

Popular Religion in Gaelic Ireland 1445-1645

(2 volumes)

Part 2

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Introductory Note to Part 2

In the first part of this work, the world of Gaelic popular devotion in the pre-Tridentine period (broadly covering the mid-fifteenth to late sixteenth centuries) was examined, using ideas expressed in bardic religious poetry as a principal source. This second part, however, contains a shift in focus. Firstly, the change (at least in chapters 5 and 6) is geographical. Secondly, there is a change of source material. Both require some explanation.

The first element is straightforward enough. As is explained in some depth in the introductory section of chapter 5, the late sixteenth century witnessed a wave of emigration among the Irish Catholic community to continental Europe. Many left Ireland in search of a Catholic education in one of the many Irish colleges that were founded in Spain, Portugal, France and the Netherlands during this period. While there, they encountered a Counter-Reformation movement that was in a far greater state of advancement than what they had left at home. The shaping of ideas in the minds of these Irish *émigrés* was to become the channel for the eventual introduction and implementation of these ideas in Ireland, especially by the continentally educated Counter-Reformation clergy, who would eventually be charged with significant leadership roles in the recusant Irish Church.

The second element of change in part 2, namely a change in the nature of the source material, necessitates some comment. Political events of the late sixteenth century witnessed a whittling away of structures of patronage and privilege on which members of the bardic order depended. Recent discussion of bardic reactions to this sort of change, most notably that of Marc Caball, suggests that, in many instances, far

from battening down the hatches and waiting for the doom, the bardic order, chameleon-like, adapted themselves to changing circumstances:

While the poems are undeniably illustrative of the institutional paralysis enveloping the profession, they also demonstrate an elite wrestling with crisis and formulating a range of responses characterised by an alternation of tradition and innovation.¹

One way in which poets sometimes reacted involved a clear rapprochement between the Gaelic and Anglo-Norman worlds, in effect a union brought about by a common threat – the increasingly evident extension of English (and Protestant) rule in Ireland. Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn (*d.*1591) reflects this approach in a poem composed in 1579, which attempted to justify the status of Seán, the lower MacWilliam (*d.*1580), arguing that land title in Ireland is based on force of arms. Like the Anglo-Norman population, he argues, the Gael had no more right to land in Ireland than the right achieved by conquest, thus placing Gaelic and Anglo-Norman holdings on an equal footing.² Another poem by Ó hUiginn attempts to convince Richard Óg Burke (*d.*1586), of the lower MacWilliam family to resist accepting a new English title which would involve the rejection of his Gaelic-style appellation ‘Richard, son of MacWilliam’.³ The change in relationship between the Gaelic Irish and Old English, spurred on by the arrival of New English settlers, was noted by George Carew in 1614. He comments on ‘...the late plantation of new English and Scottish in all parts of the kingdom whom, with an unanime consent, the natives refute as a common

¹ Caball, *Poets and politics: continuity and reaction in Irish poetry, 1558-1625*, p.74.

² *idem*, ‘Faith, culture and sovereignty: Irish nationality and its development’, pp 126-7.

³ *Ibid.*

enemy’, identifying this as the ‘first and principal cause of their union...which...they endeavour to disguise, covering the same under the mask of religion.’⁴

An alternative reaction to change, adopted by some poets, was to leave the country itself and travel to Europe in order to pursue an academic or religious career, or both. The poet to the Mág Uidhir, Giolla Brighde Ó hEoghusa is a good example of such an individual. His journey took him to Douai and then to Louvain, where he entered the Franciscan order. His decision did not so much involve the forsaking of his profession as an application or adaptation of his talents. Ó hEoghusa would proceed to apply himself diligently to the task of transmitting the teachings of the Council of Trent, *via* his Gaelic translation of the catechism, to an Irish audience. In doing this, however, he remained loyal to his bardic background, applying his skills to the composition of poetic summaries of the principal teachings of the catechism, which he included in his *An Teagasg Críosaíde* (1611 and 1614).

Bardic adaptation to the religious life and the cut and thrust of the Counter-Reformation project, as exemplified by Ó hEoghusa, largely contributes to the change in the nature of sources used in part 2. The publications of the Franciscan scholars of Louvain, inspired and executed by many who were previously members of the bardic order, embody the most significant redefinition of the bardic order in the early seventeenth century. Formerly the purveyors of the propaganda of individual chieftains, the poets now assumed the greater task of applying themselves to the spiritual and political (in the case of the more radical activists such as Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire) resurrection of their land and its inhabitants (Gaelic and Anglo-Norman alike).

⁴ *Cal.Carew.MSS., 1603-24*, pp 305-6.

That some bardic poets were now employed in the publication of material involves another significant shift in source material. Publications such as those that emerged from the printing press at Louvain, were designed to be read by audiences who were obviously literate. The invention of the printing press led, not only to a wider-reading public, but also to a change in the kind of audiences exposed to bardic poetry. There was a shift from the semi-public poem, addressed to a chieftain in front of a large gathering at a banquet, to the letter-poem, intended only for one reader, and finally to the fully public poem contained in a widely-distributed publication.⁵ As the kinds of audience changed, so did the variety of themes. Poems composed for an individual chieftain and his clan were necessarily introspective and tended to be rather narrow in theme. However, later poems, addressed to wider audiences (such as those lamenting the demise of *Éire*) adopted broader themes such as exhortations to patriotism etc.⁶ Publications such as the Gaelic translations of the Roman Catechism from Louvain reached wider audiences than the literate public, however. Because of the importance of the material, priests and the learned were encouraged to instruct the illiterate in the contents of such works, establishing what Brian Stock refers to as a 'textual community.'⁷

The exposure of the Irish *émigrés* to Tridentine ideas on the continent resulted in the desire to import these ideas to their native land. The publication of Tridentine works in the native language was one step. The second step involved the implementation of these ideas at home. This was largely undertaken by clerics returning from the continent to the Irish ministry. The most dynamic example of this was undertaken by

⁵ Simms, 'Literacy and the Irish bards', pp 251-2.

⁶ Ibid., p.252.

⁷ Ibid., 247.

the Jesuit order in their third mission to Ireland, from 1596 onwards. The seed was sown. How well the Irish soil actually received it is examined in chapter 7.

Chapter 5

Continental change: catechising the Gaelic Irish

Aodh Mac Aingil, an Irish Franciscan scholar of St Anthony's College, Louvain, in the introduction to *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe* (1618), his work on the sacrament of Penance, explained that his aim was not to present any new teaching to the reader but instead something that was already long-established and needed to be recalled:

Ní nualéighionn do bheirim dhuit achd an seanphort aithridhe do sheinn Pádrúig 7 a ttáinig do naomhuibh 'nar ttír féin lé gníomh is lé bréithir as é sheinn[i]m.¹

The position taken by Mac Aingil was not unique. Those whose onerous task it was to implement the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545-63) did not regard themselves as innovators. Rather they adopted the role of defenders and promoters of a traditional set of beliefs that had become all but forgotten in popular consciousness, or alternatively had suffered scathing attacks from reformist doctrines. The catechising movement of Trent, according to John Bossy, 'did not require much new legislation but called for a decidedly new attitude to old legislation.'² The setting for this chapter is continental Europe in the aftermath of that defining Ecumenical Council. It focuses principally on the Irish who left their homeland for an education abroad. In the wake

¹ 'I do not give you new teaching but [instead] the old tune of repentance that Patrick played and that came before to saints in our land with deed and word; this is [the tune] I play' (my translation): Aodh Mac Aingil, *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe* (ed. Cainneach Ó Maonaigh), (B.A.C., 1952), p.5.

² John Bossy, 'The Counter-Reformation and the people of Catholic Europe', in *Past and present* 47 (1970), p.53.

of the Protestant Reformation and increasing pressure on the practice of Catholicism in Ireland, young Irish men began to decline to travel to more traditional centres of education such as Oxford and Cambridge, journeying instead to colleges on the continent. It was here, in the seedbed of the Counter Reformation, that the most promising Irish scholars became influenced by the decrees of Trent. Their task would be to translate these ideas into a usable form so that they could become effective in Ireland. The manner in which groups such as the Irish Franciscans at St Anthony's College, Louvain chose to go about this involved the production of impressive catechetical literature written in the Gaelic language for popular use. The content of such literature was to form the basis for religious instruction in Ireland in the seventeenth century and is, therefore, of considerable importance. This chapter examines in some depth the catechetical literature produced by Irish clergy living on the continent at this time. In this regard, some significant questions necessitate attention. What were the intentions of the compilers of these works? What audience did they have in mind? By what kind of process did they envisage the transmission of such instruction to the Irish at home? How Tridentine were the Irish catechisms? How do they differ from the official *Catechismus Romanus* (1566) of the Council and why? What reforms did the Irish scholars of Trent seek to implement upon popular piety and what did they regard as worthy of retention? A close examination of these issues is essential before one can understand the beginnings of Tridentine reform in seventeenth century Gaelic Ireland.

Migrants to Europe

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for various reasons, witnessed wave upon wave of Irishmen leaving their native land in order to spend some time on the

continent.³ During the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603), many of those who left did so for religious reasons. Those who returned from the continent, having forged links with the papacy, became a source of consolation for the beleaguered population at home, assuring them that Rome had not forgotten their plight. One such individual, the Limerick-born Jesuit, David Wolfe, spent seven years in Rome before he returned in 1560 as part of the second Jesuit mission to Ireland.⁴ His brief was to identify potential candidates for episcopal nomination. This he did with some expedition, selecting Thomas O' Herlihy (Ross), Donald MacCongail (Raphoe), Andrew O' Crean, O.P. (Elphin), Eugene O' Hart, O.P. (Achonry), Donat O' Taig (Armagh, 1560) and Richard Creagh (Armagh, 1564).⁵ Three of these, namely O' Herlihy, MacCongail and O' Hart, travelled to the Council of Trent in 1562 to attend its closing sessions.⁶ Young Irishmen were encouraged to study abroad by new bishops such as Archbishop Creagh. To cater for the interest that was shown, in 1564 Creagh

³ John J. Silke 'The Irish abroad, 1534-1691' in T. W. Moody *et al.* (eds), *A new history of Ireland iii: early modern Ireland, 1534-1691* (Oxford, 1975), p.591.

⁴ Meigs, *The reformations in Ireland: tradition and confessionalism 1400-1690*, p.74. The first Jesuit Mission had come to Ireland in 1542, fearing that the 'Surrender and Regrant' project would lead the Irish into heresy. It consisted merely of two individuals, namely a Spaniard called Alfonso Salmeron and French theologian, Paschasius Brouet. Conn O' Neill of Tyrone, Manus Ó Domhnaill of Tyrconnell and Morogh O' Brien of Thomond had petitioned the Jesuits to send a mission to Ireland as early as 1538; see James J. Corboy, 'The Jesuit Mission to Ireland 1596-1626' (M.A. thesis, UCD, 1941), p.1.

⁵ Silke, 'The Irish abroad', p.592. For an examination of how that episcopate developed in the seventeenth century see Donal F. Cregan, 'The social and cultural background of a Counter-Reformation episcopate, 1618-60', in Art Cosgrove and Donal McCartney (eds), *Studies in Irish history presented to R. Dudley Edwards* (Dublin, 1979).

⁶ Silke, 'The Irish abroad', p.592.

sought an annual grant from Pope Pius IV for the education of Irish clergy.⁷ The leading lights of Catholic recusancy in the later years of Elizabeth's reign were those who had received an education in Tridentine Europe. Scholars and distinguished churchmen such as Richard Creagh, Nicholas Comerford, Peter Lombard and Dermot O' Hurley were graduates of Louvain.⁸ O' Hurley taught philosophy there for four years, later holding the chair of Canon Law at Rheims.⁹ Appointed to the metropolitan see of Cashel in 1580 by Pope Gregory XIII, he was martyred four years later.¹⁰ A list drawn up in 1580, possibly by O' Hurley, gives the names of thirty seven priests and students at Louvain, Douai, Paris, Rome and elsewhere, claiming that there were many others studying in Spain, Portugal and France.¹¹ It is indeed ironic that Trinity College, Dublin, established in 1592 for the training of a Protestant clergy to implement the Reformation in Ireland, shared its year of foundation with the Irish College in Salamanca, Spain, whose purpose it was to educate priests to help apply Counter-Reformation principles in the same land. The influx of continentally trained priests especially from the 1570s onwards is difficult to quantify. However an observation made by Lord Deputy Sidney to Elizabeth in 1577 illustrates that the development was carefully noted and monitored by the English administration. Sidney stated that 'there be some principal gentlemen that have their sons in Louvain,

⁷ Ibid., p.618.

⁸ Tadhg Ó Dúshláine, *An Eoraip agus litríocht na Gaeilge 1600-50: gnéithe den bharócachas Eorpach i litríocht na Gaeilge* (B.Á.C., 1987), p.7.

⁹ P. F. Moran (ed.), *History of the Catholic archbishops of Dublin since the Reformation* Vol. I (Dublin, 1864), p.132.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp 132-5.

¹¹ Silke, 'The Irish abroad', p.618.

Douai, Rome and other places where your majesty is hated rather than honoured.¹² A report to the Privy Council by Lord Deputy Chichester in on 27 October 1607 shows that developments on this front had continued to become an increasing cause of anxiety in the intervening period:

They [priests] land here secretly in every port and creek of the realm (a dozen together sometimes as they are informed), and afterwards disperse themselves into several quarters in such sort that every town and country is full of them and most men's minds are infected by their doctrine and seditious persuasions. They have so gained the women that they are in a manner all of them absolute recusants. Children and servants are wholly taught and catechised by them, esteeming the same a sound and safe foundation of their synagogue. They withdraw many from the Church that formerly had conformed themselves; and others of them, of whom good hopes had been conceived, they have made altogether obstinate, disobedient and contemptuous.¹³

This study focuses on the four most important Irish catechisms to be compiled for the religious instruction of the native Irish from the late sixteenth to the first half of the seventeenth century, namely Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of Christian doctrine (1593), Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa's *An Teagasg Críosaíde* (1611 and 1614), Theobald Stapleton's *Catechismus* (1639) and Antoin Gearnon's *Parrhas an Anma* (1645). While in some ways these catechisms differed significantly from each other, they nevertheless shared a common purpose. Irish Catholics were in need of basic instruction and these works were intended to provide just that. The examination

¹² Bernadette Cunningham, 'The culture and ideology of Irish Franciscan historians at Louvain 1607-1650', in Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Ideology and the historians: historical studies xvii* (Dublin, 1991), p.16.

¹³ Cited in Thomas S. Flynn O.P., *The Irish Dominicans 1536-1641* (Dublin, 1993), p.134.

of the four Irish catechisms compiled in the period 1593-1645 that follows consists of two parts. Firstly, the identity and background of the compiler is explored, in addition to the intention behind the work itself. This section briefly addresses issues such as the audience for which the text was compiled and also the manner in which the text was designed to be used. The second part focuses on the content of the text. The principal question posed here concerns the nature of the material itself. How much material, then, belonged to the reforming body of Tridentine doctrine as opposed to that which was retained from erstwhile pre-Reformation popular belief systems? Themes examined in the first volume of this study, such as popular conceptions of God, Mary, the saints and the sacraments, are re-assessed in the light of the reforms of the Ecumenical Council of Trent transmitted by its vehicle, the Roman Catechism and its auxiliaries.

The texts and their compilers:

Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's Catechism of Christian doctrine (1593)

Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire belonged to a famous learned family that for centuries provided *ollamhain* (chief poets) to the O' Connors and Mac Dermots of Connacht.¹⁴ He was born about 1560, probably at Elphin, and was brought up in the family profession of poetry and lore, which he practiced until he entered the Franciscan order.¹⁵ At some point before 1593 he left Ireland and journeyed to Spain.¹⁶ He studied in the convent of the friars minor in Salamanca and it was there that he

¹⁴ Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire, *Desiderius otherwise called Scáthán an Chrábhaidh*, eag. Thomas F. O' Rahilly, (Dublin, 1975), p.viii.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp viii-ix.

¹⁶ Breandán Ó Buachalla, *Aisling Ghéar: na Stíobhartaigh agus an tAos Léinn* (B.Á.C., 1996), p.22. For additional biographical information see C. Heaney, *The theology of Florence Conry. O.F.M. (1560-1629)* (Drogheda, 1935).

translated the Christian doctrine text from Spanish to Irish.¹⁷ Having travelled to Kinsale with the Spanish forces in 1601, he was forced to return to Spain in January 1602 in the company of Red Hugh O'Donnell to seek further aid from Philip III.¹⁸ In 1606 he founded, with the permission of Philip III of Spain, Saint Anthony's College, Louvain, for the education of Irish Franciscan students.¹⁹ The following winter he gave refuge to the fleeing earls at the college in Louvain and proceeded to Rome with them in 1608.²⁰ Nominated for the archbishopric of Tuam, he was consecrated bishop in Rome on 10 March 1609, although he knew that he could not return home. Instead, he continued his work of furthering the interests of the earl of Tyrone at the Spanish court.²¹ In 1616 he published *Desiderius* at Louvain. This work was a part translation of a Spanish work published anonymously in Catalan in 1515. Ó Maolchonaire's aim was to provide consolation and strength for his own oppressed population and thus he included in his work a lengthy passage dealing with the particular situation in Ireland.²² The tone of the Irish section is polemical and he does not mince his words when addressing the validity of the Reformed Church, calling it a 'synagogue of Satan.'²³ He was renowned as much for his political enterprises as his religious ones, earning him a reputation as one of the 'practicers of sedition and insurrections...employed in directions and plots betwixt the Spanish court and the

¹⁷ *Desiderius*, p.ix.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Ó Buachalla, *Aisling Ghéar*, p.23.

²⁰ *Desiderius*, p.xi.

²¹ Tomás Ó Cléirigh, *Aodh Mac Aingil agus an scoil Nua-Ghaeilge i Lobháin* (2nd ed., B.Á.C., 1985), p.36.

²² *Desiderius*, pp 113-64.

²³ 'sinaghóg Shatáin': *ibid*, p.136.

Low Countries.²⁴ He was involved as late as 1627 in a proposed invasion of Ireland to overthrow the Crown administration.²⁵ His strong political views set him apart from many of his clerical contemporaries. When, in 1614, the Dublin parliament identified the earls who fled in 1607 as rebels and traitors and approved the confiscation of their lands, figures such as Peter Lombard quietly accepted the decision. However, Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire railed against the act and claimed that such an injustice would draw down the vengeance of God.²⁶ His vitriolic political and religious rhetoric made Ó Maolchonaire one of the best examples of what the English authorities feared most: a figure who was interested in both a spiritual and political restoration in Ireland. Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire died in 1629.²⁷

The first Irish catechism to emerge from Louvain was that of Ó Maolchonaire, translated in 1593 from a Spanish work that is now unknown to us.²⁸ The fundamentals of the Catholic faith are set out in simple Irish by the Franciscan in the following manner: the catechism is in question and answer format (using the figures of Master and Disciple) and begins with a section on who Christ is and what the duties of the Christian are. A section on the Creed follows and then treatment of the articles of faith, the Our Father, Hail Mary and Hail Holy Queen. The commandments of God and of the Church are subsequently presented, preceding a section on the seven sacraments, indulgences, works of mercy, virtues and vices and a conclusion on

²⁴ Ó Buachalla, *Aisling Ghéar*, p.22.

²⁵ Marc Caball, *Poets and politics: continuity and reaction in Irish poetry 1558-1625* (Cork, 1998), p.136.

²⁶ Ó Buachalla, *Aisling Ghéar*, pp 21-2.

²⁷ Caball, 'Faith, culture and sovereignty: Irish nationality and its development, 1558-1625', p.135.

²⁸ Cathaldus Giblin, 'The contribution of Irish Franciscans on the continent in the seventeenth century' in Michael Maher (ed.), *Irish spirituality* (Dublin, 1981), p.90.

the powers of the soul and the senses, the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Beatitudes.²⁹ In answer to the Master's question 'Gá mhéd rann atá sa Tecasg Críostaidhe?' ('How many sections are in the catechism?'), Ó Maolchonaire has the Disciple explain that the catechism is principally divided into four sections, namely 'Airteagail an chreidimh, urnaighthe, na haithenta 7 na sacraminnte.'³⁰ By deliberately inserting such a question, Ó Maolchonaire clearly considered the structure of the catechism important. Firstly, the section headings serve as a memory aid. However, a far more important reason for stressing the catechism's structure is its obvious correspondence with the Tridentine model. The preface to the *Catechism of the Council of Trent for parish priests* (also known as the *Catechism of Pius V* or *Roman Catechism*), published in 1566, which responded to the call expressed at the twenty-fourth session of the Council for religious instruction to be transmitted to the laity by parish priests, laid down four key areas to which attention was to be given, namely the Apostles Creed, the Sacraments, the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, with an introduction to each area.³¹ By adopting the structure of the *Roman Catechism*, Ó Maolchonaire clearly wished his Irish version to be classified as Tridentine in character and structure.

Ó Maolchonaire's intention was clearly that the catechism should reach Ireland and serve as an aid in the education of the laity who desperately needed to be taught the fundamentals of the faith. However, it was not until 1598 that a copy of his work arrived in his homeland. The only extant copy of Ó Maolchonaire's work that is

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ 'The articles of the faith, prayers, the commandments and the sacraments': Brian Ó Cuív, 'Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of Christian doctrine', in *Celtica* i (1946-50), p.164.

³¹ Mary O' Reilly, 'Catechists in exile: an examination of seventeenth-century catechisms written on the continent for use on the Irish mission', M.A. thesis, Maynooth College, 1994, pp 9-10.

presently to be found occurs in RIA. Ms. 23 L 19, which was most probably written in the seventeenth century.³² The introductory note claims that the original work was written in 1593 and sent to Ireland in 1598.³³ The question begs itself: if Ó Maolchonaire's intention was to provide a Gaelic translation of this work for the native Irish, why the delay in sending it there? One can only hazard a guess why this should have been the case. Perhaps Ó Maolchonaire wished to have the text printed and either did not succeed in finding a willing printer or indeed one with the required Irish type. A more plausible possibility concerns the nature of Tridentine catechisms in general. These works were principally for the use of the clergy or, if the opportunity arose, a small number of dedicated and learned lay people. Ó Maolchonaire translated this work while in Salamanca around the same time that an Irish college for the education of clergy was founded (1592). Perhaps Ó Maolchonaire was content to wait until some of the first priests were ordained from that college for the Irish mission some years later, and entrusted it to them for their own use at home. Whatever the reason, 1598 remains a milestone in the history of Irish catechesis as it marks the first known arrival of a Catholic Tridentine catechetical text written in Irish to Ireland's shores.

Before embarking upon an explanation of the articles of the Creed, Ó Maolchonaire divides the first three sections of the catechism into the categories of faith, hope and working for God (charity). He explains that we acquire a strong faith by a good understanding of the Creed. We learn to put our hope in God by understanding the Our Father well. Lastly, the commandments teach us how to work for God.³⁴ The use

³² Ó Cuiv, 'Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of Christian doctrine', p.161.

³³ Ibid., pp 162-3.

³⁴ Ibid., p.165.

of the theological virtues (faith, hope and charity) in this way is a borrowing from what was undoubtedly one of the most popular and widely used of all Tridentine catechisms, namely *Summa Doctrinae Christianae* of the Jesuit, Peter Canisius (1555).³⁵ The plan of Canisius's catechism was based on a verse from Ecclesiasticus that ran 'Son, if thou desirest wisdom, keep justice and God will give her to thee.'³⁶ Christian doctrine, then, was divided into a doctrine of wisdom and a doctrine of justice. Augustine had taught that wisdom had for its object the three theological virtues, faith, hope and charity.³⁷ Ó Maolchonaire, being an accomplished Augustine scholar who is reputed to have read his entire corpus seven times, would have appreciated Canisius's outline, which was itself inspired by Augustinian thought, and undoubtedly had few qualms about adopting it.³⁸ As in Canisius's work, the sacraments form a necessary bridge between the acquisition of wisdom and the carrying out of justice. In answer to the question '*An bhfuil d'fhiachaibh oruinn anois iad so do thuicsin 7 a bhfios do bheith agoinn?*', Ó Maolchonaire unambiguously states '*Atá, ar an adhbhur nach éidir linn a [g]coimhlíonadh muna thuicimid iad.*'³⁹ From the outset, Ó Maolchonaire insists upon knowledge of the Creed, Our Father, Ten Commandments and sacraments. His position on this is clear and is somewhat

³⁵ J. Brodrick, *Saint Peter Canisius S.J. 1521-1597* (London, 1935), p.235.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Desiderius*, p.xv.

³⁹ 'Are we obliged now to understand and know these things? We are, because we cannot fulfil them if we do not understand them': Ó Cuív, 'Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of Christian doctrine', p.165.

more rigorous than what Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa would require of those who studied his compendium at a later date.⁴⁰

Ó Maolchonaire's catechism is relatively straightforward. It does not enter into complex arguments but provides the fundamentals of the faith in an accessible manner. The text of the Creed is given, followed by a short series of questions on its origin, which is traced to the Apostles. It is stated that the recitation of the Creed is used to profess one's faith and secure one in that same faith. Faith is necessary for salvation; no one can be saved without it. However, stressing the Church's repudiation of Luther's *Sola Fide* doctrine, it is stated that one cannot be saved by faith alone; love and good works are also necessary.⁴¹ Having listed the fourteen articles of faith (seven concerned with the divinity and seven with the humanity of Christ),⁴² Ó Maolchonaire proceeds to an extended examination of these articles. God is taught to be One and also Three Persons with one substance. The question of God's physicality is raised and it is taught that He is not corporeal but is pure spirit.⁴³ Such

⁴⁰ Bonaventura's recommendations are treated of below.

⁴¹ Ó Cuív, 'Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of Christian doctrine', p.166.

⁴² These are as follows: 1. Belief in One Omnipotent God, 2. That He is Father, 3. That He is Son, 4. That He is Holy Spirit, 5. That He is Creator, 6. That He is Saviour, 7. That it is He who gives glory to us (the articles pertaining to His Divinity); 1. That Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit, 2. That He was born of the Blessed Virgin Mary without violating her virginity before birth, during birth or after birth, 3. That He accepted Death and the Passion on the cross to free us from sin, 4. That He released the souls of the holy fathers who were waiting to enter Heaven, 5. That He rose from the dead on the third day, 6. That He ascended to Heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father Almighty, 7. That He will come again to judge the living and the dead, to give glory to the faithful who have kept His commandments and everlasting punishment to those who have not (the articles pertaining to His humanity): *ibid.*, p.167.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.168.

questions, fundamental as they appear, were often confused in the minds of many Gaelic Irish Catholics as they undoubtedly were amongst their European counterparts.⁴⁴ The answers to questions such as ‘How is God Creator?’ and ‘How is God Saviour?’ are mere repetitions of the teaching without much elaboration. The following examples illustrate this trend:

M: *Ciondus atá Dia 'na Chruthuightheoir?* D: *Ar an adhbhur go ndérna sé na huile gan adhbhur.*

M: *Ciondus atá Dia 'na Shlánuightheoir?* D: *Ar an adhbhur go [d]tugann sé grása dhúin 7 go maithend sé ar bpeacaidhi dhúin.*⁴⁵

Ó Maolchonaire clearly aimed to provide a simple statement of Church teaching without unnecessary argument. It was obviously sufficient that the catechumen knew what basic terms such as Creator or Saviour essentially meant, without being required to argue why it should be that Christ, as opposed to some other figure, might be Saviour, for instance. In answer to the question ‘How can one say that it is God who gives us glory?’, the following reply is given: ‘Because He gives glory to people who are secure in His grace.’⁴⁶ Before dealing with the human aspects of Christ’s life, a further question introduces the subject of Purgatory, a topic that had come to be quite controversial during the stormy debates of the Protestant Reformation.⁴⁷ The question

⁴⁴ Examples of Gaelic Irish foibles on this account are examined in the treatment of Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa’s catechism below.

⁴⁵ M: ‘How is God Creator?’ D: ‘Because He made everything from nothing.’ M: ‘How is God Saviour?’ D: ‘Because He gives us grace and forgives our sins.’

⁴⁶ Ó Cuív, ‘Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire’s catechism of Christian doctrine’, p.168.

⁴⁷ The Roman Catechism (1566) had this to say of Purgatory: ‘There is also the fire of Purgatory in which the souls of the pious are purified by a temporary punishment...And of the truth of this doctrine, which holy councils declare to be confirmed by Scripture testimonies and Apostolic tradition (Trid.

that is asked concerns the type of person who goes to Purgatory. It is stated that those who die in the state of grace, but who have earned punishment due to sin go to Purgatory.⁴⁸

The next set of questions concern Christ's humanity on earth. The issue of Christ having been born without harming Mary's virginity is treated of briefly in the question:

M: *Ciondus do fhéd sé geinemhuin ó mháthair gan mhilledh a hóghachta?*

D: *Ós cionn nádúiri 7 go miorbhúilech mur do gabhadh ón máthair cédna hé.*⁴⁹

Questions such as why Christ became man and died on the Cross for the sake of humanity, and how He could actually have done this, while remaining God, are then addressed. Christ became a man in order to die for humanity and to give an example to be followed. He chose to die on the cross to free humanity from sin and death. He could do this because 'a mortal nature was tied to His divinity.'⁵⁰ He chose

Concil. Sess. 25) the parish priest will have occasion to treat the more diligently and frequently, as we are fallen on those times when men endure not sound doctrine'; see J. Donovan (ed. and trans.), *Catechism of the Council of Trent* (Dublin, 1867), pp 65-6.

⁴⁸ Ó Cuív, 'Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of Christian doctrine', p.169.

⁴⁹ M: 'How could He be born from a mother without destroying her virginity?' D: 'Supernaturally and miraculously He was born from the same mother' (ibid., p.169). This short reply mirrors the opening treatment of the same topic in the Roman Catechism: 'But as the conception itself utterly transcends the order of nature, so also in the birth we can contemplate nothing but what is divine...': Donovan, *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, p.52. Additional features found in the Roman Catechism's fuller treatment of the topic can be found in Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa's *Teagasg Críosaíde* (1611) treated of below.

⁵⁰ 'Ar in adhbhur go raibhe duine básaighthech cengailte dá dhiadhacht': Ó Cuív, 'Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of Christian doctrine', p.169.

crucifixion because it exceeded, in pain and disgrace, all other types of death.⁵¹ Christ's descent into Hell is then addressed, and particularly any confusion, which may have arisen, regarding the kind of Hell He entered. It is stated that He entered the Hell of the faithful alone.⁵² The manner of His descent into Hell, i.e. whether the descent was with body or soul, divinity or humanity (a question dealt with in the Roman Catechism) is also addressed in Ó Maolchonaire's translation. Christ is portrayed as having descended to Hell with His soul, which is tied to His divinity. His body, meanwhile, lay in the sepulchre, tied to the same divinity.⁵³ The section treating of Christ's second coming in judgement simply states that He will come to give judgement to each as he deserves - to the just everlasting glory in return for their virtue and to the wicked everlasting punishment to chastise them for their evil lives.⁵⁴ Finally, an explanation of the term 'Communion of saints' is given, i.e. that every Catholic can share in the good works of another Catholic by virtue of being a member of one body (the Church).⁵⁵

The second section of Ó Maolchonaire's work centres on prayer and, in particular, the Our Father. The text is cited and is then examined under its seven petitions, three dealing with God and four with oneself and one's neighbour. The meaning of each petition is briefly explained.⁵⁶ The division of the Our Father into seven petitions has

⁵¹ Ibid., p.170.

⁵² Ibid. The Roman Catechism, explaining the meaning of the word 'Hell' in the Creed, gives the following meaning: 'The word 'Hell' signifies those hidden abodes, in which are detained the souls that have not attained celestial bliss' (Donovan, *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, p.65).

⁵³ Ó Cufv, 'Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of Christian doctrine', p.170.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.172.

a long history and is also used in the Roman Catechism of Trent to provide a structure against which the prayer is discussed.⁵⁷ In a departure from the Roman Catechism, Ó Maolchonaire discusses other prayers also, namely the Hail Mary and Hail Holy Queen. This was not an unusual choice to make. Although inspired by its Tridentine model, Ó Maolchonaire's catechism, like other smaller catechisms of the period, was also influenced by other contemporary works that were extremely popular, such as Peter Canisius's *Summa Doctrinae Christianae* (1555). Canisius dealt with both the Our Father and the Hail Mary in his section on prayer.⁵⁸ Other contemporary catechisms, such as Robert Bellarmine's *Dottrina Christiana Breve* (1597), were to do the same. Bellarmine's work even included a section on the Rosary. The inclusion of an explanation of the Hail Holy Queen in Ó Maolchonaire's catechism aimed at leading a people already familiar with the prayer to a better understanding of its content. Peter O' Dwyer argues that this prayer must have been widely known in Ireland as early as the middle of the thirteenth century, having been adopted by the Benedictines in 1150 and the Cistercians, Franciscans and Dominicans by 1250, if not earlier.⁵⁹ A poem by the late sixteenth-century poet, Eochaidh Ó hEoghusa, found in the Book of O' Conor Don (1631), refers to '*oilithre ghearr glinn na ndeor*' ['this short pilgrim path, vale of tears'], illustrating the influence of one of the prayer's key images on bardic religious poetry.⁶⁰ Before treating of either the Hail Mary or Hail Holy Queen, the question of the propriety of praying to the angels or saints in general

⁵⁷ For an examination of texts of the Our Father in Irish in the period before the Council of Trent see Cathal Ó hÁinle, 'The *Pater Noster* in Irish: the pre-Reformation period', in *Celtica* xxi (1990), pp 470-88.

⁵⁸ Brodrick, *Saint Peter Canisius S.J. 1521-97*, p.235.

⁵⁹ O' Dwyer, *Mary: a history of devotion in Ireland*, p.98.

⁶⁰ *ADD 73*, v.18.

is raised. The answer is clear. We should pray to the angels and saints in order that they might intercede with God for us.⁶¹ The origins of both the Hail Mary and Hail Holy Queen are examined. The first half of the Hail Mary derives from Gabriel's greeting to Mary in Scripture, the second part from the Church itself. The Hail Holy Queen comes from the tradition of the Church.⁶² The opportunity arises for Ó Maolchonaire to address some contentious questions regarding Mary:

M: *Gá hionadh ina bhfuil an Bhaintigherna atá commór 7 sin?*

D: *A bhlaithemhnus Dé idir chorp 7 anam.*

M: *7 in deilbh Mhuire bhís is na templeaibh, cía hí?*

D: *Íomháidh Mhuire.*

M: *Créd in foghnamh do ní sí dhúin?*

D: *Muire do chor in ar [g]cuimhne do réir mur do bhí sí beó.*⁶³

In a century in which prayer to Mary and the saints, along with veneration of their images, was castigated by Protestant reformers, the response of the Tridentine Church was to meet these accusations head on. Concern with such questions is a common feature of the catechisms of Trent. Robert Bellarmine's catechism for teachers, *Dichiarazione più Copiosa della Dottrina Cristiana* (1598), contains the following explanation of the use of images of Mary and the saints in the Church:

...Images of Our Lord, Our Lady and the Saints are not regarded by us as gods, but as mere representations which recall to our minds thoughts of those they represent. Thus they serve people who cannot read, in place of books,

⁶¹ Ó Cuív, 'Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of Christian doctrine' p.173.

⁶² Ibid., p.174.

⁶³ 'M: Where is the Queen, that is as great as all that? D: In the Kingdom of God, both body and soul. M: And the statue of Mary that is to be found in churches, who is she? D: An image of Mary. M: And what good does it do for us? D: It reminds us of Mary as if she were alive.'

teaching them many mysteries of our holy faith. The honour which we pay to them is not given because they are figures of paper, or wood, or stone, or metal, or because they are beautifully coloured and moulded, but because they represent Christ, His Mother or the saints. Knowing, as we do, that the images are dead, undiscerning things, made by the hands of men, we do not ask anything from them and pray before them only because they picture to our minds, Our Lord, Our Lady and the saints whom we are really addressing.⁶⁴

Ó Maolchonaire concludes his discussion on the topic of images by stating that one should give the same honour to images of saints as one would give to the saints they represent.⁶⁵

The third section of Ó Maolchonaire's work centres on the Ten Commandments. An appendage to this section explains the five precepts of the Church, namely to hear Mass in full on Sundays and feast days of the Church, to confess at least once a year or more frequently if one is in danger of death or intending to receive Holy Communion, to receive the Eucharist at least once a year, either eight days before or after Easter, to fast on the appointed days set out by the Church and to pay tithes to the Church.⁶⁶ In explaining the significance of the Mass, Ó Maolchonaire states that the Mass benefits both the living and the dead. However, those who benefit most from the Sacrifice are identified as '*[in] lucht ar son a n-aparthar iatt 7 éisdes friú 7 bhís gá rádh.*'⁶⁷ A section on the sacraments proper follows. Only a brief treatment is offered. For the sake of continuity only the three sacraments treated of in chapter 3

⁶⁴ Brodrick, *Robert Bellarmine: saint and scholar* (London, 1961), p.154.

⁶⁵ Ó Cuív, 'Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of Christian doctrine', p.175.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.181.

⁶⁷ 'those for whom it is said and [those] who hear it [the Mass] and who are saying it': *ibid.*, p.182.

are discussed here. Baptism is identified as a spiritual birth that gives the person grace and the sign of Christ. It provides the person with necessary virtues and remits the ancestral sin (Original Sin).⁶⁸ The section on Penance is somewhat longer. Penance is described as ‘spiritual treatment for sin that is undergone after baptism.’⁶⁹ The effect of the sacrament is described as a grace through which sins committed are forgiven and protection is given to preserve from future sin.⁷⁰ On the question of whether it matters what priest one goes to for confession, it is stressed that one must be sure that the priest has the necessary powers (faculties?) to absolve the penitent.⁷¹ Holy Communion is defined as spiritual food that guards the soul and gives eternal life to it. It is emphasised that what is given to us in this food is ‘*Críst féin, Dia 7 duine fire, go hiomlán.*’⁷² It is deemed necessary to stress that Christ’s presence in the Eucharist is not just figurative or symbolic.⁷³ Instead, He is present ‘*na shubstaint rígha firinnigh féin.*’⁷⁴ The issue of substance and accidents is then briefly addressed. While the appearance of bread and wine remain (the accidents) the substance has been transformed into the body and blood of Christ.⁷⁵ The reason why lay people receive the Eucharist under one species (the Eucharistic host), rather than under both (host and cup) is given as the following: ‘*Ar an adhbhor go mbíon Críost go hiomlán is in*

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.184.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.185.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ ‘*don sagart agá mbía cumhachta bhus lór ré hesbulóid do thabhairt dúin*’: ibid., p.185.

⁷² ‘Christ himself, truly God and Man, in His entirety’: ibid., p.186.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ ‘substantivally, regally and truly’: ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

*ngné sin 7 in gach rann di.*⁷⁶ This reason is the last and most precise one given for this practice in the more comprehensive Roman Catechism.⁷⁷ It is also, most fundamentally, an attempt to combat heresy. Questions such as these had served as contentious subjects for debate between the reformers of the sixteenth century and the institutional Church, and were particularly relevant to the Tridentine clergy, one of whose chief aims was to refute heresy. In the same manner, the section following the sacraments addresses briefly the area of indulgences. It is stated simply that to gain an indulgence (defined as a remission of punishment due to sin), one must fulfil the requirements of the relevant Papal bull without being in a state of mortal sin.⁷⁸

This final section of Ó Maolchonaire's catechism also features the fourteen works of mercy (seven spiritual and seven temporal), the enemies of the soul (the world, the flesh and the devil), the seven deadly sins (with seven virtues to counteract them), the three powers of the soul (the understanding, the mind, the will), the five corporal senses, seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the twelve fruits of the Holy Spirit, the Eight Beatitudes and finally a short instruction on how one should begin and end the day.

Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa's *An Teagasg Críosaíde* (1611 and 1614)

Giolla Brighde Ó hEoghusa, member of the renowned family of poets, the Í Eoghusa, who traditionally served the Mág Uidhir, was most probably born in Ballyhosey, County Fermanagh sometime in the second half of the sixteenth century. Cuthbert Mhág Craith states that he received much of his bardic training in Munster,

⁷⁶ 'Because Christ is fully present in that [one] species and in every particle of it': *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Other reasons given are as follows: Christ, speaking of the sacrament in Scripture, frequently speaks of it under one kind only (John 6:58-59), the risk of spilling the precious blood in large congregations, and the claim that in several countries wine is not easily procured; see Donovan, *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, pp 220-1.

⁷⁸ Ó Cuív, 'Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of Christian doctrine', p.187.

principally under the Uí Dhálaigh, having most likely travelled there after the visit of Conchubar Crón ('Conchobar na Scoile') Ó Dálaigh to Cú Chonnacht Mág Uidhir sometime between 1584-9.⁷⁹ Giolla Brighde, however, sometime between 1592-1600, abandoned the ancestral professional pursuit of his craft, substituting in its place the religious life.⁸⁰ It was clearly not an easy decision and he lamented his own departure in verse: 'I have exchanged the music of your heavenly birds and of your brown, beautiful, melodious, waterfalls, with their dark banks, for the noise of the sea – terrifying and fearful the sight!'⁸¹ In a poem addressed to an individual called Eoghan, Giolla Brighde explains the reason for his departure, discounting the idea that he is leaving out of disregard for his professional craft or because of a lack of honour shown to the composition of poetry by the native Irish. It is this: 'Though our knowledge of them is small, it is the study of learned books, the most noble

⁷⁹ *DBM*, p.109.

⁸⁰ Mág Craith, on the basis of his attribution of the poem *Atáim i gcás idir dhá chomhairle* to Giolla Brighde as opposed to the other famous poet, Eochaidh, of the same family (which only one of eleven manuscripts in which it is found supports, i.e. TCD Ms. 1399, f.167 v^o, A.D. 1679), also accepts that the other poem ascribed to Giolla Brighde in the same manuscript is his, i.e. *Fada léigthear Eamhain i n-aontomha* written on the inauguration of Aodh Mág Uidhir's half-brother, Cú Chonnacht, in 1600. If this is the case, he argues that Giolla Brighde was functioning as a poet in Ireland at least until that year (p.111). Yet in one of two poems written by Giolla Brighde on his departure for the continent he includes an obscure verse that makes reference to his parting with Aodh Mág Uidhir. Mág Craith translates it as follows: 'Aodh Mhág Uidhir who kindles [my] grief [is] my only love, my dear one, my warrior. Trifling our grief till parting with him – till I had calmed down afterwards' (Poem 6, v.16). If Aodh was alive at this time, then Giolla Brighde must have departed before 1600. However, Mág Craith, as stated above, subscribes to the opposite view.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 6, v.10.

profession known to me, that has enticed me away from you.’⁸² Giolla Brighde travelled to Douai where he gained an M.A. Douai was the home of English Catholic recusants and the centre of their missionary activity.⁸³ Founded by Cardinal Allen in 1568 as the ‘New Catholic Oxford’, the college at Douai educated Irish students from its inception. In 1569 thirty-five Irish students are recorded as studying at either Douai or Louvain.⁸⁴ By 1613 the college at Douai had sent 149 priests back to Ireland.⁸⁵ It would prove to be a valuable training ground before he finally moved to St Anthony’s College, Louvain that was to become for Irish Catholics what Douai was for their English counterparts, and where his name is recorded among the first people to enter the college:

*Ex Ultonia. 1. Fr Bonaventura Hossaeus, ante dictus Brigidus, in artibus magister et post duos annos studii theologici receptus 1 Novembris 1607; obiit postea guardianus 15 Novembris 1614. Diocesis Clocherensis.*⁸⁶

Giolla Brighde’s desire and ambition to succeed at ‘the most noble profession known to [him]’ was certainly one of the reasons he cited for his departure to Louvain, for the latter location afforded more profitable opportunities for the academic.⁸⁷ Ordained

⁸² Ibid., 5, v.5.

⁸³ Thomas Wall, ‘The catechism in Irish: Bonaventure O’ Hussey O.F.M.’, in *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record* vol. lix, (1942), p.39.

⁸⁴ Ó Dúshláine, *An Eoraip agus litríocht na Gaeilge*, p.7.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.6.

⁸⁶ ‘From Ulster, Fr Bonaventure Hussey, formerly called Brigid, master of arts, and after two years of theological studies was admitted [into the college] 1 November 1607; died afterwards [as] guardian, 15 November 1614. Diocese of Clogher’: Ó Cléirigh, *Aodh Mac Aingil agus an Scoil Nua Ghaeilge i Lobháin*, p.28.

⁸⁷ ‘ann sin as ferr do níther leighionn’: see Ó Dúshláine, *An Eoraip agus litríocht na Gaeilge*, p.8.

a Franciscan priest in 1609 at Malines (the seat of the diocese), Giolla Brighde (henceforth cited as Bonaventura) went on to lecture both in philosophy and theology at Louvain, ending up as Guardian of the college, a post that he still held at the time of his death in 1614.⁸⁸ But before that, he had managed to have published the first Catholic book to be printed in Gaelic, of which there were two editions that followed closely on each other, the first from the press of Jacobus Mesius of Antwerp in 1611 and the second from the newly acquired press at St Anthony's, Louvain around 1614/15.⁸⁹

Before one can assess the importance of Bonaventura's catechism and put it into its proper context, one must necessarily consider whom it was originally compiled for. The work ran to three editions (A, L and R, taking their names from the places in which they were published, namely Antwerp 1611, Louvain 1614 and Rome 1717, the latter edition having been prepared by Philip Mág Uidhir O.F.M. and published by *Propaganda Fide*).⁹⁰ Permission to print a series of religious works in Irish had first to be sought from the relevant authorities. So on 17 June 1611, the friars at Louvain applied to Archduke Albert, the king of Spain's representative in the Netherlands, for the necessary permission. This was given along with the concession of distributing the book tax-free to whatever country they wished.⁹¹ Despite this apparent boon to the enterprise, Patrick Corish states that the work was aimed primarily at Irish soldiers serving in the Low Countries.⁹² The report of the spy, Richard Morres of Templemore, which was sent to the earl of Salisbury in 1611, is

⁸⁸ *DBM*, p.112.

⁸⁹ *TC*, p.viii.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.x.

⁹¹ Giblin, 'The contribution of Irish Franciscans on the continent in the seventeenth century', p.91.

⁹² Patrick J. Corish, *The Irish Catholic experience: a historical survey* (Dublin, 1985), p.105.

sometimes employed to argue this case. Fearghal Mac Raghnaill states that it shows the immediate popularity of the catechism among the Irish soldiers.⁹³ However, a closer look at Morres's account does not necessarily warrant such a conclusion. The contents of the letter concern mostly the trip of David Kearney, Catholic archbishop of Cashel to Spain and Rome to complain about the mistreatment of Catholics in Ireland under the reign of James I, and his request for an army to be sent there. Only incidentally does the following observation arise:

Moreover he [Richard] plainly alleged that after his coming from Prague he saw one of the books among the Irish soldiers, printed in Irish at Antwerp, and set forth by the friars of Louvaine confirming their own religion, and to the contrary infirming and refusing that of the Protestants, in such sort, that infinite readers and hearers of the Irish will presently believe the contents thereof to be true.⁹⁴

The report of Morres, who had seen one Irish soldier with what is understood to be a copy of *An Teagasg Críosaíde* (the work is not named), is hardly sufficient evidence to suggest that the work was commissioned with the Irish regiments specifically in mind. It is not difficult to see why such a view might be expressed, however, given the close links that were forged between St Anthony's, Louvain and the Irish military community in the Netherlands. Ó hEoghusa's colleague at Louvain, Aodh Mac Aingil, served as chaplain to the troops for some years. However, such a narrow analysis of the purpose of Ó hEoghusa's work must ultimately be discounted. The Franciscans in Louvain were interested in catechising all the people of their homeland, not just a relatively small community of Irish in the

⁹³ *TC*, p.x.

⁹⁴ *Cal.S.P.Ire., 1611-14*, p.185.

Netherlands. It does seem possible, however, that Mac Aingil and his colleagues envisaged the military community playing an important role in the dissemination of the catechetical material on their journeys home. There is strong evidence to suggest that the English administration preferred the Irish regiment to remain on the continent rather than return home, for fear that disbandment might lead to an influx of a bellicose and possibly religiously zealous group into Ireland, equipped with the latest ideas from the heart of the Counter-Reformation.⁹⁵ These fears were not unfounded. The Jesuit, Robert Persons, who worked with the Irish soldiers in Flanders, in a letter to Philip III, explained the purpose of instructing the military community as arising out of a hope that they might return as proper Catholics to their homeland with a desire to spread the faith.⁹⁶ Ó hEoghusa's dissemination of *An Teagasg Críosaíde* among the Irish regiment (if that was, in fact, the text that Morres reported seeing a soldier read) might better be understood, then, not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end. The end envisaged by the friar was undoubtedly the wide use of the publication at home in Ireland and, concomitantly, an increasing knowledge of the fundamentals of the faith among his native people.

What evidence is there, however, to suggest that *An Teagasg Críosaíde* actually reached Irish shores in the wake of its first and second printings? Unfortunately, this is an area in which information is difficult to come by. The only surviving manuscript in which Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism (1593) is still to be found, namely RIA, Ms 23 L 19, which is dated tentatively to the seventeenth century, also contains Ó hEoghusa's *Teagasg Críosaíde* along with other religious material.

⁹⁵ For a discussion of this topic see Salvador Ryan, 'Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa's *An Teagasg Críosaíde*: a reassessment' (forthcoming).

⁹⁶ Gráinne Henry, *The Irish military community in Spanish Flanders, 1586-1621* (Dublin, 1992), p.27.

Richard Hayes lists five eighteenth-century manuscripts in which *An Teagasg Críosaíde* appears in extracts or in summary form.⁹⁷ Interestingly, a seventeenth-century manuscript found in the British Library (Sloane 3567, 1664-5) written in Clanawley, Fermanagh by Cúchonnacht, son of Aodh Mág Uidhir contains, as does several other seventeenth-century manuscripts, religious poems by Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa. However, instead of including Ó hEoghusa's *Teagasg Críosaíde*, it chooses Antóin Gearnon's *Parrthas an Anma* (1645) instead. Does this imply, then, that the scribe was unaware of Ó hEoghusa's catechism? Not necessarily. Gearnon's work was, in many ways, very different to Ó hEoghusa's. It fulfilled its own function and occupied its own niche in catechesis. *Parrthas an Anma* was both a catechism and a prayer book and was more suitably designed for use by the laity. Anselm Ó Fachtna, while admitting Gearnon's reliance on Ó hEoghusa's groundwork, notes that:

*Cruthúnas eile ar shimplíocht na Gaeilge i bParrthas an Anma seadh an chaoi a d'fhág sé ar lár na hargóintí teibí a bhí sna sleachta a bhain sé as Teagasc Críosaíde Uí Eodhasa.*⁹⁸

A report, written by the Capuchin Richard O' Farrell to *Propaganda Fide* on the state of the Irish Church in 1658, mentions, among other Franciscan works of St

⁹⁷ These are RIA 23 O. 41 (scribe Séamus Mág Uidhir, 1720-1), British Library Egerton 192 (scribe Séamus Mág Uidhir who wrote it for Tadhg Ó Baoighealláin, 1729), RIA 23 I. 20 (various Munster scribes, 1750-70s), Belfast Museum Gaelic Ms. XXXV (scribe Simon Macken, Brookeborough, Co. Fermanagh, 1788) and RIA 24 C. 39 (18th C ?): R. J. Hayes (ed.), *Manuscript sources for the history of Irish civilisation*. 11 vols. (New York, 1965).

⁹⁸ 'Another proof of the simplicity of the Irish [language] in *Parrthas an Anma* is the manner in which he leaves aside the abstract arguments that featured in the passages of Ó hEoghusa's *Teagasg Críosaíde*' (my translation): *PA*, p.xix.

Anthony's, that Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa's *An Teagasg Críosaíde* contributed greatly in counteracting ignorance, inculcating holiness and preserving the native language.⁹⁹ This implies that the work was circulating in parts of Ireland at least as early as this date. However, it is highly probable that the text was in use in Ireland even from a much earlier date. One puzzling aspect of this problem concerns Theobald Stapleton and his *Catechismus*. Theobald spent twelve years on the mission in Ireland before returning to Europe to write his catechism, which was published in Brussels in 1639. It is not clear exactly when this sojourn in Ireland took place. However, having been ordained in 1616, this period of ministry must have occurred during the years 1616-39.¹⁰⁰ In the preface to his work Stapleton, recounting his experience in Ireland, makes the following statement:

*Misi, amh, do réir na haimsiri dho chaitheas an Erinn, am shagart á ccurum na nanam, do cúnncos dhamh nach raibh aoin ní as riochtanasuidh ar lucht aitribh na duthe sion, na an teagasc Criostuí áfhoillsiudh dhaibh, go soileir, idirdhealuithe, aithghear & á nghaoilaig (chum tarabhtha na nErenach) go suimeamhail, ionnas go ttuigidís é.*¹⁰¹

Earlier, in the prologue to his work, he laments the pitiful state of religious knowledge that he encountered during his time in Ireland.¹⁰² Such a statement from

⁹⁹ Giblin, 'The contribution of Irish Franciscans on the continent in the seventeenth century', pp 101-2.

¹⁰⁰ Wall, 'Doctrinal instruction in Irish: the work of Theobald Stapleton', p.107.

¹⁰¹ 'Indeed, from the period I spent in Ireland as a priest in care of souls, I noticed that nothing was more necessary for the inhabitants of that country than the transmission of Christian doctrine to them, clearly, distinctly, concisely, and in Gaelic (for the benefit of the Irish) [and] interestingly in order that they might grasp it': Irish Manuscripts Commission, *The Catechismus of Theobald Stapleton* (Dublin, 1945), Prologue §32.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, Prologue §9.

Stapleton might lead one to surmise that Ó hEoghusa's catechism had not yet reached Ireland or at least that it was not in circulation. It must be remembered, however, that Stapleton was working in Munster and presumably in the Cashel diocese (as this is the diocese he is described as belonging to in the approbation to his catechism). His pastoral experience was more than likely confined to this particular area of Munster and, therefore, such a claim (that the people required a catechism in their native language), should be viewed as only applicable to that particular region. A report by John Roche, bishop of Ferns to Luke Wadding in Rome in 1631 serves as a fitting illustration of just how limited an individual's knowledge of church affairs could be in seventeenth century Ireland. Writing about one Seathrún Céitinn (Geoffrey Keating), an Old English scholar and priest working in Tipperary, whose monumental work *Trí bior-ghaoithe an bháis* is believed to have been in circulation as early as that year,¹⁰³ Roche comments:

One Doctor Keating laboureth much, as I hear say, in compiling Irish notes towards a history of Irish. ...I have no interest in the man, for I never saw him, for he dwelleth in Munster.¹⁰⁴

It is conceivable, then, that *An Teagasg Críosaíde* was not in circulation in Munster during the period in which Stapleton ministered in Ireland. The catechism, however, may have been in use elsewhere, particularly in Ulster, from where its author hailed and in which the Franciscan order traditionally had a strong base.

If it was managed to smuggle *An Teagasg Críosaíde* to Ireland in the early seventeenth century how might it have been used? The structure of the catechism

¹⁰³ Bernadette Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating: history, myth and religion in seventeenth century Ireland* (Dublin, 2000), p.3.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.100.

alone (in the tradition of the *Roman Catechism* of Trent) was designed for the use of a parish priest primarily, who would then disseminate the necessary doctrine in small amounts, making use of the verse to help hearers commit the information to memory. While these objectives could be reached in military *environs* in Flanders with the help of chaplains such as the Franciscans from St Anthony's, what sort of network awaited these books in Ireland? It is clear that the catechism was to be accessed at different levels. The learned were to probe the fuller explanations of the faith, while the more general populace were to be fed only what was necessary, summarised neatly in verse form. Understandably, then, it is the verse forms of Ó hEoghusa's work (*An Teagasc Críosaíde a ndán*) that appear most frequently in manuscripts. The diffusion of catechesis in short verse forms therefore could be achieved relatively easily with the help not necessarily of priests or preachers but of the laity. This was not the only reason for their use, however. Most importantly, the verse forms of the catechism were easily memorised. The use of verse summaries of sermons was already in use in Gaelic Ireland in the sixteenth century, if not earlier, as Donatus Mooney's account of the Franciscan preacher Eoghan Ó Dubhthaigh (minister provincial from 1580-3), illustrates:

At the conclusion of each sermon, even of the longest, he was in the habit of reciting elegant verses in the Irish language, containing the pith of what he had said. These verses were so fruitful of good that they appear to have been inspired less by the spirit of poetry than by the unction of the Holy Ghost.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Colmán Ó Clabaigh, 'Preaching in late medieval Ireland: the Franciscan contribution' in Alan J. Fletcher and Raymond Gillespie (eds) *Irish preaching, 700-1700* (Dublin, 2001), p.93.

