

TOPIC: Pre-Famine Ireland

SUBJECT/GRADE LEVEL: Social Studies, Grade 9.

TITLE: A Frenchman Looks at Pre-Famine Ireland: Alexis de Tocqueville

AIM QUESTION: What were the root causes of poverty in pre-famine Ireland?

NEW YORK STATE SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS:

World History: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history, and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

Economics: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of how the United States and other societies develop economic systems and associated institutions to allocate scarce resources, how major decision-making units function in the U.S. and other national economies, and how an economy solves the scarcity problem through market and non-market mechanisms.

TEACHER BACKGROUND: Alexis de Tocqueville, a Frenchman, traveled widely in the 1830s and wrote about his experiences. He is best known for his book, *Democracy in America* (1835), an account of his visit to the United States. The passages here are excerpts from a journal de Tocqueville kept during a journey to Ireland in 1835 (Emmet Larkin, ed., *Alexis de Tocqueville's Journey in Ireland, July-August, 1835*. Washington, DC: Catholic University Press: 1990). In the journal, he included notes on a series of conversations with local officials, both Protestants and Roman Catholics. De Tocqueville's goal was to try to understand the relationship between England and Ireland and the reason why Ireland was so poor. His journal is an important historical document for at least three reasons. First, he discusses conditions in Ireland, and the relationship between England and Ireland, before the potato blight. Second, as a Frenchman, he is an outsider who brings an independent view to the situation. Third, his notes on conversations with English officials allows them to express their ideas and explain their views on government policy towards Ireland. These essays provide an opportunity for students to explore the reliability of historical sources, multiple perspectives on issues, the nature of human prejudice, and the workings of a social and economic system.

REFLECTION: Teachers recommended using edited, adapted or rewritten versions of documents depending on lesson goals and performance level of students. See discussion of the use of differentiated texts.
---

AIM: What were the root causes of poverty in pre-famine Ireland?

ASSESSMENT:

- Students will demonstrate the importance of examining and respecting multiple perspectives when explaining historical events.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to examine and explain the significance of primary source documents.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to explain and address bias in personal accounts of the past.

DO NOW ACTIVITY: Read ACTIVITY SHEET A: A Frenchman Looks at Pre-Famine Ireland: The 1835 Journal of Alexis de Tocqueville and answer questions 1-3.

MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY: Historians are constantly searching for sources that help them to explain historical events. The 1835 Journal of Alexis de Tocqueville may be a key source for understanding the impact of the Great Irish Famine on the people of Ireland. In your opinion, is de Tocqueville's journal an important historical document? Explain.

- What can historians learn by examining Ireland in the decades immediately preceding the potato blight? Is this information important? Why?

TRANSITIONAL ACTIVITY:

- Alexis de Tocqueville, is an outsider, a Frenchman, and a Catholic. He is the author of a study about democracy in the new United States. In your opinion, do these qualities strengthen or weaken the reliability of his report on Ireland? Why?
- Should historians listen to explanations by English government officials when their policies contributed to the devastation caused by the potato blight? Explain your answers.
- Can historians rely on the testimony of Irish Catholic officials? In your opinion, do wealthy Catholics and Church leaders speak for the general Irish population? Explain.

ACTIVITY: Working in groups, student teams examine different sections from The 1835 Journal of Alexis de Tocqueville. Each team answers the questions that accompany their passage and prepares to report to the class.

SUMMARY QUESTION De Tocqueville wrote that it is "necessary to consider this conversation (as all the others) as indicating the state of feelings more than the naked truth." What do you think De Tocqueville meant by this statement? As a historian, do you agree with his warning? Why or why not? Do you feel these conversations can be used as reliable historical evidence? Explain.

HOMEWORK: Historians need to be skeptical. Select a newspaper report on a controversial topic. Make a list of between 3 and 5 questions that you would ask the reporters or the subjects to learn more about the issues. Write a paragraph explaining why you would ask these questions.

HOMEWORK or TEST: Use ACTIVITY SHEET B to write a Scaffolded Document-based essay.

Question: What were the causes of economic hardship in pre-famine Ireland?

APPLICATION: A major debate underscoring these documents is the question whether the poverty of pre-famine Ireland is the result of unjust English policies or the moral and or biological inferiority of the Irish? What evidence is provided to support each position? Which position do you agree with? Why?

PROJECT: Statements like the ones claiming the Irish were morally and biologically inferior to the English have also been used to explain the poverty of certain minority groups in the United States in the past and the present. In your opinion, which group or groups, if any, are America's "Irish"? In your opinion, is poverty in these groups the result of their moral and/or biological inferiority or unjust United States policies? Explain your views. Support them with evidence.

**ACTIVITY SHEET A: A Frenchman Looks at Pre-Famine Ireland:  
The 1835 Journal of Alexis de Tocqueville**

Alexis de Tocqueville, a Frenchman, traveled widely in the 1830s and wrote about his experiences. He is best known for his book, Democracy in America (1835), an account of his visit to the United States. The passages here are excerpts from a journal de Tocqueville kept during a journey to Ireland in 1835 (Emmet Larkin, ed., *Alexis de Tocqueville's Journey in Ireland, July-August, 1835*. Washington, DC: Catholic University Press: 1990). In the journal, he included notes on a series of conversations with local officials, both Protestants and Roman Catholics.

De Tocqueville's goal was to try to understand the relationship between England and Ireland and the reasons why Ireland was so poor. His journal is an important historical document for at least three reasons. First, he discusses conditions in Ireland, and the relationship between England and Ireland before the potato blight. Second, as a Frenchman, he is an outsider who brings an independent view to the situation. Third, his notes on conversations with English officials allows them to express their ideas and explain their views on government policy towards Ireland.

**Questions**

- 1- Who was Alexis de Tocqueville?
- 2- Why is the timing of his visit to Ireland significant?
- 3- In your opinion, why is his journal an important historical document?

(EDITED VERSION)

ACTIVITY B- Poverty in Pre-Famine Ireland

**a) Poverty in Pre-Famine Ireland: An English View**

In this passage Alexis de Tocqueville reports on a conversation between Nassau Senior, an economist, and John Revans, the secretary of the Irish Poor Law Commission. The Poor Law Commission was responsible for reporting on the condition of poor people. De Tocqueville later added his own comments to the manuscript. This meeting took place in London before de Tocqueville's 1835 trip to Ireland.

Senior: To what do you principally attribute the poverty of Ireland?

Revans: To a landlord system that profits from the intense competition of laborers [for land] to exact from the farmers an excessive rent. From the moment a farmer begins to make a profit, the landlord raises the price of the lease. The result is that the farmer is afraid to make improvements, for fear of being taxed by his master for a much higher sum than his improvement would be worth to him, and he confines himself strictly to subsisting.

De Tocqueville: This difficulty arises everywhere when the landlord and the farmer treat each other as strangers. But the evil is even greater with the system of large landlords.

Senior: Is the poverty as great as they say?

