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Social Structures of the Irish Church

A New Source in Papal Penitentiary Dispensations for Illegitimacy

Comment on the importance of the new Irish source material afforded by this magnificent project, pan-European in its scope and in the approach to its interpretation, must begin with appreciation of how far the study of late medieval and pre-Reformation Irish ecclesiastical history depends in general on the Vatican Archives as a repository of information which for the most part survives nowhere else. Native Irish sources of wider history in the period and – with one notable exception – of ecclesiastical history are limited and, on the documentary level, scrappy. Annalistic references provide local details of ecclesiastical interest, often selected in accordance with and heavily conditioned by the perspective and attachments of the annalist. With the exception which I have mentioned and to which I will return later, administrative documentation for the church as a whole is sparse and where it does exist in series it is limited in its range. In 1922, at the outbreak of civil war, Ireland suffered the calamitous destruction of its rich public records and – except to the very limited extent to which these had been drawn on previously and the extent to which they are capable of being substituted for by material in the London Public Record Office – there disappeared accordingly the records of medieval royal government, which would of course also have included much of ecclesiastical importance.

In the present context, one obvious point must be made at once about this catastrophe. The records of royal government pertained directly to those parts of the country in which the king's authority was effective. In the later middle ages this was a decreasing area, the core of which became the littoral eastern region mainly to the north and west of Dublin, known afterwards from its late fortification as the Pale. Its size was stated in 1435, perhaps with some hyperbole – since it was part of an appeal to government for action on the part of the loyal population – as „scarcely thirty miles in length and twenty miles in breadth“. There were large areas of unconquered Gaelicdom where the king's authority had never reached and areas once conquered where, through a combined effect of Gaelic resurgence and the rebelliousness of the Anglo-Irish magnates (in contemporary loyalist perception, the king's Irish and the king's English enemies, respectively), it had ceased. For the first of these areas the royal records would have been largely silent; for the second it is likely that they would have been a progressively indirect source and one which, while always important, not least for the inferences which even their omissions would have allowed, would have been declining in value in this later period. By an odd symmetry, the bulk of the

Irish source material in the Vatican Archives, abundant from the early fifteenth century (though beginning earlier), is for those areas in which the king's authority was either wholly ineffective or was only marginally effective. In 1411 most of the acts of the English parliament over half a century of severe legislation against the seeking out of papal provisions to benefices and the prosecution of litigation in foreign courts were enrolled in Ireland and, with prompting from the Irish parliament, were in force to the extent that the king's writ ran. It is precisely this demand-led business (if one may use economic jargon not inappropriate in dealing with the Roman curia) or „Rome running“ (as it came to be called) that constitutes the largest part of the Vatican archives material for Ireland.

As regards Ireland, the Vatican Archives are, in their main holdings, richest therefore for those parts of the country beyond the scope of the royal administration and poorest for that area where the lost records of royal government were the major administrative source. Gaelic culture – though heavily orientated towards the preservation of the past as it related, especially through genealogy, to the ruling dynasties – produced no administrative record keeping of significance. Its secular government proceeded on different lines. In principle, ecclesiastical administration in Ireland might have reflected the methods practised elsewhere. How far the paucity of records of such administration is due to the troubled history of the country in the early modern period and how far to contemporary neglect is a question incapable of definitive resolution. Most likely they were never copious. It seems that by English standards the record-keeping of Irish bishops was undeveloped. For the fourteenth century there is an incidental reference to consultation of the register of the bishop of Meath, a diocese which might, from its heavy Norman settlement and proximity to Dublin, be expected to have been in the forefront of administrative innovation. Even then, however, the register – though it existed – was in such poor condition that in part it could not be read.¹ At all events, apart from a visitation roll of Archbishop John Colton of Armagh (1381–1404), the only episcopal series of administrative records which survive for Ireland are the Armagh „registers“ – a total of seven medieval volumes and one early modern copy, documenting rather fitfully and with long gaps the activity of the archbishop both as metropolitan and as diocesan from 1361 to 1543.² Though very valuable, they are not in fact registers properly speaking and to the extent that they are an exception to the general impression of diocesan record keeping they are an exception very much corroborating the rule.

It is in this context that the value of the lists compiled for this project is to be assessed. They represent the most wide-ranging investigation to date for Ireland of the newest accession to the Vatican Archives, the registers of the Sacred Penitentiary. When these were deposited in the Vatican Archives, in the autumn of 1983, my first reaction was to think of them as facilitating a study of prime importance, to which the legalistic and contentious documents relating to benefices did not readily lend themselves and for which other sources are scanty: religious sentiment in Ireland in the century before the Refor-

¹ *G.O. Sayles, Ecclesiastical Process and the Parsonage of Stabannon*, in: *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 4 (1952–1953) C 21.

² The closest description is *W.G.H. Quigley, E.F.D. Roberts, Registrum Iohannis Mey. The Register of John Mey Archbishop of Armagh 1443–1456* (Belfast 1972) IX–XII.

mation.³ The Penitentiary registers remain the best prospect for such a study but closer examination has suggested to me that they will at times need cautious handling since overtly spiritual business can turn out to be the other face of litigation.⁴ The material extracted for this project's study of illegitimacy in the late middle ages confirms the structural and social character of part at least of the material preserved in these registers.

As indeed structural and social, the information so generously made available for Ireland through this project will, as I shall hope to explain, require painstaking collation with its counterpart from the deposits of business to do with benefices. This will be a lengthy exercise and will not be capable of being considered complete until the bulky and complicated material from both the letters series and the supplications (not to speak of lesser holdings such as the Lateran briefs) is available to be integrated with it. More than most historiography, that of the late medieval Irish church (because it is still at such a pioneering stage) is jigsaw-like and one new piece can be crucial either in providing or upsetting a framework. Analysis at this stage is perforce tentative and liable to be overturned as understanding advances. However, the significance of these dispensations for Irish clerics is clear enough in its broad lines.

The first comment which the Irish material evokes is on its sheer quantity. While, in the absence of reference to benefices, it is not always possible to distinguish with complete confidence between the Scottish and Irish dioceses of Lismore and Ross, so that some remaining uncertainty must be tolerated, it is not such as to distort the general picture. On the best count, with allowance made for this factor and with no account taken of the small number of cases where no diocese has been named, 1 884 entries relate to Ireland. This represents quite 5% of the total of 37 916 for Europe as a whole and amounts, for instance, to approximately half of the figure (3 690) for Italy and between one quarter and one third of that for France (6 627). It compares with 1 062 established, with the same caution regarding doubtful cases, for Scotland. The contrast with England (656 entries or just over one third of the Irish total) is particularly marked. Explanations for this low figure in the case of England must be hypothetical but one possible factor contributing to it is the highly organized system of papal collectorships described by Lunt.⁵ The „Calendars of Papal Letters“ make clear how effectively the statutes of Provisors curtailed the traffic in title to benefices between the papacy and England in the late middle ages. While the restrictive legislation had no implications for „spiritual“ business, such as dispensations for illegitimacy, and while general cases of conscience from England are in fact heavily represented in the registers of the Sacred Penitentiary, English petitioners who had no other business with the papacy may well have had readier recourse to the dispensing power enjoyed by the nuncios deputed as collectors, in preference to employing proctors at the papal curia.

