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Amaturo Professor in Catholic Studies, Georgetown University

“This extraordinarily helpful symposium was produced by a stellar cast of authors. High professional qualifications and years of valuable experience give great credibility to their recommendations for the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral dimensions of priestly formation. They envisage ministerial priesthood as nothing less than a lifelong pilgrimage of Christian discipleship and human integration. I cannot recommend this book too highly.”

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“This is the book I’ve been looking for since the most recent *Ratio Fundamentalis* was promulgated in 2016! The carefully compiled essays in this volume helped me to grasp the distinctive nuances of the new *Ratio* within the wider history of priestly formation and expanded my appreciation of the global perspective we must take. As a result, I have an even greater humility regarding my own vocation as a formator.”

—Dr. Ann M. Garrido
Aquinas Institute of Theology

“*Models of Priestly Formation* is of utmost importance in the ongoing discussion on Church reform and pastoral ministry. This book is particularly eye-opening as it casts a light on the vast differences in priestly formation in the long history of the Church (from Trent to Vatican II to the internet savvy and social-media connected seminarians of today) and in the new geography of global Catholicism (not only the northern hemisphere, but also Africa, Asia, and Australia), at the time of the global sex abuse crisis. Highly recommended—but it should be required reading—for all those who work in programs for the formation of priests but also lay ministers.”

—Dr. Massimo Faggioli

Professor of Historical Theology, Villanova University

“*Models of Priestly Formation* is an essential resource for anyone undertaking this ministry today. This overview of Magisterial documents, as well as the history and theology of seminary formation is balanced by practical reflections by leading experts. The authors provide vision and offer hope in a critical moment in Church history, when healthy human and spiritual development must be guaranteed.”

—Fr. David Songy, OFMCap, STD, PsyD

President and CEO, Saint Luke Institute, Silver Spring, Maryland

“The Tridentine Church is crumbling. Its renewal requires priests who are freed from clericalism and unafraid of mature collaboration with the laity. How are we to form such priests? There are few more important questions for Catholicism today and this book engages with it courageously and insightfully.”

—Timothy Radcliffe, OP, former Master of the Dominican Order

Models of Priestly Formation

*Assessing the Past, Reflecting on the Present,
and Imagining the Future*

Edited by Declan Marmion, Michael Mullaney,
and Salvador Ryan



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Foreword

Archbishop Eamon Martin

Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland

One of Ireland's earliest mentions of priestly formation can be found in the tenth-century Rule of the *Céli Dé*. The document tells us that when the candidate has been taught how to pray the Liturgy of the Hours and "the correct method of administering Baptism and Communion," the formator is entitled to a cow from the candidate's family! In subsequent years, the formator is to be paid a calf, a pig, and four sacks of grain "together with a reasonable supply of clothing and food." When the candidate passes his final exams, his formator is entitled to "a supper, of food and beer" before the bishop, "for a party of five that night."¹

Friends, I am confident that this International Symposium on Models of Priestly Formation will have more than enough to be getting on with if it concentrates on developments over the past fifty years! Since the Second Vatican Council's 1965 Decree on Priestly Training, *Optatam Totius*, we've had the 1970 *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*; updates on this text in 1985, particularly in light of the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*; reflections on priestly formation at the

1. *The Rule of the Céli Dé*, ed. E. J. Gwynn, *Hermathena* 44, suppl. vol. 2. (Dublin: Hodges & Figgis, 1927).

1990 Synod of Bishops, followed by Pope St. John Paul II's important post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992)—and not a mention of a cow or a calf in any of them!

Now, more than thirty years later, we have a new edition of the *Ratio*, promulgated on 8 December 2016, titled “The Gift of Priestly Vocation.” The new *Ratio* envisions a paradigm shift in priestly formation which calls for a considerable rethink of the structures and relationships in priestly formation. While the conciliar and post-conciliar documents on priestly formation have provided an excellent framework for bishops and seminaries, the recent *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, together with Pope Francis's various discourses about priestly lifestyle, offers a new vision, requiring new structures—new wine requiring fresh wineskins.

At this international symposium, we are all being invited to step out of our comfort zones in order to reimagine past and existing models of formation in light of the new *Ratio*: What is the “new wine”? What are the “new wineskins”?

I hope that one of the fruits of this symposium will be to inform the preparation of a new *Ratio Nationalis* for Ireland. Episcopal Conferences are currently being tasked with redesigning and updating their programmes of priestly formation. This means not only implementing the new *Ratio* in a way that takes account of local traditions, customs and needs but also courageously moving the whole formation experience beyond past and present methods so that priests will be suitably prepared to engage with, and evangelise, the secularised contemporary culture.

The preparation and implementation of the *Ratio Nationalis* for Ireland will require the thoughtful and collegial cooperation of the bishops, in dialogue with the lay faithful (male and female) and with those experienced in formation. We will need a unified and coherent approach with regard to the various elements of formation: the prior accompaniment and discernment with candidates; the admissions process; the introduction of the propaedeutic year;

the formation structures and programme for candidates preparing for the priesthood.

Recently when a parishioner asked me, “Archbishop, where did you train to be a priest?,” he quite innocently reminded me that past models of formation often emphasised the “training” of seminarians through discipline and instruction in the necessary behaviours, habits, and attitudes. The pedagogical method used in “training priests” tended to isolate candidates from the world in order to equip them with sufficient spiritual, intellectual and moral strength before they were sent back into the world to engage in the church’s mission. The seminary structure and programme was inclined to emphasise order, structure and discipline. The task of seminary educators was to ensure that candidates were thoroughly grounded in theological truths and priestly spirituality with clear expectations in terms of doctrinal orthodoxy, liturgical celebration, pastoral ministry and priestly spirituality.

Equipped with this “training,” we emerged after ordination into a very complex and conflicted world, where we found an increasing disconnect between what our church stood for and the prevailing culture around us.

I have often wondered, however, could any kind of priestly “training” (and I use that word “training” deliberately) have fully prepared me for what lay ahead: the seismic shift that would occur in the early 1990s in Ireland’s relationship with church and with priests; the horrendous and shocking child sex abuse scandals; the challenges swept in by a wave of secularisation; the digital revolution, and arrival of the internet and social media; the tendency in society towards rampant consumerism, individualism and relativism; the struggle to live a celibate life in a hyper-sexualised culture; the challenge of maintaining good physical and mental health and well-being in an increasingly rushed, stressful and pressurised environment; the decline in vocations to the priesthood and religious life bringing increased demands and a certain loss of morale for those in ministry; enhanced expectations

regarding governance and accountability for the temporal goods of the church?

Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, many of us newly ordained priests in late 1980s Ireland talked together about all that was happening—sometimes our faces downcast; “our hope had been . . .” In the years following the council, a lot had been written about a “crisis of identity” among priests. In our early years of priesthood, with so much change in the once-familiar role and surroundings for priests, one might more accurately have spoken of a “crisis of compass” or “loss of bearings.”

“Future-Proofing” Formation

Any consideration of priestly formation must see formation as a lifelong process. Who knows what challenges lie ahead for today’s seminarians? How might we best prepare them for the changes that will transform the world in twenty or thirty years’ time but which we cannot even dream of today? To put it in business terms: How can we “future-proof” formation?

Thankfully, the new *Ratio* can help us in this regard. It emphasises a model of priesthood as continuing discipleship, meaning that, even after ordination, formation cannot be “interrupted.” “The priest not only ‘learns to know Christ’ but, under the action of the Holy Spirit, he finds himself within a process of gradual and continuous configuration to [Christ], in his being and his acting, which constantly challenges [him] to inner growth” (*Ratio* 80; hereafter, RF).

