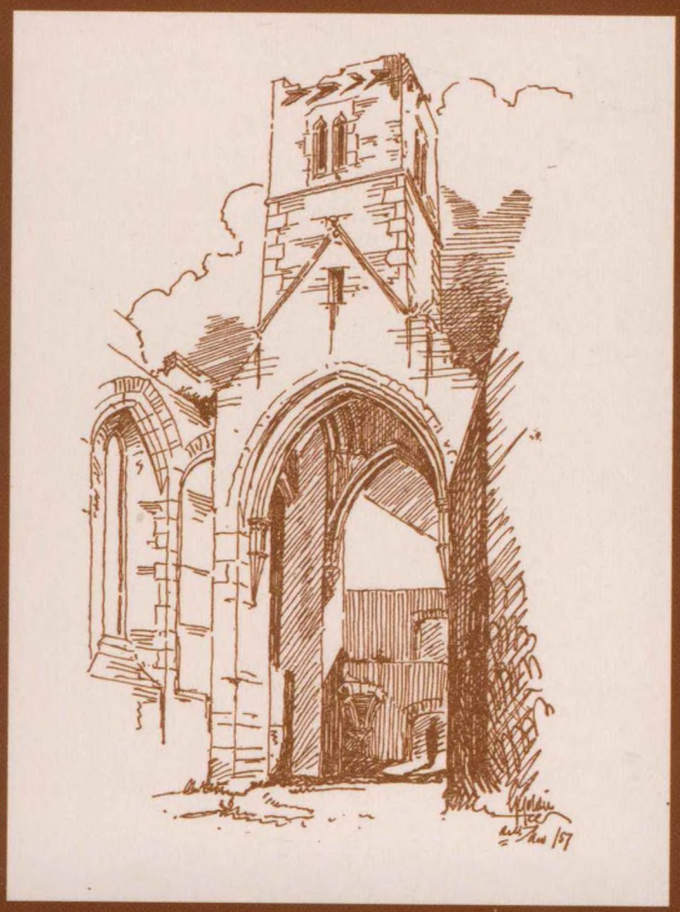
Medieval Irish Dominican Studies



Benedict O'Sullivan OP

Hugh Fenning OP, editor

MEDIEVAL IRISH DOMINICAN STUDIES

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Editor's Preface

These studies on the Dominicans or Friars Preachers of medieval Ireland are unique, for no other account of equal length exists. The author, Fr Benedict O'Sullivan, published them in no fewer than twenty-seven successive articles in the *Irish Rosary* between 1948 and 1953. Since that monthly journal, defunct since the early 1960s, can scarcely now be found, the very existence of Fr O'Sullivan's work is known to few and and read by hardly anyone. Writing a little later, in 1957, Daphne Pochin Mould covered the same ground in her fine history of the Friars Preachers in Ireland, but had to compress into sixty pages, enriched with plans and illustrations, what Father O'Sullivan had unfolded at his ease.

On the completion of the series in the *Irish Rosary*, the superiors of the Order thought of reprinting them as a book but were discouraged, it is said, by a scholar to whom they submitted the text. That objection does not seem to have been to the historical value of the work, but to the complete lack of references to the sources used. Some years ago, Professor Alfred Smyth of the University of Kent, Canterbury, warmly urged me to publish Fr O'Sullivan's work, even without footnotes, as a useful 'narrative' in its own right. Dr Eamon Duffy, author of *The Stripping of the Altars,* more recently suggested an unadorned reprinting of the text, but with an appropriate bibliography. The task was taken up with diffidence, since my own work has centred largely on the eighteenth century. In the end it seemed best to supply both the missing footnotes and a modest bibliography.

The original articles abound in capital letters and commas beyond number; these have been adjusted to suit current usage. Recurring references to the *Irish Rosary* and 'the last issue' have been silently changed to, for example, 'the last chapter', for each chapter here corresponds to one of the articles in the original series. Some obvious misprints, even of dates, have been silently corrected. The spelling of names, particularly those of Gaelic chiefs and prelates, has been brought into line with that used in the *New History of Ireland.* The actual content, however, is faithfully reproduced, despite the temptation either to cut parts of the text entirely or pare it back, especially in the discussion of founders of convents and certain passages which seemed irrelevant or fanciful. One has to bear in

mind that Fr O'Sullivan, who excelled as a preacher and lecturer, brought the skills of both professions to the writing of history.

According as Irish society becomes more secular, historians show less interest in church history than before. In the field of medieval studies, archaeology appears to enjoy more favour than narrative history, with the result that it is the early Middle Ages which take pride of place and little now appears in print relative to ecclesiastical concerns after 1200. It can hardly be coincidental that two recent books, one on the church in Derry and the other on the diocese of Dublin, contain no essay whatever on the three centuries between the arrival of the friars and their suppression in 1540. An even more recent book on preaching in Ireland before 1700 successfully traverses the Middle Ages without mentioning the 'Order of Friars Preachers' at all. The fault, to a large extent, lies with the mendicant orders themselves. There is still no general account of the Augustinians, though Dr F. X. Martin published some ground-breaking articles on the subject and Fr Thomas C. Butler wrote several excellent books on particular friaries. For the Carmelites, one can turn to Fr Peter O'Dwyer's *The Irish Carmelites* (Dublin, 1988), where the medieval period is well discussed in the first eighty pages. The Franciscans, so much more numerous than any other group, and so prolific in historical work for a century past, have only lately found an excellent general historian of the period in Francis J. Cotter, author of *The Friars Minor in Ireland from their Arrival to 1400* (New York, 1994). Colmán Ó Clabaigh OSB, even more recently, has published *The Franciscans in Ireland, 1400–1534: from Reform to Reformation* (Dublin, 2002), which emphasises the 'observant reform movement' among the friars of medieval Ireland.

For the Dominicans, some new archival material has been made available by H. Fenning, 'Irish material in the registers of the Dominican masters general (1390–1649)', in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum,* xxxix (1969), pp 249–336. Some of this has been put to good use by Thomas Flynn in the introductory chapter to his *The Irish Dominicans: 1536–1641* (Dublin, 1993), a work of special value in the present context for its study of the suppression of religious houses after 1536.

For help in the preparation of this volume I gladly thank Br Martin Cogan of St Mary's, Tallaght, who got me off to a good start by scanning the original twenty-seven articles from the *Irish Rosary.* Fr Ignatius Fennessy OFM of Killiney proved, as always, a constant source of practical help and encouragement. I have even more reason to thank Br Colmán Ó Clabaigh OSB of Glenstal, my only acquaintance in the field of Irish

medieval history. Br Colmán very kindly read and annotated my text, forcing me to supply even more references than intended and bringing some very recent publications to my attention. I am very grateful to all three.

Fr O'Sullivan was born at Drimoleague, Co. Cork, in 1887 and trained as a national school teacher at Drumcondra. After teaching for some years in Longford, he took the Dominican habit at Tallaght, Co. Dublin, in 1914 at the age of twenty-six. His study of philosophy and theology, begun at Tallaght, was completed at Rome where he was ordained in 1921 and took his 'lectorate' degree in theology at what is now the University of St Thomas. Thereafter he taught both at Tallaght and Newbridge College until his appointment in 1929 as vicar provincial in Australia. On his return in 1933 he served in various Irish houses, notably in Tralee where he was prior for six years (1947–53). The earliest evidence of his interest in history may lie in the undated pamphlet *Exiles for Christ* on medieval Dominican missionaries in the Near East, issued more than once by the Catholic Truth Society of Ireland as its booklet 'No. 1413'. In 1947, towards the end of his time at St Saviour's, Dublin, he read a paper on 'The Dominicans in Medieval Dublin' to the members of the Old Dublin Society. On his transfer to Tralee in the same year, he at once undertook the present more general study of the Irish Dominicans in medieval times, completing it while still at Tralee in 1953.

At the beginning of what proved to be the final article in this series, the writer referred to 'a later article' which would fully examine the introduction of reformed observance. Perhaps the editor of the *Irish Rosary* thought that, after twenty-seven articles, enough was enough and told him so while yet another instalment was in the author's mind. That would explain why the writer changed course, rounded off his theme and brought the long story to a fitting end with little more than a nod to reformed observance. One would have liked to read somewhat more about the Observant movement and about other topics too: the appointment of Dominicans as bishops in Ireland, the preaching of the Crusades, studies within the Order, the effect on numbers and morale caused by the Black Death, and the opposition of some prominent Anglo-Irish clerics of the Pale to the regular clergy.

From Tralee, where these 'Studies' were written, Fr O'Sullivan moved in 1962 to Waterford and there remained until his death in August 1970. During those final years, his interest in history grew rather than diminished, for besides publishing some articles on 'The Normans in

Munster' in the *Munster Express* (April–May 1967), he gave thirty-eight lectures on historical topics to the Old Waterford Society. Those lectures, which held even altarboys spellbound, were published in *Decies*, the journal of the Society, from Spring 1985.

Here, then, is Fr O'Sullivan's narrative account of the Dominicans in medieval Ireland. It may not be the last word on the subject, but it is certainly the first and is still the only one to hand. For good measure, it brings 'history' back to the 'story' which it was always meant to be.

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Sources and Abbreviations

Acta cap. gen.	*Acta capitulorum generalium ordinis fratrum praedicatorum, 1220–1844* (Rome, 1898–1904) ed. B.M. Reichert, 8 vols.
AFM	*Annala rioghacta Eireann: Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters,* ed. and trans. John O'Donovan (Dublin, 1851), 7 vols.
AGOP	Archivum Generale Ordinis Praedicatorum, Santa Sabina, Rome.
ALC	*The annals of Loch Cé: a chronicle of Irish affairs, 1014–1590,* ed. W.M. Hennessy (London, 1871), 2 vols.
Ann. Conn.	*Annála Connacht ... (1224–1544),* ed. A. Martin Freeman (Dublin, 1944).
Annals of Pembridge	'Annals of Ireland, 1162–1370' from MS Laud No. 526 in Bodleian Library, Oxford, ed. in John T. Gilbert, *Chartularies of St Mary's Abbey, Dublin* (London, 1884), ii, pp 303–98.
Archdall	Mervyn Archdall, *Monasticon Hibernicum* (London and Dublin, 1786).
Archiv. Hib.	*Archivium Hibernicum* (Dublin, 1912—).
ASV	Archivum Secretum Vaticanum, Vatican, Rome.
AU	*Annála Uladh, Annals of Ulster ... a chronicle of Irish affairs, 431–1541,* ed. W.M. Hennessy and B. MacCarty (Dublin, 1887–1901), 4 vols.
Bolster, *Diocese of Cork*	E. Bolster, *A history of the diocese of Cork from the earliest times to the Reformation* (Shannon, 1972).
Cal. doc. Ire.	*Calendar of documents relating to Ireland, 1171–1251* (London, 1875–86) ed. H. Sweetman, 5 vols.
Cal. papal letters	*Calendar of entries in the papal registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1893—).
Carrigan	W. Carrigan, *The history and antiquities of the diocese of Ossory* (Dublin, 1905), 4 vols.
Clyn, John	*The Annals of Ireland by Friar John Clyn,* ed. B. Williams (Dublin, 2007).
Collect. Hib.	*Collectanea Hibernica* (Dublin, 1958–2001).
Extents	Newport B. White (ed.), *Extents of Irish monastic possessions, 1540–41* (Dublin, 1943).
Fenning, 'Irish material'	H. Fenning, 'Irish material in the registers of the Dominican masters general (1390–1649)', in *Archivium Fratrum Praedicatorum*, xxxix (1969), 249–336.

Fitzmaurice & Little	E.B. Fitzmaurice and A.G. Little, *Materials for the history of the Franciscan province of Ireland, A.D. 1230–1450* (Manchester, 1920).
Flynn	T. Flynn, *The Irish Dominicans, 1536–1641* (Dublin, 1993).
Galway Arch. Soc. Jn.	*Journal of the Galway Archaeological Society*
Gwynn & Hadcock	A. Gwynn and R.N. Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses: Ireland* (London, 1970).
Hib. Dom.	Thomas de Burgo [Burke], *Hibernia Dominicana* (Cologne, 1762). Reprinted 1970.
IDA	Irish Dominican Archives, Tallaght, Dublin.
IER	*Irish Ecclesiastical Record* (Dublin, 1864—).
IHS	*Irish Historical Studies* (Dublin, 1938—).
Jarrett	Bede Jarrett, *The English Dominicans* (London, 1921).
Kildare Arch. Soc. Jn.	*Journal of the County Kildare Archaeological Society* (Dublin, 1891—).
Louth Arch. Soc. Jn.	*Journal of the Louth Archaeological Society* (Dundalk, 1904—).
MacFirbis, Dudley	*Annals of Ireland from ... 1443 to 1468,* trans. Dudley Firbisse, ed. John O'Donovan, in *Ir. Arch. Soc. Misc.*, i (1846), 98–302.
MacInerny	M.H. MacInerny, *A history of the Irish Dominicans, vol. I: Irish Dominican bishops (1224–1307)* (Dublin, 1916). All published.
Mortier	E. Mortier, *Histoire des maîtres généraux de l'ordre des frères prêcheurs* (Paris, 1903–16). 7 vols.
Mould	D. Pochin Mould, *The Irish Dominicans: the Friars Preachers in the history of Catholic Ireland* (Dublin, 1957).
O'Heyne	Ambrose Coleman (ed.), *The Irish Dominicans of the seventeenth century by Father John O'Heyne, O.P. First published at Louvain in 1706. Reprinted ... with an Appendix containing historical sketches of all the Dominican foundations in Ireland* (Dundalk, 1902).
Regestum de Athenry	A. Coleman (ed.), 'Regestum monasterii fratrum praedicatorum de Athenry', in *Archiv. Hib.*, i (1912), pp 201–21.
RIA Proc.	*Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* (Dublin, 1836—).
RSAI Jn.	*Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* (Dublin, 1892—).
SCAR	Archives of San Clemente, Rome.
Spicil. Ossor.	P. Moran (ed.), *Spicilegium Ossoriense: being a collection of original letters and papers illustrative of the history of the Irish Church from the Reformation to the year 1800* (Dublin, 1874–84). 3 vols.

CHAPTER I

The Coming of the Friars

On some unspecified day in the year 1224 a ship from Bristol, after threading her precarious way amongst the shoals and sandbanks of the Liffey estuary, dropped anchor in the port of Dublin and tied up at the quay. From the little city, tight and trim within the girdle of its walls, there had gathered for the occasion a miscellaneous assortment of humanity – officials from the Castle looking for dispatches from London; merchants anxious about the cargo and bills of lading; friends and relatives of the passengers; the poor Irish dock labourers who were tolerated in the city merely as useful beasts of burden. The stage thus set, the bustle and excitement incidental to the business of disembarkation and unloading soon got under way.

As the sick and weary passengers made their way ashore one might note in their midst a group of men, obviously religious, as the habit they wore indicated. There was no one to welcome them, but as they stood on the wharf, timid and uncertain, a kindly onlooker, taking pity on their forlorn state, undertook to guide them to a religious house where they might find shelter till they had made their own arrangements. We may surmise that they were accommodated in the hospice for poor pilgrims which had been erected by Archbishop Henry of London near the river bank not many years previously.[1] And thus, humbly and unobtrusively, did the friars of St Dominic slip into Ireland.

Contemporary chroniclers appear to have regarded the newcomers with the same lack of interest as was shown that day by the crowd on the quay. A solitary laconic entry copied from writer to writer in turn, recording the fact of their arrival but without mentioning a single relevant circumstance, represents the sum total of authentic information that has come down to us concerning the affair. Where, however, the historian is silent, the fiction-monger has his opportunity, and has made such good use of it in this instance, that the simple fact of the coming of the Friars

1 The hospital of St James of Compostella, founded *c.*1216 at 'the Steyne' near Store Street. where a modern stone marks the position of the old one. See J. Warburton, *History of Dublin*, i (London, 1818), p. 372 and Gwynn & Hadcock, p. 350.

Preachers to Ireland has become enmeshed in a tangle of legend as luxuriously extravagant as anything that may be found in the *Lebor Gabála* or the *Chronicon Scotorum*. It may prove instructive if we take a glance at some of them.

The seventeenth-century Italian Dominican, Fontana, in his *Sacrum Theatrum Dominicanum*, tells us that St Dominic himself came to Ireland at some date which he wisely omits to mention.[2] This fable is interesting as showing the manner in which the myth-making faculty of the uncritical historian works. There was a sixth-century Ossory saint, Modomnoc, whose name was latinised Dominicus. It was reasoned apparently, that there could be only one Dominicus – namely, the great founder of the Order of Preachers, and since he was given in the catalogue of Irish saints, the conclusion seemed clear. It is extremely unlikely that Fontana was personally aware of the existence of this rather obscure personage, and he probably heard about him from some of his Irish brethren, either those he had met in Rome, or some other with whom he had been in correspondence while engaged in collecting the material for his great work on the history of the Order. Fr John O'Hart, the provincial of Ireland at the time [1659–68], and according to Dr John Lynch, a great authority on the history and antiquities of the Irish Dominicans, was, most probably, the source of Fontana's information.

Then we have the assertion of Malvenda, who wrote in the early part of the seventeenth century, to the effect that the introduction of the Order into this country came about as a result of a letter sent by St Dominic to O'Donnell, prince of Tyrconnell, soliciting a foundation in his territory.[3] The convent of Derry is alleged to have been founded as a result. If this were true it would make Derry the first Irish Dominican foundation and, as a matter of fact, O'Heyne argues to that effect.[4] It was, however, not founded till 1274, being the twenty-third on the list, but the simplest facts of chronology and even of ordinary common-sense presented no difficulties to the adventurous imaginations of writers of that age.

The legend first appears in a report sent to Rome about 1622 by Fr Ross McGeoghegan then provincial.[5] In this it is alleged that the letter

2 All the early writers on the coming of the friars to Ireland – including Fontana and Malvenda – have been weighed in the balance and found wanting by T. de Burgo: see *Hib. Dom.*, pp 36–43. **3** This statement is not found in T. Malvenda, *Annalium sacri ordinis praedicatorum centurio prima* (Naples, 1627). O'Sullivan seems simply to have taken the name 'Malvenda' from *Hib. Dom.*, p. 39, and followed Burke in condemning him. **4** O'Heyne, p. 3. **5** Full text in Flynn, pp 323–5. The letter was said to have been written 'in favour and

had been preserved in the convent of Derry, but disappeared when the place was seized and the community dispersed by the Protestants. A variation of the story is to the effect that the document was preserved in the archives of the O'Donnell family, was brought to Spain on the downfall of that noble house and placed in a Dominican convent there, after which all trace of it was lost. Similar stories are told about the foundations of Limerick and Athenry, Donogh Carbreach O'Brien and Meiler de Bermingham, the respective founders, having been allegedly induced to undertake the pious enterprise as a result of letters sent by St Dominic. It is possible that the masters general in office at the time those houses were erected did correspond with their founders, and there is good reason for thinking that Blessed John of Vercelli who ruled the Order (1264–83) at the time Derry was founded may have sent a letter to O'Donnell.

Wider credence than can be attached to these stories has, however, been given to the statement that the pioneer band of friars who landed in Dublin in 1224, was led by Reginald, one of the companions of St Dominic, and subsequently (1247–56) archbishop of Armagh. According to O'Heyne he was the bearer of the letter to O'Donnell. There is no sufficient evidence to justify our acceptance of this account, the earliest authority for it being Fontana.[6] We first hear of Reginald in 1218 when he is stated to have been present on the occasion of the miracle of the multiplication of bread and wine by St Dominic in the convent of Bologna. He next turns up in 1237 as a penitentiary at the papal court at Viterbo, and in conjunction with another friar penitentiary, Godfrey, writing to the Paris community to inform them of the death by shipwreck off the coast of Asia Minor of the master general – Blessed Jordan of Saxony. We lose sight of him from that time till 1247, in which year he was appointed archbishop of Armagh.

We are, then, asked to believe that Reginald, having been entrusted with the difficult task of introducing the Order into Ireland, was either recalled or quitted his post within, say, ten years of his coming here, and made so little impression on the people of Ireland or his own brethren that nobody thought it worth while to record even his name. It does not carry conviction on the face of it. Reginald must have been a man of parts judging by the dignities to which he was advanced by the Holy See, and

commendation of two friars' whom St Dominic was sending to Ireland. For a similar 'origin legend' among the Franciscans, see C.N. Ó Clabaigh, *The Franciscans in Ireland, 1400–1534* (Dublin, 2002), pp 33–6. **6** The author here follows MacInerny, pp 78–81. See

it is impossible to imagine why if he did come to Ireland in 1224, no contemporary mentioned the fact.

Perhaps the most extraordinary of all the fables that have been spun out of these obscurities is to be found in the *De Praesulibus Hiberniae* of Dr John Lynch, who states on the authority of John O'Hart that amongst the early disciples of St Dominic who accompanied Reginald to Ireland were two Irishmen – Peter Madden and Antony Geoghegan. Peter Madden was, according to the same authority, the founder of the convent of Segovia.[7] There is quite a comedy of errors here. The convent of Segovia was founded by a holy Spanish friar – Blessed Corbolan – but that of Madrid was established at the same time by Peter of Medina, obviously a Spaniard too and the original of Peter Madden. Anthony Geoghegan probably owes his existence in Lynch's work to some confusion with Ross McGeoghegan (†1644). He, like most of his brethren in the seventeenth century, was educated in Spain and somebody endowed with a high-powered imagination, may have been led, through the similarity of his name to that of some thirteenth-century Spanish friar, to the discovery of the mythical Anthony.

It is most natural to assume that the group of friars who established the Dominican Order in this country were Englishmen. St Dominic, shortly before his death in 1221, had dispatched a company of thirteen religious under the leadership of Gilbert de Fresney to secure foundations in England. They arrived in that country in the company of Peter des Roches, the foreign-born bishop of Winchester, and soon won the favour of the primate, the great Cardinal Langton, as well as of Hubert de Burgh, earl of Kent, then the most powerful nobleman in the kingdom. We may surmise that the group dispatched to Ireland in 1224 enjoyed likewise the patronage of the ecclesiastical and lay magnates of the Anglo-Norman colony there.[8] Luke Netterville, archbishop of Armagh, in fact built at his own expense the convent of Drogheda in the very year of their coming, and vague traditions give to two noblemen – William Marshal, earl of Pembroke, and Maurice Fitzgerald, baron of Offaly – the credit of being responsible for their introduction into this country. These men were of a nobler type than the usual run of the filibusters who had made Ireland their happy hunting ground during the preceding half-century. Marshal,

also M. O'Halloran, 'Primate Reginald and Henry III' in *IER* (Aug. 1952), pp 121–9.
7 J.F. O'Doherty (ed.), *De praesulibus Hiberniae ... authore Joanne Linchaeo*, i (Dublin, 1944), pp 110–11. **8** On English Dominican history, see B. Jarrett, *The English Dominicans* (London, 1921); B.E.R. Formoy, *The Dominican order in England before the Reformation*

generous and humane, built the Black Abbey in Kilkenny for the Dominicans in 1225, and Fitzgerald, 'wise and witty', founded the beautiful abbey of Sligo in 1252. After a life spent with high distinction in the service of the English crown, he retired in 1257 to the Franciscan monastery of Youghal, which had been founded by him, and died there in that same year clothed in the habit of St Francis. Though there is no compelling evidence to support the tradition that these noblemen were concerned in the introduction of the Dominicans to Ireland, there is, at the same time, nothing inherently improbable in the supposition that, in fact, they did so.

The Anglo-Norman invaders made it their policy from the beginning to gain control of the church. In the parts effectively conquered by them they had introduced their nominees into the cathedral chapters and allotted to them the most valuable benefices, whilst by the time the Dominicans appeared on the scene they had captured many of the episcopal sees.

The ancient Irish religious foundations were objects of their particular disfavour, except in those cases, be it understood, where they could be quickly and easily assimilated to the new ways. The communities of St Mary's Abbey and All Hallows' Priory in Dublin, both pre-Norman foundations, appear to have been completely anglicised within a generation. Two other great abbeys in the capital owed their origin to the invaders – the Augustinian monastery of St Thomas, so called in honour of St Thomas à Becket, and the priory of St John of Jerusalem at Kilmainham manned by the Knights Hospitallers. Lands, tithes and rectorships of churches all over Ireland descended in a shower on these favoured establishments. In the Dissolution returns, the 'extent' of the possessions of St Mary's Abbey in Newport White's text runs to twenty-three pages, that of St Thomas to twenty and that of Kilmainham to thirty-seven.[9] Possibly some portions at least of the enormous property amassed by these houses may have belonged to old Gaelic foundations which were transferred by the conquerors to the newly founded abbeys.

We find the same system at work in other districts which came under Norman sway. John de Courcy, on his conquest of Ulidia,[10] established several houses of Benedictines and Cistercians, stocking them with monks brought from England and endowing them with great possessions

(London, 1925); and especially W.A. Hinnebusch, *The early English Friars Preachers* (Rome, 1951). **9** Newport B. White (ed.), *Extents of Irish monastic possesssions, 1540–1* (Dublin, 1943); A.L. Elliot, 'The abbey of St Thomas the Martyr, near Dublin', in Howard Clarke (ed.), *Medieval Dublin: the living city* (Dublin, 1990), pp 62–76; C. MacNeill, 'Hospital of St John without the Newgate, Dublin', op. cit., pp 77–82. **10** Ulidia comprised the present

confiscated either from the bishop of Down or from some of the old Gaelic houses. Meiler fitz Henry founded the great abbey of Connal in Kildare which prided itself, even when overtaken by the throes of dissolution in 1540, on its constant and unwavering fidelity to the English interest. Hervey de Montmorency, one of Strongbow's barons, founded for the Cistercians the abbey of Dunbrody, in Wexford, and William Marshal the elder, in fulfillment of a vow, founded Tintern in the same county. This nobleman also built for the Cistercians the abbey of St Saviour's at Duiske or Graignamanagh in 1203, and the careless Archdall[11] was led by the similarity of its title to that borne by the Dominican house in Dublin, to ascribe the foundation of this latter establishment to him. Hugh de Lacy in Meath founded the Augustinian monasteries of Duleek and Colpe, near the mouth of the Boyne, and made them dependent on the priory of Llanthony in Monmouthshire, with which his family was associated. His son, Walter, lord of Meath, on his return from exile in 1215, affiliated the venerable monastery of St Fechin at Fore to the abbey of St Taurin in Normandy, the abbot of which had befriended him during his stay abroad. Trim, the capital of his palatinate, rivalled Clonmacnoise and Glendalough in the number of its monastic establishments.[12] The monastery of the Blessed Virgin for Augustinian Canons, that of Newtown by Trim for the Canons of St Victor, who also held St Thomas in Dublin, another also at Newtown for the Crutched Friars, with, in due course, a Dominican and a Franciscan convent – all these were the fruits of the piety or policy which contested the mastery over the souls of those ambiguous and perplexing characters.

From all this it is clear that the mendicant orders could not fail to secure a welcome from the prelates and barons of the colonial establishment in Ireland. Their great virtue in the eyes of their patrons would be the fact that they were of foreign provenance, that their personnel was English, and might be expected to continue predominantly so, and that they could, in consequence, be depended upon to gear themselves to the wheels of the administrative machinery of the colony. It is, therefore possible that either William Marshal or Maurice Fitzgerald, or both, had something to do with the coming of the Dominicans, but a more likely agent in the transaction would appear to be the redoubtable Henry of London, archbishop of Dublin at the time.

counties of Antrim and Down. **11** Archdall, pp 205, 351–2. **12** For an excellent, recent account of all the religious houses of Trim, see M. Potterton, *Medieval Trim: history and archaeology* (Dublin, 2005).

CHAPTER 2

Taking a Look Around: 1224

In the first chapter the suggestion was put forward that Henry of London, archbishop of Dublin, was most probably the patron through whose good offices the Friars Preachers were enabled to secure a foundation in the capital on their arrival there in 1224. A good case can, I believe, be made in substantiation of this view, though it must be confessed that the absence of all reference in the records to possible contacts between the parties, must render such a conclusion more a matter of surmise than of certainty.

Henry of London, who had succeeded to the see on the death of Archbishop Cumin in 1212, was a man of no ordinary parts.[1] He was typical of many of the churchmen of his age, more of an administrator and a politician than an ecclesiastic, and his vigorous methods did not always meet with the approval of those placed under him. The opprobrious nickname *Scorchvilein* or *Scorchvill* (interpreted as 'flay-villein', or, alternatively, as 'skin the calf') indicates the popular opinion of him. He was much employed on the king's business and does not seem to have spent a great deal of his time in his diocese for some years after his appointment. He attended the Lateran Council in 1215, possibly meeting St Dominic on that occasion, and thus learned at first hand of those decrees for the reformation of the church enacted there, the implementation of which was to be the part providentially reserved for the Order which at that very time St Dominic was calling into existence. Appointed papal legate to Ireland, he came to Dublin in 1217, and convened a synod in which the decrees of the Lateran Council were promulgated.

Now, in the year 1218, two citizens of Dublin, Richard de Bedeford and Audeon Brun, granted a plot of land near the Bridge of Dublin at the north end on which to erect a chapel in honour of St Saviour, and offered it to the canons of Christ Church. The deeds of the cathedral record the transfer of the foundation to them.[2]

1 A. Gwynn, 'Henry of London, archbishop of Dublin: a study in Anglo-Norman statecraft', in *Studies*, xxxviii (1949), pp 297–306, 389–402. Henry, builder of Dublin Castle, was also briefly justiciar during 1224. **2** By a second deed (*c.*1219), the archbishop approved the erection of the chapel and made provision for a chaplain. See M.J. McEnery and R. Refaussé (eds), *Christ Church deeds* (Dublin, 2001), pp 40–1.

Whatever we may think of Henry of London, he was an able and energetic administrator of his diocese, and he would probably be quite willing to put into operation the decrees of the Lateran Council if only he had the means of doing so. The newly-arrived friars solved the problem for him. As papal legate, besides, it was his special duty to see to it that the wishes and behests of the Holy See were respected. Now, during the eight years which had passed since the papal confirmation of the Dominican Order, Pope Honorious III had shown an extraordinary interest in its welfare. Bulls were multiplied, some of general, some of particular import, recommending it to the patronage of the bishops and visiting with grave displeasure those prelates who showed themselves allergic to the papal wishes. The archbishop of Dublin cannot have been unaware of all this, and it seems to cover all the possibilities of the case if we suggest that he gave a favourable reception to the friars and induced the various interested parties to agree to hand over to them the church on the bridge. This humble building, which afterwards grew into the splendid pile which stood for centuries on the spot now occupied by the Four Courts, was the cradle of the Dominican Order in Ireland; and Archbishop Henry of London seems entitled to some share, at least, of the credit of establishing it there.[3]

Is there any clue to the identity of the leader of the newly-arrived friars? Possibly there is. In 1235, Maurice Fitzgerald, then acting as justiciar, began to have misgivings over his relations with the king, the weak and unstable Henry III. In the previous year he had been involved (to what extent is not clear) in the cowardly attack on Earl Richard Marshal on the Curragh of Kildare, as a result of which that nobleman lost his life. Henry, though responsible for the crime – he had been induced to consent to it through the machinations of Peter des Roches and his Poitevins, enemies of the earl – expressed his abhorrence of it and with tears of repentance asked pardon of the victim's brother Gilbert, to whom he restored all the estates of the late earl. Maurice Fitzgerald, on hearing of these developments, thought to provide for his own safety by sending two of his friends to the king with a letter explaining and defending his conduct. One of these was Robert Archer, of the Order of Preachers, the first Irish Dominican whose name occurs in a documentary record.

He must have enjoyed a certain status in Ireland to be entrusted with the conduct of such a delicate negotiation. He apparently made a good impression on Henry since we find the latter, a few years later, exerting

3 As the writer implies, the Dublin convent was founded by the citizens. See B. O'Sullivan, 'The Dominicans in medieval Dublin', in *Dublin Historical Record,* ix, no. 2 (June–Aug.

himself, though unsuccessfully, to have him appointed archbishop of Armagh.[4] On the death of the primate, Donat O'Fidabra in 1237, the king immediately ordered the justiciar, Maurice Fitzgerald, to take the temporalities of the see into his hands as was the usual practice. Taking advantage of the vacancy, he wrote at the same time to the dean and chapter of the cathedral of Armagh, presenting Robert Luttrel to be elected by them to the archdeaconry of the diocese. They did as they were told, and in due course Robert, on behalf of the dean and chapter, petitioned for the *congé d'élire* to proceed to the election of an archbishop. Licence was granted accordingly, and on 4 April 1238, we find the king writing to the papal legate reciting letters from the chapter of Armagh, empowering Thomas the dean, Master Robert the canon, and Laurence the clerk, to elect the archbishop of the see. The king, having given the royal assent to the election they had made of friar Robert Archer of the Order of Preachers, prays the legate to do what belongs to him in the matter. It is interesting to study the various moves in the game by which the English authorities sought and usually managed to secure control of the cathedral chapters and thereby obtained the election of their own nominees as bishops. Robert Luttrel, the newly-appointed archdeacon, was evidently the main instrument in the job of swaying the chapter towards obedience to the king's will, and it does give one a distinct feeling of satisfaction to learn that all these carefully organised moves came to nothing. The pope, Gregory IX, refused to ratify the election of Archer, and after the see had remained vacant for three years appointed the German – Albert Suerbeer – archbishop.

Robert Archer had, therefore, become a rather important figure in the ecclesiastical and political affairs of the colony within a dozen years after the Dominicans had settled in Dublin. He was obviously the foremost man amongst the friars, and considering the short space that had elapsed between their coming and his attaining to such prominence, it does not appear to strain the evidence overmuch if we take him to be the man who led the first band of pioneers who came to this country in 1224. He may, possibly, have been born in Ireland. In the earliest roll of Dublin citizens dating from the second quarter of the thirteenth century we find the name of Ricardus Archer, and though the second element here may not be a family name but merely a personal epithet as is the case with most of the names on the roll, still, on the other hand, it may. A family of Archers

1947), pp 41–58. **4** *Cal. doc. Ire., 1171–1251*, i, no. 2440, p. 365. See A. Gwynn, 'Armagh and Louth in the 12th and 13th centuries', in *Seanchas Ardmhacha*, i, no. 2 (1955), pp 33–4.

was settled in Kilkenny by 1400 and had probably been located in the county previously.[5] It is of interest in this connexion that the emissary who accompanied Robert on Maurice Fitzgerald's behalf in 1235 was William Grant[6] whom we may take to be a member of the family of that name settled in Kilkenny. The imagination is given plenty of scope starting from these facts, and we allow it to rove at its pleasure since there are no evidential particulars to tie it down.

Let us take a look at the scene which offered itself to the eyes of the newly-arrived friars in 1224. It was not an attractive nor a promising one. The country was and continued to be, for many centuries, convulsed by the internecine struggle between the invaders who constantly endeavoured to extend their possessions and the Gaelic princes who strove to keep what they had. Down to the end of the thirteenth century the Anglo-Normans carried all before them. Already by 1224 they held about half, and that the richest part of the country. In Leinster, the mountains of Wicklow, the Sliabh Bloom and the Bog of Allen sheltered the last remnants of Irish freedom. In Munster, Clare and the mountains of West Cork and South Kerry represented the poor total of possessions left to the old race. Connacht was still practically untouched; Cathal Crobhderg, employing a wise temporising policy, having managed to hold his own there.

Soon after his death in 1224, however, Richard de Burgh, who had obtained from King John a patent conveying him a grant of the province, proceeded to make good the concession.[7] He was aided in the execution of his designs by the hopeless divisions between the principal branches of the O'Connors – the sons of Ruadhri the last monarch of Ireland and those of his brother Cathal Crobhderg. He entered Connacht in 1226, and siding in turn with various O'Connor claimants to the blood-stained throne of that province, managed gradually to extend his conquests there. In 1235, Maurice Fitzgerald the justiciary took command of an army mustered from every part of the colony, by which the greater part of the modern counties of Galway, Mayo, and Sligo was conquered and effectively occupied.

In 1237, peace was concluded with Felim O'Connor, the son of Cathal Crobhderg on the basis of his acceptance of the *fait accompli*. De Burgh

5 Ralph Larcher (or le Archer) was a burgess of Dublin in 1190. See E. MacLysaght, *More Irish families* (Galway, 1960), p. 245. The family first appears at Kilkenny in 1307. Carrigan, iii, pp 74–5. **6** Grant was a 'master and official' in 1231, when holding custody of the vacant diocese of Ossory. **7** See J. Lydon, 'The expansion and colonisation of the colony, 1215–54', in A. Cosgrove (ed.), *A new history of Ireland*, ii, *Medieval Ireland, 1169–1534* (Oxford, 1987), pp 156–78.

proceeded to parcel out amongst the barons who had rallied to his standard the huge territory which had fallen into his hands. Fitzgerald received the greater part of Sligo with portions of the adjoining Co. Mayo. Meiler de Bermingham got Athenry for his portion; Jordan de Exeter was allotted the barony of Gallen with Strade or Athlethan as its principal stronghold; and Miles de Nangle was granted the territory now known as the barony of Costello in Mayo.

Eastern Ulster, after its conquest by de Courcy, had become thoroughly Normanised. The feudal system was in full operation there, and castles and fortified towns like Downpatrick, Newtownards, Carrickfergus and Coleraine sprang up to hold the territory secure. The lordship of Ulster passed from de Courcy to Hugh de Lacy the younger in 1205, and on his death in 1243 without male issue his estates reverted to the crown. They were granted with the earldom in 1264 to Walter de Burgh, lord of Connacht, who became in consequence the most powerful of the Anglo-Norman magnates, and when his son, Richard, known as the Red Earl, succeeded to his titles and lands in 1280, the fortunes of the Gaelic princes appear to have reached their lowest ebb. The warlike clans of O'Neill and O'Donnell still maintained a show of independence, but the incurable animosity which poisoned relations between them, threatened to render them, too, the prey of the invaders. Brian O'Neill, prince of Cenél nEógain, had been defeated and killed by the English of Ulidia at the battle of Down in 1260, with at least, the tacit connivance of the O'Donnells, and when during the ensuing weakness of the O'Neills, the chieftain of Tír Conaill, Domnall Óg O'Donnell rose to prominence, he was duly defeated and slain by a combination of his English and Irish enemies at the battle of Desertcreight in 1281. He was the founder of the Dominican monastery of Derry, and the Irish annalists in their normal inflated style, describe his burial there 'after having through life won the palm of pre-eminence in every virtue'. The body was, however, buried minus the head which was carried to Dublin by one of the mail-clad savages who had taken part in the action, and this little item proves that however the O'Neills might exult on the fall on their rival, the victory really rested elsewhere.

The Red Earl, Richard de Burgh, made and unmade chieftains of Tír nEógain and Tír Conaill and marched his armies through their territories at his will. He even erected a castle known as Northburgh or Greencastle in Inishowen to command the approaches to Lough Foyle. There, his grandson William, the Brown Earl, starved to death his kinsman Walter de

Burgh in 1332, a crime which soon brought its own retribution since the earl was assassinated by his own retainers soon after in revenge for Walter's death.

By this time, Anglo-Norman power had begun to wane. The invasion of Edward Bruce in 1315 had given it a bad shaking, and in addition, the settlers had begun to fall out amongst themselves. De Burghs and Geraldines, the former paramount in Connacht and Ulster, the latter in Munster, and holding as well large possessions in Leinster, viewed with mutual jealousy the growth of each other's power and strove by every means to injure each other. When Thomas de Clare with the support of the Geraldines attacked Thomond in 1276, the de Burghs assisted the O'Briens, chieftains of that principality, and their prolonged and determined resistance was finally crowned with success in 1318, when, in the battle of Dysert O'Dea, Richard de Clare was killed, his forces annihilated, and Bunratty castle, the headquarters of the settlement, destroyed.

The Marshal dynasty in Leinster had died out in 1245, and the five counties of Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny, Kildare and Laois comprised in their lordship passed by marriage to various English noblemen. The breaking up in this manner of the strongest of the Norman palatinates had disastrous results for the colony. The new proprietors were absentees, their Irish possessions were governed by seneschals and bailliffs, and the result was, as might be expected, that during the fourteenth century, a great portion of the territory was won back by the Irish. The Fitzpatricks and O'Moores recovered Laois, and the O'Connors Offaly, and the MacMurroughs the greater part of Wexford and Carlow.

On the murder of the earl of Ulster in 1333, his kinsmen in Connacht renounced their English allegiance and proceeded to divide amongst themselves the territories of his lordship in that province. They became to all intents and purposes, Gaelic chieftains, and most faithfully followed the time-honoured traditions of the older race, particularly in the unending pursuit of war. Thanks to them and to the O'Connors, the history of Connacht during those centuries forms one of the bloodiest pages in our annals. Concurrently with the revolution in the west, the O'Neills of Clandeboye crossed the Bann and reconquered almost the whole of Ulidia though they were unable to occupy the fortified towns.

In the period of eclipse in which the colony existed during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the towns remained faithful to the English connexion, each an enclave of foreignism precariously holding its own against the foes who occupied the hinterland. Though an alien

element in Irish life, peopled almost exclusively by colonists, and bitterly hostile to the Irish, it cannot be denied that the towns formed almost the sole progressive and civilised element in the life of the country during those dismal times. They may, indeed, be regarded as the one blessing, somewhat mixed no doubt, conferred on Ireland by the Normans. Most of the coastal boroughs had been in existence before the Invasion, but they were the fruit of the Danish occupation, for the Gaelic people never showed any aptitude for town life, nor for the civilising pursuits of commerce and manufacture which are its inevitable concomitants. The *dún* or crannogue where dwelt the chieftain with his followers, and the ecclesiastical settlements like Armagh, Derry, Clonmacnoise and Cashel, which housed each its bishop with his clergy and attendants, represented the utmost effort of which the old race seemed capable in this direction. The bulk of the people followed the pastoral and semi-nomadic life as practised by their ancestors ever since the day when the race first disembarked on the Irish shore.

The Normans brought with them to Ireland the tradition of town life, which, from the eleventh century onward had developed in Flanders and Northern France in common with other centres on the continent. The towns were the answer of the people to the violence and tyranny engendered by the feudal system. Ensconced within their walls, fortified by the privilege of self-government granted either by the monarch or by the local magnate, and with their citizens trained to arms, they were free to pursue their peaceful avocations, the while the Norman baron and the Gaelic prince at the head of their retainers engaged in the only occupation for which they were fitted – war.

CHAPTER 3

The Social and Religious Background: 1170–1300

The Dominicans – and the same is true of the kindred Order of St Francis – were founded primarily to cater for the inhabitants of the towns. They were as unmistakably townsmen as the monks were of the countryside, a fact which is aptly set forth in the medieval tag:

Bernardus valles; montes Benedictus amabat;
Oppida Franciscus; celebresque Dominicus urbes.[1]

Now, since town life in Ireland had not developed far beyond the embryonic stage, one may ask what business the friars had in a country where conditions were in consequence fundamentally unsuitable to their way of life. Outside of the few coastal boroughs there was scarcely a town worthy of the name in the whole country – the numerous places claiming that title amounting in each case to no more than a baronial castle with its bailey and a cluster of wooden houses sheltering beneath its walls. We must look into this matter at some length to appreciate the problems which confronted the new arrivals.

In the division of Ireland between the various Norman leaders, the crown retained under its direct jurisdiction the cities on the coast – namely, Dublin, Cork, Waterford, Limerick, Drogheda and others. Charters were granted on the model of that of Bristol endowing them with the right of self-government in return for an annual rent called the fee farm of the city. The Hiberno-Danish population which had previously occupied them was driven out or retired and settled down outside the walls, their place being taken by English settlers. From that time, down to the seventeenth century, it was made practically impossible for an Irishman to dwell within their walls, except perhaps those belonging to the humblest classes of manual workers.

1 A very free translation of these lines might run: 'The quiet vale remote was Bernard's choice, / And Benedict's the mountain citadel, / The busy town heard Francis' seraph voice, / O'er cities vast did Dominic's clarion swell.'

The other 'towns' received from the lords paramount of the areas in which they were located charters conveying the more restricted liberties of Breteuil. Thus, when William Marshal founded Kilkenny he endowed its citizens with that privilege. He extended a similar favour to New Ross which, under the fostering care of himself and his successors grew into a busy and thriving commercial centre. When the earl of Gloucester obtained Kilkenny as his share of the Marshal inheritance, he erected Rosbercon, the suburb of New Ross situated on the Kilkenny side of the Barrow, into a separate borough. The same thing happened in Trim, which received them from William Petit, and in Youghal, enfranchised probably by Maurice Fitzgerald. Galway was municipalised by Richard de Burgh, the conquerer of Connacht, and its walls were built by his successor Walter. During the centuries when English power remained in eclipse in the West, Galway never wavered in its allegiance, and remained an outpost of English influence, bitterly hostile to the Irish and to the de Burghs, whom its citizens regarded as recreants. Athenry received its liberties probably from Meiler de Bermingham, and so the tale might be extended to similar foundations located in almost every part of the country.

In some cases the town received its charter from the local bishop, who was its lord. Irishtown, the suburb of Kilkenny, separated by the Bregach stream from the baronial vill of William Marshal, was established as a distinct municipality by the bishop of Ossory and it retained its separate jurisdiction down to 1835. The Black Abbey was situated within its bounds, and hence we find the bishop, Geoffrey de Turville, granting water rights to the community by a deed still preserved in the muniments of Kilkenny Corporation. Cashel similarly received municipal rights from its archbishop, the Dominican David McKelly, and Kilmallock from its lord, the bishop of Limerick, as we shall see when we come to tell the story of the abbey there.

These facts remind us that the feudalisation of the church was one of the greatest of the changes introduced by the Anglo-Normans and, one may certainly say, a change that did not tend to the betterment of religion. Under the Gaelic system, the church was independent of the secular power to an extent unequalled in any western European country in that age. The small bishoprics which were the rule up to the synod of Rathbreasail, each governed by its abbot-bishop and ministered to by the monastic community, were, doubtless, very far from the comparatively up-to-date efficiency which marked the rule of those prelates who had extended the Cluniac reform throughout the Western Church in the

eleventh and twelfth centuries. This movement, while it did produce some good results in the moral sphere, was, at the same time, more concerned with law and administration, and the Celtic church in Ireland, which was looked upon by the new type of foreign ecclesiastic as a relic of primitive barbarism, may on the whole have had the advantage in the more important respect.

In spite of the fact that, in consequence of the clan system, many of the churches had fallen into the hands of lay proprietors during the disturbances incidental to the Danish invasion, still, this being an abuse of custom rather than of legal definition, it was possible for a great reformer like St Malachy to abolish it without too much difficulty. The institutions of the *erenach* and the *coarb*, by which the church lands were farmed in perpetuity to certain families, in all probability provided a satisfactory way out of the difficulties caused by the desire of these people to monopolise the prelacies in order to hold the lands. The erenach was bound to provide for the maintenance of the bishop and his clergy, to furnish them with the means of transport on their journeys, and to keep the fabric of the church in repair. This system continued in existence in the parts of Ulster which had never suffered Norman occupation down to the seventeenth century as we may discover in Colton's *Visitation of Derry* in 1397, and in the *Ulster Inquisitions*.[2]

The synod of Ráith Breassail [in 1111] by amalgamating the small dioceses into the large territorial units which have substantially endured to the present day, did away with the monastic organisation of the church, which up till then had been the rule. The excellence of its work is attested by the quality of the men who ruled the Irish church at the period of the Norman invasion. St Laurence O'Toole in Dublin, Gelasius in Armagh, Christian in Lismore and Albin O'Molloy in Ferns were prelates of whom any country might be proud. The account of Gelasius' visit to Dublin to meet Henry II in 1172 describes the venerable old man coming to the camp of the invaders driving before him a white cow, whose milk afforded him his sole nourishment. This sight, which caused great amusement to the foreigners, makes a different impression on us, and the patriarchal simplicity which it connotes points to a prelatical style more in keeping with the Gospel counsels than that followed by the episcopal barons in the centuries that followed.[3]

2 See H.A. Jefferies, 'Erenaghs in pre-plantation Ulster: an early seventeenth-century account', in *Archiv. Hib.*, liii (1999), pp 16–19. The editor supplies an excellent bibliography.
3 The best general accounts are by A. Gwynn, *The Irish church in the eleventh and twelfth*

Though the character of the clergy stood high, the same could not be said of the laity at this period. Accusations of scandalous incontinence were levelled at them by Lanfranc and St Anselm in the eleventh century and by St Bernard, and Popes Adrian IV and Alexander III in the twelfth. We have to accept the truth of these charges, though the extent of the evil cannot now be ascertained. In the panegyric on Cathal Crobhderg in the *Annals of Connacht*, he is praised as the most chaste of all the kings of Ireland, the king who had kept himself to one consort and practised continence before God from her death till his own. The terms of the entry suggest that this was an exceptional case. His brother, Ruaidrí, the last *ardrí* [†1198], had a very different reputation though it is hard indeed to know what to make of the chronicler's entry wherein he states that the pope was willing to allow him to have six wives provided he renounced the sin of adultery.

We may take it that the Gaelic aristocracy was not conspicuously successful in the practice of the virtue of chastity, but when has that class in any country been otherwise, and certainly the invaders themselves with Henry II at their head, could give them lessons in the art of scandalous living. Sending them as apostles to reform their Irish counterparts reveals on the part of those responsible a depth of cynicism almost unbelievable.

The real objection to the Irish church consisted in the fact that it was not organised on European lines. The people did not pay tithes, for the ecclesiastical lands were considered sufficient for the maintenance of the bishops and clergy. There were no cathedral chapters to ensure regularity in the election of bishops. There was probably no parochial system, the religious needs of the people being provided for by the monastic communities. Gerald of Wales accused the Irish clergy of spending their lives within their monasteries and neglecting preaching and parochial ministration. In regard to preaching, at any rate, the accusation was insincere since the failure to provide it was universal at that period and it was precisely with the view of meeting this need that the Dominican Order was founded.[4]

When the Normans took over, they proceeded to regulate the church in accordance with the customs obtaining in England. The synod of Cashel [1171–2], which was held during the visit of Henry II and probably by his direction, accepted the new order, and in commanding

centuries, ed. G. O'Brien (Dublin, 1992) and J. Watt, *The church in medieval Ireland* (2nd ed., Dublin, 1998). **4** See A. Fletcher and R. Gillespie (eds), *Irish preaching: 700–1700* (Dublin, 2001).

that henceforth the clergy should be exempt from the exactions of the lay lords, the fathers showed a naive ignorance of the quality of those who were now to wield the civil power. In after years, when the church found herself robbed and despoiled by the ruthless and greedy adventurers who had descended on the country, they must often have yearned for a return of the days when, if there was more disorder, there was certainly more freedom. For the church, as has already been stated, was now aggregated to the feudal system. The bishops held their lands from the crown on the same tenure as that by which the lay lords held theirs: in barony, as the current legal jargon put it. They enjoyed the status of barons; had their manorial courts with all due perquisites, including a gallows; they had an ample allotment of serfs or betaghs to work their estates. In return for these privileges, they found themselves enmeshed in the toils of the feudal system, and subject to its meticulous regimentation.

When a see became vacant, the first thing that happened was that its property was seized into the hands of the king, and as long as the vacancy continued, all its revenues flowed into the royal exchequer. Before the chapter could proceed to elect a new bishop, it had to obtain licence from the king to do so. This was frequently accompanied by an expression of his majesty's desire that a candidate indicated by him should be elected, and it would be a very independent-minded chapter indeed which would ignore such an intimation. When the election had taken place, the king's approval had to be sought. In fact, the procedure resembled very much that followed in the Anglican Church to-day, except in one all-important respect: the pope had the last word, and he frequently exercised his prerogative to the extent of setting aside the chapter election and appointing his own man. From the beginning of the fourteenth century onwards in fact, that is from the period of the Avignon papacy, direct papal provision became the rule.

When the new bishop was installed, the property of his see was restored by the crown, he being first required to take the oath of allegiance to the monarch. Woe betide him who failed in the observance of any point in this procedure. When the English Dominican, Walter Jorz, was appointed by Clement V archbishop of Armagh in 1307, the bull of institution represented the pope as conferring on him the temporalities as well as the spiritualities of the see. The king, Edward II, refused to admit the implication that the pope had the right to dispose of the temporals of the church, imposed the enormous fine of £1,000 on Walter for receiving the bull and refused to restore the possessions of the see till the unfortunate

archbishop had formally acknowledged that he received them from the king alone. Mulcted by the papal chancery for an additional 4,000 florins towards the charges of his appointment, Walter, like a wise man, escaped from an intolerable situation by resigning in 1310.[5] It may be noted here that it became thenceforth the regular practice to oblige a newly instituted bishop, before securing the restitution of his temporalities, formally to renounce the jurisdiction of the pope in regard to them. When Henry VIII, on his break with Rome, extended the claim of the crown to jurisdiction in spirituals as well as in temporals, it must have seemed a small matter to the easy-going and worldly minded to enlarge the practice to which they had been accustomed to the extent indicated by those two simple words, and to salve their consciences by the face-saving proviso 'as far as the Law of Christ allows'.

The feudalised bishop or abbot, thus installed in his temporal possessions by the good-will of the monarch, found himself bound to render to the crown all the usual services contingent on feudal tenures. He was compelled to furnish forth his quota of men-at-arms on demand and occasionally even to lead them in the field. The Knights of St John in Kilmainham became, in this way, simply a garrison for the defence of the Pale, and the prior of Connal in Kildare could boast of his prowess against the Irish enemy. Every attempt was made to hinder appeals to Rome, and no ecclesiastical dignitary could leave the kingdom on any pretext without the permission of the king. Even ordinary friars were forced to observe this regulation. Thus, in 1285, a safe-conduct was issued to Walter of Kilkenny OP granting him licence to proceed to the general chapter of Bologna,[6] and a similar permission was given in 1301 to Friar Richard de Clifford to go overseas on the business of the bishop of Emly.[7]

5 The career of Walter Jorz, an Englishman, is traced in enormous detail by M.H. McInerny, *A history of the Irish Dominicans*, vol.1 (Dublin, 1916), pp 507–603. **6** *Cal. of patent rolls ... Edward I, 1281–92* (London, 1893), p. 156. **7** *Cal. doc. Ire., 1293–1301*, p. 360, no. 789. Friar Richard, a Dominican, had the same surname as the bishop of Emly, William de Clifford (1286–1306).

CHAPTER 4

The First Foundations: 1224–1243

Something has already been said on the foundation of the great convent of St Saviour's in Dublin. It might be well, at this stage, to deal in a general way, with the other houses which the Friars Preachers established in this country during the 300-year interval which stretched from their arrival in 1224 till the sixteenth century came when the medieval order vanished, leaving in its wake a welter of desolation and ruin.[1]

Within five years from their coming the friars had secured six foundations. The significance of this fact needs no stressing. We may perceive in it the sincere determination of the authorities, civil and ecclesiastical, to implement the decisions of the Lateran Council and their recognition of the fact that the new arrivals were the means providentially ordained to that end. It has been already shown that the archbishop of Dublin, Henry of London, was, in all probability, instrumental in the establishment of St Saviour's.[2] There is no doubt whatever that his confrère of Armagh, Luke Netterville, was the actual founder, in the same year, of the convent of Drogheda, of which the beautiful Magdalen Tower now alone remains to testify to the glory that is gone. The lead thus given by the two foremost members of the Irish hierarchy gave, we may take it, the requisite inspiration to the other bishops and the pious laity which found expression in that astonishing spate of foundations, the number of which reached twenty-four in the space of seventy years.

The Black Abbey, or, to give it its formal canonical title, the convent of the Holy Trinity, was founded in Kilkenny by William Marshal the younger in 1225. It is the only one of the medieval houses still in the possession of the Order, and though naturally shorn of a good deal of the grandeur of former days it manages to retain substantially the essentials of the traditional Dominican life.

We may note here that when we speak of such or such a one as being the founder of a religious house we have to be careful as to the sense in which we understand the term. The title was much coveted by the pious,

1 There are ample details, with references, to all Dominican foundations in Gwynn & Hadcock, pp 218–34. 2 'Instrumental', that is, in its foundation by the citizens.

as well as by the not-so-pious, lay magnates in as much as its possession conferred various much valued privileges. Principal among these was the right to establish the family tomb in the most honorific site in the church – near the north or gospel side of the high altar – and this feature is still preserved in many of our ruined abbeys. With this privilege went the right to having an annual founder's day when a solemn anniversary requiem was sung. Probably, too, there would be a specially reserved seat or tribune in or near the sanctuary for the use of the founder's family and descendants. If the community were sufficiently complaisant the founder might take it on himself to interfere in the internal arrangements of the house and claim to have a say in such matters as elections, appointments and assignations.

