

“Beasts with Claws”: The English Republic, the Presbyterian Peril, and the Ulster Question

Robert Armstrong 

Abstract Among the multitude of enemies facing the newly born English republic, the Presbyterians of Ulster posed a threat at once ideological and military. Such supporters of the new regime as John Milton derided the “blockish presbyters” of a “remote” province and denounced them as Scottish intruders upon English soil. But the threat they posed lay not only in their capacity to mobilize an armed population but to do so around religious and political positions drawn from a common stock of ideas present across the three kingdoms. The twin dangers could be made to serve polemical purposes within domestic English debate as the Commonwealth sought to counter the religious ambitions and constitutional challenges of those they branded as “Scottified” Presbyterians. In Ulster, the short-lived Presbyterian “revolt” proved a remarkable though fleeting success. Its proponents cultivated these transplanted ideas into fertile if fragile growth in the form of armed organization and communal mobilization. This episode attests to the importance of localizing ideology in precise contexts, and to the fact that print was only one vector, if a vital one, for its transmission.

“G od hath eminently begun to punish those, first in *Scotland*, then in *Ulster*, who have provok’d him with the most hatefull kind of mockery, to break his Covnant under pretence of strictest keeping it; and hath subjected themselves to those Malignants, with whom they scrupl’d not to be associats.”¹ By the time John Milton included this claim in the closing pages of his *Eikonoklastes*, published in the autumn of 1649, the English Commonwealth had faced the rapid rise and swift demise of a significant challenge to its authority from among the Presbyterian population of the northern Irish province of Ulster. Milton had already indulged in a delighted mockery of those “blockish presbyters” who “imagin themselves to be marvellously high set and exalted in the chaire of *Belfast*,” “a small town in *Ulster*,” home to a “Classick Fraternity so obscure and so remote” who deigned to “send such defiance to the sovran Magistracy of *England*.”²

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¹ John Milton, “Eikonoklastes,” in *Vernacular Regicide and Republican Writings*, vol. 6 of *The Complete Works of John Milton*, ed. N. H. Keeble and Nicholas McDowell (Oxford, 2013), 279–424, at 423.

² John Milton, “Articles of Peace, Observations,” in Keeble and McDowell, *Vernacular Regicide and Republican Writings*, 195–249, at 240, 248. Originally published as *Articles of Peace, made and concluded with the Irish Rebels, and Papists, by James Earle of Ormond, For and in behalfe of the late King, and by vertue of his Autoritie. Also a Letter sent by Ormond to Col. Jones, Governour of Dublin, with his Answer thereunto. And a Representation of the Scotch Presbytery at Belfast in Ireland. Upon all of which are added Observations* (London, 1649).

Milton's disdain reflected his rooted animosity toward Presbyterianism, sprung from an abhorrence of all compulsion in matters of faith, and a disdain for the entwinement of the spiritual with the civil, to the detriment of both modes of human liberty.³ But his intervention in the new republic's encounter with Ireland was part of a wider polemical struggle, one concerned with defining as well as defeating the new regime's enemies, and waged alongside an escalating military conflict. No mere specter conjured in a distant province, the Presbyterians of Ulster constituted a real and present danger to the new order, which was precisely why they could be made to serve polemical purposes within English debate, a danger not confined to a "remote" province. The threat they posed took form in language shared with the Commonwealth's opponents in England and in Scotland, though it was given substance in a mobilized and armed population in the northern counties of Ireland. My first aim of this paper is, then, to explore how that threat was conceptualized, and deployed, in the battles waged by the infant, isolated republic's supporters, of whom John Milton was but one. As he drafted his thoughts on Ulster, news was "brought, and too true, that the *Scottish* inhabitants of that Province are actually revolted."⁴ There was strategic benefit in externalizing as Scottish, foreign, and intrusive a peril within the further territorial bounds of England's "Free State"; this was doubly so if that labeling could be used to brand and then banish from domestic English disputes "Scottified" Presbyterian critics, not merely from debate over the new religious order suited for a polity emergent from tyranny but by extension from the contest over the very meaning of "England" as a continuing constitutional order.

But attending to the Presbyterians of Ulster fulfils a second aim. Their remarkable, if fleeting, success in 1649 offers a demonstration of the importance of attending closely to the particular environments in which political and religious ideas could take root and flourish. Historians of the English Revolution have on occasion contrasted the range, novelty, or exuberance of its intellectual ferment to those generated by contemporary upheavals elsewhere in Europe, let alone within the other Stuart realms. But the case made here is that vitality of ideas need not be measured by the emergence of a major, systematic thinker or two, nor of clusters of activists operating in conditions of vibrant, even febrile, print production. Ulster in 1649 attested the potency of ideas as they were worked out in practice and embedded in community, adapted and transmitted to meet specific ends and needs and finding expression not just in texts but through communal actions and organizational commitments.

Reconstructing the perspective of the presbytery and its allies means reliance for the most part upon slivers of evidence, for what survives is often only short exhortations or rebukes, or sharp and specific exchanges of correspondence, not infrequently only surviving in printed form and more likely than not repackaged, or at least recycled, by the group's critics. This was a community, or an interest, without direct access to print, for whom no institutional archive survives from these years, and from among whom sustained narrative accounts are only known to have emerged decades after the events described.⁵ These accounts have their value, if used with caution, for all indicate access

³ N. H. Keeble, "Milton's Christian Temper," in *John Milton: Life, Writing, Reputation*, ed. Paul Hammond and Blair Worden (Oxford, 2010), 107–24.

⁴ Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 242.

⁵ Only one of the texts considered here is likely to have been sponsored to print by the presbytery or its allies: *A Declaration of the Presbytery at Bangor* [. . .] *July 7, 1649* [. . .] (1649), generally reckoned to be an

to now-lost sources, sometimes reproduced. Of most value is Patrick Adair's "True Narrative," composed at some point between the mid-1670s and Adair's death in 1694. In 1649 Adair was a youthful, Scots-born, Scots-educated, and newly installed minister in Cairncastle in County Antrim, part of the cluster of parishes where the Ulster presbytery had established itself in the course of the previous decade.⁶

I

The Commonwealth's position in Ireland was perilous from the moment of its birth. For much of the preceding decade, most of the island had been under the sway of the confederate Catholic regime that had emerged from the great upheaval of the 1641 Rising to challenge the rule of Charles I, and latterly to reconciliation with it. The prospect of a conclusive alignment, mediated by the royal lord lieutenant, James Butler, Marquis of Ormond, had served to hasten Charles I toward his fate.⁷ Articles of peace proclaimed on 17 January won the support of the majority, though not all, of the confederates and formally brought them under Ormond's authority alongside a Protestant royalist constituency centered in the southern province of Munster. On 26 February, just over a week after it had first assembled, the Council of State, the Commonwealth's executive, approved letters affirming its oversight and offering its support to its three military commanders, Colonel Michael Jones in Dublin, Sir Charles Coote at Londonderry, and Colonel George Monck in east Ulster. Each was more or less beleaguered, their forces facing both encroachment and enticement from Ormond's royalist coalition.⁸ To the threat of loss of control of an Ireland, which in stark contrast to Scotland was routinely and symbolically considered part of the newly emerging polity, was added the even greater danger from Stuart tyranny to the entire project of liberty. Across the spring and summer, it was plausible to imagine that, among the English public, the "general Demand of the people is, *What is your Newes from*

Edinburgh imprint, which heralded the presbytery's breach with their erstwhile ally, Viscount Ards. The ministers were reported to have "published" their "libel" against Ards in Scotland, which might be taken to extend to a hand in its printing. Montgomery to Ormond, 29 July 1649, Carte MS 25, fol. 90, Bodleian Library, Oxford. (Hereafter this repository is abbreviated as Bod.)

⁶ Patrick Adair, "A true narrative of the rise and progress of the Presbyterian government in the north of Ireland," in *Presbyterian History in Ireland: Two Seventeenth-Century Narratives*, ed. Robert Armstrong et al. (Belfast, 2016), 63–272. Adair refers to contemporary presbytery records throughout, but the earliest surviving portion (for the "meeting" of Antrim) begins in 1654. The most extensive archival collection relating to Protestant Ireland in these years, the Ormond material in the Carte MSS, Bodleian Library, contains correspondence and other documents relevant to the presbytery and its allies, but their position is usually hostile or wary. Some contemporary materials, apparently since lost, were printed by Presbyterian historians in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and while their accuracy cannot always be externally verified, John McBride or James Kirkpatrick can be seen to be scrupulously accurate when including texts of which copies do survive.

⁷ John Adamson, "The Frightened Junto: Perceptions of Ireland and the Last Attempts at Settlement with Charles I," in *The Regicides and the Execution of Charles I*, ed. Jason Peacey (Basingstoke, 2001), 36–70.

⁸ Council of State to Monck, to Coote, to Jones, 27 February 1649, The National Archives, SP 25/94, fols. 15–19 [hereafter this repository is abbreviated as TNA]; *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1649–50*, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green (London, 1875), 19, 21; *Calendar of State Papers Relating to Ireland 1647–60*, ed. Robert Pentland Mahaffy (London, 1903), 786–87. All three men had been confirmed in their commands by the Long Parliament in 1647.

Ireland? The sellers of the weekly sheets make answer, and cry aloud in the streets, *Newes hot from Ireland.*"⁹ In March, newsbook readers could be informed of Cromwell's acceptance of the command of an expeditionary army and reassured of Colonel Jones's fidelity in the face of Ormond's blandishments. At least readers could be confident that the new Irish peace terms, though endorsed by the exiled Charles II, "cannot possibly agree" with the stance taken by the king's other self-proclaimed subjects in Scotland and "their desires in the Covenant."¹⁰

Or could they? Milton's first commission from the Council of State, on 28 March, had been the assignment of making "observations" upon the "Complication of interest . . . amongst the severall designers against the peace of the Comonwealth," intended for publication alongside a clutch of "papers out of Ireland" that Parliament had remitted for the council's consideration.¹¹ The "Observations" duly appeared as part of a composite printed text, probably in mid-May,¹² and have been reckoned Milton's, though he did not own them then or later. More than half of his text was directed at the shortest of the Irish papers, the "Necessary Representation" issued by the Ulster Presbyterians.¹³ His closing shot was to urge the presbytery to "take heed, lest" their actions and words "have not involv'd them in . . . rebellion," "in the appearance of a co-interest and partaking with the *Irish* Rebels. Against whom . . . they goe not out to battell, as they might, but rather by these their doings assist and become associats."¹⁴ A slight tentativeness remained, for they had only "in a manner declar'd" with "*Ormond*, and the Irish Rebels . . . and begun op'n war against the Parliament."¹⁵ At this same moment, in mid-May, the Council of State affirmed its continued good faith in George Monck, though it was wary of the degree to which he seemed willing to comply with the wishes of the Presbyterian-inclined troops under his command.¹⁶ In fact the critical break

⁹ *Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer* (London), no. 317 (19–26 June 1649), 1401.

¹⁰ *Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer* (London), no. 304 (20–27 March 1649), 1306–9; *Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer* (London) no. 305 (27 March–3 April 1649), 1311.

¹¹ Council of State Order Book, February–August 1649, TNA, SP 25/62 fol. 125; Green, *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1649–50*, 57. Parliament had ordered Council to "prepare and publish a Declaration of the Sense of the Parliament upon the Whole, together with the Letters and Articles." Green, *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1649–50*, 52; *Journal of the House of Commons*, vol. 6, 1648–51 (London, 1802), 175.

¹² The bookseller and collector George Thomason dated his copy 16 May.

