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# James Henthorn Todd

by G. O. Simms\*

The Senior Fellow, of whom we treat this Trinity Monday, died on 28 June 1869. We pay our tribute one hundred years later to a reforming and devoted College Librarian, who became something of a national figure for his fostering of the language and literature of this country. A co-founder of St Columba's College, Rathfarnham, he served the cause of learning and religion in controversial days with thrust and ability. A pioneer in the historical study of St Patrick: Dr H. J. Lawlor described him as 'a household word in ecclesiastical history'; Cotton, the compiler of the *Fasti Ecclesiae Hiberniae*, termed him 'the *sine quo non* of every literary enterprise in Dublin'.<sup>1</sup>

If 'the true life of man is in his letters',<sup>2</sup> we have evidence and to spare in the College Library, and at the Royal Irish Academy, as well as in the National Library of Ireland, and in the records of St Columba's College, of the character and personality of this erudite scholar and devoted priest of the Established Church, traces of whose lively and precise intellect are to be found in the nineteenth century's world of learning.

## EARLY LIFE

He was born on 23 April 1805, the eldest of the fifteen children of Charles Hawkes Todd, Professor of Anatomy and Surgery in the Royal College of Surgeons. Their home was at 5 Kildare Street, on the present site of the Kildare Street Club. James was also called Henthorn, after a President of the College of Surgeons, James Henthorn, who had married Elizabeth Stanley. The latter was an aunt of James Todd's mother, Elizabeth Bentley, daughter of Colonel Bentley of the East India Company's service.<sup>3</sup> While the Todds were of Scottish origin, there was Goldsmith blood in James Henthorn Todd's veins, from his mother's side.

\* The Trinity Monday Discourse, delivered 2 June 1969.

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James was educated at the Luxembourg School, whose principal was Dr Feinaigle. This school, housed in the impressive building, Aldborough House, near Amiens Street, now occupied by the Post Office authorities, was distinguished for its teaching of languages, including Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, German and Italian. The 'mnemonics and methodics' of the principal had acquired a special reputation. James entered Trinity College in November 1820, at the age of fifteen and a half, with, as his tutor, Dr Hare. His course might be described as competent. It included prize-winning but not a Scholarship; and, with frequent judgments of 'valde bene in omnibus',<sup>4</sup> it culminated in an honors degree, with distinction—remarkably enough—in science in 1824. James Todd appeared sixth in an honors list of eleven. Two, who gained Fellowship from this year, were placed first and third—J. N. Toleken and S. G. Smith. Two others became bishops—Hamilton Verschoyle and John Gregg.

His father died on 19 March 1826, leaving James with an eldest son's responsibility for his widowed mother and a family that consisted of nine sons and six daughters. All through his life James was closely devoted to this family. He himself never married, yet in the care and affection which shine through the correspondence of a life-time, he showed himself to be truly a family man. His father had been deeply respected by the students in the College of Surgeons; his memorial in St Patrick's Cathedral, erected by them, records 'their high sense of his useful life' and 'their gratitude for his unwearied attention to their interests'. These words, carved on an elaborate monument, depicting in marble the Good Samaritan at his healing work, might well be applied to the future Tutor and Fellow, who at this early age was called upon to play the role of father and guardian to the orphaned family. All nine sons appear in Burtchaell and Sadleir's *Alumni Dublinenses*: four qualified in medicine, three took holy orders, two were lawyers; James and his brother Robert Bentley Todd figure in the *Dictionary of national biography*.

## GRINDING AND JOURNALISM

In the seven lean and anxious years between graduation and Fellowship, James Todd toiled as a grinder in College. He began to display the indefatigable industry that characterised all that commanded his attention throughout his life. The family motto, 'Faire sans dire', appears on his father's memorial: action *and* speech, however, were both evident in the son's achievements. From his

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rooms, no. 35 in the Inner Square, he was in close touch with college life and knew the students intimately. The experience of these years helped him not a little when later he became a tutor, greatly beloved and known to be 'in everything'.<sup>5</sup> He also launched an ecclesiastical journal entitled *The Christian examiner*, and sought to raise the illustrate the background of contemporary issues. He chose a time, he said, in the 1820's, 'when the Protestant controversy is stilled', little realising that he himself was soon to trouble the waters once standard of religious controversy by publishing historical articles to more. His team of writers was far from being narrowly ecclesiastical. William Rowan Hamilton, for example, the mathematician and astronomer, was one of his contributors. Topical subjects were chosen for comment, and a charitable and positive approach was encouraged. 'Mr Editor', wrote a friend to Todd, 'let your publication be eminently Irish; England wants information about us.' So the editor delved into the past and popularised our country's history. This, too, marked the beginning of his interest in things Celtic. A tribute was paid to his contribution in this field by Cosslett Quin,<sup>6</sup> until recently Professor of Biblical Greek in this university, in the series of Thomas Davis Lectures delivered in 1962. Todd also used the *Christian examiner* to prod the Board of Trinity College into improving the condition of the Library; editorially, he advocated the publication of Ussher's works; 'his folios moulder on the shelves', he wrote. Already Todd was sowing the seeds of future harvests.

