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THE GENESIS OF THE DIOCESES OF DERRY AND RAPHOE.

THE starting point of the history of the dioceses of Derry and Raphoe is the Synod of Rathbreasal, which met in 1110. From the Acts of that Synod, as they appeared in the now lost Annals of Clonenagh, the historian Geoffrey Keating has given some valuable extracts. In these we find a list of the proposed episcopal sees of Ireland, and a list of the dioceses to which they severally belonged.¹ Among the sees are Ard Sratha (Ardstraw) and Doire (Derry). The dioceses corresponding to them are described as follows:

“The parochia (*parochia*) of Ard Sratha from Sliabh Largha (Foremass²) to Carn Glas (The Tops, a hill to the south of Raphoe³), and from Loch Craoi to Beann Foibhne (Binevenagh mountain, about five miles north of Limavady, Co. Derry).

“The parochia of the Bishop of Doire or Raith Both (Raphoe) from Eas Ruadh (Assaroe, near Ballyshannon) to Srubh Broin (Stroove,⁴ near Inishowen Head, Co. Donegal) and from Carn Glas to Srubh Broin.”

Let us observe first of all that in the list of sees there is no mention of Raphoe. But when the diocese of the see of Derry comes to be described it is called the diocese “of Derry or Raphoe.” Apparently it was intended that the bishop of the future should decide for himself at which of the two places named, Derry or Raphoe, he

¹ *The History of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating, D.D.*, ed. D. Comyn and P. S. Dinneen (Irish Texts Society), iii. 298ff. It is unfortunate that the translator of the passages referred to in one place renders *καθεδρική* by “dioceses” (p. 299), and regularly gives “see” for *ἐκκλησία*, which Keating himself states to be equivalent to “diocese” (p. 302). It is scarcely necessary to point out that the see is the site of the bishop’s chair, the diocese the area of his jurisdiction.

² See *I.C.Q.* ii. 230.

³ See O’Donovan’s note on Four Masters *s.a.* 1417.

⁴ Locally pronounced Shroove.

should fix his seat. It may perhaps be added that the Acts of the Synod indicate a preference for Derry. This was natural, since Derry was, after Armagh, the most famous ecclesiastical foundation in the North of Ireland. But just for that reason we can understand that special difficulty might attend the introduction of a bishop of the new order into it. He could only make good his position by dispossessing of their authority the lay comarbs of Columcille, who then ruled the Church of Derry; and that would probably be no easy task. Hence it came, no doubt, that the position of the see was not absolutely decided.

In the description of the limits of the diocese of "Derry or Raphoe" there seems to be an error, probably due to Keating. For Stroove is mentioned twice. Thus the boundaries are marked by three places, not as in most other cases by four. And as Assaroe and Stroove are obviously opposite points—one at the south-western, the other at the north-eastern extremity of the diocese—we should have expected that with The Tops, which was clearly on the eastern boundary, would be coupled, not another place on the same side, but a landmark on the west. But in all probability the place mentioned with The Tops in the Acts of the Synod was on the western seaboard, and so would add nothing to our knowledge if it had been preserved. About the boundaries intended there is little room for doubt. Assaroe is on the river Erne, which to this day is the southern limit of the diocese of Raphoe. The Tops is likewise on the present diocesan boundary. The boundary now passes through The Tops, joins the River Foyle below Lifford, and is marked by the course of the river till it comes to a point about four miles south of the city of Derry, when it suddenly swerves to the left and, following the boundaries of the Liberties of Derry and the barony of West Inishowen, proceeds to Lough Swilly. The effect of this sudden turn of the boundary line is that the district lying

between Lough Foyle and Lough Swilly, now as in early times called Inishowen, and including Londonderry itself, is severed from the diocese of Raphoe and included in that of Derry. If the boundary line had followed what may be described as its natural geographical course, it would have proceeded along the left bank of the River Foyle and Lough Foyle till it reached Stroove.

Thus we find that the diocese of Derry or Raphoe as laid down at Rathbreasal coincides with the modern diocese of Raphoe, except that it included Inishowen, which now belongs to Derry.

