



"Angels and Demons in Cromwellian and Restoration Ireland: Heresy and the Supernatural"

Gribben, C. (2013). "Angels and Demons in Cromwellian and Restoration Ireland: Heresy and the Supernatural". *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 76(3), 377-392.

Published in:

Huntington Library Quarterly

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:

[Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal](#)

Publisher rights

© 2013 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved.

Published as "Angels and Demons in Cromwellian and Restoration Ireland: Heresy and the Supernatural"

Author(s): Crawford Gribben
Source: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 76, No. 3 (Autumn 2013), pp. 377-392
Published. © 2013 by the Regents of the University of California. Copying and permissions notice: Authorization to copy this content beyond fair use (as specified in Sections 107 and 108 of the U. S. Copyright Law) for internal or personal use, or the internal or personal use of specific clients, is granted by [the Regents of the University of California/on behalf of the Sponsoring Society] for libraries and other users, provided that they are registered with and pay the specified fee via Rightslink® or directly with the Copyright Clearance Center.

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Queen's University Belfast Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The Research Portal is Queen's institutional repository that provides access to Queen's research output. Every effort has been made to ensure that content in the Research Portal does not infringe any person's rights, or applicable UK laws. If you discover content in the Research Portal that you believe breaches copyright or violates any law, please contact openaccess@qub.ac.uk.



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
JOURNALS + DIGITAL PUBLISHING

Angels and Demons in Cromwellian and Restoration Ireland: Heresy and the Supernatural

Author(s): Crawford Gribben

Source: *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 76, No. 3 (Autumn 2013), pp. 377-392

Published by: [University of California Press](http://www.ucpress.edu)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/hlq.2013.76.3.377>

Accessed: 15/01/2014 05:14

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



University of California Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to
Huntington Library Quarterly.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Angels and Demons in Cromwellian and Restoration Ireland: Heresy and the Supernatural

Crawford Gribben

ABSTRACT This essay explores accounts of supernatural activity in Cromwellian and Restoration Ireland. Religious life in Cromwellian Ireland was driven by expectations of the unusual—including audible voices from heaven, material encounters with angels, and spiritual encounters with demons. Some conservative Protestants linked this activity to the development and dissemination of heretical belief, while some who had such encounters were confident that it was compatible with the Cromwellian religious mainstream. Crawford Gribben explores the flexibility in the discourse of the marvelous in Ireland and the ways in which the administration contributed to it, and the alignment of the supernatural with various confessional convictions and postures, as well as theological radicalism. After the Restoration, accounts of supernatural encounters were remembered as ghost stories, not as matters for theological debate, a cultural transition linked to the development of a historiography that has continued to invest the Irish Cromwellian past with Gothic tropes. **KEYWORDS:** Gothic tropes and Irish historiography; the re-enchantment of Irish Puritanism; religious radicalism in seventeenth-century Ireland; *sola scriptura*; Valentine Greatrakes

☞ **STRANGE THINGS WERE HAPPENING** in Cromwellian Ireland.¹ While many of the godly had gathered in congregations in and around the major urban centers, others of “Christ’s Sheep” had become “scattered Lambs, wandering in the wilds,

1. For recent work on the religious cultures of Cromwellian Ireland, see Sarah Barber, “Irish Undercurrents of the Politics of April 1653,” *Historical Research* 65 (1992): 315–35; Jason McElligott, “Cromwell, Drogheda, and the Abuse of Irish History,” *Bullán* 6, no. 1 (2001): 109–32; T. C. Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland: English Government and Reform in Ireland, 1649–1660* (Oxford, 1975; 2nd ed., 2000), xi–xxx; Crawford Gribben, *God’s Irishmen: Theological Debates in Cromwellian Ireland* (Oxford, 2007); Albert Joseph Loomie, “Oliver Cromwell’s Policy toward the English Catholics: The Appraisal by Diplomats, 1654–1658,” *Catholic Historical Review* 90, no. 1 (2004): 29–44; and Crawford Gribben, “English Poetry in Cromwellian Ireland,” *Seventeenth Century* 25, no. 2 (2010): 281–99. Except where indicated otherwise, the city of publication is London.

and among the rocks,” complained Claudius Gilbert, an Independent minister in Limerick.² Widely varied heretical errors were circulating among these “scattered Lambs,” while there was, he feared, “a fallacious plausibility in many things said.”³ In such “slippery dayes” of theological confusion, many of these solitary “professors” were “ready to slide into gross errors before they be aware.”⁴ More dangerous than the errors themselves were “Satanical Spirits and Instruments” that sought to benefit from the circulation of errors. Such evil spirits could “prevail easily with solitary Persons,”⁵ Gilbert continued, and the consequences he witnessed reflected “the Tragedy of hell let loose.”⁶ Isolated believers were falling prey to heresy, and its sudden spread was the token of a malevolent supernatural visitation.⁷

Gilbert’s fears were confirmed by his investigation of the strange case of Colonel Henry Bowen, a Welsh soldier who was sent to Ireland during the Cromwellian invasion. Bowen’s career had begun respectably enough, when he earned distinction on the Parliamentary side in the civil wars, but, as it was later reported, “as soon as the heat of the War was abated, his Ease and Preferment led him to a careless and sensual Life.” The “godly Commanders judged him unfit to continue in England, and thereupon sent him to Ireland, where he grew so vain and notional, that he was cashiered the Army; and being then at liberty to sin without any Restraint, he became an absolute Atheist, denying Heaven or Hell, God or Devil.”⁸ Bowen, it seems, had taken advantage of the confessional fluidity of Irish Protestant life to move “from Sect to Sect” and to proceed “to Infidelity if not to Atheism.”⁹ These conclusions, reported by contemporaries, were probably overdrawn, but in the early 1650s Bowen certainly found himself moving beyond the acceptable boundaries of the confessional mainstream to embrace an unusual and highly individualistic combination of antinomian theology and an emerging deism. Like a number of other employees of the new administration, however, he discovered that unorthodox opinions were more than merely a barrier to social or military advancement. Bowen was court-martialed for his new faith, but while he was still imprisoned, sometime in 1655, an “apparition” bearing his likeness

2. Claudius Gilbert, *The Blessed Peace-maker and Christian Reconciler: Intended for the healing of all unnatural and unchristian divisions, in all relations* (1658), 76–77. The passage echoes the language of Ezekiel 34. On Gilbert, see ODNB, s.v. “Gilbert, Claudius, the Elder (d. 1696?),” by T. C. Barnard.

