The European collegiate movement is a theme of cardinal importance for the history of the medieval universities. 1 The secular colleges of the old-established universities of northern Europe, such as Paris, Oxford and Cambridge, developed as the principal supports of students in the higher faculties of law, theology and medicine. In conjunction with the Franciscan and Dominican orders, they maintained large numbers of the abler postgraduate scholars in the universities enabling them to attain the lofty peaks of academic achievement. Moreover, the secular colleges came to have a seminal impact on the evolution of Paris and the English universities. For in the later middle ages the Parisian and English colleges fell heir to the crumbling system of public instruction of the university schools. By the mid-sixteenth century teaching was largely decentralized in the colleges, which had now been converted into self-sufficient educational units. Such a transformation reshaped Paris, Oxford and Cambridge from universities of a centripetal nature to those of a centrifugal form. Furthermore, several of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century universities in Germany and Scotland would probably not have endured but for the stabilizing influences of their collegiate foundations. When it is also considered that the wealth of surviving college records can provide illuminating and sometimes unique insights into crucial facets of the social and economic fabric of university life, it is plainly justifiable that over the last thirty years or so the colleges of the medieval universities have become conspicuous areas of historical study.

In its most mature state the secular medieval college was an autonomous, self-governing legal entity, generously endowed and fortified by its own statutes, privileges and common seal. Many colleges, however, especially in continental Europe, did not measure up to this fully-fledged model. As a result, the European collegiate

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scene subsumed a diversity of types ranging from the self-governing
landowning structure usual in England to the unpretentious institution
often found in France and Italy, which was, in effect, little more than a
basic lodging house for students. The common factor underlying
collegiate differentiation was the act of endowment made for educa-
tional purposes. It is this endowed status of the college which
distinguishes it decisively from the rented hall or hostel or hospice.
For it affords the only tenuous link associating organizationally-
sophisticated and wealthy societies such as Merton College, Oxford, or
the King's Hall, Cambridge, or the College of Navarre, Paris, with the
rudimentary boarding houses which were so numerous at the lower
end of the collegiate hierarchy.

European colleges were designed to make available accommoda-
tion and financial support for either undergraduate students or for
students capable of intellectual pursuits beyond the first degree stage
or for a mixture of both of these categories. The provision of such
academic support was viewed as an act of charity, and this serves as a
reminder that the charitable and spiritual aims underlying collegiate
enterprise should not be undervalued. To some extent, university
colleges were born of that same milieu which produced the collegiate
churches of secular canons with their accompanying schools of
grammar and song. But whereas the raison d'être of the colleges of
secular canons was a religious one, with education a secondary
purpose, in the case of the academic college the functional emphasis
was, by definition, reversed. Nevertheless, many secular colleges had
a strong affinity with chantry foundations. Generally speaking, the
founders of university colleges, whether kings, queens, high-ranking
ecclesiastics and statesmen, or wealthy members of the lay aristocracy,
regarded the establishment of a college as a charitable and pious
venture which would enshrine their memory and in which masses
would be said for their souls and for those of their relatives. Some
colleges were more prominently cast in the chantry mould than others.
In England, for example, at King's College and St Catharine's College,
Cambridge, and at Queen's, New College and All Souls, Oxford, the
fellows or scholars had onerous chantry duties to fulfil; whereas at the
King's Hall, Cambridge, only a minimal stress was laid upon the

2 Chantry regulations for Cambridge fellows will be found in the statutory codes in Documents
relating to the University and Colleges of Cambridge, 3 vols., ed. the Queen's Commissioners
(London: Longmans, 1852). (Cited hereafter as Camb. Docs.). For St Catharine's College see
Documents relating to St Catharine's College in the University of Cambridge, ed. H. Philpott
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1861). For Oxford chantry arrangements see Statutes
of the Colleges of Oxford, 3 vols., ed. the Queen's Commissioners (Oxford and London:
Longmans, 1853). (Cited hereafter as Statutes). A discussion of this chantry theme in academic
environments is provided by F.LI. Harrison, 'The Eton Choirbook', Annales Musiciologiques, i
(1953), 151ff.; see also C.N.L. Brooke, 'The Churches of Medieval Cambridge', History, Society
and the Churches: Essays in Honour of Owen Chadwick, ed. D. Beales and G. Best (Cambridge:
religious regime of the fellows. But wherever the personal chantry motive manifested itself, it was usually combined with the founder’s desire to contribute to a proven academic need, whether that need was to alleviate the distress of genuinely poor students of varying ages and levels of attainment or specifically to support stipulated courses of postgraduate study. This charitable ingredient of college-founding remained constant throughout the medieval period, although the aims into which it was translated altered according to the prevailing social and intellectual climate. In the thirteenth century the collegiate movement was directed especially towards the advancement of arts and theology; while in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries civil and canon law acquired a rising collegiate concentration, even if at Paris this legal focus was inhibited by the prohibition of civilian studies by Pope Honorius III in 1219. The Hundred Years War, allied to recurrent visitations of plague, led some college founders in France and England to place the emphasis upon the production of graduates to fill the depleted ranks of both the secular clergy and the teaching profession below university level. And in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries college founders made provision increasingly for branches of humanist culture. In England, for example, Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and St John’s College, Cambridge, were conceived as the first real academic centres of humanist enlightenment in the English universities. But whatever the intention of the medieval college founder at any particular period, the fusion of spiritual and personal motivation with objective educational purpose is a fundamental feature of the collegiate movement.

The university collegiate system seems to have originated at Paris insofar as primitive colleges emerged there probably earlier than elsewhere. The first group of Parisian college founders had no more elaborate aim than to furnish humble accommodation for poor students. The oldest European college about which there is definite evidence is the Collège des Dix-Huit established at Paris in c. 1180.

