

‘My repeated troubles’: Dr James Gallagher (bishop of Raphoe 1725-37) and the impact of the Penal Laws

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Dr James Gallagher was a bishop in Ireland at a time when the penal laws had effectively removed the leadership of the Catholic church. By the terms of the Banishment Act of 1697¹ all Catholic bishops, vicars general, deans and regular clergy were ordered to leave the kingdom within a year. By 1703 only three bishops remained, namely Dr Edward Comerford (Cashel), Dr Michael Rosseter (Ferns) and Dr Patrick O'Donnelly (Dromore).² By 1707 only one bishop remained in Ireland and he was being held prisoner in Dublin. Very few of the bishops who left after the enactment of the Banishment Act ever returned to their dioceses and it would take another 40 years for all vacant dioceses to once again be filled.³ As a result, those episcopal consecrations which did take place in the first quarter of the eighteenth century were conducted with extreme caution. A special dispensation regarding the consecration of new bishops was in place for Ireland, and it was not necessary to have two bishops presiding at the consecration of a new bishop.⁴

Once consecrated, the pastoral mission of a Catholic bishop was a difficult and challenging one during the first half of the eighteenth century, especially for those attached to dioceses on the western seaboard or in the province of Ulster. In the west poor travel infrastructure, general poverty among the Catholic population, and less developed ecclesiastical structures than those obtaining in

1 An act for suppressing all friaries, monasteries, nunneries and other Popish convents, and for banishing all regulars of the Popish clergy out of this kingdom (1697); ‘Bishop’s banishment act’, 9 William III, c. 1.

2 John Brady & Patrick J. Corish, *The Church under the Penal Code* (Dublin, 1971), p. 7. See also Cathaldus Giblin, ‘The Stuart nomination of Irish bishops 1687-1765’, *Proceedings of the Irish Catholic Historical Committee 1965-1967* (1968), p. 39.

3 Hugh Fenning, ‘A time of reform: from the ‘penal laws’ to the birth of modern nationalism, 1691-1800’, in Brendan Bradshaw and Dáire Keogh (eds), *Christianity in Ireland: Revisiting the Story* (Dublin, 2002), p. 135.

4 Brady & Corish, *Penal Code*, p. 9.

the eastern half of the island were to be encountered. Bishops seeking to discharge their pastoral duties in the province of Ulster were further restricted by the awareness of their existence on the part of their Protestant neighbours. The few bishops who exercised their clerical and pastoral functions were frequently (but not always) obliged to move around in secrecy and in disguise.⁵ Hugh MacMahon, who was appointed bishop of Clogher in 1707 and whose diocese bordered that of Raphoe, submitted an account of affairs in his diocese to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda in Rome in 1714. It is the most detailed report of its time on the state of affairs in a Catholic diocese in Ulster, and of the challenges that MacMahon faced as bishop. It is worth quoting MacMahon on his experience as he stated:

[My] appointment occasioned great delight among both the clergy and laity, so much so that the Scottish Calvinists, with whom the Province is swarming, put very serious difficulties in my way; in fact a law passed by Parliament⁶ forbade anyone, under pain of confiscation of all property and imprisonment, to harbour or entertain a Bishop or any Church Dignitary; there was, moreover, a reward of £100 for anyone who reported such a Prelate to the authorities.⁷ The Calvinists, spurred on by this enticement, are scrutinizing everything. Sometimes, too, there is danger from Catholics, especially servants and maids who live in Protestant houses – the result, not indeed of malice, but rather of incautious talk ... For these reasons I had to go elsewhere till such time as the excitement had abated somewhat and there was less danger in visiting the district to me ... I frequently had to assume a fictitious name and travel in disguise lest I should be detected by the guards.⁸

It should also be noted that written correspondence with the nuncio in Brussels or, indeed, with other Irish bishops was not an easy task.⁹ Despite this, MacMahon was a regular correspondent with Rome in the early part of the eighteenth century and he generally used a coded style of language in his letters and an alias when signing them.¹⁰ Bishop MacMahon also noted that the exercise of clerical discipline could occasion significant risk, as priests who had been cautioned by their bishop could take their revenge by reporting him to the civil authorities.¹¹ Conditions similar to those described by MacMahon obtained in the dioceses of Raphoe and Kilmore¹² at the same period and hampered the smooth discharge of clerical duties there and elsewhere throughout Ireland at that time. It

5 Ibid., p. 6.

6 An act for explaining and amending an act, entitled, an act to prevent the further growth of Popery (1709), 8 Anne, c. 3.

7 The specific proclamation is unidentified, but possibly issued on 20 September 1708; see James Kelly, *The Proclamations of the Kingdom of Ireland* (forthcoming).

8 P.J. Flanagan, 'The diocese of Clogher in 1714: a translation of the account compiled in Latin by Most Rev. Hugh MacMahon', *Clogher Record*, 1:2 (1954), 39-40.

9 Séamus Creighton, 'The Penal Laws in Ireland, and the documents in the archives of Propaganda (1691-1731)', *Proceedings of the Irish Catholic Historical Committee 1961* (1962), 7.

10 Ibid., pp. 7-8.

11 Brady & Corish, *Penal Code*, p. 29.

12 Philip O'Connell, *The Diocese of Kilmore: Its History and Antiquities* (Dublin, 1937), p. 461.

is against this difficult background that Dr James Gallagher was appointed to the see of Raphoe in 1725. The primary aim of this essay is to examine how Gallagher functioned as bishop when the first penal laws against the Catholic church constituted a real and abiding threat. In the course of the essay, it will be shown that Gallagher, both during his ministry in the diocese of Raphoe and through his composition of a collection of sermons in Irish and their subsequent publication, was exceptionally pragmatic in the manner in which he negotiated the restrictions imposed on all bishops and clergy by the penal laws.

I

Details of Gallagher's early life are obscure but it is possible to provide a basic biography, given the information available in a range of sources.¹³ Little exists for the early years and even details about Gallagher's date and place of birth are disputed. Historians have put forward various years for his birth, including 1680,¹⁴ 1681,¹⁵ 1685,¹⁶ and 1690.¹⁷ One source states that Gallagher was born in a townland near Glenties in the parish of Iniskeel¹⁸ but most studies suggest that he was originally from south-west Donegal, possibly in the area around Ballyshannon.¹⁹ Although, as Gallagher himself stated in a written document that he was a native of the diocese of Kilmore,²⁰ this may mean that his likely

13 For a fuller account of Gallagher's life see Ciarán Mac Murchaidh, 'Nótaí beathaisnéise ar an Dr Séamas Ó Gallchobhair', *Irisleabhar Mhá Nuad* (1998), pp. 169-86. See also Proinsias Mac Cana, 'Séamus Ó Gallchobhair/James Gallagher', *Collège des Irlandais Paris and Irish Studies* (Dublin, 2001), pp. 122-9; Hugh Fenning, 'James Gallagher (Séamus Ó Gallchóir) (c.1680-1751)', *ODNB*; Eoghan Ó Raghallaigh, 'James Gallagher (Séamus Ó Gallchobhair) (c.1684-1751)', *DIB*. Readers may also find Ciarán Mac Murchaidh, 'Dr James Gallagher, *alumnus Kilmorensis*: bishop of Raphoe (1725-1737) and Kildare & Leighlin (1737-1751)', *Breifne*, 10:40 (2005), 219-37 useful.

14 Michael Comerford, *Collections relating to the dioceses of Kildare and Leighlin*, 3 vols (Dublin, 1883-6), I, p. 75. See also Robert Welch (ed.), *The Oxford concise Companion to Irish Literature* (Oxford, 2000), p. 128.