³ *Michael J. Haren*, *The Religious Outlook of a Gaelic Lord. A New Light on Thomas Óg Maguire*, in: *IrishHSr* 25 (1986) 195–197.

⁴ *Ibid.*, *Balancing the Books. The Papal Penitentiary, a Tender Conscience and the Rectory of Clonfeacle*, in: *Seanchas Ard Mhacha* 13/2 (1989) 81–89; cited as follows: *Haren*, *Balancing the Books*.

⁵ *W.E. Lunt*, *Financial Relations of the Papacy with England 1327–1534* (Cambridge Mass. 1962).

The extent of the activity and organization in practice of papal collectors in Ireland is much less known and the present is not by its nature a source likely to reveal the exercise of their faculties, where these occasioned no difficulty. The case of Richard Dondon, cleric of Ardfert diocese, son of a priest and an unmarried woman, who in 1464 was dispensed *in uberiori forma*, having been previously dispensed on apostolic authority *per quendam subcollectorem asserentem se habere potestatem*⁶, is the sole witness to it in the material that constitutes the survey. On the whole, it may be that Irish families, especially where they had other business or had experience of transacting other business, notably the seeking out of provisions or litigating over benefices, at the curia, found it more practical to obtain dispensation from the competent organs of the papal government centrally rather than locally.

However, if the relative levels of activity of papal collectors is indeed to be allowed for as significant in explaining the discrepancy between the figures from England and Ireland, an augmentation of the collectors' role may be postulated as part at least of the explanation for the falling off of dispensations issued to Irish candidates from the later fifteenth century. The first half of the survey chronologically – up to 1492 inclusive – provides almost 80% of the total entries (see Table 1). Although the Irish statistic is in agreement with the statistic for the British Isles as a whole on this point (79% of British Isles granted by 1492), the year 1500 may be taken as a marker for a change in relative proportions between the two units of measurement. Whereas the Jubilee year 1450 produced broadly similar percentages between the British Isles as a whole (5.8% of the total figure for the period 1449–1533) and Ireland, considered separately (6.5% of the total for the period 1449–1533), the Jubilee year 1500 shows – besides a massive falling off of surviving registered dispensations for both units – an Irish percentage (0.5%) just half that for the British Isles unit (1%). Although the Irish figure (9) for 1500 is so small as to invite statistical distortion, noteworthy nonetheless is that it represents just 21.4% of the British Isles total for that year, whereas its 1450 counterpart (123) represents over 50% of the British Isles total for that year.

While the function of the papal collectors is an attractive hypothesis towards explaining the gross disparity between the English and Irish figures for dispensations, some caution in appealing to it is urged by the fact that there is also a substantial disparity, when account is taken of the relative sizes of the countries, between the figure for Wales (444 for the period as a whole) and that for England (656). The same consideration from the effect of the statutes of Provisors on general traffic with the curia applies to Wales as to England and Welsh applicants could have taken, on average, hardly less full advantage of the collectors' faculties than the geographical spread of their English counterparts. It is difficult, finally, in relation to this issue, to avoid the conclusion that the English were disproportionately well behaved, that some part of the explanation for the disparity between English and Irish figures is the state of the two churches and that in this respect we are

⁶ Reg. Pen. 13 292v.

dealing in particular with the effects of a cultural phenomenon on which, even without the impressive evidence of the present statistics, has evoked historical comment.⁷

Before I deal directly with the cultural phenomenon which is the major feature of the survey from the Irish viewpoint, I address one other feature, related to it indirectly and otherwise of some interest, which arises from what has been said so far. Because of the restriction on recourse to the papal curia over title to benefices, the Pale – that is, in ecclesiastical terms, the diocese of Dublin and the „English“ parts of Meath and to some extent even of Kildare – is, aside from matrimonial and other spiritual business, relatively little represented in the series which have been to date the most exploited for Ireland of the Vatican Archives holdings, *Registra Vaticana* and *Registra Lateranensia*. In this respect, the Pale resembles (as its legislation on this point resembled) the English scene, where true provisions in the period of this survey are exceedingly rare. As has already been observed in relation to England and Wales, the legal restriction, whose apparent success is a little-noticed demonstration of the effectiveness of royal government within the Pale, did not apply to recourse to the curia for such a purpose as dispensation for illegitimacy. However, only 33 petitioners are described as of Dublin diocese in a period stretching from 1450 to 1524. This, well short of 2% of the Irish total, represents the diocese containing the country's largest medieval city. Nor, again, is this the whole story. About half (16/33) of the petitioners described as of Dublin diocese have surnames in Gaelic form (that is continuing to be spelled with enclitic „O“ or „Mac“). (One, „Cronin“, is of Gaelic origin but has lost its „O“). It may be that some at least of these Gaelic petitioners are actually of the diocese of Glendalough – outside of the Pale – to which names like MacDowell (two clear instances among the sixteen, with one doubtful) and OByrne (two instances) are native. In fact, one of the „MacDowells“ (the doubtful instance, spelt „Macdyllchin“) gives his diocese, under the year 1524, as Dublin alias Glendalough. The form „Dublin alias Glendalough“ is found in papal chancery documents where the petitioner took the trouble to distinguish himself as coming from what had until the early thirteenth century been a separate diocese and to which there were several late fifteenth-century titular appointments. There are in the lists for this survey four instances (and only four) of Glendalough in its own right (for dates 1487–1512). However, in the case of clerics described as of Dublin diocese, it is only those who have English names or anglicised names – about half the total – who can be taken to be certainly or with high probability of Dublin. The others may on the one hand be Gaelic clerics or aspirant clerics active or hoping to make a career in Dublin diocese but they may on the other hand be rather of the diocese of Glendalough, though not impossibly with similar ambitions. Again, in the case of the diocese of Meath, a distinction must be noted between the petitioners, though it is difficult of interpretation. Of the 90 petitioners from Meath, the surnames of 87 have been established. Approximately 42 or just under half have surnames of English origin. This is perhaps a better indication of Englishry than a Gaelic surname of the diocese is of Irishry, though Gaelic petitioners may have been active predominantly in its western and northern parts. But this split, half Gaelic and half „English“, probably

⁷ *Canice Mooney*, *The Church in Gaelic Ireland. Thirteenth to Fifteenth Centuries* (Gill and Macmillan Hist. of Irish Catholicism 2/5, Dublin 1969) 57; cited as follows: *Mooney*, Church.

to some extent reflects penetration of the diocese of Meath as a whole by Gaelic clerics. Migrancy or at least „parvenu“ status seems to be implicit in the description of one of the petitioners from the diocese, (?)Ninian Olaycharayn, in 1474, as *ad presens in diocesi Midensi moram trahens*⁸.

