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Review Articles

Navigating Irish networks with a Roman compass

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Sixteenth-century Rome was still *caput mundi*, but its title was not unchallenged. In the east loomed the Turkish threat, only partially parried at Lepanto.[1] From the north surged a tide of protest that penetrated even into Italy, spawning the Roman Inquisition.[2] Even stalwartly loyal kingdoms like England and Scotland sprouted heretic monarchs.[3] Across the Channel, the church's eldest daughter, after a half century of religious war, had a religious mind of its own.[4] As for their Catholic Majesties, their American wealth and territorial expansion brought political and religious pretentions the supreme pontiffs could not ignore.[5]

A deeply reluctant papacy adapted to the new order and, despite the sea change, retained, at least in catholic jurisdictions, substantial religious authority. This would be exercised, ideally, though a network

[1] For Spain, see, for example, José Antonio Martínez Torres, Prisioneros de los infieles: vida y rescate de los cautivos cristianos en el Mediterráneo musulmán (siglos XVI–XVII) (Barcelona: Ediciones Bellaterrra, 2004).
[2] Adriano Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza: inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), 35–56.
[3] See, for instance, essays in Ethan Shagan ed. *Catholics and the 'Protestant nation': religious politics and identity in early modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).
[4] Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *The royal French state 1460–1610* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), 124–150.
[5] Geoffrey Parker, *Imprudent king: a new life of Philip II* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2014), 80–99.

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of nuncios and papal agents, working closely with newly empowered episcopates and better trained presbyterates to bring the doctrinal, moral and devotional demands of renewed Catholicism to a core of better educated laity, and something more emotionally satisfying to the rest. In the new dispensation, the papacy's authority was mainly moral. Consequently, in exercising influence, it relied heavily on the quantity and quality of information flowing between nunciatures, chancelleries, presbyteries, private studies and the various Roman agencies. Once in Rome, a sophisticated if overstretched bureaucracy read, arranged and filed the material. Interpreting and actioning the data was an entirely different question. As Liam Chambers points out in the collection under review, it proved a challenge for Rome to translate raw information, so much of it partial and interested, into effective decision-making (p. 252).

This was in part because, even in Catholic Europe, the new dispensation was subject more to local whim than papal expectation. Where the pope's writ no longer ran, as in England and, to a lesser extent in Ireland, its operation was very partial indeed. Although one can speak of a total breakdown of influence in Scotland and something near collapse in England, in Ireland, on the other hand, the Tudor reforms altered rather than dismantled the networks that traditionally linked Ireland and papal Rome. Prima facie, things did look bad. From the mid sixteenth century, there was no question, for instance, of official papal representation. Papal bishops were dispossessed, the Irish presbyterate was fractured and starved of resources. The generally traditionalist laity blithely reconciled opposing religious and political loyalties. As for the physical fabric of the Irish church, it lay devastated, its physical infrastructure in ruins, its property permanently alienated. If the pope's writ somehow still ran there, it had not much to run through.

Nevertheless, contacts between Rome and Ireland survived the break. In part this was a medieval legacy. Throughout the middle ages, Irish clergy, of all ethnic hues, had been seasoned Rome-runners[6] and, with the advent of the Tudor reforms, these old habits were recast for new needs. Litigious clergy, who for long could not be sure of the Tudors' permanent religious preferences, continued to visit Rome, which remained a source of succour and legitimacy. International orders like the Franciscans, bolstered by one of their periodic renewals, survived and with them their overseas contacts. Irish merchants continued to frequent continental ports. At the same time, entirely

[6] According to the *Calendar of Papal Letters relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, between 1447 and 1492 over five hundred dispensations from illegitimacy for clerical sons wishing to enter holy orders were granted, the vast majority relating to Ireland and Scotland. See Peter Heath, *The English parish clergy on the eve of the Reformation*, (London: Routledge, 1969), 107.

