THE HISTORIC ORIGINS OF THE IRISH STATE by John Campbell. (Address given to Approaches Irish Conference, 1981.)

It has long been observed, the hesitancy of the ninety per cent majority of Irish Catholics in impressing their Catholic culture upon Irish society. An Irish bishop has recently drawn attention to this phenomenon.

The deep reason for this is undoubtedly an inferiority complex before the vaunted Protestant Anglo–Irish culture, with its pantheon of immortals from Dean Swift and Bishop Berkley to Mr. George Bernard Shaw. One could give much chapter and verse, and I need only remind you of that common remark in Irish conversation: “all the great patriots were Protestants!” It has been a brainwashing of unusual effectiveness.

Yes the credit was boldly claimed by Senator Yeats the poet, in a Senate speech in the early days of the State, claiming those eternal divorce rights for “my people”. He said: “We are one of the great stocks of Europe. We are the people of Burke, we are the people of Grattan, we are the people of Swift... We have created most of the modern literature of this country. We have created the best of its political intelligence”.

Well as they in the Western novels, “That sure is a mighty big statement.” Its precisely the claim of being a herrenvolk among a backward “native” population.

Here was one born in Ireland who obviously considered as of no significance the unique Irish Golden Age when Irish scholars gave the lead to Europe, when Columbanus was considered “the Apostle of Europe”. Regarding political intelligence he did not even look at the records of the Irish “Wild Geese”, the Taafes who became hereditary chancellors of the Austrian Empire, and Marshall Brady of that Empire, nor the marshals of France and Marshall McMahon, President of France. In Spain it was a long roll call including the Counts Mahony, Murphy and O'Neill and Don Ambrosio O'Higgins, Viceroy of the Americas. One incident I recall. When the Spanish Empire was fighting the Bonapartists, it sent a Spanish ship of the line and two frigates to New Orleans, to escort its greatest professional soldier and Royal Governor of Louisiana back to Spain to become its Premier. He was Count O'Reilly.

Thus there is no need for the native Irish to defer to the provincial Anglo–Irish in their country. (By the way, I am glad to note that at least one Irish group has none of that apologetic note. I would advise all of you to get the splendid news-letter published by Mr. Frank O’Meara of Limerick.)

1 [The late John (Jack)Campbell. In his latter years he was editor of the publication, Daylight – an anti-evolutionary magazine.]
One part of the Protestant mind seems to find its authentic manifestation in a puritan radicalism and revolutionism, as witness the English Republic of General Cromwell, who impressed his teaching also upon the Irish. This same radicalism would even find affinity with secularism and illuminism of Europe. And the United Irishmen, whatever their particular virtues, were on this track veritable apostles of the French ideas. Precisely, they introduced the French secularism into the body of Irish life.

Not only has this school of thought intruded into Irish life, it has practically taken it over. Thus, the United Irishmen are everywhere credited as the originators of the idea of the Irish National State, only a small minority voicing protest. This amazing non-fact takes the proverbial biscuit. **For in the Confederation of Kilkenny there was an Irish National State in actual being more than a century before their arrival.**

The Confederation of Kilkenny was the assembly of the Irish, Old and New, to protect themselves against the puritan threat to their liberties and their very existence. The Confederation maintained its armies in the field, even its ships on the seas. That the Confederation was an independent State is manifest in that it had accredited to it a full Papal Nuncio and ambassadors from France and Spain.

Archbishop Rinuccini the Nuncio, along with the Confederation's General, Owen Rhu O'Neil, advised the delegates to cast off allegiance to King Charles Stuart. And there were proposals that one of the O'Neills might become King or *Ard Ri* of Ireland. But Owen Rhu died and the Confederation was ultimately defeated by General Cromwell, leading the greatest army which England had ever sent to Ireland.