3. Claudius Gilbert, *The Libertine School’d, or a Vindication of the Magistrates Power in Religious Matters. In answer to some fallacious quaeries scattered about the city of Limerick, by a nameless author, about the 15th of December, 1656* (1657), sig. Bv.

4. *Ibid.*, 55.

5. Gilbert, *The Blessed Peace-maker and Christian Reconciler*, 76–77.

6. Gilbert, *The Libertine School’d*, 25.

7. On early modern angelology and its social, intellectual, and theological contexts, see Raymond Gillespie, “Imagining Angels in Early Modern Ireland,” in *Angels in the Early Modern World*, ed. Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge, 2006), 214–31; Peter Marshall, *Mother Leakey and the Bishop: A Ghost Story* (Oxford, 2007); and Joad Raymond, *Milton’s Angels: The Early-Modern Imagination* (Oxford, 2010).

8. Richard Baxter, *The Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits and, Consequently, of the Immortality of Souls of the Malice and Misery of the Devils and the Damned: And of the blessedness of the justified, fully evinced by the unquestionable histories of apparitions, operations, witchcrafts &c.* (1691), 23–24.

9. The confessional fluidity of Irish Protestant life is described in Gribben, *God’s Irishmen*; see Richard Baxter, *Reasons of the Christian Religion* (1667), 149.

appeared before his wife and family in his household in Llanelin, Gower, “speaking, walking before them, laying hold on them, hurting them in time of Prayer.”¹⁰ Bowen later returned to Wales to investigate the strange occurrence, but his skepticism as to the possibility of the extraordinary prevented his drawing any firm conclusions: he refused to believe in his own ghost. Up to then, his heresies had not been of the mystical sort, but this familial association with a “haunting” demonstrated to his critics that he had become the target of dangerous supernatural forces.

That was certainly how these strange events were understood in Ireland. Claudius Gilbert investigated the haunting and interviewed the people involved, reporting to a colleague Bowen’s quip that he would give ten thousand pounds “to know the Truth about God.”¹¹ In a private conversation that was reported in October 1658, Gilbert insisted that the haunting proved the significance of his point about the spiritual dangers of a believer’s isolation. Bowen’s drift toward heretical opinions and the supernatural visitation it apparently precipitated were evidence that, as Gilbert had feared, “Satanical Spirits . . . prevail easily with solitary Persons.”¹² The events were seen as a lesson for saints across the three kingdoms. In the opinion of the Welsh Independent theologian Morgan Llwyd, the haunting of Colonel Henry Bowen was a signal reminder of the spiritual dangers of error. “Rem[ember] Bowen of Swanzey,” he jotted in his notebook, as he reflected on the link between heresy and the supernatural in and beyond Cromwellian Ireland.¹³



Irish Protestants, during and after the Puritan revolution, were in some ways more hospitable to what they viewed as supernatural experiences than they had been before the 1640s, but this receptivity has attracted little scholarly interest. In part, this is a reflection of wider historiographical trends. Several decades ago, F. S. L. Lyons noted that the “social history of Ireland may be compared to a series of holes held together by a few tenuous threads,” and his comment continues to reflect the state of scholarship on the “worlds of wonder” said to be abroad in Ireland during the mid-seventeenth century crisis.¹⁴ In Ireland, as in England, Protestants did not remove the “magic” from “religion.”¹⁵ But such a summary, though accurate overall, needs refinement with

10. Baxter, *Reasons of the Christian Religion*, 148–49.

11. Baxter, *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, 35–36.

12. Gilbert, *Blessed Peace-maker and Christian Reconciler*, 76–77. Gilbert’s reports of the haunting were eventually passed to Baxter; see *Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits*, 35. Gilbert’s investigations of occult phenomena continued throughout the 1680s and early 1690s, as reported by Baxter, 214–17, 247–49.

13. Stephen K. Roberts, “Welsh Puritanism in the Interregnum,” *History Today* 41 (1991): 38.

14. F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine* (London, 1971; 1973), 7. Armstrong notes that “little detailed work specifically on the Protestants of Ireland, beyond 1641, has been published,” and “the question of whether there was a [Protestant] ‘community’ . . . or a ‘Protestant interest’” is one that his work insistently interrogates; Robert Armstrong, *Protestant War: The “British” of Ireland and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms* (Manchester, 2005), 12; see also Gribben, *God’s Irishmen*, and Raymond Gillespie, *Devoted People: Belief and Religion in Early Modern Ireland* (Manchester, 1997). A more popular account was provided by St. John D. Seymour in *Irish Witchcraft and Demonology* (Dublin, 1913).

15. Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), 3.

respect to Ireland's very different religious environment—an environment in which the administration, despite its intention of promoting religious reformation, failed to establish an orthodox center. Across the spectrum of Protestant opinion, contemporaries repeatedly elevated the subjective data of experience over the authority of scripture. Without an undisputed and authoritative theological foundation, the subjective realm could appear even more error-prone in the eyes of those who considered themselves “orthodox,” and who, in the context of theological debate, designated their opponents not merely as heretical but also as victims of demonic attack.

The distinctive spiritual, legal, and political experience of early modern Ireland supported a distinctively supernatural environment. There was, for example, little to compare with the witch hunts of other areas in the three kingdoms. St. John D. Seymour, who had access to the Cromwellian records before their destruction in 1922, recorded only one incident of a formal witchcraft prosecution in Ireland, and even then, he noted, the accused was acquitted.¹⁶ But accusations of witchcraft, or other forms of spiritual malevolence, extended far beyond the courts. These accusations emerged from a long literary tradition that had engaged in the (sometimes literal) demonizing of the native Irish. John Derrick's *The Image of Ireland* (1581) had described the native Irish as “monsters,” as being a “graceless cursed race,” like “Satans ympes.”¹⁷ Edmund Spenser's *View of the Present State of Ireland* (entered in the Stationer's Register in 1598; published in 1633) documented cases of cannibalism and suggested the existence of werewolves.¹⁸ These literary traditions were consolidated in the decade after the publication of Spenser's *View*, as victims of the 1641 rising recorded their sufferings and losses. The depositions routinely insisted on the inhumanity of the native Irish. Rebels were represented as being guilty of the worst kinds of abominations—rape, mutilation, murder, and cannibalism. One deponent stated that “it hath been a very Comon & ordinary thing for the Irish to murther devowre and eate the persons of such English as they could light vpon, and when they could light vpon none of them then to kill devowre and eate one another.”¹⁹