3 See the King’s Hall statutes in W.W. Rouse Ball, The King’s Scholars and King’s Hall (Cambridge: privately printed, 1917), 65.


made for internal government or for domestic economy. By virtue of its modest endowment, however, it may technically be categorized a college, the first known progenitor of the collegiate system.

By the mid-thirteenth century Paris had a cluster of colleges similar to or more slightly advanced than the Collège des Dix-Huit, all of which had only a minimal constitutional link with the university. These early Parisian founders do not appear to have stipulated the studies to be pursued; and some of their colleges, those most closely akin to medieval hospitals, catered, in addition to university students, for clerks not engaged upon an academic course but in secular or ecclesiastical employ. In general, however, most of the early colleges at Paris were designed for the support of either grammar boys or for youths who had completed their grammatical training and had embarked upon the arts course. That is to say, they were for advanced schoolboys or university undergraduates or both.

A fundamental point of reference in European collegiate history was inaugurated with the College of the Sorbonne founded in c. 1257/8 by Robert de Sorbon, chaplain to Louis IX. The innovation par excellence of the Sorbonne was that it was confined to graduates, to scholars who had acquired the degree of M.A. and were destined to embrace the demanding course leading to the doctorate in theology. This college was to comprise a community of scholars with like-minded interests who were to live together in harmonious amity and stimulating intellectual exchange, a Christian society embodying spiritual, moral and academic excellence and very far removed from the unsophisticated colleges which had hitherto characterized the Parisian scene. And it was the College of the Sorbonne which was to be the most influential exemplar for the English colleges about which more will be said below.

Insofar as reliable figures can be obtained, it seems that just under seventy colleges were founded at Paris before c. 1500, more than half of them being in the fourteenth century which was the most expansionist century for college-founding in Europe. In that century Paris exhibited a wide diversity of collegiate types. As already mentioned, some colleges were solely for grammar boys and others for undergraduates engaged upon the arts course, while several were for both grammarians and artists. There were colleges specializing in the promotion of superior faculty studies, and there were mixed institu-

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10 It has been reckoned that about eighty-seven colleges were founded in fourteenth-century universities compared with about fifty-eight colleges in the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries: Gabriel, ‘The College System’, 82–3.
tions, such as the College of Navarre, where undergraduates and graduates lived a life in common. Interestingly, there were also societies for ethnic colonies of students at Paris including colleges for Swedish, Danish, Scottish and German scholars. The combination of a kaleidoscopic variety and a measure of instability are just two of the hallmarks which distinguish the Paris colleges as probably the most variegated grouping in the medieval universities.

Before the fifteenth century the Paris colleges, as in England, accommodated only a minor proportion of the total academic population. The majority of Parisian students in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries lived either in hospices, under the regulation of university masters, or in taverns, or in the rooms of private houses in the town. During this period formal teaching at Paris was the shared responsibility of the faculties and the nations. While it is clear that the colleges played initially only a supportive role within Paris University, by the Reformation, in parallel with their counterparts in England, they had decisively transformed its character.

It is probable that teaching infiltrated the Parisian colleges at an earlier date than in England. An undergraduate contingent was an integral part of several of the Paris colleges from their foundation as opposed to the English context where, with one or two notable exceptions, the colleges did not encompass undergraduates before the late fifteenth century. Paris collegiate instruction, in the shape of disputations and other informal academic exercises, originated as supplementary to, and not in competition with, the teaching of the university schools. But when undergraduate commoners migrated from the unstable hospices and often unsuitable town lodgings to the colleges, becoming non-bursarial members, and were augmented by non-boarders who came for instruction, the colleges were moved to expand their teaching regime to cope with this challenging situation. As a consequence, they first emulated and then superseded the university system of public instruction. By the sixteenth century the university schools were so diminished that they continued to function largely for formal acts such as determinations and inceptions, the academic exercises pertaining to the acquisition of the B.A. and M.A. degrees respectively.

There is no doubt that the decentralization of teaching among the colleges was less diffused at Paris than in England. At Oxford and Cambridge teaching was assumed by fellow-tutors in the majority of

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the colleges, irrespective of size. At Paris teaching came to be concentrated in several of the larger colleges. The smaller colleges and unendowed hospices, which could not afford the extra regent masters necessary to meet the demands of intramural teaching, were encouraged to send their students to attend the lectures presented by the more affluent colleges which could maintain the requisite teaching staff. But at Oxford and Cambridge even modest collegiate establishments would provide a basic core of teaching, although this might be supplemented by drawing upon the help of colleges conceived on a more advanced teaching scale. In the main, however, England avoided the two-tier collegiate system of Paris whereby so many of the colleges were dependent for instructional facilities on a few copiously endowed societies. It has been estimated that by c. 1500 only about a third of the Paris colleges could offer a complete course in arts: and, in tandem with this situation in arts, theology at Paris came to be focussed on a few religious houses and the secular colleges of the Sorbonne and Navarre. This inter-collegiate teaching doubtless made for a more rational use of resources than the rather wasteful and individualistic pattern of collegiate teaching which became the norm in England in the first half of the sixteenth century. It is of some note, however, that while the college teachers at Paris were nominated by collegiate heads, they were officially appointed and were removable by faculty authority. By this means, the university retained some measure of influence over the fragmented teaching arrangements.

Such a modicum of university supervision over the late medieval Parisian colleges is at variance with the English scene where the colleges emerged as almost entirely self-sufficient teaching islands successful in keeping university intervention to the barest minimum. The Paris colleges were suppressed at the French Revolution, and the university did not revert to a collegiate plan. It might be concluded that the diversified and quixotic character of much of Parisian college history is reflective of this university's cosmopolitan turbulence just as the ordered and conservative solidity of the English colleges calls to mind a more pacific and insular university ethos.

