

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

THE ENGLISH
REVOLUTION

Edited by

MICHAEL J. BRADDICK

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CHAPTER 5

THE IRISH RISING

JOSEPH COPE

The outbreak of the Irish rebellion in October 1641 represents a fundamentally important episode on the road to revolution. Primed with anti-papish fears stirred up in the early months of 1641, the rising could be interpreted as solid proof of the dangers that many perceived in Charles I's kingdoms. In the 1660s, Edward Hyde, first earl of Clarendon, reflected on the significance of the rising, recalling that when news of the crisis reached the House of Commons on 1 November 1641, 'there was a deep silence in the House . . . and a kind of consternation, most men's heads having been intoxicated, from their first meeting in Parliament, with imaginations of plots and treasonable designs through the three kingdoms'.¹ The letters announcing the rising sent to the English parliament from Dublin Castle presented the crisis in stark and simple terms, characterizing it as a 'wicked and damnable conspiracy plotted and contrived . . . by some evil affected papists here':²

In contrast to this simple reading of the rebellion, the 1641 rising exposed multiple fractures between and within Ireland's diverse ethnic and religious groups. Focusing on the period between the 1641 fall of Charles I's Lord Deputy Thomas Wentworth, first earl of Strafford, and the conclusion of the Cessation between Charles I and the Confederate Catholics in September 1643, it is possible to map out the reconfiguration of loyalties and the disintegration of pre-rebellion communities. As with the English civil war and revolution generally, historians must account for the long-term tensions that came to the surface during the conflict and the short-term and contingent factors that led to the initial outbreak of hostilities in October 1641. Source materials, particularly the 1641 depositions, preserve ample evidence of grievances dating at least as far back as the early seventeenth-century plantations. More immediate concerns arising from the destabilizing policies of Thomas Wentworth's tenure as Lord Deputy in the 1630s also played an important role in driving the Irish crisis of 1641.³ But the conflict in Ireland cannot be neatly separated from the other mid-century crises within Charles I's composite monarchy. Wentworth's policies during the Scottish wars, the radicalization of English politics in 1641, and the crown's furtive negotiations with the Confederate Catholics in 1643 underscore the importance of taking a broad British approach to the rising.

It is at the same time important to balance the British dimensions of the rising against other perspectives. Within the past several decades, scholars have increasingly looked at the local contexts of the rebellion through research in the archive of contemporary testimony commonly known as the 1641 depositions.⁴ Microhistorical studies of the depositions reveal regional differences, local tensions, and interpersonal disputes. Moving in the opposite direction, some scholars have sought to internationalize understandings of the rising by drawing out parallels to the disintegrating composite monarchies elsewhere in Europe.⁵ England's panicked response to the 1641 rising must be understood in an international context, with anti-papery providing a conceptual framework for making sense of the conflict.

Finally, it is also necessary to be mindful of fragmentation within the various ethnic and religious interests in Ireland. Obviously the split between Catholics and Protestants loomed large in the mid-seventeenth century, as did the divisions between native Irish, Old English, New English, and Scots-Irish communities. Within these groups, however, historians have begun to map out significant tensions. Among Ireland's Roman Catholic population, friction emerged between predominantly native Irish partisans in the rising and Old English elites who tried to distance themselves from the rebellion. As the conflict evolved, these tensions contributed to factionalism within the Catholic Confederacy, which worsened when Irish veterans of military service on the Continent returned to Ireland in 1642. Likewise among Ireland's Protestants, the outbreak of the rising revealed deep fissures between New English and Scots-Irish planters. As the conflict wore on, evidence of internal fragmentation also appeared within the New English segment of the population, especially when it became necessary to take a side in the English civil war.

Mid-seventeenth-century Irish politics can thus be conceptualized as a complex dance between various parties on constantly shifting ground. In order to understand the tensions that led to the 1641 rising, it is necessary to be mindful of the simmering resentment caused by the displacement of native Irish and Old English elites by New English during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The forces that accelerated the fragmentation of Irish society and created the specific catalysts for the rebellion, however, must be understood within the contingencies of the late 1630s and 1640s.

IRISH POLITICS AND THE FALL OF STRAFFORD

Charles I's appointment of Sir Thomas Wentworth as Lord Deputy of Ireland in 1632 forms the starting point for a discussion of the 1641 rising. As Lord Deputy, Wentworth had the responsibility to manage a religiously and ethnically diverse nation. The Irish population maintained the Gaelic language and other distinct cultural traditions and remained solidly connected to the Roman Catholic Church. The Old English, descendants of the twelfth-century Norman conquerors, saw themselves as distinct from the

Irish population. However, by the seventeenth century, intermarriage and other cultural interactions and a common experience of marginalization by the Tudor church and state had eroded many of these distinctions. The New English represented late arrivals, appearing at the vanguard of Tudor policies aimed at centralizing power. Often the beneficiaries of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century plantation schemes, which wrested power and land from Irish and Old English interests, the New English were a minority and almost exclusively Protestant population. Finally, Ulster housed a large Scottish population. In part this reflected traditional patterns of migration between Ulster and the Scottish isles. However, the Scots-Irish population had grown significantly in the early seventeenth century when James I, in an effort to broaden the 'British' base population in the north allowed Scots to take up land in the Ulster plantation.

