

Prophesies of the Saints

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Introduction

The functions of the pre-Christian druid and prophet appropriated by Christian clergy but it fell to the poet or *file* to interpret prophesies and apply them to a contemporary context.¹ These utterances attributed to early Christian Irish ‘saints’ can be categorised as religious/moral on the one hand and political, on the other. It is not intended, here, to minimise the importance of the religious verses prophesying punishment on the Irish by an external agency for their sinfulness.² There exists, after all, a notable overlap between the two categories, given the recurrent providentialism, the *díoltas Dé* (God’s just punishment) motif, that the poets and historians used to explain the military and political reverses of the Nine Years War (1594-1603) and the Wars of Religion (1641-53) Philip O’Sullivan Beare’s history of the Nine Years War, for example, cites a prophecy attributed to Saint Malachy that the foreigners, variously *Dhanaroibh* or Danes and *Saxuib* or English, would be able to conquer Ireland for a time, not through their own merits, but because of the faults of the Irish.³ The better known papal prophesies of Malachy do not fall within the scope of this paper.⁴

This paper will focus on the ‘political’ prophetic verses, and later additions, interpolations and glosses, in order to evaluate their importance in mobilising opposition to the invader and coloniser from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.

Prophecy: *La Longue Durée*

Giraldus Cambriensis’s twelfth-century *Hibernia Expugnata* noted, even then, that ‘the Irish are reputed to have four prophets’; Saints Moling, Bearchán, Patrick and Colum-Cille. The best-known, and most pervasive of these prophets was Colmcille; verses attributed to him will serve to illustrate the range and subject matter of the others. The central political poem of 360 lines was written, according to O’Curry, in the fourteenth or fifteenth century though it incorporates at least one stanza written in 1150.⁵ This is a poetic rendering of some of the main events of the Norse incursions of the ninth

¹ Breandán Ó Buachalla *Aisling Ghéar; Na Stiobhartaigh agus an tAos Léinn* (Dublin, 1996) 484

² The sinfulness commonly involved sexual misconduct and disrespect for the clergy.

³ Philip O’Sullivan Beare *History* ii, 65. ; Nicholas O’Kearney (ed.) *The Prophesies of Saints Colum-Cille, Maeltamlacht, Ultan, Senan, Bearcan and Malachy* (Dublin, 1856) 79 The verse from Malachy reads as follows

*leigfear do Dhanaroibh
Seal ar Innis Féidlim;
Ní ar maith na Saxuib,
Acht fa olc d’Éarionncaibh*

⁴ He was said to have composed these on visiting Rome in 1140 and they enumerate Latin mottoes and coda yielding clues to the identity of each pope in succession. The present John Paul II is, according to this, the last pope but two. These prophesies were first published by Dom Arnold Wion in his 1595 *Lignum Vitae* and were, most likely, invented by him. John Hogue *The Last Pope. The Decline and Fall of the Church of Rome. The Prophesies of St Malachy for the New Millenium* (1998) 2-3. 35

⁵ Eugene O’Curry *Lectures on the Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History* (Dublin, 1861) 400-405

to the eleventh centuries. The Norsemen (though usually referred to as *Danair* or Danes) first gave the Gaelic Irish the ‘feeling of otherness’; the realisation that they were, culturally, a people apart.⁶ The poem concludes with a destructive, if puzzling, *Roth Rámhach* or ‘rowing wheel’. O’Curry did not note one prophetic poem attributed to Colmcille by the poet Nicholas O’Kearney and included in his 1858 collection of the saints prophesies. This begins *Éire nocht in Ériain* (how prosperous Ireland is this night) and includes references to Father Theobald Wolfe Tone and to Daniel O’Connell, thinly disguised in mystical language. The beginning of the latter’s public career in the 1820s would mark the last ninety years of Irish ‘bondage’. Helpfully, O’Kearney then interprets the ‘rowing wheel’ in terms of contemporary maritime technology as a fleet of American paddle steamers.⁷ O’Kearney’s forgery (for that is undoubtedly what it was) demonstrates the continuing vitality of the prophetic tradition as late as the 1850s in underpinning and validating contemporaneous Fenian republican separatism. An even later example is the hopeful ‘spin’ put on the Boer War (1899-1902) by a contemporary: ‘He used to quote from Colmcille’s Prophecy about the two Protestant nations being at war with each other and he maintained that England’s day of reckoning had come’⁸ What is evident, then, is the sheer span of time during which these prophesies retained political potency.