Revans: The poverty is horrible. The people live only on potatoes, and often they lack them.

Senior: The number of children is very great?

Revans: Yes. It has been observed that the poorer they were the more children they had. They believe they have nothing more to fear. They marry in despair, and try to forget the future.

Senior: What is the state of morality in Ireland?

Revans: This requires a great deal of explanation. There is not a people more gentle than the Irish when the moment of anger has passed. They forget offenses easily. They are very hospitable. There is not an Irishman so poor that he does not share his last potato with someone who is in need. Crimes are very rare among them except theft, which occurs only in order to subsist. They steal things that can be

immediately eaten. There is the good side. Here is the bad: there is not a country where it is more difficult to obtain the truth from a man.

De Tocqueville: This has been at all times the vice of the wretched and slaves.

Senior: Why do the Irish have such a great hatred for the English?

Revans: Above all because we have always sustained the Orangemen (Irish Protestants), whom they consider as their oppressors.

Senior: Do you not believe that this inferiority of the Irish to the English derives from a racial inferiority?

Revans: I do not know. But I am not disposed to believe it. In the districts where property is secure and where poverty reigns less, the peasant shows himself steady and progressive.

Questions

1- What does Mr. Revans blame for poverty in pre-famine Ireland? Why?

2- According to Mr. Revans, why has the population of poor people in rural Ireland grown so large?

3- In your opinion, why are Mr. Senior and Mr. Revans so concerned about the "morality of the Irish"?

4- In your opinion, why do some English consider the Irish an inferior race of people?

5- Do you consider the speakers reliable sources? Explain.

**b) "All the evils of an aristocracy without any of its advantages."**

In this passage, Alexis de Tocqueville reports on a conversation he had with Thomas Frederick Kelly, a Protestant and a lawyer, and James Wilson, an Anglican minister who later became the Protestant Bishop of Cork. From 1831 until 1838, Kelly was a member of the government commission that administered Irish education. In his notes, de Tocqueville does not explain whether a question is being answered by Kelly or Wilson.

Question: Is it true that there are no small landowners in Ireland?

Answer: I do not believe that there is a single one. It often happens that estates are sold, but then they are always sold as a unit. The estate is never divided. The idea of buying a small piece of land never occurs to anyone, still less the idea of selling it. Besides, our civil laws make the transfer of landed estates from one hand to another expensive and difficult.

Question: Is it true that the estates are broken up into very small farms (for rental)?

Answer: Yes, the system of small farms is universal.

Question: What is the cause of this state of things, so contrary to the interests of agriculture and to the well-being of the population?

Answer: There are several causes: The first is the poverty of those who wish to become tenant farmers. To work a large farm, one needs capital (money), and there are no Irish peasants who have that capital. The second is purely political. For a long time, the property qualification required to be an elector (voter) had been fixed very low, and the tenant-farmer elector always voted according to the interests of his landlord. The landlord therefore had a very great political motive to break up his estate into as many small farmers as possible in order to increase the number of electors who were loyal to him.

Question: But the raising of the property qualification to 10 pounds, by diminishing the number of electors, and the hostile spirit established between the tenant farmers and the landlord, has put a stop to the second cause?

Answer: Since the change in the electoral laws and the Emancipation bill the landlords have busied themselves destroying the many small farms and consolidating them into larger ones. With this end in view they have evicted all the small farmers who were late with their rent (as nearly all of them were). This speedy eviction of a large part of the small cultivators has increased poverty recently.

Question: Is it true the Irish landlords squeeze the agricultural population to the extent of almost depriving them of their means of living?

Answer: Yes. We have here all the evils of an aristocracy without any of its advantages. There is no moral tie between the poor and the rich. The difference of political opinion and religious belief, of race, [and in] the standard of living, make them strangers, one could almost say enemies. The rich Irish landlords take from their estates all that they can yield. They profit from the competition created by the poverty, and when they have made immense sums of money, they go to spend them abroad.

Question: Why is the working population all drawn to agriculture, which increases competition in so extreme a way?

Answer: Because there are so very few industrial enterprises, [and] because the capital and the spirit of enterprise are wanting. Capital and the spirit of enterprise are wanting because the wealth and superior civilization of our English neighbors

attract it all. Dublin had a flourishing cotton industry. Manchester has killed that business.

Question: According to what you tell me, although the agricultural population is poor, the land produces a great deal?

Answer: The yields are immense. There is no country where the price of farms is higher. But none of this wealth remains in the hands of the people. The Irishman raises beautiful crops, carries his harvest to the nearest port, puts it on board an English vessel, and returns home to subsist on potatoes. He rears cattle, sends them to London, and never eats meat.

Question: There has been talk lately of demanding the repeal of the Union. Is it still an issue?

Answer: I think that the English will never consent to the repeal of the Union, and that there would be no chance of obtaining it short of force.

Question: But if the matter could be done peacefully would you think it desirable?

Answer: No. When we had an Irish Parliament, England looked on us as some sort of a foreign power, and rival; her jealousy was aroused, and as she had the wealth and the power she made us feel her superiority. When we had an Irish Parliament, the two races that divide this island were always facing one another, party spirit was more active, and the tyranny of the strongest party (the Orangemen) intolerable. The laws of that period are detestable.

Question: Do you believe that England could hope to remain united with Ireland if the Irish Parliament were established?

Answer: No. I am convinced that the result of such a measure would be the separation of Ireland, and all considered, I believe that the union of England and Ireland is necessary for the latter, and will become very profitable for her in time, if the English government, as everything gives promise, continues to take care of this country and sets itself up as a mediator between the two parties.

### **Questions**

1- According to the speakers, how is farm land owned and used in Ireland?

2- Why are landlords trying to change the way the land is being used? In your opinion, will this help the tenant farmers? Explain your answer.

3- Why do so many Irish work as tenant farmers when it means a life of poverty?

4- The speakers do not believe home rule for Ireland is possible or desirable. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.

5- Do you consider the speakers reliable sources? Explain.

**C) Is land reform possible?: A wealthy Roman Catholic speaks**

In this passage, Alexis de Tocqueville speaks with Mr. William Murphy, one of the wealthiest Catholics in Ireland and a friend Daniel O'Connell, the leader of Irish efforts to gain independence from England. They met in Dublin in July, 1835.

De Tocqueville: How many individuals do you estimate are unemployed in Ireland, although they are willing to work?

Murphy: Two million.

De Tocqueville: What do you think can be done?

Murphy: I suppose, but this is only an opinion on my part, if one could settle a portion of the poor population of Ireland on land not yet cultivated but farmable, this would be a great help.

De Tocqueville: Is there much of this uncultivated but farmable land?

Murphy: Yes.

De Tocqueville: But it is owned by somebody?

Murphy: Yes, it forms part of vast properties, which were formerly acquired for nothing by rich individuals. Since they do not make any use of it themselves, parliament could take it off their hands, even if that would entail paying them a certain price at the moment it would be cultivated.