¹³ Milton scholarship has generally referred to the printed text as a whole as the "Observations," but this is more properly applied to Milton's own contribution (231–49), following on from the printed "Irish papers." The Ulster document was included as "A necessary representation of the present evils, and eminent dangers to Religion, Lawes, and Liberties, arising from the late, and present practices of the Sectarian party in *England*: together with an Exhortation to duties relating to the Covenant, unto all within our Charge; and to all the well-affected *within this Kingdome*," dated 15 February (228–31). The full set of "Irish papers" had already been printed in London, without commentary, as *The Marquess of Ormond's Declaration* [. . .] (London, 1649), Thomason dating his copy to 29 March. McDowell suggests that the Council of State order may have been a response to this publication, and also notes how all of the documents except the Ulster presbytery's declaration had also previously been printed in Ireland: Nicholas McDowell, headnote to "Articles of Peace, Observations," in Keeble and McDowell, *Vernacular Regicide and Republican Writings*, 191.

¹⁴ Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 249.

¹⁵ Milton, 242.

¹⁶ Council of State to Monck, 12 May [1649], TNA, SP 25/94, fols. 161–62. In fact, Monck had concluded terms with Owen Roe O'Neill on 8 May (see below), though this would probably not yet be known to the Council of State.

had already occurred as March had turned to April.¹⁷ In the northwest, one well-placed observer detected and chronicled a “generall revolt of all the Scotch” in these weeks, moving from a refusal to pay a contribution to sustain Coote’s forces to efforts to enforce such non-payment, escalating to armed clashes, if small scale at first; by 5 May, Derry was under “close siedg.”¹⁸ Further east, Monck had voiced his concern, on 29 March, that “all the Scots will shake off their dependence upon the kingdom of England.”¹⁹ His identification of his opponents in national terms, and his assertion of their intentions, were both telling and, as will be seen, contentious.

During the war years, a dense circuitry had been built up that transmitted correspondence, petitions, and orders between Westminster and the English provinces, through intricate connections of committees and representatives and entangled with the wiring carrying material for publication through London print shops and back outward to readers. The resulting network was more than logistical: it was ideological. National agendas were as much shaped by localities as imposed upon them.²⁰ Wartime Protestant Ireland had been partially wired in. Parliamentary committees with executive powers, appointees to regional offices and commands, lobbyists or experts eager to express or press Irish needs—or rather, the needs of Protestant or parliamentary interests—abounded.²¹ As with English provincial disputes, so their rivalries, from personal quarrels to full factional roils, could be vented through the London press.²² In the first months of 1649, the new regime’s grip on publication had not yet tightened to the extent visible a year later, when the onset of war with Scotland would prompt a multidimensional propaganda campaign, spanning official statements, commissioned or sponsored polemic, and the gathering and spreading of news reports, with newsbooks

¹⁷ The most thorough and convincing account of events in Ulster is now Kevin Forkan, “The Marquess of Ormond, Lord Montgomery of the Ards, and the Problem of Authority in Ulster, 1649,” in *Ireland in Crisis: War, Politics and Religion, 1641–50*, ed. Patrick Little (Manchester, 2019), 155–71.

¹⁸ [Henry Finch], *A True Relation of the Twenty weeks Siege of London derry By the Scotch, Irish, and Disaffected English* [. . .] (London, 1649), 1–3. The pamphlet takes the form of two letters in diary form from Finch, a Londonderry alderman and captain of one of the companies in the city regiment.

¹⁹ Monck to Jones, 29 March 1649, in Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Ormonde, K.P., Preserved at the Castle, Kilkenny, (1899), at 2:91.

²⁰ Clive Holmes, “Centre and Locality in Civil-War England,” in *The English Civil War*, ed. John Adamson (Basingstoke, 2009), 153–74; David Scott, “The ‘Northern Gentlemen,’ the Parliamentary Independents and Anglo-Scottish Relations in the Long Parliament,” *Historical Journal* 42, no. 2 (1999), 347–75; David Scott, “The Barwis Affair: Political Allegiance and the Scots during the British Civil Wars,” *English Historical Review* 115, no. 463 (2000): 843–63.

²¹ Robert Armstrong, “Ireland at Westminster: The Long Parliament’s Irish Committees 1641–7,” in *Parliament at Work: Parliamentary Committees, Political Power and Public Access in Early Modern England*, ed. Chris R. Kyle and Jason Peacey (Woodbridge, 2002), 79–99.

²² An example of the former would be the contention between Sir William Cole and Sir Francis Hamilton, both based in south Ulster/North Connacht, which prompted a sequence of London-published pamphlets, alongside appeals to parliamentary committees, in 1644–45. By contrast, the failed expedition of Philip Sidney, Viscount Lisle, to the southern province of Munster in 1647, marred by intense rivalry with the regional magnate, Viscount Inchiquin, at once reflected and intensified Presbyterian-Independent divisions at Westminster; see John Adamson, “Strafford’s Ghost: The British Context of Viscount Lisle’s Lieutenancy of Ireland,” in *Ireland from Independence to Occupation, 1641–1660*, ed. Jane H. Ohlmeyer (Cambridge, 1995), 128–59; Patrick Little, “The Irish ‘Independents’ and Viscount Lisle’s Lieutenancy of Ireland,” *Historical Journal* 44, no. 4 (2001): 941–61.

confined to a state-authorized few.²³ But already a conflation of views was apparent across printed texts, between officially sponsored responses to the trial and execution of the king, supportive newsbooks, and pamphlets at least ostensibly published on their authors' own initiative.²⁴ Milton's "Observations" was not the only printed response to the Ulster "revolt." Others also took the form of animadversions upon documents produced by the presbytery, or its challengers.²⁵ *The Complaint of the Boutefeu, Scorched in his owne Kindlings* . . . was "Published by Authority," as was *Articles of the Peace* containing Milton's "Observations"; both were from the same printer, Matthew Simmons, who was responsible for Milton's two other political works of 1649, *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* and *Eikonoklastes*, and for a dense body of publications supporting the army and its political allies across 1648–49.²⁶ As late as the summer of 1650, as the Commonwealth's army made ready to march into Scotland, Edward Husband and John Field, "Printers to the Parliament of England," brought out the longest of the pamphlets, *News from Ireland*, which conveyed a cluster of documents dating back to May–September 1649, and urged: "Read this book, and see the pitiful slavery they lie under, where a Presbytery is Established."²⁷

Yet such assaults only safeguarded one flank. Two days before Milton's commission, the Council of State had engaged on another front. The veteran Irish administrator Sir William Parsons²⁸ was mandated to ready his papers on Ireland, later clarified as "discourses asserting the English Interest in Ireland," including his "Examen Hiberniae" and "another discourse" addressing "certain questions, considerations and objections" to the Irish war. Parsons was also entrusted with "ordering, preparing & publishing" the "examinations" in the hands of Thomas Waring, formerly clerk to the commission that had collected "depositions" from Protestants in the aftermath of the 1641 Rising, to vindicate the "Protestant cause," perpetuate

²³ Jason Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda during the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Aldershot, 2004), 266–67; Nicola Greenspan, *Selling Cromwell's Wars: Media, Empire and Godly Warfare, 1650–1658* (London, 2012), chap. 2.

²⁴ Amos Tubb, "Printing the Regicide of Charles I," *History* 89, no. 296 (2004): 500–24, at 510. Peacey warns against taking at face value any claims for "private" political opinion as expressed in print, since evidence of sponsorship or patronage is so rarely available; *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, 312–13.

²⁵ "Observations" was preceded by *A Necessary Examination of a Dangerous Design and Practice against the Interest and Sovereignty of the Nation and Commonwealth of England, by the Presbytery at Belfast* [. . .] (London, 1649), printed by Thomas Budenell and collected by Thomason on 17 April.

²⁶ *The Complaint of the Boutefeu, Scorched in his owne Kindlings* [. . .] (London, 1649). Thomason's copy was dated 4 August. The same three letters were printed, without commentary or any indication as to date or place of publication, as the single-sheet *Two Letters from the Presbytery* [. . .] *to the Lord Ards, And his answer* [. . .]. Simmons was probably or certainly involved in earlier Milton publications, including his divorce tracts: N. H. Keeble and Nicholas McDowell, "General Introduction," in Keeble and McDowell, *Vernacular Regicide and Republican Writings*, 1–125, at 1–2. Tubb identifies seventy-six of his titles of 1648–49 as "almost all" aligned with army or Independents; Amos Tubb, "Independent Presses: The Politics of Print in England during the Late 1640s," *Seventeenth Century* 27, no. 3 (2012): 287–312, at 296.

²⁷ *News from Ireland concerning the proceedings of the Presbytery in the court of Antrim in Ireland* [. . .] (London, 1650), A2. Husband and Field were indeed central to official publication plans of the early Commonwealth; Tubb, "Independent Presses," 293; Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, 44–45, 122.

²⁸ Parsons had served as joint head of the Irish administration, as a lord justice, from 1641 to 1643, steering a belligerent course toward the Irish rising, which coincided with that of Westminster. Removed and briefly imprisoned on the king's orders, he had made his way to London where he joined a circle of advisors pressing a forward policy on Ireland; see Little, "Irish 'Independents.'"

the infamy of “Irish Papists” and their abettors, and address “causelesse cavills and queries” raised about the “reliefe” of Ireland.²⁹ John Cunningham has revealed the importance of Parsons’s substantial “Examen,” surviving in manuscript though not published as composed (Parsons died in March 1650). In particular, “Examen” closely matches *An answer to certain Jesuitical queries*, published in 1651 and claimed by Waring, which Cunningham plausibly supposes to be in fact the second Parsons “discourse” considered by the council.³⁰ The implications may be worth pressing a little further, for the “Queries,” which Waring described as a “seditious pamphlet” that had been “dispersed” among the soldiery intended for Ireland, has been prominent in discussions of English “radical” opposition to a renewed Irish campaign.³¹ It was first tackled in print in May/June 1649 in a series of editorials in the newsbook the *Moderate Intelligencer*, which claimed that “in discourse, the same Queries have been put by some very active and eminent in the present Government.”³² Waring would later maintain that he had received the “Queries” from Theodore Jennings, who as press licenser was responsible for authorizing the *Moderate Intelligencer* and who “had delivered them over” to John Bradshaw, lord president of the council.³³ Bradshaw had alerted the council to Parsons’s writings, and Milton has been seen as an admirer, if not indeed friend, of Bradshaw.³⁴

The connections are at least suggestive of a council, or a party within it, for whom Milton’s “Observations” were but one component in its defense of its interests in Ireland, complementary to more direct assaults on Irish claims and resistance to any undermining of the case for intervention from among the regime’s supporters.³⁵ Important studies of Milton’s text have suggested that his “primary concerns . . . are

²⁹ Council of State Order Book, February–August, TNA, SP 25/62, fols. 279–80; Green, *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1649–50*, 53, 131–32. The latter task was also assigned to Sir Gerard Lowther, chief justice of the common pleas, Irish privy councilor, and associate of Parsons, who had also vouched for Waring.

³⁰ John Cunningham, “The New English, the Past and the Law in the 1640s: Sir William Parsons’s ‘Examen Hiberniae,’” in *Law and Revolution in Seventeenth-Century Ireland*, ed. Coleman A. Dennehy (Dublin, 2020), 89–103.

³¹ [Thomas Waring,] epistle dedicatorie and preface to *An Answer to certain seditious and Jesuitical Queries* [. . .] (London, 1651).