The thing to note is that this independent Irish State, this *Respublicam Hiberniae* was led by a king of the ancient Hy Nials, advised by a representative of the Papacy – whether or not the Irish secularists like the fact – and here there is a very profound symbolism for the Irish. **This Irish State was a translation into the modern age of the respublicam of the ancient Irish State and monarchy; and for its historic continuity and representative character it has a unique place in history.**

Honour where honour is due. It is not to deny the United Irishmen their particular niche in Irish history, to point out that it is a non-fact to attribute to them the idea of the Irish National State. This honour must belong to the founding fathers of the Confederation. Indeed it is Owen Rhu O'Neill who is the hero-figure of native Irish republicanism. For what good reason is he denied the honour?

Still there is no national holiday for Confederation Day – as if the Americans had forgotten their own Independence Day. There seem to be no pilgrimages to the tomb of Owen Rhu, the selfless patriot whose battle cry was "Sancta Mariae". It is really extraordinary.

Indeed, the historic fact of the Confederation resolves a supposed contradiction in Irish history, the alleged dissociation of Irish Catholics from the national struggle.
Never was historical myth so mythical. The great Irish effort throughout the centuries must be attributed to the Irish Catholic genius, to the Irish people. It is necessary to emphasise this for the secularist lobby in modern Ireland gains its prestige from the myth that it was a secularist philosophy that inspired the very idea of the Irish State.

Such is my theme. But before going on to the authentic Irish tradition certain other matters require attention.

The historic right of the Irish nation to full independence is simply too obvious to merit discussion: and historic circumstances have made the republican form of government the natural choice. But there has arisen a new doctrine called "republicanism", a sort of liberation theology teaching that the republican form of government – that without a king – is the perpetual guarantor of personal and national liberty. One notes that this dissociates the young Irishmen from the long tradition descending from the ancient Ard Riship.

But the ancient Romans, insisting that they had no time for kings, likewise insisted that their world conquering state was a republic. So Emperor Nero was a republican! There were the oligarchic republics of Venice, Genoa, Florence and many others. Today there are republics avowedly Christian, others avowedly atheist, among the latter those recently presided over by Herr Adolf Hitler and Comrade Josef Stalin.

Indeed have the Irish forgotten that the first great republican to visit Ireland was General Cromwell (so sincere a republican that he cut off his king's head to prove it) accompanied by soldiers of the English Republic. I think the worst of Cromwell's horrors was the rounding up of Irish youth for the Bristol slave mart, for a life of slavery in the plantations of the West Indies. It is beside the point to quote the horrors inflicted by Queen Elizabeth's Lord Deputies, e.g. In Munster – The Fitzgerald Rising. The point is that General Cromwell and the English Republic were able were able to conduct these policies within the context of republican principles.

Obviously there are no such things as republican principles as such, there are simply good republics and bad republics. The moral is that we should beware of "isms" and slogans: they are meant to put skids under the mind, and carry it forward to false positions. For example we support the cause of "human rights" – a very good cause – until we discover that these include the "right" to murder the unborn child, and now that of the deformed born child, plus euthanasia, plus other things.

Thus over the past quarter century certain Irish intellectuals have been busy grafting a new meaning onto the accepted phrase "a good republican": the young patriot is exhorted to have strong republican principles. Then it is revealed that republicanism must be the specific republicanism of the French Revolution, the "French ideas", the secularism brought to Ireland by Theobald Wolfe Tone. (Please note the mystic reverence usually accorded to this name whilst it is fully in order for
Irish authors to tear to pieces the reputes of the greatest patriots, even that of the Great O'Neill himself. Odd isn't it?)

When these notes were first written – a couple of months ago – it is possible my analysis might have been contested. But now it is completely verified by the extraordinary speech of the Taoiseach of the Irish state on September 7th., 1981., declaring that the Irish state – this of 1600 years Christian traditions – must be founded on the “French principles” enunciated by Wolfe Tone”. Of this - more anon.

Regarding these ideas of the French Revolution, ask the patriot Frenchman to be informed of them. He will succinctly inform you that the principle movers in the Revolution were the French puritans (Huguenots) and the financiers (for the house of France was anti-usury); that the agitations were operated through a network of Masonic lodges of foreign origin financed by English gold; that the English state papers reveal that Danton, Paine, and Camille Desmoulins were actually English agents, whilst M. de Mirabeau was constantly quoting the precedents of the English parliament. (Itinéraires, Paris, 1978²). So there are French ideas about these “French ideas”.

