before giving up the management of the Society's schools to the Bishop, was obliged to deliver them up 'free of debt' and was consequently obliged to borrow £49.16.4 from St. Patrick's Conference... 'which we hope soon to repay'. 20

Christian Brothers

Edmund Rice had founded the Irish Christian Brothers in Waterford in 1802. 21 The growth of the congregation had been dramatic - 45 members in 1831, 105 in 1844 - but

19 Dorrian to Dixon, 8th September 1863; Dixon Papers, Armagh Diocesan Archives
21 Balfour, Educational Systems, p.81
the demands for man-power in Ireland, and elsewhere, had
out-stripped even such prolific growth. 22

The Brothers could afford to be selective in the tasks
offered to them, and they were not slow to reject appeals
for participation, even where such appeals had undoubted
merit. The circumstances of the Catholic Institution for
the Deaf and Dumb, is a case in point.

The Institution, within weeks of foundation [December
1845], had applied to the Superior of the Christian
Brothers for a commitment towards the teaching of boys
who had come into the care of the Committee - girls were
already in the care of the Dominican nuns at Cabra,
Dublin. The Brothers, claiming that manpower was
overstretched, rejected the invitation, and repeatedly
did so over the next few years. However, in 1857, with
the completion of a new building at Cabra, Dublin, Edmund
Rice's men took responsibility for deaf boys, a role they
eexercise to this day. 23

Early SVP members, such as James O’Ferrall, J.L.More
O’Ferrall, Michael Errington, were to acquire some
knowledge of the working of a residential institute
through their involvement with the 'Deaf and Dumb'
schools, and Doctor Thomas Willis, in whose house both
organisations had seen the light of day, was the

22 Kerr. Peal, p.54
23 Minutes of Catholic Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, 1856
assessing medical officer for the Cabra School for some years. 24

Both the boys' Deaf school and the SVP Orphanage were to become neighbours in Glasnevin, although the Orphanage's first home had been at Mount Brown, across the city, near Kilmainham. However it seems clear, from the records of the Institution, that the choice of premises for the 'deaf' school was rather fortuitous, other locations such as Ushers Quay and Henrietta Street had been considered and rejected, and, despite being eliminated earlier, the Monastery of the Carmelite Brothers at Prospect, Glasnevin, was eventually chosen - to be known as St. Joseph's, as was the later premises at Cabra.

The Minutes of the 'Catholic Institution for the Deaf and Dumb' states that the meeting took place ".....in consequence of various conversations at different times amongst the above named respecting an Institution for deaf and dumb children...". Of the six lay men present, four of these, O'Carroll, O'Ferrall, Richard Willis, Thomas Willis, were founding members of the SVP, and it is therefore perhaps not unexpected to find that the Institution's first meetings were held in the White Cross Rooms, to the rear of Dr. Willis's home on Ormond Quay, where, exactly twelve months before, the SVP had had its Irish beginnings. 25

24 Ibid., 20th December 1847
25 Ibid.
There were to be other connections, with later meetings of both organisations taking place for some time at 10 Wellington Quay; John O'Connell and Rev. Stephen A. Farrell, SVP founding members, were, at various times, honorary secretaries of the Institution; Bradstreet, Errington, O'Hagan and Woodlock were present at the formal opening of the Cabra premises, which was situated on land provided by O'Neal Segrave, a relative of the More O'Ferrall's.

Orphanage

The establishment of the SVP Orphanage had seen a similar initial rejection by the Irish Christian Brothers, and, as a history of that Congregation tells us, in rather unpropitious terms:

"Failing to secure the Brothers for the work the Society procured the services of a foreign religious Order, called the 'Congregation of the Holy Ghost and Immaculate Heart of Mary', composed of priests and lay-brothers."

We are further told that:

27 Minutes of Catholic Institution for the Deaf and Dumb. 27th September 1858
28 The Christian Brothers: The History of the Institute. iii. Chp.VI. pp.27-8
"In course of time however, things did not work out to the satisfaction of all parties concerned; and the religious, with the consent of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, decided to withdraw from the management of the Institution." 29

An alternative account of this 'separation' comes from the biography of Pere Leman, of that same 'foreign religious Order'.

