James Ussher and the Theological Maturation of the Church of Ireland, 1600-1634

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Theological Studies

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Theological Studies) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

March 2011

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

School of Graduate Studies

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Abstract

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Kathryn Rose Sawyer

Despite the fact that by all material measures the reformed Church of Ireland was in decline by the year 1600, theologically it had only just begun to mature, a process which lasted approximately 30 years and which saw the Church of Ireland define itself as a distinct entity from both the Roman Catholic Church and the neighboring Church of England. In this paper I follow the developing theology of James Ussher, a major Irish protestant ecclesiastical figure, in order to gauge the concurrent theological development and maturation of the Church of Ireland. I examine three texts in whose creation Ussher figured prominently and which deal with the notion of the Pope as Antichrist. Then, in recognition of the intimate interplay between history and theology, I consider the historical, political, and social atmosphere of English-speaking Ireland at the time of the writing of these texts in order to see how their theology both affected and was affected by their historical context. I conclude that the Church of Ireland's developing theology of the papal Antichrist assists us, as modern readers, to better understand the historical and political events that were in play in the volatile years of the early seventeenth century, and to see how the developing theology of the Church of Ireland informed its members of their identities as both protestants and Irishmen.

Acknowledgements

There are many people who deserve my gratitude for their support in my journey of writing my Master's thesis. I would like to express a particular, hearty "Thank you" to the following:

To my supervisor, Dr. Jason Zuidema, who so gamely took on the task of learning the ins and outs of early modern Irish history so as to accompany me with this thesis, and without whose guidance, encouragement and occasional pep-talks this project would not have been realized.

To my colleague Matte Downey, who became my good friend through the shared experience of thesis-writing, whether through coffee-and-commiseration sessions, unexpected emails of updates and morale-boosting, or taking the time to proofread and comment on the finished product when I could no longer make sense of what I had written.

To Dr. Lucian Turcescu, for his wonderful encouragement and flexibility as I first considered pursuing my degree in Theological Studies, and then as I figured out how to make a semester overseas a reality. Without his help and attentiveness, that experience would never have been possible. To Dr. Jean-Michel Roessli, for his helpful comments and suggestions for additional sources in reading my project proposal, and to Dr. Pamela Bright, for her continuing interest and for introducing to me the idea of truly engaging in conversation with the text. And to everyone in Concordia's Theological Studies department, for their interest and encouragement in my current projects and my future plans. And of course, a very special thank you to Connie Di Fruscia, the departmental secretary, who makes everything run so smoothly within the department.

To the School of Canadian Irish Studies at Concordia University, the Saint Patrick's Society of Montreal, and the United Irish Societies of Montreal, whose material and financial support was so necessary to my research experiences in Ireland, England, and Montreal.

To the wonderful folks at the Trinity College Dublin Early Printed Books department, who were so helpful in my first venture into rare materials.

To Dr. John McCafferty and Dr. Edel Bhreatahnach of University College Dublin, who so kindly allowed me to sit in on a semester of their graduate class, *Writing Irish History*, without which welcome I probably would not have gone to Ireland. A special thanks to Dr. McCafferty as well for taking the time to discuss my thesis with me as I was still molding the idea, and for pointing me in the direction of important resources, both people and print.

To Dr. Brian Jackson of University College Dublin, who has been, consistently, so very generous with both his time and scholarly resources during the last several months, and to Dr. Crawford Gribben of Trinity College Dublin, for his helpful suggestions and

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents.

In memory of Kathryn Shorey Sawyer (1922-2007), whose mother Mary Stanton arrived in America from County Galway at the age of sixteen.

In memory of Thomas J. McMahon (1929-2011), whose ancestor Michael McMahon arrived in Quebec from County Clare in 1850.

May God hold you in the palm of His hand.

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Introduction

"The bishop of *Rome* is so far from being the supreme head of the
universal church of Christ, that his works and doctrine do plainly discover
him to be *that man of sin*, foretold in the Holy Scriptures, *whom the Lord
shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and abolish with the brightness
of his coming.*"[1]

The protestant church in Ireland in the early 1600s thus enshrined in its national
confession the belief that the Pope was the Antichrist foretold in the Bible. This belief
was central to the self-identity of the Church of Ireland, and the theology surrounding it
developed and deepened as the Church responded to the political and societal changes in
Ireland and England in the early seventeenth century. Naturally, a theology which viewed
the Pope as Antichrist would also view Roman Catholics as antichristian heretics whose
very presence was a threat to the security of true religion and the sanctity of the true
Gospel. This antagonistic view towards Roman Catholicism would have serious
repercussions for the Church of Ireland in its relations with the Roman Catholic majority
of Ireland, and also with the English government, whose desire for political stability in
Ireland clashed with the Irish protestant leadership's fear of Antichrist. The tensions
surrounding this central belief of the Church of Ireland as it affected its relations with
Irish Catholics and England only grew as the seventeenth century progressed, reaching a
breaking point in 1634. But during this time, a protestant identity developed in the

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[1] Article 80, of the Irish Articles of Religion, 1615.

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Church of Ireland which was separate from the Church of England and which gives us an interesting glimpse into the way in which the protestant leadership in Ireland responded to its status as a minority religion in a time of political trial.

In this paper, I wish to ask *how did the Church of Ireland continue to exist in the face of material need and a thriving Catholic population?* By all accounts, the protestant church in Ireland was in terrible shape by the end of the sixteenth century. It was a financial disaster, unable to support the clergy it could attract, and unable to attract clergy with any credentials worth noting. The Counter-Reformation was at its zenith in the first years of the seventeenth century, thanks to the arrival of the Jesuit missionaries and the increasing confidence on the part of the Catholic population that the English government could not or would not force them to give up their Catholic heritage. The new university in Dublin had failed to attract students in the numbers it initially had hoped, the only ministers available were non-conformists escaping pressures in England, and the English government was either unable or unwilling to offer more than token assistance to the fledgling cause; *so what caused the strengthening, rather than the deterioration, of the protestant resolve in the first part of the seventeenth century?*

This question gets to the heart of what a church was at that time: it was not simply a political organization, nor was it just a job for the clergy, and it certainly was not something that was on the periphery of the people's consciousness as they dealt with other, more important matters. Something that we are prone to forget in our modern era is that the church which people attended and the religious doctrine to which they adhered affected all aspects of their lives, including their educational opportunities, their social circles, and what jobs they were able to find. So the tenacity of the Irish protestant church

against all odds gives us not just an interesting glimpse into the ecclesiastical politics of that time period, but in fact it allows us to explore the mindset of the people of that time. From this perspective we are able to determine what was truly important to the people of early-modern Ireland, to the point that they would break away from their own families and see their neighbors put in jail for their religious beliefs. If we are ever to understand the events of the Irish Reformation and the hundreds of years of bloody conflict that resulted, we must first understand *why* these issues were so important to the people who lived through them, and we must do it on their terms, without simply relying on twenty-first-century hindsight.

Background

      The Church of Ireland was established in 1536 when the Irish Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy, recognizing King Henry VIII as the head of the church. It was tied closely to its sister, the Church of England, in politics and theology. It cannot be denied that the Church of Ireland was a foreign implant to the island, a protestant faith that was imposed on the country by England and largely staffed and governed by Englishmen and their representatives.[2] While there were native Irish protestants who firmly believed in the new teachings, these were vastly outnumbered by their Catholic peers whose initially ambiguous views on outward conformity to the state church became more antagonistic as the sixteenth century progressed. Even today it is generally accepted that the Reformation

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[2] Aidan Clarke, with R. Dudley Edwards, "Pacification, Plantation, and the Catholic Question, 1603-23" in *A New History of Ireland*, Vol. III: "Early Modern Ireland 1534-1691," ed. T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin, and F.J. Byrne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 229. See also the list of Church of Ireland bishops at the beginning of King James' reign in John McCafferty, "Protestant Prelates or Godly Pastors? The Dilemma of the Early Stuart Episcopate" in *The Origins of Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland*, ed. Alan Ford and John McCafferty (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 56.

in Ireland had failed by the end of the sixteenth century.[3] However, in this paper I will argue that, while by financial and material measures the Church of Ireland was in dire straits by the year 1600, it was at this time that a uniquely Irish outlook began to influence the protestant Church, thus allowing for the Church to develop its own flavor of protestant theology that set it apart not only from its Catholic enemy but also from its protestant counterpart, the Church of England.

Unlike so many of the continental reform movements, the English and Irish reformations in the sixteenth century were imposed from the top down, rather than springing from a feeling of discontent and need for renewal in the general populace.[4] While this type of reform movement was ultimately successful in England, it was far less so in Ireland, a reality which became more and more apparent as the sixteenth century wore on.[5] Unlike in England, the necessary infrastructure for enforcing the religious

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[3] The essays by Brendan Bradshaw and Nicholas Canny in the late 1970s operated from this assumption (though Canny wished to qualify that conclusion slightly, based on the evidence of the Anglo-Irish such as we will see in this paper). See Brendan Bradshaw, "Sword, Word and Strategy in the Reformation in Ireland," *The Historical Journal* 21 (1978): 475-502; Nicholas Canny, "Why the Reformation Failed in Ireland: Une question mal posée," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 30 (1979): 423-450. More Recently, Alan Ford, in the Preface to the second edition of his 1985 book, admits that this was the case: Alan Ford, *The Protestant Reformation in Ireland, 1590-1641* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), 14. And Felicity Heal, in her important work on the British and Irish reformations, ends her study in the year 1600: Felicity Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). This, however, does not imply that there was no protestant church in Ireland, but simply that it did not take hold as thoroughly as it did in other European locales, and particularly in Britain. See, for example, the essays in *The Origins of Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland*, ed. Alan Ford and John McCafferty (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) for a variety of discussions of what this meant for Catholic and protestant identity and development in early modern Ireland.

[4] G.A. Hayes-McCoy, "The Tudor Conquest: 1534-1603" in *The Course of Irish History,* Fourth Edition, ed. T.W. Moody and F. X. Martin (Lanham, Maryland: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 2001), 144-145.

[5] Though scholars disagree on when exactly this failure took place, and why: see the beginnings of this discussion in Bradshaw, "Sword, Word and Strategy"; Canny, "Why the Reformation Failed in Ireland"; and K. Bottigheimer, "The Failure of the Reformation in Ireland: Une question bien posée," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36 (1985): 196-207. This can be compared to the situation in England, where the imposed religion eventually took root, as described in Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars:*

reforms was not in place in Ireland outside of the English-speaking Pale.[6] This situation

was aggravated by Ireland's physical distance from the government in England. Thus, the

reforms mandated under Henry VIII and especially under Edward VI, while embraced by

a small number of enthusiastic individuals,[7] made little real headway in Ireland. When

Queen Mary reinstated Catholicism in Ireland in 1552 there were very few changes that

had to be made to actual religious practice.[8] Elizabeth's reinstatement of Protestantism at

the end of the 1550s once again had little effect on the state of organized religion in

Ireland.

The religious confusion of the mid-sixteenth century had the effect of

encouraging a moderately outwardly-conformist approach in the Dublin gentry and

clergy; those who could adapt to the outward forms of worship mandated by the

government were more likely to keep their jobs.[9] However, the lack of evangelization or

enforcement measures by the English government meant that the show of reformed

practice did not necessarily indicate the experience of a true conversion. The people, for

the most part, might conform to whatever religious measures were in force, but ultimately

they still continued to practice traditional, popular, pre-Tridentine Catholicism.[10] The

Jesuit missionaries arriving in the 1570s and imbued with a new Tridentine zeal found

that they had just as much evangelizing and educational work to do amongst the Irish

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Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992) and
Norman Jones, *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaptation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).
[6] Canny, 437.
[7] Colm Lennon, *The Lords of Dublin in the Age of Reformation* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1989), 135.
[8] Lennon, *Lords of Dublin,* 128, 130.
[9] Alan Ford, *James Ussher: Theology, History, and Politics in Early-Modern Ireland and England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 17-18.
[10] Canny, 433.

people as the English reformers.[11] This lack of support and enforcement, and the lay commitment to traditional religion, meant that the established church was in dire financial straits in the sixteenth century, a situation which only got worse as the population of Ireland began to embrace Catholicism over protestantism once and for all.[12] By the beginning of King James' reign in 1603, the Church of Ireland existed in a state of enduring financial ruin: "An investigation, undertaken at the king's direction early in 1604, made it clear that throughout most of the country the protestant presence consisted of ruined churches in which no ceremonies could or did take place."[13]

One particular movement within English protestantism which did have an effect on the Irish reformation, such as it was, was the reformers who came to be known as puritans (though they themselves preferred the term "godly").[14] Puritanism was fostered by the returning protestant exiles from Marian England at the end of the 1550s. These exiles were convicted protestants who had fled the threat of death under Mary's Catholic reign, heading to protestant strongholds on the European continent where they were exposed to the developing protestant cultures, and to the teachings of the great protestant thinkers. Their identity as a minority persecuted for their religion encouraged in them a particular fondness for apocalyptic theology, seeing their own situation as part of the

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[11] Clarke and Edwards, 225-226.

[12] After the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry, the financial control of the land ended up in the hands of the gentry. Unfortunately for the Church of Ireland, these gentry never gave up their Catholicism, and used the land revenues to fund illegal Catholic priests and chapels rather than pay the protestant ministers and keep up the protestant churches on their lands; Lennon, *Lords of Dublin*, 146.

[13] Clarke and Edwards, 191.

[14] The term "puritan" was used pejoratively by those who were not such: J.T. Cliffe, *The Puritan Gentry: The Great Puritan Families of Early Stuart England* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 4-5; see also Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 7-27, and Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans, and Puritans: Seventeenth Century Essays* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1987), vii-xiii.

ultimate battle between good and evil in the world.[15] Out of this understanding grew the

strong attachment to the identification of the Pope as Antichrist, a theme that had been

present from the earliest years of the European protestant movement.[16] After Mary's

death in 1558, these exiles returned to England, bringing with them this renewed sense of

religious zeal and apocalyptic thought. Unfortunately for these exiles, Elizabeth's view of

reformed religion did not go as far as they would have liked, and she made it clear that

her reforms of church policy would go only so far and no further.[17] The disappointed

puritans found themselves on the fringes of the established church in England.

As with any major power *vis-à-vis* its colonies, England viewed its own culture

and practices as normative, with the practices of colonies such as Ireland being judged,

accordingly, as less than ideal. This also applied to religion. Those who did not conform

to the practices and beliefs of the Church of England at any given time, both at home and

abroad, were labeled as dissenters, nonconformists, puritans, and radicals. Ireland was

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[15] Crawford Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium: Literature & Theology 1550-1682* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 81-82.

[16] For further reading on the history of Antichrist and apocalyptic belief in the Christian church, see Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002); Alastair Hamilton, *The Apocryphal Apocalypse: The Reception of the Second Book of Esdras (4 Ezra) from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); *Millenarianism and Messianism in Early Modern European Culture*, ed. James E. Force and Richard Henry Popkin (Boston: Kluwer, 2001); Katharine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain 1530-1645* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 1-38; and Irena Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse: Geneva, Zurich, and Wittenberg* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For further reading on this theology as it was applied in the Church of England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see especially Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 11-79; Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 1-127; and Nicholas Tyacke, *Aspects of English Protestantism, c. 1530 – 1700* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), 1-153.

[17] See Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars Restored: The Changing Face of English Religious Worship, 1547-c.1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 39ff. See also W.J. Torrance Kirby, *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology* (Boston: Brill, 2007), 203-220 for a discussion of reactions to the Queen's reforms by some of the leading English reformers, as well as by those on the continent with whom they were in contact.

only one point on a continuum of "nonconformist" practice spanning England and her colonies. Some dissenters were able to remain in England, though at times in low-key positions. Others, who found the climate in England too uncomfortable or who desired the ability to advance in the ecclesiastical or educational ranks, found welcome in Ireland.[18] Others, however, found even the moderately conformist attitude of the Church of Ireland to be a hindrance to their personal salvation, and so they went further abroad to America, the West Indies, and English exile communities in the Netherlands.

The Church of Ireland found itself in this nonconformist position initially as a matter of circumstance, although in the later years it appears that the Church's nonconformist position became more of a conscious decision of religious identity.[19] From its inception, the Church of Ireland was severely understaffed and underfunded.[20] The churches were in bad physical condition, and the ministers who were in the church tended to be former Catholics who had held onto their positions by practicing the loosest form of outward conformity that they could manage while retaining their Catholic religion.[21] However, the miniscule amount of personnel in the Church of Ireland meant that there was little that the Church authorities could do about this. The situation was not helped by the inability of the ecclesiastical and governmental leaders to agree on an appropriate strategy for spreading the religious reforms in Ireland.[22] The country did not even have a protestant university where local young men could be trained in the faith. There was,

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[18] Alan Ford, "The Church of Ireland, 1558-1634: A Puritan Church?" in *As By Law Established: The Church of Ireland since the Reformation*, ed. Alan Ford, James McGuire, and Kenneth Milne (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1995), 53.

[19] See the discussion in Ford, "Puritan Church".

[20] Steven G. Ellis, "Economic Problems of the Church: Why the Reformation Failed in Ireland," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 41 (1990): 248-249, 251.

[21] Canny, 433.

[22] See Bradshaw, "Sword, Word, and Strategy".

then, a protestant vacuum, and this was more often than not filled by those dissenters and puritans who found life difficult in England for a variety of spiritual and material reasons. The Church of Ireland, in its desperation for preaching ministers who were firm in the protestant faith, was unofficially willing to turn a blind eye to nonconformist practice so long as the minister was not a Catholic.[23] Thus an entire generation of puritans and nonconformists were able, in the latter half of the sixteenth century, to establish themselves and their ideas comfortably within the ecclesiastical structure of the Church of Ireland.

It was this generation of English dissenters that founded and staffed the new Trinity College in Dublin at the end of the sixteenth century.[24] Trinity was a protestant institution with a decidedly puritan influence, and it trained the first generation of native Irish protestant students to become preachers and evangelists, firm in the faith and united against the increasingly antagonistic Catholic majority. At the same time that Trinity was training its first classes of students, the Jesuits were arriving in Ireland, bringing with them the militancy of the Counter-Reformation; and in England Queen Elizabeth did nothing to stop the rise of those in England who wished to see the return of more traditional liturgy and worship and who alarmed those who felt that further reforms were still needed. Thus, the Church of Ireland found itself in the position of being against the Catholics, of course, but also, due to the influence of its earlier puritan leaders, not quite in line with the increasingly traditionalist Church of England.

This was the atmosphere into which James Ussher, one of the first graduates of Trinity College, stepped as he began his professional career at the beginning of the

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[23] Ford, "Puritan Church," 54-55.
[24] Ford, *Ussher*, 41-47.

seventeenth century.[25] Ussher would eventually become Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland in 1625, and he remains one of the greatest theologians in the history of the Church of Ireland. He was an academic, a theologian, and a politician who moved in circles both in Ireland and England. Ussher was born in 1581 into an Anglo-Irish merchant family, and was raised "in a prosperous Dublin household."[26] He came from the branch of the Ussher family which had embraced protestantism early on in the Tudor reformation, though his mother would eventually convert to Catholicism, much to the pain of her son.[27] Ussher held the professorship in Theological Controversies[28] at Trinity College Dublin before focusing on his ecclesiastical and political career first as Bishop of Meath, then as Archbishop of Armagh. Ussher died in 1656 in England, and was buried in a state funeral paid for by Oliver Cromwell at Westminster Abbey.

