

AN IRISH COUNTER-REFORMATION

BISHOP : JOHN ROCHE

VII

Bishop John Roche, as has been seen,¹ left Rome in the early summer of 1627 to return to Ireland. Before leaving, he appointed Eugene Callanan, the priest of the diocese of Killaloe who had become first rector of the Irish College, as his personal agent in Rome.² The bishop's long journey was smoothed by letters of recommendation to important personages,³ but on arrival in Paris he found an unexpected check to his further progress. Relations between England and France were steadily worsening since the marriage of Charles I with the French princess Henriette Marie, and had now deteriorated into open war. It was impossible to cross from France to England, so the bishop made his way to the Low Countries to see if he could get passage there. He found that the war had badly affected commerce between England and the Low Countries also; the seas were so full of pirates and privateers that he had little prospect of a passage, so little that he decided to return to Paris to await events.⁴

His visit to the Low Countries must have been a short one, for he was back in Paris by the beginning of November 1627, but during it he found time to collect material for a rather full report to Propaganda on the condition of the Irish seminaries there. Douai, he confirmed, had been forced to close,⁵ and with it its dependent house of Tournai; its debts had become unmanageable, and the governors of the Low Countries refused to pay the pension it had been granted by the king of Spain. Seminaries were functioning in Lille and Antwerp, rich in that they had no debts, but neither had they any resources. At Louvain the *Collegium Pastorale*, begun with the help of Propaganda, was still small and weak, but both the rector and the nuncio in Brussels had assured him that its

¹ Continued from *Irish Theological Quarterly*, vol. XXV, April 1958.

² *Wadding papers*, p. 249.

³ To Cardinals Borromeo, Richelieu, and the archbishop of Paris. See APF, Acta, 20 April 1627, vol. 4 f. 213v; Brady, *Episcopal succession*, vol. I, p. 376.

⁴ Roche to Ingoli, Paris, 12 November 1627. APF, *Scrittura Antiche*, vol. 130, f. 98r.

⁵ "Duaceni seminarii in quo olim ipse educatus fuit deflevi excidium"—*ibid.*

future seemed promising, although it was very dependent on the ability of its students to pay a pension. In Louvain too, the houses established by the Irish Dominicans and Franciscans were thriving, and Roche recommended them to the congregation of Propaganda for support.¹

Back in Paris, he settled down to await a crossing to England, which could hardly be expected before the end of the war. However, while waiting, he began to pick up his contacts with the Church in Ireland. Messages came from time to time, through people who could risk the crossing in circumstances where a Catholic bishop returning to his see in Ireland had to be more careful. In addition, Paris had its own Irish community, in which Roche was no stranger since the four years he had spent there while Bentivoglio was nuncio. His first care was the little Irish seminary, struggling with poverty and dissensions.² His preoccupation with the formation of candidates for the ministry finds expression also in some letters written to Propaganda asking the congregation to urge the Datary *ne nimis facilis sit in dispensando ad sacros ordines cum filiis presbyterorum*. In one Irish province—he does not name it, but in a later paragraph the name of Ulster comes out—this abuse still continues. Although the bishops reject these as candidates for the ministry, and they are not accepted in the seminaries, yet if they apply to Rome they are dispensed by the Datary. John Roche recalled that as agent of the Irish bishops he had succeeded in curbing this practice, but now, he complains, it threatens to revive, as soon, it seems, as his back is turned. It must be stopped, he writes to Propaganda. There is no lack of suitable candidates for the ministry in Ireland, where the Catholic Church, stripped of all its possessions, stripped of anything remotely resembling coercive power, depends absolutely on the probity of life of its ministers.³

Bishop Roche, it has already been noted, is inclined to say hard things of the church in Ulster, but in these letters he is so specific that it is hard to believe that he depended merely on rumour. The suspicious eye with which he watched that province found further reason for offence in the case of Edmund Dungan, bishop of Down and Connor, who had got himself and others into trouble with the government on the charge that he was in communication with the earl of Tyrone. Roche sent details of this incident to Bentivoglio

¹ Ibid., f. 98 rv.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., ff. 98v, 99r; Roche to the Cardinals of Propaganda, Paris, 8 March 1629, APF, Scrittura Antiche, vol. 131, f. 350 rv.

in Rome,¹ for Dungan's was one of the four appointments in Ulster and Connaught which he had accepted without great enthusiasm in 1625, and just at this moment his promotion to Armagh was being seriously considered.² However, before Roche's letter could have reached Rome the see of Armagh had been filled by the transfer of Hugh O'Reilly, bishop of Kilmore, on 21 August 1628.³

