

# THE IRISH REBELLION OF 1641 AND THE WARS OF THE THREE KINGDOMS



Eamon Darcy

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THE IRISH REBELLION OF 1641  
AND THE WARS OF THE THREE KINGDOMS

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# A Prospect of bleeding IRELANDS miseries: Presented in a Brief

Recitement to the eyes and hearts of all her commiserating friends in *England* and *Scotland*, as one maine Motive to move their Christian courage for her assistance, when we consider there hath been at the least two hundred thousand Protestants slain and most inhumanely massacred by the barbarous and blood-thirsty Rebels, putting them to the most cruell kinds of death that they could invent, as you may read by this following Relation. Diligently Collected from the most certain Intelligence.

*Recompence unto them double what they have done unto others.*

**R**eader what passages of cruelty thou shalt here peruse thou hast not the least cause to suspect of truth, they being such as by clear evidence have bin made manifestly true by faithfull Intelligence of eye and ear witnesses.

1. Within the County of Fermagh great cruelties have been asked upon the poor English Protestants where multitudes of men women and children have been kill'd in cold blood.

2. In the Castle of Lifgoolle there were above one hundred and fifty men, women, and children burnt there when that Castle was set on fire.

3. At the Castle of Monah about one hundred English were slain by the Barbarous Rebels.

4. The Castle of Tullah being yielded upon composition with promise of fair quarter from the Rebels, but as soon as ever they entered the same they put all to the sword without exception.

5. At Liffenskeah they murdered near one hundred of the Scotch Protestants, which they use in every place as cruelly as the English.

6. One Mr. Middleton they compelled to hear Mass and after ward they caused him his wife and children to be hanged up and murdered.

7. In the Countys of Armagh and Tirone great and Barbarous cruelties have been exercised.

8. At one place there were carried out at severall times in Troops one thousand Protestants, which were drowned at the bridge of Portnedown, which for that purpose was broke down in the midst.

9. And within the County of Armagh four thousand Protestants have in severall places been drowned.

10. The Protestants have been driven naked before these Barbarous Burchers in severall companies like they appointed for the slaughter, to the places of execution.

11. And if any favoured or grew weary on the way, they prick them forward with their sword points whereby they killed many on the way.

12. With their Pikes and swords they the poor stripe Christians into the warren of the Banks, or Bridges.

13. Those that assay by swimming to save their lives, they shoot or beat out their brains.

14. Sir Phelim Oneal hath proved the chief actor of these Barbarous and bloody massacres.

15. He having caused all the Protestants in Armagh and thereabouts under presence of conducting them murdered of young and old five hundred persons.

16. He caused the Town of Armagh, and Cathedral Church to be fired which were burnt down.

17. At a town called Killmasny, forty and eight families were Murdered by his direction.

18. In the same town there were twenty too English Protestants Burnt in one house.

Thus have you heard of some part of the miseries and tortures inflicted upon the poor Protestants in Ireland, by the bloody Rebels; many more inhuman murders they have committed, which I forbear for brevity sake: But such is the care and wisdom of the Parliament to put an end to the bleeding miseries of Ireland, that they have chosen renowned, faithful, and valiant Commander Major General SKIPPON to be Field-Marshal over their Forces, and Major General MASSEY is chozen Lieutenant General of the horse, the Lord crown their endeavour with victory over those inhuman blood-thirsty Rebels, that so dying Ireland may yet live to praise him.



19. Within two miles of the same the Rebels murdered of English two hundred Families.

20. They have been so eager at their prey, that they would not suffer the poor Protestants to say their prayers before they murdered them.

21. They have imprisoned some in noy-fome dungeons of dirt and mire, with bolts on their legs whereby they were starved to death by Leasure.

22. At Castell the Rebels cruelly murdered fifteen English Protestants using the rest most barbarously.

23. They have most Barbarously mangled many Protestants and left them languishing in their pain in the high ways half dead accounting it to favourable to end them of their pain by a suddain death.