³² *Moderate Intelligencer* (London), no. 215 (16 April–2 May, 1649), 2014. Though the reproduced “Queries,” which do not survive independently, are the same, the responses in issues 215–20 differ significantly from those in *An answer*, and began to appear before the Council order that specifically mentioned Parsons’s second tract. John Dillingham, editor of the *Moderate Intelligencer*, was notably well connected, and for much of its existence his newsbook was particularly supportive of Cromwell. See A. N. B. Cotton, “John Dillingham, Journalist of the Middle Group,” *English Historical Review* 93, no. 369 (1978): 817–34.

³³ [Waring], *An Answer*, 64. Bradshaw had overseen the press since March. Jennings had long been on the payroll of the parliamentary government machine. Waring claimed to trace the “Queries” to an Edmond Gowre, whom he implausibly alleged to be likely not only Irish but a “Jesuitical Papist.” [Waring], 64. See also Norah Carlin, “The Levellers and the Conquest of Ireland in 1649,” *Historical Journal* 30, no. 2 (1987): 269–88, at 279; Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, 104–5, 156, 158.

³⁴ Blair Worden, *Literature and Politics in Cromwellian England* (Oxford, 2007), 45–47, 195–99.

³⁵ Milton would later be charged with ensuring publication of Waring’s original commission, the selection of depositions. What eventually emerged as his *Brief Narration* in 1650 has been seen as approximating an introduction to the proposed collection, and as having been spliced with work authored by the state propagandist John Hall, which echoed the case for the late king’s involvement with the Irish Rising made in *Eikonoklastes*. See John Cunningham, “Milton, John Hall and Thomas Waring’s *Brief Narration of the Rebellion in Ireland*,” *Milton Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (2019): 69–85.

much less with Irish affairs than with a crucial phase of English domestic politics," the need to "discredit Presbyterian leaders" and detach from them their "rank-and-file supporters,"³⁶ and have drawn attention to the significant Scottish dimension to a text produced in conditions of deteriorating relations between republican England and a Scotland that had proclaimed Charles II as ruler of all Great Britain and, of course, Ireland.³⁷ Milton's limited engagement with massacre themes, or even comparative neglect of Irish and Catholic iniquity in "Observations," would then not be due to any squeamishness or lack of zeal on his part, or determination to reorient his brief toward his own particular English concerns.³⁸ Rather, his outbursts in these directions were among the more conventional of his opinions, especially prevalent among supporters of Parliament or the Commonwealth especially; his priorities were reflective of an assignment that allowed for or even encouraged his attending to the "complication" between threats to the Commonwealth within and beyond Ireland, complementing publications designed to drive home the necessity of Irish war by foregrounding the fiendishness of the Catholic enemy.³⁹

News from Ireland alerted its readers to complications, how the "Presbyterians of Ireland" looked to the Scottish kirk for "infallible directions," such as were once issued from Rome, and to "how Reverentially" they received "Dictates and Opinions" from the Presbyterian Province of London.⁴⁰ The Ulster presbytery, for its part, had boasted the "laudable Examples" of "free and faithfull testimonies against the insolencies of the Sectarian party"⁴¹ from the London ministers and the commissioners of the Scottish General Assembly.⁴² Responding to queries

³⁶ Thomas N. Corns, "Milton's *Observations upon the Articles of Peace*: Ireland under English Eyes," in *Politics, Poetics and Hermeneutics in Milton's Prose*, ed. David Loewenstein and J. G. Turner (Cambridge, 1990), 123–34, at 125.

³⁷ The literature on Milton and Ireland is, unsurprisingly, extensive. Especially useful is Jim Daems, *‘A Warr so Desperate’: John Milton and Some Contemporaries on the Irish Rebellion* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2012). For perspectives particularly relevant to the arguments advanced here, see also Corns, "Milton's *Observations*"; Joad Raymond, "Complications of Interest: Milton, Scotland, Ireland and National Identity in 1649," *Review of English Studies* 55, no. 220 (2004): 315–45; Willy Maley and Adam Swann, "Is This the Region . . . That We Must Change for Heav'n?: Milton on the Margins," in *Region, Religion and English Renaissance Literature*, ed. David Coleman (Burlington, 2013), 139–52; Nicholas McDowell, "The Scottish Inhabitants of That Province Are Actually Revolted: John Milton and the Failure of the Ulster Plantation," in *The Plantation of Ulster*, ed. Éamonn Ó Ciardha and Micheál Ó Siochru (Manchester, 2012), 238–54.

³⁸ Compare my reading with that of Joad Raymond: Raymond, "Complications of Interest." This is not, of course, to suggest that Milton did not intrude many of his own priorities.

³⁹ Though too much may be read into the precise wording of the council minutes, these refer to "observations upon the Complication of interest which is now amongst the severall designers against the peace of this Commonwealth," unqualified with any such phrase as "in Ireland," but only noting that the observations are "to be made ready to be printed with the papers out of Ireland." Council of State Order Book, February–August 1649, TNA, SP 25/62 fol. 125.

⁴⁰ *News from Ireland*, [A2].

⁴¹ Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 228.

⁴² *A serious and faithfull Representation Of the Judgements Of ministers of the Gospell Within the Province of London* (London, 1649) [dated 18 January]; *A Solemn Testimony against Toleration and The present Proceedings of Sectaries and their Abettors in England* [. . .] *from the Commissioners of the Generall Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland* [. . .] (Edinburgh, 1649) [issued 16 January.] On 1 February, the commissioners voted to send a copy to their Ulster brethren, alongside a call for Covenant renewal. Alexander F. Mitchell and James Christie, eds., *Records of the Commissions of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland in the Years 1648 and 1649* (Edinburgh, 1896), 187–89.

raised by James Kerr and Jeremy O'Quinn, two dissidents from within their own ranks, they pointed them also to "the Paper emitted by the Ministers of *Essex*" and the "Agreement of the People," and contested with them readings of the army's "Remonstrance" of November 1648.⁴³ In "remote" Ulster, such materials, for the most part published in January, had been received and digested and their arguments incorporated into February's "Necessary Representation." Its political and constitutional stance echoed that of the Londoners' *Serious representation*, which expressed a like horror toward both the purging of Parliament and the actions against the king—events "without parallel" or precedent and unacceptably acted by "private men."⁴⁴ For the London Presbyterians, the Covenant underwrote "those declared Grounds and Principles, upon which the Parliament first tooke up Armes, and upon which Wee were induced to joyne with them," and which no pleas of Providence or "necessity" could override.⁴⁵ The Ulster presbytery charged that those they deemed the "Sectarian party" had "despised the Oath in breaking the Covenant" and become "guilty of the great evill of these times . . . the despising of dominion"; covenant-takers must not "shake off the ancient, and fundamentall Government of these Kingdomes by King and Parliament" to which they had "deeply ingaged" themselves.⁴⁶ Though the London ministers alluded to anxieties around "opening a door to desperate and damnable Errors and Heresies,"⁴⁷ Edinburgh placed this to the fore. Their "horror and amazement" was "that in a Land Covenanted with God," that "monstrous Iniquity may be established by a Law" of a "Toleration unto all Errours" save "expresse Popery and compulsion."⁴⁸ "Compulsion" they construed as referring to "those who plead for the Government of *Jesus Christ* by Presbyteries, and hold that all men are to walk according to the rule of the Word of God."⁴⁹ But they fell short of

⁴³ *News from Ireland*, 10–13. Though the exchange between Kerr, O'Quinn, and the rest of the presbytery took place in May, it related to claims made in the February document. This makes it likely that the Essex paper is *To the Right Honourable Thomas Lo: Fairfax* [. . .], *A sincere and respective manifestation of the Judgements of Ministers of the Gospel within the County of Essex* [. . .] (London, 1648–49). The so-called "Officers' Agreement of the People" was in print by 20 January (and presented to the Commons on the same day). The presbytery accepted that Kerr and O'Quinn might not have seen the documents in question, but thought "it your duty in such matters of Fact, to give credit to our unanimous assertion," the presbytery having "considered" the documents. Kerr and O'Quinn had sought chapter and verse for assertions regarding the army's derogatory description of the Covenant. The presbytery was able to point to relevant passages in the November "Remonstrance," and if their reading was partial, it was not tendentious; see "The Remonstrance of the Lord General [. . .] and of the Generall Councell of Officers [. . .]," in A. S. P. Woodhouse, ed., *Puritanism and Liberty*, 3rd ed. (London, 1986), 456–65, at 460.

⁴⁴ Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 229.

⁴⁵ Elliot Vernon, "The Quarrel of the Covenant: The London Presbyterians and the Regicide," in Peacey, *The Regicides and the Execution of Charles I*, 202–24, at 209–14, 216–17; *A serious and faithfull Representation*, 5.

⁴⁶ Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 230–31; *A serious and faithfull Representation*, 3–4, 9. The disparity between the Londoners addressing their representation to the lord general and the General Council of the Army, and the Ulster targeting of the "Sectaries" or "Sectarian party" throughout, was picked up and challenged by Kerr and O'Quinn, at least implicitly so as to exonerate an army that had done such "good service." *News from Ireland*, 10, 12–13, 18.

⁴⁷ *A serious and faithfull Representation*, 9.

⁴⁸ The phrase "so it be not compulsive or express popery" was found in the so-called Second Agreement of the People, published unilaterally by John Lilburne in *Foundations of Freedom* in December 1648. Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty*, 362.

⁴⁹ *Solemn Testimony*, 2–3.

the Ulster detection not merely of "strong oppositions to Presbyteriall Government (the hedge, and Bulwarke of Religion)" but a looming "Universall Toleration of all Religions" that embraced "even Paganisme, and Judaisme."⁵⁰

The Ulster presbytery was as insistent on the Covenant as the strong foundation both for "Religion, and Liberties" as their brethren in the other kingdoms.⁵¹ As they shared common concerns, so, in part at least, it was the very "dependency of this Kingdome upon the Kingdome of *England*" that "necessitated" their response to recent upheavals.⁵² Their brief "Representation" omitted the extended argumentation of its counterparts in favor of the bold assertion and concrete application suitable to a text not to be mulled over in studies but declaimed to all congregations over which the presbytery bore sway, and to be enacted in plans for a renewal of commitment to the Solemn League and Covenant,⁵³ which had been first administered in Ulster communities in the spring of 1644.⁵⁴ Where they pressed beyond their models was in the concrete application of their "charge" in a fourfold set of "duties," each grounded on Covenant principles, radiating outward from the personal to the communal, to participation in tri-kingdom endeavors. Their hearers must "study more to the power of godlinesse, and personall reformation of themselves, and families"; "earnestly contend for the faith," "every one in their station and calling," avoiding even the company of those who promoted error or demoted public ordinances or church government; stand to the established political order; and support "the Union amongst the well-affected of the Kingdomes, not being swayed by any National respect," ensuring that, in avoiding "Sectaries," they not fall into the clutches of "Malignants" hostile to the "worke of Reformation."⁵⁵

The brethren of the presbytery represented themselves as "Watchmen in *Sion*"⁵⁶ and "Messengers of God";⁵⁷ they had "from our watch-towre blowen the trumpet unto the people," and could not "forbare to cry aloud to our flockes, to beware of ravenous Wolves."⁵⁸ They were "Overseers" owing duty to God "and his people,"⁵⁹ empowered to wield the "Rod of Discipline"⁶⁰ or "denounce judgement."⁶¹ Using scriptural and thereby commonplace terminology, they articulated that which was most indigestible to the opponents of full-blooded presbytery. This was neither its organizational particularities nor its doctrinal preferences but its conception and cultivation of a divine office, at once prophetic and governmental, that

⁵⁰ Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 229.

⁵¹ Milton, 228.

⁵² Milton, 228.

⁵³ The Covenant had been renewed in Scotland in October 1648 following the overthrow of supports of the engagement between the regime and the then-imprisoned king. Mitchell and Christie, *Records of the Commissions*, 78–88.

