# Education, confessional conflict, and the Catholic mission in Scotland, c. 1660-1707

Karie Schultz

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*Abstract.* In 1653, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith created a secular mission for Scotland that initially struggled with finances and provision. Its Prefects argued that the Jesuits exacerbated these problems by failing to intellectually prepare students at the Scots College Rome for the mission. This article examines the resulting campaign for curricular reform that Scottish secular priests waged, one intended to improve missionaries' pastoral skills and undermine the college's Jesuit administration. It ultimately demonstrates the significance of education to wider conflicts between Propaganda Fide and the Society of Jesus regarding missions and resources in the seventeenth century.

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In seventeenth-century Britain and Ireland, schools and universities were essential for the maintenance of religious orthodoxy.[1] English and Scottish universities required students to subscribe a Protestant Confession of Faith to attend, while Trinity College Dublin (Ireland's oldest university) was founded as a Protestant institution in 1592. Regents taught Reformed theology to their students – albeit not always consistently – in addition to ethical, philosophical, and political doctrines intended to produce godly subjects.[2] Roman Catholics had to travel overseas to receive a confessionalised education, either at a Catholic university or at one of more than fifty English, Irish, and Scots colleges abroad. Some students who attended their national colleges entered the priesthood or the mission, while others took up non-religious careers (often in law, medicine, diplomacy, or the military). In recent years, scholarship on Catholic national colleges abroad has flourished given the role they played in facilitating international migration, strengthening political networks across Europe, and sustaining the Catholic mission globally.[3] Nevertheless, intra-confessional conflicts also dominated these institutions, and the purpose and nature of Catholic education emerged as a central point of dispute.

This article focuses on the Scots College Rome, the main seminary for the formation of Scottish priests, to examine the role that education played in conflicts between secular and Jesuit priests from 1660 to 1707. Tensions between these two groups abounded at the college during these fifty years following significant changes to the Scottish mission. In October 1653, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (Propaganda Fide) consolidated its control over Scotland when it established a secular mission under the guidance of a Prefect.[4] During its initial years, the secular mission struggled with finances, organisation, and recruitment. As a result, its Prefects wrote reports to Propaganda Fide in which they described the dismal state of the mission and appealed for more resources. They also argued

that the Jesuits (who were responsible for educating Scottish students in Rome) exacerbated these challenges because they prioritised the highly intellectualised study of speculative theology at the expense of pastoral training. This article argues that Scottish secular priests strategically criticised the content and purpose of Jesuit education for two key reasons. First, they truly believed that improving students' practical pastoral skills was essential for sustaining the new, struggling mission in Scotland. Second, they aimed to undermine the Jesuits' control of their national seminary and increase their own oversight through the imposition of curricular reforms. Debates about the content and purpose of Catholic education were central to the wider conflicts between Propaganda Fide and the Society of Jesus in the late seventeenth century, a time when both bodies competed for control of the national colleges and Catholic missions.

This analysis provides critical insights into the history of the national Catholic colleges abroad and of early modern Catholicism more generally. It first demonstrates the centrality of education to the intra-confessional conflicts at the Scots College Rome, a concern that existing institutional histories have overlooked.[5] Following its formation in 1622, Propaganda Fide was notoriously hostile to and critical of the Jesuits. In the Scottish context, the Congregation's decision to consolidate the secular clergy into a single missionary body controversially enabled it to 'secure undisputed control of all missions, including those of the Society of Jesus' across the kingdom.[6] This decision proved highly unpopular with Jesuits who regarded Scotland as one of their own key mission fields.[7] Furthermore, the Scots College Rome was responsible for training future priests, yet its administrators struggled to convince students to serve such a difficult and dangerous mission back home. Instead, many students joined religious orders (especially the Society of Jesus), leading Scottish secular priests to believe that the Jesuits were intentionally poaching their future missionaries. The college attempted to remedy this problem by instituting a mission oath – one that required all

students to serve the secular mission in Scotland for three years before they could join a religious order – and attempts were made to extend the duration of this oath perpetually.[8] As Mark Dilworth concluded, 'The history of the Scots College in Rome, as indeed of missionary work in Scotland in the seventeenth century, is very largely the story of two powerful and influential bodies, Propaganda and the Jesuits, acting in rivalry if also in common purpose.'[9]

While scholars have noted the tensions between secular clergy and the Jesuits at the Scots College Rome, they have focused primarily on debates about administration (such as the appointment of rectors) or about the terms of the mission oath. Only in passing have scholars observed the centrality of education within these feuds. For example, Dilworth briefly mentioned that 'One abiding issue was the nature of the studies, rather abstruse for future missionaries' and that 'Occasional attempts were made to add some practicality during the course.'[10] But he provided no further information about these attempts at reform or their implications for secular-Jesuit relations. Other scholars have described the content of the Jesuits' curriculum with little analysis of how priests reflected upon, challenged, or tried to change it.[11] Additionally, the various reports authored by Scottish secular priests to Propaganda Fide (many of which remain in untranslated manuscript form) have not received sustained analysis, while historians have overlooked ideas about education within them.[12] There has thus been little critical examination of why suggestions for curricular reform arose, to what end they were directed, and why they ultimately failed. By focusing on debates about education, this article offers new insights into one way that the Society of Jesus and Propaganda Fide competed for authority over Catholic missions in the seventeenth century.

