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Allan Kennedy

Civility, order and the highlands in Cromwellian Britain

Above all else, the Cromwellian regime that governed first England, and ultimately the entirety of the British Isles during the 1650s viewed itself as ‘godly’. This was a concept with deep roots in English Puritanism, which had long viewed godly behaviour – defined by ostentatious piety, rigorous devotional patterns and a strict moral code – as a marker of proper submission to God, not to mention a signal of one’s membership of the Elect.¹ With the imposition of republican rule, and more emphatically with the establishment of the Cromwellian Protectorate in 1653, the spread of godliness through a continuing process of religious and social reform became a key aim of state.² The rule of the major-generals, whom Cromwell dispatched into the localities between 1655 and 1657 with the explicit purpose (among other matters) of affecting a comprehensive transformation in the people’s manners, promoting moral behaviour, suppressing vice and ensuring universal obedience to the word of God, was the most muscular manifestation of this overarching desire for godly reformation.³

Cromwellian godliness extended to its non-English territories. This was most obviously the case in Ireland, where a projected influx of 36,000 English settlers (although in the event only about 8,000 actually came) following Cromwell’s conquest was intended, in part, as a means of advancing Anglicisation, fostering economic improvement, and spreading Protestantism, all at the same time.⁴ A comparably well-developed Welsh policy never emerged, but the commission for the propagation of the gospel, running from 1650 to 1653 and fundamentally shaping Welsh governance for the rest of the decade, reflected an entrenched belief that the principality languished in irreligious darkness – as well, perhaps, as Cromwell’s often-overlooked personal connections with Wales.⁵ Insofar as it developed a coherent imperial policy, Cromwellian intentions were similarly for the entrenchment of godliness and the suppression of Anglicanism in the American and Caribbean colonies, even if the details were invariably left to local initiative.⁶ The markedly under-sized historiography of Cromwellian Scotland means we know less about the situation there, but it is nevertheless clear that the English regime – ‘an evangelical occupation’, in the words of one historian – identified a need to promote reform.⁷ In particular, the rigidity of Scotland’s Presbyterian ecclesiastical structures, combined with their pretensions to monolithic status nationwide, were anathema to an English regime which favoured independent congregations, lay preaching and a degree of religious toleration. If, ultimately, little came of these ambitions for reforming Scottish religion along English lines, not least because merely securing control over the Kirk took most of the republican decade, this should not obscure the fact that, on an

¹ John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, ‘Introduction’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim (Cambridge, 2008), 1–15, at 3–4.

² Barry Coward, *The Cromwellian Protectorate* (Manchester, 2002), 39–41.

³ Christopher Durston, *Cromwell’s Major-Generals: Godly Government during the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2001).

⁴ T. C. Barnard, ‘New Opportunities for British Settlement: Ireland, 1650–1700’ in *The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Nicholas P. Canny (Oxford, 1998), 309–27.

⁵ Lloyd Bowen, ‘“This Murmuring and Unthankful Peevish Land”: Wales and the Protectorate’, in *The Cromwellian Protectorate*, ed. Patrick Little (Woodbridge, 2007), 144–64; Lloyd Bowen, ‘Oliver Cromwell (*alias* William) and Wales’, in *Oliver Cromwell: New Perspectives*, ed. Patrick Little (Basingstoke, 2009), 168–94.

⁶ Carla Gardina Pestana, *The English Atlantic in the Age of Revolution, 1640–1661* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2004), 123–56.

⁷ R. Scott Spurlock, *Cromwell and Scotland: Conquest and Religion* (Edinburgh, 2007), 44.

ideological level, the Commonwealth believed that it was part of its duty to promote such changes.⁸

With all this in mind, it is curious that no attempt has so far been made to explore the impact of Cromwellian ideas about godliness and reform on the operation of the republican regime in the Scottish Highlands. The quest for improvement and cultural transformation in this part of Scotland was well-established before the 1650s, being a stated goal of James VI's policies starting seventy years earlier, even if the extent to which ideas translated into actions, not to mention impacts, remains contested.⁹ Later Stuart kings generally avoided James's grandiose aims, being content with securing order, but the perceived need to civilise (and, by implication, Anglicise) the Highlands was arguably sustained by social and ecclesiastical elites, allowing schemes for the propagation of civility to re-emerge in the eighteenth century under the auspices of British governments concerned by the persistence of Highland Jacobitism.¹⁰ While Stuart and Hanoverian monarchs are therefore credited with (or, depending on perspective, accused of) pursuing transformative agendas in the Highlands, the overtly reform-minded Cromwellian regime is usually portrayed as little more than a giant police operation, focused exclusively on using its field army and network of garrisons to suppress disorder.¹¹ This article seeks to test that characterisation. Its initial aims are to unravel Cromwellian attitudes towards the Highlands, and to ask how far these can be located within contemporary ideals of godliness and civility more broadly. From this basis, the article explores how far the imperative towards godly reformation caused republican authorities to seek behavioural and cultural transformation in Highland Scotland, while also considering what mechanisms they identified for carrying through this project. Its primary contention is that the Commonwealth certainly identified and acted upon an imperative to 'civilise' the Highlands, but that it did so against the backdrop of a limited conception of what Highland 'incivility' signified. The process is best understood, therefore, as merely an extension of the Commonwealth's wider drive for godly reformation, rather than as a wholly distinctive response to Highland circumstances, allowing this case-study to shed unfamiliar light on the mixture of conservatism and innovation that marked the British republic.

Incivility and the Highlander

Construction of the image of Highlanders as an internal 'other' within Scotland was an endeavour with a long pedigree. Ideas along these lines dated back at least to the fourteenth century, but they became increasingly elaborate during the early modern period, resulting in a familiar, if shifting and malleable discourse emphasising ethnic, social, cultural and political distinctiveness.¹² The Cromwellian conquest provided the first sustained opportunities for

⁸ *Ibid.*, 44–50; Coward, *Cromwellian Protectorate*, 141–3. Patrick Little, *Lord Broghill and the Cromwellian Union with Ireland and Scotland* (Woodbridge, 2004), 95–109; L. A. M. Stewart, 'Cromwell and the Scots', in *Cromwell's Legacy*, ed. Jane A. Mills (Manchester, 2012), 171–90.

⁹ On Jacobean Highland policy, see Julian Goodare, *The Government of Scotland, 1560–1625* (Oxford, 2004), chapter 10.

