Ireland

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Protestant nonconformity and dissent in early modern Ireland was both energised and enervated by its relationships to the established church, the majority Catholic population, and the changing political environments of the neighbouring island and the religious loyalties of its governments and royal families.[1] The Irish reformation had legal beginnings that reflected its distinctive political culture: in 1537, three years after the equivalent English act, the Irish Parliament passed its Act of Supremacy, which it renewed in 1560, though, as throughout the three kingdoms, the Protestant reformation that was thus initiated was not secured until the early eighteenth century and the accession of the House of Hanover. The community of Irish Protestants that was created by this legislation existed in a distinctive context at the heart of a

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[1] For standard accounts of Protestant dissent and nonconformity in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Ireland, see J. C. Beckett, *Protestant Dissent in Ireland, 1687-1780* (London, 1968); Aidan Clarke, 'Varieties of Reformation: The First Century of the Church of Ireland', in W. J. Shiels and Diana Wood (ed.), *The Churches, Ireland and the Irish: Studies in Church History*, Studies in Church History 25 (Oxford, 1989), pp. 105-122; Phil Kilroy, *Protestant Dissent and Controversy in Ireland, 1660-1714* (Cork, 1994); Alan Ford, 'The Church of Ireland, 1558-1641: A Puritan Church?' in Alan Ford, James McGuire and Kenneth Milne (eds), *As By Law Established: The Church of Ireland since the Reformation* (Dublin, 1995), pp. 52-68; Alan Ford, *The Protestant Reformation in Ireland, 1590-1641* (Dublin, 1997); Richard L. Greaves, *God's Other Children: Protestant Nonconformists and the Emergence of Denominational Churches in Ireland, 1660-1700* (Stanford, CA, 1997); Crawford Gribben, *God's Irishmen: Theological Debates in Cromwellian Ireland* (Oxford, 2007); and Robert Whan, *The Presbyterians of Ulster, 1680-1730* (Woodbridge, 2013); Alan Ford, 'Scottish Protestant Clergy and the Origins of Dissent in Ireland', in David Edwards with Simon Egan (eds), *The Scots in Early Stuart Ireland: Union and Separation in Two Kingdoms* (Manchester, 2015); and the essays contained in Kevin Herlihy's invaluable edited collections, *The Irish Dissenting Tradition, 1650-1750* (Dublin, 1995); *The Religion of Irish Dissent, 1650-1800* (Dublin, 1996); *The Politics of Irish Dissent, 1650-1800* (Dublin, 1997); and *Propagating the Word of Irish Dissent* (Dublin, 1998).

European and increasingly trans-Atlantic nexus of institutions, ideas, and personnel.[2] But the Irish reformation was not a success. Unusually, in European terms, the island's majority population did not adhere to the religious determination of its governments. The principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*, which was established in the Peace of Augsburg (1555) as a method of settling the question of national religious adherence, gave way in Ireland in the face of the practical difficulty of imposing the new faith, without its failure ever raising suggestions that religious pluralism might serve as an appropriate alternative. This alternative was explored elsewhere: in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, after the Warsaw Confederation (1573), Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, Anabaptists, Bohemian Brethren, Unitarians and Jews were provided with legal recognition.[3] In Ireland, only the most minor dissenting groups appealed for any policy of toleration, and that from the middle of the seventeenth century, while throughout most of the period churchmen and politicians of competing religious loyalties remained committed to the ideal of a single national religious community.

Irish churchmen and politicians expected to realise the formation of this single national religious community by political, legal, administrative and doctrinal means. The efforts of the changing personnel of the Church of Ireland hierarchy to identify a doctrinal centre, to manage nonconformity, and then to enforce conformity, provided their community with a privileged, if perpetually unsettled, position. In securing the rights of the church by law established, the bishops were unable to prohibit the worship of the most important groups of Protestant nonconformists, who seemed continually to grow in numbers, wealth and influence; and, in requiring these

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[2] Ford, *The Protestant Reformation in Ireland*, pp. 7-20.

[3] C. Scott Dixon, *The Church in the Early Modern Age* (London, 2016), p. 89.

nonconformists to adhere to the establishment, they were creating the conditions for dissent. By the early eighteenth century, one of these dissenting groups, the Presbyterians, had so grown in terms of membership and political clout, by reason of its close association with the established church of Scotland and its numerical consequence as a necessary ally in the face of Irish Catholic danger, seriously to threaten the privileges of the established church. And so the legal position of these dissenters remained ambiguous. On the one hand, the act of uniformity (1665) brought education under episcopal oversight, by requiring schoolteachers to conform to the Church of Ireland, and imposed a £100 fine on anyone overseeing the administration of the eucharist without having been episcopally ordained; on the other hand, three decades later, in 1697, Irish MPs formally approved the long-standing habit of not enforcing the provision of the 1560 act that required attendance at parish worship.[4] Throughout the seventeenth century, like other dissenters, Presbyterians suffered social, educational, legal and political inequalities, even as attendance at Catholic worship was forbidden, under the penal laws, then connived at, until, in the reign of James II, it was, briefly, rewarded and made fashionable.

The Irish history of religious nonconformity, dissent and toleration is therefore distinctive.[5] The English toleration act (1689) made little difference to the circumstances of Irish Protestant dissenters, and although they benefitted from James's declaration of indulgence (1687) and the granting of limited rights for dissenters under the toleration act (1719), their access to the opportunities of public service was only guaranteed with the removal of the sacramental test in 1780, as

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[4] Beckett, *Protestant Dissent in Ireland*, p. 40.

[5] Compare, for example, John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1689* (London, 2000).

Andrew Holmes's essay in a subsequent volume observes. For much of the period under discussion in this chapter, Presbyterian marriages were not subject to the legal liabilities that became increasingly problematic in the first half of the eighteenth century, when, in different political contexts, representatives of the establishment grew increasingly frustrated with the government's indulgence of their most significant rivals. The continuity of popular Catholicism is therefore not the only evidence for the frustration of magisterial Protestantism: the management of nonconformity in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the emergence of organised dissent in the mid-seventeenth century, and the perpetual growth of its community, offer additional evidence of popular resistance to the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*. Catholic resilience and the consequent need for the government to rely on the intransigence of Protestant nonconformity and dissent were both alike reasons for the failure of the Irish reformation.