Second, these reports provide a critical perspective on the confessionalisation of education, and especially on the Jesuits as a teaching order, in the post-Tridentine period. Scholars have long acknowledged that the Jesuits were highly effective educators.[13] They

established schools across the globe while effectively adapting their educational programme to suit local needs. Most scholarship on Jesuit curriculum and pedagogy has focused on the Society's official documents (the *Constitutions* and the *Ratio Studiorum*), on the teachings of well-known Jesuit educators, or on specific schools and universities.[14] These studies have shown that the Jesuits struck a remarkable balance between their commitment to contemporary humanist trends and their need to teach Roman Catholic spirituality and theology.[15] They did not simply train Catholic students to combat Protestant heresy. Instead, they prized the study of ancient Greek and Latin texts while aiming to produce students 'learned in the arts and sciences of the day, skilled in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, trained in Aristotelian philosophy, and [in] the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas'.[16] The Jesuits thus engaged in the most cutting-edge scientific, theological, and philosophical debates of their day while educating Catholic youths in fundamentals of the faith.

However, the Jesuits' curriculum was not without its contemporary critics, notably Scottish secular priests. Although the Jesuits originally held authority over the Scottish mission, Thomas McCoog has shown that, by the start of the seventeenth century, the Society of Jesus decided 'to employ its limited resources not on the mission proper but in the education of Scots in colleges on the continent. Education became the mission's major apostolate.'[17] Yet many secular clergy disparaged the Jesuit education they received, deeming it frivolous and impractical in its focus on speculative theology and philosophy. Instructors at the *Collegio Romano* (the Jesuit institution where Scottish students in Rome took their courses) had been heavily influenced by the revival of scholasticism in the Spanish universities. The scholastic method focused on dialectical reasoning and corresponded to an emphasis on theology's speculative nature. As a result, theology could be treated as a highly academic or intellectualised discipline. This approach to the teaching of theology proved especially controversial for Scottish priests who believed that such studies should be directly

relevant for ministry. As John O'Malley noted, while the earliest Jesuits did seek the practical implications of speculative theology, they 'never worked out a theoretical solution to the problem of making scholastic speculation pastorally meaningful'.[18] Scottish secular priests capitalised on this tension, arguing that such useless speculative studies prevented future missionaries from acquiring essential pastoral skills. As the rest of this article will demonstrate, by criticising the content of the Jesuits' curriculum, Scottish secular priests aimed to both improve their students' preparedness for the mission and to undermine the authority of the Scots College Rome's Jesuit administrators.

The historiographical intervention of this article is thus two-fold. It first demonstrates how Scottish secular clergy criticised the Jesuits' programme of studies, both to strengthen the secular mission and to strategically undermine the Society's control over their national seminary. Ideas about the content and purpose of Catholic education thus played a critical (though largely overlooked) role in wider conflicts between Propaganda Fide and the Jesuits during the seventeenth century. Second, this article provides an alternative perspective on the Jesuits' reputation as a teaching order, one derived from the views of secular priests themselves. Prefects and the Procurator of the Scottish secular mission had all studied under the Jesuits during their time at the Scots colleges. They also witnessed first-hand the problems that Jesuit education posed for missionaries in the field. As a result, they were uniquely placed to raise questions about the purpose of the national Catholic colleges abroad: should these institutions provide generalised studies to rival Protestant universities, or should they focus on pastoral care and training to sustain the mission? Their reports are therefore essential for understanding developments in Catholic education during the seventeenth century and its implications for secular-Jesuit relations more broadly.

*Early challenges to the curriculum, c. 1660-1670*

If hostility between the Jesuits and Propaganda Fide defined the Scots College Rome in the seventeenth century, education was an inevitable point of intersection for the two bodies. Students who attended the Scots College Rome took their courses at the Jesuit-run *Collegio Romano* where they generally followed the programme of studies prescribed in the *Ratio Studiorum* (1599).[19] Although implementation of the *Ratio Studiorum* varied between Jesuit schools and universities, these documents established two key stages of education. The first stage lasted five years and included the study of grammar (both Greek and Latin), rhetoric, and humane letters (poetry, history, and logic).[20] The better Jesuit schools also provided instruction in Hebrew.[21] The second stage included advanced instruction in the higher faculties, such as theology, canon law, arts, or medicine.[22] Although the Scots College Rome offered instruction in the lower faculties, it primarily functioned as a seminary. This meant that most students entered at an older age (usually between seventeen and twenty-five years old) after they completed preliminary studies at one of the other Scots colleges abroad in Douai, Madrid, or Paris.[23] They first spent three years studying philosophy using Aristotelian texts on logic, metaphysics, ethics, mathematics, and physics. They then undertook four years of theological training, during which time they studied Sacred Scriptures and moral theology using Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*.[24]

After the creation of the secular mission for Scotland in 1653, secular priests questioned the usefulness of this Jesuit curriculum. In their reports to Propaganda Fide, Prefects regularly complained that such studies of philosophy and theology failed to prepare missionaries for the practical difficulties they would face in the field. Although it is difficult to ascertain the total number of these reports, they do exist for most Prefects of the secular mission between 1660 and 1707. As a result, they offer critical insights into the unique needs of the secular mission in Scotland during its formative years. Propaganda Fide also took these

reports seriously, reflecting upon and discussing them during the Congregation's general meetings.[25] Prefects also expected Propaganda Fide to act upon their requests, meaning that their complaints were more than a routine matter of course. Instead, they functioned as a concerted campaign for reform, one that also doubled as a strategy to undermine Jesuit administration of the Scots' national seminary.

