

State intervention in disputes between secular and regular clergy in early seventeenth-century Ireland

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The success of the Counter-Reformation in Ireland following the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy was a remarkable achievement. Between 1618 and 1630 Rome made a staggering nineteen episcopal appointments in a kingdom that was ruled by a Protestant king. Documenting the achievements of the initial period only paints half the picture, however. The implementation of the Tridentine reforms and the thorny issue of episcopal authority brought the religious orders into a head-on collision with the secular clergy. This protracted dispute lasted for a decade, most notably in the diocese of Dublin where an English secular priest, Paul Harris, led a hostile attack on the Franciscan archbishop, Thomas Fleming. The longevity of the feud, though, owed at least as much to the intervention of Lord Deputy Sir Thomas Wentworth as it did to the internal tensions of the Catholic Church. Despite Wentworth's influential role, he has been largely written out of the conflict. This article addresses the lacunae in the current historiography and argues that the lord deputy's interference was a decisive factor in exacerbating the hostilities between the secular and regular clergy in early seventeenth-century Ireland.

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In May 1640, an exhausted Franciscan archbishop of Dublin, Thomas Fleming, reported to Rome that the diocese continued much as before 'with the exception of the controversy with Mr. Paul Harris, which is now happily terminated.'¹ His relief was palpable. Since 1626, Harris, a cantankerous English secular priest resident in Dublin, led a vitriolic campaign against the regular clergy and Fleming in particular. His grievance was that the archbishop allegedly favoured the Franciscan community over the numerically inferior diocesan clergy. Harris was not alone. Over the course of the dispute he enlisted the support of several equally pugnacious secular priests. Inevitably, criticism was promptly directed against all the religious

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¹ Fleming to the Sacred Congregation, 29 May 1640, in P.F. Moran, *History of the Catholic Archbishops of Dublin since the Reformation* (Dublin: J.M. O'Toole & Son, 1864), 325.

orders. Its impact was significant. Hostilities between the two clerical factions dominated the ecclesiastical agenda for over a decade. These ranged from public insults to physical assault, the most renowned case being the vicar general of Leighlin, Matthew Roche, who beat an abbot with a bat.²

Such conflicts were by no means unprecedented. In 1622 at Drogheda the Franciscans and Dominicans briefly became embroiled in a skirmish with Jesuit newcomers, who had the support of the vicar general of Armagh, Balthazar Delahoyd.³ Furthermore, parallels were drawn between the Irish problem and the divisions in England when the beleaguered bishop of Chalcedon, Richard Smith, took refuge in the French embassy in London in 1629 following a failed attempt to impose episcopal authority. Discontent was also brewing between the seculars and regulars in Holland.⁴ Thus many within the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland were deeply concerned that the *contretemps* between Fleming and Harris had the potential to spiral out of control: were it to get out of hand the whole affair could thwart the early momentum that had been built up since the restoration of the hierarchy in 1618.

While scholars have been aware of the mutual animosity between the secular and regular clergy, its treatment has been patchy. For a long time P.F. Moran's analysis, with its characteristic nineteenth-century Irish Catholic slant, was the standard account. Despite its blemishes, it remains a useful reference work.⁵ This may explain why the dispute subsequently received relatively little attention: it was either ignored or was passed off as a side note in the broader storyline.⁶ There are, nevertheless, some rare exceptions. Thomas Flynn's commentary is informative even though it primarily focuses on the Dominican perspective.⁷ Thomas O'Connor's account is by far the most exhaustive and meticulous, however. His examination of the 'Dublin broils' illustrates the extent to which such troubles weighed

² Fleming to Luke Wadding, Guardian of St Isidore's College in Rome, 20 July 1631, in Brendan Jennings, ed. *Wadding Papers 1614-38* (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1953), 557; James Barron, Abbot of Vallis Salutis, to the Cardinal Protector, 21 August 1631, *ibid.*, 564.

³ Brian Jackson, 'Sectarianism: division and dissent in Irish Catholicism', in Alan Ford and John McCafferty, eds. *The Origins of Sectarianism in Early Modern Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 203-15.

⁴ Benignus Millett, O.F.M., 'Catalogue of volume 294 of the *Scrittura originali riferite nelle congregazioni generali* in Propaganda Archives', *Collectanae Hibernica*, 8 (1965): 18.

⁵ Moran, *History of the Catholic Archbishops of Dublin*, 369-80.

⁶ Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin, *Catholic Reformation in Ireland: the mission of Rinuccini, 1645-1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 42-5; H. F. Kearney, 'Ecclesiastical Politics and the Counter-Reformation in Ireland, 1618-1648', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 11 (1960): 206-8; P. J. Corish, *The Catholic Community in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Dublin: Helicon Press, 1981), 26-8; P. J. Corish, 'An Irish Counter-Reformation Bishop: John Roche', *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 26 (1959): 110-12.

⁷ T. S. Flynn, *The Irish Dominicans, 1536-1641* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1993), 231-62.

upon the Irish Counter-Reformation in both a national and international context.⁸ Yet what is so conspicuously lacking in these commentaries is an adequate appreciation of the State's involvement, especially the administration of Lord Deputy Sir Thomas Wentworth, whose role has been either downplayed or overlooked.⁹ The intervention of his predecessors was admittedly both haphazard and ineffective. Wentworth, in contrast, became a pivotal figure in orchestrating the feud. By mid-September 1633, nearly eight weeks after his arrival in Ireland, he procured a document entitled 'The State of the Difference between the Seculars & Regulars'. It contained two detailed lists of the Catholic clergy in the Dublin diocese, accompanied by seven propositions recommending ways to aggravate the conflict.¹⁰ This is remarkable not only because it reveals the speed with which Wentworth was briefed on Irish affairs, but equally because it demonstrates his readiness to meddle in the Catholic Church's internal problems. Between 1633 and 1636 he made a concerted effort to support Harris's attack on Fleming and the Franciscans, not out of sympathy for the secular priest but rather to seize a heaven-sent opportunity to exploit such divisions. Over the course of the heated exchanges he provided Harris with government protection, assisted him with the publication of anti-regular works, encouraged him to take legal action against his opponents, and guaranteed a favourable outcome by way of an incentive to bring perceived injustices to court. In fact their collaboration proved so effective that senior Catholic ecclesiastics anxiously wrote to Rome about their inability to intervene for fear of incurring the lord deputy's wrath.

Wentworth's plan to inflict maximum damage with minimal effort signalled a new direction for government policy against the Catholic Church. Since the turn of the century, Dublin Castle had failed miserably in curbing the progress of the Counter-Reformation. Repeated attempts to banish Jesuits and priests from the kingdom in 1604, 1605, 1624 and 1629 had no impact. The confiscation of mass houses proved equally ineffective because of the sporadic nature in which the policy was enforced. The State was no less successful in trying to convert the laity to Protestantism. In the wake of the Gunpowder Plot in November 1605, the government issued 'mandates' which ordered prominent Catholics to attend church

⁸ Thomas O'Connor, *Irish Jansenists 1600-70: Religion and Politics in Flanders, France, Ireland and Rome* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), 129–70.

⁹ Brief analyses of Wentworth's involvement in the dispute is provided by John McCafferty, *The Reconstruction of the Church of Ireland: Bishop Bramhall and the Laudian Reforms, 1633-1641* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 170–4; Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580-1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 443–5; Tim O'Connor, 'Wentworth and Dublin's Catholic clergy: A document from the Strafford Papers', *Archivium Hibernicum* (hereafter *Archiv. Hib.*), 59 (2005): 37–55.

¹⁰ O'Connor, 'Wentworth and Dublin's Catholic clergy', 41–3.

services or face significant fines. Yet this was short lived on account of intervention from London who feared another potential rebellion in Ireland. As a consequence, the Irish administration had to resort to the Elizabethan Act of Uniformity of 1560 whereby recusants incurred a fine of 12d for absenting from church.