This chapter will survey the emergence and evolution of Irish Protestant nonconformity and dissent in the period before 1689. It will consider the changing circumstances of nonconformists and dissenters, and the changing utility of these descriptors, in the contexts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as the Irish establishment moved from theological ambiguity towards two different confessional standards and methods of subscription; from this emphasis on ideas through the structural tensions caused by Laudian reform and Wentworth's insistence upon liturgical conformity, Cromwellian revolution with its associated ecclesiastical pragmatism and valuing of difference, and the new allegiances of the 'Protestant interest' after the Restoration; and as dissenters moved from being the tolerated allies of a sympathetic establishment to become the victims of Laudian reform, the constituents of Cromwellian innovation, to become ineffectually marginalised during

the Restoration and the most serious threat to the stability of the Protestant Ireland after the Williamite wars. This chapter will consider the emergence and evolution of Irish dissent with reference to attempts at confessionalisation; the impact of the migration of ideas and individuals to and from Scotland, England, the American colonies, France, and the Palatinate; the functions and occasional absences of confessions of faith, and the different purposes they served; the negotiation of law, power and finance within a colonial situation; and the development of distinctive denominational communities through the 1650s alongside the emergence of a pan-denominational 'Protestant interest' after the Restoration that could not overcome the denominational loyalties of dissent, even in the context of the early Jacobite exile, the renewal of war across the three kingdoms, and the expectations of religious and constitutional change that followed.

Throughout this period, as Irish dissent absorbed personnel and ideas from the established church of Scotland, the new religious movements that emerged during the English revolution, the established churches of American colonies, and, eventually, the Reformed churches of France and the Palatinate, it developed a numerical strength greater in proportion than that of dissenters in England and Scotland, and claimed, in the north-east of the island, a number of adherents larger than that of the Church of Ireland. The significance of the dissenting community was recognised in the early 1670s, when Charles II began the programme of providing state funding for Presbyterian ministers, and was confirmed at the Glorious Revolution, when William III consolidated this *regium donum* and repealed a great deal of discriminatory legislation – a financial policy that divided the Presbyterian denomination even as it recognised its social standing and, effectively, admitted the significance of its link to an established church elsewhere in the three kingdoms. The

regium donum privileged one dissenting group above the others – in contrast to England, where Congregationalists, Baptists and Quakers remained a significant presence – and identified Presbyterians as the 'most equal' of those who would not conform. By the end of the seventeenth century, other Protestant dissenting communities had suffered serious decline, in parallel with the Cromwellian networks by which they had been supported, and the tiny number of surviving Baptist and Independent congregations were hovering on the verge of extinction, hardly warranting a reference in J. C. Beckett's standard account of *Protestant dissent in Ireland, 1687-1780* (1968). But the Presbyterians, the earliest and largest of Irish dissenting movements, retaining strong links to the Church of Scotland and its educational institutions, while expanding into the American colonies, emerged from the ambiguity of the late reformation and the instability of the Cromwellian interlude to be officially recognised as an established church in waiting. Politically marginal while numerically superior, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, dissent had come to be recognised as the dominant expression of Protestantism in the most Protestant parts of Ireland. Its significance was structural: the failure of the Irish reformation was both a cause and consequence of Protestant nonconformity and dissent, and the inability of the establishment to control it. Paradoxically, dissent dominated, if it did not denominate, the Irish Protestant experience.

I

The failure of the Irish reformation made possible the emergence of Protestant nonconformity. Historians have struggled to explain the extent to which and the reasons why the reformation failed, despite the fact that this question was regularly

debated at the end of the twentieth century.[6] This debate may not have paid

sufficient attention to the fact that the failure of Protestant confessionalisation was

represented not only by an enduring popular Catholicism, but also by the existence

of a community of Protestant dissenters, which through much of this period, as we

have noted, was growing in numbers, wealth, influence, and confidence.[7]

Despite their divisions, Irish Protestants had much in common. They tended to

share the same religious-discursive method, drawing on the Reformed theology that

had become normative in the established churches of the three kingdoms, while

offering different accounts of church government and, later, the sacraments. Irish

Protestants also tended to share a conspiratorial and apocalyptic worldview,

agreeing that the old faith represented a serious threat to their security. Their

apologists substantiated this claim by reference to Spanish and Italian incursions in

Smerwick (1580) and Kinsale (1601), by the widely publicised Ulster rebellion

(1641), and by fears that its enormities could be repeated following the reinstatement

by James II of Catholics in civil society in the late 1680s, and by the simultaneous

return to its former owners of land confiscated as a consequence of the Cromwellian

settlement. Irish Protestants located their apocalyptic and conspiratorial concerns at

the heart of their festive culture, with commemorations of the 1641 rebellion held

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[6] B. I. Bradshaw, 'Sword, Word and Strategy in the Reformation in Ireland', *Historical Journal* 21 (1978), pp.
475-502; N. P. Canny, 'Why the Reformation Failed in Ireland: *Une question mal posée*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical
History* 30 (1979), pp. 423-50; K. S. Bottigheimer, 'The Failure of the Reformation in Ireland: *Une question bien
posée*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985), pp. 196-207; S. G. Ellis, 'Economic Problems of the Church:
Why the Reformation Failed in Ireland', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 41 (1990), pp. 239-65.

[7] Elizabethanne Boran, 'Introduction', in Elizabethanne Boran and Crawford Gribben (eds), *Enforcing
Reformation in Ireland and Scotland, 1550-1700*, St Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Aldershot, 2006),
pp. 1-13.

each 23 October to reiterate the binary division of the Irish population.[8] In the later seventeenth century, these similarities allowed members of different communities to work together in defence of 'the Protestant interest'. But this substantial similarity of belief, and the shared conviction about the perfidy and peril represented by the Catholic majority, was unable to encourage Irish Protestants to bury their ecclesiastical differences under the oversight of the church by law established.