Three of the places by which the boundaries of the diocese of Ardstraw are indicated are mentioned elsewhere in the Acts of the Synod. Binevenagh was the western point of the diocese of Connor on the north coast; Foremass was the place at which the dioceses of Armagh and Clogher met; and The Tops, as we have seen, was a hill on the boundary of Raphoe. It is clear that the diocese of Ardstraw was intended to occupy the space between Lough Foyle on the north, the dioceses of Connor, Armagh and Clogher on the east and south, and Raphoe on the west. Unfortunately Loch Craoi, the opposite point to Binevenagh, has not been identified, so that we cannot be sure how far it extended to the south-west. All that can be said is that since Ardstraw was named as the see it must have been intended to include that place, and the district of which it was the centre.

On the east, from the Bior (the Moyola Water) southwards, the boundary between the diocese of Ardstraw and the diocese of Armagh appears to have been approximately that which now divides Armagh from Derry. But further north Binevenagh was the common boundary between the dioceses of Ardstraw and Connor. This indicates that a considerable area which is now within the diocese of Derry was originally assigned to Connor. For the River Bann separates Derry from Connor, and Binevenagh is situated ten miles to the west

of it. How did it come about that for the obvious geographical limit was substituted a line, the direction of which is not defined, running southwards from Binevenagh? And can we fix with any close degree of approximation what the boundary was intended to be?

The *Book of Rights*,⁵ in a list of tributaries of the King of Ailech (Greenan Ely, in Inishowen), who were not of his race, names the following: Tarath Ratha (barony of Magheraboy, Co. Fermanagh), Lurg (barony of Lurg, Co. Fermanagh), Ui Fiachrach (district round Ardstraw, barony of Lower Strabane, Co. Tyrone), Ui Mic Caerthainn (barony of Tirkeeran, Co. Derry), Ciannachta of Geimin (barony of Keenaght, Co. Derry), Fir Li, and Ui Tuitre. The writer clearly makes his enumeration in topographical order, each district being contiguous, or nearly so, with the one mentioned immediately before it. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the Fir Li were neighbours of Keenaght on the east, and also neighbours of the Ui Tuitre. Now the Ui Tuitre in early days inhabited the region south of the Moyola Water, which flows into Lough Neagh through the barony of Loughinsholin, and later on a district north of Lough Neagh and east of the Bann.⁶ Hence it appears likely that the Fir Li territory lay between Keenaght and the Bann, that is, in the barony of Coleraine and part of Loughinsholin. The probability of this conjecture is greatly increased when we note the facts now to be mentioned. The Ciannachta are said to be "of Glenn Geimin,"⁷ the glen of the River Roe, which flows south and north through Keenaght. The glen is bounded by the chain of hills which is just inside the eastern border of the barony, and which includes

⁵ Ed. J. O'Donovan, p. 119.

⁶ Hogan, *Onomasticon*, s.v. Ui Tuitre; Reeves, *Antiquities*, pp. 82f., 292ff.

⁷ Martyrology of Oengus, glosses, Jan. 3, 8; Dec. 8.

Binevenagh. The barony must therefore represent with considerable accuracy the territory of the tribe. Further the Fir Li inhabited a plain, Magh Li, the Plain of Li, as it is sometimes called. This plain cannot have included the hills of Keenaght, while the word *Magh* is a sufficiently appropriate designation of the comparatively level country to the east of them. Further, O'Dugan⁸ states that the Fir Li were neighbours of the Ciannachta, while glosses in the Martyrology of Gorman informs us that Achad Dubthaig (Aghadowey) "on the brink" of the Bann was in their territory.⁹ Finally, from the Book of Lecan we learn that Magh Li extended from the Moyola Water to Camus on the Bann, about a mile above Coleraine.¹⁰ It is therefore beyond doubt that this tribal territory corresponds to the barony of Coleraine and North Loughinsholin. Moreover, it is clear that the fathers of Rathbreasal intended that the range of hills mentioned above, of which Binevenagh is a prominent peak, should be the boundary of the diocese of Ardstraw,¹¹ and that in coming to this decision they gave the entire territory of the Fir Li to Connor. It may perhaps be inferred that when the Synod met the Fir Li were on more friendly terms with the septs on the east of the Bann—of which one, the Ui Tuirtri, was of the same stock as themselves¹²—than with the Ciannachta. More must be said in the sequel about the Fir Li and their history, which will confirm the conclu-

⁸ As quoted by Reeves, *Antiquities*, p. 296, note.