Ussher's convictions as a protestant pitted him against his neighbors and family members who were committed Catholics, while the puritan ideals he was exposed to during his training at the College would have put him at a different place along the Reformed spectrum from his counterparts in the Church of England. As Ussher and his Irish classmates graduated and took up their positions in ministry and scholarship in

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[25] The most recent comprehensive biographies on Ussher include Ford, *Ussher* (2007); R. Buick Knox, *James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967) and C.R. Elrington, "The Life of James Ussher, D.D., Archbishop of Armagh," Volume I of *The Whole Works of the Most Rev. James Ussher, D.D., Lord Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland. With a Life of the Author, and an Account of his Writings* (Dublin: Hodges & Smith, 1847). For a discussion of how Ussher's biographers throughout the centuries have attempted to show him in light of various theological persuasions (Anglican, puritan, etc.) see Ford, *Ussher*, 1-7, and Trevor-Roper, 120-124.

[26] Alan Ford, "Ussher, James, 1581-1656" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: in association with the British Academy: from the earliest times to the year 2000*, H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 6.

[27] Mary O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland, 1500-1800* (New York: Pearson Education Limited, 2005), 167.

[28] The only professorship offered at Trinity at that time: Ford, "Puritan Church," 59.

Ireland, they brought a cohesiveness and an Irish identity to the Church of Ireland that had been lacking in earlier generations. This quickly became apparent when King James I took the throne and allowed for further traditionalist measures in the Church of England, while at the same time taking a softer stance towards the Catholics in Ireland than the Church leadership had initially foreseen.[29] By 1615, a mere 15 years after the first Trinity class graduated, the Church of Ireland felt sufficiently set apart from England that it drafted a new set of articles of faith.[30] It was no longer possible for them to rely on the earlier confession in use by the Church of England, which neither expressed the extent of Irish beliefs nor spoke to the specific concerns of the Irish people.

As the seventeenth century progressed, the theological gap between the Church of Ireland and the Church of England widened, while the Catholics in Ireland saw their traditional positions undermined by the increasingly powerful and confident protestant faction.[31] The Church of Ireland was forced to stand on its own two feet as it defined itself in relation to both Rome and England. This period of growth and development came to an end a mere three decades after it had begun in earnest, yet during this time the Church of Ireland exhibited a growth in self-confidence that showed through in the way its leaders were able to assert their theological opinions against the Catholic Church and English traditionalists, even when the Church of England and even the monarch himself

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[29] Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 96-97; and Clarke and Edwards, 190.

[30] The Irish Articles of 1615: *Articles of religion: agreed vpon by the archbishops, and bishops, and the rest of the cleargie of Ireland, in the conuocation holden at Dublin in the yeare of our Lord God 1615. for the avoyding of diuersities of opinions: and the establishing of concent touching true religion* (Dublin: John Frankton, 1615). A modernized version can be found at "*The Irish Articles*, 1615," in *Creeds & Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition*, Vol. II, Part Four: "Creeds and Confessions of the Reformation Era," ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Valerie Hotchkiss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 551-568.

[31] Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 92-93; and Clarke and Edwards, 224.

did not agree. The first thirty years of the seventeenth century represent an era when the Church of Ireland flourished theologically under the leadership of locally-trained clergy and asserted its place in the ecclesiastical world based on its unique circumstances and beliefs. During this brief period, the Church of Ireland functioned as a separate entity which had a uniquely Irish flavor to its theology and practice.

Scope of the Project

My project combines three separate fields: Irish Reformation scholarship, general scholarship of puritanism and apocalypticism, and the study of James Ussher himself. I define it as a three-way conjunction because it hardly qualifies as a field unto itself – as far as I can tell, only two people, Alan Ford and Crawford Gribben, have dealt in any depth with the combination of Ireland, apocalyptic, and Ussher.[32] Of course, anyone who tries to look at the history of apocalyptic in Ireland can hardly avoid dealing with Ussher, due to his extensive writings on the subject. However, I hope that my own discussion will shed some new light on the issue of how all this relates to the development of the Irish protestant identity.

The field of modern Irish Reformation studies has moved comfortably into its second generation, with such pioneers as Brendan Bradshaw, Nicholas Canny, and Aidan Clarke retiring, and their students (Colm Lennon, Alan Ford, Crawford Gribben, and many others) taking their place as established scholars in the field.[33] This shift has taken

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[32] Ford, *Protestant Reformation in Ireland*; Ford, *Ussher*; and Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*.

[33] A very brief sampling of their extensive work appears in my bibliography. Some texts of note include: Brendan Bradshaw, *The Dissolution of the Religious Orders in Ireland under Henry VIII* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974); Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Aidan Clarke, *The Old English in Ireland 1625-42* (Dublin: Four Courts Press,

us out of the initial period of exploring the definite failure of the Reformation in the sixteenth century to a view which allows for exploration of the Irish topic on Irish terms, dealing with the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries. I hope to continue this trend away from the focus on what did not happen to a focus on what did happen, and to accept that the "positives" of the Irish Reformation occurred largely in the seventeenth century.

The study of puritanism and apocalyptic, a topic which affected a much wider geographical area than the island of Ireland, has had many excellent contributions made to it, with many sources from the 1970s and earlier still serving as important reference points for today's researchers. The works of two scholars, Hugh Trevor-Roper and his student Katharine R. Firth, stand out as particularly oft-quoted works for those writers tackling the issue of apocalyptic in early modern Britain.[34] Firth's book, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain 1530-1645*, gives a thorough overview of the development and evolution of puritan and millennial thought that serves as a good starting point for discerning puritan ideologies in Ireland. As for newer scholars, Crawford Gribben has written several books dealing with apocalyptic in Britain and Ireland, as well as treating James Ussher's role in this development in the early modern period.[35] Finally, James Ussher, being a prolific and influential writer and one of the most

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2000); Colm Lennon, "Richard Stanihurst (1547-1618) and Old English Identity," *Irish Historical Studies* 21 (1978): 121-143.

[34] I have personally found Firth, *Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain*, and Trevor-Roper, *Catholics, Anglicans, and Puritans* to be most helpful.

[35] See, for example, Crawford Gribben, *God's Irishmen: Theological Debates in Cromwellian Ireland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Crawford Gribben, *The Irish Puritans: James Ussher and the Reformation of the Church* (Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2003); and *Enforcing Reformation in Ireland and Scotland, 1550-1700* ed. Elizabethanne Boran and Crawford Gribben (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006).

important Irishmen of the early modern period, has had surprisingly little research done about him in recent years. Alan Ford, Crawford Gribben, and Elizabethanne Boran are without question the leading authorities on Ussher: Ford on his ecclesiastical and public life, in particular, Gribben on his books and millennial ideas, and Boran on his extensive correspondence.[36] I have made use of their work in my own research particularly for information about rare or restricted-access sources.

My intent is that my project, though small, will add something to the discussion of apocalyptic in the formation of the Irish protestant identity, using Ussher as a lens through which to view this topic. While it that has been treated before, I have attempted to find my own place in the field with the sources that I am using and the specific topic that I am examining. In the works dealing with puritanism, apocalyptic, and millennialism, the focus tends to be on broad themes of apocalyptic, implications about Antichrist in the texts, and rewritings of history that show the rise of Antichrist in the Catholic Church. In the interest of brevity I have chosen to approach this topic by only focusing on specific mentions of Antichrist and the most obvious references to him. In terms of sources, especially with Ussher, scholarship tends to focus on either his major printed books or his correspondence with the important figures of his day. His disputations, when mentioned, are not treated in any detail. The Irish Articles, as well, are often overlooked, with the only person to have analyzed their theology being Alan Ford.[37] It is my hope that my particular combination of primary sources and Antichrist

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[36] Boran is currently working on the enormous undertaking of compiling and editing a critical edition of Ussher's letters, which will be a most welcome resource to anyone involved in Ussher studies specifically or Irish Reformation studies more broadly.

[37] In Ford, *Ussher*, 85-103; and Ford, *Protestant Reformation*, 155-180.

language will offer a fresh reading into this three-way combination of Irish Reformation, apocalyptic, and Ussher studies.

Methodology

After initially deciding to write on the very broad topic of the theological development of the Irish protestant church, I had to put certain parameters in place in order to keep this study to a size appropriate for a Master's level thesis, but which would also allow for a thorough, yet focused analysis of the sources. My first interest was to pursue the study of historical theology. Historical theology – the study of the way in which historical circumstances affected theology, and the way in turn that this theology affected historical circumstances – is a field which I have found to be underexplored, particularly among historians.[38] Perhaps it is possible to separate theological belief from societal and political actions today (though I would also argue that this is a false approach) but it is important to remember that theology was absolutely crucial to the early modern mindset. Especially in a mixed society, such as that of English-speaking Ireland in the early modern period, theological motivations lay behind everything from day-to-day interactions with one's "heretic" neighbors and family members, to the passing of legislation which affected the lives and livelihood of whole sections of the populace. Political decisions were, if not actually based on theological principles, certainly justified by them. Within the churches themselves, what made them distinct

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[38] My own interest in the field of historical theology has been influenced by many sources, among whom the following authors play a prominent role: Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003); James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller, *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Methods* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1995); Euan Cameron, *Interpreting Christian History: The Challenge of the Churches' Past* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); and Alan Ford's recent biography on Ussher (2007).

from each other were practical decisions that were theologically based. Protestant

objections to Catholic ceremony, for instance, or Presbyterian objection to Anglican

hierarchy, were primarily theological issues that developed into political and social

divisions. Taking a historical-theological perspective, then, seemed to me the most honest

way of approaching a society from which I am removed by both time and space, yet

which I hope to understand in more depth.

The next step of narrowing down the study was to recognize that I not only

wanted to examine the Protestant Reformation in Ireland, but that I wanted to do it on

Irish terms. When the Irish Reformation is seen merely in light of the English and

continental reformations, it is easy to decide that by the end of the sixteenth century the

Reformation had failed in Ireland and there is really very little else to be said on the

subject.[39] However, a closer look at the internal dynamics of the Church of Ireland reveal

that, despite the dismal financial and material state of the Church of Ireland at the

beginning of the seventeenth century, the Church was really only just beginning to come

into its own. As a protestant minority within an English-speaking minority in Ireland, the

Church was already in a vulnerable position and its role is often lightly passed over when

considering the plethora of events and upheavals throughout the country of Ireland during

this volatile and perplexing period. From a theological perspective, and a perspective that

considers self-identity and self-definition in measuring the development of a distinct

entity, the Church of Ireland really must be examined during the early decades of the

seventeenth century in order to appreciate its theological development. The founding of

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[39] See the discussion which ushered in the modern era of Irish Reformation studies between Brendan
Bradshaw and Nicholas Canny: Bradshaw, "Sword, Word and Strategy" and Nicholas Canny, "Why the
Reformation Failed in Ireland". For a more modern consideration of dating the British and Irish
Reformation in this way, see the "Preface" in Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland*.

Trinity College Dublin in 1592 – the first protestant university in Ireland – changed the

dynamic of the Church of Ireland in that it provided the Church for the first time with a

home-grown protestant preaching ministry.[40] The most dynamic and interesting period of

theological development for the Church of Ireland occurred in the years following 1600

but ending in 1634, when the authorities of the Church of England finally clamped down

on what they viewed as nonconformity within the Church of Ireland and kept a much

tighter reign on her doctrine and leadership from then on. It was this time period, the first

three decades of the seventeenth century, which intrigued me as I set out to discover the

development of the Church of Ireland, and to do it on Irish terms.

Once this had been decided, I then had to narrow my study by topic. I decided to

use Antichrist language and apocalyptic theology because it played such a major defining

role in the maturation of the Church of Ireland, especially in the early years of the

seventeenth century. Irish protestants certainly did not hold any monopoly on apocalyptic

theology or ideas about Antichrist. However, the particular circumstances of the

protestant church in Ireland meant that there was an emphasis on the End Times and the

papal Antichrist which was unique to the Irish church at that time.[41] As Crawford

Gribben so neatly put it, "Apocalyptic interest had always seemed to thrive when the

godly were both persecuted and geographically estranged."[42] This applies to Gribben's

context of the original English puritans who had fled Mary Tudor's persecutions, but it

also aptly describes the situation of the protestants in Ireland. In the first group, their

exile lasted less than a decade. For the second group, theirs was not so much a state of

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[40] Ford, "Puritan Church," 58; Ford, *Ussher*, 25-27.

[41] McCafferty, "Protestant Prelates," 66; and Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 81-82.

[42] Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 57.

physical exile as the continuous existence of being a minority nestled amongst a majority that would become increasingly hostile towards them as time went on.

This minority status of the Irish protestants, combined with the ever-increasing numbers of English puritans who were settling in Ireland to escape pressures on nonconformists that were being levied in England, fostered in them an attachment to apocalyptic theology and an awareness of the strength and presence of the papal Antichrist which was unparalleled and uncomprehended by their protestant peers in England. This only grew stronger as the political, societal, and ecclesiastical tensions in Ireland and England increased in the early decades of the seventeenth century. As a result, there was an explosion of writings and discussions about Antichrist and his role in history and the modern world during this time. Debates, disputations, books, sermons, pamphlets, and records of dinnertable discussions between friends and family members abounded. My task, then, was not to decide only that I would examine documents dealing with Antichrist, but indeed, which ones.

To aide me in this task, I decided to focus on the writings of Dr. James Ussher, using Ussher as a guidepost by which to guide my exploration of this time period. Ussher is an ideal representative for the leadership of the Church of Ireland in the early seventeenth century. His early career parallels the rise of the native Irish element in the Church of Ireland. He was one of the first students, and one of the first graduates, of Trinity College Dublin.[43] As such, Ussher was beginning his career at the same time that my thesis analysis begins. He was both an academic and a clergyman.[44] He had a

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[43] Ford, *Ussher*, 32.

[44] Ussher gained his MA in 1601 and DD in 1612; he was given the position of professor of theological controversies at Trinity College Dublin in 1607 and vice-provost in 1616; he was awarded the bishopric of Meath in 1621 and the Archbishopric of Armagh in 1625. Ford, "Ussher, James" *ODNB*, 6-9.

personal interest in religious controversy[45] as well as apocalyptic theology.[46] He moved

in both Irish and English circles, though he was a proud Irishman; therefore he was

personally vested in many of the political and societal controversies that color the events

and documents explored here. His Anglo-Irish and protestant heritage, along with his

university training at the new College in Ireland, allowed me to keep the focus on the

distinctly Irish element of the developing Church of Ireland. But perhaps most

importantly, Ussher was a prolific writer; he was an academic, a historian, a theologian,

and a preacher. Many of his works, and indeed his most important works, deal with the

theme of Antichrist and apocalyptic.[47] While this paper is not about James Ussher

himself, he proved a useful and interesting lens through which to approach this broad

topic, while at the same time adding a thread of continuity to these documents which span

nearly thirty years.

The first document that I will examine is Ussher's disputation in June 1600 with

his kinsman, the Jesuit Henry Fitzsimon.[48] Young Ussher chose as the topic the question

from Robert Cardinal Bellarmine on whether the Pope was Antichrist. It is a short

disputation, but it gives us interesting insights into the religious training of the early

Trinity students. The document is a series of folios in the Barlow 13 manuscript

collection, held at the Bodleian Library of Oxford University. Barlow 13 consists of

"Autograph theological and antiquarian collections by James Ussher and secretaries

arranged under 95 headings", including many letters to and from Ussher, and a variety of

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[45] Ford, *Ussher*, 60-63.

[46] Ford, *Ussher*, 81-83; and Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 80-82.

[47] Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 82ff.

[48] A manuscript held at the Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

"incidental pieces".[49] Folios 80r-82v contain the transcript of the disputation which I will be examining in this chapter, and folio 83 (r-v) is a copy of a rather angry letter regarding the disputation which Ussher wrote to Fitzsimon, following Fitzsimon's failure to pursue a promised follow-up to the earlier meeting. Both items are written in Ussher's hand. The dating of these two items is unclear; they appear in proximity to other items dating between 1609 and 1612; however, the items in Barlow 13 are not necessarily in chronological order. I suspect that the transcription[50] was written when the disputation was still fresh in Ussher's mind, since the topics and phrases used by Ussher and Fitzsimon seem to me to be very much in character for each of them, judging by other writings of theirs with which I am familiar – Fitzsimon, in particular, is a personality not easily forgotten! I feel confident that this transcript, though it is the only existing record of its type for this particular disputation, is a reliable source from which to draw my conclusions.

The second document that I will look at is the Irish Articles of 1615, the first confession of faith designed by and for the clergy of the Church of Ireland. We know surprisingly little about the circumstances surrounding their creation,[51] but, especially when they are compared against the Thirty-Nine Articles from the Church of England, they can be viewed as an indicator of the development of an independent theology in the Church of Ireland. Finally, to cover the end of this time period I have chosen Ussher's

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[49] *A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*, Vol 2, Part II, Nos. 3491-8716 (Munchen: Kraus Reprint, 1980), 1043.

[50] At one point, Ussher asks Fitzsimon to repeat a syllogism with which he finds fault: "Repeat it distinctly, that it may be rightly noted down & you shall see the fault." Bodleian Library, Oxford: MS Barlow 13, fol. 82v, implying that someone present was recording or taking notes during the disputation, of which this manuscript may be a copy.

[51] Ford, "Puritan Church", 58.

Answer to a Challenge made by a Jesuite in Ireland, the 1625 printing (printed in London

for the Society of Stationers). This tract, written just before Ussher's elevation to Primate

of All Ireland, contains extensive Antichrist references, both implicit and explicit. It also

allows us the interesting side-trip into his opponent's reply, published in 1627, which

allows us to see how far the protestants had come in thirty years, *vis-à-vis* their Catholic

neighbors.

The latter documents were significantly easier to access than the folios at Oxford,

both being available at Early English Books Online. For the Irish Articles, I relied on the

version found in Hotchkiss and Pelikan's *Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the

Christian Tradition*.[52] This volume conveniently modernized the spelling in the Articles,

and the editors had included introductions before each confession as well as each section

in the book to offer background information and other points relevant to the confession or

section in question. James Ussher's book *An Answer to a Challenge made by a Jesuite in

Ireland*[53] was available to me in its original printed form while I was in Ireland; of the

1625 printing, Trinity College Dublin's Early Printed Books department holds two

copies, while the National Library of Ireland holds one. I was able to make use of these

copies during my stay in Ireland, it always being a more pleasurable experience to be in

physical contact with the book itself while doing research, though the convenience

offered by EEBO's collection is unrivaled.

This combination of documents was appealing to me for more practical reasons as

well. I wanted to limit my analysis to documents written in English, because these would

have been more likely to have been read by the Anglo-Irish populace in and around

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[52] "*The Irish Articles*, 1615," referenced above.

[53] James Ussher, *An Answer to a Challenge made by a Jesuite in Ireland* (London: 1625).

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Dublin. While this study makes no attempt to examine the reception of the church reforms from a lay perspective, and sticks very much to the established doctrines of the Church of Ireland, I do think it is interesting and relevant to take note of those documents which might have filtered down into the English-speaking populace, since these lay people were the ones who were making political decisions at this time, which in turn affected the doctrines themselves. Also, these documents are, for the most part, relatively brief, and they have attracted less scholarly attention than some of the more major works by James Ussher. In this manner I hope to explore my subject in a way that will offer a fresh reading of the dense topic of Antichrist language in the Church of Ireland in the seventeenth century.