Ó hEoghusa was a realist and understood that, for most, knowledge of the bulk of his catechetical work was unattainable. What was expected to be known, varied, therefore, according to circumstance:

Fiafraighthear ann so an bhfoil d'fhiachaibh ar an n-uile Chríosaíde fá phéin a slánaighthe iad so uile // do chreideamh. As í ar bhfreagra go bhfoil d'fhiachaibh ar an n-uile dhuine foghlamtha 7 ar an n-uile dhuine ar a bhfoil cúram teagaisc an phobail, airteagail na Créide go hiomlán do chreideamh go follas, 7 a bhfios do bheith aige. Na daoine ainbhfeasacha thráth, dhogheibh tógbháil suas bharbardha 7 nach cualaidh iomrádh go meinic ar airteagalaibh an chreidimh, ní fhoil d'fhiachaibh ortha fá phéin a slánaighthe a bhfios uile do bheith aca, achd atá d'fhiachaibh ortha na hairteagail as prínsipálta 7 as mionca ar a ccluínid iomrádh do chreideamh go follas, .i. a chreideamh go bhfoil aoinDia amháin ann, go bhfoilid trí pearsanna san Tríonnóid, go ttáinig Críosaíde a ccolaind daonda, // gur fhulaing páis, 7c. Atá dh'fhiachaibh ortha fós bheith ullamh dochum an uile neitheadh do chreideamh agá bhfoillséocha an eaglas gurab cóir a chreideamh.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ 'It is enquired here whether every Christian is obliged under pain of their salvation to believe all these things. The answer is that every learned person and every person who has the responsibility of catechising the people is obliged to believe all the articles of the Creed clearly and have knowledge of them. The ignorant, however, who had a barbarous upbringing and did not hear discussion of the articles of the faith often are not obliged under pain of their salvation to have knowledge of them all, but they are obliged to clearly believe the most important articles which they have most frequently heard discussion of, that is, to believe that there is only one God, that there are three persons in the Trinity, that Christ came in a human body, that he suffered the Passion etc. They are obliged moreover

The allowance that Ó hEoghusa makes displays a greater pastoral sensitivity than is evident in Ó Maolchonaire's work, where it is stated that unless one understands what is contained therein one cannot fulfil the requirements alluded to.¹⁰⁷

An Teagasg Críosaíde is structurally divided into five parts, broadly following the structure of the Roman Catechism, excepting the addition of a fifth section: the first deals with the Creed and an explanation of its twelve parts (seven chapters), the second with the Our Father and Hail Mary with an explanation of both (eight chapters), the third focuses on the Ten Commandments and the precepts of the Church (eleven chapters), the fourth on the seven sacraments (eight chapters) and the fifth on the virtues and vices, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and on sin, including the seven deadly sins (three chapters). Unlike Ó Maolchonaire's work and the catechisms of Canisius and Bellarmine, *An Teagasg Críosaíde* is not divided into questions and answers. The addition of a fifth section (as opposed to the Roman Catechism's four) is, however, a borrowing from Canisius, whose fifth section on Justice treated of sin, good works, the cardinal virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Beatitudes and the Evangelical Counsels.¹⁰⁸ Mary O' Reilly, in examining the place of Ó hEoghusa's work within the context of other seventeenth-century catechisms, both Irish and European, argues that, despite following the pattern of the main catechisms of Trent, *An Teagasg Críosaíde* nevertheless contains elements designed specifically for the Irish mission, thus incorporating 'a

to be ready to believe all the things that the Church considers fitting to believe' (my translation): *TC*, p.32.

¹⁰⁷ Ó Cuív, 'Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of Christian doctrine', p.165.

¹⁰⁸ Brodrick, *Saint Peter Canisius S.J. 1521-1597*, p.235.

blend between the reforming work of Trent and the particular Irish situation.¹⁰⁹ Although many of the arguments that O' Reilly uses to support her case are flawed, the claim is nevertheless valid.¹¹⁰ Ó hEoghusa's work should be classified within the *genre* of European Tridentine catechisms in general. Many of these catechisms, produced with a specific audience in mind (such as that of Jean de Bréboeuf S.J., written in 1630 for use among the Hurons in French Canada)¹¹¹ included elements of particular relevance to the people who were to receive them. This was not unusual in the seventeenth century. Ó hEoghusa's catechism was no different. While fundamentally based on the Roman Catechism of Trent, with some borrowings also from the works of Peter Canisius and Robert Bellarmine, Bonaventura did not omit to insert features that he was confident would resonate with his intended audience at home. Having lived and worked in Ireland for many years before becoming a Franciscan, Ó hEoghusa was painfully aware of the shortcomings of the Irish Church and was in a privileged position to address such lacunae. The content of *An Teagasg Críosaíde* is examined below with particular reference to the kind of beliefs and practices in Ireland that Ó hEoghusa would have hoped to rectify and

¹⁰⁹ Mary O' Reilly 'Catechists in exile: an examination of seventeenth century catechisms written on the continent for use on the Irish mission' (MA thesis, Maynooth College, 1994), p.92; see also Mary O' Reilly, 'Seventeenth century Irish catechisms – European or not?', in *Archivium Hibernicum* L (1996), p.102.

¹¹⁰ I have discussed some of these arguments in an article entitled 'Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa's *An Teagasg Críosaíde*: a reassessment' (forthcoming)

¹¹¹ Gilles Raymond, 'Le premier catéchisme de la Nouvelle France: celui de Jean de Bréboeuf S.J.' in Raymond Brodeur and Jean Paul Rouleau (eds), *Une inconnue de l'histoire de la culture: la production des catéchismes en Amérique Française* (Québec, 1986), p.27.

regulate. Lengthier in its treatment than Ó Maolchonaire's compendium, the content of *An Teagasg Criosdaidhe* better facilitates such an examination.

Ó hEoghusa begins his section on the Creed by providing the text in both Latin and Gaelic and then a third time in verse form. In the Gaelic text, each of the twelve articles of the Creed is assigned to the guardianship of one of the twelve apostles. This was not a new development. Eamon Duffy notes that portrayals of the twelve apostles each carrying a scroll or banner with their relevant article had become increasingly common on the dados of rood screens and also on chapel windows in fifteenth-century England.¹¹² After the explication of the Creed in verse (which was presumably designed to be learnt by heart by the Gaelic Irish) there is a fuller explanation given in prose, more than likely for the parish priest's use. The parish priest could then transmit this fuller explanation, which tackled issues in greater depth, to the listeners as he saw fit. However, even the prose version is simple in style. Ó hEoghusa, while dealing with the question of the Trinity is very clear in his approach:

*Ag so na ceithre hairteagail bheanas le haondachd na nádúire // diadha 7 ré
pearsanaibh na Tríonnóide: an cédairteagal: a chreideamh go bhfoil aoinDia
amháin ann; an dara hairteagal: a chreideamh go bhfoil an tAthair
neamhdha, an chéidphearsa don Tríonnóid ann; an treas airteagal: a
chreideamh go bhfoil an Mac síordhaidhe, an dara pearsa don Tríonnóid
ann: an ceathramhadh hairteagal: a chreideamh go bhfoil an Sbiorad Naomh
an treas pearsa don Tríonnóid ann.¹¹³*

¹¹² Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, pp 64-5.

¹¹³ Here are the four articles that pertain to the unity of divine nature and to the persons of the Trinity: the first article: to believe that there is [only] One God; the second article: to believe that the Heavenly

Following on from this simple catechetical statement, Ó hEoghusa moves directly to what was often a somewhat more misunderstood concept for the Gaelic Irish – the fact that the persons of the Trinity were (literally) equal in nobility and age (*go ccomhuaisle, comhaosta*): ‘*Foillsighthear ann so nách foil barr a ngné ar bioth ag pearsa//naibh na Tríonnóide ar a chéile. Ionann iomorro uaisle 7 aos, glóir 7 cumhachda....*’¹¹⁴ Perhaps the image used in a poem attributed to Donnchadh Mór Ó Dálaigh (which is extant only in late manuscripts, contributing to the doubt regarding its true authorship), namely that of ‘*trí glúine geinealach Dé*’, which reflects the Gaelic Irish penchant for genealogy, illustrates what became a hierarchy of persons in the minds of many.¹¹⁵ The idea, for instance, that the Son of God could not be king until the Father died, revealing the appropriation of socio / cultural practice into religious thought, was allegedly alive and well in seventeenth-century Ireland.¹¹⁶ An understanding of the three persons as three generations of the Godhead could lead to the conclusion that one generation quite simply led to another as occurred in earthly families. One particular verse of the poem on the Trinity attributed to Ó Dálaigh seems to suggest this idea: ‘I believe in the first person so loving, I pray to the second; may the last person protect me, the latest generation of the Lord.’¹¹⁷

Father, the first person of the Trinity exists; the third article: to believe that the Eternal Son, the second person of the Trinity exists; the fourth article: to believe that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, exists’: *TC*, p.9.

¹¹⁴ ‘It is revealed here that the persons of the Trinity do not have superiority over each other. Moreover, they are equal in age, glory and power’: *TC*, p.10.

¹¹⁵ ‘Poem to the Holy Trinity’, *IM* 1922, v.1, p.71.

¹¹⁶ Gillespie, *The sacred in the secular: religious change in Catholic Ireland, 1500-1700*, p.3.

¹¹⁷ ‘Poem to the Holy Trinity’, *IM* 1922, v.8, p.72.

In his comment on the fact that God was not created, i.e. that He *is* eternally (*ó aoinneoch ní tháinig sin*), Ó hEoghusa devises an effective image to illustrate this teaching:

*Cuirid daoine foghlamtha an tAthair a ccosamhlachd ré tobar ó mbiadh sruth ag sileadh dochum locha, 7 an Mac a ccosamhlachd ris // an sruth féin, 7 an Sbiorad Naomh ris an loch.*¹¹⁸

He explains that as the water that flows from the well to the stream, and on to the lake, is the same water so, likewise, the persons of the Trinity are one in nature and in substance. Divinity flows from the Father to the Son and from both the Father and the Son to the Spirit. The Father is the well of divinity (*tobar na diadhachda*) who is not generated (*nír geineadh 7 ní dearnadh riamh é*), the Son is the stream who is begotten by the Father (*ón Athair do geineadh*) and the Spirit is the lake who proceeds from both the Father and the Son (*tig ón Athair 7 ón Mhac a n-aoinfheachd*).¹¹⁹ Having been a professional bardic poet, Bonaventura would have appreciated how often the imagery of water was used in verse to grapple with the mystery of the Three Persons. The poetry of Mathgamhain Ó hUiginn (*d.* 1585), father to the famous Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn (*d.* 1591), from Sligo would undoubtedly have been familiar to Bonaventura, given the relative proximity of the Í Uiginn to his own territory. Mathgamhain, speaking of Heaven's King, uses the term 'well of the three streams' to denote His triune nature.¹²⁰ The title '*eo na dtrí dtobar*', often

¹¹⁸ 'Learned people compare the Father to a well from which a stream flows to a lake, and the Son is compared to the stream itself and the Holy Spirit to the lake': *TC*, p.10.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 10-11.

¹²⁰ *ADD* 75, v.16.

used of Christ, also expresses this idea.¹²¹ However, a more specific allusion is also at work here, which would undoubtedly have been familiar to the bardic order. Its origins can be found in the medieval law tract *Uraicecht na Ríar*, which sets out the seven grades of poet and their respective honour-prices. Throughout the tract, the point is made that a poet whose qualifications are complete and genuine will himself have been the son of a poet and the grandson of a poet. If this was not the case then his honour-price was halved.¹²² The status of a poet was extinguished in a family if his father and grandfather were not poets. He was then relegated to being a bard.¹²³ The imagery of the well and the stream occurs in *Uraicecht na Ríar* when the question of a splendid poet lacking poetic genealogy is addressed:

Ocus fer lasa mbí airchetal n-án 7 filedacht án, 7 ní bí lia athair nach la senathair dó, cia ainm in gráid-sin? Ní hansae, topar. Ocus a mac-side, cia ainm? Ní hansae, tiprae. Ocus a mac-side lasa mbí airchetal n-án 7 filedacht án, cia ainm? Ní hansae, sruth án .i. ánsruth; foghlaim n-án 7 airchetal n-án la cach n-aí.¹²⁴

¹²¹ A good example is found in the poetry of Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn (d.1448): see *DDé* 12, v.4. Philip Bocht Ó hUiginn (d.1487) also uses similar imagery: see *PB* 17, v.28.

¹²² Liam Breatnach (ed.), *Uraicecht na Ríar* (Dublin, 1987), pp 103-5. I am grateful to Colman Etchingham for drawing my attention to this law tract.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p.107.

¹²⁴ ‘As for a man who has splendid poetry and specific poetic standing, where neither his father nor a grandfather of his has, what is the name of that grade? Not difficult; a well. And his son, what name? Not difficult; a spring. And his son who has splendid poetry and splendid poetic standing, what name? Not difficult; a splendid stream, i.e. an *ánsruth*; each of them having splendid learning and splendid poetry’; *ibid.*, pp 114-5

Translated to Trinitarian theology, Ó hEoghusa uses this image to great effect in explaining that the Father has not come from any line before Him just as the splendid and talented poet lacks a father or grandfather who was a poet. His ability lies within his own ambit and therefore He becomes a well or a beginning from which a line of poets flow. God the Father's progeny is Jesus Christ His Son (the stream). In turn, the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the stream and the well (the Father and the Son). The only difference between the poetic line and the divine procession lies in the fact that the Holy Spirit is compared to a lake and the grandson of the poet to a splendid stream. In other words, the divine procession ends in the lake (the Holy Spirit) and does not proceed any further. The grandson of the poet, however, is called a 'splendid stream', allowing the original poet's grandson to become a grandfather himself in time.

In order to grapple with the nature of the Godhead, Ó hEoghusa, in his work, as was already done in the *Roman catechism*, set upon a process of what could be termed de-anthropomorphism, i.e. attempting to bring his audience beyond an understanding of God which was dressed up in human attributes. Anthropomorphism is the age-old practice of bestowing human characteristics upon the divine. In a sense, a certain amount of this is necessary if one is to avoid a *theologia negativa* whereby one can only pronounce upon what God is *not*. However, in Gaelic Ireland, as in the rest of Europe, God was often reduced to a great chieftain who could easily give in to petty grievances and who certainly respected kin-alliances. In other words, God was often as much at the service of the socio-political system of Gaelic Ireland as were his earthly vassals.¹²⁵ The shaping

¹²⁵ It is important to remember that theology (an account or rationale of God) does not exist within a vacuum, but is carried out and reflected upon in a given society and culture, and its expression is

of God in Gaelic Irish terms, as observed in chapter 1, took many forms. First of all, in Christ, the God-Man, His genealogy and kin-group were examined at length. Christ was therefore ‘grandson of Joachim’ and ‘comely grandson of Anne.’¹²⁶ God’s action in the world, particularly His redemptive act by which He handed over His Son to offer His life on behalf of humanity on the cross, was heavily painted in the shades of Gaelic culture by the bardic poets. As noted above, Christ’s coming to earth to free His people was routinely portrayed in terms of a Gaelic chieftain’s war on alien territory that was once his own and which now lay in the hands of an enemy (Satan). The Passion, then, was a war against the sins of humanity.¹²⁷ Christ asserted the right to His inheritance by storming into his ancestor’s country on a steed (the cross).¹²⁸ He was wounded in battle but only became more furiously determined, continuing on to advance upon the enemy fort with enflamed wounds.¹²⁹ He finally received a heart wound (the piercing of Christ’s side by Longinus) but carried on fighting, much to the amazement of his observers.¹³⁰ The climax of Christ’s victory consisted of His Harrowing of Hell, which was depicted as a daring *creach* or raid. Christ, still riding His steed, rushed to the gates of Hell, bent upon emptying its

necessarily influenced by the wider matrix from which it comes; see Macquarrie, *God-talk: an examination of the language and logic of theology*, p.19.

¹²⁶ ‘The song of Aonghus, son of Aodh Ruadh Ó hUiginn’, v.4, in Leslie (ed.), *Saint Patrick’s Purgatory: a record from history and literature*, p.175; also *AFOD* 21, v.4.

¹²⁷ *DDé* 3, v.3.

¹²⁸ *ADD* 65, v.26; *ibid.*, 71, v.32; *ibid.*, 64, v.15.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, v.31.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 77, v.35.

dungeons.¹³¹ In one composition, a poet recalled how Christ ‘with this cross...broke down our foe’s door and took us from him and marched off with us as His booty.’¹³² While elaborate descriptions of the Passion such as these might be considered merely literary conventions, their influence on popular piety should not be underestimated. Religious iconography frequently dovetailed with poetic imagery and created an image of a supremely active God who engaged with the world daily, often in a very earthly manner. For most late medieval Europeans, God was very much a ‘hands-on’ ruler and their dwelling place was, what Sallie McFague terms a ‘sacramental universe.’¹³³ Thus, God’s intervention in human affairs was expected and natural occurrences were frequently divinised. Events such as these, as discussed in chapter 1, were interpreted as God’s work in the world under what might be called the notion of Providence. God’s ways were not the ways of the world and, thus, the Lord was perceived as always having His reasons for allowing both good and evil to occur. Continuing in this tradition, Ó hEoghusa, in his commentary on the final petition of the Our Father (*‘achd saor inn ó ulc’*), clarifies what the Church interprets as ‘evil’:

Tabhair dot aire nách é ní dho theagaisg Críosa dúinn ann so a iarraidh ar saoradh ar olc d’áiridhe, mar atá tinneas, bochdaine, bás, do bhríogh gurab iomdha ní shaoilmídne do bheith olc dhúinn 7 go bhfaiceann Dia gurab é ar leas tig asda, 7 gurab iomdha ní shaoilmíd do bheith maith dhúinn 7 go bhfaiceann Dia gurab é ar n-aimhleas tig asda. Ar an n-adhbhar sin,

¹³¹ Ibid., v.27.

¹³² Ibid., 88, v.6.

¹³³ McFague, *Metaphorical theology: models of God in religious language*, pp 1-2.

*iarrmaoid ar Dhia do réir theagaisg ar // Slánaightheóra, ar saoradh ar an ní as aithnidh dhó féin do bheith olc dhúinn, ní ar an ní as olc linn.*¹³⁴

Regarding what manifested itself frequently as quite a physicalist interpretation of God's intervention in the world in the later middle ages, Ó hEoghusa takes care to remind his audience to beware of taking physical attributes of God too seriously. In commenting upon Christ's ascension to the right hand of his Father he has this to say:

*Bíoth a fhios agat nach foil lámh dheas ná chlé ag Dia mar bhíos ag na daoibh, ór ní nádúir chorpardha atá aige achd nádúir sbioradálta.*¹³⁵

Because God is not a corporal entity, therefore the generation of persons does not occur in the same way as human generation, he explains:

*Ionnas go ttuigthéa so, bíoth a fhios agat do chéidneithibh nách ionann gheintear an chlann thalmhaidhe 7 Mac an Athar síordhaidhe...an Mac iomorro síordhaidhe, ní lé saothar corpardha achd lé hoibrioghadh na tuigseana do geineadh ón Athair é ag tuigsean 7 ag féchain a dhiadhachda féin, mar gheintear íomhaigh ó dhuine ag féchain a sgáthán.*¹³⁶

¹³⁴ 'Be aware that Christ does not instruct us here to request to be preserved from specific evil such as sickness, poverty, death, because there are many things that we regard as bad for us [that] God sees as being for our good, and there are many things that we regard as being good for us that God sees as being harmful to us. On that account, we ask God, according to the instruction of Our Saviour, to save us from the thing that He himself recognises as being bad for us, not the thing that we (ourselves) do not like': *TC*, p.48.

¹³⁵ 'Know you that God has not a right hand or a left hand as people have for he has not a corporal nature but a spiritual nature': *TC*, p.27.

¹³⁶ 'In order that you would understand this, know firstly that the earthly family is not generated in the same way as the Son of the Eternal Father...moreover the Eternal Son was not generated from the Father through a bodily work [sexual intercourse] but by the working of the Will, [as] He [the Father]

Similarly, Ó hEoghusa, in treating of Christ's descent to Hell (commonly known as His Harrowing of Hell) instructs: '*Tabhair dot aire ann so nach deacaidh achd anam Críosa ceangailte ris an ndiadhachd go hifrionn.*'¹³⁷ Thus, images of Christ's full-bodied raid of Hell were not to be taken literally. Ó hEoghusa returns to the theme of imagining God (i.e. considering His shape and form) in his treatment of the first commandment. Here again, he cautions against a blind acceptance of traditional depictions of the persons of the Trinity, explaining the portrayal of the Father as an old man and the Spirit as a dove as merely a device to aid the meditation of the faithful and not a reflection of their real forms:

*Fiafraighthear fós créd fá // ndealbhtar an tAthair neamhdha go ndeibh sheanduine, ⁊ an Sbiorad Naomh go bhfiogair cholaim...ór as deimhin nach foil fioghair chorpardha ar éinphearsain don Tríonnóid do réir a ndiadhachda...achd as í cúis // a ndelbhtha mar sin, ionnas go mbéidís comharthadha corpardha éigin again do-bhéradh inar ccuimhne iad.*¹³⁸

Concluding his section on the nature of the Trinity, Ó hEoghusa offers a very simple (if circular) argument for the existence of three persons in *one* God. Were there more than one God, he proposes, the opening words of the Creed would be '*Creidim isna déibh*' instead of '*Creidim a nDia*'!¹³⁹

understood and perceived His own divinity in the same way as the image of a person is created when looking at a mirror': *ibid.*, p.11.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.26.

¹³⁸ 'It is asked still why the Heavenly Father is portrayed in the form of an old man and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove...for it is certain that no Person of the Trinity has a bodily form on account of their divinity...but the reason for their depiction as such is in order that they have some corporal character that we might remember them by': *ibid.*, p.59.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.12.

In his discussion of the Incarnation, Ó hEoghusa points out very clearly that the Holy Spirit is not the father of Christ. It was through the work or action of the Holy Spirit that Christ was conceived, the Spirit shaping and forming the body of a small child from the pure blood of the Virgin and then creating a soul with which He infused the body, he explains.¹⁴⁰ At that very moment, the Son fused these with His own nature so that the person of the Son now had two natures, divine and human.¹⁴¹ The Spirit, who worked on the original material, is no more the father of the Christ child than a builder is father of a house or the smith of a sword he produces, he continues.¹⁴² In speaking of Mary's role in the birth of Christ, mention is given to the fact that no harm was done to her virginity in the process. The teaching that Mary was Virgin *ante partum*, *in partu* and *post partum* (before, during and after giving birth to Christ), which had a long history in the Catholic Church, was very familiar in Gaelic Ireland and gained frequent mention in bardic poetry. Poets marvelled at this feature of Mary's life in lines such as 'it is a thing unheard of in her race that her infant harmed not her virginity.'¹⁴³ The image of a sunbeam passing through glass, which was commonly used from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries to convey the concept of Christ passing into Mary's womb at

¹⁴⁰ In medieval physiology, the mother was considered almost entirely passive in the formation of a child, which was thought to have been produced out of her blood, the existence of the female ovum being unknown. See Graef, *Mary: a history of doctrine and devotion*, vol. I, p.14.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.22.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *ADD* 87, v.17; *ibid.*, 71, v.34.

the Incarnation, was not ignored by Ó hEoghusa.¹⁴⁴ He draws on this image, undoubtedly aware that it had still been in use in Gaelic Ireland when he was active as a professional poet. However, in this instance, he utilises the image to describe Christ's birth rather than His conception:

*Rugadh é: a theachd amach a ccionn naoi míos gan doilgheas ná dí[o]ghbháil do dhénamh dá mháthair...mar théid ga gréine tré ghloine gan a lot; mar sin nár chaill máthair // ár Slánaightheóra a hóghdhachd agá bhreith ná agá ghabháil a mbroinn.*¹⁴⁵

When dealing with the Passion and Death of Christ, Ó hEoghusa makes a few simple, but clear points. Christ suffered death by His own will, not because of a lack of strength or power to defend Himself. He did not suffer death because of any sin He himself had committed, for He was the sinless one, but on account of the sin of humanity. However, there is a barbed warning attached, which states that no one should believe that he will be saved regardless of how he lives his life. The benefits of the Passion are clearly transmitted through the sacraments and good works. This *caveat* embodies a clear rebuff to the thought of reformers such as Luther who dispensed with the need for good works and for the Sacrament of Penance, demonstrating how this catechism was, in part, designed to combat the false

¹⁴⁴ For examples of the use of this image in bardic poetry see *DDé* 26, v.23, *ADD* 82, v.24, *ibid.*, 60, v.8 and *AFOD* 48, v.26. For an interesting study on this motif see Andrew Breeze, 'The Blessed Virgin and the sunbeam through glass', in *Celtica* xxiii (1999), pp 19-19.

¹⁴⁵ 'He was born: coming out after nine months without doing affliction or harm to His mother...as a sunbeam passes through a window, without destroying it; therefore the mother of Our Saviour did not lose her virginity neither in bearing Him nor conceiving Him': *TC*, p.23.

doctrines that assailed adherents to the Catholic Church.¹⁴⁶ Ó hEoghusa asserts that, although death separated Christ's soul from His body (His soul visiting those waiting for salvation in what was termed Hell, as noted above), Christ's divinity was not separated from either of them.¹⁴⁷ This attempt to ensure that the *whole* Christ (humanity and divinity) was kept in view at all times rallied against misunderstandings such as that of Cormac Ruadh Ó hUiginn (*n.l.t.*1473) who, when commenting upon the Incarnation, stated that 'the Father remained ruling in Heaven; the King of glory was divided, one part being in the Virgin's womb.'¹⁴⁸ The momentous event, which succeeded Christ's death on Calvary, namely His 'Harrowing of Hell' was a hugely popular theme in medieval European religious literature, appearing in a huge variety of works.¹⁴⁹ However, what all these descriptions of the Harrowing have in common, both in prose and in bardic poetry is that the *creach* or raid on Hell is complete, each of its occupants safely evacuated. This is perhaps best exemplified in a verse from the sixteenth-century poet, Maolmhuire, son of Cairbre Ó hUiginn: 'Furious at thy wounds thou dost on the Sunday morning raid drive recklessly thy steed up to Hell's gates and empty its dungeon.'¹⁵⁰ Some confusion was always likely to arise between the Hell to which Christ descended after His death (containing the generations who had waited for the redemptive act to allow them passage to paradise) and the more infamous place of

¹⁴⁶ The archbishop of Malines, in granting permission to the Franciscans for its publication in 1611, welcomed it as such. See Brendan Jennings and Cathaldus Giblin (eds), *Louvain Papers 1606-1827* (Dublin, 1968), p.32.

¹⁴⁷ *TC*, p.25. Bonaventura follows the catechism of the Council of Trent closely on this point.

¹⁴⁸ *DDé* 21, v.14.

¹⁴⁹ For a discussion of this motif, see chapter 1.

¹⁵⁰ *ADD* 77, v.27.

eternal damnation. Ó hEoghusa takes the opportunity in this section of the catechism to clarify the issue:

*Bíoth a fhios agat...nách rug sé // as achd an mhéid do bhí a n-ifrionn na n-aithreadh naomhtha amháin; ór ní rug na hanmanna damanta do bhí a n-ifreann íochdarach as, do bhrígh gurab pian shíordhaidhe dhlighthear dhóibh.*¹⁵¹

The reality of a Hell containing a damned populace who do not benefit from the fruits of Christ's Passion is, thus, reinforced by Ó hEoghusa.

One of the most sobering thoughts in late medieval piety was that of the Final Judgement, which the Son of God would pronounce upon humanity. The vision of Christ's return was regularly depicted above rood lofts in churches as a haunting reminder of the necessity of living a good life. Christ would come at the end of time, His wounds all fresh and bleeding, to exact justice.¹⁵² As noted above, bardic poets used at least fifteen different terms to refer to it, underlining its significance in the Gaelic mindset.¹⁵³ Ó hEoghusa, in his treatment of the return of Christ in judgement, combines both old and new elements. Firstly, he bases his reference to various signs and portents preceding the event firmly on a biblical reference (Lk 8), while also mentioning the older (and non-biblical) tradition of '*na cúig lá dhég résan mbráth do réir fhiaghnaisi an naoimh Hiearonimus*' (which spoke of specific fifteen signs, allegedly attributed to Jerome, which would warn humanity that the Day of

¹⁵¹ 'Be it known to you...that He only released those who were in the Hell of the holy fathers [those just ones who waited for Christ's act of redemption that finally allowed them to see Heaven]; for He did not release the damned souls that were in low-lying Hell on account of the fact that eternal punishment was due to them': *TC*, p.26.

¹⁵² Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, pp 157, 309.

¹⁵³ Ó Laoghaire, 'Spioradáltacht na hÉireann, 1200-1500', p.142.

Judgement was at hand), a belief that was fervently held right across Europe throughout the middle ages.¹⁵⁴ In Ó hEoghusa's discussion of the Judgement, however, the manner of Christ's return differs from the most prevalent portrayals of the late medieval period. Instead of His traditional return on the cross, wounds bleeding afresh, Christ is now depicted as arriving in a chariot of fire with flaming wheels and a stream of fire emanating from His countenance: '*carbad teinntidhe bhias faoi, roth // adha teinntidhe fán charbad; biaidh sruth tairptheach teinntidhe ag sileadh óna ghnúis...*'¹⁵⁵ This depiction of Christ on Judgement Day could not be further removed from the Gaelic account of the fifteen signs found in the sixteenth-century *Leabhar Uí Maolchonaire* (but which, in fact, well predates its sixteenth century transcription in origin):

And then the King of Glory will arise with His final cross on His shoulder in the presence of them all; and thus He will arise, with all His red body around Him, with the traces of the stabs and wounds of His Passion upon Him, so that all the deep incurable gashes and the great tortures which they, themselves, inflicted upon Him, may be manifested to the Jews.¹⁵⁶

Ó hEoghusa prefers, therefore, the portrayal of a triumphant Judge who does not feel the need to show His wounds again or to revisit His afflicted state at the Passion, but, instead, gets down to the business of judging immediately. Bonaventura does not neglect to state clearly that those who die outside the Church, or in heresy or mortal sin will go directly to eternal damnation.¹⁵⁷ This

¹⁵⁴ 'the fifteen days before the judgement according to the evidence of Jerome': *TC*, p.28.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.29.

¹⁵⁶ Stokes, 'The fifteen tokens of Doomsday', p.317. Note that neither image of Christ as judge is given publicity in the catechism of the Council of Trent.

¹⁵⁷ *TC*, p.30.

pronouncement was distinctly aimed at those who might contemplate converting to false doctrines.¹⁵⁸

The question of the validity of devotion to Mary and the saints is examined by Ó hEoghusa under the heading of the first commandment. However, the example of the saints is already highlighted at an earlier stage, in the context of a treatment of the Church as One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, near the end of the Creed. A succession of arguments is used in an attempt to prove that the Catholic Church is the only true and authentic Church. One of the last of these concerns the lives of the various saints down through the ages. Ó hEoghusa states that it militates against all reason to claim that figures such as Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, Gregory and others were deluded.¹⁵⁹ Moving from these universally important Church figures, Bonaventura adds to the list some saints to whom the Gaelic Irish had particular devotion, namely Patrick (who brought Ireland to the faith and exiled poisonous snakes from the land, performing many incredible miracles) Colmcille, Brigid, Ciarán and many more ‘whose sanctity and miracles cannot be verified.’¹⁶⁰ This last phrase is a telling one for, when combined with the claims regarding Patrick, it serves as a fitting illustration of Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa’s position in a devotional Europe that was on the threshold of considerable change. Ó hEoghusa, indeed, has his foot in both camps, i.e. he possesses both a traditional pre-Tridentine background and yet is at the forefront of the promulgation of Tridentine ideals to his native people. The establishment by the Papacy of the Sacred Congregation of Rites

¹⁵⁸ Bonaventura’s personal distaste for those who discarded the Catholic faith for Reformed doctrines is evident in a poem addressed to a personal friend who made such a choice. See *DBM* 9.

¹⁵⁹ *TC*, p. 18.

¹⁶⁰ ‘*7 iomad oile nách éidir cinnteachd do chor ar a naomhthachd*’: *ibid.*

and Ceremonies in 1588 marked the beginning of an organised attempt to revamp and increasingly screen the cult of the saints. From now on, there would be a serious examination of the validity of saints' cults especially at local level. The lives of saints were now required to conform to sound theology. In an effort to remodel the life of Irish saints new works such as Richard Stanihurst's *De Vitae S Patricii, Hiberniae Apostoli*, published at Antwerp in 1587, adopted an image of Patrick as patriarch and apostle of Ireland as opposed to the popular image of a saint who performed countless miracles and supernatural feats.¹⁶¹ In Ó hEoghusa's account of the saints, he displays both an eagerness to recall the miracles of Patrick, which he indirectly uses as proof of the Church's status as the one, true, Church, and yet at the same time admits to the fact that there are many other saints whose credentials are possibly dubious. It is clear that, at this point, Ó hEoghusa had not yet discarded the traditional legends surrounding Ireland's patron that he must surely have grown up with.

The prohibition against the worship of false gods contained in the first commandment does not forbid one from honouring the saints and the angels, claims Ó hEoghusa.¹⁶² Although the Lord ordered that He alone should be worshipped, nevertheless He also instructed us to honour our fathers and mothers. If a king demanded that no one else in the kingdom should be honoured as king, would that prohibit one from giving honour to the duke or the earl in their own right, asks Ó hEoghusa. Surely not, he replies to his own question.¹⁶³ In the same way, although

¹⁶¹ Cunningham and Gillespie, "'The most adaptable of saints': the cult of St Patrick in the seventeenth century", p.88.

¹⁶² *TC*, p.56.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*.

we are forbidden to adore any creature as God, this does not mean that we cannot give fitting honour to the saints and the angels. Ó hEoghusa recommends the veneration of the saints and the angels as they gaze upon God in heaven and they wish to do good for us. Besides, this has always been the case in the tradition of the Church, in Scripture and authorised by the Councils and Fathers of the Church.¹⁶⁴ In the same way, the veneration of relics of the saints is declared as a valid practice. Catholics, in their prayers, do not request anything from the relics themselves, as the heretics maintain, continues Bonaventura; instead, they ask the souls of the saints to intercede for them and to remember them, just as they, themselves, are helped to remember the saint by venerating his relics.¹⁶⁵ Images of Christ or Mary are said to perform the same function, namely to aid the devotee to remember the heavenly figure to whom his prayers are addressed.¹⁶⁶ The reader is reminded that it is still commonly recounted that Luke the Evangelist created an image of Mary.¹⁶⁷ Ó hEoghusa argues that it is unreasonable to claim that God would not approve of images, seeing the amount of benefits that they perform, citing in particular their usefulness to the unlearned:

Óir do-níd áit leabhar do na tuatadhaibh ó nách éol léghórachd do dhénamh, ag tabhairt chuimhne Críosa 7 a pháisi, Muire 7 na naomh, 'na n-intinn, ionnas go mosglaid a sbiorad chrábhaidh dochum grádha 7 anóra do thabhairt dóibh so, dochum buidheachais do bhreith iona ttiodhlaicthibh riú,

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp 56-7

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p.58.

7 *dochum a mhiana do bheith ortha a sompla do leanmhain do réir a ccumhachd.*¹⁶⁸

The benefits of images are not confined to the illiterate, in Ó hEoghusa's view, however. They are also identified as useful aids for the learned, since iconography is transmitted to the mind far more quickly than something that is read.¹⁶⁹ Ó hEoghusa, concluding his *apologia*, poses the following question: if it is true that images or relics do not sense anything that is done in their presence how is it that they perform the many marvellous miracles that we see every day? The answer which he gives to his own question is simple: it is not the images themselves that perform the miracles but God Himself, on account of the intercession of the saints and Mary, and also to show that He wishes that honour and devotion be shown by all to the saints and their relics.¹⁷⁰ Devotion to Mary is further elaborated upon in the commentary on the first line of the Hail Mary. The status of Mary and her relationship to Christ and to humanity is explained:

¹⁶⁸ 'For they take the place of the book for the laity who do not know how to read, bringing to their minds Christ and His Passion, Mary and the saints, so as to enkindle their [people's] devotional spirit to give love and honour to them to give them thanks for their gifts and to give them [people] the desire to follow their example according to their ability': *ibid.*, pp 58-9.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.59.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.* Ó hEoghusa was perhaps attempting here to discourage people from superstitiously investing power solely in the relic as object rather than in the heavenly personage whom it represented. For examples of this kind of understanding of relics see Lucas, 'The social role of relics and reliquaries in ancient Ireland', pp 21-8.

*Bíoth a fhios agat gurab uime a adermíd an tAve Maria a ndiaigh na Paidre,
ar an n-adhbhar go bhfuil Muire 'na habhcóididh eadrainn 7 Críosa, do réir
mar a//tá Críosa 'na abhcóididh eadrainn 7 an tAthair.*¹⁷¹

The idea of Mary as Advocate was not new (see chapter 2) but here Mary's position is strictly defined. Ó hEoghusa explains that it is usual for people, having asked a request of a prince, to afterwards speak to the most powerful people in his court in order that they might be aware of the petition.¹⁷²

Treatment of the sacraments in *An Teagasg Críosaíde* is straightforward enough, reflecting the concerns of Trent. Regarding baptism, Ó hEoghusa lists three things that are necessary for the valid conferring of the sacrament: firstly it must be ensured that only ordinary water is poured over the candidate (likewise, if the candidate is to be immersed, the same rule applies).¹⁷³ The fact that Ó hEoghusa mentions the possibility of full immersion is interesting. Undoubtedly, he was aware that baptism by full immersion was still relatively common in Gaelic Ireland, where it survived well into the seventeenth century, as attested by the synods of Dublin (1624) and Tuam (1631), despite having declined much more rapidly on the continent.¹⁷⁴ The enduring problem of baptisms performed using other substances such as ale and milk is discussed above (chapter 4). The second requirement is identified as the use of the correct formula, i.e. 'I baptise you in the name of the

¹⁷¹ 'Let it be known to you that we also say the *Ave Maria* after the Our Father because Mary is Advocate between us and Christ according as Christ is Advocate between us and the Father': *TC*, pp 48-9.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.77.

¹⁷⁴ Mac Garry, 'The statutes of Tuam from the Council of Trent to the nineteenth century', p.38.

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷⁵ Thirdly, the person baptising must have the intention to perform the sacrament as instructed by Christ. Therefore, to say the words in jest over a child that is simply being bathed is condemned as gravely sinful.¹⁷⁶ A mature person receiving the sacrament must not be baptised against his will. He must have faith and repent of his sins. The same requirement is not made of infants since their godparents respond in their stead and make promises in their name. Ó hEoghusa reminds the reader of the requirement of Trent that only two godparents are allowed stand for a child and that both should ensure that the child is brought up in the Catholic faith.¹⁷⁷ It is stated that the ordinary minister of the sacrament is the priest and, if possible, the parish priest. If this is not practicable, a deacon may perform the ceremony. Indeed, if the child is in danger of death, any lay person can confer baptism if they intend to do what the Church does, as Christ instructed.¹⁷⁸ Ó hEoghusa notes, however, that there is an order of preference when it comes to who should baptise, i.e. a woman should not baptise in the presence of a man, or a lay-person in the presence of a cleric, or a cleric of low order in the presence of a cleric of higher order.¹⁷⁹ This concern was not a new one. It is also documented in the Sarum rite of baptism.¹⁸⁰ Finally, a passage treating of the effects of baptism is included. Baptism cleanses one of Original Sin and from all other sin that one commits before baptism and has repented of (if one receives the sacrament as an adult). Grace is received by the candidate, which makes him a Son of God,

¹⁷⁵ *TC*, p.77.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 77-8.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.78.

¹⁸⁰ Whitaker, *Documents of the baptismal liturgy*, p.250.

heir to the kingdom of Heaven and no longer a son of the devil. All punishment due to sin is also wiped out, ensuring that an adult who receives baptism and dies immediately after it goes straight to Heaven. Baptism imparts the seal of Christ by which one is henceforth recognised, even if one goes to Hell, as one of the flock of Christ. Having been baptised, one is born anew in the Spirit and made a member of the Body of Christ, the Church. Ó hEoghusa reminds his audience that no one can be saved without baptism or at least the intention to be baptised. No other sacrament can be received without it. Ó hEoghusa notes, furthermore, that everyone who is baptised must remain obedient to the Pope, who is the head of the Church under Christ.¹⁸¹

An examination of the sacrament of the Eucharist begins with the listing of four requirements for its proper celebration. The celebrant must be a priest and he must follow exactly the rubrics of the Eucharistic liturgy as presented in the missal. The bread must be unleavened and the wine must be authentic. The priest must recite certain words, as ordained by Christ. Finally the priest must intend to celebrate the Eucharist as ordered by Christ.¹⁸² Ó hEoghusa then explains that the pre-consecrated host is merely bread and that it is only after the priest says the words of the consecration that it becomes the Body of Christ.¹⁸³ The whole Christ is present in the host; indeed the whole Trinity '*do bhriogh nách éidir pearsanna na Tríonóide do sgaradh ré chéile.*'¹⁸⁴ The same applies to the wine after consecration. It becomes the Blood of Christ, but not just the Blood but the whole Christ, Body,

¹⁸¹ *TC*, p.78.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p.79.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.80.

¹⁸⁴ 'because the persons of the Trinity cannot separate from each other': *ibid.*

Blood and Divinity.¹⁸⁵ At this point, Ó hEoghusa discusses the subject of substance and accidents in relation to the Eucharist. It is explained that without losing the form, colour, taste or smell [the accidents] of bread during the consecration, the substance of the bread is nevertheless annihilated at the moment of consecration when it is transformed into the Body of Christ.¹⁸⁶ The same applies to the chalice of wine. Ó hEoghusa uses the analogy from Scripture of Lot's wife who was turned into a pillar of salt, to emphasise his point. Although what remained displayed the figure and shape of Lot's wife, it was nevertheless only salt in substance.¹⁸⁷ Even if the host fragmented into a thousand pieces, there would not be one of them in which Christ would not be entirely present.¹⁸⁸ Ó hEoghusa warns against the belief that, when the host is broken, Christ's body is thereby dismembered. Reiterating the teaching that the whole Christ is present in every particle, he states that should one find this difficult to understand one should remember '*gurab mó as éidir le Dia do dhénamh iná as éidir leat féin do thuigsin.*'¹⁸⁹ After all, according to the evidence of Christ in the Gospel, Ó hEoghusa recounts '*go bhfédfadh [Dia]...cámhall, .i. beathadhach as mó ná each, do bhreith tré chró snáthaide.*'¹⁹⁰ This reference is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, Bonavenura, who was familiar with the Irish situation, was not confident that his audience were *au fait* with the quoted passage from Scripture. Otherwise, he would not have had to explain what a camel was. Secondly, Ó hEoghusa displays a very positive soteriological outlook in his use of

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ 'God can do more than you can understand': *ibid.*, p.81.

¹⁹⁰ 'that God could...pass a camel, i.e. an animal bigger than a horse, through the eye of a needle': *ibid.*

the passage in question (Matt 19:24). Jesus's words explain that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God. While the analogy is most commonly interpreted as stating that it is impossible for someone who is a slave to riches to enter Heaven, Ó hEoghusa approaches it from a different angle, i.e. that God will perform this wonder (the passing of a camel through the eye of the needle) if that is what it takes to save the rich man. Ó hEoghusa, therefore, presents the feat as doable, and God as willing and able to carry it out.¹⁹¹ Next, the question of the manner in which Christ is able to be present on the various altars of the world, while also present in Heaven, is addressed. Again, Bonaventura states that the powers of God are beyond our understanding and that we should therefore believe. He is not without two analogies, however, to support the Church's claim. Firstly, he states that the soul of a person can be present both in one's head and in one's feet and all the other parts of one's body at the same time. Perhaps fearing that this example might be somewhat abstract for some audiences, he provides a second analogy, this time from a life of St Anthony of Padua. It is related that Anthony possessed the gift of bilocation, enabling him to deliver a sermon in an Italian city, while performing some other good work in Portugal at the same time.¹⁹² Three recommendations are outlined for those who wish to receive: they must examine their conscience and confess their sins, they must fast beforehand and must be aware of who they are receiving and thereby receive with devotion.¹⁹³ The question of reception of Communion under

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p.82.

both species is then addressed.¹⁹⁴ Those who receive the host receive the whole Christ. The design of Christ in granting the sacrament of the Eucharist to the Church is outlined as consisting of three elements: that the Eucharist would be a spiritual food for those who received, that it would be the sacrifice for the New Covenant, and that it would serve as a constant reminder of the Passion of Christ.¹⁹⁵

The section on Confession in *An Teagasg Críosaíde* concerns itself with familiar issues and problems surrounding the sacrament. The sacrament is said to consist of both the confession of one's sins and the reception of absolution from the priest. God has ordained the priest as judge of sins committed after baptism.¹⁹⁶ Continuing with the metaphor of the court, Ó hEoghusa states that the plaintiff must present his case to the judge and the latter must judge the case clearly.¹⁹⁷ The three necessary elements for a good confession, namely contrition, confession and satisfaction, are explained.¹⁹⁸ Examination of conscience using the Ten Commandments is recommended.¹⁹⁹ The penitent is urged to remember that his sins are weightier than that of Adam who, through the eating of the apple, condemned the whole human race to Hell for five thousand years.²⁰⁰ It is not enough for him to be sorry because

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p.83.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p.84.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ This is perhaps a reference to the *Sex aetates mundi* or 'Six ages of the world', a periodisation of world history characteristic of medieval literature generally, and traceable as far back as Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*. The ages in question are from Adam to Noah, Noah to Abraham, Abraham to David, David to the Exile, the Exile to the coming of Christ, the sixth age covering the period afterwards. The concept of *sex aetates mundi* was well known in Ireland, references being found in *Lebor na hUidre*,

of the awfulness of sin or the fear of Hell; he is urged, furthermore, to repent because he has committed an offence against God.²⁰¹ Neither is it enough merely to be contrite alone. In addition, he must relate his sins to the priest in the following manner: with shame and contrition, without adding or deducting anything from them, without lying or blaming anyone else for them, without offering any excuse or withholding any sin out of shame and without relating the sins of another person.²⁰² Recommendations such as these were not new. As seen above (chapter 4) they feature in works such as the *Confessionale-Defecerunt* of Antoninus of Florence (1389-1459) whose 'sixteen conditions of a good confession' is attributed to St Thomas Aquinas.²⁰³ They also appear in Gaelic tracts on confession such as the fifteenth-century Franciscan manuscript written at Kilcrea and now in the public library at Rennes, in TCD Ms 667 (also dating from the fifteenth century) and in several other codices dating from the same period.²⁰⁴ However Ó hEoghusa sees fit to include them with a new urgency. It is recommended that the species of sin and number of times it was committed be included in the confession. There is a warning against storytelling that is not directly relevant to the confession and the penitent is advised against waiting for the priest to ask him his sins; instead he, himself, should

the *Book of Ballymote*, the (*Great*) *Book of Lecan*, *Leabhar Uí Mhaine* and widely in bardic religious poetry. For Ó hEoghusa, who was well aware of the prevalence of the tradition in Ireland, a thousand years corresponds to an age. For the first five ages humanity lingers in the Hell of the waiting just ones, which Christ eventually harrows after His death, announcing a new (sixth) age in which Heaven has been opened for mankind; see McNamara, *The apocrypha in the Irish Church*, pp 30-1.

²⁰¹ *TC*, p.84.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, pp 84-5.

²⁰³ Tentler, *Sin and confession on the eve of the reformation*, p.106.

²⁰⁴ Ó Clabaigh, *The Franciscans in Ireland 1400-1534*, pp 151-2.

relate them without unnecessary delay.²⁰⁵ He should be prepared to carry out whatever penance the priest gives to him and be thankful for the small pain it will involve when compared with the everlasting pain of Hell.²⁰⁶ The three modes of penance, namely prayer, fasting and almsgiving are then explicated. Finally, a reminder of the obligation to confess once a year and before receiving the Eucharist, if in grave sin, is given.

Theobald Stapleton's *Catechismus* (1639)

Theobald Stapleton (or Teaboid Gállduf as he called himself on the title page of his catechism) differed significantly from Ó Maolchonaire and Ó hEoghusa in background. Firstly, he did not belong to a learned family and secondly, he was of English extraction. He was not a Franciscan but was, instead, a secular priest who had also received his education on the continent. An account of Stapleton found in a history of the College of Seville, and written in 1620, details how, while a student in Lisbon, he set off for Spain to petition the duke of Braganza for permission to found a seminary for the education of Irish students for the priesthood.²⁰⁷ Having acquired one James Carney, a priest from the college at Salamanca to serve the spiritual needs of the students, the Irish college at Seville was founded in 1612 and Stapleton ordained priest in 1616.²⁰⁸ Unlike either Ó Maolchonaire or Ó hEoghusa, Stapleton spent twelve years ministering as a priest in Ireland and thus had first-hand

²⁰⁵ TC, p.85.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Thomas Wall, 'Doctrinal instruction in Irish: the work of Theobald Stapleton', in *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record* lxii (1943), p.106.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

experience of the pastoral and catechetical needs of the Catholic laity.²⁰⁹ His work, the *Catechismus*, differs from that of both others because it was researched and compiled on the continent, but in the light of pastoral experience in Ireland. Having had the catechism published at Brussels in 1639, Stapleton returned to Ireland, presumably to oversee its distribution.²¹⁰ When Cashel was sacked in 1647 by the troops of Murrough O' Brien, earl of Inchiquin, Stapleton took refuge in the cathedral and was subsequently killed.²¹¹

Stapleton's catechism is also very different in content from the works of either Ó Maolchonaire or Ó hEoghusa. The introduction to the *Catechismus* reveals Stapleton's grave concern for the catechesis of the Irish and laments the state of religious knowledge encountered by the author. Stapleton's aim was to present clearly the teachings of the Church in an uncomplicated and easily understood manner.²¹² He reacts firmly against the old minimal approach that required the Christian to 'believe what the Church believes.' This, he states, is no longer sufficient:

or ní leór creideamh go coitcheann .i. chreideamh, mar chreideas an Eaglais; acht amh, atá doulach oruinn fá phéin pheaca mhairibh, eolus do

²⁰⁹ Stapleton refers to this time spent in Ireland in the dedication of his catechism; see John F. O' Doherty (ed.), *The 'Catechismus' of Theobald Stapleton* (Dublin, 1945).

²¹⁰ Wall, 'Doctrinal instruction in Irish', p.107.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.107.

²¹² *Catechismus*, Prologue, § 3.

*bheith aguin ar dheamh-harrunnibh an chreidimh, go so leir, follas,
idirdehalaithe...*²¹³

Stapleton expresses personal regret that he has witnessed so many Christians who are astray, lacking knowledge of the most necessary teachings such as the Our Father, Creed and Ten Commandments.²¹⁴ He identifies two reasons for this state of affairs. The first is the lack of shepherds to instruct the people. Where shepherds are to be found, they often display carelessness and neglect.²¹⁵ He stresses the importance of the teaching office of the priest as outlined by the Council of Trent:

*As fíor: go ccomhlionnan an Taoiridh lé an offig, á múna an Teagaisc
Criostuí ag an Altoir, no san phuilpid na Seanamora, no pearsa ele
iomachuibhe ar a shon mar fhogras comharle Thrent.*²¹⁶

The second reason is the neglect shown by the people themselves who are either inattentive when Christian doctrine is being taught or who forego the opportunities available to them.²¹⁷

Stapleton's catechism, like that of Ó Maolchonaire, is in the form of a dialogue between Master and disciple. It is divided into four parts, following the basic structure of the *Roman Catechism*, which respond to the queries of what should be believed (the Creed), what should be prayed (the Our Father, Hail Mary and Hail

²¹³ 'For it is not enough to believe in general, i.e. to believe what the Church believes, but indeed there is an obligation on us, under pain of [committing] mortal sin, to have knowledge of the teachings of the faith in a clear, evident and distinct [manner]': *ibid.*, § 4.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, § 8.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, § 11.

²¹⁶ 'It is true that the Shepherd fulfils his office by teaching the catechism at the altar or in the sermon pulpit, or another suitable person on his behalf as the Council of Trent states', § 15.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, § 18-19.

Holy Queen), what should be done (the keeping of the Commandments of God and the Church and the works of mercy) and what should be received (the Sacraments). The following examination of the text of Stapleton's work concentrates, in the main, on the principal distinctive features of the *Catechismus* that set it apart from the works of both Ó Maolchonaire and Ó hEoghusa, leaving aside the elements it holds in common with the former works, as these are already sufficiently noted above.

In the first section of the *Catechismus* the disciple recites the Apostles Creed, subsequently explaining to his master that it was composed by the apostles after Christ had ascended to Heaven and before they set out to preach the Gospel to the world. The Creed had already been taught to them by Christ and, in turn, by the apostles to the Church whence it is taught to us daily.²¹⁸ The Master poses a question as to whether the disciple has himself witnessed all the things he affirms in the Creed, such as the fact that there are Three Persons in the One God and so on. The importance of seeing with the eyes of faith is stressed in the disciple's reply: '*Ní fhacas go deimhin, cidheagh creidim sin uile amhail agus do chifinn iad go hiomlan lem shuilibh corpudha go soleir.*'²¹⁹ Even though the disciple did not see these things he believes firmly in them because, he says, God orders them to be believed and God does not deceive.²²⁰ The articles of the Creed are then listed. The Master then asks a question that is not found in either of the other catechisms: '*foillsigh a nois cread an ní é Dia?*'²²¹ In the other works, the starting point is the most basic teachings about God but here Stapleton moves back one step and asks a more

²¹⁸ *Catechismus*, p.9.

²¹⁹ 'Of course I did not see [them]; however I believe them as if I had seen them all clearly with the eyes of my body': *ibid.*, p.10.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.11.

²²¹ 'Declare now, what is God?': *ibid.*, p.13.

fundamental question still. The disciple admits in reply that the question posed is extremely difficult to answer. However, he explains that God is the highest thing above all that was created; He is without beginning or end, was always and will be always; it was He who created all there is and who maintains and directs it still.²²² Moving on to the Trinity, the Three Persons are identified and elaborated upon. In an effort to dispense with the confusion of Persons displayed by many people in Gaelic Ireland (treated of above), Stapleton is unambiguous in his approach, asking the following direct questions: ‘*An Mac an Taithair no an Aithair an Mac?*’ and ‘*An Aithair no an Mac an Spiorad Neaomh?*’²²³ The answer to both questions is of course ‘*Niheadh go deimhin.*’²²⁴ As in the other catechisms, the question of equality of Persons is then addressed. Regarding God’s omnipotence, Stapleton sees fit to introduce some classic problems associated with this assertion: if He is almighty, how is it that He cannot suffer death or sin if He so wishes?²²⁵ Queries like these also appear in the *Roman Catechism*.²²⁶ On the question of the appellation of ‘Saviour’, Stapleton explains that God holds that title because He saved us from the slavery and service of the devil.²²⁷

With regard to the articles of the Creed pertaining to the humanity of Christ, Stapleton introduces some of the questions that are commonly examined in

²²² Ibid.