24. They have buried many alive both men women and poor harmless infants.

25. At one time at a town called Clowms, they buried seventeen persons which they had half hanged which were heard to send forth Lamentable groans.

26. After they had cruelly wounded some they hung them upon tenter hooks.

27. Others when they had put rups about their necks they dragged through the water.

28. Some they dragged through the woods and Boggs till they died.

29. They have put ropes about the necks

of many and cast them several times into the water, whereby to cause them to confes where their moneys were.

30. They have hanged up some a small time, and then taken them down again, to make them confes where their money was, which when they told them, then they hanged them outright.

31. When they have stripe the Protestants naked, they bid them go look for their God, and bid him cloth them again.

32. They have hung up English by the armes and then hact them with their swords to try how many blows they would endure before they dyed.

33. Some have had their bellys ript up and lo left with their Intails taken out.

34. They have ript up women big with child, and the young Infants hath fall'd out, which the Rebels have often given to doggs, and swine to eat or cast into ditches.

35. The Rebels robb'd, stripe, and murdered a great company of Protestants in the County of Armagh, some they burnt, some they flew by the sword, and some they hanged, others they starved and put to death more cruelly.

36. They have hanged some by the heels, and then with their skans cut them in peeces

37. Some young Infants have been found in the field, Sucking the Breests of their murdered Mothers.

39. A great number of Protestants especially of the women and children, they have left strangled in many places of their bodies, and not kill'd outright, but left them wallowing in their blood.

40. Denying to kill them outright, till two or three days after, and then they would dash out their brains with stones.

41. A woman that leapt out of a window to save her self from burning was murdered by the Rebels and the next morning her child found fixtured at her breast which they also murdered.

42. The Rebels hadd' one Jane Addiss left her sucking child alive by her, & putting the breast into its mouth said suck English bastard, so the child perisht for want, of which Act they brag'd.

43. Many young Infants have been stifled in vaults and cellers, or starved in caves which have cryed to their mothers rather to send them out to dye by the Rebels then to starve so miserably there.

44. Multitudes of men, women, and children were drowned, cast into ditches, boggs, and turf-pits.

45. Many have been inclosed in their houses which have been set on fire and burnt with their houses to ashes in a most miserable manner, and if any attempted to escape they threw them into the fire again.

46. They have dragg'd out some from their sick beds to the place of execution.

47. In the parish of Loghcall to the river of Toll they forced children to carry their aged parents out of their beds to drown them in that river.

48. They have enforced children to execute their parents, and wives their own husbands by hanging and other ways.

49. The wife of Florence Fitz Patrick was outrageous with her husbands fouldiers because they brought not the greast of a Protestant woman whom they had cruelly murdered; therer for her to make candles withall.

50. The Irish men some of them detest the cruelty of those bloody queans that follow their camp, that cry our spare neither man woman nor child.

51. They have boyld children to death in Cauldrons.

52. Ten hanged a woman and her daughter in the hair of her own head.

53. In a frosty night they stripe a woman big with child which presently after fell in labour, and both child and the dyed at the instant.

54. The Rebels often utter threatnings out to cut off all that have a drop of English blood in them, and their women cry out that the English are only meat for doggs.

55. Neare the Town of Monaghan, they most cruelly murdered one Mr. Flood in his own Garden, most inhumanly rottured his wife, Laying hot Tonges to her hands and feet (to make her tell where his money was) that with the pay thereof of the dead.

56. They have most villainously ravished Virgins and women, and afterwards have bin so bloody and hard-hearted, as to dash their childrens brains out.

April 1647

London, Printed for J. H. and are to be sold in Popes head Alley, 1647.

A prospect of bleeding Irelands miseries, London 1647.