The thing to grasp about the French Revolution is that it was not essentially a French turmoil – that could quickly have been settled – but the launching of a new world creed. This was epitomised by the enthroning on the altar of Notre Dame of the Goddess of Reason, mother of the new god-man, self-sufficient in his own universe.

(Afterwards we could have a look at the previous French State which so aroused the ire of Wolfe Tone and fellow puritans.)

The real French Revolution began when the Jacobins seized power from the National Assembly, the new kings declaring that they would make all France a cemetery rather than their ideals should not prevail. They cut off the head of King Louis, the gentle reformer, and it was an Edgeworth from the County Longford who braved the mob to stand beside the king on the scaffold, declaring: “Ascend to Heaven descendant of King Louis!” More horrible, they publicly guillotined Queen Antoinette, and then Madame Elizabeth, the king’s saintly sister, who all along wished to become a Carmelite.

The revolutionaries descended upon the Catholic city of Nantes, where they beheaded countless humble citizens so that the River Loire was choked with corpses. In the hinterland of Nantes the district of La Vendee, the Catholic peasants were in active revolt, and they likewise were pacified. General of the army Hoche,

² [ We think the author refers to this article : Itinéraires, No 223, May 1978. Article by André Guès, 'L'Angleterre, la Prusse et la Révolution ’ ]
writing to the Minister of the Interior in Paris on the completion of the task, was able to report: “There now remains only a twentieth of the 1789 population.”

And with General Hoche we are back in Irish waters for he was none other than the commander of the great French expedition to Bantry as the Liberator of Ireland, having as advisor on Irish affairs, Adjudant General Smith, otherwise Wolfe Tone. In those days the Irish people were under the terrible regime of the yeomanry, the pitch cap, the death dealing scourge, the gallows on wheels; naturally they would have supported a Bantry Bay landing for surcease: and hoping the turmoil would allow them to reassert their ancient liberties. But the question cannot be avoided, would the revolutionary general, as military commander in Ireland, away from the French arena, have been more tolerant of a Catholic population than he was in La Vendee?

More important, what would have been that attitude of Wolfe Tone as leader of the new Republic? Would he have introduced civil marriage and divorce - divorce the continual battle cry of the Protestants - plus secular education all according to the prescriptions of his “French ideas”? (Or would he have mellowed, so as to recognise the traditions of his Catholic nation?)

Let us not waste time repeating that, as Catholics, we recognise the good intentions of individual United Irishmen: the enthusiastic and gallant Lord Esward, the brave Robert Emmett must have had a certain Irishness and sympathy for their Catholic countrymen. Personally I have a dislike for exhuming the dead even as public figures but when a man is presented to us as nothing less than the new Moses of nation, i.e. Tone, then we are absolutely compelled to examine his message. Now I have long been convinced that the Wolfe Tone cult represents the very hinge of Irish life to date. For example there is a republican who declared: “Wolfe Tone’s skeleton is perpetually around our necks”. Meaning: “Wolfe Tone’s ideas are at division with our Catholic loyalties, but as the inspired national leader it seems that we have just got to follow him”. I think this attitude is a very common one; people in the propaganda din unable to ask: “Where have all our traditional leaders gone?”

My worst forebodings were as nothing when I heard with amazement, on Sunday 27th September 1981, the truly frightening speech of the Taoiseach of the Irish State declaring that Wolfe Tone’s principles must be the basis of the Irish State – certainly an official pronouncement. He went further even declaring that the religious references in the present Constitution must be deleted, to conform with Tonist principles. That is, the references to the Most Holy Trinity and Jesus Christ must be deleted in deference to Wolf Tone, the new god-man of the Irish scene. What else can such words mean? One can almost hear again the march of the Lodges to Notre Dame for the enthronement of the Goddess of Reason. Can one envisage a similar festival in Christchurch, Dublin put over as one for New Constitution Day or Wolfe Tone Day?

Tone has left us no Koran, and to get to the ideas that have so seeped into the Irish consciousness we have to read his various works, e.g. his diary and his “Argument
on Behalf of the Catholics of Ireland”. It is not possible here to quote at length but the drift of his ideas is unmistakably clear.

