Introduction: the confederate wars revisited

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The wars of the 1640s have always been one of the most controversial episodes in Irish history. Beginning with the Ulster rebellion of October 1641, with the massacre and eviction of thousands of Protestant settlers, the decade of periodic warfare, intermittent negotiation and constant threat of violence came to an end only with the Cromwellian invasion of 1649 and the brutal conquest of the whole island, completed in 1653. Irish historians have treated this pivotal period with a mixture of fascination and hesitation. It is curious that arguably the most influential historian of early modern Ireland, Aidan Clarke, wrote books that covered the period before and after the 1640s, but made only tentative forays, in article form, into the decade itself.[1] Donal Cregan's exemplary work on the Catholic Confederation of Kilkenny was fragmentary, and his *magnum opus* remains an unpublished thesis.[2] Similarly, Patrick Corish published only one major article on the 1640s, but his survey of the period in the third volume of the *New History of Ireland*, published in 1975, set the agenda for much of the debate that followed.[3] Their work was reinforced by that of other historians, notably John Lowe, whose essays on the royalist/confederate negotiations have stood the test of time,[4] and John Murphy, who produced a series of articles focusing on Munster.[5]

From the parliamentarian point of view, Karl Bottigheimer's book on the adventurers for Irish land proved the most influential, but when it came to Ireland itself his focus was very much on Munster.[6] Only a smattering of studies of individuals appeared during this period. J.C. Beckett's brief study of Ormond was a useful introduction but short on detail, Jerrold Casway's biography of Owen Roe O'Neill was a model of its kind, while Jane Ohlmeyer's portrait of the earl of Antrim was the first attempt to put a key player in Irish history into a 'three kingdoms' context.[7] Indeed, the 'wars of the three kingdoms' provided much of the impetus for renewed interest in the period during

the early 1990s, as the so-called 'New British History' movement, associated with Conrad Russell and others in the pre-civil war period, was extended to cover the 1640s.[8]

Arguably, the golden age of study of the confederate wars was the decade from 1995 to 2005. Jane Ohlmeyer's edited volume, *Ireland from Independence to Occupation*, published in 1995, included essays by such well respected authorities as Nicholas Canny, Raymond Gillespie, Toby Barnard and James Scott Wheeler, covering topics including the 1641 rebellion, warfare, the economy and the Protestant interest. The fashion for putting Ireland into its wider British and European contexts was represented by John Adamson's exploration of Viscount Lisle's lieutenancy in 1646–47 and Ohlmeyer's own chapter on confederate foreign policy.[9] The volume was the harbinger of a series of four important monographs, derived from doctoral theses, which provided in-depth studies of particular aspects of the period. Micheál Ó Siochrú's ground-breaking political and constitutional analysis of confederate government appeared in 1999.[10] Ó Siochrú's largely secular focus was balanced by Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin's scholarly account of Archbishop Rinuccini's mission to Ireland, which came out in 2002.[11] A year earlier, Pádraig Lenihan published a comprehensive study of the confederate war machine.[12] The final book of the quartet, published in 2005, was Robert Armstrong's masterly study of the Irish wars from the Protestant point of view.[13]

The Big Four were complemented by a series of articles covering different aspects of the period, notably Ó hAnnracháin's two essays looking at the Catholic clergy, and his thought-provoking piece on the conflicted loyalties of the confederates more generally.[14] On the Protestant side of the equation, Ormond came into the spotlight thanks to Armstrong's study of his peace talks with the Catholics in the mid-1640s and my own article on his parallel negotiations with the English Parliament.[15] Other important individuals, including the earl of Clanricarde, Colonel John Barry and Lord Broghill also received much-needed attention.[16] Some of the best work was brought together in Ó Siochrú's 2001 volume of essays, entitled (with a nod to the 'New British History'), *Kingdoms in Crisis*.[17] A further collection of essays, appropriately dedicated to Aidan Clarke, appeared in 2005, and included pieces by Ó Siochrú on the constitutional relationship of Ireland and England, and Armstrong on the Protestant clergy during the 1640s.[18]

After 2005, the confederate period went off the boil. The focus of Irish historical attention shifted instead both earlier and later: to the outbreak of rebellion in 1641 (thanks to the Trinity College Dublin 'depositions' project, which generated a plethora of attendant publications) and to the Cromwellian conquest after 1649.[19] An important factor in this cooling of interest was the abandonment of the 'New British History' by its leading proponents, as new bandwagons hoved into view.[20] Yet in Ireland there were still younger