#### JUNIOR FELLOW

Fellowship came in 1831, and in the same year his ordination. At once he set to work on the first college *Calendar*, which appeared in 1833. It contained an extensive and detailed history of the University. Todd owed much to the researches of Dr 'Jacky' Barrett, who collected most of the material. The reviewers praised this summary of college history for its fullness and accuracy. 'This is the first attempt of the kind made for the silent sister, as Trinity College, Dublin, is sometimes termed', wrote one, 'but unlike most first attempts it is as perfect in its plan, arrangements and details as though it had been of many years' standing. The information is admirably digested and as a standard book of reference it possesses great value.' Stubbs drew on it extensively in preparing his history of the University. Subsequent historians of the College have been likewise indebted to this volume as an important source-book. Page 83 contains a sentence

that still survives in the current college *Calendar* under the heading 'Foundation Scholarships': 'Ego A.B. .... filius natus in comitatu N., sub ferula ..... educatus, discipulatum a te humillime peto.' The 1833 *Calendar*, however, adds the reason why this formal petition is made: the statutes direct 'a preference to be given, *caeteris paribus*, to those who were educated in Dublin, or born in those counties where the College has property'.

In the same year, 1833, Todd began to write for the *British magazine*. Its editor, Hugh James Rose, the Cambridge scholar, and one of the first inspirers of the Oxford Movement, became his close friend. Todd's medical brother later attended Rose in the serious illness that caused his early death. Rose wrote in 1836 to Todd, with the information that a Dublin bookseller had passed on, that 'the *British magazine* bears a bad character in Ireland, as being too High Church for anybody but Dr Elrington, Mr Todd and one or two men'. John Henry Newman was also a contributor, and letters survive to reveal Todd's intimate friendship with the future cardinal.

#### CONTROVERSY

Todd felt most unhappy at the new educational policy issued in 1831 by the Board of Commissioners. He had not approved even of the Kildare Place Society's principle of presenting the scriptures in schools 'without note or comment'. The new National School system, which separated secular from religious instruction, and introduced what virtually became schooling on denominational lines, also displeased him. Todd clashed on the subject with his own Archbishop Whately of Dublin, one of the few from the Established Church to support the Commissioners in their policy. Todd, who thought it impossible to effect the separation of the secular and the religious, apparently went too far for his editor, with the counter-arguments he expressed in contributions to the *British magazine*. Rose wrote to him tactfully: 'I have been in a hundred minds about printing your truly able attack on the Archbishop of Dublin, but the magazine has hitherto abstained from assaulting dignities, not as thinking them infallible or impeccable, certainly . . . but perhaps your paper might be modified. . . . I wish you would give me something on the present Tithe Bill and its consequences. We are sadly in the dark. . . .'

Todd's views on the question of religious education were somewhat notoriously advanced in another way. He composed a fictitious letter purporting to be from Pope Gregory XVI to his archbishops and

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bishops of Ireland. The so-called Papal Letter praised the Commissioners' policy. Todd hoped that the Established Church would consequently blame it. The literary device, as Cosslett Quin has remarked, was a *jeu d'esprit* that would have been after the heart of Ronald Knox. A similar letter, shortly before this, claiming to be from the Pope, had been addressed to some members of Oxford University. Ireland, however, was, generally speaking, not amused. The anonymity was uncovered; Todd admitted authorship and was at pains to explain that the letter was quite an acceptable and respectable literary device. Defoe, after all, had invented Robinson Crusoe, and Swift had had his Gulliver. Nevertheless Todd was pilloried for deceit. The *Christian observer*, whose ecclesiastical orientation was quite different from that of the *British magazine*, led the attack. Todd wrote to its editor, Mr Wilks,<sup>8</sup> in 1836: 'Strictly speaking every fiction and every parable is logically untrue, but it does not follow that every fiction is a falsehood.' Lord John Russell<sup>9</sup> also gave it publicity, and after he saw the point of the satire, continued to consider it most unfortunate. A letter to Todd from the Primate, Lord John George Beresford, must have brought him some comfort. The Primate thought that Todd had written 'with good taste and judgment'. This was after Todd's second edition of the Papal Letter had been issued with a signed preface and an explanation of his basically honourable purpose. The Primate held that the explanation was sufficient 'to vindicate your character from the charge that was made against it. I think few persons have a better right than yourself to complain of the mistakes of your friends and the malice of your enemies'.<sup>10</sup> We have no evidence that Todd ever ventured again upon such a literary device to make his point, yet he never lost his sense of humour, nor did he refrain from sardonic wit, relentless punning, and devastating criticism of opinions and issues in the life around him. To the end of his days he was a warrior in the academic and ecclesiastical field, and his head remained unbowed.

#### FRIENDSHIP WITH NEWMAN

John Henry Newman became editor of a monthly called *The British critic* in 1838 and invited Todd to contribute. A letter survives in the Trinity College Library collection of Todd papers. It reveals Todd's middle position as a strong churchman, who, 'neither for Pope nor for Puritan', believed in the credentials of his communion. Newman is thanking Todd for a sermon sent to him, and writes:

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My dear Todd,

In the course of a few months I shall have the management of the *British critic*, and I am looking for writers. We wish of course that the review would speak with one voice, and not write against itself in separate articles. Now, as far as I know, I really do not think you would disapprove of anything we are likely to say. The point on which, judging at a distance, disapproval on your part is most likely, was the Revolution question, but from what I have read or heard you say, I think you are not bigotted to King William. We are as strongly opposed to the Romanists as an existing system in these countries as you can be; though we do not like abusing them. I am not aware that you are specially attached to Luther either, as we are not. We do not praise Cranmer or Jewell; but we keep silence; and I think ever should . . . we hold it a Christian duty to obey our masters as the Jews obeyed Nebuchadnezzar.

