

**The clergy of Cork, Cloyne and Ross
during the Tudor reformatiions**

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Abstract

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The clergy of Cork, Cloyne and Ross during the Tudor reformatations

This thesis challenges existing diocesan histories of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. Its local focus provides an invaluable opportunity to explore the successes and failures of the reformatations in the region. The arguments are split into four chapters, which are divided between the upper and lower clerical orders, the secular and religious clergy, both before and during the eras of the Tudor reformatations.

The argument uses antiquarian sources, Irish annals and English state papers to narrate the formation of diocesan, parochial and monastic structures in the region. The quality of each is then assessed for both the late medieval and reformatations periods, with direct reference to the effects of the peculiarities of Co. Cork's religion upon the progress of reform.

The thesis argues that the secular elites of Cork, Cloyne and Ross were intrinsically wedded to its church, involved heavily in the creation of the parish and monastic networks. Following the contraction of the crown polity in the medieval periods, local families took on increasing levels of influence.

During the Tudor period, the crown sought to expand its power in the region. However, the agents of reform failed to engage with the Irish and Anglo-Norman elites. Instead, their work would be accomplished at the expense of the traditional political and religious structures. This failure was based in the pervasive economic and political connections between the secular and religious elites of Co. Cork, but was reinforced by the particular weaknesses of the Anglican reformation strategy.

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For Jade and Mum

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Abbreviations

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| AI | <i>Annals of Innifallen</i> , edited by S. Mac Airt (Dublin, 1944) |
| AFM | <i>Annala rioghachta Eireann. Annals of the kingdom of Ireland, by the Four Masters, from the earliest period to the year 1616</i> , O'Donovan, J., ed. and trans., 7 vols. (Dublin, 1851) |
| AU | <i>Annala Uladh; Annals of Ulster a chronicle of Irish affairs from A.D.431 to A.D.1540</i> , edited by W.M. Hennessy and B. MacCarthy, 3 vols. (1887, Dublin) |
| CDI | <i>Calendar of Documents relating to Ireland</i> , edited by H.S. Sweetman, 5 vols. (London, 1875-1886) |
| CPR | <i>Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers Relating to Britain and Ireland</i> , edited by W.H. Bliss, <i>et al.</i> , 20 vols. (Dublin, 1893-2011) |
| CSPI | <i>Calendar of State Papers relating to Ireland of the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth</i> , H.C. Hamilton, <i>et al.</i> , eds., 10 vols. (1811-1895) |
| LP | <i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII</i> , ed. J.S. Brewer, <i>et al.</i> , 23 vols (London, 1862-1932) |
| NLI | National Library of Ireland |
| PROI | Public Records Office of Ireland |
| SP | State papers stored in the National Archive, London |
| SPH | <i>State Papers of King Henry VIII</i> , 11 vols (London, 1830-52) |

Preface

It is my belief that Europe and Ireland underwent several successive reformations which should not be narrowly defined. Although both the Henrician and Edwardian reformations were broadly Protestant in nature, they were not, and should not be considered, a single entity. Instead, although the policies of these monarchies were arguably similar, their distinct characteristics ensure their separateness. Consequently, I typically use the term ‘reformations’ to describe the political and religious reforms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I have particularly shunned the term ‘Counter Reformation,’ as it implies a reactionary, conservative movements. Consequently, it does little to describe the Catholic reformations which were often vibrant, innovative movements.

Where possible, I have standardised the spellings of names and places. The original spelling is supplied in brackets in the first instance, e.g. Donald MacCarthy (Mac Carthaig) and omitted in later uses of the same name. When directly quoting original documents, spellings have been left unchanged.

Finally, a note on geography: the medieval dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross largely, if not entirely, comprised the medieval county of Cork. Similarly, although the precise limits of each entity have been altered since the sixteenth century, the modern dioceses closely match the modern county. For the purposes of this thesis, any reference to Co. Cork equates to the total area of the three dioceses: Cork, Cloyne and Ross.

Introduction

August 1553 saw the Protestant author and bishop of Ossory flee the country. John Bale left his diocesan seat for the provincial capital of Dublin and then overseas to Europe. Concerned by the imminent end of a state sponsored reformed church in Ireland, the Protestant preacher felt determined to leave the country. Bale had been appointed to the bishopric in great confidence and went out into his episcopate preaching the theologies of reformation. His sermons were forceful and “Muche were the prestes off[nd]ed also for I had in my preachinges willed the[m] to have wives of their own & to leave the...occupieng of other menes wyves and doughters.”¹ The people were exhorted to follow the word of God and to repent their sins as per the gospel of salvation. However, mere months after taking up his post, disaster struck. The English cleric wrote in his *vocacyon* that in 1553, reports reached Ireland of the king’s death. “So sone as it was there rumoured abrode yt ye Kynge was departed fro[m] this lyfe ye ruffianes of ye wilde nacyon [Gaelic Irish] not only rebelled agai[n]st the English captaines...but also they conspired into the very deathes of so many English men and women.”²

Bale had been bold amongst the Irish of his diocese when supported by the English crown. However, in the uncertain environment following Edward’s death, this sense of security swiftly vanished. The bishop recorded that “I have bene in parell of the heathen... [and] of wicked prestes... trayterouse tenautes... [and] in parell of cruell kearnes and galloglasses.”³ As he moved through Ossory, the prelate’s train was attacked; nine of his men were slain. No longer protected by the shadow of an Anglican Tudor monarch, Bale had quickly come into personal danger, from which he would be saved by some 300 men who gathered about the bishop and escorted him to safety. Nonetheless, Bale would ultimately choose to escape to the continent to avoid the resurgent Catholicism and spent the wilderness years of the Marian restoration in Flanders.

The bishop of Ossory’s tale is perhaps the most famous example of sixteenth century opposition to the Tudor reforms. However, the arguments of the *vocacyon* exemplify the reformations as political rather than religious entities. John Bale was by his nature a religious

¹ J. Bale, *The vocacyon of Ioha[n] Bale to the bishiprick of Ossorie in Irela[n]de his persecucio[n]s in ye same, & finall delyueraunce* (1553), 21.

² *Ibid.*, 24.

³ *Ibid.*, 6.

man and his writings are littered with references to the bible and exegesis, but his calling was royal and not divine. Bale was sent to Ireland upon the instructions of King Edward. When confusion arose over the precise ceremony of consecration, he claimed the pre-eminence of secular law, citing that “If Englande and Irelande be undre one kinge they are both bounde to ye obedience of one lawe undre him.”⁴ Bale relied upon the Lord Chancellor, Thomas Cusack to support his case but eventually monarchical succession would drive the reformed bishop to leave the country when he could no longer avoid Roman liturgy. Political support was vital to the success of the English reformation. Across Europe, religion and religious reformers were sponsored by secular elites. This protection would repeatedly prove crucial. The principle would come to be known as *cuius regio, eius religio*; to whom the region belonged, the religion would adhere. Famously, authors have argued that Ireland represented one of the few nations to break this trend and her Catholicism would plague the English crown repeatedly over the coming centuries. However, this argument has been predicated upon an erroneous assumption: that the reforming Tudor monarchies, so secure in their own domains, were also the absolute rulers of Ireland.

In Co. Cork, Tudor authority was variable, realistically limited to the towns and their immediate locales. However, ecclesiastical rule was defined to a large degree by familial connection and local land ownership. Elite involvement in the church was extensive and pervasive. The flaws of the Gaelic church across late medieval Ireland have been well documented; of these, clerical concubinage and offspring were especially prevalent. These illegitimate sons often found their way into the ministry and so to the inheritance of their fathers’ livings. The churches *inter hibernicos*, those located within the demesne lands of the Gaelic lords were filled with Irish clerics. The O’Driscolls were, for example, particularly prevalent within the diocese of Ross and the O’Sullivans in the extreme west of Cork, around Bantry Bay.

The Anglo-Norman population was equally engaged with the late medieval church. The town of Kinsale had been granted to the de Courcy family in 1181.⁵ The barony survived the medieval period and the family remained in position throughout the Tudor epoch. As with the other towns of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, the foremost families of Kinsale were able to retain their positions of prominence with every passing century. A cursory examination of the council book of the municipality highlights several key families; in

⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁵ Lewis, *Lewis’ Cork* 326. The baron also had the privilege of wearing his hat in the royal presence and of having a cover laid for him at the royal table at coronations, and on all other state occasions.

addition to the de Courceys, the Barrys, Roches, Galweys, Copeners and Ronans played central roles within the history of Kinsale. The vast majority of those who served the parish church of Kinsale between 1350 and 1550 were scions of these families.⁶ It is no accident that the most prominent families of the various townships *inter anglicos*, those within the English polities, also supplied the priests.

For this study of the reformations, the outstanding section of John Bale's autobiography is not his account of proselytising the reforms, nor of his flight from Ireland. Instead, it is his rescue by the local men of Kilkenny that should be highlighted. Late medieval Ireland was a society of great violence and factionalism, in which the distinct political units often had a particular or peculiar internal loyalty. The suggestion of Bale's account is that in his extremely short tenure (less than six months), he had produced such an outpouring of sympathy within his diocese that the laity were willing to break traditional political lines to protect him. This is made all the more remarkable by the special attachment of Irish and Anglo-Irish elites to ecclesiastical houses, lands, possessions and incomes. In Cork, Cloyne and Ross, the secular elites dominated the clergy. Through land ownership, patronage and advowson, the influence of lay lordships was pervasive. Consequently, this thesis will argue that the nobility of the region played a crucial role in determining both the course of the reformations and the nature of the ministry within the three dioceses.

The thesis will begin by assessing the creation of the parochial and monastic networks in Co. Cork, before evaluating the condition of both traditions on the eve of the Tudor reformations. This evaluation will then be used to contextualise the reforms and the Anglican and Roman episcopacies. Finally, the course of the reformations at the close of the Tudor period will be considered through detailed analysis of diocesan visitations conducted during the last years of the sixteenth century and the first of the seventeenth.

In the first chapter, the development of the parochial network and the provision of religion on the eve of the reformations will be the focus. In Cork, Cloyne and Ross, the border between Gaelic and Anglo-Norman polities are readily observable. These are explored through geographical surveys and fiscal analysis. It is clear, however, that the

⁶ A list in J.L. Darling, *St Multose Church, Kinsale, As it Was, and As it Ought to Be: Being an Account, Historical and Descriptive, of an Ancient Anglo-Norman Church in the Co. Of Cork* (Cork, 1895), gives the following names; 1377, Philip Barry; 1383 John Horsyngton (proctor of Bath Abbey); 1406, John Nugent; 1412, John son of Gerot [FitzGerald?] was deprived and replaced by Richard Pallyn; 1446, Henry Glassane; 1488-98, rector Philip Copener; 1528, Walter Yong [Young] and vicar Jacobus Cursy [de Courcey]. In 1571, the revenues were held by David Roche, a scholar who had to be dispensed to hold the position due to his age and non-residence.

image of diocesan structures on the brink of collapse is entirely spurious. The high demand for parochial appointments will be demonstrated and the education of individual clerics considered. At the same time, the involvement and influence of local magnates in the parish network will be shown to have been pervasive and all-inclusive, from the creation of the parish and diocese to the battle for their control in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century.

The demarcation between the Irish and the Norman parishes is demonstrable, although the quality of worship in each was comparable; this will be argued in chapter one. To contrast, the second chapter will demonstrate the distinct differences in both character and quality between the religious houses across the dioceses on the eve of the reformations. Patronage of individual families was essential in the spread of the monastic tradition, which occurred in three waves during the centuries preceding the reformations. The very oldest monasteries preceded the English invasions, after which the new Anglo-Norman lordship oversaw the spread of a burgeoning tradition. However, it will be shown that by the reformations, many of the older houses had fallen into disarray, to be replaced by newer institutions. Just as the Gaelic families enjoyed a resurgence of power and influence during the fifteenth century, so too did their religion.

The first two chapters demonstrate a key and clear link between secular elites and the nature of religion. These differences are noticeable in both the monastic and parochial traditions, having direct implications on the course of the reforms. However, the influence of local families was felt nowhere so keenly as within the cathedral chapters and the bishoprics themselves. The course of the reformations amongst the episcopal seats is explored in chapter. Here, the local lords and clans not only influenced the character of a parish or the installation of a particular religious order, but instead directly caused individual bishops to succeed or fail. The support of the local political will shall be shown to have been entirely essential to the spread of the various reformations and the success of their agents.

Where chapter three will consider the role and position of individual bishops, the final, fourth chapter, will review the condition of the lower orders. Here, the focus is very much on the parish, with detours into the dissolution of the monasteries and the cathedral chapters. While the thesis as a whole charts the involvement of secular elites, a large part of this chapter will take conclusions from preceeding sections and apply them to later surveys to create a comprehensive image of the three dioceses at the end of the Tudor reforms.

Much of the argument of this thesis is based upon the development of religious structures in the region of Cork and the continuous involvement of the local elites from the medieval period onwards. The chronology of the reformations period⁷ is therefore subsumed into this larger timeline, the end of which is marked by the passing of the Tudor dynasty. The thesis sets out to consider the earliest parts of the reformations, from the introduction of reformist ideas to the promotion of the first Anglican bishop in the diocese of Cork, as well as the developing strategies of both crown and papacy under Mary and Elizabeth. In this, the role of local power structures was crucial to the entire process; the upheavals of the plantations and rebellions of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries proved to be both the ultimate catalyst for resistance and the prime cause of radical transition within the patterns of power and influence in the three dioceses and beyond. Consequently, the end of Elizabeth's reign marks the most appropriate stopping point for a study of the early reformations.

The secular clergy of Cork, Cloyne and Ross were unremarkable in many ways. The spread of the parochial network was in line with Irish norms, as was its medieval condition. On the eve of the reformations, the county's priests were largely adequate, if conservative. However, the secular divide between Anglo-Norman and Gaelic lordships played a significant role in the specifics of religion within the dioceses. As differences in the languages used by the laity and the varying ethnicities of individual clerics played their part, so too did the urbanisation of the English colony. In the western parts of the three dioceses, parishes tended to be much larger, while those in the east were smaller. In the provision of parochial religion, the influence of secular elites was pervasive, but subtle.

Their role in the monastic tradition and episcopal politics was more overt. The monasteries of the region were founded in three waves: before the Norman invasion, from 1180 to the coming of the Black Death, and the fifteenth century. In each of these periods, the lay lordships were essential to the success or failure of individual houses. Local patronage was split upon very simple lines, with clear distinctions evident between the Anglo-Norman and Gaelic traditions. These differences occasioned a significant impact upon the course of the reformations. The popularity of the Observant movement *inter hibernicos*, for example, occasioned a vibrant and effective group within the dioceses that emphasised the Roman traditions.

⁷ In this thesis, the Observant movement of reform that was popular amongst the friaries of Ireland in the fifteenth century is not considered part of the reformations. However, its inclusion in any discussion of the reformations is essential, especially in an Irish context.

During the reformations, the three dioceses enjoyed many bishops. At various times, two or all of the sees were united as one, while English and papal candidates vied for control of the episcopates. The success of these bishops was not necessarily predicated upon their faction, but rather their ability to leverage local support. Consequently, the secular elites wielded significant ecclesiastical power and provided several bishops from within their own ranks. This growth in political influence was partially rooted in the turbulent contexts of Tudor Ireland, as the Desmond Rebellions threatened the English hegemony. It was, however, reinforced by royal reformation policy.

The dissolution of the monasteries solidified the influence of the elites. At once, their involvement granted them significant ecclesiastical possessions and a duty to protect their traditions. Some lords became actively involved in circumventing the dissolution policy, whilst others became significant actors within it. Those nobles who leased ecclesiastical revenues became responsible for the provision of religion within their newfound possessions. In this way, the lordships affected a direct impact upon the reformations in Co. Cork.

The challenges to reform presented by the secular elite of Cork, Cloyne and Ross were not necessarily religious. They will be shown to have been more an exertion of opportunism. The region's lordships had enjoyed a significant degree of independence throughout the medieval period and their sixteenth century policies were largely governed by self-interest. Sheltering a monastery from suppression might represent an act of religious defiance, but also presented a chance to protect a symbol of familial status and fiscal interest. The refusal to cooperate with an Anglican bishop was an act of disloyalty, but the support for a Catholic cleric raised from a local family prevented significant secular power falling to an Englishman. Nevertheless, throughout the period, the clerics of the three dioceses continued to serve their cures. This dichotomy of extensive, intrinsic, influence, and the adequate provision of worship, will provide the central theme to the thesis.

Literature Review

It is easy to disregard the Irish reformations and to dismiss them for their obvious failures. Indeed, guided by atavistic and partisan historians, general opinion was not content to simply state that the Protestant reformation had failed in Ireland, but rather to assert that it was *doomed* to fail. Over the course of the last forty years, the inadequacies of this interpretation have become clear. Aside from the demonstrable successes of the Catholic reformation, a variety of recent works have successfully described the initial triumphs of the Henrician and Edwardian reformers. However, several weaknesses have yet to be fully addressed, including the need for a general synopsis and a study of the relationship between the reformations in Ireland, England and Europe. Similarly, there are comparatively few regional studies focusing on areas outside of the Pale.⁸ Furthermore, despite the advancements in the study of the Irish reformations, it is still perhaps unhelpful that one recent author described his book as finding its origins in the “important, but inconclusive, historiographical debate...which took place in the 1970s.”⁹ It is questionable whether a meaningful dialogue may be formed from the continual repetition of a decades old inquiry. Nevertheless, the revisionism of authors like Brendan Bradshaw did provide a welcome relief to the banality of traditional historiography of the Irish reformations.

The preeminent historical treatments of this traditional school were defined quite simply by the respective authors’ positions within the confessional spectrum.¹⁰ Nevertheless, regardless of their affiliation, these writers unerringly agreed upon the inevitable failure of the Protestant reformation.

The title of Edward’s book conveys its adversarial nature: *A history of Penal Laws against Irish Catholics*.¹¹ It reads as a repudiation of the Catholic Irish stereotypes of *Punch* and the nineteenth century Protestant Ascendancy; “since the introduction of Christianity...

⁸ In a recent PhD thesis, the south eastern dioceses were examined. A. Hensey, ‘A comparative study of the lives of Church and Ireland and Roman Catholic clergy in the south-eastern dioceses of Ireland from 1550 to 1650,’ Unpublished PhD thesis (NUI, 2012).

⁹ J. Murray, *Enforcing the English Reformation in Ireland; Clerical Resistance and Political Conflict in the Diocese of Dublin, 1534-1590* (Cambridge, 2009), 1.

¹⁰ See for example, R.D. Edwards, *Church and state in Tudor Ireland: a history of penal laws against Irish Catholics, 1534-1603* (Dublin, 1935), or M.V. Ronan, *The Reformation in Dublin, 1536-1558* (London, 1928), as an instance of the ‘Catholic’ viewpoint and G.V. Jourdan ‘The Breach With Rome A.D. 1509-1541’, in W.A. Philips, ed., *The History of the Church of Ireland from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, vol 2 (Oxford, 1934), 169-297 as an example of the Ascendancy perspective.

¹¹ The title also betrays the authorial bias, as he pays little mind to the effect of the Penal Laws on non Catholic dissenters.

religion has had a profound effect on the [Irish] people. Their strong religious feelings have found expression in many beautiful works of art, and gave rise to many humane principles of law... unaffected by any influence of Imperial Rome.”¹² An entirely positive view of a Christian *Catholic* Church is presented, in which worship benefited its devotees, without seducing their allegiance from the monarchy.

While the ‘Catholic’ school tended towards motifs of heroic resistance, of men and women who maintained the true faith, the ‘Protestant’ opinion was typified by men such as Ronan and Jourdan. These bastions of Ascendancy historiography found much to dismiss and disparage about the religion of the Irish, the latter expressing his consternation at a Gaelic poet’s knowledge of Latin religious literature.¹³ Similar examples are evident throughout their work, hindering reasonable conclusion by obscuring any vibrancy or modernity evident in Gaelic or Anglo-Norman civilisation. With the removal of these trends, the historian also removes much of the potential evidence for the success of or support for reform. Importantly, the arguments belong not to categories of race or genealogy, but to religious denomination and to the heroic tropes bestowed upon the New English Anglican communities by their historians; a brave Ascendancy against a country of wild Irish papists.¹⁴ The narrowness of this reasoning is matched only by its counterpart in the ‘Catholic’ school.

Each of the aforementioned strands, the Catholic and Protestant, follows different, yet parallel paths towards the concept of inevitability. However, it is not the inherent religiosity that forms the greatest flaw in these monographs but rather the misinterpretation of evidence. When presented with any source, regardless of form or quality, these confessional historians almost invariably sought evidence to support their pre-designed arguments. Thus, for Jourdan, the concept of a bilingual Gaelic poet seemed an anomaly, while a more recent study was able to successfully emphasise the *multilingualism* of the Bards.¹⁵ Looking as he was for the failings of pre-Catholic societies in Ireland, their strengths lay beyond Jourdan’s frame of reference. In contrast, Edwards sought to demonstrate enthusiasm and piety, tempered with the desire to locate a proto-Nationalist response to the Reformation that united the Gaelic and Anglo-Norman populations. He illuminates the tenacity of tradition through a chronological list of Irish martyrs, revising a list printed in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*.

¹² Edwards, *Church and State*, xxxiii.

¹³ Jourdan ‘The Breach With Rome’, 170.

¹⁴ Alan Ford describes the link between the predestinarian theology of the Church of Ireland and the elitist colonial ideology, specifically of the socio-political advantages of disassociating the identity of the colony from that of the Irish Catholics. A. Ford, *The Protestant Reformation in Ireland 1590-1641* (Frankfurt, 1984), 291.

¹⁵ S.A. Meigs, *The Reformations in Ireland: Tradition and Confessionalism, 1400-1690* (Dublin, 1997), 40.

However, Edwards' list does not offer significant opportunity for analysis, omitting socio-historical context and location, thus preventing the mapping of the reformers' logic or the spread of the Reformation. Regardless of reason, the abovementioned historians, and others of their ilk, presupposed the failure of the Protestant reformation as all were keen to display the preordained superiority of their chosen confession.

These deterministic principles came under attack during the 1960s and, finally, were torn down by Brendan Bradshaw in 1974 with the publication of his seminal work on the subject.¹⁶ This revisionism set a new standard and redefined the historiographical narrative of Tudor Ireland. Bradshaw approached the problem of the Irish reformations from an entirely new perspective. His careful research examines the varying stages of the dissolution of the Irish monasteries, cataloguing both their successes and failures. However, the real value of this work is not in or of itself, but lies instead in its methodological impact. Bradshaw moved beyond the religious framework followed by previous studies, instead recognising the position of the dissolutions in a wider context; political, economic and religious. More specifically, *The Dissolution of the Monasteries...* instigated a scholarly debate of which the echoes would reverberate throughout the subsequent decades.

Canny continued the discussion by rejecting the very question, 'Why did the Reformation fail in Ireland?'¹⁷ Instead he offers a premise suggesting that the question predicates a certain response informed by chronological knowledge: one that invariably searches for the failure of Protestantism. In dismissing the question, the author supposes the varieties of religious reform may be considered by their own merit instead of through the lens of their eventual defeat. Furthermore, to illustrate his argument, Canny remarks that neither Protestant evangelism nor Tridentine Catholicism had won a decisive victory at the close of the sixteenth century.¹⁸ Crucially, he finds that previous historiography had failed to appreciate instances where the Irish, either Anglo-Norman or Gaelic, had found the English reforms agreeable. In advancing this thesis, Canny wrote specifically to criticise Bradshaw's precision; he had previously stated that Mary's reinstatement of popish religion gave the

¹⁶ B. Bradshaw, *The Dissolution of the Religious Orders in Ireland under Henry VIII* (Cambridge, 2008).

¹⁷ N. Canny, 'Why the Reformation Failed in Ireland: *Une Question Mal Posée*', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 30 (October 1979), 423-452.

¹⁸ Canny, 'Why the Reformation Failed', 450.

Catholic reformation a firm foothold in Ireland and the that Protestant reforms had conclusively failed by the end fo Elizabeth's reign.¹⁹

This reasoning possesses a gloss of idealism in the belief that it is the nature of the question rather than an author's own biases that most influences historical writing. Bottigheimer adopted a worldlier attitude. In an earlier article, prior to Canny's writing, Bottigheimer describes Bradshaw's *The Dissolution of the Religious Orders...* as transforming "the religious history of Ireland at a stroke... [allowing us] to see the plans of Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell not as doom-struck idylls, but as reasonable and by-no-means hopeless strategies for dealing with admittedly difficult problems."²⁰ It is interesting to note that in describing the strengths of Bradshaw's work, Bottigheimer had recognised the problem that Canny would later outline. Consequently, it is significant that he offers an alternative subject for blame. Bottigheimer suggests that it is the will of an individual rather than the structural specifications of his study that creates unbalanced arguments.²¹ Though totally rejecting Canny's criticisms in his later article, and possibly taking him too literally in doing so, Bottigheimer does recognise the need for a fresh framework for the historiography of the Irish reformations. Importantly, he draws on recent advances in England to place them in the context of Ireland. Therefore, instead of adopting a political approach better suited to the study of *cuius region, eius religio*, he suggests that the Irish scholar should consider the importance of social and cultural factors.²²

This exchange in the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* thrived on several fronts. Firstly, Canny's article, though occasionally displaying distracting eccentricities, has prevented us from accepting Bradshaw's revisionism as unquestioned orthodoxy. Perhaps most importantly, however, the aforementioned debate between Nicholas Canny and Karl Bottigheimer presented several distinct avenues of research that still required attention: the social and cultural responses of the Gaelic Irish and Old English to Anglican reform, the analyses of the *successes* of English evangelists as well as their failures and the need to locate a definitive date for the failure of the Protestant reformation and the triumph of the Catholic reforms. Consequently, we can trace contiguous paths between the Canny/Bottigheimer discussion and several important theses.

¹⁹ B. Bradshaw, 'Fr Wolfe's Description of Limerick City, 1574,' *North Munster Antiquities Journal*, 27 (1975), 47-55.

²⁰ K.S. Bottigheimer, 'The Reformation of Ireland Revisited' *The Journal of British Studies*, 15 (1976), 141.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 140-141.

²² K.S. Bottigheimer, 'Why did the Reformation fail in Ireland: *Une Question Bien Posée*', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36 (1985), 204-207.

In 1988, Brendan Bradshaw published an important article on 'The Reformation in the Cities.'²³ In this, he noted the early arrival of the Catholic reformations in urban areas, in the guise of the Jesuit order and particularly highlighted the person of Richard Creagh.²⁴ He was responding to earlier discussions, perhaps most especially the Canny/Bottigheimer debate, in which Canny had made clear his "rejection of the imputations of failure to the Reformation in early modern Ireland."²⁵ Bradshaw does find early potential for the success of the Anglican reforms, but found that these were mixed with crucial weaknesses and failures in the development of reform.

An alternative approach was to consider the structural deficiencies of what would become the Church of Ireland; Aidan Clarke's *Varieties of Uniformity*²⁶ made much of the inability of the church to act independently from the local community and highlighted the importance of weaknesses caused by the historical church. Born of a similar approach that sought to explore the calibre and qualities of the both the Irish church and its reformers are Ford's *The Protestant Reformation in Ireland*²⁷ and various other works that appeared in 1997, of which all seemed to follow the instructions left by Canny and Bottigheimer; Meigs' *The Reformations in Ireland*,²⁸ Gillespie's *Devoted People*²⁹ and Jefferies' *Priests and Prelates of Armagh*³⁰ These monographs built on previous examples to present a wider historiographical understanding of the Irish reformations.³¹ They differ strongly from previous works on several counts, but amongst the most important is the ideological, if not methodological, affiliation with English scholarship, particularly that of Haigh and Duffy. Writing to correct the same fundamental errors as those existent in Irish historiography,³² these authors of English history presented a different chronology: a Reformation in stages. Rather than a contingent whole, the Reformation is divided between the Henrician and Edwardian reforms, the Marian revival and finally the Elizabethan Reformation. Each

²³ B. Bradshaw, 'Reformation in the Cities: Cork, Limerick and Galway, 1534-1603', in J. Bradley, ed., *Settlement and Society in medieval Ireland: studies presented to F.X. Martin* (Kilkenny, 1988), 445-475.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 470.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 446.

²⁶ A. Clarke, 'Varieties of Uniformity: the first century of the Church of Ireland,' S.J. Ellis, W.J. and Wood, D., eds., *The churches, Ireland and the Irish: Studies in Church history*, xxv (Oxford, 1989), 105-22.

²⁷ Ford, *The Protestant Reformation*.

²⁸ Meigs, *The Reformations in Ireland*.

²⁹ R. Gillespie, *Devoted People, Belief and Religion in Early Modern Ireland* (Manchester, 1997).

³⁰ H.A. Jefferies, *Priests and Prelates of Armagh in the Age of Reformation, 1518-1558* (Dublin, 1997).

³¹ These works are not the only examples of reformation historiography in the 1980s and 1990s, but they are the most significant. Other works include C. Lennon, *The Lords of Dublin in the Age of the Reformation* (Dublin, 1989) and W.J. Sheils and D. Wood, eds., *The churches, Ireland and the Irish* (Dublin, 1997).

³² For examples of this, see G. Elton, *The Reformation* (Cambridge, 1958) or A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (London, 1966), which bears similarities to Jourdan and other of the Irish 'Protestant' school.

example presents a separate socio-political context and a unique strategy of religious reform. Furthermore, they move beyond the consideration of ecclesiastical administration to address the question of lay piety.³³ What is significant however, is the diffusion of these ideas into the Irish stream of thought.

Each of these four works addresses the problem of the Irish reformations in a different way, from Meigs' concentration upon the patterns of Gaelic belief, to Gillespie's assessments of popular religion in Ireland. Although undoubtedly descending from the abovementioned debate, each offers significant advances in our understanding; Ford, for example, presents an in-depth examination of the early Protestant Church in Ireland, its missions into the countryside, and its administrative organisation. His grasp of minutiae and the conflicting, confused paths of the Elizabethan reformations is impressive and, significantly, Ford is able to state with confidence that the Protestant evangelism movement had failed by the middle of the seventeenth century.

The efforts listed above are not, of course, entirely without flaw, but together, they do provide a more than adequate response to the questions posed by the revisionists of the 1970s. Indeed, a significant portion of their strength is in their relationship to the Canny/Bottigheimer debate. Still, despite these extensive debates and explorations, this decades old debate continues to hang heavy over historiography of the reformations in Ireland. Indeed Murray, who wrote in 2009, explicitly grounded his within the "important... historiographical debate... [of] the 1970s."³⁴ It would not do to condemn his writing for this, as the discussions between Canny and Bottigheimer continue to be relevant. Murray's book, based on his PhD thesis, uses this debate as a starting point, but moves beyond an view of general loyalties. Instead, his local, archival, research was able to highlight previously unexplored territory. His argument suggested that although Dublin was populated by a strongly reformist elite, within the episcopal seat and cathedral chapters, it was also supplied by an conservative parish clergy that was their equal. Murray's work demonstrates an amalgam of a response to previous debates and a determined attempt to strike out towards fresher ground.

Pleasingly, the majority of the recent historiography has avoided the trap of disciplinary isolationism; Murray's work was heavily influenced by the diocesan surveys of

³³ The two earliest examples of this are C. Haigh ed., *The English Reformation Revisited* (Cambridge, 1987) and E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (2005, Hong Kong), first published 1992.

³⁴ Murray, *Enforcing the English Reformation*, 1.

the English reformations. It is, quite naturally, impossible to treat the history of Irish confessionalism in a vacuum; economic and political influences rightly leave their impressions. Most significantly, of course, are the pivotal reforms within the structures of English government in Ireland.³⁵ The struggle for control of the colony and the responses to the Kildare revolt demand attention. However, other, more subtle events have bearing across the divergent spheres of interest; the dissolution of the monasteries is one such example. From one perspective, this is a religious act of the Protestant reformation, yet it also had bearing upon the extension of the English seigniorial system.³⁶ Similarly, in light of Henry VIII's decision to reduce the colony to surviving on its own income,³⁷ as well as the failed attempt to bring the Irish currency in line with that of England³⁸ and the £40,000 bill for the suppression of the Kildare revolt,³⁹ the financial implications of religious policy become self-evident.

Jefferies' debut monograph is a wonderful example of an author who has considered the dichotomy between the socio-political and the religious. The main strength of *Priests and Prelates* is a rarity in the historiography of Ireland, for it utilises extant diocesan archives, notably the registers of Archbishops Cromer and Dowdall from the mid sixteenth century.⁴⁰ Such fecundity is exceptional outside of Dublin, but allows Jefferies to offer well supported arguments backed by hard evidence. It is not only this advantage that sets the book apart, but the application of its documentation, for the reader is drawn to the author's interest in *ecclesia inter hibernicos* and *ecclesia inter anglicos*. The local dimension of this study has allowed the researcher to focus upon the administrative and clerical peculiarities of the northern and southern halves of the diocese which represent the Gaelic and Anglo-Norman areas of influence respectively. While the matter of the medieval Irish cultural divide had previously been addressed,⁴¹ the crucial distinction of Jefferies' work is the placing of the

³⁵ One of the most influential studies in this area remains B. Bradshaw, *The Irish Constitutional Revolution of the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1979); more recent examples include C. Lennon, *Sixteenth Century Ireland, The Incomplete Conquest* (Dublin, 1994) and S.G. Ellis, *Tudor Ireland 1470-1603* (Essex, 1985).

³⁶ S.G. Ellis, 'Thomas Cromwell and Ireland, 1532-1540', *Historical Journal*, 23 (Sept. 1980), 517

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 510.

³⁸ *Idem.*, 'The Struggle for Control of the Irish Mint, 1460-c. 1506', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, 78 (1978), 33.

³⁹ LP, x, 1051.

⁴⁰ Jefferies, *Priests and Prelates*, 199.

⁴¹ See for example, M.T. Flanagan, 'Irish and Anglo-Norman Warfare in the twelfth century,' in T. Bartlett and K. Jeffery, eds., *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1999), 52-75, P.J. Duffy, 'The Nature of the Medieval Frontier in Ireland,' *Studia Hibernica*, 22-23 (1982-1983), 28-29 and A. Cosgrove, 'Ireland Beyond the Pale', in A. Cosgrove, ed., *New History of Ireland Volume 2* (Oxford, 1987), 569-590.

problem in the context of religion. In addition to the quality of his scholarship and originality of approach, it is his effect upon Irish historiographical writing that is most noticeable.

Nevertheless, Irish historiography of the Tudor reformation has, with some notable exceptions,⁴² tended towards geographical exclusivity. Traditional historiography has seen Ireland as unique in Europe, particularly regarding the development of her civilisation; “Because of Ireland’s geographical position, and...[its preoccupation] with the constant struggle against the English... [there was] nothing of the renaissance...no Irish universities...[nor] printing presses.”⁴³ Given also that Ireland broke the mould of *cuius regio, eius religio*, scholars have tended towards an imagined sense of uniqueness.

The impact of this has been twofold. Firstly, the effect of the enforcement of the Protestant reformation in England on the Irish reforms has, until recently, been overlooked.⁴⁴ Secondly, given the lack of sources available to the scholar of Tudor Ireland, the abandoning of potential comparative studies with relatively well documented English counties has been to the detriment of the field. A brief consideration of *Devoted People* provides an apt illustration of this problem.

While writing his text, Gillespie researched a wide array of sources, drawing on a plethora of extracts and offhand comments in unrelated documents to illustrate the religion of the laity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Gillespie’s bibliography is testament to the gargantuan nature of his task, containing sixteen pages of English, Gaelic and Latin manuscripts, printed and written sources.⁴⁵ Unfortunately, the nature of this research ensures a certain level of generalisation, in which a large mass of documentary evidence is not used to prove, but rather single pieces to illustrate. Far more satisfying is Gillespie’s use of statistical evidence, which permits a far greater clarity of understanding and lends weight to his arguments.⁴⁶ It is also interesting to consider the commonalities in worship between

⁴² There are numerous studies regarding Irish continental links. See, for example, D. Downey, *Spanish-Irish Relations Through the Ages* (Dublin, 2008) and C. Lennon, 'Primate Richard Creagh and the Beginnings of the Irish Counter reformation,' *Archivium Hibernicum*, 51 (1997), 74-86. For the seventeenth century see for example, T. Ó hAnnracháin, 'Vatican Diplomacy and the Mission of Rinuccini to Ireland', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 47 (1993), 78-88 or T. O'Connor, 'Irish Migration to Spain and the formation of an Irish College Network, 1589-1800' in L.F. Isaacs and A.K. Isaacs, eds., *The Sea in European History* (Pisa, 2001), 109-123. The prevalence of the Irish-Papal diplomatic connection is addressed most admirably in C. Giblin, 'Vatican Archives: *Lettere di Particolari*: Material Relating to Ireland', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 31 (1973), 112-123.

⁴³ K. Milne, *A Short History of the Church of Ireland* (Dublin, 2003), 32. Similar sentiments are aired in Jourdan, 'The Breach with Rome', 169-176.

⁴⁴ At least one recent essay has addressed this issue: B. Mac Cuarta, 'Old English Catholicism in Chester Documents, 1609-19', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 57 (2003), 1-10.

⁴⁵ Gillespie, *Devoted People*, 170-185.

⁴⁶ See for example, *ibid.*, 96.

divergent denominations and communities. While Canny and Ford have demonstrated the presence of native evangelists among the Gaelic population, Gillespie highlights the strength of custom. However, he avoids the trap of earlier historians, instead considering worship for its own sake. Gillespie does not consider the obduracy of traditional religion, but instead observes tendencies towards tradition amongst the conformist population. For example, Gillespie finds reluctance within the Protestant community in Dublin to work on Roman holy days or to marry within Lent.⁴⁷ If lacking significance in itself, the ability of the author to transcend the problem of the reformations, instead managing to consider the religion of the laity, is of supreme importance.

Even more importantly, it is his success at overcoming the difficulties of Irish Tudor sources that bears notice. Recent scholars of the reformations have begun to look beyond the traditional documents to form arguments; from the physical funerary monuments of Richard Boyle⁴⁸ to fresh analyses of the Calendars of Papal Letters,⁴⁹ it is evident that new methodologies have strong potential. However, direct interaction with the English narrative is rare. An article written in 2001 highlighted conclusive similarities between the religion of the Irish Pale and the English parishes.⁵⁰ Opening with a description of the socio-political make-up of the four shires immediately surrounding Dublin and continuing to the cultural and educational background of senior pre-reformation clergy, the author is able to emphasise key similarities. Building on this foundation, Jefferies is able to refine an understanding of the differences, noting the importance of the Kildare rebellion in disrupting the promulgation of the Henrician reforms.⁵¹ In a similar vein, Mac Cuarta has ably illustrated the links between the recusant Old English families of the Pale and Chester; he followed the relations of Sir Christopher Plunkett through Chester documents.⁵²

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁴⁸ C. Tait, 'Colonising Memory: Manipulations of Death, Burial and Commemoration in the Career of Richard Boyle, First Earl of Cork (1566-1643)', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, 101C, 4 (2001), 107-134.

⁴⁹ H.A. Jefferies, 'Papal Letters and Irish Clergy: Clogher before the Reformation', in H.A. Jefferies, ed., *History of the Diocese of Clogher* (Dublin, 2005), 81-107 and M. Whitman, 'A succession dispute in the calendars of papal letters: the united dioceses of Cork and Cloyne, 1455-1484', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 116 (2011), 35-41.

⁵⁰ H.A. Jefferies, 'The early Tudor Reformations in the Irish Pale', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 52 (2001), 34-62.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 44-46.

⁵² Mac Cuarta, 'Old English Catholicism', 1-6.

Concurrently, an international study published in the *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*⁵³ presents similar avenues of investigation, if along more continental lines. The precise details of the European reformations are well known, described and evidenced in a plethora of manuscript sources and a large body of secondary literature.⁵⁴ During any cursory reading of the subject, it swiftly becomes apparent that Ireland was largely removed from the great theological discussions on the continent; there were no Irish theologians to participate in the reformation dialogue.⁵⁵ Reinforcing this premise, we may observe a continuance of the themes of uniqueness and divergence in historical treatments. Traditional authors located Ireland in a distinct category, away from Europe.⁵⁶ Instead, the influence of the European on the Irish reformations has been largely demonstrated to be political. From the pleas for military aid made by Kildare's son to support a crusade against the English, to the presence of O'Sullivan Beare at the Spanish court, continental, specifically Spanish, influence is evident in Irish reformation politics.⁵⁷ As a result, more religious elements have been overlooked, although much has been made of the drive to produce a well-trained Irish clerical establishment through the continental colleges.⁵⁸

However, Bottigheimer and Lotz-Heumann draw intriguing parallels between the reformations of Ireland and Europe to encourage a reconsideration of the reasons for the failure of Irish Protestantism.⁵⁹ They begin with a cursory examination of the British Isles, noting that the impoverishment of the Welsh churches, comparable to that in Ireland, proved no hindrance to the Protestant reformations, nor was the lack of literature in the Scottish vernacular, comparable to the Gaelic linguistic divide, to the detriment of the Calvinist evangelism there. The essay continues to compare the case of Norway, a nation ruled by an external power, into which Protestantism was successfully transported, despite the lack of a popular reform movement. Finally, Bottigheimer and Lotz-Heumann consider those parts of

⁵³ K.S. Bottigheimer and U. Lotz-Heumann, 'The Irish Reformation in European Perspective', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 89 (1998), 268-309. The article builds on an earlier, shorter effort by the same authors: 'Ireland & the European Reformation', *History Ireland*, 6, 4 (1998), 13-16.

⁵⁴ Amongst the best general texts of the European reformations are D. MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (London, 2004) and R. Rublack, *Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, 2005).

⁵⁵ It is worth noting though, that three Irish clerics were signatories of the third Council of Trent, including Bishop Thomas O'Herlihy of Ross.

⁵⁶ Jourdan, 'The breach with Rome', 169.

⁵⁷ P. O'Connell, 'The Irish College, Santiago de Compostella: 1605-1767', *Archivum Hibernicum*, 50 (1996), 19-28.

⁵⁸ See for example, O'Connell, 'The Irish College, Santiago de Compostella', O'Connor, 'Irish Migration to Spain', J. Nilis, 'Irish Students at Leuven University, 1548-1797', *Archivum Hibernicum*, 60 (2006/2007), 1-304 and L. Swords, 'History of the Irish College, Paris, 1578-1800 Calendar of the Papers of the Irish College, Paris', *Archivum Hibernicum*, 35 (1980), 3-233. Many more studies exist for individual colleges as well as for the network as a whole.

⁵⁹ Bottigheimer and Lotz-Heumann, 'The Irish Reformation in European Perspective', 268-309.

Germany in which confessional choices of the elite differed from the strongly held popular religion. Essentially, Bottigheimer and Lotz-Heumann have considered the established historical canon of Ireland and for each part of it, found an example in Europe of a similar situation, which resulted in a different conclusion.

The implications are complex, but amongst the most crucial are those relating to the need for historiographical change. Alongside the development of historical writing in the last decade, our understanding has increased exponentially. However, while the paragraphs above outline the implications of revisionism for the nature of research, they offer few remarks on the current understanding of Ireland and its reformations. Rather than dismissing the Tudor reforms for their failure, greater intricacies within lay policy and piety are now readily observable in secondary literature. In the same way, the intricacies of the church structure have also been explored. Considering the concept of a Reformation of several parts, for which Ford nominated the Elizabethan as the first to offer a concentrated evangelical strategy,⁶⁰ the ambiguities of era and geography demand attention. It is clear that the enforcement of the Reformation varied locally, even within the confines of a diocese, as exemplified by the See of Armagh which was divided along a north south axis where only the deaneries of Ardee, Drogheda and Dundalk alone were subject to the new Church.⁶¹ Furthermore, we have been shown that the paucity of evidence need not be a barrier to the study of popular religion.⁶² Considering this, it is disappointing that the only full length monographs of the last decade to address the Irish reformations⁶³ chose to reiterate rather than innovate. Rather than addressing the new potential described above for local and popular studies, Murray has instead chosen to return to the often visited Tudor city of Dublin. Thus, the possibilities for local studies, following the English model, remain open.

English revisionism was founded upon this schematic and remains a lesson that could be well learned by historians of the Irish reformations. Writing in 1975, Christopher Haigh completed a study of religion in Lancashire.⁶⁴ This raised difficult questions regarding generalisations made about the English reformations by deterministic historians. Duffy's *Voices of Morebath*⁶⁵ continued the trend, as did many others.⁶⁶ Although the individually,

⁶⁰ Ford, *The Protestant Reformation in Ireland*, 9.

⁶¹ Jefferies, *Priests and Prelates*, 140-149.

⁶² Gillespie, *Devoted People*, 170-185.

⁶³ See Murray, *Enforcing the English Reformation* and F. Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2005). The latter, though a general text relating to the whole of the British Isles, does offer an excellent summation of the topic, if somewhat reliant upon secondary literature.

⁶⁴ C. Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975).

⁶⁵ E. Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath; Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (London, 2001)

the historiographical impact of each essay may have counted for little, taken together, they formed an unassailable avalanche of fresh ideas. Essentially, the local studies gave rise to an increased knowledge level, which subsequently informed wider, national examinations of the reformations in England.⁶⁷

The concept of examining Ireland through the lens of a local study is not an entirely new one, yet, unhappily, the idea has not regularly been brought to full flower. This field is dominated by older works, with few monographs which concentrate wholly upon the Church in this period. Indeed, many local historians ignored the reformations, preferring to acknowledge its failure only in passing, before going on to consider the risings of 1641 or the Penal Laws. More generally, recent historiography is greatly improved by the excellent *History and Society* series,⁶⁸ although the chapters within these volumes cover a myriad of themes. While there are numerous valuable essays which consider the reformations in Ireland at a local level,⁶⁹ there have been comparatively few of monograph length; those that do exist have been disproportionately concentrated in Dublin and Armagh. In no small part this is related to the availability of sources in those dioceses, but this pattern has been corrected to some degree in recent years. A selection of extensive, focused, studies has greatly increased our understanding of religion and reformation within Kildare,⁷⁰ Waterford and Lismore.⁷¹

However, if we focus upon the historiography of Co. Cork, we find only one recent extensive study which concentrates upon religion. This is a three volume piece authored by Sr. Evelyn Bolster, who wrote on almost the entire history of the Roman Church in Cork and Ross. More specifically the second volume, which details *...the earliest times to the Reformation*,⁷² considers the intricacies of worship and the religion in the years immediately before Henry VIII's declaration of supremacy. However, the author is more chronicler than

⁶⁶ R. O'Day and F. Heal, eds., *English Small Town Life: Retford 1520-1642* (Nottingham, 1993); Haigh, ed., *The English Reformation Revised*.

⁶⁷ See for example R. Whiting, *The Reformation of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge, 2010) or Duffy, *Stripping the Altars*.

⁶⁸ See for example W. Nolan and T.P. Power, eds., *Waterford, History and Society: Interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 1992).

⁶⁹ See for example Bradshaw, B., 'The Reformation in the Cities: Cork, Limerick and Galway, 1534-1603', in J. Bradley, ed., *Settlement and Society in Medieval Ireland* (Kilkenny, 1998), 445-476; H.A. Jefferies, 'The Role of the Laity in the Parishes of Armagh "Inter Anglicos", 1518-1553', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 52 (1998), 73-84; C. Diamond, 'The Reformation Charter of Christ Church Cathedral Dublin, 1541', *Archivium Hibernicum* 53 (1999), 20-35; H.A. Jefferies, 'Papal Letters and Irish Clergy', 81-107.

⁷⁰ M.A. Lyons, *Church and Society in County Kildare c.1470-1547* (Dublin, 2000).

⁷¹ A. Hensey, 'A comparative study of the lives of Church and Ireland and Roman Catholic clergy in the south-eastern dioceses of Ireland from 1550 to 1650,' Unpublished PhD thesis (NUI, 2012).

⁷² E. Bolster., *A history of the Diocese of Cork*, 3 vols (Shannon, 1972).

historian, recording events and structures obsessively, while systematic analysis of the same is largely absent. For example, she states that in the years following the union of Cork and Ross, ecclesiastical administration was in a state of confusion, with local clerics opposing the directives of Rome.⁷³ Evidence is merely offered as a straightforward chronology coloured by anecdotal evidence; Bolster fails to undertake a structured evaluation of late medieval diocesan structures or its impact upon popular piety and worship.

Since Bolster's impressive but ultimately flawed effort, several preeminent historians, including Bradshaw and Jefferies have considered the problems of Cork's reformations. However, as with elsewhere in Ireland, these issues have often been considered in passing, with the emphasis elsewhere. Both Bradshaw and Jefferies possess well deserved academic reputations, evident throughout their contributions, but neither has attempted a survey of the dioceses, instead limiting themselves to a refined study of a particular element. The relevance of Bradshaw's essay is restricted to being a marker of urban piety,⁷⁴ responding to Moeller's argument that the Reformation began in the cities.⁷⁵ Bradshaw's attention is further split by his desire to consider Cork, Limerick and Galway in parallel. Conversely, Jefferies' consideration is not diffused by geography but chronology. Found in a general history of Cork, the chapter on the reformations is unfortunately brief, though containing valuable insights into the topic.⁷⁶

These problems have typified the most recent historiography of the Irish reformations. Regardless of the quality of individual contributions, the restrictions of size and scope have hindered the general advance of subject, whilst at times it seems as though there is but one author labouring within the bounds of the field. A most prolific author, Jefferies has penned a variety of essays on the religion of medieval Ireland and is certainly the foremost authority on the phenomena of the local study in the historiography of the Irish reformations. Indeed, a catalogue of his works would include the already mentioned monographs concerning Armagh and Cork, as well as articles describing the diocese of Dromore, the secular clergy of Clogher and the early reformations in the Pale.⁷⁷ Happily, Jefferies does not find himself swimming

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 401-404.

⁷⁴ B. Bradshaw, 'The Reformation in the Cities', 445-476.

⁷⁵ B. Moeller, *Imperial Cities and the Reformation: Three Essays*, E. Midelfort and M. Edwards, eds., trans. (Philadelphia, 1972).

⁷⁶ H.A. Jefferies, *Cork; Historical Perspectives* (Dublin, 2004), 101-115.

⁷⁷ *Idem*, 'The diocese of Dromore on the eve of the Tudor reformations' in L. Proudfoot (Ed.), *Down: history and society* (Dublin, 1997); *idem*, 'The Early Tudor Reformations'; *idem*, 'Papal letters and Irish clergy'.

alone in stagnant intellectual waters, as other writers continue to address the Tudor religions.⁷⁸

Our understanding of the Irish reformations has undergone a vast transition since the 1960s and although the picture may ultimately remain one of defeat, it can no longer consist solely of the monochromatic shades of defeatism. In its place we find a technicolour of ambiguities, in which the evangelisers succeeded and failed, the reforms found favour or disrepute, the clerics were pious and corrupt and the laity lazy or worshipful. We can recognise the basic facts of the reformations' chronology, yet understand that subtler meanings are perceivable, hidden within and behind the foreground. Bradshaw may have implied that we no longer have to see the plans of Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell "as doom-struck idylls,"⁷⁹ but his successors have cemented that idea. Nevertheless, it remains clear that we still can not state conclusively *why* the Protestant reformation failed in Ireland, particularly in the under exploited dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross.

⁷⁸ See for example C. Brady and J. Murray, 'Sir Henry Sidney and the Reformation in Ireland,' in E. Boran and C. Gribben, eds., *Enforcing the Reformation in Ireland and Scotland, 1550-1700* (Ashgate, 2006), 14-39 and K. Walsh, 'Deliberate provocation or reforming zeal? John Bale as first Church of Ireland bishop of Ossory (1552/53-1563),' in V.P. Carey and U. Lotz-Heumann, eds., *Taking Sides? Colonial and Confessional Mentalités in Early Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2003), 42-60.

⁷⁹ K.S. Bottigheimer, 'The Reformation of Ireland Revisited' in *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1976), p. 141.

Chapter 1: The secular clergy prior to the reformations

The drive towards ever greater clerical standards was undeniably powerful in the early part of the sixteenth century. The Humanist ideal of a clerical paragon, a godly priest who would serve as a model for lay piety was gaining popularity. Arguments on subjects ranging from fornication to education ranged across Europe, while in the archdiocese of Cashel, teachers were forbidden to admit to their lectures those, “*de quibus non est spes quod in ecclesia Dei profecerint*,” of whom there was no hope that he would progress in the church of God.⁸⁰ Only the very best of candidates were to be accepted into the priesthood.

These words serve to highlight the precarious position of the secular clergy. The clerics operated at the forefront of the spiritual battleground, labouring within the parishes in chapels and churches across Europe. The structure of the Church was such that although its influence was all pervasive, primary contact with the laity was through these parish priests. These curates resided amongst their parishioners and were often drawn from a similar background. Intellectually and economically, the differences between peasant and priest were often small, although in matters of spirituality, the distinction was significant. A beneficed clergyman was responsible for the cure of souls; more specifically, it was only through the person of the priest that the laity could fulfil their obligations. Last rites and baptism, confession and marriage, these all came under the curate’s purview. Most important of all, however, was the mass itself, and only a priest could perform the rites. This ‘sacred superiority’ set the priest over and above his parishioners.

Conversely, though, it also put him at their mercy. In England and Wales, regular visitations were enacted at diocesan and archdiocesan level, in which the laity were free to air any grievances about their parochial incumbent with the visitors. Similar, if less well documented, visitations were carried out in Ireland; Jefferies has found that in the diocese of Clogher, episcopal visits were held twice each year, once in May and again by All Hallows.⁸¹ The only Irish visitation record to survive the Tudor period is that for two deaneries of Armagh, dated to 1546. The contents of this show investigations into the celebration of mass, celibacy, recitation of divine office and enquiries with the laity;⁸² they betray striking

⁸⁰ ‘Concilium provincial Cashellense Limerici celebratum, in quo sequential statute ordinate sunt, 1453’ in D. Wilkins (Ed.) *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae ab Anno MCCCCL ad Annum MDXLV* (London, 1737), 568.

⁸¹ H.A. Jefferies, ‘Papal letters and the Irish Clergy’, 81-101.

⁸² *Idem.*, ‘The visitation of the parishes of Armagh *inter hibernicos* in 1546’, in C. Dillon and H.A. Jefferies, eds., *Tyrone: history and society* (Dublin, 2000), 163-180.

similarities between the visitations in Clogher and those in England. Despite a lack of direct evidence, it is likely that a similar custom was perpetuated throughout Ireland during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, including the south-western dioceses. An archiepiscopal levy of Cork parishes from 1437 (compiled for an archdiocesan visitation) emphasises the occurrence of visitations in Cashel.⁸³

Priests had to maintain cordial relationships with their parishioners to avoid lawsuits, whether capricious or deserving. Even so, clerics were often the victims of this process. One particularly inadequate English priest of Saltash, in Devon, suffered a series of vicious attacks accusing him of fornication, drunkenness, failure to administer the last rites, rape, a failure to teach, and much more besides.⁸⁴ Beyond this, the laity held the ultimate sanction; the ability to withhold revenue. Largely reliant upon tithes for their income, beneficed priests were incredibly vulnerable to a discontented and organised parish. Furthermore, it seems that such an embargo carried at least a degree of official approval – it certainly resonates with Pope Gregory VII's assertion that the masses of unfit priests should be shunned.⁸⁵ Similarly, the early fifteenth century dialogue, *Dives and Pauper*, offers several canonistic reasons for the non-payment of tithes.⁸⁶

Priests did not solely come under pressure from the laity. Bishops and other office holders exerted their authority over clerics frequently through various means, from episcopal judgements that terminated disputes, to diocesan and archdiocesan synods. In the archdiocesan synod of Cashel from 1453, which contains over 100 tenets, there are many which enjoin the laity to follow certain behavioural codes, but still more that constrain clerical conduct. For example, article two instructed that the hours of prayer and other festivals must be rung on three bells, on penalty of a 40d fine.⁸⁷ Another ordained that each church must hold at least three images, “the blessed Virgin Mary, the Holy Cross and the patron of the place, in whose honour the church is dedicated, as well as an honourable and

⁸³ PROI MS 2N.60.4B

⁸⁴ R.N. Swanson, ‘Problems of the Priesthood in Pre-Reformation England’, *The English Historical Review*, 105, 417 (October, 1990), 845-6. Swanson's article provides a very useful summary of the secular clergy in England. Given the contemporary intention that *ecclesia inter anglicos* should be a reproduction of the English ecclesiastical construct, its conclusions remain relevant in an Irish context.

⁸⁵ R.I. Moore, *The Origins of European Dissent* (London, 1963), 54-5.

⁸⁶ P.H. Barnum, ed, *Dives and Pauper, Volumes 1-2; Volume 280 of Early English Text Society (Original Series)* (Oxford, 1980).

⁸⁷ ‘Concilium provincial Cashellense’, 565.

consecrated vessel for the body of Christ.”⁸⁸ These injunctions met with many others to directly influence the secular clergy.

Nevertheless, for many in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, priesthood remained an attractive career; consequently, personal ambition provided yet another strain upon the relationship between priest and cure. Significantly, numbers of priests were high. One estimate has suggested that a ratio of 1:32 (priests to laity) existed in Scotland,⁸⁹ while Swanson has calculated that 4-6% of the population of Norwich were in major orders.⁹⁰ Similar figures are harder to calculate for Ireland, due to a scarcity of sources, but the number of delations in the *Calendars of Papal Letters* suggests that there was a reasonable degree of competition for benefices in the south-western dioceses. Between 1477 and 1482, there were 21 letters of litigation relating to the dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, which sought to deprive a priestly incumbent to the good fortune of the author. These comprised 60% of the total number of letters involving these sees in that period⁹¹ and indicate significant competition for clerical postings.

In his famous Convocation Sermon, John Colet, the Dean of St Paul’s, expounded upon the numerous failings of the Church and its clerics, before continuing that, “we should be reformed... we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world... But this reformation and restoration in ecclesiastical affairs must needs begin with you... your priests and the whole clergy.”⁹² An orthodox reformer, Colet was speaking not of Protestant Reformation; he envisioned no grand break with Rome but a wealth of smaller changes designed to improve the Church. Significantly though, the Dean emphasises the role of the secular clergy. Despite their problematic position, such was their spiritual influence that they were the best tool for the promulgation of reform amongst the laity. Consequently, it becomes important to investigate their readiness for the oncoming storm, to consider how they would react to the upheaval of the reformations.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 565.

⁸⁹ L.B. Macfarlane, *William Elphinstone and the Kingdom of Scotland* (Aberdeen, 1995), 164.

⁹⁰ R.N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford, 1994), 109.

⁹¹ Whitman, ‘A succession dispute’, 36.

⁹² J. Colet, ‘Convocation Sermon’, in J.H. Lupton, *A life of John Colet; with appendix of some of his English writings* (London, 1909), 293-304.

In the south-western dioceses of Ireland, the ministry of the secular clergy was largely adequate, if defined by local politics. The presence of Anglo-Norman over Gaelic elites created a marked distinction, one which had a heavier emphasis on the parish. Although there were significant areas that required reform, the laity were, in the main, contented and the provision for worship sufficient. In the context of the early sixteenth century, this would translate into the absence of any real reforming zeal.

The formation of the parish network in Co. Cork

The dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross are linked by more than geographical proximity. At various points in their histories, they have alternately been united, separated or shared a single episcopal authority; it is for this reason that it is appropriate to address all three in a single study. Nonetheless, while the diocesan structures were sometimes transient, the parishes were a constant in the lives of the clergy and laity alike.

The parochial system in Co. Cork was already established by the thirteenth century. The system of rural deaneries, with its attached parishes, was at least partially in place from before 1199, as several deaneries of Cork are listed in the decretal of that year. Parish formation appears to have followed trends that had both been outlined for the Irish dioceses in general typology and later refined by the regional studies of Duffy, Nugent and Hennessey.⁹³ Significantly, the process of evolution over revolution continued in Co. Cork, with the Normans inheriting pre-conquest territorial structures. The early formation of this network, and its consequent structural stability, are strong indicators as to the efficacy of the Church in Cork, Cloyne and Ross. Likewise, their make-up is similar to that of the other Irish dioceses.

In 1199, a decretal letter was issued by Pope Innocent III to the Bishop of Cork. The papal correspondence treats us to a list of parishes “*intra et extra civitatem*,” those within and without the city, as well as possessions of the Bishop and Gill Abbey.⁹⁴ Eight churches were found within the walls at this date, including Holy Trinity (also written as Christ Church) and St Sepulchre. Conversely, St Nicholas’, one of the most ancient churches of Cork, was omitted from this list of diocesan possessions as it was held by the abbey of St Thomas rather than the local episcopal authority.⁹⁵

⁹³ For the inception of the medieval parish system see, K.W. Nicholls, ‘Rectory, Vicarage and Parish in the Western Irish Dioceses’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 101, 1 (1971), 53-84. For specific dioceses, P.J. Duffy, ‘The shape of the parish’, in E. Fitzpatrick and R. Gillespie, eds, *The Parish in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland community, territory and building* (Dublin, 2006), 33-61, P. Nugent, ‘The dynamics of parish formation in high medieval and late medieval Clare’, in E. Fitzpatrick and R. Gillespie, eds, *The Parish in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland community, territory and building* (Dublin, 2006), 186-210 and M. Hennessey, ‘Parochial organisation in medieval Tipperary’, *Tipperary: history and society* (Dublin, 1985), 60-70.

⁹⁴ Printed in Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 97-99

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 300.

The will of John de Wynchedon⁹⁶ illustrates the existence of other parishes in the city of Cork, indicating the growth of the network since the decretal. Wynchedon was a member of the merchant class and died in the early part of the fourteenth century; his will is dated to 1306 and in it, he bequeathed a variety of items and moneys to the churches of the city. This will is a valuable insight into the religious, social and economic life of the era, but also provides important evidence for the formation of Cork's churches.

Fig 1.1 Parish churches of Cork City

| | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Christ Church | 1199 Decretal | In Wynchedon will | (Extant in 1615) |
| St Brigid's | 1199 Decretal | In Wynchedon will | |
| St Catherine's | | In Wynchedon will | (Extant in 1615) |
| St Finbarr's | | In Wynchedon will | (Extant in 1615) |
| St John's | 1199 Decretal | In Wynchedon will | (Extant in 1615) |
| St Mary's le Nard | 1199 Decretal | | (Extant in 1615) |
| St Mary Magdalen's | | In Wynchedon will | |
| St Mary's Shandon | | In Wynchedon will | (Extant in 1615) |
| St Michael's | 1199 Decretal | | (Extant in 1615) |
| St Nesson's | 1199 Decretal | | |
| St Nicholas' | *appropriated* | | (Extant in 1615) |
| St Peter's | 1199 Decretal | In Wynchedon will | (Extant in 1615) |
| St Philip's | | In Wynchedon will | |
| St Sepulchre | 1199 Decretal | | |

⁹⁶ D. O'Sullivan, 'The Testament of John de Wynchedon, of Cork, Anno 1306', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 61 (1956), 75-88.

Although St. Brigid's was mentioned in the 1199 decretal, it is not referred to after the publication of the Wynchedon will and is omitted from the taxation list of 1303-06; the church seems to have been dissolved some time after this date. St. Philip's and St. Mary Magdalen's are also anomalies that fail to appear in later documents. The former was not a parish church; Wynchedon left several portions of moneys individually, one for the building, another to the clerk and the last for the *inclusa*, or recluse. The presence of the *inclusa* led Bolster to conclude that this church was an "anchoretic foundation,"⁹⁷ a hermitage. St. Mary Magdalen's is similar to St. Brigid's church; it is not mentioned in any other documents, and so may be discounted. Each of the remaining six was included in the 1615 Visitation,⁹⁸ allowing us to trace a history of continued existence for many of the city's parishes.⁹⁹

In the census of 1651, the civil parishes of Cork were listed as Christ Church, St. Peter's, Shandon, St. John's and St. Finbarr's;¹⁰⁰ the ecclesiastical counterpart to each of these was mentioned in both decretal and will. Over the 450 years between the documents, significant fluctuation in boundaries and populations occurred, yet the foundations of the city's parochial system went unchanged.