The first Prefect-apostolic of the mission in Scotland, William Ballentine (1618-1661), authored such a report to Propaganda Fide while residing in Paris in 1659.[26] According to student registers from the Scots College Rome, Ballentine attended the institution from 1641 until 1646, during which time he completed the Jesuits' seven-year philosophy and theology course.[27] While much of Ballentine's report described the difficulties that missionaries faced — such as violent persecution and financial instability – – he also discussed how education at the Scots colleges abroad might be improved to encourage students to join the mission.[28] Ballentine specifically highlighted two challenges that missionaries faced. First, Scottish Protestants believed that individuals must live only in accordance with their own interpretations of Scripture. They were thus disinclined to rely on Catholic priests to understand the Bible.[29] Second, they engaged in worship practices that deeply engrained the Protestant faith within the community. These practices included attending multiple sermons throughout the week, participating in lengthy extemporaneous prayers, and observing the Sabbath so strictly that people feared leaving their houses on Sundays.[30]

The small number of Catholic missionaries residing in the country exacerbated these challenges. Ballentine's report recorded that only eighteen priests operated in Scotland: eight Jesuits, seven secular priests (three of whom were Irish), two Dominicans, and one Capuchin.[31] This scarcity partially resulted from the failure of the Scots colleges to recruit enough students, while those youths who did attend heard about the difficulties they would

face during the mission. According to Ballentine, even if more youths from Scotland could be recruited to attend their national colleges abroad, they had 'no temporal inducement to undertake this kind of life'.[32] Ballentine also connected the challenges that missionaries faced with the education provided at the Scots College Rome. He believed that the Jesuits' curriculum prepared students to pursue non-confessional careers, ones that kept them overseas and threatened the survival of Catholicism back home. As a result, he described the 'speculative and scholastic course of theology' at the *Collegio Romano* as one 'which usually is of little or no help to those who have to do work like theirs'.[33] For example, it did not train students to preach, catechise, or administer the sacraments. Since the course in speculative theology was highly intellectualised in its focus, missionaries also entered the field without knowing 'how to undertake the care of souls, or to lead men from their conversion to a life of virtue'.[34]

To remedy this problem, Ballentine proposed several reforms intended to combat the unique challenges posed by Scottish Protestantism. He first claimed that, 'It is of the very highest importance that our missionaries should be really learned, and really expert in expounding the true and genuine meaning of the Word of God, really experienced in preaching and catechising; but most of all that they should be manifestly endowed with outstanding virtue in their life and conversation.'[35] To this end, Ballentine suggested that, after students completed their 'speculative and scholastic studies, they should spend two or three years in spiritual exercises, and should be instructed, in some place, how to preach, to catechise and to administer the sacraments'.[36] These years of spiritual training would provide students with pastoral skills that a course in speculative theology could not, skills that missionaries needed to appeal to Scottish Protestants and succeed in their attempts at conversion. Unless such training could be implemented, students would continue to resist the mission, leaving the Catholic faith to die out across Scotland.

Ballentine's successor as Prefect of the Scottish secular mission, Alexander Winster (1625-1708), authored a report to Propaganda Fide on 10 December 1668 in which he also questioned the value of the Jesuit curriculum.[37] Winster entered the Scots College Rome in 1651 and completed the standard seven-year course in philosophy and theology.[38] He was then appointed as Prefect in 1662 following Ballentine's death the previous year. In his report, Winster likewise described the poor state of Catholicism in Scotland and listed various challenges, such as the severity of penal laws or the forced education of Catholic youths in Protestant schools.[39] He lamented the poor condition of all four Scots colleges abroad, arguing that they educated too few missionaries despite having the financial capacity to accommodate more. They also produced a greater number of religious priests than secular ones.[40] Such failures of the Scots colleges had detrimental implications for the secular mission. As Winster argued, 'The fourth impediment is the scarcity of missionaries, although the number of whom may have been increased not moderately this year by the charity and benevolence of Your Eminences, is still so small that a much bigger number is needed for feeding sheep so spread out across so many provinces.'[41] For example, the small number of missionaries in Scotland struggled to reach treacherous parts of the landscape (such as the Highlands and Islands), while they could not remain in one location long enough to provide lasting guidance for new converts.

Winster presented Propaganda Fide with multiple solutions, many of which pertained to improving the administration and curriculum of the Scots colleges abroad. He maintained that students must be better armed with skills necessary for converting heretics. While Winster did not fully denounce the Jesuits' philosophy and speculative theology course, he emphasised its insufficiency for this end. As he stated, 'Although there are other exercises beyond the studies of philosophy and speculative theology for the practice of the mission and the conversion of Scotland, which the colleges must consider no less necessary, there is

nevertheless almost no curriculum in place for this in them.'[42] As a result, Winster suggested that 'students who generally spend the entire time in speculative studies,' should be instructed in other intellectual and spiritual exercises several times a week.[43] These included cultivating the virtues (both Christian and civic) and studying controversies of the faith (works on dogmatics that defended Roman Catholic doctrine). Students would also benefit from more instruction in cases of conscience, especially those 'which concern the administration of the sacraments'.[44] As Paul Grendler summarised, cases of conscience 'taught a confessor how to understand different kinds of sins, under what conditions he might grant or refuse absolution to the sinner, what penances he should impose, and which sins and sinners must be referred to higher ecclesiastical authority for resolution'.[45] For Winster, training in cases of conscience was especially applicable in the Scottish mission where 'it frequently happens that no one is present with a missionary, whom he might consult about the difficulties which occur.'[46] Given the scarcity of priests in the country, many operated alone and required exceptional knowledge of cases of conscience to resolve these issues on their own. Yet the Jesuits' failure to provide this training meant that Scottish missionaries were conflicted when they encountered these problems in practice. As Winster's report made clear, confessionalised education should impart practical pastoral skills, not just academic knowledge.

Winster also proposed curricular reforms that would better educate students for the unique challenges of ministry in Scotland. For example, he suggested that students should receive more instruction in 'catechisms, exhortations, and sermons, which are delivered to the people'.[47] Like Ballentine, Winster stressed that the ability to preach effectively was crucial. Indeed, Scottish Protestants were so accustomed to hearing sermons that 'they make sermons the chief, and nearly only, form of religious devotion and believe those who are otherwise learned to know nothing if they do not know how to preach'.[48] As Winster's report suggested, the Scots College Rome needed to supplement the Jesuits' seven-year philosophy and

speculative theology course with practical training in pastoral skills. The latter would target the heart (not just the mind) and produce pious missionaries who could live exemplary lives amongst Protestant heretics.