Prophecy: Purpose and Fulfilment

‘Magic is dominant when control of the environment is weak’ Magical beliefs, including predictive systems, reflected the helplessness of the early modern world in the face of hazard and uncertainty, the threat of plague or war, the vagaries of nature and the hazards of daily life. The actions of birds, the appearance of comets and eclipses, and dreams could all serve as dramatic omens revealing the will of God for a providential future.⁹ The prophecy may ‘on one level’ according to Keith Thomas ‘be regarded as simply a propaganda device, based on the eternal truth that nothing is more likely to bring about the success of an enterprise than the conviction of those who undertake it that they are predestined to succeed’¹⁰ The political prophesies discussed can, indeed, be seen in part as sophisticated examples of this propagandist *genre*

Colmcille’s prophesies were revived to weave Red Hugh O’Donnell, (principal ally of Hugh O’Neill the leader of the Ulster Confederates in the Nine Years War) into the fabric of legend. It was recollected that Colmcille had been the patron of the O’Donnells; ‘when two Hughs lawfully and lineally succeed each other as O’Donnells the last Hugh shall be a monarch of Ireland and banish thence all foreign nations and conquerors’¹¹ The recurrent failure of the would-be O’Donnell saviours to live up to their heroic

⁶ D.A.Binchy ‘The Passing of the Old Order’ in Ó Cúiv (ed.) *proceedings of the International Congress of Celtic Studies* (Dublin, 1965) 131

⁷ Nicholas O’Kearney (ed.) *The Prophecies of Saints Colum-Cille, Maeltamlacht, Ultan, Senan, Bearcan and Malachy* (Dublin, 1856) 37, 39, 67.

⁸ Patrick Cunningham, Drumcliffe Co.Sligo *Irish Folklore Commission* 1104:540

⁹ Raymond Gillespie *Devoted People Belief and Religion in Early Modern Ireland* (Manchester, 1997) pp.126, 133.

¹⁰ Keith Thomas *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971) p.201

¹¹ Sean O Faolain *The Great O’Neill: A Biography of Hugh O’Neill Earl of Tyrone 1550-1616* (London, 1942)

expectations illustrates that the prophesies, for all their vagueness, preserved a certain integrity. It would have been more politic to skew Colmcille's prophesy towards individuals who did, in fact, play a much more significant role such as Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone (1550-1616) Phelim O'Neill the leader of the 1641 rising or Eoghan *rua* O'Neill leader of the Confederate Catholic army of Ulster during the 1640s. Evidently, the prophesies, or Colmcille's in particular, did not lend themselves so easily, to manipulation. After all, these were written (and by the seventeenth-century printed) texts as well as oral traditions and so were, if not immutable, then not infinitely expandable. Admittedly *Aodh Eanghach*, as a mythological person, could be frequently (re)interpreted; he would be the prime personification of messianic hopes.¹² He would banish the foreigner, rule as *Ard Rí* (High King) and establish lasting peace.¹³ Nonetheless, Red Hugh O'Donnell was the single most frequent personification of *Aodh Eanghach*.

Other prophesy could more easily be revived and updated by interpolation of new material which was, broadly congruent with the original subject matter. For example, St. Senan's prophesy was quoted in a c.1569 poem addressed to James Fitz Maurice Fitzgerald who, inspired by Counter-Reformation ideology, rebelled against Queen Elizabeth. The main significance of the poem and prophesy is that it validates and encourages the alliance of native Irish (*Gael*) and pre-Reformation settlers (*Gall* or 'Old English') like Fitzgerald himself. Ultimately Irish Catholics did fashion a common territorial rather than ancestral identity as *Éireannach* or Irish, an identity that underpinned the Confederate Catholic *régime* (1642-49). At a time when that alliance was sundering one William Bourke FitzJohn made a speech to an Irish national assembly in 1650 citing 'the prophesy'¹⁴ *Gaoidhil is Goill oc deanaid combaidh daigionn anaiged sluagh Sasanach nach uilsa a congionn* [the Gael and Gall will come together in a solid alliance against the Saxon horde, their union will not be dissolved] The line is quite similar to a quatrain from an earlier prophesy of St. Senan.¹⁵ However, the next quatrain reads *Ticfadh mhac rí Saxan* (the King of England's son will come) a reference that can only mean the future Charles II and strongly suggests that this particular quatrain may have been written quite recently, c.1648-49 before the execution of Charles I. The effect was to update the prophesy by linking it to a specific hoped-for political event.

