

The Confederate Catholics of Ireland, Archbishop Rinuccini
and the Counter Reformation

By

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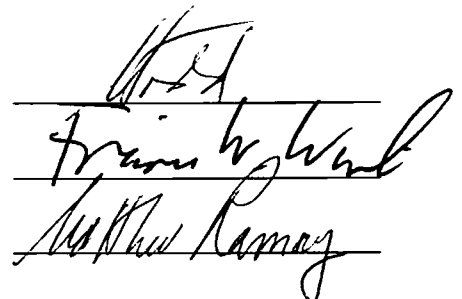
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Sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe witnessed the birth and expansion of Protestant Christianity, fundamentally altering the political, ethnic, and confessional landscape of the continent. Religious disharmony added a new element to existing tensions concerning dynastic expansion and state building, and also developed discord where peace had previously reigned. The Catholic Church naturally acted against the attempts by Protestant churchmen and princes to expand their religions, and for many years the historiographical framework within which the Church was analyzed accepted reaction against Protestantism as the main goal of the Church. As more recent work has noted, the objectives of the Church were far more diverse than mere reaction: these two centuries in fact witnessed the fashioning and implementation of a new form of Catholicism, molded partly by Protestant criticism and partly by reform efforts underway in the fifteenth century. This was the period defined by the Counter Reformation, or the broadly defined mixture of reaction, awakening, and reform that historians have identified as the principal focus of the Church. Thorough analysis continually yields new insight into this period of Catholic history, increasingly noting the diversity and richness of this movement as it undertook its two overlapping goals: halting the advance of Protestantism and improving the standard of Catholic worship.

The Confederate Catholics of Ireland (1642-1649) provides an ideal case study for examining the competing goals and means for achieving the advancement of Catholicism in Ireland during the Counter Reformation period. Nestled within the larger British conflict that included the English Civil War and the Irish Rebellion, the Confederation came about as a result of divisions both between Catholics and Protestants and within the two religions. The Catholic side of the conflict in Ireland was plagued by competing religious objectives that led to disunity and the ultimate defeat of the Catholic cause by 1653.

The Confederation arose following the Irish Rebellion of 1641, which was first resisted and then supported by the wealthy Catholic landowners of the Irish Pale known as the Old English.¹ It marked the first attempt at political and military unity among all Catholics in Ireland. The historical importance of the union between Old English and Gaelic Irish Catholics, fashioned under the guidance of an active Catholic clergy, cannot be overstated, though it is often overlooked in the literature on this period. The alliance adopted as its motto the phrase *Hiberni Unanimes Pro Deo, Rege, et Patria*², immediately raising the question of how a group could support a king while at the same time supporting a religion outlawed by that king's government.

The tension between serving the king and promoting the interests of Catholicism has received attention by historians. The standard approach is to depict the Old English, with their strong ties to England, as valuing the interests of the king at least equal to, if not higher than, the interests of the church. Naturally, this brought them into conflict with the clergy and the Gaelic Irish, both of whom saw the Confederation primarily as a means of advancing the Church.

The most recent historiography essentially supports this interpretation. Jane Ohlmeyer, in her essay "A Failed Revolution" describes some Confederates, "especially those of 'Old English'

¹ For an authoritative text on the Irish rebellion of 1641, see Michael Perceval-Maxwell *The Outbreak of the Irish Rebellion of 1641* (McGill Queen's University Press. Montreal: 1994). Additional helpful reading for root causes of the Irish rebellion is found in *Ulster 1641* (Queen's University of Belfast. Belfast: 1997), edited by Brian Mac Cuarta. A comprehensive series is *A New History of Ireland* (ed. T. W. Moody et al., Clarendon Press. Oxford: 1996) Background for Tudor Ireland (1485-1603) is best found in Stephen Ellis' *Tudor Ireland* Longman. New York: 1985. Nicholas Canny's *From Reformation to Restoration: Ireland 1534-1660* (Helicon. Dublin: 1987) provides a good overview of quite a long period of history in a small number of pages. The lack of footnotes in the Helicon edition of the text might streamline it for the average reader, but makes it far less valuable to scholars. The standard work on the Old English of the early seventeenth century is still Aidan Clarke's *The Old English in Ireland, 1625-42* (Cornell University Press. New York: 1966), though it stops short of the main period covered by this paper. Coverage of the same time period but with special concentration on Thomas Wentworth is Hugh Kearney's *Strafford in Ireland, 1633-41: A Study in Absolutism* (Manchester University Press. Manchester: 1960) Jane Ohlmeyer's collection of essays entitled *Ireland From Independence to Occupation 1641-1660* (Cambridge University Press. Cambridge: 1995) draws together some of the top writers currently working on those two decades, though it lacks a solid article on the implications of the Confederacy for the Irish Church.

² "The Irish united for God, King, and Country"

descent, often Ormonde's³ kinsmen or clients," who "proved increasingly eager to conclude a settlement with the king, even if it jeopardized the future safety of the Catholic religion" while others in the Confederation "favoured complete freedom for the Catholic religion as the inevitable price of any compromise with the Royalists". This last group was usually of "'Old Irish' or Gaelic descent"⁴.

More recently, historians have become more dissatisfied with this two-group description of the Confederation. Micheal O Siochru, in "The Confederation of Kilkenny", follows the traditional description of an Ormondist peace party and a clerical war party within the Confederation, but notes the presence of a centrist party made up of Old English lawyers, some Irish, and clergy who sided sometimes with the Ormondists and other times with the clerical party⁵. This distinction is an important first step in breaking down the notion that a group as varied and active as the Confederates could be described as falling neatly into one of two camps. That contribution, however, is muted by O Siochru's reliance on traditional ways of interpreting the religious positions of the factions in the Confederation—namely that the Old English "Ormondists" valued the Catholic cause less than did the clerical party.

Andrew Boyd in "Rinuccini and Civil War in Ireland, 1644-49"⁶ focuses on the mission of Giovanni Battista Rinuccini, the nuncio whom the Pope sent to the Confederates in 1645. Rinuccini came as a response to the request of the Confederates for a nuncio who would be the representative of the Pope and a conduit for material aid⁷. Unfortunately, Boyd makes

³ The Duke and later Marquis of Ormonde, James Butler. He was the central figure of post-1641 Irish history, sometime Lord Lieutenant and royalist intermittently throughout the century.

⁴ Ohlmeyer 18, 19

⁵ O Siochru, Micheal. *History Ireland*. 1994, pg. 51-56

⁶ Boyd, Andrew "Rinuccini and Civil War in Ireland, 1644-49" *History Today* 1991 41(Feb) 42-48

⁷ Application to the Pope From Supreme Council of the Confederation, 1 Oct. 1643. From J. T. Gilbert *History of the War and* This letter asks that Father Scarampi be made nuncio. Even though they do not

Rinuccini's presence sound like an affliction rather than casting him accurately as a representative whom the Confederates had requested⁸. He wrote that "Rinuccini's arrival in Ireland...resembled more a military invasion than any diplomatic or ecclesiastical mission"⁹ because Rinuccini showed up with a tremendous amount of military supplies. In truth, these supplies carried the Confederation through its most successful year of campaigning in 1646.

This is only the first in a long list of shortcomings in Boyd's essay. He blames Rinuccini for inflaming the divisions between Old English and Irish that tore the Confederation apart. According to Boyd, Rinuccini caused this by being too much the "zealous envoy of Roman Catholicism"¹⁰. How a nuncio sent from Rome with the specific instructions of winning as much as he could for the faith could be other than a "zealous envoy of Roman Catholicism" remains an unasked and unanswered but obvious question. Boyd essentially blames Rinuccini for not being like those Old English who were perhaps more ready to compromise with the king and with the Marquis of Ormonde. Given the radically different experiences of Rinuccini and the Old English, this is an unfair charge. It would require Rinuccini to act in a way contrary to his experience as an archbishop from the heart of Catholic Italy.

The best account of Rinuccini's mission to Ireland comes from Tadhg O hAnnrachain's unpublished dissertation from the European University Institute¹¹. hAnnrachain delves into archival material more deeply than has any previous author, and addresses the nature of the relationship between Rinuccini and the clergy very skillfully. The primary contribution of his

specifically request Rinuccini, it is clear that they want a heightened Papal presence via a nuncio, and that is what they got. Tadhg O hAnnrachain, in "Far From Terra Firma" makes the same point.

⁸ Boyd, 42.

⁹ *ibid.* 45

¹⁰ Boyd, 42.

¹¹ Tadhg O hAnnrachain, "Far From Terra Firma: The Mission of GianBattista Rinuccini to Ireland, 1645-1649" Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, European University Institute (1995)

work to the study of the Confederation is to deconstruct the rigidity of the factions as noted by other historians. By analyzing Rinuccini as an individual agent and by not assuming the lockstep support of a “clerical party”, hAnnrachain offers a far more accurate and interesting picture of the events of the second half of the 1640s.

The first chapters of his dissertation cover Rinuccini’s background as a cleric and also the political environments of seventeenth century Rome and France that greatly influenced his mission. Subsequent chapters examine the Irish Church from 1618-1641, emphasizing the renewed episcopacy as the dominant theme in Irish Catholicism. The final chapters detail the conflicts among Rinuccini, the Old English and Gaelic Irish, and the regular clergy within the Confederation.

This thesis, written without early knowledge of the work done by hAnnrachain, confirms much of his approach to analyzing Rinuccini as an individual actor shaped by continental influences different from those present in Ireland. However, areas of crucial difference remain. The first chapter here approaches the documents of the first years of the Confederation with far more depth than does hAnnrachain, and as a consequence it offers differing conclusions regarding the nature of Old English loyalty to the Church that diverge from hAnnrachain’s traditional interpretation--that the Old English put the interests of the king above those of the Church.¹² Of greater importance, this thesis applies the events of the 1640s to a debate in the literature about

¹² Printed and bound primary sources include J. T. Gilbert’s vital History of the Irish Confederation and War in Ireland, 1641-43. Vol. 1-7 (M. H. Gill and Son. Dublin: 1882), the Earl of Castlehaven’s Memoirs of the Irish War (Delmar. New York: 1974), and the Letter Book of the Earl of Clanricarde: 1643-74 John Lowe, ed. (Irish Manuscripts Commission. Dublin: 1983). For Ormonde, the standard collection is Thomas Carte’s The Life of James, Duke of Ormond (The University Press. Oxford: 1851) and also Carte’s A Collection of Original Letters and Papers (Society for the Encouragement of Learning. London: 1739). For Rinuccini, the only English-language source is The Embassy in Ireland, 1645-49 translated by Annie Hutton (Alexander Thom. Dublin: 1878)

the influence and nature of the Counter Reformation in Ireland and throughout the continental Church¹³.

The first chapter of this thesis advances the argument that the Old English showed significantly more loyalty to the cause of Catholicism within the Confederation than currently thought in the historical literature. Close attention to the founding documents of the Confederation and to the later documents of negotiation between the Old English Confederates and the king's agents in Ireland bear out this conclusion. The second chapter introduces Rinuccini to the Confederation, and explains the nature of factionalism within the organization, arguing that Rinuccini is best understood as a militant and Tridentine bishop attempting to follow an agenda in Ireland that did not fully match the wishes of any of the groups in the Confederation. This explains the downfall of the Confederation as resulting from a conflict *among* Catholics, not among some who supported the king and others who fought only for the Church.

The broader implications of this thesis are for the general body of literature on the Counter Reformation and the more specific body on early-modern Irish Catholicism. The third chapter voices these implications by introducing a new historiography and explaining why the events of the Confederation call for changes to this corpus. Some authors of the last twenty-five years have argued for the reexamination of the term "Counter Reformation", and a vocal minority for its near

¹³ Monsignor P.J. Corish's edited series History of Irish Catholicism (Gill. Dublin 1968) is dated but valuable for Irish Catholic history. Also see Corish's The Irish Catholic Experience: A Historical Survey (M. Glazier. Wilmington: 1985), though the shortcomings of this text are described here in the second chapter. Michael Mullett's Catholics in Britain and Ireland 1558-1829 covers the same material as previous works on English Catholicism (John Bossy's The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850 [Oxford University Press. New York: 1976]) but also looks at Irish and Scottish Catholics of his period. The first half of the book is relevant for the time period of this paper. For the English Reformation, many works are available. Christopher Haigh advances the notion of a slow, halting, and often reversed reformation as the historically correct interpretation of the English Reformation (Haigh, English Reformations Clarendon Press. Oxford: 1993) For a contrasting view see A. G. Dickens "The Early Expansion of Protestantism in England 1520-1558". A helpful collection of articles focusing on current controversies in the literature of Tudor and Stuart England is Reformation to Revolution: Politics and Religion in Early Modern England (ed. Margo Todd, New York 1995)

elimination¹⁴. Supporting these new arguments, this thesis concludes that given the complexities and irregularities of Irish Catholicism broad application of the term “Counter Reformation” to Catholic groups and the clergy within Ireland as found within the historiography is inappropriate. The Confederation provides an example where real Catholic disunity undermined religious progress, though each group present had received the label “Counter Reformation” at some point from historians. As a case study within the broader field of Counter Reformation studies, the example of the Confederation seriously challenges the traditional terminology associated with this period of history, and supports the call for further redefinition and clarification made by historians of this decade.

¹⁴For general, standard monographs on the Counter Reformation, see first A. G. Dickens The Counter Reformation (London 1968) and H. O. Evennett The Spirit of the Counter Reformation (Cambridge, 1968). Jean Delumeau’s Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire: a new view of the Counter Reformation (Philadelphia 1977) is also available in its original French and challenges much of the then-accepted thinking on early modern Christian history. John Bossy in Christianity in the West 1400-1700 (Oxford 1985) (among other works) along with Dickens and Evennet composed works which are the standard ones by English historians. N. S. Davidson in The Counter Reformation (New York 1987) is most useful for his introduction, which beings to rethink traditional historiography along the lines followed by this thesis. R. Po-Chia Hsia The World of Catholic Renewal (Cambridge 1998) has a useful introductory essay examining the complications of Counter Reformation

Chapter I

“For God or For King”¹⁵? The Old English and the First Years of the Confederation

Those historians who have studied the Confederation have spent significant time studying the conflicts that emerged after the arrival of Giovan Batista Rinuccini in 1645. That analysis will take place in Chapter 2. This chapter will examine the years before Rinuccini’s arrival, to set the stage for his entrance. Chroniclers generally pit Rinuccini against the Old English¹⁶ or against the “Ormondists”, who had significant control in the Confederation by 1645. Without understanding the years 1641-5, no valid comparison between Rinuccini and the Old English can take place. The crucial characterization of the Old English concerns their motivation in the Confederation. Was it for God or for King? The general historical conclusion leans towards the side of the King. The most recent historical work, that of Tadhg O hAnnrachain, argues that the group of Old English who dominated Confederate events had, as their prime objective, “to aid the king in upholding his authority in both England and Ireland, thus earning his goodwill”.¹⁷ This conclusion rests on a cursory examination of the documents of the early Confederation and the negotiations between Ormonde and the Commissioners of the Confederation after September 1643. The agreements worked out between these two sides show extensive amounts of support being promised from the

historiography. Finally, Martin D. W. Jones The Counter Reformation (Cambridge 1995) makes the most explicit call for revising the historiography in the introduction to his short text designed for undergraduate reading.