*Curriculum and the visitation of 1693*

Secular priests' frustrations about the insufficiency of the Jesuit curriculum for the mission eventually resulted in demonstrable action. In 1693, Pope Innocent XI ordered a visitation of all Pontifical colleges. William Leslie — agent of the Scottish secular clergy at Rome, Procurator of the Scottish mission, and the first archivist of Propaganda Fide — was chosen to write a report on the Scots College Rome.[49] Following this visitation, conflict erupted between Leslie and the college's Jesuit administrators regarding the nature of studies at the institution. In a letter from 1693, Leslie informed Cardinal Marcantonio Barbarigo about the Scots College Rome's poor state and recommended multiple improvements to piety, spirituality, discipline, and studies.[50] Although he raised many issues with its administration, he also directly addressed curriculum and studies, reiterating the need to improve future missionaries' practical knowledge. He questioned whether students who had studied only speculative theology and philosophy should immediately go on the mission, for 'if they have not studied practical matters while they are students, they have neither the time, nor the convenience, nor the opportunity to study them later. This can only lead to grave disturbances in the mission, where it is necessary to exercise the care of souls, preach, and convert heretics.'[51] As a result, Leslie proposed a variety of curricular reforms. Like Ballentine and Winster, he requested that students spend at least two or three years of their studies gaining hands-on experience of preaching and administering the sacraments. This training might be achieved by sending students to work in local parishes, to study with the Fathers of the Mission, or to aid more experienced students in performing ecclesiastical functions.[52]

But by proposing these curricular reforms, Leslie also intended to extend his own authority into the administration of the college. Leslie requested that he, as Procurator of the Scottish secular mission, be given greater power to oversee studies at the institution. In order for his curricular reforms to have the intended effect, Leslie suggested to Cardinal Barbarigo that 'the Procurator of the mission keep an eye on [the college], and watch over it, so that things of such a moment may not be neglected, nor overlooked, but may be observed with all exactness'.[53]As he reiterated, if the Procurator of the mission did not have 'his vigilant eye and supervision over these matters,' they would be 'absolutely neglected'.[54] While Leslie clearly sought curricular reforms that would better prepare and encourage students to join the secular mission, he distrusted Jesuit administrators of the Scots College Rome to implement these reforms.

Having received Leslie's recommendations, Cardinal Barbarigo organised the visitation with his secretary Monsignor Farsetti.[55] After its completion, the Cardinal drew up a series of regulations for the college, although these were initially kept secret. Nevertheless, the Jesuit rector, Fr William Aloysius Leslie, learned of the decrees and authored a petition to the Congregation of the Apostolic visitation in which he denounced them.[56] The decrees stipulated that the Prefect of Studies must train students in four new lessons each week: catechisms, controversies, cases of conscience, and Sacred Scriptures.[57] Notably, Sacred Scriptures should be explained not 'in a scholastic fashion, but as positive theology, taking from there the opportunity to teach students how to deliver it to the people and adapt it for use in sermons'.[58] This decree in particular demonstrated the success of the secular clergy in campaigning for the practical applications of theology teaching rather than its speculative nature.

Unsurprisingly, Fr Leslie resisted these decrees by defending the education offered by the Jesuits at the *Collegio Romano* and by arguing that the new regulations would be

impossible to implement.[59] In a list of considerations about the decrees, he maintained that students already received sufficient instruction in spiritual exercises, and that the decrees were unnecessary. Furthermore, adding four new lessons each week would be too difficult and arduous. As he wrote, 'it does not seem that one can sensibly and fruitfully put on [students] a new burden of attending four lessons each week in catechisms, Sacred Scriptures, cases, and controversies,' nor should the Prefect of Studies be burdened with teaching these lessons, especially when taking his many other responsibilities into account.[60] The Jesuit Rector therefore resisted the imposition of these curricular reforms — especially ones made following a secular priest's recommendations — by pointing out their inexpediency. Despite his resistance, the Congregation unanimously approved the decrees, confirmed them, and ordered them to be displayed publicly in the college.[61]

*The failure of the visitation and renewed complaints, 1704-1707*

However, the reforms secured through the visitation of 1693 were short-lived and proved ineffectual following the appointment of two difficult Italian Jesuit rectors: Fr Calcagni in 1701 and Fr Naselli in 1704. Both rectors reportedly ruled tyrannically and did away with all prior rules and regulations for the college.[62] Their administrations also contributed to a significant decline in student numbers, posing even more problems for the secular mission regarding the provision of priests. As a result, Scottish secular clergy renewed their complaints about the Jesuits' curriculum and administration of their national seminary in subsequent years. For example, in a report to Propaganda Fide from 1703, James Gordon reiterated earlier priests' complaints about the uselessness of the Jesuits' speculative theology course and the difficulties it created for the secular mission.[63] That same year, Gordon had been sent to Rome to serve as William Leslie's assistant. He was later consecrated bishop and appointed as coadjutor of the Scottish mission in June 1705.[64] Like earlier secular priests, He

described impediments to the mission in Scotland and argued that the colleges must serve as remedies. The severe lack of missionaries remained one of the most pressing problems. Part of this problem was a lack of financial resources. Although many Scottish Catholic youths would be desirable candidates to attend their national colleges, they lacked the funds required to travel overseas. Most were 'so poor that they [were] scarcely able to wait for money from their parents or relatives to purchase slightly more noble clothing, not to mention those necessary costs of such a long journey'.[65]

However, Gordon also attributed the lack of missionaries to long-standing problems with education at the colleges. Even if Catholic youths could afford to attend, the curriculum did not prepare them for missionary life, nor did it provide consistent training for all students. According to Gordon, missionaries in Scotland did not 'equally fulfil their duty of preaching the word and educating the people'.[66] Priests did not get along with one other, and there was no uniformity in discipline, resulting in multiple abuses and scandals which ruined the reputation of the Catholic faith across Scotland.[67] Gordon partially blamed the Jesuits' philosophy and speculative theology course for instigating these conflicts. As he wrote,