De Tocqueville: But do you believe the poor population of Ireland can be easily displaced and driven at will to the selected places, and when there, they would work profitably?

Murphy: Most of the Irish poor ask only for work, and would work eagerly to pull themselves out of the frightful degree of poverty in which they live. As for displacing the population, nothing would be easier. The place of birth for such wretched creatures has not any value.

De Tocqueville: What you have just said is the most complete proof that one could give of the wretchedness of the population. It is the last known degree of unhappiness that could force an ignorant and moral population to settle abroad. Is the improvidence among the Irish poor as great as it is said to be?

Murphy: It is extreme. They marry at 16 or 18 years. Very often it is necessary to borrow to pay the priest. The more intolerable their poverty becomes, the more this spirit of improvidence seems to increase.

De Tocqueville: Don't you think if the division of landed estates were greater, a larger number of people could live in greater comfort in the same space?

Murphy: It would be extremely difficult to effect this division. The peasant is too poor to buy the land. The landlord would not find any buyers if he wanted to sell in small lots. He can only hope to get a good price by selling it as a whole. Actually, the land is divided up among a small number of landlords; the whole Irish population, so to say, consists of very small [and] very poor tenant farmers, and laborers poorer still. It is impossible, for the present, to devise a way to change this order of things. At present, we prefer to do business with a large landlord rather than with a small one. The latter squeezes his tenants even more.

### **Questions**

- 1- The population of Ireland in 1835 was approximately 5 million men, women, and children. According to Mr. Murphy, what percentage of this population is unemployed?
- 2- What solution does Mr. Murphy propose to this problem?
- 3- Why does Mr. Murphy believe this plan will succeed?
- 4- Mr. Murphy does not think it is a good idea for landlords to sell small plots of land to the farmers? Why? Do you agree or disagree with his ideas? Explain your answer.
- 5- Do you consider the speaker a reliable source? Explain.

### **D) A Roman Catholic Bishop Speaks about Injustice and Resistance**

Monseigneur Edward Nolan was the Roman Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. In his preface to this conversation, De Tocqueville warned the reader that it is "necessary to consider this conversation (as all the others) as indicating the state of feelings more than the naked truth."

Question: Is there great discord between the people and the landlords?

Answer: An extreme discord, and which seems to be increasing rather than decreasing. Since the last election, when the Catholic candidates won, the two great families of which I was speaking introduced a new system of cultivation. They have evicted nearly all their small farmers. One alone evicted 150 families. They have

enlarged their farms and introduced Protestant farmers. It is so in most of the counties. This enlargement of farms is a great evil. It diminishes the number of hands needed on the land, and as the large mass of the population in Ireland has no other opportunity than the land, it causes frightful poverty.

Question: So, in your opinion the poverty is increasing?

Answer: Without a doubt. The population is increasing rapidly and the means of employing it are decreasing. It is a frightful state of society. For my part, I believe the adoption of "poor laws" indispensable (are essential). The natural link that should unite the upper and lower classes is destroyed. The latter have nothing to expect from the former if the law does not come to their aid.

Question: What is, in your opinion, the morality of the poor?

Answer: They have many good qualities mixed with the faults that poverty brings. They are gentle, polite, hospitable. An English population would not endure for a week the state of poverty in which they are obliged to live. But when the occasion of drinking to excess presents itself they do not know how to resist it. Then they become turbulent and often violent and disorderly. Theft is very rare among them. Their morals properly speaking are very pure. Acts of violence are rather frequent, but they all derive from drunkenness or political passions.

Questions: Have you had in this county many (rebel groups like the) "Whiteboys" or "Whitefeet" (who challenge government authority)?

Answer: Many, two years ago, in the surrounding counties. I remember at that time Mr. X (I have forgotten his name), a neighboring priest, found a gang of "Whitefeet." He met with them and he reproached them severely. Their leader, who was a very intelligent man, replied almost word for word as follows (which he repeated to me immediately): The law does nothing for us, we must save ourselves. We are in possession of a little bit of land which is necessary to our and our families' survival. They chase us from it, to whom do you wish we should address ourselves? We ask for work at 8 pence a day, we are refused -- to whom do you want us to address ourselves? Mr. O'Connell and the rich Catholics go to Parliament. We are starving to death just the same.

Two years ago, I was summoned to visit in prison a man who had killed the agent of a rich landlord. This agent wanted to change the method of cultivation and to achieve this he evicted the small farmers and destroyed their houses. One of them had a sick wife and asked for a respite. The agent had the sick woman brought outside the house in the open air and destroyed her house before her eyes. Some days after,

he was murdered by the man who was speaking to me. These crimes are frightful. But what a horrible state of society!

**Question:** Do you think that the Irish Catholic clergy [should] receive an allowance from the English government?

**Answer:** No. The Catholic clergy would then lose their influence over the people. I do not know what it is proper to do in other countries, but I do not doubt that in Ireland the clergy would lose a great deal by the change and that religion itself would suffer by it. There exists between the clergy and people of this country an unbelievable union.

### **Questions**

- 1- According to Monseigneur Nolan, why is poverty increasing in Ireland?
- 2- Monseigneur Nolan believes the wealthy must take responsibility for the poor. He supports a "poor law" that would tax them to provide welfare programs. Do you agree or disagree with his opinion? Explain your answer.
- 3- Rebels groups like the "Whiteboys" were challenging the authority of the English and the legitimacy of rich Catholics. Do you think they were justified to resort to violence? Explain your answer.
- 4- The Irish people, both Catholics and Protestants, were taxed to support Protestant churches. Monseigneur Nolan believes it would be a mistake for Catholic clergy to accept government money. Why? Do you agree or disagree with his position? Explain your answer.
- 5- Do you consider the speaker a reliable source? Explain.

### **E) A Roman Catholic Professor discusses "All the Ills of Ireland"**

Andrew Fitzgerald was a Roman Catholic monk in the Dominican order and a university professor of philosophy and theology. In 1832, he was arrested and imprisoned for refusing to pay a tithe (tax) to support the Protestant Church of Ireland. In the introduction to this section, De Tocqueville commented that Monseigneur Fitzgerald was a man of openly "Catholic and democratic passions."

**Question:** Are the ills suffered by the people very great?

**Answer:** Frightful. You see it yourself. The people are treated as conquered by the landlords, and in fact the latter occupy the estates that have been confiscated from these same Catholics, who are dying of hunger. The upper classes are to blame for all the ills of Ireland.

Question: Is it true that the discord between the upper and lower classes is increasing?

Answer: Yes. As long as the upper classes saw the Catholics as slaves, they did not treat them violently. But since political rights have been granted to the Catholic population, and they wish to exercise them, they persecute them as much as they can and seek to root them out of their lands in order to put Protestant farmers in their place.

Question: Is it true that the people have not the least confidence in justice?

Answer: Not the least. The poor believe themselves in some way outside the law.