Nonconformity became evident early in the history of Irish Protestantism. Throughout the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the Protestant population, while wielding considerable political, financial and military power, consolidated around (and occasionally against) an often weak establishment, drawing support from a tiny minority of the population except in those areas where policies of 'plantation' had been or were being pursued, in the midlands, Munster, and the north-east, as well as in the Pale, the immediate vicinity of Dublin.[9] Outside these centres of English and Scottish cultural, financial and political influence, Protestant reform was stymied by the barriers of language: for the greater part of this period, the established church lacked clergy and a Bible translation appropriate to the needs of the Irish-speaking majority. Throughout most of the island, the established church was slow to pursue a programme of confessionalisation, clerical appointments did not seem to require clear commitment to reformist or anti-reformist ideals, and the ideological leaders of both Protestant and Catholic reformations lamented the financial, architectural, theological and moral poverty of the Irish church.[10]

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[8] T. C. Barnard, 'The Uses of the 23rd October and Irish Protestant Celebrations', in *Irish Protestant Ascents and Descents, 1641-1770* (Dublin, 2004), pp. 111-42.

[9] Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* (Oxford, 2001).

[10] Boran, 'Introduction', pp. 1-13.

The number of Protestants was, initially, small. In the 1590s, Presbyterian ministers seeking refuge from the Church of England found safe havens in the recently founded Trinity College Dublin. This fluidity may have permitted the emergence of a small number of religious communities of separatists similar to those that were emerging in late sixteenth-century and early seventeenth-century England. Alan Ford has suggested that Henry Ainsworth was the separatist who, in 1594, condemned the established church as being 'in bondage' and bearing 'the yoke of antichrist': Ainsworth was certainly operating in Ireland in the early 1590s, *en route* to his becoming leader of the separatist congregation in Amsterdam.[11] Several separatist congregations from London moved *en masse* to Ireland: one church arrived with its minister in Carrickfergus in the early 1620s, and in the early 1630s another church settled in the nearby town of Antrim.[12] In the same period, John Winthrop was one of a number of English puritans who explored the possibility of joining a plantation project near Mountrath, county Laois, hoping to find an environment in which he could create *ex nihilo* the godly society he had so far found elusive. The Mountrath project was one of several to benefit from organised migration, this time from the Stour Valley, in the puritan heartland of Essex.[13] For many of these nonconformists, Ireland represented a final destination, but for others, including Henry Ainsworth, the island was a staging post in a journey to religious freedoms elsewhere.

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, religious refugees were attracted to Ireland by the theological rigour and ecclesiological pragmatism of the

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[11] Ford, 'Scottish Protestant Clergy and the Origins of Dissent in Ireland', p. 118.

[12] Ford, 'Scottish Protestant Clergy and the Origins of Dissent in Ireland', p. 118.

[13] Francis J. Bremer, *John Winthrop: American's Forgotten Founding Father* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 138-40.

established church. The settlement of refugee Calvinists and the formation of a shadowy nonconformist underground should not obscure the reality that, pursuing a very conservative tendency to include rather than exclude existing clergy, the church that consolidated English power in Ireland was becoming Protestant at a much slower pace than that of the Church of England. Nevertheless, in 1615, enthusiasts for further reformation encouraged the Convocation of the Church of Ireland to move beyond the theological ambiguity of the previous decades formally to adopt a confession of faith that in its doctrinal rigor went far beyond the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England (1563). The new statement of faith, the Irish Articles, overwhelmed the theological constitution of the English church in terms of length and controversial precision. Its one hundred and four theological statements advanced a robust Calvinism alongside an apocalyptic view of the situation of the Irish church, which, following a small number of European confessions of faith, including the Hungarian Confessio Catholica (1562), identified the pope as the antichrist. This zealotry emphasised the clear blue water that lay between the established churches of Ireland and England. For the Irish Articles included a number of theological claims that had featured in the Lambeth Articles (1595), a statement of puritan grievance that had been repudiated by the English bishops, a situation that suggests that the Church of Ireland was closer to the ideology of the hotter sort of English Protestants than to that of the establishment they sought to reform.[14] It is for this reason that historians have debated whether the Church of Ireland might best be described as 'puritan'.[15]

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[14] Clarke, 'Varieties of Reformation', pp. 105-122; Alan Ford, 'Dependent or Independent: The Church of Ireland and its Colonial Contexts, 1536-1647', *The Seventeenth Century* 10 (1995), pp. 163-87; Ford, 'The Church of Ireland, 1558-1641: A Puritan Church?' pp. 52-68.

[15] See, particularly, Ford, 'The Church of Ireland, 1558-1641: A Puritan Church?'.

Even as in the early seventeenth century the established church grew more theologically rigorous, however, it continued to offer security to Protestants who could not accept its preferred model of episcopal government. This balance of soteriological precision and ecclesiological pragmatism proved attractive to puritans in the other two Stuart kingdoms. The Irish church was projecting in emphatic terms its new puritan identity at exactly the time that the godly in the established churches of Scotland and England were looking for a new home, and as large-scale plantation projects brought around ten thousand settlers from south-west Scotland into counties Antrim and Down. These puritan refugees were welcomed into the Irish Reformed church, and helped to supply its pastoral needs, with clergy from the highlands and islands sometimes engaging in evangelistic preaching in Irish-speaking areas and occasionally being given opportunities to disseminate their radical opinions by means of teaching positions in the church's new seminary, Trinity College Dublin.[16] But the loyalty of these English and Scottish puritans was conditional. As the plantations in Antrim and Down increased in size, Scottish clergy found themselves serving congregations that were dominated by their fellow countrymen, and who retained many of their Scottish Presbyterian preferences, even as some of their Gaelic-speaking countrymen began to assimilate into the Catholic cultures of the north-east.[17] In 1622, Scottish ministers accounted for ten of the eighteen clergy in the diocese of Down, and thirteen of the twenty-one clergy in Connor. Between 1613 and 1635, as many as two-thirds of clerical appointees within Down and Connor may have been Scots,[18] and their congregations may have numbered as many as 1,500

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[16] See, generally, Ford, *The Protestant Reformation in Ireland*.

[17] John Richardson, *A Proposal for the Conversion of the Popish Natives of Ireland to the Establish'd Religion* (London, 1712), p. 13-14.

