

Eucharistic belief and practice in Ireland, 1660-1740

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For Dad

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Abbreviations

Articles of religion (1615)	<i>Articles of Religion Agreed upon by the archbishops and bishops and the rest of the clergy of Ireland, in the convocation holden at Dublin in the year of our Lord God 1615 (Dublin, 1615)</i>
BCP	<i>The Book of Common Prayer, and administration of the Sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies of the Church, according to the use of the Church of Ireland (Dublin, 1680)</i>
BL	British Library
<i>Cal. S.P. Ire.</i>	<i>Calendar of State papers relating to Ireland (24 vols, London, 1860-1911)</i>
<i>Canons and decrees</i>	<i>The canons and decrees of the sacred and oecumenical Council of Trent, (London, 1848) ed. by J. Waterworth</i>
CCCA	Cork City and County Archives
<i>IER</i>	<i>Irish ecclesiastical record</i>
<i>DIB</i>	<i>Dictionary of Irish Biography (ed. by James McGuire and James Quinn, Cambridge, 2009)</i>
<i>E.H.R.</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
H.M.C.	Historical Manuscripts Commission
<i>JRSAI</i>	<i>Journal of Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland</i>
NLI	National Library of Ireland
NLS	National Library of Scotland
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
PHSI	Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
RCBL	Representative Church Body Library
TCD	Trinity College Dublin

Conventions

Dates have been left old style except that year has been taken to begin on 1 January. Spellings of quotations have been modernized. Biblical quotations have been taken from the Authorized (King James) Version.

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Introduction

I, A.B., do solemnly and sincerely, in the presence of God, profess, testify, and declare, that I do believe that in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper there is not any transubstantiation of the elements of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ at or after the consecration thereof by any person whatsoever, and that the invocation or adoration of the virgin Mary or any other saint, and the sacrifice of the mass, as they are now used in the church of Rome, are superstitious and idolatrous.

In 1691, after the defeat of Jacobite forces by William III, the foregoing declaration against transubstantiation was included as part of the *Act for abrogating the Oath of Supremacy in Ireland and appointing other oaths* for all those who wished to enter public office.¹ Just over a decade later, the Eucharist was again included in further penal legislation of 1704, when a sacramental test was appended to *An act to prevent the further growth of popery*.² Now, instead of simply denying the central Eucharistic tenet of Roman Catholicism, officials had to publicly receive the sacrament in the Church of Ireland as a symbol of their political loyalty. This manifestation of the sacred in the secular world was the instigation for this thesis, and provides the fulcrum around which an analysis of Eucharistic practice and belief is arranged.

The conflating of political and religious identity that was advocated by the sacramental test was not unique in early modern society, where the majority of people subscribed to a transcendental world view.³ By making the Eucharist a symbol of political loyalty, the authorities revealed that this symbol was important, in different ways, to different people. The people who were targeted by the legislation were Catholics and Presbyterians, whose Eucharistic practices diverged from those of the established church. In the face of this programme of reform and pressure from the official church, Catholics and Presbyterians sought to protect their

¹ 3 William and Mary c.2

² 2 Anne c.6.

³ Raymond Gillespie, *Devoted people: belief and religion in early modern Ireland* (Manchester, 1997).

own Eucharistic practices. Catholics, influenced by the renewal of the Counter Reformation, defended the Mass as the central component of their belief system. Presbyterians, relatively recent settlers in Ireland, sought to protect what was a unique Eucharistic tradition, born of the particular circumstances of Presbyterian settlement. This thesis will examine the practices and beliefs of these three confessions in a comparative study, with the symbol of the Eucharist as its organising principle.

The function of symbols within communities is considered an important question among historians and social scientists. The search for the hidden power that symbols appeared to exercise in both primitive and contemporary societies has long been a preoccupation of the social scientist, but increasingly has attracted the interest of cultural historians seeking to understand how symbols shaped communal identity and reinforced societal structures. As one of the most powerful symbols existing in western Europe, the Eucharist has been given considerable attention. This attention is well deserved, given the complex nature of Eucharistic theologies, the powerful emotions the Eucharist has evoked among communities, and its persistence as both a symbol of unity and division within the Christian experience. Eucharistic symbolism has been identified as an area of cultural history which, by virtue of its continuity, is an avenue of enquiry likely to yield rich rewards in the understanding of how societies operated and how they composed themselves into distinct groups with specific symbols to express their identity.

Few questions have been asked by Irish historians about the Eucharistic practices of confessional groups in Ireland in the early modern period.⁴ A focus on institutional religion, rather than an investigation into the cultural practices of both the laity and clergy simultaneously, has characterised the treatment of religious practice in Ireland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁵ This is particularly true of the later period, where the political impact of the penal laws proves, understandably, to be the main attraction of the era. Even though the criterion for falling on the wrong side of

⁴ A notable exception to this is the work of Raymond Gillespie see, for example, Gillespie, *Devoted people*; idem, 'The religion of Irish Protestants: a view from the laity, 1580-1700' in Alan Ford, James McGuire and Kenneth Milne (eds) *As by law established: the Church of Ireland since the Reformation* (Dublin, 1995) pp 89-111; idem, 'Dissenters and nonconformists, 1661-1700' in Kevin Herlihy (ed) *The Irish dissenting tradition, 1650-1750* (Dublin, 1995), pp 11-28.

⁵ Gillespie, *Devoted people*, pp 2-5.

these laws was a religious one, the historical focus has been on the political or economic effects of the legislation rather than the cultural impact.⁶

Historians, while discussing Eucharistic practice, have tried to incorporate various disciplines, of which John Bossy's essay on the Mass is perhaps the most noteworthy.⁷ An earlier contribution to this type of cross-disciplinary approach is Keith Thomas' account of English popular beliefs in the early modern period.⁸ These historians have attempted to draw on ideas that have emerged from the social sciences about religion and provide useful concepts for the present investigation into religious identity in Ireland. Bossy in particular emphasized the sociological tradition- the idea that religion can be interpreted as a construction of a social system- and investigated how this idea could be applied to the development and changing rubrics of the mass between 1200 and 1700. Bossy politely rejected the anthropologist's emphasis on 'magic' and his 'tendency to see popular feelings... as governed by a deficient technology'.⁹ This is a sentiment shared by Mary Douglas who questioned the assumption that 'a rational, verbally explicit, personal commitment to God is self-evidently more evolved and better than its alleged contrary, formal, ritualistic conformity.'¹⁰ Keith Thomas also questioned the anthropologist's reluctance to define magic as bad science. Thomas challenged the assumed difference between science as we understand it today (or as he pointed out we *don't* understand it) and the magical remedies which people employed in days of old.¹¹ While Thomas' study is useful in its appreciation of popular practices, its focus on magic is not of great relevance to this thesis. References to magical practices, even when they involved the Eucharist, are in short supply in Ireland and have been discussed elsewhere.¹²

⁶ For an overview of the historiography on the penal laws see James Kelly, 'The historiography of the penal laws' in John Bergin, Eoin Magennis, Lesa Ní Mhunchaile, Patrick Walsh (ed.) *New perspectives on the penal laws* (Dublin, 2012), pp 144-76.

⁷ John Bossy, 'The Mass as a social institution 1200-1700' in *Past and Present*, no.100 (1983), pp 29-61.

⁸ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic: studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth- century England* (London, 1971).

⁹ Bossy, 'The Mass as a social institution', p.30.

¹⁰ Mary Douglas, *Natural symbols: explorations in cosmology* (3rd ed. London, 1996), p.4.

¹¹ Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic*, pp 799-800.

¹² St. John D. Seymour, *Irish witchcraft and demonology* (Dublin, 1913); Margaret Spufford has highlighted Thomas' brevity in discussing the 'magical' aspects of the Mass, see Margaret Spufford, 'The importance of religion in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries' in idem (ed.), *The world of rural dissenters, 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995), pp 97-8.

Bossy's use of liturgical texts to convey the central emphases of the Mass has been criticised by Miri Rubin as not taking into account that the Masses he described 'were never celebrated', because 'people did not experience ritual from a unitary position, in a homogenous way.'¹³ In her study of the Eucharist in the late medieval period, Rubin attempted to use a broader range of sources in an anthropological framework, in order to document the construction of the Eucharist as the 'chief' sacrament, primarily through the institution of the feast of Corpus Christi. These sources, which included the canonical, liturgical, devotional, aesthetic and legislative, both established and refined Eucharistic doctrine. In addition Rubin impressively used Eucharistic *exempla*, or miracle stories to document the variety of methods by which the doctrine of the Real Presence was communicated to the laity.¹⁴ She incorporated anthropological ideas about symbols, their meanings and effects in order to explain the process of 'the raising of a fragile, white, wheaten little disc to amazing prominence, and fallible, sometimes ill-lettered, men to the status of mediator between Christians and the supernatural.'¹⁵ In contrast to Bossy, Rubin sees evidence of the Eucharist's divisive power, because of its control by the clergy and rigid doctrine, *before* the reformation of the sixteenth century.

Eamon Duffy has, like Bossy, seen liturgy as the core of medieval religion, while 'the Mass lay at the heart of the liturgy.'¹⁶ Duffy, reflecting on Rubin's portrayal of Corpus Christi processions as a reiteration of local power-structures, argued that this could only be effective 'because the language of Eucharistic belief and devotion was saturated with communitarian and corporate imagery.'¹⁷ Duffy's emphasis was on the Eucharist as a symbol of unity, one which was all the more powerful because it was received only once a year at Easter. Infrequent reception gave rise to the powerful image of the Eucharist, imbued with a sacred quality. This quality saw various devotional practices develop around its exposition including lights, bells, rood-screens and in one exceptional case, a mechanical apparatus lowered behind the altar at the moment of elevation!¹⁸ Duffy's synthesis of archival and material sources

¹³ Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in late medieval culture* (Cambridge, 1991), pp 2, 77.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp 107-131.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.348.

¹⁶ Eamon Duffy, *The stripping of the altars: traditional religion in England 1400-1580* (2nd edn. New Haven, 2005), p.91.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.92.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, pp 95-102; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, p.62.

has been widely lauded and is particularly useful when written parochial sources are lacking.¹⁹

Virginia Reinburg has highlighted the participation of the laity in the Mass by examining vernacular prayer books in late medieval France and has found that the Mass was a 'ritual drama in which both priest and congregation had distinct, but equally necessary parts of play.'²⁰ Reinburg re-iterated the social function of the Mass as 'a rich layering of associations, of social relationships and rituals expressing those relationships.'²¹

Much of the historiographical focus has been on the pre-reformation ritual of the Mass, a fact which has been addressed by Amy Burnett Nelson in a recent study of reformed Eucharistic rituals.²² Building on previous studies which adjusted Bossy's contention that Protestants 'created no sacred symbol as powerful as the Host', Burnett traced the continuities of the communal aspect of the Mass in reformed liturgies.²³

Clifford Geertz's essay *Religion as a cultural system* is a useful exposition of anthropological ideas about how religious rituals were inextricably linked with religious symbolism. Geertz's idea that religious communities were autonomous societies which must be interpreted individually is rather difficult to manipulate, when trying to find a framework that will detect common impulses in a varied religious milieu. While Geertz's ethnographical fieldwork with Balinese and Javanese societies in some way limits his discussion of religious symbols beyond an extra-Christian context - something which Bossy felt was a mitigating factor in imposing anthropological theories on the Christian tradition- Geertz's 'definition' of religion is a useful theoretical tool.²⁴ Indeed Geertz's classification of religion as a system of symbols which attempts to 'establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting

¹⁹ For a similar enterprise see Rachel Moss, Colmán Ó Clabaigh and Salvador Ryan (eds) *Art and devotion in late medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 2006).

²⁰ Virginia Reinburg, 'Liturgy and the laity in late medieval and Reformation France' in *Sixteenth Century Journal*, xxiii, no. 3 (1992), p.530.

²¹ *Ibid*, p.542.

²² Amy Nelson Burnett, 'The social history of communion and the reformation of the Eucharist' in *Past and Present*, no.211 (2011), pp 77-119.

²³ *Ibid*, p.78.

²⁴ Bossy, 'The Mass as a social institution', pp 50-51. Bossy, in discussing four anthropological models of sacrificial meaning, regrets that some of the models rely too heavily on primitive religions. Clifford Geertz 'Religion as a cultural system' in *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays* (New York, 1973) p.90.

moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence'²⁵ complements Bossy's ideas about the Mass as a social institution which, following the rise of public justice (in the form of executions), lost a degree of potency.²⁶ Despite this convergence, Bossy's attempts to see the Mass as something which fostered a communal identity is contrasted by Geertz's ideas about cultural acts being as 'public as marriage and as observable as agriculture'.²⁷ While Bossy stressed the importance of the communal ritual, Geertz emphasized its mundaneness.²⁸

In a discussion on the celebration of the Eucharist in the early modern period in an Irish context, Bossy's model is more suitable. What is important in the Irish context is perhaps not what constructed societies but how religious practice shaped religious identities. The idea of comparing the Eucharistic practices of the Anglican, Presbyterian and Catholic communities in order to reconstruct their religious experiences is a fresh undertaking. The comparative nature of the study will therefore benefit from broader frameworks, together with an awareness of the theological foundations of different Eucharistic doctrines. For this, Christopher Elwood's study of Calvin's Eucharistic doctrine in sixteenth century France is useful.²⁹ Elwood's work also addresses the idea that harmonious Eucharistic practices reflected a social order at peace. The study is a comprehensive account of France's theological wars about the nature of the Real Presence where 'people rioted, fought, killed, and died over theological definitions of the Eucharist.'³⁰

Elwood's central argument is that the threats posed to the Eucharistic ritual by Protestant reformers were processed by church and secular authorities as coexisting with and perhaps encouraging a threat to established social order; to attack the Eucharist was to attack the social model. This approach would emphasize a

²⁵ Geertz 'Religion as a cultural system', p.90.

²⁶ Bossy, 'The mass as a social institution', p.53.

²⁷ Geertz, 'Religion as a cultural system', p.91.

²⁸ Geertz has acknowledged possible contention between anthropologists and historians in a placatory but resolute essay on interdisciplinary approaches in 'History and anthropology' in *New Literary History*, xxi, No.2 (1990) "...the concern on the history side (which seems the greater, perhaps because there are more personages there) that trafficking with anthropologists will lead to soul loss is, given the enormous discrepancy in the size of the two fields, to say nothing of their cultural weight, ludicrous" (p.333).

²⁹ Christopher Elwood, *The body broken: the Calvinist doctrine of the Eucharist and the symbolization of power in sixteenth century France* (New York, 1999).

³⁰ *Ibid*, p.4.

Durkheimian sociological perspective that concentrated on the social functions of religious ritual and religious practices.³¹ In France, where the most intimidating aspect of the reformers' beliefs was their apparent inclination to sedition, Calvin's ideas threatened to prioritize individuality over authority. In Ireland it was the fear of the political loyalties of Presbyterians that made them the target of Anglican hostility.

Raymond Gillespie has recognised the inherent problems with rigid theoretical frameworks in an interpretation of early modern religious practice in Ireland. Referring to the historiographical debate surrounding the success or failure of the Reformation in Ireland, Gillespie outlines that there has been a focus on 'official' records, which while useful for two reasons, the official position and lay transgressions of this position, does not adequately reflect the combined lay and clerical realities of religious belief and practice.³² The prevalence of what Keith Thomas has described as 'parasitic' beliefs, is important in the analysis of religious practice in Ireland and the abundance of holy wells, ghost stories, symbolic talismans and protective prayers shows up inconsistencies between official guidelines and actual practice.³³ The measurement of these types of practices indicated the extent to which official ordinances were being ignored. This study will investigate the extent to which the decrees of church authorities were being heeded by the laity and parish clergy in respect of Eucharistic traditions.

The thesis follows the confessional divisions of early modern Ireland by discussing the approach to the Eucharist of each denomination separately. These separate discussions are further divided into two parts, the first being the theoretical model of Eucharistic belief and practice that was proposed to the laity. This encompasses the way in which the Eucharist was articulated to the laity through liturgy, catechesis, preaching and official directives, mainly emanating from the 'official' or clerical proponents of the Eucharist. The second section explores the reception of this theoretical model by the laity through analysing local sources, personal experiences and official observations of lay practice. This dichotomous framework of theory and practice for each confession covers the first six chapters. The thesis concludes with

³¹ Ibid, pp 18-21, 32.

³² Gillespie, *Devoted people*, p.8.

³³ Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic*, p.40; Gillespie, *Devoted people*, pp 63-106.

an examination of confessional conflict over the Eucharist in order to examine how the theories and practices laid out in the first six chapters informed relationships between communities. Throughout the thesis a comparative framework has been utilised in order to highlight particular practices and elucidate confessional identities.

Chapter one explores the Eucharist in the Church of Ireland in the context of the ritual prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer. It documents the energies of Anglican clergy to provide a framework for the celebration of the Eucharist that was both regular and uniform. In their promotion of 'Prayer-Book Protestantism' they encouraged frequent communion and sacramental worship in a suitably embellished environment. Recent scholarship has already begun rescuing the post-Restoration church from its reputation as a 'spiritually moribund vehicle of reaction and intolerance which had little to offer the laity.'³⁴ The chapter will also examine theoretical difficulties faced by the clergy in the ambiguous position on auricular confession and the unwillingness of parishioners to embrace their specific plans for sacramental worship. Theological ambiguity is also examined in light of the observation that the nature of the Eucharistic presence 'was a question which the seventeenth-century Church of England had dodged repeatedly.'³⁵ Anglican piety has been little explored in the context of the Eucharist, with the exception of F.R. Bolton's study of the Caroline church. Bolton's work collates the spiritual writings of Irish Anglican divines to gauge the theological emphases of Eucharistic thought. His conclusion largely corroborates those of John Spurr, that the Church of Ireland's articulation of Eucharistic doctrine was varied and undefined.³⁶ While Bolton's study was confined to the intellectual tradition in the Church of Ireland, this thesis seeks to assess its impact on the laity.

The first chapter also explores the means of communicating doctrine through devotional texts and catechisms.³⁷ Canonical directives are considered, to examine

³⁴ John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (Yale, 1991), p.xii. For an examination of this theme see Donald Spaeth, 'Common Prayer? Popular observance of the Anglican liturgy in Restoration Wiltshire' in S.J. Wright (ed.), *Parish, church and people: local studies in lay religion, 1350-1750* (London, 1988), pp125-51; For an earlier period Judith Maltby, *Prayer Book and people in Elizabethan and early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1998).

³⁵ Spurr, *Restoration Church*, p.345.

³⁶ F.R. Bolton, *The Caroline tradition of the Church of Ireland* (London 1958), pp 89-120.

³⁷ Ian Green, 'The necessary knowledge of the principles of religion': catechism and catechizing in Ireland, c. 1560-1800' in Alan Ford, James McGuire and Kenneth Milne (eds) *As by law established: the Church of Ireland since the Reformation* (Dublin, 1995), pp 69-88.

the type of messages that were being communicated by bishops to their clergy and how they were implemented at a parish level. John McCafferty has looked in depth at the construction of the Irish canons in the context of the particular circumstances of the Church of Ireland in the 1630s. His study informs the type of Eucharistic worship that may have been expected in parish churches under the canons, which provided for the practical setting of the sacrament.³⁸ This practical setting has been explored for the Restoration church by Nicholas Tyacke and Kenneth Fincham and has begun to attract attention in an Irish context.³⁹

In chapter two the Eucharistic practices of Anglicans are considered in a parochial context. The engagement of the laity in parish life has received attention from, among others, T.C. Barnard, Rowena Dudley and Raymond Gillespie. Barnard and Dudley have examined the role of the laity in the religious and civic functions of the parish. Barnard has focused on the interaction of elite members with their clergy, while Dudley has analysed the treatment of the poor and involvement of the laity in parochial duties.⁴⁰ Their work has heralded the use of parish sources in the study of lay participation and compliments the recent project to publish vestry records, which form the basis of analysis for chapter two. Raymond Gillespie has investigated lay beliefs and practices outside the bounds of official parochial worship through the analyses of print culture, wonders and unorthodox piety.⁴¹ This approach is an important factor for balancing the theoretical strands running through this thesis.

Presbyterian doctrine and practice of the Eucharist, the subjects of chapters three and four, have benefitted from sustained interest in the dissenting community in Ireland.

³⁸ John McCafferty, *The reconstruction of the Church of Ireland: Bishop Bramhall and the Laudian reforms, 1633-1641* (Cambridge, 2007).

³⁹ Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars restored: the changing face of English religious worship, 1547-c.1700* (Oxford, 2007), Chapter 8; Robin Usher, *Protestant Dublin, 1660-1760: architecture and iconography* (Basingstoke, 2012), Chapter 2; Michael O'Neill, 'Architecture from the reformation to 1800' in John Crawford and Raymond Gillespie (eds), *St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin: a history* (Dublin, 2009), pp 219-30.

⁴⁰ T.C. Barnard, 'Parishes, pews and parsons: lay people and the Church of Ireland, 1647-1780' in Raymond Gillespie and W.G. Neely (eds), *The laity and the Church of Ireland, 1000-2000: all sorts and conditions* (Dublin, 2002), pp 70-103; Rowena Dudley, 'The Dublin parishes and the poor, 1660-1740 in *Archivium Hibernicum*, liii (1999), pp 80-94; idem, 'The Dublin parish, 1660-1730' in Elizabeth Fitzpatrick and Raymond Gillespie (eds) *The parish in medieval and early modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), pp 277-296; Raymond Gillespie, 'Urban parishes in early seventeenth century Ireland: the case of Dublin' in Elizabeth Fitzpatrick and Raymond Gillespie (eds) *The parish in medieval and early modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), pp 228-241.

⁴¹ For this approach in the Anglican context see 'The religion of Irish Protestants: a view from the laity, 1580-1700' in Ford, McGuire and Milne (eds) *As by law established*, pp 89-99; For a broader discussion of the Eucharist in this context see Gillespie, *Devoted people*, pp 97-101.

For religious belief Phil Kilroy's survey of dissent and controversy is a key text. Her focus is mainly on institutional origins, the development of organisational structures and theological outlooks. It also deals extensively with institutional interaction between dissenters, with the state and with the established church.⁴² R.L. Greaves expands on Kilroy's work to argue for the 'denominationalism' of dissenting groups in Ireland between 1660 and 1700. Greaves' focus is, like Kilroy's, on organisational strength and origins but he includes some comments on lay belief.⁴³ He argues against Kilroy's thesis that dissenters developed particular theological outlooks which were 'virtually irrelevant to the question of survival.'⁴⁴ The studies of Kilroy and Greaves were concerned to document the broader dissenting community and their relationship with the state. This thesis focuses exclusively on the Presbyterian tradition because of its numerical strength in comparison with other dissenting communities and its articulation of a unique Eucharistic practice.

Ulster Presbyterian piety has received attention from two historians interested in the translation of religious practices to North America. Emigration of Scots Presbyterians in large numbers in the beginning of eighteenth century has provided the basis for Leigh Eric Schmidt's account of the origins of American revivalism.⁴⁵ Schmidt's use of lay narratives at communions corroborates some of the themes discussed in chapter four. Marilyn Westerkamp's study of Ulster-Scots piety discusses the role of the laity in the development of ritual, though her focus is on institutional records.⁴⁶ The studies by Schmidt and Westerkamp indicate that in the transfer of Presbyterianism to the New World, sacramental occasions were a key feature. Schmidt's work is particularly useful as it assesses lay participation and the ritual features of Presbyterian communions.

Dissenters have, therefore, been the subject of considerable interest by historians using the sacraments they celebrated for different purposes. Few historians have looked at the devotional texts, catechisms and sermons which informed Presbyterian

⁴² Phil Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy, 1660-1714* (Cork, 1994).

⁴³ R.L. Greaves, *God's other children: Protestant nonconformists and the emergence of denominational church in Ireland, 1660-1700* (Stanford, 1997), pp215-48.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp 6-7.

⁴⁵ Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy Fairs: Scotland and the making of American revivalism* (2 edn. Grand Rapids, 2001).

⁴⁶ Marilyn Westerkamp, *Triumph of the laity: Scots-Irish piety and the Great Awakening, 1625-1760* (New York, 1988).

belief and is the subject of chapter three.⁴⁷ Many of these texts were produced by Irish clergy and were designed to be used by their own congregations. The texts are necessary for understanding the ritual of communions that are discussed in chapter four. Several sources that have not been previously used to document Presbyterian communions are used in this chapter including the records of the Cork Presbyterian congregation and the diary of William Jacque, a Presbyterian minister in Dublin. This provides a balance to the previous assessments of Presbyterian communions which have focused almost exclusively on Ulster.⁴⁸ Ulster sacramental practices have never been examined as a single study, with the exception of a concise article by J.M. Barkley who rightly points to the value of session records in illuminating lay practice.⁴⁹

Chapters five and six document the Eucharistic practices and beliefs of Irish Catholics. Studies of Catholicism in the early modern period have largely followed the divisions of that community into Old English and Gaelic Irish factions. Colm Lennon has been foremost in documenting the piety of the Old English community in the Counter-Reformation period. He has shown how the circumstances of Ireland allowed the Old English community to ‘domesticate’ the Mass in the early seventeenth century.⁵⁰ The religious beliefs of Gaelic Ireland have been well-served by the work of Salvador Ryan and Bernadette Cunningham. Ryan has studied the popular beliefs of the Gaelic Irish from the mid-fifteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries through the lense of Gaelic poetry and Irish-language catechisms.⁵¹ Bernadette Cunningham has explored the religious texts of the Irish scholar Geoffrey Keating, including his tract on the Mass, and demonstrated the hybrid identity of

⁴⁷ Katherine P. Meyer, ‘The last day I sate at this board...’: Sermons recorded at Youghal, Bandon, and Mallow, 1676-1688’ in Kevin Herlihy (ed) *Propagating the word of Irish dissent, 1650-1800* (Dublin, 1998), pp 63-74.

⁴⁸ Copies of these records are held in Cork city and county archives. The originals are in local custody. The diary of William Jacque was recently acquired by the National Library of Ireland. (NLI, MS 34,946).

⁴⁹ John M. Barkley, ‘The evidence of old Irish session-books on the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper’ in *Church Service Society Annual* no. 22 (May, 1952), pp 24-34.

⁵⁰ Colm Lennon, ‘Mass in the manor house : the Counter-Reformation in Dublin, 1560-1630’ in James Kelly and Daire Keogh (eds) *History of the Catholic diocese of Dublin* (Dublin, 2000), pp 112-26.

⁵¹ Salvador Ryan, ‘Popular religion in Gaelic Ireland, 1445-1645’ (unpublished Ph.D thesis, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2002). For published works that draw on this thesis see Salvador Ryan, ‘“New wine in old bottles”: implementing Trent in early modern Ireland’ in Thomas Herron and Michael Potterton (eds) *Ireland in the Renaissance, c.1540-1660* (Dublin, 2007), pp122-37 and idem, ‘Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa’s ‘An Teagasg Críosaíde’ 1611-1614 : a reassessment of its audience and use’ in *Archivium Hibernicum*, lviii (2004), pp 259-267.

clerics who came from a Gaelic Irish background but were exposed to the currents of the Counter-Reformation.⁵² Patrick Corish's analysis of the Catholic community in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries offered an integrated study of both Old English and Gaelic Irish communities and attempted to balance official doctrine against popular practices.⁵³ The single study on the Eucharist in Ireland for the Catholic tradition, *The Blessed Eucharist in Irish history* reflected the impetus of its publication, which was the Eucharistic Congress of 1932. Helena Concannon's text is a curious mixture of the devotional and the historical, and provides a valuable compilation of Eucharistic references from older antiquarian texts.⁵⁴ The impact of the Counter Reformation, through the catechisms and devotional works of both Old English and Gaelic Irish clergy form the basis of discussion of chapter five. Alison Forrestal's study of Catholic synods has collated valuable material for the official directives emanating from the Catholic clergy during the seventeenth century.⁵⁵ Whether these directions were heeded prompts the investigation into the Eucharistic beliefs and practices among the Catholic laity in chapter six.

The first six chapters therefore examine three confessional attitudes to the Eucharist separately, but with an eye to the concluding discussion of the seventh chapter. In the final section the Eucharist is examined in the context of 'confessions in conflict'. This conflict was both theological and political and involved the institution of the Eucharist as a symbol of secular power. The chapter argues that this institution, through the sacramental test, was only possible in light of the Eucharistic piety explored in the previous chapters. While the sacramental test has garnered considerable attention among historians, most have focused on its political motivation and consequences. David Hayton has considered the effect of the test on dissenters in local government, while Sean Connolly has examined the test in light of Anglican suspicion of Protestant dissenters.⁵⁶ Certainly these factors are important,

⁵² Bernadette Cunningham, 'Geoffrey Keating's *Eochair Sgiath an Aifrinn* and the Catholic reformation in Ireland' in William Shiels and Diana Wood (eds) *The Churches, Ireland and the Irish* (Oxford, 1989); idem, *The world of Geoffrey Keating: history, myth and religion in seventeenth century Ireland* (Dublin, 2000).

⁵³ P.J. Corish, *The catholic community in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Dublin, 1981).

⁵⁴ Helena Concannon, *The Blessed Eucharist in Irish history* (Dublin, 1932).

⁵⁵ Alison Forrestal, *Catholic synods in Ireland, 1660-1690* (Dublin, 1998).

⁵⁶ David Hayton, 'Exclusion, conformity and parliamentary representation: the impact of the sacramental test on Irish dissenting politics' in Kevin Herlihy (ed.) *The politics of Irish dissent 1650-1800* (Dublin, 1997), pp 52-73; S.J. Connolly, *Religion, law and power: the making of Protestant Ireland 1660-1760* (Oxford, 1995), pp 163-71.

but this study focuses on the impact of the test on Presbyterians and Catholics in the context of broader confessional disagreements over worship and belief. These conflicts were born of differing theological emphases.

Sources

This thesis brings together a wide variety of sources in an effort to create a layered view of religious identity. The theoretical framework in which liturgy and belief were constructed is examined using the canonical texts, official regulations and devotional material written for the laity. Eucharistic practice is examined using local sources, diaries and observations on lay practice by contemporaries. Confessional conflict is examined using controversial polemic as articulated in print culture.⁵⁷ The research will not seek to generalise about the laity's experience, although some general conclusions will be constructed, but will investigate the nuances of the communities' everyday experiences. Sources for this kind of enterprise needed to be varied but regrettably weigh in favour of 'official' observations.

Parochial records offer an opportunity to reflect on communal worship, but are limited by their geographic particularity and often by their lack of detail. The types of local sources available differ for the three confessions under review and are most informative for the established church. Churchwardens' accounts provide details on expenditure on the elements of bread and wine, church plate and changes to the interior of the church. These accounts vary considerably in quality. Some are quite detailed, such as the accounts for the united Dublin parishes of St. Bride's, St. Michael le Pole's and St. Stephen's, which were kept in a consistent fashion by a person appointed to perform the task.⁵⁸ Others are mere scraps or quick jottings, kept by chance or under the tenure of a fiscally-minded rector, who may have only been in the parish for a short period. Because the quality of the accounts varies a good deal, constructing a detailed picture of parochial expenditure is a difficult task, made more complex because of the regional biases in survival.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ For print culture in Ireland the key text is Raymond Gillespie, *Reading Ireland: print, reading and social change in early modern Ireland* (Manchester, 2005).

⁵⁸ RCBL, P327/4/1.

⁵⁹ For the English methodologies see Clive Burgess, 'Pre-reformation churchwardens' accounts and parish government: lessons from London and Bristol' in *E.H.R.*, cxvii, no.147 (2002), pp 306-332; Beat Kümin, 'Late medieval churchwardens' accounts and parish government: looking beyond London and Bristol' in *E.H.R.*, cxix, no. 480 (2004), pp 87-99; Clive Burgess 'The broader church? A

Adrian Empey, the editor of the proctor's accounts of St. Werburgh, offers an attractive framework for the use of churchwardens' account in Ireland. Parish life in late medieval Dublin is partially re-constructed using other fragmentary sources and by drawing on selected regional studies of English parishes.⁶⁰ Dr. Empey is conscious that the St. Werburgh's accounts are inadequate for analysing the success of the Reformation at parish level; 'because one sample makes this kind of historical extrapolation impossible'. However he also makes the important observation that the parish organisation of St. Werburghs', as revealed in the churchwardens' accounts, sufficiently questions the assumption that Ireland was an isolated and backward outpost of Western Europe in the late middle ages.⁶¹

Outside of materials created by the parishes themselves, the survival of testamentary or church court records as a complementary archive for assessing lay piety shared the same fate as the parish registers destroyed in the Public Records Office fire of 1922.⁶² The only known ecclesiastical court records that survive for the period are some very fragmentary records for the consistorial court of Killaloe dating from 1671.⁶³ Many of these records were formulaic and they have certainly not survived in their entirety. However they indicate, tentatively, that large proportions of society in seventeenth century Ireland cared little for the censure of excommunication meted out by the established church.

This lack of complementary materials, together with the fragmentary nature of the sources impacts on the ability to examine parochial practice in detail. Consistory court records, churchwardens' accounts and diocesan visitations have been used by Arnold Hunt to document communion practices in early modern England. These sources have highlighted interesting aspects, such as evidence for a hierarchical structure in the distribution of communion. Christopher Haigh has used similar sources to examine the practice of exclusion from communion and its effect on

rejoinder to 'Looking Beyond' in *E.H.R.*, cxix, no. 480 (2004), pp 100-116; Andrew Foster, 'Churchwardens' accounts of early modern England and Wales: some problems to note, but much to be gained' in Katherine L. French, Gary G. Gibbs and Beat A. Kümin (eds) *The parish in English life, 1400-1600* (Manchester, 1997), pp 74-93.

⁶⁰ Adrian Empey, *The proctors' accounts of the parish church of St. Werburgh, Dublin, 1481-1627* (Dublin, 2009), pp 9-38.

⁶¹ Empey, *Proctors' accounts of St. Werburgh*, pp22, 37-8.

⁶² For a general introduction to Church of Ireland records see Raymond Refaüssé, *Church of Ireland records* (Dublin, 2000).

⁶³ BL, Add. MS 31881 – 31882.

parochial harmony in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Both of these studies benefit greatly from churchwardens' presentments, which can document conformity and conflict at a parochial level.⁶⁴ Communion books have been used by Jeremy Boulton in his survey of communion attendances in the parishes of St. Saviour's and St. Boltolph without Gate in London. These records were generated because the parishes used communion tokens which were given out in return for the payment of tithes.⁶⁵ In an Irish context these types of materials were not generated or, if they were, do not survive. Parish business was largely recorded in the 'hold-all' of the vestry book which contained minutes of vestry meetings, appointments of parish officers, accounts, poor lists and often acted as a parish register recording births, marriages and burials.

The vestry books of the Church of Ireland, responsible for the official parish operation and an increasingly wide-range of local government duties, reflected this role in the mainly 'dry ground'⁶⁶ of building works, basic provision for worship, poor relief and the election of parish officers. The 'occasional oasis' can be greatly illuminating and can include things like a communicants list for a small rural parish in Co. Wicklow, converts proclaiming their rejection of transubstantiation in parish churches in Co. Meath and directions for the embellishment of 'high-church' altars. However in attempting to gain an insight into parochial worship, it is in their documentation of the ordinary that parochial records are most useful.

The session records of Presbyterians also contain information on expenditure on communion elements and the election of lay representatives, but contain much more information on the moral regulation of the community. This opens up possibilities for the examination of exclusion from the sacrament among Presbyterian congregations, which, with the loss of ecclesiastical court records, cannot be thoroughly assessed for the Church of Ireland. Although excellent for examining the attitudes of Presbyterians to moral propriety, the session records offer less information on the day to day organisation and practice of ordinary worship. This is

⁶⁴ Arnold Hunt, 'The Lord's Supper in early modern England' in *Past and Present*, no.161 (1998), pp 39-83; Christopher Haigh, 'Communion and community: exclusion from Communion in post-Reformation England' in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, li, No. 4 (2000), pp 721-40.

⁶⁵ J.P. Boulton, 'The limits of formal religion: the administration of Holy Communion in late Elizabethan and early Stuart London' in *London Journal*, x (London, 1984), pp 135-54.

⁶⁶ J.S. Craig, 'Co-operation and initiatives: Elizabethan churchwardens and the parish accounts of Mildenhall' in *Social History*, xvii, No. 3 (1993), p.370.

a theme noted of the Church Books of English Presbyterians where ‘the bulk of the business recorded is dealing with the errant and the aberrant, not the normal.’⁶⁷ The records of the synod of Ulster, the governing body of Ulster Presbyterianism, provide a context for the wider regulation of Presbyterian congregations and the difficulties which couldn’t be resolved at a local level.⁶⁸

Catholic sources have proved the greatest challenge to the study, as local records are non-existent. The earliest parish registers date from 1671 but these are an exception and the majority of registers begin much later. Even if registers had survived they would supply little detail on lay piety. Sources for Catholic religious practices therefore come in the main from clerical reports, often to superiors on the continent, and the remarks of (mainly Protestant) observers. Freak survivals, such as a late seventeenth-century list of members of a Catholic confraternity, allow tentative suggestions to be made about ‘elite’ lay piety.

Personal observations in diaries, clerical reports and letters often elucidate the picture that parochial sources have left vague and can shed light on how individuals negotiated the various elements of religious belief and practice. However, these individual sources come with attendant problems. Not only are they scarce and often tantalisingly circumscriptive, but they run the risk of representing a lay experience which was exceptional rather than typical. In examining the evidence for communion practices through parochial sources and the experience of individuals it is possible to partly reconstruct the extent to which the hopes of the institutional church were realised amongst the laity. While never elucidating the communion practices of the laity in their totality, they go some way towards investigating the religious trends operating in Ireland between 1660 and 1740.

⁶⁷ Spufford, ‘The importance of religion’, p.90.

⁶⁸ *Records of the General Synod of Ulster, from 1691 to 1820* (3 vols, Belfast, 1890-98).

Chapter One

The theory of the Eucharist in the Church of Ireland, 1660-1740

At the Reformation the sacrificial emphasis of the Mass was disregarded and reformers adapted a ritual that they believed had become corrupted by man. For the various branches of Protestantism, the results ranged along an axis of ‘high’ to ‘low’ church, with various gradations in between. In the course of the seventeenth century the Church of Ireland wavered along this axis to emerge at the beginning of the eighteenth century at a new, more definitive point on the scale. This was the ‘Anglican’ tradition¹ described variously as ‘via media’, broad church or latitudinarian. However, the churchmanship of Anglican divines cannot be neatly categorised and the idiosyncratic nature of many of the bishops who were appointed throughout the period warns against too close a definition. It is clear however that most bishops saw sacramental worship as an essential part of Anglican worship, though their statements of belief were varied.

This chapter explores the Eucharistic beliefs of the Church of Ireland by assessing the liturgical, theological and catechetical foundations upon which the celebration of the sacrament was founded. The chapter will argue that after the Restoration the theological leanings of the Anglican clergy was high-church and that this characteristic was expressed in the devotional writings and pastoral admonitions of the hierarchy. Much of this was dependent on the particular circumstances of the Church of Ireland, in particular the panel of bishops instituted after the Restoration, and the high-church influences that had operated in the 1630s to produce a set of Laudian-inspired canons. These canons would provide the basis for parochial worship after the Restoration. It will be argued that by the early eighteenth century, enthusiasm for high-church policies had waned as bishops were influenced by the latitudinarian spirit of the times.

In 1675, Andrew Sall, a Catholic convert to the Church of Ireland, described his experience of liturgical practice in the Anglican church. One of his descriptions was

¹ The term Anglican was not used until the end of the eighteenth century, it is thought first by Edmund Burke S.J. Connolly, *Religion, law and power: the making of Protestant Ireland, 1660-1760* (Oxford, 1992), p.xi. In this thesis it is used to denote the Church of Ireland and its adherents.

of a communion service held at Easter in Christ Church cathedral in Dublin. The chief celebrant was the archbishop of Dublin, Michael Boyle, and the occasion demonstrated both the liturgical and civic commitments of the restored Church of Ireland. Other clergy in attendance included the primate, James Margetson, the bishop of Meath, Anthony Dopping, as well as ‘the chief of the bishops of Ireland’. Civil representatives included the lord lieutenant, peers and royal council, as well as an unnamed ‘numerous concourse’ which presumably included other clerical and lay dignitaries of the city. The sacrament was celebrated with ‘singular decency and good order.’² This communion, although hardly representative of ordinary parish worship, followed the liturgical paradigm for the celebration of communion that was envisioned for the Anglican community. Cathedral churches were expected to provide liturgical services which parishes could imitate and the communions at Christ Church needed to conform to specific liturgical ideals.³

In 1673, two years before Andrew Sall described the ceremonial reception of communion at Christ Church, a lay theologian, Henry Dodwell published a reformed edition of the *Introduction to a devout life* by St. Francis de Sales. This text ‘fitted for the use of Protestants’ carefully excised overtly-Catholic beliefs, such as mortal sin, invocation of the saints and transubstantiation. In a lengthy preface designed to offset concerns that the original work was written by a Catholic, Dodwell considered that its usefulness stemmed from the fact that it was written, not for those living a monastic life, but for ‘seculars conversing in an active life’ and was thus very suitable to Protestants. The plain style of de Sales’ text additionally recommended it for Protestant use, in contrast to other Catholic texts which contained ‘enthusiastick phrases and pretended experiments.’⁴ Dodwell, who later became a non-juror, was not the first Protestant to reform the text. He had based his text on a London edition of 1616, which he considered had not sufficiently expunged enough of the Catholic elements.⁵ The text was printed by Benjamin Tooke, the King’s printer. The press was controlled by the state with decreasing effectiveness until the 1690s, but texts printed by license had to be approved by either the lord lieutenant, a secretary of

² Andrew Sall, *True Catholic and apostolic faith maintain’d in the Church of England* (Oxford, 1676), pp185-6.

³ Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars restored: the changing face of English religious worship, 1547-c.1700* (Oxford,2007), pp 174,193,196,202-3,220,236-7,278,313,321,354.

⁴ Francis de Sales, *An introduction to a devout life* ed.Henry Dodwell, (Dublin, 1675), sig.d1.r.

⁵ *Ibid*, sig. f.6.v.

state or the archbishop of Dublin or Armagh.⁶ Dodwell's text therefore had the approval of the establishment.

The communion held at Christ Church and Dodwell's publication of a reformed Tridentine classic, suggest that in the 1670s, the Church of Ireland was espousing a high-church view of the sacrament in its liturgy and devotional texts. They were, however, two incidents that were unlikely to have affected the majority of the Anglican laity. The attendees at the communion at Christ Church were dignitaries of the church and state, while those who read devotional texts were likely to be 'elite' parishioners. The ordinary laity experienced the sacrament in their parish churches through a liturgical code which was a product of the particular circumstances of the Church of Ireland.

Liturgical services after the Restoration found their textual parameters described in the Book of Common Prayer of 1662 and the Irish canons of 1634. The Book of Common Prayer provided the order of service, while the canons outlined the material requirements for the celebration of communion. A statement of the theological beliefs of the Restoration church could be found in the Thirty Nine Articles. These articles were adopted in Ireland under the first of the 1634 canons, but their impact was somewhat diminished by the fact that the Church of Ireland had introduced its own set of articles in 1615. These earlier articles, regarded as being more Calvinist than their English counterparts, reflected the unique position of the Church of Ireland in the early seventeenth century. The latent Calvinism of the Church of Ireland in this period has been attributed to the theological tenor of Trinity College, both as a Calvinist training ground for native clergy and an attractive haven for English puritans feeling the pressures of resurgent conformity across the water. The personality of James Ussher, archbishop of Armagh, in asserting the independence of the Church of Ireland through his writings on the early church and his own godly views, has also been considered important for explaining the theological position of the Church of Ireland in the early Stuart period. This theological perspective was embodied in the 1615 articles which had been engineered by Ussher. They affirmed the doctrine of predestination and were important as a statement of belief for a church which at the time saw itself as capable of providing its own mode of

⁶ Raymond Gillespie, *Reading Ireland: print, reading and social change in early modern Ireland* (Manchester, 2010), pp 75, 111.

expression, or at least improvisation, in formulating its beliefs.⁷ Calvinist soteriological teaching was evident in the 1615 articles in their articulation of Eucharistic reception; in ‘the inward and spiritual part [of communion], the same Body and Blood is really and substantially presented unto all those, who have Grace to receive the Son of God, even to all those that believe in his name.’⁸ The Thirty Nine Articles made no such reference to an elect group of communicants, but acknowledged that the wicked or those ‘void of a lively faith’ were not partakers of Christ in the sacrament.⁹

The theological independency expressed in the 1615 articles was to be short-lived and increasingly innovations in English worship would be imposed in Ireland. The high-church policies of William Laud travelled to Ireland under the new viceroy, Thomas Wentworth and were implemented by the bishop of Derry, John Bramhall. The practical effects of the high-church movement of the 1630s still awaits a comprehensive examination. It is unlikely that the architectural aspirations of the movement, such as the raising up and railing in of altars, had sufficient time to develop much further than the planning stage, when rebellion broke out in 1641.¹⁰

Bramhall’s involvement in the drafting of the 1634 canons was to have significant impact on the Restoration church, as they became the primary basis for the organisation of parish worship. The importance of the canons cannot be underestimated, superseding as they did the 1615 articles, representing a defeat of Ussher’s more moderate proposals and a victory for the high-church ideals of Bramhall and Wentworth. Crucially, the canons provided the Restoration church with a code of practice which provided a framework for parish organisation that was, theoretically, Laudian.¹¹ The introduction of the canons was not met with universal

⁷ Alan Ford, ‘The Church of Ireland, 1558-1634: a puritan church?’ in Alan Ford, James McGuire and Kenneth Milne (eds) *As by law established: the Church of Ireland since the Reformation* (Dublin, 1995), pp 52-68; Alan Ford, ‘Ussher, James (1581-1656)’ *ODNB*; John McCafferty, ‘Ussher, James’ *DIB*.

⁸ Articles of religion (1615), article 94.

⁹ *Articles agreed upon by the arch-bishops and bishops of both provinces, and the whole clergie; in the Convocation holden at London, in the year, 1562 For the avoiding of diversities of opinions, and for the establishing of consent touching true religion* (London, 1630), article xxix.

¹⁰ T.C. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland* (Oxford, 1975), pp168-71; For England see Fincham and Tyacke *Altars restored*, Chapter 6 and for a brief account of the Laudian changes see Horton Davies, *Worship and theology in England from Andrewes to Baxter and Fox, 1603-1690* (Princeton, 1975), pp 35-41.

¹¹ John McCafferty, *The reconstruction of the Church of Ireland* (Cambridge, 2007), pp73-113 . For criticism of applying the Laudian label to Restoration Anglicanism see Fincham and Tyacke *Altars*

approval, many of the Irish clergy were unwilling to forego the articles of 1615. In the end, the articles were never repealed, a testament to the need for unity in a church that comprehended various strands of churchmanship.¹²

The three bishops specifically mentioned by Andrew Sall at the Christ Church communion service were Michael Boyle, the chief celebrant and archbishop of Dublin, James Margetson, the primate, and Anthony Dopping, the bishop of Meath. These men were all supporters of a high-church institution. Boyle had been in England for the Restoration land settlement and was an active promoter of the temporal interests of the Church of Ireland. He never gained a reputation as a particularly innovative spiritual leader and his career has mostly been judged on its political merits.¹³ However, he was certainly in favour of an Erastian church model and his lavish furnishing of St. Mary's church in Blessington suggests that he held specific ecclesiological views.¹⁴ In 1662, when Boyle was bishop of Cork, a Baptist officer approached him to be reconciled to the Church of Ireland. Boyle wanted a public ceremony to be performed with numerous clergy in attendance 'that it may be performed with the greater solemnity and gravity.'¹⁵

James Margetson had been a chaplain of the high-church lord deputy, Thomas Wentworth, in the 1630s and had signed a declaration in 1647 that clergy be allowed to continue to use the Book of Common Prayer. He had also, as dean of Christ Church, ensured that the plate of the cathedral was hidden before he fled to England in late 1647. After the Restoration, he was quickly appointed archbishop of Dublin before succeeding to the primatial see in 1663, apparently under the recommendation of the previous incumbent, John Bramhall.¹⁶ The bishop of Meath, Anthony Dopping, had a similar outlook when it came to sacramental worship, as shall be seen below. The Christ Church communion, described by Sall as a 'spectacle ...

restored, p.334. In England, the Laudian canons of 1640 were disused after the Restoration. Idem, *Altars restored*, p.323.

¹² Ford, 'A puritan church?', p.67.

¹³ James McGuire, 'Boyle, Michael', *DIB*.

¹⁴ 'Vestry book of Blessington', (RCBL, P651/1/1, 17 September 1683).

¹⁵ R.L. Greaves, *God's other children: Protestant nonconformists and the emergence of denominational churches in Ireland, 1660-1700* (Stanford, 1997), p.261.

¹⁶ Terry Clavin, 'Margetson, James', *DIB*.

certainly grateful to God and to his angels', represented the ambitions of the Church of Ireland to become an institution with a firm liturgical and civic identity.¹⁷

The theological standpoint adopted by the Church of Ireland at the Restoration was not necessarily organic and it owed much to the expeditiousness of John Bramhall. He quickly engineered the appointment of two archbishops and ten bishops who were then consecrated en-masse in St. Patrick's cathedral in early 1661. This ensured that from its recovery at the Restoration, the Church of Ireland would be operating under a particular ecclesiastical program.¹⁸ Not dissimilar to the communion described by Sall fifteen years later, the consecration, carefully orchestrated by Bramhall, served to demonstrate the restored church in all its ceremonial glory. This display apparently engendered in the large assembled crowd a countenance to 'rival Rome ... for a regular and solemn proceeding.'¹⁹

Bramhall's episcopal appointments ensured that the specific ecclesiastical policies that he had been attempting to implement in the 1630s, could be continued after the Restoration. In terms of Eucharistic practice this involved a rich architectural setting, an emphasis on appropriate liturgical forms and bodily worship, in the form of kneeling to receive communion. The appointment of Jeremy Taylor to the bishopric of Down and Connor indicated that Bramhall was keen to consolidate worship across the church. The diocese had the highest proportion of Presbyterians and posed the greatest challenge to the Restoration church. The nomination of Taylor, who had failed, despite a distinguished academic career, to gain a see in England because of heterodox views on original sin, signalled Bramhall's ambitious plans for the Church of Ireland.²⁰ Despite Taylor's unorthodox views on certain issues, he was a keen advocate of episcopacy and prescribed liturgical forms and as shall be discussed later, he held a high-church view of the Eucharist. These traits would be important for the type of liturgical programme that Bramhall intended to implement.²¹ In fact,

¹⁷ Sall, *True Catholic and apostolic faith*, p.185.

¹⁸ James McGuire, 'Policy and patronage: the appointment of bishops, 1660-61' in Alan Ford, James McGuire and Kenneth Milne (eds) *As by law established: the Church of Ireland since the Reformation* (Dublin, 1995), p.112.

¹⁹ Dudley Loftus, *The proceedings observed in order to, and in the consecration of the twelve bishops, at St. Patricks Church Dublin* (London, 1661), p.8.

²⁰ James McGuire. 'Taylor, Jeremy', *DIB*; McGuire, 'Policy and Patronage', p.115.

²¹ For Bramhall's aims see F.R. Bolton, *The Caroline tradition of the Church of Ireland*, (London, 1958), pp 33-7. Taylor preached the sermon at the consecration ceremony of the ten bishops and two arch-bishops in St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1661 in which he extolled episcopacy. Jeremy Taylor, A

the nature of the Presbyterian challenge faced by Taylor was demonstrated quickly after the Restoration, when a meeting of Presbyterian ministers resolved to preach against episcopacy and the Book of Common Prayer.²² In electing Taylor, Bramhall evidently expected that he would be a firm defender of these two pillars of the established church.

Many of the bishops appointed by Bramhall expressed their Eucharistic beliefs in print. Taylor, a prolific writer, returned to the Eucharistic theme in many of his works. He wrote one of the most popular tracts on Eucharistic devotion, *The worthy communicant*, in 1660, as well as a number of other devotional and theological texts which treated of the subject, including *Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament* in 1654.²³ Henry Leslie, the short-lived bishop of Meath, had written a tract in response to Presbyterian dissension in 1637, in which he defended the practice of kneeling at communion.²⁴ George Baker, the bishop of Waterford and Lismore, celebrated holy Communion every Sunday in Waterford cathedral even when the congregation was small.²⁵ His dedication to the sacrament despite his frailty was highlighted by his funeral orator, who asked the congregation 'How often have some of you seen him come out of the pulpit hardly able to stand, and from the communion-table, scarce able to speak'.²⁶

As many of the bishops appointed by Bramhall were elderly at the Restoration and had short-lived tenures, others elected after them would also be influential in furthering the programme instigated by Bramhall. Of those elected to bishoprics in the 1660s and 1670s, many wrote on themes that concerned Eucharistic practice and belief. Edward Wolley, appointed to the see of Clonfert in 1665, published a sermon he had preached in front of the lord lieutenant in 1673 entitled *Altare evangelicum* which outlined the biblical precedents for the use of altars.²⁷ Edward Wetenhall, before he became bishop of Cork in 1678, had written *Enter into thy closet: or, a*

sermon preached at the consecration of two arch-bishops and ten bishops, in the cathedral church of St. Patrick's in Dublin, January 27, 1660 (Dublin, 1661).

²² *Cal. S.P. Ire., 1660-2* p.115; Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, p.270.

²³ Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, p.109.

²⁴ Henry Leslie, *A treatise of the authority of the church* (Dublin, 1637).

²⁵ Daniel Burston, *Christ's last call to his glorified saints* (Dublin, 1665), pp 36-7.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p.36.

²⁷ Edward Wolley, *Altare evangelicum, a sermon preached at Christ-church in Dublin, on the 27th of April before his Excellency Arthur earl of Essex, lord lieutenant general, and general governour of the Kingdom of Ireland* (Dublin, 1673).

method and order for private devotion in 1668 to which was added *An appendix concerning the frequent and holy use of the Lord's Supper*.²⁸ In 1684, after numerous editions of the work, Wetenhall produced a work specifically dealing with the sacrament of holy communion entitled *Enter into thy closet: or, a method and order for private devotion of the Lords Supper*.²⁹ In 1703 he wrote *Due frequency of the Lord's supper* which provided a scriptural exegesis on frequent communion.³⁰ These devotional and theological texts produced by Irish divines were supplementary to the key text that informed the liturgy of the sacrament in the Church of Ireland, the Book of Common Prayer. This text, designed 'to be used, performed, experienced' rather than read, was the foundation of Eucharistic belief and practice for the majority of parishioners.³¹

The Prayer Book of 1662 was legally introduced in Ireland in 1666 under the Irish Act of Uniformity. This ensured that the communion rite of the Church of Ireland was synonymous with the Church of England and was committed to a precise liturgical format.³² The importance of the Book of Common Prayer to the Anglican tradition cannot be overstated. It was derided by puritans who saw it as a popish leftover yet to be cleansed from the church.³³ However, it was notably different to the Catholic Mass in its liturgical style. The text was designed so that it was a dialogue between minister and people. Pastoral admonitions stressed the importance of the laity's role in enunciating the responses. In his articles of visitation for 1694, the archbishop of Dublin, Narcissus Marsh, enquired of churchwardens if the laity were 'saying audibly with the minister the Confession, Lord's Prayer and Creed; and making such other answers to the publick prayers as are appointed in the Book

²⁸ Edward Wetenhall, *Enter into thy closet: or, A method and order for private devotion. Together with particular perswasives thereunto, and helps therein. And (in this second edition) an appendix concerning the frequent and holy use of the Lords Supper* (London, 1668).

²⁹ Edward Wetenhall, *Enter into thy closet: or, A method and order for private devotion of the Lords Supper* (London, 1684).

³⁰ Edward Wetenhall, *Due frequency of the Lord's supper: stated and proved from holy scripture* (London, 1703).

³¹ Judith Maltby, *Prayer book and people in Elizabethan and early Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1998), pp 3, 29-30.

³² Richard Mant, *History of the Church of Ireland from the Reformation to the revolution* (London, 1841), pp 645-9; For an overview of the Prayer Book discussions between Puritans and Anglicans at the Restoration see Francis Procter and Walter Frere, *A new history of the Book of Common Prayer*, (London, 1965), chapter 7.

³³ Davies, *Worship and theology*, pp189-94.

of Common Prayer?’³⁴ In St. Michael’s parish in Dublin, the minister, churchwardens and parishioners dismissed their clerk, Matthew Buxton, because of his ‘insufficiency of singing the psalms, as also of reading his part in the divine service of the church which proves both to be offensive to all that hear him both parishioners and especially strangers and thereby the worship of God is much scandalized.’³⁵

In Ireland, the divisions at parish level between the ‘godly’ and the ‘conformist’ were less pronounced because of the relatively small size of Protestant congregations.³⁶ Where there were considerable Protestant populations, divisions among parishioners in the early seventeenth century were lessened by its need for unity in the face of a large Catholic majority. The concerns of those who felt that the Book of Common Prayer was overly ceremonial could be offset by the godly clerics being trained in Trinity College and the amenable disposition of James Ussher. Conflicts within parishes arising from tensions between godly and conformist parishioners never appeared to reach the levels of animosity that they were apt to do in England. However, the lack of church court records and scarcity of certain parish materials for the period does not permit a thorough analysis of contentions at parish level in an Irish context.³⁷ There is little evidence to suggest that separatist congregations existed in Ireland until the influx of Presbyterians in the early seventeenth century as part of the plantation of Ulster. The lack of references to puritan congregations in Elizabethan times indicates that both Calvinist and Arminian elements were reconciled within the Church of Ireland and that unity among the early Protestant population was essential.³⁸ Phil Kilroy has demonstrated how the desire for unity in the early seventeenth century was expressed in sermons and pamphlet literature. Henry Leslie, the vicar of Drogheda in 1622, had downplayed the differences over ceremonies in a sermon preached before the king’s

³⁴ Narcissus Marsh, *The charge given by Narcissus lord arch-bishop of Dublin, to the clergy, of the province of Leinster* (Dublin, 1694), p.33.

³⁵ ‘St. Michael’s vestry book’, (RCBL P118/5/1, 2 May 1681).

³⁶ For a survey of English conformity see Maltby, *Prayer book and people*. For the historiography that addresses puritanism and conformity at parish level in England see pp 8-12.

³⁷ *Ibid*, Chapter 2.

³⁸ Steven C. Smyrl, *Dictionary of Dublin dissent: Dublin’s Protestant dissenting meeting houses, 1660-1920* (Dublin, 2009), pp 17,49. Smyrl mentions a ‘fleeting reference to a group of puritans having existed in the city during the reign of Elizabeth I’. This group was likely to have been composed of a group of puritans who had fled persecution in England, a further indication of the Irish church’s broad churchmanship.

commissioners. By 1636, when he had become bishop of Down and Connor, his attitude had hardened and Leslie launched an attack on low-church practices, in particular, kneeling to receive communion.³⁹ Composition of various forms of churchmanship became unfeasible in the 1630s under Bramhall and Wentworth and the atmosphere became unsympathetic to low-church elements. By 1662, when the Book of Common Prayer was re-established, any remaining godly elements had the choice of accepting the theology and ritual of the Prayer Book or joining the ranks of whichever dissenting congregation best reflected their own beliefs. In Ireland, the primary choice was between the Presbyterians or Quakers, who after the Restoration emerged as the two most viable reformed alternatives to Anglicanism.⁴⁰

For those parishioners who returned to conformist worship after the Restoration, the liturgy communicated to them in the Book of Common Prayer was principally the liturgy of the church before the outbreak of war in the 1640s. In 1647 Cromwellian commissioners ordered that use of the Prayer Book be discontinued in Ireland, this was facilitated by the appointment of ministers of the gospel who were encouraged to use instead the *Westminster Directory* or another suitable form of service.⁴¹ Some clergy continued to use the Prayer Book during the period but usually only under the protection of sympathetic lay patrons.⁴² Unfortunately due to the scarcity of parish records it is difficult to judge the extent of liturgical changes that took place during the Cromwellian period. In the city parishes it is likely that conformist worship was superseded where godly ministers held the benefice.⁴³ Outside the capital, it is difficult to assess the situation in regards to the continuance or disuse of the Prayer Book, although it was likely that many parishes held no worship at all, given the effects of rebellion and war on many church buildings.⁴⁴ Therefore when the Book of Common Prayer was re-established at the Restoration, it is possible that the

³⁹ Phil Kilroy, 'Sermon and pamphlet literature in the Irish reformed church, 1613-1634' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, xxxiii (1975), pp 110-121; Henry Leslie, *A treatise of the authority of the church* (Dublin, 1637), pp 49-74.

⁴⁰ For the survival of dissent after the Restoration see Phil Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy, 1660-1714* (Cork, 1994), pp 9-10. For criticism of the conclusions of Kilroy see Greaves, *God's other children*, pp 6-7.

⁴¹ Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, p.22; St. John Seymour, *The Puritans in Ireland, 1647-1661* (Oxford, 1921), pp2-5, 14-15.

⁴² Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, pp 28-29; Seymour, *Puritans in Ireland*, pp 7-9; Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland*, p.151.

⁴³ For conformist ministers in Dublin parishes, see Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland*, p.158; Raymond Gillespie (ed.) *The vestry records of the parishes of St. Catherine and St. James, 1657-1692* (Dublin, 2004), pp 25, 217.

⁴⁴ Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland*, pp168-71.

conformist liturgy had not been experienced by many parishioners for a considerable period.

Changes to the 1662 Prayer Book mainly affected the rubrics and calendars of the text, the aim being to 'restore rather than to revise'.⁴⁵ Not only did the text provide the structure for Anglican worship, but it reflected Anglican beliefs about the sacraments and ceremonies it described. This was most obviously demonstrated in the rite of Holy Communion which expressed the Anglican project in its moderating but ritualistic form. The Book of Common Prayer was the liturgical text most frequently encountered by ordinary parishioners, and many of the devotional texts of the period followed the rhythms of the Prayer Book ritual.⁴⁶ As such it represents the chief method by which Eucharistic theology was expressed to the eyes and ears of the laity.

The *Order for the administration of the Lord's Supper* contained in the Book of Common Prayer emphasised thanksgiving, commemoration, sacrifice, mystery, and communal fellowship.⁴⁷ Of these, the sacrificial element was most contentious as it was strongly reminiscent of the Catholic Mass and opened up the possibility that the minister would become a locus of power. Most Anglican authors stressed that the sacrificial element was a representation of both the commemoration of the Sacrifice of the Cross and a sacrifice performed in tandem with Christ's heavenly sacrifice. Visual representations of this idea can be found in contemporary devotional manuals.⁴⁸ However broad their ideas of the emphases of the communion service, Anglican writers were united in their rejection of transubstantiation and the idea that the sacrament was operative without the spiritual commitment of the participants.⁴⁹ The Anglican communion service found its basis in scripture and the practices of the primitive church. Ceremonial elements reflected the significance of the Eucharist in

⁴⁵ Davies, *Worship and theology*, p.378; Bryan D. Spinks 'Anglicans and dissenters' in Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (eds) *The Oxford history of Christian worship* (Oxford, 2006), p.514.

⁴⁶ John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (Yale,1991), p. 348.

⁴⁷ Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, p.90.

⁴⁸ Ibid, pp 90-103. Bolton, who provides the only comparative view of the various Eucharistic beliefs of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Irish Divines, identifies Roger Boyle, bishop of Down and then of Clogher and William King as holding contrary views in regard to the sacrificial elements of the Communion service. For contemporary visual depictions see figures 2.6-2.9 in the next chapter.

⁴⁹ This was in contrast to the perception that Roman Catholics believed that the sacrament was effective *ex opere operato*. See Jeremy Taylor *A dissuasive from popery to the people of Ireland* (Dublin, 1664), p.144.

the Christian tradition, instituted for the worship of God and the fostering of communal harmony. John Spurr has noted that ‘public worship and personal piety reached an apogee in the Lord’s Supper.’⁵⁰

One of the changes to the communion rite of the Restoration Church was the inclusion of the Black Rubric, which having been taken out of the Book of Common Prayer of 1559 was re-inserted in 1662. The rubric expressly rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation and denied any corporal presence in the Eucharist.⁵¹ It was also demonstrative of the ‘via media’ approach that was central to Anglican theology. The rubric acknowledged a real spiritual presence in the sacrament but denied any corporal one. It also explained the practice of kneeling to receive the elements; the bodily worship reflected ‘humble and grateful acknowledgement of the benefits of Christ’ rather than any ‘adoration...unto the sacramental bread and wine...or unto any corporal presence of Christ’s natural flesh’.⁵² In the 1662 Prayer Book, a change in terminology seemed to reflect a more concrete theology. In 1552 the rubric rejected a ‘real and essential presence’ in the Eucharist, while in 1662 this became a denial of a ‘corporal presence’. The implication was that the kneeling of the Anglicans, having been attacked as popish by the godly earlier in the century, had to be qualified. The ‘real and essential presence’ that was denied in 1552 was no longer acceptable to the theological temper of the later seventeenth century, which had moved to a position that accepted a Real Presence in a spiritual sense.

While the communion rite asserted itself, terminologically at least, against the Catholic Mass in the denial of a corporal presence, it left itself open to criticism by the introduction of the fraction in 1662. This move, which introduced manual acts into the rite and the sacrificial element implied by those acts, was a significant one. It resonated strongly with the consecration ritual of the Mass and introduced a dramatic component into the service. As well as the fraction, which clearly would have

⁵⁰ Spurr, *Restoration church*, p.344.

⁵¹ BCP, ‘The Order for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper’; For the introduction of the Black Rubric see Charles Hefling and Cynthia Shattuck (eds), *The Oxford guide to the Book of Common Prayer: a worldwide survey* (Oxford, 2006), pp 25-7.

⁵² BCP ‘The Order for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper’.

presented difficulties for the godly, the prayer which had contained the words of institution was given the title of the Prayer of Consecration.⁵³

There were other elements of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer that reflected a more confident attachment to external *adiaphora*. The surplice, the ring in marriage and the sign of the cross in baptism, were all retained despite the objections of puritans.⁵⁴ The Prayer Book also remained complementary to the 1634 canons which outlined the practical requirements for the celebration of communion. Visitation articles of the period stressed parish conformity both to the Book of Common Prayer but also to canonical procedures.⁵⁵ Parishes often purchased copies of the canons to have in the church and vestry minutes demonstrate that most parishes attempted to follow the directives they outlined.⁵⁶ The canons made provisions for the frequency of communions, the bodily worship of communicants, regulated where communions could be held and who was included or excluded from communicating as well as giving instructions for the provision of adequate utensils and furnishings for its celebration.⁵⁷

The frequency of communion practice became a contentious issue within Irish Protestantism at the end of the seventeenth century, when Anglicans and dissenters clashed over their variant practices.⁵⁸ In the Church of Ireland attendance was mandatory at three communions per year, one of which had to be Easter. This followed a medieval pattern of devotion when Easter had been the traditional time when Christians attended confession and received their annual communion.⁵⁹ With criticisms levelled at this infrequent practice by Protestant reformers, all denominations, including Catholics, were aware that regular attendance at the sacrament was an important indicator of a pious lifestyle. The council of Trent

⁵³ Spinks 'Anglicans and dissenters', p.514; Procter and Frere, *A new history of the Book of Common Prayer*, p.197.

⁵⁴ Procter and Frere, *A new history of the Book of Common Prayer*, p.200.

⁵⁵ For example *Articles to be enquired of by the churchwardens and questmen of every parish in the next metropolitical visitation to be made by his Grace Michael now lord-archbishop of Armagh, lord primate and metropolitan of all Ireland, and lord high chancellor of the same* (Dublin, 1679), p.4 and *Articles of visitation and inquiry to be made within the several parishes of the diocese of Dublin, in the visitation of the most reverend father in God, Narcissus, by divine providence lord-archbishop of Dublin, primate and metropolitan of Ireland, held in the year of our Lord 1698* (Dublin, 1698), p.2.

⁵⁶ 'Vestry accounts of St. Bride, St. Michael le Pole and St. Stephen' (RCBL, P327/4/1) pp 9, 51, 124.

⁵⁷ *Constitutions and canons ecclesiastical*, xviii, xix, xx, xxi, lxiii, xciii, xciv.

⁵⁸ These debates are discussed in Chapter 7.

⁵⁹ Eamon Duffy, *The stripping of the altars: traditional religion in England 1400-1580* (2nd Ed. New Haven, 2005), pp 91-130.

encouraged frequent communion while upholding ‘Masses in which the priest alone communicates’. John Calvin described the custom of an annual communion as ‘an invention of the devil’ and recommended a weekly communion for his followers.⁶⁰ A weekly participation was impractical in the Irish context, but in the latter half of the seventeenth century the Church of Ireland endeavoured to exceed the thrice yearly rule, particularly in urban parishes. This tied in with a growing concern to foster pious behaviour through regular worship, particularly communal events like the Eucharist, and an attempt to translate into practice the edifying spiritual gifts of the sacrament.⁶¹ Communion could also serve to bolster religious solidarity among small or isolated Anglican populations. Edward Wetenhall, the bishop of Cork, claimed that it was Holy Communion that most effectively encouraged people to act piously:

There is no part of the Christian worship, in which all sort of Protestants are more serious and generally devout than in the Holy Communion. Therein none of them prate, whisper there neighbours, cough or ordinarily so much as gaze about them but all seem intent on God and their duty⁶²

Wetenhall went on to suggest that as attendance at communion produced such desirable ‘habits’ it should be celebrated as frequently as possible and that his experience was that ‘the more frequently the Communion is administered, the more do communicants grow upon us’.⁶³ Other bishops were similarly concerned to institute more frequent communions. William King, the archbishop of Dublin, advocated a weekly sacrament. In his polemical tract, *The inventions of men in the worship of God*, King asserted that there was ‘a scripture order of constant weekly communicating’. The holding of ‘solemn assemblies of Christians’ without holding a communion was ‘a corruption of popery’.⁶⁴ Narcissus Marsh, successively archbishop of Cashel, Dublin and Armagh, instructed his clergy to ‘endeavour to

⁶⁰ *Canons and decrees*, Sess. xxii, Chap. vi; John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, ed. Henry Beveridge, (London, 1845), Book 4 Chapter 17, Sec. 43-6.

⁶¹ T.C. Barnard ‘Reforming Irish manners: the religious societies in Dublin during the 1690s’ in *The Historical Journal*, xxxv, No.4 (1992), pp 805-38.

⁶² Wetenhall, *Due frequency of the Lord’s Supper*, ‘To the readers’.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ William King, *A discourse concerning the inventions of men in the worship of God* (London, 1694), pp156-7; Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, pp171-82.

convince [people] of the necessity of frequent communicating ... and of the great benefits that are to be enjoyed by the worthy partaking of the same.’⁶⁵

Frequent reception of the sacrament was similarly encouraged in devotional materials produced during the period, such as Edward Wetenhall’s *Due frequency of the Lord’s Supper* published in 1703 and 1706, which argued that frequent communion meant the celebration of communion ‘at least every Lord’s Day’.⁶⁶ Wetenhall’s text provided the scriptural basis for frequent communion but also attempted to explain why the rubrics of the Prayer Book settled on the requirement of three. This situation had arisen after the Reformation, when new communion liturgies replaced the Catholic Mass, where the custom was an annual communion which people ‘had been long taught to be greater devotion, than if they frequently communicated’.⁶⁷ Wetenhall went on to explain that initially only in cathedral and collegiate churches a weekly communion was to be held. This administration of communion to ‘some sort of peoples’, namely the clergy of the cathedrals and college churches, was intended to ease the dramatic change from the ‘heap of corruptions’ that was the annual Mass, to a more regular celebration that was pioneered through the ‘mother churches’.⁶⁸

The earlier and popular devotional text, *The worthy communicant* (1660) by Jeremy Taylor, also advocated frequent reception of the sacrament. Taylor, to emphasise his support of frequent communion, went further than other writers in addressing the issue; ‘it is’, he stated, ‘very much better to receive it every day, than every week, and better every week, than every month’.⁶⁹ He cited the early fathers in support of this but also cautioned against unworthy reception. Rather than addressing it from the viewpoint of communal harmony, as Marsh, Wetenhall and King did, Taylor focused on how frequent communion was useful for individual piety. It was ‘heavenly substantial bread, by which souls... are nourished to life eternal’.⁷⁰ This is perhaps unsurprising as Taylor’s forte was in devotional writing, he was the author

⁶⁵ Narcissus Marsh, *The charge given by Narcissus lord arch-bishop of Dublin, to the clergy, of the province of Leinster* (Dublin, 1694), p.25.

⁶⁶ Wetenhall, *Due frequency*, p.xi.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.31.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, pp31-32

⁶⁹ Jeremy Taylor, *The worthy communicant* (London, 1660), pp 445-6. There were at least fourteen editions published between 1660 and 1701.

⁷⁰ Taylor, *The worthy communicant*, p.451.

of *Holy living* and *Holy dying*, both of which had reached their nineteenth edition by 1695.⁷¹

Despite episcopal desires to increase the frequency of communion reception in Ireland, no writer ever suggested that this desire took precedence over a thorough preparation for the sacrament. Jeremy Taylor, one of the few writers who suggested the possibility of a daily communion, was aware that this would be unachievable for most ordinary parishioners. As his high view of the Eucharistic Presence meant that there was ‘more required to the receiving Christ, than eating the symbols’, his tract sought to prepare communicants with a thorough understanding of the sacrament as well as a method of preparation.⁷² Taylor’s text was one among many. William King, the bishop of Derry, considered that the clergy of the Church of Ireland were without fault in encouraging people to receive communion, as there were enough ‘sermons, admonitions, and treatises purposely published to this intent, [which] press them to it.’⁷³ Sacramental preparatory works were especially popular in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century as the Caroline emphasis on the solemnity and grace-imparting quality of the sacrament was promoted.⁷⁴ General devotional works usually contained a section on preparation for and reception of the Eucharist. *The Countess of Morton’s daily exercise*, one of the most popular devotional texts in England in the later seventeenth century, was sold by booksellers in Dublin in the late seventeenth century and printed in an Irish edition in 1723.⁷⁵ It contained daily prayers, rules for a pious lifestyle, a form of examination of conscience and ‘meditations, confessions and prayers before the receiving of the Blessed Sacrament.’ It also contained meditations and prayers when at the sacrament and for after the communicant received.⁷⁶ Morton’s exercises were most likely aimed at a female audience and included advice on how to maintain a pious household.⁷⁷

⁷¹ John Spurr, ‘Jeremy Taylor’, *ODNB*.

⁷² Taylor, *The worthy communicant*, p.446.

⁷³ King, *Inventions of men*, p.157.

⁷⁴ Spurr, *Restoration church*, pp 341-42.

⁷⁵ C. John Somerville ‘Religious typologies and popular religion in Restoration England’ in *Church History* xlv, (1976), p.33, fn.4; See booklist for William Norman and Eliphaz Dobson on final leaf of Neal Carolan, *Motives of conversion to the Catholick faith, as it is professed in the reformed Church of England* (Dublin, 1688) and the final advertisement leaves in George Saville Halifax, *The lady’s new-years gift* (Dublin, 1699).

⁷⁶ *The Countess of Morton’s daily exercise; or a book of prayers and rules how to spend the time in the service and pleasure of Almighty God* (London, 1666)

⁷⁷ Morton, *Daily exercise* sig.c2

One of the most famous devotional works of the period was Richard Allestree's *The whole duty of man*. It was published in multiple Dublin editions and remained an extremely popular religious manual until the mid-eighteenth century. It appealed to a broad audience even though it was written specifically for an Anglican one. James Trail, a Presbyterian merchant from Co. Tyrone, owned a copy of the work.⁷⁸ Other authors acknowledged the importance of this text. Edward Wetenhall praised its 'excellent forms of prayer' for different crises of conscience. Edward Synge, the archbishop of Tuam, encouraged his readers to consult the list of sins at the end of the text in his own treatise on the sacrament and Anthony Dopping, the bishop of Meath read the text aloud to his congregation.⁷⁹ The original publisher of the work sought to prevent pirated editions appearing in Dublin which further indicates its popularity.⁸⁰ The strength of *The whole duty of man* was in its practicality and as a work of reference. It contained an explication of the Lord's Supper, heads for the examination of conscience before the sacrament and prayers for intending communicants. Its comprehensive contents and accessible style were the root of its success.⁸¹

Edward Lake's *Officium eucharisticum* published in three Irish editions in 1683, 1702 and 1724 was a more specific text than *The whole duty of man*. The text came under attack for Catholic undertones in later editions, but was an extremely popular devotional text which articulated a high-church position.⁸² Lake's text was intended to be followed in the week leading up to the communion and included advice on fasting, meditations, prayers and attendance at the services of the church. The work contained a detailed devotional programme and even gave exact times for the performance of pious duties arranged around the requirements of daily life. The programme offered by Lake also included descriptions of bodily posture while praying. In his examination of conscience, Lake recommended that sins be

⁷⁸ Richard Allestree, *The whole duty of man* (London, 1670). The first Dublin edition was printed in 1699 and there were many editions published in the early eighteenth century. 'Diary of James Traill' (PRONI, D1460/1)

⁷⁹ Edward Wetenhall, *An order or method of preparation for weekly communicating* (London, 1703), p.34; Edward Synge, *An answer to all the excuses and pretences that men ordinarily make for their not coming to the Holy Communion* (9th ed, London, 1709), p.40.

⁸⁰ John Spurr, 'Allestree, Richard (1621/2–1681)' *ODNB*. For a discussion on the dissemination of the book in Ireland see Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, pp 143-5.

⁸¹ Paul Elmen, 'Richard Allestree and *The whole duty of man*' in *The Library* 5th ser, vi, (1951-2) pp 19-27.

⁸² Edward Vallance, 'Lake, Edward (1641–1704)', *ODNB*.

committed to writing and that these sins be referred to during devotions and just before going to attend the sacrament.⁸³ As in *The whole duty of man*, Lake provided a list of sins at the back of the text which were based on extrapolations of the Ten Commandments. He also recommended that on the day before the communion, the intending communicant read the bible or a suitable book such as the third part of *The whole duty of man* which concerned the sacrament.⁸⁴ Clearly the intensive preparation was designed for those who would have leisure to perform such devotions. In the mornings of the week preceding the sacrament, communicants should attend ‘the publick prayers of the church, which then you must by no means fail to be present at’, during which time ‘no sinful thought [should] possess your soul, no vain or idle communication proceed out of your mouth, but such as may tend to edifying.’ Communicants should also, ‘examine, exhort, [and] encourage your servants, or those about you, whom you have commanded, or who purpose, to receive this blessed Sacrament with you; and be careful to avoid the conversation of those who may probably tempt you to sin and vanity’.⁸⁵ For those who couldn’t follow such a precise devotional programme, Lake provided ‘short prayers for servants or any others who may be engaged in necessary affairs.’⁸⁶

In the preface to *Officium eucharisticum* Edward Lake deflected his own authorship and asserted that the text was written in the language ‘of primitive liturgies; of that of our Holy Church, and of some of the most devout Fathers of it, Bishop Andrews, Bishop Cosins, and that great and good man Archbishop Laud, who lived a patron of it, and died a martyr for it’.⁸⁷ Later editions of the work were considered to have been tinged with Catholic sentiments and the language used by Lake indicated a strong belief in a Real Presence. This was expressed in the prayer to be said by communicants after receiving the sacrament:

Most Blessed Redeemer, I do truly believe, that thy body was crucified, and thy blood was shed out of thy body, as verily as I have received this bread and this wine set apart from the bread: And that for the remission of my sins, as well as any others: And I do also believe, that with this bread

⁸³ Edward Lake, *Officium eucharisticum* (Dublin, 1683), pp 6,8,52.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p.51.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p.17.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, pp 98-103.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, sig.A4r.

and wine I have really and spiritually received the precious body and blood, whereby my sins are fully washed away, and my soul purified, and refreshed.⁸⁸

Other sacramental works of the period expressed the Eucharistic presence in similar terms. Jeremy Taylor who wrote extensively on the nature of Christ's presence, stated that the Church of England agreed with the primitive Church in its belief that 'Christ's body is truly there, and there is a conversion of the elements into Christ's body; for what before the consecration in all senses was bread, is, after consecration, in some sense, Christ's body.'⁸⁹ The countess of Morton's prayers at the sacrament entreated that 'my body may be made clean by the pure body of my Saviour Jesus Christ once offered upon the Cross, and that my soul may be washed by his most precious blood there shed for me.'⁹⁰ The text contained instructions for bodily worship and communicants were advised to repent of their negligence 'in giving him his external worship and honour, not falling down before him with that inward reverence of spirit and truth, nor with that outward order and humility of my body which is requisite always to be shewed forth and done before him'.⁹¹ The work was also clearly a reformed text. The instructions for how to receive communion included important Protestant distinctions; 'when you are ready to receive the Holy Sacrament *in each kind*, do it with the greatest reverence and devotion that you may, (*yet without all affectation and singularity*) lifting up your hands and your heart to God'. A prayer said after communion encouraged future holiness, 'having now Christ dwelling in me *by faith*'.⁹²

Writers of the period considered the examination of conscience to be central to the preparation for worthy communicating. This examination of conscience was a challenging one for parishioners who found it difficult to resolve their own scruples. In these cases the devotional manuals needed to negotiate the difficult issue of confession to a priest, which had long been considered a popish practice. The loss of the sacramental confessional structure at the Reformation created significant problems for Protestantism. Medieval Christians had relied upon the long-established practice of an annual auricular confession held at Easter to guard against

⁸⁸ Ibid, p.70.

⁸⁹ Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, pp109-112, quotation, p.111.

⁹⁰ Morton, *Daily exercise*, sig.E6r.

⁹¹ Ibid, sig.D12v.

⁹² My emphasis, Morton, *Daily exercise*, sig.E5r-F3r.

unworthy reception. The penitential rite was sacramental and imparted a grace *ex opere operato* to the penitent, which gave it a power that was difficult to replace. Anglican divines at each end of the theological spectrum, from James Ussher to Jeremy Taylor and John Bramhall, appreciated the loss of such a powerful spiritual event in ordinary people's lives.⁹³ Ussher found earlier precedents for confession in the Irish Church, while Jeremy Taylor accepted the legitimacy of a confessional system, albeit one freed from any sacramental connotations. Allestree and Lake both encouraged scrupulous communicants to seek the advice of a minister if they felt uneasy about their worthiness.⁹⁴ In this, both authors were following the directions of the second exhortation in the Book of Common Prayer, which directed that those who could not resolve their scruples consult a 'discreet and learned minister of God's word, and open his grief, that by the ministry of God's holy word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice.'⁹⁵

The prescription to consult a 'discreet and learned' minister also had canonical approbation. In canon twenty-two of the English canons ministers were directed to give warning to parishioners the Sunday before the communion was to take place. In the nineteenth Irish canon it was additionally directed that the bells be tolled 'to the intent, that if any have any scruple of conscience, or desire the special ministry of reconciliation, [the minister] may afford it to those that neede it.' Not only were the bells tolled to remind people to examine their consciences or consult their minister before communion, but the Irish canon advised that they receive the 'benefit of absolution' which 'by the power of the keyes...Christ hath committed to his ministers for that purpose.'⁹⁶ This 'power of the keys'⁹⁷ seemed to afford a power to the minister to absolve sinners, a theme that was contentious among Protestants. Edward Lake's devotional tract suggested an acknowledgment that a form of confession did exist in the Anglican tradition, 'ghostly council and advice' were

⁹³Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic*, pp182-8. On the importance of auricular confession to medieval Catholics see Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, pp 60-2,310-13 and for an overview of the attitude to confession in the Church of Ireland see Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, pp129-138.

⁹⁴ Lake, *Officium eucharisticum*, pp 25-26; Allestree, *Whole duty of man*, pp 78-81.

⁹⁵ BCP, 'Order for administration for the Lord's Supper'.

⁹⁶ *Constitutions and canons ecclesiastical*, Canon xix. For a discussion of this see McCafferty, *The reconstruction of the Church of Ireland*, pp 98-100.

⁹⁷ Matthew 16:19.

seconded to the ‘benefit of absolution’ that those who consulted their minister before the sacrament would receive.⁹⁸

At their reception of the sacrament in St. Patrick’s cathedral in 1661, the Irish House of Commons were preached to by John Bramhall on the subject of confession.⁹⁹ His sermon was critical of Protestant confessions which were ‘for the most part too general; we confess we are sinners, and that’s all, which signifies nothing.’¹⁰⁰ A true and full confession was necessary before communicants received the sacrament which according to Bramhall was,

the very conduit-pipe of Grace ... the manna of life and immortality, the precious antidote against the sting and infection of the infernal serpent, [the] inestimable love-token which Christ at his departure left to his Church, to keep in remembrance of him; the true pool of Bethesda, wherein we may be cured of all our infirmities.¹⁰¹

Other bishops went even further in their endorsement of confessional practices. William Sheridan, the non-juring bishop of Kilmore, encouraged a greater degree of ritual in his treatise on confession, describing ‘sacerdotal absolution’ as ‘Balm in Gilead’.¹⁰² His tract *On confession*, which appeared in a collected edition of works in 1704, purloined large sections from Bramhall’s 1661 sermon to the House of Commons.¹⁰³ Sheridan outlined the use of confession in the primitive Church and lamented its abandonment in the Church of England because of its association with Catholicism.¹⁰⁴ Catholics, he claimed, misused confession by ‘tricking it up in the robes of a sacrament’ and subsequently had made Anglicans wary of it. Sheridan shared with other Anglican divines the criticism that Catholics had made ignominious what was once a common practice in the primitive church, by making confession necessary for salvation and by using it as a means of financial gain. The

⁹⁸ Lake, *Officium eucharisticum*, p.26; Fincham and Tyacke, *Altars restored*, p.331.