The regional superior of the Holy Ghost Congregation, Father Leman, had been invited to take charge of the Glasnevin Orphanage by Mr. Richard J. Devitt, President of the organising Conference of the Society. Devitt had been a close friend and adviser of Leman earlier at the Holy Ghost house at Blanchardstown, and had assisted with fundraising - now it was the Congregation's opportunity to reciprocate. In any event the French Fr. Leman was anxious to become integrated into the fabric of the church in Dublin; additionally the work had possibilities 'of good vocations for the [Holy Ghost] brothers, and even for the priesthood, from amongst these boys'. 30

Fr. Joseph Koeberle was appointed Director of the Orphanage, assisted by three brothers, including the aptly-named Br. Vincent de Paul McNally, the only Irishman on the staff.

29 Ibid.
30 Farragher, Leman, p.159
Two major difficulties occurred during the short involvement of the Holy Ghost Fathers with the Glasnevin Orphanage - the matters of manual work and of corporal punishment.

It appears that the SVP Conference members were anxious to involve the boys in manual work, and that this concept was supported by the French superior of the Holy Ghost Congregation:

".....who was a firm believer in the formative value of such work, especially gardening. He saw it working so well in his agriculturally oriented 'colonies' or reformatory schools in France that he advocated a generous measure of it for the boys at Glasnevin. 31

Leman, disagreed with this emphasis, and opined:

"...they must be trained to habits of discipline and propriety, as well as being helped to cultivate a taste for a fully occupied, upright and industrious career. All this is a hundred times better for them in their environment near Dublin, than to be left with a stagnant, uneducated mentality, capable of nothing but cultivating the soil, no matter how uplifting that may be". 32

However, the matter of corporal punishment was to present a much greater challenge to the alliance of laity and religious. The Holy Ghost Fathers were not prepared to participate in a regime of corporal punishment, and, despite the quoted views of Dr. Cullen, 'he always believed that a judicious use of the cane was necessary

31 Ibid., pp.162-3
32 Ibid., p.163
for certain types, and that no real discipline would be maintained without its threat being there', the French Superior insisted that:

"If the St. Vincent de Paul gentlemen and the Archbishop say corporal punishment is necessary, I cannot insist on my view of things. So provided that all the precautions you have mentioned are taken, plus others still..., but I must insist that the punishment be inflicted in the presence of these St. Vincent de Paul gentlemen and not by any member of our congregation ......the responsibility all yours. But - pace the Archbishop - at the risk of being irreverent - I do not really believe that your orphans cannot be as readily handled as our French boys without corporal punishment". 33

Farragher goes on to describe how relations worsened between the Congregation and the SVP Conference, and how finally Devitt resigned his position as President in June 1863, to be replaced by a member who most strongly opposed his policy.

Father Leman, following discussions in Paris, wrote to the Archbishop but failed to get a reply. He reported to Paris:

"I was in no hurry to go out again in person and explain the matter viva voce to a man who leaves me with the impression that he is too busy to listen to me...But it is not true, as has been alleged, that I was in a hurry to get rid of the orphanage". 34

33 Ibid., pp.163-4
34 Ibid., pp.164-5
New Management.

The Christian Brothers took up their duties at 'St. Vincent's' on 26th October 1863, the Superior seeing that 'he could not refuse this second appeal without giving umbrage to some of the best friends of the Brothers..... .....gentlemen of influence and position in the city'. 35

It seems that both the Society and the Christian Brothers regarded the new partnership at St. Vincent's Orphanage as a success, which was confirmed by the Report of 1866, with special mention being made of the most destitute of the boys admitted - 'The Crimean and Indian Mutiny Children'. 36

