

Thomas Messingham (c. 1575-1638?) and the seventeenth-century Church

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Introduction

The early seventeenth century was a formative period in Irish history. With the extension of Stuart power following the defeat, and later, the flight of the Earls, the country entered into a new phase of political, social and religious change. The extension of English law, the policy of plantation, the state's harassment of Catholics and the increasing centralisation of political authority served to isolate the Catholic community from the sources of power and patronage. While most Irish Catholics accepted James I as their lawful king, they insisted that their political loyalty to him could be reconciled with their religious loyalty to the Pope.¹ The King and his government, however, would prove immune to their reasoning. Nor was this the only problem facing Irish Catholics. Prolonged war had shattered the church's structures and Reformation had taken away its material sustenance. In the relatively peaceful 1610s and 1620s a new generation of Catholic bishops and clergy set about reorganising the shattered, impoverished church according to the guidelines of the Council of Trent.² Central to their concerns was the establishment of a comprehensive and coherent pastoral network, centred on parishes and involving the proper celebration of the sacraments, basic religious education and the moral improvement of the faithful. The education of a clergy, imbued with the spirit of Trent yet sensitive to the political situation in Ireland, was an obvious priority. To this end, grammar schools were set up to feed a network of Irish continental seminaries which had been established in Catholic Europe since the 1590s, mostly in the great university cities. The continental seminaries were part of a vast and complex network of contacts which linked Ireland to its continental neighbours and had already opened up the country to a host of new influences. The men who ran these colleges played an important role in the shaping of early seventeenth-

century Ireland. Among them was one who hailed from the diocese of Meath. He was a priest called Thomas Messingham (c. 1575-1638).

I Early Formation

While it is possible that Messingham was a first generation English Catholic who had moved to Ireland to escape persecution, it is more likely that he was of Old English stock, established in Ireland after the Norman invasion.³ Although little is known of his family background,⁴ it does appear that the Messingham family was prominent in Meath in the early modern period.⁵ A Messingham married into the Ussher-Loftus family in the sixteenth century.⁶ It is likely that Thomas Messingham received his early academic formation, locally or in Dublin.⁷ He was sent abroad for further education, probably during the 1590s, and entered the Irish College at Douai, founded in 1595 by fellow Meath-man, Christopher Cusack (d. 1624).⁸ At Douai he joined a number of Meath students, including Luke Rochford (d. c. 1631) and the future Bishop of Meath, Thomas Dease (c. 1568-1652).⁹ He also made the acquaintance of David Rothe (1572-1650) and John Roche (c. 1575-1636), future Bishops of Ossory and Ferns respectively.¹⁰

As Messingham began his studies in Douai, efforts to organise Irish clerical students and priests into an Irish College were afoot in Paris. An Irish lay and clerical population was already in Paris prior to the last phase of the Wars of Religion and had maintained a presence there even during the upheaval of the Catholic League in the late 1580s and early 1590s. John Lee, Henry Segrave, Dominik Roche, Richard Fleming, Dominik O'Colin and Henry Fitzsimons were all in Paris in the late 1580s, where they experienced at first hand the popular, militant version of reformed Catholicism.¹¹ The relative peace following the Edict of Nantes made Paris a more attractive gathering point for emigrant Irish. At some date before 1600, Thomas Dease, encouraged by John Lee, moved to Paris.¹² Messingham followed him and joined the staff there.¹³ He took his masters in 1613 and a doctorate some time later.¹⁴ According to some sources, Messingham was entrusted with the direction of the Irish College in Paris about 1608 but we know that Thomas Dease was still superior in 1621.¹⁵ Messingham was probably second in command before his appointment as Rector, after Dease's nomination as Bishop of Meath, in 1621.¹⁶ He was still Rector in 1632.¹⁷

II Messingham and the Irish College, Paris

Messingham was a central figure in the early history of the infant Irish College in Paris, following in the footsteps of Lee and Dease. David Rothe praised him lavishly in his sermon delivered at the Irish College on 1 February 1620.¹⁸ Messingham is mentioned in glowing terms in the commendatory letter of Irish prelates in favour of the Irish College in Paris.¹⁹ Supported by Thomas Dease and David Rothe in particular, he helped secure funding for the college by gaining and maintaining the patronage of the de L'Escalopier family.²⁰ It was to this end that, in 1624, Messingham dedicated his collection of Irish saints' lives or *vitae* to Jean de L'Escalopier's two sons.²¹ De L'Escalopier (d. 1620) was a pious man, with a particular veneration for the saints, an interest he shared with Messingham, who, from the late 1610s at least was engaged in research into the lives of the early Irish saints. In fact, in 1620 Messingham published the offices of the three national patrons and of Sts Finian and Canice.²² According to Messingham, de L'Escalopier had lived, for a time, with the Irish community on the Mont St. Genevieve and had frequently spoken of setting up an Irish seminary.²³ As financial patron he appears to have had some say in the formation of the seminarians. When they were ready to return to Ireland, for instance, it was de L'Escalopier's habit to have them examined by the Jesuit priest Etienne Binet (1569-1639). If they passed, he provided them with clothes and money for the return journey.²⁴ It was also his habit to have them presented to the Cardinal de Retz for the consecration of their mission.