The same test of surnames applied to the diocese of Kildare suggests that the process there, if correctly diagnosed in the case of Meath, was further advanced. Of the 62 petitioners for Kildare only 3 have surnames of English origin. The very starkness of this statistic, however, prompts caution. It is necessary to emphasise what, at most, the distinction means. The proportions noted are not in themselves a reliable indication that the clergy of Kildare from the second half of the fifteenth century was overwhelmingly Gaelic. They state rather the fact that those applying to the papal penitentiary for dispensation over illegitimacy were so. Certainly, the impression for Kildare generated by the survey's record of illegitimacy is in keeping with the evidence from the *obligationes pro annatis* which have been published in sequence for the Irish dioceses up to the Reformation and therefore constitute a quick – if sometimes uninformative and potentially misleading – means of reaching an overview of recourse to the papal government. In over four-fifths of the Annates entries in respect of benefices in Kildare diocese the clerics named as obliging themselves have Gaelic names.⁹ However, the possibility, for which there is some evidence elsewhere, that Gaelic clerics may when competing with clerics of Anglo-Irish culture have had disproportionate recourse to papal provision forbids the assumption that the ratio noted is a true impression of the state of the diocese. This is one of many instances in which the interpreter is handicapped by being forced, as – aside from the exceptional survival of native sources noted above – he typically is in late medieval Irish ecclesiastical history, to depend for his prosopography on a single archival source, however bountiful and however diverse.

So far, in its details, I have been commenting on the survey's evidence for the activity of Gaelic clerics within the „English“ eastern cultural zone. A single instance revealed by the lists of movement in the other direction – at least from the inner to the further range of that zone – is of disproportionate interest. One of the Dublin clerics of „English“ extraction, Richard Mey, son of a priest and an unmarried woman, was stated in his petition, granted in February 1495, for dispensation from the defect, to dwell in the diocese of Kildare¹⁰, where, in the third year of Alexander VI – roughly contemporaneously therefore with his dispensation and perhaps constituting the motivation for it, since he was himself already a priest – he had a mandate from the papal chancery for his provision to a vicarage, subject to the deprivation of its possessor. Although the letter is lost and the case is, pending investigation for Ireland of the Registers of Supplications, known only from Vatican Archives Indice 339 and without contextual details¹¹, it is clear that Mey was „Rome running“. This would have been impossible (or at the very least, a great deal

⁸ Reg. Pen. 22 187r.

⁹ *Obligationes pro Annatis Diocesis Darenensis*, in: Arch. Hibernicum 2 (1913) 39*–72*.

¹⁰ Reg. Pen. 44 357r.

¹¹ Anne P. Fuller, *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland*. Papal Letters (künftig: Calendar), vol. 16 (Dublin 1986) 637 n. 1189.

more difficult) for him in the diocese of Dublin itself and it would seem that he had been tempted to try his luck in the adjoining diocese, where a Dubliner would still feel culturally comfortable but where the penalties of the Statutes of Provisors would not be enforced. Although this is the only instance of such movement revealed by these lists, the case is unlikely to be quite isolated, and I have in fact elsewhere noted recourse to papal provision by clerics native to or active in the Pale in respect of the area beyond the king's effective jurisdiction.¹²

I have dwelt at what may appear length on material which, although relating to some of the richest and most populous dioceses, constitutes just less than 10% of the Irish dispensations. My justification for doing so is the interest of the cultural issues raised and the need to acknowledge problems of source-material which are common to the general scene. I turn now to the 90% of Irish dispensations which reflect the rest of the country, territorially the largest part. It is important to remember that, although outside of the king's effective jurisdiction, especially as the fifteenth century advanced, it was neither culturally nor politically homogeneous. Dioceses such as Ossory, Waterford and Lismore, Cashel, Emly, Limerick, Cork and Ross and Ardfert had been more or less heavily affected by Anglo-Norman settlement and families which originated in that settlement remained prominent in church organization there during the later middle ages. There were the dioceses of Tuam and Annaghdown where a family of Anglo-Norman extraction, that of de Burgo, an important quantity in ecclesiastical terms, had become almost indistinguishable from the surrounding Gaelic culture. It had even acquired a Gaelic name, MacWilliam, though its members seem to have used de Burgo in their extensive recourse to the curia. Then there were dioceses, notably those of west Ulster – most of Armagh, Clogher, Kilmore, Derry, Raphoe – which were wholly Gaelic, racially, culturally, politically and ecclesiastically.

It will be most convenient to proceed directly to and to work outwards from observations on the structures of the church at its most socially homogeneous, in the Gaelic areas, as reflected in the Penitentiary dispensations for illegitimacy. An important feature of Gaelic society in this context is the fact that its major professions were hereditary castes. It was an especially difficult cultural stock on to which to graft a general ethic of clerical celibacy and from which to prune the vice, as perceived by the Hildebrandine reform, of hereditary succession to ecclesiastical benefice. Long-term failure of the reform on the one count might without difficulty be documented copiously from the papal registers throughout the later middle ages, not so much in the recurring accusations of concubinage advanced against incumbents by competitors for their benefices – the impression that I have formed is that such accusations are in fact a good deal less common than might on the evidence be expected – as in the very considerable numbers of those who in suing out title to benefice require dispensation from the defect of birth occasioned by the fact that their fathers are in major orders. Even that circumstance is, indeed, potentially misleading as to the prevalence of abuse by canonical standards, since it makes no reckoning of the extent to which titular holders of benefices with cure failed to receive the major

¹² *Haren*, *Balancing the Books* (see note 4), 87f.

orders demanded in consequence and thus avoided or postponed the obligation of celibacy in the first place. The letter of the law might in this respect be honoured in the exact measure of its breach. Failure of the reform on the other count is less susceptible of adequate documentation since the canon law on the subject was, as regards Gaelic society, ill-suited to one of the main objects of the reformers, the prising of benefices from proprietary control. In a society structured not on primogeniture but on the wider kin-group, direct filial succession is only the tip of the iceberg of family exclusiveness and, normally, it is only in respect of direct filial succession that the papal sources are an explicit and detailed witness to Gaelic-style „Eigenkirchenwesen“. When Thady OMeagher, cleric of Killaloe diocese, obtained a papal mandate in 1425 for collation to him of the perpetual vicarage of Bourney (county Tipperary), void because John OMeagher, who was to be removed, held it for ten years without having himself ordained priest and without dispensation in that respect, he recorded not only his own defect of birth as the son of unmarried parents, simply, but that „when a clerk the said John [sc. the current holder of the benefice] begat Thady's father“. ¹³ Such deference to agnatic title in the context is however as unusual as it is interesting in its circumspection.

