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'Sheep in the midst of wolves'?: The Protestant Ministry in the 1641 Depositions

Mark S. Sweetnam

As the congeries of hapless clergy that clog the pages of comic literature reveal, the social position of those in holy orders has historically been ambiguous. Most frequently it is the impecunious curate that is the butt of the joke, and the object of humour. More broadly, though, the ministry presents significant challenges to any attempt to locate it neatly within a social hierarchy. The economic and theological implications of the office and its responsibilities make it very problematic to assign it a niche, in the way that we might for any other profession. If this was true in Georgian, Victorian, and even in Edwardian society, it was, *a fortiori,* the case in the rigidly hierarchical society of early-modern England.

This was undoubtedly the case from an economic standpoint. As Keith Wrightson has pointed out, the clergy were, effectively, the most middling of the middle sort.

> Formal education at university of the Inns of Court was by no means essential for entry to any of these professions in this period, but it was necessary to those who aspired to reach the higher echelons of their profession. Since education cost money it is scarcely surprising that studies have revealed some three-quarters of common lawyers and half to two-thirds of civil lawyers to have been of gentry origin, most of the remainder being the sons of prosperous tradesmen and professional men. Only the clergy provided something of an exception, many being of yeoman stock, though the proportion of gentry sons entering the clergy rose steadily over the course of the seventeenth century.[1]

But the uniqueness of the ministry went beyond economic considerations. Ordination set these men apart from the mainstream of society in a way that was unique. Some of these distinctions were very practical. Those who had

[1] Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580–1680* (London, 1993), 29.

been ordained had their Convocation – their own assembly, with the power to self-regulate and to set their own taxes.

Something of the social implications of ordination was captured by John Donne, in his late poem 'To Mr Tilman after he had taken orders'. Donne was by no means the Laudian poster boy that some of his biographers have imagined.[2] Yet, even as a moderate conformist, who self-consciously cleaved to the middle of the English ecclesiastical spectrum, Donne had a high view of ordination:

> Thou art the same materials, as before,
> Onely the stampe is changèd, but no more.
> And as new crowned Kings alter the face,
> But not the monies substance, so hath grace
> Chang'd onely Gods old Image by Creation,
> To Christs new stampe, at this thy Coronation
> …
> These are thy titles and preheminences,
> In whom must meet Gods graces, mens offences;
> And so the heavens which beget all things here,
> And the earth, our mother, which these things doth bear;
> Both these in thee, are in thy Calling knit
> And make thee now a blest Hermaphrodite.

But Donne, who had spent a long time resisting the urgings of James I, among others, to enter the ministry, also stresses the social consequences of the step that Mr Tilman has taken. At the beginning of the poem he refers to 'lay-scornings of the ministry.' A little later, he returns to, and expands upon, this theme:

> Why doth the foolish world scorne that profession,
> Whose joyes passe speech? Why do they think unfit
> That Gentry should joyne families with it?

[2] See, for example, Izaak Walton, *The Lives of John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert, and Robert Sanderson* (Oxford, 1927); Alexander B. Grosart, 'Essay on the Life and Writings of Donne' in *The Complete Poems of John Donne D.D., Dean of St Paul's*, i–xli. ([N.P.], 1872–3); R. C. Bald, *John Donne: A Life* (Oxford, 1970); John Carey, *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art* (London, 1970); and Debra Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics, and the Dominant Culture* (Toronto, 1997), 159–217.

As if their day were onely to be spent
In dressing, Mistressing and complement.
Alas! poore joyes, but poorer men, whose trust
Seems richly placed in sublimed dust,
(For, such are clothes and beauty, which though gay,
Are, at the best, but of sublimed clay)
Let then the world thy calling disrespect,
But goe thou on, and pitty their neglect.[3]

In contrast to this disesteem for the ministry Donne asks: 'What function is so noble, as to be / Ambassador to God, and destiny?' Clearly, then, for Donne at least, the ministry was not the profession for the social climber – to enter it was to face worldly scorn. Yet, at the same time, when Donne took his place in the rotation to preach to the king at Whitehall, he did so from a pulpit that placed him at the same height as the king, eye to eye across the crowded chapel, as potent a symbol as any of the social ambivalence surrounding the role of the minister in early-modern England.[4]

These considerations were equally important for the Protestant ministry in Ireland during the seventeenth century. To them were added all the concerns implicit in the process of plantation. The ministers were, even more that their lay fellow-planters, strangers in a strange land. Like the other planters, they were divorced from the Irish population by background, language, religion and loyalty. That estrangement was only emphasised by the fact that this native population supported the ministry financially – directly by paying tithes, and indirectly through the profits of money lending. And the process of proselytisation, however intermittently carried out, only deepened these differences. Though theoretically all about the 'sameing' of the other, and though predicated upon a commonality of need and provision, the attempt to convert Irish Catholics had the effect of throwing religious differences into sharper relief. Thus, Protestant ministers in Ireland faced a double estrangement – from the planters and from the Irish. And, paradoxically, their links with both societies served to divide them from each other, rather than drawing them together.

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[3] John Donne, 'To Mr *Tilman* after he had Taken Orders' in C. A. Patrides (ed.), *The Complete English Poems of John Donne* (London, 1985), 470–471.

[4] See, for a discussion of the dynamics of Stuart court preaching, Peter E. McCullough, *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching* (Cambridge, 1998).