Thomas Wentworth arrived in Dublin with a mandate to resolve the crown's financial woes in the kingdom, but achieving fiscal solvency put the Lord Deputy on a collision course with many entrenched interests in Ireland. Wentworth explored an expansion of the English plantations in Connacht and various means of wringing money and land out of existing landowners and new settlers. These policies successively alienated segments of the Irish, Old English, and New English populations.⁶

The Old English and Irish had ample cause to be suspicious of Dublin Castle. The Tudor and Stuart plantations in general reflected anti-popish and ethnocentric assumptions. The prescriptions for the plantation of Ulster imposed fundamental changes in land use and rural economy, mandated settlement by New English and Scottish migrants, and envisioned a new landscape dominated by fortified estates, English-style towns, and Protestant churches.⁷ In reality, few of the early modern plantations completely reflected the prescribed conditions. However, the plantations fundamentally realigned political and economic power and played an important symbolic role in communicating the state's hostility to Irish customs and the Roman Catholic religion. By the early 1630s, elements within the New English administration at Dublin Castle appeared ready to extend the attack on Roman Catholicism. In the period immediately preceding Wentworth's appointment, acting Lord Justices Adam Loftus and Richard Boyle, first earl of Cork, made no secret of their hostility towards popery and presided over a period of assault on Catholic interests and religious practices. Wentworth's regime moderated some of these policies, but the long-term anxieties remained. The Lord Deputy's advocacy of expanded plantations in Connacht, which would have adversely affected Irish and Old English interests, added to these concerns.

Wentworth's policies in the 1630s badly strained his ties with his New English and Protestant constituencies. In a general sense the appointment of a stranger as Lord Deputy could be interpreted as a repudiation of New English leadership in Ireland. Wentworth made these problems worse through the pursuit of religious policies that upset the delicate working arrangement that had been achieved within the Church of Ireland in the decades before his arrival. In the minority in Ireland, many Protestants ascribed to an aggressively anti-popish worldview and perceived Catholicism as an existential threat.⁸ These anti-popish assumptions led to deep suspicion of Wentworth's motives when, in the mid-1630s, anti-Calvinist bishops supported by the Lord Deputy

gained prominence and fashioned policies that imposed greater conformity on the Church of Ireland. In the aftermath of the Scottish prayer book controversy in 1637, Wentworth's government increased this pressure, using the Irish court of high commission to root out Covenanter sympathizers.

As Wentworth pushed for conformity among Irish Protestants, the state's perceived inattention to policing recusancy fed fears that the Lord Deputy planned to extend full toleration to Roman Catholics. The failed negotiations between Wentworth and the Old English magnates over 'the Graces'—which would have firming up uncertain Catholic land titles and eliminated some of the legal restrictions on the Catholic population—enhanced these fears. The fact that negotiations over the Graces failed proved doubly damaging to Wentworth, as the Lord Deputy found himself simultaneously alienated from New English who saw the Graces as a betrayal of the Protestant interest and Old English Catholics who felt that Wentworth had negotiated in bad faith.

Wentworth's actions during the Bishops' Wars reflected how badly the Lord Deputy misunderstood his position in Ireland. Wentworth operated within a true British context in 1639–41, shuttling back and forth between London and Dublin several times while offering advice to the English privy council. Ironically, the Lord Deputy's entanglements in a three kingdoms context opened the door to collaboration among a diverse range of otherwise mutually antagonistic players in Ireland.

Wentworth arrived in England at Charles I's request in September 1639 and played a key role in planning the king's campaign to break the stalemate with the Scots. Confident about his command of the political landscape in Ireland, Wentworth, elevated to the English peerage as first earl of Strafford in January 1640, returned to Ireland in March 1640 with a plan for raising an army in Ireland for service in a summer campaign against the Covenanters. Initially, this plan worked well. The pliant Irish parliament that assembled in Dublin in March and April 1640 voted in favour of four subsidies and passed a declaration condemning the Covenanters.

The collapse of the Short Parliament in the spring of 1640, however, opened up opportunities for the Lord Deputy's enemies in Ireland to act. During the second session of the Irish parliament in June 1640, foes on all sides—New English who had seen their local authority challenged by Strafford's regime, committed Protestants angry about the direction of the Irish church, and Old English Catholics disgruntled over the Lord Deputy's vacillations on religious liberty and ominous overtures on land tenure—assailed Wentworth's authority. Within the Irish parliament, a coalition of men united by little more than their loathing of the Lord Deputy successfully stalled the subsidy to the extent that, when the Scots soundly beat Charles I's forces at Newburn in August 1640, Wentworth's much-touted Irish army had barely mobilized. During the third session of the Irish Parliament, which convened on 1 October 1640, the Irish parliament drafted a far-reaching condemnation of Strafford's tenure as Lord Deputy. Reflecting its origins in a coalition of actors, the grievances outlined in the 'Humble and Just Remonstrance' largely focused on issues that transcended the confessional divide, particularly economic and constitutional issues. With the exception of complaints about

the court of high commission and the failed negotiations over the Graces, Wentworth's religious policies remained marginal to the case articulated in the Irish parliament.⁹