Among many cases which could be studied of family control of a secular benefice, that of Inishmacsaint (county Fermanagh, diocese of Clogher) will serve to illustrate signal aspects of the context in which these Penitentiary dispensations must be set. On 29 March 1490, Bartholomew OFlanagan, cleric of Clogher diocese, had a mandate from Innocent VIII directed to the abbot and prior respectively of the neighbouring monasteries of Lisgoole and Devenish – the latter, very probably, another member of Bartholomew's family, Raymund OFlanagan ¹⁴ – and to Malachy OFlanagan, canon of Clonmacnois, in respect of the rectory of the parish church of Inishmacsaint. The rectory, it was stated „is vacant and has been for so long that by the Lateran statutes its collation has lawfully devolved on the apostolic see, and whereas Bartholomew alleges that his father, James Oflannagan, a married cleric, has occupied the fruits etc. of the said church for a certain time and still does so“, the pope ordered the mandataries to collate it to Bartholomew, with removal of unlawful detainer. ¹⁵ This episode is not at all, of course, some Turgenevian generational conflict. It is the smooth transition of benefice from father to son, or at least as smooth a transition as might be expected in a canon law system which strictly discountenanced such a manoeuvre. According to the norms of that system, if James's title was sound Bartholomew could not succeed him without an intervening incumbent and although dispensations from this are not unknown they were in practice rarely forthcoming even in this period – or, to be more precise, they were rarely within the means of Irish clerics to pay for their impetration. (The rectory of Inishmacsaint was given as worth four marks sterling and, even allowing for undervaluation, it was evidently not a rich prize. The priory of Devenish, which in 1460 the then prior, Bartholomew OFlanagan, passed to his son, Laurence, with the approval of Pius II's chancery, evidently evoked

¹³ *J.A. Twemlow*, *Calendar* (see note 11), vol. 7 (London 1906) 398f.

¹⁴ Raymund OFlanagan was prior in 1504, really as well as nominally, since he then obtained the union of several benefices to his priory. *Michael J. Haren*, *Calendar* (see note 11), vol. 18 (Dublin 1989) n. 367.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, *Calendar* (see note 11), vol. 15 (Dublin 1978) n. 475.

greater efforts.¹⁶) But there was no pressing need for dispensation: simpler that father's title should be impugned, that he should be removed by the appointed judges as an unlawful possessor and that his son should replace him, wrapping himself in the cloak of a papal bull of provision, backed by all the interest which his family commanded on the ground, against the piercing gaze of a jealous rival. If difficulty arose on the next turn a member of the wider kin-group could be used to break the line of direct transmission.

Thinly disguised by the peculiar terms in which James's status is described is the fact that the OFlanagans were „erenaghs“ or hereditary farmers of the church lands of Inishmacsaint, a function which did not require clerical, and certainly not major, orders and for which canon law had no satisfactory nomenclature – though *arrendatarius* or some equivalent is more often found than the oblique introduction by which Bartholomew ingenuously presented his father to the inspection of the papal chancery. The family connection with the benefice can be followed, if somewhat sporadically, through much of the century. In 1427, Nicholas OFlanagan, priest, reported to Martin V that after his having had papal dispensation over his illegitimacy as the son of a religious professed of the order of St Augustine – no doubt a canon or perhaps the prior, even, of Devenish – and an unmarried woman, he had obtained the rectory of Inishmacsaint, which he had then resigned on obtaining episcopal collation to other, incompatible benefice, contested with rival claimants.¹⁷ In 1452, Raymund OFlanagan, a twenty-four years old cleric, who had studied canon law at the universities of Oxford and Bologna and who described himself as „of a race of dukes“ – he was the son of a priest, a canon, OSA, and an unmarried woman, from whom probably derived the claim to „ducal“ status – was holding the rectory when he preferred charges against John MacCawell, archdeacon of Clogher, on grounds that he had committed perjury, was a public and notorious fornicator and had alienated the possessions of the archdeaconry.¹⁸

If the OFlanagans had also a monastic wing, family proprietorship of a religious house can be better demonstrated, because it is more fully documented, in the case of the Augustinian priory of Monaincha (county Tipperary, diocese of Killaloe). This seems in the period to have been firmly within the control of the OMeagher family and, as above dispute – at least so far as outsiders were concerned – might not have come into the papal records at all. However, the fact that, being a conventual priory, it fell under the general reservation, or, very likely, the pressure of some underlying anxiety locally seems to have prompted rather regular recourse to the curia for formal sanction when the prior changed. In March 1413, Marianus OMeagher, vicar of Kilvemnon (county Tipperary), the son of unmarried parents, had mandate from John XXIII to be admitted as canon with collation of the priory, as vacant by the death of Thomas OMeagher.¹⁹ What happened is unknown but in July 1415, John XXIII provided it, on its vacancy by the death of Dermot OMeagher, to his son, Donald, aged about twenty-four, and, perhaps significantly, then

¹⁶ J.A. Twemlow, *Calendar* (see note 11), vol. 12 (London 1933) 99f.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, *Calendar* (see note 11), vol. 8 (London 1909) 48f.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, *Calendar* (see note 11), vol. 10 (London 1915) 588f. He was evidently still studying at Bologna at this time since in 1454 he had added civil law to his reference (*ibid.*, 695).