¹⁵ Title inspired by Pdraig Lenihan in “Catholicism and the Irish Confederate Armies: For God or King”, *Recusant History* [Great Britain] 1994 22(2): 182-198

¹⁶ A few words about terminology. “Old English” in this paper will be used following Aidan Clarke’s definition: the group of wealthy land owners, generally concentrated in the Pale, of English descent, and Catholic. This last requirement serves to eliminate those few who converted to Protestantism, such as Ormonde. Alternatively, “palesmen” will be used, especially early on, when the Old English gentry involved in the Confederation were almost exclusively from the Pale. Donal Cregan (1995) noted the inadequacy of these terms in “The Confederate Catholics of Ireland: the personnel of the Confederation, 1642-9” (*Irish Historical Studies*, xxix, no. 116 Nov. 1995), but he continued to use them because of their appearances in the primary texts and their occurrence in the literature. Following the lead of this scholar, I will do the same.

¹⁷ HAnnrachain, O Tadhg “Far from Terra Firma: The Mission of GianBattista Rinuccini to Ireland, 1645-1649” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, European University Institute 1995)

Confederates for the King, and on the surface, make the negotiators appear to be royalists seeking Charles' good favor. In actuality, aiding the king was never an end in itself, and aid was never offered just to earn vague "good favor." Aid was offered contractually, with a particular form of assistance coming at the price of particular concessions that rested not on the king's will or promise but on published agreements that guaranteed Parliamentary approval of what the Confederates demanded.

Analyzing what the Confederates demanded, how strictly they stood by these demands, and how they went about trying to achieve these demands all emphasize the essentially religious nature of Old English interests in the first years of the Confederacy. The primary objective of the Old English in the formative years of the Confederation was the advancement of their religious goals, namely the establishment of a free Catholic Church in Ireland.

The presence of a major objective for the Old English (that of establishing their church on a firmer footing) does not imply that they pursued only one means of obtaining this objective. In fact, the Old English pursued two complimentary strategies for obtaining their religious goals, and only through correctly identifying these strategies can the pursuit of Old English objectives be understood. The first strategy was one of negotiating with the king and his ministers to obtain religious concessions, while the second strategy was to set religious policy through holding land by force. Physically controlling an area allowed Catholics to implement the kind of worship they desired. In the years between the beginning of the Irish rebellion and the publishing of the 1646 peace between the commissioners of the Confederation and the Marquis of Ormonde, the actions of the Old English lend themselves to placement into three phases.

The first phase covers the period from October 1641 through March 1642, following the beginning of the rebellion through to the first meeting of the clergy to draw up a Confederation.

This period witnessed the historically unprecedented alliance between Irish and Old English forces in December 1641. The second period covers March 1642 to September 1643, including the months of open warfare between royalist armies and the troops of the Confederation. The final phase lasts from September 1643, when the first Articles of Cessation were published to end fighting between Charles' forces and those of the Confederacy, through to August 1646, when the peace worked out between Ormonde and the negotiators of the Supreme Council was published. This final phase also witnessed the confusion caused by the proposal and failure of the secret Glamorgan treaty, and saw the first involvement of the Papal Nuncio, Rinuccini,

Fighting took place in all three phases, but it is important to note who was fighting whom at each point. In only the first and second phases did Confederate armies battle royalist forces, while in all three they fought the forces of the Scots in Ulster and any armies fighting on the side of the English Parliament. The general trend of these years saw the Old English first attempt a diplomatic solution, followed by months of warfare against royalist, Scottish, and Parliamentary armies. Finally, at the beginning of the third phase, the Old English were looking again for diplomatic solutions to the conflict between the Confederation and the royal government. A detailed examination of the documents from these years reveals these shifts in policy, and also demonstrates repeatedly the importance of religion to the Old English who involved themselves in the Confederation.

Phase I: The First Months of Rebellion

The first objective of the Old English in the early months of the rebellion was to gain a hearing with the king, in hopes that all could be reconciled if the king could hear their arguments without the filtering of his ministers and supporters of the "Puritan party". When, on the seventh of December 1641, the Old English gentry of the Pale joined with the Irish, the Lords Justice in

Dublin immediately condemned their actions and called them traitors. King Charles' first information about the actions of the Old English came both from the Lords Justice and also from his most trusted supporter in Ireland, James Butler, Duke (and later Marquis) of Ormonde.

When Ormonde wrote to the king about the gentry of the Pale and their participation in the rebellion, he was writing about his own friends, peers, and kinsmen. The Butler family itself contributed a number of members to the Confederation, and marriage ties linked James Butler with many more Confederates¹⁸. Ormonde wrote to Charles five days after the Old English and the Irish joined forces, telling the king that the addition of the gentlemen of the Pale should moderate the “demaunds and outrage of those that first tooke armes” (the Irish) but that the religious objectives of the Irish and Old English might range from a demand for toleration of Catholicism to an aggressive action against Protestantism¹⁹.

At the same time that Ormonde was writing to the king, the Old English were busy justifying their actions to the king and his supporters in Ireland, especially Ormonde. On the 19 December, a party of Old English gentry wrote to Charles begging him to listen to their case and ardently professing their loyalty to him. The authors hoped to justify their joining of the Irish Rebellion, stating first the goal of “maintaining and defending” Charles’ “royal prerogative” and their desire for free and public exercise of their faith²⁰. The order in which these reasons were given was no accident, and the fact that faith is mentioned at all is significant: from the beginning, the Old English did not try to hide the perhaps unwelcome religious nature of their actions, probably because to do so would be trying to conceal the obvious. When the reasons for taking up arms were given in greater detail, however, religious motivations were only briefly touched

¹⁸ Crogan, 495

¹⁹ Letters from Ormonde to Charles, 1641. 12 December 1641 (Gilbert I, 235)

²⁰ Addresses from English Pale to King and Queen, 1641. 17 December 1641 (Gilbert I, 236)

upon. The core of the grievances of the Old English stemmed from their treatment at the hands of the new Lords Justice in Dublin, who had refused them arms in November for defending the Pale from the Gaelic Irish army, and who had allowed the campaign of terror waged by Sir Charles Coote.²¹ The Pale gentry laid the blame for the conditions which drove them to their decision at the feet of the ministers in Dublin who acted against the king's will, and Charles received no criticism in the whole affair²². The Old English claimed that the only reason for joining the Irish was because the Irish professed to be fighting for the rights of the king²³.

Other documents circulated in late 1641 and 1642 outlining the reasons why the Pale gentry took up arms. All listed similar reasons for the rising in arms²⁴. A reader presented with only these documents might conclude that the chief motivations of the Old English were the king's rights in Ireland and his success against his enemies, while the cause of Catholicism provided a secondary and poorly articulated motivation for rising in arms. These documents influenced the general historiographical conclusion that the Old English always cared more about the rights of the king rather than the cause of Catholicism. Any analysis of this type, however, is deeply flawed because it focuses more only on words instead of on words and actions together. The prominent men of the Pale who wrote to the king and published the grievances of the gentry chose their words carefully and understood the political and religious environment in which their

²¹ Coote, who was soon to become Governor of Dublin and later an important commander in the Parliamentary armies in Ireland, began a series of retaliatory attacks against Catholics in the Pale following the successes of the Irish Catholic army approaching from the north. These attacks targeted all Catholics without regard for ethnic status or affiliation in the conflict. This greatly angered the Old English, some of whom became victims of these attacks, but their complaints about Coote to the Dublin government fell on deaf ears. See Newman Companion to Irish History, or Clarke The Old English in Ireland

²² Blaming the "evil ministers" was by then the standard way of excusing traitorous activities. In the opening years of the English Civil War, for example, the Parliamentary supporters claimed, almost to a man, to be fighting in defense of the king against his evil advisors who had led him astray.

²³ *ibid.* 237-243

²⁴ see also Gilbert I 244-254 Apology of Anglo-Irish for Rising in Arms, 1641; Gilbert II 4, Statement of Grievances of the Irish, 1642

words were received. An effective letter to Charles would not start with a polemic against Protestantism or an assertion of the superiority of Catholicism. The Old English avoided being impolitic, and because of this, their words should not be used as the sole determinant of their motivations for taking up arms.

The Palesmen routinely and blatantly violated the rights of the king they so claimed to support. For example, the Irish army they joined was actively fighting the forces of the king in Ireland, had definitively been declared rebels and traitors by the king, and was in stated opposition to the king's chosen ministers in Dublin. Nowhere did the Palesmen indicate which rights of the king they were defending, or how those rights were being infringed upon in Ireland, necessitating the rising. Without some sort of specification, the claims of defending the rights of the king lose their power to justify the actions of the Old English.

Of course, Charles did not believe the profession of loyalty by the Palesmen. In January 1642 he condemned the Irish rebels and all those who would join with them²⁵. This condemnation left no maneuvering room for the Old English, yet they stayed in the alliance with the Irish in defiance of the king's explicit wishes. These actions tell more about the Old English motives than do their words. After the condemnation from Charles, the Palesmen set about trying to rally support among the other Old English of Ireland, namely those in Connaught affiliated with the Earl of Clanricarde, the Catholic royalist who held the highest position of anyone of his faith in Ireland. As a key landowner, Clanricarde was wooed by his peers from the Pale but never joined with them, leading to frustration and resentment as the decade wore on²⁶. The attempts to increase the size of the alliance (called the "United Lords" before the Confederation was

²⁵ Proclamation by Charles I. 1 January 1642. Gilbert I 253

²⁶ Viscount Gormanston to the Earl of Clanricarde. 21 January 1642. Gilbert I 255

formalized later in 1642) show conclusively that the Old English had no real intention of backing down at the king's request.

Phase II: The Formation of the Confederate Catholics of Ireland

While the leaders of the Old English Catholic gentry wrote to Charles professing their devotion and allegiance, other processes were at work in Ireland that would demonstrate the fundamentally religious nature of Old English participation in the Irish rising. In March 1642, some bishops and various lower clergy²⁷ met to formulate plans for a national Confederation of Catholics to prosecute the war and serve as a *de facto* government of Ireland. Under the guidance of Hugh O'Reilly, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of Ireland, the clergy laid the groundwork for a "Grand Counsell" that would become the General Assembly, supposedly the primary governing body of the Confederation. The main focus of the government was to conduct the war, and the long term preparations for war and government contained in the founding documents suggest that the clergy did not see the Confederation as a temporary alliance or the war as a conflict to be over in a short time²⁸.

A greater body of clergy met in May of 1642 to formalize the Catholic union and produced a document that became the cornerstone of the Confederation. They began with standard praise of Charles and the typical vague commitment to the defense of his rights and prerogatives as found in the Old English correspondence with the king. They then proceeded to formulate policies contrary to the basic tenets of English rule in Ireland since the reformation,

²⁷ Whenever "clergy" is mentioned, it is Catholic clergy, especially when it is Irish clergy. If Protestant bishops or clergy are discussed, they will be designated as such. The default setting, so to speak, for religious terms and offices is the Catholic variety. Also, the "Irish Church" is the Catholic Church in Ireland, not the Church of Ireland (the Irish version of the Protestant Church of England).

²⁸ Plan for National Confederation in Ireland, also Proceedings at Synod of Province of Armagh, held at Kells. 22 March 1642. (Gilbert I 289-294)

neglecting the king in favor of creating a Catholic governing body²⁹. This governing structure involved clergy, nobility and gentry in a unicameral General Assembly, ensuring that the Church would have significant physical representation in the Confederation. That General Assembly would appoint a Supreme Council of twenty-four members, which had significant autonomy when the General Assembly was out of session. In addition, the clerics placed an emphasis on the central body as opposed to local governments, though it made provisions for provincial, county, and local governments, all which operated in a system with the Assembly in Kilkenny at its head. The four provinces (Munster, Leinster, Connaught, and Ulster) were allowed to vote for representatives to the General Assembly in a system designed to limit domination by any one province. The goal of this structure was limiting regionalism that might prove divisive for the cause.

Along these lines they also forbade anyone from making “distinction at all between the old and ancient Irish [the Old English and the Gaelic Irish], and no alienation, comparison, or differences between provinces, cities, towns, or families, and lastly, not to begin or forward any emulations or comparisons whatsoever”³⁰. Regionalism and ethnic distinctions had hamstrung previous Irish Catholic rebellions of the last hundred years.³¹ This time, the clergy were committed to preventing the tensions caused by these non-religious factors.

²⁹ Acts of Irish Congregation at Kilkenny. May 1642. (Gilbert II 34-43)

³⁰ *ibid.* 36

³¹ The history of sixteenth-century Irish rebellion was very much one of the English authorities allying with a rival to the family in rebellion in order to defeat the rebellion. By playing ethnic, regional, and familial rivalries effectively, the English were able to prevent an organized uprising of all Gaelic Irish, or of all the Catholics of Ireland (see Canny *From Reformation to Restoration* and Ellis *Tudor Ireland*). The Confederacy of the 1640s revealed a major failure of policy. From the English perspective, then, this failure can be seen as the result of abandoning the policy of dividing and conquering the Irish rebels. By classifying all Catholics as traitors and missing the opportunity to pit the Old English against the Gaelic army in late 1641 (see above), the Dublin government almost forced the occurrence of what it had feared for generations: a combined rising of all the major Catholic powers in Ireland.

The downplaying of ethnic and regional differences demonstrates the religious nature of the Confederation intended by the clergy in 1642. Catholicism, and not a particular regional or ethnic commonality, would hold together the members of the Confederation. That an organization with such a character would emerge from a meeting of clergy may seem natural, but the clergy were men drawn mostly from the population of Ireland and subject to the same ethnic, regional, and political loyalties that affected Irish society³². The prohibitions against inflaming divisive issues (like ethnicity and regionalism) applied equally to the members of the clergy as it did to the lay members of the Confederation³³. Later in 1642 the Confederates would put this commitment into practical terms when they guaranteed that any “Roman Catholick, as well English, Welsh, as Scotch, who was of that profession before the troubles, and who will come and please to reside in this kingdom and join in the present union, shall be preserved and cherished in his life, goods, and estates... as fully and freely as any native born therein, and shall be acquitted and eased of one third... of publick charges or levies raised or to be raised for the maintenance of this holy war.”³⁴ A later passage guarantees to any convert to Catholicism the rights of a native-born Catholic. These financial and legal commitments demonstrate conclusively the seriousness with which the Confederates tried to base their coalition on Catholicism.

It was the first meeting of the General Assembly of the Confederate Catholics of Ireland that made the above statements, meeting in October of 1642. The key distinction between this meeting and the meetings in May is that the General Assembly was a meeting of the “Lords Spiritual *and* Temporal”³⁵, not just a meeting of clergy³⁶. The “Lords Temporal” included the

³² for a good picture of ecclesiastical divisions see H. F. Kearney “Ecclesiastical Politics and the Counter-Reformation in Ireland, 1618-1648” in the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, ii (1960), 202-212

³³ Acts of Congregation. (Gilbert II 36)

³⁴ Acts of the General Assembly of Irish Confederation. 24 October 1642. (Gilbert II 73).

³⁵ Emphasis added

Gaelic gentry who had first participated in the rebellion of the previous October, and also, more significantly, the Old English lords of the Pale. Not only did the Pale gentry take part in the fledgling Confederation, but many of them became its lay leaders, taking important positions in the Supreme Council, including the positions of secretary (Richard Bellings) and President (Viscount Mountgarret). Mountgarret and Bellings would occupy their respective positions more often than any other men filled either position over the next seven years³⁷. These men could not have gained election by the other members of the Confederation if their objectives and values differed greatly from the ideals of the Confederation, so it is safe to say that the stated objectives of the Confederation accurately represent the values of the Old English gentry who took part in it.