⁹⁹ John Bramhall, *The right way to safety after ship-wrack* (Dublin, 1661).

¹⁰⁰ Bramhall, *Safety after ship-wrack*, p.19.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p.24.

¹⁰² Jeremiah 8:22.

¹⁰³ Bramhall described those who allowed their minds to wander while they were confessing as returning like a ‘dog to his vomit, and with the sow to the wallowing in her mire’ *The right way to safety after ship-wrack*, p.19, the exact same phrase is used by Sheridan in his tract on confession (and much of the paragraph is paraphrased from Bramhall). William Sheridan, *Several discourses... All preach’d on particular occasions before the state in the cathedral of St. Patrick’s, and Christ Church, Dublin* (London, 1704) p.58. The phrase originates in 2 Peter 22 and was also used in the prayers before communion in *The whole duty of man* (p.427). Sheridan also borrows the phrase ‘tricking it up in the robes of a sacrament’ from Bramhall’s text, *Safety after ship-wrack* p.18.

¹⁰⁴ William Sheridan, *Of confession*, in *idem, Several discourses*, pp 43-4.

practice ‘which the fathers spoke so gloriously of’ needed to be restored in the Anglican church. Sheridan acknowledged the link between annual confession and communion which he said had remained part of the tradition of the Church of England. Anglicans who were inclined to confess, did so circumstantially. Less commonly they confessed in times of great distress, especially at the prospect of impending death before a battle, before childbirth or during times of illness. The main occasion for confession was before communion where communicants received ‘either the bread of life or damnation’ which made it necessary for people to approach the sacrament ‘as if [they] were to die at that instant’.¹⁰⁵ The most suitable way, as Sheridan saw it, was to consult a ‘ghostly physician’. Sheridan extolled auricular confession to a priest over personal confession to God as being more useful because private confession ‘is neither so certain nor so safe for the penitent’ as confession made to a minister.¹⁰⁶ To confirm his argument Sheridan highlighted that confession before the sacrament was ordered by the Book of Common Prayer and, in support of a formal structure of confession reminds the reader that the ‘canons prescribe a rule for the priest.’¹⁰⁷

Anthony Dopping, the bishop of Meath, proposed a method of absolution in his order for the admission of lapsed Protestants or Catholic converts into the communion of the church.¹⁰⁸ After the penitent had renounced his past errors and satisfied the congregation of his commitment to the Christian faith and knowledge of its creed, he was formally absolved by the presiding minister. As part of the process of absolution the minister placed his hand over the kneeling penitent and said,

by virtue of the authority to me committed, by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I do readmit this person into the communion of the church, and restore him to the prayers of the church, and the participation of the Eucharist, and to all other rites and symbols of communion, in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.¹⁰⁹

It appears that other bishops also favoured a formal absolution when re-admitting Protestants to the church. Among the papers of John Vesey, the archbishop of Tuam, is ‘An order and manner of receiving and reconciling T.W. to the church’, which

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, pp 45-7.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p.49.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p.47.

¹⁰⁸ Anthony Dopping, *A form of reconciliation of lapsed Protestants and of admission of Romanists to the communion of the Church of Ireland* (Dublin,1691).

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, pp 59-70.

although similar to Dopping's *Form of reconciliation*, was probably of Vesey's own construction and was for a particular occasion.¹¹⁰ After questioning 'T.W.' to determine his knowledge and commitment, the archbishop restored him to communion by pronouncing 'I, tho a great sinner, absolve you from the sin you have confessed in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost...' ¹¹¹ While formal confession was encouraged by many Anglican divines of the seventeenth century, the danger that it could become formulaic in order to gain admission to communion was a concern. Many bishops agreed that the practice was a valuable one, but none advocated for a sacramental position. What appeared to have been a celebration of sacramental confession took place in Kilkenny in 1638, with intending communicants kneeling in the chancel and receiving formal absolution. This event was seen to have gone too far even for William Laud, who had been a supporter of the Irish canon on confession.¹¹²

Later in the century, advocates of a ritual of confession were less common. William King, in answer to a challenge from Peter Manby, a convert to Catholicism, considered the issue of confession to be relative to the sin committed. Private sins were to be confessed to God, sins that injured others were to be confessed to the injured party and restitution made, whereas public sins, or those that injured the church, may have required a public confession. Confession to a priest was recommended where there was 'any doubt or scruple in a man's mind concerning the nature of an action' or where the 'sense of guilt lies heavy on the conscience of a sinner.' The basis for confession was proven by scripture and by the Prayer Book 'in her exhortation to communion.' However, King maintained that though public and private confession was permitted and practised by the church, auricular confession was not a requirement.¹¹³

Most Anglican writers agreed that confession was a useful practice which was observed by the more devout members of the Church of Ireland.¹¹⁴ The restitution of a confessional structure remained one of the most challenging aspects of the

¹¹⁰ For Vesey's high-churchmanship see McCafferty, *The reconstruction of the Church of Ireland*, p.65.

¹¹¹ 'De Vescei papers', (NLI, MS 38,819/2).

¹¹² Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, p.16, 133; McCafferty, *The reconstruction of the Church of Ireland*, pp 99-100.

¹¹³ William King, *An answer to the considerations which obliged Peter Manby to embrace, what he calls, the Catholick religion*, (Dublin, 1687), pp 40-44.

¹¹⁴ Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, pp133-6.

Reformation project. As sacramental confession had been inherently part of the annual communion ritual, its effect on the laity's participation in the Anglican Eucharist should not be underestimated. The proliferation of texts that dealt with preparation for the sacrament testifies to the attempts to replace what had been lost at the Reformation. Presbyterians resolved this difficulty in a different way, by creating physical boundaries between the worthy and the unworthy. For Anglicans, who failed to create these boundaries, the 'unaided Protestant conscience' became a significant obstacle to those who wished to receive the Eucharist.¹¹⁵

Edward Synge, who became the archbishop of Tuam in 1716, provided an exposition of the common hindrances to frequent communion in his tract *An answer to all the excuses and pretences that men ordinarily make for their not coming to the Holy Communion*. The tract, first published in 1697, went on to be printed in numerous editions throughout the eighteenth century.¹¹⁶ Synge argued that there were five primary reasons why people did not receive the sacrament. The chief apprehension he observed amongst the laity was the feeling of unworthiness and inadequate preparation in advance of communion. Other obstacles included busy schedules, with no time to adequately prepare for the sacrament, the attendance at a previous communion where the expected benefits had not been received, or a dissatisfaction with the way in which the communion was celebrated.¹¹⁷ Narcissus Marsh outlined similar obstacles in his charge to his clergy in 1694 but he considered the demurrals to be in the main 'feign'd excuses', which had a sinister origin in men who had a 'secret aversion to things sacred and divine.' Marsh thought their excuses were disingenuous and he encouraged his clergy to,

answer all those cavills and objections, that some make against the manner and frequency of receiving it, and the exceptions or excuses, that others are too apt to make against their own receiving of it, either at all, or at such a time, in such a place and with such communicants, after such a manner, and from such a persons, and the like.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic*, pp 185-7.

¹¹⁶ There were multiple editions printed in London. Dublin editions appeared in 1702 and 1724.

¹¹⁷ Edward Synge, *An answer to all the excuses and pretences which men ordinarily make for their not coming to the Holy Communion* (London, 1697), pp 8-15.

¹¹⁸ Marsh, *Charge given*, pp 25-6.

While the clergy were intent on increasing the numbers that received communion by encouraging confession to a minister and attempting to answer common excuses for non-attendance, admission to the Lord's Table was not without limits.

The eligibility of potential communicants must be considered in the context of the soteriological beliefs of the Church of Ireland. Anglican theories of salvation vacillated over the course of the seventeenth century. From the predestinarian teachings of the early Stuart period to the triumph of arminianism in the 1630s and after the Restoration, the stance taken on who could be saved in the Church of Ireland would affect its Eucharistic beliefs.¹¹⁹ The articles of 1615 clearly demonstrated a Calvinist influence; 'God hath predestinated some unto life, and reprobated some unto death: of both which there is a certain number, known only to God, which can neither be increased nor diminished.'¹²⁰ After 1660, the Church of Ireland had adopted the Thirty Nine Articles, whose decree on predestination was not as prescriptive.¹²¹

The Church of Ireland considered itself open to all Christians. Jeremy Taylor laid down two fundamental conditions for eligibility to receive communion; communicants must be baptized and they must have a Christian faith. Thus the church did not give communion to catechumens or infants, and exercised extreme caution when deciding whether to admit madmen or 'natural fools' to the sacrament.¹²² Taylor's intention was to emphasize the great benefits that were offered in the sacrament but also to maintain due reverence for the sacrament by ensuring that communicants were worthy to receive the grace offered to them.¹²³ Excommunication meant exclusion not only from a spiritual communion with Christ but with the wider community. When this wider community was in a minority, the obligation to protect the sacrament against profanation needed to be balanced against the possibility of remaining open to converts to the Church of Ireland.

¹¹⁹ McCafferty, *The reconstruction of the Church of Ireland*, pp 62, 76, 91.

¹²⁰ Articles of religion (1615), article xii.

¹²¹ *Articles agreed upon by the arch-bishops and bishops of both provinces*, article xvii, 'Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundation of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from cause and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour.'

¹²² Taylor, *The worthy communicant*, p.199.

¹²³ *Ibid*, p.218.

The canons and Book of Common Prayer expressed the hope of an inclusive communion. Private communions were prohibited and the Eucharist was only to be celebrated when there were ‘a convenient number to communicate with the priest’. In its attitude to converts, the Church of Ireland displayed its inclusivity most clearly. Parish records occasionally recorded converts in their vestry books, while many bishops saw the welcoming of converts as an important part of their ministry.¹²⁴ Throughout the seventeenth century various projects to provide translations of the bible, Book of Common Prayer and catechisms indicated that hopes to convert Catholics were still alive in certain quarters of the Church of Ireland.¹²⁵ In 1691, Anthony Dopping published a tract which prescribed a ritual for receiving ‘lapsed Protestants’ and Catholics into the church.¹²⁶ There was also a penchant for publishing conversion narratives during the period which were useful tools to promote the cause of the established church.¹²⁷ The most celebrated of these narratives was that of Andrew Sall, an ex-Jesuit championed by Narcissus Marsh in the 1680s. Sall’s conversion represented a public victory for the established Church but it also indicated the broad churchmanship of the Church of Ireland whose communion could stretch to the inclusion of a former Catholic priest. The willingness of the Church of Ireland to admit converts to their communion is starkly contrasted by the lack of any conversion narratives among Presbyterians, whose predestinarian beliefs were incompatible with religious conversion.

¹²⁴ For converts recorded in parish vestry books see ‘Painstown vestry book’ (RCBL, P868/1/1, 6 August 1699) ‘St. Peter’s vestry book’ (RCBL, P45/6/1, 5 June 1703) ‘Athy combined register’ (RCBL, P630/1/1, 29 December 1708) ‘Newcastle vestry book’ (RCBL, P914/1/1, 19 November 1704).

¹²⁵ Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, pp 47, 212; Ian Green, ‘The necessary knowledge of the principles of religion’: catechism and catechizing in Ireland, c. 1560-1800’ in Alan Ford, James McGuire and Kenneth Milne (eds) *As by law established: the Church of Ireland since the Reformation* (Dublin, 1995), p.75.

¹²⁶ Anthony Dopping, *A form of reconciliation of lapsed Protestants and of admission of Romanists to the communion of the church of Ireland* (Dublin, 1691).

¹²⁷ Cornelius O’Donnell, *The recantation of Cornelius O Donnell, prior of Trim as it was by him solemnly deliver’d in the church of Trim* (London, 1664); Andrew Sall, *A sermon preached at Christchurch in Dublin before the lord lieutenant & council, the fifth day of July 1674 with a declaration made in St. John’s Church in Cashel before the archbishop of the province : and a preface shewing the reasons for deserting the communion of the Roman Church, and embracing that of the Church of England* (Dublin, 1675); John Clayton, *A sermon preach’d at St. Michan’s Church in Dublin, February the 23d, 1700. Upon receiving into the communion of the Church of England, the Honble Sir Terence Mac-mahon, Knt & Barnet and Christopher Dunn, converts from the Church of Rome. : Wherein is an account also of a late controversie, betwixt the author and some Romanists.* (Dublin, 1700); Anthony Egan, *The Franciscan convert or a recantation sermon of Anthony Egan* (London, 1673).

Labelling the churchmanship of the Church of Ireland in this period is a perilous exercise and its ability to facilitate a broad range of opinions indicates its commitment to comprehension rather than exclusion. Individual clergy are similarly difficult to pigeon-hole. F.R. Bolton argued that the Caroline divines ‘had little intention of fitting their Eucharistic teaching into the well-known categories, and it would be precarious to attempt any such classification’.¹²⁸ Bolton’s reticence was justified if these ‘well-known’ categories are taken to mean the Eucharistic doctrines of the major European reformers. Indeed there is little evidence to suggest that the Church of Ireland ever considered its Eucharistic beliefs in this light at all. Many writers preferred to be circumspect in formulating a Eucharistic theology, and evidence for a positive definition of what happened in the Anglican Eucharist are difficult to come by. Writers tended, in the main, to focus on a denial of transubstantiation while forging links with the scriptural and early church bases of Eucharistic practice. Among high-church clergymen, sacrificial language was more common and a Real Presence was often alluded to. Jeremy Taylor argued strongly against the ‘memorial’ school of Eucharistic theology, men who,

allow the sacraments to be marks of Christianity, symbols of charity, testimonies of a thankful minde to God, allegorical admonitions of Christian mortification and spiritual alimony, symbols of grace conferred before the sacrament, and rites instituted to stir up faith by way of object and representation

This, Taylor claimed, was ‘something but very much too little.’¹²⁹ He objected to those who ‘go as far’ as to uphold the doctrine of transubstantiation but was surprisingly equable in his judgement of the Mass: ‘I cannot say that [the Mass] is too much; but that these things are not true and although all that is ... said that is of any material benefit and real blessing is true’.¹³⁰ In his later controversial work, *Dissuasive from popery* however, Taylor objects more strenuously to the Mass.¹³¹ Thomas Milles, the bishop of Waterford displayed a similar high-church view; ‘tho he did not believe transubstantiation, yet the sacrament was a true sacrifice, and the clergy true priests.’ He castigated dissenters for building their meeting house so close to the cathedral of the town where ‘with unsanctified hands the heavenly

¹²⁸ Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, p.90.

¹²⁹ Taylor, *The worthy communicant*, p.18.

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, p.19.

¹³¹ Jeremy Taylor, *A dissuasive from popery to the people of Ireland* (Dublin, 1664). For a discussion of this see Chapter 7.

sacrifice, was offered up.’¹³² Milles had spent much of his early career in England and had come under suspicion for Roman Catholic sympathies.¹³³ His presence in Ireland warns against a generalisation of the theological views of the early eighteenth-century church.

Edward Wetenhall, the bishop of Cork, was more moderate in his theological writing. In his notes to accompany the catechetical questions on the Lord’s Supper, Wetenhall espoused a more familiar, ‘via media’ Anglican view. By receiving the sacrament communicants ‘not only maintain the remembrance of Christ’s sacrifice for us, and also the benefits of his sacrifice, but are besides made partakers of that sacrifice, and of those benefits.’ Wetenhall unambiguously stressed the unchanged physical nature of the elements after the consecration and the necessity of communion in both kinds as ordained by scripture.¹³⁴ In his devotional writings Wetenhall stressed self-examination rather than consulting with a minister. In his meditations to be used before communion he advocated a spiritual presence of Christ in the sacrament.¹³⁵ Wetenhall’s Eucharistic writings enjoyed success long after they were printed. Despite his seemingly moderate position he later came under censure for his views on the sacrament, albeit from an atypical source. The puritan bishop of Winchester, Benjamin Hoadley attacked Wetenhall’s 1666 tract *Concerning the frequent and holy use of the Lord’s Supper* in 1735. Wetenhall’s explanation of the manual acts was, to Hoadley, filled with unnecessary symbolism.¹³⁶ In other areas Wetenhall seemed to fulfil the criteria of a latitudinarian churchman.¹³⁷ He was open to the toleration of dissenters and published *The Protestant peacemaker*, a tract

¹³² NLS, Wod. Lett. Qu. XX, f.170v.

¹³³ John Bergin ‘Milles, Thomas’, *DIB*.

¹³⁴ Edward Wetenhall, *The catechism of the Church of England with shorter marginal notes* (Dublin, 1696) pp 76-81.

¹³⁵ Edward Wetenhall, *An order or method of preparation for weekly communicating* (London, 1703), pp 43-44.

¹³⁶ Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, pp116-7.

¹³⁷ For a full discussion of the pitfalls of the term ‘latitudinarian’ see John Spurr, ‘Latitudinarianism and the Restoration church’ in *The Historical Journal*, xxxi, No.1 (1988), pp 61-82. Although Spurr disputes the labelling of certain Restoration divines as ‘latitudinarian’, the characteristics generally attributed to the movement (religious toleration and rationalism in religion) remain useful. They are recognisable in some Irish bishops who could not be labelled ‘high-church’ and who were operating around the turn of the eighteenth century. Edward Wetenhall, Narcissus Marsh and St. George Ashe were all active members of the Dublin Philosophical Society and were generally open to the toleration of dissenters. The ‘latitudinarian’ label however should not be taken too far and is useful to describe what was a relaxation of the ‘high-church’ principles that were common after the Restoration, but not necessarily an all-embracing acceptance of a low-church program.

calling for unity between Protestants in 1682.¹³⁸ His eirenicism stretched even to dissenters that most considered were outside the pale of ecumenical outreach; he visited the Arian, Thomas Emlyn, in prison and engaged in a theological debate with William Penn, the leader of the Quakers.¹³⁹ He showed an interest in experimental science and was a member of the Dublin Philosophical Society.¹⁴⁰ While these were all indicators of a latitudinarian mindset, his reputation as a ‘quirky’ reformer can also be extended to his theological beliefs.¹⁴¹ He was the only Irish bishop to vote against the sacramental test, because he believed it profaned the sacrament.¹⁴² His numerous devotional tracts indicated that he was dedicated to instilling in the laity a keen sense of the importance of the sacrament. This concern that the laity had a deeper understanding of their faith was reiterated in his catechetical works. He was an advocate of weekly communion, his *Due frequency* text, printed in 1703 contained a method of preparation for weekly communion.¹⁴³

William King was vociferously critical of the communion practices of dissenters in the 1690s, but his objections had little to do with theological divisions.¹⁴⁴ He had been brought up in a Presbyterian household, and is better known as an Erastian high-churchman keen to defend the Church of Ireland in the political arena. He wrote little theology, but revealed a commitment to ceremonial worship in his defence of Anglican practices such as bodily worship, psalm-singing in prose and public prayers.¹⁴⁵ When his ideas about the Eucharist were recorded, they suggested a moderate position. In a letter to Henry Maule he rejected the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist; ‘all the minister and people do in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper is to remember with thankfulness the infinite mercy of God, and to plead it for a satisfaction of their sins, which is no more to offer it as a Sacrifice than a malefactor

¹³⁸ Edward Wetenhall, *The Protestant peace-maker* (London, 1682).

¹³⁹ John Cronin, Patrick A. Walsh. ‘Wetenhall, Edward’, *DIB*.

¹⁴⁰ K.T.Hoppen, (ed.) *Papers of the Dublin Philosophical Society, 1683-1709* (2 vols, Dublin, 2008) ii, p.973.

¹⁴¹ T.C. Barnard, *Irish Protestant ascents and descents 1641-1770* (Dublin, 2004), p.193.

¹⁴² Alan Acheson, *A history of the Church of Ireland 1691-2001* (Dublin, 2002), p.57.

¹⁴³ Edward Wetenhall, *Due frequency of the Lord’s supper: stated and proved from holy scripture* (London, 1703).

¹⁴⁴ The key concerns of King were with the infrequent communions of dissenters and their lack of bodily worship.

¹⁴⁵ For a discussion of this see chapter seven. For an analysis of King’s political position see Joseph Richardson, ‘Archbishop William King (1650-1729); ‘Church Tory or State Whig?’ in *Eighteenth century Ireland/Iris an dá chultúr*, xv (2000), pp 54-76.

placing the King's pardon is the granting of it or giving the price for it.'¹⁴⁶ The Eucharist as a symbol of Anglican identity was, however, important to King. While he was imprisoned in Dublin Castle when the city was under Jacobite control in 1689, he administered the sacrament to the prisoners on the last Sunday of every month.¹⁴⁷

Narcissus Marsh, who became archbishop of Dublin in 1694, like many other later seventeenth-century divines, was interested in experimental science and became vice-president of the Dublin Philosophical Society. He countenanced a limited toleration of nonconformity and was keen to accommodate the French congregation who worshipped in St. Patrick's cathedral. However his latitudinarianism did not stretch to the toleration of Presbyterians and Catholics.¹⁴⁸ He was, as we have seen, an advocate of frequent communion and also recommended bodily worship, instructing his clergy to encourage 'in the time of Divine Service ... all such reverent gestures and actions, as by the Book of Common Prayer are prescrib'd; as you may read in the 6th and 7th canons of the Church of Ireland.'¹⁴⁹ His own engagement with the sacrament suggests that he saw it as an intensely personal event, recording in his diary when he received 'his Holy Communion with God.' It was also an occasion where he renewed his commitment to his religious vows.¹⁵⁰

Marsh did not write any theological works of his own, and so his views on the sacrament, like those of William King, can only be gleaned from his brief diary entries and diocesan policies. The reticence of Anglican clergy to formulate comprehensive statements of Eucharistic belief can also be traced in the dissemination of doctrine among the laity. Jeremy Taylor recommended the clergy of Down and Connor to be simple preachers, who kept the content of their sermons focused on the four last things. These eschatological themes were 'useful, safe and profitable' and preachers should be careful to 'never run into extravagancies and curiosities, nor trouble yourselves or them with mysterious secrets.'¹⁵¹ They should

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, p.102.

¹⁴⁷ Hugh Jackson Lawlor (ed.) 'Diary of William King, D.D., archbishop of Dublin, during his imprisonment in Dublin Castle' in *JRSAI Fifth Series*, xxxiii, No. 3, (1903) p.263.

¹⁴⁸ Muriel McCarthy, 'Marsh, Narcissus' *DIB*.

¹⁴⁹ Marsh, *Charge given*, p.25.

¹⁵⁰ Raymond Gillespie (ed.) *Scholar bishop: the recollections and diary of Narcissus Marsh, 1638-1696* (Cork, 2003), pp 28, 36,50.

¹⁵¹ Jeremy Taylor, *Rules and advices to the clergy of the diocese of [blank] for their deportment in their personal and publick capacities* (Dublin, 1661), p.27.

also use ‘primitive, known and accustomed words; and affect not new phantastical or schismatical terms.’¹⁵² Narcissus Marsh, in his pastoral admonitions to his Cashel clergy in 1694, called for simple and plain sermons,

not amusing [parishioners] with too sublime and speculative matters; such as are the doctrine of the Trinity, of God’s decrees, of the mysteries of the Incarnation, and the like: farther than just to confirm the people in a belief of the truth of these things... but not at all to attempt explaining how they are so; which cannot be done...¹⁵³

Here Marsh was reiterating the call of the canons for ministers not to ‘run into curious questions, or unnecessary controversies’.¹⁵⁴ For the most part the clergy were concerned to educate the laity only to the extent that they could be induced to attend the sacrament more frequently by highlighting the benefits that could be received at communion. Simplicity was paramount and many devotional works were specifically designed for those ‘of the meanest capacities’.¹⁵⁵ Edward Wetenhall, in his idiosyncratic manner, was keen to stress in the preface of his catechism that the clergy needed to instil in people an understanding of the meaning of doctrine and that catechising was ‘not merely hearing children say over that form of words....[but] that they may be sure to retain, as well as understand, each point of faith and manners.’¹⁵⁶ Often the preparatory works collated materials from the canons, Prayer-Book and scripture and so utilised a vocabulary that would have been familiar to even the most infrequent church-goer. Samuel Colby, the lecturer in St. Michan’s parish in Dublin, designed his 1701 companion to the communion service, specifically in order to follow the service as it was laid out in the Book of Common Prayer. Colby also felt his work filled a niche in the devotional market, a market in which his own parishioners obviously readily participated: ‘I have observed in every congregation...so many other books in the hands of the communicants, and so few Common-Prayer books that the church service seems to be wholly neglected and laid

¹⁵² Taylor, *Rules and advices* pp 28-29.

¹⁵³ Narcissus Marsh, *The charge given by Narcissus lord-archbishop of Dublin to the clergy of the province of Leinster at his primary triennial visitation, anno dom. 1694 together with his articles of visitation* (Dublin, 1694), p.8.

¹⁵⁴ *Constitutions and canons ecclesiastical*, canon xii.

¹⁵⁵ Syngé, *An answer to all the excuses* was designed to be ‘fitted for the meanest capacities, and very proper to be given away by such as are charitably inclined’, John Bulkelly, *Short and Plain directions for the observation of the Lord’s Day; as they were delivered in a sermon in the church of Mallow in the diocese of Cloyne* (Dublin, 1697) was ‘suited to the capacity of the common people’; Green, ‘The necessary knowledge’, p.77.

¹⁵⁶ Wetenhall, *Catechism of the Church of England* ‘To my reverend brethren, the clergy of the diocese of Cork and Rosse’.

aside...'¹⁵⁷ In St. Michan's the devotional aides appeared to obtrude upon the ritual of the sacrament itself, such was their multiplicity.

According to Colby, parishioners were readily consuming the devotional tracts which aimed to prepare them for communion. These tracts were designed to encourage frequent and devout participation of the sacrament.¹⁵⁸ While the canonical requirement of three communions per year was to be applied to all parishioners, not all laity were considered suitable for a more frequent reception. Jeremy Taylor, in his advice to the clergy in Down and Connor, instructed them to encourage 'a devout and periodical Communion, at the least three times in the year, at the great Festivals: but the devouter sort, and they who have leisure, are to be invited to a frequent Communion: and let it be given and received with great reverence'.¹⁵⁹ Edward Wetenhall also envisaged a particular type of weekly communicant, one who fulfilled four requirements. The first was that they were persons 'who are in good earnest for heaven... who really believe Christianity, and endeavour to keep an actual sense of the Christian doctrine.' Weekly communicants needed to be 'completely knowing in the body of Christian religion' which included understanding the Creed, 'to have early learnt some good catechism' and have 'a good understanding [of] the communion service in our Church liturgy.' They also needed to have leisure 'more or less daily for devotion, and improving their souls' and finally be 'persons no whit strangers to their own hearts...not passing a day without examining conscience...'¹⁶⁰

For those who didn't read the devotional manuals, their understanding of the sacrament was probably mediated through the catechising of their clergy. Catechesis was ordered to be performed every Sunday by the canons.¹⁶¹ Ian Green has demonstrated that the laity were more likely to have been exposed to theological dogma after the 1680s, when the production of Protestant catechetical works increased considerably. This is particularly true of the 1690s and early 1700s when Edward Wetenhall published an annotated Prayer Book catechism as well as *A tried*

¹⁵⁷ Samuel Colby, *The communion service of the Church in the Book of Common Prayer, the best companion to the altar* (Dublin, 1701), 'Preface'.

¹⁵⁸ Spurr, *Restoration church*, pp 347-53.

¹⁵⁹ Taylor, *Rules and advices*, p.43.

¹⁶⁰ Edward Wetenhall, *An order or method of preparation for weekly communicating* (London, 1703) pp1-7.

¹⁶¹ *Constitutions and canons ecclesiastical*, Canon xi.

method of catechising (1698).¹⁶² Jeremy Taylor produced a catechism for young people in 1652 which was published in London but re-appeared in subsequent devotional works. Taylor urged the clergy of his diocese to use the Prayer Book catechism every Sunday. He also urged bells to be tolled before catechising was to begin to remind people to attend.¹⁶³ Narcissus Marsh ordered a catechism to be printed for use in his Dublin diocese in 1699, which he may have authored.¹⁶⁴ In the early eighteenth century Edward Synge's *Plain instructions for the young and ignorant* was printed in Dublin in 1711, after several London editions had appeared. This was also based on the Prayer Book catechism.¹⁶⁵

Ian Green has pointed to the affinity of Irish episcopal catechisms with the 1549 Prayer Book and argues that while the treatment of communion 'was far from high church, it was common for those who leaned towards a conditional view of the covenant to see communion as an occasion on which the baptismal vow could be regularly renewed and a means, together with the Word and prayer, through which grace might be channelled to and faith strengthened in the individual believer'.¹⁶⁶ Protestant catechisms, according to Green, were designed to promote the understanding of the faith to parishioners in contrast to Catholic catechisms, which were tailored to enable parishioners to take part in communal worship and particularly as aids to confession.¹⁶⁷

The catechisms that can be documented as being in use in Ireland advocated a moderate position. The catechism recommended by Narcissus Marsh which appears to have been compiled for 'particular churches in Dublin' was printed so that it could be distributed to private families.¹⁶⁸ It espoused the Prayer Book view that in the sacrament 'none but good and faithful people, receive any benefit from it: and likewise that Christ's body and blood are received in this sacrament spiritually, or by faith, and not in a gross and carnal manner.' An explanation of the manual acts in the

¹⁶² Green, 'The necessary knowledge', pp 71-4.

¹⁶³ Taylor, *Rules and advices*, pp 35-6.

¹⁶⁴ Raymond Gillespie, 'Lay spirituality and worship, 1558-1750: holy books and godly readers' in Raymond Gillespie and W.G. Neely (eds) *The laity and the Church of Ireland, 1000-2000* (Dublin, 2002), p.148.

¹⁶⁵ Green, 'The necessary knowledge', pp 74, 77.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.80.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, pp 70-71.

¹⁶⁸ *The Church catechism explain'd and prov'd by apt texts of Scripture* (Dublin, 1699), 'Preface'. There were subsequent Dublin editions printed in 1713 and 1719.

Anglican ritual however was included, ‘the breaking of the bread... represents the bruising, and crucifying of Christ’s body; and the pouring forth the wine, represents the shedding of his precious blood.’¹⁶⁹ Communicants were to repent of their sins and ‘be in charity with all men.’ The emphasis on charity was pronounced because at the sacrament communicants ‘are there particularly united unto one another.’¹⁷⁰ Further indications of the broad-communion of the Church of Ireland were highlighted by the printing of the Prayer Book catechism in Irish in 1680 and 1710.¹⁷¹

While theological concepts might be imparted to ordinary parishioners through catechisms and to more pious parishioners through devotional materials, the significance of the Eucharist was most powerfully communicated in the performance of the liturgy. The material context of this celebration was essential to the tenor of the theological message portrayed to the laity. The canons contained instructions for the adequate provision of utensils for the celebration of Holy Communion. All parishes needed to equip themselves with a flagon, or ‘sweete standing pott’, made either of pewter ‘if not of purer metal’ and a communion cup. The latter, which would hold the consecrated wine, had to be of silver.¹⁷² The elements were to be ‘fine white bread and.. good wholesome wine’ and the Prayer Book stipulated that the bread should also be the type of bread ‘as is usual to be eaten’. No consecrated elements were permitted to be brought out of the church and any remaining bread or wine was to be consumed by the priest and some communicants of his choosing.¹⁷³ The emphasis here was on avoiding superstition but maintaining respect for the consecrated elements. As the focus of the consecration and reception of the sacrament was the altar, it became an important barometer of churchmanship.

After 1660, the ideas that had inspired the Laudian high-church revivals of the 1630s began to be re-circulated in the nascent atmosphere of the Restoration period. Among the features of high-church Anglicanism was a focus on the altar as a sacred space. The altar had to be sufficiently adorned so as to reflect the gravity of the sacrament and by which parishioners could perceive visually that this was a

¹⁶⁹ Green, ‘The necessary knowledge’, p.71.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, pp 72-74.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, pp 71-2, 84.

¹⁷² *Constitutions and canons ecclesiastical*, Canon xciii, xcv.

¹⁷³ *BCP* ‘The order for the administration of the Lord’s Supper’.

sanctified place, where they worshipped together ‘in the beauty of holiness’.¹⁷⁴ The ‘beauty of holiness’ found its expression in altars that were placed at the east end of the church, often raised up to a higher level and surrounded by communion rails. Similar processes were underway in England after the Restoration, but in a more contentious atmosphere where the earlier Laudian practices could not be as smoothly re-introduced.¹⁷⁵ The canons of 1634 reflected the Laudian influences on the church at the time and canon ninety-four ordered ‘a fair table to be placed at the east end of the church or chancel.’¹⁷⁶ Several bishops were vocally supportive of the elevated altar. In his report of the diocese of Meath in the 1680s, Anthony Dopping was concerned to determine whether the communion table was railed and in its proper position in the parish churches.¹⁷⁷ Narcissus Marsh asked whether parish churches had a communion table ‘standing at the East end of the Church’ in his visitation articles of 1692 and 1694.¹⁷⁸

Edward Wolley, the bishop of Clonfert, printed a sermon entitled *Altare evangelicum* in 1673, which was a biblical exegesis on the scriptural foundations for the use of altars in the ancient church. Wolley outlined how the altar had both a literal and figural meaning. The significance of the altar in the Christian church was in its use for spiritual sacrifices, which carried on a tradition which Wolley traced back to the Patriarchs.¹⁷⁹ His sermon was published at a time when many parishes were faced with the prospect of major refurbishment having been out of repair for decades.¹⁸⁰ An important feature of Wolley’s sermon was its connection of the altar with stately occasions such as coronations and knighting ceremonies. The solemn induction of the king at the altar was painted in similar terms as the ordination of bishops and priests.¹⁸¹ Devotional works transmitted a similar message of reverence for the altar. Edward Lake recommended bowing to the altar and William King pointed to the scriptural precedents for reverence when approaching the altar.¹⁸² A minister from Co. Meath, who wrote to King in the aftermath of the Williamite war reporting the

¹⁷⁴ Psalm 29:2.

¹⁷⁵ Fincham and Tyacke, *Altars restored*, Chapter 8; Spurr, *The Restoration church*, p.350.

¹⁷⁶ McCafferty, *Reconstruction of the Church of Ireland*, pp 98-9.

¹⁷⁷ C.C. Ellison, (ed.), ‘Bishop Dopping’s visitation book 1682-1685’ in *Riocht na Midhe* iv, (1971) pp 32-9; Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, p.213.

¹⁷⁸ Marsh, *Charge given*, p.31.

¹⁷⁹ Edward Wolley, *Altare evangelicum*.

¹⁸⁰ Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland* pp168-171; Davies, *Worship and theology*, pp 3-30.

¹⁸¹ Wolley, *Altare evangelicum*, p.19.

¹⁸² Fincham and Tyacke, *Altars restored*, p.331, King, *Inventions of men*, pp 117-9.

desecration of the church at Trim by a Catholic soldier, indicated that Anglican clergy saw their altars as imbued with sacred meaning. King included the report in his printed account of the treatment of Protestants during the reign of James II:

This Keating was a soldier in the Lord of Kenmare's regiment; he with other associates, having often before plundered, broken and despoiled the seats of our Church, without interruption or disturbance, resolved on Christmas-day at night, to brake and plunder our altar, (on which we had on that day celebrated the Holy Communion) : and to that end, he with two more, about midnight, entered the Church. This Keating immediately attempted to brake one of the folding doors leading to the Communion table, and endeavouring with all his force to wrest the door from the hinges, immediately (as he thought) saw several glorious and amazing sights; But one ugly black thing (as he call'd it) gave him a great souse upon the poll, which drive [sic] him immediately into so great disorder, that he tore all the cloaths off his back, and ran naked about the streets, and used all mad Bedlam pranks whatever ...We have an account, that another of Keating's companions at the very same time was struck mad in the very act of breaking the Communion Table; and that within very few hours after, he dyed...¹⁸³

The Eucharistic theology of the Church of Ireland after the Restoration shared much with its English counterpart. Both churches placed great emphasis on the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer. Both came under the influence of a resurgent high-church party who were determined to implement their own ideas about church discipline and worship. In Ireland this resurgence was intensified by the involvement of John Bramhall in the election of a high-church episcopal bench and the implementation of the 1634 canons, themselves a product of Bramhall's earlier presence in Ireland.¹⁸⁴ The inclusion in these canons of specific directives for confession, the positioning of the altar at the east end of the church and the reception of Communion kneeling were clear digressions from the English canons of 1604. The Church of Ireland would remain under the influence of this specific theological and liturgical programme for the period 1660 to 1740. While the prescriptions of the canons and Book of Common Prayer remained in place, the zeal with which they were implemented would wane as the bishops appointed by Bramhall died and were replaced by clergy who would be more influenced by the emerging latitudinarian spirit of the early eighteenth century. However, the Church of Ireland, given its precarious position in the face of a large Catholic population and a substantial

¹⁸³ William King, *The state of the Protestants of Ireland under the late King James's government* (London, 1691), pp 397-8.

¹⁸⁴ James McGuire has pointed to the more moderate English episcopal bench in comparison to Bramhall's appointees. McGuire, 'Policy and patronage', pp115-116

Presbyterian presence in Ulster clung tightly to its arminian and erastian identity. Bishops like William King and Narcissus Marsh who in other arenas demonstrated a latitudinarian streak could be uncompromising in their defence of Anglican privileges and worship. They were concerned that worship was organised according to the prescribed liturgy and that it facilitated communal harmony within the Protestant community. A cornerstone of their policy was the regular and ceremonial worship of the sacrament of Holy Communion. For this the laity were provided with a large corpus of preparatory texts, for which we have few records for their dissemination.

While the transformation of episcopal attitudes can be largely attributed to the influences and circumstances of the contemporary climate, the Church of Ireland was also a sanctuary for idiosyncratic clergy. Edward Wetenhall, who had a remarkably long and productive career in the Irish church, continuously evades conventional categories. Similarly high-church clergy such as Thomas Milles and William Sheridan were theologically out of place in the early eighteenth century.

Given this miscellaneous group of clergy it might be expected that parishioners of the Church of Ireland received a confused Eucharistic message. However, given the attachment of all of the bishops to the Book of Common Prayer, it is likely that the ritual of the sacrament was uniformly celebrated. This was also true of the catechisms that were used during the period which were based on the Prayer Book form. Where experiences diverged amongst the laity was between the 'devouter sort' and those of the 'meanest capacities.' It is likely that any who came into contact with the devotional literature did so through the bestsellers of the day, which advocated a practical piety. The clergy were aware of the distinction between the 'devouter sorts' and the masses and evidently accepted that the former were capable of a more frequent communion practice. The reluctance of the clergy of the Church of Ireland to make firm doctrinal pronouncements on the nature of the Eucharistic presence indicated that there was a concern that the Eucharist would facilitate unity among the Protestant population, whatever their churchmanship.

Chapter Two

Eucharistic Practice in the Church of Ireland, 1660-1740

After the Restoration the laity of the Church of Ireland experienced a pastoral campaign by the clergy to encourage them to receive the Eucharist regularly. In order to fulfil its ambition the church authorities needed the full support of the political establishment. This was achieved when the Act of Uniformity of 1666 established the rites and ceremonies of the Church of Ireland as the official liturgical program.¹ In 1704 the Church of Ireland won further legislative confirmation that the sacrament of Holy Communion identified its members, and the benefits these members enjoyed, through a public ritual of reception. The sacramental test clause, appended to the *Act to Prevent the Further Growth of Popery* [2 Anne c.6], represented a political confirmation of what had been a significant pastoral campaign to position the Eucharist at the centre of the religious practice of late seventeenth-century Anglicanism. This chapter aims to explore the extent to which this campaign was successful among the laity. Despite the liturgical homogeneity, geographical and social conditions impacted on Eucharistic practice in reality. These variations in practice can be related to the strength of the parochial system. When parishes had a good ministerial supply and a sizeable congregation, the aspirations of the bishops were often successful. This inevitably meant that cities and urban areas had the most consistent levels of sacramental worship. Where Protestant numbers were small, the celebration of communion was infrequent and adhered to traditional devotional patterns.

This chapter will argue that through changes to the material possessions of parishes, namely the restoration of altars and the patronage of church plate, the Church of Ireland instituted a sacrament imbued with ceremonial characteristics. At the centre of this sacramental worship was the reception of the Eucharist at Easter. It will be argued that though the church was successful in establishing the primacy of the Easter occasion, the Paschal sacrament became a symbol of political loyalty as much

¹ The re-establishment of an episcopal, Anglican church was not inevitable after the Restoration and non-conformists lobbied hard to win accommodations for dissenting interests. S.J. Connolly, *Religion, law and power: the making of Protestant Ireland, 1660-1760* (Oxford, 1992), p.10; John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (Yale, 1991), pp 34-36; T.C. Barnard, 'Enforcing the reformation in Ireland, 1660-1704' in Elizabethanne Boran and Crawford Gribben (eds), *Enforcing reformation in Ireland and Scotland. 1550-1700* (Surrey, 2006), pp 203-5.

as a communal celebration. It will be shown that communal sacramental worship took place at Christmas among the more ‘ordinary’ parishioners. This parochial worship remains for the most part obscured by the more flashy demonstrations of conformity in the benefactions of wealthy lay patrons, and the pious reflections of godly paragons. By utilising parochial sources the experience of the laity of the ‘meanest capacities’ is explored. It will be argued that their sacramental worship was affected by immediate temporal circumstances rather than national policies.

Parochial records for religious practice in early modern Ireland are relatively poor in comparison to the rich resources of England.² This is unsurprising owing to the tumultuous religious and political past. The exception to this was in urban areas where there were enough Protestants to support the parish structure by providing it with personnel in the form of parish officers. It was these officers who generated parish records such as churchwardens’ accounts, vestry minutes, inventories of parish goods and collection lists for the poor.³ These sources can illuminate lay worship and the operation of the various civil functions of the parish, a project which is increasingly garnering attention among historians.⁴ The problems facing those using parish records to document lay piety lies in the ad hoc nature of the surviving sources. The result is a skewed picture that illuminates areas with significant Protestant populations, mostly urban areas, while neglecting those in which the Eucharistic practices of Anglicans may have been substantially different to the cities

² Beat Kümin, ‘The English parish in a European perspective’ in Katherine French, Gary Gibbs and Beat Kumin (eds) *The parish in English life, 1400-1600* (Manchester, 1997), pp 15-32.

³ The recent publication of vestry records preserves valuable early churchwardens’ accounts, see Adrian Empey, *The proctors’ accounts of the parish church of St. Werburgh, Dublin, 1481-1627* (Dublin, 2009); Raymond Gillespie (ed.), *The vestry records of the parish of St. John the Evangelist, Dublin, 1595-1658* (Dublin, 2002); Maighr ad N  Mhurchadha (ed.), *The vestry records of the united parishes of Finglas, St. Margaret’s, Artane and the Ward, 1657-1758* (Dublin, 2007); Raymond Gillespie (ed.) *The vestry records of the parishes of St. Catherine and St. James, Dublin, 1657-1692* (Dublin, 2004); W.J.R. Wallace, *The vestry records of the parishes of St Bride, St Michael Le Pole and St Stephen, Dublin, 1662-1742* (Dublin, 2011); Maighr ad N  Mhurchadha (ed.) *The vestry records of the parish of St. Audoen, Dublin, 1636-1702* (Dublin, 2012).

⁴ See for example T.C. Barnard, ‘Parishes, pews and parsons: lay people and the church of Ireland, 1647-1780’ in R. Gillespie and W.G. Neely (eds.) *The laity and the Church of Ireland 1000-2000* (Dublin, 2002), pp 71-2; Rowena Dudley, ‘The Dublin parish, 1660-1730’ in Elizabeth Fitzpatrick and Raymond Gillespie (ed.) *The parish in medieval and early modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2006); Raymond Gillespie, ‘Urban parishes in early seventeenth century Ireland: the case of Dublin’ in *idem*; Rowena Dudley, ‘The Dublin parishes and the Poor: 1660-1740’ in *Archivium Hibernicum* liii, (1999), pp 80-94; Raymond Gillespie, ‘The religion of Irish Protestants: a view from the laity, 1580-1700’ in Alan Ford, James McGuire and Kenneth Milne (eds) *As by law established: The Church of Ireland since the Reformation* (Dublin, 1995); Brian Gurrin, ‘Land and people in Wicklow, 1660-1840’ (Ph.D Thesis, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2006); Robin Usher, *Protestant Dublin, 1660-1760: architecture and iconography* (Basingstoke, 2012).

and large towns. These parochial sources form the basis of the following analysis of communion practices in the Church of Ireland which aims to illuminate how the laity engaged with the sacrament.

One of the cornerstones of the Anglican devotional programme after 1660 was an emphasis on frequent communion. It was a marker of pious conduct and gave an opportunity to the devout to outwardly renew their faith. For the Erastian clergy, this public display not only fostered communal harmony but it was a means by which the political and religious identities of Irish Protestants could be publicly displayed. Nearly all Protestant writers saw frequent communion as a distinguishing feature of their faith, one which was at odds with Roman Catholic practices. After the Reformation, parishioners were being asked to forego a tradition of annual communion which had operated for centuries.⁵ The ancient rhythm would prove difficult to unsettle. This was not solely the result of a lingering medieval nostalgia, as the Easter attendance was considered the most important in the Church of Ireland and was mandatory according to the Book of Common Prayer and the canons of 1634. However, high attendances at Christmas suggest a latent older tradition was operating when the communal solidarity and neighbourly atmosphere of the festive season was expressed in churches decorated with rushes, bows, holly and ivy.⁶ Often poor rates were collected and disbursed at Christmas time which would have further encouraged charity between parishioners.⁷

When parishes celebrated communion more than three times in the year, they usually held communions on other significant feasts such as Whitsunday, Low Sunday and Michaelmas. In the decades after the Restoration, communion was celebrated on a monthly basis in many Dublin parishes which theoretically enabled the laity to receive every week by alternating their place of worship.⁸ Figures for earlier in the century are not readily available but it is unlikely that monthly communions were celebrated in many places before the Restoration. In 1622 the rector of Tawnatlee,

⁵ Eamon Duffy, *The stripping of the altars :traditional religion in England 1400-1580* (2nd Ed. New Haven, 2005), pp 93-5.

⁶ Ibid, pp 14-15; Ronald Hutton, *The rise and fall of Merry England* (Oxford, 1994) pp 55, 241-3. For the decoration of St. Bride's church at Christmas see 'St. Bride's vestry accounts' (RCBL, P327/4/1, pp 18, 23,27) For St. John's see Gillespie, (ed.), *Vestry records of St. John's*, pp 24, 38, 42, 60.

⁷ 'St. Bride's accounts', (RCBL, P327/4/1, p.57).

⁸ William King, *A discourse concerning the inventions of men in the worship of God* (London, 1694), p.156.

Co. Armagh noted down the number of communicants at Easter, there was no indication that other communions were held in the parish.⁹ The visitation of Archbishop Bulkeley of Dublin in 1630 indicated that in most parishes there were insufficient numbers of Protestants to sustain even ordinary divine service. The only mention of communion services was at Easter and in parishes with a substantial Protestant population and church buildings in repair.¹⁰ In the parish of St. John the Evangelist in Dublin communions in the early seventeenth century were more frequent, the churchwardens often paying for ‘several’ communions in the early 1620s, later in the decade the parish appeared to be holding communions at Michaelmas, four around the Easter celebration, one on Low Sunday as well as ‘several’ others.¹¹ During the 1650s the parish maintained these levels of practice. After the Restoration, with an increased Protestant population and with churches restored for worship, communions were held more regularly. There were monthly communions in the united parishes of St. Bride’s, St. Stephen’s and St. Michael le Pole’s from the 1670s and in the parish of St. John the Evangelist and St. Catherine and St. James from the 1680s. In the union of St. Bride’s there were three communions held at Easter time, on Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Low Sunday. Bread and wine figures indicate that the communion on Easter Sunday was attended by the greatest number of people, but the parish was clearly attempting to provide the maximum opportunity for its parishioners to fulfil their Easter obligation.¹²

Outside of the city centre frequent communion was less common. In 1695 Archbishop Marsh reported that while the sacrament was administered monthly in most Dublin parishes it was only administered four to six times in others. This view was corroborated by William King. Marsh hoped to improve the frequency of communions to a weekly or fortnightly celebration in populous city parishes and monthly ones in rural areas.¹³ It is unlikely that this was an achievable goal and rural parishes in the diocese rarely held monthly communions.¹⁴ Cathedral churches were

⁹ ‘A true relation of the rectory and parish of Tawnatelee alias Mounterheyney, 1622’ (PRONI, MIC 171/1)

¹⁰ M.V. Ronan, (ed.), ‘Archbishop Bulkeley’s visitation of Dublin, 1630’ in *Archivium Hibernicum* viii (1941), pp 61-21,75,77.

¹¹ Gillespie, (ed.), *Vestry records of St. John’s*, pp 34, 35, 52-3.

¹² ‘Vestry book of St. Bride’s’ (RCBL P327/4/1) In 1668 the parish spent 6s 2d at their communions on Good Friday, Low Sunday and Whitsunday but 8s 2d at their communion on Easter Sunday.

¹³ ‘Narcissus Marsh to William Lloyd, 27 April 1695’ (Lambeth Palace Library MS 942 No.96); Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, pp172-173.

¹⁴ ‘Castleknock vestry book’ (RCBL, P352/1/1).

the only ones to hold a weekly celebration but these were poorly attended. In Waterford a weekly sacrament was administered to a small number of communicants only because of the piety of the bishop, George Baker. In the early eighteenth century Thomas Milles attempted to revive this tradition but also failed to attract communicants. Perhaps the fact that he held communions at six in the morning was a considerable deterrent.¹⁵ In 1714 Jonathon Swift instituted a weekly sacrament in St. Patrick's cathedral which remained a constant feature of the cathedral's worship. In 1719, St. Finbarre's cathedral in Cork introduced a weekly sacrament but this had died out by the end of the century.¹⁶ Cathedral churches could afford to hold these regular communions where there was a chapter of clergy and a city population to attend them.

In other areas a similar pattern emerged, towns with significant Protestant populations held more frequent communions. When Narcissus Marsh was translated to the primacy he found monthly communion to be the norm in the Armagh province by 1706.¹⁷ Clones parish in Co. Monaghan had a monthly communion from 1695, as did Athlone in Co. Westmeath by the 1730s.¹⁸ In Tynan, Co. Armagh there were only four communions a year in 1707 while in Comber, Co. Down they only held three communions a year during the same period.¹⁹

Poor money collections provide evidence for the laity's attendance at communal worship at Christmas. The poor collections in the parish of Painstown, Co. Meath in 1708 yielded £1 0s 9d at Christmas, £1 3s 4½d at Easter while the Whitsunday communion generated 9s. At the poor collections in Newcastle, Co. Wicklow in 1707, the monthly communions yielded about half the rate collected at Easter, Christmas and Whitsunday.²⁰ Poor money collections for the united parishes of St.

¹⁵ Barnard, 'Parishes, pews and parsons', pp 94-5.

¹⁶ Richard Caulfield, *Annals of St. Fin Barre's Cathedral, Cork* (Cork, 1871) p.58; Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, p.181; John Crawford, 'Retrenchment, renewal and disestablishment, 1840-77' in John Crawford and Raymond Gillespie (eds), *St. Patrick's cathedral, Dublin : a history* (Dublin, 2009), p.320.

¹⁷ 'Marsh to Tenison, 12 September 1706' (Lambeth Palace Library, MS 929 No.41).

¹⁸ 'Clones vestry book', (RCBL, P804/1/1, p.186); John Healy, *History of the diocese of Meath*, (2 vols, Dublin, 1908) ii, p.42.

¹⁹ 'Tynan vestry minutes', (PRONI, MIC1/12/1); 'Vestry book of Comber', (PRONI, MIC583/36); Aghalow/Calendon similarly held three communions a year in 1699 (PRONI, D2602/1).

²⁰ 'Painstown vestry book', (RCBL, P868/1/1, poor collection, 1708); 'Newcastle vestry book' (RCBL, P914/1/1, poor collection 1707).

Bride's in Dublin and Shankill in Lurgan corroborate this picture.²¹ In Delgany, Co. Wicklow double the number of communicants attended the Christmas sacrament as did at Easter, but the minister also served the neighbouring parish of Newcastle where parishioners may have attended the Easter communion.²² In Dublin city the preference for the Christmas sacrament was less pronounced and indicates that attendance at Easter was paramount. This was the centre of the Protestant political power and the reception of the sacrament at Easter may have been influenced by social position and reputation. In the united parishes of St. Bride's, St. Michael le Pole's and St. Stephen's four communions were held at Easter in 1672. The expenditure on bread and wine exceeded that at Christmas by a significant degree.²³ Not all parishes exhibited this pattern, in St. John the Evangelist's £1 4s was spent on wine at Christmas and £1 2s at Easter but usually only a third of that amount on non-festal days in 1689-90.²⁴

As the frequency of communions increased in Dublin after 1660, so too did the amount spent on bread and wine by the churchwardens. The Prayer Book dictated that parishes should provide for the sacramental elements at the charge of the parish and communion elements were purchased out of the parish cess or tax, usually by the churchwardens. The purchase of the elements for communion were the most basic expense incurred by the parish. When the impoverished parish of St. Nicholas in Cork sought a union with another neighbouring parish in the 1740s, the vestry emphasised that the parish could not 'find a method to support the church and to provide the sacrament bread and wine...'²⁵ Bread and wine figures reveal next to nothing about the spiritual motivations or social backgrounds of communicants, but they can demonstrate changes in patterns of attendance over time. There are limitations to this approach, as many parishes kept inconsistent churchwardens' accounts. In general parish records testify to an overall increase in communion attendance between 1660 and the early 1700s. Although a proportion of this increase could be attributed to more frequent communions in urban areas, there was a similar increase in expenditure in places where the frequency of communions remained the

²¹ 'Vestry accounts of St. Bride's', (RCBL, P327/4/1, p.53); 'Vestry book of Shankill' (PRONI MIC1/24/1, poore collection, 1685).

²² 'Delgany vestry book', (RCBL, P917/5/1, p.3).

²³ 'Vestry accounts of St. Bride's', (RCBL, P327/4/1, pp 40-1).

²⁴ 'Vestry book of St. John's', (RCBL, P328/5/2, churchwardens' account, 1689-90).

²⁵ 'Vestry book of St. Nicholas, Cork', (RCBL P498/1/1, 1 August 1748).

same. This increase may have been related to the pastoral efforts of the bishops but also points to broader secular pressures that may have influenced lay participation in the sacrament.

After 1704, there was a political incentive to receive communion with the introduction of the sacramental test. Despite this involuntary inducement, expenditure on the communion elements does not indicate a large surge in attendance after the test's introduction. Many parishes continued to see increases in expenditure until the 1730s. Rather than suggesting continued success for the reforming bishops, rises in expenditure in the early eighteenth century were probably bolstered by occasional conformists who received communion under the terms of the sacramental test. Due to the nature of surviving sources, Dublin parishes offer the greatest opportunity for an analysis of the expenditure figures for sacramental bread and wine.

Except for the proctor's accounts of St. Werburgh, the parish of St. John the Evangelist is the only Dublin parish known to have surviving pre-Restoration churchwardens' accounts.²⁶ It has vestry records dating from 1595 which contain relatively complete accounts from the early seventeenth century. Figure 2:1 shows the average expenditure per decade from the 1620s to the 1730s and provides the means with which to examine communion expenditure over a hundred year period.²⁷

²⁶ There are accounts surviving from the parish of St. Audeon from 1654 see Maighr ad N  Mhurchadha (ed.) *The vestry records of the parish of St. Audoen, Dublin, 1636-1702* (Dublin, 2012) but these are a compilation of transcriptions and published accounts, the originals were destroyed in the PRO fire of 1922. They have significant lacunae.

²⁷ These figures were compiled using index numbers, the base value being 100 for the decade of the 1660s.

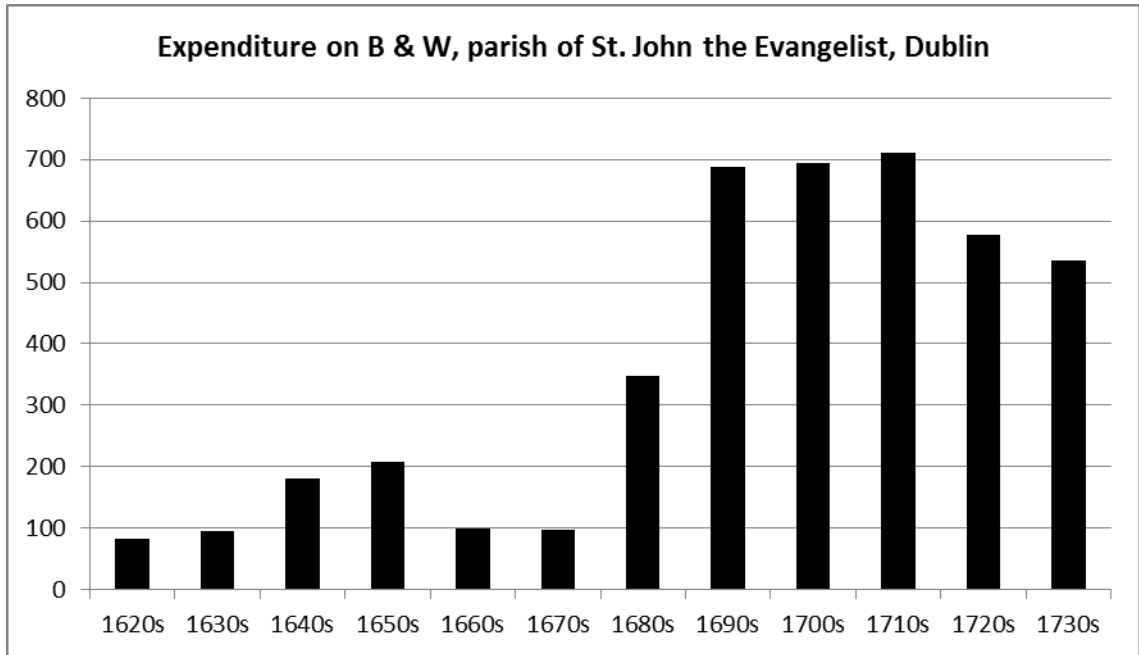


Figure 2:1 Bread and wine figures for the parish of St. John the Evangelist, Dublin [Gillespie (ed.), *Vestry records of St. John's*; RCBL, P328/5/2; P328/5/3]

The records of St. John's offer insights into the type of worship being conducted in the Church of Ireland in the 1650s, for which there are few sources of information. Surprisingly, the expenditure demonstrates the vitality of the parish's worship during this uncertain period and the amounts spent on the elements actually decreased in the decades after the Restoration from a higher rate of expenditure in the decade preceding it. Evidence from the parish records suggests that St. John's remained a conformist parish throughout most of the mid-seventeenth century. The ministers who served the parish in this period were largely conformable and it was only in the later 1650s that the parish came under more godly influences. Thomas Harrison, a prominent preacher of the period and chaplain to Henry Cromwell, was appointed as minister in 1655 but did not appear to take up the position, having preaching duties assigned to him at Christ Church cathedral. The parish was then ministered to by Patrick Kerr, a Commonwealth minister, about whom little is known. Kerr was succeeded by Edward Baines. It was possibly under the tenure of Baines that the communion rails, which had been repaired in 1655, were removed. After the

Restoration he ministered to a dissenting congregation in Wine-tavern Street and was seen as politically suspect.²⁸

Before the Interregnum the parish had been served by Dudley Boswell from 1638. It was during Boswell's incumbency that there was a significant increase in expenditure on the communion elements.²⁹ Boswell signed an address in 1647 seeking permission to continue to use the Book of Common Prayer and was imprisoned two and a half years later for using the Prayer Book, presumably in St. John's church.³⁰ The sacramental worship being promoted in the parish was likely due to the influence of the prebend of the parish, John Atherton, who had been instrumental in repositioning the communion table of Christ Church cathedral to the east end of the chancel in 1633.³¹ In St. John's the altar was renovated in a similar fashion in 1635.³²

The parish, used to a particular type of worship under Boswell, probably continued its traditions under Kerr's incumbency from 1651. While Kerr himself was eventually legally appointed as a minister of the gospel in parishes in Monaghan and Fermanagh in 1658, he was not deprived at the Restoration, suggesting that his views were easily adapted to the restored Church of Ireland.³³ During the 1650s communions were celebrated about seven times a year. A churchwardens' inventory of 1659 indicates that the parish had up to that point celebrated conformist communions. Among the items was a silver chalice, specifically demanded by the 1634 canons, two pewter flagons, two pewter plates, two napkins, and a green cloth for the communion table.³⁴ The parish regularly washed the church linen, an indication that it was using its surplice and decorative altar-cloths, and in 1655 the altar rails of the church were repaired. When more godly influences appeared in the late 1650s this element of high-church equipment was apparently removed, as the

²⁸ Richard L. Greaves, 'Harrison, Thomas (1617/18–1682)', *ODNB*; T.C. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland* (Oxford, 1975), pp 142-3.

²⁹ Prior to Boswell's incumbency the parish appeared to have held frequent communions under the prebend John Atherton, the future bishop of Waterford and Lismore. In 1633 the parish paid for bread and wine at '13 severall comunions [sic]' Gillespie (ed.), *Vestry records of St. John*, p.85.

³⁰ St. John Seymour, *The Puritans in Ireland 1647-1661* (Oxford, 1921), p.3.

³¹ Raymond Gillespie, 'The shaping of reform, 1558-1625' in Kenneth Milne, (ed.) *Christ Church cathedral, Dublin: a history* (Dublin, 2000), pp 196-8.

³² Gillespie (ed.), *Vestry records of St. John*, p.100.

³³ Gillespie (ed.), *Vestry records of St. John*, p.226, fn.96.; J.B. Leslie, *Clergy of Dublin and Glendalough: biographical succession lists* (Belfast, 2001), p.792.

³⁴ Gillespie, (ed.), *Vestry records of St. John's*, p.220.

parish had to pay to re-instate the rails in 1661. After Kerr's exclusion in 1658 from preaching in St. John's, it appears that no communions were held until the Restoration. Communions were then celebrated in St. John's about six or seven times a year until the 1680s, when a monthly celebration was instituted.³⁵ For the remainder of the period St. John's parish saw increases in its communion expenditure until the 1710s, after which figures decreased.

The long incumbency of a conformist minister such as Boswell was vital in determining the type of worship that the parish would experience. The influence of the minister was again paramount for the parish after the Restoration. The frequency of communions decreased during the incumbency of Thomas Bladen. In 1669 the parish complained to the Christ Church authorities that Bladen hadn't celebrated communion in over eight months. Tensions between Bladen and his parishioners seemed to have continued. In 1680 Bladen had to concede that the north end of the chancel was in fact part of the parish's property and did not belong to the minister and so he would no longer receive the burial fees.³⁶ While on the surface Bladen appeared a suitable vessel through which Anglican worship could be strengthened in the parish- he had been a royalist and became chaplain to Ormond after the Restoration – political credentials did not always translate into good pastoral provision. Even in the thriving parish of St. John the Evangelist parishioners had to assert their entitlement to adequate sacramental provision.³⁷

In remote areas, an inefficient ministry could have serious consequences for congregations. Lemuel Mathews, the pluralist archdeacon of Down was excommunicated for numerous breaches of his pastoral duties in 1693.³⁸ Among the parishioners who deposed against him, many claimed that they had to resort to Mass or to Presbyterian meetings because Mathews didn't provide curates to serve in his parishes. Some parishioners from Killcleif claimed that when they tried to attend Christmas communion there was no minister present when they arrived at the church. Justifying their subsequent actions of attending mass or Presbyterian services, they claimed that 'since they can have no divine service, or offices performed in [their]

³⁵ 'Vestry book of St. John's', (RCBL, P328/5/2, churchwardens' account, 1689-90).

³⁶ Kenneth Milne, 'Restoration and reorganisation, 1660-1830' in Kenneth Milne (ed.) *Christ Church cathedral, Dublin, a history* (Dublin, 2000), p.258; 'St. John's vestry book' (RCBL, P328/5/2, 25 May 1680).

³⁷ Gillespie, (ed.), *Vestry records of St. John*, p.15; Usher, *Restoration Dublin*, p.77.

³⁸ John Cronin, 'Mathews (Matthews), Lemuel', *DIB*.

Church, they are resolved to serve God, one way or another'.³⁹ Plurality and non-residence was regularly lamented by bishops who sought to implement reforms and it is likely that the situation that existed for the parishioners of Killeif was replicated in other areas.⁴⁰ The case of Thomas Bladen indicates that pastoral neglect was not always confined to rural areas. While the parishioners of St. John's were quick to complain to the cathedral authorities, those in Killeif didn't have the organisational power to represent their grievances, with significant consequences for their religious practice.⁴¹

The levels of expenditure in other Dublin parishes generally corresponded with the trends we have seen for St. John's parish. There are some surviving churchwardens' accounts for parishes outside of Dublin which allow broad comparisons between urban and rural Eucharistic practices. All parishes that have been surveyed demonstrated an increase in expenditure during the period in both urban and rural areas. Most also show an increase in expenditure in the last decade of the seventeenth century. Some parishes showed more dramatic increases than others, but generally the increase of the 1690s was more pronounced in Dublin parishes than it was elsewhere.

³⁹ Lemuel Mathews, *The proceedings against Archdeacon Lemuel Mathews, at the regal visitation, held at Lisburn, 1693* (Dublin(?), 1703) pp 8-10, 14.

⁴⁰ 'A short view of the present condition of the Church of Ireland, together with some remedies proposed, 1697' (Lambeth Palace Library, MS 929 no.60).

⁴¹ For religious plurality amongst the laity during the period see Barnard, 'Enforcing the reformation in Ireland', p.226.

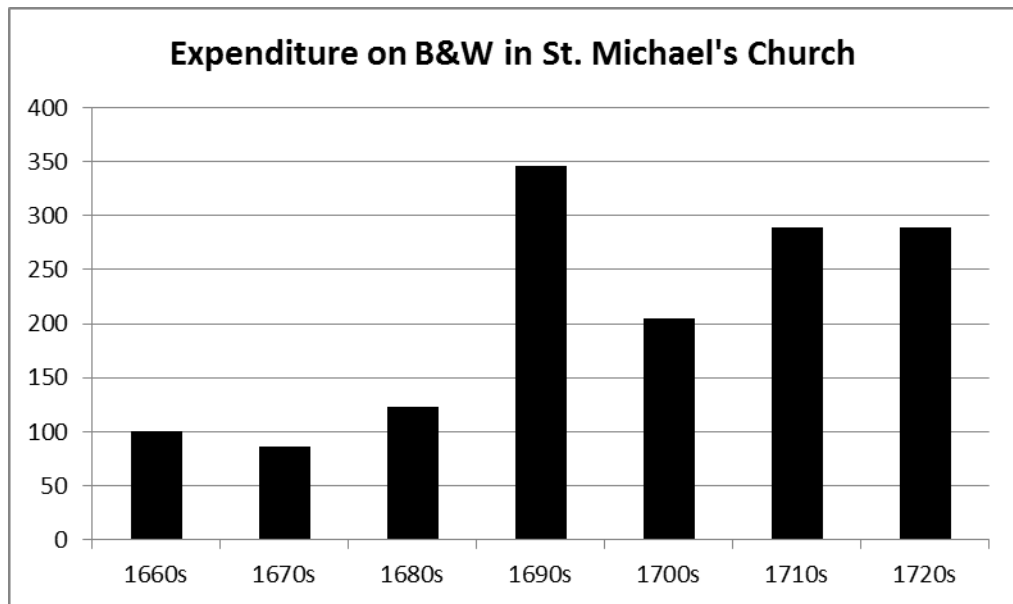


Figure 2:2. Bread and wine figures for the parish of St. Michael's, Dublin [RCBL, P118/5/1].

In St. Michael's parish in Dublin (see Fig 2:2) the expenditure on the communion elements was similar to the trends of St. John's parish. After an initial dip in expenditure after the 1660s the money spent on the elements of bread and wine rose from the 1670s until the 1700s. Between the 1680s and the 1690s there was a threefold increase in expenditure on bread and wine. The increase in the 1690s was repeated in other parishes though less dramatically than in St. Michael's. In St. Bride's parish the increase was about 25 per cent, while in St. John's it was about 32 per cent. These increases were most likely a reflection of a reforming campaign which aimed to improve the moral and religious lives of the laity. The 'reform of manners' movement sought to reduce vice after a period of significant political uncertainty and the moral laxity that was perceived to have crept into Restoration society.⁴² Though it was initially a cooperative campaign between Anglicans and dissenters, the movement's aim of increasing sacramental worship was primarily espoused by the reformers of the Church of Ireland. The same initiative, begun slightly earlier in England, had enthused Irish clergy who had gone to England

⁴² T.C. Barnard, 'Reforming Irish manners: the religious societies in Dublin during the 1690s' in *The Historical Journal* xxv, No.4 (1992), pp 805-38.

during the Williamite war.⁴³ Church of Ireland bishops like Narcissus Marsh, William King and Edward Wetenhall voiced their support for the movement. Marsh wrote of these burgeoning societies and the circumstances that led to their establishment;

Besides the great inclination of our people in this town, who have not yet forgotten their great calamities and really are very pious and do want only zealous leaders to bring them up to a good pitch of devotion... we have here in Dublin meetings of the young apprentices, like to which they have in London and observing the same rules who constantly go to our Church every day in the week and receive the sacrament once a month...⁴⁴

Anglican enthusiasts of the campaign stressed the expression of piety through external worship. This meant regular attendance at divine services and the sacrament as well as propriety in personal conduct such as avoiding swearing, drunkenness and other profane vices. The more pronounced increase in communion expenditure in St. Michael's can be attributed to the energetic promotion of the religious societies within the parish. A number of sermons were preached on behalf of the societies in the church in the 1690s.⁴⁵ As well as facilitating the meetings of the reforming societies the parish implemented the fines for swearing and Sabbath-breaking that were instituted by a law of 1695.⁴⁶ In his list of rules for the Irish religious societies, Benedict Scroggs, a senior fellow at Trinity College, encouraged holy living and regular attendance at divine worship: 'Every member is required to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, if possible, once a month, in his parish church; and should endeavour to use himself in time to a more frequent observation of that holy solemnity.'⁴⁷

The desire to increase the frequency of and attendance at communions can be demonstrated as having been a success, at least in the short-term, in St. Michael's

⁴³ Ibid, p.806.

⁴⁴ 'Marsh to Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, 27 April 1695', (Lambeth Palace Library, MS 942 No.96).

⁴⁵ Thomas Pollard, *A sermon preached before the religious societies, in St. Michaels' church, Dublin, September the 25th 1698* (Dublin,1698); Edward Wetenhall, *Two sermons preached to the religious societies in St. Michael's church, Dublin* (Dublin,1701); John Milling, *A discourse concerning man, as he is a religious creature: to the societies for reformation of manners in the city of Dublin, May the 18th, 1703* (Dublin,1703).

⁴⁶ 'Vestry book of St. Michael's' (RCBL P118/5/1, pp 383,387,407,410); Barnard, 'Reforming Irish manners' pp 812-3; These fines were also implemented in the united parishes of St. Bride, 'St. Bride's vestry book', (RCBL, P327/4/1, pp 197,203,213).

⁴⁷ Benedict Scroggs, *A sermon preached before the Religious Societies in the city of Dublin, on the 29th of Septemb. 1695. Together with the method to be observed by them at their meetings, and the laws of their Society, with the 39 Articles of the Church of Ireland* (Dublin,1695), p.64.

parish. Clearly the parish was a focal point for the societies and this was translated into high attendances at communions. It may have been that its city centre location and the lower social status of its parishioners attracted the reformers' efforts.⁴⁸ Outside of Dublin, the reforming drive made little impact in rural areas.⁴⁹ In the rest of the country, the rise in expenditure might be more comfortably attributed to a return to normality after the Williamite/Jacobite war. As alluded to by Marsh, Anglicans had 'not yet forgotten their great calamities' and one of the themes of the reform campaign was to point to the hand of providence in the crisis that befell Irish Protestants in the late 1680s. Moral laxity, many claimed, was at the root of their troubles.⁵⁰ The feeling of isolation among Protestant settlers outside the capital may have led them to attend their parish communions more diligently in the aftermath of the wars.

In Carlow, (Fig 2:3) there was a 75 per cent increase in its bread and wine expenditure between the 1680s and the 1690s, an upward trend that would continue until the 1720s.

⁴⁸ Dudley, 'The Dublin parishes and the poor', p.89.

⁴⁹ Barnard, 'Reforming Irish manners', p.815.

⁵⁰ Gillespie, *Devoted people*, pp 55-6.

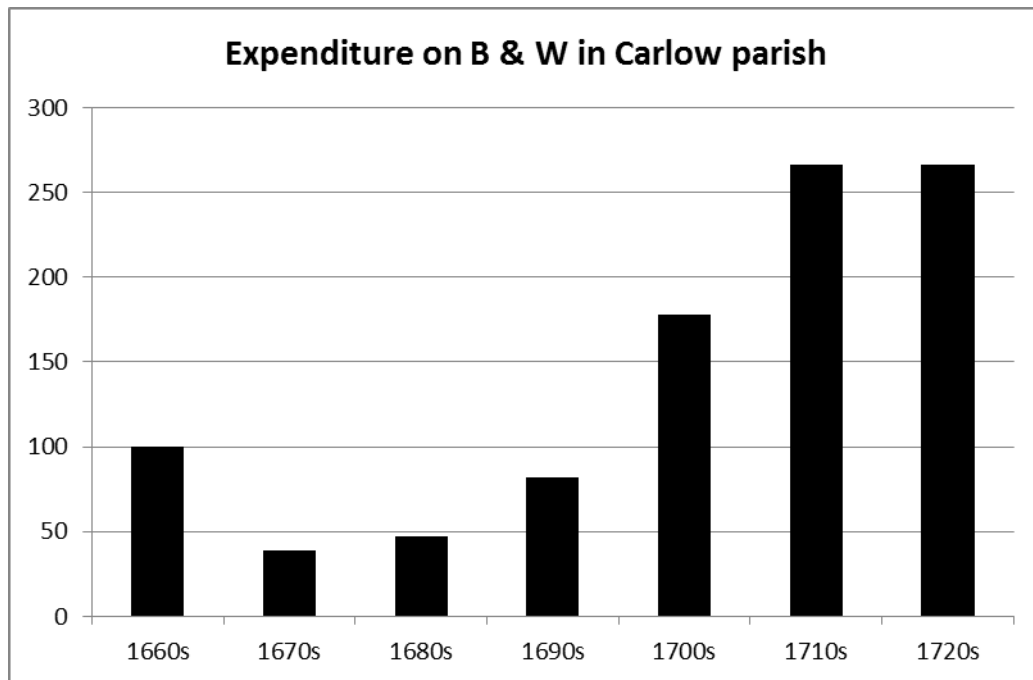


Figure 2:3. Bread and wine expenditure for Carlow parish, 1660-1720 [RCBL, P317/5/1]

Smaller parishes, like Delgany had more modest increases of about 20 per cent but this is based on fragmentary churchwardens' accounts.⁵¹ In St. Iberius' in Wexford, the parish spent twice the amount on bread and wine in 1693 as they had in 1683.⁵² In Carlow, figures for expenditure on bread and wine conform to the general trends in Dublin. Expenditure decreased after the 1660s, then followed continuous increases after the 1670s until the early 1700s. The most significant increases occurred between the 1680s and 1700s when expenditure on the elements roughly doubled between each decade. In Carlow there were significant local factors that impacted on communion practices.

In the 1660s, Carlow parish was holding between three and four communions per year. In 1669 the churchwardens purchased a number of items for sacramental worship such as table linen, a chalice, flagon and trencher plate, suggesting that conformist worship had been curtailed in the previous decades. In the 1650s the parish was ministered to by Independent and Anabaptist 'ministers of the gospel'

⁵¹ 'Delgany vestry book', (RCBL P917/5/1).

⁵² 'Vestry records of St. Iberius', (RCBL, P874/5/1, churchwardens' accounts, 1683, 1693).

and the church was used as a meeting-house.⁵³ In 1680 the vestry ordered that ‘the communion table be much longer and narrower and the altar railed in from side to side’.⁵⁴ This was in line with developments across the country.⁵⁵ In 1699 the parish purchased two more flagons, two plates and more linen.⁵⁶ Together with the increasing expenditure on bread and wine, this was clearly a parish that had a rapidly increasing number of parishioners, many of whom appeared to be receiving communion.

The continuous rise in expenditure in Carlow was probably due to the settlement of Huguenots in the area from the 1660s up until the 1720s. These were brought in under the auspices of the duke of Ormond and initially had their own non-conformist church in the parish. Ormond had sought to encourage Huguenot settlers by introducing an act ‘*for encouraging Protestant Strangers to Inhabit Ireland*’ in 1662. This act granted the settlers civil and religious liberty. In the late 1660s a group of 500 families arrived from Canterbury and settled in Carlow. The absorption of this French community into the local Church of Ireland parish was gradual as French ministers were employed in the area until 1747.⁵⁷ Some of these French ministers acted as curates in Carlow parish and French names appear in the parish vestry book with increasing frequency from the 1680s.⁵⁸ The parish seemed to have attracted many of the French settlers by the 1720s, as they were building a new church in order ‘to accommodate the great number of parishioners which have [of] late years increased in the towne and parish of Carlow’.⁵⁹ Evidently these new parishioners were readily participating in the parish communions as well.

The Church of Ireland was concerned that these French communities should be welcomed into the Anglican fold. A congregation began to worship in a chapel in St. Patrick’s cathedral and the Book of Common Prayer was translated into French and published in a Dublin edition in 1704. French sermons also appeared in Dublin

⁵³ Seymour, *Puritans in Ireland*, pp 45, 47.

⁵⁴ ‘Carlow vestry book’ (RCBL P317/5/1, p.30).

⁵⁵ See below.

⁵⁶ ‘Carlow vestry book’ (RCBL, P317/5/1, p.68).

⁵⁷ Margaret Dickson Falley, *Irish and Scotch-Irish ancestral research: a guide to the genealogical records, methods and sources in Ireland*, (2 vols, Baltimore 1988) i, pp 317-318; James G. Ryan, *Irish church records* (Dublin, 2001), p.176.

⁵⁸ J.B. Leslie, ‘Clergy of Leighlin’ typescript available in RCBL, 61/2/12/1; Grace Lawless Lee *The Huguenot settlements in Ireland* (Dublin, 1936), p.131.

⁵⁹ ‘Carlow vestry book’, (RCBL, P317/5/1, 18 July 1726).

editions in the early eighteenth century.⁶⁰ In 1699 French Protestants were given the use of St. Kevin's church in Dublin for divine service and preaching provided that they 'put the said church ... into sufficient reparaire and to keepe it so'.⁶¹ Such munificence towards the refugees, which was shored up by collections for the relief of the 'distressed Vaudois and French refugees', clearly indicated a desire to foster comprehension.⁶² By welcoming the displaced Huguenots into their churches, providing them with vernacular texts and monetary assistance, the Church of Ireland offered a welcoming home to those who had left an oppressive environment and decided to remain in Ireland. The incentives seemed to be successful in Carlow and elsewhere. Anthony Dopping, writing in support of the introduction of the sacramental test in 1695, claimed that many of the immigrants had been successfully won over to the established church and were 'constant communicants in our worship.'⁶³

The peak of expenditure on bread and wine that occurred in the 1690s affected urban and provincial parishes alike and was undoubtedly connected to a sense of Protestant solidarity after the Glorious Revolution. The cult of providential deliverance was strongly promoted in the printed literature of the period and Protestants were encouraged to develop a sense of gratitude for God's munificence to them.⁶⁴ Anthony Dopping preached a thanksgiving sermon in Christ Church on 26 November 1691 using Psalm 129 as his biblical text. This 'Song of Ascent', describing God's deliverance of Israel, provided a useful analogy for the Protestant position in Ireland.⁶⁵ While Dopping's sermon, echoed by other preachers, enabled Irish Protestants to form political and biblical justifications for the new monarchical regime, the bread and wine figures suggest that their gratitude was also expressed in

⁶⁰ Jacques d'Aubigny, *Anglia supplex & triumphans: a sermon preach'd at the French church, on Wednesday the ninth of April; being the fast-day appointed by Her Majesty for the glorious success of her arms.* (Dublin, 1707); Gaspar Caillard, *Sermons sur divers textes de L'Ecriture Sainte* (Dublin, 1728); For Caillard see Raymond Hylton, *Ireland's Hugenots and their refuge, 1662-1745: an unlikely haven* (Brighton, 2005), pp 193, 203.

⁶¹ 'St. Peter's vestry book', (RCBL P45/6/1, p.107).

⁶² 'Vestry book of Blaris (Lisburn)', (PRONI, MIC1/4/1, 18 June 1699).

⁶³ Anthony Dopping, *The case of the dissenters of Ireland considered, in reference to the sacramental test* (Dublin, 1695), p.3.

⁶⁴ Gillespie, *Devoted people* Chapter 7; Gillespie, 'The religion of Irish Protestants: a view from the laity, 1580-1700', pp 89-99.

⁶⁵ 'Sermon preached by Anthony Dopping, bishop of Meath, at Christ Church, Dublin, 26 November 1691' (Lambeth Palace Library, MS 929 No.61).

parochial worship.⁶⁶ In many cases returning to communion in churches that had been taken over by Catholics during the reign of James II may have held a greater degree of poignancy for post-revolution Anglicans.

Expenditure figures cannot be extrapolated to provide information on the proportion of parishioners that were receiving the sacrament but only on general increases in sacramental practice over time. Limited sources hinder the types of studies that have been conducted for English parishes in the late Elizabethan and early Stuart period.⁶⁷ Occasionally figures for attendance at communions reached 80 and 90 per cent in some parishes in the early seventeenth century where there was a token system in operation. In other parishes the impact of the religious diversity that was allowed to flourish during the 1640s and 1650s seemed to have reduced the numbers of communicants to below 50 per cent in certain areas after the Restoration.⁶⁸ In an Irish context figures like these are very difficult to compile. S.J. Connolly has estimated that in the diocese of Derry and Ossory between one third and one half of the parish received communion at Easter in the 1730s. The proportion of those eligible to receive the sacrament remains difficult to quantify because of the lack of surveys that enumerate religious allegiance.⁶⁹

The survival of communicant tallies in Ireland is very small. The scanty population statistics available for this period make in-depth analysis even more difficult. A list of communicants who attended communion in 1692 in the parish of Delgany, Co. Wicklow is a welcome anomaly.⁷⁰ A record of communicants also survives for a cluster of parishes in Tyrone. Fortuitously, both the Wicklow and Tyrone lists date from the 1690s and from areas that were quite different in their religious demography. As such they offer an opportunity to explore communion practices in

⁶⁶ William King, *Ireland's day of rejoicing come, or joy and thanksgiving for the preservation of His Majesty's person* (London, 1690) ; John Stearne, *King David's case apply'd to King James and King William; in a sermon preach'd at Christ-Church, Dublin, on the fifth of November, 1691* (Dublin, 1691).

⁶⁷ J.P. Boulton, 'The limits of formal religion: the administration of Holy Communion in late Elizabethan and early Stuart London' in *London Journal*, x (1984), pp 135-54; Arnold Hunt, 'The Lord's Supper in early modern England' in *Past and Present* no.161 (1998), pp 39-83; Donald Spaeth, 'Common Prayer? Popular observance of the Anglican liturgy in Restoration Wiltshire' in S.J. Wright (ed.), *Parish, church and people: local studies in lay religion, 1350-1750* (London, 1988), pp 130-6.

⁶⁸ Hunt, 'The Lord's Supper in Early Modern England', p.43, 81-83; Spaeth, 'Common Prayer?', pp133-4.

⁶⁹ Connolly, *Religion, law and power*, pp186-7; Barnard, 'Parishes, pews and parsons', pp 93-4.

⁷⁰ 'Delgany vestry book', (RCBL, P917/5/1, p.3).

different socio-political milieus and for rural parishes which are so poorly documented in other respects.