As well as ensuring financial patronage for the college, Messingham was anxious to assure its status within the University of Paris. In 1623, Louis XIII recognised the existence of an Irish seminary and gave it the right to accept donations and bequests.²⁵ In 1624, the seminary was admitted to the University of Paris although it was not granted the status of college, remaining directly under the authority of the University Rector.²⁶ A regime was agreed by the Archbishop of Paris in 1626.²⁷ In the same year Urban VIII granted Irish priests the right to be ordained before undertaking seminary training abroad.²⁸ This proved a real boon to the college as it permitted ordained Irish students in Paris to supplement their grants with Mass stipends and chaplaincy work. Messingham's term as rector was not trouble free. The maintenance of the de L'Escalopier patronage required his constant attention and financial worries were always

present. Difficulties with the University arose, chiefly because of Messingham's alleged preference for Leinster and Meath students. This probably reflects traditional provincial tensions and those existing between the Old English and Old Irish communities. In 1625, the rector of the Sorbonne was informed, probably by disaffected Irish, that Messingham was giving preference to Meath diocesan students in the college.²⁹ It was probably in response to this type of charge that Messingham wrote to the faculty of theology on behalf of the community of Irish students.³⁰ In this letter, Messingham asks the faculty authorities to confirm the status of the community already approved by the faculty and to ignore the objections of certain Irish in Paris that the seminary was reserved to students of one diocese only. He offers the deputies the evidence of the college register of students' names as proof that natives of all the provinces study there. Messingham also comments on the financial situation of the community, pleading with the faculty to recognise as uniquely the community's due the monies obtained by John Lee. He suggests that charges brought against the community by other Irish are designed to alienate these funds.

III Messingham's influence in the Irish Church

Messingham's privileged position in Paris enabled him to build up an important network of contacts in Ireland where a new generation of bishops and priests was coming to prominence. Many of them were contemporaries from his Douai days and some were students in Paris. An impression of the extent of his network can be gained from his *Florilegium*, published in 1624, to which a number of his Parisian circle contributed short verse texts. Nearly all of them rose to prominence in the Irish Church. Some were fellow Meath-men like Fathers Peter Caddell, Patrick Cahill³¹ and Laurence Sedgrave.³² Laurence Sedgrave was already, in 1624, vice-president of the Irish College in Douai and was later described as *episcopabile*.³³ He was a cousin of Christopher Cusack, the college's founder. Others in Messingham's Parisian circle were two future bishops of Kilmore, Hugh O'Reilly (1625-28) and Eugene Sweeney (1628-60). O'Reilly became archbishop of Armagh in 1628. Messingham's circle also included regulars of the calibre of the young Louvain luminaries, John Colgan and Hugh Ward (1593-1635). Other members were Edmund Dwyer of Cashel, intimate of Archbishop Malachy Queely of Tuam and himself later bishop of Limerick,³⁴ and less well

known individuals such as William Coghlan, Roger Molloy, James Delan and Thomas Guyer.

Messingham's political judgement was valued and sought by his colleagues in Ireland. His political role was already recognised in 1611, when Henry Fitzsimons S.J. praised him for his services to his homeland.³⁵ In 1615, his colleague and future bishop of Ossory, David Rothe, addressed material to Messingham concerning elections to the Parliament of 1613-15, especially the campaign for the relaxation of anti-recusant legislation.³⁶ This may have been to solicit Messingham's own opinion on the matter but he was also expected, no doubt, to pass the information on to appropriate contacts in France and Italy. With regard to his own political convictions, Messingham could be described as an Old English conservative. Some inkling of his political thinking is given in a letter to Wadding dated 15 July 1630.³⁷ This was written in the wake of the Lords Justices Loftus and Boyle's crackdown on the Catholic community in Dublin which began in December 1629 and led to the razing of the Franciscan house in Cooke Street and the handing over of the Jesuit College for higher studies in Back Lane to Trinity College.³⁸ In the concluding passage, Messingham informs Wadding that a number of agents was recently sent by the Irish clergy to the Queen of England imploring the restoration of "their former libertie or connivasion of religion." He is not sanguine about their chances of success and comments that in the past such liberty was abused "by their continual iarrs amongst themselves, and by their building of churches and keeping publick schooles." Messingham believed that keeping a low profile was the best means to secure the Catholic Church's future under the Protestant government. These views are somewhat difficult to reconcile with his involvement in clerical disputes in Dublin in the late 1620s and early 1630s which drew the unwelcome attention of the government and the established church to the Catholic community. It is possible that Messingham, living in Paris, failed to appreciate the effect of these conflicts on the domestic church. It would appear that towards the end of his career, Messingham relinquished control of the Irish College to act as a full-time agent of the Irish Church, even travelling, according to one source, between Paris and the British Isles.³⁹

Messingham's desk in Paris acted as a sorting house for ecclesiastical post between Ireland and Rome. In a letter to Wadding, Messingham bemoans the unreliability of the Paris-Rome postal service and comments on the number of letters,

passed on to him from Ireland for forwarding, which had failed to reach their Roman destination. He mentions specifically letters from the bishops of Waterford, Cashel, Ferns and the archbishop elect of Tuam.⁴⁰ Messingham was often called on to write testimonials for ecclesiastics, and his knowledge of Irish affairs made him useful to the Paris nuncio and to *Propaganda Fide*. It was probably in this way that he exercised his most direct influence on clerical appointments in Ireland in the 1620s and 1630s. In 1624, he, along with David Rothe, wrote letters of commendation for Patrick Hanratty, vicar-apostolic of Down and Connor to Archbishop Lombard. In the course of his commendation, Messingham gives some clue to his preferred criteria for choosing men for important ecclesiastical office, commenting "I believe it is both proper and reasonable in all business of this sort that those who have worked the most be preferred provided that no legitimate reason for excluding them exists."⁴¹ In 1624-5, he compiled a list of clerics promising enough to be considered for episcopal nomination.⁴² A letter from John Roche of Ferns to Wadding, dated 7 February 1630, he speaks of Messingham's intermediary role in business between Irish bishops and the nuncio in Paris, especially concerning the appointment of bishops in Ireland. Roche says that "together with these I do send to Mr. Messingham an answer of Casselensis to letters which ye nuntio of Paris did write to him for to have his opinion who of ye two, Quelleus or Molonius, be fittest for Killalo."⁴³ In a letter of his own to Wadding from Paris on 15 July 1630, Messingham speaks of the recent disorders in Ireland following on ecclesiastical appointments.⁴⁴ Obviously, not all of the new appointments in Ireland had met his approval. He speaks especially of the recent appointment to Killaloe of Mr. Mollony who "hath more power with his hollynes then many others, having found the meanes to make him change what he promised to your Rs that none should have Killaloe from Mr. Malachias." He continues, "and albeit it may be said that Mr. Malachias hath a more honorable place, yet doe I not only think that he had rather have the other, wherin he laboured so much with the good likeing of all men, but alsoe will take it for a great disgrace to be turned out of it by one that desired nothing else but to disgrace him." It is clear from the letter that Wadding had recently recommended to Messingham that he ingratiate himself with the new bishop of Killaloe but he explains that "he is more desirous of my frendshipp then I am of his". This leads Messingham to reflect that there may be too many bishops in Ireland at the moment and he claims that it was recently written to him that

“when they were fewer bishops priests and friars in the countrey, the people were more fervent in their devotion, more zealous in religion and lesse scandalls seene among all sorts of churchmen then is nowadayes.” Again, Messingham betrays his preference for a low profile Catholic presence in Dublin and, interestingly, mentions the role of clerical disputes in bringing disrepute on the Church.