However, there was some friction on funding, and the Royal Commissioners of the Patriotic and Indian Mutiny Funds, through its agent, Captain Fishbourne, stirred up, unintentionally, in 1871, a sharp exchange between the Superior of the Christian Brothers and Sir John Bradstreet, the SVP President. The charge per orphan had been £15 per annum but the Crimean Fund had offered to increase the contribution, for their 39 pupils, to £17.10.-. Indeed when compared to the charge of £24.7.3 at the Upton [Co.Cork] Reformatory, formerly in the care

35 The Christian Brothers, History, iii. Chp.VI. p.5
36 Ibid. pp.28-9
of the SVP, the Dublin Orphanage was a low cost operation. 37

We are not told of Bradstreet's response to the Brothers offer, or threat, to withdraw from the management of the enterprise, but since the Christian Brothers ministered for one hundred years thereafter, we assume that the matter was amicably settled.

The involvement of the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul with the Glasnevin Orphanage is probably the best documented aspect of the Society's history in Ireland, and a very active Orphanage Committee, or Conference, played a significant part in the working of the Society, being treated as a national body, its President having a role equivalent to that of Central Council President.

The development, and availability, of the Glasnevin premises was to have other effects on the life of the SVP, and this can be seen to mark the diminution of All Hallows College, and the Catholic University, as favoured meeting places. This reflected a reduction in Dr. Woodlock's influence, as also can be deduced from the withdrawal of his friends, the Holy Ghost Congregation, from the Orphanage.

Development

The extension of the work of the international Society, particularly when demands for relief of the poor had diminished, often resulted in the establishment of 'special works', and these were detailed in 1857 as:

Infant Schools
Patronage of Orphans
Patronage of Apprentices
Religious Instruction of Youth 38

With the expansion of such work, the Council General saw the dangers of a drift away from the Society's prime objective of visitation of the poor in their own homes, and cautioned against the attraction, for Conferences, of such 'schools' - 'these ought not to be made their sole or even their chief work'. 39 Schools were heavy in manpower and money, and 'it would appear that a work entailing such heavy expense may not reasonably be undertaken by a single Conference; it should be a special work for the whole Society, with its separate funds'. 40

With this latter point in mind, a defensive note can be observed in the Report of the Rathmines [Dublin] Conference in 1858:

38 Ibid., Vol. ii. (1858), pp. 333-4
39 Council General, Paris, 3rd August 1857
"We have increased our grants to the schools, and supply bread daily to a greater number than formerly. This we do at the solicitation of our spiritual director, who considers it one of the best means to be adopted, to check attempts at proselytism." 41

A review of the Minute and Relief Books of this same Conference shows that provision for schools was first recorded in February 1849, when Rathmines Schools received 40 lbs bread 42. This was continued on a weekly basis, and subsequently increased - along with the other schools involved - so that, a year later, the provision for the quarter-ending 30th June 1850, was as follows:

**Harolds Cross Schools**
- 546 lbs bread
- 153 qts new milk
- 150 qts buttermilk £5.-.7

**Milltown Schools**
- 674 lbs bread
- 123 qts buttermilk £4.6.10

**Rathmines Schools**
- 514 lbs bread £3.5.- 43

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42 Minute Book. 2nd February 1849. Conference of SS. Mary & Peter
43 Ibid., 30th June 1850
After 1850, inclusion of such provision for schools was erratically recorded, and the detail is therefore unreliable.

The extension of the work of the SVP following the Great Famine is possibly best summed-up in the words of the then President General of the Society on his visit to Ireland in 1856:

"Now-a-days, better times are in store. In crossing your green and beautiful land, I have seen the cheerful proofs of it; every-where the spirits of the people are better, and their hopes are revived. But your mission, Gentlemen, and dear Brothers, is not come to a conclusion as yet." 44

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CHAPTER 10
CONCLUSION

Introduction

"The Society of St. Vincent de Paul as an emerging social phenomenon in mid-nineteenth century Ireland?"

In pursuit of our thesis, we have looked at aspects of the period in which the SVP was founded, at the history of the young international SVP, at the contemporary influence of religion [albeit often in the form of the clash of denominational Christianity], at the political affiliations of some early members, at the effects of the Irish Great Famine and the SVP response which had engendered an enforced maturity, and, finally, in the following decades, at the Society's role in education and other such 'special works'.