²²³ ‘Is the Son the Father or the Father the Son?’ and ‘Is the Father or the Son the Holy Spirit?’: *ibid.*, p.15.

²²⁴ ‘Of course not’; *ibid.*

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.16.

²²⁶ ‘Although God is Omnipotent He cannot sin or be deceived’: Donovan (ed.), *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, p.34.

²²⁷ *Catechismus*, p.18.

Tridentine catechisms, such as ‘is it true that God possesses a human body like ours?’ Here, Stapleton’s answer is more cautious than either that of Ó Maolchonaire or Ó hEoghusa. He states ‘*Ní fíor go deimhin an mheid gur ab Día é, do bhrigh gur Spiorrad ghlan é, gidheagh ata an mheid gur ab duine é.*’²²⁸ Stapleton revisits the issue of the confusion of persons when he asks which of the Persons took human form. When the disciple responds that it was the Son, the Master seeks to qualify the matter further by querying whether the Father took human form. When this is denied, he moves on to the Person of the Holy Spirit and asks the same question. Having already answered the question a few lines earlier, Stapleton, in a final clarification, asks again: ‘*Ar an adhbhar sin, cia do ghaibh uime colann daonna?*’²²⁹, answering it with the words ‘*An Mac á mhain do ghaibh uime colann daonna, dha ngoirthear Iosa Christ.*’²³⁰ This kind of repetition by Stapleton suggests that he regarded a single treatment of the distinction of Persons as insufficient to inculcate the ‘*daoine ainibhfheasacha.*’²³¹ The question of the identity of Jesus Christ is subsequently addressed. Stapleton explains the meaning of the name ‘Jesus’ as ‘Saviour’, something Ó Maolchonaire or Ó hEoghusa do not do. He further explains what is meant by Saviour, asking ‘*Cia ór shlanuig & ó ar sháor sinn?*’²³² Having already answered this question a little earlier, Stapleton repeats ‘*O chomhachtuibh an Diabhuil, ó nar bpeacuibh & ó bhás shiorraidhe.*’²³³ The title

²²⁸ ‘Indeed it is not true in so far as He was God, because He is pure Spirit, however He has in so far as He was human’: *ibid.*, p.20.

²²⁹ ‘Therefore, who took human form?’: *ibid.*, p.21.

²³⁰ ‘The Son alone took human form and is called Jesus Christ’: *ibid.*

²³¹ ‘ignorant people’: *ibid.*

²³² ‘From whom did He redeem and free us?’: *ibid.*

²³³ ‘From the powers of the devil, from our sins and from eternal death’: *ibid.*

‘Christ’ is also explicated as High Priest and King of Kings.²³⁴ The reason why Christ is sometimes called ‘Our Lord’ is then given:

*Do brigh maraon ris an Aithir & ris an Spiorad Naomh gur Chruthaidh sinn, & ar an adhbhar sin, as sé ar Bpatrun é & ár Ttighearna mar an Aithair, nisa mho amh esean, or as le na shaothar, le na cheasa, lena phais, & le na bhás do shaor sinn ó an chumhachtuibh, & ó bhruid an Diabhuil, mar adearam na dhiaigh so.*²³⁵

The use of the term ‘patron’ is interesting in this regard. Bardic poets would certainly have been able to relate to the image of God as patron, being accustomed to dedicate their religious poems to this heavenly patron of the arts. The insertion of this portrayal of Christ by Stapleton is curious at a time when Gaelic literature lamented the collapse of the system that supported the bardic order. For the third time in a few lines, Stapleton refers to Christ’s redemption of humanity from the slavery of the devil. This method of including recollection of previous answers in current questions was a clever technique designed to aid mental retention of the material.

Stapleton’s treatment of the Incarnation of Christ and Mary’s perpetual virginity differs significantly from that of the earlier Gaelic catechisms. In introducing the treatment, he begins with what is obvious to human reason, namely that it is common knowledge that people have a mother and father, and that a mother no longer remains a virgin after having conceived and borne a child. In contrast to the

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ ‘Because He created us along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and because of that He is our patron and our Lord as the Father [is]; indeed He is more, for with His work, His crucifixion, His Passion, and His Death, He freed us from the powers and the slavery of the devil, as we will relate after this’: *ibid.*

normal course of events, Stapleton asserts, the Son of God did not desire to have an earthly father when assuming human nature, having only a mother named Mary who was and always remained a virgin.²³⁶ Next, the Master asks the disciple to give some allegory to explain how a Virgin could conceive and give birth without losing her virginity. Firstly, the disciple answers that God can do more than we can understand, a response commonly found in these catechisms. The first example given is an agricultural one, relating to the land. Fruit is not yielded from the soil without it first having been ploughed and having received moisture and sun. However, the First Fruit Himself (Christ) was yielded without any of these. The soil was virgin when the announcement of Almighty God first came, and immediately the soil yielded its fruit, because of God's goodness alone.²³⁷ In the same way, the conception of Christ in Mary's womb, without her having had intercourse with any man, was the result of the work of the Holy Spirit alone.²³⁸ It was His work alone that brought forth '*an gran ro-uasal ud .i. corp anamauil Mhic De.*'²³⁹ The imagery here is intensely Eucharistic.

The part played by the Persons of the Trinity in the Incarnation of Christ is now examined in response to the question of why the work of the Incarnation is attributed to the Holy Spirit. The disciple, in response, states that whatever one Person of the Trinity does, the others also perform together.²⁴⁰ Nevertheless, different attributes are accorded to the Persons. Seeing as the Holy Spirit is

²³⁶ Ibid., p.22.

²³⁷ Ibid., p.23.

²³⁸ Ibid., pp 23-4.

²³⁹ 'the noble grain i.e. the living Body of the Son of God': *ibid.*, p.24.

²⁴⁰ This question is addressed in the Roman Catechism also; see Donovan (ed.), *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, pp 49-50.

associated with the dispensing of love, the bringing of Love Himself into the world is identified as the Holy Spirit's work.²⁴¹ The master enquires next as to how all the Persons of the Trinity could have been involved in the Incarnation while it was only the Son who actually assumed human form. The disciple gives the example of a person putting on clothes and two others helping to put them on. However, only one person wears the clothes. Similarly, the Three Persons co-operated together in putting human form on the Son; however the Son alone actually assumed humanity.²⁴² This image does not appear in either the *Roman Catechism* or in the catechetical works of Ó Maolchonaire or Ó hEoghusa. The more common analogies, explaining how the birth of Christ did not harm Mary's virginity, such as Christ passing through the closed tomb, and the sunbeam through glass image, which appear together in the treatment found in the Roman Catechism, are also mentioned by Stapleton.²⁴³

The *Catechismus* introduces the subject of Christ's Passion and Death with an assertion that Christ willed to do more than merely assume human form, live for thirty-three years as a man, teach the way to salvation and perform miracles. He willed further to be scourged, crucified and put to death by Pontius Pilate, and afterwards buried.²⁴⁴ The main thrust of Stapleton's argument follows that of the catechism of Trent: Christ underwent death voluntarily and not by compulsion. Christ willed to give satisfaction to the Eternal Father for the sins of humanity.²⁴⁵ In order to illustrate this, Stapleton uses the account of Christ's arrest found in John's

²⁴¹ *Catechismus*, p.24.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p.25.

²⁴³ Donovan (ed.), *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, p.52; *Catechismus*, p.25.

²⁴⁴ *Catechismus*, pp 25-6.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.26.

Gospel. Christ is depicted as meeting his captors with the words ‘*As mesi an ti.*’²⁴⁶ The catechism of Trent also quotes this declaration of Christ in its treatment of this matter. However, Stapleton goes one step further in his work. He recounts the subsequent narrative that describes how at that moment ‘*do thuiteadar síos ar a cculaibh amhail maraibh, & níor theith uotha mar do fheidir leis, acht do fhith re hiad do thiacht chugtha fein.*’²⁴⁷ Christ is portrayed, in the typical high Christology of the Johannine school, as a powerful figure, being in control of his destiny at all times. At this point, Stapleton introduces a question that is of particular relevance to the refutation of reformer’s protests: ‘if Christ gave full satisfaction for the sins of humanity, why are so many condemned to Hell daily and why are we obliged to confess our sins?’²⁴⁸ While Christ gave full satisfaction for sin, Stapleton explains, it is nevertheless the will of the Lord that each person should claim the benefit of that satisfaction themselves by recourse to faith, the sacraments and good works.²⁴⁹ Christ’s descent into Hell is introduced by clarifying, as done elsewhere, that Christ descended to Hell in His soul and His divinity. Having done this, Stapleton treats of the location of the Hell to which Christ descended. He states that it is the lowest place in the world (as opposed to Heaven, which is the highest). This place is divided into four pits or deep caves to which souls, who do not enter Heaven immediately after death, go.²⁵⁰ The four pits are then explained in greater detail: the deepest level is the Hell of the damned and it is pride that has placed both the

²⁴⁶ ‘I am he’: *ibid.*

²⁴⁷ ‘They fell down on their backs like dead men and He did not flee from them as He could have done, but He waited for them to come to’: *ibid.*

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp26-7.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.27.

demons and the damned there.²⁵¹ This place is the furthest from Paradise. The second location is one level higher than Hell and is identified as Purgatory. The third level, higher again, is the place where babies who die without baptism go. The fourth level, which is much higher than the rest, is the place where the patriarchs and prophets, who lived before Christ's coming, went when they died.²⁵² This is identified as the Hell to which Christ descended after death.²⁵³ Interestingly, the Roman Catechism, when answering the question of the number of places souls can be detained after death, mentions only three – the Hell of the damned, Purgatory and the Hell of the Patriarchs.²⁵⁴ The Hell of un-baptised infants, popularly known as Limbo, is not mentioned at all. Stapleton's divergence from the catechism of Trent, and indeed from previous Gaelic catechisms, continues when he states that Christ also showed himself in the other places also, eliciting different responses in each.²⁵⁵ As Supreme Judge and Victor, He instilled the demons of Hell with terror. As Advocate and Redeemer, He gave consolation and joy to those in Purgatory. Finally, He visited the Hell of the Patriarchs and Prophets as a King might visit a prison and release its captives.²⁵⁶

The Resurrection of Christ is attributed by Stapleton to His power as the Son of God, and is differentiated from the raising of Lazarus and the widow's son in that

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid., pp 27-8.

²⁵³ Ibid., p.28.

²⁵⁴ Donovan (ed.), *The catechism of the Council of Trent*, pp 65-6.

²⁵⁵ Although Stapleton seems to imply, by this statement, that Christ also visited Limbo, he does not comment on the event as he does with the others.

²⁵⁶ *Catechismus*, p.28.

they were raised by the power of another, whereas Christ rose by His own power.²⁵⁷ It was by His own power also that He ascended into Heaven, where He is seated at God's right hand.²⁵⁸ The Tridentine caution against imagining that God literally has a right or left hand is given. Christ will come again at the end of the world. When the Master enquires about the fate of the regal courts and temples, the disciple explains that these will all be consumed by fire.²⁵⁹ The bodies of the dead will be resurrected and Christ will judge all. Stapleton's description of the judgement is interesting and differs from that of Ó Maolchonaire or Ó hEoghusa. The yardstick by which Christ measures humanity is the keeping of the Ten Commandments and the performance of good works.²⁶⁰ The *Roman Catechism* itself uses the account found in Matthew 25:34 but does not mention the Commandments.²⁶¹ Clearly, here Stapleton pragmatically advocates the keeping of the Ten Commandments as a practical means to attain a favourable judgement from Christ on the Last Day. In answer to the question of when exactly Christ will return in glory, Stapleton asserts that no one knows the answer to this except God, and therefore one should be ready at all times.²⁶² This approach is in striking contrast to Ó hEoghusa's reference to the medieval 'Fifteen Signs', attributed to Jerome, and also to the *Roman Catechism's*

²⁵⁷ Ibid., pp 28-9.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p.29.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ 'Bhearas luaidheacht & gloire Neaomhdha don during do chomead a Aitheanta & do rinne deagh oibreacha: Pianfas & cheasfuas na droch dhaoinne tre an Aitheanthuibh do bhrise & gan na deagoibreahcha do dheanamh do bhi dhuolach ortha': ibid., p.30.

²⁶¹ Donovan (ed.), *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, p.82.

²⁶² *Catechismus*, p.30.

three signs (preaching of the Gospel throughout the world, defection from the faith and the coming of Antichrist) based on Matthew 24:14 and 2 Thessalonians 2:2.²⁶³ Stapleton's explanation of the Communion of Saints is straightforward. Members of Christ's Body, the Church, are connected to each other in such a way that whatever spiritual good is performed by one member of the body, benefits all the other members also.²⁶⁴ These include the benefits of Masses, prayers and good works.²⁶⁵ These benefits are also available to the souls in Purgatory just as the benefits of the praying community of Heaven extend to both the faithful on earth and the souls in Purgatory.²⁶⁶ The question is then raised as to why one should offer prayers or Masses for any one specific person when the benefits of the prayers offered by the members of Christ's Body are distributed evenly anyway.²⁶⁷ The disciple responds that even though the benefits of such prayers are held in common in some manner, yet the benefits received by an individual are much greater when these prayers or Masses are offered specifically for that person.²⁶⁸ Regarding the forgiveness of sins, Stapleton asserts that, in the same way as it is commonly understood that everyone is a sinner, proceeding from one wrongdoing to another until they are forgiven by the grace of God, it must also be accepted that *'ní faghthar na grasa so acht san naomh Eaglais Chatoiliche Romhanuigh amhain ina fhuilid na fíor Shacramentibh,*

²⁶³ Donovan (ed.), *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, p.82.

²⁶⁴ *Catechismus*, p.32.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.33.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

& go mormhór an Baiste, & an Aithridhe...'²⁶⁹ In order to attain the glory of Heaven two things are identified as necessary, namely faith and works:

*Da ní mar ata Creideamhain do gach ní theisbeanas Dia & theagascas ar Naomh Mhatair an Eagluis Chatolice Romhanach dhuin & deagh oibreacha do dheanamh.*²⁷⁰

While believers are saved, those outside the Church and heretics are destined for eternal damnation.

At this point Stapleton begins a fairly lengthy examination of Heaven and Hell, asking questions such as 'In what sort of company will the person who goes to Heaven find himself?', 'What sort of joy will the Blessed experience?', 'What is the glory of the saints?', 'What glory will the human body have in Heaven owing to the fact that it cannot see God except with its soul?', 'For how long will the glory of the saints last?', 'If Hell is composed of fire, why does it not illuminate?', 'After the Resurrection of the dead will both body and soul reside in Hell?', 'What company will the damned keep?', 'Will the damned receive consolation from the demons in Hell?' and so on.²⁷¹ Such a treatment is not present in either Ó Maolchonaire or Ó hEoghusa. While there is, indeed, a lengthy treatment of the joys of Heaven in the catechism of Trent under the heading 'Life everlasting'²⁷², there is no corresponding treatment of the horrors of Hell, excepting the brief mention they are afforded in an earlier section dealing with the fate of those who appear on Christ's left hand side at

²⁶⁹ 'This grace is only found in the holy Roman Catholic Church in which are found the true sacraments, especially Baptism and Penance...': *Catechismus*, p.34.

²⁷⁰ 'Two things, namely to believe everything that God reveals and that our holy Mother, the Roman Catholic Church teaches us, and to do good works': *ibid.*, p.35.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp 36-8.

²⁷² Donovan (ed.), *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, pp 120-6.

Judgement.²⁷³ The final questions regarding the Creed are particularly interesting. The Master enquires whether the disciple believes anything that is not treated of in the Creed. The disciple answers in the affirmative, stating that he believes everything that is written down in Sacred Scripture and also what Christ revealed to the Church itself, while referring, of course to the Tradition of the Church.²⁷⁴ However, when asked to name some of these things, he declines, surprised that a person as ignorant as he should be asked such a question. In response, he states that there are many Doctors of the Church who could not sufficiently answer that question.²⁷⁵ The Master concludes the section with the telling comment:

*Admhamaid gur ris na Dóchtúribh bhenas freagra na nith soin, & nach ribhse na tuatuidhe: ór as leór dhaoibh eólus do bheith agaibh ar Airtegaluibh an chreidimh, & go hairighthe, mar ata síos san Ccré.*²⁷⁶

Simply put, the laity was expected to know what was taught to them in the catechism. Questions outside of this were best left to those who were suitably competent in theological matters.

There is very little in Stapleton's treatment of Mary and the saints in his section on prayer that marks it out as being unique. The authorship of the Hail Mary is questioned.²⁷⁷ The reasoning behind the recitation of the Hail Mary after the Our Father is explained in the following way: we have no more loving friend or bolder

²⁷³ Ibid., p.83.

²⁷⁴ *Catechismus*, p.39.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ 'We admit that the answer to those things are the concern of the Doctors and not the laity; for it is enough for ye to know the Articles of the faith, and especially those that are contained in the Creed': *Catechismus*, p.39.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., p.49.

Advocate than the Blessed Mother. Having prayed to Christ, we have recourse to our Mother in order that through her help and intercession we may attain the thing we desire.²⁷⁸ The text of the *Salve Regina* is also given and questions found in the other catechisms such as ‘If Mary is in Heaven who is in the Church?’ (which refers to images of Mary) are posed.²⁷⁹ In his explanation of the words of the Hail Mary, Stapleton asks the following question regarding the line ‘Hail, full of grace’: ‘Did Mary possess more grace than any other saint, for it is said that St Stephen and other saints were full of grace?’²⁸⁰ In order to illustrate the merits of reciting the *Salve Regina*, Stapleton recounts a story from the life of St Dominic. While praying the *Salve Regina* one evening, the Blessed Virgin appeared before his eyes and at the words ‘*Eia ergo, Advocata Nostra*’, Dominic saw the Virgin on her knees in the presence of her Son, fulfilling her office of Advocate on humanity’s behalf.²⁸¹ Throughout the prayer, Mary acts out each petition as it is enunciated, illustrating the efficacy of its recital. Stapleton then includes a section on the Angelus bell and the reason for its being rung three times a day, namely recalling the three principal elements relating to our salvation - the Resurrection (morning), the Passion and Death of Christ (noon) and the Incarnation (evening).²⁸² Stapleton’s section on devotion to the saints includes a short treatment of the office and role of Guardian Angels and also a suitable prayer designed for the use of those who wished to implore their intercession.²⁸³

²⁷⁸ Ibid., p.50.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., p.51.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., p.52.

²⁸¹ Ibid., p.55.

²⁸² Ibid., p.56.

²⁸³ Ibid., p.57.

Finally, an examination of Stapleton's treatment of the sacraments of Baptism, Penance and the Eucharist is warranted. In answer to the question of what baptism consists of, Stapleton does not shy away from a little etymology, explaining that the name itself is of Greek derivation and means to wash or to bathe, the name having been chosen on account of the general recognition among all peoples of the necessity of washing oneself.²⁸⁴ Stapleton explains that there are three kinds of baptism, namely of water, blood and fire.²⁸⁵ The three things necessary for baptism are listed as follows: firstly, ordinary water must be poured on the candidate or, if immersion is to be used, the child must only be immersed in water.²⁸⁶ The fact that Stapleton, writing sometime before 1639, mentions the practice of immersion is interesting. This practice, although it survived in Ireland right up to the seventeenth century, had experienced a general demise in the western Church. Not only that: it was also condemned by the synods of Dublin (1624) and Tuam (1631). The statutes of Dublin included this reference to the practice: 'And chiefly to prevent the danger of suffocation and various infirmities...believed to occur by reason of immersion...we decree that...no priest after 1 October 1624...shall practice immersion.'²⁸⁷ Two general conclusions can be drawn from Stapleton's reference. Firstly, Stapleton must have known how prevalent the practice was from his pastoral experience in Ireland. Secondly, he obviously did not choose to discourage its use, being more than likely aware that, owing to its continuing popularity, any effort at stamping out the practice would be futile. Stapleton identifies the second necessary

²⁸⁴ Ibid., p.103.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., p.104.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Mac Garry, 'The statutes of Tuam from the Council of Trent to the nineteenth century', p.38.

condition of baptism as the use of the correct formula. The prescribed words were to be recited while the candidate was being dipped or aspersed.²⁸⁸ Finally, the intention to baptise must be present in the mind of the individual performing the ritual.²⁸⁹ Stapleton goes on to discuss the effects of the sacrament and to explain that all can baptise if necessary, indicating the preferred candidates for the role as is done elsewhere.²⁹⁰

Treatment of the Sacrament of Penance in the *Catechismus* focuses very much on its healing effects. Stapleton, in answer to the question ‘What benefit or good does Penance do to the person?’ explains that there is no more proximate or more beneficial remedy for the human body found that compares with the effect of Penance on the soul. It constitutes a general cure for every disease of the soul.²⁹¹ He goes on to say that it hurts Christ very much (especially since He suffered so much hardship in order to provide this cure) when He sees an individual, assailed by (spiritual) sickness and the awful poisonous wounds of sin, who nevertheless refuses to come or delays coming to receive this free remedy.²⁹² Rather than warn the reluctant penitent of terrible punishment in the next life, Stapleton’s approach is positive and appeals to the emotions of the individual. He explains how this medication was bought at a great price by Christ. The (Sacrament of) Penance, he continues, is a lake that Christ prepared with His blood, in order that humanity might be cleansed.²⁹³ Penance consists of three parts: repentance, verbal confession

²⁸⁸ *Catechismus*, p.104.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., pp 105-6.

²⁹¹ Ibid., p.109.

²⁹² Ibid., p.110.

²⁹³ Ibid.

and satisfaction.²⁹⁴ Stapleton's positive approach continues in his discussion of repentance. The principal source of repentance is love of God. Sorrow for sin can be aided by considering how much good is lost by the committing of each mortal sin.²⁹⁵ This sorrow can also be honed by consideration of an eternity spent in the company of demons.²⁹⁶ An act of contrition, to be recited before the confession of one's sins, is included by Stapleton in this section.

The second part of the sacrament, namely verbal confession, is prepared for by a serious examination of conscience that includes an assessment of what commandments were broken, what good works were left undone and what deadly sins were accommodated in thought, word and deed.²⁹⁷ Here, Stapleton shows that both systems of assessment, namely the Ten Commandments and the Seven Deadly Sins, were still in operation and considered relevant. Contrition is stoked up by a consideration of the disappointment that has been caused to the Lord. The confession of sins should be in full, without hiding any, and without proffering any excuse or wandering from the subject matter.²⁹⁸ The manner in which one should approach confession, namely, on one's knees before the priest (like Mary Magdalen before Christ), without looking at him (probably to avoid a situation where the priest might establish eye contact with a young female penitent), and with great contrition and fear of the Lord, is explained.²⁹⁹ The opening prayer recited by the penitent,

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p.112.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., p.113.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., p.117.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p.118.

beginning with the words ‘*Mese an peacach bocht...*’ is then provided.³⁰⁰ The subject of satisfaction (the third part of the sacrament) is then addressed, and the three forms, namely, fasting, prayer and almsgiving are identified.³⁰¹ The conditions for the proper carrying out of fasting are listed. Food can be consumed only once a day. Neither meat (red or white) nor eggs are to be eaten. In conjunction with fasting, the following acts are recommended: pilgrimage, scourging, the wearing of a hair shirt and sleeping on the bare ground.³⁰² The types of prayer that are suggested as satisfaction for sin include hearing Mass, recitation of the Canonical Office, the Our Father, Hail Mary, the Rosary, the Penitential psalms, the Office of the Dead, the (reading of) sermons and the teaching or learning of the catechism.³⁰³ The list of recommendations provided by Stapleton is quite wide and suggests that the audience for which he intended them was equally as wide. It is difficult to imagine many penitents, other than the clergy themselves, who would undertake the reading of the Divine Office as a penance. The reading of sermons was necessarily confined to the literate who possessed such material, in reality, a small group of people. The strongest indication of a wide audience is perhaps the assignment of the teaching of the catechism and the learning of the same to the reader or hearer of Stapleton’s work. Those who were expected to teach the catechism were clearly not all clergy and, as hinted at in Ó hEoghusa’s work, more than likely consisted of a body of literate lay people who were sufficiently interested in the project.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid., p.122.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid.

The Sacrament of the Eucharist follows directly from Stapleton's treatment of the Sacrament of Penance. Again, the Greek origin of the word is explained as an introduction to the section. The nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist is the first subject to be discussed. At the consecration of the Mass, the ordinary bread that is the host is transformed into the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ.³⁰⁴ The same applies to the wine.³⁰⁵ The analogy of Lot's wife, as used by Ó hEoghusa, appears in the *Catechismus* also.³⁰⁶ The great miracle of consecration is explained as a mystery that Man cannot fully grasp: 'For God can do more than our human minds can understand'; this popular argument appears again. A second example, taken directly from Ó hEoghusa, namely, God's ability to guide a camel (an animal bigger than a horse) through the eye of a needle, is resurrected by Stapleton.³⁰⁷ The extent to which Stapleton relies on material originally found in Ó hEoghusa in this section is significant. In a departure from Ó hEoghusa, however, Stapleton includes a section dealing with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. His treatment is interesting. Taking the claim that the Mass contains the whole life of Christ as a starting point, Stapleton starts to explain each part of the Mass in that light. The *Kyrie* signifies the patriarchs who called out for the coming of the Messiah. The *Gloria* signifies the birth of the child Jesus in Bethlehem. The epistle, read on the left side of the altar stands for the preaching of John the Baptist who invited the people to come to Christ. The *gradual* signifies the change that John instilled in the gentiles with his preaching. The Gospel, read on the right side of the altar, illustrates the movement

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p.124.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., p.125; for the parallel use of this analogy in Ó hEoghusa see *TC*, p.80.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., p.126; for the parallel passage in Ó hEoghusa see *TC*, p.81.

of people, through the preaching of Christ, from the left hand side of God to His right, from temporality to immortality, from death to life and from sin to grace.³⁰⁸ The Creed symbolises conversion. The prayers said in secret by the priest after the Creed signify the devising of a secret and treacherous plot against Christ by the Jews, and so on.³⁰⁹ Detailed explanations of the significance of the prayers and rubrics of the Mass were not new, however, and were to be found in the Sarum rite. The drama of the Mass obviously appealed to Stapleton and he most likely chose to include this explanation in order that greater attention might be paid to the Sacrifice by what were often undoubtedly passive onlookers.

Antoin Gearnon's *Parrhas an Anna* (1645)

The compiler of the fourth catechism to be examined here, namely Antoin Gearnon, was probably born around the year 1610, possibly in County Louth.³¹⁰ Of Anglo-Norman stock, Antoin studied on the continent and was ordained deacon in Brussels on 23 December 1634, and priest the following year at Malines.³¹¹ In 1639, Gearnon was recommended to *Propaganda Fide* as a prime candidate for the Scottish mission.³¹² Gearnon worked in Ireland as a priest at different times. His first period (1639-44?) convinced him of the need for religious education and the catechism he compiled to fill this lacuna, *Parrhas an Anna* (Louvain 1645) was clearly the fruit of his experience there.³¹³ He returned to Louvain in 1644, having been elected superior

³⁰⁸ Ibid., p.132.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ *PA*, p.vii.

³¹¹ Ibid., p.viii.

³¹² Ibid., p.viii, n.3.

³¹³ Ibid., p.ix.

of Saint Anthony's College.³¹⁴ He left Louvain again for Ireland in 1647 and was appointed as Guardian of the Franciscan convent in Dundalk the same year.³¹⁵ In 1656, Gearnon was forced to leave the country having been discovered hearing confessions in a Dublin convent by Cromwell's forces.³¹⁶ Gearnon returned to Ireland some time after that and spent intermittent periods there between 1662 and his death some time after 1677.³¹⁷

When Antoin Gearnon wrote his catechism, he already had considerable experience of the Irish mission, having worked in his native land during the years 1639-44 in addition to his earlier formation on the continent. In the light of that experience, he compiled what was not only a compendium of Christian doctrine but also a comprehensive prayer book. Like Stapleton, Gearnon was afforded an opportunity that neither Ó Maolchonaire nor Ó hEoghusa got, namely the chance to return to Ireland soon after its publication to oversee its distribution. Gearnon returned in 1647 and stayed until 1656 when he was forced to flee from Cromwell's forces.³¹⁸ It can be concluded, then, that the ideas expressed in both Stapleton's and Gearnon's catechisms were circulating in Ireland soon after their publication. Apart from any consideration of their transmission in manuscript form it is certain that those who heard both individuals preach were sure to have been exposed to the doctrine they had already expounded upon in written form.

Gearnon's work differs significantly in format from that of his predecessors. Instead of using the broad outline of the Roman Catechism of Trent, Gearnon divides his

³¹⁴ O' Dwyer, *Towards a history of Irish spirituality*, p.183.

³¹⁵ *PA*, p.x.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp xii-xiii.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.xvii.

³¹⁸ *PA*, pp xii-xiv.

work into twelve parts: 1. Daily practices (prayers on rising, grace before and after meals, prayers going to bed etc.), 2. Faith (matters of doctrine), 3. Hope (explanations of the Our Father, Hail Mary etc.), 4. Love (the Ten Commandments), 5. The sacraments (doctrine), 6. The vices and virtues, 7. General prayer, 8. Tract on the Mass, 9. Practice of the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, 10. The tree and the clock of the Passion, 11. The last things, 12. A spiritual alphabet. Much of the material is presented in a more practical manner than the more theoretical offerings of the other catechists. This was a catechism that balanced knowledge and action. And for those who wished to adopt even some of its recommendations, there was plenty of homework to be done.

The first section, dealing with daily practice, outlined how the good Christian should spend his day in union with Christ. Morning prayers were important, yet prayer was not supposed to cease when one began the practical duties of each day. Even putting on one's clothes in the morning could be transformed into an effective meditation on the Passion:

Arís ag gabháil a éudaigh uime, smuaineadh ar éudach 7 ar ionnsdrumeintibh páise a Thighearna Críosa; 7 dá bhrígh sin, ag cur a bhróg air, smuaineadh ar thairrngibh na ccos 7 ar an ccoróin spine ag folach a chin; ag dúnadh a chnaipeadh, ar na sgiursadhaibh 7 ar an éudach púrpair, &c.³¹⁹

³¹⁹ 'Again, putting on his clothes [let him] think on the clothes and the instruments of the Passion of his Lord Christ; and on account of that, [while] putting his shoe on [let him] think on the nailing of the feet and on the crown of thorns covering his head, [while] closing his buttons, on the scourging and on the purple cloak &c'; *PA*, p.18.

This spirituality is eminently Franciscan. The devotion on which it rests, however, well predates the Council of Trent and belongs indeed to a more general devotion to the Passion (of which the cult of the Instruments of the Passion was a part) prominent in late medieval Europe as a whole. Such devotion was already deeply ingrained in the Gaelic Irish soul and therefore such recommendations could expect a warm welcome in Ireland. A version of the Morning Offering is then provided, after which the good Christian was expected to recite three Our Fathers, three Hail Marys and the Creed.³²⁰ This was to be followed by the Confiteor which people were encouraged to recite on occasions other than the reception of the sacrament.³²¹ Interestingly, the Confiteor is addressed not only to God but also to the Virgin Mary, Michael the Archangel, John the Baptist, the holy apostles, to Peter and Paul and to all the saints.³²² This would not have presented any problems to the Gaelic Irish who held these very saints in special regard as noted above (chapter 3). Gearnon includes a prayer to one's Guardian Angel to be recited in the morning.³²³ Stapleton, in his section on prayer, also ensured that such an inclusion was made.³²⁴ Although both texts make similar requests their wording, nevertheless, differs and it seems that Gearnon and Stapleton did not translate from the same version. The next thing the good Christian was expected to do was to go to the church in order to pray to God, hear Mass and the sermon, receive the Sacrament of Penance, and to receive Holy Communion if an indulgence was to be acquired or if it was a special occasion

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid. Stapleton advised that one should recite the Confiteor in the morning and at night, at Mass and before receiving the Eucharist: *Catechismus*, pp 119-20.

³²² *PA*, p.19.

³²³ *PA*, p.20.

³²⁴ *Catechismus*, p.57.

for devotion.³²⁵ On the way to Mass, the individual is instructed to keep in mind that he is approaching Mount Calvary and will soon be at the foot of the cross in the company of the Virgin Mary, St John and Mary Magdalen. He should then contemplate that he is about to offer the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ through the hands of the priest.³²⁶ While hearing Mass, one should reflect seriously on the mystery of Christ's Passion and Death that is being solemnised therein. While the priest receives Holy Communion, the Christian should, himself, make a Spiritual Communion with humility and ardent love.³²⁷ At a time when the reception of Holy Communion by the laity was not frequent, instruction on how to spiritually commune with Christ in one's heart was very relevant. At this point, Gearnon proceeds to deal with prayers to be recited during the rest of the day such as the Angelus, when passing a crucifix, a blessing when meeting a neighbour, before work, meals, while doing business, while socialising, at supper and before going to bed.³²⁸ In typical Franciscan style, the day ends as it began, by meditating on the Passion. When undressing, one is recommended to contemplate how the Jews stripped Christ before crucifixion and, while lying in bed, the prescribed image is that of Christ lying in the tomb.³²⁹

However, the suggested prayers and meditations do not end there. For those who wish to pray at midnight (in company with the angels and saints who do not sleep), suitable devotions include the Canonical Hours, the Hours of Mary, the Jesus Rosary, the Rosary of Our Lady or the litanies of Jesus, Mary and the saints '*nó gibe*

³²⁵ *PA*, p.21.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.22.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 22-32.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.30.

*urnaighthe thaisbéunas Dia dhó, do réir a cháilidheachda, do rádh.*³³⁰ The purpose of praying at midnight is explained: it was around midnight that Christ was born and, according to the writings of the Fathers, will return for the Last Judgement at this hour.³³¹ The recitation of Matins at this time by religious orders and other pious people marks its significance and perpetuates the tradition. In a digression from his more general recommendations, Gearnon makes an impassioned plea for the retention of a practice that once existed in Ireland but was, at that time, in danger of disappearing:

*Ní himchian fós ó do bhí an gnás beannuighthe céudna comhchoitcheann feadh Éirionn ag an uile shórt daoineadh aga raibhe grádh Dé 7 cúram fá shláinte a n-anmann;...Guidhmíd, dá bhrígh sin, gach aon aga bhfhuil grádh Dé 'na chroidhe 7 an cúram céudna fá shláinte a anma, gan an deághnás-so do léigean de tré leisgi nó shádhaile...'*³³²

The second section of *Parrthas an Anma* deals with matters of faith and doctrine, and principally with the Creed. Much of the material is shared with Ó hEoghusa's *An Teagasg Críosaíde*. However, there are some significant and novel differences. For instance, Gearnon mentions two different forms of the Sign of the Cross. The first Sign of the Cross, Gearnon has already mentioned in his first

³³⁰ 'or whatever prayers that God reveals to him, according to his capability'; *ibid.*, p.31.

³³¹ *Ibid.* The belief that Christ would return in Judgement at this time was not new as is evident from a reference to the significance of Matins in a prose tractate found in the fifteenth-century *Leabhar Breac* but undoubtedly of much earlier origin. See Best, 'The prose tractate on the canonical hours', p.147.

³³² 'It is not long ago now that the same blessed practice was common all over Ireland [among] every sort of person who had the love of God and care for the health of their souls;...we beseech, therefore every person who has the love of God in his heart and the same care for the health of his soul, not to forsake this practice through laziness or comfort'; *PA*, pp 31-2.

section.³³³ It is used when one passes a crucifix as a mark of devotion. One makes the Sign of the Cross on one's forehead with the words '*Tré chomharrtha na croiche naoimhe*'³³⁴ and then on one's mouth while saying '*Saor inn a Dhé*'³³⁵ and finally, on one's breast, concluding '*ór n-easgcairdibh.*'³³⁶ The second form of the Sign of the Cross mentioned by Gearnon is the standard one, found universally, and a detailed instruction is given on how it should be made. Gearnon's treatment, as in Ó hEoghusa's work, contains an explanation of the hand movements involved.³³⁷ Bringing the right hand from the forehead to the chest signifies the Incarnation of Christ. The movement from the chest to the left shoulder symbolises Christ's descent to Hell to free the patriarchs (interestingly this Hell is also associated with the left hand side of God, traditionally understood as the side of His anger and displeasure). The movement from the left to right shoulder is interpreted as signifying Christ's resurrection from the dead and ascent into Heaven where He sits at God's right hand. The final movement, to the middle of the chest, shows that Christ, being God, is consubstantial with the Father and the Holy Spirit, possessing the same nature and powers as both.³³⁸ The merits of the Sign of the Cross are then discussed, which include the profession of the individual as a Christian and as a shield and protection against the temptations of the flesh and the devil; therefore, it should be used at all times.³³⁹

³³³ Ibid., p.23.

³³⁴ 'Through the Sign of the Holy Cross...'

³³⁵ 'Deliver us, God...'

³³⁶ 'From our enemies...': *ibid*, p.34.

³³⁷ *TC*, p.33.

³³⁸ *PA*, pp 35-6.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.36.

The treatment of the Creed follows Ó hEoghusa's treatment in general, sometimes reproducing material word for word. Gearnon gets to grip with the thorny questions of scriptural authority and the authority of the Tradition of the Church. Reading of Scripture in the vernacular, especially by the ignorant, is declared forbidden and it is noted that the texts themselves are not easily understood by the masses.³⁴⁰ In order to explain the necessity of Tradition in the Church, Gearnon highlights beliefs that are held without any basis in Scripture. The examples given are these: Mary being ever-Virgin and the celebration of Easter on a Sunday.³⁴¹ Both these examples were used by Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa who, in a poem written to a friend who had left the Catholic Church for the Reformed doctrine, argued the case against Luther's *Sola Scriptura*: 'That Mary was always a Virgin, that a child should always be baptised, that Easter falls always on a Sunday; where did you read this in Scripture?'³⁴² The question of why God rewards the wicked with success and prosperity and the just with hardship is answered in the following way: God gives worldly success for a time to the wicked on account of the little good that they performed, which He could not overlook. However, He metes out eternal punishment to them on account of their mortal sins. Similarly, He allows the just to suffer short bouts of suffering on account of their light transgressions, but rewards them with eternal glory in repayment for their good works.³⁴³ The reason Christ came on earth is stated simply as 'to free us from the captivity of the devil.'³⁴⁴ The

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.39.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.40.

³⁴² *DBM* 9, v.59.

³⁴³ *PA*, p.45.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.46.

name 'Jesus' is explained as meaning 'Saviour'.³⁴⁵ In treating of Christ's Passion and Death, Gearnon goes into some detail regarding the sufferings He endured and the portrait that is given serves more as food for affective devotion than as a simple exposition of doctrine.³⁴⁶ The succeeding passage deals with the 'love that God revealed to us in the death of Christ and...the manner in which He showed His Justice and Mercy and His hatred for sin...and the good example that Christ gave us in the same death.'³⁴⁷ Humanity is invited to share in Christ's Passion through personal offering of suffering and through the sacraments and good works.³⁴⁸ Gearnon answers the question of how God revealed His Justice in the death of Christ with the following: '*Ag buain na dloluidheachda as mó dob éidir do bhuaín amach a n-éuraic an aindlighidh tugadh dhó, mar atá, bás an duine do bhí 'na Dhia.*'³⁴⁹ This reply is interesting in its use of the old Brehon legal term *éiric* that occurs so often in bardic religious poetry and in Gaelic religious sources in general. The sentence itself reeks of the kind of expression found in the Gaelic world. This was no ordinary murder. It demanded the weightiest reparation.

Gearnon's treatment of the descent into Hell is brief. He simply mentions that Christ went there to release the patriarchs.³⁵⁰ He does not clarify, as does Ó hEoghusa, that He did not release the damned souls or those in Purgatory.³⁵¹ Neither does he

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., pp 47-8.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., p.48.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., p.49.

³⁴⁹ '[By] making the greatest reparation that could be made in payment for the injustice that was given [done] to Him, that is, the death of the person who was God.'

³⁵⁰ Ibid., p.50.

³⁵¹ *TC*, p.26.

attempt to clear up confusion between the different kind of Hells as Ó Maolchonaire does, or explain the different levels of Hell as laid out in Stapleton's work.³⁵² Regarding Christ's Resurrection, the question is posed as to whether any evidence of the Passion remained on Christ's glorified body. Gearnon states that only the marks of the five wounds remained on Christ's risen body '*ionnas nach cuirthe amharas 'na eiséirghe 7 fós go ttaisbéunadh do na huilibh lá an bhreitheamhnais.*'³⁵³ The reference to Christ's display of the Five Wounds to humanity on the Day of Judgement is significant. As observed above, this belief, intimately connected to the cult of the Five Wounds, was to be found across Europe in the late medieval period. Interestingly, Ó hEoghusa does not include this portrayal in his treatment of the Last Judgement scene.³⁵⁴ Clearly Gearnon was content to perpetuate an image that had fascinated and terrified popular culture for some time. The resurrection of the human body would ensure that all who entered Heaven would be aged thirty-three years.³⁵⁵ Gearnon includes a treatment of the joys of Heaven but, unlike Stapleton, omits the parallel depiction of the horrors of Hell.³⁵⁶

The third section of *Parrthas an Anma*, concerning prayer, asks questions such as 'Why is there little fruit from our prayers?', to which the reply is given 'Because we do not perform them as is proper and we do not ask for the right things.'³⁵⁷ Gearnon

³⁵² Ó Cuív, 'Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of Christian doctrine', p.170; *Catechismus*, p.27.

³⁵³ 'in order that His Resurrection would not be doubted and that He might show them to all on the Day of Judgement'; *PA*, p.50.

³⁵⁴ *TC*, pp 28-9.

³⁵⁵ *PA*, p.59.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.60; *Catechismus*, pp 36-8.

³⁵⁷ *PA*, p.61.

gives the text of the Our Father and Hail Mary, explaining both. Added to this, he assesses the role of Mary and the saints in much the same way as done elsewhere. Mary's role is identified as one of prayer for people at all times, especially at the hour of their deaths.³⁵⁸ Quoting St Bernard, he states that it is good to have devotion to Mary, as Christ never allowed anyone who had devotion to her to be damned.³⁵⁹ However, later in the work, there appears a cautionary warning that seems to counter some excessive claims regarding the intercessory power of Mary and the saints popularly held and best exemplified in some bardic religious poems that clearly elevated the Virgin's power far above that of Christ's (see chapter 2). In treating of the Last Judgement, Gearnon introduces a strict limitation to the powers of intercession formerly attributed to Mary and the saints. He asks '*A ndiongna Críosa fabhar do neach ar impidhe Mhuire nó na naomh?*' and responds '*Ní dhiogna, ach do réir mar do thuilleadar a ghníomha.*'³⁶⁰ The implications of this statement for those who held a view of Mary akin to that promulgated in the bardic religious poems and elsewhere were surely enormous. Next, litanies to Mary and the saints are recommended.³⁶¹ The same theme is continued in Gearnon's treatment of the First Commandment in his fourth section, in which he defends veneration of images of Mary and the saints.³⁶² An explanation of the Rosary is given in section seven. The Rosary is said to consist of seven decades and with two final Hail Marys and an Our Father. At the beginning of each decade, the Our Father is also recited.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., p.65.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ 'Does Christ give favour to the person on account of the intercession of Mary or the saints? He does not, except [to the extent] their deeds deserve': *ibid.*, p.187.

³⁶¹ Ibid., p.66.

³⁶² Ibid., pp 72-3.

The decades revolve around the seven joys of Mary, a typically Franciscan devotion.³⁶³ A series of litanies to Christ, Mary and the saints are then included.³⁶⁴ Patrick, Brigid and Colmcille are the three Irish candidates that make it into the litany of the saints, confirming their status as patrons of Ireland, something that had already been copper-fastened in collections such as *Triadis Thaumaturgae*, compiled by John Colgan and his associates at Louvain.

Surprisingly, Gearnon's section on the sacraments is remarkably brief and contains nothing of exceptional interest, providing merely a synopsis of the principal points that turn up in the other catechisms. On the question of concealing sins in the Sacrament of Penance, Gearnon stresses that no good can come of the sacrament, explaining that another serious sin is added to one's soul and that further sin is acquired if one receives the Eucharist in that state. In order to allay fears of relating shameful details, however, Gearnon is keen to stress the importance of the confessional seal, assuring the penitent that the priest is obliged to face death rather than reveal a penitent's sin.³⁶⁵ The eighth section of Gearnon's work concerns the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The significance of the vestments that the priest wears is explained in detail and, not surprisingly, they symbolise different parts of the Passion event. The amice stands for the veil with which the Jews covered the eyes of Christ when they taunted 'Tell us, who hit you?' The alb signifies the bright cloak that was put on Christ when He was jeered in the house of Herod. The cincture, maniple and stole signify the fetters with which He was tied. The chasuble symbolises the cross, the altar Mount Calvary and the chalice the tomb. The

³⁶³ Ibid., pp 117-20.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., pp 120-31.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., p.93.

corporal stands for the linen sheet in which he was laid.³⁶⁶ Just as Stapleton does, Gearnon treats of each part of the Mass, relating its meaning.³⁶⁷ Although the explanation is similar to Stapleton's, it is clear that Gearnon worked from a source other than the *Catechismus*. Prayers to be recited before Mass, during Mass (especially at the elevation), at the time of Spiritual Communion and afterwards, are provided.³⁶⁸ These include popular prayers such as the *Anima Christi*, composed by St Ignatius of Loyola (1492-1556). Finally, instruction on how to hear the sermon with profit is given, emphasising the importance of the provision of catechesis advocated by the Council of Trent.³⁶⁹ The ninth section of *Parrthas an Anma* deals with preparation for reception of the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist and includes a large selection of suitable prayers associated with both.³⁷⁰ In contrast to the section on the sacraments *per se*, which is quite short, this section is extensive and comprehensive, confirming the character of Gearnon's work as infinitely more practical than doctrinal. While the other Irish catechisms might be classified as textbooks, Gearnon's was most definitely a workbook.

There is little doubt, then, that *Parrthas an Anma* is more a prayer book than a catechism. That it was interpreted and used as such, by those who received it, is evident from the manuscript tradition. While a complete copy of *Parrthas an Anma* is found in RIA, 24 L 28, tentatively classified as a seventeenth-century copy, both other manuscript copies dating from the seventeenth century, namely British Library, Egerton Ms. 196 (by William Lynch 1688) and British Library, Sloane Ms.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., p.134.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., pp 134-5.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., pp 137-41.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., pp 141-2.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., pp 143-60.

3567 (by Cuchonnacht Mac Aodha Mheig Uidhir in 1664-5), contain only extracts of the work. However, the extracts that are included are quite revealing. Egerton 196 includes the section on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, morning and evening devotions, grace before and after meals, litanies of Jesus, Mary and the saints, and instructions for Confession; in essence the type of prayers that one might practically be able to fit in to one's day. Sloane 3567 also includes the litanies, symbolism of the vestments at Mass and the Sign of the Cross that one makes when passing a crucifix. Therefore, what *Parrthas an Anma* was most cherished for was its collection of prayers. The final sections of the work include a plan for the sanctification of both one's day and one's week, firstly by introducing the Clock of the Passion, that divides the period between the Last Supper and Christ's entombment into twenty-four hours, with a meditation for each hour.³⁷¹ The days from Monday to Sunday are similarly divided into periods of meditation on the Passion event, including favourite Franciscan devotions such as the Instruments of the Passion,³⁷² the Seven Words of Christ from the cross,³⁷³ and the Seven Sorrows of Mary.³⁷⁴ Gearnon's final section, treating of the Last Things, suggests a meditation for each day of the week, beginning on Monday with a general meditation and continuing on Tuesday with the death of the Just, on Wednesday with the Judgement, on Thursday with the pains of Hell affecting the senses, on Friday with pain of loss suffered by the damned, on Saturday regarding the souls in Purgatory, and on Sunday with the glory of Heaven.³⁷⁵ The spiritual alphabet

³⁷¹ Ibid., pp 166-9.

³⁷² Ibid., pp 171-2.

³⁷³ Ibid., pp 175-7.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., p.177.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., pp 83-92.

contained in section twelve was undoubtedly intended as a means by which people could retain and take to heart the principal instructions given in the work as a whole. If they managed to do that, then it would be surely worthwhile.

Conclusion

The catechisms examined above, dating from the late sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries, are products of both Gaelic Ireland and continental Europe. They are Tridentine in character; however they do not rely solely on the Roman Catechism of Trent (1566), but also on the works of other catechists such as Peter Canisius and Robert Bellarmine. The *Roman Catechism*, influential though it was, cannot be viewed in isolation. Never designed to be a people's catechism, the works of other catechists were destined to indoctrinate the masses in a way the *Roman Catechism* never would. In fact it was Canisius's catechism that was recommended by the Synod of Armagh in 1614 as a manual for the clergy, to be used to instruct the laity.³⁷⁶ A Gaelic translation of another catechism, written in 1571 and inspired by Trent, that of the Spanish Jesuit, Diego de Ledesma (1519-75), appears in manuscript form in British Library, Egerton Ms. 196 (written by William Lynch in 1688).³⁷⁷ This Jesuit work was more than likely used by members of the order during their third mission in Ireland in the early seventeenth century. The Gaelic catechisms compiled by Ó Maolchonaire, Ó hEoghusa, Stapleton and Gearnon can only be understood as hybrid texts. Much of the material included therein can be classified as broadly Tridentine in character. Yet one cannot ignore that these texts were written by individuals who, in the main, understood what it was like to be a Catholic in Gaelic Ireland, had a particular sympathy with the problems (doctrinal

³⁷⁶ O' Reilly, 'Catechists in exile', p.24.

³⁷⁷ *B.M.Cat.Ir.MSS.* ii, p.588.

and otherwise) experienced there, and were mindful of these very problems during the compilation of their work. These individuals drew on a rich store of religious imagery and devotion (discussed in Part I of this thesis) with which they had grown up, and this ultimately helped them shape their catechetical works so that they would be couched in a familiarity that would resonate with their audience. This consideration of the intended audience afforded by the four individual catechists was not a unique quality, however; it was replicated in most other instances of similar work undertaken by foreign catechists on the continent, as evidenced by the care with which a figure such as Jean de Bréboeuf constructed his catechism, which was designed for the Hurons in French Canada.³⁷⁸ The Louvain project, however, extended beyond catechisms. The inherent restrictions of such compendia meant that all that the community of St Anthony's were trying to achieve could not be covered in this way. Other more specialised works were undertaken to fulfil the remaining objectives. These objectives included the reworking of devotion itself. It is this reshaping of Gaelic piety that is examined in the next chapter.

³⁷⁸ Gilles Raymond, 'Le premier catéchisme de la Nouvelle France: celui de Jean Bréboeuf S.J.' in Raymond Brodeur and Jean-Paul Rouleau (eds), *Une inconnue de l'histoire de la culture: la production des catéchismes en Amérique Française* (Québec, 1986), p.27.

Chapter 6

Defending and defining doctrine: the Louvain literature

The Irish scholars at Saint Anthony's College, Louvain lived between two worlds. Many of them had spent a considerable amount of time in late sixteenth-century Ireland and had grown up with the kind of religious devotion practiced by their neighbours and friends who lived within the same cultural *milieu*. Although the Council of Trent had already taken place, the implementation of its recommendations took quite some time to reach Irish shores. However, when the Irish scholars found themselves having to travel to continental Europe to receive an education, they entered quite a different environment. This new setting, in which the ideals of the Tridentine Church manifested themselves as more immediate and urgent, led the *émigrés* to a new understanding of their faith. Having received theological training in Counter-Reformation Europe, these same individuals were now charged with selling the package at home. Part of this, as discussed in the previous chapter, involved instructing people in the rudiments of the faith by means of the dissemination of catechisms. It was hoped that the provision of various forms of the Tridentine catechism in Gaelic for use by the clergy and educated laity would ameliorate the plight of the ignorant. Although, at first glance, the catechisms do not appear to be overtly polemical (i.e. tackling the perceived errors of the reformers head on), nevertheless there is an underlying refutation of their objections to be found in the choice of subject matter and its selective treatment therein. Such an approach was encouraged by some of the most Tridentine of European prelates. One such figure, Filippo Sega, bishop of the diocese of Piacenza in northern Italy (1587-96), who enjoyed a successful diplomatic career outside Italy, was instrumental in formulating

the constitutions of the diocesan synod of 1589. One of these constitutions insisted that preachers go out of their way to highlight aspects of Roman Catholic doctrine and practice that were disputed by Protestants, including such matters as Purgatory and the cult of the saints (including their images and relics).¹ This approach, exemplified by Segar, is also to be clearly found in the Gaelic catechisms emerging from Louvain (and similarly in their prototype, the *Roman Catechism*), most notably in the significant importance given to the question of whether it is right to honour statues of the Virgin and the saints and the subsequent clarification that statues are honoured as representations of a heavenly figure and not as the heavenly figure itself. It is also to be found in the treatment of subjects such as indulgences, the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist and the emphasis given to the importance of tradition as the comrade of scripture and, likewise, work as the comrade of faith. The catechism, then, not only equipped the pupil with the fundamentals of the faith, but also with arguments against the most common objections likely to be raised by a would-be-reformer.

Although some refutation of error could be achieved by means of the catechism, nevertheless far more scope was possible in publications that were not bound by the same kind of restrictions. It is these other publications that are examined in the present chapter. Having received the valuable concession of despatching their books, to Ireland or elsewhere, free of charge from Archduke Albert in 1614, the friars at Louvain took full advantage of the offer and began to publish other religious works

¹ Simon Ditchfield, *Liturgy, sanctity and history in Tridentine Italy: Pietro Maria Campi and the preservation of the particular* (Cambridge, 1995), p.77. Patrick Corish, commenting on Catholic identity in early seventeenth century Ireland, notes that 'to be a Catholic now was to know why one was not a Protestant': Patrick J. Corish, *The Irish Catholic experience: a historical survey* (Dublin, 1985), p.105.

with some expedition.² These works were not singularly designed to confront the arguments of the reformers, but also set about promulgating the vision the Council of Trent held for the regulation of the religious life of the Church. This regulation did not involve a wholesale abandonment of past values or practices but, instead, their realignment. The Irish friars at Louvain, having received their faith in a religious world that was largely pre-Tridentine in character, were not about to wantonly discard the kind of religious devotion that their parents and family had cherished. However, since coming to Europe they had received new insights and had come to learn what forms of devotion were now considered appropriate for Tridentine Catholics. The package that the friars were to export home, then, was the result of a neat balancing act between the model of religious life proposed by the council and a form of devotion to which the Gaelic Irish were endeared. An examination of this re-shaping of religion, incorporating a defence and redefinition of doctrine, is the principal subject of this chapter.

Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's *Desiderius* (1616)

This work, also known as *Sgáthán an Chrábhaidh*, was a translation of an anonymous Catalan devotional work, dating from 1515, thus belonging to the pre-Tridentine era.³ Ó Maolchonaire, however, did not translate all of the original text and, indeed, added a significant amount of his own material, one particular section running to over 1,600 lines.⁴ It is the sections that Ó Maolchonaire inserted into his Gaelic translation that are examined here. The work relates the story of the journey of a pilgrim called Desiderius, during which he meets allegorical characters such as Good Will, Love of

² Giblin, 'The contribution of Irish Franciscans on the continent in the seventeenth century', p.93.

³ *Desiderius*, p.vii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ll 3411-5050.