[18] Ford, 'Scottish Protestant Clergy and the Origins of Dissent', p. 120.

members.[19] The bishops of the Church of Ireland were eager to facilitate this sudden influx of Presbyterians, whose numbers would bolster the religious settlement of a province that had long been the subject of Protestant complaint.[20]

Seizing the opportunity, ecclesiastical authorities in the north-east of Ireland turned a blind eye to the liturgical delinquency of some of the Scottish ministers. It did not take long for some of this delinquency to become established. When John Livingstone was ordained, for example, the bishop of Raphoe, Andrew Knox, asked him to score out any part of the service that he found objectionable; but, Livingstone noted, 'I found that it had been so marked by some others before that I needed not mark anything.'[21] Inevitably, this *modus operandi* required compromise on both sides. The bishops' liturgical flexibility – if not negligence – was made possible by the fact that the Irish Articles had concentrated upon soteriological rather than ecclesiological themes, and could not be used to push these hotter sorts of Protestants into formal ecclesiastical dissent. For their part, the Presbyterians had resisted the temptation to establish a fully functioning disciplinary system, for which they had been struggling in Scotland. Neither the bishops nor the émigré Presbyterians were insisting on the details of their competing systems, and the result was that the church prevented dissent by allowing space for nonconformity.

This situation changed in the early 1630s, as Thomas Wentworth, lord deputy of Ireland, sought to solidify the Irish establishment by pushing forward the liturgical reforms and doctrinal emphases which were being associated with Laudian reform in England. He attempted to divide the Ulster Presbyterians from their brethren in

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[19] Ford, 'Scottish Protestant Clergy and the Origins of Dissent', p. 128.

[20] See, for example, the complaints about Ulster made in John Derrick, *The Image of Ireland* (1581), and Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596).

[21] Ford, 'Scottish Protestant Clergy and the Origins of Dissent', p. 122.

Scotland, many of whom were then engaged in the delinquency that would consolidate into military action at the beginning of the Bishops Wars (1639-40), by introducing a controversial oath as a test of fealty to the established church.[22] His clumsy attempt to advance the uniformity of the established church had the effect of breaking up its fluid and ambiguous character: he seemed to be more committed to full-scale confessionalisation than had been several generations of Irish Calvinists. In 1634, Wentworth had the Irish Convocation agree that clergy had now to subscribe to a statement of faith. This was an unwelcome innovation. For all the puritan zealotry of the earlier decades, ministers in the Irish church had not been required to submit to its Articles – they had merely to agree not to preach against them. Wentworth's intervention required Irish clergy to subscribe both to the Thirty-nine Articles and to the Book of Common Prayer. The doctrinal commitment required of ministers within the Irish church had been suddenly extended to include episcopal government. But these tools that had been provided to establish conformity also worked to create dissent. Bishop Bramhall led a crusade against intransigent clergy, and many of those who scrupled at the new requirements returned to the Church of Scotland.[23] Wentworth's activities pushed many formerly pragmatic Presbyterians to elevate the significance of ecclesiology with the support of another established church on the other side of the narrow Irish channel – and, as a consequence, to move from nonconformity into dissent.

It is important to note that the emergence of religious dissent in Ireland was delayed because of a widely shared sense of the threat of the Catholic majority

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[22] For more on this context, see John McCafferty, *The Reconstruction of the Church of Ireland: Bishop Bramhall and the Laudian Reforms, 1633-1641* (Cambridge, 2007).

[23] Ford, 'Scottish Protestant Clergy and the Origins of Dissent', p. 127.

population, as well as by the cementing effect of widely shared commitment to Reformed ideas, and, crucially, a willingness to suspend ecclesiological belief. The success of the Church of Ireland in preventing dissent was based on its recognition that Irish Protestants required a limited space for disagreement. Dissenting groups emerged not because of theological differences about the Trinity, soteriology, or eschatology, for example, but because of differences in understanding church government and the sacraments. And it was Wentworth's demand for ecclesial uniformity in the early 1630s that gave Irish Protestants the language to articulate these differences. The immediate impact of the religious and political crises engendered by Wentworth's poorly planned efforts were experienced alongside the energising of the Ulster Scots by the Scottish National Covenant (1638) and the subsequent Bishops' Wars, as well as the sectarian violence fomented by the rebellion of large sections of the native population in 1641: these were all important catalysts in the fragmentation of the Protestant population into competing religious communities. The attempt by James Ussher, archbishop of Armagh, to propose in *The reduction of episcopacy* (drafted in 1641, but printed in 1656) a design for the formal combination of episcopal and Presbyterian government came as too little, too late. The Church of Ireland could not continue to contain its nonconformists.

This fragmentation began with the Presbyterians. Those Ulster Scots who survived the atrocities of the rebellion appealed to the Scottish government for help. The defence for which they hoped facilitated the undoing of the Irish church. For when a Covenanter army landed at Carrickfergus in 1642, its soldiers organised themselves into a distinctly Presbyterian body, following the discipline of the Church of Scotland, in a move towards militarisation which was rapidly replicated elsewhere in the north-east, which defended the Protestant interest by dividing the Protestant

church. Drawing on the resources of an established church in a neighbouring country, the Ulster Scots established distinctive institutions and defined their theological convictions, expanding through Ulster, formalising links between congregations that would evolve into a regular Presbyterian system with concomitant disciplinary and educational provision, while drawing a small amount of support from the native population.[24] The theologically advanced cultures of the Church of Ireland had provided accommodation for Scottish puritan refugees, and then, in the 1630s, provided them with something to resist. Over one century after the legislative beginnings of Protestant reformation, and in circumstances that confirmed rather than denied the necessity of a state church, many Scots abandoned the habit of nonconformity, and Irish dissent was born.[25]

II

The founding of Presbyterian institutions in Ulster in 1642 illustrated the broader patterns that would characterise the emergence of other expressions of Irish dissent in the period before 1660. Like other religious movements that would be established in the 1650s, the new Presbyterian community was not, in the main, indigenous: it was formed, principally, of those Scottish settlers who had become involved with plantation projects in the north-east of the island, and expanded only very slowly to include members of the native population.[26] This reflected a broader trend in

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[24] *The Minutes of the Antrim Ministers' Meeting, 1654-8*, ed. Mark S. Sweetnam (Dublin, 2012).

[25] Alan Ford, 'The Origins of Irish dissent', in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *The Religion of Irish Dissent, 1650-1800* (Dublin, 1996), pp. 9-30. Herlihy's four collections of essays on Irish dissent, which include some of the most valuable work in this area, focus on the period after 1650.