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OF THE THREE KINGDOMS

*Eamon Darcy*



THE ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY  

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TO MY PARENTS



# Contents

Acknowledgements	xi
Abbreviations	xiii
Introduction	1
1 Representing violence and empire: Ireland and the wider world	17
2 Imagined violence? The outbreak of the 1641 rebellion in Ireland	48
3 Manufacturing massacre: the 1641 depositions and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms	77
4 The 1641 rebellion and violence in the New and Old Worlds	102
5 Contesting the 1641 rebellion	132
Conclusion: The 1641 rebellion in its British, European and Atlantic world context	168
Bibliography	179
Index	203



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*Eamon Darcy*  
July 2012

## Abbreviations

BL	British Library, London
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
IMC	Irish Manuscripts Commission
NLI	National Library of Ireland
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
CSPD	<i>Calendar of state papers, domestic series</i> , 2nd ser. London 1858–97
CSPI	<i>Calendar of state papers relating to Ireland</i> , London 1860–1911
DIB	James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), <i>Dictionary of Irish biography: from the earliest times to the year 2002</i> , Cambridge 2009: <a href="http://dib.cambridge.org">dib.cambridge.org</a>
HJ	<i>Historical Journal</i>
JBS	<i>Journal of British Studies</i>
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
P&P	<i>Past &amp; Present</i>



## *Introduction: The 1641 Rebellion and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms*

What began on 23 October 1641? Was it a rebellion? An uprising? A nationalist rising? A Catholic plot? A pre-meditated massacre? An indiscriminate slaughter? A fabrication? An exaggeration? A response to the wider pressures of 'Britain' and an integral part of the Wars of the Three Kingdoms? Contemporaries, scholars and historians alike have debated and contested the causes and course of what is now known as the 1641 rebellion in Ireland. Like any military event there were participants (both losers and winners), survivors, victims and witnesses. The records and testimonies left behind are fraught with difficulties for researchers. Memories of 1641 justified a range of controversial policies such as land confiscations, penal laws and the Union of Great Britain and Ireland. Historians have had to consider the course of wider Anglo-Irish history and politics when attempting to understand what unfolded in Ireland during the 1640s. Accounts were highly partisan, divided along Catholic and Protestant, and later nationalist and unionist, lines. These passionate debates meant that the main body of evidence for the rebellion of 1641, now known as the 1641 depositions, has been decried as lies by Catholics and exalted by Protestants as evidence of Catholic perfidy. As a result, historians have been reluctant to engage with the depositions to any great detail. They are a problematic source due to their highly partisan nature: they are the product of a commission comprising eight Church of Ireland clergymen who recorded the testimonies of thousands of mainly Protestant deponents, the majority of whom believed that the 1641 rebellion was a Catholic plot to destroy the Irish Protestant community.

Take as an example the deposition of Robert Maxwell, who was the rector of Tinon in Armagh and was imprisoned by the rebels shortly after the outbreak of rebellion. He managed to escape and would later provide an account of his experience on 22 August 1642. Maxwell testified that during the beginning of the rebellion Sir Phelim O'Neill, MP for Dungannon and leader of the Ulster rebels, along with his brother, Turlogh Óg O'Neill, and half-brother, Robert Hovenden, taunted English settlers calling them 'base degenerate cowards'. O'Neill and his followers had followed closely events which took place in Scotland in the preceding years. In 1637 Charles I attempted to streamline the Calvinist Scottish Church into English (Anglican) practices. In response, the Scots formed the National Covenant and took arms against the king, desiring greater political and religious privileges. According to Maxwell, this gave hope to Phelim O'Neill that Irish

