

James P. Bruce

Ireland's Hope

The "peculiar theories" of James Fintan Lalor

SERIES IN WORLD HISTORY

About the author

James P. Bruce was born in Dublin, Ireland. He spent the greater part of his adult life in banking, before setting up his own marketing consultancy in 1997. Ten years later he published his first book, *Faithful Servant: A Memoir of Brian Cleeve*. Researching the book involved many hours in libraries and archives. Stimulated by this experience he enrolled as a mature student at Trinity College Dublin in 2008. He graduated with a BA in History and later moved to University College Dublin, where he completed an MA in the History of Religion and Society. In 2019 he was awarded an MLitt by the University of Oxford. He continues to write for both general and academic audiences and currently hosts a podcast series entitled *Talk About Ireland*.

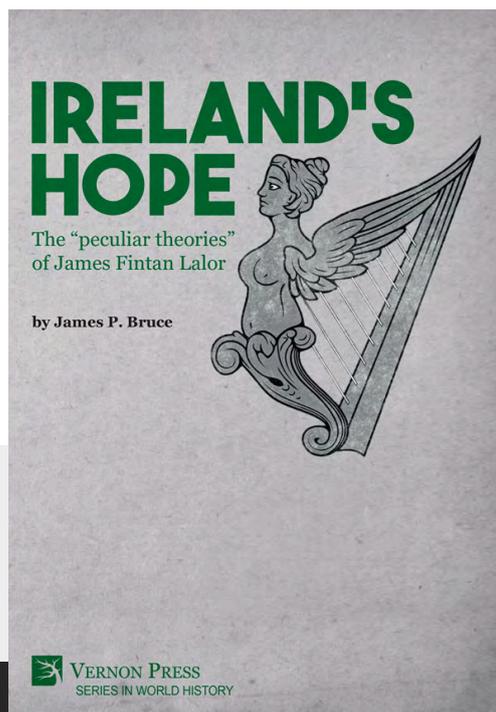
Summary

In 1847 and 1848 a little-known farmer named James Fintan Lalor wrote a series of newspaper articles in which he outlined his vision for Ireland after the Great Famine. Although they have been reprinted and republished many times since, until now there has been no systematic study of the principles and proposals that Lalor expounded. In this book, the author considers Lalor's brief career as a writer and offers new insights into his treatment of the national and land questions.

By elucidating Lalor's ideas on these questions, exploring possible influences on his thinking, and assessing the impact of his writings on his contemporaries, the author seeks to address what he regards as two deficiencies in the historiography. The first of these is the tendency to assign only a minor, supporting role to Lalor during the brief heyday of Young Ireland. Academic studies typically portray him as little more than a catalyst in the radicalisation of figures like John Mitchel, rather than as a profoundly original thinker in his own right. The second issue is the commonly held perception of Lalor's proposals on land tenure as foreshadowing the creation of a "peasant proprietary" later in the century. The author argues that Lalor advocated a much more radical plan that would link his two primary objectives: the creation of a sovereign Irish republic, and transfer of control over landholding from a small number of landlords to the entire Irish people.

By comparing and contrasting Lalor's theories with those of earlier figures such as Thomas Paine and James 'Bronterre' O'Brien, this ground-breaking book broadens the perspective on Lalor and his writings beyond the context of Irish nationalism. As the author concludes, Lalor's unique contribution to Irish radical thought merits a more prominent place in nineteenth-century intellectual history than it has hitherto received.

This book will be of great value to anyone interested in Irish history since 1800, especially in the areas of the Great Famine, the Young Ireland movement, and the Land War.



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