From all this it follows that all sorts of shadowy claims to the title were bound to emerge from time to time, resulting in the multiplication of alleged founders and a conflict of identities which provides many a puzzle for the historian. The lord of the manor or even the king himself would arrogate the title on the mere strength of his granting permission to build the monastery. Thus, when Edward I in 1285 gave a grant from the royal alms to the convent of Limerick, he gave as his reason for doing so that his father, Henry III, had been its founder.[3] I do not suppose that every schoolboy, even in Limerick, knows that the founder of the Dominican convent there was the prince of Thomond, Donnchad Cairprech O'Brien, but such is in fact, the case. Since, however, Limerick was one of the royal boroughs, permission had to be obtained from the crown before the foundation could be proceeded with, and on this grant Edward based his claim to be regarded as a descendant of the founder. He might with a greater show of legality have assumed the title of founder of St Saviour's in Waterford, since it is on record that the citizens of this town petitioned for and obtained from Henry III a grant of an old tower and the land adjoining on which to erect a monastery for the Friars Preachers.[4]

The foundation of the great convent of Athenry, which is described at some length in the still extant register of the abbey, gives one a very good idea of the part played by the founder Meiler de Bermingham in the work.[5] He purchased the site from Robert Braynach for 160 marks and

3 *Cal. doc. Ire., (1285–92)*, p. 38. Cited in O'Heyne, *Appendix*, p. 53. **4** *Cal. doc. Ire., (1171–1251)*, p. 334. Cited in O'Heyne, *Appendix*, p. 43. There is a long account of the Limerick foundation in J. Begley, *The diocese of Limerick ancient and medieval* (Dublin, 1906), pp 346–52. **5** A. Coleman, 'Regestum monasterii fratrum praedicatorum de Athenry', in *Archiv. Hib.*, i (1912), pp 201–21; M.J. Blake, 'The abbey of Athenry', in *Galway Arch. Soc.*

gave an equal sum towards the building expenses, as well as gifts of English cloth, wine, and horses for carting materials. He also induced his knights and men-at-arms to help in the work, each according to his ability.

It appears, however, that only a small portion of the church and conventual buildings owed their existence to the generous exertions of the Norman noble, and that the greater part of the work was accomplished with the aid of the neighbouring Gaelic princes. Felim O'Connor, on whom had devolved the shadowy title of king of Connacht, built the refectory. The dormitory was erected by Eugene O'Heyne, the chapter-house by Cornelius O'Kelly; the cloister by Walter Husgard; the infirmary by Arthur McGallyly and the great guest-house by Dermot O'Trarasay. More striking still was the contribution of Florence Mac Flainn, archbishop of Tuam, 'who built a house for scholars' – that is, probably a theological school, and drew up wise rules for its management. We thus see that de Bermingham is styled founder of Athenry, not in virtue of his building and endowing the abbey, but simply as the initiator of the project, in the completion of which others had a far larger share.

If it happened that at some subsequent period the church or conventual buildings stood in need of repair or renovation, a benefactor who met the resultant expenses might be nominated as second founder or might even take the place of the original donor if the family of the latter had died out or ceased to be lords of the manor. Many of the houses were reconstructed during the fifteenth century, and one may suspect that many of the ascriptions of the title of 'founder' belong to this period. Among the places thus restored was the beautiful and historic Dominican convent of Cashel which was completely rebuilt at his own expense by the archbishop, John Cantwell, after it has been destroyed by fire in 1480. As a testimony of their gratitude the friars, meeting in chapter at Limerick, drew up an instrument admitting their generous benefactor to participate in the suffrages of the Order.[6] In other words, his name was inscribed in the list of founders.

When the friars, during the period of comparative toleration they enjoyed under the Stuarts in the seventeenth century, set about reoccupying and restoring the monasteries from which they had been driven in the sixteenth, they endeavoured as best they could to collect and

Jn., ii (1902), pp 65–90. **6** Archdall, p. 647. The original was thought in 1762 to be still with a branch of the Cantwell family in Tipperary: see *Hib. Dom.*, p. 236. Some examples of such letters have been edited by J.A. Gribbin and C. Ó Clabaigh, 'Confraternity letters of the Irish Observant Franciscans and their benefactors', in *Peritia*, xvi (2002), pp 459–71.

preserve the poor remnants of their monastic archives which had survived the destruction. Where documentary evidence was lacking they appear to have had recourse to the doubtfully valid recollections of the oldest inhabitants. In this way a certain amount of matter, partly historical and partly legendary, has been preserved. One may remark in particular the tendency to ascribe foundations to some of the old Gaelic or gaelicised Norman families to whom their common misfortunes and common fidelity to the faith had attracted the passionate loyalty of the friars. In this way the O'Dowds succeeded to the title of founders of Rathfran, the de Burgos to that of Newtownards, the O'Kanes and the McQuillans disputed the title of Coleraine, and the O'Connors that of Sligo. Perhaps I should rather say that O'Heyne, in his very fascinating but inaccurate chronicle, bestows the title on them,[7] because their beautiful family tomb in the ruined sanctuary occupies, not the site traditionally set apart for the founder's monument, but the opposite epistle side, a fact which goes to show that they themselves did not claim the title.

We will now resume the recitation of the list of foundations. St Saviour's, in Waterford, followed that of Kilkenny in 1226, though the monastery was not built for some years after that date. Limerick was founded in 1227 under circumstances which have been already outlined, and Cork received the friars in the historic St Mary's of the Isle in 1229.

Of the six foundations established during those five years all, with the exception of that of Kilkenny, were situated in royal boroughs, in those places, that is, which might by a certain indulgence be accorded the status of towns. Now, after the foundation of the convent of Cork, eight years elapsed before any further move was made. The fact that after the astonishingly rapid development of the first five years, this comparatively long pause occurred before any further commitments were entered on suggests, I think, that the friars deliberated long and carefully before deciding on their next move.[8]

The brief survey of the social and political condition of the country in the thirteenth century which has been given in previous chapters explains the most probable reason for their hesitation. They had already occupied all the really worth-while centres, and outside of them only the episcopal and baronial vills, each housing only a handful of people, remained. The question, therefore, presented itself – What next? Were they to spread themselves through a country which was, seemingly, almost entirely

7 That is, on the O'Connors of Sligo, a convent first founded by Fitzgerald. **8** The eight-year pause (1229–37) may also have been required to train the first batch of Irish-born recruits.

lacking in the social apparatus necessary for the realisation of the ideas of St Dominic? Or were they to curb the urge to expand and confine themselves to the half-dozen or so fairly suitable locations which Ireland afforded? If they chose the former alternative they would render impossible that life of plain living and high thinking which St Dominic desired for his Order. If, on the other hand, they confined themselves to the few towns which they had occupied during the pioneer onrush and remained a small, closely-knit, well organised, influential body, they stood in danger of the spiritual inertia that attacks societies which are established on those lines.

The dilemma, if, as we have reason to suppose, it presented itself to them, must have been a painful one. Whichever way they turned they perceived danger, and the task of balancing advantages against disadvantages must have been difficult in the extreme. As a matter of fact, both kinds of misfortune, which we suppose to have been dimly envisaged by them, descended on the Order in due course.

The force of circumstances was probably the factor that finally turned the scale on the side of expansion. The country wanted them and was determined to have them, and the nice academic balancing of uncertainties had to make way before the practical exigencies of the hour. The foundations they had acquired were all situated on or near the coast and therefore badly disposed strategically. They needed means of access to the interior of the country if they were to occupy it effectively.

They gave good earnest of their intentions in choosing for the first foundation of what we may style the new departure – Mullingar – significantly located in the very heart of Ireland. The convent was founded in 1237 probably by the lord of the vill, William Petit, whose brother Ralph, bishop of Meath, had established there a monastery of Canons Regular ten years previously.[9] One notes, by the way, the frequency with which Dominican foundations were located in the same centres as those occupied by Canons Regular, and it is proper to surmise that the Canons exercised their good offices in favour of the friars who were also in origin canons regular, and as opportunity offered, secured for them foundations in contiguity to their own. We have seen this already in the case of St Saviour's in Dublin, and now in Mullingar. Later, we shall encounter a like situation in Lorrha, in Rathfran, where the parochial living was vested in the Canons of Mullingar, and in Derry, to mention only a few instances.

9 Later writers ascribed the foundation to the Nugent family, but the Petits have a much more likely claim. See H. Fenning, 'The Dominicans of Mullingar: 1237–1610', in *Riocht na Midhe*, iii, no. 2 (1964), pp 106–7.

Athenry received the Order in 1241, only a few years after Meiler de Bermingham had secured the place as his share of the spoils of conquered Connacht. It seemed to be part of the destiny of the Order to find itself mixed up with war and conquest, to pursue its mission in the wake of contending armies and to sound the accents of the Gospel as a refrain to the blast of the trumpet and the roll of the drum. It had come into existence in the midst of the campaign against the heretical Albigenses in southern France. When the Teutonic Knights embarked on the Christianisation of the pagans of East Prussia and the Baltic States by the very un-Christlike methods of fire and sword and extermination, the Dominicans were quickly on the scene ready to employ different means. So, too, were they to be found with the crusading armies in Greece and the Holy Land. And here in Ireland they found themselves willy-nilly in a similar position, though the invaders, in this case, were very far indeed from being crusaders, however they may have regarded themselves. One may almost go so far as to say that it is possible to determine the extent of the Anglo-Norman penetration during the thirteenth century by studying the location of the various Dominican foundations.

In 1243 the priory of Cashel was founded by David McKelly the archbishop, himself a member of the Order, and in the same year the abbey of Tralee was built by John Fitzgerald who thus initiated the long association of the Order with this famous family. The title – Holy Cross – was borne also by the abbeys of Sligo and Youghal, both of which were Geraldine foundations, and it has been suggested, and the suggestion rejected, that it was inspired by the cross quartered on the Geraldine family arms.

The well-known story of the ape which saved the child heir of the house of Geraldine appears to be associated with Tralee priory, though the castle of Woodstock[10] near Athy disputes the claim. The legend sets forth that in the battle of Callan near Kenmare, fought in 1261 between the Irish under Fíngen Mac Carthaig and the invaders under John FitzThomas (FitzGerald), the latter suffered a signal overthrow, and many of their leaders, including John Fitzgerald and his son Maurice were slain. When the news reached Tralee, the Geraldine retainers and the citizens of the town were seized with panic and ran about crying and clapping their hands, the while the monastery bells tolled for the fallen. In the midst of this turmoil, an ape which was kept as a pet in the castle seized the infant

10 Perhaps an error for Kilkea near Athy, where the figure of an ape is cut in stone.

son and heir of Maurice and running off, brought the baby up to the top of the tower of the Dominican church. When the dismayed townsfolk beheld the last hope of the Geraldines in this precarious position their terror increased, but after long efforts they finally wheedled the ape into descending to safety with its precious burden. In memory of the incident the Fitzgeralds have ever since borne an ape on their arms.[11]

The story is, of course, purely apocryphal. It is what is technically known as an etiological legend, one, that is, which is coined in order to give a plausible but fictitious explanation of a natural phenomenon or an historic event. It is easy to see how the legend in question arose. The child in the story grew up to succeed to the vast Geraldine possessions and became known to history as Tomás an Ápa – Thomas the Ape – the nickname being given to him from the fact that he was hunchbacked and repulsive in figure and appearance. In course of time, the family, to obliterate the memory of this disagreeable fact, invented and put into circulation the story of the ape and the child whom it placed in peril and then brought to safety.

11 The legend is recounted by P.N.N. Synnott, *Kilkea Castle: a history* (Mount Offaly Press, 1973), pp 30–1. The story is common to both the Desmond and Kildare branches of the family.

CHAPTER 5

The Foundations: 1244–1252

The year 1244 saw the number of Irish Dominican houses increased to twelve by the foundation of the convents of Newtownards and Coleraine; or, as they are usually styled in the ancient records, the monastery of Villa Nova and the abbey of the Bann. The names of the founders cannot be determined with certainty. Sir James Ware does not even venture an opinion on the subject. According to Alemand, the seventeenth-century French historian of Irish monastic establishments, Newtownards was founded by the Savage family.[1] He adduces no authority for this statement, and one may suspect that it is no more than an intelligent guess based on the fact that this family was the most prominent amongst the Norman settlers in the neighbourhood.

De Burgo quotes with approval the opinion ascribed by his relative – Fr Edmund Burke – to Gelasius MacMahon, provincial of Ireland *circa* 1688, to the effect that Walter de Burgo, earl of Ulster, was the founder.[2] Since Walter had attained the ripe age of fifteen years in 1244, we need not take this theory seriously. With regard to Coleraine we find the O'Kanes and the McQuillans disputing the title to the empty honour in the seventeenth century. In favour of the claim of the latter family is the fact that in the account which has been preserved of the progress conducted by the earl of Sussex through Ireland in 1556, it is stated that 'in the monastery of Coolrahan are buried the ancestors of MacGuillen on the left side of the altar, and on the tomb lyeth the picture [*sic*] of a knight armed'.[3] This proves that at some period between 1244 and 1556, the McQuillans had come to be acknowledged as founders, and the only reason for any reluctance in our admitting their claim without reservation arises from the fact that in 1244, there was no family of the name of McQuillan in existence.[4]

Though the question is of infinitesimal importance, it is not unworthy of closer study since the endeavour to unravel the difficulties will bring to

1 L.A. Alemand, *Histoire monastique d'Irlande* (Paris, 1690), p. 223. Trans. and ed. by J. Stephens as *Monasticon Hibernicum* (London, 1722). 2 *Hib. Dom.*, pp 242–3. 3 J.S. Brewer and W. Bullen (eds), *Calendar of the Carew manuscripts, 1515–74* (London, 1867), p. 260. 4 MacQuillan was the assumed name of the Cambro-Norman family of Mandeville, later 'lords of the Route', as the author shortly explains.

light the close connection which, as already pointed out, existed between the development of the Dominican Order in thirteenth-century Ireland and the doings of the Anglo-Norman colony there.

Hugh de Lacy, earl of Ulster, within whose lordship Newtownards and Coleraine were situated, died in 1243. The fact that within a year afterwards the two foundations came into being suggests very strongly that there must be some connection between the two events. Did the dying earl, as a tardy gesture of repentance for the lawless and evil life he had led, leave directions to have the two convents established? We know that during the years he spent in exile (1210–26) he put in some time fighting under Simon de Montfort in the Albigensian war. It is to be hoped that not many of the crusaders were of his stamp, for indeed he was no credit to any cause that might win his support. Though he must have been brought into contact during the period with the Dominicans, he gave no evidence of subsequent interest in them. At any rate, he granted them no foundation from the time of his restoration in 1226 till his death in 1243, and we can only hope that he relented before the end and authorised the establishment of those two convents.

Up to recent times, it was a commonplace with our historians that de Lacy was succeeded in the earldom of Ulster by Walter de Burgh who, allegedly, inherited the dead earl's title and possessions through marriage with his daughter. It is sufficient to state that Hugh's only daughter, Matilda, married David Fitzwilliam, baron of Naas – that Walter, in any case, could not be his son-in-law since he was only fourteen years old at his (Hugh's) death – that the possessions of the lordship were taken over by the crown and administered by its seneschals and bailiffs till 1264, when Prince Edward, lord of Ireland, afterwards King Edward I, gave them to Walter, presumably to enlist his support against the opposition barons in England who were then in revolt under the leadership of Simon de Montfort.

On de Lacy's death his widow, Emmeline, daughter of Walter de Riddelsford, baron of Norragh in Kildare, became entitled by feudal law to a dower of one-third of his estates. Such lands as she might thus acquire would, of course, be exempt from the jurisdiction of the officials of the crown. She lived on till 1276 (she had been forced by Henry III, in true feudal style, to marry secondly Stephen de Longespée) and, on her death the king took her possessions into his hands. Amongst the places listed in the inventory drawn up on this occasion, we note, with interest, Villa Nova. I believe that we have here the real clue to the foundation of the

convent of Newtownards. Emmeline, as soon as she became lady of the manor, installed the friars there, and, her family dying out before the close of the thirteenth century, all memory of her benefaction was subsequently lost.

The foundation of the convent of Coleraine presents an even more difficult problem than that of Newtownards. The district was granted by King John to the Norman-Scotch nobleman, Thomas, earl of Athol, who with his brother Alan, earl of Galloway, had assisted the colonists against the Irish of Ulster. When Hugh de Lacy was restored in 1226 it was expressly stipulated that the earl of Athol was to retain his rights in Coleraine. This did not deter de Lacy from taking hostile action against him, and it is not clear whether he [Athol] was still in possession of the place by 1243. The probability is that he had been driven out.

Coleraine had an ancient abbey which had originally enjoyed the status of a bishopric, and after it had been merged in the diocese of Connor, its lands, for some unexplained reason, became the property of the see of Armagh. It may be only a coincidence, but it is worth noting, that shortly before de Lacy's death, the newly appointed archbishop of Armagh, the German, Albert Suerbeer, exchanged the church lands in Coleraine for the earl's manor of Nobber in Meath. This prelate is usually, though wrongly, styled Albert of Cologne. His appellation should be *of Cholm*, and it is thereby revealed that before coming to Ireland he had been a missionary bishop in the Baltic States, which were at that time being subjected to the root-and-branch methods of evangelisation favoured by the Teutonic Knights. My readers will recall that the Dominicans under the leadership of St Hyacinth, were actively engaged on this mission and must, almost certainly, have attracted to themselves the favourable notice of Albert. It is tempting to surmise that the German bishop, fresh from his missionary experiences in the east, may have favoured the new Order and secured it a foundation in the see lands of Coleraine before transferring them to de Lacy.

We will consider another possibility. There is frequent mention of the de Mandeville family in Ulster during the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. They regularly acted as officers of the crown, and one of them, Henry, appears to have been appointed *custos* of the territory styled by the Anglo-Normans as Twescard (Irish *Tuaisceart*), when the crown resumed de Lacy's lands on his death. This district comprised north Antrim, being, in fact, the same area as was anciently called Dal Riada, which denomination became corrupted in later times to 'The Route'. Coleraine appears to have been included in it at this period.

De Mandeville was still in possession of the custodianship in 1271, when Walter de Burgh, earl of Ulster, died. His son and heir Richard was a boy of eleven years at the time and, as was the feudal custom, the crown took over all his possessions to administer them till he came of age. The seneschal appointed by the king, William FitzWarin, was not acknowledged by de Mandeville, and in the quarrel that ensued the latter was slain and his family outlawed and disinherited.

When Richard de Burgh succeeded to the earldom in 1280, he took back the de Mandevilles into favour, and restored their lands. They seem to have been distinguished by an unusual propensity to lawlessness and violence even in that lawless age. They were, for example, the prime movers in the conspiracy which led to the murder of William de Burgh, earl of Ulster, in 1333.

From this time forward the name seems to disappear from the records, but about the same period the name MacQuillan begins to crop up in Ulster and in Connacht. In Irish, it takes the form *Mac Uighilin* or *Mac Uidilin*, obviously a gaelicised Norman or Welsh name, formed from the patronymic *Hugolin*, or *Willin*, or even, as is suggested, *Llewellyn*. Who was this Hugolin or Willin or Llewellyn, the ancestor of the clan MacQuillan? It is generally held that he was a Mandeville, and certainly, if one were to settle questions of genealogy on the basis of similarity of mental and moral characteristics alone, one would have little difficulty in tracing a direct line of descent from the lawless de Mandevilles to the equally lawless MacQuillans.[5]

On the decay of the English power in Ulster following the murder of Earl William, the MacQuillans became chieftains of The Route, and here, during the next two centuries, they maintained themselves by the sword against all comers. An exhilarating free-for-all, in which they, their neighbours the O'Kanes, the O'Neills of Clandeboye and Cenél nEógain, as well as the O'Donnells figured, occupied the attention of the inhabitants of this favoured spot during the next two hundred years. Even towards the end of the sixteenth century, when the able and unscrupulous Tudor despotism was busily engaged in making an end of all such disorderly barbarism, those demented beings kept up their dog-fight. The MacQuillans were eventually destroyed and the Scotch McDonnells were granted their lands by their countryman, James I.

5 E. Curtis, 'The Macquillan or Mandeville Lords of the Route', in *RIA Proc.*, xliv, C. (1934).

It is difficult to imagine any member of such a lawless crew troubling himself about a religious foundation, but the testimony of the Earl of Sussex stands. If the MacQuillans are really Mandevilles, and if Henry, their presumed ancestor, was *custos* of Twescard in 1244, then, undoubtedly he becomes the most favoured candidate for the title of founder of the abbey of the Bann. One may derive a certain grim, cynical amusement from the spectacle of the friars celebrating the annual founder's day in the presence of the lamb-like descendants of Henry de Mandeville.[6]

We have delayed too long, perhaps, over those two foundations, and our notices of other houses must, in consequence, be curtailed.

Sligo abbey, the only Irish Dominican foundation whose community can, with certainty, boast of continuous existence down to the present day, and the grand and imposing ruins of which still remain to impress and to sadden the beholder, was founded in 1252 by Maurice Fitzgerald, grandson of Maurice the Invader and justiciar of Ireland (1232–45).[7] The reader will recall that at this time Sligo was a Geraldine possession, and it is said that Maurice built the abbey as an act of reparation for the part he had played in the death of Earl Richard Marshal on the Curragh of Kildare in 1234. He certainly needed to do penance for this and a great many other things done by him during his life, and it is to be hoped that he did not postpone doing so till 1252. The Irish chroniclers describe him as 'the destroyer of the Gaels', and he merited this appellation by the terrible devastation wrought during his invasion of Connacht in alliance with Richard de Burgh in 1235. He founded the Franciscan friary of Youghal, and it is said that having been wounded in single combat by Godfrey O'Donnell, prince of Tír Conaill, he assumed the Franciscan habit and died amongst the friars there in 1257.[8] The Norman annalists naturally do not agree with the Irish in their estimates of him: they describe him as a valiant and witty knight who lived commendably.

Contemporaneously with Sligo, the convent of Strade was founded by Jordan de Exeter, one of the barons who had assisted Richard de Burgh in the conquest of Connacht. From a neighbouring ford on the river Moy, the place was also known as *Athlethan* (Broadford) which term is still

6 One may add that *c.*1647 an Irish Dominican at Rome drew up a list of Irish convents and their founders. The convent 'of Down', presumably Newtownards, was founded, he believed, by the family of Magennis, 'now barons of Iveagh'; and that of Coleraine, 'founded and most richly endowed by the O'Cahan family'. See H. Fenning, 'Founders of Irish Dominican friaries, 1647', in *Coll. Hib.*, nos. 44 and 45 (2002–3), p. 61. **7** There is a recent account of Sligo Abbey, with plans and illustrations, by H. Fenning, *The Dominicans of Sligo* (Enniscrone, 2002). **8** Gwynn & Hadcock, p. 261.

preserved in the townland name, Ballylethan. In a list of Irish Dominican houses drawn up in the early seventeenth century it appears in the Latin form '*De Vico*'.[9]

A piquant story survives in the register of Athenry to the effect that de Exeter built the monastery in the first instance for the Franciscans. His wife Basilia de Bermingham, daughter of Milo, the founder of Athenry, was, however, determined to secure the place for her favourites, the Dominicans, and with true feminine subtlety, set about having her own way in the matter. Having prepared a great banquet to which she invited her father, she held up the proceedings by declaring that she would neither eat nor drink till her request was granted by her husband. He, poor man, anxious to get on with his meal, capitulated, and Basilia, so the story goes, immediately despatched a messenger with a great sum of money to Rome, where the transfer of the house to the Dominicans was effected. If this story is true, as it well may be, all one can say is that this lady was well versed in the technicalities of canon law for permission from the Holy See. There appears in general to have been a neglect of constitutional procedure in the acceptance of the Order's foundations in Ireland. It was laid down by St Dominic himself that no house could be affiliated without the previous sanction of the general chapter, which body was invariably guided in its decisions by the reports forwarded by the provincial chapter. In view of this it is more than surprising to find that the first instance of a general chapter approving of new foundations in Ireland occurs in the *acta* of that held in London in 1263, in which permission was granted for the establishment of two new houses in this country. Trim and Arklow, judging by the dates of their foundations would appear to be the convents thus designated. In the chapter held at Pisa in 1276, permission was granted for another house and this was, most probably, Derry which was founded in 1274.

The de Exeter family, whose name is latinised *de Exonia*, became in due course, like all the Norman families of the west, completely gaelicised and adopted the patronymic MacJordan. A member of the family, Stephen de Exonia, born in 1246, is supposed by Ware and Molyneux to have been the author of the *Annals of Multyfarnham*. The preoccupation with the affairs of the de Exeters which marks this compilation is the reason for its being attributed to him, and its very frequent mention of the Dominicans has led some writers to infer that he was a member of the Order.

9 Flynn, p. 326. '*Vicus*' is the Latin for 'street', in Irish '*sráid*'; hence Strade. The Latins also used '*stratus*' for a pavement.

Unfortunately for this theory, Mr A.G. Little, in his *Grey Friars in Oxford*, has proved that he was a Franciscan, with the result that the question of the authorship of the *Annals* remains more obscure than ever.[10] Strangely enough, there was a Stephen de Exonia, an English Dominican, who flourished about this period, and whose name has survived simply through his having to obtain the king's pardon for acting illegally.

10 A. Smith (ed.), *Annales de Monte Fernandi,* in *Tracts relating to Ireland printed for the Irish Archaeological Society,* ii (Dublin, 1842); A.G. Little, *The Grey Friars in Oxford* (Oxford, 1892), p. 213. The author of the *Annals* was Stephen de Exeter, a Franciscan familiar with the affairs of Connacht and with the family of Richard de Exeter, deputy governor of Ireland (1270–6). See B.A. Williams, 'Exeter, Stephen of', in *Oxford DNB* (Oxford, 2004), vol. 18, p. 828.

CHAPTER 6

The Foundations: 1253–1269

In the year following the foundation of the convents of Sligo and Strade, two other houses were acquired by the Order – namely Athy and Roscommon – thereby bringing the number of its establishments to the imposing total of sixteen.

De Burgo, following Alemand, names the families of the Wogans and de Boiselles (Boswells) as the founders of Athy, but since neither of these appears to have possessed any property there in the thirteenth century, it is not clear what claim either of them has to the title. Needless to say, there is no documentary evidence to support Alemand's assertion, and one may be pardoned for suspecting that it amounts to no more than one of those hit-or-miss guesses for which the antiquarians of those times cherished such a partiality.

If we are to take it that the founder was the lord of the manor, as was invariably the case with foundations which were located in the small baronial vills, then it would appear that some member of the family of St Michael might claim the honour. Their ancestor, Robert de St Michael, was granted the barony of Reban, in which Athy is situated, by Strongbow and the line continued down to the sixteenth century when we find the viceroy, Sir Henry Sydney, referring to its last representative in terms of pitying contempt.

That Athy pertained to the St Michael estate appears from the record of a case reported in the Plea Rolls under the date 1374. Four Dominicans, members of the Athy community, were arraigned on the charge of obstructing the king's constable in the town in the execution of his duty. It appeared in the course of the evidence, that the town was placed in charge of the constable during the minority of the baronial heir, as was the regular feudal custom, and that the Dominicans had, for some reason that does not appear, assumed the responsibility for conducting the 'assize of bread' in contempt of the constable's authority.[1] This episode proves that

1 The Dominicans in fact complained that Oliver Eustace, *custos* of Athy, had for two years held the assize of bread, beer etc. in their cloister against their will. Eustace held the lands of 'the late baron of Reban'. See IDA, MacInerny C4, p. 377; a transcript from PROI, Plea

the St Michael family were at that period, lords of the vill of Athy, and we may take it that the same was the case in 1253 when the Dominican convent was founded. They appear, therefore, entitled to be regarded as its founders. When in the seventeenth century an attempt was made to collect and preserve such notices of the various houses as were obtainable, nothing was apparently forthcoming regarding Athy. It had been suppressed in 1540, and was not revived till almost a hundred years later, its archives having been in the interval scattered and destroyed. Since the St Michael family, the presumed founders, had also died out by that time, it is no wonder that the writers of the period were all at sea as regards this problem.[2]

In this connexion it is worth noting that, as a general rule, there is a far greater paucity of documentary matter in the case of houses situated within the English Pale than in those outside it. The reason is as stated above in the case of Athy. These houses were suppressed in 1540–1 and were not revived till the era of comparative tolerance under the Stuarts supervened nearly a century later. By that time not only had whatever written records they may have possessed been dispersed and destroyed, but even oral tradition had probably died out also.

The houses outside the Pale, on the other hand, escaped destruction, particularly those in Connacht, till late in the sixteenth century, and even then, in some cases such as Sligo and probably Athenry, matters were so arranged that the friars were enabled to continue in possession even after their convents had been formally suppressed. To this fact we owe the preservation of the precious *Register of Athenry*, the most important, in fact the only worthwhile document dealing with our medieval history that has survived. And thus too is explained the fact that, on the whole, we have far more information about those houses than we have about the others. The interval between suppression and restoration was so comparatively short that it caused no great hiatus in the corporate life of the various houses. Documents could in consequence be preserved and oral traditions passed on.

The great and renowned abbey of Roscommon was founded, as already mentioned, in the same year as Athy, by Felim O'Connor, king of Connacht. We have already met him in his capacity of builder of the refectory of the abbey of Athenry, and the fact that he now made himself

Rolls Edward III, no. 232 m 4. **2** In 1540, at the suppression of the Dominican house in Athy, Matthew St Michael, baron of Rheban, was on the panel of jurors, yet neither he nor any other juror could say when the abbey had been founded, nor by whom. See H. Fenning, *Dominicans of Athy, 1257–2007* (Naas, 2007), p. 10.

responsible for a foundation within his own jurisdiction, is evidence that the Order, notwithstanding its predominantly Anglo-Norman tinge, did not lack popularity amongst the Gaelic nobles. True indeed, Felim appears to have lived on terms of amity with the invaders once he had accepted the fact of the conquest of Connacht by Richard de Burgh in 1237. He paid a visit to the English court in 1240, and was well received there, and he led a body of troops to Wales in 1244 to assist Henry III in his abortive expedition against that country. It seems possible that he may have been, to an extent, anglicised through his association with foreigners and that this may have had something to do with his introduction of the friars into his principality.[3] His benefactions to the new foundation must have been on a royal scale, since we read that it was found possible to consecrate the church in 1257, only four years after building had started. The ceremony was performed by Tommaltach O'Connor, bishop of Elphin and kinsman of Felim, and the church was dedicated to St Mary.[4]

Though Felim managed to keep on good terms with the invaders, it was far otherwise with his son – the indomitable warrior King Áed. Already during his father's lifetime he had signalised himself by his pursuance of a policy of determined hostility against the national foe, and when Felim's bones were laid to rest in the friars' church at Roscommon in 1265, his son proceeded to launch attack after attack against them. The consequence was that a castle was built in Roscommon to overawe the turbulent Áed in 1269, but from the point of view of the colonists, the cure was worse than the disease since the fortress and the town now became the object of constant attacks. The burning of the friary church and monastic buildings in 1270 was probably brought about in the course of the attack on and destruction of the castle by King Áed in that year.

Áed died in 1274 and once his strong hand was removed the old dissensions between various claimants to the bloodstained throne of Connacht started all over again. His immediate successor, his cousin Eógan, was murdered within the space of three months by his own kindred in the church of the friars of Roscommon.[5] How religious life could be maintained under those conditions it is hard to understand, and we must remember that this outrage was not an isolated or exceptional occurrence. It was just an incident in the prolonged dog-fight which now set in between the various branches of the O'Connor family and

3 See L. Taheny, *The Dominicans of Roscommon* (Tallaght, 1990). 4 *ALC*, i, 425, 451.
5 *ALC*, i, 451.

continued till at the end of the next century they had reduced themselves to a state of complete impotence and insignificance.

Ten years elapsed after the foundation of Roscommon before the Order secured its next prize – the convent of Trim, erected by Geoffrey de Geneville or Joinville, lord of Meath, in 1263. He was a Frenchman, brother of that Sieur de Joinville who was the friend and biographer of St Louis. It is of interest to note that this family were the seigneurs of Vaucouleurs in Burgundy in which was situated the hamlet of Domrémy, the birthplace of St Joan of Arc (†1431).

Geoffrey came to England, like so many of his countrymen, being drawn thither by the favour shown them by Henry III, and quickly won his way to recognition and preferment. He was given in marriage the Lady Matilda de Lacy, grand-daughter and heiress jointly with her sister Marguerite, of Walter de Lacy, lord of Meath who died leaving no male heir in 1243. De Geneville became thereby lord of the moiety of Meath with Trim as the centre of his palatinate. He played a prominent part in the affairs of the colony, acting as justiciary on occasion; and though a most exemplary Christian man in private life and a valiant fighter in the Crusade for the Holy Land, appears to have been obsessed by an extreme antipathy towards the 'natives', as he would most certainly have denominated them. There is still extant the record of the petition, addressed by him to the Holy See, for a dispensation for his son to permit him to marry his cousin, and the justifying reason assigned for it is, that the young man could not find a suitable mate amongst the barbarous natives of this country.

One might expect that a religious house founded by such a man and in a centre completely subject to his influence would necessarily prove itself a hotbed of intense anti-Irish sentiment.[6] That such was far from being the case is suggested by the fact that it was chosen as the venue for the important national synod convened by the archbishop of Armagh, Nícol Mac Máel Ísu, in 1291.[7] This prelate had distinguished himself by his bold and fearless opposition to the attempts of the colonial officials to reduce the church in Ireland to a condition of impotent subjection to the king's will, and though he was not in a position to lead a political or military movement against the foreigners, he did serve as a rallying centre for the hopes of the discomfited, dispossessed and discouraged Gaelic people.

6 H. Fenning, 'The Dominicans of Trim: 1263–1682', in *Riocht na Midhe*, iii, no. 1 (1963), pp 15–23. **7** J. Ware, *Bishops*, p. 70, cited by Archdall, p. 580. See J. Watt, *The church in medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 1972), pp 17–18.

It is, therefore, something in the nature of a minor landmark in our national history that, in answer to the call of the patriotic Mac Máel Ísu, the prelates and clergy of the Irish church, both Gaelic and Anglo-Norman, assembled, above all places, in the Dominican abbey of Trim, beneath the shadow of the frowning fortress of the anti-Irish Geoffrey de Geneville. They published a strong statement, listing the many instances of encroachment by the civil power on the rights of the church and expressed their determination to resist them by all available means.

De Geneville, in his old age, resigned all his dignities and possessions, and entered the monastery which he had founded to live the observant life of a good religious and prepare thereby for death. When so good a man fell victim to the virus of racialism (so foolishly thought by many to be a product of twentieth-century lunacy) what may we not suspect in the case of Hugh de Lacy and many others of like breed.

Two small and apparently unimportant foundations followed that of Trim, those namely of Arklow and Rosbercon. The former of these was built in 1264, by Thomas Theobald Butler, a fact which serves to remind us that Arklow constituted the original humble nucleus out of which grew the vast possessions of this great and renowned family.[8]

The convent of Rosbercon was erected in 1267, and according to Alemand, the founder was a member of the Grace family, or alternatively, one of the numerous branches of the Walshes.[9] No proof is given of this assertion and it seems, in fact, to be merely a surmise based on no solid foundation. Grace's *Annals* make no claim to annex the title to a member of the annalist's family, and Clyn merely mentions the fact that the Friars Preachers settled there in 1267, without mentioning the name of the founder.

Rosbercon is the suburb of New Ross situated on the west, or Kilkenny side, of the Barrow. It is connected by a bridge with the town proper which is in consequence frequently styled Rossponte in medieval documents. If our readers will recall what has been said in a previous chapter regarding the partitioning of the Marshal palatinate on the failure of the male line in 1247, they will remember that Kilkenny fell to the earl

8 D. Walsh, 'The Dominicans of Arklow (1264–1793)', in *Reportorium Novum*, iii, no. 2 (1963–64), pp 307–23. The obit of the founder, 'Theobald Fitzwalter, fourth Butler of Ireland', is given in *AFM* under 1284. On the early manor of Arklow, see L. Price, 'The Byrne's country in Co. Wicklow in the sixteenth century: and the manor of Arklow', in *RSAI Jn.*, lxvi, part 1 (1936), pp 41–66. **9** See T.S. Flynn, *The Dominicans of Rosbercon (1267–c.1800)* (Freshford, 1981). Flynn (p. 11) considers that Edward Grace, third baron of Courtstown, was probably the founder, conjointly with the Walsh family of Castle Hoell.

of Gloucester, Richard de Clare, son of Isabella, one of the five Marshal sisters who shared the inheritance. Rosbercon was included in this seignory and therefore fell under a separate jurisdiction from New Ross which was included in the Carlow seignory of Bigod, earl of Norfolk who had married Matilda Marshal. The Marshals had developed New Ross on an ambitious scale, and the trade of the port was so extensive that it rivalled Waterford, Cork and Dublin. When Rosbercon came under the control of the earls of Gloucester, these would naturally endeavour to set up this place as a rival to the port across the bridge.

At the time when Rosbercon convent was founded, the earldom was held by Gilbert de Clare, grandson of Isabella Marshal He supported Simon de Montfort, the leader of the baronial party, and fought by his side in the battle of Lewes in 1264, in which the king was defeated and taken prisoner. Simon was the son of that other Simon the leader of the Albigensian Crusade, and friend and penitent of St Dominic. The younger Simon maintained the family tradition of friendship to the Order and founded on its behalf the priory of Leicester. The Gloucester family were, too, distinguished patrons and benefactors of the friars, Earl Richard being the founder of the convent of Cardiff in 1256.

Soon after the battle of Lewes (1264), Gloucester quarrelled with de Montfort, broke with him and joined the crown party. It was largely due to him that the decisive battle of Evesham, fought in the following year, resulted in victory for the royalists, de Montfort being slain in the action. Thus perished the man who is justly regarded as the father of English democracy and who, it is now recognised, was largely inspired in his views by the system of representative government which had been elaborated in the constitution of the Order to which he was so devoted.

Gloucester soon repented the part he had played in compassing the death of de Montfort, and organised a new baronial party to carry out the projects of the dead leader. It was at this precise juncture that the convent of Rosbercon was founded. Is it not legitimate to infer a connexion between these events and to regard this rather obscure Dominican foundation as an expiatory gesture tendered by him who had been the friend and then the betrayer of the chivalrous de Montfort? If this surmise is correct (and it is certainly better based than those which have heretofore passed current) then Rosbercon convent may lay claim to an importance which otherwise it might not enjoy.

Youghal priory, dedicated originally to the Holy Cross but subsequently to Our Lady of Graces, was founded in 1268, and one writer has

followed another in ascribing the foundation to Thomas Fitzgerald, the Tomás an Ápa whom we have already encountered in our notice of the priory of Tralee. He was an infant in arms when his father Maurice, and his grandfather John, fell in the battle of Callan in 1261, and had consequently attained to the age of eight years or thereabouts at the time that Youghal convent was founded. We must look elsewhere, evidently, for the benefactor to whom this renowned monastery owes its existence.[10]

One fact, persistently overlooked by our historians, is of capital importance here. Youghal, and the barony of Imokilly to which it belonged, was at this time the property not of the Fitzgeralds of Desmond but of their cousins of Kildare. It will be recalled that Maurice FitzGerald, ancestor of the house of Kildare and founder of the convent of Sligo, erected the Franciscan convent of Youghal and died there in the habit of a Friar Minor in 1257. It is fairly obvious, therefore, that the foundation of the Dominican convent there eleven years later is to be ascribed to some member of his family.

He left three sons – Gerald, Maurice and Thomas. The first-named perished in the ill-fated expedition to Gascony in 1243, leaving a young son – Maurice – as heir to the titles and possessions of his house. Three different individuals named Maurice appear, therefore, simultaneously, in the Kildare pedigree about this time: (1) Maurice, the justiciary, who died a Franciscan at Youghal in 1257; (2) Maurice, his second son, to whom the Geraldine possessions in Connacht descended. He played a prominent part in the affairs of the colony, acted as justiciary for a period and died in 1283; (3) Maurice, son of that Gerald who perished in the Gascony expedition, and therefore grandson of Maurice the founder of Sligo. He (the grandson) perished by shipwreck while crossing the Irish Sea in 1268.

It is surely a striking coincidence, to say the least, that Youghal priory was founded in this very year, and justifies the strong presumption that the family of the unfortunate young nobleman procured its foundation as a memorial to him and a place where prayer would be offered in perpetuity for his soul. His uncle Maurice, who became the head of the family by his death, is therefore the probable founder.

10 J.A. Dwyer, *The Dominicans of Cork city and county* (Cork, 1896), pp 113–26. Dwyer gives the founder as Thomas, son of Maurice Fitzgerald, 'then viceroy'. Yet modern lists give no Fitzgerald among the chief governors of Ireland between 1245 and 1272. Gwynn & Hadcock, p. 231, specify that the founder was Thomas Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald, grandson of John of Callan who in 1243 had founded the convent of Tralee. This Thomas was buried at Youghal in 1298.

This chapter will fittingly conclude with a notice of the foundation of the convent of Lorrha in 1269. The finely preserved ruin stands near the Shannon at the point where it enters Lough Derg. The register of Athenry gives Walter de Burgh, earl of Ulster and lord of Connacht, as the founder, and we may accept this statement as true without reservation, since Lorrha was a de Burgh manor. The original possessions of this family, indeed, were located in Limerick and Tipperary, and it was therefore appropriate that their first contact with the Order should have occurred there.[11]

11 The founder, Walter de Burgh, was earl of Ulster from 1264 and father of the famous Richard, 'the Red Earl'. The dedication was to St Peter Martyr OP, as had earlier been the case at Athy. See A. Gwynn and D.F. Gleeson, *A history of the diocese of Killaloe* (Dublin, 1962), pp 273–7.

CHAPTER 7

The Foundations: 1274–1291

Rathfran Abbey, situated a few miles north of Killala on the left bank of the Cloonaghmore river near where it enters Killala bay, was founded for the Friars Preachers in 1274. The surrounding country is pleasant and picturesque, and from the number of prehistoric monuments which survive one may judge that it must have been a closely populated settlement in bygone times. Very few particulars survive of the history of the abbey, and one is thereby placed in a position to indulge to the height of his bent, the romantic and nostalgic sentiments suggested by McFirbis' epithet: 'Rathfran of the sweet bells'.

As is the case with most of our convents, there is no certainty regarding the identity of the founder. Ware records the fact, without assuming any responsibility for its genuineness, that some member of the d'Exeter or MacJordan family, the founders of Strade, was generally supposed to be the founder of Rathfran.[1] Alemand and Harris, on the strength of Ware's cautious statement, have no difficulty in deciding categorically in the same sense. O'Heyne follows a line of his own. He holds that one of the de Burgh family, the famous William Liath, was the founder, and our own de Burgo, who usually treats O'Heyne's attempts at imaginative reconstruction of the past with the greatest contempt and ridicule, for an easily understood reason, accepts his theory.

William Liath was the nephew of Walter de Burgh, earl of Ulster. Walter died in 1271, and his son Richard, the Red Earl, did not come of age and thereby succeed to the earldom till 1280. In view of this fact it is very hard to see how William Liath, the son of a younger brother of Walter, could by 1274 have reached such an age as would enable him to qualify for the title of founder of Rathfran. Besides the de Burghs did not hold any possessions in north Connacht at that time.

A possible clue to the solution of the problem is furnished by the fact that the parochial living of Rathfran was vested in the community of the Augustinian Canons of Mullingar. This arrangement was made possible in consequence of some of the Norman barons of Meath receiving as their

1 MacJordan was a Gaelic patronymic adopted by the d'Exeter family.

share of the plunder from the conquest of Connacht, the barony of Tirawley in which Rathfran is situated. The Petits of Mullingar appear to have been the original grantees of the barony and they subinfeuded their neighbours, the Cusacks, in the territory. Following their regular custom, the rectory of Rathfran was made over to the canons of their foundation at Mullingar.

Trouble arose between the conquerors when Richard de Burgh granted Tirawley and Erris to Robert de Carew of Cork. Carew then subinfeuded several of his barons, the Barrets, Lynotts, and Meyricks, in these territories. From that time forward these clans (we may call them so since they became completely Gaelic in a few generations), known generally as the Welshmen of Tirawley, carried on an internecine war with the Meathmen. One grim episode in the struggle is commemorated in Sir Samuel Ferguson's striking poem, 'The Welshmen of Tirawley'. There can be little doubt that some member of these Meath baronial families was responsible for introducing the Friars Preachers to Rathfran, just as they had been previously responsible for making over the parish to the Augustinians of Mullingar.[2]

The convent of Derry, according to Ware, Alemand and de Burgo, was founded in 1274 by Domnall Óg O'Donnell, prince of Tyrconnell. O'Heyne states that it was a magnificent and well-endowed house, and if the tradition be well founded according to which the walls of Derry were built from its stones, his statement may be taken as correct.

Derry was the only Dominican house located in the unconquered Gaelic north, and its existence there is somewhat of a mystery. Its foundation probably came about through the ecclesiastical and political events of the time, and it will be necessary in consequence to devote some space to them if we wish to clear up the matter.

During the period following the battle of Down, in which Brian O'Neill was defeated and killed by the English of Ulidia in 1260, Cenel Eóghain (which included Tyrone, Derry and Inishowen) was ruled by Aedh Buidhe O'Neill. His brother Niall Culánach ruled Inishowen as an independent prince. Domnall Óg O'Donnell, taking advantage of the weakness of Cenel Eóghain, extended his sway over several of the territories bordering on his hereditary principality of Tyrconnell, and until

2 This surmise finds strong support in a list of convents and founders compiled at Rome *c.*1647: 'The convent of Rathfran, begun by the Petit family and endowed by the family of the baron of Tireragh, commonly styled O'Douda.' H. Fenning, 'Founders of Irish Dominican friaries, 1647', in *Collect. Hib.*, nos 44 and 45 (2002–3), p. 59.

his fall in the battle of Desertcreight in 1281, he ranked as the most powerful chieftain in the north. The year of the foundation of Derry, 1274, marked the climax of his power. It is not certain that he made any move to annex Inishowen, though from the time of his death till the sixteenth century this territory remained in dispute between the princes of Tyrone and Tyrconnell. Possibly it suited his policy to support Niall Culánach in order to weaken the O'Neills of Tyrone, and a similar motive may have induced him to adopt a passive attitude when the ambitious and unscrupulous Gelasius O'Carolan, bishop of Derry, wrested this territory from the see of Raphoe and annexed it to his own.

Two Dominican prelates governed, in succession, the diocese of Raphoe during this period: Máel Pátraic O'Scannail (1253–61) and, after an interregnum of five years, Cairpre O Scuapa (1265–74). O'Scannail was the sort of man who would not view with a sympathetic eye O'Carolan's attempts to enlarge his *lebensraum* at other people's expense and we may take it that, during his occupancy of the see of Raphoe, Inishowen remained under his jurisdiction. Bishop O Scuapa was, however, a man of a different stamp, gentle, pious, and unworldly, the very type of those who are predestined to fall victims to the rapacious and the strong.

The fifteenth-century Dominican chroniclers, Taegio and Leandro Alberti, have preserved a notice of him, brief indeed but sufficiently illuminating. They state that:

> he was present at the Council of Lyons (1274), one of the thirty Dominican bishops who took part in that historic assembly. Humble and devout, yet of cheerful disposition, he had ruled his diocese wisely and well, and had at the same time retained his authority over the neighbouring Dominican convent. As often as a provincial or other official visitor came to the monastery, he took his place in the chapter room with the other friars, and (as Holy Writ saith of the just man) he was the first to confess his faults and receive his penance with all reverence. Having come to assist at the Council of Lyons, and staying with the Dominicans of that city, he repeatedly implored permission from the saintly master general, John of Vercelli, to accuse himself in chapter like the rest of the brethren. This permission was refused as the master general would not suffer the holy prelate to humble himself in this manner and he was not so susceptible to persuasion as the provincials had been. Shortly after the opening of the Council, the bishop was stricken with what

> appeared to be a slight fever and sweetly gave up his spirit to God on the eve of Our Lord's Ascension in 1274.[3]

A list of the bishops of Raphoe compiled, apparently, early in the seventeenth century throws further light on the career of this saintly Dominican.[4] It states that

> he war the first (bishop of Raphoe) who lost Derry and this side Lough Foyle (i.e., Inishowen), for at that time O'Karrealin war bishop of Rathloura (= Maghera), and the natives of Tyrconnell, contrary to all equitie and conscience, did maintain him in the bishoprick of Raphoe, because he war their friend, and withall he did largely corrupt them with bribes for to assist him against the Bishop O'Scoba.

There are a few obvious errors in this statement, but its main theme – that O'Carolan seized Inishowen during O'Scuapa's tenure of Raphoe – is most probably correct. The fact that the poor man is found acting as supernumerary in Canterbury in 1273 bears out the allegation that he was expelled from his diocese by a party favouring the pretensions of O'Carolan.

It is impossible to avoid surmising that the foundation of the Dominican abbey of Derry had some connection with these happenings. That O'Scuapa was concerned in it is suggested by the statement of Taegio ascribing to him the dual role of bishop and superior of the neighbouring priory, which must certainly mean Derry.[5] Such an arrangement is simply impossible under the constitutions of the Order, and it is astonishing to find one of its members calmly recounting it as if it were a normal occurrence. What could have put such an idea into his head? I suggest that we have here a garbled version of the true story of the foundation of our house in Derry, and that in this account the holy bishop figures as the prime mover in securing the place for the Order.

While present at the Council of Lyons, finding himself in the midst of the fervent life of the Dominicans of that city, and feeling his end approaching, he either wrote himself to O'Carolan and O'Donnell, or

3 Quoted from MacInerny, pp 292–3, being part of his much longer account of Bishop O'Scuapa. **4** Text, transcribed from Reeves, in E. Maguire, *A history of the diocese of Raphoe* (Dublin, 1920), i, p. 329. **5** The 'neighbouring priory' was surely Coleraine, founded in 1244 and also in the diocese of Derry. There was no convent at Derry until after the bishop's death.

induced John of Vercelli to do so, suggesting the foundation of the Dominican convent, as an act which would purchase oblivion for all the wrongs he had suffered at their hands. When we remember the extraordinary, even quixotic, love he felt for the Order, it must appear the most natural thing in the world, that he should utilise the opportunity offered by his meeting with John of Vercelli to set in train the negotiations which secured this house for the Preachers. The legend of the letter written by St Dominic to O'Donnell is thereby explained as well. It was written not by Dominic but by John of Vercelli, and the lapse of centuries caused the identity of the lesser man to be merged in that of the greater.

With the foundation of Derry, the Order had secured twenty-three houses in Ireland and that within the space of fifty years. From that time forward lengthy periods elapsed between foundations, and seventeen years passed by before Kilmallock was added to the list. Those seventeen years were the breeding ground of great changes in the ecclesiastical and political world, more marked, naturally, on the continent and in England than here, and the year 1291 experienced an historical climate very different from that of 1274. The anti-clerical State was by then a living reality, and the hostility of the secular clergy to the mendicants had become a settled and almost traditional thing.

The story of the foundation of Kilmallock abbey is preserved in the State Papers in the form of the record of an inquisition held in Cashel on 31 December 1291, pursuant to a writ issued by king Edward I to the justiciary of Ireland, William de Vesci, dated 3 October in the same year.[6] The writ sets forth that the king had been informed that the Dominican friars having, by grant of the king, so far as he could grant, and by protection of the sheriff of Limerick, entered a piece of land in the vill of Kilmallock given to them by a burgess of the place to dwell therein, they were ejected therefrom and their house destroyed by the clerks and servants of the bishop of Limerick, chief lord of the vill, and by his orders. The king therefore commands the justiciary to inquire by the oath of twelve men of the vill and the neighbourhood by whom and by whose authority the friars had been expelled; whether the land owes any rent of service to the lord of the fee; and whether the residence of the friars there would tend to the prejudice of the king or of the lord of the fee or any other, etc.

6 From the Miscellanea of the Chancery, London, in *Cal. doc. Ire.*, i (1171–1307), p. 439; reprinted in O'Heyne, *Appendix*, p. 61; and A. Hogan, *Kilmallock Dominican priory* (Kilmallock, 1991), p. 55.

The inquisition was duly held and twelve burgesses sworn, 'who, upon their oath, say that the friars ... *purchased* in Kilmallock, of John Bluett, burgess of that vill, a piece of land, that they retained seisin of it for seven weeks, when they were, by orders of Gerald, bishop of Limerick, ejected therefrom and their houses levelled with the ground, by Raymond the dean, Robert Blund the archdeacon, Simon Fitz John canon of Limerick, etc. ... They further say that this piece of land owes no rent or service to the bishop as lord of the vill and that the residence of the friars there would not tend to the prejudice of the king or the lord of the fee or any other person.' Many interesting considerations are suggested by this episode, but it will be possible to touch only briefly on them here, reserving a more exhaustive inquiry to a later chapter.

How are the actions of the bishop and of his subordinates to be interpreted? Was it a case simply of that hostility of secular to regular which had by this time reached serious proportions in other countries? Such, undoubtedly, would on the face of it appear to be the logical inference to be drawn from the facts as stated, and if the incident had happened in Germany, France or Spain one would have no hesitation in so interpreting it. In those countries, the campaign against the mendicants had attained to truly alarming proportions, and just at the moment when the friars were expelled from Kilmallock affairs had reached a crisis.

Notwithstanding the incessant grants of privileges by successive popes during the thirteenth century, asserting the right of the friars to preach, hear confessions and solemnize funerals in their churches, the opposition had continued to grow. The bull of Martin IV, *Ad Uberes Fructus*, granting the right to preach without needing the permission of the bishop, only embittered still more a situation already sufficiently exacerbated. His successor Nicholas IV, by a bull issued in 1288, laid it down as a fundamental law of the church that the mendicant orders were exempt from episcopal jurisdiction and subject to the sole authority of Rome. The agitation in France reached such a pitch that the pope thought it well to dispatch two legates, one of whom was Cardinal Gaetani, afterwards pope under the title of Boniface VIII, to deal with the affair on the spot (1290). At a council held in Paris, Gaetani, employing all the resources of that sarcastic eloquence which, with such unhappy facility, he subsequently employed in his papal pronouncements, declared for the friars and imposed silence on those masters of the University of Paris who desired to continue the argument.

The Kilmallock affair may therefore be an echo of these disturbances. It is however possible to find a different explanation, and one which I

think is more in harmony with the facts of the general situation in Ireland at the time. In this hypothesis, it is the civil and not the ecclesiastical authority which was responsible for the disturbance. It was in fact a by-product of the operation of the famous Statute of Mortmain.

This law, enacted by Edward I in 1279, forbade all alienations of property (without licence from the crown) in favour of any corporate body ecclesiastical or secular, under pain of forfeiture of the property concerned to the immediate lord or, in his default during a year, to the lord paramount, or in default of both to the king. An amendment passed in 1285 made these provisions more watertight by providing for the case of collusion between the parties to the transaction. When such a case was detected it was sent before a jury for trial.

The reader will note, in the king's writ and the jury's findings in the Kilmallock case, the assertions that licence had been granted to the friars for the securing of the property and that their action caused no loss or damage to the king or to the lord of the manor. The whole atmosphere of the case, in fact, was conditioned by the provisions of the mortmain statute. It appears most probable, therefore, that the bishop took action simply to save himself from victimisation at the hands of the royal officials who would discover, in his failure to do so, sufficient ground for proceeding against him under the statute. The king's declaration to the effect that the necessary licence had been secured beforehand would not prevent these gentry from taking hostile action, as many another bishop had, during Edward's reign, learned to his cost.

CHAPTER 8

The Foundations: 1291–1356

In the preceding chapter, the forcible suppression of the newly-erected Dominican foundation of Kilmallock by the agents of the bishop of Limerick was considered, and the suggestion put forward that this action was motivated, not by any particular dislike which the bishop may have entertained for the friars, but simply by the desire to safeguard himself against the danger of his incurring the penalties decreed by the statute of mortmain.[1] The popular tradition, which de Burgo accepts as well founded,[2] ascribes the foundation to Gilbert (or, *more Hibernico,* Gibbon) Fitzgerald, the ancestor of the White Knights. True indeed, the tomb of this family occupies the place assigned to the founder – the north or gospel side of the sanctuary, and the drip which ceaselessly falls on it has its place in local legend too. It is supposed to symbolise the curse that fell on the family in punishment for the betrayal to Carew of the Súgán Earl of Desmond by the White Knight in 1600 at the critical point of the Nine Years War waged by Hugh O'Neill and his southern allies against Elizabeth.

Gibbon FitzGerald was not the original founder as clearly appears from the account given in the State Papers which has been already narrated. The founder was the citizen of Kilmallock, John Bluett, who gave or sold to the friars the ground on which the church and convent buildings were erected. The White Knights were probably responsible for the reconstruction of the church in the fifteenth century when the south transept, with its glorious decorated window, was built as well as the equally splendid east window of the sanctuary, and in that way qualified for the title of founder.