In England, parish formation took place around the turn of the first millennium;¹⁰¹ in Ireland, as in Wales and Scotland, this process occurred much later. The earliest mention of the parochial system in Ireland was one by the synod of Cashel, 1171-2, which decreed that every man should pay tithes to his parish church.¹⁰² It would seem that the development began with the Norman invasion, with no significant gains made before that date. This conclusion is supported by Otway-Ruthven, who examined the rural deanery of Skreen, Co. Meath.¹⁰³ She found that "there was no parochial organisation in this area before the

⁹⁷ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 299.

⁹⁸ M.A. Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne, Ross, and the College of Youghal', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 2 (1913), 173-215.

⁹⁹ As a corollary, there also existed the parish of St. Mary del Nard on the south side of the River Lee. This was first mentioned in the 1199 decretal, and its existence is clearly chronicled in a variety of sources, down until 1615. At some point in the seventeenth century, the parish of St. Mary del Nard ceased to exist independently, most likely being subsumed into the cathedral lands.

¹⁰⁰ S. Pender, ed., *A census of Ireland, circa 1659: with essential materials from the poll money ordinances 1660-1661* (Dublin, 2002).

¹⁰¹ G. Constable, *A History of Monastic Tithes from their Origin to the 12th Century* (London, 1964), 37-42.

¹⁰² F.J. Furnival, *The English conquest of Ireland, A.D. 1166-1185, mainly from the 'Expugnatio Hibernica' of Giraldus Cambrensis a parallel text from 1. MS. Trinity College, Dublin, E.2.31, about 1425 A.D., 2. MS. Rawlinson, B.490, Bodleian Library* (London, 1896), chapter 34.

¹⁰³ A. J. Otway-Ruthven, 'Parochial Development in the Rural Deanery of Skreen,' *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 94, 2 (1964), 117.

Normans came,”¹⁰⁴ noting an explosion in the number of parishes in the early thirteenth century. Otway-Ruthven’s conclusions were echoed by Nicholls’ later study.¹⁰⁵ The restructuring of ecclesiastical networks coincides with the Norman drive to modernise civil systems.

In this context, the parishes of Cork city follow an established pattern. Although parish churches did exist in Cork prior to 1169, their numbers were low. Nevertheless, the key churches were extant in this period. During the thirteenth century, parish formation increased dramatically and the heterodox tradition of chapels, churches, shrines and other miscellany was transformed into a largely homogenous parochial system. This replaced those independent and anchoretic churches that had existed previously.

Outside of the city of Cork, the development of parochial structures was slower, although its precise nature is harder to gauge due to the scarcity of sources. There are several documents that list parish churches of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, including the fourteenth century taxation, ¹⁰⁶ a 1437 procuration list,¹⁰⁷ the Tudor extents of the monastic possessions¹⁰⁸ and the Elizabethan visitations.¹⁰⁹ However, each of these is incomplete and omits numerous examples of churches and parishes; this confuses efforts to conclusively trace parish history.

Fig. 1.2 shows the locations of the churches referenced in the 1199 decretal, outside of the city of Cork. It is quickly evident that the early ecclesiastical expansion mirrored that of Skreen; it followed the spreading Norman polity. Fitzstephen was present in the east, while Philip de Barry had been granted lands to the north, extending the Cork lordship to meet holdings in Limerick. The nascent churches almost exclusively matched the secular Norman territories. Any churches that pre-existed this period were likely semi-independent structures,

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁰⁵ Nicholls, ‘Rectory, Vicarage and Parish’.

¹⁰⁶ CDI, v, 293-294 and 307-316.

¹⁰⁷ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 300.

¹⁰⁸ N.B. White, *Extents of Irish monastic possessions, 1540-1541; from manuscripts in the Public Record Office* (London, 1943).

¹⁰⁹ *Valor Beneficiorum Ecclesiasticorum in Hibernia: Or the First-fruits of All the Ecclesiastical Benefices in the Kingdom of Ireland, as Taxed in the King's Books: with an Account Shewing how this Royal Fund Vested in Trustees, Hath Hitherto Been Disposed of* (Dublin, 1741), 18-20.

which, like those elsewhere in Ireland, held a closer attachment to monastic institutions than the nascent diocesan structures.¹¹⁰ Still, in Co. Cork, these links would be broken, replaced by a strong connection between the Hildebrandine reformation and the newly arrived administration of Norman power.

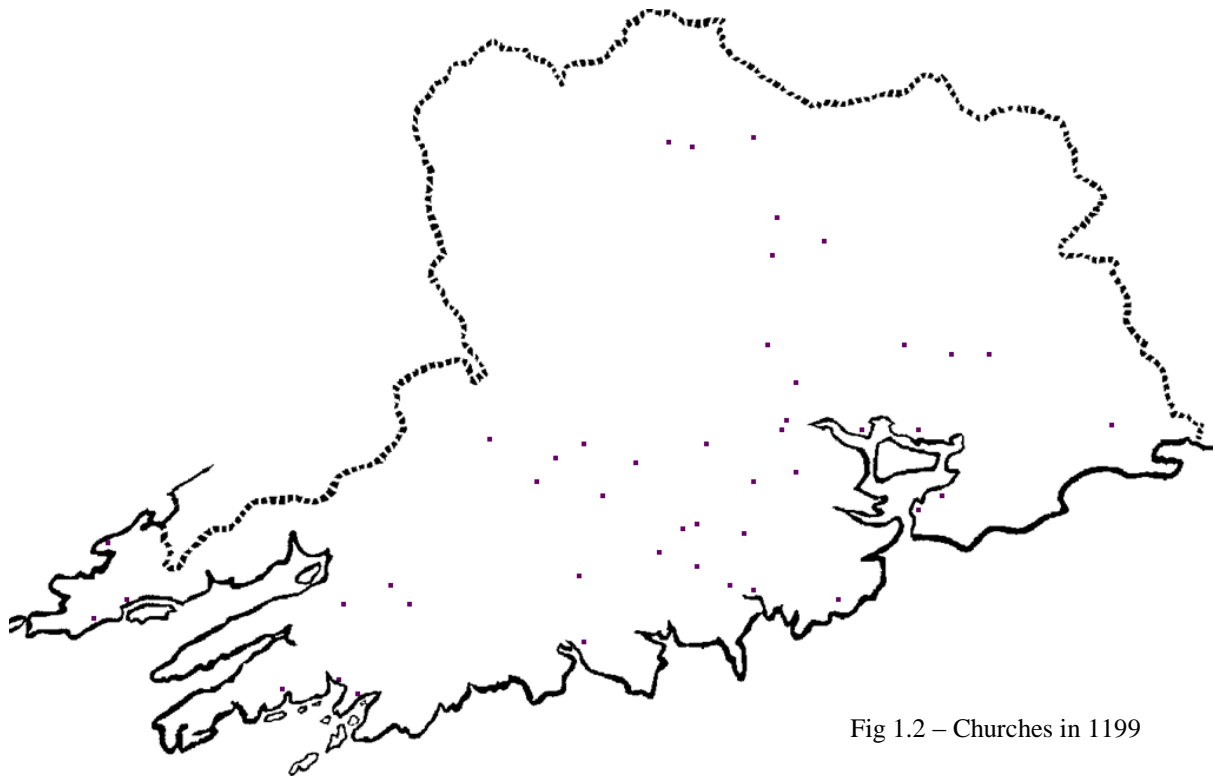


Fig 1.2 – Churches in 1199

By the 1303-06 taxation, the parish network was extended (see Fig. 1.3),¹¹¹ although its development was still incomplete. Nevertheless, the growth of the parochial system continued to follow patterns laid out by the Anglo-Norman conquest; the new parishes appear particularly in the eastern and northern regions of the map, traditional areas of English control.

¹¹⁰ A.J. Otway-Ruthven, 'Parochial Development,' 113.

¹¹¹ Unfortunately, several churches mentioned in the 1306 taxation have not been included in Fig. 1.3. This is because it was impossible to ascertain their location with any degree of certainty.

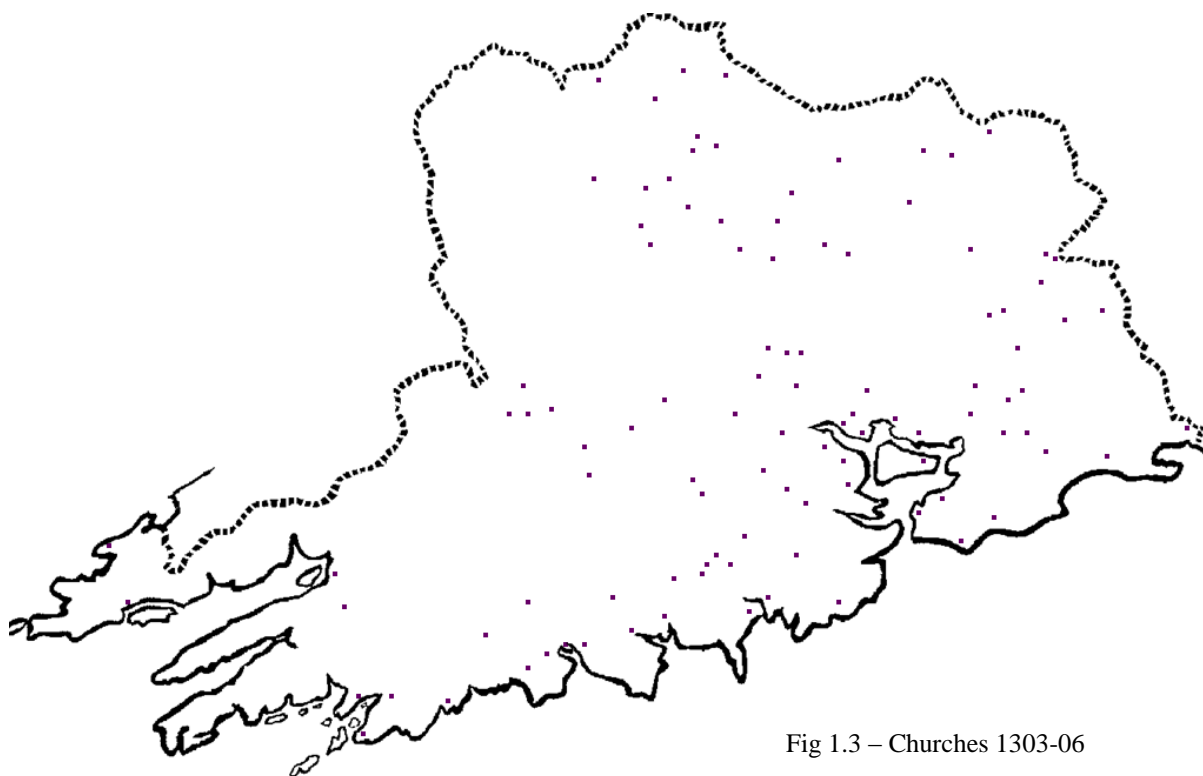


Fig 1.3 – Churches 1303-06

The most accurate representation of the pre-reformation parochial network is formulated from the 1615 Visitation. Although conducted in the later period, the greater power of the English crown in Ireland empowered its surveyors. Despite the heady changes that had occurred during the Tudor period, structurally, the church in Cork had remained durable. Consequently, the map rendered in Fig. 1.3 remains highly accurate for this earlier period.

Once again, the network of parishes in Co. Cork is seen to have evolved out of pre-existing structures. The main areas of growth between the period 1303-06 and 1615 match those from the earlier period; the area east of the Cork city, all along the road to Youghal, the northern part of Cloyne diocese and the central part of the see of Cork all saw substantial increases in the numbers of churches. Similarly, the 1615 survey shows an expansion along the River Lee, around the existing parishes of, and adjacent to, Macroom.

This process of evolution is also reflected in the deaneries of the three dioceses. A brief comparison of the fourteenth century taxation and the visitation of the seventeenth supports this supposition.

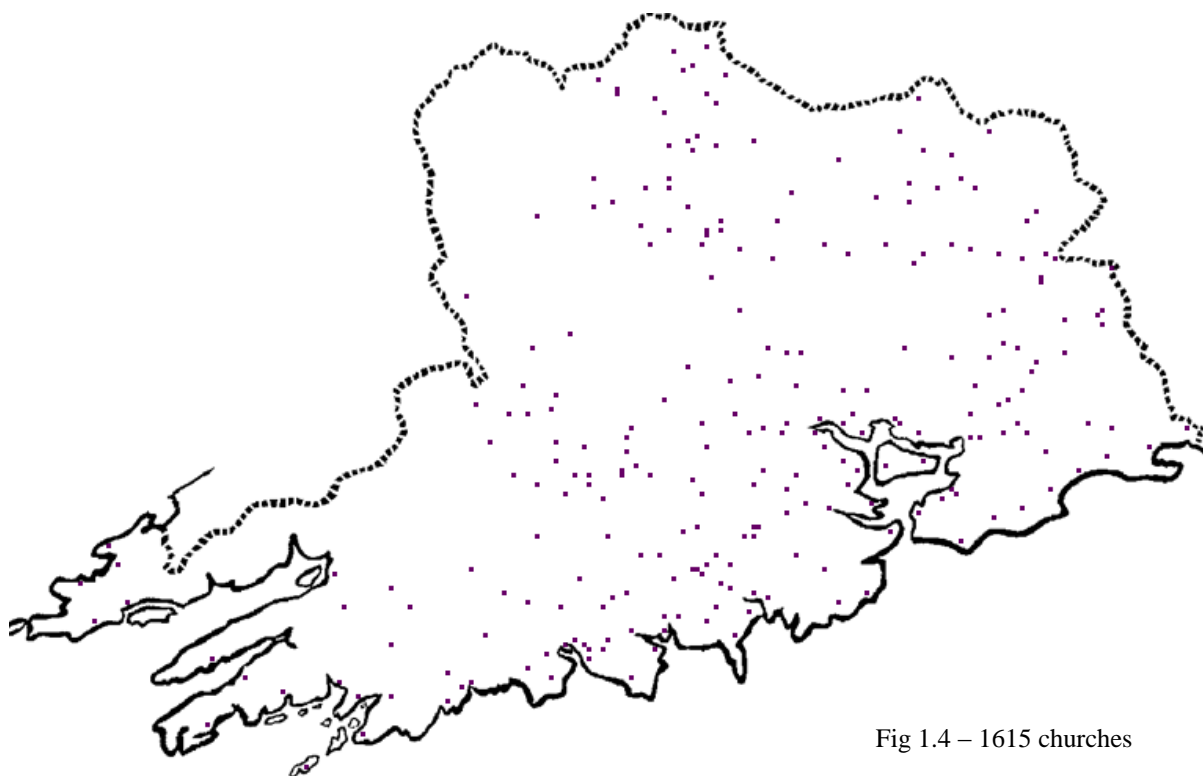


Fig 1.4 – 1615 churches

Excluding the temporalities of the bishop, in Ross, by the date of the taxation, there were three deaneries; Boerry, Obathumpna and Corkygh'teragh. In the 1615 Visitation, three are also mentioned: Beare, Timoleague and finally, Collimore and Collibeg. Although these names do not match, the parishes do. Those that belonged to the Boerry deanery largely transitioned to that of Beare, Obathumpna to Timoleague and Corkygh'teragh into Collimore and Collibeg. Almost without exception, a similar progression occurred in the deaneries of Cork and Cloyne (see Fig 1.5).

In all three dioceses, there were minor abnormalities, for the borders of the deaneries shifted as parishes changed allegiance; the parish of Ballyfeard in Cork is one such example. Whereas the other parishes in Kenalet *citra* would come to form the deanery of Kinalea, Ballyfeard was joined to Kerrycurrihy. However, this example is in the extreme minority. Most churches followed the pattern shown in Fig 1.5.

Fig 1.5 Deaneries of Cork, Cloyne and Ross

| | 1303-06 deaneries | 1615 deaneries |
|--------|--|---|
| Cloyne | Fermoy Muscridonegan Muscrilyn Omakill | Castletownroche Musgregenigan. Musgrelyn. Youghal/Castletownroche |
| Cork | Corkolwyn Kenalethe <i>citra</i> Kenalethe <i>ultra</i> Kyrricurith n/a n/a | Kilmoan Fernlowe Kinalea Kinalmeaky Kerrcurrihy Glansalny Foneragh |
| Ross | Boerry Corkygh'teragh Obathumpna | Timoleague Beare Collimore and Collibeg. |

The biggest alterations occurred within Cork. In all three dioceses, the number of parishes continued to expand in the years between the taxation and visitation. These additions seem largely to have been absorbed into the network, although the fourteenth century deanery of Omakill in Cloyne was to be divided into Youghal and Castlelyons. Already one of the largest deaneries, the area encompassed by Omakill (east of Cork city, to Youghal) saw some significant growth. This split was most likely logistical and comprises one of the areas in which transition was less gradual. Elsewhere in Cloyne and Ross, the make-up of the deaneries remained largely constant. However, in the diocese of Cork, we see

some differences. The 1615 deaneries of Glansalny and Foneragh had no precursors; none of their parishes are mentioned in the fourteenth century taxation and none, excepting Caheragh, seem to have existed prior to 1350.¹¹²

As has already been suggested, it is difficult to identify the precise number of medieval parishes in the dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. The largest single list of names is given in the 1615 Royal Visitation, in which a total of 230 parishes are listed (discounting the cathedral chapter). This register is not completely reliable as it incorrectly labels several parishes as belonging to the wrong diocese. However, after adjustment we are able to form a reasonably accurate picture. When matched to that taken from the 1306 taxation, it is clear that significant growth took place between the creation of these two documents (see Fig 1.6).

Fig 1.6 Numbers of priests in the three dioceses

| | Cloyne | Cork | Ross |
|------------|---------|--------|-------|
| 1303-06 | 97 (19) | 57 (2) | 24 |
| 1615 | 121 | 84 | 25 |
| (increase) | 24.74% | 47.40% | 4.20% |

This would imply that the parochial network of Ross was largely complete, whilst those of Cloyne and Cork were still enjoying growth. The number of chapels, given in brackets, would suggest that this description might also be extended to Cloyne. Although still following the definitions of informal structures, the numerous chapels of ease provided the forerunners of many of the later churches. Still, in all cases, a marked fluctuation in parochial borders is observable in a variety of sources, even if those changes are not reflected in the numerical representation.

The creation of the parish system in the diocese of Cork was slower, which may, in part, be explained by the patterns of settlement. That see had the largest proportion of its territory within *ecclesia inter hibernicos*. In the rural deanery of Skreen (in the diocese of

¹¹² Geoffrey Fitz John de Cogan was presented by the King to the church of the Blessed Mary de Catheragh [sic.] on December 28, 1317. W.M. Brady, *Clerical and parochial records of Cork, Cloyne, and Ross, taken from diocesan and parish registries, volume i* (Dublin, 1863), 46.

Meath) parochial development was slowest where Norman settlement was sparse.¹¹³ Lacking a survey from the late medieval period, we are forced to turn to the *Calendars of Papal Letters*, in which many of these churches receive their first mention. An examination of the ‘new’ deaneries of Glansalny and Foneragh exemplifies the development of rural parishes in the diocese of Cork.

Comparatively small, these two deaneries are located in the extremities of the diocese, occupying the twin peninsulas that reach Sheep’s Head and Mizen Head in the west, spreading east in a narrow passage of land. Hemmed in by the Shehy Mountains to the north and the diocese of Ross to the south, the two ecclesiastical constructs comprised a meagre total of 13 parish churches in 1615. Of these, Brady, in his catalogue of church records for Cork, Cloyne and Ross, claims that only Caheragh was referenced prior to 1580, implying a very late creation for the remaining churches. A detailed reading of the papal registers offers a contrary perspective; Durrus, Murragh and Schull remain elusive, though the remainder are evidenced in entries from the early to mid fifteenth century.¹¹⁴ The earliest examples are Kilcrohane and Kilmacomoge, which are mentioned in the same passage from 1411, “Mandate to collate and assign to Reginald Ohart...[the rectories of] the parish church of Killochayn [Kilcrohane] and the other in that of Kilncomog [Kilmacomoge], so long void that there is no certain knowledge of the manner of voidance.”¹¹⁵

These original mentions occur during the explosion in Vatican correspondence of the mid-fifteenth century. After the 1430s, the numbers of Papal letters seem to have dramatically increased; incidences of individual parishes prior to this date in the *Calendars* are considerably rarer. Additionally, none of the relevant letters refer to the erection of the church, nor to its elevation to parochial status. Instead, it is clear that in every case, this process had occurred some years prior to the authorship of the letter. However, in the absence of more detailed cataloguing of medieval churches, this method serves as a reasonable approximation for the dates of origin for these parishes.

Both of these deaneries were small; Glansalny had seven parishes and Foneragh six. Further, both lay in the south-western part of the diocese of Cork, outside of the traditional Anglo-Norman hegemony. It was this region that saw the largest proportion of ‘new’ ecclesiastical growth; from the 1199 and 1306 maps, we can see how the area around

¹¹³ A.J. Otway-Ruthven, ‘Parochial Development,’ 117.

¹¹⁴ Ballymoney in 1481, CPR, xiii, 739; Desert Serghes in 1466, CPR, xii, 467; Dromdaleague in 1456, CPR, xi, 256; Fanlobbus in 1463, CPR, xii, 215; Kilmoe in 1458, CPR, xi, 352; Kinneigh in 1457, CPR, xi, 314.

¹¹⁵ CPR, vi, 256.

Bantry Bay had previously possessed the barest scattering of churches. The two new deaneries were apparently created to administer fresh expansion. In this strongly Gaelic region, the development of the parish system was delayed at least until the middle part of the fourteenth century. Still, it is likely that many of these parish churches were not erected until much later, perhaps even into the fifteenth century. Certainly, the omission in the papal registers of any mention of part of the two deaneries before 1411 is suggestive of a lack of ecclesiastical activity. These contrast with the majority of the parishes in *ecclesia inter anglicos*, whose churches had an earlier origin. This pattern is in alignment with the patterns of clerical expansion in rural Meath.

However, there were certainly exceptions to this rule. The canonical erection of Kilmichael (diocese of Cork) into a parish church occurred in the first year of Alexander VI's papacy, 1493; the papal mandate is printed in Bolster.¹¹⁶ Similarly, benefices were commonly united and sundered upon supplication by vicar or rector, or, alternatively, to supplement the income of members of the cathedral chapter. However, this was common throughout late medieval Christendom, and although the effect of these changes could be disastrous, they do not distinguish the three dioceses of Co. Cork from their Irish or European counterparts.

Excepting the two newer deaneries, the expansion of the parish network in Cork, Cloyne and Ross tended to follow the foundation provided by the Anglo-Norman settlement. The parishes of the three dioceses are largely clustered around market towns and coastlines, while further inland, they skirt the Galtee and Shehy mountain ranges. The majority of those in the diocese of Cloyne are located to the north and east of Cork City, focusing especially on the urban centres of Mallow, Fermoy, Midleton, Youghal and the episcopal seat in Cloyne. Similarly, those in Cork tend towards Macroom, Bandon, Kinsale and the city, although a sizeable number follow the line of the Rivers Lee and Sultane. In the diocese of Ross, all but five are situated adjacent or within five miles of the coast, with a higher concentration of parishes at the eastern end of the see.

Of course, the influence of the Norman polity did not override the Gaelic. A strong relationship exists between *tuath* and the most basic ecclesiastical territory. With parish names as a guide, it becomes obvious that even in areas under the strongest Anglo-Norman influence, this heritage was strong. Irish prefixes such as 'Agha', 'Kil', 'Knock' and 'Rath'

¹¹⁶ Printed in Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 357.

are well distributed across the three dioceses, even in the regions that underwent the most intensive English settlement. Nugent described a pattern of varying size, in which Gaelic parishes matched the *tuath* almost exactly in Meath, while in Norman regions, the secular *tuath* was divided into two or more ecclesiastical units.¹¹⁷ Consequently, in that county, the Anglo-Norman parishes were typically smaller, and more numerous than their larger Irish counterparts. The three dioceses, most particularly Cork, adhere to this trend.

In all cases, parish size and frequency is broadly delineated between an east/west divide, following Nugent's model, as described above. Areas of Norman settlement tend to contain smaller parishes; the sub-divided *tuath*. This pattern is demonstrated in Fig. 1.3. The region that possessed the largest parishes is that which was most firmly Gaelic, in the far west of Cork. Conversely, the highest concentration of churches is to be found amongst lands immediately surrounding the aforementioned urban centres, Bandon, Fermoy and the like. In Co. Cork, the Gaelic resurgence of the fifteenth century partially obscures this tendency; parishes that should be defined as being *ecclesia inter hibernicos* on the eve of the reformations include those that were founded on Norman settlements.

The dioceses of south-west Ireland did have one peculiarity, the particle (*particulae*). These were portions of parochial incomes awarded outside of the parish and did not affect spiritual jurisdiction. A particle was an oddity, a benefice that comprised part of the tithes of a parish and was almost exclusive to the west of Ireland. The 1306 taxation lists numerous "portions," which, while not ascribed full parochial status, were clearly taxable benefices. Although this practice was more common in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, it survived the reformations. The 1615 Visitation describes the church of Rossebeg *alias* Bracknan (Templebrackman), in the diocese of Cork, and its vicar, Johannes Gould, who also held a *particula de Kilmighell*; a particle of Kilmichael.¹¹⁸ The practice was not widespread, but was known outside of Co. Cork, most especially in Waterford and Limerick.¹¹⁹ Although of little practical impact, the particle did help to complicate the organisation of the parish in the region. This is evidenced by the modern parish Particles, which is the union of four examples of its namesake.

The example of the particle notwithstanding, the development of the parochial network in the dioceses of Cloyne, Cork and Ross is best described as unremarkable. The

¹¹⁷ P. Nugent, *The Gaelic clans of Co. Clare and their territories 1100-1700 A.D.* (Dublin, 2007), 165.

¹¹⁸ Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne, Ross', 180.

¹¹⁹ Nicholls, 'Rectory, Vicarage and Parish,' 64.

earliest developments took place alongside the Norman invasion and the expansion of its polities; continued growth tended to follow these pre-ordained patterns. Elsewhere, in regions dominated by the Gaelic clans, the process of turning independent churches and chapels into formal parishes was much slower. When it did happen, as in the west of Cork, those parishes tended to be larger, while those in the areas of Norman settlement were smaller, based on units of territory that had been formed from the subdivision of the *tuath*. What remains to be seen is how effective the parochial network was.

Clerical incomes

The study of parish finances forms one of the cornerstones of the historiography of the reformations. The wealth of a benefice often dictated the nature of religion within it. The promise of a higher income could attract the attention of the very best curates, recent graduates of universities such as Oxford and Cambridge or their continental counterparts. Equally, these most tantalising of parishes could become the victims of misappropriation, and absenteeism, with favourites abusing the lay right to advowson. At the other end of the spectrum were those benefices stricken with poverty. These might be unable to provide books of sermon or liturgy for the use of the rector, fail to sustain the upkeep of the church building itself, or, in extreme cases, be so poor as to be incapable of supporting a resident cleric. With reference to the promulgation of a successful reformation, it is an established fact that wealthier parishes provided the greatest opportunities for conversion. The Protestant reformations, with the advent of a bibliocentric tradition, required an educated clerical estate; those benefices able to attract graduates were therefore better suited to reform.

The tithe system in Ireland operated in much the same way as it did in England, Wales and the rest of Europe. The system was based around the greater, or garb, tithes, and the lesser. The greater were levied on corn of any kind, whilst the lesser covered more or less every other form of agricultural production. Together with mass-pennies, which were collected on certain feasts, as well as altarages taken for performing weddings, funerals and the like, these tithes comprised the sum total of parochial income in the Tudor period. Typically, the largest proportion of that income came from the greater tithes.¹²⁰

Clerical incomes were jealously guarded and encroachment on the revenue of one parish by another was a direct affront to the incumbent curate. I quote a papal mandate from 1398:

“to the dean of Cloyne...at the petition of Richard Went, perpetual vicar of Kynsale [sic.] in the diocese of Cork, [you are] to forbid his parishioners..., who gain their living by sea-fishing, to pay tithe of their catch to rectors and vicars of churches near the shore of other

¹²⁰ Produce gleaned from tillage was the easiest to tithe. Although tithes were also taken on wool, lambs and dairy produce (the lesser tithes), these were less straightforward to collect. The results of mining and fishing were harder still to tithe. This is explored in B.M.S. Campbell, ‘Benchmarking medieval economic development: England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, c.1290’, *Economic History Review*, 61, 4 (2008), 902-904.

places without Kynsale [sic.], whither they repair for refreshment, whether eating or drinking, or are driven by stress of weather of other causes, but with the intention of returning home; and [you are] to forbid such rectors and vicars, who allege a prescriptive custom, which is rather an abuse, to exact it.”¹²¹

Went’s parishioners, in the habit of going ashore for their midday meal whilst fishing, had evidently been repeatedly demanded of a tithe of their catch by the curate of the parish at which they stopped for their meal.

This dispute takes a greater significance when considered in conjunction with the Irish agricultural bias towards pastoral farming. With a smaller proportion of tillage, the greater tithes, the corn tithes, were reduced in value, whilst the importance of the lesser tithes increased.

Unfortunately, assessing parochial incomes with any great degree of accuracy is a matter of some difficulty for this period. For England, Scotland and Wales, as well as many continental dioceses, there exist detailed accounts and taxations; for the Devon parish of Morebath, churchwardens’ accounts go so far as to list individual receipts of ale.¹²² Relevant to Ireland, only two such sets of parochial documents still exist, those belonging to the parishes of Christ Church and St Werburgh’s, both found in the city of Dublin.¹²³

Accounts with wider implications were often those created by ecclesiastical corporation as part of the papal or diocesan taxations. Surviving accounts of larger taxations of Irish dioceses are sporadic and commonly incomplete. For the Tudor period, the only source that addresses the south-western dioceses in the sixteenth century prior to the reign of Elizabeth is an incomplete list of appropriated rectories and their values. In 1541, anxious to begin the process of dissolution of the monasteries, Henry VIII tasked commissioners with visiting the religious houses of Ireland to assess the value of their lands and buildings. Included within these valuations for Co. Cork are references to numerous appropriated rectories. These were those parochial revenues which, over time, the religious houses had taken to themselves. Compiled on the eve of the reformations, this survey of monasticism, ironically, provides one of the best sources of the fiduciary accounts belonging to the secular arm of the Irish ecclesia. However, as a resource, it is flawed; it lacks both a complete

¹²¹ CPR, v, 263.

¹²² E. Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath*, 191-199.

¹²³ NLI, MS 20864 & MS 2675.

accounting of the income for each parish, as well as omitting the vast majority of secular churches in Cloyne, Cork and Ross. Only 43 rectories are mentioned.

The wider utility of the valuations of these appropriated rectories is an important consideration. Across the three dioceses, there were somewhere between 240 and 280 benefices at any point during the sixteenth century. The largest single list is the 1615 Royal Visitation of Co. Cork, in which 229 individual parishes are named. Taking this as a benchmark figure, the rectories detailed in the monastic possessions comprise roughly one sixth of this total; not a great enough proportion as to be considered representative when taken by itself, but far too large to ignore. Unhelpfully, the commissioners have supplied no indication of the value of the rectories in relation to their peers. The 43 appropriated incomes could quite easily have come from only the wealthiest parishes; these would surely have been the most attractive targets for a Prior to absorb into the revenue of his House.

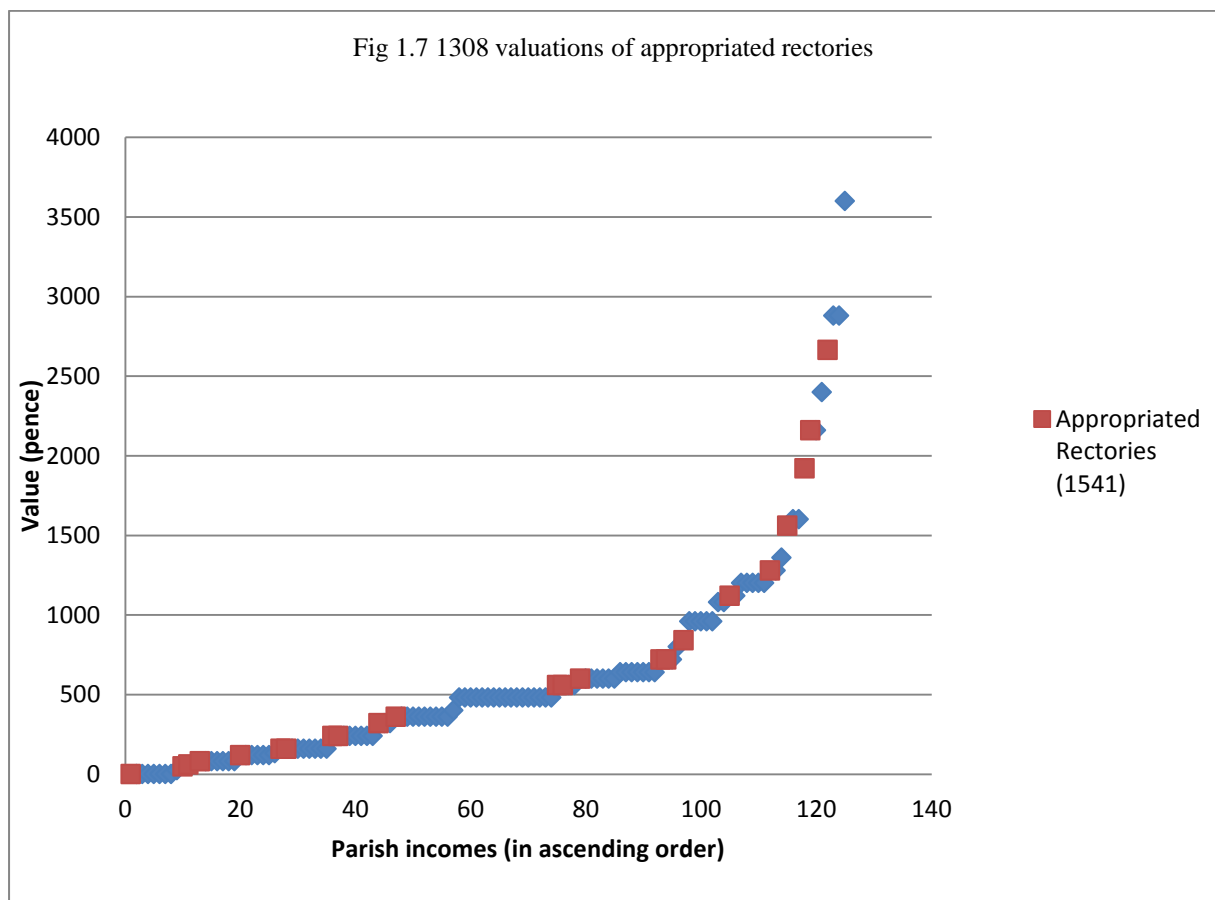
Applying the 1541 survey to a wider context is problematic, but, with some effort, extrapolation is possible. There is a tendency towards continuities in the values of parochial incomes, in relation to each other across the medieval and Tudor periods. After omitting null values (often caused by abnormal conditions or inadequate data), a high correlation is found to exist between incomes ascribed to benefices in the taxation of 1302 and the Visitation of 1615 (correlation co-efficient = ρ 0.701). Put succinctly, those benefices with a high value in 1308 continued to have elevated revenues throughout the period, while those expressed as of a lower income in the fourteenth century remained in that bracket; the more attractive church holdings retained their wealth, whilst the poorer tended to linger in poverty.

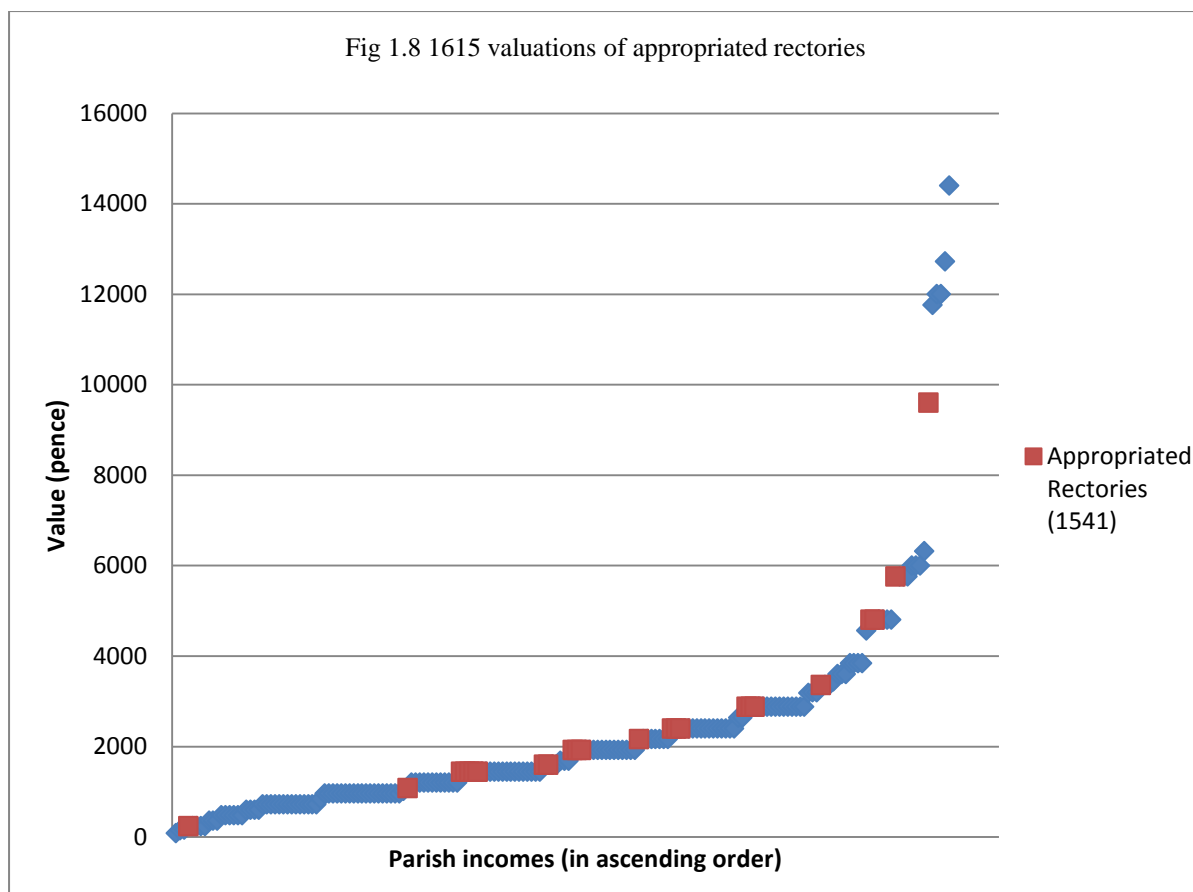
These findings are supported by work on the parish churches of Kilfenora. Building on an earlier article comparing Domesday populations and Nave sizes in the Norman diocese of Worcestershire,¹²⁴ a clear link is demonstrated between internal church size and the valuations as given in the ecclesiastical taxation of Ireland and population size as defined by the 1659 poll tax census.¹²⁵ Each of these is an indicator of wealth; richer parishes tended to have larger churches, while tithes were reliant on a labour intensive agrarian system. Ní Ghabhláin successfully emphasises the continuities in these factors, consistent with the trends evidenced for the south-western dioceses. Relatively wealthy parishes retained their statuses, as did those suffering from a dearth of moneys.

¹²⁴ C.J. Bond, 'Church and Parish in Norman Worcestershire,' J. Blair (Ed.), *Minsters and Parish Churches: Local Church in Transition 950-1200* (Oxford, 1988), 119-158.

¹²⁵ S. Ní Ghabhláin, 'Church and Community in Medieval Ireland: the Diocese of Kilfenora', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 125 (1995), 61-84.

Within this framework, the relative values of the 43 appropriated rectories can be calculated. Whether placed in the context of either the 1308 taxation (Fig 1.7) or the 1615 Visitation (Fig 1.8), the 43 rectories are shown to be a reasonable cross-section of parochial wealth. The appropriated benefices were well represented amongst the rich and poor and middling churches alike. Using this new evidence, we can extend the conclusions drawn from the 43 appropriated parishes to the remaining 200; that the entire parochial system across Cork, Cloyne and Ross was perilously underfunded.





The religious houses that had appropriated the rectories enjoyed the income from the parish, paying a pittance to an unbeneficed priest, who would reside there as vicar to provide the cure of souls. The average value of an impropriated rectory in Co. Cork, across all three dioceses, was £3 9s 6½d, varying from a low of just 6s 8d to a high of £8.¹²⁶ To put this into context, a Tudor document suggested that a revenue of £13¹²⁷ was preferable, whilst historians of the English reformations have calculated that a minimum sum of £10 was needed to support a curate. If a benefice required an additional cleric, a revenue of £15 would be needed.¹²⁸ Even without considering the comparative values of the English and Irish pound in the early sixteenth century, the relative cost of living in each nation, or the impact of the impropriations, it is immediately apparent that these 43 rectories were underfunded. Although they may have been able to support a curate, that curate's existence

¹²⁶ Several entries in the 1541 survey carry two valuations; the first unadjusted, the second the value as affected by contemporaneous events, typically rebellion by "divers [*sic.*] Irish." In all cases, I have used the unadjusted, peacetime assessment.

¹²⁷ S.G. Ellis, 'Economic problems of the Church: why the Reformation failed in Ireland', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 41 (1990), 247-8.

¹²⁸ P. Heath, *The English parish clergy on the eve of the reformation* (London, 1969), 173.

would not, in most cases, have been a comfortable one; certainly there would have been no opportunity for him to become rich.

It is clear that a large proportion of these parishes in Cork, Cloyne and Ross would have been considered very poor indeed; their value was over £1 lower than that presented in the monastic survey for Armagh, where the average value of appropriated rectories reached £4 13s 7d.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, the distribution of wealth appears to have followed a similar pattern in both Armagh and the south-western dioceses. The benefices *inter anglicos* were worth considerably more than those resting in the Gaelic polity.

Table 1.9 Mean revenue of appropriated parochial incomes, Co. Armagh and Co. Cork

| | <i>inter anglicos</i> | <i>inter hibernicos</i> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Co. Armagh ¹³⁰ | £6 10s 7d | £2 2s 9d |
| Co. Cork | £4 3s 2d | £2 10s |

However, the appropriated income did not amount to the total returns for a parish; all 43 were rectories. The majority of Ireland's secular clergy on the eve of the reformations is categorised as unbeneficed; the stipendiary chaplain, chantry priest and curate. Of these, the chaplain, or vicar, was often given the same responsibilities as a beneficed priest. It was usual practice, in instances where a parish included both rector and vicar, for both to receive a proportion of the tithes. In his study of rectory, vicarage and parish in the west of Ireland, Kenneth Nicholls comments that "for this vicarial remuneration; the vicar might receive [a proportion of all of the tithes] or he might receive the 'small tithes' of the parish, while the rector received the 'great'"¹³¹ Although there was no specific rule regarding this division, in the dioceses of Clogher, Derry and Raphoe, the system had become rather more structured. Bishop George Montgomery, of those dioceses, wrote at the start of the seventeenth century that, "the tythes are devyded between the Parson [rector] and the Vicar. In Clogher, the Parson hath two fourth parts, the Vicar hath one. In Derry and Rapho [sic.] the Parson and the Vicar have each of them one third part...[the vicars also] have the benefit of all oblations

¹²⁹ Jefferies, *Priests and Prelates*, 32 and 70.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 32 and 70.

¹³¹ Nicholls, 'Rectory, Vicarage and Parish', 64.

and other small dueties [sic.]...to themselves alone.”¹³² Essentially, in Clogher, half the tithes went to the rector, with a quarter going to the vicar and Episcopal mense respectively, while in Derry and Raphoe, the tithes were split evenly between the three parties. Nowhere is there mention of a similar system in Cork, Cloyne or Ross.

However, the valuations in the monastic survey do display a very particular trend; they are measured in plough-lands. During the early part of the Tudor period, the taxation system was standardised. Each plough-land consisted of 120 statute acres, each under a levy of 13s 4d. Fig 1.10 shows a selection of the 43 appropriated rectories and their valuations from 1541. The survey supplies the monetary valuations only, in each case. However, each was clearly recorded in plough-lands.

Fig 1.10 The relationship between parochial revenues and ploughlands as a unit of measure¹³³

| | Value of rectory | In plough-lands | Value after adjustment ¹³⁴ | In plough-lands |
|---------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Ballyclogh | £7 | 10.5 | £1 | 1.5 |
| Bridgetown | £8 | 12 | £2 | 3 |
| Ballyfeard | £3 | 4.5 | - | 0 |
| Ballyfoyle | £5 | 7.5 | - | 0 |
| Ballydeloughy | £1 10s | 2.25 | - | 0 |
| Ballymodan | £1 6s 8d | 2 | 13s 4d | 1 |
| Barnhelie | £1 | 1.5 | - | 0 |
| Carrigtohill | £6 | 9 | £1 6s 8d | 2 |

¹³² A.F. O’Dowd, ‘The O’Kane Papers’, *Analecta Hibernica*, 12 (1943), 69-127

¹³³ Values taken from White, *Monastic Possessions*.

¹³⁴ The adjusted assessments are the aforementioned values as affected by contemporaneous events, typically rebellion by “divers [sic.] Irish.” A representative sample of parishes has been included in this table to evidence use of plough-lands as a unit of value.

This pattern is continued for all of the 43 rectories of Co. Cork listed in the Henrician appraisal. The unit of a plough-land was intrinsically related to the arable potential of a piece of terrain, rather than territorial size; in this context, it referred to the tillable value of a parish. Expressed in plough-lands, the income received by the houses from the rectories was derived from tillage; the greater tithes. Although distinct from the highly structured system for the equitable division of church incomes that existed in the dioceses of Clogher, Derry and Raphoe, the model used in Cloyne, Cork and Ross was far from unique. Nicholls remarks upon it as one of a selection of common methods used to fund unbeneficed vicars; the rectory (appropriated or not) would receive the greater tithes, while to the vicar went the lesser. Richard Went's litigation now takes on a new urgency. Being restricted to the lesser tithes and altarages, the loss of a few fish could prove catastrophic, particularly in especially poor vicarages, or those that practiced monoculture farming.

The *Valor Beneficiorum Ecclesiasticorum in Hibernia*¹³⁵ offers a fresh perspective on tithe distribution in Tudor Cork. It was begun under Henry VIII, being designed to grant the reformers a truer, up to date, estimate of the value of church property across Ireland. An English version was compiled in 1533 to facilitate the administrative changes required by the Reformation Parliament's Act for First Fruits and Tenth; the Irish document would allow for an accurate levy to be collected after the break with Rome. The returns for the southern dioceses, including those in Co. Cork, were not completed until the middle of Elizabeth's reign, in 1589, by Arthur Hyde and Arthur Robbins.¹³⁶ The *Valor's* contents may be categorised in several ways; parishes with a rector, parishes with a vicar, those with both, prebends and, finally, the Cathedral chapter. Income was typically split between all three parties. The value of each rectory and vicarage is individually laid out per parish, while the chapter's portion is given as a single sum. The relative values of each of these supplies a more accurate picture of parochial wealth.

Although incomplete, the *Valor* lists 24 parishes across the dioceses that had both vicar and rector (see Table 1.6). Only in three parishes, Myross, Shandon and Macloneigh did a vicar stand to receive more than the rector. In all the others, a vicarage might be so fortunate as to have equality with the rectory, but was more likely to be worth less. Essentially, it was unusual for a vicarage in Co. Cork to generate a higher revenue than its corresponding rectory; this matches a similar pattern that has been highlighted in the diocese

¹³⁵ *Valor Beneficiorum Ecclesiasticorum*. The sections relevant to the dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross are found on pages 18-21.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 18-21.

of Armagh,¹³⁷ as well as that demonstrated for the south-western dioceses in the 1615 Visitation. Were we to assume that all the vicarages in Cork, Cloyne and Ross were the equal of their rectories, which would certainly be an exaggeration, still, the average of the total value of the 43 appropriated benefices would amount to less than the recommended amount to finance a benefice with two curates.

Using this evidence to extend the conclusions drawn from the 1541 survey, a projection of total tithe income for individual parishes of Cloyne, Cork and Ross would be as follows: for Cloyne £8 10s, for Cork, £6 4s 5d and Ross, £6 9s 6d. By contemporary standards, each example should be considered inadequate, although, in an Irish context, unremarkable.¹³⁸ There is no need to over-emphasise the significance of the methods of tithe distribution; the point is that the vicarages were, almost uniformly, poverty stricken.

¹³⁷ Jefferies, *Priests and Prelates*, 26-38 and 68-73.

¹³⁸ Ellis, 'Economic problems of the Church', 248-57.

Fig 1.11 Relative value of vicarage to rectory in the three dioceses

| | Rectory | Vicarage | Relative value (%) |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|
| Agharen | £3 | £1 10s | 50.00% |
| Ballyvorane | £1 | 10s | 50.00% |
| Clathoranthé | £2 | £2 | 100.00% |
| Craghghe | £2 10s | £2 | 80.00% |
| Donaghmore | £1 | £1 | 100.00% |
| Drinagh | £2 | £2 | 100.00% |
| Glanbarrahane | £6 | £6 | 100.00% |
| Inishonan | £5 6s 8d | £2 10s | 46.88% |
| Insula Parva | £3 | £2 | 66.67% |
| Kilcoe | £2 10s | £1 | 40.00% |
| Kilkateren | 6s 8d | 6s 8d | 100.00% |
| Kilcorcoran | £1 | 10s | 50.00% |
| Knockavilly | £4 | £2 10s | 62.50% |
| Kylcanyne | £4 2s | £4 | 97.56% |
| Leighmony | £4 | £2 | 50.00% |
| Macloneigh | £1 | £2 | 200.00% |
| Menshye | £3 | £1 10s | 50.00% |
| Myross | £3 | £6 6s 8d | 211.11% |
| Rynrone | £6 | £3 | 50.00% |
| Trinity, Cork | £1 16s 8d | £1 | 54.55% |
| Shandrum | £7 6s 8d | £3 13s 4d | 50.00% |
| Shandon | £3 | £3 10s | 116.67% |
| Siteskan | £1 6s 8d | 13s 4d | 50.00% |
| Tullagh | £2 | £2 | 100.00% |

Having addressed the relative poverty of all three dioceses, it is important to remember that the monastic survey, besides being the basis for this study of ecclesiastical income, also evidences a significant drain on parish incomes; appropriation *cum pleno jure*. Assessing the real impact of this is essential for developing a true picture of parochial finances.

This burden was significant, prevalent throughout the Tudor church. The practice was widespread, with the higher clergy taking what they regarded as their due compensation from a variety of benefices. From 1291 the rate of appropriation in England seems to have increased, rising from 2,000 appropriated parishes to 3,300 in 1547, or, roughly a third of church livings.¹³⁹ This increase may be attributed in large part to new educational foundations or collegiate churches. If anything, in the outlying nations of the British Isles, the practice was intensified. For Wales, the level of appropriation approached 65%,¹⁴⁰ while studies have suggested as many as 85% of benefices in the diocese of Dublin¹⁴¹ and 60% of all of the revenues *ecclesia inter anglicos* were lost.¹⁴²

In Cork, Cloyne and Ross, appropriation of church livings seems to have been limited to rectories. The most obvious examples of this practice are found in the 1541 monastic survey, but the higher echelons of the secular clergy are also implicated. In the 1306 ecclesiastical taxation of Cloyne, several revenues are reserved to the cathedral chapter in the form of prebends. These included a partible of Clenor, Kylmodosnog [Kilmacdonogh] and the church of Glennowyr [Glanworth], which was one of the most valuable church livings at the diocese, stated to be worth 28 ½ marks.¹⁴³ The reserved revenues amounted to thirteen prebends, or 14% of the total number of Cloyne benefices. Taken as a whole, 11% of the livings from the dioceses that made up Co. Cork were appropriated by the cathedral chapters. There is no evidence that directly speaks to rates of misappropriation by senior members of the secular clergy at the start of the Tudor period, but the *Valor* suggests that they remained stable. The 1615 Inquisition goes further, evidencing an increase in their number; by the seventeenth century, there were 46 prebends.

¹³⁹ Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland*, 70.

¹⁴⁰ G. Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation* (Cardiff, 1952), 168-9.

¹⁴¹ J. Murray, 'The sources of clerical income in the Tudor diocese of Dublin, c.1530-1600', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 45 (1990), 297.

¹⁴² A. Ford, 'Protestant Reformation in Ireland', C. Brady and R. Gillespie, eds., *Natives and Newcomers: Essays on the Making of Irish Colonial Society, 1534 to 1641* (Dublin, 1986), 68.

¹⁴³ CDI, v, 273-274

Furthermore, these circumstances were significantly worsened by the rate of appropriations by religious houses. The 43 rectories that have been already mentioned represent over almost one in six parishes, in addition to those appropriated by the cathedral chapters. However, the 1541 monastic survey is incomplete. Although it was supposed to have catalogued every house belonging to every religious order across all of Ireland, the reality was somewhat different. Whole dioceses were missed, the King's assessors limited by the extent of his writ.

At a more local level, individual religious institutions, such as the Dominican house at Youghal were omitted entirely, as was the collegiate church there. These were sheltered by the patronage of the Earl of Desmond; others escaped detection due to their distance from the City of Cork, where the commissioners resided while they conducted their investigations, or their proximity and association to other prominent lay families. There is no reason to assume that the missing houses pursued different practices from those surveyed for Henry VIII; instead, it is likely that the appropriation of the revenues of numerous parishes continued unabated. The College of Youghal had, for example, since its inception in the fifteenth century, been granted the revenues of Ballynoe, Aghern, Oletion and Mallow.¹⁴⁴ Later, the collegiate church's possessions increased to include the parsonages of Ardagh, Clonpriest, Garrivoe, Ightermurragh, Kilcredan and Killeagh, as well as the vicarage of Kilmacdonough.¹⁴⁵ Misappropriation of church benefices seems to have been both casual and common.

The *Valor* would appear to support this supposition. As a rough estimate of the frequency of appropriated rectories, we can consider the ratio of rectors to vicars. Discounting the prebends and the Cathedral chapter, we are left with 162 parishes, which were populated with 42 rectors and 151 vicars. 119 of these vicars were operating alone, in a parish that apparently lacked a rector or any other cleric. This ratio represents a real indicator of the true value of the moneys lost to the parish network through the misappropriation by the religious houses. When a rectory was appropriated, the individual or institution in receipt of its revenue was obliged to maintain the cure of souls. This, as I have already explored, was conducted through the offices of a vicar. Consequently, the presence of lone vicars, in over half of the 175 parishes recorded in the *Valor*, indicates that appropriation of rectories was far more widespread than the Henrician commission first indicated. Using these numbers, the

¹⁴⁴ Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross', 211.

¹⁴⁵ Lewis, *Lewis' Cork*, 443.

rate of appropriation amounts to 66%, surpassing that found by Ford for the area *ecclesia inter anglicos*. However, the *Valor* is, like the monastic survey, incomplete.

Consequently, in addition to the serious financial shortcomings inherent in pre-reformations parochial structures of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, the parishes were bled dry by appropriations. Assessing the spiritual impacts of these problems is difficult. It is all too easy to assume that poverty was synonymous with spiritual decline.

Still, the implications varied. It is, for example, quite possible that clerical relationships with their parishioners were sometimes acrimonious. The priests of the poorest parsonages might have had to be quite forceful to ensure the collection of their livelihood. Conversely, their parishioners could have caused great discomfort to the cleric through the withholding of tithes. Although rare, this could be used to protest against clerical failings and was especially effective in low income benefices, where a small number of dissidents would have a great impact. Disputes such as these typically fell into the domain of the ecclesiastical courts. From the scanty records available, there is little evidence of quarrels and the consequent anticlericalism. Tithe disputes were especially focused around methods of assessment, complicated by new crops, like saffron, which, in the context of Co. Cork, had an exceedingly low frequency. Similarly, challenges were raised in urban areas where traditional agriculture was non-existent. The most extreme example of this would be found in London where, from 1520 to 1546, as many as one third of parishes suffered some form of litigation.¹⁴⁶

The records of church courts for the dioceses of Cloyne, Cork and Ross have not survived. However, it must be assumed that similar complications existed within the urban centres of the region, most especially the city of Cork. The only direct evidence of dispute is the aforementioned example of Richard Went, vicar of the coastal parish of Kinsale. However, the 1453 Cashel synod is suggestive of a contentious environment. The thirty-fourth statute speaks to the problem of non-standard vocations, omitted from tithe law. The council declared that, “physicians, bards, goldsmiths, carvers, carpenters, and so on, who have gained or lawfully gotten goods, are bound to pay tithes, contrary custom notwithstanding.” Likewise, the sixty-third article highlights the difficulties of the laity. It orders clerics not to tax dairy produce twice, by first taking a tithe of milk, and then, later, the cheese.¹⁴⁷ Other examples from the synod reinforce this perspective. Furthermore, a certain

¹⁴⁶ Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland*, 72.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Concilium provincial Cashellense’, 574.

rivalry did exist between the religious and secular clergy. By statute of the 1453 provincial synod, mendicant friars were forbidden to quest on feast days, when parish clergy would receive offerings.¹⁴⁸ This declaration was almost certainly a product of lobbying by the secular clergy, who, like their contemporaries in Britain and on the continent, viewed the preaching of friars as an intrusion into their spiritual and fiduciary domain.

However, all of these examples are unexceptional; certainly they were not unique. Instead, the statutes of the Cashel synod emphasise the similarities with the conditions in that province and elsewhere within the Tudor realm. Still further, these financial concerns speak only to a complication in personal interaction between priest and parish. This might cause personal dislike or even localised anti-clericalism, but did not speak precisely to failure to fulfil religious duties.

Conversely, the poverty of certain vicarages is indicative of a different reality. Poor or unbeneficed clerics supplemented their income through funerary monuments or other oblations. These payments may not have been strictly voluntary,¹⁴⁹ and created yet another potential source for ill-feeling (funeral fees were a source of particular animosity), but were important. In Dublin, their value has been estimated to vary from ½d to 1d;¹⁵⁰ in the poverty stricken dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, they were essential. Critically, these moneys took the form of moneys charged for certain sacraments; if they were not performed, no fees would be presented. Consequently, even in the poorest benefices, poverty did not necessarily equate to religious decay.

Nevertheless, wealth, or the lack of it, would have had one spiritual effect. The majority of the secular clergy could not have paid for a university education, while for the poorest, particularly those *inter hibernicos*, the acquisition of any nonessential books would have been impossible. Therefore, the most destitute parsonages were more likely to have supplied an intellectually conservative clergy, unable to afford knowledge of Luther or Erasmus. With one or two exceptions, the amount of money on offer to a potential curate in Co. Cork remained low. The state of parish finances was so bad in many cases that the standard of living for a resident curate fell below acceptable norms. Consequently, during the early reformations, well qualified candidates were lured to richer pastures elsewhere; this hindered the spread of the Henrician and Edwardian reforms.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 571.

¹⁴⁹ These payments were typically under some form of duress, obligatory for the performance of the sacraments. Jefferies, *Priests and Prelates*, 30.

¹⁵⁰ Murray, 'The Sources of Clerical Income', 153-4.

Clerical education

The sole Irish theologian of the late medieval period with any real influence was named Maurice O’Fihilly. Although his place of birth is in dispute, it is likely that he came from Baltimore, in Co. Cork, an O’Fihilly of Corca Laoighde.¹⁵¹ Maurice was a cleric of no mean repute, earning significant renown as a scholar over the course of his career. The Annals of Ulster record his death in 1513 with a great laudation of his person: “Master Maurice O’Fithcellaigh [O’Fihilly],

Doctor of Divinity and Friar Minor, the unique cleric of most fame and consideration that was in the east or west during his time, after his being two score years in Italy lecturing and composing glosses on the Scripture, came to land in Galway [as Archbishop of Tuam]...he died in Galway, to the grief of the men of Ireland after him.”¹⁵²

Disregarding the inevitable hyperbole inherent in the Irish Annals, O’Fihilly’s scholarship can not be in doubt. While his early career is hard to follow, it is readily evident that O’Fihilly took a series of posts across Italy at the end of the fifteenth century. At the general chapter held in Cremona in 1488, he received his Masters in theology.¹⁵³ From then, we find him working at the *studium generale* in Milan for three years; later, from 1491, O’Fihilly was linked to both the Franciscan school at Padua and a professorship at the local university¹⁵⁴ and many of his publications come from this period.¹⁵⁵ Through his career as a teacher and theologian, O’Fihilly attained the moniker *flos mundi*, literally ‘the flower of the world’, as a mark of the respect in which he was held.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ It is impossible to discern O’Fihilly’s birthplace with any degree of certainty; record of his birth is non-existent. Simultaneously, both Clogher and Galway claim the Arch-Bishop as their own. Emotion has further obscured the subject, as displayed in correspondence from the nineteenth century Irish Ecclesiastical Review. For the full dialogue, see E.B. Fitzmaurice, ‘The Birthplace of Maurice de Portu’, *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record a Monthly Journal; under Episcopal Sanction Third Series*, 17 (1896), 325-32, J. Fahey, ‘The Birthplace of Maurice de Portu’, *Ibid.*, 444-449 and E.B. Fitzmaurice, ‘The Birthplace of Maurice de Portu’, *Ibid.*, 545-550. The crux of the debate surrounds the presence of O’Fihillys in Cork and the suffix “de Portu”, often used to describe the scholar. However, given the ambiguity of “de Portu” (either referring to a Galway friary, or translated literally as “of the port”), it is logical to form conclusions based on the genealogical evidence.

¹⁵² AU, iii, 1513.

¹⁵³ B. Millett, ‘The Irish Franciscans and Education in late medieval times and the early Counter reformation, 1230-1630’, *Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society*, 18, 2 (2001), 14.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

¹⁵⁵ One of his key works was an annotated publication of the writings of Joannis duns Scoti. Mauritius de Hibernia, *Primus liber doctoris subtilis fratris Joannis Duns Scoti ordinis Minorum super sententias* (1513).

¹⁵⁶ A.G. Little, *The Grey Friars in Oxford* (Oxford, 1892), 267-8.

The elevation of this scholar to the position of Archbishop has puzzled some modern academics.¹⁵⁷ There is no evidence to suggest that he was sponsored by the King, nor that he was elected by chapter. Neither can his cardinal promoter be successfully established. Nevertheless, *flos mundi* arrived in Ireland with the blessing of Julius II; he carried a plenary indulgence for all who heard his first mass.¹⁵⁸

O’Fihilly’s career was, undoubtedly, highly successful. He attended several universities, earning his Bachelors, Masters and Doctor of Divinity, before pursuing a flourishing academic reputation for which he was well rewarded. His successes are such that they go some way towards dismissing the cloud that was traditionally held over the reputation of late medieval Irish theology by many historians. Nevertheless, it is these very accomplishments that emphasise the shortcomings of the educational system in pre-reformation Ireland. *Flos mundi* earned his education overseas. Despite a supposition that he may have attained formative learning at a special *studium* in Galway,¹⁵⁹ the constraints imposed by the lack of formal structures dictated that O’Fihilly had to go abroad to complete his undergraduate work.

This problem was well known in Ireland. During 1475, a petition was sent from four separate monastic orders to plead with the Pope to establish a university, citing a generation of scholars and clerics unable to attain a university education. Irish scholars had “no safe access to any university except by crossing the said [Irish S]ea, with grave danger, many being frequently drowned.”¹⁶⁰ Maurice O’Fihilly seems to have been doubly fortunate; once for the success of his career and then again, for the safe completion of two lengthy sea voyages.

The absence of a native university was felt most keenly by the secular clergy. Clerics who sought an education in Theology or Canon Law suffered the expenses of travel to, and accommodation in, the English universities of Oxford or Cambridge or their counterparts on the continent and the 1475 letter makes reference to this fact, stating that “they [the prospective students] cannot conveniently dwell in foreign *studia* or universities on account of the lack of means to pay.”¹⁶¹ The relative poverty of the Irish benefices proved an often insurmountable impediment. Boniface VIII’s statement of intent, *cum ex eo*, dictated the

¹⁵⁷ W.E. Wilkie, *The Cardinal Protectors of England; Rome and the Tudors before the Reformation* (Bristol, 1974).

¹⁵⁸ AU, iii, 1513.

¹⁵⁹ Millett, ‘The Irish Franciscans and Education’, 14.