In the course of my study I have also limited myself to examining explicit or obvious references to Antichrist, especially the papal Antichrist, by identifying what I like to call "Antichrist language". This includes not just the name of Antichrist, but also terms such as "mystery of iniquity" and "that man of sin", and references to figures such as the beast or the harlot. I also identify certain themes that run throughout Ussher's work, regardless of the time period. The basis for the themes that I will explore here is the debate in June 1600 that the student Ussher had with the Jesuit Fitzsimon. These include, in particular, the idea that Antichrist teaches doctrine contrary to Scripture, and that he usurps power for himself which rightly belongs to God. These identifying characteristics of Antichrist, which Ussher attempts to present to Fitzsimon as a way of proving the Pope's status as Antichrist on earth, show themselves to be not just one-off attempts to win a syllogistic debate, but rather that they are key concepts that guide

Ussher's over-arching view of Antichrist and, consequently, his view of Catholics in Ireland.

Sticking to these Antichrist references only scratches the surface of what Crawford Gribben has identified as "the most basic feature of [Ussher's] worldview."[54] This was a necessary restriction in order to keep this project of a reasonable size. However, I urge the reader to keep in mind that the idea of the Pope as Antichrist was absolutely pervasive in the Irish protestant mindset, as was the idea that Antichrist had grown in power through the papacy over the previous several centuries, and that the early modern world was, in fact, quickly approaching either the beginning or end of the millennium which would see the true believers separated from the false and the coming of Christ in his judgment.[55] These ideas affected everything from Irish and world history, the role of Saint Patrick and the Anglo-Norman invaders, to contemporary political and societal events and relations. Many decisions and recommendations made by the Irish protestant leadership in the early seventeenth century can somehow be traced back to the idea that Catholics were the followers of Antichrist, and it was the job of the godly to expose his identity and strip him of his power before it was too late. The sermons and writings, both manuscript and in print, of James Ussher are an excellent and ample place for anyone interested in this apocalyptic mindset to start their exploration.[56] However, in the present study, their depths must for the moment remain unplumbed.

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[54] Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 81.

[55] Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 29-31; and Firth, 3-4, 19.

[56] The most complete gathering of Ussher's works is to be found in the seventeen-volume *The Whole Works of the Most Rev. James Ussher, D.D.*, ed. C.R. Elrington.

Discussion of terms

Before heading on to the main analysis portion of my study, I would like to offer a brief discussion and explanation for some terms which will appear throughout this paper, which may have a variety of nuanced definitions or synonyms, especially as they relate to labeling groups of religious believers removed from us by several centuries.

First, we must consider the population of Ireland, which in the early modern period was a rather mixed bag that was undergoing continuous change, thanks to English immigration and the changing loyalties of the various groups in the country. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, there were two main social groups in Ireland. The first group, alternately called the Old Irish, Gaelic Irish, or native Irish, were the descendants of the Celts who had occupied Ireland for hundreds of years. They spoke Irish Gaelic, organized themselves according to tribes or clans, and had their own manners, customs, mode of dress, and law system. They were Catholics, though their religious organization centered around powerful monasteries rather than a parochial system.[57] The second group was the Anglo-Irish, sometimes labeled the Old English. These people were the descendants of the Norman invaders who initially came to Ireland under the warrior Strongbow in 1169. Some of them intermarried into the powerful chieftain families of the Old Irish, adopting the Gaelic language and customs, and becoming "almost wholly absorbed by Gaelic Ireland".[58] Their names, such as Butler, FitzGerald, and Staunton, are

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[57] Kathleen Hughes, "The Golden Age of Early Christian Ireland: 7th and 8th Centuries" in *The Course of Irish History,* Fourth Edition, ed. T.W. Moody and F. X. Martin (Lanham, Maryland: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 2001), 54-66; and Art Cosgrove, "The Gaelic Resurgence and the Geraldine Supremacy" in *The Course of Irish History,* Fourth Edition, ed. T.W. Moody and F. X. Martin (Lanham, Maryland: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 2001), 127.

[58] J.F. Lydon, "The Medieval English Colony" in *The Course of Irish History,* Fourth Edition, ed. T.W. Moody and F. X. Martin (Lanham, Maryland: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 2001), 123.

sometimes the only indication of their heritage. However, many of the Anglo-Irish settled either in the Viking towns, such as Wexford and Limerick, or in and around the city of Dublin in the area known as the Dublin Pale. Here, in a larger group, they retained English language, laws, and customs, and prided themselves on being English citizens and loyal to the king, ruling Ireland in his stead. They practiced Catholicism that was based on a parochial system, and retained ties to England through marriage, business, and educational ventures.[59]

The Tudor Conquest of the early modern period, that period of religious and political reformation of Ireland in the sixteenth century, gave rise to a third group: the New English, those immigrating from England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who were often (though not always) protestant.[60] As the tensions of the reforms intensified, the Anglo-Irish found themselves in a difficult position: suddenly, they had to choose between their dual identities of English and Catholic. Most of them chose Catholicism, though for decades they fought to retain their rights to rule Ireland as they had been accustomed to doing for centuries.[61] It was towards the end of the sixteenth century, following rebellions in the 1580s whose leaders had adopted the banner of a Catholic heritage to fight under, that this group of Catholic Anglo-Irish began to adopt the moniker of Old English, to separate themselves both from the Gaelic Irish with whom they had little connection, and the New English, whose religion and, increasingly,

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[59] F.X. Martin, "The Normans: Arrival and Settlement, 1169-*c.*1300" in *The Course of Irish History,* Fourth Edition, ed. T.W. Moody and F. X. Martin (Lanham, Maryland: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 2001), 108; and Cosgrove, "Gaelic Resurgence," 130-131.

[60] See this discussion in David Edwards, "A Haven of Popery: English Catholic Migration to Ireland in the Age of Plantations" in *The Origins of Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland*, ed. Alan Ford and John McCafferty (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 95-126.

[61] Lennon, *Lords of Dublin*, 164-167; and Clarke and Edwards, 188.

political power they did not share.[62] For simplicity's sake, since I will be mainly dealing with the puritans in the New English group and the protestants in the Anglo-Irish group, I will use the terms "English" to refer to the former, and "Anglo-Irish" to refer to the latter. And for those descended from the Normans but who chose to retain their Catholic heritage, I will specify them as the "Catholic Anglo-Irish" when a distinction is required by the context.

Some terms may also be cause for some confusion, due to varying definitions. When discussing the protestant religion generally as it was established in Ireland, I will use the term "Reformed," in order to indicate that the Churches of Ireland and England were not of the Lutheran tradition, but rather had theology that matched more closely with those continental churches which followed in the footsteps of Zwingli, Bullinger, and Calvin.[63] In the event that I wish to stress the more austere aspects of this tradition, or the stricter application of such ideas as double predestination or simplicity in worship, I will employ the term "puritan," to describe this mindset. Here, of course, we encounter the problem that this word can be defined so narrowly as to include only a tiny group of believers, or so widely as to include just about everyone in the Anglo-Reformed church.

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[62] Aidan Clarke, "The Colonisation of Ulster and the Rebellion of 1641" in *The Course of Irish History,* Fourth Edition, ed. T.W. Moody and F. X. Martin (Lanham, Maryland: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 2001), 156-159; and Hayes-McCoy, "Tudor Conquest," 145.

[63] Pelikan and Hotchkiss, for instance, include the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England in their section on Reformed confessions, "for even those Anglicans who would not identify the Church of England as 'Reformed' in the sense that the Presbyterian Church of Scotland is 'Reformed' do acknowledge that the confession *is* Reformed." *Creeds and Confessions*, 205. Benedict points out that "Reformed theology dominated the Church of England for at least a generation after it had clearly aligned itself with continental Protestantism. During this time virtually all of the church's most influential members considered themselves part of the larger Reformed family." Benedict, xxiv (see also his section on the Church of England at p. 230-254). Finally, for a more thorough discussion on this matter, see the essays Richard Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press), particularly "Calvin and the 'Calvinists': Assessing Continuities and Discontinuities between the Reformation and Orthodoxy" Parts 1 and 2, pp. 63-102.

Following the example of Elizabethanne Boran, I will use it to describe a group of people, prevalent in the Church of Ireland of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, who wished to see further reforms in the Church of England beyond what the Elizabethan Settlement had allowed, but who yet did not see themselves and did not wish to be made into a schismatic group of believers, separated from the established church.[64] I leave it uncapitalized to reflect this manner of being a description of one type of believer to be found within the established church; a name which they did not assign themselves but which rather was used pejoratively by their detractors,[65] but which offers verbal expediency because of its modern associations and common usage. Finally, the reader will notice that I occasionally use the term "Calvinist" in quotation marks. This is to indicate that, while this term is recognized by some as referring to this particular strain of belief and practice, I feel that it lacks nuance; however, it makes up for this lack in its verbal expediency, and so I sometimes call upon it when engaged in discussion with my secondary sources in order to allow for consistency in the flow of ideas.[66] However, as a general rule, I prefer to avoid the use of this label and mention it here primarily so that

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[64] Elizabethanne Boran, "An Early Friendship Network of James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh, 1626-1656" in *European Universities in the Age of Reformation*, ed. Helga Robinson-Hammerstein (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998), 116-118.

[65] These people preferred the term "godly" to describe themselves and their beliefs, which term I shall occasionally use as well: Cliffe, 4-5.

[66] I urge the reader to keep in mind, however, that what is today termed "Calvinist" is not the same thing as what would have been termed "Calvinist" in the nineteenth century, or in our particular Reformation period of study. Indeed, what we may label as "Calvinism" sometimes has very little to do with the theology of the man whose name it carries. The use of this term is constantly changing and is part of an ongoing debate about its efficacy; see, for example, Muller, *After Calvin*, "Calvin and the 'Calvinists'," parts 1 and 2, 63-102 for an idea of how this applies to general Reformation scholarship, as well as Benedict's caveat about the term on page xxiii; as well as Tyacke, 3-4, 12, and Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 8 note 12 for how this applies specifically to discussions of the English Reformation.

the reader will understand its general usage in the context of the Irish Reformation when it is employed by other authors.

Related to this issue of capitalization and definition, I have used the capitalized "Catholic" to refer to anything relating the Roman Catholic Church. I leave the term "protestant" uncapitalized, as it may refer to anything relating to any of the reformed churches, and recognizes that there is not one Protestant Church in the same institutional manner as the Roman Catholic Church.

Finally, my discussions include references to the traditionalist movement which began to gain steam in the middle of Queen Elizabeth's reign, alternately known as "Arminianism" or "Laudianism," depending on the author describing it. "Arminianism" in the general European context refers to a movement started by the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), which, as Ford so succinctly put it, "rejected the cast-iron certainties of Calvinist double-predestination and sought to rescue human free will from its Augustinian cul-de-sac."[67] In the context of the English Reformation, however, the term also implies, in addition to an Arminian approach to grace, a move towards more traditionalist liturgy and worship in the church, away from the simplicity of service and focus on preaching that were so valued by the more "Calvinist" or "puritan" elements within the Church of England. Benedict points out that "English Arminianism was hardly identical with its Dutch namesake, as those associated with the movement in England generally cared more about matters relating to worship, the sacraments, and the status of the clergy than about the doctrine of predestination. … Insofar as the hostilities in England did focus on predestination, they were less a repetition of the Dutch quarrels

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[67] Ford, *Ussher*, 106-107. For a much more thorough description of the Arminian controversy in Europe, see MacCulloch, 373-377.

than of indigenous English theological debates."[68] It is also important to note that English

Arminians are so called not because they were necessarily followers of the man

Arminius, for this movement towards traditionalism in the Church of England had been

growing before Arminius ever stepped onto the Dutch scene.[69] Tyacke, in his own

discussion of the term, ultimately concludes that "[w]ith reference to England, anti-

Calvinism is, strictly speaking, a more accurate description than Arminianism, yet to

insist upon it seems duly pendantic."[70]

A related term, "Laudianism," is so called because of William Laud, Archbishop

of Canterbury from 1633 to 1645, who embraced the English form of Arminianism in his

own theology. His rise to power in the Church of England spanned exactly the time

period we explore in this paper (he was ordained in 1601)[71] and the "profound hostility"[72]

he and his followers felt for the puritans within the Church naturally affected those Irish

puritans of our study, as Laud and his ideas gained influence in the court of James I.

While the two terms can be used interchangeably, for chronological clarity I use

"Arminianism" to refer to these ideas in the sixteenth century and the earliest years of the

seventeenth century, switching to "Laudianism" to refer to the years after approximately

1620.[73] As a final note, it is important to keep in mind that "Arminian" and "Laudian,"

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[68] Benedict, 314.

[69] See the discussions in Tyacke, *Aspects of English Protestantism*, and Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars Restored*, for a detailed look at the changing face of English protestantism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

[70] Tyacke, 159.

[71] Tyacke, 205.

[72] Anthony Milton, "William Laud, 1573-1645" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: in association with the British Academy: from the earliest times to the year 2000*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 656.

[73] I will avoid altogether the use of the term "avant-garde conformist", which has been suggested as an alternative to Arminian/Laudian, because of its less-common usage and more awkward verbiage. In the

along with other terms such as "Calvinist" and "puritan," were originally used as pejorative terms by the movements' detractors and would not have been embraced by those whom we see today as having carried that label. It is therefore with the utmost caution that I use these terms, and only in order to locate my own research within the greater community of scholars who, for a variety of reasons, have opted to use these terms themselves.

Finally, I have modernized the spelling in all direct quotations from the early modern sources to provide the greatest ease for the reader; however, I have left punctuation, capitalization, and other grammar in the original. I have not modernized the spelling of the titles of printed works. And, unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations are from the King James (Authorized) Version, as it is both appropriate to the time period and reasonably familiar language to the modern reader.

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specific context of the later English Reformation, in essence, the three terms usually mean the same thing and the choice of words depends entirely on the author who is writing about this phenomenon. For a discussion in greater detail about how they can be differentiated, and for what reasons, see, for example, Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 7-9; and Tyacke, 3-4, 12-13, 156-159.

Chapter 1

The Early Years: The Ussher/Fitzsimon Debate of 1600

The first document I would like to consider is a transcript of the disputation between the young James Ussher and the Jesuit missionary Henry Fitzsimon. Henry Fitzsimon was a prisoner in Dublin Castle at the time that this disputation took place. Fitzsimon was of Anglo-Irish origin and a kinsman to Ussher through Ussher's mother's family.[74] He had been educated in protestant schools in England during his youth, but as a young man he experienced a conversion and entered the Jesuit order, continuing his education at Jesuit seminaries on the continent before returning to Ireland in the 1590s as part of the Jesuit evangelizing mission.[75] In 1598, he celebrated the first Mass in forty years in the city of Dublin, which he claims was extremely well-attended by members of the upper-class Anglo-Irish populace.[76] Fitzsimon was quite the showman, integrating immediately into the lavish lifestyle of the Dublin gentry.[77] Descriptions of his brief period in Dublin (he was banished in 1604) recount his flair for theatrics. It was in this vein that he actively sought out protestants to challenge to a public, formal debate. His undisguised missionary activities landed him in prison in late 1599, and in the following months he wrote both a general, open challenge to the protestants of the city and put forth

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[74] Ussher calls him "Cousin", Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 83r; and Edmund Hogan, *Distinguished Irishmen of the Sixteenth Century* (London: Benzinger Brothers, 1894), 199.

[75] Brian Jackson, "The Construction of Argument: Henry Fitzsimon, John Rider and Religious Controversy in Dublin, 1599-1614" in *British Interventions in Early Modern Ireland*, ed. Ciaran Brady and Jane Ohlmeyer, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 104; and Hogan, 199-212.

[76] Hogan, "Distinguished Irishmen," 209; and Lennon, *Lords of Dublin*, 144-145.

[77] Hogan, "Distinguished Irishmen," 211.

personal challenges to at least two protestant leaders.[78] Both declined, leading the

attention-seeking Fitzsimon to shout and wave his handkerchief out the window of his

cell in an attempt to attract the attention of passers-by.[79]

It was into this void of potential protestant champions that the young James

Ussher stepped in 1600. Ussher, still a student at the new Trinity College in Dublin, was

only nineteen and pursuing his Master's degree when he presented himself as a disputant

in response to Fitzsimon's general challenge. Ussher "tried to make up for his youth by

his precocious learning,"[80] a quality subsequently derided and mocked by Fitzsimon.[81] It

was Ussher's suggestion that the two work through the topics covered by Robert Cardinal

Bellarmine in his work of religious controversy, *Disputationes de controversiis*

Christianae fidei adversus hujus temporis haereticos,[82] beginning with the question of

whether the Pope was Antichrist.[83] Though mismatched in age and education – Fitzsimon

was thirty-four at the time and had been the chair of philosophy at the Jesuit college in

Douai[84] – the two were worthy opponents when it came to evangelical zeal and the desire

to prove themselves in the field of religious controversy.

A brief history of the young Trinity College is in order to better understand the

significance that the topic of the papal Antichrist had for James Ussher personally and for

the development of the Irish protestant church as a whole. Trinity College, founded in

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[78] Luke Challenor, another cousin of Fitzsimon and a fellow at Trinity College Dublin, received a written request; and Meredith Hanmer, who was unfortunate enough to come into contact with Fitzsimon after being thrown in prison for drunkenness, was merely goaded on verbally in front of several others at the jail: Jackson, 99; and Hogan, "Distinguished Irishmen," 231.

[79] Edmund Hogan, *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Vol. VIII (Dublin: 1872), 563.

[80] Ford, *Ussher*, 12.

[81] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 83r.

[82] 3 volumes, Ingolstadt, 1586-90.

[83] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 83v; Ford, *Ussher*, 12.

[84] Ford, *Ussher*, 12; Hogan, "Distinguished Irishmen," 205.

1592, was originally staffed by Englishmen of a puritan persuasion.[85] While Trinity was

not originally intended to serve as a puritan academy, and indeed, Archbishop Adam

Loftus warned the first provost Walter Travers that openly espousing puritan principles

could ultimately be detrimental to his career,[86] the realities of its staffing and other

support meant that it quickly evolved into a puritan-style seminary similar to Emmanuel

College at Cambridge.[87] The focus of Trinity, according to Alan Ford, "was to try to

recover the initiative for the Reformation"[88] from the Jesuit missionaries in Ireland, who

used such works as Bellarmine's *Disputationes* to proselytize the Irish people. The goal

of the Trinity fellows, therefore, was to prepare themselves and their students to

systematically challenge and refute the Jesuits and other Catholics, using Bellarmine as a

point of contact. It was this academic and theological atmosphere which shaped the

young James Ussher as he prepared to step out as a leader of the still-struggling Church

of Ireland. It is therefore not surprising that Ussher would so readily suggest the topics of

Bellarmine as the point of disputation,[89] understanding that both he and Fitzsimon would

be well-acquainted with the text at hand.

The form which Ussher and Fitzsimon's debate took is also worth noting, since it

would have been significant to the both of them. The two men attempted to have a

university-style disputation, though without a moderator, and with Fitzsimon's oversized

ego to account for, the disputation quickly and repeatedly derailed, forcing the disputants

to retreat and attempt new lines of argument. The practice of formal disputations "was at

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[85] Boran, "Early Friendship Network of James Ussher," 131-134; Ford, *Ussher*, 41-42; Ford, "Puritan Church," 55.

[86] Boran, 133.

[87] Boran, 132; Lennon, *Lords of Dublin*, 164.

[88] Ford, *Ussher*, 60.