It was, perhaps, inevitable that Messingham would himself become involved in the domestic disputes he so criticised. He also involved himself in Parisian ecclesiastical politics. A letter from Malachy Queely to Wadding of 16 June 1630 speaks of the stratagems of his Parisian adversaries and thanks Wadding for working to oppose them.⁴⁵ He also speaks of his own brother Anthony’s role in same and goes on, “if my brother left not money enough to bring the matter to passe, my worthy friend Mr. Messingham will send you what you will demand, to whom I sent monies lately to that end, and to be disposed of according to yours and Fr. Hicke’s directions. I leave to Mr. Messingham’s relation what plots are used at Paris and in Ireland by the honest man you know to doe me an affront ...” Messingham was frequently in receipt of monies from Ireland to further business in Paris or Rome. Malachy Queely, in his letter to Wadding of 20 May 1631, speaks of the difficulties in imposing the reforms of Trent. He hopes that Wadding will support his request for exceptional powers from the Cardinal Protector and mentions that Messingham had recently forwarded to Rome £30, presumably to cover expenses incurred by Wadding in pressing Queely’s case.⁴⁶ Messingham was also involved in the finances of Irish regular clergy. In 1632, a list of debts due to the Franciscan College in Louvain was drawn up. It mentioned that Messingham was in possession of 600 florins which had been sent to him by the provincial.⁴⁷ He was also mixed up in the politics of the early years of the Irish College in Rome. In 1634, he wrote to the secretary of Propaganda advising against the handing over of the college to the supervision of regulars, arguing that seculars were in a better position to educate seminarians destined for the secular ministry than their regular colleagues.⁴⁸

As has already been mentioned, Messingham’s opinion was frequently sought, by church officials at home and abroad on political matters and also on the calibre of persons proposed for ecclesiastical office in Ireland. From the mid-1620s, Messingham also seems to have been able to exercise some influence in the Roman Datary, a department of the papal government which had

traditionally adjudicated and approved certain clerical appointments.⁴⁹ He may have owed some of this power to his Douai classmate, John Roche.⁵⁰ Roche had joined the household of the internuncio to Brussels, Guido Bentivoglio and accompanied him to Paris when he was appointed nuncio there in 1616. In 1621, Bentivoglio moved back to Rome, accompanied by Roche, who in 1624 was appointed bishop of Ferns. Messingham established contact with Bentivoglio when he was nuncio in Paris and continued to enjoy access to the nuncio's patronage when the latter returned to Rome. This helps to explain Messingham's success in having a number of priests of his Paris and Douai circle appointed to important positions in Meath and Dublin in the 1620s and 1630s.⁵¹

Access to this sort of patronage was important in the early seventeenth century.⁵² The new generation of bishops, including Messingham's colleague Thomas Dease, was anxious to re-establish its authority in Ireland. Due to the earlier absence of bishops, regular clergy had enjoyed wide-reaching privileges and exemptions in ministering to a war-torn Catholic community. As peace, and the bishops, returned, the latter were concerned to regain ecclesiastical authority from the regulars by paring down their wartime privileges and exemptions, by opposing their traditional rights of presentation to ecclesiastical livings and by thwarting their efforts to regain possession of confiscated monastic property. This made for tense relations between regulars and seculars all over Ireland and especially for Messingham's colleague, Dease. He was anxious to consolidate his own ecclesiastical authority against the regulars who had the right to presentation to about half the livings in his diocese.⁵³ Furthermore, monastic property, confiscated during the Reformation, had found its way into the hands of Catholic landowners in the diocese, among them members of Dease's own family. It was in Dease's interest to cultivate Messingham's contacts with Bentivoglio and the datary, to safeguard both his own authority and his family's property.

Judging by the evidence, Messingham was quite successful in exercising influence on Dease's behalf. He himself was appointed by papal provision dean of the chapter of St. Patrick's, Dublin, in March 1624, a fair achievement for a Meathman resident in Paris. His co-diocesans, Luke Rochford, Peter Caddell and Patrick Cahill, also received datary appointments both in Dublin and Meath. In general, diocesan priests were appointed to the old monastic positions to prevent the religious making property or presentation claims. Messingham himself was appointed prior of the hospital

of St. John at Trim in 1624.⁵⁴ William Dease, probably the bishop's nephew, was appointed in 1627 to the Priory of Fore, while, in 1628, Oliver Dease was appointed to the Augustinian Priory in Navan.⁵⁵ These appointments illustrate the Dease-Messingham strategy very well. However, as the 1620s progressed, Messingham's influence in Paris and Rome, once so important a part of episcopal armoury against the regulars, became irksome. There were a number of reasons for this. Firstly, Messingham's solicitude for his own network of contacts irritated other less well connected clerics. Secondly, the Meath priest's role in domestic squabbles in Dublin was disapproved of by a growing number of bishops who came to resent this outside interference. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, in 1623 Urban VIII appointed a new archbishop to Dublin. He was Thomas Fleming (1593-1666), son of William, 16th baron of Slane. Though a Meathman, he was a Louvain-educated Franciscan and enjoyed the particular confidence of the regular clergy in his diocese.