It was in light of the State's successive failures that Wentworth recognised the need for a radical overhaul. Instead of pursuing the coercive approach he suspended it and, in a further surprise to his Irish Protestant colleagues, turned his attention to reconstructing the poverty stricken established church. In spring 1634, for example, he ordered that Protestant bishops desist from questioning any Catholic suspected of engaging in clandestine baptisms and marriages.¹¹ Other concessions soon followed, to the frustration of many within the government. At his trial in 1641 one of the charges laid against Wentworth was that 'he restored divers fryeries and mass-houses...to the pretended owners thereof, who have been since imployed the same to the exercise of the popish religion'.¹² As the lord deputy explained to King Charles in 1635, such measures were a necessary prerequisite before enforcing conformity, but the policy would take time – 'a work rather to be effected by judgment and degrees, than by giddy zeal and haste'.¹³ Until the Church of Ireland was in a stronger position, the government tacitly offered temporary respite to Catholics provided they did not exceed Wentworth's view of toleration. Of course, the policy was always subject to change and, as the Harris affair demonstrates, when the opportunity to weaken Catholicism through internal division presented itself the lord deputy gleefully took it with both hands. Without doubt Harris's confrontational nature – a man with 'both wit and spirit' as Wentworth described him – was integral to the troubles.¹⁴ But the decisive factor was undoubtedly the lord deputy's ability to manipulate developments. He strategically positioned himself so as to dictate the course of the hostilities and, more importantly, prolong the conflict.

Victims of their own success? Catholic renewal and discontent

Between 1618 and 1630 Rome had made no fewer than nineteen episcopal appointments in Ireland.¹⁵ The remarkable success was due to a number of factors: a hopeless government policy, a receptive laity,

¹¹ William Knowler, ed. *The Earl of Strafforde's Letters and Dispatches*, 2 vols (London: William Bowyer, 1739), 1:293.

¹² John Rushworth, *The Tryal of Thomas, Earl of Strafford* (London, 1680), 69.

¹³ Wentworth to King Charles, 27 January 1634[5], Sheffield City Library (hereafter SCL), Strafford Papers (hereafter Str. P.), volume 3, ff. 167-8.

¹⁴ Wentworth to Secretary Coke, 2 March 1634[5], SCL, Str. P., vol. 5, f. 187.

¹⁵ D. F. Cregan, 'The Social and Cultural Background of a Counter-Reformation Episcopate, 1618-60', in Art Cosgrove and Donal MacCartney, eds. *Studies in Irish History Presented to R. Dudley Edwards* (Naas: Leinster Leader Ltd., 1979), 87.

and a well-organised Catholic mission. The results were striking. In 1630 the Protestant bishop of Kilmore, William Bedell, lamented that the vast majority in his see were recusants. Moreover, attempts to convert them were not only hampered by the resident Catholic bishop, but also the superior number of priests, whom he estimated to be double their Protestant counterparts.¹⁶ These concerns were echoed by Justice Hugh Cressy within weeks of Wentworth's advent in 1633: 'I find, that this country, which doth contain the most ancient English plantators...by the pernicious confluence of priests...are now, in a sort, become principally Romish and Popish'.¹⁷ Both the religious orders and diocesan priests clearly made a significant impact but it was arguably the adjustments to the structure of Irish Catholicism that were of greater consequence. The new changes inevitably aroused hostility. The older mendicant orders, namely the Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians, not only resented the interference of recently installed bishops, they also feared the threat posed by newer religious orders like the Jesuits, Capuchins and Discalced Carmelites. The disputes that engulfed the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland for over a decade therefore boiled down to two key factors: ecclesiastical authority and the increased competition for money.

In truth, the matter of hierarchical jurisdiction was always going to be difficult to resolve. The orders of friars had mainly been independent of bishops and parish clergy in pre-Reformation times. Their canonical rights spared them from episcopal authority and, crucially, provided them with extensive faculties for preaching and hearing confessions.¹⁸ Nevertheless, their refusal to co-operate when the diocesan structures were re-established in 1618 created a tense atmosphere. For the regulars there were deep reservations about self-interested bishops and it re-opened old wounds dating back to the fourteenth century when the anti-mendicant archbishop of Armagh, Richard FitzRalph, clashed with the religious orders.¹⁹ The anxieties were articulated by the Franciscan Thomas Strong (*alias* Strange) who claimed: 'these lords bishops bring their mission to nought, saying that it is not necessary, seeing that there are parish priests, the said parish priests being for the most part ignorant persons.'²⁰ The secular clergy, on the other hand, expressed misgivings about untrustworthy regulars

¹⁶ Bishop Bedell to Ussher, 18 September 1630, in Richard Parr, *The life of the Most Reverend Father in God, James Usher, late Lord Arch-Bishop of Armagh* (London, 1686), 453. See also Bedell to Wentworth, 5 November 1633, SCL, Str. P., vol. 20, f. 115.

¹⁷ Cressy to Wentworth, 15 August 1633, SCL, Str. P., vol. 13, f. 28.

¹⁸ Flynn, *The Irish Dominicans*, 240.

¹⁹ For example, see letters of Thomas Strong O.F.M. to Luke Wadding O.F.M., 27 March 1629, 20 November 1629, 26 May 1630, *Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report on Franciscan Manuscripts preserved at the convent, Merchants' Quay, Dublin* (Dublin: Stationary Office, 1906), (hereafter *H.M.C. Franciscan MSS*), 10, 16, 25.

²⁰ Strong to Wadding, 26 November 1630, *ibid*, 34; See also Strong to undisclosed, 21 November 1631, *ibid*, 54-5.

and feared that their opposition undermined the necessary reforms to reinvigorate the Catholic mission. Writing to Bishop Richard Smith in 1628 about the hostilities of the regular clergy in England, David Rothe, bishop of Ossory, asserted that 'it is a thing to be lamented if the reverence and authority of Bishops which ought to be supreme should come to be despised from that very quarter whence it ought to be more supported and strengthened'. Such resistance, Rothe argued, was unacceptable 'lest the authority of Bishops be trampled on by the feet of the arrogant'.²¹ It was not just the numerically strong Franciscans and Dominicans that were of concern. There were worries that the new orders would undermine some of the core structures of the Church which Rothe and his colleagues endeavoured to implement. Precisely how Tridentine reforms, particularly the role of bishop, priest and friar fitted into unique Irish circumstances, was a question that was never resolved to any great effect.²²

No less problematic was the issue of money. Given the illegal status of their church, bishops, priests and friars all depended on the generosity of the Catholic laity. One of the key battlegrounds centred on funerals and the offerings that came with them.²³ Under the decrees of Trent, the parish priest was to receive a fee if the burial was outside the parish but, as Patrick Corish notes, there was no canon law to cover the exceptional conditions in Ireland.²⁴ In 1630 a memorandum concerning the statements of Rothe and Thomas Dease, bishop of Meath, was circulated, asserting that 'the religious in Ireland have no claim on or right to their monasteries'.²⁵ As a consequence the parish priest was allowed to preside at a funeral, even in the cemetery of a former monastery. Stripped of their ancient property and with the main source of their income now increasingly under threat, the religious orders were understandably exasperated. The pent up frustration often manifested itself at funerals, where the competition for the laity's charity intensified. In 1630 the nominated archbishop of Tuam, Malachy O'Queely, wrote about 'a little difference' between him and the Franciscans at Limerick concerning the burial of an unidentified nobleman. He explained the latter grew 'so passionate' when the (anti-regular) archbishop of Cashel ruled against them and

²¹ Bishop David Rothe of Ossory to Richard Smith, bishop of Chalcedon, 6 December 1628, *Catholic Record Society*, 22 (1921): 168-70. On the troubles Smith encountered, see A.F. Allison, 'A question of jurisdiction: Richard Smith, bishop of Chalcedon, and the Catholic laity, 1625-31', *Recusant History*, 16 (1982-3): 111-45.

²² Flynn, *The Irish Dominicans*, 257-8.

²³ See Clodagh Tait, *Death, Burial and Commemoration in Ireland, 1550-1650* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002), 54-8.

²⁴ Corish, *The Catholic Community*, 35.