The victims of these atrocities pointed to the supernatural disturbance that the violation of nature and civility had precipitated. In June 1643, Elizabeth Price reported that a large number of Irish natives had witnessed “divers apparitions & visions” at Portadown, where a large number of Protestants had been drowned by rebels. There, she claimed, rebel soldiers had witnessed a “vision or spiritt assumeing the shape of a woman waste highe vpright in the water naked with elevated & closed handes, her haire disheivelled very white, her eyes seeming to twinckle in her head, and her skinn as white as snowe which spiritt or vision seeming to stand straight vpright in the water divulged and often repeated the word Revenge Revenge Revenge.”²⁰ Two years later, a deponent reported a similar event in another scene of mass drowning in County Cavan, where “it

16. St. John D. Seymour, *The Puritans in Ireland 1647–1661* (Oxford, 1921), 140.

17. John Derrick, *The Image of Ireland* (1581), sigs. b.i.v, [D.iiii.r], E.i.v.

18. Edmund Spenser, *A View of the State of Ireland*, ed. Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (Oxford, 1997), 64, 66, 100.

19. Trinity College Dublin (hereafter TCD) MS 837, fol. 36v, Deposition of Peter Hill, May 29, 1645.

20. TCD MS 836, fols. 101r–105v, Deposition of Elizabeth Price, June 26, 1643.

was a Common report amongst the very Irish themselves thereabouts that none durst come vnto nor stay at the bridge of Belturbett, because some spiritt or ghost came often thither & cryed Reveng Reveng.”²¹ The rebellion’s survivors were marking the boundaries of religious communities with citations of occult phenomena.

In the 1650s, however, these references to occult phenomena were deployed within Protestant communities as competing groups of believers began to differentiate themselves from one another in emerging denominational networks, using the strongest possible language. Protestant polemicists used the term “Antichrist,” for example, more often against their co-religionists than they did against Irish Catholics.²² To differentiate among themselves, Protestants drew on the older supernatural vocabulary of the anti-Catholicism of the 1630s and 1640s. This trend was most obvious in the polemical recourse to the language of witchcraft. The charge of witchcraft had been conspicuously absent from the Protestant–Catholic debates of the previous decades, though it had surfaced in a variety of confessional contexts. But in the 1641 depositions, there occur only a handful of references to witchcraft, and in each case the allegation of occult activity is made, perhaps surprisingly, by Catholics against Protestants.²³ In the 1650s, however, allegations of witchcraft were more often made by Protestants against Protestants. Quakers of both sexes—among them Francis Howgil and Barbara Blaugdone—were among the members of several marginal groups who discovered that they had to defend themselves against these kinds of allegations.²⁴ And these charges were routinely linked to the heretical beliefs of these groups on the fringe of the Cromwellian religious mainstream. In the 1650s, the charge of heresy was probably made more often, and with more serious potential consequences, than in any other decade in early modern Irish history. Later in the decade, therefore, as these interdenominational debates spiraled out of the control of the Cromwellian religious administrators, emerging denominational commitments began to harden among Cromwellian troops. In 1657, and with growing alarm, conservative ministers recorded their fears of the rising influence of “Arminianism, Socinianism, Antinomianism, Familism, Seekerism, Quakerism, Antiscripturism, Erastianism; and what ever else is contrary to the acknowledging of the Truth which is according to Godliness.”²⁵ In the same year, these varieties of heretical belief were cited as the cause of outbreaks of plague in major urban centers,²⁶ and leading Irish clergy were celebrated for their

21. TCD MS 833, fol. 282v, Deposition of Audrey Carington, October 27, 1645. I am grateful to Elaine Murphy for her advice on the depositions.

22. Gribben, *God’s Irishmen*, 3.

23. See, for example, TCD MS 838, fol. 73v, Examination of Allen McRee, March 9, 1653; TCD MS 838, fol. 79r, Examination of John McCart, March 15, 1653; TCD MS 836, fol. 228r, Examination of Anne Dawson, April 26, 1653.

24. Gribben, *God’s Irishmen*, 140.

25. *Agreement and Resolution of the Ministers of Christ Associated within the City of Dublin, and Province of Leinster* (Dublin, 1659), 4.

26. [J. G.], *Moses in the Mount. Or, The beloved disciple leaning on Jesus’s bosom. Being a narrative of the life and death of Mr. John Murcot, minister of the Gospel, and teacher of the church at Dublin* (1657), 22–23.

attacks on heretical faith.²⁷ Suddenly, theological debate—with the attendant charges of heresy and supernatural threat—was everywhere.

Colonel Henry Bowen's defection from the orthodox mainstream implied the deliberate rejection of the values that were purportedly central to the Cromwellian reformation in Ireland. Bowen's apostasy, however, was perhaps made possible by the Irish administration's failure to define an orthodox center for the reformation it was required to advance. In England, Parliament made a number of attempts to define the official parameters of truth: the drive toward religious reform was undergirded by the blasphemy act of 1650,²⁸ the revived "fundamentals,"²⁹ and *A New Confession of Faith* (1654), with twenty propositions that drew on the language of the Westminster Assembly's confession and were intended to provide for a basic theological consensus. The Irish administration failed to show any similar initiative, or to import the English legislation. This was a source of concern for many: prominent English clergy worried that heretics would take advantage of the undefined nature of the Irish religious project—as Bowen appeared to have done. In 1650, for example, John Owen suggested that ministers who had been rejected in England could easily move to Ireland, taking their theological confusion with them.³⁰ Four years later, as the struggle to contain heresy grew ever more urgent, Owen's fears seemed realized. Many of the leading administrators of Cromwellian rule pointed to the problem of unsuitable preachers. In Munster, where the problem of clerical supply was particularly acute, John Cook, the regicide judge and provincial chief justice, complained that "bunglers" had taken "upon them the charge of soules."³¹ And these "bunglers" were unable to prevent the spread of heresy.