scholars coming through who were focusing on the period, asking different questions of the sources, and finding new areas to study. With notable exceptions, earlier research on the decade had tended to concentrate on leading figures and central governments, but this was now offset by a renewed interest in the war as experienced in the regions. The benefit of this approach had already been demonstrated by Mary O'Dowd on co. Sligo, Raymond Gillespie on co. Cavan, and David Edwards's work on the collapse of the Ormond lordship in Kilkenny, and it was now extended by Aoife Duignan's article on the Protestant community in northern Connacht, drawn from her PhD thesis, which was published in 2006.[21] In 2007–8 Kevin Forkan added an important new facet to our understanding of Ormond's position with an article on his 'secret contacts' with various Protestant groups in Ulster, as well as studies of the Scottish community and its reaction to the Engagement in 1647–48.[22] Western Ulster was the subject of a thesis on co. Fermanagh by Charlene McCoy and a study of the Protestants of the 'Laggan' army by Kevin McKenny.[23] Individuals also received more detailed attention, especially Clanricarde, who was the subject of a 2006 PhD by Harriet Sexton and a 2009 article by Demetri Debe.[24] Robert Armstrong contributed an article focused on Viscount Montgomery of the Ards, also in 2009, and Andrew Robinson's thesis on Sir John Clotworthy appeared in 2013.[25] Military affairs saw considerable interest. On the back of the 1641 depositions project there was new research into massacres and violence in the early years of the war, and a continuing fascination with Cromwell's nefarious activities at Drogheda and Wexford in 1649, while the definitive account of naval warfare by Elaine Murphy was published in 2012.[26] Another development – influenced by a recent trend in English history – is an upsurge of interest in royalism, as manifested in Barry Robertson's important study of *Royalists at War*, published in 2014.[27]

Much of the recent work on the 1640s has been of high quality, but has had less of an impact than that of the previous decade, for two reasons: historical fashions have moved away from traditional political and religious history, and the recent economic crisis in Ireland and elsewhere has drastically restricted the opportunities for good doctoral students to develop their ideas and to publish material from their theses. A glance at the list of contributors to this book will show how many are now in untenured or non-academic jobs.

The primary aim of the present volume is to revive interest in the confederate wars by presenting the latest findings by younger as well as more experienced scholars and to point to new ways of approaching the period in the future. The quality and variety of these chapters suggest that the time for a revival is long overdue. The essays follow a broadly chronological sequence, beginning with detailed studies of individuals facing rebellion and warfare in their immediate localities, as with David Edwards's investigations of the first

earl of Cork's private army, and the difficulty he had in defending his estates in the Blackwater Valley during the early years of the Irish wars (not least because the lord president of Munster, Sir William St Leger, had other priorities). Aoife Duignan's chapter considers Clanricarde's 'increasingly lonely struggle' as (it seemed) the only Catholic royalist in the province. As a man of honour, Clanricarde found the ambiguities of his situation difficult to face: although he remained faithful to the king he was constantly passed over or rebuffed by his royal master; and although he could not join his confederate friends and relatives in rebellion, he could (just) stomach cooperating with them against a bigger enemy, such as the Protestant army of Sir Charles Coote.

The interactions between Ireland and England are the focus of of Chapters 2 and 4. David Brown's painstaking reconstruction of the Sea Adventure as it pillaged the south and west coasts in 1642 reveals the importance of existing mercantile networks, especially in Munster, and the way in which 'piratical' colonial practices could easily be transferred to the Irish coast, with destabilising consequences. Andrew Robinson's account of the efforts of Sir John Clotworthy to increase the supplies sent from England to the armies in Ulster takes the story into the mid-1640s. Clotworthy's success in wresting the initiative away from the adventurers, aided by 'the gentlemen of Ireland' – a kaleidoscopic array of Irish Protestants from all four provinces engaged in lobbying the parliamentarian authorities – reminds us of the importance of personal connections during this period. In particular, the way in which the Carrickfergus merchant, John Davies, stole a march on his London rivals to monopolise the supply lines shows how war presented opportunities to those who were both enterprising and unscrupulous.

Chapters 5 and 6 address the neglected topic of the Irish Parliament in the 1640s. Many historians assume that, having played a pivotal role in the fall of the earl of Strafford, Parliament came to an end in 1641, before the outbreak of rebellion. Coleman Dennehy reminds us that Parliament continued to meet, however infrequently, until 1648 and technically it was only dissolved on the execution of Charles I in January 1649. His chapter investigates attendance in the houses and the business conducted there, including passing legislation and hearing petitions. He also considers why an apparently defunct institution was kept on life support by Ormond and the Dublin administration, concluding that part of the reason was to ratify a peace treaty with the confederates that never took effect. Dennehy's chapter is complemented by that of Bríd McGrath, who considers the MPs 'recruited' to the Irish Parliament between 1642 and 1647. Her analysis of the eighty-seven identified MPs added to the Commons during that period reveals that they mostly represented Leinster seats (especially those under the control of the government in Dublin), two-thirds were Protestant New English, and most were soldiers or government officials. The problems of conducting wartime elections meant that many MPs

were 'elected' by the use of blank returns or effectively chosen by the local sheriffs, and the numbers varied considerably through the decade, with peaks in 1642 (to replace ejected Catholics), 1644 and 1647. Despite this, there was a considerable variety of political views, reflecting the increasingly divided Protestant community, and this contributed to the ineffectiveness of the Irish Parliament as an institution, even as its symbolic power as guarantor of any peace treaty increased.

