The Diocese of Derry in 1631

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Source: *Archivium Hibernicum*, Vol. 5 (1916), pp. 1-6

Published by: [Catholic Historical Society of Ireland](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25485497>

Accessed: 17/06/2014 06:11

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THE DIOCESE OF DERRY IN 1631

DURING the first half of the seventeenth century the northern dioceses were, in the words of the Annalist, "under a cloud and smoke." The few glimpses we catch of their internal condition reveal a state of things verging at times on anarchy.¹ The diocese of Derry, strange to say, appears to have best maintained ecclesiastical organisation and discipline; and more than once, bishops of neighbouring dioceses applied for translation to this haven of rest. For, unlike the other counties of the Plantation, Derry was what the French term a "colonie d'exploitation." Good citizens of London had no intention of transplanting thither; they merely wanted to make the last penny out of it, and hence their representatives, Beresfords and others, set the forfeited lands to the highest bidder regardless of religious or political considerations.² In 1624, the sixteenth year of the Plantation, it was found that out of the 608 townlands or ballyboes the Irish were in possession of 305.³ However, of the new settlers the most influential were the four Hamiltons, as Catholic then as their descendants are Orange now. Hence the priests enjoyed comparative immunity from persecution and exercised their ministry, for the most part, as freely as if the Earls had never fled. "For the removing of these Popish priests," writes the Protestant Bishop Downham, "our lawes are weake and powerlesse, neither can I get the assistance of the military men as I desire, and that which discourageth me most is that when either I have gotten any of them apprehended, convicted, and com-

¹ *Spicilegium Ossoriense* I. pp. 137, 192, 206 *seq.*; "Irish Priests of the Penal Times," pp. 267 *seq.*

² "The Londoners gave out at first that anyone who would go over should have land at 4d. an acre, when they found the Irish would give high rents rather than be expelled from the land where they were bred and born, they recalled their proclamations and ran up the rents from £1 10s. to £6 or £10 a ballibol, and sacrificed the safety of the Kingdom for their own profit."—"State Papers Chas. I," 1635, p. 209.

³ "State Papers, Jas. I."

mitted they have been by corrupcon set at libertie to follow their former courses." ¹

Among the adventurers who had been soured by the grant of Derry to the Londoners the most notable was Sir Thomas Phillips. Originally a soldier in one of Elizabeth's expeditions to France, he had exchanged that service for Ireland, whose broad acres offered more ample rewards. In 1604 he obtained a custodium or temporary grant of the abbey and lands of Coleraine. Ousted by the charter to the Londoners he had to content himself with an inferior estate at Limavady and the stipend of £200 a year (not regularly paid) as overseer of the plantation. From 1612 onwards he poured into the ears of the English Council the story of the malversations of the Londoners. He enlisted the help of Falkland, Lord Deputy; he went to London, saw the statesmen there and finally made a direct appeal to the king. But all in vain; the London Companies were too powerful, too well friended to be dislodged. At length after twenty years (he said) of labour, support came from an unexpected quarter. Bramhall was appointed Protestant Bishop of Derry in 1634, and Bramhall was the friend of Laud and Wentworth. Popery became the principal count against the Londoners, and the Court of Star Chamber, 12 May, 1635, gave judgment against them and resumed the patents into the hands of the King. Phillip's multitudinous charges were availed of in working up the case. Early in February, 1631-2, he wrote to the King:—

"May it please your most Excellent Maiesty. I most humble present unto your Highnes. A true collection made the second day of January 1631 of such Popish priests as are authorized from the Pope of Rome and beneficed in the London Plantation together with their names and the severall parishes in the said County appointed to them by the Viccar Generall Turlagh o Kelly as likewise what yearly duties they receive from the Parishioners.

Their collections etc. amount to £1000. So as the priests receive more out of this county than Your Maiestie. Let not this seem strange to your Maiestie so long as the Londoners farmers of proportions [extensive farmers] do receive the said priests to dwell upon their lands, making use of them to let their lands at dearer

¹ "Ordnance Survey Memoir of Derry," p. 61.

rates then otherwise they could, and by countenancing the said priests with their usual familiarity at their tables."

[ENCLOSURE]

Priests	Parishes
Andrew o Hagarty and William o Hagarty .	Templemon alias Derry
Donohice o Cahan, tennant to the Skinners .	Commyr
Owen McClosky, tennant also to the Skinners .	Dungarven
James boy McAnnally, tennant to the Goldsmithes	Clandermot
Owen O Cosseglem tennant to the ffishmongers	Faghen Vale
Neile o Devanny	Bennagher
Neale o fferonan	Boughnevagh
Viccar o Lynne	Tayhlaght
Owin Medder o Crilly	Balliagh and Drom-cose
fferdorogh o Hagan	Taulaght Arde
Phillemy Roe McCloskey, tennant to the merchant Taylors	Dunboe and Ahadowy
William McNicoll, tennent also to the Merchant Taylors	Eregall
Hugh McKedy	Camos
Prior McKedy, tennant to the Iornmongers .	Desert Froghell
Patrick o Crilly	Kilreagh
Viccar O Cully	Tanlaght o Crilly
Patrick O Scullen	Bally ne scullen and Termonany
Donnell O Scullen, tennant to the Vintners .	Maheray and Killelaghy
Patrick o Hagarty	Ballyne screene
Henry McGilmurray	Desert Martin Kilconahan
Rory o Hagan tennant to the Salters .	Maharyfelt
Donnell o Coury	Artra
Patrick McGuggin	Ballinderry
Rory o Hagan	Desert Lynne

DUTIES

These preists receive from their severall parishioners Viz. Imprimis
 for every married couple iis.
 for every single person vid.

of every plough twenty sheaves
 of every churne one churning of butter which they call mescan frive.
 of every marriage is.
 ffor Extreme Unction which they call Cuyrollo or in liu thereof . . . is.
 A Mortuary (which is a cowe or mare or some young large beast of
 such as be possessed of goods ; and of the poore sorte some part
 of what they dye possessed of as alsoe their upper garment
 as their mantle or brackin).