¹⁰ T. M. Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War: The Social Transformation of the Scottish Highlands* (Manchester, 1994), 19–53; Allan I. Macinnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart, 1603–1788* (East Linton, 1996); Robert A. Dodgshon, *From Chiefs to Landlords: Social and Economic Change in the Western Highlands and Island, c.1493–1820* (Edinburgh, 1998); Charles W. J. Withers, *Gaelic Scotland: The Transformation of a Culture Region* (London, 1988); Allan Kennedy, *Governing Gaeldom: The Scottish Highlands and the Restoration State, 1660–88* (Leiden, 2014).

¹¹ Michael Fry, *Wild Scots: Four Hundred Years of Highland History* (London, 2005), 30.

¹² Martin MacGregor, 'Gaelic Barbarity and Scottish Identity in the Later Middle Ages' in *Miorun Mòr nan Gall, 'The Great Ill-Will of the Lowlander'? Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands, Medieval and Modern*, ed. Dauvit Broun and Martin MacGregor (Glasgow, 2009), 5–48; Jane Dawson, 'The Gaidhealtachd and the emergence of the Scottish highlands', in *British Consciousness and Identity: The Making of Britain, 1533–1707*, ed. Brendan Bradshaw and Peter Roberts (Cambridge, 1998), 259–300.

direct English experience of Highlanders and the Highlands, and their conceptualisation of the region shared much with received Scottish understandings. Englishmen's first impulse, in many cases, was to marvel at the Highlands' pristine isolation. For Thomas Tucker, dispatched in 1655 to survey Scottish ports, the entire area was a backwater. The vast expanses of Ross, Sutherland and Caithness were, to Tucker's eye, almost entirely undeveloped, producing nothing other than basic raw materials like hides or salt, and boasting little more than rudimentary and highly localised trading links. As for the western seaboard and Hebrides, these were 'places mangled with many armes of the Western Sea', rendering them 'destitute of all trade, being a cuntry stored with cattell, craggie hills, and rockes'. Even Inverness, despite being 'the cheife [town] of the whole north', was a tiny place sustained by insignificant coastal exchange.¹³ Robert Baynes, an English soldier posted to the garrison of Inverlochy, agreed with Tucker as to the isolation of the Highlands, complaining in 1658 that his posting was so distant from civilisation that the government either could not or did not bother to pay the soldiers while they were *in situ*. What struck him still more forcefully, however, was the sheer wildness of the climate:

This place affords nothing worth your notice, unless to tell you of the great storme of wind, rain, hail, frost and snow; some of which we have daily in a large proportion, so that if I had occasion I should not know well hoe to get into the Lowlands before April or May.¹⁴

For observers like these, Highland Scotland was not simply peripheral, but a strange semi-wilderness, physically and developmentally cut off from the rhythms of the developed world.

The people who inhabited this distant land were just as unfamiliar. Five key observations about them tended to be repeated, each connected to the notion of Highland isolation. Firstly, they were ethnically distinct, being, according to Peter Heylyn, 'Irish Scots' who retained the language and culture of their western forbears.¹⁵ Secondly, Highlanders were extremely poor – so much so, according to Robert Lilburne, that the Royalist rebellion known as Glencairn's Rising (1653–4) could largely be explained by poverty, since many Highlanders 'were necessitated to this desperate course for want of livelyhoods', as well as by the pressure of 'that justice done upon them in causing them [to] pay their debts'.¹⁶ Thirdly, the habits and customs of the Highland populace were backward at best. The resulting sense of condescending fascination was neatly encapsulated by the traveller Richard Franck, whose visit to Scotland in the mid-1650s allowed him to comment upon the people of Strathnaver:

[There] a rude sort of inhabitants dwell (almost as barbarous as Canibals) who when they kill a beast, boil him in his hide, make a caldron of his skin, browis of his bowels, drink of his blood, and bread and meat of his carcase. Since few or none amongst them hitherto have as yet understood any better rules or methods of eating.¹⁷

¹³ *Early Travellers in Scotland*, ed. Peter Hume Brown (Edinburgh, 1891), 174–6.

¹⁴ *Letters from Roundhead Officers written from Scotland and chiefly Addressed to Captain Adam Baynes, July MDCL–June MDCLX*, ed. John Y. Akerman (Edinburgh, 1856), 136.

¹⁵ Peter Heylyn, *Cosmographie in Four Bookes: Containing the Chorographie and Historie of the Whole World, and all the Principall Kingdomes, Provinces, Seas and Isles Thereof* (London, 1657), 296.

¹⁶ *Scotland and the Commonwealth: Letters and Papers Relating to the Military Government of Scotland, from August 1651 to December 1653*, ed. C. H. Firth (Edinburgh, 1895), 270–2.

¹⁷ *Early Travellers*, ed. Brown, 202.

Fourthly, Highlanders were lawless and disorderly, with a particular *penchant* for animal theft. This was the stereotype upon which the writer James Howell played in 1653 when he offered the withering judgement that ‘the Highlanders or Redshankes, who sojourne ‘twixt craggs and rocks [...] in the art of Robbery, go much beyond all other[s]’.¹⁸ Fifthly and finally, Highlanders were irreligious, an idea pithily summed up in one anonymous poem that appeared in 1656: ‘Religion all the world can tell/Amongst Highlanders ne’r did dwell’.¹⁹ These broad ideas, many of them echoing established Scottish tropes, were widely recycled in English writing, and they served to create the image of Highlanders as more than simply residents of a distant land. They were instead a strange, otherworldly race, and their lives operated to social and cultural rhythms that were fundamentally estranged from the Anglo-Saxon norm.

From the discourse of Highland ‘otherness’, it was a perilously short step to being labelled barbaric or uncivil. This certainly happened in Ireland, where a similar narrative crystallised into an orthodoxy about Irish barbarity that variously justified military conquest, plantation, and large-scale redistribution of land away from the native population.²⁰ But how far did English notions of ‘otherness’ tip over into accusations of incivility in the Highland case? The concept of ‘civility’ lay at the heart of early modern self-perception, and it was fundamentally a transitional notion. The claim that they had developed ‘civil societies’ allowed contemporary thinkers to differentiate their own era from the less developed, more primitive past. As such, ‘civility’ implied certain characteristics, the most important being settled societies, strong structures of civic government, the presence of towns, cereal-based agriculture, and (Protestant) Christianity. ‘Incivility’ as a label, by extension, signalled a different, more primordial collection of attributes – disorder, heathenism, transhumance, tribalism, and the absence of agriculture.²¹

The language sometimes deployed certainly suggests a full-scale discourse of Highland incivility on the part of Cromwellian observers. One newspaper correspondent, for example, baldly described Highlanders in 1652 as ‘barbarous creatures’, while another, writing a few months later, concluded that they ‘know little of God, less of themselves as men, and least of Civility’.²² But these comments were to some extent wartime propaganda, being written while the Commonwealth was still completing its conquest of Scotland, and looking beyond such material, the barbarity ascribed to Highlanders was almost invariably contingent. This was made clear in an order from the commander-in-chief in Scotland, George Monck, to Thomas Fitch, governor of Inverness, in mid-1655:

The Generall is informed that the Country about Invernesse and parts adjacent doth abound with Thievis, Robbers, and other loose and idle persons both Men and women, and through the vnwillingnesse of the Country to proceede against

¹⁸ James Howell, *A German Diet* (London, 1653), 63-4.