Question: The clergy, it is said, are very united with the people.

Answer: Intimately. It ought to be so in all countries. When I was in France ten years ago, and I saw the absurd way in which the French clergy tried to influence the population, I did not doubt that a new revolution was drawing near. The French priests appeared to me far from enlightened and far from wise. Their plantation of mission crosses, among other things, appeared to me a great folly in the interests of religion.

Question: From which class, in general, are your priests taken?

Answer: From the tenant-farming class.

Question: How are ecclesiastics (priests) paid?

Answer: They are remunerated for most of the activities of their ministry. Furthermore, there is a collection made for them twice a year.

Question: Are there many rich Catholics?

Answer: Many have considerable fortunes in personal property. But, all the landed estates are in the hands of Protestants.

Question: Is the dissension (conflict) between Protestants and Catholics so great as to be harmful to social relations?

Answer: The Catholics and Protestants avoid seeing and speaking to each other. The inn where you lodge is kept by Protestants. I am sure that on seeing me enter there to visit you, they were extremely surprised.

Question: You have lived in the times of oppression; was it great?

Answer: Terrible. Would you believe, sir, that in my youth a Catholic could not become a schoolmaster. It was necessary to leave one's children without education or send them to a Protestant school.

Question: Does the population now show an enthusiasm for education?

Answer: A very great enthusiasm. There are parents who beg so that their children can go to school. But this is a recent fact. The rising generation will be infinitely better educated than the present one.

Question: Do the people pay the tithe (church tax)?

Answer: No, they have stopped paying it and they will never pay it now. If the tithe is removed from the tenant farmer and placed on the landlord, and if, as a consequence of this new order of things, the landlord should wish to raise the rent, I am convinced that there will be also resistance among the poor whose attention has been awakened on this point.

### **Questions**

1- Why does Monseigneur Fitzgerald blame the upper class for "all the ills of Ireland"?

2- According to Monseigneur Fitzgerald, why is conflict increasing between the Irish peasantry and the upper class?

3- What evidence does Monseigneur Fitzgerald offer of resistance to English and Protestant authority?

4- Do you agree or disagree with De Tocqueville's statement that Monseigneur Fitzgerald was a man of openly "Catholic and democratic passions"? Explain your views.

5- Do you consider the speaker a reliable source? Explain.

### **F) A Parish Priest Struggles to Feed the Poor**

In this passage De Tocqueville discusses a conversation with Father Hughes, a parish priest, who is trying to provide food for the poor. Father Hughes is very bitter about conditions.

De Tocqueville: We tell the priest that we read his letters in the newspapers, that we could not believe the extent of the evils of which he speaks, and that we came to assure ourselves of the reality. He tells us that they will allow us to leave only when we should be assured that he told the truth and invites us to dinner.

Father Hughes: I have organized a committee, three Catholics, three Protestants, to distribute this money under my supervision. We have bought oatmeal with this money; it arrived here two days ago, [and] I have put it in the shop that you see over there. The problem now is how we shall distribute it. All these people that you see are here in the hope of participating in this distribution.

De Tocqueville: But are all these people in need of help.

Father Hughes: Most of them have not eaten since yesterday. Since this morning they are waiting there fasting (hungry). These men are small farmers paying a rent. The potato harvest partially failed last year, the scarcity since last March has begun to make itself felt. Those who had cows, sheep and pigs have sold them in order to live. All those you see there have nothing more. For we give help only to those who no longer can sell anything to help themselves. For several months these unfortunates whom you see have been on the point of starving. They never eat their fill. Most of them have been forced to dig up the new harvest and feed themselves on potatoes as large as nuts, which make them ill. I want you to know that our flour has finally arrived, but several members of the committee think that it would be better to try to sell a part of it at half price. The flour will be sold at half price and with what we will get, we will buy more. You see that we will not let those starve who absolutely cannot do what I advise.

De Tocqueville: But all these parishes belong to a small number of landlords, the Marquis of Sligo, Sir O'Donnell. These men participate undoubtedly in works of charity during these times of distress.

Father Hughes: These great landlords give nothing, do nothing, to prevent this unfortunate population from dying of hunger. It is the poor who support the poor.

De Tocqueville: But what is the cause of this?

Father Hughes: There are several causes; there is a profound hatred between them and the population. All the great families of this country are Catholics who have become Protestants to keep their property, or Protestants who have seized the property of Catholics. The population regards them as conquerors and detests them. In return they do not feel any sympathy for them. They let farmers die before their eyes or evict them from their miserable dwellings on the slightest pretext.

De Tocqueville: The resignation of the people seems very great?

Father Hughes: You have just seen two hundred unfortunates who are in real danger of starving to death and who can barely keep alive. Well, on the surrounding grasslands the Marquis of Sligo has a thousand sheep; and several of his granaries are full. The population has no idea of seizing these means of subsistence. They would sooner die than touch them.

De Tocqueville: That shows admirable virtue.

Father Hughes: You must not have any illusions. Religion doubtless counts for much; but fear counts for even more. This unfortunate population has been so long a butt

for so cruel a tyranny, it has been so decimated by the gibbet (gallows) and transportation (forced exile), that all energy has finally left them. They submit themselves to death sooner than resist. There is not a population on the continent that in the face of such miseries would not have its Three Days [French Revolution, 1830]. And I confess that if I were in their position, and if I were not restrained by the strongest religious passions, I would indeed have difficulty in not revolting against this tyranny and unresponsive aristocracy.

### **Questions**

- 1- Why is this community facing starvation?
- 2- Why don't the landlords help the poor?
- 3- Why does De Tocqueville say "the resignation of the people seems very great"?
- 4- Father Hughes confesses that if he were a poor farmer he would have "difficulty in not revolting against this tyranny and unresponsive aristocracy." In your opinion, is rebellion justified under these circumstances? Explain your answer.
- 5- Do you consider the speaker a reliable source? Explain.

(ADAPTED VERSION)

ACTIVITY B- Poverty in Pre-Famine Ireland

**a) Poverty in Pre-Famine Ireland: An English View**

In this passage Alexis de Tocqueville reports on a conversation between Nassau Senior, an economist, and John Revans, the secretary of the Irish Poor Law Commission. The Poor Law Commission was responsible for reporting on the condition of poor people. De Tocqueville later added his own comments into the manuscript. This meeting took place in London before de Tocqueville's 1835 trip to Ireland.

Senior: What do you blame for the poverty of Ireland?

Revans: To a landlord system that charges excessive rent to the farmers. The moment a farmer begins to make a profit, the landlord raises the price of the lease. The result is that the farmer is afraid to make improvements, for fear of being taxed by his master for a much higher sum than his improvement would be worth to him. He limits himself to subsisting.

De Tocqueville: This difficulty arises everywhere when the landlord and the farmer treat each other as strangers. But the evil is even greater with the system of large landlords.

Senior: Is the poverty as great as they say?

Revans: The poverty is horrible. The people live only on potatoes, and often they lack them.