15 Ulick J. Bourke, *Sermons in Gaelic-Irish by the Most Rev. James O'Gallagher* (Dublin, 1877), p. xxx; William James Doherty, *Inis-Owen and Tirconnell: being some account of the Antiquities and Writers of the County of Donegal* (Dublin, 1895), p. 219; Pól Breathnach, *Seanmóirí Muighe Nuadh*, 4 (Dublin, 1911), p. x; Séamus P. Ó hÉigearthaigh, 'Séamus Ó Gallchóir: easpag Ráth Bhoth 1725-1737', *Irisleabhar Mhá Nuad* (1961), p. 89; Anraí Mac Giolla Chomhaill (ed.), *Díolaim Próis A.D. 1450-1850* (Dublin, 1971), p. 149; J.E. Caerwyn Williams and Máirín Ní Mhuiríosa, *Traidisiún liteartha na nGael* (Dublin, 1979), p. 276; Nollaig Ó hUrmholtaigh, 'Seanmóirí Uí Ghallchóir', in Mícheál Ó Máirtín (ed.), *Saine Uladh*, 1 (Monaghan, 1981), p. 242; Pádraig Ó Fiannachta, 'Seanmóireacht Ghaeilge san ochtú agus sa naoú haois déag', *Irisleabhar Mhá Nuad* (1983), p. 141; Colm Ó Baoill, *Contributions to a study of Irish and Scottish Gaelic* (Belfast, 1978), p. xxv; Thomas McGrath, *Religious Renewal and Reform in the Pastoral Ministry of Bishop James Doyle of Kildare and Leighlin, 1786-1834* (Dublin, 1999), p. 28.

16 Peter O'Dwyer, *Towards a History of Irish Spirituality* (Dublin, 1995), p. 201.

17 Fenning, 'James Gallagher'.

18 Doherty, *Inis-Owen*, p. 219.

19 See n. 13.

20 Hugh Fenning, 'Documents of Irish interest in the *Fondo Missioni* of the Vatican Archives', *Archivum Hibernicum*, 49 (1995), 11-12; Archivio della S. Congregazione de Propaganda Fide:

birthplace is nearer to Kinlough in Co. Leitrim, where the borders of the three dioceses of Raphoe, Kilmore and Clogher meet.²¹ This would account for the fact that while he was a native of the diocese of Kilmore, he was sufficiently familiar with the Donegal area to be appointed bishop of Raphoe. He is known to have studied in the Irish College in Paris, where he was awarded an MA in 1715.²² He was also a student at the Irish College in Rome, as he took oaths there in 1717.²³ Gallagher may have continued with his studies and been awarded a doctorate some time between taking those oaths and his return to Raphoe.²⁴

By 1725 Gallagher was Vicar General of Raphoe. In February of that year Propaganda Fide in Rome considered a petition received from him for faculties to dispense in the prohibited degrees of marriage, as Catholics who could not get this dispensation were approaching unauthorised ministers to marry them.²⁵ He was appointed bishop of the diocese on 21 July 1725.²⁶ Bishop Gallagher administered the diocese until he had to leave it in 1735, owing to significant risks to his own life, and was translated to the diocese of Kildare in 1737.

In the period between 1735 and 1737 sources suggest that Gallagher sought refuge on one of the islands in Lough Erne and lived there for about a year.²⁷ This is the period during which he wrote and published the sermons for which he is best known. This collection of sermons in Irish, which was published in Dublin in 1736, is called *Sixteen Irish sermons in an easy and familiar stile, on useful and necessary subjects, in English characters, as being the more familiar to the generality of our Irish clergy* and the publisher was Henry Babe 'at the Yellow Lyon in St. Thomas Street'. The second edition of the sermons was published in 1752 and included a seventeenth sermon composed by Gallagher, entitled 'On the joys of Heaven'. Between 1752 and 1911, a total of fourteen further editions and reprints of the sermons appeared, which may provide the reader with some indication of the constant appeal of the text, the general demand for it and the

Acta S. Congregationis (hereafter APF Acta), Acta 95 (1725), ff. 142r-43r; Scrittura Originale Riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali (hereafter SOCG) 646, ff. 356-9, undated. I am very grateful to Fr Hugh Fenning for these references.

- 21 Ciarán Mac Murchaidh, *Seanmóirí Uí Ghallchóir: téacs agus cúlra*, 2 vols (unpublished PhD thesis, NUI Maynooth, 2003), I, pp. x-xii.
- 22 L.W.B. Brockliss and Patrick Ferté, 'Irish clerics in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: a statistical study', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* lxxxvii, C, (9) (1987), 527-72, (p. 570). For a revised and augmented version of this important study, see Brockliss and Ferté, 'Prosopography of Irish clerics in the Universities of Paris and Toulouse, 1573-1792', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 57 (2004), 7-166.
- 23 John Hanly, 'Records of the Irish college, Rome, under Jesuit administration', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 27 (1964), 71, §92; Hugh Fenning, 'John Kent's report on the Irish mission, 1742', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 28 (1966), 94, §2.
- 24 The title 'Dr' is used in regard to Gallagher in James III to Father John Ingleton, 17 July 1725, in Patrick Fagan (ed.), *Ireland in the Stuart papers*, 2 vols (Dublin, 1995), I, p. 54.
- 25 APF, Acta 95 (1725), ff. 142r-143r; SOCG 646, ff. 356-59.
- 26 *Hierarchia Catholica*, 5 (1952), 327.
- 27 Bourke, *Sermons in Gaelic-Irish*, p. lv; Comerford, *Collections*, I, p. 76; Con Costello, *Kildare: Saints, Soldiers and Horses* (Naas, 1991), p. 69.

long period during which it remained a popular catechetical, homiletic and devotional text.²⁸ No manuscript version of these sermons is known to exist and copies of the first edition are extremely rare. Gallagher was a very active pastor in Kildare, publishing an important set of regulations for the clergy of his diocese in 1748.²⁹ He died in 1751 and, like the exact whereabouts of his birthplace, the location of Gallagher's burial-place is unclear, although various sources state that he is buried at Cross Patrick near Kilmeague, Co. Kildare.³⁰

It is commonly maintained that Gallagher wrote his sermons towards the end of his term as bishop of Raphoe. His experience of life as a Catholic cleric in Raphoe was particularly difficult and what facts are available suggest that it was not easy for him to function as bishop. The sermons may be viewed, in part, as a response to the difficulties he and his priests experienced as pastors working in the conditions obtaining under the penal laws. While they are primarily catechetical and didactic in content, there are several places where remarks he makes might be construed as comments on the challenges he faced in his pastoral mission. In the preface to the first edition of the sermons Gallagher observed:

I have compos'd the following Discourses for the Use of my own Fellow-labourers principally; and next for such as please to make use of them; that they may Preach them to their respective Flocks, since my repeated Troubles debar me of the Comfort of delivering them in Person.³¹

The phrase 'my repeated troubles' may be taken not only to refer to the various challenges Gallagher experienced in the practical discharge of his ministry, but may also be read as a reference to the fact that these challenges were prompted by the penal laws themselves. The reference clearly refers to his time in Raphoe, as the sermons were written before his appointment to Kildare. A careful reading of the text against the historical context in which he was operating will provide some useful indications as to how the penal laws impacted on a bishop who sought to work within their restrictions.