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new links emerged, notably those forged by the Jesuits.[7] In 1542, a Jesuit reconnaissance mission arrived, to a rather bleak reception. From 1561, the papal commissary, David Wolfe S.J., was reporting to Rome from various locations. Thereafter, a long line of his confreres travelled between Rome and Ireland, keeping the superior general well-informed.[8]

Footloose Jesuits, just like litigious medieval clerics, travelled over and back to Rome, often via the English land-bridge. As domestic war and hardship displaced more and more Irish, the peripatetic clergy was joined in Rome by students, and, later still, political refugees.[9] It would be an exaggeration to say that these formed an Irish community there but they did coalesce into a handful of institutions, such as Saint Isidore's and, briefly, into households, such as The O'Neill's. Occasionally, disgruntled Irish noblemen, like James Fitzmaurice Fitzgerald in 1577, personally petitioned the papacy to intervene militarily in Ireland. In general, however, Rome's Irish were clerical, constrained by neither chick nor child, at least in theory. The city would eventually host a number of impoverished Irish colleges, but it never saw the influx of Irish military migrants, so characteristic of the Spanish Netherlands, Galicia and elsewhere. As Florry O'Driscoll points out in his essay, it was not until the mid- nineteenth century that a significant number of Irish soldiers entered papal military service, somewhat quixotically, it must be said. Also absent were the commercial links that brought Irish merchants to ports like Lisbon, St Malo and Ostend. If one can speak of an Irish 'community' in Rome, it was one that lacked the social and professional variety of Irish communities elsewhere. In a word, Rome heard more about the Irish than it actually saw of them.

For the foregoing reasons, the records of 'clerical networks established and developed between Rome, Ireland and the Atlantic world' (p. 2) are to be found not, as elsewhere, in baptismal and marriage registers, military archives and commercial house, but in the tidier administrative records of the papacy and other ecclesiastical organisations. Their worldview is inevitably clerical; they were read through an ecclesiastical lens; they were actioned, when possible, for the church's good. Like other great archival collections, they suffered the vicissitudes of time, conflict and clerical carelessness. Nonetheless, over the centuries, large bodies of Irish material found their way into Roman repositories: the Holy Office, Propaganda fide, the Secretariat

[7] Thomas M. McCoog, S.J., *The Society of Jesus in Ireland, Scotland, and England, 1598–1606: 'Lest Our Lamp be entirely Extinguished'* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

[8] See Vera Moynes ed. *The Jesuit Irish mission: a calendar of correspondence 1566–1752* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 2017).

[9] Thomas O'Connor, 'Prequels: the Irish European Diaspora' in Gisela Holfter and Bettina Migge eds. *Ireland in the European Eye* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2019), 3–19.

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of State, the Roman Vicariate, the Vatican Library, the Vatican Secret Archives and others.[10] For modern scholars, they constitute one of the most important sources for Irish church history in general and are obviously unignorable for historians of the Irish clerical diaspora worldwide.

The academic exploitation of these archives is relatively recent. It had to await not only the emergence of history as an academic discipline[11] but also the opening to the public of the Vatican Archives.[12] The latter took much longer than the former and was a contorted process, one that negatively coloured academic attitudes to the archives and their keepers. One can understand Roman misgivings. No regime, especially not one as wedded to secrecy as the papacy, appreciated the public gaze. Accordingly, under the *ancien régime*, its archives remained securely under lock and key. Napoleon was the first to violate their integrity, causing enormous losses in the process. Although the popes and part of their stolen archives were restored to Rome, Napoleon's idea of a state-controlled archive proved more durable than his empire. Others followed the French suit and, gradually, the preservation of archives became a function of the state. So too the provision of access. In this regard, Rome, not for the last time, lagged behind. As the major European states organised their archives into national collections, as public records offices opened in London (1859) and Dublin (1867) and as the Historical Manuscripts Commission (1869) commenced its work, access to Roman archives remained a matter of grace and favour. This infuriated the academy and rendered suspect the scholarship of the scholars fortunate enough to gain admission. Examples abound. In the 1820s, Marino Marini, the then prefect, permitted William Hamilton, British ambassador to Naples to have copies made of certain Vatican documents.[13] Transcription, however, remained in the hands of in-house copyists (a condition of the permission) and Hamilton was unable to verify their accuracy. Inevitably, this created the impression, not necessarily accurate, that the Roman authorities were doctoring the evidence for apologetical reasons.

This situation, and these suspicions, persisted throughout the century, though after Pius IX's return to Rome, a timid thaw set in.

[10] For an overview, see Francis X. Blouin Jr. ed. *Vatican archives: an inventory and guide to historical documents of the Holy See* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Matteo Sanfilippo and Giovanni Pizzorusso eds. *Gli archivi della Santa Sede come fonte per la storia moderna e contemporanea* (Viterbo: Sette Città, 2001).