In contrast to the Irish parliament's proceedings, when the Long Parliament took up the case against Wentworth, religion framed much of the discussion. In a speech on 7 November 1640 before a committee of both houses, Sir John Clotworthy, a planter in county Antrim and sitting MP for Bossiney, Cornwall, claimed that Wentworth had perverted religion, abetted corruption, and turned a blind eye to the proliferation of popery. Wentworth's intrusion into the Scottish conflict revealed his sinister potential, Clotworthy warned, as the Lord Deputy now had in arms 8,000–10,000 'papists, ready to march where I know not'.¹⁰ The articles of treason drawn up by the English House of Commons against Strafford in late January 1641 seized upon these points and even more emphatically tied the Lord Deputy to shadowy plots, presenting the Irish army as a force 'of papists, his dependents . . . which he might employ to reduce this kingdom'.¹¹

During the English Parliament's proceedings against Wentworth, anxiety about the Lord Deputy's actions spread beyond the halls of Westminster. Large-scale and tense public protests occurred throughout the trial and during debate over the Bill of Attainder against Strafford. The Lord Deputy's execution on 12 May 1641 drew out a crowd estimated by contemporaries as numbering 100,000.¹² What had begun as an Irish parliamentary protest against Wentworth's overreaching had become an opportunity for anti-popish politicking in the English parliament and mass demonstrations in London. The fears of a popish plot that had been stirred up during this period in many respects structured English understandings of the events in Ireland for the next several years.

In Ireland, the evolution of the case against Wentworth in the Long Parliament, combined with Charles I's apparent inability or unwillingness to prevent the execution of one of his closest advisers, frightened many Old English and Irish lords and gentry. Since 1495, Irish politics operated under Poyning's Law, which established the Irish Parliament's subordination to the English Privy Council. The English Parliament's claims to possess jurisdiction over the Lord Deputy now pointed to a significant expansion of Westminster's role in Irish policies. With Wentworth out of the picture, anti-popery a driving force in English popular and parliamentary politics, and the constitutional arrangements uncertain, Ireland's Catholics found themselves in a suddenly vulnerable position.

DISINTEGRATION: THE 1641 CRISIS

In the face of a feared crackdown on popery originating from the English Commons, two parallel and largely insulated strategies emerged among Irish Catholic elites. Within the Irish parliament, members pressed for a constitutional settlement, taking advantage of the power vacuum to try to roll back the policies of the 1630s. More aggressively, some also saw the elimination of Wentworth as an opportunity for the Irish parliament to assert its autonomy and revise the operations of Poyning's Law.¹³ Disgruntled leaders

of the most powerful native Irish families, however, began to explore a very different response to the anxieties stirred up by the Wentworth trial. Among the Irish, Connor, Lord Maguire, and Rory O'More took on early leadership roles in the summer of 1641, networking with prominent families in Ulster, including the Maguires in county Fermanagh, the O'Neills in county Armagh and county Monaghan, the O'Reillys in county Cavan, and the McMahanons in county Monaghan. They also connected with officers of Wentworth's Irish army at Carrickfergus and with Irish officers serving overseas in the Spanish army, most notably Owen Roe O'Neill. Although the chief Old English families were not directly involved in the plotting of the rebellion, this confederacy had at least some contact with prominent Palemen including Colonel Richard Plunkett and Nicholas Preston, Lord Gormanston.

The Irish plotters of the 1641 rising had ample cause for discontent and fear. Although the peace that concluded the Nine Years War in 1603 had allowed Irish lords to maintain significant landholdings and local power, the early years of James I's reign witnessed growing pressure on Irish and Catholic interests. In the face of this, in 1607 two of the most powerful Ulster magnates—Hugh O'Neill, earl of Tyrone, and Rory O'Donnell, earl of Tyrconnell—and their followers abandoned Ireland for the Continent. Their departure cleared a path for the crown to seize and redistribute massive landholdings in the modern counties of Armagh, Cavan, Donegal, Fermanagh, Londonderry, and Tyrone.

The flight of the earls and the subsequent Stuart plantations had been devastating for those Irish who stayed behind. Research on prominent Irish families in Ulster on the eve of the rebellion presents a grim picture of resentment, anxiety, economic dislocation, and indebtedness.¹⁴ In contrast to those Old English who sought constitutional change through the Irish parliament, many Irish elites seem to have felt much less optimistic about their future in post-Wentworth Ireland. One index to the depths of this pessimism may be found in the fact that a number of Irish gentry who served English legal and political institutions participated in plotting the rising. Sir Phelim O'Neill, who had been an MP and a justice of the peace, perhaps best embodies this, but similar examples can be found among the O'Rourkes in county Leitrim, the O'Farrells in county Longford, and the O'Reillys in county Cavan. These men had stakes in the existing political order and yet threw their lot in with rebellion.¹⁵

According to the conspirators' plan, the rising would include two main components. Lord Maguire and Hugh MacMahon gathered a body of armed men in Dublin with plans to take the Castle by surprise on the night of 22 October 1641. As this Dublin stratagem unfolded, gentry-led Irish in Ulster would rise up and disarm settlers in key plantation settlements. Effectively decapitating the state, the seizure of Dublin would prevent a coordinated response to these loosely coordinated local risings.