Senior: Do the Irish have many children?

Revans: Yes. It has been observed that the poorer they were the more children they had. They believe they have nothing more to fear. They marry in despair, and try to forget the future.

Senior: What is the state of morality in Ireland?

Revans: This requires a great deal of explanation. There is not a people more gentle than the Irish when the moment of anger has passed. They forget offenses easily. They are very hospitable. There is not an Irishman so poor that he does not share his last potato with someone who is in need. Crimes are very rare among them except theft, which occurs only in order to subsist. They steal things that can be

immediately eaten. There is the good side. Here is the bad: there is not a country where it is more difficult to obtain the truth from a man.

De Tocqueville: This has been at all times the vice of the wretched and slaves.

Senior: Why do the Irish have such a great hatred for the English?

Revans: Above all because we have always supported the people they consider their oppressors.

Senior: Do you not believe that this inferiority of the Irish to the English derives from a racial inferiority?

Revans: I do not know. But I tend not to believe it. In the districts where property is secure and where poverty reigns less, the peasant shows himself steady and progressive.

Questions

- 1- What does Mr. Revans blame for poverty in pre-famine Ireland? Why?
- 2- According to Mr. Revans, why has the population of poor people in rural Ireland grown so large?
- 3- In your opinion, why are Mr. Senior and Mr. Revans so concerned about the "morality of the Irish"?
- 4- In your opinion, why do the English consider the Irish an inferior race of people?
- 5- Do you consider the speakers reliable sources? Explain.

**b) "All the evils of an aristocracy without any of its advantages."**

In this passage, Alexis de Tocqueville reports on a conversation he had with Thomas Frederick Kelly, a Protestant and a lawyer, and James Wilson, an Anglican minister who later became the Protestant Bishop of Cork. From 1831 until 1838, Kelly was a member of the government commission that administered Irish education. In his notes, de Tocqueville does not explain whether a question is being answered by Kelly or Wilson.

Question: Is it true that there are no small landowners in Ireland?

Answer: I do not believe that there is a single one. It often happens that estates are sold, but then they are always sold as a unit. The estate is never divided. The idea of buying a small piece of land never occurs to anyone, still less the idea of selling it. Laws make the transfer of landed estates from one hand to another expensive and difficult.

Question: Is it true that the estates are broken up into very small farms (for rental)?

Answer: Yes, the system of small farms is universal.

Question: What is the cause of this state of things?

Answer: There are several causes: The first is the poverty of those who wish to become tenant farmers. To work a large farm, one needs money, and there are no Irish peasants who have enough. The second is purely political. For a long time, the property qualification required to be a voter was very low. The tenant-farmer always voted according to the interests of his landlord. The landlord therefore had a very great political motive to break up his estate into as many small farmers as possible in order to increase the number of voters who were loyal to him. Since the change in the electoral laws the landlords have busied themselves destroying the many small farms and consolidating them into larger ones. They have evicted all the small farmers who were late with their rent. This speedy eviction of a large part of the small tenant farmers has increased poverty.

Question: Is it true the Irish landlords prevent the agricultural population from making a living?

Answer: Yes. We have here all the evils of an aristocracy without any of its advantages. There is no moral tie between the poor and the rich. The difference of political opinion and religious belief, of race, [and in] the standard of living, make them strangers, one could almost say enemies. The rich Irish landlords take from their estates all that they can yield. They profit from the competition created by the poverty, and when they have made immense sums of money, they go to spend them abroad.

Question: Why is the working population all drawn to agriculture, which increases competition in so extreme a way?

Answer: Because there are so very few industrial enterprises, [and] because the capital and the spirit of enterprise are wanting. The wealth and superior civilization of our English neighbors attract it all. Dublin had a flourishing cotton industry. Manchester has killed that business.

Question: According to what you tell me, although the agricultural population is poor, the land produces a great deal?

Answer: The yields are immense. There is no country where the price of farms is higher. But none of this wealth remains in the hands of the people. The Irishman raises beautiful crops, carries his harvest to the nearest port, puts it on board an

English vessel, and returns home to subsist on potatoes. He rears cattle, sends them to London, and never eats meat.

Question: There has been talk lately of demanding the repeal of the Union. Is it still an issue?

Answer: I think that the English will never consent to the repeal of the Union, and that there would be no chance of obtaining it short of force.

Question: But if the matter could be done peacefully would you think it desirable?

Answer: No. When we had an Irish Parliament, England looked on us as some sort of a foreign power, and rival; her jealousy was aroused, and as she had the wealth and the power she made us feel her superiority.

Question: Do you believe that England could hope to remain united with Ireland if the Irish Parliament were established?

Answer: No. I am convinced that the result of such a measure would be the separation of Ireland, and all considered, I believe that the union of England and Ireland is necessary and will become very profitable for Ireland in time, if the English government, as everything gives promise, continues to take care of this country.

### **Questions**

- 1- According to the speakers, how is farm land owned and used in Ireland?
- 2- Why are landlords trying to change the way the land is being used? In your opinion, will this help the tenant farmers? Explain your answer.
- 3- Why do so many Irish work as tenant farmers when it means a life of poverty?
- 4- The speakers do not believe home rule for Ireland is possible or desirable. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.
- 5- Do you consider the speakers reliable sources? Explain.

### **C) Is land reform possible?: A wealthy Roman Catholic speaks**

In this passage, Alexis de Tocqueville speaks with Mr. William Murphy, one of the wealthiest Catholics in Ireland and a friend Daniel O'Connell, the leader of Irish efforts to gain independence from England. They met in Dublin in July, 1835.

De Tocqueville: How many individuals do you estimate are unemployed in Ireland, although they are willing to work?

Murphy: Two million.

De Tocqueville: What do you think can be done?

Murphy: I suppose, but this is only an opinion on my part, if one could settle a portion of the poor population of Ireland on land not yet cultivated but farmable, this would be a great help.

De Tocqueville: Is there much of this uncultivated but farmable land?

Murphy: Yes.

De Tocqueville: But it is owned by somebody?

Murphy: Yes, it forms part of vast properties, which were formerly acquired for nothing by rich individuals. Since they do not make any use of it themselves, parliament could take it off their hands, even if that would entail paying them a certain price at the moment it would be cultivated.

De Tocqueville: But do you believe the poor population of Ireland can be easily displaced and driven at will to the selected places, and when there, they would work profitably?

Murphy: Most of the Irish poor ask only for work, and would work eagerly to pull themselves out of the frightful degree of poverty in which they live. As for displacing the population, nothing would be easier. The place of birth for such poor people has not any value.

De Tocqueville: What you have just said is the most complete proof that one could give of the wretchedness of the population. It is the last known degree of unhappiness that could force an ignorant and moral population to settle abroad. Is short sightedness among the Irish poor as great as it is said to be?

Murphy: It is extreme. They marry at 16 or 18 years. Very often it is necessary to borrow to pay the priest. The worse their poverty becomes, the more this short sightedness seems to increase.