Other chapters approach familiar subjects from unfamiliar angles: Ormond is the focus of two chapters looking at very different aspects of his role as lord lieutenant. My own eschews the normal political route to focus on Ormond's involvement with Archbishop Ussher and the running of the Church of Ireland, specifically the appointment of bishops. This shows not only Ormond's determination to keep the church hierarchy filled with suitably able men – which was especially important during the negotiations with the confederates, in which the future of church property was paramount – but also his sympathies with Calvinist divines such as Dr Henry Jones of Clogher, who could provide robust opposition to the covenanters as well as the Catholics. The chapter thus provides yet another layer to the complicated negotiations conducted by Ormond in the mid-1640s, reinforcing the impression that the lord lieutenant was a politician of considerable ingenuity; it also suggests that the role of the Church of Ireland as a support for the royalist government needs further consideration. Ormond's position as political ringmaster did not last. His ignominious surrender of Dublin to the English Parliament in 1647 and his return to Ireland with instructions to settle with the confederates at any price in 1648 made his position untenable. The leaching away of support for his lieutenancy in Ulster in 1649 is chronicled by Kevin Forkan in Chapter 8. Viscount Montgomery of the Ards seemed a good choice to lead the royalist 'non-sectarian coalition' in the north, but he could not convince the Presbyterian ministers, who turned against him, and his position was further weakened by the activities of Sir George Monro as a rival commander in the west of the province.

The final brace of chapters focuses more directly on the Catholic side of the equation. Eamon Darcy makes a foray into the notoriously difficult topic of early modern popular politics within a confederate context. He considers the importance of communication in the period, and especially the role of bilingual 'brokers' in spreading propaganda and of the role of oath-taking as a means of securing allegiance, and also looks at print culture and popular politics. The conclusion for the Confederate Association is not at all positive, as its leaders remained wary of the ordinary people, blaming them for lawlessness and violence during the rebellion, and dismissing their beliefs; instead it was left to the Catholic Church to seize the initiative, with the rejection of the first Ormond Peace, 'the ultimate popular act' of the decade, showing the power

of the religious elite over their secular counterpart. The Catholic Church also plays an important part in John Morrill's concluding chapter, which looks at Cromwell's polemical dispute with the Catholic hierarchy in the winter of 1649–50. Morrill argues that Cromwell's rhetoric was not primarily anti-Catholic; rather his targets were those guilty of the massacres of 1641, the clergy he saw as behind the violence throughout the decade, and the recalcitrant royalists. Controversially, he concludes that the bigotry of the conquest of Ireland in the years that followed was the fault of others.

As will already be clear, these essays provide a multitude of different perspectives, many of which tie in with important ongoing research topics such as regionalism and royalism and 'British' history which provide insights into the political and religious experiences of all communities in Ireland during the 1640s. The chapters not only shed more light on the experiences of a wide range of individuals (from major political players such as Ormond and Clanricarde to lesser figures, notably the Carrickfergus merchant, John Davies) but also address the hitherto neglected topic of institutional history (specifically the Irish Parliament and the Church of Ireland). Each of these important themes might be explored further, challenging the existing literature; but for the remainder of this introduction I concentrate on another major issue that provides a thread running through almost all the chapters in this volume: the crisis of authority.

During the 1640s, prolonged rebellion and civil war led to a deterioration of already fraught political relationships within early modern Ireland. In times of peace the ultimate source of civil authority was the king, although there were concerns at outside interference, especially by the Catholic Church, while the role of the English government, and specifically the Westminster Parliament, was something of a grey area.[28] In a period of rebellion and civil war there was a fracturing of the normal order, with every side claiming some sort of justification, and seeking a measure of legitimacy for their actions. This complicated the picture enormously, and caused contemporaries to question their own assumptions. As Aidan Clarke, one of a handful of historians to have considered the problem, puts it: 'it was not until the breakdown of authority in the multiple Stuart kingdoms in the early 1640s that the underlying assumptions of Irish politics were found to be in need of definition and justification'.[29] The emphasis here is not on abstract political thought or abstruse constitutional theory but on the very real problems caused by the breakdown of a system that had been widely accepted, and was functional if not exactly smooth-running, in the four decades before the outbreak of rebellion in 1641.