Catholics would also take up arms to defend their religious beliefs and rallied Catholic Ireland to the cause. There were 'frequent and extraordinary meetings of preists and ffriars almost everywhere' who provided the main organisational backbone of the rebellion. Rumours abounded that Hugh O'Neill, the earl of Tyrone, would return from Spain with thousands of Spanish troops to spearhead the rebellion. Hugh O'Neill left Ireland in 1607 as part of the Flight of the Earls and had in fact died in 1616. Maxwell claimed that most of the Catholic nobility, both the native Irish and Old English (descendants of the first English settlers in Ireland – who had now 'degenerated' into Irish customs) had all resolved to rebel. To fund the rebellion they had duplicitously borrowed as much as they could from the 'Brittish'. Maxwell also claimed that two prominent members of the Irish nobility, the earl of Antrim, Randal MacDonnell, and the baron of Slane, Thomas Fleming, had, along with numerous other nobles, been enlisted by Catholic clerics to support the rebellion as had Catholics across England and Europe. One friar declared to Maxwell that he hoped to 'say masse in Christchurch Dublin'. Maxwell, eager to understand why rebellion broke out, pressed Phelim O'Neill to reveal his motives. O'Neill acknowledged that aside from his desire to fight for Catholicism, he wished for the reversal of the plantations and for Catholics to be granted control of all fortifications, while all 'strangers' were to be expelled from Ireland.

How would Sir Phelim O'Neill gain support from lesser nobles, gentry and the lower social orders for his rebellion? O'Neill's opinion, as recounted by Maxwell, was that Irish Catholics lived in fear of the English parliament. O'Neill alleged that MPs plotted to 'bring them all to Church, or to cutt off the papists in the Kings dominions'. Playing on the tensions between the king, covenanters (those who adhered to the National Covenant) and the English parliament, O'Neill forged a commission from Charles I ordering the lower social orders to enlist in the Irish rebellion. 'In all wars', O'Neill claimed, 'rumors and lyes served many tymes to as good purpose as armes.' His kinsmen and clan boasted of a prophecy that he would lead an army into England to expel the king. Aggrieved by religious persecution and spurred on by Catholic nobles, the native Irish attacked their Protestant neighbours and killed thousands of settlers. The Old English also partook in this violence and killed 'British Protestants'. O'Neill ordered the execution of Maxwell's brother and sister-in-law, while other soldiers tortured English animals and killed prominent members of settler society, such as the local school teacher and several landowners. The killings spread as settlers from the lower social orders were attacked. Such was the scale of death and destruction that corpses were left unburied in ditches and on the streets and began to 'stinke and infest the ayre'. Maxwell attested to the fact that he had heard of various slaughters committed in the province of Ulster, such as the murder of roughly 1,000 Protestants in Antrim, the burning of twenty-four English settlers in a house in Lisnagarry in Armagh and the killing of 600 more at Garvagh in Derry. The most horrific of these incidents

occurred when Irish rebels forced 190 people to their deaths in the river Bann at Portadown bridge.<sup>1</sup>

Although he declared that the rebels ‘never dreamt the deponent should live to tell it again’, Maxwell escaped to Dublin. He attributed his survival to two factors. First, he recalled that one night outside his house ‘a light was observed, in manner of a long pillar, to shine for a long way through the air, and ... gave so great a light about an hour together, that divers of the watch read both letters and books of a small character thereby’. Maxwell’s family, upon viewing this sign, ‘interpreted the same to be an immediate expression and token of Divine providence’. This, subsequently, led them to believe that God spared them, as the rebels ‘had a purpose to destroy the deponent and his family, but were always hindered and interrupted’. In typical God-fearing manner, ‘the deponent, with the rest of his family, gave themselves to fasting and prayer, expecting each hour that universal cutting off which fell out very shortly after’. Secondly, Maxwell was protected by prominent members of the native Irish community. Phelim O’Neill’s mother, Katherine Hovenden, ‘preserved twenty-four English and Scots in her own house’ and sympathised with their plight. For example, upon hearing of the drowning of fifty-six prisoners, ‘she swooned twice’. Aghast at Phelim’s actions, she denounced her son: ‘she used often to say she had never offended the English, except in being mother to Sir Phelemy’. In his deposition, Maxwell contrasted O’Neill’s behaviour with that of his other half-brother, Alexander, who safely conducted thirty-five English prisoners out of Armagh and prevented the rebels from torching the town after Maxwell pleaded with him to save the inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> Alexander Hovenden refused to take any further part in the rebellion after O’Neill had allegedly signed a warrant allowing for the execution of innocent settlers.<sup>3</sup>