Various affairs of the Irish church impinged on the little ecclesiastical community in Paris. On 20 October 1628 Roche wrote to Wadding concerning some controversial writings which just then were causing discussion.⁴ He expressed his pleasure that Wadding had succeeded in avoiding any formal enquiry into the writings of William Malone, S.J. Such an enquiry, he wrote, would certainly come to the suspicious ears of the government, which had just taken new repressive measures against the English Catholics, in consequence of which two Jesuits had been executed. The enquiry could not do any good, and Malone's work was not sufficiently important to warrant it, especially as what he wrote seemed susceptible of sound orthodox meaning.⁵ Another controversialist put in a posthumous appearance: "F. Seebert is here; he has brought one copy of Dempster's ecclesiastical story, of which he giveth us the sight only for a while." The name of Thomas Dempster was enough to arouse curiosity in the book being passed round so surreptitiously, for his sweeping—and dishonest—claiming of most of the early Irish saints for Scotland had earlier brought him into controversy with Irish ecclesiastics, but there is no evidence that John Roche took this particular book very seriously or even read it through.⁶

¹ Roche to Bentivoglio, Paris, 11 August 1628, APF, Scritture Antiche, vol. 130, f. 100r.

² "Quamvis simplices et inexperti, boni tamen, et ex optimis quos dictae provinciae subministrant"—cf. *Irish Theological Quarterly*, April 1958, p. 114.

³ Incidentally, another of the "simplices et inexperti," appointed to Kilmore on 9 June 1625.

⁴ *Wadding papers*, pp. 273-4.

⁵ See MacNeill, *Publications of Irish interest published by Irish authors on the continent of Europe prior to the eighteenth century*, p. 28, and the notice of Malone in *D.N.B.*, vol XXXV, p. 438.

⁶ *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Scotorum*, Bologna 1627. Dempster had died at Bologna in 1625. Lynch's statement that Roche wrote a reply to Dempster in three days (*De praesulibus Hiberniae*, vol I, 355) is more than suspect. He can scarcely be confounding Roche's alleged reply with the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Hiberniae* written as a reply to Dempster by John Wadding, a secular priest of Wexford (Ware, *Writers*, pp. 104-5. John Wadding is described by Roche in 1632 as fifty years of age, and as having ministered for twenty-five years in the diocese of Ferns—APF, Scritture Antiche, vol. 150, f. 321r), for Lynch attributes this work correctly to Wadding in *Cambrensis Eversus*, p. 127, and he must have had the book or extracts from it in his possession, for he quotes a few lines from it, *ibid.*, p. 291. His assertion

The most important measure taken by the bishop during his enforced delay in Paris was the appointment of Eugene Callanan, whom he had already named as his personal agent in Rome, as agent of the bishops of Cork and Cloyne, Ossory, Limerick, Emly, and Meath as well.¹ This is a clear indication that he was in correspondence with the Irish bishops and that they were determined to continue the practice of maintaining an agent in Rome. It will be noticed that the appointment is in the name of a group of Irish bishops only; the implications of this will shortly become clearer. It seems obvious also that Callanan was Roche's own choice for the post; it was unfortunate that he died suddenly and unexpectedly within a few months of his appointment,² for it proved difficult to find a suitable successor.

Peace was made between England and France in May 1629, and Bishop Roche left for London immediately the negotiations were concluded.³ The peace meant that there was now some prospect that Charles I might be induced to fulfil the promises of better treatment of his Catholic subjects which he had made on the occasion of his marriage, and the fact that Roche was accompanied on his journey to England by an envoy from the nuncio in Paris, John Baptist Casali, a member of Bentivoglio's household who had arrived in Paris in October 1628, suggests very strongly that the bishop of Ferns played some part in the negotiations, though it is impossible to say exactly what his contribution was.⁴ The discussions were very long-drawn-out, but there was some improvement in the position of Catholics in the king's dominions, and seven years later a papal envoy, George Con, was appointed to the English court.

Ecclesiastical affairs in England also engaged Roche's attention. The controversies between the regular and secular clergy there had reached a new level of acrimony by reason of the actions of the vicar-apostolic, Richard Smith, bishop of Chalcedon. Roche reported to Propaganda that he had read some of the writings in the controversy; that he found both sides very bitter, unable to agree

that Roche wrote his reply while in Paris on his way home to Ireland in 1621 suggests that he may be confusing it with David Rothe's *De scriptorum Scotorum nomenclatura a Thoma Dempstero edita praecedaneum*, published in Paris in 1620. See MacNeill, *Publications*, pp. 16-17.

¹ Roche to Callanan, Paris, 18 April 1629. *Wadding papers*, p. 291.

² Wadding sent the news to Roche in a letter of 29 July 1629; cf. Roche to Wadding, January 1630, *Wadding papers*, pp. 332-3.

³ Roche to Ingoli, 1 December 1629, APF, *Scrittura Antiche*, vol. 294, f. 312.