The foundation of Kilmallock may be regarded as the culminating point in the early period of development of *Hibernia Dominicana* and thenceforward till we reach the last quarter of the fifteenth century the

1 One may add that in 1291 the Friars Preachers in Ireland petitioned the king for leave 'to receive new places in which to live' at Kilmallock and Rathangan, Co. Kildare. G.O. Sayles, *Documents on the affairs of Ireland* (Dublin 1979), pp 36–7. No foundation at Rathangan is otherwise known. 2 *Hib. Dom.*, p. 284.

story is one of stagnation and decay. The miserable condition of both church and state during this time, the growth of the anti-papal spirit in England and France, the Black Death, the Great Schism, the Hundred Years' War – each of these contributed its quota towards the wholesale decline in the standards of clerical and religious life which now set in. The mendicant orders had to endure, in addition to these misfortunes, the widespread hostility of the hierarchy and the secular clergy and, from about 1300 onwards, could no longer count as they did formerly on the resolute protection of Rome.

The first clear indication of the emergence of the new spirit is the insertion by Boniface VIII in 1298 in the canon law of the provision that no religious house is thenceforth to be founded without previous authorisation from the Holy See. Until that date, in the Dominican Order, the annual general chapters and, during their interstices the master general, had the decisive voice in this particular matter. Thus the general chapter held in London in 1263 grants permission to erect two new houses in Ireland, and we may safely surmise that these were Trim and Arklow. At the chapter of Pisa held in 1276 permission was given for another house in Ireland but, since no foundation was effected between Derry in 1274 and Kilmallock in 1291, it is not easy to interpret the significance of this ordinance. Possibly it may be a *post-factum* grant, validating a step which had been undertaken without securing the requisite permission.[3]

These are the only houses of the twenty-four founded during the thirteenth century for which evidence exists that correct constitutional procedure was followed in their erection. This does not of course mean that the other twenty-one houses were founded irregularly. Permission was probably granted in each case by the master general, but since none of those who held this office prior to its tenure by Blessed Raymond of Capua (1381–99) has left a register, we can only conclude on general principles that the law was observed in Ireland as it was elsewhere.

The same obscurity attends the foundations erected in the fourteenth century. The *Bullarium Ordinis* has no record of papal authorisation for the foundations of Carlingford, Naas, Clonshanville, Aghaboe and Longford which, by contrast with the years of plenty that fill the space from 1224 to

3 The text of the London chapter (1263) is in *Acta cap. gen.*, i (Rome, 1898), p. 121. On the same occasion (p. 121) the prior of Drogheda was absolved from office for reasons unknown (p. 121). The chapter of Pisa (1276) also permitted a new foundation in Scotland, presumably that in St Andrews. Ibid., p. 188.

1291, are all that this lean century brought to the Order. One could not desire a more telling indication of the anarchic confusion that was the hall-mark of this disastrous time.[4]

Another detail apropos of this matter may be recorded here. The dates of the thirteenth-century foundations can be relied on as accurate since they are given in a brief Dominican chronicle preserved in the Clarendon Collection in the British Museum.[5] This document must have been composed before 1300, since the last foundation mentioned in it is Kilmallock (1291). Of the five houses founded in the fourteenth century, Naas is the only one whose year of foundation can be accurately determined. It is given in the State Papers which record the issue of a writ by Edward III in 1356, authorising in accordance with the statute of mortmain the alienation of property in Naas to the Dominican Order on which to erect a convent.[6]

The abbey of Carlingford, which appears to have been a magnificent building but now after centuries of vandalism a sadly defaced ruin, is stated by Ware and following him de Burgo, to have been founded in 1305. For reasons that will appear presently, this date may be a few years too early.

Richard de Burgh, the Red Earl of Ulster, is given as the founder by the author of *Hibernia Dominicana* on the strength of Ware's assertion that the earls of Ulster were patrons of the house.[7] It is very difficult to accept this statement. The register of Athenry, which so carefully records the benefactions of this great family, makes no mention of Carlingford. In addition, the town and district were not included in the earldom of Ulster, and one can discover absolutely no reason why an outsider should be the founder of this house, rather than some person or body having local associations.[8] It is possible to work out a theory on the subject which will

4 On the other hand, with the establishment of 24 houses by 1300, both the need for new foundations and the opportunity of making them had naturally decreased. **5** Reprinted from Ware in *Hib. Dom.*, p. 38. **6** Reference traced only to a general statement by Ware and others. See Gwynn & Hadcock, p. 228. **7** *Hib. Dom.*, pp 289–90. **8** Far from being an 'outsider', Richard de Burgh controlled the Gaelic clans of Ulster between 1290 and 1315. In 1305, he acquired the manor of Carlingford and marked the occasion by founding a Dominican friary there. See B. Smith, 'The medieval border: Anglo-Irish and Gaelic-Irish in late thirteenth and early fourteenth-century Uriel', in R. Gillespie and H. O'Sullivan (eds), *The Borderlands: essays on the history of the Ulster-Leinster border* (Belfast, 1989), pp 41–53. For the charter of 1305, by which the Red Earl exchanged his lands in Meath with William, son of William of London, receiving in return 'the manor of Carlingford (except the advowson of the church of the manor) and all William's land of Cooley and of County Louth', see J. Mills and M.J. McEnery (eds), *Calendar of the Gormanston register* (special vol. of the *RSAI Jn.*, 1916), p. 149. Three earlier charters concerning Carlingford (consistently

have the added value of bringing us in touch with matters of contemporary historic interest.[9]

Carlingford and district, the famous peninsula of Cuailgne or Cooley, was acquired by Hugh de Lacy, first earl of Ulster, through marriage with Leceline de Verdon his first wife. The property was made over to their daughter Matilda on her marriage to David FitzWilliam, baron of Naas. This family was descended from William, eldest son of the first Maurice FitzGerald and brother therefore to Gerald ancestor of the earls of Kildare, and to Thomas from whom came the earls of Desmond. The male line died out by the end of the thirteenth century and the property of the fief passed, by marriage of the female heiresses, to their various husbands.

Now Matilda, wife of David FitzWilliam, probably after her husband's death, made over Cooley with the advowson of the church of Carlingford to the Knights Templars, and, on the suppression of this Order in 1307, this property was either sequestered to the crown or given to the kindred body of the Knights Hospitallers. The reader will perceive what is here implied. The Hospitallers, by decision of the Holy See, were to succeed to all the property of the suppressed Templars, but the crown, on which devolved the duty of executing the decree of suppression, managed to attract quite a lot of those possessions to itself.

What has this to do with the Friars Preachers? A great deal, indeed. The Templars, as well as being suppressed and beggared, had also to stand their trial to answer the charges levelled against them, and the commissioners who conducted the trial were Dominicans – Richard de Balybin, sometime vicar of his Order in Ireland; Philip de Slane, lector of the same Order, and friar Hugh de St Leger.[10]

The second member of this trio was a remarkable man; educated, as his office of lector shows, a skilled administrator, and a diplomatist, as will appear later in the story. Withal, almost inevitably a careerist, representative of a type which appears with increasing frequency now that the Order has lost its first fervour and the lust for place and power manifests itself instead. His surname does not necessarily indicate his place of origin. By a curious coincidence, another individual of the same name figures on the jury which in 1298–9 conducted the *inquisitio post mortem* into the

spelt 'Karlingford') occur in the same volume. **9** A. Curran, in 'The Dominican Order in Carlingford and Dundalk', *Louth Arch. Soc. Jn.*, xvi, no. 3 (1968), pp 143–60, says that 'the weight of probability is in favour of the Earl of Ulster, to which his family background would appear to add strength'. **10** Not all the commissioners were Dominicans. The trial took place at Dublin in 1310. See H. Wood, 'The Templars in Ireland', in *RIA Proc.*, 26 C 14 (1906–7), pp 327–77.

Limerick property of Thomas an Àpa, lord of Desmond (†1298). The fact that our Philip first appears on the scene as prior of Cork in 1306 may plausibly suggest that he was a southerner and a member of the same family as the juryman.[11] It is significant, too, that on this occasion he plays the part of plaintiff in an action to recover property belonging to his priory (which, by the Dominican constitutions at that time, had no right to hold property) previously alienated by another superior.

Worth noting too, is the fact that at this time the see of Armagh, in which Carlingford is situated, was ruled by the English Dominican, Walter Jorze, whose unhappy experience of office has already been described. In the light of this rough sketch of the scene surrounding the trial of the Templars, the reader is now invited to glance at the inventory of the property of the Knights Hospitallers in Carlingford as set forth in the inquisition taken on the occasion of their suppression by Henry VIII on 13 May 1541.[12] They own two-thirds of the tithes of corn and hay, and of the fish caught in the river of Carlingford. The other third belongs to the archbishop of Armagh. The other tithes with altarages (that is, stole fees) belong to the vicar. *The advowson belongs for two turns to the king and for one turn to the archbishop.*

It would seem from this that the gift of Matilda de Lacy to the Templars did not pass integrally to their heirs-at-law the Hospitallers, but that some of it made its way to the king and more to the archbishop of Armagh. Were the Dominicans included in the share-out? It looks very like it. The supple-witted Philip of Slane would be unlikely to miss such a golden opportunity of getting his fingers into the pie, and however much one may baulk at the conclusion, it does appear that the foundation of the Dominican convent of Carlingford wears a certain air of resemblance to the methods which generally characterised the proceedings taken against the unhappy Templars by the kings and clerics of Christendom.

The convent at Naas, as already stated, was founded in 1356 and de Burgo states that the universal tradition of the Order ascribes the foundation to the Eustace family. Ware contents himself with the statement that they were patrons of the house, and indeed in later times this family, famous for its fidelity to the Catholic cause and for the misfortunes which

11 The 'friar Philip', prior of Cork, involved in this incident, seems rather to have been Philip Michis, styled 'prior of St Mary of the Island' in a will of 1306. See E. Bolster, *A history of the diocese of Cork from the earliest times to the Reformation* (Shannon, 1972), pp 297–99. Philip of Slane is said, however, to have been a member of the Cork community when named bishop of Cork in 1321: op. cit., p. 365. **12** This inquisition is of the rectory of Carlingford, held in 1541 by the Hospitallers of Kilsaran. See *Extents*, pp 109–10.

in consequence it endured, did act in that capacity as the dedication of the church to St Eustace would indicate. Whether, however, they were the original founders is not entirely certain. In fact, it is doubtful whether a family bearing the name of Eustace or FitzEustace existed in 1356.[13]

They were a branch of the great Le Poer (or Power) clan which, by the fourteenth century was widely spread through the counties of Waterford, Tipperary and Kilkenny, with, apparently, offshoots in Kildare and Dublin. They seem to have been much in demand as seneschals of the various lordships held by the non-resident nobles to whom the Marshal palatinate of Leinster had fallen, and as constables of castles in these and suchlike territories. A Eustace Le Poer was warden or seneschal of the royal demesne in south Dublin and north Wicklow about 1300, and the name Powerscourt preserves the memory of this fact. His brother Arnold was seneschal of Kilkenny at the time of the sensational witchcraft case in that city, and obtained an unhappy notoriety by his violent opposition to the bishop during the trial of the delinquents. His son, also named Eustace, was constable of Desmond's castle at Castlemaine in Kerry, and was hanged there with others in 1345 by Ralph d'Ufford, the justiciary, to whom he had refused to surrender the fortress. From him, it seems, the family of FitzEustace takes its name. Under this denomination we find them acting as constables of the great castle of the archbishop of Dublin on the border between Wicklow and Kildare, which is named after them: Ballymore-Eustace.[14]

A long-standing friendship seems to have subsisted between them and the Dominicans. When the convent of St Saviour's in Dublin was rebuilt after the great fire which ravaged the district of Oxmantown in 1304, the foundation stone was laid by Eustace Le Poer of Powerscourt, and when Arnold died under sentence of excommunication in 1328, his body was brought to St Saviour's, but lay there for a long time unburied.[15] On the score of this antecedent friendship for the Order, they do seem to possess one qualification at least for the title of founder.

Did they hold property in Naas and the adjacent districts in 1356? To do so, they should have married into one of the numerous families which

13 According to E. MacLysaght, *More Irish families* (Galway and Dublin, 1960), p. 100, they came to Ireland at the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion. **14** Arnold, son of Sir Eustace Le Poer (†1311), seems to have assumed the name Fitz Eustace; by 1317 he certainly owned Castlemartin and other lands in Co. Kildare, south of the Liffey. The family, in 1355, were granted lands near Naas. See E.F. Tickell, 'The Eustace family and their lands in County Kildare', *Kildare Arch. Soc. Jn.*, xiii, no. 6 (1955), pp 270–87. **15** Both incidents, of 1305 and 1329, are cited from the *Annals of Pembridge* by B. Williams, 'The Dominican

had shared the territories of the then extinct line of the FitzWilliam barons of Naas, but there is no record of any such marriage. Judging the problem from this angle, we may say that the Prestons or the Berminghams, who succeeded, through marriage with the heiresses of the FitzWilliam line, to large territories in this area, should have the founder's title adjudicated to them. There we must leave the question. A satisfactory answer cannot be supplied. [16]

The three houses of Aghaboe, Clonshanville and Longford are stated to have been founded in the years, respectively, 1380, 1385 and 1400. They mark an important stage in the evolution of the Order in Ireland, when it ceases to be predominantly, as it had hitherto been, associated with the Anglo-Norman element, and prepares to identify itself more with the resurgent Gaelic clans.

annals of Dublin', in S. Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin II* (Dublin, 2001), p. 161. **16** In 1542, John Eustace of Newlands, Co. Kildare, claimed to be heir to the founder of 'the Black Friars of the Moot' at Naas and was granted a rent from their confiscated property; so too was Thomas Eustace, Viscount Baltinglass. Exchequer Inquisition, no. 18, held at Leixlip on 9 May 1542. Transcript from PROI in IDA, MacInerny, Z3, pp 61–4; continued in Y3, pp 65–8.

CHAPTER 9

The Foundations: 1382–1427

Twenty-six out of the total of thirty-nine pre-reformation Irish Dominican foundations have now been dealt with and the story has advanced to the year 1356 when the convent of Naas was founded. Of those twenty-six houses all, with the exception of two or three, were founded under Anglo-Norman auspices. The fact that, of the remaining thirteen houses, only two were founded under similar conditions, affords a telling illustration of the extent of the Irish revival and of the corresponding decay of the English power during this period. From this time onward, the Dominicans, and the same is true of the Franciscans and the other mendicant orders, are transformed from being what we would today speak of as a predominantly West-British body into one which racially and in political sympathies finds itself more at home in the old authentic Gaelic Ireland.

The foundation of the priory of Aghaboe in 1382 may be taken as the initiation of the new departure. Aghaboe is famous in Irish monastic history as the place where St Canice established a monastery in the sixth century whence came, two hundred years later, the famous missionary abbot St Virgilius, bishop of Salzburg and propounder of certain geographical theories which proved highly disconcerting to the obscurantists of the period. When the diocese of Ossory was erected and delimited at the synod of Kells (1152), Aghaboe was chosen to be the bishop's see, but it did not enjoy the dignity very long since in 1190 the bishop, Felix O'Dulany, transferred the see to Kilkenny.[1]

Shortly after the Anglo-Norman invaders had consolidated their power in Leinster, the ancient kingdom of Ossory, comprising roughly the modern county of Kilkenny and the three southern baronies of Laois, fell into their hands. The MacGillapatricks, who ruled the territory up to the invasion, were compelled to retire into Upper Ossory, namely the three Laois baronies aforesaid, and there they managed, during the following century and a half, to maintain an uncertain and attenuated status as vassals to the Marshals and to those who succeeded them in the Laois fraction of the dismembered lordship of Leinster.

1 Carrigan, i, p. 25.

This territory appears to have been closely settled by the English, and Aghaboe is stated to have grown into a flourishing township under the rule of the Marshals and their successors. The ancient Irish monastic cathedral became the parish church and the advowson of the living was made impropriate in the lay lord of the manor. Things continued in this fashion till, from the first quarter of the fourteenth century onwards, the advance of the resurgent MacGillapatricks and their allies brought disaster on the settlement. That fervent hater of the Irish, the Franciscan John Clyn, thus narrates the misfortunes which befell the English of Aghaboe in the year 1346: 'On Friday, May 5th, Dermot MacGillapatrick, the one-eyed, a man much given to treacheries and betrayals, and scrupling little to perjure himself for his convenience in alliances with O'Carroll, burned and destroyed the town of Aghaboe. And what was far worse, like an unnatural son raising his hand against his parents, in his rage, he cruelly burned the church of St Canice, that most holy abbot and patron of the place, with the shrine and its relics.'[2] The *coup de grace* to the settlement appears to have been delivered in 1359 when the castle fell into the hands of MacGillapatrick.

The founder of the Dominican abbey there was Finghin MacGillapatrick, lord of Ossory and ancestor of the present-day Lord Castletown of Upper Ossory. De Burgo strongly insists that it was erected on the site of the ancient abbey-church or cathedral of St Canice, or to be more exact, that the old building was restored and then handed over to the friars. Ware does not commit himself in this matter one way or the other, but modern writers hold that the present day Protestant church stands on the site of St Canice's foundation and that de Burgo is in error in placing the Dominican abbey there.[3] Though the house has cut only an insignificant figure in our Irish Dominican records, it has one title to special mention: it is the only one of our monasteries which has preserved an apparently complete list of its priors. This has been printed by Archdall without any indication of the source whence it was procured, which one feels is rather a pity.[4]

The abbey of Clonshanville, situated in the parish of Tibohine near the village of Frenchpark in Roscommon, was founded about the same time

2 John Clyn, p. 238. Clyn the annalist lived in Kilkenny city nearby. **3** De Burgo was wrong. For this and the entire history of the abbey see T.S. Flynn, *The Dominicans of Aghaboe (c.1382–c.1782)* (Freshford, 1975). **4** Archdall, p. 590. This 'list of abbots from the year 1382' includes many secular priests; but it does provide the only hint of the date of foundation.

as Aghaboe. The name is explained by De Burgo in his sonorous Latin as '*Secessus leporis annosi*' (The lurking-place of the aged hare), a truly remarkable attempt indeed. Our great historian had rather a weakness for the fanciful philology which was fashionable in Irish antiquarian circles in the eighteenth century. Thus he derives *Naas* from *Eas*, that is, *a waterfall*, though how it is possible to discover such a geographical feature in the middle of the plains of Kildare it is hard to say. The name 'Athenry' would seem easily susceptible of explanation to anyone with an elementary knowledge of Irish, but here too our author goes astray, rendering it *Locus Regis*, that is, the Place of the King. These instances show that his knowledge of our native language was rather scanty but that his love for it was sincere – a fact which is borne out by his never failing references to those priests amongst his contemporaries who preached in Irish and by his obvious pride in recording the fact that in his day an Irish sermon was preached every week at one of the Sunday masses in St Saviour's, Dublin.[5]

To return to Clonshanville – the Irish form of the name given by O'Heyne is *Cluain Mhic Seanbhuil*. The second element here provides a curious instance of the philological phenomenon of contamination. It owes its existence in the term to a false analogy with the name ClonMACnoise. The third element indicates that O'Heyne derived the name from *buaile = a milking place* or from *baile = a townland*, the whole signifying *old Milking-place Meadow*, or *Old-town Meadow*. The English spelling of the word would suggest that the third element is *bile = an ancient tree*, the object of superstitious veneration, a relic of an ancient pagan cult. In the *Onomasticon*, the name is rendered *Cluain Senmail*, a form which raises a number of questions which fall outside the scope of this work.

The abbey is stated by O'Heyne to have been founded by the family of McDermott of Airtech – the ancient name of the territory roughly comprised in the barony of Frenchpark. De Burgo names the founder *McDermott Roe*, which expresses the same idea in other words. There can scarcely be any doubt that this opinion is correct.

During the fourteenth century, the Irish clans of north Connacht shared in the general revival of the old race and recovered many of the territories which they had lost in the previous century. The O'Connors

5 Thomas Burke, 'the learned de Burgo', author of *Hibernia Dominicana*, connected with the Burkes of Lisinard near Portumna, was born in Dublin in the parish of St Catherine and was educated there; see SCAR, no. 31, p. 177. *Hib. Dom.*, p. 344, note (p); his reference to Masses in Irish at Dublin (1756) is on p. 198.

who, up to the murder of the Brown Earl of Ulster in 1333, seemed doomed to complete destruction at the hands of the all-conquering de Burghs, taking advantage of the dissensions which had set in amongst their enemies, now assumed the offensive. They captured Roscommon castle in 1341, and about the same time another branch of the family reconquered Sligo. The de Burghs were gradually pushed back into their original holdings in Galway and Mayo. The McDermotts participated in the recovered prosperity of the suzerain clan, extending their power from the territory of Moylurg (nowadays the barony of Boyle) their ancestral home, to the neighbouring district of Tirerrill in Sligo. The branch of the family which settled here assumed the name McDonagh.

Unfortunately, the incurable factionalism of the O'Connors, the MacDermotts and the others, instead of moderating became still worse about this period and it may have been with a view to providing a remedy for this state of affairs that in 1384 the much reduced dominion of the king of Connacht was divided between the two main contenders to the title – Toirrdelbach Ruadh and Toirrdelbach Óc, the former taking the title *O'Connor Roe* with his headquarters in Ballintober castle and the other that of *O'Connor Donn* whose strong place was Roscommon. Amongst the supporters of O'Connor Roe was MacDermott (lord of Moylurg), the Clan Donnchada (the MacDonaghs) taking the other side.

The first mention of a MacDermott Roe in the annals of Connacht occurs under date 1388 when, in alliance with one of the MacDonaghs, he is stated to have raided Moylurg. This entry suggests that, following on the setting up of the two O'Connor dynasties, the MacDermotts, in their turn, divided, one branch setting up in Airtech under the style of MacDermott Roe. We may take it that the convent of Clonshanville was not founded till after this had taken place, but how soon afterwards we cannot say.[6] Possibly, with a view to increasing the style and consequence of his new dignity, MacDermott Roe proceeded with the foundation without delay. The main branch of the family at Moylurg could boast of the great Cistercian abbey of Boyle. He would be as good as they were, with his own Dominican priory where his tomb would hold the place of honour in the sanctuary, and with his friars to act as his chaplains and preachers. Such would be the sentiments inspiring a man occupying his position in that age. The need for providing for the spiritual welfare of his people would, most probably, not enter into his calculations. Providence

6 Gwynn & Hadcock, p. 223, suggest its foundation in 1385.

has a way, however, of employing the imperfect dispositions of mankind to forward its own grand and far-reaching purposes. Clonshanville and many other such rather humble units in the Dominican organisation played its part nobly during the centuries of persecution, and foremost amongst the valiant spirits who then spent themselves in the struggle for the faith were the numerous members of the various branches of the MacDermott clan who lived the religious life in the convent founded by their ancestor. He had built better than he knew.

The convent of Longford was founded, according to O'Heyne and De Burgo, in the year 1400, by the O'Farrell family, dynasts of Annaly, the Gaelic name of the territory now roughly represented by the county Longford. The O'Farrells had, by this time, recovered the territory which had fallen to the invaders in the early thirteenth century, and probably thought it fitting to have a religious house attached to their fortress-burgh, Longphort Uí Fhearghail.

It happened that at this time the diocese of Ardagh, in which Longford is situated, was ruled by a Dominican of colonial extraction, Adam Lyons or Leyns, and this fact may have had something to do with the choice of the Dominicans for the new foundation. It must be stated, however, that he seems not to have been over-popular with the members of his flock if one is to judge by the unfeeling entry in the *Annals of Connacht* which records his being burned to death at Rathaspic in 1416 and adds the comment that he was an inhospitable friar.[7]

His successor in the see of Ardagh was Cornelius O'Farrell who ruled the diocese from 1418 to 1423 when he was buried in the Dominican church. He is described by the chroniclers in most eulogistic terms, exemplary in his life, pious and charitable. It is tempting to see in him the founder of Longford convent, but if this be the case, and if 1400 be the date of foundation, then he must have moved in the matter before he became bishop, perhaps even before he received orders. Very probably this is what happened. The community were driven to procure bulls from Rome on three occasions shortly after Bishop O'Farrell's death, granting an indulgence to all who should contribute to the reconstruction of the convent, which is variously described as having being destroyed by fire and sacked in the course of one of the frequent 'wars' which plagued the O'Farrell chieftainry.[8]

7 For the convent of Longford and Bishop Leyns, see J.J. McNamee, *History of the diocese of Ardagh* (Dublin, 1954), pp 211–19, 246. **8** Three papal documents (of 1429, 1433 and 1438) have been printed in *Hib. Dom.*, pp 301–2. From these it appears that the convent of

If the convent had been erected during the episcopate of Bishop O'Farrell, it is scarcely credible that the friars would be placed, within five years of his death, in such straits as to be compelled to make their appeal to Rome. The assigned date (1400) affords sufficient margin for such developments to take place. Notwithstanding the untoward happenings which troubled the early years of its history, the community of Longford appear to have been exemplary exponents of the Dominican way of life. Such is the impression one gathers from the following entry in the *Annals of Dualid Mac Firbis*: '1448. There was in this year an infectious disease of which great numbers died, amongst whom were Connor, the son of Aedh-Buy O'Fergail, Diarmuid MacCommay and Henry Duffe MacFechedan, three righteous friars of the monastery of Longford O'Fergail.'[9] A noble epitaph indeed!

With the next foundation, Portumna, we emerge from the twilight groping of conjecture into the full daylight of documentary history. Two papal bulls preserved in the *Bullarium Ordinis*, set forth at great length the very interesting circumstances which attended the erection of this house.[10]

In Portumna there stood a chapel belonging, with all its vested rights and property, to the Cistercian abbey of Dunbrody in Wexford. As happened generally in the case of possessions in Connacht owned by religious houses in the Pale, the chapel of Portumna was abandoned as waste by the community of Dunbrody probably about 1400. The de Burghs and the other Anglo-Norman clans in that province, to say nothing of their Gaelic compeers, had by that time so completely broken loose from the trammels of English rule, that no loyal subject of the king would dare to enter any of their territories with a view to asserting his rights.

Some lay magnates of the place – O'Madden, dynast of Síl Anmchada (the territory in which Portumna is situated) or Burke of Clanrickard,

Longford was dedicated to St Brigid and belonged to friars of the 'regular observance'. The formal petitions (*suppliche*) on which these documents were based also survive in the Vatican Archives (ASV), Reg. Suppl., vols. 230, f. 51; 237, ff. 237–8; 240, ff 89–90; 348, f. 281. The friars sought papal indulgences for those who would contribute on the feasts of SS Brigid, Patrick, Peter and Paul, etc. to the repair of the cloister, dormitory and Lady chapel, destroyed by fire. They also sought in 1430 confirmation of the lease of land called Cartunsanasul granted to them by 'the late Bishop Cornelius'. The documents describe Longford as 'a place secluded from worldly conversation; a site far from towns, well suited to the life of contemplation' they sought. One has the impression that the town scarcely existed when the Dominicans first settled there. **9** J. O'Donovan (ed.), 'Annals of Ireland (1443–68) translated from the Irish by Dualid MacFirbis in 1666', in *The Miscellany of the Irish Archaeological Society*, i (Dublin, 1846), p. 221. **10** Reprinted in *Hib. Dom.*, pp 304–7, from A. Bremond, *Bullarium ordinis fratrum praedicatorum*, ii (Rome, 1730), pp 670–2.

lord of the manor of Portumna – took it on themselves to make over the place to the Dominicans and the abbot of Dunbrody, only too willing to wash his hands of a property which had become completely useless to his abbey, acquiesced in this move. The Dominicans, however, had the good sense to realise that these proceedings were not quite in line with the canon law, and thereupon addressed a petition to Pope Martin V setting forth the facts as stated and begging that the position be regularised. The reply took the form of a rescript addressed in 1426 to the 'official' of Clonfert authorising him to inquire into the alleged facts, and if they proved to be as set forth, to confirm the Dominicans in possession of the chapel and monastic buildings. Another bull issued five weeks later, obviously in reply to a further petition from the friars, grants an indulgence to all who contribute towards the building of the necessary extensions to the house. This document contains a statement vital to the understanding of Irish Dominican history in the fifteenth century, to the effect, namely, that certain brethren had chosen this spot as a place remote from the noise and turmoil of the world, in order that they might serve the Most High in a life of regular observance. The significance of this passage will be fully dealt with in a later chapter in this story.[11]

The small convent of Tombeola in Connemara, in the barony of Ballynahinch, appears to have been founded about the same time as Portumna, the founder probably being O'Flaherty the dynast of Connemara. If, as de Burgo suggests, this be one of the two houses for which permission was granted to the community of Athenry in the bull issued by Martin V in 1427, conjecture is transformed into certainty.[12] Nothing more can be said about this foundation since it has left no trace in history.

11 These documents explicitly state that O'Madden was the founder and that the dedication of the church was both to the Annunciation and to SS Peter and Paul. See Archdall, p. 295; *Hib. Dom.*, p. 304. The convent of Portumna already existed in 1415 when Pope John XXIII granted an indulgence to all who would give alms for its conservation: *Cal. papal letters,* vi, p. 461. For a general account, see M. McMahon, *Portumna Priory* (Portumna, 1978). **12** *Hib. Dom.*, pp 308–9.

CHAPTER 10

The Foundations: 1432–1488

On the border between that portion of Roscommon which thrusts westwards from Loughglynn and the Mayo barony of Costello, which partially enfolds it to the north and south, stretches the lake of Urlar, a typical feature of that archipelago-like formation presented by the north-midland plain of Ireland. The surrounding landscape is mostly dreary bog and moorland, with occasional pockets of well-cultivated territory, and on one of these, adjoining the lake, stand the ruins of the Dominican abbey of Urlar.

One may well ask what the Friars Preachers were doing *dans cette galère*. There is today no trace of a township in the area, the only sign of human habitation being a few scattered farm houses, and it is unlikely that it can ever have carried a numerous population. It does seem, however, to have been the site of the manorial vill of the Anglo-Irish clan of Mac Jordan Dubh, a branch of the family of MacCostello after whom the barony is named. They are not, of course, to be confounded with the MacJordans, the gaelicised d'Exeters of Strade. The name MacCostello is a patronymic, being derived from the progenitor of the clan, *Jocelyn* Nangle or de Angulo. Soon after the invasion, his great-grandson Milo entered into the service of the king of Connacht, Cathal Crobderg, and on the conquest of the province by Richard de Burgh he was confirmed in possession of the territory granted him by Cathal, which roughly corresponds to the present-day barony of Costello. The last representative of the line is entombed in the old abbey and the rather grandiloquent inscription, which describes him as the last dynast and baron de Angulo, conceals the fact that he died in poverty and obscurity in 1890.

The abbey was founded in 1432 or thereabouts and, as was usually the case with foundations dating from the fifteenth century, was embarked on without the consent of the Holy See which the rescript of Boniface VIII required. But an enabling bull was issued by Pope Eugenius IV on 18 March 1434 and addressed to the bishop of Achonry. This document purports to have been drawn up at the solicitation of William de Angulo and Thomas O'Grugan, professed religious of the order of Friars

Preachers. In their petition it had been set forth that, unaware of the existence of the rescript of Boniface, they had obtained a foundation in the diocese of Tuam four years previously (place and name unspecified). For various reasons they had, after two years residence, abandoned this site and obtained another at Urlar, still being unaware that they were acting illegally in thus proceeding without seeking papal sanction. They therefore craved absolution from the various censures they had incurred and submitted themselves to the pope's good pleasure in regard to the entire affair. The pontiff commissioned the bishop of Achonry to absolve the friars and to confirm them in their possession of Urlar. From the fact that one of the friars was a member of the family of De Angulo, alias Nangle or MacCostello, we may take it that his relatives had donated the foundation to the Order. De Burgo, following Ware, Alemand and Harris takes this for granted.[1]

O'Heyne in treating of this foundation is guilty of an amusing blunder which is not without its value as a warning to the student unaware of Irish family affiliations.[2] He gives the main credit for the foundation to Penelope O'Connor, whose first husband was Mac Jordan and whom she induced to found the convent of Strade in the year 1435! On his death she married secondly Mac Costello whom she in turn persuaded to found Urlar in 1448. Obviously, O'Heyne was unaware that there was more than one Mac Jordan clan. It never occurred to him that the Mac Jordan and the Mac Costello who appeared to be the first and second husbands of Penelope O'Connor were one single individual and that the Mac Jordan de Exeters did not enter into the story at all. This initial error, quite naturally led him to confound the activities of Penelope with those of the other redoubtable lady, Basilea de Bermingham, who had been responsible for the foundation of Strade two centuries earlier.[3]

The convent of Urlar has played an important part in the history of the Irish Dominicans, for it was here that Ross McGeoghegan, when embarking on the restoration of the province in the early seventeenth century, established the central novitiate.[4] One can easily note the contrast between the rather poor style rubble masonry of the church and the fine ashlar stonework of the range of conventual buildings. These latter were probably erected by MacGeoghegan. The people living in the district have

1 *Hib. Dom.*, pp 312–13, citing the papal bull of 1434. 2 O'Heyne, pp 227–9. Since O'Heyne devoted only five lines to Strade it is clear he knew nothing about it. 3 O'Heyne may have been thinking, not of the 'foundation' of Strade, but of its restoration in 1434. 4 Flynn, p. 170.

kept the tradition of a school that formerly flourished here. A slight confirmation of this belief is furnished by two Latin aphorisms inscribed on limestone slabs now in the possession of a neighbouring farmer. They read: (1) '*Magna aliena parva propria*' meaning 'What others have seems greater than one's own', in other words, foreign cows have long horns: and (2) '*Rure tibi dum vixeris aliis vivis in urbe*' meaning 'In the country you live for yourself, in the city for others', a decidedly ambiguous summing up of the respective advantages of town and country life. Can we get from these inscriptions a hint to the effect that Latin was taught in this school by the phrase method as, I believe, is still the case in some continental schools?

The convent of Tulsk, situated in the small village of that name in Roscommon, is stated to have been founded in 1448 by Phelim MacDowell or MacDubhgall. He was chief of the galloglass family of that name which had taken service with the O'Connors as far back as the year 1259, when Aed O'Connor, that determined foe of the invaders, went to Derry to marry the daughter of Dubgall Mac Sumarlaide and came back accompanied by nine score warriors. We may take it that the castle of Tulsk was the headquarters of the MacDubgall and that they were in some way responsible for the foundation of the Dominican monastery there.

There is no papal document in existence on the subject of Tulsk such as those which have proved so enlightening in the cases of Portumna and Urlar, but an entry in the *Annals of Duald Mac Ferbis* under date 1448 contains a very interesting reference to the matter. This last of the race of the learned historians of the Gael compiled these annals covering the period 1443–68 in the house of Sir James Ware in Dublin, writing them in English for the benefit of his patron who was unacquainted with Irish. Mac Firbis' English makes rather quaint reading and his unexplained references to various individuals are very confusing. This is what he has to say:

> 1448. Felim, son to Felim Clery O'Connor, and Brian son to Cahal O'Connor being both slaine in [a] skimish in Killculysilinny, and by Rury Fitz Cahal was slain Felim Fitz Felim by *wan trust* of a speare, and it is by Felim and by Cahal Cam ... Brian Fitz Cahal was slaine, and it was reported that the cast of Cormac Cam's speare had killed Brian Fitz Cahal, and not the blows on his head given him by Felim at first. Brian went alive so wounded the same night to Balintobair and died the next day and was buried in the fryers' monastery at

> Roscommon,[5] and Felim remained that night at Kilculey, and dyed in the same hour the next day also after extreame unction & pennance in a fryer's habit, and he chosed to be buried in the fryer's house at Tulsky, to whom he graunted a quarter of land the same year to build a monastery thereon, and it was after his buriall the monastery was consecrated to the glory of God, the honour of S. Dominick and to Diarmuid Mac Maeltuly, and also Felim aforesaid bestowed and left a great rike of corn as helpe to the fryers to begin that worke.[6]

This extract gives a pretty clear idea of how the abbey of Tulsk came into being. The unfortunate Felim O'Connor, victim of one of the endless vendettas to which the various branches of that once great family so assiduously devoted themselves, on his death-bed willed property on which the monastery was to be erected. From the accounts it appears that the Dominicans already possessed a house in Tulsk which may have been erected for them by MacDubgal. This establishment would, however, not be possessed of conventual status and was probably nothing more than one of those mission residences, which from the beginning of the fourteenth century had become a regular feature in the organisation of the Order. If this were so, it would explain the failure of the friars to follow regular canonical procedure. They may have satisfied themselves that the advancement of the house to full conventual status did not necessitate recourse to the Holy See.[7]

The convent of Glanworth in Co. Cork is situated about five miles north-west of Fermoy in the lovely valley of the Funcheon which joins the Blackwater a little to the east of Fermoy. The Irish form of the name is '*Gleann Damhain*', genitive '*Gleann Dhamhnach*', which, in medieval Anglo-Norman documents, was rendered 'Glenure' or 'Glanore'. De Burgo sees in this form the Gaelic equivalent of the Latin *Vallis Aurea* = *Golden Vale*! The O'Keefes were lords of this territory before the invasion, but they had to give place to the Roches when the Normans got the upper hand in those parts. To this family the foundation may be confidently ascribed. In a petition, the tone of which is almost ludicrously

5 The Dominican friary, no other friars having a house there. **6** MacFirbis, *Annals of Ireland*, pp 220–1. **7** The friars of Tulsk, represented by Dermot MacMylkonle and Fergal MacThyannan, did in fact receive papal confirmation of their foundation on 9 Dec. 1449. Shortly before, encouraged by 'some benefactors', they had 'moved' to Tulsk, obtained the licence of the bishop of Elphin, and put up a house and buildings of wood. See ASV, Reg. Suppl., 448, ff 9v–10r. Research of Fr Thomas Kaepelli OP.

grovelling, addressed by Lord Fermoy, the head of the family of Roche, to James I, asking to have the property of the suppressed monastery made over to him, it is stated that his family were the founders. As to the date of the foundation, nothing is known. Smith's *History of Cork* places the event in 1227 and if we had not the catalogue drawn up in 1300 to contradict him, this date might be accepted as easily as any other.[8]

The convent of Burrishoole, the ruins of which stand on the north shore of Clew Bay, a few miles west of Newport, was founded in 1486. De Burgo is more than usually unhappy in his interpretation of the name, rendering it '*Locus Territorii Pomorum*', that is, '*The Place of the Apple Territory*'. He was led astray by the last syllable which he took for the Irish for 'apple'. It really represents the old Irish name ('*Umhall*') of the territory nowadays called the barony of Burrishoole and usually Englished 'the Oules' in documents of the Tudor period. On the conquest of Connacht in 1235, this territory was allotted to Henry Butler who built a castle and town at Burrishoole, the element '*burris*' corresponding to the Gaelic *Burgheis* and the Anglo-Norman *burgage* indicating its origin. In the *Annals of Connacht* it is called Burgheis Cinn Tráchta.

The Butlers were not permitted to retain quiet possession of the conquered territory, a branch of the O'Connors, the Clann Muircheartaigh Muimnig, harrying them by incessant raids till they were expelled root and branch towards the end of the century. The Butlers, however, did not take root in Burrishoole and the territory, probably by marriage, passed to the Burkes of Mayo. The chieftain of this family in the year 1469 was Richard, son of Thomas, son of Edmond Albanach, founder of the Mayo branch of the MacWilliam. This is the genealogy given by McFerbis, but it is evidently erroneous since Edmond Albanach died a century before his alleged grandson Richard. This latter figures in the *Annals of Connacht* from 1461 onwards in the role customary with an Irish chieftain of the period, leading expeditions against various other dynasts, his neighbours.

8 In 1475, Sixtus IV approved the arrangements made for Glanworth by Louis MacCreagh OP, 'prior provincial'. MacCreagh, with permission from the bishop of Cork and Cloyne, had got leave from John Fitzgerald, the Knight of Kerry, to 'take over an abandoned stone enclosure with certain lands adjoining the town of Gleannuyr'. There the bishop, William Roche, had already consecrated a cemetery and an oratory to prevent it from reverting to lay hands, and MacCreagh had buried several people in it. See *Cal. papal letters,* xiii, part 1, p. 433; Bolster, *Diocese of Cork*, i, p. 417. The Fitzgerald connection explains the dedication of Glanworth to the Holy Cross. For all that, the local leader, David Mór Roche, first Viscount Fermoy, whose castle stands close to the priory, has always been regarded in practical terms as the founder. See H. Fenning, 'The Dominicans of Glanworth: 1474–1814' in M. MacNamara and M. O'Neill (eds), *Glanworth Millenium 2000*

Then in 1469, tired of the world, he resigned his chieftainship, assumed the habit of St Dominic and built Burrishoole convent for the Order. There, four years later, he died.[9]

As we might expect, the foundation was accepted without reference to the Holy See, and the community continued for seventeen years in happy ignorance of what they had done, till in 1486, somebody awoke to the fact. The result was a petition to Pope Innocent VIII asking that the position be regularised and the pontiff in a rescript committed to the archbishop of Tuam, in whose diocese Burrishoole was located, granted the request. It may be mentioned that de Burgo was the first to discover the true story of the foundation of this convent.[10] Ware, Harris and Alemand ascribe it to the Butlers and if this were the case it could not be placed later than 1333, the last date at which they receive mention in the *Annals of Connacht*. O'Heyne goes one better in declaring that it was founded by the O'Malley family in the reign of Cathal Crobderg, king of Connacht (†1224).

This Dominican convent has a proud place in the annals of our province. It was the scene of the martyrdom of Honoria de Burgo, daughter of the earl of Mayo, and of Honoria Magean, both professed nuns of the Order. Its community was, besides, the original owner of the famous de Burgo chalice, the only piece of church plate surviving in this country from the medieval period.[11]

Considering the outstanding part played by the Order in the west of Ireland, it is an astonishing fact that it was not till the year 1488 that the Dominicans obtained a foundation in Galway city.[12] In that year, a petition was addressed to Pope Innocent VIII by the citizens asking that the derelict chapel, situated on the west side, known as St Mary's of the Hill and formerly appropriated to the Premonstratensian monastery of Tuam, should be given to the Dominicans. On its abandonment by the canons, it was taken over for a while by the secular clergy and apparently

(Kilworth, 2000) pp 73–7. **9** The accepted date of foundation for Burrishoole (*c.*1469) may be brought back closer to 1456 when 'Rory Ymoraycen [O Morahen?] ord. praed.' applied to Callixtus III for approval. Rory stated that Richard Burke wished to give a site at 'Burge Owll Cartam Gracilem [= Carrowkeel] nuncupatus' for the building of a house for the Order. See ASV, Reg. Suppl. vol. 495, f. 49. Research of Fr Thomas Kaepelli OP. **10** *Hib. Dom.*, pp 317–21, reprinting at great length the confirmatory bull of Innocent VIII, 19 Feb. 1486. See P. Ó Móráin, *Annála beaga pharáiste Bhuiréis Umhaill: a short account of the history of Burrishoole parish* (Mayo News, 1957), pp 26–57. **11** There are in fact other surviving chalices and processional crosses etc. of this period. A chalice made in the 15th century for the Dominican convent of Roscommon was stolen with thirty-five others from the College Museum at Maynooth in 1980 and never recovered. See J.J. Buckley, *Some Irish altar plate* (Dublin, 1943), in which the 'De Burgo-O'Malley' chalice is used

abandoned by them in turn. The citizens of Galway, in their petition to the pope, speak in highly eulogistic terms of the services which the Dominicans have it in their power to render to the people of the city, and on their declaring that the Premonstratensians have renounced all title to the chapel the pope made it over to the friars.[13]

There appears to be a certain significance in the date of this foundation. Four years previously the Irish Dominican houses were separated from the English and established as a separate province. Simultaneously, a move was made towards the restoration of the strict Dominican life in certain selected convents. The leader of this movement was Maurice O'Mohan Moral, prior of Athenry and first provincial of the new province. A close connection was maintained between the friars of Athenry and the pious burghers of Galway, notably the great family of the Lynches.

In 1484 also, that extraordinary ecclesiastical arrangement known as the Wardenship of Galway came into being.[14] This resulted in the withdrawal of the city from the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Tuam and the vesting of authority in the superior of the collegiate church of St Nicholas – a move dictated by the racial hatred of the Anglo-Norman burghers for their Gaelic neighbours. As a further step towards the aggrandisement of Galway and its practical assumption of the style and dignity of a city state, it secured a most ample charter of liberties from Richard III in 1485. The introduction of the Dominicans three years later fits nicely into this picture. The prime agents in the matter appear to have been the Lynches; they certainly displayed a princely generosity in the benefactions showered by them on the new foundation.

almost as a frontispiece and described on pp 14–18. **12** See E. Ó Héidéain (ed.), *The Dominicans in Galway, 1241–1991* (Galway, 1991). The date '1241' in the title is that of the foundation of Athenry, Co. Galway. **13** *Hib. Dom.*, pp 323–5, prints the papal letter (4 Dec. 1488) outlining all the circumstances and granting the citizens' request. **14** M. Coen, *The wardenship of Galway* (Galway, 1984).

CHAPTER 11

The Foundations: 1488–1507

In December, 1488 – the same year and the same month in which the papal bull authorizing the foundation of the convent of Galway was issued – permission was granted by Rome for the foundation of three other houses, namely Clonymichan in Sligo, Intyma Kudir (*sic*) in Kildare, and Fons Cormaci in Westmeath. The enabling rescript is printed in full by de Burgo. It is addressed by the pope, Innocent VIII, to the prior provincial and brethren of the Irish province of the Order of Preachers, the first document of the kind in the history of *Hibernia Dominicana* to be thus directed.[1]

It sets forth that a petition had been addressed by the Irish Dominicans to the Holy See intimating that three new foundations had been offered to them by three noble benefactors: the baron of Norach (Narragh in Kildare), Eugene Macdonchard (*recte* Macdonchada), of Sligo, in the diocese of Achonry, and Edmund de Lantu (de Langton?), of Meath. The petitioners emphasize that the prospective donors were moved to make these tenders out of the devotion entertained by them towards the Dominican Order and its members, the example of whose holy lives and zealous and devoted labours in the pulpit had borne good fruit amongst the faithful. The pope had no difficulty in granting a petition which had been so attractively presented, and orders were issued for the building of a church and convent with all the usual appurtenances in each of the three places mentioned.

Clonymichan is situated four miles south-east of Ballymote, the stronghold of MacDonagh who ruled the clan of that ilk dwelling in the territory of Corran. De Burgo derives the place name from St Michan of Dublin, but it seems preferable to read into it the surname O'Meehan (in Gaelic *Ua Miadhacháin*) which is well represented in those parts. The MacDonaghs of Corran were a branch of the great family (offshoots of the MacDermotts), the senior line of which ruled the adjoining territory of Tirerrill. This family appears to have cultivated close relations with the community of Sligo abbey. Brian McDonagh, son of Dermot, was prior of

1 Text in *Hib. Dom.*, pp 75–6.

Sligo and rebuilt it after it had been destroyed by fire in 1414.[2] Another Brian, prince of Tirerrill, was buried there in 1484.[3] The Eugenius (in Gaelic, Eóghan) of the papal rescript does not figure in the genealogies, unless we identify him with the MacDonagh of Ballymote who, with his son, fell fighting against O'Donnell in 1516.

The ruins of the church of Clonymichan still stand, and show it to have been of humble proportions.[4] Its existence in such close proximity to the great Franciscan abbey of Ballymote and within fifteen miles of Sligo suggests certain considerations which will be dealt with later.

That rather exotic looking place name, 'Intyma Kudir', is apparently to be interpreted 'Inchaquire', situated about two miles north of the village of Ballitore in Co. Kildare and about eight miles from Athy. In a report presented to Propaganda in 1627 and printed by Cardinal Moran in the *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, a list of Irish Dominican houses is given, amongst which figures a place called *Inseueyr*, evidently our Inchaquire.[5] Further, in the *Extents* of suppressed religious houses, we find that the Augustinian nuns of Timolin possessed property at Inchmacoder in Co. Kildare, which, by aspiration of *m* and *d*, becomes the modern *Inchaquire*.[6] If, now, the final syllable of *Intyma* be prefixed to *Kudir*, the resultant form becomes the obvious equivalent of Inchmacoder or Inchaquire. It may be stated that after a great deal of labour had been expended in establishing this identity, a letter from Dr Grattan Flood was discovered in Fr MacInerny's manuscript collections in which this fact was recorded.[7] The affair is of interest as illustrating the extent of the maltreatment to which Irish names, local and personal, were liable at the hands of the Roman scribes in medieval times.

No further reference to this foundation can be discovered in extant documents, and the fact that it does not figure in the list of suppressed houses seems to indicate that the project of its establishment fell through. It is, nevertheless, suggestive that a large townland between Ballitore and Inchaquire bears the name 'Abbey', indicating that, at some period, a

2 *AFM*, iv, p. 817; *AU*, iii, p. 67. **3** Correctly 1454, from MacFirbis, *Annals of Ireland*, p. 237. **4** Definitively called 'Cloonameehan' by Gwynn & Hadcock, p. 223. It is in Co. Sligo and the diocese of Achonry. **5** *Spicil. Ossor.*, i, pp 156–61. The list of 1627 has more recently been edited by T.S. Flynn, *The Irish Dominicans, 1536–1641*, pp 158, 326–9. It places 'Insecuyr' after Naas and before Athy, respectively north and south of Inchaquire. **6** *Extents*, p. 171. Timolin itself is in Co. Kildare, just two miles south of Ballitore. **7** The uncatalogued papers of Fr M.H. MacInerny (†1932) are in the provincial archives of the Irish Dominicans at Tallaght, Co. Dublin. The letter (5 Nov. 1921) from W. Grattan-Flood, making these identifications, was removed from them by Fr O'Sullivan but came to light among the latter's papers, now also at Tallaght.

religious house stood there. We cannot, however, say that the reference is to the Dominican foundation. The fact that this is listed in the report of 1627 proves nothing, since this document obviously deals, not with houses actually functioning, but with those to which, though suppressed or even never formally established, the Order still possessed a title.

Fons Cormaci, the third of this group of foundations, is the Latin equivalent of Tubbercormac, a place situated about five miles north-west of Mullingar.[8] An ancient Celtic religious foundation existed here, as is shown by the fact that it is included in the list of houses belonging to the Canons Regular of St Augustine. It had, we may take it for granted, long ceased to function in this capacity and had become a parish church, as happened in nearly all such cases from the seventeenth century onward. We cannot claim, therefore, that the Dominicans were moved to accept a foundation there in order to revive a derelict establishment, as was the case in Portumna and Galway.[9]

No further reference to Tubbercormac occurs in our documents and it seems that this foundation, like that of Inchaquire, did not proceed beyond the blue-print stage. It is obvious that some special significance attaches to the simultaneous inception of those three or, if we include Galway, four foundations and the only adequate explanation that suggests itself is to be found in the great reform movement which had been set on foot under the leadership of Maurice Ó Mocháin Moral four years previously. This subject will be fully treated later, but a brief comment is desirable here to throw some light on those actual, or attempted, foundations.

Reform of a body which has abandoned its pristine ideals must be one of the most difficult tasks any human being can be called on to undertake. So true is this, that when a reforming movement originates in a religious order, what usually happens is that the reformers secede from the parent body and set up a new Order of their own. This happened in the case of the Franciscans as well as with the Augustinians and the Carmelites. The Dominicans, however, managed to preserve the unity of their Order while carrying out a very thorough scheme of reform, thanks partly to the adaptability of their constitutions, and partly to the appearance on the

8 In Ballymorin, Co. Westmeath, according to the editor of the papal bull (16 Dec. 1488). He also gives the name of the intended founder as 'Edmund de Lat[i]n'. See *CPL*, xv, pp 161–2. **9** Gwynn & Hadcock, p. 234, place 'Tobercormick, Co. Westmeath' among doubtful Dominican foundations, excluding any previous foundation by Celtic monks or Augustinian Canons. There was an inquisition on the Dominican property at 'Tober' in 1589, by which time it had passed to Sir Thomas Lestrange and Francis Shane. See Archdall, pp 728–9.

scene of a succession of great personalities in the leadership of the Order during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The guiding principle followed by the reformers was that no individual and no community was to be forced to accept the reform. Those who desired it were grouped together in one community and the others were not molested. It sometimes happened, however, that the civil authorities in some important centre demanded that the Dominican community dwindling in their midst should accept the return to primitive observance. If this did not prove feasible, then the laity solved the problem by offering the Order a new foundation to be inhabited by none but reformed religious.

Students of the fascinating pages of Père Mortier will recall the many instances of this nature which marked the spread of the reform in Italy during the fifteenth century.[10] The most notable, perhaps, is that of San Marco in Florence, founded by Cosimo di Medici as a reformed house on the refusal of the community of Santa Maria Novella to consent to return to the primitive observance. Notable, too, is the fact that San Marco was not an absolutely new foundation. It had previously been held by a community of monks of the Order of St Silvester who, for good and sufficient reason, were expelled from the monastery and their place taken by the Dominicans.

Siena, the birthplace of the reform, witnessed a similar development. The great convent of San Domenico in that city, the scene of so many of the marvellous happenings in the life of St Catherine, refused to accept the strict observance; it was, in fact, one of the very few of the Italian houses which persisted in this attitude from first to last. The difficulty was surmounted in the same way as in Florence. The Benedictine monastery of Santo Spirito, situated within the city, was generously handed over to the Dominicans and a fervent reformed community installed there, to form by their holy and zealous lives a standing reproach to the relaxed community of San Domenico.

These facts reveal, I believe, the reason for the extraordinary spate of Irish Dominican foundations approved by Rome in December 1488. They are to be regarded as attempts to bypass the intransigence of various communities which refused to accept the reform. Are we to regard the foundation of Galway, for instance, as being to some degree necessitated by the refusal of Athenry (only thirteen miles distant) to fall into line with

10 E. Mortier, *Histoire des maîtres généraux de l'ordre des frères prêcheurs* (Paris, 1903–20), 7 vols and Index.

the plans of Maurice Ó Mocháin? Possibly we may, but the evidence is not compulsive. It seems fairly definite that Inchaquire was intended to circumvent the opposition of the community of Athy to the demands of the reform, and Tubbercormac similarly with regard to Mullingar. Whether Clonymichan was designed to play a similar part with regard to Sligo is, however, doubtful. It may have been intended merely as a mission residence for the use of the Sligo community on their preaching campaigns. Its exiguous proportions would incline one to this belief.

The last pre-Reformation foundation of the Irish Dominicans was that of Ballindoon, which was founded by Thomas O'Farrell in 1507, as stated in the *Annals of Connacht*. It still stands in a good state of preservation at the northern extremity of the beautiful Lough Arrow; de Burgo declared, in fact, that it and Cashel were the best preserved of all the Dominican monasteries.[11]

Now, Ballindoon was the stronghold of MacDonagh, the prince of Tirerrill, and it is, in consequence, not easy to understand why Thomas O'Farrell, presumably a member of the famous Longford family, should have been free to found a religious house within the jurisdiction of MacDonagh, unless we suppose that he was a Dominican and founder of Ballindoon in the sense that he superintended its erection and headed the community which first occupied it. If he be the same individual who is referred to in the *Annals of Connacht* under date 1527 as the 'young prior O'Farrell, that is Thomas, son of Emann, etc.,' it is devoutly to be hoped that he was not a friar preacher, since his life as revealed in that entry was anything but exemplary.[12] Possibly he may have been a commendatory of one of the religious houses in the territory ruled by his family, but this supposition leaves the problem of his association with Ballindoon more insoluble than ever.[13]

In addition to the thirty-eight houses, the history of whose foundation has now been set forth, and which pertained to the first order of the Friars

11 *Hib. Dom.*, p. 311. The author, in 1755, found both the church and the conventual buildings of Ballindoon quite complete. There is now no trace of the conventual buildings. Bernard Curran OP privately published *Ballindoon Abbey, being fragments collected by ... 1970–1971*, in 17 typed pages. More recently, the Friends of Ballindoon Abbey have published a fine booklet, *Ballindoon Abbey, 1507–2007* (Sligo, 2007), particularly useful for its illustrations of architectural detail. **12** *Ann. Conn.*, p. 613, notes the foundation of Ballindoon in 1507 by 'Tomas O Fergail', and (p. 667) the death in 1527 of 'the Young Prior Tomas O Fergail', a warrior of northern background who was slain with his three sons. **13** The diocese of Ardagh, in which the O'Farrells of Longford were so numerous, extends to within a few miles of Ballindoon. Likewise the O'Rourkes of Breffny, similarly thrusting to the north–west from inland Cavan, were no strangers to Sligo on the coast.

Preachers, there existed at least one house belonging to the third order, namely Kilcorban, situated in Co. Galway, about four miles west of Portumna on the road to Loughrea. This place must not be confounded with another of the same name near Oranmore, an error easy to fall into since both names are, I believe, obsolete. It is a strange and impressive coincidence that the novitiate house of the Irish Dominican nuns of the Cabra Congregation has been established in our day at Kerdiffstown, in the parish of Kill, in Co. Kildare, or to give it its full Irish name, Kilcorban!