¹⁶⁰ CPR, xiii, Part 1, 426-427.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 427.

procedure in which a beneficed clergyman might attend a University whilst retaining his income; advancement was required, but of equal necessity was the equipping of the parish with an adequate curate.¹⁶² Bishop Montgomery of Clogher described this system;

“Parsonages were usually bestowed upon students that intended to take orders, towards their maintenance at schoole, and were enjoined within few years after they accepted the parsonage to enter into orders, but hold not themselves bound to execute devyne service. The Vicars were tyed to perpetuall residence and service of the cure...”¹⁶³

The parson, or rector, was intended to seek education while providing for the care of the cure of souls in his parish by appointing, and sustaining, a vicar. As has already been demonstrated, the values of church benefices in the dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross were largely inadequate. On the eve of the reformations, they fall far short of the minimums calculated by contemporaries and historians alike. Significantly, this seems to have worsened in areas *inter hibernicos*; being especially poor, the parishes dominated by the Gaelic clans could not have funded their priests through an expensive foreign education. Furthermore, as has already been shown, significant numbers of rectories were appropriated by religious institutions. The loss of these incomes served only to further hinder the pursuit of learning; certainly the unbeneficed cleric who managed the cure of souls in an appropriated parsonage could not leave it for a long enough period to attain a degree.

Jefferies suggests that although only a small proportion of priests came from independently wealthy backgrounds, even the poorest priests “would have come from families that had sufficient resources to have their sons educated.”¹⁶⁴ However, such a claim is hard to substantiate. There must have been a scholarly tradition in Ireland, evidenced by the repeated efforts to found a university; one example of this was an attempt centred on Drogheda in 1465. It is reasonable to presume that these attempts originated from localised custom or from regional centres of learning. Nevertheless, it is difficult to trace students of these *studia* due to a lack of documentation. Certainly wealthy families could and likely did support family in the priesthood, but it is far too easy to over emphasise their role; prominent

¹⁶² One of the best examinations of this papal mandate remains L.E. Boyle, ‘The Constitution *Cum ex eo* of Boniface VIII’, *Mediaeval Studies*, 24 (1962), 263-302.

¹⁶³ Bishop Montgomery’s description of the Ulster dioceses is printed in O’Dowd, ‘The O’Kane Papers’, 81-111.

¹⁶⁴ H.A. Jefferies, *The Irish Church and the Tudor Reformations* (Dublin, 2010), 30.

dynasties often gain an exaggerated importance as they were more likely to hold senior position in church and, consequently, appear in royal or papal communication.

These conclusions are reflected in the low frequency of office holders educated to degree level. The already small numbers of graduands evidenced from the first half of the fourteenth century declined steadily. From the onset of the Tudor period in 1485 to their close in 1521, the Calendars of Papal Letters list some 200 papers that are related to the dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. Of the hundreds of clergymen mentioned, none are described as holding a Doctorate, a Master's degree or even a Bachelor's in Theology, Canon Law, or any other subject. Although two individuals are described as "currently studying canon law", there is no evidence to suggest that either attained their qualifications or even that they returned to practice.

Additionally, a well-qualified clergyman would not necessarily benefit his cure. Despite best intentions, high calibre clerics, often in short supply, could be fast-tracked by lay or religious patrons. Thomas Darcy graduated as a canon lawyer from Oxford whilst holding two Armagh rectories.¹⁶⁵ Upon gaining preferment to promotion within the see of Dublin, he retained his possessions in the Ulster archdiocese.¹⁶⁶ The cure of those parishes was instead under the purview of vicars who had not enjoyed the same benefits from which Darcy had profited. Still, the acquisition of qualifications would assist the spiritual provision at the diocesan level, if not at a parochial.

Although the provision of clerical education was surely lacking, Ireland did not remain entirely isolated from the European mainstream. As we have already explored, *flos mundi* enjoyed a continental education before his return to his homeland. Contrarily, O'Fihilly followed the example of other sea-faring students before him. Thomas Ruth, of Meath, held a doctorate in canon law, claiming in 1468 to have taught across Ireland.¹⁶⁷ In the diocese of Cork, Randal Hurley, the rector of Ballymoney had even lectured in the subject at Oxford for more than a year and a half before returning to Ireland.¹⁶⁸ Nevertheless, such individuals were but few when considered alongside the greater numbers of priests who did not hold a degree. It is of no doubt that the lack of a native university proved to be an obstacle to the formation of a well trained clerical estate, most especially amongst the secular orders. However, to say that the clerical educational system in pre-reformation Ireland was

¹⁶⁵ A.B. Emden, *A biographical register of the university of Oxford, AD1501-1540* (Oxford, 1974), 160.

¹⁶⁶ Jefferies, *The Irish Church*, 31.

¹⁶⁷ CPR, xi, 284.

¹⁶⁸ CPR, xii, 215.

wholly inadequate is to blind oneself to the influence of informal structures for the provision of learning.

At the more local, archdiocesan level, the 1453 Synod of Cashel illustrates an institutional awareness of the need for ensuring high standards of clerical education. This archdiocesan council is only one of a succession of synods,¹⁶⁹ but remains unique as its 120 decrees have been preserved. They range from subjects covering the prerequisites for adequate worship, requiring all clerics to provide at least one statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary in their churches,¹⁷⁰ to governing clerical behaviour and dress:

“All clerics having received first tonsure and enjoying its privileges in person and property should live chaste, and especially beneficed clerics and priests should avoid usury and games of chance, they should not wear a beard on the upper lip nor nourish their hair, [instead] they should cut their curls, and abstain from thefts, plunder and violence under pain of major excommunication.”¹⁷¹

Regarding tutelage of potential clergy, the synod was most specific. The fifty-third ruling of the council forbade teachers to lecture those who are unsuitable for advancing the work of God,¹⁷² highlighting both an educational structure within the arch-diocese and an episcopal interest in tending to it. This statute suggests that *studia particularia* should not accept lay pupils; colleges of such specialism were rare indeed in pre-reformations Europe. The seventy-first decree also reveals an active interest in maintaining high standards of clerical education. It constrained those nobles' sons who wished to enter the priesthood from doing so without special licence. Both of these decrees seem intended to limit the ability of unsuitable individuals from attaining Holy Orders and, ultimately, a benefice. The specific mention of the sons of noblemen implies that the Synod was concerned by the appropriation of incomes by laymen, and the subsequent abandonment of the cure.

These articles provide us with a tantalising look into an informal education structure that benefited aspirants throughout the archdiocese. The Cork historian Evelyn Bolster emphasises the use of the word *magistri* in the fifty-third decree. She remarks that this points

¹⁶⁹ Litigation dated 3 August 1512 clearly betrays the existence of regular provincial councils. CPR, xix, 410-411.

¹⁷⁰ ‘Concilium provincial Cashellense’, 565.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 567.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 567.

to the existence of qualified teachers and offers the supposition that these teachers were simply lectors in canon law who operated from their own residences.¹⁷³

The wording of the seventy-first declaration of the 1453 Synod lends some corroboration to this theory; it indicates that the practice of apprenticeship of new recruits under experienced priests was well established, “...*quod clerici no recipiat filios nobilium ad nutriend...*”¹⁷⁴ that priests shall not receive sons of nobility for fosterage. It is the word *nutriend*, fosterage, that is key in this instance. This conclusion matches the pattern found in English dioceses, such as that of Norwich, where, once educated, secular clergy returned to their benefice able to enrich pastoral care by providing a repository of knowledge.¹⁷⁵ Working as rectors and vicars in their own right, these educated clerics could expect a ready stream of visitors desiring lectures and the latest books or papers.

In the middle of the fifteenth century, there do seem to be a reasonable number of suitable priests. Solely in the diocese of Cork (1420-1464), we find that the perpetual vicar of Kinsale, the Dean of Cork and three canons of the cathedral chapter all held Bachelors in Canon law, as did the perpetual vicar of Dunmanway. Likewise there were, at least in 1411, *studia particularia* in the region of Co. Cork. Reginald Ohart petitioned the papacy to hold at once the rectories of Kilcrohane and Kilmacomoge and the deanery of Ross; he had “studied canon law for seven years in certain where there is no university...[in] those parts.”¹⁷⁶ The subsequent letter speaks to the existence of a similar system in the diocese of Killaloe. Still, these structures were not foolproof. Papal litigation from the mid fifteenth century quite clearly described the inadequacy of the perpetual vicar of Kilmoe, as he “neglected the cure of the parishioners on account of his ignorance of letters.”¹⁷⁷

Furthermore, as has already been stated, there was a rapid drop in the numbers of degrees in the second half of the fourteenth century. This shift seems very sudden, but the decline in numbers of formally educated clerics in Cork, Cloyne and Ross coincides with the foundation of St Mary’s collegiate church in Youghal in 1464. It is entirely possible that this new foundation, in conjunction with the extensive Franciscan library nearby, provided an excellent educational prospect for local clerics.

¹⁷³ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 499.

¹⁷⁴ ‘Concilium provincial Cashellense’, 569.

¹⁷⁵ J.R Shinnars, ‘University Study Licenses and Clerical Education in the Diocese of Norwich, 1325-35’, *History of Education Quarterly*, 28, 3 (Autumn, 1988), 405.

¹⁷⁶ CPR vi, 256.

¹⁷⁷ CPR xi, 352.

Regardless of the exact locations of its foci, the informal education structure present in the south-western dioceses almost certainly continued to exist well into the Tudor period. The structure was urban-centred, given the concentration of educated clerics to cathedral chapters and their preferment to top office. This would not have formed a particular hindrance to the dissemination of knowledge, however, as this pattern simply replicated diocesan organisation.

Still, the informal processes would not assist a successful reformation of the church, whatever its source. With fewer and fewer priests attending university, the movement of modern theories relating to clerical standards, meditations on the mass or reforming theologies in Cloyne, Cork and Ross would not have been swift. Instead, priests were educated through apprenticeship. Their opinions and outlook were thus predestined towards conservatism, regardless of the adequacy of the ministry.

Efficacy of the Clergy

Assessing the quality of religious provision in pre-reformations Ireland is far from simple. Typical sources that elaborate lay opinion and expectation, visitation records and ecclesiastical court registers, are largely non-existent. Instead, the papal letters provide the greatest insight into late medieval religion; these are of particular interest to a historian of Ireland due to their focus on that nation. For the years 1484-92, 314 (90%) of the calendared letters refer to Irish matters.¹⁷⁸ This imbalance is present throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Largely made up of petitions to, and directives from, the papacy, the calendars offer many key insights. They also present an opportunity to track clerical standards in the region of Co. Cork during a period of intense turbulence. During the second half of the fifteenth century, the administration of the united dioceses of Cork and Cloyne was complicated by a prolonged dispute over the episcopal succession.¹⁷⁹

Accused of holding masses whilst under excommunication and detaining the parish of Shandrum in the diocese of Cloyne without being promoted to holy orders, Eugenius O'Faolain (Ofallan) petitioned Pope Sixtus IV for clemency. He argued that not only had,

“he hitherto led such a laudable life that the foregoing cannot be proved, but that the judges in those parts [i.e. Cloyne] are sometimes [*sic*] corrupted by a small sum of money or by gifts, and that accusers are wont to choose judges disposed to favour them, [and] it is not easy to have recourse to the apostolic see in regard to the grievances inflicted by them, or sentences wrongfully pronounced, and appeals therefrom [*sic*].”¹⁸⁰

Bribery and patronage were rife within fifteenth century church courts, yet it is unlikely that O'Faolain's complaint was a general one. In 1462, the united dioceses of Cork and Cloyne had entered a prolonged period of intense litigation and political warfare, in which rival clerics sought to secure their claims to the episcopal succession. The incumbent bishop Jordan Purcell became increasingly sidelined by two priests, William Roche,

¹⁷⁸ Jefferies, 'Papal Letters and the Irish Clergy', 82.

¹⁷⁹ This section focuses on the dioceses of Cork and Cloyne. The implications of episcopal politics in this period are highly relevant to the efficacy of diocesan administration and provision of parochial religion.

¹⁸⁰ CPR, xiii, Part 2, 529.

archdeacon of Cloyne, and Gerald Fitzgerald, apparently a member of Purcell's own household. Without invitation, Roche had himself appointed as coadjutor, struggling against Gerald Fitzgerald who had in turn presented the (presumably falsified) resignation of Purcell to Pope Pius II, paving the way for his own election to the episcopacy. Although Purcell remained *in situ* until at least 1469, it was the bitter dispute between Roche and Fitzgerald that would command lay, papal and diocesan attention until its violent climax in 1484.

Purcell remained active throughout the 1460s, casting doubt upon his coadjutor's assertion that the bishop was "so old and without bodily strength and sight that he cannot exercise the pastoral office in person, wherefore many excesses and crimes of his subjects remain unpunished, and many goods of the said churches and of their episcopal *mense* are in the hands of laymen."¹⁸¹ Though an octogenarian, Purcell's name appears on thirteen separate occasions in calendars during the years following Roche's appointment, up to and including the announcement of his death in 1472. Additionally, a further thirteen mention an unnamed bishop of Cork or Cloyne. It is unlikely, although possible, that these could refer to William Roche or to the bishop elect Gerald Fitzgerald, yet even without taking these into consideration, Purcell does seem to have remained heavily involved in the administration of his dioceses. He oversaw papal provisions, adjudicated delations and reviewed dispensations for the laity. More strikingly, he was described in a letter from 1469 as having deprived "Thady Oscychayn [O'Sheehan] [of his ecclesiastical office] for his faults and demerits."¹⁸² This last is most significant, as it quite clearly demonstrates that Purcell was personally exercising the functions of the pastoral office, eight years after Roche's original accusations.

Although active in his dioceses, Purcell may not have operated with complete independence. The continued presence of Roche and Fitzgerald in positions of authority, despite the incumbent bishop's efforts to remove them, would suggest that they both enjoyed a high level of influence in the dioceses of Cork and Cloyne. A letter, dated 18th May 1463, describes Purcell's attempt to regain his full authority. In it, the Archbishop of Cashel and the Bishops of Exeter and Limerick were to judge if either Roche or Fitzgerald had acted inappropriately and, subsequently, to respond accordingly.¹⁸³ Despite the obvious impropriety of both parties, neither seems to have suffered censure. The surname of each party betrays their strong links to prominent Anglo-Norman families in the area. A document from the 1480s clearly articulates the strength of secular influence that lay behind Roche's

¹⁸¹ CPR, xi, 529.

¹⁸² CPR, xii, 689.

¹⁸³ CPR, xi, 472.

bid; his supporters committed murder, sacked the city of Cloyne and pursued other acts of violence.¹⁸⁴ Thus, it would seem that although Purcell retained the ability to effectively minister throughout the 1460s, his independence and authority had been undeniably tarnished by the power of his potential successors.

Having established Purcell's competency, if not his autonomy, it is possible to discern two distinct phases: one of a capable ministry, which prior to 1462 was free from interference, and another after 1462, in which three clerics contested the one authority. Subsequently, to consider the impact of the succession dispute, we shall examine two separate periods, the years between 1455 and 1460 and, latterly, 1477 to 1482. The earlier period of relative stability will provide a suitable juxtaposition to that of 1477 to 1482. It was during these latter years that the rival claimants pursued the united sees of Cork and Cloyne most vigorously. Although the violent culmination of the quarrel did not occur until 1484, William Roche was most active in the papal letters in the years up to 1482.

From 1455 to 1460, there are 49 entries in the calendars which relate to the united dioceses. Of these, we can discount those whose content concerned sees other than Cork or Cloyne, but from which the petitioner had drawn one or more of his judges. In 1459, for example, Jordan Purcell was requested to assist in resolving a matrimonial suit in the Dutch city of Utrecht. Similarly, it was commonplace for abbots and members of the cathedral chapters of Cork and Cloyne to be asked to render judgement on cases relating to other Irish dioceses, particularly Ardfert, Limerick and Ross. Thus there are 27 relevant entries. For the period of 1477 to 1482, there are 51, which can be rendered down to 34 in a similar way. Significantly, the letters from both periods conform to the general pattern for entries relating to the diocese of Clogher, 1484 to 1513. A study has noted that for that see the content of letters themselves tended towards the litigious. Of the 28 papal letters relating to Clogher, 22 comprised of delations.¹⁸⁵ These are defined as legal suits in which the petitioner, or delator, would accuse an incumbent of ecclesiastical office with faults which, if proven, would necessitate the deprivation of the defendant and allow the provision of the ecclesiastical

¹⁸⁴ CPR, xiii, 187.

¹⁸⁵ Jefferies, 'Papal Letters and the Irish Clergy', 90.

office to the petitioner. Jefferies continues to remark that high numbers of these testified to administrative weaknesses, particularly in dioceses where the episcopal authority was weak.¹⁸⁶ For Cork and Cloyne we find that, in the period 1455 to 1460, of the 27 entries, 13 were delations. Notably, of the 34 in the later span, 21 may be categorised in this way. The fact that the percentage of delations increases (from 48% to 60%) would therefore imply a weakening of the diocesan structures by the latter period (see Fig 1.12).

Fig 1.12 Papal letters referring to Cork or Cloyne

| | Mentioning Cork or Cloyne | Relating to Cork or Cloyne | Of which are delations |
|-----------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1455-1460 | 49 | 27 | 13 (48%) |
| 1477-1482 | 51 | 34 | 21 (60%) |

Evelyn Bolster's *History of the Diocese of Cork* portrays the later period as one of Rome-running, turmoil and confusion, which "was only to be expected ... [to] prove detrimental to the exercise of the ministry."¹⁸⁷ Drawing on a selection of anecdotal evidence taken from the calendars, she emphasises the neglect of diocesan administration and the impact of that neglect upon the provision for lay worship. Interestingly, Bolster also stresses the weakness of Purcell's episcopate prior to the inception of Roche's coadjutorship.¹⁸⁸ In this instance, she lays the blame for instances of simony, absenteeism, appropriation and dilapidation at the feet of Jordan Purcell. However, her assumptions are predicated upon the examples of a limited selection of delations from the calendars, taken to be representative. This mistake is compounded by the presumption that those letters were invariably accurate and their delators successful.

Nevertheless, it is the opposite which appears to be true. In 1479, Maurice O'Faolain (Ofaelan), a priest of Cloyne, campaigned against Maurice O'Donoghue (Odonorchy), who

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 90-1.

¹⁸⁷ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 419.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 410.

had been provided to two rectories.¹⁸⁹ However by the year 1482, despite a favourable judgement, O’Faolain had struggled to attain occupancy. Instead, he asserts, “the patron of the said churches refused his consent.”¹⁹⁰ The influence of lay patrons would seem to have been one impediment to achieving a successful conclusion to a litigant’s efforts. Yet, even when the support of a benefactor had been secured, or in cases in which one was not mentioned, a supplicant could still find himself blocked by obstacles unknown.

With but a few exceptions, the delators conformed to a single profile; they were largely of Gaelic descent and tended to be low ranking or unbeneficed members of the clergy. Using the evidence of surnames, it emerges that from the earlier period, only 22.8% of litigants were of English descent. Between 1477 and 1482, that figure fell to 14.3%. The accusers give the impression that they had no concern regarding the fourteenth century legal bar to Gaelic priests holding benefices *inter anglicos*. At the same time, the delators were almost uniformly described as priests or clerks. There are a few monks and canons of religious houses, but these are confined to cases whose purview was limited to their own establishments. Canons and holders of diocesan office are in the extreme minority; the instance of David O’Hallinan (Ohalinan), a canon who delated the chancellor of Cork is almost unique.¹⁹¹ There are few examples of such naked ambition for personal advancement. Instead, the litigants were largely part of a lower clerical echelon pursuing appointment to their first benefice.

Between 1455 and 1460, there were 13 delations relating to the clergy of Cork and Cloyne, two of which involved the religious orders. Of these 13, further examination of the calendars provides confirmation for the success or failure of five. In 1456, Donald O’Carroll (Occaruuy) sought the deprivation of Patrick O’Kelly (Okiallare), Canon of Cloyne, who held the prebend of Kilmaclenine. Although there is no mention of O’Carroll having taken the prebend, he is referred to as a “Canon of Cloyne” in a later letter of 1458, allowing us to assume that he was at least partially successful.¹⁹² Similarly, John Terry (Tirry) seems to have failed to achieve his aims in Rathcormack. Although it has been suggested that a John Terry occupied that parish *c.* 1458,¹⁹³ later evidence implies that the delator was unsuccessful. A John Terry is mentioned twice for the year of 1459, suing once in a delation

¹⁸⁹ CPR, xiii, Part 1, 76.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 123-4.

¹⁹¹ CPR, xiii, 124.

¹⁹² CPR, xi, 550.

¹⁹³ K. Terry, ‘Aspects of settlement of an hereditary clerical family in the medieval period: the Terrys of Cork’, *Journal of the Cork Archaeological and Historical Society*, 115 (2010), 27.

marked 9 August, for Carrigtohill and Rathcormack, and again, in one dated to 12 September, for Templeroan, in which it is implied that the petitioner was then in possession of both Carrigtohill and Rathcormack.¹⁹⁴ However, in yet a third delation, dated to 1461, Terry is described as holding only Carrigtohill and Templeroan. Consequently, it seems likely that if he ever enjoyed the fruits of the rectory at Rathcormack, Terry could only have done so temporarily. In contrast to these mixed successes, the delation of John Mulryan (Omolerynn) must entirely be considered a failure. The defendant in this example, Thady O'Donegan (Odonnagayn), was able to completely resist the usurpation of his benefices, remaining in office until at least 1471.¹⁹⁵ Similarly, the suit of John O'Doran (Odoronaygh) against Rory O'Loghlainn (Olachnayn), abbot of the Cistercian monastery of St Mary's, Middleton, in Cloyne, must be considered a total failure as in 1463, the supplicant made an almost identical accusation against Rory,¹⁹⁶ who had till then retained his abbacy. In all, between 1455 and 1460, only one delation was entirely successful.

Fig 1.13 Delation success rates, 1455-1460

| Complete success | Partial success/failure | Complete failure | Unsubstantiated | Total |
|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------|
| 1 (8%) | 2 (15%) | 2 (15%) | 8 (62%) | 13 |

Of these 13 delations, five relate to incorrect procedure, usually complaining that the defendant had detained the benefice without canonical provision or, as in one typical case from 1459, “without having himself ordained priest, and without dispensation.”¹⁹⁷ Interestingly, of all of these delations, there are no accusations of sacerdotal failings. Simony and procedural issues took precedence, totalling eight (62%) of the 13. Although Bolster lists these alongside the abuses of fornication and dilapidation when criticising Jordan's episcopate, it is hard to accept that these were in fact comparable. Indeed, while the papacy allowed these suits to progress, it was the norm for supplicants who voluntarily approached Rome to be granted dispensations for similar misdemeanours. Reginald Herlihy (Imurhye),

¹⁹⁴ CPR, xii, 29.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 372.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

who petitioned the Pope in 1464, received an indulgence for detaining the rectory of Cursuhara “without having himself ordained priest, and without dispensation.”¹⁹⁸ In the same way, though Dermit O’Doran (Ydoronaygk) entered a simoniacal bargain for the fruits of St Mary’s, Fermoy, on the successful completion of an earlier delation, he would receive dispensation and papal provision to the same. It seems, therefore, that a lack of ordination was not a particular hindrance to possession. Furthermore, there were no recorded complaints concerning the provision of worship in the parish. Rather, it would appear that delations against clerics who failed to adhere to procedure were merely opportunistic.

Of those cases not accounted for, we find three defendants accused of dilapidating the goods of their possessions, two of whom were incidentally denounced as fornicators, three cases of absenteeism and one appeal against the outcome of a previous delation. It is worth noting that these letters do not appear to have enjoyed a higher rate of success than those of the opportunistic nature described above. John Terry came into possession of Templeroan after he charged John Bright (Bryt) with holding the rectory therein without having himself ordained priest.¹⁹⁹ In contrast, the respective suits against Thady O’Donegan, who was accused of absenteeism, and Rory O’Loghlainn (Olachnayn), alleged perjurer and dilapidator, were both unsuccessful. It is clear that accusations of these offences, which were more likely to be detrimental to the provision of worship, could not guarantee a successful delation.

For the later period, we find slightly different conditions. As with the earlier one, the majority of the delations dating between 1477 and 1482 are characterised by procedural failings. Of the 21, 18 consist only of vague accusations of the type outlined above, while the remaining three involve complaints of simony. Ostensibly, this suggests an adequate clergy, given that there were no entries which detailed sacerdotal abuses, nor concubinage or the dilapidation of incomes. Nevertheless, this increase in opportunistic suits does imply that the provision of diocesan administration had declined during the feud between Roche and Fitzgerald.

From 1477 to 1482, there were 21 delations relating to Cork and Cloyne, of which 14 have outcomes that cannot be determined. Odo O’Cullen (Ocolen), who litigated for a prebend and canonry in 1482, was listed as an adjudicator for a delation in 1483, in which he was described as a “Canon of Cork.”²⁰⁰ Conversely, David O’Hallinan endured a suit against

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁰⁰ CPR, xiii, part 1, 164.

his canonry in 1481 and remained in office until at least 1482 although, as in the case of O’Cullen, no reference is made to the prebend.²⁰¹ It might be reasonable to assume that in each of these cases a decisive outcome was reached; given that both O’Cullen and O’Hallinan were in possession of canonries at a later date, they likely also held the prebends mentioned above. Nevertheless, it is impossible to ascertain that with total certainty. The two letters which relate to the religious houses of Cork and Cloyne provide this period with its only confirmed successful delation. In an entry from 1484, Philip Roche is described as the abbot of St Mary’s, Bridgetown,²⁰² implying that he was successful in his suit of 1480. However, the delation against Cornelius O’Flinn (Oflaynn), abbot of Gill Abbey, dated 28 February 1482, was entirely unsuccessful, given O’Flinn’s involvement in a second delation later that year as the abbot.²⁰³

Fig 1.14 Delation success rates, 1477-1482

| Complete success | Partial success/failure | Complete failure | Unsubstantiated | Total |
|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------|
| 1 (5%) | 4 (19%) | 2 (10%) | 14 (67%) | 21 |

Despite the charge that “accusers are wont to choose judges disposed to favour them,”²⁰⁴ it is evident that the delations listed in the calendars were not consistently profitable for the petitioner. However, one should not suppose that their outcome was necessarily just. Thady O’Donegan (Odonnagayn), who defeated his delator in 1459, was a pluralist, holding parishes in both Cork and Ross. The priest who brought the suit, John Mulryan (Omolerynn), claimed that O’Donegan had taken possession of Tisaxon near Kinsale in Cork diocese, residing there to the implied detriment of his holdings in Ross. Furthermore, if the petition of David Meade (Myagh) is to be believed, it was entirely possible that the strictures of a papal mandate might be wholly disregarded. He states that, in a previous delation, David de Courcey (Lecurcy) had accused Meade of laying violent hands on a cleric of Cloyne and of simony, intending to strip him of the archdeaconry of Cloyne. While the pope

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 124.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 174.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 124-5.

²⁰⁴ CPR, xiii, Part 2, 529.

instructed the precentor of Cloyne to consider the case, Meade alleges that de Courcey caused him to be brought before a Canon of Cork, John O'Cronin (Ocronym), who masqueraded as precentor so as to pass judgement.

A summary of the delations that occurred in the periods 1455 to 1460 and 1477 to 1482 would appear to suggest that no drastic collapse of the ministry accompanied the succession dispute. In a system that rewarded the accuser, it should be expected that the faults of the accused would be emphasised, even exaggerated. That there are no complaints of sacerdotal failings and few of perjury, dilapidation and concubinage would seem to imply one of two things; that the issues surrounding procedural irregularities were of paramount importance, or that there were simply very few cases of serious abuses. Concurrently, it seems that the papacy was keen to retain control of parochial appointments. Though evidenced at a higher level by the periodic political warfare between church and state, the papacy seems to have been keen to reward those individuals who followed correct episcopal or papal procedure when seeking installation to ecclesiastical office.

Financial concerns do not appear to have motivated a large proportion of the litigation. Most delations are characterised by the acquisition of lower income vicarages and rectories; this is befitting the low status of the majority of litigants. However, the system of delations, provisions and dispensations present in the papal letters did legitimate the widespread practice of pluralism. Traditionally, pluralism has been condemned by historians as one of the great failings of the medieval Irish church, inextricably linked with absenteeism. What has yet to be considered is the impact of this prevalent practice upon lay worship. Pluralism ranged from the blatant, as in the case of John Terry, who in the space of one month delated for three parishes in two entries from 1459,²⁰⁵ to the more subtle, as with William O'Sheehan (Ysyichayn), who requested the collation of Subulter and Roskeen to his rectory of Castlemagner as its fruits were not sufficient to maintain him.²⁰⁶ In both cases, the papacy gave tacit acceptance and licence to pluralists by permitting the delations to proceed to judgement. The aforementioned John Terry gained possession of Templeroan and Carrigtohill following his suits, at a distance of 25 miles from each other. In contrast, the two perpetual vicarages sought by O'Sheehan were both within three miles of his original rectory at Castlemagner. It is easy to see that while one man might minister such a small area, Terry would find it far harder to labour in both of his holdings simultaneously.

²⁰⁵ CPR, xii, 29.

²⁰⁶ CPR, xi, 668-9.

A consideration of pluralism in the periods of 1455 to 1460 and 1477 to 1482 further exemplifies the effects of the succession dispute. In the letters dated from 1455 to 1460, there are 28 named secular clergy who are directly linked to church lands. Of these, 12 may be defined as pluralists, having held at least two diocesan possessions simultaneously during their careers. Pluralism in this period seems to have been polarised, with priests either holding lands close together or far apart, with very little middle ground. Evidently, the largest group contained pluralists similar to O'Sheehan, holding rectories, benefices and vicarages that fell into close proximity with one another. These included Donatus Long (Olongayd), who pursued a union of Kinneigh and Magourney, which were 10 miles distant²⁰⁷ and Donald O'Carroll (Occaruyl) whose successful delation would unite his perpetual vicarage of Clonfert with the prebend of Kilmaclenine, nine miles away.²⁰⁸ The other main category was that which included John Terry, whose example of incompatible pluralism is eclipsed by that of John Roche. This cleric sued for the collation of Coole and Britway, which lay 35 miles from each other.²⁰⁹

Fig 1.15 Distance between pluralists' possessions

| | Less than 10 miles apart | 10 to 20 miles apart | More than 20 miles apart |
|-----------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1455-1460 | 6 (50%) | 2 (17%) | 4 (33%) |
| 1477-1482 | 6 (50%) | 3 (25%) | 3 (25%) |

The examples of pluralism from the later period portray a strikingly similar situation and, most significantly, the largest single category is of those who held compatible benefices.

It is evident that pluralism and absenteeism were not necessarily coterminous. Certainly, it is hard to imagine James Fitzgerald maintaining an effective presence in Kilmacdonogh whilst also holding church office in the diocese of Ardfert,²¹⁰ but a large proportion of pluralist clerics could easily have maintained the laity which resided within

²⁰⁷ CPR, xi, 314.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 304.

²⁰⁹ CPR, xii, 29.

²¹⁰ CPR, xiii, Part 1, 127.

their various possessions. Interestingly, this corresponds with the character in the united diocese of Cork and Cloyne presented by the delations examined above; that although suffering from organisational failures which permitted pluralism to continue, there is no evidence for an overwhelming collapse of the ministry, either before or during the succession dispute.

Similarly, evidence taken from the Calendars is not suggestive of a ministry in crisis. From 1462 to 1484, there are only three letters which directly or indirectly refer to the effects of the succession dispute on the united dioceses and none of these offer proof of serious abuses. Nevertheless, they are all suggestive of a decline in the organisational structures of the church in Cork and Cloyne. The petition of Donatus O'Cronin (Ocionyn) explains that although he was provided to the perpetual vicarage of Aghinagh and had his writ confirmed by William Roche, O'Cronin was concerned that Roche's litigation against a "certain adversary," Gerald Fitzgerald, had put his position in doubt. Subsequently, O'Cronin sought papal confirmation of the earlier appointment.²¹¹ Crucially, this confusion does not appear to have harmed the provision of lay worship. Similarly, the climactic letter of the dispute describes violence, murder, kidnap, factionalism and theft, but not a single instance of sacerdotal failing.

"the recent petition of Gerald [Fitzgerald], bishop of Cork and Cloyne, contained that ...William Roche, priest, has in many ways disturbed him in the said rule and administration, and has caused his subjects to be despoiled of all their goods by his sons...has caused the city of Cloyne, especially the manse of the vicars of the church of Cloyne, to be burned, divers homicides to be perpetrated there, and many goods to be violently taken away from the church of Cloyne and its cemetery, and he took Gerald once before he became bishop, and again thereafter, putting him in chains ... aided and abetted by divers rectors, vicars and abbots."²¹²

It is evident that the dispute between Roche and Fitzgerald was real and was vociferously contested. However, it is also evident from this survey of the papal letters that the dispute did not result in an interminable decline of clerical standards in the united sees of Cork and Cloyne.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 108.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 187.

Conclusion

The dioceses of Cloyne, Cork and Ross were unremarkable in many ways. As with most Irish dioceses, the formation of the parochial network was a gradual process. Similarly, the influence of the Gaelic and Norman polities on parish size and distribution remained consistent with contemporary norms. Critical to this study of the reformations, all three sees enjoyed a high level of territorial stability from the middle of the fifteenth century. However, the slower diocesan development in the Gaelic regions does imply a weaker parochial tradition, potentially evidencing a greater emphasis on alternative ecclesiastical constructs.

The image of education and finance as presented is not as positive. Clerical poverty was a very real problem in many of the parishes in the south-western dioceses. However, the rates of delations suggest that this had little effect upon numbers of aspirants intent on entering the ministry. High proportions of delators were unbeneficed clergy, while delations themselves remained more numerous than any other type of papal correspondence during the pre-reformations period. This continuous pressure suggests a large priesthood. Instead, the main implication of lower priestly incomes seems to have been related to education.

Formally qualified clerics are in the extreme minority during this period, in Cork, Cloyne and Ross. From various contemporary accounts, it is evident that university education was an impossibility for many priests; pre-existing problems of geographical remoteness and the miscellaneous risks inherent to travel were compounded by inadequate financial support. Instead, informal structures served in the place of a native university, emphasising the importance of experience and apprenticeship, potentially leading to an intellectually conservative clergy.

The involvement and influence of the powerful families of Cork, Cloyne and Ross was significant. In the first instance, they populated the churches, rectories and vicarages with MacCarthys, O'Sullivans, FitzGerald and Barrys, to name but a few. The most powerful families supplied large numbers of priests and retained enormous power both within the parishes and on the provision of worship. This could encourage specific patronage of religious centres, but also left the dioceses open to the ravages of

inter-familial warfare, as demonstrated in the battle for the episcopacies of Cork and Cloyne during the later fifteenth century.

It is not possible to describe the secular clergy in the dioceses of Co. Cork as paragons of virtue. There are certain faults which seem endemic; those of concubinage, illegitimacy and poverty are paramount. However, these were all commonly forgiven by papal decree and, in absence of evidence to the contrary, accepted by contemporary opinion. More significantly, there were few complaints of a spiritual nature. Despite evidence of some shortcomings, it appears that there is little to support the traditional view of an Irish priesthood in catastrophic decline, riddled with abuse.

Chapter 2: The development of the monastic tradition

The ideals applied by the humanist reformers of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries encompassed the entirety of the clergy, not simply its secular arm. Colet's sermon referred to a sober, righteous godly existence for every priest no matter his employment.²¹³ Purely in terms of numbers, the monastic tradition commanded the attention of reformers, but the temporal wealth of many houses garnered the jealousy and censure of both priestly and lay policy makers.

English monasticism was dominated by the black monks, the Benedictines. Major foundations at St Albans, Durham, Canterbury, Bury and Peterborough demonstrate institutional health, while, like other landlords, the order benefited from the general economic recovery at the start of the sixteenth century.²¹⁴ This contrasted strongly with their status and the condition of their monasteries in Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Across the Irish Sea, the Benedictines were comparatively insignificant by the reformations era, limited to areas of strong and early Anglo-Norman influence. Other factors also differentiated the monastic tradition between the Tudor nations.

Warfare and rebellion played a significant part in the prosperity of the religious houses. Scottish monasteries located on or near the English border suffered from physical decline; this was exacerbated during the Anglo-Scottish wars of the 1540s.²¹⁵ Similarly, barring perhaps Tintern and Strata Florida, the Welsh monasteries were unable to recover from the varied negative effects of the Glyndŵr rebellions of the early fifteenth century.²¹⁶ The turbulent politics of Ireland presented similar symptoms. The contracting lordship, Gaelic revival and numerous rebellions all had implications on the financial fortunes of landlords and consequently, the Irish monastic tradition.

The three dioceses of south-western Munster possess a long relationship with the phenomena of monasticism. They reputedly contain the site of the first Franciscan abbey in Ireland,²¹⁷ as well as numerous ancient monasteries which pre-existed the Norman invasion and were found scattered across Cork, Cloyne and Ross. A later surge came in the thirteenth

²¹³ Colet, 'Convocation Sermon', 293-304.

²¹⁴ Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland*, 46.

²¹⁵ The Scottish branch of the Cistercian order was particularly affected, being disproportionately focused in that region. M. Dilworth, *Scottish Monasteries: Monastic Life in the Sixteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1994), 26-7.

²¹⁶ G. Williams, *Wales and the Reformation* (Cardiff, 1997), 72-7.

²¹⁷ Lewis, *Lewis' Cork*, p. 434.

century, accompanying the growing continental popularity of the Cistercians, Augustinians and, perhaps more importantly, the friars of Saints Dominic and Francis. With their intention to assuage some of the criticisms levelled at the secular clergy during the medieval period, particularly that a lack of education impeded their parochial duties, the friars became common in the region. The Dominicans held three houses,²¹⁸ while the Franciscans had four.²¹⁹ Later, the Observant reforms would take strong hold in the three sees, as they did across Ireland.

That internal reform movement, so successful in Ireland, was peculiarly absent in England, represented in only seven Franciscan communities.²²⁰ Conversely, Observantism was prominent in three of the four mendicant orders, comprising 40 Franciscan houses, eight Augustinian and eight Dominican. Irish affection for the friars left a lasting impression upon English commentators. In 1538, Thomas Agard found a particular fondness for them within and without the Pale, such that “The false and crafty bloodsuckers, the Observants...[are] called most holiest, so that there remains more virtue in one of their coats and knotted girdles, than ever there was in Christ and his passion.”²²¹ The prominence of the mendicant orders served as an affront to Agard’s English reformism.

Campion’s account suggests another facet of the Irish tradition. “They [the Gaelic clans] honour devoute Fryars and Pilgrimes, suffer them to passe quietly, spare them and their mansions, whatsoever outrage they shew to the country besides them.”²²² Campion implies a geographical distinction in the activities of the friars, that they had greater freedom outside the English lordship. This difference is not merely a result of the shortcomings of the Henrician suppression policy, already evident by the Elizabethan period. The Irish monastic tradition, far from a homogenous entity, was segregated by secular polity. The reasons for this, and the subsequent implications on the provision of religious worship and progress of the reformations, will be explored in this chapter.

²¹⁸ J.A. Dwyer, ‘An Historical Account of the Dominicans of Cork, from 1229, the year of their first foundation in the City, to our times, with illustrations’, *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society; Second Series*, 1 (1895), 358-60.

²¹⁹ T.J. Walsh, ‘Friary of Kilcrea,’ in *Franciscan Cork: Souvenir of St. Francis Church, Cork* (Killiney, 1953), p. 38.

²²⁰ Bradshaw, *The Dissolution of the Religious Orders*, 8.

²²¹ SPH ii, 570.

²²² E. Campion, ‘A Historie of Ireland, Written in the Yeare 1571’, in J. Ware, ed., *Ancient Irish histories: the works of Spencer, Campion, Hanmer, and Marleburrough*, i (Dublin, 1809), 26.

Origins of the Orders in Cork, Cloyne and Ross

Upon first examination, the strength of the monastic tradition in Cork, Cloyne and Ross seems focused to the east. Under the influence of the Anglo-Norman hegemony throughout the medieval era and the period of the reformations, the region plays host to the largest proportion of the foundations in Co. Cork, most especially around the ecclesiastical centre of Cork city itself. Other important secular settlements are also associated with religious establishments. Youghal, Kinsale, Ross Carbery and others all played important roles. Amongst others, Norman surnames are associated with the foundations at Kinsale, Cork, Bridgetown and Cloyne.²²³ Conversely, institutions at Bantry, Cullen, Ross Carbery and other sites in western Cork enjoyed Gaelic patronage.²²⁴ Beyond this demography, evaluation of the religious orders is suggestive of the strength of Observant Reform, while their respective sizes, wealth and dates of foundation supply interesting insights into the late medieval religion in the episcopacies.

The first hubs of religious activity to appear in the dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross pre-date the Anglo-Norman presence. These proto-monasteries are small in number and of these only the convent of nuns at Ballyvourney, founded in the sixth century,²²⁵ did not survive into the era of the reformations. Whether by suppression or abandonment, the exact date of its closure is troublesome to pinpoint, although there is no reference to this nunnery during the Norman period, or later. Ballyvourney itself faded into ecclesiastical obscurity, being reduced to a mere parish in the far west of the Cloyne diocese by the fourteenth century. By contrast, the early Irish monastery of Timoleague retained its importance. Founded during the latter part of the first millennium, it survived, in some guise or another until the Henrician dissolutions. In 1164, it was recorded that “the coarb of Mo-Laca was slain,”²²⁶ and then, later in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the site of the abbey became a hive of lay and clerical activity, as the Franciscan order obtained the site.

The remaining three are closely linked with concentrations of the laity; they would become the cathedrals of St. Finbarr at Cork, St. Fachtna at Ross and the church of Cloyne. These all date to the first millennium and long before the inception of the Irish dioceses, these

²²³ A. Gwynn and R.N. Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses* (Dublin, 1988), 290, 297-298, 315-316 and 161-162.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 233 and 379.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 313.

²²⁶ *AI*, 299.

three ecclesiastical buildings were the religious foci for the area. Evidence for these monastic communities can be found throughout the annals; for all three, priors and abbots are listed from the latter part of the first millenium. Like many coastal structures across the British Isles, they were raided by Viking longboats. In 990, “Ros Ailithir was invaded by foreigners, and the lector, namely, Mac Coise Dobráin, was taken prisoner by them, and he was ransomed by Brian at Inis Cathaig”²²⁷

Although there is a longstanding tradition of monasticism that predates the coming of Strongbow to Ireland, the majority of foundations in Co. Cork appeared after the arrival of the Anglo-Normans. Developments in the three dioceses complemented the pattern in wider Ireland. While Abbot Flaithbertach Ua Bolchain led a revival of Irish monasticism in Derry,²²⁸ a similar reawakening occurred simultaneously in Co. Cork. The ancient monasteries evolved into cathedrals and were replaced by almost twenty new houses by the late thirteenth century. However, this remarkable explosion did not originate solely in native reforms. There were strong links between the Benedictine houses in Ireland and Germany. Concurrently, the Anglo-Norman newcomers, armed with *Laudabiliter* and ambitious clerics, brought their own religiosity.

The Benedictine and Cistercian orders were at the forefront of this monastic explosion, albeit with strong links to the Anglo-Norman influx. The cell in Cork, belonging to the Black Monks, exemplifies one aspect of this relationship. This was a small foundation, numbering only two brothers and two sisters, but provided a dozen beds for the poor of the city. It was founded by John, the Earl of Morton, but quickly became united with similar establishments in Waterford and Youghal. In turn, in or before 1204, all three became dependencies of Bath. This foreign authority stamped its mark upon the Irish houses through visitations and discipline. In 1306, Robert de Clopcote, then prior of Bath abbey, visited Munster in response to complaints of poverty and mismanagement.²²⁹ In 1332, an incompetent brother by the name of Hugh de Dover was returned to Bath.²³⁰

However, the Anglo-Normans did not possess a monopoly upon the religious institutions in the three dioceses. In a marked contrast to the example described above, the

²²⁷ AI, 170

²²⁸ F.X. Martin, ‘Diarmid Mac Murchada and the coming of the Anglo-Normans,’ in F.X. Martin, *et al.*, eds., *A New History of Ireland*, (Oxford, 1987), 55.

²²⁹ W. Page, ‘Houses of Benedictine monks: The cathedral priory of Bath’, in W. Page, ed., *The Victoria History of Somerset*, ii (London, 1911), 75.

²³⁰ W. Hunt, ed, *Two Chartularies of the Priory of St Peter at Bath; i. The Chartulary in MS No. CXI, in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge ii., Calendar of the MS Register in the Library of the Hon. Society of Lincoln's Inn* (London, 1893), 137.

Irish annals clearly delineate the limits of English influence. Gaelic names remain associated with each of the three cathedrals until the fourteenth century, as indicated by a cursory reading of the Annals of Innisfallen. For Cork, it is recorded that in 1205 and 1281 respectively, the bishops Ua Selbaig and O'Tierney (Ó Tigernaig) “rested in Christ in Corcagh [Cork].”²³¹ Between 1092 and 1317, the Annals give mention to a series of bishops, deacons, lectors and chancellors, all of Gaelic name and living or dying in the cathedral chapter there. The names O'Sullivan (Ua Súilliubáin) and O'Riordan (Ua Riacáin) seem especially associated with the more senior positions. Each instance of the former filled the role of bishop.²³² Similarly, Irish bishops of Ross are listed until late in the thirteenth century.²³³ Contrarily, this trend continued throughout the waxing strength of the English colony; it was reversed during the early stages of the Gaelic resurgence. While Ross' cathedral chapter would continue to be dominated by Gaelic clerics in the fifteenth century, Cork and Cloyne came under the purview of the Norman hegemony during the fourteenth. However, in all three, there was an intermediate period in which Anglo-Norman and Irish priests worked alongside one another.

The shifting stories of the episcopal seats are better documented than and distinct from that of contemporaneous abbeys, yet remain relevant to the current appraisal of monasticism. The fates of individual houses often followed very similar patterns. Judging by the limited evidence of lay involvement, Gaelic interests were present even in areas *inter Anglicos*. By 1390, “Domnall Óg Mac Carthaig... [had] reigned thirty-one years.

There was none of his contemporaries, neither foreigner nor Gaedel, more comely, more humane, or more powerful than he, nor was there in his time one of greater [...] generosity, prowess, kindliness, or truthfulness. He died in the castle of Loch Léin, and was buried in the same monastery (in Corcach) after a victory of penance and devotion. And no other calamity was so notable at that time”²³⁴

Various MacCarthys were buried in Cork's monasteries during the fourteenth century.²³⁵ Similarly, the ascension of several of the region's Irish friars to the position of bishopric suggests strong Gaelic influence and lay patronage amongst those bishops' parent

²³¹ AI, 335 and 379.

²³² *Ibid.*, 336 and 352.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 312, 333, 346 and 376.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 438.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 393, 421 and 438.

houses. In one entry of 1279, we learn of the continued involvement of the bishop of Ross, O'Houlihan (Ó hUallacháin) in a new monastery. Through his person, Diarmait Mac Carthaig received the monastic habit and was buried within.²³⁶

The new wave of the thirteenth century was patronised by several powerful families. Still, the timbre of religiosity differed along the traditional *ecclesia inter hibernicos* and *inter anglicos* divisions. Together, the Dominicans and the smaller Carmelite order represent the clearest example of this dichotomy, being entirely unfavoured by the Irish clans. Instead, their existence is a reference to the piety of the Anglo-Norman lords of Cork, Cloyne and Ross.

From England, the Dominicans arrived first in Dublin during the year 1224 and the houses of the Black Friars multiplied quickly with the assistance of the English lordships. Archbishop David MacKelly founded the friary at Cashel while the house at Limerick was patronised by Donal Cairbreach O'Brien, but these were in the minority. Almost every other Irish Dominican house founded before 1300 received its grants of land and lay support from English lords;²³⁷ Cork was no exception. As with all Dominican friaries in the royal cities of Ireland, those of Cork were the annual recipients of royal alms. The donations began in 1272, and were increased in 1285. The King granted "to the Dominican friars of Dublin, Cork, Waterford, Limerick and Drogheda 25 marks a year at the Exchequer of Dublin...for the affection which he bears to the friars."²³⁸ Mould traces the continuation of these payments into the fifteenth century.²³⁹ The English influence was only exacerbated by the submission of the Irish monasteries to the English Dominican province.

The Dominican house at Youghal was founded later than that in the city to the west. Ware gives the date as 1268, and the patron as Thomas Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald,²⁴⁰ and it was reputedly the burial place of John Fitzgerald, the founder of Tralee in Co. Kerry.²⁴¹ Youghal, and its houses, were under the purview of the Fitzgeralds throughout the medieval period; Desmond influence would also continue well into the Tudor era.

Although there were few Carmelite institutions in Ireland, no more than two were founded in Co. Cork by the fourteenth century. The order arrived late to Ireland; its first

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 376.

²³⁷ The origins of the Dominican order in Ireland are addressed in detail in C. Ó Clabaigh, *The Friars in Ireland 1224-1540* (Dublin, 2012), 7-11.

²³⁸ CDI, iii, 38.

²³⁹ D.D.C.P. Mould, *The Irish Dominicans*, (Dublin, 1957), 52.

²⁴⁰ J. Ware, *De Hibernia & antiquitatibus ejus, disquisitiones* (London, 1658), 232.

²⁴¹ Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses*, 231.

houses appear in the last third of the thirteenth century. Ware credits John de Barry with the building of a friary at Castlelyons, which, to judge from its ruins was the largest Carmelite house in Ireland.²⁴² On 11 August, 1309, he was granted royal licence to endow the new monastery with a piece of his demesne,²⁴³ however, de Barry's enthusiasm may have outstripped his permissions. A papal letter of 1314 stated that the abbey lacked licence, which may have been a reflection of the order's tempestuous beginnings.²⁴⁴ As a result, the monks were inhibited from habitation for seven years and the house disappears from record after this, at least until the reformations. The only suggestion of continuity of the Barry patronage comes with the suppressions in 1568, when the abbey was granted to the Viscount Barrymore by the Earl of Cork, his father-in-law.²⁴⁵

The second Carmelite house in the region was dedicated to St Mary's and was founded during the reign of Edward III; Smith provides the date of 1334.²⁴⁶ Robert Fitz Richard Balrain sponsored its creation and, in 1350, granted a quarter of land in Liscahan to the friary. There seems to have been a connection to the Galwey family, as at least two members left moneys to this foundation in their will. Like its cousin in Castlelyons, the Carmelite house at Kinsale has no recorded mention of interaction or involvement with the Irish elites. Both lay in firmly Anglo-Norman hegemonies and, correspondingly, fell under the influence of English lords and clerics. However, these were also some of the last houses to be founded within this first wave of monasticism that ended with the Black Death. Of the earlier and larger religious orders in Co. Cork, an English monopoly is impossible to prove and misleading to suggest. Of all of these, Anglo-Norman authority is perhaps strongest within the Cistercian houses.

In his survey of Cork, Lewis catalogues Fermoy, saying, "This place, which is now a grand military depot is said to have originated in the foundation of a Cistercian abbey by the family of Roches, in 1170."²⁴⁷ Other sources credit Donal Mor O'Brien, but sometime in early 1178, the cantred of Fermoy was counted amongst the possessions of

²⁴² Ware, *De Hibernia*, 230. He gives the house at Franciscan. However, this conclusion is confused, as no other source mentions a Franciscan friary at Castlelyons. It is most likely that he referred to the Carmelite house there.

²⁴³ Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses*, 288

²⁴⁴ CPR, ii, 120.

²⁴⁵ C. Smith, *The Ancient and Present State of the County and City of Cork, Containing a Natural, Civil, Ecclesiastical, Historical and Topographical Description Thereof: in Two Volumes*, i, (Cork, 1815), 156.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 134.

²⁴⁷ Lewis, *Lewis' Cork*, 236.

Robert Fitzstephen.²⁴⁸ It was though, colonised from the Irish abbey of Inishlounaght, which, in the 1170s did enjoy the patronage of O'Brien.²⁴⁹ The identity of the parent abbey does lend credence to the Irish foundation.

Nevertheless, the abbey at Fermoy was reputed to have gained the Roche family as benefactors by 1250 at the latest. Their presence is still noticeable in 1450. Although the house was still nominally administrated by Inishlounaght in the fifteenth century, the abbacy had been unlawfully detained by Dermit Odorny. Crucially, he had expelled various brothers as well as the elected abbot, sponsored by Inishlounaght, using force. Odorny enlisted the aid of layperson and cleric alike, most notably Raymond Condon (Kyecheondwyn) and Edmund Roche (Roychu), who went in arms to the monastery to support him.²⁵⁰ Dermit resisted several attempts to remove him and was *in situe* in 1467 when he complained to the pope of lay interference in his affairs by both the Fitzgeralds and Patrick Fitzmaurice (Frytzmores).²⁵¹ Although Irish names are linked to Fermoy *castro dei* during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the house spent those years under Norman, rather than Gaelic, patronage.

The Cistercian abbey at Midleton was even more firmly under English control. One of the first of the early wave of monasticism, various sources give the foundation date of this house to shortly before 1180. Lewis' description of the town remarks that it was "called anciently Chore Abbey and Castrum Chore, [and] derived both its origin and ancient name from the foundation of a Cistercian monastery in 1182, by Barry Fitzgerald."²⁵² Lewis appears to have combined the two conflicting accounts, which respectively credit the Barrys and the Fitzgeralds as the original founders. Although some argument has been made for a Gaelic patron, the position of the house on the road between Youghal and Cork puts it squarely within the Norman lordships, even at such an early date.

Still, abbots of Irish and Anglo-Norman surnames have held the charge. The Barrys and the Fitzgeralds hold pride of place, but it would seem that the fifteenth century put the O'Loughnan family in ascension. Philip Olachnayn held the abbacy before his death, upon which Rory Olachnayn was provided to the monastery in papal correspondence.²⁵³ In the letter, Rory admits to being the son of unmarried parents, but makes no mention of the late

²⁴⁸ Gerald De Barry, *Epugnatio Hibernica*, F.X. Martin and A.B. Scott, eds., trans., (Dublin, 1979), 185.

²⁴⁹ Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses*, 135.

²⁵⁰ CPR, x, 464.

²⁵¹ CPR, xii, 274.

²⁵² Lewis, *Lewis' Cork*, 354.

²⁵³ CPR, x, 300.

abbot being one of them. The Irish church had little problem with such hereditary positions, so this absence was most likely not a lie by omission. Nevertheless, the two were certainly related. The power of this erenagh family was curtailed by English influence. In Rory Olachnayn's letter of preferment, the dean of Ross was empowered to deprive John de Barry of his position as a Benedictine monk who had intruded himself into the rule of Chore with the "help of lay power." Although this letter was dated August 1447, Barry still held his post in 1450 and had done then for seven years.²⁵⁴ Evidently, the influence of his lay patrons protected him against Rory Olachnayn's suit. The patronage of the house at Midleton was contested by Gaelic and Anglo-Norman families, but the Irish clerics seem to have become increasingly isolated from secular Gaelic power structures.

At Tracton, there is no inkling of cooperation or competition between the two groups. Though there has been considerable debate regarding the origins of Tracton, it is generally agreed to have been founded c.1222.²⁵⁵ During 'Conspiracy of Mellifont' and the subsequent visitation of the Abbot Steven of Lexington, the house was censured for the prevalence of the Welsh tongue within it, in 1228.²⁵⁶ This lends considerable credence to the claims of the Anglo-Norman families and the suggestion that the abbey was colonised from Whitland, in Wales, in country possessed by the Barrys. Almost every name associated with Tracton was English in origin and, furthermore, the abbey had strong connections with first Wales, through the use of its language, and later, the monastery of Tintern in Monmouthshire. In 1346, the abbot of Tracton acted as proxy for his counterpart from Tintern during visitations of the Irish Cistercians.²⁵⁷

The house at Abbeymahon betrays the realities of Gaelic influence and the first clues to the true nature of monasticism across the three dioceses. Resting within the diocese of Ross, Gwynn and Hadcock list this monastery's founder as Dermot Mac Cormac Mac Carthy, in 1172.²⁵⁸ Originally built at Aghaminster, the house relocated in or around 1278 to Cregan, which lies within the parish of Abbeymahon, two miles to the north-west of the earlier site. The existence of this move is proven by an entry in the Annals of Innifallen: "Diarmait Mac Carthaig, son of Domnall Cairbrech, died in Mag Nisi after a victory of

²⁵⁴ CPR, x, 511-12.

²⁵⁵ Several authors have suggested a MacCarthy founder, whilst others credit Barrys or FitzMartins. Still others comment on Prendergasts and Cogans. The subject is addressed at length in Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 142-143.

²⁵⁶ P.B. Griesser, ed., *Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis*, ii (Rome, 1946), 91.

²⁵⁷ Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses*, 143.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 125.

repentance, having received the monastic habit from the bishop Ó hUallacháin, bishop of Ros Ailithir, and was buried in the new monastery, which had been built at Crecán in Uí Badamna.²⁵⁹

Unlike many houses that contained the resting place of a MacCarthy, Abbeymahon had little to do with that family. Rather, we should look to the bishop of Ross, Maurice O’Houlaghan (Ó hUallacháin). That name is linked to the house from the thirteenth century until the reformations and it seems clear that they formed an erenagh dynasty there. In 1433, Maurice O’Huallachan, was the victim of a delation aimed to deprive him. What seems astounding about this case is not that O’Huallachan was in possession of the abbey for over five years, but that he did so as a brother of the Franciscan order.²⁶⁰ Evidently, this was more than a mere case of misappropriation. The litigator, Nicholas Oheda did attain the abbacy, but died by 1452, only to be replaced by another succession of O’Huallachans. Across Ross, that family held sway at all levels of church office and Abbeymahon seems a particular stronghold.

The supposition that the diocese of Ross, and its monasticism, was staunchly Gaelic is borne out by the fortunes of the Benedictines. In south-western Ireland, the order of St Benedict possessed several houses, although these did vary in size. Cells existed at Waterford, Youghal and Cork. The latter was only a small hospital, founded by the Earl of Morton. Its links to Bath abbey were confirmed in 1204 and it was largely ruled in conjunction with Waterford by a single prior until the reformations. In addition to Bath, the cell at Cork held links to Exeter. At some point prior to a survey of 1358, certain properties and lands were ceded to the Benedictine monks of St Nicholas Priory.²⁶¹ Youghal had the same relationship with Bath that the cells at Cork and Waterford enjoyed.²⁶² Although, Youghal is not mentioned in the Lincoln’s Inn manuscript, other sources do ascribe this status to it.²⁶³ Like the others, it was a small foundation.

The Benedictine house of Rosscarbery differs strongly from its compatriots. Its mother institution was not English, but German. Fuhrman cites Nehemias Scotus, a monk of St James of Würzburg, as the founder of the house there and later bishop of Ross.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁹ AI, 373.

²⁶⁰ CPR, viii, 466.

²⁶¹ C. Ó Clabaigh, ‘The Benedictines in Medieval and Early Modern Ireland’, in M. Browne and C. Ó Clabaigh, eds., *The Irish Benedictines: a History*, (Dublin, 2005), 116.

²⁶² Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses*, 108.

²⁶³ Page, ‘Houses of Benedictine monks’, 75.

²⁶⁴ J.P. Fuhrman, *Irish medieval monasteries on the Continent* (Washington, 1927), 104.

Although there was no bishop of that name in Ross, there were connections between the Irish and German Benedictines. A papal bull of 1248 concerned the abbot of Ratisbon²⁶⁵ and those priors subject to him in Ireland;²⁶⁶ Binchy describes the house at Rosscarbery as one of those. His supposition is strongly supported by the continuing relationship between Ross and Ratisbon until the eve of the reformations. Binchy comments on a letter in the Munich archives dated to 1466, in which Donatus O’Hea, the prior of Ross, recommended one of his community to all of the Irish houses in Germany. The same letter also mentions an impending visitation of O’Hea’s community by the abbot of Würzburg.²⁶⁷ This echoes the events of 1353, which had seen the abbot of St James visit Rosscarbery to receive its submission.²⁶⁸ The patronage of this Benedictine establishment is somewhat harder to ascertain, although the German abbacies are suggestive of bonds with the MacCarthy family. c.1150, about the time of the foundation of the house at Ross, St James of Würzburg was led by a scion of that tree, Christianus (Gilla Crist) MacCarthy.²⁶⁹ This, coupled with the geographical position of the monastery securely in *ecclesia inter hibernicos* demonstrates a strong and lasting Irish influence, albeit with continental connections.

Rosscarbery seems to have been unique in its continental roots, but not so in its Irish links. Located in the far north of Cloyne, the earliest mention the Augustinian house at Tullylease was in 1059, when “Dúnadach Ua hInmainéin, erenagh of Tulach Léis” died.²⁷⁰ In 1306, the church was burned by lightning.²⁷¹ Any damage was clearly rebuilt, as the building was mentioned in the Henrician monastic survey under the possessions of the Augustinian monastery of Kells. The entry there supports the supposition that there were hereditary coarbs *in situe* until the sixteenth century,²⁷² as the “R[ectory] of Tollelyche...[was] unlawfully detained by the Coorbe of Tollelyche.”²⁷³ Tullylease’s comparative remoteness, at the furthest point from the ecclesiastical and secular administrative centres, served to prevent the influence of the invaders.

The importance of this geography is noticeable when compared to Gill Abbey in Cork, an Augustinian house. c.1174, a new monastery received a grant of land from the staunchly

²⁶⁵ Alternatively known as Regensburg, Germany.

²⁶⁶ CPR, i, 251.

²⁶⁷ D.A. Binchy, ‘The Irish Benedictine Congregation in Medieval Germany’, *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 18, 70 (June 1929), 204.

²⁶⁸ A. Gwynn, *Herbipolis Jubilans* (Würzburg, 1952), 76-77.

²⁶⁹ Binchy, ‘The Irish Benedictine Congregation’, 200.

²⁷⁰ AI, 219.

²⁷¹ AI, 398.

²⁷² Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses*, 197.

²⁷³ White, *Monastic Possessions*, 190.

Irish abbey of Monasteranenagh c.1174.²⁷⁴ This abbey (also known as *de Antro sancto Fynbarri*: the abbey of the Cave of St Finbarr), had had Irish and Norman abbots by the fifteenth century, Gaelic influence remained strong. It seems to have had at least some significance for the MacCarthy family and was a favoured burial site. At least one king of Desmond found his final resting place there during the fourteenth century; “Donnchad Mac Carthaig, who had been king of Desmumu, died this year [1315] before Christmas and was buried in the Cave of Corcach.”²⁷⁵

The O’Flynnns of Corcu Laoidhe can be linked with the abbacy in both the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; Cornelius O’Flynn had the rule there from 1468. However, a consecutive succession of abbots from within this family was prevented by the intervention of various English clerics. Norman interference was first noticed in 1196²⁷⁶ when “a great

hosting by the foreigners to the south of Ireland...A great slaughter [was inflicted] on them by the Desmumu [the Irish clans]... After that the foreigners turned back without [making] foray or ransack, and the foreigners of Corcach [Cork] thereupon burned the sanctuary and the cave [Gill Abbey], lest they should be occupied by the Desmumu.

English friars had held the abbacy at varying times throughout its history, but in 1483, the abbey of Cong exercised its rights over the monastery *de antro*. Cong, which had been founded by Gaelic clans during the seventh century, had, by this time, been ruled by a succession of de Burghs.²⁷⁷ The then abbot, one Richard de Burgh (Burgo), chose to deprive the abovementioned Cornelius O’Flynn, sparking a flow of correspondence and papal litigation. Although de Burgh’s preferred candidate was Donald MacCarthy (Machardich), another Irishman, the implications of his authority are undeniable.

A dependency of Gill Abbey, the abbey at Kilmoney, just to the south of Cork, existed under a similarly confused patronage. Its exact foundation date is unclear, as was its founder, but it seems to have belonged to this first monastic wave. Kilmoney is listed amongst the possessions of Gill Abbey in the Henrician survey,²⁷⁸ and was administered either directly by, or under the supervision of, the Augustinians *de antro*. Correspondingly, the influence of the

²⁷⁴ Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses*, 141.

²⁷⁵ AI, 422.

²⁷⁶ AI, 323.

²⁷⁷ Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses*, 166.

²⁷⁸ White, *Monastic Possessions*, 142.

O'Flynn's would have been strong, but its position to the south of the city, an Anglo-Norman heartland, would have curtailed the strength of the Irish clans.