As all political authority was derived from the king, the royalists – and especially Ormond as lord lieutenant – should have been more secure in their position than their rivals. The king demanded loyalty as of right, and so did his viceroy and other officers of state. This was taken as read by most of

the Irish people, whether Protestant or Catholic. To take but two examples, Clanricarde's almost instinctive royalism led him to resist the blandishments of his confederate friends in Connacht, as Aoife Duignan demonstrates; likewise in April 1645 Sir Richard Osborne refused to surrender Knockmoan Castle in co. Waterford to the confederate forces under the earl of Castlehaven precisely because of the duty of allegiance he owed to the king and his lord lieutenant.[30] During the middle years of the decade Ormond had the additional advantages that went with his possession of the capital city, as he held not only the traditional seat of government at Dublin Castle, but also controlled the Parliament and law courts, as well as the university and two of the most important cathedrals. All enhanced his claim to be the representative of the king and to exercise lawful government of church and state, even if, geographically, most of Ireland was outside his control. Ormond was extremely jealous of his position as the king's viceroy. His dignified response, in June 1646, to the Scottish officers in Ulster, who had addressed a letter to him personally, as marquess, rather than to the lord lieutenant and council – 'in which capacity only, and not otherwise, we have power to treat with you' – was not just pulling rank.[31]

By including the council in his reprimand to the Scots, Ormond was merely stating a fact: as John Lowe has noted, the lieutenant 'insisted punctiliously on consulting at every stage in negotiations' with the confederates, and the moral support of senior councillors was vitally important.[32] The continuation of the Irish Parliament also served to bolster Ormond's authority during his negotiations. As Coleman Dennehy points out, that may provide one reason why the houses were not dissolved early in the decade, and the continuing importance of Parliament is also suggested by the continued efforts to 'recruit' its membership, as explored by Bríd McGrath. Likewise, Ormond's concern to maintain the Church of Ireland with a full complement of bishops can be linked with the need to bolster royal authority more generally. This chimes with Robert Armstrong's observation 'that churchmen and laymen could, as in England, stand by the church by law established because it was established'.[33] Such symbols of authority were vital when dealing with the confederate rebels. On the publication of the first Ormond Peace in 1646, Ormond sent Dr William Roberts, Ulster king of arms, to proclaim the treaty in Limerick and other confederate strongholds 'with the king's coat of arms upon him', as a powerful statement that central authority was being restored.[34] Parliament, the church and the officers of state were thus seen as pillars supporting Ormond's authority, even if his effective military power was restricted to the enclave around Dublin. Indeed, it might be argued that the weaker his position became, the more he came to rely on such props to his dignity. Any challenge to Ormond's own authority had to be taken very seriously – hence the frosty response to the Scots in June 1646, and the appalled reaction to

the physical assault on Dr Roberts by the 'tumultuous rabble' at Limerick in August of the same year.[35] A few months earlier the earl of Glamorgan's secret dealings with the confederates had angered Ormond not only because he was prepared to make unacceptable religious concessions, but also because he was acting independently of the Dublin government, with a royal commission of dubious legitimacy.[36] It is also interesting that Glamorgan's arrest was ordered formally by the lord lieutenant and council, as if to highlight the informality of his own activities.[37]

The Glamorgan mission also highlights the extent to which Ormond's position was undermined by the king's interference in Irish affairs, and in this he was not alone. Aoife Duignan emphasises that the refusal of Charles I to make Clanricarde lord president of Connacht hampered the earl's ability to unite the local inhabitants behind the crown. There are strong parallels with the situation faced by Lord Inchiquin as vice-president of Munster after the death of Sir William St Leger left the presidency itself up for grabs in 1642. The lord president and his council were crucial to the southern province, as 'its very existence helped to give an administrative area a real existence' and it thus represented 'the collective will of the English interest' there.[38] This was particularly important in time of war, when the president was expected to unite and command the local forces. In Munster, as David Edwards demonstrates, tensions between the earl of Cork and St Leger as president had already hampered the war effort in the immediate aftermath of rebellion. Worse was to follow. The appointment of the earl of Portland, a courtier with no experience of Ireland, as St Leger's replacement, was one of the factors which lay behind Inchiquin's defection to Parliament in 1644. According to Arthur Trevor, Inchiquin was 'as full of anger as his buttons will endure' at the appointment of Portland in February 1644, and in the following May Inchiquin was feeling the after-effects in Cork City, where 'the mayor does already question my authority for the issuing of some warrants that do not please him'.[39]

The similarities with Clanricarde's precarious position in Connacht are very close, and the appointment of another courtier, Henry Wilmot, as joint president of that province alongside Viscount Dillon, suggests that the king's main priority was to please his courtiers at Oxford rather than fight an effective war in Ireland – a policy that led to a disjuncture between authority and power that severely hampered the royalist war effort in the regions. Ironically, the presidency in both provinces only stabilised when the English Parliament took upon itself the appointment of its own lords president in the new year of 1645. Inchiquin in Munster soon took charge of the military situation, even if his position was challenged in the longer term; and Sir Charles Coote in Connacht managed to unite the Protestant interest and create an effective fighting force in the later 1640s.[40] The value placed on the office of president can also be seen after Inchiquin's defection to the king in April 1648, as pains

were taken to supply him with a new commission from the prince of Wales, his parliamentary authority having lapsed.[41]