In the second half of the decade, the Irish administration's concern about the spread of heresy was particularly focused on Quakers. In December 1655, shortly after Bowen's court-martial, Captain Samuel Grymes was investigated for "some tenets in religion . . . derogatory to the honour of God, and disconsonant to the revealed truth of his word," and the first order was issued for the arrest of Quaker believers.³² In January 1656, another order sent those Quakers who had been arrested in Dublin to Chester and those who had been arrested in Waterford to Bristol.³³ The administration

27. *Ibid.*, 11.

28. R. C. Richardson, "Writing and Re-writing the English Civil Wars," *Literature & History* 11, no. 2 (2002): 102.

29. The revived "fundamentals" can be found in *A New Confession of Faith*, Thomason Tracts E 826 (3) (MS). Parliament rejected the "fundamentals" in December 1654—even though they were aimed against anti-Trinitarians—as unworkable, not excessively severe; see Blair Worden, "Toleration and the Cromwellian Protectorate," in *Persecution and Toleration*, ed. W. J. Sheils, Studies in Church History 21 (Oxford, 1984), 219. See also John Coffey, "Puritanism and Liberty Revisited: The Case for Toleration in the English Revolution," *Historical Journal* 41, no. 4 (1998): 961–85.

30. John Owen, *The Steadfastness of Promises, and the Sinfulness of Staggering* (1650), 44–45. See Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland*, 99; and *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, ed. W. C. Abbott, 3 vols. (1939; reprint, Oxford, 1988), 2:108.

31. John Cook, *Monarchy No Creature of Gods Making* (Waterford, Ireland, 1651), n.p. [sigs. b3, d1, e5].

32. *Ireland under the Commonwealth: Being a selection of documents relating to the government of Ireland 1651–1659*, ed. Robert Dunlop, 2 vols. (Manchester, 1913), 2:557, 559.

33. *Ibid.*, 2:563.

hoped to eliminate the threat of heresy by exporting it. But these efforts did not prevent Quaker influence from becoming “pernicious” in Limerick.³⁴ Henry Cromwell ordered that Quakers should be removed from the army and arrested if they refused to pay tithes, if they evangelized, or if they disturbed members of the clergy.³⁵ In Dublin, in 1659, the administration confiscated heretical books displaying, in a litany of radical heresies, an “erroneous untoward spirit, denying any external reverence to magistrates, contemning and disgracing ministers as antichristian and not ministers of Christ, but priests, hirelings and dumb dogs, vilifying many civil professors, and expressing much bitterness against all manner of learning, maintaining perfection and freedom from sin in this life.”³⁶ The response of the government was often stringent, for the Parliamentary commissioners, who were entrusted with the day-to-day administration of Cromwellian rule, had been tasked with the preservation of religious order. If the “scattered Lambs, wandring in the wilds” were in fact becoming victims of a malevolent spiritual attack, their response could hardly have been otherwise. The welfare of individual souls and that of the collective political future required administrators to police the acceptable boundaries of truth. Heresy had become a supernatural threat.



Leaders in church and state agreed on the supernatural danger represented by the rise of false teaching, but they could not prevent its spread. Heresy flourished in Cromwellian Ireland because political and ecclesiastical leaders were prepared to ignore their official religious responsibilities—or to rethink the most fundamental components of Protestant reform, including the human condition itself.³⁷ Most significantly, many of these thinkers were to some extent prepared to elevate the subjective authority of experience above the authority of scripture.

The trend was evident even among the Parliamentary commissioners whose task it was to secure the conservative course of Cromwellian reformation.³⁸ John Jones wrote letters that reflected in their temper a coterie of mystical theologians active in north Wales, and particularly the influence of Morgan Llwyd. The two men appear to have met in the service of Sir Thomas Myddelton sometime in the later 1640s.³⁹ By 1651 they had developed the strong millennial expectations that would shape their political commitments through the 1650s and drive them from the orthodox mainstream into the world of free thought. Jones and Llwyd both corresponded with Peter Sterry—a

34. *Ibid.*, 2:637–38.

35. Phil Kilroy, *Protestant Dissent and Controversy in Ireland, 1660–1714* (Cork, 1994), 86.

36. *Ibid.*, 85; *Ireland under the Commonwealth*, ed. Dunlop, 2:695, 717.

37. Benjamin Worsley, for example, arrived in Ireland as a secretary to the Parliamentary commissioners, where he accumulated large estates and experimented in agriculture and occult philosophy, even suggesting at one point that he had discovered a cure for death, an alchemical immortality; Thomas Leng, *Benjamin Worsley (1618–1677): Trade, Interest and the Spirit in Revolutionary England* (Woodbridge, U.K., 2008), 80–137.

38. On the role of the commissioners, see Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland*, passim.

39. *ODNB*, s.v. “Jones, John (ca. 1597–1660),” and “Llwyd, Morgan (1619–1659),” both by Stephen K. Roberts.

former member of the Westminster Assembly then on the way to universalism—between June 1651 and September 1656. Their letters addressed such subjects as Jakob Boehme, the Ranters, and the Rosicrucians.⁴⁰ In a letter written in September 1658, Jones acknowledged his growing sympathy for Sterry's theology but took care to dissociate their shared concerns from those of the Quakers, who, he complained, were guilty of "circumscribing God, Christ, Heaven, Hell and other objects of faith within themselves to be God and Christ, and therefore hould themselves not capable of sinning."⁴¹ Jones distinguished his mystical orientation from what he saw as the less rational Quakers and the more rational orthodox mainstream. His mysticism drew heavily on the regional piety the Welsh coterie shared. It was strongly millennial, and skeptical of the scholastic detail of the standard Protestant confessions of faith, but still confident of its difference from the heretically subjective emphases of the radicals.

This skepticism as to the need for theological detail was also shared by John Cook. His dismissive reference to pastoral "bunglers" in Munster concealed his own investment in radical discourses. In 1650, he and his wife published separate accounts of a miracle—a deliverance from a storm at sea—that they believed had been promised to Cook when he entered a trance and was shown a vision of Jesus, who assured him that he and all on board the ship would be preserved. It was an experience that Cook was keen to promote, and the final section of his book listed other examples of what theologians were increasingly identifying as "extraordinary revelation."⁴² Yet, as other theologians recognized, these kinds of claims to extraordinary revelation constituted a fundamental attack on the argument at the heart of the Protestant Reformation—the principle of *sola scriptura*. And these claims were being made at the highest level of the Cromwellian administration.