God, Long Suffering, Humility, Simplicity and so on. In the preface, Ó Maolchonaire explains that since the work proved so popular in so many places, having been translated to Italian, French, German and Latin, he decided that it would be beneficial to provide a Gaelic translation ‘to enlighten the people of our territory, that do not understand other languages, with respect to the holy things it teaches.’⁵ The language used in the work is deliberately simple. Although Ó Maolchonaire came from a learned background, he chose not to use the elaborate and intricate forms of the bardic schools, reasoning that the wooden key of simple and intelligible Irish (that would open up the minds of a wide audience) would serve his purpose better than the golden key of literary perfection, which would more than likely fail in this regard.⁶ The sections that Ó Maolchonaire inserted into his translation of *Desiderius* treat of political matters as much as spiritual ones, including allusions to the political theories of figures such as Francisco de Suarez and Robert Bellarmine, both of whom influenced him greatly. In dealing with the practical question of whether Catholics in Ireland should obey the state’s decrees in religious matters, Ó Maolchonaire argues that civil authorities receive the power that they wield from the people themselves, and secondly, that temporal powers are entitled to be exercised merely within the temporal sphere and not within the spiritual one. Catholics, therefore, were not bound to obey the dictates of the state if such laws infringed upon their religious beliefs.⁷ Ó Maolchonaire did not allow such political theories to remain at the level of ideas but, instead, teased them out at length in a manner that showed how they could be lived in

⁵ ‘do thabhairt shoillsi don chuid dár ndúthaigh nách tuigeand theangtha eile, ar na neithibh naomhtha theagaisgeas’: *Desiderius*, p.1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁷ For a more detailed treatment of the political contents of *Desiderius* see Breandán Ó Buachalla, *Aisling ghéar: na Stiobhartaigh agus an tAos Léinn 1603-1788* (B.Á.C., 1996), pp 22-28.

practice. The additions to *Desiderius*, which were directed at an audience in Ireland, contain a treatment of religious matters in the context of contemporary political realities, something that could not be achieved in the confined project that produced the catechisms. An examination of these insertions reveals what Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire considered to be most essential for the spiritual welfare of his beleaguered countrymen, taking into account the political realities within which they found themselves.

The lengthiest insertion of Ó Maolchonaire's begins with a conversation between Desiderius and the character Simplicity. While the latter encourages Desiderius to contemplate God's judgement and the eternal fate of his soul, the pilgrim himself expresses a degree of self-satisfaction, asserting that '*ní mhothuighim mé féin ro-chlaon do chum uilc.*'⁸ He explains that while he has promised never to allow clergy into the same house as himself (out of fear), he nevertheless expects to see them in hiding in the dwelling places of his friends, on which occasion he hopes to secretly receive the sacrament of penance from them.⁹ This revelation by Desiderius saddens Simplicity and, when asked why she appears downcast, she responds:

*Níor iongnadh dá ndéarnuinn déara fola ag smuaineadh ar a olcas do thógbhuis-si an tteagasc naomhtha fuarais a ttigh ar máthar, an Umhla, an tráth a deiri go huaibhreach andóthchasach gu madh éidir lat tú féin do choimhéud gé gu mbeithea gan chongnamh na cléiri agad, 7 nách mothuighi claoine do chum peacaidh.*¹⁰

⁸ 'I do not consider myself to be too inclined towards evil': *Desiderius*, p.114.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ 'No wonder that I would shed tears of blood [while] contemplating how badly you took the heavenly counsel that you received in the house of our mother Humility, when you say proudly and

Ó Maolchonaire's message is clear: one should not turn one's back on the clergy and attempt to proceed on the path to salvation on one's own merits. All that Man possesses are his sins. By abandoning recourse to the clergy, one spreads bad example and leads others to ruin, thus making oneself responsible for the damnation of innumerable souls.¹¹ Interestingly, Ó Maolchonaire illustrates the grief of the female character, Simplicity, by using the tears of blood motif. This theme, while not exclusively Irish, is nevertheless found widely in Gaelic literature from as early as the eighth century, being later adopted into the religious sphere. Bardic poets often described the Virgin Mary as weeping tears of blood over the fate of her Son.¹² Presuming that his audience is familiar with the motif in question, Ó Maolchonaire uses it to convey the sense of disappointment that the 'virtue' character shows in the short sightedness of individuals personified by Desiderius. Continuing with the theme of the clergy's indispensability, Ó Maolchonaire makes use of one of the fables of Aesop to illustrate his point. He relates how there once existed a running feud between a company of wolves and a flock of sheep. The wolves found that they could not get the upper hand of the sheep because of their sheer number and also on account of the assistance they received from some large hounds. Finally, the wolves offered the sheep a permanent peace on the condition that they would surrender the protection of the hounds. The sheep complied with the agreement and, as soon as the wolves saw that the sheep had no protection, they attacked and killed every last one of them.¹³ Compliance with the heretical powers of government at the expense of the protection

presumptuously that you could guard yourself [from sin] even though you were without the assistance of the clergy and that you would not feel the inclination to sin': *Ibid.*, p.115.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp 115-16.

¹² See chapter 2 for a comprehensive discussion of this motif.

¹³ *Desiderius*, p.116.

and guidance of the clergy, in Ó Maolchonaire's view, could only lead to ruin. Desiderius does not express surprise that the fable of a pagan is used by Simplicity to argue her case, quoting from Augustine to confirm the acceptability of such an example:

*Óir...go n-aboir S. Aibhisdín gurab éidir leis na Críosdoighibh na neither maithe do gheibhid a leabhroibh na bhfeallsamh n-eithniocdha do chur 'na bhfeidhm féin, an tan oiread do chreideamh Críosa.*¹⁴

The comparison that Ó Maolchonaire draws between the heretics and wolves begins what becomes a bitter invective against those who followed Protestant reformed religion. He relates how the heretics inhabit cavernous burrows and live off the perverted meaning with which they infect Scripture, while attempting to colour it with the shade of truth in order to deceive simple people.¹⁵ He alludes to a putrid smell that emanates from their rear ends. Desiderius interprets the nasty body odour as a result of the misuse of their bodies to criticise and blaspheme.¹⁶ However, he questions why this smell should come from their behinds as opposed to any other area. Simplicity responds by explaining that by returning to the sins and the devil, which they renounced in their baptism, they fell into sin again. She also remarks that although there are differences between each of the heretical groups in their own perverted faith, nevertheless, they join together in turning their backs on the Catholic faith and on God.¹⁷ Much of Ó Maolchonaire's lengthiest insertion constitutes a defence of what he considers to be a persecuted Catholic clergy, containing also a concerted attack on

¹⁴ 'For Augustine said that Christians can utilise the good elements that they find in the books of the heathen philosophers whenever they accord with the Christian faith': Ibid., p.117.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.119.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.121.

the claims to legitimacy of their Protestant counterparts. As he continues on his pilgrim way, Desiderius finds himself in the midst of a band of heretics who have just imprisoned many Catholic priests and friars. The heretical bishops invite Desiderius, under the pain of dissatisfying the king, to pass judgement on the prisoners.¹⁸ He is about to acquiesce to their demands, out of fear, when the character Simplicity addresses him. She enquires whether he is a layperson or a religious. Desiderius replies that, although he intends to be a religious when he reaches the monastery of the Love of God, nevertheless he is presently a layperson. Simplicity explains that a layperson has no right to judge a person of the Church by law.¹⁹ Desiderius responds by stating that, since the reformed bishops had requested him to pass sentence upon the Catholic clergy, he was therefore not acting out of his own authority but the authority of the most distinguished bishops of the Church.²⁰ Simplicity argues that he is very much mistaken; these individuals cannot confer authority since they are not bishops at all. When Desiderius questions this statement, Ó Maolchonaire, through the mouth of Simplicity, gains the opportunity of debunking the claim of the reformed bishops to valid orders. Simplicity explains that the true bishops are those that the Holy Spirit elected to replace the apostles, each one fulfilling the role of *comharba*, in order to teach and direct the Church. Similarly, she states that, as Peter was prince and leader of the remaining apostles as the Gospel clearly teaches, so it is fitting that the *comharba* and heir of Peter (the Pope) should be the head and monarch over the successors of the apostles, namely every bishop and his flock.²¹

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.122.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.123.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.124.

Having vindicated the position of the Catholic bishops as successors of the apostles, Ó Maolchonaire turns his attention to their Protestant counterparts. In the wake of the claim that Protestant bishops lacked valid orders and were therefore devoid of authority, Desiderius asks who exactly the ‘pseudo-bishops’²² are successors of, prompting the following tirade:

As comharbadha eiriceasboig...ar an dá eirsearc fá mó olc 7 urchóid ...i. ar Lúitéur lobhtha mhac Lúsifeir, 7 ar Chailbhín choirpthe chneas dóiti, mac na mallacht. Sgríobhaid úghdair eagnoidhe thromdha go raibh deamhan do ghnáth ag imtheachd ar mháthair Lúitéir, 7 gur ab uaidhe do ghlac sí Lúitéar mar thoirrcheas; 7 sgríobhoidh sé féin 'na leabhroibh an muinteardhas 7 an cumonn do bhí aige ris an ndiabhal, mar do ith seachd miaich shaloinn 'na chuibhreann, 7 mar do bhí 'na oide múinte aige; 7 do geibhtear sgríobhtha air a leabhroibh annála, gé go ttug mhóid ngeanmoidheachda do Dhia, gur lúigh iar sin lé nuimhir éiccinnte do dhrochmhnaibh, 7 gur phós 'na dhiaigh sin challuigh nduibh, 'sa leaboigh 'na bhfuair bás ar meisge. As follas go raibhe an dara fear, .i. Cailbhín, comh shalach 7 comh madramhoil 7 sin gurab í pian phuiblidhe fuair tré an bpeacodh sodomdha do níodh do ghnáth, .i. tré choimhriachtain ré buachuillighibh, creachuireachd do dhéanamh ar a dhruim lé hiarand ndearg.²³

²² ‘seubhdeasboig’: *ibid.*

²³ ‘The heretical bishops are successors of...the two most evil and malicious heretics...that is, of rotten Luther the son of Lucifer and of lustful Calvin of the burning flesh, son of curses. Learned and weighty authors write that a demon was wont to have intercourse with Luther’s mother and [that it was] from him that she conceived Luther; and he himself writes in his books [of] the friendship and the companionship that he had with the devil, for he ate seven measures of salt in his company, and how he was a tutor to him; and it is found written in the books of annals that, although he made a vow of

Such a diatribe clearly illustrates the polemical nature of Ó Maolchonaire's additions to the translation he prepared. He is principally concerned with deriding the religion of the reformers and thereby dissuading Catholics from abandoning their own faith. Desiderius stands, in this treatment, for the average Catholic in Ireland whose mind is inundated with questions pertaining to how his faith should be lived within a jurisdiction that is overtly hostile to its practice. The dismissal of Luther and Calvin and, by extension, those that preach their doctrines, leaves Desiderius confident that those who follow them are in serious error:

*A Chríod cáidh...as truagh an doille 7 fós an fé fiadh atá ar shúilibh an phobuil bhoicht dár ab apsduil na bathluigh bhrodhacha bhiastuighthe-sin, 'sa seachrán as slighe dhíreach gu hifriond.*²⁴

The image used by Ó Maolchonaire to describe the effect of false doctrine upon the people, namely that of the mist that obscures vision, was commonly employed by bardic poets to denote the pre-Passion state of a world blinded by sin.²⁵ Using the character of Desiderius to propose contentious questions, Ó Maolchonaire attempts to remove the layers of doubt and uncertainty that he considered a threat to Catholicism in his native land. So when Desiderius questions why a layperson cannot be justified,

virginity to God, he afterwards lay with an indeterminate number of evil women, and that he later married a nun in the bed in which he died in a drunken stupor. It is clear that the second man, that is, Calvin, was [equally] as filthy and as beastly, and that he suffered public penalty, having regularly committed the sin of sodomy, that is, through consorting with boys, branding his back with a red iron': *ibid.*, pp 125-6.

²⁴ 'Holy Christ...it is a pity, the blindness and even the obscuring mist that is upon the eyes of the poor people that have for apostles those filthy beastly churls, in the error that is a direct road to Hell': *ibid.*, p.126.

²⁵ Diarmuid Ó Cobhthaigh provides such an example in *ADD 63*, v.18.

having gained permission from the temporal authorities that claim leadership of the Church in that locality, in judging the Catholic clergy, Simplicity vehemently refutes the proposition:

*A mhic...cuir conntacht ar an ní sin adeirid na heiricidhe, .i. gurab iad na prionnsadha teamporaltha as ceann ar an nEaglais, ór as eiriceachd sin do fhás as eiriceachd oile as fréamh dhi .i. a mheas nách foilid cumhachta oile san mbiath acht cumhachta na tuaithe a mháin.*²⁶

Desiderius then enquires whether he could be justified in forwarding the names of Catholics, who do not attend the Church service of the reformers, to the pseudo-bishops.²⁷ In response, Simplicity explains that such an action would be an offence against the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church. Since Catholics are the Church and the Church is the Body of Christ, who is its Head, whatever is done against that Body is done against Christ, he explains, citing Christ's words to St Paul ('Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?') in support of his argument.²⁸ Ó Maolchonaire also deals with what was ostensibly a fresh insistence by the Crown on the taking of the Oath of Supremacy; Desiderius asks whether the Church would consider the taking of such an oath permissible. Simplicity rejects the suggestion out

²⁶ 'Son...dismiss immediately that which the heretics say, i.e. that the temporal princes are head of the Church, for that is a heresy that grew from another heresy, which is its root, i.e. to surmise that there are no other powers in the world except the powers of the civil authorities': *ibid.*, p.127.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.129: Since the summer of 1614, government activity against the Catholic laity had increased in fervour. It was not unknown for civil proceedings to be brought against jurors that were not prepared to present the name of Catholics who breached the law; see Aidan Clarke with R. Dudley Edwards, 'Pacification, plantation and the Catholic question, 1603-23' in T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin and F. J. Byrne (eds), *A new history of Ireland iii: early modern Ireland 1534-1691* (Oxford, 1976), p.217.

²⁸ *Desiderius*, p.129.

of hand, explaining that such an oath would constitute '*éitheach, mearrdhánta míchreidmheach*'²⁹ that would invoke Divine retribution on the land.³⁰ As he continues on his journey, Desiderius encounters another large group of heretics who attempt to coerce him into attending the Protestant service by threatening him with prison and even with death.³¹ Simplicity dissuades him from such a visit, highlighting its dangers to his soul, even if the visit is paid out of fear and not fervour.³² The question of allegiance to the state versus allegiance to God is then broached.³³ Desiderius is advised not to depart from the 'paradise of the Church'³⁴ by attending the Protestant service. When Desiderius explains that the Protestants claim to possess this paradise themselves, Simplicity begins a defence of the Catholic Church as the Church founded by Christ, using familiar arguments such as its unity and the assurances given in the gospels of Matthew and John that it was built on solid rock and that the gates of Hell would never prevail against it.³⁵

The lengthy section of Ó Maolchonaire's translation, dealing with Irish matters, has thus far concentrated on what the proper response of the Irish Catholic should be in the face of religious and political coercion. Clearly, what Ó Maolchonaire believed to be the practical realities of life within a jurisdiction that exhibited open hostility to the exercise of one's faith, warranted immediate attention. Having dealt with this issue, the narrative moves along to questions of a more doctrinal nature. The Catholic

²⁹ 'rash, heretical perjury'.

³⁰ Ibid., p.128.

³¹ Ibid., p.131.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., p.133.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., p.134.

insistence on the necessity of both faith and works for salvation, as opposed to the more Protestant understanding of *sola fide*, is explored at greater length than could be afforded in the catechisms.³⁶ The Protestant position is likened to the heresies of old with which St Augustine was compelled to contend. Ó Maolchonaire cites Augustine's tract *De Fide et Operibus* among others, and the letters of St James and St Paul, to support this position.³⁷ The question of sin and repentance is also tackled. The heretics, he explains, deny the [sacrament of] penance along with abstinence and fasting just as their older counterparts once did, going on to cite also their refusal to recognise the difference between a bishop and a priest.³⁸ Like Arius, they also state that it is improper to pray for the dead. As Jovinian once did, they allege that there is no difference between the various sins and they do not consider the state of consecrated virginity to be more exalted than the state of marriage.³⁹ The character Simplicity, who Ó Maolchonaire uses to advise Desiderius on these matters, refrains from further explication of the views of the heretics on the Virgin Mary, the humanity of Christ and the Trinity so as not to add to the disgust of the pilgrim. However, she does not shy away from a bitterly worded dismissal of the heretics and their doctrines:

As éidir a rádh nách fuil a n-eiriceacht Lúitéir 7 Chailbhín acht camra cáidheach, mar chruinnighid aoileachmhoirt 7 uile shalchar ifrionda na n-

³⁶ Ibid., pp 138-9.

³⁷ Ibid., p.139.

³⁸ Ibid., p.140.

³⁹ Ibid.

*eiriceacht oile, 7 nách foil inntibh féin acht cúpla illphiastt ainciosach do bhí
ag sgeith blaismhémíodh, aor 7 aithisíodh...*⁴⁰

Desiderius accepts that the heretics spread falsehood but nevertheless asks whether he could give merely lip service to their requests in order to avoid persecution, while keeping the true faith in his own heart.⁴¹ This proposition is rejected and the authority of Augustine is again appealed to, as Simplicity explains that such reasoning would lead an individual into the heresy of heresies.⁴² When Desiderius protests that God is merciful and would surely pardon such a person, since his actions would stem from weakness rather than malice or lack of love, Simplicity responds by reminding the pilgrim that ‘*gé go bhfuil Dia thrócaireach atá roi-cheart roi-fhírinneach.*’⁴³ He adds that God does not allow one sin to go unpaid for.⁴⁴ Taking his inspiration from the writings of St Augustine, Ó Maolchonaire attempts to instruct his audience to strike a balance between recourse to God’s mercy and fear of His justice:

*...ná bíodh an uiread sin d’anndóthchas agot ‘na thrócaire go ccuirfea a
cheart nó a chumhacht a ttarcaisne, ná d’eagla réna chumhachtoibh go
rachthá a n-édóthchas ar a thrócaire.*⁴⁵

⁴⁰ ‘One can say that the heresy of Luther and Calvin is only a filthy sewer that gathers excremental sediment and all the hellish dirt of all the heresies, and that they themselves are merely a couple of venomous monsters that were vomiting blasphemy, satire and reproach’: *ibid.*, pp 140-1.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.143.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp 143-4.

⁴³ ‘although God is merciful He is [also] supremely just and supremely righteous’: *ibid.*, p.144.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ ‘May you not have so much presumption on His mercy that it would undermine His justice or His power, nor fear of His powers that you would despair of His mercy’: *ibid.*, p.145. A similar attempt at striking such a balance can be seen in the poetry of the fifteenth-century Observant friar and bardic poet, Philip Bocht Ó hUiginn: *PB 25*, v.3.

In order that his advice on these matters might not fall on deaf ears, Ó Maolchonaire introduces the subject of death, which he must have imagined would serve as the ultimate tool for halting good and faithful Catholic from being surreptitiously led into heresy: ‘*Ní fhuil fios uaire a bháis ag aoinneach.*’⁴⁶ Nobody can decide to depart from life in old age, he explains, but rather, people can die at various ages, and moreover, whatever life one is leading at the hour of death is the life that one will be judged upon, for there is no opportunity for repentance after death.⁴⁷ The advice given in this regard reflects standard official teaching on the sacrament in the late medieval period, particularly in its concern that coming to confession should not be delayed.⁴⁸

Dá bhrígh sin, ní cuirthe an aithrighi ar cáirdi ó lá go lá; ór tig an bás 7 fearg Dé go hoband a n-aimsir an innighthe, mar adeir béul Dé féin, 7 fuadoighidh leis a moimint go hifrionn lucht na haithrighe do chor ar athlá. Déanmaoid, dá bhrígh so uile, deithneas do chum na haithrighi, 7 bíodh do shíor uair an bháis 'nar meabhair. An tan éireócham ar maduin bíodh eagla oirn nách béaram ar an n-oidhche, 7 an tan luidhfeam 'nar leaboidh, bíodh an eagla chéadna oirn nách roichfeam beó gus an madoin; 7 dá ndearnam so béaram buaidh go hurusa ar antoilbh 7 ar lochtoibh na colna 7 ní chuirfe eagla an tshaoghoil d'fhiachoibh oirn Dia do thréigean...⁴⁹

⁴⁶ ‘No one knows the hour of his death’: *Desiderius*, p.145.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.146.

⁴⁸ For instances where this advice is transmitted through the medium of late medieval bardic poetry, see chapter 4.

⁴⁹ ‘Therefore, do not postpone confession from day to day; for death and the anger of God comes suddenly in the time of weaving as the mouth of God himself says; and it snatches to Hell in an instant those who postpone confession. Let us all, therefore, make haste to confession, and let the hour of our death be always on our minds. When we rise in the morning let us fear that we will not reach the night

This passage is a good example of the way Ó Maolchonaire succeeded in interweaving a treatment of current political and moral issues with instruction on personal devotional practice in the section of *Desiderius* relating to Irish affairs. He advocates an awareness of one's own mortality at two particular periods of the day, namely rising in the morning and retiring at night. Presumably, this practice was to be carried out in conjunction with the recitation of morning and night prayers, the carrying out of which was strongly advocated in later Franciscan works such as the catechism-cum-prayer book, *Parrthas an Anma* (1645). Such a practice, in his estimation, would prevent the individual from postponing reception of the sacrament of penance and would encourage him to remain in the state of grace. This would lead to a subjugation of the body's inordinate desires and, more importantly, in the context of political persecution, would strengthen the individual and enable him to withstand the temptation to cooperate with the wishes of the civil powers in order to avoid penalty. Personal devotional practice therefore, and not merely knowledge of moral responsibilities, was considered by Ó Maolchonaire to have a huge bearing on the way a Catholic might behave under a hostile jurisdiction.

Ó Maolchonaire does not only advocate just living, however: he also insists on cultivating the appropriate motivation for such action. When *Desiderius* is depicted as vowing never to abandon God in order that he might win eternal life, Simplicity scolds him for such an attitude, highlighting the Gospel paradigm '*Iarroidh ó thós ríoghacht Dé 7 a cheart, 7 do-ghéubhthaoi bhar riachtanas saolta maille ris sin.*'⁵⁰

and when we lie in our beds let us have the same fear that we will not survive until the morning; and if we do this we will easily conquer the desires and weaknesses of the body, and the fear of the world will not compel us to abandon God': *Desiderius*, p.146.

⁵⁰ 'Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and you will gain your earthly need[s] also': *ibid.*, p.147.

Desiderius accepts the correction and proceeds to ask how his soul can be healed from such sins. Simplicity explains that, if he admits that he is unwell, then he must summon a good physician that will examine his blood (if he be suffering from fever), give purgative medicine to him, draw blood, give him some syrup and thereafter permit him to rise from his sick bed.⁵¹ The analogy is then explained: the fever represents sin, the physician the confessor that examines one's blood as he listens to the confession. The purgative medicine stands for the penance that one must accept from the beginning if the fever is very troublesome. The blood that is let represents the diffusion of one's evil fluids and is the burden that one takes on in repayment for taking the reputation, the honour or the property of another person. The syrup that is given to the patient symbolises fasting, prayer and almsgiving as reparation for sin. The permission to rise from one's sick bed represents the absolution that releases the penitent from the bonds of sin.⁵² Such a portrayal of the dynamics of the Sacrament of Penance was not new. The idea of the confessor as *animadoctor* is found in the early Irish penitentials and is alluded to frequently in references to the sacrament in the intervening period. When asked about the composition of the purgative medicine, Simplicity replies that it consists of three pills. The first of these involves a consideration of the sins one has committed, the cultivation of profound sorrow for having angered God and an accompanying hatred for each of one's sins. The second pill involves a sincere resolution not to sin again, and the third pill consists of hope in the mercy of God and the Passion of Christ who gained forgiveness of the individual's sin from God.⁵³ Simplicity advises Desiderius how to avoid sin, explaining that all sin

⁵¹ Ibid., pp 147-8.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., pp 148-9.

arises from either love or fear of the world.⁵⁴ If one is led into temptation because of a love of the world, one should immediately think of Christ's words in the Gospel: '*Créd an tarbha do dhuine an saoghal uili do ghnóughadh, 7 a anom féin do dhamnoghadh?*'⁵⁵ If a person is drawn to sin out of fear, he should consider the words of the Saviour, which remind the sinner:

*Ná bíodh eagla oraibh réas an lucht mharbhas bhur ccorp 7 leis nách éidir bhar n-anom do mharbhadh, acht réas an tí léar ab éidir bhar ccur, idir chorp 7 anom go teinidh ifrind.*⁵⁶

Desiderius is then reminded of the words that Christ will use to welcome the just into His Kingdom on the Day of Judgement and to send the wicked to their eternal punishment. The wording is taken directly from the Judgement scene in Matthew 25.⁵⁷

Ó Maolchonaire returns to the topic of dealing with heretics in the succeeding section, placing the character Desiderius in conversation with a certain group. Their disputation easily gets the better of him for they quote Scripture at such length '*ionnas gur thionnsguin Des; mar nách raibhe eolas san sgrioptúir aige, contabhairt do chur 'na chreidiomh.*'⁵⁸ Simplicity responds to Desiderius's plight by warning him against

⁵⁴ '*...ceachtar do dhá ní as cúis don dhuine do chum an pheacoidh do dhéanamh, .i. grádh nó eagla an tshaoghail*': *ibid.*, p.149.

⁵⁵ 'What benefit is it for a person to win the whole world and [yet] damn his soul?': *ibid.*

⁵⁶ 'Do not be fearful of those that kill the body and yet cannot slay the soul; rather [fear] the person that can consign you, body and soul to the fires of Hell': *ibid.*, p.150.

⁵⁷ 'Come you, whom my Father has blessed; take for your heritage the Kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world'; and to the wicked He will say 'Go to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels' (Matt 25: 34, 41). *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ 'that Desiderius, not having any knowledge of Scripture, begins to doubt his faith': *ibid.*, p.152.

turning back on the road to salvation, using the fate of Lot's wife as an example of the consequences of such a decision.⁵⁹ She points out that it is through an erroneous use of Scripture that heresies were first devised and that Desiderius would be well advised not to allow himself to be disarmed of the sword and armour that is his faith, using St Paul's description.⁶⁰ Desiderius asks how he is to rid himself of the evil thoughts against his faith that the heretics have sown in him, using the authority of Scripture.⁶¹ Simplicity's reply exemplifies the primacy given at this time to the teaching office of the Magisterium as opposed to the dictates of Scripture, so easily misunderstood by ordinary believers:

Ná cuireadh ní ar domhan dá ccluinfé conntabhairt dá laghat ort a n-airteagloibh do chreidimh: 7 dá ttigeadh aingiol ó nimh do sheanmóir 'na n-aghoidh (mar adeir Pól) cuir contract ar a sheanmóir.⁶²

Simplicity continues by explaining that Augustine once warned that it is the custom of heretics to mislead all by reading distorted meanings into the Scriptures. His advice to all who encounter a dubious interpretation of Scripture, which militates against one's faith, is to believe firmly that those who present it are not providing its true

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.152.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.153.

⁶¹ Ibid., p.155.

⁶² 'Let nothing that you hear lead you to the slightest doubt regarding the articles of your faith; and if an angel were to come from Heaven to preach against them (as Paul says), dismiss his sermon': *ibid.*, p.155. The fear that the laity could misinterpret Scripture, or that heretics might misrepresent its contents, ensured that Church instruction of the laity centred on the articles of faith found in the Creed rather than an exposition of Scriptural passages. Such an approach is exemplified in Antoin Gearnon's explanation that the reading of the Scripture in the vernacular is forbidden to Catholics found in his 1645 catechism: *PA*, p.39.

meaning.⁶³ The message that Ó Maolchonaire tries to convey in these lines is not all that different from the old exhortation to ‘believe as the Church believes.’⁶⁴ The believer was, however, expected to know what these beliefs were. They were to be found in the articles of faith contained in the Creed. And the Creed was to be found in the catechism. Desiderius, in a clear reference to the perceived level of persecution in Ireland at the time, asks what he should do since the heretics threaten his life if he does not renounce his beliefs.⁶⁵ Simplicity asks him to be patient and strong and to place his hope in God as the martyrs did.⁶⁶ Desiderius is reminded of the reward promised to those suffering martyrdom, namely a direct passage to paradise without having to endure the pains of Purgatory.⁶⁷ However, when he asks Simplicity to instruct him, with the aid of Augustine’s teaching, in how to engage intellectually with his adversaries, and thus defend his faith, the ‘virtue’ character is reluctant:

‘A mhic’, ar isi, ‘seachain a ndiospóracht, ór gé nách bíd na heiricidhe foghlumtha, mealluid duine simplidhe lé comhrádh milis, mar adeir Pól, 7 gealluid flaitheamhnas Dé 7 uile aitos a ccolna dhóibh a n-aoinfheacht, 7 bídh mar sin briocht mealltórchta ’na mbriathruibh, 7 bídh a n-úrlabhra mar aillsi ag snámhchnaoi, mar adeir an tApstoll céadna.’⁶⁸

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ See chapter 1 for a more comprehensive treatment of this exhortation.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.155.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.156.

⁶⁸ ‘Son’, she said, ‘avoid their disputation, for even though the heretics are not learned, they deceive the simple person with sweet talk, as Paul says, and they promise them the Kingdom of Heaven and every pleasure of the body also, and there is therefore a deceptive spell in their words and their speech is like cancerous sores that slowly corrode, as the same apostle states’: *ibid*, p.158.

Disputation should therefore be left to the prelates and learned people, Ó Maolchonaire adds. When Desiderius admits that he would be ashamed were he not able to defend his beliefs, Simplicity responds by reassuring him that he should have no cause to be so. After all what person knows how many hairs he has on his head, not to speak of the mystery of the Trinity?⁶⁹ For that reason Simplicity asks that Desiderius never forget the advice of St Paul: *‘Ná hiarr eólas domhoin do bheith agot ar neithibh ársa acht bíodh eagla ort.’*⁷⁰

Confessing that he has not reached even the first stages of knowledge, Desiderius petitions Simplicity: *‘Múin mo chreidiomh dhamh.’*⁷¹ Simplicity expresses surprise that he has not learnt this at an earlier stage: *‘Nách ar fhoghlomais...an Teagasg Críosttuidhe an tan do bhádhas óg, mar atá d’fhiachuibh ar an n-uili Chríosttuidhi?’*⁷² The astonishment with which Simplicity greets the question is clearly designed to convey what was considered to be the desired norm for Catholics in early seventeenth-century Ireland – instruction in the rudiments of the faith. Desiderius’s desire for such instruction illustrates his development in the spiritual sphere, portrayed by his progression on the pilgrim journey. The wishes of the friars at Louvain were not only that their fellow country men should be instructed in the faith but also that they should actually desire and actively seek such instruction. In any event, Desiderius admits that he did study his catechism when he was young, especially the Creed, which told him that the Church can never invent another faith,

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ ‘Do not ask for deep knowledge on the higher things, but [instead] have fear [of the Lord]’: *ibid.*, p.159. The approach taken by Ó Maolchonaire, adopted from St Paul also has echoes in the Wisdom literature of Scripture where it is claimed that ‘the fear of Yahweh is a school of wisdom’ (Prov 15:33)

⁷¹ ‘Teach me my faith’: *ibid.*, p.159.

⁷² ‘Did you not learn...the catechism when you were young as every Christian is obliged to do?’: *ibid.*

apart from that which is found in the articles therein.⁷³ However what he would now like to learn is a rule of faith that would explicitly counter some of the points of contention raised by the heretics of his age. Simplicity explains that such a formula is to be found, for the most part, in the oath that bishops swear on the occasion of their episcopal ordination.⁷⁴ The first section consists of the Nicene Creed. This is followed by a reaffirmation of Catholic teaching in areas most disputed by the reformers. Firstly, the importance of Tradition is stressed, and especially its responsibility to inform the Church in its interpretation of Scripture:

*Admhoim go ro-dhaingean, 7 gabhoim chugom go fonnmar, béulproicheapta asbaltha 7 eaglasta, 7 gach éanchuid oile do ghnáthaighthibh agas d'órduighthibh na Heaglaisi céadna. Admhoim mar an ccéadna an sgrioptúir naomhtha san chéill 'nar chongaimh 7 a ccongmann an naomhmáthair Eaglaise, dárab dual a bhreathnughadh cia hí ciall fhíre 7 mínioghadh na sgrioptúireadh naomhtha, 7 ní ghlacfad 7 ní mhineóchad choidhche é achd de réir aonaonta 7 éinintinde na n-aithreadh.*⁷⁵

Ó Maolchonaire then includes a profession of faith in the seven sacraments of the Church and the grace they impart. He stresses that Baptism, Confirmation and Ordination cannot be received twice without sacrilege. He upholds the validity of the prescribed ceremonies attached to the impartation of these sacraments. Lastly, in this

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.160.

⁷⁵ 'I confess firmly and accept readily the apostolic and ecclesiastical traditions, and every other part of the traditions and precepts of the same Church. I also confess [belief in] the Holy Scripture in the manner in which it upholds and supports Holy Mother Church, Who has the duty to judge what is the true meaning of the Holy Scriptures, and I will never accept or interpret it {Scripture} except according to the unanimity and single-mindedness of the Fathers': *ibid.*, p.161.

section, he expresses assent to all the decrees and doctrinal pronouncements of the Council of Trent, especially with regard to Original Sin and Justification.⁷⁶

Ó Maolchonaire then turns to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, asserting that a true and proper sacrifice is offered to God in atonement for sin on behalf of the living and the dead.⁷⁷ He also re-affirms that the Body and Blood of Christ, along with His Soul and His Divinity are truly present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar.⁷⁸ It is explained that Christ is substantially present therein and that the entire substances of bread and wine are transformed into His Body and Blood in a change that the Church describes as transubstantiation.⁷⁹ Ó Maolchonaire moves quickly to the subject of Purgatory, a topic not unrelated to the Mass, as it was firmly believed that the offering of Masses for the deceased was the most efficacious means of securing their release. He defends the existence of Purgatory in which souls are detained and also asserts that the performance of good works assists them in their plight.⁸⁰ Prayer to the saints is encouraged on the basis that they are in the presence of Christ in His Kingdom and

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.161. This pronouncement of Ó Maolchonaire's, especially its specific regard for the issue of Original Sin and Justification, may seem to be somewhat out of place. One wonders why he was so anxious to declare his acceptance of the teaching of Trent on these very issues. In the light of the accusation that Ó Maolchonaire's theological doctrines strongly influenced the development of Jansenism (*Desiderius*, p.xvi) could it be that the friar was already aware of the potentially controversial nature of his views, and sought to place himself firmly within the authority of the Council?

⁷⁷ '...ofráiltear do Dhia san aifrionn saicriffs fhíri dhíleas a síothcháin ar bpeacadh, ar son bheó 7 mharbh...': *ibid.*

⁷⁸ '...go bhfuil corp 7 fuil ar Ttighearna Iosa Críostt mailli réna anom 7 réna dhiadhacht a sacrameint ro-naomhtha na haltóra go fíri...': *ibid.*, pp 161-2.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.162.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

constantly offer intercessory prayers on behalf of humanity. He also adds that their images should be honoured.⁸¹ This point is made quite strongly and extended to the images of Christ and Mary also:

*Adeirim go ro-dhaingean gurab cóir íomháigh Chríostt, ⁊ Mháthar Dhé do bhí riamh 'na hóigh, ⁊ na naomh oile, do chongmháil, ⁊ do bheith a rébherens ⁊ a n-onóir íomchubhoigh.*⁸²

Ó Maolchonaire is sweeping in his refutation of the reformers. Even in his brief allusion to Mary, the Mother of God, he cannot resist emphasising her perpetual virginity as a rebuff to those who would deny this attribute. Certifying that Christ bestowed the powers of granting indulgences to the Church, he upholds their value for the Christian.⁸³ Recognition is given to the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church. It is stated that she is Mother and Mistress for the whole Church. Allegiance is pledged to the Roman pontiff, the successor to Peter, Prince of the Apostles and Vicar of Jesus Christ.⁸⁴ In a final, sweeping statement, Ó Maolchonaire, in his formula, professes belief in everything the Church teaches and decrees in its holy canons, in its General Councils, especially the Council of Trent, and vehemently refutes all that is contrary to them, including all heresy, which he ‘condemns, denies and anathemises from the Church.’⁸⁵ Simplicity comments to Desiderius at the end of the lengthy declaration:

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² ‘I state very firmly that it is right that the images of Christ and the Mother of God, who was ever a virgin, should be kept and revered and honoured in fitting manner’: *ibid.*

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ ‘... ⁊ an uile eiriceacht do damnadh, do diúltadh, ⁊ do malloigheadh ón eaglais’: *ibid.*, p.163.

*Ag so, a mhic...riaghoil ro-mhaith chreidimh, ⁊ biodh sí féin ⁊ Cré na nApstoll do mheabhair go ro-mhaith agot, agus congaimh go daingean iad, ⁊ ní ba heagoil seachrán th'eascharad.*⁸⁶

Desiderius is clearly pleased with the instruction, for he replies '*as urusa a aithne gur ab é sin creideamh fire Eaglaisi Críostt, ⁊ atá do ghlain-mheabhair agom a nois, ⁊ biaidh go bás.*'⁸⁷

And so, Ó Maolchonaire's lengthiest insertion into his translation of the pre-Reformation Catalan devotional work draws to a close. In summary, much of this insertion deals with heresy and its consequences. Clearly aimed at an Irish audience experiencing persecution, the text seeks to encourage, advise and instruct. Desiderius is told to be strong in the face of coercion, and not to bow to the wishes of a heretical church supported by an overbearing government. He must place his hope in Christ as the martyrs did. He receives advice on how to deal with adversaries, namely to have recourse to the articles of faith found in the Creed rather than becoming embroiled in polemical battles that he could not hope to win. Thirdly, and only on account of his curiosity, Desiderius is instructed on how to refute the principal arguments of the reformers by use of the Nicene Creed and succeeding declarations. Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire, in compiling this section, would have been very aware of events as they unfolded in Ireland, and was clearly privy to the most pressing issues of the day. His specifically Irish additions to *Desiderius* were aimed at certain select groups. After all, it was not everybody that could claim to memorise the entirety of the Nicene

⁸⁶ 'There, son, ...is a very good rule of faith, and may you learn it by heart, along with the Apostle's Creed, and keep them firmly [in your mind], and do not [then] fear the error of your enemies': *ibid.*, p.163.

⁸⁷ 'It is easy to recognise that that was the true faith of the Church of Christ, and I have it memorised now and it will remain so until death': *ibid.*

Creed and the supplementary material aimed at refuting error. Most people were expected to learn only the basics, namely the Our Father, Hail Mary and the Apostle's Creed, as outlined in the catechetical material. However, there was clearly a need for some response to events in Ireland. Reports sent to the continent detailing the difficulty of life in Ireland tended to paint a rather bleak picture for two reasons. Firstly, bad news generally proves to be of more interest than good news and travels more quickly. Secondly, the more shocking the report sent in petition to figures on the continent, the better the chance that something might possibly be done about the precarious nature of the situation. A good example of such a report, albeit a little later than Ó Maolchonaire's time of writing, is an account of the position of Irish Catholics forwarded to Philip III of Spain in 1619 by the Dominican, Father Richard Bermingham.⁸⁸ Interestingly, it deals with the same kind of issues that Ó Maolchonaire discusses in *Desiderius*. Bermingham details how Catholics are condemned to pay twelve pence Irish if they do not attend the Protestant service. Four times a year, judges, going on circuit, enquire from the parson the names of all Catholics contravening this edict. While only the parson's evidence is used, the jury is nevertheless made up of Catholics whom, it is hoped, will condemn their fellowmen. If they fail to do this, the jurymen are imprisoned themselves. In cities and towns both Catholics and Protestants are elected to the mayoralty and other offices. Catholics, however, must take the Oath of Supremacy beforehand and are imprisoned and fined if they refuse. Catholics who harbour priests in their houses are arrested along with their wives and made suffer great hardships in prison. Besides fining Catholics for not

⁸⁸ Reginald Walsh, 'A memorial presented to the King of Spain on behalf of the Irish Catholics, A.D. 1619', in *Archivium Hibernicum* vi (1917), pp 27-54.

attending the Protestant services the 'pseudo-bishops' also excommunicate them.⁸⁹ It is not difficult to see the correlation between the two texts. Reports such as Bermingham's, coupled with first-hand accounts received by Ó Maolchonaire from individuals who visited the continent undoubtedly had a huge influence on his most lengthy insertion found in *Desiderius*.

It must be remembered, however, that *Desiderius* in its original form was essentially a spiritual guidebook, a devotional work, compiled to aid the Christian on his earthly pilgrimage. This aspect of the work was not overlooked by Ó Maolchonaire as a close reading of his insertions bears out. While Ó Maolchonaire's main concern is to counsel and support Catholics suffering oppression in Ireland, his advice is given within the framework of a programme for just living. The decisions taken by *Desiderius*, prompted by *Simplicity*, do not bow before what might be considered as political expediency. Instead, they result from a serious consideration of what is the right thing to do, with due regard for the eternal salvation of his soul. Ó Maolchonaire's principal aim, therefore, is to promote holiness in his audience. He hoped that the making of any necessary difficult decisions would be informed and guided by that same spirituality. Additional insertions by Ó Maolchonaire illustrate this clearly. At one point, the character *Humility* instructs *Desiderius* on Her particular way of life. She explains that, when tempted to sin She reacts in the following manner:

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 48-52.

*...te thim ar an modh ccéadna, ag filleadh mh'inntinde 7 mo smuaintighthibh do chum beathadh 7 báis mh'Íosa ionmhuin, 7 ag únfairt 7 ag iompúdh mh'indtinne sna créuchtuibh do fhulaing dom fhuasgladh óm fpeacodh.*⁹⁰

Although a typically Franciscan response to temptation, this method finds advocates elsewhere during the same period. The poet Muiris, son of Dáibhí Mac Gearailt (c.1565-1630) gives similar advice in one of his works. Muiris came from a well-educated family. Stanihurst claims, in respect of his father Dáibhí, that 'in all parts of logike, rhetoric and philosophie he vanquished all men and was vanquished by none.'⁹¹ Muiris was familiar with continental Europe and more than likely travelled there on more than one occasion.⁹² A poem composed for Sir John Fitz Edmond of Cloyne, on the occasion of the latter's journey to France (c. 1613), notes how women have destroyed many notable people in history. Muiris advises Sir John, therefore, against giving in to temptation of the flesh, and instead, to think of the Lord's Passion: '*Gidheadh, dá dtí t'ainmhian ort, go ndáilfe tú dhóibh t'ansacht smuain ar chneidh an chridhe i gcrois, is ar neimh na díghe domblais.*'⁹³

⁹⁰ '...I flee, in the same way, bring my mind back to the life and death of my dear Jesus, turning and bearing my mind upon the wounds that He suffered to free me from my sin': *Desiderius*, p.40.

⁹¹ *DMMD*, p.7.

⁹² It is not clear whether Mac Gearailt was educated in England or the continent. He moved from Corca Dhuibhne to the lands of Mc Carthy More in South Kerry, after his father had participated in the Desmond Rebellion in 1581 during which he lost his life at Aghadoe. He is said to have accompanied Sir John Fitz Edmond of Cloyne on his journey to France sometime around 1613 on account of being a good linguist and a 'noble deserter' (*ibid.*, pp 7-8, 15-16).

⁹³ 'However, if the desire comes upon you to share your love [with] them, think of the heart wound [on] the cross and the bitterness of the drink of gall': *ibid.*, 5, v.21.

Ó Maolchonaire chose also to use *Desiderius* to remind its audience of some points covered in catechetical *compendia* compiled for Irish use, such as his own 1593 catechism and the more recent *Teagasg Críosaíde* of Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa. This is particularly evident in his treatment of the question of the Holy Trinity. He distinguishes between the persons of the Trinity, explaining that the Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father and neither are the Holy Spirit.⁹⁴ *Desiderius* puts words on what was undoubtedly a contentious issue illustrated by the treatment it routinely received in the catechisms, namely the co-equality of persons. He asks, therefore, how it can be that the Son is not younger than the Father from whom He proceeded. The ‘virtue’ character, which responds to the question, in this case Love of God, explains that often in nature it is observed that there is no fixed beginning for one thing that proceeds from another. The example of the sun and its brightness is given. The brightness of the sun always accompanies the sun itself and was present from the beginning of the sun’s creation. Similarly the brightness and heat of a fire are no younger than the fire itself.⁹⁵ Later, *Desiderius* asks Love of God how it is that Christ, as the Second Person of the Trinity, died. It is explained that while Christ was indeed truly God, He was also truly Man and was therefore able to lay down His life, being fully human.⁹⁶ Just as in the Tridentine catechisms, the role of the Virgin Mary and the legitimacy of devotion to her are defended. *Desiderius* is used to introduce familiar objections to the Catholic stance on Marian devotion, such as the question of her perpetual virginity. Ó Maolchonaire’s response, provided by the ‘virtue’ character, is equally as familiar. He reminds *Desiderius* that Christ removed His body

⁹⁴ *Desiderius*, p.198.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 200-1.

from the sepulchre without moving the stone that was at its mouth. He passed through closed doors to greet His apostles. Just in the same way as a sunbeam can pass through a pane of glass without inflicting damage on the glass itself, why should one doubt that the Sun of Righteousness (Jesus) passed through the 'Window of Heaven' (as the Church calls Mary) without impairing her, he asks.⁹⁷ Appealing to the authority of Augustine, Ó Maolchonaire explains that it was through the Virgin Mary that the Heavenly Light (Christ) came to the human race that lay in darkness.⁹⁸

Defending the faith

Although it is evident that works such as *Desiderius* were destined for an Irish audience and were designed to support, advise and instruct, there remains very little personal evidence of their influence in seventeenth-century Ireland. The Capuchin, Richard O' Farrell's reference, in a report to *Propaganda Fide* dating from 1658, to their usefulness in edifying the Irish and refuting heresy is perhaps the only concrete indication available that these texts actually impacted upon individuals at home.⁹⁹ Therefore, it is the poetry of some of the Louvain Franciscans, often written with a single individual in mind as its audience, which proves most interesting in any examination of reshaping belief. A poem composed by Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa, addressing a close friend, who fell into heresy, is an interesting example of such. Whether the 'friend' is merely allegorical or whether Ó hEoghusa had a particular individual in mind is unclear.¹⁰⁰ The material dealt with in the poem mirrors many of the polemical sections in *Desiderius*. Ó hEoghusa begins by lamenting the fact that

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.205.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Giblin, 'The contribution of Irish Franciscans on the continent in the seventeenth century', pp 101-2.

¹⁰⁰ *DBM*, 9.

his friend's intellect has become dull and that he has fallen into darkness (confusion and sin).¹⁰¹ Using the image of physician to describe the priest in confession, just as Ó Maolchonaire does in *Desiderius*, Ó hEoghusa comments that 'it is a pity that you did not meet in the beginning a physician who would have relieved you of your pain.'¹⁰² He states that he himself would have been prepared to attend to him but that he has heard that he is a cantankerous patient who does not desire treatment.¹⁰³ The only option left to the veritable *animadoctor* is to diagnose from afar, and in order to do this, he asks his patient some questions regarding his (spiritual) illness.¹⁰⁴ Ó hEoghusa asks whether the problem is with the intellect or the will. The remedy for a skewed intellect, he advises, is to 'accept the words of God from the Church since to her alone he discovers his revelation.'¹⁰⁵ The primacy of the Pope is assured, and also God's promise that the Church would never be prevailed against.¹⁰⁶ Ó hEoghusa reminds his friend that the Church has not changed whereas heresies have come and gone.¹⁰⁷ Its hallmark is that it is One, Catholic, Holy and Apostolic.¹⁰⁸ These features are then explained in turn.¹⁰⁹ This is followed by an invective against Luther and Calvin aimed at undermining their credibility. Ó hEoghusa claims that Luther broke his three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, choosing instead wealth, a nun for a wife and his

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 9, vv 1-3.

¹⁰² Ibid., v.4.

¹⁰³ Ibid., v.5.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., v.6.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., v.9.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., vv 11-12.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., vv 13-14.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., vv 22-3.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., vv 23-7.

own will.¹¹⁰ While he exonerates Calvin of adultery and theft, Ó hEoghusa, nevertheless lays at his feet the charge of habitual sodomy, as Ó Maolchonaire also does in *Desiderius*.¹¹¹ While dismissing belief in anything that either Luther or Calvin claim, Ó hEoghusa sets out the two forms of belief found in the Church, namely Scripture and Tradition:

The words of God are preserved in two forms – each form must be believed from the Church: some are in Scripture, others have always been in the memory of all.¹¹²

While attesting the importance of Scripture, Ó hEoghusa nevertheless reminds his friend that there are many things that Christ said, which are not recorded in Scripture, citing the admission of John the Evangelist at the end of his Gospel as proof of this.¹¹³ Addressing what he considers to be a fundamentalist understanding of Scripture, Ó hEoghusa asks his friend whether, if he believes only what is stated in the Scripture that he carries in his hand, he actually believes that the Scripture is in his hand at all, since this fact is not found in the Bible itself.¹¹⁴ At this point, Ó hEoghusa alludes to some tenets of Christianity not found explicitly in Scripture, namely the authenticity of Luke's Gospel as opposed to that of Thomas, the perpetual virginity of Mary, the necessity of baptism for infants and the celebration of Easter on a Sunday.¹¹⁵ In concluding his argumentation, the friar-poet explains that, if his friend's problem lies in the intellect, he will ever be ready to assist him, and provide further explanation if

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vv 34-5.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, v.43.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, v.49.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, vv 50-1; see John 20: 30-1.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, v.55.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, v.59.

necessary. If, on the other hand, his problem resides in the will, he confesses 'I will not touch it. I will not undertake to correct it; I know all about it.'¹¹⁶ Ó hEoghusa's declared role, therefore, is in the realm of intellectual argumentation, which may or may not succeed in convincing his friend. He cannot, however, hope to overcome his friend's will 'unless the will consented.'¹¹⁷

A poem attributed to Eoghan Ó Dubhthaigh,¹¹⁸ dating from somewhat earlier (c.1578), is addressed principally to three individuals, who have fallen into heresy, namely Matthew Sheyne, Protestant bishop of Cork (1572-82), William Casey, appointed for the second time as Protestant bishop of Limerick in 1571, and Miler McGrath, Protestant bishop of Cashel and a former Franciscan himself.¹¹⁹ The first task that Ó Dubhthaigh takes upon himself is to correct what appears to be Sheyne's denigration of the Virgin Mary. Extolling the Mother of God as 'a woman before whom the course of justice is deflected; a woman most puissant and influential; ... a woman by whom the King's anger is stayed', Ó Dubhthaigh laments the fact that Sheyne has compared Mary to other women.¹²⁰ Using the familiar appellation of 'sister' to describe Mary, the friar notes that Sheyne's 'sister', unlike his mother, remained always a pure virgin.¹²¹ While Mary, as a virgin, bore a son to God, Ó

¹¹⁶ Ibid., vv 62-3.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., v.68.

¹¹⁸ Eoghan Ó Dubhthaigh was described by Stanihurst in 1577 as 'a preacher and maker in Irish.' He belonged to the Franciscan monastery at Cavan and served as Provincial of the order in 1580-3. He died in 1590: *DBM*, pp 160-2. The poem in question is 27. For a discussion of what is known of his life see Ó Cléirigh, *Aodh Mac Aingil agus an scoil Nua-Ghaeilge i Lobháin*, pp 90-5.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p.177.

¹²⁰ *DBM* 27, vv 5, 7.

¹²¹ Ibid., v.9i.

Dubhthaigh relates that ‘your [Sheyne’s] mother (and not as a virgin) bore a son (and not to God): you, Master [Sheyne], are that son, and Beelzebub is your lord.’¹²² He goes on to defend penance, charity, constant prayer and fasting, and in a later verse, attacks Miler McGrath for preaching the legitimacy of eating meat during Lent.¹²³ Coupled with this, Ó Dubhthaigh charges McGrath with abandoning ‘God’s brieveary and Mary’s’, choosing instead the brieveary of Annie (whom he had taken for a wife).¹²⁴ Leaving these individuals to the judgement of God, Ó Dubhthaigh looks forward to the occasion when ‘Jesus shall drive the uxorious clergy, who say no office, from His right hand, each with his wife beside him, reciting vespers in hell along with him’.¹²⁵

Both of the above poems address issues concerning the religion of the reformers, incorporating both an attack on their practices and beliefs as well as a defence of some of the disputed points of Catholic doctrine. This kind of *apologia* for Catholic practice is quite commonly found in Irish literature produced on the continent at this time. While Irish figures on the continent were keen to ameliorate the state of popular religion at home by implementing the ideals of the Tridentine Church, they were equally zealous in defending and clarifying what they considered to be legitimate devotions. Philip O’ Sullivan Beare, in his history of Elizabethan Ireland, written in 1621, notes that the persecution of the faith in late sixteenth-century Ireland

¹²² Ibid., v.24.

¹²³ Ibid., vv 32a, 63.

¹²⁴ Ibid., v.37.

¹²⁵ Ibid., v.85.

was now the more severe and dangerous because just at this time, more than ever since the reception of the faith, were Irishmen ignorant of theology, philosophy and jurisprudence, so that they were unprepared for controversy.¹²⁶

It is no surprise, then, to find O' Sullivan Beare eager to take the heretics to task on account of their erroneous views of Irish Catholic devotion. In one particular section of his history, he attempts to instruct his audience on legitimate veneration of the saints. Describing an attack on Derry by 'English heretics', O' Sullivan recounts how gunpowder, leaden bullets, guns and pikes, were stored by the English in a church in a certain church in the town, in preparation. However, St Colmcille, under whose patronage Derry lies, 'did not long delay the punishment of this sin.'¹²⁷ A mysterious wolf was said to have emerged from the woods, emitting sparks from his mouth. Proceeding to the place where the gunpowder was stored, he set fire to it, killing many of the English. Those who survived, recognising instantly the saint's action against them, cried 'the Irish god Columba killed us all!'¹²⁸ At this, O' Sullivan Beare seizes an opportunity to scorn their misunderstanding:

Mark the words of the barbarous heretics! As if the Irish worshipped St Columba as a god and not as a faithful servant of God who, because he observed the commandments of his creator, and because of his holy and innocent life, is noted in the calendar of saints for many miracles.¹²⁹

While O' Sullivan Beare does not rule out the notion of the saint's intervention in saving the city on that occasion, he nevertheless places his efficacy firmly within the

¹²⁶ O' Sullivan Beare, *Ireland under Elizabeth*, p.43.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 4-5

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

context of a power that is God's and not his own. In seeking to correct this 'misunderstanding' of the English, it is unlikely that he placed such a claim in the mouths of the 'heretics' in order to make them appear ridiculous. A letter written by Lord Deputy, John Perrot testifies to the fact that such a view of Irish devotion to saints actually existed among at least some English observers:

For a token I have sent you holy Colamkille's cross, *a god of great veneration with Sorleyboy* [my emphases] and all Ulster. For so great was his grace as happy he thought himself that could get a kiss of the said cross. I send him unto you that when you have made some sacrifice to him according to the disposition you bear to idolatry, you may, if you please, bestow him upon my good lady Wallsingham or my Lady Sydney to wear as a jewel of weight and bigness, and not of price and goodness, upon some solemn feast or triumph day at the court.¹³⁰

Living between two worlds, the Irish in seventeenth-century continental Europe were anxious to uphold the religious ideals proclaimed by the Council of Trent as standards to be striven for, and at the same time to defend many of the practices of their forefathers as legitimate. A delicately balanced approach was going to be necessary to achieve this. Nowhere is this more evident than in Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh's *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill* (composed sometime between 1616 and 1636 when it appears, almost identical in detail, although different in style in the *Annals of the Four Masters*).¹³¹ Mícheál Mac Craith argues that this text was composed as a work of

¹³⁰ Charles McNeill, 'The Perrot papers: the letterbook of Lord Deputy Sir John Perrot between 9 July 1558 and 26 May 1586', in *Analecta Hibernica* 12 (1943), p.12.