IV Messingham and the Paris Censure of 1631

In asserting his authority, Archbishop Fleming quickly entered into conflict with Messingham's Dublin circle. The most prominent of these were Patrick Cahill, Peter Caddell, Luke Rochford and Paul Harris (1573-1635).⁵⁶ Rochford had been appointed parish priest of St. Audeon's, by papal provision in 1624.⁵⁷ He proceeded to set up a grammar school in Bridge Street in the city, probably in a building belonging to his kinsman, the wealthy merchant Thomas Plunkett.⁵⁸ Caddell was appointed rector of Swords by papal provision in 1625 and chancellor of the chapter in 1630.⁵⁹ He taught in Rochford's school. Cahill appears to have been in Dublin, in the parish of Donnybrook from around 1615.⁶⁰ He was appointed by papal provision to the parish of Galtrim in Meath in 1625 but resided in Dublin, teaching logic in Rochford's school.⁶¹ Harris was English, had worked as chaplain to the Luttrell family and was associated with the Meath diocese.⁶²

The first clash came in 1624. In that year Francis Nugent, Capuchin, made a trip to Ireland to perform a visitation of the new Capuchin community there.⁶³ Nugent, though regular, was related to Christopher Cusack, founder of the Irish College in Douai where Messingham and some of his circle had been educated. He was a good friend of Luke Rochford. These contacts, and his efforts to set up a school in Dublin, explain why Nugent's visit was resented by the regular clergy in the city. In the course of his

visitation, two of his cousins, Thomas and Luke Plunkett, consulted him about investing 10,000 florins for the education of Irish clerics on the continent. Nugent was put in charge of the money and transferred 6,000 florins to Claris, a financial agent in Antwerp, and later to Pierre Esberard, banker at Charleville, for investment. Informally, Nugent took some of the interest on behalf of his college in Lille. Douai College, Messingham's *alma mater*, took exception and informed the Plunketts. Thomas had died on 26 January 1627 (N.S.) but his brother, Luke, appointed Messingham and Walter Enos of the Irish College, Paris, to investigate reports of Nugent's sharp practices. Archbishop Fleming and most of the regulars in Dublin supported Plunkett's contestation. A case was brought against Nugent in Belgium, which went against him. He appealed and won at the supreme court at Brabant in July 1631. In the course of this litigation, Nugent returned to Dublin, in 1629, where some Franciscan Observants, smarting at their exclusion from the Plunketts' bequest, mounted an anti-Nugent campaign. One of them, Fr. Francis Matthews, tried to discredit Nugent by associating him with the Meath seculars who had entered into a dispute with Archbishop Fleming and the regulars.

The real trouble had started in January 1627, when Thomas Plunkett died. Rochford insisted on officiating at the funeral. Against Rochford, Fr. Thomas Strange, a Franciscan, claimed the right to preside at Plunkett's funeral. Strange prevailed. This infuriated some of the seculars and very shortly an opportunity arose for them to reassert themselves. On the feast of St. Dominic 1627, a sermon was preached in the Dominican chapel in Dublin by Fr. Thomas Strange. Exception was taken by some seculars present to its theological content, particularly to the exalted status they understood Strange to give the regular clergy.⁶⁴ Frs Terence Coghlan and James Fallon would later swear that they heard him say publicly on that occasion that the monks were the superior element in the flock of Christ and that the regulars were members of the hierarchy. Similar opinions were later attributed to other Franciscans and a number of Dominicans. Fr. Paul Harris immediately rushed into print and penned a letter of fraternal correction to Fr. Strange.⁶⁵ His brotherly solicitude was not appreciated. Strange replied shortly after Christmas. Fearing that the sniping would escalate into open warfare, Archbishop Fleming, on 25 March 1628, proscribed Harris's letter and forbade debate on the subject. This measure considerably frustrated Luke Rochford, who had a pamphlet ready for the press. Smarting from the ban, he had the letter read in the city churches. He and his

faction also decided to appeal to Rome against Archbishop Fleming's ban.

Chance threw up just the man for the job. In 1628, Fr. Thomas Coyle, parish priest of St. Michael's and a thorn in the side of Archbishop Fleming, died.⁶⁶ Archbishop Fleming was away from the city, and, in his absence, Peter Cahill had been nominated to "the best parish of Dublin" by the vicar-general *ad beneplacitum Archiepiscopi*.⁶⁷ He was inducted by Rochford who preached at the ceremony. On returning, Fleming made clear his opposition, considering Cahill to be "a turbulent spirit of another vicar-general!"⁶⁸ He sought to remove him and install his own candidate, Patrick Brangan. Cahill stood firm, and, given the bad relations pertaining between regulars and seculars in the city, presented his exclusion as another example of the Archbishop's bias against seculars. He was also lucky to be able to produce a papal provision to the parish, procured with Messingham's help.⁶⁹ Archbishop Fleming contested the validity of the bull and advised Cahill to return to his native diocese and leave St. Michael's for more deserving native clergy. Cahill riposted with a few scurrilous poems,⁷⁰ and, having obtained testimonials from a number of bishops, set off for Rome, to push his claim for St. Michael's.⁷¹ On his way to Rome it was decided that he should stop in Paris and consult the faculty of theology there on the propositions ascribed to the regular clergy.