¹⁹ ‘Sir John Suckling’s Answer’ in *Wit and Drollery: Jovial Poems Never Before Printed*, ed. J[ohn] P[hillips] (London, 1656), 46-7.

²⁰ Jane H. Ohlmeyer, ‘“Civilizing of those Rude Partes”: Colonization within Britain and Ireland, 1580s–1640s’ in *Origins of Empire*, ed. Canny, 124-47.

²¹ J. Th. Leerssen, ‘Wildness, Wilderness, and Ireland: Medieval and Early-Modern Patterns in the Demarcation of Civility’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56 (1995), 25-39; Anthony Pagden, ‘The Struggle for Legitimacy and the Image of Empire in the Atlantic to c.1700’ in *Origins of Empire*, ed. Canny, 34-54, at 43-6; David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2000), 93-8; Michael J. Braddick, ‘Civility and Authority’ in *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (Basingstoke, 2009), 113-32, at 120-3; Jennifer Richards, ‘Introduction’, in *Early Modern Civil Discourses*, ed. Jennifer Richards (Basingstoke, 2003), 1-18, 1-9; Aonghas MacCoinnich, *Plantation and Civility in the North Atlantic World: The Case of the Northern Hebrides, 1570-1639* (Leiden, 2015), 11-7.

²² *Several Proceedings in Parliament*, 15-22 January, issue 121, 1876; *Mercurius Politicus*, 29 April-6 May 1652, issue 100, 1580.

them by reason the Law seldome takes away their lives, and soe opens a Gappe for them to Seeke Revenge vppon their prosecutors, and often tymes begetts new Troubles.²³

If Monck sought an explanation for Highland wildness in the traditional weakness of government, rather than in the innate incivility of Highlanders, Oliver Cromwell himself, in a proclamation of 1658, made a similar point about Highland irreligion:

Little or noe Care hath been taken for a very Numerous people inhabiteing in the Highlands by the Establishing of Ministry or a maintenance, where the Greatest part haue scarce heard whether there be an holy Gost or not, Though there be some in Seuerall parts as Wee are informed that Hunger and thirst after the meanes of Salvacion.²⁴

There was little suggestion here that Highlanders were not Christians; the problem was simply that they did not have access to robust religious instruction. This was not the uncivil standard of ‘heathenism’ in any meaningful sense, and as such it spoke to the Commonwealth’s wider assumption that, while Highlanders were wild and backward, this was largely a function of isolation and weak ordering structures. They were, by implication, capable of civility, and needed only a little tuition and a firmer hand to bring them up to an acceptable standard.

Furthermore, the absence of true ‘incivility’ in English perceptions of Highlanders can be inferred from the limited nature of Commonwealth aims in the region. English thinking, later given its fullest expression by John Locke, used ideas of native incivility to justify imperial expansion. In refusing properly to marshal the landed resources God had provided for them, and in failing to develop settled, agricultural societies, savage peoples, particularly native Americans, had forfeited their rights to own that land (although not necessarily to reside upon it), and the burden – and bounty – of taming the wilderness therefore fell to European settlers.²⁵ There is nothing to suggest that English commentators of the 1650s indulged in such ‘arguments from vacancy’ with regard to the Highlands. The closest they came was discussing the region’s underdeveloped trading networks, as exemplified by Thomas Tucker’s report – but even Tucker did not couple this with any claims about the absence of settlement or agriculture. In policy terms, certainly, no effort was made to sponsor the sorts of dispossession or land-transfer projects that marked contemporary North America or Ireland. Indeed, quite the opposite; the Commonwealth consciously shored-up existing landholding structures, for example in June 1654, when the surrender of a group of hitherto rebellious landholders in the Blair Atholl area was met with an order for them immediately to return to possessing and working their land.²⁶ Cromwellian aims, as a result, were generally modest, boiling down, essentially, to the maintenance of order – so, for example, when the House of Commons requested in 1652 that the Council of State consider ‘what is fit to be done in relation to the Highlands’, it explicitly framed the question in terms of the ‘Security of this Commonwealth’, with no hint that a broader transformative programme was anticipated.²⁷

²³ Oxford, Worcester College Library [WCL], Clarke MSS, XLVII, Abstracts of warrants, orders and passes, 1655–6, no pagination, Order to Colonel Fitch, 21 June 1655.

²⁴ Kew, The National Archives [TNA], State Papers Domestic: Commonwealth, SP25/78, 557–8.

²⁵ David Armitage, ‘John Locke: Theorist of Empire?’, in *Empire and Political Thought*, ed. Sankar Muthu (Cambridge, 2012), 84–111.

²⁶ WCL, Clarke MSS, XLV, Abstracts of warrants, orders and passes, 1653–4, no pagination, Monck’s order, 17 June 1654.

²⁷ *The Journal of the House of Commons: Volume 7, 1651–1660* (London, 1802), 111.