Ministers in the Depositions

Finding evidence to support this state of affairs is not a trivial exercise. As Raymond Gillespie has pointed out, while administrative records of the ministry are a rich source of historical information, there is a shortage of sources that record the everyday details of the lives of individual ministers:

> [T]he parish clergyman … was preoccupied with the daily round of collecting tithes, maintaining church property and carrying out his pastoral functions to Protestant communities of varying sizes across the island. In addition such clergymen had to make a living for themselves and their families and as such they became part of the secular world of commerce and agriculture. It is difficult to reconstruct this world because most clergy regarded their lives as ordinary and therefore not worth recording.[5]

Indeed, it was only when the steady tenor of these ministerial lives was disrupted by the events of the 1641 rebellion that their lives became material for recording. The testimony gathered by the commissioners appointed by the English parliament to gather evidence from the victims of the events of the 1641 rebellion are particularly valuable to us. Though they are not an unproblematic source of information, and though it would be foolish to lose sight of the layers of mediation through which the material they contain has passed, the depositions do, none the less, provide us with unparalleled insight into the lives and experiences of individual ministers in Ireland before and during the events of 1641. Nicholas Canny's summary of the depositions as a whole is apposite:

> A close study of the depositions … suggests that they might prove more useful than would at first appear because the deponents themselves, and those who collected the information from them, were concerned to identify those who had attacked them, and they recorded the gist of the justifications for the onslaught offered to them by their assailants. In the course of these summaries the deponents sought to distinguish between political, economic, and religious legitimisations … One of the

[5] Raymond Gillespie, 'The Church of Ireland Clergy, *c.*1640: Representation and Reality' in T. C. Barnard and W. G. Neely (eds), *The Clergy of the Church of Ireland 1000–2000: Messengers, Watchmen and Stewards* (Dublin, 2006), 68.

> attractions therefore of the depositions as a historical source is that they make it possible for us to unravel the complex of motivations that the Protestants attributed to their assailants.[6]

It is at the level of the individual minister that the depositions are most useful as a source. While they seem to offer the prospect of more comprehensive analysis, in reality the exigencies of the gathering of depositions mean that any attempt to draw general conclusions from them must be thickly hedged about with caveats and qualifications. To understand why this is so, it is helpful to consider in some detail the process by which the depositions were gathered.

As recent scholarship on the depositions has emphasised, the more than 8,000 statements that make up the collection are not to be regarded as parts of a homogeneous whole. The fact that the library of Trinity College Dublin had the depositions bound into thirty-one volumes arranged by county tends to obscure this fact. In reality, the depositions can be divided into eight discrete sections, which differ in date, location, and purpose. The first of these, 'the core element',[7] comprises

> the sworn statements of Protestant refugees taken by a group of eight clergymen, headed by Henry Jones, acting on the authority of three successive commissions issued by the Dublin government: the first, dated 23 December 1641, required the collection of information about robberies and spoils committed against the Protestant English; the second, dated 18 January 1642, extended the scope of the inquiry to include murders and massacres; and the third, dated 9 June 1642, replaced a deceased member and altered the legal status of the Commissioners.

These depositions were mostly taken in Dublin, before two or more of the commissioners, and date from 28 December 1641 to late 1647. In the online edition of the depositions whose terminology this article will follow, these depositions are designated 'Dublin Originals'.[8] The second category

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[6] Nicholas Canny, 'What Really Happened in Ireland in 1641?' in Jane Ohlmeyer (ed.), *Ireland from Independence to Occupation 1641–1660* (Cambridge, 1995), 27.

[7] Aidan Clarke, 'The 1641 Depositions' in Peter Fox (ed.), *Treasures of the Library, Trinity College Dublin* (Dublin, 1986), 112.

[8] The 1641 depositions website can be found at http://www.1641.tcd.ie. More recently, the Depositions have been made available as part of a new digital research environment developed by the CULTURA Project (http://cultura-project.eu).

of deposition of interest to us here are the 'Bysse depositions'. These were taken by Philip Bysse, the recently appointed archdeacon of Cloyne. Bysse's commission was motivated by the fact that very few deponents from Munster had been able to appear before the Dublin Commission. Bysse operated throughout Munster and the depositions that he took deal largely, though not exclusively, with the events in that province. The last Bysse deposition is dated 13 August 1643; by the end of October in that year Bysse was dead. These two collections are the most immediate in time to the events of 1641, and the most relevant to our present enquiry.

Three other categories exist. The 'Waring copies' are copies of the Dublin Original depositions made in the late 1640s by Thomas Waring, the clerk of the Commission. Another collection is the Informations – 'sworn statements made by individuals, captured Irish and Old English as well as refugee Protestants, by coercion as well as by choice, before an officer of state: most frequently a judge; occasionally a Privy Councillor; sometimes, a local garrison commander.' These are 'concerned almost exclusively with public affairs', and so are not especially useful for our present purpose.[9] The fifth group, the Commonwealth depositions and examinations date from April 1652, when the English parliament established special High Courts of Justice to 'hear and determine all murders and massacres of any English or other person … done or committed by any person or persons.'[10] The specific focus of these depositions and their chronological distance from 1641 make them considerably less useful for our purpose than the two early collections: the Dublin Originals and the Bysse depositions.

County	Dublin Originals	Bysse Depositions
Cavan	(1)	
Carlow	(1)	
Clare		3
Cork	2	40
Dublin	14	
Fermanagh	3	
Galway	4	
Kerry		3

[9] Clarke, 'The 1641 Depositions', 116.
[10] Ibid.