The October 1642, meeting of the General Assembly clearly stated what the objectives of the Confederation were. The first stated goal of the Confederation was to achieve a restoration of the status of the Catholic Church as enjoyed during the reign of Henry III (1216-72)³⁸. This is a tremendously bold desire as it would end a century of legislation against Catholicism and completely overturn the religious policies of every monarch since Henry VIII³⁹. The restoration of Catholicism in Ireland was mentioned as a goal before the preservation of the king's rights and prerogatives was mentioned. This is in direct contrast to the letters and documents of 1641 and early 1642 where assurances of loyalty and commitment to the king's cause always appeared before the true substance of the document.

What emerge from this series of events are two seemingly contradictory images of the Old English. The first image is that presented to the king and the Protestant royalists of Ireland (like

³⁶ Acts of the General Assembly (Gilbert II 73)

³⁷ Donal Cregan, "The Confederate Catholics of Ireland: the personnel of the Confederation, 1642-9" in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxix, no. 116 (Nov. 1995).

³⁸ Acts of the General Assembly (Gilbert II 74)

³⁹ With the exception of Mary Tudor (1553-8)

Ormonde) of a group of loyal subjects persecuted for their faith and their loyalty to their king, desiring nothing more than an end to this persecution. In these documents, the Old English cited specific, recent events to explain their actions, like particular instances of brutality by Protestant officials in Dublin, or the denial of arms for the defense of the Pale. The second image comes from the founding documents of the Confederation, which reveal a much deeper commitment to the cause of Catholicism. The motivations for the demands of the Confederation came from deeply rooted objections to the ill treatment of Catholics in Ireland that started in the sixteenth century. The Confederates strongly resented their treatment as second-class citizens at the hands of the government, and the grievances presented by the General Assembly and the assemblies of clergy were drawn from longstanding legal and social policies that did not tolerate their religion.

Which image of the Old English is the correct one? Could the same group that passionately asserted its loyalty to the king also join a Confederation that refuted the fundamental tenets of royal ecclesiastical policy in Ireland? The Old English may have wished to remain in the Catholic cause and firmly loyal to the king, but in reality, they had to choose between the two. This is not to say that they had to abandon completely one for the other, but that in circumstances where one loyalty conflicted with the other, they would have to pick a side. The actions of the Old English show which side they chose—the side of Catholicism. While they wrote to the king of their loyalty, they acted by negotiating with the Irish and then joining an exclusively Catholic organization in full knowledge that such an organization violated the laws of the English government. They then proceeded to accept leadership positions in that organization. These actions in the first year of the Confederation clearly discredit the interpretation of some historians that the Old English cared more for the cause of the king than they did for Catholicism.

The true proof of this would come finally in the years between 1643 and 1646. In the first months of 1642, the Palesmen believed that if they could just present their arguments to the king, then the conflict could be solved. At the same time that they requested an audience with the king, however, they continued to carry on the war with their new Irish allies while the Confederation was forming. Obviously, they did not have full confidence in their ability to convince the king of the justness of their cause and sought a military means of gaining what they wanted. They may not have particularly desired to fight royalist forces, but that is in fact what they did until a cessation of hostilities was concluded on September 15, 1643.

Phase III: The Long Road to the Peace of '46

The transition from phase one to phase two represents a change in policy by the Confederation. Why did the Confederates decide to stop fighting the royalist armies? The first reason was the belief among prominent Old English that the military campaigns were not working. The Earl of Castlehaven, the Confederacy's most successful (and reluctant) general in the early years was convinced that the Confederate armies could not stand up to the forces against them.⁴⁰ Before the cessation, the Catholic armies had been fighting every Protestant force in Ireland, which put them at a large disadvantage. Royalist and Scots armies had had successes against Catholic forces in 1643, and Old English leaders thought it was the right time to negotiate. Also, it was a continuation of their policy of negotiation.

From the beginning of the rebellion, the Old English had continually expressed a desire to meet with the king for the purposes of resolving the conflict, and in January of 1643, Charles responded to their overtures by commissioning several trusted lords, among them Ormonde and

⁴⁰ Castlehaven's Memoirs of the Irish Wars (1684) [Scholar's Facsimilies and Reprints, New York: Delmar 1974]

Clanricarde, to meet with the Old English and listen to their demands⁴¹. In March, the Confederates picked their representatives to meet with the delegation headed by Ormonde, and selected a group with a majority of Old English members⁴². The royalists and the Catholics agreed to meet at Trim on March 17, 1643.

The initial negotiating positions of the Confederate representatives and the king's agents could hardly have been further apart. Charles, immediately after writing Ormonde to instruct him to meet with the Confederates, promptly wrote him again to indicate on which points he was not willing to give ground to the Confederates⁴³. These points included almost every fundamental difference between the two sides. On religion, Charles noted toleration of Catholicism was "so contrary to the laws of this and that kingdom...that it may not be granted without apparent danger of ruin to the King's affairs"⁴⁴. Charles showed slightly more willingness to grant the more political aspects of the Confederates' demand, but felt unable to do so mostly because of fear of the reaction of his enemies in Parliament. The result was that Ormonde, the leading negotiator for the king's side, initially had little flexibility to deal with the Confederate's demands.

As a prelude to the negotiations, the Confederate representatives wished, once and for all, to explain the reasons why they had taken up arms, and did so in a long document prepared for Ormonde. The most profound impression left by this document is the influence of the Confederation on the outlook of the Old English, namely through the adoption of the principles of the Confederation into the language used by the authors in the document. The authors (assumed

⁴¹ Charles to Ormonde, January 11 1643. (Gilbert II 140)

⁴² Appointment of Representatives of the Confederate Catholics, 11 March 1643 (Gilbert II 224) The group included Gormanston (probably the leader), Sir Lucas Dillon, Sir Robert Talbot, John Walsh esq., Nicholas Plunkett (lawyer), Geoffrey Browne, Ever Magines, Torlogh O'Neill, Robert Barnewall (?), and Viscount Muskerry

⁴³ Instructions From Charles I. On Treaty with Confederation (3, to Ormonde) . 12 January 1643 (Gilbert II 141)

⁴⁴ *ibid.* 142

to be either the Old English representatives of the Confederacy or at least men who wrote with the approval of the Old English) were certainly bolder and more confident than the men who first addressed the king in December of 1641. They stated clearly that “noe reward could invite, nor persecution enforce (the Catholics of Ireland) to forsake that religion professed by them and their auncestors for thirteene hundred yeares”⁴⁵. This defiant statement coming near the beginning of the document made clear to the king’s representatives that on the subject of religion the Confederates would not give any ground. More importantly, it indicates that the Confederates perceived a common Catholic heritage in Ireland, not a separate Gaelic Catholic and English Catholic one. The “thirteene hundred yeares” effectively obliterated the distinctions between the Gaelic Irish and the English who began arriving there in the twelfth century, as both groups are now defined by their Catholicism rather than their ethnic classification.

This development is tremendously important. It indicates that the Old English were willing to identify with the Gaelic Irish, even to the point of fashioning a common heritage based not on race or “nationality” but on religion alone. Appreciating this requires an understanding of the English attitude towards the Irish dating back to the first contact between the two cultures. The impression of the Irish as uncivilized, uncouth, backwards, and detestable was deeply ingrained in English mentality, and the stigma only increased during the reformation, when the Irish stubbornly clung to “Popish” ways, further proving their inferiority in the English Protestant mind.⁴⁶ The importance of the Old English decision to throw in their lot with the Irish, when understood in its historical context, cannot be overstated.

⁴⁵ Statement Presented by the Confederation to the Commissioners of Charles I., on the Grievances of the Irish, March 1643 (Gilbert II 227)

⁴⁶ See William Palmer “‘That Insolent Liberty’”: Honor, Rites of Power, and Persuasion in Sixteenth-Century Ireland.” *Renaissance Quarterly* 1993 46(2): 308-327

The grievances presented to the king's commissioners are also notable perhaps for what they did not include as for what they did. The terms "Irish" and "Old English", discouraged by the General Assembly, do not appear anywhere in the document. Everywhere in the document, the aggrieved party were the "Catholiques of Ireland", whether the particular grievance had to do with the Irish or the Old English. When the writers mentioned the Irish Rebellion of October, 1641, they did not call it that, but rather noted how hardship and abuse at the hands of the Irish government "did necessitate some Catholiques in the north, about the two and twentieth of October, 1641, to take armes in maintenance of their religion, your Majesties' rights, and the preservation of life, estate, and lybertie"⁴⁷. This is not to suggest that the Old English and the Irish had resolved all of their longstanding differences, but the willingness of key Old English leaders to go before Ormonde (and, therefore, the king) identifying a common heritage and cause with the Irish demonstrates that significant gains had been made in the mission to gel the two groups in the Confederation. By the time they addressed the king's ministers in March 1643, they spoke united with the Irish as religious brothers, a commonality they were willing to put above ethnic and cultural differences. The years of negotiation following 1643, however, would see this determination put to the test.

The Articles of Cessation, published on September 15, 1643, did not resolve any of the religious quarrels between the king and the Irish Catholics. They facilitated negotiations for peace, however, and were a benefit for the king because they freed troops for use in England that had previously been tied down in Ireland to deal with the rebellion. The terms of the Cessation appeared as a mixed victory for the Confederates. In June, 1643, they had presented a list of demands to Ormonde along with the aforementioned list of grievances and reasons for taking up

⁴⁷ *ibid.* 234

arms, and this list of demands included the rather bold request that the Confederates be left in governing control of all the land they held by force of arms as of the signing of the Cessation⁴⁸. Ormonde at first rejected this proposal because he could not authorize “any government, jurisdiction, command, or power, other than such as is erected by his Majestie’s authoritie, and warranted by the lawes and statutes of this kingdome”⁴⁹. The Confederates were demanding governing control over a good part of Charles’ kingdom, a flagrant affront to the king’s prerogative if ever there were one, and intended to govern it by means of an illegal and unauthorized Confederation comprised of members professing an outlawed religion. As distasteful as this proposition must have seemed to the royalists, the military realities of Ireland and England in 1643 left the royalists little choice. The bulk of the text of the Cessation detailed what lands would be held by the royalists and which would be held by the Catholics after the Cessation was approved. The Catholics retained control over much of the area that they held by arms.

The Confederates seemed to lose in the negotiations when they agreed to a subsidy for the king. The subsidy amounted to 30,800 pounds, a large sum that one knowledgeable contemporary estimated was sufficient to field the Confederate armies for six months⁵⁰. Why did the Confederates agree to provide a subsidy to the king? The Articles of Cessation did not provide any firm guarantees of religious concessions, or any mention of the Confederates’ previous requests that the king grant a free Parliament to hear the grievances of the Irish Catholics.

⁴⁸ Propositions From Confederation, 24 June 1643 (Gilbert II 296)

⁴⁹ Answers From Ormonde to Commissioners of Confederation 29 June 1643 (Gilbert II 306)

⁵⁰ Reasons Against a Cessation with the English, August 1643. (Gilbert II 325)

Understood in its historical context, however, payment to the king for toleration and concessions had a precedent in recent Irish history. In the late 1620's and the 1630's, the Old English had negotiated with the king for the granting of royal Graces that covered religious, economic, and political matters in exchange for a fixed subsidy. Naturally, the king wanted to avoid the vulgarity of selling his favors to the Catholics, but in reality, both sides understood the transaction that was taking place⁵¹. The 30,000-pound sum promised in the 1643 cessation was actually smaller than the annual 40,000 pound subsidy agreed to in the 1630s. The cessation subsidy fit the style of the earlier payments: the king agreed to grant specific concessions in exchange for money, which he needed badly. Perhaps the agreement over control of land during the cessation needed the subsidy to gain the king's agreement, but, since the Confederates would control these areas by force of arms, it is unlikely that the negotiators would have offered a subsidy to guarantee something they had firm control over anyway. It is more likely that an unwritten agreement of some sort took place, perhaps one in which the king promised a free Parliament in the near future, or offered a repeal of the penal statutes against Catholicism at the next politically feasible time. The Old English had offered money to the king in exchange for promises in the recent past—this was a case where they were willing to do this again.

As stated before, the main objective of the Old English was the defense of the Catholic faith in Ireland, with all of the larger and smaller issues associated with the goal. In light of this, it seems odd that they would support the king financially, and this, in fact, might seem to call into question the strength of their commitment to the Catholic cause. Certainly, giving their support to the Confederation made them defenders of the faith, but giving financially to a Protestant king at the same time might lead some to think that they are wavering between serving God and

⁵¹ Clarke, Old English, 54

serving the King. Instead of questioning the mountain of evidence that proves the Old English commitment to the Catholic cause, a new explanation should be offered that resolves this apparent paradox.

That explanation requires understanding the Old English as a group pursuing different means of achieving one goal. That goal was the removal of the stigma of their faith, and the freedom to practice it as they saw fit. Two means of achieving this goal were available to the Old English in 1640s. One way was via the force of arms and the Catholic Confederation. By joining with their Irish brothers in faith, the Old English could physically implement the free exercise of religion via taking control of land and restoring Catholicism. The other option open to the Old English was the traditional one: relying upon their usefulness to the king to secure his good favor and religious concessions. There was also a realization within the Old English camp during the conflict that the king was a barrier against the wrath of the Parliamentary forces. Both of these ideas (that of gaining concessions and toleration from the king and that of bolstering the king to act as a buffer against the Puritans) had as their root motivation the advancement of Catholicism in Ireland.

The necessity of the subsidy, then, was to allow the policy of negotiation to proceed. Some redress had to be made in order to bring the king to the bargaining table without humiliating himself. Contrary to their rhetoric, the Confederates had trampled the king's rights by sacking his towns, fighting his armies, defying his ministers, and allowing the Catholic clergy to capture the property and tithe income of the Protestant clergy in Confederate-controlled areas. The thirty thousand pounds reflected the price for obtaining a cessation of arms with the royalist forces with an eye towards establishing a lasting peace.

Obtaining a Cessation of arms with Ormonde was only the first step towards resolving the conflict between the royalists and the Confederates. Ceasing hostilities merely began the long process of negotiations between the king and his Irish Catholic subjects. On November 19, 1643, the Confederates nominated seven representatives to meet with Charles at Oxford, and proceeded to draw up a list of demands, written on behalf of "The Roman Catholics of Ireland". The first proposition presented was for complete freedom for the Catholic Church, and an end to all penal laws against Catholics. The remaining seventeen propositions requested the address of civil, social, economic, and legal grievances, most of which had to do with the restrictions placed on Catholics in the government and in business.⁵² The chief call was for a free Parliament, unencumbered by royal regulations (like Poyning's Law) in which the Catholics of Ireland would hold a majority of seats. This Parliament, if set up according to the demands of the Confederates, would roll back decades of English Protestant laws which infringed upon the rights of Catholics.

The Catholic negotiators put plenty of care into forming this list of demands. The Confederates made the decision to send negotiators to Charles in November of 1643, but the actual meeting took place in late March of 1644. Richard Bellings, secretary of the Confederation, noted how the Confederates themselves debated over what to demand from the king, meaning that the propositions that emerged represented a compromise between different interests.⁵³ The importance of these demands for the Confederates was understandable given what was contained at the end of the list: a promise that pending the approval of these demands by the king, the Confederates would supply him with ten thousand men for the purposes of defeating his opponents in England.