[11] Doris S. Goldstein, 'The origins and the early years of the *English Historical Review*' *English Historical Review*, 101, 398 (1986): 6–19.

[12] The classic account in English is Owen Chadwick, *Catholicism and history: the opening of the Vatican archives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Katherine Walsh, 'The opening of the Vatican Archives (1880–1881) and Irish historical research' *Archivium Hibernicum* 36 (1981): 34–43.

[13] British Library, London, Add. MS 15, 351–15, 400. See Francis Sheppard Thomas, *Notes of materials for the history of public departments* (London, 1846), 51.

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This was in part due to the nomination of Augustin Theiner as prefect of the Vatican Archives in 1855. Under his more liberal regime, copying opportunities were accorded to a handful of European scholars, including Peter Andreas Munch, Hugo Lämmer, Julius Ficker and Henri de l'Epinois. It was the modernizing Theiner, himself the editor of *Vetera monumenta Hibernorum et Scotorum historiam illustrantia* (1864), who, from 1859, allowed access to Patrick Francis Moran, the Irish-born, Rome-educated, future archbishop of Sydney, editor *Spicilegium Ossoriense* and co-founder of the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*.[14] With Theiner's demise, engineered for his alleged leaking of archival material to opponents of the papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council, the archival shutters came down with a bang. This fed anti-papal prejudices among historians, as the regime of favouritism and partiality, now even more restrictive, continued. Usually for a price. In the years following Theiner's departure, it took the persuasions, and cash, of the British Public Records Office to arrange exceptional access for Joseph Stevenson and later William Henry Bliss. They were impossibly charged with procuring copies of all documents of British interest, an ambition that testified to their superiors' ignorance of the nature and scale of the archives in question. Over the years they managed, nonetheless, to transmit one hundred and seventy volumes of transcriptions to London.

Irked by such unsatisfactory conditions, historians ramped up pressure on Roman authorities to ease restrictions. Their hands were strengthened by the founding of national research institutes in Rome, like the *École Française de Rome* (1874) and the *Österreichisches Historisches Institut* (1883). From the mid 1870s, a select group of French and Austrian historians, including Ludwig von Pastor, lobbied their governments to obtain not just copying rights but access to the actual documentation. The pressure eventually paid off. With the appointment of Joseph Hergenröter (1824–90) as prefect of the Vatican Archives, Leo XIII indicated that a change of policy was imminent.[15] In 1881, he permitted the opening of a reading room adjacent to the Vatican archives. Two years later, in *Saepenumero considerantes*, he set out his view of the apologetical value of archives-based history for the Church and its mission.[16]

However conservatively the pope viewed the purpose of historical research, the Vatican Archives were now open for business. With-held access and other restrictions notwithstanding, the new dispensation

[14] Patrick Francis 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, 1874–84).
[15] Nicholas J. Tussing, 'The Politics of Leo XIII's opening of the Vatican Secret Archives: the ownership of the past' in *The American Archivist* 70 (2007): 364–86.
[16] *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 16 [1883–84], (Rome, 1906), 49–57.

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was a boon, at least for medievalists and early modernists. The first fruits came in 1890s, with the series of calendars of papal registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland.[17] Although the primary objective of some of the early archival pioneers was more apologetic than historical, once the documentary genie was out of the bottle, there was no turning back. For Irish church history, the work begun by Patrick Francis Moran, Augustin Theiner, Michael Costello and others gained momentum. Slowly, a small, interested public interest was built up, sustained by the regular publication of catalogues and original documents. 1912 saw the first issue of the sources journal *Archivium Hibernicum*. The Irish Manuscripts Commission (1928) took over the papal registers project from the Historical Manuscripts Commission, while *Collectanea Hibernica* (1958–2006), under the care of the Irish Franciscans, published calendars and summaries of Roman material. Over the course of nearly a century, successive generations of mainly ecclesiastical historians, including Canice Mooney, Cataldus Giblin, Brendan Jennings and Hugh Fenning, brought the archival footprint of the Irish in Roman archives into sharper focus. Propaganda and the Vatican Secret Archives, richly supplied as they had been via the Brussels nunciature, yielded particularly rich pickings.