I think if we disagree on any point, perhaps it is (you see, I am doing my very best to find some ground for quarrel) about the Church Establishment. Certainly some of us have gone lengths in this subject.

Yours most sincerely, John H. Newman.<sup>11</sup>

Strangely enough, Todd's Donnellan lectures 'for the encouragement of religion, learning and good manners',<sup>12</sup> dealt with a subject that had troubled Newman from his early days. As Todd examined in detail the prophecies relating to Anti-Christ in the writings of Daniel and St Paul, and later in the Apocalypse of St John, he pointed to the folly of the interpretation emerging from the teaching of John Newton in the previous century, that the Pope was this Anti-Christ; thus he prepared the way for a sounder Biblical criticism that took account of the dating, history and environment of the books in question. Newman's early conviction about the theory identifying the Pope with Anti-Christ may even have lingered to this period; he wrote to his friend Bowden of Todd's lectures in 1840 that they were 'bold and seasonable';<sup>13</sup> he had been waiting impatiently for their publication. Todd soon tired of this particular field of scholarship, theological polemics; and found himself involved in a running correspondence with his opponents. Todd's approach had been scholarly, his findings trenchantly presented. His critics too often became abusive and on one occasion rudely dismissed Todd as a 'theologaster'. The Donnellan lectures, published in a twofold series, 1839-41 and 1843-47, grew to massive proportions. 'The ghost of Mrs Anne Donnellan is haunting me', cried Todd from one of his European tours, knowing that he was behindhand with the proofs.<sup>14</sup> Gladly he exchanged 'Donnellanizing' for his beloved Irish manuscripts. The only other theological work from his pen was his *In search of infallibility*,



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published in 1848, displaying 'mild temper and moderate spirit'.<sup>15</sup> In 1840 he launched the *Irish ecclesiastical journal*, but after editing the first ten numbers, he committed it to the care of his brother-in-law, the Reverend J. C. Crosthwaite, and turned his concentrated attention to the College Library.

#### THE LIBRARY

From the year 1834 until his death, the Library was for Todd the scene of his administrative abilities and minute research, with but a brief break between 1850 and 1852 when he held the post of Senior Lecturer. Todd clearly revelled in the opportunity given to him when appointed Assistant Librarian soon after the Copyright Act (6 and 7 William IV, chapter 110) was amended, and the number of receiving libraries had been reduced. Todd was concerned to see that Trinity College did not ignore the privilege granted to it. Only a small proportion of books to which the Library was entitled had been received until that date. Todd therefore urged the Board to appoint permanent library clerks, for the sake of continuity in administration, in the place of those who were only set to serve on a yearly basis. One of these clerks was the poet James Clarence Mangan, whom Todd befriended. A sustained application for books resulted in the trebling of accessions to the Library during the ensuing fifteen years. The story of Todd's travels to auction rooms for purchases, and to libraries in England and throughout Europe with a view to copying manuscripts of Irish interest, is a long and fascinating one. The *Book of Dimma*, one of our Gospel Books on display in the Library, was purchased in 1836 for £150; Keating's *History of Ireland* in Irish for four guineas. John O'Donovan was commissioned to edit the Irish texts and Eugene O'Curry to copy manuscripts with the accuracy and artistry which made him famous as a calligraphist. Todd states that in 1836 he was enabled by the Board to employ O'Donovan to catalogue the Irish manuscripts, and commented that he completed a very minute and accurate list. O'Donovan writes with enthusiasm to Todd: 'Get more work out of me; I haven't idled a second. I sat writing sixteen hours this day.'<sup>16</sup> Todd himself devoted much attention to the manuscripts, and made what he calls a 'tolerably complete' catalogue of the Wycliffe and Waldensian manuscripts and published commentaries in this field. He also began a catalogue of biblical manuscripts, but was forced to abandon it for want of time. His time for scholarly work must indeed have been cut short, since he was mainly occupied



in establishing a system whereby the permanent clerks of the Library made their search for books to which the Library was entitled under copyright. Advertisements were examined, returns from the Company of Stationers were checked, books that could not be obtained in the ordinary way were written for and demanded. These requests for books had to be made within the year, and difficulties were often experienced of ascertaining the exact date when a book was published, and who was the real publisher. The British Museum was in a different situation from the other libraries, since the onus lay on the publisher to send each book there, whereas the other libraries were obliged to make application. It was a proud boast of Dr Todd when he declared: 'Everything known to be published is claimed.' News of his travels on the Continent may be gleaned from references in published articles, and also in personal letters. Todd went to the top in his zeal. The story of his personal encounter with the King of the Belgians, with a request to borrow and transcribe the Irish manuscripts from the Brussels Library, is one example of his fearlessness and tenacity. We find him also writing to W. E. Gladstone in defence of the Irish church,<sup>17</sup> to Prince Albert, seeking support for his Irish Archaeological Society. Snatches from his correspondence illustrate the trend: he writes to Lord Adare in 1845: 'I have a great plan about getting the King of Denmark to give us money to publish all the Irish documents we have about the Danes.' And again, in a letter to Dean Butler: 'I had an introduction, through Miss Edgeworth, to the Belgian Ambassador.'<sup>18</sup> His visits to Rennes, St Gall, and Rome, on the track of manuscripts, in order to collate them and obtain a full description of their contents, are recounted in his lucidly written letters, displaying his gifts of observation and detailed accuracy.