⁵² The Demands of the Roman Catholics of Ireland. 28 March 1644 (Gilbert III p. 128)

⁵³ Bellings History vol. 3 pg. 2

This offer of military support, and the specific number of troops promised, was not surprising. In January of 1644, Charles had asked an Irish royalist (Randal MacDonnel, the Earl of Antrim) to raise a ten-thousand man army to fight for the king in England.⁵⁴ Ormonde also became aware of this idea in early 1644, and subsequently sought this aid for the king continually during the negotiations for peace that would follow through 1644 and '45. In January of 1644, a Scottish army had invaded England, and the king's forces lost the battle of Nantwich later that month. The Confederates had repeatedly made protestations of their loyalty to Charles ever since 1641, and were actively fighting his enemies in Ulster. Calling upon a royalist Irish army (which happened also to be a Catholic army) was a natural choice.

The propositions given to the king in March of 1644 set the stage for the coming months of negotiations. The king desired military aid, while the desires of the Confederates were spelled out in the propositions. The following months of negotiations would see the king try to receive aid without losing too much face or power to the Confederates, while the Confederates would try to hold out as long as possible for the most gain before sending an army to England.

The initial response of the king to the Catholic demands did not satisfy the Confederates, and soon after he had to leave the negotiations to Ormonde.⁵⁵ Charles' answered the demands for religious freedom by claiming that "the lawes against those of the Romish religion within that his kingdom of Ireland have never beene executed with any rigor or severitye" and if the Confederates were willing to return to loyalty and end their enterprise, they had the king's word that toleration of Catholicism would be the same as the best conditions of the years under Elizabeth (1558-1603) and James I (1603-1625).⁵⁶ In other words, Charles asked the

⁵⁴ Charles to the Earl of Antrim, 20 January 1644

⁵⁵ Commission from Charles I to Marquis of Ormonde, June 1644

⁵⁶ Answer of Charles I to the Demands of the Irish Confederation,

Confederates to be content with the ante-bellum status quo, promising that he would be reasonable and listen to their demands as soon as he had settled the troubles in England. Charles, with little subtlety, indicated that quick aid from the Confederates would bring faster redress of their grievances.

The Confederates chose to obtain written guarantees of action before sending aid to Charles. By September 5, 1644, negotiations between Ormonde and his deputies and the commissioners of the Confederation were underway.⁵⁷ On that date, Ormonde and the Confederates agreed to an extension of the cessation of hostilities until December 1, 1644.⁵⁸ Much to the chagrin of the commissioners, Ormonde decided to shelve discussions of the first proposition--the demand for free exercise of Catholicism.⁵⁹ Debate started first on the propositions calling for a new and free parliament in Ireland. The Commissioners did get the issue of religion reopened two weeks after the start of the negotiations, and they demanded the end to "any restraynte, penaltie, mulet, or incapacitie [as] may be laid upon any Romane Catholicke within the kingdome, or Ireland."⁶⁰ Ormonde simply replied to the first proposition with the answer given previously by King Charles, that the king would not rigidly enforce the myriad laws against Catholics.

These first months of negotiations made little progress for either side. As Ormonde noted to George Digby (a Catholic royalist close to Charles), fear of Confederate military power and a lack of clear information from the king hamstrung the royalist negotiators.⁶¹ Also, the negotiations were not the only business of the Confederation in this period. Their armies battled

⁵⁷ The Confederate Commissioners were led by Viscount Muskery, and included Nicholas Plunkett, Sir Robert Talbot, Patrick Darcy, Dermot O'Brien, Geoffrey Browne, and John Dillon

⁵⁸ Renewal of Cessation, 5 September, 1644. (From Gilbert III, pg. 273)

⁵⁹ Debates on Propositions from Commissioners of Confederation, September 6, 1644

⁶⁰ The Substance of the Debate on Thursday, the 17th of September, 1644 (From Gilbert III, pg. 289)

the Scots in the north, and the Baron of Inchiquin in Munster (the southern Irish province), who had recently declared for the Parliament against the king. Meanwhile, the king's fortunes continued to decline in England, increasing his desire for Irish troops. Through the end of 1644 and into 1645, however, he still hesitated to grant many of the demands of the Confederate negotiators. He preferred to promise not to enforce the laws against Catholicism and to repeal these laws after he had secured his rule in England.⁶² The Confederates continued to insist upon repeal of them by act of Parliament as a necessary precondition to sending aid to the king.⁶³ All the while, the cessation of hostilities, first agreed upon in September of 1643, was continually extended with the agreement of both parties, indicating that neither desired to reopen the war.

In the first half of 1645, the negotiations made slow progress, with the king conceding points aside from the first proposition (the one specifically focused on the laws against Catholicism). Still, however, he desired to promise to address grievances in the future in exchange for immediate material aid. And still, the Confederates were not satisfied with promises. By the summer of 1645, Charles had agreed to make Catholics eligible to hold governmental offices again, and promised to limit the power of the Church of Ireland over Irish Catholics.⁶⁴ Still, however, the first proposition of the commissioners (that dealing with the legal status of Catholicism) went without satisfactory answer, so the negotiations dragged on, much to the irritation of Ormonde. The negotiations between June and August, 1645, concerned technicalities of old statute law that the Commissioners wanted amended, and the royalist negotiators, continuously mindful of the waning fortunes of the king against Parliament and the Scots, reminded the Catholics that "his Majestie's service doth suffer daily more and more, and wee

⁶² Charles to Ormonde 15 December 1644

⁶³ Commissioners to Ormonde, May 1645

therefore now expect from [you] such speede and clearnes[s] to be used on [your] parte as wee may have no further cause to mencion their retarding of the progress of the Treatie”.⁶⁵

At several points, the Catholics added new items to their list of demands. On 22 July, they gave new demands to Ormonde “without the graunting of which it was said there could be noe agreement of peace”.⁶⁶ These new items demanded full rights for bishops, complete freedom from Protestant ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and freedom for clergy and bishops to teach the laity.⁶⁷ Ormonde immediately replied that such proposals were impossible, but that penalties for “the quiet exercise” of the Catholic religion would not be enforced.⁶⁸ Additional Catholic demands into August of 1645 included a desire to have high positions in the army filled with Catholics from Ireland, and to have positions in the legal system of Ireland and England filled similarly.⁶⁹ In reply to this, Ormonde returned a long list of concessions already granted to the Catholics, implying that the king had already given much to them, and that it was time to conclude the process and get about sending an army to fight for Charles in England.⁷⁰ The list that the king had granted to the Catholics was extensive, but on the key religious issues, such as the repeal by act of Parliament of the laws against Catholicism, he (though his ministers in Dublin) remained stubborn.

The reasoning for Charles’ actions might be answered by the important turn of events that occurred in late August of 1645. In that month, Edward, the Earl of Glamorgan, arrived in Kilkenny holding a secret commission from the king to negotiate religious concessions. Ormonde

⁶⁴ Ormonde to Commissioners of Confederation, 20 June 1645

⁶⁵ Ormonde to Commissioners of Confederation, 18 July, 1645

⁶⁶ Debate on Propositions from Confederation, 22 July, 1645 (Gilbert IV, 338)

⁶⁷ Memoranda by Ormonde, 23 July, 1645. The last was intimated to Ormonde by “Muskry” (Viscount Muskery). Note the insistence on episcopal sovereignty and the emphasis placed on clerical teaching and governance.

⁶⁸ Ormonde to Commissioners, 25 July 1645

⁶⁹ Statements by Commissioners of Confederation, 3 August, 1645. Ormonde’s answer was that while the king was not certain about giving Irish Catholics key commands in his army, he could certainly find an immediate place for “fower thousand foote and six hundred horse of his Roman Catholick subjects”!

tithes as they saw fit. The only requirement was that for the following three years, two-thirds of the tithe money would go to the king and one-third would remain with the clergy. After that period, the clergy would have the option to continue giving a portion to the king or holding all for themselves.⁷²

After the conclusion of the secret treaty, negotiations continued between Ormonde and the Confederates. Many of the issues still being debated were ones resolved with Glamorgan, so it is unclear why negotiations continued and peace was not concluded for several more months. Glamorgan, soon after negotiating with the Confederates, informed Ormonde that the Confederates had agreed to send ten-thousand armed men to England for the king's service, pending approval of a few more demands. Glamorgan strongly advised Ormonde to grant these demands, even though Glamorgan claimed not to have any knowledge of what the demands were.⁷³ In reality, Glamorgan hoped to convince Ormonde to approve what he (Glamorgan) had agreed to with the Confederates. No documentation exists besides the secret treaty to show the interaction of the Confederates and Glamorgan, so divining the nature of their relationship is difficult. It is clear, however, that Ormonde had no knowledge of the treaty agreed to by Glamorgan until December of 1645, four months after it was concluded. Those four months had seen plenty of negotiation but little progress.

Ormonde learned of the Glamorgan agreements shortly after the Earl had reached another agreement with the Confederates to replace the August pact. This one was negotiated on 20 December, and involved a newcomer to the Confederacy, the Papal nuncio Giovan Battista Rinuccini. Only in the country for two months, Rinuccini already had become involved in the peace process. He sought and won even greater concessions for the church. It was word of this

⁷¹ Lord Digby to Muskerry and Commissioners 1 August 1645

⁷²Articles Concluded Between Glamorgan and the Confederate Catholics. 25 August 1645

pact that reached Ormonde, and the Marquis immediately issued warrants for Glamorgan's arrest.⁷⁴ Through the loud protestations of the Confederates, Glamorgan was released in January after an imprisonment in Dublin Castle. The arrest disrupted the peace negotiations for a period.

The agreement of peace finally occurred on 28 March 1646. The major concessions made by the royalists were the repeal of the Oath of Supremacy for Catholics, the repeal of all laws and statutes against the free exercise of Catholicism in Ireland, and the calling of a free Parliament to address wrongs without interference from England. The document was an anti-climactic end to three years of negotiations, however, because it was politically and militarily irrelevant long before it was completed. 1646 saw the low point of Charles' fortunes (save for January 1649, of course) when he surrendered himself to the Scots at Newark in May. Within days of agreeing to the peace, the Confederates decided that sending troops to England to support a king who was one step away from defeat was pointless.⁷⁵ The army had no safe port at which to disembark, no sizeable royalist force to join, and no secure lines of supply when in England. The Confederate negotiators and Ormonde, however, continued with the proclamation of the peace at the end of June. Once the clergy and Rinuccini saw the details, they excommunicated the negotiators and the adherents to the new peace. Following the lead of the clergy, the vast majority of Catholics opposed the treaty, finishing off an agreement that was already dead.

Conclusion

The importance of the peace negotiations was in the process and not in the end result. In establishing the religious convictions and motivations of the Old English within Confederation, it is necessary to examine the period in which they had the most control. They dominated the Supreme Council up until the publication of the peace of '46, and the negotiators were almost

⁷³ Glamorgan to Ormonde 4-29 September 1645

⁷⁴ Order for Arrest of Glamorgan, 26 December 1645. The charge was high treason.

entirely Old English. Separating the first years of the Confederacy into phases and analyzing events chronologically demonstrates the generally unwavering commitment to the cause of Catholicism among the negotiators. The key points of contention were religious, especially the first proposition presented to Charles in 1644 that finally was redressed in the peace of '46.

The actions of the first years of the Confederation settle the question of God versus the King. The best arguments for the latter are that the Old-English-dominated Confederates agreed to pay Charles significant amounts of money (in the Articles of Cessation, September 1643) and to send the bulk of their army over to England (in the peace of '46). When addressed alone, these actions paint them as ardent royalists, but the months of negotiation that led up to these agreements to aid the king show these actions as *contractual* and not as gestures of loyal subjects. Aiding the king was a policy and a means to an end, not an end in itself. As they had done in the 1630s, the Old English sought a negotiated agreement wherein they would aid the king in return for religious concession. Unlike the Graces of the 1630s, the Old English gained very significant religious concessions. This was due to the presence of a large Catholic army commanded by the Confederacy, an element missing in the 1630s.

Before moving on to the last half of the 1640s, it is important to note the significance of the events that occurred before 1645. These are often overlooked by historians who are too quick to point out the breakdown of unity that occurred around the time of the peace of '46. This increase in factionalism is the subject of Chapter II. The founding documents of the Confederation made very clear the religious nature of the union over and against the other motivations and loyalties held by the members of the coalition. Both Old English and Gaelic Irish leaders joined this Confederation, risking life and property in the effort, and both took the

⁷⁵ Muskerry to Ormonde, 3 April, 1646

unprecedented steps of redefining their relations with each other based on a common religious condition and not on divisive ethnic differences.

But what of the clergy and the excommunication that finished the peace of '46? If the Old English have been established as focused on religion, why does the peace some of them negotiated with Ormonde gain ecclesiastical censure? The answer is in the different kind of Catholicism found among the Old English that contrasts with that of some members of the clergy and of Rinuccini. The answer is also about policy, and what means each faction within the Confederation would like to pursue to see its vision of Catholicism implemented. That answer comes in Chapter II.

Chapter II. Rinuccini and the Confederation: a conflict among Catholics

Introduction

No historian of the Confederation can avoid mentioning Rinuccini just as no historian can avoid noting the increased factionalism that plagued the Confederation while he was in Ireland. Inevitably, historians attempt to discern the degree to which Rinuccini heightened this factionalism. In actuality, however, attributing significant blame or credit to Rinuccini for the developments during his years in Ireland allows him more influence over events than he really exerted. To understand Rinuccini's role requires seeing him not as a devoted member of any of the factions within the Confederation, but rather as an independent agent following a particular agenda which, in its entirety, appealed to almost none of the members of any faction. Any analysis must also take into account his background as a cleric, his agenda for his mission to Ireland, and the nature of the factions involved in the Irish Church and in the Confederation. The interplay of conflicting religious, political, and ethnic loyalties hamstrung the Confederation, and Rinuccini acted much of the time to strengthen one faction over another, but he did not create these divisions. His accounts of his mission to Ireland, and the account left by Monsignor Massari, the Dean of Fermo and Rinuccini's right-hand man, reveal the clash among the Catholic interests in the Confederation that eventually hamstrung the entire undertaking.

Constructing an accurate picture of Rinuccini's relationship with the Confederation requires first understanding his background as a cleric and his vision for his Church. After a brief overview of events from 1645 to 1649, creating that understanding is the first task of this chapter. In addition, it must be understood that his mission to the Irish was two fold: one objective was aiding the Confederates militarily and politically, while the other was to bring

Tridentine reform to the Irish Church. Rinuccini attempted to accomplish both of these goals and in doing so, he created an ever-increasing group of enemies and factions that opposed his military policies, his reform policies, or both. Finally, this chapter addresses the nature of Rinuccini's conflicts with Ormonde and with the Catholic clerics. The conflict with lay and clerical Catholics resulted primarily from competing visions for Catholic Ireland.

Events from 1645 to 1649

The arrival of Giovan Battista Rinuccini in October of 1645 marked a turning point in the history of the Confederation. His arrival followed the conclusion of a secret pact between Glamorgan and the Confederates at the end of August after they and Ormonde had spent two years negotiating without much headway towards a peace favorable to both the Catholics and to Charles I. Rinuccini's impact on the peace of the following year and the other key events of the 1640's cannot be overstated. These events have now received significant coverage from Tadhg O hAnnrachain⁷⁶, who uses English and Italian document collections as well as archival material from Fermo (Italy), the Vatican, and Ireland to trace out the events following Rinuccini's arrival in Ireland.