Kildare	12	
King's County (Offaly)	(1)	
Leitrim	3	
Limerick		6
Mayo	3	
Meath	13	
Monaghan	3	
Queen's County (Laois)	6	
Roscommon		1
Sligo	3	
Tipperary	4	6
Waterford		7
Westmeath	(2)	
Wexford	3	
Wicklow	1	
Table 1: The Geographical Distribution of Depositions from Deponents Classified as Clergy or (Ministers)		

An evident implication of these processes of deposing is that the depositions are patchy in their geographical coverage. Table 1 illustrates this. It summarises the results of searches for deponents whose occupation is listed as either 'clergy' or 'ministry' in the two collections of depositions that our investigation focuses on. The distribution of deponents also reflects the difficulty of travelling to Dublin to depose, especially for ministers in the more remote recesses of the island. The figures also reflect the fact that some of the clergy had fled to England – a task that was easier for those in the South and East. Overall, then, this table neatly highlights one of the reasons for the futility of attempting to construct a comprehensive picture of ministerial life in Ireland in the 1640s. Another difficulty arises from the form of the commission under which the depositions were taken. Each deposition broadly follows a format based on the commission under which it was taken. In the Dublin Original and Bysse depositions, the financial losses are listed, in varying

degrees of detail. This is followed by a listing of crimes and perpetrators. The final section is less structured, and is effectively a compendium for anything else the deponent wishes to report. Thus, while financial losses are reported with a reasonable degree of consistency, the details that offer us glimpses into the quotidian detail of the deponent's life are much more unevenly spread.

For these reasons, the depositions are best approached on an individual level. Abandoning an attempt at synthesis – which is doomed to fail in any case – allows us to see the depositions as a series of vignettes, capturing snapshots of the life and experience of the ministers as they lived through changeful and traumatic times. In this article we will seek to highlight some of the more suggestive of these glimpses.

Life before 1641

It is the economic aspect of the minsters' life that the depositions capture in most detail. Each deposition contains lists of the nature and amounts of the losses suffered by the deponent and this allows us to reconstruct something of the individual minister's wealth. This information emphasises the variation in resources enjoyed by the clergy. At the lower end of the scale is the loss of £4 10s, made up of a cow, household stuff and hay, suffered by John Potter, curate of Affane in Waterford. A number of clergy reported losses of nearly £2,000, and on a few occasions, even larger amounts. For the most part, though, the losses reported are well below £1,000.

The makeup of these losses is as revealing as their amount. What is striking, reading through the depositions, is the fact that the sort of losses reported by ministers are almost indistinguishable from those reported by most of the other deponents. It is unsurprising that almost all deponents report the loss of the ubiquitous household items. More striking is the lack of differentiation between the agricultural losses reported by the ministers, and those that feature in the depositions of other individuals. Richard Pickering, vicar of Tartoe, in Kildare, is typical of many other deponents – clerical and lay – in his reported losses of 'corne and hay' to the value of £110, 'horse and cattle, £25 and 'other goods', £10.[11] His colleague William Golburn, archdeacon of Kildare, reported a variety of material losses, on a rather grander scale than the average. Included in his inventory, in addition to a carefully itemised list of

[11] Deposition of Randall Dumvill, 3 June 1644 (T.C.D., MS 838, f. 9v).

household furnishings, were forty-nine cows and a bull of superior 'English streyne' valued at £150, 230 sheep 'with certayne English Ramms' to the value of £40 and 'garrans and saddle naggs' worth £30. He also reported the loss of corn in the ground, worth £150, and of seventy carts of turf and 'a quantity of Mault and corne' along with butter, wool and flax.[12] Like his fellow ministers, Golburn was no ivory tower cleric.

Golburn's list of losses does contain one item that serves to differentiate his from most, though not all, lay deponents. Amongst the losses that he suffered was 'his library with other things contayned and left in his study seased by [ ] Enemies to his dammadg of 100 li'.[13] Golburn may have had plenty agricultural possessions, but he was not unequipped for his ministerial work. He is not unique in this regard.

> Of those who reported losses of books in their depositions roughly half were clergy, suggesting their practical engagement with print. Using the valuations provided by the clergy for their book losses it seems that their books accounted for between 3 and 16 percent of their total losses, with most being above 5 per cent which is substantially more than the losses of books noted by the gentry.[14]

The obvious and immediate question to ask is what books were the ministers reading? Sadly, 'no list exists of an early seventeenth-century parish minister's library', and very few of the deponents mention any specific books.[15] One of the very few exceptions to this rule is Robert Browne, the vicar of Sutton Benger in Wiltshire. Browne became embroiled in the events of the rebellion and, in his attempt to escape by boat to England was blown into harbour at Skerries, County Dublin. Here he was relieved of 'his bookes *vizt* a bible whiche afterward he burnt, a greek newtestam{ent} and Baker upon the penitentiall psalmes to the value of tenn shillings'.[16] Browne was travelling at this time, and it would be unreasonable to suppose that he had any very large proportion of his library with him on the journey. It is, moreover, disappointing, and not a little frustrating that the one minister who mentions a specific author should not be a member of the Irish ministry at this time.

[12] Deposition of William Golburn, 8 January 1642/3 (T.C.D. MS 813, ff 273r–274r).

[13] Ibid.

[14] Gillespie, 'The Church of Ireland Clergy, *c.*1640' in Barnard and Neely (eds), *The Clergy of the Church of Ireland,* 75.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Deposition of Robert Browne, 5 January 1642/3 (T.C.D. MS 834, ff. 103r–103v).

