

# Rivalry and reform in the Irish College, Paris, 1676–1775

*Liam Chambers*

The Irish Colleges established on continental Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries played a fundamental rôle in the survival and revival of Irish Catholicism in the early-modern period.<sup>1</sup> Recent research has revived interest in the colleges, and work has appeared on institutions in Lisbon, Alcalá de Henares, Rome and Prague, which has pushed the study of the colleges beyond the institutional focus that dominated earlier histories.<sup>2</sup> By the mid-seventeenth century Paris was the main destination for Irish students on the Continent. A century later, the Irish Collège des Lombards in the city was the largest and most important institution of its kind. The work on the college archives undertaken by Liam Swords in the 1970s, combined with fresh research in French archives, has begun the process of re-assessing the history and significance of the Irish Colleges in Paris.<sup>3</sup> Building on the work of Swords and others, this essay analyses the history of the Irish Collège des Lombards in

1 For overview histories of the Irish Colleges see James O'Boyle, *The Irish Colleges on the Continent: their origin and history* (Belfast, 1935); T.J. Walsh, *The Irish continental college movement* (Cork, 1973) (hereinafter Walsh, *Irish continental college movement*). 2 Patricia O'Connell, 'The early-modern Irish college network in Iberia, 1590–1800' in Thomas O'Connor, (ed.), *The Irish in Europe, 1580–1815* (Dublin, 2001), pp 49–64; idem, *The Irish College at Alcalá de Henares, 1649–1785* (Dublin, 1997); idem, *The Irish College at Lisbon, 1590–1834* (Dublin, 2001); Óscar Recio Morales, 'Not only seminaries: the political role of the Irish Colleges in seventeenth-century Spain' in *History Ireland*, 9, no. 3 (autumn 2001), pp 48–52; idem, *Irlanda en Alcalá: la comunidad irlandesa en la Universidad de Alcalá y su proyección europea, 1579–1785* (Alcalá, 2003); *Collegium Hibernorum de Urbe: an early manuscript account of the Irish College Rome, 1628–1678*, ed. John Hanly (Rome, 2003); Jan Pařez, 'The Irish Franciscans in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Prague' in Thomas O'Connor and Mary Ann Lyons (eds), *Irish migrants in Europe after Kinsale, 1602–1820* (Dublin, 2003), pp 104–17. 3 Liam Swords, 'History of the Irish College, Paris, 1578–1800. Calendar of the papers of the Irish College, Paris' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, xxxv (1980), pp 3–233; Robert Amadou, 'Saint-Ephrem des Syriens du Collège des Lombards à nos jours' in *Mémoires de la Fédération des sociétés historiques et archéologiques de Paris et l'Île de France*, 37 (1986), pp 6–152; Liam Swords, 'Calendar of Irish material in the files of Jean Fromont, notary at Paris, May 1701–24 Jan. 1730, in the Archives Nationales, Paris' [parts 1 and 2] in *Collectanea Hibernica*, 34–5 (1992–3), pp 77–115 and 36–7 (1994–5), pp 85–139. On scholarship see Proinsias MacCana, *Collège des Irlandais Paris and Irish Studies* (Dublin, 2001).

Paris in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, drawing on Irish, French, Roman and Jacobite sources. The essay focuses on a long-running dispute concerning student admission, which dominated the college for much of the early and mid-eighteenth century. During the 1730s, it sharply divided the close Irish clerical community in the French capital. For example, in 1736, one pro-reform Irish priest, Andrew Donlevy (1680–1746), was confronted by opponents when he went to the church at St Germain to celebrate mass. Another Irish priest ‘attacked him openly, & told him in [the] presence of all the priests of the church that he deserved to be dragged between wild horses, he told him he believed his end would be to become a calvinist minister, in fine he managed him so well that he obliged him to go off without saying mass.’<sup>4</sup> Despite the acrimony involved, most commentators have assumed that the dispute ended in 1737. In fact, this essay shows that it re-emerged in the 1740s and rumbled on until at least the 1750s. Indeed, it was from this dispute that the establishment of a second Irish College in Paris, the Collège des Irlandais, evolved. Moreover, this re-assessment indicates that the problems experienced by authorities and students are revealing, not only about the internal history of the college, but also about the development of Irish Catholicism and the significant rôle played by the colleges in the debates about the reform of the Irish church in the eighteenth century.

By the early 1730s, the Irish Collège des Lombards had inherited and evolved administrative structures designed to minimise rivalries, but which turned out to be exceptionally unwieldy.<sup>5</sup> Though the Irish clerical community in Paris could trace its roots to the small group led by John Lee, which entered the Collège de Montagu in 1578, it was not until the 1670s that a permanent Irish College was established in the French capital. By this stage, a number of Irish priests, most importantly Patrick Maginn and Malachy Kelly (d. 1684), were well enough connected at court to persuade Louis XIV to grant them use of the vacant and run-down medieval Italian foundation, the Collège des Lombards. Between 1676 and 1681, Irish boursiers entered the college, received university recognition and confirmed Maginn and Kelly as proviseurs for life. The new Irish College also inherited the major-superiors of the Italian foundation, the chancellor of Notre Dame and the Abbé de St Victor. At this

4 Terence O’Gara to John Linegar, archbishop of Dublin, 5 Feb. 1736 (Papers of Archbishop Daniel Murray: Irish College Paris, part 1 (1718–1812), Dublin Diocesan Archives (hereinafter DDA), AB<sub>3</sub>/34/16/10). According to O’Gara, Donlevy had been boasting about his part in reforming the college, claiming that ‘he had clipped the prelates of Ireland’s wings’. On O’Gara and Donlevy see Liam Swords, *A hidden church: the diocese of Achonry, 1689–1818* (Dublin, 1997), pp 210–14. 5 The following section draws on Patrick Boyle, *The Irish College at Paris from 1578–1901* (London, 1901); Amadou, ‘Saint-Ephrem des Syriens’, pp 6–152; Liam Swords, ‘Collège des Lombards’ in idem (ed.), *The Irish-French connection 1578–1978* (Paris, 1978), pp 44–62; Swords, ‘History ... Irish College, Paris, 1578–1800’.

point the college housed priests from Ulster and Munster. Since the early seventeenth century Irish bishops had been permitted to deviate from Tridentine norms and ordain clergy before they commenced their studies in one of the Irish Colleges in Europe. This allowed the priests, who normally arrived in Paris in their mid-twenties, to earn a modest income from mass stipends and other clerical services while they pursued their studies. Within a few years, however, the student population at the college was substantially altered. In 1685, after the premature deaths of both Maginn and Kelly, the Ulster-Munster bias at the college was rectified, and a community of Leinster students was admitted. The government of the college was also changed to reflect its new status as a truly 'national' institution, and a system of administration by four proviseurs, one from each province, was instituted. More significantly for future developments, among the Leinster students were a small number of unordained students, soon to be joined by a much larger group who had been resident in the rue Traversine since 1692 and who were admitted in 1709 following a royal arrêt in their favour. In 1710 they were joined by a group of bourse holders who were under Maginn's supervision and who had been resident in the nearby Collège des Grassins since 1684. By 1710 the college accommodated both ordained priests and unordained students, the latter mainly clerical students, but also including some students who did not intend to enter clerical orders. These unordained students, clerical or otherwise, were much younger than their ordained colleagues, generally arriving in France in their mid-teens and therefore staying much longer.

Most authorities have argued that the complexity of the student population in the college naturally encouraged disputes, which were insufficiently dealt with, leading to the most serious outbreak of conflict in the 1730s. Certainly the regulation of the institution was constantly changing in the early eighteenth century, something influenced by the attempts of various external groups to assert their authority over it. The rules drawn up by the University of Paris in 1717 were followed, in 1724, by a serious dispute concerning the division of funds, resulting in another set of rules issued by a royal arrêt in March 1728.<sup>6</sup> The 1728 regulations recognised the conflict between the priests and unordained students and effectively split the college into two distinct groups: a *communauté des prêtres* and a *communauté des cleres*. The system of administration by four proviseurs was retained, with elections every three years to fill the offices (though the king nominated four proviseurs who were to hold office until the first election in 1731). The new regulations also provided for a prefect of clerical students, to be nominated by the archbishop, who would oversee the spiritual and physical welfare of the unordained students. As Liam Swords and Robert Amadou have noted, the real winner in 1728 was the

<sup>6</sup> The 1728 regulations are printed in Boyle, *Irish College Paris*, pp 182-96.

archbishop of Paris, who emerged as the main authority figure presiding over the college. He was granted the right to nominate another major superior or protector of the college. However, it is difficult to see how the 1728 regulations could have stemmed the tide of dissent and controversy that had dogged the institution from the 1670s. It now had five administrators (though the 1728 regulations did at least impose a hierarchy, including provision for a senior administrator, to be called the 'principal'), three protectors, and the triennial election of officers. It should not be surprising then that the 1730s was the most controversial decade in the history of the Collège des Lombards.