⁴ Cf. "Diary of John Southcote," *Catholic Record Society*, vol. I, p. 105; Roche to Wadding, 20 October 1628, *Wadding papers*, p. 273; Patrick Comerford, bishop of Waterford, to Wadding, 19 July 1629, *ibid.*, p. 298; Albion, *Charles I and the court of Rome*, p. 104.

even on the terms of the discussion. The nuncio in Paris had attempted to settle the matter, but without effect. Roche recommended that the Holy See should give a formal judgment, and that both sides would bow to its authority.¹ This judgment came two years later, in the brief *Britannia*, issued on 9 May 1631, and it must have been small comfort to the bishop of Ferns.

Having acquainted himself with the English situation, he set out for Ireland, arriving in Dublin at the end of July 1629.² From Dublin he made his way through Meath and Ossory to his own diocese. As there was no chapter, he convened the principal missionary priests, secular and regular, and presented his bulls of appointment, before beginning the organization of a diocese which, apart from the brief episcopate of Peter Power, had been without a Catholic bishop since the reformation. One of his first tasks was to send a lengthy report to Propaganda, "Narratio Joannis episcopi Fernensis de statu ecclesiae suae et aliarum quarundam adiacentium ecclesiarum in Hibernia missa ad Sacram Congregationem de Propaganda Fide die prima Decembris 1629," giving his first impressions of the Catholic faith in the country he had left as a boy more than thirty years before.³

VIII

The Church in Ireland had indeed shown marked progress in the thirty-odd years of John Roche's absence. That generation was in many ways the vital one in the Irish decision to remain Catholic; and a very important factor in that decision was undoubtedly the building up in Ireland of the counter-reformation priesthood. When the bishop returned in 1629 the immediate problem was the re-organization of the Church's mission to a Catholic people. This re-organization was a complex problem, because the Catholic Church, while increasingly assured of a practical toleration, was legally proscribed. Nevertheless, great advances had been made. The diocesan episcopate functioned effectively; the parochial system had been restored; the regular clergy once again had permanent establishments. Yet there were great difficulties, apart from legal proscription. Two in particular may be mentioned; they have indeed been mentioned several times already, for it is impossible

¹ Roche to Ingoli, 1 December 1629, APF, *Scrittura Antiche*, vol. 294, f. 312.

² *Ibid.*, and cf. Rothe to Wadding, 29 July 1629, *Wadding papers*, p. 303; Thomas Strange, O.F.M., to Wadding, 4 August 1629, *ibid.*, p. 306.

³ APF, *Scrittura Antiche*, vol. 294, ff. 312r-319v. An English précis, but with considerable omissions, is printed in Moran, *History of the Catholic Archbishops of Dublin*, pp. 396-9.

to write the history of the Irish Church at this period without coming up against them. Both tended to divide what in the common interest should have been a united effort, but the sectional interests they represented were too powerful not to assert themselves, and just now they were becoming more marked than ever.

One division arose from a difference of racial origins. This had its roots in the distant past, deriving ultimately from the partial success of the Norman intrusion. People were now becoming increasingly conscious of this difference, because the English political and religious programme in Ireland was bringing all who were threatened by it, that is to say all Irish Catholics, into a closer association in defence of increasingly common interests. It was an uneasy association. There was, in fact, not a great deal in common between a man from Ulster and a townsman from the south, except a common peril, which made it necessary for them to establish some common ground or hang separately. The inevitable result was friction and quarrels. If the ecclesiastics might seem more quarrelsome than most, the explanation is to be found, not so much in any qualities inherent in ecclesiastics, as in the fact that the common interest forcing people together was primarily a religious one.

The second division, which cut across the first, affected ecclesiastics even more closely, for it was caused by the divergent interests of the diocesan and regular clergy. The restoration of the diocesan and parochial system on the Tridentine model meant inevitably a curtailment of the activities of the regular clergy, a curtailment not merely of the extensive missionary faculties they had held in the really bad times a generation or so before, but also, in certain respects, of the position they had enjoyed in the pre-reformation Church. In the special circumstances of Ireland, where the diocesan system had to function to some extent in secret, the religious at times could feel reasonably aggrieved.¹

The whole story is a very complicated one ; here we are primarily concerned with John Roche and a small group of bishops closely associated with him, Anglo-Irish by birth, townsmen for the most part, products of the Tridentine seminaries. Although they are unmistakably Anglo-Irish, they share the interest in Irish history and culture which united Irish scholars of all creeds and classes, including Protestants such as Archbishop Ussher and Sir James Ware, in this brief period before the common interest in scholarship was embittered and withered by wars and confiscations later in the

¹ Cf. *Irish Theological Quarterly*, April 1958, pp. 107 ff.

century.¹ As far as Ulster and other parts of the Old-Irish world are concerned, the bitterness is already there since the plantation and the 1614 parliament,² and indeed it is only too easy to enumerate points which show what an alien territory Gaelic civilization was to these Anglo-Irish scholars, what deep differences had to be worked out in losses and recriminations. John Roche's verdict on Geoffrey Keating may stand as an example: "One Doctor Keating labourereth much," he wrote to Wadding,³ "in compiling Irish notes towards a history in Irish. The man is very studious, and yet I fear that if his work come ever to light it will need an amendment of illwarranted narrations; he could help you to many curiosities of which you can make better use than himself. I have no interest in the man, for I never saw him, for he dwelleth in Munster." While it is easy to point out the differences, there was a good deal of co-operation in this literary revival which is sometimes regarded as a kind of afterglow of Gaelic civilization, but might be better described as the result of a ferment set up by the disturbances which brought into contact Irishmen who had had little contact before, a brief springtime before greater upheavals and wrecking calamities.