He anticipates that the civil emancipation will lead also to emancipation from their old superstitions and beliefs, making them unheeding of “the rusty and extinguished thunderbolts of the Vatican”. So much for his toleration of Catholics. There is not the vaguest comprehension of the essential Catholicism of the Irish people.

He presents a naturalistic, secularist world view, a vision of the great French nation of the Revolution carrying its new creed to all the nations including a vision of the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem by obviously naturalistic Jews.

He rejoices at the Pope being led away captive by the French Revolutionary generals. And here I must quote him. He addresses the Pope: “How thou art fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the Morning! The Revelations have many fine things to say on this subject, touching the beast and Babylon, etc. Of the Pope’s ten horns, God bless us, I’ve knocked off four already”.

This is one of those statements that forcibly speak for themselves; hardly an amiable gentleman to the Catholics is he? It should take a sort of Nobel prize for propaganda, that such a one should be calmly proposed as a symbol of national unity and the natural leader of a Catholic people. In passing please note that phenomenon the puritan and the French secularist, all in one.

The fruits of Tone’s French ideas are seen today in the Irish establishment. The politicians of all parties – with a sounding board on RTE – announce that they have the right to decide the morality of contraception, of divorce and civil marriage and the rest, and with abortion in the background; indeed as if they were all hierarchs of a State Secular Church, which is what French state secularism actually is.

The cult of Wolfe Tone continues with those strange pilgrimages to his grave, and now with a new secular hymn in honour of the cult figure. Meanwhile the grave of Ireland’s most truly noble hero, Owen Rhu O’Nell, lies unmarked, “unhonoured and unsung”. Is it because Owen Rhu and others like him, were not leaders of a revolt against Christian principles while Wolfe Tone is the Irish exponent of secularism and naturalism, their great revolt?

Returning to the French Revolution – acknowledged source of these Irish ideas – we ask ourselves what was the inner spirit of the revolution? Here I allude to Tone’s attempt (“Address to the Peasantry of Ireland”) to explain away the terror of the French Revolution as something fleeting and incidental. But please read for yourselves the history of this revolution, that the terror was for years the declared instrument of its policy in the Law of Suspect etc. It was the duty of the revolution to inflict death upon all dissidents. All not showing themselves fervent republicans were to be apprehended. The guillotine was to be set up in the public squares of the French cities, but in Lyons it could not cope. The condemned we assemble in squares before the mass graves and mowed down by cannon.
The Paris tribunal could not cope with the numbers. The accused were tried in batches of sixty, not allowed to speak in their own defence and hurried off to the waiting tumbrils. So all embracing was this law that the most humble people who had earned their living in association with the old regime were included. When a young serving maid, whose crime was that she had been employed in the household of the Baron de Metz, was led to the guillotine, the hardened mob shouted, “no children”.

So far its mere massacre. But here it is necessary to speak of the things which decency would otherwise forbid to let us grasp the spirit of that revolution which had to be transmitted to Ireland.

After the death of King Louis they decreed that the Dauphin be taken from the Queen to break her spirit and his. The Dauphin was handed over to Samson, an illiterate cobbler, as tutor, but to be initiated into certain vices. Herbert himself instructed Samson to introduce prostitutes to this boy so that at least he would be infected with syphilis. Worse yet, the Dauphin was made to append his signature to a list of charges against the Queen which I cannot bring myself to recount.

All this is not historical gossip. The Dauphin’s pathetic “confession” is there in the Archives of France. For a readable account please read Vincent Cronin’s “Louis and Antoinette”.

Around this time Robespierre proposed the Committee of Public Safety that all unmarried girls over the age of fifteen be handed over for public use, i.e. as prostitutes ...

Why do I shock you with this horrifying catalogue? It is to show the kind of prophets whose “French principles” had to be transmitted to Ireland – but read for yourselves. Does not the whole thing give weight to the frenzy which possessed the French people at the time of the revolution was in fact an eruption of Satanic forces?

