

## 1641–1642

Milton's *Anti-prelatical Tracts* and The Ulster Rising

In the abstract, the Nine Years War (1594–1603) had been settled, if not by the Treaty at Mellifont, then by the Flight of the Earls in 1607 and the subsequent Ulster Plantation. As a result, there is a pervasive sense in London (if not in Ireland) that Ireland is at peace. In the summer of 1641, for example, Charles I's Secretary of State, Henry Vane, described "a peacable calme," two months before the Ulster Rising of 1641.<sup>1</sup> So, when literary historian David Loewenstein describes the Irish Rebellion as "erupting after over thirty years of peace under English and Protestant authority," he well conveys the official English sense of the situation, which downplays both years of growing animosity toward the Lord Deputy of Ireland and, in 1641, interisland constitutional questions.<sup>2</sup> Such a profound misreading of the situation reflects the official London policy at the time, according to which Ireland was English and Protestant, when it was not yet either, not even in its most settled province, Leinster.

Given such an understanding of the interisland situation as calm, the Ulster Rising of 1641 would be all the more shocking to London observers, even though Ulster, with its combination of Gaelic Irish, Gaelic Scottish, Irish Catholics, Scottish Catholics, and Scottish Presbyterians, was a uniquely complicated Irish province. David Edwards notes that, in fact, "native unrest was almost continuous," between 1610 and 1641, with rebellions in all but eight of those years.<sup>3</sup> While Ireland did see many rebellions, nearly annually, nothing matched what unfolded after the Ulster Rising of 1641, in its notorious ferocity, its all-island spread, and its interisland consequences for English politics.

What began on October 22, 1641, as a Rising in Ulster coordinated among the Gaelic Irish there became an island-wide rebellion by the spring of 1642, with a legacy that shaped at least the next twenty years in Ireland, if not the rest of Irish history to this day. The violence was directed at settlers on land formerly owned by Gaelic Catholics.<sup>4</sup> Settlers would be evicted from their homes, at knifepoint, and their homes ransacked,

usually for the goods, but also for the documents that had granted them title or deed to the land they had settled. At Portadown, settlers were marched out onto a bridge, the bridge destroyed, and the settlers drowned. Elsewhere, settlers were forced into a thatched cottage, which was then set alight. Describing the Ulster Rising of 1641 as "one of the most lurid and bloody events in Irish history," T. J. Moody notes that it "produced its own instant mythology."<sup>5</sup> By 1642, the number directly affected was already being inflated. Formal depositions recorded in Dublin in an attempt to document the violence of the Rising interviewed Protestants only and tended to exaggeration and repetition.

Given both the reality of the Rising and its swift conversion into myth, it is easy to forget how during the 1630s the English administration took the interrelated issues of land, political power, and religious affiliation and condensed them into explosive tinder in Ireland. During those years, Thomas Wentworth (later the Earl of Strafford), the Laudian Lord Deputy of Ireland, united the Gaelic Irish and the Old English in a new, shared sense of being Irish Catholic that overcame their traditional suspicions. In *The Irish Massacre* (1646), Henry Parker argues, "My Lord of Straffords Government (which gave distast to the whole Kingdom) and then he began to particularize the suffering of them that were the more ancient Natives . . . out of their Ancestours estates."<sup>6</sup> As historian T. C. Barnard puts it, "important though those differences [between Gaelic Irish and Old English] were, Strafford, by ignoring them and treating the Irish Catholics as a homogenous group of doubtful loyalty, helped to create such a group: in 1641 they temporarily united in opposition to him, if in little else."<sup>7</sup>

In this chapter, I review Wentworth's career in Ireland, in conversation with Spenser's *A View*, and then situate four of Milton's five anti-prelatical tracts in relation to the impeachment, trial, and execution of Wentworth in the spring of 1641 and the Ulster Rising in the autumn of the same year: *Of Reformation*, "probably in May 1641"; *Of Prelatical Episcopacy*, "June or July 1641"; *The Reason of Church Government*, "January or February 1642"; and *Apology for Smectymnuus*, "April, 1642."<sup>8</sup> The first two are published just before and the second two after the Ulster Rising of 1641. The approach here is chronological, starting with highlights of Wentworth's time in Ireland, then following the publication of Milton's essays, and the arrival in London of news of the Ulster Rising. We will see, then, two essays, then the eruption of Ulster, followed by two more of the anti-prelatical tracts. The earlier two tracts overlap with Wentworth's impeachment and trial in London during the first half of 1641, the trial

lurking behind Milton's reflections on reformation – on the shape it should take and the discipline it requires.

From a single off-handed reference to Irish Catholics in *Of Reformation*, Milton's first anti-prelatical tract, to a more conceptual confrontation with the Archbishop of Armagh in the second, *Of Prelatical Episcopacy*, Ireland emerges as a chapter-level feature of Milton's fourth anti-prelatical tract, *The Reason of Church Government*. More specifically, this essay, in which Milton outlines his plan for literary accomplishment, also includes his fullest statement yet on the situation in Ireland. Although readers have focused on the former, practically to the exclusion of the latter, the most remarkable thing is that they appear in the same important essay together. The Spenserian connection continues: Like Spenser, Milton emerges as an author with a public mission through an engagement with Ireland.

In 1641, not long before Vane described the situation as calm, the English Parliament tried and executed the Lord Deputy of Ireland, suggesting a fraught kind of calm. Wentworth's administration, less well known than Laud's in England and Scotland, concentrates both the early modern Irish crises and the British problem. The issues his administration raises play out not only in Ireland but also in England, through the civil wars: The king needs money, the established church needs reformation, and local aristocrats, who might otherwise seem like natural allies, are alienated by the means used to achieve the ends. In the case of Ireland, though, there were other, related issues: plantation, titles to land, and the status of the Irish Parliament. With the prospect of planting a fourth province, Connacht, the English administration also destabilized the ownership of land in Ulster. These developments informed the Irish petition of impeachment against Wentworth, which led to his trial in London. The implication of Ireland's subsidiary status in London was clear to Irish observers. All of these developments, as we shall see, informed the Ulster Rising. How, then, did English officials so misread the situation as calm?

In 1625, when Charles I ascends to the throne in England, he confronts an overarching financial predicament that affects his first decade, starting almost immediately in the contest with Parliament over Tunnage and Poundage (customs duties). Ireland was one of the places in which Charles hoped to raise funds. The shift to living in an Ireland – not a plantation – so clearly administered for England's benefit, led one New English settler to describe Ireland as "English empire" in 1625.<sup>9</sup> In 1626, Charles tries to bring the Old English in Ireland on board by suspending "the imposition of recusants for their failure to attend at Protestant service," along with religious tests for inheritance, law, and public office.<sup>10</sup>

The New English Protestant settlers believe – recognize, even – that they are being sidelined in this process; by working with the Old English Catholics, Charles's administration was undermining the standing of the settlers, and the Protestantism that they had in many cases been sent into Ireland to propagate.