In the event, the plot did not proceed as planned. The campaign against Dublin Castle disintegrated on the evening of 22 October when Owen O'Connolly, a kinsman of one of the Dublin leaders, revealed details of the engagement to Sir William Parsons, one of the two acting Lord Justices. In Ulster, however, the rebels found greater success. The lead conspirators targeted strategically significant settlements and disarmed New English

planters and garrisons. Over the next several days, Phelim O'Neill disarmed British settlers from an arc of territory in central Ulster extending from Dungannon to Newry; forces under Rory Maguire in county Fermanagh and the O'Reillys in county Cavan found similar success within the first week of the rising.

Even at this early stage of the rising, it is possible to discern a constitutional motive. On 4 November, Phelim O'Neill issued a declaration from Newry purporting to possess a commission from Charles I authorizing attacks on English settlers.¹⁶ The forged commission presented justification for the rising in constitutional terms, complaining of the English parliament's intrusion on royal prerogative and warning that the king feared 'these storms blow aloft and are very likely to be carried by the vehemency of the Protestant party into our kingdom of Ireland and endanger our royal power there.'¹⁷ The O'Reillys in county Cavan likewise asserted a 'great cause of fear in the proceedings of our neighbour nations' and signalled a desire to negotiate with Charles I over Catholic grievances including the failed Graces.¹⁸ The depositions preserve similar evidence, as well as accounts of participants in the rising citing the Scottish Covenanters' evolving relationship to the crown as a template for Irish aims.¹⁹ These references suggest a rough understanding of how the constitutional relationship between the Irish parliament, the English parliament, and the crown had evolved. Fears of the Long Parliament's agenda played an integral role in this framing of the rising, but at least some partisans in the rising also seem to have believed that the British crisis of the 1640s had opened the door to a radical reconstruction of the constitutional relationship between Charles I and his Irish subjects.²⁰

Over the past two decades, scholarship on the social history of the 1641 rebellion has proliferated, in large measure thanks to historians' rehabilitation of the 1641 depositions. Consisting of a disparate collection of accounts taken primarily from dispossessed settlers in the 1640s and early 1650s and archived at Trinity College Dublin, the 1641 depositions provide a rich source of evidence, not least about the differing regional manifestations of the rebellion and local and individual experiences with violence and survival.

Deposition evidence suggests that as the traditional structures of authority disintegrated in October and November 1641, a popular rebellion emerged. The violence of the early weeks of the rising reflected inequalities that had been created and sustained by the Stuart plantations, with evidence suggesting that participants pursued grievances arising from economic hardship and debt. Likewise, rebel references to perceived New English abuses of the law suggest resentment over the loss of political power and social prestige.²¹ It is also clear that some violence simply arose from opportunistic attacks on dispersed and disorganized settlers.²²

In some cases, the depositions allow a close look at specific attacks and the interpersonal dynamics that informed violence. For example, in an article on the murder of Arthur Champion, a New English planter in Fermanagh, Raymond Gillespie, finds that the outbreak of the rising presented an opportunity to avenge a history of bad neighbourly behaviour and a generally quarrelsome disposition.²³ The depositions also shed light on social dynamics in local communities. The failure of English planters to mobilize for self-defence, the refusal of Scots planters to join with English neighbours against

the rebels, and examples of New English Protestants renouncing their religion suggest isolation, fragmentation, and mistrust within the settler population. On the other hand, microhistorical evidence demonstrates how some newcomers had been able to build community relationships across confessional and ethnic lines. In county Cavan, the experience of the Scottish minister George Creighton demonstrates how ties of charity, neighbourhood, and kinship could assist an endangered settler during the rising.³⁴

Deposition evidence also reveals divisions between Scottish and English settlers during the first weeks of the rising. Whereas English planters seemed unable to respond collectively to the outbreak of the rising in Ulster, the Scots proved much more capable of organizing for self-defence. At Killeshandra in county Cavan, Sir James Hamilton and Sir James Craig organized a garrison that held out against the rebels until the summer of 1642.³⁵ In the Laggan valley, Sir William Stewart and Sir Robert Stewart organized a militia force that remained active in north-west Ulster throughout the 1640s.³⁶ This partially reflects the fact that the rebels focused their attention on English settlers during the first weeks of the rising, largely avoiding conflict with the Scots. The fact that the Scottish plantations tended to be more ethnically homogeneous and organized around kinship ties also proved significant.