The limited nature of the Commonwealth's goals was encapsulated by its policy towards clanship. One newspaper correspondent complained in 1652 that the 'barbarous creatures' of the Highlands were 'slavish' to the will of their chiefs, and although he was thinking specifically of Archibald Campbell, marquis of Argyll, the broad concern that clanship was incompatible with the shared dedication to the commonwealth inherent in a true *civis* was long-established and widespread.²⁸ Early on in his Scottish service, Monck toyed with the idea of disrupting the clan system by appointing middling clansmen, rather than chiefs, to public offices like justiceships of the peace.²⁹ But practical constraints, combined with increasing acceptance that much Highland disorder originated outside the clan system, ensured that any ambition to neuter clanship was dropped in favour of exploiting it. Robert Lilburne laid the groundwork for this approach by attempting in 1653 to resurrect the general band introduced by James VI in 1587, seeking thereby to make Highland chiefs provide annual securities for the peaceable behaviour of the dependents.³⁰ This does not seem to have had much effect, but a more diffuse policy of landlord accountability certainly persisted, so that, for example, such obligations were routinely written into the treaties concluded between the government and those Highland lords who had adhered to Glencairn's Rising, including Ewan Cameron of Lochiel, Archibald Campbell, lord Lorne, Alexander MacNaughton of Dunderave, Roderick MacLeod of Dunvegan, Kenneth Mackenzie, 3rd earl of Seaforth, Donald Mackay, 2nd lord Reay and John Murray, 2nd earl of Atholl.³¹ The Commonwealth consistently relied upon the innate authority of clan chiefs for other purposes as well, including as military auxiliaries; the MacGregor chief, Patrick Roy, was for example commissioned in December 1654 to raise an armed watch against thieves and rebels in both Perthshire and Stirlingshire.³² Despite some misgivings about the clan system, therefore, no serious plans for eradicating or weakening it ever emerged, and instead, the Commonwealth authorities opted for co-operation and accommodation. While in part reflecting the brevity and persistent insecurity of the republican regime, this lack of interest in a thoroughgoing programme of imperial transformation also reflected the moderate policy goals flowing from a limited conception of Highland 'incivility'.

Affecting Godly Reformation

But if the Commonwealth lacked any appetite for colonial rule in the Highlands, the manifest imperfections of Highland civilisation, and above all the region's alleged wildness and lawlessness, still afforded ample opportunities for the kind of behavioural reformation to which it was dedicated more broadly. Achieving its primary goal of good order by clamping down on lawlessness and robbery offered the most straightforward means of moulding Highlanders into acceptable, godly subject. In this, the government's primary tool was its network of garrisons, which at its zenith around 1655–6 included two major fortifications, at Inverness and Inverlochy, combined with a range of smaller strongholds, among them Castle Sinclair, Tain, Ruthven, Braemar, Duart and Dunstaffnage, and a shifting group of temporary, 'off-the-books' garrisons at sites like Helmsdale, Spynie, Bellachastle and Inveraray.³³ These

²⁸ *Severall Proceedings in Parliament*, issue 121, 15–22 January 1652, 1876; Arthur Williamson, 'Scotland and the Rise of Civic Culture, 1550–1650', *History Compass* 4 (2006), 91–123.

²⁹ *Scotland and the Protectorate: Letters and Papers Relating to the Military Government of Scotland, from January 1654 to June 1659*, ed. C. H. Firth (Edinburgh, 1899), 98.

³⁰ *Scotland and the Commonwealth*, ed. Firth, 148–50, Lilburne to Cromwell, 21 June 1653; *By the Commissioners appointed for Administration of Justice to the People of Scotland* (Leith, 1653)

³¹ *Scotland and the Protectorate*, ed. Firth, 158–61, 234–7, 269–82, 285–8.

³² WCL, Clarke MSS, XLVI, Abstracts of warrants, orders and passes, 1654–5, no pagination, warrant to Patrick Roy MacGregor, 18 December 1654.

³³ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Commonwealth*, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green, 13 vols (London, 1875–85), VIII, 251; WCL, Clarke MSS, XLIII, Money warrants, 1654–9, 49v–50r, 55r–57r, 66r and

centres were regularly used to tackle lawless behaviour, as for example in May 1656, when the soldiers at Dunstaffnage were ordered to apprehend ‘any of the persons that committ any roberies or felonies in Mull Island’.³⁴ Such efforts were often supplemented by co-opting local elites; in November 1656, for instance, the chiefs of several Highland clans, including the MacDonalDs of Glencoe, the Murrays of Atholl, the Campbells of Cawdor and the Stewarts of Appin, were contacted with requests to hunt down named thieves on their lands.³⁵

On one level, Cromwellian law enforcement drives really were simple exercises in securing order; Monck made this clear in early 1657, when he claimed that Highland robbery was well under control, which rendered the region ‘pretty firme to his highnesse’ and ensured Highlanders would offer ‘little encouragement’ to Charles II.³⁶ But Monck also attached a wider transformative significance to these endeavours. In his instructions of June 1656 to the incoming governor of Inverlochy, Colonel William Brayne, the commander-in-chief explicitly linked an injunction to tackle crime with the Commonwealth’s civilising mission:

For the remedying of which disorders and civillizeing of the said people, The Generall [...] does therefore aauthorize the said Colonel Brayne to apprehend or cause to bee apprehended the person or persons of any who are inhabitants, have relacion to, or shalbee found in the seuerall bounds of Lochaber [...] and that are or shalbee suspected or accused to have committed any murder robbery or fellony or to have abetted recetted or favoured any who have committed the said offences and to trye the person or persons soe apprehended by a Court Martiall [...] And that hee is to vse all other good and convenient ways and meanes to bring the inhabitants of the said bounds to a more civill life and conversacion.³⁷

Lawlessness, as discussed above, was one of the key tropes in the English discourse of Highland ‘barbarity’. Eliminating it, therefore, was not simply a project in securing the state. It was also a mechanism for transitioning Highlanders towards a more civilised way of life.

This was reinforced by a broader campaign against immorality. Tackling sinful behaviour was one of the justifications for re-appointing justices of the peace in 1656,³⁸ and according to Ruthven’s governor, John Hill, it proved a fruitful tactic in the southern Highlands at least:

The businesse prospers soe well in our hands as Justices of the peace in these Highlands [...] fornicators are startled at the punishment some have received, and drunkards begin to looke towards sobriety, and swearers to speake more deliberately.³⁹

Other parts of the judicial system were also involved in fighting immorality. Circuiting in the northern Highlands in the autumn of 1655, judges from the central criminal court prosecuted a range of crimes, but with a particular focus on sexual transgressions; of the 90 cases initiated from Inverness-shire, Ross-shire, Sutherland and Caithness, forty-four – just under

67v–69r; WCL, Clarke XLVII, Monck to Argyll, 17 July 1655; WCL, Clarke Mss, XLVIII, Abstracts of warrants, orders and passes, 1656–8, no pagination, warrant to Auditor General, 24 June 1658.

³⁴ WCL, Clarke XLVII, Monck to Waller, 16 May 1656.

³⁵ WCL, Clarke XLVIII, Monck to chiefs, 18 November 1656.

³⁶ *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe, Esq.*, ed. Thomas Birch, 7 vols (London, 1742), VI, 52–3.

³⁷ WCL, Clarke XLVII, Instructions to Colonel Brayne, 6 June 1655.