De Burgo styles the foundation of which we are treating a *coenobium*, that is, a monastery or, alternatively, a vicarial house of Athenry. He thereby infers that it was occupied by a community, that it belonged in fact to what is called the third order conventual of St Dominic.[14] Fr Coleman, in his appendix to O'Heyne, states, on the contrary, that there existed no monastic buildings in the place, nothing more in fact than a chapel employed by the tertiaries for their chapter meetings.[15]

It appears from the brief issued by Eugene IV in 1446, that the chapel of Kilcorban was, at the request of John FitzRery, vicar of the Irish Dominicans, made over by Thomas Burke, bishop of Clonfert, with the consent of his chapter, to the brothers and sisters of the third order living in the village of Kilcorban. There is no escaping the plain inference to be drawn from this passage: Kilcorban was not a conventual establishment. The fact that it was intended for both sexes is sufficient proof of this.[16] Nor had it any connection with Athenry, as one might expect from the fact that a distance of eighteen miles separated the two places. If any convent exercised jurisdiction over Kilcorban, it would surely be Portumna, only five miles away. Athenry's claim to suzerainty dates from the seventeenth century when, after so many suppressions and restorations, there could be no certainty as to the limits of the jurisdiction exercised by the various houses, and it was therefore possible to claim rights to which the claimant was not entitled.

Students of Irish ecclesiastical history are aware that on the restoration of the religious life in the seventeenth century it frequently happened that, owing to the destruction of documents which might prove title, and to the length of time that had elapsed since suppression took place, great uncertainty prevailed regarding the ownership of many monastic

14 *Hib. Dom.*, p. 344; with the papal bull, mentioned in the next paragraph, given in full on p. 342. **15** O'Heyne, *Appendix*, p. 87. **16** On the other hand, the bishop had granted land to the 'brothers and sisters for their habitation'. See C. Stanley, *Kilcorban priory* (Ballinasloe, 1987), pp 10–11.

establishments and disputes naturally arose. De Burgo gives the following list of houses formerly claimed by the Dominicans with more or less success, but to which we now know they possessed no title: Armagh, Ballinegaul (Co. Limerick), Cavan, Castlelyons, Clonmel, Clonmines (in Wexford), Knockmore (in the barony of Tirerrill in Sligo, near the Roscommon border), Knockvicar (in the barony of Boyle, Roscommon, near the Sligo-Leitrim border), Thomastown, and Toomona (in Roscommon, one mile from Tulsk).[17]

De Burgo strongly asserts the Dominican claims to four of these houses: Cavan, Clonmel, Castlelyons and Thomastown. He relies on two main arguments: (1) That the general chapter of Rome (1656) claimed forty-three houses for the Order in Ireland, and, to make up this number, these four houses must be added to the thirty-nine which are not in dispute – surely as delicious an instance of question-begging as it is possible to meet; and (2) that the provincial chapter of 1720 reiterated the same claim. It is to be feared that something more persuasive in the way of argument is required before these claims are acknowledged.

Cavan was certainly a Franciscan house and no notice need be taken of the assertion that it was originally Dominican but afterwards passed to the Friars Minor. The Dominican claim may have originated in the fact that Owen Roe O'Neill, who was interred in this monastery in 1649, was a tertiary of the Order and was buried in its habit.

The Dominicans established a house in Clonmel in 1643, claiming it as an ancient foundation. Judgment was, however, given against them by the ecclesiastical authorities and they abandoned the place in 1668. The Franciscans were the only Order who possessed a house in Clonmel.

Castlelyons was a Carmelite foundation. It was ascribed to the Dominicans through a misunderstanding of the term, 'Whitefriars', as happened occasionally in the State Papers of the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

There is no record of any religious house in Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny. De Burgo argues *a priori* that there must have been one since it

17 *Hib. Dom.*, pp 338–46. These houses, now in alphabetical order, are differently listed in Fr O'Sullivan's text. They are noted and explained, with many others, by Gwynn & Hadcock, pp 232–4. One might add to these lists a convent of the third order at Dunmore [text: Diumore] in the diocese of Tuam. One Demetrius Ohedygayn, 'laicus professus conventus de Diumore tertii ordinis S. Dominici de penitentia nuncupatus Tuamensis diocesis' applied on 17 June 1475 to Sixtus IV, seeking absolution from his express promise to fight Jews or Turks. See ASV, Reg. Suppl. 722, f. 57r; 723, ff 124v–25r. References from the late Thomas Kaepelli OP. The Augustinian friars had a house at Dunmore from at least as early as 1425.

was an important place and, granting this premiss, the house must have been Dominican!

As regards the other names on the list, nobody except de Burgo has claimed that the Order possessed a house in Armagh. His contention is that Maelpatrick O'Scannell, the Dominican archbishop who introduced the Franciscans into Armagh, would not have neglected to extend a similar favour to his own Order.

Clonmines was an Augustinian house and its ascription to the Dominicans arose from a misunderstanding of the term, 'Black Friars'. This error has found its way into the volume of *Extents* published by Mr Newport White. I cannot say whether it occurs in the original text of the inquisition.[18]

Ballinegaul in Limerick was a Carmelite house, according to the *Fiant* of Elizabeth granting its lands to Trinity College. It is, however, to be noted that this place was located near Lough Gur and that there is another Ballinegaul south of Kilmallock, where the Dominicans may have had a mission station.[19]

Knockvicar appears to have belonged to the Carmelites.[20] Knockmore and Toomona are adjudged by Harris to the third order conventual of St Francis.[21] One may query whether there may not be some confusion here between the two Third Orders of St Francis and St Dominic and that at least Toomona may have been a chapel of Dominican tertiaries.

18 It does. See T.C. Butler, *Near restful waters: the Augustinians in New Ross and Clonmines* (Naas, after 1973), especially on pp 15–16. The jurors, in this case, lived at a distance in Wexford; the Augustinian habit too is black. **19** Gwynn & Hadcock (p. 222) admit Ballinegaul, parish of Kilflyn, Co. Limerick, as a genuine Dominican foundation and a cell of Kilmallock. It was styled 'Braher duffe' in Peyton's survey, 1586, being then in ruins. The evidence for a Carmelite foundation there is discussed by P. O'Dwyer, *The Irish Carmelites (of the ancient observance)* (Dublin, 1988), p. 47. **20** Actually to the Franciscan third order regular. See Gwynn & Hadcock, p. 273. **21** With this opinion, Gwynn & Hadcock, on pp 234, 275, agree.

CHAPTER 12

The Communities: Their Personnel

Roughly speaking, the study of history to-day concerns itself, not, as was formerly the case, with the formulation of theories or with apologia for this or that, but with matters of more immediate human interest. Its purpose is to evoke the past, to paint a picture of the kind of life lived by men in ages which differed widely from our own, and it does this by the careful and systematic assemblage of facts which, if sufficiently copious and guaranteed to stand the tests devised by the critic, should yield the desired result.

It has to be regretfully admitted that this, as far as the subject of these studies is concerned, is in the nature of a counsel of perfection pointing to an unrealizable ideal. For the sad truth is that either the facts have not been recorded or the records have been largely destroyed. The only really worthwhile document bearing on the internal history of an Irish Dominican house of the medieval period is the *Regestum* of Athenry, edited by Fr Coleman and published in the first number of *Archivium Hibernicum*. A few meagre entries also survive from the house chronicles of Dublin, Limerick and Trim.[1] The *Acta* of the general chapters and of the masters general of the Order have some important references to matters of Irish interest. The Papal Letters too have their value for our purpose, principally in connection with foundations of new houses, grants of indulgences to assist in works of building construction, or the appointment of members of the Order to bishoprics. The episcopal registers contain, also, a few helpful entries.

1 These were short extracts from originals now lost, made both for Archbishop James Ussher and Sir James Ware in the 1620s. Those for Limerick, copied in 1627 by Thomas Quirke, prior of that house, survive in two copies at the British Library: Sloane MSS 4793, f. 2 and Old MSS. No. 4783 (Clarendon MSS vol. 15, f. 57, no. 30). See O'Heyne, Appendix, p. 52. Those for Dublin may be the list of some of its priors (1250–1482) in TCD, MS 654. Those styled *Annales coenobii Dominicanorum de Trim* hardly deserve the title: they supply the dates of foundation of Irish Dominican convents up to 1300, and the years and places in which the Dominicans held chapters between 1242 and 1347. See H. Fenning, 'The Dominicans of Trim, 1263–1682', in *Riocht na Midhe*, iii, no. 1 (1963), p. 15. Attached to them, in each of three copies, there is an interesting *Chronicon cuiusdam fratris ordinis Praedicatorum* for the years 432–1274: TCD, MSS. 579, ii, pp 343–6. Similar *Annals* of the convent of Rosbercon (Ross) are to be found at Oxford, Bodleian, Rawlinson MSS,

The State Papers, particularly the Chancery, the Exchequer and the Plea Rolls, constitute our most important external source, the *Extents* of the Suppression Inquisitions and the Fiants, which deal with grants of the property of the dissolved houses, providing valuable information on the economic status of their communities. The municipal records of Dublin and Kilkenny yield a few items which concern the houses in those cities.

The Anglo-Norman chronicles, namely the *Annals of Multyfarnham*, with those of Clyn, Pembridge and Grace, are, strangely enough, more helpful than their Gaelic counterparts.[2] The authors of these compilations appear to have been so besotted by the spirit of aristocratic exclusiveness that they took little interest in the doings of the mendicant orders, except on the rare occasions when one of their members was promoted to a bishopric, or when a scion of some noble family found his way into their ranks or was buried in one of their churches. The one exception to this rule was Duald MacFirbis who, in the valuable chronicle compiled by him covering the brief period 1443–68, has managed to include more matter of Dominican interest than all the rest put together.

Finally, it may be mentioned that literary references to the Order in our medieval literature are few. The fine poem on St Dominic by Philip Bocht Ó Huigin, which has been included by Fr Lambert McKenna in his edition of the works of this poet, and the strange folk-tale the scene of which is placed in Urlar and which has been published by Dr Douglas Hyde, are the only items of value that occur.[3]

From all this it is clear that a full history of the medieval Dominicans is out of the question, and that the most that can be attempted is a sort of historical *Voyage autour de ma chambre*. In other words, the rather paltry material at our disposal may be made to yield valuable knowledge by being integrated into the background furnished by the general history of the Order as well as that of church and state over the period. It is obvious that this is not an easy task, and that great care is necessary in assessing the true value of facts and in avoiding the intrusion of fancy and wishful thinking.

And so to the first question that presents itself to our scrutiny. Who, and what kind of men were the inmates of the various communities of

B. 479, ff 68–9. See John Clyn, p. 68. **2** Editions of Clyn and Pembridge are noted with 'Sources' above. The *Annals of Multyfarnham* have been edited by Aquila Smith in *Tracts relating to Ireland*, ii (Dublin, 1842), pp 1–26; and *Annales Hiberniae* by James Grace, ed. by Richard Butler, Irish Archaeological Society (Dublin, 1842) **3** L. McKenna, *Philip Bocht Ó Huigin* (Dublin, 1931), pp. 91, 183; D. Hyde, *The religious songs of Connacht* (Dublin and London, no date), part 1, pp 329–51. There is a fuller study of the subject by C. Kearns, 'Medieval Dominicans and the Irish language', in *IER*, xciv (1960), pp 17–38.

medieval Dominicans? It is fairly certain that they were a numerous body. In a papal rescript issued in 1415, granting an indulgence to all who contributed towards the rebuilding of the abbey of Sligo, which had been burned down the previous year, it is stated that the community numbered twenty.[4] In another document issued under similar circumstances in favour of Athenry in 1445, the community is stated to amount to thirty.[5] This latter was probably one of the largest houses in Ireland, though Dublin, and perhaps Cork, Limerick and Waterford may have equalled or surpassed it in the size of their communities. Archdall gives the strength of the community of Derry as 150, but this figure may be safely ignored, since it is doubtful if any house of the Order, with the possible exception of St Jacques of Paris, possessed such a number. Besides, the authority cited by him, namely, Peter Walsh's *Prospect*, does not inspire confidence.[6]

It is significant that a series of entries in the Plea Rolls dealing with certain lawless proceedings which occurred in St Saviour's, Dublin, in 1380 refers to twenty-nine individual members of the Order, ostensibly belonging to the Dublin community but whether this comprised the entire strength of the personnel of the convent we cannot say. When we remember that, at this particular juncture, religious life in Ireland, most probably, was at a low ebb, as it certainly was throughout Christendom, this seems a reasonable number for a large community such as we might postulate for Dublin and confirms the estimate given for Athenry in the papal rescript sixty years later.

If we take it that the largest houses had communities of about thirty members each and those of intermediate grade, like Sligo, had twenty, we might surmise that the smaller places, like Aghaboe or Arklow or Rosbercon, would have to be content with twelve or fifteen each. An average of twenty for each house would seem to be indicated thereby, though this must be qualified, of course, by consideration of the recurrent periods of fervour and decadence through which they passed.[7] If therefore we put the minimum strength of all the communities at any time between, say, 1300 and 1500, at 500 and the maximum at 1000 we shall be as near to the truth as it is possible to go. We might recall, too, in this connection that in a report to the general chapter of 1656 dealing with

4 'In which were lately twenty friars.' *Cal. paper letters,* vi, p. 484. At Mullingar in 1432 there were 'hardly eight in priest's orders', whereas formerly there had been forty professed friars in the community. See *Cal. paper letters,* viii, p. 446. **5** *Cal. paper letters,* ix, p. 499. **6** [Peter Walsh], *A prospect of the state of Ireland ... to the year of Christ 1652* [London], 1682. **7** The number of friars was also lessened at times by famine, war and plague.

the great revival of the Order during the period 1620–50, it is stated that the province was 600 strong at that time.[8]

From what sources did the Order draw the considerable supplies of ecclesiastical manpower represented by these figures? Were they recruited from some particular class of society or was the net thrown at random to include all indiscriminately? We may recall here that on the continent in the early days of the Order, the universities gave generously to it both of their professorial and student personnel and that high ecclesiastics like the brilliant dean of Orleans, Blessed Reginald, the two young canons of Cracow, Hyacinth and Ceslaus, and Raymond of Peñafort, canon of Barcelona, likewise yielded to the attraction of the Dominican ideal. The universities, too, were the means by which the Order won from the ranks of the nobility such illustrious characters as Blessed Jordan of Saxony, St Albert the Great and St Thomas Aquinas, as well as the two great masters general, Humbert of Romans and Blessed John of Vercelli.

We must not imagine, however, that the Order drew its entire strength from such choice preserves. From an early period it found itself compelled to institute grammar schools to educate in the rudiments the immature youths whom it admitted to profession, and it is fairly obvious that these were drawn from the humbler social strata, probably the artisans and the petty traders of the cities and towns.

Since Ireland possessed no facilities for university studies at this time, one of the recruiting grounds available in other countries was thus cut off from the Order, though it is possible that a proportion of those amongst the colonists who managed to do a course in Oxford or Cambridge may have joined up. David Mac Kelly Ó Gillapatrick – this, according to the *Annals of Connacht*, is the correct form of the name – according to the surviving documents, the only prominent ecclesiastic who became a Dominican during the early period: he had been dean of Cashel before joining the Order.[9] Nor did the nobility show any great eagerness in the same direction either, except when, as in the cases of Ivar O'Beirne, confidential minister of Aedh O'Connor, king of Connacht, of Geoffrey de Genevil, or of Thomas de Burgh, founder of Burrishole, they retired to a monastery at the end of their days to make preparation for death.

8 D. Pochin Mould, *The Irish Dominicans* (Dublin, 1957), p. 244, gives the references for this and other near-contemporary estimates. For the year 1649, before Cromwell's arrival, a figure close to 450 would be reasonable. 'Six hundred' seems an exaggeration. **9** David MacKelly, dean of Cashel from 1228 and a Dominican from 1230; archbishop of Cashel, 1238–53. See H. McInerny, *A History of the Irish Dominicans*, i (1916), pp 1–51.

It appears therefore that in Ireland the Order was obliged to depend mainly on juvenile postulants, and that these were, as a matter of course, trained in its grammar schools before embarking on their theological studies.[10]

To answer satisfactorily a query regarding the social antecedents of these friar postulants one would require, in the first place, a fairly complete list of their names. And this, unfortunately, is not available. A careful gleaning of all the relevant documents over the entire period 1224–1608 has yielded a total of only 217 names instead of the thousands of those who must have passed their lives in Irish Dominican cloisters during those four centuries. In the case of fourteen of these only the Christian name is given, leaving a mere 203 available for the purposes of our argument. Of these, eighty-four are of Gaelic origin and the remainder Anglo-Norman.

Notwithstanding the hopeless inadequacy of these figures it may not prove impossible to derive some profit from a study of them. To take the Gaelic names first, a great part of them falls into two main groups, namely, the obits given in the *Regestum* of Athenry and the list of priors of Aghaboe; the remainder being scattered over a number of convents. Amongst the thirteen names given in the obits (which extend from 1398 to 1452) there are three duplicates, leaving only ten suitable for our purpose. The Aghaboe list is unsatisfactory in that none of the names is dated and it is therefore impossible to determine the number who flourished before 1608.[11] Of the forty-four names given probably a little more than half should be assigned to the earlier period – say twenty-four – and of these, twenty-one were Gaelic. Now of the ten Athenry names, five, namely, Ó Molayn (Malone), Ó Mulkieran, Ó Corcoran, Ó Elgius and Ó Scanlan, belong to well-known erenagh families; the other five are mixed.[12] There are two representatives of the great literary and brehon family of the Ó Donnellans; there is an O'Connor and an Ó Teig, whom we may surmise to be a representative of the family which provided the majordomos of the kings of Connacht.

10 The Dominican school at Dublin was mentioned in 1320 in connection with a proposed university. Fitzmaurice & Little, p. 108. Both the foundation of a school at Athenry and the 'room of the English bachelors' there are mentioned in *Regestum de Athenry,* pp 213, 219. For a useful study of the subject, with special reference to England, see L.E. Boyle, 'Notes on the education of the *Fratres Communes* in the Dominican Order in the 13th century', in *Xenia medii aevi historiam illustrantia oblata Thomae Kaeppeli O.P.,* Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura (Rome 1978), pp 249–67. **11** Unsatisfactory too because some, and perhaps most, of the names are those of secular priests. The list is in Archdall, p. 590. **12** Erenagh, erenach: the hereditary lay guardian of a parish church. The obits of friars of Athenry (1398–1452) are in *Regestum de Athenry,* pp 215–16.

In the Aghaboe list there is no such predominance of the ecclesiastical and learned element as we find in Athenry. O Phelan (probably not of the Decies family but of that which appears to have been associated with the abbey of Kells in Kilkenny) and Mac Caisin, member of a famous family of physicians, are the only names belonging to these classes. The ruling families of the adjacent territories are strongly represented. There are four Fitzpatricks, an O'Gorman, an O'Kelly, an O'Dempsey and an O'Nolan. As if to show that the authorities of the Order did not stand for an exclusive local patriotism, we find Connacht names like O'Gara, Ó Teig, Ó Tuohy, Mac Donagh and McKeoghy, and Munster names like O'Hehir and O'Sullivan.

The names of only two Limerick Dominicans have survived – Maurice Ó Cormacan and Simon Modin. The former recalls the great ecclesiastical family who founded Abbey Ó Gormacan in Galway and gave three bishops to Killaloe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Derry has furnished us with three names, all representing distinguished erenagh families. Nicholas Lochlynnach figures in Archbishop Colton's Visitation of 1397 as prior of the Dominican convent in that city. The form of the name is, philologically, of great interest. In modern Irish it is used, with the article, as the equivalent of Mac (or) Ó Loughlin, but in middle Irish it would roughly signify 'One of the Loughlins' and would thereby indicate a family of inferior rank. It is remarkable that the same form occurs in the Ulster Inquisitions of 1609. Now, the Lochlynnach family were erenaghs of the church lands in Derry, and it is fairly certain that our Nicholas was one of them.

The other two Derry names come from the suppression period. A certain Patritius Thaddeus, who flourished during this time, has won for himself a very full dossier which is kept in the master general's archives in Rome. After years of almost legendary adventure amongst the heretics of the north, he finally left Ireland about the period of the Flight of the Earls (1607) and made his way to Rome, and it is related that the pope – Paul V – was deeply moved by the narrative of the heroic missionary's labours and sufferings. Now 'Patritius Thaddeus' would sound more familiarly in our ears if we translated it into 'Patrick Mac Teig' and we could thereby identify him as a member of the family who acted as erenaghs of the church of Drumahose, near Limavady, and for centuries furnished ecclesiastics to the diocese of Derry.[13]

13 MacTeig is mentioned several times by Flynn, most relevantly on pp 195–6.

The remaining name is that of John Ó Luinín, who, we are told, lived in the convent of Derry when Sir Henry Docwra occupied the city in 1601. It is to the credit of the English commander that he was kind to the friar and assigned him certain revenues for his support. When, however, the rebellion of Sir Cahir O'Doherty broke out, in the course of the operations a detachment of English troops fell in with Fr Ó Luinín and murdered him on the spot.[14] This last representative of the community of the medieval convent of Derry was, we may with every reason suppose, a member of the family who were erenaghs of Derryvullen in Fermanagh, and for centuries acted as poets, historians, musicians and physicians to the Maguires.

Mention has already been made of Duald Mac Firbis' reference to the 'three righteous friars of Longford', namely: Aedh Buy Ó Fergail, Diarmuid Mac Commay and Henry Duffe Mac Fechedain. The first of these we may take to have been a member of one of the branches of the great ruling family of Annaly. The second would appear to appertain to the famous family of Mac Conmee, who were hereditary poets to the O'Neills of Ulster. The third, whose name is to-day rendered Mageehin or Geehan, belonged to the family of the coarbs of Cloone in Leitrim.

Six names have survived from the history of Sligo, two from the medieval period – Magnus, son of Baethgalach Mac Aedacáin, prior in 1411, and Brian Mac Donagh, who rebuilt the monastery after it had been destroyed by fire in 1414 – and four from the suppression era: Eugene Ó Hart, Andrew Ó Crean or Cryan, Thaddeus Ó Duane and Daniel Ó Creidigan. The first of these was a member of the famous brehon family of the Mac Egans, a fact which explains the listing of his name in the *Annals of Connacht*. Brian Mac Donagh was a scion of the princely family of Tirerrill, he too on that account being regarded as worthy of mention by the annalist. Eugene Ó Hart and Andrew Ó Crean were the great bishops who wrought so valiantly in the Catholic cause during almost the entire reign of Elizabeth. Ó Hart's family were chieftains of Clann Cellaig, a territory situated in the barony of Carbury, Co. Sligo. Ó Crean was a member of the great merchant family of that name whose 'castle' in Sligo testifies to the wealth their trading activities won for them. Of Ó Duane's antecedents all that can be said is that his family does not appear to have enjoyed any defined status. Daniel Ó Credigan's family

14 John Ó Luinín was executed in 1607 with his brother William, also a Dominican. A third Dominican of Derry, John O'Mannin, was tortured in 1608 and thereby crippled for life. See Flynn, p. 73.

were the termoners, that is erenaghs or coarbs, of Drumlease near Dromahaire.[15]

Of the Gaelic members of the Order, numbering eighteen in addition to the two already mentioned, who obtained promotion to bishoprics during this period, three, namely, Ó Scannell, Ó Leyan and Mac Brien appear to have been members of erenagh families; four, namely, Ó Laidig, Ó Donnabair, Ó Daly and Ó Doran, belonged to the learned caste; one, namely John Quin, whose existence the Order would be glad to ignore, appears to have come from a family of traders in Kilmallock; one, that is Ó Scoba, cannot be assigned any special social niche, and the remainder – Mac Kelly, Mac Gillapatrick, Ó Sullivan, two Ó Connors, Ó Kelly, two Ó Flanagans, Ó More and Ó Farrell were, as the names indicate, members of ruling families.[16]

A few names which occur at random are of interest too. Maurice Ó Mochain Moral, the reformer of the Irish Dominicans, belonged to a great ecclesiastical family who were erenaghs of Killaraght near Lough Gara and gave several distinguished members to the church during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Thomas Ó Grúcain, who was concerned in the foundation of Urlar, belonged to the erenaghs of Elphin. William Ó Keane, who gained fame as a preacher and teacher during the latter part of the sixteenth century, may have been a member of the family who were erenaghs of the termon of St Senan at Kilrush. Tomás Ó Curnín, prior of Roscommon and reputed the most learned man of his day, belonged to the famous family who were hereditary poets to the Ó Ruaircs of Breffney. Diarmuid Mac Maeltuile, concerned in the foundation of Tulsk, sprang from the family who were hereditary physicians to the Ó Connors of Connacht.

The total number of Gaelic names that have been preserved amounts, as aready stated, only to eighty-four.[17] Of these, twenty-four can be assigned to erenagh families, fourteen to the hereditary learned castes, thirty-four (including nineteen from the Aghaboe list) to the ruling famlies, mostly of minor grade, and the remainder to families of undefined social status. The Aghaboe list, in my judgment, wears a

15 Each parish church had its 'termon', land allocated in law for its support, under the lay guardianship and administration either of an erenagh or a coarb. **16** Irish Dominicans who became bishops are conveniently listed in Mould, pp 230–3. **17** One could add to O'Sullivan's list many more Gaelic names which occur both in the *suppliche* for papal grants and in the registers of the Dominican master general from about 1450. Curiously, he did not attempt a similar analysis of the many Anglo-Irish names known to him fom the Fiea Rolls and other sources.

suspicious air. It carries a greater weight of heavy social artillery than one would expect in a monastery of mendicants, and the fact that Archdall, our only source for this item, does not quote his authority, can only add to our suspicions. If we exclude it from our calculations we are presented with a situation which offers very interesting possibilities indeed.

Can we look on this collection of names as an authentic cross-section of the personnel of our medieval communities? It would be injudicious to the point of rashness to do so. That, however, need not prevent us from feeling a certain satisfaction that, as far as the facts go, the Dominicans of that age were recruited from classes who, by birth and tradition, might be antecedently expected to live up to the ideals of the Order.

CHAPTER 13

The Communities: Celt and Norman

By the end of the medieval period the Friars Preachers possessed thirty-eight convents in Ireland. Of these, twelve were located in Leinster, nine in Munster, fourteen in Connacht, and three in Ulster. Of the twenty-four which were established during the thirteenth century, twenty may be regarded as Anglo-Norman in origin as well as in environment, and as we shall see, probably in personnel and in sympathy also. Two, Limerick and Cashel, though founded by men of the old race, were located in centres where colonial influence held sway. Only two, Roscommon and Derry, were Irish. Of the four established during the fourteenth century, Carlingford and Naas were Norman, Aghaboe and Longford were Irish. The ten foundations dating from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries were all, with the exception of Galway, Irish in origin and presumably in personnel and in racial leanings also. A table of the Irish Dominican houses with the names of the founders and the dates of erection affords, therefore, an instructive commentary on the political fluctuations in the country from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century.

This stressing of the political note in connexion with the affairs of a religious body in medieval Ireland is not, unfortunately, out of place since, in the then existing circumstances, politics in some shape or form entered into practically everything. Nor, indeed, can this be much wondered at. Where you have, on the one hand, an intrusive alien element acting the part of a conquering *herrenvolk*, and on the other, the native race opposing, by every means that offered, the attempt to subjugate and enslave them, one need not expect any particular disposition to live and let live from one side or the other, and the tendency will be to involve everybody and everything in the one all-absorbing interest.

This was certainly the disposition of the colonists in the portion of the country effectively ruled by the Dublin government, as well as in the towns and in the areas subject to palatine jurisdiction – in this last instance, perhaps, to a qualified extent. It goes without saying that, in the areas ruled by Irish princes or by gaelicised Norman nobles, the natives, as

far as their condition of disorganised helplessness permitted, were ready to give as good as they got.

Every student of Irish history is aware of the ceaseless pressure exercised by the colonial authorities to perpetuate a spirit of envenomed antagonism between the two races. During the first century following the invasion this policy was not too obtrusively in evidence since the sheer momentum of the process of conquest was sufficient to ensure Anglo-Norman predominance. But from the beginning of the fourteenth century, and particularly after the Bruce invasion in 1315, we find repeated attempts to establish a veritable Iron Curtain between natives and colonists.

Truth to tell, there was not much need to employ any particular effort to ensure the success of this policy since it chimed in rather aptly with the normal attitude of the colonists towards the natives. It was not due to parliamentary or executive action that, for instance, the Common Councils of the municipalities forbade any Irishman to dwell within their walls and would not even allow the Irish country people, on whom they depended for their very existence, to enter their gates to buy and sell. The extreme anti-Irish bitterness of these people is well illustrated by an incident which is mentioned in the ancient records of Dublin under date 1455. The entry relates that the mayor of the city summoned the superiors of the four mendicant orders before the council and compelled them to enter into recognizances binding them to expel forthwith from their communities all Irish religious who had been admitted therein. There seems to have been an outburst of anti-Irish feeling in Dublin about that time, since we read that, in the year preceding, an ordinance was made that 'no maner of man dwellyng within the said cite take no Iryssh prentises ne Iryssh servantes from this day forward, etc'.[1]

The establishment of the wardenship of Galway in 1484 provides an even more telling instance of this spirit amongst the English (as they persisted in regarding themselves) of the towns. The motive at the back of it was the determination not to submit to the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Tuam for the simple reason that he was an Irishman. Galway, in fact, in consequence of its isolated position and from its consciousness of being an outpost of English civilization surrounded by a hinterland of barbarism, appears to have cherished the anti-Irish spirit to a more intense degree than any of the other cities or towns.[2]

1 J.T. Gilbert (ed.), *Calendar of the ancient records of Dublin* (Dublin, 1889), i, pp 281, 287.
2 On the other hand, the bishop of Annaghdown received royal permission in 1393 to

The more one comes to close quarters with such realities as these the more one wonders how that pleasant soporific – '*Hibernis ipsis Hiberniores*' – first won currency. Of what section of the colonists could it be truthfully predicated? Not of the town population, as we have seen. Nor of the nobility, gentry and commonality of the Pale. Nor, I think, of the rulers of the great palatinates, in spite of much that has been said to the contrary.

The church was, of course, the terrain on which the quarrel between the two peoples was fought out most bitterly.[3] From the commencement of English rule in Ireland a determined attempt was made to exclude Irishmen from every ecclesiastical office. Religious houses, such as the abbey of St Thomas in Dublin or Connal[4] in Kildare, were founded with the express intention of admitting within their cloisters only men of English race. The frequent condemnation of this policy by Rome does not appear to have had much effect, since it was persisted in up to the Reformation.

From being more or less a *de facto* condition it assumed *de jure* status with the enactment of the Statute of Kilkenny in 1366. Here it was decreed 'that no religious house which is situate amongst the English shall henceforth receive any Irishman to profession, but may receive Englishmen without taking into consideration whether they be born in England or in Ireland'. This statute was strictly enforced, as is shown rather paradoxically by the fact that down to the Reformation licences of exemption were granted periodically to certain individuals.[5] Again, it must be said that this legislation did not run counter to the sentiments which prevailed in Anglo-Irish religious houses. In the remonstrance addressed by the Gaelic princes of Ulster to Pope John XXII, complaint is made of the violent anti-Irish attitude cultivated by some of these communities. The abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Abbeylara is accused of having publicly taught that it was no sin to kill an Irishman, and similar sentiments were attributed to a Franciscan named Simon. Walter Jorz OP,

procure 200 archers so that he might recover his see 'from the Irish traitors and rebels living in Galway city'. See G.O. Sayles, *Documents on the affairs of Ireland* (Dublin, 1979), p. 264. **3** There is now a general and authoritative survey of the subject by J.A. Watt, *The Church and the two nations in medieval Ireland* (Cambrdge, 1970). How this struggle impacted on Franciscans, and to a lesser extent on Dominicans, has been studied by A. Müller, 'Conflicting loyalties: the Irish Franciscans and the English crown in the high Middle Ages', in *RIA Proc.* 107C (2008), pp 87–106. Reference from C. Ó Clabaigh. **4** That is, Greatconnell of the Augustinian Canons, by the Liffey near Newbridge, Co. Kildare. **5** For a detailed discussion of the Statute, see J.A. Watt, *A new history of Ireland* (Oxford, 1987), ii, pp 386–90.

archbishop of Armagh (1307–11), opprobriously referred to as 'the ignorant English archbishop', is blamed for the enactment of an ordinance at an assembly held at Kilkenny in 1309, which was framed on the same lines as the famous statute subsequently decreed in the same place.[6]

How did the Friars Preachers behave under those circumstances of social strain and exasperation? Did they regard themselves as Celts or Normans first and religious only in the second place? Or did they rise superior to all that wretchedness and endeavour to act in the true spirit of their high vocation? Such evidence as has come down is conflicting, but I believe that, so far as it goes, it shows the friars in a rather creditable light, earnestly endeavouring to hold the balance evenly between both races.

During the thirteenth century, in the period be it remembered when the colonists were everywhere in the ascendant, twelve members of the Order were appointed to Irish bishoprics. Of these, two were Englishmen, another – Reginald, archbishop of Armagh – was most probably an Italian, and the remainder were Irish. This fact speaks for itself and needs no stressing. If the foremost men amongst the friars, and those promoted to bishoprics must have been such, had been recruited from the old race in such a preponderant proportion, it is legitimate to infer that a corresponding quota was to be found amongst the rank and file.

This view is borne out by the fact that somewhere about the year 1300 we come on a violent diatribe emanating from an English source and directed against the Dominicans, charging them with pro-Irish proclivities and particularly with fostering the Irish language.[7] It may be significant that an English Dominican who flourished about this time, John of Wrotham, is credited with a masterly knowledge of Irish, in addition to his native tongue, as well as French and Scotch.[8]

The invasion of Edward Bruce in 1315 revealed a very large anti-English element amongst the Irish clergy, more particularly in the mendicant orders. The English government's representations to the Holy

6 These details come from the remonstrance of the Gaelic nobles of Ulster, *c.*1316. Text in Curtis/MacDowell, *Irish historical documents* (London, 1943), pp 38–46. The truth of the charges is accepted as true by James Lydon, *New history of Ireland* (Oxford, 1987), ii, p. 242. **7** The reference seems to be to Nicholas Cusack OFM, bishop of Kildare, who in 1299 complained to Edward I of 'religious of the Irish tongue' who encouraged Gaelic kinglets to fight for their native country. Cited with references by C. Kearns, 'Medieval Dominicans and the Irish language', in *IER*, xciv, no. 2 (July 1960), pp 19–20. On 'racial tension' among Franciscans, with specific reference to Bishop Cusack, see C. Ó Clabaigh, *The Franciscans in Ireland, 1400–1534* (Dublin, 2002), pp 36–41. **8** For Wrotham, see W. A. Hinnebusch, *The early English Friars Preachers* (Rome, 1951), pp 308, 470. Wrotham spent his active life (1297–1320) as an English courtier and papal penitentiary.

See evoked a stern papal reprimand directed against those who, by their sermons, incited the people to rebellion against their legitimate ruler, the king of England.[9] Apparently the agitation amongst the friars continued in spite of the papal pronouncement, because we find the annalist, John Clyn, a few years later (1325) lamenting the fact that there was discord amongst the mendicant friars due, one gathers, to racial and linguistic differences.[10]

A Dominican of colonial extraction, Philip of Slane, proved himself at this juncture a useful servant of the English crown. He received in 1319, from the royal exchequer, a grant of five marks a year for life and was sworn a member of the king's council! One may be pardoned for suspecting that those tokens of the royal favour were bestowed as a reward for his publication of an abbreviated version of the *Topographia* of Cambrensis[11] which appeared in that same year. It was prefaced by a dedication to the pope in which the author styles himself Philip, chaplain of the Holy Father, friar preacher, and minister of the church at Cork. The resurrecting of the calumnies of Cambrensis at this time was obviously intended to provide ammunition for the anti-Irish propagandists at the papal court.[12]

Philip became bishop of Cork in 1321. In 1325 he was dispatched by the king to Avignon to lay before the pope a report on the state of the church in Ireland. In a memorandum submitted by him, the religious orders of the Irish persuasion were accused of excluding the English from membership in their communities in contrast to the custom of monasteries situated in the English parts, which admitted Irishmen. Whether the pope swallowed this tall yarn or not we cannot say. He contented himself with issuing his, by now well-worn, exhortation to desist from these discriminating practices.

'Mere' Irish members of the mendicant orders were accused of claiming separate and distinct convents for themselves in which they might dwell apart from their English brethren, and the pope was requested by Philip to order this practice to cease and that the two races should live

9 Bull of John XXII (10 April 1317). *Cal. papal letters,* ii, pp 139, 416, 435–36. Full text in Fitzmaurice & Little, *Materials,* p. 100. **10** Clyn, John, pp 182–3. Clyn offers a second reason for this agitation: 'ambition for prelacy and superior offices'. English and Irish friars probably tried to exclude each other from priorships etc. **11** Cambrensis was Gerald de Barry of Wales (†1223), author of the *Topography of Ireland* in 1188. **12** The work, entitled *Libellus de descripcione Hyberniae,* survives in BL, Add. MS 19513, ff 164–188b. See M. Esposito, 'The Latin writers of medieval Ireland', in *Studies* (1913), p. 512; and particularly Bolster, *The diocese of Cork,* i, pp 364–8, for a full account of Philip of Slane.

side by side in the same houses. The text of the pope's reply appears to be mutilated; at any rate, it does not make sense.[13]

Now this accusation is of interest, though how far it was true it is hard to say. Up to this time, only two of the Dominican convents might conceivably have been allotted specifically to the Irish if, that is, it had been the policy of the superiors of the Order to do so. But the inference to be drawn from the episcopal appointments made during the thirteenth century runs counter to this view. These religious must before their promotion definitely have been members of communities located in the English parts. In other words, not segregation but racial intermixture was the policy during this time.

Probably it did not continue, however, once the exacerbation of racial feeling set in after the Bruce invasion. From this time onwards, therefore, Celt and Norman kept each to his own quarters as a rule, with the result that in the houses of the Pale, such as Dublin, Drogheda and Kilkenny, you will scarcely ever meet an Irish name, just as an English one will not be found in Derry or Longford. In the Dissolution returns, the priors of all the suppressed houses, without exception, bore English names. It will, of course, be remembered that only those convents situated within the English jurisdiction were suppressed under Henry VIII, a fact which explains the absence of Irish names from those returns.

There were, however, houses where representatives of both races dwelt side by side all through the period from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century. These were the convents which, at the time of their erection, were located in centres completely dominated by Anglo-Norman influences, but which later on reverted to Irish control either through Irish reconquest, as in the case of Sligo, or through the Norman lord of the manor 'going native', as in the case of Strade.

Athenry, as we might expect, affords the most interesting and instructive instance of this racial symbiosis, for the simple reason that its *regestum* has preserved lists of names by which the phenomenon may be studied. The town was occupied, on its foundation by Meiler de Bermingham, by an English mercantile colony which maintained trading relations with England and Flanders. Names such as Bodkin, Blake, Butler,

13 The text (*c.*1325) is a list of 'reasons why the peace is being disurbed', and the papal reply to each point is interjected into the text. The papal answer to the complaint about religious houses, in the form we have it now, is incomprehensible. Edited in 'Miscellanea Vaticano-Hibernica', in *Archiv. Hib.*, vi (1917), pp 132–6. See also J. Watt, 'Negotiations between Edward II and John XXII concerning Ireland', in *IHS*, x (Mar. 1956), pp 1–20.

Bonanter (Bonaventure?), Godsun, Husgard, Joyce, Lynch, Wallis, White, Wydyr, Simkin and Spencer are eloquent of their origin.

Now, the Dominican community there which, judging by the names that have been preserved, was Anglo-Norman at the beginning, gradually changed its racial complexion till, by the middle of the fifteenth century it had become predominantly Irish. When Meiler de Bermingham died at Cashel in 1252, his body was brought back for burial in Athenry by four friars whose names were: Thomas Coll, Henry Blound, Richard Corke, and Galfrid Brun.[14] Towards the end of the century when the community had reason to complain of the treatment meted out to them by the archbishop of Tuam, William de Bermingham, son of their founder, the names mentioned show that the community was already mixed. They are as follows: Robert Gryanard, Reginald O'Lyny, Gilbert O'Leghan and Adam de Large.[15]

When Thomas de Bermingham died in his manor of Cloncesit (Clonsast?) in 1376, his body was interred in the church of the Friars Preachers at Trim but was recovered and brought to Athenry for burial by Friars John Walleys and John Michel. Friar Thomas Naase performed a similar office for David Wydyr, who died in Bristol about 1400.[16]

Of the twenty-three names preserved in the conventual obit list over the period 1394–1452, fourteen are Irish and the remainder typical English surnames. The former have been dealt with in a previous chapter.[17] The latter list runs: Henry de Burgo (†1394), John Bonanture (†1405), John Wallys and William Curtys; William Rydeymar, Nicholas Brayneog and Thomas Naisse (†1431); Richard Gouer (†1447) and Gilbert Bron (†1451).[18]

On what terms did these friars stand with their Irish brethren of the Athenry community? It is not easy to say. On the one hand, we have the case of Friar Thomas O'Corcoran, evidently a religious of distinction and praised by the chronicler for the many good things he had done for his community. He died in Chelmsford convent in England, apparently on assignation there, a fact which proves that the authorities of the Order, at any rate, did not allow racial prejudices to influence them in choosing the men most suited to their purposes.[19]

14 *Regestum de Athenry,* pp 213–14, where 'Blunt' is rendered as 'Blowynd' **15** *Calendar of the Justiciary Rolls, I–VII Edward II* , pp 108–9, 114–15. **16** *Regestum de Athenry,* pp 205, 207. **17** Chapter 12. **18** *Regestum de Athenry,* pp 215–16. **19** O'Corcoran is mentioned in *Regestum de Athenry,* p. 216.

On the other hand, there is evidence that some of the English brethren in Athenry appear to have regarded themselves as 'most superior pursuns' and to have refused to fraternise with the Irish section. In the list of benefactions given to the convent by Thomas Óg de Bermingham, lord of Athenry (who succeeded to the title in 1474), it is stated that he expended the modest sum of one mark 'on the repair of the chamber of the English bachelors'.[20] These 'bachelors' I take to be the members of the professorial staff of the theological school, acting as assistants to the regent master, and apparently they kept separate quarters there somewhat in the style of college dons. It is amusing to note the tone of reverential awe in which the chronicler mentions the name of Gilbert Bron. His is the only name amongst the obits which is dignified with the prefix 'Reverend', and the gesture of obeisance conveyed in the descriptive phrase 'Magister Theologicae Facultatis' lacks nothing in impressiveness.[21]

One is left with the feeling that Irish and English just tolerated each other and nothing more; may we therefore surmise that possibly the strained situation existing between the two sections in the Athenry community may have had something to do with the foundation of the convent of Galway in 1488? The fact that this event followed so soon after the establishment of the Wardenship and the further fact that *Hibernia Dominicana* for a brief period at this juncture enjoyed independence under the rule of the Irishman, Maurice Ó Mocháin Moral, do suggest that a section of the Athenry community, finding the situation there not agreeable to their taste, decided to transport themselves to the more congenial racial climate of the neighbouring 'Cittie of the Tribes'.[22]

20 *Regestum de Athenry*, p. 220. Elsewhere in the same text one finds '*camina*' (chimney) rather than '*camera*'. O'Sullivan goes too far in using the provision of a special room as proof of a 'refusal to fraternise'. **21** The pride of the chronicler owed much to the fact that Bron had entered the Order at Athenry and made profession for Athenry itself, yet died at London (1451), having been 'master of the faculty of theology'. Whether the latter was a degree conferred or an office held does not appear. His remarkable career in England from 1404 is outlined by A.E. Emden, *A survey of Dominicans in England* (Rome, 1967), p. 291, referring to BRUO, iii, 2157 for fuller particulars. **22** In 1488, Galway city was indeed 'English', but the new house of the Order was to the west of it, across the river Corrib, at the Claddagh, a Gaelic fishing-village. Besides, the Lynches and Blakes of Galway had been benefactors of Athenry from the 14th century.

CHAPTER 14

Church and Convent

Medieval Dominican monasteries, though, as we have seen, invariably situated in urban centres, were usually located, not within the city walls, but outside them in an adjoining suburb. The clearest instance of this is seen in the case of St Saviour's, Dublin, which stood on the north bank of the Liffey in the village of Oxmantown, near the bridge. This district, though outside the ramparts, was included within the city boundaries, and appears to have existed as a Hiberno-Danish settlement as early as the eleventh century. When, on the conquest of Dublin by the Anglo-Normans, Henry II granted the city to a colony from Bristol, the native population was probably expelled and found shelter with their compatriots in Oxmantown. When the Dominicans came in 1224, this district offered, therefore, an ideal site for their monastery.

Only a few of the houses departed from the above-mentioned rule. That of Waterford stood within the ramparts from the beginning, and the same was probably true of Limerick. Here, the monastery abutted on the city wall on the inside, as clearly appears from the account of the capture of Limerick by the Irish of Thomond in 1369. After they had been driven out in the following year a dispute arose between the friars and the citizens as to where the responsibility lay for the repair of the wall of the monastery grounds which was situated at the point where the attackers had broken in.[1] It would seem that the circumvallation of the city was so laid out as to abut on the convent wall, which thus filled a gap in the fortifications, and this fact may suggest that the city was not fortified at the time the convent was built.

If Athenry abbey stood within the town ramparts (which is doubtful, since it was separated by the river from the castle and its vill) its inclusion therein came about in a similar way. It originally stood outside the earthen *vallum* which defended the town, but when the walls were built in 1310 they may have been so extended as to abut on the abbey precinct, whose walls would thus constitute a portion of the fortifications, as was the case

1 Coleman supplies precise details from *AU* and the *Close Rolls*, in his *Appendix* to O'Heyne, p. 55.

at Limerick. The same thing probably happened in the case of St Magdalen's in Drogheda.

The location of the convents outside the city walls brought with it certain advantages. In the first place, sites there were cheaper – an important consideration for a mendicant order – and there was more scope for subsequent extension and for the acquisition of land for such monastic appurtenances as the cemetery, gardens, and orchard. Then again, it probably helped in the maintenance of religious discipline. In medieval times, religious, even friars, were more strictly confined to the monastery than is the case nowadays, the rule being that nobody could leave the precincts without the permission of the superior and for an approved reason. Indiscriminate visiting was not permitted, and egress from the convent was not allowed except when duty so demanded. It will be appreciated that it was more easy to enforce this rule when the convent stood outside the city wall, for the simple reason that the civil authorities did not permit unrestricted traffic inward or outward through the city gates. We find an interesting illustration of this fact in the special arrangements made to facilitate the Cork community in their entrances and exits to and from the city. In 1317, the viceroy, Roger Mortimer, issued a charter duly confirmed by the king, granting the custody of the gate near the priory to the mayor, bailiffs and other trusty men, and according free passage to the friars, and for their sakes to other good citizens.[2] It will be remembered that Cork was one of the royal boroughs and that when it received its charter of liberties, its military defence, which would include the wardship of the gates, was reserved to the crown, a fact which explains the necessity for the king's intervention in granting this favour to the friars.

We can infer from this incident another reason for the location of the convents on extra-mural sites. The friars were thereby spared the inconveniences which city-dwellers experienced whenever they had occasion to pass through the gates and which would have made life exceedingly difficult for the members of an Order whose calling compelled them to be constantly on the move, coming and going on their preaching missions through the countryside. It may be possible, indeed, to

2 *Chartae, privilegia et immunitates* (Irish Records Commission, Dublin, 1889), p. 48. The site of the church and convent at Cork, long overbuilt, recently came to light and has been most thoroughly examined by archaeologists: M.F. Hurley and C.M. Sheehan (eds), *Excavations at the Dominican priory, St Mary's of the Isle, Cork* (Cork, 1995). Two successive phases in the medieval complex of church and convent are illustrated on pp 47, 49.

see here another instance of the principle stressed in a former chapter: that the friars, by dwelling outside the city walls, escaped thereby to some extent the regimentation enforced by the feudal system.

We have now to consider the general architectural lay-out of church and convent in a medieval Irish Dominican monastery.[3] The materials for this study are at hand in the ruins still standing, though, since none of them is complete, a certain amount of conjectural reconstruction will be necessary. Of the thirty-eight houses which comprised the Irish province at the time of the suppression, fifteen have been totally destroyed. Only the Magdalen Tower remains to attest the beauty of the Drogheda convent which it once adorned. Of the remaining twenty-two houses, portions more or less considerable have been preserved, though in nearly every case the domestic buildings have been, either wholly or in part, destroyed.

Athenry, which must have been one of the most splendid edifices in the country, was gutted in the eighteenth century to provide the materials for the construction of the military barracks which still occupies the site, with only the poor remains of the church existing alongside. Of Derry, not a trace is left, its stones having gone to the building of the city walls when the London Companies took it over at the Plantation of Ulster. The Abbey of the Bann at Coleraine suffered a similar fate. Roscommon convent was demolished by its owner in the eighteenth century, presumably to furnish building materials, and, in the *Memoirs* of Charles O'Conor, it is stated that the steeple of the church fell down when undermined by a gentleman for this purpose.[4] Rosbercon was similarly destroyed so recently as 1812 by a person named Lamphier, whose vandalism, however, seems to have brought him no luck. The splendid pile of Carlingford has received similar savage treatment, its buildings having been used as a quarry to provide materials for the construction of houses in the neighbourhood. Only the shell of the church remains, with the cut-stone quoins of doors and windows removed by architectural treasure hunters. In Sligo, the church and cloisters are in a passable state of preservation but only a small portion of the conventual buildings has survived, a certain Thomas Corcoran having ransacked the fabric towards the end of the eighteenth century to secure the materials for the building

3 G. Meerseman, 'L'Architecture Dominicaine au xiii^{e} siècle: legislation et practique', in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, xvi (1946), pp 136–90, concludes that local circumstances overthrew early conformity to a simple plan. 4 C. O'Conor, *Memoirs of the life and writings of the late Charles O'Conor of Belanagare* (Dublin, 1796), p. 43.

of Thomas Street and Corcoran's Mall.[5] So the disgraceful story might be repeated till it embraced almost every Dominican house in Ireland.

All this notwithstanding, it is possible, with the aid of the architect and the antiquarian, to determine the purpose of each portion of the existing ruins in the general economy of the convent as it stood before destruction came upon it. By the time the Dominican Order came into existence the experience of long centuries had enabled architects to reduce the plan of a monastery to a formula almost as strict as that which governed the lay-out of a Roman camp. Each unit in the ensemble of the conventual buildings had its fixed place allotted to it as a general rule, so that it is possible to put on paper a sort of standardised plan to which all these structures must generally conform. Its outline would be plotted out roughly in this fashion.[6]

In the centre lay the cloister garth, a square plot of open ground, grass grown, or planted with shrubs and flowers. A covered ambulatory ran round the four sides and these had their fronts either completely enclosed or, as seems to have been invariably the case in Ireland, arcaded, consisting of a line of arches resting on pillars. The conventual buildings and the church lay on the outside of the cloister, abutting on the outer walls of the ambulatory and with the upper storeys advanced inwards towards the garth so as to stand flush with the arcade.[7]

Irish Dominican houses apparently differed from others in having the church to the south side of the enclosure, and on the opposite north side was placed the refectory, seemingly, as we see in Sligo, on the second story, the ground floor being occupied by store rooms and kitchens. On the east

5 The ground plan and upper plan of Holy Cross, Sligo, are reproduced in H. Fenning, *The Dominicans of Sligo* (Enniscrone, 2002), pp 13–14. **6** The following section on conventual and church architecture appeared before the monumental work of H.G. Leask, *Irish churches and monastic buildings* (Dundalk, 1955–60), 3 vols. His first volume covers too early a period for this study; the other two are indispensable. Vol. 2 contains a plan of the Dominican church of Athenry and of some of its windows; also of the tracery of the great south window at Kilkenny. Vol. 3 contains plates of the south window at Cashel, the cloister arcade at Sligo, a tomb-niche at Strade; with illustrations of Ballindoon, Portumna, Roscommon and Sligo. There are also excellent photographs and plans in D. Mould, *The Irish Dominicans* (Dublin, 1957). For an overview of 'mendicant' architecture in Ireland, see Gabriella Villetti, 'Tracce per lo studio dell'architettura degli ordini mendicanti nell'Irlanda medievale', in *Palladio: rivista di storia dell'architettura e restauro*, no. 14 (Luglio-Dicembre 1994), pp 79–96. **7** Rathfran was unusual in having a second cloister, an arrangement shown on a grander scale at, e.g., Avila in Spain. The Board of Works carried out extensive repairs there in 1929–30. See Edward MacHale, 'Rathfran Dominican priory', in *Western People* (1 June 1978). An early plan of Coleraine (1611) also shows a square walled space parallel to but smaller than the cloister-garth: see T.H. Mullin, *Coleraine in by-gone centuries* (Belfast, 1976), p. 39.

side, which joined the church midway in the north wall of the chancel, stood the sacristy, from which a narrow passage, known as the 'slype', led to the chapter-room – all these on the ground floor. The second storey was devoted to the dormitory and a few private cells which the more privileged members of the community were permitted to occupy. The prior's room was placed over the sacristy, and this arrangement can still be seen in Sligo and in Kilmallock. In the larger houses, this eastern line of buildings was continued onwards beyond the point where it joined the north cloister, and terminated in a tower. This feature, too, has survived in Sligo, though in a very ruinous condition. It may have included an extension of the dormitory, but it was most probably the sanitary wing.

The western line of buildings was given over to guest-chambers and the quarters of the lay brothers. The entrance door was placed here with the porter's room adjoining on the end nearest the church. A door or window looking into the church enabled the occupant to assist at Mass while remaining on duty. Probably on the upper floor of this wing the library was placed, and, if studies were followed in the convent, the classrooms would be situated there, though the cloisters were frequently used as a sort of open-air study-hall or reading room. In this west wing, likewise, on the end near the refectory, the kitchen was located. Sometimes, too, an extension was run northwards, parallel to the corresponding feature on the east side.

A high wall surrounded the convent precincts, within which there lay, not only the church and conventual buildings, but also the cemetery, garden and orchard. The register of Athenry mentions the name of the benefactor – Donaldus O'Kelly – who 'built the wall between the monastery and the town': in other words, he enclosed in this way the portion of the convent grounds still remaining open after the town rampart had been run round it on the outside. That this surrounding wall was not easily surmountable would appear from the story of the attack on St Saviour's, Dublin, in 1380, of which more hereafter. This account describes the assailants as not attempting to scale the wall, but resorting to what was evidently the more feasible course of breaking down the door of the bridge chapel,[8] which apparently stood within and abutted on the monastery wall. Another interesting item comes to light in this story. When the intruders had penetrated through the chapel, they found themselves in the convent cemetery, and we thus gather that this lay on

8 The reference is to the bridge over the river Liffey.

the south side of the church in the space between it and the river. This is in accordance with the universal practice of those times. The cemetery was so placed because in popular belief the south was associated with light, grace, and sanctity, while the north, the abode of darkness and evil, was given over to the burial of suicides and unbaptised infants.

A great gate in the outer wall led by a covered passage to the door situated in the west wing. Entering there, we will undertake a tour of the various coventual buildings, beginning with the church. As was the case with all cathedral and collegiate churches, so in these of the Dominicans, this edifice comprised a chancel and a nave. A surprising feature (something quite contrary to what we might expect considering that the main purpose of the Order was to attract large congregations to listen to its preachers) was the great size of the chancel relatively to that of the nave, the former being usually about two-thirds the size of the latter. In Sligo, the chancel is fifty-eight feet in length, while the existing portion of the nave is only sixty-five feet. Since, however, the west end of the church has been destroyed, it is impossible to say what its original dimensions may have been. Judging by the existing lay-out, the nave did not probably exceed eighty feet in length. In Kilmallock, the chancel is two-thirds the length of the nave.[9]

The two divisions of the church were separated by a rood screen in stone, usually consisting of an arcade of three arches above which was fixed a platform in stone on timber – the *pulpitum* – from which the lessons of the divine office were chanted, the reader mounting for this purpose by a stairway which was placed on the chancel side of the screen.[10] Sligo still shows the remains of the screen, sufficient to enable an architect to reconstruct the whole on paper. Doors or panels of wood apparently filled the open spaces of the arches so as completely to shut off the chancel from the view of the faithful assembled in the nave, and the central door was opened only at the consecration in Holy Mass. Above this door was placed or hung a large crucifix and on either side an altar (one of these is still *in situ* at Lorrha)[11] at which Masses might be celebrated in sight of the congregation. Once a day, after compline, the community passed in procession from the chancel to the nave singing the

9 For Kilmallock there is a recent excellent study by Arlene Hogan, *Kilmallock Dominican Priory: an architectural perspective, 1291–1991* (Kilmallock, 1991). **10** Various lecterns (*pulpita*), some portable, were used, but the permanent, principal lectern stood in the middle of the choir. See W.R. Bonniwell, *A history of the Dominican liturgy* (New York, 1944), p. 120. **11** Photograph in Mould, p. 23.