[26] See, generally, *The Minutes of the Antrim Ministers' Meeting*.

religious change in the period. While revolutionary England provided fertile ground for the development of new religious movements, the dissenting groups that gained significant traction in Ireland were all imported, until, perhaps, the emergence of the so-called "Plymouth" Brethren movement among an Anglo-Irish elite in county Wicklow in the 1820s. The new Presbyterian community, therefore, was not the result of a large-scale programme of evangelisation. The plantation projects in north-east Ulster and elsewhere had not been designed to promote conversion: planters did not arrive with aspirations to bear cross-cultural witness to the native population, and neither is there evidence that those planters regularly witnessed movement into their religious communities, with the possible exception of those involved in the preaching meetings held in Antrim and along the Six Mile Water in the mid-1620s, memories of which may have been elaborated upon to provide a founding myth for the new community, and the narratives of conversions, which may sometimes have been editorially adapted, reported in Independent churches in Cromwellian Dublin. Instead, the Presbyterian community in Ulster was largely formed as a by-product of the economic aspiration of the settlers and those substantial landowners who promoted their migration.

In addition, the Presbyterian institutions, like the new religious communities of the following decade, were established with armed backing. The informal proto-Presbyterian networks that had existed within the confines of the established church for several decades before the 1640s had not sought to establish a distinctive ecclesiastical infrastructure. But these networks of clergy and parishioners gained new confidence with the arrival of the Scottish army. This army landed in Carrickfergus with the stated aim of defending the safety of their co-religionists, but also provided for their forming a denomination. Similarly, in the 1650s, English

dissenting groups would be established with the backing of the Parliamentary army, but this force sought to defend its religious dependents as part of the much broader war aim of the subjugation of the island. Significantly, the decision of the Scottish Presbyterian soldiers to formally establish an ecclesiological structure similar to that with which they had been familiar in Scotland was not a decision to imagine a multi-denominational Ireland, a Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the European west – their intention and expectation was to supplant the ambiguity of the establishment with the doctrinally specific infrastructure that would be required by the Solemn League and Covenant (1643) and facilitated by the publications of the Westminster Assembly (1643-52), which were used gradually to refine the worship patterns and theological convictions of Irish Presbyterian communities. Other dissenting groups would make similar plays for power, through the 1650s and beyond: Baptists and Quakers were perhaps the only dissenting groups to articulate a critique of the religious establishments of traditional Christendom, even as members of the former community took active part in staffing and overseeing the state-funded preachers in the Cromwellian 'civil list', and engaged in an ineffective coup on the eve of the Restoration. Dissenters were divided on the question of whether their congregations should form a new state church – but there were few voices that did not argue that the erstwhile dissenting congregations should enjoy state support.

Further, despite this aspiration to reform the national church, the new Presbyterian community was geographically limited and regionally varied. The location of those congregations that made their first advances in the 1640s tracked the dispersion of Scottish migrants in the north-east counties. One decade later, a community of English Presbyterians emerged independently in the vicinity of Dublin, and made common cause with a rebranded community of former Episcopalian clergy

in Munster, but they made little impact in extending their influence beyond the Pale and the southern plantation. This geographical division made it difficult to maintain doctrinal cohesion. As the Ulster Scots adopted and continued to uphold the Westminster Confession, their southern counterparts permitted a latitude of creedal interpretation which expanded as the decades progressed. Both groups existed within a single ecclesiological infrastructure, but struggled to overcome uneasy cultural differences, and began noticeably to diverge in theological emphasis, with some of the southern Presbyterians developing sentiments that would eventually be seen as being at variance, for example, with traditional thinking about the Trinity. And neither party within the emerging Presbyterian denomination secured large numbers of native converts. The Scots were of course better equipped to grapple with the linguistic barriers that such evangelism involved, and there is evidence of Gaelic-speaking ministers from the highlands and islands engaging in the evangelism of native Catholics in Connacht. Yet, in this pastoral neglect, Presbyterians were typical of other Irish dissenters: throughout this period, Protestant dissenting groups were less likely than the clergy of the Church of Ireland to engage in evangelism among Irish Catholics, though Presbyterian communities in the north-east did include adherents with Gaelic names. Nevertheless, like most of the dissenting groups that were introduced into Ireland in the 1650s, Presbyterians did manage to organise around a series of documents and institutions that survived the period, allowing the community to emerge as a fully-fledged denomination, the structures of which could for several decades effectively conceal the extent of regional theological diversity. The Presbyterian experience in Ulster would prove to be typical. Irish dissent was born in 1642, and it did not take long to consolidate: its

theological variety could not obscure sociological similarities between the communities of dissent.

The formation in 1642 of a Scottish Presbyterian organisation in county Antrim presented a growing number of Irish Protestants with a choice between two rival organisations, therefore, each of which expected to be identified as a national church, and each of which claimed a right to governmental support. As the new Presbyterian infrastructure consolidated, as meetings of ministers were convened and disciplinary structures enacted, the reach of the new Presbyterian organisation extended across the northern counties. Both the new Presbyterian movement and the established church competed for the allegiance of Irish Protestants.[27] But Irish Protestants did not long continue as a bi-denominational community.

III

In the summer of 1649, the appearance of Irish Protestantism suddenly changed. A series of new religious movements were imported into Ireland by the 30,000 invading soldiers of the New Model Army.[28] Many of these soldiers had experienced the excitement and danger of civil war in England – a conflict that John Morrill has described as the last of the European wars of religion[29] – and had witnessed the debates about theology of which the wars had been both cause and consequence. For over a century, Irish Protestantism had been identifiable with the church by law

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[27] Robert Armstrong, 'The Scots of Ireland and the English Republic, 1649-60', in David Edwards with Simon Egan (eds), *The Scots in Early Stuart Ireland: Union and Separation in Two Kingdoms* (Manchester, 2015), pp. 251-278.

[28] See, generally, Gribben, *God's Irishmen*.

[29] John Morrill, *The Nature of the English Revolution: Essays* (New York, 1993), p. 68.

established. The nonconformity that had existed had been largely localised in the north-east and north-west of the island, and was largely limited in appeal to Scottish settlers. But the abolition of episcopacy in 1646 shattered the traditional order of the Church of Ireland. The state church continued to exist, but its creed and constitution were rapidly forgotten, as the soldiers of the London parliament introduced a range of new religious movements that would spread throughout the island to fundamentally alter the religious environment of Irish Protestantism and the geographical centre of dissent, and this, often, with varying degrees of official support. This range of religious movements cannot properly be described as dissenting, for the episcopal national church was not quickly replaced by any alternative, and these groups were often, in effect, negotiating their place in a new establishment. In Ireland, in the 1650s, the dissenters were those who could not worship within the limits of the non-episcopal evangelical Protestantism outlined in the two Cromwellian constitutions – those, that is, who promoted non-Trinitarian views, or who continued to use the prayer book after it had been proscribed. One of the significant features of the 'world turned upside down' was its inversion of the relationship between the old establishment and those it sought to contain. In the 1650s, it was prayer book Episcopalians, like Jeremy Taylor, who were being pushed into dissent.