³⁸ Dow, *Cromwellian Scotland*, 178–9.

³⁹ *Scotland and the Protectorate*, ed. Firth, 321.

50% – involved either adultery or incest.⁴⁰ These were transgressions traditionally dealt with in Scotland through church courts, and their prosecution before civil judges in the 1650s reflects the much greater interventionism of the Commonwealth in terms of tackling immorality, as well as, perhaps, its underlying desire to secure jurisdictional dominance for Commonwealth-appointed over native courts.⁴¹ Idleness was another recurrent target. Echoing contemporary ideas about the godliness of work, one newspaper correspondent reported in 1653 that the absence of sufficient gainful employment encouraged endemic robbing and plundering, and also made Highlanders inherently disloyal.⁴² This author's proposed solution was to transport all 'loose and vagabond people' overseas, an idea that gained some currency; in 1655, for example, Thomas Fitch at Inverness was ordered to round up all 'those idle Men and women' in the surrounding country and ship them to Barbados.⁴³ Less drastically, the idea was floated in October 1655 of charging the governors of Inverness and Inverlochy with appointing 'such persons, as they may best trust' to keep periodic registers of known vagrants north of the Forth, presumably with a view towards punishing them, a duty that would simultaneously be performed in southern Scotland by Monck himself.⁴⁴ It is not clear that this notion was ever implemented, but tackling idleness remained on the government's radar; the gentlemen of Argyllshire, for example, received strict instructions in October 1656 to proceed strongly against 'idle and vagabond' persons at upcoming quarter session meetings, on the grounds that such people were strongly inclined towards criminality.⁴⁵ An arguably more constructive tactic was to expand employment opportunities in the Highlands. This, as we shall see below, was also part of the Commonwealth approach, and it fed into a broader campaign for promoting respectable behaviour that echoed contemporary drives elsewhere in the British Isles. Republican ambitions, therefore, were not restricted to 'civilising' Highlanders, but also sought to shepherd them towards true godliness.

The drive to eliminate lawlessness and immorality fed into another transformative project. Despite its fundamentally militaristic character, the Cromwellian regime made extensive use of magisterial patterns of control, especially from around 1655, when Roger Boyle, lord Broghill, as president of the Scottish council, began introducing more heavily civilian elements into the administration, most importantly via the judicial system.⁴⁶ But if regional elites were to be involved in government, either through formal office-holding or (especially in the Highlands) by more informal co-operation, they needed to be properly educated as to their responsibilities, and moulded into trustworthy magistrates. The Commonwealth's attempts to do this nationwide were most explicit in the instructions given to the newly-appointed JPs at the end of 1655, which, alongside more than twenty specific injunctions, ordered office-holders to take an oath promising to 'do equal right both to rich and poor', not 'to be of Council with any person in any quarrel or matter depending before you', to 'take nothing for your Office [...] but what is or shall be by the Law allowed', and to aim for 'the

⁴⁰ Edinburgh, National Records of Scotland [NRS], JC10/10, Circuit Court Minute Books, 1655. Outside of Inverness-shire, where there were a large number of theft prosecutions, the predominance of sexual crime was even starker – some 69% of all offences cited were either adultery or incest.

⁴¹ Lesley M. Smith, 'Sackcloth for the Sinner or Punishment for the Crime? Church and Secular Courts in Cromwellian Scotland' in *New Perspectives on the Politics and Culture of Early Modern Scotland*, ed. John Dwyer, Roger A. Mason and Alexander Murdoch (Edinburgh, 1982), 116–32.

⁴² Paul Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1988), 22.

⁴³ *Severall Proceedings of State Affaires*, 1–8 December 1653, 3481; WCL, Clarke XLVI, Monck to Fitch, 20 April 1655.

⁴⁴ *State Papers of John Thurloe*, ed. Birch, IV, 12–30.

⁴⁵ WCL, Clarke XLVIII, Order to the gentlemen of Argyllshire, 24 October 1656.

⁴⁶ Little, *Lord Broghill*, 111-3.

preservation of the said peace'.⁴⁷ In the Highlands specifically, the drive against thieves provided a useful means of educating magisterial partners. The regime was explicit about the duty of all landed men to stand against thieves, for example informing William Graham, 1st earl of Airth in March 1655 that failure to take action against robbers could lead to prosecution by a court martial.⁴⁸ The obligations of civic magistracy were reinforced by conspicuously rewarding those who did good service, a tactic baldly admitted by Monck, writing to Hill in September 1658 when trying to arrange for the capture of a gang of thieves from Lochaber:

His Lordshippe desires him alsoe to send to the Governour of Dunstaffnage That hee speeke with mcnachton [Dunderave] That If hee will vndertake to apprehend those Men who are lurking about Glencoe, His Lordshippe will take itt as an acceptable service, and consider him for his paines in itt.⁴⁹

Favour was not only forthcoming for thief-catching. The Glenorchy Campbells' active service during Glencairn's rising earned them Monck's intercession with the judicial authorities for protection against creditors, while Seaforth was meaningfully reminded in 1657 that it would 'make much for his Lordshippe to expresse his obedience to the present Government' by ensuring proper payment on Lewis of the excise tax.⁵⁰ Conversely, those whose behaviour did not live up to the ideal of the active, godly magistrate could expect no reward; John Buchanan of Buchanan's request that he be allowed to bear arms in February 1655 was rebuffed on the grounds that only those 'who have done some service against the Enemy' were eligible for such favours – a standard which Buchanan, implicitly, had failed to meet.⁵¹ Of course, the adoption of a magisterial pattern of government in the Highlands was on one level simple necessity, since the co-operation of regional elites was vital for keeping the wheels of local government turning.⁵² But in making its expectations clear, and in offering material rewards in return for acceptable service, the Commonwealth made a conscious attempt to mould the existing Highland elite into the sort of active magisterial class that was a vital component of a civilised, godly state.

An indispensable corollary to any effort at rooting out lawlessness and fostering more civilised behaviour was the expansion of religious instruction. A pair of warrants issued by Oliver Cromwell in the spring of 1658 outlined the government's understanding of this issue, as well as its preferred responses. The first, lamenting longstanding shortages in ministerial provision and the consequent ignorance of the people, notwithstanding much evidence of their 'breathings after the Gospell', instructed the Council of Scotland to 'fynd out a way and meanes For the planting of the Gospell in those parts', specifically in the form of appointing new ministers. This was to be funded, to the tune of £600, by recovering concealed or appropriated stipends, which were claimed to be 'detained in vnrighteousness, and diverted from the right Ends, To the sole benefit of particular persons'. This decree was followed a few weeks later by one which likewise set itself the task of correcting 'the sad Condition of our people in Scotland living in the Highlands' who 'in their lives and whole Demeanors are

⁴⁷ *Scotland and the Protectorate*, ed. Firth, 403.