[89] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 83v.

the heart of the curriculum, an essential test which all students had to take if they were to obtain a degree" in both Catholic and protestant universities.[90] Indeed, as Jackson points out, "Formal training in, and fostering of, these skills was a major part of the education of the higher clergy."[91] This style of disputation had been in use since medieval times, in which two students argued a point or proposition – one arguing for, and one against – eventually leading to a conclusion determined by the master or moderator. The appeal of this approach was that "by strictly applying Aristotelian logic, it could offer the tantalizing promise of proof, a final resolution to contentious matters."[92]

The syllogistic method as used by Ussher and Fitzsimon is a path of logic which is composed of three parts, a *major premise* (general statement, e.g., "all cats meow"), a *minor premise* (specific statement, e.g., "Sarah meows"), and a *conclusion* based on the two premises (e.g., "therefore, Sarah is a cat").[93] As we shall see, Fitzsimon and Ussher's disputation never reached a conclusion, in part because of the lack of a moderator, but also because the two disputants were starting from two entirely different viewpoints and ideas of what constituted orthodox belief. This was a common problem in Reformation-era disputes: "What started out as a debate generally ended up as mere propaganda, as each side set out to prove its own rectitude. The result is that the disputations of the Reformation Era always had two winners, enabling each side to ritualistically claim

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[90] Ford, *Ussher*, 61; see also Jackson, 104-105.

[91] Jackson, 97.

[92] Ford, *Ussher*, 61.

[93] There are three major types of syllogisms: a conditional syllogism (if A is true then B is true; If A then B); a categorical syllogism (if A is in C then B is in C); and a disjunctive syllogism (if A is true, then B is false; either A or B). "Syllogisms", *ChangingMinds.org*. Website accessed March 12, 2011. http://changingminds.org/disciplines/argument/syllogisms/syllogisms.htm.

victory."[94] Brian Jackson remarks that "[o]ne consequence of the Reformation and the subsequent schism was that the emphasis of this training shifted from rhetoric to eristic,"[95] noting that "[w]hile rhetoric is essentially an art of constructing a persuasive, well-ordered and stylish argument, eristic is arguing to win."[96]

The two kinsmen met in Dublin Castle on June 27, 1600.[97] They had no moderator,[98] as would normally have been present at these disputations, and it was a private affair, rather to the disappointment of Fitzsimon.[99] The question to be discussed was "Whether the Pope be Antichrist".[100] Ussher started out by arguing for the position, with Fitzsimon countering. Halfway through, they switched turns, with Fitzsimon arguing against, and Ussher countering. The tone of the encounter was set immediately: Ussher asked Fitzsimon to give his opinion of whether Jerusalem was the seat of Antichrist, such as Bellarmine proposed, since Ussher understood that Catholics "do not all agree of this point";[101] Fitzsimon refused to do so because it might give the young student an advantage. Ussher then set out to disprove Bellarmine's assertion, having been given nothing of Fitzsimon's opinion to work with.

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[94] Ford, *Ussher*, 61.

[95] Jackson, 97.

[96] Jackson, 97, note 1.

[97] This seems to have been the second, possibly third meeting between the two; Ussher's letter to Fitzsimon following the disputation refers to arguments which were not included in the transcript, and to their first meeting, at which Fitzsimon expressed his eagerness to engage in religious controversy; Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 83r-v.

[98] Ussher wishes for one to counteract Fitzsimon's parrying; Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 80v

[99] For an account of Fitzsimon's attempt to use his next debate, with John Rider, to replicate the conditions of Edmund Campion's challenge to English protestantism in 1581, as well as other significant historical events, see Jackson, 100-104.

[100] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 80r.

[101] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 80r.

Ussher first put forth the more practical arguments for the Pope's status as Antichrist, before getting into doctrine and more complicated theological and scriptural issues. *Contra* Bellarmine, Ussher wanted to show that Rome, and not Jerusalem, was the seat of Antichrist.[102] His assertion is based on the argument that if Rome was the seat of Antichrist, and only the Pope and emperors made their seats in Rome, then the Pope must needs be Antichrist, since the emperors were not.[103] Fitzsimon had no problem agreeing to this, since, as he declared, Ussher's arguments were "impertinent" and his conclusion "nothing hurteth the cause."[104] This is because, as we see played out repeatedly in this disputation (and later), the question was whether the *current* Pope was Antichrist – Fitzsimon, obviously not believing so, saw no problem in admitting that Rome was or will eventually be the seat of Antichrist, since its past or future relevance in no way implicates the current papal regime as being Antichristian. Ussher, however, was taken aback that Fitzsimon could admit Ussher's argument as true yet not believe that his cause is in any way derided, and so Ussher was forced to move on to other proofs of the Pope's Antichristian status.

The next argument by Ussher, a topic to which they returned when Fitzsimon adopted the leading stance, was the length of Antichrist's reign. Ussher rejected a literal reading of the Biblical passage[105] which gave the length of Antichrist's reign as three and a half years. For Ussher, the question was whether it was the Pope who was Antichrist, or "he whom you say shall reign three years and a half";[106] but since the second choice was

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[102] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 80r.
[103] This, of course, is because while the emperors were no longer, the Pope still held power in Rome.
[104] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 80r.
[105] Given later in the disputation as Rev. 12; Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 82r.
[106] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 80v.

not the case, then it was the Pope who must be Antichrist.[107] This segues quickly into the

question of the time of Christ's coming to earth, and what will ensue at that time. This

discussion reveals to us a difference in the millennial theology of the two sides, a

question which divided various camps of protestants across Europe.[108] It also gave young

Ussher a chance to pull out one of his favorite passages regarding Antichrist in support of

his stance, which makes a regular appearance in his later writings on this topic: 2

Thessalonians, chapter 2. Having reached an impasse as to whether Christ will come at

that time in judgment of sinners or in his saints, Ussher moved on to yet another topic,

one that would make repeated appearances both directly and indirectly in his future

discussions of Antichrist.

Ussher turned to passages from Revelation and 1 Timothy[109] to make the point

that "The Pope teacheth the doctrine of devils."[110] He refered to the practice of abstaining

from "certain meats" for religious reasons, "after the full abolishing of the use of the

Ceremonial Law,"[111] to show that the Pope taught the doctrine of devils and was

therefore the Antichrist. (Fitzsimon used this opportunity to point out that, by this

reasoning, Ussher's "argument would make the Queen to be Antichrist,"[112] yet Ussher

remained unruffled.) Ussher pressed the point by showing, "That which God hath made

clean, the Popes commandment cannot make unclean: Therefore no Popes commandment

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[107] The issue was that since, to Ussher's mind, Antichrist was currently at work in the world, he could not be a man (either a historical figure or someone in the future) whose reign was limited to three and a half years; and since the current Pope at the time, Clement VIII (whom Ussher was trying to show was Antichrist), had been in power for more than twice that length by the time of this debate, Antichrist must therefore not be limited to a reign of three and a half years only.

[108] Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 29ff.

[109] Rev 12:10; 1 Tim 4:1, 3.

[110] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fols. 80v-81r.

[111] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 81r.

[112] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 81r.

can make [certain meats] unclean," noting in the margin that this is "because Peter could not" and citing Acts 11:9 in support.[113] Later in the disputation, Ussher returned to this point by attempting to prove that the Pope "teacheth doctrine directly contrary to the Doctrine of Christ,"[114] again, a characteristic of Antichrist. This brief but important point provides us with the basis by which to understand the assertion that the Pope teaches the doctrine of devils, which appears regularly in later writings of Ussher's.

The next major point that Ussher made, and which again shows up in many of his later writings about the papal Antichrist, is that the Pope tries to show himself to be God so as to usurp for himself that which properly belongs to God, in particular power and honor. Ussher's first approach was to again point to his favorite Antichrist text, 2 Thessalonians 2, to show that the Pope sits in the Temple of God and shows himself to be God, therefore he is Antichrist. Against Fitzsimon's protests that "[t]he Pope doth not show himself to be God" and "[t]he pope is God in denomination, not in nature & power," Ussher replied that the mere fact of the Pope's taking upon himself the "denomination" of God "is enough to prove him to be Antichrist."[115] And finally, Ussher also asserted that the Pope assigns worship to creatures which should properly be given to God, especially in his endorsement of the veneration (or worship, in Ussher's words) of saints.[116] Fitzsimon, of course, returned that the worship given to saints is not the same as that which is given to God. Thus, the question comes down to the manner in which God may communicate some of his powers to his creatures, and therefore whether the Pope has been given this power or whether he has usurped that which is not his by right.

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[113] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 81r.
[114] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 81v.
[115] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 81r.
[116] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 81v-82r.

In the last part of the disputation, Fitzsimon adopted the advancing position, with Ussher refuting and denying his claims. Over the course of a few different topics, we can see one last key component of Ussher's Antichrist theology emerge: that Antichrist is a "mystery of iniquity,"[117] and as such he will not come openly in his own name; and that the length of Antichrist's reign as given in the Bible can therefore not be read literally, or at least not be taken to be the entire length of Antichrist's reign on earth. The question repeatedly comes down to, not the actual actions or characteristics of Antichrist, but whether he will be or do such *openly*. For instance, Fitzsimon declared that Antichrist would openly deny Christ's Godhead; therefore, the Pope cannot be Antichrist. Ussher replied, "I distinguish your proposition. Antichrist shall deny Christ his Godhead closely, but not openly."[118] Ussher also refuted Fitzsimon's literal reading of the length of Antichrist's reign, as found in Revelation 11:2 and 12:6. Ussher said that the 1260 days should be read as "prophetical days," so that "his kingdom shall increase by little and little, till at last it come to his height, & then it shall be made manifest to the world."[119] This point, perhaps above all others, gives us the clearest foretaste of the developing Antichrist theology within the Church of Ireland – because Antichrist is hidden in a "mystery of iniquity," it is the task of true Christians to expose his identity and therefore weaken his power on earth.

This disputation, and Ussher's role in it, allow us to tease out certain elements of the Church of Ireland's development and self-identity at this time in Irish history. First, the circumstances surrounding the debate are striking. If formal debates were a common

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[117] 2 Thess 2:7.
[118] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 82v.
[119] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 82r.

way for evangelizers to publicly champion their cause,[120] why was the protestant church in Ireland unable or unwilling to furnish anyone to debate with an illegal Jesuit missionary? Fitzsimon claims that he sent out both a general challenge, as well as personal challenges to three major protestant leaders in Dublin. Hanmer did not reply, Challenor refused, and Rider stalled until he was publicly shamed in the marketplace by the mayor of Dublin himself, although he was ultimately able to avoid a face-to-face public disputation.[121] (What evidence we have of Rider's written controversialist skills suggests that this was, most likely, a merciful outcome for him.) A nineteen-year-old student had to present himself as an opponent, and the two adversaries carried out their discussion in the privacy of Dublin Castle rather than in a public forum such as a university, where undoubtedly both would have been more comfortable, and where they could have had access to such formal trappings as a moderator of the discussion to determine the ultimate victor.

These details suggest that the leadership of the Church of Ireland was unwilling to engage in any sort of formal, public disputation with a Catholic. One might suggest that this was because they were so confident in their position that they felt no need to entertain challengers; however, I believe that it says the opposite. Apart from informal discussions and debates conducted over dinner tables and among friends and family, the disputation between Ussher and Fitzsimon appears to have been the first of its kind in Ireland.[122] It was, at the very least, the beginning of a barrage of similar encounters, both

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[120] Jackson, 103-108.

[121] Jackson, 99-102; see also Rider's *Rescript* along with Fitzsimon's *Reply* (pp. 4-17), bound in one volume with Fitzsimon's *Catholicke Confutation* (Rouen, 1608). An original copy of Rider's *Rescript* does not survive, but Fitzsimon reproduces the text in his *Reply*.

[122] Ford, *Ussher*, 61.

spoken and printed, in Ireland over the next several decades.[123] However, in the year 1600, the Church of Ireland was not really in the position to be engaging in such exercises. The Church was in a precarious financial situation, it had great difficulty attracting and retaining ministers with formal training, and it was struggling to deal with its identity as an English institution implanted in Ireland and lacking the support of the general populace. In short, the Church of Ireland had much more pressing issues to worry about than finding a preacher to spare to participate in an academic debate with a popular Catholic personality.

It does, however, point to promising signs of development in the Irish church, thanks in large part to the existence of Trinity College. Ussher's arguments were scripturally based, as is to be expected from a tradition which placed heavy emphasis on popular reading of the Bible. The debate also demonstrates Ussher's training in anti-Catholic controversy, another hallmark of Anglo-Reformed identity.[124] Ussher's familiarity with Bellarmine's work of controversies and his desire to debate these points with a Catholic missionary point to both personal interest on his part in religious controversy, something that we see continually in his later ecclesiastical and academic careers,[125] as well as the kind of training he would have been receiving as a student at

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[123] The Church of Ireland was rather late in getting into the scene of formal theological controversy. For further information about the practice of religious controversy in England in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, see Peter Milward, *Religious Controversies of the Elizabethan Age: A Survey of Printed Sources* (London: Scolar Press, 1977); Peter Milward, *Religious Controversies of the Jacobean Age: A Survey of Printed Sources* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1978); and Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 31-92. For a description of the printed debates and controversies which sprouted in Ireland following Fitzsimon's initial challenges, see Ford, *Ussher*, 61-64. And for a cross-comparison of the characteristics of one of the earliest Irish debates with the older tradition in England, see Jackson, 103ff.

[124] See Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 1-27; Jackson, 103-115; Ford, *Ussher*, 60-63; Milward, *Religious Controversies of the Elizabethan Age*, and Milward, *Religious Controversies of the Jacobean Age*.

[125] Ford, *Ussher*, 61-62.

Trinity College. As mentioned earlier, Trinity's role was to try to regain ground that had been lost to Catholic missionaries operating throughout Ireland. Ussher demonstrated during the course of the debate that he was well-practiced in the art of a university disputation, though he seemed at times unsure of how to proceed with a rather recalcitrant opponent who was unwilling to admit the apparent truth of a technically well-formed argument.[126]

Finally, and most importantly for this paper, we can see the early form which Antichrist theology took in the emerging identity of the Church of Ireland. If we accept Ussher's role as an appropriate representative for the ongoing development of the Church of Ireland, it is highly significant that, "having proffered to confer syllogistically on the whole body of the controversies as in order they lay in Bellarmine,"[127] the very first issue Ussher proposed was to prove the nature of Antichrist. This indicates an already strong attachment to the idea of Antichrist, undoubtedly one of the distinguishing marks of the puritans who had brought this theology from England to Ireland in the preceding years. Ussher was well-prepared to discuss this topic from a scriptural standpoint at the very least; when Fitzsimon prepared to expound a point based on the text in Daniel and Revelation, Ussher immediately replied, "Out of Daniel I answer you cannot prove it, for in him nothing is properly spoken of Antichrist."[128] This attachment to the idea of Antichrist would, in subsequent decades, develop into a hallmark of Irish protestant

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[126] "Is not the matter & form of this syllogism good? and doth it not directly prove that which you denied?" (fol. 80r) and later, "I never heard before in any syllogistical disputation, how an argument directly concluding that which was denied, could be shifted off …" (fol. 80v) and again, "I will not seek to press you further; seeing you are brought to invent such an exposition as is contrary both to the clear words of the text, and also to the opinion of your own writers. I will then use another argument." (fol. 80v)

[127] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 83v.

[128] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 82r.

theology. Indeed, it would influence the theology of the Church of Ireland so significantly that it would become a distinguishing characteristic to separate the Irish church from its sister in England, and influence the relations between Irish and English bishops and politicians.

Two details of this Antichrist theology are clearly present even in the earliest years of Ussher's theological development. First is the conviction that the Pope himself is the Antichrist. Antichrist has taken up residence in the throne of Peter, developing his power "by little and little,"[129] and the current Pope is the embodiment of Antichrist in his reign on earth. The coming to power of Antichrist is imminent; and the reason that so many will not admit to this is because he has not yet been "made manifest to the world."[130] This connects to the second major characteristic of Irish Antichrist theology, which is the idea of Antichrist operating as a "mystery of iniquity" in the world, at least for the moment. Ussher repeatedly makes the distinction to Fitzsimon that Antichrist will not operate "openly" in the world. Fitzsimon attempts to press the point in order to show that Pope is not Antichrist since he does not publicly do anything that would be associated with Antichrist, such as usurping God's name for himself. Ussher's objection to this point intimates how he believes this "mystery of iniquity" will function: "I deny the Major for any may call himself God, & yet in word confess Christ deity."[131] While officially paying lip service to orthodox Christian belief, Antichrist will be privately working to build himself up in the world before he finally will reveal his true character. Both of these ideas would continue to grow and develop, eventually taking an official

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[129] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 82r.
[130] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 82r.
[131] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 82v.

place in the theology of the Church of Ireland. However, in the year 1600, these ideas were only beginning to take hold in the collective Irish protestant consciousness.

At this moment in history we can discern the relative positions of Catholics and protestants in Irish society as well. The Catholics, compared to their protestant neighbors, were coming from a very strong position. They were more numerous than the protestants by an overwhelming margin.[132] The Catholic populace had begun to consciously embrace Catholicism, consciously turning away from the state-imposed reforms, as a heritage of which they were proud and which they desired to protect.[133] This was helped and encouraged by the presence of Catholic missionaries in Ireland. In Dublin, especially, the Jesuits such as Henry Fitzsimon were enjoying a great success in their proselytizing. The missionaries were well-trained, educated at Catholic universities on the continent, and had kinship connections in Ireland which they could draw upon to aid in their missions. Fitzsimon, certainly never lacking in confidence, was coming from a much stronger position than his protestant opponent on that June day: he had popular support in Ireland for his mission, which was going exceedingly well, and he was older, better-trained, and better-practiced than Ussher in debating religious controversies. Overall, the Catholic gentry in Dublin were still the ruling power, and their self-confidence in the solidity of their position despite their recusant faith is evident in many of the political and societal interchanges of the day.[134]

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[132] Lennon estimates that about three-quarters of the city-center households were recusant at the end of the 1590s: *Lords of Dublin*, 144.

[133] Lennon, *Lords of Dublin*, 150, 164-165.

[134] Clarke and Edwards, 188; Colm Lennon, "The Rise of Recusancy among the Dublin Patricians, 1580-1613" in *The churches, Ireland and the Irish: Studies in Church History*, ed. W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1989), 128.

The protestants, on the other hand, were coming from a much weaker position.

They were fewer in number, and most of them were immigrants from England who came

to escape the pressures of conformity across the Irish Sea.[135] James Ussher was somewhat

of an exception in that his family was a well-established Anglo-Irish line which had seen

its members convert to protestantism in the 1560s.[136] And, as mentioned earlier, the

Church of Ireland had bigger concerns than engaging in academic debate with Catholics.

Their attempts at converting the general populace had been hitherto unsuccessful, and,

despite their status as being the official religion of the kingdom, they had received less

help than they needed from the Crown for their evangelizing efforts.[137]

However, at the time of this debate we can already see signs of an emerging Irish

protestant theology and identity separate from that of the Church of England. The

obsession with the papal Antichrist, while still a part of Church of England theology, had

passed out of the immediate consciousness of most people.[138] England was, by this point,

four generations removed from its Catholic past, and what Catholics remained in England

had been driven underground through severe measures enacted against recusancy. Unlike

in Ireland, where the protestant minority was in daily contact with a Catholic majority,

the English church had little reason to consider the papal Antichrist as an immediate

concern, and the idea, while not rejected, was passed over in favor of other, more

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[135] Ford, "Puritan Church", 55.

[136] Lennon, *Lords of Dublin*, 135; Ford, *Ussher*, 36.