This is not to say that the English flavour of monasticism was limited to the city and its surrounds. Lordships to the north also extended their protection to the orders. In the northern reaches of Cloyne, the Barrys exercised their rule and apparently patronised two friaries, remarkable by their proximity. This has caused some confusion for historians, as Ballybeg and Buttevant have often been mistakenly assumed to be one house, despite their belonging to different orders. Ballybeg, an Augustinian friary, was founded by the Barrys in or before 1237, when William de Barry endowed it with lands and an income.²⁷⁹ His son, David, further extended its holdings. Barrys and Fitzgeralds filled the position of abbot from its creation; the example from 1431 of John Barry (Baret), "an Augustinian canon of St Thomas the Martyr's," is a common one.²⁸⁰ No more than two miles south resided a Franciscan community. It was first provided with land in the reign of Edward I by David de Barry, who also enhanced the revenue of the Augustinian house at Ballybeg. He was buried in the middle of the choir in 1279.²⁸¹ Foundation dates are variable, but generally given as the middle of the thirteenth century.

In the furthest east of Cloyne, another friary fell under Anglo-Norman patronage. Youghal holds an important place in the history of the Franciscan order in Ireland and its inception reflected this. Its founder, Maurice Fitzgerald, Justiciar of Ireland, had a key role in the spread of the order. Youghal lay within the barony of Imokilly, the seat of house Desmond. "Maurice Fitzgerald, for some time Lord Justice of Ireland, and the destroyer of the Irish" died in 1257 and was buried in the Franciscan friary of Youghal.²⁸² Like the Dominican house there, the Franciscan order enjoyed the protection of the Earls of Desmond until the reformatory movements.

This monastic wave, which began coterminously with Strongbow's invasion, seems when taken at first impression, to be dominated by the newcomers. Numbers of purely Irish abbeys founded before 1350 in Cork, Cloyne and Ross are especially low when considered against the prevalence of the Norman foundations. Even the geographical distribution of the

²⁷⁹ Ware, *De Hibernia*, 229.

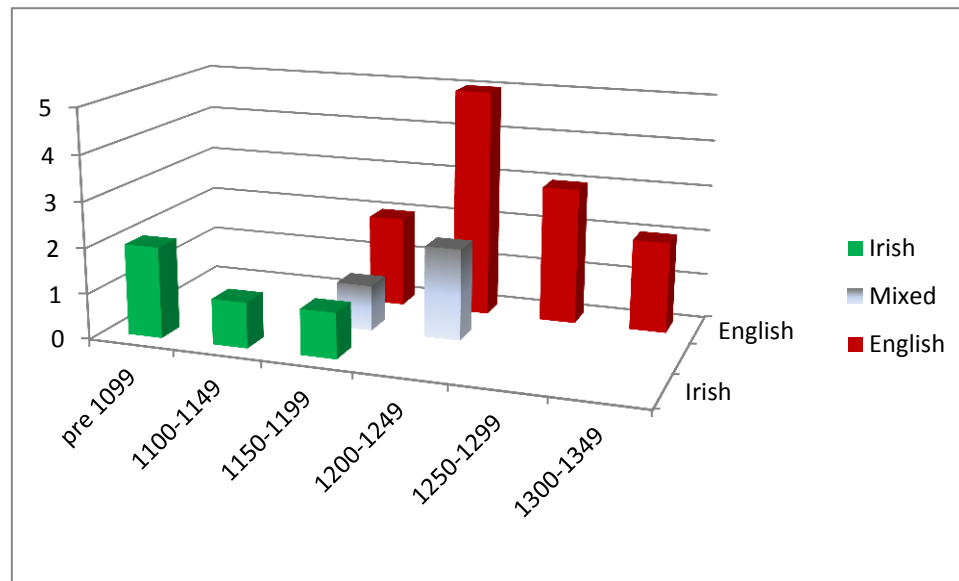
²⁸⁰ CPR, viii, 353.

²⁸¹ Ware, *De Hibernia*, 229-30.

²⁸² AFM, iii, 363.

religious houses shows an English bias. The majority cluster near to Cork city or in eastern Cloyne, sheltered by a strong lordship. Comparatively, the lands of the Gaelic clans are seemingly devoid of the tradition; western Cork is entirely empty. A more telling image is drawn from chronological evidence.

Fig 2.1 Development of monasteries across the three dioceses²⁸³



This graph shows the foundation dates of Co. Cork's religious houses, arranged by the nationality of their patron(s). The monastic tradition in the three dioceses did predate the Anglo-Normans, but it was a smaller thing, including amongst its numbers what would become the cathedrals (not included on the graph). Regardless, Gaelic elites were still involved in the creation of new religious houses. However, it is evident that the arrival of the English altered the dynamics of the region. Quite beyond the political, economic and social impacts, though surely not independent of them, a religious change is eminently noticeable. In the first place, clerical administration within the English lordship began to come under Norman sway; the role of the cathedral monasteries was formalised during this time and those of Cork and Cloyne began to have English bishops. Simultaneously, those Irish houses within the new hegemony gained Anglo-Norman patrons in addition to, or instead of, their Gaelic supporters.

²⁸³ Please note that Irish houses which did not survive into the twelfth century have not been included in this table.

The Franciscan house at Timoleague is perhaps the best example of this. As has already been discussed, there had been a community of monks here, on the eastern coast of the diocese of Ross, since the first millennium. In the early thirteenth century, it was transformed into a modern Franciscan friary. As with several of the other examples of monasticism, it is difficult to confirm the founder or founders. What is evident is that the house saw the burial of MacCarthys, Barrys and de Courceys between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.²⁸⁴ Whether MacCarthy Riabach did patronise the Franciscan community in its fledgling years is uncertain, but his goodwill was certainly joined by that of Anglo-Norman lords before 1300.

²⁸⁴ Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses*, 259.

Friars Preacher

In addition to the changing politics, the houses of Co. Cork were defined by their nature. “The friars preachers entered Ireland” in 1224.²⁸⁵ This was a sentiment echoed by several of the various annals. These were English missionaries, appearing in the wake of the first settlers. However, it was not their ethnicity that led them to houses within the Anglo-Norman settlement, but rather their orders. Friars, unlike their reclusive monastic brethren who had chosen to remove themselves from the world, existed to preach and were intended to survive primarily upon the alms of their congregation. Consequently, the Augustinian, Franciscan, Dominican and Carmelite foundations are clustered around the more densely populated areas of east and central Co. Cork.

This is not to say that the Anglo-Norman ascendancy did not alter the timbre of religiosity. In the first instance, the monastic tradition became heavily reliant upon its counterpart in England for inspiration, administration, patronage and evangelisation. While a friary was essentially independent, its day to day and spiritual affairs ruled by a prior or abbot, convents were often grouped together for administrative purposes in linguistic or geographical regions. Collectively, convents made up a province, ruled by a provincial; in many orders, Ireland was not awarded its own province. The Irish Dominicans were not granted their own provincial until 1400 and, even then, his authority was to be subservient to that of England. “Once appointed, the vicar was to enjoy all the privileges of a prior provincial, except when the prior provincial of England conducted a visitation of the Irish province.”²⁸⁶ The mendicant orders in Ireland had their inception with English friars; each, like the Dominicans, began their existence as part of the English province.

The fate of the Augustinian houses mirrors that of the Dominicans. They were officially granted autonomy by the mid fourteenth century, but Anglo-Norman influence remained pervasive. The order identified itself with the English settlement and possessed no zealous drive to expand their operations. Prior to the fifteenth century, Irish Augustinians were in the extreme minority, and few houses were founded in Gaelic lands.²⁸⁷ Whilst the Carmelites struggled to the separation of the English and Irish monasteries in 1309, the Franciscan province was created in 1230 by a general chapter of Assisi. Still, this Irish

²⁸⁵ AU, ii, 274.

²⁸⁶ Ó Clabaigh, *The Friars in Ireland*, 24.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

province was ruled by English provincials. Richard of Ingworth was succeeded by John of Kethene. As elsewhere in Europe, the Irish Franciscan province was further subdivided into custodies. The borders and number of these were altered regularly, not for any administrative reason, but rather to consolidate the English supremacy within the order.²⁸⁸ In 1341, the end of the first phase of monasticism, ninety-six friaries existed in Ireland; only eight lay outside of the Anglo-Norman colony.²⁸⁹ The strength of the English presence within the friars is undeniable, but proprietorship was a shared thing. The Augustinian Gill Abbey was one example of this and the Shandon friary was another.

The founder of the friary of St Mary's, Shandon, is disputed. Ware is a proponent of Maurice or Philip Prendergast, c.1240. An alternative, earlier date of foundation suggests Dermot MacCarthy mor, with the Barrys and Prendergasts as benefactors,²⁹⁰ whilst yet another suggests MacCarthy acted alone as the king of Desmond, most likely during the 1230s.²⁹¹ Despite this uncertainty, it is evident that MacCarthy patronage was continuous.

The Annals of Inisfallen describe six burials of individuals within Cork's friaries between 1250 and 1400. Two bear specific mention of the Discalced Friars, which almost certainly refers to the Franciscan order.²⁹² The first burial occurred in 1298²⁹³ but the second, in 1301, provides further corroboration. Domnall Ruad Mac Carthaig, high-king of Demumu, found his resting place in the centre of the Friars' choir.²⁹⁴ This matches the description of the familial tomb of the MacCarthys, sited at Cork's Franciscan friary. Bolster also states that MacCarthys were buried there in 1359, 1390 and 1426.²⁹⁵ Although the entries in the annals that form the basis for her conclusions simply refer to burial within a friary and although overlooked by other commentators,²⁹⁶ it is a logical leap to connect the unassigned friary from the annals and the Franciscan order.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁸⁹ F. Cotter, *The Friars Minor in Ireland from their arrival to 1400* (New York, 1994), 186.

²⁹⁰ B. Jennings, 'Part II: Brevis Synopsis Provinciae Hiberniae FF. Minorum', *Analecta Hibernica*, 6 (1934), 145

²⁹¹ AFM, iii, 242.

²⁹² The term discalced applied to clergymen and women who went unshod. Although other orders arose post-reformations (such as the Discalced Carmelites and the Mercedarians), the custom was introduced to the West by St Francis of Assisi.

²⁹³ AI, 391.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 393.

²⁹⁵ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork.*, ii, 210.

²⁹⁶ Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses* make no mention of burials.

Irish influence was not without challenge. Bolster records that fourteen Barrymore knights found their final resting place in St Mary's prior to the reformations.²⁹⁷ An excavation in 1804 revealed a sculptured sceptre with, importantly, an inscription in Norman French.²⁹⁸ The MacCarthy's may have understood the language, but did not use it in monuments nor epitaphs. Simultaneous with the patronage of various lordships, the Franciscan friary at Cork was, like the Dominican, the recipient of royal alms.²⁹⁹ Nevertheless, St. Mary's was a favoured house of the Gaelic elite.

Geographical location alone did not determine the nature of the house. Even within the city of Cork itself, an Anglo-Norman stronghold, religious houses remained under Irish sway. This pervasion of Gaelic power into English territory was not limited to patronage or even to the priors and abbots of the religious houses. Many monasteries were the home to both English and Irish brethren. Buttevant hosted both Gaelic and Anglo-Norman canons in 1325,³⁰⁰ though this may have been a reflection of its position in the marches. However, the Shandon friary famously enjoyed a mixture of Irish and English monks, at least until the mid fourteenth century. This is borne out by several sources, not least those which document strife between those two groups in the 1290s. Nicholas Cusack, bishop of Kildare from 1279-99 composed a report to Edward I, stating that, "The peace of the land is frequently disturbed by the secret counsels and poisonous colloquies which certain religious of the Irish tongue, belonging to diverse orders, hold with the Irish and their rulers."³⁰¹ For perhaps the first but certainly not the last time, Irish friars were accused of inciting anti-English sentiment and rebellion.

That there was a distinction between the Irish and English houses is evident, more pronounced than the split in the secular wing of the church. Co. Cork bears the dubious distinction of hosting the most famous example of religious rivalry during the medieval period. By the accounts of two separate chroniclers, this rivalry turned to bloodshed. Bartholomew of Cotton, in his *Historia Anglicana* describes how, whilst making visitation of the Order of St Francis, the minister general of that party held a general chapter. At that

²⁹⁷ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 210.

²⁹⁸ J. Windele, *Windele's Cork: Historical and Descriptive Notices of the City of Cork from Its Foundation to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* (Cork, 1910), 72.

²⁹⁹ Ó Clabaigh, *The Friars in Ireland*, 90-91.

³⁰⁰ J. Clyn. *Annales Hiberniae chronicon; The annals of Ireland, by John Glyn and Thady Dowling, together with the Annals of Ross; edited, from MSS. in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, with introductory remarks by Richard Butler* (Dublin, 1849), 17.

³⁰¹ E.B. Fitzmaurice and A.G. Little, eds., *Materials for the history of the Franciscan province of Ireland*, xx (Manchester, 1920), 18.

meeting, 16 friars were killed, others being imprisoned by action of the king of England.³⁰² The Annals of Worcester Abbey offer greater detail,

“there was held a general chapter of the Friars Minor at Cork in Ireland, to which the Irish brothers came armed with a certain bull. Contention arose over this bull and they fought with the English and many were killed and wounded to the scandal of the order until finally the English with the help of the town prevailed.”³⁰³

Ó Clabaigh has criticised historical analysis of this event, arguing against the veracity of these claims. Particularly, he refers to the anti-mendicant bias inherent to Benedictine annalists, from whom both sources cited above originated. Although a general chapter did take place at Cork during that year, he argues that there is no corroborating evidence to support the case for a violent confrontation. Similarly, the Bull mentioned in the Annals of Worcester Abbey has not been discovered and, consequently, he deems it impossible to discern the accuracy of the allegations.³⁰⁴ A papal bull of 1290 is discernable; it relates to the election of a new archbishop.³⁰⁵ However, it is unlikely that the confirmation of the election of the archbishop of Cashel (1290) would have occasioned such violence in the friars of Cork. This imposition of a Gaelic archbishop, Stephen O’Brogan, may have fired local tension and reignited old squabbles, but the impact upon the Franciscan friary of Cork was comparatively negligible.

There is no direct reference to the incident in either the English State Papers, or the Irish annals. The biases of the former may excuse that omission, while the loss of the Cork annals may answer the second. Still, the contemporaneous secular context was one of strife. Donald Og MacCarthy was outlawed through several robberies and raids. He was then given succour by varying parties within the city. Sirs William de Barry and Gilbert le Waleis petitioned the king for remedy, as the law would not avail them.³⁰⁶ Crucially, the “Prior of the hospital” was included amongst those aiding MacCarthy. This most likely refers to the Benedictine cell in Cork, but given the MacCarthy connection to St Mary’s friary, the letter may have referred to the prior of the Franciscan house of Shandon.

³⁰² Ó Clabaigh, *The Friars in Ireland*, 33-4.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 33-4.

³⁰⁴ Cotter, *The Friars Minor in Ireland*, 74.

³⁰⁵ CPR, i, 516.

³⁰⁶ CDI, iii, 371.

Bolster finds echoes of this cataclysmic event in a papal bull that denied the Franciscans the right to elect their own provincial (1312),³⁰⁷ although it is hard to assume a direct relation between the two events. However, a 1317 mandate from the Avignon papacy seems a more probable response. It instructed the Archbishops of Dublin and Cashel “to warn Friars Preachers and other mendicant religious...to desist from stirring up the people of that country [Ireland] to resist the king’s authority.”³⁰⁸ In the same year, the Annals of Innisfallen record that “The Friars Minor of Corcach [Cork] are cited as defendants at Corcach; they are summoned to appear in the king's court contrary to common and ecclesiastical law.”³⁰⁹ It is tempting to imagine a connection between the two, although, lacking further evidence, it is impossible to know for certain. The pope’s proclamation seems to have been ineffective however. In 1324, the bishop of Cork visited Rome at the behest of the English crown.³¹⁰ The first main proposal was that Irish clergy should preach loyalty to the King of England, and that those preaching rebellion should be censured. However, a second highlights another facet of ethnic tension. The pope was asked to condemn the refusal by certain Irish religious houses to admit English novices.

The first wave of monasticism was strongly influenced by the Anglo-Norman invasion. In the years, decades and centuries that followed Strongbow’s arrival, the Irish church underwent a revolutionary transition. In Co. Cork, the monastic tradition was transformed. Driven by the newly arrived English with their own brand of piety and, importantly, their wealth, twelve priories, monasteries, cells and friars were founded in the space of 150 years. The advent of the friars, the Augustinians, Franciscans, Dominicans and Caramelites, hitherto unknown in Ireland, would perhaps provide the greatest transition. However, the Gaelic conventions were not totally overturned, nor replaced. Irish monasticism was still extant and expanding by 1200, even if that expansion had slowed. Patronage by prominent families, including the MacCarthys and O’Huallachans continued throughout the period, whilst Irish clerics were important in various English houses.

Irish efforts were hampered by the Anglo-Norman ascendancy. After 1200, the number of new Gaelic houses dropped dramatically. The native elites, already involved with supporting and protecting communities at various sites, lacked the drive of their English opposites. Furthermore, the impact of the Norman settlement, both economically and

³⁰⁷ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, i, 432.

³⁰⁸ CPR, ii, 139.

³⁰⁹ AI, 429.

³¹⁰ J.A. Watt, ‘Negotiations between Edward II and John XXII concerning Ireland’ *Irish Historical Studies*, 10, (1956), 16-18.

politically, served to limit the ability of the Gaelic lords to compete with the English nobles in an ecclesiastical setting. However, during the fourteenth century, the fortunes would be reversed. The first wave of monasticism in Ireland was ended by the Black Death. The decline of the Anglo-Norman nation and the Gaelic resurgence saw a reversal of fortunes for the English and Irish houses.

All across Ireland, the fourteenth century saw a colony in decline. The Bruce invasion marked the greatest challenge to Anglo-Norman rule for over a century. Following the example of Bruce, the Gaelic elites of Leinster learned anew their animosity towards the Galls, and had a king who was willing to challenge the English.³¹¹ Worse, by 1350, the island was in the grip of the Black Death. Given their concentration in the urban centres of Ireland, it is often assumed that the Anglo-Normans suffered more than the Irish. Mortality rates have been much discussed, but recovery from the first outbreaks was hindered by the impact of subsequent epidemics in 1357, 1361, 1370 and 1373. The Black Death did not create new problems for the English lordship, merely exacerbating those already in existence. From the late thirteenth century, clerical incomes had dropped, whilst rates of absenteeism and pluralism had risen; all of these were worsened by the heightened death rates of the fourteenth century.

The religious orders' suffering was particularly severe. Depopulation caused particular hurt to landowners' incomes, including those of the church. In 1352, the Archbishop of St Paul was granted papal permission to hold three or more benefices to repair his losses from Irish raids and high mortality.³¹² Recovery was difficult, expansion even more so. In a letter illustrative of their plight, the Augustinians in Ireland were granted permission to accept men who were unable to read or speak Latin unto any office up to and including prior.³¹³ Trade, flourishing at the end of the thirteenth century, dropped sharply during the middle of the fourteenth. This matched wider European trends during and following the Black Death, with a reduced demand for basic foodstuffs. However, the decline in trade further affected real incomes, which is reflected in a reduced number of new monastic foundations during the period. Only the Carmelite, Dominican and Franciscan orders expanded between 1350 and 1367 and these gains were minor.³¹⁴

³¹¹ This is addressed at length in J. Lydon, 'The impact of the Bruce invasion, 1315-27' in F.X. Martin, et al., eds., *A New History of Ireland Volume 2*, (Oxford, 1987), 302.

³¹² C. McNeill, ed., *Archbishop Alen's register, c. 1172-1534* (Dublin, 1950), 170-71.

³¹³ Ó Clabaigh, *The Friars in Ireland*, 42.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

Cork, with an economy based upon trade and agricultural productivity, suffered with the rest of Ireland during this period. The fourteenth century began with a sequence of disastrous harvests,³¹⁵ which coincided with the Bruce invasion to weaken the lordship in the region. Between 1276 and 1332, customs returned for the city of Cork fell from £400 to £118.³¹⁶ The Black Death greatly reduced available manpower, impeding the ability of the landowners to sell an agricultural surplus. In the already infertile environment of thirteenth century international trade, commerce was hindered by the inability of the hinterland to feed the city; Cork was forced to import foodstuffs. The precise effect of these upheavals upon the monastic tradition within the three dioceses is easily imagined to be comparable to the rest of Ireland.

The final house of the first onrush of monastic piety to be founded in Cork was the Carmelite friary at Kinsale in 1334, a mere fourteen years before the first outbreaks of the Black Death in Ireland. The foundation at Kinsale is exceptional as one of only two houses in the region that was founded during the fourteenth century; most others were created prior to 1270. Almost without exception, the dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross would not see the consecration of another chapter until the fifteenth century and the second wave of monasticism. In the decades following the Black Death, only a single, small, nunnery was created, on the south side of Youghal. In later years, a convent of nuns would tend a beacon tower on the site of the later lighthouse.³¹⁷ However, its founding date is unclear. Gwynn and Hadcock offer the date of 1385, but they are unsure, finding only supplementary references and obscure, unclear evidence. Nevertheless, the monastic tradition entered a steep decline during the fourteenth century.

Conversely, it benefited from a revival during the fifteenth. Between 1400 and the onset of the reformations, the whole of Ireland enjoyed a growing religiosity, which found its outlet in the religious, and particularly the mendicant, orders. This upsurge rivalled the first wave in its strength and in the number of new houses, but possessed several key differences. The early period had witnessed a concentration of the orders in urban areas but this later expansion was significantly more rural, located in the lands of Gaelic chieftains and Anglo-Irish lords across Munster, Connacht and Ulster. In this way, the later explosion of monasticism differed from the first. However, the precise colour of piety would also change with the rise in popularity of the mendicant orders, in the fifteenth century.

³¹⁵ Jefferies, *Cork; Historical Perspectives*, 69

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

³¹⁷ Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses*, 325

The fifteenth century

The first evidence of a new religious foundation in Co. Cork during the fifteenth century came in 1442. Pope Eugenius IV granted a relaxation of certain strictures for twenty years, for the purpose of encouraging the giving of alms, “for the furnishing with books, chalices, ecclesiastical ornaments etc., and for the repair, restoration and conservation, of the Friars Minors’ house of St Francis, Gahannyh [sic.], in the diocese of Cork, which Donald O’Sullivan (Oscolly), a Friar Minor, with the aid of alms founded and built.”³¹⁸ The exact origins of this friary are shrouded, as is its location, but it remains a true harbinger of the second wave. Aside from the role of the Franciscan order, its location and founder are indicative of a new trend. Gahannyh, which has been taken as a concatenation of Gaibhlin-an-gaithneamha, has been located in modern day Goleen, although as yet, no physical evidence of the friary has been found.³¹⁹ Both its location, in the extreme west of Co. Cork, and its founder, Donald O’Sullivan, were undoubtedly Gaelic.

A papal grant licensing a second house came in 1449.³²⁰ However, the friary on Sherkin Island was short lived. It was destroyed prior to the reformations and its brothers scattered between other Franciscan houses on the mainland. In 1538, the island was raided by persons unknown on Palm Sunday as the brethren gathered together for mass. Much plunder was taken and the movable goods were lost, including books, cups and the bells.³²¹ Nevertheless, the friary at Sherkin Island was important. Its location in rural Ross, in Gaelic territory, is unremarkable by the standards of this second wave, but its patron is important. The papal licence cites Fynin O’Driscoll (Ohedustoy) as the originator of the house, but others suggest Dermot or Florence O’Driscoll.³²² The confusion arises as there may have been a slight delay between the granting of permission and the onset of construction. Nevertheless, the role of a lay benefactor was essential in the formation of this priory; it was built upon O’Driscoll territory, at his expense, with a church, bell-tower and bells. Equally significant was the Observance of the Franciscans on Sherkin Island.

³¹⁸ CPR, ix, 249.

³¹⁹ C. Mooney, ‘Franciscan Architecture in Pre-Reformation Ireland (Part I)’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 85, 2 (1955), 136.

³²⁰ CPR, x, 202

³²¹ Jennings, ‘Part II: Brevis Synopsis Provinciae Hiberniae FF. Minorum’, *Analecta Hibernica*, 6 (1934), 158

³²² *Ibid.*, 158.

An inter-order movement, Observants promoted a return to the rule, a strict adherence to the original ideals of the friars, in direct competition with the lax lifestyles in Conventual priories. The spread of Observantism had ramifications in the spheres of monastic administration, clerical politics, education and, crucially, religious practice. Perhaps most important in an Irish setting was the administrative freedom granted to Observant houses. Across Europe, they received papal and conciliar permission to elect their own superiors and, though they nominally operated under the authority of the provincials, the Observant houses were, in reality, autonomous.³²³ In Ireland, where the religious houses had been dominated by English clerics since the thirteenth century, this opportunity for independence was attractive to Gaelic priors and lay elites alike. The Observant movement first made landfall in Ireland during 1390, when Friar Nicholas Hil was ordered to make the priory at Drogheda into a house of regular Observance.³²⁴ The friary on Sherkin Island marked the first arrival of Observantism in any of the three dioceses, Cork, Cloyne, or Ross.

On the same date that Fynin O'Driscoll received papal consent to begin work upon a house on Sherkin Island, in 1449, Donatus O'Mahoney (Omabba) was granted a near identical permission for his own Observant priory.³²⁵ Various suggestions have been made as to the location of this friary; Kilcrea³²⁶ and Bantry³²⁷ are two such examples. However, lacking further clarification within either the papal letter, or any other corroborating evidence, it is difficult to justify such an application. O'Mahoney's request, even if unfulfilled, does adhere to the trends exemplified in the second wave of monasticism in the three dioceses. Further, it re-emphasises the popularity and desirability of the Observant movement.

In 1465, Cormac MacCarthy, the Lord of Muskerry, founded a house for the Franciscan friars of Observance at Kilcrea. He was an "exalter and reverer of the church, the first founder of the monastery of Cill Chreidhe [Kilcrea],"³²⁸ and was buried in the middle of the choir in 1494.³²⁹ A fourth house, again located to the west of Cork and, again, part of the Observant movement, was positioned near the town of Bantry, overlooking the bay. The Franciscan community there has been given a founding date of 1307,³³⁰ but this is unlikely as

³²³ Ó Clabaigh, *The Friars in Ireland*, 54

³²⁴ H. Fenning, ed., 'Irish material in the registers of the Dominican masters general (1360-1649), *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 39 (1969), 254.

³²⁵ CPR, x, 202.

³²⁶ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 441

³²⁷ Ó Clabaigh, *The Friars in Ireland*, Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses*.

³²⁸ AFM, iv, 1214.

³²⁹ AU, iii, 381.

³³⁰ Jennings, 'Part II: Brevis Synopsis Provinciae Hiberniae', 156

it is omitted from a subsequent list of Franciscan houses.³³¹ Instead, it is generally agreed to date from the mid-fifteenth century. Although initially a house of Conventual priors, the Observant rule was applied no later than 1482, being introduced to it by David O’Herlihy (Hiarlaighy), who would later become provincial of that order.³³² Spearheaded by these new Gaelic institutions, Observantism found fertile ground in the Franciscan order of Cork, Cloyne and Ross.

With the new houses lighting the way, older friaries began to follow. Their conversion to the Observant rule was often slower, however, and, in some cases, non-existent. As with the new foundations, it was the Franciscan order which achieved the most change. In a rare demonstration of Anglo-Norman commitment to the monastic movement, Observantism was introduced to Timoleague by a Barry, in 1460.³³³ Provincial chapters of the reform movement were held here in 1494 and 1530.³³⁴ Throughout this period, the MacCarthy family remained involved in this friary, as well as expressing their enthusiasm for monasticism. Consequently, it is hard to imagine that they were not concerned with the conversion of Timoleague. The same source grants a similar date to the reform of the famous Franciscan friary at Youghal, but suggests a later one for St Mary’s, Shandon, in Cork. In the city, Observantism appears not to have arrived until 1500. Conversely, the Franciscan convent at Buttevant remained Conventual until its suppression, and did not take to the Observant rule until its revival in the seventeenth century.³³⁵

Two further religious houses were founded in Co. Cork during the fifteenth century, neither following the patterns exemplified above. Of the two, the most contentious is a foundation at Ballymacadane,³³⁶ where a convent of nuns was *in situ* c.1450. Quoting a patent roll in the British Museum, one nineteenth century historian suggested that Honor MacCarthy (ni Carthaigh) was the first abbess, giving the date of 1472 for foundation.³³⁷ Smith’s account contests this, suggesting 1450.³³⁸ Bolster argues that this was an Augustinian priory, remarking on various possessions of Gill Abbey in the area surrounding Ballymacadane. However, if it was, the nunnery was short-lived. A Brussels

³³¹ Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses*.

³³² Jennings, ‘Part II: Brevis Synopsis Provinciae Hiberniae’, 156 and 168.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 148

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 202

³³⁶ Also written Ballvacadane.

³³⁷ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 439.

³³⁸ Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 54.

MSS lists Ballyagadain as a Franciscan friary.³³⁹ It is likely that the community of nuns was suppressed during the reformations, at the very latest, to be replaced by one of the Franciscan Third Order.

However, it is the final community that is most unusual. In the first instance, it is the only new monastery to be founded in the diocese of Cloyne during the second wave. More important still, is that it is the only example of a new Anglo-Norman house. At Glanworth, just a few miles northwest of Fermoy, the Roche family founded a friary for the Dominican order. Smith argues for an earlier foundation date, giving 1227, but Glanworth is absent from a Dominican catalogue of 1300. Unfortunately, little is known of this friary, but the probable date of creation is 1475.³⁴⁰

Both the nature and position of this house run contrary to the fifteenth century monastic fashions. Only Glanworth lies east or north of Cork. Aside from Kilcrea and Ballymacadane, the friaries were in the extreme southwest of the county. Crucially though, the second wave of monasticism was dominated by the Gael, both by Irish clerics and secular elites. In a near complete reversal of the earlier surge in the thirteenth century, the Anglo-Norman lordship, apparently, was nearly devoid of enthusiasm for the religious orders. However, the absence of new institutions in their lands should not be taken as proof of antipathy amongst the English communities of Cork, Cloyne or Ross. The lordship was hindered, as already discussed, by the lasting economic impacts of the Bruce invasion, Black Death and Gaelic revival. Further, monasticism was not the only expression of lay piety and power. Abbeys, as patronised by diverse lords and nobles across Europe, represented a very physical marker of authority and wealth; the collegiate church at Youghal provided a similar purpose for the Desmonds. Representing a large investment in political favour, correspondence and revenue, the church was endowed in 1464. Anglo-Norman religiosity is not so easily dismissed.

Bradshaw has remarked upon a spate of fifteenth century church building, citing examples in Limerick and Galway. In the former, a large project was undertaken to replace a thirteenth century Dominican foundation with a large priory built in the 1460s.³⁴¹ Echoing the college of secular clerics at Youghal, Philip Goold financed the construction of a chantry,

³³⁹ Jennings, 'Brussels MS. 3947', 104.

³⁴⁰ Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses*, 225.

³⁴¹ B. Bradshaw, 'Reformation in the Cities: Cork, Limerick and Galway, 1534-1603', in J. Bradley, ed., *Settlement and Society in medieval Ireland: studies presented to F.X. Martin* (Kilkenny, 1988), He also incorrectly references some small building work in the Dominican priory at Cork; no evidence of this is forthcoming.

attached to Christ Church in Cork. Begun in 1482, eight chaplains resided here, singing in a stone college.³⁴² The site was excavated in 1975, and found to have been built with cut limestone blocks, measuring some 25 by 60 feet.³⁴³ Further evidence of building works in the city is provided by the Red Tower, a fifteenth century addition to Gill Abbey, which has survived for over five hundred years. Seemingly, the Augustinians were the recipient of several improvements to their possessions in the region; an “Austin house near Cork,” was investigated by the Henrician inquisition. The friary was reported to have a church, chancel, two chapels and an old dormitory, which could be thrown down, or sold. In addition, it had a new dormitory, which was deemed necessary for the farmer.³⁴⁴ The precise date of this addition is unknown, but a clear differentiation between old and new dormitories is made. The former likely served the house from creation and, given the high mortality rates and low recruitment during the Black Death, the latter was likely built during the second wave of monasticism.

The archaeological survey of Co. Cork illumines several other instances of building undertaken in Anglo-Norman areas. Most likely with the advocacy and support of its principal supporters, the Barrys, the Franciscan friary at Buttevant saw extensive repair and addition c.1500.³⁴⁵ The large Carmelite foundation at Castlelyons underwent similar works during the same period. Archaeologists have ascertained that only a very small proportion of the surviving stonework was of the original, built in the early fourteenth century. Instead, the majority of the masonry and surviving detail are of fifteenth and sixteenth century techniques and appearance.³⁴⁶ The enthusiasm of the Anglo-Norman elites for the foundation of new houses may not have matched that of their Gaelic counterparts, but throughout the period, until the start of the reformations, they continued to patronise, repair and even extend religious houses within their demesne.

Outside of the now Gaelic dominated Franciscan communities, internal reform was slow. In the orders led by English clerics, it came haphazardly, or not at all. Across Ireland, the Cistercian and Benedictine houses were in greatest need of reform but, at least for the former, it failed. The Dominicans fared somewhat better. In 1484, Maurice O’Mochain Moralis was appointed the first Irish provincial and was granted

³⁴² Murphy, ‘The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,’ 210.

³⁴³ Bradshaw, ‘Reformation in the cities’, 472.

³⁴⁴ White, *Monastic Possessions*, 140.

³⁴⁵ D. Power, S. Ronan, U. Egan, E. Byrne, *Archaeological Inventory of County Cork*, iv, Part 2, 548-550.

³⁴⁶ Power, *et al*, ii, 239-240

permission to reform Coleraine, Drogheda and Cork. By 1505, he had introduced the Observant rule in Youghal as well.³⁴⁷

The Augustinians were the first order to found a new Observant house in Ireland, in Co. Sligo, 1423. However, reform stuttered in Gill Abbey. The Observant Augustinians were led by Irishmen, and in 1458, Hugh O'Malley was elected president of a chapter of the Irish province; the friary at Cork did not accept such an intrusion. Opposition was sufficient to force the prior general of the order to release the friars of Gill Abbey from the obligation to associate with Observants.³⁴⁸ In 1494, a complaint was made by the Conventuals against their reformed brethren. Calendared in Rome, it speaks to a charge of dilapidation by foreign Observants, prosecuted by local magistrates.³⁴⁹ The reality of this refers to the unwillingness of the priory to submit to the authority of Irish Observantism.

This, then, was the true hindrance to a fifteenth century Anglo-Norman monasticism. Just as the political implications of Observant reform made it attractive to the Gaelic communities, it had the opposite effect upon the English lordship. The independence of the Irish province weakened its appeal, allowing a Gaelic domination of the second monastic wave. Consequently, it is of no surprise that the death of Cormac MacCarthy was recorded with great applause.

“[He], the son of Teige, son of Cormac, Lord of Muskerry, was slain by his own brother, Owen, and his sons. He was the exalter and reverer of the church, the first founder of the monastery of Cill Chreidhe [Kilcrea], and a man who had ordered that the Sabbath should be strictly observed throughout his territory.”³⁵⁰

The annals are often hyperbolic, but during MacCarthy's reign as chief of his clan, the MacCarthys were directly responsible for the foundation of two new religious houses. He was buried within the church at Kilcrea, in a Franciscan habit. Under his sponsorship, Observant reform, in the guise of the Franciscan order, found a firm foothold in southwest Ireland.

³⁴⁷ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 436.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 434

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 434.

³⁵⁰ AFM, iv, 1214.

The condition of the monastic orders in Cork, Cloyne and Ross

An upsurge in popularity amongst lay patrons did not necessarily equate to adequate ministry. Conversely, many sources speak as to the general decline and abuses rampant in the monasteries of Ireland.³⁵¹ Traditional historiography has often painted the older orders, the Cistercians and Benedictines in particular, as the victims of secularism. Although the friars tend to receive better reports, monasticism as a whole has not received a positive press. The evidence of the papal letters is not immediately conclusive. Between 1455 and 1460, 13 delations were made to the papacy that related to Cork and Cloyne; two of these involved the religious orders. Again, only two of the 21 for the period 1477-1482 referred to monasticism. Evidently, the secular wing of the church dominated this style of litigation, both as plaintiff and defendant. Given the number of secular clergy, however, that their petitions outweighed those of the religious is unsurprising.

On 10 August, 1483, the papacy empowered the abbot of St Mary's *de Kirieleysin*,³⁵² in the diocese of Ardfert, as well as the dean and precentor of that see's cathedral chapter, to adjudicate a complaint concerning Ross.³⁵³ The perpetual vicarage of Aghadown (Ackaduinn) and the parish church there had had certain items alienated from the premises. The then bishop of Ross, Odo O'Driscoll, alleged that Donatus Oheaga, prior of the Benedictine house at Ross, had removed those goods and put them into the hands of laymen. Claiming poverty, the bishop asked that the vicarage be granted to the bishopric, as well as the abbacy of the Benedictine house. Sadly, the matter is not mentioned again in the letters, but a reference in the survey of monastic property allows a tentative conclusion. The vicarage was not included in the assessment of Rosscarbery's possessions, suggesting that Odo was successful in his suit for the benefice.³⁵⁴ Sadly, O'Driscoll chose not to elaborate upon the goods alienated from the church, though these would most likely have been land or rents. The significance of this case is not the goods themselves, but the meaning of the litigation. In the first instance, accusations of secularism amongst the Benedictines seem vindicated. Equally important, the wealth of the house was such that it aroused jealousy in the bishop of Ross. Though the bishop was unsuccessful in annexing the religious house, the eyes of his cathedral chapter

³⁵¹ See for example, Cosgrove, 'Ireland beyond the Pale', 587-589.

³⁵² Cistercian monastery of Abbeydorney, also known as Kyrie Eleison.

³⁵³ CPR, xiii, Part 1, 146.

³⁵⁴ White, *Monastic Possessions*, 152.

remained fixed upon the abbacy.³⁵⁵ At best, Odo and his dean wanted nothing more than to halt the abuses and reform the house. At worst, they were simply looking to line their own pockets.

Gill Abbey fared little better in the latter part of the fifteenth century. Once, the Augustinian house had been patronised by Gaelic leaders and Norman lords alike as one of the foremost ecclesiastical centres of Cork. Now, the clerics of that city had fallen to squabbling and infighting over control of the monastery. Bolster briefly alludes to this period of discontent, stating, “Because of strife between Cornelius O’Flynn and Donald Machardich [sic.], Richard, Abbot of Cong, removed Cornelius and a papal investigation was instituted.”³⁵⁶ However, she misses many of the subtleties of the situation.

The events Bolster describes took place in 1482, but in the preceeding year, O’Flynn had shown that he was chafing under the authority of Richard. Gill abbey was a daughter house of Cong, in the diocese of Tuam. Nominally independent, the monastery at Cork was under the authority of Cong and its abbot, who, besides other powers, enjoyed the right to confirm or refuse the elevation of a new canon at Gill abbey, or the election of a new prior there. O’Flynn had had the rule of the monastery *de antro*, and claimed to have governed it well and laudably, having been provided to the abbacy by Pope Paul II.³⁵⁷ In the second part of this letter, Cornelius complained that Richard de Burgh (Rustardus de Burgo) of Cong, “father-abbot of the said order...[had] *de facto* deprived him of the said rule and administration...and against the custom hitherto observed, have received divers [sic.] persons as canons of the said monastery.” Not only had de Burgh ignored a papal provision, but he also diluted the monastery, by implication allowing unsuitable candidates to be invested into it. Furthermore, the abbot of Cong, it was alleged, had despoiled Gill abbey of almost all of its moveable goods. The veracity of these claims notwithstanding, the purpose of the petition was not to the immediate benefit of the monastery *de antro*. Rather, O’Flynn hoped to ensure his independence from the father house in Tuam; this speaks as much to personal ambition and politics within the Augustinian order as to the religious adequacy of the house.

That ambition seems to have surfaced again swiftly. In the same year, within days of the first letter, a second was sent. O’Flynn had delated Matthew Omachuna, a priest of Cork, who held a non-major dignity, the chancellorship of that diocese. With that position, he

³⁵⁵ CPR, xv, 361.

³⁵⁶ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 101.

³⁵⁷ CPR, xiii, Part 2, 800.

hoped too to attain the perpetual vicarage of Liscleary (Lischerrid), with a combined value of 13 marks annually. Matthew had detained that position without title or provision for some years, and Cornelius was to be granted it, “notwithstanding that he holds the said monastery [Gill abbey].”³⁵⁸ Although not incompatible with his role as prior, O’Flynn’s personal ambition and coveting of the temporal goods of his order and diocese would not have encouraged him to concentrate upon the spiritual needs of his house. Additionally, such secularism was hardly in keeping with the Observant Augustinian movement.

However, this transition was not a simple one. In a letter dated to March 1482, Cornelius O’Flynn’s appointment to the post of Chancellor is confirmed, as it implies that he had taken office during the preceding year.³⁵⁹ However, papal provision seems to have been insufficient to secure Cornelius’ assignment. In this letter, David O’Houlihan (Ohalynayn), canon of Cork, complained that O’Flynn had entered into a simoniacal bargain with the previous incumbent, Matthew Ourathuna. In exchange for a portion of the fruits of that post, Matthew would stand aside to the advantage of the abbot *de antro*. Shockingly, this deal was allegedly made “after Raymund, abbot *de Ablotractu* [of Tracton], had caused the said Matthew to be summoned...the said abbot Raymund, proceeding to execution of the said letters, granted the chancellorship *in commendam* to the said Cornelius.”³⁶⁰

The abbot of the Cistercian abbey of Tracton was an ally of Cornelius’. Papal plaintiffs named their own adjudicators, usually numbering three.³⁶¹ In O’Flynn’s first letter, in which he sought independence from Cong, he named the treasurer of Cork, Donatus O’Herlihy (Oherlache), a canon of Cork and the abbot of Tracton.³⁶² In his second, wherein the prior of Gill abbey submitted a delation for the office of chancellor, only the abbot of Tracton was named. O’Flynn was confident of Raymund’s support and cooperation in his claims; this confidence was justified when he oversaw a simoniacal bargain that guaranteed Cornelius’ promotion. That this arrangement encouraged abuses of simony and secularism is undeniable. Cornelius’ benefit is evident, but Raymund too would have expected reward for his aid; a *quid pro quo* in the maelstrom of Co. Cork’s clerical politics.

A marked difference is to be found in David O’Houlihan’s letter. The abbot of Tracton is absent. Instead, he names the prior of Midleton, in the diocese of Cloyne, as well as

³⁵⁸ CPR, xiii, Part 2, 757.

³⁵⁹ CPR, xiii, Part 1, 124-5.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 124.

³⁶¹ A further explanation of this process is given in Chapter 1, 55-57.

³⁶² CPR, xiii, Part 2, 800.

Dermot O’Herlihy (Ohelathy) and Maurice Standon (Stondon) to be his judges.³⁶³ Evidently, O’Houlihan’s allies were not to be found within the see of Cork, whilst both Raymund and Cornelius retained much influence there. David was “afraid to meet the said [abbots] within the city and diocese of Cork.”³⁶⁴ His intent was to remove O’Flynn from the chancellorship, inserting himself in Cornelius’ place. However, O’Houlihan did not stray too far from the mould of a politicking, grasping cleric. He was granted a papal indulgence as the son of an unmarried woman and an abbot of the Augustinian order. This suggests a separate slant upon his suit, now coloured by nepotism and that much maligned trait of the Irish church, hereditary positions; a consequence of the *erenagh* families. It is difficult to locate his father. The Augustinian houses of Ballybeg and Bridgetown, both situated in Cloyne, seem unlikely, as does that of Waterford. All three were heavily influenced by Anglo-Norman families. Tullylease presents another option. Once the site of a religious community, though by now much reduced, a *coarb* still held the land; as late as the Henrician period, the incomes were “unlawfully detained by the Coorbe [sic.] of Tollelyche.”³⁶⁵ The identity of this family is suggested by an entry in the Annals of Ulster: “Dúnadach Ua hInmainéin, *erenagh* of Tulach Léis.”³⁶⁶ O’Houlihan may well have belonged to that clerical dynasty.

The timing of this suit is remarkably close to Richard of Cong’s retaliation against O’Flynn. In early 1482, within days of O’Houlihan’s letter, a papal response was issued to a second *delation*.³⁶⁷ The plaintiff, one Donald MacCarthy (*Machardich*) asserted that the abbot of Cong had removed the prior of Gill abbey *de antro*. In O’Flynn’s place, and despite his youth (he received papal dispensation to hold the post regardless of his young age), MacCarthy had been elected by the greater part of the abbey’s brethren to the abbacy. However, both the removal and the election seem to have been unsuccessful. Instead, O’Flynn seized Donald, imprisoning him for “one or two years.” This, then, was the unspoken context of Cornelius’ earlier letter. He had sought independence and freedom from the rule of Cong following Richard’s attempt to remove him. The reasons behind the attempted exertion of de Burgh’s authority are unknown, but are easily imagined to be linked to Cornelius’ ambitions towards the chancellorship. The adjudicators in this matter, three canons of Cork, were to deprive and remove O’Flynn, instituting Donald (dispensed for the reason of being of noble birth) in his place.

³⁶³ CPR, xiii, Part 1, 124.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 125.

³⁶⁵ White, *Monastic Possessions*, 190.

³⁶⁶ AI, 219. A. Gwynn and R.N. Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses* incorrectly give this as AU.

³⁶⁷ CPR, xiii, Part 1, 125-6.

It is tempting to view the litigation of O’Houlihan and MacCarthy as two aspects of a single attack upon Cornelius O’Flynn. However despite their chronological proximity, several distinctions imply otherwise. The latter was enacted with, and for the benefit of, the Augustinian abbot and abbey of Cong. Donald’s letter concludes by reiterating that his provision to the abbacy was “dependent upon that of Cong, and [Gill Abbey] is a daughter house or member thereof.”³⁶⁸ In contrast, O’Houlihan appears to have acted alone, afraid of entering Cork city by virtue of Cornelius’ power there. Instead, he brought supporters from outside of the diocese. MacCarthy, presumably with the support of Richard de Burgh of Cong, was under no such limitation, calling Donatus O’Donovan (Odonwywan), Renaldus Hoyluada and John Ocronyin, all canons of Cork, to judge his case. Donald may also have been assisted by the influence of his own family, but were O’Houlihan and MacCarthy acting in tandem, O’Houlihan would have shown more confidence; he would have used the same adjudicators.

The outcome of this litigation is unclear; there is no further documentary evidence available that confirms the abbacy upon either Cornelius O’Flynn or Donald MacCarthy within the papal letters. Although the “abbot of Gill abbey *de antro*,” is mentioned on numerous occasions, a name is never given. From a fragmentary reference from the Augustinian general archives in Rome, a conclusion may be drawn. On 24 March 1484, the vicar provincial of that order instructed his “venerable brother Cornelius” to reform the religious life of the convent at Cork.³⁶⁹ This indicates that O’Flynn managed to retain the abbacy until at least that date and, given a lack of continued litigation, he remained secure in his seat. The fate of the chancellorship is unknown.

The eventual victor is, in part, unimportant. Both factions were accused of various abuses detrimental to the provision of worship at the Augustinian house *de antro*. The actuality of those accusations is hard to substantiate, but seems likely. Cornelius’ original complaint against Richard de Burgh of Cong was, amongst others, that he had removed certain items of value, dilapidating the monastery of Cork. In May 1483, Richard was sued by Walter de Burgh (de Burgo), who stated that the abbot had seized his rectory against the wishes of the lay patrons. The prior of Cong had allegedly, “dilapidated and alienated [the church] and turned to his own uses the immoveable goods thereof.”³⁷⁰ The similarity

³⁶⁸ CPR, xiii, Part 1, 126.

³⁶⁹ F.X. Martin and Geiger, eds., ‘Irish Material in the Augustinian Archives, Rome, 1354-1624,’ *Archivium Hibernicum*, 19 (1956), 102.

³⁷⁰ CPR, xiii, Part 1, 132.

between this complaint and his own lends credence to the earlier appeal by O’Flynn. This does not absolve Cornelius of his crimes. Quite besides the matter of the simoniacal bargain, he amply demonstrated his personal ambition in his quest for the chancellorship. Additionally, although he had papal authority for the usurpation of Cong’s authority over his abbey, O’Flynn had no right to imprison a friar of his own order.

Though O’Houlihan’s delation may be dismissed as opportunistic, MacCarthy’s was motivated by political infighting within the Augustinian order. However, it also reflected the simultaneous episcopal struggles within the dioceses of Cork and Cloyne. Conflict between Cork and Cong is evident, but the significance of that strife ran deeper. The friars of St Augustine in Ireland when taken together formed the largest and poorest of the five *plagae* or limits of the English province. This subservience enhanced Anglo-Irish separatism within the Augustinian houses. Additionally, the litigation described above evidences further friction within and between the Irish abbeys. The order for Cornelius to reform the house at Cork, to enforce the Observant rule,³⁷¹ may not found its origins in matters spiritual. The friary at Cong, under the influence of the de Burgh family, remained Conventual until the onset of the reformations.³⁷² With the accompanying political changes, O’Flynn enjoyed freedom from Cong following his adoption of Observance. The new rule did not gain favour within the city. The Augustinian archives at Rome calendar an accusation from the secular courts of Cork. The magistrates charged the *fratribus dictis de observantia alienigenis*, the foreign brothers of the Observance, with maladministration and other abuses concerning their conduct within Gill Abbey.

The deterioration of monasticism in the three dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross was not limited to Gill Aabbey. The second wave and the Observant movement notwithstanding, the religious orders were held by many to be in terrible disrepair, across Ireland. Thomas Cromwell received a report in 1536 to the effect that, “The abbayes here doo not kepe soo good Divine Service, as the abbayes in England, beeing suppressid.”³⁷³ Besides religious failings, monasteries were plagued with financial and organisational abuses; the Benedictines of south-western Ireland represent a fair example of this.

The Benedictine cell at Cork was only small, a sister to that at Waterford, both satellites of Bath abbey, and administered as one unit. Nevertheless, its association with the English

³⁷¹ Martin and Geiger, eds., ‘Irish Material in the Augustinian Archives’, 102.

³⁷² Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses*, 166.

³⁷³ Ó Clabaigh, ‘The Benedictines’, 118.

monastery has furnished it with a more complete history through English Benedictine documents. The Lincoln's Inn MSS pertains to the correspondence of the mother house, and it is clear that Cork's hospital fell into decline. After a half century of benign communication, largely comprising grants of land, the tone of the letters changes. In 1298, the prior of the order at Cork, John de Wellia, was commanded, "on account of the debts of the houses, not to receive any brothers, sisters or scholars who would be chargeable to the said houses."³⁷⁴ John de Cumptona was to rectify any breach of this rule. However, his influence was surely ineffective, as debts continued to dog the Benedictines of Cork until at least 1347.

Administrative issues too provided cause for concern. The letters dating from the first half of the fourteenth century create the impression of an institution in confusion; in this period, there were eleven instances of recall, appointment or annulment. At varying times, the personal involvement of the prior of Bath abbey was required. Between 1332 and 1347, first Thomas de Foxcote and Master Giles le Engleys vied for supremacy, and then Foxcote struggled with John de Bloxham. By 1345, Foxcote, who had "put the charities of said hospital to evil and profane uses,"³⁷⁵ was replaced by, and put into the custody of, Bloxham. However, Foxcote was clearly not without friends. In 1347, despite losing the abbacies of Cork and Waterford, the prior of Bath granted him a cell in the Waterford house, as well as a groom, a horse and 100 shillings annually.³⁷⁶

The final entry of the Lincoln's Inn MSS is for the year 1357. Although there are no further sources that elaborate upon the fortunes of the cell at Cork prior to the reformations, it is possible to make several assumptions. The primary concerns of the letters took two main forms; relating to abuses pertaining to the governance of the houses or the cells' pecuniary interests, although these matters were often linked. The matters had clearly become so severe that the debts of the Benedictine priory at Waterford impinged upon the operation of that at Cork. A letter dated at London, 1345, was sent, "from Raymond Pelegrini, Canon of London, Special Commissary of the Pope to Hugh de Calce, Chancellor of Dublin, commanding the said Hugh to desist from any sequestration of the Priory of St John the Evangelist of Waterford with the house of St John of Cork."³⁷⁷ The function of the Black Monks in Cork and Waterford did suffer due to mismanagement; provision of both

³⁷⁴ Hunt, ed., *Two Chartularies of the Priory of St Peter at Bath*, 106.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 177.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 178.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 177.

hospitality and charity were affected by poverty. However, the cells did survive until the Tudor reformations. Furthermore, that survival is at least partially suggestive of the hospital's quality.

In the first instance, the relationship between Cork, Youghal, Waterford and Bath was unceasing. The joint rule of Waterford and Cork is mentioned repeatedly, in 1335, 1344, 1386 and 1455.³⁷⁸ Bath's links to Ireland recur similarly. The final instance of this is in 1474 with the appointment of Philip Thancard to the position of prior.³⁷⁹ It may be reasonable to presume that the convoluted hierarchy of this portion of the Benedictine order in Ireland continued to provide a negative influence upon the houses. Although the fortunes of the hospital never again appear to have reached the lows of the fourteenth century dispute, the lengthy processes that selected the prior and saw oaths of fealty made in person by each Irish brother at Bath would not have assisted in the daily running of the hospice. Furthermore, in Thancard's letter of promotion, his newly won domain is said to be "Conventual." No record survives to confirm this status, nor to suggest that Observance was found prior to the Henrician suppressions. There was no early adoption of the movement, apparently no effort to internal reform.

Additionally, a complaint in the papal letters contains a harbinger of a problem that would plague the Tudor reformations in Ireland; the language barrier. The grievance spoke to the dismay of the laity, for "[the rectory] is at present detained by a monk of the said Order who does not understand the language of that country, on account of which he cannot hear the confessions of the parishioners and administer the sacraments."³⁸⁰ The Benedictines, through their Irish cells, had been granted the advowson of the rectory of Kinsale. They were wont to lease this rich holding to lay and religious alike and, at this time, it was held by a brother of their order at Cork. His unwillingness to employ a Gaelic speaking chaplain would evidently have harmed the provision for lay worship.

Still, the survival of the cells is telling. Unlike several small, unviable foundations, they did not fall until the second wave of suppressions in 1536,³⁸¹ nor had they faded into obscurity despite their small size. It must be supposed therefore that these Benedictine institutions were patronised by some local power, of which there is no evidence, or that the English connection fortified them against the vagaries of time and lay perfidy. Their

³⁷⁸ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 137.

³⁷⁹ CPR, xiii, Part 1, 385.

³⁸⁰ CPR, xiii, Part 1, 176.

³⁸¹ Ó Clabaigh, 'The Benedictines', 101.

property, seemingly recovered from the fourteenth century mismanagement, remained largely intact. Lists of accoutrements were made in a document that Bolster dates to the late fifteenth century; they include the tithes, great and small, of the grange at Legan. More tellingly, the twin priories retained at least one of their most valuable assets; the rectory of Kinsale. Although repeatedly leased to lay and clerical persons, it is listed amongst the Waterford house's properties in 1584.³⁸²

The examples listed above are two of the best documented cases of neglect and abuse within the religious houses of the three dioceses. However, other sources provide corroboration, albeit fleeting. In the taxation of 1304 it was recorded that the abbot of Tracton did not reside within the diocese. Simultaneously, it was noted that while the goods of Middleton were valued at over £9 and 20 marks, they were charged with debt beyond an estimated moiety. The monks of Fermoy were "so charged with debt that they [had] not the wherewithal to eat."³⁸³

The monastic tradition in Co. Cork was not rotten to the core. The Henrician survey of monastic possessions suggests that aside from the negative effects of warfare, the physical aspects of the religious houses in the three dioceses were in reasonable condition. The majority of monasteries inspected were not in need of repair and those that did were invariably valued at above the cost of repair. The Augustinian friary of Cork city and the abbey at Fermoy both required maintenance costing no more than 2s each.³⁸⁴ Even the Benedictine priory of Rosscarbery, whose church, hall, buttery and other houses were considered, "very ruinous and decayed,"³⁸⁵ were valued at 6s 8d over the cost of refurbishment.

Although significant failings have been emphasised amongst many of the older establishments, the younger possessed a greater zeal. Supported by the Observant movement, the monasteries remained an important part of religious life, retaining significant lay support. Many authors, contemporary writers and historians alike, have recognised the mendicant orders as the preeminent preachers and teachers of the pre-reformations period.

³⁸² Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses*, 166

³⁸³ CDI, v, 274.

³⁸⁴ White, *Monastic Possessions*, 138 and 144-5.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 152.

“Some sayeth that the prelates of the churche and the clergie is much the cause of all the mysse order of the land; for there is no archbyssshop ne byssshop, abbot ne pryor, parson ne vycar, nor any other person of the churche, high or lowe, greate or small, Englyshe or Iryshe, that useyth to preach the worde of Godde, saveing the poor fryers beggars.”³⁸⁶

The author of this tract remains anonymous, using the alias Pandarus, but his English biases are obvious. He writes for the King and his court, advocating a means of pacifying and organising Ireland under Tudor reign. Pandarus is freely critical of many contemporaneous social and religious norms; his positive comments regarding the friars provide a stark contrast.

The reputation of the Franciscan order in Ireland is particularly good.³⁸⁷ In the south-western dioceses, preaching traditions were well established before the reformations. The Franciscan author of the *Liber Exemplorum* spent time as lector at the Cork friary, whereupon he learned a tale of murder. The victim was a woman who had lived upon the lands of Lord David de Barry in Wales; fleeing war there, she came to his lands in Ireland settling in Carrigtwohill, where she received a burgage and brewed there. This “*de quadam muliere vidua honesta et religiosa*,” an anonymous widow of honour and piety, was murdered in her new home. Significantly, the Franciscan author obtained this tale whilst in the town, as part of a preaching tour of the region.³⁸⁸ Far from an isolated incident, the friars remained persistent in their pastoral projects.

One portion of the *Liber Exemplorum* is dedicated to the tale of a parish priest who, upon experiencing difficulties *vis a vis* the confessional and other pastoral duties, approached a nearby friary for assistance.³⁸⁹ The relationship between the friars and the secular clergy was rarely so harmonious. Across Europe, parish priests jealously guarded their privileged duties to retain both influence and income within their benefices. At the Cashel synod of 1453, it was declared that, “The faithful are forbidden to hear the sermon of any friar under

³⁸⁶ ‘State of Ireland and plan for its reformation’ in SPH ii, 15.

³⁸⁷ The case for the Franciscan order is made in C. Ó Clabaigh, ‘Preaching in late medieval Ireland: the Franciscan contribution,’ in Fletcher and R. Gillespie, eds., *Irish Preaching* (Dublin, 2001), 81-93.

³⁸⁸ A.G. Little, ed., *Liber exemplorum ad usum praedicantium saeculo xiii compositus a quodam fratre minore anglico de provincia Hiberniae* (Aberdeen, 1908), 38-39. The volume itself is further example of the cosmopolitan and pastoral nature of the order. Compiled at Cork c.1275-1280, it demonstrates the earliest collection of Franciscan *exempla* to survive. It documents several pastoral efforts, including detailed accounts of preaching tours in Ulster and Clonfert. Furthermore, the author carefully documented those sources upon which he relied for his compilation.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 55-7.

pain of mortal sin, unless the friar has obtained the permission of the ordinary where he preaches, and the Council forbids friars to preach without permission under pain of depriving them of their right to quest where they offend.”³⁹⁰

The practice of questing, in which friars would preach and take confession, provided them with a source of income through oblations and altar fees; this was to the detriment of the parish priest. Similarly, Friars were forbidden to tour upon important feast days, which enjoyed larger than usual congregations and correspondingly important offerings.³⁹¹ The brothers of the region enjoyed a particular boon from the repository of learning at Youghal.

The town has a well-deserved and lengthy reputation for learning. Bolster comments upon this, describing how “Bishop [John] Benet stocked the library of the collegiate church of Youghal with many valuable volumes from his own personal collection.”³⁹² However, this presents some difficulties, as she has confused the religious institutions in the town. The town’s reputation for learning stems in part from the college, but also from an extant library register, begun by William O’Herlihy (Ohurrily) in 1490. He described the reasoning behind his work in an introduction to the codex; “lest with the advent of some kind of carelessness or negligence...the books be destroyed.”³⁹³ His foresight has preserved a list of some 150 printed works, manuscripts and papers, even though the library itself was divested of its contents long ago. Bolster incorrectly identifies the provenance of the library list, ascribing it to Benet. However, there were three main late medieval foundations in Youghal, the collegiate church of St Mary,³⁹⁴ the Franciscan south friary and the Dominican to the north; the codex refers to a library in the Franciscan friary.

The library list has strong implications for the intellectual interests of Irish clerics. Consensus agrees that the inventory evidences strong links between Youghal and the continental theologies of contemporary authors, as well as an enthusiastic pastoral bias.

³⁹⁰ ‘Concilium provincial Cashellense’, 571.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 571.

³⁹² Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 492.

³⁹³ The Youghal Library List is printed in an appendix to C. Ó Clabaigh, *The Franciscans in Ireland 1400-1534 from Reform to Reformation* (Dublin, 2002), 158-180.

³⁹⁴ Youghal College, otherwise known as the collegiate church of St Mary’s, was established in 1464 by the earl of Desmond. The church consisted of a warden, eight fellows and eight choristers, and was granted the collation of the parish churches of Rathclaryn, Newtown, Clonpriest and others; the number of these collations would eventually rise to a total of 17. During the years of John Benet’s tenure as bishop of the united dioceses of Cork and Cloyne, 1523 to 1536, it was used as the Episcopal seat. It has been alternatively described as an Irish chantry or as the first Irish university. That said, Youghal has done little to alter the poor reputation of education in Ireland during the late medieval period.

Despite engagement with modern authors, the Franciscans at Youghal had no exposure to the reformation theologies. There is no sign of anything truly radical; no works by Luther or Zwingli. These would have been in circulation when the second part of the catalogue was recorded.³⁹⁵ The library at Youghal maintained its connection to contemporaneous religious output, particularly sermons and pastoral papers.

The pastoral application of the library is well argued by Watt, who emphasised the presence of works by Leonard of Udine and Robert Carraciolo of Lecce.³⁹⁶ As an Observant Franciscan reformer, Carraciolo's writings reflected the changing trends of Irish monasticism. While the majority of listings date from the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, there is a significant minority from the fifteenth; these include *sermons discipuli* (John Herolt's *Sermons of a Disciple*) and *sermons Michaelis Lochmayr de festis* (23 sermons of Michael Lochmayr for feastdays). More than twenty collections of sermons were present in Youghal in 1523, their subjects wide ranging, although the significant, if small, number authored by Dominican preachers is worth mentioning. To compliment those tomes described above, the codex continues to list volumes detailing the lives of saints, biblical concordances and encyclopedia; all of these provided valuable tools for preaching.

The presence of the library in the diocese of Cloyne is significant for the region and its religion. Although there is no evidence of similar *studia* at the other Franciscan houses of Co. Cork, their purposes would have closely matched that of the Youghal friary. The order, particularly the Observant arm, was dedicated to the pastoral effort. Understanding the actual usage of the library is somewhat trickier than contemplating its contents. The list may be comprehensive, but it contains little evidence regarding the exploitation of the books. However, investigation is illuminating. The codex is split into two sections; the first was compiled in 1491, while the second dates to 1523. There seem to be several distinct differences between these two sections. There are fewer books in the second, as it numbers only items 101 to 150. There also seems to be a changing pattern in the way books are held. The books listed in the first section seem to be held communally, while several of those in the second are held by individuals. Prior to item 85, is a missive stating that "*sequuntur libri quidam pro usu maurcii Hanlan,*" that is, that the following books were reserved for the use of Maurice Hanlan. This referred to some sixteen items. This privilege was generally reserved to lectors in a friars' *studia*, although there is nothing concrete to evidence this

³⁹⁵ The essentially conservative nature of this library serves to compliment and consolidate the conventional theologies and practices encouraged by the structures of clerical education described in the previous chapter.