Harris and Cahill prepared a list of 11 "heretical" propositions.⁷² Signed by Patrick Cahill, Michael Cantwell, James Fallon and Terence Coughlan, these were sent for examination to the faculty of theology of Paris. The Paris faculty, dominated by secular clergy, and ignorant of the political situation in Dublin, proved favourable to a condemnation of the propositions, even though it was impossible to prove that they had actually been uttered by the regulars. Cahill, aided by Messingham, successfully lobbied the faculty.⁷³ The propositions were condemned on 15 January 1631, after lengthy debate on 2 and 7 January.⁷⁴ With the censure, the affair moved on to a different, more dangerous plane, as it became associated with a parallel dispute, ongoing in England, which pitted Richard Smith, the titular bishop of Chalcedon, against some English regulars.⁷⁵ The Irish bishops stirred themselves. O'Queely of Tuam and Dease of Meath were among those bishops who wrote testimonials on behalf of the regulars, while the regulars themselves organised enquiries to clear themselves of Cahill's charges. After his success in Paris, Cahill journeyed to Rome to press his case, still enjoying Messingham's support.⁷⁶

As the bishops rallied around their Dublin colleague, Archbishop Fleming went on the offensive. With Cahill on the continent, Caddell had rushed in to fill the breach, joining forces with Harris. On 6 March 1631, Harris and Caddell were excommunicated. The internuncio in Brussels had been instructed by Rome on 10 May 1631 to see to the setting up of an episcopal commission to examine the affair. It included Archbishop Fleming, O'Queely, bishop elect of Tuam, Eugene, bishop of Kilmore, and Rochus de Cruce, Dominican bishop of Kildare.⁷⁷ Caddell proceeded to publish a version of the censure, addressed to the other bishops of the province.⁷⁸ Fleming, pointedly described as a "friar", was accused, among other things, of unlawfully expelling secular clergy from his diocese; of forbidding recourse to civil law by parties whose cases he himself refused to hear and of engaging in non-canonical procedures of refusing to hear the proofs against regulars; of failure to suppress a libel under the name of Edmund Ursulan⁷⁹ against some good priests; of permitting to remain in service two incompetent regulars, Patrick Brangan and his assistant, James Quin; of maintaining as his advisor John Preston, a "most seditious and turbulent fellow"; of allowing the stock of learned priests in Dublin to run down, leaving room to friars "to roam", so that they observe no regular discipline and "labour to create a monarchy for themselves"; of using his influence at Rome to frustrate efforts to bring charges against him there, and of being especially thick with Cardinal Ludovicus, vice-chancellor of Rome and protector of Ireland.

Harris seconded Caddell's efforts. In 1632 he published a pamphlet entitled *The Excommunication published by the L. Archbishop of Dublin, Thomas Flemming...*⁸⁰ In 1633, he responded to Francis Matthews's examination of the Paris censure, which had appeared in 1631.⁸¹ In 1634, he penned a pamphlet entitled *Fratres sobrii estote ...*⁸² This literary output exasperated more than the Archbishop of Dublin. In 1635, Bishop Dease of Meath was ordered by Rome to remove Harris from Dublin. He pleaded inability to act, claiming that Harris was too well connected with the civil authorities to permit any punitive action.⁸³ For his part, Harris responded to the threat of removal with a work entitled *Exile exiled*.⁸⁴ He died in the same year. In 1636, Rome again intervened, appointing the archbishops as temporary apostolic delegates, to investigate charges of abuse of authority.⁸⁵ This brought relative peace to Dublin for the remainder of the 1630s but the deep divisions revealed by the censure affair were set to resurface in the far more troubled 1640s. Messingham's part

in these disputes was pivotal. It was he who originally secured the appointment to Dublin in the 1620s of the Meath priests involved. They could not have undertaken successful opposition to Archbishop Fleming without the support of their powerful contact in Paris. There can be little doubt that he was instrumental in having the Paris censure passed in 1631. Messingham's continued support of his circle afterwards permitted them to remain on in Dublin.

V Conclusion

Messingham probably died in 1638. During his career, he contributed much to Irish ecclesiastical politics. He secured the continuation of the Irish College in Paris. He was an important contact for clergy and laity in Paris. His advice on church affairs was valued and his political judgement was sound enough to earn him the confidence and trust of many bishops. For Dease, he was an important ally in resisting the claims of the regulars. While his involvement in the Paris censure dispute won him many powerful enemies, his influence survived intact and, to the end of his life, he continued to execute important business for the Irish Church.

His contribution to the religious and historical culture of Ireland by research and publication is, in retrospect, the most significant aspect of his career. Messingham was a harbinger of the great Irish hagiographical revival of the seventeenth century and had a keen appreciation of both the importance and the power of history in the formation of identity. For him, hagiography and history were more than mere academic exercises. They were also of great practical import. He was particularly concerned to reintegrate a modernised version of the cult of the saints into Irish tridentine Catholicism.⁸⁶ At the same time, his writings contributed to the formation of a new, Catholic identity for Ireland, elements of which survived to our own time.⁸⁷ On both the religious and political level, Messingham was responding to the challenge posed by the clash of Catholic loyalties, divided between King and Pope. Like most of his contemporaries, Messingham was anxious to convince the King that being Catholic did not automatically imply political disloyalty. On the other hand, he was nervous of some of the more extravagant claims made for the deposing power of the Pope and was more interested in the moral possibilities of the new reformed Catholicism in Ireland than in its political pretensions. In attempting a satisfying, coherent solution to the political and

religious dilemma of seventeenth-century Irish Catholics, Messingham combined the tools of Renaissance scholarship, the discipline of Counter-Reformation Catholicism and the diversity of native religious traditions to produce a modernised, adaptable version of Irish history and a contemporary, flexible version of Irish identity to meet the demands of the new century. It was this image of Ireland, as it slowly formed in his mind's eye, that informed his political, social, legal and religious activities. In the end, the most absorbing aspect of his career is the way in which the practical implications of his "vision" of religion and politics were translated into his educational and pastoral activities in France and Ireland.