#### BOOK OF KELLS

His descriptive catalogue of some manuscripts in the Trinity College Library drew attention to the *Book of Kells* in a new way. 'The *Book of Kells* had lived in obscurity and had sometimes been confounded with the *Book of Durrow*.' 'We knew it was in Ussher's hands from certain memoranda he has written in it. . . . I once thought that this was the book that Giraldus Cambrensis saw in Kildare . . . it was seized by Cromwell with the rest of the Archbishop's library . . . it remained in a loose and insecure cover until 1821, when it was unfortunately given to be bound. I say "unfortunately"', he continues, 'because this event must be regarded as the

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last injury it has sustained. The binder ignorantly cut off about half an inch off the margin; thereby injuring several of the illuminations and cutting off some modern entries which are connected with the history of the Book.<sup>19</sup> Thus as a result of Todd's prompting the *Book of Kells* has become the most noticed book in the Library's collection.

#### MANY MANUSCRIPTS

Through Todd's initiative also the Board of Trinity College commissioned Dr Elrington to publish Ussher's complete works in seventeen volumes, for which they voted £6,000. Elrington died before the project was completed. Todd assumed the joint editorship with William Reeves to finish the work. In 1840 Todd founded the Irish Archaeological and Celtic Society and so began a series of studies in Irish texts. The year 1843 finds him on a European tour. He lists the names of the towns on his itinerary with obvious relish: Aix, Cologne, Paderborn, Leipzig, Dresden, Karlsbad, Würzburg, and the rest. Paderborn he describes as an antiquary's delight: 'not disturbed by a single ray of Protestantism, where there had been no Reformation to sweep away relics'. He searched for, listed, and collated manuscripts of Irish origin all the way, scraping up 'what little we could muster of the German language, in noble defiance of all number, gender and declension'.<sup>20</sup>

#### UNIVERSITY COMMISSION

We learn of his ambitions for the Library from his own account. In 1853, when apparently there were 107,650 volumes, increasing at the rate of 1,500 volumes per annum, Todd made this report to the University Commission: 'The number of books now received in virtue of the Copyright Act is more than three times as great as it was prior to 1835. Several books claimed and received are not ultimately placed in the Library; for example, children's books, school books, the inferior class of novels, and insignificant publications of various kinds. These are stored and preserved. Lists are made, but are not very easily accessible owing to want of room. They are piled in large chests and boxes. I am contemplating a better arrangement.'<sup>21</sup> He regretted that there were no agents in foreign countries, nor even at home for foreign books. Much seems to have been left to his own initiative, as his continental travels testify. He placed a *Want book* in

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the Reading Room, for readers to enter recommendations, and a few years before had adopted a plan of leaving almanacs, *Calendars* of universities, and works of reference, on the tables of the Library. This plan had to be discontinued because of wanton injury to the books. However, so far from being discouraged by this, he resolved to try the experiment again, by leaving out a selection of the new books to be laid on the tables. Making room for books was his constant concern, and he it was who proposed to the Board the erection of bookcases in the gallery. A special kind of double bookcase with hinged shelves and a rail for wheeling the front portion forward to enable the shelves behind to be examined, was his invention. This neat device in the bays of the gallery may still be inspected. Todd was always in favour of admitting the undergraduates to read in the Library, and removing the restriction which confined the readers to graduates and specially privileged scholars. Others on the Board thought that the undergraduates would only spend their time in useless reading or in the perusal of pernicious books, if admitted. Todd, however, ultimately won his way. He proudly observed that since 1843 to the time of writing his report in 1853 only two volumes had been lost from the Library, as a result of the introduction of the system used by the British Museum and the Bodleian for checking readers' books.

### THE PRINTED CATALOGUE

In January 1849 Todd had begun the preparation of the catalogue of printed books. He observes that he undertook this gigantic task of compiling what he calls a finding catalogue, without remuneration, but 'with Mr Lee helping'. He writes: 'I kept the first two or three sheets in type for more than a year, being anxious to settle the plan of the catalogue, By consulting the heads of other large libraries and other persons experienced in such work, I was anxious to consider fully the controversy raised about the catalogue of the British Museum, and the evidence given to Parliament on that subject. The first printing has proceeded very slowly.' It is interesting to note that the daily average number of readers in 1850 was 47, while for the benefit of the undergraduates not yet admitted to the Library, the Junior Dean was granted £50 to stock their Lending Library. It is evident that as Librarian from 1852 until his death in 1869, Todd made his mark upon the Library's administration, and the Library became the scene of his greatest influence.