⁵⁴ Adair reports the representation as being read alongside the renewing of the Covenant, ministers performing this duty "in their own congregations first and thereafter each Minister in the Congregations next adjacent to his own." "True narrative," 174–76. In due course, Kerr acknowledged his offence in not "reading the Representation." *News from Ireland*, 38.

⁵⁵ Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 230–31.

⁵⁶ Milton, 230.

⁵⁷ *Complaint of the Boutefeu*, 13.

⁵⁸ *Declaration at Bangor*, A2.

⁵⁹ Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 228.

⁶⁰ *News from Ireland*, 13.

⁶¹ *Complaint of the Boutefeu*, 13.

would infuse into statements and diffuse across actions a moral imperative predicated on constancy, fidelity, and endurance, in the teeth of royalists or republicans. Milton's jab at Presbyterian deviation, "that *John Knox*, who was the first founder of Presbyterianism in *Scotland*, taught professedly the doctrine of deposing, and of killing Kings," reflected a tactical appropriation of "Scotchmen and Presbyterians" among the historical "examples . . . all Protestant and chiefly Presbyterian" in defense of the late actions against Charles.⁶² Milton's far weightier blow was the assertion that "the general exhortation to Justice and Obedience . . . is the utmost of their Duty" in "affaires of State"; it was "not for their Medling" as "busie Bodies, to preach of Titles, Interests and alternations in government."⁶³ Rather than offering a "nuanced" perspective on Presbyterianism,⁶⁴ or an accommodating gesture, Milton pressed his demand for a stilling of Presbyterianism's prophetic voice raised against social or political sin. Knox might be applauded for having voiced correct political doctrine, but his heirs must be barred from emulating a readiness to "Charge and obtest all who resolve to adhere unto truth" with duties necessarily political because grounded in moral and spiritual demands and commitments at once personal and public.⁶⁵

In April and again in the early summer of 1649, the Rump Parliament had made efforts to settle church government in England in the "Presbyterian way" by a declaration confirming and implementing existing legislation.⁶⁶ Such a measure embraced Ireland, and despite allowing some space for "godly" dissidents, roused concern or hostility, not least in the army.⁶⁷ On both occasions, those efforts coincided with the publication of anonymous attacks on the Ulster presbytery. Not they alone but "all others" should "take heed they be not found guilty of the great evils of the Priests of these times, which is to despite Dominion"; they should instead "cheerfully contribute their best endeavors for the establishing their own liberty, as it is now constituted in this Common-wealth."⁶⁸ The "shadow" of the Ulster presbytery could be detected "here in England," where only the absence of a "Consistory for the forming those dreadfull Thunder-bolts" confined ministerial misdeeds to the pulpit-trumpeting of rebellion: "[W]hat would our Priests doe, if they had the power of the Kirk of Scotland?" News that they had broken with the local grandee, James, Viscount Montgomery of the Ards, military leader of the Ulster "revolt" but now revealed as a royalist "malignant," was shaped into a warning for English pulpit-politicians whose "poore silly Brethren at *Belfast*" could "raise more such Devils than they can

⁶² John Milton, "Tenure of Kings and Magistrates," in Keeble and McDowell, *Vernacular Regicide and Republican Writings*, 151–85, at 166–68; Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 246.

⁶³ Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 240. Daems, *A Warr so Desperate*, 33, notes that Milton implies that the presbytery are too ignorant to engage in state affairs, but that for Milton "they should not, as clergy, be meddling in the first place."

⁶⁴ Maley and Swann, "Is This the Region?," 142.

⁶⁵ Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 230. Knox's readiness to confront monarchs extended also to Parliament; his perception of a prophetic calling eventually embraced a foretelling of judgments. See Euan Cameron, "John Knox and Andrew Melville," in *History of Scottish Theology*, vol. 1, *Celtic Origins to Reformed Orthodoxy*, ed. David Fergusson and Mark W. Elliott (Oxford, 2019), 124–43, at 132–34.

⁶⁶ *Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer* (London), no. 306 (3–10 April 1649), 1313.

⁶⁷ Blair Worden, *The Rump Parliament, 1648–1653* (Cambridge, 1974), 191–92, 206–8. The declaration's inclusion of Presbyterian church government was only defeated in August by the speaker's casting vote.

⁶⁸ *Necessary Examination*, 19.

conjure downe."⁶⁹ The regime's accommodating initiative ran alongside debate on what must surely be seen as complementary measures intended to stifle any application of religious principle as political critique, "prohibiting Ministers and Preachers, in their Praying, Preaching, or Writing, to declare against the present established Form of Civil Government."⁷⁰ The royalist regime in Ireland was equally ready to bridle the prophets. Having secured from Protestant clergymen in the south of Ireland an acknowledgment that they should "keepe themselves within their owne Line, preaching faith, and good manners, with obedience to the Civill Magistrate" and ensure their "Discourses" not "intrench upon the Civill Government" nor "communicate any Mysteryes of State,"⁷¹ Ormond would in due course promulgate royal orders imposing punishments for "any Ecclesiastical Person" who "in his Prayer or Sermon, shall presume to exercise the People to Sedition or Disobedience, or shall intermeddle in Pulpit or Consistory with the managery of Civil Affairs."⁷²

The Ulster presbytery presented its actions as those of "lovers of the standing of Christs Kingdome" and upholders of "Christs throne."⁷³ Milton's exhortations to counter error and ungodliness through "diligent preaching . . . confuting not . . . railing down errors, encountring both in public and private Conference" and "the spirituall execution of Church discipline within their own congregations," were to render into metaphor all talk of spiritual "government."⁷⁴ The presbyters' figuration of "Presbyteriall Government" as "the hedge, and Bulwarke of Religion"⁷⁵ could allow critics some playfulness with this "thorny part" of their text, for a hedge was "no essentiall part of Religion it self: old hedges are commonly burned, and so will that amongst other superstrucons of like combustible nature, that are built upon the foundation, when the fire shall try every mans work."⁷⁶ But their image of a secure garden or walled city depicted to good effect one necessary dimension of government: protection. Within the safe space that Presbyterian governance provided, pastoral ends could be attained: the cultivation of individual spirituality within parish and wider, national, communities; the reconciliation of internal and external dimensions of religious life, of private and public duties as set out in the fourfold

⁶⁹ *Complaint of the Boutefeu*, 7, 14.

⁷⁰ *Journal of the House of Commons*, 6:275. These measures followed from proposals in February, arising from publications by the London ministers and specifically targeting preaching or publication directed against the king's trial; they encompassed a series of resolutions in July whereby those who might "directly or indirectly, preach, or publicly pray, against the Power, Authority, or Proceedings of this present Parliament, or against the present Government" or avert to the Stuarts, save as "Enemies to this Commonwealth," would be considered as delinquents. See *Journal of the House of Commons*, 6:131, 175, 257, at 257.

⁷¹ *The Lord Inchiquins Queries to the Protestant Clergy of the Province of Munster* [. . .] (The Hague, 1649), 4, 6.

⁷² Edmund Borlase, *History of the Execrable Irish Rebellion* (London, 1680), 215–17; also quoted in *Kingdoms Weekly Intelligencer* (London), no. 330 (18–25 September 1649), 1505–8. The declaration specifically targeted any who might "teach, that his Majesty is not to be admitted to the possession of his Crown, until he hath given satisfaction to his Subjects, or until he have taken such Oaths and Covenants, as are impos'd upon him, without his Consent, without Law, contrary to the Dictates of his own Conscience," clearly directed at the position maintained by the Presbyterian clergy after their breach with Ards.

⁷³ *Complaint of the Boutefeu*, 13.

⁷⁴ Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 244.

⁷⁵ The imagery was regularly deployed; for example, see *Solemn Testimony*, 2, 8.

⁷⁶ *Necessary Examination*, 10.

charge. It was an image of security far removed from that designed as a refuge only for those who were already—or already considered themselves to be—the godly.⁷⁷ Milton's sense that such "compulsive power upon all without exception," with "fleshly" support, approximated "the Popish and Prelaticall Courts, or the Spanish Inquisition" was not far short of the view of an earlier printed attack on the Ulster presbytery.⁷⁸ The *Necessary Examination of a Dangerous Design* detected a Satanic transition from a deceiving and persecutory Rome to the promotion of "formality" and a drive to "persecute the Puritans" by means of "Protestant Bishop and a Protestant State" to "yet another secret transmigration of the deceiving serpent . . . now powerfully working in a faction of Presbytery, to persecute those for Sectaries, whom he can no longer call Puritans."⁷⁹ A pretended pity could be extended even to the "malignant" Ards, represented as preferring to acknowledge treason against the Commonwealth than "Treason against the Presbyterie, and Covenant, which may not be forgiven him, neither in this World, nor that to come."⁸⁰

The propensity of "priests" to usurp prophetic and kingly office in the church was what distinguished the "Scottified" among Presbyterians, so abhorrent to the army and its allies when detected in disparate corners of England.⁸¹ Ulster demonstrated the full horror of presbytery, and on "English" soil; its "teeth and claws" showed it "not such a harmless Beast as it hath been represented."⁸² Tensions among supporters of the Commonwealth might exist between those who regarded its Presbyterian critics as a "political problem," appropriately addressed through accommodation alongside repression, and those who detected "agents of Antichrist."⁸³ But the Ulster revolt signaled not only a regional challenge to the regime but a reminder, exploitable by the more adamant critics, and resonating with the more restrained, that any acceptable Presbyterianism was one domesticated and defanged.

Could even more ferocious beasts be tamed? Even as Milton was berating Ulster Presbyterians for nudging toward "a co-interest and partaking" with Irish rebels, it was in fact the republic's own commanders who had determined to "goe not out to battell . . . but rather by these their doings assist and become associats" of a Catholic Irish faction.⁸⁴ Most evaluations of their nonaggression agreements with Owen Roe O'Neill's Ulster army, decidedly Gaelic in composition and previously demonstrably staunch in commitment to church interests, conclude them to be designed for

⁷⁷ For suggestive discussions of such ideas, see Elliott Vernon, "A Ministry of the Gospel: The Presbyterians during the English Revolution," in *Religion in Revolutionary England*, ed. Christopher Durston and Judith Maltby (Manchester, 2006), 115–36; John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge, 1997), 188–89, 214–16.

⁷⁸ Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 244–45.

⁷⁹ *Necessary Examination*, 2. For popery, prelacy, and Presbyterianism as the three faces of the Antichrist as a "common trope," see Greenspan, *Selling Cromwell's Wars*, 46.

⁸⁰ *Complaint of the Boutefeu*, 10–11.

⁸¹ For examples of the language of "Scottified" clergy from the army and its allies, see Henry Reece, *The Army in Cromwellian England, 1649–1660* (Oxford, 2013), 118–19, 121, 126, 129, 132, 137; Bernard Capp, *England's Culture Wars: Puritan Reformation and Its Enemies in the Interregnum, 1649–1660* (Oxford, 2012), 40–41.

⁸² *News from Ireland*, A2.

⁸³ Worden sees the former perspective as predominant within the Rump, which tended to steer a course away from either "high" Presbyterianism or "radical separatism." Worden, *Rump Parliament*, 82–83, 124.