The Catholic Anglo-Irish could have only one attitude towards the monarchy. They might regret that the king was a heretic, but they had to plan how to live with the problem, and their hopes of toleration had been roused by the Catholic marriage of Charles I. John Roche would certainly have been content with a settlement allowing private practice of religion, and he was convinced that there was a real hope that this might be secured if the Catholic clergy did not put themselves forward too boldly or with too much display.⁴ Three days after he arrived in Dublin the viceroy Falkland made enquiries about him, "from a friend." The friend answered judiciously that he had retired to the country where he intended to live quietly without offending the civil authorities. Falkland replied that he was assured of the bishop's peaceable disposition, and that as long as he gave no indication to the contrary he might rely on not being molested.⁵ Bishop Roche asked no more, though in view of the turbulent state of the Irish Church it was not always easy to live peaceably. His anxieties were renewed on the coming of

¹ See for instance the interesting letters of Roche to Wadding, 29 July 1629 and 19 July 1631, *Wadding papers*, pp. 302-3, 551, and Gwynn, "John Lynch's 'De praesulibus Hiberniae'", in *Studies*, vol. XXXV (1945), pp. 37-52; "Archbishop Ussher and Father Brendan O'Connor," in *Father Luke Wadding*, pp. 263-83.

² Cf. *Irish Theological Quarterly*, January, 1958, p. 27.

³ 19 July 1631; *Wadding papers*, p. 544.

⁴ Cf. Roche to Ingoli, 1 December 1629, APF, *Scrittura Antiche*, vol. 294, f. 317.

⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 312v.

Wentworth, but he was happy to report that the new viceroy was not proving so severe as he had feared,¹ though he trembled at the madness which had led ecclesiastics in Dublin to bring their disputes before the secular courts. The viceroy, he reported to Ingoli, was a stern man, determined to keep the peace, and there was certain to be a disciplining of ecclesiastics in Dublin as soon as the current session of parliament was over.²

Generally speaking, however, the bishops were free to carry out their work quietly and privately. David Rothe of Ossory was the acknowledged head of the group of bishops with whom John Roche was associated, both by reason of his seniority and his incisiveness of character. In 1629 this group agreed to meet every year, or every two years at most, in order to secure common action, and these meetings seem to have been regularly in Rothe's house in Kilkenny. One of their chief problems arose from the difficulty of communicating with Rome; Roche's letters are full of complaints on this point. Decrees from Rome do not arrive in Ireland at all, or arrive with vital parts missing.³ All kinds of rumours are spread by interested parties.⁴ Roche began by using the obvious channel of communication, through the nuncios in France and Flanders.⁵ This must have proved unsatisfactory, for on Ingoli's advice he began to communicate with Rome through the Tuscan ambassador in London. This in turn broke down, completely it would seem, for the bishop was not able to maintain an agent in London to collect incoming mail, and so he had to turn again to the nuncio in Paris.⁶ Even when everything went well six months was regarded as a not unreasonable time for a letter to pass between Rome and Ireland.⁷ Allowing six months more for an answer, the transaction of business could become very complicated indeed.

It was made more complicated by the fact that the bishops never found a really satisfactory agent in Rome to succeed Eugene Callanan. This may be attributed partly to their own divided counsels.

¹ Roche to Propaganda, 18 November 1633, printed in Moran, *Spicil. Ossor.*, vol. I, p. 190. I have not succeeded in locating the original of this letter in the archives of Propaganda.

² Roche to Ingoli, 15 November 1634, APF, *Scrittura Antiche*, vol. 105, ff. 479-80; printed in Moran, *Spicil. Ossor.*, vol. I, pp. 198-9.

³ Cf. Roche to Ingoli, 10 June 1630, APF, *Scrittura Antiche*, vol. 294, f. 298.

⁴ For example, a report that Wadding was dead circulated at the end of 1629. See Comerford to Wadding, 22 November 1629, *Wadding papers*, p. 322; Roche to Wadding, January 1630, *ibid.*, p. 332.

⁵ Roche to Ingoli, 16 January 1630, APF, *Scrittura Antiche*, vol. 132, f. 289r.

⁶ Same to same, 19 November 1633, APF, *Scrittura Antiche*, vol. 294, f. 185r. printed in Moran, *Spicil. Ossor.*, vol. I, p. 191.