The Old English, though, could not have been reassured to know that funds were being raised to support an army the king wanted Irish Catholics not to join. By 1631, Sir Charles Coote, the Protestant vice president of Connacht, proposed a new plantation, one in his province; and in 1632, lists are drawn up of Catholics who would need to pay the formerly suspended recusancy fines for not attending services in the Church of Ireland. To historian Aidan Clarke, the development meant that “conciliatory acceptance of the pluralist character of the colony in Ireland . . . seemed to have fallen victim to the single-minded sectionalism of the protestant settlers.”<sup>11</sup>

In the same year that Thomas Wentworth arrived in Ireland, 1633, James Ware published a version of Spenser's *A View*, which had been completed toward the end of Spenser's time in Ireland, and just before what turned out to be the end of his life. First recorded in the Stationers' Register in 1598 as *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, Spenser's *A View* participates in the repeated sixteenth-century English process of surveying Ireland. Long the most popular manuscript affecting English policy in Ireland, *A View* draws together Spenser's classical training, time in Ireland, and extant Tudor tropes about Ireland into a compelling, and confusing, prose dialogue about the situation there. *A View* is staged as a Ciceronian dialogue between Irenius, whose name refers to the island from which he has purportedly returned, and Eudoxus, whose name, implying both good opinion and no opinion, makes him the ideal recipient for Irenius' insights. Still, as Patricia Coughlan notes, Spenser's “descriptive accounts of Ireland taken as a whole reveal a marked uncertainty of perspective,” and she cautions against “the too ready conclusion that Irenius wins the argument.”<sup>12</sup>

The dialogue form contributes to the standing of *A View*, embodying its cultural capital; Spenser, unlike so many other English essayists on Ireland, represents the Irish classically. But at the same time, the dialogue form is ambiguous by design; readers are left to evaluate for themselves not only the truth of the situation in Ireland but, regarding the text itself, which of the two voices are supposed to be trusted. Irenius's claim that the Gaelic Irish are “very stubborne and untamed” is one of many that fit conveniently into long-standing English attitudes and discourse about Ireland

(14). When Irenius proposes English intervention in Irish court poetry, he does so in broad terms with clear political echoes: "This evill custome therefore needeth reformation" (77). Irish bards lack discipline, Irenius argues: "So farre from instructing young men in morall discipline . . . they themselves doe more deserve to bee sharply disciplined" (76). In this, the situation with poets is similar to the political and religious conditions in Ireland, both Catholic and Protestant. Their reformation as imagined by English Protestant commentators must begin with the question of discipline.

To describe how to achieve the Irish reformation he desires, Spenser turns to agricultural metaphors: "All these evils must first be cut away by a strong hand, before any good can bee planted, like as the corrupt branches and unwholesome boughs are first to be pruned" (93). Such discussions of pruning Irish culture take on a life of their own and grow like a poisonous vine. In short, they come to be associated with a policy of extirpation, of uprooting. It is this policy of extirpation that leaves readers seeing Spenser's *A View* as "racial in focus and racist in intent."<sup>13</sup> Over time, the reception of *A View*, related to the remarkable timing of its publication, will emphasize the narrow, categorical assertion of difference. Part of the interest in *A View*, though, is that Spenser would like to extirpate the Church of Ireland just as much as the Roman Catholic Church. In *A View*, Spenser is unaware of Ulster, and Scottish Presbyterians, an increasingly prominent group following the Plantation of Ulster. Within just a decade of its publication, subsequent events – culminating in the later Cromwellian invasion – will focus extirpation on Irish Catholics.

Spenser writes *A View* sixty years after Henry VIII commits the English polity to Protestantism, and five decades after the Irish Parliament commits Ireland to that English Protestant polity. At the time he writes *A View*, Spenser has spent two decades living on the island of Ireland, and is thus well-positioned to describe the failure of the established church in Ireland to reach and reform those who were supposedly so backward in custom, law, and religion. A then-new feature of the English experience in Ireland, the failure to convert – or to reform – the Irish means that Spenser is at least as focused on English Protestants as he is on pre-Catholic Reformation Gaelic Irish. Spenser is concerned not only that the Irish be reformed but that England's institutions in Ireland be modernized as well. He argues that it is important to reform Irish "trades, and set a course for their good establishment" (156). Similarly, he believes that the island will need additional "bridges," investment in cross-island communication and transport, or modernized infrastructure (156).

The 1633 edition of Spenser's dialogue coincides with the arrival of Wentworth as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, to whom this first print edition is dedicated. By 1633, however, Spenser's *A View* was a very dated traveler's guide to Ireland. More than a half century had passed since Spenser first left England for Ireland. In the intervening decades, the turmoil has, if anything *accelerated*: The Desmond Rebellions that Spenser's generation was sent to Ireland to quell have passed; the Munster Plantation had begun in earnest; the Nine Years War had been fought, collapsing the Munster Plantation; the Ulster Earls had fled; James I had succeeded Elizabeth I; and the Ulster Plantation was well underway. At a distance from Ireland, Ware had every reason to refer to the current moment in Anglo-Irish relations as "our halcyon dayes."<sup>14</sup> After all, it had been nearly three decades since the last sustained campaign in Ireland, the Nine Years War. The Ulster Plantation, nearly a quarter-century old in 1633, seemed well advanced, with tens of thousands of new settlers.

Ware's optimistic phrase also conveys English administrative ignorance regarding cultural developments in early seventeenth-century Ireland: Reformation Catholicism, Scots Presbyterianism, and the anglicization of Irish peerages. Each of these post-date Spenser's *A View*. Together, they represent new political combinations – a disciplined Catholicism, a disciplined but not English Protestantism, and a land-owning class "whose agendas were anglocentric, not Brito-centric."<sup>15</sup> Just eight years after Ware published Spenser's *A View*, Wentworth would be executed and Ulster would rise. Along the way, Scotland would rebel and the Bishops War would pull Charles out of England and into war. As it turns out, then, 1633 would indeed look, with the passage of time, as halcyon days – more so than Ware could know.

Wentworth, as the new Lord Deputy sought to "supply the king's wants," which were substantial as Irish expenses alone were running fifty percent higher than Irish revenues – £60,000 spent versus £40,000 taken in.<sup>16</sup> With Wentworth's appointment, "the conventions by which early modern Irish society operated changed fundamentally."<sup>17</sup> When he arrived in Ireland, in the summer of 1633, Wentworth enlisted the standing discussion of "Graces" (a royal dispensation tolerating Catholics), the pluralism of the island, and the plan for a plantation in the fourth and final province to play both sides against the middle, or to "govern the Native by the Planter and the Planter by the Native."<sup>18</sup> Initially, the Old English oppose the New English settlers, and they both oppose the government. Over time, a matter of just a few years, Wentworth would shift the two sides, and thus the middle. When Wentworth arrives, Ireland

has de facto toleration for Catholics, popular with the Old English, who were then, as we have seen, providing and training the Tridentine Catholic clergy. Wentworth continued the Irish practice, and offered the tantalizing prospect of "Graces" from Charles I.

Wentworth called an Irish Parliament to convene in the summer of 1634. Since 1615, the early years of the Ulster Plantation, successive administrations had increased the size of the Irish peerage, from twenty-five to ninety-nine members, with an eye toward reducing Catholic influence in the Irish Parliament.<sup>19</sup> By 1628, though, as Jane Ohlmeyer notes, "nearly one third (30/95) of Irish peerages had passed to Englishmen."<sup>20</sup> When the Irish Parliament meets in 1634, Catholics are entirely outnumbered by Irish (well, mostly New English) Protestants and absentee Protestant English lords of Ireland. Their identification was English, not Irish, of any variety, nor British in the James mold. Only "eighteen of the members bore native Irish names."<sup>21</sup> An attempt, soon after Parliament opened, to oust nonresident Lords failed, and clarified Wentworth's strength as new lord deputy.

When Wentworth turns his attention to religion (which, in colonial Ireland, is also a way of talking, again, about land), the effects were even more unpopular among the New English. Taking a perhaps uncharacteristically pragmatic approach to his new island, Wentworth continued toleration of Catholicism. In keeping with the efforts of Laud, the Archbishop of Canterbury, appointed to that position the same year Wentworth became Lord Deputy, Wentworth harmonized the Churches of England and of Ireland. In Ireland, though, pluralism extended to Protestantism. The Church of Ireland had long been more Calvinist than Anglican. By the mid 1630s, the episcopalian structure of the Anglican church struck many Protestants in the British Isles as Catholic, or at best a lingering Catholic effect on the Anglican Church. In addition to the varieties of pre- and post-Tridentine Catholicism, Ireland mixed an established, episcopalian Protestant Church with Presbyterianism in the one kingdom. Among the Protestant communities, then, Wentworth was not only requiring a new conformity; it was, in the words of historian Clarke, "a norm that was unrepresentative of Irish protestant opinion."<sup>22</sup> In Ireland, Wentworth heightened this sensitivity with his continuing toleration of actual Catholicism, in an increasingly structured Catholic Church.