Causes and Questions

If we have not already found a single cause for the introduction of the SVP to Ireland, we might now recite the separate elements which were relevant to the foundation in 1844.
Spiritual, or Material?

If the foundation in Paris in 1833 was the consequence of a defence of Christianity, the undertaking in Dublin was clearly seen in more temporal terms as the natural extension, to Ireland, of an established organisation. The structure of an international fraternity was already in place, and formal rules and objectives had been adopted and recognised. The Christian ethos of the Society was unquestioned and was reflected in these rules - 'self-sanctification' being understood as the prime objective 1 - and the work of the movement had been dedicated to Saint Vincent de Paul, whose patronage had been claimed by many nineteenth century foundations, and had been recognised by the Roman Catholic Church as the patron of all charitable works.

However, if the 'spirit' of Saint Vincent was accepted as a motivating force, did 'spirituality' appear as an outward motivation for the early members of the SVP in Ireland?

A twentieth-century writer describes the Catholic laity of being 'passive' in the matter of evangelisation, happy to leave the role of the evangelizer to the ordained 2, and there is such passivity discernible in the absence of

1 SVP Minutes, 21st July 1845
references to the spiritual needs of both members and 'cases' in the early Irish SVP Minutes. One must speculate that the lay members saw 'religion' as the province of the priests, and the early introduction of 'spiritual advisers' to Irish Conferences would suggest that this was so - leaving the 'social' work of the Society as the function of the laity.

Taking the Christian ethos of the SVP for granted, but relying on the clergy for religious guidance, may well have established a tradition which, to this day, sees such a separation of roles. Spiritual discussion was best left to the ordained clergy, in the absence of whom, the more formal and stereotyped 'readings' were used.

The acceptance of both clergy and laity of this situation was taken for granted, which may account for the limited role for Bartholomew Woodlock, and his appearance as a remote figure. There is, clearly, no evidence that Woodlock interfered with the laity's relief agenda, and the 'independence of action' of his lay colleagues on the Superior Council, is evidenced by their rejection of one 'recommendation for relief' - what in modern terms would be called 'clientism' - from a member of the Hierarchy 3. We see similar independence in the action of the committee of the Catholic Institution for the Deaf and

3 SVP Minutes, 4th March 1865
Dumb when these laymen encountered a 'conditional' promise of a large episcopal donation. 4

Bartholomew Woodlock knew and accepted his role; Redmund O'Carroll, as evidenced by the limited material available, likewise understood his own responsibility as lay leader.

Did this represent a contemporary compartmentalisation of functions amongst the Roman Catholic faithful, not practised in the charitable organisations of the Established Church, such as ARDP, where, significantly, the clergy played a more intrusive role?

An ethos of Catholicity was presumed in the SVP, even if it was seldom, if ever, defined; the 'Rule' and its objectives were clear, and, even if relief was provided on a non-sectarian basis, the regular reference to 'Divine Providence' had a clearly Catholic ring.

Fathers Woodlock and Farrell would, of course, have felt comfortable with their early colleagues in the SVP since, as we have already seen, many were former schoolmates or, indeed, relations. There is little information to suggest that proceedings were any less harmonious in later Conferences, and, particularly in rural areas, some priests, such as Rev. Timothy Kelly of Kilrush, saw the

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4 Minutes of Catholic Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, 23rd August 1858
local SVP members as their main support within the community. 5

There was an unselfconscious spiritual vision in the Society's French Bulletin, but the Irish 'Intelligence' in the journal was, just what was suggested by the word, information, news, tidings - details of the work and development of the Society. 'Religion' to the lay members, at least post-Famine, appears as the defence of poor Catholics against proselytisers.

The Social Agenda

If Redmund O'Carroll and his lay colleagues were prepared to accept the objective of self-sanctification, but to leave the imparting of an avowedly religious message to the clergy, they did adopt and develop a positive structure of assistance to, and relationship with, the poor which has survived for nearly 150 years. The visitation of the poor in their homes, rather than the provision of centralised aid or relief, had been the central feature of the Society's work.