¹⁹ *Ibid.* *Calendar* (see note 11), vol. 6 (London 1904) 389.

already a canon, OSA.²⁰ There was probably competition between rival branches of the family. In January 1419, Donald – son of the late Donatus OMeagher, a layman, and an unmarried woman – also said to be a canon of the house, had collation of the priory, void because Donald OMeagher (evidently the prior provided in 1415) had become a Friar Minor²¹; in what capacity is unclear: the Franciscan priory of Ennis had strong OBrien associations. Then, in 1455, a complicated series of transactions took place. On 20 February, two separate but related mandates issued: one, that the resignation be admitted of Keruallus OBogue (Obuaigi), prior of the Augustinian house of Aghmacart (county Laois), in the diocese of Ossory, and that the priory of the same be provided to Dermot OMeagher, canon of Monaincha, son of a canon, OSA, and an unmarried woman, related in double fourth degrees of consanguinity²²; and another, that Donald OMeagher's resignation be admitted of the priory of Monaincha and that this be provided to Patrick OBogue, Augustinian canon of Aghmacart.²³ Next, on 12 June, Dermot OMeagher, resigned Aghmacart to exchange it with Patrick OBogue for Monaincha.²⁴ It may be taken that Dermot was Donald's son – probably, in view of the terms of his dispensation, born when his father was still canon, and thus about thirty-six years old in 1455. The elaborate arrangement was devised to facilitate his succession. The OBogues cannot be shown to have had a motive on the occasion, since Patrick was said to suffer simple illegitimacy; there will have been other compensation, and side-letters locally to cover the exposure in respect of benefices of unequal value, a disparity which evoked the diplomatic caution „that there should be no corruption in respect of the resignations“²⁵. The peculiarity occasioned by the exchange in the history of the title of Aghmacart was carefully recalled on the death of Patrick OBogue.²⁶ The latter's brief, titular occupancy of Monaincha was also recalled later. It continued to be useful. When Dermot OMeagher's son, Donald, succeeded in 1487, he did so on the basis that the priory was vacant by the death of Patrick – which had occurred some twenty-one years previously, eleven years after his resignation – and had his father ousted accordingly as an unlawful possessor.²⁷

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 467.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Calendar (see note 11), vol. 7 141.

²² *Ibid.*, Calendar (see note 11), vol. 10 674.

²³ *Ibid.*, 678.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Calendar (see note 11), vol. 11 (London 1921) 11.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ In 1466 Aghmacart was collated as vacant by the death of Patrick or by the death of Charles OBogue or by his resignation or by the resignation of Dermot OMeagher. *J.A. Twemlow*, Calendar (see note 11), vol. 12 540.

²⁷ According to *ibid.*, 540, the 1466 provision to Aghmacart, in recalling Dermot OMeagher's resignation, refers to him as „late“. This would appear erroneous, however, since the recapitulation of the title to Monaincha in 1487 takes no account of his having died in the interval. Monaincha is supposed to be vacant by the death of Patrick OBogue or by his resignation or by the resignation of Donald OMeagher – evidently therefore the Donald of 1455. It is improbable that such a circumstance as his death (or the intervention of a second Donald) should have been omitted in what was otherwise a most circumspect, if tendentious, account. In any case, the motive for the preposterous claim that Monaincha was vacant by the death of Patrick OBogue was evidently to avoid the inconvenience of acknowledging filial succession. *Ibid.*, Calendar (see note 11), vol. 14 (London 1960) 171f.

Examples of this kind could be multiplied. They could also be drawn from a Hiberno-Norman family such as the FitzMaurices in their dealing with the Augustinian abbey of Rattoo or in their jostling over the Cistercian Abbeydorney (both county Kerry, diocese of Ardfert). They show clerics' sons as part of an ecclesiastico-political economy which accommodated them and perhaps even demanded them. Its classic centre was the family monastery or parish benefice, from which or round which ambitious clerics might build up more extensive interests. The association with specific benefice is usually crucial to the identification of clerics' sons and conversely their identification is crucial to evaluating their place within the ecclesiastical economy.

A large deficiency of the Penitentiary dispensations is that they generally lack the precise information which facilitates identification. One notable exception to this problem is the sons of bishops. There are twenty-two sons of bishops recorded in these lists – that is, in the period 1449 to 1533, though the latest case is in fact for 1522 – all but one by *solutae*. Peter OHedian, of Cashel diocese, dispensed in 1453²⁸, may probably be taken to be the son of Richard, archbishop of Cashel (1406–1440). The John MacGuire, of Clogher diocese, dispensed in 1464²⁹ is more likely to be the son of Bishop Ross (1447–1483) whose obituary in 1501 occurs in the Annals of Ulster, than of Bishop Pierse; similarly, and *a fortiori*, Thomas, Laurence and Cathal (*Katholicus*), dispensed together in 1474,³⁰ Peter OFlanagan, of Clogher diocese, dispensed in 1483³¹, must be a son of Bartholomew, bishop of Derry from 1458 until his resignation in 1465. Thomas Purcell, of Cloyne diocese, dispensed in 1491³², whose father's status is given as *clericus* with the note *nunc vero episcopus*, is evidently a son of Thomas, bishop of Waterford and Lismore (c. 1483–1519), born before his father's becoming bishop. Edmund OHedian, of Elphin diocese, dispensed in 1457³³, is no doubt a son of Bishop William, bishop of Elphin from 1429 until his translation to Emly in 1449. Richard Nevill of Ferns, dispensed in 1511³⁴, is evidently the son of Bishop Laurence (1479–1503). Denis Ó Connmhaigh, of Kilfenora, dispensed in 1450³⁵, must be the son of Bishop Denis (1434–1491) and was thus not more than sixteen years of age at this point. The father of Matthew OBrien, of Killaloe, dispensed in May 1460³⁶, was evidently Bishop Donatus (1443–*ante* August 1460), while the father of Donald, dispensed in 1502, was evidently Toirdhealbhach mac Mathghamhna Ó Briain (1483–1502). The circumstances of this extraordinary case will be dealt with separately. Laurence Ó Donnchada (Ydonchu) of Kilmacduagh, dispensed in 1471³⁷, must be the son of Bishop Denis (1441–1478). John Magamran, of Kilmore

²⁸ Reg. Pen. 4 172r.

²⁹ Ibid., 13 250v.

³⁰ Ibid., 22 185r.

³¹ Ibid., 32 208r.

³² Ibid., 40 500r.

³³ Ibid., 6 91r.

³⁴ Ibid., 56 839r.

³⁵ Ibid., 4 36v.

³⁶ Ibid., 8 249r.