²⁵ Memorandum concerning the statements of bishops of Ossory and Meath, [1630], Benignus Millett, ed., 'Catalogue of Irish material in vols. 132-139 of the *Scrittura originali riferite nelle congregazioni generali* in Propaganda Archives', *Collectanea Hibernica*, 12 (1969): 11.

promised to ‘informe against me for maintayning mine owne and the right of their brethren in their own chapter onely’.²⁶ Similarly, the Augustinian bishop of Waterford, Patrick Comerford, informed Rome that disputes between the Friars Minor and the secular clergy in Waterford over precedence and the right to preside at funeral services ‘cause much scandal’.²⁷ In fact, sources of income became so serious that disputes between secular and regular clergy often arose regarding the right to preside over baptisms as well.²⁸

There were clearly numerous stresses and strains that weighed heavily on Catholic clergy, some of which were entrenched within their separate cultures and identities, others of which were complicated by the legalities of the new reforms. While the issue of ecclesiastical authority often dominated the list of grievances expressed by both sides in letters directed to Rome, the competition for parishioners was the driving force behind a bitter conflict that Wentworth was only too willing to exploit.

From tension to conflict: the Dublin dispute in context

The document informing Wentworth about the differences among the Catholic clergy in September 1633 identified three main points. The first contended that Fleming ‘endeavourd by all meanes to subtract their livelihood from the [secular] Clergy’; the second stated he suspended and expelled Fathers Harris, Patrick Cahil and Peter Caddell from the diocese despite no allegations of wrongdoing or legal proceedings against them; the final point claimed the archbishop was guilty of exercising foreign jurisdiction by excommunicating Harris and for ‘bringing another priest before the civil magistrate for detaining his books’.²⁹ In truth, the contention reached its peak between 1631 and 1632 and Fleming’s difficulties were seemingly easing by the time Wentworth arrived. Those turbulent few years are nevertheless important to briefly highlight in order to gauge the heightened atmosphere when the lord deputy assumed his office.

Dissent exploded in the diocese at a funeral in Christmas 1626 when the guardian of the Franciscans in Dublin, Thomas Strong, publicly challenged the rights of the parish priest, Luke Rochford, to deliver the customary panegyric. What ensued was an uncompromising pamphlet war between Strong and Harris in 1627.³⁰ The disparaging publications forced Fleming to intervene. Hoping to bring the matter to

²⁶ O’Queely to Wadding, 26 June 1630, *H.M.C. Franciscan MSS*, 27.

²⁷ Comerford to Francesco Ingoli, 4 February 1633, *ibid.*, 21.

²⁸ My thanks to Clodagh Tait for drawing my attention to this. See her article, ‘Spiritual Bonds, Social Bonds: Baptism and Godparenthood in Ireland, 1530-1690’, *Cultural and Social History*, 2 (2005): 301-27.

²⁹ O’Connor, ‘Wentworth and Dublin’s Catholic clergy’, 45.

³⁰ O’Connor, *Irish Jansenists*, 152-3.

a swift conclusion, the archbishop elected to condemn Harris and excuse Strong from censure. The decision backfired: accusations of favouritism surfaced within the ranks of the secular clergy while the religious orders rallied in support of Fleming.³¹ Relations deteriorated further in 1628 following the death of the parish priest of St. Michael's, Thomas Coyle. Since the archbishop was in the country on visitation it was left to his vicar-general, James Talbot, to appoint a successor.³² Under pressure, Talbot rashly nominated Patrick Cahil, whose close friendship with Rochford and Harris was common knowledge. This was viewed as a major victory for the secular clerics. Although Talbot insisted that the post was subject to Fleming's approval, Cahil's faction interpreted the decision as permanent. Therefore, when Fleming refused to endorse Cahil and displaced him in favour of his preferred candidate, Patrick Brangan, it exposed the archbishop to a barrage of harassment.³³ Fleming was adamant that this was the right decision. He wrote to Luke Wadding O.F.M, Guardian of St Isidore's College in Rome:

Thomas Coyle, a parish priest which did not a little trouble during his life all the religious of this towne...being dead, all were in hope of a calm; yet... my vicar general, with the advise of some factious persons, placed in his stead one Patrick Cahil, far more dangerous and factious then the former, to the great grief of all the regulars.³⁴

The discontent failed to subside. Cahil refused to acknowledge Brangan's appointment and procured a bull that recognised him as the rightful priest of the parish. His defiance clearly took a toll on Fleming's credibility. Undermined and clearly frustrated, the archbishop suspended Cahil and ordered him to return to his native diocese of Meath.

Fleming's bungling and Cahil's obstinacy brought Harris back into the fold. In 1630 Cahil decided to bring his protestations to Rome whereupon he brought a list of eleven propositions that were allegedly held and taught by the regular clergy. Drafted by Harris, Cahil submitted them to the Faculty of Theology at Paris for examination.³⁵ In doing so, he dramatically raised the stakes. Certainly, Fleming had a right to be wary of his presence. He confided to Wadding, 'the turbulent priest Cahil is at Paris... He is the cause of all the troubles in Ireland with the English priest Harris... It is he that brought all complaints of Father Strong and that brought the

³¹ Declaration by the Dominican Chapter in favour of Thomas Fleming, Archbp., 20 February 1628[9], *Wadding Papers*, 287-8.

³² O'Connor, *Irish Jansenists*, 155.

³³ Fleming to Wadding, 26 August 1629, *Wadding Papers*, 308, Fleming to Wadding, 23 September 1629, *ibid*, 315.

³⁴ Fleming to Wadding, 1 February 1631, *ibid*, 469.

³⁵ W.D. O'Connell, 'The Cahil propositions, 1629', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 62 (1943): 118-23; O'Connor, *Irish Jansenists*, 158-61.

propositions.³⁶ The propositions held little weight and were primarily drawn up in retaliation for the hardships the seculars encountered under their metropolitan.³⁷ Yet Cahil's achievement was not only that he managed to get the faculty to condemn the list but also that he obtained permission to publish them with the Parisian censure in January 1631.³⁸ This inevitably triggered a wave of resentment and outrage. The Vatican was flooded with protestations of innocence and complaints against Cahil's behaviour.³⁹ Fleming repeatedly urged that his adversary be severely rebuked: 'I hope they at your entreaty and my request will make him an example by some public punishment for all refractories and disobedient subjects; other ways there will be no governing here, where for fear superiors dare not punish delinquents according their deserts.'⁴⁰ Fleming followed through with his own advice in Dublin. He suspended Harris and another antagonistic priest, Peter Caddell, who upon hearing about the decree 'protested he would not obey the Archbishop no more than the Great Turk'.⁴¹

Hostilities exacerbated further with the outbreak of a print war between the two sides. It started from an anonymously translated but controversial source. In 1630, on the back of the Sorbonne's condemnation, a presumably Irish author with the initials 'P.S.P' translated the anti-mendicant work by Bishop Jean Pierre Camus of Belley entitled *A Discours hapned betwene an hermite called Nicephorus & a yong lover called Tristan*. The preface, addressed to 'the Catholikes of Ireland', stressed the 'honour & respect [to] all Religious men... as long as they containe themselves within the limits of their Rules, & that they do not prefer the honour of their order, as many seeme to doe'.⁴² This was promptly followed by the publication *Examen Juridicum* in 1631. The author was the guardian of the Irish Franciscans at Louvain, Francis Matthews, who concealed his identity under the pseudonym 'Edmundus

³⁶ Fleming to Wadding, 3 January 1631, *Wadding Papers*, 456; *H.M.C. Franciscan MSS*, 36.

³⁷ The propositions censured at Paris, *Wadding Papers*, 510.

³⁸ Condemnation of the Irish propositions, 30 January 1631, *ibid*, 465.

³⁹ In the *Wadding Papers* alone there are seventeen attestations in favour of the regulars and at least ten letters by the regulars themselves addressed to the Holy Office.

⁴⁰ Fleming to Wadding, 7 April, 3 May, 20 July, September 1631, *Wadding Papers*, 493, 516, 558, 570.

⁴¹ Nicholas Donnelly, *Short Histories of Dublin Parishes: Part viii, Parish of St Audeon and St Michael* (Dublin: Catholic Trust Society of Ireland, 1911), 171–2.