³⁹⁶ J. Watt, *The Church in Medieval Ireland* (1998, Dublin), 201-202.

supposition.³⁹⁷ However, other books were also reserved to clerics. To David Ronan were reserved the sermons of the disciples and the Breviary of Edmund Magner. To Maurice Power a missal. John Cornelius held a printed bible in round type, while William Nicholas had the Life of Christ according to Bonaventure and a Roman Breviary. In all, ten names are mentioned; only one is described as a friar; it is likely that the remainder were students attending the friary.

The library catalogue at Youghal is only one example, but it is strongly suggestive of a positive religiosity in the town and in the Franciscan order. Though limited, it is contextualised by the revivification of monastic traditions in Ireland, and the revitalisation of the Franciscan and Dominican orders in the dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. The older houses had become increasingly secularised and, as powerful institutions in their own right, were the target of personal ambition and avarice. The younger, carried by the Observant zeal, remained largely clear of such impulses prior to the reformations.

³⁹⁷ Ó Clabaigh, *The Franciscans in Ireland*, 173.

Conclusion

The arrival of the Anglo-Norman lords in the late twelfth century irrevocably altered the monastic tradition in Co. Cork. They brought with them new varieties of monasticism (specifically, the Benedictines) as well as patronising houses both old and new. However, as their power waned, so too did the involvement of the Norman nobles in the creation of new foundations. The vast majority of English houses were built in the thirteenth century. As the arrival of the Black Death heralded the contraction of the royal polity across Ireland, so it plunged the colony in the south-west into decline. A monastic revival coincided with the resurgence of the Gaelic lordship in the fifteenth century; it significantly differed from the earlier stage of growth. Now, the Irish clans were the pre-eminent patrons and their new foundations outnumbered those sponsored by the Anglo-Norman families. However, throughout the medieval period, the involvement of secular elites was essential to the progress of monasticism in Co. Cork.

Regardless of the degree of lay support, the quality of the foundations was questionable. Accusations of secularism and various other common abuses were rife across medieval Europe; Ireland was no exception. In Cork, Cloyne and Ross, the Augustinian and Benedictine houses suffered from particularly political infighting. Consequently, the spiritual provision within those monasteries declined. In Gill Abbey, canons were accused of maladministration and theft. The involvement of the English Benedictines in the cells at Cork, Kinsale and Youghal did little to aid the financial management of those houses. Conversely, both the third wave of monastic foundations in the fifteenth century and the influx of Observantism indicate strength and vibrancy. The popularity of the Franciscan order is well documented and secular support for them among the Gaelic clans was significant.

This is the legacy of medieval monasticism: the houses which lay *inter hibernicos* and *inter anglicos* were characterised by differing emphases. Tradition, epitomised by the Cistercian, Benedictine and Augustinian orders dominated the old Anglo-Norman colony. The Irish hegemony tended to the newer, fifteenth century foundations and the spread of Observantism. These distinctions would help to colour local responses to the Tudor reformations. However, despite the intrinsic differences, patrons of all houses were heavily invested in the monastic network on the eve of the reformations.

Chapter 3: The clerical elite during the reformations

In England, the Protestant reformation began several years earlier than its counterpart in Ireland. Forewarned, concerned individuals were able to watch events unfold across the narrow divide of the Irish Sea. As the divorce crisis grew alongside ill-feeling between the crown and papacy, so did the potential for religious reform in the King's Irish possessions. In 1534, the Act of Supremacy confirmed Henry as head of the church in England. Although this in itself was problematic, it marked a real beginning, shortly followed by the suppression policies and the doctrinal changes famously detailed in the Act of Six Articles.

“A heresy and a new error sprang up in England, through pride, vain-glory, avarice, and lust, and through many strange sciences, so that the men of England went into opposition to the Pope and to Rome. They at the same time adopted various opinions...and they styled the king the Chief Head of the Church of God in his own kingdom. New laws and statutes were enacted by the king and Council Parliament according to their own will. They destroyed the orders to whom worldly possessions were allowed, namely, the Monks, Canons, Nuns, Brethren of the Cross, and the four poor orders, i.e. the orders of the Minors, Preachers, Carmelites, and Augustinians; and the lordships and livings of all these were taken up for the King. They broke down the monasteries, and sold their roofs and bells, so that from Aran of the Saints to the Iccian Sea there was not one monastery that was not broken and shattered, with the exception of a few in Ireland, of which the English took no notice or heed.”³⁹⁸

Thus, the Irish annals recorded the momentous events of 1537, the schism within the Irish church and the growing strength of Henry VIII there. The sixteenth century chroniclers are damning in their indictment, vilifying the King and his motives. However, these reforms, though of great consequence, were but a part of the wider efforts of English monarchs to expand their influence in Ireland. Their opinions were coloured as much by that as by the break with Rome. Further, despite the suddenness with which the events are announced within the annals, they were rather the result of a gradual build up of intent. A plan for the

³⁹⁸ AFM, v, 1446-9.

reformation of Ireland was forwarded as early as 1515.³⁹⁹ Increased English activity is recorded within the annals and state papers for the period; the doings of the Henrician Lord Lieutenants are well documented by both contemporary and modern authors.

Still, 1537 did mark a watershed year. The Irish reformation parliament convened in May of the preceding year, and over the following twelve months struggled against obstreperous politicians and peers. In their actions, Brabazon felt that the Irish followed designs created by “their masters the bishops.”⁴⁰⁰ While the parliament was swift to accept Henry’s royal supremacy, it resisted his ecclesiastical primacy.⁴⁰¹ In 1537, the fourth council was convened, at the behest of four royal commissioners sent to Ireland in the September of that year. They carried the King’s threat to the politicians, that those failing to follow his wishes would attract his attentions and, “we shall so look upon them with our princely eye as his ingratitude therein shall be little to his comfort.”⁴⁰² Along with this threat, they carried with them valuable incentives to end the deadlock and the first monastic suppression campaigns began later that year.

Amongst the secular clergy, the appointment of amenable bishops was crucial to the successful prosecution of Henry’s reformation. Archbishop George Browne, appointed to Dublin in 1536, is perhaps the most famous example of this. He served the reformation policies of two monarchs, before being deposed during the Marian Catholic resurgence. Browne’s role was to provide leadership, guiding the Irish clerics of his see into the Henrician reforms. He encountered vituperative resistance from all levels of the clergy, but remained steadfastly dedicated to Protestant theologies.⁴⁰³ Browne determined that those beneath him should swear oaths of royal supremacy, but opposition continued.⁴⁰⁴ Still, the centrality of his role remained paramount throughout his tenure as the Archbishop dictated religious policy and reforms. The career of the Dublin Archbishop, though of great interest, is less relevant to the present discussion than the episcopates of Cork, Cloyne and Ross.

³⁹⁹ ‘State of Ireland and plan for its reformation’ in *State Papers for the reign of Henry VIII*, iii (London, 1830), 15.. Only a small part of the document relates to religious matters; the anonymous author, who uses the label Pandarus, is primarily concerned with the Anglo-Norman and Gaelic lordships, the interaction of English and Brehon law, militaristic manoeuvring and domination of the “mere Irish”.

⁴⁰⁰ SP 60/4/74.

⁴⁰¹ Jefferies, *The Irish Church*, 75.

⁴⁰² LP, xii, no. 388.

⁴⁰³ Browne was keen to promote his ideals, though was careful not to overstep his authority, nor to go beyond that sanctioned by Henry or Cranmer. B. Bradshaw, ‘George Browne, first Reformation archbishop of Dublin, 1536-54’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 21 (1970), 83-99.

⁴⁰⁴ A good summary of the Archbishop’s career is provided in Jefferies, *The Irish Church*, 78-82.

Just as the development of the parochial network in the dioceses was coloured by the local elites, the monastic tradition across Co. Cork was defined by patronage from individual noble families, both Gaelic and Anglo-Norman. During the sixteenth century, the Tudor reformers would seek to exert the will of the crown on the religion of the region by appointing a succession of Anglican bishops. To their cost, as well as to the detriment of Protestant reform, the influence and power of local elites would remain essential to religious success in the dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross.

The fifteenth century episcopate

The Irish reformations came at a time of uncertainty for the united sees of Cork and Cloyne. John Benet had held his post for a thirteen year tenure, but died in 1536. Little is documented of his reign; less is known. However, his death provided Henry with the opportunity to instil the first reformation bishop into a vacant see in Ireland. Through the investiture of Dominic Tirrey, the crown hoped to forestall the episcopal instability that had plagued the dioceses of Cork and Cloyne for much of the recent past.

The rule of the two dioceses, united in the early fifteenth century, had been disputed by William Roche and Gerald Fitzgerald in the 1470s and 1480s.⁴⁰⁵ After his involvement in the failed Simnel Affair, Roche received a royal pardon, along with many of the pretender's other Irish supporters, but shortly after its receipt, he resigned his claims to the see. In 1490, Roche left the post with a pension equal to one third of the revenues of Cork and Cloyne.⁴⁰⁶ His surrender was not the end of the disputes surrounding the bishopric. Rather than resign in favour of his adversary, Fitzgerald, Roche chose to support Thaddeus MacCarthy, the then bishop of Ross.

Born during the mid 1450s, Thaddeus belonged to a powerful dynasty; the MacCarthy Reagh. Dominant in the region of Rosscarbery, the family proved a Gaelic bastion, obstinate in their opposition to the Anglo-Norman polity. Of his early life and education, no evidence is forthcoming. However, given the patronage provided by the MacCarthy Reagh to numerous foundations, including the Franciscan houses at Kilcrea, Ballymacadane and Timoleague, a connection to the orders is probable. At the age of 27, he was appointed to the see of Ross, being consecrated in Rome on the 29 March 1482, wherein he resided whilst presumably attending university.⁴⁰⁷ Thaddeus was dispensed for his youth, and ascended to the rank of bishop, though the episcopacy of Ross was not then vacant. Upon returning to Ireland, MacCarthy found his rule hindered by the incumbent, Odo O'Driscoll. He had ruled there some nine years, in direct contradiction to Thaddeus' bull of provision, which stated that the seat had lain empty since the death of Donald, bishop of Ross, who died in 1473. O'Driscoll had, in all actuality, ruled peaceably, without interruption or competition.

⁴⁰⁵ The effect of this strife upon the secular clergy and their ministry is evaluated in Chapter 1, 55-65.

⁴⁰⁶ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 425. Bolster references an entry in the Cork diocesan archives, now lost.

⁴⁰⁷ W.M. Brady, *Episcopal Succession in England, Scotland and Ireland, A.D. 1400-1875*, ii (Rome, 1877), 107.

MacCarthy's arrival shattered that peace. Odo had been accepted by the cathedral chapter, consecrated by the archbishop, and had received the fruits of the episcopal *mensa* without hindrance.⁴⁰⁸ Still, there was a critical flaw in his position. O'Driscoll's original appointment was based upon the resignation of his predecessor, which was invalidated by his death; a narrow but crucial distinction. Consequently, Odo sought papal confirmation, travelling in person to Rome.⁴⁰⁹ It came in 1483, as the pope "decreed that Odo's letters of provision should hold good from the date thereof, and that the provision itself and also Odo's consecration and his administration etc. as bishop should be valid."⁴¹⁰ The pope's declaration was ineffective as Thaddeus ignored the papal mandate.

In some respects, the dispute between these two clerics mirrored that which was occurring simultaneously in the dioceses of Cork and Cloyne. In both instances, archdiocesan and papal adjudication was spurned, episcopal administration was neglected and loopholes in canonical law were exploited. However, perhaps the greatest similarity was the involvement of powerful lay factions, invested in the successful elevation of their candidate. In Cork and Cloyne, the papal letters record that Roche's brothers participated in the despoiling of the diocesan *mensa* of Cloyne, the ruin of that city, murders, thefts and the kidnap of his rival.⁴¹¹ The dispute in Ross encompassed two powerful families; the MacCarthy Reagh and the O'Driscolls. During this period, the power of the MacCarthys was very great in Munster; though but one branch of a family which also included princes of Desmond, MacCarthys of Muskerry and MacCarthys of Duhallow, the Reagh remained a potent force.

The O'Driscoll family was descended from a line no less powerful or ancient. The churches of Ross were built upon their ancient lands and the insertion of a MacCarthy into the bishopric must have seemed little less than an invasion. Furthermore, the arrival of Thaddeus coincided with a period of strife between the Gaelic MacCarthys and the Anglo-Norman lordship, personified by the FitzGerald clan. The War of the Roses added to the upheaval in the region. The appearance of a MacCarthy bishop exacerbated old irritations.⁴¹² The importance of this lay influence was evidently sufficient to force the papacy to respond. In 1488, a second letter was sent from Rome, describing MacCarthy as "the son of iniquity." Innocent VIII then confirmed Sixtus IV's earlier letter, continuing to

⁴⁰⁸ CPR, xiii, Part 1, 143.

⁴⁰⁹ This may in part have been to avoid the malign lay influence that supported MacCarthy's claim.

⁴¹⁰ CPR, xiii, Part 1, 142.

⁴¹¹ CPR, xiii, Part 1, 187.

⁴¹² Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 452.

nullify all of Thaddeus' actions and any letters which granted him claim to the episcopacy.⁴¹³ Additionally, he excommunicated the rogue cleric, along with several of his lay allies. The deprivation of this secular support had been judged essential to the removal of MacCarthy.

So for a time, the three dioceses had four pontiffs, two each to Ross and the united sees of Cork and Cloyne respectively. However, the sudden resignation of William Roche altered the situation to the benefit of the administration of Ross. Coming swiftly in the aftermath of this announcement was a series of papal pronouncements on 21 April 1490, concerning the three episcopates.⁴¹⁴ The first reiterated earlier pronouncements upon Thaddeus, "[declaring] that the said Thady never had any right and has no right in the rule and administration, and imposes perpetual silence upon him [with regards to the see of Ross]." The other two letters provided Thaddeus to the united dioceses of Cork and Cloyne, one doing so upon Roche's resignation and the other upon his death. MacCarthy was protected against any invalidity, although the presence and power of Fitzgerald, still *in situ*, appears to have been ignored.

The problems that plagued the diocese of Ross were solved in this simple stroke; the plans of the MacCarthy clan were derailed by Innocent VIII's orders. The pope went so far as to confirm Thaddeus in the abbacy of Maure (Abbeymahon), which could be held "with such other bishopric or diocese to which he might hereafter be appointed."⁴¹⁵ The wayward cleric had come into possession of the house on 29 December 1489 and the papacy was evidently keen to avoid further destabilisation in the region. However, while Ross benefited from the new arrangement, Cork and Cloyne suffered.

Prior to his appointment to Ross, Thaddeus had been studying in Europe. Unaware of the murk of episcopal politics, he returned to Ireland to claim his position. In 1490, though, MacCarthy was wiser. In the face of staunch opposition from Fitzgerald's lay allies, Thaddeus armed himself with a papal bull, the text of which was preserved in the Cork diocesan archives. The missive required the secular powers to support MacCarthy's episcopacy, and those opposed to him are mentioned by name, "Maurice Earl of Desmond, William Barry (Barrymore), Edmund Maurice de Geraldine, the corporation of the city of Cork, the corporate body of the University of Youghal, the brothers of the earl of Desmond,

⁴¹³ CPR, xiv, 31.

⁴¹⁴ CPR, xiv, 260.

⁴¹⁵ F.P. Carey, *The Blessed Thaddeus MacCarthy* (Dublin, 1937), 5.

of William Barry, of Edmund Maurice, and finally, Philip Ronan... [the] judge of the ecclesiastical court of Cork.”⁴¹⁶

Having received this letter of papal support, Thaddeus MacCarthy set out from Rome for his homeland in the early summer of 1492. Travelling alone as a pilgrim, he reached Ivrea, a Piedmontese city 30 miles north of Turin. The Irish cleric died there in October of that year.⁴¹⁷ Bolster discusses his life and works, describing him as a “saintly pilgrim,” who has been “uninterruptedly venerated since [his death],” “far ahead of his Irish contemporaries.”⁴¹⁸ She continues to state that “the provision of Thaddeus MacCarthy to the dioceses of Cork and Cloyne could have obviated the shameful happenings of the [two dioceses].”⁴¹⁹ Bolster further excuses MacCarthy’s role in the diocesan upheavals across south-west Munster, arguing them the work of lay patrons over whose actions the bishop had no control. However, it is too easy to allow the nineteenth century beatification to colour our perception of Thaddeus MacCarthy. His actions and associations emulate those of Gerald Fitzgerald and William Roche. Although the first controversy, Thaddeus’ appointment to Ross, began with him *in absentia* and potentially ignorant of the realities of diocesan affairs, the second came with his full knowledge. Having spent considerable time in neighbouring Ross, MacCarthy understood precisely the ramifications of his appointment; the censure of Fitzgerald’s lay proponents, given at Thaddeus’ personal request, evidences his comprehension. Likewise, we must dismiss many of his posthumous accolades. Those of flowery speech or which described miraculous events surrounding his death were little different in character or content from those epitaphs given for clerics and laypersons alike in various Irish sources. There is simply no evidence to suggest that the rule of Thaddeus MacCarthy, even had it been free of interference, would have healed the rifts within the upper echelons of the churches and laity of Cork and Cloyne.

His case does emphasise the centrality of lay influence upon diocesan succession. At the core of each diocesan dispute lay a clash of dynasties. In Ross, the MacCarthys and O’Sullivans warred with each other, while in Cork and Cloyne, the Roche family disputed with the lords of Desmond. Later, the appointment of Thaddeus oversaw strife between

⁴¹⁶ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 455. Bolster references a document in the Cork Diocesan Archives that has since disappeared.

⁴¹⁷ MacCarthy died as an unknown, in a pilgrim hospice. His identity was discovered post-mortem, from his papers and possessions. In the years following his death, Thaddeus became the centre of a popular cult in Ivrea, and was apparently the source of numerous miracles (record of these was destroyed in a fire, 1620). His beatification occurred in the nineteenth century.

⁴¹⁸ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 455-63.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 462.

Desmond and MacCarthy. At several instances, secular involvement was so severe as to warrant protest to the papacy; Fitzgerald's kidnap in 1484 and the excommunication of MacCarthy's lay allies are but two examples. Still, the censure in 1492 of Thaddeus' opponents in Cork and Cloyne best demonstrates the breadth of secular involvement in clerical affairs. The potent lordships of Desmond and Barrymore are perhaps foremost, but their liege-lords and allies are also to be considered. The earldom alone held marriage ties to the Fitzgibbons and the Lords of Fermoy. Quite besides the strength of the nobles, the opposition of the corporate body of the University of Youghal and the corporation of Cork are significant. The election of a bishop was of central importance to life within a diocese, but the rampant partisanship and deep divisions within secular society in Cork, Cloyne and Ross went further. In the pre-refomations period, the bishoprics were but another theatre in which to continue the internecine hostilities between clan and lordship.

The involvement of the corporations may indicate concerns beyond familial one-upmanship, a worry over the provision of worship. If so, they were ineffective, as even with the death of MacCarthy, the crises of Co. Cork's episcopacies were unfinished. Fitzgerald enjoyed several years of uninterrupted rule, but further claimants arose before the end of the fifteenth century. In 1499, two individuals were proclaimed for the bishopric, both of whom were supported by the Desmonds, against Gerald Fitzgerald. Patrick Cant⁴²⁰ enjoyed the patronage of the earl of Desmond, first as abbot of Fermoy and later as an episcopal candidate. MacCarthy of Desmond was named as the sponsor of John FitzEdmund Fitzgerald.⁴²¹ The Cant family was prominent in the city of Cork and the Geraldine assistance implies familial connections. Nevertheless the incumbent, Fitzgerald, chose to resign in favour of John FitzEdmund Fitzgerald, his 27 year old nephew. Concurrently, the bishop of Ross and Henry VII supported the same candidate. The King wrote to request the pope confirm FitzEdmund's appointment, "*quod cum commendasset D. Joannum Edmundi de Geraldinis ad ecclesias Corkagen. et Clonen. in dominio suo Hiberniae unitas, in cuius favorem a modern Episcopo resignacio facienda erat.*"⁴²² After several more complications,⁴²³ FitzEdmund ascended the post before the end of the year, marking the end of the lengthy episcopal disputes in Cork and Cloyne.⁴²⁴

⁴²⁰ Also referred to as Condon.

⁴²¹ M. Kiely, 'Episcopal Succession in Cork and Cloyne in the Fifteenth Century', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 40 (1932), 116.

⁴²² Brady, *Episcopal Succession*, ii, 81. Quoting *Acta Consistorialia*.

⁴²³ The Pope had instructed that Gerald could not resign the see while two candidates were claiming right of succession. This, presumably, was to prevent a return to the conflict between Roche and FitzGerald. Further, as

The quarrels over the see had lasted well over thirty years, and the involvement of secular dynasties was now well entrenched in the ecclesiastical affairs of Co. Cork. In many respects this was little different to dioceses across Ireland, England or Europe, where lay interests engendered particular clerical appointments and shifts in church politics. Nevertheless, the cathedral chapter at Cork would be the scene of murderous dynastic rivalry. The Annals of the Four Masters record that, “[the] Barry More was slain by his own kinsman, David Barry, Archdeacon of Cloyne and Cork. David was slain by Thomas Barry and Muintir O’Callaghan.”⁴²⁵ These consanguineous murders occurred in the year 1500 and Desmond’s involvement in the affair is evident; “[within 20 days of its burial] the Earl of Desmond disinterred the body of David...and made it into dust and ashes.”⁴²⁶ Shortly after, still seeking vengeance, the Earl despoiled FitzEdmund’s estates and the manse of the cathedrals. It becomes quite obvious that Desmond assumed knowledge and even culpability in and of the murder by the bishop. Losing the favour of one of the most powerful families in the region was evidently to the detriment of the see, as neither the sanctity of the church nor that inherent to the office itself prevented the raiding of episcopal lands by the earl.

The only other surviving record from FitzEdmund’s episcopate emphasises lay interaction within the church of Cork and Cloyne. In it, “John, Lord Bishop of Cork and Cloyne, in Christ Church in Corcke...[confirmed] Gerott in the principalitie of the Rotchfords.”⁴²⁷ This judgement, dated to 25 May 1514, outlines the extents of some of the diocesan holdings and implies the subservience of the Rotchfords to the bishop. However, the identities of the witnesses to this grant are of greater significance; Patrick Cant, Philip Gould, Edmund Tirry, John Galway and William Tirry. Quite aside from the mayor of Cork (Edmund Tirry) and two past mayors (Galway and William Tirry) and the official of the city (Gould), the presence of Cant suggests the blessing of Desmond upon this transaction. During his role as a potential successor, the abbot of Fermoy had betrayed his relationship with the earldom. At some point in the preceding decade FitzEdmund had successfully pacified the vengeful earl, either through his innocence or by compensation. By 1514, the bishop was once more working closely with some of the most powerful, albeit primarily Anglo-Norman, magnates of the region.

Patrick Cant’s provision was based upon the death of Jordan Purcell, Thaddeus MacCarthy’s had been settled on Roche’s resignation and FitzEdmund’s on the that of FitzGerald, straight succession was difficult to establish. A consistory court was required to solve the issue.

⁴²⁴ CPR, xvii, 303.

⁴²⁵ AFM, iii, 1258.

⁴²⁶ AU, iii, 451.

⁴²⁷ Smith, *History of Cork*, i, 363.

FitzEdmund died in 1520, to be replaced by John Benet in 1523. During the intervening years, the sees of Cork and Cloyne appear to have been void, though it is possible that Patrick Cant administered the dioceses for a short time.⁴²⁸ Regardless of the presence of any caretaker bishop, Benet was seemingly able to enjoy his rule without interruption; a welcome return to normalcy for dioceses, in what was the second straight uncontested diocesan succession. However, far from a utopian rule, the annates suggest a relatively confused one. There are only three entries for the whole of his rule, but all complain of *intrusus*, intruders. An entry from 1525 names several benefices which had been misappropriated by those individuals. The parishes were Liscleary, Inishkenny, Templemichael and Tisaxon.⁴²⁹ Bolster highlights the high rate of *intrusus*, as the annates only record three instances for the whole of FitzEdmund's rule but four in just two years.⁴³⁰ However, she misses the likelihood of additional cases in the later years of Benet's episcopacy. Consequently, it is highly likely that the administrative structures and systems for advancement of the clergy within the church in Cork and Cloyne were still disrupted from the previous half century of turmoil.

At this time, the diocese Ross was enjoying some measure of stability in its episcopal succession. After the upheavals of Thaddeus MacCarthy's claims, Odo O'Driscoll remained in post until 1494. After that date, Edmund de Courcey claimed the episcopal seat until he retired in 1517, whereupon the bishop, originally a friar of Timoleague, re-entered the friary there. He died the following year. As in Cork and Cloyne, the processes of election and consecration of the new bishop worked without hitch. Neither lay politics, nor ecclesiastical intrigue intruded upon the south-western dioceses until after Henry VIII's pronouncements. When it reasserted itself, local lay opinion was to have a profound effect upon the course of the reformations in all three dioceses.

⁴²⁸ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 470.

⁴²⁹ E. Bolster, 'Obligationes pro Annatis Diocesis Corcagiensis,' *Archivium Hibernicum*, 29 (1970), 32.

⁴³⁰ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 492.

The bishoprics during the early sixteenth century

The first episcopal seat to be filled by Henry VIII after his break with the papacy was that of Cork and Cloyne. His selection was Dominick Tirrey, the rector of Shandon. The promotion of Tirrey's candidacy is lost, as were his patrons, but it remains probable that his person was advocated by powerful allies. Dominick himself was well established within the city of Cork, but his family had a long history with the settlement and its surrounds. The Tirreys had strong connections to Castlemartyr, Carrigtwohill and Rathcormac, as well as Cahirultan, Castlelyons and Spike Island. The city too, bore considerable links, with several members of the family owning, buying and selling land throughout the municipality, including Dungarvan, weirs in Cork harbour and lands abutting those bequeathed in the Wynchedon will.⁴³¹ The Tirrey family was old and well established. Whether by accident or design, Henry VIII had selected a bishop who would easily be accepted.

In this period, during the aftermath of the Act of Supremacy, the Henrician reformation was little more than a schism. Beyond the change in allegiance, the vast majority of Henry's policies were conservative, preserving patterns of religiosity as they were (discounting the dissolution of the monasteries). Tirrey's appointment was based, at least partially, in pre-existing English law as the bishopric of Cork and Cloyne, now vacant by death of John Benet, was judged to be in gift of the crown. The new bishop was consecrated by the archbishop of Cashel and later endorsed by his peers in Ross, Emly and Limerick, further cementing his authority in tradition. Although the nascent bishop quickly acknowledged Henry's position as ultimate head of the Irish church and rejected the power of the pope,⁴³² his election retained the appearances of validity. When coupled with the penchant for the most potent families of Cork and Cloyne to work with bishops raised from their number, it is perhaps no surprise that Tirrey encountered little resistance and at least some measure of welcome amongst his flock.

This flow of support and favour did not simply travel in a single direction. The new bishop was expected to repay his patrons through those means most readily available to him, starting with the crown. After his appointment in 1502, John McCarrol took one of the king's men into his service; under the garb of a request Tirrey was given a similar instruction.

⁴³¹ Terry, 'Aspects of settlement,' 23-30.

⁴³² Brady, *Clerical and Parochial Records*, iii, 45-6.

He was to find for John Wise, a chaplain, an adequate pension to be paid out of the bishop's own income, until such time as he should find ecclesiastical office.⁴³³ The practice was not new, but serves to display Dominic Tirrey's allegiance. The crown had used its auspices to place him into a position of power and expected a return upon its investment. The oligarchs of Co. Cork no doubt expected similar repayment, though their demands are not preserved. Undoubtedly, they came in the form of advowson and the advancement of family members within the minor and major orders.

Direct evidence of support for the new bishop is hard to find, limited by the restrictions of surviving manuscripts. However, in 1537, shortly after Dominic Tirrey took post, the layman William Sarsfield demonstrated his acceptance of the new religious order. Like the Tirreys, the Sarsfields were a well established Cork family. William, in his capacity as a notary would have drawn up numerous documents; one has survived to us. In it, the author makes pointed reference to, "King Henry VIII, orthodox Defender of the Faith, Supreme Head under Christ of the Churches of England and Ireland, our invincible prince."⁴³⁴ Such a detailed and emphatic statement went beyond the bounds of propriety. Instead, it was intended to be, and should be thought of as such, a declaration of intent on the part of William Sarsfield. The extent to which his sentiments were shared amongst his neighbours is unknown and can not be proved, but evidently Tirrey possessed at least one ally amongst the laity.

In contrast to Henry VIII, the papacy was slow to respond to the vacancy in the sees of Cork and Cloyne. Still at an early period in the reformations, Rome had not yet established a system of papal appointees to contend with those of the schismatic Anglican church. Not until September 1540 did the pope appoint a cleric to the conjoined dioceses, a Franciscan friar named Lewis McNamara. He died in Rome shortly after receipt of his provision.⁴³⁵ Moving swiftly, another candidate was chosen before the end of the year and John O'Heyne began the journey to Ireland. Soon after his arrival there, O'Heyne had his writ translated to the diocese of Elphin.⁴³⁶ The first Catholic bishop of Cork and Cloyne complained that he was prevented from claiming either the see or its temporalities by an

⁴³³ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, iii, 2.

⁴³⁴ Marsh's Library, Dublin, MS CI 13.

⁴³⁵ Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 439.

⁴³⁶ Upon his appointment to Elphin, the diocese already possessed both a royal and papal appointee. The introduction of a third contender for the bishopric was unsuccessful. F.X. Martin, 'Bernard O'Higgin, O.S.A., bishop of Elphin,' A. Cosgrove and D. McCartney (Eds), *Studies in Irish history presented to R. Dudley Edwards* (Dublin, 1979), 64.

incumbent schismatic bishop who had the support of lapsed Catholics.⁴³⁷ O'Heyne, an outsider, had fared poorly in the arena of ecclesiastical politics in a region where lay influence was so important. Upon Tirrey's death, during Mary's reign, O'Heyne returned to claim the united sees of Cork and Cloyne. Once again, he was unsuccessful. In 1556, Petrus Wall was appointed by Pious VI, though his tenure was as ineffectual as O'Heyne's. The Annals of St Mary's of the Island⁴³⁸ record that Wall, of the Order of Dominic, was nominated to the bishopric of Cloyne (and presumably, Cork).⁴³⁹ Given the omission of a consecration or any further information upon this papal appointee, the weakness of Rome in the conjoined dioceses did continue well into the Elizabethan period.

Conversely, the diocese of Ross offers an apt example of the limitations of royal prerogative in clerical appointments. The first consecrated Anglican bishop of that see, William Lyon, was not *in situ* until 1582. The absence of English rule is reflected in comparative strength of the local powers, most especially the MacCarthys and O'Sullivans. The sixteenth century saw no less than eight Roman bishops and less than five years of vacancy. Unlike the common practice of external, unknown, candidates enjoying papal preferment in Cork and Cloyne during the early years of the reformations, Rome's appointments to Ross were rather more local. Long a stronghold of Gaelic interests, the diocese engineered a further erosion of crown authority through the offices of the MacCarthy clan. From 1526 to 1553, Diarmard MacCarthy held the bishopric. Named Demetrius Mac Car in his bull of appointment and later Mackham and Mackhani, Diarmard's familial connections are self evident. Under the protection of that powerful clan, this bishop enjoyed a long reign, surviving both the Henrician and Edwardian rules, to die in the first year of Mary's reign. He was succeeded by two short lived bishops, Maurice O'Fiheely⁴⁴⁰ and Maurice O'Hea, or Hayes, who ruled 1554 to 1559 and 1559 to 1561 respectively.⁴⁴¹ The impact of these clerics is negligible and nothing survives to us of their rule or worth. However, their mere presence was enough to hinder the Protestant reformations.

The beginning of the Elizabethan era sees yet another Roman cleric taking up the episcopacy of Ross. In 1561, Thomas O'Herlihy was appointed to the rule by Pope Gregory XIII. His tenure was that of one of the earliest adherents to the Catholic reformation in Ireland, but also demonstrated the first expansion of crown influence into the religion of Ross

⁴³⁷ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, iii, 3.

⁴³⁸ Now unfortunately lost.

⁴³⁹ Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 445.

⁴⁴⁰ Relation to the fifteenth century scholar is possible, though undocumented.

⁴⁴¹ Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 448.

during the Tudor period. During the middle decades of the sixteenth centuries, the Roman church had begun to respond to the ecclesiastical reforms proposed by Luther, Zwingli and their contemporaries. Distinct from the concerns of the political reformations of Henry VIII, these issues spoke to the heart of the nature of worship and clerical conduct. The Council of Trent began on 13 December 1545 and would run for eighteen years over twenty-five sessions. It would determine the church's attitude towards the reforms.⁴⁴² Ultimately, the council was decided by the third period (1562-63), which was dominated by the militant Jesuits and the strong influence of the Italian and Spanish clerics. The decrees of this council were signed by only three Irish bishops; among their number was Thomas O'Herlihy of Ross. Ware reports that Thomas was present in the final year of the Council of Trent, alongside Donatus of Raphoe and Eugenius of Aghadown.⁴⁴³ At this time, in 1563, O'Herlihy was already bishop of Ross.

His role there was defined by the context of this Catholic reformation and the church politics of the period. One seventeenth century émigré Irish author remarked that, "It is almost incredible with what zeal he laboured there against heresy, by preaching, administering the sacraments, and ordaining priests."⁴⁴⁴ David Wolf, who came from Rome to the neighbouring diocese of Waterford was given instructions to, "visit the Catholic leaders, and especially the four chief princes of the kingdom, to commend in the name of his holiness their unflinching constancy and zeal, and to encourage them to persevere in the defence of the catholic faith." Wolf was also to ensure residency, encourage the guidance and instruction of the laity and vigilance in selection of appropriate clergymen.⁴⁴⁵ O'Herlihy must have been given similar direction.

The prelate reigned at least until 1570, presumably in full possession of the temporalities of the see. As with his predecessors, familial connections certainly aided Thomas' missions within the countryside. The O'Herlihys are prominent in Co. Cork as secular and religious clerics throughout the medieval period. Similarly, the clan held its *tuath* lands in *Ros Ailithir*. The English state papers record that his support (and activism) spread beyond the boundaries of the episcopal writ. In 1569 the men who were intended to plant the province of Munster were urged to hurry as news reached the crown of James FitzMaurice FitzGerald's anti-English machinations. He had brought the bishops of

⁴⁴² U. Rublack, *Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, 2005), 87.

⁴⁴³ Ware, *Hibernia Sacra*, ii, 224.

⁴⁴⁴ P. O'Sullivan Beare, *Chapters towards a History of Ireland in the reign of Elizabeth*, M.J. Byrne, ed. and trans. (Cork, 2008), 18.

⁴⁴⁵ Meigs, *The Reformations in Ireland*, 74.

Ross and Cashel both to Kerry and intended to send the pair to Spain to promote his cause there.⁴⁴⁶ The strength of O’Herlihy’s Catholicism would have come to nought had he been unable to express it within his diocese by virtue of local opposition. That the cleric proved himself an irritant to the English newcomers evidences his ability to express the authority of the Roman ecclesiarchy. However, soon after embarking upon this mission to Spain, Thomas O’Herlihy left office, but not through the constraints of mortality. Instead, he resigned.⁴⁴⁷ This Catholic cleric, ostensibly staunch in his faith and evidently active within and for his cure, did not remove himself voluntarily.

The final years of Thomas’ episcopacy coincided with the first of the Desmond Rebellions. Though comparatively weak, with unsuccessful sieges at Cork, Kilmallock and Kilkenny, the uprising did disrupt much of the region’s economic and political structures. The annals record the rising of 1569 as follows,

“James, the son of Maurice, son of the Earl [James FitzMaurice Fitzgerald], was a warlike man of many troops this year; and the English [Anglo-Norman families] and Irish of Munster, from the Barrow to Carn-Ui-Neid, entered into a unanimous and firm confederacy with him against the Queen's Parliament. The Earl of Ormond, i.e. Thomas, the son of James, son of Pierce, son of James, son of Edmond, being at this time in England, his two brothers, Edmond of Caladh and Edward, had confederated with James, the son of Maurice... The Earl returned to Ireland the same year.”⁴⁴⁸

The cooperation of two of the great Irish Earls dictated some strong response by the agents of the crown. In 1569, warfare ranged throughout the province of Munster and county of Cork as the Lord Justice of Ireland led a retaliatory strike. Ballymartin was the site of the English camp and Henry Sydney moved from there into the city of Cork, then Limerick and Galway. However, despite his operations there the region remained insecure. Consequently, the first task of the newly created Lord President of Munster, John Perrot, was to suppress the FitzGerald movement. He arrived at Waterford on 27 February, 1571 and began to prosecute a vigorous campaign (though from the outset, Perrot requested release from his duties upon

⁴⁴⁶ CSPI, i, 401.

⁴⁴⁷ Ware, *Hibernia Sacra*, ii, 224.

⁴⁴⁸ AFM, v, 1632.

grounds of ill health).⁴⁴⁹ The newly arrived official complained of the damages done to the country by the rebels, but seems to have pursued FitzGerald aggressively. The Lord President submitted frequent reports, identifying his numerous allies and explaining his employment of local mercenaries, the *kerne*. Warring continued until 1573, but during this time Perrot was also active politically, keen to deprive his opponent of materiel and men. Amongst his allies were the Earl of Clancarr, the Viscounts of Buttevant and Fermoy, Sir Thomas of Desmond (of Ormond), Sir Donough MacCarthy and Sir Cormac MacTeig MacCarthy.⁴⁵⁰ Conversely, the Lord President worked to isolate the rebels. Here, Thomas O’Herlihy, bishop of Ross, seems to have fallen foul of the English statesman.

As previously mentioned, the Catholic bishop abdicated his responsibilities in the early 1570s. Ware suggests that this occurred in 1570, though O’Herlihy did not die until 1579, “*in coenobio fratrum Minorum de observantia*,” in the habit of the Franciscan friars of the observance, at Kilcrea near Cork.⁴⁵¹ However, this simple conclusion is disputed by several antiquarian authors. Although precise dates remain unclear, it is suggested in various volumes that the bishop did not merely resign, but was arrested by Perrot who sent him to the Tower of London. There O’Herlihy would be kept for a period not less than three years. His resignation, rather than being voluntary in nature, is instead suggested to be a deprivation by the Lord President or Queen.⁴⁵² This account is more compatible with that which is known regarding O’Herlihy’s character. The Tridentine reformer who actively involved himself (through a diplomatic mission on the part of the rebel FitzGerald) and anti-English politics would not have resigned upon a whim. Still, verification remains troublesome as the episcopacy of Ross is often ignored in official correspondence and there is little evidence to suggest Perrot was even aware of his existence.

Several letters attempted to bring concerns regarding the Roman bishops of Munster to the attention of crown policy, though these were more general. One exception to this rule was the aforementioned diplomatic mission. State papers demonstrate that the English governors of Munster were well informed on the inner workings of FitzGerald’s covenant, that they knew of his intent to send bishops to Spain. “James FitzMaurice [*et al*], have in their parliament agreed to send messengers to the King of Spain. The Bishop of Ross in

⁴⁴⁹CSPI, i, 438. Perrot seems to have shared the common view of his contemporaries; that employment in Ireland was an unwelcome burden, potentially hazardous to one’s fortune, career and standing at court.

⁴⁵⁰ CSPI, i, 494-495.

⁴⁵¹ Ware, *Hibernia Sacra*, Part 2, 224.

⁴⁵² Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 448.

Carbary... [is intended].”⁴⁵³ This meeting occurred in early 1569. Later that year, an unnamed Irish bishop was arrested and taken to the Tower.⁴⁵⁴ Although this seizure occurred at least two years before the antiquarian accounts suggest, it is appealing as a date for O’Herlihy’s capture. Coming about before Perrot’s arrival in Ireland, this incarceration came in the midst of Sydney’s campaign through Munster. Furthermore, after this date, mention of Thomas O’Herlihy, as bishop of Ross, is absent in the state papers.

The date of O’Herlihy’s incarceration was most likely the summer of 1569. Although this date does conflict with other sources, its implications do not. The Irish bishop held considerable influence amongst the laity, most specifically with FitzGerald, as evidenced by the proposed mission to Spain. Concurrently, he enjoyed a potent Tridentine religiosity. However, his downfall was located in the contraction of the Irish polity to the advantage of the English interest. As Sydney moved into Munster in force, he was able to assert his own rule over the region in general and O’Herlihy specifically. For the first time in the sixteenth century, the crown had been able to influence the episcopacy of Ross. However, this did not serve to enhance the English reformations there. Shortly after the arrest, Sydney moved on to quell other problem areas without appointing a replacement to the vacant see. Likewise, John Perrot wrote in the summer of 1573 to request permission to visit with his queen, claiming that he has been very active in the discharge of his duty, “and executed this time for treasons and felony’s about 60 persons, caused all the Irishry (in manner) within this province to forego their glybbes, and... for all my gains here is for every white hair that I brought over with me sixty and a thin purse.”⁴⁵⁵ Soon afterwards, he quit the country to return to London.

Philip O’Sullivan Beare provides an alternative end to O’Herlihy’s story. Writing in the 1620s, O’Sullivan used his extensive local knowledge to provide a detailed account of the Elizabethan period.⁴⁵⁶ He agreed that the bishop of Ross was “arrested, sent to England in chains and cast into the Tower of London.”⁴⁵⁷ However, his tale does not end there.

⁴⁵³ CSPI, i, 401.

⁴⁵⁴ CSPI, i, 415.

⁴⁵⁵ R. Caulfield, *The Council Book of the Corporation of the city of Cork, from 1609 to 1643, and from 1690 to 1800 Edited from the original, with annals and appendices compiled from public and private records*, i (Guildford, 1876), xvi.

⁴⁵⁶ O’Sullivan Beare wrote extensively on this topic, in defence of the Gaelic Irish. He was born in Ireland in Co. Kerry within the traditional sept lands of his clan and allegedly ended his days in the Franciscan friary at Kinsale after an extended continental exile. A fuller biography is provided in T. Barnard, ‘O’Sullivan Beare, Philip (b. c.1590, d. in or after 1634)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20913>, accessed 3 Nov 2014].

⁴⁵⁷ O’Sullivan Beare, *Chapters towards a History of Ireland*, 18.

“Thence brought before the Privy Council, he [O’Herlihy] with marvellous learning and skill pleaded his cause and refuted charges. However, he was not on that account the less maltreated, but was sent back to the same prison... Thrown into his former bonds he was long tortured with hunger, thirst, and fetid darkness, and his body from filth covered with vermin, and the soles of his feet gnawed by rats. At last he was released, some of the Queen's councillors thinking he was a fool and an idiot. I do not know if it be true, as I heard, that some of the Queen's councillors were corrupted by a bribe from Cormac McCarthy, son of Thady, Irish chief of Muskerry, to free the bishop. Freed from his chains, for some years he discharged his holy duty, and at length fulfilled his holy mission.”⁴⁵⁸

This is support by another source, which recorded the burial of the Bishop O’Herlihy at Kilcrea in 1588.⁴⁵⁹ Regardless of the precise end of the story, no English or Roman bishop was appointed to Ross. Whether by the absence of John Perrot or the return of O’Herlihy, the royal cause was weakened in Co. Cork after 1570.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁵⁹ Jennings, ‘Part II: Brevis Synopsis,’ 184.

The Anglican see of Ross

Amidst this preponderance of popish bishops, the Anglican seat at Ross remained ostensibly and officially empty. However, a curious reference from the courts of the admiralty⁴⁶⁰ relates the experience of one Giles Wiggers of Antwerp. His ship, en route to Calais or Dunkirk from Lisbon with cargo of sugars and spices, was taken while at anchor in Portland Bay. Wiggers yielded to the new masters of the vessel and was taken to the bay of Rosscarberry where a pilot was summoned to bring the ship to a safe harbour. “Whereupon,

two boats came aboard this examine [the vessel], in one of which was the bishop of Ross, Cornelius Brenner, with whom he agreed for 30 dc [ducats] to bring them to some good harbour. Upon which bargain certain fishermen, which the bishop brought with him, conducted the ship into Glandore haven.”

Once ashore, the bishop took some 60lb of spices in lieu of the moneys promised. Wiggers asked for aid in obtaining justice for his dead shipmates and reclaiming the ship, but instead, not satisfied with his gains, Brenner took the sailor to his demesne and held him there for four days. His freedom was bought only with a further 732lb of spices and the ship was lost, to be ruined on the shores of Cornwall, near Padstow.⁴⁶¹

The name Cornelius Brenner is all but unknown in the histories of Ross and his bishopric, if it did exist, has largely gone unrecorded by antiquarian and modern scholars. However, there are several snippets which support the Wiggers’ account. Henry Sydney made a progress in Munster during 1576, and part of his report mentions his travels through Co. Cork and a meeting with the bishop elect of Ross, who was unfortunately anonymous.⁴⁶² Being some six years before the appointment of Lyon, this elect must be some other cleric. In an annotation, Brady, who edited this collection, supplements the aforementioned document by appending the moniker Cornelius O’Brennan. His justification for this likely comes from a complaint made by Archbishop Loftus and others to the crown. These grievances were articulated in a letter (1578) forwarded to England and referred to the Commissioners for Ecclesiastical Matters in Ireland and to the Commission itself. The

⁴⁶⁰ Thanks to Ivy Manning for her assistance with this section.

⁴⁶¹ The National Archives: High Court of Admiralty M13/22 ff 40v-2. 10 February 1576. Deposition of Giles Wiggers of Antwerp, mariner, aged about 34.

⁴⁶² Brady, *Episcopal Succession*, 13.

protestations were manifold, but included that the commissioners had allowed some men, “without Letters Patent [to] intrude themselves into bishoprics in that land, as Cornelius O’Brenan, a Layman, did into the bishopric of Ross Carbury in the county of Cork.”⁴⁶³

Consequently, it becomes clear that Brenner, as referred to by Wiggers, was actually Cornelius O’Brennan. By some contrivance, he became the bishop elect of Cork, although it is likely that he remained unconsecrated; no records of Anglican or Catholic church countermand this supposition. This limitation makes efforts to assess his allegiance problematic. What can be determined is that O’Brennan was the sole claimant to the diocese. During this period, the Roman see of Ross was empty, having fallen vacant upon the death of O’Herlihy in the mid 1570s, not to be filled until 1582 by Bonaventura. Similarly, Lyon was not appointed until 1582. With no opposition, his enemies are unidentifiable. However, a clue is to be found within Sydney’s letter. He arrived in Cork, staying there for six weeks, in which time he received numerous visitors, including O’Brennan. Sydney’s presence in Cork was the living symbol of English rule and his apparently unremarkable meeting with Cornelius,⁴⁶⁴ bishop elect of Ross, strongly indicates a conjunction of allegiances between the two men. The Lord Lieutenant would not have sat at table with a papal appointee.

Further investigation elaborates upon the relationship between O’Brennan and Sydney. The latter supported the election of the nascent bishop to Walsingham.⁴⁶⁵ To judge from that letter, Cornelius had the rule from the summer of 1576. So, in opposition to the established histories, William Lyons was not to have been the first Anglican bishop of Ross. Even if he operated independently, Cornelius O’Brennan derived his authority from the Act of Supremacy and the English crown. This status is emphasised by a request to have him confirmed as bishop *post mortem*. Throughout the medieval period, the precise means by which a see had become vacant could invalidate episcopal succession.⁴⁶⁶ The disputes that plagued Cork and Cloyne during the late fifteenth century were based in no small part upon this principle. The region was well versed in the conflict that could be caused by loopholes in ecclesiastical law. George Fenton,⁴⁶⁷ a resident of Co. Cork, wrote to Walsingham “For

⁴⁶³ Brady, *Episcopal Succession*, 30.

⁴⁶⁴ Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 161.

⁴⁶⁵ CSPI, ii, 94.

⁴⁶⁶ Where one party held the right upon the previous incumbent’s resignation, another might successfully argue for the illegitimacy of that predecessor. To invalidate that rule was to invalidate the succession that was based, in no small part, upon its legitimacy.

⁴⁶⁷ A George Fenton made a deposition in 1641. He was a Protestant merchant and likely descendant of this Elizabethan Fenton. *1641 Depositions Project, online transcript* [<http://1641.tcd.ie/deposition.php?depID?=822162r137>] accessed 3 May 2013.

confirmation of the late elected Bishop of Ross Carbery.”⁴⁶⁸ A response to the affirmative was granted in July of 1581.⁴⁶⁹ This procedure was certainly undertaken with the diocesan succession in mind, especially given the appearance of William Lyons the following year.

Still, if O’Brennan’s authority stemmed from the Anglican church, his relationship with the reformations was likely less than pious. The complaint of Loftus *et al* casts strong aspersions upon Cornelius’ ability to fulfil his clerical role. No firm reformer was he, no royal appointee to the diocese to facilitate religious change and crown policy. Instead, the bishop elect apparently intruded himself into post, most likely to avail himself of the wealth and status of the bishopric; Loftus’ description of him as a “layman” lends support to this argument. The accusation is clear: O’Brennan had no ecclesiastical background; instead he aspired to the lands and powers of the church. Certainly his actions towards Wiggers imply an impressive materialism that took precedence over the Christian values of charity and justice.

It is perhaps surprising that the powerful lay interests of Ross were willing to accept such a man, whose leadership would surely harm the provision of religion in the diocese. Nevertheless, Cornelius’ presence must have been predicated upon the pre-established pattern of secular support. Wiggers’ account evidences the extent of the bishop elect’s power. O’Brennan held significant influence over the bay of Rosscarbery, its sailors and fishermen. Beyond that, rather than a lay lord, it was this layman cleric who met the incoming ship and arranged for its safe landing at the harbour. Further, this layman cleric likely had possession of the temporalities of the see. Wiggers states that the “Bishop promised him great friendship, and took him to his house where he was closely detained for four days.”⁴⁷⁰ Although unclear, this building was most likely the manse of the bishop. Subsequently, O’Brennan held custody of influence and property he could not have held without the acceptance of the laity.

It is unfortunate that nothing is known of Cornelius’ early life, for his supporters are unidentifiable.⁴⁷¹ His name, O’Brennan, is not one previously related to the county of Cork; thus his friendships are obfuscated. Nevertheless, his presence must have proved a hindrance to both the Catholic and Protestant reformations. Throughout his rule as bishop elect Cornelius, by mere virtue of his presence, denied any other access to the see. More

⁴⁶⁸ CPSI, ii, 294. March 20 1581.

⁴⁶⁹ CPSI, ii, 314. July 1581.

⁴⁷⁰ Deposition of Giles Wiggers.

⁴⁷¹ Although the account of Wiggers does suggest dealing with pirates.

specifically, his retention of the physical properties of the episcopacy, the manse and incomes, prevented a more clerically minded candidate from inserting or supporting himself. Significantly, O'Brennan's tenure also served to erode the rule of the crown within Ross. Contemporaneously, the bishops of Cork and Cashel were acting as judges of English statute, forming courts upon the English pattern to replace the Brehon law. Cornelius acted against the royal interest and curtailing the expansion of the English interests and policy in the region for his own self-interest.

The Anglican sees of Cork and Cloyne

While the reformations stalled in Ross, O'Brennan's counterpart in the united dioceses of Cork and Cloyne worked hard to further the Protestant cause. Since the structured years of Tirry's episcopate during the reigns of Henry and Edward, the regulation of the church in the two dioceses had vacillated. The reins of power were held by two men in the years following Tirry's death, from 1557 to 1582. The first, who ruled until 1566, was named Roger Skiddy, whose family would later become synonymous with the city.⁴⁷² However, Skiddy ruled only for four years prior to his resignation. His enthusiasm for the Elizabethan reformation is undocumented, but likely uninspired. Skiddy was nominated to post during the Marian reign, which championed Roman clerics, though he was not consecrated until 1562. His career in Cork and Cloyne was largely unremarkable and Skiddy resigned in 1566, which coincided with a visit to the region by Henry Sydney.⁴⁷³ This timing can not be coincidental; rather, it is likely to have been related to a refusal to adhere to the Anglican reforms or to distribute the Elizabethan Book of Common Prayer. Skiddy's contemporary in Limerick certainly suffered that fate. Bishop Lacey, appointed during the Catholic resurgence, was removed for this reason in 1571, to be replaced by the Protestant William Casey.⁴⁷⁴ In 1567, Skiddy was granted a pardon for unspecified crimes.⁴⁷⁵ This lends credence to this theory of recusancy.

After his resignation, Skiddy took possession of the collegiate church at Youghal. In 1577, James Unak bequeathed to "Roger Skiddie, wardine [of Youghal], in recompense of such duties as he neglected to pay, 2s."⁴⁷⁶ The commencement of Skiddy's wardenship certainly came after his resignation as bishop, though the precise date is unclear. His association with Youghal does strongly imply a friendly relationship with the Desmond clan. Being as the collegiate church resided firmly within Geraldine control, the new warden certainly enjoyed a positive relationship with the family, whose opposition to English interests would soon be demonstrated in blood. Furthermore, the town of Youghal was a

⁴⁷² Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 439.

⁴⁷³ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, iii, 60

⁴⁷⁴ Edwards, *Church and State*, 73

⁴⁷⁵ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, iii, 60

⁴⁷⁶ R. Caulfield, *The Council Book of the Corporation of Youghal, from 1610 to 1659, from 1666 to 1687, and from 1690 to 1800 edited from the original, with annals and appendices compiled from public and private records* (Guildford, 1878), xliii.

centre of conservative religiosity, hosting several communities of Catholic brethren and a Jesuit school during this period.⁴⁷⁷

Following Skiddy's episcopate the united dioceses lay empty for some four years. The cause of this is uncertain, but the vacancy was ended by an assuredly Anglican appointee. Richard Dixon's tenure as bishop in Cork and Cloyne, though problematic, evidences the growth of English power and spread of her ecclesiastical involvement during the middle years of Elizabeth's reign. While Ross continued to exist beyond English influence, Sydney's authority pushed his own chaplain into the bishopric.⁴⁷⁸ With this powerful ally, Dixon either aligned himself with, or circumvented, local interests to take possession of the temporalities. This cleric was no mere sycophant, but invested in Anglican reform both through his chaplaincy to the Lord Lieutenant and a prebendary of St Patrick's, Dublin, that he held prior to the episcopate.⁴⁷⁹ Unfortunately, the personal failings of the cleric prevented any realisation of reforming zeal. In 1571, less than a year after Dixon's consecration as bishop, he was ordered to do penance in the cathedral at Dublin. Richard Dixon came to the county already married, though it seems his wife Margaret Palmer did not come with him. She resided in England with their children. Instead, once in Cork he, "under colour of matrimony, retained a woman of suspected life as his wife."⁴⁸⁰ Anne Goold was this lady of questionable character and, after his dalliance with her, the bishop attempted to entice another local noblewoman into matrimony.⁴⁸¹ Dixon was accused of bigamy, adultery and associations with an immoral woman. His accusers, including Archbishop Loftus and the Lord Justice, lacked the power to deprive him but nonetheless set him penance before pursuing his divestiture through other means. By the end of 1571, Dixon had been removed and his successor granted letters of preferment.

Loftus provided the letters patent, commending "the bearer Matthew Seyne [Sheyn] to be preferred to the bishoprick of Cork, vacant by the deprivation of Dixon."⁴⁸² Simultaneous approbation came from the Lord Justice, FitzWilliam.⁴⁸³ The episcopate of Matthew Sheyn was another result of the waxing of English influence in the region, for he was a Protestant reformer. In the years preceding the rebellions of 1579 and 1580, the cause of the Anglican

⁴⁷⁷ Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, iii, 73-4

⁴⁷⁸ CSPI, i, 424.

⁴⁷⁹ Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 439.

⁴⁸⁰ CSPI, i, 444.

⁴⁸¹ Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 439.

⁴⁸² CSPI, i, 460.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, 460.

reformation was staunchly and forcibly driven forwards. The Ecclesiastical Commission recorded a significant increase in fines collected 1577-82 compared with 1573-7.⁴⁸⁴ Nobles were penalised for attending mass; Viscount Baltinglass was fined 100 marks for attending mass. Into the diocesan seat of Cork and Cloyne, the Archbishop of Dublin had ensconced a candidate who was “a man [who] in the judgement of the godly there that know him for his sound religion, honest life and good learning [is] most meet for that dignity. I have known him for seven years and think him the fittest man for the place as he is acquainted with the country’s language.”⁴⁸⁵

Despite these impressive credentials, Sheyn still fell victim to the vicissitudes of *real politik*. He was discovered to have “sold the livings of his diocese to horsemen and kerne, [and] answered both privately to them.”⁴⁸⁶ Ostensibly, this was excused by the poverty of the dioceses, but, though poor, they were not poverty stricken. Still, both Sir William Drury (President of Munster) and the Commissioners for Ecclesiastical matters accepted this reasoning. Crucially, these sales of episcopal property allowed Sheyn to successfully prosecute his reforms in the two dioceses.

His was perhaps the strongest reforming will of the Tudor reformations in Co. Cork, at least of his predecessors. By Ware, Sheyn was educated at Oxford⁴⁸⁷ and Sydney’s progressions about Munster record that Sheyn was of great assistance in Cork, where “we [Sydney *et al*] got good and honest juries and with their help twenty-four malefactors were honourably condemned and hanged.”⁴⁸⁸ In a letter to the Privy Council, the Lord Lieutenant wrote to recommend the bishop and various laymen for their good works and a tract written by a Jesuit remarked upon the strength of the Protestant preaching in the city during Sheyn’s tenure.⁴⁸⁹ Fr Wolfe mentioned the zeal of the bishop of Cork and Cloyne and remarked particularly upon his preaching, which presumably benefited from his understanding of the Irish tongue. In 1578 Sheyn demonstrated his true passion for the reforming cause. Several sources record that he was much opposed to the veneration of images and in October of that year, the Protestant bishop caused an effigy of St Dominic to be burned at the high cross at

⁴⁸⁴ Murray, *Enforcing the English Reformation*, 284.

⁴⁸⁵ SP 63/34/30.

⁴⁸⁶ *State Papers Concerning the Irish Church in the Time of Queen Elizabeth*, edited by W.M. Brady (London, 1868), 31.

⁴⁸⁷ J. Ware, *Hibernia Sacra, Sive Series Chronologica Hiberniae Praesulum, Qui Hang Magnae Britanniae Regionem, ab Ethnicorum Idolomania, divinitus vindicando, Christiana Fide, sartam, tertamque servarunt, À Nati Domini Anno CCCCXXXII. In annum MDCLXV. Usque, & ultra. episcoporum fata, vitam, & successiones ordinatè, & exafte recensente viro* (Dublin, 1717), 213.

⁴⁸⁸ *State Papers Concerning the Irish Church*, 13.

⁴⁸⁹ J. Begley, *The Diocese of Limerick, Ancient and Medieval* (Dublin, 1906), 494-515.

Cork.⁴⁹⁰ This was apparently a much revered statue, most likely taken from the Dominican friary at Youghal, burnt in the centre of the city. This high profile act speaks to the efficacy of Sheyn's spiritual leadership and did not rest upon the external authority of crown forces garrisoned nearby. Upon Matthew Sheyn's death in 1582,⁴⁹¹ the mayor of Cork advocated another zealous Protestant to succeed him. William Lyon's time in office would mark a religious watershed for both the Catholics and Protestants of Co. Cork.

⁴⁹⁰ Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 439.

⁴⁹¹ Ware suggests 1583, but this is incorrect.

The bishopric of William Lyon

Lyon was an English cleric, who had been born in Chester.⁴⁹² His early career is unknown and he first comes to notice on 6 November 1573 when he was presented to the vicarage of Naas in Co. Kildare and later, Bodenstone. As Richard Dixon courted favour as chaplain to Sydney, prior to his episcopal appointment, Lyon filled the same role for Lord Deputy Grey and, in 1582, he was rewarded by appointment to the diocese of Ross.⁴⁹³ Lyon would later claim to have been serving in Ireland from c.1570 and, while his residency in Kildare is unsubstantiated, he was certainly in Ireland whilst acting as chaplain and after, as bishop of Ross. Purely on his status as the first consecrated Anglican bishop of Ross, William Lyon is exceptional, but in 1583 he oversaw the uniting of the three dioceses of Co. Cork into a single administrative body.

As early as September of 1582, letters were being sent to Walsingham in favour of William's accession to Cork and Cloyne *in commendam* with the bishopric of Ross.⁴⁹⁴ For the following four years, Lyon remains active, but no further discussion of his position within the sees is forthcoming until October 1586 when Elizabeth confirmed his appointment. The decree remarks that the justices of Ireland granted the sees to Lyon, "for his better stay in those parts."⁴⁹⁵ The diocese of Ross was considered exceptionally poor and while Cork and Cloyne were said to be worth no more than £30, the dwelling was convenient, situated in the more civil environs of Cork, which "he [Lyon] esteemeth most." The second part of the letter reminds the reader of the succession disputes of the pre-reformations period. The Lord Chancellor wrote answering a request from the bishop to confirm his position as, "he feareth there is some will go about, by obtaining Her Majesty's letters to avoid his *commendam*." This confirmation was granted. The appeal may have been aimed to solidify Lyon's position, but was more likely a pre-emptive move against local opposition who hoped to unseat him by invalidating his letters patent.

While Lyon certainly obtained his position through no small application of patronage and politicking, the unity of Cork's dioceses under him was also won upon his own merits as a reforming cleric and agent of the crown. The bishop was not only swift to rectify the

⁴⁹² A. Ford, 'Lyon, William (d. 1617)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17287>] accessed 10 Oct 2013].

⁴⁹³ Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 443.

⁴⁹⁴ CSPI, ii, 400.

⁴⁹⁵ CSPI, iii, 185.

poverty of his diocesan possessions, but also to work upon the strengthening of crown authority within the region. Significantly, he was also of that rare breed: an English bishop who remained resident within his cure. Even during the strained circumstances of the Nine Years' war, the English cleric remained within the city, despite having had to flee his residence in Ross.⁴⁹⁶

Shortly after his arrival in Ireland, Lyon wrote a memorandum upon the physical and spiritual state of Munster,⁴⁹⁷ but his involvement in governance was not limited to the theoretical. After Geoffrey Fenton⁴⁹⁸ left Cork in 1587, he left instructions for the bishop to "have an eye to the port towns," and watch for foreign, particularly Spanish, interests about the coast of south-west Munster. Lyon did not simply send agents, but made personal visits to pursue rumours of alien vessels. Having ridden to Kinsale, the bishop wrote Fenton detailing the ports of origin and destination for three ships, as well as naming their captain. The letter itself, being made "wet and rent by ill carriage," was sent from Beare Haven in the far west of the county.⁴⁹⁹ The bishop's information gathering did not cease. In 1591, he reported on messages travelling between the MacCarthys and Spain⁵⁰⁰ and wrote regular reports to London throughout his career.

Lyon worked hard to improve the physical possessions of the episcopate, especially its houses and incomes. Previous decades had seen the dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross enter a steady decay through mismanagement and warfare. Various rebellions disrupted regular income, but perhaps of greater harm was Sheyn's selling of the fee farm of Cloyne for £3 6s. 8d *per annum*.⁵⁰¹ Equally, neither the dioceses of Cloyne or Ross possessed an episcopal manse. During O'Brennan's imposition in the latter, he had been in possession of the house there; presumably it was either sold during his reign or destroyed by civil unrest. The bishop was denied access to the house at Cloyne by Sir John FitzEdmund Fitzgerald, who resided there.⁵⁰² Lyon worked swiftly to rectify these problems and in 1589 built a new house "in the wildest part of Munster [Ross]."⁵⁰³ It was of good quality and built entirely of stone. Regarding the debts and income of his office, Lyon arranged for the remittance of the

⁴⁹⁶ CSPI, vii, 326.

⁴⁹⁷ CSPI, ii, 404.

⁴⁹⁸ At this time, Fenton was secretary to Lord Deputy Grey.

⁴⁹⁹ R. Caulfield, *The council Book of the Corporation of Kinsale from 1652 to 1800 edited from the original, with annals and appendices compiled from public and private records* (Guildford, 1879), xxiv-xxv.

⁵⁰⁰ CSPI, iv, 461.

⁵⁰¹ Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross', 214. Lyon would made complaint of this during the 1615 visitation. Presumably, he had been forced to forgo the fruits of Cloyne for the entirety of his reign.

⁵⁰² Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 439.