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### THE FRIEND OF SCHOLARS

It is fascinating to read, from letters which survive, of the many contacts he made with scholars who turned to him for references, verifications and evidence, all of which he endeavoured generously to supply 'with a courtesy and geniality which were traits in his character apparently less noticeable for those who had dealings with him in college administration, university reform and ecclesiastical politics'. John Keble, for example, is grateful to him for the help he received in the preparation of his great edition of Hooker's *Ecclesiastical polity*. The manuscript of the eighth book of that work is in the Trinity College Library, and provides the most reliable text extant. Tischendorf,<sup>22</sup> famous for his rescue of *Codex Sinaiticus* from the Middle East, writes to Todd that he has just heard from Tregelles of Todd's work on the palimpsest *Codex Z*, as he is preparing his New Testament edition, and is anxious to include the fruits of Todd's scholarship before going to press. Todd also had the gift of encouraging younger scholars, and often expressed his intention that men must be trained to follow up the work that he had begun. Renowned among these was William Reeves, his most promising pupil, and also a devoted friend. Todd had collaborated with him in the martyrology of Donegal. He had also brought Reeves nearer to Dublin from his parish in Ballymena, when he nominated him to the living of Lusk. He did this in order to save Reeves from abandoning scholarship and returning to teaching, or as Todd would say, 'Pedagogising', for Reeves had a large family to support. As he planned for his friend this movement to Lusk, within striking distance of the College Library, he wrote: 'My object is to effect a movement in your latitude and longitude, for your benefit and that of the literary world.' The living was worth £170 a year: 'I wish the seven were in the third instead of the second place from the units.' It was through Todd that the Primate, Lord John George Beresford, provided the purchase money for the *Book of Armagh*, so that Reeves should not be out of pocket, nor hindered from completing a study of it. A letter written by the Primate to William Reeves in 1853 discloses the effectiveness of Todd's persistence: 'Todd has been staying with me on a visit . . . College is now spending so much on the building of lecture rooms . . . the purchase of the *Book of Armagh* is clearly beyond the means at the disposal of the College authorities.'<sup>23</sup> It is evident that the presence of the *Book of Armagh* in the Library owes much to Todd's zeal, as well as to the Primate's generosity. Robert Atkinson,<sup>24</sup> long after

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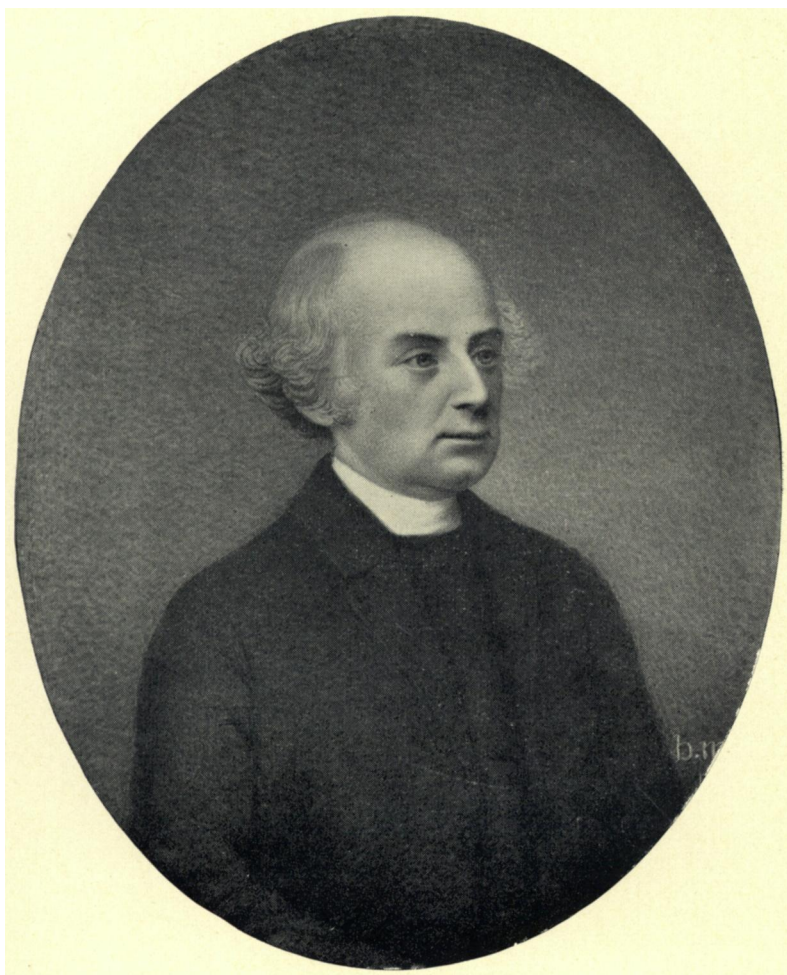
Todd's death, paid this pleasant tribute to a scholar with whom he did not always agree, of whose findings he often found himself severely critical: 'His name carries a charm that is full of regret. Todd loved deeply as he prosecuted zealously the study of Ireland's past history. It is not needful that we should agree with all he said or accept all his theories, to enable us to value his labours in antiquarian research; he had a true feeling of the worth of this order of studies, a keen perception of the class of facts to which prominence is to be given, and a subtle skill in arranging artistically his collected material; an extremely rare combination, which in my opinion belongs to one living man among us.' Here Atkinson is referring to Todd's pupil Reeves, and calls him the author of the *Life of St Columba*.