⁴² Jean Pierre Camus, *A Discours hapned betwene an hermite called Nicephorus & a yong lover called Tristan, who for that his Mistresse Petronilla entred into Religion would faine become an Hermite...and Translated into English by P.S.P.* ([Paris], 1630), 'To the Catholickes of Ireland'. I owe this reference to John McCafferty. According to the Capuchin, Nicholas Archbold, it was not until 1635 that the book was censured by the Sorbonne and prohibited by the Privy Council. Archbold 'Evangelic Fruit of the Seraphicall Franciscan Order', London, British Library, Harleian MS 3888, p. 282.

Ursulanus'.⁴³ He dismissed the Cahil propositions and took aim at the secular clergy as well as the bishops, especially Patrick Comerford of Waterford and Thomas Walsh of Cashel. This drew sharp criticism from David Rothe, John Roche and William Tirry, respective bishops of Ossory, Ferns and Cork, who demanded that the book be put on the *Index*.⁴⁴ Comerford expressed his displeasure by informing Wadding 'I am ashamed and grieved that our countrymen begin to imitate apishly the falshood of heretics, which for want of reasons do stuff up their books with lies.'⁴⁵

Within months, Harris and Caddell re-entered the fray. Addressing their grievances to bishops of the province, they published a list of charges against Fleming. The most notable allegations were that he favoured the regular orders and that he allowed incompetent clergy to remain in office, identifying Fleming's 'pet' Patrick Brangan and his assistant James Quinn 'whereof the one is most unlearned, the other [a] lunatic'. They also condemned the archbishop's advisor, John Preston, who was deemed 'a most seditious and a turbulent fellow, to the ruin of the clergy, and disturbance of the Christian common-wealth'.⁴⁶ Harris did not stop there either. Shortly afterwards he attacked Fleming's censure in his work entitled: *The excommunication published by the L. archbishop of Dublin Thomas Flemming aliàs Barnwell friar of the Order of S. Francis, against the inhabitants of the diocesse of Dublin*.⁴⁷ A second edition was printed twelve months later in 1633. Indeed by summer of that year his criticism extended to the regulars in a vindictive account *Arktomastix* ('A scourge for the bear') that specifically took aim at Matthew's claims about diocesan clergy.⁴⁸ Harris's relentless attacks clearly dominated the controversy but, more importantly, it underlined the dogged polarities embedded within the

⁴³ Francis Matthews, *Examen Juridicum Censurae Facultatis Theologicae Parisiensis et eiusdem civitatis archiepiscopi latae circa quasdam Propositiones Regularibus Regni Hiberniae impositas* (Frankfurt, 1631). Matthews also went under the name of Francis O'Mahony.

⁴⁴ The petition is in Moran, *History of the Catholic Archbishops of Dublin*, 374.

⁴⁵ Comerford to Wadding, 30 October 1631, *Wadding Papers*, 609.

⁴⁶ Peter Caddell and Paul Harris, *To the most illustrious archbishops and reverend bishops of Ireland, but more particularly to those of the Province of Dublin their Honourable Lords, David Bishop of Osory, John of Fernes, Ross of Kildare, and Mathew Vicar Apostolical of Laghlein* (Roan [i.e. Dublin]: at the sign of the three lilies with Edmund Firzours [Dublin Society of Stationers], 1632).

⁴⁷ Paul Harris, *The excommunication published by the L. archbishop of Dublin Thomas Flemming aliàs Barnwell friar of the Order of S. Francis, against the inhabitants of the diocesse of Dublin, for hearing the masses of Peter Caddell D. of Divinity, and Paul Harris priests, is proved not onely unjust, but of no validity, and consequently binding to no obedience. In which treatise is also discovered that impious plot and policy of the aforesaid archbishop and his friars in supplanting the pastors and priests of the clergy, thereby to bring all into the hands of the friars, of whose disorders and foule abuses (especially in this kingdome) something is noted.* (Dublin: [Society of Stationers], 1632).

⁴⁸ Paul Harris, *Arktomastix, siue Edmundus Vrsulanus propter usurpatum iudicium de tribunali dejectus: et propter libellum famosum in iudicium vocatus* (Dublin: [Society of Stationers], 1633).

Catholic Church. In a letter to his nephew, Fleming lamented: ‘he abuses me, calling me to my face neither good Catholic nor good subject, and that as I threaten them with Rome, he threatens me with the State here’.⁴⁹ Yet for all the turmoil Harris and his colleagues had created, they had achieved nothing, except for further dividing the Church and, worse still, risking the disillusionment of the Catholic laity.

Statement of intent: Wentworth’s invasive policy

Dublin Castle’s track record in the conflict had been sporadic and largely unsuccessful. Lord Deputy Falkland established a working relationship with Harris by early 1628 and regularly obtained information from him with a view to using it to the government’s advantage.⁵⁰ As a consequence, the Irish Privy Council pushed Whitehall to agree to a proclamation banishing the priests and friars ‘as there is now a great faction between the Regulars and Seculars an occasion for taking it [the decision] has arisen which may not recur’.⁵¹ However, much to his frustration, Falkland was forced to pursue a general policy of toleration during England’s war with Spain and France. After his recall in 1629, his successors, Lords Justices Boyle and Loftus, showed little interest in maintaining an open dialogue with Harris or his associates. They occasionally targeted the religious orders, most notably the Franciscans in Dublin in 1629, and the Dominicans in Limerick two years later.⁵² In the case of Dublin, a botched attempt to apprehend the two celebrants of the Mass when storming a Franciscan chapel at Cook Street provoked a riot.⁵³ Nevertheless, it did lead to the arrest of several Catholic aldermen and the temporary closure of the city’s mass houses belonging to the Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites, Capuchins and Jesuits, as well as the convent belonging to the Poor Clares.⁵⁴ This served the dual purpose of fuelling the ongoing tensions with minimal effort, and making political assertions of power. Many within Catholic circles were left in no doubt that the Franciscans were to blame for attracting unwelcome attention. An eye-witness account by the Capuchin,

⁴⁹ Archbishop Fleming to Thomas Fleming, 12 October 1631, *Wadding Papers*, 604.

⁵⁰ Memorandum for the English Privy Council, c.1628, Brendan Jennings, ed. ‘Miscellaneous Documents I, 1588-1634’, *Archiv. Hib.*, 12 (1946): 152. See also ‘Abstract of a [lett]re dated att Dublyn’ [written in Falkland’s hand], 9 July 1633, Kew, The National Archives, State Papers 63/254, f. 87.

⁵¹ Memorandum for the English Privy Council, c.1628, *Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1647-60, Addenda 1625-60* (London: Public Records Office, 1900), 109.

⁵² Mark Empey, ed. ‘The diary of Sir James Ware, 1623-66’, *Analecta Hibernica* (hereafter *Anal. Hib.*), 45 (2014): 81-2, 89.

⁵³ Mark Empey, ‘“We are not yet safe, for they threaten us with more violence”: a study of the Cook Street riot, 1629’, in William Sheehan and Maura Cronin, eds. *Riotous Assemblies: Rebels, Riots and Revolts in Ireland* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2010), 64-79.

⁵⁴ Empey, ed. ‘The diary of Sir James Ware’, 82.

Nicholas Archbold, noted that Father Thomas Babe, Superior of the Franciscans, ‘made some little speech unto the people’ and when news of this reached Dublin Castle ‘they holding it for an affront & contempt caused the first eruption to be made upon the Franciscans residence.’⁵⁵ Bishop John Roche of Ferns, moreover, claimed that ‘the Jesuits weare not so forward as the friars in opening their schools or oratories; and you know they judge it prudence to suffer others try ye foord before them.’⁵⁶ Dublin Castle was more than happy for the religious dispute to rumble on, particularly as it put the heat on the Franciscans who were the largest order. Yet the reality was neither Boyle nor Loftus had the capacity to manipulate the situation in the way that Wentworth so ably demonstrated during his tenure.