The key events lie between the peace of 1646 and the peace of 1648. Both were treaties negotiated by powerful members of the Old English which contained provisions for the security of Catholicism in Ireland as part of the pact, and Rinuccini found the religious terms of both agreements unacceptable. He succeeded in defeating the peace of 1646, which had taken so many long months of negotiations⁷⁷. The opposition to the peace came first from the higher clergy and bishops of the church meeting to discuss the peace in August of 1646, two weeks after its announcement. Rinuccini influenced (but did not direct) the proceedings in which the clerics

⁷⁶ O hAnnrachain, Tadhg. 'Far from Terra Firma' The Mission of GianBattista Rinuccini to Ireland, 1645-49. Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, European University Institute 1995

declared that the negotiators of the peace had violated the principles of the Confederation. and, when the negotiators and the supporters of the peace still desired to approve it, the synod of bishops proceeded to excommunicate them. At the time of the first proclamation of the peace at the end of June, Rinuccini had been an observer to the synod, while by September 1, when the synod composed the excommunication, he was clearly its leader.

For a short time after, his power increased within the Confederation. The majority of the Confederates supported the clerical position and denounced the treaty. Some of the negotiators were imprisoned and the Supreme Council was dissolved in favor of a new Council presided over by Rinuccini and packed with opponents of the truce and some members of the clergy. This Council dictated a new war policy for the Confederation, the failure of which caused its demise in late 1647 when Catholic armies could not take Dublin⁷⁸. This failure allowed those Old English who had negotiated and supported the 1646 peace to regain control of the Supreme Council and caused Rinuccini to lose prestige among the members of the Confederation. When the restored leaders of the Supreme Council concluded a peace with the Baron of Inchquin⁷⁹ in 1648, Rinuccini again excommunicated its supporters, but this time the clergy were not united behind him, and some bishops questioned the validity of the excommunication. The Supreme Council appealed to Rome questioning Rinuccini's actions and, while many Confederates dutifully followed Rinuccini's lead in opposing the peace, enough doubted his actions so as to threaten to lead the Confederates into civil war. After the failure of his second excommunication, Rinuccini abandoned Confederate politics to focus intently on his reforming

⁷⁷ See Chapter 1 for this negotiating process.

⁷⁸ Pdraig Lenihan notes the two overwhelming Confederate defeats of 1647, one at Knocknuss and the other at Dungan's Hill as the decisive battles of the decade, and the ones from which the Confederation could never recover. See [His Diss. Here](#)

⁷⁹ Inchquin vacillated between the royalist and Parliamentary sides during the decade, and the peace was designed to control him and his army which was taking land in Munster despite the best efforts of the Confederate armies.

agenda for the Irish church, and left Ireland in February of 1649 fully convinced that his mission had failed.

Events quickly forced a rough settlement to the internal divisions within the Confederation. Half a year after defeating and executing Charles in England, Cromwell landed in Ireland with an army theologically and technologically equipped to inflict retribution on Catholic Ireland for its support of the king and for the long list of atrocities the Parliamentary supporters believed had been inflicted on Irish Protestants since 1641. The hasty alliance of the remaining Catholic forces and the royalist armies could not match this combination of motivation and effectiveness, and in short order the Parliamentary armies ravaged their way across the island, applying on a grander scale the brutality and thoroughness that English forces had used to put down Irish rebellions since the start of the Reformation.

Rinuccini's Background and the Instructions for his Mission

Rinuccini strove for the majesty and authority of the Church and the Holy See over all other interests. Significantly, his experience was in the continental Church, and not in the Irish Church. He naturally brought to Ireland all of his experiences as a bishop in Italy, moving in circles of power in the Church and dealing with Catholic monarchs almost as an equal. His experience as a Catholic leader took place in a Church far different from the one experienced by the Catholics of Ireland, and this difference is the key point over which he and the Old English split. Rinuccini's ecclesiastical experiences in Fermo (Italy), the Vatican, and in France in the months before leaving for Ireland, better fit the typical definitions of Counter Reformation Catholicism than did the experiences of those in the Irish Church.

As a representative of the pope, Rinuccini understood that his rank in the Church was exalted. Rinuccini saw deference and respect paid to himself as minister of the Pope as part of

the proper veneration of the Holy See. Before his arrival in Ireland, while traveling through Europe, he met with many dignitaries, both of the Church and of temporal principalities. The temporal leaders, including the Doge of Venice and even the King (Louis XIV) and Queen of France paid him respect which the Nuncio considered proper and fitting for his place. When Rinuccini came into the presence of the King and Queen, “the Queen rose to her feet, as did her two young sons, the King at the same time uncovering his head.⁸⁰” The writer of the account (the Dean of Fermo) used the term “customary” to describe the ritualized actions that took place. This was the treatment Rinuccini expected, and it was the treatment he received in Europe in the months leading up to his arrival in Ireland.

The decrees of the Council of Trent shaped the church of Rinuccini’s Italy. He was a Tridentine bishop in every sense of the term, implementing the spirit and letter of the reforms of that council in his diocese of Fermo.⁸¹ In line with the Council, Rinuccini believed that the bishop was the essential authority within the Church whose role was correcting and strengthening the Church regionally and locally.⁸² Tridentine bishops tried to bring a level of uniformity to a church emerging from the medieval tendencies of eclectic and pluralistic Catholic practice⁸³. Rinuccini was just such a bishop, firmly devoted to the hierarchy and the Holy See, and recognizing his status first as archbishop of Fermo, and later as the nuncio to Ireland.

Tridentine bishops and their supporters hoped to galvanize the Church to combat Protestantism and other threats to the faith. Unifying all the faithful under bishops who in turn were under the Holy Father would help a bulwark against the advance of Protestantism. In

⁸⁰ Massari 34

⁸¹ For Rinuccini’s intellectual background and ecclesiastical priorities see Tadhg O hAnnrachain “Far from *Terra Firma*” (1995)

⁸² John Bossy “The Counter-Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe” in Past and Present no. 47 (1970), 51-70

light of this, improving clerical morality, standardizing worship, and strengthening the hierarchy had the double benefit of improving the worship of God and holding the line against Protestantism. In addition to a Tridentine motivation, the movement later called the Counter Reformation often recognized the importance of militancy and warfare for achieving religious ends. The Thirty Years War was in its last decade when the Irish Rebellion of 1641 began. With some exceptions, the lines of battle in the Holy Roman Empire cut along religious divisions. When Catholic princes held territory, Catholicism became the religion of the land, and when Protestants held the land, Catholicism was usually outlawed. The military successes of Catholic armies became victories for the faith, as the force of arms allowed Catholicism to advance or to hold ground.

Rinuccini actively followed military events in the Thirty Years War. More importantly, he placed Ireland in the context of the rest of European events. In 1645, before his arrival in Ireland, Rinuccini heard of a victory won by the Confederate forces in Ireland, and he was eager to get to Ireland so “as to have certain news of these successes, so much to be desired at the present conjuncture, when heresy is more triumphant than ever in Germany, and the Holy faith itself grows pale at the threats of the Turk”⁸⁴. Rinuccini’s spirits rose and fell with the successes and defeats of forces in Catholic Europe against Protestants and Turkish forces⁸⁵. Clearly he supported the use of force on the continent to advance religion. In light of this, he came to Ireland well stocked with arms, ammunition and supplies as well as money to continue the war⁸⁶. Clearly, his mission was not simply to advise the Confederates, but also to usher across the channel the means of fighting the enemy.

⁸³ *ibid.* 53 Jean Delumeau in Catholicism from Luther to Voltaire advances the argument that the crusade against medieval Catholic plurality and widespread paganism was actually the key undertaking of Tridentine Catholicism.

⁸⁴ Reports on the State of Ireland. 8

More than any other source, the instructions Rinuccini received from the Pope prior to his arrival in Ireland fashioned his perceptions of the situation in Ireland and spelled out for him the nature of his dual mission to the island. These instructions laid out what the Pope hoped Rinuccini would accomplish in Ireland. Prominent among them was to accomplish the “strict observance of the decrees of the holy Council of Trent” by the Church in Ireland⁸⁷. The Catholic Church in Ireland was by no means ignorant of the Council, but enforcing the decrees of the Council had been difficult, and monitoring from Rome almost impossible, because of the English Protestant domination of the land. For this reason, Rinuccini saw Irish Catholicism as a “primitive and persecuted church”⁸⁸. In September of 1645, before his arrival in Ireland, he reported back to Cardinal Pamphili on his desire to enforce the decrees of Trent and his desire to induce the “people to maintain a filial reverence to the Supreme Chair”⁸⁹. Even after his arrival, when he discovered the true state of affairs in Ireland and became mired in the factionalism in the Confederation, he still pursued the goal of the recognition of Trent by the Irish Church⁹⁰. This other mission of Rinuccini overlapped with his mission of aiding the Confederates. He wanted to aid them to aid Catholicism, but specifically to further the *type* of Catholicism he tried to bring to Ireland.

The Papal instructions first laid out a brief history of Stuart Ireland, focusing mostly on the state of the Catholic Church and what Rinuccini should do to strengthen this institution. The Pope made clear to Rinuccini that his objective for the Confederation was the security of the Catholic religion in all of Ireland, and nothing less. He warned him against supporting any

⁸⁵ *ibid.* 56, 92

⁸⁶ 155 Massari, “My Irish Campaign” Catholic Bulletin 1916-1922

⁸⁷ xli The Embassy in Ireland, 1645-49 by G. B. Rinuccini, transl. by Annie Hutton Dublin 1878 This is a collection of Rinuccini’s letters compiled by the secretary of the Rinuccini Library

⁸⁸ *ibid.* 237

⁸⁹ *ibid.* 62

⁹⁰ *ibid.* 128 “Report on the State of Ireland” March 1, 1646

halfway accords that did not include security for religion, saying that such a peace would be “a source of disgrace and shame”⁹¹. Also, the Pope made clear that security for religion did not just mean a promise from the king to settle religious issues in the future, but rather required binding legislation supported by the force of a Catholic army. Innocent supported the idea of sending a Catholic army to fight in England, but not under the terms that the King and Ormonde would like. His idea was to send a strong force to England (not less than ten to twelve thousand men), strong enough that neither the royalist armies nor the Parliamentary armies could defeat it immediately or ignore it⁹².

With this army as a blunt bargaining instrument, the Pope hoped the Irish Catholics could win religious concessions from the king, and could also see to the plight of English Catholics, a heavily persecuted group that had suffered since the days of the Tudors. Of course, the Pope went to some length to spell out how the Irish Catholics should never lose their obedience to the king, and that this army would be answerable only to the king, but clearly, the king’s control would be merely nominal given that the army would be too big for his own forces to defeat. Part of an accord between the Catholics and the King needed to include the occupation of “all the fortresses in Ireland...(by) English and Irish Catholics, because without some such pledge, their Majesties’ promises can not be depended on.”⁹³

The reason why such measures were necessary was because the king had violated the trust of so many of his supporters in the past. The Pope referenced Charles’ allowance of Wentworth’s execution, and his repudiation of promises made to the French king.⁹⁴ In spite of this, Innocent strongly cautioned Rinuccini against doing anything to weaken the loyalty of the

⁹¹xlviiii Innocent’s instructions from Emb. Ireland

⁹²lix Memorandum to Rinuccini from Innocent X from Emb. Ireland

⁹³lxiii ibid

Confederates to the king, and especially wanted him to snuff out any talk of political separation from the king⁹⁵. If Rinuccini were to enter the Confederation advocating anything other than loyalty to Charles, he would have alienated the royalists in the Catholic cause in England, driven a wedge between moderate royalist Protestants and royalist Catholics, and made the Pope appear as one who sought to violate the realm of temporal authority⁹⁶. All of these would have destroyed the chances of the Catholic forces. In addition, any hint of Catholic disloyalty would have further alienated Charles from his Catholic subjects and supporters in Ireland. At the end of his Memorandum to Rinuccini, Innocent revealed a hope for “the conversion of the whole kingdom”, meaning a return of the English kingdom to the Catholic fold⁹⁷. The way to accomplish this lofty goal was not through alienating the Catholics from the temporal power, but rather through making Catholicism appealing to the temporal authorities.

Rinuccini tried to take both of these warnings seriously, but did a better job of the first (being wary of Charles’ promises) than of the second (instilling loyalty among the Confederates to the king). Early on, Rinuccini admitted his wariness about sending an army to fight for the king, though he did admit that such an army would be useful for keeping Charles honest to his promises⁹⁸. In general, Rinuccini had little respect for Charles, referring to him frequently as a “heretic prince”⁹⁹. In spite of his dislike of the king, however, Rinuccini would later make no opposition to a plan to send soldiers to aid the king in February of 1646 “to show that the Pope

⁹⁴ Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland was tried and executed by Parliament in 1641 for his policies in Ireland, which were under the direction of the king. Charles did not even halt his trial, and, in fact, signed his execution warrant.

⁹⁵lxi Memorandum to Rinuccini from Innocent X from Emb. Ireland

⁹⁶ The number of “sincere royalists” in the Confederation is hard to enumerate. All claimed ultimate allegiance to Charles, but as the previous chapter noted, that allegiance did little to stop them from violating his rights in Ireland repeatedly in the name of the king’s best interest.

⁹⁷lxiv Memorandum to Rinuccini from Innocent X from Emb. Ireland

⁹⁸ 38 Response to the Requests of Digby, July 21, 1645

⁹⁹ 39, 103 Emb. Ireland

really wishes to assist His Majesty, a necessary point to keep constantly in view”¹⁰⁰. This acquiescence to such aid for the king stemmed not from a sincere care for the king’s cause, but rather from the need to maintain the appearance of supporting the king.

In actuality, Rinuccini was not certain that the victory of Charles over the Parliamentary forces would be in the best interests of the Catholic Confederation. In his 1646 Report on the State of Ireland sent back to the Vatican, he concluded:

“Therefore I am disposed to believe that in considering the subject of religion, which grows and is purified by opposition, the destruction of the King would be more useful to the Irish. In this case, a union of the whole people to resist the forces of Parliament would immediately follow, and by choosing a Catholic Chief or Viceroy from among themselves, they would establish according to their own views all ecclesiastical affairs, without danger of being molested in the execution of their designs by the pretensions of the Protestants or their adherents.”¹⁰¹

Rinuccini wrote that a union between King and Parliament against the Confederates (an event feared by some Confederates) would not bother him at all, and in fact would make his mission in Ireland easier. Such a move would clean up the messy religious divisions that confused the conflict in Ireland. Catholics would fall on one side, Protestants on the other, and every combatant would know exactly where he stood. The Princes of Catholic Europe and the Church would come to the aid of the Confederation, and Rinuccini’s tasks would become simpler in many ways. These scenarios represented Rinuccini’s true desires for the progress of his Irish

¹⁰⁰ 120 Rinuccini to Pamphili, February 1646

¹⁰¹ 146 Report on the State of Ireland

mission, in keeping with his general belief that “the religious conditions can only be established by arms and by ourselves.¹⁰²”

Political, Ethnic, and Religious Factionalism within the Confederation

While the instructions from the Pope tempered Rinuccini’s actions towards the king, Innocent did nothing to restrain Rinuccini’s dislike for the arch-nemesis of his Irish mission, James Butler, Marquis of Ormonde, Viceroy and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. This intense dislike for Ormonde drove a permanent wedge between Rinuccini and the faction of Ormonde’s kinsmen (labeled “Ormondists” in the literature) who were more apt to trust the Viceroy than were other members of the Confederation. This wedge would separate the most powerful individual from the most powerful group within the Catholic camp, and became the single most important tension that would drive the Confederacy apart. It is important to note, however, that solely Rinuccini did not cause conflicts between Ormonde and members of the Confederation: these conflicts preceded his arrival. Nor was this the only tension at work. Rampant factionalism plagued the clerical community as clerics split along ethnic and political lines and also along the lines of order and position in the hierarchy.