⁴⁸ WCL, Clarke XLVI, Monck to Airth, 30 March 1655.

⁴⁹ WCL, Clarke Mss, XLIX, Abstracts of warrants, passes and orders, 1658–65, fol. 5v, Monck to Hill, 18 September 1658.

⁵⁰ NRS, Breadalbane Muniments, GD112/39/100/5, Monck to the judges, 20 July 1655; WCL, Clarke XLVIII, Monck to Seaforth, 14 February 1657.

⁵¹ WCL, Clarke XLVI, Monck to Buchanan, 12 February 1655.

⁵² Necessity of this sort might also explain why ecclesiastical courts continued to meet during the Commonwealth, despite initial English plans to eradicate them. Smith, 'Sackcloth for the Sinner' in *New Perspectives* ed. Dwyer, Mason and Murdoch.

little different from the most Savage Heathens'. Its focus, however, was on the paucity of education, for remedying which it allocated £1,200 annually from the same 'concealed Church Rents' so that 'schooles of Learneing for the educacion of Children be erected'. As mentioned above, these decrees are striking in that they suggest a conceptualisation of Highland 'irreligion' rooted very much in inadequate provision, rather than godlessness. At the same time, however, it was assumed that bolstering Highlanders' exposure to religion would have an improving effect, since 'advanceing of the Gospell' would see 'Vice suppressed'.⁵³ There is nothing to suggest that these projects were actually put into action, and indeed, coming mere months before Cromwell's death, it would hardly be surprising if they had proved inoperative. They are, nonetheless, instructive about the nature of the Commonwealth's transformative posture towards the Highlands, and to the centrality of expanded religious instruction in this project.

Despite the tardiness and likely ineffectualness of a formal religious policy for the Highlands, there are indications that the Commonwealth attempted to foster expanded provision on an *ad hoc* basis. Sometimes this was done by protecting local churches or their income streams, for example in February 1655, when the vacant stipend of Fodderty in Inverness-shire was ordered to be uplifted by James MacDonald of Sleat and 'to be by him applied for pious and publique vses within the said parish'.⁵⁴ Further south, it was recorded in early 1659 that the vacant stipends within the presbytery of Argyll had for some time been allowed for 'charitable and pious uses', in which case the Commonwealth may well have been indirectly responsible for facilitating the translation and printing of last 50 psalms into Gaelic, a project carried forward by the presbytery throughout the late 1650s largely using this revenue stream.⁵⁵ The republic also sought to expand religious provision by, in effect, sponsoring preaching missions. In June 1656, three ministers – Colin McLachlan, Dougal Campbell and Archibald McClean – were granted passes 'to goe to preach in seuerall parts of the Highlands during this summer season', and were also given leave to require quarters and assistance from all garrison commanders.⁵⁶ Three years later, Inverlochy's governor, John Hill, helped finance a two-month mission by the Argyllshire minister Robert Duncanson to tackle the 'ignorance, enormities and increase of poperie' in Ardnamurchan, Sunart, Moidart, Arisaig.⁵⁷

In other cases, republican authorities sought to settle ministers more permanently, with the most concerted efforts being made at Inverlochy, where the absence of 'Scotch Ministers' was so complete that Monck was forced in 1657 to add an English minister to the garrison's establishment at a cost of more than 6s per day, primarily for the soldiers' comfort but also, possibly, to preach to the locals.⁵⁸ Monck had been receptive to the idea of assisting in the settlement of Scottish ministers in Lochaber since at least 1655, but tangible action was not in evidence until three years later, when £80 of public money was provided to pay for two posts. Hill immediately set about looking for suitable appointees, eventually settling on two candidates from Argyll synod, Dougal Campbell and Donald MacVicar. Nothing had been achieved by late 1659, largely because the synod (irritated anyway that Hill was proceeding without their advice) refused to ratify the transfer of Campbell and MacVicar until guarantees of suitable manses and glebes could be secured, and in the event it seems that only

⁵³ TNA, SP25/78, 557–8, 589–91; *State Papers of John Thurloe*, ed. Birch, VII, 169. The second of these grants, which mentioned in passing maintaining ministers, may in fact have been a replacement for, and extension of, the first.

⁵⁴ WCL, Clarke XLVI, Monck to Fitch, 14 February 1655.

⁵⁵ WCL, Clarke XLIX, fol. 35v, Monck to John Yuile, 28 February 1659; *Minutes of the Synod of Argyll, 1639–62*, ed. Duncan C. MacTavish, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1943–4), 113–4, 188.

⁵⁶ WCL, Clarke XLVII, passes to ministers, 19 June 1656.

⁵⁷ *Synod of Argyll*, ed. MacTavish, II, 194.

⁵⁸ WCL, Clarke LI, Monck's Letter Book, 1657–9, 21v; *State Papers of John Thurloe*, ed. Birch, VI, 556–7.

Campbell actually made the move.⁵⁹ There is also some evidence of interest in education provision, for example in 1653, when the governor of Inverness demanded a report from the presbytery of Dingwall as to their progress in establishing schools, or in 1658, when the Council of State (responding to a petition) ordered an investigation into how new schools might be financed in the Strathspey parishes of Abernethy and Duthil.⁶⁰ Initiatives such as these were piecemeal and largely reactive, lacking the sense of overarching plan implied by Cromwell's proclamations. They suggest, nonetheless, that the Protector's notion of helping expand religious provision in the Highlands found real-world expression in his government's actions on the ground.