Offerings at Christmas and Easter of some iid. some iiid. some iiid.
 some vid. some is. none comes empty.

At burials, daily beggins, of corne, sheepe, and other necessities
 for their masse and for helpe of poore schollers which amounteth
 to a good sune in the year.

It is certain that the preists receive in duties with the jurisdiction
 from the pope as much as doth amount to 1000 li. per an.

A far greater sune yearly than the Revenues in Your Maesties
 Crowne in this county and payment of your Army.

The Londoners pay Your Maestie for all their goodly Territories, Customs, fishings, Royalties etc. per ann	205	17	00
To your Maestie for maintenance of your Army which the Londoners paie not but the poore tennants .	600	00	00
The Sheriff's Retournes into the Exchequer about 50 per ann	050	00	00
So it appears that the popish Preists in this Co: receive per annum more than your Maestie by	144	3	00

There are also friers mendicants who come abroad twice a yeare
 and receive, beside the beggins, which is of no small value, 8*d* a couple
 per ann. 20 sheeves of corne of every ploughe[land] and a churning
 of butter every churne.

The names of such vagrant preists as are not beneficed and yet
 liveth upon the peoples labor in the foresaid County.

Shane o Hagan, Maurice McRoddan, Gillegroome McTeig,
 Thomas o Human, Neale o Donnelan, Patrick McGillene, Shane oge
 Megy.

Masse houses, erected by the preists in the London Plantation viz.
 Upon the Fishmongers Proportion and Grocers two houses near
 one another.

Upon the Skinners Proportion two
 Upon the Iornmongers Proportion one
 Upon the Salters Proportion one

Upon the Drapers Proportion one

Upon the Vintners Proportion one

Which premise I humbly upon bended knees beseech your Royall Maiesty to cause to be compared with the Preamble of the Londoners Charter which is sufficient to convince them without further trouble.

To sustain his case, Phillips forwarded to Secretary Coke, as would appear a

List of Witnesses, who prove that in every Parish of the Londoners, Plantation there is a Popish Priest Beneficed; Sir John Bingley, Timothy Foorde, Brian O'Cahan, John Cragg, Oliver Mather, William Chesman, Michael Machett, Richard Kerbye, Thomas Raven, Thomas Thursby, Hugh Sayer, Valentine Hartop, Anthony Lipsett, John Coachmore, Samuel Andrewes, Archbold Brookes, Henry Sutton, John Lewis, Michael Brickenhead, William Free, Digory Wells, Thomas Harman, Henry Wright, Thomas Dawson, Richard Collins, Brian O'Neale, Ensign Cooke, George Downing, Richard Keane, Luke Austrey, John Williams.

Further, not only these priests in every parish but they were countenanced and supported by the local magistrates, the sheriff of the county, Richard Kirby being the worst offender. "I have discovered how mightly he hath abused your Maiestie which he is now to be questioned for in the Exchequer. Amongst others his abuses he hath entertained into his Court actions for Popish priests sallary for saying of Masse."

To make good this charge two affidavits were enclosed. In the first, dated December 21, 1631, Cormac O'Mullan made voluntary oath before Quintin Hartopp, J.P., that Donnogh O'Cahan, priest of Cummer, prosecuted four actions in the Sheriff's Court against persons for not paying the priests fees and that he (deponent) had been excommunicated for two and a half years by this priest. The second of the same date by Shane McTegart was a corroboration of the foregoing.

This was serious enough but worse was to come:

Voluntary Oath of Owen O'Quigg taken before Sir Thomas Phillips Knt, 17 December 1631

He had been excommunicated by the Vicar General for claiming a debt of Thomas O'Lunnan a priest, He got a decree out of the King's Bench against O'Lunnan but he escaped and then the Vicar General excommunicated Deponent. On his asking to be heard

the Vicar General assembled twenty priests in the Skinners Proportions viz., Turlogh O'Kelly, Vicar General, Toole O'Boy, Donogh O'Cahan, Neale O'Harrinan, Brian McAvard, Shane O'Cahan, Neale O'Donnellan, Owen O'Devenny, Owen Mother O'Creely, Fordorogh O'Cahan, Dermot O'Lyn, Maurice McCruddan, Phelim McClosky, James McNerny and six [*sic*] more. They agreed that he should be absolved but that he should be first whipped. This was done, and he was told to beware how he meddled with priests again.

No wonder that Secretary Coke, in his report upon the whole matter to King Charles, should ask "Is not this Deformation instead of Reformation?"¹

W. P. BURKE.

¹ "State Papers Chas. I," 1647-1660, p. 199.