1. A good example of an attempted reconciliation is David Rothe, *Analecta sacra et mira* ... (s.l., 1616). On the general context, see J.H. Burns and M. Oldie (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700* (Cambridge, 1991). Little has been written on Irish Catholic political thought in the Latin language. On contemporary Irish language political thought, see Breandán Ó Buachalla, "James Our True King: the Ideology of Irish Royalism in the Seventeenth Century", in D.G. Boyce, Robert Eccleshall and Vincent Geoghan (eds.), *Political Thought in Ireland since the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1993), pp 7-35; Aisling Ghéar: *na Stíobhartaigh agus an tAos Léinn 1603-1788* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1996), esp. pp 3-66, and Marc Caball, *Poetry and Politics: Reaction and Continuity in Irish Poetry 1588-1625* (Cork, 1998). On the situation in England, see T. Clancy, "English Catholics and the Papal Deposing Power, 1570-1640", in *Recusant History*, vi, 3, pp 114-40; vi, 5, pp 205-27; vii, 1, pp 2-10, and W.B. Patterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge, 1997).
2. See Aidan Clarke, "Plantation and the Catholic Question", in T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne (eds.), *A New History of Ireland* (Oxford, 1978), iii, pp 186-232.
3. For his birthday, see L.W.C. Brockliss and P. Férté, *A Prosopography of Irish Clerics who Studied in France in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, in Particular at the Universities of Paris and Toulouse* (R.I.A., Dublin, 1987), p. 70 (n. 203).
4. See Alphons Bellesheim, *Geschichte der Katholischen Kirche in Irland* (3 vols, Mainz, 1880), ii, 737. John Brady traced one Messingham family reference in Ireland. See John Brady, "Luke Rochford and his Circle", in *Reportorium Novum*, iii, I (1962), pp 108-20, p. 120, n. 84. The family name is more common in England, see *Historical Manuscripts Commission Report*, 11, app 2 (1887), p. 244 and A.B. Emden, *Biographical Register of Oxford to 1500* (2 vols, Oxford, 1958, ii, p. 1269).
5. See John O'Hart, *Irish Pedigrees* (2 vols, New York, 1915), ii, p. 694.
6. Trinity College, Dublin, MS 1217, 4. This is a Belew-Dillon family tree. A daughter, Anna Belew, married a Sarsfield whose offspring married a Messingham.
7. The Meath Old English were closely connected with their Dublin neighbours. It is likely that Dublin grammar schools were frequented by Meath students. On the education of the Counter-Reformation episcopacy, see Donal F. Cregan, "The Social and Cultural Background of a Counter-Reformation episcopate, 1618-60", in Art Cosgrove and Donal McCartney (eds.), *Studies in Irish History Presented to R. Dudley Edwards* (Dublin, 1979), 85-117.
8. On the Irish College in Douai, see John Brady, "Father Christopher Cusack and the Irish College of Douai 1594-1624", in Sylvester O'Brien (ed.), *Measgra i gcuimhne Mhichíl Uí Chléirigh* (Dublin, 1944), pp 98-107.
9. John Brady (ed.), "The Irish Colleges in the Low Countries", in *Archivium Hibernicum*, 14 (1949), pp 66-91, p. 76.
10. Rothe was prefect of the college in 1601 and in that capacity travelled to Spain to seek royal funding for the institution. See Brady, "Christopher Cusack", p. 102. On John

- Roche, see Patrick Corish, "An Irish Counter-Reformation Bishop", in *ITQ*, 25 (1958), 14-32, 101-123; 26 (1959), 101-116, 313-330.
11. On Fitzsimon, Lee and the Catholic League, see *IER*, 8 (1873), pp 270-1. According to this source, Fitzsimon experienced a miracle during Mass in St. Severin which copperfastened his return to Catholicism. The miracle was witnessed by Henry Segrave, John Lea, Dominik Roche and Thomas Darbyshire. For a general account of the Catholic League see Jean-Marie Constant, *La Ligue* (Paris, 1996).
 12. John Lynch, *De Praesulibus Hiberniae*, ed. J.F. O'Doherty, 2 vols (Dublin, 1944), i, p. 168. On Dease's academic career in Paris, see Brockliss, *op. cit.*, p. 68 (n. 176). He took a masters in 1601, a licence in 1612 and was professor of theology at the College of Navarre about 1612.
 13. Lynch, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
 14. Brockliss, *op. cit.*, p. 70 (no. 203). Messingham, like Dease, was an active member of the German Nation of the University between 1613-19 and again between 1627-37.
 15. Bellesheim, *Geschichte*, ii, p. 217. Luke Rochford, a priest of Meath diocese, published his *The Genealogy of Protestants ...* (Paris, 1621) with the approbation of several Parisian clerics, including Dease, Richard Stephens, Christopher Bagshaw and Gabriel de S. Maria.
 16. Dease's provision dates from April-May 1621, his consecration from May 1622. See D.F. Cregan, *art. cit.*, p. 87. Cregan informs us that Dease probably received part of his early education in local bardic schools in Meath, studied philosophy in Douai and Paris, theology in Paris and held a doctorate from the University there; see *Ríocht na Midhe*, 3 (1964), pp 99-104; 4 (1972), pp 56-62; 6 (1975), pp 69-89.
 17. Bellesheim, *op. cit.*, p. 737.
 18. David Rothe, *Brigida Thaumaturga* (Paris, 1620), pp 124-50.
 19. *Spicilegium Ossoriense I*, pp 133-5. See Bellesheim, ii, p. 219.
 20. *Mémoire genealogique de la maison de l'Escal, de Verone, dont une branche a fait souche à Paris sous le nom de l'Escalopier* (Chalons, 1628) sets out de L'Escalopier's pedigree. See Mazarine Library, 42996, pièce 8.
 21. *Florilegium Insulae Sanctorum* (Paris, 1624). Of Italian extraction, Jean de L'Escalopier was an eminent legal figure, a member and president of the Paris parlement who enjoyed royal patronage as a member of the council of state under both Henry IV and Louis XIII. In 1614, the Queen Regent nominated him for the chancellorship of France.
 22. *Officia Ss Patricii, Columbae, Brigidae ...* (Paris, 1620).
 23. Messingham, *Boquet de l'isle des saints* (Chalons, 1628), p. 19. This is held in the Mazarine Library, Paris, 42996, pièce 9. It is a French translation of Messingham's Latin preface to the *Florilegium* (Paris, 1624).
 24. Messingham, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
 25. Liam Swords, "Document: History of the Irish College, Paris, 1578-1800", in *Archivium Hibernicum XXXV* (1986), p. 28.
 26. Patrick Boyle, *The Irish College in Paris from 1578-1901* (Dublin, 1910), pp 5-6.
 27. Boyle, *op. cit.*, pp 165-9.
 28. Swords, *art. cit.*, p. 24.
 29. John J. Silke, "The Irish Abroad 1534-1691", in *A New History of Ireland*, 9 vols (Oxford, 1976-96), iii (1978), pp 587-633, p. 628.
 30. *Archives nationales*, Paris, MS M 71, f. 77. The author is indebted to Dr. Marion Lyons for drawing his attention to this source and for providing him with transcripts. The document bears no date but other papers in the same file date from 1630-31.
 31. This is not the Patrick Cahill in Hannah Fitzsimons, "Rev. Patrick Cahill, Capuchin Priest, Killadoran, Delvin", in *Ríocht na Midhe*, 3 (1966), pp 385-7.
 32. For their appointments in the archdiocese of Dublin see *Reportorium Novum*, ii, I (1958), p. 115.
 33. Brendan Jennings (ed.), *Wadding Papers 1614-38* (Dublin, Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1953), p. 94.
 34. See Brockliss, *op. cit.*, p. 116 (no. 739). Queely took his master's in Paris in 1615, was a member of the German Nation 1615-23, procurator of same 1617-20, 1623; in 1617 he was called B Th. and professor of philosophy at college de Boncourt; licence in theology in 1622, and *socius* of college of Navarre. In 1622 he was vicar general of Killaloe.