Alongside tackling lawless or immoral behaviour and expanding religious instruction, Commonwealth drives for civility also had an economic component. This was an approach commensurate with contemporary understandings of civility, which stressed the importance of honest labour in warding off immoral temptation, and moreover it had a clear Scottish precedent in the form of James VI's abortive plantation of Lewis at the start of the seventeenth century.⁶¹ Cromwell reputedly toyed with the idea of dispatching forty boys, the sons of prominent Highlanders, to be educated in England in 'al trades and callings and then sent hom agayn', an idea echoing James VI's 1609 agreement with west-Highland chiefs known as the 'Statutes of Iona' and clearly intended as a means of both expanding the Highlands' economic profile and entrenching civilised commercial values.⁶² This remained merely an idea, but an interest in stimulating economic development persisted. In October 1656, for instance, Monck issued orders for the exploration of suspected silver deposits at a site thirty-five miles from Inverness, with the intention, if practicable, of developing a mining operation. While the ore produced was intended to be shipped off to London in a classic 'asset-stripping' pattern, there was also an explicit belief that such an endeavour would work for the improvement of the locality, not just by injecting capital via the local landowner, who would be given 'satisfaction [...] for any prejudice they shall receive', but also by providing employment for 'all idle persons' in the northern Highlands.⁶³

This pattern of sponsoring economic development that would, naturally, benefit the state, but with the additional intention of bringing the benefits of civilised economic activity to the Highlands, was also apparent in the Commonwealth's interest in timber. Between late-1651 and mid-1653, repeated efforts were made to open up the woodlands of Speyside for exploitation by the English navy. Self-interest was central to these plans; the navy needed timber, masts and tar, which it was hoped the Highlands could provide at a reasonable rate, and there was also the possibility of running a commercial operation whose profits would defray the expense of the Scottish military establishment. Yet the project, as initially envisaged, would also have yielded significant infrastructure advantages for the eastern Highlands. The main proposals involved shipping timber from the Abernethy woods down the river Spey, to allow for which 'a small charge [would] bee bestowed in mending one or two places in the way'. James Grant of Freuchie would be contracted to build a wharf at the mouth of the Spey to receive the timber, which would then be cut in specially-built sawmills before being shipped to England. This operation would require a workforce of several dozen men, and for their accommodation a small village would be built on 100 acres of land leased

⁵⁹ WCL, Clarke XLVII, Monck to Lochiel, 16 October 1655; James Drummond, *Memoirs of Sir Ewen Cameron of Locheill*, ed. [James MacKnight] (Edinburgh, 1842), 153–4; *Synod of Argyll*, ed. MacTavish, II, 172, 205–6.

⁶⁰ *Records of the Presbyteries of Inverness and Dingwall 1643–1688*, ed. William Mackay (Edinburgh, 1896), 257–9; *The Chiefs of Grant*, ed. William Fraser, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1883), II, 19.

⁶¹ MacCoinnich, *Plantation and Civility*.

⁶² Archibald Johnston, *Diary of Sir Archibald Johnston of Wariston*, ed. George Morison Paul, David Hay Fleming and James D. Ogilvie, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1911–40), III, 93. For the most extensive comment on the Statutes of Iona, see Martin MacGregor, 'The Statutes of Iona: Text and Context', *IR* 57 (2006), 111–81.

⁶³ WCL, Clarke XLVIII, Monck to Hill, 15 October 1656; *State Papers of John Thurloe*, ed. Birch, v, 702.

from Freuchie. The effect would have been to create the infrastructure for a whole new industry. In the event, however, little seems to have come of these plans, with English exploitation of Highland timber apparently being restricted to smaller-scale contracts for the Strathcarron woods belonging to the Rosses of Balnagown.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, the mooted investment on Speyside is reflective of a broad economic approach that hoped to work to the advantage of the state while simultaneously fostering ‘improvement’ at the local level.

The main engines of Commonwealth economic improvement were its garrisons, and their activities in this regard underlined the regime’s symbiotic understanding of the process. At a very basic level, soldiers required shelter, and providing this for them often required substantial building work, most obviously at Inverness, where Commonwealth efforts produced a brand new, stone-built pentagonal citadel with a harbour incorporated.⁶⁵ Such benefits often proved fleeting, since many garrison sites were abandoned after the English withdrew in the early 1660s, allowing the fortifications to crumble, but that was not always the case; at Inveraray, the works and houses were passed on the Marquis of Argyll in August 1655 for him to do ‘as his lordshipp shall see most convenient for his owne Accommodation’.⁶⁶ But potential infrastructure impacts were not limited to the garrison buildings. In August 1659, the governor of Ruthven Castle, Captain Anthony Wilkes, was ordered to survey the land surrounding his garrison with a view to improving it to a sufficient extent that it could provide all the material he might need for maintaining and repairing the castle; he was also instructed to curate flood works on the river Spey.⁶⁷ More substantially, the large citadel built at Inverlochy apparently caused the growth of an embryonic town nearby for housing the soldiers’ families, as well as sundry others attracted by ‘the hopes of gain, and the security of living safe from the prosecutions of their defrauded creditors’.⁶⁸ There was even talk of forcing Highland elites to reside in this and other ‘litle villages near the garisons’ for part of the year in the hope that they would internalise a civilised urban outlook.⁶⁹

Typically, however, the garrisons’ main impact was to spur local economic demand. Lochiel made £40 in 1656 selling timber to the garrison at Inverlochy. John Campbell, younger of Glenorchy, had secured an even more lucrative deal the previous year, earning £100 by supplying wood to Finlarig’s garrison.⁷⁰ Further north, Inverness’s town council enjoyed a steady income of 40s by leasing the patch of carseland upon which the citadel was built, while one local merchant, Alexander Dunbar, earned £200 supplying the soldiers with unspecified wares in February 1654.⁷¹ Hugh Fraser of Struy did even better, allegedly making 30,000 merks from selling timber to the garrison, some of whose stone, moreover, was bought from the quarries of Alexander Dunbar of Bennetfield.⁷² Foodstuffs might also be locally sourced, even though, in theory, soldiers were supposed to receive all their rations from military stores – certainly James Dennis, the governor of Balloch, was reprimanded in

⁶⁴ *Calendar of State Papers*, ed. Green, iv, 103–4; v, 178–9; TNA, SP19/23, 33; T. C. Smout, Alan R. MacDonald and Fiona Watson, *A History of the Native Woodlands of Scotland 1500–1920* (Edinburgh, 2005), 322–5.

⁶⁵ *Early Travellers*, ed. Brown, 200; James Fraser, *Chronicles of the Frasers*, ed. William Fraser (Edinburgh, 1905), 413–4.

⁶⁶ WCL, Clarke XLVII, Monck to Argyll, 16 August 1655.

⁶⁷ WCL, Clarke XLIX, Monck to Wilkes, 18 August 1659.

⁶⁸ Drummond, *Memoirs*, 139.

⁶⁹ Johnston, *Diary*, III, 93.

⁷⁰ WCL, Clarke XLVIII, Warrant to Clarke, 9 July 1656; WCL, Clarke XLVII, Warrant to Glenorchy, 11 June 1655.