Another category of loss specific to the ministry is the loss of income from church livings. And here, as elsewhere, the constant is variation. The size of living, the income produced and the amount of livings held by an individual all vary widely. Most ministers valued their living at less than £100, and the income it provided was often a relatively minor element of their finances. Michael Smith, archdeacon of Clonfert, who claimed one of the highest losses of any minister estimated that his living was worth £100, while 'future proffitts of his lands tythes & temporall estate' were 'clerely worth' £700. Smith is admittedly an extreme example, but it remains the case that few of the ministers relied solely upon the income from their livings. This was just as well, perhaps. There is evidence that a gulf could—and often did—exist between the nominal worth of a living, and the amount that could be taken from it in tithes. And there is evidence of difficulty in persuading parishioners to pay their tithes. Elizabeth Hatherington, deposing on behalf of her husband Richard, listed among the debts outstanding to him, in his role as minister of Modelligoe, County Waterford, the sum of nine pounds from the previous year's tithes.[17] Similarly, Hugh Morrison of Trim listed losses from outstanding tithes in two parishes:

> Item thirtie pounds sterling due vnto him from Philip McMulmore ô Rely of Lismore for the tithes of Castle Corre this yeare 1642 whoe is a gran rebell
> Item the Tithes of the vicarage of Galtrim sett for this yeare vnto the said Daniel Wilson for fiftie pounds sterling soe disabled as aforesaid.[18]

William Holyday, incumbent of Bruheny, County Cork, deposed that 'he lost in the benefitt of his tithes fiftie pounds the last harvest & forty pounds the last this presente yeeres.'[19] This context explains why, in 1642, the disposed ministers petitioned parliament:

> That it would please this honorable house for preserveing of peace for abolisheing of Popish Customes & for furthering the worke of the Ministry, that Ministers may have noe occasion to Contend with their parishoner, nor be diverted from their studies, by followeing suites of Law, occasioned by diverse popish Customes, and severall manners

[17] Deposition of Ellizabeth Hatherington, 23 June 1642 (T.C.D. MS 802, ff 91r–91v).
[18] Deposition of Hugh Morison, 8 July 1642 (T.C.D. MS 816, ff 180r–180v).
[19] Deposition of William Holyday, 17 February 1643/4 (T.C.D. MS 825, ff. 72r–72v).

> of Titheing, To settle one sette forme of Titheing through out the kingdome and that to be (if it may be) according to the Late Table of Ulster.[20]

In years of poor harvest, like those leading up to 1641, we can only suppose that tithes must have seemed an imposition even to devout members of the Protestant flock. In Protestant England, tithes were an ongoing source of grievance. To the Catholic Irish who owed no loyalty to the Church of Ireland, they must have seemed intolerable. The limited pastoral care provided for the native Irish, and the use of bailiffs to extract payment, meant that the relationship between Protestant clergy and Catholic Irish was perceived as 'uniquely exploitative.'[21] In 1629, Sir John Bingley, a Protestant layman, claimed that the ministers of the Church of Ireland 'do exact of their parishioners more fees and duties than is taken in England which is a great scandal'.[22] Such sentiments found their expression in the depositions. When Robert Maxwell, rector of Tinan in County Armagh, asked Sir Phelim O'Neill what his demands were, the answer included 'All tythes payable by papists to be paid to popish preists. Church lands to be restored to theire bishopps.'[23] Joseph Smithson, 'Minister and Preacher of Gods word in the Parish of Clonekeene in the Countie of Dublin' reported the central role that tithes seemed to play in a local rebel leader's sense of grievance:

> And this deponent further saith that the said Mr Woolverston told him this Examinant that hee would pay noe more tithes but to the Masse Preist And this deponent is like to be deprived of the same tithes which the said Mr Woolverston since the Rebellion beganne hath deteyned from him And saith alsoe That about a fortnight after alhollantide last Mr Nicholas Rochford of Rochestowne aforesaid gent a wilfull Papist kept from this deponent soe many tithe furrs as came to 5 li. and said to this Deponent that hee kept them in hope to see Protestants burne in them And this deponent is like to be deprived of those tithes Alsoe the sai{d} Rochford since the rebellion beganne peremptorilie denyedinge to pay them.[24]

[20] Petition of the dispoyled ministers, 8 March 1642 (T.C.D. MS 840, ff. 36r–36v).

[21] Alan Ford, 'The Reformation in Kilmore before 1641' in Raymond Gillespie (ed.), *Cavan: Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin, 2004), 86.

[22] Ibid., 86.

[23] Deposition of Robert Maxwell, 22 August 1642 (T.C.D. MS 809, f. 7r).

[24] Deposition of Joseph Smithson, 8 January 1642/3 (T.C.D. MS 809, f. 327 r).

When tithes were gathered they needed to be invested. Agriculture, as we have seen, was one option. To be sure, the *Articles given in Charge to be Inquired upon and Presented to Churchwardens* (1623) prohibited members of the clergy from engaging in 'servile labour', but, in practice that did little to limit the agrarian activities of ministers. Another avenue of gain specifically proscribed in the directions was usury. This prohibition, too, operated at the level of theory rather than that of practice. The depositions provide evidence that money-lending was widely practiced by the Protestant clergy in Ireland. Many of the deponents listed amongst their losses debts that the circumstances of the rising had rendered unrecoverable. Some of these debts were small, representing the lines of credit essential to the conduct of commerce in early-modern society. Others ministers, though, reported much more significant amounts – in both absolute and relative terms. Such debts can best be accounted for as part of a long-standing and well-established practice of ministerial money-lending. Debt was an important factor in the 1641 rebellion as a whole. Heavily indebted Irish saw the rising as an excellent opportunity to eliminate this burden. And the depositions of the ministers reveal that they too were affected by the same imperative. Indeed, as Nicholas Canny argues, the native animosity towards the clergymen 'may be explained as much by the ministers' heavy involvement in money-lending transactions as by their religious profession.'[25]

Such, then, were the economic and financial circumstances of the ministerial life in Ireland during the first half of the seventeenth century. 1641 found them a heterogeneous group, marked by striking disparity in means and position. Some were poorly provided for, doing their best to eke a living from small and costive livings. Others possessed considerable wealth, and were engaged in large-scale farming and extensive financing. Most existed between the two extremes, engaging in agricultural activity on a medium scale and increasing their capital through money-lending.