In this sense, the priest can never consider himself to be definitively formed. A priest is certainly not the man who arrives at a parish, perfectly packaged, with all the answers. There will often be people who are more qualified than he in facing particular problems, and the new challenges that emerge may well be beyond his seminary formation. This is why his relationship with Christ is paramount. Pope Benedict XVI once said that “the faithful expect only one thing

from priests: that they be specialists in promoting the encounter between man and God.”²

Formation in Discipleship

It has to be fundamental then, to every model of seminary, that we are all—seminarians, rectors and formators, theologians—on the lifelong journey of discipleship, called to follow Jesus Christ. Consequently, the distinctions between the steps (propaedeutic, initial, permanent), between the roles (of bishop, rector, formator, spiritual director), between the dimensions (human, spiritual, pastoral and academic) and between the stages (discipleship, configuration, pastoral) are all somewhat secondary and instrumental to the overall integral formation of each of us as pilgrims along the *Sequela Christi*—under the action of the Holy Spirit and sustained by the grace of God.

This reflects what Pope Francis stated in an address to the Congregation for the Clergy in October 2014: “Formation is . . . not a unilateral act by which someone transmits theological or spiritual notions. Jesus did not say to those he called: ‘Come, let me explain,’ ‘Follow me, I will teach you’: no! The formation offered by Christ to his disciples came rather as a ‘come, and follow me,’ ‘do as I do,’ and this is the method that today too, the Church wants to adopt for her ministers.” Pope Francis continues: “The formation of which we speak is a discipular experience which draws one to Christ and conforms one ever more to Him. Precisely for this reason, it cannot be a limited task, because priests never stop being disciples of Jesus, who follow Him. . . . Initial and on-going formation are distinct because each requires different methods and timing, but they are two

2. Benedict XVI, Address during a meeting with the clergy at Warsaw Cathedral, 25 May 2006, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060525_poland-clergy.html.

halves of one reality, the life of a disciple cleric, in love with his Lord and steadfastly following him.”³

Formation in discipleship helps to prepare pastors who can meet the challenges presented by Pope Francis for the priests of today: to be priests to “accompany” God’s scattered people and heal their wounds, “as in a field hospital”; priests who will be shepherds who know “the smell of the sheep” and are able to serve with the mind and heart of the Good Shepherd; priests who are missionaries, witnessing to “the joy of the Gospel.” (Incidentally, while the expression “missionary disciples” only appears twice in the *Ratio*, the word “missionary” seems to appear everywhere in it: “missionary spirit,” “missionary zeal,” “missionary impulse,” “missionary joy,” “missionary fervour”; the *Ratio* states that formation must be clearly “missionary in spirit,” and formation structures, programmes and processes should cultivate this spirit in seminarians.)

Formation is therefore not about mastering techniques or functional roles, but about following the path of discipleship: internalising, in cooperation with divine grace, the core virtues and ideals of discipleship. Put simply, one cannot be a credible witness, shepherd, healer or proclaimer of the Good News to contemporary culture unless one is rooted in a profound relationship with Jesus with the zeal and attitudes of a disciple that will last a lifetime.

Humility and Vocational Discernment

A word of caution, however: even though one could speak of moving from “training of seminarians” to “formation in discipleship,” this does not mean that formation for the priesthood loses its specificity. The church has clearly stated expectations of her priests in terms

3. Francis, Address to the plenary of the Congregation for the Clergy, 3 October 2014, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141003_plenaria-congregazione-clero.html.

of the discipline of the clergy and the understanding of the priesthood. It is my contention that nothing in the new *Ratio* is inimical to the established teaching on the ordained ministry. However, the new *Ratio* does appear to emphasise that the seminarian, and priest, through pastoral accompaniment, engagement and discernment, must seek to interiorise these doctrinal understandings so that they do not exist merely as a “vener” over his personality.

As the *Ratio* puts it: Priestly formation involves “working humbly and ceaselessly on oneself. . . so that the priest opens himself honestly to the truths of life and to the real demands of ministry. . . . This work cannot be undertaken satisfactorily by relying only on his own human resources. On the contrary, it relies principally on welcoming the gift of divine grace” (RF 43).

A good formation programme has therefore to foster in the seminarian, and in the priest, the virtue of humility and a willingness to search both for the right answers and be open to receiving the help he needs to be a faithful disciple of Christ in a changing world. This is why the spirit of humble discernment is so important. Discernment will sometimes be painful as it requires honesty, integrity, perception, sincerity and an openness to engage with every element and all areas of formation.

Vocational discernment also requires a relationship of trust with formators, an honest assessment of one’s own strengths and weaknesses and an honest and appropriate disclosure of these to formators; a willingness to receive and accept direction, guidance, correction; above all the capacity to live discipleship and priesthood consistently and systematically. This is a lifelong work project.

No “Lone Rangers”

One of the “tools for the journey” which formation must nurture is the ability to work with others. The candidate must be able to work in communion with his bishop, other priests and the members of the

people of God. The candidate must always remember that he has come from the Christian community and upon ordination returns to this community (RF, Intro. 3). The days when we could consider the priest as a “lone ranger” or a “rugged individual” are long past.

St. John Chrysostom was clear in his *Six Books on the Priesthood* that “the most basic task of a Church leader is to discern the spiritual gifts of all those under his authority, and to encourage those gifts to be used to the full benefit of all. Only a person who can discern the gifts of others and can humbly rejoice at the flourishing of these gifts is fit to lead the Church.”⁴

New Wineskins?

To summarise then, the “new wine” or renewed vision of seminary formation aimed at by the *Ratio* is one of ongoing “transformation,” or “conversion” where seminary promotes an “internalisation” of the values and ideals of discipleship. But what of the “new wineskins”? This, friends and delegates to our symposium, is your task—to tease out the characteristics and practical models of formation needed to respond to the new *Ratio*.

Clearly the essential issue is not one of simply reforming the physical structure or location of the seminary—indeed such a pre-occupation can actually divert from the real challenge of the *Ratio*. Whatever the physical shape or building, what is most important is to provide the structures and processes of formation that will foster true conversion and commitment on the part of candidates for the priesthood, as distinct from mere compliance and conformity. The new *Ratio* acknowledges four generally accepted models:

4. John Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood*, trans. G. W. Butterworth (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1964), 44.

1. residential seminaries where all aspects of formation are addressed
2. houses of formation with a nearby pontifical or Catholic university providing the academic courses
3. parish-based models of formation, where seminarians live in a parish supervised by a local parish priest /mentor and take their academic formation in a nearby university or pontifical university
4. “part-time” models where seminarians in the first cycle are engaged in full-time studies at various universities but come together regularly with a rector and other formators for spiritual exercises and group sessions to continue discerning their vocation before entering theology

Other models which might offer useful perspectives include the Paris Model, centred around the bishop and his cathedral, and the Redemptoris Mater model for candidates coming through the Neocatechumenal Way.

It is clear that, whatever the model or models chosen, our aim should be to ensure:

1. a quality propaedeutic experience, rooted in the cultural, ecclesial and social reality of Ireland, preceded by a period of accompaniment and discernment with an experienced priest who would be a mentor and spiritual director
2. that those admitted to a seminary formation programme should have a capacity for community life and be open to lifelong prayerful formation as disciples of Christ; all the time developing interior maturity and a clear coherence of life with their convictions

3. that the formation community is distinctive and small enough to sustain a strong sense of community while not being turned in on itself—this means having frequent and meaningful pastoral placements throughout the years of formation experience
4. that the formation team not only accompanies seminarians but is itself open to being formed in the process
5. that there is a strong relationship between formator, seminarian and bishop, with frequent conversations and contact between all three
6. that there is a greater involvement of, and collaboration with, laity—women and men—in the formation programme
7. that there is a strong emphasis on prayer, communication skills, catechetical skills, leadership and facilitation skills
8. that the seminary formation team has a broader role as a key motivator in vocations promotion and in ongoing formation throughout Ireland

Friends, I commend these thoughts to you as you begin this symposium, grateful that you have taken the time and made the effort to be part of this conversation in which we assess the past, reflect on the present and imagine the future. I cannot promise a calf, a pig, or four sacks of grain, but I trust that you will leave this symposium emboldened and informed to continue your vitally important task of helping to form men to serve Christ and his church. May God grant success to the work of our hands.