Salve Regina – a function which appealed particularly to the people – and on the great occasions of solemnity, such as Easter and Christmas, there were grand processions which defiled from the chancel into the cloister, thence to the great west door of the church and through the nave back to the chancel.

Apart from these occasions, the public were excluded from all participation in the choir functions, and general chapters laid it down that the chancel was to be so enclosed that nobody could be seen from the nave entering or leaving choir. In continental churches, which were constructed on a scale far larger than was the case in Ireland, the community choir formed a sort of peninsula jutting into the nave, somewhat in the style of the *schola cantorum* in a Roman basilica, and women were forbidden to enter the adjoining space on either side. In the sixteenth century, all this was changed. The choir was moved from the chancel into the apse behind the high altar, and the liturgical functions were thenceforth conducted in full view of the congregation, while, ironically enough, the community were deprived of this spiritual amenity. This innovation does not seem to have been introduced into Irish Dominican churches, partly because of the fact that they were not provided with the apse, and partly because the destructive fury of the Reformation came too soon to permit of its introduction.

The high altar stood against the east wall of the church, and that of Sligo, which still exists in a good state of preservation, will probably give a good idea of what the appearance, structure and proportions of this feature were like. It is of huge dimensions – eleven feet nine inches in length, four feet four inches in breadth, and three feet three inches in height. The front is exquisitely carved, the face being divided into nine panels with cusped ogee heads and foliage decoration of the fifteenth century. The altar table is formed of five slabs, one of which is an insertion. The remaining four exhibit a cross and the inscription (*Johan me fieri fecit*), one word of which stands on each slab.[12] The cross is in a square frame thirteen and a half inches wide, both cross and frame being formed of two bands which interlace in the centre and at their meeting points. These points are surrounded with circles also interlaced, the whole forming five connected crosses.[13]

12 The missing slab is thought to have borne the surname of the 'Johan' in question.
13 Several detailed accounts of the church and priory in Sligo, with plans and photographs, have been published by the Office of Public Works; notably an undated one by R. Cochrane. The decorative use of stone in medieval churches has been studied by R. Moss, 'Permanent expressions of piety: the secular and the sacred in later medieval stone

Over the altar was the great east window, of which many examples remain, the most famous being those of Sligo and Kilmallock. During the Early English period of Gothic, which lasted in Ireland from the beginning of the thirteenth century until well into the fourteenth, this window consisted of a group of lancets combined under a single pointed arch widely splayed on the inside. In the fifteenth century, when many churches were reconstructed, the lancets were on occasion replaced by a single large decorated or perpendicular window, with chamfered mullions and jambs, and having the head filled with beautiful reticulated tracery. Sligo, Cashel and Kilmallock are splendid instances of this style, but the Black Abbey in Kilkenny, one of the few medieval churches still remaining in Catholic hands, surpassed them all in the grandeur of this feature.

The change from the lancet to the large decorated window may have been introduced in order to allow more scope to the stained-glass artists whose work forms such a feature in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century churches in England and the continent.[14] We find instances, too, of its employment in Ireland. Bishop Ledrede of Ossory (1318–60), the hero of the notorious Kilkenny witchcraft case, introduced stained glass into the cathedral there,[15] and on the reconstruction of the Franciscan friary of Ennis in 1305 the church was presented with a set of blue painted windows.[16] We have no direct evidence pointing to the use of stained glass in Dominican churches, but it is impossible to doubt that it was employed. In the register of Athenry it is stated that Edmund Lynch (†1462), *venerabilis et notae famae burgensis de Galuy*, in addition to his other princely benefactions to the abbey, constructed, at his own expense, a mural altar on the north side opposite (in front of) the columns and had its windows sculptured and glazed. No definite conclusion can be drawn from this as

scupture', in R. Moss, C. Ó Clabaigh and S. Ryan (eds), *Art and devotion in late medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), pp 72–97. The author refers to Dominican examples at Athenry, Sligo and Strade, as also to the wooden statues of Kilcorban, supplying valuable bibliographical references to her subject. **14** The use of 'large decorated windows' had to wait until the art of building advanced sufficiently to make them structurally feasible. **15** 'He furnished all the windows of the entire church of St Canice with stained glass'. Carrigan, *Diocese of Ossory*, i, p. 57; M.J. Buckley, 'The ancient stained glass of St Canice's cathedral, Kilkenny', in *RSAI Jn.*, xxii (1896), pp 240–4. **16** From *The Triumphs of Turlough*, cited by A. Hogan, *Kilmallock Dominican priory*, pp 47–8, with other evidence for the use of stained glass at Kilkenny (cathedral), Donegal and Kilconnell (Franciscans), and Youghal (collegiate chapel). Plain glass, perhaps simply painted, and even parchment were also used for glazing. There is a recent overview of the subject by J. Moran, 'The shattered image: archaeological evidence for painted and stained glass in medieval Ireland', in R. Moss et al. (eds), *Art and devotion in late medieval Ireland*, pp 121–41. A large number of painted glass fragments were found in 1994 on the site of the Dominican priory in

to whether the glazing was plain or stained, though one may suspect the latter as being more in keeping with the general spirit of the benefaction. Not much doubt, however, can be entertained in the case of Johanna Wyffler, wife of David Wyffler (†1408), who expended 100 marks on the glazing of the great window over the high altar as well as the windows of the choir. The cost of the work, which would amount to something like £4,000 in present-day currency,[17] points unmistakably to the use of stained glass. Similarly, when we find it stated that Kenelbreck Sherman (†1351), sometime mayor of Dublin, glazed the great east window of St Saviour's, we are to understand the entry in a like sense.[18] When Maurice Doncref (†1361) gave £40 (£2,400 in our money) towards a similar object, we are forced to draw a similar conclusion.[19]

Linerick. Op. cit., p. 12. **17** That is, in 1950. **18** Archdall, *Monasticon*, pp 207–8, from the *Annals of Pembridge*, p. 391. **19** 'To glaze the church' at Dublin: *Annals of Pembridge*, p. 395.

CHAPTER 15

Church Building and Decoration: from Poverty to Wealth

In the earliest extant redaction of the constitutions of the Friars Preachers, those, namely, which were passed into law under the presidency of Blessed Jordan in the general chapter of 1228, we find various provisions inscribed designed to exclude all extravagance in the architecture of the churches and convents of the Order. The most rigorous functionalism was to govern the structure and design of both types of edifice. The church was to be, for all practical purposes, simply a large bare hall adapted for the accommodation of the congregations who might come to listen to the sermons of the friars. The convent buildings were to wear an even more emphatic air of austerity and unpretentiousness.

That this legislation was not suffered to become a dead letter during the half-century that followed its enactment is proved by the vigorous measures employed to secure its enforcement from time to time. As an instance of this we may note that at the general chapter held at London in 1250, the provincial of England was severely penanced because of his indulging in over-exuberant notions in this regard. He was sentenced to five days on bread and water, five recitations of the entire psalter and five public disciplines. He was then, rather unnecessarily one might imagine, warned not to do it again.[1]

At the chapter of Barcelona held in 1261 under the presidency of the great master general, Humbert of Romans, the dormitory of the convent there was demolished by his Order in punishment for the failure to observe, in its construction, the principles laid down in 1228. In addition, the prior and his councillors had to endure a penance of thirteen days on bread and water.

Now, all experience goes to show the extreme difficulty, if not indeed the impossibility, of enforcing sumptuary regulations over a lengthy period. It might, therefore, have been confidently anticipated that

1 B. Reichert, *Acta capitulorum generalium ord. praed.* (Rome, 1898), i, p. 54, cited by B. Jarrett, *The English Dominicans* (London, 1921), p. 23.

notwithstanding the sternly determined efforts employed to maintain the spirit of primitive austerity, the contrary tendency would inevitably show itself and eventually triumph. Even in the lifetime of St Dominic himself this development had already set in, since we read that on one occasion, returning to Bologna from a missionary journey, he burst into tears on beholding what he regarded as the over-sumptuous style of the buildings which had been erected in his absence, and in tones of sad reproachfulness, exclaimed: 'What! Could you not even wait for me to die before doing this?'

It will help towards an understanding of the factors that determined this process if we remember that the churches of the Order were being built precisely during the period when gothic architecture was developing those qualities of artistic beauty and soaring magnificence which make it, aesthetically, perhaps the most perfect product to which the genius of man has given birth. It was impossible to isolate the members of the new Order from this movement of architectural fashion. Many of them had been bred to a university career or had held high office in the church before entering the Order, and a certain proportion had come from the higher levels of society. All these were, naturally, particularly sensitive to those currents of thought and feeling set in motion by the gothic movement and were, besides, in a position to exercise a decisive influence on the ways of thought of the general body of the fraternity. It is, consequently, not a matter for wonder that, towards the end of the thirteenth century, the conservative element surrendered to the inevitable and all restrictions against sumptuousness in building were withdrawn.

A contributory factor in bringing this result about was, undoubtedly, the desire of noble founders to build in a style befitting their rank. An Irish king like Felim O'Connor, or a great Anglo-Norman magnate like William Marshall, would not consent to have his name identified with a foundation built in the poor and humble style favoured by St Dominic and those who thought with him. The burial of distinguished people in the churches, which became general from the end of the thirteenth century onwards, accelerated this tendency. Tombs, elaborately sculptured funeral monuments, memorial altars and chantry chapels, all expressing at once the piety of those who rested there as well as their desire that their ashes should repose amidst surroundings of splendour and magnificence, soon converted the plain Dominican church into a veritable art museum.

In the primitive period, this structure took the form of a simple rectangle, without aisles, transepts or tower, and the roof, except for the

portion surmounting the chancel, was not vaulted. In Ireland, it appears to have been covered with wooden shingles; in the more remote parts, indeed, the entire church might be constructed of this material, at least as a temporary measure, as we have seen in the case of Burrishoole. The wooden roof was later replaced in most instances, at least in the portion adjoining the tower, by a covering of tiles or stone flags, probably in the fifteenth century when so many of the churches were reconstructed and modernised. There were, however, cases where the old-style roof was persisted in up to the period of the suppression. In one instance, indeed, that of Mullingar, the *Extent* records that the church had a thatched roof.[2]

It is worthy of note that secular buildings, even castellated structures, of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were likewise furnished with shingled roofs. In the estate accounts of the earl of Norfolk, who held Carlow in right of his wife Matilda Marshall, it is stated that the great hall adjoining the castle was roofed in this fashion. It was constantly in need of repair, and the account roll records an instance of the issuing of 2,500 shingles in a single year for this purpose.[3] Notwithstanding the care thus shown, when, twenty years later, the earl's possessions reverted to the crown, the castle and hall were found so ruinous that no value could be assigned to them.

Wooden-roofed churches must likewise have fluctuated precariously between conditions of weather-proof stability, disrepair and ruin. St Magdalen's in Drogheda appears to have undergone a thorough renovation about 1496; at any rate, a record has been preserved in the register of Octavian, archbishop of Armagh, of a licence granted to Cornelius Gerald, prior of the convent at that time, to quest for funds throughout the archdiocese to help in the restoration of the church.[4] And yet, at the suppression, only forty years later, it was discovered that this structure and portion of the dormitory had fallen down through age.

The employment of the wooden roof and the frequent absence from it of grounded vaulting explains a feature of medieval Irish architecture which has often been commented on: namely, the rather sparing use of

2 *Extents*, p. 291. The roof, of course, may have been of wood or stone at an earlier period. The same source suggests that in 1540 there was only one window in the church at Mullingar. **3** J. Mills, 'Accounts of the earl of Norfolk's estates in Ireland, 1279–1294', in *RSAI Jn.*, 5th series (1892), pp 50–62. **4** M. A. Sughi, *Registrum Octaviani alias Liber Niger: the Register of Octavian de Palatio, archbishop of Armagh, 1478–1513* (Dublin, 1999), ii, pp 567–9. Prior Gerard, who had already spent a great deal on the repair of church and convent, providing books, lights, vestments, etc., was permitted to quest in the 'parts of Ulster', having already exhausted local support in Louth.

the buttress in churches of the period. In this it presents a striking contrast to English and French usage which employs this structure on a wholesale scale. Irish architects had no particular need for it since the outward thrust of the wooden roof was so comparatively feeble that it could be carried without difficulty by the wall structure without any lateral support.

The stonework of these structures is executed, generally speaking, in a rather poor and rude style of rubble masonry. In Urlar, the fifteenth-century church is of this character and stands in marked contrast to the domestic apartments which date from the time when Ross McGeoghegan established the noviciate house of the restored province there in the seventeenth century. These are constructed in fine ashlar masonry and are furnished with vaulted undercrofts. The windows and doorways are, in all cases, finished in cut stone so excellent and durable that they require only the requisite fittings in glass and timber to be put into use to-day.

Church interiors were probably finished in plain plaster, though little trace of this remains, and ornament appears to have been practically non-existent, if we except the finely sculptured mural tombs. At the general chapter held in London in 1250, at which the unlucky English provincial came to grief, it was ordained that ornament was not to be tolerated in funeral monuments that might be erected in the churches of the Order. But, as we have already seen, this prohibition soon became a dead letter.

When the conservative element finally gave way before the increasing volume of adverse opinion both within and outside the Order, various developments in the structure and ornamentation of churches set in. In Ireland, these uniformly embraced (1) a tower placed in the chancel immediately behind where the rood screen formerly stood; (2) an aisle on the south side (that is, on the side farthest from the cloisters) running from the west gable to meet (3), a transept which opened off the portion of the nave adjoining the choir and usually slightly westwards of the chancel arch. In this way the southern wall of the chancel remained in the clear and carried a number of narrow lancet windows.

We find mention of the construction of church towers from the mid-fourteenth century onwards. That of Athenry was raised as far as the church roof by Wyllyn Wallys (†1344) and was completed by James Lynch at a cost of 40 marks.[5] The tower of St Saviour's in Dublin was built by Kenelbreck Sherman in 1351. It cannot have been very solidly constructed since it was blown down in a violent tempest only ten years later.[6] That of

5 *Regestum de Athenry*, p. 206. 6 *Annals of Pembridge*, p. 395. These annals, written by a Dominican of Dublin, list Sherman's benefactions to the Order and his burial in 1351

the Black Abbey in Kilkenny, which is of huge proportions, was not built till 1507. There is an inscription on the base of the north side of the chancel arch asking prayers for the souls of James Schortals, lord of Ballylarkin and Ballykeeffe, and his wife Katherine Whyte, 'who gave the builders their daily wages from the beginning of the work to the end'.[7] The tomb of this pious couple still exists in St Canice's cathedral. The tower of Sligo was probably built on the reconstruction of the abbey after it had been damaged by fire in 1414.

In all these cases, the tower, which frequently filled the entire cross-section of the nave-chancel space, was built without disturbing the existing walls of the structure and it has thus the appearance of having been fitted into it like a piston in its cylinder. That of Sligo is supported on pointed arches resting on four piers of cut stone of rather exiguous dimensions. The arch on the chancel side is of immense span so as to allow a full view of the high altar when the centre door of the rood screen was thrown open. The upper part of the tower, which has a ribbed vault on its underside, is not of the same breadth as the span of the arch, with the result that the thrust of the side walls is carried on the haunches[8] – an arrangement which may suggest a pretty problem to the professional architect.

Practically all Dominican church towers of the period are broad in proportion to their height, offering thereby a marked contrast to the usage of the Franciscans whose towers are usually slender and lofty. The one Dominican building that carries a tower of this latter description is Kilmallock. It was struck by lightning a century ago and cloven in two from top to bottom, so that from one aspect it appears to be in a state of perfect preservation whilst the opposite view discloses it as a sadly defaced ruin.

This tower must be unique amongst its kind from the method employed in its construction. It rests on arches based on two parallel walls spaced about sixteen feet apart and running right across the church at the junction of the nave and chancel. Each of these walls is pierced in the centre by an arch only seven feet wide and twenty-two feet high – really

under the belfry he had built (p. 391). The annals do not state that the tower was built in 1351, but imply its erection after 1316 when the entire structure was levelled. The same storm of 1361, mentioned also in the *Book of Howth*, brought down several church towers in the Dublin area. **7** According to Leask, this is 'the most perfect of all the surviving square-plan towers in the country'. See *Irish churches and monastic buildings*, iii, p. 54. The inscription is supplied by Carrigan, *Diocese of Ossory*, iii, p. 181, with the Shortall funerary inscription on p. 152. **8** Haunch: the lower part of an arch, that takes the thrust.

rather an exceptionally elongated doorway than an arch. A window in the north wall of the nave is partly blocked by one of the parallel walls and on the opposite side there is a similar feature where the lateral supporting arch of the tower adjoins the transept. This proves that the tower with its abutments was fitted into the previously existing church. At the corner near the right side of the arch which pierces the outer parallel wall, there is a beautifully moulded aumbry probably intended for use in connection with an altar which once stood there and at which Mass was said for the body of the faithful who were cut off from sight of the high altar because of the narrowness of the chancel arch.[9]

The tower of Burrishoole deserves a passing mention because of its extraordinary configuration. It fills the entire breadth of the nave-chancel area, that is, twenty feet, but measures only thirteen and a half feet from back to front. The rectangular appearance thus created makes it appear like the upper story of a dwelling house raised amidships above the church.

It has been stated that the transept of a medieval church usually joins the nave slightly to the west of the tower. Kilmallock is a notable exception to this rule. There the transept extends southward directly from the side of the tower and an arched doorway underneath connects one with the other. A similar doorway on the opposite side leads to the domestic apartments. With the two chancel arches in the parallel walls in addition to these apertures, the tower has the appearance of a great structure standing on four legs.

The nave at Kilmallock was separated from the transept and the aisle, and these from each other, by great pointed arches which probably formed the most decorative feature of the interior. In Limerick they appear to have rested on marble columns, since we find it stated that Martin Arthur built a splendid peristyle of marble in the church there, and since the description seems to rule out an external colonnade, we must conclude that it refers to the arches of the aisle and the transept which would form a sort of rectangular peristyle.[10]

The transept was usually very large in proportion to the nave. In Kilkenny it actually exceeded it in length. Its principal function was to provide space for the erection of side-altars and chantry chapels to meet the increasing demand of the faithful for the celebration of perpetual

9 For the most recent study of Kilmallock, see A. Hogan, *Kilmallock Dominican Priory: an architectural perspective, 1291–1991* (Kilmallock, 1991). **10** Mentioned by M. Lenihan, *Limerick: its history and antiquities* (Dublin, 1866), p. 648, citing the Arthur MSS. Peristyle: a range of columns surrounding a building or an open court.

obits[11] which set in from the fourteenth century onwards. These altars were built against the east wall of the transept or in small chapels which formed bays in the edifice. In Sligo, two were placed in this position which were lighted by two large recessed windows. An aumbry and a piscina exist in the wall space between them and there is a second piscina in the south-east corner. The fact that the aumbry, in which the Blessed Sacrament was reserved, was placed in the transept, is interesting from the liturgical standpoint. A fine decorated window occupied the south wall of the transept, comparable in magnificence with that in the east gable of the chancel.

The transept of Kilmallock church is justly famous for its magnificent south window done in the very perfection of reticulated tracery. The employment of this form of ornament proves that the window was constructed, or at least fitted with this tracery in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, at which period the Decorated form of Gothic prevailed in Ireland. It stands in striking contrast to the beautiful east window in the gable of the chancel which has five lancet lights grouped under a common arched moulding. Since lancet windows form a typical feature of the Early English style which was fashionable in this country during the thirteenth century and well into the fourteenth, we have here a telling proof of the fact that the transept is of later date than the chancel.

It may be well to note that discretion must be used in the ascription of a particular feature in those buildings to a definite date. A church originally built, say in the thirteenth century, might at a later date undergo a radical process of repair and modernisation and thereby give the impression to the unwary student that the entire construction belongs to this later period. We have an instance of this in the case of Sligo. The church and convent were badly damaged, but not destroyed, by fire in 1414. Two years later the work of reconstruction began.[12] How is it possible today to draw a dividing line between what was old and what was new in 1416?

Well, we can rest assured that the eight slender lancet windows in the south wall of the chancel belong to the thirteenth century and that this portion of the church, consequently, escaped destruction in the fire. What, then, are we to make of the fine four-light east window with its head of

11 Anniversary Masses said in perpetuity for benefactors deceased. **12** Since so much remains of the abbey in Sligo, though 'burnt' several times down the years, such incidents may have been less serious than one would think from reading the ancient *Annals*. Since the abbey stood outside the town, it may occasionally have been spared when Sligo itself

grandly carved reticulated tracery? This must date from the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, the period when Decorated Gothic was in fashion in Ireland. The expert is, however, in a position to point out that this window has replaced an earlier one which consisted of a group of three lancets similar to those in the south wall. We are thereby left to infer that the original window was either completely destroyed or so badly damaged in the fire as to render its replacement imperative. Or this may have been done simply from a desire to keep in step with the latest fashion.

The Black Abbey in Kilkenny, still actively functioning as a Dominican church, on its restoration to the Order towards the end of the eighteenth century, was badly manhandled by the then prior, Friar Michael V. Meade.[13] He demolished the chancel and built the new priory on the site. The transept became thereby the main portion of the church and so it remains today. Its glorious south window surpasses in grandeur that of Kilmallock – in fact the only such structure of comparable proportions in the country is the wonderful east window of Ardfert cathedral which fills the entire wall. Even in decay, this inspires the spectator with something of the speechless awe which one feels at sight of the apse of Milan cathedral.

It may be mentioned that when the Black Abbey was being restored, the interior was found filled with rubbish to a depth of several feet. When this was cleared away and the original floor laid bare it was found finished with a covering of encaustic tiles. One would like to know whether this was a normal feature of our other medieval churches.[14] We may call attention, also, to the fact that in some churches the transept was furnished with an aisle on its west side, a colonnade of arches separating the spaces. This feature is clearly identifiable in Kilmallock, and in the Black Abbey it stands perfectly preserved and is still in use today.

was torched. **13** The Dominicans rented the Black Abbey from about 1776, but it was too ruinous for use as a chapel; besides, the bishop would not permit its reopening. Successive Dominicans survived there by working as curates. See H. Fenning, *The Black Abbey: the Kilkenny Dominicans, 1225–1996* (Kilkenny, 1996), pp 26–9. **14** At the Dominican priory in Drogheda, archaeologists have found roof-tiles, floor-tiles and even a medieval tile kiln nearby from which they apparently came. See Archaeological Services Ltd, *Report on archaeological excavation at the Dominican priory, Drogheda* (privately issued, 1991), p. 23; also H.G. Tempest, 'Tiles from old Dominican friary, Drogheda', in *Louth Arch. Soc. Jn.*, xii, no. 2 (1950), pp 182–3. Some floor tiles have also been found at Dominican sites in Kilkenny, Limerick and Dublin. Usually tiles are associated with cathedrals, wealthy parish churches, and abbeys, not with friars. To date, tiles have been uncovered at only one Franciscan house (Waterford), and not at all on Augustinian or Carmelite premises. Were Dominicans then more wealthy than other mendicants? See E.S. Eames and T. Fanning, *Irish medieval tiles* (RIA, Dublin, 1988), pp 64, 70, 76.

In Athenry, the transept appears to have served as the Lady Chapel. It was built by Mac an Wallayd de Bermingham as far as the bases of the windows and completed by Wyllyn Wallys. Walter Brayneoc built an altar in the chapel 'beside the columns on the north side', that is, presumably, against the east wall near the corner between it and the nave. This seems to have been the same altar which was repaired by Edmund Lynch and had its windows sculptured and glazed. The Lady Chapel appears to have been the special object of the piety of the citizens of Athenry. Nicholas O'Kernie and his wife Sonota Fatyth (Fahy or Fuyt = White?) adorned its altar and panelled the ceiling.[15]

One of the most remarkable entries in the abbey register records that William Buttiler and his wife Agnes Bonater presented the chapel with a painting (*tabulam bene depictam et deauratam*) which they procured from Flanders.[16] It represented the 'history' of the death and burial (*sic*) of the Blessed Virgin by the apostles, and cost forty marks. From the description we may surmise that it was a triptych and one wonders if it still exists and, if so, where. Radulf Haletun built another altar in the Lady Chapel,[17] and the more modest gift of one in wood contributed by John Blak has not been forgotten by the chronicler.[18] One is left wondering as to the exact nature of the *bonum speculum*[19] which his son William bestowed towards the ornamentation of his parents' tomb.

15 *Regestum de Athenry,* pp 206, 208–9, 211. **16** The surname Bonater occurs elsewhere in the edition of the *Regestum* as 'Bananter', 'Bonanter' and 'Bovanter'. **17** *Regestum de Athenry,* p. 213. The text reads 'altar', not 'another altar'. **18** *Regestum de Athenry,* p. 208. **19** Literally a mirror, of glass or polished metal.

CHAPTER 16

Church and Convent: Furnishings

It is a matter of some notoriety that Dominicans have, from the beginning, manifested a reluctance for certain forms of publicity, preferring to have their wares under the counter rather than display them in the showcase. They have, for instance, consistently neglected to propagate devotion to the great saints of the Order, beginning with their founder, and, apart from the endless ponderous commentaries on the *Summa* of St Thomas, it must be admitted that the work of exploiting the enormous theological riches bequeathed by him has, to a great extent, been done with more zeal and efficiency by writers from outside than by the brethren themselves.

It is, therefore, a cause for some satisfaction that, from the scanty records which survive, evidence can be gathered to show that the Irish Dominicans were not lacking in the noble virtue of *pietas* and that they did labour to spread amongst the people devotion to the saints of the Order. St Peter Martyr appears to have been the object of a widely diffused cult which had its centre at Lorrha, this house being dedicated to him, and several miracles attributed to his intercession there and in adjoining areas have been recorded in the *Acta Sanctorum*.[1] The foreign compiler of the narratives was not able to make much of a hand of the Gaelic place names and usually omits them altogether, contenting himself with vague references to the dioceses in which the various incidents occurred.

One of these is placed in the mythical diocese of *Eloriensis*, and the Bollandist editor suggests in a footnote that Ossory was the place intended, but it is obviously Lorrha, which has been promoted to diocesan dignity for the occasion. The incident in question concerns a man named Elias, who, suffering excruciating pain from an ulcer in his leg, was cured

1 St Peter of Verona (†1252); feastday 29 April. Bollandists, *Acta sanctorum Boll. Aprilis III* (Venice, 1738), pp 717–18. The medieval text may be found in any other edition under 29 April. Lorrha, Co. Tipperary, is in the diocese of Killaloe (*Laonensis*). The priory at Athy, founded in 1253, was also dedicated to St Peter Martyr. This appears from a petition submitted to the pope in 1468. See ASV, Reg. Suppl. 628, ff 139r–140r. Research of Fr T. Kaepelli.

on being bathed in water which had been blessed with a relic of the saint. The people of the town were thrown into such a state of excitement by the miracle that they insisted on going in procession with the clergy to the church to chant the *Te Deum*.

A certain noble lady named Illicia, who had 'lost the use of her tongue' and other members and lay in a death-like trance for so long a time that her relatives had begun to make preparations for her burial, was restored to health in similar fashion. A boy living in the diocese of Emly, whose body was swollen in a horrible manner, was instantly cured after he had drunk and been bathed in the blessed water. Another boy, named Henry, playing around the table of a certain nobleman, was suddenly seized with a strange illness. His tongue became swollen to an incredible degree and was severely bitten in a convulsive fit which seized him. The miraculous water which, with great difficulty, he managed to swallow, also effected a cure in his case.

The wife of Robert Palmer, agonising in the throes of a difficult birth, was instantly relieved by the same miraculous means. Three others, whose names are not given, were similarly restored, as were Christina, wife of Gilbert English, and Basilea, wife of John Epoes (Le Poer?). A lady named Everborga, living in Limerick, whose son had been cured by the miraculous water, kept a quantity in her home. The house was destroyed by fire but the water, with its container, escaped untouched.

At Athenry, altars were dedicated to the leading Dominican saints. The Lynch family had several members entombed beneath the altar of St Dominic, from which we may infer that they had erected it and founded a chantry there. Thomas Bovanter (†1413), a great benefactor of the monastery, was buried beneath the altar of St Peter Martyr.[2] The Lord Thomas de Bermingham and his wife, Anablina de Burgo, gave ten ounces (whether in gold or silver is not stated) towards the construction of the window of the altar which had been erected to the memory of Maurice O'Mochain Moral and dedicated to the two St Catherines of Alexandria and Siena.[3]

There is evidence that the founder of the Order figured in popular devotion in those times to a greater extent than is the case to-day. His feast-day seems to have formed a landmark in the calendar, as is curiously shown by an ordinance of the Dublin city council appointing this day as one of the four occasions in the year when all stray pigs should be cleared

2 *Regestum de Athenry*, p. 208. **3** Op. cit., pp 218–19.

off the streets. It was a most popular 'patron-day', and in some of the ruined abbeys of the west, which have long ceased to have any connection with the Order, the people still keep up this celebration.[4]

The most remarkable testimony, however, to the prestige enjoyed by St Dominic in this country is found in a poem from the Franciscan, Philip Bocht Ó Huigín (†1487). The poet, a member of the famous bardic family whose name he bore, though employing the method of the court panegyrists of the period, avoids the flamboyant absurdities in which they revelled, and writes in a style of comparatively sober realism. He speaks of Dominic's renown as a teacher, of his pre-eminence in the school of holy scripture, of his love of poverty and humility, of his all-devouring zeal in the cause of his Divine Master. He quotes the legend which ascribes to the intervention of the Blessed Virgin, in the role of Mediatrix with her Son, the foundation of the two great mendicant orders. When Our Lord was ready to unleash his wrath on the wicked race of mankind, she averted the threat by presenting to Him her two servants, Francis and Dominic, as the chosen instruments of its conversion. The two blessed ones were equal in mildness of heart, in obedience, in the spirit of penance, and in mercy, too, they emulated each other because they refused nought to any man. Sad it is to behold the evil discords which have divided their spiritual children and made them forget the love which united the holy Founders. Some of the traditional miracles of St Dominic are described – his book unscathed by the fire – his cloak remaining dry in the midst of a rain storm – the blind man who recovered his sight while praying at his tomb. He surpassed all in the observance of his austere rule; he is the choice one of the Poor Orders. His preaching bore fruit in the saving of many souls to the discomfiture of hell's angels. In many a land his seed took root, many a heart he taught to reflect, and not fewer were the tears shed as his lips unravelled the scriptures. If he stand by his client (the writer) at death, this child (Dominic) for whom blazed the star, he will loosen the fetters of Christ's wrath, and he will do so since his charity on earth is earnest of his generosity in heaven.[5]

We will now resume our progress, passing through a doorway in the north wall of the chancel which will admit us to the sacristy and the

4 St Dominic's feastday, celebrated for centuries on 4 August, now falls on 8 August.
5 L. McKenna, 'A Franciscan to St Dominic', in *Irish Monthly* (Aug. 1929), pp 435–9. The poet died in 1487. The author might also have mentioned the carved stone doorway of Dean Odo in the cathedral of Clonmacnois (*c.*1460); it depicts SS Francis and Dominic, one on either side of St Patrick. See Mould, *The Irish Dominicans*, p. 66.

vestry. These apartments formed a link between the church and the eastern line of the cloisters, the chapter room and, above, the dormitory. In the sacristy were stored the various articles required for the service of the altar – chalices, pyxes, vestments, service books, statues and reliquaries. During the austere primitive period, poverty and simplicity were the keynotes here as everywhere else. Gold and precious stones were interdicted, silk vestments were forbidden, and statues absolutely ruled out. This phase did not last long however; silk, for example, was permitted in 1240, but only for the cope which was worn in procession by the hebdomadarian.[6] Athenry possessed such a vestment. It was presented by David Wydyr (†1408), who left by will a 'choral' cope of silk and cloth of gold of the value of sixteen marks, and his wife, Joanna, presented a wooden chest in which it, as well as other vestments, might be kept.[7] By degrees, all restrictions on the use of precious materials for the service of the altar were removed, and it is significant that Humbert de Romans, the declared foe of anything like sumptuousness in the domestic buildings, held that, where the worship of God was concerned, the appointments should be splendid and ornate.[8]

If one is to judge by what the chronicler has recorded of Athenry, Irish Dominican sacristies possessed well replenished treasuries and vestment lockers. No part of the register of this abbey is more interesting than the section which records the gifts of sacred objects bequeathed by various pious benefactors, and a detailed account of them should prove instructive and, perhaps, not uninteresting.

Thomas Bovanter and his wife, Christina Lynch, presented the church with a chalice, a missal, two sets of vestments with finger-towels and corporals, and Christina, in addition, furnished candles for matins over a space of thirty years. Two or three *chelones*, that is, pieces of tortoiseshell or precious stones, also figured amongst the gifts of this pious couple.[9] John Black and his wife, Joanna Godsun, were equally good friends of the friars, contributing a chalice, a missal, two silk chasubles, and other vestments for the service of the altar which they had erected in the church. Their son William gave a precious cloth and two brass candlesticks, costing 16*s.*, as well as a holy water stoup which cost 6*s.* 8*d.*[10] Nicholas O'Kernie and his wife, Sonota Fatyth, presented a good silk chasuble, and Sonota gave, in addition, two brass candlesticks, a good missal, and a beautiful chalice.[11]

6 The friar appointed to preside at the divine office in choir for one week (*hebdomada*).
7 *Regestum de Athenry*, pp 207–8. **8** Humbert de Romans, master general, 1254–63.
9 *Regestum de Athenry*, p. 208. **10** Op. cit., p. 208. **11** Op. cit., pp 208–9.

One is forced to notice a certain lack of originality in the bestowing of these various gifts. They appear to follow a prescribed formula and were possibly donated in each case for use at a designated altar which fulfilled the purposes of a chantry. This suggestion would not, however, apply to the gift of Adam Crynan, who paid for the writing of a missal, the price of which is unfortunately not stated.[12] We are reminded by this item that the Dominicans, unlike the older monastic orders, did not maintain *scriptoria* in their convents, but had the work done by extern professional scribes.

John Reed and his wife, Catylyne Brayneoc, added to the sacristan's treasury a good silk chasuble, a crucifix, and statues of the Blessed Virgin and St John, the whole costing 30 marks.[13] Walter Blake gave two brass candlesticks.[14] The chalice presented by Margareta Ballach Lynch aroused the chronicler's warm admiration – it was, according to him, a most beautiful affair.[15] William Lynch gave a crucifix and a statue of St Dominic costing a hundred shillings.[16] We recall that the tomb of this family was placed under the altar of the saint, and may thus infer that these gifts, as well as the chalice, missal and two sets of vestments presented by the said William, were intended for its service.

Walter Fanyn presented a statue of Our Lady, which was placed over the stone tomb between the two altars in her chapel. It cost 41 marks (£180 in our money) and thus merited the chronicler's encomiastic description: *bonum jocale*.[17] Wyllyc Lynet emulated Adam Cryan by paying for the writing of another missal.[18] Joanna, daughter of Gibbon O'Kelly, was a noted benefactress of several of the religious houses in Connacht and showed a certain independence of mind in departing from the beaten track in her choice of gifts to Athenry. She gave a gold pyx and a new gradual, and the grateful community granted her in return a perpetual participation in the Mass of Our Lady, which was said daily at the high altar.[19] Edmund Lynch, the good and pious citizen of Galway – *venerabilis et bonae famae* – surpassed all benefactors of Athenry in the number and richness of his gifts. He gave two gold chalices with their patens, a missal, and a *Pontificale* costing 6 marks.[20] Vestments presented by him were of unusually rich texture and design. He gave two sets, each consisting of a

12 Op. cit., p. 211. **13** Op. cit., pp 209–10. The text does not specify 'statues', but '*imagines*'. **14** Op. cit., p. 208. **15** Op. cit., p. 210. **16** Op. cit., p. 210. **17** *Regestum de Athenry*, pp 210–11. *Jocale*: a jewel or precious object. **18** Op. cit., p. 211. **19** Op. cit., p. 211. Gradual: a liturgical book for sung antiphons. **20** Op. cit., p. 211. *Pontificale*: the liturgical book containing the prayers and ceremonies for rites restricted to bishops. First

cope, chasuble, tunic, stole, maniple, alb and amice. One was of variegated colours – red, yellow, green, white, azure and black – *quod visui intuentium est delectabile*[21] – and cost 16 marks of pure gold (about £600 in 1950). The other was azure, with foliage and flowers in silver.

In contrast with this munificence we have the small but interesting gift of Elys Bonanter – an antiphonary which cost two marks.[22] Thomas de Bermingham, lord of Athenry and his wife Anablina de Burgo gave 40 marks to the community for the purchase of vestments in red silk, viz., a cope, a chasuble, and two tunics.[23] The sum mentioned (about £1,500 in our money) is impossibly large, even though the gifts are described as *nobilissima*, and the entry is either erroneous or intended as a piece of crude flattery to the family of the founder of the abbey. A more interesting gift from the same source was one of 3 marks of pure silver for the repair of the organ, and one wonders if this work was done by John Lawless, organ-builder of Kilkenny, who flourished about that time.[24]

The Lord Thomas granted, in addition, a tenement held by Roger Worloc at the modest rent of a shilling a year, to provide candles for matins, an item which reminds us that the notorious village of Ballykilner[25] was so called in consequence of its having been assigned for a similar purpose by John de Courcy to the canons of Christ Church in Dublin. John Reed and his wife showed an equally practical turn of mind in donating 20*s.* to provide flour for making hosts for Mass.[26] We find a similar provision noted in the municipal records of Kilkenny. In 1353 the city council there assigned the rent of two houses to the Black Abbey to furnish bread and wine for Mass. In 1376 we read, sentence of excommunication was pronounced against Philip Leget for neglecting to supply these materials as he was bound to do, in a certain 'cause testamentary' tried before the archdeacon of Ossory, Robert de Tunbrigge. In 1394,

printed at Rome, 1485. **21** 'Which is delightful to the eyes of the beholders.' **22** *Regestum de Athenry*, p. 211. **23** Op. cit., p. 218. **24** Op. cit., p. 218. W.H. Grattan Flood, 'Irish organ-builders from the eighth to the close of the eighteenth century', in *RSAI Jn.*, series v, vol. xx (1910), pp 229–34. By 1450 there were organs in both the Dublin cathedrals and at Limerick. In 1476, when John Lawless, an Irish organ-builder, settled in Kilkenny, he was given many privileges by the corporation. Art. cit, p. 231. At that time, the keys of the console were so large – six inches wide – that they had to be struck with the clenched fist! Nor were there any pedals. An upper keyboard supplied the semi-tones. Hence the expression 'a pair of organs'. By 1485 there were fine organs both at St Thomas' Abbey and Kilmainham priory, Dublin, but not so far as is known in churches of the mendicant friars, save for that at Athenry. **25** *Regestum de Athenry*, p. 219. Ballykilner, near Downpatrick, Co. Down, was 'notorious' in 1950 because of a retention centre there. **26** Op. cit., p. 210. The text here, '*ferramentum hostiarum*', seems rather to mean a hot iron for making hosts.

Thomas Holbeyn and others granted a tenement near the cemetery of the church of the Blessed Virgin to supply the Friars Preachers with bread and wine for Mass.[27]

Two ancient Dominican chalices of the fifteenth century are still in existence, but neither of them pertained to the rich treasury of Athenry. The famous de Burgo chalice appears to have belonged to Burrishoole. The story of its discovery in the home of the Dowling family in Tullamore and of the devious ways by which it finally reached harbour in the National Museum is known to all students of Irish antiquities. The museum in Maynooth College has in its possession another Dominican chalice dating from the fifteenth century. It carries inscribed the name: '*Magister Hubuertus Ua Conchabhair O.P., Conventus Roscommonensis*', but our obituary lists carry no reference to this personage.[28]

In Sligo, as well as in Kilmallock, a ruined stone stairway leads from the sacristy to an upper apartment. We may take it that this was a usual feature in every monastic establishment and that it was employed as a living room. It was probably allotted to one of the officials of the community or even possibly to the prior, who, from this vantage-point, might exercise supervision over the adjoining dormitory.

In Kilmallock, a small dark chamber beside this apartment presents some features of interest which suggest certain surmises regarding the use to which it was put. It is furnished with a spout-like orifice leading into the open, which apparently served the purposes of drainage. A squint running through the immense thickness of the church wall which forms the south side of the chamber gives a direct view of the high altar. Those two facts go to show that the place was intended to be occupied by someone who was immured therein over an indefinite period of time, that it was, in fact, either the convent prison or an anker-hold. From its situation it would appear that the latter is the more probable opinion.

The recluse or anchorite (from 'anker' in middle English) was a regular feature in all medieval monasteries, including those of the Friars Preachers.

27 The writer took these three events in Kilkenny from O'Heyne, *Appendix*, p. 27. Coleman, editor of O'Heyne, refers simply to the archives of the Corporation, with which he was familiar. **28** Both chalices are described by J.J. Buckley, *Some Irish altar plate* (Dublin, 1943), pp 14–18, 214. He also supplies a detailed account of the 'devious ways' by which the de Burgo – O'Malley chalice of 1494 came to the National Museum. The second, Roscommon, chalice bears no date; it was unfortunately stolen from the Maynooth museum, with thirty-five other chalices, in 1980. The full inscription, in English translation, reads: 'A portable chalice of the Dominican priory of Roscommon, which Hubert O'Conchobair, master of theology of the same order, caused to be made.' No other reference whatever to Friar Hubert O'Connor has yet been found. See L. Taheny, *The*

No reference to this institution occurs in our Irish records, but English Dominican history furnishes instances thereof. Thus, a bull of Boniface IX, dated 1402, grants to John Bourne OP, who, with licence from his superior, had himself enclosed in a cell in the house of his order at Arundel, permission to transfer himself to another house of the same or other order with his clothes, books and other things conferred upon him as alms, and to remain there under like enclosure perpetually.[29] From the Suppression returns, we learn that at Blackfriars, Oxford, there was an anker in addition to the surprisingly small community of ten, while in Blackfriars, Worcester, there was actually an ankress, who naturally lived in an anker-hold placed without the convent precincts.[30] We are reminded here of the cases of Honoria de Burgo and Honoria Magaen, the martyrs of Burrishoole.[31] They probably lived a life analagous to that of the ankress of Worcester.

Is it not simple and natural to infer from these facts that the dark cubby hole in Kilmallock was the scene of the heroic penitential life of some medieval friar who won his way to heaven by this hard and toilsome way?

Dominicans of Roscommon (Tallaght, 1990), p. 7. **29** *Cal. papal letters*, v, p. 470. **30** B. Jarrett, *The English Dominicans* (London, 1921), pp 12, 26–7, 51, 168, 211. The English 'ankar-house', for man or woman, was a small tower or 'pyler' within the cemetery precinct of the friary. For details on all English friaries of the Order see D. Knowles and R.N. Hadcock, *Medieval religious houses: England and Wales* (Bristol, 1971), pp 213–20. **31** Lay Dominicans of the Third Order who died of exposure near Burrishoole, 1653.

CHAPTER 17

The Domestic Apartments

Having examined in some detail the architectural features and the furnishings of the church and sacristy, it now remains to devote ourselves to the conventual buildings though, as has been previously explained, in consequence of the largely general disappearance of those structures from the surviving ruins, this study must be of a nature cursory and brief.

A door in the north wall of the chancel underneath the tower will admit us to the cloister and, fortunately for the purposes of our study, that of Sligo still exists in a good state of preservation. The east side of the cloister is complete, the north and south practically so, and only the west is missing. The garth, which measures fifty feet by forty-two, is surrounded by an ambulatory over six feet in breadth, having in front an arcade of double-shafted pillars and plain chamfered arches, with a vaulted ceiling which originally supported the domestic apartments. The pillars are sculptured in diverse patterns, some being fluted, some diapered,[1] others panelled, while others again are twisted. A buttress in the centre of each side served not only for support but for ornament as well, being splendidly designed and executed. The entire work is of incomparable beauty and never fails to arouse the admiration of the beholder. Gabriel Béranger, in his *Tour through Connaught in 1779*, dwells with particular pleasure on the excellent workmanship of the arches and pillars.[2]

The cloister was invariably the finest architectural feature in a medieval abbey. The garth was planted with shrubs and flowers and the inner wall of the ambulatory was frequently used for funeral monuments erected in honour of those buried beneath the floor, whence it is usually referred to as the 'cloister of the dead'. In the great continental monasteries, this wall was covered with frescoes and inscriptions, but it is doubtful whether Irish houses ever succeeded in rising to those heights. The constitutions of the Order interdicted it to women, for the good reason that it gave direct access to the private apartments of the community.

1 Diapered: with small squares or lozenges applied as an overall pattern. 2 A book since greatly expanded by P. Harbison, *'Our treasure of antiquities': Beranger and Bigari's antiquarian sketching tour of Connacht in 1779* (Dublin, 2002), pp 39-41. This fine work refers also in

Privacy was desirable in the cloister for the additional reason that it was probably, at least in the smaller houses, the study hall and library of the community. In the larger houses, indeed, a special apartment on the first floor of the west wing was devoted to this purpose, if one may generalise from the exhaustive account of the convent of Langres as quoted by Mortier.[3] This may well have been the case in places like Dublin or Athenry, but such obscure convents as Mullingar, Arklow or Rosbercon, certainly, and the general run of Irish houses, probably, made use of the cloister for this purpose.[4] A cupboard or two placed against the south side, that is, the church wall, sufficed for the accommodation of the community's meagre store of books.

In the western range of buildings on the ground floor, beside the main entrance, the porter's room was situated, and in the same wing, probably, the guest hall and guest refectory or hospice. The laybrothers' quarters and, possibly, a guest dormitory, were located on the second storey. The porter occupied an important place in the economy of a medieval monastery, his duties approximating to those of a modern receptionist rather than those of a mere doorkeeper. All sorts and conditions of visitors, from royalty downwards, passed through his hands, and on him rested the onus of dispensing the nicely graduated scale of ceremonial hospitality which the community extended to its visitors.

Ordinary callers were not allowed to proceed further than the entrance hall or, in the larger convents, the visitors' cloister – a small courtyard or atrium placed just inside the entrance. There were no parlours, and interviews between members of the community and ordinary visitors took place in the bleak and discouraging environment of the draughty atrium, whose only furniture was a rude bench resting against the wall. More important visitors were conducted by the porter within the community cloister and introduced to the prior and community in the chapter-room. This apartment, as already stated, stood on the ground floor in the east wing, beside the sacristy. In Kilmallock, though the superstructure of this portion of the buildings has been destroyed, the

some detail to the Dominican abbeys of Athenry, Ballindoon, Burrishoole, Clonshanville, Tulsk and Roscommon. **3** Mortier, *Histoire des maîtres généraux*, i, pp 621–2; iii, pp 301–10. The library was not usually a place in which to read, but a small locked room containing a partitioned cupboard for books. Yet at Bologna the large and elegant library of the fifteenth century is still in daily use. **4** The friary of Mullingar was not quite so 'obscure'. In its heyday it had a community of forty friars, but by 1432 'only eight in priests' orders': *Cal. papal letters,* viii, p. 446. See H. Fenning, 'The Dominicans of Mullingar, 1237–1610', in *Ríocht na Midhe*, iii, no. 2 (1964), p. 109.

foundations remain of the walls which divided it into three portions, representing, probably, the chapter-room, a class-room, or, perhaps, the day-room or locutorium[5], and, in the north-east corner apparently, the community bakehouse. The chapter-room was employed, not merely for the purpose indicated by its name; it served besides as a reception room where the community met distinguished visitors, and the business affairs of the house were also transacted there.

As soon as the more ceremonious part of the reception was concluded, the visitor, if he intended to remain for a day or more, was conducted to the guest hall and served with a meal. This was furnished from the common kitchen, though again, in the larger and better furnished houses a special guest kitchen existed. In Kilmallock there seems to have been one of them; at any rate, two enormous fireplaces still remain on the ground floor of the well-preserved north wing, and one of them may well have belonged to the guest kitchen.[6] In Humbert's commentary on the Rule, it is laid down that meat should not be served even to guests.[7] It is, however, certain that the fare provided for them was of a kind superior to that which the friars themselves received, since Humbert, with rich humour, describes the unmortified religious hanging about the door of the guest house in the hope that an invitation to dinner there might come his way.

In the Middle Ages the religious houses fulfilled the function of the modern hotel, and travellers of every social grade sought accommodation in them on their journeys. The houses of the friars, since they were located in the towns and, therefore, placed on the great traffic routes, were particularly in demand for this purpose. Athenry, which lay on the main road between Athlone and Galway, must have been a welcome port of call for the many travellers who journeyed hither and thither on this highway. Drogheda too, situated as it was on the great north road, was availed of for this purpose and it is recorded that Richard II stayed there during his Irish expeditions and received in the church the homage of the northern chieftains.[8] Waterford and Dublin probably catered for cross-channel

5 A room in which it was permissible to speak; outside it, the general rule of silence was intended to prevail. **6** Most friaries had a 'calefactory', to which the brethren might go occasionally to warm themselves in severe weather. Such was the arrangement even for students at St Mary's, Tallaght, as late as the 1930s. **7** J.J. Berthier (ed.), *B. Humberti de Romanis opera de vita regulari* (Fribourg, 1888; repr. Turin, 1956), 2 vols. O'Sullivan seems not to have used the original text but to have cited it at second-hand from B. Jarrett, *The English Dominicans* (London, 1921). Jarrett gives a fuller and most interesting account of the lay-out of English convents and the daily round of life within them. **8** In 1394.

visitors. The Baron's Hall at Waterford, with its upper rooms, the Little Hall, with its kitchen and upper room, and the Great Hall, with its upper rooms, all of which are enumerated in the *Extent* of the house, are strikingly suggestive of an elaborate equipment designed for the hospitable entertainment of guests.[9]

A very amusing account has survived describing Sir Richard Edgecombe's stay in St Saviour's, Dublin, in 1488. He had been dispatched to Ireland by Henry VII on the conclusion of the ridiculous episode of the impostor Simnel's rebellion, to reconcile the Anglo-Irish noblemen who had been concerned in the rising.[10] The earl of Kildare was deeply implicated in the movement and Edgecombe was anxious to secure his submission. The lords deputy appear to have regularly made St Mary's Abbey their place of lodging when in Dublin, but since the abbot had been involved in the rebellion, Edgecombe, on this occasion, preferred St Saviour's. Kildare was in no hurry to meet Edgecombe and the latter had to cool his heels amongst the Dominicans for several days. The account of his stay with them makes piquant reading:

> The Mayor and substance of the city received him (Sir Richard) at the Black Fryers' Gate, at which Black Fryers the said Sir Richard was lodged ...
>
> *Item.* The said Sir Richard lay still at the Black Fryers abiding the coming of the Earl of Kildare and the other lords of Ireland.
>
> *Item.* Likewise the said Sir Richard lay still at the Black Fryers preparing the matters that he had to declare to the lords there; and the said *eighth* day the archbishop of Dublin came to the said Sir Richard to his lodgings ...
>
> The said Sir Richard lay still at the Black Fryers abiding the coming of the Earl of Kildare, and that day the Busshopp of Clocornen (Clogher) and the Treasurer of Ireland came and spake with the said Sir Richard in his lodgings ...
>
> *Item.* The said Sir Richard in like wise lay still within the said Black Fryers abiding the coming of the said Earl of Kildare ...

Richard II, on the same visit, also used the Dominican friary, Kilkenny. See E. Curtis, *Richard II in Ireland, 1394–95* (Oxford, 1927). **9** *Extents,* pp 351–2. This document expressly mentions 'the library', apparently as a separate room. **10** A.J. Otway-Ruthven, *A history of medieval Ireland* (London, 1968), pp 404–6. Lambert Simnel had presented himself as heir to the throne. The full text of Edgecombe's *Voyage* is in W. Harris, *Hibernica, or some ancient pieces relating to Ireland, part 1* (Dublin, 1770), pp 65–70.

> *Item.* The said Sir Richard in likewise lay still in the said Fryers abiding the coming of the said Earl of Kildare, to the great costs and charges of the same Sir Richard ...
>
> The said Sir Richard, at the desire of the said Earl, went to the monastery of St Thomas the Martyr where the Lords and Council were assembled.

The account goes on to describe the receiving into favour of the repentant rebels, very much to the relief of Edgecombe, we may be sure.

It is to be suspected that the harbouring of distinguished guests of this character did not greatly conduce to the maintenance of regular discipline and that the only people who had reason to derive any satisfaction from it were those medieval counterparts of the Bisto twins[11] described by Humbert. It may, however, be pointed out that the Irish houses of the Order fared better in this regard than those of England and the continent, which were forced to entertain on occasion, not merely a lone guest, but a king and queen with their numerous entourage, and, still worse from the point of view of those who held dear the upholding of the true values of the religious life, an entire session of parliament.

The community refectory was invariably located in the north wing, and the kitchen and storerooms occupied areas adjoining. In the greater convents the refectory was on the ground floor, running the entire length of the cloister, and was constructed on such grandiose lines that when, as frequently happened, an assembly of diocesan clergy or a session of parliament was held in the convent, it was chosen as the place of meeting.[12] In those larger convents, as a necessary consequence of the siting of the apartment on the ground floor, the upper storey was given up to the great dormitory. This is clearly indicated in the description of the convent of Langres, already referred to.

The great majority of the houses of *Hibernia Dominicana* were constructed on much more modest lines than those indicated above, and in them the refectory, with the kitchen, required far less space. In Kilmallock, as far as one can judge, these apartments occupied the ground floor and above them, approached by a ruinous stone stairway, is located what appears to have been the dormitory. In Sligo, the refectory, and

11 Young boys who featured in a commercial advertisement, savouring the smell of Bisto, a soup-powder. Humbert de Romans' comment on hungry friars is given in B. Jarrett, *The English Dominicans*, p. 34. **12** Larger meetings may have taken place, not in the convent but in the church or even in a separate hall within the priory precinct.

probably the kitchen as well, occupied the second storey. The reader's desk still exists there in a fine state of preservation. It stands in a bay which projects into the cloister and rests on a beautifully moulded bracket tapering to a point in a manner characteristic of fifteenth-century Irish Gothic. It is lighted by an oriel window and opens into the refectory by three small arches with hexagonal columns. It is popularly, but erroneously, believed to be an open-air pulpit, from which overflow congregations assembled in the cloister were addressed. We have only to recall the fact that entrance to that place was permitted to outsiders on a very restricted scale and that women were altogether excluded, to realise that this theory is wrong. Furthermore, the universal medieval custom was to address open-air sermons to the people, not in the cloister, but in the convent cemetery.[13]

The Sligo plan for the siting of the refectory and kitchen was, probably, followed generally in the smaller houses, not only of the Dominicans but of other orders as well. In the well-preserved Franciscan house of Muckross, near Killarney, for example, one can have ocular demonstration of the fact.[14]

In the refectory, meat was never served, and from the feast of the Holy Cross (14 September) to Easter, only Lenten fare was allowed. The one substantial meal of the day was taken after *none*[15] during fasting time, but during the remaining part of the year at midday. Novices, those in infirm health, and others who might have a personal dispensation, were permitted a morning refection, and Humbert in his Commentary takes pains to warn the novices not to over-indulge at this session lest they might spoil their appetite for dinner six or seven hours later.[16] The subprior had the important duty of seeing that the dinner bell was rung in time, and one learns, without surprise, from Humbert that some of the brethren, driven by the pangs of hunger, were accustomed to gather about the kitchen door, studying the sun's altitude and apostrophising the sacristan if he should happen to delay the bell for the Office which preceded dinner.

Two courses were usually served at the one meal, but the prior might add something extra on occasion. Then there was the pittance which

13 In Italy one may find open-air medieval pulpits half-way up the façade of a church, at its joining with a lateral wall. **14** Canice Mooney has written a magistral work in *RSAI Jn.* on Franciscan architecture. For the refectory at Muckross, see his 'Franciscan architecture in Ireland', in *RSAI Jn.*, lxxxvii, part 1 (1975), p. 23. While Mooney grants that the refectory is on the second storey, he suggests that originally it was on the ground floor. **15** The ninth hour of the divine office. Hence 'noon' in English. **16** Cited by B. Jarrett,

figures so largely in medieval religious records. This was a special dish presented by a benefactor to some individual member of the community. If this happened to be the prior, he might share it with all; if anybody else, only his fortunate neighbours at table benefited by this unexpected windfall. The pittance probably took the form mostly of a dessert of sweet or fruit, and was delivered at the convent door before or during dinner. Word was passed to the refectorian, who conducted the lucky one to his visitor, the gift was received with due thanks and brought to the refectory to be duly dealt with. On occasion the donor brought his gift personally there and enjoyed the satisfaction of serving it with his own hands. The highest in the land esteemed it an honour to be allowed to do this service to the poor of Christ, and it is on record that St Louis of France particularly loved to indulge in this way the pious feelings of his amiable and generous heart.