⁸⁴ Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 249.

immediate, mutual, practical military benefits.⁸⁵ George Monck expressed doubt about the "wonderful high" terms that O'Neill offered as a means of securing a "more absolute agreement" authorized by Westminster.⁸⁶ But there was more at play. Monck seems to have won O'Neill around to the important modification of his request for the repeal of all legislation "against the Roman Catholiques their Ministers or professors their liberty or exercise of the said Religion," the rock on which royalist negotiations with Catholic Ireland had once foundered, to that of assurance that O'Neill and those who joined him "in the service of the Parliament of England . . . may have liberty of Conscience for themselves and their issue."⁸⁷ This position, much closer to that put forward by Cromwell when in Ireland,⁸⁸ also bore some resemblance to the multiple conversations, negotiations, and propositions regarding accommodation for Catholics with the Commonwealth conducted in London.⁸⁹ The possible formula being worked out there balanced firm commitments of political loyalty with a paring back of autonomous church governance, or its surrender to state supervision, and a "liberty of Conscience" interpreted as a confined but secure pastoral ministry with no state impositions upon lay belief or private religious practice. However improbable of realization, the Catholic negotiations bespoke the furthest limits of the new moral geometry of the English Republic, at once authoritarian sponsor and monitor of "Christian liberty."⁹⁰ It was a vision at the furthest odds from Presbyterian aspirations to religious unity as the moral foundation of political order. Had the arrangement with O'Neill moved from temporary cooperation to full-scale accommodation, it would not have precluded Cromwell's Irish campaign, merely detached some from among the Commonwealth's muster of enemies. It might even have aided the construction of a rival complication of interests aligned with the new republic, which could embrace some Catholics, if not Catholicism, as it might woo Presbyterians but bless only an attenuated Presbyterianism.

⁸⁵ Jerrold Casway, "George Monck and the Controversial Catholic Truce of 1649," *Studia Hibernica*, no. 16 (1976): 54–72.

⁸⁶ *The true state of the Transactions of Colonel George Monk with Owen-Roe-mac-Art-O-Neal* (London, 1649), 7–10.

⁸⁷ The printed text authorized by Parliament contained only O'Neill's original terms, not Monck's revised version; both versions appear in *The Propositions of Owen Roe O Neile* [. . .] (Cork, 1649), [2–4], which presented them as transmitted from Dundalk, Monck's headquarters, to a "friend" in Cork (within Inchiquin's Protestant royalist quarters). *Generall Owen Oneales Letter to Collonell Monck with The Propositions of Owen Oneale* [...] (London, 1649) [Thomason date 28 June]; and in *Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer* (London), no. 318 (26 June–3 July 1649), 1410–12, always well informed on Irish news.

⁸⁸ John Morrill, "The Religious Context of the Cromwellian Conquest of Ireland," *Cromwelliana*, 3rd ser., 3 (2014): 29–35. Monck's letter to Cromwell of 25 May enclosed O'Neill's propositions, as well as their agreement for short-term cooperation. Monck did not "think it fit to signifie" to the Council of State the terms of his dealings with O'Neill, but instead he chose to "wholly refer the business" to Cromwell as lord lieutenant; see *True state of the Transactions*, 6–8.

⁸⁹ For example, see Jane H. Ohlmeyer, *Civil War and Restoration in the Three Stuart Kingdoms: The Career of Randall MacDonnell, Marquis of Antrim* (Cambridge, 1993), 212–14, 217–28; Jeffrey Collins, "Thomas Hobbes and the Blackloist Conspiracy of 1649," *Historical Journal* 45, no. 2 (2002): 305–31.

⁹⁰ For an important evaluation of the multiple meanings that could attach to the terminology of religious "liberty," see Blair Worden, *God's Instruments: Political Conduct in the England of Oliver Cromwell* (Oxford, 2012), 320–24.

II

George Monck sought to justify his dealings with O'Neill as encompassed within his "utmost endeavors to reserve the interest of England in the North" in a situation with "the Scots deserting me (although they are unwilling to own it)."⁹¹ If his remarks caught the tone of rendering defection in national terms, which the Commonwealth's agents and adherents would continue to pursue toward Ulster, his response to challenges within his own ranks would be met with a mobilization of the language of Presbyterian constitutionalism, with an organization to give it voice, acting and speaking as trustees for the authority of an English crown and constitution temporarily in abeyance. Monck drafted a "Declaration" of common purpose against a "common enemy," silent on English political developments, and obligatory for any who would hold military command. His declaration was issued on 21 March from his headquarters, Lisburn, an "English" town within the plantation geography of Ulster and one that Adair would later describe as "a place where neither Landlord nor People (a very few excepted) did give Countenance or Entrance to the Gospel."⁹² It was countered by a statement from an alternative gathering of officers at Scottish-inflected Newtown (or Newtownards), the family borough of the viscounts Montgomery, insistent that "any new association" could only be founded on covenant renewal.⁹³ For Lieutenant-Colonel James Wallace, covenant renewal was understood as a response to the discernment of divine judgment against "policies" [policies] and "prudentiall wayes." It was the fruit of a welcome readiness to "no moir consulte with flesh and bloode" but, determining on duty, "with boldness and confidence chearfullie to stepe forward and tak upp Christ and his crosses in our airmes as the onlie meane even of our owne securitie."⁹⁴ But such zeal was fused with a remarkable and clear-eyed political initiative.

From a sequence of exchanges and a flurry of proposals emerged a "Declaration" in direct competition with that from Monck, perhaps authored by Viscount Ards,⁹⁵ issued from the alternative council of war, and endorsed by "the Gentry and others of the Country." In due course it would reach print in London (and perhaps Edinburgh), apparently transmitted in part through the south Ulster gentleman and officer Robert Ward, an important Ormond informant and conduit to Ulster.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Monck to Cromwell, 25 May 1649, *True state of the Transactions*, 6.

⁹² Adair notes that the presbytery had only met once at Lisburn, when Monck was posing as "their great friend and promoter of the work." Adair, "True narrative," 174, 192. Lisburn (which often appears as "Lisnegarvey" in contemporary accounts) eventually succumbed to covenant renewal, if unenthusiastically; see John Perkins to Sir George Lane, 29 April 1649, Bod., Carte MS 24, fol. 546.

⁹³ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of the Late Reginald Rawdon Hastings, Esq., of the Manor House, Ashby de la Zouche*, vol. 2. (London, 1930), 356–57.

⁹⁴ "J. W." [Colonel James Wallace] to Robert Douglas, 27 April 1649, Wodrow MS Folio 25, fols. 96–97, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

⁹⁵ The presbytery claimed that Ards had "first moved and framed a Declaration," and Adair would suggest that Ards "with his own hands formed a declaration . . . which was read and approved by the Presbytery after some alternations and additions." See *Complaint of the Boutefeau*, 1; Adair, "True narrative," 176.

⁹⁶ *The Declaration of the British in the North of Ireland, with Some Queries of Colonel Monke, and the Answers of the British to the Queries* [. . .] ([London?], 1648–49). None of the three variant editions carry any publication details save that two, otherwise identical, bear the dates "1648" and "1649" respectively on the title page. These have generally been reckoned to be London imprints, the latter carrying a

James Kerr claimed that the presbytery had preached up the declaration and encouraged subscriptions to it, even stating that the Council of War had issued orders "to all Ministers and Elders" to return the names of those who would not subscribe or were covenant-refusers.⁹⁷ It is possible the presbytery had agitated for the establishment of a broad-based council of war, acting in cooperation with "country gentlemen" representing the two counties of Antrim and Down, and also that some organization emerged reflective of the interests being pressed by both "the Army" and "the Country."⁹⁸ What Monck considered "another posture and command" usurping his own⁹⁹ was one committed to "proceed to no thing whatsoever in reference to Religion, without advice of Gods Ministers and servants here given to us," but rather "to prosecute every mean of surety to our Religion, which they shall propose to us according to the word of God, and the Covenant." Eschewing any overtly Scottish identification, it spoke for "faithfull and loyall Subjects to the Crown of England."¹⁰⁰

From London to Londonderry to Lisburn, adherents of the Commonwealth were consistent in representing the Ulster revolt as "Scottish"; its adherents did not do so. As in the northern counties of England, so in Ulster, the earlier years of the decade had seen an army sent from Scotland prove burdensome in its demands for funds and other resources and provocative in its sponsorship of Presbyterianism. But it was a shattered force when it was finally rolled up by Monck in 1648.¹⁰¹ The presbytery in Ulster, though its ministers were brisk, brusque young Scottish graduates, had expanded its hold well beyond army quarters, encountering anguished cries from supporters of prayer-book Protestantism and on occasion generating "national" tensions within the Protestant population between those of English or Scottish origin. It was never a neat divide. The covenanting alliance between Westminster and Edinburgh had meant that the English Parliament and its agents had countenanced the Ulster presbytery from the mid-1640s; nor was its support only Scottish.¹⁰² But if

Thomason date of 25 May. The only clue to the transmission of the documents is a brief cover letter dated 16 May 1649 and signed "R. W.," included in these two printings. It does not appear in the third version, which may be an Edinburgh imprint: see the National Library of Scotland online revision of H. C. Aldis's *List of Books Printed in Scotland before 1700*: "Scottish Books 1641–1660 (Aldis updated)", p. 76, <https://www.nls.uk/catalogues/scottish-books-1505-1700> (choose "1641–1660 (PDF)"), It may be a reprinting from a London copy, though it is possible that the documents were separately transmitted directly from Ulster. One tiny sliver of evidence may lie in the fact that both editions with the "R. W." letter carry a distinctive printer's mark on the title page, used in a number of 1649 publications connected to the royalist publisher Richard Royston, though it is of course possible that Royston's printer produced this text independently of any Royston or other royalist link. For Ward in 1649, see papers among those in Bod., Carte MSS 23–24.

⁹⁷ Kerr to the Commissioners of the General Assembly, 15 September, *News from Ireland*, 29.

⁹⁸ Adair, "True narrative," 77 (first quotation); *Declaration of the British*, 2–3 (second quotation). For further discussion, see Robert Armstrong, "Viscount Ards and the Presbytery: Politics and Religion among the Scots of Ulster during the 1640s," in *Scotland and the Ulster Plantations*, ed. William P. Kelly and John R. Young (Dublin, 2009), 18–40, esp. 28–34.

⁹⁹ Monck to Jones, 29 March 1649, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Ormonde, at 2:91.

¹⁰⁰ *Declaration of the British*, 5–6.

¹⁰¹ David Stevenson, *Scottish Covenanters and Irish Confederates* (Belfast, 1981), 253–65.

¹⁰² Robert Armstrong, "Ireland's Puritan Revolution? The Emergence of Ulster Presbyterianism Reconsidered," *English Historical Review* 121, no. 493 (2006): 1048–74.

a breach was now to occur, the republic needed to fall back on the call of “nationality,” not only to mobilize support within England against hostile external forces¹⁰³ but to sustain an interest in Ireland, whether among Protestants of the type of Coote or Jones¹⁰⁴ or indeed those of more traditional liturgical tastes.¹⁰⁵

Though the movement associated with the declaration was centered on the two eastern counties of Antrim and Down, home of the densest clusters of parishes aligned with the presbytery, from the first it had sought with some success to tap support in the Derry hinterland.¹⁰⁶ Coote’s response to the presbytery’s initial “Representation” had insisted that there was no scriptural warrant “authorizing us, being but a Branch of a subordinate Kingdom, to declare against the Parliament of *England*. . . who are the visible Authority of both Kingdoms.”¹⁰⁷ In the moment of constitutional hesitancy before the Rump Parliament declared England a “Commonwealth and Free State” in May, the language of “crown” and “kingdoms” could still be of use,¹⁰⁸ and the idea of inherited “dependency” of the Irish kingdom could be deployed by supporters of a regime determined to stress constitutional continuity over innovation, to see the remnant of the Commons as the last “deposit of lawful government.”¹⁰⁹ One use was to drive home the Scottish peril. Milton alleged Ireland’s historical “dependence on the Crown of *England*” against an Ormond treaty that enabled its adherents “by degrees to throw off all subjection to this Realme,” “a whole Feudary Kingdome from the ancient Dominion of *England*.”¹¹⁰ Milton dismissed the presbytery’s recognition of “the dependency of this Kingdome upon the Kingdome of *England*” as a “shamelesse untruth” belied by their actions, “driving on the same Interest” as that of the Irish rebels, “to loose us that Kingdome, that they may gaine it themselves, or at least share in the spoile.”¹¹¹ The *Necessary Examination*, consistently more virulent in its anti-Scots

¹⁰³ Independent political interests had built connections with religious conservatives and ex-royalists in northern England around a shared animus to Presbyterianism and Scots; see Scott, “The ‘Northern Gentlemen,’” and Scott, “Barwis Affair.”