While there may well have been local food initiatives during the Famine, it is clear that there were no attempts, by the Irish Superior Council of the SVP, to provide central feeding-centres, or 'soup-kitchens'.

5 Ignatius Murphy, Killaloe, pp.226-7
There was confidence in the network of Conferences to bring succour direct to the poor, and to spend the limited resources with local discretion. Experiments emerging from France, such as the provision of, the quaintly named, 'economical ovens' at Angers, whilst first noted in The Bulletin of November 1848, were not imitated in Ireland, although such kitchens spread to others parts of France, and then to Rome, Germany, Holland, and even to Montreal, in Canada. 6

These 'economical ovens' provided cooked meals for the homeless - "We cannot bring relief to their homes - they have none". 7 There was apparently a long-established tradition in this work, evidenced by reference to a publication of January 1653 [The Charitable Magazine] indicating the re-establishment of the Hospital D'Etampes, by the 'Missionaries of M.Vincent', and of the foundation of an oven for nearly 200 poor people. 8 This was not, however, a feature of the Society's development in Ireland.

If the listing of new SVP Conferences [Appendix C] indicates development in the towns rather than the villages, this was due, as least in part, to the effect of the drift of the destitute from rural cabins. This movement was, of course, dramatic during the Famine years, and there was often, for the local Conference of

7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., p.90
the Society, no alternative to some collective relief. This is well described in Father Ignatius Murphy's history of the diocese of Killaloe, where the SVP had assembled a crowd of paupers in a large timber yard and distributed 1d [one old penny] each to 3,102 persons—nearly £13 in total. 9

The 'social aid' agenda of the SVP in Ireland in 1844 ran in parallel with, but apparently ignored, the new Irish Poor Law, and one is surprised, indeed intrigued, by the absence, in the few surviving SVP Minute Books of the period, to any reference to the legislation, or to that ultimate refuge, the poorhouse.

It seemed that there had been acceptance of the fact that, as was the opinion of organisations such as ARDP [then eight years in existence], the Poor Law was dealing with the 'incurable cases' 10, and the SVP's first report described the new 'compulsory' charity as merely 'a security against absolute death by starvation'. 11

The curable cases, even the occasional member of the 'farming class' 12, could be helped by regular visits, by relief 'in kind', or less often, in cash, by provision of

9 Ignatius Murphy. Killaloe. p.227
10 7th Annual Report. ARDP
Penny Banks, by seed, and seed potatoes, or help towards such restocking. 13

In the years after the Great Famine, the workhouse, while no less daunting than before, had become an accepted fact of life, and the occupancy levels of these institutions, despite the reduction in overall population of the country, remained significant. 14 There was no apparent attempt, by the SVP, to remove inmates from these establishments, or to seek outdoor relief for those who moved away. However, that the Society was prepared to 'work the system', is indicated by a later example of a Conference dealing with a woman deserted by a drunken husband:

"....we recommended the applicants to enter the workhouse, with a view of having the husband proceeded against by the authorities." 15

Politics

An organisation which, in Ireland, in 1844, featured such significant 'Young Ireland' names as O'Hagan, Gavan Duffy, and, within months of commencement, Richard Dalton Williams and Kevin Izod O'Doherty, cannot be only seen in religious or social terms, there was a political agenda - at least for some early members - but there is no

14 Reports of the Irish Poor Law Commissioners, (1849 and following)
indication that the SVP was seen as the charitable 'arm' of the Young Ireland movement.