Surprisingly few historians followed the labours of these archival sleuths with full scale, archivally researched monographs. In fact, aside from some exemplary works like Hugh Fenning's meticulous, *The Undoing of the Friars of Ireland*,[18] and, more recently, Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin's *Catholic Europe 1592-1648: centres and peripheries*[19] remarkably little Irish history has been written from the Roman sources. If at the beginning of the twenty-first century, these archives remain poorly used by Irish historians and imperfectly integrated into national and diasporic historiographies, the blame lies not with our scholarly forebears. It is a matter, rather, of historiographical habit (notably the marginalisation of 'church' history in the academy), linguistic deficiencies and the caprices of funders. In contemporary Ireland, there may be another factor at work. As more and more Irish religious institutions close, the preservation of their archives is becoming an increasingly urgent issue. That much has already been lost can be put down to the incoherence of state, and church, archives policy and to the perennial shortage of funds and facilities. An even greater challenge lies in the general public disdain for the institutions

[17] London, Public Records Office, 1896–1913. This project continues under the auspices of the Irish Manuscripts Commission. See, inter alia, Alan Macquarrie ed. *Calendar of entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland. Papal Letters, Volume XXIII, Part I, 1523–1534, Clement VII, Lateran Registers*, (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 2017).
[18] Hugh Fenning, *The Undoing of the Friars of Ireland* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1972).
[19] Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin's *Catholic Europe 1592-1648: centres and peripheries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

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that generated these archives. The latter is something that time may heal but not necessarily in time for their unloved records.

Given this rather dismal domestic scenario, the neglect of the Roman archives by Irish historians might seems almost trivial. Nevertheless, the editor of the volume under review is justified in introducing the collection with a complaint: historians of the Atlantic world and its Irish dimension have either ignored or underused Roman archives, preferring to concentrate on 'traditional themes such as slavery, state formation and encounters between the native peoples and European settlers' (p. 7). A failing all the more reprehensible, he goes on, given the recent historical attention to Irish activities in precisely those zones where Roman archives, especially Propaganda fide, are richest: the Caribbean, the United States and Canada. Nor is this all. While noting, approvingly, historians of the nineteenth-century's sharper awareness of the religious dimension of the Irish diaspora and their use of the Roman evidence to investigate it, he laments the failure of early modernists to follow suit. In his introduction, he proposes the following correctives: first, to assert the importance of the Roman archives *in se*; second, to expose the religious and especially clerical dimension of the Irish diaspora's activities; third, to restore to Roman authorities their agency in the formation and maintenance of Irish overseas networks. To these ends, twelve essays are shoehorned into three sections: the first on the emergence of Irish clerical networks; the second, on the establishment of the Irish 'community' in Rome; the third, on the impact of Hiberno-Roman networks on the Irish domestic mission.

This is an ambitious programme, somewhat hampered by volume's organisation: a number of the essays sit uncomfortably in their thematic corrals; others do not seem to belong there at all. It might have been more coherent to divide the collection into two, rather than three parts: a first dealing with early modern networks and a second looking at their subsequent avatars. This seems justifiable simply because, on either side of the late eighteenth century, and not withstanding significant continuities, we are dealing with two quite different Irish Catholic churches. In effect, the process by which the penal church gained civil status, dramatically expanded its human and physical infrastructure and developed a politically effective organisation, created something new. So too did the fact that, during the same period, the Irish church broke definitively out of its European straight-jacket into the new world. There it produced less an extension of the domestic church than something quite novel: a voraciously expanding organisation, that was historically, at least, part Irish but functionally American, possessed of exclusive cultural and political agendas and, most importantly, endowed with the financial clout to influence political agendas not only domestically but also on the old sod and in Rome.

