Of the English Seminaries that Have Been Established for the Benefit of the Kingdom of England

But because in her edict Queen Elizabeth directs her greatest force against the seminaries created in France, Italy, and Spain for the many English Catholic youths who wish to dedicate themselves to recalling the heretics of England to our sacred religion, proclaiming that the pope and the Catholic King support and exploit these colleges to undermine her kingdom, and because the young students (whom she calls “seminarians”), the priests, and the fathers of the Society of Jesus who oversee them are the principal targets of her volleys, her machinations, her fury and rage, we ought to give some justification of these establishments and of their customs, before responding to the decree’s lies or describing the punishments and tortures inflicted in England upon people so innocent and saintly. For this is Elizabeth’s second allegation against the pope and the Catholic King, and it pertains to religion.

Now, in the knowledge that everything to do with the seminaries of Rheims and Rome and their achievements has been recorded in the second book of this history¹ (which for the sake of brevity I do not wish to repeat here), it should be understood that various Roman pontiffs have long provided for certain native children of various Christian lands to be raised apart and instructed in Catholic doctrine and the rites of the Roman Church, so that they might subsequently be dispatched to their homelands to teach the inhabitants what they learned. Of the Roman Pontiff Saint Gregory I (whom the Venerable Bede so justly calls the apostle of England),² we read in his vita that he had numerous English youths raised in monasteries at his expense,³ and Gregory VII addressed a brief about such a project to King Olaf of Norway, of the following tenor:⁴

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¹ In the margin: “Book 2, Chapter 29.”
² “We can and should by rights call him our apostle, for though he held the most important see in the whole world and was head of Churches which had long been converted to the true faith, yet he made our nation, till then enslaved to idols, into a Church of Christ.” Bede, Ecclesiastical History, 123.
³ In the margin: “John the Deacon, in his Life [of Saint Gregory the Great], Book 2, Chapter 46.”
⁴ In the margin: “This brief is found in Johannes Magnus’s history of the metropolitan church of Uppsala.”
We wish you to know that we desire to find a means of sending you some of our faithful and learned children to teach and instruct you in every science and in the creed of Jesus Christ, to the end that, having been sufficiently instructed according to the Gospel and the apostolic teachings, you will not waver, but rather, well ordered and rooted in the steady foundation that is Jesus Christ, grow with greater abundance and perfection in the virtue of God, and, conforming your deeds to your faith, receive its fruits and rewards, worthy of eternal recompense. Given the difficulties of the long distance and the lack of those who know your language, we beg you (as we have likewise begged the king of Denmark) to send us some noble youths of your realm, so that under the wings of the apostles Saint Peter and Saint Paul, having diligently learned the sacred and divine laws, they might return to you, bearing with them the mandates of this holy Apostolic See, not as strangers, but as natives and your own. Explaining and preaching the whole of the Christian religion to your realm, with prudence and with faithfulness, with the knowledge of the land and its tongue and with their own virtues, they will be able to cultivate and gather the fruit, through the Lord's favor, of what has been sown in your land.

Thus it was that, following the example of his predecessors the two Gregorys, the first and the seventh, Gregory XIII of happy memory, after having established the English seminary at Douai and transferred it to the city of Rheims in France (as has been mentioned), created the seminary at Rome for other Englishmen, and to entrench and augment it, promulgated a bull on April 23, 1579, the seventh year of his pontificate, in which he declares his intention in the erection and organization of this seminary:

Seeing, to the heartfelt pain of our spirit, that so many enemies have banded together against the holy bride of the Lord, assailing and embattling it upon every side, and that its ancient enemies—the infidels and Turks—have now joined with the heretics and schismatics, and, armed with impiety and wickedness, and stirred by hellish madness, they seek

5 For a contemporary depiction of the foundation, see Book 3 Figure 19.1.

6 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25–27; Rev. 19:7–9.