The fact that prophesies could be delivered by delegates to national assemblies suggests that they enjoyed prestige and authority in *élite* culture. The authority of prophesy is also suggested by other incidents of the 1640s. Moreover, these incidents suggest that Irish prophesy could be more than a propagandist device of the sort noted by Thomas. Richard Bellings, an historian not given to embellishment, noted that one Dermot Mac Dowlin Kavanagh appeared before the battle of Kilrush, Co. Kildare (1642) even though he was 'weake and sickly'. When his commander remonstrated with him for leaving his sickbed, he replied 'there must a way have been found to bring him to be

¹² Ó Buachalla *Aisling Ghéar* 493-94

¹³ Ó Buachalla *Aisling Ghéar* 494-503 notes no fewer than ten historical figures who were praised as Aodh Eanghach including Cathal *Croibhdhearg* O'Connor +1224, Fiach Mac Hugh O'Byrne +1597, and Red Hugh O'Donnell

¹⁴ J.T. Gilbert (ed.) *A Contemporary History of Affairs in Ireland from 1641-1652* 3 vols. (Dublin, 1879) ii, 122

¹⁵ O'Kearney (ed.) *The Prophesies of Saints Colum-Cille*, 100

engaged in the battle of Mullaghmast, a hill near Kilrush, which they were then to fight and in which he was to be killed'.¹⁶ Another contemporary also recorded this event;

'Of this gentleman was a prophesy (Which I heard myself told 12 years before his death) that he should be killed in that same plain in a battle between English and Irish; himself knowing this of long departing his proper home to his fatal journey made his last will and testament...and complied with the said prophesy...fighting very manfully'¹⁷

Mullaghmast, overlooking the battle site, was emblematic of the earlier struggle of *Gael* and *Gall*. The soldiers of Thomond and Desmond encamped at Mullaghmast on their way home from defeating the Vikings at Clontarf (1014) A quarrel threatened to erupt into full-scale battle when the Thomond wounded who had been left in the *rath* of Mullaghmast for safety stuffed their wounds with moss and took up their weapons. This so impressed the men of Desmond that they withdrew and battle was avoided. Perhaps Kavanagh thought that his rising from his sickbed would have an equally dramatic effect. Consider, also, the account by the papal nuncio, Rinuccini, of Archbishop Malachy Ó Caollaidh's departure in 1645 to lead an expedition to recapture Sligo; 'I understand that on quitting Kilkenny he carried with him all his property, took leave of many persons as if he should never return, alleging as a reason some prophesy concerning the pastors of his church. I find these people much given to belief in these vain predictions.'¹⁸ Ó Caollaidh's fatalism can hardly have failed to percolate to the rank and file so it is hardly surprising that the expedition was routed and the phlegmatic bishop himself killed. As a vigorous Tridentine reformer, Ó Caollaidh's was in other respects, however, an unmistakably modern figure.¹⁹ Prophesy, then, was not just a propagandist device used by the *élite* to attract a credulous popular following. The well-attested anecdotes about Kavanagh and Ó Caollaidh suggest that these prophesies were implicitly accepted by, at least, some members of the Irish Catholic *élite* as injunctions which *had* to be obeyed, even in the knowledge that it would cost them their lives. Defeat at Mullaghmast and Sligo were, as will be suggested below, necessary preconditions for ultimate and decisive victory.

'I ask again oh mighty Son,
Where be the prophesies of Holy Patrick?
Of Berchan, of gentle Senan,
Of Ciaran of Cluain, obeyed by all,
Of Colum Cille, the cheerful-faced;
Of Cailin, of Ultan the laborious,
Of Colman Ele, whose food was the green grass.

This particular poem penned in exile c.1650 while the Cromwellian reconquest ground down Irish resistance betrays a new note of despairing disbelief in the saints prophesies.