35. *The Justification and Exposition of the Divine Sacrifice of the Masse ...* s.l., 1611, introduction.
36. See *Historical Manuscripts Commission Report on Franciscan Manuscripts* (Dublin, 1906), pp 60-9.
37. *Wadding Papers*, p. 380.
38. Also closed and handed over to Trinity College were two Catholic schools in Bridge Street, one of which was probably that founded and run by Rochford, of Messingham's circle. All these houses were later returned to their owners after court proceedings, with the connivance of Wentworth. See R. Dudley Edwards, "Church and State in Ireland of Micheál Ó Cléirigh 1626-41", in Sylvester O'Brien (ed.), *Measgra i gcuimhne Mhichíl Uí Chléirigh* (Dublin, 1944), pp 1-20, p. 8, n. 47.
39. Paul Grosjean, "Un Soldat de Fortune Irlandais au service des *Acta Sanctorum*: Philippe O'Sullivan Beare et Jean Bolland (1634)", in *Analecta Bollandiana* 81 (Bruxelles, 1963), pp 418-46, p. 418, n. 2. Grosjean, unfortunately, offers no evidence to support his assertion that Messingham was a roving Catholic agent after 1633.
40. *Wadding Papers*, pp 379-81.
41. "Existimo esse valde conveniens et rationabile in omnibus eiusmodi negotiis, ut illi qui amplius laboraverunt, semper praeferentur, quando non est legitima causa ad ipsos excludendos." *Wadding Papers*, pp 76-6.
42. *Wadding Papers*, p. 93.
43. *Wadding Papers*, p. 338.
44. *Wadding Papers*, pp 379-81.
45. *Wadding Papers*, p. 377.
46. *Wadding Papers*, pp 521-2.
47. Brendan Jennings (ed.), *Louvain Papers, 1606-1821* (Dublin, Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1968), p. 98. This may be connected to the Plunkett request, mentioned below.
48. *Archivium Hibernicum*, 12 (1946), pp 192-3. See Patrick J. Corish, "The Beginnings of the Irish College, Rome", in Franciscan Fathers (eds.), *Father Luke Wadding: commemorative volume* (Dublin, 1957), pp 284-94, p. 296.
49. At this time, it was gradually being superceded by the other congregations, especially *Propaganda fide*.
50. See Patrick Corish, *loc. cit.* (1958), p. 32.
51. See Gerard Rice, "Thomas Dease, Bishop of Meath and Some Questions Concerned with the Rights to Ecclesiastical Property Alienated at the Reformation", in *Ríocht na Midhe*, 6, i (1975), pp 69-89.
52. Gerard Rice, *art. cit.*, p. 72, no. 9.
53. Newport White, *Extent of Irish Monastic Possessions 1540-41* (London, 1943), pp 250ff.
54. On Rochford's circle, see John Brady, "Archdeacon Luke Rochford and his Circle", in *Reportorium Novum*, iii, 1 (1962), pp 108-20.
55. On Oliver Dease, see Brockliss, *op. cit.*, p. 69 (no. 177). He took his masters in Paris in 1627, was a member of the German Nation 1627-35. Brockliss adds that he was presumably vicar general of Meath 1666, 1674, at the second date living with the Earl of Westmeath.
56. On the Cahill affair, see the rather unsatisfactory article of William D. O'Donnell, "The Cahill Propositions, 1629", in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 62 (1943), pp 118-23. See also P.F. Moran, *History of the Catholic Archbishops of Dublin* (Dublin, 1874), pp 373-80.
57. Rochford had joined the Irish Capuchins under Francis Nugent in 1611 but later left, and studied for the secular priesthood in Douai and Paris. See Brady, "Rochford Circle", p. 111 and W.M. O'Riordan, "A List of 17th-century Dublin Diocesan Priests", in *Reportorium Novum*, iii, 1 (1962), pp 137-52, p. 144.
58. At the same time Francis Nugent, Capuchin, part of the Rochford-Messingham circle, was in Dublin, trying unsuccessfully to set up a grammar school in the teeth of opposition from the Franciscan Observants, as a feeder institution for his seminary in Lille. See Brady, "Rochford Circle", p. 118.
59. W.M. O'Riordan, "A List of 17th-century Dublin Diocesan Priests", in *Reportorium Novum*, ii, 1 (1958), pp 109-119, p. 115.
60. N. Donnelly, *Short History of Dublin Parishes*, 3 parts (Dublin 1905, reprinted 1977), part 3, p. 87.