II

Prior to Gallagher's appointment in 1725, there had not been a bishop of Raphoe since 1661. Between 1625 and 1661, John O'Cullenan was bishop but from 1661

28 Reprints or new editions of the sermons were published in the following years: 1767, 1777, 1795, 1798, 1807, 1819, 1831, 1835, 1841, 1877, 1878, 1881, 1911. For a full account of these see Ciarán Mac Murchaidh, 'Seanmóirí an Easpaig Séamas Ó Gallchóir: Eagráin, Aistriúcháin agus Aidhmeanna', in Damien McManus *et al.* (ed.), *Féilscríbhinn do Chathal Ó Háinle* (forthcoming).

29 The original documents do not survive but were reproduced in Comerford, *Collections*, I, pp. 78-82.

30 Bourke, *Sermons in Gaelic-Irish*, p. lxiii; Comerford, *Collections*, I, p. 78; Fenning, 'James Gallagher'.

31 J[ames] G[allagher] DD, *Sixteen Irish sermons in an easy and familiar stile on useful and necessary subjects* (hereafter *Sixteen Irish sermons*) (Dublin, 1736), p. ii. I have reproduced this quotation faithfully from the 1736 edition, including the punctuation.

to 1695 the diocese was in the care of various vicars. Aspects of the penal laws were rigorously enforced in Donegal in the early eighteenth century. In addition, of all the dioceses in Ulster at that time, Raphoe was the most impoverished. The long periods during which there was no bishop in charge of Raphoe had led to a gradual decline in the diocese's provisions and structures, although such a decline was not limited to that diocese alone. As Marianne Elliott has noted, 'the 1731 report on the state of popery shows Ulster and parts of north Connacht lagging far behind the rest of the country in the provision of mass-houses (though with neighbouring Louth the wealthiest in the country), and still dependent on itinerant friars'.³² This interpretation is supported by William J. Smyth who notes that:

Across an extensive region over the middle half of the island, from Meath and Dublin diocese in the east to Ossory, Waterford and Limerick in the south and across to Tuam in the west, mass houses were essentially dominant. However rudimentary some of these buildings were, they point to the already solid position of the Church in these dioceses. Ferns, Leighlin, Cloyne, Cork and Ross (and possibly Kerry) were also characterized by a clear majority of mass houses but still retained a number of movable altars in the fields. In the north Midlands, Elphin and Clonmacnoise appear to be similar in the character of mass provision. The beginnings of a belt of weakness emerges in the northern part of the diocese of Armagh and stretches north of a line that goes westwards to embrace the dioceses of Achonry and Killala in north Connacht. Here a significant number of centres of Catholic worship were open-air sites. In Ulster, the situation deteriorates even further in Raphoe, Clogher, Derry, and the northern half of Armagh, where, in contrast to the southern dioceses, a significant majority of places for Sunday mass were mobile in character and unprotected.³³

In the absence of other data, an examination of the returns contained in the 1731 report on the state of Popery is the most reliable source of information on the diocese of Raphoe closest to the point of Gallagher's nomination to the see of Raphoe. Twenty-three parishes are listed in the report, most of which were served by secular clergy. The parish of Taughboyn (modern-day St Johnston) is listed as having no priest, although the report states that the people attended mass in the neighbouring parish of Raphoe. The parishes of Killea and Gartan were without a priest and no mention is made of their attending mass anywhere else or provision being made for any kind of pastoral service. The parish of 'Donnegall' also had no resident priest but the two priests listed for the parish of Drumholm 'celebrate mass either in the fields or private houses' there. The neighbouring parishes of Templecrone and Lettermacward had one priest between them. The parish of Aghanunchin has no priest registered there 'but the priest of the parish [of] Conwall officiates in this p[ari]sh once in a month'.³⁴

32 Marianne Elliott, *The Catholics of Ulster* (London, 2000), p. 200.

33 William J. Smyth, *Map-making, Landscapes and Memory* (Cork, 2006), pp. 371-3. See also Emmet Larkin, *The Pastoral Role of the Roman Catholic Church in Pre-Famine Ireland, 1750-1850* (Dublin, 2006), p. 139.

34 Aghanunchin and Conwall correspond roughly to the modern parish of Letterkenny.

'Fryers' (or regular clergy) are also listed as serving alongside secular clergy in a number of parishes. This of itself is noteworthy as only secular clergy were entitled by law to register for ministry in Catholic parishes. The total number of friars serving in this capacity in Raphoe is five – one in the parish of Glen Columkill, one in Killcar, one in Killbarran³⁵ and two in Iniskeel.³⁶ Only two clergymen are named in the report on Raphoe. For the parish of Glen Columkill, where a secular cleric is listed as parish priest, the report states that 'in his absence one MacLaughlin, a reputed fryer, officiates for him.' In an entry for the parish of Killygarvan³⁷ the report states:

One James Gallagher, a reputed fryer, has of late endeavoured to pervert some of the Protestant parishioners to the Popish religion but where s[ai]d fryer now is, the minister of ye parish knows not but hath applied to ye magistrates to have him taken.³⁸

Since the details are sketchy, it cannot be said with certainty that this 'reputed fryer' is Bishop Gallagher, but the accusation of proselytising is suggestive, as he is known to have been a progressive and active pastor.³⁹ That Gallagher also moved around from parish to parish to discharge his duties would probably account for his being described as a 'fryer', as the regular clergy mentioned in the report were not assigned to specific parishes, save those listed above. Regular clergy were not supposed to officiate in Ireland at all under the terms of the Banishment Act but there is plenty of evidence to suggest that they did so with some impunity. It may be that it suited Gallagher to be thought of as an itinerant friar, as bishops often assumed the role of parish clergy in order to be at greater liberty to move around their dioceses. Patrick Corish has noted, for instance, that a proclamation dating from February 1698 revealed that bishops often changed their names and address in order to remain in their dioceses and avoid discovery.⁴⁰

There were no friaries or nunneries in the diocese of Raphoe, though the report makes it clear that considerable numbers of itinerant clergy were moving around the diocese. Entries for five parishes state that 'itinerant fryers' or 'vagrant fryers' visited in order to preach and 'officiate' there. (The term 'officiate' suggests that these friars provided the full range of normal pastoral services.) More interestingly, mention is made in two of these entries of 'some priests' and 'several itinerant P[arish] Priests' coming to the parishes in question to 'officiate' and to 'marry clandestinely'. This must surely refer to unauthorised or disciplined secular clergy who had no designated parish but who moved around the

35 The modern-day parish of Ballyshannon.

36 The modern-day parish of Glenties.

37 The modern-day parish of Rathmullen.

38 'Report on the State of Popery', *Archivium Hibernicum*, 1 (1912), 21.

39 Cathaldus Giblin, 'Catalogue of material of Irish interest in the collection *Nunziatura di Fiandra*, Vatican Archives: part 5, vols. 123-132', *Collectanea Hibernica*, 9 (1966), 123-32, (p. 47).

40 Brady and Corish, *Penal Code*, pp. 11-2.

diocese, providing pastoral services illicitly. It was a legacy of the long period during which the diocese was without a resident ordinary to monitor and conduct the affairs of the diocese. It is also noteworthy that these vagrant clergy were supported financially by the people. A note for the parish of Killcar states ‘but some priests and fryars, beside those already mentioned, officiate sometimes in the parish and are supported by collections made among the people’.⁴¹

The report has little to say about schools within the diocese of Raphoe. The data provided show that, in general, schools were in operation in only four parishes: Conwall, which had ‘one in the mountains’; Killcar and Iniskeel, which had one school each, and the parish of Enver, which had two. It may be that schools of a more irregular nature were in operation in two other parishes, as the returns for Raphoe state that there was ‘no settled popish school’ and those for Taughboyn reveal that ‘none [was] kept publickly’.⁴²

Out of twenty-seven parishes listed in the diocese, only six were reported as having a ‘Mass house’ or ‘chappel’, listed in the table below.