The English secular colleges of Oxford and Cambridge had, as their original aim, the promotion of higher faculty studies in the universities. In an age bereft of state postgraduate support it was often extremely difficult for the promising B.A. or M.A. graduate of slender means to remain at university to take a degree in one of the superior faculties of law, theology or medicine. Because of the length and expense of the courses in these disciplines there was, in the

16 On this inter-collegiate system at Paris see Rashdall, Universities, i. 528–9.
thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, a high-priority need to make provision for the longer-term student. Consequently, the English secular colleges were designed, not to give a general arts education, but a diet of advanced arts and superior faculty studies, the exact scope of which varied according to the interests and predilections of the founder. In this regard, the early English colleges were patterned in similar vein to the Sorbonne, the European matrix of the purely graduate college. English collegiate history was launched with the foundation of Merton College in 1264 which must rank as the prototype of the English 'graduate' college of the pre-Reformation era. It was followed by University College in c. 1280 and by Balliol in 1282. At Cambridge, the only thirteenth-century college, Peterhouse, was established by Hugh de Balsham, Bishop of Ely, in 1284.

It is clear, then, that English colleges and undergraduates were for long kept apart. As in the case of Paris University, students in the early stages of English university development lived wherever they could find accommodation compatible with their means either in the halls of Oxford or the equivalent hostels of Cambridge, or in inns, or in private dwellings. This posed a major problem for the university authorities as to how to discipline this academic population distributed throughout the town. The first step taken towards solving this difficulty was to ensure that every bona fide student had his name inscribed on the matricula, the roll of a regent master whose ordinary lectures he was obliged to attend in the schools; in return, the master would protect and be answerable for the conduct of his charge. This contractual device, however, proved inadequate as the lecture room comprised only an ephemeral disciplinary unit. In the course of time the university establishment came to see that a more effective control could be maintained through the licensed halls or hostels where the students spent a goodly part of their time. As the number of halls and hostels multiplied so they came to house the majority of the undergraduates, and by this development the worst excesses of disorder and criminality were curbed. Nonetheless, the disciplining of the undergraduate population through the halls and hostels could not


provide the final solution to the problems of student misconduct. The main disadvantage of the halls and hostels was that they were unendowed societies with no security of tenure beyond the year for which the premises had been leased. They were, therefore, potentially unstable units, a situation worsened by an unedifying competition among their governing principals for the custom of the fee-paying undergraduates. Moreover, lacking the resources with which the colleges were able to erect their increasingly imposing buildings in the later medieval period, the insecure halls and hostels came to be overshadowed by comparison. When the colleges began to open their doors to paying students the position of the halls and hostels became progressively tenuous.

Before the mainstream transference of the undergraduate population to the colleges had been set in motion, there were two exceptional and highly influential colleges which had housed a significant proportion of undergraduates as either fellows or as probationary fellows. It is evident that the royal College of the King's Hall, Cambridge, whose origins date from c. 1317 and which became an endowed society in 1337, was the first English college to incorporate a sizable undergraduate element which, at the same time, formed an integral part of the institution.20 As a college which accommodated an association of university scholars engaged in study from undergraduate to doctoral level the King's Hall stands out as the archetypal mixed secular English collegiate society. In this respect, as in others, the King's Hall anticipated by more than half a century a cardinal ingredient of New College, Oxford, founded in 1379, which has often been designated the fount of the mixed collegiate ideal.21 In other words, New College has been singled out repeatedly in the past as the catalyst whereby the Mertonian 'graduate' college tradition was deflected into those channels which produced the mixed or consciously balanced societies characteristic of the sixteenth century. But the element of conscious balance apart, it is apparent that the King's Hall was the pristine model for an English secular college which enabled a scholar to pass through the entire educational gamut within the walls of the same institution and which became the distinctive type of English college of the post-Reformation era.

Although the King's Hall and later New College were important practical examples of mixed undergraduate and graduate societies and undoubtedly helped to promote the institutional species which was ultimately to dominate their respective universities, the mass infiltration of the colleges by English undergraduates was in the main

20 Cobban, The King's Hall, ch. 2.
consequent upon social and economic pressures. As already indicated, many university staff had come to argue that the long-term solution to the problem of student governance was to house the undergraduates in the purpose-built colleges where a disciplined way of life was imposed. But this could not be achieved overnight. Eventually, however, economic pressures bearing upon the colleges led them to adopt measures which ended in their absorption of the undergraduate army.\textsuperscript{22} Inflationary trends of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries forced the colleges, whose revenues were in general dependent upon fixed rents, to seek out novel ways of increasing their finances. One such means was to extend a cautious welcome to undergraduates: the heart-searchings involved may well be imagined. Nevertheless, financial interest prevailed over the exclusiveness of the fellows, especially when they realized that their personal incomes could be augmented with tutorial fees. Although lectures and academic exercises had been staged in the halls from at least the fourteenth century, as they had indeed in the monastic colleges,\textsuperscript{23} many of the halls did not possess teaching facilities comparable to those of the colleges, lacking, as they did, not only permanency but also a sufficiently large and long-tenured graduate teaching element. As a result, the secular colleges were able to attract a flow of undergraduates on the strength of the tutorial advantages on offer. The earliest known appearance of paying undergraduate commoners admitted to an English college for tutorial purposes is found at the King’s Hall, Cambridge, from the 1430s.