The democratic spirit of the Order showed itself nowhere better than in the refectory. No distinction of persons was allowed there – even the master general himself shared in the common fare. Visitors were served first and the prior last, a custom which is still followed in every Dominican refectory.[17] When, at the present day, the community assembles for the evening meal, the hebdomadarian invokes a blessing on the drink of which the brethren are about to partake and makes no mention of food. In medieval times this formula had a literal application; the friars had nothing to eat after dinner and went to the refectory in the evening simply to drink. The function, in fact, served merely as a ceremonial introduction to compline, and was prefaced by the 'chapter' which is nowadays said in choir – *'Noctem quietam et finem perfectum'*.[18] After the community had sufficiently tantalised themselves with the liquid nourishment, they proceeded immediately to the church, where compline was sung and the day closed with the *Salve Regina*.

In the upper storey of the east wing the dormitory was uniformly situated, and, as we have seen, the first floor of the north wing was devoted to a like purpose, especially in the larger houses. Scarcely a trace of this feature survives in any of the extant ruined priories, and one is, in consequence, compelled to have recourse to evidence drawn from

The English Dominicans, p. 34. **17** This, in 2007, is no longer invariably the case, since meals are 'served' only in larger communities. The custom had the advantage that if there was not enough food for all, the officials of the house were the first to go hungry and could do something about it. **18** 'A quiet night and a perfect end.'

external sources, documentary or architectural, to learn the manner of its functioning in the conventual ensemble.

According to Humbert, the sleeping accommodation of the brethren might be planned in three different ways. There might be an open dormitory in which the straw pallets of the occupants were ranged almost side by side along either wall, with a passage down the middle. This is the arrangement which appears to be envisaged in an ordination decreed in the general chapters of 1239 and 1240, which laid down that no separation was to be permitted between the beds in the dormitory.[19] The novices, in particular, appear to have been condemned to use this arrangement, since Humbert takes care to warn them that the dormitory, for them, takes the place of a cell, that they should say their prayers kneeling beside their beds and were never to enter the community cells.[20]

From this last reference we gather that cells figured in the sleeping quarters of the convent from the beginning. This is, in fact, directly conveyed in statements contained in some early documents. In the charming story given in *The Lives of the Brethren*, describing the vision of St Dominic in which he beheld Our Lady passing through the dormitory of Santa Sabina sprinkling holy water on the sleeping brethren, it is stated that each one of these rested in a cell.[21] We are not to suppose, of course, that these apartments bore any resemblance to the living rooms (wrongly labelled 'cells') of a modern religious house. They took the form, rather, of the cubicles in a school dormitory, with open fronts and partitions reaching to the height of a man; they extended the same distance outwards from the dormitory wall, and the breadth between every two partitions was six feet. One can still observe in the dormitory of the Franciscan abbey of Muckross the marks on the floor showing where the cell partitions rested, and a visitor to Italy may see in the famous convent of San Marco in Florence a perfectly preserved suite of cells, the meagreness of whose proportions corresponds fairly well with the dimensions laid down in the thirteenth century.

The open cell naturally precluded all possibility of privacy and it was recognised from the beginning that certain officials whose duties necessitated some form of isolation from the community at large should be provided with more suitable accommodation. Permission was

19 B.M. Reichert (ed.), *Acta capitulorum generalium* (Rome, 1898), i, pp 12, 16. **20** J.J. Berthier (ed.), *B. Humberti de Romanis ... opera de vita regulari* (Rome, 1888–9), ii, p. 534. **21** P. Conway and B. Jarrett (eds), *Lives of the brethren of the Order of Preachers; 1206–1259* (London, 1955), p. 81. This early work was compiled by Gerard de Frachet between 1256

accordingly granted, though with a rather cautious niggardliness, to the master general, to the doctor lector in each convent, and to a small number of the intellectual élite, to have a closed chamber for their personal use. The utmost vigilance was employed to prevent any other members of the Order arrogating to themselves a like privilege. The prior of a house, and even a provincial, do not appear to have been regarded as eligible for this concession, and Humbert takes care to warn the master general himself against abusing the privilege by turning his room into a rendezvous for the entertainment of his friends after hours, to the scandal of the brethren and the detriment of the Order.[22]

One can well imagine that the rank and file must have viewed with some jealousy this conferring of a favour on a chosen few, and judging by the enactments of various general chapters bearing on the matter, the pressure that was brought to bear on the authorities with a view to its universal extension was intense and prolonged. The result, as one might expect, was that the closed cell became the rule in due course. It had become general by the time of the Black Death (1348) and in the widespread collapse of religious discipline which supervened on that catastrophe made way for the appearance of a far more startling phenomenon: the luxuriously furnished chamber constructed by a friar out of his own private means.

An apartment of this description was regarded as the inalienable perquisite of the happy preacher-general or master-in-theology who, having with the connivance of his superiors amassed sufficient capital, expended it in the building of his ivory tower in which, immune from the intrusion of authority, he might pass the dreaming hours away. It is hard indeed in these post-Tridentine days of order and rationality, to believe that such a state of affairs could exist anywhere outside of Rabelais's Abbey of Thelema, but in sober fact it did and on a widespread scale. One instance occurs in our records. It concerns a certain Frater Cornelius de Ybernia, who was granted by Blessed Raymond the right to possess a chamber of which he might not be deprived by anybody except the master general himself.[23] Waterford may have been the scene of our friend's advancement to the honours of proprietorship, since it is credited

and 1260. **22** J.J. Berthier, *B. Humberti de Romanis opera*, ii, pp 190–1. **23** In 1397. H. Fenning, 'Irish material in the registers of the Dominican masters general (1390–1649)', in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, xxxix (1969), p. 256. In 1451, Philip Verdon 'de Hibernia' was likewise permitted to have not only a room he had constructed and a cell he had repaired, but even a garden he owned. Art. cit., p. 256.

in the Dissolution *Extents* with the possession of several of these apartments. Though Cornelius thus remains in solitary glory in Raymond's register like an insect preserved in amber, we may say of his case that, like Mercutio's wound: "'tis enough: 'twill serve'. We may be sure that the good man's example did not lack imitators.

CHAPTER 18

The Material Resources of the Brethren

When the holy bishop of Osma and his chaplain, Dominic Guzman, offered their services in 1205 to the papal missionaries then engaged in preaching to the Albigenses of southern France, they strongly urged the dismissal of the cavalcade of attendants and equipages with which these good men had encumbered themselves and the adoption by them of a life of apostolic poverty and simplicity. Only thus, it was contended, could they hope to undermine the influence which had been won by the heretical preachers who, in their own practice, gave a living example of these virtues.[1]

This proposal gave a clear indication of the line that was to be taken in the foundation, ten years later, of the Dominican Order, and though the founder hesitated for some time as to the strict legal definition which should govern the practice of poverty in his institute, he ultimately decided in favour of an almost complete renunciation of material possessions, both individual and corporate. The Order as a whole and each individual house were to hold no property in lands, houses, rent, or in fact in fixed revenues of any kind, but to look for their support to the unconvenanted charity of the faithful.

The qualification almost suggests that the act of renunciation lacked completeness and in fact it did. For it was decided, though when or under what circumstances is not clear, that each community might enjoy legal ownership of its church and conventual buildings with the site on which they stood, along with the cemetery, gardens and orchards, all of which were included in the conventual precinct. No extension of these holdings was permitted unless the wall of the convent grounds could be made to enclose the new acquisition and if a public way ran outside this boundary, then no fresh property could be secured in the area on the further side.

That this law was strictly interpreted during the thirteenth century appears to follow from various pieces of evidence still available. One of

1 The reference is to St Dominic who was in 1205 a canon regular of Osma in Spain. His travels on diplomatic business with Diego, bishop of Osma, brought him to Albi in the south of France where he was inspired to stay preaching the true faith for several years.

these occurs in the history of St Saviour's, Dublin, and the record of it is preserved in the White Book in the Corporation muniments.[2] There we read, under date 1240–1, of the grant by the city council to Radulph le Porter of a plot of land lying in front of St Saviour's towards the west and situated between the king's highway and the river. The grant was accompanied, as was usual in similar cases, by an express proviso that Radulph le Porter was not to reassign it to any religious community except the Friars Preachers.[3]

We can gather from the terms of this grant that the church and priory stood some distance back from the river bank, that a roadway ran in front eastwards to St Mary's Abbey, and that a strip of land lay between this road and the river. At this period the greater portion of this strip had apparently been made over to various lessees and the Dominicans may have begun to fear that they were thereby in danger of being cut off from all access to the river. It seems certain that the grantee of the plot acted as their agent in securing it from the city council, as the clause in their favour would indicate; at any rate, in the following year he assigned it to them on the same terms as were laid down in the council grant.

Some twenty or more years later we very surprisingly find the prior of St Saviour's, Richard de Odoch, conveying the plot to Thomas de Lexinton on these same terms, retaining, however, the right to convey water from the Liffey to the priory, and Thomas in due course willed it with his other property in Oxmanstown to St Mary's Abbey.[4]

Now, why did Richard de Odoch surrender this valuable piece of ground, apparently without securing anything in return, after his community had held it over a period of twenty years? It is not easy to adduce any constitutional provision bearing on the question, since it was not till the general chapter of Lyons in 1274 that we find any legislation that might cover the case. In this assembly the brethren were forbidden to acquire property beyond the convent precincts, and if they had already done so, they were to get rid of it. Possibly this principle had been under discussion for some years previously: it may even have been, from the beginning, generally practised though not reduced to precise legal form, and a strict superior would find himself accordingly bound in conscience to observe it. At any rate, it is, I believe, clear that Richard, either

2 J.T. Gilbert, *Calendar of ancient records of Dublin* (Dublin, 1889), i, pp 84–5. **3** The text as edited by Gilbert reads: ;'*nor* to the Friars Preachers, if they so desire'. The land in question was a strip ten feet in breadth. **4** J.J. Gilbert (ed.), *Chartularies of St Mary's Abbey, Dublin* (London, 1884), i, pp 472–3; ii, pp 480–6.

voluntarily or under compulsion from his provincial, came to the conclusion that the plot must be abandoned, since it lay outside the convent precincts. It should, however, be noted that, if it had been originally acquired in order to secure access to the river to obtain water supplies, it would, later on, cease to be regarded as essential for this purpose, since the community had been granted a supply from the city cistern at some time between 1250 and 1255.[5]

A similar case which occurred at Cork in the early years of the fourteenth century worked itself out on different lines. The prior of St Mary's, Philip de Slane, in the year 1306 brought an action against Matthew de Cantillon for the recovery of a messuage situated in St Nicholas' Lane which had formerly been in the possession of the community and had been illegally alienated to Thomas Sarsfield by Philip's predecessor in office, Gilbert le Blanc.[6] We may surmise that the new prior who, we know, was something of a worldling and a careerist, but withal a man learned and competent in the handling of affairs, did not see his way to adopt the idealistic interpretation of the constitutions favoured by his predecessor. Whether he acted as he did in a purely arbitrary way or whether a general tendency against more rigorous views had already set in and thereby given him a colourable justification for his action, it is very hard to say. The point will be dealt with later in the chapter on observance.

We will now proceed to a detailed examination of the material resources which a medieval convent enjoyed. And first let us take the ground enclosed within the monastery walls. This varied in extent from five acres in Tralee to half-an-acre each in Cork, Waterford, Limerick, Drogheda, Athy, Carlingford and Naas. Dublin had three acres, Trim four and Kilkenny two, while Aghaboe and Glanworth had, surprisingly, only one each. These figures are given in the Dissolution *Extents*.

As we shall see later, the law forbidding the acquisition of property outside the convent precincts had, long before the suppression (1540), been abrogated by the Holy See. We need not, therefore, be surprised to find that the various houses had, when this catastrophe fell upon them, acquired property in houses and lands, very modest indeed in extent when compared with the possessions of the Canons Regular and the Cistercians, but even so it constituted a radical departure from the spirit of early days.[7]

5 J.T. Gilbert, *Calendar of ancient records*, i, pp 101–2. There are two undated documents concerning the water-supply; the second, of about 1262, bears the friary seal. **6** The transaction of 1306 is related by Bolster, *Diocese of Cork*, p. 297. **7** The whole subject of

Dublin in 1539 held fifteen tenements in the parish of St Michan's and two others in the city, as well as the moiety of a meadow called *Helen Hore's Mead*, situated at the east end of the Phoenix Park. The biggest item in its list of possessions was the hundred acres which it held at Londreston[8] in Co. Meath.

Kilkenny approached Dublin in the extent of its property. It owned no fewer than seventeen messuages as well as several small pieces of land in the neighbourhood of the city, the whole amounting to about twenty acres. It owned, in addition, half a *caruca* at Ferynbrok and, probably most prized of all its possessions, an acre of wood in Glassanaghe and another at Kappaghe.

Athenry was the wealthiest of the Irish Dominican houses. O'Heyne says that it held 1,500 acres of land and states that he found it so recorded in the original deeds which were preserved in the monastery in his time.[9] Now, the existing register of Athenry gives in exhaustive detail particulars of the benefactions of various kinds received by the community from its foundation in 1241 down to 1565, the approximate date of its suppression, and it is not easy to square this account with O'Heyne's statement. It seems probable that the minimum figure representing its possessions might stand at about 500 acres.[10]

The *Desmond Survey*, taken in 1586, gives valuable particulars of the possessions of Tralee. The precinct, covering five acres, was the largest of any house in Ireland. It held as well thirteen acres in the parish of Tralee and two acres in Dingle. It also possessed the tithes of several townlands.[11]

The inquisitions taken under Elizabeth and James I throw light on the economic status of the Connacht houses. Rathfran owned two quarters of land, Urlar thirty acres, Roscommon sixty and Tulsk two quarters.[12]

We thus see that the convents, with the exception of Dublin, Kilkenny, Athenry and Tralee (and perhaps also Mullingar) held such small portions of property that one feels justified in saying that they substantially preserved their mendicant status to the end, and that, with the exception

Dominican property as revealed by the Extents (1540–43), has since been thoroughly analysed in Flynn, pp 26–34. **8** Presumably Londerstown, a townland in the parish of Duleek. **9** O'Heyne published his history at Louvain, 1706; in A. Coleman's edition (1902), the reference to Athenry is on p. 171. O'Heyne says nothing of 'old deeds' but supplies the Gaelic names of several properties which he saw 'in an old parchment document' while still only a novice in 1665. This need not have been the conventual *regestum* which closed a century earlier. **10** Flynn (p. 78), also accepts 500 acres for Athenry, but as a maximum figure. **11** S.M. Hussey (ed.), *The Desmond Survey of Co. Kerry* (Tralee, 1923). There is more detail on the property of Tralee in Flynn, p. 75. **12** Both Flynn and Gwynn & Hadcock depend on Archdall for details of these inquisitions.

of these and a few of the Connacht houses, they were all poor in worldly possessions.

What use did they make of their land and to what extent did it minister to their support? Were they in a position to put in practice the wise and careful directions of that remarkable man, Humbert de Romans who, in his Commentary on the Rule, gives a list of all the things that might be grown in the convent garden, with hints on methods of cultivation. Beans and peas, onions, leeks, sage and parsley are mentioned by him, and we may suppose that these, at any rate, were cultivated by the Irish friars.[13]

Orchards are mentioned in the *Extents* of Kilkenny, Mullingar, Cashel, Athy and Trim. In the estate accounts of the earl of Norfolk's manor of Carlow, apples are returned as a very valuable crop, and we may take it that they were grown by the friars.[14]

Cases occur in which a portion of the convent land was devoted to the growing of timber. Kilkenny, as we have seen, had two acres planted; in Mullingar, there were two small closes containing half-an-acre of ash and other trees which were reserved for the repair of the buildings and for firewood; and O'Heyne has a reference to the *foresta fratrum* in Athenry. One use in particular to which this timber was dedicated must have been the frequent renovation of the wooden roofs of the church and the other monastic buildings.[15] Limerick was especially well provided in this regard (though no reference is made to it in the *Extent*), since we are told that in 1370, when the work of reconstruction, rendered necessary in consequence of the ravages inflicted on the city during its occupation by the Irish in the preceding year, was undertaken by the citizens, the Dominican community furnished them with 1,050 ash trees. Payment was deferred, however, till 1385, in which year a *liberate* was issued for £17 11*s.* 8*d.*: 'arrears due for the timber for repairing and rebuilding the city after it had been burned by McFinan and his companions'.[16]

Land held outside the precincts but in the vicinity of the monastery was probably exploited directly by the community. Thus we know that Helen Hore's Meadow yielded a crop of hay to the Dublin friars, since we have it on record that in the year 1470 the prior of Kilmainham forcibly

13 J.J. Berthier (ed.), *B. Humberti de Romanis opera de vita regulari*, ii, p. 334. **14** The account-roll of the earl of Norfolk was edited by J. Mills in *RSAI Jn.*, xxii (1892), pp 52ff. **15** At Drogheda, as early as 1300, the church roof was tiled; in England, some friary churches were slated. **16** The references, from *AU* and the *Close Rolls*, are supplied by Coleman in O'Heyne, *Appendix*, p. 55.

intervened to prevent them from carting it to their barns. On learning of this, the mayor mustered the citizens, marched to the meadow, compelled the Kilmainham potentate to retire, and brought the hay in triumph to St Saviour's. We may, possibly, see in this incident, an attempt by the Hospitallers to assert a claim to the meadow as pertaining to the portion of their property which lay north of the Liffey in the area which lies roughly between the Park Gate and the Wellington Monument.[17]

In Athenry the friars kept a dairy farm to which the Lord Thomas de Bermingham (†1500) donated eighteen milch cows, whilst his wife, Anablina de Burgo, contributed four animals with their calves. Richard de Burgo (†1536) left by will to the abbey a herd of sixty cows, with a cowboy, cowgirl and herdsman. He forbade the sale or disposal of the cattle in any other way and ordered that the herd be maintained for the support of the community and the upkeep of the monastery. When one of the beasts should be killed or died from age, it was to be replaced. He also left by will eight noble horses from his stables and forbade the recipients of his bounty to part with them on any terms. He left, as well, a full set of agricultural implements including a plough, and from this we gather that the community tilled more land than was contained in the convent garden; they probably grew corn on one of the farms they owned near the town.[18]

Land owned by a monastery and situated at too great a distance to be cultivated by the community was let to a tenant. Thus the hundred acres held by the Dublin friars at Londrestown in Meath was rented to Thomas Corbally and Joan Doghed for 106*s.* 8*d.* per annum.[19] The rent was, in some cases, paid partly or wholly in kind, occasionally even by the performance of the usual feudal services. In Athy, ten acres of the convent lands were leased to David MacShanemore and Elisius Oderan at 8*d.* per acre, and at Christmas they were, in addition, to supply 48 gallons of beer valued at 2*d.* per gallon, 48 loaves at a penny each and a quarter of beef of the value of 2*s.*, the entire rent thus coming to 20*s.* 8*d.* per annum. In addition, six cottages yielded 6*s.* each with six hens and the service of six *boon days* estimated at 2*s.*[20]

17 The mayor had a particular interest in Helen Hore's meadow, near Chapelizod, because it lay on the city's western boundary. It figured in the 'Riding of the Franchises' in 1488. See J.T. Gilbert, *Calendar of ancient records of Dublin* (Dublin, 1889), i, p. 494. **18** *Regestum de Athenry,* pp 217–21, *passim*. **19** That is, in 1541, at the time of the suppression. **20** *Extents,* pp 172–3. Boon days: times of compulsory service for tenants, on which they were obliged to reap or plough for their landlord.

In Arklow, a messuage was let to Connor Mackee for 12*d.* as well as a quarter of beef valued at 12*d.*, six cakes, 12*d.*, and three gallons of butter, 2*s.* For this and three other messuages, the tenants gave the friars for their sustenance, from every brewing of beer for sale, three and a half gallons and one hen. In Aghaboe, the tenants of twelve cottages gave each three *boon days* and two weeding days, of which the total estimated value was 3*s.* 6*d.*; in addition, out of every flock of seven or more sheep they gave one in autumn, and a gallon of butter. In Trim, John Fyan held from the friars, in the common field of the town, thirty acres of arable land at 12*d.* per acre and three acres of meadow at 16*d.* per acre, and was bound to give in addition a quarter of beef on the feast of St Dominic.[21] The fact that this land was in the common field suggests that it was granted to the convent by the burgesses. Possibly Helen Hore's Mead was obtained by the Dublin friars in a similar way. It may have formed part of the common land of the city through its being possibly included in Oxmantown Green. If this were the case, it would explain the action taken by the mayor against the prior of Kilmainham when the latter attempted to confiscate the hay crop.

21 All these details are from the published *Extents*.

CHAPTER 19

Food and Income

The Dominican Rule imposes on those who profess it perpetual abstinence from meat, and though this prescription is nowadays not enforced literally, it has never been abrogated, and it rests with a superior, if he should be so minded, to insist on its strict observance.[1]

The references to beef and hens in the rent charges recorded in the *Extents* indicate that observance of the law had fallen off towards the end of the medieval period. On the other hand, there is evidence that, at any rate up to the period of the Black Death, the Irish friars maintained a remarkably high standard in the observance of this austere article of the Rule.

It follows from this that fish was an important item in the dietary of the medieval communities, and it is not a matter for wonder, therefore, that the various houses were so situated that plentiful supplies of this commodity were available close by. The *Extents* give numerous and interesting details of the fishing rights possessed by various convents in the rivers beside which they stood.

St Saviour's in Dublin appears to have been unique in not enjoying any fishing rights in the Liffey. These were the property of the citizens, with special reservation in favour of the Hospitallers of Kilmainham and the Cistercians of St Mary's Abbey. The Cork Dominicans owned half a fishing pool and half a salmon weir on the Lee. Limerick had a salmon weir, and so had Tralee, Rosbercon and Sligo. Athy had two fishing weirs and two ponds on the Barrow, and one of the former figured in a court case which was tried at the Kildare Assizes in 1309 or 1310.[2] The prior of the Friars Preachers of Athy charged a number of people – Thomas the Chaplain, William, son of Thomas the Baker, Lawrence the Cook, Brother John, prior of St Thomas Abbey (of the Crutched Friars), Thomas Hayward, John the Miller, Brother Maurice, etc. – that they had by night

1 Perpetual abstinence lost whatever legal basis it had within the Order on the appearance in 1968 of the *Liber Constitutionum*, a drastic revision of the Constitutions called for by Vatican II. 2 Archdall, followed by Gwynn & Hadcock, wrongly sets this trial in 1347. It was held in the 3rd year of Edward II, 1309–10. IDA, MacInerny notebook Z3, p. 31: a transcript from PROI, Plea Rolls, no. 95, M. 5, dorso.

come to the weir of the Dominican convent and had there, by violence, taken a net with fish and carried it away to the loss and injury of the community. Damages were estimated at a hundred shillings. The defendants did not appear, and the sheriff was ordered to take them into custody and produce them at the next sitting of the court. What the outcome was we do not know, but the case serves to show that the friars were learning that property may not prove an unmixed blessing.

Edmund Mortimer, earl of March and in right of his wife Philippa (daughter of Lionel, duke of Clarence, and Elizabeth de Burgh) also earl of Ulster, came as viceroy to Ireland in 1380. In an endeavour to secure his possessions in the north, he proceeded to fortify Coleraine, and while there granted the Dominican community liberty to keep a fishing boat on the Bann, and also the right to receive half the fish caught in the Lyn on the eve of St John every year. The community bound itself in return to pray for the earl and for the soul of his countess Philippa, his ancestors and successors.[3] Though there is no mention of any other house enjoying such privileges, it is scarcely open to doubt that such places as Youghal, Derry, Strade and Burrishoole, to mention only the most favourably situated, were so endowed.[4]

Water-supply was as vitally important to a medieval convent as it is to one of the present day. It was generally procured from a well sunk within the enclosure or piped from one located some distance away. The Dominicans of Kilkenny got their supply from St Canice's Well, whence it was conveyed by a pipe to the abbey. They were indebted for this favour to their good friend Geoffrey de Turville, bishop of Ossory, who granted it in 1247 in his capacity of lord of the manorial vill of Irishtown, the suburb of Kilkenny in which the Black Abbey is situated. The document conveying the grant is still preserved in the muniment room of Kilkenny corporation with the mutilated seal of the bishop attached.[5] It sets forth that the friars were empowered to construct an aqueduct from St Canice's Well, the pipe to be of the calibre of the bishop's ring, a model of which was to be kept in the diocesan treasury. Within the abbey the pipe was to

3 Further details of the grant (10 June 1381), which included fishing rights, are given by J. O'Laverty, *An historical account of the diocese of Down and Connor* (Dublin, 1887), iv, p. 166. Flynn, p. 32, summarises the evidence for Dominican water-mills, fishing rights, woodland, orchards etc. **4** A.E.J. Went (*c.*1955) published several studies of Irish fisheries and fishing weirs, notably in *RSAI Jn.*; also 'Irish monastic fisheries', in *Cork Hist. Soc. Jn.*, lx (1955), pp 47–56. **5** Illustrated and described by Carrigan, i, pp 37–8; and more recently by J. Bradley and T. Brett (ed.), *Treasures of Kilkenny* (Kilkenny, 2003). St Canice's well still flows strongly at Kilkenny.

be reduced in diameter so that it might admit a little finger and no more. The friars were permitted to carry out whatever construction work was necessary for their purposes at the well, provided that they did not impede the flow of water to the bishop's mill, nor take more than the head of their pipe could carry off.

Where a public water-supply existed the monastery could avail of it, but there appears to have been only one instance of this in medieval Ireland, namely in Dublin. Henry III in 1244 directed an order to the justiciary, Maurice Fitzgerald, to proceed with the construction of a public water-course and cistern for the benefit of the citizens, being probably moved to do so by the example set by the citizens of London in 1237. The Dublin water-supply was a very primitive affair, being merely an open stream flowing through the middle of the street, with pigs and other domestic stock frequently refreshing themselves in it. The water was collected in a cistern which stood in High Street opposite the Tholsel and near the gate of the convent of the Holy Trinity (that is, Christ Church). In 1308 John le Decer, the mayor, erected at his own expense a marble cistern to receive water from the conduit for the benefit of the citizens.

The Dominicans were amongst the first beneficiaries of the enterprise. Between 1250 and 1255 they obtained from the mayor and commons of the city, in pure and perpetual alms, a grant of water to be taken from the aqueduct at the Newgate by the house of William the Clerk, through a pipe joining the main at this point. They had liberty to lay the pipe through the land of the city, across the river without damage to the bridge in the most convenient manner possible. Its calibre was to be five thumb-breadths along its length to the monastery, but within the house it was to be contracted to the breadth of a little finger. These dimensions were to be at no time enlarged, and if the friars contravened the conditions laid down, the citizens held themselves free to withdraw the concession. No obligation was imposed on St Saviour's to contribute anything towards the maintenance of the city main, and the citizens guaranteed that if in future they molested the friars in the enjoyment of their privilege, the archbishop of Dublin was to restrain them by stopping the city water course in its passage through his lands.[6]

One of the most galling of the feudal impositions was that which obliged all manorial tenants to grind their corn at the mill of their lord,

6 Gilbert, *Calendar of ancient records of Dublin*, i, pp 101–2. There is an excellent account of 'water supply and sewerage' in Franciscan friaries by C. Mooney, 'Franciscan architecture in pre-reformation Ireland (part III)', in *RSAI Jn.*, lxxxvii, part I (1957), pp 35–8. Mooney

and the monopoly thus created was an extremely lucrative one. We may, therefore, admire the generosity of the earl of Gloucester who granted the community of the Black Abbey the right to have their corn ground at his mill free of charge.[7] Edmund Mortimer, on his visit to Coleraine in 1380, granted a similar privilege to the friars there.[8] Citizens of enfranchised cities and boroughs were to some extent exempted from this system. The king, indeed, or the manorial lord might, in granting a charter, retain milling rights for himself, but these might then be extended by special favour in individual cases. Thus, in Dublin, the king owned the mill which stood on the Poddle near the Castle. It was erected between 1248 and 1254, and we find it still being administered by royal keepers in the time of Edward II. But there seem to have been private mills in Dublin as well. When King John, while still earl of Mortain, held the post of Lord of Ireland, he granted the site of a mill to William Doubleday, and half of this concession was in due course conveyed to St Mary's Abbey.[9] The establishment was, however, closed down when the king's mill was erected and the abbey was given compensation for the loss it thereby sustained.

The job of getting one's corn ground in those days must therefore have been rather a problem, but the Dominicans managed it by having their own private mills. In Kilkenny there was the 'Blake Fryers mylle', which was rented at the suppression to Francis Drom for ten shillings, so that, at some point apparently, they had made themselves independent of the bounty of the lord of the manor. Kilmallock had a water mill worth 53*s.* 4*d.*, Carlingford had one valued at 60*s.*, and Cork the same. Mullingar had a watermill 'which, some say, was pledged by the friars to Gerald Petyt of Irisshetown, gent., for 12 marks and was valued at 20 shillings'. A mill, probably the same, was occupied by the said Gerald, who asserted that it was his property and was merely leased to the friars. The convent mill at Athy was ruined.[10] Tralee had a mill, as we learn from the Desmond Inquisition, and Athenry, of course, had one, according to O'Heyne.[11]

The foregoing brief investigation will enable us to realise that the stable property held by Irish Dominican houses, even in the period when the

emphasises the use of wells and rainwater. **7** This grant to Kilkenny by Gilbert de Clare in 1274 is noted in O'Heyne, *Appendix*, p. 27, from the Corporation archives. **8** J. O'Laverty, *An historical account of the diocese of Down and Connor*, iv, p. 166, giving the date as June 1381. Mortimer, chief governor, died with the Dominicans of Cork six months later. **9** The royal grant to Doubleday is in J.T. Gilbert (ed.), *Historic and municipal documents of Ireland, 1172–1320* (London, 1870), p. 465. **10** Details taken from the published *Extents* of 1540. **11** O'Heyne, p. 171: 'a large and excellent mill almost at the gate of the abbey'. For Tralee, see Hussey (ed.), *The Desmond Survey of County Kerry*. One of the actual millstones of the ancient abbey is in the present priory garden at Tralee; illustration in

earlier strict ideals had been relaxed, must have been entirely inadequate for the support of their communities. The only exceptions that may be granted to this statement might be, possibly, Tralee, Athenry and some of the other Connacht houses whose holdings were sufficiently extensive to render them practically self-supporting. Communities, therefore, relied for their maintenance, universally in the earlier times of strict observance and preponderatingly up to the very end, on the day-to-day receipts from their professional earnings, but above all on the charitable offerings of the people to whom they ministered.

They had, for instance, their Mass stipends. It is very hard to say what was the value of *honoraria* in those times. Perhaps a hint is afforded by a case preserved in the plea rolls for 1347. It states that friar Philip Perys OP, who had been fined half a mark (£20 to-day) for a breach of the king's peace, was pardoned and released from payment on condition that he offered a hundred Masses for the king.[12] This works out at four-fifths of a penny per Mass, and, when we remember that the daily wage of an ordinary worker in those times was a penny per day, it probably represents the normal amount of a Mass stipend.[13]

Casual or manual stipends did not, apparently, enter so largely into the religious life of the people in those times as did obituaries, anniversaries and founded Masses. The *honoraria* for these were provided either by donation or bequest and might take the form either of a perpetual alms or of payment in a lump sum. From the point of view of the ultimate benefit to the community, the former arrangement was preferable, but the brethren probably preferred the latter since it conferred an immediate substantial benefit and left to others in the future the burden of meeting the annexed obligation.[14] The 140 marks left by Wyllyn Wallys to Athenry would seem to be of this latter type. Such, too, were the lavish donations given by the Lord Thomas de Bermingham and his wife on the occasion of the burial of their son, John, in 1488. On the day of the funeral they

S. McConville (ed.), *The Dominicans in Kerry: 1243–1987* (Tralee, 1987), p. 18. **12** Friar Philip Perys of Athy. O'Sullivan took the text from IDA, A. Coleman, *Notes on the history of the Irish province*, i, p. 209. Coleman's source was TCD, King's *Collectanea*. **13** John de Wynchedon of Cork bequeathed (in 1306) three marks to the Augustinians so that a friar might offer Mass for his soul every day for a year. This amounted to half a mark for about sixty Masses. See Bolster, p. 298. M. Murphy has analysed Mass offerings and bequests to the four Orders of friars in 'The high cost of dying: an anlysis of the *pro anima* bequests in medieval Dublin', in *Studies in Church History*, xxiv (1987). **14** In continental establishments a multiplicity of founded masses often left a handful of priests obliged to say an enormous number of masses which, because of inflation, were of little financial value. In severe cases, the obligation had to be reduced by papal decree.

gave eighteen milch cows, besides the oblations (query: were funeral offerings meant?) and wax for candles. For eight days after the funeral they stayed in the abbey and gave a pipe of wine and other drinkables, twenty crannogues of wheat, meat and other food towards the sustenance of the brethren and of the poor who came the way. For a whole year thereafter a weekly Mass and office (*solemnis memoria*) was sung for the soul of the deceased, and at the first anniversary they gave 100*s.* besides the oblations to the convent.[15]

I have come on only one case of a perpetual alms in money, that, namely, given in the will of Nicholas Blake (†1565) granting 5*s.* annually in perpetual alms to the friars of Athenry.[16] David Terry of Cork (†1475) left a legacy for Masses, but this does not appear to be a perpetual foundation.[17] We may take it for granted that the various conveyances of land or house property or rents had attached to them the obligation of saying a perpetual Mass annually or weekly.

Medieval man was deeply concerned with the problem of death and took pains to ensure that his soul, when it entered into eternity, should be assisted by the suffrages of the church here below. The Gaelic or Norman noble, after a life spent perhaps in violence and disorder, equally with the pious and sober merchant of the town, all took care to make provision towards this end before their death. Many among them, weary of the world they had only too faithfully served, when they felt their end approaching, entered a monastery and spent their last days doing penance for their sins. Geoffrey de Geneville, whose life was crowded with great deeds on the crusading battlefields of Africa and Palestine and in the council chamber here in Ireland, was glad at last to resign all his possessions to his grand-daughter and spend his last years in the Dominican monastery of Trim, which he had founded.[18] Such, too, was the end of Ivor O'Beirne, confidential friend of Aedh O'Connor, the warlike king of Connacht, who, in 1269, 'withdrew from the world, from the midst of his children and affluence, resolving to pass his life in Roscommon in the monastery of the Friars Preachers'.[19] That generous

15 All these details are in the *Regestum de Athenry*, pp 219–20. **16** Blake left 3*s.* 4*d.* yearly for ever to the friars [OP] of our Lady's Hill, by the west of Galway, and six shillings yearly for ever to Athenry. The testator remarks: 'and in case the friars should be put out of the abbeys about Galway', the legacies made to them should retun to the heirs of the testator. See M.J. Blake, *Blake family records, 1300 to 1600* (London, 1902), p. 113. **17** The will of David Terry was for 'mortuary masses' according to O'Heyne, *Appendix*, p. 47, citing the Sarsfield Papers. **18** H. Fenning, 'The Dominicans of Trim', in *Ríocht na Mídhe*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1963), pp 15–16. **19** *AFM*, iii, p. 407; *Ann. Conn.*, p. 153.

friend of the Dublin Dominicans, Kenelbreck Sherman, ended his days as a member of the community of St Saviour's.[20]

There is one instance of a woman taking up her residence under similar circumstances in a Dominican monastery. Wyllyn Wallys, citizen of Athenry (†1344), was a great benefactor of the abbey there. After his death his wife Isybel Bodykyn lived in the convent infirmary and covered the eastern portion of its roof with tiles.[21] Let us hope that this was done under dispensation regularly procured, since, as we know, it was forbidden by the constitutions of the Order. This favour was regularly extended to ladies of high degree in other countries, and it is on record that Elizabeth, queen of Edward IV, gave birth in the Dominican convent of Tewkesbury to the ill-fated Richard, duke of York.[22]

20 Kenewrek Scherman, twice mayor of Dublin (1339–41, 1348–9), died on 25 Feb. 1351. See *Annals of Pembridge*, p. 391. **21** *Regestum de Athenry,* p. 206. **22** Richard, Duke of York, one of the princes murdered in the Tower of London, 1483. Born, not in the convent of Tewkesbury but in that of Shrewsbury: Jarrett, pp 36, 106. Queens were the only females who might legally enter the cloister without special permission.

CHAPTER 20

Guests, Funerals and Donations

Reference has been made in the preceding chapter to instances of pious people taking up their residence in Dominican convents when old age or ill-health or disillusionment with the world counselled preparation for death. As to the nature of the financial arrangements governing those cases we can only conjecture. Probably in most of them the friars were glad to be enabled in this way to make some return for the generosity formerly shown to them by their guests. In others, matters might be arranged on a more strictly business basis.

A corrody, for example, that is, the acquisition of the right of residence and maintenance in a monastery by an initial large payment in money or kind in much the same way as one secures an annuity today, might be purchased by the intending resident. This, rather than the system of living *en pension* would appear to have been the normal arrangement. It may well be that a good deal of the landed property possessed by some of the Irish Dominican convents came to them in this way. The farm of Londreston in Meath may have been acquired by St Saviour's in Dublin as a return for granting bed and board and medical care to some worn-out 'half-mounted gentleman' of the period who chose to spend his last days there making his soul. The 130 acres in Ballyvelly near Tralee may have come to the abbey there in some similar way, and fancy may even play with the notion that the acquisition of this property may constitute a record of the edifying last days and holy death of some member of the house of Desmond.[1]

If we are content to regard this business from the crudely mercenary point of view, it is probable that the dead rather than the living were welcomed as prospective guests of the friars. A funeral was a more attractive proposition, from their point of view, than the purchase of a corrody if (though we do not grant this) financial considerations alone dictated policy. Certainly, if it were a mere question of supply and demand, a Dominican community in those times could not but feel that

1 Here, for the second time, the writer gives '130 acres' for this holding. Flynn, p. 75, gives '13 acres of excellent meadow and pasture land on the west side of Tralee at Ballyvoylan'

they were on to a good thing in catering for the pious desires or the snobbish aspirations of those who wished to be in the fashion by having themselves buried in their churches or cloisters or even in the convent cemetery. We must, of course, go carefully here and not indulge in wholesale ascription of purely sordid motives to those concerned in those affairs. The baser element in human conduct would, naturally, show itself to a qualified extent but the predominant factor was religion.

People desired to be buried with the friars because they honoured them as men of holy and mortified lives and felt that it was a good thing to be in the company of those friends of God and thereby be in a position to benefit by the constant offerings of suffrages for their souls. Their theological outlook may not have been too clear, but they were surely arguing on the right lines when they held that an abode of holiness and righteousness is a good place to be buried in. We find this attitude strongly showing itself even in some of those undesirable characters who played their ignoble parts in Elizabethan Ireland. When the Order went forth in 1565 that Athenry abbey should be suppressed, the earl of Clanrickard begged that the church should be spared on the plea that it was the burial place of his ancestors, and when in 1585 Sligo Abbey received a like sentence, O'Connor Sligo made a similar successful plea for its preservation.[2] These two men were amongst the worst of the many degraded characters who figured in the history of those times, and their feeling of reverence for the venerable buildings in which the dust of their ancestors reposed was probably the only religious instinct they were capable of experiencing.

If we find such an outlook so strongly manifesting itself in the darkest hours of the sixteenth-century debacle, we need not wonder that in the high days of the Middle Ages funeral and burial ceremonies, conducted with all the pomp and impressive dignity of the church's ceremonial, were looked upon as very important affairs indeed. There are not lacking descriptions in the various annalistic collections of the funerals of important personages during those centuries and these narratives convey, more tellingly than the interminable stories of battle, murder and sudden death with which they abound, the ethos of those times.

The account given in the *Annals of Connacht* of the funeral in the Dominican abbey of Roscommon in 1464 of Tadhg O Conchubuir, titular king of Connacht, gives in picturesque style the atmosphere of such

2 Flynn, pp 50–1.

a function. 'He died on the Saturday after the first festival of Mary in autumn and was buried at Roscommon by the posterity of Cathal Crovderg and the territories of Sil Murray with such pomp and dignity as had not been accorded to any king of the line of Cathal Crovderg before him for a long time. For their horsemen and gallowglasses in armour surrounded the body of the high king as if marching into battle; their young levies were there in battle array; their poets and men of art and the women of the Sil Murray followed in countless throngs. Countless too were the offerings to the church at the burial of the high king, of cows and horses and money, and he had seen himself in vision being snatched from doom by (St.) Michael'![3]

Far exceeding in pomp and lavish display this funeral of an Irish king was that of a simple citizen of Athenry, David Wydyr, who was interred in the Dominican abbey there in 1408. In the course of his return from a voyage to Flanders, he had fallen ill and died at Bristol. From the love he bore to the Friars Preachers, he elected to be buried in their church in that city and was laid to rest in their habit, bequeathing the community the sum of £20 towards his funeral expenses, and to Athenry abbey a hundred marks.[4]

Now his wife, the noble matron Joanna Wyffler, taking counsel with the friars of Athenry, procured the transfer of his remains from Bristol in most honourable fashion and at great expense, through the agency of Brother Thomas Nasse, lector of the convent. The obsequies lasted a whole fortnight, and all the Dominicans of Connacht were invited to the function as well as the members of the other mendicant orders. The hospitality was on a lavish scale and gifts of money were bestowed on the religious and the poor. The widow glazed the window of the high altar, as well as the windows of the choir, spending thereon 100 marks, and gave in addition 100 pounds of wax for candles. She built the two stone steps of the convent and the stone bridge between the convent and the town ditch. She also imported, from parts beyond the sea, a sculptured stone to be placed over the tomb of her husband.[5]

3 *Ann. Conn.*, p. 525, no. 40. The text simply says 'at Roscommon', but the Dominican church there was in fact the burial place of the O'Connors, kings of Connacht. King Felim, son of Cathal Mor 'of the Wine Red hand', founded the abbey in 1253 and was buried within it. The eight gallowglasses carved on his tomb, being of the fifteenth century, may well have graced the tomb of Tadgh O Conchubuir (†1464). See J. Hunt, *Irish medieval figure sculpture* (Dublin, 1974). 4 There are excellent details on burials and bequests to English Dominican houses in Jarrett, pp 29–32. 5 *Regestum de Athenry*, p. 207.

It is sad to have to record that, after such a demonstration of grief and love, she consoled herself in due course by marrying secondly a noble knight, Sir Robert Gardiner, an Englishman, who 'possessed the lordship of Cork and the parts adjacent', and who was, when his time came, laid beside her in the tomb of David Wydyr.[6]

The friars do not seem, to put it mildly, to have discouraged the fondness for mixing religious ceremonial with costly social display which these descriptions reveal. Their enemies indeed, in England and on the continent, were persistent in accusing them of showing an altogether undue eagerness in cultivating the wealthy and the powerful for ignoble ends, particularly in this matter of securing the funerals of rich people for their churches. Criticism of the clergy has, however, never been a popular pastime in Ireland, and our medieval literature offers in this respect a striking contrast to what we find elsewhere.

One need not postulate perfection in the motives of all the religious who satisfied the longings of the pious laity to rest their bones in their churches but, on the other hand, there is no justification for the general ascription to them of base, mercenary views. Reading the obituary notices in the registry of Athenry, one can see that, along with some snobbish gratification at the abbey's being made the receptacle of so much noble dust, there went a deep-felt sense of gratitude to the generous benefactors who chose to be buried there, as well as a serious recognition of the obligation to pray for the pious dead.

It would give us an entirely false notion of the economic status of a medieval friary if we were to imagine that fashionable funerals bringing rich donations were matters of frequent occurrence. They were, in fact, as far as our documentary evidence shows, rare even in such a house as Athenry which was so particularly favoured by the Clanrickard de Burgos and the de Berminghams as well as by the wealthy burghers of the town. We must remember too that a large proportion of the donations received went, not to the support of the community, but to the furnishing and ornamentation of the church. The maintenance of the house in food, clothing and other necessaries derived only in a very minor degree, therefore, from casual gifts large or small, and the quest must have been the chief mainstay of the community.

Before going on to a more detailed study of the sources of the daily income, it may prove profitable to give the account of the manner in

6 Loc. cit. 'Cork' may here refer to some place in England, if not in Connacht itself, for no Gardiner seems to have cut any great figure in medieval Munster.

which the various portions of Athenry abbey came into existence and their cost distributed amongst various benefactors. This is, perhaps, one of the most interesting features to be found in any of our medieval chronicles, and it will serve to give a tolerably complete picture of what we may call the economic technique which governed a development of this nature.

The foundation owed its origin to Meiler de Bermingham (†1253), lord of the vill of Athenry, who gave the preference to the Dominicans before other religious and invited them to settle there. We can read into this entry a suggestion of jealousy in the writer's mind against some other religious order, most probably the Franciscans. The founder granted the friars a most desirable site and supplied money for the construction of the monastery. Moved by the poverty of the community, he bestowed on them various gifts: a large measure (*dolium*) of wine, gold and silver, English cloth, horses for the carting of building materials, etc. For land adjoining the site he paid 160 marks to the knight Robert Braynach and also encouraged his nobles and men-at-arms to contribute towards the work *secundum sanguinis qualitatem*.[7]

The Gaelic nobles far surpassed the colonists in the generosity of their donations. Felim O'Connor, king of Connacht (†1268), founder of the Dominican abbey of Roscommon, built the refectory at Athenry. Eugene O'Heyne (†1253) erected the dormitory; Cornelius O'Kelly (†1268) the chapter house; Arthur McGallogly, the infirmary; Dermot O'Trarasay and his wife, Margaret Ni Lorcayn, the great hospice. Donald O'Kelly (†1295) built the wall between the convent grounds and the town. Thomas O'Kelly, bishop of Clonfert (†1378), or more probably his earlier namesake (†1263) had the arches constructed on the north side of the high altar. Rory Mor O'Shaughnessy and his wife, Dervial O'Brien, were great friends of the friars and donated many gifts (unspecified) towards the building. The most remarkable contribution, however, was that of Florence McFlainn, archbishop of Tuam (1250–6), who erected the 'house for scholars', the theological school which enjoyed such a flourishing existence during the centuries which followed. It is also related of him that he '*legavit optima decreta*', which has been understood by writers from the days of Sir James Ware to our own as meaning that the archbishop drew up a set of regulations for the government of the *studium*.[8] Such a

7 Literally, according to the quality of their blood; according to their station. See *Regestum de Athenry*, p. 204. 8 All these donations by Gaelic nobles are grouped together in *Regestum de Athenry*, pp 212–13.

procedure could scarcely be made to square with the Dominican constitutions which jealously reserved such rights to the authorities of the Order, and it seems in fact that the simple meaning of the phrase is that he left by will some tomes on canon law such as the *Decretum Gratiani* and the work of St Raymund of Penafort.

The citizens of Athenry naturally played their part too. Walter Husgard and his wife Joanna built the cloister. Thomas Dolphin and his wife Clarice built the high house near the private chambers. Walter Brayneoc built the altar of the chapel on the north side beside the pillars. This must, however, not be ascribed to the original work of foundation, but may probably be placed a century later, as may likewise the chapel of Our Lady built by Mac an Wallayd de Bermingham and Wyllyn Wallys, and the campanile which was erected by the latter and by James Lynch. With this we may collocate the two hundred marks left by William Liath de Burgo (†1324) and his wife Finola O'Brien to build the front of the church, probably the west porch with its doorway and window; the £20 given by Thomas Bovanter (†1413) *ad opera monasterii*,[9] and the 20 marks presented by Nicholas O'Kernie and his wife Sonota for the same purpose.[10]

Stones and mortar, gold vessels and silk vestments do not, however, contribute very much towards solving the problem of how a community which owns little or nothing is to live. We have already seen that the income derived from their small possessions in land and houses, and the offerings and bequests for obituary or perpetual Masses went only a little way towards the friars' maintenance and that their chief standby was the quest. It is now time to discuss this theme.

9 Literally, 'for the activities of the monastery'. 10 Here again, the benefactions of the 'citizens' are grouped together in *Regestum de Athenry*, pp 208–9.

CHAPTER 21

Mendicant Friars: the Quest

The hall-mark of the medieval friar was his profession of mendicancy. The literature of the period, in its forthright and unadorned fashion, consistently refers to the fraternity as beggars; and even Richard of Bury, that friendly but discriminating critic of their ways, applies to them the epithet, paupers.[1] This was, of course, not an expression of contempt but simply a plain and unsentimental statement of fact.

The early Dominicans, in their practice of poverty, seem to have depended on casual charity without resorting to organised questing. This appears to follow from the stories which narrate the miraculous interventions of providence in their favour from time to time when they found themselves lacking even the bare necessaries of life, with larders and cellars empty and with no means of replenishing them. On their missionary journeys especially this seems to have been the rule. When St Dominic, in 1217, on his return from Rome to Toulouse after the confirmation of the Order, dispersed the sixteen members who then constituted its entire strength to secure foundations in Paris and Madrid, he sent them away without any provision for their journey. They were to depend solely on providence for their support; a counsel not so quixotic as it might appear to a citizen of the world of to-day, in view of the great number of monasteries then in existence which offered hospitality to all comers. His successor, Blessed Jordan, personally lived up to this ideal. The life of this luminous-souled and spiritually gifted man, one of the most attractive characters of the Middle Ages, teems with stories of the privations, borne with cheerful patience, which he endured in his incessant journeyings.[2]

When, however, houses multiplied and communities grew in numbers, it became necessary to devise more practical and workaday measures to secure the supplies requisite for their maintenance. The door-to-door quest offered itself as the simplest means to this end, and it was imposed as an obligation on the brethren to seek their sustenance in this way. They presented themselves as objects of charity to the public and had to abide

1 Richard of Bury, Benedictine and bishop of Durham (†1345), author of *Philobiblion*.
2 Bl Jordan of Saxony, master general of the Order (1222–37).

by the result. All, from the highest to the lowest, were liable, at least in theory, to be called on to face this disagreeable duty since it was realised that, apart from its economic aspects, it offered the opportunity of reaping rich spiritual benefits as well. They learned, while thus engaged, the necessity of perfecting themselves in humility, patience, forgiveness of injury, and tranquil submission to the will of God. By this means also they were brought into close contact with the people and thereby acquired much intimate knowledge of the conditions under which the different classes of the community existed, knowledge which must have furnished rich material for their sermons. Finally, the quest provided them with the opportunity of exercising a discreet and fruitful apostolate in a direct and simple way.

Generally speaking it was not found necessary to pursue questing activities unremittingly from day to day, and when this became actually necessary it was considered as an indication that conditions had become quite insupportable. An instance of this is afforded by the account of the situation in which some of the convents in southern France found themselves at the end of the Hundred Years War in 1453. That of Toulouse was reduced to such misery that the religious were forced, in order to procure the means to support life, to go out begging every day.[3] It was obviously never intended that the state of mendicancy should involve the reducing of its practitioners to a condition comparable to that in which a primeval savage community exists, where everything reduces itself to a sheer struggle for existence.

The quest, then, was as a rule pursued only at stated intervals. Food, and not money, being its object, it was exercised particularly during harvest time when provisions were most plentiful. The constitutions permitted the friars to store a reserve of supplies which might last them for a year but no longer. Bread, corn, peas and beans, wine, ale, butter, dried fish, that is, stockfish and herrings, would most likely have constituted the main bulk of the returns, and the questors would have sufficient intelligence to seek these things only when supplies were abundant.

All the evidence available points to the fact that the Irish people, both Gaelic and Norman, gave willingly and generously, as we might expect, of their goods to the 'poor friars beggars'. Their conduct in this regard is in marked contrast to that which, in course of time, became general

3 Mortier, iv, pp 188–9. Much of this chapter in Mortier describes the horrendous condition of the south of France (1433–53) due to constant war and the marauding

elsewhere. In England and the continent, from the beginning of the fourteenth century, charity towards the mendicants had begun to grow decidedly cool and the questor, in many instances through his own fault no doubt, became a standing object of ridicule and contempt. That masterpiece of cornerboy scurrility, *The Summoner's Tale*, which disgraces the name of Chaucer, probably gives the measure of the estimation in which the mendicant friar was held, at least by the literary clique, in late fourteenth-century England.[4]

To what extent the friars were themselves to blame for this it is hard to say. On the one hand, there is evidence which goes to show that, from the beginning, a section of the public in England resented the activities of the questors and that, in consequence, quite apart from any question of abuse, the custom was bound to provoke hostility. As against this, it is certain that when the mendicants lapsed into decadence in the course of the fourteenth century, the questor proved on occasion to be a rather disreputable customer. Richard of Bury, commenting on the matter, censures the friars for sending out young religious, even novices, to make the quest. The practice thus revealed constitutes an eye-opener for us of this century indeed, and one can imagine the ill-consequences which it probably too often bred.[5]

On reflection, however, one can perceive how well it fits into the general picture of the time. It was the age of the '*magni fratres*' – the upper-ten amongst the brethren – the official clique – the royal confessors – the university graduates, whose vastly inflated sense of their own importance spurned the notion of their being liable for the questing service. This fell, in consequence, to the share of the undistinguished rank and file, amongst whom, as we might expect, an occasional scallywag would inevitably find his way.[6] By this unwise disregard of consequences, the friars played into the hands of those who, like Chaucer, lent themselves to the anti-clerical propaganda which Wycliffe and his followers set in motion and which, soon hardening into tradition, has continued on its deplorable career to the present day.[7] Did Chaucer, one wonders, in the penitent mood which

'Sacageurs' of the time. **4** Jarrett, writing on the English Dominicans of the time, admits their decline in literary reputation after the Black Death (1348), but illustrates the popular regard in which they were still held from numerous bequests, donations and patronage. See Jarrett, pp 19–22, 139–40, 149–50. **5** For a detailed account of religious 'observance', and the occasional lack of it, among the friars of England, see Jarrett, pp 129–50. Some of Jarrett's examples of misconduct are startling: in one case, some Dominicans led a mob in an attack on their own priory. **6** Richard of Bury (†1345) accused friars in general of attracting boys whom they did not instruct but sent out on begging expeditions, whereby they 'procured the favour of friends, to the annoyance of their parents, the danger of the boys, and the detriment of the Order'. Quoted by Jarrett, pp 50–1. **7** John Wycliffe

came on him towards the end of his life, foresee the terrible mischief that was to ensue from his writings? Probably he did, but the harm was done: *littera scripta manet.*[8] In justice to his memory, however, it may be pointed out that the friar who is made to cut such an odious and contemptible figure in *The Summoner's Tale* was not a Dominican.

All this was, generally speaking, foreign to the Irish religious and literary atmosphere. It does not appear that the strong efforts made during this period by Richard FitzRalph and Philip Norreys[9] to organise an anti-mendicant movement bore any fruit amongst the general body of the people, nor did the flow of charitable contributions slacken. The exact contrary, indeed, appears to have been the case. The faithful were glad to give alms to the friars: there is even evidence to show that they did so without waiting to be asked. We find for instance the custom, apparently peculiar to this country, of the setting aside by a benefactor of a fixed portion of the corn grown on his land to be given to the questors. This grant, improperly referred to as a tithe, is mentioned in the register of Athenry. Thus Meiler de Bermingham, the founder, gave tithes (so called) of all his granges to the abbey, as did his son Piers and his grandson Richard, the victor of the battle of Athenry in 1316.[10] Nicholas Godsun gave tithes on his property both in and out of town, as well as on his merchandise. Thomas Symkyn and William Stywyn did likewise, and William the son of this latter not only followed his father's charitable example but he himself carted the corn to the friars' barns when they themselves were unable to collect it.[11]

Some of the extents set out in the inquisitions into the property of suppressed houses under Elizabeth and James I mention tithes among their possessions. Rathfran, for instance, possessed two quarters of land with the

(†1384), a secular priest and doctor of Oxford, struggled against the worldliness of the church and even sent out 'poor preachers' of his own. He also translated the New Testament into English. By his denial of transubstantiation, a denial spread by his followers (Lollards), he came to be regarded as a forerunner of Protestantism. **8** 'The written word survives.' **9** Fitzralph, archbishop of Armagh (1346–60), and Norris, dean of St Patrick's, Dublin (†1465). One might add the names of Henry Crumpe, a Cistercian of Baltinglass (fl. 1380), and John Whitehead of Dublin (fl. 1400). F.X. Martin drew attention to the fact that 'between 1350 and 1450 four of the most notable opponents of the friars in England were [these] Anglo-Irishmen'. All four had studied at Oxford; three were from Dublin; three were of the secular clergy. See F.X. Martin, 'An Irish Augustinian disputes at Oxford: Adam Payn, 1402', in C. Mayer and W. Eckermann (eds), *Scientia Augustiniana: festschrift D. Adolar Zemkeller* (Wurzburg, 1975), p. 298. There is quite a literature on Fitzralph; see particularly K. Walsh, *A fourteenth-century scholar and primate, Richard Fitzralph in Oxford, Avignon and Armagh* (Oxford, 1981). **10** *Regestum de Athenry,* pp 204–5. The battle of Athenry (1316) against the Irish was an episode in the Bruce invasion. **11** These various grants of 'tithes' are noted in the *Regestum de Athenry,* pp 208–10.

tithes thereof. Are we to understand this term in the strict sense of parochial tithes or does it represent a popular and improper usage such as it undoubtedly implies in the entries quoted from the Athenry register? It may well be that the friars of Rathfran had charge of the parish there at the time of the suppression and therefore drew the parish tithes. We find similar attributions of tithes to other houses in Connacht. Roscommon had sixty acres of land and tithes of the same; Urlar had twelve acres with their tithes, Tulsk possessed two quarters with their tithes; Clonymichan had a quarter with the tithes. It is impossible to decide the nature of those tithes. Possibly owing to the state of confusion into which the church in Ireland was plunged during the latter part of the sixteenth century, these houses may have administered, wholly or in part, the parishes in their neighbourhood and therefore drawn the parochial revenues. On the other hand, the whole thing may simply be on a parallel with the custom of Athenry.

