The revival of patristic scholarship in late medieval Europe was accompanied by a renewed interest in the theological works of St Augustine, and in particular in his works on justification and grace, the *De gratia et libero arbitrio* and the *De praedestinatione et gratia*. The Low Countries and other northern parts of the Holy Roman Empire were at the centre of this revival which in the early years of the sixteenth century, alongside Christian Humanism, produced an evangelical Christocentric piety to challenge the scholastic and Thomistic analysis of much orthodox theological scholarship as exemplified by the Sorbonne. The most important place of learning associated with these new developments was the University of Louvain, founded in 1426, which, following Luther’s break with Rome, became associated with the defence of orthodoxy. Their biblical scholarship and the emphasis placed by Luther’s followers and other Protestants on scripture as the basis for their separation from the Roman Church required a scholarly response from traditionalists and, from the 1540s, following the humanistically inspired fifth session of the Council of Trent, Louvain became the centre of Catholic biblical scholarship. In 1546 the Emperor Charles V established a royal professorship of sacred scripture at the university alongside a chair in theology, and in 1547 Hententius’ revision of the Vulgate was published there. From that date the university, together with the university of Douai, founded by Philip II in 1559 and staffed by several Louvain professors, became famous for its textual studies of the Latin Vulgate, declared to be the authentic version of the scriptures by Rome, and for the publication of biblical commentaries and homiletic expositions which were used throughout Catholic Europe. In the century following 1550 Louvain and Douai were the scholarly drivers of what has been described as the ‘Golden Age of Catholic Biblical scholarship’. This was soon to bear fruit with the publication of the celebrated Antwerp *Biblia Regia* or Polyglot Bible which appeared between 1568 and 1573 with the five scriptural languages –

Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Aramaic and Syriac – printed alongside each other. Concentration on linguistic and textual fidelity inevitably led to analysis of the content of scripture, and it was among the Louvain scholars that Augustinian ideas about grace emerged from their biblical labours.

The accession of Elizabeth I to the English Crown in November 1558, and the rapid return of a Protestant regime, resulted in a number of clerics and scholars who had participated in the Marian restoration of Catholicism going into exile. It is not surprising that many of these went to the new university founded by their recent monarch Philip, and the new university of Douai was to see an influx of English scholars in the early 1560s. Moreover, following the formal inauguration of the university in 1562, its first chancellor was installed; he was an Englishman, Richard Smith, formerly Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford and a fellow of Merton College. Several other Oxford scholars moved with Smith into exile, either at Louvain or Douai. Among them was a young former fellow of New College, Thomas Stapleton. Elected a fellow in 1553 and ordained priest in 1558, Stapleton left Oxford at the end of 1559 following the passing of the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity establishing the new church, and went to both Louvain, where he studied theology, and to Paris where he studied languages. It was from Louvain, and the associated press at Antwerp, that his extensive vernacular polemic against the Elizabethan Church – and in particular the writings of two of its bishops, John Jewel of Salisbury and Robert Horne of Winchester – was produced and published during the 1560s. Stapleton was an accomplished polemicist who, among his more directly controversial writings, produced a translation of Bede’s History as part of the argument about the Roman origins of English Christianity, but at the end of the 1560s, by which time he had moved to a chair at Douai, that phase of his polemical career had run its course. The papal bull excommunicating Elizabeth and the failure of the northern rebellion made it clear that the settlement of religion in England was not going to be reversed quickly. In 1568 William Allen had established an English College at Douai, separate from the university, designed to undertake the training of priests for the longer term project of catering to those Catholic families still living in England and reconciling to the

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