⁷ Roche to Wadding, 26 May 1630, *Wadding papers*, p. 370.

Roche favoured the appointment of Terence Coghlan, a priest of the diocese of Clonmacnois, though other bishops were inclined to think him a little too hot-headed where the regular clergy were concerned.¹ However, the Munster bishops chose Michael Cantwell, a native of Waterford, a Jesuit who had left the society, though it would appear amicably enough. Roche accepted their decision, though with some reservations, for he knew little or nothing of Cantwell.² It began to appear that his reservations were not altogether misplaced, for Cantwell was slow in making his way to Rome, and on the way he caused trouble. In Paris he showed himself violently anti-regular, and by June 1632 he was reported to be leaving Madrid on his way to Rome. He cannot have been of much assistance to the bishops who had appointed him, and in fact he was soon replaced, though the Irish bishops never really found an agent to take the place of John Roche.³

This lack of a reliable agent in Rome was a severe handicap to the bishops, because, especially in their disputes with the regular clergy, it was in Rome that the vital decisions were made. It was precisely at this period that the decision was taken for England to suppress the vicariate-apostolic and to return to a regime of missionary faculties. The Irish bishops were in a much stronger position than the English vicar-apostolic, but the decision taken in regard to England was an indication that the issue might not be finally decided even in Ireland. The Irish bishops were aware of their common interest with Bishop Smith in England and intervened in Rome several times to strengthen his position, urging in particular that the number of bishops in England should be increased to three.⁴ They also watched sympathetically, and a little anxiously, the controversial writings of the English seculars and regulars, for they faced the same problem at home.⁵ They knew that a settlement of the English problem was mooted in Rome, and that it would be of close interest to themselves

¹ Roche to Wadding, January 1630, *Wadding papers*, p. 332. Wadding was not opposed to Coghlan, see same to same, 7 February 1630, *ibid.*, p. 336.

² Roche to Wadding, 7 February 1630, *Wadding papers*, pp. 336-7; same to same, 26 May 1630, *ibid.*, p. 370; Roche to Ingoli, 10 June 1630, APF, *Scrittura Antiche*, vol. 294, f. 298; bishops of Cashel, Ossory, Ferns and Emly to Cardinal Ludovisi, 10 June 1630, *ibid.*, vol. 133, f. 280.

³ Cantwell "failed in the trust committed to him," according to Archbishop Walsh of Cashel—Walsh to Wadding, 17 November 1631, *Wadding papers*, p. 613.

⁴ Bishops of Cashel, Cork, Limerick, Emly, Waterford, Ossory and Ferns to Propaganda, February 1630, *Wadding papers*, pp. 426-7 and cf. APF, *Scrittura Antiche*, vol. 132, f. 274r. Roche wrote another letter to the same effect in his own name. I have not been able to trace it, but it came up for consideration at a meeting of Propaganda in August 1630—cf. APF, *Acta*, vol. 7, f. 116, no. 50.

⁵ Cf., e.g., Roche to Lovell, 30 June 1630, *Wadding papers*, pp. 427-8.

too. "Shall not this decree of which you speak ever come to light?" Roche wrote to Lovell in England; the decree came within a year, the brief *Britannia*, which was such a severe rebuke to Bishop Smith that it resulted in England being left without a bishop for fifty years.

IX

The brief *Britannia* was a warning to the Irish hierarchy that their position might not be completely secured. In Ireland too the reorganization of the Church had led to bitter and frequently disedifying quarrels between the diocesan and regular clergy. Here the story must be confined to these quarrels as they impinged on Bishop Roche. A full account, with all its nuances, would fill a book, a book which in any case cannot be written until the sources have been much more thoroughly investigated.

The most important aspect of these quarrels concerned such orders as the mendicants and the Jesuits which by their constitutions were intimately connected with the care of souls. In his own diocese, Bishop Roche succeeded in living at peace with the regular clergy, but he did become involved in the most serious single incident of these quarrels, which had begun in Dublin before his return to Ireland, and which was still smouldering when he died.

It broke out in 1627, with a series of apparently provocative sermons by a Franciscan, Thomas Strong, in which he made rather sweeping claims for the regular clergy *vis-a-vis* the hierarchy. The secular clergy were naturally resentful, especially an English priest resident in Dublin, Paul Harris, a man learned enough, but unfortunately at least as quarrelsome as Strong was. He published a book against the Franciscan, entitled *Philadelphus*—in spite of its title, there was no charity in it, comments Bishop Roche. Strong replied in *Philaethes*, imprudent as well as uncharitable, for he spared no rank of the hierarchy, not even Pope Boniface VIII. These books were widely circulated in Dublin, and the laity began to take sides. The archbishop, a Franciscan, intervened and condemned Harris, who submitted for the time being. The archbishop did not censure Strong, and inevitably he was accused of favouring his own order,¹ though, as Bishop Roche commented, without excluding this possibility, the archbishop's motive in refraining from censuring a religious might well have been because he knew his censure would be ineffective. Nevertheless, the archbishop's de-