There are numerous references to rebel partisans who claimed that they had no intention of attacking their Scottish neighbours, and the depositions reflect some accommodation between the rebels and Scottish planters in the north, including a handful of cases in which deponents alleged that Scots took pleasure in witnessing and sometimes participated in attacks on English settlers.³⁷ The presence of Scottish Catholics should also not be overlooked. In the early months of 1642, for example, the earl of Antrim's Scottish tenants joined with the Irish rebels. This material also suggests a significant ethnic component to the rising, which connects to repeated assertions in the depositions that Irish rebels waged symbolic attacks on English cultural artefacts, for example massacring English breeds of livestock.³⁸

A growing number of local studies of the rising based on the depositions point to significant regional differences. For example, references to acts of violence appear more commonly in central Ulster than in depositions from the south and east. The rebellion manifested itself in Munster and Leinster gradually, giving settlers time to prepare for self-defence or flight. Depositions from the Munster plantations also suggest a great deal of interaction between various religious and ethnic constituents, including inter-marriage and bilingualism, which may have mediated some local tensions.

FRAMING THE REBELLION: THE 1641 RISING AND THE CRISIS OF THE THREE KINGDOMS

In contrast to the complexities evident on the ground in Ireland, English observers found it easy to make sense of the rising. In the spring of 1641, the architects of Wentworth's trial had framed the Lord Deputy's actions as part of a broader popish plot.

The rising confirmed these fears and widespread print coverage played an important role in further disseminating anti-popish anxieties. As much as one-third of England's total print output in October 1641–March 1642 dealt in some manner with the rising.³⁹

Much of the English print coverage of the rising stressed atrocity and asserted that Irish Catholics waged a war of extermination against Protestants and Englishmen. Typically short and cheap, pamphlets and tracts on the rebellion contained many sensationalized elements, including graphic and melodramatic scenes of arbitrary violence. A tract entitled *Treason in Ireland*, for example, described the murder of Protestant children, the massacre of twenty families in a plantation town, the rape of a virgin in the presence of her captive parents, the decapitation and mutilation of an aged woman, and an incident in which Irish Catholics sexually assaulted an English maiden and then drowned her in a hot cauldron.⁴⁰ Texts with lurid titles such as *Bloody News from Ireland*, *The Rebels' Turkish Tyranny*, *The Tears of Ireland*, and *Worse and Worse News from Ireland* repeated similar accusations.⁴¹ Explicitly, a number of these works also connected the rebellion to Catholic interests on the Continent. For example, in his 1642 work entitled *A Remonstrance of Diverse Remarkable Passages Concerning the Church and Kingdom of Ireland*, Henry Jones, dean of Kilmore and chief collector of the 1641 depositions asserted 'that from Spain they did expect an army... From France also they looked for aid. Being in all this further encouraged by bulls from Rome.'⁴²

Whereas atrocities and popish intrigue took centre stage in print, in general, the depositions tended to focus on theft and the destruction of property. Even in parts of Ulster where violence was significant, the evidence from the depositions is anything but clear. Close readings of particular acts of atrocity suggest significant differences in accounts, problems with chronology and coherence, and cross-fertilization as deponents failed to differentiate between events that they had witnessed directly and those that they had heard about from other settlers.⁴³ Interpreting other kinds of violence can be equally difficult. For example, English pamphlets repeatedly asserted episodes of rape, but references to these crimes are almost non-existent in the depositions.⁴⁴

English printed material provides evidence of growing mistrust of Charles I's conduct. Although no pamphlet went so far as to assert the king's participation in the rising, cheap print did publicize rebel claims about royal support for their actions, often framing these accounts as examples of Irish treachery. Henry Jones's *Remonstrance*, for example, dwelled upon the forged commission, reported on rebel rumours that Charles was present in Ulster, and repeated rebel boasts that the queen had played a key role in directing the rising.⁴⁵

The English parliament participated directly in the process of connecting the rebellion to popish plots. Within days of receiving news of the rising in November 1641, John Pym renewed discussion of the Grand Remonstrance in the Commons. This document reiterated suspicions of Wentworth's conduct and connected generic anti-popish fears to the outbreak of the rebellion. In Ireland, the Grand Remonstrance asserted, 'they have had time and opportunity to mold and prepare their work' and only divine providence had stopped them from having 'totally subverted the government of it, routed out religion, and destroyed all the Protestants.'⁴⁶

Reconstruction of reader response to this material is difficult, but the evidence from crowd protests in London and petitioning campaigns in the provinces suggests that this synthesis of recent Irish events found a sympathetic audience. The last week of December 1641 proved especially intense in the metropolis, with the Commons accepting several petitions from diverse constituencies of Londoners who connected the Irish rebellion to calls for reform of the Church of England and self-defence against popish enemies. Outside London, the rising also had a destabilizing effect. Settlers fleeing from the Irish conflict began appearing in English and Scottish ports in December and January, bringing with them tales of misery and woe. Panics, although not common, also occasionally broke out in 1642 as local communities responded with fear to the movements of persons displaced from Ireland as a result of war.³⁷