Decentralized teaching in the English universities had a tripartite institutional source. It was an amalgam of the tutorial and lecturing facilities which evolved in the monastic colleges, in the halls or hostels, and in the secular colleges. In the event, it was the secular colleges which brought these teaching arrangements to their most advanced expression.\textsuperscript{24} With the growth of tutorial facilities in the colleges, the undergraduates had less inducement to attend the ordinary lectures of the regent masters in the university schools, although Oxford formally stipulated attendance until at least the mid-sixteenth century and at Cambridge the chancellor, William Cecil, decreed in 1562 that all members of colleges were to attend the appropriate university lectures.\textsuperscript{25} The final assault on university teaching was delivered by the establishment of college lectureships whereby fellows of a college, or others from outside, were appointed to give a specific course of lectures within a college at an agreed salary.

\textsuperscript{22} On the transference of the undergraduates to the colleges see conveniently Emden, \textit{An Oxford Hall}, introductory.
\textsuperscript{23} For lectures and academic exercises in the Oxford monastic colleges and halls see Cobban, ‘Decentralized Teaching’, 193–4, 199–200.
\textsuperscript{24} Cobban, \textit{The Medieval Universities}, 141ff.
An early instance of this is to be found at King’s College, Cambridge, which mounted regular lectures from at least 1456. These lectures were confined to college members, and they were not of an endowed character but were given on an ad hoc basis and financed by a combination of college funds and fees exacted from the hearers. The earliest endowed college lectureship in the English universities would appear to be that established at the Cambridge college of Godshouse, which possessed its own lecturer or reader (lector) probably from its foundation in 1439. Godshouse had been founded with the central aim of training undergraduates for the degree of master of grammar with a view to their becoming teachers in England’s languishing grammar schools: and the specialist training required the services of a lecturer elected by the college. An attempt to initiate a permanent and public lectureship in theology at Queens’ College, Cambridge, was made by Queen Margaret of Anjou in 1447. The outcome of this is unknown. In c. 1472, however, a lectureship in theology was endowed by the will of a benefactress, Dame Alice Wyche, and it was certainly operational by 1484–85.

These early instances of endowed lectureships at Godshouse and Queens’ are of undoubted interest, although they were not so historically influential as those established at Magdalen College, Oxford, where, by the statutes of 1479/80, provision was made for three lectureships: one in theology, and the other two in natural and moral philosophy respectively. All three lecture courses were to be free and open to the entire university community, including members of the religious orders. Following the Magdalen example, nearly every new college foundation made provision for lectureships, which were mostly, though not always, of a public nature and open to all comers in the university. At the same time, most of the older colleges revised...

26 See, from many references, King’s College Archives, Mundum Books, iii. fos. 22r – 24r, 80r – 81r, 99r – 101r; v. fos. 67r, 124r, 124v; vi. fos. 47r, 67v.
28 See Margaret of Anjou’s petition to Henry VI concerning the foundation of Queens’ College in W.G. Searle, History of the Queens’ College of Saint Margaret and Saint Bernard in the University of Cambridge, 1446–1560, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge Antiquarian Society, 1867–71), i. 15–16.
29 Ibid., i. 80–1; see also Twigg, A History of Queens’ College, 75.
30 Queens’ College Archives, Journale, i (1484–1518), fo. 23r. (Queens’ College Archives are now deposited in Cambridge University Library).
32 Of the new colleges St Catharine’s College, Cambridge, formed an exception because, during its initial phase of life, it was a wholly graduate society specializing in philosophy and theology, and it did not employ the services of a college lecturer: see A.B. Cobban, ‘Origins: Robert Wodelarke and St Catharine’s’, St Catharine’s College, 1473–1973, ed. E.E. Rich (Leeds: Maney, 1973), 30–1 and passim.
their constitutions to bring them into line with this new development. Attempts to revive the moribund system of university teaching through the institution of several endowed lectureships or professorships, culminating in the establishment at both universities of Henry VIII's regius professorships of divinity, civil law, physic, Hebrew and Greek, proved to be rather ineffective. The collegiate advance had gone too far by the beginning of Elizabeth's reign to be reversed. This uneven relationship between colleges and university at Oxford and Cambridge remained fairly static down to the early twentieth century when the spread of scientific studies, necessitating the building of university-funded laboratories, began to turn the tide somewhat in favour of the university sector.

The educational training of the majority of undergraduates in medieval universities was centred upon the lecture and disputational programmes and only to a limited extent upon the direct usage of books. This situation was exacerbated by the relatively slow evolution of university and college libraries.

Between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, however, a cheap utilitarian method of manuscript production, the exemplar-pecia system, is known to have been in operation in at least eleven universities, including Paris and Oxford. In this context, exemplars were the approved copies of texts, commentaries, lectures and disputations used in the teaching process. The exemplars were handed over to stationers of the university town who divided them into portions or peciae for the purpose of making multiple copies. The resultant copies would then be hired or bought by students either individually or as a group. At Paris University the exemplar-pecia system applied to all of the faculties, including arts, but at Oxford it seems to have been confined to the superior faculties of civil and canon law and theology where students were required either to own or to borrow the prescribed texts. At Cambridge there is no definite proof that the pecia system was applied to any academic discipline. The exemplar-pecia device proved to be only a palliative. But it did ensure that before


35 See Pollard, 'The Pecia System', 150, 151. For the requirement that Oxford students in the faculties of civil and canon law had to own or borrow the key texts, with their commentaries, see Gibson, *Statuta Antiqua*, cvi, cviii, 43-4, 46.

36 Apart from Cambridge, there is no clear evidence that the pecia system operated at Salerno, Montpellier, Orleans, Angers or Avignon: Pollard, 'The Pecia System', 148.
the advent of printing a proportion of students at a number of universities had the opportunity of acquiring relevant texts for private study at price levels which they could afford.