In 1634, a year after the publication of Spenser's *A View* and Wentworth's arrival, the Parliament in Ireland approved two bills, one of which would have formalized the Graces (Catholic toleration), and the other of which would move "the commission for defective titles" (that is,

investigate and establish legal ownership according to English law, politics, and principles). After Parliament ended three weeks later, Wentworth considered the two bills, unsurprisingly deciding that he was not comfortable with sending the Graces bill as it was to London and that he would move the title commission to Dublin. Wentworth thereby brought along the New English settler Protestants while (and to some extent *by*) alienating the Old English Catholics.

Wentworth's relocating the title commission is part of a larger process that proves to be unsettling to each of Ireland's diverse communities: the plantation of Connacht, and a prospective retitling of the Ulster Plantation. In both cases, the ownership of the land would again be up for grabs (and therefore in doubt), except that this time titles held by Old English, New English, and Ulster Scots would *all* be under reconsideration. The Province of Connacht, the only one without a systemic plantation thus far, would be placed under review, regardless of the standing of its current occupants and historic owners. With Wentworth planning an "investigation of all titles in the Munster plantation and urg[ing] the confiscation of the Londonderry Company's holdings in the Ulster Plantation," across Ireland the halcyon days were fading.<sup>23</sup>

In 1635, Wentworth began a formal procession across the island, stopping in Connacht towns along the way: Boyle, County Roscommon on July 9; Sligo, County Sligo on July 13; and Ballinrobe on July 31, pressing in each case for the title of each county to be transferred to Charles, which it was. Galway, then, was the last holdout against the king's claim, and in order to prosecute it, Wentworth took up residence in Portumna Castle (Illustration 1.1), home of Richard Burke, the 4th Earl of Clanricarde, then in England (where he was Viscount Tunbridge, Baron of Somerville, and Earl of St. Albans).<sup>24</sup> That is, Wentworth moved into the seat of the most powerful person in the final county in Connacht to hold out and proceeded to dispossess it from its ancient owner, an aristocrat in two kingdoms. Burke died in November of 1635. Three Galwegians who had gone to London to plead his and their case, getting the message, did not return to Ireland. Lord Mountnorris, a New English aristocrat, "wrote to the king offering to substantiate his criticisms of Wentworth," and was tried and sentenced to death for his efforts. The sentence was not carried out, but it did not need to be for the message to be clear: Wentworth was in control of Ireland.

Coincidentally, Ulster faced a new, destabilizing threat in 1635, this time from Charles' London administration directly. The Star Chamber fined the City of London, holder of the charter for the 340,000-acre Derry





Illustration 1.1 Portumna Castle, County Galway.

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plantation, for their (predictable) failure to replace the native population with English and Scottish settlers on that land. This London-based development in the North coincided with Wentworth's approach to Connacht (his actual approach, as it turned out). By 1636, Wentworth's plan to move the commission on defective titles to Dublin is given new energy as the court of the castle chamber reviews the titles of all church lands acquired by New English settlers. This court, which had the authority to fine, imprison, and mandate corporal punishment, had no means of appeal. As Clarke puts it, "the whole basis of New English property-ownership was jeopardized." In many cases, though, the existing property ownership was abandoned in the face of such threats. By 1637, Galway had decided to give the title of the county to Charles, transferring as a result 80 percent of the land out of its existing ownership. In July of the same year, Derry's "surrender was completed."<sup>25</sup> By 1638, the City's charter for Derry had been revoked.

Owners in Connacht (many with centuries-long claims on the land) and in Ulster (many of them new arrivals enticed by the formal, public 1609 terms of the Plantation) now found themselves suddenly without title to land they had thought theirs. In Ulster, one of the people bidding

to acquire the newly available land was the Lord Deputy himself, who by then had already acquired 57,000 acres in the Pale outside Dublin. Such use of power works, if it works, only when it somehow does not appear arbitrary. In Ireland, Wentworth's unsettling march across the island, consolidating London-backed power in Dublin, and his aggressive surrender-and-regrant (again) policy certainly looked inconsistent. It had now affected everyone in Connacht, many in Derry, and some in County Wicklow, too.

There seemed to be no alternative to such apparent abuse under the guise of standardizing reform – until, suddenly, there was: In 1637, Scotland rebelled against the English attempt to enforce an Anglican church model there. Those “Covenanters” in Scotland threatened Charles in England, and the Dublin administration in Ireland, because they inspired, were inspired by, and could further inspire Scots in Ulster. In September 1638, Charles made concessions to Scottish demands. The changes are received in Scotland as both too little and too late, and a sign of Charles's weakened position. In Ireland, Charles's concessions would have been welcomed by Ulster Scots, who began to press for them. By 1639, the Dublin administration was requiring all adult Scots in Ireland to forswear the Covenanter movement, a middle position created for the Irish situation: neither an oath of supremacy, nor an act of conformity. The Covenanters in Scotland showed that the policies from London were not consistent, because they did not remain consistent in the face of opposition. Indeed, the policies were revealed to be arbitrary, a lesson not lost in Ireland.

By 1638–1639, Charles again needs to raise money, this time for a war against rebellious Scotland rather than Continental Catholics. And Wentworth – who, in keeping with a Stuart policy of “fiscal opportunism,” always wanted to provide for Charles – offers his services and the revenues of Ireland.<sup>26</sup> Wentworth visited England to make his case, but upon returning to Ireland and his second Parliament (the first since 1634), he learned how much the situation had changed. In the intervening years, Wentworth had undermined ownership and inflamed religious tensions, just as thoroughly as he had promised he would govern. He is unable to marshal the Irish Parliament as he had done before. It turned out that Parliament did not like an administration that would capriciously “deprive a freeholder of his property, a burgess of his reputation, a nonconformist of his freedom to refuse . . . a defendant of his legal rights, or a parliament of its financial prerogatives,” in Clarke's crisp formulation.<sup>27</sup> Wentworth, now the 1st Earl of Strafford, was recalled to London, and condemned

in late 1640 by the Irish House of Commons, "without a single speech or debate."<sup>28</sup>

In January of 1641, the Irish Parliament gathers materials for "articles of impeachment against Strafford," sending what they found to the king in London with a committee that includes "Sir Donagh McCarthy, a native Irishman, a Catholic, and a future Irish rebel, and Sir Waller, a new English settler, a devout Protestant, and a future New Model colonel and regicide." Their collaboration in prosecuting Strafford "shows," Raymond Gillespie points out, "how completely Strafford had broken down the normal groupings of Irish politics."<sup>29</sup> Irish politics stretch the English language: Strafford unifies Irish politics, and, in Ireland, political unity looks like a breakdown. On January 30, 1641, the English House of Commons sends articles of impeachment to the House of Lords, and in March, Strafford's high-profile trial began.