In his instructions, Innocent commented on the “arts of the Marquis of Ormonde, the present Viceroy, a Protestant, who, although Irish, will never yield, save by force, to the wishes of the Catholics, but, by gaining time, hopes to create dissensions (*sic*) amongst them, and to wean them from the common cause”¹⁰³. This is the only major discussion of Ormonde in the instructions to Rinuccini, and Rinuccini made little mention of the Marquis in his letters before his arrival in Ireland. From Rinuccini’s correspondence, then, it is not possible to establish the

¹⁰² 156 Rinuccini to Pamphili April 6 1646

¹⁰³ xlviiii Instructions from Innocent to Rinuccini from Emb. Ireland

nuncio's position on the Viceroy, other than to assume that Rinuccini planned to be wary of him because of the Pope's instructions to that effect.

The Dean of Fermo, Monsignor Massari, who served as Rinuccini's closest aid and agent during the Irish mission, compiled an account some years later of his experiences in Ireland in the last half of the 1640s. As a confidant and admirer of the nuncio, Massari probably held few views not in accord with those of the nuncio. Massari's account of the nuncio's trials and tribulations with the Confederation all point to the villainous scheming of the heretic Marquis as the root cause of the downfall of the Confederation. At each turn of events, Ormonde lay in wait to foil the plans of the Catholics. Massari put Ormonde as the villain in events of 1645. The condemnation of Ormonde began in earnest in 1646, in the days leading up to the publication of the peace accord. By the end of his stay in Ireland, Rinuccini saw Ormonde behind every move against his objectives for the Confederates. By the time Massari wrote his chronicle, the demonization of Ormonde was the standard tool for explaining the failure of the Confederation from the perspective of the nuncio/clerical faction.¹⁰⁴ Given that Rinuccini's correspondence composed before his arrival in 1645 made little mention of Ormonde, Massari no doubt filled in Ormonde's role in events taking place before the nuncio's arrival. Still, the increasing dislike and eventual hatred of Ormonde by Rinuccini was a vital theme of his mission, and one which goes far to explain his falling out with the Old English faction in the Confederation.

The conflict between Ormonde and Rinuccini was not a personal battle between two men as much as it was a conflict over what Ormonde represented. On the most basic level, the Old English were willing to trust Ormonde as a peer and kinsman, while Rinuccini, being neither an Old English lord nor a member of the Butler family, saw him merely as another Protestant heretic. The terms of the treaties negotiated between the Old English and Ormonde included the

provision that Ormonde would retain his current position overseeing all of Ireland. The issue of the religion of the Lord Lieutenant, though not expressed explicitly, was in reality a major sticking point between the position of the Old English and that of Rinuccini.

For Rinuccini, leaving Ireland in the hands of a Protestant official would be a defeat in the context of his continental experience. A Catholic prince in Europe would never leave territory in the hands of a Protestant underling, nor would he consider Catholicism secure in an area ruled by a Protestant prince. Rinuccini showed his true inclinations above, in his report back to Rome, when he expressed a secret longing for a chance to pit Catholics against Protestants in a clearer conflict that would not force him to support the Protestant king of England. Rinuccini constantly complained that “security for religion” was lacking in the agreements made by the negotiators with Ormonde, and this hints at the inadequacy of allowing Ormonde to retain his position over the people of Ireland. The nuncio wished that the Confederate Catholics would abandon Ormonde and choose a Catholic Viceroy. Rinuccini’s choice for the position was the Earl of Glamorgan, a Welsh royalist, whose main qualification was his Catholicism.¹⁰⁵ In light of Ormonde’s greater popularity with the Old English leaders of the Confederation, Rinuccini also advised Ormonde to convert to Catholicism.¹⁰⁶ Clearly, the issue of the Viceroy’s religion drove a wedge between the Old English who supported Ormonde and the nuncio.

While Rinuccini eventually became the primary spokesman for those opposing Ormonde, this opposition group neither began with him nor supported him in every aspect of his mission. After two weeks at the Confederate headquarters in Kilkenny, Rinuccini wrote that “great differences of opinion appear every day, weariness, self-interest, want of money, and respect for

¹⁰⁴ See Nicholas French: “Unkinde Deserter”

¹⁰⁵ Rinuccini to Pamphili, October 4 1646

the King incline many to peace...the greater part of the clergy, those who have no confidence in the King and those who are convinced that if the dissensions among the commanders could be allayed, it would be easy to expel the enemy from the whole kingdom, incline to war"¹⁰⁷.

Though committed to remaining neutral for as long as he can, Rinuccini noted soon after his arrival a group that might be receptive to his ideas. This group consisted of "the ecclesiastical party, all the members belonging to the old Irish families, and the opponents (who are not a few) of the Ormonde faction"¹⁰⁸.

The specifics of this group yield very valuable insights into the nature of the Confederation around the beginning of spring, 1646. Rinuccini's ability to distinguish an "ecclesiastical party" suggests that the unity between the lay and clerical members of the Confederation, evident in 1642, had broken down over the intervening years. Also, his identification of "old Irish families" indicates that the Confederation's ban of the terms "old and ancient Irish" only united the ethnic groups on the surface, while in fact the distinctions between ethnic groups were still valid for categorizing members of the Confederation.

Rinuccini described those members who supported Ormonde, and noted that "the head of the opposite faction is Viscount Muskerry, a brother-in-law of Ormonde, supported by the Moungarret and Butler families with their adherents and followers"¹⁰⁹. He does not use the term "Old English" or "New Irish" as a term synonymous with support for Ormonde. The easy division of Confederates into an Ormondist faction of Old English against an Irish faction backed by the clergy is not at all apparent from Rinuccini's impression. Irish members may tend towards the clergy's position, and Ormonde's faction, being composed of his relatives, may take

¹⁰⁶ Rinuccini to Pamphili, March 21 1646

¹⁰⁷ 93 Rinuccini to Pamphili, November 28, 1645

¹⁰⁸ 117 Rinuccini to Pamphili Feb 13, 1646

¹⁰⁹ 119 Rinuccini to Pamphili Feb 21, 1646

on an Old English flavor¹¹⁰, but this is a far more limited statement than claiming that the Confederation split on definable ethnic differences. The character of the Confederation was far more complicated than this.

Rinuccini's observations also provide vital evidence of a clerical faction in existence *before* his arrival in Ireland, a faction opposed to the wishes of Ormonde and the direction of the peace process in 1646. This undermines the argument that Rinuccini created a faction opposed to the Ormonde faction. It is true, however, that Rinuccini became the leader of this faction in 1646, especially when he was elected President of the Supreme Council in September 1646. after the rejection of the Ormonde peace and while the supporters of the Viceroy were in retreat. Rinuccini's relationship with the Catholic clergy of Ireland, however, was not uniformly congenial. Calling the clerical faction and its supporters "nuncioists" as some chroniclers have done to highlight their connection with the nuncio overlooks the conflicts between the clergy and Rinuccini, and among the clergy themselves.

Massari noted how Rinuccini attempted to stay out of the conflict between the supporters of Ormonde and the clergy that was reaching its climax in the first months of his stay in Ireland. While Ormonde and the negotiators for the Confederates moved towards a peace 1645-6, the Congregation of the Clergy was meeting continually and threatening the negotiators and any other Confederates with excommunication should they implement a peace without clear safeguards for religion. But, as Massari pointed out, Rinuccini was drawn into the conflict by implication:

"During all this the Nuncio had resolved to take no part in the deliberations of the Congregation and had made this resolution known both in writing and by word of mouth

¹¹⁰ It is important to note that Viscount Muskerry was of clear Gaelic Irish extraction, further limiting the relevance of splitting the Confederates simply along ethnic lines.

to the clergy...He persisted in his refusal: asking them to bear in mind that whatever would be done by the bishops and clergy would be imputed to him for dishonest purposes, and that he was, therefore, unwilling to take part in the proceedings. What he predicted took place; for the proceedings were subsequently attributed to him just as much as if the whole transaction had been arranged and carried out not only by his inspiration but by force and pressure brought to bear on the congregation."¹¹¹

The nuncio's reluctance to direct clerical policy at first appears also in his own letters. As Rinuccini feared, the clergy wanted to use his office and rank to add credibility to their side. Eventually, he came more and more to participate in the meetings of the clergy and advise them on what courses to take.

The coalition of bishops, clergy, and the nuncio was initially very successful and cohesive, but over time the resolve of this group weakened. One bishop (Thomas Dease of Meath) was condemned early on by the Confederates in 1642 for not supporting the synod of the clergy that met at Trim to begin the process of forming the Confederation. Dease continued to be a problem for Rinuccini later on, opposing the nuncio in favor of the Ormonde faction. In July 1648, Rinuccini heard an erroneous report announcing Dease's death, and felt relief at being rid of the man. Later, however, he learned the truth, and in exasperation wrote that the "bishop of Meath did not die but has remained on earth to be a trial to all good men"¹¹². Rinuccini's troubles with Dease were probably his worst relationship with any one bishop, but his dealings with the rest were often far from congenial.

On the surface, it seems strange that a high member of the Church like Rinuccini should have trouble gaining acceptance from members of the clergy. The differences between the

¹¹¹ 398 Massari, "My Irish Campaign"

¹¹² 407 Rinuccini to Panzirolo Aug. 3, 1648

nuncio and members of the clergy ran along a number of lines. One major area of conflict was Confederate military and political policy. Just as politics and familial relations affected the factions among the lay Confederates, so too would they have affected the clergy. An Old English bishop was still Old English, and his office may or may not have broadened his views beyond that of his family. A political/ethnic split existed among the clergy at least since 1618, when the Catholic hierarchy began to be restored in Ireland¹¹³, and no doubt stretched back well before that time. Old English bishops tended to favor a strong relationship with the king and the Irish government to maintain the tacit toleration of Catholicism. This group had the backing of the Jesuits, the Capuchins, and the other orders in Ireland (save the Franciscans). The Franciscans, with their particular ministry to the native Irish, were allied with bishops with closer ties to continental Catholicism, and who favored schemes to bring Spanish forces into Ireland for the purposes of establishing a Catholic nation¹¹⁴.

The alliance of Old English Catholics and the Jesuits had started soon after the first Jesuit came to Ireland, in 1561. David Wolfe, S.J., spent a brief period of time in Ireland in a largely unsuccessful mission that included imprisonment at the hands of English authorities, a common fate for most prominent and identifiable Irish Catholic clergy who ventured into Ireland. The Jesuits' ministry soon centered on the families of the Pale—the Old English. The first Jesuits like Wolfe had come to favor military action to oust Protestantism, but later ones cooled on the idea, as did Popes like Clement VIII.¹¹⁵ Diplomacy and negotiation became the primary means of achieving religious aims under Clement VIII, and the Jesuits came to favor this approach.

¹¹³ Since the Tudor days, and before 1618, Catholic bishops were generally not to be found in Ireland because of the severe punishment for higher ecclesiastics of the outlawed faith. After 1618, the Church reappointed bishops and bishops began residing in their Sees.

¹¹⁴ 204 Kearney This discussion presented here certainly overlooks many fine points of ecclesiastical politics, but it contains the essential points of the period of 1618-1640

¹¹⁵ 42, Jones, Frederick M. C.S.S.R. The Counter Reformation from A History of Irish Catholicism ed. Patrick J. Corish, vol. 3 #3 Gill and Son. Dublin: 1967

Their relationship with the Old English enhanced this: the Old English had ethnic, and, at that time, political, ties to the crown. This attitude of the Jesuits and the Old English was demonstrated clearly in O'Neill's rebellion of the 1590s, the best chance of Irish success before the 1640s, when both groups reacted coolly to overtures from the rebels to join with them.¹¹⁶ Rinuccini favored military means for accomplishing his religious objectives. This explains why the Jesuits and many of the Old English, with their longstanding resistance to such means, reacted negatively to his presence. It also explains why, in 1649 after leaving Ireland in disgust, Rinuccini wrote to the General of the Jesuits and complained about the Jesuits who had "declared themselves the heads and advisers of the opposition", meaning that they were providing spiritual sanction for Ormonde's supporters to ignore the authority of the nuncio.¹¹⁷ In summing up the failure of his mission, Rinuccini noted that "on Father Malone [a noted Jesuit who supported the Old English] and his associates will lie the greater share of the blame."¹¹⁸

Historians who use the term "clerical party" to describe the group of clergy generally opposed to the supporters of Ormonde leave an impression of greater uniformity among the clergy than what really existed. Rinuccini certainly realized the need for unity among the clergy and the degree to which it was lacking when he arrived in 1645¹¹⁹. In addition to ethnic and political divisions, the clerical faction also suffered from the usual conflict between secular and religious members of the clergy that occurred throughout Church history¹²⁰. Religious orders sometimes competed with each other in the church, and commonly caused tensions between

¹¹⁶ 44, Jones.

¹¹⁷ 474 Rinuccini to General of the Jesuits. May 19, 1649

¹¹⁸ 475 *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ 128 Report on the State of Ireland from Emb. Ireland

¹²⁰ Religious clergy belong to orders (Franciscans, Jesuits, Dominicans) while secular clergy do not, as they are assigned to particular diocese. Because the regulars followed different rules, wore different clothing, and sometimes even said a different Mass (the Dominican rite, *per se*) some members of the Church secular hierarchy questioned sought to rein them in and make them conform to the general rules of the Church that applied to all of the clergy.

members of their order and the secular clergy in a particular area. The central issue was authority. The regular clergy, living under their particular rule and answering to their Superior, sometimes chafed at obeying the local (usually secular) bishop, though the bishop nominally had control.

Rinuccini's arrival brought to the fore another tension among the clergy. He sought to increase the uniformity of clerical standards and augment the authority of the bishop in his see. Some of the principal targets of Tridentine Reform were the older regular orders who needed to be brought under the control of local bishops¹²¹. The principles of the Council of Trent had filtered into Ireland before Rinuccini, but, as noted before, the Irish bishops were generally absent from their sees before 1618 and therefore unable to regulate first hand in their diocese. As noted before with the case of David Wolfe, imprisonment was common for identifiable Catholic clergy, resulting in the scarcity of higher clergy. The return of bishops and the opportunity (afforded by the Confederate's military successes) for Rinuccini and others to attempt the implementation of Trent in Ireland brought to the Irish Church conflicts that had surfaced decades before in the continental Church.

It was not until the Confederation's successes against Protestant forces that the decrees of Trent could become a major issue. When English Protestants dominated in an area, as they did in much of Ireland save during the years of the Confederation, intra-Catholic disputes took on less importance because of the common cause of survival and the struggle to maintain even the minimums of faith (Mass and the Sacraments). When the Catholics retook an area, however, they could think about how parishes would be set up, which bishops would preside in the new diocese, and generally what kind of Catholicism they would implement. Regulars resented increased secular control once the Confederates won back an area for Catholicism. As the nuts

and bolts of the pre-1641 underground Church, the regulars had manned the front lines of the ecclesiastical war. Now that areas fell back into Catholic hands, secular bishops tried to claim powers not previously exercised because of the reality of English control over the land and the penal laws against Catholicism. Rinuccini entered this situation fully promoting Trent against the regulars in those areas where they conflicted. He accused many of the regulars of actually fearing a “peace favorable to religion” because it would open the door of increased episcopal scrutiny and force them to change their ways¹²². Clearly, he favored the assertion of control by bishops, whether secular or regular in their initial calling, as long as they adhered to the wishes of the Pope and the instructions of Trent.