No I do not say that Wolfe Tone approved any of these specific acts. But with the acts of a public figure it is necessary to give an objective account. He had seen their setting up of the Goddess of Reason in Notre Dame, had seen the wholesale killing of priests and all suspected of being Catholics. He had seen the virtual extermination of the populace of Catholic La Vendée. But he left the moderate republic of George Washington in America, landing in France in 1793, when the terror was at its height. There he not only negotiated with these men but actually became an officer in their Revolutionary Army becoming the advisor on Irish affairs to General Hoche, the Cromwell of La Vendée. This is the factual record.

However there it that naïve idea that pagan ideas became transmuted upon arrival in Ireland only the pure gold remaining after the defeat of the Protestant insurgents in Ballynahinch, Co. Down in 1798 there was found in the field the bodies of two women dressed as Goddesses of Reason. At the same time MacNevin the only born Catholic in the United Irishmen declared, “I would as soon become a Mahommedan as to be a Roman Catholic”. Note the anti-Christian hatred engendered by the
revolution! And you might remember that Irish postage stamp of last year showing a Goddess of Liberty holding that horrible weapon the bayonet. Whilst at the same time RTE could justify the persecution of the Catholic peasants of the Lebanon on the grounds that they were "right wing". Once the secular principle is accepted the rest follows with terrible logic.

Of course the great appeal of the Wolfe Tone propaganda is in the claim that he was the originator of the Irish National State. It well be shown that here there is a chronological error of some 1300 years.

We return to the more pleasant subject of the authentic Irish tradition. The ancient Ard-Ri-ship was fully recognized by St. Patrick, for he negotiated with the Ard Ri and his brehons for the Christianisation of Irish laws, particularly those dealing with slavery. One notes, the written Irish laws of two centuries after no longer record slavery as an existing institution. Irish historians also opine that the National Apostle healed the breach between the ascendant Gael and the socially inferior other races and that to the National Apostle is due the new conception Fir-Eireann or Irishman. The negotiations of St Patrick with the Ard-Ri-ship as the source of Irish authority and laws must invest it with deep significance in the eyes of Irish Catholics.

Under the Ard-Ri-ship flourished Ireland's Golden Age, that of the Insula Scholisticorum et Sanctorum, what a French academic terms "The Irish Miracle", when students from all Europe in their thousands received free board and tuition at Irish monastic schools, when Irish saints carried the Faith from Iona to Poland, from France to Naples. Here is the unique age forming the centrality of Irish tradition illuminating the unique Irish vocation.

Later an Ard Ri, Brian of the southern Hy Nials, according to Belloc, destroyed the pagan Norse power for all Europe.

At the time of the Norman landings there seems to have been a decline in the Irish political genius in the Irish state.

In times of disarray the Confederation of Irish Chiefs invited Edward Bruce of the royal house of Dalriada to become Ard Ri – an unfortunate choice but one assuming the independence of the Irish state

Leaping the centuries we come to the rising of the Great Tyrone and Red Hugh O'Donnell. In correspondence the two chiefs requested King Phillip to suggest a Royal Archduke to become king of an independent Ireland. Again the independence of the Irish state is assumed.

Coming to the modern era of Europe, in the 17th Century, the modern Irish era was ushered in by the Confederation of Kilkenny. I do not intend to enter into the pros and cons of the dispute between the Angles and the Gaels under O'Neill and the Papal Nuncio. I have already dealt with the essential features of the Confederation: that it was the translation into the modern era of the Respublicam Hiberniae; that it
received the ambassadors of foreign powers and sent them in return. It was truly a
government and administration and a parliament-in-being. To illustrate its
assumption of power and national character I point to the fact that it made plans for
the setting up of constituencies throughout Ireland.

The national state-in-being conducted the greatest war - for almost a decade – ever
conducted by the native Irish for their freedoms. The successive English armies they
engaged suffered 70,000 casualties even before the arrival of Cromwell and greater
armies. Here is the watershed of Irish history, the emergence of the Irish national
state into modern history. And it was Owen Rhu O’Neill who must be regarded as its
champion. The scale of the military effort alone makes the Confederation epoch the
greatest in Irish history. But it is all ignored.