The sort of life that emerges from an examination of the economic information furnished by the depositions is predicated upon close ties with the lay population, and with both English and Irish communities. Ministers participated fully in the agrarian economy, buying and selling, sowing and reaping in a way that was largely indistinguishable from their neighbours. Their involvement in money-lending, again, indicates close interaction with local communities. But this was a link that separated, as well as connected. As

[25] Canny, 'What Really Happened in Ireland in 1641' in Ohlmeyer (ed.), *Ireland from Independence to Occupation,* 33.

the *Articles* implicitly indicated, involvement in usury was a risky business for a cleric who wanted to secure the hearts and minds of an Irish population. Money-lending all too easily allowed for the construction of a grievance.

The system of tithes, too, though always chaotic, and both poorly and patchily implemented, was an active source of grievance to those who found themselves required to support the foreign ministers of a religion – never mind denomination – that did not command their loyalty or allegiance. This did not pass unnoticed by contemporary ecclesiastical authorities. Bishop Bramhill reported that, in parts of Down the clergy 'never use tithing for fear of scandal.'[26]

The picture that emerges from the depositions, then, gives us much information that we would struggle to discover from other sources. Man, however, does not live by bread alone, and it is hardly unreasonable to hope that the depositions would tell us something about the ministers' activities in pursuit of their calling, rather than the subsidiary interests that we have been considering so far. In these terms, the depositions are something of a disappointment. These activities are simply not the focus of their interest, in the way that they might be for records of episcopal visitations or for session and presbytery minutes. This notwithstanding, the depositions do shed some, admittedly incidental, light on the ministerial activities of the Protestant clergy in Ireland.

The deposition of John Gouldsmith, a minister from County Mayo is a particularly rich source for information of this sort. Gouldsmith had been a Catholic. His deposition contains a wealth of information about the beginning and conduct of the rising in Mayo. Gouldsmith's brother was a Catholic priest in Antwerp, and had alerted him to the imminence of an armed uprising and urged him to flee with his wife and children. Gouldsmith failed to heed the warning, and remained in Ireland. When Gouldsmith did seek refuge, he found that his religious history counted against him:

> [A]bout the first of November 1641 When the proclamation against the Rebellion came downe from Dublin, & that many of the Cleargy fled to Gallway the deponent desired the said Sir Henry Bingham to receive him into his castle of Castlebarr: there being as he conceived, noe other secure place of refuge within forty myles (And the deponent haveing beene formerly a Romish *papist* ~~preist~~, and conuerted to the

[26] Quoted in Gillespie, 'The Church of Ireland Clergy', 72.

> protestant religion by the light of gods truth being therefore more hated by the papists then any other) The said *Sir* Henry Bingham answered him That if he this deponent were in his Castle it would be the more eagarly assaulted for his sake and therefore he would not receive him: And thus haveing noe place of refuge within the said County of Mayo the deponent was exposed to the merciles rage of those his virulent enemyes the Rebells Whoe comeing to his howse at Midnight after the day of 1641 (all his men servants being fled from him) Presented their sharpe skeines to his throate robbed him.[27]

Gouldsmith suffered heavy material losses, but escaped physically unscathed to the house of the Lord of Mayo, where he took refuge, along with 'one Mr Gilberte a distressed mynister and his wiffe & family & 3 other distressed gentlemen protestants.'[28] Gouldsmith's account does not tend to underestimate his own importance and ability. So, he provides considerable detail about discussions that took place at Lord Mayo's table, and the way in which he provided the definitive religious position. He also details his – usually successful – engagement in controversies with Catholics, who sought to 'seduce' the few remaining Protestants in the county.

In addition, Gouldsmith provides a lengthy account of his activity as a minister in County Mayo, which is worth quoting in its entirety:

> And this deponent further saith That although Mr Bringhurst aforenamed turned and went to Masse: yet of this deponents knowledg he had aftewrwards seuerall men about him consulting to fling him over the Walle at Castlebarr *as the deponent hath heard* And this deponent (becawse he still kepte vp and manteined the mynistry whilest he stayd in the said Countie) was therefore much maligned and hated soe as he was in contynuall danger of his Liffe, and the rather becawse his religion was persecuted and dispised by the papists on the one side and either contemped or at Least sleighted by all or the most of the English *left* within both the said Counties of Mayo and Sligoe And before the Rebellion began (becawse this deponent whoe had formerly beene a *papist* ~~popish preist~~, too well knew in what blindnes & ignorance the poore children of the irish papists in his parrish and in other parts of this kingdome were brought vpp, and that not they alone but

[27] Deposition of John Gouldsmith, 30 December 1643 (T.C.D. MS 831, f. 192v).
[28] Ibid., f. 193r.

