Preface

Liam Chambers and Thomas O'Connor

This book results from an 'Irish in Europe Project' conference, which took place at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, in June 2014.¹ The conference brought together an international group of scholars working on colleges established abroad by Catholics from Protestant and Islamic jurisdictions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For the first time, Irish, English and Scots colleges were considered alongside Dutch, Scandinavian and Maronite institutions. The conference reflected advances in scholarship on early modern migration, higher education and Catholicism and applied these to the history of the colleges as institutions and as human communities. This resulted in a robust historiographical discussion. It also encouraged a re-consideration of the role and significance of the abroad colleges, in their regional, national and transnational contexts.

The present volume draws together eight substantial essays which present up-to-date research on different regional and national groups set in their international and transnational frameworks. The book is intended to draw attention to similarities between colleges which developed in familiar patterns, faced parallel challenges and served analogous functions. The introductory essay, by Liam Chambers, traces the evolution of the abroad colleges, draws connections between them and assesses the impact of changes in recent scholarship on the subject. He argues that the obvious next step is to examine the colleges in transnational and comparative perspectives. He also illustrates how the Irish colleges, for instance, had obvious parallels in English and Scots institutions, but at the same time operated in tandem with Dutch colleges, Scandinavian papal seminaries and centres for German, Balkan and Middle Eastern Catholics. This discussion provides the context to a series of chapters dealing with 'national' colleges, set in their regional and transnational frameworks. Urban Fink provides an important point of departure in his consideration of the first post-Reformation abroad college, the Collegium Germanicum in Rome. The author assesses the challenges faced by the Society of Jesus as they struggled to develop the college from the 1550s until its future was secured under the pontificate

of Gregory XIII (1572–1585). Fink's concentrated study of this crucial institution illustrates how the Collegium Germanicum experienced problems which would impact on almost all of the abroad colleges throughout the early modern period. Willem Frijhoff examines the educational strategies employed by Dutch Catholics, who faced challenges closely related to those of their confessional colleagues across the North Sea. He illustrates how colleges in Cologne, Louvain and other centres operated within a system of connivance, compromise and co-existence which helped ensure their future. Thomas O'Connor re-considers the Irish colleges as multifaceted educational institutions, which provided the domestic church with clergy but also acted as way stations on longer migrant journeys to permanent residence abroad. He argues that through the colleges specific Catholic communities in Ireland preserved and sometimes strengthened not only their domestic position but also their transnational and international interests. As the introduction points out in more detail, the English and Scots colleges have a rich historiography. Michael Questier's chapter on the English examines a central issue for all of the abroad colleges: the role of the college-trained clergy who returned to the domestic churches. His chapter exposes the range of political opinions held by the clergy and how various clerical interests reacted to changing conditions for Catholics, particularly under the Stuarts. In doing so, he underlines how internally contested recusant survival strategies were and how crucial a role recusancy played in the general political evolution of early modern England. Adam Marks' chapter on the Scots addresses the political significance of the colleges, at home and abroad, in particular through their relationships to the Stuart monarchy. This complements traditional treatments of the Scots colleges, which tended to concentrate almost exclusively on their priestly output, to the neglect of their political activity and significance. Aurélien Girard and Giovanni Pizzorusso's study of the Maronite college in Rome uncovers similar social and cultural themes to the other abroad colleges, in particular the decisive role played by papal politics, curial interests and, later, Propaganda Fide in the foundational phase of the Roman-based colleges in particular. Finally, James Kelly breaks new ground by addressing the relationship between male and female English Catholic institutions abroad. He explores the levels of contact and cooperation between the various 'national' groups in Britain and Ireland, outlining how Catholic internationalism interacted with sectional, regional and national particularism.

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Note

- 1 Collegial communities in exile: new histories of the Irish, English, Scots, Dutch and other colleges founded on the continent in the early modern period. The conference website may be accessed at: <https://colleges2014.wordpress.com>. For the 'Irish in Europe Project' see: www.irishineurope.com.