By 1733 the Collège des Lombards seemed to have entered a new era, one bankrolled by the generous patronage of Nicolas Guillaume de Bautru, known as the Abbé de Vaubrun (1662–1746), who was appointed major superior, to replace the Abbé de Saint Suplice, in 1730.<sup>7</sup> His patronage encouraged the college authorities to target other 'pious and zealous' French persons for support.<sup>8</sup> In January 1733 Christopher Butler (1673–1757), the archbishop of Cashel, wrote to the college's Munster provisor, John Bourke, who had acted as his legal representative in Paris since 1729,<sup>9</sup> effusive in his praise for Vaubrun, noting at one point that the college 'nommé des Lombards par le passé, méritant le glorieux nom de Vaubrun pour l'avenir'.<sup>10</sup> In the same year the construction of a new college chapel commenced, again under Vaubrun's patronage, and Cardinal André Hercule de Fleury (1653–1743), the king's first minister, laid the first stone. However, Butler's letter also raised another more difficult subject, the alleged overabundance of priests in Ireland, which resulted in scandalous behaviour and provided an excuse for persecution by the Protestant authorities.<sup>11</sup> Butler agreed with Vaubrun's proposal, supported by

7 John Bourke to James III, 27 June 1735 (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers: correspondence and documents of Irish interest from the Stuart papers in the Royal Archives, Windsor Castle*, ed. Patrick Fagan (2 vols, Dublin, 1995), i, 215–16; also published in 'Clerical recruitment, 1735–83: documents from Windsor and Rome', ed. Hugh Fenning in *Archivium Hibernicum*, xxx (1972), pp 3–6). Bourke noted in his letter: 'Besides ecclesiastical revenues he and his sister, the duchess of Étrées, have between them one hundred and twenty thousand livres a year, and no near relation to inherit their fortune, so that it is easily seen of what importance it is for the college to manage a person so well-disposed and so able to serve them' (*ibid.*). On reconstruction at the college, see Joe McDonnell, 'From Bernini to Celtic Revival: a tale of two Irish Colleges in Paris' in *Irish Arts Review*, 18 (2002), pp 165–75. 8 See the interesting petition, which can be dated to this period, in Patrick Boyle, 'Glimpses of Irish collegiate life in Paris in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 4th ser., xi (1902), pp 437–8. 9 Swords (ed.), 'Calendar ... files of Jean Fromont ... part 2, 1716–1730', pp 125–6. 10 Christopher Butler, archbishop of Cashel, to John Bourke (copy), 20 Jan. 1733 (Archives of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide, Scrittura rificrite nei Congressi, Irlanda, 9, f. 278–278v.) (hereinafter APF, S.C., Irlanda). 11 On this subject see Eamon O'Flaherty, 'Clerical indiscipline and ecclesiastical authority in Ireland 1690–1750' in *Studia Hibernica*, 26 (1992), pp 7–30; Hugh Fenning, *The undoing of the friars of Ireland: a study of the novitiate question in the eighteenth century* (Louvain, 1972); 'Clerical recruitment', ed. *idem*, pp 1–20; 'John Kent's report on the state of the Irish mission, 1742', ed.

Bourke, that ordinations and the reception of regular novitiates should be suspended for a period of five years. It was clear, therefore, that Vaubrun's generous patronage of the Paris Irish would have far-reaching consequences for the question of reform in the Irish church.

As Butler suggested, Vaubrun and Bourke brought their case to the attention of Rome during the summer of 1733, though Hugh Fenning has shown that Cardinal Guisepppe Renato Imperiali (1651-1737), the cardinal protector of Ireland, and the Congregation de Propaganda Fide were opposed (at this stage at least) to Vaubrun's mechanism for reducing the number of priests in Ireland and effectively shelved the issue.<sup>12</sup> In December, Bourke complained that no action had been taken on Vaubrun's suggestion and he reiterated the necessity of banning ordinations for five years. Again he stressed the oversupply of priests in Ireland, but this time he added an important detail, that the authorities at the Collège des Lombards had decided to take action themselves:

Our frequent remonstrances to the bishops have proved ineffectual with some of them, we this year made a rule to receive no priest from Ireland till the number we have be reduced to a hundred, for which and no more we'll have lodging. The same we'll hinder to go out of the house, were it for ten years, till the bishops write for them to take a fixed place and employ.<sup>13</sup>

Bourke's comments indicate that, from the start, the 1730s disputes in the Irish College were related to the wider debates about reform in the Irish church. But at the local level, Bourke's reforms were bound to cause much controversy, given that Vaubrun had estimated that there were more than 300 Irish priests in Paris in early 1733, many looking for a place in the Irish College.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Bourke and Vaubrun were also involved in the construction of a new wing which would accommodate up to 60 priests and envisaged a further wing for unordained students, and they were busily raising funds among French patrons for this venture during November and December 1733.<sup>15</sup>

As Fenning has noted 'one could write a book about the controversy which, for the following few years, raged about this decision of the proviseurs in

idem, in *Archivium Hibernicum*, xxviii (1966), pp 59-102; 'Some problems of the Irish mission, 1733-1774: documents from Roman archives', ed. idem, in *Collectanea Hibernica*, 8 (1965), pp 58-109. 12 Fenning, *The undoing of the friars*, pp 109-15. 13 John Bourke to Anon., 6 Dec. 1733 ('Some problems', ed. Fenning, p. 63). Fundamentally, Bourke argued that the Counter-Reformation had missed Ireland: 'And I am afraid the clergy as well as the laity of our poor country at present, when they ought to be most exemplary, want reformation of manners as much as when the Council of Trent though it necessary to make regulations upon that subject' (Ibid., p. 60). 14 Abbé de Vaubrun to Cardinal Imperiali, 29 June 1733 (APF, S.C., Irlanda, ff 273-4). 15 John Bourke to Anon., 6 Dec. 1733 ('Some problems', ed. Fenning, p. 63); John Bourke to James Edgar, 15 Nov. 1733, *Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, i, 186.

Paris.<sup>16</sup> The 1728 regulations allowed for the election of new proviseurs every three years. In 1731 the proviseurs nominated by the archbishop of Paris, who had the support of Vaubrun, were duly re-elected. However, at an assembly in the college chapel on 13 February 1734, the priests declared their opposition to Bourke's reform proposals and boldly elected three new proviseurs, Francis Duffy, Cornelius McMahon and James Geoghegan.<sup>17</sup> A new Connaught proviseur, Walter Blake (d. 1758), was chosen around the same time, though he was not elected at the 13 February meeting.<sup>18</sup> With the exception of Geoghegan (more commonly known under the surname MacGeoghegan), the new proviseurs were all theology students and therefore senior members of the college. However, the election was contested on a technicality (that Geoghegan did not have all the necessary documentation) and the old proviseurs were quickly re-installed, wrecking the priests' coup d'état and resulting in a serious escalation of the dispute.<sup>19</sup>

The main reformer among the re-instated proviseurs, and the man clearly identified by the priests as their chief opponent, was John Bourke, a priest of the diocese of Cashel. Born around 1699, Bourke arrived in Paris aged sixteen and graduated with an MA (1720) and a licence in theology (1726). In 1728 he was appointed Munster proviseur and served as prefect of studies (1728–34), and later procureur (1734–7). He never returned to Ireland, and in 1756 was ministering in the diocese of Metz.<sup>20</sup> Bourke's key ally among the other proviseurs was Walter Daton. A priest of the diocese of Ossory, Daton was born in Kilkenny around 1692. He graduated with a bachelor (1720) and licence (1728) in theology at the University of Paris and was appointed Leinster proviseur at the Collège des Lombards in 1728, filling the roles of procureur (1728–31), prefect of studies (1731–6) and chaplain (1736–7).<sup>21</sup> This meant that financial control of the community of priests was in the hands of

16 Fenning, *Undoing of the friars*, p. 114. For his assessment see pp 114–16. 17 1728 rules, no. 8, cited in Boyle, *Irish College Paris*, pp 186–7. On the election see Swords, 'Calendar ... files of Jean Fromont ... part 2, 1716–1730', p. 134. On the new proviseurs see L.W.B. Brockliss and Patrick Férté, 'Prosopography of Irish clerics in the universities of Toulouse and Paris, 1573–1792' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, lviii (2004), pp 18, 31, 81 (nos 59, 665, 192). 18 See Brockliss and Férté, 'Prosopography', p. 129 (no. 1121). 19 *Second mémoire pour les prêtres Irlandois du Collège [sic] des Lombards contre le Sieur Bourke, et autres* [written by M. Pelletier, avocat, 1737], pp 8–9, 33–4 (copy in Archives Nationales, Paris, MM 147; for a useful summary see Swords, 'History ... Irish College, Paris, 1578–1800', pp 67–70); Swords, 'Collège des Lombards', pp 49–50; Vincent Geoghegan, 'A Jacobite history: the Abbé MacGeoghegan's *History of Ireland*' in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 6 (1991), p. 38. 20 Brockliss and Férté 'Prosopography', p. 46 (no. 324); John Bourke to James Edgar, 19 July 1756 (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, ii, 194–5; see also the biographical note in *ibid.*, i, 186 n. 14). 21 Brockliss and Férté 'Prosopography', p. 116 (no. 992); Swords (ed.), *Irish-French connection*, pp 161–2; David Bracken, 'Irish migrants in Paris hospitals, 1702–1730: extracts from the registers of Bicêtre, La Charité, La Pitié and La Salpêtrière' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, lv (2001), p. 16. Daton spent a week in La Charité in 1710, when he was 18.

the two reformers, Daton and Bourke, for six years between 1728 and 1738. The Ulster provisor, John Farrelly, was opposed to the reform plans of Bourke and Daton. Unlike them, Farrelly, who was born around 1652, was ordained in Ireland in his twenties before travelling to France, where his studies lasted well over a decade before he gained a doctorate in theology in 1698. He became an important figure in the Irish community in Paris and was appointed proviseur in 1710. He was even allowed to reside outside the college because he was tutor to the sons of James Fitzjames, duke of Berwick (1670–1734). He subsequently moved to the Collège des Lombards in 1719 or 1720, where he resided until his death in 1736. By 1734, as the disputes at the college were about to enter their most acrimonious stage, Farrelly was already an old man (aged around 82 in 1734), and Swords has argued that ‘he stayed above the fray, though there is little doubt his sympathies lay with the priests.’<sup>22</sup> In their attacks on the reforming party the priests do not mention Farrelly, or the fourth proviseur, elected by Connaught students, a position which was filled by four different priests during the key period: Mark Kirwain (1728–1734), Walter Blake (1734), Patrick Conroy (1734–6) and James Connellan (1736–8).<sup>23</sup> These Connaught proviseurs appear to have had little involvement in the dispute, and given Farrelly’s advanced years, the way was left open for Bourke and Daton.