¹⁰⁴ For significant continuity in clerical personnel and prayer-book worship within the zones under the control of the “pragmatic” Jones (son of one bishop and brother of another) between 1647 and 1649, see Patrick Little, “Michael Jones and the Survival of the Church of Ireland, 1647–9,” *Irish Historical Studies* 43, no. 163 (2019): 12–26.

¹⁰⁵ The republic speedily secured the services of Ulster English figures like Major George Rawdon and Colonel Arthur Hill, both of whom harbored conservative religious preferences. Hill had sought to mobilize opposition to the Covenant in 1644, while Rawdon showed recurrent anti-Presbyterian tendencies.

¹⁰⁶ Adair, “True narrative,” 171–72, 177–78; *Perfect Occurrences* (London), no. 118 (30 March–6 April 1649), 932–33.

¹⁰⁷ Borlase, *History of the Execrable Irish Rebellion*, 207; also found in the *Moderate Intelligencer* (London), no. 214 (19–26 April 1649), 2003–4.

¹⁰⁸ The March act abolishing the office of king had made use of the terms “Crown,” “kingdom,” and “kingdoms” (of England and Ireland) even while acknowledging that the “nation” had “Government now settled in the form of a Commonwealth.” Perhaps significantly, the May act omitted reference to Ireland, presumably encompassed in the “dominions and territories . . . belonging” to England, where in the earlier act “territories and dominions” were noted after reference to England *and* Ireland; see “Act abolishing the office of a king” in S. R. Gardiner ed., *Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1906), 384–88. The demise of older constitutional language was implicitly incorporative of Ireland.

¹⁰⁹ Worden, *God’s Instruments*, 269–74, 278–83.

¹¹⁰ Milton, “Articles of Peace, Observations,” 233–34.

¹¹¹ Milton, 228, 239, 241.

rhetoric, insisted that the adherents of the presbytery "intend to destroy the interest of *England* in *Ireland*, and root out, if they can, the Sovereignty of *England* there, and transfer it to the Scots."¹¹² One newsletter cast an alignment of Ulster interests with the exiled Charles as tending toward a conquest of Ulster "to be called new Scotland."¹¹³

These were hoary allegations, previously more associated with wartime English royalism.¹¹⁴ And they would continue to be pressed. As the Commonwealth edged toward war with Scotland, Marchamont Nedham would construct a reading of prolonged Scottish determination to advance their interest in the "fat soil" of England, before and across the war years, with the covenant twisted and manipulated so that "grandees" could "domineer in the possessions, as their pharasaical priests would over the consciences, of the English."¹¹⁵ So in another "Countrey better then thir own,"¹¹⁶ Scottish ambitions could be tracked from the reign of James VI and I, when "that whole Province [Ulster] was alreadie *possessed* in their *hopes*, and a design was laid in time to *have in realitie*, by finding some or other to forfeit also the *English* Plantations there."¹¹⁷ As recounted in a text printed "by the Appointment of the Council of *State*" in 1650, the Scots had been deceived at the outset of the 1641 Rising by Irish claims to have "no quarrel" with them, "knowing their good natures such, as they would bee content to sit still, and see the English destroyed, so they might escape, there would bee the more room for Colonies of their Nation." Even now, the English should be "taught of an *Enemie*" and remove Scots from the coasts of Ireland, if not from the land altogether.¹¹⁸

The author of the *Necessary Examination* had charged the presbytery, "We would have you remember the *dependence*, for that is like to *last*, but forget the *Kingdom* in them both, for that is at an *end*."¹¹⁹ Milton heartily disparaged Ormond's depiction, writing to Jones, of a legislature reduced from its ancient "three estates of King, Lords & Commons" to "a small number. . . the dregs and scum of the House of Commons," the mere "name of a Parliament."¹²⁰ In his subsequent correspondence, Ormond had pressed further. As he acted "by the same Power that in all ages since the Conquest, hath and only can dispose of the Government of this

¹¹² *Necessary Examination*, 16.

¹¹³ *Perfect Occurrences*, no. 120 (13–20 April 1649), 948.

¹¹⁴ Robert Armstrong, *Protestant War: The British of Ireland and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms* (Manchester, 2005), 132–33.

¹¹⁵ Marchamont Nedham, *The Case of the Commonwealth of England, Stated*, ed. Philip A. Knachel (Charlottesville, 1969), 71–86, at 73, 76–77.

¹¹⁶ Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 249.

¹¹⁷ Remarques, or Observations upon the fore-going Declaration," in *A Declaration of the Irish Armie in Ulster: sent to the Parliament in a Letter from William Basill* [. . .] (London, 1650), 7. The particular example instanced here concerned Scots ambitions following the loss of the City of London's right to its plantation in Londonderry; for the episode, see Jane H. Ohlmeyer, "Strafford, the 'Londonderry Business' and the 'New British History,'" in *The Political World of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, 1621–41*, ed. J. E. Merritt (Cambridge, 1996), 209–29.

¹¹⁸ "Remarques," 7, 9, 11. (The "Remarques" are not attributed to Basill, who was attorney general for Ireland.) Thomason's copy is dated 12 July, a few days before Cromwell's forces entered Scotland. The printer was William Dugard, by this point very much aligned with printing in the service of the regime and not least in support of its Scottish campaign. Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, 45, 121, 266–67.

¹¹⁹ *Necessary Examination*, 6.

¹²⁰ Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 224, 238.

Kingdome,” he understood “of no English Interest separate from, or Independent of the King and Crown of England” (let alone the “misshapen Republique” now in being).¹²¹ Jones’s admission “that were there neither King nor Parliament, yet should I stand firm to my principles, and to this my trust, against those Bloody Rebels, to the best of my power, for preserving the English interest in Ireland”¹²² sounded an authentic note, that of Protestant Ireland’s readiness to relativize constitutional forms to the substance of national or religious interest.¹²³ But it threatened to render an abstract “England” rather than one delineated using “the Fundamentall Lawes and Constitutions of the Kingdome.”¹²⁴ It was to just such an England, construed in constitutional terms, that the Presbyterians of London believed themselves attached by the “Grounds and Principles” upon which they first took up arms for Parliament, and they remained committed to maintenance of its “setled Government.”¹²⁵ “The confirmation and inviolable settlement of which happie Nationall constitution, with its preservation, were the ground of our Engagements, and no change or alternation of the same.”¹²⁶ Those coming together around a Presbyterian platform in Ulster were also resolved to “carry on the service under King and Parliament of England according to our first undertakings;” if these related to an Irish rather than an English war, they were readily enough coupled with rejection of a “usurped power” set “to put down the lawful authority of King, Lords and Commons.”¹²⁷

This was a striking and strident affirmation, and one profoundly threatening to the Commonwealth regime. Within days of the formulation of the Ulster “Declaration” and its accompanying “Propositions,” the presbytery were in a position to broadcast through their pulpits a “Vindication” of their proceedings. Their resolution “to Subject ourselves to the Lawful Authority of the Righteous King and free Parliament of England” allowed them to defy the usurping sectaries, “whom we are resolved never to obey as the Lawful Authority in England.”¹²⁸ If “obedience to the Crowne of England” meant “obedience to the King and free Parliament thereof,” then “untill it shall please God to establish these according to our Solemne League

¹²¹ Ormond to Jones, 27 March 1649, in *A True Copy of two Letters, the first sent from the Earle of Ormond to [. . .] Colonell Michael Jones [. . .] with Colonell Jones his Answere [. . .]* ([London?], 1649), 5, 9–10. The original Dublin edition only included Ormond’s 9 March 1649 letter and Jones’s 14 March reply, both of which appeared in the *Articles of Peace* with Milton’s “Observations.” The expanded version (Thomason date 7 May 1649) continues the correspondence with a further Ormond letter (27 March 1649) and very lengthy reply from Jones (31 March 1649).

¹²² Jones to Ormond, 31 March 1649, in *True Copy of two Letters*, 15.

¹²³ Armstrong, *Protestant War*, 232–34.

¹²⁴ *A serious and faithfull Representation*, 5–7.

¹²⁵ *A serious and faithfull Representation*, 5–7.

¹²⁶ *An Apologeticall Declaration Of the Conscientious Presbyterians of the Province of London, and of many thousands of other faithfull and Covenant-keeping Citizens and Inhabitants [. . .]* (London, 1649), 3. For the importance of this argument, see Vernon, “Quarrel of the Covenant.”

¹²⁷ “Instructions from the officers of the regiments under the command of Colonel George Monck to their commissioners for treating with him,” in Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of the Late Reginald Rawdon Hastings*, 2:357.

¹²⁸ The presbytery’s “Vindication” survives only as reprinted in [James Kirkpatrick], *An Historical Essay Upon the Loyalty of Presbyterians in Great-Britain and Ireland* ([Edinburgh], 1713), 286–87. Kirkpatrick dates the document to 10 April 1649, and this seems likely following a failed meeting between Monck and an expanded council of war at Belfast on 9 April. *Declaration of the British*, 2.

and Covenant," the army and its supporters would press ahead against the "Common Enemy."¹²⁹ As the Council of War clarified for Monck, their service to the king and Parliament of England would continue, "though (for a time) they be violently bereft of the exercise of their just and lawful power" and duty demanded they declare "against the Publick Enemies of our God, such as are now the prevalent party in England."¹³⁰ This was a Presbyterian appropriation of the good old cause, the embrace of a trusteeship for a suspended constitution. And it came with an army.

The danger was both the weakening of the Commonwealth's hold upon Ireland and the articulation—and mobilization—of a constitutionalist opposition that challenged the very premises upon which the regime founded its authority in England. The opportunity to enact such ideas in Ulster came not merely by its distance from the political center but also by Ulster's particular covenanting experience. Where the English and Scottish sister legislatures had set their seal on the Solemn League and Covenant, the Irish parliament (which had maintained a residual royalist existence) had roundly condemned it.¹³¹ In due course, Ulster Presbyterian ministers would spin their willingness to obey Westminster-made law as partly due to "finding this Kingdom in such Posture by the Bloody Rebellion that from our own Parliament, wholesome Laws cou'd not Issue."¹³² The covenanting regime in Scotland had always been ready, even eager, to acknowledge English legislative oversight of Ireland.¹³³ Westminster had slipped Ireland into the pledge to reform the Church of England in the text of the Solemn League and Covenant.¹³⁴ Like its Scottish counterpart, it had ordered that the Covenant be sworn by all troops in its pay in Ireland. But it was ministerial initiative and popular pressure that had extended the Covenant's reach to the civilian population. Those "distressed Christians in the North of Ireland" who petitioned the Scottish General Assembly of 1644 acknowledged that they had "made bold to lay hold upon the opportunity," long desired, "to joyne ourselves with the People of God in the aforesaid League."¹³⁵ The author of the *Necessary Examination* charged that the presbytery had been "very active sometime to impose it upon others, who were the subjects of *England in Ireland*, upon the authority of the *generall Assembly of Scotland*; a thing which in time may cost you the pain of *praemunire*, being within the letter of it."¹³⁶

The Ulster presbytery was as ready as its London brethren to renounce the revolutionary deeds in England as the lawless and furious actions of "private men."¹³⁷ Matters were less certain when it was spiritual craving that called forth actions beyond the boundaries set by national churches or national laws.¹³⁸ Milton had shown himself ready to burst the bounds of a conventional, regulated, "resistance

¹²⁹ "The Councell of Wars Declaration," in *Declaration of the British*, 5.