At Wentworth/Strafford's impeachment, Irish landowners spoke, including Robert King, from Boyle, County Roscommon, where Wentworth had spent time during the summer of 1635 in the process of acquiring Connacht for plantation. King takes part in the trial of Wentworth "as a witness against the lord lieutenant."<sup>30</sup> (Robert's brother Edward had drowned on his attempted crossing from England to Ireland in 1637, the occasion for a collection of poems including Milton's "Lycidas," about which more in Chapter 2.) The House of Commons in London declared Wentworth guilty in April 1641. Charles subsequently agreed to abandon "our intended plantations" (meaning in Connacht), to address the titles in Ulster, the titles on appropriated church lands, and the dissolution of Dublin Castle's chamber court.<sup>31</sup> In May 1641, in what has been called "one of the great showpieces of English history," Wentworth was beheaded in front of a large crowd.<sup>32</sup> On the scaffold, Wentworth was attended by James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh.<sup>33</sup>

Wentworth's execution exposed larger questions about Irish government. If, in the end, England did not support Wentworth's Irish policies, why should Ireland? Indeed, if his Irish policies were worthy of execution for treason, what then of other administrations' policies there, similar as they were to Wentworth's? Moreover, since the English parliament agreed that Wentworth's administration of Ireland was treasonous, with Irish evidence and testimony, could not the Irish Parliament have brought such a charge against Wentworth, too, and earlier? After all, there was an Irish Parliament, and to bar it from self-government certainly creates the impression that Ireland was undergoing a sudden transition to direct rule from London. As John Morrill notes, "it is not fanciful to see behind this

demand, as the Irish rebels did, a demand for the reduction of Ireland to a mere dependency of England."<sup>34</sup> Finally, it was not the English monarch, but the English Parliament instead, that decided on the charge of treason for Wentworth. On the centenary of the Regnal Act, by which the Irish Parliament offered Ireland to the King of England, Parliament had intervened in Irish affairs, against the terms and history of the monarch setting Irish policy.

Except to reiterate the primacy of Poyning's law – that Irish decisions must be ratified by the London administration – the questions of the Irish Parliament were suppressed, rather than addressed. Indeed, the House of Lords initially ordered the Irish Privy Council "to appear before them as delinquents." After protests from Lord Justice Parsons and the speaker of the Irish Parliament, in August 1641 the Lords treated their protests as the problem, and they "set up a committee to search records of Ireland's dependency on this kingdom."<sup>35</sup> If the English Parliament had taken over governing Ireland, the Catholic majority was immediately under threat. The constitutional questions did not apply to Ireland alone; Parliament's treatment of Ireland raised questions about the English Parliament's attitudes toward English monarchy, too.

The Irish Parliament was not alone in spotting the many questions raised by Wentworth's administration, the Scottish rising, Wentworth's impeachment and execution, and Charles' agreement to address most of the property issues frustrating Old and New English. As would be seen in the Ulster Rising, the questions, it turned out, were pervasive in Ireland. In February 1641, Rory O'More was arguing to Conor, Lord Maguire (who had ancestral lands in County Fermanagh) that this was the time to act to reacquire lost land: Wentworth was in London, and a new administration had barely been formed. Indeed, in February 1641, between Wentworth's impeachment and trial, London saw the publication of Sir Phelim O'Neill's *The True Demands of The Rebels in Ireland: Declaring the Causes of Their Taking up Armes*, even though the Irish had *not* yet taken up arms.<sup>36</sup> In his pamphlet, O'Neill proposes "that all Lawes and Ordinances hereafter enacted in this Kingdome, may be by select Councells of Romane Catholikes for the Romish Religion. And only of Protestants for theirs, and jointly together in matters concerning the Civill and Politicke government of the State."<sup>37</sup> Wentworth's administration, begun in halcyon days, provided the fuel for a Rising, while his absence, trial, and subsequent execution created an opening for it to occur.

In May 1641, around the time of Wentworth's execution, Milton publishes *Of Reformation*, and alludes to Wentworth. Milton contends

that God, looking down from above, "hath hitherto maim'd, and infatuated all their damnable inventions, and deluded their great Wizzards," the last of which Don M. Wolfe takes to refer to the trials and executions of Wentworth and Laud (*CPW*, 1.596). In *Of Reformation*, while he discusses the prospect of renewed inraislend warfare between England and Scotland over the future of the island's Protestant church, Milton adds the Irish to that war – before the Ulster Rising. As the sibling kingdoms of England and Scotland "wade in one anothers blood," Milton describes Ireland as "our free Denizon upon the back of us both, as occasion should serve: a piece of Service that Pope and all his Factors have beene compassing to doe ever since the Reformation" (*CPW*, 1.596). What should be, if be it must, a simple, bloody family feud is interrupted by the troublesome Irish, who jump on the back of one side or the other.

Milton casts Ireland as attacking either England or Scotland from behind, interfering with their bloody fraternal war. In this analogy, the Irish involve themselves, though, as pawns of the Pope, and as part of a century-old plan to turn back the Reformation, the topic of Milton's pamphlet. "Denizon" is the most striking single word in Milton's analogy. This ambivalent term can refer to a resident citizen, and, crucially in this context, to "an alien admitted to citizenship by royal letters patent, but incapable of inheriting, or holding any public office."<sup>38</sup> That is, a denizen can be a citizen, and also a restricted kind of citizen, not entitled to full participation. This latter, more prevalent meaning has devastating implications for the Irish context, with the majority Irish Catholic population disenfranchised in a word.

Although his trial and conviction would seem to help an anti-prelatical argument, Wentworth nonetheless sets a challenge for Milton. In *Of Reformation*, Milton steers between a set of opposed positions: His fevered disgust over Catholicism, and the episcopalian structure it gave to the Anglican church; his professed regret over the "Fraternal Warre," between "England and Scotland dearest Brothers both in Nature, and in Christ" (referring, in part, to the Bishops Wars of 1639 and 1640); his conviction that Ireland must be a reformed subsidiary of England; and his commitment to discipline.<sup>39</sup> The result is a curious mix of theological abstraction, purple prose insults, and seemingly unexamined assumptions about the prospects for anglo-centric, non-prelatical unity in what Milton calls, in *Of Reformation*, "this Britannick Empire" (*CPW*, 1.614).

At this point, Milton's perspective could not be any more Anglocentric – the Irish are merely permitted citizenship in their own land, and Wentworth is seen as a miserable accommodationist. However,

Milton then invokes God, and asserts that “had God beene so minded hee could have sent a Spirit of Mutiny amongst us . . . and slaine heaps more” (CPW, 1.596). That is, God views kindly the spirit of comity between Scotland and England, an implication that it would seem had already been contradicted by the two border wars (and Charles’s failures in them). However, Milton’s claim about the cross-island brotherhood that he thought obtained between England and Scotland also implies a vision, maybe a British vision, for a united kingdom of England and Scotland, either without Ireland or carrying Ireland on the burdened British back. In this political union, in early 1641 at least, Milton is proposing that England adopt a Presbyterian model, over, interestingly, the Anglican one.

To make his case, Milton needs to bring along Scots, whose Presbyterianism is anti-prelatical by definition. Insulting as he is to the Catholics of Ireland, and to the Church of Ireland, Milton prepares a special place for them in the empire – “Daughter Ilands,” female children with minority status (in several senses of “minority”), dependent on the English and Scottish Britannic *pater familias*. By 1642’s *Reason of Church Government*, as we shall see, Milton turns to “discipline,” as offering a chance for the daughter islands exculpatory maturation, at least in his argument at the turn of the new year.

In the full title of his second anti-prelatical tract, *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* (June or July 1641), Milton takes up the challenge from Ireland more directly, referring to the author of “*some late Treatises: One whereof goes under the Name of Iames Archbishop of Armagh.*”<sup>40</sup> Here, Milton’s anti-prelatical tract becomes a tract directed against a specific prelate, the most prominent prelate in Ireland, James Ussher. With this essay, Milton responds to Ussher’s 1641 essay, *The Judgement of Doctor Rainoldes Touching the Originall of Episcopacy*. In *The Judgement*, Ussher contends that early Christians did not make such a firm distinction between bishops and presbyters: “They chose one amongst them to be the President of their company and Moderator of their actions . . . And this is he whom afterward in the Primitive Church the Fathers called *Bishop*.”<sup>41</sup> By implication, the modern reformed church, so invested in early Christian examples, could follow the early Church and moderate religious and political tensions.