They were supported by a third ally within the college, the prefect of clerical students, who was appointed by the archbishop of Paris according to the 1728 statutes. In fact, Archbishop Louis-Antoine de Noailles (1651–1729) appointed Andrew Donlevy to this post in 1722, which he retained until his death in 1746. Born in Sligo around 1680, Donlevy arrived in France about 1710 and studied law at the University of Paris before his appointment to the Collège des Lombards. He was a prominent Irish language scholar and published his *An Teagasg Críosduidhe* in Paris in 1742.<sup>24</sup> But any push for reform by Bourke, Daton and Donlevy was only possible with outside support provided by the Abbé de Vaubrun. Born into a wealthy aristocratic family in 1666, it was Vaubrun, above all, who permitted the reform agenda to develop in the college.<sup>25</sup>

With Bourke’s decision to instigate reform in the college and his successful

<sup>22</sup> Liam Swords, ‘Fr John Farrelly, doctor of the Sorbonne (1657–1736)’ in *Breifne: Journal of Cumann Seanchais Bhréifne*, 8 [34] (1998), p. 918, see also p. 920; idem (ed.), *Irish-French connection*, pp 161–2; Brockliss and Ferté, ‘Prosopography’, p. 25 (no. 139). The latter states that Farrelly was 82 years old in 1734. <sup>23</sup> Walter Blake was appointed or elected Connaught proviseur around the same time as the controversial election of Duffy, McMahon and Geoghegan, in 1734, and lost his position at the same time as the others. <sup>24</sup> MacCana, *Collège des Irlandais*, pp 115–21; Boyle, *Irish College Paris*, p. 227; Brockliss and Ferté, ‘Prosopography’, p. 120 (no. 1023); Swords, *Hidden church*, pp 212–14. <sup>25</sup> According to his memorial tablet, he died on 15 November 1746, aged 80 (Boyle, *Irish College Paris*, p. 230). See also Amadou, ‘Saint-Ephrem des Syriens’, p. 123 n. 97, who states that he was 84 when he died.

overturning of the 1734 election, the priests had little choice but to respond. In March 1734 they petitioned Colonel Daniel O'Brien, earl of Lismore (1683–1759), James III's unofficial representative in Paris, complaining of

The act of turning away Irish priests from this most charitable city, an unheard of cruelty to strangers in past ages, and [something which] can surely be no less surprising to a true, zealous and worthy patron as your honour justly merits [you] to be regarded . . . among us. [MAL2]The legal exclusion of our former proviseurs seems not to relish with some, but these are people entire strangers to the misery we groan under, which we often offered to demonstrate (but never had the opportunity) to [the] great and venerable superior abbot de Vaubrun, who, we are persuaded, always sought our welfare if not prevented.<sup>26</sup>

A few months later, an English-based writer penned an even harsher assessment of the priests' situation. It has been argued that the author was Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke (1678–1751), but this seems very unlikely.<sup>27</sup> In fact, the writer was probably the Irish-born pamphleteer, Charles Forman (d. 1739), who returned to London from France, having made his peace with Walpole's government, in August 1734.<sup>28</sup> In 1735, Bourke accused the priests of hiring Forman to drum up support for them:

They called it [the college] a barrack and employed one Charles Forman to write against it and against the abbot himself. They made a collection for him towards the expenses of his papers. The first letter was only against me as an instrument to [the] abbot [abbé] de Vaubrun. He got two letters upon the same subject printed in London since the first.<sup>29</sup>

According to Forman, the priests were 'treated not only with cruelty, but even with a barbarity shocking to human nature' and 'arbitrarily threatened to be sent to Bicêtre [prison] and put to bread and water if they refused to obey Mr

26 Humble petition of the Irish students in the college of Lombard to Col. Daniel O'Brien, Mar. 1734 (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, i, 194). O'Brien was an officer in the French army and James's unofficial representative in Paris between 1725 and 1747. See *ibid.*, p. 65 n. 1.

27 H.N. Fieldhouse, 'Bolingbroke and the Irish College in Paris in 1734' in R.C. Lodge (ed.), *Manitoba essays* (Toronto, 1937), pp 142–50, which prints the letter in full. The letter was titled 'Intended letter written to a friend in Paris, to be inserted in one of the English prints' and dated London, Sept. 1737 (British Library, Add. MS 35,335). 28 On Forman see *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (Oxford, 2004) [accessed online: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/68299>]. Forman also penned, *A defence of the courage, honour, and loyalty of the Irish nation* (London, 1731). 29 Bourke adds that, at Forman's instigation, Walpole had also written a letter attacking Vaubrun and himself. John Bourke to James III, 27 June 1735 (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, i, 218).



Bourk'. Furthermore, he argued that 'under the specious but groundless and knavish pretence of reforming manners', Bourke was 'laying a scheme for driving the priests out of the college, and turning it entirely into a barrack for recruits for the Irish regiments in the service of France.' For reasons of justice and diplomacy, Forman complained to selected French ministers, warning that 'if the British ministry should come to hear of the part played by the chevalier and his minister in that affair', it could provide grounds for war between Britain and France.<sup>30</sup> Forman's allegation that the reform of the college was a Jacobite inspired plan, backed by the French government, to provide a nursery of Jacobite soldiers, was unrealistic. In fact, James III (1688–1766) was unwilling to become involved in the internal affairs of the college.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, Forman claimed that his own opposition to the reform plans, leaked to Vaubrun and Bourke, led to pressure from the French government to leave France which resulted in his decision to move to London before September 1734.<sup>32</sup>

Though unreliable, Forman's letter not only underlines the strength of the priests' counter-attack, but points to the increasingly complex nature of the reform debate. In 1735 the rector of the University of Paris, Balthasar Gibert, visited the college and produced a positive report, which included praise for the community of priests.<sup>33</sup> However, as Forman's letter suggested, in French ecclesiastical circles the tide had turned against the priests and their campaign to overturn the election failed. In April 1735 Cardinal de Fleury informed Vaubrun that the king had not changed his mind on the suspension of the 1734 election and commented that the priests should be encouraged 'to remain quiet and to comport themselves in a manner to merit more and more the protection of His Majesty. They ought to have great confidence in your advice because of the good deeds which you do not cease to perform for them.'<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile Bourke attempted to enlist the support of James III and wrote a long and telling letter to the king outlining his version of events and stressing the importance of Vaubrun for the future of the college. He pointed out that Vaubrun was 'extremely well pleased with the behaviour of the young students of this college and with their application to their studies', while the priests 'can have neither learning nor good behaviour'. He claimed that 'instead of learning or manners [they] bring only along with them hither a certain wrong turn of brain and a stubbornness with which they think to cover their other defects and are easily drawn in by a few artful men to enter into their factious views.' Taking this further he argued that

30 Fieldhouse, 'Bolingbroke', pp 147–8. 31 It is interesting to note James's comment in April 1734 that 'they have begun again to pray publicly there [at the college] for me', though he maintained that 'I have nothing to do with any little disputes they have ...'. James to Daniel O'Brien, 6 Apr. 1734 (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, i, 209). 32 Fieldhouse, 'Bolingbroke', p. 148. 33 *Second memoir*, p. 36. 34 Cardinal de Fleury to Abbé de Vaubrun, 18 Apr. 1735 (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, i, 209–10).

ignorance and scandalous behaviour of a great number of priests, straggling about the place without place or employ, are the cause of the decay of religion and the perversion of many considerable Catholics in Ireland as much as the severity of 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.<sup>35</sup>

Though James was aware of Vaubrun's importance, he was reluctant to get involved in the college disputes.<sup>36</sup>

The priests argued that Bourke wanted to eject them and replace them with younger unordained students. In response they asserted that the younger students had 'hitherto proved of very little advantage to the mission of Ireland' and 'take up for the major part with different professions and secular engagements'. Indeed, they argued that Bourke's plans directly threatened the authority of the Irish bishops, and thereby challenged James III as well.<sup>37</sup> The priests also produced the first of two lengthy and detailed memoirs in 1736, charging Bourke and Daton with maladministration and persecution of certain members of the community of priests. A strong personalised attack on the two reformers, but especially on Bourke, became an important aspect of the counter-attack. In a reply produced in 1736, Bourke rejected accusations of persecution and also countered the arguments that younger students were not useful to the mission, pointing out that some members of the hierarchy were themselves good examples that the system could work. The priests, he suggested, were too old to submit to discipline or to profit from their studies, and in any case many did not return to Ireland when their studies had finished. He outlined his own position that the college should take younger students only and refuse entry to the priests, a system initiated by Cardinal Imperiali in the Irish College in Rome.<sup>38</sup>

Though Bourke was keen to point out that he had support for his plans among the bishops, the majority had already declared against him. Indeed, by June 1736 Bourke found himself attacking the bishops as well as the priests in the college:

35 John Bourke to James III, 27 June 1735 (*ibid.*, 215–19). In this letter Bourke came close to explicitly stating his plan to ban priests and reserve the college for unordained students.