Introduction

Declan Marmion, SM

This volume on models of priestly formation arose out of an international conference on the theme at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, Ireland, in November 2017. The new *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (The Gift of the Priestly Vocation), promulgated the previous year, served as a key document of reference. In Ireland there has been much recent discussion about the suitability of large institutional seminaries in the context of the reduced numbers of entrants. Against this backdrop, the Faculty of Theology of St. Patrick's College proposed an international conference on priestly formation which had four aims:

- to reflect on the issue of priestly formation since Vatican II
- to assess the current situation
- to look at best practice from elsewhere
- to imagine new models of priestly formation into the future

While the conference focussed primarily on the English-speaking world and on the Northern hemisphere, the editors commissioned some additional chapters (which appear in the e-version of the book) that focus on the challenges of formation in India, Africa and Australia.

In his welcoming address to the conference, Archbishop Eamon Martin, primate of all Ireland, spoke about a paradigm shift in priestly formation now taking place and how new structures of formation or “new wineskins” need to be found. This work, he said, would form part of the new *Ratio Nationalis* for Ireland and take place in a culture that has experienced some seismic shifts—the clerical sexual abuse scandals, the digital revolution, secularisation, individualisation, etc., all of which have impacted priestly vocations. Referring to the new *Ratio*, he spoke of formation as a lifelong process and the challenge to form a “disciple cleric” who is missionary in spirit.

In the opening survey chapter on priestly formation since Trent, Salvador Ryan emphasises the unevenness of seminary formation in the centuries after the council. Both the number of seminaries established, and the quality of the formation offered, varied quite considerably from region to region, depending on local circumstance. Although the decree *Cum Adulescentium Aetas* of 1563 mandated the establishment of seminaries in every diocese, it did not compel all future clergy to attend them. This meant that, for centuries afterwards, one could still proceed to ordination without having undergone a seminary education, a situation that would only change with the issuing of the Code of Canon Law in 1917. Ryan also argues that the principal focus of seminary training in the centuries after Trent was not primarily a solid formation in speculative theology (that was the business of universities) but, rather, a decent spiritual, pastoral and practical formation in the administration of the sacraments. In the final analysis, Trent’s decree on seminary education was far from prescriptive, leaving many of the decisions regarding its application in individual dioceses to bishops themselves. In this regard, it was malleable and adaptable to the changing needs of a diocese over time. To speak, then, of an overarching experience of the Tridentine seminary in, certainly, the first three hundred years after its promulgation is to misunderstand its variegated nature.

In chapter 2, Jorge Carlos Patrón Wong, archbishop secretary for seminaries at the Congregation for the Clergy, describes how the

new *Ratio* emerged from a long period of consultation from the “real life experiences” of seminary formation worldwide. Pope Francis’s vision is that formation to the priesthood is *an experience of ongoing discipleship*, since “priests never stop being disciples of Jesus, who follow Him.”¹ The renewal of the church depends in many ways on the renewal of the priesthood. Archbishop Wong discusses the stages and agents of formation in the *Ratio*, emphasizing the need for support and accompaniment not only for those recently ordained but also for middle-aged priests, who carry most of the responsibilities in dioceses and religious congregations. Finally, he reminds bishops to respect the final discernment of formation teams about a candidate—a point underlined by many of the contributors.

In chapter 3, “Priestly Formation after *Pastores Dabo Vobis*,” Katarina Schuth, OSF, traces the significance and the legacy of *Pastores Dabo Vobis* in relation to its Vatican II predecessor *Optatam Totius*.² She notes some of the significant changes in seminary formation in recent years: the development of human formation programs, the expansion of pastoral experiences, and a sharper focus on priestly life and ministry. Three areas for further development in seminary formation conclude the chapter: an evaluation of current admission standards and procedures; how to help seminarians acquire a balanced view of the church and her members as they exist in reality; and how to develop a more thorough understanding of the impact on seminarians of secular society and culture.

Christopher Jamison, OSB, former director for the National Office of Vocation in England and Wales and now abbot president of the English Benedictines, discusses some characteristics of the “youth

1. Francis, Address to the Plenary of the Congregation for the Clergy, 3 October 2014.

2. Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Training of Priests (*Optatam Totius*), 28 October 1965. All quotations of Vatican II documents are taken from Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations; The Basic Sixteen Documents* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014).

generation” from which seminarians come. Young people today “stay young longer,” marry later, and enter seminaries later. This generation creates their own world for themselves, are “hyperconnected,” and derive fellowship from social media. They have little sense of belonging to institutions, yet the seminarians from this group tend to love the Catholic Church and are seeking a clear identity. Most are “reverts” or converts and their zeal needs time to mature. Eucharist and eucharistic devotions are central. On the downside, there is a tendency towards an individualistic spirituality, seeing faith as primarily a gift for themselves rather than one to be shared with others. This can lead to narcissism and a sense of self-importance which can only be overcome via a journey of discernment, of stripping away the sense of self-sufficiency in order to help them discover the real meaning of church as community.

In chapter 5, Kevin O’Gorman, SMA, shows how a theology of priesthood can only be understood in the light of a theology of church. The relationship between church and priesthood is analogical, and he develops this argument through the application of Avery Dulles’s models of the church to the priesthood. Dulles outlined five foci for describing the mystery of the church—*institution, mystical communion and herald, servant and sacrament*—and later added a sixth, the church as *community of disciples*. O’Gorman presents another—a seventh model of priesthood—inspired by the writings and witness of Pope Francis—the priest as *man of mercy*. An underlying theme both in this chapter and throughout the book is that human formation is a progressive achievement, a lifelong journey of integration and discipleship.

The themes of vocational accompaniment, spiritual direction and the role of women in seminary training are taken up in chapter 6 by Brenda Dolphin, RSM. The focus in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and in the *Ratio* on human formation has allowed seminary formation to be personalized—tailored to the growth and development of each individual person moving at his own pace. The emphasis on human development

has also led to an increased number of women being involved in seminary training. Seminarians now have the opportunity to interact with women as adult to adult and relate with them on an equal basis in an open, friendly and mature way from the outset of their formation. Dolphin also highlights the importance of the propaedeutic year where the prospective seminarian can experience a focused and extended period of common spiritual searching with others who are starting the same journey and towards the same goal. She notes the challenges faced by the transition from seminary to parish, especially when the current parish model is breaking down, and asks how such changes are finding their way into the training of the prospective priest. Finally, she questions whether the seminary setting as we know it today is the most suitable means for attaining the goals of initial formation for the diocesan priest. This question has now become acute in those countries with dwindling numbers of seminarians. In such circumstances a smaller formation locale might promote a greater sense of human and interpersonal growth and interaction.

The theme of integration in the process of seminary formation is a central focus of the new *Ratio* and in its precursor, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. In chapter 7, Aoife McGrath takes up this issue, linking it with the notion of “authenticity.” Her premise, and that of the *Ratio*, is that if seminarians, both individually and as a group, do not sufficiently “demonstrate—and not only in their external behaviour—that they have internalised an authentically priestly way of life . . . [which] is a sign of a mature choice to give themselves to following Christ in a special way,” then this is an obstacle to the efficacy (and continuation) of their formation (RF 131). In other words, “the lack of a well-structured and balanced personality is a serious and objective hindrance to the continuation of formation for the priesthood” (RF 63).

The Society of St. Sulpice is an international group of diocesan priests dedicated to initial and ongoing formation of priests (and formators) on five continents. Their superior general, Ronald Witherup, PSS, draws on these international perspectives in chapter 8 to describe

the various models of priestly formation currently operative and identifies four. First is the classic free-standing model of the traditional seminary where all aspects of formation are conducted in-house. This seems to be the model presumed in the new *Ratio*. Its weakness is its lack of connection to the real pastoral world outside. The second is the university model where the intellectual aspect of formation is catered for outside the seminary at a pontifical university or similar. The danger here is that the intellectual aspect can become disconnected from the other aspects of formation. The third model is the Paris parish-based model, devised by Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, where seminarians are continually exposed to the realities of parish life. The downside is that there is no formation community as such (or formation team in the traditional sense). A fourth model, operating in France, is a part-time model for first cycle philosophy students who gather on certain weekends during the year and in the summer for retreats. There are also variations of the above models. While the plurality is to be commended, there is the problem of the quality of formation when numbers are either too small or too large. In many countries, especially in Africa but also in China, there is a serious dearth of resources for formation (lack of books, poor libraries, lack of formators, etc.). Witherup concludes by listing some challenges facing formation into the future. These include: how to avoid compartmentalization, how to achieve the “integration” referred to in the *Ratio*, how to better manage the transition from seminary to parish, and how to deal with clericalism, careerism and misogyny.