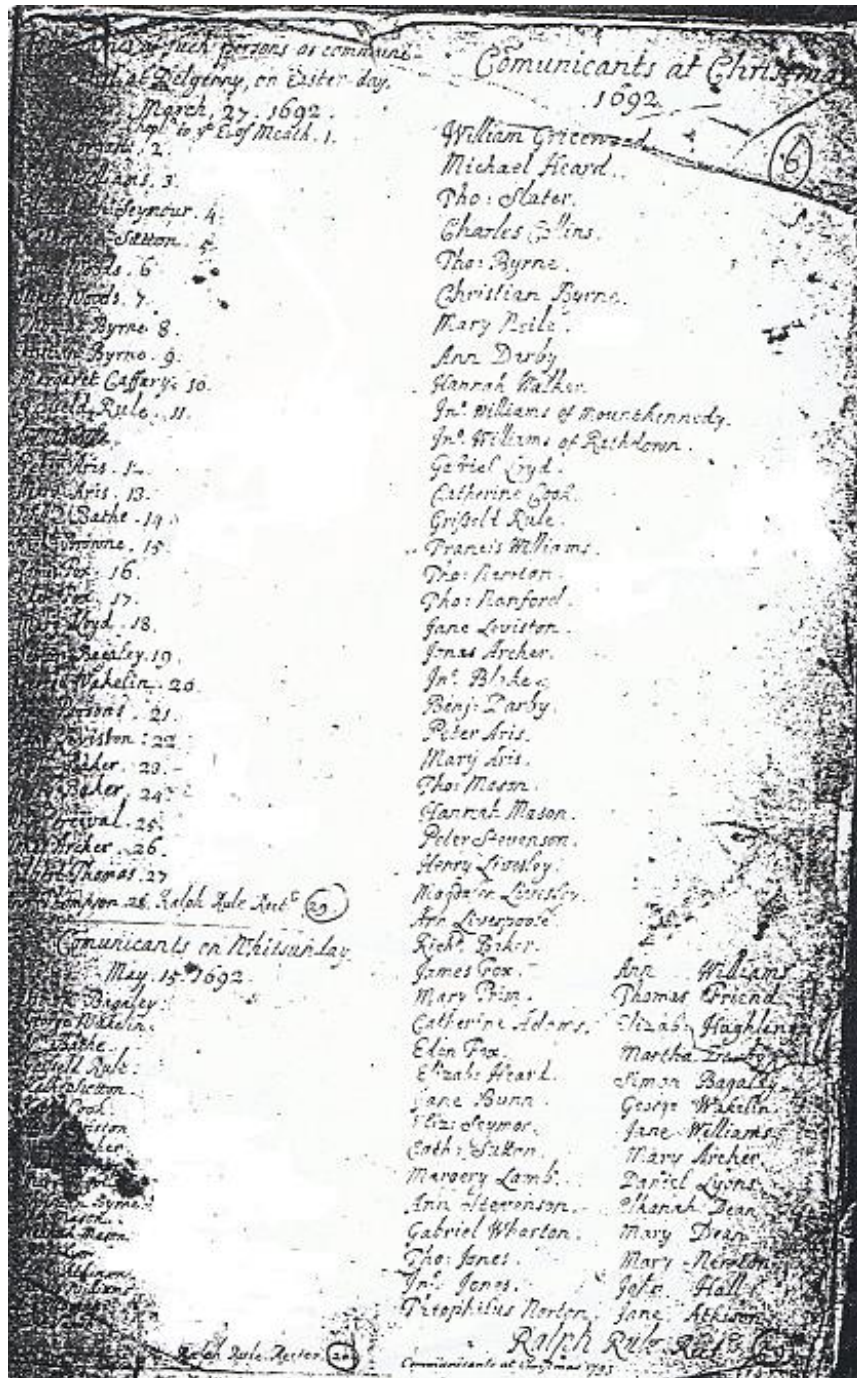


Figure 2:4. Communicants list for Delgany, Co. Wicklow (1692) [RCBL, P917/5/1, p.3]

The list of communicants for Delgany (Fig. 2:4) was compiled by the rector, Ralph Rule, very shortly after his return from England after being attainted by parliament in 1689. It lists those who received communion at Easter, Whitsunday and Christmas for the year 1692. Communion lists of this kind were preserved more regularly in seventeenth century England and were often the result of the method used by parishes to collect church rates.⁷¹ The list for Delgany may have been generated in an attempt to evaluate the conformist population of the parish after the war years and the absence of the incumbent minister. In theory churchwardens must have maintained communicants lists of some kind because they had to present those who failed to receive communion at Easter to the diocesan courts. A guide published for parish officers in 1720 stated that they were 'to mark, whether all the parishioners come so often every year to the Holy Communion, as the laws and our constitutions do require'.⁷² As the Delgany list is the one of the few communicants' lists that survives among parish records it is reasonable to assume that lists were not usually kept for posterity. Perhaps churchwardens relied on their own memory to present non-communicants or possibly the directive for presenting non-communicants was not rigidly enforced. The list is in the hand of Ralph Rule who served the parish for over forty years between 1682 and 1724.⁷³

There are eighty seven parishioners' names on the Delgany list, with six names that appear at all three sacraments and fourteen that appear at two sacraments.⁷⁴ This meant that of those who received in 1692, only 6 per cent fulfilled their obligation to attend communion three times a year. Therefore of the total number of parishioners in Delgany, only a tiny minority received strictly according the canonical requirements of the Church of Ireland. The Delgany parishioners favoured the Christmas communion which had fifty nine attendees, followed by Easter which had twenty nine and then Whitsunday, which had twenty communicants. This may relate to a festive atmosphere or it may indicate that the Easter communion, although still popular, had acquired specific political associations. While the politicised nature of

⁷¹ Boulton, 'The limits of formal religion', pp 140-2.

⁷² *The office and duty of high and petty constables, church-wardens, overseers of the poor, parish-watches, surveyors of high-ways, bridges and causeys, county treasurers, goalers and masters of houses of correction, in Ireland: collected from the books of common law, and the Acts of Parliament of force in this Kingdom to the end of the third Session of this present Parliament* (Dublin, 1720), p.156.

⁷³ Leslie, *Clergy of Dublin and Glendalough*, p.1025.

⁷⁴ These figures exclude the minister and his wife Grisseld, who both attended all three communions.

the sacrament was more visible in the cathedral and city churches, an analysis of the Easter communicants names in Delgany indicates that a particular section of the community were represented more visibly at the Easter communion than at the Christmas one. As has been shown, some Dublin parishes held communions on several days in the Easter period, meaning that the total Easter attendance was in fact spread over several days. Delgany had close connections with its neighbouring parish of Newcastle and Ralph Rule was also vicar there. It is possible that a communion was also held in Newcastle at Easter at which parishioners in the area may have received. Several of the Christmas communicants on the list were parishioners of Newcastle who possibly received the sacrament in Delgany because there was none held in Newcastle.

An analysis of the Easter communicants suggests that even in rural parishes, the paschal sacrament had assumed an alternative function. While the definition of an elite parishioner in what was a predominantly rural parish is more difficult to discern than in a city parish, a significant number of the Easter communicants in Delgany seem to have constituted the parochial, if less the political, elite. The first name on the Easter list was Joseph Fisher, described as the earl of Meath's chaplain. The earl of Meath had a seat in Delgany church from the 1660s and as such his chaplain may have been representing the earl at the solemnity.⁷⁵ Of the thirteen men who attended at Easter, excluding the minister and the earl's chaplain, seven had served as parish officers while four of the names corresponded with the hearth-money returns of the 1660s.⁷⁶ The Easter communicants also contained a high proportion of the names that appeared at more than one sacrament, perhaps an indication that the elite parishioners recognised the importance of their attendance at communion. A similar picture emerges at the Whitsunday communion where of the seven men, excluding the minister, five had served as parish officers.⁷⁷ As parishioners were least inclined to attend a combination of the Easter and Whitsunday communion, unless they attended all three, it is probable that a proportion of the Whitsunday communicants felt that they had fulfilled their Easter obligation as it fell close to the principal feast.

⁷⁵ 'Delgany vestry book' (RCBL, P317/5/1, p.17)

⁷⁶ Of these were the Baggaly, Woods, Williams and Fox families who all appeared on the hearth returns of 1669 for Wicklow. Liam Price, 'The Hearth Money Roll for County Wicklow' in *JRSAI*, Seventh Series, i, No.2 (1931), pp 164-178.

⁷⁷ I would like to thank Dr. Brian Gurrin for access to a database of the names of parish officers for Delgany compiled by him.

At the Christmas communion, the demographic of the communicants changed noticeably. Whereas at Easter and Whitsunday the communicants were often single representatives from a particular family, at Christmas there was a great increase in the number of families attending communion together. In general this was as husband and wife, and people who attended with family members comprised almost half the total number of communicants. At Easter and at Whitsunday there was a much smaller proportion of same-family members attending together. This further indicates that the Easter communion was seen as a political obligation as families were represented by single members, whereas at Christmas, parishioners attended as part of their family worship.

It is difficult to say whether the communions at Delgany were well attended by the conformist population given the absence of comparable population statistics. In Clones, Co. Monaghan the minister estimated that there had been approximately 160 to 180 Easter communicants in 1700 in a parish that had over 600 families. The minister's estimation of families included Catholics and dissenters in the area. In 1659 about half of the population of Clones was Protestant. While there was likely to have been an increase in the Protestant population by 1700 a 50 per cent ratio would indicate a low estimate of 300 conformist families.⁷⁸ If the pattern of family representation found in the Delgany was followed, the number of communicants would appear to have been just over one communicant per two families.⁷⁹ In Cork, the numbers attending Bishop Dives Downes' communions during his tour of the diocese in 1699-1700 were also poor. In Ballimony only twenty out of 150 people who were in the church received communion, even though the bishop had just confirmed sixty two people. While in Bandon the situation was even worse where forty out of an estimated 800 people received communion.⁸⁰ However these communions were at unusual times of the year and given that people still observed the traditional feasts of Easter and Christmas, it is perhaps unsurprising that there were not greater numbers of communicants on these occasions.

⁷⁸ Pender (ed.), *Census of Ireland*, p.155.

⁷⁹ 'Vestry book of Clones' (RCBL, P804/1/1, p.202).

⁸⁰ W. Mazier Brady, *Clerical records of Cork, Cloyne and Ross* (3 vols, Dublin, 1863-4) i, pp 39,141, 220-1.

Figures for communicants survive for County Tyrone which provide an alternative image of Anglican worship.⁸¹ In the parishes of Badoney and Drumragh fifteen parishioners attended three communions in 1699. The communions were held on Whitsunday in Badoney and Drumragh and a second communion held at Easter in Drumragh. The area had a high proportion of Presbyterians and only about one fifth of male conformists received communion. The names of communicants clearly represented the parochial elite. The major landholders of the area were the Hamiltons and Mervines both of whom were strongly represented among the communicants. The Whitsunday communion at Drumragh was attended solely by members of these two families. The other names that appeared were mostly other prosperous inhabitants of the area. Robert Douglass, a communicant in Drumragh and Patrick McNicoll, a communicant in Badoney appear on the hearth money roll for Tyrone for the 1660s.⁸² McNicoll had served as churchwarden in the early 1690s in Badoney along with another communicant John Campbell, the Campbells also featured prominently in the hearth money returns.⁸³ It is clear that the majority of the communicants were well-established and wealthy members of the community.

Occasional conformity may have been a significant factor for these Tyrone communicants. Captain Henry Mervine, a Whitsunday communicant in Drumragh was described as a 'loyal, good man' by the earl of Clarendon when he served as sheriff for Co. Tyrone in the 1680s.⁸⁴ The Mervine family had a chequered relationship with conformity. Although Henry's father, Sir Audley Mervine, had been a royalist during the 1640s and 1650s, he was accused of unorthodoxy in his religious convictions, not least as he had taken as his second wife the daughter of Sir John Clotworthy, a leading Presbyterian. He was also connected to some prominent Catholic families in Ulster.⁸⁵ His son's attendance at the Whitsunday communion may have been a statement of his family's political allegiance rather than an expression of strongly-held religious beliefs. The second family who composed the main communicants in this area of Tyrone were the Hamiltons. They were related to the earls of Abercorn who owned a substantial amount of land in the area. The

⁸¹ 'Masters of families, Badoney, June 1699', (PRONI, T542/1).

⁸² 'Hearth Money Rolls, Co. Tyrone, 1664-1666', (PRONI MIC 645/1).

⁸³ J.B. Leslie, *Clergy of Derry and Raphoe* (Belfast, 1999), p.104.

⁸⁴ Samuel Weller Singer, *The correspondence of Henry Hyde, earl of Clarendon and of his brother Laurence Hyde, Earl of Rochester* (2 vols, London, 1828) i, p.286; J.B. Leslie, *Clergy of Derry and Raphoe*, p.212.

⁸⁵ Aidan Clarke, 'Sir Audley Mervine', *DIB*; R.M. Armstong, 'Sir Audley Mervyn', *ODNB*.

second earl, James Hamilton, had been a recusant and the fourth earl, Claude, had fought for James II at the Boyne and Aughrim. By 1699 the Abercorn earls had tempered their recusancy and the sixth earl had fought in defence of Londonderry, was elected an M.P. for Tyrone and was made a Privy Counsellor.⁸⁶ The Hamiltons and Mervines were not noted as pious Anglicans, but their attendance at communion was representative of their social and political standing in the community. This was a community which had recently seen a large influx of Presbyterian settlers.⁸⁷ Both families had complicated religious pasts, their attendance at communion signalled a clear allegiance to the prevailing political and religious establishment.

The communion lists for Badoney and Delgany represent two pictures of conformist worship. In Delgany parochial worship took place at Christmas, as families attended the sacrament together. At Easter male heads of families attended as representatives of their political conformity to the established church. In Tyrone this pattern was replicated with the leading conformist families attending the sacrament at Easter in a community which had a large non-conformist presence. What is absent from these analyses of parochial worship is the devotional culture of the communicants. From other sources we may glean some understanding of what the Eucharist meant to the Anglican laity.

In the 1690s, John Dunton, the London bookseller, noted a laxity in appropriate behaviour at Christ Church cathedral, which he described as ‘a great scandal ... in the eyes of all sober people’. According to Dunton, the worshippers tended to ‘make it too often their Sunday exchange...for their devotion is only to the music, and the ladies’.⁸⁸ Joseph Boyse, a Presbyterian minister in Dublin, contended that ‘open irreverence [was] too common in many parish churches, and much more in the cathedrals.’⁸⁹ In 1691, preaching to a congregation in St. Patrick’s cathedral in Dublin, Anthony Dopping railed against the ‘general coldness in the externals of religion, especially in receiving the blessed Sacrament.’ His description of a recent communion attended by the political elite of the city leaves an uninspiring picture:

⁸⁶ Stuart Handley, ‘James Hamilton, sixth earl of Abercorn’, *ODNB*.

⁸⁷ Leslie, *Clergy of Derry and Raphoe*, p.104.

⁸⁸ John Dunton, *Teague land or a merry ramble to the wild Irish*, ed. by Andrew Carpenter (Dublin, 2003) pp132-3.

⁸⁹ Joseph Boyse, *Remarks on a late discourse of William lord bishop of Derry; concerning the inventions of men in the worship of God* (Dublin, 1694), p.112.

Not ten persons stayed in the church to accompany them to the office. To see the state chaplains attend their masters to the sermon but forsake them at the communion, to see none of their sacred hands extended to receive the holy symbols, when if a fat prebend had been upon the holy table there would have been hands enough stretched out to receive it. To see the honour-able nobility attending the insignia of honour to the holy table and retiring from them when they are safely deposited on the cushion, and paying far less ceremony to the king's representative than Naaman the Syrian did unto his master in the house of Rimmon. For he would attend him in an idolatrous house till the heathen sacrifices finished, whereas ours have neither so much patience nor so much ceremony as to stay and partake of the Christian religion's sacrifice. To behold the chief magistrate of the city turning his back upon so holy an ordinance and all the freemen then present following his vertuous and good example, and briefly to behold the whole body of the people running out of the church as if some sudden damp had risen out of the vaults to frighten them away.⁹⁰

This speaks of a piety that was purely ceremonial and political, the dignitaries attending for reasons of professional etiquette rather than spiritual devotion. Although the lack of devotion was bemoaned by Dopping, others saw the public reception of communion by the city's dignitaries as vitally important to the Church of Ireland interest. Narcissus Marsh became concerned when one of the lord justices was absent from the city at Easter 'wherby the government could not receive the communion publicly on the day if one of the L[or]ds Justices [was] absent'. Lord Mountrath, the lord justice in question, had gone into the country the Thursday before Easter day. Lord Drogheda, another of the lord justices, had absented himself telling Marsh that 'he would have communicated publicly, if my Lord Mountrath had stayed.' Marsh prevailed upon them both to attend communion at Whitsunday, it bring the next 'great solemnity'. Mountrath 'seemed to consent', while the earl of Drogheda agreed to receive it privately either in the chapel of Trinity College or Dublin Castle. Marsh encouraged him to 'give public notice therof for examples sake' before he received the sacrament, which Drogheda apparently did. Rumours surrounding Lord Mountrath's conformity had been circulating and Marsh was keen to put paid to them. Marsh's concern that the lord justices receive together in a united show of support for the government indicates the desire to closely identify the Anglican sacrament with the government and Protestant interest.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Joseph Irving Peacocke, 'Anthony Dopping, archbishop of Meath' in *The Irish Church Quarterly* ii (1909), pp128-9.

⁹¹ 'Narcissus Marsh to Archbishop Tenison, 10 April 1697' (Lambeth Palace Library, MS 942 No.133); Barnard, 'Parishes, pews and parsons', p.79.

An important aspect of Dopping's sermon at St. Patrick's cathedral was the abandoning of dignitaries by their aides when they were receiving the sacrament. In contrast to the older Catholic belief that to 'hear Mass' and see the consecrated host was a powerful experience in itself, Anglican parishioners did not always remain in the church to see people receive the sacrament. James Trail, a Co. Down merchant, remembered people leaving the church when communion was distributed in his youth.⁹² After the introduction of the sacramental test spectators may have been more common, in the 1740s a member of the Lucas family of Inchiquin, Co. Clare travelled to his local parish church to see a neighbour receive the sacrament.⁹³

In the early eighteenth century many parishes became concerned that communicants could receive the sacrament in comfort. Dopping's contempt for the attitude that saw dignitaries were 'safely deposited on the cushion' was not shared by parish churchwardens. Several parishes in Dublin, no doubt conscious of their more genteel parishioners, purchased cushions for the communicants to kneel on. In St. John's parish 'kneeling stools' were purchased for the communion table in 1713 and the following year cushions 'to lay at the steps before the altar' were added to the parish's stock.⁹⁴ In St. Nicholas' in Cork the vestry ordered that cushions were purchased to put around the communion tables in 1723.⁹⁵ Rural parishes with fewer wealthy parishioners seemed to be able to do without cushions and kneeling stools. Inventories for St. Michael's parish in Dublin suggest that they never purchased cushions, the parish having a poorer population.⁹⁶ Not only did the cushions and stools confirm the bodily worship expected of Anglican communicants, it simultaneously injected a social hierarchy into parish life in the eighteenth century.

While Anglican bishops simultaneously promoted and decried the political nature of the sacraments in Dublin city, others chose to focus on lay exemplars. In 1700 the pious lifestyle of James Bonnell, the accomptant general of Ireland was promoted by the Anglican authorities who 'positioned [Bonnell] as the tutelary saint for the Protestant worthies of Hanoverian Dublin.'⁹⁷ Bonnell changed his place of worship

⁹² 'Diary of James Trail, c.1690-1742', (PRONI, D1460/1).

⁹³ 'Journal of the Lucas family', (NLI MS 14,101); Barnard 'Parishes, Pews and Parsons', p.90.

⁹⁴ 'Vestry book of St. Bride's', (RCBL, P327/4/1, pp 117, 118, 161); 'Vestry book of St. John's', (RCBL, P328/5/2, churchwardens' accounts for 1712-1713, 1713-1714).

⁹⁵ 'Vestry book of St. Nicholas, Cork' (RCBL, P498/1/1, 2 September 1723).

⁹⁶ Usher, *Restoration Dublin*, pp77-8.

⁹⁷ Barnard, 'Parishes, pews and parsons', pp 100-1.

each week in order to receive the sacrament.⁹⁸ His Eucharistic beliefs were illuminated by the meditations which he composed on the sacrament and they expressed a personal articulation of the concepts behind Anglican Eucharistic doctrine;

Tis true on our table, the holy elements are impregnated with the materials of life; like the first framing of a living creature or embryo, before it is quickened: But they are quickened with spiritual life, only on the faith of each receiver, which God hath appointed to be the concurring instrument, or means of this Divine quickening.⁹⁹

It is interesting that Bonnell's lay spirituality involved an allegorical explanation of the sacrament, an indication that he read theological works and distilled them into a more concrete image in his own mind. He used similar language in a prayer composed after receiving the sacrament; 'My saviour impregnated the consecrated elements, and in a manner embody'd himself there; yet still remaining where he was, filling Heaven and Earth, but more particularly our chancel'.¹⁰⁰ This expressed an awareness of the communal aspect of the sacrament but it also contained an important qualifying clause that marked the distinction between Catholic and Protestant belief which was so characteristic of the canon of Anglican literature. His prayers and meditations, which his biographer states were so numerous that 'instead of being inserted in a *Life*, they would make almost a volume themselves' were composed both before and after his attendance at the sacrament.¹⁰¹ Bonnell's prayers sometimes incorporated more controversial elements such as kneeling to receive the sacrament. Explaining his own approval of bodily worship he stated that 'it is our souls that sit...well may our bodies be, as they that serve.' However, it is clear that Bonnell disliked the controversy ('what need these nice disputes, about posture in this Holy Exercise'), indicating that he preferred not to dwell on divisive issues.¹⁰² His elation after receiving communion is similar to expressions used by other godly communicants; 'when I come from [the sacrament], my heart is all joy and wonder,

⁹⁸ William Hamilton, *The life and character of James Bonnel Esq.*(Dublin,1703), pp169-170.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, pp 173-74.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p.187.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p.175, For examples of his sacramental prayers see pp175-188. Bonnell's meditations were published in *The harmony of the Holy Gospels* (London, 1705). Many of these meditations were based on a Roman Catholic text by John Austin called *The four gospels in one* (Paris, 1675) Bonnell reformed these texts for his own use. See 'Smyth of Barbavilla papers' (NLI, MS 41,580/23).

¹⁰² Hamilton, *Life*, pp 172-3.

all adoration and praise; all sacrifice and resignation; courage and resolution...'¹⁰³
He was often brought to tears at the sacrament which he endeavoured to conceal,
thus avoiding the ostentatious piety discouraged within Anglicanism.¹⁰⁴

In the climate of the reforming activity of the 1690s Bonnell's *Life* was widely published as an exemplary to others. The fact that he was seized upon with such enthusiasm, as a paragon for Anglican piety, suggests that there was a lack of other subjects to choose from.¹⁰⁵ Bonnell's value, even if he was a singular example, was in his moderation and pious conduct. At a time when disagreements were rife between Anglicans and Presbyterians about the appropriate form of Christian worship, Bonnell's eirenicism was particularly useful. He remained a godly paragon for the Church of Ireland until the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁶ The protection of Bonnell's posthumous reputation by his wife, biographer and a number of bishops indicates that his *Life* was a carefully constructed paradigm which was an important tool in Anglican reform efforts.¹⁰⁷

Other Anglicans appeared to adopt a similar theological outlook to Bonnell, which suggests that at least the 'devouter sorts' were heeding the calls of the clergy for pious preparation and frequent communicating. The duke of Ormond, whose influence at the Restoration was indispensable for allowing John Bramhall to construct a high-church episcopal bench, was, like Bonnell, a composer of prayers for his own private use.¹⁰⁸ These prayers were constructed for specific intentions, for relief from illness, safe travel, familial births and deaths, and for intercession in times of particular tension such as the prayer composed in 1680 which according to a later hand was 'a time of great distraction about the popish plot.'¹⁰⁹ This prayer was extracted out of Allestree's *The whole duty of man*.¹¹⁰ In his sacramental prayers, Ormond focused on his unworthiness in approaching the sacrament that was instituted 'for the remission of my sins, and for the conferring all the Graces

¹⁰³ Ibid, p.188.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p.171.

¹⁰⁵ Barnard, 'Reforming Irish manners', pp 816-9, 833.

¹⁰⁶ His *Life* was re-printed by the SPCK in 1829.

¹⁰⁷ 'Dopping-Hepenstall papers', (NLI, MS 41,580/23).

¹⁰⁸ 'Devotional paper of the duke of Ormond', (NLI, MS 19,465) For the duke's piety see Raymond Gillespie, 'The religion of the first duke of Ormond' in T.C. Barnard and Jane Fenlon (eds) *The dukes of Ormond 1610-1745* (Woodbridge, 2000); McGuire, 'Policy and patronage', pp116-117

¹⁰⁹ 'Devotional papers of the duke of Ormond', (NLI, MS 19,465), p.3.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p.3; Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, p.159.

necessary for my eternal salvation.’¹¹¹ Some of his meditations reflect an uncertainty of past communions when ‘impudently and madly’ he participated in the ‘adorable, and dreadful mystery, laden with the weight, and overwhelmed with a multitude of soul, incharitable and unrepented sins, without any thought or purpose of amendment...’¹¹² Ormond’s prayers suggest a much more tumultuous experience of sacramental preparation. In contrast to Bonnell’s joy after receiving, Ormond rebukes his own sinfulness; ‘I have presumed this day O most merciful Jesus to present my selfe at thy table, clothed not with the wedding garment that should fit me to be accepted as a worthy guest, but covered with the pollution of flesh and spirit.’¹¹³

The piety of James Bonnell and the duke of Ormond indicated that they had negotiated the theological literature which then enabled a personal expression of what the sacrament meant to them. Their piety was highly individualistic and paradoxically went against the aims of the clergy to foster a communal Eucharistic practice. Even though they shared a common societal position, these two men seemed to choose different emphases in their personal preparation of the Eucharist. Bonnell’s positive affirmation of the grace received in communion contrasts with Ormond’s concerns that he had received unworthily.

The sacramental meditations of Bonnell and Ormond provide only glimpses of Anglican piety among pious adherents. Piety could be expressed in other non-textual ways. One path was to donate altar plate to the local church. Quality and quantity of altar plate varied according to parish resources. In St. Peter’s church in Dublin, the parish owned four silver flagons, two large silver salvers and two small silver chalices in 1734. In the same year St. Kevin’s church had one chalice with two ‘blocktin’ flagons and salvers.¹¹⁴ After the Restoration the quantity of church plate rose dramatically and the parish records testified to this, in some cases it was to replace worn out utensils, in others it was part of the overall restorative program that followed the depletions that occurred during the Cromwellian period and before.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ ‘Devotional papers of the duke of Ormond’, (NLI, MS 19,465), p.9.

¹¹² Ibid, p.16.

¹¹³ Ibid, p.9.

¹¹⁴ ‘Vestry book of St. Peter’s’ (RCBL, P45/6/1, p.357).

¹¹⁵ Tony Sweeney, *Irish Stuart silver : a short descriptive catalogue of surviving Irish church, civic, ceremonial & domestic plate dating from the reigns of James I, Charles I, the Commonwealth*,

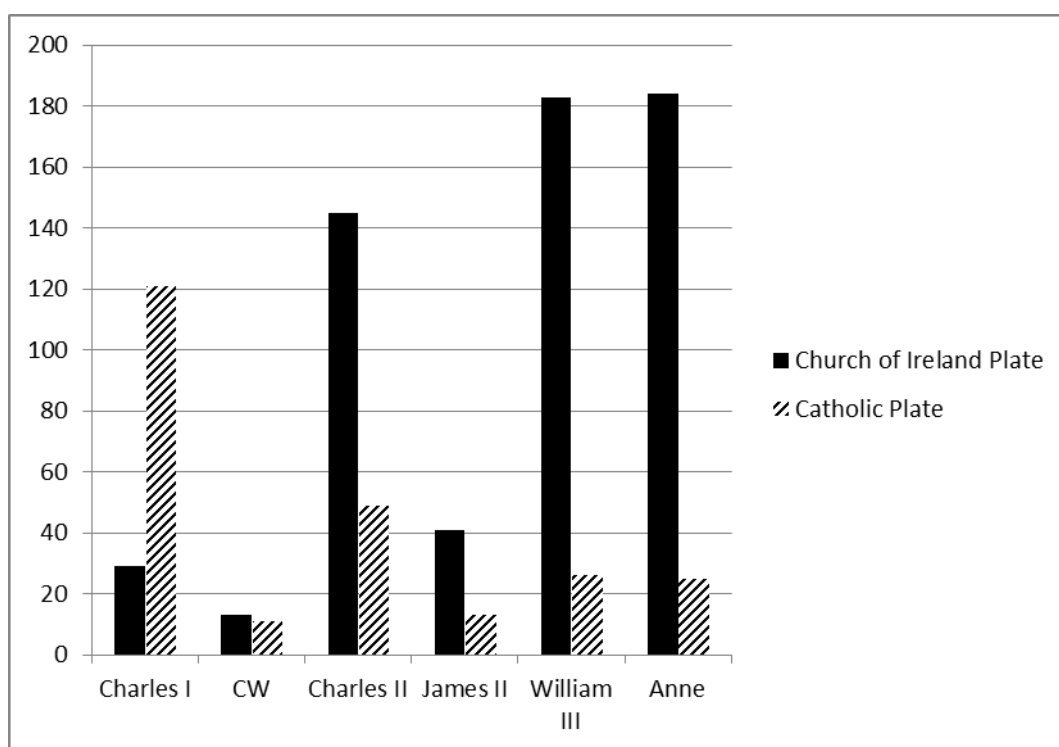


Figure 2:5. Surviving church plate. (Figures based on data in Sweeney, *Irish Stuart Silver*, p.112.)

Tony Sweeney's catalogue of church plate for the Stuart period showed that large volumes of plate were produced directly after the Restoration of Charles and in the reigns of William and Anne (see Fig 2:5). When plate produced during the reign of Charles I is compared with that of his son, the change in the material possessions of the church is clear. Between 1625 and 1648 Sweeney records twenty nine pieces of surviving plate produced for the use of the Church of Ireland, between 1660 and 1684, 145 pieces survive.

Most Dublin parishes exceeded the minimum requirements of the canons when it came to altar plate, probably because much of the plate was donated by parishioners or clergy. Outside the capital, where there were fewer wealthy donors, parishes had to meet the considerable cost involved in purchasing expensive pieces of plate. In 1669, Carlow had the minimum requirement of plate, a single chalice, flagon and

Charles II, James II, William & Mary, William III & Queen Anne, 1603 – 1714 (Dublin,1995), pp 8-9.

‘trencher plate’, the rapid growth of the Protestant population in the town in the later seventeenth century meant that it required a larger quantity of plate to facilitate the growing number of communicants. As we have seen the parish increased its expenditure on bread and wine in this period and in 1699 parishioners were levied for the purchase of two pewter flagons, two pewter plates and a new set of linens for the communion table. In 1711 a further £7 was raised to buy a chalice, surplice and books for the church.¹¹⁶ In the parish of St. John the Evangelist an inventory of the church goods from 1659 shows the parish was in possession of a full collection of altar plate including a silver communion cup, two pewter flagons and two pewter plates as well as a large collection of fine linen.¹¹⁷ In 1684 they purchased candlesticks, two large flagons and two plates for the altar. By 1727 the parish had two flagons (one of which, made of silver had cost £23), two chalices, two patens and a silver spoon.¹¹⁸ The stylistic ornamentation of Restoration silver has yet to be analysed but as cathedrals and royal chapels were considered archetypes for liturgical practice, the royal plate of William III, gifted to Christ Church in 1697, offers evidence for the rich ornamentation of late seventeenth-century worship. In 1682 Christ Church had sold all of its plate in order to buy a vastly more expensive set.¹¹⁹ The old plate was bought by John Pooley, the prebend of St. Michan’s, and later bishop of Cloyne and then Raphoe. Pooley was an inveterate donor of plate and clearly of considerable financial means, paying £116 13s 4d for the old plate of Christ Church. The plate of the cathedral comprised ten different items and was presented to St. Canice’s cathedral in Kilkenny by Bishop Thomas Otway in 1684. It included four chalices, (two of which were silver-gilt), two silver-gilt flagons, six silver-gilt patens and an alms dish, also of silver-gilt.¹²⁰

Gifts of plate could be a means of gaining particular privileges for the donors. In 1700 Gersham Herrick donated a silver flagon to Inishannon church in Cork in return for a pew.¹²¹ Mrs Ellener Jolly gave a large two-handled cup to the parish of

¹¹⁶ ‘Carlow vestry book’, (RCBL, P317/5/1, p.68,108).

¹¹⁷ Gillespie, (ed.), *Vestry records of St. John the Evangelist*, p.220.

¹¹⁸ ‘Vestry records of St. John’s’ (RCBL, P328/5/2, account for 1684, P328/5/3, account for 1727).

¹¹⁹ Bolton, *Caroline tradition*, p.243.

¹²⁰ R. Wyse Jackson, ‘Old church plate of Kilkenny city’ in *JRSAI*, lxxxi (1951), p.32; Bridget Houricane, ‘Thomas Pooley’, *DIB*.

¹²¹ ‘Vestry book of Inishannon, Cork’ (RCBL, P142/1/1, 15 April 1700).

Fethard in Tipperary in return for a family burial place in the church in 1711.¹²² This is not to say they were not motivated by piety, but the donations unavoidably reflected the donor's financial status. The Hill family donated a large and ornate silver chalice to Hillsborough church in 1663, this was undoubtedly a reflection of their position as major landholders but also perhaps an indication of their conformist piety, said to have withstood the disruptions of the Interregnum.¹²³ Carrick-on-Suir received a gift of a chalice from the duke of Ormond in 1673 and a further gift of a flagon from the countess of Tyrone in 1715. The countess had also donated a chalice to the church of Mothel in 1697 and a paten to the same church in 1712. When St. Peter's church in Dublin raised subscriptions for the building of the new church in 1685, many parishioners contributed in kind. The parish received a silver flagon from a Madam Savage and a silver plate from Madam Ward.¹²⁴ Women were particularly inclined to make these types of donations, the altar plate of Cashel cathedral was donated by the wife of the archbishop, William Palliser in 1714-15. Her husband had been particularly concerned that churches were adequately provided with communion plate in a visitation of the diocese in 1698.¹²⁵ Of the seventeen donations of plate by lay benefactors to churches in the diocese of Cashel, Emly, Waterford and Lismore which survive for the period 1660-1740, eleven were donated by women, most of them wives or widows of the local gentry.¹²⁶ Donations sometimes revealed particular religious motivations. Elizabeth Irby, who most likely returned to Ireland after the Williamite wars, had the chalice she donated to the church of Duntryleague in Co. Limerick inscribed with words of thanks for her safe conduct. Perhaps influenced by the atmosphere of providential deliverance, the chalice was given 'as a grateful acknowledgement to Almighty God for her safe return to her native country and finding her husband and father in good health; which mercy she hopes never to forget.'¹²⁷

¹²² David Butler, 'The churches and plate of the Church of Ireland in the dioceses of Cashel, Emly, Waterford & Lismore' in the *JRSAI*, cxxxiv (2004), p.105.

¹²³ Bolton, *Caroline tradition* pp 51, 243.

¹²⁴ 'Vestry book of St. Peter's', (RCBL P45/6/1, pp 5-6).

¹²⁵ Butler, 'The churches and plate of the Church of Ireland', pp 92,102-3, 139-140; R.Wyse Jackson, 'Old church plate of Lismore diocese' in *JRSAI*, lxxxv (1955), pp54-5.

¹²⁶ These figures gleaned from David Butler's survey of plate of the dioceses, see fn. 121. For donations of plate by women in the period to churches in Kilkenny see Wyse Jackson, 'Old church plate of Kilkenny City', pp 28, 30.

¹²⁷ Butler, 'The churches and plate of the Church of Ireland', pp 122, 162 fn.70.

Parishes encouraged the glorification of generous benefactors. In 1672, after donating £150 for the ‘repairs and beautifying’ of St. Audoen’s church, the earl of Arran had his coat of arms erected in the church and won burial rights and other privileges for his regiment. St. Luke’s parish in Dublin planned to display its building accounts in the church to ‘satisfy posterity’ in 1717. In Glasnevin, a list of ‘pious benefactors’ for the re-building of the church was to be ‘fix’d up in some convenient place in the church’ in 1707.¹²⁸ When altar plate was donated by individuals, inscriptions and insignia were nearly always engraved to memorialise the names of the benefactors. Where plate was purchased by the parish it often was left uninscribed, although the churchwardens responsible for its purchase were very often successful in having their names recorded on the plate, even though the money was raised from subscriptions or levies on parishioners.¹²⁹

As well as giving an indication of the frequency of the sacrament of communion, changing patterns of communicants and the purchasing of church plate, churchwardens’ accounts also memorialised the physical setting of the communion. As we have seen, the policy adopted after the Restoration was a programme heavily influenced by the high-church principles of frequent and ceremonial sacramental worship. Similar notions informed Anglican perceptions of ecclesiology. After 1660 the ideas that had inspired the Laudian high-church revivals of the 1630s began to be re-circulated in the nascent atmosphere of the Restoration period.¹³⁰ One of the features of high-church Anglicanism was the re-focus on the altar as a sacred space. The altar had to be sufficiently adorned so as to reflect the gravity of the sacrament, by which parishioners could perceive visually that this was a sanctified place where they worshipped together ‘in the beauty of holiness’. The ‘beauty of holiness’ found its expression in altars that were placed at the east end of the church, often raised up by the installation of steps, and surrounded by communion rails. This practice seems

¹²⁸ Ní Mhurchadha (ed.), *Vestry records of St. Audoen’s*, pp 23, 93-4; Raymond Gillespie, ‘Religion and urban society: the case of early modern Dublin’ in Peter Clark and Raymond Gillespie (eds) *Two capitals: London and Dublin, 1500-1840* (Oxford, 2001) p.227; ‘Glasnevin vestry book’, (RCBL, P244/5/1, p.1v).

¹²⁹ Butler, ‘The churches and plate of the Church of Ireland’ pp 93-94, 147; Wyse Jackson, ‘Old church plate of Kilkenny city’ p.29.

¹³⁰ The success of the Laudian reforms in Ireland has not yet been fully investigated from an architectural perspective, a difficult task given the poor survival of churchwardens’ accounts for this period. In the church of St. John the Evangelist, the introduction of the Laudian program was signified when the church spent £6 on work in the chancel in 1635 which included steps, tiling and wainscoting. (Gillespie (ed.), *Vestry records of St. John the Evangelist*, pp 99-100)

to have been generally implemented in Ireland during the latter half of the seventeenth century in urban parishes. The same process was also underway in England after the Restoration but at a brisker pace where the cathedrals and city churches were the first to feel the impact of the changes. In England, where a significant amount of research has been carried out on altar refurbishment, certain discernible architectural patterns have emerged. These patterns were faintly echoed in Ireland where a true picture of the changes is hampered by the much sparser documentary record. Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke have demonstrated how the restoration of altars in London parishes after 1660 followed a standard model:

The table was to stand on a low ascent of marble paving, usually black and white set out in ‘arras’ or diamond formation, with a step made of polished black marble and sometimes another of stone. Integral to the design was the provision of communion rails placed on top of these steps, and the creation of an altarpiece behind the table, on which were written the Decalogue, creed, and Lord’s prayer, sometimes accompanied by pictures of Moses and Aaron.¹³¹

In London this pattern was widely followed by parish churches mainly due to the fire of 1666 when Christopher Wren designed churches in which the altars reflected his own high-church inclinations.¹³² Thus the opportunity that the fire presented for the complete refurbishment of fifty-one of the cities’ churches -and the appointment of Wren to design them- facilitated a revival of the high-church altar that may otherwise have been slower to take hold.¹³³ Aside from the fire churches, the progress of renovations depended on the attitude of individual bishops. Bishops who were not committed to the high-church programme tended to avoid the issue of altar renovation, as it opened up controversies that had temporarily abated. Where there was a bishop committed to providing altars that reflected the ‘beauty of holiness’, such as Archbishop Sheldon of London, altars tended to receive greater attention.¹³⁴

The pattern of London’s Restoration-era churches found its way into Irish church architecture. In 1679 the vestry of St. Michael’s church in Dublin ordered the following renovations to their altar,

¹³¹ Fincham and Tyacke *Altars restored*, p.325; Gillespie, *Devoted people*, p.98.

¹³² Fincham and Tyacke, *Altars restored*, pp 328-31. Apart from these fire churches, altars were renovated during the Tory reaction of the 1680s.

¹³³ *Ibid*, p.325.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, pp 318-319.

[It was] agreed...that Mr. Thomas Raynor of the said parish Joyner, should make and set up.. an altar within the said church according to a platform or model hereunto annexed and it was further agreed that the said Thomas Raynor shall erect... steps leading to the said altar together with flagging and railing the said altar well and sufficiently and setting up a table...¹³⁵

At the same time Thomas Wiseman was engaged to paint the Ten Commandments in gold, as well as the creed and Lord's Prayer above the communion table.¹³⁶ Wiseman had been engaged by the parish of St. Catherine and St. James for the same project of painting the texts behind the altar in 1663. In St. Audoen's, Wiseman was engaged for 'gilding and beautifying' the organ in 1681.¹³⁷ A plasterer, Thomas Spencer, was owed £216 for extensive work carried out by him in St. Audoen's in 1680. Spencer, like Wiseman, was consistently engaged for work in both cathedral and parish churches. Plastering work carried out by him varied from simply 'whitening' the walls of the church to painting and gilding altarpieces.¹³⁸ Both St. Michael's and St. Audoen's had close involvement with the guild of St. Luke the Evangelist which monitored the activities of cutlers, painters, stainers and stationers. The guild held meetings in a hall in St. Audoen's arch and attended sermons en masse in St. Michael's in the 1690s.¹³⁹ The monopolisation of this type of work by certain individuals meant that churches probably had some uniformity in ornamentation.

Altars were restored in other parishes around the country with some fulfilling more of the criteria of Wren's London churches than others. Many of the records do not specify the exact nature of the refurbishment, however other aspects of Wren's formula beyond the standard communion rails can be found in Holy Trinity in Cork which installed rails, specially-imported Cornish tiling in the chancel and painted effigies of Moses and Aaron on each side of the altar in the 1660s.¹⁴⁰ As in England the 'mother churches' led the way for parish churches to follow.¹⁴¹ Christ Church

¹³⁵ 'Vestry book of St. Michael's', (RCBL P118/5/1, pp 136-7).

¹³⁶ Ibid, pp146-7.

¹³⁷ Gillespie (ed.), *Vestry records of St. Catherine and St. James*, p.212; Ní Mhurchadha (ed.), *Vestry records of St. Audoen*, p.115. Gilbert gives Wiseman's initials as 'W' however given the time period it is likely that this was the same Wiseman who carried out the work in St. Michael's or a son. J.T. Gilbert, *A history of the city of Dublin* (3 vols, Dublin, 1854-9) i, p.282. A Thomas Wiseman was receiving financial aid from the guild of stationers in 1699 and 1701. 'Guild of St. Luke papers' (NLI, MS 12,123, pp.31, 48).

¹³⁸ Ní Mhurchadha (ed.), *Vestry records of St. Audoen's*, pp 24-27; Ní Mhurchadha (ed.), *Vestry book of Finglas*, p.95.

¹³⁹ 'Guild of St. Luke papers', (NLI, MS 12,123, entry for 24 August 1696).

¹⁴⁰ Richard Caulfield, *The register of the parish of Holy Trinity (Christchurch), Cork* (Cork, 1877) pp 10, 12.

¹⁴¹ Fincham and Tyacke, *Altars restored*, pp 236-7.

had installed carved communion rails before 1663, black and white tiles in the chancel and carried out further embellishments in 1668.¹⁴² St. Patrick's needed to re-instate their altar rails after the Restoration and had chequered tiles in the chancel.¹⁴³ Influenced by the specific aesthetic, Dublin parishes followed suit. St. John's parish had re-instated their altar rails in 1661. When the church was re-built in 1681 the parish paid for 'painting and gilding' their pictures, marble stones for the altar and purchased a new communion table.¹⁴⁴ In St. Audoen's the communion table was railed in 1668 at a cost of £3 12s with an additional £2 paid for carpentry work. The rails may have been taken away at the same time as the organ pipes were sold for the founding of new bells in 1658.¹⁴⁵ In 1700, St. Mary's parish ordered 197 foot of black and white marble, presumably to lay in the chancel.¹⁴⁶

Where churches were newly built they followed a similar pattern. St. Peter's, which was built in the 1685, paid for an altar piece executed by a 'french carver', marble stones in the chancel, steps leading up to the altar and altar rails.¹⁴⁷ There was a desire for architectural and liturgical uniformity at a local level and there is evidence to suggest that parishes were aware of the arrangements in neighbouring churches. St. Audoen's ordered that new seats being built in 1672 be designed 'according to the forme and model of those seats of St. Warburse'. Later, the vestry ordered that a branch 'like St. Katherines branch be made of the best brass' in 1701. In 1705 the vestry of St. Michael's church ordered the purchase of new Common Prayer books 'such as are now at the altar of St. John's'.¹⁴⁸ Resourcefulness at a local level was not lacking and there were occasions when communion rails were recycled to be used in smaller parishes. In 1705, Clonsilla parish was 'buying books, building a pulpit, buying a chalice, a decent communion table and carpet...', ten years later the parish received a donation of the old altarpiece and banisters of St. Werburgh's.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴² Milne, 'Restoration and reorganisation', pp 255-6.

¹⁴³ Raymond Gillespie, 'Age of modernization, 1598-1690' in John Crawford and Raymond Gillespie (eds), *St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin : a history* (Dublin, 2009), pp 189, 191.

¹⁴⁴ 'Vestry records of St. John', (RCBL P328/5/2, churchwardens' account for 1681).

¹⁴⁵ Ní Mhurchadha (ed.), *Vestry records of St. Audoen*, pp 17, 69-71, 79, 82. The organ had been dismantled in 1638 as part of the demolition of the rood loft but the pipes were to be kept 'in some convenient safe place, until some farther order be taken for their reparation' (p.57).

¹⁴⁶ 'Building accounts of St. Mary's', (RCBL, P277/9/1, account for 1700).

¹⁴⁷ 'Vestry book of St. Peter's', (RCBL, P45/6/1, pp 40-1).

¹⁴⁸ Ní Mhurchadha (ed.), *Vestry records of St. Audoen's*, pp 94, 140; 'Vestry account of St. Michael's' (RCBL, P118/5/1, 25 October 1705).

¹⁴⁹ 'Clonsilla vestry book', (RCBL, P353/5/1, p.6); 'Notes of Rev. John Lyons', (NLI, MS 104, ff.25v).

This also occurred in St. Iberius' cathedral in Wexford which gave its communion rails to St. Mary's, another church in the town in 1691 and in St. Eunan's cathedral in the diocese of Raphoe, whose rails were given to Aghanunshin parish in 1700.¹⁵⁰

The restoration of altars depended on the financial and numerical strength of the local Protestant population and so had wide regional variation. Some parishes such as Delgany in Co. Wicklow were relatively speedy at altar refurbishment. It refurbished its altar rails in 1667. In Finglas, a rural Dublin parish, altar rails were installed in 1671. It wasn't until 1715 that the vestry in Durrow had alerted itself to the need to raise up and rail in its communion table, while in Painstown, Co. Meath they still hadn't a satisfactory communion table by 1745.¹⁵¹ This appeared to be a long-standing issue in the diocese. Bishop Dopping's report on the churches of Meath in the 1680s paints a desolate picture of parish life, where small groups of Protestants gathered together in half-ruined churches to hear their curate preach. Narcissus Marsh was conscious of these isolated parishioners, writing to the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, William Lloyd, in 1695, he lamented 'our misfortune... that in most places the Irish papists are the next inhabitants to ye church' and that Protestants lived 'scattered abroad on farms...'¹⁵² In his report on parishes in Meath Dopping recorded whether the altar was railed or not, even though rails were not commanded by the canons nor were they generally specified in visitation articles.¹⁵³ Dopping's high-church influence in Meath was lasting. When Durrow parish was contemplating the restoration of its altar the vestry specified that it was to be railed in as 'the canons of the Church of Ireland do require'.¹⁵⁴ The canons only required that the altar be situated in the east end of the Church, but Dopping's long episcopal tenure and his encouragement of altar rails had evidently left its mark on the diocese.

It is likely that Irish parishes were aware of the attempts to 'worship in the beauty of holiness' but their ability to realise this depended on local circumstances. Not only

¹⁵⁰ 'St. Iberius' vestry book', (RCBL, P874/5/1, 10 Aug 1691); 'Vestry book of Raphoe', (PRONI MIC1/95)

¹⁵¹ 'Painstown vestry book', (RCBL, P868/1/1); 'Durrow vestry book', (RCBL P348/1/1, p.60).

¹⁵² 'Narcissus Marsh to William Lloyd, 27 April 1695', (Lambeth Palace Library, MS 942 No.96)

¹⁵³ C.C. Ellison (ed.), 'Bishop Dopping's visitation book 1682-1685' in *Riocht na Midhe*, iv, (1971), pp32-9. See for example Duleek parish which had seven families of Protestants: 'Church and chancel out of repair since 1641... a bible two prayer books, no surplice...The people assemble in the church porch which is arched and slated and has desk, pulpit, seats, communion table but not railed, no font..' (p.33).

¹⁵⁴ 'Durrow vestry book', (RCBL, P348/1/1, p.43).

were parishes often too impoverished to attempt ambitious architectural programmes but there appeared to be no concerted effort by the episcopacy to implement wide-ranging reforms. Dublin parishes were not afforded the unique opportunity of the parishes of London, who, after the Great Fire of 1666, could reinvent the urban ecclesiastical landscape in a particular architectural mould. The restoration of altars was also aided by the appointment of two Laudian-inspired bishops; Gilbert Sheldon, who soon advanced to the see of Canterbury, and Humphrey Henchman who became bishop of London in 1663.¹⁵⁵ The archbishop of Dublin and later primate of Ireland, Michael Boyle, was one possible channel through which reform programmes were introduced after the Restoration. The recording of altar restorations in at least five churches from different geographical areas under Boyle's episcopacy indicates that churchwardens' accounts might provide a chronology for the implementation of reforms. It was under Boyle's tenure as archbishop of Dublin that Christ Church cathedral made significant alternations to its altar.¹⁵⁶ Boyle was lord chancellor, an active promoter of the temporal interests of the Church of Ireland and represented the interest of the Irish Church at the Restoration settlement. In London he came into contact with Bishop Gilbert Sheldon and was even posited as a possible successor to him at Canterbury.¹⁵⁷ In 1683 he built St. Mary's church in Blessington, Co. Wicklow as part of his new estate, which was supplied with all the necessities for high-church worship.¹⁵⁸ Equipped with a pair of chalices, two flagons and two plates as well as fine linen, cushions, six Common Prayer Books and six bells 'all at his Graces own proper cost and charge', the altar undoubtedly reflected 'the beauty of holiness'. The consecration of the church in 1683 was closed with a communion ceremony and the parish held monthly communions from 1698.¹⁵⁹ In the early eighteenth century the parish was an enthusiastic participant in the bell-ringing for political anniversaries and regularly paid its ringers for services rendered.¹⁶⁰ St.

¹⁵⁵ Fincham and Tyacke, *Altars restored* pp 306-7,326.

¹⁵⁶ Altars were restored in Holy Trinity (Cork), Delgany, Finglas, St. Michael's and Drumglass, Co. Tyrone when Boyle held the episcopal or arch-episcopal tenure. Milne, 'Restoration and reorganisation', p.255; Fincham and Tyacke, *Altars restored*, pp 236-7.

¹⁵⁷ Toby Barnard, 'Michael Boyle', *ODNB*.

¹⁵⁸ James McGuire, 'Michael Boyle' *DIB*, Fincham and Tyacke, *Altars restored* pp 306-7; 'Blessington vestry book', (RCBL, P651/1/1, 17 September 1683).

¹⁵⁹ 'Blessington vestry book', (RCBL, P651/1/1, 17 September 1683)

¹⁶⁰ Outside of Dublin this practice was rarely recorded in churchwardens' accounts. While the accounts for Dublin often refer to bell-ringing the sources would not support an intensive investigation similar to Ronald Hutton's in *The rise and fall of Merry England* or David Cressy's *Bonfires and bells: national memory and the Protestant calendar in Elizabethan and early Stuart*

Mary's in Blessington appeared to operate exactly as late seventeenth century divines might have wished, offering parishioners a regular, ritualistic sacramental practice which fully embraced its' connection with the political establishment.

However, there is little direct evidence that Boyle vigorously advocated a high-church architectural programme, and the churchwardens' accounts unfortunately do not provide concrete evidence of a concerted campaign. Most likely restoration was on an ad-hoc basis and under the influence of individual enthusiasts. In Waterford the high-church bishop, Thomas Milles, who carried on the tradition of frequent communions of his predecessor, George Baker, donated communion plate to many of the parishes in his diocese as well as an ornate marble communion table to St. Olaf's church.¹⁶¹ The laity too could be influential in altar refurbishment. Sir John Rogerson, a Dublin merchant who made his fortune in property speculation, used his prominent societal position to support the Church of Ireland. He was a benefactor of St. Werburgh's church in the city centre and donated a chalice to the parish in 1685. When he acquired lands in Glasnevin, in the north of the city, he was instrumental in regenerating the parish.¹⁶² In 1707 the curate and parishioners made a public acknowledgment of 'the care and diligence of Sir John Rogerson' in the rebuilding of the church both as a major contributor and as an organiser of subscriptions. These subscriptions came from the ecclesiastical and societal elite of the city, Rogerson obviously using his political connections (he had been lord mayor in 1693-4) to good effect.¹⁶³ Unsurprisingly he was given the pew opposite the pulpit in the church. Rogerson's involvement with the parish was hands-on, the vestry book was given to him for safe-keeping until a suitable chest was found to keep it in. He also served as churchwarden between 1710 and 1712, after which the vestry received 'an ample, full and plain account' from Rogerson for his procurement of a bell, as well as

England (Berkeley, 1989) *pace* T.C. Barnard's 'The uses of 23 October 1641 and Irish Protestant celebrations' in *E.H.R.*, cvi (1991), pp 893, 914 fn. 2. For an intensive year of bell-ringing see Gillespie, (ed.), *Vestry records of St. Catherine and St. James*, (pp 206-7) where ringers were paid for ten separate occasions in 1691-2, including the surrender of Limerick, the anniversary of the 1641 rebellion (23 October) and the defeat of the French fleet at sea on 24 May 1692.

¹⁶¹ Wyse Jackson, 'Old church plate of Lismore diocese', p.53.

¹⁶² Rogerson was also responsible for the regeneration of the village of Glasnevin. Tony O'Doherty, 'Glasnevin village in the 18th century: the Parish alms house and the parish school' in *Dublin Historical Record*, lix No. 2 (2006), p.136.

¹⁶³ 'Glasnevin vestry book' (RCBL, P244/5/1, p.1) The list of subscribers included the primate, archbishop of Dublin, a former lord mayor of Dublin city and various other political dignitaries, Rogerson was the largest benefactor being listed as having contributed £23 for the enterprise. See also Daniel Beaumont, 'John Rogerson' in *DIB*.

expenses for ‘flagging the church, railles and bannisters for the communion table.’¹⁶⁴ Rogerson died in 1724 but his invigorating presence in the parish proved lasting, a year after his death the parish purchased a selection of ‘both useful and ornamental’ plate. This included a chalice and paten with a Latin inscription, as well as another set with an English engraving. At the same time they bought a large salver, the total cost of the plate coming to £19 4s 2d. It is clear that the involvement of committed lay Anglicans could greatly influence the progress of refurbishment at a local level. This is particularly obvious in parishes like Glasnevin and Blessington whose fortunes aligned with the settlement in the area of wealthy Anglican benefactors.¹⁶⁵

The fact that some Dublin parishes, such as the united parishes of St. Brides’, St. Michael le Pole’s and St. Stephens didn’t record any expenditure on altar renovation perhaps indicates that there was no need for restoration, having remained relatively undisturbed in the Cromwellian period. It may however also be an indication that major building works often produced their own separate accounts, such as happened in the parish of St. Mary’s in Dublin.¹⁶⁶ The extent of the deliberate dismantling of altars during the Cromwellian period is difficult to determine, as it has been much less documented than the widely observed wrangles over altar arrangements in English parishes.¹⁶⁷ A more profitable route for the Irish context, where godly enclaves were less common, might be to examine whether there were significant changes to altars during the reign of James II, a time when it was alleged that Catholics took over Protestant churches for various uses, sometimes to celebrate Mass. William King estimated that Catholics took control of up to twenty six of Dublin’s churches and often proceeded to tear down the communion rails and presumably adapted the church for the hearing of Mass.¹⁶⁸ King’s estimation of the damage may have been overstated given the relatively few repairs noted in churchwardens’ accounts after 1688. There are some references to the ‘troublesome tymes’ and repairs made to city churches after arms-searches, but not the widespread

¹⁶⁴ ‘Glasnevin vestry book’, (RCBL, P244/5/1, p.9v)

¹⁶⁵ St. Paul’s parish located in the rapidly expanding northern suburbs of Dublin seems to have undergone a similar process of establishment as Glasnevin. Lord Charlemont served as churchwarden and had a pew in the church which was built in 1698 complete with an altarpiece, railing and flagging in the chancel. See Edith M. Best, ‘St. Paul’s parish Dublin’ in *JRSAI* civ, (1974), pp15-16.

¹⁶⁶ ‘Accounts of St. Mary’s parish’, (RCBL, P277/9/1).

¹⁶⁷ Fincham and Tyacke. *Altars restored*, chapter 7.

¹⁶⁸ William King, *The state of Protestants of Ireland under the late King James’ government* (Dublin, 1691), pp 208-16. Churches were also used for storing arms and housing soldiers.

repairs to altars or church interiors that would be expected had King's reported desecration taken place on a large-scale.¹⁶⁹ It seems that in parishes where Catholics had maintained some connection, or foothold, that infringements were possible. St. Anne's guild, which had managed to continue operations in St. Audoen's church throughout the seventeenth century and indeed was instrumental in rescuing the parish from financial difficulties, became a channel for the re-assertion of Catholic rights.¹⁷⁰ Certainly there were incursions on churches in rural areas, where the Protestant population was in a weaker position.¹⁷¹

The mise en scène of the Anglican communion service after the Restoration clearly represented a high form of worship. The communicants were encouraged to act accordingly and the presence of communion rails in most churches meant that parishioners adopted a kneeling position to receive. Devotional tracts which contained illustrations of the communion reinforced this pattern of bodily worship. They displayed the altar, adorned with the linen and plate demanded by the canons and Book of Common Prayer, set at an elevated position at the east end of the church, with the surpliced minister reading the service at the southern end of the communion table.(see figures 2:6-2:9).

¹⁶⁹ 'Vestry book of St. Michael's church', (RCBL, P118/5/1 pp 259 265-66); 'Vestry accounts of St. Bride's', (RCBL P327/4/1, p.138) 'Vestry book of St. John's', (RCBL, P328/5/2, p.156); King, *The state of the Protestants of Ireland*, pp 208-16, 395-98.

¹⁷⁰ See chapter 6.

¹⁷¹ Barnard, 'Enforcing the reformation in Ireland, 1660-1704', pp 214-16.

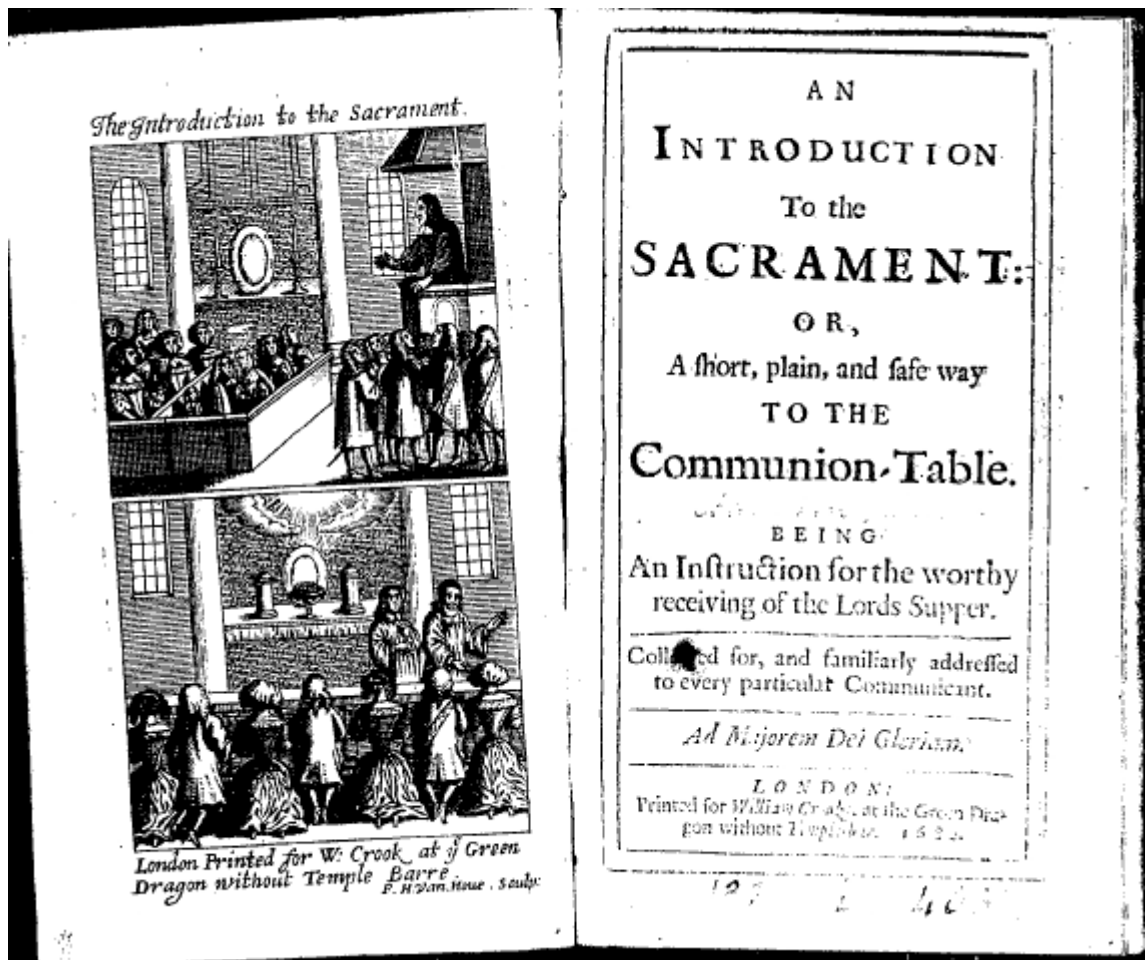


Figure 2:6. Lancelot Addison, *An introduction to the sacrament* (London, 1682).

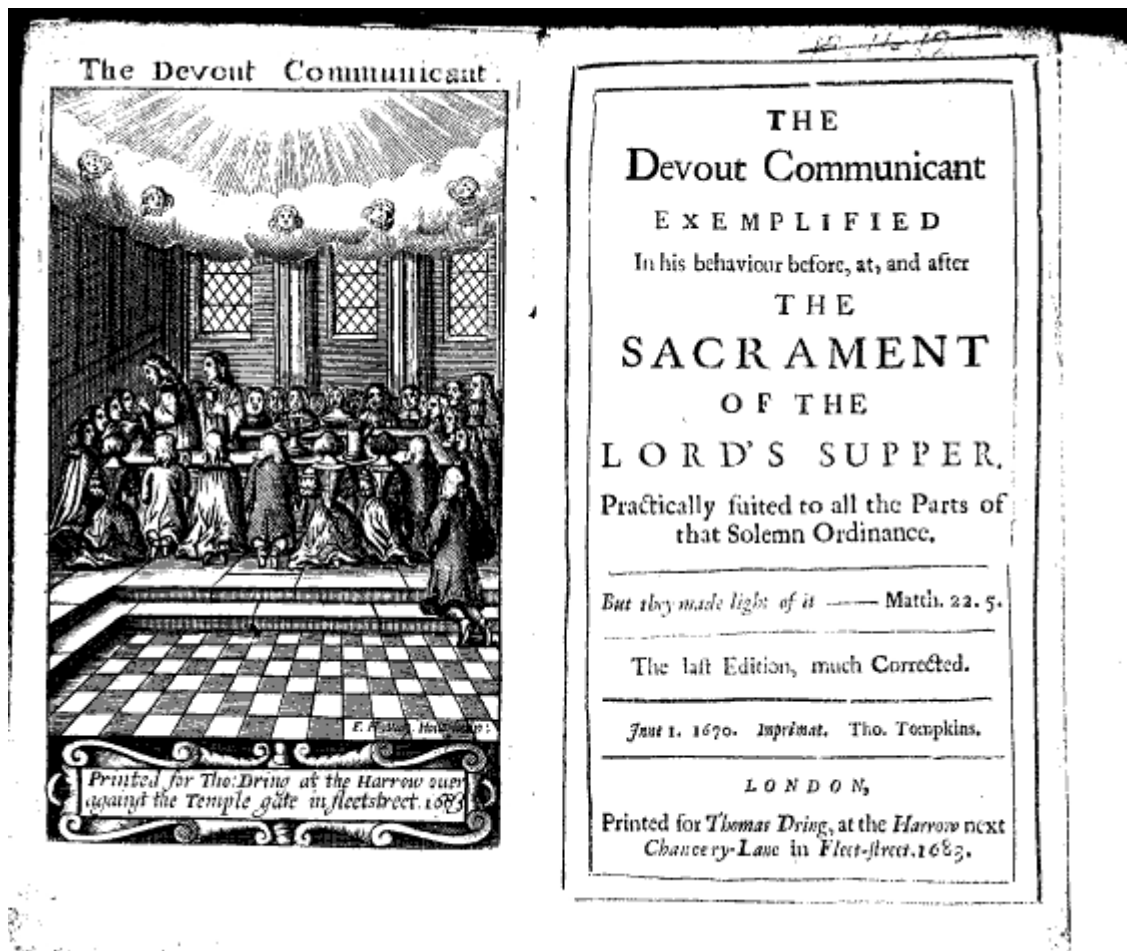


Figure 2:7. *The devout communicant exemplified in his behaviour before, at, and after the sacrament of the Lord's Supper* (London, 1683).

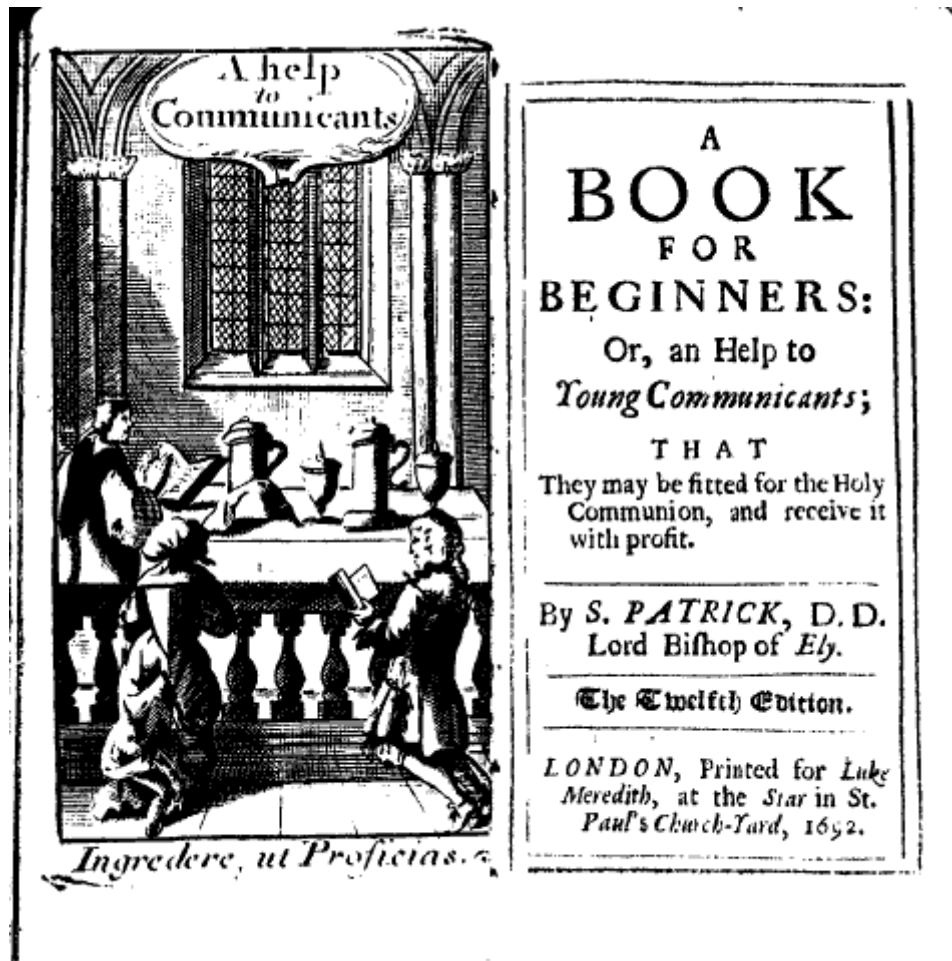


Figure 2:8. *A book for beginners: or, an help to young communicants* (London, 12th ed., 1692).



Math. XVIII. 19. 20. I. Cor. XI. 23. 24. 25. 26. J. G. G. Sculp.
Printed for A. Bellamy, W. Clements & C. Rivington.

Figure 2:9. Charles Wheatly, *A rational illustration of the Book of Common Prayer, and administration of the sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies of the Church* (London, 1720).

Whether the laity were conscious that their celebration was high or low, or whether they were simply following the preferences of their ministers is not clear. Those who read the devotional tracts with illustrations may have seen in them an example to follow; others may simply not have considered the theological inferences of the plate, rails and east-end altar. For those with a Catholic past, the communion of the Church of Ireland in this period perhaps resembled the Mass in solemnity and ritual but there were still considerable differences. Theological abstractions aside, the offering of the wine to the laity must have resonated strongly with Protestant sensibilities and jarred with Catholic ones. In a public renunciation of his Catholicism in 1704, a convert in Newcastle, Co. Wicklow conceded that the denial of the cup to the laity was ‘against the institution of that sacrament’.¹⁷² Evidently communion in both kinds was something which was important to Protestant identity. In Bandon, Mrs. Maria Bull donated £12 for a silver flagon for Kilbrogan church in 1688 but clarified that it was donated on the understanding that communion was celebrated in both kinds. Her clarification demonstrated the importance of communion in both kinds to the Protestant laity and possible uncertainty that the Protestant liturgy would survive the fractious period of the late 1680s.¹⁷³

These pious benefactors were clearly beneficial to the material strength of the Church of Ireland. They were not however, their primary targets for reforming piety. Devotional works were often aimed at those of the ‘meanest capacities’, and the reforming societies of the 1690s were mainly preoccupied with extirpating vice among the poor. Occasionally the poor were encouraged to receive communion under more coercive measures. In Raphoe those on the parish poor list had to show themselves to be ‘consistent communicants’ and regular attendees at divine worship or risk forfeiture of their alms unless a sufficient excuse was given to the dean.¹⁷⁴ In Wexford similar pains were taken over the less fortunate, where only the ‘protestant poor of the towne, and such as resort usually to the communion here’ were allowed to be admitted onto the list of the poor.¹⁷⁵ In the early eighteenth century, the corporation of Drogheda took its cue from the requirements of the church canons when it ordered the following:

¹⁷² ‘Newcastle vestry book’, (RCBL, P914/1/1, 19 November 1704).

¹⁷³ Mazier Brady, *Clerical records of Cork, Cloyne and Ross*, i, p.14.

¹⁷⁴ ‘Vestry book of Raphoe’, (PRONI, MIC 1/95, churchwardens’ account, 1693)

¹⁷⁵ ‘Vestry book of St. Iberius’, (RCBL P874/5/1, 14 Sept 1674) See also Dudley, ‘The Dublin parish, 1660-1730’, p.290.

that no petition be received or read for the future, from any person whatsoever for any pention [sic]... without a certificate from the minister of the parish of this town that the petitioner has received the sacrament three times a year at least, and that the certificate be for the future tacked to the petition before it be read, and that the present petitioners do bring certificates that they have received the sacrament three times a year before they be paid.¹⁷⁶

In St. Bride's parish Turlough Burn who had been in receipt of poor relief in 1669 in the parish had his alms withdrawn in 1671 because he was 'a papist and would not go to church.'¹⁷⁷

While the Church of Ireland sought to facilitate rather than limit Eucharistic participation, the exclusion of communicants was an unavoidable aspect of reformed theology. Without the threat of excommunication, the Church of Ireland risked the profanation of the sacrament by the laity or their ambivalence to its symbolic power. It is difficult to determine the extent to which the reformed tradition managed to carry forward the fear of excommunication which had existed in pre-Reformation society.¹⁷⁸ The grounds for excommunication were laid out in the canons and Book of Common Prayer and were suitably vague to allow the clergy to use it in whatever way they saw fit. There must have been considerable differences in the eyes of the laity to those who were 'open and notorious evil liver[s]' and what must have been a considerable few who 'have done any wrong to [their] neighbours by word or deed'.¹⁷⁹ In a doctrinal context, the clergy were concerned to prevent the profanation of the sacrament, an endeavour that would become more difficult when communion became a legal requirement in 1704. This mode of thinking was to become less prominent with the weakening of high-church principles in the later seventeenth century and perhaps showed its lingering influence in the person of Edward Wetenhall, the bishop of Cork, who though by other measures a latitudinarian, voted against the sacramental test on the grounds that it would profane the sacrament.¹⁸⁰ Wetenhall's commitment to preserving the Eucharistic rite appeared to be borne out in his practice. An incident reported by Arthur Pomeroy, the dean of Cork, paints Wetenhall as unequivocal in his attitude to worthy reception. On a number of

¹⁷⁶ Thomas Gogarty (ed.), *Council book of the corporation of Drogheda* (Drogheda, 1915), p.309.

¹⁷⁷ 'Vestry book of St. Bride's', (RCBL, P327/4/1), p.34.

¹⁷⁸ Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, pp 94-95.

¹⁷⁹ Haigh, 'Communion and community: exclusion from communion in post-Reformation England' in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, li, No. 4 (2000), p.722.

¹⁸⁰ Acheson, *A history of the Church of Ireland*, p.57.

occasions Pomeroy wrote to his patron, William Palliser, the archbishop of Cashel, complaining of Wetenhall's treatment of him. In 1690, Pomeroy claimed that Wetenhall had sought 'to ingratiate himself ... with the late times' by preaching a sermon in the cathedral that defended the Catholic church from the charge of idolatry. More heavy-handed perhaps was Wetenhall's subsequent action, he 'turned from the sacrament' one of the vicars who had omitted the name of King James from the prayers of the cathedral.¹⁸¹ Such dramatic exclusions were probably rare as excommunication was in the power of the ecclesiastical courts.

As the majority of church court records have been lost, the number of excommunications or their effect on individuals is difficult to determine. In the diocese of Derry a list of excommunications for 1667 suggests that the penalty was inflicted for common misdemeanours. Repeated crimes included non-attendance at divine worship, fornication, adultery and profaning the Sabbath. The most common cause however was non-payment of the parish cess, and there is evidence that groups of parishioners were excommunicated en mass for this reason.¹⁸² In the early eighteenth century over 300 parishioners from the united parishes of Killinaboy in Co. Clare were presented to the consistory court of Killaloe for non-payment of tithes. How many of these were subsequently excommunicated is not recorded.¹⁸³

While evidence for excommunications is slight, what survives suggests a distinct lack of concern for the sentence that was so greatly feared in the medieval Christian church. A short report on the Church of Ireland, prepared by Anthony Dopping, bishop of Meath, in 1697, suggests that excommunication had little efficacy among the laity. As well as the usual complaints of poor resources in the Church of Ireland, 'the general slight and contempt there is put upon excommunication which is the highest act of censure of the church' is cited as adding to the Church of Ireland's difficulties. Dopping advocated imprisonment rather than excommunication as a tool

¹⁸¹ 'Letters and Papers of Rev. Arthur Pomeroy, 1675-1708' (PRONI, T2954/1/6); For Wetenhall's opinion of Pomeroy see letter from same to Tension, 13 March, 1694 (Lambeth Palace Library, MS 929/14).

¹⁸² 'Names of persons excommunicated in Derry diocese by the late bishop (1667)' (PRONI, T552/10).

¹⁸³ 'Killaloe consistory court papers, 1671-1725' (BL, Add. MS 31881).

more suited to the sins for which people were presented to the ecclesiastical courts.¹⁸⁴

A lack of concern on this point is somewhat borne out by evidence from the church court records of Killaloe. Usually the censure was only recorded when the excommunicated person sought to overturn the judgment and approached the court in order to commute their sentence. This was achieved in two ways, either by paying a fine to the court or, more usually, by performing public penance for a number of Sundays in their local church. Occasionally they were ordered to attend neighbouring churches, no doubt an intention to imbed the censure into the minds of a greater proportion of parishioners. Some petitioners to the court sought to avoid the public penance. Francis Heaton, who was excommunicated for adultery, and was ‘not as yet a married man’ asked the court ‘not to expose him to public penance’ but to accept a fine instead. The payment of fines however was an important consideration, not only financially beneficial to the church courts but a necessary escape route for those Anglicans who were concerned to protect their status in society. Other young men sought similar arrangements to Heaton, some fearing a loss of inheritance if their fathers discovered their crime.¹⁸⁵

While penitent sons approached the courts with humble petitions, others were openly pragmatic about their excommunication, seeing it only as a bar to conducting their business. William Hogan sought to lift his censure because ‘he had business of importance to do next sessions and [was] resolved to receive the sacrament next Sunday which cannot be done by an excommunicated person.’¹⁸⁶ The Presbyterian minister Joseph Boyse considered the practice of excommunication in the church of Ireland totally inadequate to enforce church discipline:

For what can more effectually pour contempt on the censures of the church, than to have the most solemn of ‘em, I mean excommunications, decreed by a lay chancellor, and what is worse decreed

¹⁸⁴ ‘A short view of the present condition of the Church of Ireland, together with some remedies proposed, 1697’ (Lambeth Palace Library, MS 929 no.60). See also John Brady, ‘Remedies proposed for the church of Ireland (1697)’ in *Archivium Hibernicum* xxii (1959) pp163-73; Healy, *History of the diocese of Meath*, ii, p.17.

¹⁸⁵ ‘Petition of Amos Carr’, (BL Add MS 31881, f.194).

¹⁸⁶ ‘Killialoe consistory court papers’, (BL Add MS 31881, f.214r).

usually upon so frivolous causes, in so rash and precipitant a manner, and made merely an engine to squeeze the purses of men, rather than reform their manners¹⁸⁷

The Presbyterian system of censure, which is discussed in chapter five, held a far weightier spiritual penalty and was administered by a panel of lay elders and the minister. Some Anglicans, whether sincere or not, expressed concern over their excommunicated status, William Murphy ‘dreads and is afraid to be under the terrible censure of excommunication’ while the churchwardens of Tomgraney seemed perturbed by ‘the dreadful sentence of excommunication’ and sought readmittance ‘to the full and blessed communion of the faithful’.¹⁸⁸ It is clear that large numbers of excommunicated persons, presumably the majority of them Catholics, didn’t appear in the court to see themselves excommunicated nor did they place any great emphasis on being excommunicated from rites they didn’t participate in. Twenty men who were excommunicated for prophaning the parish church of Kilmurry, Co. Clare consistently ignored their summons to the court.¹⁸⁹

The failure of the Church of Ireland to make excommunication a potent weapon rested on its numerical inferiority which made exclusion a risky business in a church concerned to increase its numbers and the sacramental worship of its members. The regulation of a community using exclusion from the sacrament as a deterrent was a luxury that only a majority church could afford. Any sustained campaign of excommunication would only fragment communal solidarity and make the promotion of sacramental worship more difficult. If people were in general unperturbed by their exclusion from the sacrament and knew that the regulatory system could be manipulated by the practice of occasional conformity or the payment of a fine, then the primacy of the Eucharist in Anglican worship and identity could be depreciated. However, as all or at least some of the above examples may have been Catholics it is difficult to determine who it was that cared so little for the excommunication procedures of the Church of Ireland. Importantly, and in stark contrast to Presbyterian modes of discipline, there is no evidence that public penance was being performed in Anglican parish churches. To godly parishioners like James Bonnell, excommunication was undoubtedly feared but never a reality, kept in check by a vigorous prayer life and sacramental worship. To the ordinary parishioner, fear

¹⁸⁷ Boyse, *Remarks*, pp155-6.

¹⁸⁸ ‘Killaloe consistory court papers’, (BL Add. MS 31881, ff 147r, 226r).

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, f.263r.

of unworthy reception, worldly distractions or an unsatisfactory provision of the rite were more likely impediments to their regular reception of the Eucharist.

The Eucharistic practices of Anglicans in early modern Ireland were varied. The type of practice that emerges from the parochial sources suggests that it was conditional upon local circumstances. While the aims of the bishops to provide regular sacramental worship in a ceremonial setting were successful in urban areas, the degree to which the laity followed the exact conditions that were laid out in the canons is less clear. In cities and towns, the elite embraced the Easter celebration as a testament to their societal position. For some clergy, such as Anthony Dopping, this was a dilution of the spiritual aspect of the Eucharist. For others, such as Narcissus Marsh, the reception of the sacrament by the political establishment was a necessary duty. The analysis of communicant lists and expenditure on the elements of bread and wine suggests that there was a quiet conformity among ordinary parishioners who preferred to receive with their kin in a communal celebration at Christmas. Their piety was born of an older tradition and was largely unmoved by the ambitious schemes of the clergy. Official directives filtered through piecemeal and according to the numerical and financial strength of the parish. Exposure to an enthusiastic patron saw the fortunes of a parish change dramatically, particularly in its architectural and material provisions. With the exception of the outpourings of godly paragons or the lamentations of frustrated bishops, the 'moods and motivations' of the ordinary Anglican can only be inferred through glimpses of particularly assertive parishioners, who were 'resolved to serve God, one way or another'.

Chapter Three

The theory of the Eucharist in the Presbyterian Tradition, 1660-1740

When the sacramental test was introduced in Ireland in 1704 it was considered by contemporaries to have been principally aimed at nonconformists, the largest group of which were Presbyterians. These dissenters were concentrated in Ulster but congregations could be found in Dublin, Cork and some provincial cities and towns. The hostile reaction to the test's introduction among Presbyterians testified to the strength of a confession which had, by the early eighteenth century, established a solid ecclesiastical structure, through which it organised worship and operated a quasi-judicial authority over its members. In Ulster, Presbyterianism became a political and religious force which authorities felt could be subdued by the sacramental test. In the south, Presbyterianism formed part of a more fluid community of dissenters, born of the religious plurality of the Interregnum. Influenced by the English Presbyterian theology of Richard Baxter, southern Presbyterians were comfortable with Independency and Congregationalism. In Ulster, and in the small number of Dublin congregations which identified with Scottish Presbyterianism, the tradition was Knoxian and the community's identity was more solidly linked to a Presbyterian institutional church. This chapter will demonstrate that by 1704 the Calvinist sacramental piety of Presbyterians was confidently articulated in liturgical texts, catechisms, devotional writing and sermons. This theological influence embodied a firm belief in the doctrine of election and the communion of saints. At the sacrament these beliefs were made visible to the laity in the liturgical setting of the communion and the gathering of large numbers of communicants. The chapter will explore the ways in which the sacrament became a distinctive symbol of identity for a covenanted people in contrast to the broader communion of the established church.

The character of Presbyterianism in Ulster was influenced by theological developments in Scotland and Europe which would have an impact on Eucharistic practices. The Synod of Dort, which met in 1618-9 to resolve the disputes between

Arminians and Calvinists in the Dutch church, resulted in a consolidation of the Calvinist position across Europe. In Scotland the canons of Dort were often used as justification for measures adopted by Presbyterians there.¹ At the same time, James I had introduced the Articles of Perth in 1618, in an attempt to bring the Church of Scotland into line with its English counterpart. Among their stipulations was the requirement for communicants to receive the sacrament kneeling and that private communion could be distributed to the sick.² These articles signified that it was Eucharistic practice that had become a major area of conflict between conformists and nonconformists. For many, the Articles could not be accepted and a considerable portion of the ministers who came to Ulster in the 1620s were of this opinion.³ The communion services they instituted reflected these convictions. The Calvinist influences in the Church of Ireland in the early seventeenth century and the appointment of a sympathetic archbishop in James Ussher in 1625, facilitated the early development of Presbyterianism in Ulster.⁴ In the south of Ireland, the foundation of dissenting communities was more haphazard and was not anchored, as it was in Ulster, to an increasing settler population.

Despite the fluidity of the southern Presbyterian identity, they merit inclusion in a discussion of Irish Presbyterian communions. Not only were there doctrinal similarities, but congregations themselves were conscious that they were part of a common Reformed tradition. Presbyterians from the north were welcomed at communions in the south, ministers who served congregations in both jurisdictions served as conduits for fostering links and institutional arrangements connected congregations in Dublin with their northern neighbours through the establishment of the synod of Ulster in 1690.⁵ Where the communities differed was in their communion rituals, which will be discussed more fully in the next chapter.

¹ G.D. Henderson, *Religious life in seventeenth century Scotland* (Cambridge, 1937) pp 77-99.

² George Burnet, *The holy communion in the reformed Church of Scotland, 1560-1960* (Edinburgh, 1960) pp 64-87.

³ W.D. Bailie, *The six mile water revival of 1625* (Belfast, 1976), p.3.

⁴ Alan Ford, 'The Church of Ireland, 1558-1634: a puritan church?' in Alan Ford, James McGuire and Kenneth Milne (eds) *As by law established: the Church of Ireland since the Reformation* (Dublin, 1995), pp 52-68.

⁵ For an account of individual congregations of Presbyterians in the south see Steven S. Smyrl *Dictionary of Dublin dissent : Dublin's protestant dissenting meeting houses, 1660-1920* (Dublin, 2009), pp17-53.