36 James III to Daniel O'Brien, 13 July 1735 (*ibid.*, 219); James III to Abbé de Vaubrun, 13 Nov. 1735 (*ibid.*, 222). 37 An Irish ecclesiastic in Paris to Col. Daniel O'Brien, c.1736 (*ibid.*, 233–6; also published in 'Clerical recruitment', ed. Fenning, pp 6–9). 38 Précis of the reply of Messrs Bourke and Daton, provisors of the Irish College, Paris to the Memoir of the Irish priest-students of the same college (c.1736) (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, i, 225–33) (hereinafter 'Précis of the reply of Messrs Bourke and Daton ...'). Indeed, as early as December 1733 Bourke claimed that Irish priests in Paris routinely faced accusations of Jansenism despite 'their zeal all along against that party.' John Bourke to Anon., 6 Dec. 1733 ('Some problems', ed. Fenning, p. 60). See also O'Flaherty, 'Clerical indiscipline', pp 20–1. 39 John Bourke to James Edgar, 11

Though we write to the bishops of Ireland that by the new regulation they are to have a sufficient number of subjects and that a smaller [number] of well formed subjects would do more good and less noise than they have of impudent, ignorant and indisciplined priests, they are still alarmed as if hindering [th]em to make priests in Ireland were to condemn them to starve with hunger.<sup>39</sup>

By 1736, the dispute had entered its most important phase with the establishment of a royal commission on the future administration of the college and student admission policy, headed by the archbishop of Paris, with three others, including the marquis d'Argenson, lieutenant général de police in Paris.<sup>40</sup> The majority of the Irish bishops appointed a colleague, Bishop James Augustine O'Daly (d. 1749), an Augustinian, as their representative in the matter. By this stage only the archbishop of Armagh, Hugh McMahan (d. 1737), fully supported Bourke's plans to eject the priests (indeed the proposals were described as his project in one contemporary document) and certainly without his backing, Bourke's plans would have crumbled much sooner.<sup>41</sup> In June 1736 the bishop of Killaloe, Sylvester Lloyd OFM (d. 1747), who was travelling to Spa for health reasons, deposited a document with Francis Goddard, administrator of the papal nunciature at Brussels. Signed by three Irish archbishops (the exception was Hugh McMahan) and nine bishops, it granted power of attorney to James O'Daly, in their efforts to oppose Bourke's reform plans. Goddard was not a strong supporter of the ordination before study system, and he must have harboured deep reservations about the bishops' choice of representative. O'Daly had been appointed bishop of the tiny impoverished diocese of Kilfenora in north-west Clare in July 1726.<sup>42</sup> By 1729 it was clear that he had no intention of settling in his diocese while he had a reasonable living in Tournai, where he was a canon of the cathedral. As the disputes broke out in

June 1736 (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, i, 236-7). 40 From a letter written by Terence O'Gara, a spokesman for the community of priests, it can be deduced that the third commissioner was 'Mr d'Argenson', presumably the marquis d'Argenson, lieutenant général de police in Paris in 1720 and 1722-4. The identity of the fourth member is not clear. O'Gara argued that d'Argenson was firmly on Bourke's side, a suspicion confirmed by Bourke's comments in a letter to James Edgar that 'I have been above five hours with Mr Herault [marquis d'Argenson], one of the commissioners, to make up the new regulation'; John Bourke to James Edgar, 11 June 1736 (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, i, 236); Swords, 'Collège des Lombards', p. 50; Terence O'Gara to John Linegar, archbishop of Dublin, 5 Feb. 1736 (DDA, AB3/34/16/10). 41 Laurence J. Flynn, 'Hugh MacMahon, bishop of Clogher, 1707-15 and archbishop of Armagh, 1715-37' in *Seanchas Ard Mhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society*, 7, no. 1 (1973), p. 166. 42 On O'Daly's appointment see Cathaldus Giblin, 'Catalogue of material of Irish interest in the collection Nunziatura di Fiandra, Vatican archives: part 5, vols 123-132' in *Collectanea Hibernica*, 9 (1966), pp 61-2 (hereinafter Giblin, 'Catalogue'); John Hay to Daniel O'Brien, 17 July 1726 (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, i, 82).

Paris, O'Daly was coming under more intense scrutiny as the clearest case of absenteeism among the Irish bishops, notably after 1733 when he outraged the cathedral chapter in Tournai after acquiring a papal bull allowing him four years absence, during which he intended to reside in Paris.<sup>43</sup> Before his official appointment to represent some of the bishops, and certainly from early 1736, O'Daly had been in Paris taking the priests' side of the debate. One of his key concerns was the repeal of a papal bull of 1626, which allowed the ordination of Irish clerics on the word of a superior of an Irish College, without the necessary dismissory letter from a bishop. O'Daly and the bishops correctly deduced that a ban on the ordination of priests before study would mean that the superiors of the Irish Colleges (or continental bishops) would gain control over ordinations of Irish clergy, and therefore that the reform (with the 1626 bull still in place) amounted to a full attack on episcopal authority.<sup>44</sup>

A series of conflicting reports emerged from the royal commission about plans for radical change at the college.<sup>45</sup> Central to discussion was a compromise plan to ban both priests and unordained lay students, instead allowing only the entrance of subdeacons. A number of objections to the plan emerged, including one that the college could not cope financially, though this seems to have been overruled. The priests later alleged that Bourke entertained the idea of subdeacons only as a ruse and that he was as opposed to these as he was to priests. Initially the momentum lay with Bourke, Daton and Donlevy. According to one (generally antagonistic) report written in February 1736, Vaubrun spread the news that the commission had decided to ban priests, though in fact the plan was not approved by either the archbishop of Paris or the marquis d'Argenson, one of the two lay commissioners. However, proposals were passed on to Cardinal Imperiali, prompting optimism among the reformers, notably Bourke and Donlevy.<sup>46</sup>

In fact the work of the commission dragged on through 1736 with the priests increasingly claiming that they were the victims of persecution. Terence O'Gara, a priest from Achonry, who kept the authorities in Dublin constantly briefed on developments, reported in February that Vaubrun had bribed an advocate engaged by the priests to draw up what was presumably the

43 Giblin, 'Catalogue', pp 30–32, 49–59; Patrick Fagan, *An Irish bishop in penal times: the chequered career of Sylvester Lloyd, OFM, 1680–1747* (Dublin, 1993), pp 142–4, 173; *Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, i, 155, 161, 246; O'Flaherty, 'Clerical indiscipline', p. 23. 44 *Memoire présenté à Monseigneur l'archevêque de Paris aux noms des archevêques et évêques d'Irlande par M. évêque de Fenibor [Kilfenora] chargé de leur procurations*, 1736; James O'Daly to 'Votre Eminence', 1736 (APF, S.C., Irlanda, 9, ff 493–4v., 498–9). 45 Terence O'Gara to John Linegar, archbishop of Dublin [1736?] (DDA, AB3/34/16/9); James O'Daly to James III, 29 Oct. 1736 (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, i, 248–9). 46 Terence O'Gara to John Linegar, archbishop of Dublin, 5 Feb. 1736 (DDA, AB3/34/16/10); John Bourke to James Edgar, 11 June 1736 (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, i, 236).

first of the two long documents outlining their case. In another letter he accused Bourke and his associates of outright victimisation: ‘when Bourke had last the refectory you might see hunger and famine printed on our faces. Swarms of our house lay in ye hospitals here & if any p[re]sumed to complain even modestly of ye inhumane treatm t he wo[ul]d be on sight interdicted and expelled [from the] college’.<sup>47</sup> Bourke would later claim that the priests had run up considerable debts and that therefore the only option open to him was to shut the refectory. Clearly the dispute had become very bitter indeed, and the use of lettres de cachet against some members of the community of priests did nothing to ease tensions.<sup>48</sup> By October James O’Daly believed that a compromise had been reached, with which he expressed satisfaction, and he wrote to James III outlining the plan. In future the college would only accept subdeacons for whom a fund would be established. In addition, an immediate election for new proviseurs (to be repeated triennially) would take place. O’Daly concluded optimistically that: ‘The bishops of Ireland will be established in their rights, priests will be ordained according to the regulations, we will never more have disputes or complaints, the subdeacons being aged 21 years will no longer be exposed to losing their maternal language.’<sup>49</sup> Though O’Daly noted that he was to meet Vaubrun (after a trip to Tournai), these proposals simply seem to have been dropped, for ultimately they satisfied no one.

In 1737 the priests produced their lengthy second mémoire, an important source on the history of the college, though over-reliance on it has coloured analysis of the disputes. This document marked the culmination of an almost three-year campaign against Bourke, Daton and Donlevy, and provided a catalogue of detail to prove the historical rights of the priests, maladministration under Bourke, persecution of individual priests and the overwhelming support of the episcopacy for the priests (the mémoire included a lengthy appendix containing letters from individuals and groups of Irish bishops). By the time the document was printed, Bourke’s position had slowly crumbled in the face of mounting opposition, especially from the bishops. There is evidence that Daton turned against him in June 1736.<sup>50</sup> The following August, his sole supporter among the episcopacy, Hugh McMahon, archbishop of Armagh,

47 Terence O’Gara to Patrick Fitzsimons, 31 Oct. 1736 (DDA, AB3/34/16/11). O’Gara later studied at Alcalá de Henares, before returning to Ireland (Swords, *Hidden church*, pp 201, 217, 381–3, 396, 397; O’Connell, *Irish College at Alcalá de Henares*, p. 56; Recio Morales, *Irlanda en Alcalá*, p. 126). 48 ‘Précis of the reply of Messrs Bourke and Daton ...’ (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, i, 228–9). A lettre de cachet was a communication from the king which could order imprisonment or exile for an individual without recourse to courts of law. It came into common use during the seventeenth century as an instrument of the increasingly absolutist monarchy. 49 James O’Daly to James III, 29 Oct. 1736 (*ibid.*, 248–9). 50 *Second memoir*, p.

died. By the summer of 1737 even Vaubrun had realised that the enmity against Bourke was too strong to withstand and he was ready to remove him from the college if another suitable position could be found, preferably the vacant see of Raphoe. However, as Patrick Fagan has illustrated, any hopes that Bourke had of filling the see had evaporated with the death of his patron, McMahon.<sup>51</sup> The other bishops were resolutely opposed to Bourke's appointment, and it is telling that his former patron, Christopher Butler, archbishop of Cashel, informed Goddard in Brussels:

I am afraid he will not be acceptable in Ireland especially to the body of the bishops, who in general have all been displeased with the scheme that had been formed and promoted to not receive for the future in the College of Lombard at Paris anybody, except little boys, to the exclusion of those who had been first promoted to the orders in Ireland.<sup>52</sup>

Though Bourke's Irish support was dissolving and the vast majority of the Irish episcopacy were opposed to him, he did have support on the Continent. There is evidence that the French and Roman authorities decided to undertake a radical reform of the college in 1736–7, though in the crisis atmosphere, conflicting reports emerged making it difficult to determine exactly what was happening. At some point in or before 1736 Cardinal Imperiali ordered that no ordained priest should be received at the college (of course, if enacted this would have meant that within a decade the college would have been devoid of ordained priests).<sup>53</sup> In 1737 the archbishop of Paris issued an order expelling Irish priests from the college and city and ordering that the Collège des Lombards could only accept unordained students but this was suspended and eventually abandoned.<sup>54</sup> In the end no action was taken and the commission of 1736–7 effectively buried the issue of reform. However, there were important outcomes. The authority of the archbishop of Paris over the college was underlined and he gained power of appointment of proviseurs when the system of election was dispensed with.<sup>55</sup> For the moment the reform campaign had been

51 *Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, i, 265 n. 30. 52 Christopher Butler to Abbé Goddard, Nov. 1737 (*ibid.*, 269–70). See also *ibid.*, 265–70, 273, 282. 53 See Fenning, *Undoing of the friars*, pp 114, 193. 54 John O'Neill 'Memoire instructif pour Monseigneur L'archeveque de Paris' [1748?] (DDA, AB3/34/16/17) (hereinafter O'Neill, 'Memoire instructif'); Fenning, *Undoing of the friars*, p. 191. Terence O'Gara's version of events, written in October 1736, suggests that Imperiali took the side of the Irish bishops, but this is not clear (Terence O'Gara to Patrick Fitzsimons, 31 Oct. 1736; DDA, AB3/34/16/11). 55 It is interesting that the students' right to elect their superior at the Irish College in Bordeaux also caused problems and was withdrawn, after a dispute, in 1733 (Walsh, *Irish continental college movement*, p. 104). The system of election would come back to haunt the Parisian colleges in the 1790s, see Liam Swords, *The green cockade: the Irish in the French Revolution, 1789–1815* (Dublin, 1989), pp 55–69.

defeated. John Bourke and Walter Daton lost their positions when four new proviseurs were appointed in December 1737. Of the reformers only Andrew Donlevy and Vaubrun remained.<sup>56</sup>

According to Patrick Boyle, 'From this period [1737] for nearly thirty years the college continued its work undisturbed, and its two communities lived harmoniously together.'<sup>57</sup> In fact, by the late 1730s, the college was beginning to feel the financial consequences of such serious disorder. As an indicator, the number of foundations established by Irish donors for the education of Irish students, though small before the 1730s, seems to have dried up completely between 1733 and 1748, which suggests that the problems persisted long after they had apparently ended in 1737.<sup>58</sup> Hugh Fenning has pointed to the continued reform impulse emanating from a group based around the Irish College in Paris in the 1740s. He recognised that the disputes at the Irish College had to be contextualised against wider debates within Irish Catholicism that raged throughout the first half of the eighteenth century.<sup>59</sup> More specifically, he argued that at a crucial moment in the debate about clerical recruitment and clerical indiscipline in the mid-eighteenth century, between 1747 and 1750, three pro-reform currents came together from Dublin, Armagh and, critically, Paris. Paris-based reformers in the 1740s used instances of clerical indiscipline in Ireland and France to argue for the restructuring of the Irish College there, along similar lines to those proposed by Bourke in the 1730s. The Irish reformers in Dublin and Armagh generally opposed their schemes as too radical, but were also arguing that reform of the Irish church was necessary to overcome problems of clerical indiscipline. In Dublin it was the archbishop, John Linegar (d. 1757), and his deputies Patrick Fitzsimons (d. 1769) and John Clinch, who favoured reform.<sup>60</sup> In Armagh, reform was championed by Michael O'Reilly, who had been appointed archbishop with the support of an influential group of administrators at the Collège des Lombards.<sup>61</sup> The reform agenda, pushed simultaneously by groups of clergy in Armagh, Dublin and Paris, effectively laid the groundwork for the Roman decrees of 1751, which closed the novitiates of the regular clergy in Ireland.<sup>62</sup>

One of the Paris-based reformers was an Irish priest called Myles

<sup>56</sup> The four new proviseurs, nominated on 23 December 1737, were Francis Devereux, John Plunkett, Matthew McKenna and Patrick Corr (Swords, 'Calendar ... files of Jean Fromont ... part 2, 1716–1730', p. 137). <sup>57</sup> Boyle, *Irish College Paris*, pp 39–40. <sup>58</sup> Swords, 'History ... Irish College, Paris, 1578–1800', pp 203–5. <sup>59</sup> Fenning, *Undoing of the friars*, pp 109–16, 157–8, 173–8, 188–96. <sup>60</sup> On Linegar see Hugh Fenning, 'The archbishops of Dublin, 1693–1786' in James Kelly and Dáire Keogh (eds), *History of the Catholic diocese of Dublin* (Dublin, 2000), pp 188–94. <sup>61</sup> Professors of the Irish College to James III, 6 Dec. 1748 (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, ii, 697–8). The signatories were Francis Devereux, John Plunkett, John Brady and John O'Neill. <sup>62</sup> Fenning notes that the Paris reformers of the 1730s were not specifically concerned with the reform of the regular clergy. See *Undoing of the friars*, p. 115.

McDonnell, who outlined his reform proposals in a series of documents written in 1745. Unlike Bourke and his allies in the 1730s, McDonnell was concerned with alleged abuses and potential reforms for both the secular and regular clergy, and he did not specifically mention the college administration. Nonetheless there is internal evidence that he shared the concerns of a group of Paris-based reformers and he echoed some of the complaints voiced in the years 1733–7. For example, he argued that the practice of ordaining priests before leaving Ireland was problematic:

They are sent at first to study in Catholic countries in which, alas, only a purely metaphysical education of five or six years at most can be provided for them. Oddly enough this makes them more proud and arrogant, loitering here and there (without having regard to the elementary standard of their first education), making the most of the high status of their sacred profession, which they dishonour and degrade every day by a coarse, dissipated and consequently, unedifying, conduct.<sup>63</sup>

Two of his proposals for reform of the secular clergy are interesting and relate to his complaint that there were too many priests in Ireland. First, a prohibition on ordination for two, three or four years, which echoes the first Bourke–Vaubrun–Butler reform plan of 1733. Second: ‘That in sending students to colleges for studies, the numbers should always be proportionate to the revenues of those colleges and recruitment in line with the spiritual needs of the faithful.’<sup>64</sup> Both suggestions corroborate Fenning’s argument that McDonnell was in close touch with some Irish College reformers.<sup>65</sup>

In fact, McDonnell’s confidential reports were made the year before the beginning of a new round of acrimonious disputes at the college, and may have precipitated these clashes. But there were other events that were also clearly important. In 1746 an important change in personnel occurred at the Collège des Lombards, following the death of the two key remaining champions of reform, Andrew Donlevy and the Abbé de Vaubrun.<sup>66</sup> Two men who were just as committed to the reform cause replaced them: John O’Neill and the Abbé de Nicolai. O’Neill, born around 1698, was a nephew of the deceased Hugh McMahan, a student of the University of Paris and by 1730 a priest of the archdiocese of Armagh with a licence in civil, canon and French law.<sup>67</sup> He was

63 Myles McDonnell’s report to James III [July 1745] (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, ii, 32; also published in ‘Clerical recruitment’, ed. Fenning, pp 10–13). 64 Myles McDonnell, ‘Proposals for remedies to obviate the abuses specified above’ [July 1745] (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, ii, 35). 65 *Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, ii, 26–9, 32–6; Fenning, *Undoing of the friars*, pp 174–6, 188–91. 66 It is also important that Patrick Corr died in 1746 (see Brockliss and Ferté, ‘Prosopography’, p. 14 (no. 24)). On Corr’s viewpoint, see below. 67 John O’Neill to James III, 7 May 1746 (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, ii, 45);



still resident in Paris in the 1730s, where he was the director of a female Benedictine house. He became prefect of clerical students on Donlevy's death in 1746, a position he held until his own death in 1761.<sup>68</sup> Nicolai may well have been appointed major superior before Vaubrun's death, but it was really after 1746 that he assumed a more important role in the college.<sup>69</sup> Almost immediately, Nicolai and O'Neill were at the centre of a new bid to implement reform at the Collège des Lombards.<sup>70</sup>

Though a letter written to the archbishop of Dublin, John Linegar, around 1746, noted that the college was 'jouissant d'un peu de calme', this did not last long. In 1746 Patrick Corr, one of the four proviseurs, wrote to Nicolai, indicating that he had agreed to take over the responsibilities of Vaubrun and commenting on the existence of new disputes:

It is with unspeakable concern that we hear that Revd Mr O'Neill in conjunction with a few others are attempting to dispossess ye community of priests of their just establishment and as these are the far more useful to this mission and without whom it can scarce subsist we write to our dear B[isho]p of Paris most earnestly praying his grace to defeat an attempt so unjust in it self and so destructive to our holy religion here; and we flatter ourselves that you will use all your interest with his grace against so pernicious a scheme.