This theme of *integration* as a primary focus of seminary formation is also taken up in chapter 9 by John Kartje, rector of Mundelein Seminary in Chicago. Kartje describes an integration that happens on multiple levels. These include: the integration of the seminary into the diocese or dioceses; the integration of the four dimensions of seminary formation as laid out in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, and the integration of the seminary faculty. If priests and people are to view the seminary as the “heart of the diocese” (*Optatam Totius* 5), then there need to

be structures in place that facilitate good communication between the two from admission processes (involving lay collaboration) to the challenges facing the newly ordained and beyond. The chapter also looks at some practical processes (classroom pedagogy, parish-based integration and theological reflection) followed at Mundelein that enable the seminarian to integrate the various aspects of his formation—human, spiritual, theological and pastoral.

Hans Zollner, SJ, from the Centre of Child Protection at the Gregorian University in Rome, looks at the new generation of seminarians in Europe and elsewhere who are older and who are likely to have some experience of the world of work prior to entering the seminary. This is a group who are internet savvy and social-media connected, and who may have previously been in an intimate relationship. Given that seminarians are no longer a homogenous group, a more flexible and personalised approach is needed. Issues around sexuality and the living of celibacy need to be talked about in an open way. Typically, the church has dealt with sexual abuse by splitting it off or shelving it, yet the issue of safeguarding should not be relegated to a one-off workshop but treated as a normal issue that is discussed in class, homilies and retreats. He notes the challenges (also mentioned in chapter 4) of helping seminarians to move beyond narcissism and self-love to a desire to give oneself totally in the service of the kingdom. Alongside self-discipline and personal asceticism, the seminarian, paradoxically, needs to develop a strong sense of self and self-esteem to be able to withstand the various storms that are part of the journey of priesthood. Finally, in the context of the stagnation of spirituality after seminary, the seminarian needs to be convinced of the need for ongoing formation rather than the myth that with ordination he is complete.

The e-book version of the volume contains a further four, specially commissioned chapters outlining the challenges facing seminary formation in Africa, India and Australia. As mentioned by Ronald Witherup, one of the biggest challenges for seminaries in Africa (in

contrast to Europe) is overcrowding. To this Bede Ukwuije, CSSp, in his chapter, adds: the lack of trained formators, the lure of money, and the challenges of intercultural living in formation communities. He highlights the call to servant leadership rather than being a clerical “chief” in a context where power is frequently abused. Cornelius Hankomoone, PSS, outlines the need and value of the propaedeutic year in Zambia. Once again there is the lack of material resources (e.g., lack of water) not to mention the lack of library resources, textbooks and of suitably trained formation personnel. The propaedeutic year nevertheless has helped prospective candidates to the seminary gain some grounding in the intellectual, spiritual and human dimensions of formation.

The importance of context is again to the fore in the chapter by Gabriel Mathias, OFM, on formation in India. Not unlike Africa with its various tribes, India’s context comprises different ethnic groups, a dehumanizing caste system and multiple religions. This means that seminary formation must be “inculturated” (i.e., linked to the reality of widespread poverty) and that the seminarian is capable of entering into dialogue with those of other faiths. Mathias notes a worrying trend: namely, the decline in the intellectual standards of those in formation. And finally, the issue of safeguarding policy, while being developed by government, has yet to be fully appreciated in the Indian church.

Not only in the new *Ratio* but throughout this volume, there emerges a new vision of priesthood in terms of discipleship: configured to Christ and at the service of the people of God. The *cantus firmus* of the *Ratio* is its emphasis on the *integration* of all four dimensions of formation—human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. These dimensions are not separate stages but linked together in the journey of discipleship. In relation to ecclesiastical studies, Pope Francis has called for a wisdom and for a reflection “capable of formulating a guiding synthesis” (*Veritatis Gaudium*, Foreword, 4). For its part, the *Ratio* offers the church a synthesis of the rich experiences of forma-

tion since Vatican II, while at the same time encouraging a degree of creativity and originality at the local level. It serves as a “base text” to enable Episcopal Conferences to draw up their national *Ratio*. At the same time, the contributors highlight the need for ongoing evaluation and reform of seminaries and of priestly formation. Against the recent backdrop of the sexual harassment and abuse of seminarians in the United States and elsewhere, this task has become all the more urgent. Seminary formation will need to jettison the old clericalist model of church—one that perpetuated a separated, exalted and elitist priesthood—and promote in its place a model based on discipleship, service and mercy. It is our hope that the ensuing chapters will contribute to this process of radical rethinking of how best to prepare our future priests to serve the people of God.

Chapter One

Seminary Formation since the Council of Trent: A Historical Overview

Salvador Ryan

Introduction and Background to the Establishment of the Seminary System

On 27 June 1562, Sigismund Baumgartner, Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria's envoy (and a layman), was admitted to the Council of Trent. The submission he made on that day highlighted a number of concerns that arose out of an extensive visitation of clergy in Bavaria, carried out four years previously. The results were not encouraging, showing that the majority of clergy were ignorant and "infected with heresy" and that a mere three or four out of a hundred were not already married or living with concubines. Baumgartner made a number of recommendations on behalf of Duke Albrecht to the council for an improvement in the state of the church in the region. One of these concerned a reform of the clergy, the imposition of a stricter discipline on the conduct of their lives and, to counter their general ignorance, the establishment of schools for their training. In the words of John W. O'Malley, Baumgartner was the first to bring

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the idea of the establishment of “seminaries” to the council in an authoritative way.¹

Of course, concern for the proper education of clergy was not particularly new. For centuries, complaints about the deficit in both the intellectual and moral standards of the clergy were commonplace. The Anglo-Saxon missionary, Boniface, famously complained in one of his letters that he encountered one Bavarian priest around 746 whose Latin was so poor that he baptised “in nomine patria et filia et spiritus sancti.”² Charlemagne, in his *Admonitio Generalis* of 789, placed great emphasis on clerical education; in the words of Giles Brown, he wished that

the parish clergy, from whom so much is now expected, are educated in Christian doctrine, and possess not only decent copies of the key Christian texts—biblical, canonical, penitential and liturgical—but also the literacy to use them.³

To this end, Charlemagne called for schools for *pueri* at monasteries and cathedrals (*Admonitio Generalis*, c. 72). Over two hundred years later, the preface to Burchard of Worms’s *Decretum* refers to the collection of church law as a work of reference intended to remedy the

1. John W. O’Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2013), 184–86.

2. Ian Wood, “Religion in Pre-Carolingian Thuringia and Bavaria,” in *The Baiuvarii and Thuringi: An Ethnographic Perspective*, eds. Janine Fries-Knoblach and Heiko Steuer with John Hines (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014), 326. If this bungled Latin baptismal formula meant anything at all, it might be translated as “in the name of the fatherland and the daughter and the holy spirit.” Interestingly, Pope Zacharias would later take Boniface to task in a letter which rebuked him for his officiousness.

3. Giles Brown, “The Carolingian Renaissance,” in *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Imitation*, ed. Rosamund McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 19.