⁵⁰³ CSPI, iv, 126.

first fruits before adding to the temporalities of the bishopric. The bishop used his good favour with the crown to obtain lands dispossessed from the earldom of Desmond. Having secured some unspecified parcels of land from a Mr John Grenville,⁵⁰⁴ Lyon was granted the yearly rents of a total value of £5 17s in 1588: Carrigrohane (33s), Crosshane in the barony of Kerrycurrihy (4s), Noffall (£4) as well as five ploughlands in Kilbrogan and two ploughlands in Meshill of the Kinalmeeky barony.⁵⁰⁵ An astute businessman, William Lyon managed a very effective upswing in diocesan finances, raising his income by an additional £130 *per annum*.⁵⁰⁶

Unlike the stereotypical Anglican bishop in Ireland, preoccupied with lining his own pocket, Lyon channelled his good fiscal fortune back into his responsibilities. The good bishop was actively engaged in the spiritual wellbeing of his cure. Lyon's activities were such that in 1589, the Lord Deputy remarked that, "the Bishop of Cork's godly course hath so reformed his most wild and disordered people by informing them in the principles of religion, as that they will come to him on his word."⁵⁰⁷ William Lyon spent large sums upon the construction and maintenance of diocesan buildings,⁵⁰⁸ including £150 for the provision of religion in the diocese of Ross. There he built a "fair bridge," renovated the cathedral and put up a free school for the education of the laity and clerics alike.⁵⁰⁹ Quite aside from the empirical benefits generated by such expenditure, Lyon had managed to expand his region of influence. For the first time, Anglican ministry was being enthusiastically encouraged within the antagonistic diocese of Ross.

Lyon sent successive reports on the state of Munster's religion to the crown in 1586⁵¹⁰ and 1596.⁵¹¹ The matters contained within reveal much regarding his ministry and intentions. He wrote that, "I have caused churches to be re-edified, and provided books for every church through my diocese, as Bibles, New Testaments, Communion books, both English and Latin, and the Injunctions."⁵¹² As a consequence, Lyon was the first bishop evidenced to have introduced the Book of Common Prayer to Co. Cork; his claims are borne out by the free

⁵⁰⁴ CSPI, iv, 472.

⁵⁰⁵ CSPI, iv, 19, 22.

⁵⁰⁶ Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 439.

⁵⁰⁷ CSPI, iv, 130

⁵⁰⁸ In 1615, he claimed to have spent £300 upon the building of a new house at Ross and the improbable sum of £1000 renovating the manse at Cork. In all, this would have represented the expenditure of six years' income, at minimum. Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross', 215.

⁵⁰⁹ CSPI, iv, 390.

⁵¹⁰ CSPI, ii, 404.

⁵¹¹ CSPI, iv, 14-20.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 15.

school built at Ross. Furthermore, after discovering that some 74 books had been defaced in a single school,⁵¹³ Lyon inspected his educational institutions and found that all the books therein had been similarly damaged. This emphasises the resistance to Protestant reform and English rule, but also highlights the energy Lyon placed into his cure. He also mentions three individuals who might be described as schoolmasters, and implies that there are many more.

The bishop's visitations were not limited to the schools. Lyon stated that his report was true, for it was based upon interviews he had personally performed: "These intelligences I had from them-selves, because I visit the country several times in the year, and do observe things, and hear and learn the dispositions [of the people], how they are inclined and bent."⁵¹⁴ Records of these yearly inquisitions were either not kept, or have since been lost, but the dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross certainly participated in two series of national visitation during Lyon's episcopate. In Henry VIII's reign, a committee was established to assess the value of church lands and benefices, though its efficacy was limited by the crown's political influence. It took three sessions to fully address the problem, with commissioners performing assessments in the reign of three monarchs, Henry, Elizabeth and James I.⁵¹⁵ For Co. Cork, the evaluations took place between the 31st and 33rd years of Queen Elizabeth's reign (1589-1591).⁵¹⁶

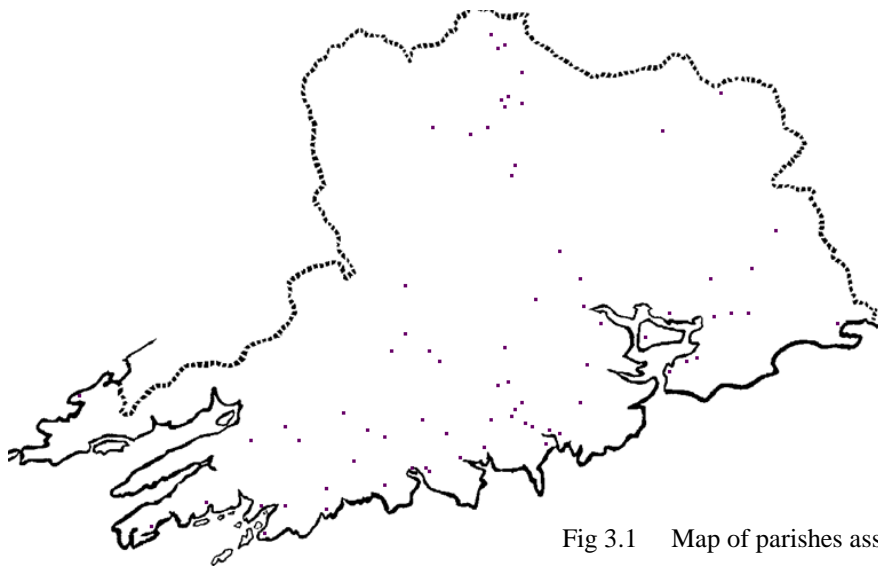


Fig 3.1 Map of parishes assessed 1589-91

⁵¹³ The frontispiece had been torn out, which contained within it the name of the Queen and her titles, including "Defender of the faith."

⁵¹⁴ CSPI, iv, 16.

⁵¹⁵ Those dioceses assessed during Henry's rule were Armagh, Cashel, Derry, Dublin, Fern, Leighlin and Ossory. Those assessed during Elizabeth's reign were Ardagh, Clonfert, Cloyne, Cork, Emly, Elphin, Lismore and Ross and Tuam. The remainder were not considered until the Tudor dynasty had been replaced. These dioceses were Down, Kilmore and Raphoe. A small number of sees, especially harmed by warfare, were assessed a second time under James I: these were the northern episcopates of Armagh and Derry.

⁵¹⁶ *Valor Beneficiorum*.

The parishes inspected under the auspices of the *Valor Beneficorum* did not represent the entirety of those belonging to the bishoprics of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. Nevertheless, they were spread reasonably throughout the region, albeit with a peculiarly low number in the areas directly surrounding the city of Cork. Consequently, the *Valor* acts as a very good signifier of Lyon's ability to administer his holdings and apply his will to them. Most significantly, parishes throughout Ross and even to Bantry Bay were surveyed. In 1615, during the reign of James I, a grand inquisition of the Irish church was undertaken and again, Bishop Lyon took a leading role in ensuring the participation of his dioceses. Then suffering from advanced years (he died in 1617 of old age), Lyon did his part in the visitations of the parishes, as well as submitting a report upon the bishop's manor houses, their finances and condition. The official report of the Royal Visitation for Cork, Cloyne and Ross closes with two letters from the bishop and earl of Cork respectively.⁵¹⁷ Lyon continued to perform with due diligence until the end of his tenure.

All of his reports and letters are interwoven with matters of state. Even excepting those which referred explicitly to secular matters, communications regarding the provision of worship in Munster remained at least partially concentrated upon royal policy. In this, Lyon took the role of the first truly internationally politicised Anglican bishop of Co. Cork. The report on Munster (1596) did mention the many shortcomings of the laity of his diocese, speaking of the mustering of Carbery, Beare and the Courcey's lands. Lyon predicates the paper on the proviso that, "Where there is no knowledge of God and his truth, there can be no obedience to magistrates, no submission to laws, no true hearts to the Prince."⁵¹⁸ It is evident that statement served the purpose of promoting the importance of his cause, easing his lobbying for assistance from the crown. Equally evident is the passion with which he writes and the fervency of Lyon's belief in the veracity of his words. It is of no surprise that his policies were intended for the reformation of not only Irish religion, but also of the nation itself.

The Anglican bishop proved himself a reliable agent of the crown. Taking a prominent role in the governance of Munster, he acted as one of the Royal Commissioners in 1597 and was also a member of the Munster Council of Affairs. In 1607 he was appointed to supervise the surrender and regrant of lands belonging to the O'Sullivan in Rosscarbery. Lyon's colleagues in this matter were the Lord President, Chief and Second Justices, the

⁵¹⁷ Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross', 214-215.

⁵¹⁸ CSPI, iv, 14.

Attorney and Esceator of Munster and one Captain Henrie Skipworth. Lyon's presence on the committee amongst such officials aptly demonstrates his importance to the crown. However, while the Anglican bishop was valued by the English crown, so too was his Roman counterpart by the papacy.

The bishopric of Dermot Creagh

The Catholic bishop Dermot Creagh has not been well treated by antiquarians; Ware omits him entirely and Smith's study of the *Ancient and Present State of the County and City of Cork* simply records his succession in 1580 and death in 1606.⁵¹⁹ This laxity is peculiar, as Creagh's activities in Ireland spread far beyond his own dioceses and their significance was felt in London. Northern bishops are well documented as anti-English agitators,⁵²⁰ but the Catholic bishop of Cork and Cloyne engaged in similar actions and should be accounted their equal. From the outset of his career in Ireland,⁵²¹ Creagh made his politics clear. In 1590, it was remarked to the Privy Council that, "This Cragh [sic] is one of the most dangerous fellows that ever came to Ireland, for such is his credit that he draws the whole country to disloyalty and breaking of the laws." The same letter submitted a request for the execution of an Edmund Atty who having claimed a £20 reward for the capture of Creagh, submitted false intelligence and failed to deliver upon his promises.⁵²² The papal bishop's reputation was well-deserved.

In the 1590s, the Anglican archbishop of Cashel, Meyler Magrath, was accused of treasonous actions during the second Desmond Rebellion and the interviewing of certain individuals was central to a resolution of the case. The deposition of Murtagh Leaghe O'Hiffernane bears particular relevance to the current study. It was made in 1591 at Kilmainham before the Lord Deputy FitzWilliam. The examinee was tasked upon the nature of the relationship between the curates of Cork and Cashel, reporting that though the two never met in his house, a close confidante of the archbishop and Creagh did. O'Hiffernane further reported that correspondence continued between Creagh and Magrath.⁵²³ By insinuation, the active role of the Catholic bishop of Cork and Cloyne in this

⁵¹⁹ Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 446.

⁵²⁰ Various authors have written upon this subject. Of particular interest is the role of clerics in establishing and maintaining a working relationship between Spain and Tyrone. Magowran, archbishop of Armagh was instrumental, working on the continent to obtain military aid and, on returning to Ireland, creating the Catholic Confederacy through the administering of oaths. See Jefferies, *The Irish Church*, 259-60, M. Walsh, 'Archbishop Magauran and His Return to Ireland, October 1592', *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society*, 14, 1 (1990), 68-79, H. Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion: the outbreak of the Nine Years War in Tudor Ireland* (Woodbridge, 1993).

⁵²¹ The precise date of his consecration is unclear, but William Lyon states in 1600 that Creagh had then been in Ireland for 22 years. CSPI, viii, 476. In 1590, the Archbishop of Cashel reported his arrival during the Desmond revolt. CSPI, iv, 375.

⁵²² CSPI, iv, 375.

⁵²³ CSPI, iv, 429-31.

matter was readily accepted by all jurors, as he furthered the cause of Roman church and rebel alike.

Creagh was recognised beyond the borders of Ireland. In Lisbon, his services had been noted and Walter Brehin submitted a request to the chancellor of Lismore to send the bishop of Cork and Cloyne to Spain, where he could lobby for the Irish Catholics at court.⁵²⁴ It was the strength of Creagh's reputation that Brehin thought to be most beneficial. However, the bishop did not leave Ireland at this time, likely as a result of Brehin's subsequent letter, written to Creagh himself. "The King, Philip II., requested His Holiness to create no more bishops in Ireland, and said they were very impudent and tedious to him."⁵²⁵

The Roman bishop had carefully built up his spiritual authority, using it as a tool to create secular alliances. In successive promissory notes, he was first granted the faculties of his sees, then the power to absolve priests and lay persons in Cork and Cloyne and then, finally, the same for the dioceses of Limerick and Ross.⁵²⁶ Although both of these episcopates were filled by papal appointees, the bishops themselves were abroad in Spain, their responsibilities unmonitored. During the 1590s, Creagh was able to exercise "his jurisdiction as Pope's legate, with all manner of spiritual jurisdictions."⁵²⁷ These the bishop was able to use as a weapon against English rule. In the confused context of reformation era Munster, Creagh denied those in the sees he administered access to the sacrament unless they forswore Elizabeth in favour of the Pope. In 1600, he wrote a letter to Lord Barry in Buttevant, hoping to persuade the Anglo-Irish noble to turn his coat against the crown.⁵²⁸ Creagh's argument centred upon his own powers as the bishop of Cork and Cloyne: he had "an excommunication from the Pope against all those that do not join to this Catholic action [the rebellion]...This much we thought good to certify unto you beforehand, and do wish you therefore to consider of the same, like a good Christian Catholic and an obedient child of the Church."⁵²⁹ Furthermore, Creagh demanded that the people of Cork, Cloyne and Ross give oaths to keep and obey the laws of the papacy and assist its armies on their arrival. The names of these oath givers were recorded in a Book of Life (a list of those who were to live

⁵²⁴ CSPI, iv, 292.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, 294-6.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 187, 211 & 292.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 375.

⁵²⁸ A letter from Sir Thomas Norreys to the Privy Council identified the key supporters of the royal cause in south west Munster as Lord Barry of Buttevant, Cormac McDermot of Muskerry, McCarthy Reagh of Carbery and Lord Roche. It was said that Barry and McDermot each commanded a sizeable force. CSPI, vii, 400.

⁵²⁹ CSPI, viii, 494.

forevermore in heaven), which was sent annually to Spain and Rome.⁵³⁰ This intelligence of grass roots Catholic support would later prove invaluable to Roman agents. However, although Creagh was assuredly a staunch advocate of the Catholic interest, and a powerful Roman agent in Co. Cork and wider Ireland, his reforming zeal was perhaps hindered by his political activities.

Working closely with a Jesuit priest named Archer, Creagh proved central to the formation and sustenance of opposition to English rule in the south of Ireland. While the bishop was unsuccessful in persuading Barry to shift his allegiance, Creagh was more fortunate in his dealings with other nobles: Lords Mountgarret and Cahir both sided with the rebels at his urgings and took up arms. Throughout the last decade of the sixteenth century letters from Munster repeatedly cited Desmond, Creagh and Archer as equal causes of the calamities there. The Earl of Ormond described a 1598 campaign towards Cahir to be aimed at the prosecution of the lord of that place, Doctor Creagh (Cragh) and the priest, Archer.⁵³¹ Another correspondent wrote that although at first he had believed the rebellions to have arisen, he had learnt that between them Archer and Creagh had incited the whole of the province.⁵³²

An insight into the character of the bishop and his methods has been preserved in the state papers.⁵³³ November of 1598 saw negotiators arriving in Cahir for meetings with the recently rebellious lord. Edward Gough (Geoghe), George Sherlock and several unnamed others went to the house, but were not admitted; instead they were left to wait in the garden for upwards of two hours. Although their diplomatic mission was aimed at the Baron of Cahir, when the mission was finally admitted to the house, Gough complained that he had “scarcely spake two words unto me, when Crah [Creagh] came abruptly upon Mr. Sherlock and me,” interrupting the parley. Even in his own house, Cahir was clearly subservient to the Roman bishop of Cork and Cloyne. Geoghe continued to ask to speak to the secular lord alone, “him who hitherto I had found a good neighbour.” The priest hotly denied this request and when tasked by the English agent, the baron announced that he would be ruled by the two holy fathers. Denied the privacy that he had hoped would allow him to sway his peer, Geoghe argued for the royalist cause but was met by the staunch advocacy of Creagh.

⁵³⁰ CSPI, iv, 494.

⁵³¹ CSPI, vii, 410.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, 400.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, 348-50.

The bishop was certain in his convictions. Even at this time, when Desmond's rebellion was far from secure, he was convinced of the inevitability of its success. Creagh stated that, "ere Easter day we doubt not but we, and such as be of our Catholic confederacy, shall be masters and commanders of all the cities, towns, and forts in Ireland." He foresaw the restoration of the monasteries and the abbey lands, the return of popish authority and excommunication of English priests. The wrongs and injustices of English governance would be overturned and replaced with an Irish prince to keep the realm. In all this, Creagh would brook no opposition. When Geoghe interrupted, both he and Archer grew angry; the account demonstrates Geoghe's very real fear, first at his disarmament and then later as they fled the house.

Creagh's religion was very much the forefront of his policies. His activism was designed primarily to secure the return of Catholicism to Ireland and while his methods may have been largely political, Creagh's intentions were very much religious. Of a certainty, his agitation was highly successful, receiving equal measures of condemnation from the English and commendation from the papacy.⁵³⁴ The curate came from a bardic family in Tipperary⁵³⁵ and used his connections there as a foundation for his authority. Creagh enjoyed many advantages of familial relation and position, but these were often external to Co. Cork. Similarly, his role in the rebellions required significant investments of time and effort that in turn necessitated Creagh's absence from his demesne and cure. His personal involvement in negotiations with Cahir and Mountgarret exemplify these problems. Unlike O'Herlihy's earlier career as active Roman bishop within the diocese of Ross, with an emphasis upon the religious, Creagh's episcopates suffered from his politicised religiosity and the resultant absentee bishop. Nevertheless, the Catholic cause did flourish in Co. Cork, during this period, even if indirectly. In the first instance, the Desmond rebellions put the English polity on the defensive. As the colony contracted, the papal cause expanded. Reports to the queen and royal proclamations begin, from the mid 1590s, to speak of seminaries being set up in Ireland. Simultaneously, popish priests were arriving in Cork city and in 1606, these included the priests Richard White, Gerrard Miagh, and William Crokin. To these were added the Jesuits Nicholas Lennagh and Andrew Mulrony.⁵³⁶ The same document speaks to

⁵³⁴ In 1598, Creagh was granted the primacy of Armagh, to be held *in commendam* with Cork and Cloyne. CSPI, vii, 493.

⁵³⁵ CSPI, iv, 294-296.

⁵³⁶ CSPI, xi, 476.

some 200 noblemen about the province of Munster who had been indicted for recusancy. These were undoubtedly amongst those sworn by Creagh into his Book of Life.

The success of Creagh's episcopate came not in direct action, but as a by product of his advocacy of rebellion. Whilst he used his religious powers as a bludgeon with which to control the populace, they served too to prepare his cure for recusancy. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, it was remarked that the bishop might be arrested and brought to London, were it not for the failings of the officers. Agents of the English crown feared being excommunicated by the Catholic bishop, such was the strength of Creagh's character and conviction.

Possession of Co. Cork's bishoprics has always been reliant upon the support of the local polity. During the upheavals of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, when the dioceses suffered from a surplus of bishops, continuing lay support was instrumental in the success of individual candidates. William Roche used his family to burn and steal his opponent's possessions, while his brothers kidnapped the rival bishop, Gerald Fitzgerald.⁵³⁷ External powers could (and did) exert their authority, but that authority remained reliant upon local agents.

This process was not always one which witnessed a supplicant cleric, requesting support from the laity. Instead lay notables were often pro-active in their involvement in the selection process. Thaddeus MacCarthy's appointment to the see of Ross came whilst he was studying in Rome; his later actions betrayed his ignorance of diocesan affairs and suggest that he was raised upon another's urgings. The chiefs of the MacCarthys had much advantage to gain from Thaddeus' accession. From the inhabitants of Kinsale comes another example of lay advocacy and interest in the promotion of one of their own. In 1557, Dominic Tirrey had died, and a letter was sent to forward the case of Patrick Roche. His family was one of merchants and landowners, with a strong presence across the Anglo-Norman regions of Co. Cork.⁵³⁸ The townspeople of Kinsale wrote a memorandum to Queen Mary in Roche's support. By their words, Patrick Roche was "welbeloved... [and the] Archideacon of Corke... mooste meate to supplye that [vacancy]." The paper was signed by Richard Meagh (Meed), sovereign of Kinsale,⁵³⁹ William Young (Wyllame Yong),⁵⁴⁰ Geoffrey Galway

⁵³⁷ Whitman, "A succession dispute," 41.

⁵³⁸ In Kinsale alone, 7 of the 22 provosts and sovereigns of the town belonged to that family. 6 of the remainder were Martells, with the others split between the Youngs, Barrys and Meaghs, with a single Courcey, Copener and Nashe. Brady, *Council Book of the Corporation of Kinsale*, 432.

⁵³⁹ Meagh was sovereign of Kinsale 1557 and 1580.

(Goffre Galwey), Patrick Meagh (Meed), Richard Young (Yong), John Roche (son of Patrick), John Roche (son of Philip⁵⁴¹), William Galway (Gallwy).⁵⁴² This august collection of power brokers made their primary reasoning clear: “[Roche was] to be preferred to... [the imposition of] one Conaughte, right strange to us, who pretendethe to com to the same, nor meate nor able to exercise such pastural office be anye means or qualities.”⁵⁴³ Rather than accept an outsider in the role of bishop, the civic leaders of Kinsale desired one of their number to succeed in his place. Throughout the period of the Tudor reformations, the high frequency of prominent local families providing episcopal candidates can be no accident.

However, the reformations themselves did alter the character of politics in Co. Cork. The first appointees after the schism suggest a strong continuation of earlier trends as the Roman outsider, O’Heyne, was denied access to the temporalities by the Anglican local, Tirrey. Nevertheless, from the middle of the sixteenth century, both the papacy and English crown looked to increase their influence in the region. Still, both of these powers often remained subservient to local interest. As the Catholic bishop was hindered by the local Protestant in the 1540s and 1550s, so too was the Anglican effort in Ross. The strength of the MacCarthys and O’Sullivans prevented English success, while the papacy capitalised on this weakness by naming local priests to the post.

The Tudor period does give the appearance of stabilising clerical politics in south-west Munster. Whereas much of the period immediately preceding the break with Rome was characterised by all three dioceses being simultaneously contested by multiple diocesan candidates, this form of internal struggle had ceased by 1537. After this date, diocesan succession was orderly and without serious difficulty. However, this would be an oversimplification. The tensions of local politics were merely masked by international concerns and local lordships were able to continue their personal wars and feuds. Similarly, local power continued to determine religious influence. Whilst Creagh had the run of much of Munster, Lyon lay under heavy siege at Cork. Despite the latter’s evident zeal, his effectiveness was severely limited by *real politik*.

⁵⁴⁰ Young was sovereign of Kinsale 1541-1542.

⁵⁴¹ Philip Roche was sovereign of Kinsale 1522-1523.

⁵⁴² William Galway was sovereign of Kinsale 1566.

⁵⁴³ Brady, *Council Book of the Corporation of Kinsale*, xvii.

Chapter 4: The regular clergy during the reformations

The various outcomes of diocesan politics were crucial to the success or failure of the Catholic and Protestant reformations. However, without the ministry of the parish clergy, the causes of reform were lost. Evolving from pre-Norman territorial units, the parochial system in Co. Cork had, by the Tudor period, expanded to encompass the whole of the region during the medieval period. Despite these advances, the churches, particularly those in rural areas, suffered greatly from the joint hardships of poverty and warfare, whilst the clerics themselves often lacked any formal education. University education has been shown to be an impossible aspiration for the majority of priests, who were instead reliant upon informal structures and pseudo-apprenticeships. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that the provision of spiritual affairs was indeed adequate, as there were few complaints of sacramental failings. The high rates of delations during the late medieval period are strongly suggestive of continuous competition for parochial cures and, consequently, high numbers of priests. Thus, it was to an uneducated and poor, but large and spiritually adequate, priesthood that the religion of the people was entrusted at the beginning of the Tudor reformations.

The parish priest was responsible for much. His duties principally included the administering of the sacraments to the men and women of his parish, as well as educating them in the basic catechisms. Richard Greenham, the pastor of Dry Dayton in Cambridgeshire recorded his experiences and duties. His descriptions included the claim that they were “none other thing but to preach the word of God sincerely, and purely with a care of the glory of God.”⁵⁴⁴ However, the reality of his position was ever more complicated. The priest was a community leader, a counsellor and a promoter of peace and concord between his neighbours. For the recently founded Protestant faith, the ministry was especially important, for this was a religion in which the preacher was paramount. In England, the output of university educated clerics was crucial to the advance of reform. Armed with modern theologies and oratorical strategies, these were the front-line warriors of the Protestant cause. However, as has been well discussed elsewhere, Ireland suffered from dual problems of poverty and a linguistic barrier. The well-educated clerics were at once unwilling to serve in the financially unrewarding Irish benefices *inter hibernicos* and unable to preach in the vernacular. Henry Sydney, then the Lord Deputy, wrote to the Queen of a

⁵⁴⁴ K.L. Parker and E.J. Carlson, ‘*Practical Divinity*’: *The Works and Life of Richard Greenham* (Aldershot, 1998), 59.

survey conducted by the Bishop of Meath; this report emphasises the problems facing the Elizabethan priesthood. “Irish priests live upon the bare altarages...churches must be repaired...[and] ministers sought who can speak Irish.” The Queen was requested to write to the Regent of Scotland to request some honest, zealous or learned men who could speak the Irish language, in the hopes of reinforcing the ministry within her domains in Ireland.⁵⁴⁵

Rome was slower to respond and when it did, its chosen combatant was not the traditional parish priest. While mainland Britain was visited by comparatively few of the clerical orders of the Catholic reformations (the Jesuits and Franciscans), Ireland’s religion was heavily influenced by them. The previous chapter discussed the immense influence of the Catholic bishop of Cork and Cloyne, Dermot Creagh, and his Jesuit ally, Archer. During the seventeenth century, the recusant religion would be characterised by these continentally educated priests. Drawn from Irish colleges in Spain, Portugal, France, Italy and the Low Countries, these scions would famously return to lead the people of Ireland in Catholic masses in defiance of English law during the penal era. However, the majority of the Tudor reforms predated the spread of these ministers. Their outcomes would be determined by a different form of agency; one predicated upon traditional religion and political realities.

⁵⁴⁵ CSPI, ii, 92-3.

The monastic suppressions

By the early seventeenth century, the diocesan clergy of Cork, Cloyne and Ross had undergone a significant demographic shift. The parishes had once been dominated by Irish and Anglo-Norman clerics, but now a new breed had arrived: the English evangeliser. This transition occurred largely during the closing years of the Elizabethan period and the immediate aftermath of the Desmond rebellions, but was hardly the first upheaval to affect the ecclesiarchy of Co. Cork. The break with Rome, so pronounced in England, was perhaps obscured by the murk of local politics in the first instance; the appointment of reforming bishops was certainly delayed. However, the concurrent policies of monastic survey and suppression rapidly impacted upon the church throughout Ireland. As previously explored, the poverty of the parishes in the three dioceses was worsened by the appropriation of benefices by the myriad houses and orders across the region.⁵⁴⁶ The problem was highlighted by the Henrician monastic survey, but further examination of the *Valor Hibernicus* demonstrated the prevalence of this harmful practice. Additionally, in England and Wales the suppression of the religious houses created a surfeit of unbeneficed clergymen and women. These priests, who had once been monks and nuns, would be in receipt of a pension, yet often sought further employment within the church. The women were hindered in this by virtue of their gender while the men could easily fulfil the role of vicar, rector, chantry priest or chaplain.

During the period of the reformations, many canons belonging to the religious orders did endure drastic revisions to the conditions in which they lived and worshipped. The Franciscan community in Cork city was dispersed in 1540; possibly the first of that mendicant order to be suppressed in all of Ireland.⁵⁴⁷ Within three months of the Henrician monastic survey, the friary had been sold to a local merchant. Similarly, other communities within the city and in nearby towns were effectively suppressed, although many others survived the Henrician and Edwardian reigns entirely. The influence of local lordships and Gaelic clans affected the nature of the suppressions, although they did little to halt it. Quite conversely, Cork city's elite appear to have been quite supportive of the policies of

⁵⁴⁶ Chapter 1, 34-48.

⁵⁴⁷ Bradshaw, *The Dissolution of the Religious Orders*, 154.

dissolution. Henry VIII's monastic surveyors were assisted in their work by members of several prominent families, including Patrick Coppinger, Walter Galwey, Richard Gould and John Skiddy.⁵⁴⁸ There seems to have been little reverence for church buildings, as jurors reported on churches, chapels and other buildings that might be "thrown down," dismantled and sold.⁵⁴⁹ Bradshaw remarked with concern upon the swift demise of the Franciscan friary of Cork and the subsequent sale of its lands; in his eyes, this intimated a lack of support for the mendicant orders from within the city.⁵⁵⁰ However, this was a political, rather than a religious victory. Although the friary was dissolved, this suppression should not be equated with the Protestant religion, but rather taken as an exertion of Tudor authority and so support for the monastic tradition in the region remained high on the eve of the reformations. Those merchants who leased the friary buildings were not anticlerical, but opportunistic pragmatists who understood the inevitability of the suppressions.

The dissolutions in Cork, Cloyne and Ross were a sporadic affair. While some houses were shielded, others swiftly capitulated. The Cistercian and Benedictine orders, with strong links to English mother houses and traditionally Anglo-Norman territories, were amongst the first to fall. The two small Benedictine cells in Cork and Youghal, so closely linked to their mother house of Bath Abbey and their sister in Waterford, were suppressed early, in 1536. By 1590, the installation at Youghal was recorded as a parcel of St Johns priory, Waterford.⁵⁵¹ Thus, the English Benedictines of Cork and Cloyne were swiftly terminated. The dissolution of the Cistercian monasteries is of greater interest, however - a representative microcosm of the suppression policy, including all of its failures. The suppressions of this order in the three dioceses marked a particular political success for the Tudor crown as its foundations were heavily patronised by the Anglo-Norman elites.

By 1541, the abbey of Fermoy was heavily patronised by the Roche family. Although possibly founded by Donal Mor O'Brien, by the late medieval period the house had become inextricably linked with the Anglo-Norman family. Consequently, it is of little surprise that after its suppression, the lease was granted to one of the leading Roches. Although inspected in 1541, Fermoy's fate was postponed and it was not until 1570 that the "late dissolved house...with all the possessions spiritual or temporal," was leased to one Tibold Roch, son of the Viscount. Value was stated to be 20 marks a year and the rent was to be determined at a

⁵⁴⁸ White, *Monastic Possessions*, 137.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁵⁵⁰ Bradshaw, *The Dissolution of the Religious Orders*, 135.

⁵⁵¹ M. Archdall, *Monasticon Hibernicum* (1786), 818.

future survey.⁵⁵² The monastery had survived both the Henrician and Edwardian reformations, presumably under the protection of its patrons. Although the suppression was a political success, it was a financial failure. Roche, although the nominal tenant, was not bound to pay any specific sum. Furthermore, his lease was good for forty years of possession; the crown would gain little. Ultimately, the abbey lands would be granted to an Englishman, but still there was little financial gain to be had. Following the consolidation of Elizabethan power in Munster that occurred in the years after the second Desmond rebellion, Sir Richard Greneville was leased all of the revenues of the monastery for a rent of £15 18s 4d.⁵⁵³ In the Henrician survey, Fermoy was valued at £26 in “normal times.”⁵⁵⁴ Although the value of the house was estimated at a mere 20 marks in 1570, even a conservative estimate suggests that the rent was low.

The suppression of Abbeymahon followed a very similar pattern. Included in the Henrician survey, the monastery was not dissolved until slightly later. It is likely that, like Fermoy, Abbeymahon was protected by its patron. Lewis claims that on the eve of the dissolutions, Lord Barrymore had invested the house with 18 new ploughlands and had begun, although not completed, a renovation of the abbey.⁵⁵⁵ In 1568, he was offered the chance to lease the house and grounds provided certain conditions were met. The abbey was not to be within a close proximity to any of “our strengthes [those belonging to the crown], and be not fownde meete to be kept in our awne hands.”⁵⁵⁶ Whether the arrangement was confirmed is unclear, but in 1584 the Justice of Munster, Nicholas Walshe, was the recipient of the lease. In 1587, he was granted it “forever.”⁵⁵⁷ Similarly, Tracton was leased first to the medieval patron, the Earldom of Desmond, before later being confiscated and bestowed upon an Englishman. From 1548, the Earl farmed the rent, though he neglected to pay and was in arrears for the amount of £23 5s.⁵⁵⁸ The deed would be lost following the failed rebellion, as Henry Gylford was rewarded for his service with a 60 year lease.⁵⁵⁹ Dissolution did not progress so smoothly for the Cistercian house at Midleton. Like the other foundations of that order across the three dioceses it was surveyed by Cowley and White in 1541.

⁵⁵² *Calendar of The Patent and Close Rolls of Chancery in Ireland of the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth*, edited by J. Morrin, i (Dublin, 1861), 546.

⁵⁵³ Archdall, *Monasticon Hibernicum*. Greenfield’s association with Fermoy would survive the upheavals at the start of the seventeenth century. In 1615, he was included in the ecclesiastical visitation of that year as the usurper of the vicarage of Kilcrumper; the description marks him as the farmer of Fermoy.

⁵⁵⁴ That is, discounting the effects of warfare upon the value of its properties.

⁵⁵⁵ Lewis, *Lewis’ Cork*, 7.

⁵⁵⁶ *Sidney state papers, 1565-70*, edited by T.O Laidhin (Dublin, 1962), 88-89.

⁵⁵⁷ Archdall, *Monasticon Hibernicum*.

⁵⁵⁸ White, *Monastic Possessions*, 144.

⁵⁵⁹ *Calendar of The Patent and Close Rolls of Chancery*, 517.

Similarly, it was leased to lay patrons of Anglo-Norman descent as Sir John FitzEdmund FitzGerald was granted the abbey of Midleton.⁵⁶⁰ However, the foundation was made distinct by the survival of the community after its official suppression. As late as 1548, the abbot and canons were both *in situ* and behind on the rent.⁵⁶¹

In geography, the Cistercian abbeys of Co. Cork should be properly described as being part of *ecclesia inter anglicos*. All were firmly part of the English hegemony both before and during the Tudor period. However, within this limitation, they were indicative of a major trend within the monastic tradition. They were houses that had been surveyed during the early stages of the Henrician reformation and would largely be suppressed in the first half of the century. Their leases were typically granted to Anglo-Norman families traditionally associated with the houses, prolonging the classical patterns of religion, in which a limited number of families controlled a significant proportion of the clerical estate within the region. In turn, these would largely be supplanted by newer English lords, in line with the ebb and flow of local politics.⁵⁶² For the largest part of the sixteenth centuries, the older noble families of Cork, Cloyne and Ross were able to exert their influence over the reformed church. Importantly, though in some circumstances the monks were protected by the lay leaseholders, the foundations were, ultimately, dissolved and their canons dismissed. The implications of these successes are manifold.

The relationship between patrons and their families has been explored above, but an important facet of the monastic estates has yet to be reviewed; the appropriation of benefices. This problem was rife in the county of Cork and was particularly well documented in the Henrician *Monastic Possessions*. It details 43 church livings appropriated by those houses surveyed during the 1540-1 inspections.⁵⁶³ The limited dissolution of the monasteries did nothing to improve the situation. When a house was dissolved, its revenues were farmed by a layman and the practice of appropriation changed to impropriation. These laymen, whose families had typically been involved in their new possessions prior to dissolution, ostensibly took responsibility for providing a curate, but more commonly retained the incomes themselves.⁵⁶⁴ The appropriation of church livings by the monasteries was unchecked by the

⁵⁶⁰ *Calendar of The Patent and Close Rolls of Chancery*, 552

⁵⁶¹ White, *Monastic Possessions*, 151.

⁵⁶² These trends were not uniform. Sir John FitzGerald retained the lease of Midleton until his death, upon which it was inherited by his son.

⁵⁶³ A full list of these is appended to this thesis.

⁵⁶⁴ The secularisation of monastic incomes is addressed at length in Bradshaw, *Dissolution of the Religious Orders*, 181-206.

Henrician and Edwardian reforms, continuing to prove a serious impediment to the effective provision of parochial revenues into the seventeenth century.

Fig 4.1 Appropriated parishes held by religious houses in two periods⁵⁶⁵

| | 1541 | 1591 |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Abbeymahon | 2 | |
| Ballybeg | 7 | 1 |
| Bridgetown | 3 | 11 |
| Buttevant | 0 | 16 |
| Cavan | | 1 |
| Fermoy | 1 | |
| Gill Abbey | 9 | 1 |
| Glanworth | 0 | 6 |
| Insula | | 1 |
| Midleton | 7 | 9 |
| Molana (Waterford) | 6 | |
| Mourne | | 12 |
| Rosscarbery | 0 | 2 |
| Tracton | 6 | |
| Unnamed | | 5 |
| Total | 43 | 65 |

Neither the visitations of 1540-1 or 1591 present a comprehensive list of appropriated livings. Due to their various shortcomings, each only presents a partial picture of the

⁵⁶⁵ Figures taken from TCD MS 566. Carte.

dioceses,⁵⁶⁶ but each offer one that is remarkably similar. Across both periods, the abbeys had an overwhelming tendency to appropriate rectories; vicarages and prebends are almost totally absent. Equally, both surveys show large numbers of appropriations, albeit by very different houses. Still, where similarities do exist, they are striking. Middleton had seven appropriated incomes in the 1540s and nine in the 1590s. Of these, the rectories of four parishes, Dunbullogue, Killcully, Mogeely and St Catherine's, were in the possession of the abbey in both 1540-1 and 1590. There was also some overlap between Ballybeg and Buttevant as three rectories appropriated by the former in 1541 were listed as possessions of the latter in 1591. This may have been a result of the close geographical proximity of the two houses confusing the surveyors. Given the weaknesses of the earlier inspections, it is highly likely that possessions were missed in those extents. It is certain, however, that many were missed in the 1591 visitation. Of the 43 appropriated rectories found in 1540-1, only 14 are mentioned in the Carte MSS.⁵⁶⁷ Interestingly, of these, the vast majority were found to be vacant or appropriated; only the rectories of Ballinaboy, Tullagh and Lislea had escaped these abuses. On this basis, the picture of appropriation presented in the 1591 visitations may obscure a far worse truth.

This evidence is strongly suggestive of a continuous and lasting legacy of monastic appropriations that survived the suppression campaigns. In time, the secularisation of clerical and monastic incomes would provide a springboard for the plantation of Ireland,⁵⁶⁸ but for much of the Tudor period, appropriation served merely to restrict the economic potential of the parochial clergy. The effects of the Henrician and Edwardian suppression policies did little to negate these problems as the houses continued to be patronised and protected by the descendants of their medieval founders. Simultaneously, where suppression was successful, it effected the dispersal of large numbers of conservative clergy into the parish system.

⁵⁶⁶ For the Henrician survey, the jurors did not leave the confines of the city. Similarly, during Elizabeth's rule, the inspectors were limited by local rebellions.

⁵⁶⁷ TCD MS 566. Carte.

⁵⁶⁸ Bradshaw, *Dissolution of the Religious Orders*, 181.

Religious clergy during and after the suppressions

Careers of former monks in south-west England have been carefully traced. The vast majority of these men from Gloucestershire and Bristol are, for example, demonstrated to have taken positions as curates within the parishes or inside the cathedrals in those two cities. At the time of suppression, the monastery of St Augustine in Bristol was populated by twelve canons. Of these, five became parish priests in the region and three curates. One joined a chantry in Berkeley and another one went to a similar institution in Winterborne. The abbot and one of his subordinates chose to retire upon their pensions to the Isle of Wight.⁵⁶⁹ A further study of the West-country betrayed similar trends. Many priors and abbesses retired, whilst the canons tended to find themselves within the parish.⁵⁷⁰ Although the institutions themselves may have been in varying states of moral and physical decay, Bettey suggests that the ex-monks could be quite compatible with the reformations. Given the nature of Irish monasticism, the monks of Cork, Cloyne and Ross held one significant advantage over their pious, sexually abstemious, English brethren. Richard Bragge had been a friar in the city of Gloucester and his seclusion and piety within that order hindered his ability to adapt. Unsited to the prospect of matrimony, Bragge found himself matched with a wife who was, “ungodly, proud, envious, envious and a common scold.”⁵⁷¹ Many men would find matrimony a difficult challenge, but the propensity of Irish priests towards concubinage and clerical dynasty granted them some small advantage in this arena.

Due to sparse documentation, mere identification of lower ranked religious clergy in Co. Cork is all but impossible. Whilst the abbots themselves are slightly more identifiable, their careers after the suppressions resist examination. Many of them are unnamed, simply referred to by their position in papal letters or petitions to the crown: “The prior of Ballybeg,” or by only a single appellation, such as “Patrick, abbot of the monastery of St Mary, *de Castro Dei* [Bridgetown].”⁵⁷² These problems complicate the task of the historian. Prior to the 1570s, far too few of Co. Cork’s parochial clergy are mentioned by name in the State Papers to allow for a systematic survey of those whose origin lay within the monastic orders. In an entry from 1557, Robert Gogan provided perhaps the sole example in the Calendars.

⁵⁶⁹ G. Baskerville, ‘The Dispossessed of Gloucestershire,’ *Bristol and Gloucester Archaeological Society; Transactions*, 49 (1927), 63-97.

⁵⁷⁰ J.H. Bettey, *The Suppression of the Monasteries in the West Country* (Gloucester, 1989), 114-117.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 114-117.

⁵⁷² CPR, xviii, 308.

“[Gogan], Friar of the Order of Friars Preachers...[prayed] to the Queen...for the restitution of the Monastery of St Mary of the Island adjoining to the walls of Cork.”⁵⁷³ This priest was not an example of an unemployed brother; he wrote to the Queen as prior of the convent at Youghal. In contrast, neighbouring Waterford does offer an example of an ex abbot’s prospects after the suppressions. Robert Remon, who had been prior of the Augustinian monastery of St Katherine’s by the city, appealed to Queen Mary for a restitution of his house.⁵⁷⁴ Supported by his pension, Remon had evidently not sought benefice nor cure in the aftermath of the monastic suppressions.

Compensation for the monks and abbots of suppressed houses was commonplace. In March 1538, Thomas Beringham was granted a royal pension for the surrender of his abbey on the borders of Co. Meath.⁵⁷⁵ These payments were not available to recalcitrant monastics, nor recusant priests. Instead, their receipt was a signifier of formal capitulation to the campaign of dissolution. Uniformly, the leaders of religious communities received significantly more than the lower orders, but in all cases the value of the pensions was related to the value of the suppressed house. The single largest payment was acquired by the proctor of the Kilmainham community of Knights Hospitaller, who managed to obtain the sum of 500 marks, to be paid annually. In the main, however, the superiors of dissolved houses within the Pale received between £40 and £20, while a sizeable minority (30%) were all granted sums of less than £6.⁵⁷⁶ This lower tier of pensions was received by those who had been abbots and priors of the smaller and poorer religious houses in the region. Bradshaw contrasts these favourably with the incomes of various government officials in the Irish administration. Although the financial remuneration for the posts of sergeant-at-law and attorney general were undoubtedly higher, they were comparable to the monastic pensions at £13 6s 8d and £12 respectively.⁵⁷⁷

The value of the monastic houses within Dublin was considerably higher than those that lay beyond the Pale. In 1546, the Augustinian priory of Bridgetown was suppressed, and the last abbot, one William Walsh, was awarded a pension of £6 8s 4d *per annum*.⁵⁷⁸ This is analogous to those pensions awarded to the Pale priors of the poorer houses. However, such a comparison is indicative of the divergences of economic conditions of the church within the

⁵⁷³ CSP, i, 140.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁵⁷⁵ Bradshaw, *Dissolution of the Religious Orders*, 74.

⁵⁷⁶ *Calendar of The Patent and Close Rolls of Chancery*, 59-63.

⁵⁷⁷ Bradshaw, *The Dissolution of the Religious Orders*, 133.

⁵⁷⁸ *Calendar of The Patent and Close Rolls of Chancery*, 162.

English colony. In the Henrician survey, the value of the priory at Bridgetown was surpassed only by the foundation at Abbeymahon.⁵⁷⁹ As one of the paramount monasteries in the region, by Pale norms, its abbot should have received a pension of high value. Except in exceptional circumstances, the regular canons of the houses of the Pale were left with pensions of less than £4, which typically varied with the value of the house. In Cork, Cloyne and Ross, where one of the wealthiest abbeys supplied its abbot with only a small pension, the ordinary canons must have found themselves in extremely straightened circumstances. The regular canons were expected to supplement their pensions with additional sources of income; in the far flung regions of Munster this would prove an absolute necessity.

During the late medieval period, religious houses in Ireland had commonly provided a direct ministry in which either their canons or buildings supplied parochial services. The suppression campaign understood this and the commissioners ensured that while monasteries were still dissolved, responsibilities to a cure were maintained. At St John the Evangelist's in the diocese of Waterford, the Augustinian monks supplied from one of their number a canon who would serve the local church as a parish priest, with all that that entailed.⁵⁸⁰ Following suppression campaigns across Europe, many monasteries were reduced to the status of a parish church. Although this reduced importance might be painful, it was far from a new concept. Even in Co. Cork, medieval examples of this process might be found. The nunnery at Ballyvourney had pre-dated the Anglo-Norman colonisation of Ireland, yet had fallen into disuse prior to the reformations. The house sank into ecclesiastical obscurity, reduced to a mere parish in the far west of the Cloyne diocese by the fourteenth century.⁵⁸¹ Other religious houses, even those independently wealthy or spiritually dynamic, acted within the twin worlds of monastic and parochial religion. The house of Tracton was one of the richest in the region and still, "the church of the said monastery from time immemorial was and is the parish church of Tracton."⁵⁸² Similarly, the parishes of Buttevant and Glanworth coincide with the monasteries of the same name. Famously, St Mary's, the collegiate church of Youghal, provided many of the sacramental needs of that town. In 1540, the surveyors noted that regardless of its other possessions, the Cistercian abbey "is, and has been from time immemorial, the parish church of Iormoy [Fermoy]."⁵⁸³

⁵⁷⁹ White, *Monastic Possessions*, 141-142 and 145-146.

⁵⁸⁰ LP, xiii, 850.

⁵⁸¹ Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses Ireland*, 313.

⁵⁸² Bolster, *A History of the Diocese of Cork*, ii, 145.

⁵⁸³ White, *Monastic Possessions*, 144.

While monasteries could double as parish churches, they would also commonly provide ministers to appropriated rectories and vicarages, although, the presence of a canon within a parish did not predicate competency. As one contemporary author complained, the rectory of Kinsale “is at present detained by a monk of the said [Augustinian] Order who does not understand the language of that country, on account of which he cannot hear the confessions of the parishioners and administer the sacraments.”⁵⁸⁴ Regardless of this deficiency, the canon remained *in situ*. Like the rector of Kinsale, other monks found themselves employed in service to the cure of appropriated rectories. Their number may have been small, but for the canons resident within these livings, the suppression of their monasteries would have had little effect upon their lives.

This continuation marks a common theme in the clergy of the early reformations. It has frequently been remarked that the Tudor reforms in Ireland suffered primarily from a lack of evangelical English clerics. In Co. Cork, as elsewhere, the majority of clerics remained unchanged. Even in England and Protestant Europe, the old clergy remained in service to their cures; no time had elapsed for the training of a reformation ministry. The dissolution of the monasteries had the effect of exacerbating this. Most obviously, those canons who had acted as vicars and rectors in appropriated rectories continued to do so after the suppressions, with no option to return to their abbeys. The same must be said of monks who remained in their monasteries to minister a cure which had used the religious house as a parish church. However, the suppressions themselves created a glut of clerics. With pensions that were kept intentionally low by official policy, that were further limited by the relative poverty of the monastic tradition in Cork, Cloyne and Ross, canons of dissolved houses were forced to seek employment. Their qualifications and experience would have led them to remain within the clergy and simply switch from the religious arm to the secular.

Those who had once been canons within the monasteries were not predestined towards either revolution or conservation. Just as the religiosity and vibrancy of worship varied between the orders, so too did their political outlook. As shown in the previous chapter, the Observant orders tended more towards an effective spiritualism, whilst the older orders were rather more stagnated. Even within the English dioceses of Bristol and Gloucester, vast differences existed between the outlooks of ex canons. Henry Wakeman, who had been a monk in Tewkesbury, found position in a vicarage during the reign of

⁵⁸⁴ CPR, xiii, part 1, 176.

Henry VIII and later became bishop of Gloucester.⁵⁸⁵ Under Mary's rule, Wakeman was dispossessed due to his marriage and adherence to the Protestant reforms. Conversely, a Carthusian monk named Nicholas Balland was imprisoned for his treasonous diatribes on the religion of the newly reformed Tudor state. On Mary's accession, he was freed and enjoyed the restoration of his order. However, Balland's opposition to the Protestant state was revived after Elizabeth's coronation and ultimately, he fled to the continent, where he would die.⁵⁸⁶

In the case of Co. Cork, the influx of monks from the suppressed monasteries was at its strongest during the middle of the sixteenth century. At a time in which the formation of an Irish Protestant ministry from English educated clerics was crucial to the success of the Anglican reformations, the demand for parish priests was being reduced by these ex canons. The exact number of these clerics is impossible to determine and may only have represented a small proportion of the overall ecclesiastical population. Furthermore, the political and religious outlook of individual canons certainly varied. Nonetheless, they still marked a serious impediment to the Protestant reformations in the dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross simply through their presence.

An effective suppression campaign would have seen the monks subsumed into existing parochial or diocesan structures and gradually replaced by the new generation of priests. This process was successful in England, but only partially so in Ireland where a significant proportion of religious houses survived the dissolutions. Crucially, this served to cement relationships between the Irish monasteries and Europe. Many of the orders previously subservient to their compatriots now found themselves bereft of English leadership. The restructuring of the Roman church during the sixteenth century placed the surviving Irish monasteries under the nominal control of Irish clerics who were often based on the continent. Even after the revival of English monastic movements, Irish houses maintained their continental connections. The Benedictine communities of Munster had been especially reliant upon the English counterparts, as the houses at Cork, Youghal and Waterford were all directly answerable to the prior of Bath abbey.⁵⁸⁷ However, these links were dissolved with the suppression of the mother house in the early 1540s. Even after the English Benedictine Congregation was re-formed in the early seventeenth century,

⁵⁸⁵ Bettey, *The Suppression of the Monasteries*, 111-112.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 114-115.

⁵⁸⁷ W. Page, 'Houses of Benedictine monks', 75.

connections with the Irish orders would remain tenuous.⁵⁸⁸ The implications of these problems were widespread, strongly affected by the patronage of secular elites enjoyed by the monasteries of south-west Munster.

The Henrician investigators had been limited in their duties by *realpolitik* and accordingly had found themselves prevented from accessing many of the more remote areas of the region. The extreme west of the *ecclesia inter hibernicos* was entirely absent from the investigation, while the remainder of the three dioceses was somewhat more receptive. From their base in the city of Cork, the surveyors, Walter Cowley and James White, received reports on the monasteries, despite the fact that they disdained to venture from behind the safety of the walls.⁵⁸⁹ Unsurprisingly, the Anglo-Norman polity provided a larger number of returns to the inspectors. Nevertheless, the houses at Youghal were remarkably well protected. As arguably the second most prosperous settlement in the region, the town was an especial focus of crown policy, yet its Dominican friary was entirely unobserved during the Henrician dissolutions. Of a certainty, an extent of the Franciscan monastery of Youghal was made to the surveyors, but this did not make the suppression policy effectual.

Cowley and White employed a selection of seven jurors to assess the house; they recorded the value of the buildings and livings, noting that the “church and chancel, with cloister and dormitory, can be thrown down.”⁵⁹⁰ The house was nominally dissolved in 1539, while Maurice FitzGerald, the earl’s brother, received the revenues. However, in June 1543, the house was sold to William Walsh. Walsh was not only a man of local influence and importance, but also a follower of the Desmond earldom. He was apparently under FitzGerald’s tutelage, and accompanied him to court in 1542.⁵⁹¹ Desmond manipulations of suppression policy surpassed the obvious physical protection. Their influence extended to the formation of the extents. Although none of the Fitzgerald dynasty acted as a juror in the extent of the Franciscan friary, they possessed the ability to influence the Henrician survey. William Walsh, who would later receive the Franciscan friary of Youghal, was closely associated with the jurors who supplied the extent of the friary, three of whom possessed the surname Walsh (Walshe).⁵⁹² In 1257, “Maurice Fitzgerald, for some time

⁵⁸⁸ The matter is addressed at length in A. Bellenger, ‘The Post-Reformation English Benedictines and Ireland: Conflict and Dialogue’, in M. Browne and C. Ó Clabaigh, eds., *The Irish Benedictines: a History* (Dublin, 2005), 140-155.

⁵⁸⁹ The extents recorded within the document penned by Cowley and White were explicitly and exclusively made “at the City of Corcke.” See for example, White, *Monastic Possessions*, 137.

⁵⁹⁰ White, *Monastic Possessions*, 137.

⁵⁹¹ LP, xv, 387; LP, xvii, 847 and 880.

⁵⁹² White, *Monastic Possessions*, 137.

Lord Justice of Ireland, and the destroyer of the Irish,” was buried in the Franciscan friary of Youghal.⁵⁹³ Four hundred years later, his family still patronised and protected the establishment. In the map *Pacata Hibernica*, published circa 1587, the south friary was still clearly extant with the body of its church and tower unharmed.

The houses at Youghal did not survive indefinitely. The Dominican house was torn down during the late 1580s following the transfer of its lease to Sir Walter Raleigh for a rent of £12 19s 6d. Its destruction entered popular memory, being recorded thus:

“A certain Englishman named Poet [Power], while destroying the Monastery of St. Dominic, in the northern part of Youghall, fell from the top of the church and broke all his limbs. Likewise, three soldiers of that town, who had cast down and thrown into the mire the Sacred Cross of the monastery, were dead within eight days from the perpetration of their crime. The first died of madness. The second was eaten of lice. The third was slain by the Seneschal of the Earl of Desmond.”⁵⁹⁴

Although the Dominican house was ultimately demolished, the inclusion of the earldom in its legend is important. So intrinsic was the FitzGerald patronage that the actions of the seneschal were considered comparable with the wrath of God.

While Desmond’s actions might be considered ultimately futile, the Youghal friary did provide a springboard for the Catholic reformation in Ireland. The Dominican house, finally suppressed at end of the sixteenth century, was revived during the seventeenth. In 1603, the site was “utterly wast, and have soe remained ever since the leases made [to Raleigh].” However, in 1617, the Dominicans of Youghal were presented with a silver gilt shrine, made to house an image of the Virgin Mary in their possession.⁵⁹⁵ In 1644, the abbey was listed as one of the foremost houses, amongst a small number of Dominican properties in Ireland.

Monastic survival was not limited to Youghal. In Kilcrea, the Lords of Muskerry ensured the continuance of the Observant Franciscan friary. This house was one of the newer monasteries. Founded by the MacCarthys during the fifteenth century, the abbey represented

⁵⁹³ AFM, iii, 363.

⁵⁹⁴ S. Hayman, ‘The Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Youghal. No. II. The Nunnery, or Chapel of Saint Anne’s. The Franciscan Friary, Commonly Called the South Abbey. The Dominican Friary, Commonly Called the North Abbey’, *Proceedings and Transactions of the Kilkenny and South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society*, 3, 2 (1855), 334.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 334.

the forefront of the Gaelic monastic revival. Like the Dominican house at Youghal, Kilcrea was not inspected by the jurors of 1541. Supposedly, the foundation was suppressed during the reign of Henry VIII, when it was leased to Sir Cormac mac Teige MacCarthy for a period of 21 years,⁵⁹⁶ during which time the friars remained at the monastery, under his protection. They were forced to leave the grounds on several occasions, but always returned. In 1584, the buildings were plundered by two English soldiers who killed each other over the spoils.⁵⁹⁷ Similarly, an entry in the Catholic encyclopaedia gives a rather sensationalist account of the martyrdom of a Fr Matthew O'Leyn by English arms men, in the 1590s.⁵⁹⁸ Nevertheless, the friary was repaired in 1603 and even when troops were billeted on the town of Kilcrea, it was reported that several monks remained in the area.⁵⁹⁹

As with the Dominicans in Youghal, the Franciscans at Kilcrea would provide an important avenue for agents of the Catholic reformation during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Together, these two houses marked two important examples of resistance to the suppression policies. Whereas the vast majority of installations were cast down with a reasonable measure of alacrity, these two survived.⁶⁰⁰ The influence of the Desmond earldom and Muskerry lordship was certainly paramount in this matter, but their geographical remoteness from the city of Cork (and the Henrician surveyors) also played its part. In the west of the county, the area previously known as *ecclesia inter hibernicos*, the policies of monastic dissolution were especially hindered. Even in Kinsale, the third town of the county, the Carmelite friars survived into the Elizabethan period, despite lacking such a prominent sponsor.⁶⁰¹

The Franciscan order, so popular amongst the Gaelic patrons during the fifteenth century, was the best placed to survive the dissolutions. Even where their suppression was unavoidable, in nearly every instance, the houses were swiftly re-established. In Buttevant, Cork, Timoleague and Youghal, as well as on Sherkin Island, the Observant Franciscans found themselves under extreme pressure and were nominally suppressed. While the house of Cork did not resurface, the others did. Under various auspices, the friaries would remain impervious to the attentions of the Tudor reformers. In 1638, Sherkin Island was invaded by

⁵⁹⁶ C.A. Webster, *The Diocese of Cork* (Cork, 1920), 192.

⁵⁹⁷ Jennings, 'Brussels MS. 3947', 70.

⁵⁹⁸ C. McNeill, 'Irish Confessors and Martyrs,' *The Catholic Encyclopaedia*, viii (1913), 163-8.

⁵⁹⁹ Jennings, 'Part II: Brevis Synopsis Provinciae Hiberniae', 159.

⁶⁰⁰ Bradshaw recounts the fate of the monasteries of Youghal and Cork. In these towns, only the Dominican house of Youghal survived the early suppressions.

⁶⁰¹ Thomas Courcy, vicar general of the Carmelite order and based at its friary in Kinsale, was hung in that town in 1577. Gwynn, and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses Ireland*, 290.

privateers and the house there ruined.⁶⁰² The friary there had been rebuilt and it was leased out in 1578. In 1627, however, the friars returned.⁶⁰³

At Youghal, the abbey's fortunes followed a similar pattern but the endurance of Buttevant, Timoleague and Bantry was greater. Protected by Barrymore, Buttevant had still come under the auspices of crown policy. In 1568, it was amongst those houses offered as compensation if Barry's application for the lease of Abbeymahon was denied.⁶⁰⁴ Despite this royal attention, several friars remained at large when others were captured and they made their home amongst the ruins. In 1604, the buildings were repaired and as of 1609, the friary was considered to be Observant.⁶⁰⁵ The monastery of Timoleague enjoyed a similar story. Nominally suppressed during the 1540s, it was considered to be in the enfeoffment of the crown during the Elizabethan reign. Still, the friars persisted with the assistance of the O'Sullivans and though forced into frequent hiding, remained *in situ* well into the seventeenth century.⁶⁰⁶

These survivals served as a direct repudiation of the Tudor suppression policies. However, their ramifications were not confined to local, religious effects. Rather, the continuation of the Franciscan order in Cork, Cloyne and Ross was central to the consolidation of political relationships with continental powers. In 1580, O'Sullivan Beare demolished the remains of the house at Bantry, intending to repair it. That there was a need for a friary is certain, as in the same year, English soldiers drowned two Franciscans caught at the foundation there.⁶⁰⁷ However, before Beare was able to complete the work, he was forced to quit Ireland and took up residence at the court of the King of Spain. It was there in 1602, he reiterated his promise to rebuild the house.

The Henrician and Edwardian policies of dissolution were of mixed success, limited in large part by the extent of the Tudor polity. Their course played a large part in determining the nature of the ministry provided to the parishes of the three dioceses. Failures in the west and rural parts of the county saw a strengthening of political and religious links between the church of Cork, Cloyne and Ross and the continent, which coincided with the exile of secular elites to the court of Spain. Conversely, although the successes of

⁶⁰² Jennings, 'Part II: Brevis Synopsis Provinciae Hiberniae', 158.

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁶⁰⁴ *Sidney State Papers*, 88-89.

⁶⁰⁵ J. Moloney, 'Part III: Brussels MS. 3410: A Chronological List of the Foundations of the Irish Franciscan Province', *Analecta Hibernica*, 6 (1934), 202.

⁶⁰⁶ Jennings, 'Part II: Brevis Synopsis Provinciae Hiberniae', 148.

⁶⁰⁷ C. Lennon, 'The dissolution to the foundation of St Anthony's College Louvain', E. Bhreathnach, *et al*, *The Irish Franciscans 1534-1990* (Dublin, 2009), 20.

suppressions might be considered political victories, their spiritual impact was mixed. While they overturned the foundations and forced the region to adhere to Protestant organisation, the dissolutions also created a surplus of Irish and Anglo-Norman priests that would slow the formation of an English ministry. Thus, it was not until the late sixteenth century that the clerical demographics began to change.

The cathedral chapters at the start of the seventeenth century

On the eve of the reformations, the Irish ministry was largely Gaelic. Although the clerical elites were often drawn from Anglo-Norman families,⁶⁰⁸ the lower orders more closely reflected the realities of local demography. For the period 1460-1469, after adjustments⁶⁰⁹ the calendars of papal letters refer to 120 unique priests and almost that many again either completely or partially unnamed. Of these, 84 may be categorised as Gaelic, and 36 as Anglo-Norman. Furthermore, just as those of English descent were more likely to inherit the bishoprics, so too were they more accustomed to positions within the cathedral chapter. 36.1% of Anglo-Norman clerics held these posts and only 28.6% of the Irish. Further exacerbating the situation, those of Gaelic descent were largely confined to the rank of canon, whilst their colleagues from the English population filled the more senior posts of precentor, chancellor, treasurer and archdeacon.

The final three volumes of the calendars, which run from 1504 to 1521, refer to 142 clergymen that resided within Co. Cork (discounting bishops). In contrast to the earlier period, a higher proportion of Gaelic clerics held senior posts. 35.1% of the Anglo-Norman priests were to be found within the cathedral chapters, but 52.4% of the Irish. Some of this imbalance is undoubtedly ascribed to the peculiarity of the source. Priests of Irish descent were more likely to refer local matters to the papal court; presumably their Norman colleagues preferred to use the local diocesan judicial system. Consequently, the numbers of Gaelic clerics are likely inflated. Similarly, the proportion of canons to vicars and rectors is exceptionally high (almost 1:1 across all three dioceses). These men were employed as adjudicators in juries of three to a single case, which would typically include reference to only one or two parish priests. Integration of other sources alters the numbers to some degree, but the overall trends remain static.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁸ Twelve of the sixteen bishops of Cork and Cloyne from 1400 to 1550 had English surnames. Ross, being firmly with the *ecclesia inter hibernicos*, had only six of Anglo-Norman background compared to ten Gaelic.

⁶⁰⁹ Bishops were removed from this list, as were abbots. Only individuals with both surnames and forenames are included.

⁶¹⁰ Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 504.

Fig 4.2 Anglo-Norman and Gaelic clerics (1504 to 1521)

| | Total | Percentage of which are part of the Cathedral chapter |
|--------------|-------|--|
| Anglo-Norman | 37 | 35.1% |
| Gaelic | 105 | 52.4% |
| Total | 142 | |

This expanded evidence is strongly indicative of the demography of the clergy of the three dioceses. Firstly, as the reformations approached, the Anglo-Norman polity appears to have lost its grip upon the cathedral chapters. In the early part of the sixteenth century, Gaelic canons had not only overtaken those of English descent in terms of number, but also as a proportion of the priesthood. Furthermore, although the bishops of Cork and Cloyne tended to have an Anglo-Norman familial background and the bishops of Ross an Irish one, the clerical elite of Cork and Ross had a strongly Gaelic tone. The majority of individuals mentioned in these sources are either cathedral canons or parish priests, but some few are of the clerical elite. For Ross, one Anglo-Norman chancellor is recorded at the start of the sixteenth century, alongside three Gaelic archdeacons and one Irish dean. Only the Warden of Youghal (John Benet) may be positively identified in Cloyne. The diocese of Cork is far more illuminating, in which five archdeacons, deans and officials can be identified, all of whom have Gaelic surnames. The clans did not have a monopoly upon senior appointments, but Anglo-Norman priests were clearly at a disadvantage when seeking promotion within the diocese of Cork and Ross. Some important positions were still filled by English priests though; in 1517, Philip Gould surrendered the church of the Holy Trinity, one of the more important within the city of Cork, to his successor George Roche. Nevertheless Fig 4.2 demonstrates that there were significant distinctions between the dioceses.