Ormond was the primary focus for royalist legitimacy in the middle years of the decade, but with his surrender of Dublin to the Westminster Parliament in June 1647 his position was severely damaged. Indeed, Ormond not only surrendered the royalist garrisons but also his sword of office and 'other ensigns of royalty' – a point insisted upon by parliamentarians, who hoped thereby to undermine his influence in Ireland.[42] In this they were successful. Although he remained titular lord lieutenant, on his return to Ireland in September 1648 Ormond found his authority questioned at every turn. When negotiations with the confederate General Assembly restarted in October, that body even demanded proof that Ormond had the right to conclude a treaty; and instead of treating the General Assembly with disdain, he now needed it as guarantor of the settlement. His position was further weakened by the order of Charles I, made at the insistence of the Parliament in November, that all talks with the confederates be broken off.[43] The 'lavish ceremony'[44] which inaugurated the second Ormond Peace in January 1649 did little to disguise the shakiness of the authority that underlay it. Unlike the first treaty in 1646, there was no role for the Ulster king of arms, resplendent in the royal livery; and the lord lieutenant's discomfiture could only have worsened by having to listen to Richard Blake's speech, praising the 'bond of unity' that had been brokered by the General Assembly as 'the representative body of the Roman Catholics of this kingdom'. After the second Ormond Peace was signed the foundations of Ormond's authority began to subside even more alarmingly. Part of the problem was that the lieutenancy had at that stage lost much of its institutional underpinning: instead of presiding over his government in Dublin Castle, Ormond was forced to operate out of his own home at Kilkenny; the Irish Parliament had been brought to an end; the Church of Ireland had all but collapsed; and the Irish council was no more. Instead, the treaty left Ormond with twelve Catholic commissioners, drawn from the four provinces of Ireland, and with the official backing of the Catholic Church.[45] Once it was clear that the centre could not hold, things fell apart in the regions. Ormond's proclamation in July 1649 that all Ulster must obey him as lord lieutenant was a sign of his desperation. It was hardly surprising, as Kevin Forkan notes, that Montgomery of the Ards kept his royal commission secret at first, and when he was forced to produce it to overawe the garrison at Belfast, he found it created more problems than it solved; and it was perhaps ironic that Montgomery's position was made impossible by the activities of another man with a royal commission, Sir George Monro.[46] There are obvious similarities with Munster, where Inchiquin spent 1649 trying to prevent his troops from mutinying as royal authority gradually declined. He headed off trouble caused by arresting disloyal officers, threatening the clergy and making concessions

to Catholics under the terms of the second Ormond Peace, but could not prevent his troops from deserting in droves during the summer, nor could a new round of arrests prevent the final collapse in November, when the Protestant garrisons threw in their lot with Cromwell.[47]

Ormond's authority may have eroded rapidly towards the end of the decade, but when it came to legitimacy the confederates were on the back foot from the start. Historians in the past have mentioned confederate difficulties in this regard, but in most cases without dwelling on them,[48] and Ó Siochrú in particular was at pains to portray their government as 'a unitary state' with 'a highly sophisticated system of representative government'; indeed, 'the fact that the confederates never claimed sovereignty, and were ultimately prepared to accept Charles as head of state, does not negate the radical nature of their actions'.[49] Yet the surviving evidence suggests that the confederate leadership was far from radical, and the concern for true authority was no mere 'cloak of legitimacy'.[50] From the onset, the Irish rebellion was framed in terms of defending the king, and 'the point was driven home by the publication of a forged commission in which Charles was represented as commanding them to take arms in his defence'.[51] The confederate oath of association famously defended God, king and country, and the reluctance of the lords of the Pale to join in the rebellion speaks volumes for their instinctive loyalty to the crown.[52] Something of the confederates' awareness of the delicacy of their position can be seen in the institutional structures at Kilkenny: the unicameral General Assembly was specifically designed not to be a rival Parliament; the Supreme Council studiously avoided becoming a privy council in waiting; and the continuing respect accorded to the Irish Parliament, and its central importance as a guarantor of successive peace treaties, is striking.[53] When a genuinely radical alternative was proposed by the exiled Jesuit, Conor O'Mahony, in his *Disputatio Apologetica* of 1645, it was condemned by the vast majority of confederate leaders, alarmed by claims that the Irish could reject their king because his authority came not from God but from the people of Ireland. As Ó hAnnracháin comments, the violence of such opinions 'carried the risk of becoming a dangerous hostage to fortune, legitimising Protestant distrust and persecution of Catholics'.[54]