In many respects it was a stroke of luck that Harris was still expressing his discontent when Wentworth took office. The priest stood as a lone figure by 1633: Cahil had reconciled with Fleming, Rochford’s enthusiasm had notably waned, and even Caddell became less active in the campaign against Fleming. Still, it says everything about Wentworth’s mindset and attention to detail that he immediately looked to intervene in the dispute before it fizzled out. Harris was still a powerful and disruptive force that could play to his tune but it required a considerable degree of skill for his plan to be executed with precision. Writing to Archbishop William Laud of Canterbury in August 1633, Wentworth reported ‘considering the infinite swarms of friars that are here... I thought it fit rather to keep their differences on foot then to labour unity amongst them.’⁵⁷ Investigating the legalities of Harris’s excommunication on the grounds that Fleming exercised foreign jurisdiction provided the lord deputy with the perfect occasion to pursue an invasive religious policy. Proceeding in this way was not without its own complications, however. Wentworth’s main objective in his early deputyship was to secure a new subsidy when parliament convened in 1634, but this required the co-operation of the Catholic Old English community.⁵⁸ Many were patrons of the religious orders and there was always the danger for Wentworth that they could be influenced by the friars and obstruct his plans if he over stepped the mark. He was conscious of the need to tread very carefully until the revenues of the Crown were settled, but vowed ‘to make good use’ of Harris and Caddell when the assembly prorogued.⁵⁹ By declaring that the punishment bestowed on

⁵⁵ Archbold, ‘Evangelic Fruict’, BL, Harleian MS 3888, p. 212.

⁵⁶ Roche to Wadding, January 1630, *Wadding Papers*, 333.

⁵⁷ Wentworth to Laud, 28 August 1633, SCL, Str. P., vol. 8, f. 13.

⁵⁸ Aidan Clarke, ‘28 November 1634: A detail of Strafford’s Administration’, *Journal of Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* (hereafter *JRSAI*), 93 (1963): 161-7; Dermot Fenlon, ‘Wentworth and the Parliament of 1634: An essay in chronology’, *JRSAI*, 94 (1964): 159-76.

⁵⁹ Wentworth to Laud, 22 October 1633, SCL, Str. P., vol. 8, f. 34.

the two priests was contrary to their rights and, therefore, impinged on the rights of the king, Wentworth forestalled suspicions of religious discrimination among the Catholic Old English. To reinforce his intentions he also played on the State's long held concerns about Old English allegiance to the Crown: 'if they [the laity] were not still distempered by the infusion of these friars and Jesuits', he argued, 'I am of belief, they would be as good and loyal to their King, as any other subjects.'⁶⁰ In other words, Wentworth's course of action made it increasingly difficult for them to intercede without raising doubts of their loyalty.⁶¹

Creating a smokescreen was essential if Wentworth was to meddle with the internal affairs of the Catholic Church and retain favour with the Old English at the same time. Risky though it was, interfering in the dispute presented a genuine opportunity to redress the religious imbalance between the regular and secular clergy. Despite insisting that his involvement was merely 'entrenching only upon the civil power not touching any question of religion', he still needed a strong platform to combat the regular clergy.⁶² His response was quick and devastatingly effective. After only four weeks he accumulated sufficient information to converse with Laud about the conflict and by mid-September he obtained a detailed list of the secular and regulars resident in the diocese of Dublin.⁶³ Even before this came into his possession, Wentworth had already convened a meeting with Fleming and compelled him to retract the suspension bestowed on Harris and Caddell. There was no compromise made. Were the archbishop to disregard the orders, he was threatened with a summons to the Court of Castle Chamber 'where he would find these things fall very heavy upon him.'⁶⁴ With no options available to him, Fleming adhered to Wentworth's request. At the end of October 1633, the Lord Deputy gleefully announced that the excommunication was being retracted, despite caution from Laud not to be too cavalier in his proceedings lest 'the Archbishop and they join together, and then your interest prove the less in both'.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Wentworth to Coke, 16 December 1634, SCL, Str. P., vol. 5, f. 162.

⁶¹ Alan Ford, "'Firm Catholics" or "Loyal Subjects"? Religious and Political Allegiance in Early Seventeenth-century Ireland', in D. G. Boyce, Robert Eccleshall and Vincent Geoghegan, eds. *Political Discourse in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 1-31.

⁶² Wentworth to Laud, 28 August 1633, SCL, Str. P., vol. 8, f. 13.

⁶³ *Ibid.* Laud to Wentworth, 9 September 1633, SCL, Str. P., vol. 8, f. 32; O'Connor, 'Wentworth and Dublin's Catholic clergy', 45-50.

⁶⁴ Wentworth to Laud, 28 August 1633, SCL, Str. P., vol. 8, f. 13; Laud to Wentworth, 9 September 1633, SCL, Str. P., vol. 8, f. 33; Laud to Wentworth, 15 November 1633, SCL, Str. P., vol. 6, f. 1; Secretary Coke to Wentworth, 12 July 1634, SCL, Str. P., vol. 5, f. 246.

⁶⁵ Wentworth to Laud, 31 October 1633, SCL, Str. P., vol. 8, f. 43; Laud to Wentworth, 2 December 1633, SCL, Str. P., vol. 6, f. 16.

Withdrawing the censure had serious consequences. It was not simply a check on Fleming's authority. It also enabled Wentworth to re-ignite the hostilities that were in danger of petering out. Indeed, by supporting the numerically inferior seculars he ultimately hoped to persuade them to draft a petition when parliament was in session for banishing the regular clergy out of the kingdom, 'setting forth their scandalous life and mighty charge they are unto this people'.⁶⁶ That was the medium term objective, however. In the interim period, Wentworth needed to ensure that the rumblings persisted. The answer to his problems was Harris.

An unlikely alliance: Wentworth and Harris

Given that Wentworth had a keen interest in religious controversy, not to mention studying the subject at Cambridge, it was perhaps inevitable that their contrasting ambitions would converge at the same junction.⁶⁷ By collaborating with the temperamental secular priest, he realised that he could manipulate the tensions to great effect. Harris, meanwhile, was safe in the knowledge that he received protection from Dublin Castle and could manufacture a host of scathing attacks without fear of prosecution. He was virtually untouchable. Not even the efforts of Rome could do anything to prevent his tirade against Fleming and the regulars. Harris published *Fratres sobrii estote. 1 Pet. 5.8. Or, An Admonition to the Fryars of this Kingdome* in 1634 with the support of the government's printing press. It asserted that the Franciscans resisted any kind of reform and endorsed superstition and heresy.⁶⁸ That was not the end of his scornful publications either. The following year *The Exile Exiled* was printed which was less cutting but equally negative in content.⁶⁹ Of the two texts that he wrote, the second was by far the most controversial. It was published after Fleming received authorisation from Rome to suspend Harris and expel him from the diocese (hence the title), which the bishop of Meath, Thomas Dease, was asked to perform. But Dease refused to carry out his orders due to the fact that Wentworth left strict

⁶⁶ Wentworth to Laud, 29 January 1633/[4], SCL, Str. P., vol. 6, f. 15. Bramhall was of the same opinion following a visit to Munster where he witnessed 'a great controversy...hatched at Limericke between the Franciscans on the one part and the Jesuits and Dominicans on the other.' Bramhall to Laud, 26 May 1634, *Historical Manuscripts Commission, Calendar of the manuscripts of the late Reginald Rawdon Hastings*, 4 vols (London: Stationary Office, 1944), 4:60.

⁶⁷ 'Extracts from Sir George Radcliffe's draughts for his life of Strafford', *Wentworth Papers, 1597-1628*, ed. J. P. Cooper, Camden Fourth Series, 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Royal Historical Society, 1973), 320.

⁶⁸ Paul Harris, *Fratres sobrii estote. 1 Pet. 5.8. Or, An Admonition to the Fryars of this Kingdome of Ireland to abandon such hereticall doctrines as they daylie publish of Ireland to abandon such hereticall doctrines as they daylie publish* (Dublin: [Society of Stationers], 1634).