Fig 4.3 Racial demographics of the cathedral chapters, Cork, Cloyne and Ross (1504 to 1521)

| | Cork | Cloyne | Ross |
|-----------------------|------|--------|------|
| Anglo-Norman heritage | 7 | 5 | 1 |
| Gaelic heritage | 34 | 5 | 16 |

The cathedral chapter of Ross was dominated by Gaelic clerics. The O'Driscoll clan was prominent, but the MacCarthys are also well represented. The diocese of Cork was also heavily influenced by Gaelic priests, but here the ratio drops from 16:1 (Ross) down to just under 5:1. Again, the MacCarthys play a significant role in the ecclesiastical rule of the diocese, but their influence is tempered by Barrys, Courceys and Goulds. Only in the diocese of Cloyne is the representation of Anglo-Norman and Gaelic priests within the cathedral chapter equal. When considered alongside the political structures of the region, these numbers are unsurprising. Ross, lying deep within the *ecclesia inter hibernicos* and the territories of the O'Sullivan, O'Driscoll and MacCarthy clans, has the highest numbers of Gaelic clerics. Conversely, the cathedral and manse of Cloyne was staunchly English in outlook, as part of the *ecclesia inter anglicos*. Cork, as that diocese which best bridged the two worlds of the Irish church, acted as a middle ground, albeit somewhat closer to Gaelic than Norman. Most significantly though, where the Gaelic polity was strongest, the Norman priests were all but unrepresented. Conversely, where the English rule was strongest, Gaelic clerics still made up half of the cathedral chapter.

Examining the rank and file of the clerical proletariat across the three dioceses, continuities between the late medieval period and the immediate eve of the reformation are readily recognisable. Ross still has the lowest proportion of Anglo-Norman clerics, and Cloyne the highest; again, Cork has the highest number of priests in total⁶¹¹ and Gaelic

⁶¹¹ The diocese of Cork was the most populous and prosperous, containing many of the most desirable benefices. Simultaneously, the see had a large Gaelic population. Consequently, the numbers of litigants were extremely high and accordingly, a large number of papal letters.

members outnumber the English. Furthermore, in every diocese, including Cloyne, the parish priest was more likely to be Gaelic than Anglo-Norman.

During the course of the Tudor reforms, the clergy of Cork, Cloyne and Ross underwent a radical shift. Whereas on their eve, all levels of the ecclesiastical establishment had been dominated by Gaelic priests, by the beginning of the seventeenth century English clerics had risen to prominence. The sheer number of English clergymen marks a clerical revolution in the three dioceses. In conjunction with the retrenchment of the English polity throughout the Tudor period, the Elizabethan plantation schemes saw a large scale influx of New English settlers. As the Anglo-Norman and Gaelic lordships contracted⁶¹², their influence in Co. Cork's ecclesiarchy deteriorated and New English clerics rose to prominence. The political upheavals of the Munster rebellions caused significant shifts in the makeup of the priesthood throughout the province. With traditional power structures disjointed by suppression and colonisation, it is unsurprising that politics in the region, both ecclesiastical and secular, were affected. The previous chapter showed how this worked amongst the upper echelons of the clergy, clearly demonstrating that the backing of powerful external forces did not guarantee the success of a bishop. For the parish priest, the support of the local lord was of the utmost importance. Consequently, it is unsurprising that clerics of Gaelic and Anglo-Norman descent had fallen from favour by the seventeenth century.

However, this was not a process of rapid revolution. Just as the transition towards reformed bishops in the region was both slow and erratic, dependent upon local political realities, so too was that which occurred in the cathedral chapters.⁶¹³ Though evidence is restricted to the reports of two visitations in 1588 and 1591, two material facts are immediately demonstrable; both a reflection of the socio-political changes and continuities that occurred within and without the colony during the sixteenth century. The members of the chapters are those recognisable as belonging to the establishment of Cork, with names that would reside comfortably in much of this history. In 1591 Philip Gould resides as the archdeacon of Cork cathedral and John Martell as the chancellor. John FitzEdmund is the dean of Cloyne and Donell Donovan the treasurer of Ross. Simultaneously, new English clerics are conspicuous only by their absence. Only Meredith Hanmer, the archdeacon of

⁶¹² The Desmond revolts hastened this process, as the suppression of the rebellions required greater concentrations of Royal power in the region.

⁶¹³ Unfortunately, evidence of the effects of reformation amongst these elite of the secular clergy is severely limited. Examples are restricted to the famous 1615 visitations of William Lyon, Murphy, 'The Royal Visitations of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,' and the earlier surveys of 1588 and 1591 recorded in TCD MS 566. Carte.

Ross, is directly representative of a Protestant English reformation in the region and even he is listed as absent, “*in Anglia pluralis*.”

Hanmer’s career began in England. He was born in Shropshire and was educated at Corpus Christi, Oxford. There, he obtained a chaplaincy in 1567 and later graduated first BA, then MA, BTh and finally DTh in 1582. Despite Hanmer’s formidable array of qualifications and growing reputation as an historian and academic, his career was tarnished by repeated accusations of misconduct, including involvement in the libellous scandal that had the Earl of Shrewsbury as the lover of the Queen.⁶¹⁴ In its wake, Hanmer sought to rebuild his career in Ireland. While there, he focused heavily on his historical writings, from which we can glean his strongly Protestant outlook. In them, his argument demonstrated the swift collapse of the early church from its untainted beginnings to its deleterious condition in the late medieval period. James Ware arranged for its publication in 1633, telling us that Hanmer, a Doctor of Divinity, died of plague in Dublin in the year 1604 before completion of his “intended work.”⁶¹⁵ For all of his supposed faults, this Oxford educated cleric was a staunch supporter of the Anglican cause. He was, however, largely ineffective. As the only English born member of Co. Cork’s cathedral chapters in 1591, Hanmer would have found himself isolated as a minority within Ross. His presence, however, was at best an occasional one. Appointed to the archdeaconry of Ross just prior to the 1591 visitation, Hanmer once more demonstrated his tendencies towards pluralism, in which he had first dabbled whilst still in England. With the aid of his patron, Thomas Butler, the tenth earl, he was granted five vicarages, including four in Ossory and one in Ross, Timoleague.⁶¹⁶ It is likely that in the first instance, Hanmer concentrated his attentions on his holdings in Ossory, close to his patron’s centres of power. Later in his life, the archdeacon of Ross came to live and work in Dublin, where he concentrated upon his historical writings. The journal of the Lord Deputy, Sir William Russell, records that on 24 August 1594, Hanmer preached in the capital. Similarly, he gave sermons on 11 January 1595 and 9 January 1596 respectively. Little other mention of this scholar can be found.⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁴ For further detail on his early career, see A. Ford, ‘Hanmer, Meredith (1543–1604)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12204>] accessed 26 Aug 2014].

⁶¹⁵ M. Hanmer, ‘The Chronicle of Ireland. Collected by Meredith Hanmer, Doctor of Divinity, In the Yeare 1571’, in *Ancient Irish histories: the works of Spencer, Campion, Hanmer, and Marleborough*, ii (Dublin, 1809), preface.

⁶¹⁶ TCD MS 566. Carte.

⁶¹⁷ *Calendar of the Carew manuscripts*, ii, 235, 241 and 254.

This brief examination of Hanmer's character and personal history demonstrates the complete failure of the new English polity to gain significant influence in the cathedral chapters. This new order would come to dominate the region, but in 1591 its sole representative was a pluralist cleric who was working to rebuild his career while absent from his possessions in Ross. This was not an atmosphere conducive to the spread of the Anglican reforms and Hanmer's personal influence was certainly minor at best.

Although the Protestant reforms may not have made their presence felt in the cathedral chapters by the 1590s, changes were underway. Echoing the increased English presence and the political realities of south western Ireland in the late sixteenth century, real change is readily observable within the cathedral chapters.

Fig 4.4 Racial demographics of the cathedral chapters, Cork, Cloyne and Ross (1591)⁶¹⁸

| | Cork | Cloyne | Ross |
|-----------------------|------|--------|------|
| Anglo-Norman heritage | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| Gaelic heritage | 1 | 0 | 2 |

Figure 4.3 provides a real contrast to the earlier 4.2. Before, clerics of Gaelic descent had dominated the cathedral chapters of Cork and Ross and retained sizeable influence in Cloyne. In 1591, this position has been radically altered. Some part of this transition must be ascribed to the different sources used in order to derive the data. For the earlier period, the calendars of papal letters are the main resource upon which we can draw and as previously stated, these include extremely high proportions of cathedral canons. Consequently, they should not be taken as an equivalent to the later systematic survey, which carefully recorded dean, archdeacon, precentor, chancellor and treasurer of each diocese. These prestigious positions had been habitually reserved to scions of notable Irish and Anglo-Norman families and the papal letters may be unfairly weighted towards the more numerous Gaelic canons. However, even when they are excluded from the figures provided by the papal letters, Gaelic

⁶¹⁸ Figures taken from TCD MS 566. Carte, fo. 146, 149-150, 153-156, 168-169.

priests remain dominant. John Benet may have been the warden of Cloyne's collegiate church, but Donough MacCarthy was the archdeacon of Cork. Thady O'Keefe would join him in that diocese as dean and Thadeus MacCarthy took position as archdeacon of Ross. These most senior of the Irish ecclesiarchy are poorly represented in the later papal letters, referred to erratically and infrequently. Despite this, they do still obey the overall trends of Gaelic dominance, which makes the later period all the more distinctive. By 1591, the character of the clerical elite in Cork, Cloyne and Ross had undergone a radical transition. However, this was not indicative of a successful Protestant reformation, but rather another reflection of the changing political realities of the region.

The 1615 survey was intended to be a comprehensive visitation of the dioceses by their (Protestant) bishop, William Lyon.⁶¹⁹ During this period, immediately following the Flight of the Earls, the English colony was once more in the ascendancy, which allowed the New English ecclesiastical hierarchy the freedom and authority to assert control over the dioceses. This assessment of the Co. Cork sees was the most complete of its type during either the late medieval or Tudor periods and, as such, it evidences an enormous shift in patterns of the clerical profession. Interestingly, whereas the evidence from earlier periods demonstrated a clear distinction between the three dioceses, these differences appear to have been removed by the start of the seventeenth century. The diocese of Cloyne is unique, in that it was the only one of the three to have clerical representation from the older English families of Co. Cork, but even here, their numbers remain low. In every instance, the new influx of settlers dominated the priesthood.

The cathedral chapters, once bastions of Gaelic hegemony were, by 1615, subsumed almost entirely into the new English polity.⁶²⁰ In the early part of the seventeenth century, they reflected the changing socio-economic climate of the English colony in Ireland. The once quasi-independent city and townships of Co. Cork now fell under the purview of increasingly effective royal appointees; under the direction of the Lord President Carew's close ally, Mountjoy, the citizens of Cork were forced to rebuild Elizabeth Fort. English soldiers would continue to be billeted in the city long after the Nine Years' war which saw their arrival. Simultaneously, the corporation of Cork received a new, restrictive, charter on

⁶¹⁹ Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,' 173-215.

⁶²⁰ The 1615 survey provides a snapshot of the cathedral chapters which will be reviewed later in this chapter. *Ibid.*, 175, 190, 206.

10 March, 1608, on terms dictated by the English.⁶²¹ The dominance of royal power in the secular world was reflected in the spiritual.

The three cathedral chapters of the region, of Cork, Cloyne and Ross, were of crucial importance to the administration of religion in the dioceses. The 1615 survey emphasises a revolution in the religious life across the district. Only the precentor of Ross was Gaelic at this time; every other senior clergyman was English.⁶²² O'Sullivans and FitzGeralds had been replaced by Stones and Westmores. Absentee officials did remain a problem, but the visitation suggests an active *English* clergy. Dr Michael Boyle was at once the archdeacon of Cork and Cloyne, as well as the dean of Lismore cathedral. Nevertheless, in every diocese, members of the chapter were apparently *in situ* and active. Alexander Gough was described as a "reading minister," John Brocke as a "minister and teacher of public ministry." The chancellor of Ross, Thomas Newton, was the "preacher in residence." These changes are echoed at every level in the character of the diocesan clergy.

⁶²¹ For a detailed account of Cork in the seventeenth century, see M. McCarthy, 'The historical geography of Cork's transformation from a late medieval town into an Atlantic sea-port, 1600-1700,' Unpublished PhD thesis (UCC, 1997).

⁶²² The precentor was Teige McDonnell O Donovan. Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,' 206.

The secular clergy at the end of the sixteenth century

The Carte manuscripts⁶²³ offer a glimpse into diocesan organisation in the early 1590s. Although limited to a single visitation of Cloyne and Ross dated 1591, there are two for Cork, in 1588 and 1591 respectively. This is supportive of an argument for effective diocesan supervision under the episcopate of William Lyon, even during this period of heightened political uncertainty.⁶²⁴ These visitations do provide evidence of Lyon's claims; that he regularly travelled through his episcopate. He wrote that during his time in the county of Cork, he "visit[ed] the country several times in the year, and do observe things, and hear and learn the dispositions [of the people], how they are inclined and bent."⁶²⁵ The three year gap between visitations hearkens back to the pre-reformation practices of triennial diocesan surveys. This echo of previous practices offers a pleasing reminder that suggests continuity, but the accuracy of this hypothesis all but impossible to ascertain.

Unlike the national visitations conducted earlier during the Elizabethan reign, the local inspections recorded in the Carte are not preoccupied with finance. They do bear an unfortunate similarity in that none recorded the condition of the churches, nor the quality of worship. However, unlike the *Valor Hibernica*, the Carte manuscripts do provide the names of parish priests, vicars and rectors. For the diocese of Cork, they offer an almost unique opportunity: a comparison of a series of parishes from two chronologically adjacent and thematically linked surveys. This prospect does come with a caveat, as the particular constraints of the source are severe. Of a diocese with 84 distinct parishes in 1615,⁶²⁶ only a total of 39 are mentioned in the Carte. Of these, only 19 are mentioned in both. At this time, Lyon's survey of the diocese of Cork was severely restricted by the political realities of the Elizabethan period; with the exception of Kilcrohane in the extreme west of the see (lying adjacent to Bantry Bay), all lie within 20 miles of the centre of the city of Cork. This colours the impressions that might be gained from the visitations as only parishes *ecclesia inter anglicos* were surveyed. The evidence available does, however, demonstrate no immediate signs of catastrophic collapse. Although there are numerous empty livings, those positions

⁶²³ TCD MS 566. Carte, fo. 146, 149-150, 153-156, 168-169.

⁶²⁴ See previous chapter.

⁶²⁵ CSPI, iv, 16.

⁶²⁶ This total is taken from information gleaned from Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,' 175-189.

that were filled in 1588 appear to have retained their clerics. For example, Alexander Meagh retained the rectory of Inishannon from 1588 to 1591, while Richard Skiddy held that of Liscleary. There are a few examples in which a clerical living, either rectory or vicarage, that had been filled in 1588 had fallen vacant in 1591. Edward Flynn, one time rector of Kilcrohane, is omitted from the later survey while his vicar, James Vernam, is included in both visitations.⁶²⁷ In general, however, the number of clerics in the diocese may have enjoyed a gentle increase during the period. Where priests do leave, they tend to be replaced and in some instances, once-empty livings have been filled.

Fig 4.5 Clerics in the three dioceses, 1588 and 1591⁶²⁸

| | Filled 1588 | Filled 1591 |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Rector | 10 | 5 |
| Vicar | 3 | 4 |
| Curates | 0 | 4 |
| Other | 3 | 5 |
| Total (omitting abbeyes) | 16 | 18 |

One significant difference between the surveys of 1588 and 1591 is the sudden appearance of curates. In the earlier of the two, rectories outnumber vicarages more than 3:1, along with a smattering of prebends. As demonstrated in the table above, this ratio drops to almost 1:1, with the shortfall of rectors being made up by curates. In 1591, Ballinaboy, Kilcully, Marmullane and Templeusk possessed examples of these. It is unclear if this is due to a change in spiritual practice, or simply if the diocesan recorders chose to note the same position in a different fashion; if it was a real transition it may have been a minor one. Maurice McDermot (McDermitt) was listed as the curate of Marmullane and Templeusk respectively, but in 1588 he had been in possession of their rectories.⁶²⁹ For McDermot, the

⁶²⁷ TCD MS 566. Carte, fo. 146, 149.

⁶²⁸ Figures taken from *ibid.*, fo. 146, 149-150, 153-156, 168-169.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, fo. 149.

distinction was likely a small one as he was the sole occupier of both in 1591 and the shift from rector to curate would have had little day to day impact. In comparison, the curate of Ballinaboy shared his parish with a vicar by the name of Cogan, while the vicarage of Donough O’Cahill’s cure fell to the Dean of Cork and that of Barnehelie to Gill Abbey.⁶³⁰ In addition to the evidence of appropriation, there is an ethnic element to this new distinction. Every cleric of Gaelic descent listed in the Cork visitation of 1591 is described as a curate; conversely, there are none of Anglo-Norman or English heritage. This is strongly suggestive of a void between the two nations that may not have existed in 1588. The nature of that void is difficult to ascertain, but it seems likely to have been a reflection of the changing political landscape creating ripples in the religious one. Interestingly though, there is no comparison in either Cloyne or Ross; both were equipped with Gaelic clerics, yet neither possessed a single curate.

This is not the only distinction between the three dioceses. Using the 1591 survey as a point of reference, certain trends quickly come to the fore.⁶³¹ Cork’s parishes are noticeably underrepresented with by far the smallest number of livings recorded, even though the diocese had almost three times as many as Ross. That said, Cork also possessed the highest number of populated livings; this may have been a reflection of the geographical proximity of the surveyed parishes to the city and its religious and political influence. Conversely, the diocese of Cloyne was extensively surveyed. The hinterlands of Cork were decidedly *inter hibernicos*, located far to the west of traditional English and Anglo-Norman power structures; these were controlled by Irish rebels and Catholic priests. Conversely, almost the entirety of Cloyne was *inter anglicos*. A visitation of the easternmost see of Co. Cork was not limited by the depravations of the wild Irish or the Anglo-Norman rebellions. The ability of Bishop Lyon to survey Cloyne to such an extent indicates a strong diocesan structure. Nevertheless, that diocese also suffered the highest impositions upon its economy, with the highest rates of appropriation and vacancy recorded in 1591.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, fo. 146.

⁶³¹ The table takes no account of lay improppriation nor of revenues appropriated by the cathedral chapters. Duplications formed through the commonplace practice by which one parish supported multiple livings are included.

Fig 4.6 Appropriations and vacant parishes in 1591⁶³²

| | Cloyne | Cork | Ross |
|----------------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| Populated | 59 (30.26%) | 23 (57.5%) | 31 (49.20%) |
| Void | 42 (21.54%) | 6 (15%) | 13 (20.63%) |
| Appropriated | 65 (33.33%) | 6 (15%) | 8 (9.52%) |
| Total church livings | 195 | 40 | 63 |

Another significant difference between the dioceses was in demography. The traditional view of Ross as a largely Irish see and Cloyne as English (or at least Anglo-Norman) is borne out by the 1591 survey, albeit with some alteration. Pluralism remained a significant problem in 1591, with priests quite commonly in possession of multiple livings. There were, for example, a total of 11 clerics of English descent across the three dioceses: between them, they had responsibility for 20 positions. Still, it is a relatively simple matter to analyse the information provided with a view to highlighting the number of unique entries and remove the duplications.

Fig 4.7 Racial demographics of the parish clergy, Cork, Cloyne and Ross (1591)⁶³³

| | Cork | Cloyne | Ross |
|-----------------------|------|--------|------|
| English heritage | 2 | 7 | 2 |
| Anglo-Norman heritage | 9 | 18 | 3 |
| Gaelic heritage | 4 | 7 | 15 |

⁶³² Figures taken from TCD MS 566. Carte, fo. 146, 149-150, 153-156, 168-169.

⁶³³ *Ibid.*

As with the developments in the cathedral chapters, the impact of the reformations is immediately noticeable, if not revolutionary at this time. In the period 1460-1469, the number of Gaelic clerics more than doubled those of Anglo-Norman descent.⁶³⁴ Just over a hundred years later the ratio has gone the other way, if not to quite the same degree. This alteration is a reflection of the changes in the political landscape. Ross, once dominated by the Irish clans and their clerics, now sees the gradual ingress of Norman interests. The bishopric of Cork, consolidated by William Lyon, sees an increase in the representation of Anglo-Norman families and Cloyne, most heavily *inter anglicos*, has begun to welcome the new power. The revolution was to come later, between 1591 and 1615.

Spenser complained in 1596 that despite all their advantages, “what good should any English minister doe amongst them [the Gaelic Irish], by teaching or preaching to them, which either cannot understand him, or will not heare him?”⁶³⁵ The Elizabethan writer continued by asking which English priest would risk his life amongst parishioners “so insatiable, so intractable, so ill-affected...as they usuall bee to all the English...[that] the boldest captaines dare scarcely dwell by”. The importance of Irish clerics to English evangelism should not be underestimated. Spenser, though somewhat florid in his phrasing, accurately described the major advantages of a native ministry; an enhanced personal influence and a linguistic advantage of preaching in the vernacular. Gaelic preachers were consequently at a great premium to the nascent Anglican church. Thus, while the changing demographics of the county’s priesthood represented a victory for the Tudor polity, the shrinking number of Gaelic Irish allies formed a stumbling block to reform.⁶³⁶

The diocese of Ross had been the most strongly Gaelic on the eve of the Tudor reformations and had remained so in 1591. Nevertheless, as per the Visitation of 1615, only one of the seventeen priests who served that see can be definitively identified as of Gaelic heritage.⁶³⁷ Echoing the transition in the make up of the cathedral chapters, the representatives of the Gaelic clans had been almost entirely⁶³⁸ replaced by English, Anglican,

⁶³⁴ This is referencing beginning of the cathedral chapters section

⁶³⁵ Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 142.

⁶³⁶ The second chapter of Hensey’s PhD thesis deals with this matter in some detail. In particular, she detailed the involvement of the laity in the counties to the east of Cork, highlighting the negative impact on the Anglican church of the retention of advowsons and clerical incomes by Catholic landowners. A. Hensey, ‘A comparative study of the...south-eastern dioceses, 60-137.

⁶³⁷ Murphy, ‘The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,’ 206-10.

⁶³⁸ There were only six priests of Gaelic origin recorded within the survey, as well as two of mixed heritage. The descendants of the Anglo-Norman families were almost completely absent from the church. Although Sir John FitzGerald held large swathes of Cloyne diocese, he was a layman who merely farmed the revenues. His kinsman, Thomas FitzGerald, who held the rectories of Cahirultan and Dangandonovan, was little better.

ministers. Even those few Irish priests who remained in service seem to differ from their predecessors.

The image of Cork's Gaelic priests as provided by the Carte is in many ways a traditional one. Across the three dioceses a wide variety of surnames and families populate the livings, albeit with a few families making the largest contributions. Some families appear to have been new to the region in the 1590s; their members include Maurice McDermot⁶³⁹ and Icarus O'Huigen.⁶⁴⁰ Still, the overall impression is of continued service of familiar names: O'Sheehan and O'Houlaghan, O'Donovan and O'Sullivan. The traditional elites of Cork, Cloyne and Ross in arenas both secular and religious were still to be found in 1591. Although their influence may have been lessened, it was not eradicated; in several important ways, it remained unchanged. Individual priests commonly found themselves in those areas most heavily influenced by their clans. Jo, John and Daniel O'Sullivan held a selection of rectories between them, all closely clustered around the towns of Middleton and Castlemartyr in central Cloyne.⁶⁴¹ The parish of Myross, on the coast of Ross, demonstrates a relationship not so strictly defined by geography, but rather one of ongoing familial chronology as a bastion of authority for the O'Donovan family. They appear to have enjoyed an unbroken relationship with the church there for over 100 years.

The Calendars of Papal Records record that in 1465, Dermot O'Donovan (Odonnagayn) sued Dermot O'Horan (Osuotharayn)⁶⁴² for possession of Myross.⁶⁴³ His relative, also named Dermot O'Donovan (Odonngayn), canon of Ross, was asked to sit in judgement of this delation. In a wonderful twist common to the medieval Irish church, this was a political move by one clerical dynasty to another. O'Horan was accused of being a "public and notorious fornicator," who perverted the wealth of the parish to the purposes of his children. For his part, O'Donovan had been dispensed, "by means of a certain sub-collector of the papal *camera* in Ireland," on account of his illegitimacy as the son of a priest and an unmarried woman. Although both parties might be tarred with the same brush, it was the accuser who was successful. A second entry in the calendars records that in 1466, Dermot O'Donovan was in possession of Myross having obtained the resignation of his

⁶³⁹ The O'Huigens were of the O'hUigin sept, based in Sligo. TCD MS 566. Carte, fo. 146.

⁶⁴⁰ The root of the McDermot family lay in Connaught with the three septs of the Mac Diarmada, which originated in Co. Roscommon. *Ibid.*, fo. 150.

⁶⁴¹ These comprised of church livings in Mogeely, Dungourney, Bohillane and Kilmacdonough. *Ibid.*, fo. 154-5.

⁶⁴² Later Ofohoran.

⁶⁴³ CPR, xi, 221-222.

predecessor.⁶⁴⁴ 125 years later, in 1591, another Dermot O'Donovan held the vicarage of the parish⁶⁴⁵ and it is tempting to imagine a clerical dynasty stretching from one to the other. At the least, the repetition indicates an association between the Elizabethan clerics and the traditional centres of Gaelic power.

This story may seem fanciful, but it is not the sole example of its kind. The relationship between the Terrys of Cork and certain parishes is well documented. In his article on the family, Terry demonstrated an ongoing relationship between that family and various parishes, most especially Carrigtwohill, which was seemingly passed from father to son on four occasions.⁶⁴⁶ In 1591, Colman O'Sheehan was the vicar of Roskeen, but in the fifteenth century, his ancestor had delated that parish's incumbent.⁶⁴⁷ Like the O'Donovans in Myross, the O'Sheehans echo the medieval erenaghs. William O'Sheehan (Osyichayn)'s appeal detailed that Roskeen was vacant by the death of the previous occupier, one Cornelius O'Sheehan (Osyichayn). The petitioner's dispensation to enter orders as the son of a priest and an unmarried woman is unlikely to have been coincidental.

Some families are noticeable only by their absence; the MacCarthys, O'Driscolls, O'Mahonys. Throughout the late medieval period, these clans had supplied large numbers of clerics to the three dioceses but are entirely missing from the Elizabethan survey. The O'Mahonys were relatively minor players in comparison to the other two, but for the others to disappear highlights a significant change in the region. In the fifteenth century, O'Driscolls had populated livings in all three dioceses, but most especially in Ross. These included Aghadown,⁶⁴⁸ Creagh,⁶⁴⁹ Tullagh,⁶⁵⁰ Dromdaleague,⁶⁵¹ and Glanbarrahan.⁶⁵² In each of these examples, the position of the family resembles that of the O'Donovans in Myross and the O'Sheehans in Roskeen. These are strong clerical dynasties that combined

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 55-56

⁶⁴⁵ TCD MS 566. Carte, fo. 156.

⁶⁴⁶ Terry, 'Aspects of settlement,' 28.

⁶⁴⁷ CPR, xi, 668-669.

⁶⁴⁸ Odo O'Driscoll (Ohedyrsgeail) was confirmed in the parish, which he had held for more than a year without being ordained priest and without a dispensation. *Ibid.*, 305.

⁶⁴⁹ Donatus O'Driscoll (Ohedortroil) was assigned the revenues of Creagh, even though he was *in absentia*, studying in Bologna. The parish was then in the gift of laymen and Donatus himself was the son of unmarried, related parents; this is likely another example of a Gaelic clan retaining possession of a church living from one generation to another. *Ibid.*, 55-56.

⁶⁵⁰ In 1481, Eneas O'Driscoll (Ohedersgeoyll) defended himself against accusations of simony by Donatus O'Driscoll (Yhedersgeoyll). The right of advowson was with a lay patron. CPR, xiii, part 2, 768-769.

⁶⁵¹ Macrobius O'Driscoll (Ohederstgyol) entered suit against a canon of Cork for both his position and the prebend of Dromdaleague in 1456). CPR, xi, 265.

⁶⁵² Cornelius O'Driscoll (Ohedersegyol) was granted an indult of a plenary remission in 1456. He was described as the rector of Glanbarrahan. *Ibid.*, 298.

secular power with ecclesiastical succession. However, unlike the other families mentioned, the O'Driscolls did not retain their church possessions into the 1590s. The Carte manuscripts record that the rectories of Creagh and Tullagh were held by Dermot Long⁶⁵³ and Glanbarrahan by Dominic Cormack⁶⁵⁴. The O'Donovans themselves were not immune from this decline: ownership of Lislee had been transferred from them to William Morgan by 1591. The chronological distance in the cases mentioned above might suggest that these links are but tenuous coincidence. However, each of these families was a potent force, firmly ensconced in their positions within the ecclesiarchy of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. They should be taken as examples of the weakening of traditional power in the region.

Like the O'Driscolls, the MacCarthys of Co. Cork are entirely removed from parochial ministry in 1591. Not a single example of this most powerful family remains. In part, this must reflect the clan's fall from grace and their declining influence in the region, but their involvement in the religious life of Cork, Cloyne and Ross was never so narrow. As befitted the exalted status of the chiefs of the MacCarthys, their sons overlooked rectories in favour of abbacies and ignored vicarages, preferring instead the episcopal seat. Even in the fifteenth century, very few of that family were to be found within the parishes. Thady MacCarthy (Macarryg) was a delator who in April 1478 sought possession of Rathclaren and Burren.⁶⁵⁵ However, unlike Dermot O'Donovan, MacCarthy did not seek a cure of souls. A canon in the cathedral of Cork, he sought to add these revenues to his income. This predilection for the elite positions of the dioceses goes some way towards explaining their absence in the 1591 surveys, but also masks another aspect of the MacCarthy dynasty: one of geography.

In previous chapters, the MacCarthy influence and patronage has been considered in some detail. In addition to the cathedral chapters, they sponsored several religious houses in the region, having strong links in Gill Abbey, Abbeymahon, the Franciscan friary in the city of Cork, as well as Kilcrea and Bantry. Of course, the absence of the MacCarthy clan was not solely a matter of obfuscation. In 1541, the Henrician survey of the monasteries described how the "R[ectory] of Tollelyche...[was] unlawfully detained by the Coorbe of Tollelyche."⁶⁵⁶ In 1592, Tullylease's vicarage lay void and its rectory impropriated by the Earl of Ormond. Even for examples such as these, wherein the Gaelic clerical families had

⁶⁵³ TCD MS 566. Carte, fo. 156.

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, fo. 156.

⁶⁵⁵ CPR, xiii, part 1, 70.

⁶⁵⁶ White, *Monastic Possessions*, 190.

retained their positions until relatively late, the vagaries of the Tudor period would alter the position of even the most powerful Irish families.

It is important to be cautious with the Carte MSS as the surveys of Cork are geographically limited. With the surveyors restricted to areas within close proximity to the city, they omitted the Gaelic heartlands. Fig. 4.8 shows that only two parishes were listed in the 1591 survey of Cork that fell outside of the city of Cork and its immediate surrounds. Of those, Killaspugmullane to the east fell within Cloyne; it was a prebend providing parochial revenues to absentee Englishman, Thomas Gibbons.⁶⁵⁷ To the west, Kilcrohane overlooked Bantry Bay and its cure fell to James Vernam.⁶⁵⁸ However, that parish was firmly within the *ecclesia inter hibernicos* and its inclusion in the 1591 survey should be treated as anomalous.

Fig 4.8 Map of parishes surveyed in 1591⁶⁵⁹



⁶⁵⁷ TCD MS 566. Carte, fo. 146.

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, fo. 146.

⁶⁵⁹ Based on *ibid.*, fo. 146, 149-150.

The extreme west of Cork, as well as the western sections of Cloyne and Ross had historically been those parts of the county most heavily influenced by the Gaelic clans. This remained true throughout the Tudor period and has been explored in some depth throughout this thesis.⁶⁶⁰ That these regions were omitted from the visitations of 1591 obscures the involvement of the Gaelic Irish in the parishes of Cork and exaggerates that of their counterparts. Nevertheless, it is obvious that even in the 1590s the parochial ministry of the three dioceses was a varied thing. The above-mentioned limitations notwithstanding, the grip of the clans was weakening, albeit with some strong connections still remaining. The new English polity had yet to replace the older Gaelic and Anglo-Norman structures, but it was making great strides.

⁶⁶⁰ The example of O'Sullivan Beare is particularly pertinent in this instance. This sept had anchored its fortunes to the mainland near Beare Island and Bantry Bay. This family was particularly supportive of the Catholic church, lending its influence and military power to various rebellions, including the Spanish landings at Kinsale in 1601. O'Sullivan Beare provided a fuller history of his family in the region within his book, *Chapters towards a History of Ireland*.

The secular clergy at the start of the seventeenth century

Evidence from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries may have shown that while the priests of Cork, Cloyne and Ross originated from a wide variety of families, certain clans dominated the clerical orders. This changed during the latter part of the sixteenth century and changed yet further in the seventeenth. By 1615, Teige MacDonald O'Sullivan was the sole representative of a clan which had traditionally supplied priests throughout the region.⁶⁶¹ Overall numbers of Gaelic priests, both in total and as a proportion of the overall clerical population, had decreased and the once pre-dominant clans had fallen from grace. Conversely, at some point in the early seventeenth century, the MacDonalds⁶⁶² had risen to replace the more established clerical families of Co. Cork. Of the six Irish priests who were reportedly engaging with the Anglican church in the region, four were associated with this clan.

In 1603, a report to the English government listed the MacDonalds alongside the O'Sullivans and Roches as the chief men of Muskerry.⁶⁶³ However, they were not an independent power and were instead an offshoot of the MacCarthys.⁶⁶⁴ Those mentioned in 1615 exemplify this trend, as two of the four have hybrid names. In addition to the aforementioned Teige MacDonald O'Sullivan was the layman Cormac McDonagh MacCarthy, who held the prebend of Kilbrogan.⁶⁶⁵ In the 1615 Visitation, these two were the sole links to clans which had once been so important within the ecclesiarchy of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. It is difficult to determine the affiliation of the MacDonald sept at the start of the seventeenth century. While its origins suggest strong links to the traditional Gaelic power centres of the region, the role of the MacDonalds as the pre-eminent Irish priests of the new church is indicative of a shift of allegiances. The nature of these appointments is similarly suggestive.

The example of Teig MacDonald O'Sullivan is particularly edifying. In the reformed ecclesiastical society of seventeenth century Cork, he represented a confusing combination of medieval erenagh and Anglican Irish preacher. Ostensibly, O'Sullivan served his cures as a

⁶⁶¹ Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,' 210.

⁶⁶² Also written MacDonough, MacDonagh and MacDaniel.

⁶⁶³ CSPI, x, 648.

⁶⁶⁴ The genealogy of the MacCarthy clan has been examined in detail in W.F. Butler, 'The Pedigree and Succession of the House of MacCarthy Mór, with a Map,' *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Sixth Series, 11, 1 (June 1921), 32-48.

⁶⁶⁵ Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,' 185-6.

reading minister and worked under an English minister⁶⁶⁶ to provide religious services to the heavily Gaelic parish of Dromdaleague in the diocese of Cork.⁶⁶⁷ His role was almost certainly to provide linguistic support to the parishioners while the well qualified rector enjoyed the income of the benefice. Nevertheless, O’Sullivan’s role far surpassed this single position. In addition to the cure at Domdaleague, he was responsible for another two vicarages in Cork and four in Ross. All of these resided within the extreme south and west of what is modern day Co. Cork. As vicar, O’Sullivan served beneath an English rector in Dromdaleague, but his real work saw him reporting to the cathedral chapters of Ross and Waterford. To these went the revenues of Kilcaskin and Killaconenagh (Ross) and Durruss and Kilcrohane (Waterford).

However, O’Sullivan can not purely be defined as one of that rare few; a native Irish Anglican reading minister. In addition to the varying cures described above, he also held both the vicarages and rectories of Kilcatherine and Kilnamanagh. Both of these parishes were on the Beara Peninsula, which is bounded by the Kenmare River to the north and Bantry Bay to the south. Kilcatherine lay no more than six miles north of Castletownbere while Kilnamanagh was even closer. Significantly, these were traditional O’Sullivan lands.⁶⁶⁸ As early as 1602, the chief of that clan, O’Sullivan Beare, was to be found amongst the dependents of the King of Spain.⁶⁶⁹ Nevertheless, even in his absence, the O’Sullivans retained possession of their ancestral church lands.

Teig MacDonald O’Sullivan was not formally qualified. Unlike a large proportion of the English priests mentioned in the visitation, the Irish priest is found to be conspicuously without a bachelors, masters or doctorate. As a “minister who reads,”⁶⁷⁰ some level of education must be assumed, while his appointment by two separate cathedral chapters speaks to his competence. Furthermore, the rector of Kilcatherine and Kilnamagh was, in addition to his many other duties, the precentor of Ross. As precentor, O’Sullivan was responsible for preparing the cathedral for acts of worship and given the apticulars of his colleagues within the chapter, it is highly likely that he was a competent Protestant minister. The actively Anglican bishop, William Lyon, held the bishopric *in commendam* with those of Cork and Cloyne and had formed a chapter that was almost entirely English. Theodore Arther, BA, filled the role of archdeacon and William Bolton, BA, acted as treasurer. The dean, Hugh

⁶⁶⁶ Alternatively given as Robert and Richard Wilson, MA.

⁶⁶⁷ In the 1659 census, of a population of 297 in the parish, 285 were classified as Irish.

⁶⁶⁸ Butler, ‘The Pedigree and Succession of the House of Mac Carthy Mór,’ 33.

⁶⁶⁹ CSPI, x, 536.

⁶⁷⁰ Murphy, ‘The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,’ 206.

Perceval, possessed a master's degree. Ostensibly, these men were both well educated and capable, priests apparently prepared for ministry by a thorough education. Concurrently, their status as Englishmen would indicate an attachment to the Anglican church and a loyalty to the crown; consequently, the employment of O'Sullivan by such men offers a positive commentary upon his character.

The remaining MacDonalds were positioned in two parishes; these were Kilmaclenine and Caheragh.⁶⁷¹ Of these, only Kilmaclenine lies near the traditional lands of this sept. Caheragh is in the extreme west of the diocese of Cork. Geography was not a determining factor in the appointment of these MacDonald clerics. Instead, they appear to have been sponsored by English and Anglo-Irish interests. Rather than under the purview of Irish clans, the advowson of these parishes had fallen to the FitzGerald family. The 1615 Visitation clearly demonstrates the ownership of these rights. For the entry of Kilmaclenine, the rectory was stated to be in the hands of John Fitzgerald, who was "of the Waterford cathedral." Similarly, Caheragh can be linked to the old Desmond family. These two Gaelic clerics had subtly different roles within the church. Like O'Sullivan, Thadeus, vicar of Caheragh, was a reading minister with responsibility for the cure of souls. There is little to recommend or condemn his competency; no further information is offered on the priest's character. However, the survey does remark that while the church is up and thatched, the "chancell [is] downe."⁶⁷² This is not indicative of an effective or motivated priest.

Murry MacDonald differs from Thadeus and O'Sullivan. The condition of his church was worse than that at Caheragh; here, both the church and chancel were damaged. Similarly, the benefice lacked a curate. He held the prebend of Kilmaclenine *in absentia* while studying over a five year period and in a rare reversal, the vicarage was filled by an Englishman.⁶⁷³ However, the reported condition of the church building and the complaints of the investigators regarding the provision of worship indicate that Murry's deputy, Thomas Westmore, was ineffectual as vicar.

The two Irish priests independent of the prominent clans are split between these two groups. Murtagh Agharrin, as already mentioned, was a "scholar ready to enter orders," while Conor (Cnohre) Farshine worked as a reading minister at a vicarage in the deanery of

⁶⁷¹ The fourth, Cormac McDonough MacCarthy, was a layman who appropriated a large proportion of the revenues of the diocese of Cloyne. His contribution to the reformed church will be considered separately.

⁶⁷² Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,' 189.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*, 202.

Glansalny, Cork diocese.⁶⁷⁴ Despite his position, and Agharrin's education, Farshine is the more distinctive of the two. In the first instance, both the nave and chancel of his church were in good repair and well supplied with books; "reading minister" seems to have been no hollow title. More importantly though, he was the only Gaelic cleric mentioned in the 1615 Visitation who did not have an obvious connection to the old dynasties of the region. O'Sullivan, the pluralist priest of west Cork and Ross, held revenues from parishes traditionally controlled by his clan. Similarly, both Caheragh and Kilmaclenine had strong links to the Desmond earldom, with rectories appropriated by members of the FitzGerald family. Simultaneously, the revenues of Ballyvourney were held not by a member of the church, but by Cormac McDonough MacCarthy.⁶⁷⁵ Conor Farshine was unique, being an Irish minister independent from the conventional polities of Co. Cork. The rectory which was the counterpart to his vicarage lay empty, but the deanery's clergy was strongly English. Aside from O'Sullivan's role as a vicar in one of the rural churches, the remaining clerics within Glansalny were entirely Anglican.

The strong connections between the Irish priests and the older families of the region cast a shadow of doubt upon their performance as parochial ministers. Sir John FitzGerald had little interest in religion, despite his extensive ecclesiastical possessions.⁶⁷⁶ Consequently, his patronage of Gaelic clerics in Kilmaclenine and Caheragh was more likely a reflection of privilege and greed than religion. Edmund Spenser was certainly in no doubt as to the character of these priests. His account is damning in its accusations.

"all Irish priests, which now enjoy the church livings, they are in a manner mere laymen, saving that they have taken holy orders, but otherwise they doe goe and live like lay men, follow all kinde of husbandry, and other worldly affairs, as other Irish men doe. They neither read scriptures, nor preach to the people, nor administer the communion, but...onely they take the tithes and offerings, and gather what fruite else they may of their livings."⁶⁷⁷

The evidence of the 1615 Visitation serves to reinforce Spenser's conjectures. Furthermore, his conclusions might be extended towards the Anglo-Irish families of the

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁶⁷⁶ CSPI, xiv, 367.

⁶⁷⁷ E. Spenser, 'A View of the Present State of Ireland, written dialogue-wise betweene Eudoxus and Irenaeus', in J. Ware, ed., *Ancient Irish histories: the works of Spenser, Campion, Hanmer, and Marleburrough*, i (Dublin, 1809), 139-40

dioceses. There were no more than a couple of priests with mixed Norman and Gaelic heritage; John McDavid Hayes and Ullig Bourke. Of these, the latter is somewhat of an enigma. The name Ullig Bourke seems to be associated with sixteenth and seventeenth century Connaught and might more properly be rendered as Burgh.⁶⁷⁸ This family's involvement with the see of Cloyne was slightly more limited as Ullig possessed the cure of only one parish.⁶⁷⁹ Though he had sequestered the rectory unto himself also, Bourke's main role was as a reading minister. However, despite the high value of these offices (£8 when taken together), both the church and chancel were in a state of disrepair. The efficacy of his ministry is subsequently questionable and there is nothing that indicates his residency within the parish. The clerical appointments of Hayes are indicative of further abuses. Although the offices he held were of a lower value, only one seems to indicate actual provision of worship; Kilsillagh.⁶⁸⁰ This rectory, which was united to Lisle in the eighteenth century, had no vicarage and Hayes was employed as a reading minister. Still, he was also linked to the parishes of Ardfield and Donoughmore, serving both as a vicar. However, the advowson of both these were held by absentee landlords. Sir John Jephson, the lessee of Buttevant (Bothon) priory, granted the first, while the second fell under the possessions of the precentor of Ross. At once capable and corrupt, the patronage of Teige MacDonald O'Sullivan does not present McDavid Hayes as a valuable minister of the English reformation.

The final non-English cleric recorded within the visitation was John,⁶⁸¹ "an Irish preacher," or simply, "John Irish." Another surname is never mentioned, but the surveyors' description is unwavering, even though his service seems somewhat out of character with the remainder of the Gaelic priests. In the first instance, although John should properly be described as a pluralist with revenues from no fewer than six parishes, his parochial livings were largely within a single deanery. Furthermore, they were not within *ecclesia inter hibernicos* or traditional sept lands. Instead, his parishes resided solidly within the English stronghold of eastern Cloyne, surrounding the town of Castlelyons.⁶⁸² The Barry family had

⁶⁷⁸ The family appears to have been landowners in both Limerick and Clare. Castle Hackett in Co. Clare might be listed amongst their possessions, at which the Catholic Bourkes sheltered a Protestant bishop in the early seventeenth century after he suffered a military defeat. Additionally, an Ullig Bourke was killed during a rebellion in 1586. J.P. Nolan, 'The Castles of Clare Barony [The thirty-four De Burgo Castles in the Barony of Clare],' *Journal Of The Galway Archaeological And Historical Society*, 1 (1900–1901), 30–31.

⁶⁷⁹ This was Castlelyons. Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,' 194.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁶⁸¹ Also rendered Johannes and Johnnes.

⁶⁸² Although the town was named for Castle O'Lehan, the Gaelic Irish were supplanted by the Anglo-Norman families during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. For details, see Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,' 183, 186–7, 193–4, 197.

considered this region well within their demesne and founded a Carmelite monastery here.⁶⁸³ While that house was leased to the Barrymore family in 1568,⁶⁸⁴ the Anglo-Norman influence upon the secular church in and about the settlement had lapsed by 1615. Murtagh Agharrin had been granted his vicarage by a secular lessee of church lands; Conor MacDonough MacCarthy. Similarly, John Irish enjoyed lay patrons. However, his came from newcomers to the diocese, rather than the established families. Kilcrumper and Macronev had both been appropriated by monasteries during the sixteenth centuries; subsequently, these had been inherited by the leaseholders. Patrick Pepper and Sir Richard Greenfield [Grinfielde] were the occupiers of Glassarge and Fermoy respectively and shared the responsibility for the two parishes.⁶⁸⁵ The rectories of Aghern and *Villa Nova*,⁶⁸⁶ wherein John Irish served the cure, were held by the college of Youghal and its warden, Richard Boyle, he also had the advowson for the vicarage. The parish of Rathcormack was John Irish's alone, wherein he enjoyed both the rectory and vicarage, but his final appointment to Ringrone was shared with the English cleric Henry Hussey. John Irish was subservient to new English priests in every one of his livings, barring only the parish of Rathcormack.⁶⁸⁷

Thus far, John Irish's career does not seem to differ significantly from those of the other Gaelic priests. His livings were largely derived from appropriated revenues and his pluralism is relatively derivative. Furthermore, other Irish priests employed as "reading ministers," had been put into their positions by Englishmen. Teige MacDonald O'Sullivan has been shown to have worked extensively with senior clerics of English descent despite the serious concerns that swiftly become evident after a consideration of his loyalty and character. Nevertheless, the geography of John Irish's possessions is crucial in assessing the efficacy of his mission. O'Sullivan's independence from the established church was enabled by the remoteness of his holdings, further reinforced by their position within the territories of O'Sullivan Beare. Conversely, John Irish's ecclesiastical revenues originated in lands far from Gaelic influence and freed from the control of the Barrys by the new English. In this stronghold of Anglican interests, the clerics of the established church came under far closer and more regular scrutiny; amongst John's masters was the first earl of Cork and the collegiate church.

⁶⁸³ Ware, *Hibernia Sacra*, ii, 230.

⁶⁸⁴ Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 156.

⁶⁸⁵ In a rare occasion, the revenues of the parish of Kilcrumper were split between two houses; the rectory to Patrick Pepper and the vicarage to Sir Richard.

⁶⁸⁶ *Alias Ballynoe*.

⁶⁸⁷ Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,' 193.

The collegiate church of St Mary's at Youghal was a wanton appropriator of clerical incomes, but remained at least partially proof against the corruption of secularism. The 1615 Visitation reports that those churches which fell under the responsibility of its warden were, in the main, well cared for. The parish church at Killeagh was "slated, glazed, repayed and [equipped] with books and other things befittinge."⁶⁸⁸ The condition of Irish's other churches further speaks as to the quality of his ministry. While several were in poor condition, in the main they evidence signs of active maintenance. Church and chancel were both down in the appropriated rectory of Kilcrumper,⁶⁸⁹ but the 1615 surveyors recorded that Aghern and Newtown (*Villa Nova*) had both enjoyed recent repair.⁶⁹⁰ In Rathcormack, that parish in which John Irish held ultimate responsibility for both vicarage and rectory, the body of the church lay under a slate roof; a considerable rarity.

The collegiate church also employed largely adequate English vicars. The parish of Mallow was remarked to be "very well served by Mr Bradford," the parson. The provision of worship within the parishes appropriated to the church at Youghal was evidently important. This attitude seems indicative of John Irish's competency, as an appointee of the warden. Although he resided within Cloyne, within the *ecclesia inter anglicos*, John Irish's role within the church was that traditional to Gaelic ministers whose ability to understand and preach in the vernacular was invaluable. In a letter appended to the 1615 Visitation, Richard Boyle remarked that "the parsonage of Newtowne Oleghan...⁶⁹¹ hath a vicar [John] endowed for the serving of the cure... [which] consisteth wholly in Irish." To assist him in his role, Irish's church at Ringrone was "furnished with the necessities [for worship]." The varying accoutrements, books, vestments and other paraphernalia of the reformed church were expensive and supplied explicitly for the provision of religion. Well equipped and supervised by interested patrons who resided in close proximity, John Irish was the most effective Gaelic Anglican minister serving in any of the three dioceses in 1615. Furthermore, the ministry of Irish surpassed that of many of the new, English, priests.

Although Irish may have provided an adequate and even successful ministry to his cures, his position in Co. Cork does not hide the central fact; that by 1615 a revolution had occurred within the churches of the three dioceses. The surveys of the 1590s highlighted apriesthood in flux, one which was developing along new lines while still reliant upon its

⁶⁸⁸ Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,' 193.

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁶⁹¹ Newtown Lyons; known otherwise as Ballynoe.

traditional structures. During the 1590s, members of the old Irish clans remained influential and many continued to inhabit and inherit church livings in much the same way as medieval coarbs and erenaghs. However, by 1615, their involvement is all but entirely removed. It is no accident that this revolution occurred during a period in which the Gaelic clans and Anglo-Norman families had lost the largest part of their influence through plantations, rebellions and centralisation. In their weakness, the newer, English, polity had taken control of the established church, its lands, its revenues and its responsibilities.

Provision of worship and the quality of the ministry

Though now dominant within the established church of the dioceses, as a rule the reformed Anglican clergy were improperly prepared and equipped for their ministry. As already explored, the shortcomings of their Gaelic counterparts served to reinforce the linguistic and political barriers to accessing the religion of rural Co. Cork. Furthermore, despite great improvements to the overall education of clerics within Cork, Cloyne and Ross, provision for further instruction of priests and laity was severely limited. The Visitation of 1615 reflects that comparatively few churches were supplied with books and these were in the care of even fewer priests. Of all the parishes, only seventeen were said to have been furnished with religious literature and of these seventeen, the majority lay within the diocese of Cork.⁶⁹² It becomes further evident that even fewer individuals either provided or had access to these books. The secular lessees Sir John Jephson and the dean of Cloyne, Richard Boyle, held responsibility for four of the parishes between them.⁶⁹³ With their wealth and privileged position, it is probable that they endowed these churches with books.

In 1615, the see of Cork reputedly had twelve parishes that were stocked with evangelical literature. However, access to these was restricted even further by a high concentration within the deanery of Glansalny,⁶⁹⁴ in which over half of the parochial libraries of that diocese resided. Glansalny was comparatively small, containing only seven parishes. Located in central Cork, during the medieval period the deanery had been counted *inter hibernicos*; subsequently, it should not be considered a traditional bastion of English authority. Prior to the twelfth century reforms, the deanery had been coterminous with an ancient, if small, bishopric founded by St Mocolmoge.⁶⁹⁵ In later years, it was to be associated with the Duke of Devon.⁶⁹⁶ In 1615, the parishes were largely under the control of Cork's cathedral chapter, specifically the vicars choral; George Lee, Michael Boyle, John Brocke and Thomas Lloyd.⁶⁹⁷ Under the influence of these men, the deanery of Glansalny was well stocked with books. Whereas parishes throughout the three dioceses lacked the basic tools of religion, the vicars choral ensured that their responsibilities were well provided

⁶⁹² See Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,' 175-90, for the Cork parishes.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, 184-5, 195, 199, 201.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁶⁹⁵ Lewis, *Lewis' Cork*, 315.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 316.

⁶⁹⁷ Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,' 188.

for. Similarly, the churches were almost uniformly of good condition. Only that at Dromdaleague ran counter to the trend, of which the surveyors remarked that although “Church and chancel [were] down...Order [had been] taken for the bylding of [them].” Two parishes of Glansalny remained independent of the cathedral chapter, although the necessities of religion found therein likely originated from the vicars choral. Robert Snowsell was in possession of the rectory and vicarage of Ballimoney; Edward Clerke held those of Muragh. Both were supplied with books and benefited from well maintained churches. Still, the beneficial authority of the vicars choral filtered across from the parishes of Kinneigh and Fanlobbus, at which Clerke and Snowsell served as vicars.

In Cork, Cloyne and Ross, the parishes which were supplied with books and liturgical works were usually linked to the cathedral chapters. Dunderrow was served by Hugh Perseval, for it lay within two miles of his other cure. The visitation records, “church and chancel up, and well furnished with necessaries for devyne service.” Perseval was the dean of Cork. Concurrently, Carrigrohane was a possession of the precentor; the church was well built with chancel and books. However, none of the diocesan offices provided so well for their cures as did the vicars choral of Cork. Israel Taylor, the precentor of Cork, held upwards of five church livings; only one of these was equipped with a library. In addition to the paucity of books throughout the dioceses, especially in Ross and western Cork and Cloyne, the utility of religious literature was further limited by the linguistic barrier. Theological and exegetical works relevant to the established, English, church were most likely to be written either in English or Latin. The rarity of evangelical works written in the Irish vernacular was not unique to Co. Cork, but rather common to all of Ireland, especially prior to 1607. After this date, the New Testament, Book of Common Prayer and catechism were all available in the vernacular. Nevertheless, as elsewhere, the lack of native preachers restricted the use of these religious works and hindered their beneficial impact upon evangelical efforts.⁶⁹⁸

Across the three dioceses, the vast majority of clerics surveyed in the 1615 Visitation were English. The character of these men was distinct from that of their late medieval counterparts in that many had enjoyed a formal education. The pre-reformations church in Cork, Cloyne and Ross had been hampered by the lack of a native university and characterised by informal processes of knowledge transfer, including pseudo-apprenticeships. The seventeenth century clergy was coloured by the English universities; over one third of

⁶⁹⁸ This is explored in greater detail by Alan Ford in *The Protestant Reformation in Ireland*.

the priestly population held a qualification. Predominantly, these were Masters' degrees, though several had been limited to Bachelors'. These numbers must be considered as a stark contrast to the period 1485-1521, in which no university educated parish clerics had been recorded in the region.⁶⁹⁹ The fifteenth century had seen several priests with doctorates inside the cathedral chapters of the three dioceses, but in the seventeenth educated clerics were not confined to such narrow roles. Each of these centres did have higher rates of schooling, but in every diocese priests with degrees could be found in both rural and civic parishes. Even the briefest examination of the Carte manuscript confirms that this new, educated priesthood was a late development.

There were no educated clerics recorded in the visitations of 1591. Although this aspect of religious life simply may not have been documented, there are a few scattered references that suggest the surveyors were interested in the suitability of priestly candidates. The rector of Lislee in Ross, one William Morgan, was prevented from enjoying the fruits of his benefice until such time as he should prove that he knew the presbyter. Similarly, the 'priest' Dermot of Kilmalooda was ordered not to celebrate divine service until he was able to evidence that he had taken divine orders. Another was "*in tradicitur donec ad ordines promot.*" It is easy to conclude that had a priest been in receipt of a degree, his education would have been noted. This absence of evidence also reflects the trends of earlier and later periods; the difficulties that the Gaelic and Anglo-Normans had encountered in obtaining a university education throughout the late medieval and Tudor periods and the greatly increased numbers of formal qualifications received by English clerics in the seventeenth century.

By the evidence of the 1615 survey, university education was almost completely restricted to the new English priests. There are no priests listed of Gaelic or Anglo-Norman heritage with a degree and only two who were granted status as an intellectual. Murtagh Agharrin, who possessed the vicarage of Ballyvourney in the diocese of Cloyne, was described by the surveyors as a "scholar, ready to enter into orders."⁷⁰⁰ Murry MacDonald (Donogho) was a "student."⁷⁰¹ The quest for an Irish university pre-dated the reformations, but remained unfulfilled. During the 1580s, this drive was revived under fresh impetus from Perrot. In the summer of 1584, the Lord Deputy petitioned Walsingham to deprive St Patrick's cathedral, Dublin, of benefices worth around 4000 marks to finance two university

⁶⁹⁹ See Chapter 1, 48-55.

⁷⁰⁰ Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,' 206.

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 202.

colleges. Archbishop Loftus exercised his political strengths to defend his possessions and the motion was defeated.⁷⁰² Consequently, Irishmen were forced abroad if they were desirous of a university education and no bursaries were established to support students at either Oxford or Cambridge. Lacking either financial incentive or an inherited inclination towards English or Protestant tuition, the few Irish clerics from Co. Cork who found themselves within the Anglican church appear to have abstained higher education. Furthermore, despite the increase in instances of education amongst clerics and the overall training of clergymen for and in the region remained below expectations. Writing in 1596, Bishop William Lyon complained of “the great lack of teachers” for the schools he had set up.⁷⁰³ These problems were synonymous with those experienced across the seventeenth century English hegemony; in 1522, James I demanded the creation of free schools within his Irish domains and called for the suppression of Catholic schoolmasters.⁷⁰⁴

The growth of the Catholic education systems on the continent proved a continual concern to the English crown, dating from the sixteenth century. This concern was emphasised even in the legislation founding Trinity College Dublin.

“...whereby knowledge and civilities might be increased by the instruction of our people there, whereof many have usually heretofore used to travaille into ffrance, Italy and Spaine to get lernynge in such forraigne universities where they may have been infected with poperie”⁷⁰⁵

Despite the creation of the university, in 1615, only one third of Co. Cork’s Anglican priests held a degree.⁷⁰⁶ This was an enormous improvement on earlier periods, but these rates were still low when considered in context. At the highpoint of the parish system in London, above 60% of benefice holders between 1521 and 1546 were graduates.⁷⁰⁷ Consequently, at the end of the Tudor period, levels of education within the Irish priesthood

⁷⁰² Loftus claimed that such appropriations would harm the provision of Protestant religion in the archdiocese, but his claims were more likely founded upon personal greed and nepotism. The subject is considered in depth in Jefferies, *The Irish Church*, 227-230.

⁷⁰³ CPSI, v, 260.

⁷⁰⁴ ‘Orders and directions concerning the state of the church of Ireland and the possessions thereof, ffree schools, and other endowments, and lands given to charitable uses, for and concerning other things tending to the advancement of true religion, and maintenance of the clergie in the said Realme in James time, 1623’ (TCD MS 808), 37-9.

⁷⁰⁵ T. Corcoran, ed., *State policy in Irish education* (London, 1916), 56.

⁷⁰⁶ This statistic is drawn from information supplied in Murphy, ‘The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross.’

⁷⁰⁷ Heal, *The Reformation in Britain and Ireland*, 65.

should be characterised as both inadequate and linguistically limited. Formal qualifications were restricted only to the new English colonists, marking a significant shift in the demography of the religious gatekeepers. Under the seventeenth century Anglican church, the traditional elites found themselves displaced.

Pluralism

The Anglican church in Cork, Cloyne and Ross was woefully equipped for the needs of a successful Protestant reformation at the start of the seventeenth century. Worse still, it was also painfully short of ministers. This was not a new development but, like the educational shortcomings, was merely a retrenchment of earlier problems. The difficulties encountered by diocesan administration across Ireland in the fifteenth century have been extensively discussed in previous chapters, but crucially, they had still not been addressed by the reforming bishops in the sixteenth century. In northern Munster, an anonymous author⁷⁰⁸ wrote to the lord treasurer, Burghley, to complain that he had,

“heard no newes yt either in English, Irish or other language at any tyme service to have ben used in his [the Earl of Thomond] howse agreeable to the church of England, or any the churches reformed.”⁷⁰⁹

The reluctance of Clanricard to associate with the Anglican church surely impacted upon the lack of reformed ministers within his domain. Conversely, however, the dearth of English clerics was sure to entrench attitudes of traditionalism in the region. The shortage of ministers that were capable of supporting the reformed church was felt across Ireland. Worse, even where the priesthood was able to provide an adequate number of clerics to support the provision of ministry, there was no guarantee that those priests were suitable. Indeed, this proved a problem even in the English dioceses, across the Irish Sea. In Ely during the 1560s, Bishop Parker was forced to accept those priests which were available on the basis that any priest was better than none.⁷¹⁰ In Dublin and throughout Ireland, there were repeated complaints that priests abandoned reform and Anglicanism being as they were both ignorant and worldly, as well as erring towards Catholicism.⁷¹¹ This severe shortage ensured that those clerics that were available were expected to serve multiple cures simultaneously.

⁷⁰⁸ Cunningham argues that this author was Sir Turlough O'Brien of Ennistymon, cousin of the 3rd Earl of Clanricard, with whom the author was in dispute.

⁷⁰⁹ B. Cunningham, 'A View of Religious Affiliation and Practice in Thomond, 1591,' *Archivium Hibernicum*, 48 (1994), 15.

⁷¹⁰ M. Parker, *The Correspondence of Matthew Parker*, T. Perowne, ed (Cambridge, 1853), 120-1. This theme is explored further in R. O'Day, *The English Clergy: The Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession* (Leicester, 1979), 49-54.

⁷¹¹ J. Murray, 'The Tudor Diocese of Dublin: Episcopal Government, Ecclesiastical Politics and the Enforcement of the Reformation, 1534-90,' Trinity College Dublin PhD (1997), 324-7.

In 1591, 85 individual clerics served the three dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross in the Anglican church.⁷¹² These were spread between 186 parishes and were collectively responsible for the cure of souls in the entire region.

Fig 4.9 1591 priests in the dioceses⁷¹³

| | Clergy | Parishes | Number of parishes per cleric |
|--------|--------|----------|-------------------------------------|
| Cork | 16 | 29 | 1.81 |
| Cloyne | 44 | 112 | 2.55 |
| Ross | 25 | 41 | 1.64 |

Fig 4.9 should not be taken to suggest that every cleric in the region was a pluralist during the 1590s. There are examples of presumably dedicated priests, who held the cure of only one parish. In Cloyne, William Dermit filled the vicarage of Clondrohid and no other. In Ross, Daniel Hammelan served as rector in Kilmeen and Gilbert Greene as that of Dromecleff.⁷¹⁴ In these samples, the perfect ideal of the reformed church shines through. However, these were the exception to the rule. In Cork, Thomas Wood was responsible for the vicarages of Liscleary, Rorbeg and Shanbally.⁷¹⁵ Similarly, Maurice McDermot served as curate in Marmullane and Templeusk,⁷¹⁶ Roger Skiddy in Athnowen and Liscleary.⁷¹⁷ Interestingly, with one key exception, these were the worst offenders. Cork's priests, though spread between those parishes actually surveyed, typically held no more than two livings. Crucially, even when they did hold more than one, they were not geographically remote; a priest could conceivably travel from one parish to another in less than a day and potentially provide a passable ministry. In the example of Thomas Wood above, Liscleary and

⁷¹² As previously discussed, the west of the Cork diocese was omitted from the 1591 surveys. Consequently, those western parishes and their clergy are omitted from this discussion.

⁷¹³ Figures taken from TCD MS 566. Carte, fo. 146, 149-150, 153-156, 168-169.

⁷¹⁴ *Ibid.*, fo. 156.