Presbyterians in Ireland were influenced by the theology of John Calvin and Richard Baxter. John Cook, a Presbyterian minister in Tipperary and Waterford, recounted his training with the ministers of Dublin, who gave young ordinands the works of Wollebius and Turretine. These Swiss theologians were influential in English Presbyterian circles, although Cook preferred English authors to the lengthy systematical works which ‘ran hastily through the whole [of theology]’. Joseph Boyse, one of the leading ministers of the Dublin Presbyterians, recommended that Cook read the works of Richard Baxter, for whom Boyse had ‘a very great veneration’.⁶ Cook followed Boyse’s example and ‘found the discovery of a very piercing judgement, and a nervous strength of reason’ in Baxter’s arguments and ‘so much zeal and love for God, so deep a relish of spiritual and heavenly things...’ in his practical teachings. A contemporary, James Barry, who had embraced nonconformity to the chagrin of his Anglican family, credited Baxter’s *Call to the unconverted* as an instigator to his spiritual awakening. It was the title page of the work which ‘invited my fancy to make choice of it for my chief companion.’⁷ Baxter’s influence over Presbyterians in the south of the country owed much to Edward Worth, who in the 1650s, had attempted to steer the remnants of the Church of Ireland through the Interregnum period by adopting a policy of comprehension. Worth had been heavily influenced by Baxter’s eirenical approach.⁸

In Ulster, the legacy of Baxter was less pronounced, the Presbyterians there preferring the catechetical and devotional works of Scottish and Ulster divines.⁹ This tradition was strongly Calvinist and was tied not only to a religious, but also to an ethnic identity. Ulster Presbyterianism, emanating from Scots settlers who came over in successive waves with the plantation of Ulster in 1610, envisaged a Presbyterian state church as was achieved in Scotland, with the signing of the National Covenant in 1638. This conviction was not shared by congregations in the south who were

⁶ ‘Diary of John Cook, 1696-1705’, (PHSI); Gordon Rupp, *Religion in England, 1688-1791* (Oxford, 1986), p.176; Raymond Gillespie ‘Dissenters and nonconformists, 1661-1700’ in Kevin Herlihy (ed) *The Irish dissenting tradition, 1650-1750* (Dublin, 1995), p.19.

⁷ James Barry, *A reviving cordial for a sin-sick despairing soul, in the time of temptation* (Edinburgh 1722), pp 23-4; For a layman ordering Baxter’s works from England in the 1650s see Raymond Gillespie, *Reading Ireland: print, reading and social change in early modern Ireland* (Manchester, 2010), p.79.

⁸ T.C. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland* (Oxford, 1975), p.120; Terry Clavin, ‘Edward Worth’, ‘Samuel Winter’, *DIB*; Gillespie, ‘Dissenters and nonconformists’, pp14-15

⁹ Baxter’s *Call to the unconverted* was printed in Belfast in 1741 and his works appear on a booksellers list of 1746 see the final advertisement leaves in John Taylor, *The scripture-doctrine of original sin proposed to free and candid examination* (Belfast, 1746).

largely accepting of their separatist status, which reinforced their identity as a godly elect. In Ulster the doctrine of election was also crucial to their Calvinist faith, but encompassed a much larger number of saints, the regulation of which was more challenging. This need to regulate and delineate those who were the ‘people of God’, led to a stronger institutional church, revealed in the organisation of the church into sessions, meetings, presbyteries and finally the establishment of the General Synod of Ulster in 1690. The large number of adherents also led to a more circumscribed doctrinal church whose statement of belief was the *Westminster Confession of Faith* of 1646. It was this confession, together with the shorter and longer catechisms, that would inform Presbyterian communion practices in the north in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Together with the catechisms, the laity ‘became familiar with the Confession, not so much in understanding and evaluating specific tenets, as in recognizing the language and rhetoric and perceiving it as the true Presbyterian creed.’¹⁰ In addition, the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 remained an important aspect of Ulster Presbyterian identity, many of whom subscribed to the covenant at the same time that they received communion. Some early settlers believed that children who were baptised by Presbyterian ministers were simultaneously ‘christened into the solemn league and covenant’.¹¹ Others preached that the covenant was ‘as necessary as the sacrament.’¹²

The beliefs articulated in the texts emanating from the Westminster Assembly of 1643-53 were expounded at a local level in catechisms and devotional aids produced by Presbyterian ministers. The catechisms were largely based on the wording and formula of the two produced by the Westminster Assembly, while the devotional aids were designed to prepare communicants to worthily partake of the sacrament and to appreciate the benefits and obligations which reception of it entailed. The output of the first printing press established in Belfast in the 1690s testified to the corpus of godly texts that were available to Presbyterians. The stock of the first

¹⁰ Marilyn Westerkamp, *Triumph of the laity: Scots-Irish piety and the Great Awakening, 1625-1760* (New York, 1988), p.75.

¹¹ ‘Extracts from Wm. Rainey’s Diary’ (Linen Hall Library Joy MS 10, 21 February 1703, 22 August 1704); Jean Agnew, *Belfast merchant families in the seventeenth century* (Dublin, 1996), p.67; Westerkamp, *Triumph of the laity*, p.38; Raymond Gillespie, ‘The Presbyterian revolution in Ulster, 1660-1690’ in William Shiels and Diana Wood (eds) *The churches, Ireland and the Irish* (Oxford, 1989), p.166.

¹² Raymond Gillespie, ‘Print culture, 1550-1700’ in Raymond Gillespie and Andrew Hadfield (eds) *The Irish book in English 1550-1800* (Oxford, 2006), pp 31-2.

Belfast printer, Patrick Neill, was a veritable check-list of godly textbooks. New Testaments, psalms and devotional works by John Bunyan, John Flavel, William Guthrie and Joseph Alleine were all for sale together with sacramental treatises by Thomas Doolittle and Daniel Campbell.¹³ Prior to the establishment of the Belfast press, books were imported from Scotland and Ulster ministers utilised the Scottish presses to have their own works printed. Itinerant booksellers supplied books to those living at a distance to the port towns and the laity and clergy created their own distribution networks through friends or acquaintances with a ready access to books.¹⁴

The godly aversion to set forms of ritual stemmed from an unwillingness to adopt a liturgy that could become superstitious or would rely heavily on external symbolism. The sole informant of liturgical practices was Scripture, the ‘inventions of men’ were to be avoided at all costs. In separatist communities, liturgical flexibility was necessary to forge links between congregations and prevent accusations of anarchy from hostile observers. The textual foundations for the liturgy that developed among Presbyterians were scriptural in origin and became embodied in the *Directory for public worship* of 1645. The *Directory* had been substituted for the Book of Common Prayer in 1647 and remained operative during the Interregnum, which meant that Presbyterians, though politically opposed to the Protectorate, had an acceptable liturgical code available to use without fear of censure.

In essence the *Directory* offered a proposal of a ritual but not a rite in itself. While not entirely permissive, the *Directory* allowed the minister to choose the words of institution, a significant departure from the prayers of consecration in the Catholic Mass and Anglican Holy Communion. Even more significant was the lack of rubrics, a sign that the proposed ritual could be variously interpreted, which meant that there were no direct instructions for the bodily worship of either the minister or the laity. In particular it was not clear whether the minister gave the elements to each communicant or whether the bread and wine were passed from one communicant to the next. In Ulster the elements were served in the latter form or by assisting elders

¹³ Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, pp78-9; See final advertisement leaves of Matthew Meade, *The almost Christian discovered* (Belfast, 1700).

¹⁴ Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, pp 79-80,89-90; NLS, Wodrow Lett. Qu. XX, ff.195v, 223v; Wodrow Qu. XXX, f.11r.; Wodrow Lett. Quarto XXII, f.123r.

of the congregation, in the south the practice seemed to have been to receive communion from the hand of the minister.¹⁵

The *Directory of public worship* set forth a ritual considerably more brief and circumspect than either the Book of Common Prayer or the Roman Missal. The *Directory* only provided liturgical guidance for the actual administration of communion and didn't include instructions for the days on which congregations heard preparatory sermons and prayers in advance of the sacrament. While the *Directory* acknowledged this 'public and private work', it simply asserted its necessity and did not prescribe appropriate topics for sermons. In this sense the *Directory* is aptly named as it provided the bare minimum upon which congregations had scope for expansion with hymns or scripture passages of their own. The communion service began with a sermon and prayer, the minister then made a short exhortation, gave warning to the unworthy and invited worthy communicants to come forward to receive. The elements were then 'set apart and sanctified' by the minister's reading of the words of institution. These words could be chosen out of any of the gospels or from the first letter to the Corinthians. Then followed a prayer of thanksgiving and blessing which completed the 'consecration' element of the rite, after which the bread and wine were distributed to the communicants.

The *Directory* remained the only practical guide for the celebration of the Lord's Supper for Presbyterians as they adopted no formal set of canons. The instructions for the frequency, type of plate, and bodily posture of the communicants were only loosely defined. The sacrament was to be celebrated frequently, the elements placed in 'comely and convenient' vessels, while the table was to be positioned so that communicants could sit around it. Like the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian clergy aimed to have frequent communions as was the practice of the primitive church and enjoined by the early reformers.¹⁶ This proved to be a significant challenge to the denomination for reasons that were similar to the difficulties facing Anglicans. They too were contending against the Catholic legacy of an annual Easter communion. The Presbyterian response however was not to imbue the Easter celebration with particular resonance but to depart from it completely. Communions were held in

¹⁵ In at least one Dublin congregation however the practice of Ulster congregations was followed. See Gillespie 'Dissenters and Nonconformists' pp23, 26.

¹⁶ *Institutes of Christian Religion by Jean Calvin*, ed. Henry Beveridge, (Edinburgh, 1845), chapter 17 Sec.44.

summer or autumn, usually about once a year in individual congregations.¹⁷ In the revivals of the 1620s and 1630s the communal feasts were extraordinary events and the heightened spiritual atmosphere could only be sustained for a certain period of time. The success of the revivals depended to some extent upon their infrequency. As Presbyterian church organisation gained greater stability and a more regulated system of worship, the large festal communions became unmanageable and at times worked against the type of Reformed worship desired by the clergy. In the late seventeenth century Anglican clergy seized on this as evidence that Presbyterianism was seditious and ungodly. The ministers themselves replied that the infrequency was as a result of persecution rather than spiritual laxity and that had they been given freedom of worship, communions could be held more regularly and with fewer of the festal aspects of the 'holy fair'.¹⁸ While the argument may have been legitimate and more frequent communions were called for in much of the devotional literature and the *Directory*, it was the infrequency of the communions that probably most solidified a sense of communal identity, as it created special 'high' times during the year. Similar to the annual reception of communion at Easter by Catholics, it infused the sacrament with additional power because it was only available for limited periods of the year.

Anglicans also criticised the mode of reception advocated by the *Directory*. Whether to receive the sacrament seated or kneeling was a recurring source of friction between various grades of Protestants. Remaining seated to receive the sacrament was considered by Presbyterians to have scriptural warrant, and they utilised the image of the Last Supper to advocate the practice. Defenders of bodily worship claimed that such a practice was irreverent. John Bramhall contended that many churches in Ulster had no altar but 'a table ten yards long, where they sit and receive the Sacrament like good fellows.'¹⁹ Bramhall was drawing on a shared polemical language. Communions at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, were described to Archbishop Laud in the 1630s in very similar terms:

¹⁷ 'Lagan Meeting Minutes' (PRONI, MIC 637/6, 23 October 1672); for the seasonal nature of Scottish and American communions see Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy fairs: Scotland and the making of American revivalism* (2nd edn., Grand Rapids, 2001), pp 20, 58-9, 156-7.

¹⁸ One Anglican commentator described these large gatherings as resembling the movement of 'crowds to a fair'. Gillespie, 'Dissenters and nonconformists', p.25. For a discussion of these disputes see Chapter 7.

¹⁹ John McCafferty, *The reconstruction of the Church of Ireland: Bishop Bramhall and the Laudian reforms, 1633-1641* (Cambridge, 2007), p.99.

they receive that Holy Sacrament sitting upon forms about the Communion Table, and doe pull the loaf one from the other, after the Minister hath begun. And so ye Cup, one drinking it as it were to another, like good fellows, without any particular application of ye sd words, more than once for all.²⁰

Despite Anglican criticisms, Presbyterians defended ‘table posture’ and it was required by the *Directory* that the communion table was to be ‘conveniently placed, that the communicants may orderly sit about it, or at it.’ Catechetical works, sermons and session records testify to the commitment to a ‘feasting posture’.²¹

Communicants needed to know the major tenets of their faith in order to be admitted to communion. The *Shorter catechism* of the Westminster Assembly was the most likely source of such knowledge. The *Confession of faith*, which was a statement of Presbyterian belief, together with the Longer and Shorter catechisms, was published in Belfast in 1694, 1700 and 1717. It is likely that the catechisms had been circulated in Scottish editions prior to their printing in Belfast, as there are records of catechisms being shipped to Ireland in the 1680s.²² The *Confession* was not printed in Dublin during the Restoration period, perhaps an indication of the concern to maintain a broader communion between Dublin’s smaller Presbyterian community and other dissenting groups. Extended versions of the catechism were produced for individual congregations. Thomas Hall’s *A plain and easy explication of the assemblies shorter catechism*, was dedicated to his parishioners in Larne, though printed in Edinburgh in 1697. Robert Chambers, whose edition of the shorter catechism remained unpublished, undoubtedly used it among his congregation in Bull Alley in Dublin.²³

In the south, English works were preferred, the only record of Presbyterian catechisms printed during the period were John Wallis’ *A brief and easie explanation*

²⁰ T.D. Atkinson and John WillisClarke, *Cambridge described and illustrated : being a short history of the town and university* (London, 1897), p.460.

²¹ John Willison, *A sacramental catechism* (Edinburgh, 1720) p.77; *A sacramental catechism: in which the nature of the covenant of grace, and the visible seals thereof, baptism, and the Lord’s-Supper, with the Gospel qualifications, of worthy receivers, are plainly open’d, by way of question, and answer* (Limerick, 1724[?]) p.87; John Bailey, ‘To my loving and dearly beloved friends, in and about Limerick’ in *Man’s chief end to glorify God* (Boston, 1689), p.34; James Barry, *A reviving cordial for a sin-sick despairing soul, in the time of temptation* (Edinburgh 1722), p.73.

²² Anthony Drennan ‘On the identification of the first Belfast printed book’ in *The Library* 1, no.2 (2000), pp 193-6; Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, p.87.

²³ Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, p.119; Phil Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy, 1660-1714* (Cork, 1994), pp118-9.

of the shorter catechism and Thomas Lye's *A plain and familiar method of instructing the younger sort*. These texts, printed as separate works in London in 1648 and 1672 were printed together by Joseph Howes in a Dublin edition of 1683. Both of these catechisms were based on the *Shorter catechism*. Therefore in Ulster and Dublin it was the *Shorter catechism* and its various derivations that informed Presbyterian sacramental beliefs in the late seventeenth century. Later catechetical works printed in Belfast included John Willison's *Sacramental catechism* in 1735 and *Young Communicants catechism* in 1754. In Limerick a sacramental catechism was printed anonymously in the 1720s. These later works encompassed more original material, were often specifically designed for the sacrament or for younger audiences and were not as self-consciously anchored to the Westminster catechisms as those produced earlier.²⁴ The primacy of the *Shorter catechism* remained however, with editions continuing to appear in Dublin and Belfast throughout the eighteenth century.²⁵

The importance of the catechisms to the regulation of communion was clear. Communicants had to be familiar with the *Shorter catechism* before they could be admitted to the sacrament. How detailed the examination into the laity's knowledge of doctrine on these occasions is difficult to determine. Presumably there was a time restraint and so the set form of questions in the catechism would have allowed elders and ministers to quickly examine potential communicants.²⁶ The laity were usually given about a month's warning of an impending communion and so had time to prepare themselves for examination.²⁷ In some disciplinary cases the session recommended that sinners 'be better acquainted with the principles of religion and to get the catechisms'.²⁸ Young communicants were more vigorously examined as the first communion was an important rite of passage. Sacramental catechisms not only stressed the importance of communion as a seal of the baptismal covenant but also treated both subjects together as being inseparable, the first necessary for

²⁴ Schmidt, *Holy fairs*, pp 46-7; *A sacramental catechism* (Limerick, 1724[?]).

²⁵ Ian Green, 'The necessary knowledge', of the principles of religion': catechisms and catechizing in Ireland, c. 1560-1800' in Alan Ford, James McGuire and Kenneth Milne (eds) *As by law established: the Church of Ireland since the Reformation* (Dublin, 1995), pp 85-6.

²⁶ 'Lisburn session book', (PRONI, MIC1P/159/6) In Lisburn elders were dispatched to examine their quarters a week before the communion.

²⁷ For the communion on the 4 July 1691, the session of Lisburn announced their intention on the 11 June 'Lisburn session minutes', (PRONI, MIC1P/159/6).

²⁸ 'Templepatrick session book' (PRONI, CR4/12/B/1, 6 Aug 1707).

occasioning the second. Baptism, the sacrament of initiation was never repeated, but the Lord's Supper, 'being for nutrition, [was] often to be received.'²⁹ Thomas Lye, whose catechism for the 'younger sort' was published in Dublin in 1683 set out very specific instructions to the heads of families when catechising those in their care. Not only were children expected to learn the questions and answers but they were to be examined in detail on the scripture proofs that substantiated the doctrine. Catechists were to be careful that the children were not simply learning by rote 'because to repeat words and not to understand the truths contained in them is but to act the parrot and profits very little.'³⁰ Lye's catechism followed the questions of the *Shorter catechism* with additional questions designed to test that knowledge was not superficial. Young communicants should have the 'knowledge to discern the Lord's body... faith to feed upon him.'³¹

John Wallis' catechism was less demanding and perhaps the reason the texts were sold together to provide for various capabilities. The catechism required only yes or no answers and the table explaining difficult terms at the back had a pedagogic aspect. The definition of a sacrament was given as 'formerly an oath taken by soldiers, to be true and faithful to their general: Now used for a mystical ceremony, or outward sign in religious worship, representing some inward grace.'³² John Willison highlighted the extremely significant occasion of the first communion as it was the second seal of the Christian's covenant with God. Willison beseeched the first communicants; 'O young people take heed to your first communicating, for very much depends upon it, you are, as it were, about laying the foundation-stone of your salvation work'.³³ First communion seemed to have occurred anywhere between the late teens and early twenties and ministers were particularly concerned that communicants be made aware of the significance and importance of the sacrament. Young communicants in Connor, Co. Antrim had a special meeting with the minister before receiving, where they were 'putt to minde of their baptismal cov[enan]t and of

²⁹ Willison, *A sacramental catechism*, p.96.

³⁰ Thomas Lye, *A plain and familiar method of instructing the younger sort according to the lesser catechism* (Dublin, 1683), p.4.

³¹ *Ibid*, p.60.

³² John Wallis, *A brief and easie explanation of the shorter catechism presented by the assembly of divines at Westminster, to both houses of Parliament, and by them approved wherein the meanest capacities may in a speedy and easie way be brought to understand the principles of religion* (Dublin, 1683), sig E.2v, p.125.

³³ Willison, *A sacramental catechism*, pp v-viii.

the engagement their parents came under at their baptism which they themselves are now obliged to fulfil being they are now come to years of understanding..’ The communicants then subscribed to the covenant by declaring that they believed in a Triune God ‘according to the several articles of the Christian faith as they are contained in the H[oly] Scriptures of the old and new Test [ament] and summed up in our Confession of faith and catechisms..’³⁴ The names and ages of young communicants were recorded by Rosemary Street Congregation in the 1720s, a further indication that by receiving the Eucharist young Presbyterians took their public position among a covenanted people.³⁵

Some catechisms were designed for the godly of all ages. Joseph Alleine, whose catechism was printed in Belfast in 1700, intended that ‘not only the younger, but also the elder sort would become students of the catechism’.³⁶ His layout was intended to be adaptable to different capacities by dividing up the larger answers of the Westminster catechism ‘into lesser parcels, thereby to let in the light by degrees into the minds of the learners.’ Included in the work was a method of self-examination and instructions for the promotion of godly living.

The difference between Presbyterian and Anglican catechetical forms has been noted as deriving chiefly from the Calvinist basis of Presbyterian doctrine.³⁷ Calvin’s covenantal theology not only informed the doctrine of election but also became an adjunct to political identity. This preoccupation with covenantal theology manifested itself in the political arena when the Solemn League and Covenant was agreed in 1643 which pledged to eradicate popery and prelacy. William Tisdall, a Church of Ireland minister, claimed that the covenant had been re-printed in Belfast in 1701 and 1707 and sold together with the *Directory* and catechisms.³⁸ William Jacque, a Scottish Presbyterian minister, described himself as having ‘an early zeal for a covenanted reformation.’³⁹ John Bailey reminded his congregation in Limerick of how he had ‘preached an hundred and ten sermons on the covenant of grace, for your

³⁴ ‘Connor Session Minutes, 1693-1735’ (PHSI, 20 May 1720).

³⁵ ‘List of catechisable persons (3rd Congregation Rosemary Street) and lists of communicants’ (PRONI, MIC1P/7/2).

³⁶ Joseph Alleine, *A most familiar explanation of the assemblies shorter catechism* (Belfast, 1700), p.v.

³⁷ Green, ‘The necessary knowledge’, pp 79-80.

³⁸ William Tisdall, *The conduct of the dissenters of Ireland* (Dublin, 1712), p.73.

³⁹ ‘Diary of William Jacque’, (NLI, MS 34,947), p.1.

information and consolation.’⁴⁰ Covenanting language and theology was infused throughout the communion practice of Presbyterians.

For Presbyterians there were two covenants, the first, the covenant of works was ‘that covenant which God made with our first parents; Adam and Eve, in the estate of innocence, wherein God promised perfect happiness to them, upon condition of their perfect obedience to him.’ When this covenant was broken by the disobedience of Adam and Eve, God instituted a second covenant with man, the covenant of grace, by which the elect could be saved. The ‘signs and seals’ of this new covenant were baptism and the Lord’s Supper.⁴¹ Not everyone could benefit from the new covenant, only those ‘to whom the Holy Spirit of God doth bless ... working in and by them on their hearts, as he doth on all God’s elect.’⁴² The doctrine of election, a cornerstone of Calvinist belief, could be seen clearly in the ritual of communions where communicants were delineated, often using physical boundaries, from those who did not receive the sacrament.⁴³ This doctrine was starkly articulated in the Westminster Confession;

By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life; and others foreordained to everlasting death... These angels and men, thus predestinated, and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished...

This was a difficult position to articulate in any society and especially in one where doctrinal boundaries could be fluid and interaction with the ‘reprobate’ a daily necessity. In many cases the reality of the doctrine, that there were a ‘certain and definite’ number that were destined to damnation, was not discussed at any length by the catechisms or devotional literature. The focus remained on the ‘communion of saints’ and it was assumed that those reading the literature could safely count themselves among those ‘men and angels’ predestined to everlasting life. Some ministers warned the saints not to make the signs of their election conspicuous. In Cork dissenters were told to avoid appearing as though they ‘think themselves too

⁴⁰ Bailey, ‘To my loving and dearly beloved friends, in and about Lymerick’, p.21.

⁴¹ *A sacramental catechism*, pp 9-17.

⁴² *Ibid*, p.18.

⁴³ See chapter 4.

good to communicate' and 'stand aloof off from all other Christians.'⁴⁴ This was necessary particularly where Presbyterians were a minority. However the theology of election could not but demand extraordinary conduct, preaching to the same congregation in Cork the minister bemoaned the lack of godliness among Christians. The 'uneven and unanswerable walking of professors, they that pretend themselves to more than ordinary strictness, and yet give themselves over to vanity' meant that 'no wonder persons [were] prejudiced against profession, when they see professors walk loosely.'⁴⁵ In Clonmel, Co. Tipperary the saints were urged to consider themselves as outsiders in the world, living 'among a people of a strange lip and language.'⁴⁶

It has been argued that Calvin articulated a 'lucid, persuasive, and accessible argument for holding together emphases others had considered incompatible' in his Eucharistic theology.⁴⁷ Calvin believed communion to be a spiritual partaking of Christ which was only efficacious to believers by virtue of their inner piety. He did not believe that the bread and wine were simply taken in memory of Christ, as his detractors often claimed, but that in the Eucharist the faithful received the 'virtue of true communication with [Christ], his life passes into us and becomes ours, just as bread when taken for food gives vigour to the body.'⁴⁸ This emphasis can readily be seen in Presbyterian literature. Thomas Hall, the minister of Larne, described the parallels between bread as food and bread as spiritual sustenance in the sacrament, 'bread and wine are means of life nourishment and refreshment to the body, so is there in Christ crucified and his benefits life-giving, soul-nourishing, and refreshing virtue.'⁴⁹ In a sacramental catechism printed in Limerick, contemplation on the bread-making process was used as a meditative device, communicants were reminded how bread resembled the body of Christ;

⁴⁴ Katherine P. Meyer, 'The last day I sate at this board...': Sermons recorded at Youghal, Bandon, and Mallow, 1676-1688' in Kevin Herlihy (ed.) *Propagating the word of Irish dissent, 1650-1800* (Dublin, 1998), pp 67-8.

⁴⁵ 'Book of sermons, Youghal', (NLI, MS 4201), p.63.

⁴⁶ 'Sermons preached at Clonmel, 1705-1707', (NLI, MS 1435, sermon preached on 11 September 1705)

⁴⁷ Christopher Elwood. *The body broken: the Calvinist doctrine of the Eucharist and the symbolization of power in sixteenth century France* (New York, 1999), p.72.

⁴⁸ *Institutes of Christian Religion* by Jean Calvin ed. Henry Beveridge, (Edinburgh, 1845), chapter xvii, Sec. 5.

⁴⁹ *A plain and easy explication of the assembly's shorter catechism; confirmed with plenty of Scripture-proofs. very useful to all, especially to those of weaker capacity. [B]y the Late Mr. Thomas Hall minister at Enver*, (Edinburgh, 1741), p.210.

As corn is prepared by grinding, moulding and baking, to make it bread for our bodies, so Christ was prepared, by exquisite sufferings, to be bread for our souls. As bread is the staff and strength of our natural life, so is Christ the staff, and strength of our spiritual life. As bread is but one body, tho' it be made up of many grains; so Christ mystical (that is the Church) is but one body, tho' made up of many members.⁵⁰

The members of this church were those elected by God. At the communion ceremony the pastoral and theological foundations of Presbyterian worship came together. The primacy of the Scriptures was displayed in the sermons and words of institution delivered before the sacrament. The election of the saints was displayed in the communicants themselves, who had proven their worthiness through recitation of the catechism. The communion of saints was proclaimed in the gathering together of the communicants at the table to receive the body and blood of Christ.

The catechetical needs of the laity were also served in non-textual ways. Preaching, a bedrock in the godly practice of religion, was the most common method by which the laity were informed about the sacrament.⁵¹ Sermons by Presbyterian ministers were not widely printed after the Restoration, with the exception of funeral sermons and those preached to the reformation societies in the 1690s and 1700s.⁵² In the eighteenth century printed sermons by Presbyterians were more common, especially in Dublin.⁵³ Extant manuscript sermons indicate that this lacunae was filled by the laity themselves, who recorded the words of their minister for their own reflection. In 1659, Joseph Eyres, who ministered to a congregation in Cork, encouraged the laity to 'write sermon notes, you that can; and you that cannot, learn to do it.' This practice he said 'prevents not only a sleeping eye, but a wandring eye.'⁵⁴ Some laity in Cork heeded his advice and there survives a volume of eighty eight sermons preached at various places in Cork in the late 1670s and 1680s, most of which were preached at the celebration of communion. In Clonmel, the sermons preached by

⁵⁰ *A sacramental catechism*, p.89.

⁵¹ For differences between Anglican and nonconformist preaching see Raymond Gillespie, 'The reformed preacher: Irish Protestant preaching, 1660-1700' in Alan J. Fletcher and Raymond Gillespie (eds) *Irish preaching 700-1700* (Dublin, 2001) pp 127-37.

⁵² Barnard, 'Reforming Irish manners' pp 805-838; Gillespie, 'The reformed preacher', p.137. For sermons see for example Joseph Boyse, *A sermon preach't before the societies for reformation in Dublin* (Dublin, 1698); Francis Iredell, *A sermon preached before the Societies for Reformation of Manners, in Dublin: April 22. 1701* (Dublin, 1701); Daniel Williams, *A sermon preach'd before the Societies for Reformation of Manners, in Dublin: July the 18th, 1700* (Dublin, 1700).

⁵³ A.W. Godfrey Brown, *The great Mr. Boyse* (Belfast, 1988), pp11-14.

⁵⁴ Joseph Eyres, *The church-sleeper awakened, or a discourse on Act. 20. 9. being the substance of two sermons composed and preached at Corke in Ireland* (London, 1659); Bailey, 'To my loving and dearly beloved friends, in and about Lymerick', p.32.

Rev. N. Card in the early eighteenth century were written down by a hearer in the congregation.⁵⁵ In the catechism of Joseph Alleine, printed in Belfast in 1700, a method of examination for readers included the advice to think over ‘the heads of the last sermon you heard.’⁵⁶ Preaching was fundamental to Presbyterian worship and ministers were expected to have good rhetorical ability. John Cook was passed over for the position of assistant minister at the Wood Street congregation in Dublin ‘because of the lowness of my voice’ despite being recommended by Joseph Boyse.⁵⁷ Robert Chambers considered that there was a great difference to hearers between ‘a lively voice and breathless lines, as much as between cold meat and hot.’⁵⁸

At communion the primacy of the word was demonstrated in the continuous programme of sermons in the lead up to the administration of the sacrament. The *Directory* did not specifically recommend that sermons were preached but advised that after warning for the communion was given the Sunday before its administration both ‘publique and private’ worship should be undertaken during the week. The public worship was to include ‘something concerning that ordinance, and the due preparation thereunto, and participation thereof ‘so that ‘all may come better prepared to that heavenly feast.’ A sermon was advised by the *Directory* the morning of the communion but during the sacramental occasion, the word was overtaken by the sacrament. It was perhaps only at communions that the godly were encouraged to find their sustenance in the visual which in other forms of worship was denied. At communions Presbyterians were to allow their minds to be fed by the drama of the communion ceremony. John Livingston, who ministered in Ulster and Scotland, told communicants at Carluke in 1659, that ‘looking upon these elements hath done more good than many sermons.’ Livingston, whose popularity saw his former parishioners in Ulster attend communions he held in Stranraer, encouraged his flock to envisage Christ in the sacrament: ‘Says the soul when the elders are coming with the flagons, Is Christ coming in a flagon? And shall I drink eternal life over in a cup? There is my body which was broken for you: Take ye, eat ye all of it.’ Finally Livingston married

⁵⁵ ‘Book of sermons, Youghal’, (NLI, MS 4201); Meyer, ‘The last day I sate at this board...’ pp 63-4; ‘Sermons preached at Clonmel, 1705-1707’ (NLI, MS 1435).

⁵⁶ Joseph Alleine, *A most familiar explanation of the Assemblies Shorter Catechism* (Belfast, 1700), p.132. For note-taking see Gillespie, ‘The reformed preacher’, pp140-1, 142.

⁵⁷ ‘Diary of John Cook, 1696-1705’, (PHSI), pp 26-7.

⁵⁸ For dissenting preaching as ‘drama’ see Gillespie, ‘The reformed preacher’, pp138-40.

the visual sacrament with the word ‘that the substance of the whole Bible is in these sacramental elements; the whole covenant, a whole Christ in a state of humiliation and exaltation.’⁵⁹ In a sermon preached at Youghal in 1681 the word and sacrament were again made coterminous:

The ordinance you art now upon, is Christ preaching to your eyes, you have heard him preached to your ears many a time, but he is now in this appointment of his speaking you your eyes, here is the flesh of the son of God broken, and the blood of the Son of God shed, here is the flesh that is meat indeed, and here is blood that is drink indeed, you have eaten and drunken in the presence of God often, has this bread been strength to you, and this wine refreshing, take heed my friends, what improvements you make of it.⁶⁰

Robert Craghead, the minister of Derry, explained in his devotional manual for communicants how sermons were the prelude to the sacrament: ‘preaching is to bring us near to Christ; but in the Lord’s Supper the believer directly acteth Communion with Christ.’⁶¹ One of the most popular godly manuals of the seventeenth century encouraged communicants to ‘lay aside all praying, reading, and all other cogitations’ at the moment of blessing and ‘settle thy meditations only upon those holy actions and rites, which according to Christ’s institution, are used in and about the holy sacrament.’ The visual dimension of the sacrament was appointed by God ‘to lift up our minds to the serious contemplation of his Heavenly Graces.’⁶² John Willison, whose catechisms and sacramental treatise became immensely popular in the early eighteenth century, described the sacrament as a ‘visible gospel’, instituted by God who ‘knows our stupidity and dullness, that we are much more affected with things that we see with our eyes, than that which we only hear.’ The traditional view that the godly ‘so aggrandized the preached Word that the sacramental actions paled in comparison’ has, as one commentator argued, neglected the fact that ‘faith in the unsurpassed power of the Eucharist was forever central to the revivalism of the evangelical Presbyterians.’⁶³

The intention of the minister was to make the occasion as spiritually intensive as possible. The *Directory* encouraged this in the administration of communion, the

⁵⁹ *A collection of lectures and sermons, preached upon several subjects, mostly in the time of the late persecution.* (Glasgow, 1779), pp 593-4.

⁶⁰ ‘Book of sermons, Youghal’, (NLI, MS 4201), p.48.

⁶¹ Robert Craghead, *Advice to communicants* (Edinburgh, 1695), sig.A.3r.

⁶² Lewis Bayly, *The practice of piety* (London, 1702), p.339.

⁶³ Schmidt, *Holy fairs*, p.69.

minister was to endeavour ‘to perform with suitable affectations answerable to such an holy action, and to stir up the like in the people.’ Joseph Boyse, minister to the congregation at Wood Street in Dublin, produced a volume of sacramental hymns in 1693 with a similar intention. The hymns were modest in their scope, being paraphrases of the psalms. They described ‘the great mystery of our Redemption by our incarnate and dying saviour’ and brought to mind ‘the inestimable benefits’ received from his sacrifice as well as the obligations that communicants owed in the service of God after the sacrament. The hymns were designed to ‘excite... all those pious affections which become the communicants at that holy table.’⁶⁴ In the preface Boyse was careful to associate the singing of hymns at the sacrament with the practice of the early church, and the singing of hymns during the communion service was a singular one amongst the other Christian denominations in Ireland. His book also addressed a practical concern in that other hymn books, specifically those of William Barton, were too large to furnish an entire congregation and not purposely designed for the sacrament but for various occasions.⁶⁵

Boyse’s text was short and could be easily carried to the sacrament by communicants. The compositions were not poeticised ‘for the things themselves shine the brightest in their own native simplicity’ and were approved by six other Presbyterian ministers who judged them ‘very useful and proper for the end by him intended.’ Boyse was minister at Wood-Street chapel, for whom he designed the hymns, but they were likely used among the other Presbyterian churches in Dublin.⁶⁶ At the end of the text Boyse provided an explanation of some of the words of the hymns ‘lest any unskilful reader be at a loss’.⁶⁷ The hymns emphasised the redeeming power of the sacrament: ‘To him who in his ardent love/Freely his precious blood has spilt/And in that sacred laver wash’d/Our souls from all their

⁶⁴ Joseph Boyse, *Sacramental hymns collected (chiefly) out of such passages of the New Testament as contain the most suitable matter of divine praises in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper* (Dublin, 1693), sig. A3v; Brown, *The great Mr. Boyse*, p.5.

⁶⁵ Boyse, *Sacramental hymns*, sig.A4r; William Barton’s *The Psalms of David in metre* was published in Ireland and set to music by Thomas Smith, a Dublin musician, in 1680, 1697 and 1706. Barton however claims that 1500 copies were ‘printed by stealth in England and carried over into Ireland’ Barton, *The Book of Psalms in metre* (London,1691), sig.A5r.

⁶⁶ Boyse, *Sacramental hymns*, preface; For a similar project by Isaac Watts, Independent minister at Southampton see Margaret Spufford, ‘The importance of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries’ in idem, *The world of rural dissenters, 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995), pp 94-5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p.63.

heinous guilt.’⁶⁸ They also emphasised the communion of saints: ‘For now no more as foreigners/Among the saints on earth we dwell/Excluded from the blessed rights/Of God’s peculiar Israel// Of fellow-citizens we have/The privilege and dignity/And are with glorious saints above/A part of God’s own family.’⁶⁹ Towards the end of the text hymns were evidently designed for the moments before reception: ‘With dainties of and heav’nly feast/Thou hast thy table richly spread/The banner of thy glorious love/Streaming in triumph o’er my head.’ At this table communicants sat ‘with ravishing delight’ to receive the ‘delicious fruits’ of the sacrament.⁷⁰

To an outside eye the doctrine that was espoused in these hymns, sermons and catechetical works seemed to imply a belief in a Real Presence. According to the Westminster confession, Christ was ‘really, but *spiritually*, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance’ who could ‘feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death.’ This spiritual feasting was often presented in graphic terms. In Youghal, communicants were told to ‘let your eyes be distinguishing between this and common bread, behold the body of your Lord broken, distinguish this wine from common wine, tis Blood shed, the blood of your dearest Lord shed on the cross, o do not rest in externals, taste Christ, feed, feed on him, let your souls faith be awakened, and stirred up.’⁷¹

Records of the preaching schedules for Ulster communions indicate that the week preceding the communion were tailored to reach a pinnacle of devotion by the time the administration was at hand on the Sunday. In Ramelton, Co. Donegal the communion recorded by the minister, Seth Drummond, in 1706 describes what was a typical Presbyterian communion during this period. On the Wednesday before the sacrament there was a day of fasting and humiliation. The sermons on James 4:9 (‘Be afflicted and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness’) and Job 2:12 (‘And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven’) reflected the sombre mood that befitted the congregation in their preparation for the sacrament.⁷² On the

⁶⁸ Ibid, p.14.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p.17.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.45.

⁷¹ ‘Book of sermons, Youghal (NLI, MS 4201, p.49).

⁷² ‘Sermon notebook of Seth Dummond, 1705-1707’ (PRONI, MIC 1P/455/1).

Saturday, there were further sermons which covered themes of penitence and the supremacy of the law of God.⁷³ On the morning of the communion Drummond preached on Canticles 3:11 with its prefiguration of Christ's coming.⁷⁴ In Burt, Co. Donegal, a communion in 1681 followed a similar pattern with penitential sermons on the 'day of humiliation' ('Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us'). On Saturday the scripture chosen put before the communicants the saving benefits of the sacrament ('but whoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life') and on the morning of the communion the minister preached on the words of institution from 1 Corinthians 11.23. After the administration of the communion the sermons, in line with the instructions of the *Directory* to exhort the people to 'walk worthy' of the sacrament, were advised as to their future conduct ('So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him').⁷⁵ Despite the plain setting for communion, the sermons had a visceral quality, a trait that could also be found in devotional materials.

As in the Church of Ireland, manuals for preparation before communion formed an important corpus within Presbyterian religious literature. These comprised both imported works but also texts produced by Presbyterian clergy ministering in Ireland. By the time a printing press was operating in Belfast, treatises on communion were among the first to be circulated. In 1700 Patrick Neill was selling Daniel Campbell's *Sacramental Meditations on the sufferings and death of Christ* and Thomas Doolittle's *Treatise concerning the Lord's Supper*. Campbell was a Scottish minister whose *Meditations* went through at least five editions between 1692 and 1740 and were based on sermons he preached in Gaelic to his congregation in Glassery, Argyll.⁷⁶ In 1714 James Blow printed a Belfast edition of the work and the meditations were still being sold in the city in 1746.⁷⁷ Thomas Doolittle was an

⁷³ Sermons were based on Prov. 28.13 ('He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy') and James 1.25 ('But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.')

⁷⁴ 'Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and the day of gladness of his heart.'

⁷⁵ Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy*, pp 20-21.

⁷⁶ Alexander du Toit, 'Donald Campbell', *ODNB*.

⁷⁷ See final advertisement leaves in Edward Pearse, *The great concern; or A serious warning to a timely and thorough preparation for death; with helps and directions in order thereunto* (Belfast,

English Presbyterian who, influenced by listening to the preaching of Richard Baxter as a young man, went on to found the ‘leading Presbyterian academy in London’. His treatise on the Lord’s Supper went through numerous editions which appealed to both English and Scottish Presbyterians, with twenty seven editions of the work printed in England and twenty two printed in Scotland.⁷⁸

Devotional works on the sacrament were, like their Anglican counterparts, designed to prepare communicants to worthily receive the sacrament. The scriptural warning that ‘he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself’ was enshrined in the *Westminster Directory* and loomed large in the godly conscious. Like the ‘notorious evil liver’ excluded by the Book of Common Prayer, the *Directory* forbade the ‘ignorant and scandalous’ from receiving the sacrament. As in the Church of Ireland, Presbyterians excluded infants and ‘distracted persons’ from receiving communion.⁷⁹ Communion tokens which were used by Presbyterians in Ulster created a physical impediment to the unworthy, as tokens were only issued to those who had been examined by the minister or elders. As we shall see in the next chapter, the laity could both circumvent and manipulate the token system for their own ends. The purpose of the communion token was as a tangible mark of election and worthiness to receive. Like the language of the covenant, tokens were extended into the theological discourse of Presbyterian literature. Communicants were encouraged in catechisms to ‘press always for a token of Christ’s love at his table’ and that the ordinance was ‘a love feast and a love-token between Christ, and his Church.’⁸⁰ The *Directory*, catechisms and devotional texts were more concerned with the ‘ignorant’ than the scandalous. The *Shorter catechism* required communicants to ‘examine themselves, of their knowledge to discern the Lord’s body, of their faith to feed upon him.’ Of the seven ‘graces’ needed for the worthy reception of the sacrament in a catechism printed in Limerick, knowledge was the most important.⁸¹ After receiving communion with a Presbyterian congregation in

1770) and John Taylor, *The scripture-doctrine of original sin proposed to free and candid examination* (Belfast, 1746).

⁷⁸ J. William Black, ‘Thomas Doolittle’ *ODNB*; Schmidt, *Holy fairs*, p.46.

⁷⁹ Thomas Doolittle, *A treatise concerning the Lord’s Supper* (Glasgow, 1700), p.11.

⁸⁰ Willison, *A sacramental catechism*, p.ix; *A sacramental catechism*, p.54; Bayly, *The practice of piety*, p.338.

⁸¹ *A sacramental catechism*, p.39. This followed closely the *Shorter catechism* which, after knowledge, required ‘repentance, love, and new obedience’.

Dublin for the first time, James Barry testified to his 'soul's great comfort and edification in the knowledge of Christ.'⁸²

The degree of knowledge required was not only literal but needed to be deep and well-formed. Thomas Hall, expanding on the *Shorter catechism* saw this as 'a spiritual or saving knowledge, which is a work of inward revelation of the spirit.'⁸³

John Willison entreated young communicants to 'beware of contenting themselves with a literal knowledge.... but O press and pray hard for the inward teachings of God's Spirit, that light in your hearts may be joined with heat in your hearts.'⁸⁴

While catechesis may have informed the young, the acquisition of knowledge was an individual obligation. The examination of conscience was deeply personal. It was 'not such a forced self-examination as is sometimes made by the preaching of the Word or sometimes by affliction but voluntary self-examination, wherein we pose our own hearts with certain questions, and put our hearts to make plain answer.'⁸⁵

Presbyterians, with their depreciation of clerical power and focus on inner piety, faced a difficult prospect of reconciling the clear scriptural warning against unworthy reception with the covenanted requirement that the saints received the sacrament as a 'sign and seal' of their election. The difficulties of overcoming the 'unaided Protestant conscience' was partially resolved in the Church of Ireland through quasi-liturgical forms of confession and exhortations to consult the ghostly counsel of a minister. Auricular confession in the Church of Ireland, though never officially sanctioned, was hinted at. For Presbyterians a ritual of confession was unthinkable. Joseph Boyse wrote against auricular confession calling it 'an intolerable yoke' upon the laity. The tradition in the reformed churches was of 'secret repentance which is transacted in the court of every man's conscience'. This private repentance was suitable for 'personal injuries and wrongs done to others.' When the sin was public 'wherby a man brings reproach on his Christian profession' the 'contagious influence of his evil example' should be repented of in public 'not secretly to the priest, but openly in the face of the church.' For those who could not resolve their own scruples a minister or 'any other judicious Christian' could be

⁸² Barry, *A reviving cordial*, p.73.

⁸³ Hall, *A plain and easy explication of the assembly's shorter catechism*, p.214.

⁸⁴ Willison, *A sacramental catechism*, pp vii-viii.

⁸⁵ Hall, *A plain and easy explanation of the assemblies shorter catechism*, p.213.

consulted.⁸⁶ Presbyterian communities overcame the loss of auricular confession by instituting a more public ritual of confession through the operations of the session. Rather than confess sins to a priest, penitents had to publicly admit and denounce their transgressions in front of their fellow saints. This public dimension was important for purifying the community and for the re-admission of the fallen into the communion of the elect. Breaches of charity were seen as particularly damaging to this communion but personal sins were also publicly atoned in many communities. The practice had scriptural origins and bore resemblance to pre-scholastic practices of public confession.⁸⁷ Boyse referred to these ancient practices which could be seen in the public penance directed by Presbyterian sessions. Penitents in the primitive church ‘were wont to stand at the Church-doors, in a garb and posture and carriage that might express their just shame and humiliation, begging the prayers of the faithful, and earnestly soliciting to be admitted to the Church's communion.’⁸⁸

When sins were private, self-examination was encouraged. Joseph Alleine provided communicants with a form of examination of conscience in his catechism that was printed in Belfast in 1700. This comprised a series of questions divided into six subjects including duties that had been neglected and sins that had been committed. Some catechisms advised the reading of spiritual manuals, particularly those that had a practical arrangement. Alleine recommended *The practice of piety* by Lewis Bayly which was printed in Dublin in 1701 and appeared on Belfast booksellers lists. The text was a favourite among Protestants of various dispositions.⁸⁹ The work, a godly equivalent to Allestree's *The whole duty of man*, had a substantial method of preparation for communion. After examining themselves against the Ten Commandments communicants should,

retire to some secret place and there putting thy self in the sight of the judge, as a guilty malefactor standing at the bar to receive his sentence, bowing thy knees to the earth, smiting thy breast with thy fists, and bedewing thy cheeks with thy tears, confess thy sins and humbly ask him mercy and forgiveness⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Joseph Boyse, *The works of the reverend and learned Mr. Joseph Boyse, of Dublin* (2 vols, London, 1728), ii, pp 391,395.

⁸⁷ John Bossy, ‘The social history of confession in the age of Reformation’ in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth series, xxv (1975), pp 22-4.

⁸⁸ Boyse, *Works*, ii, p.392.

⁸⁹ Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, pp142-3.

⁹⁰ Bayly, *The practice of piety*, p.325.

There followed a formula for the confession of sins which comprised exclamations of penitence for transgressions of the Ten Commandments. Before communion was distributed communicants were to consider their unworthiness. This was demonstrated using biblical examples such as John the Baptist who felt unworthy to bear Christ's shoes even though he was 'the holiest man that was born of a woman.' Bearing in mind the hesitancy of John the Baptist communicants were urged to consider 'how unworthy is such a prophane wretch, as thou art, to eat his Holy-flesh, and to drink his precious blood?'.⁹¹

Right up until the moment of reception the laity were warned of the repercussions of receiving unworthily. The *Directory* forbade those 'ignorant, scandalous, profane, or that live in any sin or offence against their knowledge or conscience that they presume not to come to that holy table.' Robert Craghead, minister of Derry, published a devotional text for communicants in 1695. The work was inspired by Craghead's pastoral ministry where he 'had occasion to converse with many in soul-distress.'⁹² The danger of unworthy reception led him to include a lengthy section on self-examination in the text. In ten chapters he outlined the key elements for a worthy participation.⁹³ Fundamental to preparation for receiving the sacrament was a belief that the communicant received an understanding of what the sacrament signified. Craghead also provided answers for the most common objections among communicants, among which were fears of unworthiness, fears of being forsaken at the communion, fears over sinful thoughts and fears that they were not a member of the elect. Craghead gave his most lengthy advice to those that feared that they had blasphemous thoughts, perhaps an indication that this was a common obstruction to receiving the sacrament.⁹⁴ Craghead also provided meditations for the communicant to use during the ritual. At the breaking of the bread 'thou art to meditate on Christ crucified, his blessed broken body and bleeding wounds, and so to behold him as in exquisite pain, crying out of being forsaken...'⁹⁵

Preachers could expand on this theme more graphically. In Carluke John Livingston warned communicants that God 'may kill or save alive as it pleaseth him. Yea, it

⁹¹ Ibid, p.337.

⁹² Craghead, *Advice to communicants*, sig.A.1.r.

⁹³ Ibid, sig.A3.r., pp 5-6.

⁹⁴ Ibid, pp 105-132.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p.84.

may be, there are more that get a dead stroke at communions than at any other time or place.’⁹⁶ A covenanting preacher warned communicants in Ulster in the late seventeenth century to ‘have a care what ye are doing and make use of this communion for it will be among the last that ye shall get in this place before the judgments come on: many a time have you banqueted upon the blood of the son of God by your abusing of your communion tables and so you are more guilty than the people of Scotland that have shed the blood of the saints.’⁹⁷ In Bandon, Co. Cork communicants were admonished to ‘purge out every filthiness from among you, come not to the Lord’s Table with that which may cause his stomach to rise against you, and smell a stink in your souls.... O be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.’⁹⁸ Thomas Hall considered unworthy reception ‘a sin of such a hainous nature, that it is no less than a partaking with their sin, who crucified Christ, and makes the unworthy comer guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.’⁹⁹

The effects of such emphatic preaching often caused considerable spiritual distress for the laity. Some devotional manuals attempted to obviate this distress by providing a progressive meditative program. The *Practice of piety* outlined detailed spiritual reflections at each stage of the sacrament from the consecration to the departure from the church. Like the sermons, mental imagery was encouraged in graphic terms. As communicants ate the bread they were directed to ‘imagine that thou seest Christ hanging upon the Cross, and by his unspeakable torments, fully satisfying God's justice for thy sins.’ When they felt the sacramental wine ‘warming thy could [sic] stomach: so endeavour to feel the Holy Ghost cherishing thy soul in the joyful assurance of the forgiveness of all thy sins, by the merit of the blood of Christ.’ At the moment of drinking, communicants were to meditate on Christ crucified, ‘his blood running down his blessed side out of that ghastly wound, which the spear made in his innocent heart: wishing thy mouth closed to his side that thou mightest receive that precious Blood before it fell to the dusty earth.’¹⁰⁰ This intensive mental stimulation was an important aspect of the ‘spiritual eating’ but such evocative language could lead to excess amongst the laity. When this happened, as it

⁹⁶ *A collection of lectures and sermons, preached upon several subjects, mostly in the time of the late persecution.* (Glasgow, 1779), p.590.

⁹⁷ ‘Covenanting sermons’, (Edinburgh University Library, LA II.27.1, ff.89)

⁹⁸ ‘Book of sermons, Youghal’, (NLI, MS 4201), p.4.

⁹⁹ Hall, *A plain and easy explanation of the assemblies shorter catechism*, p.217.

¹⁰⁰ Bayly, *The practice of piety*, pp 345-47.

did at the early revival communions in Ulster during the 1620s, the clergy sought to curb such ‘extasies and enthusiasms’ which brought ridicule upon the sacramental occasions.¹⁰¹

Some devotional texts used more allegorical methods by proposing a practical resolution to scruples. Thomas Doolittle, in his *Treatise concerning the Lord’s Supper* set out three dialogues, the first between a minister and a communicant who desired to receive the sacrament, the second between a weak believer and a strong believer and a third between a believer who had assurance and another that was ‘under doubtings of the love of God.’¹⁰² In this way various common obstructions to receiving the sacrament could be resolved. It is worth comparing this approach to that put forward in Edward Synge’s *Answer to all the excuses and pretences*. While Synge could see both temporal and spiritual reasons for the reluctance of the laity to attend communion, Doolittle’s tract was wholly concerned with spiritual misgivings. Synge included in his discourse those who were dissatisfied with the method of administration of communion, specifically it would seem, with dissenters who objected to a kneeling posture and the administration of communion to a ‘mixt congregation without a strict enquiry into the qualifications of all those who are admitted to it.’¹⁰³ Doolittle was concerned to assure believers that their scruples could be resolved by contemplating their election and there was no consideration of addressing a broader audience of believers.

Left to their own devices, the resolution to receive the sacrament lay in the ability of the laity to recognise the signs of their own election. These signs could be physically manifested to them through, for example, a preservation of their life or a continuance of good fortune. In order to aid the searching for the signs of election, the godly were encouraged to record the manifestations of God’s favour to them. Thus was born the ‘puritan diary’, a chronicle of God’s pleasure, or displeasure, with his communion of saints. Divine assurance was monitored at both a personal and a communal level. The practice of calling fasts among congregations for anything from inclement

¹⁰¹ John Livingston, *A brief historical relation of the life of Mr. John Livingston* (Edinburgh [?], 1727), p.13; W.D. Killen (ed.) *A true narrative of the rise and progress of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (1623-1670) by the Rev. Patrick Adair* (Belfast, 1866), p.317; *Cal.S.P.Ire, 1625-32*, pp 629, 662.

¹⁰² Doolittle, *A treatise concerning the Lord’s Supper*, sig.A3r.

¹⁰³ Edward Synge, *An answer to all the excuses and pretences that men ordinarily make for their not coming to the Holy Communion* (9th edn, London, 1709), p.35.

weather to moments of political danger testified to a sense of communal responsibility.¹⁰⁴ Group fasting was also a common characteristic in the lead-up to communions. Fasting cleansed the community as a whole from their sins against God. When the congregation of Carnmoney, Co. Antrim were beset by demonic influences they proclaimed a fast and suspended their communion ‘until the confusion should fall a little’.¹⁰⁵ Signs of communal election were sought out at the communions themselves. In Carnmoney the session book recorded that ‘much of God’s presence [was] seen at the work’ at a sacrament in 1698. A minister writing to brethren in Scotland observed how palpable the presence of God was at a communion in the late 1670s.¹⁰⁶ Providence was also a factor in scheduling communions, in Connor a communion was scheduled in 1715 ‘if nothing extraordinary in God’s providence’ prevented it. At a communion the previous year the session recorded that God had ‘favoured his works very remarkably.’¹⁰⁷ At prayers in 1715 the session noted ‘seriousnesses and sincerity.... intermixed with Christian conference both as to public occurrences in God’s providence and particular cases of persons.’ The session, keeping an eye on both communal worship and individual members was perhaps searching for signs of what had been more clearly demonstrated in the ‘extasies and enthusiasms’ of the communion occasions of the early settlers.

Personal assurance could also be found in the happenings of one’s own life and seeking it out was encouraged by the clergy. John McKenzie, in sermons preached in 1681, told his hearers that the certainty and assurance of their calling and election ‘is not only possible in itself but obtainable.’ In order to answer ‘all fears and doubts’ the saints should ‘keep a record of all God’s by past kindnesses’ to them.¹⁰⁸ The purpose of keeping a spiritual diary was twofold. The first was that it enabled the author to search for ‘marks of election’ in their own lives in the context of a predestinarian outlook. The second was their usefulness in preparing for communion. It has been suggested that these diaries found their origins in an older Catholic

¹⁰⁴ Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy*, pp 23-4, 238.

¹⁰⁵ St. John Seymour, *Irish witchcraft and demonology* (Dublin, 1913), pp159-60.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Connor Session Minutes’ (PHSI, 8 October 1714); NLS, Wodrow Fol. XXVI, no.132.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Carmoney session book’, (PRONI, MIC/1P/37/4, 26 June 1698); ‘Connor session minutes’ (PHSI, 8 October 1714, 2 October 1715).

¹⁰⁸ ‘Sermons of John McKenzie, 1681’ (PHSI); R.L. Greaves, *God’s other children: Protestant nonconformists and the emergence of denominational churches in Ireland, 1660-1700* (Stanford, 1997), pp 216-8.

tradition and certainly St. Augustine's *Confessions* could be found in godly libraries. Robert Blair, who ministered in Bangor. Co. Down after the introduction of the Articles of Perth in 1618, related that reading the *Confessions* caused him to 'set to work to ponder the paths of my youth.'¹⁰⁹ The text was listed for sale in Belfast in the 1740s.¹¹⁰ Providential account-keeping was not only observed among the godly and could be seen in each denomination as they sought to see in the natural world signs that it was their confession that had Divine approval.¹¹¹ The difference in the case of the Presbyterians was that they proclaimed and believed that *only* they would be saved by God. In this context communion ceremonies became much more potent displays of the doctrines of election and assurance.

Synonymous with the spiritual diaries kept by the godly, was the notion that the elect were on a spiritual pilgrimage towards their salvation. John Bunyan's *The pilgrim's progress*, one of the most popular books of the seventeenth century was sold in Belfast in 1700 together with his *Signs from hell: or the groans of a damned soul*. An allegorical text, the popularity of *The pilgrim's progress* testifies to its important message among the godly, themselves treading along an intensely personal soul pilgrimage.¹¹² In the communions the life-long pilgrimage of the saints was condensed into a week-long mental and often physical journey, at which the endpoint was Christ and an assertion of one's place in a wider community of saints. While pilgrimage has generally been seen as a process in which an individual undertakes a physical journey in order to achieve a spiritual goal, recent anthropological models have encouraged a broader understanding of the notion of pilgrimage as not being necessarily tied to a geographical expedition. Victor Turner has described four pilgrimage types based on a chronological classification of Christian pilgrim traditions.¹¹³ His analysis focuses on the interconnectivity of the geographical and spiritual journeys undertaken by people. His typology has been modified by others who consider that pilgrimages do not always necessitate a

¹⁰⁹ *The life of Robert Blair* ed. Thomas McCrie (Edinburgh, 1848), p.6.

¹¹⁰ Tom Webster, 'Writing to Redundancy: approaches to spiritual journals and early modern spirituality' *The Historical Journal*, xxxix, No.1 (1996) pp 44-5. 'Diary of James Trail' (PRONI D1460/1). See the final advertisement leaves in John Taylor, *The scripture-doctrine of original sin proposed to free and candid examination* (Belfast, 1746).

¹¹¹ For a full exploration of this see Gillespie, *Devoted people*, Chapter 3.

¹¹² For sacramental allegory in the text see Spufford, 'The importance of religion', pp 93-4.

¹¹³ Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and pilgrimage in Christian culture: anthropological perspectives* (Oxford, 1978). For Turner's methodology see Chapter 1.

physical movement from one place to another. This type of model attempts a classification that exceeds the boundaries of Christian pilgrimage and they tend to focus on the pilgrim, his motivations and journey, rather than the pilgrim route and destination.¹¹⁴ While the broader classification system is useful in that it expands the more historical analysis of Turner, the model of Christian pilgrimage as portrayed by Turner can be considered in the context of Presbyterian communions. For a group which ostensibly rejected external forms of piety, the features of pilgrimage as elucidated by Turner are surprisingly adaptable to the sacraments of Presbyterians.

While the tradition of Christians being on a continuous spiritual pilgrimage towards heaven was an ancient one, the soteriological beliefs of Presbyterians imparted a self-conscious adoption of this spiritual journeying. The doctrine of election meant that their lives were sanctified and thus the custom of seeking signs of their own assurance led them to analyse more closely their spiritual progress along what they saw was a predetermined route. Preaching the funeral sermon of Arthur Upton in 1706, James Kirkpatrick, the minister of Templepatrick, alluded to the vagaries of the Christians' journey, which was 'checker'd with alternate turns of joys and sorrows, comforts and crosses of diverse sorts; and who alone are priviledg'd with an eternal abode in Immanuel's land, when they conclude their pilgrim-state.'¹¹⁵ In Clonmel the transient nature of the life of the Christian was expounded in a sermon on Hebrews 11.13; 'real saints count themselves to be but strangers and pilgrims on the earth and should therefore behave and demean themselves accordingly.'¹¹⁶ John Livingston told communicants at Carluke that 'the Christian should be like an old pilgrim with his gown and staff.'¹¹⁷

Turner's pilgrimage classifications of prototypical, archaic, medieval and modern all come with specific manifestations and locations.¹¹⁸ Alan Morinis has suggested a two-part model which allows a comparative analysis of different types of pilgrimages.¹¹⁹ The first, 'formal' system has a rigid, highly symbolic structure which emphasizes the moral purpose of the pilgrimage and which enforces a

¹¹⁴ Alan Morinis (ed.), *Sacred journeys: the anthropology of pilgrimage* (Westport, 1992), p.10.

¹¹⁵ James Fitzpatrick, *The saint's life and death* (Belfast, 1706), p.1.

¹¹⁶ 'Sermons preached at Clonmel, 1705-1707' (NLI, MS 1435, sermon preached on 11 September 1705).

¹¹⁷ *A collection of lectures and sermons, preached upon several subjects, mostly in the time of the late persecution.* (Glasgow, 1779), p.601.

¹¹⁸ Turner, *Image and pilgrimage*, pp18-9.

¹¹⁹ Morinis, *Sacred journeys*, pp10-14.

restricted behavioural code. In the second, informal system, pilgrims experience a more flexible format with few symbolic features, which emphasises the personal nature of the pilgrimage and allows pilgrims greater freedom in their behavioural expressions.¹²⁰

Presbyterian communions would seem to fit somewhere in between the two schemes, and over time they moved away from the informal structure to a more prescribed model. It is apparent that informal models would be transient in nature especially when an open behavioural code leaves the pilgrimage open to wide divergences of practices. In America the sacraments of Scottish settlers were often stigmatized and ridiculed because of the intense bodily convulsions of some communicants. This tendency, although less documented in the Irish context, appears to have surfaced in the revivals of early seventeenth century Ulster.¹²¹ While generally considered a manifestation of the acute and difficult environments in which newly settled people found themselves, the behaviour is also characteristic of this informal model of pilgrimage proposed by Morinis.¹²² This informality had much to do with the large numbers of communicants and the lack of a formal ecclesiastical structure at the time. As Presbyterianism gained a more solid structure by the late seventeenth century, we can see the communions becoming more formal. While never fully embracing a strict symbolic system they did become standardised and regulated by the increasingly consolidated system of church government. Elements of the informal remained, especially in relation to the personal and direct experience of the pilgrims, or communicants.

Presbyterians in Ulster often travelled to attend communions outside their own congregations. This had been a feature of the communions of the early settlers when ministers were few. Later in the century the practice continued, often as a result of persecution of the authorities when the gatherings were viewed with suspicion. The travelling to communions was therefore both a geographical and spiritual pilgrimage. The devotional tracts and sermons that they were exposed to all encouraged this rhythm of 'pilgrimatic' piety.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p.15.

¹²¹ Bailie, *The six mile water revival*, pp17-18.

¹²² Leigh Eric Schmidt's *Holy fairs* was an attempt to counter the historiographical trend that had decided that the Eucharistic practices of early American settlers were a reaction to frontier conditions and a newly settled population. See the preface to the second edition, pp xi-xxviii.

The extended period of communions were designed, like a traditional pilgrimage, to build in intensity until the communicants reached their destination which was communion with God and their fellow spiritual companions. Similarly the timing of the communions, usually held in summer and autumn, created seasonal 'high' times of the year. The lack of calendrical touchstones in the Presbyterian church left it in need of an anchor with which to secure a pattern of lay devotion which could replace Easter and Holy Week. Indeed the laity themselves appeared to respond to the rhythms of the sacramental periods. Sins confessed to the session were often dated by their proximity to the communions. In Templepatrick, a woman cited for fornication in January confessed it 'was committed a little before the communion of Killaid which was about the tenth of July'.¹²³ The sacramental journey began when the communicant made an individual preparation for receiving the Eucharist. At this stage the pilgrimage was an internal one and was not a shared communal phenomenon. However in its external form the fact that Presbyterians travelled from far-off distances to the congregation that was hosting the sacrament must have fostered a unity between fellow travellers. In the communions introduced to America by Scots and Ulster settlers, the travelling to the communion was a time of communal solidarity where those on the road sang and prayed together.¹²⁴ Ulster Scots who travelled back to their homeland to attend communions in the seventeenth century, often in large groups, must have experienced something of this pilgrim experience.¹²⁵

The pilgrim who set out to visit holy places often traversed long distances in the hope of achieving some spiritual objective. For Catholics it was a 'good work' in itself but pilgrims in general hoped for a change of some kind to occur when the pilgrimage was completed. This could be a change to the individual in terms of his own spiritual development. Many pilgrims expected that by freeing themselves from normal social pressures and temptations and immersing themselves in the journey it would result in their re-joining their own communities in a better spiritual condition than when they left it. Others had more worldly considerations and among medieval pilgrims there was a concrete sense that pilgrimages were undertaken as quests for

¹²³ 'Templepatrick Session Book', (PRONI, CR4/12/B/1, 31 January 1711).

¹²⁴ Schmidt, *Holy fairs*, p.95.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, pp 30-1.

propitiation or divine intercession.¹²⁶ However in each of these motivations there was still the same movement from an individual to the communal event. Communal celebration at the end of the pilgrimage, as well as the pilgrims re-joining of his own community, signal the re-integration of the pilgrim after a period of private contemplation. For Ulster Presbyterians the process was markedly similar and the fact that communions did not occur all year round was an important feature that confined periods of communal re-generation to summer and autumn.

The Presbyterian sacrament was a bubbling to the surface of an internal piety that was in all other respects highly personal. The sacrament was an intense spiritual occasion and was underpinned by the doctrinal touchstones of Calvinism. The belief that Christ was spiritually offered to the communicants meant that it needed to be protected from profanation and that those who received had the 'knowledge to discern the Lord's body'. If this knowledge was complete, admission to the communion was granted. At the communion, Presbyterians were exposed to visual stimuli which were absent in ordinary worship. Preaching, long considered the hallmark of godly worship, facilitated this call to 'see Christ.' The path to the sacrament was arduous, with communicants not only required to demonstrate their knowledge of the catechisms to their ministers, but also called to find assurance within themselves. For some this resulted in an external expression and spiritual writing became a means of seeking out the signs of their election. The sacrament became a seal of their election although assurance, as we shall see, could be fleeting. The journeying to communions facilitated a sense of communal election which was supplemented by the fasting and praying held in the lead-up to the sacrament. The sacraments of Presbyterians were therefore expressions of personal and communal salvation, a 'visible gospel' and a source of concern to outsiders. The introduction of the sacramental test in 1704 was an attempt to strike at the lifeblood of Presbyterian worship. By then the sacrament had become central to the religious and political identity of the 'people of God.'

¹²⁶ Eamon Duffy, *The stripping of the altars: traditional religion in England 1400-1580* (2nd edn. New Haven, 2005), pp193-4; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic: studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England* (Harmondsworth, 1991), p.28.

Chapter Four

Eucharistic practices among Presbyterians, 1660-1740

This chapter explores the reaction of the Presbyterian laity to the ‘visible gospel’ of the sacrament. As a symbol of social cohesion, the Presbyterian Eucharist could only be celebrated when the community was at peace. Such peace could be fleeting in an atmosphere of persecution, or disrupted when social bonds had broken down within the community. In these situations the sacrament became a litmus test for the resilience of the Presbyterian community in the face of a hostile establishment, and at the same time a barometer of the social unity of the community itself. This chapter will examine Presbyterian Eucharistic practices at a communal and individual level. It will argue that the influence of the early ‘festal’ tradition would be lasting and was a key component of Presbyterian identity. In their often dramatic expressions of Eucharistic piety, early modern Presbyterians came, as one commentator has observed, to recover ‘much of the Eucharistic festivity of late medieval Catholicism.’¹ This festivity was heightened by the infrequent reception of communion and the large crowds that attended the sacraments. The chapter will also explore the ways in which individuals engaged with the sacrament and demonstrate how the doctrine of election could be both an aid and a hindrance to lay participation.

In 1625 the settler population of the Six Mile Water Valley, in Co. Antrim underwent a period of religious revival and evangelisation. These early settlers had been bereft of spiritual leadership for some time and much has been made of their moral laxity. Andrew Stewart, whose father had been one of the first ministers to arrive in Ulster, described them in the following terms:

...from Scotland came many and from England not a few, yet all of them generally the scum of both nations, who, for debt, or breaking and fleeing from justice, or seeking shelter, came

¹ Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Holy fairs: Scotland and the making of American Revivalism* (2nd edn., Grand Rapids, 2001), p.20.

hither, hoping to be without fear of man's justice in a land where there was nothing, or but little, as yet, of the fear of God...²

Patrick Adair, the seventeenth-century historian and Presbyterian minister, commented that 'the case of the people through all that part of the country was most lamentable, they being drowned in ignorance, security and sensuality.'³ When pastors arrived to minister to these wayward people, the settlers welcomed them with enthusiasm, resulting in a period of religious regeneration. The revival, which took place in the late 1620s and early 1630s, became the foundation of Presbyterian sacramental practice in Ulster. Many of the ministers involved in the revival had come to Ireland after the introduction of the Articles of Perth in 1618, unable to reconcile their consciences with the directives of these articles, among them the requirement to receive communion in a kneeling posture. The early sacraments of the revival were large events, often involving thousands of people, who came to listen to the preaching before receiving communion. The crowds were often so large that sermons were delivered in the outdoors, a practice that continued throughout the seventeenth century.⁴ Some were undoubtedly attracted to the convivial atmosphere and the secular attractions offered by such a large convergence of people. The tradition of these early communions shaped the character of Presbyterian sacraments in Ulster for the remainder of the seventeenth century. Large crowds, week-long celebrations, extensive preparatory work in the form of sermons and prayers and a 'festal' atmosphere had all been part of the experience of the Six Mile Water revival.

The religious fervour created by the mass communions provided a basis for Presbyterian worship, however not all elements of the revival sacraments could be retained. Concerns were raised by outsiders over the excessive somatic displays at some of the meetings. Henry Leslie, the dean of Down, saw evidence of fanaticism;

The people in that place are grown into such frenzies that the like is not to be found amongst Anabaptists, for there is set abroad a new piece of divinity that no man can be converted unless he feel the pains of his new birth such as St. Paul felt. So that every sermon, 40 or so people,

² W.D. Killen (ed.) *A true narrative of the rise and progress of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (1623-1670) by the Rev. Patrick Adair* (Belfast, 1866), p. 313.

³ Adair, *Narrative*, p.9.

⁴ W.D. Bailie, *The Six mile water revival* (Belfast, 1976), pp13-4; 'Lisburn session minutes' (PRONI, MIC/1P/159/6-10, 28 June 1691).

for most part women, fall down in a trance, and (are as is supposed) senseless, but in their fits they are grievously afflicted with convulsions, tremblings, unnatural emotions...⁵

The bishop of the diocese, Robert Echlin, was more dismissive of the phenomenon telling the lord justices in 1632 that the ‘raptures’ that had been reported among Presbyterians were ‘only a case of a few women, who were so impressed by the gloomy character of a sermon which they heard that they fell to sighing, sobbing, or weeping over their sins.’ The ‘nuisance’, he said, was abating.⁶ The reports of emotional reactions at the meetings were confirmed by the ministers who presided at them. Andrew Stewart, who was the minister of Donaghdee in Co Down between 1645 and 1671, recalled the communion events he had witnessed as a child during the revival: ‘I have seen them myself stricken, and swoon with the Word- yea, a dozen in one day carried out of doors as dead, so marvellous was the power of God smiting their hearts for sin...’⁷

John Livingston, minister at Killinchy, Co. Down, observed similar outpourings of spirit; ‘there were indeed in some parishes...some people who used in time of sermons to fall upon an high breathing and panting, as those do, who have run long...’⁸ The evocative preaching was crucial to the revival’s success and as we have seen, spirited sermons remained an integral part of Presbyterian sacramental practice. Robert Blair, whose autobiography provides details on the beginnings of Presbyterianism in Ulster, noted the rhetorical abilities of many of the ministers. Blair’s own style was both ‘thundering and comfortable’, other ministers were described as having a ‘vehement delivery’ and an ‘extraordinary awakening and rousing gift’.⁹ It appears from the reactions of the ‘stricken and swooning’ laity that the sermons were effective, although not in the way that all ministers hoped. Blair was suspicious of the emotional displays and saw in them a diabolical origin rather than the ‘marvellous power of God’ that was observed by Andrew Stewart.¹⁰

⁵ *Cal. S. P. Ire, 1625-32*, p.629.

⁶ *Ibid*, p.662

⁷ Andrew Stewart, ‘History of the Church of Ireland after the Scots were naturalized’ in W.D. Killen (ed.) *A true narrative of the rise and progress of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (1623-1670) by the Rev. Patrick Adair* (Belfast, 1866) p.317.

⁸ W.K. Tweedie, *Select biographies* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1845), i, p.146.

⁹ Bailie, *The Six Mile Water revival*, pp 4-7.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp17-18.

Although the attitude of some conformist clergy to the revival was hostile, the contemporary climate was favourable to the project. James Ussher, who became the archbishop of Armagh in 1625, was known to favour the godly faction of Protestantism. These sympathies facilitated the ministry of godly pastors operating in Ulster, not only during the revival but also in parish churches. John Ridge, who participated in the revival, was said to have abolished kneeling at communion in the parish church at Antrim, while Ussher was rumoured to have a communion table placed lengthways in the aisle of St. Peter's church in Drogheda.¹¹ John Bramhall contended that many churches in Ulster had no altar but had 'a table ten yards long, where they sit and receive the Sacrament like good fellows.'¹² In the 1650s Samuel Winter held seated communion services in Christ Church cathedral with tables 'placed together in length from the choir up to the altar.'¹³ In addition there were attempts by many Church of Ireland clergy to maintain the unity of the fledgling church in Ulster, where most of the Protestant settlers favoured a Presbyterian style church.¹⁴ The communion ceremonies of the revival were a key feature of spreading godliness among the newly settled people, however, the ministers were anxious that 'emotionalism' did not become a dominant factor. This was apparent in the attempts to control James Glendinning, one of the first ministers to inspire the revival. According to Robert Blair, it was his preaching ability that accounted for much of Glendinning's success. He had a 'great voice and vehement delivery, he roused up the people, and wakened them with terrors.' The attraction to Glendinning's preaching spread, and large crowds were drawn to his ministry in Oldstone, Co. Antrim. But when Glendinning failed to provide his hearers with suitable pastoral care, other ministers stepped in to relieve their anxieties and to correct the 'erroneous conceits' of Glendinning, who was now preaching millennialism. Glendinning appeared to descend into lunacy and according to Blair 'did run away to see the seven Churches of Asia.'¹⁵ In a further attempt to channel the religious fervour of the revival into organised practice, John Ridge established a monthly lecture meeting at

¹¹ Ibid, pp 4-5.

¹² John McCafferty, *The reconstruction of the Church of Ireland, Bishop Bramhall and the Laudian reforms, 1633-1641* (Cambridge, 2007), p.99.

¹³ J.T. Gilbert, *A history of the city of Dublin* (3 vols, Dublin, 1854-9), i, p.123.

¹⁴ Phil Kilroy, 'Sermon and pamphlet literature in the Irish reformed church, 1613-1634' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, xxxiii (1975), pp 110-21.

¹⁵ Bailie, *Six mile water revival*, p.10.

Antrim so that the people ‘might be balanced Christians with all their faculties engaged.’¹⁶

With the arrival in Ireland of Thomas Wentworth in 1632 the large Presbyterian communions became impracticable. Wentworth, together with the new bishop of Derry, John Bramhall, were concerned to introduce the high church ecclesiology and liturgy of the archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud. Presbyterian ministers were forced to return to Scotland and the revival came to an end. The importance of these communions to the early settlers is revealed by the fact that numerous Ulster Presbyterians travelled back to Scotland to attend the communions held by John Livingston at Stranraer and by Robert Blair at Ayr.¹⁷ Livingston recorded that sometimes up to 500 communicants would travel from Ulster to the sacraments which were held twice a year. They would also bring their children to be baptized by these ministers.¹⁸ Large communions continued in some parts of Ulster. Josias Welch reported crowds of well over a thousand people at communions he held in Templepatrick in 1632, despite a crackdown on Presbyterian ministers by the Anglican authorities.¹⁹ In the 1640s, most Presbyterians in Ulster were ministered to by itinerant preachers from Scotland. By the end of the decade there were enough Presbyterian clergy in the area to provide a resident ministry.²⁰ In Templepatrick, Co. Antrim, the session made extensive preparations for a sacrament in June 1647, the level of organisation suggested that they had been holding these communions for some time.²¹ When the first presbytery was established at Carrickfergus in 1642, Presbyterianism was founded on a solid institutional framework. The presbyteries multiplied and by 1659 there were five in operation.²² After a short bout of persecution in 1650 with the introduction of the Engagement Oath, the political atmosphere for dissenters improved when Henry Cromwell granted them the *regium*

¹⁶ Ibid, pp 9-10, 14-15.

¹⁷ Tweedie, *Select biographies*, i, p.161.

¹⁸ Adair, *Narrative*, p.50; J.S. Reid, *A history of the Presbyterian church in Ireland* (3 vols, Belfast. 1867), i, pp 222-3.

¹⁹ Bailie, *Six mile water revival*, p.14.

²⁰ Schmidt, *Holy fairs*, p.35.

²¹ Records for this session only begin in 1646, by which time they were operating a sophisticated judicial and pastoral system. W.T. Latimer, ‘The old session book of Templepatrick Presbyterian Church, Co. Antrim, Part III’ *JRSAI* Fifth Series, xxxi, No. 3, (1901), pp 265-7.

²² Phil Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy, 1660-1740* (Cork, 1994), p.16.

donum in 1654.²³ The *Directory of public worship* had been sanctioned for use in 1647 in place of the Book of Common Prayer, which provided an acceptable liturgy for Presbyterians.²⁴

After the Restoration, Presbyterians would face bouts of persecution which would hinder their celebration of communions. In 1670 Templepatrick recorded that communions had been impossible due to the ‘persecution of the prelates’ during the 1660s. Robert Craghead, minister of Derry, claimed that the sacrament was often delivered at night ‘in great danger’ because of the harassment of the bishops.²⁵ Communion ceremonies, for reasons of security, needed to be inconspicuous. The religiosity of the revival communions could not be sanctioned in the late seventeenth century and there were no longer reports of ‘extasies and enthusiasms’ among the people.²⁶ The large numbers of communicants still alarmed the established church. One Anglican commentator observed that those attending communions went ‘like crowds to a fair.’²⁷ In 1698, the bishop of Down and Connor sent a petition to the lord justices of his grievances with the Presbyterians in his diocese, asking them to put an end to the liberties they enjoyed:

They celebrate the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper in congregations so formidably numerous by gathering the inhabitants of ten or twelve or more parishes together.. [there?] they preach in the fields and continue there a great part of the day together. ²⁸

William King, the archbishop of Dublin, observed in 1716 that Presbyterians gathered ‘in crowds of three or four thousand from 20 or 40 miles about.’²⁹ While Presbyterian sources corroborate the large attendances they highlight the fact that the number of those that received the sacrament was always less than the numbers who attended. In the late 1690s there were over 2000 attendees at sacraments in Derry, but only about 900 of these were communicants. In Belfast the proportion of those

²³ W.T. Latimer, ‘The old session book of Templepatrick Presbyterian Church, Co. Antrim’ *JRSAI*, Fifth Series, v, No. 2 (1895) p.134; Idem, ‘The old session-book of Templepatrick Presbyterian Church, Co. Antrim (Continued)’ *JRSAI* Fifth Series, xxxi, No. 2, (1901) p.163.

²⁴ Adair, *Narrative*, p.136.

²⁵ ‘Templepatrick session book’, (PRONI, CR4/12/B/1, pp 168-9); Adair, *Narrative*, p.288; Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy*, p.186.

²⁶ Tweedie, *Select biographies*, i, p.146.

²⁷ Gillespie, ‘Dissenters and nonconformists, 1661-1700’ in Kevin Herlihy (ed.) *The Irish dissenting tradition, 1650-1750* (Dublin, 1995), p.25.

²⁸ NLS, Wodrow Quarto XXVIII, f.107.

²⁹ S.J. Connolly, *Religion, law and power: the making of Protestant Ireland, 1660-1760* (Oxford, 1992), p.168.

that attended communion in 1734 represented less than half of the number that were deemed 'catechisable'.³⁰ At sacraments in Burt, Co. Donegal just under a thousand people received communion in 1697, while communions in Carnmoney, Co. Antrim in the same period attracted between six and seven hundred communicants.³¹ Some inferences about the numbers that attended communions may be made by the amount spent on the elements. In Carnmoney there were approximately 600 communicants at the sacrament in 1697 for which the session purchased elements to the value of £2 18s.³² The amount spent on the bread and wine was about double this amount in Lisburn in the same period, as were the sums collected for charitable purposes from parishioners during the communions. It is likely then that there were well over a thousand communicants at these sacraments in Lisburn.³³ The large crowds were acknowledged and welcomed by the Presbyterian clergy. Joseph Boyse defended the large communions, suggesting that the crowds, increased the solemnity of the institution and represented 'in a more affecting manner, the communion of saints'.³⁴

Most commentators agree that the Presbyterian communions of the early modern period were distinct from other Christian sacraments. They tended to be larger, they transcended the stricter liturgical codes of Anglicans and Catholics and they placed an emphasis on an intensely existentialist occasion where communicants connected at a personal level with Christ and their wider community. R.L. Greaves has proposed three categories of communions during the seventeenth century among Scottish Presbyterians.³⁵ The first grouping was the 'single-congregation' sacrament which typically involved one minister and his congregation, this type of sacrament has been identified by Raymond Gillespie as characteristic of the communions of southern congregations.³⁶ The second category were the large communions generally confined to Ulster, involving several congregations and multiple assistant ministers. These were the 'festal' communions, or later termed 'holy fairs', born of the Six

³⁰ 'A list of catechisable persons belonging to the 3rd Congregation (Rosemary Presbyterian) in Belfast within the bounds assigned to the inspection of Samuel Smith and Alexander Chalmers, 1734' (PRONI, MIC1P/7/2).

³¹ R.L. Greaves, *God's other children: Protestant nonconformists and the emergence of denominational churches in Ireland, 1660-1700* (Stanford, 1997), p.224; 'Carnmoney session book' (PHSI, 22 August 1697); Gillespie, 'Dissenters and nonconformists', p.24.

³² 'Carnmoney Session Book', (PHSI, 22 August 1697).

³³ 'Lisburn session minutes', (PRONI, MIC1P/159/6-10, 24 June 1694).

³⁴ Joseph Boyse, *Remarks on a late discourse of William Lord Bishop of Derry; concerning the inventions of men in the worship of God* (Dublin, 1694), p.136.

³⁵ Greaves, *God's other children*, pp 223-4.

³⁶ Gillespie, 'Dissenters and nonconformists', p.25.

Mile Water revival and Scottish influences.³⁷ The third category encompassed those communions held by peripatetic covenanting ministers whose ‘services were emotional, their sermons often condemnatory of Stuart rule and Anglican worship, and at least in some cases worshippers had to subscribe to the Covenant before partaking of the elements.’³⁸ These sacraments were also large and filled the authorities with apprehension. The political character attributed to these sacraments overshadows the religious motivation of the laity who attended them and sees in the Covenanting sacraments only manifestations of political unrest. Two categories, loosely based on the size and format of the communions, seem more adaptable to the vagaries in communion practices in this period.

Covenanting communions were short-lived and sporadic in Ireland. Spectators evidently saw both types of large communions as one and the same, and ‘lumped the ... two forms of observing the sacrament together inasmuch as both tended to draw large crowds and often met entirely or partly outdoors’.³⁹ Few records of Covenanting communions remain to corroborate the thesis that those that attended them had specific political motivations. A Covenanting sermon preached in Ireland in the later seventeenth century offers little in the way of elucidation, being almost entirely composed of scripture passages. This extemporary preaching, with the passages serving as prompts to the preacher, was a common trait of Presbyterian worship. However the tone of covenanting sermons was generally more politically strident than those of more moderate Presbyterians.⁴⁰

Covenanting preachers only appeared in Ireland for a short period and it is difficult to gauge the effect of their particular brand of ministry on a long-term basis. Whether they were more popular, purely based on the numbers who attended, than the large communions shared by several congregations is not clear. Covenanting communions that were recorded were geographically confined to northern Ulster. An Anglican reported on a series of such communions in 1679, where crowds of thousands at Coleraine, Castlefinn, Ballykelly and Derry appeared to hold ominous signs for the safety of the established church. The commentator stated that the

³⁷ The term ‘Holy Fair’ was popularised by the 1785 Robert Burns poem of the same name Schmidt, *Holy fairs* pp3-4.

³⁸ Greaves, *God’s other children* p.224.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ The sermon is contained at Edinburgh University Library, LA II.27.1. See Greaves, *God’s other children*, pp.218-19; Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy*, pp 117-118.

communions were ‘very numerous and terrible’ in ‘this corner of Ulster’. The ‘corner’ in question, the northernmost coastline of Ulster around Coleraine, was also the area in which David Houston, a minister whose ‘irregular carriage’ worried the Route presbytery in the early 1670s, was preaching covenanting principles.⁴¹ Houston had been banished from Scotland for keeping ‘numerous conventicles in the fields’ and for preaching ‘rebellion and resistance’ to the king.⁴² Unfortunately there are no detailed descriptions of these Covenanting sacraments in Ireland but they caused concern to both the presbyteries and established church. Anglicans were concerned that the large communions were operating under a pretence. The strong links with Scotland served to heighten alarm that the sacraments fostered sedition and that allowing such occasions to continue gave ample opportunity for political unrest to develop.⁴³ William Tisdall, vicar of Belfast, pointed to the danger of these ‘sacramentum militare’:

... by their monthly and quarterly communions, the Dissenters, take an occasion of calling their numbers together, when and where they please: Whether this device seems not more political, than religious, and whether this liberty of numbering their people at such times and places, as they shall judge convenient, may not prove of dangerous consequence. The tumults which were in Scotland in King Charles I, his time, were generally concerted at those assemblies, and after the Restauration [sic] the Rebellions of Pentland Hills in 1665 and of Bothwell Bridge in 1679, were managed in the same manner, their place and time of communion and rebellion were the same, Communion gave a colour for their rendezvous in such numbers, and they immediately took the field after their Sacrament...⁴⁴

Tisdall’s purpose in conflating the political and religious identity of Presbyterians was to argue against the removal of the sacramental test. As covenanting theology informed so much of Presbyterian worship, it is unsurprising that their communions could become infused with the same themes. The covenant and the sacrament had been linked in Ulster since the 1640s, when large crowds were administered both the covenant and communion by Patrick Adair and other ministers.⁴⁵ At the beginning of the eighteenth century William Rainey, a Belfast merchant, recorded the dates on which he ‘renewed [the] covenant and rec[eive]d [the] sacrament’. Occasionally this

⁴¹ Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy*, pp 111-116.