We come to the Ireland of our own times, to the declaration of the republic of 1916,
this document being the foundation of the present Irish state. It begins by invoking
the name of God. It goes on to attribute its sanction to the Irish people of all the past
generations. Nowhere does it attribute its authority to any social philosophy French
or otherwise. It deals exclusively with Irish ideas, claims its authority under God as
that of the continuing Irish tradition. Its constitutional progenitor is clearly that of
the Kilkenny Confederation.

Finally we come to Bunreacht na h’Eireann the Constitution carried by referendum
of the Irish people in 1937. The first two paragraphs of the preamble, the actual
declaration of purpose read:

“In the name of the most Holy Trinity from Whom all authority, and to Whom
as our final end all actions both of men and states must be referred…

Humbly acknowledging all our obligations to Our Divine Lord Jesus Christ
Who sustained our fathers through centuries of trial…”

Deriving from a 1600 years national culture this Irish state makes the declaration
authorized explicitly by act of its people, that all its authority derives from the Most
Holy Trinity and that to the Most Holy Trinity all its acts must be referred. I cannot
imagine any statement being more definite or explicit. Therefore the statement that
Irish constitutionalism is founded upon secularist principles is simply the
impudence of the devil and taking the old advice I think the best way to treat this
propaganda of the devil is simply to laugh it out of the open window.

To summarise, the Irish national state does not derive from a secularist or
protestant ideology of the 18th century, but from the 1600 years Catholic tradition of
this nation. The ancient Irish monarchy and the modern Irish republic form the one
continuity.

Reverend Fathers, Ladies and Gentlemen, as St. Theresa pointed our, all bad things
must come to an end - and this talk is almost run. The good things are still there in
Ireland, those which my instinct tells me will ultimately bring the Irish Catholic
victory. There are the angel patrons of this historic land. But the angels need some human help.

The battle being fought is clearly shown by the subjects of the distinguished speakers at this conference. In short a secular establishment determined to destroy Christian marriage and with this to tear away the whole fabric of Irish Catholic life. But indeed when a nation exalts as its national hero a veritable prophet of secularism is it not to be expected that his ideas would also be exalted.

Secularism! It’s the devil with his tongue in his cheek! The state must be so completely neutral that it cannot even acknowledge God. But this really means that it must acknowledge Man. And here comes the devil’s joke, for man is of no significance if he is not unique made in the image and likeness of God; otherwise, as Mr. Charles Darwin informs us, he is but one of the animals. And if man is but an animal there cannot be those “human rights” – you might as well talk of “horseianity” as talk of humanity. And as animal, man is now put away in the hospitals whenever he is considered a social burden. Indeed secularism is the Devil’s joke upon humanity for it is the amazing truth that you must prove the existence of God before you can prove the existence of man.

The secularists in their wildness do not hesitate to reduce Irish life to an absurdity. To recognize marriage according to the Catholic beliefs of the Catholic majority is sectarian but to enforce the beliefs of the sects upon the Catholic majority that is non-sectarian. To present the heroes of 1600 years of Irish Catholic tradition is discriminatory and sectarian so you must take them from the sects to be non-sectarian. Laugh them out of court!

In a spirit of Christian optimism aided by our angelic friends it remains to ask what can be done?

The great thing of course is to constantly and publicly proclaim that the Irish Respublicam derives not from foreign sects or ideas but, under God, from the Irish Catholic genius throughout the centuries.

One suggestion here, as symbols are so important in Ireland, would those of you who already make pilgrimages to the grave of Owen Rhu not consider making this a public event? And to his battle cry “Sancta Maria” why not add, “Regina Angelorum, “ this for the great battle of today.

The battle, it is one of the powers and dominations, for God or anti-God. And Catholic Ireland is a most important hinge.

So here from the viewer’s distance is a view of modern Ireland. Ireland is still unique, the only European state still banning divorce and abortion – hence all the clamour and constant din. But the step of Catholic Ireland in rallying to the attack is confused and sadly weighed down by what the patriot called the skeleton around our necks. Why not then divest ourselves of the skeleton and clearly assert – the
Irish tradition is ours. That done in the Providence of God we might see again another Irish miracle.