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The late eighteenth-century disruption is well captured in the essays of Luca Codignola, Terrence Murphy and Matteo Sanfilippo, all in the first, and most satisfying, part of the present volume and all successfully straddling the awkward early-modern/modern divide. They ring in the changes in status and entitlement experienced by Irish Catholics in nineteenth-century Canada and the United States. For Murphy and Sanfilippo in particular, this had generally nefarious consequences for other Catholic groups, notably the French. Murphy, in his examination of the struggle for domination of the church in Canada, suggests that Irish zeal for their own ethnic cause may be traced back to the new, more strictly organised domestic Irish Church, its ultramontane leadership and its belief that the health of the Catholic church in the English-speaking world was contingent on the appointment of Irish bishops. In this context, he uses the seductive language of 'spiritual empire' (p. 76). This may be something of a misnomer for what he has in question here. No matter how hard one looks at the evidence, there was little that was distinctively 'spiritual' about nineteenth-century Irish Catholicism, in any of its avatars. What did distinguish them was their capacity to colonise the basic institutions of church life (episcopal administrations, schools, hospitals, lay organisations etc), and turn them to their competitive advantage. One would like to know more about these manipulations, which were anything but spiritual, having more to do with political nous and hard neck. Advantaged by language and weaponizing anglicisation, the Irish stole a march on the French in Canada, and, later, on newer Catholic immigrants to America. Demographic accident was a crucial factor too, permitting the Irish, by sheer force of famine-scattered numbers to wrest territorial and administrative superiority from competitors and to establish it *ab initio* in the new territories in the west (and in the Antipodes).

Pivotal too was their financial clout. As they became more firmly established, and built up wealthy urban dioceses like New York, Boston, Baltimore, St Louis and Chicago, Irish American clerics acquired the monetary resources to bankroll political influence in America, in Ireland and, most crucially for our purposes, in Rome. This included the maintenance in Rome of American clerical agents, the foundation of American institutions there and strategic contributions to Church coffers, either directly in cash or through support of particular causes or projects. From these institutions and through these contacts, Irish-American agents were available to act as consultors and advisors to congregations like Propaganda and, in general, to exercise influence. To an extent, this was in continuity with the example of their eighteenth-century Irish forebears, as Codignola makes clear (p. 48). But with an important caveat: while former generations of impoverished Irish clergy visited Rome in search of patronage, their Irish-American successors actually exercised it. These social, demographic

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and financial factors are not always obvious in the Roman archives, as the very title of Sanfilippo's article, 'Irish question or Irish connection? Irish Catholics in North America through the "Roman Lens"', suggests. Yet their swinging into operation in the various Irish churches marks the watershed separating the circumscribed penal Church from its brasher, more confident nineteenth century successors. As these three essays affirm, the Roman records, used in conjunction with domestic archival sources, notably the contemporary press, government records and diocesan archives, can make a decisive contribution to a more rounded account of these nineteenth century conflicts. Cardinal Cullen cannot be blamed for everything!

In marked contrast to their nineteenth-century American descendants, the early modern Irish, sons of a penal church, generally travelled cap in hand. The stuttering early history of the Irish pastoral college in Rome, is eloquent testimony to their predicament and helps explain why, when it came to educational funding, they received less papal attention than the Germans and English, for instance. Early modern Irish clerics lived hand to mouth, and, in his chapter, Matteo Binasco convincingly describes their desperate financial straits in his essay on the seventeenth-century Irish pastoral college in Rome. He may, however (and he is not alone in this), overstate its leadership's clarity concerning the institution's purpose and, more generally, its significance for the domestic mission. True, the provision of priests was undoubtedly on their minds but there was no blueprint for how this was to be achieved. In this regard, seventeenth-century Irish college rectors were far from unique. To a large extent, 'seminaries' in the classic definition of endowed institutions housing young men in a disciplined environment, providing them with spiritual, moral, liturgical and theological programmes leading eventually to ordination and pastoral ministry, were an eighteenth rather than a seventeenth-century phenomenon. As Joe Bergin, writing about early modern France, comments, it was only 'after long years of trial and error, a range of educational-cum-disciplinary practices that complemented each other took shape, so we should not imagine that, at least in the minds of contemporaries, there was ever a single, magical solution called a 'seminary' for such purposes'.[20]

A fortiori in the Irish case, where, had a seminary-trained clergy been available in the seventeenth century, there was neither the educated laity nor the pastoral infrastructure to receive them. Unlike England, where seminary-trained clergy served tightly-knit gentry household churches from quite early in the seventeenth century, and where, almost uniquely in Catholic Europe, the vast majority of the

[20] Joseph Bergin, *Church, society and religious change in France 1580–1730* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), xv.