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid.*, fo. 146, 149-50.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*, fo. 149-50.

⁷¹⁷ *Ibid.*, fo. 146, 149-50.

Shanbally were neighbouring parishes, lying less than three miles distant, while Rorbeg was a particle of Shanbally.

Similarly, Ross' clerics rarely had more than two parishes to their name, which were generally coterminous. The vicar John O'Heyes looked after neighbouring Lisle and Castleventry, while his rector in Lisle, William Morgan, also held the rectory and vicarage of nearby Kilsillagh.⁷¹⁸ These examples typify the clergy of Ross. However, special mention must be made of Dermot Long, treasurer of the Cork cathedral chapter. As part of his clerical income, he enjoyed possession of the Ross rectories of Creagh, Tullagh, Kilnagross and Timoleague.⁷¹⁹ Even were his other livings, positions and responsibilities disregarded, it is difficult to believe that Long could have provided an adequate ministry to these cures. While it must be acknowledged that Tullagh and Timoleague lie within a few miles of each other and Creagh and Kilnagross were at that time adjacent parishes, the first pair lay thirty miles to the east of the other. The latter were so far removed that they lay to the south west of Skibbereen, overlooking Roaringwater Bay. Worse, Long had not provided any of the four parishes a vicar who might serve the cure.

In Cork and Ross, the pluralist with incompatible benefices was the rarity. In Cloyne, he was rather more commonplace. Across that diocese, rates of pluralism were higher, as was its severity. Whether by church politics, personal greed or necessity, several clerics were left responsible for multiple livings remote from one another. This trend was epitomised in the person of David Terry (Tirry). Terry was undoubtedly a member of the Anglo-Norman family of that name, which had been firmly ensconced in the medieval church and its priesthood.⁷²⁰ Terry held seven church livings across two dioceses; Cork and Cloyne.⁷²¹ Two of these parishes had been associated with his family since the fifteenth century.⁷²² While four of Terry's possessions lay within a 10 mile radius of Cloyne cathedral, the others were stretched across Cork and north western Cloyne.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*, fo. 156.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*, fo. 149, 156.

⁷²⁰ This is explored in detail in Terry, 'Aspects of settlement.'

⁷²¹ TCD MS 566. Carte, fo. 146, 155-6.

⁷²² These were Cahirlag and Little Island, or *Insula Parva*. The prebend of Cahirlag had been granted to one John Terry in 1459 and the parish church of Little Island to Thomas Terry in 1443. Terry, 'Aspects of settlement,' 27.

Fig 4.10 Distance between pluralists' possessions in 1591⁷²³

| | Less than 10 miles apart | 10 to 20 miles apart | More than 20 miles apart |
|--------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Cork | 5 (83.33%) | 0 | 1 (16.67%) |
| Cloyne | 6 (35.29%) | 2 (11.76%) | 5 (29.41%) |
| Ross | 5 (83.33%) | 0 | 1 (16.67%) |

Across the three dioceses, pluralism was a significant hindrance in the late sixteenth century. It was most pronounced in Cloyne, but was also present in both Ross and Cork. In all three, pluralism followed the fifteenth century pattern; multiple possessions were either grouped close together or extremely far apart.⁷²⁴ The practice was polarised along geographical lines. Much of the pluralism involved compatible benefices that might reasonably be served by a single cleric. This might be characterised as pluralism by necessity. The remainder were more opportunistic, with parishes and cures spread over unfeasibly large distances. There would be no improvement before the end of the Tudor period.

In comparison to the 1591 survey, the examiners in 1615 found 93 priests across the 230 parishes. Consequently, rates of pluralism remained high. In the diocese of Cork, Mark Pagett was responsible for the rectory of Liscleary as well as the vicarages of Ballyfeard and Ballymartle. William Holiday possessed the rectory of Bruhenny and while the cure of souls there was served by the vicar, Holiday worked the vicarages of Kilathie and Rahin himself. In a particularly astounding example, Hugh Percevall held responsibility for Dunderrow, Kilmonoge, Kilnagross, Nohoval, Rincurran, Christ Church and Timoleague. Although his was an extreme case, pluralism does appear to have been rife at the beginning of the early seventeenth century. In almost every example, priests appear to have been forced by

⁷²³ Figures taken from TCD MS 566. Carte, fo. 146, 149-150, 153-156, 168-169.

⁷²⁴ See Chapter 1, 63-65 for a more detailed explanation of this period.

circumstance to maintain multiple positions. This does not mark a significant departure from the 1590s, although the situation did worsen.⁷²⁵

Fig 4.11 Numbers of individual clerics across the dioceses in 1615⁷²⁶

| | Clergy | Parishes | Number of parishes per cleric |
|--------|--------|----------|-------------------------------------|
| Cork | 33 | 84 | 2.55 |
| Cloyne | 44 | 121 | 2.75 |
| Ross | 16 | 25 | 1.56 |

In 1615, there were 47 pluralist clerics across the three dioceses. Their possessions were spread throughout the region and while some might have been awarded compatible cures, others were so geographically removed as to be impractical. However, church livings and possessions held by a priest or cleric tend to be grouped around individual foci. The career of Teig MacDonald O’Sullivan has already been reviewed extensively, but was centred upon the ancestral lands of the O’Sullivan clan.⁷²⁷ His cures lay to the extreme west of the county, overlooking the bays of Bantry, Dunmanus and Roaringwater. Meanwhile, Nicholas Bright’s responsibilities all lay within five miles of Mallow with the exception of the rectory of Bridgetown, far to the north, on the border with Limerick.⁷²⁸ In another example, Richard Alley’s three incomes came from parishes along the valley of the Lee. These may have lain up to 15 miles from one other, but an internal logic is clearly evident.

⁷²⁵ See Chapter 1, 55-66 for a further run down of pluralism on the eve of the reformation.

⁷²⁶ Table based on information taken from Murphy, ‘The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne, Ross.’

⁷²⁷ *Ibid.*, 185, 210.

⁷²⁸ *Ibid.*, 179, 205.

Fig 4.12 Distance between pluralists' possessions in 1615⁷²⁹

| | Less than 10 miles apart | 10 to 20 miles apart | More than 20 miles apart |
|--------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Cork | 6 (26.09%) | 8 (34.78%) | 9 (39.13%) |
| Cloyne | 13 (41.94%) | 9 (29.03%) | 9 (29.03%) |
| Ross | 3 (3.33%) | 1 (11.11%) | 5 (55.56%) |

Despite these instances, pluralism worsened significantly in the years between 1591 and 1615. In every diocese, there was an increase in the more extreme pluralism with incompatible benefices and cures. This is strongly suggestive of a rise in pluralism for the sake of ambition or personal gain. It is difficult to see how Thomas Holford could have maintained the cure of souls in both Castlelyons, in south east Cloyne, and the vicarages of Kilbroney and Ardskeagh over 25 miles to the north west.⁷³⁰ The example of Thomas Bourden is particularly striking. Bourden held three incomes in 1615; of these, the vicarages of Little Island and Holy Trinity lay in or near the city of Cork. The church of Little Island was up and well stocked with books,⁷³¹ well looked after. With his other living being an important church within the city of Cork, it is easy to suppose that Bourden resided within the comfortable confines of the city, travelling the scant few miles to Little Island by boat. The income of Kilbonan, some 50 shillings, would have helped to support him in this manner; it certainly was not spent upon the parish church. Although this vicarage was ostensibly Bourden's responsibility, it lay some 25 miles to the west of Cork, deep in the traditional Gaelic heartlands. It is perhaps unsurprising that the church and chancel there were down with only the walls standing.⁷³²

Along with the increases in opportunistic pluralism was one in the intermediate category; those priests with parishes and cures that lay more than 10, but less than 20, miles apart. Much like the other pluralist priests, these tended to fall into two categories. The

⁷²⁹ Table based on information taken from Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne, Ross.'

⁷³⁰ *Ibid.*, 193, 200-2.

⁷³¹ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁷³² *Ibid.*, 187.

aforementioned Richard Alley held three parishes along the River Lee.⁷³³ These were not immediately adjacent, but their location could be no accident. Alley was expected to minister his benefices and could conceivably have done so, if with reduced efficacy. Conversely, Nicholas Bright held church livings in both Cork and Cloyne. The majority of these fell within a small area five miles south of Cork city. However, Grenagh was to the north. The nature of Bright's holdings echoes that of Thomas Bourden, albeit not so severe. The growth in this intermediate category was an extension of the trends already outlined. Due to a lack of ministers, some priests were forced to accept an ever growing cure of souls, while others seized the opportunity to increase their incomes.

Rates of pluralism were extremely high at the start of the seventeenth century. A relatively small number of priests held large numbers of church livings. In the years preceding the 1615 Visitation, the demographics of the Anglican ministry in Cork, Cloyne and Ross had undergone a revolution, wherein the English priests came to the fore. However, the loss of the Gaelic and Anglo-Norman clerics left a shortfall in numbers that was still being corrected in the 1630s. Successive visitations in 1615 and 1634, as well as a more informal survey in 1622, indicate significant growth in the established priesthood. Overall numbers of clerics in Ireland increased by 23.67%, but within that, certain categories had enjoyed a rather more explosive increase. The rates of resident ministers remained static but the number of active preachers increased by almost 52% over the period.⁷³⁴

⁷³³ Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross,' 180, 205.

⁷³⁴ Alan Ford considers this matter in some detail in *The Protestant Reformation*, 63-93

Fig 4.13 Breakdown of parochial clerics by type in the three dioceses in 1615 and 1634⁷³⁵

| | 1615 | | | 1634 | | |
|--------|--------|-----------|---------|--------|-----------|---------|
| | Clergy | Preachers | Readers | Clergy | Preachers | Readers |
| Cork | 33 | 39.4% | 33.3% | 39 | 48.7% | 10.2% |
| Cloyne | 44 | 34.1% | 45.5% | 52 | 30.8% | 23.1% |
| Ross | 16 | 62.5% | 25% | 20 | 45% | 30% |

As a percentage of the overall clerical population, the numbers of preachers and readers from the 1634 visitation are an approximation, an underestimate.⁷³⁶ Nevertheless they are indicative of an overall increase in the number of priests beholden to the established church across the three dioceses (a total 93 up to 111, or a 19.4% rise). This upward trend was a continuation of the demographic shift which saw an upsurge in the numbers of English priests in the region. At the same time, the parish borders remained static. Consequently, it becomes obvious that the number of priests across Co. Cork at the start of the seventeenth century was low.

The vastly reduced status of the Gaelic and Anglo-Norman priest within the established churches of Cork, Cloyne and Ross was surely affected in no small part by the intrusion of the English into local politics, both secular and ecclesiastical. As the influence of the crown and its agents increased, so too did the number of English clerics. Conversely, with the contraction of the Desmond polity following the failures of consecutive rebellions, the earldom's sway over diocesan religion was much reduced; as his influence fell, so was that of his allies amongst the traditional Irish elites, the Gaelic chieftains and Anglo-Norman lords. By 1615, the older families of the region, which had dominated the church since the twelfth century, were all but banished from the ministry.

⁷³⁵ Table based on information taken from Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne, Ross,' and TCD 1067, Reeve's transcript of the 1643 visitations.

⁷³⁶ Ford remarks that for the later visitation, "only rarely are details given of whether clergy are preachers of reading minister, resident or non-resident, graduate or non-graduate." Consequently, this work is reliant upon the extrapolation of incomplete data.

Nonetheless, unlike the earlier church, the 1615 Visitation demonstrated that a large percentage of parishes were vacant. Although the fifteenth century delations have been shown to evidence popular competition for parochial appointments;⁷³⁷ the sixteenth and seventeenth century surveys present a stark contrast. In earlier periods, the number of litigants implied a high level of demand for positions within the churches of the three dioceses. There were comparatively few examples in which clerics adopted vacant roles. Instead, they litigated against their brethren to secure positions of all qualities. During and after the Tudor reformations, this demand had dropped. In both 1591 and 1615, there were huge numbers of vacancies. In 1591, 54 of the livings surveyed were simply reported to be empty, without an incumbent. The clerics that were available to the reformed church were spread increasingly thin, weakening the thrust of the Anglican movement within the county. Moves to arrest this trend did not occur during the Tudor period.

⁷³⁷ Whitman, 'A succession dispute'.

The impact of impropriation

For large parts of the sixteenth century, as well as the early years of the seventeenth, Munster was ravaged by warfare. While the story of Tudor Ireland is one defined to a large degree by conflict between the Gaelic clans and English settlers both old and new, Munster was the scene of two of the largest rebellions against crown rule; the two Desmond revolts. These risings had wide ranging effects, which impacted in all aspects of life within the three dioceses. In the long term, Irish resistance occasioned a strengthening of the English policies of militarisation and colonisation, but in the short term at least, the Desmond rebellions' greatest impact was physical. On 1 November, 1579, the rebellious army took Youghal after a three day siege. 180 "traitors" were apparently slain, before a massacre of the town's mayor and 120 of the population.⁷³⁸ However, for St Mary's, the collegiate church of Youghal worse was to come. The town was occupied for five days, during which time the rebel army sacked the town, plundering its treasures and damaging the buildings. Those that were consecrated did not escape. Vestments, chalices and other furniture were destroyed, whilst horses were sacrilegiously stabled within the cloisters.⁷³⁹

Warfare directly hindered the work of both churches within Cork, Cloyne and Ross. During the rebellions, the roads were unsafe and people untrusting. Churches were damaged and the necessities of worship stolen or defiled. Over the longer term though, indirect damage was found to be worse. To reduce the insurgents to surrender, the crown forces began to follow a scorched earth policy, to which the rebels reciprocated. The Irish annals recorded that, "the sons of the Earl [of Desmond] proceeded to destroy, demolish, burn,

and completely consume every fortress, town, corn-field, and habitation between those places to which they came, lest the English might get possession of them...the English consigned to a like destruction every house and habitation, and every rick and stack of corn, to which they came, to injure the Geraldines, so that between them the country was left one levelled plain, without corn or edifices."⁷⁴⁰

⁷³⁸ CSPI, ii, 197.

⁷³⁹ S. Hayman, 'The Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Youghal. No. I. St. Mary's Collegiate Church,' *Proceedings and Transactions of the Kilkenny and South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society*, 3, 1 (1854), 100.

⁷⁴⁰ AFM, v, 1724.

Outside of the large scale political rebellions headed by the Desmond family, Munster also played host to smaller scale unrest. Between 11 April and 10 May 1603, townspeople and corporations demonstrated their resistance to the established religion. This Recusancy Revolt, though short lived, emphasised the shortcomings of Anglicanism and the opportunities opened to the Catholic church by the support of the Irish populace. The uprising was predicated upon a false rumour that suggested that the newly crowned James I of England followed the Catholic faith. All across Munster, the anti-Catholic penal laws were openly refuted and Catholic priests preached freely. More recently, however, historiography has emphasised the economic causes of the Revolt.⁷⁴¹ In the years following the Nine Years war, much of Munster was bankrupt, forced to desperation both by the direct and indirect costs of rebellion. Due to the historical peculiarities of Ireland, the towns beyond the Pale enjoyed many charter privileges that their English contemporaries did not, most particularly relating to the retention revenues raised from fines and custom duties upon trade. Being needful of militia to protect them from rampant Irishry, these towns were reserved moneys normally received by the crown, in order to finance their defence. However, in the aftermath of the rebellions, the Dublin administration began to curtail these privileges. Furthermore, English soldiers were billeted with increasing numbers within the towns. This cessing was an enormous social and financial burden which occasioned great ill-feeling.

The economic conditions of the region were worsened by the banning of trade with Spain. The Spanish markets were one of the principal destinations for vessels leaving the ports of Co. Cork. Exports consisted mainly of hides and leather, but their value was high. During the 1590s, O'Sullivan Beare alone was in receipt of upwards of £300 per annum.⁷⁴² On 10 March, 1603, the Lord Deputy proclaimed that, "in her Majesty's name, [we command]

⁷⁴¹ One author writes that "the fears of the corporations and officials of the towns over the threat to their charter privileges played at least as great a part in the insurrection as the more obvious religious feelings of the people." A.J. Sheehan, 'The Recusancy Revolt of 1603: A Reinterpretation,' *Archivium Hibernicum*, 38 (1983), 3-13.

⁷⁴² A.K. Longfield, *Anglo-Irish Trade in the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1929), 85.

that no merchant nor merchants, master nor owner of any ship, bark, pickard, or other bottom whatsoever, nor mariner, nor other person nor persons whatsoever...[shall] do traffic, trade, or take his or their voyage from any port town, haven, or creek within this realm into Spain.”⁷⁴³

The finances of the region were in severe jeopardy at the start of the seventeenth century. The ramifications of the policies of rebellion and pacification were instantly felt as many of the peasants began to suffer from starvation. Experiences within the towns were little better and the once flourishing timber trade based around Youghal failed. The church, external to the human cost of war, still suffered from a loss of revenue as tithes became all but valueless. These problems were not unexpected. The region had a long history of warfare that predated the Desmond rebellions. The financial implications of the Kildare revolt and the internecine clan warfare of the early sixteenth century are well documented in the Henrician monastic survey. Throughout southern Ireland, church lands were left to waste by rebellion. Crops were scorched and weirs were destroyed, but in some cases the land was simply left empty. In 1540, the lands surrounding Ballindrohid, Templeroibin and Castletown were severely under populated and, consequently, under exploited. Elsewhere, both parishes and monasteries were rendered all but valueless in the face of incessant conflict.⁷⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the economic impact of the various rebellions did little to assist the formation of an Anglican ministry in Cork, Cloyne or Ross. Although ultimately, the English polity was strengthened by them, or more specifically through the crown response to the Irish revolts, warfare so reduced the value of the parishes that many were unliveable.

The progress of reformation along English lines was further harmed by the impropriation of clerical incomes. Just as the monasteries had been sold as fee farms during the sixteenth century, so too were many parochial benefices. Sir Richard Boyle, the first earl of Cork, could count amongst his possessions eight rectories and five vicarages. In the main, these were left vacant, with no curate. While the earl apparently sponsored Randle Holland in college using the revenues of Kilmichael, this seems to be the sole application of his spiritual incomes to religious purposes. However, unlike others who misused church revenues, Boyle was not antagonistic towards the Anglican church.

⁷⁴³ *Calendar of the Carew manuscripts*, v, 437.

⁷⁴⁴ See for example the abbey of Molana in Co. Waterford (White, *Monastic Possessions*, 148). This house possessed three salmon weirs, which had been worth as much as 20s. At the time of the survey, they were considered worthless due to the rebellions of Cormac Oge McCarthy and his sons.

Sir John FitzGerald was heavily active within the diocese of Cloyne and, to judge from the 1615 Visitation, his involvement in the diocese was almost entirely self-serving. Antiquarians have recorded that Bishop Lyon suffered as the “see house at Cloyne was held from him by John Fitz-Edmund Fitz-Gerald,”⁷⁴⁵ but the impropriations of this Desmond magnate were far more significant. FitzGerald’s abuses long predated the seventeenth century, as his presence within the ecclesiastical life of Cloyne began during the early years of the Elizabethan reign. In a parliamentary bill of 1613, it was alleged that “by an agreement between Roger Skiddy, the late Bishop elect of Cloyne, and [FitzGerald], the bishops should have conveyed to Sir John...some small parcels of the corporeal possessions of the bishopric.” When drawing up the agreement, the noble proceeded to alter the value of the rent payable to the bishop, as well its extent, so that FitzGerald would now come into the whole of the temporalities of the bishopric.⁷⁴⁶ The authors of the bill hypothesise that Skiddy was careless in affixing his seal to the document and for failing to note the changes made to the agreement. However the bishop would soon resign his post to assume the role of warden at the collegiate church at Youghal; the granting of such a lucrative position, for life, to a foundation so heavily patronised by the Desmond family is strongly suggestive of a *quid pro quo*.

Under the episcopacy of Sheyn, FitzGerald extended his grasp of the temporalities. He became dean of Cloyne and took possession of the diocesan seal. While supposedly writing a confirmation of the feoffment, Sir John took the opportunity to extend his advantage. For the compensation of a mere £40 to the bishop, the temporal possessions of the see of Cloyne were awarded to Richard FitzMaurice of Ballintemple. The yearly rent would be five marks on an income worth supposedly £300. The complaint of 1613 stated that FitzGerald had then persuaded FitzMaurice (who had clearly been employed as proxy), to return the possessions into Sir John’s hands and those of his heirs; “[he had] for the space of 39 years taken the issues of the bishopric.”⁷⁴⁷ FitzGerald’s grasp on the incomes of the bishopric was impressive. His influence over the episcopacy withstood the suppression of the Desmond rebellions and changes in diocesan management. In the early seventeenth century, Lyon still found much of Cloyne denied to him by the dean.

The 1615 Visitation seems to suggest that the bishop was finally asserting his control. FitzGerald had been replaced as dean a couple of years previously by an Englishman.

⁷⁴⁵ Smith, *The Ancient and Present State*, i, 439.

⁷⁴⁶ CPSI, xiv, 367-368.

⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 368.

Thomas Winter, MA, was a powerful man in his own right and simultaneously acted as the dean of Cloyne, treasurer of Cashel and precentor of Waterford and Lismore. Winter was appointed in 1612 and filled the role until his death on 25th August, 1615.⁷⁴⁸ He would be succeeded by another Englishman, Edward Clerke.⁷⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Sir John's abuses of clerical and episcopal incomes were not a simple matter of personal ambition; they were familial. The purpose of the above mentioned petition to parliament was not to dispossess FitzGerald, for he was already dead. Instead, it was intended to prevent the inheritance of the feoffment by his son, also named Sir John FitzGerald. No such Act was ever passed and while Sir John (junior) was unable to retain the deanship, he was not forced to relinquish his other holdings.⁷⁵⁰

The Royal Visitation reveals that Bishop Lyon's troubles were far from over. As an appendix to the survey, he wrote, "For Clone, I have seene there [the house] belonging to the Bishop, the which was kept away from me, but I could never as yet attayne to the reall possession of the same, it being withheld from me by Sir John FitzEdmonde [FitzGerald]...and now by his heire."⁷⁵¹ Winter may have controlled the deanship, but the cathedral of Cloyne remained "*Nulla domus*," without a see house. Presumably, this had been inherited as part of the feoffment. Furthermore, the commissioners reported that "all the church [had been] intruded upon by Sir John FitzGerald."⁷⁵² Concentrated about the Desmond stronghold of Youghal, Sir John perverted the revenues of thirteen individual clerical incomes. Although none of these were important on their own, when taken together they represented a significant proportion of the deanery of Youghal. The church in this strongly Anglo-Norman region of Cloyne remained in Geraldine hands for much of the seventeenth century and even those lands not held by Sir John himself were possessed by relatives. Thomas FitzGerald farmed the rectories of Dangandovan and Cahirultan. Sir John's influence extended beyond the realms of the secular clergy, for he held the lease for the abbey of Midleton, just west of Youghal.

⁷⁴⁸ Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross', 190.

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 190

⁷⁵⁰ On 30 October 1639, Sir John FitzGerald was ordered to surrender the temporalities by the bishop of Derry. 600 acres would be reserved to him, but the remainder was to be returned to the see of Cloyne. However, this mandate was rendered impotent by the risings of 1641.

In CSPI, xiv, 367, is the letter of Edward, bishop of Cork, dated 5th June 1665. Edward was writing to the earl of Ormond to request aid against Sir John Fitz Edmond FitzGerald (the third of his name), whose family still held the temporalities of Cloyne against him.

⁷⁵¹ Murphy, 'The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross', 215

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*, 190.

Aside from the significant lay influence required to maintain ownership of these holdings, given the tenuous legality of the actions of Sir John's father,⁷⁵³ the presence of the FitzGeralds in the church lands of Cloyne coloured the nature of religion there. Improprated rectories did not imply religious negligence. Sir Richard Boyle, Earl of Cork, had the fee farm of many parochial revenues including Dundrinane, Ballymodan and the cure of souls surrounding what had once been Gill Abbey. In each case, the 1615 Visitation demonstrates the English earl's willingness to engage with the requirements of the reformed church. At Ballymodan, the church and chancel were in a good state of repair and furnished with all the necessities of worship. Similarly, Dundrinane and Gill Abbey were both provided with curates, William Heally and Richard Allen respectively. Boyle did not supply such men to every parish under his advowson and nor did he always pursue the maintenance of church buildings under his care with such rigour; even in Gill Abbey, where the earl had secured the services of a reading minister, both the nave and chancel were ruined.

No matter how negligent Richard Boyle might have been towards the parishioners who were nominally under his care, Sir John FitzGerald was certainly worse. No evidence exists to suggest that he attempted to provide vicars or curates to any of the parishes whose incomes he had improprated. As the lessee of Midleton abbey, FitzGerald held five rectories. All lay vacant and while the church was still of good repair in Kilcredan, those in Kilmaclenine, Mogeely and Clonmult were all badly damaged with church and chancel described alternately as "in decay," "ruinous" and "down." Those churches linked to the incomes improprated as part of the episcopate's temporalities appear to have fared somewhat better, yet once more, the Geraldine leaseholder neglected to employ vicars for the cure of souls. The sheer volume and character of neglect is such that it can not be considered incidental. Furthermore, Sir John had been "admonished to provide a curate" on more than one occasion. This would indicate an awareness at the diocesan level of FitzGerald's failures over a long period. Thomas FitzGerald, Sir John's cousin, appears to have offered a similar level of engagement being that although the church of Cahirultan was in good order and supplied with books, it lacked a priest to utilise them.

⁷⁵³ A pair of letters in the *Calendars of State Papers Ireland* indicate Sir John's favourable reception with the Lord Chief Justice and his advisors as well as at the provincial court of Munster. Jordan Condon, of Co. Cork, had entered a suit against FitzGerald for lands in the county (these were certainly those taken from the diocese of Cloyne). Having had Condon's complaint dismissed from the provincial court, Sir John took the further step of appealing to the Lord Chief Justice on 11 November 1624, to further confirm him in his possessions. CPSI, xv, 542.

Confirmation was awarded that same day. In a "Certificate by the Commissioners for Irish Affairs in favour of the petition of Sir John FitzGerald relative to certain lands in Co. Cork claimed by him..." CPSI, xv, 546.

In the seventeenth century church of Co. Cork, English names and interests were predominant, but some elements of older polities still exerted their influence. The role of the Desmonds is outlined above, but Sir John was joined by Cormac McDonough MacCarthy, the “Master of Mora.”⁷⁵⁴ Like those of Sir John FitzGerald, MacCarthy’s possessions were concentrated in Cloyne. While he held the prebend of Kilbrogan, of the diocese of Cork, the deanery of Muskerry (Musgrelyn) was the source of the vast majority of Cormac’s ecclesiastical revenues. Notwithstanding the two prebends of Donoughmore and Inishcarra,⁷⁵⁵ MacCarthy was able to pervert revenues from every parish in the deanery. His authority was centred on the mastery of Mourne (Mora) abbey. The 1615 Visitation reports that the incomes of Muskerry had been appropriated by Mourne abbey, but, as leaseholder, Cormac was the ultimate recipient. While an echo of the Gaelic polity, as opposed to the Anglo-Norman, these impropriations closely reflect those of FitzGerald. Sir John’s parochial incomes came from lands historically associated with his family; so too did those of Cormac MacCarthy. The deanery lay within the sept lands of the MacCarthy Mór.⁷⁵⁶

However, the lingering power of medieval Munster dynasties did not of necessity predicate opposition to the Anglican reforms. Although Sir John FitzGerald was apathetic to the requirements of religion, or his responsibilities as leaseholder, MacCarthy was somewhat more receptive. The parishes of Muskerry, though harmed financially by his impropriations, were preserved spiritually by the provision of English vicars; George Lee was employed to the vicarage of Aghinagh and William Healy to the urban parish of Macroom. Though Cormac failed to supply a curate to either Mourne or Kilcolman, he showed further cooperation with the Anglican church by encouraging education. Working in conjunction with the bishop of Cork, who apparently served the cure, the revenues of Ballyvourney were secured to support Murtagh Agharrin’s scholarly pursuits. The surveyors report that he was, in 1615, ready to enter orders.

⁷⁵⁴ Murphy, ‘The Royal Visitation of Cork, Cloyne and Ross’.

⁷⁵⁵ These were held by Richard Owen and Richard Alley respectively. Both were *in situe*, serving the cure of souls.

⁷⁵⁶ In addition to the myriad of mentions from earlier centuries, the Irish annals are replete with references to the defence of Muskerry by the MacCarthy clan against the Desmond earldom in the sixteenth century. “James Oge, the son of James, son of John, son of Thomas the Earl of Desmond, set out in rebellion to seek a prey in Muskerry; but Cormac, the son of Teige, son of Cormac Oge, son of Cormac, son of Teige Mac Carthy, Lord of the country, had all his forces assembled to oppose him. Cormac, being informed that James had passed by him, proceeded to a certain place, through which he knew James would pass; and he soon perceived James coming towards him with a prey, and he attacked him, and slew and destroyed the greater number of his people.” AFM, v, 1728-1729.

The older dynasties did not possess a monopoly upon impropriation. During the Elizabethan plantations and the confiscations of Desmond lands following failed rebellions, new English settlers would rise to prominence. The 1615 Visitation bears the hallmarks of this transition as a significant proportion of the diocesan revenues were usurped by English laymen. The worst offender was Sir John Jephson. He was an English soldier who married Elizabeth Norreys, the daughter of the Lord President of Munster. Although Jephson spent much of his career in England, where he was elected MP for Hampshire in 1624, he possessed significant Irish estates. In Co. Cork, his possessions encompassed a large part of the revenues of the dioceses. Principally, these were connected to the suppressed monastery of Ballybeg, from which he enjoyed the incomes of 22 rectories. To these were added several vicarages and other church livings, whose total value amounted to over £130.

For the new English elites, the leasing of monastic properties was conjoined with the impropriation of parochial incomes. Whereas Jephson had possessed Ballybeg with its rectories, others were in possession of the houses of Buttevant, Bridgetown and the like. The Englishmen Richard Grinfielde, Patrick Pepper, Captain Tent and Thomas Dant all benefited from this trend. Although none of them approached the English MP in the scope of their impropriations, their holdings were still significant. Thomas Dant, the lessee of Tracton Abbey, was in possession of church livings from six parishes; both rectories and vicarages. However, unlike Jephson, Dant neglected to provide for the service of his cures. These were largely in the deanery of Kinalea in the diocese of Cork but despite their favourable location, the parishes were left without a priest. In Ballyfoyle, Ballyspillane, Clontead and Knover, Dant rejected his responsibilities in favour of enhancing his profit.

However, Dant's behaviour does not mark the norm for secular impropriators. Throughout the three dioceses, the revenues of some 186 livings had been obtained by lay elites. Of all of these, only 24 parishes found themselves without a minister to fulfil the cure of souls. To the credit of the lessees, they were willing to pay some concern to their spiritual duties. Even in extreme circumstances, ministers were provided. The rectory of Rathgogan, valued at £8, was being farmed by two laymen. Sirs William Sarsfield and Gerret Elmor held the living, while the vicar served the cure. Nonetheless, the drain on the diocesan economies was enormous and while it may not have hindered the immediate provision of worship, the plague of impropriations did serve to hinder the evolution of a skilled, Anglican ministry.

Conclusion

Over the Tudor period, a revolution occurred amongst the priesthood of Co. Cork. Although the implications were of grave import, it was largely quiet, and only slowly eased the three dioceses into the new reality. This is not to say that religion in the region was peaceable; to the contrary, there were outbursts of violence specifically related to the reformations, including the 1603 Recusancy Revolt and the martyring of the Jesuit lay brother, Dominic Collins, in Youghal.⁷⁵⁷ However, the rate of change itself was a gradual one. At the start of the Tudor reigns, under Henry VII and his son, Henry VIII, the churches were dominated by traditional elites. During the following century, they would be replaced by new English settlers, in the political, economic and religious settings.

Nowhere are the transitions as clearly demonstrated as within the cathedral chapters. The evidence clearly delineates three separate periods. From 1504 to 1521, the traditional elites dominated the chapters, with particular emphasis upon the Gaelic clans. The chapters mirrored their bishops in their tardy approach to English reforms. For the majority of the sixteenth century and the entirety of Henry's reign, none of the three sees had an effective Anglican bishop. For the same period, English clerics were absent from the chapters; it was not until the 1590s in the episcopacies of William Lyon that changes began to occur. The 1591 survey showed a clerical elite that was neither drawn solely from the traditional families, nor from the newer English. Instead, it was those families of Anglo-Norman descent, the Gaelicised English, which provided the dioceses' treasurers, chancellors and deans. In previous decades, the Irish families had shown themselves to be as heavily invested in the region's church as their neighbours, but in the late sixteenth century, the ability of the clans to remain involved in the chapters had decreased alongside their political fortunes. However, between 1591 and 1615, a real, sudden change occurred. During those 24 years, both the Gaelic and Anglo-Norman families found themselves all but totally removed from the centres of diocesan power.

The parish priesthood showed similar trends, with a marked shift from the traditional to the new over the course of the sixteenth century. The parish incomes fell from the grasp of those who had held them in the preceding centuries and passed into the hands of the new

⁷⁵⁷ F. Finegan, 'The Beatified Martyrs of Ireland,' *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 65 (2000), 157-167.

elites; the Anglican English. The shift was not as total as within the chapters, but the parishes did mirror the cathedrals. However, the formation of a professional Protestant priesthood was significantly hindered by other developments. In the first instance, the traditional patterns of religion were not totally supplanted by the new; clerics of Gaelic descent continued to tend cures within traditional sept lands. Caheragh was held by John Fitzgerald and had links to the medieval holdings of the Desmond earldom. Kilmaclenine lies in close proximity to the region of the MacDonalds; in 1615, Teig MacDonald O'Sullivan served the cure there. However, even though the 1615 Visitation shows clear signs of an English dominance at the parochial level, it offers precious little evidence for the effective provision of a reformed ministry. Comparatively few churches were supplied with the books and other items necessary for worship; only 12 parishes in Cork had access to evangelical literature and almost all of those had strong links to the cathedral chapters. Simultaneously, many of the church buildings were ruined, whether by neglect or by the effect of repeated rebellions or both; this condition was exacerbated by the continuation of pluralism and the lack of suitable candidates for parish cures. Many were left vacant.

These problems had been left to foment by the failures of the suppression of the monasteries, which though eventually completed (in piecemeal fashion), failed to correct the central problems of medieval religion. Crucially, the suppressions did not prevent the misuse of parish incomes. In the pre reformations period, the revenues of vicarages and rectories were typically reserved to wealthy houses, who would in turn take responsibility for the cure of souls. The process of dissolution was intended to resolve these problems and return those moneys to the parishes for the better provision of worship and parochial ministry therein. This process did not run true in the dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. Instead, when the houses were dissolved, their lands and incomes were divided, farmed and split into the hands of secular elites. These individuals, often part of the new English elite, retained the parochial revenues. Importantly, this slowed the creation of a new, professional, clerical elite, that would have been designed to carry the light of the Anglican reformations into the most resistant areas of the south western dioceses.

Ultimately, by the end of the Tudor period, the traditional patterns of religion were not totally supplanted by the new; clerics of Gaelic descent continued to tend cures within traditional sept lands. The Tudor reforms enjoyed several demonstrable successes with the creation of strong Anglican bishoprics, backed by a new but powerful English Earl, and an enormous shift in the demographics of the priesthood. Nevertheless, the traditional patterns

of religion had, by 1615, proved impossible to excise from the three dioceses. The grasp of the older families on parochial and cathedral life, once so strong, had weakened significantly. However, neither had it been fully eradicated, nor transferred to the Protestant ideal. Spenser complained that “they [the Irish priests] christen yet after the popish fashion”⁷⁵⁸ William Lyon himself offered corroboration to this accusation. In 1596, he claimed that “the priests of the country forsake their benefits to become [Roman] massing priests, because they are so well entreated, and so much made of among the people; many have...[done this] by persuasion of those seminaries that come from beyond the seas.”⁷⁵⁹ The Gaelic and Anglo-Norman priests may have been ousted from the established church, but their influence in Cork, Cloyne and Ross was not eradicated with the coming of Anglicanism.

⁷⁵⁸ Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, 140.

⁷⁵⁹ CPSI, v, 268.

Conclusion

The failure of the Protestant reformation in the three dioceses was not complete by the close of the sixteenth century. However, the signs of defeat were readily observable. Spenser wrote, “the faulte which I finde in [the Irish] religion is...that they are all Papists by their profession...not one amongst an hundred knoweth any ground of religion...but canne perhappes, say his pater noster, or his Ave Maria.”⁷⁶⁰ In the preservation and restoration of the Catholic church in Cork, Cloyne and Ross, the secular elites would play a vital role, but no more crucial than that they played in shaping the Tudor reformations. At every level, amongst the laity and religious, the parochial ministry and the diocesan elite as well as the monastic tradition, Gaelic and Anglo-Norman polities shaped the religion of the dioceses. Their role was not necessarily partisan, but always influential.

By the eve of the reformations, religion in Co. Cork had developed along an unexceptional pattern and in this, the involvement of the local lordships was paramount. From the creation of the medieval church in the twelfth century, the nature of the parishes and deaneries diverged along political lines. Even the reform of the Irish church, which had previously been defined by the strength of its monasticism and the weakness or non-existence of diocesan structures, was sparked by the Anglo-Norman invasion. As the church developed through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, even small details such as the physical size of the parishes was determined by the borders defined by *ecclesia inter hibernicos* and *ecclesia inter anglicos*. In Gaelic regions, parishes matched the *tuath* almost exactly, while in Norman regions, the secular *tuath* was divided into two or more ecclesiastical units. Consequently, areas of Anglo-Norman settlement tended to have a larger number of smaller parishes; for the Irish regions, the reverse was true. Furthermore, the priesthood itself was populated by the sons of prominent families. Within a 20 year period in the middle of the fifteenth century, at least nine members of the extended Barrymore dynasty served as clerics within the three dioceses. For the same period, eight priests of the O’Driscoll clan held positions within the churches of Ross.

The monasteries of the region were similarly affected, although the patronage they enjoyed was even more pervasive. Invariably, the creation of a monastery was sponsored by secular elites. Their patronage helped in obtaining letters of endorsement from crown and

⁷⁶⁰ Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, 145.

papacy, while grants of land were essential for the financial stability of the nascent house. These houses would then become inextricably linked with their benefactors as the relationship continued, often over centuries. The Augustinian priory at Bridgetown, for example, displays significant signs of the Roches' presence, chiefly as a burial place, though its extensions should be similarly associated.⁷⁶¹ Although the role of the families might in some cases have been political, or for reasons of maintaining status, many do seem to have been motivated purely by religious fervour. The popularity of the Observant movement and the new wave of monastic foundations during the fifteenth century must be a signifier of this.

When considering the true nature of the involvement of the laity, the role of Cormac MacCarthy is especially illuminating. Lord of Muskerry for almost half a century, he was buried in a Franciscan habit at Kilcrea and, in a catalogue of genealogy more concerned with lineage than character, was described thus: "He was the exalter and reverer [sic.] of the church, the first founder of the monastery of Cill Chreidhe [Kilcrea], and a man who had ordered that the Sabbath should be strictly observed throughout his territory."⁷⁶² Significantly, his involvement with the Church seems to have surpassed that of one who sought merely to display his wealth. Responsible for three foundations begun within his lifetime, one at Kilcrea and a friary and nunnery at Ballymacadane,⁷⁶³ it is hard to doubt the existence of a sincere piety. Indeed, from the fragmentary sources available, certain commonalities appear, particularly of the house at Kilcrea, where "[the MacCarthys'] erected an honourable tomb in it for the interment therein of their gentlemen and chieftains."⁷⁶⁴ Similarly, the eighth Earl of Desmond, who founded the collegiate at Youghal with great expense, is also linked to a friary at Adare in the Limerick diocese, in which was erected a tomb for his family.⁷⁶⁵ As with the Lord of Muskerry, it is likely that the expense involved indicates a high level of piety. Although physical evidence of late medieval additions and constructions remains in numerous ruins, given the dearth of supplementary sources, it is impossible to assign the local elite a vibrant religiosity on their basis. It is, however, sensible to conclude that a reasonable level of piety was present among both the Norman and Irish laity.

Nevertheless, opposition to the Tudor reformations was not rooted in loyalty to the 'popish' religion. Quite to the contrary, many of the early reforms found success. The

⁷⁶¹ D. Power, *et al*, *Archaeological Inventory of County Cork*, iv, Part 2, 547-548.

⁷⁶² AFM, iv, 1213.

⁷⁶³ Gwynn and Hadcock, *Medieval and Religious Houses*, 268 and 313.

⁷⁶⁴ AFM, iv, 1039.

⁷⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 1035.

suppressions in the city of Cork were swift and effective and the Anglican churches found themselves with large congregations. William Lyon may have complained in the 1590s that his sermons were given to only a small number of parishioners, but he does allow that only a few years later, thousands attended the Protestant services.

Direct evidence of support for the new bishop is hard to find, limited by the restrictions of surviving manuscripts. However, in 1537, shortly after Dominic Tirrey took post, the layman William Sarsfield demonstrated his acceptance of the new religious order. Like the Tirreys, the Sarsfields were a well established Cork family. The Cork notary, William Sarsfield, pointedly prefaced one of his documents with reference to “King Henry VIII, orthodox Defender of the Faith, Supreme Head under Christ of the Churches of England and Ireland, our invincible prince.”⁷⁶⁶ This was intended to be, and should be thought of, as a declaration of intent on the part of William Sarsfield.

Every rebellion made certain to cite defence of the Roman faith as one of its principle aims. Silken Thomas began this practice, and it was continued through the Desmond revolts, and well into the seventeenth century.⁷⁶⁷ However, as has been previously discussed, even those uprisings most closely linked to religion were not so simple. The 1603 Recusant Revolt was primarily occasioned by the new limits placed upon the chartered townships and the damages suffered by the English responses to the rebellions of the late sixteenth century. The growth of the crown polity alienated the more traditional elites of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. During the late medieval period, the contraction of the crown polity had created a power vacuum in matters both secular and religious; in both arenas, these families stepped to the fore.⁷⁶⁸ During the sixteenth century, as the Tudor monarchs began to re-exert their influence in south western Ireland, the local elites offered resistance, jealous of their role and power.

The election of the sixteenth century bishops exemplifies this trend. In Ross, an Anglican bishop was not supplied until the 1580s, while the Roman counterparts received relative free reign. This was not an overt rejection of royal authority, but rather a retrenchment of local power structures; the sixteenth century papal candidates belonged to the O’Fiheely, O’Hea, MacCarthy and O’Herlihy. Even though the religiosity of the latter was

⁷⁶⁶ Marsh’s Library, Dublin, MS CI 13.

⁷⁶⁷ These allusions to religion also served to assist attempts to garner military support on the continent.

⁷⁶⁸ A particularly good examination of this is offered in P. MacCotter, ‘The Geraldine clerical lineages of Imokilly and Sir John fitz Edmund of Cloyne,’ D. Edwards, ed., *Region and Rulers in Ireland, 1100-1650* (Dublin, 2004), 54-77.

strongly Catholic and his attendance at the Council of Trent should be marked, local support for Thomas O’Herlihy came more from his familial connections.

During the sixteenth century both the papacy and English crown looked to increase their influence upon the church in the three Munster dioceses. Still, both of these powers often remained subservient to local interest as both Catholic and Protestant bishops were hindered by local polities. Crucially however, the papacy learned from its early failures in Cork and Cloyne, where it had attempted to promote outside clerics to key appointments. Consequently, while the Elizabethan reign saw the installation of a succession of new, English bishops, such as William Lyon, the Catholic ministers were drawn from local stock. The royal appointments were viewed as an extension of crown policy, an exacerbation of the invasions into the traditional political and territorial hegemonies of Munster. Consequently, just as the townships would object strenuously to the conditions imposed upon them by the victorious English following the Desmond rebellions, the local lordships, both Anglo-Norman and Gaelic, resisted the reduction of their powers in the ecclesiastical setting. This opposition was motivated not by religion or Tridentine reform, but by self interest and a natural inclination to prefer internal candidates to the diocesan seat. Even in the early seventeenth century, when the balance of secular power had begun to shift sharply towards the influx of English lords and landowners, the conditions for religion were little changed. The English secular elites were motivated primarily by pecuniary self-interest as large numbers of church livings were appropriated. Admittedly, the majority of parishes whose revenues were diverted were supplied with a priest for consideration of the cure, but the loss of such a significant part of the diocesan economy was still harmful.

Opposition to the Tudor reformations, often mistakenly ascribed to a fondness for the traditional religion, was instead predicated upon political, rather than religious concerns. However, as the increasing alienation of the Gaelic and Anglo-Norman lordships continued, the traditional powers of Co. Cork began to look to the continent for support. This necessitated a certain stance upon religion that was reinforced during exile. At the court of Spain, O’Sullivan Beare lobbied repeatedly for military action in Ireland and in doing so, came into frequent contact with the papal legate that further reinforced his religiosity. Consequently, in the seventeenth century, the O’Sullivans provided an important conduit for the agents of the Catholic reformation.

At a political level, the involvement of secular elites was most obvious, but their influence upon the actual provision of worship was pervasive. On the eve of the

reformations, the provision of religion had largely been adequate, if somewhat conservative. The evidence of papal litigation implies a high demand for benefices and low occurrence of clerical abuses. Conversely, while the ministry may have been adequate, low rates of education and the relative poverty of the dioceses limited opportunities for reform. The lack of a native university and relative extremity from the European centres of learning prevented easy access to the new reformation theologies sweeping the continent. This would have a crucial impact, limiting the spread of the Tudor reforms and these conditions would remain largely unchanged into the seventeenth century.

At the end of the Elizabethan reign, rates of formal education amongst the parish clergy in the three dioceses had improved dramatically. However, the prevalence of pluralism and omission of the Gaelic language from official policy largely rendered these advances impotent. The poverty of the parishes had worsened, aggravated by the all but incessant warfare of the Tudor period. Consequently, the churches were largely incapable of providing appropriate books and liturgical works unless supported either by secular or clerical elites. Furthermore, these inadequate benefices could not hope to attract an appropriate ministry, as candidates preferred the richer parishes of the English dioceses.

Many of these failures must be attributed to a failure on the part of the Tudor monarchies to obtain local support for their religious reforms. With cooperative secular elites, the many shortcomings of the Tudor church in Cork, Cloyne and Ross could have been overcome. The poverty of the benefices could have been assuaged by lay sponsorship and political weakness by the assistance of powerful Gaelic and Old English lordships. Instead, the crown provided a direct challenge to local ecclesiastical, political and economic structures. These policies provided the papacy, and the papal powers of France and Spain, an opportunity to ally with the Gaelic and Anglo-Norman polities of Co. Cork. What had begun as self interest under Henry VIII had become outright rebellion against Elizabeth's rule.

In 1629, the departing Lord Deputy, Falkland, issued a proclamation concerning papist worship,

“...orders from the see of Rome hath bred such an extraordinarie insolence and presumption in them, as that they have dared here of late not onely to assemble themselves in publike places to celebrate their superstitious services in all parts of this kingdome, but also have erected houses and buildings called publike oratories, colledges,

Mass-houses, and convents of fryers, moncks, and nunnes in the eye
and open view of the state and else where...’’⁷⁶⁹

The Lord Deputy describes a vivid picture of Catholic society, living under the noses of their Protestant lawmakers and landowners. The nature of that society is such that it had clear systems in place for the practice of, and provision for, worship and education. The political resistance of the traditional secular elites of Cork, Cloyne and Ross during the Tudor period had become religious. However, Falkland’s impression of Ireland did not reflect newer developments, especially in the south western dioceses. Instead, the patterns he described in 1629 should be taken as the natural continuation of the relationship between secular and religious. In Co. Cork, the traditional elites, the Anglo-Norman families and Gaelic clans, had enjoyed strong links with the late medieval church; in this thesis, these have already been shown to have continued throughout the Tudor period. Indeed, as these families were increasingly excluded from the established Anglican church, they found their way into its Roman counterpart. During the latter parts of the sixteenth century, Anglo-Norman and Gaelic clerics were active in the three dioceses within the Franciscan and Jesuit orders.

In the 1580s, clerics sponsored by the papacy were to be found in several locations across Co. Cork. Eoghan O’Duffy (Ó Dubhthaigh) travelled widely on foot, preaching in his Franciscan habit in a mode that would be commonly recognisable in agents of the Catholic reformation during the seventeenth century.⁷⁷⁰ Simultaneously, Tadgh MacDonough (Mac Domhnaill) operated out of Bantry Bay and the friary there. Where O’Duffy gained a relative celebrity, MacDonough led a rather more sedate existence. Nonetheless, he was described as an educated and distinguished preacher and was martyred along with another friar by English soldiers in 1580.⁷⁷¹ In the same year, Donus Eugenius Eganus and John Donatus MacCarthy (mac Carha) were noted as active Franciscans, working in the diocese of Cork.⁷⁷² Similarly, Edmund de Courcey (Cursy) died in the Observant habit and was buried in the friary of Kilcrea.⁷⁷³ Kilcrea appears to have been a strong point of the Franciscan movement, with several other friars listed and events detailed. These included another brother of the MacCarthy clan in minor orders and the burial of Thomas O’Herlihy (O Harlaighy), bishop

⁷⁶⁹ P.J. Corish, ‘Two Seventeenth-Century Proclamations against the Catholic Clergy’, *Archivium Hibernicum*, 39 (1984), 54.

⁷⁷⁰ Millett, ‘The Irish Franciscans,’ 20.

⁷⁷¹ Jennings, ‘Part II: Brevis Synopsis,’ 175.

⁷⁷² *Ibid.*, 183.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*, 183.

of Ross, in 1588.⁷⁷⁴ Father Thadeus O'Sullivan (o Suilevaine), a miracle worker and preacher, died near the friary in 1578.⁷⁷⁵ This brief examination demonstrates an issue of key importance; the continued involvement of the traditional elites in the Roman Catholic forms of worship.

Other sources suggest the presence of yet more priests loyal to the papacy. One lists Thomas Moreanus, dean of Cork, Carolus Leus and Robert Risfordius of the Society of Jesus, William O'Kenny (Okeni), a Dominican, who worked alongside his brothers of the same order Thadeus Tergallus and Matheus MacCarthy (Machuar).⁷⁷⁶ In the 1580s, these men served in the county of Cork, ministering in support of the Catholic Tridentine reformation. The local elites, whose role had been central to the church in the region, are largely absent from this list, but this is in no small part due to the continuance of traditional forms of religion; a significant proportion of the religious houses remained open under the protection of their noble patrons. Similarly, even into the 1590s,⁷⁷⁷ both Anglo-Norman and Gaelic priests were to be found in the parishes. It was not until the seventeenth century that the families of Cork, Cloyne and Ross could be found in large numbers in those orders that would prove so crucial to the successes of the Catholic reformations; the Jesuits and Franciscans.

At the close of the sixteenth century the older elites were being supplanted by the new English settlers. Their involvement in the church had been reduced and their priests replaced by Anglican clerics; by 1615, the traditionally powerful families had been all but totally displaced from the established church of Co. Cork.⁷⁷⁸ As they were marginalised in the political and religious arena, the MacCarthys, FitzGeralds, Courceys, O'Sullivans and de Burghs would be seen on the continent. In the 1590s, the continental colleges began to spring up in earnest, with seven new institutions created between 1590 and 1600, including Salamanca (1592), Lisbon (1593) and Douai (1594). The displaced elite of south western Ireland would find their new religious home there, providing a springboard for the Catholic reformations in their home dioceses.

Some of the new colleges held particular importance to Munster. The institution at Bordeaux held a particular debt to Dermit MacCarthy, a priest of Cork, who arrived in France

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁷⁷⁶ J. Hagan (ed), 'Ireland in 1580,' *Archivium Hibernicum*, 5 (1916), 160-1.

⁷⁷⁷ See the evidence provided by the analysis of TCD MS 566. Carte in Chapter 4.

⁷⁷⁸ See the evidence and argument presented in the preceding chapter. The 1615 Visitations evidence an overwhelmingly English diocesan organisation and parochial ministry.

in 1603 following the failure of the Kinsale revolt. With 40 companions, he was received by the Archbishop there and given hospitality. This strong connection would continue for the life of the college. With the exception of Dr Jacques Piers, the superiors of the college between 1603 and 1648 belonged to the most illustrious families of late medieval Co. Cork.⁷⁷⁹ Dermot MacCarthy died in 1621 and was succeeded by Piers. In turn, he was replaced by Kilian McCarthy (Carteus) in 1630 and Thomas FitzGerald (Giraldin) took the post in 1633 until in 1648, Kilian was re-elected. The obituaries of the order demonstrate how persuasive this Cork influence was, going beyond the leadership of the college.⁷⁸⁰ Edmondus Barry died in the college on Christmas Eve 1684. Similarly, it names Gerald de Roche, Maruice Fitzgerald (Gerardin) and Jean Desmond (Desmons). A petition in support of a new superior was signed by 18 brothers, of whom six are of Cork origin.

The case of the Irish College at Santiago de Compostella perfectly encapsulates the position of the exiled elite. Donal O'Sullivan Beare fled to Spain following the reversal of his fortunes in 1603. He had been heavily involved in continental trade prior to this time and a large portion of his personal wealth was derived from that.⁷⁸¹ In the aftermath of a ban on Spanish trade,⁷⁸² which severely limited O'Sullivan Beare's personal authority, the Gaelic chief found himself marginalised by the English polity. The increasingly desperate leader turned to force of arms to reinforce his position and took a leading role in the Recusancy Revolt. However, when the uprising at Kinsale was crushed by the English, O'Sullivan was forced to flee to Spain where he would set up the Irish college at Santiago de Compostella. An account of the institution there gave a list of twelve students in 1613; of these, there were two MacCarthys, two O'Driscolls and four of the O'Sullivan clan. Just as the traditional elites were being removed from the established church in Cork, O'Sullivan was finding a new home on the continent and as part of the seventeenth century Catholic reformations.

⁷⁷⁹ T.J. Walsh and J.B. Pelette, 'Some Records of the Irish College at Bordeaux,' *Archivium Hibernicum*, 15 (1950), 106.

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁷⁸¹ Over £300 *per annum* found its way to O'Sullivan's coffers as a direct result of this commercial activity. Longfield, *Anglo-Irish Trade*, 85

⁷⁸² *Calendar of the Carew manuscripts*, v, 437.

The O'Sullivan dynasty had played a significant role in the political and religious life of Co. Cork for centuries, being heavily invested in both the parochial and monastic networks. During the Tudor period, just as their political influence was harmed by the strengthened English polity, the ability of the O'Sullivans to exert religious power within the established church was limited by the Anglo-centric Protestant reforms. The combination of these pressures created and confirmed a powerful and deep seated opposition to the Tudor reformatations and the failure of its agents to engage with traditional elites like O'Sullivan Beare would prove catastrophic.

Appendix: Appropriated rectories from the 1541 monastic inquisition⁷⁸³

| | Modern Parish | Diocese | Ecclesia | Value |
|---|---------------------------------|---------|-------------------------|--------------|
| ??? | ??? | ??? | <i>inter hibernicos</i> | 60s |
| Ballinaboy (Ballenebowe) | Ballinhassig | Cork | <i>inter anglicos</i> | 106s 8d |
| Ballybeg (Ballybege) | Buttevant | Cloyne | <i>inter anglicos</i> | £4 |
| Ballyclough (Ballycloghye and Ballycastell) | Ballyclough | Cloyne | <i>inter anglicos</i> | £7 |
| Ballindrohid (Ballydroghyde) | Castletownroche and Ballyhooley | Cloyne | <i>inter anglicos</i> | £8 |
| Ballyensyll | ??? | ??? | ??? | 100s |
| Ballyfearde (Ballyfearde) | Carrigaline | Cork | <i>inter anglicos</i> | 60s |
| Ballyfoyle (Ballyfewan) | Tracton | Cork | <i>inter anglicos</i> | 100s |
| Ballydelongby (Ballymacjonoke) | Glounthaune | Cork | <i>inter anglicos</i> | 30s |
| Ballymodan (Ballyvodan) | Bandon | Cork | <i>inter hibernicos</i> | 26s 8d |
| Barnehalye | Passage West | Cork | <i>inter anglicos</i> | 20s |
| Saint Catherine (Blessed Katherine) | Saint Mary's Cathedral | Cork | <i>inter anglicos</i> | Records Lost |
| Carrigtwohill (Carryketwoghyll) | Carrigtwohill | Cloyne | <i>inter anglicos</i> | £6 |
| Castellbeghan | ??? | ??? | ??? | £6 |
| Castlelyons (Castelton) | Castlelyons | Cloyne | <i>inter anglicos</i> | £6 |
| Midleton (Chore) | Midleton and Ballintotas | Cloyne | <i>inter anglicos</i> | 100s |
| Clontead (Clontade) | Clontead | Cork | <i>inter anglicos</i> | 40s |
| Crusemallyney | ??? | ??? | <i>inter hibernicos</i> | £6 |
| Dunbullogue (Downbowlogge) | Glanmire | Cork | <i>inter anglicos</i> | 66s 8d |
| Goleen (Gleawne) | Goleen | Cork | <i>inter hibernicos</i> | 40s |

⁷⁸³ The table is based on information taken from White, *Monastic Possessions*.

| | Modern Parish | Diocese | <i>Ecclesia</i> | Value |
|--|--|------------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Fermoy (Iormoy) | Fermoy | Cloyne | <i>inter anglicos</i> | £4 |
| Kilcoe (Kylcoccan) | Aughadown | Cork | <i>inter hibernicos</i> | 6s 8d |
| Kilcully (Kylcollyle) | Glanmire | Cork | <i>inter anglicos</i> | 66s 8d |
| Kilcorcoran (Kylcoryghyn) | Kanturk | Cloyne | <i>inter hibernicos</i> | 20s |
| Ardfield and Rathbarry (Kylkeran, Ardofoyll and Rathbarry) | Ardfield and Rathbarry | Ross | <i>inter anglicos</i> | 100s |
| Killaconenagh (Kyllymycananag) | Bere Island and Castletownbere | Kerry (Co. Cork) | <i>inter hibernicos</i> | 26s 8d |
| Kilmocomage (Kylmocomok) | Bantry | Cork | <i>inter hibernicos</i> | £6 |
| Kilmoe (Kylmone) | Goleen | Cork | <i>inter hibernicos</i> | 26s 8d |
| Kilmurry (Kylmorye) | Kilmurry | Cork | <i>inter hibernicos</i> | 106s 8d |
| Kilmichael (Kylmyghell) | Iveleary | Cork | <i>inter hibernicos</i> | 20s |
| Ballygiblin Kylynnemaragh and Ballygibyn) | Mitchelstown, Ballygiblin and Tullylease | Cloyne | <i>Ambiguous</i> | 40s |
| Kylnemallagh | ??? | ??? | ??? | 80s |
| Kilpatrick (Kylpatryk) | Tracton | Cork | <i>inter anglicos</i> | 40s |
| Kilroan (Kylrowayne) | Ballinspital | Cork | <i>inter anglicos</i> | 66s 8d |
| Lislee (Lyslye) | Barryroe | Ross | <i>inter anglicos</i> | 53s 4d |
| Abbeymahon (Maure) | Barryroe | Ross | <i>inter anglicos</i> | £6 |
| Mogeely (Mogyellyne) | Imogeela Castlemartyr and Dungourney | Cloyne | <i>inter anglicos</i> | 20s |
| Doneraile and Caherduggan (Rossaghe, Downeraghyll and Cahyrdowgan) | Doneraile | Cloyne | <i>inter anglicos</i> | £6 |
| Templerobin (Tempell Robyn) | Cobh | Cloyne | <i>inter anglicos</i> | 60s |
| Templemichael (Templemyghell) | Glanmire | Cork | <i>inter anglicos</i> | £8 |
| Tracton (Traghton) | Tracton | Cork | <i>inter anglicos</i> | £6 13s |
| Tullagh (Tullaghe) | Skibbereen | Cork | <i>inter hibernicos</i> | 40s |
| Inchigeela (Ynchegeynlaghe) | Iveleary | Cork | <i>inter hibernicos</i> | 13s 4d |

Appendix: Seventeenth Century Guardians of the Franciscan Friars in Co. Cork⁷⁸⁴

| Cork | Bantry | Buttevant | Kilcrea |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1609 William French | 1639 Cornelius Liney | 1607 Conor MacMaurice | 1606 Cornelius Desmond |
| 1625 Francis O'Mahony | 1649 Bonaventure O'Sullivan | 1639 Robert Lacey | 1621 John Gould |
| 1629 Bernadine Meagh | 1650 Anthony O'Sullivan | 1641 Boetius MacEgan | 1629 Thaddeus Corneij |
| 1639 Thomas Strang | 1661 Philip Holan | 1646 Bonaventure Barry | 1639 Eugene Field |
| 1641 Francis O'Mahony | 1669 Donat O'Callaghan | 1647 James Cavarly | 1646 Thaddeus O'Connor |
| 1646 Bonaventure Meagh | 1671 Eugene MacCarthy | 1650 James Bary | 1647 Cornelius Leyn |
| 1649 John Conry | 1677 Dermot MacCarthy | 1659 Anthony De Burgo | 1650 Anthony MacCarthy |
| 1650 Philip Roche | 1678 Francis Kenny | 1661 Cornelius Scanlan | 1661 John Conry |
| 1659 Francis Coppinger | 1680 Bonaventure O'Cronin | 1669 Anthony Barrett | 1669 Francis Gray |
| 1671 John Conry | 1684 Anthony Canty | 1672 Louis Gibbon | 1671 Florence Carty |
| 1682 John Daly | 1689 Francis O'Mahony | 1675 Anthony Falvey | 1672 Bonaventure MacCarthy |
| 1687 Bonaventure FitzGerald | 1690 Patrick Senner | 1682 Anthony Magner | 1675 Eugene MacCarthy |
| 1689 Laurence Considine | 1694 Francis O'Mahony | 1683 Eugene MacCarthy | 1699 Francis O'Riordan |
| 1690 Bonaventure FitzGerald | 1697 Bonaventure Crowley | 1687 Laurence Considine | |
| 1694 Anthony Falvey | 1699 Michael MacCarthy | 1694 Marcus MacGrath | |
| 1697 Anthony Magner | | 1697 Bonaventure Murphy | |
| 1699 Anthony Daly | | 1699 John MulCahy | |

⁷⁸⁴ Based on information predominantly gathered from Brady, *Clerical and Parochial Records* and B. Egan, 'Guardians of the Franciscan Friaries in the City and County of Cork,' *Franciscan Cork: Souvenir of St. Francis Church, Cork* (Killiney, 1953), 91-95.

| Sherkin | Timoleague | Youghal |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1629 Didacus O'Neill | 1607 Rory O'Tamy | 1605 James Carney |
| 1639 Francis MacCarthy | 1615 Eugene Field | 1627 Bernadine Meagh |
| 1645 Eugene Field | 1624 Florence MacDonnell | 1629 Anthony Galvan |
| 1650 Fachnan O'Driscoll | MacCarthy | 1646 Philip Roche |
| 1661 Francis FitzGerald | 1629 Eugene Field | 1649 Edmund Bray |
| 1669 Thaddeus O'Donovan | 1639 Philip Young | 1650 Francis Roche |
| 1672 Antony Canty | 1646 Daniel Crowley | 1659 Francis Goole |
| 1675 Bonaventure Callanan | 1649 Francis O'Sullivan | 1669 James White |
| 1682 Francis O'Cronin | 1650 David Hodnett | 1671 Anthony Barrett |
| 1686 Bonaventure Murphy | 1659 Eugene Field | 1672 Francis Gray |
| 1694 Cornelius O'Herlihy | 1669 Charles MacCarthy | 1675 Anthony Canty |
| 1697 Francis MacCarthy | 1671 Dermot Crowley | 1678 John Daly |
| 1699 Francis O'Mahony | 1672 Bonaventure Crowley | 1680 Edmund Dullany |
| | 1675 Ceallachan MacCarthy | 1682 Anthony Barrett |
| | 1678 Anthony Canty | 1684 Marcus MacGrath |
| | 1682 Finian MacCarthy | 1687 Francis Dwyer |
| | 1687 John Callanan | 1690 Marcus MacGrath |
| | 1689 Dennis O'Driscoll | 1694 Andrew Russell |
| | 1694 John Galvan | 1697 Bonaventure FitzGerald |

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