¹⁶ J.T. Gilbert (ed.) *Irish Confed.* I, p.81

¹⁷ J.T.Gilbert (ed.) *Contemp. Hist* I, 30

¹⁸ Annie Hutton (ed.) *The Embassy in Ireland of Rinuccini* (Dublin, 1873) p.87

¹⁹ Alison Forrester *Catholic Synods in Ireland 1600-1690* (Dublin, 1998) 36, 48, 136, 147.

beaten at the Boyne, James II, his Irish viceroy, Richard Talbot Earl of Tyrconnel and his French allies all wrote off the prospect of further resistance. Tyrconnell believed that even if the Irish regrouped, held Limerick city and the line of the Shannon, William of Orange ‘would send another army, and another after that’²⁵

By any rational appraisal of the military situation Tyrconnell was right, yet the Irish rallied, buoyed by the irrational:

A little after their arrival there was a report spread that the Irish would put their backs to the walls of Limerick and there engage in a regular fight with the enemy for the whole kingdom; which report raised the courage of the army, and invited no small number of gentlemen, burgesses and farmers, who flew before the enemy out of Leinster, Munster and Ulster, to approach to Limerick, in order to share in the glory of that day²⁶

The ‘report’ is an oblique reference to the Berchán prophesy that the Irish would be beaten until they made a stand at Singland, the hill outside Limerick where the besiegers encamped. Afterwards the *Gaill* or foreigner, would be driven out of Ireland, (*ni bhiadh Gaill seal a ndaingean na h-Eirionn*)²⁷ William of Orange was, unexpectedly, driven back from Limerick thereby prolonging the war for another year.

In other respects, too, the prophesies proved to be politically potent. A returned adventurer named *Ball-Dearg* O’Donnell was popularly acclaimed as the conquering hero in the mould of Red Hugh O’Donnell. He managed to attract a large following but behaved in a singularly unheroic fashion. He kept aloof from the Jacobite resistance and, towards the end of the war, switched sides in an attempt to secure a commission for himself in the Williamite army.

In the wake of Irish defeat expectations of deliverance were most frequently expressed in the *Aisling* or ‘vision’ poem genre. This formulaic composition invariably included the prophesy that one of the exiled Stuarts, or his supporters would assume the mantle of deliverer. The saints prophesies were not extensively reworked to include Jacobite themes.²⁸

Prophesy and Popular Mobilisation (2) The last phase

It is characteristic of a millenarian movement that ‘...its aims and premises are boundless. A social struggle is seen not as a struggle for specific, limited objectives, but as an event of unique importance.’²⁹ Cohn’s definition would definitively exclude most of the violent agrarian secret societies of the period 1760 to 1845. Lee stresses ‘the relentless

²⁵ J.T.Gilbert (ed.) *A Jacobite Narrative of the War in Ireland* (Dublin, 1892) 110

²⁶ *Ibid.* 94-95

²⁷ O’Kearney, *The Prophesies of Saints Colum-Cille* 102-103 Brendan Ó Buachalla ‘An Mheisiasiaicht agus an Aisling’ in de Brún, Ó Coileáin and Ó Riain (eds.) *Folia Gadelica* (Cork, 1983) 77

²⁸ A verse belonging to the Colmcille corpus predicts that the deliverer will come from *Alba* or *ón mBioscain* (Biscay?) The former doubtless refers to the Jacobite risings in Scotland in 1715 and 1745. *Royal Irish Academy* 24-1-19

²⁹ Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millenium* (London, 1978) 281

realism' of the Whiteboys and similar societies, their recurrent concern with limited demands regarding such concrete matters as wage rates, conacre rents and tithes³⁰

There are, however, two important exceptions to Lee's generalisation. The first is the Defender movement of the 1790s. This had its origins in the sectarian cockpit of County Armagh, a region of 'land hunger, erratic and uneven economic expansion and shifting racial, religious and settlement frontiers'³¹ It culminated in the expulsion by the newly formed Orange Order of several thousand Catholics from Armagh and neighbouring counties in 1795-6. While the Defenders drew on by now traditional grievances of the small tenant farmers and cottiers they were, in contrast to earlier agrarian societies, avowedly anti-English and anti-Protestant and unprecedentedly violent in their murders and mutilations. The Defenders drew on the moribund *Aisling* deliverance tradition in Irish popular culture and on Colmcille's prophesies and fused these with the prospect of military help from revolutionary France to form a revolutionary dynamic.³²

In 1795, according to the French traveller De Latocayne, an old prophesy of 'St. Columba' was revived warning that 'a time will come when war and famine will destroy in this part of the country all those who have not embraced the new errors' but adding that the massacre would not extend beyond the Shannon.³³ He claimed to have heard of these prophesies from Catholic refugees whom he met fleeing to Connacht. More typical was the reworking of Colmcille's prophesies to assert that, despite temporary reverses, the Catholics would totally annihilate the Orangemen.