Maxwell’s testimony is illustrative of both the problems and potential of looking at the 1641 depositions to investigate the causes and course of the 1641 rebellion. First, he believed that the rebels were motivated primarily by religious grievances with economic and political considerations being only secondary concerns. Historians in more recent times, however, have argued that the rebellion broke out as a result of the gradual decline of Catholic political influence and economic strength.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, Maxwell blamed members of the Catholic nobility for the murders of British settlers, which

<sup>1</sup> This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 2 below.

<sup>2</sup> For other accounts of how Protestant settlers survived among the native Irish during the 1640s see Joseph Cope, ‘The experience of survival during the 1641 Irish rebellion’, *HJ* xlvi (2003), 295–316.

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise stated all quotations are taken from the deposition of Robert Maxwell: TCD, MS 809, fos 5–12.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580–1650*, Oxford 2001; Aidan Clarke, ‘Ireland and the general crisis’, *P&P* xlvi (1970), 79–99; Michael Perceval-Maxwell, *The outbreak of the Irish rebellion of 1641*, London 1994.

has been strongly contested by scholars.<sup>5</sup> Maxwell's deposition provides evidence for his worldview, that of a Protestant minister imbued with a strong belief in divine providence. Living in a polarised community there is some sense that Maxwell was suspicious of Catholics living nearby. Yet, Maxwell's deposition tentatively suggests some form of interaction between natives and newcomers prior to the 1641 rebellion. Katherine Hovenden, a leading figure within the native Irish social hierarchy in Armagh, assisted settlers in their attempts to escape and survive the rebellion. What were relations between native and newcomer societies like prior to the rebellion? What motivated the Irish rebels? Did they take arms to defend the Catholic faith as alleged by Maxwell? Is this why popular violence erupted in 1641? What did contemporaries believe had occurred and why? Before addressing any of these issues it is necessary first to look at life in Ireland in the years leading up to 1641.

### The polarisation of Irish society

Prior to the Reformation in the mid-sixteenth century, the Old English were seen as the powerbrokers in Ireland at the expense of the native Irish. After the Reformation, with the polarisation of Irish society along sectarian lines, newly-arrived Protestant, English settlers (the New English) began to label the native Irish and Old English ethnic groups as one Catholic or 'papist' community. Catholic firebrands (in colonists' eyes) such as James Fitzmaurice in the 1570s and 1580s and Hugh O'Neill in the 1590s began to appeal across ethnic divides to an ideology of common faith and fatherland and to shared identity among the native Irish and Old English.<sup>6</sup> Their 'rebellions' were a response to the fact that in the late sixteenth century Ireland witnessed an unprecedented level of bloodshed and violence during the vast expansion of Tudor power. In fact, the entire reign of the Tudors in Ireland was exceptionally violent even in moments of relative 'peace', which has only recently been acknowledged by historians.<sup>7</sup> From the 1570s onward, in particular, through scorched earth policies, 'the native population was starved and terrorised into submission' and surrendered their authority to the Tudor monarchy.<sup>8</sup> Such cycles of violence would dominate Irish politics in the early modern period.

<sup>5</sup> Canny, *Making Ireland British*, 472; Perceval-Maxwell, *The outbreak of the Irish rebellion*, 228.

<sup>6</sup> Hiram Morgan, 'Hugh O'Neill and the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland', *HJ* xxxvi (1993), 21–37.

<sup>7</sup> David Edwards, Padraig Lenihan and Clodagh Tait, 'Early modern Ireland: a history of violence', in David Edwards, Pádraig Lenihan and Clodagh Tait (eds), *Age of atrocity: violence and political conflict in early modern Ireland*, Dublin 2007, 9–33, esp. pp. 12–19.