> 'In truth, when I think seriously about the instruction employed in the *Collegio Romano*, it is astonishing that seven whole years are spent thoroughly learning philosophical subtleties and theological speculations which are generally of no use in our mission, for they provide questions more than edification … Things that are necessary for us are those that may be able to direct the people towards salvation, and those that may be used for refuting heretics … And so nothing is more dangerous, than that the entire time of young men who are to be sent out for missions should be squandered in laborious trifles.'[68]

Gordon continued to emphasise the problematic nature of speculative studies, arguing that 'the ministers of our faith stir up hatred among the people chiefly out of certain incautious and disagreeable opinions of the scholastics.'[69] The scholastic method's emphasis on disputations and dialectical reasoning was far too combative for conversions. As Gordon claimed, 'Youths, having been accustomed to the clamorous, obstinate, and nearly frantic kind of debate used in schools, in which contentious people strive after victory more than

truth, will expose themselves and the religion to mockery by heretics if they continue to use it in their country.'[70]As these criticisms demonstrated, the teaching of speculative theology (especially through the scholastic method) proved a problematic conversion strategy, and it raised more questions than it answered. As a result, Gordon beseeched Propaganda Fide to ensure that students were taught to represent the Catholic faith to its enemies with dignity to avoid ridicule.

Beyond criticising the Jesuits' curriculum, Gordon also proposed curricular reforms that resembled ones advanced by previous Scottish secular priests. As he argued, 'It would therefore first be necessary that missionaries, who are about to be among heretics, thoroughly read the scriptures with commentaries more frequently and carefully.'[71] He also maintained that 'church history is to be read by future missionaries, from which they are able to draw many things for preaching and for excellent controversies.'[72] Additionally, students should engage diligently with 'distinguished and famous authors of controversies who are able to supply us with the strongest and most useful weapons'.[73] Although Gordon believed that education should be focused on combatting Protestantism, he also encouraged missionaries to live virtuously and piously so they could serve as examples to heretics. As he explained, 'It is also necessary that missionaries thoroughly understand those things which relate to true and genuine piety (which is the main part of the moral doctrine) themselves, and that they know how to deliver the people sincerely and profitably.'[74] Piety could be inculcated through devotional acts, such as attending confession, partaking in Communion, and examining the conscience daily.[75] It could also be attained by studying and reflecting upon devotional literature. However, as Gordon argued, the curriculum at the *Collegio Romano* did not sufficiently emphasise piety or the development of Christian virtue. As a result, students must read 'authors who sincerely discuss moral doctrine and the piety of Christians,' but only those who drew sound conclusions from Scripture, the writings of the Church Fathers, or

canon law.[76] As Gordon's report made clear, students who trained at the *Collegio Romano* were ignorant of necessary subjects (such as church history), but they also lacked essential preaching and catechising skills. His report, like those of Scottish secular priests before him, thus highlighted the continued tension between practical pastoral skills on the one hand and highly intellectualised speculative knowledge on the other.

It is especially notable, however, that Gordon lauded Scottish priests who attended the Scots College Paris (where he himself had studied) for their intellectual preparedness for the mission. As he claimed, 'missionaries who are educated in it are generally distinguished for both piety and knowledge.'[77] His respect for the Paris college likely reflected the fact that, after Louis Innes became Principal in 1683, it became 'a centre of practical training for ordained priests before they proceeded to the Mission'.[78] Gordon thus praised the training offered in Paris and encouraged its implementation in Rome. As he stated,

> 'In Paris, they are compelled to stay for a year or two before they go on the mission so that they might learn, to some extent, those things that are truly most necessary for the mission, and which might be learned more usefully in this very college, than philosophy and that quarrelsome theology, which often is not only useless but also harmful.'[79]

Crucially, the Scots College Paris was also the only of the four national Scots Colleges abroad that was not under Jesuit control, nor did its students take their courses at Jesuit-run institutions. Instead, the Paris College was run by secular clergy, and its students studied at the University of Paris. It is likely that Gordon favoured the Paris college precisely because it offered the kind of training programme for which secular priests had campaigned, yet one that Jesuit administrators of the Scots College Rome continued to resist.

In 1706, one year before his death, Leslie also returned to the problem of educating Scottish students in Rome. In a letter to Cardinal Guiseppe Sacripanti (who Innocent XI appointed Cardinal Protector of Scotland that same year), Leslie provided an update about the state of the Catholic faith in Scotland.[80] He again raised the problem of Jesuit curriculum, although he now acknowledged that 'scholastic and speculative sciences are not to be

completely scorned or excluded by the missionaries of Scotland'.[81] Nevertheless, he still criticised Jesuit administrators of the Scots College Rome because 'almost all of their care and diligence consists of making sure to inflate the heads of those students with speculations, with subtleties, and with probable and problematic opinions, *hinc pro, inde contra* [on one side for, on the other against]'.[82] Furthermore, students spent all their time 'running from the Quattro Fontane to the *Collegio Romano*, and then to return, purely to learn troublesome scholastic questions'.[83] This type of education continued to have negative repercussions for the mission. As Leslie claimed, missionaries, 'having arrived in Scotland and wanting to behave as Doctors, make themselves esteemed by forcefully pushing the speculations of the *Collegio Romano* (being unable to speak of anything else chiefly on principle), or they make themselves ridiculous in conversations, or tedious, or truly hateful, when they treat others with contempt and accuse them of being ignorant'.[84]

The speculative theology curriculum thus created intellectual rifts between missionaries and potential converts while sowing divisions among missionaries themselves. Leslie directly blamed the Jesuits for creating 'discords and factions between [them] in purely speculative and scholastic doctrinal matters'.[85] As he argued, in the Scottish mission, there was 'neither place nor time, nor occasion, much less the need, to stir up such matters'.[86] When missionaries engaged with heretics, they should focus on those doctrines that Catholic intellectuals did not dispute, not highly controversial ones. As Leslie concluded, the teaching of speculative theology alone would never be enough 'to defend the Catholic kingdoms, to instruct the faithful, and to persuade heretics'.[87] Instead, it would continue to sow discord between missionaries, proving far more harmful than beneficial. Despite their brief success following the visitation of the Scots College Rome in 1693, Scottish secular priests continued to be concerned about the content and purpose of education at their national seminary, especially after its Jesuit administrators did not follow through on curricular reforms. Their

campaign to reform the studies at the Scots College Rome between 1660 and 1707 — though a persistent and strategic one — ultimately failed due to the internal resistance of Jesuit administrators, the practical difficulties with implementation, and the lack of secular oversight within the institution.