⁴² *A proclamation against field conventicles, and offering a reward for apprehending James Renwick, Alexander Shiels, and Houstoun, seditious field preachers* (Edinburgh, 1687).

⁴³ Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy*, p.21.

⁴⁴ William Tisdall, *The conduct of the dissenters of Ireland* (Dublin, 1712), p.50.

⁴⁵ Adair, *Narrative*, pp116-117

was done in Scotland, suggesting that this this type of sacramental worship was not readily available in Ulster.⁴⁶ In 1679 the persecution of radical Presbyterians in Scotland was considerable and after the defeat of the covenanters at Bothwell Bridge many travelled to Ireland.⁴⁷ This coincides with the accounts we have of Covenanting communions in Ulster. It also coincides with periods of intense Covenanting activity in Scotland which saw large-scale communions in the 1670s with crowds of thousands and multiple ministers in attendance.⁴⁸ Marilyn Westerkamp saw in the highly emotional occasions of Covenanting communions in Ulster a filling of a spiritual void in the laity who were uninspired in their ordinary practice by ‘the mild, symbolic purification’ which ‘paled, for many in the face of an overriding political/religious mandate’.⁴⁹ The idea that the laity were heavily politicised perhaps gives too much credence to Anglican fears that the communions had seditious motives and undervalues the position of more moderate ministers among the laity.⁵⁰ These ministers are perhaps too readily dismissed as being overly cowed by the persecutory atmosphere of the period. Indeed the robust defence of Presbyterian worship by Presbyterian ministers in the 1690s indicated that they were willing, and often did, suffer for their beliefs.⁵¹ The contention that during the period the ‘Presbyterian leadership was at odds with its community’ and that ‘the ministers’ carefully considered actions were challenged by the laity’ appears to generalise the matter based on the large crowds that attended the covenanting communions. It also minimises the role of the ruling elders, the lay representatives in the session. It is clear that during the 1670s at least, a certain proportion of Ulster Presbyterians were attracted to Covenanting sacraments. It is less clear how much the covenanting message was the primary draw however especially when the long-standing festal tradition is considered. Certainly these events could be more emotionally charged than others, but so too was the experiences of communicants under the charismatic preachers of the Six Mile Water revival.⁵²

⁴⁶ ‘Extracts from Wm. Rainey’s diary’ (Linen Hall Library, Joy MS 10, 21 February 1703, 22 August 1704); Jean Agnew, *Belfast merchant families in the seventeenth century* (Dublin, 1996), p.67.

⁴⁷ Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy* pp 236-7; Greaves, *God’s other children* pp116-17.

⁴⁸ Schmidt, *Holy fairs*, pp 32-4.

⁴⁹ Marilyn Westerkamp, *Triumph of the laity: Scots-Irish piety and the Great Awakening, 1625-1760* (Oxford University Press, New York 1988), p.68.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, pp 65-8.

⁵¹ This debate is more fully discussed in Chapter 7.

⁵² Greaves, *God’s other children*, pp218-9; Bailie, *Six mile water revival*, pp17-18.

Phil Kilroy has argued that the Covenanters had only a limited following in Ireland after the Restoration.⁵³ Had these Covenanting communions been more sustained then there might have been evidence to suggest that the laity were in search of a more politicised Eucharistic experience, but as it was, the communions were isolated, geographically confined and similar to the communions being held under less political banners available in their own congregations. The charisma of individual ministers must also be considered given the strong affinity there was for extemporary preaching within Presbyterianism.⁵⁴

Charismatic Covenanting preachers were dangerous to the Presbyterian self-interest. Determined to promote a loyal image the presbyteries sought to subdue extreme covenanting elements from operating in Ireland.⁵⁵ In the south the Covenanting influence was almost non-existent, although one Covenanting minister, James Renwick, spent a short period of time in Dublin. William Jacque, the fractious minister of Bull Alley represented the most strident exponent of Scottish Presbyterianism in the south, although his outlook often resembled Independency. In the 1650s, Jacque ministered to congregations in the north but from 1659 his activities were confined to the south of the country. He was incumbent in Longford, Bull Alley and Capel Street, the latter being an unauthorized congregation Jacque established after his dismissal from Bull Alley. He also went on a tour of Limerick, Waterford, Kinsale, Bandon and Cork where he was jailed for his public preaching.⁵⁶ In 1663 he was imprisoned for his suspected involvement in Blood's plot, a conspiracy to seize Dublin castle and kidnap the duke of Ormond. It is possible that 'field conventicles' were conducted by Jacque after his release from prison, he noted in his diary that he 'preached in the fields in several places in the county of Down and Antrim to multitudes of people, and baptized many children.'⁵⁷ His diary provides some indication of the type of sacraments Jacque held in his congregation. After he established the rudiments of a congregation in Dublin by preaching in his home, he claimed that 'multitudes withdrew from the publick assemblies' to hear him preach and requested that he administer the sacrament to them. After a week in prayer the congregation met and adopted several proposals relating to the celebration

⁵³ Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy*, p.116.

⁵⁴ Westerkamp, *Triumph of the laity*, p.30.

⁵⁵ Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy*, pp 111-118.

⁵⁶ 'Diary of William Jacque', (NLI, MS 34,946, p.49).

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p.13.

of the sacrament. The first was that 'due care be taken to prevent a promiscuous administration of the Lord's Supper to unworthy persons'. The second made arrangements for the collection of poor money, while the third intimated the method of celebration. The influence of Jacque's Scottish heritage could be seen in this final proposal. The communicants should 'come to the table and divide the elements among themselves.' This was 'most consonant to Christ's example and the nature of that heavenly banquet.' The congregation were 'strangers to such methods before' indicating that the communions they had attended previously had been administered in a different manner.⁵⁸ Other descriptions of communions in the south are few. Large communions were reported in Dublin in 1669 but it appears that most communions were held within single congregations, for which there are few surviving records.⁵⁹ Some ministers in the south objected to Jacque's method of administration of communion and favoured a method whereby communicants received the elements from the hands of their minister.⁶⁰ Records survive for the congregation of Prince's Street in Cork from the early eighteenth century which indicate that communions in the south were highly protected events and admission was determined by the congregation as a whole. Here, the doctrine of election was clearly delineated in the ritual of communion.⁶¹

There had been a dissenting presence in Cork since the 1650s when Edward Worth established an association of ministers which aimed at a comprehension of Episcopalians and Presbyterians. By the late 1650s, with the support of Henry Cromwell, the lord lieutenant, the association had adopted a Presbyterian outlook which was seen as a possible template for a national church.⁶² The congregation at Prince's Street was in existence since at least the 1670s when a Mr. Brinkley was recorded as ministering to a congregation there.⁶³ Sacraments held at Prince's Street were diligently recorded in the congregation minutes. They occurred monthly and new communicants were proclaimed to the congregation in the weeks leading up to the sacrament. At the communion those who received for the first time with the

⁵⁸ Ibid, pp15-16.

⁵⁹ Greaves, *God's other children*, p.222.

⁶⁰ 'Diary of William Jacque', (NLI, MS 34,946, p.23).

⁶¹ 'Cork Presbyterian Meeting House, Prince's St., Cork Records' (CCCA, U87/1)

⁶² Terry Clavin, 'Edward Worth', *DIB*; T.C. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland* (Oxford, 1975), pp117-22, 126-8.

⁶³ Clarke H Irwin, *A history of Presbyterianism in Dublin and the south and west of Ireland* (London, 1890), p.212.

congregation were noted as having ‘sat down at the Lord’s Table’. When communicants were first announced they were called upon publicly to acknowledge their baptismal covenant and personally consent to the duties of it. New parishioners who wanted to receive communion needed a certificate from their old congregation testifying to their ‘good carriage’. It is clear that the church had connections with Presbyterian congregations in Dublin, Clonmel, and Limerick but their sacraments remained ‘closed’ events. Enquiries into those who wished to communicate were painstaking and the laity recognised the exclusivity of being a communicant. In December 1720, Samuel Abernathy requested to be admitted to the Lord’s Table after being a ‘constant hearer with us for many years’. After giving a satisfactory account of his character, Abernathy was then proposed to the communicating members of the congregation for approval, ‘at the close of the administration in the usual form.’⁶⁴ This approval was granted to potential communicants if the congregation were satisfied with their character. Often approval was only granted when testimonials were obtained. Robert Meade, who requested to join ‘into church-communion’ with the Prince’s Street congregation in October 1720, needed to supply a letter of recommendation from the Usher’s Quay congregation in Dublin where he had previously been a communicant. After writing twice to the ministers with no response, Mead asked Mr Tweed, the minister of Prince’s Street, to write on his behalf. The response from Usher’s Quay suggested ‘something as to the manner of his leaving Dublin which was exceptional’ and further enquiries ensued before Mead was eventually accepted.⁶⁵ Communicants leaving the congregation were aware that testimonials would be necessary for them to join with other congregations. In October 1720 Dorcas Clear requested a testimonial ‘in order to her admission to the Lord’s Table in any other church where providence may cast her lot’. Before issuing her with one, the session first required that she clear up ‘dissensions’ that were reported between herself and her husband.⁶⁶

Communicants were welcomed from other Presbyterian congregations. In April 1721, a woman from the Limerick congregation produced a testimonial ‘certifying

⁶⁴ ‘Cork Presbyterian Meeting House, Prince’s St. Cork Records’ (CCCA, U87/1, 4 December 1720).

⁶⁵ Ibid, 9 October 1720, 23 October 1720.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 4 August 1717, 23 October 1721, 23 October 1720.

her church-membership and gospel-conversation' and was admitted to communion.⁶⁷ Others from further afield came armed with their certificates. Samuel Wells a 'file-cutter from Birmingham' was admitted to communion when he produced a certificate from his previous congregation. In September 1726, James Dunbar, a soldier in Colonel Hayes' regiment, gave in a certificate dated 24 July 1725 from the congregation in Londonderry. The session was told that 'the reason of the old date of his certificate [was] because the regiment lay last year at Galway where the dissenters had no fixt minister.'⁶⁸ William Tisdall, the Church of Ireland minister and high-tory, who wrote several pamphlets against dissenters in the early eighteenth century, claimed that the laity lived in fear of not receiving testimonials. A witness told Tisdall that the minister at Portaferry, Co Down had warned that those who left the parish without a signed certificate 'would not only be deny'd admittance into any other congregation, and to the sacrament, but that they wou'd not be employ'd as servants, but be turn'd out of such parishes where they went, when it was known that they want'd such certificates.'⁶⁹ For those who were travelling to find work, the issuing of certificates became an effective control on the laity. When Dorcas Clear, 'in very pressing terms' repeated her request for a testimonial it was denied as the 'charge of misbehaviour brought against her is so well attested'. A conformist clergyman reported the power exerted by session over the laity in relation to testimonials. Writing to William Tisdall in 1711, the clergyman related a case in his parish of Knock, Co. Antrim. A man whose child was dying refused to send for the conformist minister to baptize the infant after a church elder had spoken to him. The minister remonstrated with the man and asked him why he would suffer to let his child die unbaptized, to which he answered 'I durst not do it, for if I did, I should neither be admitted to the ordinances, nor have the benefit of a certificate from the elders in case I should have occasion to remove out of this parish into another.'⁷⁰

While certificates regulated the broader communion of congregations, especially between northern and southern congregations, communion tokens protected the sacraments in Ulster from profanation. With elders stationed at each entrance to

⁶⁷ Ibid, 16 April 1721. On 5 October 1729 the congregation received the certificate of Elizabeth Bagnall 'a communicant with Mr. Jackson's congregation at Clonmell'.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 28 Sept 1726.

⁶⁹ Tisdall, *Conduct of dissenters*, p.97.

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.98. For the claim that Presbyterians allowed their children to die unbaptized rather than have them christened by a conformist minister see William King, *A discourse concerning the inventions of men in the worship of God* (London, 1694), p.174.

collect tokens, Presbyterian communions in the north were also carefully regulated and any procedural infringements were punished swiftly. Rules were framed for communions by individual congregations, despite efforts at unifying the ‘external order of communions.’ In 1687 the Antrim meeting was concerned that rules governing communions be synchronized to prevent ‘numerous confluences.’⁷¹ The communions in Ulster also bore close resemblance to those held in Scottish churches after the triumph of Presbyterianism in 1690. Regulations drawn up for a communion at Glasgow in the 1690s indicated the close regulation of communicants at the sacrament. Collectors stood at the entrances to the meeting house to receive charity money, two elders stood at the inner doors ‘for conveying communicants and noncommunicants to convenient places’ and the session also recommended that the secular authorities be present alongside the elders ‘for preventing of confusion’.⁷² This was the practice of an established Presbyterian church but a similar practice transpired in Ulster. Tokens made of lead were produced in vast quantities, in Carnmoney 700 tokens were cast for a communion in 1697, the previous tokens being lost ‘in the time of troubles.’ Large quantities were still being used in Belfast in the 1730s which indicates that ‘vast confluences’ were still the norm.⁷³

⁷¹ Greaves, *God's other children*, p.225.

⁷² NLS, Wodrow Fol. XXVIII No. 67.

⁷³ ‘Carnmoney session book’ (PRONI, MIC/1P/37/4, 22 August 1697); ‘A list of catechisable persons, 1734’ (PRONI, MIC1P/7/2).



Figure 4:1 Communion token for St. Johnston, Co. Donegal, 1728. The six punched holes indicate that the communicant should receive the sacrament at the sixth table.



Figure 4:2 Communion token for Larne, Co. Antrim, 1700.

Communion held in Lisburn in the 1690s indicate that the tradition of large communions had developed into a complex ritual which was closely regulated by the session. Instructions for elders in advance of the communion included apportioning quarters to the elders 'to take inspection of the people' and a detailed schedule of duties for the day of the sacrament. Presbyterian sacraments needed to be constructed in a physical sense. At the communion in Lisburn in July 1691 elders were appointed to furnish the 'forms' and tables for the communion, provide tablecloths, cups, plates, flagons and to oversee the making of the bread and the procurement of wine. The setting was makeshift and needed to be reassembled at each sacrament. Tables were erected out of wooden planks, with seats fashioned in the same way at a lower level. Where preaching took place outside the meeting house, tents needed to be erected and elders positioned to oversee them. At the communion, elders were assigned specific duties such as arranging the bread and wine on the table before the minister, carrying the consecrated elements to the tables and overseeing an ordered distribution. In Templepatrick, sacraments were similarly organised. After an absence of communions for ten years, the one held in June 1670 signalled an important return to communal worship. The tokens were 'delivered to the parish' on the Monday before communion, elders who officiated at the sacraments were to meet at the preaching tent at 9 o'clock in the morning and begin preparations. Elders were charged with providing the elements, plate and serving the tables with the bread and wine. This drama, which in Lisburn and Templepatrick occurred only once a year until the early eighteenth century, implied a continued festal tradition with lay involvement in the construction of the ritual itself.⁷⁴

In the late seventeenth century communions were held in most congregations only once a year. These communions took place in summer or autumn and were attended by communicants from surrounding areas. The joining together of congregations was a conscious effort, with ministers leaving their own congregation to assist at other communions. In Kilwaughter, Co. Antrim, the people were deprived of a sermon in June 1701 because their minister was assisting at the communion in Carncastle. The people of Kilwaughter were 'exhorted to repair thither for hearing of the Word and

⁷⁴ 'Lisburn session minutes' (PRONI, MIC/1P/159/6-10, July 1691); 'Templepatrick session book' (PRONI CR4/12/B/1, June 1670).

communicate (as many) as may be admitted and are willing'.⁷⁵ Joseph Boyse estimated that in the north up to two thirds of communicants could be strangers. In Carrickfergus William Keyes, the minister of Belfast, held a communion service in 1670 assisted by six Scottish preachers and attended by a large numbers of Scots who had travelled to the area.⁷⁶ Of the 856 tokens used by the Rosemary Street session in 1734, less than a hundred were given to strangers, indicating that by this time urban communions at least were becoming single-congregation events.⁷⁷ In response to accusations that communions were infrequently administered among Presbyterian congregations, Boyse asserted that monthly communions were the norm in the south of Ireland, although his claim that some congregations celebrated once a week was more optimistic than factual. Boyse consented that there were less frequent celebrations in the north where congregations joined together for celebrations and thus facilitated a more frequent practice for those willing to travel outside their own congregations. This pilgrimaging to sacraments allowed communicants between ten and fifteen opportunities a year to receive communion. Boyse concluded that in reality, the laity received between four or five times a year. The session records corroborate the picture with most congregations recording a yearly celebration in the late seventeenth century.⁷⁸ The pattern began to change in the early eighteenth century. In Connor, Co. Antrim the session agreed that they would hold two communions a year from 1707 onwards.⁷⁹

The setting for Presbyterian communions was designed so that the visual meditation that was urged by the preaching was not diverted by lavish utensils. The amount of plate needed at Presbyterian communions was greater than Anglican celebrations but it was plainer in design and less expensive. In Aghadowey, Co. Derry the session sent to Dublin for communion cups in 1704 at a cost of £2 6s 2d. In Armagh five pewter flagons were purchased by the session in 1710 at a cost of £1 12s. At a Templepatrick communion in 1693 they had three flagons and four cups with which to distribute 14 gallons of wine and 4 dozen loafs of bread.⁸⁰ Compared to the Church of Ireland, the plate was significantly cheaper. Delgany, a small Wicklow

⁷⁵ John M. Barkley, 'The evidence of old Irish session-books on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper' in *Church Service Society Annual*, no. 22 (May, 1952), p.27.

⁷⁶ *Cal S. P. Ire., 1669-70*, p.148.

⁷⁷ 'A list of catechisable persons' (PRONI, MIC1P/7/2).

⁷⁸ Boyse, *Remarks*, pp 135-7.

⁷⁹ 'Connor session minutes', (PHSI, 14 October 1707).

⁸⁰ 'Aghadowey session book' (PHSI, accounts 1704); (PRONI, MIC637/1, CR4/12/B/1).

parish with about one hundred communicants in 1692, spent £9 15s on a chalice and paten in 1704.⁸¹ Presbyterian communion plate was often made of pewter. It may have been that domestic plate was used in cases of necessity, as happened in Scotland.⁸² The linen used was plain white cloth, unadorned with the silken fringes and velvet cloth that could be found among the inventories of parish churchwardens. The linen may also have been domestically-sourced, the Templepatrick session paid a woman one shilling for the loan of the ‘webs’ for the communion in 1647.⁸³ As plate was made of inexpensive material survivals are rare. Figure 4:3 shows the plate of Prince’s Street in Cork city which was made of silver. Despite the unusual use of silver, the communion cups were simple in structure. One of the cups that was acquired later was modified to ensure uniformity in design. Two of these cups were donated by members of the congregation in 1699 but there are few other records of donations of plate by the laity in this period.⁸⁴ In the main plate was seen as purely functional, the *Directory* ordered ‘plain and comely’ vessels. Donations of plate ran the risk of introducing hierarchical divisions among the communicants which would have undermined the equality of the communion of saints.

⁸¹ ‘Delgany vestry book.’ (RCBL, P917/1/1, p.55v).

⁸² George Burnet, *The holy communion in the reformed Church of Scotland, 1560-1960* (Edinburgh, 1960), p.193.

⁸³ Latimer, ‘The old session book of Templepatrick Presbyterian Church, Co. Antrim, Part III’ p.269.

⁸⁴ Carnmoney received a donation of silver communion cups in 1714 from John Shaw, see Figure 4:4.



Figure 4:3 Communion cups of Prince's Street Presbyterian church, Cork. [Source: *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, Series 2, xiv (1908), pp 61-62.]



Figure 4:4 Communion cup donated by John Shaw to Carnmoney Meeting House in 1714 [Source: *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, vi (1900), p.10]



Figure 4:5 Pewter communion plate from 1714 for Carnmoney Meeting House

[\[http://www.carnmoney.org/historical-artefacts.html\]](http://www.carnmoney.org/historical-artefacts.html)

While the setting of the sacrament ensured visual uniformity, unity among communicants was paramount. Breaches of charity were particularly disruptive and the sessions moved quickly to resolve differences. For several years the congregation at Prince's Street in Cork were beleaguered by a recalcitrant member called Thomas Mills. In 1717 it was reported that Mills was forbidding his wife from attending worship. Mills had quarrelled with the minister, Mr. Lowthian, and had chosen 'to desert our public worship and thereby cut himself off from church fellowship among us.' Declining several attempts made by the ministers 'to restore him regularly to Christian communion' the session resolved to write to him.⁸⁵ This evidently failed to resolve the dispute, but after the death of Lowthian in 1725, Mills began to attend divine service again. In September 1725, Mills signified 'his purpose by the mouth of Mr Sobslaw, to communicate with us in the Lord's Supper the next opportunity'.

⁸⁵ 'Cork Presbyterian Meeting House, Prince's St. Cork Records' (CCCA, U87/1, 21 November 1717).

The session rejected his intention because of a ‘vow he had made not to come within our meeting house during Mr. lowthian’s life..[which] has given general offence to the church’.⁸⁶ Mills blamed the session for not taking steps to heal the rift between himself and Lowthian, which was denied, as they had laid the dispute in front of a meeting of ministers of the province in Clonmel. Mills responded that he would acknowledge his obstinacy if the session admitted ‘neglecting’ him.⁸⁷ In March 1726 the session drew up two resolutions that would allow Mills to be admitted to communion. The first resolution stated

That tho his temper and deportment is not so humble and submissive as we could wish and might well be expected, yet we are willing to believe and hope that his profession of repentance is sincere, and we accept of it as such, to make way for his re-admisssion to communion with us in the Lord’s Supper

Mills assented to this resolution and thankfully accepted ‘the favour designed him thereby’. The second resolution stated that Mills would be proposed to the congregation in the following manner;

Thomas Mills who hath for many years withdrawn himself from communion with us, having applied for re-admission and made such a profession of his repentance for his misconduct and the grounds and causes of it as we are willing to hope and believe is sincere; if any person has ought to object against him why he should not be re-admitted [we] desire to be made acquainted with it in due time; it being our purpose to receive him to communion the next opportunity

When this second resolution was read to Mills he ‘went off to our great surprise and astonishment very abruptly and in an unbecoming heat and hast, and gave such manifest tokens of his resentment and dissatisfaction on account of this necessary delay as were very shocking and indecent.’⁸⁸ Mills went on to state ‘there were other churches besides this’ with which he could join. Two days later Mills’ temper had cooled and he agreed to allow the ‘intimation’ to be read to the congregation and in April he received communion with the congregation.⁸⁹

The peace between Mills and the session was short-lived. In December 1727 he accused one of the minsters, Mr. Cuthbert of preaching theological errors, namely

⁸⁶ Ibid, 2 September 1725.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 30 September 1725, 7 October 1725.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 3 March 1726.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 5 March 1726.

‘that the heathens might be saved by the light of nature or their own moral righteousness, without Christ’. This was denied by Cuthbert who ‘had expressly asserted in the sermon that all who ever have been, or ever shall be saved must be saved by Christ; and quoted Acts 4.12 neither is there salvation in any other.’⁹⁰ Mills retaliated by refusing to pay his yearly subscription until Mr. Cuthbert publicly retracted his sermon and preached another ‘recantation sermon’.⁹¹ Cuthbert, concerned that Mills was spreading allegations of heresy against him asked that Mills appear before the session to justify himself. After some delay Mills claimed that he could provide a dozen witnesses including Nathan Knott, a communicant, ‘who had declared himself exceedingly shocked at the passage.’ When the session interviewed Knott he appeared ‘exceedingly confused, and seemed inconsistent with himself’ and eventually ‘expressed his good liking of Mr. Cuthbert’s ministry and declared his resolution to continue his attendance thereupon.’⁹² Confronted with Knott’s feeble testimony and sermon notes offered by Cuthbert, Mills refused to acquiesce to a public recantation, ‘nor did he care whether he were continued a member of this church or not.’⁹³ A week later the session barred him from the communion but Mills proclaimed that ‘he would not be hindered from sitting down at the Lord’s Table by any sentence of ours unless he were suspended by the whole church’.⁹⁴ This episode not only reveals the disruptive power of a belligerent parishioner, but also the lengths to which Presbyterian congregations were prepared to go to resolve breaches of charity between the clergy and laity and to prevent the spreading of discord amongst the congregation. Mills’ disruptions spanned ten years which not only reflected considerable patience on the part of the session but also to the desire of Mills to remain a communicant in the church.

In Ulster the sessions faced similar anxieties, but on a larger scale. Exclusion from the sacrament was considered carefully by the session. Transgressions were reported to the session by the elders or by vigilant members of the congregation. Common sins included fornication, adultery, profanation of the Sabbath and theft. These were private sins, punished by the session who ordered that if found guilty, the sinner should make public reparation. Usually this involved ‘standing’ in front of the

⁹⁰ Ibid, 7 December 1727.

⁹¹ Ibid, 10 Dec 1727.

⁹² Ibid, 14 Dec 1727.

⁹³ Ibid, 11 Jan 1728.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 14 Jan 1728, 22 Feb 1728.

congregation. The duration of time that this public penance lasted varied from one to several Sundays, in Aghadowey, Co. Derry, the standard punishment was eight Sundays in a row.⁹⁵ Sometimes sinners were further stigmatised by having to wear white sheets while certain sins carried certain provisos such as the requirement of adulterers to wear sack-cloth by the Antrim Presbytery.⁹⁶ As exclusion carried such visible consequences there were those who resolutely avoided it. One man who came to the attention of the Lisburn session vowed to ‘be shot before he will stand publicly before the congregation.’⁹⁷ In these situations the session could do little to enforce their authority and there were many cases where the session simply had to give up pursuing malefactors. In Connor the laity objected to public censure in the 1700s because it was ‘not practiced in other places’ and it is difficult to determine how long into the eighteenth century public penance was a useful social control.⁹⁸ In 1709 John Henderson, an elder in Templepatrick, who was ordered to stand publicly with his servant for fornication, was initially willing to perform his reparation but did not appear to answer two subsequent citations. Six months later he had undergone a change of heart appearing before the session claiming ‘that he is ignorant whither it be a duty or not, to appear in publick and after much discourse with him saith that he will appeal to the General Synod.’⁹⁹ Perhaps more significantly there is some evidence to suggest that discipline was not enforced where it might damage the interests of the church. In 1708 the Templepatrick session proceeded cautiously in a case involving a servant of the Upton household who was accused of fornication and was with child. The session approached Esquire Upton concerning the girl ‘his advice [was] to bring her to the session and when she is fit to be brought to publick that she be not interrogat[ed] to whom she brought forth her child.’ Clothworthy Upton, an elder in the church and one of the most important defenders of dissenters in the period, had obviously no desire to have a member of his family perform public penance. The servant appeared in 1713 ‘confessing her sin of fornication committed several years ago with Counsellor Upton’ and after her

⁹⁵ ‘Aghadowey Session Book ’ (PHSI).

⁹⁶ Latimer, ‘The old session book of Templepatrick’, p.133; idem, ‘The old session-book of Templepatrick (Continued)’, p.165n; ‘Antrim meeting minutes’, (PRONI, MIC637/1, p.102).

⁹⁷ ‘Lisburn session book’, (PRONI, MIC 1P/159/8, 2 June 1720).

⁹⁸ ‘Connor session book’, (PHSI, 22 November 1710).

⁹⁹ ‘Templepatrick session book’, (PRONI, CR4/12/B/1, 17 April 1709, 12 June 1709, 7 August 1709, 14 August 1709, 11 October 1709)

public penance was absolved. Upton, it appears, was not pursued.¹⁰⁰ As with the payment of fines for avoiding public penance in the ecclesiastical courts, it appears that even the ostensibly equitable and democratic Presbyterian church structure could be manipulated to protect the secular hierarchy.

Exclusion from communion was rarely permanent and it was usual for the session to try and resolve issues between its parishioners. Isobel Etcheson, a woman who frequently relapsed into adultery, was excommunicated by the Antrim Presbytery in 1655 and her sentence was to be read out in all churches. However a short time later two ministers were sent to visit Etcheson and ‘make report of her condition’. At the next meeting she was absolved after appearing in the ‘habit of the adulteress’ and expressing herself as ‘deeply humbled’. This indicates a keen desire to ensure that saints were reconciled with their community. In some extreme cases the strict admission policy was relaxed. Thomas Porter requested to receive the sacrament with the Prince’s Street congregation when he was gravely ill, ‘he thinks unto death’. Having communicated in the north he had ‘for several years neglected to communicate and fallen into a pattern which comes very far short of the strictness and purity [of a] gospel-conversation.’ He was visited by two ministers who questioned him and urged repentance and then asked the session that he be allowed to communicate against protocols. In the majority of cases the session was fastidious in its investigations and would debar from the sacrament those who were under censure.¹⁰¹

While self-presentment at the session was rare, it could have a powerful knock-on effect. In Templepatrick Michael Paul submitted to censure in June 1712 for the sin of adultery committed ten years previously with Mary Main. Paul saw in a series of misfortunes that had afflicted his family ‘the remarkable judgements of God’ and sought ‘for God’s glory and the ease of his conscience’ to perform public penance.¹⁰² In November another parishioner called Samuel Reid claimed the reason he was appearing to confess his sin of fornication was ‘from the conviction of his conscience by Michael Paul’s confession and because he thinks the providence of

¹⁰⁰ ‘Templepatrick session book’, (PRONI, CR4/12/B/1, 12 May 1708, 26th August 1713).

¹⁰¹ ‘Cork Presbyterian Meeting House, Prince’s St. Cork Records’, (CCCA, U87/1, 1 June 1721).

¹⁰² ‘Templepatrick session book’, (PRONI, CR4/12/B/1, 29 June 1712).

God hath crossed him in all his worldly affairs for the punishment of his sin.’¹⁰³ Evidently seeing Paul perform his penance and the emphasis on providential judgement that pervaded Presbyterian culture had an impact on policing the morality of the congregation.

The threat of exclusion, though usually temporary, was significant. Being under censure meant that access to both the sacrament of baptism and communion was denied. Often people capitulated after long periods because baptism could not be obtained for their children if they were under censure. The session minutes record many cases of parents coming forward seeking reconciliation with the congregation in order to get their children baptised. In fact it often seemed a greater inducement than the threat of exclusion from communion. While some parishioners didn’t mind using the services of other denominations in order to avoid submitting to censure, many placed huge emphasis on getting baptism for their children and were willing, sometimes after periods as long as twelve years, to do public penance to gain this ‘sealing ordinance’.¹⁰⁴ This highlights the importance of being made a formal member of the community and indicates a strong sensibility of sacramental power. Given the emphasis placed on baptism in the devotional and catechetical texts, the laity appreciated it’s importance in their spiritual lives and to their admission to the Lord’s Supper.

Occasionally sins were communal, for which fasts were proclaimed. In 1656 the Antrim presbytery proclaimed a fast in order to reconcile the community. The reasons for the fast included the ‘unfruitfulness of the gospel’, ‘abounding wickedness’, ‘the sad declinings of the godly’, ‘contempt, reproach and hazard of the gospel’, ‘desolate congregations’, Sabbath breaking and ‘eminent judgements ready to break out’.¹⁰⁵ Where sins threatened the social cohesion of the congregation, communal repentance was required. Fasting in response to disruptions in the community as well as in preparation for communion signified a purification of the

¹⁰³ Ibid, 9 November 1712.

¹⁰⁴ For examples of people seeking reconciliation in order to obtain baptism for their children see the case of John Gamble in Aghadowey Session Book (PHSI, 17 November 1705) and in Connor the case of Mary Russell, ‘Connor session minutes’ (PHSI, 8 June 1701) For a man who did not scruple to obtain the sacraments from whichever denomination suited his present need see the case of William Millar who was married by a Catholic priest, had his child baptised by a Church of Ireland clergyman but was a member of the Presbyterian congregation of Aghadowey. ‘Aghadowey session book’ (PHSI, 5 October 1703).

¹⁰⁵ ‘Antrim meeting minutes’, (PRONI, MIC 637/1, 4 December 1656).

‘people of God’. Breaches of charity in the congregation were resolved by calling both parties to the session to attempt mediation and sessions went to great pains to resolve disputes between communicants. In Aghadowey a dispute between two parishioners, David Blair and Mrs Boyd, resulted in the following ruling by the session: ‘this session judges him [Blair] not fit to partake of the ordinance of the Supper until this [difference] be removed namely that he say to Mrs Boyd I am friends with you and do entertain no malice...’¹⁰⁶

The dispute was eventually resolved when both parties admitted their fault in being out of charity with each other and were received back into communion. In 1709, Samuel Herron, an elder in Lisburn, refused to attend the session until they ‘repair[ed] him of the wrong he received in being deprived of the sacrament’. Herron was in dispute with another parishioner, John Chambers, who he alleged had stolen goods from him during the fire of Lisburn.¹⁰⁷ When the congregation of Bull Alley sought advice from the Antrim Presbytery on how best to proceed in celebrating the sacrament, the presbytery advised the minister ‘to take pains to remove animosities betwixt that people and the people that adhered to Mr. W[illia]m Jacque before he gives the communion.’¹⁰⁸

In some cases the laity used the threat of exclusion against each other. In Carnmoney, Co. Antrim, a dispute arose between two families, the Hendersons and the Russells, which stemmed from an incident in which Mr. Henderson had pushed one of the Russells’ children who had fallen and died a few days later. The resulting confrontation saw Henderson threaten to ‘keep them [the Russells] seven years from the communion.’ When elders were sent to investigate the dispute they reported back that the Russells were ‘willing to live neighbourly [and were] ...troubled that they were debarred from the Lord’s Supper at last occasion [and] also regret that Henderson express himself very maliciously...’ The Russells had been frequent communicants before the incident, and were anxious to continue to be ‘admitted to sealing ordinances’. To ensure this they agreed ‘to live neighbourly’ with Henderson and were allowed to continue in communion.¹⁰⁹ As it was in the power of the minister and elders to decide who was fit to receive communion, tensions between

¹⁰⁶ ‘Aghadowey session book’ (PHSI, 8 May 1703).

¹⁰⁷ ‘Lisburn session minutes’, (PRONI, MIC1P/159/10, 22 June 1709, 14 February 1709).

¹⁰⁸ ‘Antrim meeting minutes’, (PRONI, MIC 637/1, September 1672).

¹⁰⁹ ‘Carnmoney session book’ (PRONI, MIC 1P/37/4, 23 July 1708).

elders and the laity could surface when people were excluded from the sacrament. Francis Gilmore, an elder in Templepatrick, complained to the session in 1721 that Sarah McElvin and her family ‘abused him... and blame[d] him for not getting her a token at the last occasion.’¹¹⁰ Others went to great lengths to circumvent the system, Joan Clarke was rebuked by the Connor session for using her sisters’ token in 1713 ‘and coming to the Lord’s table not being orderly admitted.’¹¹¹ At another communion a parishioner asked an elder for a token ‘unseasonably in the time of serving of the tables’ and although he was refused, he managed to get a token from a different elder. In the same congregation an elder was rebuked for giving a token to a man who was apparently under censure.¹¹² While the laity occasionally managed to find ways of gaining entry to communion when they were deemed unworthy by the session, the token-system remained a useful tool to prevent the profanation of the sacrament. Indeed the swiftness with which the Connor session dealt with the infringements testifies to its important function.

As in the Church of Ireland, excommunication sometimes acquired a secular function. In Aghadowey the laity who had not contributed to the ministers’ maintenance were told ‘they need not expect tokens’ if they didn’t pay the minister his dues.¹¹³ The people of Carnany, Co. Antrim, were similarly threatened with being debarred if they didn’t pay the arrears due to their minister John Logh.¹¹⁴ The synod of Ulster attempted to curb the practice of disorderly marriages by barring from communion any who ‘shall presume to be married by any vagrant minister or any falsely pretending to be a minster.’¹¹⁵

The attitudes of the laity to the sacrament are difficult to determine at an individual level. The survival of first hand experiences are few and those that remain can neither be taken as standard participants nor dismissed as pious anomalies. The impetus to record religious experiences amongst the godly was, as we have seen, a preoccupation stemming from the doctrine of election.¹¹⁶ One such example is the diary of James Trail, a Presbyterian merchant from Co. Down which was written in

¹¹⁰ ‘Templepatrick session book’ (PRONI, CR4/12/B/1, 28 October 1721).

¹¹¹ ‘Connor Session Minutes’ (PHSI, 13 September 1713).

¹¹² ‘Connor Session Minutes’ (PHSI, 2 November 1718, 17 June 1720).

¹¹³ ‘Aghadowey Session Book’ (PHSI, 11 June 1711).

¹¹⁴ ‘Templepatrick session book’ (PRONI, CR4/12/B/1, 20 January 1712).

¹¹⁵ *Records of the General Synod of Ulster from 1691 to 1820* (3 vols, Belfast, 1890), i, p.276.

¹¹⁶ Tom Webster, ‘Writing to redundancy: approaches to spiritual journals and early modern spirituality’ *The Historical Journal*, xxxix, No.1 (1996), pp35-9.

the early eighteenth century. Trail's narrative was a curious mixture of memoir, theological commonplace book and diary but it had the pervading intention of allowing him to document his spiritual pilgrimage as one of the elected saints. Brought up in an Anglican household, Trail converted to Presbyterianism in his early youth. His diary was written as a response to what he considered to have been a spiritually bankrupt earlier life and was an attempt to record his experiences so that he might 'by confessing and forsaking my sins... be qualified to receive the pardon of them'. Having recounted his earlier transgressions, the diary continues in the vein of a spiritual journal in which Trail seeks to negotiate his elected position. Everyday details were recorded through this prism of a Presbyterian soteriological belief system, in which important events were interpreted as evidence for divine approbation or displeasure.¹¹⁷

Trail was not unique in his self-examinations and the recording of one's life through a spiritual lense was not uncommon among godly laity and clergy alike. While there are few known examples of godly narratives from early modern Ireland, those that survive suggest the balancing of assurance with the 'unrelenting anxiety' of the elect.¹¹⁸ John Cook, a Presbyterian minister in Tipperary and Waterford recounted his life experiences giving the following characteristic explanation; 'I consider that (according to the custom of very many pious and worthy Christians) it is high time to begin to keep a more strict account of my life, together with the remarkable transactions of my time especially as they regard myself'.¹¹⁹ Cook had, like Trail 'unprofitably spent' his early years and sought to mend his ways. James Trail's impetus to record his own life experiences was a decision taken in tandem with some friends who having spoken with each other 'about the practice of writing down one's life with the purpose of examining faults and promoting their holiness, they all three decided to do the same.'¹²⁰ Joseph Boyse, in his sermon on the death of Dr. Duncan Cumyng, one of his congregation, alluded to his practice of 'for so many years [recording] monthly his reviews of his own carriage towards God, and the conduct of Divine Providence towards him.'¹²¹ The spiritual experience of the laity who came

¹¹⁷ 'Diary of James Trail', (PRONI D1460/1).

¹¹⁸ Webster, 'Writing to redundancy', p.54.

¹¹⁹ 'Diary of John Cook, 1696-1705' (PHSI, p.1).

¹²⁰ 'Diary of James Trail' (PRONI, D1460/1).

¹²¹ Joseph Boyse, *The works of the reverend and learned Mr. Joseph Boyse, of Dublin* (2 vols, London, 1728), i, p.316; A.W. Godfrey Brown, *The great Mr. Boyse* (Belfast, 1988), p.11.

from more humble backgrounds was rarely recorded. Research in English dissenting communities warns strongly against the assumption that godly living was a preserve of the social elite.¹²² In Scotland surviving accounts taken down by ministers of how the laity engaged in sacramental worship reveal a piety that was intense and full of revivalist rhetoric. These accounts testify to an emotional piety which encompassed a strong emphasis on intensive preparation, the mental visualisation of Christ's Passion and a tendency to analyse the after-effects of receiving communion. Leigh Eric Schmidt has analysed the accounts of the Cambuslang revival of the 1740s and concluded that 'variety and nuance in the experience of the evangelical Presbyterians were certainly as notable as commonality and collectivity.'¹²³ Given the shared religious heritage, it is possible that a similar situation prevailed among Ulster Presbyterians. The Cambuslang narratives offer an unparalleled glimpse into the religious experience of the laity, with little censorship or inventiveness on the part of the minister who recorded them. No such cache exists to analyse the piety of Irish Presbyterians. At communions the clergy sought evidence of the workings of God amongst the laity, but they also extolled individual saints. The funeral sermons of pious parishioners indicated that attendance at communion was a marker of godly living. Certainly, as Schmidt has argued, 'pastoral ideals can be too easily taken as the measure of devotional practice' and the eulogies of 'the best people at their best moments' should be balanced by the experiences of those who fell short of the godly paragons.¹²⁴ The unfortunate sinners who were castigated by the sessions and donned sack cloths to perform public penance deserve attention, as do those who served as their exemplars.

In the sermon preached at the funeral of Arthur Upton, the patriarch of one of the leading Presbyterian families in Ulster, it was remarked that 'his heart and flesh cry'd out for the Living God and his presencehe receiv'd the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, as oft as he had opportunity, with a strict preparation and devout affections; making conscience of his vow to God.'¹²⁵ Duncan Cumyning, a Presbyterian doctor who arrived in Dublin in 1684, began every new year of his life, 'by a solemn renewal of his covenant with God.' He urged his

¹²² Margaret Spufford (ed.), *The world of rural dissenters, 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995).

¹²³ Schmidt, *Holy fairs*, pp 117-68, quotation p.122.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, p.122.

¹²⁵ James Kirkpatrick, *The saints life and death* (Dublin, 1706) pp 68-9.

children to do the same and reminded them ‘of their baptismal bonds, and [persuaded] ‘em to a solemn, deliberate renewal of their covenant with God at his holy Table.’¹²⁶ Preaching at the funeral of Mrs. Atkins, a parishioner in Clonmel in 1707, the minister noted that she was ‘both constant and conscientious in her attendance on the duties of God's public worship, and we have reason to believe she frequented ordinances from much more just and noble aims than to make a shew and to be seen of men.’¹²⁷ While the piety of Mrs. Atkins was no doubt constant, her funeral eulogy contains little to illuminate her personal experience of the sacrament. The piety that is suggested in the funeral orations is a sober one, grounded in a pious education. This early religious education was stressed as being influential in the religious practice that ensued in later life.¹²⁸ This was perhaps an attempt to circumvent emotionalism, echoing the actions of the ministers at the Six Mile Water revival. Certainly the clergy were successful in quashing the physical outbursts, but a revivalist rhetoric could still be found among Presbyterians when they received the sacrament. Through the diary of James Trail the experience of one Presbyterians’ Eucharistic practice is brought to life.

James Trail’s view of the sacrament reflected a firm Calvinist underpinning. He frequently called the sacrament an occasion for ‘commemorating the dying love of my Redeemer’ and his spiritual experience at the sacrament could vary from the effusive to the disappointing. Covenanting language also played a part in his spiritual landscape and he described another communion as an opportunity ‘of knowing my covenant with God’. On one occasion, in what is one of the only articulations of Presbyterian sacramental piety of the period, Trail receives the effects of the ‘sealing ordinance’ in spectacular fashion on a meditative walk, the Monday after the communion:

I found my heart in the sweetest and most desirable frame that ever I had observed it in either before or since, my eyes ran down with tears for joy, my soul was filled with love to God, that allowed me such manifestations of his love, I was then deeply humbled under a sense of my unworthiness of such a favour. I then thought myself sincerely willing to be absent from the

¹²⁶ Boyse, *Works*, i, p.316.

¹²⁷ ‘Sermon preached on the death of Mrs. Atkins, 20 December 1707.’ (NLI, MS 1435).

¹²⁸ See Kirkpatrick, *Saints life and death*, p.64; Joseph Boyse, *A funeral sermon on the occasion of the death of William Cairnes* (Dublin, 1707), p.18; Idem, *A sermon on the occasion of the death of the late Sir Arth. Langford* (Dublin, 1717), p.22.

body that I might be present with the Lord (whom my soul loved) and never more return to my family again.¹²⁹

On this occasion the communion represented ‘an opportunity to focus intensely upon the believer’s personal relationship with God, precisely because the elements of bread and wine, however their substance was understood, signified both the means and goal of personal salvation.’¹³⁰ This type of emotional reaction was encouraged by some ministers. Joseph Eyres told his parishioners in Cork of ‘a gracious woman’ he had read about,

who at the Supper-Ordinance, being abundantly refreshed with the joyes of the spirit, gat home (as she professed) she knew not how; and for the space of a fortnight these raptures and ravishing joyes continued, and filled her mouth with songs of praise, so that she could neither sleep nor eat more than she forced herself to do out of conscience of duty¹³¹

The elation that was promised at communion was not always achieved. Trail’s experience at a sacrament given in the parish of Kilmore was less exuberant where he had only ‘a good deal of comfort’. He soon received again at a communion at Killinchy but felt that on this occasion it was too soon ‘my soul was on that occasion as the full soul that loatheth the honeycomb’.¹³² The fluctuating spiritual experiences of Trail were recorded elsewhere among the laity when a communion failed to live up to the experiences of previous sacraments and led the communicant to doubt his own worthiness or God’s favour. In Scotland there are comparable examples of unresolved fears and anxieties among communicants who, like Trail, ‘had not all the comfort [they] expected and desired’. In a similar lamentation a communicant described how he ‘did not get all that I thought to have got’ at Cambuslang in the 1740s.¹³³

Feelings of ‘delight in knowing my covenant of God’ were sometimes transient and on the Saturday before one communion Trail was plagued by doubts and had lost his earlier feelings of joy at the anticipation of receiving the sacrament. Trail consulted one of the assisting ministers as to the possible reasons for this sudden change and

¹²⁹ ‘Diary of James Trail’ (PRONI, D1460/1).

¹³⁰ Matthew Story, *The diaries of Isaac Archer and William Coe* quoted in Spufford, ‘The importance of religion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’ in idem, *The world of rural dissenters*, p.96.

¹³¹ Joseph Eyres, *The church-sleeper awakened, or a discourse on Act. 20. 9. being the substance of two sermons composed and preached at Corke in Ireland* (London, 1659), pp 68-9.

¹³² ‘Diary of James Trail’ (PRONI, D1460/1), pp 26-7.

¹³³ Schmidt, *Holy fairs*, pp159-60.

the minister assured him by drawing on similar examples from scripture. While his doubts were temporarily resolved, they returned the next morning and Trail spent much of the communion unsure of whether or not he should receive the sacrament. Though aware that he risked eating and drinking ‘damnation to myself’ Trail decided to receive the sacrament as he ‘thought it was possible I might never have another opportunity and that it would then rather afflict me that I had not imbraced this.’ The sacrament proved disappointing and he quickly resolved to receive again in a fortnight. Perhaps as a testament to the importance of the post-communion sermon, the one given on Sunday evening on Isaiah 40:31 vanquished Trail’s doubts and strengthened his resolution to attend at another sacrament.¹³⁴ While Trail’s fluctuating experiences of communion may have been common to other communicants, his frequency in attending them may have been a hindrance to the intensive emotional experience that he seemed to seek. In the summer of 1734 he attended three communions at which he was more edified by the preaching than the sacrament itself. This points to the importance of the seasonal pattern of the sacraments as an aid to lay piety. The times chosen, usually early summer and autumn coincided with high points of the agricultural year and so in agrarian societies where communal harmony was often indispensable to survival, communions provided the spiritual expression of the need to maintain a society in which its members would help each other with harvests and other labours.¹³⁵ The reasons given for Presbyterian fasts at this time also reiterated the deep connection with the natural world in these communities when intemperate weather was often the first reason given for the holding of a fast.¹³⁶ In addition to the practical benefits that appertained to holding communions in a seasonal pattern they also created ‘high times’ of the year which paralleled the primacy of Easter in the Anglican and Roman Catholic traditions.

Trail’s diary also provides us with an indication of how lay people might have prepared for communion and the difficulties that arose from the emphasis on ‘eating and drinking unto damnation.’ It is likely that the warning from 1 Corinthians 11:29-30 was pronounced at most communions and the *Directory of public worship*

¹³⁴ ‘But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.’

¹³⁵ Schmidt, *Holy fairs*, pp156-7.

¹³⁶ ‘Antrim meeting minutes’, (PRONI, MIC 637/1, October 1672, 12 August 1673); Greaves, *God’s other children*, pp 227-9.

specifically instructed ministers to allude to the dangers of unworthy participation. The importance of this warning also found its expression in other social contexts. In 1711 the community of Islandmagee in Co. Antrim witnessed the last witch trial held in Ireland. Eight women were found guilty of bewitching a young woman causing her to have convulsions, choke and vomit various household items. During the trial, the fears and insecurities of the Presbyterian community emerged. A minister involved in the case saw in the diabolic manifestations evidence of unworthy communicating, which he claimed had implications for the whole community. In his remonstrance with one of the accused he railed against those ‘misbelieving ones, eating and drinking damnation to themselves, crucifying Christ afresh and taking all out of the hands of the Devil.’¹³⁷ However it was also clear that some individuals felt that the sacrament would be protected autonomously. Anthony Upton, one of the magistrates in the case, found the testimonies of the accused all the more compelling because they ‘had received the communion, some of them very lately, [and] that several of them had been laborious, industrious people ... they being every one Presbyterians.’ Although believing that the events were ‘preternatural and diabolical’ he felt that ‘had the persons accused been really witches and in compact with the devil, it could hardly be presumed that they should be such constant attenders upon divine service, both in public and private.’¹³⁸ In the face of such contaminating influences there was a great incentive to protect the sacrament from profanation by the laity. When the people of Carnmoney were worried by a case of spirit-haunting in 1672 they proclaimed a fast and postponed their celebration of communion ‘until the confusion should fall a little.’ On another occasion a woman who was under censure was told not to stand in public until after the communion was over, presumably to maintain the purity of the sacramental occasion.¹³⁹

While communion tokens provided a degree of control by allowing only those who were deemed to have sufficient catechetical knowledge to participate, the *Directory* also highlighted that private as well as public preparation should be a part of a communicant’s devotional programme. James Trail’s preparatory method involved fasting and praying as well as reading over the Ten Commandments. These he

¹³⁷ R.M. Young (ed.), *Historical notices of old Belfast* (Belfast, 1896), p.163.

¹³⁸ St. John Seymour, *Irish witchcraft and demonology* (Dublin, 1913), pp 219-20.

¹³⁹ ‘Carnmoney session book’ (PRONI, MIC 637/1, 3 September 1672); Seymour, *Witchcraft and demonology*, pp156-60.

meditated on in order to as ‘narrowly as I could ... observe wherein I had violated any of them or failed in the discharge of any duty required by them.’¹⁴⁰ Presumably he also had other ‘closet devotions’ and he owned copies of the *Directory*, the longer and shorter catechisms and a popular work by the English Presbyterian, Matthew Henry, entitled *The communicants’ companion*.¹⁴¹ It had reached a sixth edition by 1715, with two Dublin editions printed in 1716 and 1736. Henry was renowned for his evangelical ministry, and Trail also owned a copy of his life which was widely published after his death. *The communicants’ companion* urged careful self-examination as well as direction on the benefits that should be watched for at communion. By his own admission these signs were carefully recorded by Trail when he received the sacrament. Trail also borrowed metaphors from the text; in the instructions for approaching the sacrament the importance of a ‘spiritual appetite’ was emphasised, ‘for the full soul loaths even the honey-comb.’¹⁴² Trail’s fairly extensive library also included many other devotional materials and he was well read in scriptural exegesis. His synopses of the books of the bible that were written at the beginning of his diary show a keen awareness of the disagreements between the various authorities of the time.¹⁴³

The sense of lay participation in the sacrament gleaned from Trail’s diary offers us a method of interpretation as well as a means of comparison with lay accounts from Scotland. Many of the Scottish narratives were taken down during a period of revival and were chosen for their evangelical fervour.¹⁴⁴ They indicate however that Trail was not unique in his sacramental piety and it is conceivable that his experience matched those of his friends, whose spiritual accounts have not survived. Lay accounts in Scotland indicate a similar spirituality and communicants often had the wavering experiences ranging from ecstasy to disappointment that characterised Trail’s attendance at communion. There is little evidence to suggest that the highly emotional experiences of the Six Mile Water revival occurred with any great

¹⁴⁰ ‘Diary of James Trail’, (PRONI, D1460/1).

¹⁴¹ David L. Wykes, ‘Henry, Matthew (1662–1714)’, *ODNB*.

¹⁴² Matthew Henry, *The communicants companion* (Dublin, 1716), p.110.

¹⁴³ Raymond Gillespie, *Reading Ireland, print, reading and social change in early modern Ireland* (Manchester, 2010), p.134. As well as his catalogue of books, which number over ninety titles, Trail also purchased ‘above 500 sermons the best I could choose, some of which I read to my family every Lord’s day that I am at home.’

¹⁴⁴ Schmidt, *Holy fairs*, pp 47-9, 117; T.C. Smout, ‘Born again at Cambuslang: new evidence on popular religion and literacy in eighteenth-century Scotland’ in *Past and Present*, no.97 (1982), pp114-27.

notoriety after 1660. When James Trail doubted whether he should receive communion because of his spiritual lethargy, he ‘went out of the [meeting] house to get in to the end of a table where I might not be taken notice of...’¹⁴⁵ Trail welcomed the edifying presence of spectators at the sacrament and preferable to the practice of the Church of Ireland who sent those who were not going to receive communion out of the church. Trail saw the practice as an evangelistic opportunity ‘as the solemnity of the ordinance might beget a desire in some unthinking people to join in it and to live lives more agreeable to such a solemn profession...’¹⁴⁶ A similar practice was recorded in Scotland where those who sat in the church only to observe the sacrament increased the gravity of the occasion.¹⁴⁷ The self-regulation which was ingrained in Trail as he chose the least conspicuous seat to receive (possibly unworthily) the body of Christ, meant that the sense of corporate responsibility pervaded the communions of Presbyterians. This meant that the division between worthy and unworthy communicants had to be clearly defined and the resources of tokens, ‘fenced’ tables and catechetical inquiry were mobilised to ensure that the saints were both physically and meritocratically proclaimed to others present at the communion.

While the laity undoubtedly appreciated the communal and initiatory functions of the sacraments, the extent to which they understood the theology of Presbyterian Eucharistic practice is less clear. Trail represented the experience of an ‘elite’ communicant who interpreted his Eucharistic experience in light of a Calvinist education and godly reading habits. He finds a parallel in James Bonnell, discussed above in chapter two, both in his societal position as well as his concern to inspire godliness in others by his own conduct. Unfortunately the experience of Presbyterians of the ‘middling’ or ‘meaner’ sort cannot be appraised in any detailed way. However it would be a mistake to believe they were ignorant of complex theological concepts. In 1648 Thomas Dirgil was delated to the Templepatrick session ‘for denying the second person to be God equall with the Father’.¹⁴⁸ When the controversies of the 1720s saw ministers who refused to subscribe to the Westminster Confession being accused of Arianism, there were repercussions among

¹⁴⁵ ‘Diary of James Traill’, (PRONI, D1460/1).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p.10.

¹⁴⁷ NLS Wodrow Fol. XXVIII no.67.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Templepatrick session book’, (PRONI, CR4/12/B/ 1, 24 April 1648).

the laity also. Thomas Buys, a parishioner Aghadowey was sharply rebuked by the session for ‘a great piece of imprudence’ when in the course of slandering another parishioner James Mitchell he seemed to question the divinity of Christ. Buys quickly submitted a paper to the session in which he ‘declared his faith of Christ’s equality with the father in the plainest words.’¹⁴⁹ The Belfast session were accused of barring two nonsubscribing ministers from the sacrament in 1724. Clearly many of the parishioners had theological reservations which impacted on social harmony. Writing to a minister in Scotland, the session informed him that ‘many of our own and other congregations scrupled communicating with [the nonsubscribing ministers] ... for reasons which they could not overcome, and that the session gave it as their humble advice, that those two ministers their communicating on that occasion [would] occasion disturbance in that solemn work’. Clotworthy Upton indicated that he would refuse to communicate with nonsubscribers.¹⁵⁰ In the aftermath of the first subscription controversy, it was the subscribing laity who advocated separation from the nonsubscribers, though their ministers were concerned to foster unity and prevent a rupture.¹⁵¹ In Cork the theological knowledge of Thomas Mills was used against the minister, in an accusation of heresy relating to the doctrine of salvation by faith. By the eighteenth century the sacrament had come to rely on theological as well as social cohesion among the Presbyterian community.

Some of the laity remained attracted to the ‘festal’ atmosphere of the sacraments rather than their spiritual benefits. This atmosphere can only be inferred from transgressions that appeared in the session books shortly after communions, and usually took the form of ‘unseasonable drinking’ at the communion time. In some cases the intense religious atmosphere collided with these profane practices. John Millar, who was accused of being drunk on the fast day before a communion in Lisburn in 1701, told his servants ‘that the devil was in their eyes, that they saw not the things that were wrong’, after which he ‘ran to and fro and was in a passion.’¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ ‘Aghadowey Session Minutes’ (PHSI, 28 June 1728).

¹⁵⁰ NLS, Wodrow Lett. Qu. XXI, f.140; Westerkamp, *Triumph of the laity*, p.96.

¹⁵¹ A.W. Geoffrey Brown, ‘A theological interpretation of the first subscription controversy (1719-28)’ in *Challenge and conflict: essays in Irish Presbyterian history and doctrine* (Antrim, 1981), p.41; T.C. Barnard, ‘The government and Irish dissent, 1704-1780’ in Kevin Herlihy (ed.) *The politics of Irish dissent* (Dublin, 1997), p.19.

¹⁵² ‘Lisburn session minutes’ (PRONI, MIC1P/159/6-10, 7 September 1701, 16 October 1701, 8 December 1706). For another case of ‘unseasonable drinking’ see ‘Templepatrick session book’ (PRONI, CR4/12/B/ 1, 2 February 1703).

The Monday following a communion appeared to be a time of revelry for ministers and laity alike and brandy or beer was often purchased by the session for Monday's celebrations. Church authorities were wary of these secular activities and the synod of Ulster attempted to ban the 'sumptuous dinners like feasts' which ministers held after communions.¹⁵³ Ministers may have been reluctant to give up this tradition and beer and brandy continued to be purchased by the sessions after the synod's prohibition.¹⁵⁴ The hospitality of the congregation that was hosting the communion was important when such large crowds converged on one area. Robert Craghead reported that people freely invited communicants into their homes 'observ[ed] the gospel rule not to forget to entertain strangers.'¹⁵⁵ William King decried the 'oppressive coshering' at the sacraments where 'none that live near the meeting house can call their meat or drink or grass or houses their own during these times'.¹⁵⁶ Although looked on suspiciously by the synod and Anglican commentators, the social and festal aspects of the sacraments in Ulster remained important for ministers and laity alike.

Leigh Eric Schmidt, in his wide-ranging study of sacramental occasions, has criticised the functionalist approach to analysing communion occasions in America which subjugate every part of the ritual to its role in reinforcing the moral and social order. While his plan to analyse these rituals as 'multilayered expressions of various religious meanings' is certainly warranted, excising the social function of communion seems unnecessary.¹⁵⁷ Certainly it is important to look at the 'religious' meanings of these occasions but seeing religion as something that is not also social appears to confuse the purpose of the rituals themselves. Perhaps where a functionalist approach falls down is in its attempt to demote the role of religion as secondary to the motivation of communicants and to suggest that their desire to attend the sacrament was simply a result of a subconscious urge to reinforce existing social structures. In this scenario an elite was nearly always involved (the clergy in a religious context) in enforcing the order that a religion has constructed to maintain

¹⁵³ *Records of the Synod of Ulster*, i, p.46.

¹⁵⁴ See for example the gallon of brandy purchased by the Lisburn session in 1711 (PRONI, MIC1P/159/8, 11 October 1711).

¹⁵⁵ Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy*, p.186.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.183.

¹⁵⁷ Schmidt, *Holy fairs*, p.75.

the status quo.¹⁵⁸ This order was enforced among Presbyterians in the session which was the regulator of sacramental admission. The laity were aware of this power, as demonstrated by the censured parents seeking baptism for their children and those who performed public penance in order to be admitted to the sacrament. However the cases of Thomas Mills in Cork and Sarah McElvin in Templepatrick indicate that they could also be forthright in asserting their covenantal rights.

In his seminal article on the social function of the Catholic Mass, John Bossy argued that Protestant reformers ‘created no sacred symbol as powerful as the Host’.¹⁵⁹ For Presbyterians the symbolic power of their Eucharistic celebrations was in the gathering of the saints which reinforced communal bonds between members and confirmed their elected status. For many outside the bounds of Presbyterian practice the sacraments were occasions of danger but some were also struck by the powerful display of piety that the communions evinced.¹⁶⁰ The continued attraction to large-scale communions, be they ‘festal’, congregational or Covenanting, demonstrated a desire to cherish a particular religious identity. In the north this identity was inextricably linked to Scotland and the aspiration that the Presbyterian system that triumphed there would one day pertain in Ireland. Even when the secular attractions and ‘large confluences’ of communions became distasteful to church authorities, people remained attracted to sacraments that were rooted in an older tradition. In the south, the English heritage of most Presbyterian congregations was reflected in the leadership of individual ministers, who could ensure that communicants were worthy to receive. Regulation was easier in these smaller congregations whose godliness marked them out as a minority ‘among a people of a strange lip and language.’¹⁶¹ What is remarkable about these sacraments was their complex ritualistic character which has been likened to the Roman Catholic tradition. Certainly the ‘festivity’ of the medieval church was richly symbolic and communal, but it remained a different type of festivity. Just as the particular influence of England and Scotland shaped Irish Presbyterianism, contact with Europe would determine the shape of Irish Catholic experiences of the Eucharist in the early modern period.

¹⁵⁸ For a similar discussion in the context of English dissenters see Spufford, ‘The importance of religion’, pp 100-102.

¹⁵⁹ John Bossy, ‘The Mass as a social institution’ in *Past and Present*, No. 100 (1983), p. 60.

¹⁶⁰ Adair, *Narrative*, p.208.

¹⁶¹ ‘Sermons preached at Clonmel, 1705-1707’, (NLI, MS 1435, sermon preached on 11 September 1705).

Chapter Five

The Theory of the Eucharist in the Catholic Church, 1660-1740

The aims of the Protestant Reformation are well-known. The reformers sought to sweep away the superstitions and abuses that they believed had corrupted the church in the medieval period. These corruptions were theological, liturgical and devotional and many of them centred on the Eucharist. Lutherans, Calvinists and Zwinglians formulated new and diverse Eucharistic doctrines, all of which expressly rejected the Catholic belief in transubstantiation, the literal transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, in the sacrifice of the Mass. Protestants believed that the Mass had become laden with superstitious practices including the adoration of the Host, the elevation of the Host after the consecration, Masses in honour of the dead, Masses where only the priest received communion, the reception of the bread without also offering the wine to the laity and the celebration of the liturgy in a tongue that was unknown to the majority of the laity. In practical terms, lavish vestments and altar plate, Eucharistic processions with the Host and a myriad of superstitious practices emanating from the doctrine of transubstantiation were evidence to Protestants of the need to reform the Church to its primitive, and by implication, purer and simpler, origins. This chapter will explore the theoretical model proposed by the Council of Trent for Catholic Eucharistic belief and the degree to which it was applied in Ireland after the Restoration. This involves an exploration of the main doctrinal tools of evangelisation; catechesis, preaching and devotional writing. It will argue that the Eucharistic message of the clergy was a Tridentine one but adapted to the particular circumstances of the Irish laity.

In the process, and with varying geographical nuances, the Reformation also precipitated a religious upheaval that saw religious practice shift from a richly symbolic, kin-centred system, to one where individual piety and the relationship between the individual and God was the most important. This manifested itself specifically in vernacular liturgies, Eucharistic theologies that stressed spiritual communion and a strong emphasis on personal responsibility. The Counter Reformation has been viewed both as a reaction to this radical program and as an autonomous movement rooted in the earlier reforms of the Christian humanists. Recent scholarship has refined the arguments by considering the Counter

Reformation as a clearing away of superstitious practices and a marrying of external symbolic forms with their theological bases. In particular this has involved an examination in greater detail of what has variously been termed ‘medieval’, ‘pre-Reformation’ or ‘traditional’ religion among the laity, in an attempt to investigate both the reality of religious practice before the Reformation and the practices that were expunged or retained by the agents of Tridentine reform.¹ An interpretative framework which takes into account the Tridentine attempt to reduce superstitious excess, but maintain a rich symbolic liturgy which was understood at a deeper spiritual level by individual Catholics, seems most suitable.

In *Natural symbols*, Mary Douglas attempted to examine the decline of ritual, in its most symbolic forms, as an intellectually-acceptable mode of religious practice or to analyse the ‘replacement of ritual conformity with rational commitment.’² This is easily discernible in the programme of the Protestant reformers, particularly in their promotion of *sola scriptura* and *sola fide* which made salvation possible through the personal reading of the Word and the spiritual faith of the individual. It can also be seen in the strenuous efforts of the Counter-Reformation hierarchy to get their priests to catechise the laity, preach regularly and instil in them an understanding of the mysteries of the faith. What Douglas attempted to question, though she was dealing with a much broader conceptual theme, was the validity of an assertion that the intellectual model was necessarily superior to its ritualistic counterpart. When analysing the Irish experience of the Counter Reformation, this framework is useful, given the cultural distinctions of early modern Ireland not only between Protestant reformers and the Catholic majority, but within Catholicism between the Old English and Gaelic Irish traditions.

While Douglas’ ideas are useful in that they provide an alternative to the tendency amongst reformers (both Protestant and Tridentine) and historians to prioritise intellectually-informed religious practice, they do not seem to consider the possibility that both forms, ritualistic and symbol-led on the one hand, and ascetic

¹ Mary Laven, ‘Encountering the Counter-Reformation’ in *Renaissance Quarterly* lix, No. 3 (2006) pp 706-720; Salvador Ryan, ‘“New wine in old bottles”: implementing Trent in early modern Ireland’ in Thomas Herron and Michael Potterton (eds) *Ireland in the Renaissance, c.1540-1660* (Dublin, 2007), pp131-5; Alexandra Walsham, ‘Miracles and the Counter-Reformation mission to England’ in *The Historical Journal*, xlvi, No.4 (2003), p.780; Eamon Duffy, *The stripping of the altars: traditional religion in England, 1400-1580* (2nd edn. New Haven, 2005).

² Mary Douglas, *Natural symbols: explorations in cosmology* (3rd edn. London,1996) , p.4.

and spiritual on the other, may have operated in unison. In the context of religious practice, questions over whether ritual observance was less efficacious, either for the individual or for the community, because it was not rooted in a theologically-developed consciousness, seem unanswerable. Motivations and personal reflections very often evade historical enquiry and ritual remains as a quantifiable record of religious experience. Ritual performance, such as the Mass, was an activity that involved the participation of the entire community, unlike intellectual pursuits, such as devotional reading, which often only occupied a place in the realm of elite culture. In this context analysing the central ritual act of Catholic worship, the Mass, is a useful way of interpreting the differences between various types of religious practice in early modern Ireland. These differences have, in the past, been seen as a division between elite and popular religion and relied on the assumption that the piety of an educated, and usually wealthy, lay person was vastly different to that of his illiterate and poor neighbour. Eamon Duffy has argued against the assumption ‘that the religion of ritual, relic, and miracle is somehow at odds with the religion of meditation, reading, and the quasi-monastic devotion of the mystics and spiritual guides’, which was ‘filtered into the devotional handbooks of the later Middle Ages.’ In this context the Eucharist facilitated both religious experiences, as ‘communal and individual experience could be held together without tension [in] the rhythm of the Mass, from procession to prayer to rapt gaze and outwards once again to the bustle of offertory or pax.’³ The dichotomy in interpretations also applied to divisions between pre-Reformation religious practices, or ‘traditional’ religion, and the religion espoused by the Council of Trent. Increasingly evidence is emerging to indicate an attempt by reformers to forge links between the two strands, seeing in post-Tridentine Catholicism a variety of connected experiences, within a framework that was directed from above but negotiated at a local level by the clergy and laity.⁴

Michael Carroll considered that pre-famine Catholicism in Ireland was ‘clearly different from the variant favoured by the good bishops who gathered at the Council of Trent’ and that the religion of the populace ‘was a variant of Catholicism in which

³ Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, pp121-3.

⁴ Walsham, ‘Miracles and the Counter-Reformation’ pp780-1. For an exploration of this theme with a special focus on the bardic tradition of Gaelic Ireland, see Salvador Ryan, ‘Popular religion in Gaelic Ireland, 1445-1645’ (unpublished Ph.D thesis, National University of Ireland, Maynooth); Anne Dillon, ‘Praying by number: the confraternity of the rosary and the English Catholic community, c.1580-1700’ in *History*, lxxxviii, no.291 (2003), pp 541-71.

the figure of Christ played only a small role, which was blissfully unconcerned with esoteric doctrines about transubstantiations, Virgin births or Immaculate Conceptions and whose central ritual involved walking several times around a pile of stones or a well.’⁵ In light of this hypothesis, a study of the Mass seems secondary to the study of rituals that surrounded pilgrimages to holy wells. However, devotional practices at holy wells constituted the exceptional, rather than the everyday experience of Catholics and the Mass remained a central element of the devotions performed at pilgrimage sites. An account written of the devotions in the barony of Forth, Co. Wexford in the 1680s, where there were at least two pilgrimage sites, indicates that ‘traditional’ religion existed alongside Tridentine influences;

The native Inhabitants celebrate with singularly pious Devotion the yearly festivities, or patron Days, as they term them, in the several parishes, in honour of God and his Saints, esteeming him profane (if a constant inhabitant) who doth not on such dayes penitently (by confession to his spiritual pastor) purge his conscience from mortal sin, be reconciled to his neighbours, and reverently receive the sacred Eucharist...⁶

Symbolism was central to the religious, artistic and literary culture of medieval and early modern Ireland.⁷ At the Council of Trent, the Eucharist was confirmed as the principal symbol of the Catholic faith;

The most holy Eucharist has indeed this in common with the rest of the sacraments, that it is a symbol of a sacred thing, and is a visible form of an invisible grace; but there is found in the Eucharist this excellent and peculiar thing, that the other sacraments have then first the power of sanctifying when one uses them, whereas in the Eucharist, before being used, there is the Author Himself of sanctity⁸

The Mass became in this period a unifying concept behind which Catholics could rally against the clearly very different Eucharistic expressions of Protestants. The council acknowledged that it was in the field of Eucharistic theology that the most damage had occurred. A decree on the Eucharist had ‘especially ... been the object

⁵ Michael Carroll, ‘Rethinking popular Catholicism in pre-famine Ireland’ in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, xxxiv, no.3 (1995), p.360.

⁶H.F. Hore, ‘An account of the barony of Forth, in the County of Wexford, written at the close of the seventeenth century’ in *Journal of the Kilkenny and South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society*, iv, no.1 (1862), p.69.

⁷ Rachel Moss, Colman Ó Clabaigh and Salvador Ryan (eds) *Art and devotion in late medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 2006); Thomas Finan ‘The bardic search for God: vernacular theology in Gaelic Ireland, 1200-1400’ in *Eolas: the Journal of the American Society of Irish Medieval Studies*, ii, (2007), pp28-44.

⁸ *Canons and decrees*, pp 77-78.

of Its desires, that It might pluck up by the roots those tares of execrable errors and schisms, with which the enemy hath, in these our calamitous times, oversown the doctrine of the faith'.⁹

The Council of Trent envisaged that the promotion of its message would be achieved through the clergy. These clergy would be well-educated and would promote the Tridentine message through parochial channels. In the early modern Ireland these parochial channels were unavailable, which would hinder the administration of the sacraments, a cornerstone of the Tridentine reform.¹⁰ Added to this was the fluctuating position of the clergy who suffered intermittent persecution and could not always be relied upon to uphold and disseminate the official doctrine of the church.¹¹ Even in the late seventeenth century, when lax attitudes to clerical celibacy and the resulting nepotism had been largely expunged, unsuitable candidates could find appointments. In the 1660s Terence O'Kelly, the vicar apostolic of Derry, was reportedly openly living in concubinage, despite being trained in Rome in 1620s.¹² According to one contemporary the vicar general of Tuam had 'never saw either a theological or law school, [and hadn't] even got correct grammar, doesn't know the ceremonial of the Mass, is confined to bed with gout for most of the year, and keeps his fingers open when he celebrates Mass.'¹³ Where such appointments persisted they were likely to affect the progress of reform.¹⁴

Firmly-entrenched traditional practices also hindered the advancement of Tridentine policies. The regulation of marriages, a key concern of the Council, made little progress in early modern Ireland. Synods of the seventeenth century were concerned about it, but for the most part only refer to the impracticality of imposing the Tridentine model on the Irish situation.¹⁵ Other issues, such as the revelries associated with wakes, were targeted by the Catholic synods even though there was

⁹ Ibid, p.75.

¹⁰ John Bossy, 'The Counter-Reformation and the people of Catholic Europe' in *Past and Present*, no.47 (1970), p.60.

¹¹ P.J. Corish, *The Catholic community in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Dublin, 1981), pp 8-9; John Bossy, 'The counter-reformation and the people of Catholic Ireland' in T.D. Williams (ed.) *Historical Studies VIII* (Dublin,1969), p.162.

¹² Corish, *The Catholic community*, p.56.

¹³ Benignus Millett 'Catalogue of Volume 3 (1672-5) of the *Scrittura riferite nei congressi, Irlanda*' in Propaganda Archives: Part 2, ff.201-518' in *Collectanea Hibernica* 21 & 22 (1979-80), p.67.

¹⁴ Alison Forrestal, *Catholic synods in Ireland 1660-1690* (Dublin, 1998), pp 157-60, 174-6.

¹⁵ Bossy, 'Counter-reformation and the people of Catholic Ireland', p.160; Edward Rogan, *Synods and catechesis in Ireland c.445-1962* (Rome,1987) , pp38-9.

no mention of them in the Tridentine decrees. It is clear that a spirit of reform was adapted to suit the Irish context, where death and burial had accumulated a host of para-liturgical and secular activities.¹⁶ Across Europe the machinery of the Counter Reformation had to overcome obstacles that surfaced trying to impose a universalising program on a variety of social milieux. These difficulties can be generally characterised as emanating from an urban and rural divide. The division existed in Ireland but involved issues of ethnicity as well as geography and would significantly impact on the progress of reform and the attitude that the clergy adopted to promote it. Perhaps the most serious obstruction to the progress of the Counter Reformation in Ireland was the Church's poor institutional framework. As parish churches had been assumed into the new Protestant state structure, Catholics were faced with a disability that was not common in a European context where state-sponsored confessionalisation had taken place. The lack of churches posed an enormous impediment to the mission of the counter-reformers, who were intent on making Catholicism a 'parochially-grounded' religion.¹⁷ This impracticality was obviously a serious issue where regular worship was concerned. The Council of Trent had outlawed mass in private houses, a regulation that was incompatible with what had become both a necessary and important aspect of Catholic worship in Ireland after the Reformation.¹⁸ As persecution increased in the later seventeenth century, Masses were sometimes impracticable even in a domestic setting and the culture of the 'Mass rock' was born.¹⁹

In light of the poor parochial sources that survive it remains an elusive task to discover how the Catholic church in Ireland managed to successfully, if haphazardly, implement the process of reform. There are few ecclesiastical archives available, mainly synodal records, which in other areas provide useful data concerning internal parochial disputes and administrative problems.²⁰ The lacuna in the sources revolves around the fact that the church had no state backing, priests lived peripatetic

¹⁶ Corish, *The Catholic community*, p.50; Revelries at wakes were condemned by the synods Tuam(1631) Armagh (1670) and Meath (1685) see Rogan, *Synods and catechesis*, pp 32, 41,47.

¹⁷ Bossy, 'The Counter-Reformation and the people of Catholic Europe', p.53.

¹⁸ Colm Lennon, 'Mass in the Manor House: the Counter-Reformation in Dublin, 1560-1630' in James Kelly and Daire Keogh (eds) *History of the Catholic diocese of Dublin* (Dublin, 2000), pp112-26.

¹⁹ Patrick J. Corish, *The Irish Catholic experience: a historical survey* (Dublin, 1985), pp 129-130, 132.

²⁰ Bossy, 'Counter-Reformation and people of Catholic Europe' pp 53,56.

existences and the laity had lost the spiritual locus of their worship, the parish church. A sensitivity to the divergent nature of Irish Catholicism must permeate any discussion of Eucharistic practice in early modern Ireland. This relates to divisions of the pre-Reformation period of the *ecclesia inter Hibernios* and the *ecclesia inter Anglos*.²¹ There were also urban and rural divides, often these coincided with the divisions between the Old English and Gaelic Irish. This was not a situation that was unique to Ireland. In northern England and upland areas of Europe many communities operated under similar kin-based societal structures as those of Gaelic Ireland.²² The different emphases of Eucharistic practice and belief among Catholics in Ireland must be considered in light of different ethnic heritages. While different practices in Gaelic and Old English areas could for the most part coexist in pre-Reformation society, it is clear that the universalizing principles of the Counter Reformation would be incompatible with such heterogeneity.

Although the church operated under different structures among the Gaelic Irish and Old English, the function of the Mass remained the same. For both groups the Mass was the central act of worship and its primary social purpose was to reconcile the community to each other and promote charity in the parish. This aim very much coincided with the secular preoccupations of the kin-based or Gaelic society. In urban areas dominated by the Old English, the Mass performed the same social function but was susceptible to a much more elaborate system of piety which reflected the complex hierarchies of urban life. This is why the feast of Corpus Christi achieved its cultic status in urban societies.²³ References to the feast in medieval and early modern Ireland demonstrate that it was in the towns that the feast was most prevalent. Archbishop Richard FitzRalph of Armagh preached to crowds in Dublin during the Corpus Christi octave in the mid-fourteenth century. The first reference to a Corpus Christi procession in Dublin occurred in 1466, while the dramatic performance of the feast was recorded in Kilkenny as late as 1637 when the corporation paid ten shillings ‘for copying the book of Corpus Christi plays.’²⁴ The Council of Trent decreed in 1551 that ‘this sublime and venerable sacrament be,

²¹ 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* (Dublin, 1986), p.78.

²² Bossy, ‘Counter-Reformation and the people of Catholic Europe’, p.55.

²³ Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, pp43-4.

²⁴ Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi :the Eucharist in late medieval culture* (Cambridge, 1991), p.213; P.J. Corish, *The Catholic community*, p.11.

with special veneration and solemnity, celebrated, every year, on a certain day, and that a festival; and that it be borne reverently and with honour in processions through the streets, and public places.²⁵

The primary social function of the Mass was aimed at bringing the community together and dissipating feuds. For this reason the laity received communion usually only once a year at Easter, preceded by their annual confession. The reception of communion so infrequently appears to have been specifically aimed at fostering communality. Those who received more frequently could in fact set themselves apart from other community members by their devotion.²⁶ However it must be remembered that although the laity only received communion once a year, they could 'hear' Mass as often as they liked. This is an important aspect because it constituted the regular, rather than exceptional, worship of the laity. It is in this context that the second aspect of Eucharistic theology became evident. This was the Eucharist as a Divine symbol, a manifestation of God in the community. Much has been documented about the laity's fascination with this concept, from Eucharistic miracle stories that confirmed the doctrine of transubstantiation, to the practice of Host gazing and veneration.²⁷ It also encompassed the belief that the Eucharist, particularly in the context of Masses offered for specific intentions, had a propitiatory function which operated independently of whether or not the laity received it. This was the sacrificial element of the Mass which was so denounced by Protestant reformers.²⁸

The council of Trent sought to do two things in their decrees on the Mass. The first was to assert Catholic theology against the beliefs of the Protestants, which meant a clear pronouncement on the doctrine of transubstantiation and an affirmation of the Mass as a sacrifice. The second was to reform abuses that had crept in to Catholic Eucharistic practices.²⁹ Eucharistic theology was expounded in the 13th Session (1551), while issues concerning the Mass itself were discussed at the 22nd Session (1562). In setting out its doctrinal stance on the former, the Council clearly affirmed

²⁵ *Canons and decrees*, p.79.

²⁶ For the potential divisiveness of frequent communion see Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, p.93.

²⁷ Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, chapter 2; Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, pp 95-102, Corish, *The Catholic community*, p.7; Virginia Reinburg, 'Liturgy and the laity in late medieval and Reformation France' in *Sixteenth Century Journal*, xxiii, no. 3 (1992), p.527.

²⁸ Bossy, 'The mass as a social institution', pp 34-53.

²⁹ Reinold Theisen, *Mass liturgy and the Council of Trent* (Minnesota, 1965), p.29; *Canons and decrees*, pp160-161.

the sacrificial element of the rite but also pleaded for conformity among Christians in ‘this sign of unity...this bond of charity...this symbol of concord.’³⁰ In the 22nd Session the council was concerned with the function and practice of the Mass and set out justifications for its propitiatory role, for masses in honour of the saints, masses where only the priest communicated as well as affirming the use of various ‘external helps’ such as lights, incense and vestments.³¹ In its ‘decree concerning things to be observed, and to be avoided, in the celebration of Mass’, the Council outlined three major problems under the titles of covetousness, irreverence and superstition. By covetousness the council was referring to the buying and selling of Masses, a practice that was common in the medieval church, a corruption of a system based on (admittedly expected) voluntary donation for spiritual services.

The problem of irreverence was considered to stem from the celebration of Masses in places other than the parish church and the Council ordered an end to the practice of holding Masses in private houses. In an Irish context this part of the decree would hold great significance as it was only by holding Masses in private dwellings that Catholics were able to practice their faith at all in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Subsequently these Masses in private houses became more desired than necessary. Indeed this aspect of Tridentine reform, which also included instructions on not allowing ‘wandering’ priests to celebrate Mass, was one which would remain unfeasible in Ireland until well into the eighteenth century.³² The final target of the decree was superstition and was the most reactionary to Protestant criticisms. The Council wanted to extirpate the practice of saying a ‘fixed number of certain Masses’.³³ The observance of these fixed numbers of Masses would have a long legacy in an Irish context, particularly given the highly ritualistic practices surrounding death.³⁴ In 1684 the Catholic bishop of Ferns, Luke Wadding, recorded in his notebook that he was given credit for saying 300 Masses for the husband of a Mrs. de la Herse and for 100 Masses for another woman’s mother and son.³⁵ It is clear that given its restricted position the Irish church could not be expected to implement all of the reforms that Trent demanded in regards to the Mass. However it

³⁰ *Canons and decrees*, p.81.

³¹ *Ibid*, pp151-8.

³² Gillespie, *Devoted people*, p 27-8.

³³ *Canons and decrees*, p.161.

³⁴ Bossy, ‘The Counter-Reformation and the people of Catholic Ireland’, pp163-5.

³⁵ P.J. Corish (ed.), ‘Bishop Wadding’s notebook’ in *Archivium Hibernicum*, xxix, (1970), p.109.

is also clear that the Counter Reformation was eventually implemented in Ireland via extra-parochial routes. In the main this was accomplished as it would have been had the parochial system been available, through the clergy. The message that they preached was Tridentine, even if the framework for the transmission of doctrine was not.

One of the principal ways in which Irish Catholics would have been made aware of the Church's teachings about the Eucharist was through the instruction of the clergy. The success of communicating doctrine to the laity was dependent on a number of factors, chiefly the abilities, dedication and orthodoxy of the clergy, the opportunities afforded to the priest to communicate with his congregation and the response of the laity to their priests' instruction. The extent of lay knowledge, though only patchily recorded, will be discussed in the next chapter. Increasing the laity's theological knowledge was an essential component of the Tridentine programme of reform. The council proposed to produce a catechism which would be translated into the vernacular and given to parish priests 'in order that the faithful people may approach to the reception of the sacraments with greater reverence and devotion of mind.'³⁶ The resulting catechism, generally known as the Roman catechism, provided the foundation for these vernacular catechisms. This was itself adapted from the catechism of the Jesuit, Peter Canisius, although it was different in structure. The catechetical model of Canisius was in the form of questions and answers, a style that was widely adopted by others and most useful in a pastoral context. The first Tridentine catechism produced in Irish by Florence Conry in 1598, adopted its style as did the most widely used English-language catechism of the later seventeenth century, the Douai catechism.³⁷

John Bossy has argued that at least in the early years of reform, catechesis simply imposed 'a mental automatism on the behavioural automatisms of the code of external practice.'³⁸ Others have taken a more positive view; 'the implicit aim of catechesis' suggests Gordon A. Jensen, 'was to inculcate piety'.³⁹ The Tridentine decree appeared to fall somewhere in the middle. Priests were to set aside 'all

³⁶ *Canons and decrees*, pp 213-214.

³⁷ Ryan, 'Popular religion in Gaelic Ireland', ii, pp 8-11.

³⁸ Bossy, 'The Counter-Reformation and people of Catholic Europe', p.66.