The new religious movements took full advantage of the inchoate character of the Cromwellian religious settlement. During and after their campaign of conquest, English soldiers carried their religious convictions throughout Ireland, establishing centres of influence in garrison towns along the southern and eastern coasts. The most important of these new religious movements were Independents, also known as Congregationalists, some of whom remained agnostic on the proper mode and

subjects of baptism; Baptists, who argued that baptism should be reserved for those able to make a confession of faith, and whose congregations were often closely associated with the military; and Quakers, who argued against any form of sacramental observation, developed looser networks of association, often disrupting the public worship of other groups, and, consequently, falling foul of the law, except in locations where influential members of the military could offer some degree of protection. Just as the Ulster Presbyterians capitalised on their connections with the church of Scotland, so the southern networks, as they were evolving into new religious movements, developed close links with their co-religionists in England, with Dublin Baptists, for example, receiving admonitions from London. The boundaries between these movements were often porous. Many individuals moved between movements in search of their religious ideal. Baptists lost members to Quakers, while some radicals pursued more idiosyncratic religious practices, sometimes claiming prophetic gifts, and others dallied with antinomianism or mysticism outside any formal congregational context.[30] One preacher worried about radical preachers who had travelled to Ireland to 'vaunt themselves to be God ... in the open streets with detestable pride, atheism, and folly'.[31] Only a tiny handful of individuals explored the possibilities of atheism. But for some observers, the situation was out of control.

The situation was certainly ripe for religious radicalisation. Outside Dublin, five independently controlled armies, in a shifting series of alliances, were waging total war in free-fire zones of almost apocalyptic brutality. Inside the city, the population was being ravaged by disease and was experiencing acute shortages of food. One

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[30] Crawford Gribben, 'Angels and Demons in Cromwellian and Restoration Ireland: Heresy and the Supernatural', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 76:3 (2013), pp. 377-92.

[31] John Owen, *Works*, 16 vols, ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh: Johnstone & Hunter, 1850-1855), viii. 236.

English observer recalled seeing 'poor parentless children that lie begging, starving, rotting in the streets, and find no relief; yea, persons of quality ... seeking for bread, and finding none'.[32] English preachers could not appeal for help to the Presbyterians in the north of the island. The army that had entered Ireland to protect the interests of the Scottish settlers as 'Covenanted Protestants', and who had 'sworn, in the presence of the great God to extirpate Popery and prelacy', had joined forces with the army of the Irish royalists, led by James Butler, first duke of Ormond, who 'counted themselves under no less sacred bond for the maintenance of prelates, service books, and the like', and native Catholics, 'a mighty number that had for eight years together sealed their vows to the Romish religion with our blood and their own'. The Scottish Presbyterians had made an alliance with 'that party which themselves had laboured to render most odious and execrable, as most defiled with innocent blood', to conceal evidence of the atrocities committed in 1641 and to defend the Catholic faith.[33] In the chaos of the invasion, and in the face of the overwhelming Catholic threat, the religious divisions that had formed in and after the 1630s were reflected in the formation of rival armies. The members of the new religious movements, and those of the establishment they sought to replace, were being militarised. Ecclesiology was weaponised, and dissenters were fighting each other.

As these Protestant armies engaged, apologists for rival religious bodies sought to capture the hearts and minds of individuals under their control. The Cromwellian army took pains to provide its soldiers with appropriate reading material. It purchased four thousand Bibles just before the invasion, and was still

[32] Owen, *Works,* viii. 237.

[33] Owen, *Works,* viii. 232-33.

organising their distribution three years later. [34] Some of these Bibles had

enthusiastic readers. John Rogers, who led an Independent congregation in Dublin

with strong links to the army, recorded a series of conversion narratives, offered by

prospective church members, which illustrate the role of Bible reading and the

development of introspective piety among the godly in this period.[35] The conversion

narratives he collected reveal the idiosyncratic spirituality of the members of his

important Congregational church: one membership applicant, Dorothy Emett,

remembered that '[John] Owen was the first man by whose means, and Ministry I

became sensible of my condition', adding that God had assured her of salvation in a

voice that she heard in her sleep.[36] Owen, who was preaching in Dublin as

Cromwell's chaplain in the early 1650s, would have regarded this claim to

extraordinary revelation as entirely spurious. But Emett's claims to spiritual

experience reveal that religious communities could agree on church polity without

necessarily signing up to a broader set of expectations about the Christian life: Emett

shared Owen's views on church government without necessarily subscribing to his

views on the doctrine of revelation. If the Church of Ireland had pursued a puritan

consensus by refusing to divide on ecclesiological issues, religious movements in

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[34] W.M. Clyde, *The Struggle for Freedom of the Press: From Caxton to Cromwell* (Oxford, 1934), p. 225, 281-282; John P. Prendergast, *The Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland* (New York, 1868), p. 78. See Crawford Gribben, 'The Commodification of Scripture, 1640-1660: Politics, Ecclesiology and the Cultures of Print', in Kevin Killeen et al (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England, 1530-1700* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 224-36, and Crawford Gribben, '"Loitering gear": Bible Reading Aids in the Puritan Revolution', in Robert Armstrong and Tadhg O'Hannrachain (eds), *The English Bible in the Early Modern World*, St Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Leiden, 2017), forthcoming.

[35] Crawford Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium: Literature and Theology, 1550-1682* (Dublin, 2000), pp. 149-71; Gribben, *God's Irishmen*, pp. 55-78.

[36] John Rogers, *Ohel or Bethshemesh* (1653), p. 412. Note the errors in pagination in this part of the book.

Cromwellian Ireland that were dividing on the basis of ecclesiological differences were not necessarily participating in a broader culture of agreement.