Confederate hostility towards O'Mahony's book may have been heightened by his argument that authority rested in the people rather than the king. As Eamon Darcy points out in Chapter 9, the government in Kilkenny harboured an ill-concealed distrust of the common people. This can be traced back to the early days of the rebellion, when local leaders such as Sir Phelim O'Neill in Ulster struggled to assert their authority over the rebel forces.[55] After the chaos of rebellion it was hardly surprising that the confederate leadership was reluctant to appeal to 'the many-headed beast, the multitude',[56] or to use more than the minimum amount of propaganda. For the confederate

elites, popular lawlessness undermined their strenuous efforts to assert the legitimacy of their government and their fundamental loyalty to the crown. But the government could not close down debate, not least because it relied on the plain people of Ireland for troops and taxes, and the principal tool for ensuring loyalty was the parish clergy who were beyond their jurisdiction. The confederate leadership – drawn disproportionately from the Old English landowners of the Pale and Dublin-based lawyers – also lacked sensitivity when it came to regional power structures. For example, moves against the traditional lords of Sligo, the O'Connors, in early 1643 left a power vacuum, while in neighbouring Mayo the obvious candidate to lead the confederate forces, Viscount Mayo, was passed over in favour of John Burke, creating a rivalry that provoked Mayo's rejection of confederate authority in 1644, and made the area vulnerable to an increasingly aggressive Protestant interest led by Sir Charles Coote.[57] Mary O'Dowd is surely justified in her damning verdict on north Connacht, where 'the Kilkenny Assembly was insensitive to [traditional] loyalties' and 'the weak local government structure of the confederates undermined the solidarity of their support'.[58] The failure by the confederates to confer authority where power already lay has striking similarities to royalist policy in the provinces: both seem to have been the result of political short-sightedness that put factional concerns above military necessities.

As Cromwell recognised, the Catholic Church provided an immensely important alternative source of authority in Ireland. This had been the case since the very beginning of the rebellion, when the oath of association (by which 'the confederates tackled the awkward problem of legitimising the structure which they had created') was given further weight by the fact it was administered by the parish priests after confession and Mass. As a result, 'the authority of the church and its sacraments was thus thrown behind the oath, which emphasised the enormity of the sin which perjury would entail'.[59] In the early years of the war the clergy were careful to include professions of loyalty to the king in their public statements, but in the later 1640s the confederates had become more dependent on the support of the Catholic hierarchy in all its panoply.[60] The presence of papal representatives, Scarampi and Rinuccini, lent the regime considerable prestige and, domestically, the revival of bishops across Ireland in the previous decades – 'as a shadow church and not as a mission', as Ó hAnnracháin puts it – meant that 'when the 1641 rebellion engulfed Ireland, an extremely experienced Catholic hierarchy was already in existence in the island'.[61] The authority exercised by the church was crucial to the legitimacy of the confederate government, and at times it was not entirely clear who was in charge. Nowhere is that more apparent than in August 1646, when the first Ormond Peace was rejected by Rinuccini and the Irish bishops. Indeed, in the aftermath, the nuncio hijacked the confederacy, establishing himself as president of the Supreme Council, and reinforced his dominance

by cementing alliances with the two most powerful confederate generals, Owen Roe O'Neill and Thomas Preston.[62] Interestingly, even before his coup Rinuccini was not exactly a fan of the confederate government, questioning its loyalty to the Pope, distrusting its desire to make peace with a Protestant king, and making sure the subsidies he brought from Rome remained under his control. He also despised the confederate administration, criticising what he saw as its ham-fisted diplomacy, disorderly finances and lack of forward planning. In return, the confederates treated Rinuccini with suspicion, keeping details of their peace negotiations, and even of the terms of the treaty, secret from the nuncio during the early months of 1646.[63]

Perhaps the most important tool of the Catholic hierarchy was the ecclesiastical synod, described by Ó hAnnracháin as 'a powerful forum from which to present a unified position', and these were a regular feature of the 1640s: the national synod at Kilkenny in May 1642 'explicitly legitimised participation in the rebellion on the grounds of protection of the Catholic religion'; the first Ormond Peace of 1646 was overturned by another synod at Waterford; and Rinuccini's position during the excommunication crisis in May 1648 was weakened because the Supreme Council sent troops to prevent a synod from being held at Galway.[64] The power of the synod was that it represented the whole institution of the church, with authority derived immediately from God. As Ó hAnnracháin argues, these meetings 'reflected the active guidance of the Holy Spirit and were thus close to infallible'.[65] This ties in closely with a point made in his chapter by John Morrill: that the archbishops, bishops and clergy that met at Clonmacnoise in 1649 to denounce Cromwell were making a powerful statement *ex cathedra*. The ancient monastery at the heart of Ireland was replete with symbolism – and the intention was to unite the Irish as Catholics, relying on the authority of the church rather than that of the crown. Cromwell's reaction was understandably violent.