The patchy application of the exemplar-pecia system was complemented by the piecemeal growth of university and college libraries. University libraries were slow to evolve. At Oxford, the university library functioned only on a regular basis from 1412, and by legislation of that year it was confined to graduates. The Cambridge university library was operational in the first half of the fifteenth century and by a statute of c. 1490 it too was restricted to graduates and to those accompanied by graduates. If university libraries in England were not designed with undergraduates primarily in mind, so college libraries would have been beyond the direct reach of most undergraduates until well into the sixteenth century. Only in one or two of the English colleges such as the King’s Hall and New College, which had significant undergraduate numbers from the fourteenth century, were college libraries available to younger members, although even here access probably had to be sought through graduate fellows. It may be assumed that the unendowed halls and hostels of Oxford, Cambridge and Paris would have harboured a selection of books, and at least two of the Oxford halls had recognized libraries. It seems that few undergraduates in universities of northern Europe, as distinct from their wealthier southern colleagues, could afford to build up private collections of books on any scale. At Oxford, only about 10 per cent of recorded secular scholars before 1500 are known to have owned books, and at Cambridge the figure is about 9 per cent. The majority of these book owners were not undergraduates in arts but more mature students engaged in the higher faculties.

If college libraries were of marginal significance for undergraduates in arts in the pre-Reformation era, they were of considerable importance for graduates who were college fellows. Most college libraries in Oxford, Cambridge and Paris divided their books into a chained or reference department to which each graduate fellow would normally have a key, and a lending or circulating section. At the King’s Hall, Cambridge, only about one fifth of the 101 volumes were chained in 1391. This proportion is similar to that found at the Paris

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38 *Camb. Docs.*, i. 403.
42 Cobban, *The King’s Hall*, 249.
College of the Sorbonne in 1338 when 330 books are described as chained out of a total of 1,722. Likewise, at Merton College, Oxford, the chained books were much less numerous than those kept for the personal use of the fellows, and at Peterhouse, Cambridge, just under half of the 302 volumes listed in 1418 were chained. From the analysis of such lending lists which have survived it appears that graduate fellows were well served by their college libraries. To this extent, college libraries were a decisive factor in ensuring that graduate fellows who were studying for advanced degrees were more book-oriented than the mass of the undergraduate population who were heavily dependent upon formal oral instruction right through to the sixteenth century.

The advent of printing did not materially alter the situation regarding access to college libraries. The gradual replacement of manuscript volumes by printed books from the late fifteenth century did not initially lead to the opening up of college libraries to direct undergraduate usage. But the coming of printing certainly helped to bolster the colleges as teaching agencies in all disciplines but most dramatically in the field of humanist studies. This is well illustrated by academic developments in England.

The assimilation of humanist studies by the English universities was a gradual process which began in a superficial and eclectic manner in the fifteenth century and became more sophisticated and coordinated in the course of the sixteenth century. In general, Oxford and Cambridge incorporated only those aspects of continental humanism which were deemed compatible with inherited patterns of learning. In this way, humanism was absorbed into the mainstream of English intellectual life without effecting a major deflection of traditional horizons. Several of the colleges played a crucial role in the establishment of humanist learning and teaching in the English universities in the first half of the sixteenth century. At Oxford,
Corpus Christi College (1517) and Thomas Wolsey's Cardinal College, dating from 1525, refounded as King Henry VIII's College in 1532 and finally as Christ Church in 1546, were founded primarily as humanist havens. At Cambridge, their counterparts were Christ’s College, refounded from Godshouse in 1505 by Lady Margaret Beaufort with the guiding assistance of John Fisher, St John's College, likewise founded by Lady Margaret, aided by Fisher, in 1511, and Trinity College, founded by Henry VIII in 1546. These colleges built up impressive libraries of printed humanist texts from their early years. 49 In similar fashion, most of the old-established English colleges incorporated a sizable body of printed humane literature over the sixteenth century. 50 It was the combination of these humanist library resources and the endowment of an array of college lectureships in the humane subjects which furnished much of the institutional support for the new learning in the English universities. It is true that several endowed lectureships and professorships in the humanist field had materialized by the mid-sixteenth century under the auspices of the university authorities. 51 But these were not particularly influential, and there can be little doubt that the collegiate contribution was vital in securing the successful absorption and teaching of humane learning within Oxford and Cambridge.

If the foundation of an academic college was viewed as an act of charity, there was an expectation that colleges would themselves perform charitable functions within society. Among the Parisian colleges the support of poor scholars or beneficiarii as a charge upon the finances of the college was fairly widespread. It appears that the maintenance of poor scholars was pioneered at the College of the Sorbonne and imitated in many of the later colleges at Paris. 52 Ave Maria College (1339) was one of the numerous Parisian colleges which supported beneficiarii. But the charity of the Ave Maria College far outstripped the maintenance of poor students. 53 The founder, John of Hubant, established two houses from the resources of the college, one for the support of ten poor and aged women and the other for ten poor and aged workmen. Moreover, the fellows of the college were statutorily obliged to distribute soup and bread daily to the poor of Paris, along with clothes and shoes which were surplus to basic needs. They were also required to tour the Paris prisons annually bearing gifts of money for the inmates. Such regulations were clearly designed

49 E.g. the founder's gift of ninety-seven volumes to Corpus Christi College, Oxford, rendered the college library the best for humanist studies in Oxford in the early sixteenth century: see N. R. Ker, 'The Provision of Books', The History of the University of Oxford, iii. 459.

50 For an analysis of Oxford college libraries during the transition from manuscript to printed collections over the sixteenth century see ibid., 441ff.