⁶⁹ Paul Harris, *The Exile Exiled* (Dublin: [Society of Stationers], 1635).

instructions for Harris to remain within the confines of Dublin city.⁷⁰ In a letter to Rome, John Roche wrote in exasperation:

I am not surprised that the Bishop of Meath should hesitate to execute that commission, for he foresees that it would give rise to still greater noise and confusion on account of the favour which Harris enjoys with the Royal Ministers, the more so as the Viceroy has given orders to the same Harris not to depart from the city on any account. For my part, I think it would be better to leave this crotchety man alone.⁷¹

The agitation caused by Harris was plainly affecting the Roman clergy. Orders that his 'cavillations' were to be met with silence in the hope that his works would disappear 'into oblivion' were partially successful in that there was no printed response.⁷² However, attempts to prohibit his books were challenging as the government facilitated their circulation and thus made them remarkably easy to obtain: Falkland and the Protestant archbishop of Armagh, James Ussher, were just two noted individuals who had copies.⁷³ Indeed, such were the frustrations with the impact of Harris's works that rumours reached Whitehall of an assassination attempt being arranged.⁷⁴ Wentworth revelled in these developments, not just the discontent it was creating but also the fact that *The Exile Exiled* appealed to the civil authorities and passed over the ecclesiastical superiors much to the embarrassment of the Catholic Church.

Orders that Harris was to stay in Dublin under the government's protection were not just intended to encourage the production of more derogatory texts. His frequent use of the courts against his religious adversaries had equal potential for causing mischief. In September 1633 Wentworth was alerted to the action recently taken by Harris in the consistory court at St Patrick's Cathedral for defamation of character against Father Edmund Doyle.⁷⁵ Accompanying this information was a list of recommendations 'to see that the said cause be not ended without a public hearing and censure'.⁷⁶ This was

⁷⁰ Bishop Roche to the Secretary of Propaganda, 15 November 1634, in P.F. 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*, 3 vols (Dublin: W.B. Kelly, 1874-8), 1:198-9.

⁷¹ Letter of John Roche, 20 October 1635, *Ibid.* 1:204.

⁷² Archbold, 'Evangelic Fruit', BL, Harleian MS 3888, p. 264.

⁷³ Fleming to Wadding, 5 September 1636, Jennings, 'Miscellaneous Documents I, 1588-1634', 16-17; Falkland to Sir John Veel, 24 December 1632, Dublin, National Archives of Ireland Falkland Letter Book, 1629-33, MS M2445, f. 278; Falkland to Sir John Veel, 24 May 1633, *ibid.*, f. 314. Ussher to Laud, 17 March 1630/[1], in Alan Ford, ed. 'Correspondence between Archbishops Ussher and Laud', *Archiv. Hib.*, 41 (1991-2): 14.

⁷⁴ Coke to Wentworth, 21 January 1634/[5], SCL, Str. P., vol. 5, f. 268; Wentworth to Coke, 2 March 1634/[5], SCL, Str. P., vol. 5, f. 187.

⁷⁵ O'Connor, *Irish Jansenists*, 167. Doyle was vicar general of Swords in 1630 and subsequently parish priest of St. Audoen's in Dublin from 1631. M.V. Ronan, 'Archbishop Bulkeley's Visitation of Dublin, 1630', *Archiv. Hib.*, 8 (1941): 63; Donnelly, *Short Histories of Dublin Parishes*, 171-2.

⁷⁶ O'Connor, 'Wentworth and Dublin's Catholic clergy', 46.

blindingly obvious to Wentworth, having been briefed on the *contretemps* involving Fleming, Harris and Caddell the previous month. That Doyle was a supporter of the archbishop's decision to restrain Harris for his malicious outbursts only added extra spice to the growing hostilities. Although Patrick Brangan informed Wadding that Doyle successfully avenged his opponent by providing irrefutable evidence against the claims, there is no record of the outcome.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, what can be confirmed is that Wentworth closely monitored the contention with keen interest. Indeed with the retraction of Fleming's excommunication effectively completed by Christmas, Wentworth endeavoured to protract the disputes by fuelling the tensions between Harris and Doyle once more. In January 1634, Gerald Keating of Castlewarning in County Kildare was interrogated before Wentworth on account of obtaining information from a Franciscan friar, Christopher Flatsbury.⁷⁸ Under oath, Keating confessed to receiving from him a written declaration by Brangan concerning an award made by two priests between Harris and Doyle.⁷⁹ The attestation revealed 'that some were present when witnesses testified before the Lord Chief Justice that Fa[ther] Doyle dissented from the order, and refused to stand to the arbitrament of the said arbitrators before their award was published.'⁸⁰ The document was clearly intended to be circulated among the religious orders to highlight the biased disposition of the courts towards Harris. Yet Wentworth sought to use the examination as a means to encourage the impertinent priest to exercise his enmity towards Doyle in the form of a second cause. The lord deputy had already reversed the consistory court's judgement and forced Doyle to write a letter of apology to Harris in February 1634.⁸¹ No doubt enticed by the prospect of another positive verdict, Harris once again proceeded against his adversary under the accusation of illegally possessing his property.

Bringing priests before the courts obviously served the interests of both the administration and Harris. For the latter, being persuaded to proceed against his opponents in the courts was a further slight to

⁷⁷ Donnelly, *Short Histories of Dublin Parishes*, 172.

⁷⁸ Flatsbury's identity is somewhat of a mystery. A John Flatsbury was Guardian of Clane Friary in 1645. It is possible that John was his religious name and that Flatsbury used his baptismal name (Christopher) to evade the authorities. Ignatius Fennesy O.F.M., 'Franciscan Guardians in Co. Kildare, 1629-1872', *Journal of the County Kildare Archaeological Society*, 18 (1994-95): 158; Clodagh Tait, 'Namesakes and nicknames: naming practices in early modern Ireland, 1540-1700', *Continuity and Change*, 21 (2006): 313-40. I am indebted to Father Ignatius Fennesy O.F.M. for his assistance on this matter.

⁷⁹ Examinations taken upon oath before the Right Honourable, the Lord Deputy of Ireland, 31 January 1633[4], SCL, Str. P., vol. 24-25, f. 101.

⁸⁰ Harris obviously failed in his initial suit against Doyle in the consistory court the previous year, Donnelly, *Short Histories of Dublin Parishes*, p. 172.

⁸¹ Harris, *The Exile Exiled*, 34-5.

his ecclesiastical authorities. Similarly, enticing the secular and regular clergy to bring their respective grievances to the religious and civil courts enabled Wentworth to prolong the controversies beyond their natural courses. Adjudicating the fate of priests had two crucial advantages. Firstly, it meant that the civil court took priority over the church court, thus reinforcing the supremacy of the governmental institutions. Secondly, and possibly more importantly, the future direction of the internal divisions of the Catholic Church was edging out of the hands of Rome. The lord deputy believed that he held the whip hand. As a result, he was able to shape the course of the conflict at his own discretion. This was a major concern among the more senior ecclesiastics. Bishop Roche, in particular, feared the consequences of the increasing role the courts were playing:

The worst feature of the matter is, that they [the priests] now bring their litigations before the Viceroy, and make the most bitter accusations against each other before him. I think that before long they will repent of having had recourse to his tribunal, for the Viceroy is a stern man... as soon as the Parliament, which has now met the second time, will have closed its Sessions, we will see an exercise of authority which will not be pleasing to everyone.⁸²

Pessimistic though it was, Roche was entirely justified in predicting a further deterioration in relations between the secular and regular clergy. Wentworth, on the other hand, was spurred on by the success of his makeshift alliance with Harris. In November 1635, the Lord Deputy reaped the rewards of their partnership once more when the latter took legal action against the archbishop's favourite, Patrick Brangan. While the belligerent rebel could bring neither Dease nor Fleming before the Castle Chamber because of their failure to carry out his excommunication, Brangan's recent conduct gave Harris legitimate grounds for a hearing at court. In translating, and subsequently publishing, Cardinal Barberini's letter to remove Harris, Brangan exposed himself to the charge of exercising foreign jurisdiction in Ireland.⁸³ 'For Father Harris, I shall hold him up sure enough', Wentworth affirmed 'so well as we are like to have very canonical bawdry publicly heard...which, I trust, will occasion our lecturer once more, to tell Rome she is a whore, a scarlet whore, a strumpet, an errant strumpet'.⁸⁴ The combination of the lord deputy's arrogance and his growing interference in ecclesiastical matters

⁸² Roche to the Secretary of Propaganda, 15 November 1634, *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, 1:197-9.

⁸³ The exercise of jurisdiction derived from Rome was again declared illegal in April 1629 by royal proclamation. P. J. Corish, 'Two Seventeenth-Century Proclamations against the Catholic Clergy', *Archiv. Hib.*, 39 (1984): 53-5.