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clergy were seminary-educated, in Ireland, a similarly trained clergy would have been overqualified for the pastoral needs of all but a fraction of the laity. In fact, and again in contrast to England, the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Irish church was served largely by domestically-trained clergy. Often frustratingly anonymous characters, they were formed though old-fashioned clerical apprenticeships and served as inconspicuously, as the political situation required. Consequently, they left no trace in overseas college records and rarely grace the papal collections, unless in litigation. In this context it can be said that, if the seventeenth-century Irish continental colleges did actually function as seminaries, and they sometimes did, it was as much to provide for Irish priests in overseas clerical networks as to supply the Irish mission.[21] More usually, and far into the eighteenth century, they acted as hostels for a wide variety of mobile Irish males, many of them unattracted to the priesthood. This was especially true of the much larger French colleges, less, one imagines for the smaller Roman houses.[22]

This points to the internationalizing character of many so-called 'Irish' overseas institutions and to their role in integrating the abroad Irish into the service of the European monarchs, religious orders and papal bureaucracy. In this regard, the Roman experience of Luke Wadding, whose name occurs frequently in this volume, is revealing. He certainly had the interests of the Irish Franciscan Province in mind when setting up St Isidore's, but it was Spanish and international Franciscan interests that dominated his activities and his literary output. In this, he resembles another Irish heavyweight in Rome, Peter Lombard. He travelled to Rome originally as an agent of the University of Louvain and quite accidentally took up a political role in the 1590s and 1600s, when Ireland fleetingly won the papacy's attention.[23] Like Wadding, Lombard was a highly 'romanized' figure. Churchmen of their stature may have been Irish by origin but owed their loyalties to the papacy. This is what Pérez Tostado has in mind, perhaps, when he speaks of 'globalized individuals' (p. 26). Micheál Mac Craith implies as much in his chapter on Irish Franciscan contributions to the seventeenth-century doctrinal definition. Notwithstanding St Anthony's (Louvain) contribution to Irish history, hagiography and language, Irish Franciscan colleges overseas operated less to support independent Irish network or forge Irish

[21] Thomas O'Connor, 'Irish collegians in Spanish service (1560–1803),' in Liam Chambers and Thomas O'Connor eds. *Forming Catholic Communities: Irish, Scots and English college networks in Europe, 1568–1918* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 15–38.
[22] See Matteo Binasco and Vera Orschel, 'Prosopography of Irish students admitted to the Irish College, Rome, 1628–1798' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, 66 (2013): 16–62.
[23] Bruno Boute, *Academic interests and catholic confessionalisation: the Louvain privileges of nomination to ecclesiastical benefices* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), passim.

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identities than to train theology staff for international service. In the process, they integrated them more fully into the order, and/or into Spanish, Roman and imperial structures. In a similar way, though in a different context, the *Ospizio apostolico dei convertendi* helped naturalize Irish protestants into international Catholicism as Clare Carroll demonstrates.[24] Entry into a putative Irish community or network in Rome was probably of secondary importance.

It goes without saying that the organisation of collections like this one inevitably involves a play off between chronology and theme. This is apparent in the two intriguing essays by Igor Pérez Tostado and Cristina Bravo Lozano, both of which look at Irish clerical networks in the Spanish sphere. They make a robust contribution to the collection's Atlantic theme but sit less comfortably with the 'Roman'. To an extent, as Pérez Tostado argues, this is because the Spanish assiduously controlled access to their Atlantic networks. They were especially careful about Roman influence, though that was not always enough to keep out the Irish. In this context, and for historians of the Irish abroad in particular, it might be interesting to consider not only how the Irish maintained Roman, Spanish and French networks but also how they moved over and back between them. This seems to have been something of an Irish speciality. The inclusion of Irish networks in the British sphere, a greatly neglected topic, would add extra spice to the subject. So too would a deeper look at how all these related back to the old country, a topic whose importance is amply suggested in Liam Chambers' essay.

In short, this collection suggests an ambitious research agenda for historians of Irish clerical networks. In highlighting the importance of Roman archives, it points up current deficiencies in Irish historiography and professional training. In spanning the early modern and modern periods, it reveals the risks and challenges of identifying continuities while admitting disjunctures. In describing how certain networks function, it is suggestive of how they pushed clerics out of Irish orbit into the inter-stellar space of global Catholicism. Finally, in concentrating so closely on the clergy, it identifies an overlooked common thread that can help pull the worldwide Irish together. The establishment of an Irish clerical prosopography (an impossibly ambitious goal?), would facilitate this grand enterprise.

[24] For a fuller treatment, see Clare Lois Carroll, *Exiles in a global city: the Irish and early modern Rome, 1609–1783* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 89–143.

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