Like the commissioners overseeing them, ministers employed in the government's "Civil List"—a cadre of state-approved and sponsored clergymen—similarly oscillated in their commitment to *sola scriptura*. Some vigorously supported the idea. *The Agreement and Resolution of Severall Associated Ministers in the County of Corke for the Ordaining of Ministers* (1657), for example, distinguished the revelation given to "extraordinary" apostles, prophets, and evangelists from that given to "ordinary" pastors and teachers: "though Miracles cease, yet the Gospell-ministration, and Ministry must continue," it argued, though "enthusiasms" were "often pretended to, and no wonder, when Learning, which in an ordinary way, should furnish with abilities, is wanting."⁴³ But other pastors working within the religious mainstream supported

40. ODNB, s.v. "Sterry, Peter (1613–1672)," by Nabil Matar.

41. John Jones to Peter Sterry, September 29, 1658, in *Inedited Letters of Cromwell, Colonel Jones, Bradshaw, and Other Regicides*, ed. Joseph Mayer (Liverpool, 1860–61), 261.

42. John Cook, *A True Relation of Mr. John Cook's Passage by Sea from Wexford to Kinsale in that Great Storm January 5. Wherein is related the strangeness of the storm, and the frame of his spirit in it. Also the vision that he saw in his sleep* (Cork, 1650); Frances Cook, *Mrs. [sic] Cookes Meditations, Being an humble thanksgiving to her Heavenly Father, for granting her a new life, having concluded [sic] her selfe Dead, and her grave made in the bottome of the sea, in that great storme. Jan. the 5th. 1649* (Cork, 1650).

43. *The Agreement and Resolution of Severall Associated Ministers in the County of Corke for the Ordaining of Ministers* (Cork, 1657), 10, 13.

claims for extraordinary revelation, such as the otherwise conservative pastor of a large Independent church in Dublin, “trier” for the Civil List and the provost of Trinity College, Samuel Winter. Winter’s private notebook and his published sermons took care not to overtly intimate his strong supernaturalism, but it did occasionally surface. His sermons before Charles Fleetwood—then strongly influenced by Baptists—described an extraordinary revelation that had convinced its recipient of the propriety of infant baptism.⁴⁴ Whatever the caution of his public statements, Winter’s biography—prepared by his brother-in-law, John Weaver, MP in the Long Parliament and Parliamentary commissioner in Ireland—actively highlighted the theme. The biography noted Winter’s claims to have heard supernatural voices, to have received visions, and, on his deathbed in winter 1666, to have conversed audibly with angels.⁴⁵

These claims were advanced, albeit in a less material fashion, by Winter’s clerical rival, who gathered a congregation in Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin. John Rogers theorized a quite different conception of the relationship between Word and Spirit in his study of millennial church government and spirituality, *Ohel or Beth-shemesh* (1653). Rogers recorded his own conversion experience, remembering that when he came under conviction of sin, he imagined “any thing to be the Devil”⁴⁶ and thought he saw demons in “severall ugly shapes and formes (according to my senses) and sometimes with great rolling flaming eyes (like sawcers) having sparkling fire-brands in the one of their hands, and with the other reaching at me to tear me away to torments!”⁴⁷ By the early 1650s, he had grown assured of his spiritual gifts:

[M]y Experience tells me how to prophesie by the Spirit of the Lord, when the Spirit brings me into a fruitive discovery of the latter dayes, by leading me into the belly of the Prophecies and the Promises which are to come to passe, as if they were already present and come to pass . . . by both these together (for there is the Word and the Spirit agreeing in one) I am able to foretell, and testifie to the approach of Christ, and his promises.⁴⁸

Of course, like Winter, Rogers believed that his experiences of the supernatural were perfectly compatible with the expectations of the Cromwellian religious mainstream. He therefore distinguished his claims from those made by radicals like the “presumptuous” Ranters, whose “light . . . is but like a blazing Comet; presaging his preposterous spirit, or preparing a venomous malign, and pestilential influence, and portending his ruine.” Rogers argued that a mature believer could distinguish true from false varieties of extraordinary revelation:

44. Samuel Winter, *The Summe of Diverse Sermons Preached in Dublin* (Dublin, 1656), 179–80.

45. [John Weaver], *The Life and Death of the Eminently Learned, Pious, and Painful Minister of the Gospel, Dr. Samuel Winter* (1671), “Courteous Reader,” [17]. See also *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Richard L. Greaves and Robert Zaller (Brighton, U.K., 1984), vol. 3, s.v. “Samuel Winter.”

46. John Rogers, *Ohel or Beth-shemesh* (1653), 420.

47. *Ibid.*, 426–27.

48. *Ibid.*, 27.

[T]he Spirit displays himself to the soul, and gives a glistening manifestation of his presence in the heart, of his motion in that horoscope and horizon, and by his owne beams (as the Sun) is to be seen, and paraphrased upon himself, and witnesses to himself, that he is there; so that (as one sayes) a man may sooner take the glo-worm for the Sunne, then an experienced Saint can take a false light (and delusion) for the light of the Spirit.⁴⁹

Ohel or Beth-shemesh argued that this kind of spiritual experience would become normative as believers entered the final stages of human history, and, paradoxically, as they recovered the intimacy of the relationship with God enjoyed by Adam and Eve in Eden. Dramatic supernatural experiences would no longer be instinctively suspected, he believed: “Paradise is the place wherein God did most familiarly appeare, and acquaint himselfe to Man, and manifest his love and glory,” Rogers reminded his readers:

Three wayes we read of by which God spoke to men, by dreams, by visions, or else face to face; and in this manner, whereby his Love, and wherein his Glory did most appear, viz. face to face did the Lord manifest himself in Paradise, although his face was seen but as in a Glasse, 2 Cor. 3.18 under the similitude of an Angel, or some other bodily appearance . . . Then the Saints in the Churches shall have the most familiar presence of God, discourses with him, discoveries of him walking in the Garden.⁵⁰

So God might more often appear in the form of an angel to offer extraordinary revelation, Rogers contended, and in *Ohel or Beth-shemesh* he included the testimonies of over thirty members of his congregation who believed that they had begun to enjoy these kinds of experiences in the present. The structures of orthodox theology would remain the same, he continued, but as the 1650s progressed toward the period of millennial glory, which he expected imminently to begin, unusual spiritual experiences would be extracted from the category of heresy and entered into the category of truth.