their parents (otherwise morally honest) were totally ignorant of the grounds and wholesome precepts and rudiments of gods true Religion; Therefore hee (as became one of his function) vsed all the faire gentle & prevalent perswasions & arguments he could to draw them to learne & vnderstand the same, & to resort to the ~~protestant Church~~ *deponents howse* to gaine instruccion there, and Likewise to conuerse with him *the same* privately in matters of Religion tending to their salvation By which meanes and by divers good turnes & curtesies done vnto them by him (to his noe Little cost) hee drew divers to *their Cathachism* become protestants : ~~some of which (to his great greefe suffered since by the Rebells)~~ And becawse this deponent would the rather invite and draw the poore children of his parrish to bee Catechised & instructed by them *him* As alsoe the children of the richer sort (though papists) hee did by all wayes and *gentle* meanes seeke ~~by gentle meanes~~ to draw them vnto him By which way he brought many to be Cathechised euery sabboth day & at other tymes: And often their parents (though papists) would be present and approve of his labours with their sonns, and say there is nothing amisse in this that yow teach them: wishing *that* their preist would doe as much And for the poorer sort this deponent *in the Countie s of Westmeath and Mayo* gave the parents of the children ~~seuerall sumes of~~ *some* money and Lent them divers Cowes freely somtymes by about 22 at once for [ ] yeres *for a good time* together and other *somtyme for a milch Cow* { *for* } tymes *22 yeres seuerall sometimes for a yere, divers Cowes by 13 at once* to suffer their children to come to him to be cathechised & instructed in the grounds of the true protestant Religion: ~~Where by very many were drawn to vnderstand gods words & truth : & the Church whereof he had the Cure began to florish & be accomodated and furnis h ed with a faire and competent auditorie.~~[29]

This is, manifestly, not the account of a disinterested witness. Moreover, Gouldsmith's deposition repeatedly emphasises a sense of isolation and embattledness that should cause us to proceed with caution. None the less, the deposition provides us with a unique account of a minister in operation.

One of the distinctive features of Gouldsmith's account is his dependence on catechising as an evangelical tool. In the context of his time, though, his use of this method is unremarkable. Nor does his use of the catechism give us

[29] Ibid., f. 196v.

any indication of his churchmanship. The catechism was regarded as a crucial pastoral tool across a wide range of Protestant opinion, especially, as in this case, when children or the unlearned were in view. The use of catechising as a handmaid to the sermon, and a preparatory course to preaching received broad agreement. This is reflected in the 'petition of the dispoyled ministers' presented, on their behalf by Henry Jones. Amongst other things, the ministers petitioned parliament:

> To establish one Catechisme to be taught in Schooles; Schoole{s} to be erected in meet precincts some little meanes to be allotted to the School=masters were it but the proffits of the County Schooles (wherewith hitherto little good hath been done) to be devided among them, and that Catechisme to be taught and explayned by the Ministers, to the ignorant in every parish, and they under some penalty to be compelled to learne the same, not to exclude preaching at any time, but to prepare them the better for heareing sermons and by Gods blessing to banish Ignorance the sinne of this Land.[30]

In any case, it appears that Gouldsmith's was a preaching, as well as a catechising, ministry for it was presumably to his sermons that his 'faire and competent auditorie' listened.

Gouldsmith's account is unmatched by any other in the depositions. Thus, how well his experience matches that of his ministerial colleagues is a matter of surmise. Yet, it seems likely that the approach taken to his pastoral and evangelical activities would be likely to recommend itself to his colleagues. Nor is there any reason to suppose that Gouldsmith's report of Catholic regard and hatred is an inaccurate reflection of the response of the Irish. Indeed, a similar dynamic may be witnessed in the deposition of Henry Boyne. Boyne reports how, at the outbreak of the rising, 'hee was come home to his house hee found there an Irishwoman that was come (out of goodwill) from Donoghmore about 6 miles distant, to tell the Deponents wife that it were best for him too *bee* ~~be~~gone Least hee might bee killed, (for as the said woman related) the rebells had cutt of one Mr Madders head a Minister, & that their cheife malice was against Churchmen.'[31] This woman's risky undertaking indicates a particular sense of goodwill towards the Protestant minister, as well as a keen sense of the reality of the risk that he faced.

[30] Petition of the dispoyled ministers, 8 March 1642 (T.C.D. MS 840, f. 36v).

[31] Deposition of Henry Boyne, 16 February 1642/3 (T.C.D. MS 839, f. 10r).

The Experiences of Ministers in 1641

For Henry Boyne's well-wisher there was no doubt that the violence being perpetrated by the rebels was not random – 'their chiefe malice was against churchmen'.[32] The ministers' depositions make it clear that they shared this sense, and believed that their calling singled them out for special attention. Determining whether this was, in fact, the case is not straightforward. Gillespie's warning is useful: 'The anecdotal character of the evidence for the nature of violence in the early months of the rebellion makes it difficult to identify motivation in any meaningful quantitative way, but it is clear that a wide diversity of motives was operative.'[33] None the less, the view that Protestant ministers were being singled out by the rebels was shared by many contemporaries. Henry Jones certainly subscribed to it: 'So in chief and above all others do we finde it with the deadliest venome spit against the persons of us the Minsters of the Gospel, towards whom their rage is without bounds.'[34] Similarly, in Cavan, Dr Teate warned fellow minister George Creichton that 'the whole north was risen and that of all men the ministers were like to be in greatest danger.'[35] The aftermath of the rebellion, too, seems to support this perception. 'Petitions to the House of Lords by the Ministers of the Gospel in Ireland suggest that close on half of their members ended up in distress in the early 1640s.'[36] On this basis, it seems that the ministers' sense of victimhood and persecution was not without some basis in fact.