#### SKILLED ADMINISTRATOR

Todd held a whole range of offices in College. He was Junior Dean in 1838; successively he was Junior Proctor, Junior Bursar, Senior Lecturer, Senior Dean, and Registrar. Even in his life-time glowing tributes were paid to his interest in students and his devotion to the College. 'In the University', wrote a friend to Charles Todd about his brother, 'nothing is done without him. Everyone who has any single-hearted desire to do good there, or to carry out any real improvement, invariably looks to him in the first place for his counsel, approval and assistance. Now that he is no longer Tutor, I know not what degree of intercourse he may be able to keep up with the junior members and students. As long as he was a Junior Fellow, his kindness to the undergraduates was more than of parental care and affection. He had their confidence to an unusual degree.'<sup>25</sup>

#### INCIPIENT ECUMENISM

This is eulogy, but contemporary eulogy, written in the life-time of the distinguished scholar. James Todd spent virtually his whole adult life within the walls of the College, and yet his influence outside the walls was no less remarkable. The same letter written to his brother proceeds: 'His conciliatory manner and temper, his entire freedom from anything approaching to the acerbity of sectarian feeling, have done more than anything else whatever to promote that harmony and good feeling by which the proceedings of the Irish Archaeological Society have hitherto been characterised. He brought and kept together men who never before could be induced to act on any



**James Henthorn Todd**

By courtesy of the National Library of Ireland



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common ground for the benefit of Ireland . . . for the first time the Regius Professors of Divinity and of Hebrew in Dublin may be seen acting together with the President of Maynooth, with one Roman Catholic gentleman joint secretary with your brother and another their assistant secretary . . . his object is to make the University as respectable, as efficient and as generally useful to the country and Church as could be, for the wants of the country and the purposes for which it was founded.' The reference here is to the establishment of the Irish Archaeological Society in 1840, which, with the help of John O'Donovan and Eugene O'Curry, as already described above, published many Irish texts, with notes and translations for which Todd has become famous.

#### COLLEGE OF SAINT COLUMBA

Another absorbing interest of James Henthorn Todd was the founding and constant cherishing of St Columba's College, now at Rathfarnham. Todd, with Lord Adare, and William Monsell (later Lord Emly), collaborated closely in this project with that enterprising genius, William Sewell of Exeter College, Oxford. These four founders planned a school which should be Irish, where the Irish language would be taught and a proper pride in Ireland fostered, yet the lines of the foundation were to follow the public school tradition. Todd's interest in education, Irish antiquities, the language and the Church, all found expression in this venture. He had been in touch with Sewell during his frequent stays in Oxford in the 1830's. Sewell was the dominant figure in the founding of St Columba's, but Todd soon became the practical director. When the siting of the College was determined and its administration put into effect, it was Todd who made the approach to the Primate, Lord John George Beresford, for his support, since little help appeared to be coming from the other bishops of the Church, so great was their suspicion of the ethos of the proposed school. Todd toured the country houses of Ireland, scouting for sites in Kerry, Clare and many other places, before Stackallan was chosen, Lord Boyne's residence, not far from Navan, offering, as Todd said, a glorious view of Slane's Hill, where St Patrick by tradition first preached the Gospel in Ireland. In these temporary quarters St Columba's was opened on 26 April 1843.<sup>28</sup> Sewell gave the address, Todd conducted the service of installation, using his beloved Litany, and, rather typically, a chain of prayers from the Baptismal



Service, ending with the Grace in Irish. Sir William Rowan Hamilton came, with what was described as a genuinely authenticated relic of St Columba, the Meesach, said to be the finely wrought metal cover of the saint's calendar. In the same year Todd commissioned John O'Donovan to work on an Irish grammar for the senior classes in the school, and five Irish scholarships were established in Dublin University. The Irish grammar was dedicated to James Henthorn Todd, 'as an humble testimony to the great value of his exertions in preserving and illustrating the history and language of Ireland'. The Archbishop of Dublin had his doubts about the possible success of the venture. Opposition came from the Irish Society. By 1845 the four founders gave way to three trustees, one of whom was Todd, with Archdeacon Cotton and Dr Elrington. It was a sad ending for the four friends, two of whom, Lord Adare and William Monsell, had given their allegiance to the Church of Rome, following Newman, while Sewell carried the vision of the school to English soil and founded Radley College, near Oxford, on Columban lines. Todd became virtually director of the College, in close contact with his generous supporter, Primate Beresford. He was involved in the appointing of Wardens, as the Headmasters were called; when the College moved from Stackallan to Holly Park, its present Rathfarnham site, on thirty-three acres, Todd supervised the building. Ultimately, with the circumstances that caused Lord John George Beresford to terminate his connection with St Columba's in 1854 as a result of the controversy with Warden George Williams over the Jerusalem bishopric, a story too long to be told, Todd found himself in charge. Officially elected Visitor of the College in 1857, he made strenuous efforts to deal with the recurring financial problems that beset the school at this period. He gave generously of his own means; through his brothers he arranged mortgages; by his constant visits to the college he steered its fortunes to more successful days. Sewell and Todd seemed to be kindred spirits. Sewell was under suspicion for his High Church tendencies, though in fact he had written against the notorious Tract 90 in his article in the *Quarterly* on the divines of the seventeenth century. Todd was delighted with that article and its emphasis on the Anglicanism to which he was devoted. It appeared just when he was engaged in a long talk with the Primate, anxious to persuade him to give his support to St Columba's. 'The article is worth fifty pounds', wrote Todd. Todd's persistence and tenacity served the College well.