In *Of Prelatical Episcopacy*, Milton ridicules the equivalence Ussher establishes between presbyters and bishops in the early church, which he describes as a “vaine foraging after straw” (CPW, 1.646). Instead, Milton asserts, “no man will gainsay the constitution of Bishops, but the raising them to a superior, and distinct order above Presbyters” (CPW, 1.647–648).



Illustration 1.2 Dublin Castle.

In other words, what Ussher casts as the later sense of episcopalian arrangements is the one that matters now, regardless of Ussher's reconsideration of the early church. What, though, if they are both right, Milton for England and Scotland, and Ussher for Ireland? After all, Milton's vision was as useful for Ireland as Ussher's was for England.

In Ireland, O'More and Maguire's February 1641 plan mutated into an October attempt on Ulster homes and on Dublin Castle (Illustration 1.2). With their timing compromised by an informant, on October 22, the conspirators acted. They were able to turn Ulster plantation settlers out of doors but unable to take Dublin Castle, or other walled settlements, such as Derry city. Still, what had begun as a provincial tactical strike regarding land rights, organized by the next Gaelic Irish generation after the Ulster Plantation, became, like the plantation process itself under Wentworth, island-wide and destabilizing. Swept up in the retributive fever, Irish Catholics forced settlers out of their homes; thousands died of exposure. In several cases, such as, most famously, at the Portadown Bridge, settlers were forced into deadly circumstances (see Illustration 1.3).



Illustration 1.3 Woodcut, Portadown Bridge massacre, from *The Teares of Ireland* (1642).<sup>50</sup>  
The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

An interisland dynamic helped the Irish imagine rising. According to one captured rebel, they did it “to imitate Scotland, who got a privilege by that course.”<sup>42</sup> In Ulster, Scots were supportive of the Gaelic Irish. In February 1642, as Edwards notes, one English settler, Roger Markham, “arrived at Dublin Castle from Ulster, claiming that in October the great majority of Scots in Tyrone stood aside.”<sup>43</sup> Through what Edwards calls “Scottish collusion,” in those early days of the Ulster Rising Scots “provided military support to an attempted Gaelic resurgence.”<sup>44</sup> This apparent Scottish independence from English policy will infuriate John Milton.

Reports of the Ulster Rising begin appearing in London by the following month. It is estimated that “a quarter of the pamphlets collected by the London bookseller George Thomason during November and



December 1641 concerned the Irish Rebellion," a ratio that suggests both Thomason's interest in events in Ireland, and, relatedly, a large English audience for news from Ireland.<sup>45</sup> Between October 1641 and the end of June 1642, according to William J. Smyth, "over 250 news tracts . . . dealt with Ireland."<sup>46</sup> With the lapse of the Star Chamber and its controls on printing, England was already experiencing an explosion of print, much of it related to the current situation in Ireland.

Such reports from Ulster and Ireland feed the presses and dominate news and politics in England well into 1642. The result is a set of "formulaic" repetitive stories about violence against English Protestants, often accompanied by woodcut illustrations (Illustration 1.3).<sup>47</sup> *The Rebels Turkish Tyranny* (1641), for example, claims to show in its six pages,

how cruelly they put them to the sword, ravished religious women, and put their children upon red hot spits before their parents eyes; throw them in the fire, and burn them to ashes, cut off their eares, and nose, put out their eyes; cut off their armes, and legges, broyle them at the fire, cut out their tongues, and thrust hot irons down their throats, drown them, dash out their brains, and such like other cruelty.<sup>48</sup>

Similar images recur in *Treason in Ireland* (1641): "One woman above the rest," for example, "they hanged at her own doore, with her children by the haire of the head: and afterwards burnt up the whole town with fire."<sup>49</sup> In Chapter 2, when we get to 1646, the year Sir John Temple's *Irish Rebellion* is published, with details from the so-called 1641 Depositions, we will evaluate such claims, but for now they represent a typical instance of the English discourse surrounding the Ulster Rising in these early weeks.

By December 1641, "Protestant refugees poured into the city of Dublin," and a Commission of Despoiled Protestants led by Henry Jones was established to take down testimonies from these new arrivals, the so-called 1641 Depositions (most of which were actually taken in 1642–1643, in a process that continued until 1647, the first selections of which were published, as we shall see in Chapter 3, in 1646).<sup>51</sup> How many Protestant settlers died or were killed in the Rising will never be known, but there were many victims, certainly several thousand. In England, however, those numbers were always thought to be much higher. Indeed, "a tract published by the Long Parliament in 1642 claimed that the Irish massacred no fewer than 154,000 Protestants between October 1641 and March 1642."<sup>52</sup> Although these numbers are greatly exaggerated, all of a sudden Charles needs more money, again, for another attack on yet another one of his kingdoms. Parliament, seeing a king riding around his islands in attack mode, was not inclined to more generosity,

and England tipped into the first of its 1640s' Civil Wars. One result, in Ireland, would be "the death of over a quarter of the Irish population."<sup>53</sup>

Setting aside the long-running debate over the accuracy of the descriptions, numbers and woodcuts in contemporary English coverage of the Ulster Rising, what they portray seems to be unmitigated marauding, an uncontrolled release of atavistic depredations. For historian T. J. Moody, such a reception starts with nineteenth-century Irish historian W. E. H. Lecky who sees the wider rebellion as springing from a "lack of discipline."<sup>54</sup> In 1641 and 1642, by contrast, English observers saw a sophisticated, coordinated attack. According to *An Exact and True Relation* (1641), "the Irish Rebels . . . intended at one hour and moment of time, to massacre and murder all the English and protestants in the Kingdom of Ireland."<sup>55</sup> In *A True and Full Relation* (1641), Edward Littleton claims to know the very hour for this island-wide massacre of English protestants in Ireland: "Nine of the Clocke."<sup>56</sup>

Such coordination, which might surprise readers familiar with depictions of an Ireland in need of reformation, was built, according to the pamphlets, on an island-wide Catholic network. *The Bloody Newes from Ireland* (1641) reports "that in every parish there is a protestant Minister, there is likewise a popish priest, which is very true, and more than that, there is also in every parish a Fryer, a Monk, and an Abbot: besides, with many more in several Abbies, doe resigne three of fourescore in a Fryers house."<sup>57</sup> The point is not only that there are varieties of Catholic religious figures in Ireland, capable of facilitating coordinated attacks; rather, there is the related point that they outnumber Protestants, everywhere there.

The English focus on Irish Catholicism means that contemporaries are not attending to the role of the Ulster Scots in the early days of the Rising. In the 1641 Rising, Scots in Ulster often stood back as the Irish attacked English settler families. Their seeming neutrality had the effect of colluding with the Irish Rising. By early 1642, the ambivalent Scottish non-involvement is known in the capitals. In Ulster, then, a sense of British identity was put to the test by the Rising, and it was found wanting. Decades of high-minded reimagining an intraisland British partnership between English and Scots meant little when the Irish rose up in opposition to settlers from the kingdom organizing the plantation of Ulster. Within a few months, England would bring in Scots, from Scotland, to retake the island, but the larger question about who would be governing Britain and Ireland was raised again thereby.