¹ Harris was certainly convinced of this—see his *Arhtomastix*, p. 57.

cision left the supporters of the seculars with their grievance, and Roche's judgment was that, whether his motive was good or bad, the archbishop's decision was unfair in that Harris and Strong were equally to blame.¹

Ecclesiastical affairs in Dublin were troubled again on 26 December 1629 when the Protestant archbishop and the mayor closed the Franciscan chapel there. They tried to arrest the friars, but were mobbed and the friars escaped. Several Catholic gentlemen were arrested for not coming to the rescue of the forces of the law. Within a month two other chapels were closed in Dublin and the trouble had spread to Limerick and Cork.² The incident gave an opportunity to the party opposed to the Franciscans to claim that they had provoked the trouble by a lack of discretion. Roche agreed substantially with this view; he feared, as he wrote to Ingoli, that it had been caused by the friars giving themselves too much publicity; that no one could predict how far repression might spread, once started, and that if it spread the bishops would certainly suffer most.³

These were favourable circumstances in which to keep alive the dispute started by Harris and Strong. The bishop of Ferns, as we have seen, had sent an account of this dispute to Rome, which was considered at a meeting of the Congregation of Propaganda on 5 August 1630. The congregation decided to write to the archbishop of Dublin to put an end to the controversy as prudently as possible, and to send the writings of both parties to Rome for judgment.⁴ The Roman decision, however, had not time to produce any effect before the dispute flared up again. On 6 March 1631 the archbishop of Dublin suspended Harris and one of his supporters; with the support of the secular authority, which was happy to use an opportunity to embarrass the Catholics, they defied the archbishop and continued their attacks on the regulars, attacks which grew more violent as Harris's natural lack of balance became more marked under what he judged to be persecution. The times were not exactly propitious for the growth of charity between the secular and

¹ Roche to Propaganda, 1 December 1629, APF, *Scrittura Antiche*, vol. 294, ff. 312-3; see also Moran, *History of the Catholic Archbishops of Dublin*, p. 376.

² Roche to Ingoli, 16 January 1630, APF, *Scrittura Antiche*, vol. 132, f. 289r; Roche to Wadding, 7 February 1630, *Wadding papers*, p. 337.

³ Roche to Ingoli, 9 February 1630, APF, *Scrittura Antiche*, vol. 132, f. 288r.

⁴ APF, *Acta*, vol. 7, f. 116, no. 50, 5 August 1630; Propaganda to Roche, 17 August 1630, APF, *Lettere*, vol. 10, f. 89v; Propaganda to Fleming, 17 August 1630, *ibid.*, f. 90r.

regular clergy; motives became suspect and the temptation to make the division more clear-cut was strong.¹

Some time before this the Dublin dispute had been carried to Paris by another secular priest, Patrick Cahill. A native of Meath, he had held a parish in Dublin in what certainly seem to be irregular circumstances. He had been associated with Harris, and in 1629 Archbishop Fleming removed him from his parish.² This action was resented by the secular clergy, and Cahill decided to challenge the archbishop, though his case in law cannot have been a very strong one. It was probably in an attempt to bolster it up that he sought testimonials in various quarters. Among these were testimonials from the bishops of Ossory and Ferns. These testimonials were very carefully worded, and, it would seem certain, were given before Cahill had made any formal move against his archbishop's decision. They confined themselves to saying that Cahill was of good moral reputation, had been imprisoned for the faith, and had worked in the ministry to the profit of souls, all of which was true but which might be used to create a false impression once Cahill had taken action against the archbishop, and evidently was so used, for on 6 December 1630 Bishops Rothe and Roche formally attested that they did not wish their letters in favour of Cahill to be used to prejudice the case.³

Cahill made his way to Paris and submitted to the Sorbonne eleven propositions which he claimed were taught by the regulars in Ireland,⁴ and asked for a formal censure from the University. He obtained this with the help of some Irish secular priests living in Paris.⁵ Later in that year a reply to Cahill and the Sorbonne appeared in Frankfort, entitled *Examen Juridicum*. Its author, thinly concealed under the pseudonym "Edmundus Ursulanus,"

¹ An instance may be cited of the letter of Roche to Lovell, 30 June 1630, *Wadding papers*, p. 428, in which Roche says that the suppression of public oratories together with the threat of further repression "purchaseth for us some quietness amongst ourselves, though we be not wholly out of broils." This letter fell into the hands of Francis Matthews, O.F.M., who forwarded it to Wadding, with a comment in which he interprets "ourselves" as the bishops and implies that Roche's letter shows how the bishops rejoiced at the suppression of the religious communities (Matthews to Wadding, Louvain, 8 February 1631, *Wadding papers*, p. 471). This interpretation seems to me very forced and unfair; by "ourselves" Roche clearly means the Catholic community as a whole. Only a consideration of the inflamed state of tempers at the time prevents one from calling the interpretation suggested by Matthews a malicious one.