⁹ At Jan. 9, 22.

¹⁰ Referred to by Reeves, *Antiquities*, p. 296 note; and by O'Donovan in *Dublin Penny Journal*, i. 123.

¹¹ To a modern mind a mountain range may seem an unsatisfactory boundary. But it was not so in the conditions of twelfth century Ireland. The mountains mentioned in the text must have been sparsely inhabited, and we know that they were difficult to cross. When the diocese extended beyond them they must have presented a serious obstacle to its administration. See below p. 226, note.

¹² Reeves, *op. cit.*, pp. 82, 293.

sion now reached, and show its importance. But for the moment we may leave them.

It has been shown that the diocese of Ardstraw was nearly conterminous with the present diocese of Derry. In the east Magh Li belonged to Connor, in the north-west Inishowen was given to Raphoe. These are the only points in which it is certain that the boundaries did not coincide. Roughly speaking, the diocese of Derry or Raphoe was meant to embrace the tribal district of Tir Connell, as the present diocese of Raphoe does; the diocese of Ardstraw was meant to include that part of Tir Owen which was not within the borders of Armagh; the diocese of Derry does so now.

We must now endeavour to determine (1) when these two dioceses were actually constituted, (2) when they were reduced to their present dimensions, and (3) what places were selected as their respective sees. These three questions, as we shall soon see, are closely connected with each other. In discussing them I shall, for convenience, call the dioceses by their modern names.

The first person who is described as bishop of either Derry or Raphoe after the Synod of Rathbreasal is one Muiredach or Maurice O'Coffey. The *Annals of Ulster*¹³ call him bishop of Cinel Owen and of all the North of Ireland. This title may be taken to imply that he was a diocesan bishop, a bishop who claimed jurisdiction over a territory. Moreover, part of the territory over which he had spiritual rule was Cinel Owen or Tir Owen. But the words "and of all the North of Ireland" seem to convey that his sway extended beyond Tir Owen. This phrase probably had in the minds of the Annalists a more definite meaning than we might be inclined to give it—though doubtless its significance was somewhat fluctuating. At 1113 it is defined as including Tir Connell, Tir Owen and Oriel.¹⁴ It is perhaps safe to

¹³ s.a. 1173.

¹⁴ *Annals of Loch Cé*. Cp. *Annals of Ulster*.

infer from the use of it in connexion with O'Coffey that he was bishop of Tir Connell as well as of Tir Owen. And the compiler of the *Annals of Loch Cé* tells us plainly that he was "bishop of Derry and Raphoe and of all the North of Ireland,"¹⁵ thus indicating the construction which he put upon the words, or perhaps rather giving independent testimony to the fact. We may therefore conclude, with some little hesitation, that in spite of the ordinance of Rathbreasal, Tir Connell and Tir Owen were ruled for some time by a single bishop.

Not, however, for a very long period. For O'Coffey is called bishop of Cinel Owen in the supplement to the *Annals of Tigernagh*,¹⁶ nothing being said about Cinel Connell or the "North of Ireland" as being under his rule. He was present at the Synod of Kells in 1152, and in the record of that assembly he is again called bishop of Cinel Owen. So also he styled himself when he witnessed the endowment charter of Newry (c. 1158), in which he is followed by Gilla in Coimdedh O'Caran, bishop of Tir Connell.¹⁷ There is a yet more noteworthy mention of him. He and O'Caran appear in the list of bishops who waited on Henry II in 1171;¹⁸ and in it they are styled bishops of Derry and Raphoe respectively. Plainly, therefore, before 1158, and probably before 1152, Derry and Raphoe had been constituted as separate dioceses.

Let us now advance to a further inference. In 1171 the bishop of Tir Connell is called bishop of Raphoe. Raphoe must, therefore, have been already fixed upon as his see. There is, in fact, no evidence that the see of Tir Connell was ever in any other place. In like manner we may conclude that the see of the neighbouring diocese had already been fixed at Derry. And here the testimony is

¹⁵ *s.a.* 1173.

¹⁶ *s.a.* 1173. See *Revue Celtique*, xviii. 287.

¹⁷ See *Dublin Penny Journal*, i. 102.