<sup>8</sup> David Edwards, 'The escalation of violence in sixteenth-century Ireland', in Edwards,

Fears of further persecution, particularly when religion became the main indicator of disloyalty after the succession of James VI and I to the English crown in 1603, caused some of the leading Irish nobility to flee for Europe in 1607. At a local level in Ulster, the composition of Irish society in Ireland radically changed over the first half of the seventeenth century. Protestant, New English settlers took the place of absent Irish lords. These settlers viewed the native Irish and Old English Catholics with suspicion. This led to considerable tensions between the two religious communities in Ireland. To impose their new-found authority on the island, these newly-enriched English planters frequently used excessive force. Furthermore, they denied Irish Catholics the opportunity to use English common law structures.<sup>9</sup> Tense relations between natives and newcomers led to misunderstandings and, sometimes, violent conflict erupted.<sup>10</sup> At a high political level, policies pursued by colonial administrators further threatened and alienated Ireland's Catholic population. For example, after the suppression of Cahir O'Doherty's rebellion in 1608, O'Doherty's lands were divided out amongst the New English. Arthur Chichester, lord deputy of Ireland (1605–15), benefited most from this land grab, much to the chagrin of the dispossessed. Chichester's vision for the plantation of Ulster involved the segregation of the native Irish and the preferential treatment of New English settlers, particularly those who served in the Nine Years' War. In his first year as lord deputy, Chichester challenged the loyalty of the Old English and issued 'mandates' requiring them to attend the services of the established Church. Westminster, alarmed at this attack on the Old English, lambasted Chichester for acting without their authority. In his attempts to call an Irish parliament in 1613 he first met with members of the Old English community. They were appalled at his refusal to listen to their petitions and so canvassed the royal court for his removal.<sup>11</sup> From a Catholic perspective (i.e. the perspective of both the native Irish and Old English) it was clear that a new Protestant and English order was emerging in Ireland.

The ascendancy of the royal favourite, George Villiers, duke of Buckingham, as James VI and I's key minister in Ireland dramatically altered the composition of the Irish peerage and further diluted Catholic influence in the upper echelons of Irish political life. In 1603 89 per cent of peers were Catholic (twenty-four out of twenty-seven peers) but by 1628, after Buckingham's death, the Catholic share of power had been diluted to 54 per

Lenihan and Tait, *Age of atrocity*, 34–78.

<sup>9</sup> Idem, 'The plight of the earls: Tyrone and Tyrconnell's "grievances" and crown coercion in Ulster, 1603–7', in Thomas O'Connor and Mary Ann Lyons (eds), *The Ulster earls and baroque Europe: refashioning Irish identities, 1600–1800*, Dublin 2010, 53–76.

<sup>10</sup> Darren McGettigan, 'O'Doherty, Cahir', *DIB*; Raymond Gillespie, *Conspiracy: Ulster plots and plotters in 1615*, Belfast 1987.

<sup>11</sup> Raymond Gillespie, 'Chichester, Arthur', *DIB*; John McCavitt, *Sir Arthur Chichester: lord deputy of Ireland, 1605–1616*, Belfast 1998.

cent.<sup>12</sup> The influx of Protestant men of less noble standing and less noble breeding to the uppermost ranks of Irish political society can only have alarmed Ireland's Catholic population. According to Aidan Clarke's masterly study of the Old English in the early seventeenth century, these descendants of the original invaders of Ireland maintained a distinct identity, aloof from the native Irish. Clarke's undeniably seminal work, however, overlooked a key context in seventeenth-century Irish history: Europe. After the Flight of the Earls and the establishment of Irish colleges to educate native Irish and Old English students as Catholic clerics in France, Italy and Spain, exiles and students fashioned a new identity for Ireland that transcended ethnic differences. Geoffrey Keating's 'Foras Feasa ar Éirinn', a popular manuscript, offered the shared designation of 'Irishmen' to the Catholics of Ireland. They created this new identity with the Spanish king in mind. Aware of tensions between England and Spain in the 1620s, Irish Jesuits in Spain campaigned for Spanish intervention in Ireland and 'began to present themselves as religious crusaders against a heretical English monarchy'. Despite this, Anglo-Spanish relations were prioritised ahead of Hiberno-Spanish, for Spain feared antagonising a powerful English enemy.<sup>13</sup>