³⁹ Gordon A. Jensen 'Shaping piety through catechetical structures: the importance of order' in *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, x, no.2 (2008), p.224.

unprofitable questions' but at the same time 'endeavour to impress them on the hearts of all, and to instruct them in the law of the Lord.'⁴⁰ It is difficult to gauge whether the knowledge of the laity was superficial or whether it had a significant impact on their experience of the Mass. Looming large of course were the particular circumstances that surrounded the Irish church, where the mission of the institution itself and consequently the laity's religious practice was disrupted intermittently for the period 1660 to 1740. This impedes but does not negate the imposition of a European frame of reference for how successful catechesis was in Ireland, particularly given the fact that the Irish clergy were so often in contact with continental affairs.⁴¹ The Irish continental college network not only ensured that Irish clergy were being schooled in the centres of Tridentine Europe but they also became the physical conduits for the dissemination of catechetical material. The students of the colleges were required under oath to return to Ireland on mission which meant that the traffic between Europe and Ireland was considerable.⁴² Books seized in Chester in 1609 indicate a complex system of transport involving clergy and laity. The 'divers papistical books' both manuscript and printed, together with 'superstitious relics' that were seized by the port authorities probably included catechisms.⁴³ The previous year a young law student was found trying to smuggle catechisms into Ireland and there were other reports of similar consignments arriving on the ships from the continent.⁴⁴ The fact that the Irish church was successfully able to produce vernacular catechisms seems to suggest an ability to respond to specific demands and compares favourably with European standards.⁴⁵ It has also been suggested that Ireland was an innovator in catechising in the domestic sphere, as priests were encouraged to perform catechesis in the houses they stayed in, a practice not common in the rest of Europe.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ *Canons and decrees*, p.214.

⁴¹ R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The world of Catholic renewal 1540-1770* (Cambridge, 1998) pp 87-9.

⁴² Tadhg Ó Hanracháin, 'A typical anomaly? the success of the Irish counter-reformation' in Judith Devlin and Howard B. Clarke (eds) *European encounters: essays in memory of Albert Lovett* (Dublin, 2003) p.86.

⁴³ Brian Mac Cuarta, 'Old English Catholicism in Chester documents, 1609-1619' in *Archivium Hibernicum* lvii, (2003), p.7.

⁴⁴ Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, pp147-8, 151.

⁴⁵ See the comments of Bossy on the tendency among French bishops to produce their own catechisms. Bossy, 'The Counter-Reformation and the people of Catholic Europe', p.66.

⁴⁶ Bossy, 'The Counter-Reformation and the people of Catholic Ireland', p.169.

Even though Catholic books were subject to confiscation if they were openly imported into the country, it is clear that books were quite easily obtained in the seventeenth century. Whether through clandestine or normal routes, it is likely that the clergy would have had little difficulty in acquiring catechetical material.⁴⁷ Franciscans travelling on mission to Ireland in the 1690s requested only four books, which indicates that they were for their own use to be transmitted orally to the laity.⁴⁸ The only record of catechism distribution to lay persons was in the diocese of Ferns when the bishop, Luke Wadding, listed items he distributed to ‘relations, friends, benefactors, poor gentry, and widows, children etc.’ between 1668 and 1687.⁴⁹ Among these were twelve dozen ‘abridgments of Christian doctrines with pro[o]fes of scripture’.⁵⁰ This was Henry Turberville’s *Abridgement of Christian doctrine*. More commonly known as the Douai catechism, this work replaced earlier favourites such as the Roman catechism and those of Canisius and Bellarmine.⁵¹ The catechism was sold in Dublin by a Catholic bookseller, William Weston, in 1688, which was probably where Wadding sourced it.⁵²

The predominance of Jesuit authors in catechetical endeavours is unsurprising given their important role in the Counter Reformation. As active agents in the Irish reform movement their preference for their own catechisms could be expected. The extent of their influence remained in anglicised areas where gentry families provided much of the manpower by sending their sons to Jesuit seminaries.⁵³ Wadding came from an Old English family which had been resident in Wexford since the twelfth century. The town itself had a strong Old English community and Wadding’s relations with local Protestants were positive. His choice of the Douai catechism reflected his own family connections as well as the community he was ministering to.⁵⁴ The Douai catechism was in the form of questions and answers following the method of Canisius and Bellarmine and was published in a simpler ‘abstract’ form in 1682.⁵⁵ It

⁴⁷ Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, pp 63,76, 114-115, 147-8.

⁴⁸ Benignus Millett, ‘Irish Franciscans ask Propaganda to give them books for their pastoral ministry in Ireland, 1689-1696’ in *Collectanea Hibernica* no. 44/45 (2002/2003), pp 63-75.

⁴⁹ Corish, ‘Wadding’s notebook’, pp88-91.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p.90.

⁵¹ Bossy, ‘The Counter-Reformation and the people of Catholic Europe’ p.66; Rogan, *Synods and Catechesis* p.29.

⁵² Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, pp148-50; Corish, ‘Wadding’s notebook’, p.90.

⁵³ Lennon, ‘The Counter-Reformation in Ireland’, p.87.

⁵⁴ Barry Crosbie. ‘Wadding, Luke’ *DIB*; Corish, *The Catholic community*, pp 61-4.

⁵⁵ *An abstract of the Douay catechism* (Douai, 1682).

is possible that it was these smaller abstracts which were distributed by Wadding. Turberville, a Jesuit and a renowned controversialist, published *A manual of controversies* in 1654 which enabled clergy to quickly access the key areas of contention between Protestants and Catholics. This polemical streak was also reflected in Turberville's catechism. The catechism itself was designed to be used by the laity, 'the plainness of the style' was for 'minding rather the profit of the ignorant than the pleasure of word-affecting critics'.⁵⁶

It must be noted that the clergy, at least those with considerable means, may have had copies of a variety of catechisms. Luke Wadding, whose library perhaps offers a good, if isolated, example of the literary tastes of a counter-reforming bishop, had copies of the Canisius, Bellarmine and Tridentine catechism. Similarly John Donnelly, a Dominican preacher from Drogheda, owned copies of the Douai and Trent catechisms.⁵⁷ The Douai catechism was emphatically Tridentine in focus and contained a full exposition of the sacraments, as well as a detailed section that expounded the ceremonies of the Mass. The purpose of the catechism was to prepare the laity for receiving the sacraments and to provide a foundation in the major tenets of the faith including the articles of the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Seven Deadly Sins and the Beatitudes. Turberville's section on the ceremonies of the Mass did not appear in the catechism of Trent. This exegesis of the liturgy of the Mass became a key feature of the devotional literature of the period.

The theological emphases in the Douai catechism reiterated the Catholic belief that sacraments were visible signs of an invisible grace and that in the Eucharist the laity received 'the body and blood of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, whole Christ, under outward forms of bread and wine'. The catechism also stressed the important role of priests as administrators of the sacraments, the necessity of confession before receiving communion and the sacrificial element of the rite as 'propitiatory for the remission of sins, impetratory for the obtaining of all benefits, a peaceable offering of Thanksgiving of our God, and a sweet holocaust of Divine Love.' Contending

⁵⁶ Henry Turberville, *An abridgment of Christian doctrine with proofs of scripture for points controverted, catechistically explained by way of question and answer* (Douai, 1648), 'An addresse to the reader'.

⁵⁷ Corish, 'Wadding's notebook' p.89 Wadding gave out 20 dozen of Bellarmine's catechism, an indication perhaps of the laity's ability to absorb more complex theological works. Hugh Fenning (ed.), 'The library of a preacher of Drogheda: John Donnelly, O.P. (d.1748)' in *Collectanea Hibernica*, no.18/19 (1976/77), p.95.

Eucharistic rituals were dismissed as being receptions of ‘baker’s bread, with a poor sup of common vintners wine’.⁵⁸ While in its theological exegesis the Douai catechism asserted what had been the Catholic belief for centuries, a pastoral element was introduced in the exposition on the liturgical components of the Mass. Turberville, in his section on the ‘ceremonies of the Mass’, demonstrated a thorough dedication to Counter-Reformation ideals in attempting to convey a deeper sense of the theological meanings behind the liturgical performance of the priest. He explained the kneeling, bowing, kissing, washing and repetitive actions that occurred during the liturgy, such as the blessing of the chalice three times with the sign of the cross. This was ‘to signifie that our redemption made upon the Crosse was done by the consent of the whole Trinity.’⁵⁹ He also discussed the part taken by the laity in their responses and bodily worship during the rite. The Pax, or kiss of peace signified ‘that peace and charity which ought to be amongst the faithful, who do all eat of one bread of the Eucharist and are all members of one mystical body.’⁶⁰ It is clear that anyone who read or was catechised using the Douai catechism could have absorbed the basic theological concepts behind Catholic Eucharistic belief but was also exposed to the knowledge that would have infused their own participation in the Mass with a deeper spiritual understanding.

Turberville’s catechism was of little use to Irish-speaking Catholics, as it was not published in Irish until 1738.⁶¹ There were at least five Irish language catechisms produced throughout the seventeenth century which were aimed at promoting the Counter Reformation. Four have been shown to follow closely the Tridentine model but with additions that were particularly suited to the Irish situation, most notably poetry to help memorisation.⁶² Salvador Ryan has demonstrated how the use of verse to evangelise among Irish-speaking Catholics drew on the embedded culture of bardic poetry. The use of Irish in the context of Tridentine reform reflected not only the evangelistic zeal of those missionary priests that came from the Gaelic Irish

⁵⁸ Turberville, *Abridgement of Christian doctrine*, pp 207-8, 209.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.299.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p.305.

⁶¹ Michael Tynan, *Catholic instruction in Ireland, 1720-1950: the O’Reilly/Donlevy catechetical tradition* (Dublin, 1985), p.14.

⁶² Four of these, those by Ó hEoghusa, Gearnon, Mac Aingil and Stapleton are discussed in Mary O’Reilly, ‘Seventeenth century Irish Catechisms-European or not?’ in *Archivum Hibernicum*, 1, (1996). Francis O’Molloy’s catechism *Lucerna Fidelium* can be added to these and was printed in Rome in 1676. Corish, ‘Wadding’s notebook’, p.72 fn.166.

culture, but also a commitment to, and pride in their heritage. In 1658 a report on Bonaventura O'Hussey's catechism to Propaganda Fide stated that it 'contributed greatly to counteracting ignorance, inculcating holiness and preserving the native language'.⁶³ Many Irish priests returned to the places of their birth on mission, suggesting that they may have enjoyed a greater respect from the local community.⁶⁴ If these priests were ministering to Gaelic areas, it is clear that Irish-speaking Catholics had access to a range of vernacular aids that would have enabled them to gain a deeper understanding of the Eucharist.⁶⁵

In 1611 the Irish Franciscan, Bonaventure O'Hussey, sought permission to publish *An Teagas Críosdaidhe* from the authorities in Antwerp. The catechism, partly versified and drawing on O'Hussey's bardic heritage, was reprinted in 1614 or 1615 and remained in use throughout the seventeenth century. Together with the report to Propaganda of its use in Ireland in 1658, the catechism was circulated in manuscript copies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and was reprinted in 1707 in Rome, edited by Philip Maguire.⁶⁶ The catechism was compiled with an eye to the religious atmosphere of Counter-Reformation Europe as well as the situation in Ireland, which O'Hussey described as 'afflicted by heresy'. Closely following the structure of the catechism of the Council of Trent it eschewed the question and answer style of the catechism of Canisius, but departed from the Roman model 'especially [in] its tendency to address issues peculiar to the land for which it was composed'.⁶⁷ These issues included making provision for the incomplete knowledge of those who had a 'barbarous upbringing' which left them devoid of catechetical instruction, as well as the use of Gaelic verse which would ensure a greater impact in Irish-speaking areas familiar with the tropes of bardic poetry.⁶⁸

Though aware of those of 'barbarous upbringing', the catechism was probably for the use of the clergy operating in an oral culture. Marc Caball has suggested that

⁶³ Salvador Ryan, 'Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa's 'An Teagas Críosdaidhe' 1611-1614 : a reassessment of its audience and use' in *Archivium Hibernicum* , lviii (2004), p.261.

⁶⁴ Ó Hanracháin, 'A typical anomaly?', p.86.

⁶⁵ Antoin Gearnon's *Parrthas an Anma* (1645) was both a catechism and a prayer-book. Other non-catechetical devotional works produced in Irish in the seventeenth century included Aodh Mac Aingil's *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe* (1618) and Geoffrey Keating's *Eochair -sgiath an Aifrin* and *Trí bior-ghaoithe an bháis* (1631).

⁶⁶ Ryan, 'Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa's 'An Teagas Críosdaidhe', pp 261-3; Eoin Mac Cárthaigh, 'Ó hEódhasa, Giolla Brighde' *DIB*.

⁶⁷ Ryan, 'Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa's 'An Teagas Críosdaidhe', p.264.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p.265, fn28.

O’Hussey’s catechism marked ‘a fundamental shift in Gaelic communicative practice.’⁶⁹ This shift was from a predominantly oral and manuscript tradition to a print culture, which in the process firmly connected Gaelic Ireland with the religious developments in Europe. The prose sections on doctrine could be transmitted by the clergy to the laity in an oral context with the poetic compositions serving as useful summaries of doctrine which were easy to memorise.⁷⁰ The verse relating to the sacraments was brief and simple;

Na seachd sacramainte dhoit:

Baisdeadh, Dol fá láimh easboig, /

Corp Críosd is Faoidin ghlan,

Ola ré mbás, Ord, Posadh.

As leo sin ghléstar na glais

Atáid róimh ar dhun bparrthais

A n-aimhréidh dá ndeachad so

Tré chaill aithne an ardFhlatho.⁷¹

In his explanation of the Eucharist, O’Hussey attempted to set out the doctrine articulated at the Council of Trent in a concise form for a lay audience. He began with an explanation of the things necessary for the celebration of the Eucharist, the Real Presence of Christ and the transubstantiation of the elements. In his discussion of the presence of Christ in every particle and on every altar in the world, O’Hussey

⁶⁹ Marc Caball, ‘Articulating Irish identity in early seventeenth-century Europe: the case of Giolla Brighde Ó hEódhusa (c. 1570–1614)’ in *Archivium Hibernicum*, lxii (2009), p.280.

⁷⁰ Aodh Mac Aingil claimed that the reason for resorting to print was practical rather than progressive because oral catechesis was obstructed in Ireland due to persecution. *Ibid*, p.282.

⁷¹ ‘The seven sacraments are/ Baptism, confirmation,/ Eucharist and Confession/ Extreme unction, Ordination, Marriage/ With these are dressed the ditches/ Paradise for us is closed/ Should these become troublesome/ Because we forget the knowledge of God.’ Bonabhentura Ó hEodhasa, *An Teagas Críosdaidhe* ed. by Fearghal Mac Raghnaill (Dublin, 1976), p.75.

was evidently aware that his audience may have been exposed to Protestant criticisms of Catholic Eucharistic doctrine. However, O’Hussey does not provide a detailed exegesis on this matter, simply stating that ‘God can do more than you can understand’.⁷² This reiterated the Tridentine decree to set aside ‘all unprofitable questions’ and to impress upon ‘the hearts of [the faithful] ... the sacred oracles, and the maxims of salvation and to instruct them in the law of the Lord.’⁷³ O’Hussey, avoiding abstract articles of doctrine, explained the presence of Christ at every Mass in different places by comparing it to the soul’s presence in the head and feet of one person. Then, using a pedagogical tool that long predated the Counter Reformation, he used an example from the life of St. Anthony of Padua, who appeared singing in the quire at the same time that he was giving a sermon in Limoges. O’Hussey then reiterated the three conditions necessary to receive the Eucharist; confession, fasting and receiving in the knowledge of the Real Presence.⁷⁴ O’Hussey’s catechism was influential on other writers long after its first publication. John Dowley in his *Suim Bhunadhasach an Teagaisg Chríosdaiidhe* (1663) was indebted to O’Hussey for the structure of his catechism, using both prose and verse. His verse summaries borrowed heavily from O’Hussey, the poetry composed to memorise the sacraments was copied directly, although Dowley only kept the first stanza which listed the sacraments.⁷⁵ The reprinted edition of 1707 added devotional material on Our Lady together with woodcuts of the coronation of the Virgin and the Crucifixion. These additions perhaps indicated that the catechism was now considered useful for a lay audience (see figure 5:1 & 5:2). The catechism of Andrew Donlevy of 1742, which remained influential until near the end of the twentieth century, incorporated aspects of O’Hussey’s catechism, including his verse summaries.⁷⁶

⁷² Ryan, ‘Popular religion in Gaelic Ireland’, ii, pp53-5.

⁷³ *Canons and decrees*, p.214.

⁷⁴ Ryan, ‘Popular religion in Gaelic Ireland’, ii, p.55; Ó hEodhasa, *An Teagasg Chríosdaiidhe*, p.81; *The life of St. Anthony of Padoua* (Paris, 1660), pp 38-40.

⁷⁵ Tynan, *Catholic instruction in Ireland*, pp10-11; The Dowley catechism was re-printed in 1728 in Hugh Mac Curtain’s *The elements of the Irish language* (Louvain, 1728), according to the ESTC, there only remains one copy of the 1663 edition in the Royal Irish Academy.

⁷⁶ Éamonn Ó Ciardha, ‘Andrew Donlevy’, *DIB*.



Figure 5:1 Woodcut showing the Crucifixion contained in the Philip Maguire's edition of Bonaventura O'Hussey's *An Teagasg Críosdaidhe* (Rome, 1707) [Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland].



Figure 5:2 Woodcut showing the Coronation of the Virgin in Philip Maguire's edition of Bonaventura O'Hussey's *An Teagasg Críosaíde* (Rome, 1707) [Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland].

In 1676 another Franciscan, Francis O'Molloy requested permission to print 'a small catechism in Irish for the Irish and Scottish nations' which he said 'wavers for the lack of instructors ... [and] has been greatly approved as very useful, not only for the simple [people] ... of these countries but also for the more learned and to maintain and confirm the Catholic religion and Christian life in these calamitous times.'⁷⁷ The result was the publication in Rome of *Lucerna Fidelium, seu fasciculus decerptus ab authoribus magis versatis qui tractarunt de doctrina Christiana* (1676). The catechism remained popular until the early eighteenth century for priests going on mission to Ireland. It was published in a second edition in 1686 and it appeared to have been the standard catechetical work used by the Franciscans in the late seventeenth century. In 1679 a group of ten Franciscans from St. Isidore's in Rome who were travelling to Ireland, requested copies of the catechism together with O'Molloy's Irish grammar from Propaganda Fide. *Lucerna Fidelium* was one of the four books requested by Franciscan missionaries to Ireland in the 1690s, while in 1707 another Franciscan was looking for the catechism, also on his way to Ireland. By this time the corpus of texts used by the Franciscan missionaries equipped them to evangelise both English and Irish speaking laity. As well as O'Molloy's catechism, the priests requested copies of an English language catechism by Philip Howard as well as the Roman Ritual.⁷⁸ Philip Howard, an English Dominican cardinal, never wrote a catechism, so it is possible that it may been one which had his approbation.⁷⁹ Clearly the careful and limited selection of books aimed to cover the basic demands of the mission to Ireland, including catechetical instruction in Irish and English and the liturgy for the administration of the sacraments. Luke Wadding provided for the clergy of his diocese by distributing 'small rituals for administering sacraments', some of which he bought in Dublin.⁸⁰ The concise book list of the Franciscans travelling to Ireland also testifies to the difficulties of transporting books to Ireland where their discovery could mean confiscation and prosecution.

⁷⁷ Bartholomew Egan, 'Notes on Propaganda Fide printing-press and correspondence concerning Francis Molloy, O.F.M.' in *Collectanea Hibernica*, ii, (1959), p.117.

⁷⁸ Egan, 'Notes on Propaganda Fide printing-press', pp 120-1; Millett, 'Irish Franciscans ask Propaganda to give them books for their pastoral ministry in Ireland', pp 63-4.

⁷⁹ Millett, 'Irish Franciscans ask Propaganda to give them books for their pastoral ministry in Ireland', p.64, fn.4.

⁸⁰ Corish, 'Wadding's notebook', p.89.

O'Molloy's catechism adopted the question and answer style that had been favoured by Peter Canisius indicating a varied approach to catechesis among the Franciscans. Though coming from the Gaelic tradition and capable of poetic composition, O'Molloy did not include any of the versified compositions seen in O'Hussey's text. In fact Molloy borrowed heavily on a devotional text written in 1645 by Anthony Gearnon, entitled *Parrthas an anma*, O'Molloy's copy survives in the British Library.⁸¹ *Parrthas an anma*, a prayer book combined with catechetical instruction, borrowed on O'Hussey's *Teagas Críosaíde* but with some differences.⁸² In particular, Gearnon had used illustrative woodcuts in his text (see figures 5:3, 5:4 and 5:5) and avoided 'literary archaisms' which indicates that it was for popular lay consumption.⁸³ The woodcuts which depict laypersons at their devotions suggest that the work was for a particular type of lay audience, showing well-dressed nobility kneeling in front of the altar, receiving absolution and receiving the Eucharist. Woodcuts were a feature of the German translations of Canisius' *Smaller catechism*, an Augsburg edition of 1589 contained 103 illustrations.⁸⁴ The woodcuts represent a visual piety, with the laity adoring Christ on the cross, in pictures and in Eucharistic monstrances and the images themselves offered a visual stimulus to prayer for those who read the catechism. Together with its simple language, *Parrthas an anma* was distinctively for a lay audience.⁸⁵ Gearnon's work circulated in Ireland in the 1660s and well into the eighteenth century in manuscript transcriptions.⁸⁶ Originally it may have been envisaged as a devotional aid for the many Irish exiles living on the continent, as has been suggested of O'Hussey's catechism.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Antoin Gearnon, *Parrthas an Anma* ed. by Anselm Ó Fachtna (Dublin, 1953), p.xviii; O'Molloy's aptitude in this field can be seen in his Irish grammar which contained sections on Gaelic prose and poetry and also contained a verse which lamented the neglect of the Irish language, see Darren McGettigan 'Ó Maolmhuidh, Proinsias' *DIB*.

⁸² Frioinsias Ó Maolmhuidh, *Lucerna Fidelium* edited by Pádraig Ó Súilleabháin (Dublin, 1976) p.xiii; Ryan, 'Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa's 'An Teagas Críosaíde', p.261.

⁸³ Vincent Morley, 'Gearnon, Antoin' *DIB*.

⁸⁴ Tynan, *Catholic instruction in Ireland*, p.12; Jeffrey Chips Smith, *Sensuous worship, Jesuits and the art of the early Catholic reformation in Germany* (Princeton, 2002) pp19-20.

⁸⁵ Antoin Gearnon, *Parrthas an Anma* ed. by Anselm Ó Fachtna (Dublin, 1953) p.xix.

⁸⁶ Ryan, 'Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa's 'An Teagas Críosaíde', p.261; Anselm Faulkner, 'Anthony Gearnon, O.F.M. (c. 1610-1680) and the Irish Remonstrance' in *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society*, xvii, no. 3 (1971), p.141.

⁸⁷ Corish, *The Irish Catholic experience*, p.105; for a criticism of this assertion see Ryan, 'Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa's 'An Teagas Críosaíde', p.159.



Figure 5:3 Woodcut showing the elevation of the host from Antoin Gearnon's *Parrhas an anma* (1645), p.12



Figure 5:4 Woodcut of the laity receiving absolution from Antoin Gearnon's *Parrhas an anma* (1645), p.111.



Figure 5:5 Woodcut of laity kneeling in front of an image of the Resurrection from Antoin Gearnon's *Parrthas an anma* (1645), p.33.



Figure 5:6 Woodcut of the reception of the Eucharist from Antoin Geranon's *Parrthas an anma* (1645) p.371.

The catechism of Francis O'Molloy was influential until the early eighteenth century. It was representative of the progression in the Franciscan Irish-language catechetical tradition during the seventeenth century. This progression involved adapting the templates of the catechisms of Canisius and Trent in response to the demands of the mission to Ireland. *Lucerna fidelium* built on these earlier texts incorporating some elements and abandoning others. It was in question and answer form, but without versification or woodcuts. Departing from the model of O'Hussey, who provided a prose exegesis on the sacrament of the Eucharist, with a short verse on the sacraments in general, *Lucerna fidelium* included the doctrinal explication of the sacrament as well as a section that explained the Mass. This was an abridgement of Gearnon's *Parrthas an anma*⁸⁸ and included an explanation of the meaning of the Mass, the role of the priest and the laity, the signification of the vestments, altar plate, and liturgical actions as well as the appropriate behaviour of the laity.⁸⁹ The description of the Mass was a feature it had in common with the Douai catechism, although O'Molloy's section was more concise and differed in some of the explanations. In relation to the fracturing of the Host into three parts, Turberville explained that it signified 'the division of Our Saviour's soul and body made on the cross, and that his body was broken, or divided in three principal parts, namely, his hands, his side, and feet.'⁹⁰ O'Molloy, using Gearnon's explanation, implied that it signified the three groups that benefitted from the Mass; those in heaven, those in this world and the souls in purgatory.⁹¹ As well as the liturgical actions of the priest, the vestments and altar plate are described in the context of the Passion. The amice represented the cloak put on Christ by the Jews, the belt, maniple, pallium and stole represent the ropes with which Christ was bound while the altar represented the hill of Calvary.⁹² The behaviour of the laity was described in the final question on the Mass and included instructions for their bodily worship and participation. In answer to the question 'How should you conduct yourself at Mass?' the laity were urged to

⁸⁸ Gearnon, *Parrthas an Anma* pp132-7.

⁸⁹ O'Molloy, *Lucerna fidelium*, pp77-81.

⁹⁰ Turberville, *Abridgement of Christian Doctrine*, p.303.

⁹¹ 'Na tri dronga da tteid a ttarbha, .i. an lucht ata a bhflaitheas De, an lucht ata san saoghal so, ⁊ na hanmanna ata a bpurgadoir.' O'Molloy, *Lucerna fidelium*, p.80.

⁹² *Ibid*, pp78-9. The amice was a long oblong piece of linen worn around the neck and shoulders.

observe the vestments of the priest and begin to think of Christ ‘as though I could see Him, with His cross on His shoulder going to Calvary.’⁹³

O’Molloy’s catechism was a concise exposition of the sacrament of the Eucharist and the central actions of the Mass. It differed from O’Hussey’s by adopting the question and answer style and adopted the devotional aspects of Gearnon’s *Parrthas an anma*. It was a shorter, more compact catechism for the use of the clergy during a period of greater persecution. It catered not only for those laity who could absorb a deeper theological message, but also to those whose experience was rooted in the ritual of the Mass and accommodated its visual aspect in its description of vestments and altar plate. A product of earlier catechisms, it too demonstrated a quality of adaption, this time for the mission to the more confined church of the later seventeenth century. It is clear that there was a continuity in the composition of Franciscan catechisms during the seventeenth century which ensured that though the method may have varied, the message remained the same. Originating in the catechism of Peter Canisius and the catechism of the Council of Trent, the works were adapted for Irish audiences in various ways including the use of the vernacular, simplification through the use of verse, clearer language and the use of imagery to aid devotion. The catechisms also testified to the embracing of the medium of print through the use of continental presses. Though the manuscript tradition endured throughout the seventeenth century, particularly among Gaelic scholars, the printing in Irish language testified to the reforming zeal of the Irish clergy.⁹⁴

Whether the laity regularly or ever came into contact with catechetical instruction is another matter. Evidently catechesis was a cornerstone of Tridentine reform and synods became increasingly concerned that it take place regularly from the early seventeenth century. In 1614, the provincial synod of Armagh ordered that the Catholic laity be taught that ‘that the body and blood, soul and divinity of Christ, are really offered in this sacrifice; that they are truly and really partaken of by those who receive- by the worthy communicant unto life everlasting; by the unworthy, in the

⁹³ ‘...ag faicsin an tsagairt san cculaidh ag tionsgna, smuainim at Chriosd fa mar do chifinn e 7 a chroich ar a ghuailibh ag dul go Sliabh Calvairi.’ Ibid, p.81.

⁹⁴ For an exploration of this theme among English clergy see Alexandra Walsham, ‘Domme preachers?’ Post – reformation English Catholicism and the culture of print’ in *Past and Present*, no. 168 (2000), pp 72-123.

state of mortal sin, unto damnation.⁹⁵ The same synod decreed that the clergy should equip themselves with ‘the Roman catechism, that compiled by Peter Canisius, or one compiled by some other approved author’. In 1629 the synod of Kilkenny ordered that the canons and decrees of the Council of Trent be promulgated, while the synod at Tuam two years later urged priests to obtain catechisms with which to catechise the laity in whichever circumstances they found themselves, including catechesis in a domestic setting. In Waterford in 1643, considered by some to represent a national synod, a declaration was issued to the effect that Trent was received in so far as was practicable in Ireland. For the rest of the century this was the message of the Catholic synods, that the decrees of Trent were to be adopted in Ireland when possible. Increasingly the synods reflected that deeper theological knowledge was expected of the laity.

Most seventeenth-century synods were concerned that the decrees of Trent be adopted throughout the diocese, catechesis and proper administration of the sacraments were consistently at the forefront of their concerns. Synods also aimed to consolidate the physical setting of the Mass by ordering that clergy equip themselves with suitable vestments and altar plate. These directives could be specific, such as the decree by the synod of Armagh in 1672 that priests own a silver chalice worth fifty shillings. Perhaps reflecting the optimism of the church at the beginning of the reign of James II, the synod of Dublin ordered the use of gold chalices in 1685.⁹⁶

While it is clear that it was the clergy’s responsibility to catechise their flocks, which was expected to occur once a week before or after Mass by the 1660s, the expectations for the level of knowledge required by the laity became more precise as the seventeenth century wore on.⁹⁷ While early synods demanded simply that Trent be promoted, by the 1660s the synods were delineating the type of knowledge that was required before the laity could be admitted to the sacraments. At the provincial synod of Cashel in 1661 the laity were required to know the Creed, the Lord’s prayer, ‘the precepts of God and of the Church’ and the number and meaning of the

⁹⁵ L.F. Renehan, *Collections on Irish church history*, (2 vols, Dublin, 1861), i, p.430; Rogan, *Synods and Catechesis*, p.29.

⁹⁶ Forrestal, *Catholic synods*, p.111.

⁹⁷ Rogan, *Synods and catechesis*, p.39. Beningus Millet, ‘Calendar of volume 1 (1625-68) of the collection "Scrittura riferite nei congressi, Irlanda", in Propaganda Archives’ in *Collectanea Hibernica*, no.6/7 (1963/1964), p.85; Idem, ‘Calendar of volume 2 (1669-71) of the "Scrittura riferite nei congressi, Irlanda", in Propaganda Archives: Part 1, ff. 1-401’ in *Collectanea Hibernica* no. 16 (1973), p.40.

sacraments. By 1685 the same synod expected the laity to also know the Seven Deadly Sins.⁹⁸ This may have been an indication of an effective catechetical and preaching program. By the mid-eighteenth century lay people needed to know the Angelus and the mysteries of the Trinity, Incarnation and Passion and were also considered possible catechists themselves.⁹⁹ The extent of lay catechesis is unknown, although its use in Ireland would have been beneficial when clergy were in short supply. The catechism of O’Hussey hinted that suitable lay people could be used as catechists, and it was included in a list of suggested forms of penance in the catechism of Thomas Stapleton in 1639.¹⁰⁰

As well as catechetical instruction the clergy were expected to preach regularly to their congregations on various aspects of the faith. Ideally this would occur every Sunday and was one of the key opportunities for the priests to communicate doctrine to the laity. While many priests undoubtedly composed their own sermons it is likely that others used ready-made ones. The synod of Tuam that met in 1660 stated that priests should own the ‘Sunday Sermons’.¹⁰¹ There may have been a significant overlap in what constituted catechesis and what constituted preaching as both took place after Mass and overworked priests may well have considered them interchangeable. The laity undoubtedly experienced high-quality preaching by the regular clergy, particularly by the Dominicans, whose missionary focus on secular festivities such as fairs would have ensured a broader hearing.¹⁰² A very active mission appears to have been carried out by some Dominicans in the late seventeenth century whose summer tours included catechising, hearing confessions, saying Mass and preaching on a daily basis.¹⁰³ Where priests were unable to rely on their own talents they may have found inspiration in collections of printed sermons.¹⁰⁴ Surviving book lists testify to the popularity of printed sermons among a clergy who may have been hard-pressed to find the time to prepare sermons every week. The book list left by Luke Wadding, the bishop of Ferns, shows an extensive collection

⁹⁸ Rogan, *Synods and catechesis*, p.39, 46.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p.54.

¹⁰⁰ Ryan, ‘Popular religion in Gaelic Ireland’, ii, p.77.

¹⁰¹ Rogan, *Synods and catechesis*, pp38-39.

¹⁰² Bernadette Cunningham, ‘Zeal for God and for souls’: Counter-Reformation preaching in early seventeenth-century Ireland ‘ in Alan J. Fletcher and Raymond Gillespie (eds) *Irish preaching 700-1700* (Dublin, 2001) p.114.

¹⁰³ John O’Heyne, *The Irish Dominicans of the seventeenth century* (Dundalk, 1902), pp xii-xiii.

¹⁰⁴ Cunningham, ‘Zeal for God and for souls’, pp118-125 .

of homiletical material, including eight volumes of the sermons of the Oratorian, Pere le Jeune.¹⁰⁵ French collections were very popular amongst the Irish clergy and many can be found in the library of Bishop Daton of Ossory and among the books of the Drogheda preacher John Donnelly.¹⁰⁶ All three men had spent a considerable time in France and, as Hugh Fenning has pointed out, a priest's library reflected 'both the particular country and the theological school in which he studied on the continent.'¹⁰⁷ Pierre le Camus, the bishop of Belley, was a favourite of all three men, particularly bishop Wadding. The three lists which date from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, reveal men who had the tools to compose or reproduce sermons of a thoroughly Tridentine quality, given the strong pastoral characteristics of the books themselves and the large number of Jesuit authors to be found on the lists. All three also owned copies of the *Introduction to the devout life* by Francis de Sales, a Tridentine classic which was focused around a sacramental piety.¹⁰⁸

The book list left by bishop Luke Wadding represented not only the bishop's own intellectual preoccupations but his literary outreach in his diocese. It has been rightly suggested that these types of lists can only really serve to give an indication of their universal applicability when used comparatively.¹⁰⁹ Some commentary is possible given the similar time periods of the lists of Wadding and Daton and to a lesser extent to that of Donnelly. Each of the men were involved with spreading the message of the Counter Reformation in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. When compared with the list of books dating from the 1670s of Bishop Piers Creagh of Cork, the lists of Wadding, Daton and Donnelly assume a relatively cohesive nature. The list of Creagh is very different in character, comprising mostly titles of classical writers and works on canon law, philosophy and history.¹¹⁰ The lack of devotional and catechetical texts is immediately obvious, particularly when compared with Wadding's list. This was probably due to the fact that the books

¹⁰⁵ Corish, 'Wadding's notebook', p.60.

¹⁰⁶ Hugh Fenning (ed.) 'The library of Bishop William Daton of Ossory, 1698' in *Collectanea Hibernica*, no.20 (1978), pp30-59; Fenning, 'Library of a preacher from Drogheda' pp 76,78-80, 83, 94, Donnelly also had some of Le Jeune's sermons (p.89).

¹⁰⁷ Fenning, 'Library of Bishop William Daton', p.31.

¹⁰⁸ Wadding bought 18 copies of the *Introduction to the devout life* probably for distribution. Corish, 'Wadding's notebook', p.89; The book was printed in a Dublin edition in 1705 and was for sale in 1730.

¹⁰⁹ Fenning, 'Library of Bishop William Daton', p.31.

¹¹⁰ Canice Mooney (ed.), 'The library of Archbishop Piers Creagh' in *Reportorium Novum*, i, no.1 (1955) pp136-7.

comprised titles that were for Creagh's personal use and reflected his role as an agent of the Irish bishops at the papal court. The books, left for safe-keeping in St. Isidore's while Creagh was in Ireland, would have been of little pastoral use to the bishop as he carried out a busy mission in the diocese of Cork in 1676.¹¹¹ In contrast to this the library of Luke Wadding is much more reflective of a provincial in charge of a pastoral mission. It includes the titles of books that were distributed by the bishop, thus giving an indication of the type of materials that the laity were exposed to in the diocese of Ferns, as well as the type of theological influences that Wadding himself would have transmitted in his preaching and catechising.

Accounts of Wadding suggest that he was a hard-working bishop who took an active role in his diocese. Perhaps the most striking indication of his reforming credentials was the fact that he was responsible for introducing parish registers in Wexford as early as 1671.¹¹² The fruits of his zeal are difficult to gauge, but by beginning with the premise that his books represent both his theological and pastoral outlook, it is possible to deduce something about the religious climate of the diocese of Ferns in the late seventeenth century. It is of course apt to focus on those works which would have transmitted Eucharistic doctrine. Wadding distributed twelve dozen Douai catechisms which had descriptions of the liturgy of the Mass as well as explanations of various actions of the priest and laity. He also distributed other devotional works which he called 'little books of the Mass' and 'printed prayers for to follow Mass'. Many of the titles on Wadding's list can be traced to the Dublin bookseller William Weston for whom there survives a printed list of stock.¹¹³ Of the seventeen titles advertised by Weston in the 1680s, Wadding owned at least eleven of them, mostly in multiple quantities. Weston undoubtedly sold other books to Wadding and it seems likely that Weston's stock came primarily from the London Catholic bookseller, Nathaniel Thompson. Thompson had served his apprenticeship in Dublin and maintained commercial links in Ireland.¹¹⁴ More of Wadding's books, which presumably were sold through Weston, can be traced to an advertisement for Thompson's stock printed at the back of a tract on the mass by Thomas Gawen. Gawen's tract *A brief explanation of several mysteries of the Holy Mass* was surely

¹¹¹ Mooney, 'The library of Archbishop Creagh' pp118-19.

¹¹² Corish, 'Wadding's notebook' p.52; Barry Crosbie. 'Wadding, Luke' *DIB*; Bossy, 'The Counter-Reformation and the people of Catholic Europe', p.53.

¹¹³ Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, pp148-50.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.82.

the ‘Mysteries of the Holy Mass’ that was advertised on Weston’s list and the ‘little books of the mass’ distributed by Wadding. This text was similar to Turberville’s catechism aimed at expounding the liturgical actions of the Mass as well as containing prayers and meditations.¹¹⁵ Other titles on Thompson’s advertisement reveal his connection with Weston because they are found on Wadding’s list. Peter Manby’s *Brief discourse of confession*, a rare work printed by Thompson and Henry Turberville’s *A manual of controversies* are both found in Wadding’s library.¹¹⁶

The devotional works differed from catechisms as they attempted to provide the laity with material that could be used for their participation in the Mass. They did not attempt to explain in great detail the doctrine of the church, but to bolster the faith of the laity by elucidating the liturgy and providing suitable prayers and mediations for public and private worship. In this respect they were geared primarily towards a lay audience. An early precedent had been set in Ireland when Henry Fitzsimon, a Dublin Jesuit, published *The justification and exposition of the divine sacrifice of the Masse* (1611). This text, largely written in a polemical style, was divided into two books. The first part comprised the preparation required for the celebration of the Mass including the church, altar and ornaments, the role of the priest, the prayers to be said before Mass as well as prayers during Mass. It also addressed controversial issues, such as communion in one kind and the Latin used in the rite. In the second part ‘the first Mass in the missal is justified, and expounded for all and every parcel thereof’, there followed an explication of each part of the Mass. The text was heavily annotated throughout with scriptural references and the writings of the church fathers. Fitzsimon was an intimate of the Catholic gentry of Dublin and ministered in their houses. He held a High Mass in a newly-erected chapel in one of these houses in the 1590s which had an altar ‘as handsome and as elegantly furnished and decorated as any altar in Ireland.’¹¹⁷ Although written in English and ‘in no part is it

¹¹⁵ Thomas Gawen, *A brief explanation of several mysteries of the Holy Mass* (London, 1686) The advertisement of books is on the last page.

¹¹⁶ Peter Manby, *A brief discourse of confession to a lawful priest wherein is treated of the last judgement* (London, 1686) I have only found one surviving copy of this work by Manby listed in the ESTC. It is held by the National Library of Scotland. It was printed just before Manby officially converted to Catholicism but as it was printed by Thompson, a Catholic bookseller, it can only be assumed that Manby’s tract was considered representative of his later religious affiliation. Wadding owned six copies of Manby’s tract, an indication that he intended to distribute them. Corish, ‘Wadding’s notebook’ p.91.

¹¹⁷ James Corboy, ‘Father Henry Fitzsimon, S.J., 1566-1643’ in *Studies: an Irish quarterly review*, xxxii, no. 126 (1943), p.261.

curious or affected', the text was interspersed with un-translated Latin passages and was dedicated to a member of one of Dublin's leading recusant families. The work was clearly designed for a highly literate audience.¹¹⁸ While not explicitly a devotional work, Fitzsimon laid down the scriptural and theological emphases of the ritual of the Mass as part of an overall controversial project.

Thomas Gawen's *A brief explanation of several mysteries of the Holy Mass* which was sold by the Dublin bookseller William Weston and distributed by Luke Wadding, reflected a lay perspective using 'the thoughts wherewith generally I use to hear, and to assist at Mass.'¹¹⁹ It offered explanations for the actions of the laity, including the offertory which was explained in the context of ancient practice when 'every particular Christian presented Bread to the priest, both for materials to be consecrated for the sacrifice, and withall, for a token of his union to the body of Christ Jesus.'¹²⁰ The consecration was described in terms of its visual impact on the congregation: 'He elevates [the bread and wine] aloft; both to shew that he offers them up to God the Father, above in Heaven; and also to make the People more visibly behold Jesus Christ, and so to bow down and worship him.'¹²¹

Remnants of Gawen's Protestant upbringing or perhaps Tridentine influences can be seen in the devotions following the second intercession: 'Estrange me, O my God, from all humane inventions, and ways of worshipping thee, of what sort soever, though never so specious and holy in appearance!'¹²² The agency of the laity was established with the explanation of the reception of the priest of the Eucharist: 'Shewing, hereby, that both priest and people do partake of the same sacrifice, are fed with the same spiritual food, from the same table, admitted to the same pasture, all in quality of being the sheep of the same shepheard [sic]'.¹²³ The text ended with an exegesis of the Creed together with prayers in preparation for the reception of the Eucharist.

¹¹⁸ The text was dedicated to Christopher Cusack who was the president and founder of the Irish college at Douai. His father was baron of the exchequer and grandfather, Thomas had been a prominent government official who had acquired much land at the dissolution of the monasteries.

¹¹⁹ Gawen, *A brief explanation*, p.1.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p.48.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, p.82.

¹²² *Ibid*, p.106.

¹²³ *Ibid*, p.130.

The 'printed prayers to follow Mass' which Wadding purchased from Weston was likely *An excellent way of hearing Mass* (1686) by Richard Lassels, an English priest and travel writer. The work was written for 'a particular person of quality' to whom Lassels was chaplain in Paris.¹²⁴ Indicative of its intended audience was the recommendation that the server at Mass should be a 'noble man' rather than 'some tatter'd boy, or ... the meanest of our servants'.¹²⁵ It included the recommendation 'to hear Mass every day if thy health permits thee (I speak to people of condition)' and went on to admonish those who used the excuses of bad weather and worldly distractions not to attend Mass. Appropriate behaviour in church included good posture ('Sit not upon thy heels ... that posture belongs more to one that's milking a Cow') and proper attention to the ceremony ('Gaze not about thee, thou art in the church, not in a tennis court; at Mass, not at a Mask').¹²⁶ The text was to be used during the Mass using auditory cues from the priest;

When the priest says any thing aloud, either listen to him, if thou understand'st Latin, or else say the prayers which are prescrib'd thee here to be said at that time; for they are either the same that the priest says, or much to the same purpose.¹²⁷

Prayers were added for certain sections when priestly actions were occurring, at the elevation of the Host, the reader was to say, 'I believeth then firmly, O my sweet saviour, that after the words of consecration thou art really here present upon the altar, and in the hands of the priest...' ¹²⁸ At the end of the text there was a method for examining conscience before confession, together with other devotional material. The tone of Lassels' work was clearly geared towards a socially elite parishioner. Clearly envisaging an audience which could afford not only a copy of the book, but other texts as well, he urged them to read the epistle and gospel in English from the 'Rhemish testament', once permission had been obtained from the priest.¹²⁹

The English language devotional materials catered for a variety of audiences. Neither Wadding or Weston supplied Irish language material; clearly this was outside the remit of their spheres of influence. Irish language devotionals were, like the

¹²⁴ Richard Lassels, *An excellent way of hearing Mass with profit and devotion* (London, 1686), p.1; Edward Chaney, 'Richard Lassels', ODNB.

¹²⁵ Lassels, *An excellent way of hearing Mass*, sig.A.8v.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, sig.A7r.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, sig.10v.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, p.25.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, pp10-12.

catechisms, supplied by the continental presses. As well as Gearnon's *Parrthas an anma*, it is likely that Geoffrey Keating's devotional text on the Mass, *Eochair – sgiath an Aifrinn* was quite widely available to the clergy. It continued to appear in manuscript form until the nineteenth century.¹³⁰ The text utilised a broad range of sources ranging from medieval to Tridentine but also incorporated idiosyncratic elements, born of Keating's Gaelic scholarship. The controversial works of Bellarmine and Suarez were mined for material as were older medieval texts such as the *Scaeli Coeli* and the writings of William Durandus. For doctrinal points, Keating used Tridentine texts, for the confirmation of faith he used medieval collections of *exempla*. Innovative traits included attempts to explain the etymology of the Irish word 'Aifreann', as well as Keating's additions to some of the miracle stories that supported the doctrine of the Real Presence. The text explained the ritual of the Mass, the visual aspects including a description of the priest's vestments, the doctrine of the Real Presence and also had sections on confession and purgatory.¹³¹ The text was a 'distillation of current [Catholic] teaching for an Irish audience.'¹³² The text emphasised the sacrificial nature of the Mass as propitiatory for the souls in purgatory. This was an emphasis found in O'Molloy's *Lucerna fidelium*, which had been essential to the pre-reformation church and had been affirmed by the Council of Trent.¹³³

It is clear that Weston's stock of Catholic devotional books in Dublin in 1688 was significantly larger than his advertisement suggests and it highlights the range of works that made their way to Ireland through the connection with Nathaniel Thompson. It is also clear that Weston was not the only source of Wadding's books, as he recorded texts he brought back from France as well as some that were received from his cousin, Anthony Talbot in 1687.¹³⁴ Wadding's distribution of books marked an awareness of the need for different types of catechetical and devotional material.

¹³⁰ Bernadette Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating: history, myth and religion in seventeenth century Ireland* (Dublin, 2000) pp 11, 40.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, pp 31-40.

¹³² Bernadette Cunningham, 'Geoffrey Keating's *Eochair Sgiath an Aifrinn* and the Catholic reformation in Ireland' in William Sheils and Diana Wood (eds) *The churches, Ireland and the Irish* (Oxford, 1989) p.135.

¹³³ 'Who is the mass for? Most often for members of the church, for the person it is said for, the priest who says it and those that hear it.' O'Molloy, *Lucerna fidelium*, p.78; Cunningham, 'Geoffrey Keating's *Eochair Sgiath an Aifrinn*', pp135-136. Keating's inclusion of a chapter on purgatory indicated that the sacrifice of the Mass for the dead was important to his audience.

¹³⁴ Corish, 'Wadding's notebook', p.89.

As well as Turberville's catechism, he also distributed the smaller catechism of Cardinal Bellarmine and Jacobus Ledesma's *Christian doctrine*. Non-catechetical works included meditative texts such as 'Christian thoughts for every day of the month', collections of prayers such as those of St. Brigit and the Blessed Virgin Mary, 'little books of eternity' and 'little books of the Rosary.'¹³⁵ It is impossible to determine how many books were sold by Weston on an individual basis but many of his customers may have been clerical figures, like Wadding, who bought in bulk. In total Wadding gave out hundreds of books, but these were to a group specified by himself; 'relations, friends, benefactors, poor gentry, and widows, children etc.'¹³⁶ The recipients were presumably able to read, but could not afford the books. This does not mean that Wadding neglected his pastoral responsibilities to the illiterate in his diocese. The dual approach to his reforming program is demonstrated by his provision of more traditional missionary tools as during the same period he also distributed hundreds of medals and thousands of pairs of rosary beads.¹³⁷ This awareness of the different demands of his parishioners is a useful example of the varied approach that was necessary in Ireland to implement religious reform.

To consider in more detail the Eucharistic message that may have been emanating from the Ferns episcopate, apart from the distribution of material devotional aids, it is worthwhile investigating one of Wadding's theological influences. Pierre de Camus, the bishop of Belley, was one of the most prolific Catholic writers of the seventeenth century. Wadding owned at least twenty titles attributed to Camus and he can also be found in the library of Bishop Daton and Fr. John Donnelly. This indicates that Camus' style was a useful one that was adaptable to the demands of those with wide pastoral responsibilities. Camus wrote a good deal of material on Eucharistic matters and his Salesian outlook seemed compatible with a bishop dealing with the implementation of a practical spirituality. Wadding listed a work entitled 'Homilie de l'eucharistie' which must have been Camus' *Premières homélies eucharistiques* which was preached for the Corpus Christi octave in Paris in 1617.¹³⁸ Camus' style in these and most of his homilies was practical and he was a

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid, pp 88-91.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p.88; In 1614 a Jesuit missionary remarked that the Irish were particularly fond of beads, medals and relics see Ryan, 'Old wine in new bottles', p.134.

¹³⁸ Thomas Worchester, *Seventeenth century discourse: France and the preaching of Bishop Camus* (Berlin, 1997), p.121.

bishop who urged frequent reception of the Eucharist and focused strongly on the doctrine of the Real Presence. Many of his sermons used vivid images of communion as real food and he was clearly uncomfortable with those who seemed content to practice an older tradition of ‘seeing, smelling, adoring, and attending’ Mass without receiving the Eucharist.¹³⁹ While his focus was on more frequent reception of communion, this was tempered by warnings of unworthy reception and he shared the wariness of most counter-reformers of anyone who wanted to receive communion daily. It seems unlikely that there would be many willing to identify themselves as the ‘elite souls, judiciously examined’ who Camus claimed could receive communion every day.¹⁴⁰ However the threat of Jansenism and its insistence on infrequent communion was in the eyes of Camus a much greater evil. Wadding owned a copy of Camus’ polemical tract against the Jansenists and if his books are a good indication of his own pastoral wishes then it would appear that Wadding was concerned to implement this aspect of the Counter Reformation in his own diocese.¹⁴¹ While tradition dictated that people receive communion only once a year at Easter, Wadding probably envisaged a much more frequent communion. In 1678 he wrote a song lamenting the fact that Masses could not be celebrated because of the persecution of the clergy at the time of the Popish Plot. It is clear that Christmas was another high time of year for Catholics in Ireland;

‘On Christmas to have no mass,
 is our great discontent,
 That without Mass this day should pass
 Doth cause us to lament
 The name of Christmas
 must chang’d and alter’d be
 For since we have no Mass
 No Christmas have we...’¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Ibid, p.123.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p.125.

¹⁴¹ The work was *Due Rare ou Frequent usage de l’eucharistie* (1644) Worcester, *Seventeenth century discourse*, p.224, Corish, ‘Wadding’s notebook’, p.71.

¹⁴² Luke Wadding, *A pious garland, Compos’d by the Reverend Father Luke Wadding bishop of Ferns which he compos’d for the solace of his friends and neighbours in their afflictions* (London,1728), p.31.

It is possible that for those who Camus' considered 'elite souls', Wadding could countenance a much more frequent reception of communion than just Christmas and Easter. Among his books were twelve copies of the rules for the sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This sodality, set up in Ireland in the early seventeenth century, was primarily aimed at the social elite and if the rules were followed closely would have impacted on the lives of the sodalists daily.¹⁴³ As a Jesuit sodality, it fully embraced the Tridentine emphasis on intense inner devotion and promoted pious living through membership of a lay organisation. The devotion of the sodalists should consist 'not so much in painful exercises of the body, as in pious and regular comportment of [themselves]'.¹⁴⁴ Sodalists were expected on their admission to make a full confession of their previous lives and profess their Catholic faith. This involved affirming their belief in the Real Presence and transubstantiation as it was outlined by the council of Trent.¹⁴⁵ They were expected to receive communion once a month, or more often depending on the advice of their spiritual director, but were specifically warned against communicating more than weekly. As well as receiving frequently, sodalists were to be present at Mass, daily if possible, and if not, to spend time in prayer during which they were encouraged to 'communicate spiritually'.¹⁴⁶ While the devotions of the sodalists were clearly Tridentine in origin, members also retained aspects of older traditions as they were encouraged to wear and venerate relics and pictures.¹⁴⁷

Also active in Ireland was the Archconfraternity of the Holy Rosary, set up by the Dominicans in the 1620s, which produced a printed list of the indulgences that were granted for various devotions.¹⁴⁸ The sodality retained the focus on the Eucharist as the central means for advancing spiritual or temporal desires, a tradition that long-preceded the Council of Trent. Indeed the type of tallying of devotions with temporal results was a thorny issue, with a decree of the Council stating that bishops 'wholly banish from the church the observance of a fixed number of certain Masses.'¹⁴⁹ Two of the privileges of the confraternity of the Holy Rosary outlined the plenary indulgences that were gained by members who confessed and communicated every

¹⁴³ Gillespie, *Devoted people*, p.151; Rogan, *Synods and catechesis*, p.29.

¹⁴⁴ *Rules and instructions for the sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, (Dublin, 1703) 'preface'.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, pp 30-31.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, pp 47-50.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p.67.

¹⁴⁸ *The Arch-confraternity of the Holy Rosary of our Blessed Lady* (London [?],1636).

¹⁴⁹ *Canons and decrees*, p.161.

month and on the feast days associated with the Virgin Mary.¹⁵⁰ While members of the sodality were usually members of a social elite, it is clear that the rosary was a powerful devotional tool in Ireland as is evidenced by Wadding's distribution of rosary beads and 'little books of the Rosary', and the observations by Protestants of Catholic devotion to the Virgin through the recitation of the rosary.¹⁵¹

There were many ways in which the essential tenets of a Eucharistic faith system could be disseminated among the laity. Synodal regulation, catechesis, preaching and lay sodalities were some of those used in Ireland in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. This followed the Tridentine policy of imposing official doctrine through well-tested methods. These methods revolved around an educational theme and the setting up of a universal education system has been recognised as one of the lasting successes of the Tridentine programme.¹⁵² However, given that many people could not read, ensuring that everyone grasped the fundamental tenets of the church was a challenging task.¹⁵³ This was a problem that had in the past been largely overcome by the use of visual aids to convey theological information. The Counter Reformation represented a period when the written word became the pre-eminent tool for transmitting doctrine. This was a transition that could not be rapidly achieved and increasingly evidence is being put forward to show that the Tridentine church continued to rely on traditional methods in order to achieve this change. Recent studies have suggested that the use of miracles and sacramentals remained an important part of convincing the laity of the veracity of the truth claims of the Catholic Church in the early modern period.¹⁵⁴ The use of miracle stories as exegetical tools had a long tradition in the Church.¹⁵⁵ Miracles associated with the Eucharist were among the most common and they were transmitted textually and orally in early modern Ireland. A collection of miracles associated with the relics of St. Francis Xavier was printed in Louvain in 1666 but was intended for the Irish

¹⁵⁰ *Arch-confraternity of the Holy Rosary*, p.2.

¹⁵¹ Corish, 'Wadding's notebook' p.88; Gillespie, *Devoted people*, pp71,162-3.

¹⁵² Bossy, 'Counter-Reformation and people of Catholic Europe', pp 67-8.

¹⁵³ Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, pp 39-45. In England the rate of literacy among men, based on those who could write, was about 30 per cent in 1600, but this rose to about 50 per cent by the end of the century. Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and pamphleteering in early modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003), p.89.

¹⁵⁴ Walsham, 'Miracles and the Counter-Reformation' *passim*; Dillon, 'Praying by number', *passim*.

¹⁵⁵ Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp109-29.

market.¹⁵⁶ Included in the collection were some miracles that had occurred in Ireland and central to the efficacy of all of the miracles was the performance of ritualised devotions of which attendance at Mass was fundamental. Similarly preachers used compendiums of miracles in order to infuse their sermons with anecdotes that proved the doctrine they were expounding. The *Magnum speculum exemplorum*, one of these compendiums, contained miracle stories both on the Real Presence and the Mass. It was used by Geoffrey Keating in his theological writings and there is evidence of its use by other seventeenth century authors.¹⁵⁷ Keating used no more than nineteen miracle tales to confirm the Real Presence and the doctrine of transubstantiation in *Eochair sgiath an Aifrinn*, all taken from the *Magnum speculorum exemplorum*.¹⁵⁸ One of these tales, involving the adoration of the Host by a swarm of bees, was in use in Ireland since at least the fourteenth century.¹⁵⁹ Bishop Wadding owned a copy of the compendium of miracle tales, which indicates its use in the later seventeenth century.¹⁶⁰ The transmission of Eucharistic miracles will be discussed at a later stage, but it is important to bear in mind that this was another avenue of pedagogy that was open to the clergy. As we have seen, poetry was also used to communicate the importance of the Mass, it may also have been transmitted through music. Turlough O'Carolan, the Irish harper, composed a tune called *The Elevation* in the early eighteenth century. It was remarked of Carolan that he 'frequently assisted with his voice and his harp at the Elevation of the Host.'¹⁶¹

The implementation of the Counter Reformation in Ireland called for a nuanced approach by the clergy. Most obstacles to the application of the Tridentine model stemmed from the fact that the Church did not have the backing of the secular state to bring about reform through the apparatus of the parish. However, these obstacles were compounded by older ethnic divisions among Catholics. Some of these

¹⁵⁶ See preface, Richard Archdekin, *A treatise of miracles, together with new miracles and benefits obtained by the sacred relics of St. Francis Xavier* (Louvain, 1667). Wadding owned a copy of the work, Corish, 'Wadding's notebook', p.72.

¹⁵⁷ Cunningham, 'Zeal for God and for souls', pp120-3.

¹⁵⁸ Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating*, p.35.

¹⁵⁹ E.J. Gwynn, 'The priest and the bees' in *Ériu*, ii (1905) pp 82-83; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp123-4.

¹⁶⁰ Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating*, pp 35-37; Corish, 'Wadding's notebook', p.83; A copy of the 1624 edition printed in Douai can also be found in Marsh's Library. For Catholic texts held in the library see Thomas O'Connor, 'Marsh's Library and the Irish Catholic tradition' in Muriel McCarthy and Ann Simmons (eds) *The making of Marsh's Library: learning, politics and religion in Ireland, 1650-1750* (Dublin, 2004) pp 235-55.

¹⁶¹ For bardic poetry and the Mass in Gaelic Ireland see Ryan, 'Popular religion in Gaelic Ireland', i, pp 343- 73; Donal O'Sullivan, *The life times and music of an Irish Harper* (Cork, 2001) p.55.

difficulties could be found in other areas of Europe, where a transition from a kin-based to a civil society posed problems for the universalising tendencies of the reform movement. These obstacles were to a great extent overcome by the commitment of the clergy through the production of vernacular texts and the provision of a range of devotional aids. Many of these echoed the traditional devotions of the pre-reformation church but were transmitted in conjunction with official doctrine. When there was an active episcopacy, the ideals of the Tridentine Eucharistic program were possible as is clear from the example of Ferns. While it may be difficult to quantify the depth of lay knowledge about the sacrament, the theoretical model found active agents and there was a concerted synodal campaign to implement the Counter Reformation. There was no shortage of vernacular catechetical material available and the thrust of the catechesis was the exposition of the liturgy of the Mass and a re-iteration of the sacrificial and sacramental elements of Eucharistic doctrine. This Tridentine emphasis on education was balanced by an awareness that the laity needed ‘external helps’ to realise fully their spirituality.

Chapter Six

Eucharistic practice in the Catholic Church, 1660-1740

The Catholic clergy who ministered in Ireland between 1660 and 1740 had a range of tools with which they could teach the laity about the Eucharist. The catechetical texts ensured that both Irish and English speakers were provided for, devotional works catered for a variety of lay knowledge, while the synodal decrees reiterated Tridentine aims but were also aware of the particular difficulties of the Irish mission. Bearing these difficulties in mind the institutional church had to implement a programme of reform which sought to universalise Catholic religious practice among the laity. At the centre of this process was the Mass, which was experienced by all levels of society as a powerful symbol of the Divine made manifest in the world. This chapter aims to explore the degree to which this transmission of doctrine was successful and how the laity responded to the teachings of the missionary clergy. Isolated incidents provide glimpses into how the laity absorbed doctrine, occasionally in unusual ways. Many of the descriptions of lay practice come from Protestant observers, who had clearly absorbed the polemical language of contemporary pamphlet literature. While religious practices reported among Catholics could be described as ‘superstitious’ in some cases, lay belief and practice could also be rigorous and highly devotional. Even where doctrine had only been partially understood, it demonstrated an awareness of the Eucharist’s deeper meaning. Overshadowing lay practice was the contemporary climate of intermittent persecution, which could infuse attendance at Mass with an even greater resonance for Catholics.

The chapter will also explore the ways in which the meaning of the Eucharist was conveyed to laity outside of the tools of catechesis and preaching. This was achieved through the material culture of the Mass, the establishment of lay sodalities and the dissemination of Eucharistic miracles. Each of these facets had considerable lay involvement. Altar plate was donated by pious benefactors, sodalities were sustained by a lay membership and the participants (and audience) of Eucharistic miracles were often lay people. The chapter will also examine an important aspect of lay piety which impacted on Eucharistic belief, devotion to the Virgin Mary. The

experience of lay belief and practice is reconstructed by assessing these various themes as complementary to the overall program of the Counter Reformation.

An assessment of lay experience, as in the cases of Anglicans and Presbyterians, proves difficult in light of the patchy survival of primary sources. Reconstructing both the individual and communal experience is exacerbated by the lack of parochial records. Reports by Catholic clergy to superiors on the continent offered a variety of opinions, from exasperated clergy in rural dioceses to officious counter-reformers eager to prove their mettle. John Sullivan, a priest who had just returned from the western diocese of Achonry, wrote to the cardinals of Propaganda Fide in 1668 reporting on the condition of Catholics there. The picture he presented was bleak. The 'calamities' of the church were vast and in particular he was concerned to detail 'the spiritual inconveniences, from which the danger to the salvation of souls more directly comes.' Among the theological errors under which the laity laboured was a misconception of the number of persons in the Trinity. In response to the question 'How many Gods are there?' Sullivan was given a variety of different answers. Some said there were three, 'others said four, adding the Blessed Virgin Mary to the Three Divine Persons of the Trinity; others added the apostles and other saints.'¹

Sullivan was aware that the cardinals may have been receiving more favourable reports from other quarters. He maintained that 'the gravity of the situation demand[ed] that he proceed in such a manner that he may appear to some as the accuser of his own people'. He reasoned that 'it [was] better to tell the truth and reveal the sickness of the Irish Church ... lest by hiding the wound a cure become impossible.'² In contrast, Oliver Plunkett, the archbishop of Armagh, was keen to point out his own successes in implementing the Tridentine program, observing in 1671 that he had 'done more in eleven months than my predecessors in thirty years...'³

Persecution in the Cromwellian period had instituted a tradition of clandestine worship. Edmund O'Reilly, who became the archbishop of Armagh in 1658, reported that the clergy in many places celebrated Mass 'before and round about

¹ Beningnus Millet, 'Calendar of volume 1 (1625-68) of the collection "Scritture riferite nei congressi, Irlanda"', in Propaganda Archives' in *Collectanea Hibernica*, no.6/7 (1963/1964), pp145-6.

² *Ibid.*, p.146.

³ John Hanly (ed.) *The letters of Saint Oliver Plunkett, 1625-1681* (Dublin,1979), p.156.

dawn, and that in hiding places and recesses, having appointed scouts to look around and with eyes and ears agog to keep watch lest the soldiers come by surprise.’⁴ In 1665 the faculties granted to Edmund Teige, the newly appointed vicar apostolic of Meath, demonstrated the difficulties of the Irish mission. Teige was given permission ‘to celebrate Mass in any becoming place, even in the open air or underground, as early as one hour before dawn and as late as one hour after midday, and twice daily if necessary.’ His faculties included provisions

to celebrate Mass at a portable altar, even on a broken or damaged altar-stone or on one not containing relics of the saints [and] to celebrate Mass in the presence of heretics and other excommunicated persons, if it cannot be celebrated otherwise and there be no danger of sacrilege, but on condition that the Mass-server be not a heretic or an excommunicated person.⁵

Persecution clearly impacted on the celebration of Mass in the Cromwellian period and in the aftermath of the Restoration. When there were no immediate grounds for curtailment, Catholics were relatively free to attend Mass. Oliver Plunkett reported that in the province of Armagh, Catholics lived in ‘deep peace’. In 1670 he was invited to use the palace of William Caulfield, the earl of Charlemont, to hold confirmations and to celebrate Mass.⁶ Plunkett formed a close relationship with the viceroy, Lord Berkeley, who allowed Mass to be said in the viceregal palace in 1670. Rumours of Catholicism surrounded Berkeley. His wife, daughters and prominent members of his administration were Catholic, and the correspondence of Plunkett testified to the effect of this period of toleration on Catholic worship.⁷ A Huguenot settler wrote from Dublin in 1670 saying that Catholics ‘go openly to Mass and speak high in various places’ in the country, while clergy in the city did not attempt to hide themselves and that he had seen many Jesuits and regular clergy.⁸ Toleration greatly depended on the local administration. In the provinces of Cashel and Tuam, the provincial presidents actively forbade the meeting of Catholics for Mass in the same period.⁹ Harassment after the Popish Plot was short-lived, with Mass-houses

⁴ Patrick J. Corish, ‘The Cromwellian regime, 1650-1660’ in T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne (eds) *A new history of Ireland: iii. early modern Ireland, 1534-1691*, (Oxford, 1976), p.385.

⁵ Millett, ‘Calendar of volume I’, p.22. The same faculties were granted to William Burgat, the vicar apostolic of the diocese of Elphin and to Richard Butler, the vicar apostolic of Dublin. (Idem, pp 23-4).

⁶ Hanly (ed.), *Plunkett letters*, p.152.

⁷ Ibid, pp 83, 104-5, 106.

⁸ *Cal .S. P. Ire., 1669-1670*, p.67.

⁹ Hanly (ed.), *Plunkett letters*, pp 152, 218.

reopening in many places in the final years of Charles II's reign. When James II came to the throne, Catholics looked forward to a more favourable atmosphere.¹⁰

During the later 1680s the Catholic church began to organise itself in earnest. Between 1685 and 1688, there were eight synods held, four of these in Dublin. Thereafter there were no synods held until 1712. The 1685 diocesan synod of Dublin included among its decrees that no chalices should be consecrated in future unless they were made of gold. It also sought to regulate Masses held on St. Patrick's day, it forbade Masses held in the houses of the nobility unless permission was obtained from the bishop, forbade Catholics to attend Protestant services and reiterated the 'Paschal Precept' on pain of excommunication. The synod also ordered that Masses no longer be celebrated in the open air or in unsuitable places and that each parish priest should have an oratory for the celebration of Mass.¹¹ Other developments signalled a renewed confidence among Catholics, schools were opened, bishops were permitted to appear in public wearing their clerical dress and the king appointed a Catholic priest, Alexius Stafford, as dean of Christ Church.¹² One of Stafford's first actions was to celebrate Mass in the cathedral which had been consecrated for Catholic use in September 1689. The first Mass was said in October and was conducted with much ceremony, with soldiers lining the streets as dignitaries processed to the cathedral. On 7 November, William King, the vicar of St. Werburgh's, noted with sombre resignation from his prison cell that the King had attended Mass in the cathedral.¹³

By the early eighteenth century in the wake of the penal legislation, precautionary measures were in place to protect those attending Mass from persecution. Hugh McMahon, the bishop of Clogher, reported in 1714 that since the introduction of the oath of abjuration, the laity were under increasing pressure to divulge the whereabouts of priests and the location of the celebration of Masses. To counter-act

¹⁰ J.G. Simms, 'The Restoration, 1660-85' in T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne (eds) *A new history of Ireland: iii. early modern Ireland*, p.433; P.J. Corish, *The Catholic community in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*, (Dublin, 1981), p.72.

¹¹ Michael Comerford, *Collections relating to the dioceses of Kildare and Leighlin* (3 vols, Dublin, 1883-1886), i, pp 254-255.

¹² J.G. Simms, 'The war of the two kings, 1685-91' in T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne (eds) *A new history of Ireland: iii. early modern Ireland*, pp 481-2.

¹³ William Hugh Jackson Lawlor (ed.) 'Diary of William King, D.D., archbishop of Dublin, during his imprisonment in Dublin Castle' in *JRSAI Fifth Series*, xxxiii, No.4, (1903), pp 399- 400, 407; Richard Roche, 'Alexius Stafford: the popish dean of Christ Church' in *History Ireland*, viii, no.3 (2000) p.34.

this, ‘priests have celebrated Mass with their faces veiled, lest they should be recognized by those present.’. Another method was to celebrate Mass ‘in a closed room with only a server present, the window being left open so that those outside might hear the voice of the priest without knowing who it was, or at least without seeing him.’¹⁴ An account of religious worship in Galway from 1708, indicates that it was the Catholic laity who took the lead to ensure their provision of Mass. An Italian visitor remarked that Mass was said outside the city walls or in the houses of Catholics who had secret chapels in their homes.¹⁵ The biggest impediment to regular sacramental worship remained the scarcity of clergy. In 1697 an act banished all regular clergy and bishops. Those who remained were obliged by the Registration Act of 1704 to provide sureties and could only minister in the parishes for which they were registered.

A further attempt to require priests to take an oath of abjuration failed, with only a handful of priests obliging in 1709. After this, priests were subjected to a degree of persecution and there emerged a new threat, the ‘priest-catcher’, who could claim a financial reward if they apprehended a priest.¹⁶ In 1718 Fr. Anthony O’Brien who had registered for the Dublin parish of Rathfarnham in 1704, was prosecuted in the King’s Bench for saying Mass and preaching outside his parish. His accuser, John Garzia, was the most notorious priest-catcher of the period, and was despised by Catholics. The jury in the case involving Fr. O’Brien were clearly reluctant to convict the priest. When questioning Garzia, they asked him ‘what sort of robes [O’Brien] had on... and if [Garzia] staid from the beginning to the end of all or any Mass...from the *Introibo* to *Ita missa est*...’ Despite the reluctance of the jury, O’Brien was convicted and ordered to be transported, having failed to provide an adequate defence. Claiming that he had no recollection of saying Mass or preaching outside the parish he was registered in, he went on to harangue Garzia who, he said, ‘pretended to be a popish clergyman, but that he actually was a Jew’. Garzia had been able to attend Masses in various locations in Dublin and had gathered

¹⁴ Patrick J. Flanagan, ‘The diocese of Clogher in 1714’ in *Clogher Record*, i, no.2 (1954), p.42.

¹⁵ Patrick Francis Moran, *Spicilegium Ossoriense : being a collection of original letters and papers illustrative of the history of the Irish church from the reformation to 1800* (3 vols, Dublin, 1878), ii, p.396.

¹⁶ Corish, *The Irish Catholic experience*, pp125-126.

information on those he eventually reported to the authorities, among them the archbishop of Dublin, Edmund Byrne.¹⁷

In 1722 Garzia reported that there were fourteen chapels and forty-two clergy in the city of Dublin. By 1731, the 'Report on the state of popery' showed that this had increased to eighteen chapels and over one hundred clergy.¹⁸ This was a dramatic increase from the 1660s, when there were as few as ten clergy in the diocese.¹⁹ The tacit acceptance of the authorities that Mass was being held regularly in the city from the 1730s onwards can be adduced by reports in the press. There were prosecutions of women pickpocketing during Mass as well as a report of a 'sacrilegious villain' who was imprisoned for stealing a priest's vestments 'as he was going to put them on to celebrate Mass'.²⁰ The knowledge that Catholics attended Mass on a weekly basis in the city became valuable as a method of social control, especially amid fears of the Catholic mob. Catholics at Mass in 1725 were warned by their priests not to plunder goods from ships that had been stranded as a result of a storm in Dublin Bay. In 1739 there were fears that a prohibition read at all Masses forbidding evening services would result in 'a constant profanation of the Lord's Day, [the Catholics] evening songs etc. having in a great measure restrain'd them from that wicked and idle practice.'²¹ After 1745, the penal statutes that affected religious practice were largely unenforced, those pertaining to political liberties were however continued.²²

Between 1660 and 1740 the Mass was intermittently targeted by the authorities. The effect on lay practice was to increase the laity's appreciation for the clergy because of their scarcity, but also to imbue the Mass with particular resonance. Whether in an open field or in a domestic setting, Mass became a symbol of the persecuted majority. While the humble settings in which many Masses were celebrated in the penal era were tolerated by Catholics, disruption to the rite itself was often met with

¹⁷ *An account of the tryal and examination of Father Anthony Brien* (Dublin, 1718); Patrick Fagan, 'The Dublin Catholic mob (1700-1750)' in *Eighteenth Century Ireland/ Iris an dá chultúr*, iv (1989) pp133-4; Kevin McGrath, 'John Garzia, a noted priest-catcher and his activities, 1717-23' in *IER*, lxxii (1949) pp494-514; Corish, *The Catholic community*, pp 77, 83.

¹⁸ McGrath, 'John Garzia', pp 511-12; 'Report on the state of popery in Ireland, 1731: diocese of Dublin' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, iv, (1915), pp 131-3.

¹⁹ Raymond Gillespie, 'Catholic religious cultures in the diocese of Dublin, 1614-1697' in James Kelly and Dáire Keogh (eds) *History of the Catholic diocese of Dublin* (Dublin, 2000), p.140.

²⁰ John Brady, 'Catholics and Catholicism in the eighteenth century press' in *Archivium Hibernicum* xvi, (1951) pp 53,55,62.

²¹ *Ibid*, pp 43, 60.

²² James Kelly, 'The historiography of the penal laws' in John Bergin, Eoin Magennis, Lesa Ní Mhughhaile, Patrick Walsh (eds) *New perspectives on the penal laws* (Dublin, 2012), p.52.

violent defence. John Totty, an officer at mace who disrupted a Mass being held at a Mass-house on Merchant's Quay, was later attacked by a group of men who asked 'will you pull down the holy altar?'²³ Similar violence was perpetrated on Protestants who refused to go to Mass during the 1641 rebellion, one man was immediately hanged after he compared the Mass to puppetry.²⁴ It is worth noting that rather than extract some verbal oath or written renunciation of Protestantism, the rebels deemed attendance at Mass to be sufficient restitution for the apostasy of their Protestant victims, although it was not always enough to save their lives.²⁵ This indicates that it was hostility to the ritual itself that met with the most violent reactions, rather than attacks on theological doctrine. Soldiers sent to discover a meeting of Catholics near Belturbet, Co. Cavan in 1660 found them at Mass, when they tried to seize the priest, the soldiers were attacked by the crowd.²⁶ In 1663 a rumour that a soldier who had drowned in the river Liffey after drinking consecrated wine and saying 'he would put their God into his belly', was quickly suppressed by the authorities, who clearly feared the repercussions of such provocation.²⁷ For Catholics, attacks on the Mass were considered to be attacks on God because He was present in the Eucharist. The violence with which 'priest-catchers' were met with in the early eighteenth century indicates a defensive attitude amongst the laity for their priests, who were the gateway to accessing the power of the Eucharist.²⁸

The belief in the Real Presence meant that the Eucharist held tremendous potential to be seen as a source of supernatural potency. This is evident in Eucharistic miracles which were promoted in print and manuscript form in the early modern period.²⁹

²³ *Whereas it appears by the examination of John Totty, one of the officers at mace in the city of Dublin, taken upon oath before the lord mayor of the said city, that on the first day of this instant April, the examinant being commanded, went with the magistrates and other officers, pursuant to an order of this board, to a mass house on the Merchants-Key in this city, where they found a priest & many people assembled together ... by the lord lieutenant and council, Ormonde* (Dublin, 1679).

²⁴ Gillespie, *Devoted people* pp 66-7; TCD, MS812, f50v) [available at <http://1641.tcd.ie/index.php>] (10 January 2013)

²⁵ TCD, MS 812, f51r, MS 833 f23r, MS 818 f24v, MS 837 f18r, [Available at <http://1641.tcd.ie/index.php>] (10 January 2013) ; Gillespie, 'Catholic religious cultures', p.136.

²⁶ *Cal. S. P. Ire, 1660-1662*, p.54.

²⁷ Gillespie, 'Catholic religious cultures', p.138; A similar account from the early seventeenth century survives in the Salamanca archives, relating how a performing fool imitated the Mass in front of the lord deputy and council by lifting up a piece of bread and a jug of beer in a mock consecration. He immediately was struck dead and the authorities sought to curb the spreading of the story. Helena Concannon, *The Blessed Eucharist in Irish History* (Dublin, 1932), pp 291-2.

²⁸ Fagan, 'The Dublin Catholic mob', pp133-4; Corish, *The Catholic community* pp 77, 83.

²⁹ Alexandra Walsham, 'Miracles and the Counter-Reformation Mission to England' in *The Historical Journal*, xlvii, No.4 (2003), pp 814-5; Richard Archdekin, *A treatise of miracles, together with new miracles and benefits obtained by the sacred relics of St. Francis Xavier* (Louvain, 1667).

Clearly some clergy took advantage of the awe with which the laity regarded the Eucharist. Anthony Egan, a Franciscan convert to Protestantism, related an incident in which he retrieved a consecrated host from the owner of a public house, to whom it had been pawned for thirty five shillings by a ‘lewd priest’.³⁰ Rumours circulated in the 1660s that Irish servants believed that if they took the sacrament three times they would cause the death of their masters.³¹ Some clergy reinforced the image of power by mechanical, rather than miraculous means. John Dunton, the London bookseller, on his trip around Ireland in the 1690s recounted how a priest, attempting to give the viaticum to a man, found that he had already died. Persevering, the priest placed the Host in the deceased man’s mouth and then attempted to pour water from a chalice that had contained consecrated wine into his mouth.³² His actions may have been influenced by a popular *exemplum* which recounted how a Host entered a sick person’s side when they were unable to receive it through the normal means.³³ On another occasion, Dunton witnessed a priest giving the viaticum to a sick woman, demonstrating the attribution of power to the Eucharist by the clergy in a more domestic setting. After adoring the Host on his knees, the priest lifted it up, showed it to the woman and placed the Host in her mouth.³⁴

In early 1665 Edmund Nangle, an army officer from Co. Longford, had an extraordinary religious conversion experience which involved visions of hell, Satan, St. Patrick and the Virgin Mary.³⁵ His visions occurred when he was bed-ridden, after being reputedly poisoned. It was expected that he would die and his house was at the time full of family and friends, as well as a Protestant clergyman and a Catholic priest. The experience resulted in his conversion to Catholicism, after Nangle was convinced of the veracity of the religion by the attendance of the Catholic priest, Fr. Keeran and by his own experience of the visions.

³⁰ Anthony Egan, *The Franciscan convert: or a recantation sermon of Anthony Egan* (London, 1673), p.6. I would like to thank Liam O’Rourke for this reference.

³¹ *Cal S.P. Ire, 1625-1670*, p.584.

³² John Dunton, *Teague Land; or a merry ramble to the wild Irish (1698)* ed. by Andrew Carpenter (Dublin, 2002), p.78.

³³ Frederic Tubach, *Index exemplorum: a handbook of medieval religious tales* (Helsinki, 1969), p.210; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, p.120; Gillespie, *Devoted people*, pp 66-7.

³⁴ Dunton, *Teague land*, p.77

³⁵ For background to Nangle see Tana O’Hara, ‘A vision of hell in early modern Ireland’ in *Archivium Hibernicum*, li, (1997), pp 87-99.

During the period of his confinement masses were said by Fr. Keeran, at which Nangle witnessed three types of Eucharistic miracle. The most spectacular of these was when the Host glowed red at the elevation, a common motif in Eucharistic miracle stories in which the Host itself manifested the Real Presence to the observer, often an unworthy priest or sceptical believer. Among other common manifestations in this type of Eucharistic *exempla*, was the appearance of a child in the hands of the priest at the consecration, or the appearance of blood or flesh. At the same Mass which saw the Host turn red, Nangle experienced a second miracle when he observed a beam of light entering the room through a blocked up window. The beam, rather than following its true trajectory, bent itself so that it shone above the head of the priest, outlining a vision of the Trinity which remained above the altar until Mass had ended.³⁶ The third miracle occurred at a later Mass when Nangle noticed a coffin near the altar. At first he first thought it was for his own body, but seeing that it was standing upright without any support he began to look at it more closely. At the elevation of the Host the coffin opened to reveal the Virgin Mary, with rosary beads in her hand ‘knocking her breast with far more fervency of devotion than any that was in the room.’³⁷ When the Mass was ended the apparition ceased, but its meaning must have been clear to Nangle and those he related it to. His miraculous experience was circulated in print and Nangle became a figure of reverence among local people, clearly affected by his experience of the Divine.³⁸ His visions were a confirmation of Catholic Eucharistic and Trinitarian doctrine, but also encompassed devotion to the Virgin Mary and the rosary.

Eamon Duffy has suggested that the content of Eucharistic miracles varied according to the receiver of the miracle in the pre-Reformation period. Those who were suffering from unbelief, a common motif in Eucharistic *exempla*, often experienced graphic visions of bleeding hosts or sights of human flesh.³⁹ Richard Archdekin, a Kilkenny Jesuit, wrote a treatise on miracles specially for the Irish market in 1667. Miracles were according to Archdekin, ‘an attestation of the supreme and sovereign authority belonging to God only: to be the Divine seal whereby God approveth such

³⁶ *Narrative of Edmund Nangle of Cloandarah, 1665* (Dublin, 1665), p.8.

³⁷ *Ibid*, pp13-14.

³⁸ Gillespie, *Devoted people*, p.32.

³⁹ Eamon Duffy, *The stripping of the altars :traditional religion in England 1400-1580* (2nd edn. New Haven, 2005), pp 104-5.

verities as he proposeth to his creatures.’⁴⁰ Among the miracles contained in the collection was the famous miracle of the Three Bloody Hosts in Brussels. Archdekin related that there were many miracles of a similar nature which could be related from England and Ireland.⁴¹ Nangle in his oscillations between Catholicism and Protestantism would seem to fit into the category of a sceptic who was shown images that addressed his unbelief. Others experienced ‘calming and beautiful’ images such as an image of a child or a sweet aroma or taste.⁴²

Even when miracles were not directly associated with a Eucharistic setting, attending Mass or receiving communion was often a necessary part of the operation of the miracle. Archdekin’s collection of the miracles associated with the relics of St. Francis Xavier commonly included such a prerequisite and although the miracles always occurred after some form of contact with the relics, they invariably were preceded by attendance at Mass as part of the process of healing. In one case those seeking a miracle got a ‘vertous’ woman living near Mechlin, where the relics were kept, to perform a novena and receive communion.⁴³ While most people never experienced miracles in their own lives, they were certainly aware of them through printed collections of them and through their use as pedagogic tools by the clergy.⁴⁴ Among the other miracles recounted in Archdekin’s tract was the miracle of the Holy House of Loreto, whereby the home of the Virgin Mary was transported by angels from Nazareth to Italy.⁴⁵ This miracle was reproduced again in 1707 attached to the Irish catechism of Bonaventure O’Hussey.⁴⁶

The Eucharistic miracles or visions experienced by those like Edmund Nangle serve to highlight how theological knowledge could penetrate the religious experiences of the laity.⁴⁷ Not all experiences demonstrated the range of Catholic doctrines that were expressed in the visions of Nangle. Ritualised devotions remained central to lay experience, with little evidence that the laity understood their theological basis. John

⁴⁰ Archdekin, *A treatise of miracles*, p.2.

⁴¹ Ibid, pp 31-3.

⁴² Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, p.105; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp108-129.

⁴³ Archdekin, *A treatise of miracles*, pp 74-5.

⁴⁴ Walsham, ‘Miracles and the Counter-Reformation’ pp 814-5; Bernadette Cunningham, ‘Zeal for God and for souls’: Counter-Reformation preaching in early seventeenth-century Ireland’ in Alan J. Fletcher and Ramon Gillespie (eds) *Irish preaching 700-1700* (Dublin, 2001), pp120-2.

⁴⁵ Archdekin, *A treatise of miracles*, pp24-27.

⁴⁶ Bonabhentura Ó hEodhasa, *An Teagasg Críosdaidhe* ed. by Fearghal Mac Raghnaill (Dublin, 1976), pp 95-7.

⁴⁷ Walsham, ‘Miracles and the Counter-Reformation’, pp 805-6.

Dunton, remarked that while Mass was occurring, the laity very much did their own thing;

More appearance of devotion among the laity at celebration of their Mass is not every where to be found, but yet so full of a blind zeal that the poor wretches know nothing of what they do or say. For while the *Pater* is repeating from their altar, you shall hear others thumping their breasts and muttering an *Ave Maria*, the *Credo*, or *Mea Culpa*, as my own senses assure me.⁴⁸

According to Dunton the religion of the laity consisted of a 'blind and total adhering to what is delivered to them by their oracles, their clergy.'⁴⁹ Clearly those encountered by Dunton were not following the Mass in logical order as was laid out in the devotional tracts, but they knew their prayers and could recite the Creed. Soloman Richards, a Presbyterian landlord in the barony of Forth, Co. Wexford, described the religious practices of Catholics in the area in 1682. His sentiments echo those of Dunton, describing an external religion, not only among the 'natives' but also among 'persons of honour.' Ladies of this latter category could pay local women to perform the pilgrimage to Our Lady's Island, the requirements of which included the necessity to go barefoot, or sometimes on one's knees, around the island.⁵⁰ A more favourable report of the inhabitants survives from the same period, this time from the pen of a Catholic priest. His description of the religious practices at the patron days we have already seen.⁵¹ His description of the theological knowledge of the laity was even more laudatory;

The natives are ingenious, and being by education assisted, apprehensive of the most abstruse and exquisite School learning, wherein many (in all ages and instantly) have been and are, at home, and in foreign regions, eminent, no less honoured and admired for prudence and piety...⁵²

Other clergy also took a positive view of the religious practices of the laity. In the 1670s, Bishop John Brennan of Waterford acknowledged that there were problems, but on the whole the Catholics of his diocese were 'very religious and pious, leading a Christian life without great faults or many scandals.'⁵³ Oliver Plunkett praised

⁴⁸ Dunton, *Teague land*, p.67.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Herbert F. Hore (ed.), 'Particulars relative to Wexford and the barony of Forth: by Colonel Solomon Richards, 1682' in *Journal of the Kilkenny and South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society*, iv, no.1 (1862), pp 87-8.