¹³¹ Mícheál Mag Craith, 'Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill: beathaisnéis de chuid an Renaissance', in *Irisleabhar Mhá Nuad*, 1994, p.46.

propaganda in favour of Hugh O' Donnell (nephew of Red Hugh and recognised as Earl of Tyrconnell by Spain), as opposed to John O' Neill (earl of Tyrone and son of Hugh O' Neill, who died in 1616) leading a military invasion of Ireland in September 1627. Mac Craith claims that it was the intention of O' Donnell's supporters to translate the work into Latin and publish it on the continent to strengthen Hugh O' Donnell's cause.¹³² Red Hugh O' Donnell (Hugh's uncle) is therefore portrayed as a hero whose deeds of bravery far exceeded those of Hugh O' Neill (John's father). Not only is he painted in the best military light; he is also depicted as the embodiment of what a Counter-Reformation Catholic should be. It was not uncommon during this period to make parallels between the situation of the Gaelic Irish and that of the

¹³² Mícheál Mac Craith, 'Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill in the context of the literature of the Renaissance', (paper given at Irish Texts Society Conference, University College, Cork, 10 November 2001; publication forthcoming), p.12. I am grateful to Mícheál Mac Craith for allowing me to view this paper in its pre-published form. . An analysis of the language of Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh's work by Pádraig A. Breatnach at the same conference which publication will also appear in the same volume, suggests that the earlier *Beatha*, with its archaisms reminiscent of the heroic sagas, was probably aimed at a more strictly Irish audience than the later version found in the *Annals of the Four Masters*, which displays a simpler style that would have been more amenable to a future planned translation into Latin. It is difficult to imagine, then, why Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh would go to the trouble of using such an archaic style in his *Beatha* given that it would necessarily lose much of its impact in its Latin translation, if it was, indeed primarily aimed at a European audience. There is also the question of the time it would have taken to produce a Latin translation and subsequently distribute it to a sufficiently wide audience to justify its inception in the first place. On the other hand, the later version of the *Beatha* found in the *Annals of the Four Masters*, in Mac Craith's view 'were interested more in simple narrative and not in Ó Cléirigh's ideological and rhetorical aims' (Mac Craith, 'Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill in the context of the literature of the Renaissance', p.4).

Israelites held in Egyptian captivity.¹³³ Little wonder, then, that O' Donnell was also portrayed as a Moses-like figure:

But yet, as the destruction and evil deeds, which the English practiced on the people of the country in their own dear native land, were not pleasing to God, he brought the prophesied child of mighty deeds (Aodh Ruadh, son of Aodh, son of Maghnus) to the tribe of Conall, son of Niall, for their relief and succour, to protect and free them from the merciless foreign tribe, as Moses the son of Amram, came to the aid of the people of God to free them from the Egyptian bondage.¹³⁴

Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh was not content with portraying O' Donnell as Moses-like in valour only; he was also required to be Moses-like in doctrine. O' Donnell must at all

¹³³ For some instances of this see Ó Buachalla, *Aisling Ghéar: na Stiobhartaigh agus an t-aos léinn 1603-1788*, p.29.

¹³⁴ Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh, *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill*, ed. Paul Walsh, (2 vols, Dublin, 1947-9) i, p.35. The portrayal of Red Hugh O' Donnell as another Moses is interesting. Irish hagiography routinely portrayed its saints in the light of important Biblical personages. A life of St Moling found in the fifteenth-century *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum*, details how the saint, resembling Moses, drew water from a rock with his staff in order to give his gillie a drink: see Whitley Stokes, 'The birth life of St Moling', in *Révue Celtique* xxvii (1906), p.301. Manus Ó Domhnaill's *Betha Colaim Chille* (1532) likens the saint not only to Moses but also to Christ in his miracles: *BCC*, pp 109, 137, 77. While *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill* might sometimes read like a saint's life, it is important to remember that the drawing of comparisons between individuals and biblical figures was not confined to hagiography but also extended to works whose subjects were secular rather than saintly. In one of his poems, the poet Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh (*n.l.t.* 1387) compares Domhnall Mág Cárthaigh, Lord of Múscraí (c.1353), to Solomon: *IM* 1919, p.402, v.47, and in another he compares him to Moses (*ibid.*, p.286, v.33). In the early seventeenth century, Eoghan Ruadh Mac an Bhaird, in a poem dedicated to Niall Garbh Ó Domhnaill, a prisoner in London tower (1609-26), compares the plight of Ó Domhnaill to that of the patriarch Joseph, wrongly imprisoned by Pharaoh: *IM* 1928, p.154, v.15.

times be seen to uphold the ideals of the Tridentine Church. As a good Catholic, O' Donnell did not neglect his Easter duties in 1595:

He went across the river to Conmaicne Réin, and he encamped in Leitrim of Muintir Eólais, and remained there with his army until they had finished the celebration of Easter.¹³⁵

Similarly, on another occasion, he is reported as having remained at Ballymote during the Christmas period until 'he had finished celebrating the feast as was proper.'¹³⁶ The following account of O' Donnell's spiritual activities merits quoting in full:

A prudent pious cleric and a gracious psalm-singing priest used to be with Ó Domhnaill continually, to offer Mass and the pure, mysterious sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ, and it was his usual practice whenever he set out on an expedition or a hosting, or whenever stress of danger menaced him, to fast for three days and confess his trespasses to his confessor; thereafter he would lament for his sins before God, and partake of the Body of Christ. He requested his army on this occasion to fast on the 'Golden Friday' of the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mass was offered for him on the next day, for the army generally, and for everyone who was in that camp, and he received, and the chiefs of the army with him, the Body of Christ with great reverence for the Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Mother on her feast day that fell then.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Ó Cléirigh, *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill*, p.89.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.193.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.225. The practices of O' Donnell reflect both Tridentine ideals and erstwhile devotions. While devotion to the Mass, the offering of the *Body and Blood of Christ* [clearly defined as such in order to reinforce Catholic teaching against that of the reformers: my emphases] and frequent and contrite confession were clear exhortations of Trent, other practices such as fasting on the 'twelve Golden Fridays' reflect earlier practices. The *Leabhar Chlainne Suibhne* (c.1513-14) includes two

The account of Red Hugh's brother, Manus O' Donnell's death appears as a paradigm for all good Catholics:

He confessed his sins without any concealment, and admitted his transgressions then. He bewailed his sins before God and he was sorry for his pride and arrogance in former times. He forgave also him who wounded him and said that he himself was the cause of his death for he first attacked Niall (Ó Domhnaill). He was in this way for a week, preparing himself for death every single day, and a spouse of God of the said Order continually with him at the head of his bed to guard him against the snares of the devil. He gave his confidences frequently to his confessor and received the Body of the Lord afterwards, and he died 22 October 1600, having gained victory over the devil and the world.¹³⁸

O' Donnell is also described, in one place, as acting in a manner that Protestant reformers, wishing to castigate Catholic practices, would relish scorning. It is recounted that, on the Feast of St Andrew (30 November) 1601, he visited the relic of the true cross at Holycross Abbey 'for a blessing and protection.'¹³⁹ The use of relics in a proper fashion had of course been defended and upheld by the Tridentine Church as is observed in Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa's *Teagasg Críosaíde*.¹⁴⁰ Tadhg Ó Cianáin, whose *Flight of the earls* (written c.1609) describes the travels of the large

passages on the Golden Friday devotion (pp 70, 86), a custom that was especially dear to Máire Ní Mháille, for whom the compendium was compiled, as is evident from her obit (1522) that recorded how she fasted three days a week on bread and water, in addition to the seasons of Lent and Advent, and the twelve Golden Fridays: Walsh (ed.), *Leabhar Chlainne Suibhne*, p.67.

¹³⁸ Ó Cléirigh, *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill*, eag. Paul Walsh, p.277.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.321.

¹⁴⁰ *TC*, pp 56-7.

group (some ninety-nine persons) that left Ireland for the continent in 1607, was certainly interested in relics and describes in great detail the various reliquaries visited by the party.¹⁴¹

In summary, then, figures such as Eoghan Ó Dubhthaigh, Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa, Philip O' Sullivan Beare, Lughaidh Ó Cléirigh and Tadhg Ó Cianáin, all of whom ostensibly display knowledge of the ideals of Trent, choose, in their respective ways, to defend the various aspects of Catholicism that they hold dear, namely devotion to the Mass, Confession, Mary, the saints, fasting, penance and relics, against the religion of the reformers, which called many of these things into question. In presenting their defence, however, they portray these devotions in all of their Tridentine purity, well balanced and un-abused. The Red Hugh O' Donnell character embodies what it might be like to be a true Tridentine Catholic. However, these writers were not oblivious to the fact that many individuals fell far short of the ideal. And they interpreted the sorry state of their home country as a direct consequence of this 'falling short.' The suffering of Catholics in Ireland was quite simply seen as a punishment from God for sin. This punishment was largely attributed to two kinds of sin. Firstly there was the very public secession from Catholicism of clerical figures, who espoused both wives and the religion of the reformers. Eoghan Ó Dubhthaigh's poem (c.1578), addressed to Matthew Sheyne, William Casey and Miler McGrath (all serving as Protestant bishops), makes a clear connection between their sin and Irish misfortune:

¹⁴¹ Tadhg Ó Cianáin, *The flight of the earls*, ed. Paul Walsh, (Dublin, 1916). Even before leaving Ireland, the group had recourse to the protection of relics: 'A cross of gold, which O' Neill had, and which contained a portion of the cross of the crucifixion, and many other relics, being put by them in the sea, trailing after the ship, gave them great relief': *ibid.*, p.11.

You Irish clergy, you uxorious churchmen, you foreign unclean clergy, - your evil lives follow the same pattern. Ireland has lost prosperity on account of you!¹⁴²

Philip O' Sullivan Beare, in 1621, attributed the dispersion of Ireland's nobility and the concomitant widespread destruction to '*peccata nostra*.'¹⁴³ Aodh Mac Aingil, in his tract on penance, *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe* (1618), attributed the dispersion of 'learned shepherds of our souls' and their replacement by 'proud, heretical, pseudo-bishops' to God's anger with the country.¹⁴⁴ Such an interpretation of events in Ireland found its way into sermons preached at the time, transmitting these ideas to a wide audience. One Tyrlogh M'Crobyn, a Franciscan friar returned from the continent, preached a sermon to over 1000 people in the woods outside Londonderry on 11 October 1613, explaining to them that the Pope himself had sent him to bring them comfort. He warned them not to attend the Protestant service, even under pain of death, and promised them that the Pope would continue to send them holy men to protect them from the wiles of the English. Preaching against 'drunkenness, whoredom and lack of devotion and zeal', he nevertheless told them that:

they should not despair nor be dismayed; though for a time God punished them by suffering their lands to be given to strangers and heretics, it was a punishment for their sins; and he bade them fast and pray and be of good

¹⁴² *DBM*, 27, v.67.

¹⁴³ Ó Buachalla, *Aisling Ghéar*, p.36.

¹⁴⁴ *SSA*, p.147.

comfort, for it should not be long before they were restored to their former prosperities.¹⁴⁵

Sermons such as these obviously influenced many people and taught them to interpret events in this way. A piece of poetry uttered by Seaán Séideánach Ó Smútacháin, administrator and spokesman at the parliament in the text *Pairlement Chloinne Tomáis* (c.1615) similarly explains the reason why he fell into poverty and lack of funds in the following manner, adding a timely warning to all:

Labourers' broods, swagger in court, the buzzing folk who should be humming, bread-eating, buttermilk-drinking, are taking to idleness and are incessantly carousing; this time you will merit from the Almighty Lord displeasure at all your indiscipline and your evil desires, to be evicted from this land if you don't forsake these practices; the wickedness of your lives, hatred and thievings in the midst of tranquillity will be perpetually poured out upon you.¹⁴⁶

Sin, which drew the punishment of God, was seen to shape the events of history. The unfolding of some events could even be attributed to a combination of sins. Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire surmised that the sins of Ireland, the sins of Spain and his own personal sinfulness combined to ensure that no more help arrived from Spain after the defeat of the defeat at Kinsale.¹⁴⁷ It is not difficult to imagine, then, why a figure such as Ó Maolchonaire expended so much energy on what was effectively a dual mission: to excise both the English 'heretical' settler and the personal sinfulness of the Irish that merited his coming in the first place.

¹⁴⁵ *Cal.S.P.Ire.*, 1611-4, pp 429-30.

¹⁴⁶ *PCT*, p.85.

¹⁴⁷ Ó Buachalla, *Aisling Ghéar*, p.36.

Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe

It is precisely the subject of sin and its consequences that is discussed at length in another publication from the Louvain school, namely Aodh Mac Aingil's *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe* (1618).¹⁴⁸ A native of Saul, near Downpatrick, Aodh was born in 1571.¹⁴⁹ He probably attended a local school of poetry before completing his education in the humanities on the Isle of Man.¹⁵⁰ His intellectual prowess soon caught the attention of Hugh O' Neill, who employed him as tutor to his two sons, Henry and Hugh, who had been borne by Red Hugh O' Donnell's sister, Siobhán.¹⁵¹ He was held in great respect by O' Neill, who eventually sent him as a legate to Spain in 1599 in the company of his own son Henry, who was to receive his education there.¹⁵² On arrival, both Aodh and Henry attended lectures at the college of Salamanca, residing with the friars minor at night.¹⁵³ After the peace of 1603, Aodh joined the Franciscan order, helping Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire to found St Anthony's College, Louvain in 1606.¹⁵⁴ Aodh became Guardian of the college and also functioned as chief chaplain to the Irish regiment in Flanders, which was under the command of his old friend Henry O' Neill.¹⁵⁵ He taught theology in Rome in 1623,

¹⁴⁸ SSA.

¹⁴⁹ Anraí Mac Giolla Chomhail, *Bráithrin bocht ó Dhún: Aodh Mac Aingil* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1985), p.15.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.19.

¹⁵¹ Ó Cléirigh, *Aodh Mac Aingil agus an scoil Nua-Ghaeilge i Lobháin*, p.46.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p.48.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Aodh de Blácam, *Gaelic literature surveyed* (3rd ed., Dublin, 1973), p.222.

¹⁵⁵ Ó Cléirigh, *Aodh Mac Aingil agus an scoil Gaeilge i Lobháin*, pp 53, 49.

was appointed archbishop of Armagh on 22 April 1626 and died unexpectedly on 22 September of the same year in Rome, before taking up his appointment at home.¹⁵⁶

In the preface to his work, Aodh explains, in the same manner as Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire did in his introduction to *Desiderius*, ‘*nách do mhínadh Gaoidhilgi sgríobhmaoid achd do mhínadh na haithridhe, 7 is lór linn go ttuigfidhear sinn gé nách biadh ceart na Gaoidhilgi aguinn.*’¹⁵⁷ The work itself is divided into five parts, corresponding to the four principal parts of the sacrament, namely contrition, confession, satisfaction and absolution, in addition to a section on indulgences. The four principal parts of the sacrament that Mac Aingil discusses correspond perfectly with the sections outlined in the *Rituale Romanum* of 1614, the first three being acts of the penitent and the fourth the act of the confessor.¹⁵⁸ Like Ó Maolchonaire’s *Desiderius*, the subjects it treats of are varied. On the surface, it appears in the guise of a manual explaining in some depth various aspects of the sacrament of penance, drawing on Scripture and the Fathers of the Church for its theological content, and secondly, on medieval *exempla*, utilised to transmit its message to a wide audience by means of a preacher who could then successfully instruct the faithful by the use of suitable stories. However *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe* is also a commentary

¹⁵⁶ De Blácam, *Gaelic literature surveyed*, p.223; for a discussion of some of the controversy surrounding his appointment see Cathaldus Giblin, ‘Hugh McCaghwell, O.F.M., Archbishop of Armagh (+1626): aspects of his life’ in Benignus Millett and Anthony Lynch (eds), *Dún Mhuire Killiney 1945-95: léann agus seanchas* (Dublin, 1995).

¹⁵⁷ ‘It is not for [the purpose of] teaching Irish that we write, but, to teach [the sacrament of] penance, and it is enough for us that this [penance] should be understood, even though we have not perfect Irish’: *SSA*, p.5.

¹⁵⁸ Mícheál Mac Craith, ‘Scáthán Shacramuinte ne hAithridhe: saothar reiligiúnda nó saothar polaitíochta?’, in *Irisleabhar Mhá Nuad* 1993, p.145.

on current religious and political events in Ireland. Cainneach Ó Maonaigh notes that Aodh Mac Aingil's tract was not a translation of a continental devotional work in the same way as Ó Maolchonaire's was.¹⁵⁹ There was no need, then, for insertions relevant to the Irish situation. The whole work was the creation of Mac Aingil himself. Despite its similarity in material to many other continental works examining the same topic, *Scáthán* is not based on any one work but is, instead, a work in its own right.¹⁶⁰ The catechesis of the Sacrament of Penance, which was its aim, could not be separated from the political realities that surrounded its publication. Mac Aingil's reasons for compiling such a work are interesting. In the preface to *Scáthán* he explains:

*Bid leabhráin mar so ag gach náision Chatoilic eili, 7 atáid do riachdanas ar an náision dá bhfuilmidne go speisialta, do bhríogh go bhfuil gan maighistre gan prealáide gan seanmóntuidhe, leath amuigh do bheagán bhíos a bhfhólach d'eagla bháis nó phriosúin, mar do bhídís na habsdail tréis bháis Chríosa d'eagla an chinidh Iudaithe.*¹⁶¹

Marc Caball indicates that Mac Aingil's sense of national pride was pained because of the lack of such works in the vernacular, and sees this as a key factor in his decision to publish.¹⁶² Bernadette Cunningham, however, points out that the teaching of Counter-Reformation doctrine, which Mac Aingil took upon himself, 'went hand in

¹⁵⁹ *SSA*, p.ix.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ 'Every other Catholic nation has books like these, and it is a special necessity for our nation, because it is without masters, without prelates, without preachers, except for a small number that are in hiding for fear of death or prison, as the apostles were afraid of the Jews after the death of Christ' (my translation), *SSA*, pp 4-5.

¹⁶² Caball, 'Faith, culture and sovereignty: Irish nationality and its development, 1558-1625', p.136.

hand with resistance to persecution on religious grounds in Ireland.¹⁶³ Mac Aingil, himself, indicates that his compiling of *Scáthán* was prompted by the precarious situation in his homeland, ‘ó nách léigtheas dhúinn tré bhurba an pherseacuisión foircheadal do dhéanamh ó bheól.’¹⁶⁴ It appears, from this statement, that Mac Aingil envisaged a dissemination of the text among those who could read and, possibly a subsequent diffusion of Tridentine doctrine among a wider audience to whom such ideas could be spread by word of mouth. It is likely, then, that he expected the text to be used by a wider group of people than the clergy themselves, for priests were the most obvious targets of an administration eager to curb the transmission of Catholic doctrine. While there is no doubt that *Scáthán* was compiled with an Irish audience at home in mind, there is some evidence, nevertheless, to suggest that Mac Aingil was also conscious of another audience when writing, namely the small Irish community in the Netherlands that had grown up around the Irish regiment. This is illustrated in his section on indulgences where he questions a belief, prevalent in the Low Countries, that one received a special indulgence from the Pope if one drank from one’s cup after reciting grace after meals:

An fir an ní adeirid san tír si go bhfuil loghadh áiridhe ag an té ibhios a chapán a ndiaigh altuighthe? Ní héidir leis an bpápa loghadh do thabhairt amach achd maille hádhbhar ndleisdionach, 7 is ionann sin 7 cúis dhiadha shubháilceach do bheith aigi chuigi. As inchreidithi go ttugadh an loghadh soin amach fán n-altúghadh do rádh; gidheadh ní chreidim go ttugadh amach é fán ndigh d’ibhi. 7 ní rigeadh a leas. Ibhtear í go maith (go háiridhe san

¹⁶³ Bernadette Cunningham, ‘The culture and ideology of Irish Franciscan historians at Louvain 1607-50’ in Ciaran Brady (ed.), *Ideology and the historians: Historical studies xvii* (Dublin, 1991), p.26.

¹⁶⁴ ‘for we are not allowed, owing to the fierceness of the persecution, to instruct orally’: *SSA*, p.94.

*Tír Íochdaruigh) gan loghadh ar bioth, 7 ní shaorfuinn ar pheacadh an mhuintir bhíos ag ibhi deochann ar a chéile mar ghreann a ndiaigh altuighthi d'fhagháil loghaidh, óir ní neithe iomchuibhghe chum súgartha na neithe spioradáltha.*¹⁶⁵

Mac Aingil's experience as chief chaplain to the Irish regiment in the Netherlands undoubtedly led him to include an upbraiding such as this one, as it was especially relevant to the lives of the soldiers.

The first section of Mac Aingil's work deals with the subject of contrition. The friar is quick to point out that tears are not a prerequisite for true contrition. Even though they can illustrate the extent of regret felt by the penitent, God is nevertheless, satisfied when He recognises contrition in the heart. This claim challenged what was heretofore recognised as an unmistakable attestation of sorrow for sin.¹⁶⁶ Mac Aingil, then, highlights interior rather than exterior contrition, as being most beneficial to the penitent. This contrition should be accompanied by a sincere desire to avoid all sin in

¹⁶⁵ 'Is it true, what is said in this country, that a person who drinks from his cup after grace receives a special indulgence? The Pope cannot bestow indulgences except in a legitimate case. And that is the same as him having a virtuous spiritual purpose [for it]. It is likely that that indulgence was bestowed for saying grace; however I do not believe that it was granted for consuming a drink. And it was not needed. The consumption of drink is sufficient (especially in the Low Countries) without any indulgence, and I would consider as sinful the people who, after grace, knock back drinks together for fun in order to obtain an indulgence, for spiritual things are not suitable for entertainment': *SSA*, p.196.

¹⁶⁶ *SSA*, p.7. This is in contrast to some of the sentiments expressed in the religious poetry of the bards, dealing with contrition. The poets placed great importance on an outward manifestation of sorrow for sin, even after one allows for the inclusion of such features for dramatic effect. See, for example, the work of Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh (*ADD* 69, v.28), Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn (*DDé* 5, v.21), Philip Bocht Ó hUiginn (*PB* 6, v.40) and Aonghus Fionn Ó Dálaigh (*AFOD*, 51).

the future, including all occasions of sin.¹⁶⁷ On this point, Mac Aingil states that it is enough for a person to have a true hatred for the sin they have committed before coming to confession, for one cannot hate a sin without implicitly deciding to avoid it in the future.¹⁶⁸ In the style of a true pastor, well accustomed to administering the sacrament in practice, Mac Aingil adds the following advice:

*Dá bhríogh so, ná biodh scrupuil ort a gcás nách biadh rún follus agad na peacuidh do sheachna. As fíor nách tigid na doctúire re chéile san phonca sa. Achd seachuin na siocra do réir aithne an oide.*¹⁶⁹

This is the language of a priest who wanted to encourage all to use the sacrament. It is the language of a Franciscan who wished to render confessing one's sinfulness as easy and accessible as possible within the bounds of ecclesiastical doctrine and practice. Mac Aingil places a significant emphasis on motivation for avoiding sin. He explains that one should avoid sin out of faithfulness to one's lover (Christ) rather than out of fear of its consequences (Hell), just as a woman avoids adultery because of the love of her spouse and not because she is afraid of what her fellow adulterer might do to her:

¹⁶⁷ SSA, p.7.

¹⁶⁸ 'Gidheadh, má tá gráin dá-ríribh agad ar na peacadhaibh do-rinis, as lór sin dochum na faoisidne, ór ní héidir fuath éiffeachdach an pheacuidh do bheith agad gan rún a sheachanta do bheith a bhfolach san fhuath sin' ('However, if you have genuine hatred for the sins you have committed, that is enough for confession, for you cannot have effective hatred for sins without having a decision to avoid them hidden within that hatred'): *ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ 'Do not have scruples, therefore, in the case where you might not have a clear intention to avoid sin. It is true that the doctors [of the Church] do not all agree on this point. However, avoid the occasion of sin according to the advice of the confessor': *ibid.*

Mar sin, as cóir don annuin, do ghlac Críost mar leannán san bhaisdeadh diúltadh d'adhaltrannus an diabhair, .i. do na peacadhuibh, 7 gráin d'fhagháil orra, ní treasan n-olc amháin tig di féin as so, .i. iffrionn síorruidhe, achd go prinnsiopál//[ta] tré ghrádh nDé, a Leannáin.¹⁷⁰

The 'motivation from love' theme is continued in Mac Aingil's discussion of various ways by which one might become contrite and learn to abhor sin. One of the methods, which he highlights, is that of thanksgiving. Addressing the penitent, he advises him that if he wishes his name to appear in the Book of Life he must first read the book of accounts that details his dealings with God who has made him an official and a steward over great wealth.¹⁷¹ Mac Aingil, furthermore, states: '*Tionsgain ar tús ar ghlacuis uaidh do léghadh ag admháil a thiodhlaictheadh.*'¹⁷² Immediately following this suggestion, he includes a ready-made prayer of thanksgiving to God for all His gifts. The prayer consists of an acknowledgment of God's love from all eternity and an admission that every other gift proceeds from that love.¹⁷³ The penitent who prays

¹⁷⁰ 'Therefore, the soul that accepted Christ as a lover in baptism, should refuse the adultery of the devil, i.e. sins, and have hatred for them, not only because of the punishment that comes to it [the soul] from [sin], i.e. Hell for eternity, but, principally, because of the love of God, its lover': *SSA*, p.9.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.20. The image of books of accounts being opened at Judgement comes from Daniel 7:10 and is also found in Revelation 20:12. The same verse in Revelation goes on to identify another book, the book of life, from which the dead are judged. The reference to God making man a steward over great wealth mirrors the parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30, which precedes the account of the Last Judgement that Mac Aingil uses a little earlier in his work (*SSA*, p.15).

¹⁷² 'Begin first by reading what you have received from Him, acknowledging His gifts': *SSA*, p.20.

¹⁷³ '*Admhuim gar ghrádhuis go mór mé ó thus na suthuineachda tréd mhaithios 7 tréd mhórdháil féin... 7 gurab ón tobar thrócaireach sa do ghrádha táinig an tuile thiodhlaictheadh so síos chugam*' ('I believe that you loved me from all eternity, through your own goodness and majesty...and that it is from this merciful well of love that every gift came to me'): *ibid.*, p.20.

the prayer continues by thanking God for creating him as a noble being over all creatures and akin to the angels. He thanks God for creating his soul in His own image, conscious and intelligent, and possessing three powers, namely intellect, will and understanding, to mirror the three persons in the Godhead. He expresses gratitude for his human body too, which he recognises as the most noble of all creatures. He then recounts the many things he owes to God, including being born in a Catholic country, the various wonders of nature, his being given a guardian angel for protection, and especially his release from slavery to the devil as a result of the Redemption won by Christ.¹⁷⁴ This leads Mac Aingil into a beautifully poetic description of Christ's self-giving:

*A Thighearna, do íslighis thú féin dom árdúghadh, do laguighis thú dom láidrioghadh, do bhochtuighis thú dom shaidhbhrioghadh, do laghduighis thú dom neartúghadh, do thalamhuighis thú dom neamhdhúghadh, do dhaonduighis thú dom dhiadhúghadh, do anuaislighis thú dom uaislioghadh, do mharbhuis thú dom bhéoughadh, do phianuis thú dom ghlórughadh, do nochduis thú do[m] médughadh...*¹⁷⁵

Aodh continues his praise of God's gifts by focussing on the life of Christ. In typically Franciscan style, Mac Aingil vividly describes Christ's voluntary exile from

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., pp 20-1.

¹⁷⁵ 'Lord, you lowered yourself to raise me up, you weakened yourself to fortify me, you made yourself poor to make me rich, you diminished yourself to strengthen me, you made yourself of earth to make me of heaven, you made yourself human to make me divine, you belittled yourself to exalt me, you died that I might live, you suffered that I might be glorified, you stripped yourself that I might have increase...' : ibid., p.21.

his homeland (Heaven) for thirty-three years ‘*ar mo shon.*’¹⁷⁶ He emphasises the physical sufferings of Christ during His period on earth, mentioning the cold, hardship, hunger, thirst, shame, contempt, scorn and persecution that He suffered, in addition to the fasting, prayer and solitude that He took upon Himself.¹⁷⁷ Such a description of Christ’s life is rooted in the affective devotion promoted by the mendicant orders, particularly the Franciscans, from the thirteenth century onwards. Mac Aingil recalls Christ’s Passion and Death by listing the various elements of the experience that had appealed, for some time now, to the imagination of late medieval devotees. He mentions, therefore, the sweating of blood in Gethsemane, the stripping and tying to a column, the purple cloak, the 5000 scourges, the crown of thorns, the carrying of the cross to Calvary, the crucifixion, the five wounds, the giving up of Christ’s spirit to the Father, His death and burial.¹⁷⁸ He concludes his reflection on the Passion by exclaiming:

*Ó a Cheanduighthéoir charthanuigh! Ó a Fhuasguilthéoir órdhuirc
ionganthuigh! Ó a Aodhaire fhíorghrádhuigh thug fuil do chroidhe dod
chaorchuibh dá ttabhairt as glasuibh an diabhuil!*¹⁷⁹

Continuing his account of his indebtedness to God, Mac Aingil gives thanks for Christ’s glorious Resurrection that gives him hope of his own rising from the dead.

¹⁷⁶ ‘for my sake’: *ibid.*, p.22. It must not have been difficult for at least some of *Scáthán*’s audience to appreciate the pain of exile from one’s homeland, especially given the fact that those in the Low Countries were experiencing it first hand and many of those at home must have at least known someone who was forced to leave Ireland for the continent, for educational purposes or otherwise.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p.22.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ ‘O loving Redeemer! O illustrious, wonderful Saviour! O truly loving Shepherd, who gave your heart’s blood to your sheep to release them from the fetters of the devil!’: *ibid.*

He recalls Christ's journey to the right hand of the Father to intercede for him, His sending of the Spirit to make people holy and to teach them the Gospel, and he gives thanks for the gift of the seven sacraments '*dar ndíon ór naimhdibh 's do leigheas ar lot.*'¹⁸⁰ Mac Aingil expresses gratitude to God for having called him back from his evil ways. Acknowledging that God could have chosen to damn him eternally, he rejoices that, instead, God whispered gently to him and called him back lovingly.¹⁸¹ He then mentions the crown of glory that God promised to him, a crown that will last forever '*a ngeall ar bheagán seirbhísi.*'¹⁸² Aodh concludes outlining the structure of the prayer of thanksgiving by adding:

*Abair féin ann so iomad tiodhlaictheadh // eile spéisialta fuaruis ó Dhia, ór ní fhuil ionnta so achd tiodhlaictheadh coitcheann don uile Chríostuidhe, 7 dá n-abra tú iad, maille deuósion 7 ré heagla nDé, budh mór an congnamh do-bhéraid do mhaothughadh 7 do chlaochlodh do chruadhchroidhe ó sheirbhísi an diabhuil dochum seirbhísi an thé ó bhfuaruis na troimthiodhlaicthe si.*¹⁸³

Clearly, then, the prescription that Mac Aingil offered as a tool to promote contrition was to be internalised and personalised. It was not merely to be recited by rote, but was, instead to be applied to one's own life experience. Far from taking a coercive line, threatening eternal damnation on the believer who refused to confess, Mac

¹⁸⁰ 'to shelter us from our enemies and to heal our ills': *ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² 'in payment for a little service': *ibid.*

¹⁸³ 'Here recount many other particular gifts that you received from God, for these [that are listed] are merely gifts that are common to all Christians, and if you recite them, with devotion and fear of God, they will assist you greatly in softening and changing your heard heart from the service of the devil to the service of the One from whom you received these great gifts': *ibid.*

Aingil's approach was to entice the Christian to recognise his own sinfulness by allowing himself to be confronted by the almighty love and beneficence of his God.

Mac Aingil did not, however, avoid speaking of Hell as a consequence of sin. Earlier, he invites the Christian to consider the various benefits, which he has forfeited as a result of sin, namely God Himself, a heavenly inheritance, the help and personal friendship of God, the protection of His grace, the Holy Spirit, who heretofore dwelt in the Christian's heart, and so on. He continues by asking the Christian to imagine what it will be like to be placed at Christ's left side, in the company of goats on Judgement Day.¹⁸⁴ Mac Aingil's account of Judgement follows that of Matthew 25 closely, therefore rooting itself in the authority of Scripture. At first, it seems that Aodh has chosen to jettison more vivid and popular late medieval descriptions (such as the figure of Christ on the cross appearing on the last day) in favour of the authenticity of Scripture. However, later in the text, while encouraging sinners to have recourse to the Five Wounds of Christ, 'from which the smallest drop is capable of melting the hard hearts of all the men of the world',¹⁸⁵ Mac Aingil outlines the consequences of rejecting this resource:

Muna dhérna tú so, do-chíthfe do shúile féin lá an chundtais an ccroigh ccésda san aieór ag cur th'uile 7 do pheacadh at aghuidh 7 go spesiálta an mhasla thuguis don chroigh naoimh féin 7 don fhuil neamhdha do doirteadh uirre ag diúltadh do leighios ria. Ag faicsin na croichi dhuit, dá rabh tú san pheacadh, adeir Críosa go mbía tú ag síorghul ag caoineadh th'olc...gidheadh, má ní tú an aithríghi a n-am, do-chíthfe tú an ccroigh

¹⁸⁴ SSA, p.15.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p.40.

*ccédna 'na bratuigh // bhuaidha 7 meanma ag cor luathghára 7 sóláis ort bhías
'na thosach ar do ghlóir shíordhuidhe.*¹⁸⁶

The connection between recourse to (or indeed rejection of) the five wounds of Christ, and the appearance of the cross of crucifixion in the sky at Judgement upon which Christ displayed these same wounds 'to the elect as pledges of love for them, to the sinners as bitter reproach',¹⁸⁷ was one of the most popular subjects of late medieval religious literature, treated of by preachers and bardic poets alike.¹⁸⁸ Perhaps it is not surprising that Mac Aingil, as a Franciscan, whose order were at the forefront of promoting devotion to the wounds of Christ in the late medieval period, should give such prominence to them in his work on confession. What is certain, however, is that such imagery would have felt as much at home in fifteenth-century Gaelic Ireland as in the Ireland of the first half of the seventeenth century, to which the friars at Louvain wished to bring the standards of the Tridentine Church, demonstrating that they, themselves, were engaged in straddling both worlds. The efficacy of the blood of Christ is further promoted by Mac Aingil, when he encourages the sinner on the road to contrition:

¹⁸⁶ 'If you do not do this your eyes will see, on the Day of Judgement, the cross of crucifixion in the air, casting your evil and your sin in your face, and especially the insult that you paid to the holy cross itself and the holy blood that flowed from it [by] refusing to heal yourself with it. Should you be in sin while seeing the cross, Christ says, you will be perpetually crying and weeping [on account of] your sin...however, if you repent in time, you will see the same cross as a standard of victory and courage, delighting you and making you joyful, you who will be beginning eternal glory': *ibid.*, p.40.

¹⁸⁷ Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, p.246.

¹⁸⁸ For a more detailed discussion of this subject see Salvador Ryan, 'Reign of blood: aspects of devotion to the wounds of Christ in late medieval Gaelic Ireland' in Joost Augusteijn and Mary Ann Lyons (eds.), *Irish history: a research yearbook* (Dublin, 2002).

Glac chugad fuil, 7 ní fuil ghabhar achd fuil Íosa, Uain Dé, thógbhas peacuidhe an tshaoghail. Féuch uirre dá dortadh san chrann ar do shon, cuir do dhóigh innti, 7 bean fuaim aonosna amháin as an démond sin atá ad chliabh; 7 croithfe an fhuil í féin ort agas brúidhfe an cruachroidhe sin 7 do-ghéna tláidh umhal é ullamh dochum deaghoibre na hái[th]ridhe do ghlacadh; 7 nídhfi é fá dhéoigh óna pheacuidhibh.¹⁸⁹

Mac Aingil was keen to stress that one should not delay repentance for any reason, and especially that an individual should not leave confession until his deathbed. He compares sin to a cancer that worms its way into the marrow of one's spirit. Therefore, one should not delay in taking action when one first recognises the signs of its arrival, by cleansing oneself of the intruder with the water of penance.¹⁹⁰ If this is not done immediately, Mac Aingil explains, sin and its master, the devil, will begin to rob the best of one's strength, each day weakening the person more and more, so that one sin leads to another.¹⁹¹ He compares the person who delays repentance until the last moments of his life to a gambler who has won nothing against his opponent all night and who is, nevertheless, prepared to gamble all of his fortune on one last game:

Dá mbeithea ad dhroichearbhach ag imirt ré fírchearbhach feadh na hoidhche geimhrídh 7 gan aon chluiche do bhreith duit air, nár mhór an mhíre dhuit a

¹⁸⁹ 'Take [some] blood, and not goat's blood, but the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Look on it, that was shed on the tree for you sake, put your confidence in it, and emit the sound of one sigh from that diamond that is in your chest; and the blood will stir itself and it will incite that hard heart and it will make it soft and obedient, ready to accept the good work of repentance; and it will wash it thereby from its sins': *ibid.*, p.37.

¹⁹⁰ *SSA*, p.25.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

*ndeireadh oidhche do chuid don tshaoghal do chor san chluiche dhéighionach
risan bhfear sin?*¹⁹²

Mac Aingil then lists the kind of obstacles that the devil can use to distract a person from repentance on his deathbed:

*Crádh an tinnis, gul na ccarad, coimhne na bpeacadh, // uathbhás an bháis,
coimhchriothnughadh résan mbreitheamhnus, 7 mórán eile chuirios toirmiosg
oruinn aire do thabhairt do Dhia.*¹⁹³

The advice given by Mac Aingil was certainly not new, and he did not intend it to be. He merely wished to reiterate what had been repeated many times by spiritual writers throughout the late medieval period, appearing not only in sermons but also in the religious verses of the bardic poets.¹⁹⁴ The recommendations regarding how one should confess one's sins, outlined in the second part of Mac Aingil's work, were not new either. The friar describes how some people approach confession in the same way as they might entertain with a story, without showing any sign of remorse or repentance.¹⁹⁵ They often seem more interested in telling other people's sins, recounting their own good deeds or indeed spending time storytelling without any regard for details relevant to the subject.¹⁹⁶ Mac Aingil recalls how he often spent half

¹⁹² 'If you were a bad gambler playing with a true gambler all through a winter's night without winning one game against him, would it not be great madness on your part, at the end of the night, to gamble all your wealth in the last game with that man?': *ibid.*, p.34.

¹⁹³ 'The suffering of sickness, the weeping of friends, the memory of sin, the terror of death, the dread of judgement, and a lot more, that prevent us from focussing on God': *ibid.*, p.35.

¹⁹⁴ For examples of this see chapter 4.

¹⁹⁵ *SSA*, p.61.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.61. Such an approach to confession during the late medieval period is well documented: see Bossy, 'The social history of confession in the age of Reformation', pp 22-4.

an hour or an hour listening to stories in which not one sin was confessed, ‘*tré ainbhfhios an pheacuigh*.’¹⁹⁷ The aim of *Scáthán* was clearly to instruct and not to condemn. That is why Mac Aingil, while criticising the way some people confessed their sins, attributed this fact to ignorance requiring instruction rather than deliberate obstinacy. One of the functions of *Scáthán*, therefore, was to re-educate the faithful about the sacrament. The ground that needed to be covered was far from new, and was, in many ways, quite familiar. This is evidenced in the list of ‘sixteen conditions for a good confession’, which appeared across Europe in the later middle ages in works by figures such as Antoninus of Florence and Angelus de Clavassio, emerging also in the devotional collection compiled for Máire, daughter of Eoghan Ó Máille, known as *Leabhar Chlainne Suibhne* (1513-14) and also in a Franciscan manuscript dating from the fifteenth century,¹⁹⁸ which advised against the very practices that Mac Aingil mentions in his work. One of the sixteen recommendations for a good confession was that the penitent should not withhold from confessing a sin simply out of shame. Indeed, his confession should be always complete.¹⁹⁹ This is echoed by Mac Aingil in the following instruction:

*As deimhin gibé do léigfeadh dhe aoinepheacadh marbhtha dá ghráineamhla
d’innisín tré náire, nách biadh do tharbha na faoisidín aige achd peacadh
marbhtha nua do chur a gceand // na bpeacadh do bhí air ré tteachd dochum
na faoisidíne dhó.*²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ ‘on account of the ignorance of the sinner’: *SSA*, p.61.

¹⁹⁸ See chapter 4.

¹⁹⁹ Ó Clabaigh, *The Franciscans in Ireland, 1400-1534*, p.152.

²⁰⁰ ‘It is certain that whoever fails to confess a mortal sin, however terrible, out of shame, will not [only] forfeit the benefit of confession but will add a new mortal sin to the sin, which was on him, before coming to confession’: *SSA*, p.80.

This teaching was rooted in the Fathers and Councils of the Church.²⁰¹

Mac Aingil believed preparation for confession to be of the utmost importance. He advises penitents to pray to the Virgin Mary beforehand '*óir ní fhoil slighi as deimhne 7 as dirighe dochum an Mhic iná impidhe na máthar do bheith leat.*'²⁰² He also encourages prayer to St Patrick and to one's native saints, to which people owe special allegiance. In the wake of their assistance, comments Mac Aingil, one's heart will turn towards repentance.²⁰³ He recommends different periods of preparation for the sacrament depending on how often a person receives it. If an individual is preparing for a general confession of his life, a period of eight days is suggested, during which the penitent might spend an hour or two in reflection each day. If one holds public office, a longer period is considered fitting. For yearly confessions, however, a preparation of two days is deemed sufficient.²⁰⁴ Mac Aingil suggests that during this time one should use the Ten Commandments and the Twelve Precepts of the Church as guidelines to assist in examining one's conscience:

*Ní fhuil glés cuimhnighthe ar na peacadhuibh is férr iná aitheanta Dé 7 na heagluise do chur at fhiaghnuisi 7 ceistt do chur ort féin gá mhéid uair do bhrisis gach aithne díoph 7 siobhal orra mar sin fó seach.*²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ Ibid. Concern for sins of the individual, who chooses to conceal a sin from the priest in confession is also a relatively common feature of bardic religious poetry (see chapter 4).

²⁰² 'for there is no surer or more direct way to the Son than to have the intercession of [His] mother':
ibid., p.80.

²⁰³ Ibid., p.13.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., p.55.

²⁰⁵ 'There is not a better tool to remember sins than to place before you the precepts of God and His Church and ask yourself how many times you have broken each commandment and proceed thus respectively': ibid., pp 55-6.

There appears to be a clear preference, on Mac Aingil's part, for the use of the Ten Commandments as opposed to the Seven Deadly Sins, for the purpose of an examination of conscience. He states that a person cannot know if he has sinned without knowing the commandments of God and the precepts of the Church.²⁰⁶ He therefore includes a poetic summary of both, for those who might not know them, which he borrows from Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa's *Teagasg Criosdaidhe*.²⁰⁷ He stresses that everyone should know them by heart and also understand them.²⁰⁸ He encourages each person to examine each commandment in turn, asking himself whether he broke it and how often.²⁰⁹ A suggested form of examination of conscience, based on the Ten Commandments and the Precepts of the Church is then provided for the reader's use.²¹⁰ Mac Aingil goes on to advise the penitent on how he should approach the sacrament itself, namely with contrition, bowed head and on bended knee. The manner in which Mac Aingil describes how the person should approach the priest's chair, with reverence and honour, and without looking from side to side, suggests that the kind of sacrament, which he envisaged in practice, did not include confession boxes, even though these first appeared in the sixteenth century.²¹¹ On

²⁰⁶ SSA, p.94.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p.95.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p.96.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. Mac Aingil was also concerned that the penitent provided adequate detail regarding the sin so that the priest, whose function was to adjudicate, might weigh its gravity and apply an appropriate penance. At one point he comments '*Ní lór dhuit a rá go ndéirnis creach, achd a chor síos más chreach mhór í, ór ní hionann creach míle bó do dhéanamh , grágán beag do chreachadh*' ('It is not enough for you to say that you stole something, but [you must] specify whether it is a big thing, for the theft of one thousand cows is not the same as robbing a little piece of wood'): *ibid.*, p.90.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 98-104.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.105.

approaching the priest, the penitent is instructed to make the Sign of the Cross and then to implore the blessing of the confessor, reciting the prayer beginning ‘*Benedicite...*’²¹² Mac Aingil then states that if the penitent understands Latin he should then recite the *Confiteor*. Interestingly, however, if the penitent does not understand Latin, even though he might know the *Confiteor* by heart, he should recite it in Irish ‘*do ghluasachd do spioraidi chum // deuóision.*’²¹³ Such a statement by Mac Aingil provides a useful window on the outlook of the Irish Franciscans at Louvain regarding personal devotion. While implementing the decrees of the Council of Trent, figures such as Mac Aingil were not content with offering a supply of prayers that could be recited at length by Irish people at home. Their concern was not confined to mere textual prayers, but extended to the disposition of the person using the texts. It was not sufficient, then, to recite a text. One had first to understand what one was praying before being in a position to pray from one’s heart. Mac Aingil, therefore, provides the text of the *Confiteor* in Irish and encourages those for whom he writes to pray it, not only within the sacrament, but also each morning and evening, and on other occasions.²¹⁴ It is clear that Mac Aingil wished, as far as possible, that the prayer might be personalised by the penitent. At the point where the Virgin Mary, St Michael the Archangel, John the Baptist and the apostles Peter and Paul are invoked,

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ ‘to incline your spirit towards devotion’: *ibid.*, pp 105-6.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.106. This attitude is also evident in the work of Theobald Stapleton who, in the preface to his *Catechismus* (1639) expressed his regret that ‘so many Irish speakers were taught to say their prayers in broken Latin, repeating them “like a parrot”, not knowing what they were saying’: Bernadette Cunningham, ‘Geoffrey Keating’s *Eochair Sgiath an Aifrinn* and the Catholic reformation in Ireland’, in W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds.), *The churches, Ireland and the Irish* (London, 1989), pp 138-9.

Mac Aingil adds '*abair ann so gibe naomh eili bus áil leat.*'²¹⁵ The opportunity was thereby given, deliberately or inadvertently, for the inclusion of all manner of local cults.

Employing the medieval tradition of viewing sin as a sickness that assails the soul and the priest as a doctor, who restores it to health, Mac Aingil explains that

*Nil fhuil san fhaoisidin achd purgóid uasal spioradálta lé bhfolmhuighthean leannta truaillidhe an anma 7 lé n-aisighthean a shláinte dhó. As gnáth sioróipe do ghlacadh do dhíleagadh na leanntadh ré nglacadh na purgóide 7, muna dhearntar so, ní hé amháin nách dein an phurgóid tarbha achd as gnáth go ndén díoghbháil.*²¹⁶

The three syrups that the penitent is advised to take before drinking the medicine (confession) consist of an examination of conscience, contrition and a firm purpose of amendment.²¹⁷ Continuing with the same analogy, Mac Aingil explains what sort of satisfaction for sin should be prescribed for the penitent / patient. He focuses on three main areas that, according to John the Evangelist, tackle the three roots of all sin (detailed as the desire of the body, the desire of the eyes and pride).²¹⁸ The three areas, in which satisfaction can be made, are identified as fasting, almsgiving and

²¹⁵ 'Mention here whichever other saint you wish to [include]': *SSA*, p.106.

²¹⁶ 'Confession is merely a precious spiritual medicine by which poisonous liquids of the soul are discharged and through which it is restored to health. It is usual for syrup to be taken to digest the fluids before taking the medicine, and if this is not done, not only does the medicine not do any good, but often it does harm': *ibid.*, pp 62-3.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 63-8.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.112.

prayer.²¹⁹ Addressing priests, Mac Aingil advises that the satisfaction, or penance prescribed, should address the sin itself:

*Tabhair dot aire gur choir an lóirghníomh do bheith contrárdha do na peacadhuibh; cuirthear, dá bhríogh sin, déirc ar fhear na sainnte, trosgadh ar fhear na drúisi, urnuighthe ar fhear an uabhair, 7 iad 'na ttriúr ar an tté atá sanntach, drúiseamhuil, uaibhreach.*²²⁰

The method thus advocated is, of course the ‘principle of contraries’, dating from the early Irish penitentials. Suggestions as to what kind of fasting, almsgiving and prayer one could profitably perform are provided. Fasting is defined as any form of hardship that a person applies to one’s body in reparation for sin.²²¹ Among the legitimate forms of fasting mentioned by Mac Aingil, the following are included: pilgrimage, lying on a hard bed, scourging, abstaining from food, suffering from the cold and keeping vigil.²²² The corporal and spiritual works of mercy are suggested as a form of almsgiving, and a poetic synopsis of both, taken from Ó hEoghusa’s *An Teagasg Críosaíde* is included in the text.²²³ Finally, singing the psalms, preaching or listening to a sermon or Mass, and meditation on God and spiritual affairs, are all recommended as forms of prayer.²²⁴ Suggestions such as these illustrate that the text of *Scáthán* was aimed primarily at a clerical audience, who were then expected to

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ ‘Be aware that the penance should be the contrary of the sins; alms is prescribed, therefore, for the greedy man, fasting for the lustful man, prayer for the proud man, and the three of them for the one who is greedy, lustful and proud’: *ibid.*, p.113.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, p.111.

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ *Ibid.*, pp 111-12.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.111.

impart its content to their flock. The first function of the text, then, was to sanctify the clergy themselves and, by extension, the people in their charge. Mac Aingil encourages the penitent to make satisfaction for sin while still on earth rather than postponing it until Purgatory.²²⁵

In considering the exercise of penance, Mac Aingil boasts that nowhere else in Europe is there found a place where the subject of penance and satisfaction for sin, in addition to treatment of the pains of Purgatory, was more comprehensively preached than Ireland.²²⁶ Speaking of the lives of saintly clergy of Ireland in former times, he exclaims ‘*Cáit a bhfuigheam úrnuighthe mar a n-úrnuighthe, trosgadh mar a ttrosgadh, nó déirc mar a ndéirc?*’²²⁷ He goes on to extol in detail the virtues of these Irishmen of holiness, concluding with a declaration of the authority with which he can make such statements:

*Iomdha dearbh ar a n-abruim do thaobh na húrnuighthe, na haibsdinéidi, 7
chráidh an chuirp, a mbeathaidh ar n-árdnaomh n-óirdheirc Coluimcille 7
Brighid, 7 // go sunnradhach a mbeathaidh ar n-árdphátrúin Pádrúig.
Léigheadh an téfhéidus a mbeathadha.*²²⁸

This passage is of vital importance in understanding how those responsible for the implementation of the decrees of the Council of Trent wished to deal with devotion to the saints, which is examined below. Firstly, Mac Aingil claimed that the exercise of

²²⁵ Ibid., pp 114-25.

²²⁶ Ibid., p.125.

²²⁷ ‘Where [else] do we find prayers prayer like their prayer, fasting like their fasting, or almsgiving like their almsgiving?’: *ibid.*, p.125.

²²⁸ ‘[There are] many proofs of what I say regarding the prayers and abstinences and tortures of the body in the lives of our illustrious great saints Colmcille and Brigid, and especially in the lives of our great patron Patrick. Let he, who is able to, read their lives’: *ibid.*, pp 126-7.

penance, and by extension, the manifestation of holiness, found in Ireland was unrivalled anywhere else in Europe. Therefore, Ireland is shown to have possessed, throughout its history, people of outstanding holiness, well able to match candidates from any other European land. This was an important point. Secondly, those saintly figures that roamed Ireland excelled in prayer, fasting and almsgiving, according to Mac Aingil. Yet, more importantly still, he claimed to have proof of their deeds. This proof could be found in the lives of Ireland's principal saints, namely Patrick, Brigid and Colmcille. In the wake of the establishment of the Sacred Congregation of Sacred Rites and Ceremonies by the papacy in 1588, which regulated the cults of saints, requiring rigorous new standards for canonisation, many saints from different countries became effectively endangered species, facing demotion for want of proper documentation. It was in the interest of each nation to get its house in order with regard to its national cults, and this inevitably involved a certain amount of competition between candidates. Later efforts to have St Patrick suitably included in the revised Roman Calendar of 1632 led to Patrick Comerford, bishop of Waterford petitioning the Franciscan Luke Wadding, who served on the commission established for this purpose in 1629: 'For your life, do you endeavour that at least a semi-double be accorded to St Patrick in the new Brievary.'²²⁹ Mac Aingil's claim that the penances of Irish saints far surpassed their counterparts on the continent is a clear manifestation of the kind of rivalry that existed at the time. The reference to the lives of Patrick, Brigid and Colmcille is deliberately included to show that evidence existed as proof of their feats, should such documentation be required. And finally, the lives

²²⁹ Cunningham and Gillespie, "The most adaptable of saints": the cult of St Patrick in the seventeenth century', p.90.

of these three saints are held up as models to be imitated; thus, those with the ability to read them are encouraged to do so.²³⁰

It could be argued that *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe*, like its antecedent, *Desiderius*, is composed of two kinds of material, which are interwoven in the text, often overlapping each other. The first kind consists of doctrinal and devotional matter, reflecting the general ethos of the Tridentine Church, which could be applied, with equal relevance, to the lives of Catholics in Paris, Rome or Dublin. The second type of material, however, consists of a commentary on the current situation in Ireland, political and religious, and applies itself to its inherent problems. The Tridentine doctrine is therefore promulgated in a specific setting. Aodh Mac Aingil, accordingly, often makes reference to pressing political and religious questions at home. The friar makes reference to the religious persecution of Catholic clergy by their Protestant counterparts.²³¹ He prays that God will open the eyes of the ‘false clergy’ and all those who follow them before they are damned for eternity.²³² He also asks people to accept the returning Catholic clergy and welcome them into their homes, even if they should be punished for doing this, for in showing them honour they do the same to Christ.²³³ Mac Aingil reminds his readers that it was for their consolation that God drew great numbers of young Irishmen to foreign lands ‘*iondus go bhfilldís chugad do leighios do lot 7 dot shaoradh ó sheanmóntuidhibh na hearráide ’s na heiriceachda.*’²³⁴ He spiritualises this exile of Irish youth, identifying

²³⁰ This subject is discussed at greater length below.

²³¹ *SSA*, p.151.

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ ‘so that they could return to you to heal your affliction and to free you from the sermons of error and the heretics’: *ibid.*

it as a specific mission designed by Christ.²³⁵ As was common in political and religious literature of this period, the journeys of these young people are compared to the experience undergone by a biblical character, in this instance, Joseph, who was sold as a slave into Egypt:

*As follas gurab é Dia thairrngios iomad n-ógán neamhorchóideach as ar ttír go críocheuibh ciana comhuidheachda ina ttabhairtheas suas iad a léighionn 7 a ccrábhadh iondus go ttugdaois mar Ioseph crui[th]neachda chreidimh 7 naomhthachda riú d'fhurtachd a tíre san aimsir si a bhfuilid lán do ghorta grás, gan cur ná treabhadh soisgéoil, ná seanmóra dá sásadh.*²³⁶

Recalling notable pilgrimage sites where St Patrick was traditionally believed to have done penance, such as Lough Derg, Down, Croagh Patrick and Saul (Mac Aingil's home place), Aodh laments the fact that they are no longer openly accessible to the faithful, and attests personally to their existence (as further proof of the legitimacy of the Patrician cult):

*Do-choncamar féin na toibre si a ndéineadh an úrnuighthe, na clocha ar a ccodladh, an leabaidh phianta ina mbíodh ag eadarghidhi an aoineDia fhírindigh grás 7 trócaire do thabhairt dá phobal.*²³⁷

²³⁵ 'Do ghair Íosa mórán dár ttír-ne dochum na hoiffige si san aimsir si féin' ('Christ called many from our country to this office at this time'): *ibid.*, p.150.

²³⁶ 'It is clear that it is God who draws many innocent young men from this country to faraway foreign lands in which they are 'sold into' [using the Joseph analogy] learning and religion in order that they might give the wheat of faith and holiness to assist their country in this time that is starved of grace, devoid of the sowing or ploughing of the Gospel, [and without] sermon to satisfy it': *ibid.*, p.152

²³⁷ 'We ourselves saw the wells where he used to pray, the stones on which he used to sleep, the bed of pains in which he used to intercede with the one true God, that He might give grace and mercy to His people': *ibid.*, p.127.