There is also a wider point here, as Morrill indicates, for the language Cromwell used to denounce the Catholic theocracy in Ireland was almost identical to that he deployed against its Presbyterian counterpart in Scotland. Both churches demanded allegiance independent of the state, and enforced it by oath. Just like the Catholics with the oath of association, so the ministers in Ulster 'set themselves up as guardians and interpreters of the Covenant' which was subscribed as a 'public, communal and religious activity', often taken in conjunction 'with that other communal rite of Presbyterianism, large-scale communions'. For Presbyterians the Covenant contained a 'spiritual imperative' that demanded allegiance, and the claims of loyalty made by the king were only accepted because they were incorporated into the Covenant.[66] The popular appeal of such personal commitments can be seen in both west Ulster and Munster, where pressure to subscribe came from below, with regimental commanders like Sir William Cole at Enniskillen struggling to contain the

enthusiasm of their troops.[67] The Covenant continued to cast a spell even after the regicide. During the crisis in Ulster in the summer of 1649, the Presbytery's declaration against Viscount Montgomery helped turn the tables against the royalists in the province. Ormond had been wary of dealing with covenanters earlier in the decade, and his antipathy towards them was one of the few things he had in common with Cromwell.

A key concern of the confederates was to deny the status of the English Parliament as a rival source of authority to the crown. Parliament's claim to authority over Ireland was also derived from the king, who had (it was argued) delegated the running of the war to them through the Adventurers' Act of April 1642 and the appointment of commissioners for Irish affairs drawn from both houses of Parliament. As David Brown emphasises (in Chapter 2), contemporaries were not necessarily taken in by this: the Sea Adventure was authorised by a separate ordinance, with a commission that was eminently 'deniable'; and Lord Forbes's false claim at Galway that he held the king's commission was technically treason. Nevertheless, the argument that 'the managing of that war is wholly committed' to Parliament was deployed repeatedly during the decade that followed. To take but one example, in their declaration rejecting the cessation and siding with Parliament, the Munster Protestants cited the king's assent to the Adventurers' Act, which had 'communicated to the Parliament that power which before was solely in himself'.[68] Whether this included the right to appoint their own lords president in 1645, and even to appoint Viscount Lisle as a rival lord lieutenant in 1646, was at best a moot point. In making such appointments, Parliament was consciously usurping royal authority, as a way of bolstering its own rather dodgy claim to interfere in Ireland. Significantly, the instructions issued to Inchiquin were modelled on those for pre-war presidents, giving him legal as well as military authority as governor of the province.[69] Likewise, the exact nature of the office of chief governor was also given careful consideration, with a sub-committee being appointed by the Star Chamber Committee of Irish Affairs in December 1645 to consider what powers were exercised by previous incumbents.[70] When it was finally issued, Lisle's credentials were based on 'precedents of former instructions and commissions to lord lieutenants of Ireland', written in Latin and authenticated by the great seal (itself a symbol purloined from the king).[71] He was also provided with a sword of office, as 'an ensign of honour and authority' and a privy council – 'the first body to bear that title without the prior approval of the king'.[72]

The rules governing Lisle's relations with other officials also followed traditional lines. On his arrival in Cork in February 1647, Lisle 'had his commission read … by the master of the rolls' and made a formal speech in which he emphasised 'how really he would follow the public good, without bias or partiality'.[73] Despite this, and his earlier assurances to Inchiquin that 'it is far from

my intentions either to stretch my authority or diminish yours', Lisle's arrival in Munster naturally led to the lord president's authority being compromised, and he set about interfering with the day-to-day running of the province, not least by imposing his own officers to senior positions. When he relinquished his position in April 1647 it was even argued by some that presidency also 'determined upon the passing of the lord lieutenant's commission'.[74] With Lisle's term expired and Ormond gone, there was a vacuum at the top of Irish politics from the summer of 1647, and the Protestant community felt it keenly. There were persistent rumours that Ormond would return as lord lieutenant as late as September 1647,[75] and even Michael Jones was uncomfortable that his authority as governor of Dublin was based on such shaky foundations, representing to Parliament in February 1648 'the necessity of a commander in chief' who might have 'countenance and abilities above mine'.[76]

Lisle's commission would provide the model for the lieutenancy granted to Cromwell in 1649, even though the latter was issued by a commonwealth government that had just abolished the monarchy.[77] This attachment to the office of lord lieutenant was doubly odd, as Cromwell did not even try to behave as one. Unlike Lisle, he did not surround himself with councillors and the trappings of power or have himself read-in on arrival. His instinctive solution to the problem of lack of legitimacy was to fall back on military force, backed by claims of 'necessity'. But even Cromwell accepted that this was not enough, and it is interesting that in his exchange with the Catholic clergy he directly addressed the people of Ireland, in an attempt to convince them not to throw away their lives in defence of clerical tyranny. It was more typical of Cromwell to appeal to the highest authority when seeking justification for his actions. In September 1649, immediately after the storming of Drogheda, he told Speaker Lenthall, 'it was set upon some of your hearts that a great thing should be done not by power or might but by the Spirit of God… and therefore it is good that God alone have all the glory'.[78]