¹⁸ Benedict of Peterborough (Rolls Series) i. 26: "Mauricius Tarensis episcopus . . . Gillebertus Rathpothensis episcopus."

even more convincing, and goes further back. For there is reason to believe that having been for a considerable time at Derry it had already in 1171 been removed to another place. This appears from several documents preserved among the papal archives and in the Public Record Office of England. In the year 1246 we find that one Germanus O'Carolan, bishop of Rathluraigh, was postulated as Archbishop of Armagh by some members of the chapter of that diocese.¹⁹ The same person or an otherwise unknown predecessor is called bishop of Rathluraigh, also in 1231.²⁰ And an earlier bishop, Florence O'Carolan (1185-1230) signs a charter as Florentius Rathlurensis Episcopus.²¹ Rathluraigh is the older Irish name of Maghera, in the county Derry. Now it appears that Bishop Germanus had petitioned the Pope to sanction the transference of his see from Rathluraigh to Derry. In doing so he gives us the interesting piece of information that the see had in former times been at Derry, from which it had been moved by one of his predecessors, Ocophtig by name, who was a native of Rathluraigh. In conformity with this petition a mandate was issued by Pope Innocent IV on the 31st May, 1246, that the see should be restored to its original place,²² on the ground that Rathluraigh was almost inaccessible by reason of hills, woods and swamps. There is not much difficulty in recognizing that Germanus's predecessor, Ocophtig, was Maurice O'Coffey, the name as given

¹⁹ *Calendar of Papal Letters*, i. 228; Theiner, *Monumenta*, 45; *Annals of Ulster*, s.a. 1246. In the papal documents, as published, the name appears as Rathuil, Rathuoyd, Anichluc; but in the *Annals* it is Rath-Luraigh. For the surname of Germanus, see Ussher, *Works*, vi. 417.

²⁰ *Calendar of Papal Letters*, i. 198. Cp. *Patent Rolls* 1232-1247, p. 461.

²¹ *Chartularies of St. Mary's Abbey*, i. 154. This charter seems to be not earlier than 1227.

²² *Calendar of Papal Letters*, i. 233; Theiner, 48. Note the reference to "hills," no doubt the range in the barony of Keenaght, referred to above, p. 222 f.

in the Pope's letter being actually closer to the Irish form (Ua Cobhthaig) than our Anglicized equivalent. It seems, therefore, that in the early years of O'Coffey's episcopate the see was at Derry, but that after a while he removed his establishment to his native town of Maghera. I believe I shall be able to make it appear probable that this was not for some years after he entered upon the oversight of his diocese.

The letter which I have quoted was not the last which Innocent IV wrote on this subject. A year later, 24th June, 1247, he granted an indult to the chapter to enjoy at Derry all the privileges which had belonged to them at Rathluraigh.²³ And a month before his death, 4th November, 1248, he confirmed his mandate for the removal of the see.²⁴

After all this one might have supposed that the bishop would soon migrate to Derry. But there is evidence that the see remained for many years longer at Maghera, where it had now been for a century. After the death of Bishop Florence O'Carolan II the chapter prayed for licence from the crown to elect a bishop. Their petition is dated at Rathluraigh, 12th August, 1294.²⁵ And so strong was the tradition, nearly two hundred years later, that Rathluraigh was an episcopal seat, that on 3rd April, 1471, the Pope made provision of the see to Thomas Ingoldsby, and caused him to be consecrated in the church of the English Hospitals at Rome in the same month.²⁶ It appears, therefore, that the see of the diocese of Derry was at Maghera for about a century and a half.

Now it is a curious fact that throughout this period the bishops were constantly styled "bishops of Derry." Bishop O'Coffey is so called in the *Annals of Loch Cé*, and so are all his successors with the exception of

²³ *Calendar of Papal Letters*, i. 234; Theiner, 48.

²⁴ *Calendar of Papal Letters*, i. 307; Theiner, 64.

²⁵ *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, 1292-1301, p. 248.

²⁶ Brady, *Episcopal Succession*.

Germanus.²⁷ In fact, the only one besides him who is known to have been styled bishop of Rathluraigh is Florence O'Carolan I. This may be partially explained by the supposition of occasional migrations of the see. But such migrations must have been rare, since Maghera was at the opposite side of the diocese from Derry, and "almost inaccessible." It seems more probable that the bishops retained their older title while their official residence and their chapter were actually at Maghera.