51 See above, n. 33.


53 For the following details see ibid., passim; also A. L. Gabriel, 'The Practice of Charity at the University of Paris during the Middle Ages: Ave Maria College', Traditio, v (1947), 335ff.
to inculcate in privileged academics a heightened awareness of the needs of the disadvantaged members of the community. The charitable functions of the Ave Maria College were probably more extensive than were to be found among the generality of Parisian colleges. Nevertheless, the concept of charity appears to have occupied a larger role in the Paris colleges than in those of England.

There was a general anticipation in England that college founders would make provision for charitable grammar teaching in their establishments. This proved to be a very subsidiary aim, however, as is evident from a comparison of the codes of college statutes of the medieval period. From such an analysis it is apparent that the regulations concerning the maintenance and teaching of poor youths amounted in most instances to little more than a conventional gesture. It is frequently emphasized that the charitable teaching of poor boys was to come into operation only when the college resources would permit. For example, the Peterhouse statutes of 1344 specify that two or three grammar scholars are to be maintained from the charity of the college subject to the availability of finances. On evidence of satisfactory progress they might be made scholars: if not, they were to be removed from the college. A similar example is contained in the statutes of 1359 of Clare College, Cambridge. Since most English medieval colleges did not possess the resources to maintain their full statutory complements of fellows, the opportunities for the realization of charitable 'colonies' of grammar youths were minimal. An extreme illustration is afforded by Queen’s College, Oxford, where the founder’s statutes of 1341 envisaged the maintenance and education of poor boys up to the number of seventy. In the event, the number of charity boys came to only a handful before 1500.

A form of charitable expression which was particularly associated with Oxford colleges was the preference accorded to founder’s kin among the statutory categories of those eligible for admission to an academic college. The preponderance of ecclesiastical founders of colleges at Oxford, which will be discussed below, helps to explain this phenomenon of founder’s kin: by contrast, the relative infrequency of ecclesiastical founders among Cambridge colleges may partly account for the absence of arrangements for founder’s kin at England’s eastern university. Because wealthy ecclesiastical founders could not have direct heirs, the device of founder’s kin presented a way of compen-

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54 On ‘grammar colonies’ in English secular colleges see Cobban, The King’s Hall, 50–2 and notes: for the maintenance of poor scholars by English colleges see also M. Rubin, Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).


56 Ibid., ii. 140–1.

57 Statutes, i. ch. 4, 30.


sating younger relations who had the aptitude for university study. The practice of giving first preference to founder’s kin for entry to a college was inaugurated by Walter de Merton at Merton College, Oxford. Indeed, as originally conceived in c. 1262–64, Merton was designed for the exclusive benefit of the founder’s numerous nephews. When this initial purpose had been fulfilled, the categories of entrants were broadened but first preference to founder’s kin was given in all three codes of Mertonian statutes of 1264, 1270 and 1274. Following Merton’s example, the founders of Queen’s College (1341), New College (1379), and All Souls College (1437/8) made provision for founder’s kin. While the concept of founder’s kin was not emulated at Cambridge, it is clear that between the late thirteenth and fifteenth centuries a number of Oxford colleges made elaborate arrangements for founder’s kin and were, in this sense, vehicles for a measure of family charity.

In general, English colleges did not formalize charitable links with their immediate communities on anything approaching the scale of Parisian colleges such as the Ave Maria College. So often the primary objective in England was to preserve the quality of endowment for the graduate fellows, and this was achieved in many instances at the expense of the charitable potential of the collegiate enterprise. Whereas some Parisian founders intended that their colleges should perform regular charitable exercises for the benefit of the urban poor, English founders took little cognizance of this. They entertained a more insular view of the college within the community, gave only a limited support to poor youths with scholarly aspirations, and did not embrace extensive charitable undertakings among the citizenry of the town.

Whereas, as has been argued, the colleges were to have a profound directional influence upon the universities of Paris, Oxford and Cambridge, they did not have a commensurate constitutional or educational function in the Italian or French provincial universities. The colleges in Italy and provincial France were mostly boarding houses for students, and few developed as primarily educational centres. Even the sumptuous College of Spain at Bologna, founded by Cardinal Gil Albornoz in c. 1367 and designed for thirty Spanish or Portuguese students, was not planned as essentially a teaching institu-

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61 Statutes, i. ch. 2, 6 (code of 1264), 17 (code of 1270), 36 (code of 1274); see also Squibb, Founder’s Kin, 5–8.
62 Statutes, i. ch. 4, 12 (Queen’s), ch. 5, 5 (New College), ch.7, 21–2 (All Souls); see also Squibb, Founder’s Kin, 8–10.
tion, although some lectures in theology were apparently given. There were fewer than half a dozen colleges at Bologna by c. 1500, and of these only the College of Spain was of prime significance. The first college at Padua was founded as late as 1363, and before the sixteenth century the ten colleges which had been established were, with one apparent exception, the Collegium Pratense, of modest proportions. Colleges blossomed into greater prominence in Paduan life in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a circumstance which was mirrored in several of the other Italian universities. In the French provincial universities some of the early secular colleges of Toulouse, those of Vidal Gautier (1243), of Montlezun (1319) and of Verdale (1337), are of constitutional importance in the context of collegiate history. In particular, the college of Vidal Gautier may be instanced as a relatively advanced type of college founded some fourteen years before the Sorbonne at Paris, about twenty years before the earliest colleges at Oxford and Bologna, and some forty years before the first Cambridge college. In Spain, the oldest college was St Mary's College, founded in 1372 at Lérida. It appears, however, that the only really notable college of the medieval period in Spain was the Salamanca Colegio viejo de San Bartolomé of 1401 whose statutes incorporate features reminiscent of the organizational pattern of an Italian student-university. The college system made little headway in Portugal where the only university, which alternated between Lisbon and Coimbra, acquired one unpretentious collegiate foundation in 1447. As in the case of the Italian universities, it would seem that colleges did not generally figure prominently in the Iberian Peninsula before the sixteenth century.