Our melancholy situation here is such that we can't with safety correspond even with our confreres here on these topics; to write abroad on [th]em is still more dangerous and unsafe, yet ye frequent attempts of ye superiors of ye boys [John O'Neill] put us often under ye hard necessity of exposing ourselves to such dangers; to prevent which they will at last oblige us to forbid any of our young candidates to receive their education under such directors and to resolve unanimously never to admit any that shall, into our districts unless in case of absolute necessity.<sup>71</sup>

Brockliss and Ferté, 'Prosopography', p. 16 (no. 46); Boyle, *Irish College Paris*, p. 228. <sup>68</sup> Swords, 'History ... Irish College, Paris, 1578–1800', pp. 61–2. It is interesting that O'Neill is described as prefect of the Irish community of clerics in a document dated 1740 (*ibid.*, p. 72). Either this was a mistake, or he began to assume Donlevy's responsibilities earlier than 1746. <sup>69</sup> Swords 'History ... Irish College, Paris, 1578–1800', p. 67. <sup>70</sup> This becomes clear from a series of documents in the Dublin Diocesan Archives. Fenning was not granted access to these papers in the course of his research for *The undoing of the friars of Ireland* and therefore did not view the important material relating to reform in the college in the 1740s (*Undoing of the friars*, pp. viii–ix). Based on the information available to him from other sources he suggested that the leading reformers in Paris were John O'Neill, John Brady and one John McDonnell, as well as Nicolai and Myles O'Donnell (*ibid.*, pp. 176–8). For information on some of the papers relating to the Irish College in the Dublin Diocesan Archives see David C. Sheehy, 'A short title calendar of the papers of Archbishop Daniel Murray: Irish College Paris, Part 1 (1718–1812)' in *Collectanea Hibernica*, 45 & 46 (2004–5), pp. 142–54. <sup>71</sup> Patrick Corr to Abbé de Nicolai [1746?] (DDA,

Corr noted that O'Neill had 'reprinted' and dispersed a 'scandalous libel' in Paris and that he had requested his fellow proviseur, Matthew McKenna, to prosecute O'Neill as a result. Nicolai wrote a conciliatory reply, lauding the memory of Vaubrun, and noting that there would be no changes 'sans le concerter avec vous'. However, he also defended O'Neill and assured Corr that O'Neill had not printed the offending document.<sup>72</sup>

In 1748 O'Neill went public with his reform plans in a memoir to the archbishop of Paris, which made five main points. First, historically the college was designated for the education of young Irish students, despite the encroachment of the priests and the 'provisional' decisions of 1707 and 1728. Second, the experiences of the priests before their arrival in France made them unsuitable candidates. O'Neill provided a lengthy and very unfavourable picture of their background, noting that if an ordained priest could not afford to travel to a continental college, he simply performed a clandestine marriage to raise the fare. Third, he underlined the poor behaviour of the priests while in France, noting that the police had even been forced to intervene on occasions. Fourth, he argued that the main problem facing the Irish church was an excessive number of priests, estimated at over 1200, more than during the reigns of Charles II (1660–85) and James II (1685–1701). The church's problem was exacerbated by the indiscipline of these priests when they returned to Ireland. Fifth, he outlined the necessary reform, pointing out that Cardinal Imperiali had resolved similar problems at the 'Collège des clercs Irlandais de Rome' by excluding the priests from the college, and obliging them to leave the city. O'Neill drew attention to a decision that had been taken in 1737 to expel the priests from the Collège des Lombards, but that they successfully appealed the decision to Charles de Vintimille (1650–1746), the archbishop of Paris, whose death in 1746 halted the process. O'Neill requested that the commissioners execute the arrêt of 1737, desist from the practice of accepting priests, nullify the 1626 bull, and the college would then continue with a new lustre and provide prelates and missionaries for the Irish church.<sup>73</sup>

Despite the fact that this radical Paris reform current dovetailed with reforming sentiment in Armagh and Dublin, it was too much even for the so-called 'Zelanti di Dublino'.<sup>74</sup> In June 1748 Patrick McDonogh (d. 1752), bishop of Killaloe, wrote to Archbishop John Linegar of Dublin, requesting his support in a fresh campaign by the priests against reform. Though

AB3/34/16/14); there is also a French version (DDA, AB3/34/16/15). <sup>72</sup> Abbé de Nicolai to Patrick Corr [1746?] (DDA, AB3/34/16/16). <sup>73</sup> O'Neill, 'Memoire instructif'. Presumably O'Neill was referring to the commission established in 1736. <sup>74</sup> It is also interesting that Walter Daton the pro-reform ex-proviseur of the Collège des Lombards, was in contact with the 'Zelanti di Dublino' in the early 1750s. See Anon. to James III, 16 Apr. 1753 (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, ii, 171; also published in 'Clerical recruitment', ed. Fenning, p. 14). On the 'Zelanti' see Fenning, *Undoing of the friars*, pp 136–40.

McDonogh acknowledged that ‘your Grace had never one single subject from that refuge’, he stressed that the other dioceses depended heavily on Paris-trained clergy.<sup>75</sup> He argued that only the community of priests could produce clergy suitable for the Irish mission, with the practical hardships that entailed. ‘How can we, then’, he asked, ‘in honour or conscience, suffer that they should be destroyed and banished by a parcel of young students, backed by two or three rash and inconsiderate priests of our own, bred during their youth in that little blind college [the community of clerics], whereof one in a hundred never becomes a pastor in Ireland?’<sup>76</sup> Linegar came out very strongly against the reform proposals in his correspondence with the archbishop of Paris, Christophe de Beaumont (1703–81), echoing comments made by McDonogh:

Of the Irish boys that have been educated in Paris many apply themselves to the study of physic, several take on in the army, others follow different secular occupations, which however advantageous to them respectively, no way contributing to the preservation of religion amongst the poor Catholics of Ireland: this great work is and must be performed by priests only, and that in the English and Irish languages only, which those who do not go abroad before the age of maturity must know much better than such as quit the kingdom when very young, who though, perhaps, well qualified to instruct and preach in the French tongue, would probably be laughed at ... if they were to deliver the same discourse in their mother tongue, which they often lose by non use and daily conversation in another language.<sup>77</sup>

He rejected charges of scandalous behaviour among the priests and declared that the bishops ordained cautiously. As in the 1730s, Linegar asserted that the proposed changes would damage the church in Ireland and undermine the authority of the episcopacy, concluding that: ‘we are absolutely determined never to recommend a boy to their care & will exclude anyone educated by them or such superiors as act in manifest contempt of our authority and dignity’.<sup>78</sup>

75 Patrick McDonogh to John Linegar, 8 June 1748 (*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*, ed. Patrick Moran (3 vols, Dublin, 1874), iii, 163. The letter was a response to a petition sent to the Irish archbishops and bishops by the community of priests. 76 *Ibid.*, p. 164.

77 John Linegar, archbishop of Dublin, to Christophe de Beaumont, archbishop of Paris (copies in English and French) [1748?] (DDA, AB3/34/16/19). 78 *Ibid.* See also ‘Reponse des proviseurs et pretres du College des Lombards au memoire presenté a Mgr l’archevêque de Paris sans nom et sans signature pour les ecoliers du dit college’ [1748?] (DDA, AB3/34/16/18); John Linegar, archbishop of Dublin, to Christophe de Beaumont, archbishop of Paris (copy) [1748?] (DDA, AB3/34/16/20); Christophe de Beaumont, archbishop of Paris, to — , 23 June 1748 (DDA, AB3/34/16/22).

From Linegar's correspondence it also becomes clear that O'Neill was supported in his action by Francis Devereux, principal of the college in 1748. Devereux was principal between 1738 and around 1773, and surely could not have occupied this position without the support of the archbishop of Paris.<sup>79</sup> Once again then the college was fundamentally split on the same issue that had divided it in the 1730s. O'Neill, Devereux and Nicolai were aligned on one side of the debate, with Matthew McKenna (and, until his death in 1746, Patrick Corr) on the other side. The positions of John Plunkett (provisieur, 1738–60) and James Brady (provisieur, 1750–60) are not clear, though along with O'Neill and Devereux, they had supported the postulation on behalf of the reforming archbishop of Armagh, Michael O'Reilly, in 1748.<sup>80</sup>

The limitation on the number of ordinations per bishop, imposed in 1742, did not solve the problems, which were still hotly debated in Paris for more than a decade.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, the Abbé de Nicolai continued the reform campaign, by petitioning Rome in 1749.<sup>82</sup> Another mémoire, addressed to Rome, written around the same time, called for a ban on ordained priests at all the Irish Colleges on the Continent and clearly emanated from the same reform group in Paris.<sup>83</sup> The opposition of the bishops was enough to sunder O'Neill's reform plans after 1748, but this did not mean that the problem disappeared and by the 1750s it was becoming clear that a solution had to be found. Even those at the Collège des Lombards who were antagonistic to reform along the lines argued by O'Neill or Nicolai realised that some kind of reform was necessary. One of these was the new Munster proviseur of the college, David Henegan (d. before 1776). A priest of the diocese of Cork, Henegan had studied at the University of Paris, graduating with an MA (1729) and a licence in theology (1740) and subsequently served as proviseur at the Collège des Lombards between 1750 and 1775.<sup>84</sup> When he reported the effective end of the latest reform campaign in 1750, he also noted approvingly that the bishops had begun to limit the number of students they were sending to the college:

<sup>79</sup> He may be the same person as Philip Devereux, priest and MA in 1724, Brockliss and Ferté, 'Prosopography', p. 110 (no. 933). See also John Linegar, archbishop of Dublin, to Christophe de Beaumont, archbishop of Paris (copy) [1748?] (DDA, AB3/34/16/20). Devereux's successor, Charles O'Neill, was first described as principal in 1773 (Swords, 'History ... Irish College Paris, 1578–1800', p. 141). <sup>80</sup> A point made by Fenning, *Undoing of the friars*, pp 157–8. Dates based on Swords (ed.), *Irish-French connection*, pp 161–2. <sup>81</sup> Fenning, *Undoing of the friars*, pp 41, 141–2. In any case, as Fenning points out, bishops could petition to be allowed to ordain more than 12 priests and were usually granted permission (*ibid.*, p. 142). <sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 191–2. Based on Fenning's summary this document would seem to share important characteristics with O'Neill's memoir and may, indeed, be the same basic document. <sup>83</sup> Fenning, *Undoing of the friars*, pp 192–5. <sup>84</sup> Brockliss and Ferté, 'Prosopography', p. 69 (no. 564); MacCana, *Collège des Irlandais*, pp 77–9; dates based on Swords (ed.), *Irish-French connection*, pp 161–2. Interestingly, in his will, dated 12 May 1774, Henegan established a bourse for a student in the community of clerics, with the surplus to be given to the community of priests (Swords, 'History ... Irish

I have seen with pleasure how ye most part of y[ou]r brethren were exact in observing what ye promis'd in their names, viz. that they were cautious in sending no more workmen here than our house can contain this is so necessary a rule to follow that those who missed in this point were sent away from hence after they had lost their year and spent what little they had. The regulation in itself is very wise our present good repute arising from the facility we have to keep in order and discipline as many as dwell in the same lodging, whereas our people abroad [that is, outside the college] being left to their own ideas, was apt to make bad use of their leisure in case our reformer [John O'Neill] were tempted to make fresh tumults.<sup>85</sup>

However, the problem of too many students persisted and, in 1754, Christophe de Beaumont directly intervened in the administration of the college to ensure reform. De Beaumont sent a circular letter to the four archbishops in Ireland:

Il vient à Paris, Monseigneur, plus de prêtres Irlandais qu'on n'en peut recevoir dans le Collège des Lombards qui leur est destiné. Ceux qui ne peuvent être admis dans ce Collège sont obligés de demeurer dans la ville, où les ressources leur manquent bientôt, et plusieurs en effet tombent dans de grandes fautes, et causent des scandales qu'ils éviteraient s'ils étaient dans une maison régulière sous les yeux d'un supérieur vigilant qui les contiendrait dans le devoir. D'un autre côté le bon ordre ne permet pas qu'on laisse dire la messe à les jeunes prêtres étrangers qui sont abandonnés à eux-mêmes. Dans ces circonstances j'avais chargé les proviseurs du Collège des Lombards de prier M[esseigneu]rs les évêques d'Irlande de les prévenir du nombre de sujets qu'ils voudraient envoyer chaque année à Paris, afin que M[esseigneu]rs les évêques sçussent avant le départ de ces jeunes gens s'il pourraient être reçus dans ce collège, et qu'ils n'en envoyassent qu'autant qu'il y aurait de chambres vacantes.<sup>86</sup>

College Paris, 1578–1800, p. 142). <sup>85</sup> David Henegan to John Linegar, archbishop of Dublin [?], 24 Jan. 1750 (ODA, AB3/34/16/24). <sup>86</sup> 'There come to Paris, Your Grace, more Irish priests than can be received in the Collège des Lombards which is intended [to cater] for them. Those who cannot be admitted to this college are obliged to live in the city, where they soon lack means, and several actually fall into great errors, and cause scandals that they would avoid if they were in a regular house under the eye of a vigilant supervisor who would control them in the [exercise of their] duty. On the other hand good order does not allow young, foreign priests who are left to their own devices to say mass. In these circumstances I had charged the proviseurs of the Collège des Lombards to intercede with the bishops of Ireland to notify them in advance of the number of persons that they wish to send every year to Paris, so that Their Graces the bishops would know prior to the departure of these young persons if they might be received in this college, and that they would only send as many as there would be vacant rooms'. Christophe de

De Beaumont requested that each archbishop would not send any candidates until he had consulted with the proviseur of his province, who would inform him of the space available.<sup>87</sup> Such a forceful intervention by de Beaumont marked a massive shift in power relations in this dispute and, though the Irish bishops had been moving in this direction since at least 1750, it must have still come as a surprise. The fact that the circular was sent by the proviseurs (the Leinster proviseur was still the pro-reform Francis Devereux), meant that Linegar was slow to respond, though the archbishops of Armagh and Cashel both replied favourably. Henegan, by this stage clearly acting as Linegar's agent in Paris, urged him to accept the conditions.<sup>88</sup> Eventually Linegar too accepted, though he seems to have engaged in some special pleading for Dublin on account of its 'great size'. Indeed, the authorities were apparently concerned that the end to the reform dispute would not mean the beginning of a provincial dispute.<sup>89</sup>

The problem which had effectively dominated the administration of the Collège des Lombards since the 1720s (if not before) was solved by an informal agreement reached by the four Irish metropolitans, the proviseurs of the college and, crucially, the archbishop of Paris, to limit the number of priests sent to Paris. The evidence of student attendance, from the work of Laurence Brockliss, seems to back up this point, since the number of Irish clerics taking the basic MA drops dramatically in the 1750s and 1760s. Brockliss surmised that this meant fewer students were actually taking the MA, rather than fewer students attending the university, but his explanation for this, by his own admission, is less than convincing.<sup>90</sup> The fact that the dispute did not reach the fever pitch of the 1730s during the late 1750s or 1760s leads to the conclusion that the informal limitation on the number of ordained priests sent to Paris, facilitated by the growing toleration and organisation of the hierarchy in Ireland, ended the disputes, though it was reported in 1759 that 'misunderstandings' were still 'rife in that college'.<sup>91</sup> In fact, the disputes were only finally eradicated with the establishment of a second Irish College in Paris between 1769 and 1775.

Beaumont, archbishop of Paris, to John Linegar, archbishop of Dublin, 28 June 1754 (DDA, AB3/34/16/26). This may be the second version of the letter, see comments in John Linegar, archbishop of Dublin and other Irish bishops, to Christophe de Beaumont, archbishop of Paris [1754] (DDA, AB3/34/16/27). 87 Christophe de Beaumont, archbishop of Paris, to John Linegar, archbishop of Dublin, 28 June 1754 (DDA, AB3/34/16/26). 88 David Henegan to John Linegar, archbishop of Dublin [?], 10 Aug. 1754 (DDA, AB3/34/16/28). Matthew McKenna had previously acted as Linegar's informant. 89 David Henegan to John Linegar, archbishop of Dublin, 4 Apr. 1755 (DDA, AB3/34/16/ no reference number [filed between 28-29]). 90 L.W.H. Brockliss and Patrick Féré, 'Irish clerics in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: a statistical study' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 87 C.9 (1987), pp 543-5. 91 There was concern in 1759 that John O'Neill was still intent on reform in the college and that he had the support of the archbishop of Paris. See James Brady, bishop of

By 1755 the second coming of the reformers, led this time by John O'Neill, had run its course. While the input of those based in Paris was significant in the wider reform campaign led by Armagh and Dublin, the changes introduced in the secular Irish Colleges were not in line with suggestions made by Bourke and Donlevy or O'Neill. Indeed, from the early 1750s there is evidence of a change of tack by those in charge of the community of clerics, made possible by the increasing wealth of members of the Irish Catholic community in exile. After 1728, the two communities at the Collège des Lombards shared the same space but lived, it would seem, separate lives. The failure of the attempts made in the 1730s and again in the 1740s to oust the priests meant that a new way had to be found to secure the future of the community of clerics. In 1752 John O'Neill petitioned the parlement of Paris for permission to buy two small houses contiguous to the community's house in the college, paid for by lay Irish donations, a request that was granted the following year.<sup>92</sup> During the 1760s, O'Neill's successor as prefect of clerics, Laurence Kelly (d. 1777), began the process of attracting patronage that would allow the community of clerics to move to a new site. In 1769 he acquired a new building which would become the home of the community of clerics, leaving the community of priests in the old Collège des Lombards.<sup>93</sup> It is worth making the point that Laurence Kelly and the establishment of the new Collège des Irlandais ultimately ended the disputes and rivalries of the eighteenth century by adopting the policies initiated by Bourke and other reformers. Kelly, like Bourke, accepted that an institution for the education of young Irish students that would bar the entrance of ordained priests was necessary. Kelly simply used a new tactic; rather than rid the Collège des Lombards of priests, he realised that the donations of wealthy Irish patrons could be used to acquire a separate building.