In the final section of *Scáthán*, while treating of indulgences, Mac Aingil launches into a bitter invective against both Luther and Calvin, reminiscent of similar material in Ó Maolchonaire's *Desiderius*.²³⁸ He chooses to launch this particular attack in the section on indulgences since, according to Mac Aingil, it was the issue of indulgences that led Luther into his first heresy.²³⁹ Indicating that his treatment of the subject would necessarily be brief, he states that a weighty book would be needed to detail even some of the 'wickedness, evil and error' with which Luther assailed the Church, adding later that it was his intention to compile such a work.²⁴⁰ Meanwhile, he contrasts the lives of Patrick, Brigid, Colmcille and other native Irish saints with those of the new and 'false' clergy.²⁴¹

Aodh Mac Aingil was not naive regarding the general standard of native clergy available to his audience. Although he gives thanks to God at one point for the number of educated people in Ireland,²⁴² he was not unaware of problems. In another place, he seems to contradict this optimism by recommending that everyone should have a skilled and educated spiritual director, while acknowledging the difficulties in finding one:

Muna fhoil h'oide faoisidne foghlamtha diadha, iarr oide eile, 7 muna héidir a fghagháil (fá-raor, atá easbhuidh daoine bhfoghlamtha anois ar an ná[i]sion)

²³⁸ Ibid., pp 160-8.

²³⁹ Ibid., p.164.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., pp 164, 167.

²⁴¹ Ibid., p.131.

²⁴² Mac Aingil admits 'go bhfuilid mórán daoine foghlamtha ag ár náisíon (glóir do Dhia!)' ('our nation has many educated people (glory to God!)': *ibid.*, p.95.

*cuir romhad comhairle duine mhaith nách biadh 'na shagart do leanmhuin, 7
budh mór an múr sin dod chosnamh ar naimhdibh th'anma.*²⁴³

The scarcity of suitable confessors brought its own theological problems, which Mac Aingil chose to address. The first related to the validity of the Sacrament of Penance when it was received from a priest who was leading a dissolute life. Mac Aingil assured his readers that Christ so earnestly wished to leave His healing herbs (the sacraments) with humanity for our benefit that He ordained that the sinful life of the priest administering them would not present itself as an obstacle to the grace of the sacrament.²⁴⁴ This teaching regarding the sinfulness of the priest is summarised thus:

*Gé go mbeth 'na eirice 7 'na pheacach ghráineamhuil, atá a absolóid
coimhbríoghmar risan n-absolóid do-bhéradh Pádrúig an príomhfháidh
uaidh.*²⁴⁵

The second problem was that of the unlearned priest. How effective was his absolution? Mac Aingil listed the basic requirements of a confessor. The confessor, in order to perform his duty without sin, was obliged to know the different kinds of sin, i.e. whether they were mortal or venial.²⁴⁶ He must know what is expected of the penitent, namely contrition, a firm purpose of amendment and a full confession.²⁴⁷ He

²⁴³ 'If your confessor is not learned and pious, ask for another director, and if you cannot find one (unfortunately the nation has a lack of educated people at present), begin to follow the advice of a good person who is not a priest, and it will be a great defence to protect you against the enemies of your soul': *ibid.*, p.70.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.137.

²⁴⁵ 'Even though he be a heretic or a terrible sinner, his absolution is, nevertheless, as effective as the absolution Patrick, the primary prophet, might give': *ibid.*, p.137.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.139.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.140.

must also know the cases in which he should ask the penitent to make restitution if he is able, the sins for which he cannot give absolution and the situations in which he should assist the penitent and in what manner.²⁴⁸ He should also be aware of the kind of penance he should prescribe.²⁴⁹ If, however, a person should confess to such a priest, without recognising him for what he was, he would not need to confess a second time and, moreover, the sacrament would be valid. Mac Aingil explains that this is because the priest's knowledge is not integral to the sacrament.²⁵⁰ The only requirement for the valid celebration of the sacrament that Mac Aingil identifies is authority, i.e. that the priests possess faculties for doing so. In exceptional cases, such as danger of death or when the penitent wishes only to confess venial sins or mortal sins that he confessed on a previous occasion, the only requisite was that the priest be validly ordained.²⁵¹

Representing the Saints

At one of the last sessions of the Council of Trent, the question of the role of saints within the Church was addressed. While the fathers upheld the value of venerating images and relics of the saints, they nevertheless admitted that there had been some abuses of their cults in the past. This led effectively to an effort to regulate and reform the process of canonisation, by which saints were made, involving a greater control over the creation of saints by the authorities in Rome in order to avoid the further growth of dubious local cults that ranged from the benign to the bizarre.²⁵² In other

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ 'Ni fhoil foghlaim an tsagairt do shubstaint na sacrámuinnte': ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid., pp 134-5.

²⁵² For a discussion of one of the most bizarre cults of the medieval period see J. C. Schmitt, *The holy greyhound: Guinefort, healer of children since the thirteenth century* (Cambridge, 1983).

words, recognition of the sacred was centralised.²⁵³ In the wake of the Council, and amidst criticisms of the previously accepted view of sainthood from reformers within and without the Church alike, the official reaction of church authorities was indecisive. Thus, from the close of the Council in 1563 until 1588, when the Congregation of Sacred Rites and Ceremonies was established to oversee canonisations, there were no new saints officially recognised within the Catholic Church.²⁵⁴ One of the problems facing the Church was the prevalence of what was now considered questionable material in the lives of even the officially recognised saints. A more historically critical method of outlining the lives of saints was required if the idea of sainthood was going to retain any credibility in a rapidly changing Europe. In order to achieve this, the construction of new lives would have to attain certain standards and concomitantly, old lives that were deficient in this area necessitated amendment. Peter Burke sees evidence of this new and more critical approach to the lives of saints in the work of Erasmus on the life of St Jerome.²⁵⁵ It was, however, a Jesuit project, begun in Antwerp in 1607 and spearheaded by Fr Heribert Rosweyde, that began a systematic attempt at collating and publishing what was hoped would be a more acceptable collection of the lives of the saints of the universal church.²⁵⁶ Rosweyde's *Fasti sanctorum* (1607), apart from giving an account of the manuscript lives of saints found in Belgian libraries, outlined a plan for

²⁵³ Peter Burke, 'How to be a Counter-Reformation saint', in Kaspar Von Greyerz (ed.), *Religion and society in early modern Europe* (London, 1984), pp 46-7.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.46.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ Canice Mooney, 'Father John Colgan O.F.M: his work, times and literary milieu' in Terence O'Donnell (ed.), *Father John Colgan O.F.M. 1592-1658* (Dublin, 1959), p.19; see also Richard Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints' lives: an introduction to Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Oxford, 1991), p.40.

the publication of eighteen volumes of the lives of the saints including a commentary volume and index volume.²⁵⁷ He did not live to see his plan implemented, however, and when he died in 1629, John Bollandus was placed in charge of the project in his stead.²⁵⁸ The group that worked with John Bollandus, known since as the Bollandists, published in 1643 two volumes of the lives of saints whose feastdays occurred in January, followed in 1648 by three volumes treating of the saints whose feasts occurred in February.²⁵⁹ Roughly around the same time, in 1645 and 1647 respectively, to be precise, John Colgan, an Irish Franciscan friar based at Louvain, published two volumes of Irish saints' lives, the first, entitled *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae* (1645), treating of the lives of Irish saints whose feast days occurred in January, February and March, and the second, *Triadis Thaumaturgae* (1647), comprising various lives of Patrick, Brigid and Colmcille.

The works of Colgan marked the culmination of a long process, involving many individuals, that partly entailed the production of Irish saints' lives that would satisfy the expectations of Tridentine prelates such as John Roche of Ferns who praised the life of Patrick in the new breviary as 'modern, drawn out of the best writers, more seemly to be read than the ancient legend.'²⁶⁰ Renewed interest in the publication of 'more seemly' lives of Irish saints can be traced to the activity of Richard Stanihurst, whose Latin life of St Patrick entitled *De vita S Patricii, Hiberniae Apostoli* was published at Antwerp in 1587.²⁶¹ Based on both the works of Jocelin and Giraldus

²⁵⁷ Mooney, 'Father John Colgan', p.19.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Cunningham and Gillespie, "'The most adaptable of saints": the cult of St Patrick in the seventeenth century', pp 90-1.

²⁶¹ Ibid., p.88.

Cambrensis, this life also contained many additional patristic and biblical references that portrayed Patrick as a figure whose life was intimately related to the patriarchs in Scripture and the Fathers of the Church, therefore bestowing on him exceptional credentials.²⁶² The work of other Old English scholars, such as Fr Henry Fitzsimon (1566-1643) and Fr Stephen White (1574-1646), both Jesuits, also had a formative influence on the hagiographical research of the Louvain school. Fr Henry Fitzsimon, who had studied at various locations on the continent, concerned himself with the compilation of *Catalogus praecipuorum Sanctorum Hiberniae* in 1611.²⁶³ In the course of twenty years of research in various libraries, Fitzsimon stumbled upon a hand-written life of St Patrick in Douai, presumably undiscovered heretofore.²⁶⁴ His work was widely consulted by other scholars such as James Ussher, and was also passed on to the Franciscan, Fr Hugh Ward (1593-1635), a native of Donegal, who resided at Louvain. Fr Heribert Rosweyde also possessed an expanded copy, which was used later by the Bollandists.²⁶⁵ The Bollandists were especially indebted to the work of Fr Stephen White S.J. Holding professorships at Ingolstadt and Dillingen, White had access for many years to the manuscript collections of Germany, from where he discovered many important texts, including *Vita I S. Brigidae* in a manuscript of St Magnus in Regensburg. He was not slow to pass on copies of what he found to James Ussher, the Franciscans at Louvain and the Bollandists.²⁶⁶ He had

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints' lives*, p.42. This work was, itself, based on a list of ninety four names, drawn up Fr Richard Fleming SJ, who served as chancellor of the university at Pont à Mousson, where Fitzsimon once studied.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p.43.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p.45.

been in regular correspondance with Fr Heribert Rosweyde since 1607 and the Bollandists relied very much on White for the compilation of their sections on the Irish saints.²⁶⁷

The hagiographical project of the Franciscans at Louvain, inspired by the developing interest elsewhere in saints' lives, can be said to have begun in earnest in March 1623. Fr Patrick Fleming (1599-1631), a Franciscan and a native of Louth, was travelling from Louvain to Rome to attend the general chapter of the order, in the company of his confrere, Aodh Mac Aingil, while at the same time Fr Hugh Ward was journeying from Salamanca to Louvain. The three friars met Fr Thomas Messingham, rector of the Irish College in Paris, while passing through that city. Messingham was, at that time, preparing a work on the lives of the Irish saints in Latin.²⁶⁸ Both Ward and Fleming promised to assist Messingham in his work by forwarding to him copies of the lives of the Irish saints that they might stumble upon on their journey.²⁶⁹ Letters written from Fleming to Ward, after the former's arrival in Rome, detail how both he and Mac Aingil travelled from one archive to another in the quest for new material on the Irish saints.²⁷⁰ Although Messingham acknowledged in his publication, *Florilegium Insulae Sanctorum* (1624), that he received a copy of a hymn and of the Rule of St Columban from Aodh Mac Aingil,²⁷¹ Hugh Ward later accused Messingham of publishing many items, for which he was indebted to the Franciscans, without acknowledging their contribution to the enterprise.²⁷² The arrangement with

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p.44.

²⁶⁸ Mooney, 'Father John Colgan OFM: his work and times and literary milieu', p.15.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Giblin, 'Hugh McCaghwell, OFM, Archbishop of Armagh (+1626): aspects of his life', p.92.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Mooney, 'Father John Colgan OFM: his work and times and literary milieu', p.16.

Messingham therefore fell through shortly afterwards and Fleming and Ward pressed on with the project themselves. The arrival of Mícheál Ó Cléirigh, a man in his mid-forties and a native of Donegal, to St Anthony's College Louvain in late 1623 or early 1624 gave the enterprise new impetus.²⁷³ Fleming urged Ward to send Ó Cléirigh, who, while ignorant of Latin, was skilled in Irish, back to Ireland to collect as many manuscripts as possible and copy as many saints' lives as he could manage.²⁷⁴ By the beginning of 1629, Mícheál claimed to have collected more than three or four hundred lives.²⁷⁵ These lives were carried back to Louvain where Ward and his assistants began to translate them into Latin.²⁷⁶ John Colgan (1592-1658) was placed in charge of the project after the deaths of both Fleming and Ward, in 1631 and 1635 respectively, and he set about completing their work.²⁷⁷ On completion of the *Acta Sanctorum* in 1645, Colgan was munificent in acknowledging his indebtedness to Ward, Fleming, Ó Cléirigh and others, himself claiming to have done no more than 'add the chapter numbers, marginals, explanations or notes to each Life.'²⁷⁸ In reality, however, his editorial work was comprehensive and learned, and the second volume, dedicated to the three patron saints of Ireland, was accomplished largely by Colgan

²⁷³ Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints' lives*, p.49.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, p.50; Canice Mooney, 'Fr John Colgan', p.16. Ó Cléirigh most probably reached Ireland in the autumn of 1626; Cathaldus Giblin, 'The annals of the Four Masters' in Benignus Millett and Anthony Lynch (eds) *Dún Mhuire Killiney 1945-95: léann agus seanchas*, p.137

²⁷⁵ Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints' lives*, p.51.

²⁷⁶ Mooney, 'Fr John Colgan', p.16.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., pp 21-2. For a survey of Colgan's life see pp7-13. It seems that Colgan had some involvement in the project since 1628 when he was presumably lecturing in theology in Germany. A letter written to Ward in the same year indicates that he was about to be transferred to Mainz for a teaching post in theology there: Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints' lives*, p.54; Mooney, 'John Colgan', p.12.

²⁷⁸ Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints' lives*, p.55.

himself.²⁷⁹ Having intended to publish seven or eight volumes in all, Colgan's work was interrupted by his death in 1658.²⁸⁰

Renewed interest in hagiography in the seventeenth century, especially in Irish hagiography by Irish scholars on the continent, cannot be attributed to any one factor. It would be overly simplistic to cite the stricter regulations governing the canonisation of individuals, operational in the Sacred Congregation for Rites and Ceremonies, as solely responsible for the desire, on the part of many scholars, to remodel existing saints' lives in order to make them more acceptable to a Tridentine audience. Although there is evidence to suggest that this certainly constituted one reason for focussing anew on hagiography, there were other important issues involved. At least four principal factors, influencing Irish hagiographical projects in the first half of the seventeenth century, can readily be identified. The first consisted of a defence of Irish history and a refutation of what was considered an attempt by the Reformers to utilise native saints for their own advantage. The second involved the process already mentioned whereby lives of Irish saints were remodelled to meet new and more stringent requirements and also to compete favourably with their European counterparts. The third factor was influenced by the political fall out of the conquest of Ireland, and constituted an effort to seek out and preserve a large body of hagiographical material, extant in either manuscript or oral form, before it disappeared forever. The fourth entailed an employment of the lives of the saints to edify, instruct and spiritually enrich the Catholic faithful. An examination of each of these in turn is necessary in order to better comprehend why these hagiographical projects cannot be viewed as homogeneous either in purpose or in implementation.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., pp 55-6.

²⁸⁰ Mooney, 'Fr John Colgan', p.26.

The interest shown in systematically recording and editing the various lives of Irish saints must first be seen in the context of a renewed interest in ecclesiastical history as a whole in the wake of the Reformation.²⁸¹ Flacius Illyricus's *Centuriae magdeburgica* (1559-74), a Protestant work treating of the history of Christianity from its inception to the beginning of the fourteenth century, constituted a scathing attack on Catholicism, to which Catholic apologists such as Cesare Baronio (Baronius) replied, after meticulous research in the Vatican archives, in his multi-volume work, *Annales ecclesiasticis a Christo nato ad annum 1198* (1588-1607).²⁸² Such exchanges concerning the history of the universal Church were mirrored in disputations regarding ecclesiastical history in Ireland. In order to countenance the somewhat unsavoury views of pro-English Catholic commentators such as Richard Stanihurst and Edmund Campion, the Irish Franciscan communities at Louvain and Rome wished that a comprehensive history of Ireland might be compiled. It never came to fruition, however, and such an enterprise was finally left to the Old English priest and scholar, Geoffrey Keating, who completed his *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* around 1634.²⁸³ Works dealing with more recent political history in Ireland from a Catholic perspective included Peter Lombard's *De regno Hiberniae, sanctorum insula commentarius* (completed in 1600 and published posthumously in 1632), David Rothe's *Analecta sacra* (1616-19) and Philip O' Sullivan Beare's *Historiae catholicae Iberniae compendium* (1621).²⁸⁴ The views of James Ussher, Protestant primate of

²⁸¹ Mooney, 'Fr John Colgan', pp 13-14.

²⁸² Ibid., p.14.

²⁸³ Ibid., pp 15, 17; Bernadette Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating: history, myth and religion in seventeenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2000), p.3.

²⁸⁴ Mooney, 'Fr John Colgan', p.17, n.25. Peter Lombard was Catholic archbishop of Armagh and David Rothe (1573-1650) served as Catholic bishop of Ossory.

Ireland (1625-56) concerning the history of the Irish Church were expressed in his *Discourse of the religion anciently professed by the British and Irish* (1631). He claimed that from the sixth to the twelfth century the Irish Church was free from the influence of Rome, and therefore flourished. He saw the twelfth-century reform, which extended Roman control over the Irish Church, as its death-knell, leading to all manner of corruption.²⁸⁵ Geoffrey Keating, in his *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (c.1634), while declining to openly confront Ussher on this point, nevertheless highlighted the twelfth-century reform as a key moment in Irish Church history, giving rise to the current ecclesiastical structures within which he lived his priesthood, thus implicitly rejecting Ussher's claim that it had led to a corrupt establishment.²⁸⁶ Other works, such as Thomas Messingham's *Florilegium sanctorum seu vitae, et acta sanctorum Hiberniae* (1624), endeavoured to provide a favourable presentation of Ireland's Christian past to a European audience.²⁸⁷

Perhaps one of the most immediate challenges for Catholic writers in the first half of the seventeenth century was to dismiss the view, advocated by writers belonging to the Reformed Church, that St Patrick was in fact a proto-Protestant.²⁸⁸ This argument

²⁸⁵ Cunningham, 'The culture and ideology of Irish Franciscan historians at Louvain, 1607-50', p.11.

²⁸⁶ Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating: history, myth and religion in seventeenth-century Ireland*, pp 119-20; *idem*, 'The culture and ideology of Irish Franciscan historians at Louvain, 1607-50', pp 12-13.

²⁸⁷ Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating*, p.27.

²⁸⁸ Bridget McCormack, *Perceptions of St Patrick in eighteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2000), p.21. These views were expressed by Meredith Hanmer, who was dean of St Patrick's in the late sixteenth century, in his *Chronicle of Ireland*, written in 1571: Cunningham and Gillespie, "The most adaptable of saints", p.92.

was most comprehensively made by James Ussher. The Protestant primate maintained that since the early Church in Ireland was not under Roman influence

the religion professed by the ancient bishops, priests, monks and other Christians in this land, was for substance the very same with that which now by public authority is maintained therein against the foreign doctrine brought in thither in later years, by the Bishop of Rome's followers.²⁸⁹

The views of Ussher involved him in a protracted dispute on the matter with the Catholic bishop of Ossory, David Rothe.²⁹⁰ The claim appeared all the more grievous on account of simultaneous efforts by Catholic writers such as Thomas Messingham to portray Patrick not only as Catholic but, furthermore, as a Tridentine prelate, as is evidenced by the frontispiece to his *Florilegium* (1624), which depicted the saint in baroque vestments.²⁹¹ Robert Rochford (B.B), the Franciscan compiler of *The life of the glorious bishop S.Patricke apostle and primate together with the lives of the holy virgin Bridgit and of the glorious abbot S.Columbe patrons of Ireland* (1625), which

²⁸⁹ James Ussher, *Discourse on the religion anciently professed by the Irish and British* (Dublin, 1631. 2nd ed., 1739), p.2.

²⁹⁰ William O'Sullivan, 'The correspondance of David Rothe and James Ussher 1619-23' in *Collectanea Hibernica*, xxxvi (1994), pp 7-49. James Ussher already published in 1622 his *Discourse of the religion anciently professed by the Irish and Scottish* in Sir Christopher Sibthorpe, *A friendly advertisement to the pretended catholics of Ireland...in the end whereof is added an epistle written to the author of the religion anciently professed by the Irish and Scottish by James Ussher* (Dublin, 1622, 2nd ed., 1623): see Cunningham and Gillespie, "'The most adaptable of saints'", pp 92, 103.

²⁹¹ McCormack, *Perceptions of St Patrick in eighteenth-century Ireland*, p23.

was clearly aimed at an Old English audience,²⁹² addressed this issue in the introduction to his work.²⁹³

He liued an hundred and two and twenty yeares, most part of which tyme he spent in reclayming the Irish from idolatry to the agnition of one true God: during the course of so many yeares so fruitfully spent among us, his pen neuer deliuered, his tongue neuer uttered, nor himself neuer practised indeed any thing that might haue the least colour of faouoring or establishing that Religion, which the preachers of the fift Ghospel proudly vaunt, and vainely boast, to be the doctrine and fayth of the Primitiue Church. And since they obtrude their new found Ghospell on you, under the specious vizard of venerable antiquity; loe we offer heere S.Patricke's life...who liued in the purer times of Christianity, let them examine it, let them search it, & point vs out what they shall find in it to couenance their cause, or to aduance their religion: but sure I am they will shrinke from such a disquisition, as would turne to their notable preudice and open confusion, by discovering the fondness and nouelty of their religion.²⁹⁴

Rochford continues by alluding to the many features of the life of Patrick that would 'sound very harshly in Protestants eares.'²⁹⁵ These include references to 'quires of sacred virgins...troupes of holy monkes...holy vayles...ecclesiasticall tonsure...holy

²⁹² Cunningham and Gillespie, "The most adaptable of saints", p.92.

²⁹³ Robert Rochford (B.B), *The life of the glorious bishop S.Patricke apostle and primate together with the lives of the holy virgin Bridgit and of the glorious abbot S.Columbe patrons of Ireland* (1625), facsimile reprint in D.M. Rogers (ed.), *English recusant literature 1558-1640*, vol. 210, (London, 1974).

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, epistle dedicatory, p.ix.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

water...vessels of holy oyles...hallowed fire...the signe of the crosse...& alibi.²⁹⁶

Rochford makes reference to how the above elements of a saint's life contrast with the experiences of the 'wiuing ghospellers' who 'hold no commerce, or society with a continēt and chast monke' and can make no sense of a saint's 'short and broken sleepes taken all alone on a hard flint' when they, themselves, 'lie immersed in beds of downe, not alone, but embracing their sweet harts with greater deuotion than euer any Genua Bible.'²⁹⁷

The practice of contrasting the lives of ascetical and chaste Irish saints with indulgent and uxorious reformed clergymen was not entirely new and can be traced to the poetry of the Franciscan, Eoghan Ó Dubhthaigh, in the late sixteenth century. Addressing the Protestant bishops Sheyne, Casey and McGrath, Ó Dubhthaigh invites them to model themselves on Patrick's life, while simultaneously indicating how removed their own lives are from the life of the saint:

Remember St Patrick's pilgrimage on the Reek; look at his fasting in the cave.

If the clergy of the present day attain heaven, that son of Calpurn was a nincompoop!²⁹⁸

Aodh Mac Aingil quotes this verse of Ó Dubhthaigh's in *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe* and adds 'Má táidsion [the Reformed clergy] ar shlighidh fhlaithreamhnuis, do bhí Pádrúig 'na amadán ar seachrán nó 'na chluanaire chealgach 7 do tharraing sinne 'na dhiaigh lé hainbhíos nó lé cealguibh...'²⁹⁹ This pronouncement of Mac Aingil's followed a passage where the penitential lives of

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ *DBM* 27, v.69a.

²⁹⁹ 'If they [the Reformed clergy] are on the way to heaven Patrick was a misguided fool or a treacherous deceiver, and he brought us after him by ignorance or deceit': *SSA*, p.132.

Patrick, Brigid and Colmcille, and all the saints of Ireland were contrasted with the self-satisfying and luxurious lives of the 'new clergy.' While the saintly clergy of Ireland's past performed 'penance without fault' the new clergy commit 'fault without penance.' Whereas the saints offered the sacrifice of the Lamb of God in the Mass, the new clergy perform the 'filthy supper of lustful Calvin.' He concludes by stating that the dissimilarity between God and the devil is hardly greater than that between the two sets of clergy.³⁰⁰ The business of reclaiming Patrick as a Catholic saint and not a proto-Protestant was therefore not confined to works addressed to the Old English of the Pale but also to the Gaelic Irish as evidenced by the passages from the works of Ó Dubhthaigh and Mac Aingil. There were, however, some voices addressing the Gaelic world that unwittingly compromised Patrick's credentials as a saint of the Roman Church in an attempt to remain faithful to Gaelic lore. One such voice was that of Geoffrey Keating who, while acknowledging the value of the twelfth-century reform of the Irish Church, nevertheless stated that 'the Roman pontiff never had definite authority over Ireland, any more than he had over Spain and France.'³⁰¹

The third historical concern of Irish Catholic writers in the first half of the seventeenth century was to refute the claims, being made by a group of Scottish scholars, that in both the early and later medieval period the word *Scotia* meant Scotland and *Scotus* a Scotsman.³⁰² The debate had begun on the continent in the course of research on the lives of the early Irish saints. One of the first to publish on the subject was Henry Fitzsimon S.J. in his *Catalogus praecipuorum Sanctorum Hiberniae* (1619) in which

³⁰⁰ Ibid., p.131.

³⁰¹ McCormack, *Perceptions of St Patrick in eighteenth-century Ireland*, p.24.

³⁰² Mooney, 'John Colgan OFM', p.17.

he defended Ireland's claim to her saints.³⁰³ The most famous protagonist of the view that many of the early 'Irish' saints were, in fact Scottish, was Thomas Dempster who published both *Nomenclatura Scotorum scriptorum* and *Scotia illustrior, seu mendicabula repressa, modesta parechasi Thomae Dempsteri* in 1620.³⁰⁴ This was quickly followed by a rebuttal of Dempster's claim by the Catholic bishop of Ossory, David Rothe, in his *Hibernia Resurgens* (1621).³⁰⁵ The debate proved to be intense. Irish figures on the continent were loath to allow the reputation of their 'Island of Saints and Scholars' to be compromised by the Scottish claims, especially at this important juncture for the Church, at which the country's reputation in Catholic Tridentine Europe depended on the reliability of their saints' credentials.³⁰⁶ The magnitude of the implications for the Irish Church as a result of this controversy provided added impetus for Franciscan scholars such as Patrick Fleming and Hugh Ward to join the search for hagiographical records with which Dempster might be discredited and defeated.³⁰⁷ The eagerness with which the Franciscans at Louvain defended their native saints also influenced Aodh Mac Aingil's publications on John

³⁰³ Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating*, p.86, n.24.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, n.25; see also Mooney, 'John Colgan OFM', p.18.

³⁰⁵ Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating*, p.27.

³⁰⁶ Robert Rochford, in his address to the reader in the 1625 publication on the lives of SS Patrick, Brigid and Columcille, states that he has translated Adomnán's use of *Scotia* as Ireland in the lives 'in regard that Ireland was anciently called *Scotia* by the conspiring confession and uniforme consent of all learned writers, and especially, because it is cleerer than midday that my author meaneth by the Latin word *Scotia* Ireland which he calls sometimes *Scotia* and sometimes *Hibernia*': Rochford (B.B), *The life of the glorious bishop S.Patricke apostle and primate together with the lives of the holy virgin Bridgit and of the glorious abbot S.Columbe patrons of Ireland* (1625), facsimile reprint in D.M. Rogers (ed.), *English recusant literature 1558-1640*, pp xviii-xix.

³⁰⁷ Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints' lives*, p.47.

Duns Scotus, on whose writings he had considerable expertise. In his 1620 edition of the commentaries of Duns Scotus, Mac Aingil included a Life of Scotus and a defense of him against Abraham Bzowski, a Polish Dominican, who had treated Duns Scotus's writings with some disdain in his continuation of Baronius's *Annales Ecclesiastici*.³⁰⁸ Aodh Mac Aingil commented in this work on the nomenclature of Ireland and the location of Duns Scotus's birthplace.³⁰⁹ Evidence that the debate over the title *Scotia* and its meaning continued for some years appears in a letter from Stephen White S.J. to John Colgan O.F.M., written at the end of January 1640. At the time, White was residing in Dublin. In the letter, he explains to Colgan that the reason that some of his historical writings have not been published is due to a lack of finance. In relation to one of his works entitled *Scoto-Caledonica Cornix deplumanda ab auibus orbis*, a work in five books, he explains:

In the...volume...I refute the false histories and interpretation of names by the Scots of Alba from start to finish, methodically, by plain arguments, and in addition I lay before any reader, who is not blind, proof that through the first nine centuries and more the name *Scotia*, whether used by Christians or pagans, Irish or foreigners, applied only to Ireland. Only later, perhaps from the early eleventh century, was the name used of both our Ireland and of Alba or Caledonia.³¹⁰

It is no surprise that such a defence of the name *Scotia* for Ireland in the early period came from a man whose contribution to the collection of Irish hagiographical manuscripts on the continent in the seventeenth century was unmatched. He continues

³⁰⁸ Giblin, 'Hugh McCaghwell OFM, archbishop of Armagh (+1626): aspects of his life', pp 90-1.

³⁰⁹ Mooney, 'Fr John Colgan OFM', p.17.

³¹⁰ Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints' lives*, pp 58-9.

later in the letter with a suggestion for the ongoing refutation of the claims of the Scots:

I warn you again of a matter, which I deem of great importance, as affording a very expeditious way of diminishing the credit of our adversaries, Dempster, Chambers, Boece, Major, Buchanan, etc. This is to urge at once each and every single writer known to you at home or abroad, present or absent, secular or religious, Dominicans, Augustinians, etc., never to allow to be printed anything, whether on a grammatical, philosophical, theological, historical or other subject, unless it bears on the title page these or similar words – ‘By the Rev. Father N.N., an Irishman or Old Scot’. The constant commemoration of *Scotus Vetus* will not merely irritate our adversaries, though in truth it ought not, but it will awaken in foreign readers at least a curiosity to enquire about the Old Scots and the more recent Scots of Alba...³¹¹

The feverish search for manuscripts containing lives of the Irish saints owed much, then, to the provocation of Dempster and his school.

The second factor that led Irish scholars on the continent into hagiographical research involved a certain remodelling of saints’ lives in an effort to render them more acceptable to Tridentine standards and to allow them to compete favourably with other European saints for recognition within the universal Church. The Irish Franciscans at Louvain do not seem to have been interested in promoting the cults of new saints but, instead, focussed on the earlier Irish saints, and especially on those cults that possessed adequate documentation with which to make their case.³¹² In fact, ‘antiquity implied significance, and continuity with the tradition of an “island of

³¹¹ Ibid., p.60.

³¹² Cunningham, ‘The culture and ideology of Irish Franciscan historians at Louvain, 1607-50’, p.22.

saints and scholars” was the point at issue.³¹³ The *Genealogiae Regum et Sanctorum Hiberniae*, a genealogy of the kings and saints of Ireland, compiled by Mícheál Ó Cléirigh and his associates at the monastery of Athlone in 1630,³¹⁴ was important for the hagiographical project in so far as it traced the origins of the Irish saints and established their impeccable pedigree by arguing that they, themselves, sprung from a line of kings. In the words of Bernadette Cunningham, ‘Irish saints were no peasants.’³¹⁵ Before Irish saints could be made to compete with other European candidates, their newly published lives had to be seen to be traceable to a recognised and reputable source. Thomas Messingham, in his *Florilegium Insulae Sanctorum* (1624), therefore includes a reprinted version of Jocelin’s Life of St Patrick from an edition published at Antwerp in 1514, of Adomnán’s Life of St Columcille and of Cogitosus’s Life of St Brigid, the latter two being derived from an edition by Peter Canisius.³¹⁶ Messingham’s publication did not contain any new material on the three patron saints of Ireland. However, it did not contain any superfluous material either, and the information to be found therein could be traced to standard hagiographical works, rendering it accountable and available for inspection. Robert Rochford was equally careful in his 1625 edition of the lives of SS Patrick, Brigid and Columcille, to remain within the bounds of accountability and to display, in so far as was practicable, some degree of impartiality. Having extolled the virtues of Irish saints, claiming them to be virtually without peer in all of the Christian kingdoms, Rochford comments on the care with which he chose the sources for his work, and why:

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Pádraig de Brún, ‘Lámhscríbhinní Gaeilge Dhún Mhuire’ in Benignus Millett and Anthony Lynch (eds), *Dún Mhuire Killiney 1945-95: léann agus seanchas*, p.148.

³¹⁵ Cunningham, ‘The culture and ideology of Irish Franciscan historians at Louvain, 1607-50’, p.22.

³¹⁶ Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints’ lives*, p.46.

And fearing to be branded with the soule note of adulation, to your worthy selues, or partiality to my deere Country, I will keep within compasse, so as I meane to produce nothing, but what hath beene deliuered from the pens of famous Authors, who either for their antiquity claime veneration, or for their learning deserue credit, or for their sanctity chalenge authority. Euery Author I will alleadge by name speaking in his genuine sense, if not in his proper wordes.³¹⁷

If the Irish saints' credentials could be attested, then their remarkable attributes could confidently be lauded on the European stage. The publication of lives, which could be sourced to reputable hagiographers, made this possible. And thus Rochford could claim that the Ireland

hath exposed on the theatre of the Catholicke Church such firme pillars of fayth, such burning lights of Religion, such clear mirrours of perfection, such perfect paternes of sanctity & such rare miracles of learning, that other Christian Kingdomes are so far from ouer-peering her that few peere her in flying so high a pitch of true glory.³¹⁸

John Colgan, in the preface to *Triadis Thaumaturgae* (1647), also boasted that SS Patrick, Brigid and Columcille were Europe's outstanding saints in terms of virtue

³¹⁷ Rochford (B.B.), *The life of the glorious bishop S.Patricke apostle and primate together with the lives of the holy virgin Bridgit and of the glorious abbot S.Columbe patrons of Ireland* (1625), facsimile reprint in D.M. Rogers (ed.), *English recusant literature 1558-1640*, p.iv. A similar concern for proper sourcing of materials was expressed by John Colgan in the preface to his *Triadis Thaumaturgae* (1647): see Cunningham and Gillespie, "The most adaptable of saints", p.95

³¹⁸ Rochford (B.B.), *The life of the glorious bishop S.Patricke*, p.iv.

and miracles, and that if greater existed, he did not know of them.³¹⁹ Nicholas Vernulaeus, historiographer to the King of Spain and professor of public eloquence at the university of Louvain, in praising John Colgan's first volume on the saints, *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae* (1645), confirms that the intentions of Colgan and his associates were to promote the causes of the Irish saints on the continent and to render their lives acceptable to a European audience:

Well you have merited, O most learned Colgan, of heaven and earth, of your country and of the whole world. Others of your fellow countrymen have arisen in these times to vindicate in arms the Catholic religion... You vindicate the saints of your country with your pen... Your glory will be that you restore her saints to the Island of Saints, that the Church accepts them, and that the world acknowledges them.³²⁰

In order to make the lives of the Irish saints acceptable to the new and more rigorous standards of the Tridentine Church, some adjustments to existing lives were going to be needed. In the case of the cult of St Patrick, Bernadette Cunningham and Raymond Gillespie argue that Old English Counter-Reformation Catholics saw the need for revision of some of the traditional lives of Patrick when presenting his story to a Roman audience. Thus, in the new breviary of the universal Church, which was published in the 1630s, while Jocelin's twelfth-century life is used as a basic source, large parts of it are, nevertheless omitted, chiefly those sections dealing with 'exotic

³¹⁹ Cunningham and Gillespie, "The most adaptable of saints", p.95. Aodh Mac Aingil, in his *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe* (1618), argued that the lives of the saints of Italy, Spain, France and Germany, which he claimed to have read, illustrated that they fell far short of the severity of penance endured by the Irish saints: *SSA*, p.125.

³²⁰ Mooney, 'Fr John Colgan OFM', p.26.

miracles and his traditional role of judge of the Irish.³²¹ The business of excising the more fantastic elements of Patrick's life was an important one, and was seen as crucial to the acceptance of his cult at an official level in the Church. Correspondence between Stephen White S.J. and John Colgan O.F.M. in January 1640 attest to the continuation of concern for such matters, at least on White's behalf. White mentions in a letter to Colgan that he is delighted to hear of his progress and especially with the *Féiliride*, and states that he wishes that that book and Colgan's other works were in the hands of a European audience. His praise contains a warning, however:

Before this happens, as a friend, I warn you of a few things. One is that the lives of SS Ailbe, Declan and Gerald of Mayo, who are mentioned in the catalogue you sent me, are swarming (if the Lives you have are the same as those I have read here) with improbable fables, and contain things opposed not only to all that has been written, delivered by tradition, and believed about St Patrick, our Apostle, and about his legation to Rome and thence to Ireland, but contrary to the old and modern Martyrologies, and clearly conflicting with the undoubted statements of St Prosper of Aquitaine, and the Venerable Bede etc., as I at one time proved to demonstration.³²²

Interestingly, Jocelin's twelfth-century life of St Patrick receives two different types of treatment at the hands of Tridentine Catholic hagiographers. While Thomas Messingham was happy to reprint Jocelin's life *in toto* in his *Florilegium Insulae Sanctorum* (1624), the account of St Patrick in the Roman Breviary, based on the

³²¹ Cunningham and Gillespie, "The most adaptable of saints", p.91. The Breviary Reform Commission, which was established in 1629, had, as one of its consultants, the Franciscan Luke Wadding: *ibid.*, p.90.

³²² Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints' lives*, p.60.

same Life, leaves large sections of it out. It must be remembered, however, that two very different types of publication are in question here. The kind of life required for the breviary differed significantly from that required for a work like Messingham's. Firstly, there was the issue of length. What was required for the breviary was a succinct synopsis of the principal elements of the saint's life, including mention of the characteristics of the saint that conformed him to the model of sainthood advocated by the universal Church. It is no surprise, therefore, to find reference to his parents, education, prayer, his having been guided by an angel, his call to ministry, his preaching and his penitential exercises.³²³ These were universally recognised components of what a saint's life should be like and naturally they were given priority in any summary of a saint's life.³²⁴ Had a strict policy of omitting spurious miracles pervaded among those responsible for Patrick's life in the Roman Breviary, it would be surprising to find a concluding reference to Patrick having raised people from the dead being permitted at all.³²⁵ A passage from Philip O'Sullivan Beare's history of Ireland in the Elizabethan period, written in 1621, illustrates that, far from portraying St Patrick as a model of Tridentine Catholicity, trimmed of the excesses of medieval characterisations, he presents a saint with more in common with folklore and legend than with Tridentine hagiographical trends:

O' Neill was so sorely vexed at the holy city of Armagh being contaminated by heretics that he determined to cut it off from provisions...St Patrick, however, the Patron and Guardian of Ireland, and who was the first to

³²³ Cunningham and Gillespie, "'The most adaptable of saints'", p.91.

³²⁴ For a discussion on what kind of person possessed the necessary qualifications for sainthood during the Counter-Reformation see Peter Burke, 'How to be a Counter-Reformation saint', pp 49-53.

³²⁵ Cunningham and Gillespie, "'The most adaptable of saints'", p.91.

consecrate this city to God, would not put off the punishment of the crime which impiously defiled the sacred town with heretics. It is believed that he was the bishop who, clad in pontificals, frequently and plainly appeared to the English at night and threatened them; took away the iron tips of their spears...and extracted the bullets and powder from their guns.³²⁶

Cunningham and Gillespie also mention Robert Rochford's abbreviated version of Jocelin's *Life of Patrick*, which formed the basis for the Patrician section of his 1625 publication, as a clear example of the adaptation of a text to meet Counter-Reformation standards. Fifty-four of the original ninety-six chapters were omitted from this publication, removing 'some of the more fantastic miracles, especially the infancy miracles and the cursing episodes.'³²⁷ There is evidence to suggest, however, that Rochford was not averse to publicising the miracles of his saints, and in fact used Patrick's claim to miracles as an argument in favour of his gargantuan stature as a saint in the epistle dedicatory to his work on the three patrons:

His life which heere we offer you, will abundantly teach how stupendious he was in perpetrating of miracles, how admirable in al kind of sanctimony, and how enflamed with the zeale of gaining soules.³²⁸

His own reasoning for having provided an abridged version of Jocelin's text is contained in the 'Advertisements to the Reader':

First (gentle reader) I haue thee understand, that in this translation of S. Patricke's life, I haue followed Iocelinus of Tornesio, who had written it in

³²⁶ O' Sullivan Beare, *Ireland under Elizabeth: chapters towards a history of Ireland in the reign of Elizabeth*, p.92.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.90.

³²⁸ Rochford (B.B), *The life of the glorious bishop S.Patricke*, epistle dedicatory, p.viii.

Latin about 400 years ago, at the treaty of S. Malachy, bishop of Conerthern, of the right Reverend Father in God Thomas, Lord Primate of Ireland, & of the honorable knight Syr John de Curcy, as himself signifyeth in his preface, which together with many other celebrated and note-worthy things I have willingly left out, contenting my selfe in this present edition to publish a summary abridgement of matters, that are most remarkable, and best befitting our tymes. If I learne that this, my labour will prove gratefull, I will God willing, put my hand to an entire edition.³²⁹

Again, it seems that the redactor was faced with having to choose the most salient parts of Jocelin's life for publication, and the omission of fifty-four of the original chapters resulted not so much from a decision that they were unsuitable as from the necessity of selecting material that best served his purpose.³³⁰ Rochford's proposed publication of an entire edition of Jocelin's, should the abridged version whet his audience's appetite, suggests that he had no particular qualms about disseminating some of its more far-fetched material at a later date. This is especially evident in his treatment of the life of Brigid.

Robert Rochford's account of St Brigid is based on two sources. The first source is the Life of Cogitosus, who was most probably a religious of the Brigittine monastery of Kildare.³³¹ This life is thought to date from not much later than 650 and is considered to be the earliest Life of the saint.³³² The second source used by Rochford

³²⁹ Ibid., p.xvii.

³³⁰ In fact it seems that Rochford wished to provide an English translation of Jocelin's Life for Old English Catholics of the Pale just as Thomas Messingham had provided access to Jocelin's Life for a continental audience and for all who were versed in Latin.

³³¹ Sean Connolly, 'Cogitosus's *Life of St Brigit*: content and value', in *R.S.A.I.Jn.*, cxvii (1987), p.5.

³³² Ibid; see also Donncha Ó hAodha (ed.), *Bethu Brigte* (Dublin, 1978), p.xxiv.

is that of John Capgrave (1393-1464), an Augustinian friar, theologian and historian based at Norfolk. Capgrave, who, having been indebted to the work of John of Tynemouth a century earlier, was responsible for the production of *Nova Legenda Anglie*, a comprehensive collection of saints' lives arranged in the fifteenth century.³³³ Rochford's use of Cogitosus's Life of Brigid as a source contains no evidence of the removal of its more fantastic elements as Cunningham and Gillespie claim to be apparent in his treatment of Jocelin's Life of Patrick.³³⁴ In fact twenty-six of the thirty-one stories found in Cogitosus are included in Robert Rochford's account.³³⁵ The stories omitted by Rochford certainly cannot be categorised as Cogitosus's most implausible and there seems to be no particular reason why they should have been left out.³³⁶ In fact those that he chooses to incorporate are full of miraculous occurrences, including Brigid changing the course of a river, moving a huge tree that neither men nor oxen could stir, converting stone into salt for the needy and water into beer for

³³³ See Carl Horstman (ed.), *Nova Legenda Anglie: as collected by John of Tynemouth, John Capgrave and others, and first printed, with new lives by Wynkyn de Worde a.d.mdxvi*, vol I, (Oxford, 1901). Capgrave's life is itself an abridged version of the so-called *Vita Prima*, which comprised a conflation of various traditions about Brigid and was composed before the middle of the ninth century: Ibid., p.153, n.5; see also Ó hAodha (ed.), *Bethu Brigte*, p.xx.

³³⁴ Cunningham and Gillespie, "The most adaptable of saints", p.90.

³³⁵ Sean Connolly includes thirty-two chapters (or stories) in his edition of Cogitosus's work. However, since numbers three and thirteen are so similar in content I have treated them as one story, which is related in turn by Rochford. See Connolly, 'Cogitosus's *Life of St Brigit*: content and value', pp 12-13.

³³⁶ One exception to this is the story wherein a woman, who had lost her virginity through youthful concupiscence and was now pregnant, came to Brigid for help. After Brigid's blessing, what had been conceived in her womb disappeared. Perhaps Rochford, fearing that this story would be open to misinterpretation, consciously omitted it: Connolly, 'Cogitosus's *Life of St Brigit*: content and value', p.16.

lepers, not to mention her hanging of a wet mantle on a sunbeam to dry.³³⁷ Neither was Rochford very selective about the passages he used from Capgrave. At Brigid's birth, the cloth covering her head is said to have burned with a flame of fire. When the party attempted to quench it, there was no fire there at all.³³⁸ This pillar of fire appeared again at her veiling by the bishop Machella, after which Brigid touched the altar post, which immediately budded forth with leaves.³³⁹ If Rochford was keen to deliberately omit some passages from Jocelin's life of Patrick that showed the saint inflicting harm on others, he did not allow this resolution to affect his treatment of Brigid. The story found in Capgrave, in which a man who prohibited Brigid's coach from passing through his fields is struck to the ground and dies, appears also in Rochford's version.³⁴⁰ A woman, who falsely and deliberately accused one of Patrick's bishops, namely Broon, of fathering her child, was questioned by Brigid. When she refused to retract her claim, Brigid signed her mouth with the Sign of the Cross at which her head swelled up with a great tumour. Turning to the child, she then enquired of him who his father was, at which time the truth came out.³⁴¹ Once again,

³³⁷ Rochford (B.B), *The life of the glorious bishop S.Patricke*, pp 125, 118, 129, 134.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.108.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 110-11. Whitley Stokes argues that this pillar of fire is one example of the way heathen mythological legends became annexed to historical Christian saints: see Stokes (ed.), *Three Middle-Irish homilies on the lives of saints Patrick, Brigid and Columba*, p.vii.

³⁴⁰ Rochford (B.B), *The life of the glorious bishop S.Patricke*, p.124.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.132. Interestingly, although Rochford's version closely follows Capgrave, the version of Brigid's life found in the *Leabhar Breac* differs slightly in detail in this story, curiously rendering the cursing episode more benign. In the *Leabhar Breac* version Brigid does not make the Sign of the Cross over the woman's mouth but instead, over the child's mouth, at which he begins to tell the truth. Although it is recounted that a swelling assailed the woman's tongue, the direct link between Brigid's use of the Sign of the Cross and the woman's affliction no longer appears. In this case, then, it is the

if Rochford had made a concerted decision to excise cursing episodes from his lives, this should not have been included. Another lady, who had given apples to Brigid from her orchard and then chid her because she subsequently gave them away to poor lepers, provoked the saint into cursing her fruit trees so that they remained barren ever since.³⁴² Rochford could quite easily have set aside these stories. Yet, he clearly decided in favour of their retention.³⁴³ It seems, then, that a reassessment of Rochford's reasons for abridging the lives of Ireland's three patrons is required. It may just be that the process of abridgement was due to nothing more remarkable than the production of a more concise publication, which would convey to the reader a summary version of the saint's life. This was certainly the case with Rochford's treatment of the longer lives of Patrick and Columcille by Jocelin and Adomnán.

It is clear, then, that seventeenth-century versions of saints' lives did not always leave aside the miraculous and the vengeful elements of their subjects. It seems that the saints were understood by some to be as vengeful as ever. Perhaps the only difference

late medieval redactor, and not the Tridentine friar, who shows himself to be conscientious to portray the actions of a saint in an appropriate manner: see Stokes (ed.), *Three Middle-Irish homilies on the lives of saints Patrick, Brigid and Columba*, p.69.

³⁴² Rochford (B.B.), *The life of the glorious bishop S.Patricke*, p.112.

³⁴³ Rochford does omit one particular story that appears in both Capgrave and the *Leabhar Breac*. When Brigid was being offered the Eucharistic chalice by the bishop she saw therein a vision of the head of a he-goat. The significance of the vision was revealed when the gillie confessed to having taken one of the goats that morning and eating its flesh. Possibly Rochford omitted this tale because it recounted how one of Ireland's patron saints used to receive the Blood of Christ, and at a time when the Catholic Church was trying to argue its reasons for distributing the Eucharist under one species only, this might have caused confusion among the faithful. See Horstman (ed.), *Nova Legenda Anglie: as collected by John of Tynemouth, John Capgrave and others, and first printed, with new lives by Wynkyn de Worde a.d.mdxvi*, p.157.

between their exercise of rough justice in the earlier period and its seventeenth-century equivalent was that now the enemy was often more clearly defined as cases concerning reformers and their reformed religion. A life of St Senan, written by a French hagiographer, Albert le Grand in 1629 at Plouzané, on the Breton coast, perfectly illustrates the marriage of Tridentine concerns and older ideas regarding vengeful sainthood that were suitably revamped and redirected at Protestants and their religion. Firstly, Senan is aptly depicted as a Counter-Reformation cleric. Having been chosen by St Patrick to be his successor, he was quickly ordained as bishop. It is at this point in the story that the following comment is made:

As soon as he was consecrated, to the great joy of the whole island [Scattery Island, where he ministered], he immediately set to work and did so much that he eradicated all idolatry from Ireland, most scrupulously visiting his diocese and removing any abuse, which may have developed among the new Christian communities.³⁴⁴

St Senan is portrayed, therefore, as a model for Tridentine prelates, conducting frequent visitations of his diocese and removing any abuses therein. However, a darker side to Senan's character is revealed in the recounting of a story relating to events in the late sixteenth century. The narrator relates how a 'pseudo-bishop' of Limerick, appointed by Queen Elizabeth to instruct the people in the Protestant faith, wished to visit Scattery Island to persuade the people there to renounce the Pope and embrace reformed religion. Being fearful of visiting an island that was under the mighty protection of St Senan, however, he sent one of his trusted ministers. Having arrived there, the minister ordered all the inhabitants to come to the church of Our Lady the following day to

³⁴⁴ Liam de Paor, '*La vie de Saint Sané: a seventeenth-century life of St Senan*', in *N.M.A.J.* xxxv (1994), p.48.

renounce the Pope and pledge allegiance to the Queen. In response, the islanders had recourse to St Senan and besought his assistance. When the minister retired to bed that night, St Senan, remaining invisible, entered his room and began to beat him violently with the back of his staff for over two hours. The next day the minister was in no fit state to keep his appointment with the people at Our Lady's Church. Some of the inhabitants that visited him informed the clergyman that he had suffered the punishment of St Senan and duly advised him to abort his mission. Undeterred, however, the minister blasphemed against the saint, vowing to appear at the church the following day. That very night, St Senan arrived for a second time into the minister's room, this time appearing in all his pontifical robes while wearing a mitre on his head and holding his crosier in his hand. Reprimanding the clergyman for his audacity, he dragged him from his bed and thrashed his body with the crosier until he was covered in wounds. By the time the saint disappeared the minister was found 'all battered and broken, half drowned in his own blood.' Leaving the island, he returned to Limerick and, four days after, 'vomited his soul to the devil, still ensconced in his heresy.'³⁴⁵ Such an account, written on continental Europe at a time when there was concern to excise fantastic elements from Irish saints' lives in order to make them more acceptable to a Church that aimed for stricter hagiographical standards, illustrates that seventeenth-century ideas regarding saints and their roles were, at best, a hybrid variety, bridging late medieval religion and Tridentine reform. The French hagiographer, Albert le Grand, in his compilation of the Life of St Senan, drew on two sets of ideas regarding sainthood. Interestingly, both sets managed to co-exist in the minds of the most Tridentine of Catholic reformers.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., pp 50-1.

The third factor influencing the great hagiographical project of the Irish Franciscans at Louvain was the awareness that a body of manuscript sources were in danger of being lost forever because of the political situation at home. The claim of the Four Masters,³⁴⁶ in their introduction to *The Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland* (popularly known as the ‘Annals of the Four Masters’), that they undertook the work to save the records of the Irish past from oblivion, could also be understood as one of the principal reasons for their other works, including *Féilire na Naomh nÉirennach* (also known as the ‘Martyrology of Donegal’), the *Leabhar Gabhála* (‘The Book of Invasions of Ireland’) and *Réim Ríoghraidhe na hÉireann agus Seanchas a Naomh* (*Genealogiae Regum et Sanctorum Hiberniae*), all of which were completed in the space of a decade.³⁴⁷ In fact, Mícheál Ó Cléirigh’s brief, which was to copy, among other things, all the lives of the saints that he could find in Ireland, obliged him to record exactly what he found, without amendment. This was a duty that even he, himself, found difficult. Bernadette Cunningham explains that

he repeatedly expressed a desire to be more critical in his use of the available material than the instructions of his Louvain-based superiors allowed. He had been dispatched to Ireland to assemble, not to distill, and thus included material, which he was convinced was not historical.³⁴⁸

A similar preoccupation with recording exactly what he found can be seen in the work of John Colgan. For his *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae* (1645), Colgan treated his sources in the following manner. If a Latin life of the saint existed, it was invariably published

³⁴⁶ Mícheál Ó Cléirigh, Cúcoigríche Ó Cléirigh, Fearfeasa Ó Maolchonaire and Cúcoigríche Ó Duibhgennáin.

³⁴⁷ Cunningham, ‘The culture and ideology of Irish Franciscan historians at Louvain’, p.17; see also Giblin, ‘The annals of the Four Masters’, p.137.

³⁴⁸ Cunningham, ‘The culture and ideology of the Irish Franciscan historians at Louvain’, p.18.

as it was found. If the life was in Irish, it was translated into Latin. In the case of two very similar lives, Colgan used what he deemed to be the original. If many different lives of the saint were available, all were printed.³⁴⁹ He applied the same policy in his second major work, *Triadis Thaumaturgae* (1647), detailing the lives of SS Patrick, Brigid and Columcille. This work contained no less than seven lives of Patrick, six of Brigid and five of Columcille.³⁵⁰ Ludwig Bieler concludes, therefore, that the *Triadis Thaumaturgae* 'aim[ed] at nothing less than a complete dossier of each of the three saints, that is to say, at a collection of all relevant texts and references concerning them.'³⁵¹ Colgan's tendency to err on the side of completeness resulted in him being less critical in his treatment of the sources than others, such as Stephen White S.J., would have liked.³⁵² Canice Mooney, in an assessment of Colgan's lack of criticism in the hagiographical sphere, attributes it to an unquestioning respect for the saints:

His reverence for God's saints made him hesitant about casting doubts on alleged miracles. The fallacy lay in confusing reverence for the saints with respect for imaginative and fallacious accounts of their lives.³⁵³

Both the *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae* and *Triadis Thaumaturgae* acted as dossiers of all the available material on the lives of the Irish saints. This material was sourced and its contents could therefore be traced to a particular author or Life, thus presenting the 'evidence' for the feats of the saints before a European audience. In the preface to *Triadis Thaumaturgae*, Colgan explained that the virtues of these wonderful Irish

³⁴⁹ Mooney, 'Fr John Colgan', pp 34-5.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., p.35.

³⁵¹ Ludwig Bieler, 'Trias Thaumaturga 1647', in Terence O'Donnell (ed.), *Father John Colgan OFM, 1592-1658: essays in commemoration of the third centenary of his death*, (Dublin, 1959), p.42.

³⁵² Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints' lives*, p.60.