³⁷ Ibid., 20 227r.

diocese, dispensed in 1481³⁸, must be the son of the claimant bishop, Cormac Mág Shamhradháin (1476–1512). Either he was dispensed at tender age or what is given is his father's current status. John is described as *clericus*. Patrick Cantwell, of Lismore diocese, dispensed in 1458³⁹, must be the son of Bishop Richard Cantwell of Waterford and Lismore (1426–1446). James Hedra, of Ossory diocese, *clericus*, dispensed in 1480⁴⁰, if the son of John, bishop of Ossory (1479–1487), would most plausibly be giving his father's current status rather than his status at the time of birth. William OHedian, bishop of Emly, who died *post* February 1475, is another candidate as father, though the son's choice of diocese makes John more probable. William Cantwell, of Ossory diocese, dispensed in 1522⁴¹, must be the son of the Dominican, Oliver Cantwell (1487–1527). Four clerics with versions of the surname Ó Gallchobhair occur from Raphoe diocese, evidently the sons of Bishop Lochlainn (1442–1479): John and James, dispensed in 1463⁴²; Laurence, dispensed in 1469⁴³ and another John, dispensed in 1476⁴⁴. Donald MacCarthy, of Ross diocese, dispensed in 1501, must be the son of Bishop Thady, erroneously provided to Ross in 1482 and subsequently bishop of Cork and Cloyne (1490–1492).⁴⁵

Regular clergy too, even when not associated with specific benefice, can sometimes be seen in limited social context, as inheriting their father's avocation. There are some thirty-six certain instances, distributed as follows between the orders: 4 Augustinian friars; 1 Carmelite; 13 Cistercians; 11 Augustinian canons; 1 Cruciferian; 3 Premonstratensians; 1 Benedictine. In two cases, sons choose a different order to their fathers'. One nun, Joanna Barrett, of Lismullin (county Meath), dispensed in 1511⁴⁶, was the daughter of a canon, probably though not certainly regular. Of the Cistercians, Donatus Omulwardayn alias Obroych, a monk of Kilcooly (county Tipperary), dispensed in 1487 as the son of a Cistercian abbot⁴⁷, was evidently related to and may have been the son of the John OMulwarden alias OBrophy, who was abbot of the same in 1507⁴⁸. Quite certainly, however, this count of sons „inheriting“ their fathers' regular status is far short of the total contained in the lists, since in perhaps the majority of cases where the son of a regular father is described simply as *clericus* or *scholaris* it may be thought that he was likely to proceed later to profession. Another way of expressing this feature of the lists is that there was an evident tendency, hardly surprising, for regular clergy to imitate their secular fellows, in both fathering children – approximately 8.5% of the fathers are regulars – and to a limited extent, so far as can be demonstrated (in approximately 23% of cases of regu-

³⁸ Ibid., 31 202v.

³⁹ Ibid., 6 126v.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 30 125r.

⁴¹ Ibid., 67 43r.

⁴² Ibid., 11 307r., 317r.

⁴³ Ibid., 17 179v.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 24 217v.

⁴⁵ The lists do not contain the names of all known bishops' sons for the period. For some other instances, see *Mooney*, Church (see note 7), 57–59.

⁴⁶ Reg. Pen. 56 828v.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 36 330r.

⁴⁸ *Haren*, Calendar (see note 11), vol. 18 n. 740.

lar fathers), transmitting a regular life to their sons. This comparison with the secular clergy rather than measurement against an abstract standard of canon law or regular discipline is perhaps a less misleading assessment of their conduct if one wishes to gauge the contemporary impression occasioned.

As will be seen from Table 2, the Irish lists heavily comprise the offspring of clerical fathers (well over half of the whole). In this respect the survey is to be distinguished from a survey of illegitimacy as a general social phenomenon. Well over half the Clogher petitioners have fathers who are clerics (most of them priests). In the case of Clonfert, 31 out of 40 fathers are clerics, most of them priests or religious. In the case of Derry, 56 out of 90. However, all this is most likely to understate the case considerably, though, even with the most extensive collation of family names against all the other records (most of them, in the case of Ireland, of Vatican Archives provenance) affording details of clerical careers, it would be difficult to estimate by what margin. That a petitioner's father was *solutus* at the time of his birth does not preclude his having subsequently proceeded to orders and his having remained unmarried, though in a liaison, with the intention of doing so. One may not expect often to find documentation of such a background, except in the occasional instance of hesitation shown by petitioners over their father's status. However, a specific instance may be quoted. In March 1512, William Machrayg, cleric of Dromore diocese, obtained a mandate from Julius II for collation to him *inter alia* of a benefice possessed by his father, then a priest. It seems, however, that at the time of his birth, his father was *solutus*, simply, for William, in impetrating the bull, rehearsed that he had been dispensed by papal authority accordingly.⁴⁹ Moreover, the dispensation, issued in February 1512, is now known from the Penitentiary lists.⁵⁰ An interesting case from Kilmore shows not indeed a transition from *solutus* to *clericus* but a hardly less abrupt unprogrammed progression to major orders. Odo OSheridan, a canon of the Premonstratensian house of Lough Oughter, dispensed in 1491, was the son of a priest and „a certain woman with whom his father, before, by her consent, he was promoted to major orders, had contracted marriage *per verba de presenti*“⁵¹. This seems to be a case of actual clerical marriage, suspended for the purpose of the reception of sacred orders, and then recommenced. Such evidence of fluidity cautions against assigning the subjects of the survey too readily to definitive categories.

When allowance is made for some understatement in the information supplied by petitioners of the extent of clerical pedigree, there remains the question of interpreting the entry into the clerical profession of those whose fathers were indeed, fixedly, laymen – with discount of families whose erenagh status left them in a twilight world ecclesiastically. This is the next largest potential contribution of the new information to an understanding of the social structures of the Irish church. Again, until exhaustive collation is possible, extending up to the Reformation itself, of the names of those dispensed by the Penitentiary with the names of those featuring in the archival sources for papal provisions, judgement must be reserved as to how far such an access to the clerical profession contri-

⁴⁹ ASV L 1265 217v–222r.

⁵⁰ Reg. Pen. 57 10v.

⁵¹ Ibid., 41 332v.

buted to the intense competition for benefices in late medieval Ireland which is so evident a feature of that system. Judgement must be equally reserved as to how far such entrants to the clerical profession constitute a clerical proletariat – so to speak – without aspiration to benefice, of a type which is well known elsewhere but which is more than usually concealed from view in the case of Ireland, where, as I have already emphasised, the evidence, deriving so heavily from the Vatican Archives, is biased towards business linked with benefice. In the meantime, an impression may be recorded. Notwithstanding the case just cited of William Machrayg, it is less easy than might be expected a priori to match the names from the Penitentiary lists with those revealed by the other registers. The effect will be due in part, no doubt, to the hazard of losses between the series. It may be, however, that there is in some measure a real mis-match. For this there are several possible explanations, aside from the sub-class postulated above. Families which had business with the chancery – such as the impetration of title to benefice – may well have deferred seeking a dispensation for illegitimacy until it could be included with the bull of provision. On the other hand, some at least of those who had their dispensation from the Penitentiary may have been so secure in their title that they had no beneficiary business to transact. This is a recurring conundrum in the interpretation of the welter of provisions to late medieval Ireland. Are the really successful those who are least documented?