Ireland in the 1640s experienced a number of interlocking crises, political, military, religious, social and economic; but it has been argued here that central to all of them was a crisis of authority that affected every part of Ireland, and all kinds of civil government, from the lord lieutenant to the lords president, the confederate Supreme Council to the Association's representatives in the provinces. This challenges traditional histories that concentrate on treaty negotiations conducted like games of chess, or on military campaigns represented by arrows on maps: the reality was a lot more chaotic and contingent than that. Ormond can no longer be seen as some kind of malicious puppet master; instead the weakness of his position should be recognised. It is also misleading to portray the confederates as having set up an effective parallel state, or to claim that they achieved even a modicum of 'independence' during the upheavals of the decade. Indeed, from the mid-1640s the position of con-

federate Ireland became increasingly fragile, at the same time that Ormond's own authority started to implode; it was small wonder that the first Ormond Peace of 1646 failed almost before the ink had dried, and a similar fate awaited the second peace signed in the new year of 1649. By then, the most credible sources of authority in this failed state were not secular but religious. The Catholic Church and the Covenant already provided alternative sources of authority to rival civil governments fatally weakened by years of conflict, but the laurels would belong to another set of religious fundamentalists, led by Oliver Cromwell. As soldiers answerable only to God, the Cromwellians were not hampered by questions of legitimacy or concerns about authority, and the sword of state was soon replaced by one of cold steel.

NOTES

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11 Ó hAnnracháin, *Rinuccini*.
12 Lenihan, *Confederate Catholics at War*.
13 Armstrong, *Protestant War*.
14 T. Ó hAnnracháin, 'Rebels and Confederates: the stance of the Irish clergy in the 1640s', in J.R. Young (ed.), *Celtic Dimensions of the British Civil Wars* (Edinburgh, 1997), pp. 96–115; T. Ó hAnnracháin, 'Lost in Rinuccini's shadow: the Irish clergy, 1645–9', in M. Ó Siochrú (ed.), *Kingdoms in Crisis: Ireland in the 1640s* (Dublin, 2001), pp. 176–91; T. Ó hAnnracháin, 'Conflicting loyalties, conflicted Rebels: political and religious allegiance among the confederate Catholics of Ireland', *EHR* 119 (2004), pp. 851–72.
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29 Clarke, 'Patrick Darcy', p. 35.
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33 Armstrong, 'Ormond [and] Confederate peace talks', p. 136.
34 *Clanricarde Letter-Book*, pp. 349–50.
35 Ibid.
36 Lowe, 'Glamorgan Mission', pp. 171, 180, 185.
37 *HMC Egmont MSS*, i. 267.
38 Murphy, 'Munster Protestants', p. 4; see also L. Irwin, 'The suppression of the Irish presidency system', *IHS* 22 (1980), pp. 21–32.
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42 Bodl. MS Carte 176, fo. 213: Dublin Articles, 18 June 1647.
43 Ó Siochrú, *Confederate Ireland*, pp. 188–91, 195n.
44 see Ó Siochrú, *Confederate Ireland*, p. 201; Ó Siochrú, *God's Executioner*, p. 52; and Ó Siochrú, 'Catholic Confederates', p. 207.
45 Ó Siochrú, *God's Executioner*, pp. 56–7.
46 Robertson, *Royalists at War*, p. 170.
47 Murphy, 'Munster Protestants', pp. 18–19.
48 An exception is Ó hAnnracháin, 'Conflicting loyalties'.
49 Ó Siochrú, *Confederate Ireland*, pp. 11, 243.
50 Ibid., p. 54.
51 Clarke, 'Patrick Darcy', p. 46.
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57 O'Dowd, *Sligo*, pp. 127–9.
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59 Ó hAnnracháin, 'Rebels and Confederates', p. 99; for the oath(s) see J. Morrill, 'An Irish protestation? Oaths and the Confederation of Kilkenny', in M.J. Braddick and P. Withington (eds), *Popular Culture and Political Agency in Early Modern England and Ireland* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2017), pp. 243–66.
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61 Ó hAnnracháin, 'Rinuccini's shadow', p. 178; Ó hAnnracháin, 'Rebels and Confederates', p. 97.
62 Ó hAnnracháin, *Rinuccini*, pp. 125, 153–8.
63 Ibid., pp. 127, 132–7, 154.
64 Ó hAnnracháin, 'Rebels and Confederates', pp. 96–8, 100–1, 108; Ó hAnnracháin, 'Rinuccini's shadow', pp. 184, 188.
65 Ó hAnnracháin, 'Rinuccini's Shadow', p. 186.
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