[137] Brendan Bradshaw's seminal article suggests that the reason for the failure of the Reformation in Ireland had to do with the inability of the government and the Church officials to agree on who had to go first: should the government ensure conformity by force, allowing the Church to then go in and educate the people in the religion? Or was it the job of the Church to teach the people civility and loyalty, thus allowing the government to move in and take control of all of Ireland? The lack of resolve of this issue forced a stalemate in reforming efforts that lasted throughout the sixteenth century, allowing Catholicism to gain a firm foothold amongst the Irish people: Bradshaw, "Sword, Word and Strategy."

[138] Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 81.

pressing matters.[139] Ussher's desire to debate the point, and the fact that Trinity students were trained in such matters, is an early sign of the different bent which the Church of Ireland would take in the decades to come.

Also, the very fact that the debate even took place shows the beginnings of a shift in power between the Irish Catholics and Irish protestants. Though the protestant leadership could not be troubled to debate with an imprisoned Jesuit, the young Ussher's willingness to do so can be attributed, I believe, to a combination of his precociousness and the training he was receiving at Trinity. While Ussher demonstrated throughout his career a personal interest in theological controversies,[140] it seems likely that, for a student who had not even attained his M.A. to attempt such a formal interchange outside of the university's walls, it would have been because his education up to that point had consisted of training, at least to a degree, for such endeavors in the future. If this was the case, then this exchange between Ussher and Fitzsimon was simply a small taste of what was coming down the pipeline from the new college in its first graduates, who would shortly be beginning their careers in the Church and in academia.[141] As we follow Ussher in the early years of his career, we shall see how this inclination unfolded, and how this Irish, puritan university training would affect the development of the theology of the Church of Ireland a mere fifteen years later.

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[139] McCafferty, "Protestant Prelates," 66. The idea of the papal Antichrist was eventually rejected in the Church of England, in 1633: Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 50, and Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 93-127.

[140] Ford, *Ussher*, 61-62.

[141] Indeed, Trinity's "fellowships were limited to a seven years, so that the fellows would be forced to leave their ivory tower and provide learned preachers for the church." Ford, "Puritan Church", 59.

Chapter 2

A Protestant Decision: The Irish Articles of 1615

The next document under consideration here is the confession of faith drawn up by the Church of Ireland a mere fifteen years after Ussher's debate with Fitzsimon. The Irish Articles of 1615[142] represent a significant step in the development of the Church of Ireland's self-identity. Eight decades after the Irish Parliament recognized Henry VIII's initial reforms in 1536, the Church of Ireland had developed to the point where the bishops felt it was necessary to draw up a confession of faith separate from the Thirty-Nine Articles which had been in use in the Church of England and, by extension, the Church of Ireland since their ratification in 1571.[143] While in the greater scheme of history and Christian theology, the Irish Articles are easily ignored due to their limited geographic appeal and short lifespan,[144] they were recognized both by the Irish clergy and by the rulers in England as being an important move, on the part of the Church of Ireland, away from their subordinate position to the Church of England.

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[142] All text in quotations from the Irish Articles is taken from "*The Irish Articles*, 1615" in *Creeds & Confessions*. For an introduction to the general practice of confession-making in the Christian Church, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). He suggests that 16th and 17th centuries could be called "the confessional age" because of the proliferation of confessions not just among Protestants, but also among Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christians (p. 459).

[143] The Thirty-Nine Articles were drawn up in 1563 but were only ratified by Queen Elizabeth in 1571, and the Church of Ireland appears to not have required subscription to any confession from its clergy: Ford, "Puritan Church," 57.

[144] They were thrown out by Archbishop William Laud in 1634, though they made a reappearance in the English puritan Westminster Confession of 1643; see Pelikan and Hotchkiss, p. 551.

James Stuart[145] ascended the English throne upon the death of Elizabeth Tudor in 1603. His reign, which lasted until 1625, set the tone for much of the development of the Church of Ireland in the early seventeenth century. Two factors, in particular, affected the Irish protestants. First, James had been "Calvinistic, rigidly anti-Catholic, and profoundly millenarian"[146] in his earlier years, before his ascent to the English throne. Thus, his accession in 1603 was seen as a potential turning point in the stalled reformation of the English church by the puritans of the land, who had been discouraged and silenced by Elizabeth throughout her reign. However, James quickly proved that he was not to be the champion of the puritan cause. He repeatedly refused to "Calvinize" the Church under his headship, and quickly embraced the episcopal system once his title was no longer under the threat of Scottish Presbyterian mutiny.[147] The puritan revivalist hopes of the godly in England and Ireland were soon dashed. Even this would not have been so bad, if not for the second problem: James personally took a stance that tended towards religious toleration of Catholicism, especially in Ireland (though it was still a proscribed religion), which manifested itself as measures of leniency towards Catholics in Ireland.[148] Indeed, this tendency would only grow stronger towards the end of his reign. To see their beloved king, the one upon whom the hopes of the godly had been pinned, not only *not* eliminating the Catholic threat but seeming to encourage it by extending slight measures of toleration towards the followers of Antichrist, was more than the puritan element of

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[145] James VI of Scotland and James I of England, Wales, and Ireland; commonly written as James VI/I.

[146] Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 96.

[147] Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 97; The Presbyterian system did not accept the hierarchy of deacons, priests, and bishops, and relied instead on a system of church governance run by councils of elders.

[148] Clarke and Edwards, 189-191.

the Church of Ireland could bear. The apocalyptic view of history espoused by the puritan mindset grew and intensified in response to this alarming turn of events.

In addition to the personal tendencies of the king, the puritan element in the Church of Ireland was threatened on two fronts: by the rise in Arminianism in the Church of England, and by the defiant displays of Catholicism exhibited by the Anglo-Irish and Gaelic Irish populace, both in Dublin and elsewhere. Arminianism was beginning to rear its head in the Church of England, even before the time of Queen Elizabeth's rejection of the Lambeth Articles in 1595. This tacit support of a more traditionalist approach to doctrine and ceremony by the Queen continued to gain ground in the court of James I.[149] Even the publication of the Authorized Version of the Bible in 1611, lacking the apocalyptic and otherwise puritan annotations contained in the earlier Geneva Bible, pointed to this trend in the Church of England.[150] Puritan observers, in England and in Ireland, grew uneasy at the traditionalist direction which the Church of England was taking.

On the other hand, the protestant church in Ireland had to deal with the Catholics which surrounded it. As a minority group, the protestant church had to deal with the daily reality of being in contact with the followers of Antichrist. Unlike in England, where recusancy had been firmly oppressed, the Catholic population in Ireland was thriving. "Irish protestants existed as a besieged remnant, a faithful elect in a nation which retained a superstitious allegiance to Rome. The reality of this situation dramatized the Irish protestant identity and was the basis for the unity of its reformed church."[151] The

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[149] For a discussion of these changes, see Fincham and Tyacke, 74-125.

[150] Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 92.

[151] Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 81.

accession of James to the throne had led to defiant displays of public Catholicism,[152] and the exemplary execution of the elderly Bishop Cornelius O'Devany of Down in 1612 backfired on the government when the relatively unorganized, haphazard and independent clergy within Catholicism banded together against this outrage. Clarke comments, "O'Devany's death was an event of unexpected importance in the development of the counter-reformation in Ireland."[153] The Catholic Anglo-Irish population was becoming more organized and expressive in its adherence to a political, heritage Catholicism. Another pressure on the protestant church was the fact of a rival Catholic episcopacy – the Catholics had not only refused to be converted, but they had maintained an episcopal system parallel to that of the Church of Ireland. The protestant obsession with Antichrist, religious controversy, and seeing their efforts as part of the final battle between good and evil therefore became an essential marker of protestant self-definition that was grounded in their daily experiences with Catholics.[154]

It was against this backdrop that the convocation of bishops and lower clergy met in 1613-1615 in order to draw up the new Irish confession of faith that would cement the place of a "Calvinist" or "puritan" understanding of the reformed religion, including apocalyptic theology and anti-Catholic sentiments, in the code of the Church of Ireland. The convocation was called at the same time as the parliament, which was dealing with some very contentious political issues, and which had the full attention of King James. The original intent of this parliament was "to obliterate the constitutionally sanctioned political influence of the Old English" by creating more protestant seats.[155] However,

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[152] Clarke, "Pacification", 189.
[153] Clarke, "Pacification", 209.
[154] McCafferty, "Protestant Prelates," 65.
[155] Clarke, "Pacification", 214.

James' personal commitment to religious toleration was still evident. In a speech in 1613, James was still saying that he did not wish to make anyone go against his own conscience,[156] and though he spoke harshly to the Catholic opposition in 1614, he later moved back towards conciliation and compromise in order to get them back into Parliament so things could move forward.[157] This bending to Catholic political pressure would, of course, have been alarming to Ussher and the other Irish protestant bishops who were meeting just at that time in their convocation, and would undoubtedly have been on the minds of those who were discussing the content of the Irish Articles. These circumstances, plus the fact that it was the Lord Deputy and not the king who ultimately approved the final confession, suggest that "the Church of Ireland might have judiciously exploited its distance from the centre to deviate from English norms"[158] and taken advantage of the cover of the contentious parliament to push forward their godly agenda.[159]

We know very little about what actually went on at the convocation. The only original information we have about the gathering, aside from the Articles it produced, are

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[156] Clarke, "Pacification", 216.

[157] Clarke, "Pacification", 215.

[158] Ford, "Puritan Church," 58.

[159] For a discussion of this possibility, see Ford, *Ussher*, 100. It is important to notice that like many other Reformed confessions (as opposed to, say, Lutheran confessions) of the Reformation era, the Irish Articles carry a national title: Pelikan, *Credo*, 465-466. In the confessionalizing mindset of the times, "[t]he Bible has to speak *to* all the people, the confession has to speak *for* all the people. As each major shift in what was taken to be the correct interpretation of Scripture led in turn to a new form for the correct declaration of its doctrinal content, the result would often be the formulation of a new confession …" Pelikan, *Credo*, 462. So, the drawing up of a separate national confession for the Irish church would have been a natural theological development, in line with Reformed churches elsewhere – the delicacy of their position was related more to Irish political relations with England, rather then the actual act of writing a national confession.

the names of the men who presided over the houses of bishops and lower clergy.[160]

However, a reference by Ussher's seventeenth-century biographer mentions that Ussher was a member of the synod and was appointed to "draw up" the Articles.[161] What this actually means is unclear; Ford points out that "Ussher could have done anything from composing the articles to copying out the final draft."[162] However, Ford gives a compelling argument that "Ussher had a significant role in writing at least some of the text of the confession."[163] For this reason, I consider it important and appropriate to link the themes expressed in the Irish Articles with themes that were brought up in the Ussher/Fitzsimon debate of fifteen years previous.

The Irish bishops used the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England as a basis for their confession. Most of the English articles are present in the Irish Articles, often verbatim. The only two that are not present in the Irish Articles are EA 35: Of Homilies[164] and EA 36: Of Consecration of Bishops and Ministers. The absence of this latter article is attributed to the heavy puritan influence in the Church of Ireland at that time, which can also be seen in other additions and alterations of wording in various articles throughout the confession. The differences, then, lie not in what was chosen for inclusion, but rather what was added for clarification.[165]

The Irish confession is much longer than the English, at 104 articles, which is due both to the fact that in many cases a lengthy English article was split into several shorter

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[160] Archbishop Jones of Dublin presided over the house of bishops, and Ralph Barlow, Archdeacon of Meath, was the speaker for the lower clergy: Ford, *Ussher*, 86.

[161] Ford, *Ussher*, 86.

[162] Ford, *Ussher*, 86.

[163] Ford, *Ussher*, 87.

[164] Though information from the approved English homilies does appear in the Irish articles dealing with justification (IA 35-36).

[165] Ford, *Ussher*, 90.

Irish articles, as well as there being additions to the Irish confession of topics that do not appear in the English confession. The extra information also means that the Irish Articles give more of a general overview of the faith than the English articles. The English articles were written to provide the basic building-blocks of the faith, to lay out exactly what was important for English protestants to know at that time (in 1563). More than fifty years later, the composers of the Irish Articles had a much more substantial English-speaking protestant tradition to draw upon. Also, while the English confession sought to define itself in the sense of what Roman Catholic practices it rejected, the Irish Articles walk the fine line of not only distinguishing themselves from the Roman Catholic Church, but also making it clear how they were distinct from the Church of England. These distinctions, codified in the Irish Articles of 1615, put the Church of Ireland "unmistakably to the theological left of the Church of England."[166]

The Irish Articles are also arranged differently from the Thirty-Nine Articles. The first part of the Irish Articles discusses the Bible, its proper books and its proper use.[167] It then proceeds systematically through salvation history leading up to the current state of the world's affairs, then moving on to contemporary earthly concerns such as the service of God and civil magistrates, and finishing with what the Church believed of death, resurrection, and the final judgment of Christ. The various articles are grouped into sections under topical headings. The primacy of the Scriptures is displayed through their being placed at the beginning of the whole confession. The Irish Articles also exhibit a more puritan inclination than the English confession on which it is based. The inclusion

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[166] Aidan Clarke, "Varieties of Uniformity: The First Century of the Church of Ireland" in *The churches, Ireland and the Irish*, Studies in Church History, ed. W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1989), 108.
[167] IA 1-6.

of the Lambeth Articles of 1595[168] and a variety of other additions and nuanced phrases

provide this nod to the members of the Church who wished to see a more thorough

reform of the Church of England and its sister in Ireland.

Of the material that differs from the English confession, three main categories can

be discerned: those of an anti-Catholic nature, those which deal with the particular

context and realities of Ireland at that time, and those which sway the tone of the

confession to a more puritan interpretation of the Anglican doctrine (the discussions of

predestination, the inclusion of the Lambeth Articles, and the references to apocalyptic

theology would all fall under this one broad category). For our purposes here, those of an

apocalyptic nature and many of the anti-Catholic articles will be our primary

consideration. Keeping in mind some of the points that Ussher had brought up in his

debate with Fitzsimon some fifteen years before, we can also find what may seem to us

like indirect references to the Pope's Antichristian status, but which would have been

understood immediately by anyone familiar with the apocalyptic mindset. The Antichrist

references which I will be discussing in this chapter can be filed into two categories:

those which are blatantly against the Pope, and those which demonstrate that the Roman

Church teaches doctrines directly contrary to Scripture.

The reader will recall that one of the main points of argument that the young

Ussher used in his debate with Fitzsimon was that the Pope teaches doctrine that is

directly contrary to Scripture (the doctrine of devils), and therefore he is the Antichrist.

This implication resurfaces in many of the Irish Articles. Frequently, a dichotomy is

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[168] The Lambeth Articles were written as a response to a Cambridge theology professor's assertions that people could reject the grace given to them by God. They laid out a "strongly predestinarian" theology, stressing the predetermined number of those chosen by God to be saved, and the irresistible nature of God's grace once bestowed on a soul: Benedict, 304.

drawn between that which is taught by Scripture, and that which is "devised by man's phantasy besides or contrary to the Scriptures."[169] First, the importance of the Scriptures is laid out in the first section of the Irish Articles, dealing with the same: "The Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation, and are able to instruct sufficiently in all points of faith that we are bound to believe, and all good duties that we are bound to practice."[170] The implication here is, of course, that what is not found in Scriptures is not necessary to salvation, and a Christian is not mandated to believe or practice any of it. This goes right back to the roots of the Reformed movement nearly a century before[171] and it is natural that such a statement would appear in the confession of the Church of Ireland.

IA 42 builds upon this point of what should be followed by the people and what should not: "The works which God would have his people to walk in are such as he hath commanded in his Holy Scripture, and not such works as men have devised out of their own brain, of a blind zeal and devotion, without the warrant of the word of God." Such strong, obviously anti-Catholic wording is not found in the milder English articles. Similarly, IA 52 warns that "All worship devised by man's phantasy, besides or contrary to the Scripture (as wandering on pilgrimages, setting up of candles, stations, and jubilees, pharisaical sects and feigned religions, praying upon beads, and such like superstition) hath not only no promise of reward in Scripture, but contrariwise threatenings and maledictions." This again is an article that has no precedence in the English confession, both in its strong anti-Catholic wording, and also because it appears

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[169] IA 52.
[170] IA 6.
[171] Benedict, 24-25.

as part of a section entitled, "Of the service of God",[172] which describes how a true Christian should approach prayer, fasting, dealing with affliction, images, the swearing of oaths, and repentance. In this section we see both positive and negative examples of how to serve God as a Christian; IA 52, of course, falls into the "negative" category by detailing what not to do and why.

In the sections dealing with the New Testament sacraments there is again a focus on ridding the church of superstitious practices. IA 87 takes much of its text from the corresponding EA 25, except for the first and last phrases. The beginning of the article, "Those five which by the church of *Rome* are called sacraments" is an Irish puritan elaboration of the more inclusive English text, which reads, "Those five commonly called sacraments," in order to stress the extra-biblical nature of the sacraments which are not the Lord's Supper and baptism.[173] (The final phrase[174] is also a puritan addition, to stress the role of God's grace in the efficacy of the sacraments.) The emphasis of extra-biblical content continues, by saying that these sacraments "are not to be accounted sacraments of the gospel" because they are simply a combination of a "corrupt imitation of the apostles" and their status is only as "states of life allowed in the Scriptures."[175]

In the section dealing with the Lord's Supper the danger of following practices which are not found in the scriptures is again made clear. IA 93 declares that the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation "cannot be proved by Holy Writ" and "is repugnant to plain testimonies of the Scripture". Hinting at another theme that Ussher brought up in his earlier debate, the article explains that belief in transubstantiation "hath given occasion to

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[172] IA 46-56.
[173] Ford, *Ussher*, 95.
[174] "… together with a promise of saving grace annexed thereunto."
[175] IA 87.

most gross idolatry and manifold superstitions." This recalls young Ussher's assertion that the Antichrist encourages idolatry because he causes worship to be given to things which are not God. In a similar vein, IA 54 states that "All religious worship ought to be given to God alone"; that is, not to saints, not to bread, not to images, nor to any other created thing. Following up on this idea is IA 102, right at the end of the confession. It reads, "The doctrine of the church of Rome concerning *limbus patrum, limbus puerorum, purgatory, prayer for the dead, pardons,* **adoration of images and relics,** and also **invocation of saints**, is **vainly invented without all warrant of Holy Scripture**, yea, and is **contrary unto the same**" (bolded emphasis mine). Neatly placed in this article are two of the characteristics of Antichrist: that he teaches doctrine contrary to the scriptures, and that he encourages the worship of things which are not God, in particular of saints and images.

The second set of articles which we will consider are those which are blatantly anti-Pope. The intense anti-papal focus is seen when we first look to the short sentence which is a part of EA 37: "The bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England." This one sentence is developed into two whole articles in the Irish confession, IA 59 and 60. IA 59 reads, "The pope, neither of himself, nor by any authority of the church or see of Rome, or by any other means with any other, hath any power or authority to depose the king, or dispose any of his kingdoms or dominions; or to authorize any other prince to invade or annoy him or his countries; or to discharge any of his subjects of their allegiance and obedience to his majesty; or to give license or leave to any of them to bear arms, raise tumult, or to offer any violence of hurt to his royal person, state, or government, or to any of his subjects within his majesty's dominions." IA 60

continues tersely, "That princes which be excommunicated or deprived by the pope may be deposed or murdered by their subjects, or any other whatsoever, is impious doctrine." These of course bear witness to the precarious state of the protestant minority in Ireland in the early seventeenth century. The threat of military action on the part of the Catholic populace, encouraged by the Pope, was a daily reality in the volatile years of James' reign. Especially in the lead-up to the parliament which was held at the time of the drawing up of the new confession, there had been Catholic agitation, political resistance, and threats of violence.[176] That the bishops felt the need to encode such strong language into their new confession speaks tellingly of how they perceived their situation and the growing threat of the followers of Antichrist in their homeland.