Table 1: Mass houses in the diocese of Raphoe, 1731	
<i>Parish</i>	<i>Mass Houses or Chappels</i>
Enver	One
Glen Columkill	One
Iniskeel	One mass-house lately built
Killcar	One
Killygarvan	One cabin
Raymunterdony & Tullyobigly	Two sheds where mass is celebrated

Source: Derived from ‘Report on the State of Popery’, *Archivium Hibernicum*, 1 (1912).

In the other parishes the clergy, it was reported, officiated ‘in the open fields’, ‘in the open air’ or, in a few cases, ‘in some poor cabbin’ or ‘in private houses’.⁴³ This effectively means that approximately two thirds of the twenty-seven parishes, mass was celebrated in the open.

Despite the paucity of proper buildings in which mass was celebrated, one may interpret the mass-house ‘lately built’ in Iniskeel as evidence that Gallagher was embarked on a process of improving the provision of church structures in Raphoe. As three secular priests and two reputed friars were listed among the clergy in this parish, and as the parish was reported as having a ‘popish school’, it is also evident that the parish of Inniskeel was wealthy enough to support this range and level of activity. The fact also that almost all parishes had at least one

41 ‘Report on the State of Popery’, p. 23.

42 Ibid., p. 21.

43 Ibid., pp. 20-3.

priest assigned to their cure suggests that Gallagher was steadily re-establishing diocesan structures from the ground up. Another comment in the report regarding the parish of Glen Columkill, to the effect that 'Three young priests lately ordained here are gone to France for education'⁴⁴ would strengthen the conclusion that the James Gallagher mentioned for the parish of Killygarvan was the bishop of the diocese, as it is more than likely that he was responsible for ordaining the three young men who went to pursue their theological studies abroad. We know that Gallagher himself studied at the University of Paris and was anxious to improve the calibre of candidate presenting for ordination.

The report on the diocese of Raphoe gives the reader a clear account of how affairs in the diocese stood six years after Gallagher's appointment there. While the 1731 report is revealing in that it clearly shows 'the scale and level of Catholic ecclesiastical organization' and 'the general absence of concealment', it also illustrates that official toleration of church structures was not always equal, especially in Ulster.⁴⁵ The reality of the challenges faced by Gallagher during the penal era as he tried to correct decades of neglect and the poverty of many parishes is also evident. One may conclude that, local difficulties notwithstanding, Gallagher was able to function reasonably free from interference, and thus with some effect during the first half of his tenure in Raphoe. The irony is that his zeal and impact attracted the attention of both civil authorities and some disaffected clergy. This would ensure that the latter half of his episcopacy became more problematic.

III

The incident in which Gallagher was involved and which led to his leaving Raphoe diocese serves as a defining example of the kind of challenges and risks to which bishops were exposed during the penal era. Gallagher was keen to restore order to affairs in his diocese. Yet his work at reforming the church and its structures in Raphoe and dealing with errant priests brought him directly into conflict with the local civil authorities. In a letter to the nuncio at Brussels, dated 20 January 1735, the archbishop of Armagh, Hugh MacMahon, described Gallagher as a very active pastor, noted his 'extraordinary zeal and youthful vigour', and made the following statement about affairs in Raphoe at that time:

Persecution has flared up in Raphoe because of Gallagher's great zeal, and the bishop lives in misery, and wanders about unknown, like a fugitive, at the greatest risk to himself; there is little hope that he will ever be able to function peaceably as a bishop in Raphoe, as that diocese is overrun with Scottish Presbyterians.⁴⁶

The reference to problems being caused to the Catholic clergy by 'Scottish

44 Ibid., p. 22.

45 Connolly, *Religion, Law and Power*, pp. 288-9.

46 Giblin, 'Catalogue of material, part 5', p. 47.

Presbyterians', especially in Ulster, would appear not to have been an exaggeration. Some twenty years earlier, when he was bishop of the neighbouring diocese of Clogher, Hugh MacMahon wrote in his report on affairs in the diocese:

Although all Ireland is suffering, this province is worse off than the rest of the country, because of the fact that from the neighbouring country of Scotland Calvinists are coming over here daily in large groups of families, occupying the towns and villages, seizing the farms in the richer parts of the country and expelling the natives.⁴⁷

The year before Gallagher left the diocese his 'great zeal' led to his being involved in a case in which he censured a priest. As has been previously noted, it was tempting for priests who were disciplined to seek to revenge themselves on their bishops by bringing their grievances to the attention of the civil or even the Protestant ecclesiastical authorities. This could, as happened in this instance, elevate an essentially minor personal or insubstantial dispute into a matter of significant controversy that could threaten the security and well-being of the bishop. Gallagher's situation is a case in point.

On 16 July 1734, Gallagher wrote a letter to Valenti-Gonzaga, nuncio for Ireland who resided in Brussels, stating that he was in grave danger of being captured because of a search that had been ordered for him by the civil authorities.⁴⁸ This search had been initiated as a result of a complaint made about him by a priest whom he had censured in early March of that year. Gallagher had censured Humphrey Griffill whom he described as 'a priest more by name than by practice'. Griffill, having been ordained, refused to travel abroad to complete his studies 'in accordance with the oath he took at ordination' and in spite of Gallagher's insistence that he do so. Instead, Griffill took up residence in the parish of Clondavadog in opposition to the properly installed parish priest there, Dominic O'Donnell, forcing Gallagher to suspend and then excommunicate Griffill. Unwilling to accede in his eclipse, Griffill 'called in the secular authorities to help him and by his evil conduct incited them against the bishop and priests loyal to him'.⁴⁹

47 Flanagan, 'The diocese of Clogher', pp. 39-40.

48 Giblin, 'Catalogue of material, part 5', p. 42.

49 The civil authorities were very quickly made aware of the incident as may be seen from a report made by Josiah Hart, Anglican bishop of Kilmore, to George Doddington concerning the matter, in Dublin in March 1734: 'The [Anglican] Bishop of Raphoe [Nicholas Forster] acquainted the Duke of Dorset [Lord Lieutenant] in the Great Room this morning that the Popish Bishop [of Raphoe] having removed a quiet, inoffensive priest, and put a turbulent fellow in his place, Dr. Rogers had issued his warrant for apprehending him. As they were carrying him to the county jail, guarded by several protestants, some of them gentlemen, a great body of papists attacked them, wounded several, and arrested the priest. Letters from my own diocese are full of apprehensions that some mischief is brewing, and that the papists have many private cabals. What particular mischief they have in their heads, God knows, but there does not seem to be a crisis in affairs at present for their purpose.' See Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on Manuscripts in various Collections*, VI (London, 1909), p. 60.

Gallagher recounted that a civil order was issued for his arrest and that while visiting a parish priest in Killygarvan, an attempt was made to arrest him. Informed by a local person that a group was on the way to arrest him, Gallagher managed to evade capture, but the parish priest, Charles Kerighan, was taken. Kerighan's parishioners came to his rescue but a row broke out between the parishioners and the soldiers who were holding the priest. Injuries were inflicted on both sides and although Kerighan was freed, he was mortally wounded. Gallagher reported that many of the parishioners were imprisoned – some for up to a year – while others were fined and released. Others still were forced to seek refuge outside the province.⁵⁰ As a result of the ensuing tensions, and increased risk, three other local priests fled their parishes for fear of being arrested and their absence, stated Gallagher, 'resulted in serious disorders'.