Cromwellian administrators took advantage of the religious divisions. Members of the new religious movements jockeyed for influence within the administration, and the most astute politicians, including Charles Fleetwood and Henry Cromwell, played off religious movements against each other, securing their own interests, rather than those of any particular religious group. After all, the Cromwellian reformation of the Irish church continued in the absence of any national confession of faith, with some networks continuing to use the Westminster Confession that had fallen out of favour in official circles in England: the Commonwealth and Protectorate parliaments were pursuing the formation of a new confession of faith, to replace that which had been drawn up by the Westminster Assembly, which had been only partially adopted by the Long Parliament. In England, drafts of new confessions of faith extended from the sixteen sentences of *The humble proposals* (1652) and the twenty sentences of *A new confession of faith* (1654) to the full-scale revision of the Westminster Confession in the Savoy Declaration (1658). But no similar project was pursued in Ireland. The Scottish Presbyterian communities in the north-east of the island continued to refer to the Westminster Confession as an authoritative text.[37] And this confession was recommended in publications of individual associations of ministers, like that in Dublin and Leinster. It is not clear whether the confession of faith published by Particular Baptists in London in 1644 was circulated in Ireland, as it did in Scotland, where it was reprinted in Leith. But these efforts at creedal expression were developed in isolation from the government. The Irish parliamentary commissioners

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[37] See, generally, *The Minutes of the Antrim Ministers' Meeting*.

and lords deputy developed a state-backed religious administration that drew heavily on the methods of triers and ejectors that had been developed in England and that depended entirely on the orthodoxy of the persons doing the trying and ejecting.

Throughout the 1650s, therefore, there was no church by law established, but a long ecclesiastical experiment, for the state church, insofar as it can be said to exist, operated without reference to a particular ecclesiological theory or confession of faith. In that context, the only Protestant dissenters were those whose consciences could not tolerate such ambiguity, or those who could not find a place in any of the state-approved religious communities: as the world was turned upside down, a new community of dissent encompassed prophetic individualists who steered clear of all congregational life, such as Walter Costello, as well as members of the erstwhile party of prayer book conformists, including Jeremy Taylor, who moved to county Antrim in 1658 with a pass from the Lord Protector to function as a household chaplain. Some Irish preachers grew tired of this constitutional experimentation, the endless proliferation of religious novelty, and the debate that inevitably escalated. Faithful Teate, who in the late 1650s was preparing to return to Ireland from a brief pastoral career in England, lamented that an individual could not declare himself '*Congregationall*, but must presently be *Schismaticall*, nor *Presbyterian*, but presently *Antichristian*.' The discussions had become so heated that 'a man cannot *follow Peace with all men*, no not with all good men … but … hee becomes an *Heteroclitall Erasitan*, and is almost *Anathematized*, or severall hands, by some lesse charitable *Zelots*, for a *Neutralizing Merozite*.'[38] Irish ministers were certainly concerned to police the boundaries of their ecclesiological communities: in

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[38] Faithful Teate, *The Character of Cruelty in the Workers of Iniquity* (1656), p. 93. The Merozites were cursed by God for failing to assist the Israelites in the conquest of Canaan (Judges 5:23).

April 1658, Irish Presbyterians enquired of their counterparts in London why they 'owne no such thing as a Ruling Elder by Divine Right', compelling the London Provincial Assembly to reiterate their commitment to *A Vindication of the Presbyterial Government and Ministry* (1650).[39] By the end of the decade, as the revolution and its experiment in religious novelty failed, the Cromwellian administration turned to prefer the more conservative religious communities, setting the stage for the formation of 'the Protestant interest' that would, later in the century, combine their political, if not the ecclesiastical, interests.

IV

Despite their bargaining for power at the end of the Richard Cromwell administration, Irish dissenters found themselves at the mercy of the restored king, Charles II, and, at least initially, his less than sympathetic parliaments.[40] In England, the provisions of the so-called Clarendon Code created the conditions for the emergence of distinctive dissenting communities, which, in the early 1660s, were gathered around the memory of martyred leaders by means of a vigorous and innovative culture of print.[41] In Ireland, the situation was, as ever, more ambiguous, as governments remembered that the threat of Protestant dissent was outweighed by the menace of Catholic rebellion.[42] For the number of dissenters continued to increase. In 1670, Sir

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[39] Lambeth Palace Library, *Sion College MS* Arc L40 2/E17 (2)), [244r] - 25 April 1658. I am grateful to Elliot Vernon for providing this reference.

[40] See, generally, Kilroy, *Protestant Dissent and Controversy in Ireland*.

[41] Neil Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Leicester, 1987).

[42] Raymond Gillespie, 'Dissenters and nonconformists, 1661-1700', in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *The Irish Dissenting Tradition, 1650-1750* (Dublin, 1995), pp. 11-28; Jacqueline R. Hill, 'Dublin Corporation, Protestant Dissent, and Politics, 1660-1800', in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *The Politics of Irish Dissent, 1650-1800* (Dublin, 1997), pp. 28-39;

William Petty estimated that the total number of Presbyterians equalled the membership of the established church, though the membership of other dissenting bodies likely declined throughout the later part of the century. This dissenting population was clustered into one province. By the end of the seventeenth century, Presbyterians made up the majority of Protestants in Ulster, and dominated religious life in Antrim and Down.[43] For all the strength of numbers, the quality of the religious life of Presbyterians may have significantly varied: William King recorded that his Presbyterian childhood in the 1650s and 1660s had done very little to provide him with Christian instruction, but he may have made this case to justify his conversion into the establishment, in which he was elevated to become archbishop of Dublin.[44] Presbyterian commitment was likely replenished by a wave of migration from Scotland after the defeat of the Covenanter force at Bothwell Bridge (1679).[45] The community was, in some senses, expanding beyond its ability to sustain itself – though that expansion was not necessarily to its disadvantage. Francis Makemie, from Donegal, could not find a pastoral charge after his graduation from the University of Glasgow in 1682, and moved to Maryland, and thence to Virginia and Barbados, to establish Ulster Presbyterianism as a trans-Atlantic faith. The rapid improvement of his financial situation in new world plantations paralleled his rise through a consolidating denomination, in which he became its first American moderator.[46] By the 1680s, therefore, the Irish Presbyterian community was being

James McGuire, 'Ormond and Presbyterian Nonconformity, 1660-63', in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *The Politics of Irish Dissent, 1650-1800* (Dublin, 1997), pp. 40-51.