In Ireland, the English characterization of the rising as a popish plot played an important role in forcing together mutually suspicious Irish and Old English Catholics. The Lord Justices' proclamation of 23 October 1641 presented the rising as the work of 'evil affected Irish papists' and this underlying sentiment characterized Dublin Castle's response to the rising.³⁸ Over the winter of 1641-2, the state organized raids out of the city and commanders like Sir Charles Coote often failed to differentiate between loyal and rebellious Catholics. For Old English Catholics who had attempted to separate themselves from the rebellion, the state's crackdown on popery and advocacy of indiscriminate violence proved demoralizing and destabilizing, and led to defections into rebellion.³⁹ In turn, as Old English Catholics embraced the rising, Dublin Castle could further justify the brutality of New English attacks in the Pale. Thus, by the late spring of 1642, the Ulster-centred and Irish-led rebellion had morphed into a nationwide and multi-ethnic revolution.

During the spring and summer of 1642, the conflict moved into a period of internationalization and stalemate. Although the Dublin administration seemed in danger of collapse in October and November 1641, by April 1642 things had turned around considerably. Troops based in Dublin had mostly pacified the Pale, albeit at the cost of alienating and driving away many loyal Catholics. Following a string of victories early in the war, Phelim O'Neill suffered a major defeat when New English troops raised the siege of Drogheda in March 1642, and with the coming of spring, reinforcements from England and Scotland could be expected. A force of 2500 Scots under General Robert Munro arrived in April, and proved immediately successful in rolling back the tide of rebellion in east Ulster.

Many of these developments occurred in spite of rather than as a result of actions in the English parliament. Although parliamentary business in late 1641 had been dominated by Irish affairs, a concrete response to the rising developed slowly. Through the end of December 1641, the Commons focused primarily on symbolic acts, such as the Grand Remonstrance and the celebration of fast days to reflect on the crisis in Ireland. Inaction in parliament provided traction for claims of a popish plot, with some critics asserting that the long delays revealed the sinister machinations of a popish fifth column comprised of the Laudian bishops, Catholic lords, members of the Queen's household, and English recusants.

After the king's flight from London in mid-January 1642, Irish affairs became a point of moderate cooperation between crown and parliament. In late January, Charles I authorized the Act for a Speedy Contribution and Loan, which created a mechanism for raising money to be used towards the relief of displaced Irish Protestants.⁴⁰ In March, the more ambitious Act for the Speedy and Effectual Reducing of the Rebels in His Majesty's Kingdom of Ireland, more commonly known as the Adventurers' Act, passed into law.⁴¹ With the Adventurers' Act, the English parliament claimed authority to seize and redistribute property belonging to men who had taken up arms in Ireland. On a practical level, the Adventurers' Act funded the pacification of the rebellion with money contributed by English investors who would eventually be reimbursed with Irish land.⁴²

REALIGNMENT: CHARLES I, THE CATHOLIC CONFEDERATION, AND THE CESSATION

The Adventurers' Act left little doubt that an English victory in Ireland would be followed by massive dispossession of Catholic property and a vigorous English parliamentary intrusion into Irish affairs. The Act formalized the constitutional revisions that the English parliament had been asserting since the trial of Thomas Wentworth. In what amounted to a heavy-handed intrusion on the king's prerogatives, the Act prohibited royal pardons for Irish rebels without parliamentary authorization, gave the English parliament the mandate to determine when the counter-offensive in Ireland was complete, and created a panel of commissioners who would report directly to parliament on the progress of the war. Charles I did try to rein in some of this transformative momentum, refusing, for example, to provide a royal warrant to the parliamentary commissioners sent to Dublin in the autumn of 1642. Even so, the language of the new statute clearly indicated that the English parliament and its investor allies would play a much-expanded role in post-conquest Ireland.

With the Adventurers' Act, the Long Parliament thus created a mechanism for waging a war of conquest framed around the extinction of Irish Catholic political and economic interests. For Irish Catholics, this development played a key role in the formation of the Catholic Confederation in June 1642. As early as March 1642, Catholic clergy meeting at Kells agreed to excommunicate any Catholic who took up arms for Dublin Castle. In May and June 1642, meetings of priests and the heads of key Irish and Old English families at Kilkenny formalized these measures by creating a structure for managing the political and military situation in rebel-controlled territory.⁴³ In the summer and autumn of 1642, Irish soldiers who had served Spain on the Continent began to return to Ireland. These professional soldiers helped improve the Confederate army, which in turn strengthened the bargaining position of the Catholic Confederation.

A constitutional argument lay at the heart of Confederate activism. The oath of association promulgated at Kilkenny in June 1642 included a pledge of allegiance to Charles I.