*Conclusion*

As these reports and letters have demonstrated, over a period of fifty years, Scottish secular clergy consistently criticised the Jesuits' programme for training missionaries and priests, one which depended upon the intensive study of philosophy and speculative theology. They expressed concerns to Propaganda Fide that this curriculum had little practical benefit for conversion and ministry. Instead, it stirred up discord between missionaries, leaving them incapable of performing ecclesiastical functions and caring for the souls in their charge. Although their complaints ultimately proved ineffectual, they were not simply a routine matter of course either. Instead, Scottish secular priests presented a prolonged, strategic campaign for curricular reform for a few reasons. On the one hand, they were so preoccupied with education because they legitimately believed that the secular mission in Scotland would fail if students continued to be poorly prepared. Their suggestions thus functioned as a call to action for Propaganda Fide, one that would improve students' pastoral skills and increase provision for the new, struggling mission field.

On the other hand, their complaints must also be interpreted as part of wider conflicts between Propaganda Fide and the Society of Jesus regarding the control of missions in the seventeenth century. After the formation of their own mission in 1653, Scottish secular priests desperately needed to increase the number of missionaries. They knew that the Scots colleges abroad were essential mechanisms for recruiting and training these priests. But they also believed that Jesuit administrators were poaching students to join their religious order,

thereby depleting the number of students available to join the secular mission. At a time of limited funds and low student recruitment numbers, secular priests needed to compete with their Jesuit contemporaries for greater control over the resources of their national colleges if they had any hope of strengthening their own mission. Debates about curriculum played an essential yet under-examined role in this feud. By proposing curricular reforms, secular priests sought to better prepare missionaries for the difficulties they would face and entice them to join the mission rather than enter other non-confessional careers. At the same time, their complaints strategically undermined Jesuit control of the college and secured greater authority for secular priests (especially the Procurator of the mission) to oversee the education of Scottish students.

Although Scottish secular priests' complaints about education at the Scots College Rome were thus part of wider disputes between Propaganda Fide and the Society of Jesus, this does not negate the very real validity of their concerns about the nature of confessional education in the post-Tridentine period. Although scholars are increasingly recognising the importance of the national colleges abroad for sustaining the mission, creating global Catholic networks, and facilitating early modern migration, there has been surprisingly little critical engagement with their fundamental purpose: providing confessionalised education for Catholic youths. But Scottish secular priests did strategically deploy criticisms about curriculum as a weapon for intra-confessional conflicts, especially at a time when Catholics contested and negotiated the nature of education as a counter-Reformation strategy. Although the Jesuits were indeed a highly effective teaching order, these reports provide a more critical first-hand account of the curriculum's shortcomings for sustaining a new, challenging mission field in Scotland. The Jesuits may have engaged with cutting-edge philosophical, theological, and scientific debates of the day, but they struggled make their curriculum pastorally relevant. The unique needs of the fledgling Scottish secular mission thus prompted

its Prefect and Procurator to capitalise upon this tension and appeal to the more powerful institutions available to them (such as Propaganda Fide) to assert greater administrative control of their national colleges. Reports from the Scottish secular mission — while still under-examined — thus provide critical insights into the development of early modern Catholic education, both as a practical tool for imparting pastoral skills and as an academic pursuit which rivalled the best Protestant universities of the time.

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APF = Archivio Storico di Propaganda Fide, Rome; AUL = University of Aberdeen Library; PSC = Archive of the Pontifical Scots College, Rome; SCA = Scottish Catholic Archives; SOCG = *Scritture Originali riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali*

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[2] Karie Schultz, 'Protestant intellectual culture and political ideas in the Scottish universities, ca. 1600-50', *Journal of the History of Ideas* lxxxiii (2022), 41-62; Steven Reid, *Humanism and Calvinism: Andrew Melville and the universities of Scotland, 1560-1625,* Farnham 2011.

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[6] McInally, *Sixth Scottish university,* 188.

[7] Halloran, *Scots College Paris,* 39-40.

[8] Dilworth, 'Beginnings', 30.

[9] Ibid. 26.

[10] Ibid. 38.

[11] Tom McInally, 'The influence of the Scots colleges in Paris, Rome, and Spain', in David Fergusson and Mark Elliott (eds), *The history of Scottish theology, volume II: From the early Enlightenment to the late Victorian era,* Oxford 2019, 141-54, at 143-5; McInally, *Sixth Scottish university,* 67-71; 82-94.

[12] McInally, *Sixth Scottish university,* 192-3; Alphons Bellesheim, *History of the Catholic church of Scotland from the introduction of Christianity to the present day* Edinburgh 1890, iv. 42-9; William James Anderson, 'Narratives of the Scottish reformation III, Prefect Ballentine's report, *circa* 1660 part one', *Innes Review* viii (1957), 39-66; William James

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[16] Jean Dietz Moss, 'The rhetoric course at the Collegio Romano in the latter half of the sixteenth century', *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* iv (1986), 137-51, at 138.