There is little scope to speak of wider social aspects of the evidence. Two concluding observations may be of interest. The incidence of parents who are severally married at the time of their child's birth is low. This despite the ease, complained of by eleventh and twelfth century reformers, with which the Brehon (or native secular) law system was prepared to contemplate divorce. I am aware that this judgement is premised on the unverifiable, if reasonable, assumption that the parents' marital status would be given by petitioners in canonical rather than in Brehon law terms. On another count, it is noteworthy that of true incest the incidence in the lists would appear to be a single case, though that a startling one. The mother of Cornelius and Tatheus O'Brien, clerics of Killaloe diocese – members of the ruling dynasty – dispensed in June 1482⁵² and May 1485⁵³, respectively, was their sister, with whom their and her father was also connected, through fornication, by the quadruple second degree of affinity. Since she is distinctive as an Augustinian abbess, it is certain that they were brothers. In that case, the fact that their dispensations are separated by three years, taken with the fact that while the father of the presumed elder, Cornelius, is described as *solutus*, Tatheus's father is described as *coniugatus*, gives rise to a supposition that the relationship continued for several years at least after their mother's becoming abbess and, perhaps, for some time after their father's marriage. Seventeen years after the later of these dispensations – in May 1502 – Donald O'Brien, of the diocese, was dispensed as the son of an abbess and a bishop.⁵⁴ His parents were related in the second degree of consanguinity and in the double second of affinity.⁵⁵ Despite the interval, Cornelius, Tatheus and Donald may be supposed to have the same mother. In a

⁵² Ibid., 31 217v.

⁵³ Ibid., 34 273r.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 50 345r.

⁵⁵ The details are amplified in ASV L 1244 192v–196r.

later papal letter in Donald's favour she is identified as the abbess of the monastery of St John the Baptist, OSA, of Killaloe diocese, therefore Killone (county Clare)⁵⁶. The father of Donald, who has occurred above in the list of bishops' sons, was Toirdhealbhadh (Theoderic) mac Mathghamhna Ó Briain (1483–1526). Though the conclusion is to an extent speculative, the most likely candidate to be the abbess's father is Conchobhar Mór Ó Briain (Conchobhar na Srón – Connor „of the Nose“), who maintained himself as head of the OBriens for thirty years until his death in 1496⁵⁷. His unsavoury reputation lasted long, being preserved to history in a late but not implausible account of how a Franciscan friar laboured mightily to overcome his resistance to confession and to bring him to repentance on his deathbed.⁵⁸ Sadly, we are not told what was confessed.

The bizarre case of Bishop Toirdhealbhadh apart, one general conclusion prompted by the lists is that the sexual liaisons of Irish clerics in the period cannot, except in the most formal and abstract sense and by a standard of Irish clerical discipline that became generally effective only in a later age, be presented as the aberrations or lapses that they have sometimes been thought to be. „Sad proof“, wrote the late Professor Aubrey Gwynn, contemplating evidence that Bishop Cormac Mág Shamhradháin of Kilmore – whose son has been mentioned above – was himself the son of a bishop, „that the law of celibacy was not always observed in these years of distress and confusion“⁵⁹. If the historian's task is to estimate how the clerics whose children are so large a part of this survey were regarded generally within their society, the sources offer little direct assistance and the sober records of the Penitentiary nothing beyond the statistics which urge the enquiry. Even the indictments of contemporary reformers in their attempts to correct what they found scandalous may be a fallacious guide. Here judgements will, perforce, usually be at the level of supposition and, at best, be indirectly founded. The case may be briefly recalled of Cathal Óg MacManus Maguire, who died in 1498. In addition to minor benefice, he was a canon of Armagh and Clogher cathedrals, dean of Lough Erne, rector of Inishkeen and for fifteen years effective administrator of the diocese of Clogher. (He is sometimes called vicar-general of the diocese. The term used in the Annals of Ulster, of which he was chief compiler, is more nuanced: „fer in aid espuic“, literally „the man in place of bishop“.⁶⁰ He had in fact resisted the entry of the papally provided bishop, the Franciscan outsider, Edmund de Courcy, when the latter attempted to take possession of his diocese in 1485 and he kept him permanently excluded⁶¹.) In a very real sense, Cathal Óg's success was without benefit of papal provision. But then perhaps it was ultimately failure: had episcopate depended on election he would have been bishop. Within his sphere, undeniably, he

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ His genealogy is contained in *Tadhg O Donnchadha*, *An leabhar Muimhneach* (Dublin 1940) 345. I am grateful to Professor Francis John Byrne for his advice and assistance with the OBrien genealogies.

⁵⁸ B. Jennings, Brussels Ms. 3947. Donatus Moneyus. *De Provincia Hiberniae S. Francisci*, in: *Analecta Hibernica* 6 (1934) 60–62.

⁵⁹ Aubrey Gwynn, *The Medieval Province of Armagh 1470–1545* (Dundalk 1946) 158; cited as follows: Gwynn, *Province of Armagh*.

⁶⁰ W. Hennessy, B. MacCarthy, *Annala Uladh. Annals of Ulster. A Chronicle of Irish Affairs from A.D. 431 to A.D. 1540*, vol. 3 (Dublin 1887–1901) 428f; cited as follows: Hennessy, MacCarthy, *Annals of Ulster*.

⁶¹ Gwynn, *Province of Armagh* (see note 59), 166–169.

was a great ecclesiastic and the father of over a dozen children. One of them, his son Thomas, who took up the continuation of his annals as well as the officialship of the deanery of Lough Erne, wrote his obituary, in literal keeping with Ecclesiasticus's injunction to praise famous men. Its paradoxical quality has much delighted historians, for among Cathal's virtues is noted not only that he was „the stored chest of wisdom and the fruitful branch of the Canon ... full of grace and of knowledge in every science, both law and divinity“ but that he was, too, „for purity of heart the dove, for chastity the turtle dove“.⁶² In face of this testimony several reactions are possible. The late Fr Canice Mooney, in mild Franciscan rebuke, confessed to „a certain puzzlement“.⁶³ But perhaps one must rather accept that the standard being applied, if not that which would have been endorsed by a Peter Damian as the model of a senior ecclesiastic, was one that was by no means ridiculous to Cathal Óg's society: even with allowance for filial piety and for propagandist interest there is every reason to think that the annalist at this point expected to be taken seriously in lauding his father's memory and requesting prayers for him. The mother of Cathal Óg's children was a daughter of a neighbouring chieftain.⁶⁴ A cleric who may be his son Thomas in a papal provision issued to him in 1479 describes himself as „son of a priest and an unmarried woman, both of a race of princes“⁶⁵ and even if this is not Cathal's son but a cousin, as is possible, the point remains. Granted that according to the Canon of which he was such a fruitful branch Cathal Óg's union must be deemed concubinage, was it by the standards of the society of which both he and his „wife“ were pillars a well ordered and chaste household? Certainly „concubinage“ is not right: it conjures up misleading images of fast living. It was only where two systems met that language proved inadequate to maintaining decencies. One point at which systems met was the section of Papal Penitentiary registers containing the dispensations *de defectu natalium* and we cannot easily know quite how that formal hurdle in the race of life was regarded by those who were used in other contexts to think of themselves not as defective but as the progeny of learned men, of great ecclesiastics, even of dukes and princes.