“ignorance” of the clergy; it was “concisely assembled” in order to render it as accessible as possible even to untrained priests who might need to consult it as a work of reference. For Burchard, the ignorance of the clergy had significant consequences: for instance, “for those fleeing to the remedy of penance . . . on account . . . of the ignorance of the priests, help is in no way at hand.”⁴ By the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, the formation of clergy was still high on the agenda. In its eleventh decree, Lateran IV referred to the fact that the Third Lateran Council had prescribed that in each cathedral church a suitable benefice should be provided for a master whose duty would be to train the clergy, but that “this decree, however, is very little observed in many churches.”⁵ The Council of 1215 reaffirmed and strengthened this decree by extending the appointment of a master to other churches with sufficient resources as well. The twenty-seventh decree of Lateran IV, which called the guidance of souls a “supreme art,” ordered bishops to

carefully prepare those promoted to priesthood and to instruct them . . . in the divine services and the sacraments of the church, so that they may be able to celebrate them correctly. But if they presume henceforth to ordain the ignorant and unformed, which can indeed be easily detected, we decree that both the ordainers and those ordained are to be subject to severe punishment.⁶

However, later experience would prove that not all bishops could be considered suitably equipped to the task of providing for the education of their clergy. Indeed, Lewis de Beaumont, bishop of Durham from 1316–33, a nobleman who was described as being “handsome but with bad feet,” is a case in point. While possessing a reputation for

4. Greta Austin, *Shaping Church Law around the Year 1000: The Decretum of Burchard of Worms* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 81, 77.

5. Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1 (London: Sheed and Ward, 1990), 240.

6. Tanner, *Decrees*, 248.

having remained chaste, he was also illiterate (*laicus*). One account describes the consequences of this:

He did not understand Latin and had trouble pronouncing it. Thus, during his episcopal consecration when he was obliged to make his profession, he was unable to read it aloud even though he had previously been coached for many days. With difficulty and whispered promptings he finally got to the word *Metropoliticae* [Metropolitan]. After stuttering over it a bit, he still could not pronounce it; so he said in French “let it stand as I’ve read it.” Everyone around him was thunderstruck, mortified that this sort of fellow was being consecrated a bishop.⁷

On the eve of the Reformation, the Fifth Lateran Council was also concerned about continual oversight of those in priestly ministry, especially those who were licensed to preach. In its eleventh session on 19 December 1516, it decreed that nobody should be allowed to carry out this office without prior examination from a superior “and unless he is found to be fit and suitable for the task by his upright behaviour, age, doctrine, honesty, prudence and exemplary life.”⁸ These characteristics were precisely the qualities that would be expected of candidates for formation to the priesthood in the Tridentine seminary system. Perhaps most damningly of all, the *Consilium de emendanda Ecclesia*, commissioned by and read to Pope Paul III on 9 March 1537, “identified the ordination of unsatisfactory priests as the primary cause of the ills of the Church.”⁹

7. Geoffrey Coldingham, Robert Graystones, and William Chambre, eds., *Historiae Dunelmensis Scriptores Tres* (London: J. B. Nichols, 1839), 118–19. Cited in John Shinnars and William H. Dohar, eds., *Pastors and the Care of Souls in Medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 48.

8. See Tanner, *Decrees*.

9. Frans Ciappara, “Trent and the Clergy in Late Eighteenth-Century Malta,” *Church History* 78:1 (March 2009), 1.

Although both local and ecumenical councils of the church had decried the ignorance of the clergy through the Middle Ages, and certain minimum requirements for ordination had been laid down—such as legitimate birth and being of good moral character and, as in the case of Lateran IV and Lateran V, for instance, knowledge of specific formulae and prayers (the Ten Commandments, Our Father and Hail Mary), it would not be until after 1563 that institutions emerged whose main purpose was the professional formation of Catholic clergy.

Establishment of Seminaries in the Early Modern Period

The Council of Trent's *Cum adolescentium aetas* (canon 18), promulgated during its twenty-third session, mandated that every diocese was to provide a college for the education particularly of poor boys to the priesthood, which would enable them to read and write sufficiently well to allow them to adequately administer the sacraments. In these diocesan seminaries, boys who were to be at least twelve years old were to study "Latin grammar, sacred Scripture, ecclesiastical books, the homilies of the saints, and the things necessary for the administration of the sacraments, especially confession" and local clergy, including their bishops, were to be their instructors, or they should choose other "competent substitutes."¹⁰ It is important to note that, in founding seminaries, Trent was mainly thinking of supporting poor boys who could not otherwise receive an education. Seminaries might admit candidates from more well-heeled families, but these would have to pay for their accommodation.¹¹ The seminary

10. Thomas B. Deutscher, "From Cicero to Tasso: Humanism and the Education of the Novarese Parish Clergy (1565–1663)," *Renaissance Quarterly* 55 (2002): 1007; Kathleen Comerford, "Italian Tridentine Diocesan Seminaries: A Historiographical Study," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 29:4 (1998): 1000.

11. Joseph Bergin, *Church, Society and Religious Change in France, 1580–1730* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 195.

that Trent created is defined by Kathleen Comerford (building on a previous definition by John W. O'Malley) as

a freestanding and programmatically integral institution reserved exclusively for the professional pastoral training of the future diocesan clergy under the direct jurisdiction of the local bishop and the academic and disciplinary staff of regular and secular clergy he hired to administer it.¹²

Although there had been long-standing concerns for the proper education of clergy, a more immediate impetus for the establishment of seminaries can be traced to the actions of Cardinal Giovanni Morone, who encouraged the Jesuits to open the Collegium Germanicum in Rome in 1552 for the education of young men from the empire who wished to be priests.¹³ Cardinal Reginald Pole of England had also recognised the solution to the competency deficit among clergy to lie in the establishment of special schools, and the wording of his canon to this effect in *De Reformatione Angliae* (the decrees of his legatine synod of 1555–56) anticipates the twenty-third session of the Council of Trent by seven years.¹⁴ Other figures such as the Andalusian priest, Juan de Avila, had opened schools for religious

12. Comerford, "Italian Tridentine Diocesan Seminaries," 1009. And yet such an institution did not exist in many areas for a considerable period of time after the promulgation of the 1563 decree which is customarily understood to have established the "seminary system."

13. O'Malley, *Trent*, 212. See especially Urban Fink, "The Society of Jesus and the Early History of the Collegium Germanicum, 1552–1584," in Liam Chambers and Thomas O'Connor, eds., *Catholic Communities Abroad: Education, Migration and Catholicism in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 34–54.

14. Comerford, "Italian Tridentine Diocesan Seminaries," 1001; O'Malley, *Trent*, 212. There had been some pre-Reformation seminary-like institutions in existence: most notably the College of the Holy Spirit in Louvain, founded in 1445; the Almo Collegio Capranica, founded in Rome in 1457; and the Geor-

instruction as early as the 1530s and had written *Memoriales* to the Council of Trent, detailing his ideas on clerical education.¹⁵ When Duke Albrecht V of Bavaria's envoy, Sigismund Baumgartner, entered the council chamber on 27 June 1562, with the recommendation of establishing schools for the training of clergy, he was therefore expressing what had already been recognised by many others as a pressing need within the context of church reform.

With regard to *Cum adolescentium aetas*, John W. O'Malley has stated that "it is difficult to exaggerate the canon's long-range influence."¹⁶ But the wording is important here; canon 18's influence was *long-range* rather than immediate. Adriano Prosperi has cautioned against concluding that the establishment of the seminary system transformed "ignorant, unprepared and immoral clergy" into exemplary models of priesthood overnight.¹⁷ There was a great deal of regional diversity not only between core and peripheries but also within core Catholic countries. Marc Forster, in his study of the Diocese of Speyer, remarks how "the peasant-priest of the mid-sixteenth century only slowly evolved into the educated professional of the eighteenth."¹⁸ Much of this could be attributed to the practical difficulties surrounding the setting up of seminaries in the first place. These colleges cost money, and bishops of dioceses were now faced not only with finding the funds necessary to establish and then maintain a seminary but also the necessity of recruiting both staff

giam in Ingolstadt, established in 1492. See Fink, "The Society of Jesus and the Early History of the Collegium Germanicum," 36.

15. See David Coleman, "Moral Formation and Social Control in the Catholic Reformation: The Case of San Juan de Avila," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 26:1 (Spring 1995): 17–30.