With a bounty on his head Gallagher went into hiding to 'the borders of his diocese' until the storm abated, following which he returned to the diocese to resume his duties. Some time later Griffill sought pardon for his misdeeds and apologised for the harm he had caused 'to innocent people and to the catholic religion'. Gallagher described Griffill's action in the following way: 'Griffill has repented of his crime and of having done such harm to innocent people and to the catholic religion, and has humbly begged absolution for his misdeeds. Since, however, his crime was as notorious as the tumult which it caused, it demanded an absolution from censures and irregularities of various kinds.' With that in mind Gallagher appealed for the necessary faculties to lift the penalties which had been imposed, faculties the nuncio granted. However, the nuncio cautioned Gallagher 'to make sure that Griffill is firmly and securely penitent, and that, as far as prudence will permit, he is to impart the absolution not entirely in secret but with that degree of solemnity and in such a manner as to repair the grave public scandal which was given'. Acting on Gallagher's report of events in his letter, the nuncio also noted 'the pitiable circumstances in which this prelate lives and that he felt he should be given some assistance'.⁵¹ What assistance the nuncio had in mind is not clear but it is obvious from the description of events that Gallagher encountered considerable challenges in the course of his work and disruption to the smooth order of the diocese from certain errant priests.

The Griffill case was a turning point in Gallagher's ministry. His safety in Raphoe could no longer be guaranteed and he eventually left the diocese altogether. Canon Ulick J. Bourke, who published a bilingual edition of Gallagher's sermons in 1877, asserted that Gallagher took refuge on an island in Lough Erne, and there reputedly wrote his famous sermons over the course of a year or so.⁵² According to Bourke's rather cloying account of these events:

50 Giblyn, 'Catalogue of material, part 5', p. 42.

51 The quotations in the preceding paragraph are drawn from the letter as described in *ibid.*, pp. 42-3.

52 Bourke, *Sermons in Gaelic-Irish*, p. lv. See also Comerford, *Collections*, I, p. 76, who was probably drawing on Bourke.

In one of the small islands of that lovely lake he secured, amongst the humble but trusty clansmen of the Gallacher sept, a secure asylum. For fully twelve months he remained there comparatively unknown, dressed in peasant costume, holding aloof from public gatherings. It was in one of those small islands, like St John in Patmos, that Dr James O’Gallagher re-wrote and prepared for press the fragmentary sermons, which he had from time to time preached in Irish to the flock entrusted to his pastoral charge.⁵³

There is, however, something rather incongruous about the suggestion that Gallagher had to leave Raphoe in 1735 owing to the warrant that had been issued for his arrest and to the general threat on his life and yet was in a position to publish his *Sixteen Irish sermons in an easy and familiar stile* through the medium of Irish in Dublin the following year. His experience at Raphoe serves to illustrate the irregular and disjointed nature of the penal laws and the many other local issues which had a bearing on how they were imposed. Gallagher’s experience also provides some indication as to how bishops who were prepared to stay in their diocese during the early years of the eighteenth century attempted to discharge their pastoral responsibilities without falling foul of the penal laws.

IV

The text of Gallagher’s sermons may be usefully explored in order to establish what his main priorities were while bishop of Raphoe. From the time of their publication in 1736, it is clear that Gallagher intended his collection of sermons to be the means by which priests might more effectively attend to the catechetical and pastoral needs of those under their care. Gallagher also clearly viewed such a collection as an important pastoral tool and as an effective means of equipping priests with the necessary skills to preach through the medium of Irish. Many bishops of the time were greatly concerned about the standard of Irish of priests returning to the home mission on completion of their studies abroad. These concerns centred mainly on the priests’ weakened ability to function and preach, especially through the medium of Irish.⁵⁴ Gallagher referred explicitly to these concerns in the preface to the sermons:⁵⁵

... It may be objected that the Generality of our Clergy have Sermon-books in *Latin* or *French*, or other languages, I allow they have, but generally in a stile not so well

53 Bourke, *Sermons in Gaelic-Irish*, p. lv.

54 See Mac Murchaidh, *Taighde agus Teagasc*, 1, pp. 19-21. See also David Ryan, ‘Catholic preaching in Ireland, 1760-1840’, in Raymond Gillespie (ed.), *The remaking of modern Ireland 1750-1950: Beckett Prize Essays in Irish History* (Dublin, 2004), p. 76.

55 While it may seem unusual in such a text that the preface and titles of the sermons should be in English and the main body of the text in Irish, it must be borne in mind that Gallagher’s target audience was the Catholic clergy, including those who may not have had enough Irish to minister to their respective congregations. This was more than likely an attempt by Gallagher to appeal to an anglophone clergy. See Niall Ó Ciosáin, ‘Print and Irish, 1570-1900: an exception among the Celtic languages?’, *Radharc*, 5-7 (2004-2006), 81-2. See also Niall Ó Ciosáin, ‘Printing in Irish and Ó Súilleabháin’s *Pious miscellany*’, in Gerard Long (ed.), *Books beyond the Pale* (Dublin, 1996), p. 87.

adapted to our Country. But surely they are not the worse to have some in their Mother tongue, which may furnish them with Thoughts or proper Expressions, very often wanting to such as gather their Discourses from Foreign Languages?⁵⁶

It is apparent that Gallagher was greatly concerned with the status and general welfare of the spoken language during his years as bishop of Raphoe and that this informed his decision to have the sermons printed in roman rather than gaelic font:

If my Brethren will admire, why *Irish* Sermons should come cloathed [*sic*] in *English* Dress, which seems not to suit so well the *Irish* language. One reason is, that our Printers have no *Irish* Types. And another, that our Mother-language, sharing so far the Fate of her Professors, is so far abandon'd, and is so great a stranger in her Native Soil that scarce one in ten, is acquainted with her Characters. Lest any, then, should be discouraged from making Use of this little Work, by being strangers to its very Elements, I have made Choice of Letters, which are obvious to all; and in spelling, kept nearer to the present manner of speaking, than to the true and ancient Orthography. This seeming Difficulty being removed, I hope that as many as can speak or tollerably [*sic*] pronounce the *Irish*, If furnish'd with any stock of Zeal to discharge their Duty, will with little Pains, soon read and understand the following Discourses.⁵⁷

Niall Ó Ciosáin has asserted his belief that the use of the roman typeface in Irish language printing was as much a matter of practicality as any other consideration. He has also acknowledged that it was widely believed at the time that people would have difficulty in reading the gaelic typeface where the roman font would not prove nearly so challenging. The reason given for this is that Catholics who already had some levels of basic or moderate literacy were far more likely to be familiar with the roman rather than the gaelic script.⁵⁸ He cites the example of a religious text⁵⁹ which was published in Waterford almost one hundred years after Gallagher's sermons, in which reference is made to the same problem:

It is a great dissatisfaction to me ... that I have been prevented from having this little book printed in the native Irish character, for the want of a native Irish type in Waterford, and because few only are acquainted with the language in its ancient characters.⁶⁰

Aside from a pamphlet containing two of Gallagher's sermons edited by Father Joseph S. O'Gallagher and published in 1900, all issues of Gallagher's text appeared in roman type until the most recent edition, that of Father Paul Walsh in

56 Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, pp. ii-iii.

57 Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, pp. iv-v.

58 Niall Ó Ciosáin, *Print and popular Culture in Ireland 1750-1850* (Dublin 2010; first edn 1997), p. 184.

59 *Cheithre Soleirseadha de'n Eaguidheacht Chriostuidhe etc.* (Waterford, 1820).

60 Ó Ciosáin, *Print and popular Culture*, p. 184.