Overlapping loyalties account for the number of bishops who moved from one position to another over the course of the Confederation. For example, a Franciscan cleric might favor continuing the war or securing a peace with solid assurances for religion and might be opposed to the Ormondist/Old English faction. This would lead him towards Rinuccini’s position on military/political affairs. As a Franciscan, however, he would likely resent some of the implications of the Council of Trent, the decrees of which Rinuccini endeavored to implement. An individual cleric would have to weigh priorities between the policy for the Confederation he favored and the structure of Church he endorsed. It is no wonder that dissension and disorganization plagued the clerical faction after its first successes in 1646¹²³.

Rinuccini’s mission was one distinct from that of any other cleric in Ireland. He desired to push ahead equally with all parts of his agenda, not weighing military matters above ecclesiastical reforms. He left Ireland with few friends in the Irish Church, and he noted how

¹²¹ Kearney 206

¹²² Report on the State of Ireland from Emb. Ireland

¹²³ Kearney notes that the initial awe created by Rinuccini’s arrival quelled dissension among the clergy, but, when Rinuccini’s plans ran into trouble, the tensions erupted again. Also, Rinuccini’s zeal to create and fill

only five bishops were ever firmly behind him throughout his mission¹²⁴. These five were new bishops, most likely either appointed by the recommendation of Rinuccini or sympathetic to his mission. Therefore, they were more likely to follow his lead than the lead of the older bishops. Sometimes, Rinuccini puts the numbers of bishops who support him at seventeen, and at other times it seems fewer than five do¹²⁵. These inconsistencies point out the tenuous nature of the clerical faction. Perhaps it is not even rightly called a faction at all. "Faction" describes accurately the solidarity of the first months of Rinuccini's mission, but the defections that plagued his cause over the next three years make discerning a cohesive clerical faction by the end of his mission impossible.

Conclusion

The primary focus of this chapter has been to examine the role of intra-religious disputes among the Confederates and to analyze the increase of factionalism following the arrival of Rinuccini. By the time Rinuccini arrived, the Old English were following their second strategy, that of negotiating with the king, much to the dismay of many in the newly forming clerical faction. They were negotiating with Ormonde to aid Charles in return for promises of religious concessions. Pursuing this strategy around 1645 put the Old English on a collision course with Rinuccini, newly arrived in Ireland and fresh from the heart of Catholicism in Italy and France. His mission was strengthening Catholicism, which he intended to do by supporting an expanded war against Protestantism, and implementing the reforms of Trent through a style of Catholicism

new bishoprics ended up with supporters of the Ormonde faction filling many of them, which later hamstrung his efforts.

¹²⁴ 426 Rinuccini to Panzirolo 11 Nov. 1648 from Emb. Ireland

¹²⁵ 429 Instructions to Father Giuseppe Arcamoni from Emb. Ireland

never before found in an Irish church that had for so long been underground due to English oppression.

Ultimately, recognizing and understanding this dual strategy is key for explaining the course of factional conflict in the Confederation. Analyzing an intra-religious conflict such as that which hamstrung the Confederation requires first delineating the religious positions among the Catholics in the Confederation and then explaining how these positions conflict, as has been done in here. All “parties” (the Old English, Rinuccini, the religious orders, the lower secular clergy and the higher secular clergy) generally strove for the advancement of Catholicism, but it was for different forms of Catholicism. Tensions among the different factions of lay and clerical Confederates already existed prior to 1645: Rinuccini’s arrival heightened these rather than created them. His arrival strengthened war advocates against treaty advocates, Tridentine reformers against opponents (like many religious), and secular bishops against the religious. Unfortunately, those of the first groups (war advocates, Tridentine reformers, and secular bishops) did not fit into one party, because not all Tridentine reformers were war advocates, nor were all secular bishops, as many adhered to the Old English way of thinking. The particular and unique objectives of Rinuccini’s mission definitely strengthened particular groups against others, but the net result was more factionalism, not more harmony. As Rinuccini would not sacrifice one aspect of his mission to forge unity on another, the end of his mission naturally found him with few supporters, and his departure marked the end for the Confederation.

Chapter III: The Importance of the Confederation for Counter-Reformation Historiography

Introduction

The importance of the 1640s for Irish history of the seventeenth century cannot be overstated. It is the most important decade, and the Confederation that fits within its boundaries is the most remarkable development of early modern Irish history. Between the start of the English Reformation in the mid-sixteenth century until the twentieth century, the only period of all Catholic native government for the majority of Ireland was that of the Confederation. In spite of this, the Confederation has generated a surprisingly small body of secondary literature. Some explanation for this might be found in the complexity of the issues and the dispersion of the sources necessary to tackle a topic in the 1640s. Additionally, the destruction of many Confederate documents in the eighteenth and twentieth centuries left gaps in the chronology of events that other sources can only partially fill. The importance of the Confederation for constitutional and legal innovation has received some attention¹²⁶, as has the Irish Rebellion of 1641 by itself.¹²⁷

The area overlooked to date is the value of the Confederation to the study of the early-modern Irish Catholic Church. As with all post-Tridentine Catholic topics, the dominant issues examined deal with the Counter Reformation. Historians generally use the term Counter Reformation in two ways, first as a series of changes within the Church in the sixteenth century and second as a period of time in which these changes dominated the objectives of the Church. Like all areas of historical studies, historians are constantly refashioning and improving their interpretations and understandings of this period for Continental Europe. Unfortunately, those authors writing on the Counter Reformation in Ireland are out of step with the developments in

¹²⁶ See Donal Cregan "The Confederation of Kilkenny" from The Irish Parliamentary Tradition ed. Brian Farrell (Gill and Macmillan: Dublin 1973) 102-115

the continental literature. In addition, the Confederation has received so little attention from these authors that they are missing perhaps the best opportunity available to analyze Irish Catholicism by the middle of the seventeenth century. By doing this, they fail to realize the great potential that exists for comparative religious history by recognizing the uniqueness of the Irish situation from the rest of continental Catholicism.

The Historiography of the Continental Counter-Reformation

The general historiography of the continental Counter Reformation is primarily a discussion on the nature and pace of this religious movement. The debate over “Catholic Reform” versus “Counter Reformation” has largely subsided as most authors acknowledge the presence of both tendencies within early-modern Catholicism. The historiography of the last forty years has shown increasing willingness to dispense with “Counter Reformation” as much more than a rough indicator of the subject matter of a particular text. This trend began in earnest under the influence of H. Outram Evennett who argued that the limitations of the term were too great and that any use of it must occur with care.¹²⁸ This critique focused on the then-new insight that far more was occurring within the Church and within Catholic Europe than merely the defense of the faith against Protestantism. John Olin contributed vitally to the idea of “pre-Reformation” Catholic reform, and linked many of the sixteenth-century Catholic reforms (previously seen as mere reactions to Protestantism) to fifteenth-century (and earlier) origins.¹²⁹ The trend of reinterpreting the events of the Counter Reformation took a new turn with Jean Delumeau’s controversial monograph in the late seventies that placed the Counter Reformation and the Protestant Reformation as two movements which, more than anything else, sought the

¹²⁷ Perceval-Maxwell, Michael. The Outbreak of the Irish Rebellion of 1641. (Montreal, 1994)

¹²⁸ H. Outram Evennett. The Spirit of the Counter-Reformation (Cambridge 1968)

initial Christianization of much of Europe, which retained many pagan influences long after Trent and Luther¹³⁰.

While Delumeau's thesis has by no means garnered universal support, it is a pivotal argument for the transition from a rigid view of a reactionary Counter Reformation towards an understanding of the more complex and nuanced reality of the goals of Catholic leaders and the Church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Perhaps the best expression of this new trend in interpretation came two decades after Delumeau's book. Martin Jones states clearly that "the term 'Counter Reformation' cannot not be used without major qualification", and offers it as the title for his book only because of its longstanding presence in the literature¹³¹. Without arguing the merits of titling a book with a term the author thinks has little worth, it is clear that the direction pursued by Jones represents the one of the latest contributions in the direction first started by Evennett.

In the introductory section to the latest book on early-modern Catholicism, The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770 (1998)¹³², Dr. R. Po-Chia Hsia notes some of the progress of the changing historiography but makes little new addition to these trends. In the title of his book, he consciously avoids using the term Counter-Reformation, yet he justifies this avoidance by claiming that "Catholic Renewal" incorporates "the concepts 'Catholic Reform' and 'Counter Reformation'", without defining precisely what he means by either of these terms. Essentially,

¹²⁹ John Olin and others push the date back towards Cardinal Ximenes and reforms in Spain of the fifteenth century. See Olin's The Catholic Reformation: Savanarola to Ignatius Loyola (New York, 1969) and Catholic Reform: From Cardinal Ximenes to the Council of Trent 1495-1563 (New York, 1990)

¹³⁰ Jean Delumeau Catholicism from Luther to Voltaire: a New View of the Counter Reformation (London 1977)

¹³¹ Martin D. W. Jones. The Counter Reformation (Cambridge 1995)

¹³² Hsia, R. Po-Chia. The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770. (Cambridge, 1998). Hsia's book also contains two large errors concerning the Confederation. The first is the assertion that Owen Roe O'Neill and Thomas Preston were the leaders of the Irish Rebellion of 1641 (pg. 86-91). Neither man was actually present in Ireland until midway through the following year, and only joined the Confederation at that point. Also, he called

while Dr. Hsia notes the hazards of the term “Counter Reformation” in his introduction, his own contribution to the literature does little to solve the problem. In spite of this, however, a clear trend away from the term “Counter Reformation” and towards a more comprehensive understanding of early-modern Catholicism is evident in the secondary sources.

The Historiography of the Irish Church and the Counter Reformation:

The secondary literature on Irish Catholicism has largely neglected the Confederation, and is marked by a careless and inconsistent use of the term “Counter Reformation”. Even though the general historiography on continental Catholicism has limited its use, Irish historiography continues to use it for trends and situations for which other authors have long since considered it inappropriate. Patrick Corish, in his survey of Irish Catholicism, devotes only two pages to the Confederation, most of which focus on the split between the Gaelic Irish and the Old English.¹³³ While this length might be appropriate for discussing only a ten-year period out of the centuries covered by his book, it is insufficient for the relative importance of this decade in the history of Irish Catholicism. In addition, Dr. Corish’s use of the term Counter Reformation raises more questions than it answers. The sections covering the Reformation of the English church until the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland use the term freely without defining precisely what it means.

For example, he notes an increasing allegiance to something called “Counter-Reformation Catholicism” throughout the last three decades of the sixteenth century.¹³⁴ He then liberally applies this term to Gaelic rebel leaders, to established Franciscans and Jesuit newcomers, and to the Old English town-dwelling communities around the Pale. According to

Rinuccini “Cardinal Rinuccini”, though he was an Archbishop and never became a Cardinal. These errors marred what was otherwise merely a disappointingly short discussion of the Confederation.

¹³³ Corish, Patrick James. The Irish Catholic Experience. (Wilmington DE. 1985)

¹³⁴ *ibid.* 67

Corish, the Irish rebel James FitzMaurice traveled to Rome in 1575 where he “grew into the Counter Reformation”.¹³⁵ FitzMaurice then returned to Ireland where he soon was killed continuing his rebellion. Corish never specifies what it means to grow into the Counter Reformation, as there is no evidence of a theological change in FitzMaurice during this process. He began as an Irish rebel leader claiming religion as his primary motivation, and after his trip to Rome he returned to continue his rebellion with the same emphasis. Perhaps FitzMaurice became more committed spiritually to the cause of Catholicism. Is this, then, what Counter Reformation Catholicism is—simply greater inspiration to fight for the faith?

Clearly, this definition does not agree with other uses of the term by Corish or by other authors. Later in the book, when describing the reaction and outcry of Old English Catholics to the execution two Catholic clergy by the government, Corish notes that “This large-scale public profession of the Catholic faith in the very capital itself irrevocably committed the Old English community to Counter-Reformation Catholicism”.¹³⁶ Here there is no rebellious or military connotation associated with the term. Corish does not explain why the commitment is not to Catholicism in general but is instead to this new form called “Counter Reformation Catholicism”. Nor does he explain here or anywhere else what this new form entails or how it differs from the old system.

The term is further confused when Corish returns to its more traditional definition, linking the Counter Reformation with the decrees of the Council of Trent and the new Jesuit order, both of which were mid-sixteenth century developments. The individuals usually associated with Counter Reformation Catholicism are the Jesuits, and Corish, when discussing the growing influence of particular Jesuit missionaries to the Pale area argues that “with these

¹³⁵ *ibid.* 76

¹³⁶ *ibid.* 97

names [the Jesuits being discussed] we are firmly and clearly dealing with the Counter-Reformation.” Again, what makes this so is never revealed. Corish uses “Jesuit” as an indicator of Counter Reformation Catholicism, implicitly including in this term the Jesuit agenda of Tridentine reform, perhaps militant defense of the faith, and unswerving devotion to the Holy See. The problem is not that Corish has linked the term Jesuit with Counter Reformation Catholicism, but rather that he has used Counter Reformation Catholicism elsewhere in the book to describe so many kinds of activities that may or may not parallel the Jesuit mission.

Not only is Corish vague as to the precise definition of “Counter-Reformation Catholicism”, he is also unclear about the progress of this religious change in Ireland through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. When does the Counter Reformation take hold in Ireland? Corish seems to give many answers to this, or perhaps no answer at all. Loosely defining what the Counter Reformation entailed necessarily inhibits answering this question accurately.

Michael Mullet, in Catholics in Britain and Ireland 1558-1829 (1998) also does not pin down a precise definition of the Counter Reformation, though he uses the term less frequently than does Corish. His preference to write of a general rejuvenation and reform of Irish Catholicism at the end of the sixteenth century is a more appropriate way of identifying the events of that period than is labeling them with the broad brush of “Counter Reformation.” To the extent that he does use that term, it is linked with Tridentine reform of the church.¹³⁷ This is a more narrow use than that of Corish, who applied the term to almost any post 1540s effort at resistance to Protestantism in Ireland. Mullet investigates the progress of Tridentine reforms through sixteenth and early seventeenth century Ireland and concludes that there were areas of progress and areas still needing reform by the 1620s. While this analysis does not answer many questions about the pace or progress of reform, it admits that it is a question for later study.

Colm Lennon, in writing on the Pale community at the end of the sixteenth century, argued that they “possessed a self-assured form of Counter Reformation Catholicism”.¹³⁸ Lennon implicitly links “Counter Reformation” to the mission of the Jesuits to the Pale and to the influence of Continental education on the youth of the Pale by pointing to these two factors as the reasons why a Counter Reformation identity developed in the Pale. Unlike Corish’s use of the term, Lennon’s has nothing to do with political or military efforts to resist Protestantism or advance Catholicism. Also writing on the English Pale community, Declan Gaffney noted the influence of Jesuit missionaries in providing the backbone of Old English resistance to the state church at the turn of the century.¹³⁹ This mission stressed religious reform and quasi-legal, non-violent forms to resist Protestantism. Historical works like these covering the area of the Pale community generally note the presence of active Jesuits as evidence of the Counter Reformation coming to the Old English.