⁸⁴ Wentworth to Laud, December 1633, SCL, Str. P., vol. 6, f. 7; Laud to Wentworth, 15 November 1633, SCL, Str. P., vol. 6, f. 2.

definitely unnerved those within the ranks of the Catholic Church. Wentworth was making a point. The clergy knew it too. On Rome's commands to excommunicate Harris the court pronounced that it 'was sufficient to cause all men of the Romish religion to forbear his company, the said sentence of exile being a merely temporal punishment', adding that, 'it was in this case used being also a new found device never before heard of or practised in any of his Majesty's dominions when Popery was at its highest.'⁸⁵ Their anxieties were compounded further upon news of the severity of Brangan's sentence: a fine of £3,000 and imprisonment for life.

It should be of little surprise that both Doyle and Brangan were targeted by Harris. In the list of the clergy in the diocese of Dublin, which was drawn up with the help of a secular, the two priests were depicted as 'creatures' of the regular clergy. The hostility Harris directed at the regulars and their supporters did not just widen the divisions within the Catholic Church: the implications were far greater. His behaviour compelled impetuous friars into a response. It was effectively an ambush since such actions were interpreted by the government as contravening the laws of the state. The Franciscan John Preston, for example, found himself under the spotlight of the High Commission in 1636. On the 11 February, a warrant was issued for his arrest owing to his alleged authorship of the book, 'Keeper of the Bear'. The court claimed that the book promoted the jurisdiction of the Church of Rome and that the viceroy was preparing a persecution of Roman Catholics. It also asserted that Preston attacked the link between the Crown and religion. The 'infamous libel cast out against me', Wentworth informed Coke, was remarkably close to the truth. The lord deputy revealed the book:

vents part of that discontent they carry secretly in their bosoms, the language is very venomous, but the effect is that in private causes I am indifferent just, but that if the King or Church be concerned there is no right to be expected from me; that I bring in new laws and proceed in the plantations with an intent to overthrow the old law and in time the old religion; that I am a *Count Julian*, a Nero, an Herod, and what not, but in the conclusion gives me advise to amend for that there are in this Kingdom both Feltons and Ravailacs.⁸⁶

No doubt Wentworth was eager to suppress the book and the friar for fear of stirring up the increasingly restless clergy. Nevertheless, by seeking the approval of certain regular clergy, in addition to the aforementioned allegations, Preston was in contempt of *Praemunire*.

⁸⁵ Sentence in the Castle Chamber against Nicholas Stephens and others for spreading abroad a letter and order of Cardinal Barberini against Paul Harris, contrary to the laws against foreign jurisdictions and bringing in Papal Bulls, 18 November 1635, SCL, Str. P., vol. 24-25, f. 460.

⁸⁶ Wentworth to Coke, 2 March 1634[5], SCL, Str. P., vol. 5, f. 180.

The decision to imprison him, therefore, was merely a formality.⁸⁷ But it is important to stress that while the undoing of the Franciscan was exercising foreign jurisdiction, it was chiefly the past activities of Harris and Cahill which forced Preston to breach the law. Of the indictments listed against the friar the most noticeable was clause seven which alluded to his attack on Harris.⁸⁸ Hence, it was patently obvious that Dublin Castle's partnership with the latter was paying dividends well before Preston was arrested in early 1636. Even the papal agent in England, George Conn, in a letter to Cardinal Barberini noted with despair the damage Harris' relationship with Wentworth had caused.⁸⁹

Limits to Wentworth's success

Harris was certainly a crucial ingredient in the lord deputy's plans to subvert the fragile structures of the Catholic Church. The timing of the conflict was no doubt fortuitous but it should not undervalue Wentworth's active contribution. His invasive policy clearly made an impact. Moreover, he was prepared to follow up on any collateral damage from the Harris affair. The Franciscan friar, Christopher Flatsbury, found himself under the microscope after Gerald Keating's confession in the case between Doyle and Harris. Flatsbury's alleged defence of the Dominican friar, Arthur MacGeoghan, who had been executed for treason in London, induced Wentworth to send over details of the Franciscan's comments to the attorney at Whitehall. Keating heard that Queen Henrietta Maria 'in some passion' was against giving MacGeoghan a reprieve following his sentence because she believed 'it was such a rascal that killed her father'. Upon hearing this, Flatsbury was said to have replied that he thought the Dominican was wrongfully accused, 'and that in some cases the killing [of] the King of France might be tolerable or lawful'.⁹⁰ These claims were well wide of the mark. MacGeoghan was, in fact, believed to have said in Spain that the only reason he would return to England would be to kill the king of England.⁹¹ Even so, Wentworth used this opportunity in

⁸⁷ Brendan Jennings, 'The Indictment of Fr. John Preston, Franciscan', *Archiv. Hib.*, 26 (1963): 50-5.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁸⁹ Giorgio Coneo [George Conn] to Cardinal Barberini, 2 September 1636, in P.E. Mac Fhinn, ed. 'Scribhinni I gCartlainn an Vatican: Tuarascbháil', *Anal. Hib.*, 16 (1946): 20. See also Archbold, 'Evangelic Fruit', BL, Harleian MS 3888, p. 264.

⁹⁰ Examinations taken upon oath before the Right Honourable, the Lord Deputy of Ireland, 31 January 1633/[4], SCL, Str. P., vol. 24-25, f. 101.

⁹¹ Vicenzo Gussoni, Venetian Ambassador in England, to the Doge and Senate, 9 December 1633, *Calendar of State Papers, Venice, 1632-6* (London: Stationary Office, 1865), 172; John Southcot to Peter Biddulph, 13 September 1633, in *Newsletters from the Caroline Court, 1631-1638*, ed. Michael Questier, Camden Fifth Series, 26 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2005), 205; Mr Garrard to Wentworth, 6 December 1633, Str. P., SCL, vol. 13, , SCL, f. 130.

the hope of hauling Flatsbury into the Court of Castle Chamber, 'whereof the punishment being arbitrary it may be set as high as the offence may deserve.'⁹²

Harassing the religious orders was part of the lord deputy's long-term objective to eventually bring the whole kingdom into uniformity with England. Even discounting the Harris affair, Wentworth sought to pry into their affairs as much as he could, a point that is seldom debated. The cross-examination of the Carmelite friar, Stephen (*alias* Paul) Browne, in the Castle Chamber is a case in point.⁹³ Browne was summoned to explain his conduct during the riot at Cook Street in December 1629, when the administration attempted to suppress religious houses.⁹⁴ Having initially escaped punishment from the authorities, the friar was hauled a second time before Wentworth and the Council. On this occasion he was charged with suspicion of partaking in an exorcism of a twelve-year-old girl. In the course of the proceedings the Chief Baron of the Exchequer, Richard Bolton, accused Browne of luring Protestants away from their religion and allegiance to the king. The Council, unsurprisingly, supported Bolton. Thus, on 11 February 1635, Browne was censured, fined £3,000 and ordered to be pilloried 'as an impostor and sorcerer' in a square in Dublin.⁹⁵ To compound matters further, the friar was subsequently imprisoned for failing to pay the excessive fine. The severity of the punishment is an indication of how much political capital Wentworth and his colleagues expected to derive from the case, both in Ireland and at Whitehall. Writing to Secretary Coke, Wentworth proclaimed how the sentence caused 'a kind of panic terror affrighting them [the religious orders] as if certainly there were a present change of religion intended in so much as the Jesuits have already shut up their oratory... for fear of a sudden persecution [and] a Benedictine friar hath done the like on the other side' of Dublin.⁹⁶ Furthermore, from Wentworth's perspective, Browne's conviction was a very public demonstration of authority by which he sought to make examples of offenders. Whereas he was compelled to compromise with the Catholic gentry on political issues, Wentworth refused to countenance the unrestrained openness with which the religious

⁹² Wentworth to Coke, 3 March 1633[4], SCL, Str. P., vol. 5, f. 58; Coke to Wentworth, 15 April 1634, SCL, Str. P., vol. 5, f. 229; Wentworth to Coke, 13 May 1634, SCL, Str. P., vol. 5, f. 81; Coke to Wentworth, 30 June 1634, SCL, Str. P., vol. 5, f. 243.