Supposing that this is the true account of the matter, I can only explain it in one way. There must have been a very strong feeling that Derry was the proper and normal see; that so long as the bishop's stool was at Maghera, or indeed anywhere else than at Derry, he was in exile; that the constitution of Maghera as the see was but a temporary expedient, due to a pressing necessity. Before such a feeling that the bishop of Tir Owen was always the bishop of Derry, wherever his seat might for the moment be placed, could come into existence, the bishop must have resided at that place; and for no short period if the feeling was to endure with unimpaired strength for a century and a half. But the migration took place in the time of Maurice O'Coffey—that is certainly before his death in 1173, and probably long before it. The petition of Germanus which I have quoted seems to imply that Derry was the see before O'Coffey became bishop; and indeed it is unlikely that he himself selected it as the see. If he preferred Maghera, why did he not place his stool at Maghera from the first? I conclude that O'Coffey had predecessors in the episcopate of Tir Owen, and that their see was at Derry. And that carries back the establishment of Derry as the see of a diocese a long way—at least considerably beyond 1152, when O'Coffey first makes his appearance.

²⁷ Florence O'Carolan, *Cal. of Docs. rel. to Ireland*, iii. 884 (p. 396); Gilla an Choimdedh O'Carolan, *Annals of Loch Cé*, s.a. 1279; Florence O'Carolan II. *Annals of Ulster*, 1293.

We may conclude with almost complete certainty that it occupied this position from the day when the diocese of Tir Owen first acquired a separate existence apart from Tir Connell; indeed, not improbably before it, if it was in O'Coffey's episcopate that the division was made.

Why was the see removed from Derry, and why did it remain at Maghera so long? Not merely because O'Coffey was a native of the latter place. That fact may have determined his choice of a see, once Derry was abandoned. But it would not have sufficed to induce his successors to continue in so remote a spot.

A different answer is suggested by the *Annals*. There were no more influential ecclesiastics in the North of Ireland—save only the comarbs of Patrick at Armagh—than the comarbs of Columcille, the Abbots of Derry. These abbots would certainly resist with all their power the new movement in the Irish Church.²⁸ They would strongly resent the suggestion that they should subject themselves to the authority of a diocesan bishop. So long then as the bishop of Tir Owen resided in Derry, he would be in the near neighbourhood of a formidable rival. He would have been involved in perpetual conflict, and the difficulty of establishing his authority in other parts of the diocese would have been enormous.

There would have been exactly the same difficulty at Armagh if a diocesan bishop had been placed in rivalry with the comarb of Patrick. There was indeed a conflict there between the old system and the new. Malachy O'Morgair was designated as Archbishop in 1129. But for the seven following years his right to the see was bitterly contested by two successive comarbs, Muirchertach and Niall, and he did not secure possession of it till 1136. Yet Malachy's way had been prepared for him by the fact that his predecessor in the Archbishopric was also comarb of Patrick. In the end

²⁸ It should be borne in mind that abbots of the Columban order were seldom, if ever, bishops.

he triumphed because he succeeded in winning recognition as comarb.²⁹ At Armagh, in fact, the line of comarbs was merged in the line of Archbishops, and the rivalry of bishops and comarbs became impossible. At Derry, it seems, there was no hope of such a compromise. The line of comarbs continued unbroken after the diocese was created, and none of them was bishop of Tir Owen, if indeed any had episcopal rank.

No sooner was Malachy established in the archbishopric than he resigned it for the bishopric of Down. With the assent of clergy and people he nominated and consecrated Gelasius (Gilla Mac Liag) as his successor at Armagh. Gelasius was Abbot of Derry for sixteen years (1121-1137) before he became Archbishop of Armagh.³⁰ He was no doubt favourable to the reform movement: otherwise Malachy would not have nominated him to the primacy. But under Flaithbertach O'Brologhan, who may have been his immediate successor,³¹ the power of the comarb of Columcille reached its zenith, and not improbably also the highest point of its opposition to the new system of Church government. An incident of this period must be told in the words of the *Annals*. It is curious to note that Gelasius took a leading part in it. It is evident that he had not wholly shaken himself loose from the older Irish ecclesiastical traditions, nor yet from his affection for the Abbey over which he had presided till twenty years before. The incident occurred in 1158.