³⁵³ Mooney, 'Fr John Colgan', p.31.

saints, often ridiculed by heretics, required a proper presentation of their relevant documentation and sources.³⁵⁴ The business of paring down the more fantastic details of saints' lives to make them more plausible to a European audience then, was not one of Colgan's chief concerns.

The fourth ambition, affecting the compilation of Irish saints' lives in the first half of the seventeenth century, was to instruct and edify a particular audience by raising up the saints as models to be imitated. The three most obvious models that the Irish writers on the continent presented to their audience in Ireland for imitation were SS Patrick, Brigid and Columcille. Aodh Mac Aingil, in his *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe* (1618) on a number of occasions employs the example of these saints to urge his audience, whom he addresses as 'a chlann chroidhe Phádrúig'³⁵⁵ to revitalise their spiritual lives, arguing in the following manner:

*Ós ó Phádrúig do ghlac tú creideamh Chríost, bíodh a bheatha 7 beatha na naomh do lean é 'na sgáthán at fhiaghnuisi dod chor féin a ccéim éigin a ccosmhuile riú.*³⁵⁶

Mac Aingil states that there is much proof of the prayer, abstinence and penance exercised by the three patrons, and especially by St Patrick, encouraging his audience to read their lives.³⁵⁷ Robert Rochford, in his 1625 edition of the lives of SS Patrick, Brigid and Columcille, also admits that it was the 'desire of advancing thy spirituall profit' that led him to undertake the work in the first instance.³⁵⁸ Part of the spiritual

³⁵⁴ Cunningham and Gillespie, "The most adaptable of saints", p.95.

³⁵⁵ 'family of the heart of Patrick': SSA, p.191.

³⁵⁶ 'Since it was from Patrick that you accepted the Christian faith, let his life and the lives of the saints that followed him be a mirror before you to make you somewhat like them': *ibid.*, pp 130-1.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 126-7.

³⁵⁸ Rochford (B.B.), *The life of the glorious bishop S.Patrick*, p.xix.

regeneration that the lives of the saints were employed to bring about involved a defence of the Catholic faith, and particularly those aspects of it that were disputed by the Protestants. Rochford, in his epistle dedicatory, therefore, juxtaposes the views of the reformers with those of Patrick, exemplified in his life. While the reformers believed that kings were rulers of the church in their own dominion, Patrick accepted his mission from the See of Peter. While reformers understood the Eucharist as symbol, Patrick confessed the Body and Blood of Christ, shrouded beneath symbols. The reformers rejected the veneration of relics, whereas Patrick carried many relics of the apostles and martyrs back to Ireland from Rome, and so on.³⁵⁹ Geoffrey Keating, in his *Trí bior-ghaoithe an bháis*, completed before 1631, also encouraged his readers to have recourse to the examples of the Irish saints, citing their lengthy penances and good works.³⁶⁰

The renewed interest in hagiography in the first half of the seventeenth century, especially by Irish scholars on the continent, was nothing if not a complex affair. For this reason it cannot be explained in a simple manner without exploring the religious and political world in which it was spawned. One cannot easily compare the objectives of individual compilers of saints' lives without some regard for the audience for whom they wrote, and the purpose for which they strove. The Irish Franciscan community at Louvain is a useful example of a body of individuals, often sharing a common building and a common faith, in addition to a collective regard for the lives of the saints, who, nevertheless, treated these saints very differently according to the audience they addressed. Aodh Mac Aingil alluded to one St Patrick

³⁵⁹ Ibid., pp x-xi.

³⁶⁰ Osborn Bergin (ed.), *Trí bior-ghaoithe an bháis: the three shafts of death* (Dublin, 1931), p.72. This text will be examined in greater detail in the following chapter.

who not only banished snakes from Ireland but frogs also.³⁶¹ Luke Wadding apparently was influential in excising the miraculous and far-fetched from the life of St Patrick to be used in the new Roman Breviary while John Colgan, less than ten years later was accused of leaving too many of these features in!³⁶² The example of St Patrick was highlighted by Aodh Mac Aingil in *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe* (1618) far more than that of Brigid or Columcille, yet in Mícheál Ó Cléirigh's Martyrology of Donegal, compiled in 1630, seven pages are allotted to the account of Columcille's life as opposed to one page each for the lives of Brigid and Patrick.³⁶³ One cannot, for example, compare the treatment given to St Patrick by John Colgan in his *Triadis Thaumaturgae* with that accorded the saint in the new Roman Breviary. While Colgan was concerned with collating all the available lives of Patrick into one dossier, Luke Wadding and his associates on the breviary reform commission were more interested in balancing conciseness and a version of the saint's life that would contain all the relevant details. While each work was published with a specific audience in mind and a particular purpose to achieve, it is also important to remember that these works were compiled by human agents with their own particular favourite saints. It should come as little surprise, then, to find Mícheál Ó Cléirigh, a native of Donegal, extolling at length the virtues of Columcille in his Martyrology, leaving Patrick rather underrated, while Aodh Mac Aingil, hailing from Down, eulogises Patrick at every opportunity, expressing great familiarity with the localities associated with his penances. Yet, promotion of the three principal saints of Ireland clearly

³⁶¹ SSA, p.29. This claim is also made by Philip Bocht Ó hUiginn (*d.* 1487): *PB* 10, v.5.

³⁶² Cunningham and Gillespie, "The most adaptable of saints", pp 90-1; Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints' lives*, p.60.

³⁶³ James Hawthorn Todd and William Reeves (eds.), *The martyrology of Donegal: a calendar of the saints of Ireland* (Dublin, 1864), pp 150-65, 34-7, 78-81.

received a new impetus in the seventeenth century. One need only compare the entries for the year 493 (traditionally held to be the year of St Patrick's death), in the *Annals of Ulster* and the *Annals of the Four Masters*, to notice the greater importance accorded the saint in the seventeenth century. The entry for the former is quite brief:

Patrick, arch-apostle or archbishop and apostle of the Irish rested on the 16th of the calends of April in the 120th year of his age, in the 60th year after he had come to Ireland to baptise the Irish.³⁶⁴

The seventeenth-century annals, prepared by Mícheál Ó Cléirigh and his associates, provide a much fuller treatment of the national patron:

Patrick, son of Calphurn, son of Potaide, archbishop, first primate and chief apostle of Ireland, whom Pope Celestine first had sent to preach the Gospel and disseminate religion and piety among the Irish [was the person] who separated them from the worship of idols and spectres, who conquered and destroyed the idols which they had for worshipping; who had expelled demons and evil spirits from among them, and brought them from the darkness of sin and vice to the light of faith and good works, and who guided and conducted their souls from the gates of Hell (to which they were going) to the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven. It was he that baptised and blessed the men, women, sons and daughters of Ireland, with their territories and tribes, both [fresh] waters and sea inlets. It was by him that many cells, monasteries and churches were erected throughout Ireland; seven hundred churches were their number. It was by him that bishops, priests and persons of every dignity were ordained; seven hundred bishops and three thousand priests [was] their number. He worked so many miracles and wonders that the human mind is incapable of

³⁶⁴ *AU*, 493.

remembering or recording the amount of good which he did upon earth. When the time of St Patrick's death approached, he received the Body of Christ from the hands of the holy bishop, Tassach, in the 122nd [year] of his age and resigned his spirit to Heaven.³⁶⁵

It is fallacious to speak of only one 'reworking of the saints' in the first half of the seventeenth century. In fact, the saints were used in several different ways for a variety of purposes, and by a diverse number of individuals.

Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the reshaping of religious ideas in the minds of the large number of individuals who travelled from Ireland to continental Europe in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. By attending universities in Spain, France and the Low Countries, Irish scholars became immersed in the teachings of a Tridentine Church. The writings of some of these scholars, published at a later date, would reflect the fusion of the traditional religion with which they were reared, and the Tridentine norms in which they were subsequently schooled. The devotional publications of Irish religious on the continent, such as Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire and Aodh Mac Aingil, can only be fully understood when read as both political and spiritual works. The spiritual counsel that they hoped to impart to their fellow countrymen at home was not divorced from what they perceived to be the harsh reality of life in Ireland. These works were not merely designed to provide practical devotional advice for the individual but aimed, in addition, to send a message of hope and comfort to a nation. Bernadette Cunningham argues that the Franciscans at Louvain were not only concerned with importing Tridentine ideas regarding Mass and

³⁶⁵ *AFM*, 493.

the Sacraments but also a theology of persecution.³⁶⁶ This dual address of Ireland's spiritual and political problems found its clearest expression in a character such as Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire who was deeply in favour of both a spiritual and political invasion of his country. The literature of the Irish scholars on the continent embodied a defense of legitimate Catholic practice and a vitriolic attack on the religion of the reformers on the one hand, and on the other a chiding of those Irish Catholics who failed to live up to the kind of sacramental life envisaged by the Council and its decrees. It was hoped that, among other things, the great hagiographical projects undertaken on the continent might enable the saints to be utilised as models and vehicles of change, which would revitalise the Irish soul. To what extent these ideas, expressed in publication, became a reality in the lives of the beleaguered Irish at home, is the subject of the final chapter.

³⁶⁶ Cunningham, 'The culture and ideology of the Irish Franciscans at Louvain', p.29; see also Bernadette Cunningham and Raymond Gillespie, "'Persecution" in seventeenth-century Irish', in *Éigse* xxii (1987).

Chapter 7

‘Bringing it all back home’: tracing the impact of Trent in early seventeenth-century Ireland

Introductory Note

This chapter explores the transmission of religious ideas from Counter-Reformation Europe to Gaelic Ireland in the seventeenth century. The Irish who studied in continental colleges and encountered the principal tenets of Tridentine thought, bore the onerous task of inculcating their fellow countrymen in what constituted the Catholic Church’s reforming ideals. The concomitant responsibilities that such an endeavour generated varied according to one’s state of life. The most promising scholars, adept in the areas of academia, administration and organisation, were likely to be chosen to fill bishoprics, becoming charged with the responsibility of re-structuring Irish diocesan life in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Ecclesiastics, such as these, began the long process of reform by holding diocesan synods which enacted legislation designed to bring Irish church practices in line with the norms of the Council of Trent. Passing legislation was one thing. Implementing it, however, was quite another! It had been hoped that the return of ordained priests, continentally-trained, to Ireland would provide the personnel necessary for the establishment of Tridentine norms ‘on the ground.’ However, this was destined to be a long, slow process. Even if the necessary manpower had been available to cover the entire country (which it wasn’t), there was no guarantee that people’s beliefs and practices would change immediately. Those who wished to implement the decrees of Trent would need a lot of time and, more importantly, plenty of patience. Priests returning to Ireland from abroad, both secular and regular, could only hope to implement the decrees of the Council piecemeal. One

of the most effective means of doing so was by means of the sermon. In Geoffrey Keating's *Trí bior-ghaoithe an bháis* (c.1631), we have what can be described as a bridge between Tridentine thought, encountered on the continent, and its dissemination among a parish community in the first half of seventeenth-century Ireland. This work surely represents the kind of material that Keating might have used in sermons delivered to his flock in County Tipperary. While a work like this is useful in illustrating how ideas encountered abroad were eventually transmitted to an Irish audience, its value is limited. What it does not provide is an account of how such ideas were received by their intended audience. In order to gauge reactions to the reforming ideals of Trent (which included the importance of catechesis and of returning to the sacraments) as they were played out in early seventeenth-century Ireland, it is necessary to examine a different set of sources. While secular priests, such as Keating, ministered in parish settings where they might spend a long time, there were others whose task was very different. Members of the Jesuit Order, who were often regarded as spearheading the Counter-Reformation in Europe, employed very different methods in spreading the ideas of Trent. Instead of settling in a particular area, the Jesuits, who came to Ireland on mission, travelled from region to region, spending not longer than one month in each place. Their objectives included preaching the Word, administering the sacraments and bringing about deep conversion of heart among people. Jesuit missions were, in effect, 'spiritual blitzes', designed to achieve maximum impact in minimum time. Their principal usefulness, however, lies in the fact that details of the results of such missions are recorded in the letters of Jesuit missionaries to their General. These letters, then, provide a window into the response of individuals to the reforming norms of Trent in a way that works by figures such as Keating do not. Accounts of the ministry of Jesuits in Ireland date from the mid-sixteenth century onwards and thus are of huge importance in

recording the gradual introduction of the ideas of Trent into Irish life. It is for this reason (a concern for chronology) that the examination of the initial effects of Trent on religion in Ireland, with which the present chapter concerns itself, begins with a discussion of the Jesuit mission.

Stirrings of reform: the Jesuit mission in Ireland

The first half of the seventeenth century saw the production of a body of religious literature on the continent, which was destined principally for an Irish audience at home.¹ It was all very well to expound upon the decrees of Trent from afar. However, the problem of transmitting this teaching to a people largely uneducated and, in some areas, experiencing varying degrees of religious oppression, remained. Catechisms such as Ó hEoghusa's *An Teagasg Críostaidhe* (1611 and 1614) were designed to be used by priests, who would, in turn, impart their contents to a congregation. There is evidence to suggest that educated lay people also assisted in this regard by conveying some of the material to their households.² This chapter explores the beginnings of the

¹ It must be remembered that the Irish *émigré* population also required instruction and, consequently, the Irish community in places like Flanders were perhaps the first to receive the fruits of Tridentine teaching in their own language from the friars at St Anthony's, Louvain. Despite this fact, however, the primary audience for whom the religious works in Irish were compiled were still living in their native land, as is manifestly obvious from the intermingling of references to religious persecution with doctrinal material in works such as *Desiderius* (1616) and *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe* (1618).

² Mícheál Mac Craith, 'Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe: scáthán na sacraiminte céanna', in *Léachtaí Cholm Cille* xxx (2000), p.60. Theobald Stapleton, in the preface to his *Catechismus* (1639), addressed parish priests, patrons, parents, preachers and confessors, requesting them to see to it that those in their care were suitably instructed and, in addition, reminded them that an indulgence was to be gained each time they instructed a new person. Stapleton, who spent twelve years as a priest in Ireland, was well aware of the state of religious knowledge in the country, and therefore his exhortation to lay people to catechise was not merely the pipe dream of a cleric on the continent, but was based on

implementation of the decrees of the Council of Trent in late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Ireland. While previous chapters focus largely on the literary activities of Irish Franciscans on the continent, many of the extant accounts of pastoral activity in early seventeenth-century Ireland are to be found, instead, in the records of the Jesuit order. Jesuit activity in seventeenth-century Ireland was largely operative in towns and some of the priests involved in ministry were not fluent in the Gaelic tongue. However, there were important exceptions to this trend. The Jesuits were concerned with ministering in both Gaelic and Old English areas as repeated requests for Gaelic-speaking clerics illustrate below. Despite the lack of satisfactory records detailing the process by which the Gaelic Irish were instructed in the Tridentine model of faith, it is possible, with the aid of insights gleaned from accounts of the Jesuit Mission, to gain some understanding of the manner in which the teachings of Trent were received. Indeed, the Franciscans, who set about the business of preparing texts that would promulgate Tridentine reform, owed a great deal to their Jesuit counterparts, despite the frequent disagreements between the two orders. Tadhg Ó Dúshláine notes how both the colleges of Douai, established by Cardinal Allen in 1568 and St Anthony's, Louvain, founded in 1606 followed Jesuit practice closely.³ This statement, however, must be qualified. The importance placed by the Jesuit order on catechesis in the years after the Council of Trent surely inspired the Franciscans at Louvain, although no less a figure as

what he knew was within the bounds of possibility: See Bernadette Cunningham, 'Geoffrey Keating's *Eochair Sgiath an Aifrinn* and the Catholic reformation in Ireland' in W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood (eds.), *The churches, Ireland and the Irish* (London, 1989), p.138. For actual instances of lay people involving themselves in catechesis in the early seventeenth century see James J. Corboy, 'The Jesuit mission to Ireland 1596-1626', MA thesis, University College Dublin, 1941, p.140.

³ Ó Dúshláine, *An Eoraip agus litríocht na Gaeilge 1600-1650: gnéithe den bharócachas Eorpach i litríocht na Gaeilge*, p.5.

Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire frequently and severely criticised the Jesuit-run college administration of his old *alma mater*, Salamanca, both for their policy of preferring to admit students from Munster and Leinster as opposed to Connacht and Ulster, and for what he viewed as their pro-English political leanings, leading him later to criticise the Jesuit mission in Ireland itself.⁴ Despite these wranglings, however, Franciscans were happy to use material composed by the Jesuit order when it served a catechetical purpose. Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa, completed an M.A. at Douai before travelling to the Low Countries, and his *An Teagasg Críosdaidhe*, which he later completed at St Anthony's College, Louvain, was heavily influenced by the earlier catechisms of two of the sixteenth-century's greatest Jesuit catechists, Peter Canisius, who published *Summa doctrina christiana* in 1555 and Robert Bellarmine, whose *Dichiarizione più copiosa della dottrina cristiana* became available in 1598.⁵ It was the Jesuit, Fr Thomas White of Clonmel, who, in 1592 secured a house in Salamanca and an annual grant from Philip II for the education of Irish seminarians. Its management was entrusted to Irish members of the Jesuit order.⁶ A number of the future Franciscans of St Anthony's Louvain, including Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire, Aodh Mac Aingil and Hugh Ward had spent some time studying at Salamanca and undoubtedly became acquainted with the Jesuits there. The manner in which members of the Jesuit and Franciscan orders, in addition to secular priests, could manage, at least for a time, to work together is best illustrated in the collaboration between individuals such as Stephen White, Patrick

⁴ Edmund Hogan (ed.), *Ibernia Ignatiana* (Dublin, 1880), pp 106-8.

⁵ Ó Cléirigh, *Aodh Mac Aingil agus an scoil Nua-Ghaeilge i Loháin*, p.28; Mícheál Mac Craith, 'Scáthán Shacramúinte na hAithridhe: scáthán na sacraiminte céanna', in *Léachtaí Cholm Cille* xxx, (2000) p.51.

⁶ John Brady, 'The Irish colleges in Europe and the Counter-Reformation', in *Proceedings of the Irish Catholic Historical Committee 1957* (Dublin, 1957), p.3.

Fleming, Hugh Ward, Thomas Messingham and John Colgan in the great Irish hagiographical projects undertaken on the continent.⁷ Generally speaking, therefore, the aims of the Jesuit order *vis à vis* the implementation of Tridentine norms in Ireland and those of their Franciscan counterparts did not differ terribly in content. An examination of the records of their missionary work in Ireland provides some insight into what Franciscans might also have attempted to achieve in more Gaelic areas.

An appeal made as early as 1538 to Pope Paul III by Conn O' Neill of Tyrone, Manus Ó Domhnaill of Tyrconnell and Morogh O' Brien of Thomond for spiritual and material assistance resulted in Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, personally sending two Jesuits on mission to Ireland in 1542.⁸ The Jesuit order, which was officially recognised in 1540, was merely in its infancy at the time. The two individuals chosen for the task were Paschasius Brouet, from Picardy in northern France, and Alfonso Salmeron from Toledo in Spain.⁹ Because the appeals for help had originated among Gaelic chieftains, it was to Gaelic Ulster that the first Jesuits were dispatched.¹⁰ The mission was poorly prepared for, however, and was soon aborted. The second attempt at such an initiative did not come for almost twenty years. However, this time, it was better planned. The candidate chosen for the task was not only a Jesuit, but also an Irish man. David Wolfe, a native of Limerick, had joined the Society in Italy and had served as rector of a college in Modena.¹¹ He arrived at Cork

⁷ Sharpe, *Medieval Irish saints' lives*, pp 44-61.

⁸ Corboy, 'The Jesuit Mission to Ireland 1596-1626', p.1; see also Louis McRedmond, *To the greater glory: a history of the Irish Jesuits* (Dublin, 1991), p.11.

⁹ McRedmond, *To the greater glory*, p.11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.17.

harbour on 20 January 1561.¹² Appointing him as nuncio apostolic, Pope Paul IV's instructions to Wolfe included the responsibility of bringing Ireland into the mainstream of reformed Catholicism, particularly through education.¹³ This was a remarkable request seeing as the Council of Trent had not, as yet completed its deliberations. He was to be joined in 1564 by the English Jesuit William Good and an Irish man, Edmund O' Donnell.¹⁴ Wolfe, who set about setting up a number of schools in the Munster region, entrusted the running of a grammar school in Limerick to both William Good and a Jesuit cousin of his, Edmund Daniel.¹⁵ It was the duty of Wolfe, as nuncio apostolic, to recommend to Rome suitable candidates for the Irish episcopate. Somewhat disillusioned by the state of the country's hierarchy, Wolfe's episcopal recommendations, including O' Herlihy of Ross, Mac Congail of Raphoe, O' Hart of Achonry and Creagh of Armagh, were to prove men of different calibre. O' Herlihy, Mac Congail and O' Hart were to travel to Rome in 1562 for their episcopal ordination, proceeding afterwards to Trent to participate in the closing sessions of the Council.¹⁶ The subsequent years of Elizabeth's reign proved difficult ones for the Jesuit order. The Desmond rebellion and the excommunication of Elizabeth by Pope Pius V in 1570 fed government suspicions of the Jesuits as traitors and rebels. Wolfe was captured in 1568 and consigned to Dublin castle for four years, escaping to the continent in 1572, only to return three years later for a brief period before his death in 1578.¹⁷ In the meantime,

¹² Corboy, 'The Jesuit mission to Ireland 1596-1626', p.3.

¹³ McRedmond, *To the greater glory*, p.19.

¹⁴ Corboy, 'The Jesuit mission to Ireland 1596-1626', p.4.

¹⁵ McRedmond, *To the greater glory*, pp 20, 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.21.

¹⁷ Meigs, *The reformations in Ireland tradition and confessionalism 1400-1690*, p.75; McRedmond, *To the greater glory*, p.27.

the first Jesuits to be martyred on Irish soil were Edmund Daniel, who was hanged, drawn and quartered on 25 October 1572 for refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy, and Edmund O'Donnell, who was put to death on 16 March 1575 for the same reason.¹⁸ In the period 1586-96 no Jesuits operated formally in Ireland. The second Jesuit mission had come to an end. Towards the end of that period, however, there were repeated requests from Hugh O' Neill and Red Hugh O' Donnell for the re-establishment of the order in Ireland. Richard Creagh, archbishop of Armagh (1564-85) had made similar appeals in the 1580s.¹⁹ When, after consultation with Pope Clement VII and the Spanish king, Philip II, the Jesuit General, Claudius Aquaviva decided to investigate the possibilities of a third Jesuit mission to Ireland, he entrusted the business of reconnaissance to one James Archer. Originally from Kilkenny, Archer had been educated at Louvain, returning to Ireland as a priest in 1577.²⁰ Four years later he decided to join the Society of Jesus, departing for Rome in the same year. The brief that Archer received from Aquaviva was simple. He was to explore the possibility of reviving the mission and also to raise funds for the college at Salamanca.²¹ Because of his interest in political and military matters, he gained the reputation of a seditious rebel in government circles.²² He was, therefore, obliged to spend much of his time in more Gaelic areas and, perhaps on account of his notoriety, was not to be appointed as

¹⁸ McRedmond, *To the greater glory*, p.23.

¹⁹ Corboy, 'The Jesuit Mission to Ireland 1596-1626', p.12.

²⁰ McRedmond, *To the greater glory*, p.28.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.30.

²² While on the continent, English spies had listed him as one of a number of individuals they suspected of being involved in a plot to assassinate the Queen. He also had a prominent place in O' Neill's entourage and assumed the role of adviser to Don Juan del Aguila at Kinsale: McRedmond, *To the greater glory*, pp 29, 31.

superior of the third Jesuit Mission. That particular role was to be fulfilled by Christopher Holywood who, with Henry Fitzsimon, helped to spearhead the re-introduction of the Jesuits to Ireland. Fitzsimon had been received into the order at Douai in 1592 and arrived in Ireland three years later, ministering, for the most part, in his native Dublin for five years before he was imprisoned in Dublin castle and exiled in 1604.²³ Holywood, also a native of Dublin, was appointed as superior of the third Jesuit Mission at its inception in 1598.²⁴ He was not to reach Ireland until 1604, however, having been captured at Dover and imprisoned in London for refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy.²⁵ In the interim, Aquaviva nominated Richard Field to act as superior in his stead.²⁶ Holywood, when accepting his appointment initially in 1598, wrote to Aquaviva to suggest the assignation of Florence O' More and Andrew Mulroney to the Jesuit mission in Ireland, specifically on account of their knowledge of the Irish language. He believed it important that the Jesuit mission should embrace the Gaelic Irish population as well as the minority of English speakers in the towns.²⁷ In 1600, Richard Field, the new superior, made a similar suggestion in a letter which James Archer delivered when on a visit to Rome.²⁸ By 1604 Holywood was back in Ireland

²³ Sharpe, *Medieval saints' lives*, p.41.

²⁴ Meigs, *The reformations in Ireland, tradition and confessionalism 1400-1690*, p.101; McRedmond, *To the greater glory*, p.30.

²⁵ Meigs, *The reformations in Ireland, tradition and confessionalism 1400-1690*, p.101.

²⁶ McRedmond, *To the greater glory*, p.34.

²⁷ *Ibid.* While Mulroney was eventually sent to Ireland in 1601, O' More was not, however, despite a repeated request in 1604 from Holywood, who wished to make inroads into Ulster and believed that O' More, as a native of Armagh and a native Irish speaker, would prove an invaluable asset in this regard: *ibid.*, pp 38-9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

and was re-appointed as superior of the Irish mission. He would prove to be a powerful leader of Jesuit activity in Ireland for more than twenty years.

In order to explore the impact of the Jesuit order in bringing about religious change in late sixteenth century and early seventeenth-century Ireland, an examination of an account written by the Jesuit William Good in Limerick around 1566 is well worthwhile.²⁹ Good was an Englishman and a graduate of Oxford. His disapproval of the customs of the native Irish reads similarly to other unflattering accounts such as those of Richard Stanihurst, Edmund Campion and Edmund Spencer. What makes Good's account worthwhile is the fact that it forms a bridge between customs that were allegedly found among the native Irish around the same time as the Council of Trent was concluding its sessions on how to reform the universal Church, and later attempts by Jesuit missionaries to reform these very practices. It is ironic that in the same year as William Good penned his misgivings, a synod was held by the bishops of Achonry, Elphin and Killala, in the name of the province of Tuam, at which the decrees of the Council of Trent were accepted in their entirety.³⁰ While Tridentine norms were officially accepted by the prelates of the province of Tuam in 1566, and subsequently by those of Armagh two years later, it would take a much longer period for the implications of its decrees to reach a wider audience. Among the curiosities of native Irish practice, Good observes that 'as a preservative against misfortunes [they] hang about the children's necks not only the beginning of St John's Gospel, but a crooked nail out of a horse's hoof or a piece of wolf's skin.'³¹ He criticises the practice of

²⁹ Camden, *Britannia: or a chorographical description of the flourishing kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland*, pp 658 ff.

³⁰ Meigs, *The reformations in Ireland, tradition and confessionalism 1400-1690*, p.75.

³¹ Camden, *Britannia*, p.658.

fosterage, noting that ‘foster-fathers spend much more time, money and affection on their foster children than their own.’³² The Gaelic sense of morality was also called into question by Good:

Robberies are no disgrace among them, but practiced in common with the utmost cruelty. Before they set out on such designs they pray to God to put booty in their way and look upon booty as the gift of God; nor can they be persuaded that violence, rapine or murder are displeasing to Him. They say he would never put such opportunities in their way if it was any sin to lay hold of them. You shall hear murderers and incendiaries say God is merciful and will not suffer the price of His own blood to be lost in me.³³

The penitential leanings of those who dispose themselves to religion are, however, lauded by Good, who speaks of their attitude as a ‘wonderful austerity’ and depicts the natives as ‘wasting themselves in watching, praying and fasting so that the accounts of their early monks are not to be wondered at.’³⁴ On the custom of fasting, he notes:

The very women and girls keep a fast every Wednesday and Saturday throughout the year and some of them also on St Catherine’s Day; nor will they omit it though it happen to be their birthday or if they are ever so much out of order. The reason given by some for this is that the girls might get good husbands and the women better by the death or desertion of their present ones, or at least by an alteration in their manners.³⁵

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

The radical nature of Gaelic prayer and penance, noted by Good, is also attested in a report on the customs of the Irish, compiled in 1581 by a Spaniard, who had visited many parts of the country while on an expedition to aid the Geraldines. The account was subsequently presented to the Holy See. His remarks are similar to those of Good:

They arise at midnight for prayer and meditation, to which some devote an entire hour, others half an hour...on Wednesdays they abstain from flesh meats; on Fridays, from white meats and milk...they eat a great deal when food can be found; but they also fast with alacrity for two or even three days.³⁶

The eulogy to Máire Ní Mháille (*d.*1522), found in the *Leabhar Chlainne Suibhne*, records how she used to fast on bread and water three days a week, thus verifying the claims of both Good and the Spaniard.³⁷ In his report, Good also decries the physical state of the country's churches, remarking particularly the poor condition of altars, crucifixes and vestments.³⁸

One particular aspect of life in sixteenth century Ireland, which Good gives some attention to, is swearing. This subject serves as a fitting example of a practice that was very common among the Irish, and which was condemned in the literature of the Louvain school, and most probably in any catechetical programme aimed at an Irish audience. What is most interesting, however, is that the catechetical condemnation of swearing emerges in some of the religious verses of contemporary bardic poets,

³⁶ P. F. Moran (ed.), *History of the Catholic archbishops of Dublin since the Reformation* Vol. I, (Dublin, 1864), p.92.

³⁷ Aubrey Gwynn, *The medieval province of Armagh 1470-1545* (Dublin, 1946), p.203.

³⁸ '[The churches have] no altars or very mean ones, and if any, only a wretched defaced figure of a crucifix. The sacred vestments are so nasty as to turn one's stomach; the altar portable without any sign of the cross, and exposed to every outrage; the missal tattered, and the canon torn out and made to serve for all their oaths and perjuries': Camden, *Britannia*, p.659.

indicating that the prohibition against swearing was, at least to some degree, assimilated into Gaelic culture. But first, Good's account:

They make a practice of swearing at every third word by the Trinity, God and the saints, Patrick and Brigid, their baptism, their faith, the Church, their godfathers and their hand. Though they will take these oaths in a most solemn manner on the bible or a missal, bare-headed, and foreswear themselves, if any should tell them they incur the pain of damnation by perjury, you shall presently hear them exclaim aloud: 'The Lord is merciful and will not suffer the price of His blood shed for one to be lost. Whether I repent or not, I can never go to Hell.' But to make an engagement binding these three things are requisite; 1st, to swear at the altar with their hand on the book, which lies open on their head. 2dly, to take some saint to witness, whose crosier or bell must be touched and kissed. 3dly, to swear by the hand of his earl or Lord, or some person of rank.³⁹

The practice of swearing upon Mass books, employed even by the Earl of Tyrone, Hugh O' Neill, when he swore in the presence of Captain Warren at Dundalk that he sought no aid from Spain,⁴⁰ was identified by Good as the reason for the many tattered missals he encountered with the Canon torn out of them.⁴¹ Another Jesuit, Henry Fitzsimon, also condemned the Irish proclivity for swearing in a quite novel manner:

For one thing I am very thankful to our reformers, that they imitate less and less the corrupt custom of loose Catholics who swear on every occasion 'by the Masse'; yet I am sorry they have preceded to a greater inconvenience by what succeedeth as I show them in this epigram:

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Letter dated 30 April 1597, *Cal.S.P.Ire.*, 1596-7, p.278.

⁴¹ Camden, *Britannia*, p.659.

In elder times an ancient custom 'twas,
 To swear in weighty matters 'by the Masse',
 But when Mass was put down, as old men note,
 They swore then 'by the cross of this old grey Grote',
 And when the cross likewise was held in scorn,
 Then 'faith and truth' for common oaths were sworn,
 But now men banished have both faith and truth,
 So that 'G. d—n me' is the common oath.
 Thus custom keeps decorum by gradation,
 Losing Mass, Cross, Faith, Truth – followeth damnation.⁴²

The Franciscan, Aodh Mac Aingil, was equally aware of the pervasiveness of swearing and, as part of his examination of conscience, based on the Ten Commandments, in *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe* (1618), included the question '*an ttugais fuil nó buill Dé a bhfior nó i mbréig?*'⁴³ The bardic poet, Diarmuid Mac an Bhaired,⁴⁴ includes the following verse in one of his religious poems (*n.l.t.*1631): 'Believe sincerely that God was born and that He went under the tomb; to swear by the blood of Mary's Son is to wound Him.'⁴⁵ The catechetical tenor of the first half of the verse is connected to the later admonition regarding swearing. Mac an Bhaired succinctly expresses some fundamental truths regarding the Incarnation and the Passion and Death of Christ and completes his verse by discouraging the listener from disrespecting Christ's blood by calling upon it in an oath. The reasoning against such an action is contained in the first

⁴² Edmund Hogan, *Distinguished Irishmen of the sixteenth century* (London, 1894), p.200.

⁴³ 'Did you take the blood or the limbs of God [in vain] [whether] honestly or not?': *SSA*, p.100.

⁴⁴ This is probably the 'Deirmod' mentioned in a County Monaghan *fiant* of 1602: *ADD* i, p.xxvii.

⁴⁵ *ADD* 56, v.24.

half of the verse – Christ’s blood is shown to be God’s blood too (for ‘God was born and went under the tomb’), and thus oath-taking was deemed inappropriate. Evidence that the Jesuits strove to eliminate the practice of swearing in their missions is contained in the following claim by Fr Ibernus:

It would take me too long to describe the reformation and amendment of life and customs which have taken place since we made our entrance into this island; the oaths and blasphemies we did away with, the discords, enmities, and public adulteries, to which a remedy was applied through the public penance of the delinquents.⁴⁶

Some of Good’s other observations regarding Irish practices were to be addressed in due course by the gradual assimilation of Tridentine norms in the early seventeenth century. There was an attempt to tackle the Gaelic system of godparents in the synod of the province of Dublin, assembled at Kilkenny in 1614, where the number of godparents permitted for a child followed the Tridentine recommendation of one godparent or a godparent of each sex.⁴⁷ The business of kin allegiances and social regulation had long defined the sacrament of baptism for the Gaelic Irish. The Catholic synods of the seventeenth century attempted to promote a more spiritual approach to the sacrament. The synod of the province of Armagh, held at Drogheda in the same year, however, allowed for two male godparents, to represent the father and mother’s kin group respectively.⁴⁸ Good’s description of the sorry state of the country’s churches in 1566 and the paucity of suitable liturgical material illustrates a Church that was not

⁴⁶ Alison Forrestal, *The Catholic synods in Ireland, 1600-1690* (Dublin, 1998) p.151.

⁴⁷ Alison Forrestal, ‘The Catholic synods: their influences and their influence, 1600-90’, MA thesis, National University of Ireland Maynooth, 1996, p.14.

⁴⁸ Bossy, ‘The Counter-Reformation and the people of Catholic Ireland’, p.163.

unduly worried about the niceties of ecclesiastical furnishings, a Church that would, indeed, be obliged to carry out much of its ministry clandestinely in the future. Lord Deputy Sidney remarked in 1567 that ‘I doubt whether they christen their children or no; for neither find I place where it shulde be don nor any persone able to instruct them in the rules of a Christian.’⁴⁹ The constitutions of the Synod of the Province of Dublin in 1614 took account of the nature of a Church that was more at home in private homes and in the countryside than in a formal ecclesiastical setting. However, this was balanced by a desire to celebrate the sacraments in the most fitting manner possible. It was stipulated, therefore, that the most appropriate localities be chosen for the celebration of the sacred mysteries. Linen cloths were to be suspended above or around the altar to guard against dust. When celebrating outdoors, the priest was to ensure that the sacred vessels were not disturbed by wind or rain. Two lighted candles, or in exceptional circumstances, one, were deemed prerequisites for the celebration of Mass. It was also required that the chalice and paten be made of silver, and, if possible, gilt on the inner side.⁵⁰ In addition, no ‘torn, dirty or cracked equipment or cloths’ were to be permitted.⁵¹ Regarding the celebration of baptism, in the absence of the availability of churches, there was to be a font provided at the house where the priest usually resided.⁵² This decision by the synod was designed to re-locate the sacrament within the ambit of the Church. By gathering people around the priest at a house where ecclesial life could, to some extent, continue, the custom of home baptisms, divorced from the Christian community, could be curbed. John Shearman, writing to the archbishop of

⁴⁹ E. P. Shirley (ed.), *Original letters and papers in illustration of the history of the Church of Ireland*, p.328.

⁵⁰ Moran, *History of the Catholic archbishops of Dublin since the Reformation*, p.268.

⁵¹ Forrestal, ‘The Catholic synods: their influences and their influence’, p.82.

⁵² Moran, *History of the Catholic archbishops of Dublin since the Reformation*, p.268.

Armagh regarding the state of religion in Waterford in 1585 noted the prevalence of this particular custom:

They never christen their children but in their houses, either with a man priest, or for want of him (which commonly the wealthiest of them want not) the women themselves christen.⁵³

Shearman's claim is corroborated by an earlier letter from an English lawyer, Andrew Trollope, to Walsingham, the Queen's Principal Secretary of State, written in 1581:

For they never serve God or go to any church, and in most parts of the country they have neither ministers nor churches, or those which are, be decayed and never used. They never marry nor christen...⁵⁴

In addition to attempting to exert more control over the Sacrament of Baptism, the synod prescribed the use of the 1614 *Rituale Romanum* for the administration of the sacrament (and all other sacraments) thus forbidding, from October 1615, further use of the Rite of Salisbury (or Sarum Rite).⁵⁵ As part of this transition, the practice of baptism by immersion was immediately outlawed. The declaration reads as follows:

From the first day of October this year, 1614, priests may use no further in the baptism of infants, immersion; but all priests may baptise uniformly; the

⁵³ Brady (ed.), *State papers concerning the Irish Church in the time of Queen Elizabeth*, p.99.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.51.

⁵⁵ Moran, *History of the Catholic archbishops of Dublin since the Reformation*, p.269. Interestingly, the Synod of Armagh, held at Drogheda in 1614, proved to be somewhat more lenient in this regard. All deviations from the *Rituale Romanum* were not to be permitted. Exception was allowed for deviations that involved use of the Sarum Rite, however, on account of its common use in the province: see Forrestal, 'The Catholic synods: their influences and their influence', p.83.

godparent holds the infant over the font, they pour the water of the font upon the head of the infant, simultaneously say 'I baptise you' etc.⁵⁶

What was proscribed by a synod, however, did not necessarily simultaneously cease in practice.

The decrees of the synod held at Kilkenny in 1614 were interesting in many other ways. The fasting practices of the Irish, described by William Good and others, were brought in line with those of the universal Church. Whereas the Irish Church traditionally observed three days of fast, namely from meat on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, and also from other animal products such as eggs, milk, cheese and butter on Fridays and Saturdays, the synod now recommended a more lenient observation, based on a Papal Bull of Clement VIII in 1598.⁵⁷ In addition, the laity was prohibited to engage in disputation with heretics lest they become infected with their doctrines. Clergy were also advised to avoid such contact.⁵⁸ This advice also appears in Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's *Desiderius* (1616), in which Simplicity cautions Desiderius against arguing with the heretics, stating that such disputation should be left to the prelates and learned people.⁵⁹ Undoubtedly those who drafted the synodal constitutions believed that, for the most part, clergy were not intellectually capable of engaging in debate with their Protestant adversaries. This is a good example of where counsel, given in a religious work of the Louvain school and aimed primarily at learned priests and laity, and secondarily (by oral transmission) at the wider populace, dovetailed with

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.81.

⁵⁷ Moran, *History of the Catholic archbishops of Dublin since the Reformation*, p.271.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.269. In fact, five synods in all between 1614 and 1632, prohibit disputes with heretics and the reading of heretical authors; see Forrestal, 'The Catholic synods: their influences and their influence', p.52.

⁵⁹ *Desiderius*, p.158.

recommendations of a provincial synod, which also wished to implement changes both at the level of the ministers of the Church and, by extension, at the level of the faithful in general. Thus, there is evidence of some correlation between what was written about on the continent, and what was beginning to be implemented at home. Although the Synod of Dublin may appear to have quibbled about the necessity of liturgical *minutiae* such as lighted candles, even when celebrating Mass in outdoor locations, it showed itself to be expedient in other ways, such as permitting laymen, in cases of necessity, to carry the Eucharist to prisoners awaiting execution.⁶⁰ Both the synods of Dublin in 1614 and Armagh (held at Drogheda in the same year) forbade recourse to the Sacrament of Penance without the penitent knowing the articles of faith, the doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation and Crucifixion, and the Our Father and Hail Mary.⁶¹ Priests were to provide themselves with the catechism of Peter Canisius, which included the above information, and could be used for instruction.⁶² A work such as Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa's *An Teagasg Críosaíde*, had it been circulating in Ireland in 1614, would have served the same purpose in Gaelic areas. The Synod of Dublin encouraged priests to catechise wherever they went, and the catechesis was to include instruction in the essential prayers required for entry to the Sacrament of Penance and, by extension, the Eucharist:

They are, in particular, exhorted to instruct the faithful in the catechism; and even when casually stopping for a day in the house of any of their parishioners,

⁶⁰ Moran, *History of the Catholic archbishops of Dublin since the Reformation*, p.268.

⁶¹ Forrestal, 'The Catholic synods: their influences and their influence', p.494.

⁶² Daniel McCarthy (ed.), *Collections on Irish Church history from the manuscripts of the late Very Reverend Laurence Renehan*, Vol I (Dublin, 1861), pp 142-6, 427-37.

never fail to teach one or other of its inmates in the presence of the rest, the Creed or the Lord's Prayer, or some point of Christian doctrine.⁶³

While the synods of the first half of the seventeenth century made various recommendations that were aimed at bringing Irish religious practices in line with Tridentine models, the extent to which such counsel was heeded can, to some extent, be gauged by the records of the Jesuit missionaries working in Ireland at the time. An examination of some of the encounters of Jesuits with Irish Catholics in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries provides important insights into early efforts at implementing the decrees of Trent.

Lord Deputy Sidney's description of the religious life of the Irish in 1567 depicted a people largely unconscious of the nature of sin and showing little regard for the celebration of the sacraments.⁶⁴ Similarly, Marmaduke Middleton, Protestant bishop of Waterford and Lismore, writing in 1580 to Sir Francis Walsingham, described how many marriages were contracted before two or three lay people without any minister present.⁶⁵ John Shearman, writing to the Protestant archbishop of Armagh in 1585, also complained about the prevalence of hand-fasted marriages.⁶⁶ The English lawyer, Andrew Trollope, writing to Walsingham in 1587 alluded to the double standards of the Catholic clergy regarding sexual morality. While, according to Trollope, they did not marry (for it would automatically contravene their vow of celibacy), they were content, nevertheless, to keep 'harlots which they make believe that it is no sin to live and lie

⁶³ Moran, *History of the Catholic archbishops of Dublin since the Reformation*, p.266.

⁶⁴ Shirley (ed.), *Original letters and papers in illustration of the history of the Church of Ireland*, p.328.

⁶⁵ Maziere Brady (ed.), *State papers concerning the Irish Church in the time of Queen Elizabeth*, p.40.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.99.

with them and bear them children.’⁶⁷ The Jesuit, William Good, corroborates allegations of the cavalier attitudes of the Irish with respect to marriage when he notes that ‘man and women ‘part on the slightest difference.’⁶⁸ He continues by stating that when a man acquires a new love interest, having parted from his wife, ‘the women, who are turned off, have recourse to witches, who are supposed to inflict barrenness, impotence or the most dangerous diseases on the former husband or his new wife.’⁶⁹ One of the priorities of the Jesuit mission, then, would be to re-introduce their flocks to sacramental life. This would involve encouraging a return to the Sacrament of Penance, and concomitantly the Eucharist, in addition to the regularisation of marriages and the solving of marital disputes.⁷⁰ As observed above, the early synods took steps to ensure that children were baptised and that all baptisms were recorded on register in which the names of the baptised and his parents and godparents were included.⁷¹ In order that those to whom they ministered might better appreciate what sacramental life entailed, a programme of catechesis was also regarded as of great importance.

The effectiveness of the Jesuit mission depended very much on the number of Jesuits available for ministry. This varied over time. In 1605 there were only four Jesuits involved in active ministry in Ireland.⁷² By 1609 this number had risen to eighteen. By

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.118.

⁶⁸ Camden, *Britannia*, p.659.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Records of Jesuit activity in early seventeenth century attest to the importance placed on the regulation of marriages. In the first few months of his stay in Ireland, the Jesuit David Wolfe was credited with having rectified over a thousand marriages that had been invalidly contracted: Corboy, ‘The Jesuit Mission to Ireland, 1596-1626’, p.3.

⁷¹ Forrestal, *Catholic synods in Ireland, 1600-1690* (Dublin, 1998), p.56.

⁷² *Idem*, ‘The Catholic synods: their influences and their influence’, p.37.

1613 there were about twenty-six Jesuits in Ireland and in 1626 the number had increased to forty-two.⁷³ Such numbers, however, appear quite small when compared with those of the Franciscan order, which, by 1621, had founded seventeen new residences in the country.⁷⁴ The organisation of the mission took the following form. Jesuits arriving at a particular location would first get in contact with the local lord who would subsequently be charged with the responsibility of relaying a message to the people living within his territory to come and meet with the priests. The Jesuits would first offer the Sacrament of Penance to the lords, their wives and families and then to councillors, judges and other professionals before ministering to the people in general.⁷⁵ It was usual for the order to remain in the same location for about a month.⁷⁶ During that time they preached on Sundays and holy days and, from noon until evening, taught catechism to adults and children, before spending time hearing confessions and presiding over the many sodalities they set up.⁷⁷ The structure of such a day reflected perfectly the ideals set out by the Council of Trent. According to the Council, catechesis by preaching was to be carried out by parish priests, or deputies appointed by them, at least on Sundays and feast days. On these days also, children were to be instructed in the rudiments of the faith.⁷⁸ The Synod of Dublin in 1614, adopting the requirements of Trent, decreed that priests should provide some explanation of a point of doctrine either before or after Mass on Sundays and holy days.⁷⁹ On concluding the

⁷³ Corboy, 'The Jesuit Mission to Ireland, 1596-1626', pp 186, 194, 60.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.119.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p.88.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.157.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.156.

⁷⁸ H. J. Schroeder (trans.), *The canons and decrees of the Council of Trent* (Illinois, 1941), pp 26, 196.

⁷⁹ Forrestal, *Catholic synods in Ireland 1600-1690*, p.64.

mission, the Jesuits would leave a selection of rosaries, agnus deis, medals and little crosses with the people free of charge.⁸⁰ The reports of various Jesuits working on the Irish mission testify to the response gained from those to whom they ministered. For the sake of clarity, some of the principal elements of the mission such as emphasis on the sacraments, devotion to Mary and the saints, the use of sacramentals and relics, and modes of catechesis, are treated of in turn below.

The business of restoring people to the sacramental life usually began with the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance. Although commentators such as Lord Deputy Sidney allude to the lack of a sense of sin among the Irish, which must surely have led to a lack-lustre attitude to confessing one's transgressions, there are other accounts which illustrate that some understanding of the sacrament could be found in the most unlikely places. The Jesuit, William Good, was once robbed of his Mass vestments. However, when the thieves found out what exactly they had stolen, they returned in fear and threw themselves at Good's feet, raising their heads in a gesture of supplication. Failing to understand exactly what they were gesticulating, and not being conversant in the Irish language, Good did not make any move to recover his vestments. One of the men then suddenly took the priest's hand and made the Sign of the Cross with it over the others as if to absolve them. He subsequently asked one of his friends to do the same for him.⁸¹ An incident such as this can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Perhaps what frightened the men most was that they had stolen from a priest and feared that they might suffer a great retribution, from the priest himself, in the form

⁸⁰ Corboy, 'The Jesuit mission to Ireland, 1596-1626', p.88.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.6.

of a curse perhaps, or directly from God.⁸² In this case, then, the act itself would have remained without evaluation. In other words, an understanding of theft as legitimate, as long as it was not theft from a priest, may have prompted the men to act in the way they did. On the other hand, the men may have wished to avail of the Sacrament of Penance in the light of their larceny. Being unable to enunciate their confession (since the priest spoke only English) they may have wished to at least receive absolution, and therefore proceeded to prompt Good to perform the necessary sign. It is unclear, therefore, whether the action of the thieves actually illustrated their superstition or their sacramental awareness.

The reports of the Jesuit fathers depict, in general, a population deprived of the Sacrament of Penance for many years, either because of irregular attendance attributable to poor catechesis, or simply to the unavailability of priests. The Jesuits Nicholas Leynich and Andrew Mulroney, working in Munster in 1605, informed their superior, Christopher Holywood that they heard so many confessions that 'they could

⁸² There is little doubt that such perceptions of priesthood prevailed in late medieval Ireland. Alison Forrester comments that 'Pre-1600 Irish society demanded that priests be men of power, but this demand fed upon the miraculous; themes of relics and miracles, of superhuman qualities predominated, propped up by poorly-developed comprehension of the sacraments, in particular of the Mass, and perpetuated by the traditions of miracles and saints within the Catholic Church.' The Counter-Reformation synods sought to establish the priest as a man of power also; however his power would now spring from his authority as a spiritual and moral figure: see Forrester, *Catholic synods in Ireland, 1600-1690*, p.73. However, earlier perceptions of the supernatural power of priests was to persist for some time, as evidenced by the awe in which figures such as the Jesuit, James Archer, were held: 'He was held not merely in awe by the heretics, but even in a kind of admiration or superstitious terror and they believed him able to walk dry-footed over the sea, to fly through the air and to possess other superhuman power, arguing thence that he ought to be called arch-devil rather than Archer': O'Sullivan Beare, *Ireland under Elizabeth*, p.123.

hardly breathe.’⁸³ A year earlier, Leynich had described the following scene: ‘From twelve townlands about, crowds have gather[ed] to hear instruction, and confessions have been made, some of over forty years.’⁸⁴ The Jesuit, Thomas Mulkerrin, a native of Galway, travelled widely in 1610, having returned to Ireland the previous year. He was shocked to discover the extent of ignorance regarding the essentials of the faith. Finding people who knew nothing about the Holy Trinity, he quickly learnt that in some places there had not been a sermon preached for over fifty years. This laxity was accompanied by the absence of the availability of the Sacrament of Penance. He vehemently urged priests to begin again to hear confessions. When Mulkerrin, himself, visited the area with four other priests, it is reported that hundreds of people flocked to them to confess their sins.⁸⁵ The most difficult problem facing priests who wished to reintroduce people to the sacraments was a catechetical one. The unwillingness of priests to provide the Sacrament of Penance to their people, according to Mulkerrin’s account, went hand in hand with an unwillingness to preach and to instruct. Records from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in Ireland portray a great hunger among people to receive the sacraments, and yet a certain awkwardness regarding the

⁸³ Fergus O’ Donoghue, ‘The Jesuit Mission in Ireland, 1598-1651’, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, Catholic University of America, 1982, p.40. The Jesuit, Walter Wale, while in Rome in 1610, sought advice regarding certain aspects of Church practice in circumstances that were peculiarly Irish. One of the concessions alluded to by four theologians of the Roman college was that General Absolution could be administered if the number of people seeking confession was impossible to accommodate: *ibid.*, p.86.

⁸⁴ Forrestal, *Catholic synods in Ireland, 1600-1690*, p.149.

⁸⁵ O’ Donoghue, ‘The Jesuit Mission in Ireland, 1598-1651’, p.82. In 1611, one of the two Jesuits in the Meath residence went northwest to the boundaries of Connacht and Ulster and found people who had not been to the sacraments in living memory. He provided them, therefore, with elementary instruction, including explanation of Divine Justice and the reward of the good; in short, the scenario portrayed in Matthew 25: *ibid.*, p.72.

procedure. Edmund Campion's tale regarding a certain Ulster gentleman, who had not received the Eucharist for many years and yet wished to receive the Sacrament of Penance from a monk, is perfectly illustrative of this problem. While his desire to receive the sacrament was sincere, he nevertheless lacked the tools with which to confess his sin. Asked whether he had ever committed homicide by the priest, he admitted that he had never thought it a crime before, proceeding to relate how, during his lifetime, he had murdered five and left the rest grievously wounded.⁸⁶ It was of the utmost importance, then, that the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance should follow catechesis and instruction. The regulations of the Council of Trent, expressed in the Synod of Dublin, 1614, went to great lengths to copper-fasten the connection between instruction and confession. Priests were to explain to penitents that they must provide a detailed account of their sins that encompassed species (the nature of the sin), number (the number of times the sin was committed) and circumstances surrounding the sin (which might serve to diminish the guilt of the penitent).⁸⁷ In addition, penitents were obliged to know the principal articles of the faith and be able to recite the Our Father, Hail Mary, Apostle's Creed and Ten Commandments in the vernacular, before

⁸⁶ Campion, *A historie of Ireland*, pp 15-16. Instruction provided by good sermons was undoubtedly the antidote required to counteract poor sacramental practice. Even in the earlier part of the sixteenth century, examples are to be found of the reforming effect of preachers on their audience. The *Annals of the Four Masters* relate how Tuathal Balbh, one of the most powerful sub-chieftains of the O'Gallaghers in Donegal, refused to kill in battle, taking his prisoners alive instead. His reason for doing this was on account of a sermon he heard in his youth from one of the [Franciscan] friars of Donegal. The friar explained that if one wanted to attain eternal life one should neither kill people nor shed their blood. From that day forward Tuathal vowed never to kill or wound in battle as long as he lived: *AFM* 1541.

⁸⁷ Bossy, 'The Counter-Reformation and the people of Catholic Ireland, 1596-1641', p.167.

being admitted to the sacrament.⁸⁸ The most important aspects of instruction, therefore, included these elements, and enabled those who learnt these rudiments of the faith to return to sacramental practice. Most Jesuit accounts of people returning to the sacraments indicate that the event occurred after some preaching or instruction. Eugene Bernard, working in Galway in 1606, details the following:

I give sermons and lectures frequently; many come to be reconciled...I have disabused people of their errors...I have made their reconciliation laborious, and painted in lively colours the enormity of their crimes; this has disposed them, not only to perform any penance that might be imposed on them, but to sacrifice life and property before displaying the like weakness again. I have admitted all such, after proving them some time, to the Sacrament of Penance.⁸⁹

James Archer, who ministered in the camp of O' Neill in Ulster, also captures the link between instruction and the reception of the sacraments in an account of his work:

I have instructed an uncultivated and rude people in the faith; I have brought back some to the Church...I have administered the sacraments in the camp, and it is marvellous to see the crowds that come from the neighbouring districts to hear Mass and go to confession.⁹⁰

The impact of sermons, which awakened a desire in people to confess their sins, was considerable. The Jesuit, Walter Wale, working around Carrick-on-Suir, preached frequently on the Passion of Christ, drawing loud sobs and cries from his audience to such an extent that, on Good Friday in 1605, he was forced to discontinue his sermon

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.168.

⁸⁹ Forrestal, *Catholic synods in Ireland, 1600-1690*, p.149.

⁹⁰ Corboy, 'The Jesuit Mission to Ireland, 1596-1626', p.158.

for he could not be heard.⁹¹ One sermon on the Last Judgement, delivered during Advent 1613 by a Jesuit, lasted three hours and resulted in large numbers of people copiously weeping and wailing in the church, accompanied by many public confessions of crimes and cries for forgiveness.⁹² Barnabas Kearney, a Jesuit working in Munster, and brother to Archbishop David Kearney of Cashel, preached a sermon on the pains of Hell, after which five men, famous for stealing cattle approached him, begging for forgiveness.⁹³ Feeling exhausted, Kearney attempted to persuade them to postpone their confession until another time. So intent were they on receiving absolution, however, that they threatened to block the road until Kearney made the sacrament available to them.⁹⁴ Effective sermons also had consequences for public order. Barnabas Kearney, while travelling in a territory notorious for its robberies, preached not only against the robbers, but also against the lords and families who sheltered them. This led to great reform in the region, directly resulting from the six weeks the Jesuits spent there.⁹⁵ The preaching of sermons sometimes resulted in reformed clergy returning to Catholicism, or embracing it for the first time. A sermon by Walter Wale in 1605 resulted in one such reconciliation, in which a Protestant minister performed public penance, standing barefoot and whipping himself for the length of the *Miserere*.⁹⁶ Some, ministers who

⁹¹ Hogan, *Distinguished Irishmen of the sixteenth century*, pp 430-1.