The two most obvious articles which deal with the papal Antichrist are IA 79 and 80, in the section entitled "Of the authority of the Church, general Councils, and Bishop of Rome." IA 79 reads, "The power which the bishop of *Rome* now challengeth to be supreme head of the universal church of Christ, and to be above all emperors, kings and princes, is a usurped power, contrary to the Scriptures and word of God, and contrary to the example of the primitive church …" Here again we see themes that Ussher used to challenge Fitzsimon. First, that the Pope puts himself above all others on earth (emperors, kings, and princes), thereby taking for himself power and honor which is actually due to God. Related to that is the assertion that the Pope usurps power for himself which is not actually given to him by God. In essence, Antichrist, and therefore the Pope, steals from God. Finally, he does all this "contrary to the Scriptures and word of God," a very common anti-Catholic and anti-papal accusation, as we have seen. A similar theme can

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[176] Clarke, "Pacification," 191-193.

be seen in IA 67, which states, "The popish doctrine of equivocation and mental reservation is ungodly, and tendeth plainly to the subversion of all human society." Once again the Pope is described similarly to Antichrist – that he subverts humanity to himself and keeps people from the true worship of God.[177] IA 80 is the real climax, though, and unique to the Church of Ireland. It reads, "The bishop of *Rome* is so far from being the supreme head of the universal church of Christ, that his works and doctrine do plainly discover him to be *that man of sin*, foretold in the Holy Scriptures, *whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and abolish with the brightness of his coming*." This "man of sin" is, of course, the Antichrist; and the passage being referred to here is 2 Thessalonians 2, Ussher's personal favorite Antichrist proof text.[178]

Finally, the Irish apocalyptic mindset, and the prevalence that the End Times had in the Irish church, is demonstrated in one literally final way: the last section, entitled "Of the state of the souls of men, after they be departed out of this life; together with the general Resurrection, and the last Judgment" (IA 101-104) describes what will happen to us when we die, as well as at Christ's final judgment of man. Aside from IA 102, which denounces the Catholic teachings on Purgatory (saying, of course, that it is contrary to the Scriptures) and is taken from the corresponding EA 22, these articles are Irish additions to the confession, and they emphasize the dichotomy of the damned and the saved. That such a subject would be included in a confession of faith shows the prominent place that the puritan-style concern with the imminent approach of the End Times had on the ongoing development of the Church of Ireland's theology.

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[177] Bodleian, MS Barlow 13, fol. 81v.

[178] "that man of sin" – 2 Thess 2:3; "whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and abolish with the brightness of his coming" – 2 Thess 2:8; see also Ford, *Ussher*, 93-94.

The inclusion of these apocalyptic and anti-papal articles in the Irish Articles of 1615 shows a clear development in the Church of Ireland's own theology, and it also gives us a clear indication of what sort of trajectory this development was taking. It is important to note that the themes discussed throughout this chapter were not unique to the Church of Ireland. These beliefs were shared in common with a variety of other churches throughout Europe which shared the Irish church's Reformed-"Calvinist" ancestry.[179] Indeed, this belief was still fairly common in the Church of England,[180] and Clarke summarizes the content of the Articles by saying that "they tended, while [being] perfectly consistent with anglican tradition, to emphasise its more Calvinist aspects."[181] What is important about their inclusion in the Irish Articles is that, until this time, these beliefs did not have confessional status.[182] Also, the emphasis that is placed on the identity of the papal Antichrist – with references scattered throughout the document, from beginning to end, and in nearly every topical section – is a thoroughly Irish characteristic of this confession.

Along with the previously mentioned recurring themes from Ussher's 1600 debate with Fitzsimon, we can also see the continuing emphasis on exposing the identity of the papal Antichrist. As Ussher pointed out to Fitzsimon, the Antichrist works "closely,"[183] as a mystery of iniquity, operating out of the view of the world until such time as he sees fit to reveal himself when his kingdom will come into its full power. The repeated references to the Pope as Antichrist show a desire on the part of the Irish protestant

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[179] See Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed*.

[180] Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 97.

[181] Clarke, "Pacification," 229.

[182] Ford, *Ussher*, 99.

[183] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 82v.

church to expose Antichrist and ruin his plan. To make such blatant and forceful statements, especially such as is seen in IA 80, was a major step for the Church of Ireland: by doing so, they were marking themselves off as a minority, as the faithful remnant remaining in God's church[184] – exposing the Pope as Antichrist in such a public, formal way would separate them from the Church of England in an important way during such a time of political agitation. In terms of a developing identity, this was an important moment of self-actualization. What we can see here, then, is the conjunction of the use of apocalyptic and Antichrist language with a sense that the Church of Ireland was coming into its own, theologically. The Irish Articles made it clear that the Church of Ireland, while certainly based in the English tradition, was no longer dependent on it.

The language of the Articles also points us to the shift in the balance of power in Ireland at that time between the Catholics and the protestants in the Dublin gentry. Right into the beginning of James' reign, the Catholic Anglo-Irish "ignored the possibility that, as catholics, they were among the defeated rather than, as English, among the victors" in the English conquest of Ireland.[185] However, by 1615, and especially by the time of the parliament which met at the same time as the convocation, that assumption was beginning to crumble. The influx of protestant settlers from Britain, along with such gerrymandering tactics as the government trying to create new seats of protestant members for that parliament,[186] had begun to weaken the grip that Catholic gentry in Dublin held in politics. While on the one hand, the events leading up to the convocation and parliament had caused concern among the protestant bishops and other puritan-

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[184] Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 81.
[185] Clarke, "Pacification," 188.
[186] Clarke, "Pacification," 213.

minded clergy, the general trend was towards a protestant takeover of power in the Irish government. Again, the fact that the bishops felt confident enough to put such strong anti-Catholic language into their new confession shows their increasing confidence in their position *vis-à-vis* their Catholic neighbors. Indeed, after having made such strong statements, the leadership of the Church of Ireland could not turn back; "any compromise was unthinkable."[187]

Despite this trend of rising protestant power, however, the Irish bishops did make some effort to be pragmatic in regards to their particular situation. In accordance with the stress that they placed on the primacy of scriptures, IA 4 calls for the scriptures "to be translated out of the original tongues into all languages for the common use of all men: neither is any person to be discouraged from reading the Bible in such a language as he doth understand …" This reference to *all* languages recognized that Irish Gaelic, and not English, was still the daily language of the majority of the populace, no matter how much the English government insisted that the people learn English language and customs. The Catholics, after all, were still a majority, and the puritans in their zeal still wanted to see the heathens converted. Also, IA 66 is a concise recognition of the mixed nature of Irish society, especially in Dublin, where not only might one's neighbors or colleagues be of a different religion, but that this was even the case within families, Ussher's included. IA 66 states simply that "Faith given, is to be kept, even with heretics and infidels." While the Antichrist language speaks to the protestant hyperawareness of being a minority surrounded by a hostile majority, other, more mundane considerations of this reality also give us an indication of where the church saw itself in relation to society at large.

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[187] McCafferty, "Protestant Prelates," 66.

The fact that an entire convocation was able to agree to these changes and additions[188] is a strong indication of how far the Church of Ireland had come in fifteen years. First, the fact that there were even enough ministers to warrant a convocation is in itself significant, since in the sixteenth century this was not the case.[189] In addition, the church not only found its differences from England so noteworthy as to warrant a new confession, but it also realized that the differences were great enough that they should not be brought to the attention of the king, if at all possible. Finally, the fact that the protestant Church felt confident enough to make such public, blatant statements against the Catholic Church shows the effect of strength in numbers. Young Ussher, we recall, had no one to back him up when he took on Fitzsimon's challenge, and the authorities at the time would not even support a public debate, never mind supply a champion. These fifteen years had made a difference in the cohesiveness of beliefs across the spectrum of protestant clergy operating in Ireland, and their confidence in standing together to state their position readily shows through in the Irish Articles.

The trends noted here – a rising protestant political force, the growing obsession with Antichrist and conviction of living in the End Times – would continue on their present trajectory in the years following the drawing up of the Irish Articles of 1615. Catholic Anglo-Irish loyalty would be more pointedly called into question by the government. And yet, the Church of Ireland would continue to grow away from the English government and the Church of England as well. This would be due in no small part to the Irish focus on Antichrist, and the way this would color Irish protestant interpretation of and reaction to developments in the Church of England's doctrine as

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[188] Though, unfortunately, we have no record of what objections might have been raised against them.
[189] Ford, "Puritan Church," 57.

well as the English government's foreign policy. Despite their growing self-confidence as a church, the Church of Ireland was also intensely aware of its isolated position in the apocalyptic drama of the battle between good and evil. Within two decades, this tension with England would come to a head, but not before Ussher and his bishops had tried their best to forestall the inevitable.

Chapter 3

A Newfound Confidence: Ussher's *Answer to a Challenge*

The years following the first national convocation and the introduction of the Irish Articles of 1615 saw the religious and political tensions that had been present in the previous years reach a near-breaking point. Once again in 1624, James Ussher, now Bishop of Meath, founded himself engaged in a religious debate with a Jesuit. This time the exchange was realized in print, with Ussher's portion, *An Answer to a Challenge Made by a Jesuite in Ireland* first appearing in 1624, and with his respondent's book appearing in 1627.[190] Ussher's book was reprinted in 1625, this time bound together with a printing of a sermon he had given at Wansted before King James in 1624. While Ussher's *Answer* is the main focus of this chapter, the sermon also makes free use of Antichrist references, and, together with Malone's reply, gives a more well-rounded view of the historical context of Ussher's book. For this reason I will occasionally call upon these two items as a supplement to the discussion of our main text, Ussher's *Answer*.

The formation of a new confession of faith in 1615 was an important step in cementing the place of the Church of Ireland in Irish society as a distinct and permanent entity. As a matter of self-identity, it was crucial. But as a matter of dealing with the relations between the Irish protestants and Catholics on the one hand, and the Irish protestants and English protestants on the other, it served only to heighten tensions by sharpening the lines of separation between the various groups. The period of 1615-1624

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[190] A delay explained by the lack of access to printing for Catholics in Ireland: William Malone, "Preface to the Christian Reader," in *A Reply to Mr. Ussher His Answere* (1627), sig. e2v.

saw relations between these groups quickly decline. As the Catholic population of Ireland grew more hostile and opposed to protestant efforts to convert them, the Church of Ireland began to turn inwards, focusing ever more strongly on its belief in the power of Antichrist and the Church's role in being a faithful remnant of the true church in the world. As the outside pressure grew, so did the Irish protestant conviction that theirs was no less than a battle between the good and evil forces of the world, and that the role of the protestant bishops in Ireland was to be a light in a time of darkness[191] and to bring the people to the truth by force, if necessary, rather than let them "go willingly to destruction."[192]

The political situation in England during this time had a resonant effect on the internal development of the Church of Ireland. First, the outcome of the parliament that had met at the time of the Church of Ireland convocation caused King James to be determined "to enforce the disabilities and inconveniences that attached to catholicism."[193] His earlier inclination towards tolerance had shifted gears. The result was that "at local level the laws against recusancy were executed within the limits of practicality," with a particular emphasis on "significant changes in the collection of recusancy fines" in 1618.[194] This change in the collection of fines was supposed to centralize the process and channel the money into the upkeep and repair of the badly neglected protestant parish churches in Ireland. The result, however, was merely "greater

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[191] James Ussher, *A Briefe Declaration of the Universalitie of the Church of Christ, and the Unitie of the Catholick Faith professed therein: Delivered in a Sermon before His Majestie the 20th of Iune, 1624. At Wansted, by Iames Ussher, Bishop of Meath* (London: Robert Young, 1625), 31-32.
[192] Ford, *Ussher*, 116.
[193] Clarke and Edwards, 224.
[194] Clarke and Edwards, 224.

oppression and smaller returns."[195] While the monetary consequences of the enforcement of these laws perhaps left something to be desired, they did alert the Catholic Anglo-Irish population that their claim to power was tenuous at best, and now in real danger of being taken away.

James' stricter enforcement of anti-recusancy laws was tempered a bit by his attempts to make a match for his son Charles with the princess of Catholic Spain. This was brought on by his son-in-law's acceptance of the crown of Bohemia in 1619. The process of the "Catholic match" dragged on for several years. Naturally, the harsh oppression of Irish Catholics would not help the English prince's chances of making a match with one of the most powerful Catholic monarchies in the world. "At the beginning of 1623, when Charles was about to travel to Spain to press his case in person, the Irish government received instructions to suspend recusancy proceedings. And though the prince's mission was unsuccessful, the new leniency generated by international considerations was to remain."[196] England was also well aware of Irish willingness to stage rebellions in the name of the Catholic faith and the growing discontent of the ruling Catholic gentry. As such, the Crown, while wishing to enforce the protestant religion, was also cautious about pursuing any action that would destabilize the country by antagonizing those who were by and large responsible for local peace and security. The Catholics, feeling the pressure of the anti-recusancy laws yet knowing the reality of the situation the Crown was in, "used every opportunity to press the King and his ministers to grant formal toleration."[197] This was an alarming development to the bishops in the

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[195] Clarke and Edwards, 225.
[196] Clarke and Edwards, 225.
[197] Ford, *Ussher*, 118.

Church of Ireland, to say the least, seeing their king and the champion of the protestant cause in danger of bending to the demands of the followers of Antichrist.

A final source of tension, and perhaps the one which had the most effect on alienating the Church of Ireland from England and forcing it to turn inwards, was the rise of Laudianism in the Church of England. Laudianism, successor to the Arminian movement which had been building for decades in the Church of England, espoused a protestant worldview which lacked the emphasis on apocalyptic theology and the role of Antichrist which had come to define the Church of Ireland. Despite the independent outlook of the Church of Ireland that had been expressed in the Irish Articles of 1615, the Church was still closely tied to its sister in England, and it was ultimately still under the headship of the English monarch. One of the strengths of the Irish Articles had been that they defined the Irish protestant religious perspective without abandoning the English theology on which they were based. Ussher still recognized the validity of the Thirty-Nine Articles.[198] However, as James' reign wore on, he "increased attempts to forge a common religious identity throughout his three kingdoms, regularizing the relationship between the Churches of England and Ireland as he had earlier insisted upon the harmonization of the canons and practices of the Churches of England and Scotland."[199] Unfortunately for the puritans in Ireland, the rising influence of Laudianism in England extended to the king's court. "The atmosphere of James' court was demonstrably hardening against the type of millenarian and overtly Calvinistic theology Ussher had

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[198] He challenges Malone to prove that there is anything prescribed in the Thirty-Nine Articles which was disallowed by the Church Fathers, or anything denied in the Articles which was held by the Fathers to be true. Ussher, *Answer*, "To The Reader", sig. Ar.

[199] Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 98.

advanced."[200] It was therefore in the very time of need for the Church of Ireland, as they faced growing threats from both the Irish Catholics and the English protestants, that they could not count on their king to protect them. The obsessive fear of Antichrist in their midst had seen the threat move from far-away Rome to neighboring England, and the theology of the Irish bishops reacted accordingly as they stressed even more fervently the omnipresent threat of Antichrist and his operating in mysterious, malicious ways.

The printed debate between Ussher and Malone had actually started back in 1616, when a discussion between Malone and his Irish protestant friend, Sir Piers Crosby, took a turn into the question of where in history the Roman Church had gone wrong. Of course Malone held that the early church was in fact Catholic, and upon hearing this Crosby desired a proper defense for his side in this matter, and suggested James Ussher as an appropriate defender.[201] Malone then composed a two-page challenge that was delivered to Ussher, who obligingly took on the task. Accordingly, "there followed a polite, even friendly interchange of letters between Malone and Ussher, as they sent each other their contributions to the controversy in instalments."[202] Once again, we can see in Ussher's writing the recurrence of several of the main themes, or proofs of Antichrist, which he had brought against Henry Fitzsimon two and a half decades earlier. The greater length of time for preparation, the greater length of the document,[203] and the development of both the Church of Ireland's and Ussher's personal theology all contribute to the more

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[200] Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 97.

[201] The background of the debate is given in Malone, "Preface", sig. e2v-e3r; and the text of the challenge is reproduced beginning on sig. e3r.

[202] Ford, *Ussher*, 62; the letters, signed alternately "W.B." and "W.M.", can be seen in Bodleian Library, Oxford: MS Barlow 13, fols. 492-499.

[203] The main body of the book runs to 527 pages.

nuanced Antichrist language which appears in this text. However, the key points of argument remain the same and offer us an opportunity for comparison and exploration.

The point of the debate, ostensibly, was the question of antiquity and the church: whether the protestants or the Catholics were closer to the practices of the primitive Christian church, and for the one which was not, when the errors had entered into their belief and practice.[204] For Ussher the historian and chronologist, this was an intriguing question, but hardly the point.[205] As an experienced academic and controversialist, his first step was to toss out the question, calling it a "vain demand":[206] "*First then would he fain know, what Bishop of Rome did first alter that Religion, which we commend in them of the first 400 years? In what Popes days was the true Religion overthrown in Rome?* To which I answer, First, that we do not hold that Rome was built in a day; or that the great dung-hill of errors, which now we see in it, was raised in an age …"[207] Having thus dictated the terms which the argument will take in his own work, Ussher then launches into what, to his mind, is the real question: whether the Pope in Rome is the Antichrist, and whether Roman Catholics therefore follow a true religion or a false one.

Ussher once again puts the primacy of Scriptures above all else in his writing. While he admits that the Church Fathers were "godly men"[208] (language which, incidentally, ties them to the puritan or "godly" movement), he also questions the practice of relying on their testimony if it cannot also be backed up by Scriptures. He asks

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[204] His base text being taken from Matthew 19:8 "From the beginning it was not so."
[205] "… commentators have underplayed the extent to which this type of polemical research in theology and history was underpinned by his eschatological and chronological studies." Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 82.
[206] Ussher, *Answer*, 2.
[207] Ussher, *Answer*, 1.
[208] Ussher, *Answer*, 29.

"whether *their admirable learning may sufficiently cross out all suspicion of error,* which

may arise either of *affectation*, or *want of due consideration*, or such *ignorance* as the

very best are subject unto in this life."[209] He then says that only the guidance of the Holy

Spirit as found in the canonical Scriptures is enough to eliminate such suspicion.

Therefore, the Catholics, in their valuing "the *facility* and the *learning* of the Fathers," are

"blind[ing] the eyes of the simple" to the only true way of knowing God's teachings.[210]

He also emphasizes the fact that the Church Fathers took "*great pains … in the defence

of the true Catholic Religion*, and the *serious study of the holy Scripture.*"[211] And so, even

if they have differing opinions on certain matters of religious practice, they are still to be

held in "reverend estimation"[212] because of their focus on Scripture. The point, of course,

is that Catholics do not emphasize Scripture study, and indeed they try to prevent people

from engaging in such a task, so what they consider to be "chief articles" of faith are

actually nothing of the kind.[213]

      The flipside to this argument is the idea that Antichrist keeps the Scriptures away

from the people, to keep them ignorant of the true way to worship God and to know His

will. First Ussher claims that the Roman Church altered the wording in several editions of

a printed homily on the Gospel of Matthew in order to better support the Catholic

doctrine of transubstantiation, even though in older editions the original wording may be

found.[214] Ussher is trying to demonstrate here that the Church was trying to shore up a

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[209] Ussher, *Answer*, 30.