"A synod of the clergy of Ireland was assembled by the comarb of Patrick [Gelasius] and by the clergy of Ireland at the Hill of Mac Taidhg [near Trim, Co. Meath], wherein were present five-and-twenty bishops, to enjoin rule and good conduct upon everyone in common. It is

²⁹ See St. Bernard, *Vita S. Malachiae*, 20-30; and for the dates *Annals of Four Masters*.

³⁰ *Annals of Ulster*, s.a. 1174.

³¹ He first appears as comarb in 1150. But no comarb is mentioned after 1137 till that year.

on this occasion that the clergy of Ireland along with the comarb of Patrick and along with the legate appointed a chair for the comarb of Columcille, that is for Flaithbertaigh Ua Brolchain, the same as for every bishop, and the arch-abbacy in general of the churches of Columcille throughout all Ireland.”³²

Elsewhere it is plainly stated that this synod gave O’Brologhan “the chair of a bishop.”³³ It has been inferred from these statements of the annalists that O’Brologhan was actually consecrated bishop of Derry. I do not believe that this conclusion is correct; for at a date later than the synod he is described as “comarb of Columcille” and “son of the bishop Ua Brolchain,”³⁴ which implies that he was not himself a member of the episcopal order. And none of his successors in the comarbate appear to have been bishops. But the record is a remarkable testimony to the great influence of O’Brologhan, and not less to the fact that his influence had to be recognized by such leaders of reform as the papal legate and the Archbishop of Armagh.³⁵

O’Brologhan died in 1175, and from that year the succession of comarbs of Columcille was maintained for half a century or more. In 1220 there was a contested election, as to the result of which the annalists contradict one another. The successful litigant seems to have been the last of the line, for we hear of no later comarbs of Columcille at Derry.³⁶

Now the giving of the “chair of a bishop” to

³² *Annals of Ulster*.

³³ *Ibid.* s.a. 1175.

³⁴ *Ibid.* s.a. 1163.

³⁵ Another indication of the wide influence of O’Brologhan is the fact that he held visitations similar to those of the comarbs of Patrick, though not throughout the whole of Ireland. According to the Four Masters he visited Cinel Owen in 1150, Sil Casey (Co. Antrim) in 1151, Dal Cairbre and Iveagh (Co. Down) in 1153, and Ossory in 1161. In 1161 he also “freed” the churches of Columcille in Leinster.

³⁶ See the Annals under 1175, 1198, 1214, 1220.

Flaithbertagh took place while Maurice O'Coffey was bishop of Derry. Is it too rash to conjecture that it was the greatness of his power that moved O'Coffey to retire to Maghera? It is in harmony with this suggestion that towards the middle of the thirteenth century, just when we may believe that the succession of Columcille ceased, Bishop Germanus began to think of returning to Derry. As long as Gelasius was abbot of Derry, it may be assumed that O'Coffey had no great difficulty in exercising his episcopal office. We may therefore reasonably place the translation of the see of Tir Owen from Derry to Maghera in the interval between 1137, when Gelasius became Primate, and 1150, the year in which Flaithbertagh is first mentioned in the *Annals* as comarb of Columcille. Why the successors of Germanus lingered on at Maghera for so many years I am unable to guess.

We have not forgotten all this time that the Synod of Rathbreasal did not intend that either Derry or Maghera should be the episcopal see of Tir Owen. It named for that honour Ardstraw, which still gives its name to the parish in which is situated Newtown Stewart, in the county Tyrone. If I have reasoned correctly that place was never the see of the diocese of Derry. And in fact there is no mention, so far as I know, of any bishop of Ardstraw, diocesan or other, from the year 707, when one Coibdenach died, to the present day. In that particular the decision of the synod never became operative.³⁷

We may now proceed to draw some conclusions about the boundaries of the dioceses of Derry and Raphoe. We have seen that the city of Derry, being on the left bank of the Foyle, was included by the Synod of Rathbreasal in the diocese of Raphoe, and was actually suggested as its see. But we may be confident that when it became the see of the diocese of Derry it was no longer in Raphoe diocese. The boundary had at that