61. O'Riordan, *op. cit.*
62. W.M. O'Riordan, "A List of 17th-century Dublin Diocesan Priests", in *Reportorium Novum*, ii, 2 (1960), pp 257-68, p. 265. Harris was chaplain to the Luttrells.
63. See F.X. Martin, *Friar Nugent: a Study of Francis Lavalin Nugent (1569-1635) Agent of the Counter-Reformation* (Dublin, 1962), pp 266-8 for a full account of Nugent's involvement.
64. See *Wadding Papers*, pp 503-7 for an account of this part of the episode. Mark Rochford, O.P., a kinsman of Luke Rochford's, writing for the regulars, names the Oratorian Walter Taylor as the first who detected the "heresy".
65. It was entitled *Fasciculum Florum in Horto Thomas Strange collectorum*. See *Wadding Papers*, p. 505.
66. *Wadding Papers*, p. 469.
67. W.M. O'Riordan, "A List of 17th-century Dublin Diocesan Priests", in *Reportorium Novum*, ii, 1 (1958), pp 109-19, pp 115-6.
68. Fleming to Wadding, *Irish Franciscan Archives*, MS D 11 f. 83.
69. Messingham was active on behalf of other anti-Fleming clerics in Dublin. See Roche to Wadding, January 1630, *Wadding Papers*, p. 332, where he is accused of having "earnestly written" on behalf of Terence Coughlan. Is this a relative of William Coughlan who wrote a Latin poem for the *Florilegium* in 1624?
70. Cahill authored a number of poems on the affair. On his poetic offerings see *Wadding Papers*, pp 470, 477, 511.
71. Cahill enjoyed some success on this score in Rome. A commission was ordered to be set up under the chairmanship of William Tirry, bishop of Cork. It was decided to divide the parish in two, Cahill taking one half and Patrick Brangan the other. In 1644, Cahill was described, in a papal brief to the Archbishop of Dublin and the bishops of Kildare and Ferns, as vicar of St. Michael's. See Brady, "Rochford Circle", p. 119, n. 4.
72. An almost contemporary and delightfully prejudiced account of this phase of the Cahill-Fleming dispute is in William Prynne (ed.), *A Brevitate of the life of William Laud archbishop of Canterbury, extracted (for the most part) verbatim out of his own Diary, and other writings, under his own hand* (London, 1644).
73. A file in the *Archives Nationales*, Paris, contains documents relating to this case. Some of these are addressed to Messingham and the file is headed by a letter of Messingham to the faculty concerning recognition for and funding of the Irish College. *Archives nationales* MS M 71, f. 77-86.
74. See *Censura propositionum ex Hibernia ...* (Paris, 1631).
75. See A.F. Allison, "Richard Smith's Gallican Backers and Jesuit Opponents", in *Recusant History*, xviii, 4 (1987), pp 329-401; xix, 3 (1989), pp 234-85; xx, 2 (1990), pp 164-206. See also his "A Question of Jurisdiction: Richard Smith and the Catholic Laity, 1625-31", in *Recusant History*, xvi, 2 (1982), pp 111-45.
76. *Wadding Papers*, p. 507. Mark Rochford O.P. writes to Wadding, 19 April 1631, "restituto autem ipso [Patrick Brangan], nec adhuc cessit Cahil, sed in parrochia vivens [St Michael's] (licet alter jam curam et fructum habuit) inter sibi notos, sperabat se a sede apostolica, medio Thoma Messingham tunc Parisiis existente, breve quoddam apostolicum recepturum quo, etiam resistente archiepiscopo."
77. It met in September and issued a provisional recommendation in favour of the regulars.
78. Peter Caddell, *To all the most illustrious archbishops and reverend bishops of Ireland, but more particularly to those of the province of Dublin their honourable lords David, bishop of Osory, John of Fernes, Ross of Kildare and Matthew vicar apostolicall of Laghlein* (Rouen, i.e. Dublin, 1632).
79. The author's name was Fr. Francis Matthews. See *Wadding Papers*, p. 609, n. 1.
80. The full title is *The Excommunication published by the L. Archbishop of Dublin, Thomas Flemming, alias Barnwell, friar of the order of S Francis, against the inhabitants of the diocese of Dublin for hearing the Masses of Peter Caddell d. of divinity and Paul Harris, priests, is proved not only unjust but of no validity and consequently binding to no obedience. In which treatise is discovered that impious plot ... of the aforesaid Archbishop and his Friars in supplanting the pastors and priests of the clergy, thereby to bring all into the hands of the Friars* (Dublin, 1632). There was a second edition the following year.

81. *Aptomastie sive Edmundus Ursulanus, propter usurpatum iudicium de tribunali dejectus, et propter libellum famosum in Iudicium vocatus* (Dublin, 1633). The title of Matthews' work was *Examen Juridicum censurae Facultatis Theologicae Parisiensis, et ejusdem civitatis archiepiscopi latae circa quasdam propositiones Regularibus Regni Hiberniae falso impositas* (Dublin, 1631).
82. *Fratres sobrii estote I Pet. 5:8 or an admonition to the fryars of this kingdome of Ireland to abandon such hereticall doctrines as they daylie publish* (Dublin, 1634). This was another reply to Matthews' *Examen ...* of 1631.
83. The anti-Harris faction frequently accused him and Cahill of using the civil authority against their opponents. See Moran, *op. cit.*, pp 378-9.
84. *Exile exiled. Occasioned by a mandat procured from Rome procured by Thomas Flemming, alias Barnwell, archbishop of Dublin and friar of the order of St Francis, from the congregation of the cardinals de propaganda fide, for the banishment of Paul Harris out of the diocese of Dublin* (Dublin, 1635).
85. Moran, *op. cit.*, p. 380.
86. Messingham published two known works, *Officia Ss Patricii, Columbae et Brigidae* (Paris, 1620) and *Florilegium Insulae Sanctorum* (Paris, 1624).
87. On his political significance, see Thomas O'Connor, "Towards the Invention of the Irish Catholic natio: Thomas Messingham's *Florilegium* (1624)", in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 64, 2 (1999), pp 157-177.