[17] Thomas McCoog, '"Pray to the Lord of the Harvest": Jesuit missions to Scotland in the sixteenth century', *Innes Review* liii (2002), 127-88, at 159.

[18] O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 255.

[19] *The Ratio Studiorum: The official plan for Jesuit education,* trans. Claude Pavur, Saint Louis, MO 2005; John Padberg, 'Development of the *Ratio Studiorum*', in Duminuco, *Jesuit Ratio Studiorum,* 80-99.

[20] McInally, 'The influence', 143.

[21] O'Malley, *First Jesuits*, 215.

[22] McInally, 'The influence,' 143.

[23] McInally, 'The influence,' 145.

[24] McInally, 'The influence,' 144; Ricardo García Villoslada, *Storia del Collegio Romano,* Rome 1954, 215-62; O'Malley, *First Jesuits,* 216.

[25] Some of these reports are preserved in the *Scritture Originali riferite nelle Congregazioni Generali* (SOCG) collection in the Archivio Storico di Propaganda Fide (hereinafter cited as APF). These documents formed the basis for discussion in the Congregation's meetings. See: Nikolaus Kowalsky, *Inventory of the historical archives of the sacred congregation for the evangelisation of peoples or 'De propaganda fide'*, Rome 1983.

[26] William James Anderson, 'William Ballentine, Prefect of the Scottish mission, 1653-1661', *Innes Review* xiii (1957), 5-70.

[27] Archive of the Pontifical Scots College, Rome (hereinafter cited as PSC), R/9, n.p.

[28] University of Aberdeen Library (hereinafter cited as AUL), MS Scottish Catholic Archives (hereinafter cited as SCA), SM2/3. A transcription of Ballentine's report (including the English translation cited here), can be found in: Anderson, 'Narratives – part one', 39-66 and 'Narratives – part two', 99-129.

[29] Anderson, 'Narratives – part two', 111.

[30] Ibid. 112.

[31] Ibid. 111.

[32] Ibid. 113.

[33] Ibid. 114.

[34] Ibid. 114

[35] Ibid. 112.

[36] Ibid. 114.

[37] Also known as Alexander Dunbar Winchester. His report is held in APF, SC Scozia 1, vol. 1, fos 511r-543v. For the Congregation's summary of his report, see: APF, CP23, fos 176r-196v. For a description of Winster's report, see: Bellesheim, *History,* 116-22.

[38] PSC, R/9, n.p.; APF, SC Scozia 1, vol. 1, fo. 522r: 'D. Alexander Winsterus quadragesimum sextum annum statis iam agens per septennium fere Philosophie, et Theologie Romae studuit' [All translations are mine].

[39] Ibid. fos 525r-526v.

[40] Dilworth, 'Beginnings', 31.

[41] APF, SC Scozia 1, vol. 1, fo. 527v: 'Quartum Impedimentum est paucitas Missionariorum quorum numerus licet Vestrarum Eminentiarum charitate, et benevolentia non mediocriter hoc anno auctus sit, adhuc tamen adeo exiquus est ut ad pascendas oves per tot Provincias valde dispensas longe majori numero opus sit.'

[42] Ibid. fo. 530v: 'Cum praeter Philosophiae, et Theologiae speculativae studia alia sint exercitia ad Missionis praxim, et Scotiae conversionem, quam praesertim Collegia spectare debent non minus necessaria, quorum tamen nulla fere in Collegiis ratio habetur.'

[43] Ibid. fos 530v-531r: 'Alumni qui totum ferme tempus in speculativis studiis consumunt'

[44] Ibid. fo. 531r: 'In casibus conscientiae praesertim, qui sacramentorum administrationem spectant.'

[45] Grendler*, Jesuit schools,* 26.

[46] APF, SC Scozia 1, vol. 1, fo. 531r: 'cum saepe contingat Missionario neminem adesse, quem in difficultatibus occurrentibus consulat.'

[47] Ibid. fo. 531v: 'In catechismis, exhortationibus, concionibus habendis ad Populum.'

[48] Ibid. fo. 531v: 'ut praecipuum, et paene solum Religionis cultum in concionibus collocent, eosque etsi alioqui doctos nihil scire credunt, qui concionari nesciunt.'

[49] Dilworth, 'Beginnings', 35-6.

[50] AUL, MS SCA 3/9/4, fos 1r-13v.

[51] Ibid. fo. 8r: '… se non hanno studia te cose prattiche in quel tempo che sono Alunni non hanno poi ne tempo, ne commodita, ne occasione di studiarle dopo. dal che non ponno non

arrivare gravi disordini nella missione, dove gli conviene di esercitare cura di anime, predicare, e convertire eretici.' For a summary of this report, see: Abbe Paul Macpherson, 'History of the college from 1676 till 1694', *Innes Review* xii (1961), 51-79, at 59-64.

[52] Ibid. fo. 8r-v.

[53] Ibid. fo. 8v: 'et acció che questo habbi il suo effetto si supplica che'l Procuratore della missione vi habbia d'occhio, e sopramentendenza accio che cose di tanto momento non si negligano, ne si trascurino, ma siano osservate con ogni esattezza.'

[54] Ibid. fo. 9r: 'habbia l'occhio suo vigilante, et una sopraintendenza'… 'assolutamente si trascureranno.'

[55] Macpherson, 'History of the college from 1676 till 1694', 66.

[56] AUL, MS SCA, CA3/9/20.

[57] AUL, MS SCA, CA3/9/5, fos 1r-4v, at fo. 1r-v.

[58] Ibid. fo. 1v: 'lectio sacrae scripturae non scholastico more, sed tanquam Theologia positiva explanetur, inde occasione sumpta docendi Alumnos modo tradendi eam Populo, et ad usum in concionibus aptandi.'

[59] Macpherson, 'History of the college from 1676 till 1694', 68; Dilworth, 'Beginnings', 35-6.