1911. While Gallagher himself defended his decision to use roman type in the 1736 edition, as has been noted above, the reviewer of the 1911 edition was not impressed by Walsh's decision to adopt the use of a gaelic font after all that time:

The present edition is distinctive in that the Sermons for the first time appear in the so-called Irish character. Different people will hold different opinions as to the advantages of the retention in Irish of a set of 'ornamental' characters which other languages have long since discarded; but in the case of Gallagher's Sermons there are, I think, special reasons which would make the ordinary form of the Roman character the more appropriate. There are probably not a few among the older speakers in Donegal who, thanks to the former editions of the 'Sermons', would be able to read Irish if printed in "letters which are obvious to all" (to borrow Gallagher's own words), but to whom the same Irish dressed up in ornamental lettering will appear strange and foreign.⁶¹

In the end, it was simply a matter of pure convenience that the roman type achieved the prominence it did. Ó Ciosáin has commented that the use of roman letters '... was partly for the convenience of anglophone clergy and partly for that of a Dublin print trade which did not work with Gaelic letters, did not have a Gaelic font, and most likely couldn't afford to buy one.'⁶²

In accordance with the decrees of the Council of Trent, Irish bishops in general placed great emphasis on preaching as a means of catechesis and as a bulwark against the proselytising activities of the established and reformed churches. Priests were put under constant pressure to preach regularly and to do so with due care and attention.⁶³ Preaching and the composition of sermon material would gradually become more important as the eighteenth century progressed. Many preachers who came after Gallagher drew on his work as well as that of the continental preachers in order to enrich their own work and to provide material in Irish for preachers. Priests such as John Heely, who ministered in Co. Louth, and Tadhg Ó Conaill, who was Prior of the Carmelite monastery in Kinsale in the mid-eighteenth century, are good examples of this phenomenon.⁶⁴ Many bishops required their clergy to have a *prône* (a book of sermons) on which they could draw to enhance their own preaching.⁶⁵

Gallagher sought to assist his priests in their pastoral endeavours by providing them with suitable material in Irish on which they could draw in order to preach

61 O'Rahilly, *Gadelica*, p. 66.

62 Ó Ciosáin, 'Print and Irish, 1570-1900', p. 83.

63 David Ryan, "'That most serious duty": Catholic preaching in Ireland, 1760-1840' (unpublished MA thesis, NUI Galway, 1998), pp. 83-6.

64 Heely wrote a set of sermons in phonetic script in which he drew heavily on Gallagher's work; see Seosamh Ó Labhraí, 'Seanmóirí John Heely' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Ulster, 1998). Ó Conaill translated *La Trompette du Ciel* by Provençal priest Père Antoine Yvan (1576-1653) and in so doing introduced many interpolations from Gallagher's sermons throughout the text. The editor of the Irish text, Cecile O'Rahilly, notes that Ó Conaill 'probably intended his translation to be used as material for preaching', see Cecile O'Rahilly (ed.), *Trompa na bhFlaitheas* (Dublin, 1955), p. xv.

65 Ryan, 'Catholic preaching in Ireland', pp. 74-5.

effectively. Indicatively, towards the end of the preface to his sermons he offered the following advice to his clergy:

Take then cheerfully, beloved Fellow labourer, this small Mess, of which I make you a Gift; with which you may Feed your Flock once a Month, thro' the Year, and have some to spare. Nay, rather than they should Fast, spare not to give them each *Sunday* a Part of the Loaf, by Preaching a Point, or even a Paragraph; for there are some by their Length, which can afford to be divided. And by the time your store is exhausted, you'll acquire a Facility both of Expression and Invention, to Serve up fresh Dishes of your own dressing.⁶⁶

Based upon what he wrote, it is clear that Gallagher expected priests to preach one long sermon each month or a shorter one each Sunday. He also expected that by so doing the preaching skills of the clergy would improve in two respects: (i) their competence to craft effective sermons and (ii) their ability to address confidently theological concepts through the medium of Irish. His aims, therefore, centred on the need to ensure that his clergy were adequately educated for the mission and were equipped to preach and teach the faith, and that they did so while trying to negotiate the difficult challenges posed by the penal laws.

Gallagher's *Sixteen Irish sermons* is a long text and yet throughout the book there are few direct references to the conditions he worked in and the challenges he faced as a bishop. Where such references are made, therefore, they possess a particular significance and are worthy of attention. These references fall largely into two main categories, Gallagher's concern with the general standard of the clergy and his understanding of the challenges being faced by the church.

Gallagher's concern with the standard of his clergy is made clear by the references made to this problem in various sermons. This was a matter of particular concern for bishops during the eighteenth century, since there was quite a number of dissident or unauthorised priests functioning throughout the country. Some of these men were disciplined by the bishops for various infractions. Others simply refused to travel abroad to complete the necessary courses of formation after ordination by their bishop and had suspensions imposed on them for their recalcitrance.⁶⁷ The Griffill case described above is a case in point. Such clergy were a source of particular difficulty for bishops⁶⁸ and we may get some idea of how exercised Gallagher was by the problem of ensuring that priests were properly authorised and trained from the following references in his sermons. Gallagher first refers to this problem in Sermon 4, 'On Confession and its conditions'. While defining for his listeners what true confession is, he states:

66 Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, p. v.

67 Tomás Ó Fiaich, *The Irish Colleges in France* (Dublin, 1990), p. 13.

68 Seosamh Ó Dufaigh and Brian E. Rainey, *Comhairle Mhic Clamha ó Achadh na Muilleann/ The advice of Mac Clave from Aughnamullen* (Lille, 1981), pp. 15-23.

'Se as faoisidin an, a Chriosdaigh, casaoid ni an peacach air fein re Dia a bpearsuinn sagairt, ag a mbiann comhacht absoloid no pardun thabhairt do ana chorrtha. Mais ea, mas casaoid i as coir a dheanamh re sagart ag a mbeidh cumhachta faoisidin d'eisteacht, god e bheir sinn dha dheanamh re ruagaire ratha, re seanbhuachalidh agus re strainseiridh? Da mbeth loit no tinnios mharbhtach air do cholainn, ni he an liaigh as measa thoighfea chum do leighios agus tobha tu an leigh is taire agus as measa chum cneadha dioghbbalach h'anama do leighios agus nach moide go mbion ughdaras no chomhachta on Eagluis aca absoloid thabhairt duit.⁶⁹

[Confession, my dear Christians, is an accusation which the sinner makes against himself to God through the person of a priest, who has the power to grant absolution or forgiveness for his sins. Well, if it is an accusation that ought to be made to a priest who has the authority to hear confession, why then do some of you confess to a wandering vagabond or some old fellows or to strangers? If there were some deadly wound or mortal illness afflicting your body, you would not attend the worst doctor in order to be cured, yet you choose the worst and most wretched doctors to heal the malignant wounds of your soul, they who have barely the authority to hear confession.]

'Wandering/strolling vagabond' is a rough translation of *ruagaire reatha* and here it is understood to refer to a wandering friar, perhaps a 'couple beggar'.⁷⁰ The terms *seanbhuachaillí* (old boys/fellows/idlers) and *strainséirí* (strangers) are taken to have a similar sense. 'Old boys/fellows or idlers' may mean some kind of unauthorised or degraded priest, and 'stranger' suggests an unknown or unvouched-for priest. In his first year in Raphoe as Vicar General of the diocese, Gallagher wrote to Propaganda Fide on 26 February 1725 to complain about the problem of unauthorised priests who were marrying Catholics within forbidden degrees of consanguinity. Gallagher petitioned Rome for faculties to dispense with this particular canonical prohibition so that people in this situation could approach their parish clergy and be married by priests in good standing, rather than go to the *ruagairí reatha* mentioned by him in the sermons.