During the Counter-Reformation, the Catholic Church laid strong foundations that survived the haphazard attempts of generations of reformers to convert Catholics.<sup>14</sup> In Armagh, priests downplayed ethnic differences between the native Irish and the Old English and in Ulster it appears that a broad knowledge of the nuances of the Catholic faith existed across the social orders.<sup>15</sup> Priests catered for their flocks' increasing dissatisfaction with the new Protestant and English order emerging in Ireland. Catholic polemics linked Protestantism with the devil and argued that Luther was the fallen son of Lucifer. 'Consequently, in the popular mind the rites and personnel

<sup>12</sup> Jane Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English: the Irish aristocracy in the seventeenth century*, New Haven 2012, 27–63 at p. 42; Victor Treadwell, *Buckingham and Ireland, 1616–1628: a study in Anglo-Irish politics*, Dublin 1998.

<sup>13</sup> Bernadette Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating: history, myth and religion in seventeenth-century Ireland*, Dublin 2007; Aidan Clarke, *The Old English in Ireland, 1625–1642*, Dublin 2000; Brendan Kane, 'A dynastic nation? Re-thinking national consciousness in early seventeenth-century Ireland', in David Finnegan, Éamonn Ó Ciardha and Marie-Claire Peters (eds), *The flight of the earls: Imeacht na nIarlaí*, Derry 2010, 124–31; Óscar Recio Morales, *Ireland and the Spanish empire, 1600–1825*, Dublin 2010; quotation from Igor Perez Tostado, *Irish influence at the court of Spain in the seventeenth century*, Dublin 2008, 23.

<sup>14</sup> Colm Lennon, 'The Counter Reformation in Ireland, 1542–1641', in Ciaran Brady and Raymond Gillespie (eds), *Natives and newcomers: essays on the making of Irish colonial society, 1534–1641*, Woodbridge 1986, 75–92.

<sup>15</sup> Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin, 'The survival of the Catholic Church in Ulster in the era of the flight of the earls and the Ulster plantation', in Finnegan, Ó Ciardha and Peters, *The flight of the earls*, 221–6.

of the Church of Ireland became tainted with diabolical overtones.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, public pronouncements by English commentators that the Irish should be converted were not met with enthusiasm on the ground. By the 1620s, the established Church in Ulster had effectively abandoned the conversion of Irish natives in favour of adopting a more anglocentric Church that had little appeal to the Irish. Tellingly, in 1640 only five native Irish people were enrolled at Trinity College Dublin, the university founded to promote the Church of Ireland.<sup>17</sup> This religious polarisation caused much resentment in Ireland during the reign of the Stuart monarchs in Ireland and led to the outbreak of sectarian violence in 1641. In fact, religion is a vital component of the events of 1641. Fears of religious persecution mobilised the lower social orders and some of the rebels consequently targeted Protestant people and artefacts. These religious grievances became one of the most contested aspects of the rising during the 1640s. Catholic nobles vehemently denied that religion was the main cause of their quarrel, while the Protestant administration poured scorn on their protestations. Furthermore, religious beliefs provided a lens through which deponents could understand and rationalise their experience.