[210] Ussher, *Answer*, 30.

[211] Ussher, *Answer*, 27.

[212] Ussher, *Answer*, 27.

[213] Such as transubstantiation, confession, intercession of saints, etc. Ussher, *Answer*, 27.

[214] Ussher, *Answer*, 14-15. Ussher's English translation of the troublesome passage reads, "*If therefore it be
so dangerous a matter, to transfer unto private uses those holy vessels, in which the true body of Christ is*

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false, non-biblical doctrine in order to incline the people towards antichristian beliefs. Ussher also builds on his accusation that the Church tries to "blind the eyes of the simple" by telling the story of two conflicting groups of monks, one group which followed Saint Basil, and the other which followed Pope Hildebrand. "The Novices of the former were trained in the Scriptures, to the end *they might not be accustomed unto human traditions:* those of the latter, to the clean contrary intent, were kept back from the study of the Scriptures, that *they might be accustomed unto human traditions.*"[215] These monks "brought in *schisms and heresies* into the Church, … that *despising the tradition of God, they desired other doctrines, and brought in mysteries of human institution.*"[216] Ussher calls these human traditions "the husks of devils,"[217] thus emphasizing the good/evil dichotomy that is at stake in these matters. This policy continued down the ages to the present day in the Catholic Church: "And even thus in the times following, from Monks to Friars, and from them to secular Priests and Prelates, as it were by tradition from hand to hand, the like ungodly policy was continued, of keeping the common people from the knowledge of the Scriptures; as for other reasons, so likewise that by this means they might be drawn to *human traditions.*"[218] Without the study of Scriptures, the people easily fall into the trap of Antichrist, a devious process which has been developing in the Church over centuries and which can only be combated by bringing the people back to

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not, but the mystery of his body is contained: how much more for the vessels of our body, which God hath prepared for himself to dwell in, ought not we to give way unto the Devil, to do in them what he pleaseth?" wherein he claims that the words "*in which the true body of Christ is not, but the mystery of his body is contained*" were removed in the printings of 1537 (at Antwerp), 1543 and 1557 (both at Paris).

[215] Ussher, *Answer*, 43.

[216] Ussher, *Answer*, 42.

[217] Ussher, *Answer*, 43.

[218] Ussher, *Answer*, 43.

the study of Scriptures themselves rather than relying on traditions and the Fathers to dictate true belief and practice.

Ussher's favorite Antichrist proof text, 2 Thessalonians 2, makes an immediate appearance in the now-familiar theme of Antichrist appearing as a "mystery of iniquity." The point he is trying to make is that he cannot tell Malone exactly when errors first entered the Church, because Antichrist is sneaky; outright heresy would convince no one, and Antichrist would be immediately identified as the man of sin foretold in the Scriptures.[219] Therefore, Antichrist must act as a "Trojan horse," entering the Church as "an iniquity indeed, but mystical, that is, cloaked with the name of piety."[220] Disguised in his piety, that is, as the Pope, Antichrist is then able to operate in the world "closely," as the young Ussher had pointed out to Fitzsimon all those years ago.[221] In this way, it is possible that people could assist Antichrist in his gradual rise to power over the centuries, "*not all at once*, but *by little and little*," without even meaning to do so.[222] However, Ussher also recognizes the difference between "error" and "malicious error"; he can therefore esteem the opinions of the Church Fathers, who may have been "subject unto error", as all men are, but because they were "godly men" we can feel assured that they would not have "brought in opinions which they knew to be repugnant to the Scriptures."[223]

Another familiar theme that appears in this work is the idea of the Pope teaching the "doctrine of devils." Ussher again attacks the doctrine of transubstantiation as being

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[219] "The impiety of the one is so notorious, that at the very first appearance it is manifestly discerned …" Ussher, *Answer*, 2.
[220] Ussher, *Answer*, 2.
[221] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 82v.
[222] Ussher, *Answer*, 2-3.
[223] Ussher, *Answer*, 29.

one of the most antichristian beliefs, and he claims that it was initially introduced into the Church by a man whom Ussher labels "an *Idolmaker*," "the Devils forerunner," and "that man of sin,"[224] thus tying the central practice of the Roman Catholic Church to a deceitful wonder-worker.[225] When Ussher discusses the doctrine of confession, as well, he traces it back to the Devil himself. For the origin of this practice, "we cannot discover this better, than by tracing out the doctrine publicly taught in that Church touching this matter, from the time of Satans loosing until his binding again by the restoring of the purity of the Gospel in our days."[226] In this way we can see how two of the most important and distinctive Catholic practices are traced back to having their origins in the teachings of the devil rather than the teachings of Jesus and the early church.

Related to the doctrines of devils, we recall, is the idea that the Pope usurps for himself power that properly belongs to God. This, too, appears in Ussher's book. First, regarding confession and forgiveness of sins: "To forgive sins therefore being thus proper to *God* only and to his *Christ*: his ministers must not be held to have this power communicated unto them, but in an improper sense …"[227] One of the disagreements that Ussher had had with Fitzsimon was the manner in which God communicates his power to his creatures.[228] Ussher had insisted that it was only in an improper sense; and he elaborates this idea here in regards to the ability of a priest or minister to forgive sins: "…because God forgiveth by them, and hath appointed them both to apply those means by which he useth to forgive sins, and to give notice unto repentant sinners of that

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[224] Ussher, *Answer*, 67.

[225] Ussher, *Answer*, 67-68.

[226] Ussher, *Answer*, 159-160.

[227] Ussher, *Answer*, 118.

[228] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 81v.

forgiveness."[229] Because the Pope teaches that priests have the power to actually forgive sins in the power of the sacrament, he is taking power from God that is not truly given to him, thereby showing that he is Antichrist.

This theme appears again in the section dealing with the invocation of or prayers to the saints, a topic that seems to particularly bother Ussher. Ussher refers to Romans 10:4[230] to make the point that only God can be properly prayed to, and not the saints: "For if none can be *invocated* but such as must be *believed in*; and none must be believed in but God alone … Again, all Christians have been taught, that no part of divine worship is to be communicated unto any creature."[231] And again, the fact that the Pope allows for such an honor and power to be applied to creatures, that he allows, in that sense, for the "worship of creatures,"[232] shows that he is the Antichrist who is trying to stand in God's place and take God's power and honor for himself. Ussher also calls upon antiquity to make this case, declaring that prayer to saints, "which smelt so strongly of Idolatry," cannot be found in the tradition "for the space of 360 years together after the birth of our Saviour."[233] This delay is explained because "at first it was not safe to acquaint either the Jews or the Gentiles therewith,"[234] because they would have immediately recognized it as idolatry. Here, as well, we see the implication of Antichrist operating as a "mystery of iniquity," slowly making changes in the Church so that the people do not notice when errors creep in. Ussher poses the question of idolatry again a bit later, saying, "Whereas it hath been the constant doctrine of the ancient Church, that all religious worship (whereof

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[229] Ussher, *Answer*, 118.
[230] "How shall they call upon him, in whom they have not believed?"
[231] Ussher, *Answer*, 377.
[232] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 81v.
[233] Ussher, *Answer*, 379.
[234] Ussher, *Answer*, 379.

Prayer … hath been always esteemed to be an especial part) is so properly due unto God alone, that without committing of Idolatry it cannot be communicated unto any creature."[235] And finally, "it is as clear as the noonday, that the giving of divine honour and worship unto any creature is flat Idolatry."[236] Of all of the "doctrines of devils" and usurping of power, idolatry through prayers to the saints is one that concerns Ussher greatly and which he puts much effort into exposing as one of Antichrist's methods of taking God's place on earth.

Then, of course, we have the outright mentions of Antichrist. While Ussher never calls the Pope Antichrist as directly as we see in Article 80 of the Irish Articles, he does come quite close. He comes right out and calls the practice of asking for the intercession of saints (or any human being who is not Jesus Christ) antichristian: "The Doctrine therefore and the practice of the Church of *Rome* in this point, … must needs be held to be ungodly and *Antichristian*."[237] He also wastes no time in attacking the Jesuits in particular on this topic: when he quotes one such Jesuit author, who recommends praying to the saints as intercessors, as saying, "*So because the Church, which hath the Spirit of Christ, … most frequently hath recourse unto God by the Saints …*" Ussher interjects, parenthetically, "though S. *Augustine* surely would have judged such a Church to be led by the spirit of *Antichrist* rather than of *Christ*."[238] The common practices of the Catholic Church, led by the Pope, show it to be actually led by Antichrist, if the people would only open their eyes to see.

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[235] Ussher, *Answer*, 420.
[236] Ussher, *Answer*, 420.
[237] Ussher, *Answer*, 410.
[238] Ussher, *Answer*, 412.

Hearkening back to his theme of Antichrist preventing the proper study of Scriptures, Ussher remarks that "*S. Chrysostom* in like manner giveth this for a mark of *Antichrist*, and of all spiritual thieves: that they come not in by the door of the Scriptures."[239] This is as he is preparing to tell the story of the followers of Saint Basil versus the followers of Pope Hildebrand, mentioned above. He then goes on to explain "How this mystery of iniquity [was] wrought when *Antichrist* came unto his full growth, and what experiments his followers gave of their thievish entry in this kind."[240] And finally, he makes reference to the Beast of Antichrist[241] by asking "what kind of monster is nourished in the Papacy" when he discusses the Catholic affection for the Virgin Mary.[242] In keeping with the desire to expose the identity of Antichrist, he explains that he deals with such topics so thoroughly "not because I take any delight in rehearsing those things, which deserve rather to be buried in everlasting oblivion: but *first*, that the world may take notice" of these dangerous and antichristian ideas.[243]

There is one major theme that appears throughout this work which we have so far not seen in the shorter documents discussed previously. This is the idea that Antichrist rose to his height in the eleventh century and has been personified in the papacy ever since.[244] Ussher dates this event to "toward the end of the tenth, and the beginnings of the

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[239] Ussher, *Answer*, 42.

[240] Ussher, *Answer*, 42.

[241] Of Revelation, chapter 13.

[242] Ussher, *Answer*, 447.

[243] Ussher, *Answer*, 447.

[244] Though this idea had certainly been in development since very early in Ussher's career; "A similar eschatological exposition of history was the basis of Ussher's first published text, the *Gravissime Quaestionis de Christianarum Ecclesiarum Successione et Statu* (1613)." Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 84. See the discussion in Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 84-91.

eleventh age after the Incarnation of our Saviour Christ."[245] As Ussher puts it in this book, when describing how errors could creep into the Church under the very noses of men, the eleventh century was "an age, wherein men not only slept, but also snorted: it was (if you know it not) the tenth from Christ, the next neighbor to that wherein Hell broke loose."[246] This brings him conveniently close to the thirteenth century, a period which Ussher dubs "the times of darkness," in which new doctrines were devised by the Antichristian papacy "to delude the world withal."[247] Interchanging language used to describe Antichrist with his description of the Pope, Ussher mentions "the power of the Pope (who was now grown to his height)" and Italy as "there where Satan had his throne."[248] Antichrist is the one whom Ussher sees as having come to his full power, and Rome is, of course, the location of the papal throne (we recall the young Ussher's first argument in 1600 that Rome is the seat of Antichrist, and therefore the Pope, who makes his seat in Rome, is Antichrist).[249] His free interchanging of the descriptions of the Pope and Antichrist is one way of indicating how completely intertwined the two are in his mind. "Whether in scholarly pursuit of the details of esoteric chronology, or in providing theological ammunition to counter Jesuit claims, Ussher's work was infused with his hatred and fear of the Antichrist who sat in the Vatican. Apocalyptic hostility to Rome informed his entire worldview."[250]

This dating of the rise of Antichrist has two significant consequences for Ussher, one positive, and one negative. The first, and the positive one, is that dating the rise of

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[245] Ussher, *Answer*, 80.

[246] Ussher, *Answer*, 6; he cites Revelation 20:7 as his proof text.

[247] Ussher, *Answer*, 224.

[248] Ussher, *Answer*, 80.

[249] Bodl. MS Barlow 13, fol. 80r.

[250] Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 82.

Antichrist to just before the thirteenth century allows him to file Pope Innocent III under "Antichrist." Innocent III convened the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, which, among other things, formalized the doctrine of transubstantiation. This doctrine, the "gross conceit" of the Catholics "(of the guttural eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ)"[251] is a horrifying idea to Ussher and his protestant confrères, first forced on the people by "sorceries" and "enchantments,"[252] and one of the clearest signs of Antichrist's work.[253] Ussher mentions Innocent III repeatedly throughout his work when dealing with Antichrist or antichristian (Catholic) beliefs.[254] One negative result of this dating, however, relates to Ussher's own minority position as an Irish protestant, descended from a long line of Anglo-Irish gentry. As a proud Irishman, Ussher wished to reconcile a religion which he viewed as the absolute truth, but which most of his countrymen saw as simply an attempt by the English Crown to exert its power over them. One of his main goals in writing his works of "doctrinal history"[255] was to show that the Church of Ireland was more closely related to the primitive church than the Catholic Church was,[256] but also, by extension, that it was closer to the early Irish church as established by Saint Patrick than the early modern Catholic Church was.[257] However, as an Anglo-Irishman descended from the Norman invaders who first arrived on Ireland shores in 1169, this

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[251] Ussher, *Answer*, 68.

[252] Ussher, *Answer*, 67.

[253] Ussher uses as his proof text 2 Thess 2:9: "*whose coming* was foretold to be *after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, & lying wonders.*" Ussher, *Answer*, 67.

[254] See, for example, Ussher, *Answer*, pp. 81, 105, 227.

[255] Ussher, *Answer*, "To The Reader", sig. Ar.

[256] Ussher, *Answer*, 1.

[257] Ford, "The Irish Historical Renaissance and the Shaping of Protestant History" in *The Origins of Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland*, ed. Alan Ford and John McCafferty (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 148-149; and Ute Lotz-Heumann, "The Protestant Interpretation of the History of Ireland: The Case of James Ussher's *Discourse*" in *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth Century Europe, II: The Later Reformation*, ed. Bruce Gordon (Aldershot, 1996), 111.

posed Ussher with a serious problem: "if Ussher had really made the last step and explicitly connected the general Protestant historical chronology with the history of his own people, he would have had to say that the Old English helped Antichrist to gain control over the Irish church" by bringing Rome into contact with the hitherto "pure" Celtic church of Ussher's history.[258] "This was the identity conflict in which Ussher as a Protestant Old Englishman found himself and which he could not successfully resolve."[259] Thus, even Ussher's expertise as a theologian and a historian could not completely account for his own views on Antichrist's role in the course of salvation and world history.

We can tell from his writing and his manner of approaching his topics that Ussher and his Church were in a much more secure position then they had been two and a half decades before. Ussher expressed confidence in his writing. While the Church of Ireland had been less than successful in its goal of converting the Catholic populace, its numbers had swelled nonetheless thanks to an influx of Scottish Presbyterian settlers over the previous two decades.[260] A solidly protestant population, with its own national confession, and backed by a newly enthusiastic monarchy, stood behind Ussher as he composed this answer to Malone's challenge. Considering the dismal material and financial state of the Church of Ireland at this point,[261] Ussher should be discouraged, yet he is not. Confidence shines forth in his writing, even more so than in his opponent's

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[258] Lotz-Heumann, 116-117.

[259] Lotz-Heumann, 116-117.

[260] Ford, "Puritan Church," 64-65.

[261] The difficulties of finances and personnel in the Church of Ireland have been well-documented. Two articles of note on this topic are Ellis, "Economic Problems of the Church," in which he suggests that the dismal financial situation of the Church contributed in a major way to the failure of the Reformation; and McCafferty, "Protestant Prelates," in which he describes the conflicting expectations placed upon the protestant clergy in Ireland and the difficulties that ensued thereby.

reply.[262] He has the weight of an established church with an established doctrine behind him. The fact that he is able to make his connection to Antichrist with more subtlety than before shows that he is confident that he is backed up by other sources: since the proof does not rest entirely on his ability to show it, he is able to focus more on the task at hand, that is, the discussion of antiquity. And even his approach to antiquity shows more confidence: he can admit that he values it, and he even takes the interestingly ecumenical step of offering that the ancient Roman church, though blemished, was still not so far removed from grace that "there is no necessity, that hereupon presently she must cease to be our sister."[263]

Ussher's "doctrinal history", as he calls it,[264] thus allows us a glimpse into the fuller development of the Church of Ireland two and a half decades after our study had begun, especially in regards to the development of the Church's theology of the papal Antichrist. The first thing to note is the appearance, once again, of those characteristics of Antichrist which we have seen in the previous two documents: the primacy of scriptures, teaching the doctrines of devils, usurping power that belongs to God, and operating as a mystery of iniquity. However, these ideas have been elaborated and expanded, thanks in part to the longer format of the book. The question of the timing of Antichrist's rise to power, and of his coming to his height in the eleventh century, is an addition which does not appear in the earlier works, though, again, the larger format of the book allows for Ussher to delve into this theme in much more detail.

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[262] Malone was clearly distracted by the pressing issue of proving Catholic loyalty in the face of political pressures; see his "Epistle Dedicatory" to Charles I in his *Reply*.

[263] Ussher, *Answer*, 398, 22.

[264] Ussher, *Answer*, "To The Reader", sig. Ar.

What we do see is a development in the vehemence with which Ussher writes about these issues surrounding Antichrist. Despite all of the support and confidence on the part of the Church of Ireland, the historical circumstances discussed at the beginning of this chapter influenced Ussher's response to his Catholic challenger. The Church of Ireland in the 1620s was beginning to feel pressure to conform from the very government that it relied on for support and validation. The Irish protestant fear of Antichrist, now seen as a threat from both the Catholics and the Laudian Church of England, had reached a near-fever pitch. Ussher's writing conveys the urgency which this topic demanded, that the world should recognize Antichrist in the papacy and cast him out of God's church once and for all. Ussher used this opportunity remind King James of his duties and past history as a godly monarch in the Epistle Dedicatory, and again even more severely in his sermon at Wansted several months later.[265]

So indeed, this response that Ussher gives to the Jesuit's challenge shows us two sides of the same coin regarding the development of the Church of Ireland. On the one hand was a church which had grown into a solidly rooted, stable entity with a functioning hierarchy and a cache (albeit small) of trained clergy to fill its ranks. It had a doctrine which the clergy agreed upon and a university with a well-stocked library that even attracted students from outside the country.[266] It was thoroughly convinced of its ties to

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[265] The latter half of the "Epistle Dedicatory" reminds James that "from a child have you been trained up to this warfare" and "How constant you have been ever since in the profession and maintenance of the truth", as well as quoting a lengthy passage from the king's speech against a petition giving leniency to recusants; Ussher, *Answer*, sig. A5v and following. See also his pleas for help in the Irish mission in his *Briefe Declaration*, 33-34.

[266] Elizabethanne Boran, "An Early Friendship Network of James Ussher," 119, 128; and Ford, *Ussher*, 33.

the primitive church and the purity of its faith.[267] But on the other hand, it was a church

which was aware of its lack of resonance with the majority of the population.[268] It feared

the gap that was growing between its theology and that of its sister in England, and it was

scrambling to sway the opinion of the king before the Laudian factions gained too much

power. Ussher's *Answer to a Challenge* is a prime example of the balancing act in which

the Church of Ireland found itself as the reign of King James came to a close, displaying

at the same time confidence and fear, and an unswerving commitment to its apocalyptic

theology even when such a commitment could, and eventually did, bring about the

downfall of the uniquely Irish character of the Church of Ireland.