In 1772 the community of clerics released the first formal appeal on behalf of Irish students in Paris to the Catholics of Ireland, requesting assistance in the construction of the new Irish college. They pointed out that the college would accept only clerical students, but noted that not all would actually end up in holy orders. In an argument which closely echoed comments made by John Bourke in the 1730s, the appeal pointed out: 'In this case a solid advantage accrues to the nation; such persons having received a virtuous and liberal education, may live to be in the world ornaments to their society and in their own sphere supports to their religion.'<sup>94</sup> The 1772 petition highlights the fact

Ardagh, to Daniel O'Brien, 22 Feb. 1759 and O'Brien to Brady [Feb. 1759] (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, ii, 236-7). <sup>92</sup> Amadou, 'Saint-Ephrem des Syriens', pp 34-5. The 1752 petition is cited in Priscilla O'Connor, 'Comhluadar Deighilte: cõimhlint in Collège des Lombards, Paris (1707-1752)' in Eataín Ó Siocháin (ed.), *Maigh Nuad: santhrú na Gaeilge, 1795-1995* (Maynooth, 1995), p. 49. <sup>93</sup> He handed over the property to the community of clerics in 1772 (Swords, 'History ... Irish College Paris, 1578-1800', pp 135-6.) <sup>94</sup> Appeal

that Bourke's reforms were only realisable in the changed circumstances of the later eighteenth century, as a wealthy Irish middle class emerged on which would-be reformers could draw support. The establishment of the Collège des Irlandais marked the end of disputes that had dogged the Irish student community in Paris for most of the eighteenth century, though fresh problems would quickly surface. The long, drawn out Walsh–Kearney–Ferris–Long disputes of the revolutionary and Napoleonic periods and the Miley–Lavelle conflict of the mid-nineteenth century also concerned the future of the colleges, but in very different circumstances.<sup>95</sup>

While historians of the college have recognised the importance of the reform plans initiated by Bourke and his allies in the 1730s, most have concentrated on internal divisions and problems to explain the disputes. They have argued that there was an 'inevitable' conflict between two irreconcilable communities, the priests and the unordained clerics and students, a judgement that seems sound in hindsight since the communities split in the 1770s. This conflict between the two communities was exacerbated by provincial rivalry, financial insecurity, poor living conditions and pressure for places (especially bourses).<sup>96</sup> However, Hugh Fenning and, in recent work, Liam Swords, have recognised the centrality of the reform debates and the importance of contextualising the disputes in the college against reform currents within Irish and continental Catholicism.<sup>97</sup>

Disputes involving Irish students and priests in the continental colleges were not new in the later seventeenth century.<sup>98</sup> For example, when David Rothe (1573–1650) preached at the Irish College in Paris in 1620 he urged the students to bury divisions.<sup>99</sup>

Nor were they confined to Paris. John Bourke argued that the practice of ordaining priests before education was the root cause of problems everywhere, writing that: 'All our establishments abroad were intended for bringing up young, but when by too great a facility of some bishops in ordaining, they were insensibly filled with priests made in Ireland, our colleges in Spain and Portugal, Toulouse and Douai are almost gone to nothing by disputes and scandals'.<sup>1</sup> Disputes affected non-Irish colleges as well. The Scots College in

from the Irish community of the Irish College to the Catholics of Ireland, 1772 (DDA, AB3/34/16/37). See also John Bourke to James III, 27 June 1735 (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, i, p. 217). <sup>95</sup> Swords, *Green cockade*, *passim*; Gerard Moran, 'John Miley and the crisis at the Irish College, Paris, in the 1850s' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, 1 (1996), pp. 113–25; Fearghas Ó Fearghail, 'A stormy decade in the Irish College, Paris, 1849–1958' in Swords (ed.), *Irish–French connection*, pp. 108–18. <sup>96</sup> Boyle, *Irish College Paris*, pp. 35–40; Amadou, 'Saint-Ephrem des Syriens', p. 26; Swords, 'Collège des Irlandais', pp. 47–51. Both Boyle and Swords (1978) drew heavily on the *Second memoir* compiled by the priests. <sup>97</sup> Fenning, *Undoing of the friars*, *passim*; Swords, *Hidden church*, pp. 210–12. <sup>98</sup> Walsh, *Irish continental college movement*. <sup>99</sup> David Rothe, *Brigidia thaumaturga* (Paris, 1620), pp. 124–61. <sup>1</sup> John Bourke to James III, 27 June 1735 (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Fagan, i, 218).



Paris was a tiny institution, there were only two students there in 1732 and the total number never exceeded fourteen, yet it was dogged by disputes and dissent for much of the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Nor were French colleges without problems. When Michael Moore (1640–1726), an Irish professor, attempted to reform the prestigious Collège de Navarre in 1703, he came up against strong internal opposition and complained to Cardinal de Noailles that the students had no respect for his position as principal.<sup>3</sup> This mirrored many cases of reform in Paris, where students fought strongly to retain their traditional powers and autonomies against increasingly centralised administrations.<sup>4</sup> Both Bourke and Vaubrun intimated at the start of the Irish College dispute early in the 1730s that the *real* cause of opposition to them was the priests' unwillingness to submit to a disciplined timetable, especially those who had enjoyed their freedom before entering the college. In June 1735 Bourke commented:

... [The priests] formed cabals against him [Vaubrun] and flew in his face, because that instead of straggling abroad he would bring them to rule and discipline and oblige them to live in a community in the house he built for them ... While the abbot [Abbé de Vaubrun] was receiving compliments from the bishops of Ireland and others upon his building, the priests who were to be brought into it looked upon it as a prison, destined for taking away their usual liberty.<sup>5</sup>

In short, the Irish College was experiencing in the 1730s what many other Parisian colleges had already gone through in the seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries. If the disputes were not unique, the acrimony and longevity that attended them were unusual, and therefore demand explanation. Insecurity and poverty, at face value, appear to have been important contributing factors. In 1733, Vaubrun commented that there were more than 300 Irish priests in Paris, and clearly not all could be accommodated at the Irish College. However, by the 1730s the Irish community in Paris was actually *more* secure than they had ever been (and the same could be said for other Irish Colleges in this period, for instance, at Bordeaux).<sup>6</sup> The work of Priscilla O'Connor and Thomas O'Connor has demonstrated that Irish clerics were even making significant inroads in the faculty of theology, filling the vacuum

<sup>2</sup> Brian M. Halloran, *The Scots College Paris, 1603–1792* (Edinburgh, 1997), pp 102–76. <sup>3</sup> Liam Chambers, 'Knowledge and piety: Michael Moore's career at the University of Paris and *Collège de France*, 1701–20' in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 17 (2002), pp 9–25. <sup>4</sup> For an overview of student life in early-modern Europe see Rainer A. Müller, 'Student education, student life' in Hilde de Ridder-Symoens (ed.), *A history of the university in Europe, volume two: universities in early-modern Europe (1500–1800)* (Cambridge, 1996), pp 326–54. <sup>5</sup> John Bourke to James III, 27 June 1735 (*Ireland in the Stuart Papers*, ed. Pagan, i, 215–16, 218). <sup>6</sup> Walsh, *Irish continental college movement*, p. 106.

left by expelled jansenists.<sup>7</sup> At the same time Vaubrun's financial support permitted the expansion of the college, which would allow more students to reside there.<sup>8</sup> Arguably then, it was security, not insecurity, which permitted the dispute to develop.

One factor that clearly exacerbated the situation was the complex administration of the college, resulting in attempts by various external parties to exercise control. In particular, there was a battle between the rector of the University of Paris (who drew up the 1717 regulations) and the archbishop of Paris (who formulated the 1728 rules) concerning jurisdiction. The exceptionally unwieldy administrative structures in the college aggravated the situation. While the government by four proviseurs and a prefect of clerics solved the problem of province-equality (still a serious issue elsewhere), it created new ones. Moreover, all sides in the disputes exploited the confusion concerning the ultimate source of authority in the college. In the 1730s alone the various factions appealed to one or more of the Irish bishops (who were split themselves), the archbishop of Paris, the French court, James III, the cardinal protector of Ireland, and the Congregation de Propaganda Fide.

Clearly the disputes, which dominated the Collège des Lombards for much of the eighteenth century, involved a conflict between the communities of priests and students, exacerbated by external power struggles and, though the financial situation was improving, the problems associated with the financial lives of students everywhere in Europe at the time played a part. But, ultimately, the real problem was more complex. The dispute resulted from a conflict between a reforming group of clergy based in the college and those opposed to them. Bourke, Daton, Donlevy, O'Neill, Vaubrun and Nicolai wanted to end the unorthodox procedure of training ordained priests and instead to bring the Irish church into line with Tridentine norms. For Bourke and others, the reform of the Irish College and that of Irish Catholicism were inextricably linked. The priests in the college and the majority of Irish bishops, for whom such a radical reform was not yet acceptable, opposed them. What one finds in Paris in the first half of the eighteenth century is part of a debate about the re-organisation of the Irish Catholic church as it emerged from the penal era. It is therefore significant that this debate was already underway in the late 1720s and 1730s, though it was the 1750s before the bishops actually agreed to reform (informally rather than formally) and another two decades before Bourke's vision was enshrined in the Collège des Irlandais.

7 Priscilla O'Connor, 'Irish students in Paris faculty of theology: aspects of doctrinal controversy in the *ancien régime*, 1730-60' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, liii (1998), pp 85-97; Thomas O'Connor, 'The role of Irish clerics in Paris University politics, 1730-40' in *History of Universities*, xv (1997-9), pp 193-225. 8 According to Boyle, numbers rose steadily between the 1670s and 1770s: 11 (1677), 14 (1681), 30 (1685), 100 (1736), 165 (1762) (Boyle, *Irish College Paris*, pp 29, 39, 40, 199).

The disputes at the Collège des Lombards point to the importance of the continental colleges as cultural interfaces where Irish and continental Catholicism met and, inevitably perhaps, clashed. The long periods away from Ireland experienced by some of the leading proponents of reform in Paris, meant that they felt able to argue that the Irish church should adhere more closely to Tridentine standards. French clergy, like Vaubrun and Nicolai, for whom unorthodox practices and scandalous indiscipline must have looked like they naturally went hand in hand, supported them. It was on the Continent that the clash between the functioning Catholic church in Ireland, heavily influenced by 'localism and familiarism', and the 'highly developed authoritarian and legalistic structure of post-Tridentine Catholicism' manifested itself most starkly.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the reforms spearheaded by O'Neill in the 1740s were too radical even for the pro-reform groups in Dublin and Armagh. Personal ambitions, factional rivalries and administrative complexities all played their part in fanning the flames of dispute and dissent from the 1730s, but ultimately the problems experienced in the Collège des Lombards highlight the importance of the colleges not just for the survival of Irish Catholicism, but also for the reform and re-development of the Irish Catholic church as it emerged from the 'penal era' in the first half of the eighteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

9 O'Flaherty, 'Clerical indiscipline', p. 11, see also pp 27–8. 10 *Ibid.*, *passim*.