One of these alludes to a final battle to be fought close to the ford in a valley near the Hill of Tara (the ancient royal seat) where the hitherto victorious *Gall* would be utterly defeated and killed except for enough men to crew a bark.³⁴ This episode was frequently echoed in the twentieth-century folklore of south Ulster. One respondent from south Armagh held that it referred to an invasion of the south by an Orange army which would be blocked at the Boyne 'that there they would be defeated and that one small ship would be sufficient to carry away the remnants'³⁵ The choice of the Boyne represents a symbolic reversal of the real battle in 1690 which copperfastened Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. Another folklore interviewee from Cavan claimed that the *ne plus ultra* would be the valley of 'The Race of the Black Pig', an earthworks stretching across south Ulster.³⁶ The choice of this otherwise not especially emblematic landscape feature probably resulted from the fact that a Franco-Irish force fought a last battle against superior converging British forces at Ballinamuck or 'the Mouth of the Ford of the Pigs' in Longford (September 1798)³⁷

William Carelton, an unsympathetic but accurate insider from south Ulster who rejected the culture of his youth makes two key points about these prophesies;

³⁰ Joseph Lee 'The Ribbonmen' in T.D.Williams (ed.) *Secret Societies in Ireland* (Dublin and New York, 1973) 33

³¹ Tom Bartlett 'Defenders and Defenderism' *Irish Historical Studies* 1985, 374

³² *Ibid.* 377

³³ John A.Gamble (ed.) *A Frenchman's Walk through Ireland 1796-7* (Belfast, 1984) 263-64

³⁴ O'Kearney 41

³⁵ Tomás Mac Eoin, Crossmaglen (1954) *Irish Folklore Commission* 1357: 425

³⁶ P.J.Gaynor *Irish Folklore Commission* 1356:169

³⁷ Maureen Murphy "The Noggin of Milk": An Old Testament legend and the Battle of Ballinamuck' Daire Keogh and Nicholas Furlong (eds.) *The Women of 1798* (Dublin, 1998) 178

There have been for centuries, probably since the Reformation itself, certain opinions floating among the lower classes in Ireland, all tending to prepare them for some great change in their favour, arising from the discomfiture of heresy, the overthrow of their enemies, and the exaltation of themselves and their religion...³⁸

The first, is that they were (Carleton is writing of the 1820s) millenarian in the sense that they expressed the hope and expectation of sudden and violent overthrow, in this case of the English and Protestantism in Ireland. The second is that by then, the prophesies like their ambient language had long since been confined to popular rather than *élite* culture.

The 'Rockite' movement of violent agrarian and sectarian protest that swept across much of north Munster in 1821-24 represents the second exception to the generalisation that such movements were not millennial. James Donnelly Jr. identified powerlessness, the experience of defeat and the fear of impending catastrophe as predisposing causes of millennial protest.³⁹ The central characteristic of such movements was the expectation of sudden reversal, of the casting down of oppressors by supernatural agency. He also noted, but did not fully accept O'Farrell's view that hatred of English and Protestants served as a 'secular substitute' for millennial visions.⁴⁰ As Donnelly points out, that very hostility was capable of underpinning Irish Catholic millenarianism. The Pastorini prophesies, which animated this particular wave of disturbances, were a written commentary on the Book of Revelation forecasting the imminent extirpation of Protestantism. The Book of Revelation was for centuries a favourite of those who hoped for a second coming in their lifetime and, as such, the Pastorini-inspired Rockite movement fits comfortably within the 'mainstream' of millennial typology. Other aspects of Rockite millenarianism, however, refer back to the older indigenous messianic tradition. A prophesy heard in the Adare district of Limerick in 1822 ran as follows:

The children of God are to be defeated with great loss in the first two battles; before the third on their march, they are to meet with a white horse. They are then to come victorious and to chase the locusts to the north....at the battle which is to be fought at Singland near Limerick...two brothers, McDonnells by name, of Scotch extraction, are to come to the relief of Ireland with their fleets; one is to land in the north the other in the west. When all is over the Spaniards are to settle a frame of government...⁴¹