## James Henthorn Todd

### HIS PUBLICATIONS

Todd's scholarship was wide ranging, and the *Dictionary of national biography* claims that 'no man in Ireland has, since Archbishop Ussher, shown equal skill at bibliography, accuracy and knowledge or devotion to the development of Irish literature'. He published Irish texts and made contributions to church history. In 1848 he brought out the Irish version of Nennius' *History of the Bretons*. There followed later, in 1855, the not uncriticised *Irish liber hymnorum*, two volumes of ancient hymns in Latin and Irish. A substantial volume, comprising an edition of *The wars of the Gael and the Gall*, appeared in 1867. Outstanding was his *Life of St Patrick*, designed as the first of a series of biographies of archbishops of Armagh, which failed on account of its publisher's collapse. It appeared in 1864, and is notable for its historical approach, and, in spite of allegations to the contrary, its freedom from narrowness and sectarianism, as he formed his conclusions. It is good to note that Dr Richard Hanson, in his recent work on the saint, praises Todd for his approach, although not agreeing with all his findings. Hanson holds that the sectarian bias of Todd was greatly exaggerated. Todd's knowledge of the Irish sources in this piece of research was of great advantage. He admits his convictions and allows for them, while appealing solely to the historical evidence. The following extract from his Introduction to the *Life of St Patrick* makes his position clear: 'The story of St Patrick's commission from Pope Celestine is rejected in the following pages, simply because the writer believes that there is no satisfactory evidence for it. He hopes that no reader will suppose him to have been influenced by any controversial prejudice in coming to this conclusion. He is conscious of no such prejudice. He is indeed sincerely attached to the Reformed Church of these kingdoms, in which he holds the office of a priest; but he cannot perceive how the question if Patrick had or had not his mission from Rome affects in any way the controversy which now unhappily divides the Western Church. If we acknowledge, as we must do, the Roman mission of Palladius as well as the Roman mission of Augustine of Canterbury, it is difficult to see what is to be gained by denying the Roman mission of Patrick.' Todd was something of a pioneer in seeking close touch with the sources, and he showed real historical sense. He is skilled in using hagiography and folklore. He was applying in his time the very methods that are being used to-day. Cosslett Quin adds in his Davis Lecture: 'Todd seems to be one of the first of the scholars to see that

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the ancient Irish bishop, while a successor of the apostles and alone entitled to consecrate other bishops and ordain priests, was not in charge of a diocese, nor did such things exist. Administrative duties were discharged by comharbs and abbots in priests' orders, and even by abbesses like St Brigid. Thus Todd was the first to observe the real nature of Celtic episcopacy.'<sup>27</sup>

### IRISH CHURCHMAN

Todd's churchmanship, as will be gathered from the foregoing account of his life, was expressed in the *Book of common prayer*, to whose services and language he was devoted. He upheld the tradition of the full liturgical round in the College Chapel, and dreaded the curtailing of it. He became deeply depressed by anything that appeared slovenly or casual in the conduct of church services in the country parish churches which he encountered during his travels in the quest for the language and antiquities of Ireland. With a touch of acidity he called one parson of whom he was quite fond, 'a very quiet, ignorant slob of a man', and deplored his somniferous sermons and his casual conduct of worship. He is shocked to find parishes where the surplice was not worn and little heed was paid to decency and order. He constantly strove for worthier standards in the services of Trinity College Chapel, St Columba's Chapel, and rather specially at St Patrick's Cathedral. He had been chosen as Treasurer of the Cathedral as early as 1837. The appointment straightaway plunged him into a bitter controversy. The Dean had nominated him at his early age from outside the Chapter to this post of responsibility, but certain members of the Chapter protested against the right of the Dean to propose any such extern candidate. This resulted in the suspension of the appointment, and the necessary signature from the Lord Lieutenant was not forthcoming.<sup>28</sup> This suspension was not removed until eleven years later, when Todd was finally installed as Treasurer in 1848. His close association with Oxford, his battle over the educational question, and his strong sense of the Church's continuity and traditions, were all deeply suspected by his opponents. However Todd had always won the confidence of those with whom he worked, and later was promoted to the Precentorship of St Patrick's, taking a deep interest in the choir and the ordering of the Cathedral's music. He himself had a keen appreciation of church music, and among his papers are his own settings of the Litany. He liked Handel's *Veni Creator*, and was greatly disappointed when

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Archbishop Whately stymied its use at the consecration of a bishop in the College Chapel in earlier days.<sup>29</sup> In a voluminous correspondence with Dean Butler of Trim, he often makes suggestions for tunes that might be sung by country choirs. In College he was on the committee of the Choral Society. On his travels, and especially in a fascinating account of his two-month visit to Rome in 1862, where he worked on the Irish manuscripts at St Isidore's, he refers with special commendation to the singing in St Peter's. Although there is much that he does not care for in the services in which he participates in that city, there is always an appreciative word for the singing.