³⁷ As we shall see Ardstraw was outside the diocese in the early thirteenth century.

point moved westward. But Derry was in Inishowen, and it is a natural inference that with it the whole of that district was transferred to the jurisdiction of the diocese of Derry. When that was done the boundary ran, not to Stroove, as the Synod of Rathbreasal directed, but along the southern and western shores of Lough Swilly, as it does now. Now Derry was from the very first, as I have shown, the see of the diocese which bears its name. Hence it follows that in spite of the ordinance of Rathbreasal, the boundary between the two dioceses of Raphoe and Derry has always been the same, excepting of course very slight variations of which we have no knowledge.

That the Synod of Rathbreasal would fail to weld together into one diocese Inishowen and Tir Connell was certain. Inishowen, as its name implies, is really part of Tir Owen. In the *Annals* its inhabitants are the Cinel Owen of the Island. And though the Cinel Owen and the Cinel Connel were kindred tribes, both descended from Niall of the Nine Hostages,³⁸ they were constantly at feud with one another. In 1093 Donnell O'Loughlin (1083-1121), one of the strongest kings of Tir Owen, who, like all the princes of his race, had his palace at Ailech (Grenan Ely), in Inishowen,³⁹ conquered Tir Connell, and ruled them with a stern hand for more than twenty years. By 1113, possibly earlier, he had made his son Niall king of the Cinel Connell.⁴⁰ It may have been in the expectation that this enforced union of the two tribes would be permanent, and under the influence of Donnell O'Loughlin himself, that the synod proposed to place Tir Connell and Inishowen under a single bishop. But the futility of the scheme soon became manifest. Seven years after Rathbreasal, while

³⁸ Reeves, *Adamnan*, p. 93.

³⁹ *Annals of Ulster*, s.a. 1090

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, s.aa. 1111, 1113, 1114.

O'Loughlin was still alive, we read of "a slaughter of the Cinel Owen of the Island by the Cinel Connell," in which many of their nobles were slain.⁴¹ No wonder the combatants were never brought together to form an ecclesiastical unit.

That the diocese of Derry was extended in the east to the Bann at an early date is certain. For when Maurice O'Coffey transferred his see from Derry to Maghera the latter place must have been already in his diocese. And Maghera was in Magh Li. How came Magh Li to be added to the diocese of Derry? Up to the beginning of the twelfth century the ruling family of the Ciannachta were the O'Conors. They were succeeded by the stronger dynasty of O'Kane (Ua Cathain), who crossed the mountains and conquered the Magh Li. This must have taken place before 1138, under which year the Four Masters record the death of Ragnall son of Imhar Ua Cathain, styling him lord of Craebh, Cinnachta and Fir Li.

So complete was the conquest that the Fir Li abandoned their old home and crossed the Bann; and in comparatively recent times the district was known as O'Kane's Country.⁴² The date of this migration cannot be determined; but that it took place before the fourth quarter of the twelfth century is made clear by several entries in the *Annals*. Thus that in 1176 the Fir Li were closely associated with the Ui Tuirtri and Dal Araidhe is proved by two notices: "Bean Midhe . . . wife of Cu-maighi Ua Flainn, queen of Ui Tuirtri and Fir Li, died"; "Cu-maighi Ua Flainn, king of Ui Tuirtri and Fir Li and Dal Araidhe, was killed by Cu-Midhe, his own brother and by the Fir Li." Again, in 1177 John de Courcy invaded Dal Araidhe, Ui Tuirtri and Fir Li "until Cu-Midhe Ua Flainn burned Airthir

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, s.a. 1117.

⁴² Reeves, *Colton's Visitation*, p. 74, note 2. For the rise of the O'Kanes, see also p. 36.

Maighi [Armoy, Co. Antrim] before him." In 1178 he once more "went for preys into Dal Araidhe and Ui Tuirtri," but he was defeated by Cu-Midhe, "King of Ui Tuirtri and Fir Li." And lastly, in 1181 there was "a great foray of the men of Magh-Itha around O'Cathain, namely, Echmarcach . . . until they went past Tuaim [*i.e.*, crossed the Bann at Toome] and harried Fir Li and Ui Tuirtri."⁴³ In all these statements the Fir Li are placed on the east side of the River Bann. Thus it appears that Ciannachta and Magh Li were brought together under the O'Kanes in a union that was destined to endure. It was a natural, indeed, an inevitable consequence that ecclesiastical arrangements should be accommodated to the new civil conditions. The limits of the diocese of Derry, we may suppose, were extended to the Bann in order that it might include the whole territory of the O'Kanes.