⁵¹ See Chapter 5, p.178.

⁵² Hore (ed.), 'An account of the Barony of Forth', p.71.

⁵³ Patrick Power, *A bishop of the penal times* (Cork, 1932) p.34.

those who travelled three miles to hear Mass and twelve miles to get confirmation.⁵⁴ Bishop Hugh MacMahon of Clogher reported that to hear Mass the ‘people must rise early and travel through frost and snow; some, many of them advanced in years, leave their homes the previous day to make sure they will arrive in time at the place where Mass is to be celebrated.’⁵⁵ The reports on lay practices, whether positive or negative, testify to an attachment to the ritual of the Mass among the laity.

An incident from the west of Ireland illuminates the complexities of lay understanding. In the late seventeenth century a nobleman from Spanish Flanders, the Baron de Corthay, settled in Shrule, Co. Mayo with his English wife. He was it seems a nominal Catholic, the local Catholic population suspected his fidelity to the faith because of the Protestantism of his wife, his tendency to employ only English servants in his castle at Shrule, and his refusal to hold Mass in his house. Political considerations further alienated him from his Catholic neighbours. He had occupied the estate of the earl of Clanrickard and was involved in securing a ship for the Williamite army that had been under Jacobite control in Galway harbour. De Corthay was soon deprived of his property and incarcerated in Galway gaol. His account of his troubles, written in 1699, includes many valuable observations on the religious practices of Irish Catholics. He had clearly experienced a different, continental, style of Catholic worship, which he contrasted with what he considered to be gross superstition and idolatry among the inhabitants of Connacht.⁵⁶

Much of the Baron de Corthay’s description of Irish Catholicism was coloured by his own experiences, particularly the confiscation of his goods and home by the Irish and his incarceration in gaol. This leads to his repeated condemnation of the Irish as a nation of the thieves and particularly on their apparent unconcern for the obligation to make restitution for wrongs perpetrated.⁵⁷ He was also critical of the highly

⁵⁴ Hanly (ed.), *Plunkett letters*, p.74; Corish, *The Catholic community*, pp73-81.

⁵⁵ Flanagan, ‘The diocese of Clogher in 1714’, p.41.

⁵⁶ As far as can be determined the manuscript is extant in two forms one in the Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS C439 and the other in Lambeth Palace Library, MS 711. For the most part MS 711 has been used in this analysis. Very little can be traced about de Corthay other than that the manuscript appears to have been written to support an application for relief on the grounds of loyalty during the Williamite wars. The earl of Galway wrote in favour of his case to Shrewsbury in 1695. H.M.C., *Report on the manuscripts of the duke of Buccleuch and Queensbury* (2 vols, London, 1897-1903) ii, p.239.

⁵⁷ ‘The Irish villany feelingly represented by the Baron of Courthuy Ronsele’ (Lambeth Palace Library MS 711, f.96r.).

external religious practices of some Catholics. His summation of these exemplified an attitude common among other observers,

all the blessed water of the world, all their pilgrimages, their holy wells, the saying over their beads and all their howling and lamenting, fasting and praying, could make no atonement for this so much practiced sin of theft and injustice without making restitution.⁵⁸

After his conversion to Protestantism through the auspices of a local clergyman, de Corthay attempted to converse with people, usually before or after Mass, on the futility of their religion. 'I pity,' he told them, 'very much your condition, to see, that you are so simple, as to imagine that by hearing of a mass, and making several crosses with holy water, upon your foreheads, faces, mouths, breasts etc. you are washed of all your sins, and that you would go straight to heaven, if you should happen to die in that crossed condition'.⁵⁹

This dismissal of traditional practices was not unusual, but de Corthay went further and attempted to gain an understanding of the theological beliefs of the laity. He set about questioning a number of them on some of the central doctrines of the church. He asked one woman what she received in the Eucharist, she answered that she received 'the Virgin Mary, with the little child Jesus in her arms'. The baron, obviously surprised by her answer asked where she had learned this, to which she replied 'she had always heard so from her mother.'⁶⁰

The woman's answer would not have satisfied Tridentine reformers. Though it may not have been correct within the strict parameters of Catholic Eucharistic doctrine, her answer did contain the central truth claim of the Catholic Mass; that at communion Catholics received Jesus in the Host. In this sense the woman was aware of the deeper theological resonances that were operating at the celebration of the Mass. If she had ever read or been exposed to catechetical instruction she may have answered more succinctly that she received 'the body and blood of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, whole Christ, under the outward forms of bread and wine.'⁶¹ Her understanding came not from clerical instruction however, but from her mother, who had evidently passed on this belief to her daughter. It is significant that the woman

⁵⁸ Ibid, f.97r

⁵⁹ Ibid, f.96r.

⁶⁰ Ibid, f.96v.

⁶¹ Henry Turberville, *An abridgment of Christian doctrine with proofs of scripture for points controverted, catechistically explained by way of question and answer* (Douai, 1648), p.200.

could not answer the baron's previous question about how many Gods there were but to the Eucharistic question she was confident. 'That I'll never forget', she told him. Another man questioned by the baron in relation to the Trinity could not answer him either, but alluded to the fact that he had known something of an answer but had forgotten or confused it in his mind.⁶² In the 1660s Capuchin missionaries in Wicklow were confronted with even more varied answers. The Host was understood by some as the grace of God, by others as a picture of God while others simply believed it to be 'good.'⁶³

It is clear then that these Catholics had been exposed to theological instruction of some kind, but not for some time, or effectively. A friar that the baron remonstrated with about this lack of knowledge among the laity blamed the temporal circumstances and hoped that 'God will pardon him and others, because since Cromwell's time, the poor people have had but little instruction, and we may thank the English for it.'⁶⁴ John Sullivan's report of 1668 indicated a similar lack of 'correct' knowledge amongst the laity. It seems that Trinitarian doctrine was the most difficult to grasp. The laity in response to the question 'How many Gods are there?' gave a variety of different answers, some said there were three,

others said four, adding the Blessed Virgin Mary to the Three Divine Persons of the Trinity; others added the apostles and other saints; others, when asked the same question, said that they were not accustomed to such subtleties and that they wished, without them, to be admitted ... to the sacrament of penance.⁶⁵

By the standards of the synod of Cashel of 1661, these laity should not have been granted absolution as they did not know the 'principal mysteries of the faith ... the precepts of God and of the Church [or] the number and meaning of the sacraments.'⁶⁶ Sullivan remarked that those who wished to be absolved of their sins were 'completely ignorant' of its power. Given the fact that auricular confession was the gateway to receiving the Eucharist at Easter, it seems likely that the laity were very aware of its power. Oliver Plunkett was not hopeful of having the required five priests needed to consecrate the holy oils in 1670 as they were too busy hearing

⁶² 'The Irish villany feelingly represented' (Lambeth Palace Library MS 711, f.96v); Gillespie, *Devoted people*, pp 24-5.

⁶³ Gillespie, 'Catholic religious cultures', p.138.

⁶⁴ 'The Irish villany feelingly represented', (Lambeth Palace Library MS 711, f.96v).

⁶⁵ Millett, 'Calendar of volume I', pp 145-6.

⁶⁶ Rogan, *Synods and catechesis*, pp 43, 45-52.

confessions during Easter week.⁶⁷ The importance of the sacrament of confession was noted by Jesuit missionaries in 1605 who heard so many confessions that ‘they could hardly breathe’.⁶⁸

While miracles communicated that the Eucharist was a symbol of power, there were difficulties in controlling how this power was understood by the laity, and in particular, how they attempted to harness this power for themselves. While occasionally uses of the Eucharist by the laity were clearly bordering on the ‘magical’- one wonders what the woman who bought the consecrated host from the priest had intended to do with it - it is important to place these types of practices within the context of a broader theology. Masses were seen by many as operative in a very quantifiable way. This was not necessarily considered dangerous by the proponents of official religion, as they themselves often outlined programmes of devotions which had very clearly defined end-results. In particular masses said to gain indulgences were common and the Archconfraternity of the Rosary printed a list of indulgences gained by confessing and communicating on the feast days of Our Lady, as well as attending or causing to be said the ‘Mass of the Rosary’.⁶⁹ The power of Masses as effective *ex opere operato* is clear in the value attributed to them by the laity with the intention of freeing souls from purgatory.⁷⁰ Masses were considered to be effective ways of relieving those in distress, a Catholic soldier asked the imprisoned baron de Corthay, ‘have you not promised some Masses to be said for your deliverance?’. The baron replied that ‘no S[ain]t in heaven, and less Masses will put a stop to the Irish cruelty.’ The soldier persevered and advised him to have recourse to the Virgin Mary, ‘[she] will hear you, if you make some vow to her’.⁷¹ John Dunton on his travels around Ireland in the 1690s was invited to attend a wake at which he witnessed the last Mass said for the deceased woman at eleven in the morning. He was told that there had been twelve Masses already said for her,

⁶⁷ Hanly (ed.), *Plunkett letters*, p.65.

⁶⁸ Ryan, ‘Old wine in new bottles’, p.129; Lisa McClain, ‘Troubled Consciences: new understandings and performances of penance among Catholics in Protestant England’ in *Church History*, lxxxii, (2013), pp 90-124.

⁶⁹ Anon, *The archconfraternity of the Holy Rosary of Our Blessed Lady* (London[?], 1636) pp2-4; Cyprien de Gamaches *Heaven opened, and the pains of purgatory avoided by the very great indulgences of the two most illustrious archconfraternities : the one of our Blessed Lady, called the Rosary, and the other of the seraphical father, St. Francis, called, The cord of the Passion* (1663).

⁷⁰ *The archconfraternity of the holy rosary*, pp8-9.

⁷¹ ‘Copy of Ms. Rawl. C.49’, (NLI, MS 908, f.58).

presumably by the six or seven priests that were there.⁷² Henry Piers, a Protestant landlord from Tristernagh, Co. Westmeath described the religious custom of the ‘month’s mind’ in 1682,

preparation for this feast are Masses said in all parts of the house at once for the soul of the departed; if the room be large you shall have three or four priests together celebrating in the several corners thereof; the Masses done they proceed to their feasting; and after all, every priest and friar is discharged with his largess⁷³

Central to any understanding of how Catholics viewed the Mass is the belief, evident at all levels of society, that the Mass was efficacious simply because it occurred. The sacrificial nature of the Mass was what set it apart from Protestant rituals. Catholics were often content simply to ‘hear’ Mass or to put it another way, watch the ritual take place.⁷⁴ Since the Mass had an intrinsic power, Eucharistic practice could take place at varying levels of participation, whereas in Protestant communions there were clear boundaries constructed between those who received and those who did not. Although Tridentine reformers encouraged more frequent reception and sought to do this through the establishment of sodalities and regular catechesis, there remained an attitude amongst the laity that Masses could be said or heard and that this in itself was enough to fulfil their religious obligations. Indeed more pious individuals made ‘hearing’ daily Mass a devotional priority.⁷⁵ William King, in his account of Protestant sufferings during the reign of James II, noted that Catholics ‘seemed to make conscious of hearing Mass, and not eating flesh on Fridays, but hardly of anything else.’⁷⁶ As we have seen this was an attitude shared by others who believed that Catholics partook of the ritual in the belief that the action itself was sufficient and did not need to be followed up in their moral behaviour. The baron de Corthay shared William King’s criticisms, observing that ‘a confession makes all [their] hellish crimes as white as snow, and as smooth as a looking glass

⁷² Dunton, *Teague land*, pp 79-81.

⁷³ Henry Piers, ‘A chorographical description of the county of West-Meath, written A. D. 1682’ in Charles Vallancey (ed.) *Collectanea de Rebus Hibernicis*, (Dublin, 1770) p.126.

⁷⁴ Corish, *The Catholic community*, pp 6-7.

⁷⁵ Mary O’Dowd, *A history of women in Ireland, 1500-1800* (Harlow, 2005), p.161; *Rules and instructions for the sodality of the Immaculate Conception of the most glorious and ever Virgin Mary, mother of God* (Dublin, 1703), p.49; Clodagh Tait, ‘Art and the cult of the Virgin Mary in Ireland, c1500-1660’ in Rachel Moss, Colman Ó Clabaigh and Salvador Ryan (eds) *Art and devotion in late medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), p.178.

⁷⁶ William King, *The state of the Protestants of Ireland under the late King James’s government* (London, 1691), p.23.

without any restitution.⁷⁷ Even Catholic priests observed the apparent satisfaction that the laity felt with a ritualistic observance of their religion. John Sullivan believed that ‘many rank and file Catholics.....think that they are good Catholics if they attend Mass, while they are completely ignorant of the very fundamentals of the faith.’⁷⁸

Clearly the reports of lay practices varied. Protestants highlighted the empty externalism of those attending Mass, while Catholics focused on the pious conduct of the laity in their devotions. Common to both was the important social function of the Mass. The baron de Corthay felt that he was disliked by his Catholic neighbours because he would not have Masses said in his home, clearly an expectation amongst the laity. This tradition was an old one and fostered unity between different classes.⁷⁹ Born out of necessity, the practice was maintained in the later seventeenth century, particularly by the regular orders who celebrated masses not only in the houses of the nobility but in those of ‘artisans’ as well.⁸⁰ The fact that Masses were said in private homes, in back-lanes and in the open countryside must have done much to create a sense of communal solidarity between Catholics. Societal divisions remained, despite efforts by some clergy to ensure equality. Oliver Plunkett was keen to ensure that holy water was dispersed at Mass equally over all the people rather than offering it ‘hand-to-hand to all the gentlemen and ladies’ which had been the custom in some churches.⁸¹ Bishop Brennan of Waterford reported to Rome in 1672 that two Masses were held on Sundays in the city because the magistrate prohibited anyone from being in the streets during the time of the Protestant services. For this reason Masses had to be held early in the morning which created difficulties for ‘the more respectable of our families’ who could not organise their households in time for early Mass. They would then give alms to the priest to have Mass celebrated in their own homes at a later time.⁸²

⁷⁷ ‘The Irish villany feelingly represented’ (Lambeth Palace Library, MS 711, f.102v). A similar accusation was levelled at Irish Catholics as early as 1582 by the Lord Justice Henry Wallop, ‘And hearing Mass on Sunday or Holyday, they think all the week after they may do what heinous offence soever, and it is dispensed withal.’ Ryan, ‘Popular religion in Gaelic Ireland’, i, p.366.

⁷⁸ Millett, ‘Calendar of volume I’, p.145.

⁷⁹ Colm Lennon, ‘Mass in the manor house: the Counter-Reformation in Dublin, 1560-1630’ in James Kelly and Daire Keogh (eds) *History of the Catholic diocese of Dublin* (Dublin, 2000), pp 112-26.

⁸⁰ Hanly (ed.), *Plunkett letters*, p.30.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p.522.

⁸² Power, *A bishop of the penal times*, pp 32-33.

Some attempt to foster a more inclusive piety came in the form of confraternities and sodalities, although this appears to have been an initiative of the clergy that was not adopted by the laity. The post-reformation sodality has been seen as different to its ‘corporate precursor’, the confraternity, which had exhibited ‘a certain promiscuity of membership and social inclusion’.⁸³ Divested of the secular activities associated with the medieval confraternity, Tridentine devotional organisations focused on the Eucharist and their ‘moral tone was set by the example of the holy family : the chaste marriage of the Virgin and St. Joseph was promoted as the Christian ideal.’⁸⁴ The two confraternities that were most active in Ireland were the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception and the Arch-confraternity of the Holy Rosary, both set up in the early seventeenth century.⁸⁵ The rules of the Archconfraternity of the Rosary stipulated that it should be open to all ‘whatsoever calling and condition’ and there was no payment for joining.⁸⁶ In the rules of the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception printed in Dublin in 1703, an appendix testified to the different types of lay parishioner that might join. As a result of complaints that the early members of the sodality had enjoyed particular privileges as they were students of the Jesuits, a ‘second congregation’ was instituted. The first and second congregations were likened to the ‘different employs of Mary and Martha’. The first congregation were ‘sodalists of quality, whom God hast blessed with superabundance in temporals’. These had leisure to ‘sit at the feet of Jesus, by assisting daily at Holy Mass, reciting the Office of the Blessed Virgin, and by frequent reading, hear the Word.’⁸⁷ The second congregation were urged to follow the rules of the sodality ‘so far as suits with their calling and circumstances’, but were encouraged in their lowlier pursuits by the person of Christ who ‘was born of a poor mother, maintain’d by a laborious artificer, and chose the cottage of Nazareth for his dwelling place.’⁸⁸ Like the devotional works, the clerical compilers of the rules clearly hoped that the sodalities would cater for a broad swathe of society.

⁸³ Brian Jackson, ‘Sectarianism: division and dissent in Irish Catholicism’ in Alan Ford and John McCafferty (eds) *The origins of sectarianism in early modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2005), p.209; Dillon, ‘Praying by number’, p.462.

⁸⁴ Jackson, ‘Sectarianism’, p.209.

⁸⁵ Tait, ‘Art and the cult of the Virgin Mary’, pp 175-9. There were two rosary confraternities set up in Ireland at this time, one under Jesuit, the other under Dominican influence.

⁸⁶ de Gamaches, *Heaven opened*, p.27.

⁸⁷ *Rules and instructions for the sodality of the Immaculate Conception*, p.140.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, pp 141-142.

One of the central obligations in the Marian confraternities was that of regular attendance at Mass and if the rules of the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception were followed would have resulted in a weekly attendance at mass and frequent reception of the Eucharist. The Confraternity of the Holy Rosary made similar demands, although its focus on the recitation of the rosary involved a type of devotion that could be performed at a more individual level if worldly concerns interfered with sacramental practice.⁸⁹ It is clear however that membership of both confraternities involved the laity in regular sacramental worship, as they were frequently encouraged to confess and communicate on specific occasions, usually feastdays. The sodalities were also similar in that all of their piety was infused with a devotion to the Virgin Mary.

Marian devotion cannot be underestimated as part of early modern Catholic spirituality. This was not an Irish phenomenon and dedication to the Virgin Mary was frequently derided by Protestants across Europe as superstitious and detrimental to the supremacy due to God. Connections between the Virgin Mary and Eucharistic practice had been established since at least the eleventh century and were consolidated through various means after the Reformation.⁹⁰ Gaelic Irish catechisms frequently included sections on Marian prayers and the Douai catechism contained the Office of Our Blessed Lady.⁹¹ Philip Maguire, the editor of the 1707 edition of Bonaventure O'Hussey's catechism, added an account of the Holy House of Loreto together with a woodcut of the Coronation of the Virgin. The connection between Mary and the Eucharist may have been further enhanced by the large amount of chalices produced in the seventeenth century which were engraved with her image, usually holding the Infant Jesus, while many more were inscribed with dedications to the Virgin.⁹² Most of these chalices were bequeathed by the laity and demonstrate that Marian devotion was seen as a natural component of Eucharistic iconography. A

⁸⁹This has been demonstrated as being one of the great benefits of the confraternity in a missionary context where priests were few and sacramental observance infrequent. Dillon, 'Praying by number', pp 456, 464.

⁹⁰Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, pp 142-7; Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, p.256; Dillon, 'Praying by number', pp 452-3.

⁹¹O'Reilly, 'Seventeenth century Irish catechisms' pp105-7; Ryan, 'Popular religion in Gaelic Ireland', ii, p.16; Turberville, *Abridgment of Christian doctrine*, pp 307-320.

⁹²For medieval Eucharistic representations of Mary see Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, p.143; Tait, 'Art and the cult of the Virgin Mary', p.179. Franciscan altar plate has many depictions of the Virgin Mary see Malgorzata Krasnodebska D'Aughton 'Piety, patrons and print: Franciscan altar plate, 1600-1650' *History Ireland*, xvi, no. 3 (2008), pp 35-6.

banner used by the confederate Catholics in Kilkenny was similarly emblematic of the devotional preoccupations of Catholicism, one side depicting the coronation of the Virgin Mary, the other depicting the Host displayed in a monstrance and surrounded by angels.⁹³

Marian-related associations were the most active of the confraternities in early modern Ireland. A list of members of the Sodality of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary survives from 1696. It has not been examined in detail to date and offers an opportunity to explore lay practice.⁹⁴ Despite the aspirations of the clergy that the devotional groups would be open to all, the list indicates that the sodality remained the preserve of elite parishioners and had a complex hierarchical structure. It was highly organised and had strict rules on the comportment of its members, the admission of new members and the election of officers.

There were forty four women and twenty three men in the sodality, the majority of whom bore the names of Old English families. The register book was the gift of Garrett Dillon, who held the position of assistant. His wife, Mary, was also a member of the sodality. Dillon, described by William King as a ‘furious papist’, was a prominent Catholic lawyer who had fought on the side of James II.⁹⁵ Other Jacobite names appear, such as Christopher Butterly and John Begg.⁹⁶ There was a strong clerical presence in the sodality, its director was Fr. Bernard Kieran, Thomas Quirke, the prefect of the sodality, was another Jesuit⁹⁷ while Thomas Austin became the parish priest of St.Nicholas Without in 1709.⁹⁸ Jerome Bath may have been a Dominican from Co. Louth, while the families of Bermingham and Dowdall, whose names appear among the women of the sodality, also had strong clerical connections.

⁹³ William Carrigan, *The history and antiquities of the diocese of Ossory* (4 vols, Dublin,1905) iii, p.78; Jane Fenlon, ‘The Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland’s Kilkenny Banner’ in *JRSAI*, cxxxi,(2001), pp19-28.

⁹⁴ The list is contained in a register book for the sodality in Clongowes Wood College, Co. Kildare. The sodality was revived among students of the school in the nineteenth century. It appears that the original list has not been consulted by historians who have relied on the figures reported by Myles V Ronan in ‘Religious life in Old Dublin’ *Dublin Historical Record*, ii, No.3 (1940) p.107. These include O’Dowd, *A history of women*, p.164 and Kelly, ‘Impact of the penal laws’, p.146; Brian Jackson (Jackson, ‘Sectarianism’, p.208) used the figures from the Clongowes manuscript but incorrectly states that the list is from 1628, when the sodality was founded, however the list is clearly from 1696.

⁹⁵ Éamonn Ó Ciardha, ‘Garret Dillon’, *DIB*.

⁹⁶ J.G. Simms, ‘Irish Jacobites’ in *Analecta Hibernica*, xxii (1960), pp 32, 90.

⁹⁷ W. Carrigan, ‘Episcopal appointments in Ireland’ in *Archivium Hibernicum*, vi, (1917), p.56.

⁹⁸ Cormac Begadon, ‘Laity and clergy in the Catholic renewal of Dublin, c.1750- 1830’ (unpublished PhD theses, NUI Maynooth, 2009), p.275.

Among the female members of the sodality, many came from families known for their Catholicism. Lady Mary Hackett was the wife of Sir Thomas Hackett, a Catholic merchant, banker and Jacobite mayor of Dublin in 1687-8 and appears as one of the first women on the list. Elizabeth Linegar may have been the mother of John Linegar, the future archbishop of Dublin. Linegar had been educated by the Jesuits and in 1729 dedicated a chapel in Liffey Street to the Conception of the Blessed Virgin. In the 1690s, while curate of St. Michan's, he had stayed in 'widow Linegar's' possibly his mother and the Elizabeth Linegar who appears on the list of sodalists.⁹⁹ Others were probably representative of the 'middling class' to which many Catholics were now confined, such as Edward Meredith, a warden and clerk of the Feltmakers Company.¹⁰⁰

Clearly the sodality attracted a particular type of parishioner. William St. Leger, the head of the Jesuit mission to Ireland, remarked on the revival of the sodalities in Dublin in 1661,

Crowds of the better citizens and young men entered [the Sodalities] to the great edification of all; and it is well-nigh impossible to tell how much they, by their works of mercy and frequentation of the sacraments, strengthened the cause of the Catholic religion.¹⁰¹

Other, much older, devotional groups also managed to operate in Dublin. St. Anne's guild which had been attached to the parish of St. Audoen's survived in Catholic hands until 1638. An investigation into its property resulted in a Protestant take-over and its official pastoral activities mainly concerned ministering to the poor. Catholics maintained a presence and were elected as officers of the guild throughout the seventeenth century.¹⁰² After 1638 the guild's spiritual activities were conducted in the Mass-house in Baker's Hall, which adjoined the parish church of St. Audoen's.¹⁰³ The Catholic resurgence in the late 1680s demonstrated their readiness to reclaim the spiritual functions of the guild in a parochial context. On the first of February 1688 the guild met in the parish church and appointed a chantry of six priests to celebrate mass every day in the chapel of St. Ann, 'accordeing and

⁹⁹ Hugh Fenning, 'John Linegar', *DIB*.

¹⁰⁰ Henry F. Berry, 'The records of the Feltmakers' Company of Dublin, 1687-1841: their loss and recovery' in *JRSAL*, Sixth series, i, (1911), pp 39, 43.

¹⁰¹ Myles V. Ronan, 'Religious life in Old Dublin' in *Dublin Historical Record*, ii, No.3 (1940), p.107.

¹⁰² Colm Lennon, 'Civic life and religion in early seventeenth century Dublin', in *Archivium Hibernicum*, xxxviii, (1983) pp 21-2.

¹⁰³ Ronan, 'Religious life in Old Dublin', p.106.

pursuant to the ends in the charter or letters patents of King Henry the Sixth.’ Until the chapel was ready the priests were to use ‘the sev[era]l altars in St. Audoens Church.’ The order was cancelled by the newly appointed Protestant master of the guild in July 1692 and probably had never taken effect.¹⁰⁴ It testified however to the collective memory of Catholics of pre-Reformation practices and the latent cultural identity of the Old English community.¹⁰⁵

The Old English hegemony of sodalities may have been replicated elsewhere. Bishop Wadding, whose diocese contained a significant proportion of Old English families, purchased twelve copies of the rules of the sodality of the Immaculate Conception.¹⁰⁶ There were similarly branches of the Jesuit sodality in other centres of Old English Catholicism, including Kilkenny, Cashel, Clonmel and Drogheda.¹⁰⁷ The sodalists were expected not only to live pious lives which included regular attendance at Mass but also needed a considerable degree of theological knowledge. On their admission to the sodality members expounded a Tridentine formulary;

I receive and embrace all and everything which hath been defined and declared by the Holy Synod of Trent, touching original sin and justification. I likewise profess that in the mass is offered to God a true, proper and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead, and that in the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist there is truly, really and substantially the Body and Blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that there is made a conversion of the whole substance of bread into the body, and of whole substance of wine into the Blood, which conversion the Catholic Church calleth transubstantiation. I confess also that under one kind alone whole and entire Christ is received and a true Sacrament.¹⁰⁸

When members received the Eucharist they were encouraged to imagine ‘that they receive out of the arms of the Mother of God, her immortal son, as the dearest pledge of her unchangeable protection.’¹⁰⁹ In light of this, the woman who answered the Baron de Corthay that she received ‘the Virgin Mary, with the little child Jesus in her arms’, demonstrates that the connection between the Virgin Mary and her sacrificed

¹⁰⁴ Maighr ad N  Mhurchadha (ed.) *The vestry records of the parish of St. Audoen, Dublin, 1636-1702* (Dublin, 2012), pp 28, 152-4.

¹⁰⁵ 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* (Dublin, 1986), p.78. A medieval guild of St. Catherine was still operating in Trim, Co. Meath in the 1680s, see Concannon, *The Blessed Eucharist*, pp 121-2.

¹⁰⁶ P.J. Corish, ‘Bishop Wadding’s notebook’ in *Archivium Hibernicum*, xxix (1970), p.90.

¹⁰⁷ Tait, ‘Art and the cult of the Virgin Mary’, p.175; Jackson, ‘Sectarianism’, p.206.

¹⁰⁸ *Rules and instructions for the sodality of the Immaculate Conception*, pp 30-31.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.36.

son in the Eucharist transcended societal boundaries. When sodalists were unable to attend Mass they were directed to ‘conceive an intense desire of receiving so great a guest, and communicate spiritually, sending before acts of faith and love in an humble posture, begging with the *Cananean* the crum[b]s that fall from the table.’¹¹⁰ The practice of spiritual communion was described in other circumstances where persecution hindered lay attendance at Mass. In the early eighteenth century ‘people might be seen, on meeting, signalling to each other on their fingers, the hour Mass was due to begin, in order that people might be able to kneel down and follow mentally the Mass which was celebrated at a distance.’¹¹¹

The list of members of the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary showed that women outnumbered men by almost two to one. It has been suggested that women were in many instances responsible for the maintenance of religious practice during periods of difficulty, some credit them with playing an essential role in the Counter Reformation in Ireland. The piety of Catholic women had repercussions for their children as they were generally the facilitators of religious instruction in the home.¹¹² Women were also acknowledged as being particularly forthright in their protection of priests, especially during periods of persecution.¹¹³ Of course the women who joined sodalities and donated altar plate were ‘elite’ parishioners, but a particular female religiosity was also common among those of humbler backgrounds. This type of practice was generally seen by outsiders as more superstitious often because it was peculiar to women. The Baron de Corthay encountered a woman saying the rosary for her dead father and husband behind a bush. The woman was certain

that they would be delivered out of purgatory, when she would have said her rosary two hundred times for each soul, and gone round about a certain well [bare-footed and fasting] ten times every day for three months together, except the Sundays and bestowed a lamb upon the fryars of Ross, who had compelled her to do this good work.¹¹⁴

While her devotions were highly specific in their external demands and were intended by her to have specific ends, these ends could not be empirically quantified by her. They required faith that they would achieve the intended outcome of

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p.50.

¹¹¹ Flanagan, ‘The diocese of Clogher in 1714’, p.42.

¹¹² O’Dowd, *A history of women* pp159-164; Lennon, ‘Mass in the manor house’, p.117.

¹¹³ O’Dowd, *A history of women*, p.159; Concannon, *The Blessed Eucharist*, pp 224, 288.

¹¹⁴ ‘The Irish villany feelingly represented’, (Lambeth Palace Library MS 711) f.96v.

purgatorial release for loved ones. This faith was similarly required of the women who were members of a sodality, one of whose main functions was to pray and have masses said for the dead. The women who paid other women to perform their pilgrimage to Our Lady's Island clearly saw merit in these devotions, even if they were unwilling to perform them in reality.

It was impossible for Irish Catholics to celebrate Mass in anything like the splendour that was achievable in other European countries. The Baron de Corthay was grateful for this impediment to superstition. It was fortunate, he thought, that Catholics did not 'have before their eyes all them fine and rich imagines and sculptures of Italy'.¹¹⁵ Oliver Plunkett melancholically wondered 'how much it would benefit [the laity] to see the splendour and magnificence of the church in other lands'.¹¹⁶ While the visual culture was certainly stifled, visual stimulation was not totally absent for Irish Catholics. A Jesuit church in Back Lane in Dublin was described thus in 1635 'the pulpit in this church was richly adorned with pictures, and so was the high altar, which was advanced with steps and railed out like cathedrals: upon either side therof were there erected places for confession...'¹¹⁷ In Drogheda, the Dominicans had a fixed altar, pulpit and confessionals in their oratory.¹¹⁸ Much destruction likely took place during the Cromwellian period. Chapels in Wexford were described as 'firmly builded and richly adorned for divine service' in the early seventeenth century but after the 1650s, churches were left 'defaced, broken, or burned ...and their sacred ornaments profaned.'¹¹⁹ The process of restoration was aided in Wexford by Luke Wadding's episcopate. His own chapel was undoubtedly a model for others in the diocese and it contained altar rails, a pulpit, confessionals, seats and a variety of pictures, vestments and altar plate.¹²⁰ In Waterford Bishop Brennan reported that when it was possible to build chapels they were 'commodious and decorous'.¹²¹ By the early eighteenth century many Dublin chapels had significant ornamentation, a list of 1747 indicates that by that time most had paintings behind the altar.¹²²

¹¹⁵ Ibid, f.97r.

¹¹⁶ Hanly (ed.), *Plunkett letters*, p.78.

¹¹⁷ Gilbert, *History of Dublin*, i, p.242.

¹¹⁸ Jackson, 'Sectarianism', p.205.

¹¹⁹ Hore (ed.), 'An account of the Barony of Forth', pp 66-9; Paul Walsh, 'An account of the town of Galway' in *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, xlv, (1992) p.113.

¹²⁰ Corish, 'Wadding's notebook', pp 91-2.

¹²¹ Power, *A bishop of the penal times*, p.30.

¹²² Ronan, 'Religious life in Old Dublin', pp110-111.

The rich material culture of the Counter-reformation that was lavishly expressed in the baroque extravagances on the continent could be expressed in more subtle ways in the subdued environment in Ireland. Church plate from the seventeenth century survives in considerable quantities. As it was portable and easily hidden, it could enrich the celebration of Masses in more humble surroundings. Well-endowed churches were mainly confined to urban areas and the regular orders seemed to have been the most favoured when it came to donations of plate by the laity.¹²³ Bequests of chalices, monstrances and vestments reveal an appreciation for the visual complexity of the Mass. The political and economic pressures of the early eighteenth century seemed to manifest themselves in the ornamentation of chalices especially when compared with ones of the early and late seventeenth century.¹²⁴ Chalices of the early seventeenth century had richly engraved pyramidoid feet with large, stylised globular knobs (see figure 6:1). By the later seventeenth and early eighteenth century there was greater variety and there were more simpler styles with circular feet, less ornate engraving and plainer knobs (see figure 6:2). Not all churches would have had fine altar plate, rare survivals of small (and easily transported) pewter chalices testify to the fact that Catholics were often deprived of rich visual imagery.¹²⁵

¹²³ Forrestal, *Catholic synods in Ireland*, pp176-79

¹²⁴J.M.F. Ffrench 'A notice of some county Wexford and other chalices' in *JRSAI* Fifth Series, viii, No. 2 (1898), pp130-1.

¹²⁵ Ragnall Ó Floinn (ed.) *Franciscan faith: sacred art in Ireland, AD 1600-1750* (Dublin, 2011), p.142.



Figure 6:1 The 'James Egan' chalice, 1633. [From J.J. Buckley, 'Some Irish altar plate' in *JRSAI* Seventh Series, ix, No. 4 (1939)]



Figure 6:2 The 'Plunkett- McDermott' chalice, 1712. [From J.J. Buckley, 'Some Irish altar plate' in *JRSAI* Seventh Series, xi, No. 1 (1941)].

Richly-embroidered vestments also heightened the solemnity of the Mass and there are survivals of these from the seventeenth century which demonstrate a rich indigenous tradition of embroidery.¹²⁶ The Dominican priory in Galway had a large number of vestments in the late seventeenth century. In 1674, Oliver Plunkett considered that the Dominican priory had ‘the best and most ornamented church that is in the entire kingdom’.¹²⁷ Before leaving for the continent in 1698 the Dominicans left in the safe-keeping of a local Catholic gentleman their large collection of vestments and linen which comprised of

eleven casulas, one canopy, two red dalmaticas, two cappas wherof one white and the other red, two small frontals, ten old silk scarves, six bursas, five pallas, five vellums, several small coats for ye image of Jesus, two silk coats for to make antependiums of sad colour, thirteen towels, four albs... four antependiums, five corporals.¹²⁸



Figure 6:3 Chalice veil made by a Dominican sister of Galway in 1683. [Galway City Musuem]

The laity could access the meanings of this visual culture in printed works. The various ornaments, vestments and colours associated with the liturgical seasons were

¹²⁶ Joseph O'Donnell, *Maynooth bicentenary art exhibition: ecclesiastical art of the penal era* (Maynooth, 1995), pp 40-4. Concannon, *The Blessed Eucharist* illustration facing p.224 and p. 304; Helena Concannon, 'Historic Galway convents II: the Dominican nuns' in *Studies*, xxix, No.53 (1950), pp 67-8.

¹²⁷ Ambrose Coleman, *The ancient Dominican foundations in Ireland* (Dundalk, 1902), p.72.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, pp72-73.

carefully explained in a pamphlet printed by Nathaniel Thompson in 1686 who supplied William Weston, the Dublin bookseller, with various devotional works.¹²⁹

While the Dominicans in Galway had managed to accumulate a large collection of vestments and plate, not all churches were as well provided for. Bishop Brennan conceded that although many clergy had ‘decorous sacerdotal ornaments and the chalice and pix of silver’ others had ‘tattered vestments and pewter chalices’.¹³⁰ The bishop of Ferns lamented the subdued visual culture of Catholics in Ireland in a poem written c. 1684;

‘Our Altar valu’d more than gold

were deck’d with holiness,

with objects to behold

and mov’d to Godliness

Now trees grow where those altars stood

For priests to sacrifice

And offer up that precious blood

Which our souls purifies

Our priestly vestments white and red

Our violet and our green

The black which we keep for the dead

no more are to be seen’.¹³¹

The injury felt by Catholics who had lost their churches remained for a considerable time and is testified by their repossession of them during the reign of James II,

¹²⁹ Anon, *An Exposition of the Holy Ornaments and Ceremonies which the church uses at Mass* (London, 1686).

¹³⁰ Power, *A bishop of the penal times*, p.30.

¹³¹ Luke Wadding, *A pious garland, compos’d by the Reverend Father Luke Wadding bishop of Ferns which he compos’d for the solace of his friends and neighbours in their afflictions* (London, 1728), p.6.

despite having been out of Catholic use for many decades.¹³² Catholics who pulled up the communion tables, seats and reading desks in churches in order to reclaim them for their own use were signalling that the setting for Mass was wholly different to Protestant services.¹³³ When James II went to Mass in Christ Church cathedral it was a symbolic victory for the Catholic Eucharist, the candlesticks and tabernacle reputedly used during the Mass are still preserved to this day.¹³⁴ Though clearly fashioned hastily and simple in design, they testified not only the different setting for Catholic worship but also had a doctrinal message, the tabernacle being the receptacle for the preservation of the Eucharist.

The power of the Eucharist was not only demonstrated miraculously or symbolically through the efforts of the clergy in the Mass, it was also demonstrated in the practice of Eucharistic adoration. The extent to which this was possible in Ireland is unclear. Faculties granted to vicars apostolic in the 1660s suggested that it should only take place when it was safe to do so. Eucharistic adoration during the Forty Hours Prayer should be avoided if there were large crowds or if 'the exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament will give rise to sacrilege on the part of the heretics and infidels or give offence to the magistrate.'¹³⁵ James Brenan reported in 1672 that 'in none of [the] oratories is the Blessed Sacrament preserved with a lamp burning before it on account of the poverty of the clergy and the danger of irreverence from our adversaries.'¹³⁶ During the late 1680s there were Eucharistic processions in Dublin and there is a suggestion that processions took place in Galway under the auspices of Fr. Gregory Joyce.¹³⁷ When James II arrived in Dublin in May 1689 he was met at the gate of Dublin castle 'by the Host, over-shaded with a canopy bore-up by four popish bishops, and accompanied with a numerous train of friars singing...' The king 'went down upon his knees to pray to the image' before entering the chapel where a *Te Deum* was sung for his arrival.¹³⁸

¹³² Gillespie, *Devoted people*, p.89.

¹³³ King, *The state of protestants*, pp 174, 208-16, 395-8; *Ireland's lamentation* (London, 1689), p.12.

¹³⁴ King, *The state of protestants*, p.173, Kenneth Milne, 'Restoration and reorganisation, 1660-1830' in Kenneth Milne (ed.) *Christ Church cathedral, Dublin: a history* (Dublin, 2000), pp 269-272; John L. Robinson, 'Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin, proctors' accounts, 1689-90' in *JRSAI Sixth Series*, i, no.3 (1911), pp 264-5.

¹³⁵ Millett, 'Catalogue of volume I', p.22.

¹³⁶ Power, *A Catholic bishop in penal times*, p.23.

¹³⁷ Gillespie, 'Catholic religious culture', p.138; Helena Concannon, 'The "Company of the Blessed Sacrament"- some Irish associations' in *IER*, lxxii, (1949), p.532.

¹³⁸ *Ireland's lamentation* (London, 1689) p.28.

The liturgical object which facilitated Eucharistic adoration, the monstrance, does not seem to have been readily available until after the 1660s but there certainly were monstrances in existence in Ireland before this. Monstrances appear engraved on the Font-Butler chalice of 1621, the Gravan-Hogan chalice of 1632 and the Gould chalice of 1639, all of which were pieces used by Franciscans or Dominicans.¹³⁹ There are depictions of monstrances in Antoin Gearnon's *Parrthas an anma* (see Figure 6:4) published in Louvain in 1645, and on the Kilkenny confederate banner mentioned above (see Fig 6:5).¹⁴⁰



Figure 6:4. Angels with a monstrance in Antoin Gearnon's *Parrthas an anma* (1645), p.208.

¹³⁹ Krasnodebska D'Aughton 'Piety, Patrons and Print', pp 35-7; J.J. Buckley 'Some Irish Altar Plate' in *JRSAI* Seventh Series, Vol. ix, No. 2 (1939), pp54-5; Robert Day, 'The altar plate of the Franciscan church Cork' *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, iii, (1897), pp 161-2.

¹⁴⁰ Antoin Gearnon, *Parrthas an anma*, (1645), pp 208, 371.



Figure 6:5 Kilkenny banner (c.1644) showing Eucharist displayed in a monstrance. [Jane Fenlon, 'The Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland's Kilkenny Banner' in *JRSAI* cxxxi, (2001) p.20.]

In the early seventeenth century it is likely that monstrances were scarce and only available in certain areas. The Armagh diocese appears to have owned a gilt monstrance which was placed for safe-keeping in the Irish College at Louvain in the early seventeenth century by the earl of Tyrone. An inventory of the plate taken in 1644 mentions it, however there is considerable difficulty in tracing whether this

plate belonged to the cathedral or the diocese as a whole or indeed if it was part of the original consignment brought over by the earl.¹⁴¹ The Rothe monstrance of 1644 seemed to have been used in St. Canice's cathedral, an indication that Eucharistic exposition was perhaps only operable in the larger churches or that monstrances were only used for special liturgical occasions, such as Corpus Christi processions. The existence of the Rothe monstrance perhaps explains its appearance on the Kilkenny banner, as well as complementing an enduring tradition of Corpus Christi pageantry in the city.¹⁴² Jane Fenlon has suggested that the banner and monstrance may have been used when the papal nuncio, Cardinal Rinnucini, arrived in 1644.¹⁴³ Monstrances survive in greater quantities after 1660 such as the Fitzsimon monstrance of 1664 (see Figure 6:6), a monstrance owned by the Cork Dominicans dating from 1669, the Kilmanagh monstrance of 1688 and the James Madden monstrance of 1714.¹⁴⁴ All of these examples were in the custody of the regular orders, an indication perhaps of their greater ability to facilitate Eucharistic adoration in their chapels or perhaps the influence of continental forms of devotion being brought to Ireland by the orders.¹⁴⁵ Where Eucharistic adoration took place it would have reaffirmed external devotion to the Host.

¹⁴¹ Beningus Millett, 'Ancient altar-plate and other furnishings of the church of Armagh' in *Seanchas Ardmhacha*, iii, (1958), pp 87-93.

¹⁴² Corish, *The Catholic community*, p.11.

¹⁴³ Fenlon, 'The Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland's Kilkenny Banner', p.27.

¹⁴⁴ Ó Floinn, *Franciscan faith: sacred art in Ireland*, pp 148-55, 174-5; Carrigan, *The history and antiquities of the diocese of Ossory*, iii, pp 446-7; For a monstrance given to the Poor Clares in Galway in the 1670s see Concannon, *The Blessed Eucharist*, p.375; Sweeney, *Irish Stuart silver*, pp 35, 50,120.

¹⁴⁵ Forrestal, *Catholic synods*, p.177.



Figure 6:6 James Fitzsymon monstrance, 1664 [from Malgorzata Krasnodebska D’Aughton ‘Piety, Patrons and Print: Franciscan Altar Plate 1600-1650’ *History Ireland* (2008)].

External religion was not suppressed by the Council of Trent but was streamlined into more orthodox expressions of piety. In a Eucharistic context this meant more frequent communion encouraged through the establishment of sodalities. In the seventeenth century frequent communion became a source of contention within the Catholic church with the emergence of Jansenism. The consensus among historians is that Jansenism had little practical influence in Ireland, although Irish clerics were certainly involved in Jansenist activity abroad.¹⁴⁶ The possibility cannot be completely dismissed however given that Florence Conry, who wrote an unpublished

¹⁴⁶ Corish, *The Catholic community*, pp 51,65, 87; Mary Ann Lyons, ‘The interrogation of Matthew Barnewall, an Irish Jansenist Imprisoned in the Bastille, 1712-1713’ in *Archivium Hibernicum*, lix (2005), pp79-89; Joseph S. O’Leary, ‘The Irish and Jansenism in the seventeenth century’ in Liam Swords (ed.) *The Irish-French Connection : 1578-1978* (Paris, 1978); Ruth Clark, *Strangers and sojourners at Port Royal* (Cambridge, 1932) pp210-19.

Irish catechism in the late sixteenth century, was a suspected Jansenist and fears of the heresy were expressed in some of the synodal legislation. Jansenism was expressly mentioned at the synods of Armagh and Tuam in 1660 and was alluded to at the synod of Cashel in 1685.¹⁴⁷

Oliver Plunkett was aware of the dangers which Jansenist austerity posed to ordinary practice in Ireland. He noted that Jansenist disapproval of frequent recourse to confession and devotion to the Virgin Mary was ‘in conflict with the traditional belief and practice of the church.’¹⁴⁸ The fact that the archbishop administered the anti-Jansenist formulary to Fr. Cornelius Daly in 1678 indicates a readiness to deal with the issue. His approval of Daly, he had ‘seen few men return from Paris with more churchmanlike qualities’, denotes an alertness to the possibility of Jansenism creeping in via the continentally-trained clergy.¹⁴⁹ Not all who were trained in Paris could be said to have remained untainted, Bishop James Phelan of Ossory, made diocesan regulations in the 1670s which may have betrayed a leaning to austerity in Eucharistic practice.¹⁵⁰ However, Phelan signed the declaration that repudiated the Remonstrance of Peter Walsh in 1670 which suggests that his loyalty was firmly with Rome. Walsh’s Remonstrance was a denial of papal authority in temporal affairs and was affiliated with Gallican influences associated with Jansenism in France. Thomas O’Connor has argued that if Jansenism survived at all in Ireland after the 1670s, ‘it was as a personal spirituality and world-view of a number of Irish Catholic laity and clergy.’¹⁵¹ This world view espoused an extremely rigorous personal piety which emphasised penitential devotion. One of the key texts of Jansenist thought was *De la fréquente communion* by Antoine Arnauld, the leading exponent of Jansenism in France, the country in which it found its most success and also its bitterest opposition. Arnauld’s text discouraged frequent reception of the Eucharist and instead emphasised the need for a long and spiritually-arduous preparation. It has left little evidence of influence on the lay experience of the Eucharist in Ireland, perhaps because of the watchful eyes of bishops like Plunkett.

¹⁴⁷ Rogan, *Synods and catechesis*, pp 38, 39, 46; Forrester, *Catholic synods*, p.106. For Conry’s alleged Jansenism see O’Leary ‘The Irish and Jansenism’, p.21; Thomas O’Connor, *Irish Jansenists, 1600-1700: religion and politics in Flanders, France, Ireland and Rome* (Dublin, 2008) pp 21, 64-72.

¹⁴⁸ Hanly, *Plunkett letters*, p.488.

¹⁴⁹ Hanly, *Plunkett letters*, p.525.

¹⁵⁰ Corish, *The Catholic community*, p.65.

¹⁵¹ O’Connor, *Irish Jansenists*, p.348.

The most prominent Irish Jansenists remained on the continent and many confined their activities to the realm of the theological schools.

Eamon Duffy has argued that a Jansenist trend operated in England, not only in the form of opposition to the papacy, but can also be detected in the devotional texts of certain seventeenth century Catholic writers.¹⁵² Theological disputes on the nature of grace were largely conducted outside the religious life of the laity, but when their devotional manuals became influenced by the austere piety of the Jansenists, the suppression of the heresy became an urgent matter. Although the debates probably interested few of the laity, some were evidently keen to discuss the new theological ideas coming from Europe. In the early eighteenth century a charitable group of lay people in London became enthused with the subject, probably due to the influence of a Jansenist layman, Dr. Richard Short. The charitable aspirations of the group became forgotten as ‘bakers, lawyer’s clerks, cobblers and bodice-makers argued vehemently about attrition and contrition, efficacious grace and irresistible grace, limited or unlimited atonement, the doctrinal irregularities of Pope Honorius, and the question of papal infallibility.’¹⁵³

Duffy has identified John Gother (d.1704) as a devotional writer that exhibited a certain reserve about ‘externals’ in religion. Gother was initially a controversial writer but in his later life produced devotional works. Instead of advocating the use of devotional aids such as scapulars and rosaries he instead focused on the fostering of a rigorous internal piety, one which carefully prepared for the sacraments.¹⁵⁴ Gother was not an avowed Jansenist, but his writings suggest a disposition that favoured a deeply spiritual experience of religion that many associated with Jansenism.¹⁵⁵ His Presbyterian upbringing may perhaps have more to do with his devotional style than the spiritual programmes of Port Royal.¹⁵⁶ Gother’s

¹⁵² Eamon Duffy, ‘A rubb-up for old soares’; Jesuits, Jansenists, and the English secular clergy, 1705-1715’ *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, xxvii, No. 3 (1977), pp 291-317.

¹⁵³ Duffy, ‘A rubb-up for old soares’, p.305; Clark, *Strangers and sojourners*, pp165-70.

¹⁵⁴ Duffy, ‘A rubb-up for old soares’, p.293.

¹⁵⁵ Marion Norman has argued that Gother’s writings sit comfortably into a much older tradition of English devotional writing with its elements of ‘sturdy independence, down-to-earth commonsense, quiet humour and unostentatious tenderness.’ Marion Norman, ‘John Gother and the English way of Spirituality’ in *Recusant History*, xi, no.5 (1972), p.306.

¹⁵⁶ Jansenism was at its peak in the seventeenth century when political factors combined to allow it to flourish at the convent of Port-Royal des Champs in Paris. It was greatly advanced by the involvement of the Arnauld family, who were heavily involved with Port-Royal and whose mother superior, Angélique Arnauld, was sister to Antoine Arnauld. Under Mère Angélique the nuns

controversial texts were printed in Ireland, his most famous being *A papist misrepresented and represented, or, a two-fold character of Popery* (1685).¹⁵⁷ In 1730 several of his devotional texts were for sale in Dublin, including *Instructions for hearing mass*.¹⁵⁸

Even if Jansenism did not take any firm roots during this period the ideals of the movement were certainly known to many of the clergy. Bishop Luke Wadding of Ferns owned a handful of Jansenist works, as did Bishop William Daton of Ossory.¹⁵⁹ The small number of these compared with the many more orthodox works in their libraries indicates a desire to be alert for heretical indicators rather than any affiliation with them. By the 1730s the library of the Augustinians of Galway contained a more worrying number of Jansenist works, which had probably been acquired before 1698, some of which were on the subject of the Eucharist.¹⁶⁰ Cornelius Nary, a Dublin priest and controversial writer, had alarmed Rome with his translation into English of the New Testament in 1718. The text was ordered to be withdrawn for its Jansenist sentiments. Nary was a correspondent of Sir Richard Bellings, whose father was one of the few lay people associated with Jansenism in Ireland and who had translated Arnauld's, *De la fréquente communion* into English.¹⁶¹ Nary has been associated with the publication of a tract which reported a Eucharistic miracle from the parish of St. Margaret in Paris. The work was translated from a text by Cardinal de Noailles, known to have a moderate attitude to the Jansenists. The text reported a miracle that took place on the feast of Corpus Christi in 1725. Mdme de la Fosse, the wife of a cabinet maker, was cured of a chronic 'issue of blood' during the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. She was a pious woman and had been carried in a chair to receive the Eucharist before she was cured. Before her miraculous healing she had crawled on her hands and knees after the

reformed as the Daughters of the Blessed Sacrament in 1626 and were devoted to the worship of the Eucharist.

¹⁵⁷ Dublin edition was printed in 1686.

¹⁵⁸ John Gother, *Instructions and devotions for hearing Mass* (Dublin, 1730).

¹⁵⁹ Corish, 'Wadding's notebook' pp 53, 57, 71; Fenning, 'The library of Bishop William Daton', p.31.

¹⁶⁰ Hugh Fenning (ed.) 'The Library of the Augustinians of Galway in 1731' in *Collectanea Hibernica*, no.31/32 (1989/1990) p.163, no. 78 and no.99 appear to be Eucharistic tracts written by Jansenists. The library also had a copy of the Catechism of Montpellier in Spanish which was condemned in 1712,(p.181). It can't be assumed that the Galway Augustinians were completely given over to Jansenism as they also had many orthodox works and a work by Louis Abelly, a defender of the church against Jansenism (p.177).

¹⁶¹ Patrick Fagan, *Dublin's turbulent priest: Cornelius Nary (1658-1738)*, (Dublin 1991), pp 57-66; O'Connor, *Irish Jansenists*, pp 318,353.

sacrament had passed her house, pleading for a miracle. By the time she had reached the church she could stand up and walk with the crowd. The miracle was deemed ‘to signalize [God’s] power after a sensible manner, in this sacrament, by miracles equally capable to establish the truth of the Catholic doctrine relating to it, and to inspire men with the sentiments wherewith they ought to be persuaded concerning this august mystery.’¹⁶²

Shortly after the publication of the tract a series of miracles associated with the grave of Francois de Pâris, a Jansenist deacon, would take place in the cemetery of Saint-Médard in Paris. The *convulsionnaires* of Saint-Médard marked the decline of Jansenism into a sect in the wake of *Unigenitus* (1713), the papal bull which denounced Jansenism, and its adoption as a law of the state.¹⁶³ Although the miracle of Mme. de la Fosse was not directly connected to those of St. Médard, miraculous healing was the most common of the miracles associated with the *convulsionnaires*.¹⁶⁴ The miracle was strongly dependent on the belief of Mme de la Fosse in the Real Presence. The miracle served to ‘enlighten and sanctify’ the soul rather than ‘cure and comfort the body’.¹⁶⁵

The Dublin edition of the text alludes to further circulation in the press of the miracle, on the title-page it states ‘that this is the miracle mention’d in our newspapers of last June.’ The text was possibly printed by Luke Dillon, whose list of books for 1730 indicated that his customers were interested in more ascetic devotional texts. In contrast to Weston’s stock of the 1680s, Dillon’s is almost entirely composed of works of ‘interior piety’. Gone are the texts on the rosary and St. Bridget’s prayers, and in their place are spiritual staples such as Francis de Sales’ *Introduction to a devout life*, Thomas a Kempis’ *Imitation of Christ* and Robert

¹⁶² *The mandate of his eminence the Lord Cardinal D’Noailles, archbishop of Paris* (Dublin [?] 1726) p.7. The ESTC lists this edition as printed in London however it is a different translation to the London edition printed by John Hughes in 1725. Patrick Fagan has suggested that this work was translated by Nary, the typeface appears similar to that of other works printed in Dublin by Luke Dillon. The two surviving copies of this 1726 edition are both held in Ireland. Fagan, *Dublin’s turbulent priest*, pp 95-6.

¹⁶³ William Doyle, *Jansenism: Catholic resistance to authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution*, (New York, 2000) pp 45-57.

¹⁶⁴ Bryan E. Strayer, *Suffering saints: Jansenists and convulsionnaires in France, 1640-1799* (Eastbourne, 2008) pp 241-5.

¹⁶⁵ *The mandate of Cardinal D’Noailles*, p.17.

Parson's *Christian directory*.¹⁶⁶ The transition probably reflected not only a growing and sophisticated literate audience, but also to the waning of external devotional practice in some quarters. In the 1730s a theological discussion group took place in the parish of St. Catherine led by a Carmelite, Fr. Lahy, which further suggests a deeper intellectual engagement on the part of some laity.¹⁶⁷ Although no Jansenist texts appeared on Dillon's list, the books he sold were geared towards a more austere spirituality.

Even if the Jansenist programme of ascetic sacramental practice was introduced in Ireland by some clergy, it is unlikely that the laity would have embraced it in the seventeenth century.¹⁶⁸ As we have seen their transition from traditional to Tridentine religious practice was a gradual process which was greatly hindered by poor resources and the ritualised devotions of the laity. The rigorous interior discipline of Jansenism was likely a step too far for a people who clung to an externalised piety. While priests like Cornelius Nary and booksellers like Luke Dillon may have catered for those laity who wished to practice a more ascetic religion, the majority of Catholics continued to seek connection with the Divine in their outward actions, their spiritual motivations remaining largely undetectable. Where it can be detected, their theological knowledge fell short of the aspirations of many of their pastors. However, the belief in the power of the Eucharist could be seen, even in these faulty beliefs, it was 'the grace of God', 'the little child Jesus' or 'a picture of God'. The laity's attachment to the ritual does not negate their idiosyncratic rendering of a complex theology.

Catholic Eucharistic practice in the early modern period must be analysed within the framework of a persecuted church trying to implement a universalising religious practice. It appears that the sacraments became the means through which Tridentine and traditional practice could be reconciled. As the most powerful demonstration of the Divine in the temporal world, the Mass became for Catholics a symbol of intense significance. Its power was only reinforced by the outsiders who targeted it and it became for Catholics not only the well-spring of their faith but the boundary mark

¹⁶⁶ The advertisement appears on the final page of John Gother, *Instructions for hearing Mass* (Dublin, 1730).

¹⁶⁷ Raymond Gillespie, 'Religion and urban society: the case of early modern Dublin' in Peter Clarke and Raymond Gillespie (eds) *Two capitals : London and Dublin 1500-1840* (Oxford, 2001) p.238.

¹⁶⁸ Corish, *The Catholic community*, pp 65-6.

which separated them from others. Persecution increased the Eucharist's symbolic message so that it was displayed on military banners, enriched by those devotions that substituted it when it was unavailable and pronounced to the eyes and ears of Catholics in chalices, monstrances, vestments and miracle stories. Any attempts to disrupt the ritual itself were met with fierce opposition while theological disputes were largely ignored by the laity. As in each of the denominations there were sometimes disparities between the religion of the elite and of the ordinary parishioner, but these differences are largely undetectable and can only be inferred by the assumption that the elite were more naturally disposed to found their practice in a solid intellectual basis. It is clear that however it was understood, both ordinary and elite Catholics knew that the Mass was central to their faith and identity.

Chapter Seven

‘Confessions in conflict’ - Eucharistic controversy in Ireland, 1660-1740

Controversy over the Eucharist was a central preoccupation during the early modern period. Books, pamphlets and broadsheets sought to establish and defend competing theologies. It has been estimated that more than 7000 books of controversy were printed in France between the Edict of Nantes in 1598 and its revocation in 1685. Peter Milward has suggested that works of controversy in England attained unprecedented levels in Jacobean era, with over 700 texts being produced during the period.¹ In Ireland, polemical writing never reached these levels partly due to state’s control over the printing presses and also the desire to minimise confessional conflict in a society in which political control lay with a confessional minority.² Controversial writing appeared with greater frequency towards the end of the seventeenth century when access to the press became easier and confessional confrontations unavoidable as divisions within Protestantism hardened. The minutiae of the theological debates were the preserve of the clergy in the early seventeenth century but as the printed word became cheaper, and more widely available, writers simplified their texts to provide for a broader audience. This chapter will explore the ways in which Catholics, Anglicans and Presbyterians defined their own Eucharistic beliefs against those of each other. It will also consider the extent to which these debates reached the laity and argue that though the themes of controversial polemic may have influenced lay behaviour, discussion of doctrinal matters was largely the preserve of the clergy and educated laity.

Competing theological doctrine was at the heart of the turmoil, but in 1704 the Eucharist became a tool by which political hegemony could be displayed and dissenting elements eradicated from participation in public life. The sacramental test

¹ Peter Milward, *Religious controversies of the Jacobean age* (London, 1978); Oliver Rota ‘La controverse entre catholiques et protestants en France au XVIIe siècle’ *Institut d’Etude des Faits Religieux* accessible at <http://iefr.univ-artois.fr/spip.php?article121#nb2> [19 Feb 2013].

² Raymond Gillespie, ‘Irish print and Protestant identity: William King’s pamphlet wars, 1687-1697’ in Vincent P. Carey and Ute Lotz-Heumann (eds) *Taking sides? colonial and confessional mentalities in early modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2003), pp 231-2.

that was appended to the *Act to prevent the further growth of popery*, made the reception of the Eucharist, according to the Book of Common Prayer the method by which people proved their loyalty to the established church. The legislation did not appear out of the blue, but originated in changing political balances in parliament and the security fears of the Church of Ireland.³ This chapter will address an aspect of the introduction of the sacramental test which has previously been ignored. Taken together with the declaration against transubstantiation, which was required of all converts to the Church of Ireland, the act of 1704 marked a concrete legislative expression that the Eucharist was at the core of religious identity in early modern Ireland. Its success depended on the belief that Presbyterians and Catholics could not countenance receiving the Anglican Eucharist. Its failure revealed the organisational strength and resilience of Presbyterians in their quest to repeal the test and the ambivalence with which Catholics viewed the Protestant Eucharist. The chapter also aims to explore the immediate impact of the test in this context of religious belief and confessional identity.

The sacramental test must be considered in light of the broader concerns of the Church of Ireland. Many of these concerns were related to the loyalties of Catholics and Presbyterians. Catholics' loyalty to the papacy, their strong links with the continent and the large Catholic population were constant sources of anxiety to the establishment. After the Interregnum, Irish Presbyterians were seen as being similarly untrustworthy and they were censured for their perceived associations with the regicidal dissenters in England and Scotland. The adherence of many Ulster Presbyterians to the Solemn League and Covenant also damaged their claims of monarchical fidelity. While the charge against Catholics and Presbyterians was the same, that they were not sound in their loyalty to the monarch, the nature of the supposed threat from both groups was different. Catholics were dangerous not only because they were a disloyal majority, but because by virtue of their allegiance to an external power, they were capable of seeking assistance from this source. Presbyterians on the other hand, posed an internal threat and were seen as seditious because they had been tainted by their associations with the regime that had overthrown the monarchy. In particular, any advancement in their political power

³ J.G. Simms, 'The making of a penal law (2. Anne. c.6), 1703-4' in *Irish Historical Studies* xii, no.46 (1960), pp 105-118.

was seen as threatening to the established church because their loyalty to the monarchy had been suspect in the past. James I had solidified the connection between the established church and the monarchy when he proclaimed ‘No bishop, no king’ to those attending the Hampton Court conference in 1604. He successfully implemented this tenet in Scotland, where the kirk was threatening to establish a Presbyterian system. The experience of Scotland would be a persistent source of concern to the Church of Ireland especially after 1690, when episcopacy was abolished there. The establishment of the synod of Ulster in 1691 together with a campaign to grant toleration to dissenters, fuelled Anglican fears that Presbyterians in Ulster were plotting something similar.⁴ It was the necessity of demonstrating concretely this temporal loyalty that made the Eucharist of the Anglican church a symbol of political identity. While it was used in a context of political power, it was only operable in a context in which there were differing views of what the Eucharist meant and how it should be celebrated.

The controversial literature of the early seventeenth century involved theologically dense, lengthy texts which contained extensive references and Latin passages.⁵ They were clearly designed for a highly educated laity. By the late seventeenth century print culture had rapidly expanded and works of religious controversy could be disseminated to a much wider audience. This was achieved through increased access to the printing presses⁶ and better networks of distribution through chapmen, provincial booksellers and the benevolence of reforming clergy. Lists of books sold during the period demonstrate that the Eucharist was a popular controversial theme. As they often had a shorter lifespan than devotional manuals, controversial texts appeared less frequently on booksellers’ lists. James Blow, a Belfast bookseller advertised over sixty works in 1731, but his stock also included ‘above an hundred and eighty sorts of small pamphlets, garlands and ballads’.⁷ An advertisement for the Dublin bookseller, Samuel Dancer in 1663 gave notice that he would soon sell Jeremy Taylor’s *Dissuasive from popery*, one of the key controversial texts of the

⁴ S.J. Connolly, *Religion, law and power, the making of Protestant Ireland, 1660-1760* (Oxford, 1992), pp 167-71; Phil Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy, 1660-1714* (Cork, 1994), pp 192-3.

⁵ Declan Gaffney, ‘The practice of religious controversy in Dublin, 1600-1641’ in W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds) *The churches, Ireland and the Irish* (Oxford, 1989), pp145-158.

⁶ For challenges to the monopoly of the King’s printer after the Restoration see Raymond Gillespie, *Reading Ireland: print, reading and social change in early modern Ireland* (Manchester, 2010), pp76-7.

⁷ See final advertisement leaves in Mathew Mead, *The almost Christian discovered* (Belfast, 1731).

period. There was clearly an audience for this type of work, Dancer commented in the advertisement ‘of the necessity of which no man can be ignorant’.⁸ A Dublin bookseller’s advertisement from 1688 further reveals a market for controversial literature. Three of the seven named religious texts were controversial, all of which were tracts against specific Catholic doctrines, transubstantiation, purgatory and auricular confession.⁹

Controversial encounters rarely bore ecumenical fruit as there was a tendency among each denomination to reject a nuanced view of the religious practices of others. Despite this, it is clear that polemicists had access to a variety of creedal texts with which to construct their arguments. Jeremy Taylor’s *Dissuasive from popery* was published in 1664 and heralded the re-emergence of controversy between Protestants and Catholics after the Interregnum. Taylor however was aware that public appetite for this type of work may have waned;

why any more controversies? Why this over again? Why against the papists, against whom so very many are already exasperated, that they cry out fiercely of persecution? And why can they not be suffered to enjoy their share of peace, which hath returned to the hands of his Sacred Majesty at his blessed Restoration?¹⁰

Despite finding skill in controversy ‘the worst part of learning’, Taylor wanted the *Dissuasive* to encourage Protestants to pursue the conversion of Irish Catholics.¹¹ The work, which Taylor admitted had limited potential to produce any new arguments, was intended as a guide for the clergy who ‘must for ever be ready to put people in mind of such things, which they already have heard, and by the same scriptures and the same reasons endeavour to destroy their sin, or prevent their danger’.¹² Despite Taylor’s professed aim, his text was clearly more dissuasive than

⁸ See final advertisement leaf in Jeremy Taylor, *Chrisis teleiōtikē. a discourse of confirmation* (Dublin, 1663).

⁹ I have identified these as John Tillotson, *A discourse against transubstantiation* published first in London in 1684 but with multiple editions subsequently and Dublin editions in 1686 and 1700; John Hartcliffe, *A discourse against Purgatory* (Dublin, 1686) and John Goodman, *A discourse concerning auricular confession* (Dublin, 1686). The advertisement was for books printed by William Norman and Eliphaz Dobson and appears on the final leaf of Neal Carolan, *Motives of conversion to the Catholic faith, as it is professed in the Reformed Church of England* (Dublin, 1688).

¹⁰ Jeremy Taylor, *A dissuasive from Popery* (Dublin, 1664) sig.A3v.

¹¹ Taylor, *Dissuasive*, see the ‘Epistle to the reader’, especially sig A4v- sig A5v.

¹² Taylor, *Dissuasive*, p.2.

persuasive, and as a result it elicited at least three robust responses from English Catholics.¹³

The *Dissuasive* demonstrated Taylor's thorough knowledge of the conciliar documents, contemporary theologians and catechetical material of the Catholic church, a characteristic that would be consistent in most Protestant controversial works. This tendency is apparent in the types of materials that were held in Marsh's library, the first Irish public library built in 1701. The library was founded upon the purchase of the collection of the great English controversialist Edward Stillingfleet, and the range of materials contained in the collection would amply provide Protestant clergy with the means to engage in the controversial arena.¹⁴ Others, such as the curate of Clogher, in Co. Monaghan, Matthew Buchanan, endeavoured to study documents in enemy territory. In 1719 Buchanan produced a polemical tract against transubstantiation. Buchanan had travelled to the continent for his health and took the opportunity to study in the library of Naples 'the acts of the Council of Trent, the Roman catechism, bible and Mass book... and also the writings of the principal Romish doctors, in reference to the Romish Eucharist.'¹⁵

The *Dissuasive from popery* marked the beginning of Protestant/Catholic controversy after the Restoration. Written in an attempt to persuade Catholics in Ireland of the errors of their religion, it had a more moderate tone than later works, which were often produced at times of heightened political tension. However, it maintained an attitude towards the Mass which would remain prevalent among many Irish Protestants for the rest of the century. Taylor's apprehension of Irish Catholicism would become the standard view, an externally complex but spiritually empty religion which was controlled and manipulated by a powerful clergy. The type of religious practice he described was one of ignorance ('only they believe as their priest bids them, and go to Mass which they understand not') and external ritualism ('[they] reckon their beads to tell the number and the tale of their prayers, and abstain

¹³ These were John Sergeant *A discovery of the groundlessness and insincerity of my L[or]d of Down's dissuasive* (London, 1665) Edward Worsley, *Truth will out: or, a discovery of some untruths smoothly told by Dr. Jeremy Taylor in his dissuasive from popery: with an answer to such arguments as deserve answer* (London, 1665) and Vincent Canes, *Diaphanta: or, three attendants on fiat lux* (Douai 1665)

¹⁴ Thomas O'Connor, 'Marsh's Library and the Irish Catholic tradition' in Muriel McCarthy and Ann Simmons (eds) *The making of Marsh's Library: learning, politics and religion in Ireland, 1650-1750* (Dublin, 2004), p.238.

¹⁵ Matthew Buchanan, *Arguments mostly ad hominem, against Popery* (Dublin, 1719), p.v.

from eggs and flesh in Lent, and visit S. Patrick's Well and leave pins and ribbands, yarn or thread in their holy wells...desire to be buried with St. Francis' cord about them...[and] fast on Saturdays in honour of our Lady').¹⁶ His description of Catholicism would be echoed by other Protestant observers throughout the period, not only in controversial works but by private individuals.¹⁷ Despite the caricature of Catholicism presented in the preface to the work, Taylor attempted a systematic deconstruction of each of the disputed doctrines between Catholics and Protestants. Indeed Taylor's knowledge of both historical and contemporary Catholic doctrine was thorough. He referred to a 'new' article of faith, the Immaculate Conception, which he claimed was 'ready for the stamp' and also mentioned the *Speculum exemplorum*, a handbook of stories designed to be used by Catholic preachers to illuminate doctrine.¹⁸

The most prolific English Catholic controversialist of the seventeenth century, John Sergeant, replied to the *Dissuasive* in 1665.¹⁹ The swift response from Catholic writers indicated an awareness of Taylor's erudition and popularity as a devotional writer. Sergeant, who replied to the *Dissuasive* as part of an ongoing controversial war with the English mammoths of controversy, Edward Stillingfleet and John Tillotson, explained how he was not worried of its effect on those who were 'thoroughly intelligent', but rather on those 'meaner or rather middle sort of scholars' who could be taken in by its apparent piety and gravity. Sergeant's text was not concerned to counter the specific arguments of Taylor but rather focused on his method of argument and attacked the way in which Taylor used his sources. Sergeant remarked that Taylor's use of Peter Lombard to refute the doctrine of transubstantiation misrepresented Lombard. While Taylor argued that Lombard 'could not tell whether there was any substantial change [in the bread and wine] or no', Sergeant claimed that Lombard used the writings of the early fathers to prove it, and 'concludes thence that 'tis evident that the substance of bread is converted into

¹⁶ Taylor, *Dissuasive*, sig.A6r.

¹⁷ 'The Irish villany feelingly represented' (Lambeth Palace Library MS 711) f.96r, Dunton, *Teague land*, p.67.

¹⁸ Taylor, *Dissuasive*, p.15. For background to the use of the *Speculum exemplorum* in an Irish context see Bernadette Cunningham, 'Zeal for God and for souls': Counter-Reformation preaching in early seventeenth-century Ireland ' in Alan J. Fletcher and Raymond Gillespie (eds) *Irish preaching 700-1700* (Dublin, 2001), pp120-2.

¹⁹ John Sergeant, *Sure-footing in Christianity* (London, 1665) , pp 247-325.

Christ's body.²⁰ Sergeant's main concern was to expose the weakness in Taylor's scholarship which he feared would be disguised by his writing, 'For, as Sampson's strength lay in his hair, the weakest part that can be found in a man, so the chief virtue of the *Dissuasive* lies in the godliness of its style'.²¹

A man persuaded by Taylor's godly style was Neal Carolan, the parish priest of Slane and Stackallan in Co. Meath, who converted to the Church of Ireland in the late 1680s. In 1688 Carolan's conversion narrative was published under the title *Motives of conversion to the catholick faith*. Carolan, in his discussion of the doctrine of transubstantiation, mentions the proofs taken from the writings of the early fathers that were used by Taylor, 'to whom' he said 'I own myself much indebted for my conversion.' Carolan was certainly influenced by Taylor, as large portions of his text were appropriated from Taylor's *Dissuasive*. One of the more colourful passages concerned the implausibility of the changing of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ at the utterance of the priest. In phraseology borrowed directly from Taylor's *Dissuasive*, Carolan alluded to the implications of the doctrine for Catholic scholastics. 'Horrid and blasphemous' questions that they were forced to address because of the doctrine, resulted in various ludicrous scenarios: 'As if a priest going by a bakers shop, and saying with an Intention, *Hoc est corpus meum*, whether all the baker's bread be turned into Christ's Body? Whether a church-mouse does eat her maker? Whether a man by eating the consecrated symbols does break his fast?...'²² Catholics in their turn used similar language in their denigration of the 'empty' Protestant Eucharist, the most popular catechism of the period, dismissed it as tantamount to the eating of 'baker's bread, with a poor sup of common vintners wine'.²³

Although Taylor and Carolan intended to highlight the theological conundrums that could result from the doctrine of transubstantiation, their language was symptomatic of a broader and older preoccupation with how to explain the dogma. The motif of a mouse eating the host was a common strand even in the medieval period, with one fourteenth-century Dominican theologian arguing that a mouse that swallowed a

²⁰ Sergeant, *Sure-footing in Christianity*, p.282.

²¹ Ibid, pp 247, 249.

²² Carolan, *Motives of conversion*, p.31.

²³ Turberville, *Abridgement of Christian doctrine*, pp 207-8, 209.

consecrated host must be burnt and its ashes washed down the *piscina*.²⁴ Protestant fascination with the extreme extrapolations that could result from Catholic doctrine remained a constant feature of the polemical literature.²⁵

Throughout the period one of the most popular authors who engaged in controversy and found an audience in Ireland was John Tillotson. The dean and then archbishop of Canterbury, Tillotson published among his many writings *A discourse concerning transubstantiation* in 1684. Dublin editions were printed in 1686 and 1700, and it seems that Tillotson's works enjoyed large distribution in Ireland. Individual sermons were printed in 1678, 1680 and 1685, while his entire works were printed in 1726.²⁶ Archbishop Marsh had 2,500 of Tillotson's sermons printed for distribution in Ireland in the 1690s while Dives Downes, the bishop of Cork and Ross also gave out Tillotson's sermons in his diocese in 1699.²⁷ Tillotson's works drew a response from the Catholic priest Cornelius Nary in 1696, perhaps because they were been so thoroughly circulated in Ireland.²⁸ The duke of Ormond claimed to have read all of Tillotson's sermons and had taken pains to get the respected cleric to take up a position in Ireland, first as bishop of Derry and then as bishop of Meath.²⁹ Robert Fanning whose conversion to the Church of Ireland was publicised in print in 1705, credited Tillotson's *Discourse against transubstantiation* with playing a part in his conversion.³⁰

The theological divisions over the Eucharist stemmed from the Catholic belief in a real corporal presence and the spiritual presence of Christ that was emphasised by

²⁴ Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in late medieval culture* (Cambridge, 1991), p.68.

²⁵ See for example Antonio Gavin, *A master-key to popery* (Dublin, 1724).

²⁶ John Tillotson, *Sermon preached November 5 1678* (Dublin, 1678); Idem, *Protestant religion vindicated, from the charge of singularity and novelty in a sermon preached before the King at White-Hall, April the 2d, 1680* (Dublin, 1680); Idem, *A sermon lately preached on I Corinth. 3. 15. by a reverend divine of the Church of England* (Dublin, 1685); Idem, *The works of the most Reverend Doctor John Tillotson, late lord archbishop of Canterbury* (Dublin, 1726).

²⁷ Raymond Gillespie, 'The circulation of print in seventeenth-century Ireland' in *Studia Hibernica*, no. 29 (1995-97), p.51; Thomas Pollard, *The necessity and advantages of family prayer in two sermons preached at St. Peter's Dublin* (Dublin, 1696) sig.b.1v. When John Dunton came to Ireland in 1698, he held three book auctions in which he sold Tillotson's collected works. John Dunton, *The Dublin scuffle* (London, 1699) p.109.

²⁸ Cornelius Nary, *A modest and true account of the chief points in controversie between the Roman Catholics, and the Protestants: together with some considerations upon the sermons of a divine of the Church of England* (Antwerp, 1696).

²⁹ Gillespie, *Reading Ireland* p.159; Raymond Gillespie, 'The religion of the first Duke of Ormonde' in T.C. Barnard and Jane Fenlon (eds) *The dukes of Ormond 1610-1745* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp102-3.

³⁰ Robert Fanning, *A lost sheep returned home* (Dublin, 1705) p.3.

Protestants. In the sphere of theological controversy, the debate centred around scriptural exegesis and the patristic tradition. Both Catholic and Protestant authors anchored their arguments around these two themes. Protestants contended that there was no evidence in scripture to support the claim that Christ's body was carnally present in the Eucharist. Usually the argument was advanced that although Christ said at the last supper 'This is my body' this was meant in a spiritual sense only, and should be taken in a similar way as when he said 'I am the vine' or 'I am the door'.³¹ In conjunction with the lack of scriptural warrant, Protestant authors argued that the practice of the primitive church, as it was known through the writings of the early church fathers, never indicated that there was a belief in transubstantiation or a corporal presence. Writers often claimed that transubstantiation was only introduced as a result of the Fourth Lateran council in 1215.³² The evidence brought to bear on the debate from the early fathers was countered by Catholic accusations that the quotations used were selected out of context in order to prove the Protestant position.³³ Most Protestant writers also made the argument that belief in transubstantiation and the corporal presence was against reason and contrary to the senses. They refuted the idea that the conversion of the substances of bread and wine was miraculous because miracles by their nature involved a supernatural manifestation that was tangible to the senses.³⁴ In addition, Protestants argued that 'priestly gobbling' or celebration of the Eucharist without the partaking of the sacrament by the laity had no scriptural warrant.³⁵

Catholics approached the debate in a similar fashion and used the writings of the early fathers to prove that the real presence was always understood to be doctrine in the primitive church. In the debate over the scriptural basis for the corporal presence, the great proof brought against Protestants by Catholic writers was the sixth chapter of John.³⁶ Edward Nicholson, a Sligo clergyman and author of numerous

³¹ John Tillotson, *A discourse against transubstantiation* (Dublin, 1686), p.6.

³² Taylor, *Dissuasive* pp 36-37.

³³ Ignatius Brown *An unerrable church or none being a rejoinder to the unerring unerrable church* (Douai, 1678) p.205; Nary, *A modest and true account*, pp143-157.

³⁴ Tillotson, *Discourse*, p.23.

³⁵ John Bossy, 'The mass as a social institution, 1200-1700' in *Past and Present* No. 100 (1983), p.53.

³⁶ John 6 54-56: 'Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.'

controversial pamphlets, observed that ‘their great plea is the 6th chapter of St. John’ and attempted to reclaim the notion of a ‘real presence’ as having been always part of Anglican belief.³⁷ Earlier writers had made similar attempts and it is clear that Anglicans, aware of the more Calvinist interpretations of the nature of the divine presence, felt the need to secure their own position as promoters of a ‘real’ but spiritual presence. Jeremy Taylor warned his readers not to be persuaded by Catholic claims from the primitive church but also affirmed a high church position in regard to the Eucharistic presence:

That they be not abused by the rhetorical words and high expressions alledged out of the Fathers, calling the Sacrament, the Body or flesh of Christ. For we all believe it is so, and rejoyce in it. But the question is, after what manner it is so? Whether after the manner of the flesh, or after the manner of spiritual grace, and sacramental consequence? We with the H[oly] Scriptures and the primitive Fathers, affirm the later.³⁸

In response to the argument that transubstantiation and the corporal presence was against the senses, Catholic authors tended to advocate the position that revelation superseded the senses and that reason in religious matters should be determined on the basis of this scriptural revelation.³⁹

Despite the fact that there were numerous texts printed that addressed the Eucharistic controversy between Catholics and Protestants, they rarely produced original arguments. It is clear that the works by stalwarts such as Tillotson and Taylor formed the basis for many of those who wrote lesser-known tracts. It was likely that there was a widespread tendency to simply collate references from various sources rather than attempt any original research of the issues at hand.⁴⁰ Some authors attempted to produce works that they felt addressed a new aspect of the controversy such as Matthew Buchanan, a Monaghan clergyman, who printed a work on transubstantiation in 1719. Conscious of entering what was already a very crowded and established controversial arena, Buchanan explained that his particular mode of

³⁷ Edward Nicholson *A short view, of the Popish doctrine of transubstantiation* (Dublin, 1705), pp9,20.

³⁸ Taylor, *Dissuasive*, p.44.

³⁹ John Gother, *An answer to the discourse against transubstantiation*(London,1687), pp 6-7; Brown, *The unerring and unerrable church*, pp195-8.

⁴⁰ See for example the parallels between Tillotson’s *A discourse concerning transubstantiation* (Dublin, 1686) and Anon, *The Popish doctrine of transubstantiation not agreeable to the opinion of the primitive fathers. Shewed in a letter to a friend* (Dublin, 1687) The author refers to the works of Tillotson (p.8) and the tone and content of the work is remarkably similar, though much shorter.

argument, which encompassed a lengthy discussion on the nature of the Eucharistic presence between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection, had proved effective in his discussions with Catholic clergy and he was encouraged by some Protestant divines to publish his arguments which they thought were ‘nervous and cogent’.⁴¹ These types of pamphlets were mainly theological in scope and can be assumed to have been intended for an audience interested in doctrinal issues. Their enduring appearance throughout the period indicates that there was an continued interest in debates of this kind.⁴²

John Gother’s work *A papist misrepresented and represented* is indicative of this interest. The text went through several editions in England and drew responses from many eminent Protestant divines including Edward Stillingfleet. An Irish edition of the text was printed in a collated form together with Stillingfleet’s answer in 1686. Gother was considered to be one of the most eloquent of the Catholic apologists, perhaps the reason why his pamphlet elicited the response it did.⁴³ A convert from Presbyterianism, Gother sought to present Catholic doctrines through the juxtaposition of the common misperceptions held by Protestants about Catholics with what he considered was the real doctrinal position of the Church. The Irish edition of the work was clearly designed for ease of use, at the back a list of common controversial topics were given together with the page numbers of the Catholic position of Gother and the Protestant reply of Stillingfleet.⁴⁴ Gother’s work was an attempt to counter the repeated claims of Protestants that the Roman Catholic religion was one of superficial externalism. Using his own perceptions of what he believed about Catholicism was when he had been a Protestant, his tone was more moderate than the often hyperbolic styles of his fellow Catholics.⁴⁵ In the text Gother

⁴¹ Matthew Buchanan, *Arguments mostly ad hominem, against popery* (Dublin, 1719), p.vi.

⁴² Works on the theme of transubstantiation alone continued to be printed throughout the eighteenth century. See for example Samuel Johnson, *The absolute impossibility of transubstantiation demonstrated* (Dublin, 1744); Patrick Delany, *The doctrine of transubstantiation, clearly and fully confuted* (Dublin, 1765); Andrew Meagher, *The popish mass celebrated by heathen priests, for the living and the dead, for several ages before the birth of Christ* (Dublin, 1771).

⁴³ Marion Norman, ‘John Gother and the English way of spirituality’ in *Recusant History*, xi, no.5 (1971-2), pp 306-19; Stuart Handley, ‘Goter, John’ *ODNB*; For evidence of an Irish readership of Gother’s tract see John Clayton *A sermon preach’d at St. Michan’s church in Dublin, February the 23d 1700. Upon receiving into the communion of the Church of England, the Honble Sir Terence Mac-Mahon, Knt & Barnet and Christopher Dunn, converts from the Church of Rome* (Dublin, 1700), p.4.

⁴⁴ This system was also used for John Heigham’s *Touchstone of the Reformed Gospell*, see below.