16. O'Malley, *Trent*, 212.

17. Ciappara, "Trent and the Clergy," 2.

18. Marc Forster, *The Counter-Reformation in the Villages: Religion and Reform in the Bishopric of Speyer, 1560–1720* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 59.

and students. Kathleen Comerford points to the uneven distribution of seminaries on the Italian peninsula: for instance, less than half of the Italian dioceses opened seminaries in the sixteenth century and some Italian dioceses failed to open a seminary all through the seventeenth century.¹⁹ The holding of diocesan or provincial synods often provided the impetus for the establishment of seminaries.²⁰ But in some regions, seminaries that had already been established were extinguished as a result of the upheaval of the age. Joseph Bergin, for instance, records how “the few French seminaries founded after Trent did not survive the religious wars, and a new wave of foundations only began in the 1630s.”²¹ Meanwhile, the first seminary was not established in Malta until as late as 1703.²²

It is worth remembering that the notion of a “typical” Tridentine seminary in this period is misleading. These institutions could vary considerably in their fundamental *raison d'être*, student body, teaching arrangements, length of course of study, curriculum, and living arrangements. So, for example, Douai College, established by Cardinal William Allen in 1568, was the first Tridentine seminary for English speakers; and yet it was much more than that, having been founded as an educational establishment for young English Catholic scholars, both clerical students and the sons of lay gentry, who could no longer attend Oxford and Cambridge in the reign of Elizabeth I and thereby sought a Catholic education abroad.²³ Likewise, a minority of Irish students from well-heeled families pursued their clerical for-

19. Comerford, “Italian Tridentine Diocesan Seminaries,” 1002.

20. Comerford, 1003.

21. Thomas Worster, *Seventeenth-Century Cultural Discourse* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1997), 89.

22. Ciappara, “Trent and the Clergy,” 23.

23. Eamon Duffy, “Introduction: Historical,” *Treasures of Ushaw College*, ed. James E. Kelly (Durham University: Scala Arts & Heritage Publishers, 2015),

17. I am grateful to James Kelly for having reminded me of this very useful volume.

mation abroad in Irish colleges located in Spain, the Low Countries, France and Italy. While Trent may have ideally envisaged grouping candidates for priesthood around their bishop in a diocesan setting for moral and spiritual formation, this was not the reality for many Irish clerical students in the seventeenth century. Thomas O'Connor adverts to the fact that, in this instance, lack of episcopal oversight was taken for granted by the Holy See and that in 1626 a papal bull allowed for the ordination of Irish clerics on the word of a college superior on the continent, thus severing a vital link between a cleric and his bishop. Furthermore, many of the colleges attended by the Irish abroad were under Jesuit, as opposed to episcopal, governance and operated independently of the hierarchy.²⁴ In other instances, such as at the seminary at Pavia, Jesuit lecturers in philosophy were hired in the 1640s and 1650s while the college remained a diocesan, rather than a Jesuit, seminary.²⁵ In eighteenth-century Lombardy, the seminary served merely as a boarding school (*convitto*), while the teaching was delivered externally in colleges run by the religious orders, a common model for seminaries in university towns.²⁶

Furthermore, what might today be termed the projected “learning outcomes” of an early modern seminary education were reasonably modest; certainly in respect of a thorough grounding in theology. The seminary’s principal focus was to form young men into persons capable of attending to the *cura animarum*. This did not necessarily require a deep understanding of theology. Instead, students were to be instructed in “the things necessary to know for salvation,” i.e., practical, pastoral and sacramental theology, with a focus on moral and ethical behaviour. Their function should be clearly distinguished from

24. See especially Thomas O'Connor, “The Domestic and International Roles of Irish Overseas Colleges, 1590–1800,” in Chambers and O'Connor, eds., *Catholic Communities Abroad*, 93.

25. Comerford, “Italian Tridentine Diocesan Seminaries,” 1008.

26. Ciappara, “Trent and the Clergy,” 23.

that of the universities where one might study theology at a much higher level. In this respect, seminaries might better be understood as technical schools for the professional training of future or already ordained clergy.²⁷ Indeed, they were intended precisely to provide a better (if modest) theological and spiritual formation for those who could not attend a university than they would otherwise receive; O'Malley pointedly identifies seminary formation as "an almost fall-back alternative for those who could not do better."²⁸ Leo Kenis remarks that "the top priority for future priests was to train them to be pious, morally upright worship leaders and parish administrators. The requirements for pursuing this model were complimented with a modicum of intellectual formation."²⁹ Timothy Tackett has observed that seminarians might even be discouraged from wandering into the potentially dangerous waters of speculative theology, raising subjects that might only arouse the idle curiosity of their parishioners: what the common people needed was milk, not solid food.³⁰ Kathleen Comerford has uncovered important clues about the content and

27. Comerford, "Italian Tridentine Diocesan Seminaries," 1009.

28. Klaus Ganzer, "Das Trienter Konzil und die Errichtung von Priesterseminarien," in Klaus Ganzer, et al., *Kirche auf dem Weg durch die Zeit. Institutionelles Werden und theologisches Ringen* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1997), 485; O'Malley, *Trent*, 213. I am grateful to Charlotte Methuen for this first reference.

29. Leo Kenis, "Movements toward Renewal: The Belgian Church and the Improvement of Clerical Education 1830–1850," *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis / Dutch Review of Church History* 83:1 (2003): 371.

30. Timothy Tackett, *Priest and Parish in Eighteenth-Century France: A Social and Political Study of the Curés in a Diocese of Dauphiné, 1750–1791* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 81. Dissuasion from entering into disputations for which one might be ill-prepared was a common warning for both laity and clergy in a period when "a little knowledge" might well be regarded as an eternally dangerous thing. See Salvador Ryan, "New Wine in Old Bottles": Implementing Trent in Early Modern Ireland," in Thomas Herron and Michael Potterton, eds., *Ireland in the Renaissance, c.1540–1660* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006), 127.

purpose of a seminary education from inventories of the library of the diocesan seminary of Fiesole, taken in 1646, 1703–1715 and 1721. On the assumption that an institution may be known through its books, Fiesole's collection suggests that the educational emphasis was pastoral rather than intellectual in nature. It is interesting to note, for instance, that between 1646 and 1721 "the number of books on the study of Scripture declined sharply and controversial theology disappeared entirely. On the other hand, books on pastoral theology increased significantly as did books on private devotion."³¹ Once again, however, it would be unwise to draw general conclusions from a single institution. As in so much concerning the seminary system, there was a great deal of variation from region to region.

Hubert Wolf notes that in the Tridentine church, three possible routes for training for the priesthood existed: the diocesan seminary, another (higher) school, or the university theology faculties.³² There might, of course, be added a fourth route; which was simply that largely pursued in the Middle Ages—the apprentice system of learning "on the job," so to speak, from one's own local priest, who himself had been similarly trained up. And because attendance at seminary was not a requirement for ordination to priesthood until as late as 1917, this kind of formation also persisted through the early modern period. Franz Ciappara puts this rather starkly when he reminds us that while "Trent decreed that each diocese must have such institutions, future clergy were not compelled to attend them, and young men could still proceed to the priesthood much as before."³³ Indeed,

31. Kathleen Comerford, "What Did Early Modern Priests Read? The Library of the Seminary of Fiesole, 1646–1721," *Libraries and Culture* 34:3 (Summer 1999): 203, 206.

32. Hubert Wolf, "Priesterausbildung zwischen Universität und Seminar. Zur Auslegungsgeschichte des Trienter Seminardekrets," *Römische Quartalschrift für Christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchen-geschichte* [Freiburg im Breisgau] 88 (1993), 231–32. I am grateful to Charlotte Methuen for this reference.