Others believed they were already encountering angels and demons. For some, this was a self-consciously psychological claim. Mary Burrill, a member of Rogers’s congregation in Dublin, reported dreams in which she had “two terrible conflicts with Satan, by all which I have been much assured of Gods love, for that I alwayes had the better, the victory.”⁵¹ Others believed they were meeting these beings directly. Walter Gostelo, a conforming Anglican and sentimental Royalist, encountered an angel who commissioned him as a prophet.⁵² Arriving in Cork in December 1652, Gostelo had made his way to Lismore, a “Seat very ancient, and not a little eminent and honor-

49. *Ibid.*, 373.

50. *Ibid.*, 547.

51. *Ibid.*, 413.

52. See ODNB, s.v. “Gostelow [Gorstelow], Walter,” by Ian L. O’Neill.

able,”⁵³ where he met the angel: “one Sunday morning . . . about day I did see, sitting at my beds foot, behind the curtain, a Man sent of God: whilst He continued there sitting, there fell a Showre of Fire, thick, and in drops, like Rain, all about my beds foot.”⁵⁴ The angel communicated to Gostelo a number of unorthodox beliefs that he published in the later 1650s. His first publication, which included a substantial amount of biographical material, including his prophetic call, was entitled *Charls Stuart and Oliver Cromwel United* (1655), and was, as its subtitle suggested, “extraordinarily declared by God almighty to the publisher, Walter Gostelow,” but, in attempting to reconcile Cromwell with the exiled Charles II, it demonstrated that experiences of the marvelous could generate political conservatism as much as theological radicalism. The discourse was inherently flexible: an experience that had been damned by its association with the heretical was being used to support a conservative social and theological claim. Sightings of angels did not necessarily drive a radical political agenda, therefore, and neither did manifestations of the demonic.

Others, seeking encounters with a broader range of supernatural experiences, rejected the ecclesiastical mainstream altogether, and some of them thought this could come about only by moving beyond the Bible. Thomas Morford typified the approach of these believers when he entirely dismissed the principle of *sola scriptura*: in a book written in Clonmel in 1659, he argued that “Carnal Ordinances”—which, he explained, “stood in time and outward things” and therefore included the Bible—should be valued no more than “types and figures,” for they had “ended to every one that believes.”⁵⁵ And others expected that their experiences of supernatural phenomena would provide them with access to the divine voice itself. William Penn, the future Quaker leader, described a case in which Irish Cromwellian soldiers tricked their commander into believing he was hearing the voice of God by addressing him through a tube from under his bed.⁵⁶ The incident reflected the expectations of the substantial number of Irish Cromwellians who believed that they could indeed have the ultimate supernatural experience—private revelation from God.⁵⁷ Their prophetic individualism offered a fundamental challenge to the administration’s theological consensus, and to the confessional tradition it assumed. Heresiarchs could research the history and intellectual development of the movements they abominated. But they were much less sure about the best way of approaching those individuals who took advantage of a distinctive and innovative prophetic power to espouse an eclectic mixture of heresy and supernatural experience.



Irish Protestant claims to supernatural experience, with its complex implications for the boundary between truth and error, continued after the Restoration. This trend was most obvious in the literature surrounding Valentine Greatrakes, the celebrated faith

53. Walter Gostelo, *Charls Stuart and Oliver Cromwel United* (1655), 1–3.

54. *Ibid.*, 45.

55. Thomas Morford, *The Baptist and Independent Churches (So Called) Set on Fire* (1660), title page.

56. William Penn, *The New Witnesses Proved Old Heretics* (1672), 61–62.

57. Gribben, *God’s Irishmen*, 129–50.

healer and exorcist.⁵⁸ Greatrakes was a Restoration celebrity: “the great discourse now at the Coffee-houses, and every where, is about Mr G. the famous Irish Stroker,” one English observer reported.⁵⁹ But many of his English supporters did not appreciate the significance of his Irish Cromwellian background. Greatrakes had grown up in County Waterford but left for England during the chaos of the 1640s: “All company seemed irksome and distasteful to me; so epidemically lewd, blasphemous and sottish were many become, that I saw the many and great Judgments of the Lord that the Kingdom groaned under, had . . . hardened our Egyptian hearts.”⁶⁰ Returning to Ireland, and switching from his early Royalist sympathies, Greatrakes enlisted in the Parliamentary forces in a regiment commanded by Colonel Robert Phaire, in the service of Robert Boyle, then Lord Broghill, until his disbandment and his return to “a Country life” in 1656.⁶¹ His experiences of the later 1650s were sorry ones, watching as “one Faction destroyed another, till at length they all lay down in sorrow.”⁶² But he was evidently deepening his spiritual knowledge through these years, for in 1661 he gave expert testimony in the trial of a witch in Youghal, only a few miles from the place of his birth, and in 1662 the “Dictates of Gods Spirit on my heart” indicated the beginnings of his celebrated career as the “Irish stroker.”⁶³

Perhaps it was his experience of religious life in Cromwellian Ireland that made Greatrakes so terrified of the charge of heresy. Throughout his English career, he played down his earlier political and religious radicalism, presented himself as a loyal Anglican, and insisted that “I never was a Member of an Independent Church in my life.”⁶⁴ His orthodoxy was repeatedly validated. George Rust, the Church of Ireland dean of Connor and future bishop of Dromore, insisted that Greatrakes was “of a very agreeable Conversation, not addicted to any Vice, nor to any Sect or Party; but is . . . a sincere Protestant.”⁶⁵ And, although Greatrakes claimed to have “met with several Instances which seemed to me to be Possessions by . . . Devils,”⁶⁶ his cures were attested by many well-known individuals, including Andrew Marvell.⁶⁷

58. Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (New Haven, Conn., 2006); Peter Elmer, *The Miraculous Conformist: Valentine Greatrakes, the Body Politic, and the Politics of Healing in Restoration England* (Oxford, 2013).

59. Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus: or, full and plain evidence concerning witches and apparitions*, 2 vols. (1681), 1:90. See also Eamon Duffy, “Valentine Greatrakes, the Irish Stroker: Miracles, Science, and Orthodoxy in Restoration England,” in *Religion and Humanism*, ed. K. Robbins, *Studies in Church History* 17 (1981), 251–73; and Alan Marshall, “The Westminster Magistrate and the Irish Stroker: Sir Edmund Godfrey and Valentine Greatrakes, Some Unpublished Correspondence,” *Historical Journal* 40, no. 2 (1997): 499–505. Greatrakes’s correspondence is preserved in National Library of Ireland MSS 4728, Letterbook (1666–71); see also BL Add. MSS 25692, MS account book of Valentine Greatrakes.