A number of points may be advanced in partial explanation of the relative unimportance of colleges before the sixteenth century in the universities of southern Europe. The greater average wealth and maturity of the student populations of Italy, southern France and Spain compared to that of northern Europe would probably have acted as a brake on collegiate growth. Many of the students of southern Europe came from easy social backgrounds, being sons of affluent urban bourgeoisie or scions of noble families. It is likely that their average age lay somewhere between eighteen and twenty-five and that

64 Marti, *The Spanish College*, 32.
68 Ibid., *Universities*, ii. 96.
69 Ibid., ii. 89 and n. 4.
some were on the borders of thirty upon entry to university. And a not insignificant proportion of southern students held ecclesiastical benefices or offices or had experience of secular employment before their enrolment as students. Given these circumstances, which are so markedly different from those prevailing for the usual type of northern student who was likely to be younger, of more humble background, and struggling financially, it is readily understandable that there would be less obvious need for charitable college-founding in southern Europe. Moreover, the sophisticated organizational pattern of student nations so widespread in southern universities, with its effective capacity for fraternal support, may also have restrained collegiate enterprise. In addition, the brooding presence of student controls, in all their disparate manifestations, throughout a galaxy of universities in southern Europe may well have had a dampening effect on potential college founders.

Investment in student-controlled universities can scarcely have been an attractive prospect, and it is noteworthy that what limited measure of collegiate advance was experienced by the southern universities came with the reversion of authority to the teaching masters.

Throughout medieval Europe the colleges are often useful indicators of broad trends in university life. This may be illustrated with reference to the important question of how far ecclesiastical authority had permeated university structures. In the French provincial universities, for example, the majority of the colleges had ecclesiastical founders. Popes, cardinals and bishops feature conspicuously among the founders and, in the event of a lay founder, the college was normally placed under the guardianship of an ecclesiastic or a mixed committee of university and ecclesiastical officials. Had nothing been known of the efforts of the French episcopate to maintain a stranglehold over the French provincial universities, a good insight into the degree of ecclesiastical dominion could be derived from a study of the French colleges, leaving no room for doubt about the intensity with which ecclesiastical authority had percolated the component parts of the French universities. The French colleges did not participate in the struggle for university emancipation from episcopal domination, and everywhere they served as passive reflectors of the ecclesiastical stamp of their universities. In the English situation too the colleges were barometers of the ecclesiastical penetration of the universities.

71 On students at Bologna see, e.g., S. Stelling-Michaud, L'Université de Bologne et la Pénétration des Droits Romain et Canonique en Suisse aux xiii e et xiv Siècles, Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, xvii (Geneva: Droz, 1955), 81.
72 Cobban, 'Medieval Student Power', 39.
73 For the range of student controls see ibid., passim and A.B. Cobban, 'Elective Salaried Lectureships in the Universities of Southern Europe in the Pre-Reformation Era', BJRL', lxvii (1985), 662ff.
74 For the French provincial colleges see Cobban, 'Episcopal Control in the Mediaeval Universities of Northern Europe', Studies in Church History, v (1969), 16 and notes.
75 On university-episcopal relations in the French provincial colleges see ibid., 3ff.
It might be argued that insofar as the Oxford colleges were heavily subject to ecclesiastical influences they bore a closer affinity to the French provincial colleges than to those of Cambridge. Of the ten secular colleges established in Oxford between the late thirteenth and the end of the fifteenth centuries no fewer than seven had ecclesiastical founders. Of the thirteen Cambridge colleges for the same period only three had episcopal founders and two, Gonville and Godshouse, were founded by rectors. The remainder had, as founders, two kings, a queen, a chancellor of the exchequer of Edward II, a provost of King's College, and a Cambridge guild. Moreover, after the French manner, most of the Oxford founders placed their colleges under external ecclesiastical supervision. At Cambridge, by contrast, the usual practice was to vest the visitatorial power not in an ecclesiastic but in the chancellor or vice-chancellor of the university and to limit the right of intervention to exceptional circumstances. Thus, from the beginning, the Cambridge colleges were strongly insistent on their independence, and, unlike the Oxford situation, the attitude towards both university and ecclesiastical authority was that of encouraging non-intervention unless for avoidable cause. Ecclesiastical influences must have been ever-present among the fellows of the Oxford colleges but only lightly manifest in the Cambridge college environment. And this collegiate dissimilarity between the English universities may well have had some bearing upon the differing intensities with which the struggle for university autonomy was fought at Oxford and Cambridge. The seeming slowness of this movement at Cambridge may have been a direct result of the fact that ecclesiastical control was a distant and occasional nuisance rather than one which affected the daily round of the university to any significant degree. Equally, the extent of ecclesiastical influence in the Oxford colleges may serve as a pointer to the heat and fervour of Oxford's drive for emancipation from ecclesiastical authority. While colleges cannot always be taken as microcosms of university history, there are occasions when they can provide a deeper appreciation of areas of university life than might otherwise be obtained through formal university archives.

In the later medieval period the collegiate movement made a signal contribution to university history through the emergence of that academic device which may be designated the college-university and which was characterized by the virtual or actual fusion of college and university into a single entity. This was a constitutional event of some magnitude because it helped to solve the problem of ensuring a permanent teaching staff in the universities of northern Europe, especially with regard to the German and Scottish universities.