Gallagher adverts to these kinds of problems again in Sermon 8, 'On the danger of making an unworthy communion', where he writes:

Nil sligh is fearr 'an a' chonsias a ghlanamh no an fhaoisidin ma rinne tu i go ceart, ma rinne tu i re dolas chroidh agus aithreachuis ann do pheacaidh. Acht cia ris a ndearna tu an fhaoisidin so? Ata re ruagaire ratha no re sagart og ainbhfiosach nachar chuairtidh do chonsias agus nach moide go raibh cead aige on Eagluis faoisidin d'eisteacht. Acht mur raibh, d'fhag se thusa ansa muileoig cheanna ana bhfuair thu.⁷¹

69 Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, pp. 48-9.

70 'Wandering vagabond' is my translation. One might also use the term 'wandering rogue'. Bourke's translation is 'strolling friar'. It is interesting to note that the Presbyterian church in eighteenth-century Ulster also struggled with the problems associated with censured or 'degraded' clergymen who performed illicit marriages and who were commonly known as 'buckle-beggars'. See Andrew R. Holmes, *The shaping of Ulster Presbyterian Belief and Practice 1770-1840* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 219-20.

71 Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, p. 115.

[There is no better way to cleanse one's conscience than confession, if that confession is made in the proper manner, with heartfelt contrition and real sorrow for your sins. But to whom do you make your confession? Is it to a *ruagaire reatha* (wandering/strolling friar) or to a *sagart óg ainbhfiosach* (a young, ignorant priest) who does not adequately probe your conscience and who probably does not have the church's permission to hear confession. If he does not, he will have left you in the same mire in which he found you.]

The phrase *sagart óg ainbhfiosach* is more than likely a reference to a young man recently ordained but who has not completed his theological or pastoral training. The re-occurrence of the phrase *ruagaire reatha* in a lengthy text, which otherwise contains hardly any reference to Gallagher's pastoral difficulties, suggests that it was an issue that weighed heavily on his mind. It also conveys Gallagher's own dissatisfaction that such priests were still moving around the diocese, functioning illicitly and interfering with the normal activities of properly appointed priests.

The problem of candidates ill-suited to the priesthood was one which also exercised the seminary authorities abroad. Certain priests sent to the Irish College in Paris to complete their pastoral training were deemed inadequate for the mission by their superiors and those charged with their formation in the College. In a letter dated 27 June 1735, Fr John Bourke, provisor of the College, testified to the truculence and indiscipline of these men during their sojourn in Paris:

The ignorance and the scandalous behaviour of a great number of priests, straggling about without place or employ, are the cause of the decay of religion and perversion of many considerable Catholics in Ireland as much as the severity of the Acts of Parliament, and it is remarkable that such priests as have raised any disturbances or persecutions in the country were of the set ordained in Ireland without due preparation, who being reprimanded, as they have been here, for the irregularity of their lives, turned against those whose duty it was to correct and suspend them ... The Primate of Ireland, Dr Lloyd, the bishop of Limerick and the bishop of Raphoe were denounced by unruly priests and obliged to disappear.⁷²

The ordaining of men who did not have the necessary proper pastoral formation was a source of considerable anxiety for Bishop Gallagher and it was an issue to which he devoted a great deal of time and energy in rectifying. It is reasonable to postulate that the sermons were, in part, an attempt by Gallagher to address certain weaknesses in the standard of preaching and catechesis. At the very least they were a means by which Gallagher could provide a manual to those clerics who found the task daunting. They were also the means by which he could both encourage his priests to preach and, at the same time, exercise some measure of control over what was being presented to the faithful.

⁷² Fagan, *Stuart Papers*, I, p. 217. Hugh MacMahon was archbishop of Armagh; Sylvester Lloyd was bishop of Killaloe; Cornelius O'Keeffe was bishop of Limerick and James Gallagher was bishop of Raphoe.

V

The idea that a people or a nation could be partly responsible for its own woes as a result of some disloyalty to God (or more specifically the church) is aired in a number of the sermons. The concept of God's anger with his people is commonly encountered in the Old Testament where it is normally understood within the context of the Covenant relationship that exists between the people and their God. He has a claim upon their obedience and trust, and when they stray outside the parameters of his relationship with them, and forsake their covenant responsibilities, God is justifiably angry with them. There are echoes of this concept to be found in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Irish poetry and religious texts. In those cases, poets and writers used the notion as a means of inciting the people to greater reverence and commitment in order to overcome their political woes. The deprivations suffered by the people during various wars, plantations and even the penal laws themselves were sometimes portrayed as a punishment in return for a lukewarm attitude to faith and fatherland. Gallagher was drawing a little on the biblical and native traditions here in his sermons but he presented a more nuanced version of the traditional trope. The following extracts illustrate not that the Irish had brought the hardship being endured under the penal code upon themselves, but that they had become weakened and less faithful owing to the hardships they were forced to endure. The fact that the people had been deprived of a viable and vibrant Catholic church was in large part the reason why the woes they suffered were so pronounced.

In the second sermon, 'On the Last Judgement', possibly the most famous sermon in the collection, Gallagher engaged with the sinfulness of humankind before the Flood and compared that to affairs in the Ireland of the eighteenth century:

Maseadh, mas adhbhar an peacamh fo dtig tromdhioghaltus De air na daone, an dtainic aimsir ar bith riaomh dar baoghlaidh fearg agus dioghaltus De no an uair so? An dtainic aimsir ar bith ariamh ana raibh na lochta nios iomadamhla, na dubhailce nios coitchionna agus na peacaidh nios madramhla no air an uair so? An feidir a radh roimh an dile go raibh na breaga nios iomadamhla, na mionna mora nios minicidh, druis agus adhaltranus nios madramhla, eagcoir agus leathrom na comharsan nios coitchionna eidir an uile shoirt drong dhaoine no air an uair so? D'fhuaraidh an cradhbha, d'imthidh an devotion, diobrudh an chathranacht. Nil 'na n-ait againn acht easbhuidh creididh, briseamh saoire, dibheirge agus dantharacht 'n-aighe air gcomharsan. So na peacaidh dhibrios rioghtha, scriosfus nasuin, fhagus tiorrtha 'na bhfasach. So na peacaidh thug leirscrios air *Eirinn*, thug a nduithe agus a bhfearann do nasuinn eile agus oh, mo mhile truidhe, nach bhfuil siad 'na mhuinin so.⁷³

[So, if sin is the cause of the coming of God's grave vengeance upon the people, has there ever been a time when God's wrath and vengeance were more threatening than the present? Has there ever been a time when crimes were more abundant, vices more commonplace and sins more beastly than the present? Can it be said

73 Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, pp. 16-7.

that before the flood lies were any more numerous, swear-words any more frequent, lust and adultery any more beastly, injustice and oppression of one's neighbour any more common among every class of people than they are now? Devotion has become lukewarm, piety has disappeared, charity has been banished. There is nothing in their place but lack of faith, violation of the Sabbath, enmity and animosity against our neighbours. These are the sins that do away with kingdoms, destroy nations and leave countries desolate. These are the sins that have brought ruin upon the Irish people and have given their properties and lands to other nations.]

Gallagher returned to this theme in the third sermon, 'On the necessity of loving our enemies' where he wrote:

Acht 'se as adhbhar don differ ata eidir Chriosdaighne na haimsire so agus an mhuintir bhi a dtus na hEagluise gur fhuairidh anois an crabhudh, gur imthidh an devotion, gur dibreamh an chathranacht, nach bhfuil 'na n-ait againn acht easbhuidh creididh, ainbhios agus arraid, uabhar agus anfhlaithios, fuath agus fearg, dibheirg agus dannarracht 'n-aighe ar gcomharsain. So na peacaidh fhagus Flaitheamhnus De 'n' fhasach agus lionus Iffrionn. So na peacaidh scriosfus nasuin, loisgios cathreacha, thug an dile air an domhan agus loisgios fa dheireamh an cheathar-chruinne, acht mur dtionntaidhmid ...⁷⁴

[But the root of the difference between the Christians of these times and those of the early days of the church is that devotion has cooled, piety has disappeared, charity has been banished and that in their place there is only lack of faith, ignorance and error, pride and tyranny, hatred and anger, enmity and animosity against our neighbours. These are the sins that lay to waste the kingdom of God and cause Hell to be filled. These are the sins that destroy nations and burn down cities, that brought the flood upon the world and that will eventually consume the whole of creation if we do not turn back to God ...]