⁹³ Brocard Mansfield, O.D.C., 'Fr Paul Browne, O.D.C., 1598-1671', *Dublin Historical Record*, 37 (1984): 54-8.

⁹⁴ Empey, ed. 'The diary of Sir James Ware', 84, 88, 90, Empey, 'A study of the Cook Street riot, 1629', 76-8; Rev. Marcellus Glynn, O.D.C. and Rev. F. X. Martin, O.S.A., eds. 'The "Brevis Relatio" of the Irish Discalced Carmelites, 1625-1670 by Father Paul Browne, O.D.C.', *Archiv. Hib.*, 25 (1962): 149-50.

⁹⁵ Empey, ed. 'The diary of Sir James Ware', 99.

⁹⁶ Wentworth to Coke, 2 March 1634[5], SCL, Str. P., vol. 5, f. 190.

orders conducted themselves. Consequently, Browne's condemnation constituted a stern warning to the numerous friars in the kingdom who continued to defy the government.

Despite his endeavours to limit the progress of the Counter-Reformation, Wentworth was repeatedly hampered by interference from Queen Henrietta Maria. Thanks to her intercession, Browne had his fine abated and was released from prison after just two years. Nor was he the only friar to receive a royal pardon. Preston had spent barely a month in jail when the Queen discovered that he was captive in Dublin Castle.⁹⁷ Likewise, the Capuchins were reassured of protection from governmental aggression having relayed their concerns about the growing hostile environment. In April 1634 the queen besought Wentworth that the 'poor harmless religious men... may live in security, and without molestation so long as they shall keep themselves within their duties, giving no public scandal nor offence.'⁹⁸ He was clearly irked by the queen's comments that her demands 'cannot be thought [to be] very unreasonable'. Quite the reverse, it affected him on a number of levels. To begin with, any 'duties' performed by friars contravened the laws of the state. Secondly, facilitating such a request exposed him to attack from enemies at court. Finally, but no less significantly, such demands threatened to undermine Wentworth's highly effective and opportunistic tactics against the religious orders. It was for this reason as much as anything else that Henrietta Maria felt obliged to intervene.⁹⁹ Resenting her meddling in his affairs, the lord deputy responded either by attempting to ignore her in the hope that she would not follow up the matter, or by dragging his feet. It was a big gamble. His bluff was called the following month after receiving a second letter from the queen's secretary, Sir Robert Ayton, who asked for an update on developments.¹⁰⁰ Wentworth was forced to concede. The queen was informed that the Capuchin superior was reassured 'that he should freely come to me at all times and upon all occasions should partake of those duties I acknowledge to owe to your Majesty's gracious recommendations of them unto me.'¹⁰¹ It was no secret that she was distrustful of the lord deputy. His pro-Spanish policy meant that he was always given a cool reception from

⁹⁷ Conn to Barberini, 23 October 1636, 'Scribhinní I gCartlainn an Vatican', 20; Conn to Barberini, 20 November 1636, *ibid.*, 21; Jennings, 'The Indictment of Fr. John Preston, Franciscan', 50.

⁹⁸ Queen Henrietta Maria to Wentworth, 30 April 1634, SCL, Str. P., vol. 3, f. 105.

⁹⁹ For an excellent assessment of Wentworth's uneasy relationship with the queen and her court, see Fiona Pogson, 'Wentworth and Court Politics, 1628-40' (PhD thesis, Sheffield University, 2004), 189-235.

¹⁰⁰ Wentworth to Sir Robert Ayton, secretary to the queen, 14 May 1634, SCL, Str. P., vol. 8, f. 112. He informed Ayton, 'for her Majesty's letter you mention in favour of some religious men, it is not as yet brought unto me'.

¹⁰¹ Wentworth to Queen Henrietta Maria, n.d., SCL, Str. P., vol. 3, f. 106.

her at court.¹⁰² Nonetheless, once it became evident that Wentworth was targeting the religious orders, their spiky relationship deteriorated further. That Henrietta Maria was driven repeatedly to intercede on behalf of the regular clergy is, paradoxically, the measure of just how effective his religious policy was in the early years of his deputyship.

Conclusion

Wentworth's attempts to counter the growing influence of the Catholic Church in Ireland merit attention for a number of reasons. Firstly, the lord deputy's exploitation of Harris and manipulation of the court system was a masterful demonstration of crafty management and political ingenuity. The bitter rivalry which Harris and his colleagues excited could in reality last only as long as their opponents were prepared to take the bait. By late 1632 many of the key players were showing signs of weariness. Even Harris was looking an increasingly forlorn figure. Had it not been for the arrival of Wentworth in the summer of 1633, and his determination to meddle in the internal divisions of the Catholic Church, the feud would most likely have ended sooner than it did. The anxieties expressed by a number of high profile figures within the Catholic hierarchy clearly indicate that the lord deputy's intervention was both unwelcome and deeply resented. It speaks volumes about Wentworth's resolve that he sought to become embroiled in the divisions when previously no Irish governor had dared to trespass. If anything, the methods he employed perfectly encapsulate his trademark policy of 'thorough': ruthless, efficient and devastatingly effective.

Secondly, one of the striking features about Wentworth's treatment of the Catholic clergy was its consistency with his wider religious policy that also targeted members of the Church of Ireland. As Harris publicly attacked the religious orders, the lord deputy undertook the gargantuan task of improving the state of the established church. This not only included upgrading the physical condition of churches and redressing clerical standards, it also required considerable effort in recovering impropriations from eminent laymen.¹⁰³ The most noteworthy victim was Richard Boyle, first earl of Cork. Indeed there are interesting parallels between the complaints of Cork and the religious orders. Like many of the friars brought before the courts, the earl faced the wrath of Wentworth after the latter bullied a vicar from

¹⁰² Mark Empey, 'Ireland, Spain and "the protection and defence of the Christian religion", c. 1622-35', in Declan M. Downey and Julio Crespo MacLennan, eds. *Spanish-Irish relations through the Ages* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), 103-22, esp. 115-22.

¹⁰³ See McCafferty, *The Reconstruction of the Church of Ireland*, 140-6; Alan Ford, *James Ussher: Theology, history and politics in early modern England and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007), 184, 242.

Munster to take an action in the Castle Chamber.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, Cork and the regulars were not alone in expressing their grievance at the manner in which the lord deputy sought to use prerogative powers and control the court system to impose his will. Once Harris had served his purpose, attention turned to non-conforming Protestants. Not long after the Court of High Commission was established in 1636, the earl of Nithsdale, Robert Maxwell, revealingly asserted that ‘the Catholickes are much afrayd of it, but as I am inform[e]d from england it is rather intended against the puritans, it will not be long befor[e] wee hear more certantie of it’.¹⁰⁵

Third, and finally, the specific emphasis Wentworth placed on the courts was instrumental in achieving his desired outcome. By the same token, the verdicts gave him a degree of legal protection against his enemies. Wentworth was well aware that previous lord deputies, notably Viscount Falkland, suffered at the hands of scheming factions within the Dublin administration.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, the Harris affair highlighted how susceptible his policies were to interference from Whitehall. Repeated attempts by Henrietta Maria to protect members of the religious orders who got caught in the firing line showed that even the best laid plan could be undone. The fact that the final judgement emanated from the courts, however, provided Wentworth with a strong defence when his enemies eventually came calling in 1641.

¹⁰⁴ Mark Empey, ‘Paving the way to prerogative: the politics of Sir Thomas Wentworth, c. 1614-1635’ (PhD thesis, University College Dublin, 2009), 234-7.

¹⁰⁵ A. Guthrie to Robert Maxwell, earl of Nithsdale, 7 February 1636, Constable Maxwell MS, DDEV/79/H10, University of Hull Archives, Brynmor Jones Library.

¹⁰⁶ Perez Zagorin, ‘Sir Edward Stanhope’s advice to Thomas Wentworth, Viscount Wentworth concerning the deputyship of Ireland: an unpublished letter of 1631’, *The Historical Journal*, 8 (1964): 317-8.