The SVP had the correct nineteenth century political credentials, French enough to satisfy the Irish admirers of Montalembert, Lacordaire and Ozanam, Roman enough for the Ultramontane adherents, and praised by both ecclesiastical and governmental authorities; a movement which had been recognised by O'Connell, father and son, and which had a benevolent and popular purpose:

"The great object is, to cure that bitterness and burning of the heart, which the poor feel at the thought of their own undeserved misery, and of the neglect and hard-heartedness of the rich." 16

Another political grouping, the 'Catholic Committee' of sixty years earlier, had seen provision for the poor as a worthy objective 17, but, while the Dublin SVP members had stated political views 18, most had rejected - as did the clergy 19 - violent or radical politics. One cannot, however, gauge the loyalties of those, later, members in parishes ministered by priests who supported Land League or Fenian leaders.

Of the original nineteen, John O'Hagan was the most obviously 'political' - he described himself, in 1842, as

16 SVP Minutes, 21st July 1845
18 Diaries of William Woodlock [NLI]
19 Pastorals of Dr. Bartholomew Woodlock, particularly those dated '11th November 1880', 'Ash Wednesday 1881', and '1890'.
'formerly a Whig, but now, and ever after, as a nationalist'. 20 - but his role should be interpreted in the light of, what has been argued as, the transition amongst the key members of the Young Ireland movement 'from cultural revivalism to a politico-cultural nationalism, and, finally, to an insurrectionary populist nationalism'. 21

O'Hagan, in view of his absence from reported Young Ireland affairs after April 1848, may have resisted this total transition, and John Mitchel's later remarks indicate that the SVP co-founder had separated from his early friends when, in 1870, in a letter to John Blake Dillon's widow, Mitchel acknowledged the continuing interest of some past friends:

"I am glad to hear that they remember us kindly, though in the case of J.O'H. I scarcely expected that." 22

The parting of the way for O'Hagan, as for others, may well have come with the events of June 1848 in Paris when Archbishop Denis Affre was shot dead at a barricade while attempting to negotiate a truce during the uprising of that year. 23 Gavan Duffy opined that the death of the Archbishop - who, as has already been pointed out, had,

20 'Nation', 31st December 1842, cited in O'Cathaoir, Dillon, pp.7-8
21 John Hutchinson, Cultural Nationalism, p.97
22 John Mitchel to Adelaide Dillon, 30th November 1870, cited in O'Cathaoir, Dillon, p.180
23 For a detailed account of the event, see Freeman's Journal, 1st July 1848.
only months earlier, worked closely with Archbishop Daniel Murray and the SVP - 'not only disgusted the clergy, but alarmed and alienated the middle class throughout Europe'. 24

Foundation

The debate on the beginnings of the SVP in Ireland has been muted; no argument has emerged to share the same intensity as the French debate, nor has conjecture about personalities been on the scale of that seen in England, or in the United States. 25 It is as if the Irish Society, only, had heeded the reproach of Ozanam to the historians.

Archbishop Daniel Murray, to whom ultimate credit must be given for the foundation of the Society, was, for the church of the time, the supreme innovator, the charismatic figure who could build bridges between the penal times and the post-Emancipation era; the man who had the courage to address the Protestants of Great Britain as 'beloved fellow-Christians' 26. Perhaps the Society of St. Vincent de Paul did not need Murray's help to establish itself in Dublin, it might well have located

26 Kerr, Peel, pp. 57-8
itself at some later time and place in Ireland, but that Providence, to whom we have already referred, had chosen to crown the last years of Dr. Murray's administration with this embellishment.

The foundation of the Society in Ireland was essentially an 'innovation', both in terms of relief for the poor, and in participation in such work by the Roman Catholic middle class. Indeed, the period between 1800 and 1850 has, in much broader terms, been described by several writers as a time of 'innovation' for the whole Irish Catholic Church, and that period between 1850 and 1900 merely of 'consolidation', although Emmet Larkin narrows this latter epoch to 1860-1870.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul presented such a structure of innovation and, then subsequent consolidation. One can conclude that the Society was, as it remains, far more than a social phenomenon.