33. Ciappara, "Trent and the Clergy," 24.

Kathleen Comerford's work on Fiesole has shown that from 1635 to 1675, about 59 percent of the priests ordained in Fiesole spent no time at all in seminary—"They were, for the most part, locals who remained local."³⁴ For roughly the same period, Charlotte Methuen has observed that "in the German dioceses, the main qualification of prince-bishops continued to be their birth."³⁵

Furthermore, on account of Trent's non-requirement of seminary attendance or theological training prior to ordination, it was customary for many students from Britain and Ireland, who travelled for a clerical education to the continental colleges, to be ordained in advance in order that they might be in a position to help cover college fees through the acceptance of Mass stipends. And even those who did manage to attend seminary were not guaranteed to emerge as polished Tridentine specialists. Patrick J. Corish, in commenting on the poor reputations of some Irish seminarians at the Irish College in Rome in the seventeenth century, mentions, as examples, "Terence Kelly, one of the original students, who seems to have worn the Tridentine reform very lightly, or James Stafford, who entered in 1653, self-willed and a bit of a fool, or Hugh McKean, who came in 1675, self-willed and more than a bit of a knave."³⁶ As early as 1644,

34. Kathleen M. Comerford, "Clerical Education, Catechesis, and Catholic Confessionalism: Teaching Religion in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Early Modern Catholicism: Essays in Honour of John W. O'Malley*, Kathleen M. Comerford and Hilmar M. Pabel, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 252.

35. Charlotte Methuen, "The Theologians: Who Were They?," in Kenneth Appold and Nelson H. Minnich, eds., *The Cambridge History of Reformation Theology* (forthcoming). I am grateful to Charlotte Methuen for having provided me with an advance copy of her article.

36. Patrick J. Corish, review of *The Irish College, Rome 1628–1687: An Early Manuscript Account of the Foundation and Development of the Ludovician College of the Irish in Rome*, Albert McDonnell, ed. (Rome: Pontifical Irish College, 2003), in *The Furrow* (January 2004): 57.

Vincent de Paul, founder of the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians), sounded a rather pessimistic note regarding the success of the seminary system up to that point: “the decree of the Council of Trent must be respected because it is of the Holy Spirit. Yet experience shows that the manner in which it is implemented in respect of the age of the seminarians means that it does not work, neither in Italy nor in France.”³⁷ De Paul personally favoured a model implemented by Adrien Bourdoise, *curé* of St. Nicolas-du-Chardonnet in Paris, who experimented with the idea of the coming together of a community of past and future clergy and who would use his own parish as a laboratory for formation in, and practice of, the requisite pastoral skills for the priestly life. Here, then, for de Paul, the best learning took place, arising, as it did, out of experience.³⁸

Ronnie Po-chia Hsia stresses that clerical discipline was imposed unevenly and with difficulty over a long period of time.³⁹ Testament to this is the report of one particularly amorous Maltese priest, Don Andrea Borg from St Helen’s, who stated in 1789 that “he contemplated going to Turkey to apostatize to Islam and there ‘take as many wives as my strength allowed me.’”⁴⁰ By as late as the turn of the twentieth century, reports of clerical behaviour did not offer more encouraging news, particularly in some Latin American regions where the seminary system was not as firmly established. Cardinal Rafael Merry del Val, papal secretary of state, listed the deficiencies of the clergy of Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay as follows in 1907:

37. Bergin, *Church, Society and Religious Change in France*, 196–97.

38. Bergin, 197.

39. R. Po-chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540–1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 120–21.

40. Ciappara, “Trent and the Clergy,” 11. This was not uncommon. See Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500–1800* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 90.

the Gospel is not explained; they do not teach the catechism to the faithful; they do not administer the sacraments if there is no profit in it; they do not attend to the dying promptly . . . [and] finally, not a few live in concubinage and publicly maintain illicit relationships.⁴¹

Clearly, then, nearly 350 years after the decree establishing the seminary system, there was still a great deal of ironing out to be done on the issue of clerical formation for ministry.

Refining the Seminary Experience into the Modern Period

The Council of Trent had attributed the spread of Protestantism in Europe in large part to the ignorance and immorality of Catholic clergy.⁴² And how the clergy behaved had a direct impact on the behaviour of the laity more generally; this was expressed in clear terms by Jean-Pierre Camus, consecrated bishop of Belley (1609–1628) by St François de Sales, who remarked that priests

must order their life like a clock, for what a clock is to a city, so is a priest; if the clock is “out of order,” business, meals, and everything go astray; if the priest is disordered the laity will follow his example.⁴³

The seventeenth century would see an enormous contribution to seminary development from the so-called French school of spirituality with figures such as Pierre de Bérulle, Charles de Condren, Vincent de Paul, and Jean Jacques Olier developing a spirituality for

41. Lisa M. Edwards, “Latin American Seminary Reform: Modernization and the Preservation of the Catholic Church,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 95:2 (April 2009): 270.

42. Deutscher, “From Cicero to Tasso,” 1007.

43. Worster, *Seventeenth-Century Cultural Discourse*, 89.

diocesan priests. Vincent de Paul's Congregation of the Mission, founded in 1625, and Olier's Society of St Sulpice, formed in 1641, would place special emphasis on the spiritual formation of candidates for priesthood. In his first encyclical (*E Supremi apostolatus*, 1903), Pope Pius X would note that "as a general rule, the faithful will be such as are those whom you call to the priesthood."⁴⁴

It would be four Sulpician priests who would open the first diocesan seminary in the United States at Baltimore in 1791. In order to financially support the seminary, which had few students at the outset, the Sulpicians were to open an affiliate lay college in 1805.⁴⁵ In 1833 the second Provincial Council of Baltimore reminded itself of the duty of establishing seminaries as laid down by Trent. They considered various models: that of a bishop training seminarians at his own residence; training taking place in the cathedral rectory; and the option of training seminarians in an institution that also provided a Catholic school for lay students. One of the problems identified by the early 1850s was that each bishop wanted his own diocesan seminary, even if problems with numbers and also staffing issues made this less than ideal. At the First Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1852, while bishops urged the formation of diocesan seminaries, they also recommended the establishment of provincial seminaries where this was not possible. This gave rise to "freestanding seminaries" which ceased to rely on lay colleges for the necessary financial support.⁴⁶ In Belgium in the 1830s, provincial seminaries were where one sent one's most promising students to complete their theological studies, and

44. Edwards, "Latin American Seminary Reform," 269.

45. Joseph M. White, "Perspectives on the Nineteenth-Century Diocesan Seminary in the United States," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 19:1 (Winter 2001): 22–23. In its early years, the Irish seminary at Maynooth College, founded in 1795, also ran a lay college, but this only lasted from 1800 to 1817, by which time the neighbouring Jesuit school, Clongowes Wood College, had opened.

46. White, "Perspectives on the Nineteenth-Century Diocesan Seminary," 24.

this would lead, in 1834, to the establishment of a Catholic University.⁴⁷ In another adaptation of the Tridentine model, the Benedictines became responsible for the running of seminaries training candidates for the diocesan priesthood at St Meinrad Abbey in southern Indiana in 1854 and at St John's Abbey, Collegeville, in 1857.⁴⁸

Despite such progress, the unevenness of the working out of the Tridentine seminary system was still in evidence. Archbishop John Hughes of New York was quite candid about the quality of his priests when he remarked, in 1858, "if anyone looks for extraordinary eloquence in the pulpit, or immense erudition, or able writers among the clergy of New York, he may be prepared for much disappointment." Meanwhile, the rector of the seminary in Cincinnati admitted that often candidates were ordained after just a year of theology.⁴⁹ When the nuncio to Brazil, Archbishop Gaetano Bedini, visited the United States in 1854, he advocated the setting up of an American College in Rome, which he felt would strengthen the Roman Catholic spirit, allow the Holy See to get to know the American clergy better and, not least, put an end to the worrisome business of seminarians returning home for the summer holidays, a practice that often proved fatal to their perseverance in the seminary.⁵⁰ This point was reinforced by Cardinal Johannes Franzelin of Propaganda Fide in the 1880s when he referred to the fact that, in these instances, the young men were "indulged by all" and made "continual journeys on horseback, went hunting, and what is worse, went to beach resorts, dressed entirely as laymen."⁵¹ This eagerness to keep seminarians removed from society

47. Kenis, "Movements Toward Renewal," 375.

48. White, "Perspectives on the Nineteenth-Century Diocesan Seminary," 25.

49. White, "Perspectives on the Nineteenth-Century Diocesan Seminary," 26.

50. White, "Perspectives on the Nineteenth-Century Diocesan Seminary,"

28. The archbishop would get his wish in 1859 when the American College in Rome opened with twelve students from eight dioceses.