The prophesy comprises a mishmash of oblique references to evocative historical events and symbols, a crude example of the technique employed by the early modern poets in composing and updating prophetic verses. Spanish armies had not trod Irish soil since 1601; one of the Mac Donald brothers, Alasdair Mac Colla, had led an Irish Catholic army in a devastating campaign against the Scottish Covenanters 1644-47, before returning to Ireland. His regiment of 'Redshanks' or Gaelic Scots, charged and scattered

³⁸ William Carleton *Traits and stories of the Irish peasantry* (Belfast, 1834) 313

³⁹ James Donnelly Jr. 'Pastorini and Captain Rock: Millenarianism and Sectarianism in the Rockite Movement of 1821-24' in *Irish Peasants Violence and Political Unrest 1780-1914* (Wisconsin, 1983) 103-04

⁴⁰ Patrick O'Farrell 'Millenialism, messianism and utopianism in Irish history' *Anglo Irish Studies* ii (1976) 53-54

⁴¹ Donnelly 'Pastorini and Captain Rock' 117

their opposite numbers at the battle of Knocknanuss (November 1647) but were abandoned by the mass of the Munster Confederate Catholic infantry. Surrounded, Mac Donald was taken prisoner and shot. White was the Jacobite colour, and the emblematic white horse links this to the wish-fulfilment fantasies of invasion and external delivery of the *Aisling* poetic genre. The, by now venerable, Singland is familiar as the third battle that would follow two earlier defeats.

Summary

The millennial tradition, as represented by the prophesies of the Saints was a potent force for centuries. The central verses were included in the *Cogadh Gael is Gall*, a history written in the twelfth century to retrospectively validate and celebrate victory over Norse invaders. These supply many of the emblematic locations such as Singland Hill and Mullaghmast. Central to all these prophesies was the assertion that while the invaders, the *Gall* or the Saxon would initially be successful they would ultimately be subject to sudden and total rout through the agency of a mythological hero. Vagueness as to who this deliverer would be or just how long the foreigner's rule would last allowed fulfilment to be deferred without calling the prophesies into question. The prophecy could also be revived and updated by the addition of new material reflecting current concerns such as the hoped for alliance of native Irish (*Gael*) and pre-Reformation settlers (*Sean Ghall* or 'Old English'). O'Kearney's invention of a new prophesy in his 1858 collection of the saints prophesies includes an unmistakable reference to Daniel O'Connell. The last ninety years of Irish 'bondage' would, according to this, run from the beginning of O'Connell's political career in the 1820s.

The Nine Years War and the Wars of Religion were periods of crisis for the emergent Irish Catholic nation when these prophesies enjoyed their greatest currency and prestige. The political prophesies discussed can, on one level, be seen as propaganda by the *élite* buoying their followers with the conviction that they are they are predestined to succeed. However, they were more than unproblematically vague wish-fulfilment fantasies or propaganda ploys. This is suggested by the willingness of members of that *élite* like Kavanagh and Ó Caollaidh to die in order to fulfil Berchán's prophesy.

'Where be the prophesies of Holy Patrick'? The new note of disillusionment struck by the author of the *Siogaidhe Romanach* [Vision at Rome] in the wake of the Cromwellian catastrophe certainly did not percolate to popular culture where the prophesies retained their potency. A striking example of this would occur during the Jacobite Wars. Berchán's claim that the English would be definitively beaten at Singland predated the 1690 siege of Limerick by at least half a century and was of vital importance in rallying the demoralised Irish soldiery, contrary to expectations, to beat back William of Orange from the walls of Limerick.

It is generally true to say that millenarianism was generally irrelevant in agrarian agitation of the period 1760-1845 which concentrated on specific and limited objectives. Nonetheless there were two important exceptions. The first was Defenderism which fused French-inspired revolutionary ideology to traditional millenarian preoccupations. The latter aspect emerges in late reworking of Colmcille's prophesies and their application, most commonly, to a last bloody battle to be fought on the Boyne. The 'Rockite'

movement of violent agrarian and sectarian protest that swept across much of north Munster in 1821-24 represents the second exception to the generalisation. The Rockite movement fits comfortably within the 'mainstream' of millennial typology in its reliance on biblical sources but in this case, too, the native messianic tradition is invoked.

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