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The first general meeting in Dublin on Monday, 21st July 1845, heard the statement that:

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28 Larkin, Consolidation, pp.686-7
"If the charity that bestows, and the misery that requires relief, be the two elements in which such an institution has its growth, she has long laid claim to the first at least, and holds beyond dispute a melancholy preeminence in the second." 29

Redmund Peter O'Carroll's words, for such they are ascribed, showed that there was a sureness of the value of the Society, and a need for the establishment of the organisation in Dublin, but O'Carroll had, as a higher objective, the wish that 'this young germ' of a Society in Ireland might be reckoned as 'a symptom of the revival of religion and charity among us':

"......we can, with the blessing of heaven, see almost no limits to its progress........ a bond between the rich and the poor over all Christendom, for the solace of the latter and the sanctification of both." 30

29 SVP Minutes. 21st July 1845
30 Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Description of Inmates</th>
<th>BREAKFAST</th>
<th>For Three Days</th>
<th>DINNER</th>
<th>For Four Days</th>
<th>SUPPER</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Able-Bodied Working Males.</td>
<td>Seven Ounces of Oatmeal, and One-third of a quart of Buttermilk.</td>
<td>One quart of Broth, and Ten ounces of Brown Bread.</td>
<td>Seven ounces of Oatmeal, and one third of a quart of Buttermilk.</td>
<td>Six ounces of Indian Meal and one-third of a quart of Buttermilk.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Aged &amp; Infirm. Persons of either sex and Adult persons of either sex above 14 years of Age, but not working.</td>
<td>Five ounces of Oatmeal, and one-fourth of a quart of Buttermilk.</td>
<td>One Pint of Broth, and Eight ounces of Brown Bread.</td>
<td>Five ounces of Oatmeal, and one-fourth of a quart of Buttermilk.</td>
<td>Four ounces of Indian Meal, and one-fourth of a quart of Buttermilk.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Boys and Girls above 9, and under 15 years of Age.</td>
<td>Five ounces of Oatmeal, and one-fourth of a quart of Buttermilk.</td>
<td>One Pint of Broth, and Six ounces of Brown Bread.</td>
<td>Five ounces of Oatmeal, and one-fourth of a quart of Buttermilk.</td>
<td>Four ounces of Indian Meal, and one-fourth of a quart of Buttermilk.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Children above 5, and under 9 years of Age.</td>
<td>Three and a half ounces of Oatmeal, and one-sixth of a quart of Buttermilk.</td>
<td>One-third of a quart of Broth, and Five ounces of Brown Bread.</td>
<td>Three and a half ounces of Oatmeal, and one-sixth of a quart of Buttermilk.</td>
<td>Three ounces of Indian Meal, and one-sixth of a quart of Buttermilk.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Children above 2, and under 5 years of Age.</td>
<td>Two and a half ounces of Oatmeal, and one-eight of a quart of New Milk.</td>
<td>Half-a-pint of Broth, and Four ounces of Brown Bread.</td>
<td>Two and a half ounces of Oatmeal, and one-eight of a quart of New Milk.</td>
<td>Two and a half ounces of Indian Meal, and one-eight of a quart of New Milk.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Infants under 2 years of Age.</td>
<td>One Pint of New Milk, and Eight ounces of White Bread, Daily.</td>
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</tr>
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### SVP CONFERENCES IN IRELAND 1844–1849

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commenced</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Conference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>White Cross</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ormond Quay</td>
<td>[St. Michan]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
<td>Dublin</td>
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NEW SVP CONFERENCES
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1855 - 1859

NEW SVP CONFERENCES
APPENDIX D

PRAEDCESSORES NOSTROS

Encyclical of Pope Pius IX
on aid for Ireland
March 25, 1847

To all Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops and Bishops.

Venerable Brothers, We give you Greetings and Our Apostolic Blessing.

You know from your study of the Church's history, that Our predecessors in the Roman Pontificate assiduously assisted Christian nations. You know too that this zeal included not only spiritual benefits conferred on the Christian people, but also disaster relief whenever calamity struck. This fact is confirmed by documents of ancient and more recent times, as well as by Our own recollection of recent events. Who indeed could, or should, more fittingly display this fatherly concern of spirit that those whom the Catholic faith teaches "are the Fathers and Teachers of all Christians"? and to whom should afflicted peoples have recourse but to those who have proved by actual deeds over a long period of time that they are sympathetic benefactors?