De Tocqueville: Don't you think if the division of landed estates were greater, a larger number of people could live in greater comfort in the same space?

Murphy: It would be extremely difficult to effect this division. The peasant is too poor to buy the land. The landlord would not find any buyers if he wanted to sell in small lots. He can only hope to get a good price by selling it as a whole. Actually, the land is divided up among a small number of landlords; the whole Irish population, so to say, consists of very small [and] very poor tenant farmers, and laborers poorer still. It is impossible, for the present, to devise a way to change this order of things. At present,

we prefer to do business with a large landlord rather than with a small one. The latter squeezes his tenants even more.

### **Questions**

- 1- The population of Ireland in 1835 was approximately 5 million men, women, and children. According to Mr. Murphy, what percentage of this population is unemployed?
- 2- What solution does Mr. Murphy propose to this problem?
- 3- Why does Mr. Murphy believe this plan will succeed?
- 4- Mr. Murphy does not think it is a good idea for landlords to sell small plots of land to the farmers? Why? Do you agree or disagree with his ideas? Explain your answer.
- 5- Do you consider the speaker a reliable source? Explain.

### **D) A Roman Catholic Bishop Speaks about Injustice and Resistance**

Monseigneur Edward Nolan was the Roman Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. In his preface to this conversation, De Tocqueville warned the reader that it is "necessary to consider this conversation (as all the others) as indicating the state of feelings more than the naked truth."

**Question:** Is there great conflict between the people and the landlords?

**Answer:** Extreme conflict which seems to be increasing rather than decreasing. Since the last election, when the Catholic candidates won, two great families introduced a new system of cultivation. They evicted nearly all their small farmers. One alone evicted 150 families. They enlarged their farms and introduced Protestant farmers. It is so in most of the counties. This enlargement of farms is a great evil. It diminishes the number of hands needed on the land, and as the large mass of the population in Ireland has no other opportunity than the land, it causes frightful poverty.

**Question:** In your opinion, is poverty increasing?

**Answer:** Without a doubt. The population is increasing rapidly and the means of employing it are decreasing. It is a frightful state of society. For my part, I believe the adoption of "poor laws" are essential. The natural link that should unite the upper and lower classes is destroyed. The latter have nothing to expect from the former if the law does not come to their aid.

**Question:** In your opinion, what is the morality of the poor?

Answer: They have many good qualities mixed with the faults that poverty brings. They are gentle, polite, hospitable. An English population would not endure for a week the state of poverty in which they are obliged to live. But when the occasion of drinking to excess presents itself they do not know how to resist it. Then they become turbulent and often violent and disorderly. Theft is very rare among them. Their morals properly speaking are very pure. Acts of violence are rather frequent, but they all derive from drunkenness or political passions.

Questions: Have you had many rebel groups like the "Whiteboys" or "Whitefeet" who challenge government authority?

Answer: Many. I remember Mr. X (I have forgotten his name), a neighboring priest, found a gang of "Whitefeet." He met with them and he criticized them sharply. Their leader, who was a very intelligent man, replied: The law does nothing for us, we must save ourselves. We are in possession of a little bit of land which is necessary to our and our families' survival. They chase us from it, to whom do you wish we should address ourselves? We ask for work at 8 pence a day, we are refused -- to whom do you want us to address ourselves? Rich Catholics go to Parliament. We are starving to death just the same.

Two years ago, I was summoned to visit in prison a man who had killed the agent of a rich landlord. This agent evicted the small farmers and destroyed their houses. One of them had a sick wife and asked for another chance. The agent had the sick woman brought outside the house in the open air and destroyed her house before her eyes. Some days after, he was murdered by the man who was speaking to me. These crimes are frightful. But what a horrible state of society!

Question: Do you think that Irish Catholic priests should receive payment from the English government?

Answer: No. The Catholic clergy would then lose their influence over the people. I do not know what it is proper to do in other countries, but I do not doubt that in Ireland the clergy would lose a great deal by the change and that religion itself would suffer by it. There exists between the clergy and people of this country an unbelievable union.

### **Questions**

- 1- According to Monseigneur Nolan, why is poverty increasing in Ireland?
- 2- Monseigneur Nolan believes the wealthy must take responsibility for the poor. He supports a "poor law" that would tax them to provide welfare programs. Do you agree or disagree with his opinion? Explain your answer.

3- Rebels groups like the "Whiteboys" were challenging the authority of the English and the legitimacy of rich Catholics. Do you think they were justified to resort to violence? Explain your answer.

4- The Irish people, both Catholics and Protestants, were taxed to support Protestant churches. Monseigneur Nolan believes it would be a mistake for Catholic clergy to accept government money. Why? Do you agree or disagree with his position? Explain your answer.

5- Do you consider the speaker a reliable source? Explain.

**E) A Roman Catholic Professor discusses "All the Ills of Ireland"**

Andrew Fitzgerald was a Roman Catholic monk in the Dominican order and a university professor of philosophy and theology. In 1832, he was arrested and imprisoned for refusing to pay a tithe (tax) to support the Protestant Church of Ireland. In the introduction to this section, De Tocqueville commented that Monseigneur Fitzgerald was a man of openly "Catholic and democratic passions."

Question: Are the ills suffered by the people very great?

Answer: Frightful. You see it yourself. The people are treated as conquered by the landlords, and in fact the latter occupy the estates that have been confiscated from these same Catholics, who are dying of hunger. The upper classes are to blame for all the ills of Ireland.

Question: Is it true that the conflict between the upper and lower classes is increasing?

Answer: Yes. As long as the upper classes saw the Catholics as slaves, they did not treat them violently. But since political rights have been granted to the Catholic population, and they wish to exercise them, they persecute them as much as they can and seek to root them out of their lands in order to put Protestant farmers in their place.

Question: Is it true that the people have not the least confidence in justice?

Answer: Not the least. The poor believe themselves in some way outside the law.

Question: Is the Catholic clergy united with the people?

Answer: Very closely.

Question: From which class, in general, are your priests taken?

Answer: From the tenant-farming class.

Question: How are priests paid?

Answer: They are remunerated for most of the activities of their ministry. There is a collection made for them twice a year.

Question: Are there many rich Catholics?

Answer: Many have considerable fortunes in personal property. But, all the landed estates are in the hands of Protestants.

Question: Is the conflict between Protestants and Catholics so great as to be harmful to social relations?

Answer: The Catholics and Protestants avoid seeing and speaking to each other. The inn where you lodge is kept by Protestants. I am sure that on seeing me enter there to visit you, they were extremely surprised.

Question: You have lived in the times of oppression; was it great?

Answer: Terrible. Would you believe, sir, that in my youth a Catholic could not become a schoolmaster. It was necessary to leave one's children without education or send them to a Protestant school.

Question: Does the population now show an enthusiasm for education?