The impression of the Counter Reformation left by this brief historiographical survey is at best unclear. In Corish’s book, several possible interpretations of the term are present, while other authors use internally consistent definitions that are never explicitly expressed, and ones which are often not in harmony with those used by others in the field. The lack of clarity in the larger field of Catholic history over the term “Counter Reformation” applies equally to the focused field of Irish history. This shortcoming in the literature will only be revealed in a comprehensive study of Irish Catholicism, one that deals directly with the events in the Confederation. Dealing with the progress of the Counter Reformation in one particular group by

¹³⁷ 69. Mullet, Michael A. Catholics in Britain and Ireland, 1558-1829. (New York, 1998)

¹³⁸ 124. Lennon, Colm. “The Rise of Recusancy Among the Dublin Patricians” in The Churches, Ireland and the Irish Sheils and Wood eds. (Worcester 1989)

¹³⁹ Gaffney, Declan. “The Practice of Religious Controversy in Dublin 1600-1641” Sheils and Wood (Worcester 1989)

itself, such as Ulster Catholics or Franciscans or the Old English of the Pale, will not run into difficulty as long as the definition of Counter Reformation is consistent throughout the study.

The Role of the Confederation

What role, then, does the Catholic Confederation of the 1640s play in this historiographical debate? The events of the 1640s both exemplify and suggest solutions to the problems associated with the terminology of Catholic history in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, primarily for Irish Catholic history but also for Catholic history in general. In the 1640s, for the first time since before the Reformation, all Catholic bishops were in residence in Ireland. newly formed and more traditional religious orders flourished, a papal nuncio operated in Ireland free from the molestation of the English government, and Catholicism was made legally acceptable and safe in lands controlled by the Confederate armies. The presence of all these conditions, made possible by the unique institution of the Confederation, makes this decade perfect for analyzing Irish Catholic history to date, focusing especially on the Counter Reformation and its nature and progress in Ireland.

The Confederation brought all of the Catholic groups in Ireland together, providing a measure of breathing room from English oppression, and the disharmony that prevailed after the arrival of Rinuccini in 1645 strongly challenges the idea that these various groups had embraced some common religious ideology known as “Counter Reformation Catholicism”. The inability of the Confederates to agree on a basic military and political policy as well as the resistance to the Tridentine reforms brought by Rinuccini some groups necessitates rethinking the present literature on the nature and the progress of the “Counter Reformation” in Ireland and on the continent.

The present study has demonstrated that the Old English pursued the right to exercise their Catholic faith in the way they saw fit as their primary goal, over and above their concern about the fortunes of the king. Rinuccini clearly put the Church before all other concerns, and favored military efforts first to eliminate Protestant threats or, barring that, to win generous concessions in bargaining and to enforce the security of Catholicism once peace was established. The Jesuits in Ireland maintained close ties to the Old English and sought to reform and revitalize Catholicism within the framework of winning concessions from the king through the traditional Old English role of appeasing the king and his ministers, such as Ormonde. The Franciscans ministered to the Gaelic Irish and were the keenest supporters of Rinuccini's war policies, though on the issue of reform they opposed the nuncio. Finally, the bishops represented a variety of positions. All but one supported the Confederation and sought to blur the ethnic distinctions that separated the Confederates, and the vast majority welcomed Rinuccini and supported his first excommunication. Individual loyalties, to kinsmen of either Old English or Gaelic Irish backgrounds or to the regular orders from which some were drawn, disagreements over the best policy for securing the faith, and a growing resentment of an Italian outsider attempting to police their sees led most to abandon the nuncio by the time he left Ireland in 1649.

This depiction of Confederate Catholicism challenges the historical literature because at some point each of the above groups has earned the descriptor "Counter Reformation" from one author or another. How an organization with as many diverse political, military, and religious objectives warrants a common adjective for their religion is inconceivable. That they all sacrificed and fought for their faith is beyond question, but the kind of faith envisioned by each was clearly unique in at least some key area.

Rinuccini's presence alone further emphasizes how Irish historiography has fallen behind the broader Counter Reformation literature. Rinuccini himself merits the title "Counter Reformation bishop", and yet he clashes with every other group in Ireland assigned that same descriptor by an author from the Irish literature. Clearly, a definitional clash exists between the two historiographies, and this can only be detrimental to those studying Ireland within the context of the continental literature.

The lesson of the Confederation for Irish Catholic history and the history of Catholicism in its broader field is that terms like "Counter Reformation" should be either abandoned or very clearly defined by authors. Rinuccini and his actions in the Confederation demonstrate that the conflation of "Counter Reformation" and "Tridentine" should be avoided. Rinuccini took very seriously the instructions to implement the decrees of Trent in Ireland, and met with significant resistance from regulars whom other authors had described as participants in the Counter Reformation. If adherence to Trent is not in fact a component of the Counter Reformation, then the terms should not be used interchangeably. The Franciscans received this label because they were the heart of the underground church outside of the Pale after the Reformation. This was, however, simply a change of tactics to a missionary position, and does not warrant a special term, especially not one with so many implications.

The resistance encountered by Rinuccini in his ecclesiastical reforms also questions the historical conclusions about the progress of the "Counter Reformation" or of Tridentine reforms in the Irish Church. That the Pope and others in Rome felt that Rinuccini needed to bring the decrees of Trent to Ireland reveals the opinion of the Church hierarchy that the Irish Church lacked these new instructions. The condition of the faith noted by Rinuccini upon arriving, though it was influenced by his biases towards the practice of faith in Tridentine Italy, strongly

suggests that these reforms had made little progress in many areas of Ireland. Irish bishops and regulars had compromised with the decrees of Trent and with the regulations for the practice of the faith, evidenced by such things as the practice of Mass in the home and the use of portable altar stones for Mass out in the countryside. Rinuccini was most angered by the reluctance to abandon these methods even when Confederate military success had liberated Churches to be used to replace the private and home-oriented worship. The Church had a particularly Irish flavor, constructed under the years of English oppression. The term “Tridentine” has limited applicability to this church.

In other cases, Counter Reformation is associated with militant defense of the faith, such as the case of James FitzMaurice, without referring to a particular form of Catholicism. Rinuccini would fit the militant aspects of this definition well, as he supported efforts in Ireland and on the continent to use arms to control areas for Catholicism. In that case, the label should not be applied broadly to the Old English or to the Jesuits in the Pale, who did not advocate the military overthrow of Protestant government in Ireland. Not applying the term to Jesuits seems illogical, however, as they are the individuals traditionally associated with this movement in the Church. Obviously, this was a branch of Jesuits who followed a different philosophy from others, such as Robert Parsons of England.

The English Catholic Parallel

The historiography of English Catholicism is a natural area from which to draw a thematic framework for analyzing the Irish Church. The body of work on Catholicism in Reformation England dwarfs the work for the same topic in Ireland simply because the general historiography of sixteenth and seventeenth century England is far broader than the historiography for that period in Ireland. An additional advantage held by English

historiography is the participation of authors in both the field of continental Catholicism and English Catholicism, giving them a very active role in contextualizing the English experience in the framework of broader continental developments¹⁴⁰. This also ensures that the English Catholic experience receives proper attention in the broader works on post-Tridentine Catholicism in a way that Irish Catholicism has yet to receive.

Much of the current framework for analyzing English Catholicism came from John Bossy (1976). Though his text stretches two centuries beyond the 1640s, it still provides a very concise and rich picture of later Tudor and early Stuart Catholicism. Bossy identified two major transitions that English Catholicism underwent in the period between the death of Queen Mary and the outbreak of the English Civil War. The first transition was the growing realization that, by the 1570s, Catholicism was destined to be a minority religion in England for the foreseeable future.¹⁴¹ Emblematic of the change was the realization at Douai that English priest trained there could not simply wait for the restoration of Catholicism, as that event looked increasingly unlikely. Instead, they would have to come to England as missionaries to a minority group. The second transition involved the relationship between Catholics and the government. Many English Catholics desired to be loyalists in every way except for religion, and sought a more moderate position than the one held by more radical religious brethren. What developed were a series of conflicts among lay Catholics and among the clergy about the direction of Catholicism in England.

Robert Parsons (1546-1610), the controversial English Jesuit, articulated one position in this conflict. Up until the ascension of James I, Parsons numbered among the more militant

¹⁴⁰ John Bossy, for example, participates in the realms of both English Catholic and continental Catholic historiographies. See Bossy *The English Catholic Community and Christianity in the West 1400-1700* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985), his important introduction to Delumeau's *Catholicism Between Luther and Voltaire*, and "The Counter-Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe" in *Past and Present* no. 47 (1970), 51-70.

members calling for the reestablishment of Catholicism. This change would require some change in government, either through overthrow or, as 1603 drew near, through a Catholic successor. His reformation of England would proceed from the top down with frequent public debates and teachings to instruct the people on the error of Protestantism.¹⁴² This was a departure from forced conversion under Mary that was unsuccessful. While Parsons did not advocate a bloody reconversion, that he had a plan to reestablish Catholicism threatened the government nonetheless. Against Parsons' position were those Catholics resigned to their minority status who sought to retain the right to practice their faith but in a loyal manner. This group would have welcomed the reconversion of England but did not actively seek it via political or military means.

The loyalist group necessarily won out as its definition of victory was achievable under the Stuart monarchy. By the 1620s, the Jesuit mission to England had changed focus from the policies advocated by Parsons and was content to service the Catholic gentry while generally abandoning the goal of overthrowing the government either via an internal conspiracy or foreign Catholic intervention.¹⁴³ The relationship between the regulars and the gentry was the most important relationship of English Catholicism in this period. These groups were decidedly antiepiscopal in their choice of church government and preferred a system of priests supported by gentry to establishing an episcopal hierarchy. This flexible system allowed Catholicism to survive in England and actually enjoy a privileged position in the court of Charles I, though this presence served to stir up anti-Catholic sentiment in Parliament.¹⁴⁴ The lessening of rigid

¹⁴¹ John Bossy, *English Catholic Community*, 17.

¹⁴² Robert Parsons, 37. "Memorial for the Reformation of England", London: 1690

¹⁴³ John Bossy, *English Catholic Community*, 47.

¹⁴⁴ Caroline Hibbard, *Charles I and the Popish Plot*. Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1983. 14-18

Calvinism in the Church of England reduced the theological pressure on Catholics, and naturally endeared many Catholics to the crown as a source of protection from more radical Protestants.

The parallels with Irish Catholicism are very apparent. English and Old English Catholic gentry faced essentially the same dilemma about loyalty to the Church versus loyalty to the Crown. While the Old English were pursuing the Graces in the 1630s, English Catholics were establishing similar agreements whereby they traded money for religious concessions from the King. Both groups had made the practical decision to side with the King, and even through the years of the Confederation a minority of Old English retained royalist sympathies over and above their Catholic ones.¹⁴⁵ This is not to say that their Catholicism was not interested in conversion and expansion. Recent research by Peter Lake and Michael Questier challenges the notion that English Catholicism had acquired a passive confessional stance by researching the overlooked evangelizing ground offered by prisons.¹⁴⁶ These poorly regulated and managed institutions allowed tremendous opportunity for Catholic evangelization, often times a superior opportunity to that offered by life outside the prison. Imprisoned priests administered sacraments, ministered to the community, and sought the conversion of prisoners often in conflict with Protestant ministers. The vibrancy and energy of the faith shows through in these examples. The best example showing the vibrancy of Old English faith is, of course, the Confederation itself.

While these parallels to English Catholicism are important, they must not overshadow the differences between Irish and English Catholic experiences. The first major difference is the existence of an ethnic tension within the Irish Church and English Catholics never experienced. The conflict between Old English and Gaelic Irish Catholics caused disunity in the Church. This ethnic tension had been diminished by the sense of common Catholic purpose that motivated the

¹⁴⁵ Clanricarde and Castelhaven being the two best examples of this.

formation of the Confederation, but the tension had become apparent again by the time Rinuccini arrived in Ireland.

A result of this ethnic tension was the presence of militant Catholicism in Ireland¹⁴⁷.

While militancy lost appeal to English Catholics under Elizabeth (post-1570s) and later under the Stuarts, it gained appeal in Ireland. The Gaelic Irish had adopted religion as a motivation for rebellion by the 1540s, and, once the Old English acknowledged the greater importance of religious unity over ethnic distinction, militant Catholicism became a primary characteristic of the Church in the 1640s. The majority of Irish Catholics came to support some use of military means for accomplishing religious goals in a way that English Catholics were unwilling (or unable) to do.

By the 1620s, another difference was evident between English and Irish Catholicism. While this decade saw the return and revitalization of the role of the Bishop in Ireland, it witnessed its failure in England. English Catholic gentry and the Jesuits who ministered to many of them rejected attempts to restore episcopal control. They seemed content to follow an informal hierarchy that differed from how the Church operated in all other parts of Europe. This is not to say that English Catholicism became completely isolated. Rather, its choice of structure made it unique in the Catholic Church. The Irish Church, by contrast, was establishing some of the strongest Continental ties it ever held. The Bishops who came to occupy their sees starting in 1618 were Tridentine reformers. This new kind of Bishop was unlike anything seen previously in the Irish Church. Naturally, this created tensions between the existing Catholic lay and

¹⁴⁶ Peter Lake and Michael Questier, "Prisons, priests and people" *England's Long Reformation 1500-1800*. Ed. Nicholas Tyacke. London: UCL Press, 1998.

¹⁴⁷ I consider militant Catholicism to exist when a significant part of the lay and clerical members of the Church are seeking military means to resolve disputes in which religion is an important element. It means more than simply Catholics fighting in wars.

clerical powers and these new Bishops, but these tensions were similar to those experienced by all Catholic countries in the wake of Trent, though they came to Ireland several decades later.

England provides the most natural framework for analyzing Irish Catholicism as long as the differences between the two experiences are kept in mind. As John Bossy wrote, it is “important to affirm that there is an English Catholic history as well as an Irish one, and that it is not a good idea to conflate them.” The trend in Irish Catholicism between 1570 and 1650 is *away* from similarities with English Catholicism, but the experiences of English Catholics provide an excellent beginning point for the study of Irish Catholicism.

Conclusion—A New Approach to Irish Catholicism:

A fundamental truth about the difference between English and Irish Catholicism and that found on the continent also supports the use of unique language for British Catholicism from that of continental Catholicism. The Catholicism found beneath the yoke of English Protestant rule developed over a period of one hundred years into something distinct from continental Catholicism. The shortcomings of attempts by historians of the Irish Church to transplant the terminology from continental Catholicism to the study of Ireland, as noted above, proves this conclusively. The terminology is inappropriate because the “Catholicisms” are different. The continent has no good parallel to the unique situation in Ireland, where a superstructure of English Protestants exercised control over a Catholic majority with varying success and severity. The Catholicism developed within this framework did not match with that of Rinuccini, the Pope, or of many Irishmen who had spent most of their lives abroad and who returned during the years of the Confederation.

Historians of the Irish Church, therefore, should not feel obliged to place events and trends in Ireland within the Counter Reformation. The broader literature on the continental

Counter Reformation has long since moved away from the term as an effective descriptor in most cases, and historians of Ireland should do the same. Instead of looking for similarities, authors should note the uniqueness of the Irish Catholic experience from that of either continental Catholicism or, for that matter, continental Protestantism. Doing so will open a whole field of comparative religious history, analyzing the development of subservient religions in early modern societies where a significant part of the population does not follow the religion of the dominant rulers. Ireland provides the prime example for this new area of study that would greatly enhance the current historiography.

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