60. Valentine Greatrakes, *A Brief Account of Mr Valentine Greatrak’s* (1666), 18.

61. *Ibid.*, 19; Barnard, *Cromwellian Ireland*, 273.

62. Greatrakes, *A Brief Account of Mr Valentine Greatrak’s*, 22.

63. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 2:180; Greatrakes, *A Brief Account of Mr Valentine Greatrak’s*, 22.

64. Greatrakes, *A Brief Account of Mr. Valentine Greatrak’s*, 11.

65. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 1:90–94.

66. Greatrakes, *A Brief Account of Mr Valentine Greatrak’s*, 32–33.

67. *Ibid.*, 84.

But Marvell's commendation may be a clue to the political significance of Greatrakes's career. Some of his supporters believed that his miraculous abilities validated the return of the monarchy. As Henry Stubbe put it, Greatrakes was a "Miraculous Conformist: many strange reports have and do runne of him; but he is reclaimed from all that is fanatique; and this gift of Healing was bestowed on him, since the Restauration of his Sacred Majesty, and the restitution of the Doctrine and Discipline of the English Church."⁶⁸ But Stubbe's defense is misleading. It is significant that the "vast majority" of those who supported or claimed to have benefited from Greatrakes's unusual ministry had themselves been beneficiaries or servants of the Cromwellian regimes. In 1665, for example, Greatrakes was involved in the healing of "Colonel Phaire," a close friend under whom he had served in Ireland, and the regicide retained his Parliamentary military rank in Greatrakes's account of the event.⁶⁹ Furthermore, Greatrakes's recent biographer has suggested the political significance of his actions—for in targeting the "king's evil" Greatrakes was claiming powers that popular superstition had limited to the monarch, and powers that supporters of Charles II had claimed justified the return of the Stuart succession.⁷⁰ Perhaps, therefore, Greatrakes had not been "reclaimed from all that is fanatique."

Greatrakes's miracles were not the only legacy of the supernatural in Cromwellian Ireland, though there is no doubt that the supernatural environment had altered. Restoration Protestants were not typically encountering angels or demons: the content of the supernatural encounter appears to have been changing. Keith Thomas's *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971) argues that in the later seventeenth century the supernatural became detached from orthodox Christianity and that the position of angels was consequently obscured. In Ireland, during the same period, encounters with angelic or demonic beings were less frequently reported, as Protestants began to describe encounters with ghosts, and the occult possibilities of this ghostly activity were increasingly reported for their own sake, ostensibly without confessional or theological purpose: supernatural encounters were no longer being narrated to mark denominational differences between Catholics and Protestants, or among Protestants. Thus Joseph Glanvill, a Somerset clergyman with an abiding interest in the occult, recorded a number of accounts of Irish hauntings, several of which can be linked to events in the 1650s, but few of which relate the threatening supernatural to any doctrinal view. Many of these stories emanated from Ulster. Francis Taverner, for example, a servant of Lord Chichester, based in Belfast, County Antrim, experienced a series of hauntings that required him to redress an injustice dating from 1657.⁷¹ His claims were validated by Jeremy Taylor, bishop of Down and Connor, and George Rust, then the Church of Ireland dean of Connor, in an interrogation held in the presence of Lady Anne Conway.⁷² Another such experience was attributed to David Hunter, servant of

68. Henry Stubbe, *The Miraculous Conformist* (1666), n.p.

69. Greatrakes, *A Brief Account of Mr Valentine Greatrakes*, 27.

70. ODNB, s.v. "Greatrakes, Valentine," by Peter Elmer.

71. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 2:276–85.

72. *Ibid.*, 2:283–84. For the letters of Conway, see *The Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More and Their Friends, 1642–1684*, ed. Sarah Hutton (Oxford, 1992).

Jeremy Taylor, the Church of Ireland bishop of Down and Connor, who, in 1663, reported an apparition of a woman informing him that she was “Margaret” who “lived here before the War,” and “died Seven years before you cam into the Countrey.” The apparition commanded Hunter to instruct her son to “dig under such a Harth, and there he shall find 28s. Let him pay what I owe in such a place, and the rest to the charge unpaid at my Funeral.”⁷³ Again, his interrogation was witnessed by Lady Anne Conway, who recorded a series of similar incidents in letters to Glanvill in 1662 and 1663, describing ghostly encounters requiring the “amendment of some miscarriages by some persons intrusted” with responsibilities in Cromwellian Ireland.⁷⁴ Other accounts were collected from the opposite end of the island—from the other center of Protestant plantation, in Munster. One was offered by Florence Newton, “an Irish witch of Youghall,” tried for witchcraft in the Cork assizes in September 1661.⁷⁵ She had known her accuser and alleged victim, Mary Longdon, since 1657/58.⁷⁶ Valentine Greatrakes had “read of a way to discover a Witch,” and intervened in the case in order to test his theory, alongside James Wood, a minister in Youghal who had been on the Civil List in the later 1650s, and whose increasing conservatism had drawn bitter comment from his former colleagues among the radical party.⁷⁷ Glanvill added another “Irish story” in which a gentleman’s butler, on an errand to buy playing cards, encountered fairies and was invited to join them in a drinking party in a field. He refused, and was warned that he would be carried away, and the next day, before the eyes of several other people, was dragged through fields by an unattended rope. The Earl of Orory, a neighbor of the anonymous gentleman, insisted that his butler should be guarded by a company of people in his own home, a company that included the ubiquitous Greatrakes, two bishops, “and other Persons of Quality,” who subsequently witnessed his being levitated “in the Air to and fro over their heads.”⁷⁸ The ghost responsible for the strange events eventually explained to the butler that “I have been dead . . . seven years, and you know that I lived a loose life. And ever since I have been hurried up and down in a restless Condition with the Company you saw, and shall be to the day of Judgement.”⁷⁹ Both Greatrakes’s ministry of exorcism and healing and Glanvill’s “Irish stories” served the same purpose, therefore, measuring their distance from the enchantment of the Irish Cromwellians, even in the aftermath of the Restoration.

73. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 2:286.

74. *Ibid.*, 2:288.

75. *Ibid.*, 2:168–87.

76. *Ibid.*, 2:168.

77. *Ibid.*, 2:180, 182. See also Gribben, *God’s Irishmen*, 15, 120, 143–44, 157. Thomas Harrison was among those attending the hearing, in the period between his wedding in February 1660 in Chester and his taking up a clerical position in that city in 1661; Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 2:174; *ODNB*, s.v. “Harrison, Thomas,” by Richard L. Greaves.

78. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 2:246–48.

79. *Ibid.*, 2:249. The “Advertisement” concluding the story implied that its genesis could be traced to a conversation between Greatrakes and Elizabeth Foxcroft, which had taken place while the latter was living at Ragley Hall, Warwickshire, as a companion to Lady Anne Conway between 1666 and 1672, thus implying that the death of the man who became the ghost occurred at or immediately after the end of Cromwellian rule in Ireland; Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, 2:250; *ODNB*, s.v. “Foxcroft, Elizabeth,” by Sarah Hutton.



Cromwellian administrators in Ireland had certainly been aware of the dangers of spiritual excess. An official government publication—written by Marchamont Nedham and reprinted in Dublin in 1654—explained why the Barebones Parliament had been dissolved the previous year. A group of fanatics, Nedham claimed, had censored everyone “whose Conscience was not of the same size with their own, and condemned all as Enemies to Reformation who kept not an even pace with themselves in the House . . . that Imposing Spirit of theirs was actuated, by a more high and active spirit of Dreams and Phantasie, which set an end to reasoning, and led them out to a pretence of infallibility [*sic*] in all their determinations.”⁸⁰ The pamphlet explained that Barebones politicians had erred in depending too much on extraordinary revelations that never arrived: “we are too apt to think,” it confessed, “that none out to be intrusted in Government but godly persons such as are Saints by calling, who shall have immediate assistance from God suitable to their work. But alas, our late experience hath sufficiently taught us, that God works not now in any such extraordinary way, but hath left the world to be ordered by the moral improvement of natural Endowments and Faculties.”⁸¹ Nedham’s pamphlet was defining the Protectorate government as being opposed to radical spiritualities and to the unorthodox ideas from which they often emerged—as the strange case of Colonel Henry Bowen was shortly to demonstrate.

Despite this official discouragement, religious life in Cromwellian Ireland continued to be driven by expectations of the unusual. After all, the ecclesiastical ordering of Independency—where congregations gathered on the basis of the preacher’s appeal—demanded the exploitation of a heightened subjectivity and analyses of Christian experience that blurred the boundaries between the human and divine. Mainstream divines insisted, for example, on the Christian’s duty to “pray in the spirit.” Preaching in Dublin toward the end of the decade, Thomas Harrison (not the famous regicide) was echoing scripture when he noted that “we know not what we should pray for as we ought; (no not Paul and the Apostles) but the Spirit it self maketh Intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, Rom. 8. 26.” But he was going beyond scripture when he argued that “our enlargements”—the Christian’s mystical sense of freedom in prayer—“may be but the flowings of the Gifts of the Spirit; but our inward pinchings and coarctations [*sic*] may be the Intercession of the Spirit it self; the more immediate operations of the Spirit.” Harrison attested his own conviction that “the Spirit of God . . . by these and the like injections and intimations, helping me to plead and press them, and to hold them up before the Lord, and to spread them before Him, as Hezekiah did the Letter, hath many a time, sustained and cheared mine own heart.”⁸² The pressure to move from exegesis to spiritual application drove preachers from textual to experiential preaching.

80. *A True State of the Case of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the Dominions thereto belonging; by [the] Lord PROTECTOR and [the] Parliament* (Dublin, 1654), 15.

81. *Ibid.*, 26.

82. Thomas Harrison, *Topica Sacra: Spiritual Logick: Some brief hints and helps to faith, meditation, and prayer, comfort and holiness. Communicated at Christ Church, Dublin, in Ireland* (1658), n.p. [sig. A2v].

But other claims to spiritual experience went far beyond this until, by the end of the 1650s, the traditional combination of Word and Spirit was decisively exploded. The Geneva Bible was still being cited, but, in the cacophonous vitality of theological debate, the hegemony of its interpretive sobriety was over.⁸³ And, in the absence of an official theological standard, it was not clear how those individuals described by John Cook as pastoral “bunglers” could be identified. Cromwellian administrators regularly highlighted their ambition to reform native superstition but never agreed on the formula with which it should be replaced. The “delinquent” were often recognizable, but true piety was typically much less obvious. Its plasticity was emphasized by the evolving theological preferences of successive administrations, which reflected changing—and often incompatible—religious opinions. These opinions were generally voiced within the wider parameters of the theological tradition defined by major confessions of faith. But many continued to dissent from that confessional mainstream. Leaders in church and state continued to complain of the existence of a wide range of heretical opinions.

Later generations of Irish writers looked back to the mid-seventeenth century crisis for the beginnings of an Irish Gothic tradition. In Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), the portrait with moving eyes has as its subject a man who gained his wealth during the Cromwellian invasion of Ireland, and Henry Bowen’s haunting forms a significant foundational myth in Elizabeth Bowen’s narrative of her family’s history, *Bowen’s Court* (1942).⁸⁴ In the mid-seventeenth century, contemporaries were already linking forms of visitation to a realm beyond the reach of religious discourse or experience. As encounters with angels and demons gave way to encounters with ghosts, contemporaries from across the Protestant theological spectrum agreed: heresy was not a doctrinal danger—heresy was a supernatural threat.

I am grateful to Stephen K. Roberts, Jerome de Groot, Raymond Gillespie, and the journal’s anonymous peer reviewers for their comments on an earlier draft of this essay, and to the organizers and attendees of conferences and graduate seminars in Trinity College Dublin, Queen’s University Belfast, and Princeton University, where these ideas were initially explored, especially Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, Ramona Wray, Nigel Smith, and Paul Muldoon.

CRAWFORD GRIBBEN is professor of early modern British history at Queen’s University Belfast and the author of a number of recent books on the literary cultures of Puritanism and evangelicalism.

83. Thomas Patient, *The Doctrine of Baptism, and the Distinction of the Covenants* (1654), 108.

84. Charles Robert Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, ed. Douglas Grant (Oxford, 1968), 26.