² Fleming to Wadding, 26 August 1629, *Wadding papers*, p. 308.

³ Attestations in *Wadding papers*, p. 452.

⁴ Propositions in *Wadding papers*, pp. 510-11.

⁵ James Fallon, vicar-general of Achonry, to Wadding, Paris, 1 February 1631, *Wadding papers*, p. 468.

was Francis Matthews, O.F.M.¹ These events on the continent added new fuel to the fire which Harris was busy keeping alive in Dublin.² The bishops were under pressure to dissociate themselves from Cahill's action in Paris. It was a tricky problem, in view of the admittedly tendentious nature of the "Sorbonne propositions" and the insinuations being made in connexion with the testimonials given to Cahill. To refuse to denounce him might be construed as approval; on the other hand, there was reason to fear that a denunciation might very well be used by certain religious to their own advantage in a much wider context, and not all the points Cahill had made were without foundation.

The bishops of Ossory, Ferns, Cork and Waterford tried to meet the problem by a declaration that no regular had taught in their dioceses the propositions attributed by Cahill to the regular clergy as a whole.³ The publication of the *Examen Juridicum*, an intemperate reply to Cahill's intemperance, strengthened their position in that it threatened to set off a spate of pamphleteering which Roche at any rate was anxious to prevent. He and the bishops of Ossory and Cork wrote to Propaganda on 3 November 1631 asking for a condemnation of the book.⁴ Propaganda referred the matter to the Holy Office, and in the meantime imposed silence on all concerned. This decision led to external restraint at least in the controversies in Ireland⁵—except of course for Paul Harris, who continued his publications with the assistance of the government, and brought his complaint against the archbishop to the secular courts.⁶ He became more and more isolated, as the bishops and religious superiors agreed to discipline their more recalcitrant sub-

¹ Matthews, alias O Mahony, Latinized Ursulanus.

² He published a pamphlet of 112 pages in 1632, accusing the archbishop of planning to supplant the parochial clergy by the regulars; a reply to Ursulanus, *Arktomastix* ("The bear-tamer") in the same year; *Fratres sobrii estote, an admonition to the Fryars of this kingdom*, in 1634; and *The Exile Exiled* in 1635. None bore any place of publication, and "there can be little doubt that they were printed in Dublin with the connivance of the Irish government" (MacNeill, *Publications*, p. 20).

³ The bishops of Cork and Ossory inclined to take a more decided anti-regular attitude. Cf. Roche to Wadding, 19 July 1631, *Wadding papers*, p. 542; Francis Matthews, O.F.M., to Wadding, 29 August 1631, *ibid.*, pp. 568-9; Thomas Strange, O.F.M., to Wadding, 10 September 1631, *ibid.*, p. 579.

⁴ APF, Scrittura Antiche, vol. 150, f. 326, printed in Moran, *History of the Catholic Archbishops of Dublin*, p. 374. The archbishops of Cashel and Tuam wrote to the same effect, Scrittura Antiche, vol. 14, f. 129, printed in *Archivium Hibernicum*, vol. XII, pp. 187-8.

⁵ Roche to Ingoli, 19 November 1633, APF, Scrittura Antiche, vol. 294, f. 185r, printed in Moran, *Spicil. Ossor.*, vol. I, p. 191.

⁶ Cf. APF, Acta, vol. 10, f. 93, no. 29, 31 July 1634.

jects for the common good of the Catholic religion.¹ Propaganda finally decided to depute the bishop of Meath to remove Harris from Dublin. The bishop demurred, understandably enough, and in a letter to Propaganda Bishop Roche supported him, arguing that such a move would cause trouble with the civil authority, which would be prepared to support Harris, and had in fact given him special orders not to leave the city. Apart from his fixed ideas where the regular clergy were concerned, reflecting by now a really unbalanced mind, he was a man of some genuine learning and exemplary life. He was making no attempt to administer the sacraments, nor did he seem to mind that no one attended his Mass.² It was sound advice; Paul Harris could now be safely left undisturbed, better, indeed, left so.

The monastic orders were also involved in these disputes, for reasons which emerge rather clearly from a not particularly edifying incident in the diocese of Waterford, where Bishop Comerford—himself an Augustinian—in the course of his attempts to restore the parochial system in his diocese, had sent a parish priest to a church which in pre-reformation times had been inappropriate to the Hospitallers. This was resented by a religious who had joined the Hospitallers in Malta after a career which could only be described as somewhat involved, if what the bishops of Ferns and Waterford say about him is to be taken as true. In virtue of his profession as a Hospitaller he had, he claimed, the duty of defending all the rights of the order in Ireland. He asserted their right to this particular church by bursting in during Sunday Mass, snatching the chalice and host from the altar and making off before anyone could stop him, but not before he had time to threaten that he would do the same to the bishop if he found him saying Mass there.³

The revival of the Cistercian order in Ireland posed a more serious threat to the hierarchy, in that the relatively few Cistercians in the country were claiming full authority, independent of the Ordinary, in the very numerous parishes appropriated to the order in pre-reformation times, and were also accused of trying to expand their numbers by accepting novices on a scale far beyond the resources

¹ Roche to Ingoli, 15 November 1634, APF, *Scritture Antiche*, vol. 105, ff. 479-80, printed in Moran, *Spicil. Ossor.*, vol. I, p. 198.