⁴⁵ The pamphlets in response to Andrew Sall’s conversion all tended to adopt a highly personal tone, see below.

was keen to address the misconceptions about Catholicism, he did not attempt any refutation of Protestant doctrine, nor enter into a defensive mode of argument. There were of course practical impediments on Catholic authors who wanted to produce works of controversy and few of the works were printed in Ireland, with the exception of a period of relative freedom in the late 1680s.⁴⁶ This factor explained the imbalance of controversial works in favour of Protestant authors especially in the seventeenth century. Cornelius Nary who printed his early works in Antwerp and then by the 1720s in Dublin, is indicative of the growing availability of the printing presses of Dublin to Catholics.⁴⁷

While Protestant writers derided the superstitious and idolatrous Eucharistic practices of Catholics, Catholic polemicists pointed to the divisive nature of Protestantism. The numerous sects within Protestantism was presented by Catholics as proof of the dangers of schism. Nicholas French, one of the Catholic writers to respond to the high-profile conversion of Andrew Sall, was keen to point out the differing views of Luther and Calvin on the interpretation of *Hoc est corpus meum*.⁴⁸ Ignatius Brown similarly argued that Lutherans believed in a real presence even though they were the ‘elder brethren of the pretended reformation; whom Protestants do embrace, and receive to their communion’.⁴⁹ Peter Manby, who converted to Catholicism in the 1680s, alluded to the different Eucharistic theologies of Anglicans and Presbyterians, claiming that ‘The Church of England Protestants are every jot as offensive to [the Presbyterians] kneeling before the elements of bread and wine, as the papists kneeling before the images of Christ.’ Manby then expressed his gratitude for having ‘escaped out of the unstable waters of schism into the ark of Christ’s church.’⁵⁰

It is clear that many Catholic clergy, though they had restricted access to the printing presses, would have had the capabilities to respond to Protestant challenges. Archbishop Oliver Plunkett, perhaps aware of the growing necessity of being well-

⁴⁶ Gillespie, ‘Irish print and Protestant identity’, pp 233-5.

⁴⁷ For Catholics and print in Ireland see Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, p.110; Nary published *A modest and true account of the chief points in controversie between the Roman Catholics, and the Protestants* in Antwerp in 1696, while his dispute with the bishop of Tuam, Edward Synge was published in Dublin.

⁴⁸ French, *The dolefull fall of Andrew Sall*, pp22-5.

⁴⁹ Brown, *The unerring and unerrable church*, p.187.

⁵⁰ Peter Manby, *The considerations which obliged Peter Manby, dean of Derry to embrace the Catholic religion* (Dublin, 1687), p.13.

versed in theological controversy, recommended two books to the clergy, Richard Archdekin's *Theologica tripartita universa* and the *Touchstone of the Reformed Gospel* by John Heigham. The first of these works was distributed among the clergy at a certain price and it can reasonably be assumed that many clergy acquired the work.⁵¹ It went through numerous editions and revisions and was popular both in Ireland and on the continent.⁵² Bishop Luke Wadding owned a copy of the work and it seems that Protestant clergy were similarly aware of its importance. Marsh's library contained four editions of an earlier version of the work, the *Praecipuae controversiae fidei* as well as a copy of the *Theologica tripartita*.⁵³ It was a theological handbook in four volumes, which followed closely on Peter Canisius' *Summary of Christian doctrine*. The first volume dealt extensively with controversial subjects, its section on the Eucharist contained a statement of the Catholic position, scriptural passages to support it and a refutation of the Calvinist and Lutheran positions.⁵⁴ It was also a catechetical work, which Archdekin envisaged would be used in an oral context. Its style was clearly useful to clergy as when printed versions had run out, students copied the text in manuscript and unauthorised editions appeared. Doctrinal positions were augmented with the use of miracle stories from the *Speculum exemplorum* with the addition of more modern examples, as well as some Irish material. Later editions of the work were enlarged to include the lives of Oliver Plunkett and Peter Talbot, the archbishop of Dublin. The text was clearly intended for an Irish audience, specifically the clergy who could find not only catechetical material, but also a clear statement on Catholic belief and refutations of Protestant criticisms.⁵⁵

While the clergy who had access to these types of texts may have been well-versed in current debates, contemporary accounts indicate that not all clergy would have been capable of engaging in theological controversy. In a list of twenty eight priests

⁵¹ Carolan, *Motives of conversion*, 'Preface to the Reader'.

⁵² The *Praecipuae controversiae fidei*, first published in 1671 and expanded and retitled the *Theologica tripartita universa* in 1686, was intended as a missionary work for priests travelling to Ireland. The first edition of 1000 copies sold out rapidly and there were eleven subsequent editions published in Archdekin's lifetime.

Terry Clavin. 'Archdekin (Ardsdekin, MacGiolla Cuddy), Richard', *DIB*.

⁵³ Bishop William Daton also owned a copy of the work, while Wadding owned two copies of the *Touchstone of the Reformed Gospel*. O'Connor, 'Marsh's library and the Irish Catholic tradition' pp 251, 252; Hugh Fenning (ed.), 'The library of Bishop William Daton of Ossory, 1698' in *Collectanea Hibernica*, xx, (1978), pp43,47,48; Corish, 'Wadding's notebook' pp 61,63,67.

⁵⁴ Richard Archdekin, *Theologica tripartita universa* (Cologne, 1693), pp 94-100.

⁵⁵ Thomas Wall, 'Richard Archdekin's catechetical hour' in *IER*, lxx, (1948) pp 305-15.

of Down and Connor the majority of them were described as ‘sufficiently learned’ one was considered an ‘outstanding theologian’, one was considered ‘very learned’ and two were considered simply ‘learned’. Only two were considered to be of ‘weak’ learning.⁵⁶ The priority in this context was in ensuring that they could at least administer the sacraments and provide basic pastoral care to their parishioners. Oliver Plunkett seemed particularly keen however that the clergy be able to engage with Protestants in theological matters. In 1670 he attempted to make provisions to send young priests to the continent especially to learn moral theology and controversies.⁵⁷

Within Protestantism many of the divisive issues between Anglicans and Presbyterians had political associations which originated in religious worship. Stemming from the influence of Calvinist theology among Ulster Presbyterians, the conflicts that arose in the later seventeenth century were largely concerned with external worship. Confessional boundaries had been clearly drawn and the debate centred around two areas of Eucharistic practice, kneeling to receive communion and frequency of celebration. We have seen how Anglican observers looked upon Presbyterian communions as unruly gatherings, lacking any clear liturgical customs. Presbyterians in their turn accused the Church of Ireland of being tainted by popery, and saw their celebration of Holy Communion as far too concerned with external ceremonialism. While there was a greater degree of theological congruence between the groups, the divisions between Anglicans and Presbyterians reiterates the importance of individual Eucharistic expression for each confession. Both churches espoused a spiritual presence but their liturgical practice indicated that their beliefs were clearly not the same.

To the established church earnestly attempting to construct a pattern of regular worship amongst its adherents, the loose structure of Presbyterian sacraments appeared counterproductive. Aside from the infrequent celebration of the Eucharist among Presbyterians, there were also theological concerns amongst some members of the Church of Ireland. In the early eighteenth century, the bishop of Waterford, Thomas Milles, suspected by some of having Catholic and Jacobite sympathies, took

⁵⁶ John Hanly (ed.), *The letters of Saint Oliver Plunkett, 1625-1681* (Dublin, 1979), pp145-6.

⁵⁷ Hanly (ed.), *Plunkett letters*, p.78.

issue with the Presbyterians of the town.⁵⁸ In 1711 the bishop held a visitation of his clergy at which he asserted that dissenters were ‘the most inexcusable schismaticks in the world’ and warned his clergy to have ‘no conversation with them, nor read their books, and particularly none of Mr. Boyses’.⁵⁹ Milles lived up to his high-church reputation by asserting that ‘tho he did not believe transubstantiation, yet the sacrament was a true sacrifice, and the clergy true priests.’ He went on to castigate the dissenters for building their meeting house so close to the cathedral of the town where ‘with unsanctified hands the heavenly sacrifice, was offered up.’⁶⁰

The issues over worship in Waterford had been established in a printed controversy between William King and some prominent dissenters from the late 1680s. This debate stemmed from a work published by William King in response to Peter Manby’s conversion in 1687. In the work King had criticised Presbyterians and attempted to forge links between Catholics and their ‘old friends’, the Presbyterians.⁶¹ The text was swiftly responded to by Joseph Boyse, one of the most prominent Dublin Presbyterian ministers, who rejected the association with Catholics and defended Presbyterian practices.⁶² The comments made by King about Presbyterians formed a small part of his rebuttal of Manby. In fact, King was reluctant to enter into a prolonged controversial dispute.⁶³ His disparagement of Presbyterians, who ‘separated themselves from their lawful governours’ was particularly provoking in the contemporary climate.⁶⁴ His ‘unseasonable provocations’ were considered damaging to the religious toleration granted to Presbyterians which had, legislatively at least, remained intact.⁶⁵ By the 1690s however there were moves to extend the corporation and test acts, which had been operating in England since 1661, to Ireland. It was in this political context, together with Presbyterian hopes for greater toleration after the Glorious Revolution, that the

⁵⁸ Archbishop King and Jonathon Swift suspected that Milles wore a crucifix around his breast. G. Le G. Norgate, ‘Milles, Thomas’, (rev. Julian C. Walton), *ODNB*; John Bergin, ‘Milles, Thomas’, *DIB*.

⁵⁹ NLS, Wod. Lett. Qu. XX f.170.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, f.170v.

⁶¹ William King, *An answer to the considerations which obliged Peter Manby, &c. (as he pretends) to embrace, what he calls, the Catholick religion* (Dublin, 1687), p.72.

⁶² Joseph Boyse, *Vindiciæ Calvinisticæ: or, some impartial reflections on the dean of Londondereys considerations that obliged him to come over to the communion of the Church of Rome* (Dublin, 1688), preface sigA2v.

⁶³ Gillespie, ‘Irish print and Protestant identity’, pp 238-41.

⁶⁴ King, *An answer to the considerations*, p.6.

⁶⁵ Boyse, *Vindiciæ Calvinisticæ*, sigA3r.

controversies between Anglicans and Presbyterians must be considered.⁶⁶ The religious dimension of the controversy must first be examined, an aspect which had earlier antecedents in Ireland. In 1637 Henry Leslie, the Church of Ireland bishop of Down and Connor published *A treatise of the authority of the church*, part of which defended the act of kneeling to receive communion. Although Leslie's tract was intended to address not only nonconformists but also more 'godly' elements within the Church of Ireland, many of the arguments were similar to those that would surface in the later seventeenth century.⁶⁷ By the time William King was debating the same issues with dissenters in the 1690s, the Church of Ireland had no recognisable puritan elements remaining. Denominational lines had been drawn and bodily worship, as it had been a bone of contention between puritans and conformists earlier in the Church of Ireland, again divided Anglicans and Presbyterians in the 1690s.⁶⁸

King's major issues with Presbyterian celebrations of the Eucharist was the frequency and manner in which they communicated. In *A discourse concerning the inventions of men in the worship of God* he outlined the scriptural bases for the sacrament, how it was practised in the Church of Ireland and how it was practised in the dissenting tradition. Again King attempted to draw parallels between Presbyterian and Catholic practices while also blaming nonconformists for some of the failures of the Church of Ireland.⁶⁹ Admitting that the established church had not been entirely able to obliterate the practice of holding public services without communicating, King claimed that the 'ill example and obstinacy of those that separate from our church [had] encouraged [the laity] in their negligence, and weakened our discipline.'⁷⁰ King alleged that dissenters only celebrated Holy Communion once or twice a year and often underwent long periods where none were held at all.⁷¹ He also criticised their lack of bodily worship, especially the fact that they sat rather than knelt to receive the sacrament. King alleged that this practice,

⁶⁶ D.W. Hayton, *Ruling Ireland, 1685-1742: politics, politicians and parties* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp187-8; Anthony Dopping, *The case of the dissenters of Ireland consider'd in reference to the sacramental test* (Dublin, 1695).

⁶⁷ Henry Leslie, *A treatise of the authority of the church* (Dublin, 1637), pp 49-74.

⁶⁸ The debate has been examined at length in Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy*, pp171-87.

⁶⁹ King charges dissenters as being 'more inexcusable than the papists themselves' in relation to their infrequent communions. King, *Inventions of men*, p.159.

⁷⁰ King, *Inventions of Men*, pp156-157.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, pp160-1.

which stemmed from the emphasis on an inner spiritual communion, would lead to the disintegration of any form of outward worship at all, as it had in Quaker meetings where there were no set prayers or sacraments.⁷² In a similar fashion to the Protestant use of canonical Catholic literature, King used the *Westminster directory* to disparage Presbyterian practice.⁷³

Joseph Boyse, the Dublin Presbyterian minister who was the first to reply to these criticisms, did so in an irenic spirit, stressing the importance of unity between the churches but attempting to defend the accusations levelled at Presbyterian communion practices by King. To the accusation that they had no form of bodily worship, Boyse replied that they commonly stood for prayers, a practice which was deemed to have convincing scriptural warrant.⁷⁴ Boyse affirmed the lack of emphasis on bodily worship in the dissenting tradition and criticised the Church of Ireland for making it a central part of worship when it should have remained ‘more properly an adjunct’ to worship through prayer, praise and hearing.⁷⁵ As articulated by Boyse, the concern of Presbyterian worship was never to adopt the ‘bowings and cringings’ that had entered into the church under Archbishop Laud earlier in the century.⁷⁶ He refuted King’s accusation that Presbyterians were like Catholics because they separated from the established church and argued that it was Anglicans who had retained much of the Roman Catholic tradition:

Do we frisk from place to place in reading our service, use the sign of the cross, kneel at the sacrament which never obtained in the church before transubstantiation? ... The Romish church has all these; whereas we worship God without all this stuff added to the gospel institutions and are content with that for decency.⁷⁷

There was a certain disjunction in the debate because King was primarily concerned with addressing the practices he had observed in his own diocese of Derry. These were the practices of Ulster Presbyterians and thus not the same as the tradition of English Presbyterianism in the south, to which Boyse belonged. In refuting King’s criticisms, Boyse used the examples of dissenters in England, whose practices were

⁷² Ibid, pp129-31.

⁷³ Ibid, p.127.

⁷⁴ Joseph Boyse, *Remarks on a late discourse of William lord bishop of Derry; concerning the inventions of men in the worship of God* (Dublin, 1694), pp105-6.

⁷⁵ Boyse, *Remarks on a late discourse*, p.106.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p.108.

⁷⁷ Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy*, pp 172-3.

clearly not the same as those of the dissenters in Ulster. Boyse's concerns for unity led him to downplay the extent of the differences between Anglicans and dissenters, which may have been appropriate in the case of Dublin Presbyterians, but was less effective when addressing practices of those in the north of the country.⁷⁸

Robert Craghead's response to King was perhaps more representative of the response sought by King, who had intended that his text would only be circulated in the diocese of Derry.⁷⁹ Craghead's reply more adequately reflected the controversy between Anglicans and the Ulster Presbyterian tradition. Craghead had been a minister in Derry and his text was dedicated to the mayor, aldermen and burgesses of the city.⁸⁰ He was concerned to highlight the primacy of inner worship and admonished King for considering that outward bodily worship was devotion in itself. Craghead went on to say that there was no scriptural warrant for kneeling to receive communion and that such a posture only indicated a belief that a sacrifice was being offered which was 'no pattern to us under the Gospel.'⁸¹ He defended the frequency of holding communions in the Presbyterian church by outlining that there were no express directions made by Christ for how often it should be celebrated, and reiterated the necessity of a lengthy preparation before receiving. He also alluded to the persecution of Presbyterians as a reason for their infrequent celebration of communions.⁸² More significantly Craghead rejected occasional conformity, which had been agreeable to Boyse.⁸³

The disagreements between William King and the dissenters indicated that though Protestants were in general agreement in theological matters, they diverged in their communion practices. In particular, the debate highlighted the degree to which Ulster Presbyterians had formulated a particular Eucharistic identity. In 1704, this identity was directly challenged with the introduction of the sacramental test which sought to establish the Anglican Eucharist as the symbol of loyalty to both church and government.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p.180, In particular Boyse emphasised the monthly communions of the Dublin churches.

⁷⁹ Gillespie, 'Irish print and Protestant identity', pp 240-41.

⁸⁰ Robert Craghead, *An answer to a late book entituled, A discourse concerning the Inventions of Men in the worship of God* (Edinburgh, 1694).

⁸¹ Craghead, *An Answer to a late book*, pp 91-10.

⁸² Ibid, pp116-19.

⁸³ Ibid, p.139.

The association between the communion of the established church and political loyalty had been constructed before the introduction of the sacramental test of 1704. Soldiers in the army of Charles II needed proof from their bishop that they had received the sacrament at the Easter or Christmas preceding their mustering.⁸⁴ This was already a cause of concern to Presbyterians, John McBride, minister of Belfast, who wrote against the introduction of the test, noted ‘doe not we daily see, that all the soldiers are forced to communicate, how ignorant and vicious soever they be? else they lose their pay’.⁸⁵ Joseph Boyse similarly argued that the ‘the government may have occasion to employ many in public offices (especially military ones), and apparently does employ many, that shou’d be rather according to the rubrick, debarr’d from the sacrament, then thus driven to it.’⁸⁶ The Church of England had succeeded in establishing the primacy of the Anglican Eucharist much earlier in 1661 with the introduction of the Test and Corporations Act. The fact that this legislation was not extended to Ireland at this time suggests that the government was unwilling to provoke confessional conflict. When the test was finally introduced it was amid fears of the growing political influence of dissenters. Despite the political considerations, Anglican writers still appealed for unity. Edward Synge, who became the bishop of Raphoe in 1714, responded to the calls for toleration by dissenters in the 1690s by encouraging occasional conformity. Synge suggested that Presbyterians could still attend meetings ‘besides the parochial congregations’ for ‘mutual edification’ but only when such practices tended towards piety and not schism.⁸⁷ This occasional conformity was rejected by John MacBride, the minister of the Belfast Presbyterian congregation, who viewed those who occasionally received ‘but fools to suffer for nonconformity.’⁸⁸

The importance of the political endorsement of the Anglican Eucharist was demonstrated by the pains to which Archbishop Marsh took in pestering some of the Irish chief justices to receive at Easter in the 1690s. In a letter to the archbishop of Canterbury, Marsh alluded to the importance of the government receiving on at least

⁸⁴ ‘Laws and Ordinances of War, 4 October 1662’ *Cal. S.P. Ire., 1660-2*, p.600.

⁸⁵ John MacBride, *Animadversions on the defence of the answer to a paper, intituled, the case of the dissenting Protestants of Ireland, in reference to a bill of indulgence* (Belfast, 1697) p.86.

⁸⁶ Joseph Boyse, *The case of the Protestant dissenters of Ireland* (Dublin, 1695) p.11.

⁸⁷ Edward Synge, *A peaceable and friendly address to the non-conformists* (Dublin, 1697) , p.7

⁸⁸ MacBride, *Animadversions*, p.113.

one of the 'great solemnities' of which Easter was the most desirable.⁸⁹ Similarly the primacy of the Easter celebration was memorialised by the Jesuit convert Andrew Sall, who described the solemn communion administered by archbishop Michael Boyle to the dignitaries of the church and government on 'Resurrection Day' in 1675. The public reception of the Eucharist by prominent members of the Church of Ireland had been an important aspect of the post-Restoration church, after the introduction of the test it became a requirement for a broader spectrum of the laity.

The sacramental test emerged amid fears of the growing strength of Presbyterians and their calls for a bill of indulgence after the Glorious Revolution. Anglicans argued against this using the experience of the church during the Interregnum and the tacit toleration enjoyed by Presbyterians, among them their freedom to worship and the *regium donum*. In 1690 episcopacy had been abolished in Scotland, giving Presbyterians in Ulster a cause for hope and Anglicans a concern for the stability of the Established church. William King attempted to destabilise the growing momentum of the Presbyterians by attacking their religious practices in the debates mentioned above. When the test was introduced, fresh controversy erupted as Presbyterians sought to have the test removed and Anglicans sought to justify it. The effect of the sacramental test was significant for dissenters in public office. In the corporation of Derry there were mass resignations. Nine aldermen and fourteen burgesses resigned, while in Coleraine seven Presbyterians refused to take the test. In Belfast there were also significant losses. The sovereign of the corporation resigned immediately after the test's introduction and in 1707, a further six burgesses failed to conform and were replaced.⁹⁰ The delay was a result of confusion over which officers needed to take the test, in particular if it was required of burgesses. The favourable patronage of Lord Donegall also played a part in the delayed resignations. When he died in 1706 the Presbyterians in the corporation were exposed to the full impact of the legislation.⁹¹

The consistent campaign for the removal of the test indicates that it was effective among Presbyterians, many of whom clearly balked at its requirements. Those who

⁸⁹ 'Marsh to Tenison, 10 April 1697', (Lambeth Palace Library MS 942 No.133).

⁹⁰ David Hayton, 'Exclusion, conformity and parliamentary representation: the impact of the sacramental test on Irish dissenting politics' in Kevin Herlihy (ed.) *The politics of Irish dissent, 1650-1800* (Dublin, 1997), pp 52-73.

⁹¹ For a discussion of the political manoeuvring of Lady Donegall and her opponents in the corporation see Agnew, *Belfast merchant families*, pp 95-101.

resigned in Belfast were influenced by John MacBride, the minister of Belfast. MacBride had been a representative in a bid for legal toleration for the Presbyterian church in 1695 and had written in defence of the solemnization of marriages by Presbyterian ministers. When the debate over the possible introduction of the sacramental test began in the 1690s, MacBride was clear in the difficulties it posed for Presbyterians. He wondered why ‘one single ceremony should be made the test of our piety to God, and obedience to the civil magistrates.’ The particular issue was, of course, bodily worship. He argued that for the ‘most part of Presbyterians and Independents in Ireland ... all judge and declare that the table gesture in receiving the sacrament and not the adoration, is the most agreeable.’⁹² For MacBride therefore occasional conformity was impossible as it would involve bodily worship of the sacrament, which was against Presbyterian principles. In addition he pointed out the contradiction in asking Presbyterians to deny transubstantiation and then to adore the sacrament by kneeling. A test, he argued, would induce men to ‘damn their souls to preserve their bodies’, while at the same time ‘give sacred things to dogs’. In essence it would profane the sacrament by making it the ‘condition of both state and church membership.’⁹³ Joseph Boyse reiterated these sentiments claiming that the sacrament was debased when turned ‘into an engine for advancing a state-faction’.⁹⁴ With MacBride’s attitude to a test thus expounded it is unsurprising that his parishioners would find it difficult to take the test. Several of the burgesses in Belfast were elders in the church.⁹⁵ Those who took the test did so ‘without consulting ministers of our way’ argued Alexander McCrackan, the minister of Lisburn in 1704.⁹⁶

In Drogheda, two members of the corporation lost their position after the introduction of the test. A Presbyterian congregation existed in the town from 1652, but was dispersed during the reign of James II. Presbyterians who remained were ministered to by itinerant preachers until 1708 when the synod of Ulster appointed nine ministers to preach regularly in the town. By the early 1700s it was estimated that there were 200 Presbyterians in the area. This was likely an over-inflated figure. Many at the meetings were outsiders, some claimed they had travelled from the

⁹² MacBride, *Animadversions*, pp 86-7.

⁹³ *Ibid*, pp 46-7.

⁹⁴ Joseph Boyse, *Sermons preach'd on various subjects* (2 vols, Dublin, 1708) i, p.330.

⁹⁵ Agnew, *Belfast merchant families*, p. 118.

⁹⁶ NLS Wod. Lett. Qu. II, f.110.

north. In 1708, James Fleming, one of the ministers appointed to preach in the town, was bound over to stand trial at the next assizes together with three of his congregation. Those who were brought as witnesses against him claimed that there were about forty people in the congregation ‘most of them strangers, many known papists, very few housekeepers, and some other inconsiderable people.’⁹⁷ It is clear that few of these were involved in public offices and that there were fewer than 200 Presbyterians in the town. Even those who were Presbyterian seemed to have a complex religious identity. Sometime between 1705 and 1710 Narcissus Marsh, then archbishop of Armagh, sent a list of Presbyterians in the town to the lord justices in which he recorded only thirteen people.⁹⁸ The majority of these clearly wouldn’t have been eligible to take the test. Three were described as being ‘of no substance’ and one man was described as ‘no housekeeper’ and was in receipt of poor relief from the corporation.⁹⁹ Several were migrant workers from the north or resident tradesmen and there was one woman, Widow Ballantine, at whose house the meeting took place and where the minister lodged.

The first person on Marsh’s list, Mr. Haywood, was a man of substance but also had a confused religious identity. Marsh described him as ‘one of the congregation tho he frequents the church’. The second man on the list was Robert Elliott who had received communion and went to services in the established church before the arrival of dissenting preachers in the town. Richard Haywood, despite his frequenting of Anglican services was, it appeared committed to Presbyterianism. In 1701 he was appointed as a warden of the poorhouse.¹⁰⁰ On 26 April 1704 he was elected an alderman together with John Shore and John Cope. John Shore was immediately sworn in and then elected to serve as mayor for the ensuing year. At a meeting two days later Haywood and Cope appeared ‘desiring time till next assembly to be sworne aldermen’. On the 27 November at a special assembly Richard Haywood ‘declared he is not qualified as alderman or mayor.’ John Cope requested more time and was finally sworn in as alderman on 10 January 1705.¹⁰¹ At the same meeting Haywood was fined 100 marks for refusing to take the oath required of aldermen. A

⁹⁷ Dermot Foley, ‘Presbyterianism in Drogheda, 1652-1827’ in *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society*, xxv, No.2 (2002), pp 181-2; Clarke H. Irwin, *A history of Presbyterianism in Dublin and the south and west of Ireland*, (London, 1890), pp 28-9, 235-7.

⁹⁸ Foley, ‘Presbyterianism in Drogheda’, pp179-82.

⁹⁹ Thomas Gogarty (ed.), *Council book of the corporation of Drogheda* (Drogheda, 1915), p.278.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p.273.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, pp 286-9.

few months later Haywood appears before the assembly requesting a reduction of the fine. In his petition he outlined that ‘being from his childhood educated in another persuasion, [he] can’t in his conscience comply with the law.’ In 1708 another member of the family, Benjamin Haywood, was elected sheriff and again he requested more time ‘to consider and give his answer whether he would serve’. When he appeared again he refused to conform and was fined £40. The next choice of the council, Abraham Wilson, also refused to serve and was likewise fined.¹⁰² Of particular interest in this is the request for time to consider their decision. Clearly it was one that was not taken lightly. That Richard Haywood had initially attended Anglican services indicates that the sacrament had become an important indicator of his religious identity.

The sacrament was clearly important to these Presbyterian aldermen and burgesses who refused to conform. The influence of MacBride and other clergy in Ulster bolstered the confidence of those who had clung to their positions in the uncertainty after the introduction of the test. However their loss of influence could be considerable and their refusal to conform must be considered as a genuine spiritual commitment. The overall effect of the test on public officials is difficult to determine and reports are varied. William King insisted in 1706 that only twelve justices of the peace refused to conform in all of Ulster.¹⁰³ Alexander McCrackan wrote from Lisburn in 1704 that ‘all of the justices of the peace that were Presbyterian have quit their commissions upon ... the sacramental test; and are now out.’¹⁰⁴ Other Presbyterian ministers reported a similar withdrawal of Presbyterians from public life, ‘to the great prejudice of the country.’¹⁰⁵ It certainly had an effect on Presbyterian representation in local government and this likely drove the continued campaign to have the test repealed. Certainly some Presbyterians in Ulster did conform, often the sons of prominent Presbyterians eager for employment.¹⁰⁶ A minister writing from Longford in 1718 told how the ‘dissenting interest in this kingdom still groans under the yolk [sic] of the sacramental test.’ He acknowledged the fidelity of the ‘old disciples’ who had not given in for ‘places of honour or profit

¹⁰² Ibid, pp 300-1.

¹⁰³ Connolly, *Religion, law and power*, p.163.

¹⁰⁴ NLS, Wod. Lett. Qu. II, f. 110.

¹⁰⁵ J.S. Reid, *A history of the Presbyterian church in Ireland* (3 vols, Belfast, 1867), ii, p.512.

¹⁰⁶ Robert Whan, *The Presbyterians of Ulster, 1680-1730* (Dublin, 2013), p.60.

upon those sinful terms, yet it is very much to be feared that this will prove a great snare to the young rising generation.¹⁰⁷

The effect of the test in Ulster was much greater than elsewhere.¹⁰⁸ In Dublin, only one dissenter refused to qualify himself. Thomas Bell, who had been lord mayor in 1703/4, resigned his position as treasurer and alderman in 1704. Bell had come from a Scottish Presbyterian background which is perhaps why he refused the test.¹⁰⁹ Humphrey Jervis, a Presbyterian who had helped established two meeting-houses in Dublin, evidently conformed until he retired from the corporation in 1705. Jervis, who came from an English dissenting background, may have been influenced by the more eirencial approach of the Dublin clergy.¹¹⁰ The nature of Ulster Presbyterianism made them a particular target of Anglican hostility. In the advent of increased emigration to Ulster in the 1690s and the establishment of the synod of Ulster in 1691, Anglicans came increasingly alarmed at the strength and level of organisation of the Presbyterian institution. Tobias Pullen, the bishop of Dromore, claimed that 'there is a daily accession of great numbers from a neighbouring country, of whom the meaner sort, are generally of a different communion from the establish'd church...'¹¹¹ Anglican writers denied that the test would profane the sacrament and dismissed Presbyterian attitudes about the nature of receiving. Pullen argued that since religion was 'the great band of humane society, 'tis highly reasonable, that those persons should be rewarded, as well as intrusted with employments in the state that give the greatest evidences of their piety to Almighty God.'¹¹²

In the south, congregations were scattered in various provincial centres and Dublin ministers like Joseph Boyse, were less antagonistic towards occasional conformity than Ulster clergy. Although he argued against the test act, he could envisage a comprehension with the established Church and was open to the possibility of occasional communion.¹¹³ Settlers from Scotland were often independent migrants,

¹⁰⁷ NLS, Wod. Lett. Qu. XX, f. 224.

¹⁰⁸ Whan, *The Presbyterians of Ulster*, p.60.

¹⁰⁹ Jacqueline R. Hill, 'Dublin corporation, Protestant dissent, and politics, 1600- 1800' in Kevin Herlihy (ed.) *The politics of Irish dissent, 1650-1800* (Dublin, 1997), pp 31-2.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, pp 29-32.

¹¹¹ Tobias Pullen, *An answer to a paper entitled the case of the Protestant dissenters of Ireland* (Dublin, 1695), p.4.

¹¹² *Ibid*, p.5.

¹¹³ Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy*, pp 174, 189.

‘with capital resources of their own.’ In contrast, English settlers were often sponsored migrants who ‘settled into positions of economic dependence’.¹¹⁴ As such Ulster Presbyterians had an economic independence that may have emboldened their resolve to adhere to Presbyterian principles. The strength of the Presbyterian institution in Ulster bolstered those faced with the sacramental test. It also meant that Anglican ministers in Ulster who disliked Presbyterian influence would draw attention to the lack of compliance with the test. William Tisdall, the most vociferous promoter of the cause of the sacramental test, was vicar of Belfast from 1706. In 1715 he published *The case of the sacramental test stated and argued* in which he outlined the danger of repealing the test. The Church of Ireland was ‘plac’d like an Isthmus, betwixt two raging seas, of popery and presbytery’ and if given the chance, Presbyterians would overrun the Anglican establishment in Ulster.¹¹⁵ In Co. Antrim he reported that a prominent Presbyterian had ‘told the reverend Mr. Mathews, a justice of the peace of that county, ... that within three months he did not doubt to see him out of commission, and himself in his place.’ A few days later the same man walked up to Mr. Mathews during divine service and slapped him in the face.¹¹⁶ These stories and others related by Tisdall were undoubtedly designed to prevent the repeal of the test through scaremongering. Tisdall himself was in a fragile position in Belfast where Presbyterians outnumbered conformists by a considerable degree.¹¹⁷ In the south, congregations were smaller and self-contained, without the increasing numbers or institutional sophistication of the Ulster Presbyterians.¹¹⁸ Ministers in Ulster recognised that the resistance to the test in southern congregation would likely not be as strong. Alexander McCrackan wrote from Lisburn in October 1704 that he was ‘persuaded the generality of the north will be against it, but what the south may do I cannot tell only a little time will tell whither they receive the test.’¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ Connolly, *Religion, law and power*, pp 170-171.

¹¹⁵ William Tisdall, *The case of the sacramental test stated and argued*, (Dublin, 1715) p.2.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp 43-44; William Tisdall, *The conduct of the dissenters of Ireland, with respect both to church and state* (Dublin, 1712) pp15, 19.

¹¹⁷ In 1705 it was estimated that about 70 per cent of the population of Belfast was Presbyterian. Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy*, pp 25-6.

¹¹⁸ Kilroy, *Protestant dissent and controversy*, p.193; T.C. Barnard, ‘The government and Irish dissent, 1704-1780’ in Kevin Herlihy (ed.) *The politics of Irish dissent* (Dublin, 1997), pp 11-13.

¹¹⁹ NLS, Wod. Lett. Qu. II, f. 110.

The reaction of committed Presbyterians to being forced to receive the Eucharist in the Church of Ireland testified to the importance their own form of worship held for them. It was not primarily a doctrinal division, but an issue of practice. Presbyterians, who had long been accustomed to receive communion seated and with no bodily worship, could not ‘prostitute their consciences’, by kneeling to receive the sacrament.¹²⁰ In addition, there were qualms about the use of the Eucharist as a test in the first place, that this was a profanation of the sacred. The fact that some Anglicans shared this opinion indicates that the test was controversial in its use of the Eucharist for a secular purpose.¹²¹ Occasional conformity highlighted the risks involved in making the sacrament an indication of loyalty.

Occasional conformity was a virulently contested issue in England because of the effects of the Toleration Act of 1689 on the involvement of dissenters in political life. This had allowed dissenters in England to accumulate a significant degree of power at a local level, especially in the corporations. Although some writers, such as Daniel Defoe, denounced occasional conformity, many dissenters had, by the 1690s, accepted a notion of ‘catholic communion’ which permitted receiving communion in the established church.¹²² For high-church Anglicans receiving the sacrament for political gain was ‘a perversion of religion’ and ‘a hypocritical misuse of the sacrament as a legal loophole in the pursuit of undeserved benefits.’¹²³

After the introduction of the sacramental test in Ireland the issue became more pertinent and coincided with a Tory campaign to outlaw occasional conformity in England during Queen Anne’s reign. While the ‘old disciples’ who had resigned from the corporations in immediate aftermath of the test’s introduction had exposed a deep loyalty to Presbyterian worship, it is clear that the younger generation were more open to occasional conformity. The Uptons, who had long been the principal patrons of Ulster Presbyterians, and whose patriarch, Arthur Upton had petitioned parliament to repeal the test in March 1704, which campaign had been carried on by

¹²⁰ Tisdall, *Conduct of dissenters*, p.30.

¹²¹ Alan Acheson, *A history of the Church of Ireland 1691-2001* (Dublin, 2002), p.57.

¹²² John Flaningham, ‘The occasional conformity controversy : ideology and party politics, 1697-1711’ in *Journal of British Studies*, xvii (1997), pp 43-7.

¹²³ Flaningham, ‘The occasional conformity controversy’, p.41.

his son Clotworthy, saw their legacy overturned by the inheritance of Clotworthy's brother, John Upton, who conformed to the established church.¹²⁴

In 1711 the *Representation of the present state of religion* drawn up by Convocation, explicitly denounced those 'professed enemies of our constitution [who] will occasionally communicate with us.' These enemies 'rarely appear at the publick worship of God...[and] seldom frequent the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, unless for an office or employment.'¹²⁵ The high-profile resignations in the corporations tended to overshadow those lower-ranking officials who may have quietly acquiesced. After the initial purge of the corporations, the test may have been only loosely enforced. Hugh Dickson, an M.P. for Cork, wrote to an acquaintance in 1732 who was concerned that he hadn't taken the test, 'I wonder that you trouble your head about qualifying, for I am sure you'll never be questioned for neglecting it.' Dickson went on to relate that he had held 'three commissions of the peace and have been twice elected recorder and I have never qualified but once.' He felt this was sufficient for anyone whose 'principals and character [were] known'.¹²⁶ It is clear however that while occasional conformity was practiced among Presbyterians, it remained a significant 'sticking point' in the community's identity, members of which consistently advocated for its repeal.¹²⁷ Significantly the the nine aldermen and fourteen burgesses who resigned in Derry, had their names inscribed on a commemorative plaque on the wall of the first Presbyterian church in the city.¹²⁸

The survival of sacramental certificates among family papers indicates that others found the test an important part of their identity (see Fig. 7:1). Occasionally the certificate marked a poignant moment in the religious experience of long-established families. The Lombard family from Cork had been in Ireland from the thirteenth century. They managed to retain their estates after the Restoration by obtaining a decree of innocency for Edmund Lombard in 1662 and had been active in local government. James Lombard, who had purchased the majority of the estate of Lombardstown in the 1620s, had been an alderman and sheriff in Cork before

¹²⁴ Reid, *History of the Presbyterian church*, ii, pp 515-517; Hayton, 'Exclusion, conformity and parliamentary representation', p.70.

¹²⁵ *A representation of the present state of religion, with regard to infidelity, heresy, impiety and popery: drawn up and agreed to by both houses of convocation in Ireland* (Dublin, 1711), p.10.

¹²⁶ 'Letter from Hugh Dickson, 26 December 1732' (PRONI, D2707/A/1/2/99).

¹²⁷ Connolly, *Religion, law and power*, pp 166-7.

¹²⁸ Hayton, 'Exclusion, conformity and parliamentary representation', p.60.

becoming mayor in 1642. His will stipulated that he be buried in St. Francis' abbey in Limerick 'between [the grave of] father Patrick Gallwey and ye North pillar of the Great Altar of said Abbey.'¹²⁹ James was also involved in bequests to the Augustinian friars of Cork.¹³⁰ Dying unmarried, his estate passed to his nephew Edmund, a merchant, who obtained the decree of innocence. Edmund's son James may have become Protestant, in his will he stipulated that he be buried in the parish church of Kilshanning.¹³¹ His estate passed to his son James, who had no issue, after which it was inherited by his cousin's son, also James, who in 1717 conformed to the Church of Ireland.¹³² James' sacramental certificate survives among the family papers, attached to his appointment as justice of the peace in 1731.¹³³

The *Act to prevent the further growth of popery* to which the sacramental test was attached was primarily aimed at Catholics. Its stipulations included a ban on Catholics sending their children abroad to be educated, forbade Catholics to hold leases over thirty one years and instituted a system of land inheritance by which children of Catholics could only inherit entire estates if they converted to Protestantism. The sacramental test did not affect Catholics in the same way that it did Presbyterians. Already disenfranchised, there were few Catholics involved in local government. Where it had the possibility to be effective was in the legal profession, where Catholics had a considerable presence. Those wishing to gain admittance to the bar had to qualify themselves by taking the sacrament.¹³⁴ In 1727 an act made it obligatory for those in the legal profession to prove that they had been Protestant for two years before applying for admission.¹³⁵ It appears that Catholic lawyers experienced fewer scruples than Presbyterian burgesses. Archbishop Boulter of Armagh reported in 1727 an attitude of indifference;

The practice of the law, from the top to the bottom, is at present mostly in the hands of new converts, who give no farther security on this account, than producing a certificate of their

¹²⁹ James Groves White, 'Historical and topographical notes, etc on Buttevant, Doneraile, Mallow and places in their vicinity' in *Journal of the Cork historical and archaeological society*, xxiii, (1917), p.52.

¹³⁰ 'Lombard family papers' (NLI, MS 49,545/99 [Folder 1], MS 49,545/72 [Folder 6])

¹³¹ 'Lombard family papers', (NLI, MS 49,545/63).

¹³² Eileen O'Byrne (ed.), *The convert rolls* (Dublin, 2005), p.150.

¹³³ 'Lombard family papers', (NLI, MS 49,545/87) For other sacramental certificates preserved in family papers see NLI, MS 49,518/58; PRONI, D671/D/14/3/23; D1449/12/49; D2977/5/1/5/27.

¹³⁴ Whan, *The Presbyterians of Ulster*, p.130; John Bergin, 'The Irish Catholic interest at the London inns of court, 1674–1800' in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr*, xxiv, (2009) pp 36-7.

¹³⁵ O'Byrne (ed.), *Convert rolls*, p. xvii.

having received the sacrament in the Church of England or Ireland, which several of them which were papists at London, obtain on the road hither, and demand to be admitted barrister in virtue of it, at their arrival...several of them have popish wives and mass said in their houses¹³⁶

Writing to the bishop of London shortly afterwards, Boulter reiterated the claim, but thought that Catholic barristers travelling from London took the sacrament on the way back to Ireland and were then admitted to the bar.¹³⁷ There appeared to be some suggestion that certificates could be obtained easily, possibly without actually receiving communion. Many of the certificates that survive were in manuscript and not printed forms as they were in England.¹³⁸ There may have been some standard forms as Joseph Ray, a Dublin bookseller, was licensed to sell printed certificates by the council in 1704.¹³⁹ Figures from the convert rolls appear to corroborate a lack of concern among Catholics about receiving the Eucharist. In order for a Catholic to be recorded on the rolls they needed a certificate from their bishop that they have taken the oath of abjuration, the declaration against transubstantiation and made a public renunciation of Catholicism. Under the original legislation the convert did not need to receive the sacrament unless he wanted to obtain a public position. By 1709 a further act decreed that unless a convert received the sacrament within six months, he was not considered a Protestant.

¹³⁶ Hugh Boulter, *Letters written by his excellency Hugh Boulter, D. D. lord primate of all Ireland* (2 vols, Dublin, 1770) i, p.182.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, i, p.184.

¹³⁸ The National Archives, London (KB 22/1).

¹³⁹ John Brady, 'Catholics and Catholicism in the eighteenth century press' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, xvi (1951), p.6.

Received of the Reverend Father Richard Smyth of the Parish of Ballynatray in the County of Cork
 the sum of Ten Shillings and Six Pence for the purchase of the Sacrament of the Eucharist
 administered to him by the Reverend Father Richard Smyth of the Parish of Ballynatray in the County of Cork
 on the 10th day of October 1741
 Witness my hand and seal this 10th day of October 1741
 John Cantillon
 by order of the Bishop of Cork
 The said and provided date as above

Figure 7:1 Sacramental certificate of Richard Smyth of Ballynatray, Co. Cork. NLI, MS 49,518/58 [image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland]

This legislation also closed any avenues for the transfer of land illegally by Catholics.¹⁴⁰ Between 1703 and 1709 only thirty six converts enrolled, the majority of whom were probably landowners. Between 1709 and 1731, 670 names were recorded and figures steadily increased over the century. Although professions were only occasionally recorded, it appears that farmers were the most likely to conform, an indication of the effects of the penal legislation on this class.¹⁴¹

It is clear that many Catholics saw the sacramental test as a mere formality. Archbishop Boulter testified to the continuance of Catholicism among lawyers who conformed.¹⁴² Families like the Lombards were often the victims of avaricious heirs or Protestant discoverers. Others may simply have seen no option but the conform and did so with the acquiescence of their Catholic families. In contrast to the vociferous opposition of the Presbyterian clergy to the sacramental test, the Catholic clergy were relatively mute on the issue. Some must have objected, although incidents are not widely recorded. The daughter-in-law of Sir Donat O'Brien wrote to him in 1713 requesting permission to dismiss Mr. Brown, a schoolmaster who had 'delared himself a Roman Catholic'. She had questioned him about not receiving the sacrament at Christmas. Brown, who had for the previous four years gone 'constantly to prayers and once to the sacrament' had met a priest who had told him he would be damned if he went to communion in the Anglican church.¹⁴³ Many Catholics may have been unperturbed as they viewed the Anglican Eucharist as an empty ritual. If, as Catholic controversial writers argued, Protestants 'substitute a little baker's bread, and drink a little wine now and then in remembrance of Christ',

¹⁴⁰ 8 Anne c.3.

¹⁴¹ O'Byrne (ed.), *Convert rolls*, pp xi-xviii. Under the penal legislation Catholics who did not conform had to divide their land by gavelkind among their heirs unless one of their sons became Protestant, in which case he inherited the entire property. The 1709 legislation introduced rewards for those who discovered illegal land transactions. These 'protestant discoverers' could claim the land if they successfully proved their discovery. Corish, *The Catholic community*, pp73-74.

¹⁴² David A. Fleming, 'Conversion, family and mentality' in Michael Brown, Charles Ivar McGrath & Thomas P. Power (eds) *Converts and conversion in Ireland, 1650-1850* (Dublin, 2005), pp290-311.

¹⁴³ John Ainsworth (ed.), *The Inchiquin manuscripts* (Dublin, 1961), p.114.

then Catholics may have easily reconciled themselves to receive communion in the parish church.¹⁴⁴

Lady O'Brien was clearly aware that the sacrament was an indication of loyalty. In the same vein, a member of the Lucas family, who recorded in his diary each time he went to church or received communion, also noted down an occasion when he went to the church in Corofin to see a neighbour receive the sacrament.¹⁴⁵ The continuance of the sacramental test until 1832 for members of the established church indicated its importance to Anglican identity.¹⁴⁶ In 1715 fifteen custom house officers received the Eucharist in the church of St. Multoe's in Kinsale, Co. Cork. Their sacramental certificates were all persevered in the corporation records of the town. It was clearly a symbolic event as the officers acted as witnesses for each other and the communion took place in September, rather than on one of the principal feasts.¹⁴⁷ It is likely that this corporate reception was repeated elsewhere.¹⁴⁸

The demonstrative function of the Eucharist, while not ideal for a clergy concerned with promoting genuine religious piety, was nevertheless an essential tool for bolstering the position of the Church of Ireland. Occasional conformity, which was seen as damaging to the conformist interest in England, was unavoidable in Ireland and tolerated as a necessary evil. The sacramental test, though born out of fears of Presbyterian organisation and expansion, also reflected the deeper theological divisions that separated the Anglican church from dissenters. While historians have generally focused on the political impact of the test, especially in local government, it had a religious dimension. Presbyterians had built their institutional church on the foundation of sacramental worship which was highly social and reflected their beliefs about election and spiritual communion. To take the sacrament in the Church of Ireland rejected these essential aspects of godly worship. For Catholics, the Mass was also communal, but the doctrine of the Real Presence made other rituals defunct. For this reason they may have seen no harm in receiving the Anglican Eucharist as it was devoid of the power they encountered in the Host. The controversy over the

¹⁴⁴ J.M. *Three discourses: I. Concerning transubstantiation II. Concerning Invocation of angels and saints III. Concerning the worship of images, with an appendix concerning the Pretended sacrament of penance and extreme unction* (Dublin, 1707), p.41.

¹⁴⁵ 'Diary of a member of the Lucas family' (NLI MS 14,101).

¹⁴⁶ Presbyterians were exempted from the test in 1780 under 19 & 20 Geo. III, c.6.

¹⁴⁷ Michael Mulcahy (ed.), *Calendar of Kinsale documents* (7 vols, Kinsale, 1988-98) vii, pp 42-3.

¹⁴⁸ Richard Caulfield (ed.), *The council book of the corporation of Youghal* (Surrey, 1878) , p.413.

sacramental test took place among learned divines of the Anglican and Presbyterian establishments. The effect of the test however was on the laity who were eligible for public office. The final section of this chapter will examine the extent to which controversy over the Eucharist impacted on the confessional identity of the laity.

Many lay people were probably unfamiliar with the specific theological detail of the debates over the Eucharist and there was no great desire amongst the clergy to allow the laity to enter into this realm. In the seventeenth century the polemical literature was primarily an arena for the clergy to defend and promote their theological position while a small proportion of the educated public may have been aware of current debates and engaged in discussions in the private sphere. With the advances of printing, controversial polemic was available to a wider audience.¹⁴⁹ It is likely that religious disputation in an oral context also remained a part of early modern social interaction. Conversion narratives often claimed that it was discussions with members of the opposing faith that brought about their change in religion. Andrew Sall and Neal Carolan both allude to discussions with Protestants being instrumental in their conversion.¹⁵⁰ When James Verdon travelled to Ireland in the 1690s he was distracted on the rough crossing by a discussion between two fellow passengers on the differences between Catholics and Protestants.¹⁵¹ The Baron de Corthay engaged in disputes with the friars of Ross, and also spoke to people outside Mass about religious issues. He also partially attributed his eventual conversion to Protestantism to the discussions he held with a local clergyman, Mr. Shaw.¹⁵² Perhaps indicative of a lingering feeling that religious discussions had the potential to be dangerous, but equally satisfying, Narcissus Marsh wrote an account of a dream in his diary in which he found himself in Rome where,

entering a house fell into a company of learned men who raising a discourse concerning religion to ensnare or detect me, as I apprehended, I replied thereto with so much subtlety and maintained the dispute with so much dexterity (defending truth and yet giving them no

¹⁴⁹ Gillespie, 'Irish print and Protestant identity', pp 232-4, 240-1.

¹⁵⁰ Andrew Sall, *A sermon preached at Christ-Church in Dublin, before the Lord Lieutenant & Council, the fifth day of July 1674* (Dublin, 1675) pp23-24; Carolan, *Motives of conversion*, 'Preface to the Reader'.

¹⁵¹ 'Diary of James Verdon' BL, Add. MS 41769.

¹⁵² 'The Irish villany feelingly represented' (Lambeth Palace Library, MS 711, ff. 96,105r).

advantage against me) that when I awaked I did much admire myself for subtleness and acuteness of answers...¹⁵³

In the early eighteenth century, when there was a looming schism over subscription in the Presbyterian church, a conversation at the time of the assizes in Downpatrick demonstrated that there was a tradition of religious discourse between the clergy and laity. Mr. Nevin, the Presbyterian minister of Downpatrick, was tried for heresy in front of the general synod in 1724, after a conversation with a layman, Charles Echlin, in which he appeared to espouse Arian principles. The incident reflected both an inter-denominational confrontation, as most of the men present were of the established church, and a willingness to debate religious issues amongst the laity. Mr. Echlin, aware of his opponents' scholarly advantage was determined to proceed in the debate;

though in his youth [Echlin] had some university education and had some knowledge of these points, he did not think himself an equal match for learned men; but he thought our Saviours' Godhead was a fundamental point of our Christian faith, and he was resolved on all occasions to defend it as well as he could...¹⁵⁴

The extent to which the laity absorbed the complexity of doctrinal divisions is difficult to gauge. Ownership of controversial material when it can be determined was far outweighed by ownership of devotional works.¹⁵⁵ Certain individuals were clearly interested in having the creedal texts of their adversaries close at hand. The duke of Ormond, who in response to rumours that he had received the Eucharist at Mass in his sister's house declared that it was more likely that he was 'circumcised at Christ Church', owned a copy of the catechism of the Council of Trent as well as a number of French theological works.¹⁵⁶ James Trail inherited the library of a Presbyterian friend in 1736 which contained 'the Masse in Latine and English'. In his own library Traill had a copy of an Italian bible 'with the apocrypha'.¹⁵⁷ Ownership of these texts perhaps indicates that some of the Protestant laity were

¹⁵³ O'Connor, 'Marsh's Library and the Irish Catholic tradition', p.236.

¹⁵⁴ NLS, Wod. Lett. Qu. XXI f.157v; *Synod of Ulster* ii, pp 69-70.

¹⁵⁵ C. John Sommerville, 'Religious typologies and popular religion in Restoration England' *Church History*, xlv, No.1 (1976), pp 32-41; Gillespie, 'Irish Print and Protestant identity' pp 231-2.

¹⁵⁶ J.T. Gilbert, *A history of Dublin* (3 vols, Dublin, 1861) iii, pp19-20; Raymond Gillespie, 'The religion of the first Duke of Ormonde', p.113.

¹⁵⁷ 'Diary of James Traill', (PRONI, D1460/1) 29 April 1735 'List of Captain Read's Books', catalogue of Traill's books taken 21 February 1731/2.

keen to read at first hand the espousals of their enemies or that they used the texts as reference works when reading controversial tracts.¹⁵⁸ An early seventeenth-century manuscript entitled ‘A key to the controversies’ prepared by Robert Marshall for the ‘gentlemen of Munster’ indicates that the controversial sphere needed some interpretation. Marshall devised a ‘theological triangle’ which would enable the reader ‘to finde the truthe in all controversies in Divinity’ through this ‘instrument of brevity’.¹⁵⁹

When controversial texts were aimed at a popular audience, there was vigilance on the part of the Catholic clergy lest any of the laity find that they were convinced by the arguments of Protestant writers. The swift response to the conversion of Andrew Sall in 1675 indicated that the clergy were aware that controversial literature had the potential to influence the laity. Nicholas French, the bishop of Ferns, criticised Sall for leading people away from the church on the basis of his learned position, while another pamphlet written anonymously but most likely by an Irish cleric, was aimed at convincing the laity that Sall’s arguments were of little consequence and attributed his apostasy to him being ‘flushed with the vain-glory he gain’d amongst Protestants’.¹⁶⁰ In 1674 French wrote *The dolefull fall of Andrew Sall*, an emotional and highly personal lamentation on Sall’s apostasy. The conversion of Sall was most influential partly because he had been a prominent Catholic as rector of the Irish College in Pamplona. French alludes to the depths of the betrayal felt by Catholics; ‘woe be then to Sall for having scandalised so many thousands, to whome you have before broken the bread of life’. There was evidently a danger that others might follow his lead; ‘greater is the temptation, by how much the master, that gives the scandal, is the more learned.’¹⁶¹ The tone of much of French’s writing, however, is of a personal betrayal. In *The bleeding Iphigenia*, another response to Sall’s conversion, French details his former opinion of the convert ‘for I loved the man dearly for his amiable nature, and excellent parts, and esteemed him both a pious person and learned, and so did all that knew him, but I see we were all deceived in

¹⁵⁸ Texts of controversy were often heavily annotated with citations. James Trail apparently read in a comprehensive fashion and cross-referenced his own reading of the bible with the commentaries of theologians. Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, p.134.

¹⁵⁹ BL, Royal MSS. 17 A XVIII.

¹⁶⁰ Nicholas French, *The dolefull fall of Andrew Sall*, (Louvain, 1674), p.4; J.E. *A sovereign counter-poyson* (Louvain, 1674) ‘To the reader’.

¹⁶¹ French, *The dolefull fall of Andrew Sall*, pp 3-4.

him.¹⁶² Sall's conversion was responded to by two other Catholic writers, Ignatius Brown and an anonymous writer, J.E. Brown, a Jesuit and also a former acquaintance of Sall's, followed the style of French in a highly personal rebuke of Sall, casting doubt both on his professional claims and his scholarship.¹⁶³

The conversion of Sall generated conflict because those who responded had known him personally and printed their objections to his actions, but the storm it created also indicated that other Catholics would respond to significant theological threats. John Gother, the most prominent Catholic controversialist in England was taken seriously by Protestant divines because they recognised that his eloquence and learning posed a danger in an age when people had ready access to the controversial arena.¹⁶⁴ In the 1690s when John Tillotson's sermons were being distributed by at least two Church of Ireland bishops, Cornelius Nary decided that there was a need for a Catholic response to the archbishop's works. In 1696 he published *A modest and true account of the chief points in controversie between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants* which outlined Catholic doctrine and addressed issues raised in Tillotson's sermons. Originally Nary intended that his text would respond to the arguments of Tillotson, but he felt the need to include statements of Catholic belief 'considering that the weaker, and more ignorant sort of people, for whose use I chiefly design'd it, might be easily shaken in their faith, by the specious arguments of this ingenious man'. Nary felt that these laity would be especially convinced of Tillotson's arguments derived from the 'sense and reason' perspective, a central element of the Protestant critique of transubstantiation.¹⁶⁵ Nary's aim was practical and apparently based on an exchange with a Catholic gentlewoman who had been encouraged to read Tillotson's sermons by her Protestant friends. She had been perturbed at their convincing reasoning but upon consulting Nary was 'not a little pleas'd to find that her own faith was founded in scripture, and in the authority of the primitive fathers.' Convinced by this incident that Tillotson's text needed to be answered, Nary embarked on the task to convince any wavering laity by selecting evidence from only a limited number of patristic sources being 'small in number, but

¹⁶² Nicholas French, *The bleeding Iphigenia* (London, 1675), sig.A2v.

¹⁶³ See preface of Ignatius Brown, *An unerrable church or none being a rejoinder to the unerring unerrable church against Dr Andrew Sall's reply entitled The Catholic apostolic Church of England* (Douai, 1678); Terry Clavin, 'Brown, Ignatius', *DIB*.

¹⁶⁴ Stuart Handley, 'Goter, John', *ODNB*.

¹⁶⁵ Nary, *A modest and true account*, sig A3r.

great in authority.’¹⁶⁶ He then proceeded to set out the basis for Catholic belief from the scriptures and the early fathers and in dealing with transubstantiation he made a determined attempt to answer the claim that it was against sense and reason.¹⁶⁷

Nary’s tract highlighted the degree to which style was important in handling controversies. Recognising that this was Tillotson’s forte, he believed that readers were especially convinced by eloquent language when ‘deliver’d by a man in a high station’.¹⁶⁸ Nary’s professed aim was to target the ‘ignorant sort’ an objective not expressed by many other Catholic writers. However one indication that there was a growing lay audience interested in controversy was the tendency to provide full translations of Latin passages and to use much fewer lengthy Latin quotations in published work. Earlier in the century Henry Fitzsimon, who wrote a polemical tract on the Mass, had clearly been addressing a highly literate audience, as Latin passages were left un-translated. This was also a feature of the discourses between James Ussher and William Malone in the 1620s.¹⁶⁹ The very large size of these works further indicates that they were for a select audience.¹⁷⁰ Texts printed later in the century tended to be much shorter and were often only the length of a pamphlet. Cornelius Nary recognised that the wider audience needed a different type of text ‘of two or three days reading’ without large amounts of references and multiple examples to demonstrate one point.¹⁷¹

Whether Nary was successful in reaching a lay audience is another matter. It is clear that in the later seventeenth century the laity were still mainly interested in devotional material. William Weston’s list of books of 1688 contained only one work of controversy. However Luke Wadding had obtained multiple copies of French’s tract against Andrew Sall which he distributed.¹⁷² It appears that access to

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, sig. A4r - sig. A4v.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, pp132-141

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, pp1-2.

¹⁶⁹ Henry Fitzsimon, *The justification and exposition of the divine sacrifice of the Masse, and of al rites and ceremonies therto belonging divided into two books* (Douai, 1611); Gaffney, ‘The practice of religious controversy’, p.146.

¹⁷⁰ Fitzsimon’s tract on the Mass was over 400 pages long, while Malone’s *A reply to Mr. James Ussher his answere wherein it is discovered how answerlesse the said Mr. Ussher returneth* (Douai, 1627) was over 700 pages long. Malone’s tract had large amounts of Latin passages in the margins of the work.

¹⁷¹ Nary, *A modest and true account*, sig.A4v.

¹⁷² Richard Hudleston, *A short and plain way to the faith and church* (Dublin, 1688) Advertisement for books sold by William Weston appears on the final leaf. Corish, ‘Wadding’s notebook’ pp62, 89. Wadding also distributed a work he called ‘The Imposture posted’ which I have been unable to

the controversial arena to those who couldn't afford to purchase works for themselves would depend on the attitudes of their clergy. For Church of Ireland adherents this could be a substantial problem as the canons of the Church of Ireland directed that clergy should not 'runne into curious questions, or unnecessary controversies'.¹⁷³ A certain amount of lay agency can be detected among Presbyterians in the distribution of controversial texts. In the 1660s four men were indicted at the Clonmel assizes 'for having publish[ed] and proclaiming a scandalous printed pamphlet or booke entitled *More news from Rome*'.¹⁷⁴ The work, by the English pamphleteer, Ralph Wallis, was an invective against the Church of England.¹⁷⁵ William Tisdall claimed that the radical covenanting tract *A hind let loose* was being peddled all over Ulster and a shipment of the text was seized at the custom-house in Belfast in the 1690s.¹⁷⁶ More traditional statements of covenanting ideology could also be found in editions of the *Shorter catechism* which included the text of the Solemn League and Covenant.¹⁷⁷ The debates over the sacramental test were also being transmitted to the laity through the unlikely conduit of a Belfast woman's apron, who was seen carrying around Daniel Defoe's text on the sacramental test.¹⁷⁸ This distribution was likely discouraged by moderate Presbyterian clergy. In the 1690s a minister preached to the societies for the reformation of manners urging piety among his hearers rather than controversy.¹⁷⁹ Catholic clergy were clearly advocating a similar position even if the laity might be considered suitably educated. John Dunton reported how a well-versed young Catholic who had mistakenly taken up a bible to read, immediately threw the volume down when he realised what it was, and resolved to confess it at the next opportunity.¹⁸⁰

identify. It appears on William Weston's booklist with the title *The imposter, posted, or the author of the Protestant Resolution prov'd no Protestant of the Church of England*, undoubtedly it was a controversial work.

¹⁷³ *Constitutions and canons ecclesiastical, treated upon by the archbishops and bishops and the rest of the clergy of Ireland* (Dublin, 1638) Canon xii.

¹⁷⁴ 'Clonmel assizes records', (NLI, MS 4908, ff 29v, 35r).

¹⁷⁵ Stephen K. Roberts, 'Ralph Wallis', *ODNB*.

¹⁷⁶ Tisdall, *Conduct of dissenters*, pp 67-70; The tract was by the Scottish covenanting minister Alexander Shields. It was abhorred by authorities in Scotland who ordered its destruction when it was first published. Michael Jenkins, 'Alexander Shields', *ODNB*.

¹⁷⁷ Connolly, *Religion, law and power*, p.170.

¹⁷⁸ Tisdall, *Conduct of dissenters*, p.75.

¹⁷⁹ Gillespie, 'Irish print and Protestant identity', p.244.

¹⁸⁰ Dunton, *Teague land*, pp 67-68.

While the clergy attempted to regulate access to controversy, there was little they could do to restrict open public discourse. The controversy between Henry Fitzsimon and John Rider in the early seventeenth century had initially sprung from conversations around two Dublin dinner-tables.¹⁸¹ As we have seen there seemed to be an appetite for discussing religious issues among the laity and this propensity was reflected in the printed literature. A popular anti-Catholic tract purporting to be an account of a discussion on transubstantiation between the duke of Buckingham and an Irish priest, Fr. Fitzgerald, was printed in several Dublin editions in the early eighteenth century.¹⁸² In a similar format, the prebendary of St. Michan's John Clayton published an account of a dispute between himself and the local Catholic priest Fr. Dalton in 1702, it was allegedly the result of a conversation involving both men and a parishioner called Mrs. Joy.¹⁸³ This technique of constructing controversial pamphlets in dialogue format was presumably a more direct and succinct way in which to set up the argument and one which people would have found easy to read and understand. These pamphlets can be assumed to have been directed at a broad audience whose knowledge of theological doctrine did not need to be sophisticated and frequently relied on the use of exaggerated metaphors to make a point. The pamphlet describing the conference between the duke of Buckingham and Fr. Fitzgerald was representative of this method. In one example the duke described how he brought a Guinean servant boy to a High Mass at Notre Dame cathedral at which the young boy, described as ignorant and hardly able to speak English, was confounded by the apparent cannibalism of Catholics.¹⁸⁴ In the conference between John Clayton and Fr. Dalton of St. Michan's parish a similar 'outsider' role, this time in the form of a scrupulous Catholic woman, was used to demonstrate the falsehood of transubstantiation. Whether or not the oral discussions

¹⁸¹ Brian Jackson, 'The construction of argument: Henry Fitzsimon, John Rider and religious controversy in Dublin, 1599-1614' in Ciaran Brady and Jane Ohlmeyer (eds), *British interventions in early modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2005), pp 98-100.

¹⁸² George Villiers, *An account of a conference between His Grace, George late duke of Buckingham, and Father Fitz-gerrald, an Irish priest: ... Faithfully taken by one of his domesticks* (Dublin, 1706). The authorship of Villiers is doubtful, it was reportedly an account of the dispute 'faithfully taken by one of his domesticks' in one copy and 'faithfully taken by his secretary' in another. There were at least three different Dublin editions in 1706, 1714 and 1726. It is possible that it had an Irish author as the first London edition didn't appear until 1719.

¹⁸³ *An account of a dispute betwixt Mr. Clayton prebendary of St. Michan's, and Father Dalton, priest of the same parish, on the 18th of August, 1702* (Dublin, 1702), p.1.

¹⁸⁴ Villiers, *An account of a conference*, pp12-13

ever took place in reality is difficult to determine, but it is clear that the format in which they were presented was a popular one for polemical texts.

While there is evidence that the laity discussed religious topics, it is difficult to determine how much this was informed by the printed literature rather than by traditional opinions. Perhaps the most likely way in which the laity learned of the details of controversy was through the preaching of their clergy. Many of the controversial works in the period originated as sermons such as that preached by Edward Fowler in the parish of St. Werburgh's on the subject of transubstantiation. Fowler, who had converted to the Church of Ireland in the 1690s, stuck to the well-tested themes of evidence from the scriptures, early church fathers and the 'sense and reason' perspective.¹⁸⁵ Presbyterian ministers in Ulster preached on William King's debate with the dissenters of Derry, while the participants themselves saw the debate as one that involved a lay audience. William King alluded to a popular discourse among the laity when he noted that 'neither in meetings, drinking parties nor feasts' could Anglicans avoid the 'scoffings and continual disputations of the dissenters.'¹⁸⁶

After the introduction of the sacramental test, parishioners may have been subjected to the renunciation of converts in their local parish church. This would have exposed them to the doctrines of the Catholic church which were publicly repudiated by the convert in front of the congregation, and would have reminded them of the differences between the doctrinal stance of their own church against that of Catholics. This was already the practice for high-profile converts, whose change of religion was immortalised in the printed recantation sermon.¹⁸⁷ It may have been much more effective when a convert was local and the drama of conversion was acted out in front of one's neighbours. In the vestry book of Painstown, Co. Meath, the conversion of Helena McNaughten was recorded in the parish church in 1699. McNaughton was brought up a Catholic but 'now being sensible of the errors and

¹⁸⁵ Edward Fowler, *A discourse against transubstantiation*, (Dublin, 1699).

¹⁸⁶ Gillespie, 'Irish print and Protestant identity', p.245.

¹⁸⁷ Anthony Egan, *The Franciscan convert: or A recantation-sermon of Anthony Egan* (London, 1673); Andrew Sall, *A sermon preached at Christchurch in Dublin before the Lord Lieutenant & Council, the fifth day of July 1674 with a declaration made in St. John's Church in Cashel before the archbishop of the province : and a preface shewing the reasons for deserting the communion of the Roman Church, and embracing that of the Church of England* (Dublin, 1675); John Clayton, *A sermon preach'd at St. Michan's Church in Dublin, February the 23d, 1700. Upon receiving into the communion of the Church of England, the Honble Sir Terence Mac-mahon, Knt & Barnet and Christopher Dunn, converts from the Church of Rome* (Dublin, 1700).

corruptions of that church and the great hazard of [her] salvation by continuing longer in it...' renounced her former faith.¹⁸⁸ Five years later and likely as a result of the recent introduction of the sacramental test, Patrick Burly converted in Painstown having formerly been a Protestant 'until by the treachery of my own sinful heart and for sinister ends and wordly respects, and especially for the importunity of some near relations I forsook the same...'¹⁸⁹ Most converts specifically rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation in their renunciation, in line with the requirements of the *Act to prevent the further growth of popery*.¹⁹⁰ John Handypot who converted in 1704 in Newcastle, Co. Wicklow stated in his declaration that 'transubstantiation cannot be proved by scripture, overthrow [s] the nature of a sacrament and hath given occasion to many superstitions and [that the] adoration of the consecrated elements is idolatrous'.¹⁹¹

In their attitudes to other denominations there is evidence that the Catholic clergy were instrumental in informing people of contentious issues. Anthony Egan recounted that he was frequently in danger of attack by Catholics while in Ireland, the instigators of which were often the Catholic clergy. Andrew Sall made similar observations of the anger at his former acquaintances upon hearing of his conversion.¹⁹² While converts provided a locus for expressing anger towards those that stepped outside confessional bounds, threats towards them do not represent a widespread awareness among the laity of the exact nature of Eucharistic controversy. Similarly, when boys in Belfast followed an Anglican clergyman, calling him Dr. Sacheverell, it is unlikely that they were aware of the confessional divisions the name-calling was suggesting.¹⁹³ Controversy amongst the laity tended to be blunt and played out in a practical fashion. While they originated in theological divisions,

¹⁸⁸ For a discussion of the theological impact of Catholic to Protestant conversion see Thomas P. Power, 'The theology and liturgy of conversion from Catholicism to Anglicanism' in Michael Brown, Charles Ivar McGrath & Thomas P. Power (eds) *Converts and conversion in Ireland, 1650-1850*, (Dublin, 2005), pp 60-78.

¹⁸⁹ 'Painstown vestry book', (RCBL P868/1/1, 6 August 1699).

¹⁹⁰ O'Byrne (ed.), *Convert rolls*, p.xii.

¹⁹¹ 'Newcastle vestry book', (RCBL, P914/1/1, 19 November 1704).

¹⁹² Francis Egan, *The Franciscan convert* (London, 1673) pp 23-30; Sall, *True apostolic and catholic faith* 'Preface'.

¹⁹³ Tisdall, *Conduct of the Dissenters*, p.20; Henry Sacheverell a religious controversialist who espoused high-church principles and attacked dissenters. He was impeached before the House of Lords when he printed a sermon he had preached to the lord mayor and council of London which aligned the actions of Catholics in the Gunpowder plot with the actions of dissenters at the execution of Charles I. W.A. Speck, 'Henry Sacherevell' *ODNB*.

the conflicts in the public sphere were targeted towards symbolic destruction.¹⁹⁴ As we have seen, Catholics reacted angrily to disruptions to the Mass and protected the priests who provided it. They sought revenge for the Protestant use of parish churches by destroying seats, pulpits and communion tables during the late 1680s. Some confusion over the exact parameters of what constituted objects of controversy is suggested by the sparing of a communion chalice when Catholics re-claimed the Protestant church at Clonmacnoise, though they destroyed other liturgical objects.¹⁹⁵ Presbyterians could also react to the objects of difference, in Derry a conformist minister was pulled from the pulpit and had his gown torn by dissenters in the 1640s. Later in the century Presbyterians began to interrupt conformist ministers while they read the burial service in the graveyard, an objection to the reading of the Office of the Dead. In one instance a servant of the conformist minister was almost struck by a Presbyterian with an iron shovel.¹⁹⁶

By the eighteenth century, it is likely that those who were literate would have been aware of the doctrinal divisions over the Eucharist. It was only in this context that satirical works on the distinctions of religious practice would find a receptive audience. Broadshets, both local and imported, were printed in Dublin in the early eighteenth century which satirised the differences in religious practice. A versified tract published c. 1719, on the differences between Anglican and Presbyterian worship, may have been intended to promote the cause for toleration of dissenters among a lay audience.¹⁹⁷ It was constructed as a dialogue between St. Patrick's cathedral and the Wood-Street meeting house and attacked Anglican ceremonies and worship. The meeting-house accuses St. Patrick's of excessive external worship; 'Altho thy pomp and gilded altar shine/ By holy sanction and a right divine/ submissive people tremble at it's nod/ and worship it, tho' they profane their God.'¹⁹⁸ The tract also attacked other aspects of cathedral worship including singing, the use of instruments and the wearing of vestments. It also alluded to the

¹⁹⁴ Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, pp19-20.

¹⁹⁵ Barnard, 'Enforcing the reformation in Ireland, 1660-1704' in Elizabethanne Boran and Crawford Gribben (eds), *Enforcing Reformation in Ireland and Scotland, 1550-1700* (Aldershot, 2006), p.216 ; 'Letter from Mr. Theophilus Harrison to the Rev. John Strype' in *The Old Limerick Journal*, xxviii (1990), p.184.

¹⁹⁶ Tisdall, *Conduct of dissenters*, pp 15, 65-6.

¹⁹⁷ Raymond Gillespie, 'Presbyterian propaganda' in Kevin Herlihy (ed.) *The politics of Irish dissent, 1650-1800* (Dublin, 1997), pp 105-7.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p.109.

persecution of Presbyterians ‘stifl’d in prisons, robb’d of liberty/ for non-compliance to thy foppery.’¹⁹⁹ Although the writer was advocating toleration for dissenters, he alludes to the perception of occasional conformity among Anglicans, the cathedral maintains, ‘But for preferment, or a wealthy place/ interest usurps, and baffles conquer’d grace/Your sons assemble, and with mine receive/ The sacrament, as I the same do give.’²⁰⁰ The meeting-house laments these occasional conformists who ‘bow the knee to Baal’ but concludes that though they ‘side with the world for profit and estate’, the fault lies with those who instituted the laws and ‘corrupt the faith... [and] do the worth of sacraments debase.’²⁰¹

A satirical description of Sunday worship in Christ Church by some Presbyterian visitors in the 1730s implied a relaxed atmosphere at the cathedral where people made it the occasion for conferring with their fellow-churchgoers.²⁰² Two Ulster ship hands, who were looking for a meeting-house, accidentally followed the crowd that were accompanying the lord mayor to the weekly service at Christ Church cathedral. One of the men makes it into the cathedral and with astonishment registers the lack of a pulpit only noticing a ‘brass bird wee a buke on the back o’ him’, as well as the railed communion table, candlesticks (‘as thick as my arm’) and the organ music and bodily worship of the clergy.²⁰³ The tract has been attributed to Jonathan Swift as an attempt to ridicule the Ulster-Scots dialect but the observations included the common themes that were the subject of the theological debates, bodily worship, ceremonies and a rich architectural setting.²⁰⁴ The dialogue device was also used in a satirical tract printed in Dublin in 1710 in the form of a conversation between St. Peter and a ‘low- churchman’. This was written by Edward Ward, an English satirist, and a high-church tory who attacked dissenters and the practice of occasional conformity.²⁰⁵ The dialogue purported to take place at the gates of heaven with St. Peter blocking the path of the low – churchman. In the final stanza it implies the wavering loyalty of the low-churchman who tells St. Peter,

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p.113.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, p.115.

²⁰¹ Ibid, p.116.

²⁰² J.S., *The Northcountryman’s description of Christchurch* (1731) .

²⁰³ *ibid.*

²⁰⁴ Linda M. Hagan ‘The revival of the Ulster-Scots cultural identity at the beginning of the twenty-first century’ in *Journal of Irish Scottish Studies*, i (2007), p.276.

²⁰⁵ James Sambrook, ‘Edward Ward’ *ODNB*.

Prithee, old friend, forbear this needless chat,
Keep me not in suspence, but open the gate,
I've here a good certificate to shew,
I lov'd the church and the dissenters too,
Pray'd and commun'd with both, oft fed the poor,
And join'd with all sides to be more secure.²⁰⁶

This theme of dissenting opportunism was reiterated in *The religious turn-coat* printed in Dublin in 1711,

As soon as James began his reign
And Mass was us'd in common,
I shifted of my faith again
And then became a Roman...

Sided with the Church of Room[sic],
And read the declaration
That by degrees the land might come
To transubstantiation.²⁰⁷

These satirical works were aimed at a broader lay audience, were cheap and were peddled by itinerant booksellers. The ballad form in which *The religious turn-coat* was constructed was suited to these chapmen who could sing their wares as an

²⁰⁶ *A dialogue between St. Peter and a low-churchman* (Dublin, 1710[?]).

²⁰⁷ Edward Ward, *The religious turn-coat, or, The trimming observatory* (Dublin, 1711).

advertisement.²⁰⁸ Through these short and direct tracts, the laity could quickly absorb the differences in worship between denominations without the need for a deeper appreciation of conflicting theologies.

In the 1660s Jeremy Taylor alluded to the staleness of polemical writing and its repetitive nature. Skill in controversies was ‘the worst part of learning, and time is the worst spent in them, and men the least benefited by them; that is, when the questions are curious and impertinent, intricate, and inexplicable, not to make men better, but to make a sect.’²⁰⁹ Nevertheless learned divines, including Taylor, continued to produce and participate in the controversial arena. In the early seventeenth century, controversy was a serious and exclusive business, lengthy texts were produced and the participants were concerned to consolidate the theological position of their respective confession. Controversy was organised and directed by the authorities who had control over the printing presses. With the expansion of print culture, lay involvement became inevitable and controversial texts could be easily disseminated. Clergy realised that their arguments would now be available to the literate public and altered their texts accordingly. Amid the explosion of the printed word, the Eucharist continuously came to the fore in the polemical literature.

At the same time that controversy over the Eucharist was being fought out in print, it was assuming a symbolic identity in practice. The sacramental test, on the surface a political manoeuvre born of the insecurity of the established church, had its basis in confessional conflict. This conflict derived from the various emphases of the Eucharistic theologies of Anglicans, Presbyterians and Catholics. We have seen in the preceding chapters how each group understood and adopted a particular Eucharistic identity. The sacramental test highlighted not only the centrality of the Eucharist to the established church but threw into relief its importance to Catholics and Presbyterians.

²⁰⁸ Raymond, *Pamphlets and pamphleteering*, pp84-5; Gillespie, *Reading Ireland*, p.113.

²⁰⁹ Taylor, *Dissuasive*, sig A4v.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the meaning of the Eucharist for Catholics, Anglicans and Presbyterians in early modern Ireland. The interaction between Eucharistic theology and practice has been a central feature of the study. Rather than seeing doctrinal edicts as something removed from lay experience, it has been demonstrated that both facets were interconnected. The thesis has also adopted a comparative approach and demonstrated that within each confession there were elements in common as well as considerable differences. These differences stemmed not only from theological sources but from the position of each confession. Anglicans benefited materially from their status as the established church, but struggled to maintain this position in the face of the Catholic majority and the lack of unity derived from the separation by Presbyterians. The sacramental test was an attempt to bolster their position and enforce conformity. The use of the Eucharist in this way served to underline how it was a sensitive indicator of the social order.

In each confession there were those who fell short of clerical aspirations, but it would be a mistake to characterise these people as ‘failures’. Just as the narratives of the godly shone a light on the ‘best people at their best moments’, those who were cited for drinking at communions or censured for revelry at wakes, may be seen as ordinary people at their ‘worst moments.’ Many of course may have been attracted to the secular advantages that communion could offer. For those whose transgressions were highlighted by the kirk session, ecclesiastical court or disgruntled Protestant observer, there were hundreds more among the large crowds at Presbyterian sacraments, the ‘Prayer-Book Protestants’ who received communion once a year in their parish church and the Catholics who attended Mass at an open-air Mass rock. These were the ordinary communicants who, extraordinarily, have left such a faint impression in the surviving sources. Some attempt has been made to ‘enumerate’ them in this study by using communicant lists, financial accounts and the estimates of the clergy but this simply lets us know that they existed, not what their Eucharistic experience may have been like.

When the clergy attempted to introduce ambitious programs of reform the laity tended to stick to traditional practices. Thus, Dives Downes in Cork and Thomas Milles in Waterford saw paltry results when they attempted to step outside the

bounds of regular worship. Occasionally, immediate pressures have been shown to have affected lay practice and were seized upon by the clergy to affect change. The resulting religiosity, such as that at Six Mile Water in the 1620s and among Anglicans in the 1690s indicates that the laity would react to temporal exigencies. Once the panic had passed and order was restored, the laity resumed older patterns.

Some effort to correct this statistical interpretation has been made by examining the books which the laity may have read and the type of practice these texts encouraged. Clearly this leaves a rather dry impression of lay experience, but indicates that the texts which advocated a 'ritualistic' piety, proved consistently to be at the top of booksellers lists and endured lengthy shelf-lives. In particular, texts which crossed confessional boundaries such the *Introduction to a devout life*, point to a shared desire for a simple piety, even among the most learned.

This was not to say that the laity were unmoved by the energies of their pastors. In negotiating the differences between elite and popular religion the thesis has encountered a variety of practices. Those who thirsted for a more 'intellectual' Eucharistic experience had their needs readily met in the expanding print culture, while those who stuck to traditional patterns may have managed to combine these with the catechetical instructions of their ministers. This was particularly true of the counter-reforming clergy, who tailored their texts through the use of the Irish language, imagery and verse. Protestant authors also attempted to engage directly with their parishioners. The catechisms of Thomas Hall and Robert Chambers were composed with their own congregations in mind. Narcissus Marsh saw the value in the 'plain' Prayer book catechism and recommended its use for the Dublin diocese. The oral context in which these texts were transmitted cannot be known, but it may have been effective. The fact that godly paragons, who were lauded for their religious education, suffered pangs of conscience, suggests that knowledge may have impeded participation in the sacrament. The difficulties encountered by Protestants in relieving the 'unaided Protestant conscience' is testified in the proliferation of devotional texts designed for worthy participation.¹

¹ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic: studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England* (Harmondsworth, 1991), pp 185-7.

The thesis has shown that local circumstances played a significant part in the progress of reform. Luke Wadding successfully implemented Tridentine policies in the diocese of Ferns, where the favourable climate and a receptive Old English laity aided the process. In Anglican parishes with powerful patrons and a sizeable conformist population, the reforming bishops could implement their desire of regular communions. In Ulster, a growing Presbyterian population was periodically refreshed with communicants from Scotland, who ensured that their sacramental tradition would continue.

Where lay experience remained obscure, the thesis has found recourse to sociological and anthropological models in an attempt to analyse the external actions for a laity whose internal states were unknown. These frameworks have been useful for drawing comparisons between the three confessions and for highlighting differences. Adopting these schemes has uncovered shared elements such as pilgrimage among Presbyterians, rituals of confession among Anglicans and ascetic piety among Catholics. These broader frameworks have corroborated the essential feature of the thesis, that ritual remained key to the Eucharistic practices of early modern Ireland. While their clergy strained to impose 'rational commitment' on 'ritual conformity', the laity continued to see the Eucharist as a symbol of sociability.²

The thesis has also examined Eucharistic conflict both in consolidating confessional identities and as a method of social control within communities. In order to protect the Eucharist, each confession established clear barriers to participation, barriers which were dissolved once worthiness had been proven. For Presbyterians the gateway to the sacrament was both spiritual, through the examination of their ministers and elders, and physical, in their procurement of tokens and certificates. For Catholics the barrier was spiritual but could be resolved in the ritual of confession. For Anglicans the line was less clear, participation in the sacrament could be a personal decision or could be dictated by their clergy, who varied in their views on confession. Control over the sacrament could also be exerted through the ecclesiastical courts but as we have seen the censure was not widely feared.

² Mary Douglas, *Natural symbols: explorations in cosmology* (3rd edn. London, 1996), p.4.

With these methods of controlling the sacrament the essential liturgical differences between the confessions were connected. The Prayer Book ritual was one of dialogue with the laity responding to ministers' actions. It was unsurprising therefore that communicants were advised to seek 'ghostly counsel' before receiving. Among Presbyterians worthiness was proved after a strict enquiry to ensure that communicants had the 'knowledge to discern the Lord's body'. The ritual became a mutual partaking of the sacrament among the elect with elements distributed by lay elders or passed from one communicant to the next. The Mass as a sacrifice was focused on the priest, the laity urged to look on at his actions as spectators. As a symbol of Divine presence in the world, it was only received once a year preceded by a ritual spiritual cleansing in confession.

Institutional conflict over the Eucharist was played out through the printed word and affirmed older theological differences. Between Catholics and Protestants the difference stemmed from the nature of the Eucharistic presence while Presbyterians and Anglicans differed over the type of worship which the sacrament called for. The thesis has shown that the nuances of theological interpretation were reflected in communion practices. The doctrine of election resulted in Presbyterian communicants receiving the sacrament seated around specially constructed and 'fenced' tables. The high-church view of the Eucharistic presence saw Anglicans kneeling to receive the Eucharist at embellished altars. The doctrine of transubstantiation imbued the Host with a power that saw Catholics fall to their knees to adore it. Even subtle theological differences could result in diverging practices which was revealed in the different sacramental worship of Scottish and English Presbyterians. The thesis has shown that confessional conflicts over the Eucharist became hardened in the period, so that in 1704, one particular type of practice could be used as a test to distinguish confessional identity.

But still there were surprising features uncovered which would repay further study. Glimpses of cooperation at local level, such as the offer to hold Mass in the palace of the earl of Caulfield in the 1670s and the inter-denominational friendships in the diocese of Ferns, indicate that the fierce polemical battles of the pamphlet literature were not representative of the whole picture. Confessional harmony, like the religious practices of the ordinary lay-person, was rarely recorded. It must, however, have existed in a local context. Some attempt has been made to exploit local sources,

such as churchwardens' accounts, to document communion attendance and lay practice in general. An intensive quarrying of these sources to examine the involvement of Catholics and Presbyterians in parish life would perhaps illuminate local cooperation. Similarly, family estate papers may offer opportunities to investigate lay piety through correspondence, diaries and testamentary material.

In the period 1660 to 1740 formal controversy over the Eucharist had lost the immediacy it had acquired in the sixteenth century. Even those who engaged in controversial writing, such as Jeremy Taylor, accepted that the theological battle was over. It was now a question of religious identity and what the markers of that identity were. This thesis had argued that the Eucharist was a key component of religious identity in early modern Ireland. Eucharistic rituals were delineated by the clergy but were practiced by the laity, who revealed by their patronage of communal worship that the sacrament expressed social cohesion. Communicants in Delgany who eschewed the political connotations of the Easter sacrament and chose instead to attend with their family at Christmas demonstrated how official policies could have alternative consequences. Presbyterians who travelled to large-scale sacraments in Ulster and Scotland and provided 'coshering' to visiting communicants similarly demonstrated the importance of communal solidarity. Among these people, clergy of each denomination found evidence of Divine approbation. For Presbyterians, this was a manifestation of the 'people of God', predestined by the doctrine of election. For Anglicans communicants represented the 'singular decency and good order' that behoved an Erastian church. Among Catholics communal worship was fostered by persecution, when Catholics travelled 'through frost and snow' to attend Mass in isolated places. For each group the Eucharist was a 'sign of unity, bond of charity and symbol of concord.'³

³ *Canons and decrees*, p.81.

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