While other historians have argued that in the 1630s, Ireland, much like England, was relatively at peace, the central premise of this work is that throughout the early seventeenth century an uneasy equilibrium existed between the various religious and ethnic communities that could be upset at any moment. This is not to deny that the economic downturn of the late 1630s, the tenure of Thomas Wentworth as lord lieutenant, and the policy of plantation (both proposed and implemented), and the wider crisis of the three kingdoms were contributing factors. The sustained persecution and alienation of native Irish and Old Catholics for their faith, however, was at the root of all the problems that led to the 1641 rebellion.<sup>18</sup> The Catholic elites lost their land and many of their economic and political liberties because of their religious beliefs. Meanwhile, the majority of those from the lower social orders who fought were roused by the elites into an anti-Protestant and anti-English frenzy. What united rebels of all social strata was their shared faith and fatherland.

<sup>16</sup> Brian Mac Cuarta, *Catholic revival in the north of Ireland, 1603–41*, Dublin 2007, 90; Nicholas Canny, 'Religion, politics, and the Irish uprising of 1641', in Judith Delvin and Ronan Fanning (eds), *Religion and rebellion: the proceedings of the Twenty Second Irish Conference of Historians*, Dublin 1997, 40–70.

<sup>17</sup> Aidan Clarke, 'Bishop William Bedell, 1571–1642 and the Irish Reformation', in Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Worsted in the game: losers in Irish history*, Dublin 1989, 61–70; Alan Ford, *The Protestant Reformation in Ireland, 1590–1641*, Frankfurt 1987, 66.

<sup>18</sup> For the clearest assessment of how Ireland was at peace see Canny, *Making Ireland British*, 455–60.

## The 1641 rebellion and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms

While Irish Catholic nobles felt threatened by religious persecution, English and Scottish nobles witnessed the gradual expansion of the Stuart monarchy's power. King Charles I attempted to impose an Anglican Church on Scotland causing considerable controversy among the Calvinist ecclesiastical hierarchy. The Scots' recourse to arms sparked a series of interconnected and complex wars across England, Ireland and Scotland, now known as the Wars of the Three Kingdoms. This included the 1641 rebellion, the confederate wars (1642–8), the execution of Charles I and the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland.

Numerous accounts of the troubled decades of the mid-seventeenth century have located events in England, Ireland and Scotland in this wider 'British' and Irish framework. There are benefits to this approach. A successful war in Scotland for religious liberties gave hope to Irish Catholics. Irish rebels followed the covenanters' example in taking up arms in defence of their faith and political liberties. Irish Protestant politicians, aware of the wider crisis that Charles faced, had to compete for the king's attention now that the English parliament also wished for greater religious and political autonomy. News sent by the Irish colonial authorities after the outbreak of rebellion on 23 October 1641 exacerbated tensions between king and parliament, particularly in the tumultuous spring and summer of 1642. This led to the outbreak of the English civil wars, which pitted the king against parliament. Without war in Scotland it is unclear whether rebellion would have broken out in Ireland when it did. The title of this book is deliberately provocative. This book draws upon events in Scotland when necessary but Scotland receives little attention, for one simple reason: the colonial administration in Ireland naturally looked to the king and the English parliament for aid. When private letters did not achieve the desired result, they resorted to London printers to canvass English support for their efforts. The Irish confederates also looked to England for help. They pledged loyalty to the king and lobbied for his support by branding Protestant politicians as parliamentarians. So perhaps another title could have been *The Irish rebellion of 1641 and the English civil wars*.

Are there other methodological models that might be appropriate to this discussion of the 1641 rebellion? When looking at this issue from the perspective of English colonists, Ireland fitted into the broader colonial/imperial framework of the Atlantic world. Without doubt, Ireland provided a training ground for English colonists in their conquest of America. Plantations in Leinster and Munster provided a blueprint for later English colonisation in America, particularly in Virginia. Historians have, however, debated whether Ireland fits into this model of American colonisation.<sup>19</sup> Aside from

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Benjamin, *The Atlantic world: Europeans, Africans, Indians and their shared*