[60] AUL, MS SCA, CA3/9/20, fo. 1r: 'non pare peró che si possa raggionevolmente, e con frutto adossare ad essi un novo Peso di trovarsi ogni settimana a quattro lezioni di catechismo, sacra scrittura, casi, e controversie.'

[61] Macpherson, 'History of the college from 1676 till 1694', 78.

[62] Dilworth, 'Beginnings', 37.

[63] Copies can be found in: PSC, 6/41; AUL, MS SCA, SM3/8/2, fos 1-64.

[64] Dilworth, 'Beginnings', 36-7; A.P. Macpherson, 'History of the College from 1694 till 1706', *Innes Review* xii (1961), 80-114, at 97.

[65] AUL, MS SCA, SM3/8/2, fos 17-8: 'Nam lectissimi adolescentes qui ab Episcopo ad Collegia destinatur, sunt plerumque ita inopes, ut vix honestioribus paulo vestibus sibi coemendis pecuniam a parentibus aut cognatis expectare possint, nedum quae necessaria sunt sumptibus tam longi itineris.'

[66] Ibid. fo. 38: '3$^{um}$ impedimentum est, quod Missionarii omnes non prout par est munere suo fungantur verbi praedicandi et populorum erudiendorum.'

[67] Ibid. fo. 38.

[68] Ibid. fos 23-4: 'De institutione vero quae in Collegio Romano adhibetur cum serio cogito mirari subit, quod 7 anni integri transigantur in philosophicis subtilitatibus ac speculationibus theologicis perdiscendis, quae in Missione nostra nullius fere sunt utilitatis, quaestiones enim magis praestant quam aedificationem … nobis ea sunt necessaria quae populos ad salutem instruere possint, quaeque usui esse queant ad haereticos revincendos … ideoque nihil magis perniciosum esse, quam ut totum juvenum qui ad missiones mittendi sunt tempus in nugis laboriosis conteratur.'

[69] Ibid. fo. 25: 'Ministri enim fidei nostrae apud plebem maxime conflant invidiam ex incautis atque odiosis quibusdam scholasticorum opinionibus.'

[70] Ibid. fo. 27: 'quia adolescentes disputandi generi clamoso, pervicaci ac prope furibundo qui in scholis in usu est, quo homines contentiosi magis victoriae quam veritati student, assueti, si eo in patriam uti perrexerint, et se et religionem apud haereticos ludibrio exponent.'

[71] Ibid. fo. 24: 'In primis itaque necesse esset ut, qui Missionarii inter Haereticos futuri sunt, perlegerent saepius atque accurate scripturas cum commentariis.'

[72] Ibid, fo. 24: 'Legenda etiam Missionariis futuris Historia Ecclesiastica, unde multa hauriri possunt et ad praedicationes et ad controversias egregia...'

[73] Ibid, fo. 24: 'Evolvendi sunt praeterea, idque diligenter, praecipui ac celeberrimi aliqui controversiarum tractatores, qui nobis arma firmissima ac utilissima subministrare possunt.'

[74] Ibid. fo. 26: 'etiam necessarium est, ut Missionarii, quae ad veram germanamque pietatem pertinent (quae praecipua morum doctrinae pars est) et ipsi penitus intelligant et populis sincere utiliterque tradere noverint.'

[75] O'Malley, *First Jesuits,* 264-272.

[76] AUL, MS SCA, SM3/8/2, fo. 25: 'Legendi sunt etiam ab alumnis authores qui moralem doctrinam ac pietatem Christianarum sincere tractant.'

[77] Ibid. fo. 23: 'tamen qui in illo erudiuntur Missionarii, sunt plerumque et pietate et scientia insignes.'

[78] Halloran, *Scots College Paris,* 15.

[79] AUL, MS SCA, SM3/8/2, fo. 27: 'Parisiis antequam ad missionem accedant unum duos annos subsistere coguntur, ut ea quae sunt Missionario necessaria maxime vero, utilia aliquatenus discant quae multo utilius in hoc ipso Collegio discerent, quam Philosophiam illam ac theologiam rixosam, quae saepe non solum inutilis, sed etiam noxia est.'

[80] Dilworth, 'Beginnings,' 37.

[81] AUL, MS SCA, SM3/4, fo. 34: 'si hanno da disprezzare ne escludere affatto da i missionarii di Scozia le scienze scolastiche e speculative.'

[82] Ibid. fo. 38: 'E questo e un gran diffetto nel Colleggio Scozesse di Roma, nel quale quasi tutta la loro cura, e diligenza consiste in invigilare di gonfiare la testa di quei Alunni di speculationi, di sottigliezze, e di opinioni probabeli, e problematiche, *hinc pro, inde contra*.' For information on probable opinions, see: Rudolf Schuessler, *The debate on probable opinions in the Scholastic tradition,* Leiden 2019.

[83] Ibid. fos 38-9: 'gl'Alunni spendono il tempo … in correre dalle quattro fontane al Collegio Romano, e di indi tornare, per imparare questioni scolastiche meramente problematiche.'

[84] Ibid. fo. 39: ‘Quindi deriva che capitati in Scozia e volendo fare i Dottori, e farsi stimare a forza di spacciare le speculationi del Collegio Romano non potendo parlare di altro, massime sul principio, o si rendono ridicoli nelle conversationi, o tediosi o veramente odiosi quando trattano gl’altri con disprezzo, e gli tacciano di ignoranti.’

[85] Ibid. fo. 42: ‘le discordie, e le fattioni fra missionari etiam in materie dottrinali meramente speculative, e scolastiche.’

[86] Ibid. fo. 42: ‘non essendo in Scozia ne luogo ne tempo, ne occasione, molto meno necessita di aggitare tali materie.’

[87] Ibid. fo. 38: ‘difendere i Regni Cattolici, et instruire i fideli, e convincere gl’Eretici.’