As already noted, the idea that the sufferings of the people were a divine visitation was not an uncommon theme in the sermon literature and poetry of the eighteenth century nor, indeed, in that of the seventeenth century either, where it was a common homiletic device of the Protestant, as well as the Catholic preacher, as illustrated some years ago by Toby Barnard and others.⁷⁵ A good example of this may be found in the work of the Cork priest and poet, Fr Conchúr Mac Cairteáin, who told his flock in a sermon in 1724 that their misfortunes were due to the mortal sins of those who had gone before them. To emphasize his point he quoted a short verse:

Peaca na sinsear, uar is díomas, feall is cinnteacht, craos is ól,
Creacha na mbochtán, cealla do robáil, fórsa agus furáil, puimp is próis,
Easumhla d'ordaibh, síorbhriste pósta, iompó na gcóta in aghaig dhlí Phóil,

⁷⁴ Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, p. 33.

⁷⁵ R.A. Breatnach, 'The end of a tradition: a survey of eighteenth century Gaelic literature', *Studia Hibernica*, 1 (1961), 131; T.C. Barnard, 'The uses of 23 October 1641 and Irish Protestant celebrations', *English Historical Review*, 106 (1991), 891-2, 894, 908-9; Elliott, *Catholics of Ulster*, p. 204.

Do dhíbir ár bhflatha, do bhain díobh a mbeatha, d'fhág sinn ar leatrom fé scíos is fé bhrón.⁷⁶

[Original sin, pride and arrogance, deceit and covetousness, greed and drink,
The plunder of the poor, the robbing of churches, violence and excess, pomp and
debauchery,
Disrespect for clergy, constant marriage breakdown, turning of the back on Paul's
law,
All this has banished our princes, deprived them of their livelihood and left the
rest of us oppressed, weary and sorrowful.]

One suspects that while Gallagher was, at face value, drawing a direct link between the people's sinfulness and the woes of both church and country at the time, he was also adverting indirectly here to the difficulties the church was having in successfully preaching the message of the faith and providing spiritual sustenance to its people as a result of the restrictions of the penal laws. The people's suffering was not entirely of their own making but was as a direct result of having the work and ministry of their priests and their church restricted to such an extent that the traditional supports of their faith (the sacraments and ministrations of the clergy) were being denied them. The whole point of his publishing a volume of sermons in Irish was to assist the clergy in their pastoral responsibilities and to help with the religious instruction of the people. He highlighted this in his preface to the sermons, where he outlined the difficulties facing bishops who sought to maintain clerical standards in their dioceses and see to the propagation of the faith among their people:

And notwithstanding the great number of sermon books amongst us, we find by woeful experience, that many through indolence, not to call it culpable negligence, make but very little use of them.

How many do we see through diffidence in their capacity, or the difficulty they meet in following a point closely, or to form a discourse with any connection, chose rather to be silent, than to attempt to go about it.

We see others who have books, zeal and capacity, yet are daily distracted and diverted by attending the sick, and discharging the other functions of their ministry in an incommodious and ill-situated parish, that they have scarce leisure to read their canonical office.

For all such, I hope it will be allowed that these, my lucubrations, may be of use to begin with 'till they gain a facility, assurance, and leisure to work for themselves.⁷⁷

Gallagher in his final sermon, 'On the joys of Heaven' included a veiled exhortation to his listeners to be strong in the face of such adversity and to endure bravely the restrictions of the penal laws:

⁷⁶ Thomas F. O'Rahilly (ed.), *Burdúin bheaga* (Dublin, 1925), no. 161, p. 33.

⁷⁷ Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, pp. iii-iv.

Ni e sin na radh go bhfuil d'fhiache ar dhuine dhol 'n-arracis a namhud agus bas d'fhullint ar son a chreidigh, mar do rinadar na martiridh acht ata d'fhiachaibh orrain ma chastar foina laimh sin, mile bas d'fhullint nios thoisge no do sheanamist aon phu[i]nte amhain dar gcreidamh.⁷⁸

That is not to say that any of us is required to go to meet his enemies and to die for his faith as did the martyrs of old but we are obliged, if we happen to be in their control, to suffer a thousand deaths sooner than deny even one point of our faith.⁷⁹

One can conclude from this comment that Gallagher, using the sermon, strove to encourage the people to remain faithful to the practices and teachings of the Catholic church, even in the face of the difficulties the practice of their faith posed them. As has been shown earlier, it was certainly his aim that his clergy should use the sermons to provide them with the kind of instruction that would strengthen the people's understanding of their faith and remind them of their duty to God and his church. Gallagher urged both clergy and people to remain true to their faith in defiance of the challenging times in which they lived. His hope was that by so doing both clergy and people would emerge from this struggle with their faith intact and their belief strengthened.

VI

Gallagher's many troubles in Raphoe and his precipitate departure from the diocese must have weighed heavily on his mind during the months he spent in hiding. It begs the question why these traumatic events do not figure more prominently in the sermons he then worked on in the months following his departure from the diocese. One might also suggest that he could have written more readily about them owing to the fact that the text of the sermons was entirely in Irish, although that in itself would be no guarantee of his not being reported to the authorities in Dublin. It must be assumed that he decided to keep the memory of these events separate from his primary goal in composing his sermons. It is reasonable to surmise that he viewed his ministry to the priests and people in his care as his ultimate priority. It can be suggested, then, that from the evidence of his book of sermons, Gallagher viewed his mission as primarily, but not entirely, a spiritual one. During his time in Raphoe it may be that he viewed it as a more important and useful strategy to survive the penal laws than to limit or even end his ministry by challenging them outright. Eventually, however, his zeal and attempts at reform brought him too soon to the attention of the civil authorities in Raphoe and the conditions and circumstances that obtained there brought his ministry to a close earlier than he might have liked.

Gallagher's episcopacy in Raphoe was marked by consistent attempts at local level (i) to ensure proper and adequate training and formation for his clergy and

78 James Gallagher, *Seventeen Irish Sermons [...] in English characters [...] in which is included a Sermon on the Joys of Heaven* (Dublin, 1798), p. 211.

79 Bourke, *Sermons in Irish-Gaelic*, p. 384.

(ii) to restore some order to the proper function of both the clergy and the structures of the church. Where his activities met with resistance from the civil authorities, he appears to have chosen, more often than not, the path of survival rather than confrontation. His escape, unharmed, from the dangerous situation he found himself in as a result of the Griffill case is clear evidence of this. What evidence there is in his book of sermons seems to point to a pastor who challenged his clergy and people to remain firm in their faith and not to abandon the principles of that faith. His own struggles to function as bishop show clearly the effects the penal laws had on his ability to perform effectively. A less active and less zealous pastor might have drawn less notice from those who had reason to be suspicious of the Catholic clergy but Gallagher seems to have been anxious to fulfil his mission as effectively as he could. The writing and publication of the sermons provided him with an opportunity to continue his pastoral mission to the priests and people of his diocese and, indeed, the wider Catholic church of his time from a safe distance.