Answer: A very great enthusiasm. There are parents who beg so that their children can go to school. But this is a recent fact. The rising generation will be infinitely better educated than the present one.

Question: Do the people pay the church tax?

Answer: No, they have stopped paying it and they will never pay it now. If the church tax is removed from the tenant farmer and placed on the landlord, and if, as a consequence of this new order of things, the landlord should wish to raise the rent, I am convinced that there will be also resistance among the poor whose attention has been awakened on this point.

### **Questions**

1- Why does Monseigneur Fitzgerald blame the upper class for "all the ills of Ireland"?

2- According to Monseigneur Fitzgerald, why is conflict increasing between the Irish peasantry and the upper class?

3- What evidence does Monseigneur Fitzgerald offer of resistance to English and Protestant authority?

4- Do you agree or disagree with De Tocqueville's statement that Monseigneur Fitzgerald was a man of openly "Catholic and democratic passions"? Explain your views.

5- Do you consider the speaker a reliable source? Explain.

### **F) A Parish Priest Struggles to Feed the Poor**

In this passage De Tocqueville discusses a conversation with Father Hughes, a parish priest, who is trying to provide food for the poor. Father Hughes is very bitter about conditions.

De Tocqueville: We tell the priest that we read his letters in the newspapers, that we could not believe the extent of the evils of which he speaks, and that we came to assure ourselves of the reality. He tells us that they will allow us to leave only when we should be assured that he told the truth and invites us to dinner.

Father Hughes: I have organized a committee, three Catholics, three Protestants, to distribute this money under my supervision. We have bought oatmeal with this money; it arrived here two days ago. The problem is how we shall distribute it. All these people you see are here in the hope of participating in this distribution.

De Tocqueville: But are all these people in need of help.

Father Hughes: Most of them have not eaten since yesterday. These men are small farmers paying a rent. The potato harvest partially failed last year, the scarcity since last March has begun to make itself felt. Those who had cows, sheep and pigs have sold them in order to live. All those you see there have nothing more. For we give help only to those who no longer can sell anything to help themselves. For several months these unfortunates whom you see have been on the point of starving. They never eat their fill. Most of them have been forced to dig up the new harvest and feed themselves on potatoes as large as nuts, which make them ill. I want you to know that our flour has finally arrived, but several members of the committee think that it would be better to try to sell a part of it at half price. The flour will be sold at half price and with what we get, we will buy more. You see that we will not let those starve who absolutely cannot do what I advise.

De Tocqueville: But all these parishes belong to a small number of landlords, the Marquis of Sligo, Sir O'Donnell. These men participate undoubtedly in works of charity during these times of distress.

Father Hughes: These great landlords give nothing, do nothing, to prevent this unfortunate population from dying of hunger. It is the poor who support the poor.

De Tocqueville: But what is the cause of this?

Father Hughes: There are several causes; there is a profound hatred between them and the population. All the great families of this country are Catholics who have

become Protestants to keep their property, or Protestants who have seized the property of Catholics. The population regards them as conquerors and detests them. In return they do not feel any sympathy for them. They let farmers die before their eyes or evict them from their miserable dwellings on the slightest pretext.

De Tocqueville: The resignation of the people seems very great?

Father Hughes: You have just seen two hundred unfortunates who are in real danger of starving to death and who can barely keep alive. Well, on the surrounding grasslands the Marquis of Sligo has a thousand sheep; and several of his granaries are full. The population has no idea of seizing these means of subsistence. They would sooner die than touch them.

De Tocqueville: That shows admirable virtue.

Father Hughes: You must not have any illusions. Religion doubtless counts for much; but fear counts for even more. This unfortunate population has been so long a butt for so cruel a tyranny, it has been so decimated by the gallows and forced exile, that all energy has finally left them. They submit themselves to death sooner than resist. There is not a population on the continent that in the face of such miseries would not revolt. I confess that if I were in their position, and if I were not restrained by the strongest religious passions, I would indeed have difficulty not revolting against this tyranny and unresponsive aristocracy.

### **Questions**

- 1- Why is this community facing starvation?
- 2- Why don't the landlords help the poor?
- 3- Why does De Tocqueville say "the resignation of the people seems very great"?
- 4- Father Hughes confesses that if he were a poor farmer he would have "difficulty in not revolting against this tyranny and unresponsive aristocracy." In your opinion, is rebellion justified under these circumstances? Explain your answer.
- 5- Do you consider the speaker a reliable source? Explain.

(REWRITTEN VERSION)

ACTIVITY B- Poverty in Pre-Famine Ireland

**a) John Revans, Secretary of the Irish Poor Law Commission**

John Revans, an Englishman, was the Secretary of the Irish Poor Law Commission. The commission was responsible for reporting on the condition of poor people in Ireland. Mr. Revans spoke with Alexis de Tocqueville in London before de Tocqueville's 1835 trip to Ireland.

Poverty in Ireland is caused by the landlord system. Landlords charge tenant farmers very high rent. If a tenant farmer makes a profit or tries to improve his farm, the landlord raises the rent even more. Tenant farmers have no reason to work harder because they cannot improve their condition.

The poverty in Ireland is horrible. The people live only on potatoes and often they lack them. The poorer people are, the more children they have. They believe they have nothing more to fear. They get married and try to forget the future. I do not think the Irish are an inferior race of people. In the parts of Ireland where there is less poverty, the Irish people are steady and hard working.

There is not a people more gentle than the Irish. They forget offenses easily. They are very hospitable. There is not an Irishman so poor that he does not share his last potato with someone who is in need. Crimes are very rare among them except theft, which occurs only in order to survive. The Irish steal things that can be immediately eaten. The Irish hate the English because England supports the people they consider their oppressors.

Questions

- 1- Who does John Revans blame for poverty in pre-famine Ireland? Why?
- 2- According to Mr. Revans, how does poverty affect the people of Ireland?
- 3- How does Mr. Revans describe the character of the Irish people?
- 4- Do you consider the speaker a reliable source? Explain.

### **b) Two Irish Protestants discuss Conditions in Ireland**

Alexis de Tocqueville spoke with Thomas Frederick Kelly and James Wilson together. In his book, he did not explain whether Mr. Kelly or Mr. Wilson was talking. Mr. Kelly was a lawyer, a Protestant, and a member of the government commission that ran Irish education. Mr. Wilson was a minister who later became the Protestant Bishop of Cork.

The landlords destroy the small farms and combine them into larger ones. They have evicted all the small farmers who were late with their rent. The speedy eviction of a large part of the small tenant farmers has increased poverty. To work a large farm, one needs money, and there are no Irish peasants who have enough.

There is no country where the price of farms is higher. But none of this wealth remains in the hands of the people. The Irishman raises beautiful crops, carries his harvest to the nearest port, puts it on board an English vessel, and returns home to subsist on potatoes. He raises cattle, sends them to London, and never eats meat.