[43] Whan, *The Presbyterians of Ulster*, p. 1.

[44] *ODNB*, s.v.

[45] Beckett, *Protestant Dissent in Ireland*, p. 23.

[46] *ODNB*, s.v.

renewed and growing in confidence. Unlike their fellow travellers in Scotland and England, Irish Presbyterians were not involved in any significant way with the Rye House Plot (1683), the Monmouth rebellion (1685), or other potential acts of anti-governmental violence. Instead, their growing confidence was expressed in a new commitment to evangelise Catholics and in the development of a culture of serious theological enquiry that would facilitate structural challenges to conventional assumptions about orthodoxy, and, later, the division of the community into confession (and Trinitarian) and non-confessional (and eventually non-Trinitarian) denominations.[47] But after 1685, as James II became the first Catholic monarch since the mid-sixteenth century, and began to formulate his principles of religious toleration, these Presbyterians became alarmed. Their united front included a significant number of adherents who had recent experience of fighting against an episcopal hierarchy and a supportive national government, and who were 'little likely to welcome an indulgence, when they thought themselves entitled to an establishment'.[48] They may not have realised how much they stood to gain from James's indulgence.

For, throughout this period, dissenters were also, in unusual ways, protected. In 1662, the duke of Ormond introduced into Parliament 'An Act for Encouraging Protestant Strangers and Others to Inhabit Ireland', encouraging the tradition of immigration from those whose religious scruples often hesitated at conforming to the

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[47] Terence McCaughey, 'General Synod of Ulster's Policy on the Use of the Irish Language in the Early Eighteenth Century: Questions about Implementation', in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *Propagating the Word of Irish Dissent* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 46-62; R. Finlay Holmes, 'The Reverend John Abernethy: The Challenge of New Light Theology to Traditional Irish Presbyterian Calvinism', in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *The Religion of Irish Dissent, 1650-1800* (Dublin, 1996), pp. 100-111.

[48] Beckett, *Protestant Dissent in Ireland*, p. 24.

establishment.[49] Refugees from France and, later, the Palatinate settled in communities such as Portarlington, county Laois, building an infrastructure that would create a distinctive society, that even in its conformity to the established church continued to advertise difference from its norms.[50] (It is notable that, in the early nineteenth century, the growth of the congregations linked to Thomas Kelly, and the earliest assemblies of larger and more significant community of 'Plymouth' Brethren, was strongest in those areas where, in the 1660s, there developed nonconformity and conformity combined with significant cultural difference.) In 1663, Charles II banned John Wilson's play, *The cheats*, which had been performed in Dublin, on account of its negative portrayal of a dissenting minister.[51] In 1665 new legislation threatened non-episcopal clergymen with a fine of £100 for administering the eucharist, but reservations appear to have been made for those ministers serving the French congregations, who were likely using the French translation of the Book of Common Prayer that was published in Dublin in 1665.[52] Throughout the period,

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[49] Toby C. Barnard, 'Identities, Ethnicity and Tradition among Irish Dissenters, c. 1650-1750', in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *The Irish Dissenting Tradition, 1650-1750* (Dublin, 1995), pp. 29-48.

[50] Ruth Whelan, 'Sanctified by the Word: The Huguenots and Anglican Liturgy', in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *Propagating the Word of Irish Dissent* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 74-94; Raymond Pierre Hylton, 'The Less-favoured Refuge: Ireland's Nonconformist Huguenots at the Turn of the Eighteenth Century', in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *The Religion of Irish Dissent, 1650-1800* (Dublin, 1996), pp. 83-99; G. Andrew Forrest, 'Religious Controversy within the French Protestant Community in Dublin, 1692-1716: An Historiographical Critique', in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *The Irish Dissenting Tradition, 1650-1750* (Dublin, 1995), pp. 96-110; Vivien Hick, '"As Nearly Related as Possible": Solidarity Amongst the Irish Palatines', in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *The Irish Dissenting Tradition, 1650-1750* (Dublin, 1995), pp. 111-25.

[51] Stephen Austin Kelly, 'Anglo-Irish Drama? Writing for the Stage in Restoration Dublin', in Kathleen Miller and Crawford Gribben (eds), *Dublin: Renaissance City of Literature* (Manchester, 2017), pp. 206-227.

[52] Mary Ann Lyons, 'Foreign Language Books, 1550–1700', in Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hadfield, *The Oxford History of the Irish Book,* Vol. 3: *The Irish Book in English, 1550–1800* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 347–67, at p. 359.

those French Protestants who could not conform to the Church of Ireland were treated with much greater leniency than those Presbyterians who defended very similar theological commitments and ecclesiological structures in English. The 'stranger' churches benefitted from this flexibility, and by 1696 had established two congregations in Dublin, with others in Cork, Waterford, Carlow, Portarlington and Castleblaney.[53] Quakers were also afforded special accommodation by successive Restoration governments. Like the French Protestants, they represented no significant political or military threat to the regime, and while some Quakers were imprisoned for refusing to pay tithes, they benefitted from an accommodation that was formalised in 1715 in an act of the Irish Parliament concerning militia service, and from the beginnings of *de facto* toleration in 1719.

The position of Irish dissenters was therefore not substantially changed by the act of toleration of 1689. By the time of the 'Glorious Revolution,' the circumstances of Irish dissent had become quite distinct. Almost all dissenters agreed that the government should support a single national religious community, and argued only over its character. Hardly any Irish dissenters argued for toleration: there is no evidence for the widespread reading of pro-toleration literature, including work by John Milton and Roger Williams, or even Jeremy Taylor's early interventions, which might have been expected to circulate around his base in county Antrim. No-one was executed for heresy in Ireland, and the state was less systematically persecutory than elsewhere in the Stuart kingdoms. And yet, whatever the claims of later mythologies, it was James's declaration of indulgence, in 1687, rather than William's toleration act, in 1689, that 'marked the end of large-scale religious persecution' in

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[53] Beckett, *Protestant Dissent in Ireland*, p. 127.

England and Ireland.[54] As James abandoned his throne, and the three kingdoms entered a new period of civil war, Irish Presbyterians threw their weight behind the claims of the Dutch usurper. But, as Andrew Holmes' chapter in another volume illustrates, they could hardly have anticipated how little their position would be changed by his 'Glorious Revolution'.

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[54] Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England,* p. 191.