The Confederates, however, married this claim of allegiance to a call for substantial revisions to Ireland's constitutional position in the British Isles. Confederate leaders hoped to see major concessions from Charles I, including the repeal of Poyning's Law and the creation of an autonomous Irish parliament, official recognition of distinct Irish legal traditions, and guarantees of the free practice of the Roman Catholic religion. In the context of the British crisis of 1641–2, the proposed constitutional revisions were not entirely implausible. Indeed, many of the key principles floated by the Confederation paralleled the constitutional arguments of the Scottish Covenanters.⁴³

The outbreak of civil war in England and the stalemate that developed after the battle of Newbury enhanced the potential for a negotiated settlement between Charles I and the Catholic Confederation. From the crown's perspective, forces tied up in Ireland represented wasted resources, which could be used to the royalists' advantage in the English theatre of war if a workable peace could be achieved in Ireland. Moreover, as the English conflict wore on, serious divisions emerged among the New English in Ireland. These tensions pitted those who identified themselves as primarily loyal to Charles I against those who saw themselves as primarily loyal to the anti-popish offensive and viewed the English parliament's advocacy of the Adventurers' Act as an important component of Ireland's future security.

The Confederate cause benefited from discord among New English and Protestant interests, but also showed signs of strain. As Micheál Ó Siochru's essay in this volume argues, it is easy to overstate conflicts between the Old English and Irish within the Catholic Confederation. At the same time, however, tensions between those who had pre-rebellion properties and prestige to fall back on, including many of the prominent Old English families, and those who had already suffered dispossession as a result of the plantations could create very different outlooks on a negotiated settlement with the king.

Following several military setbacks in the spring of 1643, the Catholic Confederation entered into serious discussions with James Butler, first marquis of Ormond over a one-year ceasefire. When Ormond announced the Cessation on 15 September 1643, it reflected the hopes of both parties rather than any tangible agreement on the complicated political and constitutional issues. For the crown especially, the agreement had a great deal of dangerous potential. Further negotiations with the Confederation would likely require concessions on constitutional issues and the prosecution of men who had participated in the early months of the rebellion. The Adventurers' Act, however, rendered both requirements impossible. The potential for resumed hostilities when the Cessation expired also meant that Charles I would have to make a significant gamble if he intended to draw military resources out of Ireland to support the royalist cause in England.

The Cessation also had the immediate effect of devastating hopes for further accommodation between the royalist and anti-papist factions of the New English in Ireland.⁴⁴ A number of high-profile military commanders in service to Dublin Castle openly questioned or resisted the Cessation entirely. The Scots troops in Ulster also presented a major problem. The English parliament's cooperation with the Scots left a major military force in the field and beyond the reach of the ceasefire agreement. As the conflict in

Ireland evolved in the mid-1640s, these troops would become increasingly important in any political calculus.⁴⁵

In a British context, the Cessation represented a major turning point. Predictably, the English parliament framed the Cessation as a major betrayal of the godly cause. Outrage over the Cessation in turn paved the way for formal cooperation between the English parliament and the Scottish Covenanters. On 25 September 1643, only ten days after publication of the ceasefire, parliament adopted the Solemn League and Covenant. This effectively completed the process of realignment that had begun in early 1643. Ormond and the Confederates had now entered into an uneasy and unpredictable ceasefire and began long-term negotiations for a peace favourable to English royalists. Tensions among the New English had exploded into open division. Opponents of the Cessation publicly connected themselves to the English parliamentary cause against the crown, and Ulster—seat of the 1641 rebellion and the region where the Irish rising had had its most important early successes—fell under occupation by Scottish forces allied with the English parliament.

In retrospect, Charles I lost the most as a result of this realignment. In 1641, hints of crown complicity in the rising had appeared on the fringes of political discourse and were presented as evidence of the rebels' treasonous disrespect for authority rather than as a criticism of the crown. With the Cessation, however, some Irish Protestant leaders now openly questioned the king. According to this view, Charles I, in an effort to expand his war against Protestants in England and Scotland, had allied himself with those Catholics who in 1641 had massacred scores of Protestant settlers. This was an important moment on the road to revolution in England. To his enemies, the crown's participation in the Cessation provided further evidence of an untrustworthy king who was willing to make war against his own Protestant subjects. The representation of Charles I as a 'man of blood' owed much to this development.

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND HISTORICAL MEMORY: THE LONG VIEW OF THE 1641 RISING

During the 1640s, published accounts of the rising often asserted authenticity by appealing to the authority of the Irish Lord Justices and by drawing on the 1641 depositions. Henry Jones's *Remonstrance of Diverse Remarkable Passages Concerning the Church and Kingdom of Ireland*, which appeared in the spring of 1642, represents an early example of this kind of account. Prefaced by letters from the Irish Lord Justices attesting to its veracity, the *Remonstrance* assembled heavily edited and excised versions of depositions taken during the first month of the rising into an assertion of rebel intentions to enact 'a general extirpation even to the last and least drop of English blood.'⁴⁷