An entry in the returns of the *Desmond Survey* concerning the convent of Tralee would incline one to this latter interpretation.[12] It enumerates the towns, villages and lands which yielded tithes to the house of the friars of Tralee, namely the twentieth part of all the corn raised therein, and states that the tithes renewed annually to the late earl. This last phrase seems to refer to a grant previously made by the crown to Desmond of the convent of Tralee with its property, including the tithes, this grant being renewable annually and therefore revocable at pleasure. But the mention of the twentieth part shows that the tithes were distinct from parochial dues. They were the fixed contributions set aside for the questors each year by the pious friends of the community, which the English crown had the meanness to grant and Desmond the baseness to accept on the suppression of the house.[13]

When the quest had become a regular institution, it was found necessary to introduce into its practice some measure of organisation. For this purpose, each house was allotted a district known as its *diet* or *limitation*, within which its questors might exercise their activities and its preachers (hence dubbed *limitours*) the duties of their ministry. This step was, of course, necessary in order to ensure that there might be no clashing of interests between the various convents, and it was strictly forbidden to any friar to quest or preach outside the limitation of his

12 The survey of the Desmond estates was carried out in 1586. Details on the friary property and rights are more fully given by Flynn, pp 74–6, from S.M. Hussey (ed.), *Desmond Survey of County Kerry*. **13** To be fair to Desmond, he may have accepted these rents to pass them on to the dispossessed friars.

convent. So rigidly was this rule observed that the term *predicatio* (preaching) came to signify the same thing as *diet* or *limitation*.

About the beginning of the fourteenth century, the limitation came to be sub-divided into areas called *termini* (terms), to each of which was allotted a special questor or preacher. The latter was known as a *terminarius*, though probably in England and amongst the colonists in Ireland the term *limitour*, of which Chaucer was so fond, was more generally employed. This arrangement was obviously modelled on the official ecclesiastical organisation of diocese and parish, though the two systems did not, of course, correspond territorially. [14]

Each 'term' had a residence with a grange attached, in which the preacher took up his abode during his missionary tour and the questor stored the alms collected locally. There are traces of this custom in the history of the Irish Dominicans. Athenry possessed a limitour's residence at Toolooban, and probably another at Kilcorban, which later became a separate establishment though still subject to the mother house.[15] Tralee appears to have possessed one in the parish of Dingle, of which mention is made in the *Desmond Survey*, and another at Killballylahive near Camp, the Dominican association with this place being registered in local tradition to the present day.[16]

The authorities of the church recognised the limitation system and from time to time issued ordinances forbidding any friar to quest beyond his own territory without the permission of the bishop or bishops concerned. A case in point is furnished by the licence granted by Octavian, archbishop of Armagh, to Cornelius Gerald, prior of the Friars Preachers of Drogheda, to quest in the northern parts of the archdiocese for funds for the repair and renovation of his church and priory.[17] The alms of the people in the neighbourhood of the convent not being sufficient to carry out the work, he sought assistance outside his limitation and for this purpose obtained the primate's licence. The archbishop, in addition, granted an indulgence of forty days to all pious Christians who aided the prior in the repair of the sacred edifice.

14 The whole question of questing and of the conventual '*diète*' or district divided into '*termes*', each with its '*terminaire*', is explained in Mortier, iii, pp 300–1. He also mentions how the system was sometimes abused in France, when the *terminaires* came to expect a percentage of the sum collected. **15** C. Stanley (ed.), *Kilcorban Priory* (Ballinasloe, 1987). This house is thought to have been used by conventual tertiaries or members of the Third Order. **16** Camp is some ten miles west of Tralee at the foot of the mountain pass to Dingle on the southern side of the peninsula. **17** In 1496. M.A. Sughi (ed.), *Registrum Octaviani* (Dublin, 1999), ii, p. 567.

The repeated denunciations of misconduct levelled against questors by medieval diocesan and provincial synods do not seem to have been directed as a rule against the members of the mendicant religious orders, but rather against the itinerant preachers of indulgences and relic pedlars of the type of Chaucer's *Pardoner* or Mendoza's *Bulero*. This class, one of the greatest pests of the later Middle Ages, who were frequently mere rascals and impostors, went amongst the people pretending to be furnished with bulls from Rome granting them faculties for the imparting of the most desirable spiritual favours – all transactions to be on a strictly cash basis, needless to say. The base traffic in faked relics provided another profitable line to the same fraternity. This, and not the approved questing of the friars, was what was aimed at in the synodal decrees, and when those assemblies had occasion to deal with the friars' activities, they did so in comparatively mild and paternal language. Thus the synod of Cashel in 1453 contented itself with an admonishment to religious questors to confine themselves each to his own limitation.[18]

The Irish Dominicans, on a few rare occasions, availed themselves of grants of papal indulgences to enable them to meet extraordinary expenditure incurred by necessary works of reconstruction of church or convent. The community of Athenry obtained a bull for this purpose from Boniface IX in 1400, by which the faithful were granted special indulgences on the usual conditions, provided that, on certain specified days, they visited the church and offered alms there. In 1423, after the burning of the convent, a similar grant was issued by Martin V. In this document it was declared that the community was destitute of the resources necessary for the building or repair of the monastery and the people were exhorted to come to their aid. Sligo abbey was burned in 1414, and, in the following year John XXIII granted an indulgence to induce the faithful to contribute by their alms to its reconstruction. Longford abbey, destroyed by fire during one of the numerous 'wars' which enlivened the country during this period, was favoured in a similar manner by Martin V and Eugene IV.[19]

18 The full text of the synodal decrees, in 121 short chapters, is given by J. Begley, *The diocese of Limerick, ancient and medieval* (Dublin, 1906), pp 431–41. The same synod (par. 14, 36) ordered mendicants to pay to the parish the 'fourth part' of all goods received at funerals, and restricted Franciscans of the third order with respect to the burial of their members. The 'fourth part' or *quarta funeralia* was the periodic subject of dispute between the secular and regular clergy of Galway from at least as early as 1550 until the 1790s.
19 These papal bulls are printed in *Hib. Dom.*, each in the chapter allocated to the friary concerned. English summaries may be found under the appropriate dates in *Cal. papal letters.*

CHAPTER 22

Royal Alms and Princely Gifts

The five houses situated in royal cities, namely Dublin, Cork, Waterford, Limerick and Drogheda, were, for a period during the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, the recipients of alms on a modest scale from the king's bounty. The earliest payment of this nature was made in 1253 when Henry III ordered the justiciar to distribute 100 marks between the Hospital of St. John, the Friars Preachers and the friars minor of Dublin. A gift of 100 shillings was made in 1270 to the Dublin community 'to acquit them of their debts'. In the accounts of Hugh, bishop of Meath (1270–72) treasurer of Edward, lord of Ireland, an item of 70 marks is given as alms provided to various houses of the Order. In 1275 a grant of 35 marks was made to divers houses (presumably those above mentioned) out of the king's alms and this sum appears to have been paid regularly every year thenceforward during the reign of Edward I.[1]

The poverty of the convents is strikingly revealed by the fact that the friars sometimes obtained payment of the alms in advance. In 1278, for example, the roll of payments mentions that a *prest* (that is, payment in advance or earnest money) of 110 shillings was conceded to the Dominicans; in 1279 they drew 40*s.* and 20*d.* on their allowance for the following year. In the same year Robert the Justice came to their aid by contributing 40*s.* out of his own pocket over and above the amount given from the king's alms. In 1280 again a *prest* on their fee of 41*s.* and 8*d.* was granted to the Friars Preachers of Dublin.[2]

A letter addressed by Edward I to his justiciary in 1285 states that for the special affection he bears the friars of Limerick, which house had been founded by his ancestors, he wishes to continue and amplify the grace he had already shown to them and to the friars of the other royal boroughs. He therefore grants the friars of Limerick ten marks annually over and above the 25 marks previously granted – the 10 marks to go to Limerick and the 25 to be divided amongst the other four houses.[3] From 1305

1 P. Connolly, *Irish exchequer payments, 1270–1446* (Dublin, 1998), i, pp 2, 6, 11. The royal order of 1253 is noted by Archdall, p. 200. Henry III's gift of 1270 is in *Cal. doc. Ire. (1252–84)*, p. 142. 2 Connolly, *Irish exchequer payments*, i, pp 26, 29, 36–7, 45. 3 *Cal. doc.*

onwards the method of payment was regularised by the issue of a writ of *liberate* annually authorizing it. That for 1306 is endorsed by Richard de Balibin, prior of the house of the preachers at Dublin and that for 1307 similarly with the name of Thomas de Rathouthe.[4]

When Edward II succeeded his father in 1307 he confirmed the grant. Up to this time it had been paid at the exchequer in Dublin to the prior of St Saviour's, to be distributed by him to the various houses, but from 1311 onwards, for some reason or other, a separate *liberate* was issued for each house and directed to the sheriff and the receiver of customs of the place, empowering them to pay out of the crown revenues the alms due to the convent. We find such orders issued in 1311 and 1312 in favour of Cork, Waterford, Limerick and Drogheda; Dublin, it is to be presumed, still receiving its portion at the exchequer.

Edward III, on his accession in 1327, confirmed the grant and payment was apparently made till some time after the outbreak in 1337 of the Hundred Years War. From that time on however – and the fact gives us an insight into the misfortunes which that ill-advised venture brought with it – payments were allowed to fall into arrear over a long period. In 1356, the King addressed a *liberate* to the treasurer and chamberlain of the exchequer at Dublin ordering payment of sums to the amount of £47 10*s*. 3*d*. due over the period 1348–53, and £52 6*s*. 8*d*. due from the years 1353–6. One hopes that the Order was carried into effect: if it were, it must have constituted a rare windfall for the impoverished friars. It is more than doubtful, however, that it was executed, since we find an entry in Pembridge's *Annals* under date 1359 recording the issue of a *liberate* in that year for the payment to the friars of £137 18*s*. 5*d*. and one fears that this order, too, remained a dead letter.[5]

There is no mention of the grant during the troubled reign of Richard II, and after the solitary donation of 30 marks given by Henry IV the only record of such payment occurs in the year 1459, when the colonial parliament passed an act endowing the Friars Preachers of Dublin with £10 annually as free and perpetual alms for the repair of their house, and in 1465 this act was confirmed in the parliament held under Thomas, earl

Ire. (1285–92), p. 38. It is thought that the king granted the site at Limerick and (perhaps) founded the friary; but the founder of the church was Donnchad Carbreagh O'Brien, king of Munster. See Gwynn & Hadcock, p. 226. **4** Connolly, op. cit., i, pp 189, 197. **5** Pembridge, compiler of these annals to 1347, was John Pembridge, Dominican prior of Dublin (1329–33, 1342), as now appears from Connolly's *Irish exchequer payments,* and B. Williams, 'The Dominican annals of Dublin', in S. Duffy (ed.), *Medieval Dublin II* (Dublin, 2001), pp 142–68.

of Desmond. In 1468, by act of parliament held at Drogheda under Tiptoft, earl of Worcester, it was ordained that the Friars Preachers of that town should be granted 20 marks annually out of the fee farm of the city of Dublin.[6] The community of St Saviour's appears to have taken fright at the possibility that the Drogheda Act might involve their losing the donation previously conceded to them, since we find an assurance given by Edward IV to Thomas Kelly, prior of the Friars Preachers at Dublin, that the grant to his house would be continued.[7]

The money was paid to both houses up to the Dissolution. It is recorded as an item of revenue in the extents of both convents, and is significantly shown to have been in arrear for the three and a half years preceding the inquisitions – on 12 March 1541 in Dublin and 11 October 1540 at Drogheda. This fits in with the known fact that the first moves in the scheme for the destruction of the religious houses in Ireland were made in 1537.[8] The irony of history shows itself in small things as well as in great, and one may contemplate, with a certain grim amusement, the spectacle of the tame jurymen solemnly noting, for the benefit of the Tudor tyrant, that he was now free to resume the grant made by his ancestors and till recently continued by himself to the Friars Preachers of Dublin and Drogheda.

It only remains to notice various acts of private benefaction which cannot be grouped under previous headings. They do not seem to have attached to them the obligation of offering masses for the donors nor to have been contributed as part of the routine quest collections.

One obvious way by which the benevolent clients of the friars might extend their charity towards them was the entertaining them in their houses, and a few precious items recording this practice have come down to us. John le Decer, the mayor of Dublin in 1308, we are told, had the entire Dominican community of St Saviour's to dine with him every Friday.[9] The significance of the choice of this day will be noticed in another place. Wyllyn Wallys of Athenry had two friars to dine every day and Nicholas Godsun showed equal kindness to the brethren. His wife went one better by having four fortunate members of the community to

6 Archdall, p. 457. The reason given was the 'incessant depredations both of English rebels and Irish enemies'. Similar causes probably frustrated the efforts of the prior of Drogheda, Cornelius Gerald, to improve the fabric in and after 1494. **7** These details, from 1459 to 1474, when Thomas Kelly was prior of Dublin, are taken from Archdall, p. 209. **8** The first steps towards the suppression of houses in Leinster were taken in 1536. See M.V. Ronan, *The reformation in Dublin, 1536–58* (London, 1926), pp 129 and following. **9** Archdall, p. 206, from Pembridge. John le Decer was mayor of Dublin in 1302, 1306, 1307–9 and 1324–6.

dinner in her house every day during Lent.[10] William Stywyn was another who extended his hospitality to two friars every day, while Walter Blak contented himself with issuing one invitation.[11] Edmund Lynch of Galway entertained at his house any friar from Athenry who chanced to travel thither on his lawful occasions, and Margareta Ballach Lynch excelled to such a degree in these kind offices that she earned for herself the endearing title of '*hospita fratrum*'.[12]

The same unstinted generosity of the people showed itself in occasional gifts in money or in kind. John le Decer, at a time of great scarcity in Dublin, imported from France at his own expense, three shiploads of corn. One of them he presented to the lord justice for the use of the military garrison of the Castle, another to the Dominican and Augustinian convents, and the third he reserved for the more liberal exercise of his own hospitality. These beneficent actions so moved the community of St Saviour's that they inserted in their liturgy a prayer for the well-being of the city of Dublin.[13]

In Athenry, Sylyna Lynch, wife of Thomas Hoburchyon of Galway gave annually a pipe of wine and a pipe of fish (!) at the beginning of Advent, and a similar gift for each Lent over a period of twenty years.[14] Thomas de Bermingham gave two ounces (of gold or silver?) for butter in autumn, and his wife a great quantity of the same commodity – a horse-load, in fact – *onus caballi*.[15] Only one gift of clothing is mentioned in the register of Athenry, and in this respect Ireland stands in sharp contrast to other countries where gifts of this nature were very common. In England Henry III and Edward I frequently provided clothes and footwear for the mendicant communities.[16] As regards the Athenry item, the entry records that the ever-generous Nicholas Godsun adopted twenty-four friars of that convent *tanquam alumnos*,[17] and gave each an English cloak every year, his wife furnishing each of them with a habit of English cloth annually for twenty-two years.

The merchant princes of the Lynch family in Galway were outstanding in their benefactions to the friars. We have already noted in many places

10 *Regestum de Athenry,* pp 206, 208. **11** Ibid., pp 209–10 **12** 'Hostess of the brethren.' The references in the *Regestum de Athenry,* are on p. 211 (Lynch) and p. 210 (Margaret Ballach). Warm relations, long established, between citizens of Galway and the friars of Athenry prepared the way for the foundation of a new priory at Galway itself in 1488. **13** Archdall, p. 206. **14** The 'pipe' was a cask, usually for wine, holding 105 gallons. A 'cask' of fish would be a better rendering of the text in the *Regestum de Athenry,* p. 210. **15** *Regestum de Athenry,* p. 220. **16** Jarrett, p. 41. **17** Literally: 'as students', or 'as pupils'. See *Regestum de Athenry,* p. 208.

the name of Edmund Lynch as the consistent and indefatigable friend of Athenry Abbey. James Lynch Fitz Stephen (†1493) the mayor of Galway who made history by hanging his own son, built, 'at his own cost and charges, the *quier* of our blessed Lady's church in the West of Galway', in other words the Dominican abbey church.[18] Dominic Dubh Lynch left £6 by will 'towards the works of the chapel of Blessed Mary on the Hill'. He left, in addition, £6 to the Friars Preachers of Athenry, and £4 to the convent of the Franciscans in Galway. To every convent of the four mendicant orders and of the three orders of Observantines he bequeathed a legacy of 3*s*. 4*d*. It is not impossible that every mendicant house in Ireland benefited by this gift, though owing to the careless way in which the will has been enrolled, one cannot be quite certain as to the import of the provision. If the suggested interpretation be admitted, it would make the gift amount to something like £1,500 in our money and this would be quite in keeping with the princely style of this great family.[19]

Another member of the clan – John Lynch FitzJohn (†1496) – remembered in his will several houses of the mendicants throughout Connacht. To Athenry he left a chasuble and a stole, and to Sligo, Rathfran, Burrishoole, Strade and Roscommon 20*d*. each to be paid in merchandise.[20]

The register of Athenry gives some particulars, too few unfortunately but all the more precious on that account, of gifts of articles which served the humbler domestic needs of the community. Thomas Bovanter presented them with a gridiron and the chronicler, wishing to show off his linguistic prowess in his notice of the donation, has inserted after the Latin '*crates*' the gloss: '*rostyng hibernice*'![21] Possibly an ignorant or careless copyist has been responsible for making him appear to perpetrate this ridiculous blunder, since another gift from the same source, namely a *cacabus*, is glossed with fair to average accuracy: '*anglice chytyl, hibernice kery*' (that is, coire = a cauldron). The chronicler, in his enthusiasm, describes it as a *bonum jocale*, as if it were a diamond tiara or a string of pearls.[22] The lord of Clanrickard, Richard Óg de Burgo, did not think it beneath him to

18 J. Hardiman, 'The pedigree of Doctor Dominick Lynch ... Seville ... 1674', in *The Miscellany of the Irish Archaeological Society*, i (Dublin, 1846), p. 47. Incidentally, on the same page, it is mentioned that James Lynch Fitzstephen installed 'glass windows sumptuously painted' in St Nicholas' church, Galway, in 1493. His 'hanging of his own son' is now thought to be merely a legend. **19** The full text of the will (1508) is given by J. Hardiman, art. cit., pp 74–81. The distinction made here between 'mendicant orders' and 'orders of Observantines' is interesting. **20** This will also (1496), is given by J. Hardiman, art. cit., pp 70–3. **21** *Regestum de Athenry*, p. 208. **22** Ibid.

furnish the abbey with a gift of basins,[23] and Anabla, the Lady of Athenry, gave a *cacuma* (*sic*)[24] and four tin pots.

Though the missionary and social activities of the friars served to relieve the monotony of life in the monastery (to speak *humano modo*) still, existence for them in those times must have been on the whole cheerless and dreary. None of the amenities which we to-day regard as essential were for them: and if they found themselves unable to maintain themselves at a high supernatural level, life must have become for them well-nigh insupportable. The monastic misfit was of all beings the most unfortunate and it is no wonder that so many of them solved their problems by running away. The 'escaped' monk or friar was a far more frequent phenomenon in those times than is the case today.[25]

Anything which helped to break the tedium of the round of conventual life was, therefore, welcome and the annual general or provincial chapters seem to have been, for this reason, especially from the fourteenth century onwards, regarded more as social gatherings than as grave deliberative assemblies. Readers of Mortier[26] will recall the repeated ordinances of the general chapters forbidding the presence at those meetings of friars who had no business to be there, but notwithstanding the infliction of the most severe punishments they still continued to come. This was, in truth, a product of the universal itch for going on pilgrimage which afflicted the soul of medieval man and as we know, mundane motives played very often in this matter a more important part than the religious did.

The Irish friars were, as one might expect, not exempt from this failing, and some entries in the register of Athenry give truly incredible figures for the attendance at the chapters held there. In 1482, the number amounted to 280, that is at least three times as many as were legally entitled to be there, and at the chapter of 1524 a record must surely have been established since we read that 360 were present.[27]

One can imagine what it meant to the convent of Athenry to have to provide for such a multitude. It was, perhaps, a more serious problem for the community than that which confronted the higher officials of the Order who had to cater for the far greater members which crowded to the general chapters. These had the advantage that the place of meeting of

23 *Pelves* in *Regestum de Athenry*, p. 217. **24** *Regestum de Athenry*, p. 220. *Cacuma*. Probably a spit for the kitchen; Latin *cacuminare*, to crucify. It was donated with its '*crates*', a gridiron. **25** Dispensation from vows and/or the obligations of priesthood was not then available on request. **26** Mortier, *Histoire des maîtres généraux*, i, p. 306. **27** *Regestum de Athenry*, pp

those assemblies was invariably one or other of the great and wealthy European cities, that the various public authorities showed a keen anxiety to attract the capitular fathers to their territories, and that public funds were generously provided to defray all expenses.

And so it was indeed too in Athenry. At the chapter of 1482, Thomas de Bermingham and his wife entertained the entire body of 280 friars twice one day, and it appears that the large train of servants and attendants who accompanied them came in for their share. At another chapter held there in 1491, this pious couple again extended their bounty to the capitulars and, in addition, presented 20*d.* to each friar of the province. Meiler, their son and successor in the lordship of Athenry, contributed a large subsidy towards the expenses of the chapter of 1524 and gave two refections to those who attended. Ricard Óg de Burgo of Clanrickard shared a portion of the burden on this occasion, entertaining the chapter *cum magna solemnitate et honore.*[28]

219–20. **28** 'With great solemnity and respect.' See *Regestum de Athenry*, pp 219–20, for the chapters of 1482, 1491 and 1524.

CHAPTER 23

The Juridical Status of the Convents: 1224–1277

For a proper understanding of the questions which it is proposed to discuss in this and succeeding chapters, it is desirable to have some acquaintance with the constitutional basis and administrative practice of the Order during the period under review. This will, in turn, necessitate an examination of the developments which have occurred in those spheres since the thirteenth century.[1]

As is well known, the characteristic feature of the Dominican Order, under its constitutional aspect, is that it is a centralised organisation, so constructed that, by hierarchical gradation, power devolves from the supreme to various subordinate authorities. In this respect it has not changed through all the centuries of its existence: it stands to-day where it stood when it emerged, new minted, from the brain of St Dominic. In so far as it is centralised, it is sharply marked off from the great orders which have branched from the primitive Benedictine stem, whilst by its allotting a qualified autonomy to its subordinate organs it is equally differentiated from those modern orders and congregations which, modelling themselves on the Society of Jesus, tend to concentrate all power in the supreme authority with a corresponding diminution of status in the minor governing bodies. Due proportion observed, one may say that the order of Friars Preachers is as typical of the high Middle Ages when the political genius of Christian Europe expressed itself in monarchical rule tempered by large devolutions of power in the shape of palatine jurisdictions, exempt 'liberties' and chartered municipalities, as the loose agglomerations or federations of monasteries which characterise the Benedictines, Cistercians and Canons Regular are representative of the earlier period when feudal dissipation of jurisdiction was the rule, or as

1 The standard authority on early Dominican law is G.R. Galbraith, *The Constitution of the Dominican Order, 1216 to 1360* (Manchester, 1925). There is a more recent historical account, with three chapters on the 'government of the Order', by W.A. Hinnebusch, *The history of the Dominican Order: origins and growth to 1500* (New York, 1965), i, pp 169–250.

the modern unitary orders are racy of the post-Reformation period when absolutism became general in the various European states.

Perhaps the greatest innovation introduced by St Dominic into his constitutions was this, that each member of the Order on profession took a vow of obedience to the master general and not, as had been the case in the older orders, to the local superior. By this simple but at that time revolutionary device, which placed every friar under the immediate jurisdiction of the central government, it was possible to command the services of any and every member of the Order anywhere and at any time as its interests might demand. In this way, centralised and organised government was made possible, and it was the discovery of this principle by St Dominic that entitles him to be regarded as the first man in history to found a religious order in the modern sense of the world.

The unit of local administration amongst the Dominicans was and still is the individual house or convent, ruled by a prior *elected* by the community. Nowadays the minimum number necessary to form such an electoral body is eight, but in the times with which we are dealing twelve were required, this provision being probably modelled on the practice of the Cistercians.[2] The prior holds office for three years, but in the pre-Reformation era no definite limit was fixed and he might occupy the position for life.

A group of convents (three being the minimum) all located in the same country or in some well-defined area therein constitutes a 'province'. Twelve years after the foundation of the Order it already possessed twelve of these. The province of England, which included the Irish and Scotch convents, was perhaps the largest in the Order, and these houses remained subject to it, the Scottish ones till 1481 and the Irish till 1536. Thereby hangs a very curious tale indeed which will be unfolded in due course. A province is ruled by an official called the prior provincial (or provincial simply) elected by the members of the provincial chapter. This body meets nowadays once every four years, but in the medieval period it met annually. It is composed of the conventual priors, of delegates – one from each convent – elected by the rank and file of the communities, and an indefinite number of ex-officio members: preachers general, masters in theology and ex-provincials.[3]

Within the province, the chapter is the controlling power. During the medieval period, the annual meetings enabled it to make its claim a reality

2 By now (2008) the minimum number in community for the election of a prior is six.
3 The only *ex officio* member of a provincial chapter is now (2008) the out-going provincial. Preachers general no longer exist, while masters of theology no longer enjoy

and hence, during those centuries, we find it not merely electing the provincial and indulging in legislative acts, but playing a vital part in administration as well. Very little has survived in the way of documentary record of the activities of the medieval provincial chapters (in Ireland not a single line), but we may suspect that a regular feature of their activities was the suspension or removal of priors and other functionaries who had either outlived their usefulness or whose services were required elsewhere.

All the members of the chapter vote in the election of the provincial and, having done so, proceed to the choosing of four delegates from amongst their body to whom is entrusted all the legislative and administrative business. They are known as *diffinitors*, since their duty is to 'define', that is, to expound, pass (or reject), and enact the various matters brought to their notice. By this remarkable device St Dominic ensured, as far as that was humanly possible, that the chapter assemblies should never degenerate into mere demagogic tournaments, but that a select committee, such as the diffinitors were meant to be, should attend to the matters in hand in cool and businesslike fashion. Their duty was (and is) to scrutinise the general administration of the province, to arrange such matters as the preaching and questing *limitations* of the various convents, to inquire into complaints, to remedy abuses, to punish delinquents. The conduct of studies in the various provincial *studia* was the object of their particular care. Students were posted to various houses of study, and the most promising probably brought to the notice of the general chapter, which body arrogated to itself the right to nominate those who were to read for a degree in Paris or Oxford.

During the thirteenth century the provincial chapter possessed the right to appoint preachers general. This was a dangerous privilege as it might lead, and in due course did lead, to grave abuses. Since the preachers general enjoyed the right to vote in the provincial chapter, an intriguing clique, once it managed to secure control of that body, could perpetuate its power by the simple device of creating preachers general *en masse* from amongst the ranks of their followers. The higher authorities of the Order were, however, alive to the danger and never hesitated to intervene, ruthlessly quashing such appointments when they threatened to jeopardise the representative character of the chapter. Finally, the provincial authority was deprived of this right altogether and it was vested in the master general and the general chapter.[4]

a privileged vote at chapters. **4** From the 1600s, if not before, the custom in Ireland was that the provincial chapter would postulate candidates as preachers general and masters of

This last mentioned body was, and still is, the supreme authority in the order under the Holy See. Down to the year 1370 it met annually, afterwards every two years, and nowadays its sessions take place triennially. It was composed of all the priors provincial, with an elected delegate from each province chosen by the provincial chapter, each of whom enjoyed the status of diffinitor, and another delegate as well, known nowadays as a *socius* (companion), but anciently denominated an *elector.*

The chief executive officer of the Order is the master general. He is elected by the general chapter, and is subject to its control in the same way as the provincial is subordinate to the provincial chapter. These and indeed all the officials of the Order were certainly in medieval times, and are substantially still, its servants not its autocratic rulers. The very name 'master', in its Latin form, *magister*, suggests this; it indicates one who teaches, exhorts and leads, not one who dominates. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries indeed, in consequence of the new ideas in ecclesiastical government which had sprung up after the Council of Trent and the foundation of the Society of Jesus, the Dominican master general became in practice an autocrat, though in theory still occupying his old constitutional position, and the general chapter, assembling only at rare intervals, sank into a subordinate place. This was, however, an intermittent phase which has long passed away.

The general chapter occupied itself with everything that concerned the well-being of the Order: the spiritual interests of the brethren, religious observance, the liturgy, preaching, teaching and study, the correction of abuses, the punishment, by removal from office or otherwise, of incompetent superiors, the economic side, and above all, necessary amendments of the constitutions. These last, however, did not assume the force of law until they had been passed by three successive chapters, and this is probably the origin of the three readings through which a parliamentary bill must pass before it becomes law. One is struck by the extraordinary uprightness and fortitude of mind that marks the proceedings of these assemblies during the early centuries of the Order's history. Respect of persons was never a guiding principle with them, and if a man were found incompetent or unworthy he had to go, no matter who he might be. When one remembers too, that in those times no superior held office for a definite term of years, but might continue till he voluntarily retired or till death overtook him, one can see that the chapter had, in its annual

theology. The master general would then either promote or ignore those postulated.

assemblies, plenty of scope for exercising its deposing power. Only one instance of this, as far as Ireland is concerned, has come down from the early period. In the general chapter held at London in 1263, we read that the prior of Drogheda was cashiered.[5] No reason is given for this step and we need not infer therefrom anything derogatory to his character, since it was quite a usual thing to remove even provincials from office so that they might be free to proceed to Paris or Oxford to teach or read for their degrees there.

It should be mentioned that the masters general and provincials had, as part of their executive function, the right to issue *ad hoc* ordinances, more or less on the lines of present day orders in council or departmental decrees. Very soon after the foundation of the Order it became customary for the master general to issue an encyclical letter after each chapter meeting. These were usually pious exhortations, but occasionally they concerned themselves with important constitutional matters or with special provisions for the government of the provinces.

A very important duty of the master general and (for his own province) of the provincial was the visitation of the houses of the Order. This most salutary practice was not original to St Dominic: he borrowed it from the Premonstratensians, as they in their turn had copied it from the Cluniacs and the Cistercians. As was his way, however, he improved on his model, since in order to ensure that every house should be visited once a year, he ordained that the provincial chapter was to appoint four visitors to inspect each a certain group of houses and return a report of their doings to the succeeding chapter. In addition to this, the master general and the provincial when, in consequence of the great development of the Order from the mid-thirteenth century onward, the duty of visitation became increasingly burdensome, were empowered to delegate this duty to subordinates, who were known as vicars. They were not, however, thereby exempted from the obligation of frequent personal inspection of the convents, and nothing perhaps can give one a better idea of the incomparable ability with which the Order was administered during its golden age than to read of the endless journeyings undertaken for this purpose by the masters general. One might in fact go so far as to say that they spent their lives on visitation. Take, for example, the case of Blessed John of Vercelli who ruled the Order from 1264 to 1283. He spent those

5 B.M. Reichert, *Acta capitulorum generalium*, i, 121. The same chapter of 1263, meeting at London, 'conceded' to the province of England permission to found 'four houses, and two in Ireland'. Ibid. The two Irish houses were probably Trim (1263) and Arklow (1264).

nineteen years travelling from convent to convent, his itinerary being determined by the location of the annual general chapter. When one of these assemblies had wound up its proceedings and appointed the place of meeting for the following year, the old man (he was sixty years of age when he was elected general), severely handicapped as he was by a lame leg, took his stick and set out to walk to the place thus designated, visiting every convent en route. After the general chapter of Vienna in 1282 the gallant veteran, now almost eighty years of age, started, again on foot, for Montpellier where the next chapter was to meet. It was however too much for him and, his strength failing, he died soon after reaching his destination.

The master general and provincial on visitation had full power to deal on the spot with anything needing correction. In the exercise of their ordinary jurisdiction, and without reference to the general or provincial chapter, they could make ordinations, decree structural changes in the conventual buildings, transfer friars from one house to another, punish the delinquent, and depose unfit superiors. When a provincial was removed from office either by the general chapter or the master general, an interim vicar was appointed to administer the province until a new provincial might be elected.

Mention has been made of the practice of appointing officials to assist the provincials in carrying out the annual visitation of the provinces. Each of these visitors was assigned a certain group of houses, and gradually these groupings became stabilised, each being technically known as a *visitation*. The English province possessed four of these, known as the visitations of London, Oxford, Cambridge and York. Though Ireland is not mentioned amongst the visitations of the province, it is certain that it enjoyed that status almost from the beginning, as we shall see.

The establishment of these divisions came about as the result of provincial arrangements and without the sanction of the general chapter. Under the generalship of Blessed John of Vercelli,[6] an agitation was started to give them a more permanent constitutional force, and here we come up against one of the drawbacks from which a democratic organisation is liable to suffer, that is its habit of changing its mind and of proceeding by the method of trial and error. Thus in the general chapter of 1265 it was ordered that each province was to be split up into divisions, each to be ruled by a vicar appointed by the provincial, who would delegate to him

6 John of Vercelli was master general, 1264–83.

certain duties and privileges which, however, were in their exercise to be subject to his supervision and control. In other words, the vicar was to be a permanent visitor and the vicariates were merely the old visitations under a new name. The general chapter in the following year refused its sanction, with the result that the proposal lapsed. It urged, however, a more radical change: the creation of new provinces by dividing in two each of those already in existence. But this, again, was not proceeded with. It was introduced afresh in 1269, but once more fell through. It should be mentioned, in explanation of these frequent changes of mind, that of any three successive chapters, two were composed of elected diffinitors and one of provincials and, as we might expect, the latter favoured the vicariate system, while the others were for the creation of new provinces. Each side being determined on putting through its own policy, agreement was not possible. In 1271 the vicariate scheme was again proposed, but in the following year rejected. Finally, in 1275, it was once more brought forward and this time, receiving the assent of three successive chapters, became law.

To return to the scheme for the creation of new provinces: this was approved in the chapter of 1275 and confirmed in the following year, but received its *quietus* in 1277. In 1283 the legislators ordered the various provincial chapters to draw up schemes for the division of the provinces, and this other democratic device, that is the handing over to a commission of a problem which the government is disinclined to deal with, was again brought into play in 1286. Next year's chapter confirmed this proposal, but limited its scope to the provinces of Spain, Provence, Rome and Lombardy. This was approved in the following year and confirmed in 1289, when it should have become law, but apparently through including Germany in the scheme it was not considered as having received final sanction, since nothing was done to put it into effect. Finally, the Holy See intervened, and in 1295 Pope Celestine V on the petition of the king of Naples separated his dominions from the Roman province and erected them into a separate jurisdiction.[7] This step seems to have given a much needed stimulus to the capitulars, since between that date and 1303, Spain, Provence, Lombardy, Germany and Poland were each divided into two separate provinces.

7 More clearly expressed by Hinnebusch, *History of the Dominican Order*, i, p. 174. In 1295, Dominicans living in the territory of the king of Naples ceased to belong to the Roman province of the Order; thenceforth they constituted the new province 'of the Kingdom of Sicily'.

England was at this time one of the largest provinces of the Order, and it is more than strange that no attempt was made to deal with it in the same way. The difficult political situation brought about by the attack (1303) of the king of France, Philippe le Bel, on Pope Boniface VIII was probably the reason.[8] It was not prudent in the circumstances to take any step that might arouse the anger of the powerful Edward I (1272–1307), and the separation of the Irish or Scottish houses from the jurisdiction of England would certainly not please him.

8 In 1299, the same pope had supported the independence of Scotland against Edward I. The Dominican friaries of Scotland formed at first a 'visitation' of the English province, but constituted a 'vicariate' by 1349, becoming an independent province of the Order only in 1481. See A. Ross, *Dogs of the Lord: the story of the Dominican Order in Scotland* (privately printed, 1981).

CHAPTER 24

The Irish Vicariate: 1314–1378

We have seen that the Dominican Order, after a lengthy and tiresome debate, and largely under pressure from the Holy See, accepted the twin propositions that provinces of an unwieldy size should be broken up and that, in addition, they should be subdivided into subordinate administrative units known as vicariates. This decision appears, however, to have been adopted with bad grace, though whether this attitude was based on an exaggerated reverence for the primitive constitutions of the Founder or on dislike for the cognate system of 'custodies', which the Franciscans had adopted, it is impossible to say.

The antipathy of the Order to the vicariate system showed itself in frequent warnings by the general chapters that provincials were not to establish them without grave necessity. The provinces of England, Germany and Hungary were, however, invariably excepted from these admonitions. In the chapter of Pamplona in 1355, the warning was repeated with the significant qualification: 'we do not intend the aforesaid to apply to countries which by the custom of the Order have ordinarily been ruled by vicars.'

This has direct reference to the case of Ireland. It appears that almost from the beginning its houses enjoyed a certain measure of autonomy and that the English provincial interfered but little with them. Even before the establishment of the vicariate system in 1275, the visitors of Ireland seem to have acted in a quasi-vicarial capacity. This would explain the so-called 'provincial chapter' of Athenry in 1242, which, if it were really held, could be nothing more than an assembly convened by one of these officials.[1] Whatever be the truth regarding it, there can be no doubt that a chapter was held at Cashel in 1256, nor about the fact that Ireland was then ruled by a Friar Charles, vicar of the English provincial. Both facts are mentioned in a letter of Henry III to Lawrence Somercote, collector of Crusade money in Ireland.[2]

1 Archdall, p. 273. 2 These details were rehearsed by Somercote in a letter of 20 May 1256, a month before the intended 'provincial chapter' at Cashel. See Fitzmaurice & Little, pp 23–4.

A similar reference is contained in a rescript addressed in this same year by Pope Alexander IV to the 'vicar of the prior provincial of the Friars Preachers in Ireland'. It commands him to place two of his brethren, prudent and discreet men, at the disposal of the bishop of Raphoe (the Dominican Máel Pátraic Ó Scannail) to undertake a preaching crusade against certain parties in his diocese who were given to heresy, unlawful marriage and other corrupt practices.[3]

After 1275,[4] when the Irish, like other vicariates, was constitutionally established, its chapters assembled regularly, though from 1315 onwards only rare records of them survive. Four chapters are alleged to have met in the year 1281, which points to some confusion in the mind of the annalist, since nothing of the kind could happen under the Dominican constitutions.[5]

Difficulties must have occurred in the administration of the Irish affairs of the Order however, since in 1314 the then master general, Berengar de Landorra, found it necessary, on the conclusion of the general chapter held that year in London, to draw up a charter defining with great precision the canonical status of the vicariate, the powers of the vicar and the methods to be followed in his election. We may take it for granted that some Irish friars were present at the chapter, not of course officially but with a view to laying before the master general the grievances under which they suffered. As a result of these representations he issued a letter in which were laid down the following regulations for the government of *Hibernia Dominicana*.[6]

3 M.P. Sheehy, *Pontificia Hibernica* (Dublin, 1965), ii, pp 251–2. Some people in Raphoe were given to the worship of idols. When rebuked, they challenged the Catholic faith and the authority of Rome, and plotted against the lives of those who rebuked them. See M.O'Halloran, 'Patrick O'Scannell, OP, archbishop of Armagh, 1261–70', in *IER* (Sept. 1960), p. 155. The Dominicans had no house near Raphoe until the friary of Derry was established in 1274. Coleraine, founded in 1244, may have been the intended base of operations. **4** The year 1275 was that of the general chapter of Bologna which in its first ordinance authorised provincials 'to divide their provinces into vicariates, as shall seem proper to them; over each they shall appoint a vicar who is neither a prior nor a lector *actu legens*'. This decision was final, having already been passed by three successive chapters. See Reichert, *Acta cap. generalium*, i, p. 177. **5** Archdall, p. 82 (at Youghal); p. 206 (two 'general' chapters at Dublin); p. 372 (at Kilkenny). In each case, Archdall cites King, p. 87, which is a simple list of chapters up to 1315. No chapter acts earlier than 1669 survive. Nor was any truly general chapter held in Ireland until 1971. There may have been some reason in 1281 for holding what are now called 'regional meetings', with a mandate to report to two further 'general' meetings at Dublin. This, however, is unlikely. **6** The Latin text of this important letter is most conveniently found in Mould, *Irish Dominicans*, pp 245–7.

(1) The prior of each house, a delegate elected by each community, and the preachers general are to meet and choose three brethren whose names are to be submitted to the English provincial. He is bound to nominate one of the three as vicar of Ireland.

By way of comment on this, we may note that there was nothing to prevent an English friar from acting as vicar of Ireland. The remarkable case of John of Wrotham appears to be relevant here. He was confessor to Edward II and is stated to have been a fluent speaker of French, Irish, Welsh and Scotch, as well as a complete master of his own native English. This medieval Mezzofanti would probably have picked up his knowledge of Irish while acting as vicar in this country since it is difficult to believe that a man important enough to be chosen as royal confessor would be sent here in any lesser capacity.[7]

(2) The vicar is to enjoy all the powers and privileges of a provincial, except when the English provincial is a visitor to Ireland, and he is to retain office in case of the death or removal of the latter.

(3) Every year he is to hold a chapter which will consist of four members elected after the manner prescribed in the constitutions.

(4) This chapter is empowered to scrutinise the vicar's administration, to reprove him, and if necessary to suspend him till the provincial chapter (of England) meets. Conventual priors are, of course, similarly subject to the control of this assembly.

(5) The vicar, with his chapter, has power to direct studies, appointing lectors to the houses and granting licences to read for a degree.

7 John of Wrotham OP served at the English court, 1297–1320. Similarly Friar Clement, leader of the first Dominicans in Scotland (1230), 'knew various languages'. See W. A. Hinnebusch, *The early English Friars Preachers* (Rome, 1951), p. 308. An English vicar based in Dublin would not, strictly speaking, have needed to know Irish, but the records of the Irish exchequer show that friars of the Dublin community were often employed to treat with Irish rebels in Wicklow and Connacht. Thus Richard McCormogan (1331), Alexander Lawless, Henry Hollywode and William Jordan (all in 1335). The name of one vicar of the order in Ireland, Richard de Bochampton (1337–39), also occurs in this record, he being reimbursed for a visit to the English court 'on very important business touching the state of the land of Ireland'. See Connolly, *Irish exchequer payments, vol. II (1326–1446)* (Dublin, 1998), passim. **8** Curiously, while preachers general are mentioned here (before

(6) Two priors or preachers general chosen by the chapter are to represent Ireland at the English provincial chapter each year and the vicar himself is to go there every fourth year.[8]

(7) The English provincial has power to remove the vicar from office for just and sufficient cause.

(8) The provincial chapter of England will annually nominate visitors for Ireland *as has been the custom*.

(9) The Irish vicariate has the right to send two students to Oxford, two to Cambridge, two to London, another to Paris, and in addition others may be sent to other centres in the proportion allowed by the constitutions. The vicar is to defray all expenses at the rate observed in the English houses. Irish students in England are to enjoy the privileges accorded to foreigners. Those who, according to prudent judgment, may be considered suitable, are to be promoted to the grade of master or bachelor.[9]

(10) The Irish vicariate is granted the right to send two delegates annually to the general chapter.

From this summary it will be seen that Berengar's charter, as we may call it, practically set up Ireland as a province while withholding the name and some special privileges that go with this dignity. The position of the vicar, who acted to all intents and purposes as a provincial, and the right to hold annual chapters are features which seem, at that date, to have been extra-constitutional. Possibly, however, we may discover a precedent in the constitution of the Society of the *Fratres Peregrinantes*, the body of Dominican missionaries who did such notable work in the Middle East from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century.[10] It was formally organised as a congregation of the Order (this being the first occasion of our meeting this term which subsequently loomed so large in Dominican constitutional practice) by Berengar in 1312, its members (recruited from various provinces) having previously operated in a sort of freelance fashion, each being subject more or less to his own provincial. A good many of the provisions in the constitution of the *Peregrinantes* are similar to those in the Irish charter, with the exception that they were not granted the right to hold a chapter nor to draw up a panel of candidates from whom the vicar was to be selected.

1314), masters in theology are not. **9** Berengar also decreed that the books of deceased friars were not to pass to the English province but to remain in the vicariate. **10** R. Loenertz, *La société des frères Péregrinantes: Étude sur l'Orient Dominicain* (Rome, 1937).

The reader will, therefore, judge according to his taste whether Berengar's charter is to be regarded as an insult to Ireland or the reverse. Whether, that is, it was based on the idea then widely prevalent (thanks to Adrian's Bull and the writings of Giraldus Cambrensis) that the country was so sunk in barbarism that it had practically renounced the Christian faith and was therefore to be regarded more or less as a foreign missionary area; or whether it was a sincere attempt to accord to a nation so renowned in former centuries, as wide a measure of autonomy as was consistent with the preservation of the English hegemony which the Holy See would not permit to be touched.[11]

It does not appear that the charter bred any great cordiality between the English and the Irish friars, and we occasionally in the acts of the general chapters come on evidence of friction between them. In 1318 at Lyons, only four years after Berengar had laid down the law for both parties, the capitular fathers pronounced very strong animadversions on the conduct of certain members of the Irish vicariate who had refused to accept the vicar nominated by the English provincial.[12] They were accused of forming a treasonable combination for this purpose, and their leader, Henry Glam, was cited before the chapter to answer for his misdeeds. After due examination, he was found guilty and punished with great severity. He was expelled for life from the English province (Ireland is of course, in Pickwickian mode, meant here), condemned to perpetual deprivation of the right to vote, was never to speak unless to accuse himself in chapter, and was to occupy the last place in the house to which he was to be assigned. One can easily imagine the unhappy man eating out his heart, an exile and in disgrace, in some foreign convent. The English provincial was ordered to proceed to Ireland without delay, to appoint one or more vicars to inquire into all cases of alleged misconduct;

11 The more obvious interpretation is that Berengar did as much as he possibly could for the Irish, given the opposition of the English province to Irish independence, and the fact that he was writing in London itself. Edward II was then at war with the Scots and would soon have to fight them in Ireland also. **12** *Acta cap. gen.*, ii, pp 112–13. Henry Glam, like the incident itself, is not otherwise known. Even his given surname 'Glam' is hopelessly corrupt. See Jarrett, p. 143. He was the ringleader of a 'malicious conspiracy' of friars who had rejected the English-appointed vicar to follow one of their own. The context is that of the Bruce invasion of Ireland (1315–18) during which many friars of Irish descent took Bruce's part against the king of England. Pope John XXII issued a bull from Avignon (10 April 1317) warning the Friars Preachers and other mendicants to desist from stirring up the people to resist the king's authority. See Fitzmaurice & Little, p. 100. The general chapter at Lyons in 1318, at which 'Glam' was interrogated and condemned, also instructed the provincial of England to appoint one or more vicars in Ireland who would help him to restore order.

and to inflict such punishment on the guilty as would prove a wholesome example to others, so that thereby peace might be restored to the Irish houses.

We feel justified in seeing in these troubles the aftermath of the Bruce invasion.[13] Many, even amongst the colonists, favoured the Scottish leader, and that the Gaelic party did so goes without saying. When we find a man bearing the name of Adam of Northampton, bishop of Ferns and member of the council of state, secretly acting in collusion with Edward Bruce, we may feel sure that strange things were happening behind the scenes in Ireland during that time. The Franciscans were particularly prominent in this movement, so much so that Edward II thought it well to denounce them to their minister general on this score. Though no mention is made of the Dominicans, it would be absurd to suppose that the sympathies of many of them were not deeply stirred by the great and very nearly successful effort of the Scottish hero. Hence, probably the conspiracy against the vicar of the English provincial.

The general chapter of Venice in 1325 has a somewhat cryptic notice relating to Ireland which is probably to be understood in the light of Philip of Slane's embassies to Avignon in 1324 and 1325.[14] Reference is made to a discussion concerning our country which took place at the chapter of Bordeaux in the preceding year (1324), in the acts of which, however, nothing of the kind has been preserved. It appears that certain Irish friars had been ordered to appear at Venice, but none of them putting in an appearance, the chapter with the best grace it could muster decreed that Berengar's charter was to remain in force until other provision might be made. Going over the head of the English provincial, the chapter appointed the prior of the house in which the next vicariate chapter was to be held as interim vicar of Ireland. The English provincial with his chapter was ordered to provide in due course for the government of the Irish vicariate in accordance with the terms of the charter.[15]

13 See J. Lydon, 'The impact of the Bruce invasion, 1315–27', in A. Cosgrove (ed.), *A new history of Ireland,* ii, *Medieval Ireland, 1169–1534* (Oxford, 1987), pp 275–302, especially p. 293. **14** Philip of Slane OP, bishop of Cork (1321–7) and member of the king's council in Ireland, spent much of his episcopate as a royal emissary at Avignon. See E. Bolster, *A history of the diocese of Cork … to the reformation* (Shannon, 1972), pp 364–8. **15** *Acta cap. gen.*, ii, p. 161. The chapter of 1325 did not mention Berengar, already dead since 1317, but approved the '*forma fratrum de Ybernia*', the Irish form of government, and named as 'our vicar general for the whole of Ireland' the prior of the house at which the vicariate chapter was to be held in 1325. It also removed from office any other vicar whatsoever. Although the chapter also permitted a new foundation in Ireland, none was made for another twenty-five years.

This fits in well with an entry in Clyn's *Annals* under date 1325: 'General discord between the mendicants of Ireland, some exerting themselves to promote the cause of their own nation, race and language, others ambitiously seeking after the pomp and dignity of office.' The trouble was obviously deep seated and all the mendicant orders were affected by it.[16]

In 1348 at Lyons, Adam Guarin (probably Warren or Gearon) was appointed vicar by the general chapter until a superior might be regularly elected and confirmed by the English provincial.[17] This may perhaps be linked with an entry in Clyn's *Annals* which reports that eight Dominicans were carried off by the pestilence (the Black Death) in Kilkenny in that year, and we may conjecture that these deaths resulted from the coming together of the large numbers of friars assembled for the vicariate chapter which was held there in that year.[18] The delegates may, in consequence, have abandoned the chapter without transacting any business.

At Pamplona in 1355, Ireland was again under discussion and the capitulars ordered that the visitor of Cork (who was, be it remembered, the delegate of the English provincial chapter) was to be placed on the same footing as the other visitors of Ireland: he was to enjoy the same honours, privileges and exemption from common duties and contributions.[19] Possibly the friars of the southern houses of his visitation were lacking in cordiality towards one whom they did not look on as a welcome visitor.

All these bickerings, however, pale into insignificance before the sensational (and to us scandalous) happenings of the year 1380. To understand the story properly we shall have to treat of certain incidents that had occurred in England a short time previously.

16 John Clyn, p. 182. It also coincides with the complaints of Edward II (28 May 1325) carried to Avignon by Philip of Slane OP, bishop of Cork. 'The king is not acknowledged by the Irish ... Monks and friars *inter Hibernicos* will admit only Irish novices; they also try to reserve certain friaries for Irishmen only.' See J. Watt, 'Negotiations between Edward II and John XXII concerning Ireland', in *IHS*, x (Mar. 1956), pp 1–20. **17** *Acta cap. gen.*, ii, p. 324. 'We appoint friar Adam Guarin vicar general in Ireland until a vicar general of that nation be elected and confirmed by the prior provincial of England, and be present in that nation.' **18** John Clyn, p. 250. The 'general chapter' held at Kilkenny took place in 1346, well before the plague. Archdall, p. 372. The Black Death reached Howth only in July 1348, spreading quickly to Dublin, Kilkenny and other towns. See M. Kelly, *A history of the Black Death in Ireland* (Stroud, 2001). Since Clyn also notes (p. 250) the death of twenty-five Franciscans at Drogheda and of an almost equal number at Dublin, there is no need to postulate a Dominican chapter at Kilkenny to explain the death of eight friars there. **19** *Acta cap. gen.*, ii, pp 369–70. The chapter of 1355 ordered the provincial chapter to define the 'limits' or area within the remit of the 'visitator of Cork'. It also directed the English provincial or his vicar in Ireland to punish those who had molested 'friar Philip, vicar of

This province, which during the first hundred years of its existence had maintained an extraordinarily high level of observance and produced a great number of distinguished men, had begun by the middle of the fourteenth century to develop tendencies which appear to have made it somewhat of a problem to the central authority of the Order. A certain amount of worldliness had crept in, the result of the close association of many of its members with the secular affairs of their country, and a disposition to accept with an ill-grace the orders of the general chapter and the master general manifested itself. Worse still was the habit of having recourse to the civil power for help in these differences, a practice which unfortunately became widespread in most countries from the fifteenth century onward and made the government of the Order a matter of peculiar difficulty. We see an instance of this in the case of the provincial, Richard de Wynkley, on whose removal from office by the general chapter of Clermont in 1339 Edward III wrote a violent letter of protest to the master general.[20] One cannot imagine that this letter was written without Richard's knowledge and approval. He evidently regarded his office not as a burden which he was anxious to lay down but as an honour which he was desirous to retain.

The climax to all this came in 1378, a few months before the outbreak of the Great Schism of the West. In the general chapter, held that year at Carcassonne, the master general Elias Raymond reported that, having made a visitation of the English province six years previously and drawn up certain regulations for its reformation, the deputies to whom their execution had been committed were not only opposed and disobeyed, but the civil authorities, at the instigation of the rebels, laid violent hands on them and placed them under arrest. The chapter pronounced sentence of excommunication on all who had been implicated in these carryings-on, removed from office the provincial, Thomas Rushook, as well as the vicar of Ireland, John Leicester, and appointed as interim vicars John Paris for England and Robert Cusack for Ireland.[21]

Ireland'; likewise those who hindered the *'habilitacio'* of two Irish friars engaged in the *'lectura Sentenciarum'*: John Tropt at Oxford and Walter Soril at Cambridge. **20** The chapter of 1339 recorded no reason for the removal of the English provincial; the provincials of Greece, Sicily and Rome were 'absolved from office', equally without comment, in the same sentence. *Acta cap. gen.*, ii, p. 254. For the reaction of Edward III, see B.E.R. Formoy, *The Dominican Order in England before the reformation* (London, 1925), p. 88. The deposed provincial was the king's envoy 'on secret and arduous affairs' to Scotland, Italy and France, and therefore usually absent from the province under his care. **21** *Acta cap. gen.*, ii, pp 450–3. This capitular text on England, though unusually detailed, does not mention a vicar for Ireland. The English provincial successfully appealed from the chapter

At this same chapter Ireland was withdrawn from English jurisdiction and declared an independent province, the necessary two previous readings of the bill having been passed at Florence (1374) and Bourges (1376).[22] It is hard to say whether this step was taken in order to punish the misconduct of Rushook and his supporters or whether it was a *bona fide* piece of legislation. This latter supposition does not lack probability since, about the same time, Sicily, which had been a vicariate of Naples, was erected into a province. The other motive must, however, have been present to the minds of the capitulars: certainly the sequence of events justifies our thinking so, since the move to establish the new province was not made until two years after the trouble had started.[23] It was not a wise step coming at this particular juncture, since it might be colourably represented as being done by Elias Raymond simply to indulge his personal resentment against Rushook at the expense of the English province.[24]

to the Holy See; cardinal Nicholas Caracciolo then overruled the decisions made at Carcassonne; and it is in the cardinal's judgement (25 Aug. 1379) that John Leicester and Robert Cusack appear. See *Hib. Dom.*, pp 52–7, where the year is wrongly given as 1370. **22** *Acta cap. gen.*, ii, pp 427, 422. At Carcassonne (1378) it was stated that this decision had been passed by the 'three chapters' necessary to make it a final decision. Curiously, the creation of a distinct Irish province was not mentioned explicitly in the English provincial's immediate appeal to Rome against his own deposition. **23** That is, at Florence in 1374, two years after the beginning of Elias' contested visitation of England in 1372. **24** Elias Raymond, master general from 1367 to 1379, remained in office until 1389, but only 'in the Avignon obedience'. In the 'Roman obedience', after the Great Schism, he was succeeded by Blessed Raymund of Capua (1380–99).