There are no ties between the poor and the rich. Differences of political opinion and religious belief, of race, and in standard of living, make them strangers and enemies. The rich Irish landlords take from their estates all the wealth that they can yield. They profit from the competition created by poverty. They make large sums of money but do not spend it in Ireland.

The working population is drawn to agriculture because there are so few industrial companies. The wealth of our English neighbors attract it all. Dublin had a flourishing cotton industry once. Manchester has killed that business.

### **Questions**

- 1- How is farm land owned and used in Ireland?
- 2- Why do so many Irish work as tenant farmers when it means a life of poverty?
- 3- According to the speakers, why are the rich and poor in Ireland so divided?
- 4- Do you consider the speakers reliable sources? Explain.

### **C) William Murphy: A Wealthy Catholic**

Alexis de Tocqueville spoke with William Murphy, one of the wealthiest Catholics in Ireland. Mr. Murphy was a friend Daniel O'Connell, the leader of Irish efforts to gain independence from England. De Tocqueville and Mr. Murphy met in Dublin in July, 1835.

The whole Irish population consists of very small and very poor tenant farmers and laborers who are even poorer. There are two million unemployed people in Ireland. The best way to help the poor population of Ireland is to move them to empty land so they can become farmers.

There is enough empty land, but it is owned by rich individuals. These people hardly use the land. Parliament could take it off their hands, even if that would mean paying them. Irish peasants cannot buy the land themselves. The peasant is too poor to buy the land. A landlord could not find buyers even if he wanted to sell in small enough lots.

Most of the Irish poor ask only for work. They would work eagerly to pull themselves out of the frightful poverty in which they live. Nothing would be easier for them than moving. The place of birth for such poor people has not any value.

Conditions now are horrible. Men marry at 16 or 18 years of age. Very often they have to borrow money to pay the priest. The worse their poverty becomes, the more their short sightedness seems to increase.

#### **Questions**

- 1- According to Mr. Murphy, what is the main problem in Ireland?
- 2- What solution does Mr. Murphy propose to this problem?
- 3- Why does Mr. Murphy believe this plan will succeed?
- 4- Do you consider the speaker a reliable source? Explain.

### **D) A Catholic Bishop Speaks about Injustice and Resistance**

Monseigneur Edward Nolan was a Roman Catholic Bishop. De Tocqueville warned readers that it is "necessary to consider this conversation (as all the others) as indicating the state of feelings more than the naked truth."

Conflict between the landlords and the tenants seems to be increasing. Recently, two wealthy families evicted nearly all their small farmers. One landlord evicted 150 families. They made the farms larger and brought in Protestant farmers to take over. The enlargement of farms is a great evil. It reduces the number of people needed on the land and causes frightful poverty. The population is increasing rapidly and the means of employing it are decreasing. It is a frightful state of society.

Some people have started to rebel. A neighboring priest spoke with the leader of a gang. He was a very intelligent man. He told the priest that the law does nothing for us, we must save ourselves. We are in possession of a little bit of land which is necessary to our and our families' survival. They chase us from it. The man wanted the priest to tell him whom he should speak to to change this unfairness. He charged that when rich Catholics go to Parliament, they starve to death just the same.

Two years ago, I visited a man in prison who had killed the agent of a rich landlord. This agent evicted small farmers and destroyed their houses. One of them had a sick wife and asked for another chance to pay his rent. The agent had the sick woman brought outside the house in the open air and destroyed her house before her eyes. Some days after, he was murdered by the man who was speaking to me. These crimes are frightful. But what a horrible state of society!

### **Questions**

- 1- According to Monseigneur Nolan, why is conflict increasing in Ireland?
- 2- Rebels groups were challenging people in power. Do you think they were right to turn to violence? Explain.
- 3- Do you think the tenant farmer who killed the land agent should be punished? Explain.
- 4- Do you consider the speaker a reliable source? Explain.

**E) Andrew Fitzgerald, Catholic Monk and University Professor**

Andrew Fitzgerald was a Roman Catholic monk in the Dominican order and a university professor of philosophy and theology. In 1832, he was arrested and sent to prison for refusing to pay a taxes to support the Protestant Church of Ireland. In the introduction to this section, De Tocqueville commented that Monseigneur Fitzgerald was a man of openly "Catholic and democratic passions."

The Catholics and Protestants in Ireland avoid seeing and speaking to each other. The inn where you lodge is kept by Protestants. I am sure that on seeing me visit you, they were surprised.

The Irish people are treated as conquered by the landlords. The lands were confiscated from these same Catholics, who are dying of hunger. The upper classes are to blame for all the ills of Ireland. The Catholic clergy is united with the people. The priests are from the tenant-farming class.

The oppression of Catholics is terrible. In my youth, a Catholic could not become a schoolmaster. It was necessary to leave one's children without education or send them to a Protestant school. There are parents who beg so that their children can go to school. But this is a recent fact. The next generation will be much better educated than the present one.

**Questions**

- 1- Who does Monseigneur Fitzgerald blame for the ills of Ireland?
- 2- According to Monseigneur Fitzgerald, who is the ally of the tenant farmer?
- 3- Do you agree or disagree with De Tocqueville's statement that Monseigneur Fitzgerald was a man of openly "Catholic and democratic passions"? Explain your views.
- 4- Do you consider the speaker a reliable source? Explain.

**F) Father Hughes, A Parish Priest who Struggles to Feed the Poor**

De Tocqueville spoke with Father Hughes, a Catholic parish priest. Father Hughes was trying to provide food for the poor. He told de Tocqueville that he was very bitter about conditions in Ireland.

A committee of Catholics and Protestants bought flour to help the poor. The problem now is how we shall distribute it. Several members of my committee think that it would be better to sell a part of the flour at half price so we can buy more. The large landlords give nothing, do nothing, to prevent this unfortunate population from dying of hunger. It is the poor who support the poor.

The potato harvest partially failed last year. Those who had cows, sheep and pigs sold them in order to live. Most of them have been forced to dig up the new harvest and feed themselves on potatoes as small as nuts. We help only those who no longer can sell anything to help themselves. These people have nothing left.

There is a deep hatred between the wealthy landlords and the rest of the population. The wealthy families of this country are either Catholics who become Protestants to keep their property, or Protestants who seized the property of Catholics. The population thinks of them as conquerors and detests them. In return they do not feel any sympathy for the Irish people. They let tenant farmers die before their eyes or evict them from their dwellings on the slightest excuse.

You have just seen two hundred unfortunates who are in danger of starving to death. On the surrounding grasslands the landlord has a thousand sheep and several of his granaries are full. The population has no idea of seizing this food. It has been so defeated by cruel tyranny, the gallows and forced exile, that all energy has finally left them. They submit themselves to death sooner than resist. I confess that if I were in their position, I would have difficulty not revolting against this tyranny.

Questions

- 1- Why is this community facing starvation?
- 2- What does the relief committee plan to do with the flour? Why?
- 3- Why don't the landlords help the poor?
- 4- Do you consider the speaker a reliable source? Explain.