² Roche to Propaganda, 20 October 1635, APF, *Scritture Antiche*, vol. 135, f. 193r, printed in Moran, *Spicil. Ossor.*, vol. I, p. 205.

³ Roche to Propaganda, 1 December 1629, APF, *Scritture Antiche*, vol. 294, ff. 313-4; Comerford to Wadding, 22 November 1629, *Wadding papers*, p. 325.

they possessed to give them any sound religious formation.¹ John Roche's first impressions of the Irish Cistercians were not very favourable;² he was convinced that the share they claimed in the pastoral mission in Ireland bore no relation to their numerical strength, to the prospect of a restoration of their monasteries, or to the post-Tridentine canon law, and that their abbatial titles, derived from a bull procured in the Datary and "a blessing from some kindly bishop," were a nuisance and devoid of any real significance. On 1 December 1629 he wrote to Ingoli, proposing that the Pope should instruct the Datary not to grant any more titular appointments to Irish Cistercian monasteries, though he did not urge the point, as the practice was so widespread, unless other Irish bishops could be found to support his request. He did urge, however, that the Congregation should instruct the Irish Cistercians to observe the command they had got in 1626 not to be too insistent in putting forward their claims for the restoration of their monasteries.³ Ingoli replied on 26 June 1630, saying that the Cistercian protector in Rome had been approached by the Congregation of Propaganda after its meeting on 15 June, and ordered to see that the monks did not disturb the ordinary's jurisdiction with empty abbatial titles, nor set up novitiates in Ireland.⁴

This action does not seem to have been very effective, for a few years later we find Roche writing again, this time suggesting much more firmly that the appointment of titular abbots be discontinued.⁵ The matter was discussed at a meeting of Propaganda on 31 July 1634, but it was decided that no action be taken to prevent further Cistercian appointments.⁶ Meanwhile, Roche seems to have succeeded in curbing the activities of the Cistercians to some extent, and at the same time to have established friendly relations with them, at least in his own diocese.⁷ On 1 September 1635 the Congregation of Propaganda, again under the initiative of a letter from Roche,

¹ Roche to Ingoli, 1 December 1629, APF, *Scritture Antiche*, vol. 204, ff. 313-14v; same to same, 9 February 1630, *ibid.*, vol. 132, f. 288v.

² "Per il più loro stessi non sono che una mano d'ignoranti" —Roche to Ingoli, 9 February 1630, *cit.*

³ APF, *Scritture Antiche*, vol. 298, f. 314v; cf. also Roche to Ingoli, 9 February 1630, *ibid.*, vol. 132, f. 288v.

⁴ APF, *Acta*, vol. 7, f. 84v, no. 3, 15 June 1630; *Lettere*, vol. 10, ff. 60-61.

⁵ Roche to Ingoli, 18 November 1633, printed in Moran, *Spicil. Ossor.*, vol. I, p. 190. See above, note 28.

⁶ APF, *Acta*, vol. 10, f. 93, no. 29. From the entry in the *Acta* it would appear that Moran does not print the full text of Bishop Roche's letter in *Spicil. Ossor.*, vol. I, p. 190.

⁷ Roche to Ingoli, 15 November 1634, APF, *Scritture Antiche*, vol. 105, ff. 478-80, printed in Moran, *Spicil. Ossor.*, vol. I, p. 198; same to same, 4 April 1635, *Scritture Antiche*, vol. 14, f. 135.

decided to raise the matter of Cistercian appointments with the Datary.¹ The issue, however, was still far from decided at the time of the bishop's death. He had fought a hard battle with the Cistercians, but it had been a fair one, to which he was impelled by strictly legal and pastoral considerations. The Cistercians respected him. In their apologia for their Irish mission, the work known as *Triumphalia Monasterii S. Crucis*, they record the obits of two Irish bishops only. One is John O'Cullenan, bishop of Raphoe, whose brother was a Cistercian and who openly favoured them. The other is their influential and persistent opponent, "Reverendissimus Dominus Joannes Roch, episcopus Fernensis, doctrina humanitateque insignis : obiit 10 Aprilis, 1636."²

(To be concluded)

PATRICK J. CORISH

¹ APF, Acta, vol. 10, f. 308, no. 10.

² *Triumphalia Monasterii S. Crucis*, p. 188.