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[267] Speaking against the Catholics: "… *they* have only the shell without the kernel and *we* the kernel without the shell … we … having relinquished these words and observances, but retained nevertheless the same primitive doctrine, unto which by their first institution they had relation." Ussher, "Epistle Dedicatory", *Answer*, sig. A5r-v.

[268] For one thing, Ussher makes repeated references to the general Irish population as "simple people" who are deluded by the teachings of the Catholic Church; see, for example, Ussher, *Answer*, 30; "Epistle Dedicatory", sig. A5r; Ussher's *Briefe Declaration*, 33-34; Bodl. MS Sancroft 18, p. 9; and Bodl. MS Perrot 9, fol. 3v.

Chapter 4

Coda

The period following the death of King James and the accession of his son, Charles I, in 1625 was one of mounting tension for the Church of Ireland's leadership. The sense of threat that the Church felt from both the Irish Catholics and the Church of England only intensified as the years passed. While the "Catholic Match" planned for Charles with the *infanta* of Spain was unsuccessful, Charles did indeed take a Catholic wife in Princess Henrietta Maria of France. However, the failure of the Spanish match resulted in a revival of England's war with Spain in 1624. Political pressure from the Catholic French monarchy, combined with his desperate need of funds to pay for the war with Spain, pressured Charles to extend some leniency to the Catholics of Ireland. The Old English used this opportunity to press the king into allowing them to serve in arms, thereby forcing the king to accept that their Catholicism in no way affected their loyalty to the Crown, in return for their financial aid. Charles was inclined to agree; his protestant bishops were horrified.[269]

In May of 1626 a letter endorsed by several Irish bishops warned the English leadership against the purchasing of toleration by the Catholics in Dublin, calling the Catholic religion "popery, superstition, & idolatry" and insisting that any form of toleration of such heresy would be "a grievous sin."[270] This letter apparently went

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[269] Aidan Clarke, "Selling Royal Favours, 1624-32" in *A New History of Ireland*, Vol. III: "Early Modern Ireland 1534-1691," ed. T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin, and F.J. Byrne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 234.
[270] Bodleian Library, Oxford: MS Sancroft 18, p. 19.

unheeded, for in November 1626, the Irish bishops met to prepare "a statement castigating the royal proposal to 'set religion to sale'."[271] These actions illustrate the desperation of the protestant leadership in Ireland, and reveal the precariousness of their position amongst the people: they had good reason to fear that if Catholics had any more power, they would find ways to diminish and eventually starve out the protestant church. Religious toleration meant, among other things, the ability to hold large amounts of land and goods, levy taxes, and make political decisions, all privileges which were gradually being taken away from the Irish Catholic gentry in the early seventeenth century. What control the Catholics had left they were using to support illegal priests rather than pay living wages to protestant ministers.[272] The bishops' statement against toleration was made public for the first time through a series of sermons in April 1627, which the protestant citizens of Ireland roundly supported.[273]

King Charles' precarious financial state forced him to offer a set of concessions to the Catholic gentry in Ireland, which were termed "the Graces," in 1628 in return for their financial support of his foreign wars.[274] These promises fell short of lifting the existing recusancy fines or allowing Catholics to hold public office, and by 1629 the government had once again stepped up efforts to repress the public practice of Catholicism "by discontinuing the tacit policy of religious toleration."[275] But the damage had been done. The Irish protestants, disillusioned by Charles' willingness to compromise on the repression of the followers of Antichrist, had seen their theological

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[271] Clarke, "Selling Royal Favours," 234.
[272] Lennon, "Rise of Recusancy," 128.
[273] Clarke, "Selling Royal Favours," 236.
[274] Clarke, "Selling Royal Favours," 239-240.
[275] Clarke, "Selling Royal Favours," 240.

raison d'être undermined by the king himself.[276] They could feel their independence and ability to run their church in a uniquely Irish way slipping**,** despite their efforts to cling to their so recently defined Irish protestant identity. The situation, set on this trajectory, continued to decline in the following years.

During this time, as well, the rise of Laudianism in the Church of England progressed, and the ideological separation between the Churches of England and Ireland increased.[277] Most alarming to the Irish leadership was the English rejection of the idea of Antichrist in general, and the idea of the papal Antichrist in particular. "The rejection of Antichrist, the rejection of the pope as Antichrist" had been "picking up momentum through the 1630s" in the Church of England.[278] The era of independence and specifically Irish character in the Church of Ireland ended soon after William Laud was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1633. He quickly set about reigning in the nonconformity of the Irish church to bring it more in line with the English through a series of ecclesiastical reforms.[279] The effects of this, however, were stymied by the heightened state of apocalyptic unease already in place in the leadership of the Church of Ireland. Laud, along with Lord Deputy Thomas Wentworth and Bishop John Bramhall of Derry, quickly realized that "weeding out nonconformity required major constitutional change in the Church of Ireland."[280]

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[276] McCafferty, "Protestant Prelates," 67.

[277] For more information about the rise of Laudianism and traditionalist factions in the Church of England, see Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 1-27; Tyacke, 111ff.; and Fincham and Tyacke, 74ff.

[278] McCafferty, "Protestant Prelates," 67. See also Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, 93-127.

[279] Ford, "Puritan Church", 66; and Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, 94. See also John McCafferty, *The Reconstruction of the Church of Ireland: Bishop Bramhall and the Laudian Reforms, 1633-1641* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) for further reading on the effects of Laud's policies in Ireland.

[280] Ford, "Puritan Church," 66.

By 1633, the Church of Ireland was developed and cohesive enough that it could put up serious resistance to Laud's reforming attempts. "What Wentworth and Bramhall wanted was the adoption of the Thirty-Nine Articles and of the 1604 canons, verbatim, by the Church of Ireland. What they got, after a certain amount of arm-twisting, fell significantly short."[281] Ussher, as Primate of the Church of Ireland, was ordered by Wentworth to prepare an Irish set of canons which recognized *all* of the articles of the Thirty-Nine Articles, and which required subscription by all of the Church of Ireland clergy.[282] Ussher's version, however, left out a requirement for subscription, so Wentworth was forced to write his own. The convocation of clergy in 1634 would not accept the Thirty-Nine Articles as they were, and "Ussher insisted that the Irish Articles had not been repealed by the adoption of the English, with the result that the two were left in a curiously ill-fitting tandem."[283] In the end, a compromise version was reached, which incorporated "most of the English canons, but nevertheless retaining distinctly Irish elements" that pointed to the Church of Ireland's more puritan influences in liturgy and practice.[284] While the Laudian reforms were not what Laud had perhaps envisioned initially in the Church of Ireland, they nevertheless spelled the end of the "golden age" of the Church of Ireland. The puritan element was significantly curbed, and the Church of Ireland would never again experience the theological freedom from the English establishment that it had enjoyed in those first few decades of the seventeenth century.

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[281] Ford, "Puritan Church," 66.

[282] The Irish Articles of 1615 did not require subscription, which allowed the more nonconformist elements of the church considerably more room to maneuver, especially when it came to matters of liturgy.

[283] Ford, "Puritan Church," 67.

[284] Ford, "Puritan Church," 67.

Conclusion

The Church of Ireland developed significantly over the approximately thirty-year period covered in this paper. The Reformation in Ireland was both a religious and political conquest by the English monarch, which lent a whole new dimension to the already turbulent process of realizing a sweeping religious and cultural change throughout the kingdom. While there had been a small number of enthusiastic, earnest protestant converts in the Anglo-Irish community in the mid-sixteenth century, the majority of the Dublin gentry were content to practice a form of flexible conformity, attending the state church while still practicing and holding to Catholic beliefs.[285] This began to change in the late 1570s and 1580s, when the arrival of two opposing forces brought the theological issues to bear in the sowing of reformation ideas: the English puritans, and the Jesuit missionaries.

The clergy of the Church of Ireland during the sixteenth century tended to consist overwhelmingly of English implants.[286] They had little connection to the land or its people, they could not speak the Irish language spoken by the vast majority of the population, and they were recognized as symbols of a foreign government flexing its muscles in Ireland. They made almost no headway in converting the general populace, and by the last decade of the sixteenth century their church was in material ruin and psychological despair.[287] It was recognized as early as 1547 by the protestant leadership in Ireland that a protestant university was necessary to train the people of Ireland in the

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[285] Canny, "Why the Reformation Failed in Ireland," 433.

[286] Though Ussher's uncle, Henry Ussher, served as Archbishop of Armagh from 1595-1613: Ford, "Ussher, James" *ODNB*, 6. The English implants included such famous names as John Bale and George Browne; see Heal, 1-3; and Bradshaw, "Sword, Word and Strategy," 478.

[287] Ellis, "Economic Problems of the Church."

ways of the new reforms if any gains were to be made amongst the Irish population.[288] However, by the time Trinity College Dublin was founded in 1592, more than two generations of evangelizing opportunity had slipped through the fingers of the Church of Ireland.

The Church began to undergo a dramatic change at the turn of the seventeenth century as the first students of Trinity were attaining their degrees. In the students, the protestant preaching ministers had a captive audience. Many of the early faculty at Trinity were English puritans who were escaping the growing pressures of the religious climate in England under Elizabeth.[289] As their reforming impulses saw them increasingly labeled as nonconformist in England, those who desired opportunities for advancement in ecclesiastical or academic endeavors found welcome in the Church of Ireland, a safe distance removed from the church authorities in England. Their "puritan" inclinations were passed on to their students, who went on to become the next generation of leaders in the Church of Ireland. The effects of Trinity's establishment extended to purely practical matters as well. At the end of Elizabeth's reign, the preaching clergy in Ireland were poorly trained and under-educated, thanks to the Church's inability to offer wages and livings to compete with posts in England. John McCafferty makes the witty observation that "It is hard to avoid the impression that the Irish episcopate was, in this light, somewhat of a 'B' league."[290] However, after the accession of James, and as his reign progressed, the leadership of the Church of Ireland regularly sported Bachelor's degrees in Arts or Divinity, and some even attained their Doctorates of Divinity.[291] They

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[288] Lennon, *Lords of Dublin*, 139.

[289] Ford, "Puritan Church," 55; and Ford, *Ussher*, 45.

[290] McCafferty, "Protestant Prelates," 62.

[291] Ussher was awarded his M.A. in 1601, and his D.D. in 1613: Ford, *Ussher*, 32.

were no longer a rag-tag group of country preachers, but an organization of well-trained ministers of the Church. By the time Laud set out to reform the Church of Ireland, he was forced to deconstruct an entire existing system rather than simply tweak a few details. The first 34 years of the seventeenth century had seen an all-encompassing transformation in the state of the protestant church in Ireland.

The more puritan-minded training of Trinity College combined with the reality that the protestant faith was very much a minority movement in Ireland to produce a Reformed theology that mimicked the theology of the Church of England in many ways but which had a distinctly Irish flavor about it. One of the most conspicuous was the way in which an apocalyptic theology, with the idea of the papal Antichrist at its center, shaped the theological and institutional development of the Church of Ireland. What stands out about this Antichrist theology in particular is the widespread acceptance of the idea, even when the English church and government moved away from it, and the vehemence with which this idea was promoted by the Irish protestant leadership.

In the course of this paper we explored how the idea of the papal Antichrist could be used as an indicator of the theological maturation and the constantly changing place in Anglo-Irish society that the Church of Ireland occupied in the early seventeenth century. The most striking and immediate observation which we encountered was the recurrence of three major themes throughout the three documents, themes which laid the groundwork for the identification of the Pope as Antichrist. As these themes appeared in each of the documents that we examined, we were able then to use their development as a basis for analysis of how far the Church of Ireland had come in its theology, and in which direction it was headed both theologically and politically.

In the first document, the transcript of the disputation between Ussher and Fitzsimon, we could glimpse the state of the Church of Ireland's theology at the end of the sixteenth century, while also seeing indications of how the Church was beginning to develop in its own right. First we noted the appearance of four ideas which we would follow throughout our study and which would form the basis for our analysis of the later documents: that the Pope is the Antichrist embodied in the world today, that he operates in secret as a "mystery of iniquity," that he teaches the doctrine of devils, and that he usurps for himself what is proper to God. The arguments that Ussher used to advance his position of the papal Antichrist were very much scripturally-based, indicating that the idea of a return to the Scriptures was strongly present in Irish protestant theology, just as it was in Reformed theologies throughout Europe. Also, the fact that Ussher, who was still a student at Trinity at the time of this disputation, suggested the topic of the papal Antichrist as the first *quaestio* to be argued is significant in that it indicates to us that an apocalyptic mentality and a commitment to the belief in the papal Antichrist were already present in the Church of Ireland's theology, at least as it was being cultivated in the minds of the Trinity students.

It also gave us a glimpse of the relative positions of Catholics and protestants in Anglo-Irish Dublin at that time in history. Our understanding of the societal and political circumstances is just as important as our understanding of the established doctrine at that time, since these events would affect the theology of the emerging Church, and vice-versa, in the years to come. For instance, we saw that the established church in Dublin was either unwilling or unable to furnish a champion for the protestant cause in response to Fitzsimon's initial challenge, hence the arrival of young Ussher on the scene. This

shows that, for one thing, the leadership of the Church of Ireland at that time had more practical concerns than engaging in academic debate with "heretics," as other groups and localities in Europe had.[292] It is also my opinion that, considering that the Church of Ireland lacked a clearly-defined confession of faith[293] and had a large nonconformist contingent in its ranks, it implies a certain amount of nervousness or lack of confidence, perhaps, in an Irish responder's ability to frame his replies within a doctrinally and politically acceptable sphere. When viewed in light of the contemporary Catholic Anglo-Irish confidence in their political power and their role as the governors of Ireland, these circumstances highlight the still-struggling state of the Church of Ireland at the dawn of the seventeenth century.

We then jumped forward fifteen years, to the convocation of 1613-1615, to examine the new confession of faith as it was laid out in the Irish Articles of 1615. We saw the same four themes regarding the Antichrist that Ussher had brought up in his debate with Fitzsimon appear scattered throughout the individual articles. The Articles went so far as to flat-out name the Pope as "that man of sin," the Antichrist, in Article 80. This was the first time that this idea had been given official, confessional status, both within Ireland and abroad. Its inclusion demonstrated the Irish protestant commitment to exposing the identity of the papal Antichrist and thereby destroying his ability to operate as a "mystery of iniquity" in the world. It also showed how deeply entrenched an apocalyptic mentality and a theology of Antichrist had become in the Irish protestant belief system: that an entire convocation of bishops and lower clergy could agree to its

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[292] Ford, *Ussher*, 60-61; and Jackson, 103-104, 107.

[293] The Church of Ireland relied on the Twelve Articles of 1567 from England, which were "a bland and unexceptional statement of essential reformation principles," hardly tailored to the Irish protestant experience; see Ford, "Puritan Church," 57.

inclusion in their confession suggests that it was a common and deeply-held belief which these men considered to be an important and defining component of their church's theology.

These considerations also point us to developments on the social and political fronts for the Church of Ireland; again, developments which both affected and were affected by the developing theology of the Church. First, they show that the Irish bishops now enjoyed the confidence of having strength in numbers. Before 1613, there had not been a need for a national convocation of protestant bishops. It is significant that the product of this first national convocation was an Irish confession of faith, and significant too that this confession included a widespread apocalyptic theology and an unabashed affirmation of the existence of the papal Antichrist. Putting such seemingly contentious material into a formal document like the national confession shows that the Irish bishops were aware of their isolation from the Irish majority, on the one hand, but also aware of the growing gap between the Irish and English churches on the other hand. The fact that the Irish bishops even felt the need for a national confession to define the beliefs of the Church of Ireland, rather than just relying on equivalent documents from England, shows how far they had come in this regard. It also shows us, though, that while the Irish bishops were aware of this growing gulf between themselves and England, it didn't seem to bother them very much, at least not to the point of making them compromise on one of their key beliefs. Defining and enshrining their convictions about the papal Antichrist was ultimately deemed more important than smoothing out Irish-English relations in matters of religion and foreign policy. At the same time, the Catholics of Dublin were beginning to realize that their position as the rulers of English-speaking Ireland was being

threatened by the growing numbers of English and Scottish protestants settling in Ireland, who had also added a much-needed boost to the numbers of the Church of Ireland. And, interestingly, despite their brazen move of including such contentious Antichrist theology in their Articles, the Church of Ireland bishops demonstrated a sensitivity to the realities of a religiously mixed society at home: scattered throughout the Articles are particularly Irish concerns, such as the necessity of keeping one's word even with heretics, and a mention of the importance of making the Bible available in all languages so that everyone could hear and understand its message.

By the time we reached our final installment in this analysis, the Church of Ireland and the politics that surrounded it had both changed considerably from our first encounter with the Church in 1600. Ussher's portion of his printed debate with William Malone in 1624 included familiar themes but with new developments. The main indicators of the papal Antichrist appeared once again, but thanks in part to the longer format of the book, Ussher was able to elaborate on these themes and draw support from a variety of ancient and contemporary sources. Another theme regarding Antichrist also appears for the first time in this study, though it was many years in the making in Ussher's personal theological studies: that is, the dating of the rise of Antichrist in world history, with his coming into the height of his power in the eleventh century. This chronology allowed Ussher to elaborate on the abuses of the papal Antichrist in the preceding several centuries, but it also placed him in a difficult position as an Anglo-Irish protestant historian, who sought to prove the purity of the early Irish church and the continuity of the Church of Ireland with it. Despite his extensive work on Antichrist and

the developments that had occurred in the previous twenty-five years, there were still obstacles in this line of thinking which Ussher had been unable to fully resolve.

This final document, and the historical circumstances surrounding it, showed two sides of a church which was confident on the one hand, but worried on the other. First, we could see how much more confident Ussher had become in his writing about this topic. He had the weight of an established church with a national confession behind him, and so he was able to elaborate on his points with more subtlety and nuance than before, without carrying the burden of proof entirely on his own shoulders, as he had done as a young man in his disputation with Fitzsimon. But on the other hand, we can divine a growing sense of urgency in Ussher's writing; his approach to exposing the identity of the papal Antichrist seems to only have increased, and not decreased as might be expected from a church which was feeling more confidently situated in its societal context. This suggests that, while the Church of Ireland had indeed developed in its theology and self-identity, its sense of being firmly situated to bear up against pressures from both England and Catholic Ireland is contradicted by Ussher's approach in his book.

The "golden age" of the Church of Ireland was brief, lasting less than forty years. However, as a matter of Irish self-identity in a time of tumult and political conquest, it was an important stage for the Church to go through and one which raises interesting questions of "what if" regarding the timing and outcome of the religious reformations in Ireland. By the time of Laud's crackdown on nonconformity in the Irish church, the struggling, unorganized entity which had lacked coherence and a base of support in Ireland in the sixteenth century had grown into an institution, albeit a minority, which had its own customs and practice, its own university, its own national confession, and a

Primate in the person of James Ussher who was not only Irish-born and of Anglo-Irish stock, but who had also completed all of his education, right through D.D., in Ireland. When considered on these terms, the Church of the early seventeenth century shows us that, indeed, the Reformation was perhaps not entirely decided by the close of the sixteenth century. Perhaps in different financial or political circumstances, even the late-starting Church of Ireland could have had a stronger impact on the religious landscape of Ireland than it ultimately did. However, considering its difficult circumstances, the theological maturation of the Church of Ireland at the beginning of the seventeenth century is an important subject to explore if the events and upheavals of the early and mid-seventeenth centuries in Ireland are to be properly understood by modern historians.

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