76 Relations between the Oxford and Cambridge colleges and ecclesiastical authority are analyzed ibid., 16ff.
Salaried lectureships spread rapidly in the southern universities in the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries with the twofold effect of lessening the economic dependence of the lecturing staff on student fees and of securing a greater measure of teacher stability. The salaried lectureship made a late entry in northern Europe, and universities there had for long to rely upon the necessary regency system for the recruitment of academic staff, a system whereby every new master of arts or doctor of theology or law had to remain to teach for up to two years. These ‘necessary regents’ would be augmented by lecturers who were supported by a college fellowship, or by an ecclesiastical benefice, or by a religious order. Nevertheless, this pool of ‘necessary regents’ furnished the heart of the teaching personnel in the northern universities until the later middle ages. But the modest level of teaching fees in a university bereft of salaried lectureships led many young masters to seek more lucrative employment once their lecturing obligation was over. This drain of teachers driven out by economic necessity was a constant source of weakness affecting the vital organs of the university. After salaried lectureships had become the norm in southern Europe, the universities founded in northern Europe in the later medieval period were determined to supersede the unplanned teaching system of their predecessors.

A variety of ways evolved whereby a stable residential teaching staff could be achieved. The municipal authority might pay salaries directly or secure the annexation of prebends of churches for the endowment of lectureships; while colleges might be founded with the specific intention of providing a supply of lecturers for a lengthy period. In several university towns an amalgam of salaries, prebends and college fellowships, or of any two of these, was in operation to induce a more stable nucleus of teachers. Schemes such as these were in force among the later university foundations of northern Europe including Vienna, Erfurt, Heidelberg, Cologne, Leipzig, Rostock, Louvain, Greifswald, Freiburg-im-Breisgau, Basel, Ingolstadt and Tübingen. It was, however, the college which became the principal means by which the injurious mobility of lecturing staff was contained.

In the German universities of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries colleges were regarded as a chief means of guaranteeing a source of endowed lecturers. Colleges were often part of the founder's design: and, if not, they were quickly established early in the life of the

77 For the growth of the salaried lectureship in European universities see Cobban, The Medieval Universities, 154–7.
78 A valuable article on the financing of lecturers in northern universities in the later medieval period is provided by J. Paquet, ‘Salaires et Prêbendes des Professeurs de l’Université de Louvain au xve Siècle’, Studia Universitatis Lovanium, 2 (Leopoldville: Lovanium University Press, 1958), 3ff.
university. Initially, college and university teaching co-existed in the German universities. Progressively, however, there was a blurring of this distinction when both college and university teaching came to be assumed by the same lecturers. As a result, a relatively stable professoriate was achieved. Similar developments occurred in the three Scottish universities of the fifteenth century. St Andrews and Glasgow were devoid of colleges in their earliest phase. It is highly likely that had it not been for the later colleges these precarious universities would have disintegrated, torn as they were by inadequate funding and internal strife and the inability to retain a core of teachers of the first rank. But the subsequent wave of college-founding did much to rectify the position, and the colleges at St Andrews and Glasgow emerged as the main suppliers of the lecturing force of their respective universities.

It is apparent that at St Andrews and Glasgow the colleges and university had gone a long way towards fusion. But whereas fusion was never fully completed at these two universities in the fifteenth century, at Aberdeen fusion was an integral part of the founder's scheme from the beginning. Between 1494 and the opening of the sixteenth century the founder, Bishop Elphinstone, who had direct experience of the law faculties of Glasgow, Paris and Orleans and was a legal scholar of considerable repute, made the identification of college and university the pivotal feature of his Aberdeen venture in a bid to avoid the weaknesses which had beset St Andrews, Glasgow and some of the French provincial universities. Elphinstone's university was not fully operational until c. 1500, but in the first half of the sixteenth century it seems to have achieved a position of primacy among the Scottish universities. The success of the Aberdeen college-university experiment, next realized at Alcalá in Castile, was a notable contribution, built upon analyzed experience, to the creation of a university society of greater equilibrium and embodying a more balanced staff/student ratio than could pertain in circumstances of haphazard growth. The centralized format of the German and Scottish universities was in direct contrast to the decentralized character of Paris, Oxford and Cambridge in the later medieval period. It is certainly arguable that this centralized organizational response of the German

79 Rashdall, Universities, ii.283–4.
and Scottish universities to the endemic problems of instability and ephemeral teaching personnel, culminating in the birth of the college-university, proved a more enduring formative influence on university history in the sixteenth century and beyond than the individualistic solutions of England and Paris.

University history of the medieval period which does not pay a due regard to the creative role of the European collegiate movement is somewhat lacking in perspective, to say the least. As the colleges were among the foremost influences shaping numerous aspects of the constitutional, educational and social life of the universities, they invite central and not the peripheral attention which, until not so many years ago, they were habitually accorded. Since the 1960s there has been a decisive shift away from that kind of parochial treatment of college history which assumed the guise of a tribute to a shrine and in which the biographies of college alumni occupied a starring role. It is now generally appreciated that illuminating collegiate history must reflect historical forces of change in the university world at large and, where appropriate, the concerns of extra-university society. The increasing use of quantitative methods in the sphere of medieval academic history, involving computerized analyses, is making possible a more sophisticated appraisal of areas of collegiate life and would appear to be yielding useful results. This article has alluded to some of the important ways in which the colleges in universities of northern Europe became determinants of university development, not only at Paris, Oxford and Cambridge but also at the German and Scottish universities of the later medieval period. By any yardstick, the collegiate impact on these universities amounted to an academic revolution of the first magnitude with profound consequences for their constitutional shape, teaching structures, and library resources. Although there were important individual colleges in the universities of southern Europe, in Italy, the south of France, and in the Iberian Peninsula, for reasons which have been advanced, the collegiate movement in these areas did not acquire a comparable significance.