51. White, "Perspectives on the Nineteenth-Century Diocesan Seminary," 31–32.

was favoured in Germany by bishops like Karl August von Reisach (1800–1869), who praised the exclusive theological training in a seminary, “away from the world” (rather than in a university setting), and under close episcopal surveillance. His seminary at Eichstätt had become a model of ultramontane clerical education before 1848.⁵² Of course, there was always the danger of seminarians who were too sheltered from the world, experiencing a rude wake-up call when transitioning to the realities of pastoral life. In some instances, this transition was not made any easier for seminarians when the form of training they received did not easily translate to parish ministry on the ground. A former professor of Theology at Maynooth in the 1850s, in the context of commenting on an often excessive rigorism found in the seminary, opined later that “as a result of his training at Maynooth and faced with the realities of life ‘the priest is forced to tone down . . . the principles of too rigorous a morality.’”⁵³

An educational standoff, of sorts, had also taken place in the years leading up to Belgian independence in 1831. During the period of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, King William I had wished to centralise the philosophical education of future clergy in the state-run *Collegium Philosophicum*, which was then boycotted by church leaders who greatly resented what they regarded as state interference. Belgian clerics were largely looked down on by Dutch government officials who stated that “they exhibited an *air stupide* and were unable to behave

52. Claus Arnold, “Internal Church Reform in Catholic Germany,” in *The Churches: The Dynamics of Religious Reform in Northern Europe, 1780–1920*, Joris van Eijnatten and Paula Yates, eds. (Leuven University Press, 2010), 171. See also Erich Garhammer, *Seminaridee und Klerusbildung bei Karl August Graf von Reisach—eine pastoralgeschichtliche Studie zum Ultramontanismus des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Münchener kirchenhistorische Studien, Bd. 5; Diss. Universität Regensburg 1989 (Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln, 1990). My thanks to Astrid Schilling for this last reference.

53. Michael Turner, “The French Connection with Maynooth College, 1795–1855,” *Studies: an Irish Quarterly Review* 70:277 (Spring 1981): 81–82.

properly in any society.”⁵⁴ Despite the drive to keep seminarians insulated from wider society, most American seminarians would continue to be educated in their own country. In 1884, Archbishop John Ireland, upon assuming responsibility for the St. Paul Diocese, made his first priority a well-run seminary, for, as he noted in a pastoral letter ten years later, he saw it as the bishop’s major responsibility to provide a “numerous, learned and holy clergy.”⁵⁵ It is interesting to note, too, that in a series of reports sent to Rome in 1869, on the eve of the First Vatican Council, regarding the situation of the Belgian church, it was issues such as “the spirit in the institutions, personal piety, the discipline at the seminaries” that loomed large rather than complaints about the quality of intellectual formation.⁵⁶

In roughly the same time period, other regions were playing catch-up. Across Latin America in the second half of the nineteenth century there were many dioceses without seminaries, while those that did exist were often not fit for the purpose.⁵⁷ For one thing, there needed to be a much longer period of preparation for priesthood. In 1883, Monsignor Ignacio Montes de Oca, bishop of Monterrey, Mexico, recommended eleven years’ preparation in order to be sufficiently equipped to preach effectively and to have enough English to minister to foreigners and to convert Protestants. Failing this, he warned, you will see a priest “in the pulpit if, in fact, we see him, contorting and gesturing ridiculously, speaking in such a low voice that no one

54. Kenis, “Movements toward Renewal,” 373n4.

55. Daniel P. O’Neill, “The Development of an American Priesthood: Archbishop John Ireland and the Saint Paul Diocesan Clergy, 1884–1918,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 4:2 (Spring 1985): 39.

56. Kenis, “Movements toward Renewal,” 387.

57. Edwards, “Latin American Seminary Reform,” 267. Contrast this with the fact that in thirty-one dioceses established across the United States in 1851, most bishops had established their own seminaries. White, “Perspectives on the Nineteenth-Century Diocesan Seminary,” 23.

hears him, or in excessive shouting that horrifies the audience.”⁵⁸ The Latin American College, which opened in Rome in 1858, one year before its North American counterpart, would become, over time, a model for seminary reform at home.⁵⁹ And yet, while clear progress was made, problems persisted on the ground. In some regions, the shortage of clerical vocations was directly attributed by church leaders to the poor quality of existing clergy which scandalised the faithful and did little to encourage men to consider priesthood as an option. And even those who did enter seminary were wholly unprepared for a priestly life. A report written in 1911 by the rector of the Conciliar Seminary of La Paz (Bolivia) stated that “many of the boys who come to us from the provinces have witnessed acts [that were] sometimes scandalous by their parish priests and enter the Seminary [ill-prepared], ignorant even of doctrine. Very far from being inclined to the priesthood, they have [other] aspirations.”⁶⁰ Meanwhile, Pope Pius X instructed the archbishop of Caracas, Venezuela, to ensure that the Venezuelan seminaries taught future priests “the virtues necessary to the priesthood, including piety, chastity, and Christian humility; good discipline and the necessary knowledge to perform their functions.”⁶¹

Returning to the situation in North America, in 1884 the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore shifted the emphasis from a local determination of the seminary’s needs and directed it to adhere to a national set of standards.⁶² It also began to emphasise neglected subjects such as biblical studies, church history and homiletics. While a chair in ecclesiastical history had been established at the Irish seminary of Maynooth (at one stage in the mid-nineteenth century, the largest

58. Edwards, 271.

59. Edwards, 272.

60. Edwards, 265.

61. Edwards, 269.

62. White, “Perspectives on the Nineteenth-Century Diocesan Seminary,” 34.

seminary in the world) as early as 1845, nevertheless, “the subject only played a limited part in what was a very crowded curriculum.”⁶³ With Pope Benedict XV’s issuing of a Code of Canon Law in 1917, greater uniformity was imposed on seminary formation:

The Code prescribed the years of study at six each for minor and major seminary courses, named seminary officials, and listed the subjects to be covered in the curriculum; it laid down principles for the spiritual formation of seminarians and, crucially, it, at last, made seminary training a condition for ordination.⁶⁴

In Joseph White’s words, “Trent’s principle of the bishop as responsible for directing his seminary was transformed to make him the local agent of Roman authority.”⁶⁵

Conclusion

In retrospect, what is perhaps most remarkable about the Tridentine decree of 1563, which established what could only much later be regarded as the “seminary system,” is simply how it shies away from setting out in any detail how these new institutions should operate in practice. Questions, such as how long a seminary programme should last; what subjects should be taught; whether all clerical students from a diocese should attend the seminary; or, most crucially of all, whether a seminary education should be mandatory for all who wished to proceed to ordination, remained unanswered or

63. White, 33; Jacqueline Hill, “Laying the Nineteenth-Century Foundations: Contributions from a Catholic and a Protestant Scholar in the 1820s,” in Jacqueline Hill and Mary Ann Lyons, eds., *Representing Irish Religious Histories: Historiography, Ideology and Practice* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 59.

64. White, “Perspectives on the Nineteenth-Century Diocesan Seminary,” 35.

65. White, 35.

perhaps, more precisely, were delegated to the authority of the local bishop. In essence, “the primacy of the local church’s needs stands out as a central characteristic of the diocesan seminary.”⁶⁶ It is this approach which rendered the Tridentine seminary such a malleable institution over the succeeding centuries, capable of adapting itself to local needs as was deemed fit. It is also, of course, what perpetuated the variegated and uneven nature of priestly formation globally right up to the twentieth century. As we imagine the future—and ask ourselves what might be the most effective models of formation for seminarians in a rapidly changing society—we could do worse than look to Trent’s original decree of 1563, not as the bringing to birth of a monolithic Tridentine seminary structure but rather as a remarkably flexible piece of legislation that allowed for a variety of training models which were adapted to service the needs of the local church. With the right degree of care, and attentiveness to the lessons of the past, this should give us much to be hopeful about for the years ahead.⁶⁷

66. White, 22.

67. I am very grateful to Thomas O’Connor for agreeing to read a draft of this chapter and for his valuable suggestions.