⁷¹ *Records of Inverness*, ed. William Mackay, Herbert Cameron Boyd and George Smith Laing, 2 vols (Aberdeen, 1911–24), II, 210; WCL, Clarke XLV, Warrant for Alexander Dunbar, 17 February 1654.

⁷² *Chronicles*, ed. Fraser, 414; WCL, Clarke XLVIII, Monck to Man, 20 January 1658.

June 1655 for allowing his subordinates to purchase livestock directly from local gentlemen, albeit at below market prices.⁷³ Rather differently, the expense of hiring local boats to carry supplies up Loch Linnhe to the garrison at Inverlochy was so great that the governor, William Brayne, commissioned a dedicated ferry vessel in September 1654.⁷⁴

Conversely, the garrisons were centres of supply. The company at Drummond Castle enjoyed the special privileges of being permitted to bake bread and brew beer, and it may be that some of the resulting produce diffused out into the local community.⁷⁵ More concretely, Inverlochy's storekeeper, Henry Brabin, received permission in September 1657 to sell off a batch of military clothing, including coats, breeches, stockings and shoes 'to the Country people or others at the best rates they can gett'.⁷⁶ According to James Fraser, the Restoration-era minister of Kirkhill, the fort at Inverness was an even more substantial conduit for English goods:

They brought such store of all wares and conveniencies to Inuerness that English cloath was sold neare as cheape here as in England; the pint of claret win for a shilling; set up an apothecary shop with drugs, Mr Miller their chyrurgion, and Doctor Andrew Monro their phisitian. They not onely civilised but enriched this place.⁷⁷

If, as Fraser suggested, medical personnel seconded to the garrisons also serviced neighbouring civilians, this might well have been one of the Commonwealth's most widespread 'civilising' impacts, since surgeons were in residence at Ruthven, Braemar, Dunstaffnage, Duart, Finlarig and Balloch by the mid-1650s.⁷⁸ The larger garrisons also provided employment opportunities. The wages of a shilling per day offered to labourers working on Inverness's sconce won many takers, and the garrison's employment of Scottish servants, and indeed Scottish soldiers, was so substantial that Monck ordered them all to be dismissed in August 1658 for fear that 'the same may in time prove inconvenient'.⁷⁹ The Commonwealth, then, and in particular its garrisons, demonstrated consistent interest and utility in term of heightening economic activity in the Highlands. Although the evidence presented here is too disparate and small-scale to suggest a general programme of economic reform on the government's part, it is sufficient to suggest that the regime's improving mission in the Highlands had a distinct economic component to complement its efforts at behavioural and religious reformation.

Conclusion

Throughout the British Isles, the Commonwealth regime was driven by the zealous desire to craft a godly society. For a government of this bent, the Highlands of Scotland, weighed down by a reputation for strangeness and 'otherness', presented a particular challenge. The precise contours of its response, however, were mapped out less by its view of Highland oddness than by where it placed Highlanders on the sliding scale of civility, and here, the situation was complex. On a rhetorical level, the language of barbarity was ubiquitous, but on closer inspection this seldom reflected any notion that Highlanders were 'uncivil' in the same way as the native Irish or Native Americans. Rather, they tended to be viewed as wild and

⁷³ WCL, Clarke XLVII, Monck to Dennis, 23 June 1655.

⁷⁴ *Calendar of State Papers*, ed. Green, VII, 558.

⁷⁵ WCL, Clarke XLVII, Monck's order, 10 September 1657.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Order to Henry Brabin, 9 September 1657.

⁷⁷ *Chronicles*, ed. Fraser, 415.

⁷⁸ WCL, Clarke XLIII, 49v–50r.

⁷⁹ *Chronicles*, ed. Fraser, 413–6; WCL, Clarke LXVIII, Monck to Fitch, 6 August 1658.

wayward, led astray by the absence of proper supervision or instruction, rather than by inherent brutishness. This being the case, it was unsurprising that the Cromwellian posture towards the Highlands was avowedly non-imperial. The English regime had no meaningful interest in colonial models of government; its aims in Highland Scotland were generally more modest, with security and order being the primary objectives.

None of this means that the Commonwealth entirely eschewed transformative projects in the Highlands. Indeed, quite the opposite: its campaigns – inconsistent, limited and truncated though they may invariably have been – to root out thieves, mould a responsible magistracy, tackle immoral behaviour, improve religious provision and stimulate economic development were all informed by a conviction that Highlanders' civility quotient needed to be raised, and that doing so would produce a more orderly, secure and godly society. But these programmes need to be read within the proper context. They were not imperialistic responses to a barbaric locality, but instead were local variants of the Commonwealth's much wider zeal for godly reformation. To put it another way, making the Highlands godly required a unique set of tools and tactics, but not a unique conceptual framework.

Seen in this light, the Highland experience takes on wider significance. Not least, it underlines some recent suggestions that historians should, certainly in a Scottish context, be wary of becoming too parenthetical in their understanding of the Cromwellian period.⁸⁰ Taking a cue from the unique constitutional situation of the 1650s, not to mention the presence of an occupying foreign army, it is tempting to set the decade aside from the broader story of seventeenth-century Scotland. But in its conceptualisation of the Highlands, in the means it used to weaken regional distinctiveness, and in its rhetorically extravagant but functionally limited understanding of Highland 'incivility', the Commonwealth can perhaps more comfortably be placed within a narrative of governmental continuity.

A second observation – in partial counterpoint to the first – is that the Highland evidence suggests a strikingly and consistently interventionist regime. Cromwell's conquest of Scotland was as much a pragmatic and an idealistic project, and the consequent English regime was a hard-nosed project in securing occupation. But if its approach to the Highlands is any guide, none of this drowned out the Commonwealth's reforming zeal. The degree of its commitment to behavioural reformation really was something new, even if it was based on a broadly familiar conception of the 'Highland problem'. This observation is especially pertinent for Scotland, where the familiar picture of dogged and unimaginative military repression must surely be reviewed, but it is also of potential significance in a wider British context. Historians have long accepted that the British republic, particularly in its Protectoral guise, was generally conservative in form, but highly innovative in the ends for which it sought to use power.⁸¹ The Highland evidence indicates that in its vision of society, as well as in its understanding of the relationship between government and governed, the radicalism of the Commonwealth was strong enough to shape its policies even in one of its most distant and troublesome peripheries.

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⁸⁰ See, for example, Spurlock, *Cromwell and Scotland*, which argues for the longer-term significance of the otherwise distinctive religious history of the 1650s.

⁸¹ Barry Coward, 'Introduction', in *The Cromwellian Protectorate*, ed. Little, 1–13, 2–5.