#### ACADEMICIAN AND PROFESSOR

As President of the Royal Irish Academy in 1856–61, and for many more years a member, he fostered Celtic scholarship with characteristic vigour. As Professor of Hebrew, at £60 a year, in succession to Dr Wall, he gave two courses each term—a private lecture for third-year men and a public prelection for the second-year students. Attendance on his lectures was not compulsory, but all students could be admitted. Subjects included the history of the Hebrew language, history of the texts of the Old Testament, and needless to say, detailed studies of philology and punctuation. His main object was to interest the students in biblical criticism. Those who came to his advanced lectures rarely reached as many as ten in number, but some sixty would be present at the elementary lectures. 'My predecessors', says Todd, 'were not required to deliver any public lecture or prelection; this was voluntarily begun by me in Michaelmas Term 1850.' He was often conscious of his independence of mind, and in many battles for what he considered right and proper in church and university he remained an isolated figure. A passage from Warden Rice's memorial sermon after Todd's death, delivered in St Columba's College Chapel, more than hints at some of the suffering which he endured: 'Separated from all of his original colleagues, separated from some by events which led to lasting pain in his heart, under severe trials of patience in the face of cruel calumny, when friends grew cold, he would never relinquish the work to which he had given his heart.' From quite a different background Eugene O'Curry paid tribute to the master mind he admired. O'Curry had been employed by Todd to make accurate and laboured copies of manuscripts for Todd's private library as well as for the College. O'Curry writes: '. . . casting away from him all the unworthy

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prejudices of creed, caste, and position, with which, unfortunately, too many of his class are filled to overflowing, and, like a true scholar and a man of enlarged mind and understanding, endeavouring to recover for his native country as much of her long-lost and widely dispersed ancient literary remains as he can; and this too, I may add, at an expense of time and money which few, if any, in these very utilitarian times are found disposed to incur.’<sup>80</sup> The scholar was a hero to his scribe.

Todd died at Silveracre, a gracious house off Grange Road, Rathfarnham, nearby his beloved St Columba’s College, with which he had been in constant touch to the last. In the garden wall there is a stone with Hebrew lettering finely engraved, from Psalm 102, verse 14, which might be translated: ‘And why? Thy servants think upon her stones, and it pitieth them to see her in the dust.’ In the undergrowth are fragments of carved stones, gathered after the travels of the family. Here the brothers and sisters returned to be with their mother, who lived until 1862. The lonely Senior Fellow remained deeply devoted to his family, as personal letters from ‘Uncle Jemmy’ to various nephews and nieces reveal. The scholar adopts an affectionate and vividly descriptive style when stirring the interest of the younger generation in his travels. The keen observer, the lucid reporter, with neat penmanship and amusing illustrations of types and personalities drawn in the margin, chronicles his adventures for the family circle to enjoy.

In St Patrick’s Cathedral graveyard a High Cross of stone, ornamented with designs apparently chosen from the *Book of Kells* and the Shrine of St Patrick’s Bell (one of Todd’s personal treasures) marks the grave of our distinguished alumnus who had given life-long service to the College he loved, sometimes chastened, but never failed. The obituary notice on 29 June 1869, the day after his death appeared in the *Irish Times* in appreciative terms, and added tersely ‘the fault did not lie with Dr Todd if the Library is not all that it might be’, and proceeded to report inexorably that the Reverend Thomas Stack now becomes a Senior Fellow and that there will be a vacancy next year among the Junior Fellows. *Sic transit*.

## Notes

1. Alfred Webb's *Compendium of Irish biography*, Dublin, 1878.
2. J. H. Newman.
3. Cameron's *History of the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland*, second ed., 1916, p. 437.
4. Senior Lecturer's Books, *ad loc.*
5. T.C.D., Todd Ms. 221.
6. C. W. C. Quin, Canon of St Patrick's: *Todd and Reeves: Thomas Davis Lecture*, 1962.
7. T.C.D., Todd Ms. 80.
9. Ibid. 33.
8. Ibid. 35.
10. Ibid. 41.
11. Ibid. 65.
12. *Dublin University calendar*, *ad loc.*
13. Quoted in *Correspondence of John Henry Newman with John Keble and others: 1839-1845*, edited at the Birmingham Oratory. Longmans, 1917, p. 50.
14. T.C.D., Todd Ms. 140.
15. Ibid. 221.
16. National Library of Ireland, Ms. 5443.
17. British Museum, Add. Mss. 44373 f 295.
18. N.L.I., Ms. 2253.
19. J. H. Todd, *Descriptive catalogue of some mss in T.C.D. Library*.
20. T.C.D., Todd Ms. 140.
21. *Report of Her Majesty's Commission: Dublin University*, 1853.
22. N.L.I., Ms. 5941.
23. Quoted in the *Life of the Right Reverend William Reeves, D.D.*, by Lady Ferguson, Dublin and London 1893, p. 33.
24. *Todd lecture series*, vol. ii, 1887 (R.I.A.).
25. T.C.D., Todd Ms. 221.
26. Register of the College of St Columba.
27. C. W. C. Quin, *op. cit.*
28. St Patrick's Cathedral, Chapter Book.
29. T.C.D., Ms. 26.
30. Eugene O'Curry, *Lectures on the manuscript materials of ancient Irish history, delivered at the Catholic University of Ireland, 1855-56*, p. 174.

It may be useful to mention here two further publications connected with Todd:  
J. H. Todd, *A catalogue of graduates who have proceeded to degrees in the University of Dublin, 1595-1868* (Dublin, 1869);  
[Auction] *Catalogue of the valuable library of the late Rev. James H. Todd, D.D., . . . comprising select biblical literature . . . and an important collection of patristic, Irish and other manuscripts* [prepared (MS note by T. K. Abbott) by Dr Reeves], MSS Room, Trinity College.