Whether or not the objective evidence endorses their view, the depositions given by the ministers clearly express their subjective belief that they were exposed to particular hazard. The atrocities that they record lend colour to this belief. So, for example, John Walcockson, of County Laois reports his being singled out by the rebels:

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Raymond Gillespie, 'Destabilizing Ulster, 1641–2' in Brian Mac Cuarta (ed.), *Ulster 1641: Aspects of the Rising* (Belfast, 1993), 113.

[34] Henry Jones, *A Remonstrance of the Beginnings and Proceedings of the Rebellion in the County of Cavan, within the Province of Ulster in Ireland, from the 23 of October, 1641 untill the 15 of June, 1642* (London, 1642) .

[35] Brian Mac Cuarta, 'Religious Violence against Settlers in South Ulster, 1641–2' in David Edwards, Padraig Lenihan and Clodagh Tait (eds), *Age of Atrocity: Violence and Political Conflict in Early- Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2007), 158. I am grateful to Gordon O'Sullivan for this reference.

[36] William J. Smyth, *Map-making, Landscapes and Memory: a Geography of Colonial and Early-Modern Ireland, c. 1530–1750* (Cork, 2006), 131.

> But on a suddaine vizt the xxjth of January 1641 The Rebell Barnaby Dempsy of Knockardagurr in the same County Esquire & Colonell of Rebells, and Captain Dempsy his sonn together with about 3000 of other Rebells forceibly & rebelliously came and besett the said Castle & Church and [ ] tooke and surprised the Church only and this deponent and the rest of the protestants there and forceibly then and from thence halled dragged and carried all the men them away prisoners along with them: & pynioned and tyed fast their armes behynd them: but haveing stript the women and children of their clothes they lett them goe, And such was the mallice of those Rebells to this deponent becawse he was a minister, that they stript him stark naked & soe he contynued about an howre in snowy frosty & windy weather & then at length they returned vnto him a poore short wascote only which they had taken from him which did hardly couer his privy parts.[37]

John Gouldsmith, who we have already met, believed that, but for the intercession of a friar on his behalf, the rebels would have carried out their design of cutting out his tongue. That act, though grisly enough in its own right, gains added symbolic significance as the silencing of a preacher of the Protestant gospel. Thomas Bingham was less fortunate. After he was killed, his head was taken, with those of six other English to Kilkenny where:

> the Rebells then and there putt a gagg & a carrot in the said Mr Binghams mowth & slitt vpp his cheeks to his eares and lay{} the leafe of a Bible before him bade him preach for his mowth was wyde enowghe open.[38] And the Rebells then and there putt a gagg in the mowth of the said Mr Bingham the minister & laying the leafe of a bible before him bade him preach saying his mowth was open wyde enowghe.[39]

Richard Bourk, minister at Enniskillen, also reported events that were laden with anti-ministerial malice:

> *this deponent was likewise informed that* Mr Lodge the archdeacon of Killalow being buried about ~~Eight~~ *six* yeres since, ~~*His*~~ *H is* and divers other ministers bones were digged out of their graves as patrons of heresies

[37] Deposition of John Walcockson, 8 January 1644/5 (T.C.D. MS 815, ff. 367r–367v).
[38] Deposition of William Lucas, 16 August 1643 (T.C.D. MS 812, f.220r).
[39] Deposition of Joseph Wheeler, *et al.,* 5 July 1643 (T.C.D. MS 812, f. 203r).

> by direccion of one Melone titulary Bishop of Killalowe: One Robt Jones minister & preacher of godes word (whom the Rebells seemed to favour and speake well of) was not admitted Christien buriall after hee *was* dead, by directcion of the *some* popish preists; Albeit some of his frendes being Rebells (in regard of the goodnes of the man) much solicited that he might haue Christian buriall: but were denyed: Because (as they said, Hereticks must not be buried in hallowed ground.[40]

Ministers' persons were only one element of the infrastructure of Protestantism in Ireland. Churches, whether they were commandeered Catholic buildings or new Protestant constructions, were important symbols of Protestant power, and their destruction had important symbolic value.[41] The deposition of Francis Sacheverell highlights how they were targeted by the rebels:

> And the Deponent lastlie obserued that the malice of the Irish to the English protestants did not onely satisfie it selfe in the destruction of their lives and estate{s} but did alsoe extende itselfe to the detestacion and destruction of these Churches [ ] *the* { } wherein the Englishe had Celebrated the worshippe and service of god and in Testimony thereof the Irishe haue destroyed and burned downe to the ground the seuerall Churches followeing vizt the Cathedrall Church of Armagh the Church of Loughgall the Church of Tamlaregy or Ballymore the Church of Charlemont and moste parte of the Church of Monaghan.[42]

Equally telling is the rebels' focus on the Bible as a symbol of the Protestant faith. This view of the Scriptures is given expression to in a number of accounts of the desecration of Bibles. A large number of lay deponents report the burning or mutilation of their Bibles. At times, this becomes the catalyst for martyrdom:

> fflorence fitzPatricke his wife demaunde Mris Nicholeson to bring in her bible or otherwise shee would burne the same, vpon which grose termes Mris Nicholson tould her shee had rather loose her life before her bible should be burned.[43]

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[40] Deposition of Riccard Bourk, 12 July 1643 (T.C.D. MS 835, f. 238v).
[41] Smyth, 'Map-making, Landscapes and Memory', 142–143.
[42] Deposition of Frauncis Sacheverell, 21 July 1643 (T.C.D. MS 836, f. 111r).
[43] Examination of George Syllie, 9 April 1642 (T.C.D. MS 815, f. 260r).