The attention to Irish Catholicism in the 1641 pamphlets about the Ulster Rising does highlight for English readers the reality, previously

obscured, of the Counter Reformation strengthening of the Catholic Church in Ireland, under a century-old English Protestant dispensation. Even in the absence of a rising, the new density of an Irish Catholic network would represent a threat on England's western edge. These pamphlets also host a discussion in England about the goals of Catholic Ireland. While the pamphlets might exaggerate both the numbers and the gruesome details, 1641's *A True and Full Relation of the Horrible and Hellish Plot* is accurate enough in its three-point summary of Catholic Ireland's interests: "First, to have their Crowne not to bee dependent upon England, nor to be a conquered Nation"; "secondly, to have their Irish Lawes established"; and "thirdly, to have free liberty of the exercise of their Religion."<sup>58</sup>

Irish independence, Irish legal traditions, and religious toleration for Catholics were of course long-standing issues in Ireland, and for England there. Decades earlier, Spenser knew that the Regnal Act of 1541 would agitate Ireland, and it did. Laws on Irish landownership and transfer were a major issue. In the 1620s and 1630s, toleration of Catholicism was proffered – dangled – by the Wentworth administration. Soon after the 1641 pamphlet, Ireland would achieve a short-lived but important independence, with a ceasefire in 1643, a tentative peace treaty in 1646, and another proposed treaty of 1649, each reflecting this pamphlet's sense of Irish goals.

Milton's fourth anti-prelatical tract, *The Reason of Church Government* is published in January or February 1642, after English pamphlets on the Ulster Rising convey the panicked impression of a disciplined Catholic Ireland capable of coordinated planning and attack. The longest and most famous of Milton's anti-prelatical series, *The Reason of Church Government* offers Milton's most expansive treatment yet of the difference between the episcopalian and the presbyterian. In the first six chapters, Milton completely redefines the debate in three important ways – as what he calls "church government," as "discipline," and as a question of form. The combination lifts *The Reason of Church Government* above the pamphlet war in which it appears; indeed, Milton lifts this essay above his own previous contributions to that debate.

At the beginning of "The Second Book" in *The Reason of Church Government*, John Milton, the ambitious English author, steps forward into the essay. It is a remarkable and important scene. By itself, it contributes to the history of English authorship, as Milton reflects on his preparation and hopes for his future poetic career, "to be an interpreter & relater of the best and sagest things among mine own Citizens throughout this

lland in the mother dialect" (CPW, 1.811–812). As a document from the person who would publish *Paradise Lost* a quarter century later, it is even more valuable. Not only does Milton sketch a hierarchy of genres in which he hopes to publish and authors he hopes to emulate (and supersede); he also stakes his claim on the future, "I might perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die," an ambition he achieved with *Paradise Lost* (CPW, 1.810). At the same time, acknowledging his current participation in a topical pamphlet debate, Milton regrets that he currently has "the use, as I may account it, but of my left hand," stuck as he temporarily is "here below in the cool element of prose" (CPW, 1.808).

Understandably, *The Reason of Church Government* is usually treated as source material for Milton's literary biography. Gordon Campbell and Thomas Corns represent this well-established tradition when they claim that "the most remarkable element in *The Reason of Church Government*" is "its extraordinary autobiographical digression."<sup>59</sup> While the autobiographical digression is extraordinarily valuable, the most remarkable element in *The Reason of Church Government* is the sudden appearance of Ireland. With the last chapter of the first part of the essay, the then-current situation in Ireland arrives directly in Milton's prose. According to the title of that section, "rebellion in Ireland, ought not to be a hindrance, but a hastning of reformation" (794).

In *The Reason of Church Government*, Milton shares the Spenserian attitude toward the Irish and the Church of Ireland; but he adds to that an awareness of the Scottish influence in Ulster. To say, though, simply that Milton sides with the Presbyterians, or with Puritans, is to miss out both on a central term in Milton's essay, and a central development in his idea of Protestant churches: "Discipline," in Ireland a term and means whereby the different confessions (which found themselves unequally sharing the same island) identified themselves. By highlighting a nineteenth-century development in the use of the word, Foucault linked "discipline" to what he cast as ideological state apparatuses, the penitentiary and the academy (and thus to academic fields of study known as "disciplines"). But the word's earlier association with Christian penitential practices of (what are later called) self-abnegation – practices which, it must be admitted, are not entirely erased from the academic sense of "discipline" – play a particularly important role in the interisland conflicts between England and Ireland.

There is an element of purification implied by the term, "discipline." Practices such as the mortification of the flesh have their sources in stoic

Greek philosophy, and Pauline attitudes toward the body. Eventually, they are systematized in Christian monasteries, whose orders distinguish themselves by the forms of their discipline. The monastery offered, Giorgio Agamben argues, “a level of consistency that is unthought and perhaps today unthinkable.”<sup>60</sup> “Discipline” is both the name for and the cause of such unthinkable consistency. In the sixteenth century, with the Reformation, discipline leaves the monastery (and Latin), becoming vernacularized as an issue central to Protestantism. As Philip S. Gorski puts it, “with regular Bible reading, daily journals, moral log books, and rigid control over time . . . Calvinism propagated new ethics and practices of self-discipline.”<sup>61</sup>

Gorski sees the Reformation as what he calls a “Disciplinary Revolution,” and he distinguishes between “real differences in the doctrines, structures, and politics of the three confessions,” Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist, seeing those disciplinary differences as a guide to the different contours of state formation in Western Europe. According to Gorski, “politics dominated by Calvinists and other ascetic Protestants were more orderly, more regulated, and more fully rationalized than politics dominated by orthodox Lutheranism or reformed Catholicism.”<sup>62</sup> Gorski is sketching here an intellectual-history version of the north–south distinction in European terms: the organized, Protestant North versus the less organized, Catholic South. In this model, Anglican discipline, bridging the Lutheran and the Calvinist, carries with it a latent disorganized Catholic quality. By contrast, as Felicity Heal notes in *Reformation in Britain and Ireland*, “the Scottish congregation . . . seems to have accepted communal discipline with unconcealed enthusiasm . . . With its processions of penitents, its sermons urging repentance, and its unique use of the stool, or bench, placed in front of the preacher, all spoke to the central significance of the experience.”<sup>63</sup> The counterintuitive (counter-Weberian) point is that the Church of Ireland lagged the Presbyterians of Ulster and maybe also the Catholic-Reformation Catholics across Ireland more broadly.

Milton contends that “the flourishing and decaying of all civill societies, all the moments and turnings of humane occasions are mov’d to and fro as upon the axle of discipline” (*CPW*, I.751). By 1641, open rebellion first in Scotland and then in Ireland revealed the limits of a certain kind of discipline, the prelatical form that Laud tried to enforce in England and Scotland and that Wentworth enforced in Ireland. The Catholic Irish might have recognized the top-down form of the Laudian Church, but that could not make it Catholic for them. To English and Scottish Presbyterians, by contrast, that same top-down structure meant that the Churches of England and Ireland were Catholic. Especially in the context

of Ireland, the Tridentine reforms in church structure represented a new level of Irish Catholic discipline. Milton's Presbyterian Scots in general (and those who had moved to Ulster in Ireland in this case) offer what Spenser, four decades earlier, believed the Church of Ireland lacked: discipline.

To Milton, discipline "is the practick work of preaching directed and apply'd as is most requisite to particular duty" (*CPW*, 1.755). Discipline is the practice of preaching, or, even shorter, discipline is practice, the practice of the religion, or of the belief; for Milton, discipline looms larger than any religion, or indeed religion itself. Discipline, then, ought to distinguish Catholics and Protestants, with the Protestants, being more disciplined than Catholics. The success of Irish Catholics would undermine crucial assumptions about Protestantism and development. Discipline in early seventeenth-century Ireland, however, is surprising, because it upsets the usual hierarchy among what Gorski calls "the three confessions." To a degree not achieved (and not possible to achieve) in England, Irish Roman Catholicism had become more disciplined than the Lutheran-Calvinist combination embodied in the Church of Ireland.

Mary C. Fenton argues that "Catholicism is nothing more than, in Milton's mind, an odious regression . . . 'sliding back to Rome',"<sup>64</sup> but the English response to the Irish rebellion of 1641 strikes Milton as another way in which the prelatical English seem less disciplined than he believes they should be. In *The Reason of Church Government*, it is England that is regressing: "We may now thank our selves and our delays," Milton argues, "if instead of schism a bloody and inhumane rebellion be strook in between our slow movings" (*CPW*, 1.797). Delay on the part of the English, that is, could escalate the religious differences in Ulster, and maybe Ireland overall, into a larger and more dangerous war. After the publication of *The Reason of Church Government*, a larger war did break out across Ireland, and the Catholic Irish were able to govern themselves through the Kilkenny Catholic Confederacy.