Famine and Disease in Ireland

2. Inspired by this notable example of Our predecessors, and at the behest of Our own will, We immediately made every effort, as far as in Us lay, to bring help to the Irish nation in their time of peril. Therefore as soon as We learned that the kingdom of Ireland was suffering a great dearth of food, both grain and other provisions, and that the nation was hard pressed by a series of awful diseases caused by this lack of food, We immediately came to their aid. We proclaimed that public prayers should be made by God in this city of Ours; We exhorted the Roman clergy and people, as well as the rest of Rome's residents, to come to the aid of Ireland and to pray for them. By contributing Ourselves and by collecting money in Rome, We were able to send a contribution to Our venerable brothers, the Archbishops of Ireland. They distributed it among the needy.

Situation Worsening

3. But letters reach Us daily from Ireland, bringing news of the calamity worsening. We are distressed and again want to help that nation. Ireland deserves our aid for so many reasons. The clergy and people of Ireland have always revered the Apostolic See. Indeed that nation has persevered in professing the Catholic religion in all distressful times, and the Irish clergy has worked industriously to spread the Catholic religion in the farthest part of the globe. Finally the Irish nation zealously honours and understands divine Peter whose humble representative We are, and whose dignity, to quote
the words of Leo the Great, "does not fail in the person of an unworthy heir."

4. So, after carefully weighing this serious matter and ascertaining also the view of several cardinals on the implementation of Our plan, We have decided to write this letter to you, venerable brothers, so that We may provide for the needs of the Irish people.

Pray for Ireland

5. In this matter We advise you all in the dioceses and districts subject to your jurisdiction to proclaim three days of public prayers in churches and other holy places, as has previously been done in Rome. Do this in order to beseech God, the Father of mercies, to set the Irish people free from this great disaster, and to prevent such a misfortune befalling the other kingdoms and lands of Europe as well. To encourage these prayers, We grant an indulgence of seven years to those who are present at these prayers on any occasion; and, in addition, on those who attend the prayers for the entire three days and who also within a week receive the sacraments of penance and of the most holy Eucharist, We bestow by Our Apostolic authority a plenary indulgence.

Take Up Contributions

6. In addition, We urge you to exhort the people under your jurisdiction to give alms for the relief of the Irish nation. You know the power of almsgiving and the rich fruits which proceed from it. You know the noteworthy praises showered on almsgiving by the holy Church Fathers and especially by St. Leo the Great in many of his sermons. And you readily recall the well-known letter of St. Cyprian, martyr and Bishop of Carthage, to the Bishops of Numidia, which contains clear evidence of his people's zeal in generous almsgiving for those Christians who needed help. You can, furthermore, remember the words of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, that "the beauty of wealth lies not in the manner of life of the rich but in food given to the poor; wealth is more resplendent among those who are weak and in want; Christians should learn to use money in looking not for their own goods but for Christ's, so that Christ in turn may look after them." When you recall these and other praise, We hope that you will vigorously assist the poor whom we are discussing.

7. We could indeed end Our letter here. But since you are about to proclaim public prayers, We must add, venerable brothers, what "Our daily urgency, the care of all the Churches" warns us of, day and night; that is, the furious, savage storm that We have seen for a long time raised up against the whole Church. Our spirit shrinks to recall "how greatly His enemy hates the holy one" and what evil scheming now goes on" against the Lord and His Christ." Therefore we strongly recommend that when you
proclaim public prayers for Ireland, you ask your people to beseech God at the same time for the whole Church.

Meanwhile, venerable brothers, We most lovingly impart to you Our Apostolic Blessing.

Given in Rome at St. Mary Major's on the 25th of March, 1847, in the first year of Our Pontificate.

LATIN TEXT: Acta Pii X, 1, 1:32-37

ENGLISH TRANSLATION: Padraig M. O'Cleirigh
[Annotation omitted]

SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL 'TICKETS'

(Original tickets were printed on coloured card)

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