CHAPTER 25

The Return of Rushook and Leicester: 1378–1381

The deposed provincial of England, Thomas Rushook, was a man of strong character, not particularly scrupulous and, by virtue of his position as confessor to King Richard II and member of his council, possessed of great influence at the English court. He lost no time in petitioning the king and parliament through his agents, John Leicester, William Cambre and Pierse Daniel, to take action against John Paris who had supplanted him. It would appear that, in consequence of this step, the latter was inhibited from exercising the office of vicar provincial in England, since we find three others occupying it in quick succession, namely, Thomas Northebe, William Siward and John Empsay.[1]

Circumstances now came to the aid of Rushook. The Great Schism of the West broke out within two months of the general chapter of Carcassonne and the various states of Christendom proceeded to take sides with one or other of the two parties. Each country supported the Roman or the Avignon pope, as the case might be, for reasons that appeared good and proper to its civil rulers, and these reasons, needless to say, were preponderatingly political. Europe had travelled far from the days of Innocent III and was already almost within sight of that sorry consummation of all its religious greatness, the deadly erastianism of the sixteenth and succeeding centuries which finds its most complete expression in the formula: *cujus regio ejus religio*.[2]

France supported the Avignon pope, Clement VII, and Elias Raymond, remembering that he was a Frenchman and forgetting that he was the master general of the Dominican Order, took the same line. He led his brethren of the French provinces into schism and Spain followed suit. From this time till the reunion of the two parties at the Council of Constance (1414–18) the Order was split up into two jurisdictions, one

1 Listed by Jarrett, p. 221. Their names are also known from Caracciolo's judgement of 25 Aug. 1379. See *Hib. Dom.*, pp 53–5, where the year is wrongly given twice as 1370, though 'in the second year of Urban II', which was 1379. 2 'To each the religion of his own country.' A political compromise recommended after the Reformation.

obeying Rome and the other Avignon. To save us from being driven to take a completely cynical view of these happenings, we find two of the greatest Dominican saints, Catherine of Siena and Vincent Ferrer, taking opposite sides in the quarrel, and when such utterly self-forgetting and God-intoxicated souls could not agree as to who was the rightful pope, we may be sure that multitudes of the devout clergy and laity followed one side or the other in all good faith.

Since France had sided with Avignon, England naturally declared for Rome. With the English Dominicans thereby withdrawn from the jurisdiction of his enemy, Raymond, Rushook knew that the game was as good as won. He immediately appealed to Rome against the decisions taken at Carcassonne in 1378, and we might point out that in doing so – and this is, of course, even more true of his appeal to the king – he was acting in direct violation of the Dominican constitution which allows no appeal from the decisions of the supreme governing body, the general chapter.

Pope Urban VI nominated Cardinal Niccolo Caracciolo, himself a member of the Order, to investigate the case and in due course he found in Rushook's favour. A document setting forth the finding – the most terrible example the present writer has ever met of medieval legal Latin gibberish – was addressed in 1379 to, among others, the archbishops of Canterbury, York, Armagh, Dublin and Cashel, on whom was placed the obligation of putting the decree into force.[3] It restored Rushook to the provincialate of England and Leicester to the vicarship of Ireland, declared all the acts of the chapter of Carcassonne null and void and stigmatised the proceedings of Elias Raymond as temerarious, illicit, iniquitous, unjust and defective in form since they were instituted after appeal had been made to the higher authority of the Holy See. The vicars appointed by him, including Robert Cusack for Ireland, were removed from office. Furthermore, the charter of Berengar (1314) was brought back into force, and the recently established Irish province thereby ceased to exist.

The cardinal stated that in the conduct of the case he was assisted by various legal experts, and that amongst the witnesses to his decision was William Andrew OP, bishop of Achonry (subsequently in 1380 translated to Meath).[4] He was an Englishman, one of those court nominees who so

3 The document, cited already, is printed with the wrong date (1370) in *Hib. Dom.*, pp 52–7. It is not 'gibberish', but packed solid with saving clauses. Oddly, it was not also addressed to the archbishop of Tuam, though Gaelic friars must have been quite numerous in that province. **4** William Andrew had been vicar general of England in 1370. Jarrett,

frequently found their way into Irish sees during those centuries. Remembering his antecedents, we need not suppose that his presence in Rome just then was purely fortuitous, nor need we doubt that he exercised his influence in support of Rushook and his party. Ware says of him that he was a learned man and prudent but that, after the example of Socrates, he wrote nothing, though much was expected of him.[5]

The publication of Caracciolo's decree led to a violent reaction amongst the Irish Dominicans, disputes of an unseemly character broke out, and in Drogheda things reached such a pitch that some of the disputants found themselves in prison.[6] Rushook and Leicester had their supporters, but probably the larger, if not the wiser party, took the opposite side. They had reason to feel deeply aggrieved at the turn things had taken. After their country had been honoured by being advanced by the supreme authority of the Order to provincial dignity, they now found their rejoicings cut short as a result of what they might rightly regard as the successful intrigues of that tricky politician Rushook and the clique which supported him.[7] Some, at least, would probably regard the decree as devoid of binding force, either because it constituted a radical violation of the Dominican constitution, or because they did not acknowledge Urban as the lawful pope. Even in England, Avignon had its supporters among the Dominicans, and John Paris, their leader, acted for some time as vicar of Elias Raymond, then master general of this obedience. This attempt to swing the English province away from Rome met, however, with no success.[8] Though we have no direct evidence on the matter, we

p. 221. By 1374, he was resident at Avignon. See *Cal. papal letters,* iv, p. 194. Bishop of Achonry, 1374–80; bishop of Meath, 1380–5. **5** W. Harris, *The whole works of Sir James Ware ... revised ... The history of the bishops* (Dublin, 1739), pp 659–60. **6** The Drogheda incident took place in 1377, earlier even than the chapter of Carcassonne, and two years before Caracciolo's intervention. Three friars of the community assaulted and wounded two others. Though the names of all five were English, this was nonetheless a political squabble. See Archdall, pp 455–6. The reforming visitation of the English province by Elias Raymond, which led to the deposition of twelve priors, had begun in 1372. Significantly, two of the friars guilty of assault at Drogheda – John Bromfield and Thomas Bron – later took part in the affray at Dublin in 1380 in support of John of Leicester. **7** Rushook, provincial of England (1374–82), was confessor to the boy-king Richard II from 1377; archdeacon of St Asaph from 1382; bishop of Llandaff, 1383, and later of Chichester. Escaping a charge of treason, he was exiled by parliament to Cork but then translated from Chichester to Kilmore, 1388. Died in Kent, 1393. See W. Gumbley, 'A friar at court: Thomas Rushook, OP, bishop of Llandaff, Chichester and Kilmore, 1383–1393', in *IER* (Sept. 1920), pp 241–9. Gumbley here discusses Rushook's attempted deposition in 1378 and his successful appeal against it. See also R.G. Davies, 'Thomas Rushook', in *DNB* (Oxford, 2004), vol. 48, p. 161. **8** The existence of a pro-Elias party in England is mentioned by Mortier, iii, pp 652–3. Elias had named John Paris his vicar for England. Interestingly, while commissioner of the archbishop of Canterbury in 1392, he ('Parys') found the Irish

may feel sure that some proportion of the Irish friars would favour Avignon, and would be influenced in this direction by the example of Scotland, which had taken that side.

Hence, when Leicester, flushed with victory, crossed to Dublin in 1380 to take possession of his vicariate, he met with a reception such as he had not bargained for. The doors of St Saviour's were closed in his face, and when he attempted to force an entrance he was resisted *vi et armis*.[9] The story has been preserved for us in the plea rolls and is well worth telling for the light it throws on the manners and customs of the time.[10]

> Before Edmund Mortimer, earl of March and Ulster, and deputy in Ireland of the King, on the Friday after the feast of St Nicholas, in the fourth year of Richard II [that is, 1380].
>
> Friars Nicholas Power, William Roche, William Duraunt, William Lang, John Pembroke, John Gower, William Crumpe, Thomas Prendergast, John More, Thomas Brown, William Carrow, William Palmer, Thomas Lawless and Thomas Bette were arraigned on the following charges:
>
> That they came, armed and wearing coats of mail, to the chapel of St Mary's upon the Bridge of Dublin, at the time of evening twilight [*crepusculo*] on the Saturday after the feast of St Bartholomew in this same year, and that with armed violence, they broke down a door in the said chapel, entered therein and penetrated to the cemetery of the Friars Preachers. And William Roche, prior of the aforesaid order, alleges that Peter Glisbourne, Richard Ferrers, Philip Talbot and John Leynagh being within the said abbey and hearing a great outcry [*maximam garrulationem*] in the aforesaid cemetery came armed, and all running together committed an assault and affray. And the aforesaid Nicholas Poer, William Roche and others of their following robbed the aforesaid Richard Ferrers of a coat of mail of the value of twenty shillings, feloniously and against the king's peace. [...]

Cistercian, Henry Crump of Baltinglass, guilty of heresy. Crump was an enthusiastic preacher against Irish friars. See Formoy, *The Dominican Order in England*, p. 66. **9** 'By force and arms'. **10** From IDA, A. Coleman, Historical notes, i, pp 230, copied from King's *Collectanea*, pp 91–2. Some surnames, wrongly rendered by O'Sullivan, have been silently corrected. O'Sullivan first published an account of this affray in *Dublin Historical Record*, ix (1946–8), pp 41–58; reprinted by H. Clarke (ed.), *Medieval Dublin: the living city* (Blackrock, 1990), pp 91–4, 212.

> When asked what they had to plead in their defence, the accused deposed that disputes had arisen amongst the brethren of the order of preachers in Ireland, some wishing to be ruled by a provincial and others by a vicar, as had been the ancient custom: that the Lord Pope, through a certain cardinal delegated for the purpose, had ordered that this quarrel should cease and that Ireland should be ruled by a provincial whom all the brethren should obey: that this cardinal had ordered John Leicester to exercise the office of provincial [!] and the master general of this order[11] had likewise commanded him to the same effect: that, acting in virtue of these orders, he came to Dublin and proceeded to make his entrance into the abbey in the execution of his duty: that Richard Ferrers and other rebellious brethren resisted in arms his entrance therein, not wishing to have him for their provincial [!]: that he came to the defendants, brethren of his order, and commanded them, by virtue of their obedience, to come with him to the abbey, wearing coats of mail beneath their habits for safety's sake: that on the strength of this order they accompanied him there and entered the chapel which is within the precinct of the said abbey: that the said Richard Ferrers was there wearing a coat of mail and that the said provincial commanded him, in virtue of his obedience, to put it away and that he did so: that the said provincial, hearing that the mayor and citizens of Dublin were approaching in arms to take or kill them, directed the door of the said chapel to be shut and ordered William Lang to assume the coat of mail in self-protection: that they afterwards surrendered to the mayor and offered to hand over the coat of mail to him but that he forbade William Lang to put it away: that the mayor and citizens violently dragged them to the Tholsel and despoiled William of his coat of mail: that, therefore, they were innocent of the charge of robbing the same as had been alleged against them.

What is one to make of the ascription of the title of 'provincial' to John of Leicester? Was it a deliberate distortion of the facts in order, somehow or other, to confuse the issue, or did he, once he had been reinsinstated in control of *Hibernia Dominicana*, decide, in his ambitious Anglo-Norman

11 Blessed Raymund de Vineis of Capua (1380–99), master general 'of the Roman obedience'. Elias Raymond ruled those loyal to Avignon.

way, to assert his right to the dignity, in virtue of the ordination made at Carcassonne? One guess is as good as another.[12]

One can imagine the grim smile of Mortimer and the 'laughter in court' which greeted the story of the mock-heroics of these exceedingly amateurish 'bad men', and we should certainly be on our guard against imagining that anybody in Dublin at the time was particularly scandalised by it. Chesterton, I think it is, who says somewhere that the Middle Ages were often scandalous but never vulgar. He thereby makes two misstatements, since the period could be appallingly vulgar, as even a slight acquaintance with its literature shows, and it was seldom scandalous, in the sense that people then were not upset by things which appear to us to be very terrible indeed. We are duly shocked at the spectacle of two parties of Friars Preachers confronting each other with arms in their hands, but the people of the Middle Ages, with their tougher and more realistic outlook, were able to take that and a great deal more in their stride. The citizens of Dublin, at any rate, did not go into hysterics over it, since from another account of the affair which has come down to us,[13] it appears that they and the mayor, far from being the law-abiding guardians of the king's peace as they are represented in the story told in court, were in reality up to their necks in the whole business. This account states that the community of St Saviour's had plotted with the municipal authorities to oppose Leicester's entry into the convent, and that they had arranged to ring the great church bell on his approach as a signal to their confederates in the city. This explains the speedy appearance of the mayor and his following on the scene, as well as the fact that it was Leicester's party that was hauled off to gaol and summoned to court, whilst the others got off scot free.

It is not quite clear from the story what part was played by William Roche in the affair. Were there two individuals of the name – one, a member of Leicester's forlorn hope, and the other the prior of St Saviour's who gave evidence to the charge in court? Or was there only one who,

12 The true provincial of England (including Ireland) in 1380 was Thomas Rushook, reinstated in 1379. John of Leicester was merely vicar, under Rushook, of the houses in Ireland; it is unlikely that he claimed in court to be anything more than 'vicar provincial'. Perhaps it was common usage to describe such Dominican vicars as 'provincials'. Leicester must have been well known in Dublin, for he was prior there for most of the time between 1355 and 1375. See Connolly (ed.), *Irish exchequer payments* (Dublin 1998), ii, passim. **13** This is the version given by Archdall, p. 208, from King, *Collectanea*, p. 91. The Plea Rolls also noted the pardon on 4 Sept. 1381 of William Roche and other Dominicans, including a few not mentioned in the original charge. IDA, Coleman, *Historical notes*, i, pp 234–7, from King's *Collectanea*, p. 92.

more or less on the analogy of the bird of his famous namesake, Sir Boyle Roche, managed to be on both sides at the same time?[14]

One incident in the story, a mixture of the ludicrous and the pathetic, will probably have been noticed. That doughty warrior, Richard Ferrers, apparently the hope of his side, on Leicester's summoning him in the name of holy obedience to cease his opposition and to yield up his weapons (like those slaves in the ancient story who, having taken up arms in revolt, submitted when their masters appeared amongst them with whips in their hands) obeyed straight away. It speaks well for the basically sound quality of the man that, at the height of this tumultuous and passionate interlude, he should have displayed such regard for the fundamental obligations of his state, and that too in face of the fact that, in his eyes, the man who issued the Order had no authority to do so. The habit of obedience must have been strong indeed to triumph over such difficulties.

From the names of those involved in the trouble we gather that they were all Anglo-Normans, so that it was not a question of Ireland versus England, but simply another of those interminable broils between the colonists which had set in with such frequency from the early years of the thirteenth century onward, and which rendered them a greater curse to the country, if that were possible, than the endlessly foraying, raiding and plundering Gaelic chieftains themselves. The reader will be relieved to learn that the king pardoned everybody who had been concerned in the riot, and Leicester was allowed, apparently, to enter on his office without further opposition.[15]

14 The documents seem rather to suggest only one 'William Roche', prior of St Saviour's, pardoned in 1381. **15** A similar incident among the contemporary Augustinian friars of Dublin has been ably analysed by the late F.X. Martin with a wealth of detail on support for Avignon in Ireland, on anti-English feeling among the Anglo-Irish, and on analogous incidents among both the Knights Hospitallers and Dominicans of Dublin. See his 'Murder in a Dublin monastery, 1379', in G. Mac Niocaill and P.F. Wallace (eds), *Keimelia: studies in medieval archaeology and history in memory of Tom Delaney* (Galway, 1988), especially (for the Dominican story) pp 477–9.

CHAPTER 26

The Irish Vicariate, 1397–1532

As stated in the preceding chapter, Cardinal Caracciolo had decided that the general chapter of Carcassonne in 1378 had acted illegally in constituting the Irish houses an independent province of the Order and that, in consequence, they should revert to the vicarial status which they had previously enjoyed under the jurisdiction of the English provincial.

It is very likely that some at least of the Irish convents received this decree with mixed feelings, the violent happenings in Dublin and Drogheda giving the measure of their disappointment. Whether in order to put an end, once for all, to the agitation fomented by discontented friars, or for another reason which shall be dealt with presently, King Richard II, in 1397, addressed a memorial to the pope, Boniface IX, requesting him to take action with a view to restoring peace amongst the Irish Dominicans.[1]

There is no need to view the king's move otherwise than as a sincere attempt to work for the good of the Irish Dominican houses. Richard, whose misfortunes have been so powerfully dramatised in Shakespeare's great tragedy, was a sincerely religious man. It is told of him that he daily recited the divine office, and from the fact that he used a Dominican breviary it has been concluded that he was a tertiary of the Order.[2] It was, therefore, quite natural that he should interest himself in its affairs and that that was the reason for his appealing to the pope to bring the Irish friars to order. The pontiff, in reply, merely contented himself with reaffirming the decree of Caracciolo, and there the whole matter might have rested had not a fresh cause of disturbance been provoked by the general chapter held in Frankfurt in 1397, in which the extraordinary step was taken of deposing the superiors of all the vicariates in the Order.[3]

1 The king's request is mentioned in the papal bull (20 Feb. 1397) confirming Caracciolo's decree. Text in *Hib. Dom.*, pp 57–8. **2** It is certain that King Richard was 'wont to say the canonical hours with clerks and priests after the manner of the Friars Preachers': *Cal. papal letters*, iv, p. 508. He frequently resided at the Dominican convent of King's Langley, the richest Dominican house in England, where he was first buried. Thomas Rushook, the Dominican provincial, was actually his confessor. See Jarrett, pp 8–9, 13, 38. **3** The chapter acts of 1397 are in *Acta cap. gen.*, iii, pp 93–102, with those of the 'Roman obedience'.

It is not quite clear why the chapter decided on this drastic measure. It may be that the fathers felt that the devolution of power made possible by the vicariate system enabled provincials to shirk their duties in order to devote themselves to more mundane pursuits. It was, of course, a normal feature of clerical life in the Middle Ages, that an ecclesiastic was prepared to devote himself to any and every activity except the one for which he had been ordained. He could be a minister of state, a financier, a military leader, a diplomat, but could not find time to administer his diocese or parish or monastery.

Many Dominicans had, in the course of the fourteenth century, manifested similar proclivities, and it is possible that the capitulars of Frankfurt, in dissolving the vicariates, had no other end in view than to compel the provincials to attend to their own business and to cease playing at politics or diplomacy. Or it may be that they were acting from a less worthy motive: that, in fact, the move was directed against the effort that had been launched a few years previously by Blessed Raymund of Capua to recall the Order to the strict observance of the Rule of St Dominic which had, in the course of the fourteenth century, been largely abandoned.[4]

Amongst those who answered the call of Raymund was that great and saintly religious, Conrad of Prussia, to whom was committed the task of reforming the German houses. Though the measure of success that attended his efforts was small, it was probably sufficient to alarm those who did not want reform. And, since the members of the chapter undoubtedly belonged to this faction, we can easily understand that the device of abolishing the vicariates must have seemed to them the simplest and easiest way of putting an end to all attempts at reform; it being understood that an essential condition to the restoration of primitive observance in a group of convents was the removing them from the jurisdiction of the provincial and placing them under a vicar nominated by the master general.

Whatever reason the fathers of the Frankfurt chapter had for their action, the Irish friars were thrown by it into a state of alarm and in due course the priors of all convents in the country petitioned the pope to countermand the decree and to permit their vicariate to continue in existence under the same conditions as before.[5] This action led to

4 This is rather unlikely, since Blessed Raymund himself attended the Frankfurt chapter as master general. The 'Rule of St Dominic' was not a particular document but the ordinations made by general chapters before and after his death. 5 The petition of the

momentous consequences which, however, did not reveal themselves fully till another century had passed. The pontiff acceded to the petition of the Irish friars. He published a bull in 1400 in which the charter of Berengar (1314) was confirmed in all its provisions. It was quoted in full and declared to be promulgated by apostolic authority, and a prohibition was laid down forbidding anybody henceforth to contradict it or violate its provisions.[6]

The effect of the bull can be seen in the acts of the general chapter of the following year which again orders the suppression of all vicariates with the exception of those of Ireland, Scotland and Armenia.[7] With this ordinance the troubled chapter in the history of *Hibernia Dominicana* which had opened in 1378 was brought to a close. From this time till almost the close of the fifteenth century it found itself free from constitutional experiments and pursued its life (largely a hidden one) in its own way.

A new phase in its history opened in the year 1484. At the general chapter held in Rome in that year, under the presidency of the newly elected master general Bartholomew de Comatiis, Ireland was promoted once again to provincial status. The relevant entry in the acts of the chapter records that the decree emanated from the unanimous decision of the capitulars, including the English provincial, William Richford.[8]

It is stated by de Burgo, who does not quote his authority, that Richford was so impressed by the arguments of the Irish representatives at the chapter – Berengar's charter, we must remember, provided for the attendance of two delegates of the vicariate at the general chapter, who, however, had no right to vote – that he willingly agreed to the creation of the new province.[9]

'priors, convents and friars' to Boniface IX was expressly mentioned in and answered by his bull of 21 Feb. 1400: *Hib. Dom.*, p. 58. **6** *Cal. papal letters,* v, p. 323. Full text of the bull, rehearsing the ruling of Berengarius in 1314, in *Hib. Dom.*, pp 49–50, 58–9. The bull does not refer to any general chapter later than that of 1314. **7** *Acta cap. gen.*, iii, p. 107. **8** Denunciamus, maximis et rationabilibus causis in presenti capitulo alligatis, de unanimo voto reverendorum provincialium et diffinitorum presentis capituli, nacionem Hyberniae provinciam fecisse (sic), quam provinciam, per se volumus a provincia Angliae distinctam et separatam esse et appellari, et eamdem provinciam Hyberniae cum suis conventibus, privilegiis omnibus, gratiis et libertatibus ordinis quemadmodum ceterae provinciae gaudere debere, ac locum inter alias provincias in nostris capitulis generalibus ut moris est obtinere. Et ne praedicta provincia idoneo capite careat pro tempore, reverendissimus magister ordinis fratrem Mauricium Meral theologiae magistrum in priorem provincialem praedictae provinciae Hyberniae instituit et creavit, dando ei auctoritatem super dictam provinciam in spiritualibus et in temporalibus, etc.: *Acta cap. gen.*, iii, pp 383–4. Though the text does not expressly mention the provincial of England, the vote of the chapter was unanimous. **9** *Hib. Dom.*, pp 73–4. The English provincial, while voting for Irish

Friar Maurice Meral or Moral was appointed interim provincial till such time as a provincial chapter could be convened with a view to providing a superior by normal constitutional procedure. As we shall see later, the creation of the new province appears to have been linked up with a scheme for the restoration of strict observance in the Irish houses of the Order and was, almost certainly, inspired by a similar move which had been made in Scotland three years previously. That country had, like Ireland, been a vicariate of the English province but from 1349 onwards had, for all practical purposes, been exempt from the jurisdiction of the English provincial and placed directly under the master general. Its houses appear to have maintained a tolerably satisfactory level of observance during the fifteenth century and played an important part in the religious and educational life of the country. The Glasgow convent of Blackfriars appears to have taken the leading role in the establishment of the university in that city, and the theological faculty was established in the Dominican school there.[10]

It is strange that, after Scotland had finally defeated the attempt of England to destroy her independence, the friars did not fall into line with the national achievement. At any rate, the nominal status of subjection to the English provincial lasted till 1481, in which year the general chapter, '*ad instantiam et preces serenissimi regis Scotiae*',[11] promoted the vicariate to provincial dignity. We may take it for granted that the Scottish king had acted in this way under the promptings of the friars. Very likely they did so by way of preparing for the introduction of the strict observance into their convents, since we find a strong movement in that direction in being a few years later under the leadership and inspiration of the holy and learned religious, Friar John Adam.

One is therefore justified in presuming that the creation of the Irish province in 1484 was directly inspired by the similar recent event in

independence, would have had reasons of his own for doing so. Scotland for instance, another vicariate of the English province, had become a province shortly before in 1481. Besides, since the death of Edward IV in 1483, the English monarchy was highly unstable and its Irish colony even more troublesome than before. See S.G. Ellis, *Tudor Ireland: crown, community and the conflict of cultures* (London, 1985), pp 66–7. **10** These views correspond with those of the late Anthony Ross OP, *Dogs of the Lord: the story of the Dominican Order in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1981), unpaged. On the role of Scottish Dominicans in university life and their 'reform movement', see A. White, 'Dominicans and the Scottish university tradition', in *New Blackfriars,* vol. 82, no. 968 (Oct. 2001), pp 434–49; also J.P. Foggie, *Renaissance religion in urban Scotland: the Dominican Order, 1450–1560* (Leiden, 2003). This last reference from C. Ó Clabaigh. **11** 'At the instance and request of his serene highness the King of Scotland', James III.

Scottish Dominican history. And this presumption is strengthened by the fact that, very soon after the establishment of the province, an energetic movement was set on foot under the leadership of Maurice Moral (or Meral) to introduce reformed observance into the new province.

By the way, who was Maurice Moral? The name suggests a Spanish origin but he was, apparently, Irish. In the register of the master general Leonard de Mansuetis, under date 1474, we find him assigned as *baccalaureus extraordinarius* to Oxford to read for his master's degree.[12] In another document of the same period the name occurs under the form, *Merral*. In the register of Athenry, he is stated to have built a chapel in the church there in honour of SS. Catherine of Siena and of Alexandria, and mention is made of a donation of ten ounces (of silver?) given by Lord Thomas Bermingham and his wife, Annabella de Burgo, for a window in this chapel 'and for the soul of Master *Maurice O'Mochan Moral* founder of this chapel'.[13]

This entry enables us to decide with a fair amount of accuracy on the form of the name. The *O'Mochan* element which figures therein suggests that he was a member of the family who acted as hereditary erenaghs of the parish of Killaraght on the shores of Lough Gara in Mayo. Gregory Ó Mocháin (†1392) was archbishop of Tuam and is described in the *Annals of Connacht* as a man eminent for piety and learning. According to de Burgo, a branch of the family was established in Galway and possessed burial rights in the abbey of Athenry.[14] Probably the archbishop and our Maurice were members of this family.

The *Morall* or *Merral* element is puzzling. Are we to regard it as forming with *O'Mochan* a double-barrelled name, part Irish and part English? Or is it a rendering of a nickname in Gaelic such as we often find attached to members of a sub-branch of an important family, so that it might read *O'Mochan Mórálach* (Haughty)? It may be significant in this connection that amongst the marginal scribblings in the hand of Charles O'Conor of Belanagare which occur in the original manuscript of the *Annals of Connacht*, against the name of archbishop Gregory O'Mocháin is found

12 Fenning, 'Irish material', p. 257. The actual spelling here is 'Morall'. The entries for his reception of sacred orders at Salisbury and Worcester (1460–2) give 'Morell'. Ibid. **13** *Regestum de Athenry*, pp 218–20. This source, which twice refers to him as founder of the chapel of the two SS. Catherines, never styles him 'provincial' but only 'vicar of Ireland', which post he may have held even before 1484; nor does it give his obit. *Hib. Dom.*, p. 518, suggests he died *c.*1502. **14** There was a closer contemporary, Cornelius Ó Mocháin O.Cist., bishop of Achonry, 1449–*c.*1463. 'The Moghan family' is mentioned in a list of those buried at Athenry before 1756. *Hib. Dom.*, p. 222.

the syllable – *MOR* – as if the old scholar was surmising that the Gaelic epithet might apply to him, and left the matter undecided.

Scattered little scraps of information are forthcoming which rather add to than lessen our puzzlement. Thus in the district of Ballyduff in North Kerry there is a townland which bears the name of Ballymorrall. And, in a very venomous anti-Irish tract by Barnaby Rich, one of the seventeenth-century defamers of Ireland, there is an allegorical dispute between a popish priest and Patrick Plain, a young student of Trinity College, Dublin.[15] The priest's name is *Sir Thady Mac Morall* of Waterford! Could the Morall of these references be an anglicised rendering of *O'Murthuile* (= Hurley)? As late of the eighteenth century there was an Irish Dominican who bore this name under the form O'Morrily.[16]

Some one of these various suggestions is valid as an explanation of our Maurice's name, but as to which is the correct one it is impossible to say. We feel safe in inferring from the meagre facts at our disposal that he was an *alumnus* of Athenry – that he taught there for some years, possibly in 'the chamber of the English bachelors', of which mention was made in a previous chapter – that, in due course, he was licensed to proceed to Oxford to sit for his master's examination, and that he was probably prior of Athenry at the time when the momentous chapter of 1484 sat in Rome. It is even possible that the vicariate chapter held at Athenry in 1482 was induced by him to apply to the general chapter to have *Hibernia Dominicana* raised to provincial dignity.

We do not know whether Maurice was elected, in due canonical fashion, by a chapter constitutionally assembled, to be provincial of Ireland, since no record of the activities of the Irish Dominicans during the seven years following the creation of the province has been preserved.[17] In 1491, however, at the general chapter of Le Mans, they came once more into the limelight when they lost their previously acquired provincial status and found their country again a vicariate of England. The explanation of this occurrence is simple but instructive.

15 Barnaby Rich, *A Catholike conference between Syr Tady Mac. Mareall a popish priest of Waterforde and Patrick Plaine* (London, 1612). **16** There were in fact four named 'Morilly': Dominic Bernard (†1755), Hugh (†1756), James († before 1781) and Walter († before 1773). All four belonged to the convent of Urlar, Co. Mayo, in the diocese of Achonry, about twelve miles south west of Lough Gara. James, in 1756, styled himself 'Murray alias Morilly'. E. MacLysaght gives 'Morrally, Morley, *Ó Murghaile*. A Mayo name for which the English surname Morley is now almost always used. It must be clearly distinguished from the Munster Murley (see Hurley).' See *A guide to Irish surnames* (Dublin, 1964), p. 156. **17** 'Magister Mauritius Meral' was appointed provincial of Ireland by the master general and general chapter at Rome in October 1484. See Fenning, 'Irish material', p. 260.

The capitular fathers of Rome, like Lord Randolph Churchill on a certain occasion, forgot something when they created the Irish province. The vicariate, as has been previously explained, appears to have existed in some shape or form practically from the commencement of Irish Dominican history, and had been given definite constitutional validity by Berengar's charter in 1314. If things had remained thus it was naturally within the power of the general chapter, whenever it might see fit to do so, to confer provincial status on Ireland but, as we have seen, another factor entered into the situation in 1400 in the shape of the bull of Boniface IX.

By this document the juridical basis of the vicariate was shifted from Dominican constitutional jurisdiction to the apostolic authority of the Holy See and the general chapter was in consequence deprived of all right to alter or abolish it. No lesser jurisdiction than that of the pope has power to revoke an apostolic decree. Consequently, the chapter of Rome (1484), in declaring Ireland a province, was acting *ultra vires* and its decree was null and void. Someone had blundered through being ignorant of the existence of the bull of 1400 and apparently, in due course the error was brought to the notice of the authorities of the Order. Thereupon, the process of exploring avenues, retracing steps, and retiring to a previously prepared position had to be gone through.

So it was that, at the general chapter of Le Mans in 1491, it was enacted that Ireland should, once more, revert to vicarial status and be placed under the jurisdiction of England 'in accordance with the terms of a certain bull which had been laid before the fathers'.[18] One can detect an attempt at face-saving in the vague manner of reference to this document, and I have to confess that I was, for a time, deceived by it, believing that it referred to a recently issued decree of the Holy See which had been procured by somebody who was opposed to Irish interests. There can, however, be no doubt that the bull of Boniface (1400) was the one in question, that it had probably been brought to the notice of the master general (Joachim Torriani) by the papal officials, and that the chapter had, in consequence, to execute its *volte face* with the best grace it could command.[19]

18 *Acta cap. gen.*, iii, pp 408–9. The chapter, which opened in May 1491, was of definitors only, among them Richard Herre (elsewhere Hart) for Ireland. Maurice Morall was relieved of the office of vicar, at his own request, on 17 July. See Fenning, 'Irish material', p. 263. **19** The chapter may also have been reminded of the Bull by the definitor for England, Peter Hem.

It is astonishing to find de Burgo, in his account of these transactions, not only ignoring the bearing of the papal decree on the act of the (Roman) chapter of 1484, but still more that he should omit all reference to the revocation by the assembly of Le Mans (1491) of the proceedings of the Roman chapter. It was not that he did not make a close study of the acts of both chapters. He makes, in fact, voluminous quotations from them in his endeavour to prove that 1484 is the foundation date of the Irish province.[20]

He has devoted long pages to a dispute on this issue with the Italian Dominican, Fontana, who maintained that Ireland did not become a province of the Order till 1622.[21] Both, as we shall see, were wrong, though the Irishman is more blameworthy than the Italian. Fontana might adduce, in support of his opinion, the fact that Ireland was neither represented at nor mentioned in the acts of any chapter from 1558 to 1618, and that at this latter assembly it is described as a Congregation. He might, however, have given a glance at the acts of the chapter of 1558 and would have been led to change his views thereby. And he might have reflected that the dispersal of so many communities during the Elizabethan persecution, with the consequent destruction of organised religious life throughout the country afforded a sufficient explanation of the absence of Ireland from the various chapters which sat during this long period.

To return to Le Mans in 1491: Ireland was represented there by Richard Herre (*query* Hare or Hehir, or O'Hart)[22], and de Burgo makes great play with the fact that he came there on that mission. He regards this as the final, clinching proof that Ireland enjoyed provincial status from 1484 and that Richard acted as diffinitor of his province at the general chapter of Le Mans.

He may, indeed, have come there and taken his place in that capacity, but at some point in the deliberations of the assembly, when the *certain bull* was brought to the notice of the capitulars, he was compelled to vacate his

20 *Hib. Dom.*, pp 74–5, 517–18. The author, Thomas Burke, seems not to have had the full text of the 1491 chapter but only excerpts from it, e. g. the list of definitors. Burke also cited two papal bulls of 1488 expressly addressed to the 'prior provincial of Ireland'. **21** Op. cit., pp 97–102. The reference is to Vincent Fontana OP, historian. **22** Richard Hart, bachelor, was granted permission on 10 Nov. 1488 to present fifteen young men for priestly orders in their twenty-third year. Maurice Morall, provincial, received exactly the same permission on the same day. This indicates that Hart was a vicar of some kind in Ireland contemporaneously with the provincial. See Fenning, 'Irish material', p. 261. He belonged to the convent of Sligo in 1491; in 1496 was named vicar general of the 'province' (though not of the observant houses); and in 1505 was named vicar of the non-reformed houses in Ireland for a four-year period, subject to the confirmation of the provincial of England. Art. cit., pp 264–6. **23** First perhaps in the mode of his conferral,

seat and take his station amongst the crowd of humble petitioners outside the bar. He did not do too badly for himself, however, since he was bonnetted a master in theology: 'by the authority of his holiness the Pope he was publicly conferred with the mastership by the most reverend master general': the first of a long line of Irish Dominicans to be so distinguished.[23]

If anybody, after what has been said here, still feels inclined to accept de Burgo's date (1484) for the foundation of the Irish province, these two little facts may make him change his mind. At the chapter of Rome in 1530, the province of *Germania Inferior* (Holland) was created, and at the chapter of 1532 the Dominican mission territory in the West Indies received provincial status under the title of 'The province of the Holy Cross'. In all official lists of provinces during that period, Ireland comes after those two. It must, therefore, have been created a province at some date subsequent to 1532.[24]

but Hart was not the first Irish Dominican 'master of theology'. Maurice Morall, for one, already held that title in 1484. **24** Precisely in 1536, when the registers of the master general note the appointment of Master David [Browne] as provincial of the province of Ireland, 'recently created'. See Fenning, 'Irish materials', p. 270. There is a brief outline of the evolution of the 'province' from 1482 to 1536, and in greater detail for a century thereafter, in Flynn, pp 4, 44–5.

CHAPTER 27

Juridical Status and Reformed Observance: 1484–1558

Concurrently with the abortive attempt to establish an Irish province of the Order in 1484 a move was set on foot to introduce reformed observance into a small number of the houses. Though a full examination of this episode must be reserved for a later chapter, still, since it resulted in creating a certain amount of confusion in the juridical sphere, we must devote a little space to it at this juncture.[1]

Shortly after the general chapter of Rome in 1484, the master general Joachim Torriani commissioned the newly-fledged provincial of Ireland, Maurice O'Mochan Morall, to undertake the task of reformation.[2] We have no information concerning the procedure followed or the measure of success attendant on this enterprise, but considering that the number of convents involved amounted only to five (Cork, Youghal, Limerick, Drogheda and Coleraine) and that apparently no other house rallied to the reform for some years subsequently, one must conclude that his efforts met with some degree of opposition.

When the chapter of Le Mans in 1491 abrogated the decree establishing the Irish province, Morall had of course to retire from his post. He apparently even lost control of the reformed convents, and for two years thereafter there is no mention of a responsible head of the Irish houses. We must naturally believe that the English provincial provided for the government of the vicariate but, however that may be, the master general Joachim Torriani in 1493 appointed Morall vicar of Ireland and empowered him to proceed with the reformation of the houses, Youghal being specially mentioned.

In the letter of appointment the master general refers to Morall as vicar of the province but, by a truly laughable blunder, de Burgo states that

1 Obviously Fr O'Sullivan intended to write a further chapter, but this is the last in the series. 2 O'Sullivan wrongly named the master general 'Bartholomew de Comatiis', who died in Aug. 1485. Torriani issued his licence to Morall on 10 Nov. 1488, permitting the provincial to reform the five convents named, as well as such others as he might persuade to join the reform. See Fenning, 'Irish material', p. 261.

Torriani christened him 'provincial' *tout court* and gleefully fastens on this alleged fact as proof that Ireland was a province in 1493.[3] If he had only taken the trouble to do what every historian is obliged to do – to verify his references – he would not have been led to the perpetration of this folly. The irony of the situation is heightened by the fact that his *bête noir*, Fontana, was responsible for leading him astray.

Apparently de Burgo never read the letter in the original but contented himself with inspecting it in the text of Fontana's history of the Order. The reference here is not to Torriani's letter of appointment of 1493 in which Morall is definitely styled vicar general of the province, but to another which runs thus, according to Fontana:

> *From the register of Torriani* ... Letter to Hibernia: 'Among many other matters pertaining to this province the letter continues:–
>
> Friar M(aurice), *prior provincial* obtained licence to reform the convents of Cork, Drogheda and Coleraine, etc. ...
>
> Dated Milan, Nov. 10th 1484[!]

Fontana, thus, with extraordinary carelessness, ascribed to Torriani the letter which had been written by his predecessor de Comatiis in 1484 when Morall had been appointed provincial of Ireland, and de Burgo blindly accepted the statement as true notwithstanding the fact that the date given (1484) ruled out Torriani as the writer. And, in any case, how could a responsible historian of the Order imagine that the *ipse dixit* of a master general suffices to override a legislative decision of a general chapter?[4]

A further development took place in 1496 when Morall's term of office came to an end. He was appointed to the charge of the reformed houses exclusively. A mandate to this effect was issued by the master general on 12 April of that year, and on the 26th of the same month, Richard Hart was appointed vicar of the unreformed houses.[5] The latter was to hold office till a successor should be elected according to the procedure set forth in Berengar's charter, but the confirmation of the vicar-elect was

3 The entry in the general's register, under 7 Aug. 1493, styles Morall 'vicar general of the province'. See Fenning, 'Irish material', p. 263. **4** The wrong year (1484 in error for 1488) does appear in V. Fontana, *Constitutiones ... ord. frat. praed. Secunda pars* (Rome, 1656), col. 209, and was so quoted by Burke in *Hib. Dom.*, pp 73–4. But the misprint in Fontana did not lead Burke astray, as may be seen from his excellent account of Morall in *Hib. Dom.*, pp 517–18. **5** The original text named Hart *'vicarius provinciae et electionis pro electione futuri vicarii generalis'*. See Fenning, 'Irish material', p. 264.

committed, not to the English provincial as it normally would be, but to Maurice Morall! De Burgo would naturally see in this arrangement confirmation of his claim that Ireland was independent of England at that date. But of course it meant no more than an *ad hoc* appointment by the master general to ensure that a worthy superior was appointed to the difficult job of ruling the unreformed houses. It appears that from that time forward the vicar of the reformed houses was appointed directly by the master general while the superior of the unreformed convents derived his authority, as formerly, from the provincial of England.

Maurice Morall died in 1502, leaving a memory worthy to be cherished by all Irish Dominicans. Master of Oxford, and thus one of the distinguished line of learned men who have brought glory to the Order, he added to this the higher title of holy and observant religious. That this was how he was regarded by his contemporaries is sufficiently attested by the erection of the chapel of St Catherine by the Bermingham family in Athenry: '*pro anima Magistri Mauricii y Mochain Morall*'.[6]

At the time of his death, Vincent Bandelli, one of the greatest of the reforming masters general, ruled the Order. Somewhere about the end of 1503 he took the bold step of nominating Jean de Bauffremez, vicar-general of the reformed Congregation of Holland, as vicar of the reformed houses of Ireland.[7] To understand the real significance of this measure, we must note that a reformed congregation of the Order at that period might embrace houses belonging to different provinces. One of the essential steps in launching the reformation in a particular area usually involved the setting aside of the jurisdiction of the provincial and placing the reformed convents under the direct authority of the master general. The position thus won was usually secured by the procurement of a papal bull which established the reformed convents as a separate juridical body known as a Congregation with special provisions regulating elections, observance, and suchlike matters. The Congregation thus established had the power to aggregate to itself any convent which wished to join the reform whether the provincial of the said convent agreed to this or not.

The Congregation of Holland was the greatest of the reformed bodies in the Order and included in its membership convents not only from the

6 Friar Maurice Moghane Morall himself was the founder of this chapel. The Berminghams paid for a large window in it. *Regestum de Athenry*, pp 218–19. **7** At Ghent on 3 June 1503. Two years earlier, a friar of Cork named Thomas Machascule was permitted by the general to go ('*licentia eundi*') to the Congregation of Holland. See Fenning, 'Irish material', p. 265.

Low Countries but from France, Germany, Scandinavia and even Poland as well. One may suspect that, under Morall, the reform had not made much headway in Ireland and, in that hypothesis, it was natural that the master general should look to the all-conquering reformers of the Congregation of Holland to supply a much needed stimulus to their Irish confreres. As well as that, he procured from Pope Julius II a bull dated 23 January 1504, establishing the reformed convents of Ireland by apostolic decree as a Congregation to be ruled by a vicar general who should be totally withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the English provincial and subject directly to the master general.[8]

Unfortunately, Bauffremez died the next year without, as far as we know, having visited Ireland and no further attempt was made to associate this country with the Congregation of Holland. One cannot but feel that this was nothing short of a calamity for *Hibernia Dominicana*. Had the project been persisted in, it might well have resulted in the anticipation by over a hundred years of the appearance on the scene of an Irish Dominican province such as we find in the seventeenth century: a hive of learning and zeal and holy living, all the result of the contacts then established with the great reformed houses of Italy, France and, above all, of Spain.

In September 1505, John Coyn or Quin was appointed vicar of the reformed congregation of Ireland, and in the same year Richard Hart was re-appointed vicar of the unreformed houses, and this latter appointment was confirmed by the English provincial.[9]

Now, under this same date, we find mention of a Simon Lacy STD, vicar general of the Irish Dominicans, in a document which has been preserved, granting a share in all Masses, prayers, preachings, fasts, etc., of the Order throughout Ireland, to John Caddell and Genet Taylor.[10]

8 This bull is reprinted in *Hib. Dom.*, pp 77–8. It did not set up a 'congregation' but confirmed the authority of Jean de Baufremez, vicar general of the Congregation of Holland, over such Irish convents as sought reform, particularly those of Cork, Limerick and Youghal. Both Henry VII and Maurice Fitzgerald, archbishop of Cashel, had supported this initiative. The three named convents were in the province of Cashel, and the archbishop was *conservator* of the privileges of the Order. Since the four geographical provinces of Ireland were almost different countries, it may well be that the friars of Munster preferred to be ruled from Holland rather than from Connacht. **9** Text in Fenning, 'Irish material', p. 266. Strictly speaking, Quin was then confirmed in office as 'vicar of the Congregation of Ireland' for a three-year period, owing no obedience to the provincial of England. Presumably he was himself subject to the vicar general in Holland, unless that arrangement had fallen through. **10** J.G. Smyly (ed.), 'Old deeds in the library of Trinity College, part V', in *Hermathena*, lxxi (May 1948), p. 51. Lacy signed the document at Dublin in 1505.

There were, then, in this year (1505) three vicars exercising jurisdiction in various capacities in Ireland. Of these, the position of John Quin is clear: he had charge of the reformed congregation, being exempt from the control of the English provincial and responsible directly to the master general. But what of the other two? They both acted as vicars of the English provincial, since it is stated that Hart was confirmed in office by him and Lacy is styled vicar of the English in a letter written by the great Thomas de Vio Cajetan, who succeeded Bandelli as master general in 1509.[11] In his first year in office Cajetan addressed a blunt enquiry to each of the three vicars, demanding information as to the method of their appointment, the source of their authority and the extent of their jurisdiction.

The replies of the vicars have not been preserved and we must therefore rest satisfied with a surmise as to their contents. It seems fairly obvious that Simon Lacy exercised authority over the houses which were situated in the part of the country subject to the control of the English government in Dublin. Cajetan certainly regarded him as the official head of the vicariate since, in the letter already referred to, he ordered every conventual prior, on pain of dismissal from office, to hand over to Lacy, vicar of the English provincial in Ireland, the contribution due to the master general. The sum levied on each individual house was three ducats, and the total came to 114 ducats. This gives a total of thirty-eight convents, a figure which tallies with our previous findings. If our suggestion regarding Simon Lacy's position is correct, it would appear to follow that Richard Hart had the care of the unreformed houses in the parts of the country outside the English Pale.[12] At this time, and for a century and a half previously, practically the whole of Connacht and Ulster, with large adjoining areas in Leinster and Munster, had cast off English rule, and no English official, ecclesiastical or civil, dared venture within their confines. It had become usual in these circumstances for English prelates ruling Irish dioceses to appoint an Irishman as archdeacon for the portion of their territory within which no English writ was allowed to run. In the archdiocese of Armagh, for instance, which was

11 On 13 Nov. 1509. Cajetan does not name the three, but describes their areas of competence: 'one over the three reformed convents, another over the entire nation by appointment of Master Vincent [Bandelli], the third styling himself vicar of the provincial of England.' See Fenning, 'Irish material', p. 267. Were Cork, Limerick and Youghal the 'three reformed convents' in question? **12** In Sept. 1505, Hart was named by the master general vicar of the unreformed houses in Ireland, but this apppointment was to be confirmed by the provincial of England. As vicar he would have the authority of a provincial during his four-year term. See Fenning, 'Irish material', p. 266.

ruled by Englishmen or by colonists from the early fourteenth century onwards, the areas within Irish control were committed to the care of the archdeacon *inter Hibernos*. In the diocese of Ardfert, the archdeacon of Aghadoe filled a similar role.

Very probably, then, Richard Hart played a like part in regard to the Dominican convents situated *inter Hibernos*. From the name, one gathers that he was Irish, possibly a member of the O'Hart clan in Sligo, and possibly, therefore, an alumnus of the abbey of Holy Cross in that town.[13] If this be the case, he might claim relationship with Eugene O'Hart who, later in the sixteenth century, was to shed such lustre on the Irish Church and on the Dominican Order.[14]

The next incident of note in the history of *Hibernia Dominicana* happened in 1518. In that year, at the general chapter held at Rome, the reformed congregation of Ireland established by Vincent Bandelli was formally adopted and approved by the Order.[15] This was the normal constitutional procedure, since the general chapter, as the supreme governing body of the Order, had the right to review, confirm or quash any act of a master general. In the present instance however the act of confirmation was just a piece of legal play-acting since, in consequence of Bandelli's establishment of the Irish Congregation being buttressed by a papal bull (1504), the chapter daren't do otherwise than confirm it.[16] From the act of confirmation some interesting facts emerge:

(1) The Congregation was established *'in natione Hiberniae'*, in other words, within the vicariate of Ireland – a country which, though not enjoying provincial status, was governed by a vicar who exercised quasi-autonomous jurisdiction. Such is the technical sense attaching to the term '*natio*' in Dominican legal terminology.

(2) The provincial of England and his vicar (obviously his representative in Ireland) were warned under threat of severe penalties not to impede the process of reformation and especially not to receive into unreformed convents those friars who might find the burden of strict observance so great that their only resource lay in flight and seeking shelter in the more congenial climate of a relaxed convent.

13 Richard Hart was certainly of Sligo in 1491, though an entry of 1490 speaks of a 'Richardus Herth, conventus Banniensis [Coleraine], bachalarius'. See Fenning, 'Irish material', p. 262. **14** Eugene O'Hart, bishop of Achonry, 1562–1603. **15** *Acta cap. gen.*, iv, p. 174. '*Acceptamus congregationem vitae regularis in natione Hiberniae cum gratiis … ei per magistrum Vincentium Bandellum … concessis.*' The text does not expressly state that Bandelli (1501–6) had established this 'congregation'. No Irish representative attended this Roman chapter of 1518, though others came from England and Scotland. **16** *Hib. Dom.*, pp 80–1.

(3) It is clear, therefore, that the Congregation did not include all the Irish convents and that thenceforward there was in Ireland, as in nearly all provinces of the Order at that juncture, an observant elite varying in strength from one ecclesiastical province to another.

It had become the custom by this time in the Order, following the lead of the Franciscans, to style these two parties *Observants* and *Conventuals*. Both were represented in Ireland all through the sixteenth century, in the midst of desolating wars, massacres, persecution, suppression and dispersal, though we have no means of determining the relative strength of the two sections. The truth of this statement appears in a passage which occurs in a report sent in 1593 to the master general by the acting vicar general of Ireland, Thady O'Devany.[17] The writer speaks of 'our places both of the reformed and of those not reformed' and then proceeds to reveal that the unreformed were governed by a vicar who was apparently independent of the Irish provincial.

It has seemed necessary to devote some space to the clarification of this matter since de Burgo is again found in error in his manner of treating it. He states that in 1518 all the Irish convents were included in the reformed Congregation and in this he has been followed by every writer who has handled the question.[18] Fontana again seems to have been responsible for leading our historian astray, for this is how he describes the capitular action:

> In consequence of the greatly increased number of houses of strict observance (in Ireland) a congregation embracing those convents was created which was accepted by the general chapter of 1518.

The 'greatly increased number' existed only in Fontana's imagination, since there is no document in existence that might enable us to determine the extent of the reform.[19] Apparently, however, the assertion was regarded

17 The letter of Thady MacaDuany (his original signature), written at Coleraine on 1 Aug. 1593, is most readily found in Mould, *Irish Dominicans*, pp 247–9. MacDuane, as he is usually called, was not 'vicar general' but a vicar named to rule the province by the dying provincial Eugene Machugan. All this is better treated by Flynn, *The Irish Dominicans*, pp 88–9. **18** Not so. Burke simply says that by 1518 'the number of observant houses had increased'; that some even within the Pale (Cork, Limerick, Youghal) were by now Observant; and that these coalesced into a Congregation approved in 1518. See *Hib. Dom.*, pp 80–1. **19** Cajetan, in 1509, said there were three reformed convents. Fenning, 'Irish material', p. 267. O'Sullivan is here a little unfair to Burke, who admitted that the convents of the Pale may have remained subject to the English provincial until 1536. See *Hib. Dom.*,

by de Burgo as justifying his holding that all the Irish Dominican convents had embraced the strict observance by 1518. We have seen how wide of the mark that conclusion is.

John Quin who, as we have seen, was appointed vicar of the reform in 1505, is found exercising the office in 1524, in which year he was appointed bishop of Limerick. Whether he had been re-appointed at the end of each triennial period in the interval we cannot say. His nomination to the see of Limerick was strongly supported by Henry VIII who, in his letter of commendation to the pope, speaks of him as a learned man of holy and edifying life. We can only hope that he merited the king's encomium, though we must be pardoned for feeling some doubt about it, since his subsequent career was anything but edifying. The disgraceful story of his life is set forth at length in Archdeacon Begley's *History of the Diocese of Limerick*,[20] and to that magisterial work the inquiring reader is referred.

We come at last to the end of the long travail through which *Hibernia Dominicana* passed before its birth as a province of the Order. This was accomplished in 1536 by decree of the reigning pope, Paul III, and that is the true date of the foundation of the Irish province.[21]

The pope was motivated in his action, we may be sure, not by any doctrinaire regard for the niceties of Dominican constitutional procedure or from a wish to observe strict canonical principles, though indeed it is true that an Irish province could not be established except by papal decree, since only in that way could the bull of Boniface IX be annulled. The reason for the pope's action was simply that, because of the religious revolution which had broken out in England over the preceding three years, Ireland, after centuries spent in cold oblivion, suddenly found herself to be a rather important piece on the international chess board.

By 1536 Henry VIII had completely broken with Rome and had embarked, with all the engaging and undiscriminating zeal of a neophyte, on the suppression of the religious houses and the confiscation of their property. The English Dominican province thereby ceased to exist and in

p. 81. The capitular text of 1518 accepted the 'Congregation of the Regular Life *'in natione Hiberniae'* and approved the privileges granted to it by Bandelli, master general. **20** J. Begley, *The diocese of Limerick in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Dublin, 1927), pp 162–8. Bishop Quin or Coyne, of the convent of Kilmallock, renounced papal authority in 1538, but opposed the abolition of the Mass in 1550. He was bedridden and blind for six years before his death in 1555. According to David Wolfe SJ, Quin kept a common-law wife and family throughout his episcopate. Op. cit., p. 166. **21** Unfortunately the text of this papal bull has never been found. It is known only from a reference to it in the general

order to fill the vacuum thus created the Irish province was called into being. It is possible that the pope took this step after consultation with that rather shadowy figure – Master David – who is stated to have been appointed first provincial of the newly created province.[22]

Who was this Master David? According to Ware, he was David Browne, brilliant alumnus of the Dominican convent of Tralee whose talents won him great distinction in the Order. He attracted the notice of Henry VIII, who made use of him on some diplomatic missions. He served the king faithfully and well till the divorce proceedings, with all the evil consequences to which they led, were instituted, whereupon he resigned from the king's service and spent the remainder of his life abroad. If this account is true (and it is not inherently improbable) David Browne after breaking with Henry would probably take up his abode in Rome, and the unusual appellation by which he is designated in the records appear to bear this out. '*Magister David*' suggests a personage familiar and even intimate with the ruling circles in Rome: one respected and revered for his qualities and attainments.

There is a temptation to identify him with a personage who figures in earlier records. A certain David Browne OP was admitted to lecture on the *Sentences* in Cambridge University in 1515, and we find that in the same year a Dominican of that name received the degree of STM at the general chapter of Naples, where he represented the English province as diffinitor. Are these two identical? Possibly. Are they to be equated with Magister David? Equally possibly, but of course we have no chance of proving it. I must confess that I have searched the State Papers of Henry's reign for some mention of David and have searched in vain. If then Ware's statement is correct, we must conclude that he served Henry in a very minor capacity, so insignificant that it did not call for mention in any state document.[23]

The Irish province, thus established by papal decree, received only tardy recognition from the Order.[24] It was not till 1558, at the general chapter

chapter acts of 1558. **22** His appointment is found in the register of the master general under the year 1536, but without a more exact date. Master David was then at Rome with three companions. See Fenning, 'Irish material', p. 270. **23** There is a more recent account of David Brown in Flynn, pp 8–11. Brown was Anglo-Irish, a son of the convent of Tralee, a student and lecturer at Cambridge (1513–15); definitor of the English province at the general chapter at Naples (1515) at which he was named '*magister*'; Roman courier on behalf of Henry VIII; and in 1536, the one who prevailed on Paul III to erect the Irish Dominican province. **24** The masters general, at least, continued from 1536 to regard Ireland as a province. In 1548, for example, their registers mention Master David again, and as provincial. See Fenning, 'Irish material', p. 272.

held in Rome, that Ireland was assigned a place on the list of provinces. It is fairly clear that during the twenty years following its erection the authorities of the Order had little faith in its chances of survival under the conditions then prevailing, and it was not till the Catholic Queen Mary ascended the throne in 1553 that they adopted a more optimistic view in its regard. Alas for human hopes! Little did the capitular fathers assembled in Rome in 1558 dream that the Marian revival was fated to be of brief duration and was soon to be followed by the dark and terrible Elizabethan night. They might have felt some further reassurance, however, if they had any knowledge of the quality of the men who formed the backbone of the newly recognised province and who would, in some miraculous fashion, manage to carry on till the better times of the Stuart era dawned.

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