For Milton, discipline is "the very visible shape and image of vertue" (*CPW*, 1.751). Across *The Reason of Church Government*, Milton turns to spatial analogies to describe discipline, and the differences between prelatical and presbyterian forms of church government. At one point, Milton compares the prelatical form of Church government to a pyramid, with more at the base and increasingly fewer at the top – the Pope, the Cardinals, the Bishops, the Priests, and the laity, in descending order – and the Presbyterian to a cube. He proposes a spatial conversion, from pyramid to cube: "Prelaty if she will seek to close up divisions in the Church, must be forc't to dissolve, and unmake her own pyramidal

figure . . . and must be faine to inglobe, or incube her selfe among the Presbyters" (*CPW*, 1.790). Given a matching base, and the same height, a pyramid would fit inside a cube. Or to put the same point another way, the cube and the globe can encompass more than the tapering shape of pyramid.

Subsequent developments in Ireland (where Catholics had autonomy) and in Scotland (where Presbyterians cut a deal with the king, the top of the pyramid) would radicalize Milton's attitudes toward both the Irish and the Scots, as we shall see. But in 1642, Milton is already focused on English protestant settlers in Ireland, and arguing against delay in helping them. Recognizing that some will say that Reformation takes time, Milton argues that the situation in Ireland requires "speedy redresse." Milton describes Protestant English settlers as "the poore afflicted remnant of our marty'd countrymen that sit there on the Sea-shore" (799). This image of a lost tribe of England caught in an undisciplined Irish Babylon would convey substantial pathos in 1640s England. Milton's reference to the "shore," though, echoes his earlier invocation of it in "Lycidas," a poem Milton will republish three years after *The Reason of Church Government*.

Milton shares Spenser's earlier analysis of the state of the Church of Ireland, and the quality of its ministers. But, reflecting his later intervention in Ireland's rebellions (and thus later developments in English Protestantism), Milton offers a broader critique of the established church than does Spenser. Milton asks – and answers – his own question: "Where then should we begin to extinguish a rebellion that hath his cause from the misgovernment of the Church, where? but at the Churches reformation" (*CPW*, 1.798). Milton's point, then, is larger than Spenser's focus on the English clergy who had gone to Ireland for the established church there (or the flattened church foundations it occupied). Milton is talking instead about a reformation of the English Protestant church in Ireland itself. Specifically, the Anglican Church and the Church of Ireland, for all their differences in their theologies (the status of Calvinism, for example), are both episcopalian, and organized around the authority of the bishop, or "prelatical" in Milton's terms.

In arguing that the Irish and the English Protestant churches need to become presbyterian, Milton is siding with the Scots – whom he calls "our brethren" – both on the British mainland, and, more importantly for the Irish/Spenserian context, in Ulster. Milton, citing Jerome, argues "that custome only . . . was the maker of Prelaty; before his audacious workmanship the Churches were rul'd in common by the Presbyters" (*CPW*, 1.777). The prelatical, bishop-based structure of the Churches of England and Ireland, that is, results from mere custom, rather than true

Biblical principles. This is quite different from Spenser's argument in *A View*. There, Spenser would have been defending a form of the church to which Milton is here opposed. Indeed, Milton claims that those who are on the "Prelatick side" seem "to be Protestants, and are indeed Papists in most of their principles" (*CPW*, 1.789). That is, the prelatik side has the same structure as the Catholic Church against which the Reformation was protesting. This Irish context also accounts for Ussher's attempt to negotiate a middle way between the presbyterian and the prelatical, a path Milton rejects in these pamphlets (despite the apparent similarity between his and Ussher's projects).

On the one hand, Milton is clear: He considers the Irish "the enemies of God and mankind, a cursed off-spring of their own connivence" (*CPW*, 1.798). Not only are the Irish opposed to God, the Irish are so grotesque that they are also, apparently, capable of some sort of parthenogenesis, fission, or asexual reproduction. Somehow they replicate; they persist in their Irishness, and their opposition to England's grand vision for improving them and their island. On the other hand, though, Milton asks, sympathetically, "what can the Irish subject do lesse in Gods just displeasure against us, then revenge upon English bodies the little care that our Prelats have had of their souls" (*CPW*, 1.798). This extraordinary claim, justifying Irish violence with the Church of Ireland's failure to provide pastoral care in Ireland, extends Spenser's *A View*. Of course, the Catholic Irish might not want ministering from English Protestants, then actively settling among them and dispossessing them of their land. One can imagine that such reluctance might be somewhat increased among those Catholic Irish who speak only Irish, and would be ministered to by Protestants who speak only English.

Milton holds the ministers of the Irish established church responsible not only for the state of the Church of Ireland (as did Spenser), but also for the rebellion of 1641, which has begun by the time Milton is writing *The Reason of Church Government*. For Spenser, reformation would have improved his neighbors, starting with the English Protestants and moving out from there. For Milton, by contrast, reformation would have forestalled rebellion, and the absence of reformation caused rebellion: "Tis not rebellion that ought to be the hindrance of reformation, but it is the want of this which is the cause of that" (*CPW*, 1.798). With this complicated writing of the left hand, Milton argues that the lack of reformation causes rebellion, and that rebellion should not hinder reformation.

By "reformation," Milton means interisland uniformity, on the basis, now, of a Presbyterian form. Moreover, English failure in either reforming



Ireland or now suppressing the all-island rebellion means “we for our parts [as] a populace and meeting action must needs be faln into a strange plight either of effeminacy, or confusion.” Milton, noting that “*Ireland* . . . was once the conquest of one single Earle with his privat forces, and the small assistance of a petty Kernish Prince” (alluding to the Anglo-Norman conquering of Ireland centuries earlier), worries what it means that it “should now take up all the wisdome and Prowesse of this potent Monarchy to quell a barbarous crew of rebels” (*CPW*, 1.799–800). Milton’s proposed interpretations – effeminacy or confusion – both point to a lack of discipline, and raise questions for Milton about England’s possible decline since the time of the Normans. Ireland has challenged Milton’s sense of England itself.

In 1642, political developments on the two islands move quickly. In London, Parliament begins initially to plan for retaking Ireland, where Church leaders organize a new national representative council for an emerging independence. February sees the publication of the fantastical *Demands of the Irish*, which proposes, among other things, undoing the plantations, establishing Catholicism as the state religion, returning all church properties in Ireland to the Roman Catholic Church, and appointing a Catholic Lord Deputy.<sup>65</sup> The list, which confirms the suspicions about Ireland enumerated in *A True and Full Relation of the Horrible and Hellish Plot* (1641), proposes developments so unlikely they would not take place for another 270 years. (England first appointed a Catholic Lord Deputy months before signing the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty that created the Free State.) In March 1642 and then again in May, Synods held at Kells and Kilkenny, Ireland, respectively, created a Catholic-only unicameral Irish General Assembly from which was elected a twenty-four-person Supreme Council.<sup>66</sup> Starting in October 1642, this new government met nine times, until 1649, constituting what has come to be known as the Kilkenny Catholic Confederacy.

