ammunition' against each other, Eire argues that both agreed that impossible acts like levitation or bilocation could occur, revealing 'a continuity- a shared mentality- that rubs awkwardly against all other discontinuities and core disagreements between these two competing branches', one which 'runs against the grain of the era's increasing skepticism and of the new worldview created by the rise of rationalism and modern empirical science' (p. 290). The final chapter, 'The Devil Himself', provides an exploration of the belief, both in Protestant and Catholic circles, that the devil was considered real in the early modern world. Eire concludes that 'Protestants continued to believe in a world peopled by evil spirits' and in fact did not 'make a clean break with the medieval past'. In doing so, Eire questions the usefulness of concepts such as 'modernity' and 'post-modernity' to our understanding of belief. 'Modernity, post-modernity, and post-post-modernity have many dimensions', Eire reflects, 'some of which tend to be ignored or summarily dismissed, often at an undetected cost' (p. 353).

This is a thought provoking, ambitious, and well written book that challenges assumptions about the study of impossible phenomena. It demands a reassessment of testimonies and accounts of such phenomena as an important element in the mindset of belief in the early modern period. As Eire hints at the very start of the book, 'the historical truth is that this mentality has not yet died and is still actually thriving and raving in the twenty-first century' (p. xv). Perhaps then, the canonization of Padre Pio in 2002 needs to be seen less as an incredulous anomaly to 'modern sensibilities', and more as the latest chapter in a long and rich history of the impossible.

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Simon Johnson, *The English College at Lisbon 1622–1972*. Leominster: Gracewing, 2023, pp. 224, £25.00, ISBN 978 085244 701 7

2022 marked the four hundredth centenary of the founding of the English College at Lisbon. To commemorate this anniversary the Bishops Conference of England and Wales charged Dr Simon Johnson with the unenviable task of compiling a history that would encompass the three hundred and fifty years in which the college functioned as a seminary. What has resulted is a thorough and scholarly (yet accessible) publication that will no doubt please many readers to see available on booksellers' lists.

Amongst the body of British and Irish 'Continental Colleges', the English College at Lisbon is one of the better served with regard to scholarly enquiry. Many readers of this journal will no doubt be

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acquainted with the works of Msgr Michal Williams, and more recently, with Johnson's own contributions on this subject. Perhaps it is because the college's history extended over four centuries, with each bringing their own very distinct historical flavours, challenges and opportunities, that a comprehensive history was not unwelcome.

The book is comprised of a brief introduction, followed by fifteen comparatively short chapters. For the most part Johnson draws on the college's own records (now housed at Ushaw College, some of which have been published as part of the CRS Record Series) which give it an 'institutional flavour'. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, about half of the book relates to the college in the seventeenth century, outlining its foundation and expansion. Those with an interest in the Stuart era will be particularly interested in chapters six and seven, which shed much light on the links with the Braganzas, and in particular the way in which the college and its officials acted as facilitators in the marriage of Charles II to Catherine.

One of the book's delights is the series of high-quality illustrations (sixteen in all), featuring artworks (including portraits of Lisbonians), apostolic briefs, liturgical objects and vestments, as well as a number of historical photographs, all of which offer welcome visual insights into the college's life. Some of the items featured, like the silver sanctuary lamp, supposedly bearing the physical marks of the Great Earthquake of 1755 and since placed in Ushaw College's St Cuthbert's chapel, might be familiar to readers. Others, however, like Thomas Wright's sundial of 1732 might come as more of a surprise, a nod to the college's not insignificant links with science and secular learning.

The insights that Johnson offers into the scholarly activities of Lisbonians (especially in the eighteenth century) are particularly illuminating, and significantly, plug this book into a wider body of recent literature which examines the more 'worldly' activities of religious in the period of Enlightenment (here I am thinking of the works of Ulrich Lehner and Thomas Wallnig, and from a British perspective that of Thomas McInally and Alexander Lock), although perhaps the author might well have made these links more explicit to readers. In particular the activities of Jerome Allen and John Preston in science deserve mention. There had been some suggestion that Preston had been responsible for the introduction of Newtonian Physics into Portugal (p. 129.) One of Allen's most daring experiments was to follow closely the example of the French scientist and explorer, Mongolfier at Versailles, launching his own hot air balloon at the Royal convent at Mafra. A wonderfully vivid and descriptive contemporary account recalled the aeronaut as 'an immense baboon dressed

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on the habit of a sailor, a most mischievous creature', piloting a 'flying bomb' powered by straw and brandy! (p. 133).

As Johnson shows, Allen and Preston, like a number of other Lisbonians, were especially well-connected within Portuguese high society (Allen, for example, acceded to the somewhat curious role of pen maker to the Braganza court). This was yet another example of the ways in which British and Irish Catholic exiled clergy fostered important social and professional relationships with locales. Connections allowed Allen to amass considerable personal wealth, which the college sometimes benefited from, for example, purchasing a sundial (dated 1732) from Thomas White, instrument maker to George II, which was located on the college's observatory-come-viewing platform.

Even though the college was confiscated by French forces, and a garrison of some nearly 300 conscripts was billeted there, the French Revolution did not strike the decisive blow that it brought to many of the continental colleges, although as the author illustrates, it was forced to contend with changing political realities throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The chapters that illustrate the history of the college in the post-revolutionary period, with which many readers might be less familiar, offer a welcome insight into the way in which the college was affected not only by the internal debates within the English and Universal Church, but also by the very impactful changing tides of the Portuguese political and constitutional climates. These trials continued to affect the college even after its closure as seminary in 1972, when during the *Revolução dos Cravos* in 1974, the buildings were requisitioned 'by ambitious revolutionaries', being transformed—albeit temporarily—into the Conservatory of Music (p. 215.)

Covering a four-hundred-year-history is a sizeable task, one with which the author deals admirably. Small criticisms might be that more could have been made of some very substantial archival finds, by locating them within a wider, more overt international scholarly context, and that 'extra mural' sources could have been utilised to a greater degree. At times the author whets our appetites with tantalising snapshots (but was understandably tied by constraints), such as the relationship with the nuns of Syon Abbey, or how it was affected by the changes brought about the Second Vatican Council. Yet these are merely minor criticisms, and in truth the author manages to do what he set out to achieve. A very welcome addition, this study will hopefully act as a welcome prompt to scholars to undertake new research on the British and Irish colleges.

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