And now it becomes possible to see that the bishops of Derry may have gained some advantage from their long sojourn at Maghera. It is very unlikely that Maurice O'Coffey would have fixed his see at his native place a few years after it fell a prey to the invader, if he had not good reason to look for favour from its new rulers. And we know that at least one of the O'Kanes was friendly to the new ecclesiastical order; for the Echmarcach O'Cathain mentioned in the last paragraph, whose long reign lasted till 1195,⁴⁴ was a witness to the endowment charter of the Cistercian Abbey of Newry in 1158.⁴⁵ Thus at Maghera the bishops were supported by the authority of kings who held sway over a large part of their diocese.

From the foregoing survey of the known facts it may be concluded that the boundary of the diocese of Derry in the west, north, east and south-east has remained almost unaltered from the early part of the twelfth century to the present day. On the south-west it was not finally

⁴³ See *Annals of Ulster*.

⁴⁴ *Annals of Ulster*.

⁴⁵ *Dublin Penny Journal*, i. 102.

fixed so soon. In the first half of the thirteenth century the country of the Ui Fiachrach, of which Ardstraw was the centre, was in the diocese of Clogher. It was added, or restored, to Derry about the year 1250, as we learn from passages of the lost register of the diocese of Clogher compiled by Archdeacon Rory O'Cassidy (d. 1541) quoted by Ussher and Ware.⁴⁶ It seems to have been constituted shortly afterwards into the rural deanery of Magh Itho; and a list of the churches of that deanery in the papal taxation of 1306 is convincing proof that it extended to the south and west as far as the present limits of the diocese.⁴⁷

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⁴⁶ This information is not given in the excerpts from the Register in the T.C.D. MS. 574 (E.3, 20); but at the place where one might have expected to find it the scribe has clearly omitted portions of the original. Ussher writes (*Antiqu.* c. 17; *Works* vi. 417), "In regesto Clochorensi tempore Davidis O-Bragan, per potentiam quidem Germani O-Cherbalan Rathlurensis sive Derensis episcopi et nationis suae de Kœnel-eogain (sive Tir-oen), ecclesia de Ardsratha, cum pluribus aliis ecclesiis de Opheathrach [*i.e.* Ui Fiachrach]; per Ardmach-anorum vero praesulum potentiam, ecclesia Ludunensis . . . subtractae fuisse referuntur . . ." The whole of this passage appears also in Ware, *De Praesul. Hib.*, p. 46, almost verbatim, along with a sentence, which is not in Ussher and which is obviously based on an extant fragment of the Register. Ussher and Ware, therefore, may be assumed to have made independent copies of the same passage. The date of the annexation of Ui Fiachrach is fixed by that of David O'Bragan's episcopate, which seems to have begun in 1246. He died in 1267.

⁴⁷ *Cal. of Docs. rel. to Ireland*, 1302-7, p. 216, Deanery de Maguritha. The churches are Donnaghid (Donaghedy), Ledpadrich (Leckpatrick), Clonleg' (Clonleigh, the parish containing Lifford), Tagnagomark (in Clonleigh: see Reeves, *Colton's Visit.*, 71), Frundy (Urney: Furny in *Colton's Visitation*) Donnaghmore, Ardgrathe (*l.* Ardsratha (?), Ardstraw), Kelkirell (Termonamongan, Reeves, p. 72), Keppauch (Cappagh), Rath (Drumragh), Lenycalle (*l.* Leuycalle (?), Longfield), Bothdomnyk (Bodoney). Thus "this Deanery comprehended all the parishes of the diocese which are in the modern county of Tyrone and in the barony of Raphoe in the county of Donegal" (Reeves, p. 69). The influence of Germanus in securing this district for the diocese is easily understood when we remember that the family of O'Carolan, to which he and all the known bishops of Rathluraigh belonged, was connected with it. See Reeves, *op. cit.*, pp. 18, 60f.