⁶² Hennessy, MacCarthy, *Annals of Ulster* (see note 60), vol. 3 428–431.

⁶³ Mooney, *Church* (see note 7), 60.

⁶⁴ Gwynn, *Province of Armagh* (see note 59), 175.

⁶⁵ J.A. Twemlow, *Calendar* (see note 11), vol. 13 (London 1955) 700.

Appendix

Table 1: Incidence by Year of the Dispensations for Ireland

Year	Frequency	Percent	Year	Frequency	Percent
1449	10	0.5	1487	29	1.5
1450	123	6.5	1488	31	1.6
1451	14	0.7	1489	14	0.7
1452	21	1.1	1490	23	1.2
1453	49	2.6	1491	26	1.4
1454	30	1.6	1492	16	0.8
1455	40	2.1	1493	19	1.0
1456	35	1.8	1494	21	1.1
1457	23	1.2	1495	7	0.4
1458	26	1.4	1496	7	0.4
1459	13	0.7	1497	3	0.2
1460	65	3.4	1498	5	0.3
1461	58	3.0	1499	4	0.2
1462	11	0.6	1500	9	0.5
1463	61	3.2	1501	11	0.6
1464	53	2.8	1502	15	0.8
1465	31	1.6	1503	1	0.1
1466	53	2.8	1504	3	0.2
1467	28	1.5	1507	25	1.3
1468	28	1.5	1508	33	1.7
1469	72	3.8	1510	16	0.8
1470	34	1.8	1511	13	0.7
1471	41	2.2	1512	37	1.9
1472	30	1.6	1513	2	0.1
1473	66	3.5	1516	31	1.6
1474	26	1.4	1517	29	1.5
1475	72	3.8	1518	4	0.2
1476	52	2.7	1519	10	0.5
1477	20	1.1	1520	10	0.5
1478	13	0.7	1521	3	0.2
1479	13	0.7	1522	25	1.3
1480	24	1.3	1523	10	0.5
1481	14	0.7	1524	7	0.4
1482	17	0.9	1532	13	0.7
1483	25	1.3	1533	4	0.2
1484	18	0.9			
1485	54	2.8			
1486	24	1.3			
			Total	1 903	100

Table 2: Status of Fathers of Irish Petitioners

Father	Frequency	Percent	Father	Frequency	Percent
ABB	8	0.4	PRE OCARM	1	0.1
ABB OCIST	10	0.5	PRE OCRUC	4	0.2
ABB OSA	10	0.5	PRE OFM	3	0.2
ACL	1	0.1	PRE OP	2	0.1
CAN	10	0.5	PRE OSA	12	0.6
CAN OPRAEM	1	0.1	PRE OSAERM	2	0.1
CAN OSA	10	0.5	PRE OSJOH	1	0.1
CLE	136	7.1	PRE OSTRIN	1	0.1
CLE SOL	7	0.4	PRE PRI OSA	3	0.2
CLE/PRE	4	0.2	PRE PRI OSB	3	0.2
CON	34	1.8	PRE REL	6	0.6
CON/SOL	1	0.1	PRE/CAN	4	0.2
DIC	12	0.6	PRE/CAN	7	0.4
EPI	21	1.1	REL	8	0.4
EPI OP	1	0.1	REL OCIST	2	0.1
MON	2	0.1	REL OFM	2	0.1
MON OCIST	2	0.1	REL OSA	5	0.3
MON OSA	2	0.1	REL OSAERM	1	0.1
MON OSB	1	0.1	SOL	695	36.5
PRE	788	41.4	SOL NOB	2	0.1
PRE CAN	2	0.1	SOL/Cle	1	0.1
PRE CAN OPRAEM	1	0.1	SOL/CON	1	0.1
PRE CAN OSA	29	1.5	SOL/PRE	1	0.1
PRE CAN OSAERM	5	0.3	SUB	2	0.1
PRE CON	1	0.1	0	10	0.5
PRE MON	4	0.2			
PRE MON OCIST	16	0.8			
PRE MON OPRAEM	2	0.1			
PRE MON OSB	3	0.2			
			Total	1 903	100

Table 3: Status of Mothers of Irish Petitioners

Mother	Frequency	Percent
ABA	1	0.1
ABA OSA	2	0.1
CNA	118	6.2
CNA/SLA	2	0.1
MNA OSBRIG	1	0.1
RLA	1	0.1
SLA	1 745	91
SLA/CNA	22	1.2
0	11	0.6
Total	1 903	100

Table 4: Irish Dispensations by Diocese

Diocese	Frequency	Percent	Diocese	Frequency	Percent
Achonry	23	1.2	Kildare	62	3.3
Annaghdown	23	1.2	Kilfenora	26	1.4
Ardagh	42	2.2	Killala	23	1.2
Ardfert	120	6.3	Killaloe	170	8.9
Armagh	64	3.4	Kilmacduagh	15	0.8
Cashel	84	4.4	Kilmore	47	2.5
Clogher	75	3.9	Leighlin	85	4.5
Clonfert	40	2.1	Limerick	41	2.2
Clonmacnois	15	0.8	Lismore	35	1.8
Cloyne	70	3.7	Meath	90	4.7
Cork	75	3.9	Ossory	69	3.6
Derry	90	4.7	Raphoe	47	2.5
Down-Connor	83	4.4	Ross	50	2.6
Dromore	62	3.3	Tuam	89	4.7
Dublin	33	1.7	0	19	1.0
Elphin	65	3.4			
Emly	28	1.5			
Ferns	39	2.0			
Glendalough	4	0.2			
			Total	1 903	100

Late Medieval Irish Dioceses (with distribution of Papal Penitentiary dispensations for illegitimacy 1449-1533)