In London, Parliament at first takes a two-pronged approach, military in the present, and fundraising for the future. For the present, Parliament sends George Monck with 1,500 troops to Dublin in March. For the future, Parliament passed The Adventurers’ Act in March 1642. This ambitious legislation, something of an Initial Public Offering of Irish land, offered “Protestant speculators 2,500,000 acres belonging to Irish ‘delinquents’ who had lost their lands because of their alleged involvement in the rebellion.”<sup>67</sup> Investors in the scheme, paying now on the promise of lands to be acquired and divvied up in the future to fund the anticipated conquest of Ireland, included 119 Members of Parliament – one of them being Oliver Cromwell, who invested the very substantial sum of £600.<sup>68</sup>

The Adventurers Act raised an extraordinary amount of funding. According to Karl S. Bottigheimer, "its total capital dwarfed all but that of the East India Company (£2,887,000) . . . Only the Virginia Company, with £200,000, came close to the Irish adventure of the 1640s."<sup>69</sup> The investment outran the amount of Irish land available, or, to put the same point another way, had dramatically overvalued the bog-prone land of Ireland. In April, Robert Munro lands in Carrickfergus, Ulster, with Scottish troops, but as Morrill notes, "the Adventurers Act galvanized the great majority of the Catholics of Ireland, including many who had held back from the original rebellion, to come together as the Confederation of Kilkenny."<sup>70</sup> In July 1642, Owen Roe O'Neill, Hugh O'Neill's brother, landed at Doe Castle, on the coast of County Donegal, "with a force gathered from the Irish contingent in the army of the Spanish Netherlands."<sup>71</sup> In August 1642, Civil War broke out in England: Parliament was at war with Charles, the Stuart king to whom the Irish Confederacy pledged fealty.

The Ulster Rising of October 1641 had quickly become a generalized Irish Rising by early 1642. In the last of his anti-prelatical tracts, *An Apology for SMECTYMNUUS* (April or May 1642), Milton again invokes Ireland, this time citing the rebellion spreading there: "Rebellion rages in our Irish Province, but with that miraculous and losselesse victories of few against many."<sup>72</sup> By the time Milton's pamphlet was printed, Ireland was well on its way to what turned out to be a seven-year period of Irish independence. In 1642, with the Adventurers' Act, Parliament began fundraising for the eventual assault on the wayward "province," as Milton describes the island of Ireland in *An Apology*. In June 1642, Milton donates £4 "for the relief of English Protestant refugees,"<sup>73</sup> which Campbell and Corns describe as "a considerable amount."<sup>74</sup> Again, Ireland informs Milton's involvement and commitment, the culmination of which would see Milton serving in Cromwell's government, and arguing against Ireland and the Irish, for England, officially.

On December 22, 1642, in a remarkable turn of events, James Ussher, Milton's Irish interlocutor in the anti-prelatical tracts, came to London and preached a sermon at St. Paul's. According to "The Humble Petition of James Archbishop of Armagh," "one John Nicholson . . . got into his hands a collection of some rude and incoherent Notes of that Sermon," and published them under the title, *Vox Hibernae, or Rather the Voice of the Lord from Ireland*.<sup>75</sup> With his petition, Ussher succeeded in having "the Lords in Parliament" suppress Nicholson's book, so we may never know precisely what Ussher said in his sermon. Nonetheless, it is striking to

think that even the notes reported by Nicholson, Ussher, from the pulpit of the most prominent Episcopalian cathedral in London, may have delivered something of a Jeremiad against the English management of and attitude toward Ireland, "our neighbour nation."<sup>76</sup> By the time that Ussher speaks, the Irish rebellion has swept across the island, destabilizing English politics at the same time. What will turn out to be the first English Civil War is already underway. Excoriating the English in England, according to the *Vox Hibernae*, Ussher makes several related claims, starting with the implication that the Irish wars are coming home to England. Citing "those that fell with their carckesses in the wildernesses," in Nicholson's rendering, Ussher contends "the Lord might have made you examples unto Ireland, as well as hath made Ireland an example unto you" (A2r–A2v).

The English failure to find a way to live with difference, to imagine a space for variety, or the rejection of Ussher's middle way (both for Ireland and for Ireland's neighboring nations of England and Scotland) means that the largest of the British Isles will now undergo the violence long (and, in December 1642, recently) experienced in Ireland, all in a futile pursuit of uniformity, conformity, and purity, religious and political. The reason of good church government, of course, is to avoid such violence (or, in *Vox Hibernae's* graphic terms, not to have those who fell with their carcasses).

In *Vox Hibernae*, Ussher contends that "the fire breakes out in that corner of the nation that wee least feared, which should cause us to repent in sackcloth and ashes" (A2v). The referent is ambiguous: A little more than a year ago, the English might have seen Ireland, then relatively peaceful for a generation, as the corner of the nation least feared to break out in flames. By December 1642, with the monarch who had marched on Scotland (and wanted to land in Ireland) now at war in England, maybe England is the corner of the nation in which the English least feared to have a fire break out. Nonetheless, the conflagration was engaged, in England, which had for a century believed it could manage Catholic Ireland and for eighty years that it could accommodate Calvinist and Catholic Scotland. Their failure had now come home, and an Irish voice was there in London to tell them so in late 1642. "The danger," Ussher argues, "is perishing, either repent or there is not possibility of salvation" (A2v–A3r). In case his London audience, by then familiar with the Ulster and Irish rising, might wonder of what it is he thinks they ought to repent, *Vox Hibernae* claims, "the Lord will breake the hairie scalpe of them that commit iniquity" (A3r).

Ussher here indicts a century of English iniquitous mismanagement of Ireland, and tells his audience that their unrepentant pursuit at home of the purity that they tried to enforce in Ireland will mean that "the danger is

inevitable, no way to escape" (A3r–A3v). As we know, the danger to the English, British, and interisland polity did only increase, as wars, the execution of Charles and the invasion of Ireland all followed in the next seven years. But what is especially remarkable, for those of us thinking about Milton's involvement in and contribution to this period, is how much Ussher and Milton would seem to agree. According to what he describes as "rude and incoherent Notes" of his sermon, the Archbishop of Armagh has made the anti-prelatical argument, from inside St. Paul's Cathedral, the seat of a Bishop. He and Milton are both distraught over the trajectory of English government. But Milton, in part because of the Irish context scholars have so long overlooked, treated Ussher's argument as different, when, apparently, they could have been allies in the struggle against the English prelacy.

In *Representing Revolution* (by which he means an English revolution), Loewenstein admits that "Milton's godly republican engagement with the crisis of the Irish rebellion . . . is an unsettling episode."<sup>77</sup> In Milton's lifetime, the Irish rebellion begins in 1641, and does not end, if it ends, until 1653, with the surrender of Galway. As a result, the "episode" lasts at least twelve years, or about one-fifth of Milton's life, pulling Milton into government, too, in the process. It is indeed an unsettling period in Milton's life. As we shall see in Chapter 2, it finds the poet who wants to write all he describes in *The Reason of Church Government* revising "Lycidas" instead. As we shall see in Chapter 3, it also means Milton is writing about a treaty with the Irish rebels in 1649. For Loewenstein, Milton's engagement with the Irish rebellion is "unsettling" because it disturbs the familiar vision of Milton as a proto-Enlightenment progressive, a revolutionary in a word.

This period is "unsettling" in another sense of the word as well. Before the rebellion, the Irish were being pushed off their land ("unsettled") and replaced as a matter of policy by English and Scottish settlers. That process would accelerate in the 1650s and 1660s, as investors in the Adventurers' Act and leaders of the New Model Army, owe land due to a law passed in 1642, descended on Ireland. Indeed, Parliament's anticipated process of land transfer in Ireland began to accelerate quickly. In 1643, six years before Cromwell's invasion, "Parliament enacted the 'Doubling Ordinance' . . . whereby all its soldiers who had served in Ireland were to receive compensation in Irish lands for their arrears of pay."<sup>78</sup> In a sense, within months of the start of the Ulster Rising, Parliament was imagining an expanded policy of plantation, to be applied to the entire island of Ireland, no longer just to individual provinces. The process was designed to be unsettling, for people in Ireland.