¹³⁰ "Answers given by the Counsell of War," in *Declaration of the British*, 1–2.

¹³¹ *Journal of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland*, vol. 1, 1613–66 (Dublin, 1796), 324–25.

¹³² "The defences of Mr John Drysdail Minister of Portaferry [. . .] June 1650," in [Kirkpatrick], *Historical Essay*, 289–97, at 292.

¹³³ Conrad Russell, *The Fall of the British Monarchies, 1637–1642* (Oxford, 1991), 384–85.

¹³⁴ Armstrong, *Protestant War*, 95–96.

¹³⁵ *Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland from the Year 1638 to the Year 1649* (Edinburgh, 1691), 215.

¹³⁶ *Necessary Examination*, 21.

¹³⁷ Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 229.

¹³⁸ Armstrong, "Ireland's Puritan Revolution?," 1059–60.

theory” confined to magistrates, such as was endorsed by Presbyterians, in order to justify deeds of justice and righteousness.¹³⁹ But already in his “Observations” there are hints of an emerging tension in his thought, more fully displayed in the second edition of his *Tenure of kings and magistrates*; he now needed to uphold the Rump, guardian of that revolution toward liberty, against challenges to its authority,¹⁴⁰ including from those who, like the Ulster presbytery, stood in no more relation to the Commonwealth as a whole than “Private persons,” no distinct “Tribe and party by themselves.”¹⁴¹ Where Jones could play up the continuity of his authority over the hiatus of 1648–49,¹⁴² the presbytery and its allies could find no sure footing there. If they were to avoid being cast as “private” incendiaries, their recourse must be to the covenant. However imposed, the pledge of the covenant, once sworn, was enduring in its own terms. Covenant-takers were now numbered among “the well-affected in the Kingdoms” and perhaps too an earnest of Ireland’s admission to the covenanted fold.¹⁴³

There was, however, a wrinkle in the logic. When might such a trusteeship be ceded back to restored authority? In Scotland, after all, kingship had also in effect been rendered a trust, the title of Charles II recognized but his exercise of his powers suspended pending his embrace of the Covenants, acted on his behalf by the legislative and executive organs in Edinburgh. So for all that the Ulster Declaration committed its signatories’ lives to uphold the new king’s “just succession,” it immediately qualified the same as dependent on his giving security for covenanted ends “before He be admitted to the exercise of His Royall Power.”¹⁴⁴ Scottish priorities were replicated, too, in the exclusion of malignants, specifically those associated with the Engagement, until suitable repentance and satisfaction was accepted by both “Church” and “Army.”¹⁴⁵ Yet no mention was made of Scotland throughout these documents, and no parallel to its legitimated institutions was present in Ulster. The wrinkle could be smoothed. As the sure foundation for local action was the Covenant, so the restored English constitution was to come in by Covenant means, an option perhaps being explored through some contacts between English Presbyterians and the exiled court.¹⁴⁶ Truly the covenant was the panpharmakon,¹⁴⁷ the panacea for constitutional as for religious ills.

¹³⁹ Martin Dzelzainis, “Anti-monarchism in English Republicanism,” in *Republicanism and Constitutionalism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge, 2002), 27–41 at 36–41.

¹⁴⁰ Go Togashi, “Milton and the Presbyterian Opposition, 1649–1650: The Engagement Controversy and the *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, Second Edition (1649),” *Milton Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (2005): 59–81.

¹⁴¹ Milton, “Articles of Peace, Observations,” 241.

¹⁴² Jones to Ormond, 31 March 1649, in *A True Copy of two Letters*, 14–15.

¹⁴³ Milton, “Articles of Peace, Observations,” 231.

¹⁴⁴ “Councill of Wars Declaration,” 4–5.

¹⁴⁵ “Councill of Wars Declaration,” 5.

¹⁴⁶ “Councill of Wars Declaration,” 5. Though necessarily shady, there is some evidence of an English “Presbyterian plot” in 1649–50, supportive of a restoration of Charles II to power in alignment with Scotland and, it would appear, on effectively Scottish, covenanted terms. Leland H. Carlson, “A History of the Presbyterian Party from Pride’s Purge to the Dissolution of the Long Parliament,” *Church History* 11, no. 2 (1942): 113–17.

¹⁴⁷ *Necessary Examination*, 21; *Complaint of the Boutefeū*, 7.

III

The demise of the Ulster revolt was swift, and its stages are well established.¹⁴⁸ At the end of June, Ards revealed his possession of a royal commission to command-in-chief in Ulster, obtained and deployed before any commitment by Charles to "secure Religion." His commission brought full and unrelenting condemnation from the presbytery.¹⁴⁹ The "quarrell of the Covenant"¹⁵⁰ pursued Ards to Derry, where he sought to join his forces to an increasingly heterogeneous besieging army, only to find that not only his own men but many of the west Ulster forces heeded the calls of the ministers and melted away, disdaining service alongside so-called malignants. Though not the sole cause of the collapse of a now-prolonged siege, presbytery opposition continued across the summer and autumn, as Ards's army shriveled, west Ulster garrisons surrendered to Coote, and some of the harried ministers themselves took flight for Scotland.¹⁵¹

With wisdom after the event, James Kerr, minister of Ballymoney, lamented that the presbytery, though setting themselves against both "sectaries" and "malignants," had not first turned upon the more immediate and more pestiferous threat, the "numerous Army of Papists and Malignants," instead entangling the "honest Army" with the duplicitous Ards.¹⁵² Even the commissioners of the Scottish General Assembly, who backed the presbytery in its standoff with Kerr and his neighbor minister O'Quinn,¹⁵³ had suggested that it was the "Malignant party" who were "the greatest opposits at this tyme within that land."¹⁵⁴ The two men had framed their earliest disagreement as cautious concern at pronouncements issued in undue haste and "exceedingly more hask than beseemeth us,"¹⁵⁵ mounting to very Presbyterian pleas to allow them "clearness" in squaring their consciences and not to demand "implicit" obedience without conviction, "to believe as the Church believeth, without any further tryal of what the Church believeth."¹⁵⁶ But one forceful challenge, reiterated and elaborated as the months passed, was to the determination of the presbytery, being merely a few young men "and far from true Intelligence,"¹⁵⁷ to act in advance of their brethren in the other kingdoms in moving to "proclame war. . . we not being ane intyr [entire] kingdome, but a handful of scattered people," and where "the king hath not given as yet security for religion . . . neither (for ought as we know) just satisfaction to both kingdomes."¹⁵⁸ The presbytery

¹⁴⁸ Forkan, "Ormond, Montgomery, and the Problem of Authority," 160–66.

¹⁴⁹ *Complaint of the Boutefeū*, 1–3. The fullest statement of the Presbytery's position is their *Declaration at Bangor*, which Adair claimed was ordered read in all congregations, though opposed in some by "Malignant officers"; see Adair, "True narrative," 187.

¹⁵⁰ *Declaration at Bangor*, 5; Leviticus 26:25.

¹⁵¹ Forkan, "Ormond, Montgomery, and the Problem of Authority," 161–64, 169. Owen Roe O'Neill honored his commitment to Coote and intervened to scatter the last remnants of the besieging army.

¹⁵² *News from Ireland*, 23–24, 30, 32–33.

¹⁵³ For a less than positive account of Kerr and O'Quinn, see Adair, "True narrative," 152, 161, 183–84.

¹⁵⁴ Mitchell and Christie, *Records of the Commissions*, 278.

¹⁵⁵ "Objections" by Kerr and O'Quinn, in *News from Ireland*, 10–11.

¹⁵⁶ Kerr and O'Quinn, "Reply [. . .] to the Presbyteries Observations," 3 May 1649, in *News from Ireland*, 15–20. This was also the burden of their letter to the Commission of the General Assembly in Scotland, 5 May 1649; see Mitchell and Christie, *Records of the Commissions*, 276–77.

¹⁵⁷ *News from Ireland*, 10.

¹⁵⁸ Kerr and O'Quinn to Commissioners of the General Assembly, 21 May 1649, Wodrow MS Folio 25, fol. 104, National Library of Scotland.

had “caused all the Countrey and Army to rise in Arms . . . against all the Power that now rules in England; notwithstanding that neither our friends in England that is against that Army, has given us any call so to do, nor has Scotland risen in Arms against them as yet.”¹⁵⁹

Milton had claimed, and challenged, a “Copartnering,” a shared “Interest,” of “op’n enemies” and “pretended Brethren” in Ireland.¹⁶⁰ Possibly the phantom of a project was more real, and more terrible, than he knew. A set of propositions formulated for transmission to Charles II, perhaps as early as February, survive, in which both Ards and the presbytery almost certainly had a hand. Present concession of a Presbyterian church order in Ulster was an instalment toward a future when “God shall afforde his Highnesse the opportunitie to settle it though the whole Kingdomes,” as royal approbation for their renewing of the Covenant prefigured the heartily wished-for “ioyning therein” of the king himself.¹⁶¹ The implicit premise was the successful outcome of the negotiations then in train between Charles and the Scottish regime, and confidence in such a settlement may have lingered in Ulster.¹⁶² Whether the Ulster terms were dispatched to the court or not, some inkling reached Ormond.¹⁶³ Contact with Ards was established, perhaps by March, and Ormond preempted the royal initiative in issuing his own commission for Ards to command in Ulster in April.¹⁶⁴ Ards may have been a little Lucifer who “practiced falsehood under saintly show,”¹⁶⁵ but he was less a cavalier in covenanter guise than the aspiring sponsor of Presbyterian incorporation into a reconfigured royal cause.¹⁶⁶ In his person he bridged royalism’s alternative Irish and Scottish strategies—for the Commonwealth, a truly monstrous conflation of interests.

Even political genius far beyond Ards’s could hardly have succeeded in accommodating the Ulster component of a covenanted monarchy to an Irish settlement founded on the Ormond articles. By May, even as the exiled Charles issued his commission to Ards,¹⁶⁷ negotiations with the Scottish government collapsed. Any commitment Charles would make to uphold the covenants or Presbyterianism was confined to

¹⁵⁹ Kerr to “a friend” in Scotland, 13 July 1649, in *News from Ireland*, 20–27, at 23.

¹⁶⁰ Milton, “Articles of Peace, Observations,” 239.

¹⁶¹ “The humble petition of his Majesties well affected subjects of the Province of Ulster,” TNA, SP 63/275/2. These undated propositions are calendared in *Calendar of State Papers Relating to Ireland 1647–60*, 261–62 under the date 1643 but clearly belong to early 1649. The presbytery would claim that in “the Propositions to be offered to the King, you [Ards] agreed that these concerning Religion should be first offered, and if these were not granted, no other should be presented”; see *Complaint of the Boutefeu*, 2.

¹⁶² Monck suggested that his Ulster opponents believed Charles would “presently” come to Edinburgh and take the Covenants: Monck to Jones, 29 March 1649, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Ormonde, at 2:91.

¹⁶³ Unsigned and undated notes, seemingly from or sent via Robert Ward, linked the promise of such an outcome to the issuance of a commission to Ards. Ormond papers, Bod., Carte 26, fol. 448.