> [John Nicholson's] wife euen shewing greater resolution when they much pressed her to burne her bible but her answer was most peremtorye that before she would burne her Bible or turne against her countrie shee would die upon the poynt of the sword which they both made good uppon the saboath day in the morneing next after the 12th day last at which time they were *most cruelly butchered &* murthered before Masse time that morning [44]

The words spoken by the rebels as these acts were carried out indicate the closeness of the identification between the Protestant faith and Scripture. So, Elizabeth Hooper reported:

> But soone after this deponent among the rest) being sent downe to Passadge aforesaid she *there* obserued one of the rebells (whose name shee knoweth not) teareing the singeing Psalmes out of this deponents Bible or Testament & shee reproueing of him for doeing soe, one Mr Butler *then presente said to* this deponent I am sory (honest woman that you are soe deluded, for there is nothing in that booke but *the* devills Inventions[45]

Similarly, Edward Slack, from Fermanagh, reported a telling incident:

> The said Rebells tooke this deponents byble opend it, and laying the open side in a puddle of water lept and stampt vpon it, Saying a plague ont this booke hath bred all the quarrel, saying *&* they hoped that within 3 weeks all the bibles in Ireland shold be vsed as that was or worse & that none should be left in the Kingdome.[46]

Slack had already listed his books, worth £20, as losses suffered at the hands of the rebels. It is telling that he singles out this incident for special mention.

Other instances displayed even more contempt for the Bible. John Parrie reported that, after the burning of Armagh, the Irish 'layd the sacred bible on their privy parts of some of [the dead] in contempt of the same.[47] He also reported a hearsay account that 'one Patrick Carragh ô Cullan opening the

[44] Deposition of John Glasse, 8 April 1642 (T.C.D. MS 815, 197v).
[45] Deposition of Elizabeth Hooper, 1 February 1643/4 (T.C.D. MS 820, f. 50v).
[46] Deposition of Edward Slacke, 4 January 1642/3 (T.C.D. MS 835, f. 170r).
[47] Deposition of John Parrie, 31 May 1642 (T.C.D. MS 836, f.63 v).

sacred bible pist vpon the same, saying if I could doe worse with it I would.'[48] These accounts of the desecration, defilement, and destruction of the Bible are significant. They identify the Bible as a crucial symbol of Protestant faith – something to be valued above and protected by the life of the faithful, and the target for the depredations of the heathen. The propaganda value of such accounts should not be ignored, nor should we disregard the importance normally attached to the Bible in Protestant martyrology. None the less such accounts provide us with important evidence about Bible possession and reading in Ireland and they tell us a good deal about how Irish Protestantism and the ministers who preached it were perceived during the early decades of the seventeenth century.

More broadly, the experiences reported by the ministers, in their depositions, almost univocally describe violence that was, to some extent at least, motivated by the ministers' position, and by their identification with a foreign religion. But, as we have seen, economic motivations also featured, and had particular relevance when ministers were in view. It is impossible at this remove to disentangle the various threads of motivation – probably it would have been difficult even for the rebels to do so. But the accounts do present the ministers as an isolated and embattled caste. This sense of isolation is echoed again and again through the depositions as ministers list the names of those who have 'turned to the mass', who converted to Catholicism. That English Protestants thought it expedient to do so must, in itself, tell us something about the nature of the violence that erupted in 1641.

These events and – just as importantly – the ministers' perception of these events, seem to clamour for an explanation that made meaning of these traumatic events. As we have seen, the ministerial deponents were quick to develop a narrative of religious persecution, aimed particularly at them as the symbols and standard bearers of the Protestant faith in Ireland. It is noteworthy, therefore, that, on the whole, ministers are slow to attempt to provide an overarching apocalyptic or providential reading of events. There are exceptions to this. Most notoriously, Robert Maxwell's deposition, which later formed part of Sir John Temple's *The Irish Rebellion* (1646), was peppered with especial actions of divine providence protecting the elect Protestants of Ireland.[49] But Maxwell was the exception, rather than the rule. In general,

[48] Ibid., f. 64 r.

[49] See, for a discussion of Temple's work, T. C. Barnard, 'Crisis of Identity among Irish Protestants, 1641–1685', *Past and Present*, 127 (1990), 50–51. For Maxwell's deposition see John Temple, *The Irish Rebellion: or, An History of the Beginnings and First*

providentialist or apocalyptic explanations were offered in publications about 1641, rather than in the depositions themselves. Daniel Harcourt's pamphlet, *The Clergies Lamentation* (1643), and John Puttock's *Good and True News from Ireland* (1642) provide examples of this sort of reinterpretation of history going on outside of and parallel to the depositions. For the most part, though, deponents tended to limit themselves to expressions of thankfulness for divine deliverance from threatened danger.

We began this article by noting that the social position of the ordained minister had often, and for a number of reasons, been problematic. These reasons were relevant to the Protestant ministers in Ireland during the early decades of the seventeenth century. The context of plantation exacerbated and added to the complexities of the minister's social status. But the depositions capture for us a moment of unparalleled confusion during which ministers became martyrs, when their relationship to a social order that was being turned upside-down pushed them to the forefront of events. There is much that the depositions do not tell us, but they do provide a unique insight into the experience of these men before and during the catastrophes of 1641.

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Progresse of the General Rebellion raised within the Kingdom of Ireland, upon the Three and Twentieth Day of October, in the Year, 1641, Wing (2nd ed.) / T627, 123–127.