The same general structure appears in Sir John Temple's *The Irish Rebellion*, first published in London in 1646. Like Jones, Temple presented selectively edited information from the depositions and supporting material from Dublin Castle administrators. *The Irish Rebellion* also reflected the realignments of the mid-1640s, presenting the Cessation as a betrayal of those Protestants who had suffered through the dislocations of 1641. Temple's work had a unique longevity, appearing in at least ten editions over the next century and a half, with the last appearing in 1812.⁴⁸ Asserting a simple version of the rising as an indiscriminate and brutal massacre of Protestants, Temple's work fit comfortably with other early modern accounts of Protestant martyrdom, particularly John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.⁴⁹ It also asserted the grossly exaggerated claim of more than 100,000 Protestant deaths, a figure that became deeply entrenched in slanted accounts of the rising.⁵⁰

During episodes of political stress in the British Isles, appeals to memories of the 1641 rising could serve the interests of Protestant polemicists. John Milton's *Eikonoklastes*, for example, justified the regicide in part by asserting that Charles I bore responsibility for more than half a million Protestant deaths in Ireland by having been 'ever friendly to the Irish papists'.⁵¹ In the 1680s and 90s, a flurry of works drawing on memories of 1641 appeared in both England and Ireland, including a new edition of Temple and Edmund Borlase's similarly structured *History of the Execrable Irish Rebellion*.⁵² Well into the nineteenth century, works of historical fiction such as William Godwin's *Mandeville* (1817) and James Meikle's *Killinichy* (1839), likewise asserted as fact a general and indiscriminate massacre of Protestants in 1641.⁵³

Protestant commemorative culture sustained memories of the 1641 rising. From 1661 into the late eighteenth century, commemorations of the rising occurred in Dublin on 23 October.⁵⁴ Printed versions of 23 October sermons, often stressing the cruelty of Roman Catholics and the theme of providential deliverance, began to appear in the crisis years of the mid-1680s and intensified after the Glorious Revolution.⁵⁵ These fit into an arc of Protestant celebration that also incorporated commemorations of William III's birthday (4 November) and Gunpowder Plot (5 November).⁵⁶ Simplistic narrations of the rising stressing Catholic-on-Protestant violence survived in the service of sectarian agendas into the twenty-first century. References to mass drownings at Portadown, for example, appeared on Orange Order marching banners and public memorials.⁵⁷ Essays disseminated by the Ian Paisley-affiliated European Institute of Protestant Studies likewise continue to present the rising as a 'vicious, unprovoked bloodbath engineered by Rome against Protestants'.⁵⁸

In part thanks to the dispossession of Irish Catholics in the aftermath of the Cromwellian conquest and the War of the Two Kings, few competing accounts of the rising appeared in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Irish Catholics, however, did recognize the significant power of historical memory and the ways that commemorative culture in particular sustained interpretations of the rising that served anti-popish agendas. Thus, the short-lived Irish Patriot Parliament called by James II in 1689 abolished commemorations of 23 October.⁵⁹ Occasional printed pieces framed the Irish rising as a matter of Catholic self-defence, critiqued the massively inflated

casualty figures found in Temple and similar works, and counterpoised evidence of Protestant atrocities, including massacres of non-combatants, during the war. Hugh Reily's *Ireland's Case Briefly Stated*, originally published in 1695 and reprinted at several points in the eighteenth century represents the most thorough of such retorts to the Protestant historiography.⁶⁰

Some of the earliest syntheses of the rising, particularly Jones's *Remonstrance* and Temple's *Irish Rebellion*, drew upon the 1641 depositions as evidence. It should therefore come as no surprise that debates on the reliability of the archive played an important role in the early historiography of the rising.⁶¹ Historians began to tentatively probe the depositions during the late nineteenth century. Much of this early work, however, misused the depositions and repeated assertions that would be familiar to seventeenth-century readers of John Temple. James Anthony Froude's *The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, for example, asserted that the depositions represented an 'eternal witness of blood, which the Irish Catholics have from that time to this been vainly trying to wash away'.⁶² Mary Hickson's *Ireland in the Seventeenth Century* bore an imperious preface by Froude and printed heavily edited versions of selected depositions that asserted universal 'massacres... begun by the Roman Catholics on the 23rd of October at the instigation of the majority of their priests'.⁶³ On the other side, critics such as Robert Dunlop and John T. Gilbert countered that the self-interested motives of the Dublin Castle administrators, the commissioners responsible for compiling the depositions, and the deponents themselves rendered the entire archive suspect. The former concluded that virtually all evidence pertaining to violence in the depositions had been tainted by the biases of men and women 'maddened with recent losses and yearning for revenge', which 'rendered it impossible for us to discriminate between what was false and what was true in them'.⁶⁴

Apart from an abortive attempt to calendar and publish the 1641 depositions under the auspices of the Irish Manuscripts Commission in the 1930s, the archive remained largely unutilized for much of the twentieth century.⁶⁵ Over the past three decades, however, historians have rediscovered the richness of the archive and significantly expanded scholarship on the rising. Work with the depositions necessitates engagement with the biases of the witnesses and those who recorded testimony. Despite these challenges, the archive contains a wealth of evidence on social, economic, and cultural issues. The online release of the depositions, including both facsimile and transcribed versions of the archive and full text search capacities, opens dramatic opportunities for many more studies of the social and cultural context of the rising.⁶⁶

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