¹⁶⁴ Ormond papers, Bod., Carte MS 24, fol. 446; Forkan, “Ormond, Montgomery, and the Problem of Authority,” 158–59.

¹⁶⁵ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, in *The Major Works*, ed. Stephen Orgel and Jonathan Goldberg (Oxford, 1991), 424.

¹⁶⁶ For Ards’s earlier involvement with the Scottish Engagement, opposed by the Ulster presbytery, see Kevin Forkan, “The Ulster Scots and the Engagement, 1647–8,” *Irish Historical Studies* 35, no. 140 (2007): 455–76.

¹⁶⁷ Octavius Ogle et al., eds., *Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers*, 5 vols. (Oxford, 1872–1970), 2:11; Ormond papers, Bod., Carte MS 24, fol. 706. The commission was to be carried by Sir Robert Stewart,

Scotland, and he refused anything that might "obstruct or disturb" the Ormond treaty in Ireland.¹⁶⁸ In early July, after his breach with the presbytery had opened, Ards still publicly proclaimed his commitment to royal confirmation of Presbyterianism in Ulster.¹⁶⁹ He may have procured the letter from Ormond's deputy, Viscount Inchiquin, which asserted the king's resolution to "Establish the Presbyterian government in these Parts, and I Believe, it may be in other Parts also, of the Kingdom."¹⁷⁰ But at best this was a scaled-back promise, detached from the promise of a tri-kingdom covenanted future, in effect rescaling the Ulster option to fit an internal Irish settlement lacking solid guarantees.¹⁷¹ The presbytery knew that Ards could not deliver what the king had refused Scotland. It was "of small purpose though His Majesty should tolerat Presbyteriall Government in this Province for a time, and yet refuse to settle it in the rest of His Dominions." Without an underpinning in the Solemn League and Covenant, "Religion can never be truly secure here."¹⁷²

IV

It could be said that the presbytery's fullest triumph in 1649 was to collapse Ards's efforts to incorporate Presbyterians within a malignant construction. Even positive evaluations of English Presbyterian arguments have discerned "an almost self-destructive integrity" or, more resoundingly, an "impotence" in the face of the revolutionary events of 1648–49.¹⁷³ By such standards, Ulster Presbyterianism demonstrated only a temporary virility. But the Commonwealth's Ulster problem demanded a resolution, not only in arms but in print, in Milton's "Observations" and across a scattering of pamphlets and press reports. Constitutional and religious ideas reflective of Presbyterian thinking in England as well as Scotland had been mobilized to add to the threat to the Commonwealth's hold on Ireland. To ensure support for the massive new Irish expedition taking form in 1649 meant not only fending off any "radical" concerns about the appropriateness of reconquest, either in principle or in light of unfinished English business. It meant quashing any option between republic and rebel, stamping out the idea as well as the armed forces of a covenanted interest on the English ground

with permission to suppress it if Ards was unwilling or insufficiently forward in his commitment: see Bod., Carte MS 24, fols. 709–10.

¹⁶⁸ *State papers collected by Edward, earl of Clarendon*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1767), 2: xciii. The answer was delivered on 19 May 1649, and the Scottish commissioners had reached Leith by 27 May; see S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate*, 4 vols. (London, 1903), 1:66–67.

¹⁶⁹ George Hill, ed., *The Montgomery Manuscripts* (Belfast, 1869), 187–88.

¹⁷⁰ [John McBride], *A Sample of Jet-Black Pre—tic Calumny* [. . .] (Glasgow, 1713), 189–91.

¹⁷¹ Inchiquin's letter of 2 July 1649 also warned against division between Presbyterians and Episcopalians and advanced the unrealistic hope of a future resolution of their differences. Nor can it have bolstered confidence in future pledges that he suggested the king's current concessions to Catholics were "but Temporary." The proposal in the Ormond papers suggested that if Presbyterianism "shalbe established by a generall assembly of the church as the lawe of the land, it shall goe through this kingdome" (Bod., Carte MS 24, fol. 448)—perhaps a less appealing promise than it was intended to be.

¹⁷² *Declaration at Bangor*, [3]. That Charles determined to remit consideration of the Solemn League and Covenant to the parliament of Ireland as well as of England offered precious little prospect of future security for Presbyterianism in Ireland, under any likely composition of that body.

¹⁷³ I. M. Smart, "Edward Gee and the Matter of Authority," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27, no. 2 (1976): 115–27, at 123; second quotation, Vernon, "Quarrel of the Covenant," 218.

of Ulster. The same strategy that would routinely render Scottish the revolted of Ulster¹⁷⁴ would brand as Scottified those English Presbyterians deemed to promote principles incompatible with the liberty and security of England's new Free State. For Milton and other writers whose hostility to Presbyterianism was ingrained, Ulster offered a model of subversion and examples of churchly tyranny that could tug at those of moderate, or Erastian, or merely patriotic disposition, to curb any tendency to challenge on the grounds of Covenant or calling any political order that "refuses to give Christ his due first."¹⁷⁵ Ireland mattered in the resolution of England's Presbyterian question. It was because the Ulster Presbyterians posed a real threat to Commonwealth interests, militarily confined but ideologically connected, that they could serve as a proxy in campaigns that revealed the most widely unacceptable elements of covenanted Presbyterianism.

Milton celebrated those "endu'd with fortitude and Heroick vertue" who battled the "calamities and thraldoms of a People" regardless of "gibrish Lawes . . . the badge of their ancient tyranny," or the "inconstancie" of "revolters."¹⁷⁶ For him, the untrammelled pursuit of religious as of civil liberty, beyond the bounds of constraining laws or confining religious establishments, was a moral imperative.¹⁷⁷ Students of the English Revolution must heed J. C. Davis's depiction of the "dynamism" of a providential religion where God's control was unquestioned but his designs unperceived, where a sense of God as a divine "destabiliser" was the absolute against which all forms, political or ecclesiastical, were rendered provisional.¹⁷⁸ The Ulster Presbyterians in their "remote" province gave expression to a widely shared counter-imperative, as intense and comprehensive in its obligation, and as tailored to present need, the call to the faithful to "choose affliction rather than sinne . . . suffering rather than compliance . . . that neither perswasion nor terrour may withdraw them from the Truth that is now opposed."¹⁷⁹ The call was to emulate Nebuchadnezzar's victims of old: to face "Papists, Sectaries, or Malignants" with the affirmation that "yet the Lord our God will deliver us from them, or if he doe not, yet we will not serve their gods, nor by any connivance, or politique lukewarmness, be any wayes partakers of their iniquities."¹⁸⁰ A God of covenants was a God of promises, to whom vows must be honored, whose word revealed the lineaments of his kingly rule, his governance over conscience.¹⁸¹ This was no static vision. For a Samuel Rutherford, a "biblically prescribed church government" was more than compatible with a "passionate subjectivity" of devotion: it was one of the "channels through which true spiritual experience would freely flow."¹⁸² For the Ulster presbytery it was the hedge safeguarding the garden of the Lord, in which all might—indeed, must—

¹⁷⁴ It is worth reiterating that this was a routine description, from correspondence to newsbooks, even when it was not the occasion for anti-Scottish attacks.

¹⁷⁵ *Complaint of the Boutefeu*, 13.

¹⁷⁶ Milton, "Tenure of Kings and Magistrates," 151–52.

¹⁷⁷ For Milton's "pairing" of civic and religious "virtue and obligation," not despite but as reflective of his determination to separate church and state, see Worden, *Literature and Politics*, 161–62.

¹⁷⁸ J. C. Davis, "Living with the Living God: Radical Religion and the English Revolution," in Durston and Maltby, *Religion in Revolutionary England*, 9–41.

¹⁷⁹ *Declaration at Bangor*, [6].

¹⁸⁰ *Declaration of the Brittish*, 4; see Daniel 3:16–18.

¹⁸¹ *Solemn Testimony*, 4.

¹⁸² Rutherford, as quoted in Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions*, 188–89.

be gathered to cultivate the fruits of righteousness. As the regicide was more than an act of religious fanaticism but a stimulant to the political imagination,¹⁸³ so the covenant could inspire the zeal of Colonel Wallace or the practical political reasoning that could cast his fellow officers as the trustees of a suspended constitution, acting "for the Parliament of England, And onely against those who have illegally usurped their power."¹⁸⁴

Milton's "vehemence" when confronted with Presbyterian backsliding has been seen as evidence of an "intense commitment to community"—but to an "idealized national community. . . in his own image and likeness," one perhaps always, to some extent, a textual community only imaginable, let alone realizable, in a world of ready print.¹⁸⁵ Milton delivered polemical service to regimes that offered the promise of religious deliverance,¹⁸⁶ of a strong state brooking no spiritual rivals but countenancing all those engaged in the honest pursuit of truth. It was a more imaginable outcome in a print-strewn and institution-rich London than in a war-torn and desolate Ulster, where any spiritual provision was sparse and with little by way of uncontested or effective civil authority. The Ulster presbytery and its supporters were no strangers to print debate, citing texts in their exchanges with George Monck or with Kerr and O'Quinn.¹⁸⁷ But their community was more than textual; their declarations and declamations rarely if ever reached print at their own hands but were readily broadcast through a network of pulpits, not only articulating but activating covenanted ideals, creating as well as confirming community. Sixty years later, Milton would be called as a defense witness by Belfast Presbyterians protesting charges of the ingrained disloyalty of dissenters. "Milton's invectives" showed how staunchly their predecessors had stood by monarchy, "contrary to the Sectarian and Rump-Parliament-Council of those Times."¹⁸⁸ The descendants of the "treacherous guests" had gone "out to battell,"¹⁸⁹ again, in the Jacobite wars, as the heirs of the "blockish presbyters" would demonstrate in stout histories compiled to reassure a greatly expanded flock of their place in the narrow ground of Ulster and the broad terrain of British history.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸³ Dzelzainis, "Anti-monarchism in English Republicanism."

¹⁸⁴ "Scottish Officers" to Monck, 9 May 1649, in *True state of the Transactions*, 15. The appended list of signatories makes it clear that not all were in fact Scottish.

¹⁸⁵ Paul Stevens, "Intolerance and the Virtues of Sacred Vehemence," in *Milton and Toleration*, ed. Sharon Achinstein and Elizabeth Sauer (Oxford, 2007), 243–67, at 251–52, 260–61.

¹⁸⁶ See Worden, *Literature and Politics*, 174–76, for Milton's readiness to "embark on his career of political polemic" as reflective of a recognition that post-1649 regimes offered the prospect of protection for religious liberty.

¹⁸⁷ *Declaration of the Brittish*, 2; *News from Ireland*, 13, 18.

¹⁸⁸ [McBride], *Sample*, 109. The pamphlet that started the controversy included a reprint of the Bangor declaration as evidence of Presbyterian disloyalty to monarchy; see [William Tisdall], *A Sample of True-Blew Presbyterian-Loyalty in all Changes and Turns of Government* [. . .] (Dublin, 1709), 25–31. Kirkpatrick's *Historical Essay* was another, massive, contribution to the same debate.

¹⁸⁹ Milton, "Articles of Peace, Observations," 249.

¹⁹⁰ Ian McBride, "Ulster Presbyterians and the Confessional State, c.1688–1743," in *Political Discourse in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, ed. D. G. Boyce, Robert Eccleshall, and Vincent Geoghegan (Houndmills, 2001), 169–92; Robert Armstrong, "Telling the Presbyterian Story in Eighteenth-Century Ireland: John McBride and James Kirkpatrick," in *Representing Irish Religious Histories*, ed. Jacqueline Hill and Mary Ann Lyons (Cham, 2017), 37–51.