⁹² Corboy, 'The Jesuit Mission in Ireland, 1596-1626', p.195.

⁹³ Bernadette Cunningham, "'Zeal for God and for souls": Counter-Reformation preaching in early seventeenth-century Ireland', in Alan J. Fletcher and Raymond Gillespie (eds), *Irish preaching, 700-1700* (Dublin, 2001), p.116.

⁹⁴ Corboy, 'The Jesuit Mission to Ireland, 1596-1626', p.179.

⁹⁵ Cunningham, "'Zeal for God and for souls": Counter-Reformation preaching in early seventeenth-century Ireland', p.116.

⁹⁶ O' Donoghue, 'The Jesuit Mission in Ireland, 1598-1651', p.67.

were not convinced by the arguments of the Jesuits, nevertheless expressed admiration for the learning and zeal of the Order and praised them for their teaching of the catechism through Irish, for the prevention of robberies and for bringing about so many restitutions of stolen goods.⁹⁷

The issue of prescribing penance for sin was addressed by the decrees of many of the provincial synods in the early seventeenth century. John Bossy highlights the change of focus regarding the sacrament, as evident in synodal legislation at this time. While late medieval practice had emphasised the social nature of confession, ‘mediating between overt offences and overt acts of “satisfaction”, and owing more to composition-theory than to a recognised need for repentance’, the Tridentine Church, to some extent, privatised the sacrament.⁹⁸ Part of this process involved the introduction of the confession box, which screened both penitent and confessor away from the general community during the act of restoring one’s relationship with one’s God. The effect of an approach to the Sacrament of Penance that emphasised reconciliation as more personal than communal on the legislation of the Irish synods led to calls for the administration of penances that were easier and more fitting to reforming the penitent than merely offering suitable satisfaction for the offence committed. Confessors were enjoined never to place the confessional secret in jeopardy by prescribing a public penance for a sin that was private.⁹⁹ This did not mean, however, that there would be no such thing as the enjoinder of a public penance for sin that was known to all and sundry. In fact, the Jesuits were quite fond of meting out penances that were quite

⁹⁷ Corboy, ‘The Jesuit Mission to Ireland, 1596-1626’, p.126. The Annual report of the Irish Jesuits details how the people are taught the Decalogue and the Apostles’ Creed in their own language: O’Donoghue, ‘The Jesuit Mission in Ireland, 1598-1651’, p.69.

⁹⁸ Bossy, ‘The Counter-Reformation and the people of Catholic Ireland’, p.166.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.167.

overt. The renowned preacher, Walter Wale, describes the public performance of penance in Carrick-on Suir:

Those who have given disedification there do canonical penance on Sundays and festivals, remaining covered with a linen sheet or garment during the time of Mass and sermon. A certain illustrious man had killed a gentleman. He was so penitent for what he had done that he confessed publicly, and for nine consecutive Sundays stood covered with a linen sheet.¹⁰⁰

Such penances marked a penitent out as alienated from the Christian community until reparation for his sin was performed. The public nature of the penance matched the public nature of the crime. A certain man from Cork, who, himself, had lived an openly depraved life, and whose territory was a refuge for thieves and proponents of lawlessness, converted and confessed his sin. The penance prescribed for him by the Jesuit fathers was public in nature 'in order to avert a public scandal'. The penitent swore to execute those responsible for robbery and extortion from that time onwards and the penance he performed involved walking barefoot to Mass, clothed with a white sheet.¹⁰¹ A Jesuit working in Connacht, possibly Andrew Mulroney, was accustomed to ensuring that penitents displayed a visible sign of their penitential exercises, advocating that they go on pilgrimage while carrying white crosses in their hands and wearing white sheets.¹⁰² As in other areas of liturgical life, certain dispensations were offered in penitential matters on account of the particular situation in Ireland. Already a Papal Bull, promulgated in 1607 by Pope Paul V, had extended the period in which Paschal communion might be received in Ireland from the standard two weeks to any time

¹⁰⁰ Hogan, *Distinguished Irishmen of the sixteenth century*, p.430.

¹⁰¹ Corboy, 'The Jesuit Mission to Ireland, 1596-1626', pp 83-4.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p.204.

between Ash Wednesday and Ascension Thursday on account of the scarcity of clergy there and the persecution under which they lived.¹⁰³ Regarding the administration of penances, Ross MacGeoghegan, the superior of the Dominican Order in Ireland during the period 1617-22, was granted a set of Papal faculties on 16 August 1617, which included the power to dispense with vows in respect of pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Rome and Compostela, and to absolve from binding oaths relating to the same.¹⁰⁴ Apart from the fact that such pilgrimages were often not viable options in the political climate of early seventeenth century Ireland, an added motivation for releasing individuals from such vows was a renewed emphasis on the sincerity of a penitent's contrition rather than the severity of his penance.

Devotion to both Mary and the saints was encouraged and fostered by Jesuit missionaries in Ireland in the early seventeenth century. Prayers such as the Rosary were particularly encouraged. Although the Dominican order is most frequently associated with the promotion of this devotion, the Jesuits and Franciscans also played quite a large part in its dissemination. Chief among its proponents were the Jesuit theologians Alfonso Salmeron and Francisco de Suarez.¹⁰⁵ It should be remembered that Salmeron, accompanied by Paschasius Brouet, was the first Jesuit to set foot in Ireland in 1542. It is inconceivable that, albeit his stay was short, he would not have promoted this devotion while there. The Sodality of Our Lady, founded under Jesuit auspices in 1563, which would play a significant role in Irish towns of the seventeenth century, was instrumental in promoting devotion to the Blessed Virgin in general and to

¹⁰³ Moran, *History of the Catholic archbishops of Dublin since the Reformation*, p.270.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas S. Flynn, *The Irish Dominicans, 1536-1641* (Dublin, 1993), p.140.

¹⁰⁵ O' Dwyer, *Mary: a history of devotion in Ireland*, p.26.

the Rosary in particular.¹⁰⁶ As early as 1565, the Jesuits David Wolfe, Edmund O' Donnell and William Good organised a sodality in Limerick.¹⁰⁷ After having celebrated a clandestine Mass in a house in Dublin in 1598, Henry Fitzsimon enrolled the host family members in the Sodality of Our Lady, establishing similar prayer cells in other homes also.¹⁰⁸ Sodalities in the towns began to flourish nearly twenty years later. The first to be officially aggregated to the founding branch in Rome was the sodality at Cashel, established in 1617, closely followed by groups in Clonmel, Limerick, Cork, Kilkenny and Carrick-on-Suir, all areas associated with Jesuit activity.¹⁰⁹ Priests were also encouraged to adopt the practice of reciting the Rosary. Two Irish secular priests, who decided to make the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius in 1614, were prescribed a fixed time for daily mental prayer, the Hours of the Virgin, the Rosary in addition to Mass, a nightly examination of conscience and an annual pilgrimage.¹¹⁰ Official recognition of the spiritual weight of the Rosary by Church authorities in Rome is evident in one of the faculties granted to the superior of the Dominican order in Ireland, Ross MacGeoghegan, in 1617:

[Faculties] to substitute the rosary, other prayers or the psalms known by heart in those circumstances where it would not be possible to carry the breviary or perilous to recite the divine office.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Corboy, 'The Jesuit Mission to Ireland, 1596-1626', p.238. Presumably this branch later disintegrated as it was necessary to reorganise the Limerick branch in 1619.

¹⁰⁸ O' Dwyer, *Mary: a history of devotion in Ireland*, p.210.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., pp 214-15.

¹¹⁰ O' Donoghue, 'The Jesuit Mission in Ireland, 1598-1651', p.80.

¹¹¹ Flynn, *The Irish Dominicans 1536-1641*, p.140.

The provincial synod of Armagh, held at Kells in 1642, recommended the daily recitation of the Rosary for the needs of the country.¹¹² The Franciscan, Aodh Mac Aingil, outlined the recitation of the Rosary as one of three ways of gaining an indulgence in his work *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe*.¹¹³ It can be taken, then, that even as early as the sixteenth century, the Rosary was well established in Ireland.¹¹⁴

One of the most telling indications of devotion to the Rosary was the well-documented custom of wearing rosary beads around one's neck. There are many reports of this practice. In 1579, the Protestant bishop of Waterford, Marmaduke Middleton, complained that not only were people 'massing at every corner but they were wearing beads in public and were praying on them.'¹¹⁵ The Irish *penchant* for wearing religious emblems, including rosaries, relics and crucifixes, features in the account of the Spaniard, Francisco de Cuellar, detailing his experiences in the country after having been shipwrecked off the west coast of Ireland in 1588. He recounts an encounter with a seventy-year old Irish 'savage', his young female 'savage' companion and an Englishman and Frenchman who accompanied them. Detailing how the Englishman robbed him, he continues:

¹¹² O' Dwyer, *Mary: a history of devotion in Ireland*, p.218.

¹¹³ *SSA*, p.154.

¹¹⁴ Diarmuid Ó Laoghaire, 'An aspect of Irish spirituality – the Rosary', in *Doctrine and Life* v (May / June, 1982), p.279.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.280. Middleton makes the same complaint in a letter to Sir Francis Walsingham the following year also, referring to 'public wearing of beads and praying upon the same – worshipping of images and setting them openly in their street doors, with ornaments and deckings': Maziere Brady (ed.), *State papers concerning the Irish Church in the time of Queen Elizabeth*, p.40.

Moreover, they had taken away my shirt and some relics of great value, which I wore in a small garment (vestment) of the Order of the Holy Trinity that had been given to me at Lisbon. These the savage damsel took and hung them round her neck, making me a sign that she wished to keep them, saying to me that she was a Christian: which she was in like manner as Mahomet.¹¹⁶

An account of Ireland in 1620 by Luke Gernon, appointee to the office of Second Justice of the province of Munster in 1619, described the wearing of crucifixes by women in the Thomond region:

In Thomond...they weare no bands, but the ornament of theyr neckes is a carkanett of gold-smyths worke beset wth precious stones, some of them very ritche, but most of them gawdy and made of paynted glasse and at the end of them a crucifixe.¹¹⁷

The value placed on the wearing of sacramentals by the Irish was not lost on Jesuit missionaries. A letter written by Fr Leynich to Aquaviva included a request for beads, medals and relics, which he described as being 'greatly revered by the people'.¹¹⁸ There is evidence to suggest that rosary beads were smuggled into Ireland for distribution among the faithful. The authorities responsible for searching the luggage of Bishop Maurice MacBrien of Emly, who arrived at Waterford from Rome in 1578, stumbled

¹¹⁶ De Cuellar, 'Letter from one who sailed with the Spanish Armada and tells the story of the enterprise of England', pp 232-3. Apart from the religious significance of wearing relics, various kinds of necklaces were prized by native Irish women, if the account of Fynes Moryson, from the early seventeenth century is to be believed. Moryson comments that the women of Ireland 'wear so many bracelets and necklaces as rather load than adorn': C. Litton Falkiner (ed.), *Illustrations of Irish history and topography mainly of the seventeenth century* (London, 1904), p.321.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.258.

¹¹⁸ Corboy, 'The Jesuit Mission to Ireland, 1596-1626', p.163.

upon what must have seemed a very small hoard, comprising seven pairs of beads, which he may have intended to distribute to family or close friends.¹¹⁹

While the use of sacramentals, including crucifixes, relics and rosary beads was, in general, encouraged by clerics formed in the Counter-Reformation mould, an attempt was made, nevertheless, to place these items in their proper context and thereby to ensure that they were used in an appropriate manner. The Synod of Armagh, held at Drogheda in 1614, therefore forbade the carrying of relics and images by those collecting alms without the license of the Ordinary because ‘the proper worship due to sacred things is thus brought into contempt with heretics.’¹²⁰ Aodh Mac Aingil addressed the question of the relative value of sacramentals in *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe*:

*Cia as tarbhúighe do dhuine medáille, cros nó céisadh loghuidh do bheith aige nó bheith a gcombráithrios spioradáltha ina bhfaghtar iomad loghadh, mar atá bráithrios úird Mhuire a n-órd S. Doimínic 7 bráithrios úird chreassa S. Froinsias? As férr dhó go mór bheith a mbráithrios úird do bhríogh ós ceann an loghuidh go mbí cuid 7 páirt aige do mhaithghníomhuibh na ccomhbráthar uile 7 go ttig go minic do thathuighe na sacramuinteadh 7 chum oibreadh trócaire tré bheith a ccomhbráithrios úird.*¹²¹

¹¹⁹ O’ Dwyer, *Mary: a history of doctrine and devotion*, p.187.

¹²⁰ Forrestal, ‘The Catholic synods: their influences and their influence’, p.52. Perhaps this decree was formulated in a bid to avoid the use of relics in a threatening manner in order to exact money from those who cowed before them in fear. Such practices routinely occurred: see Lucas, ‘The social role of relics and reliquaries in ancient Ireland’, pp 14-17.

¹²¹ ‘Which is more beneficial for the person, to possess an indulgenced medal, cross or crucifix, or to be in a spiritual confraternity in which one receives many indulgences, such as the Confraternity of Mary in the Order of St Dominic, and the Confraternity of the Cord of St Francis? It is far better for

The benefits of the sacraments themselves (promoted by confraternities and sodalities) far exceeded, then, the value of indulgenced sacramentals in the opinion of Mac Aingil.¹²² It was a question of achieving the proper balance. The Capuchin order, which promoted a distinctively Tridentine programme, established an Irish college at Lille in 1611 and began to work in Ireland four years later. Part of their ministry involved teaching the correct use of medals and relics along with encouraging the obtaining of indulgences and frequent communion.¹²³ This illustrates that the proper use of such traditional devotional items could co-exist with new standards established by the Council of Trent. In fact, there are many examples of the use of relics by the Jesuit missionaries in seventeenth-century Ireland. One particular Jesuit called to the house of a wealthy merchant in Cobh, whose only daughter was dying. He entered the room, read the Gospel over the dying girl and placed some relics on her neck, after which she quickly recovered.¹²⁴ A letter from Henry Fitzsimon to Aquaviva relates the following story regarding the efficacy of agnus deis, a supply of which were normally left with the communities that the Jesuits visited upon the conclusion of the mission:

How many and how great miracles are worked by Agnus Deis can hardly be fully told. In the beginning of this Lent an elderly lady was, for three days, at death's door, deprived of voice and memory. An Agnus Dei was hung round her

him to be in a confraternity, since, apart from [receiving] indulgences, he has a part in the good deeds of all the confreres, frequenting the sacraments and [performing] work[s] of mercy as part of being in a confraternity': *SSA*, p.196.

¹²² Those who were members of the Sodality of Our Lady, for instance, were encouraged to work towards their personal sanctification through monthly reception of the Sacrament of Penance and the Eucharist: Corboy, 'The Jesuit Mission to Ireland, 1596-1626', p.242.

¹²³ O' Donoghue, 'The Jesuit Mission in Ireland, 1598-1651', p.59.

¹²⁴ Corboy, 'The Jesuit Mission to Ireland, 1596-1626', p.148.

neck and that instant she recovered her voice and memory, and the following day she was perfectly cured. It was refreshing to see the confusion of her heirs who, having prematurely taken away her goods, were forced to bring them back.¹²⁵

Referring to the extent of persecution in a letter written in 1607, Henry Fitzsimon alludes to the ransacking of Catholic houses by the civil authorities. As part of this exercise, sacramentals were especially targeted, leading to several blunders. Fitzsimon relates how ‘they seize goblets as chalices, jewels for Agnus Deis’.¹²⁶ There are references to the use of relics by Jesuits in performing exorcisms. In one case, a statue of St Ignatius was held over a woman in labour and an exorcism performed in Spanish, the language the demon spoke.¹²⁷ In another case, the Jesuits Andrew Mulrone and Thomas Mulkerrin, working in Connacht, reported in 1614 that a former student of the Jesuits at Douai had successfully used relics to exorcise a possessed lady.¹²⁸ Relics of saints were hugely popular with the Irish. Barnabas O’ Kearney, who reported many healings in the south of the country through the application of the relics of St Ignatius and other saints, commented that the Irish had a greater reverence for relics of the saints than even those on the continent.¹²⁹ Nowhere is this more evident than in the extensive commentary on the various reliquaries visited by the Irish earls on the continent provided by Tadhg Ó Cianain.¹³⁰ Relics, therefore, possessed an appeal that was enduring, even among the most learned of Counter-Reformation clerics. In 1599, one

¹²⁵ Hogan, *Distinguished Irishmen of the sixteenth century*, p.262.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 270-1.

¹²⁷ O’ Donoghue, ‘The Jesuit Mission in Ireland, 1598-1651’, p.81.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.83.

¹²⁹ Corboy, ‘The Jesuit Mission to Ireland, 1596-1626’, p.170.

¹³⁰ Ó Cianain, *The flight of the earls*; see especially pp 31-3, 167, 177, 179, 193.

such figure, the learned Scots Jesuit, James Gordon-Huntley, who was a philosopher and theologian of note, in addition to being a Hebrew scholar, arrived in Ireland as apostolic nuncio. On arrival, he went on pilgrimage to the tomb of St Patrick in Down and took away some earth from the grave, which he found to have miraculous effects.¹³¹

The Jesuits encouraged devotion to the saints and, in this regard, adapted one of the practices of their own order for lay usage. This particular custom involved members of the order drawing the name of a saint by lot on the eve of each month, and that saint would, thenceforward, become that person's patron for its duration. This patron was known as one's 'valentine'.¹³² Its adaptation consisted of the laity similarly drawing a saint's name on St Patrick's Day who would become their protector for the following year. The individual was encouraged to foster devotion to their chosen saint during that time.¹³³ It is interesting to note that in an age when the credentials of the saints were beginning to be scrutinised with more care, and, at least in some circles, stories of dubious saintly miracles and vengeful deeds were being played down in favour of their more exemplary behaviour, vestiges of earlier ideas of sainthood persisted, even among the most ardent proponents of Tridentine norms. One of the clearest indications of this is in the continual perception of the saint as worldly avenger of grievances. Examples abound of this kind of saint in the literature of the late medieval period, especially in annalistic references to heavenly patrons avenging the deaths of their charges through violent means. It is most curious, then, to find a similar understanding of a saint's role among the most learned of clergymen spearheading the Counter-Reformation in Ireland

¹³¹ Hogan, *Distinguished Irishmen of the sixteenth century*, pp 326-7.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p.127.

¹³³ Corboy, 'The Jesuit Mission to Ireland, 1596-1626', p.201.

in the seventeenth century. Christopher Holywood, Jesuit superior of the Irish mission, however, betrays such an understanding in his account of a shipwreck off the coast of County Cork:

About the feast of St Catherine, a vessel from England, freighted with ministers and their wives and families was about to land at Youghal when it was wrecked. The dead bodies were cast ashore and the Catholics refused to bury them until forced and fined by the President.¹³⁴

Although St Catherine's involvement in bringing about the tragedy is not explicitly stated, it can, nevertheless, reasonably be inferred, especially when this passage is compared with other contemporary Irish Jesuit accounts of the saint's activities, such as the following:

In a town six miles from Dublin, a Protestant carpenter being remonstrated for working on the feast of St Catherine, virgin and martyr, called her a – witch and had hardly uttered the words when, bringing his axe down on a beam of timber, he cut his foot and died soon after.¹³⁵

The records of the Jesuit mission in Ireland that treat of the catechetical methods of the order contribute quite significantly to our understanding of the manner in which the Irish might have been instructed in the first half of the seventeenth century. One of the principal aims of the Council of Trent was to facilitate widespread catechesis of the faithful. While the *Roman Catechism* of 1566 was designed for the use of parish priests, the material provided in *compendia* of Christian doctrine compiled by figures such as Peter Canisius and Robert Bellarmine was more suitable for instruction of the laity. It was principally the works of Canisius and Bellarmine, then, that Irish translations of the

¹³⁴ Hogan, *Distinguished Irishmen of the sixteenth century*, p.445.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.481.

catechism designed by Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire, Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa, Theobald Stapleton and Antoin Gearnon were modelled on. The Synod of Dublin in 1614 especially recommended use of Canisius's catechism.¹³⁶ As noted above, the fundamental catechetical requirements for every Catholic were knowledge of the articles of faith, and being able to recite the Creed, the Our Father and Hail Mary and the Ten Commandments in one's own tongue, for with these one could receive the Sacrament of Penance. The reception of this sacrament, in turn, was the gateway to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist was the gateway to eternal life. The business of catechesis was vital, therefore, to the salvation of people's souls. Sundays and holydays were occasions especially devoted to the ministry of preaching and catechesis. The Jesuits often spent from noon until evening, on these days, instructing people in Christian doctrine.¹³⁷ After hearing confessions, they would sometimes read a spiritual book for their congregations. Consequently, the records often complain of a lack of suitable reading material.¹³⁸ Despite the small number of Jesuits working in Ireland, their mission would seem to have achieved considerable success, at least if one is to take comments of the superior, Christopher Holywood, made on 24 April 1604, at face value. Holywood claims to have visited the greater part of Munster, and to have found the Catholics, in the towns and cities especially, openly professing their faith and exhibiting a fairly satisfactory standard of instruction thanks to the efforts of the Jesuit order.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Forrester, *Catholic synods in Ireland 1600-1690*, p.72.

¹³⁷ Corboy, 'The Jesuit Mission to Ireland, 1596-1626', p.156.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp 166-8.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.86.

It is certain that even the most zealous group of priests could not, with such a small company, succeed in satisfactorily catechising the whole of Ireland. However, it must be enquired whether Counter-Reformation clergy, anxious to implement the decrees of Trent on Irish soil through a programme of catechesis, ever actually envisaged performing the task alone. The Franciscan, Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa, in his Irish catechism *An Teagasg Críosaíde*, made known the expectations he had of different groups of people who would encounter his work. Each learned person and every person responsible for catechising were to have a clear and detailed knowledge of the articles of faith as explained therein. It was sufficient for the unlearned, however, to know the principal articles, namely those referring to the Unity of God and the Trinity of Divine Persons, in addition to Christ's Incarnation and His Passion and Death.¹⁴⁰ Unsurprisingly, the manuscript transmission of Ó hEoghusa's work illustrates that it was the verse formulae of these principal articles, including other requisites, such as the Ten Commandments, that were repeatedly copied. Ó hEoghusa's approach to the Irish catechism illustrates two things. Firstly, it was envisaged that both clergy and learned lay people would act as instructors of Christian doctrine. Secondly, the verse forms of the most important material were not only designed as helpful memory-aids for the unlearned, but may have been expected to take on a life of their own by being repeatedly copied and transmitted in manuscript form. Alexandra Walsham, in a study of the role of printed religious works as 'Domme preachers' in post-Reformation England, highlights the feats that could be achieved by books when real-life preachers were not available.¹⁴¹ The observations of the Jesuit, Robert Persons, in a letter to

¹⁴⁰ *TC*, p.32.

¹⁴¹ Alexandra Walsham, "'Domme preachers'? Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the culture of print', in *Past and present* 168 (August 2000), p.102.

Aquaviva in 1581 are interesting in this regard: 'Books penetrate where the priests and religious cannot enter and serve as precursors to undeceive many.'¹⁴² Catechesis by manuscript was bound to be more laborious, but, in the absence of evidence for the dissemination of printed copies of *An Teagasg Críosaíde*, the historian is faced solely with its appearance in manuscript form. The added advantage of the provision of verse forms, treating of the central themes of the catechism, was the ease with which they could be transmitted orally, exceeding both print and manuscript in the speed and effectiveness of their diffusion.¹⁴³ The fact that the business of catechesis was not envisaged as the sole preserve of the clergy is crucial to an understanding of how the catechism was intended to function. Theobald Stapleton's exhortation that lay people catechise, outlined in the preface to his own Irish translation of the catechism, illustrates what at least some Counter-Reformation clergy regarded as a necessary way forward.¹⁴⁴ Such an approach was certainly fostered by the Jesuit missionaries in the earlier part of the seventeenth century. A Jesuit, returning from the Hebrides in 1613, converted a minister's son in the north of Ireland. As an act of repentance, the man burnt all his Protestant books and devoted himself to teaching the catechism to little children from then on.¹⁴⁵ A lady, who used to educate the children of one of the northern chieftains in the Protestant faith, repented in similar fashion and set about instructing people in Catholic doctrine instead.¹⁴⁶ It is quite probable that, in both cases,

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ A similar employment of Catholic teaching through songs, rhymes and poems was undertaken by priests in England around the same time: *ibid.*, p.114.

¹⁴⁴ Cunningham, 'Geoffrey Keating's *Eochair Sgiath an Aifrinn* and the Catholic reformation in Ireland', p.138.

¹⁴⁵ Corboy, 'The Jesuit Mission to Ireland, 1596-1626', p.140.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

the penitents assumed the role of catechists at the suggestion of their Jesuit confessor. After all, the practice of enlisting lay assistance for this work was common among the Society. In 1618, before members of the order would visit people in their homes (for it had become too dangerous for large groups of people to gather together at this time), they would first send some young men to teach the catechism in Irish to their prospective flocks.¹⁴⁷ Christopher Holywood frequently alludes to the employment of lay assistance in rural areas.¹⁴⁸ One of the functions of the sodalities, which were being formed in towns at this time, was also to form lay leaders who, by their example and influence, might bring others to a more zealous practice of their faith.¹⁴⁹ The role of the educated laity, then, in catechising their families, relations and communities, and as auxiliaries to the Counter-Reformation clergy, may have been quite significant indeed. The mission undertaken by the Jesuit fathers, in relative terms, contributed hugely to the beginnings of the implementation of Tridentine reform in seventeenth-century Ireland. Much of their work helped, to some extent, to bring about the wishes of those who compiled statutes at the various synods held at this time. One of the appealing aspects of the Jesuit order was its rule that no stipends should be accepted for the celebration of Mass or the other sacraments. Fynes Moryson notes that it was the custom for Irish parents bringing their child to be baptised to ‘tye a little peece of siluer in the corner of the cloth wherein the chylde is wrapped, to begiuen to the priest.’¹⁵⁰ It

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p.207.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p.240.

¹⁵⁰ Graham Kew, ‘The Irish sections of Fynes Moryson’s Unpublished Itinerary’, in *Analecta Hibernica* xxxvii (1998), p.109. An account of the entitlement of St Brigid’s *comharba* to baptise the people of Uí Mhaine (Hy-Many) and, in addition, to receive a share in the compulsory ‘baptismal

troubled Christopher Holywood, then, to encounter the Irish custom of leaving gifts on the altar for the support of the priest, as he considered it to be a contravention of Jesuit rule to accept such an offering.¹⁵¹ Not all criticisms of Irish religious practice found a sympathetic ear, however, even among the most eager of Counter-Reformation scholars. An interesting example of this can be observed in Aodh Mac Aingil's response to the description of a series of abuses prevalent in the Irish Church highlighted by the newly formed Congregation known as *Propaganda Fide* in 1626. In general, Mac Aingil, while not denying the existence of such practices, nevertheless offered some defence for most of them, arguing that one must first understand the exigencies of the particular situation in which members of the clergy worked. One of the abuses noted by the Congregation concerned the acceptance of presents of pigs, sheep and lambs by the religious orders, which were subsequently sold to raise money for Irish colleges abroad.¹⁵² Mac Aingil responded by explaining that this practice was common also among the diocesan clergy and that the Congregation would do well to remember that there was very little money in Ireland and an abundance of farm animals.¹⁵³ Another abuse raised by the Congregation concerned the holding of lavish celebrations in religious houses on the feast day of the patron saint of the order. The Provincial Synod of Armagh, held at Kilkenny in 1618, had complained of the same problem, claiming that

some such feasts of the founders of religious orders were a source, not of edification, but of scandal to the faithful, whilst the laity were 'burdened to

penny' that was required for this service, can be found in O' Donovan (ed. and trans.), *The tribes and customs of Hy-Many, commonly called O' Kelly's country* (Dublin, 1843), p.79.

¹⁵¹ Fergus O' Donoghue, 'The Jesuit Mission in Ireland, 1598-1651', p.63.

¹⁵² Giblin, 'Hugh McCaughwell, O.F.M., archbishop of Armagh (+1626)', p.66.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.67.

supply cows, sheep, calves, lambs, goats, deer, birds, and a variety of wines and other liquors.¹⁵⁴

Mac Aingil responded to the complaints of the Congregation by reminding them that Catholics on the other side of the Alps were also accustomed to celebrating their feast days in similar fashion. He saw no need to ban such festivities, suggesting however, that, should they grow too lavish, that the superiors of the orders in Ireland could be notified and admonished.¹⁵⁵ Had Mac Aingil lived long enough to travel to Ireland to assume the responsibilities of his post, he would have undoubtedly adopted a gentle, and perhaps effective, approach to the implementation of Tridentine reform. However, it was not to be.

In assessing the response of the Irish to the beginnings of the Counter-Reformation in Ireland, it has been necessary to rely heavily upon the records of the Jesuit order and their Irish mission. It could be argued that since these missionaries were largely based in towns, and ministered, in the main to the Old English community, drawing their personnel from the same source, it is, therefore, incongruous to apply conclusions drawn from this source to life in Gaelic Ireland. It is known, however, that some Jesuits did, in fact, minister in Gaelic Ireland, and sought to inculcate the native population in the same doctrines that they disseminated among the Old English.¹⁵⁶ While records of the activity of orders that were more popular in Gaelic Ireland, such as the Franciscans, in the early seventeenth century, are much more sparse than those pertaining to the

¹⁵⁴ Moran (ed.), *History of the Catholic archbishops of Dublin since the Reformation*, p.274.

¹⁵⁵ Giblin, 'Hugh McCaughwell, O.F.M., archbishop of Armagh (+1626)', p.67.

¹⁵⁶ A Jesuit priest working in Connacht once spent six days on the Aran islands, catechising and preaching. He harshly condemned, among other things, the evils of gambling, after which he was approached by a septuagenarian gambler who confessed his sins and promised amendment: Corboy, 'The Jesuit Mission to Ireland, 1596-1626', p.205.

Jesuits, there is little doubt that religious material compiled in Franciscan centres such as St Anthony's, Louvain, or substantially similar ideas, were certainly preached in Ireland, at least by the 1630s. One of the strongest indications that this was the case is contained in the work of one individual – a priest, whose life and work forges important links between Jesuit theology and secular priesthood, between the Old English and Gaelic Irish worlds, but most importantly between late medieval popular religion and its early modern Tridentine successor. That priest was Geoffrey Keating.

Geoffrey Keating: Counter-Reformation priest?

Relatively little is known of Geoffrey Keating's life.¹⁵⁷ He was born of Old English stock in the latter part of the sixteenth century near the village of Burgess, in the parish of Tubbrid, south west of Clonmel.¹⁵⁸ The lands around Burgess were held by the Meic Craith kin group, who were poets to the Butlers and enjoyed the patronage of Theobald Butler, lord of Cahir from 1566-96.¹⁵⁹ Although Keating did not come from a traditional bardic background, he had strong associations with the Meic Craith family, who ran a school of *seanchas* at Burgess.¹⁶⁰ It was presumably there that he acquired his proficiency in Irish language and literature, acting himself as poet propagandist for the Butlers of Cahir in the 1620s.¹⁶¹ It is likely that Keating departed for a continental

¹⁵⁷ For a simple introduction to the period during which Keating lived see Donchadh Ó Corráin, 'Seathrún Céitinn (c.1580-c.1644): an cúlra stairiúil', in Pádraig Ó Mathúna (ed.), *Dúchas 1983-84-85* (Dublin, 1986).

¹⁵⁸ Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating: history, myth and religion in seventeenth-century Ireland*, p.20. Cunningham suggests that he was born around 1570: see Cunningham, 'Geoffrey Keating's *Eochair Sgiath an Aifrinn* and the Catholic reformation in Ireland', p.133.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p.22.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p.23.

education sometime before 1600.¹⁶² His name is linked with the colleges of Bordeaux and Rheims, both of which were heavily influenced by Jesuit thought.¹⁶³ While the literary output of Geoffrey Keating was considerable, ranging from his defence of the Mass, entitled *Eochair-Sgiath an Aifrinn*¹⁶⁴, presumably written while on the continent sometime around 1615, to his re-interpretation of Irish history from a Gaelic perspective in *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (c.1634), it is proposed to examine only one of his works here, namely *Trí bior-ghaoithe an bháis*, (c.1631), in which he treats of the subjects of death and Purgatory. This particular work reflects most clearly the kind of material Keating himself might have preached from his pulpit in County Tipperary. Drawing heavily on European sermon literature, but also on the particular Irish situation in the first half of the seventeenth century, Keating manages to bridge the gap between the spirituality encouraged by the Council of Trent and its pre-Tridentine antecedent. Compiled by Keating during a period in which he certainly had pastoral responsibilities at home, its style is popular and is recognisably more suited to a lay audience than his earlier theological musings on the Mass, which were undoubtedly compiled in a different setting, with a different frame of mind, and for a more restricted audience.

¹⁶² Ibid., p.27.

¹⁶³ Cunningham, 'Geoffrey Keating's *Eochair Sgiath an Aifrinn* and the Catholic reformation in Ireland', p.133.

¹⁶⁴ Geoffrey Keating, *Eochair-sgiath an aifrinn... an explanatory defence of the Mass* (ed. Patrick O' Brien) (Dublin, 1898). For a good introduction to its subject matter see Cunningham, 'Geoffrey Keating's *Eochair Sgiath an Aifrinn* and the Catholic reformation in Ireland'; also Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating: history, myth and religion in seventeenth-century Ireland*, pp 32-40; Pádraig Ó Fiannachta, "'Eochair-sgiath an aifrinn'" in Pádraig Ó Mathúna (ed.), *Dúchas 1983-84-85* (Dublin, 1986).

Trí bior-ghaoithe an bháis is a quite a large work, consisting of three books, which are, themselves, composed of a sequence of individual chapters, varying from six to twenty-one in number. The first book focuses on the inevitability of death for each person, taking as its theme a quotation from Hebrews 9:27 '*Statutum est hominibus semel mori*' ('It is our human lot to die'). The second examines the doctrine of Original Sin and the manner in which one should prepare for death. The final, and by far the lengthiest book, explores the doctrine of Purgatory, treating of many other subjects associated with sin and death in some depth. The text is replete with suitable quotations from Scripture, the Fathers of the Church and various medieval authors to support its arguments, in addition to many appropriate *exempla* that could be committed to memory more easily than quotations from the works of learned scholars. The following examination of some of the themes discussed by Keating in *Trí bior-ghaoithe an bháis* reveals that, despite his continental training in the norms of the Council of Trent, he was, nevertheless, quite conservative in their propagation, preferring, instead, to use an approach that better reflected pre-Reformation spirituality than Tridentine thought. Undoubtedly he had already decided that such a style would prove more effective in eliciting the response he desired than a more innovative method. Despite this, Keating does, however, treat of issues pertaining to some of the reforms sought at the Council. In fact, while rooted in late medieval spirituality, *Trí bior-ghaoithe an bháis* reflects, to varying degrees, the work of Franciscan authors such as Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire and Aodh Mac Aingil, exhibiting also a reliance on the Jesuit revival of the *ars moriendi* tradition. Just as Ó Maolchonaire and Mac Aingil did before him, Keating refers occasionally to the political situation in Ireland and theologises themes such as persecution and hardship. Similarly, he occasionally rails against the teachings of Luther and Calvin, even though the work, as a whole, does not feature lengthy theological debate on issues disputed

with the reformers.¹⁶⁵ In addition to citing universally respected spiritual and theological writers, Keating was also prepared to quote native sources such as the religious verse of the bardic poets. Evidently, despite his theological education on the continent, Keating considered the verses he included to contain something of merit, apart from their use as memory aids. The content of his work, then, provides an important insight into how an educated, Counter-Reformation priest did not lose touch with his roots, using them, instead, as a vehicle by which the essentials of the Christian message could be preached.

Keating's portrayal of the uncertain journey of life, with its many dangers of sin and its untimely end, borrows heavily from imagery that was routinely used in late medieval bardic poetry, itself influenced by the prevailing spirituality at the time:

Óir mar nach feas do stiúrthóir na luinge...cá huair nó cá tráth theilgtear dá taobh-lot 7 dá tuargain go tinneasnach ar tráigh í, go ndéantar blogha béal-sgaoilte dhi, mar sin don duine ré dtriall ar lear luath-thonnach na locht, ó phort an gheineamhna go cuan a chríche déidheanaighe, i gcurachán chriadh na colna, 7 é ag loingseóireacht i n-oidhche na hurchóide, fá dhoilbh-cheó dubháilceadh 7 droch-rún, ar chor nach feas dó cá tráth theilgtear ar thráigh nó ar charraig chinneamhnaigh a chríche déidheannaighe é.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating*, p.49.

¹⁶⁶ 'Just as the steerer of the ship...does not know when, or at what point, its side is being bombarded and it is hastily being cast upon the shore, to be made bits of, so it is for the person who travels on the quick-waved sea of sin from the port of his conception to the harbour of his last end in the earthy currach of the body, sailing in the night of iniquity, under the deceptive fog of vice and evil intention, so that he does not know at what time his last end [will] fling him onto the shore or upon a fatal rock': *TBGB*, p.26.

The mist or fog clearly represents sin and ultimately leads to the shipwrecking of the vessel, symbolising the human person. The sixteenth-century poet, Diarmuid Ó Cobhthaigh, used both the images of the mist and the boat effectively to demonstrate that while the mist threatened the boat with destruction, it was only when Christ sat into it and began to row, that the vessel could be brought safely to shore.¹⁶⁷ Just as many bardic poets had done in the past, Keating also chose to use the imagery of a chess game to make an important point about death. Poets before him had depicted the world as a chessboard that was filled up with pieces at Creation.¹⁶⁸ These pieces were subsequently won by Christ at His Passion, which was portrayed as a game played with exceptional skill.¹⁶⁹ Keating's employment of the image embodies a warning to all who consider themselves important pieces on the chessboard of life. While standing upon the chessboard, pieces such as the King and Queen enjoy greater importance and honour than their counterparts. However, when the gambler decides that the game is finished and wishes to put the pieces back into his sack, he does not care which pieces end up on the top or the bottom of the bag, nor which piece goes in when. So it is with people, Keating explains. When the gambler of life, i.e. Death, arrives, and flings people into his earthy bag, he does not regard one person as higher in rank than another as he sweeps them from the chessboard of life.¹⁷⁰

Aware that people all across Europe fostered special devotion to the Five Wounds of Christ, particularly from the fourteenth century onwards, Keating chose to make use of this most powerful image of Christ's love, mercy and justice in his own work. In the

¹⁶⁷ *ADD* 63, vv 18, 35.

¹⁶⁸ *GBMCM* 20, v.8.

¹⁶⁹ *ADD* 63, v.9; see also the work of Muirchertach Ua Cobhthaigh in *Studies* xxxviii (1949), v.12, p.187.

¹⁷⁰ *TBGB*, p.30.

following case, the wounds of Christ serve as a standard under which his followers should pledge allegiance. Keating illustrates this point by referring to a practice attributed to the first prince of Rome, Romulus. He reportedly rendered his right hand armoured in order to retain fear in his subjects. Keating relates that

*Mar an gcéadna ní hail ré Dia gan é féin do thaisbéanadh armtha maille ré
sgíúrsadhaibh sgoith-ghéara phian ifrinn do bhagar ar na daoinibh, dá
gcongabháil fá chuing umhlachta 7 óigh-réire dhó féin.¹⁷¹*

The depiction of the sorrowful Christ bearing armour of wounds and the instruments of His Passion was hugely popular in late medieval Europe as evidenced by the number of images known as *Arma Christi* that are extant. In medieval religious thought, these same wounds were believed to appear fresh and bleeding at the Last Judgement as a sign of hope for those who confided in them and as an indictment of those who did not.¹⁷² The consequences for those who chose to scorn the representations of Christ's love and mercy are outlined by Keating in a story, which he borrows from the *Speculum exemplorum* (originally published in 1481)¹⁷³:

*Léaghthar fós sgéal míorbhaileach ar aní se, amhail chuirthear síos san
leabhar dá ngoirthear *Speculum exemplorum*, mar atá go raibhe peacthach
trom dh'áirithe do bhí ag drud ré deireadh a ré, 7 nach fuair neach uaidh ucht
do thabhairt ar aithrige, 7 go dtáinig gur thaisbéin Críost tré iomad trócaire é*

¹⁷¹ 'In the same way, God wishes to show Himself armed with the sharp-pointed scourges to threaten people with the pain of Hell, in order to keep them in a bond of humility and complete obedience to Himself': *ibid.*, p.215.

¹⁷² See Ryan, 'Reign of blood: aspects of devotion to the wounds of Christ in late medieval Gaelic Ireland', pp 144-5.

¹⁷³ Íde Ní Uallacháin, 'An cnuasach exempla Gaeilge i G 867 i Leabharlann Náisiúnta na hÉireann' (M.A. thesis, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, 1992), p.30.

féin dó, 7 gur nocht a chréachta dhó, dá ghríosadh ré déanamh aithrighe. Gidh eadh, do ghabh seisean go haindiúid doitheagaisg ag éimhdheadh aithrighe do dhéanamh. Agus mar do-chonnairc Críost an dobhuidheachas do bhí ann, do ghabh fearg é, 7 leis sin cuiris a lámh 'na thaobh dhearg, 7 do-bheir cuid dá fhuil féin as a thaobh, 7 croithis ar an bpeacthach í, 7 adubhairt, 'bíodh an fhuil sin mar fhiadhnaise ar thusa do bheith damanta go dlightheach'. Agus leis sin téid Críost a hamharc cháich, 7 gabhaidh an drong do bhí timcheall an othair ag ionnlat a dheilbhe, ag buain na fola dhe. Gidh eadh, níor fhéadadar, acht do lean mar oil i n-úir an uilc do bhí ann dego bhfuair bás.¹⁷⁴

The message that Keating wished to portray was very clear: life is short and one should approach death with contrition in one's heart and a desire to be reconciled in the Sacrament of Penance.

In the tradition of the medieval occupation with the brevity of life and one's accountability at death, Keating relates a story concerning an Irish kern from Munster who, with some friends, arrives in England and proceeds to acquire lodgings in the first

¹⁷⁴ 'Another miraculous story, which is recorded in the book that is known as *Speculum exemplorum*, [can be] read on this [subject]; that there was once a certain grave sinner, who was approaching the end of his life, and exhibited no sign of moving towards repentance. And it happened that Christ showed himself to him, through His great mercy, and displayed His wounds to him, in order to encourage him to repent. However, he remained stubbornly incorrigible, refusing to repent. When Christ saw his ingratitude He became angry and, with that, placed His hand in his red side and drew out some of His own blood from His side and shook it upon the sinner, saying "Let that blood be a witness to your lawful damnation" And, with that, Christ disappeared from everyone's sight, and the crowd that were gathered around the patient began to wash his face to remove the blood from it. However, they could not, and it remained [there] as a testimony of his wickedness until his death': *TBGB*, p.303. A version of this story also appears in the fourteenth century *Gesta Romanorum* and also in John Mirk's *Festial*: see Frederic Tubach, *Index exemplorum*, p.232, n.2960.

town he encounters. Many people welcome him and offer him accommodation on his arrival and, finally, he settles in one place. The kern was more than pleased with the hospitality he received throughout the week until the proprietor of the tavern called him aside eventually to ask him to 'make reckoning', later explaining that they were obliged to pay for all that they had eaten and drunk. This was a new experience for the kern, who, before this, had never been used to paying for anything. On arriving home, when asked about his trip, he praised the land, the food and drink and the people he met in England, all except for one fellow called 'Mac Raicín' who spoiled the party! Keating explains the allegory by stating that England symbolises the world and the innkeepers the devil, the world and the flesh; the kern stands for people in general and 'Mac Raicín' represents death. Just as the kern was made to pay for all the comforts he received at the inn, so will death exact payment from those who sample the fruits of the aforementioned innkeepers.¹⁷⁵ Keating makes use of religious verses from late medieval Irish bardic poets to make his case. He cites Donnchadh Mór Ó Dálaigh's warning that 'ye who have not yet died, be ready henceforth; your passing is certain, yet badly ye prepare for it.'¹⁷⁶ The ubiquity of death is expressed in lines from Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn: 'Death – woe forever! – shall not pass by child or old man; woe to him whom it finds guilty; 'tis the fate of all.'¹⁷⁷ The single remedy, recommended by Keating, in the face of death, is illustrated, again by Ó hUiginn, in the verse 'Now is the hour for penance; how know I if I should live another hour? Let me seize the time at hand.'¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ *TBGB*, pp 117-18.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.85. Translation found in *DDé* 25, v.20.

¹⁷⁷ *TBGB*, p.240. Translation found in *DDé* 5, v.8.

¹⁷⁸ *TBGB.*, p.59. Translation found in *DDé* 5, v.5.

Keating was certainly keen to convey the fact that death could seize both the old and young. In attempting to provide some rationale for the death of a young person, Geoffrey listed five reasons for such an occurrence. The first reason, he explains, is that it is the will of God. He cites the example of St Anthony, who was accustomed to questioning God about the state of this person and that. One day he heard a voice from Heaven, which gave him the following advice: ‘*aire a thabhairt dó féin 7 gan bheith ag fiafraighidh ar staidibh cáich.*’¹⁷⁹ Secondly, young people are often removed from the world through death ‘*ionnas nach rachdaois i n-olcaibh ó bheith i gcaidreabh na ndroch-dhaoine.*’¹⁸⁰ Keating relates a story from the Book of Wisdom to support his argument, in which a righteous man died in the prime of youthfulness. His death was explained by Solomon in the following manner: ‘*Do fuaduibheadh é ionnus nach diongnadh an mhailís a thuigse a chlaochlódh.*’¹⁸¹ Thirdly, a young man, whose life is bent on ill, might be taken quickly to preserve him from further sin. Keating borrows a phrase from King David when he comments: ‘*an dream bhíos fuileach...7 bhíos cealgach, ní fhaghaid leath a laitheadh.*’¹⁸² The fourth reason for the death of the young, inspired by the thought of Augustine, is to preserve them from committing the evil deeds of their forefathers. The infants in Sodom were slain along with their parents, he explains, for fear that they might follow their example.¹⁸³ The final reason given concerns the visitation of punishment for sin on succeeding generations as elucidated in

¹⁷⁹ ‘to mind his own business and not to be perpetually enquiring about the states of others’: *TBGB*, p.166.

¹⁸⁰ ‘in order that they might not turn to evil through fraternising with wicked people’: *ibid.*

¹⁸¹ ‘He was taken in order that malice might not alter his mind’: *ibid.*, p.167.

¹⁸² ‘Those who are murderous...and deceitful, do not enjoy half their days’: *ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

Exodus 20.¹⁸⁴ The ramifications of sin were seen to appear even to the third and fourth generation.¹⁸⁵ The rationale that Keating provided for the suffering and death of individuals, and especially of the young, was commonly held in late medieval Europe, as discussed in the first chapter. It is most lucidly illustrated in an Irish translation of the Gregory Legend, in which an emperor repents after having committed the sin of incest with his sister. Having received penance, he dies and the empress interprets his death as God's way of preserving him from ever committing the same sin again.¹⁸⁶ The final reason given by Keating, namely the visitation of the sins of one generation on another, would certainly have found sympathy among many in seventeenth-century Ireland. This notion was to be found among bardic poets such as Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird, Fear Flatha Ó Gnính and Aonghus Fionn Ó Dálaigh, among friars such as Aodh Mac Aingil and Antoin Gearnon and expressed by other individuals like Philip O' Sullivan Bear and Patrick Comerford, Catholic Bishop of Waterford.¹⁸⁷ Essentially a biblical notion, Keating was quick to apply it to the state of Ireland in the early seventeenth century:

Bíodh a fhiadhnaise sin ar mhórán d'uaislibh an oiléin se na hÉireann gá ndeachaidh báthadh ar mhórán dá dtightheibh onóracha, ionnus nach fuil acht ainbhfine agá n-áitiughadh don chur so; 7 iad féin – an mhéid amaireas dá n-

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., pp 167-8.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p.167.

¹⁸⁶ Falconer, 'An Irish translation of the Gregory Legend', p.52.

¹⁸⁷ See Ó Buachalla, *Aisling Ghéar*, pp 35-9; also Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating*, p.161; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on Franciscan manuscripts preserved at the convent, Merchant's Quay, Dublin* (London, 1906), p.20.

*iarmhar – i moghsaine 7 i mbochtacht, ag íoc uabhair 7 aindlighidh, drúise 7 droich-bheart, fill 7 fionghaile a sean 7 a sinnsear.*¹⁸⁸

Keating indicates that it was not just public sin that led to such a calamity, but the accumulation of many private sins, which cried out to God for vengeance. Recounting a vision given to Adomnán, as detailed in the *Book of Lecan*, Keating identifies three sins as deserving particular punishment, namely treacherous murder, injustice meted out to the Church, and the practice of adultery.¹⁸⁹ In an effort to dissuade people from being unfaithful to their spouses, he outlines four consequences of such action, namely poverty, the loss of a limb or some other body part (permitted by God as a warning to others), sudden death without repentance (such as being burnt in a fire, drowned in water or slain in battle), and being deprived of progeny.¹⁹⁰ While personal suffering might be endured by the guilty party, the adulterous act also had wider ramifications for the community as illustrated by the consequences of the unfaithfulness of Rory O' Connor, King of Connacht, Dermot McMurrough, King of Leinster, which, Keating argued, led to the invasion of Ireland.¹⁹¹

While Keating draws clear links between both sickness and suffering and sin, he does not argue that all suffering is a direct punishment for sin. In fact, in his description of the Sacrament of Penance, he notes that some hardships and sicknesses are permitted by God in order to sanctify the soul. Using the old image of Christ as the heavenly

¹⁸⁸ 'The nobles of this Ireland of Ireland witnessed this in the destruction of a lot of their honourable houses, so that there are only foreigners living there now; and they – the remnant that lives – [are] in slavery and in poverty, paying for the pride and lawlessness, lust and evil deeds, treachery and fratricide of their fathers and forefathers': *TBGB*, p.168.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 168-9.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.170.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.171.

physician in the Sacrament of Penance, Keating explains that some medicines, prescribed by a physician for the patient's health are naturally distasteful:

*As na briathraibh se S. Augustine is follus gurab liaigh Dia, 7 dá réir sin, Críost. Is follus mar an gcéadna an buaidhreadh 7 gach docar oile theagmhas don fhíréan ionnraic, gurab sioróipe searbha 7 ioc-luibhe borba do-bheir Dia dhóibh do shlánughadh a n-anmann.*¹⁹²

The medicines that God sometimes prescribes to the patient to enable him to conquer spiritual sickness include persecution, distress, captivity and exile, ills which Keating was in no doubt many had suffered in Ireland.¹⁹³ In simple terms, however, the principal message being conveyed by the priest-writer is that repentance is the solution to every illness:

*Bíodh a sháir-fhios agat gurab ioc-luibh dá gach othras 7 gurab urchosg imleighis dá gach easláinte dá mbí ar an anam an aithrighe; 7 gurab ceirín dá gach créacht an crábhadh, 7 gurab luibh dá gach lot an lóir-ghníomh.*¹⁹⁴

Keating's use of the medieval idea of Christ acting as physician in the Sacrament of Penance to a sick patient also embraced the 'principle of contraries', which was commonly used in the early Irish Penitentials. Adopting the medieval formula of the 'Seven Deadly Sins' rather than the more Tridentine moral checklist embodied in the Ten Commandments, Keating offered suggestions of some antidotes to combat sins

¹⁹² 'From the words of St Augustine, it is clear that God is a physician, and therefore [so, also] is Christ. It is also clear that trouble and every other harm that befalls the honest, righteous man, is a bitter syrup and harsh herb, which God gives to them for the salvation of their souls': *ibid.*, p.257.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.264.

¹⁹⁴ 'Let it be well known by you that the healing herb for every ailment and the healing remedy to cure every illness that may be upon the soul is repentance; and piety is the plaster for every wound, and the herb for every injury is penance': *ibid.*, pp 73-4.

such as pride, jealousy and lust.¹⁹⁵ Humility was offered as a remedy for pride.¹⁹⁶ Paul's recommendation in 1Cor:13 that love be patient and kind was prescribed against jealousy.¹⁹⁷ Virginity was suggested as a means to combat lust.¹⁹⁸ Although Keating did not employ the Ten Commandments as a tool for moral evaluation, as Aodh Mac Aingil did in *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe*, he did not wholly neglect them either.¹⁹⁹ The vision of destruction beheld by Adomnán, and quoted by Keating, attributes Ireland's misfortune to one factor: '*Monuar, monuar, monuar, d'aitightheóiribh oiléin na hÉireann, sháruigheas aitheanta an Tighearna.*'²⁰⁰ Two of the three principal sins listed at the end of Adomnán's vision, namely murder and adultery, are clearly proscribed in the Ten Commandments formula. Keating seemed confident that this same formula was being widely taught at the time, for he states that no one should plead ignorance as an excuse for not doing the will of God:

*Agus fós, ná measadh aon-duine go saorfadh a ainbhfios é i mbriseadh reachta Dé, do bhríogh go bhfuil an reacht go fairleathan arna chraobhsgaoileadh 7 arna fhógra dona Críostaidhthibh I gcoitchinne...*²⁰¹

While much of *Trí bior-ghaoithe an bháis* exhibits a late medieval spirituality, it does not neglect some of the concerns of the Tridentine Church. Although Keating did not

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., pp 248-59. See Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating*, pp 49-50, 161.

¹⁹⁶ *TBGB*, p.255.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p.253.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p.256.

¹⁹⁹ *SSA*, pp 94-104; Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating*, p.49.

²⁰⁰ 'Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the island of Ireland, that has violated the commandments of God': *TBGB*, p.169.

²⁰¹ 'And, yet, let nobody think that his ignorance will save him in the breaking of the commandments of God, for the law is being widely proclaimed and announced to Christians in general': *ibid.*, p.110.

design his work to be a polemical treatise, there is, nevertheless, some evidence of the kind of writing to be found in more openly bitter invectives directed against the reformers and Protestantism. Firstly, Keating is keen to establish the validity of the Sacrament of Penance, conveniently tracing it to a Scriptural source (with which, he must have hoped the Reformers could not quibble), namely the Book of Numbers:

Léagthar san naomhadh caibidil déag do Leabhar na Nuimhreach, mar ar orduigh Dia don mhuinntir do bheith cáidheach nó salach dol d'fhios na sagart dá nglanadh; 7 is amhlaidh do-níthí riú, luathreadh na hiodhbarta 7 fíor-uisge ar n-a gcumasg do chrothadh orra le craoibh íosóipe. Agus is eadh chialluigheas sin, go ndligheann gach aon bhíos cáidheach nó salach ó cheanuibh an chuirp, luathreadh smuaintighthe an bhás do chumasg tré fhíor-uisge na haithrighe, 7 a gcrothadh ar an anam lé híosóip na hurnaighthe.²⁰²

The third and final book in *Trí bior-ghaoithe an bháis*, dealing with Purgatory, identifies three common errors made by people in this regard. The first consists of the notion that the soul is not immortal.²⁰³ The second accepts that the soul is immortal but rejects the notion of Purgatory.²⁰⁴ The third states that neither the communion nor the good works of people on earth assist the dead in any way.²⁰⁵ Both the second and third

²⁰² 'It is read in the nineteenth chapter of the Book of Numbers how God ordered the people, who were filthy or soiled, to go to ask the priest to cleanse them; and this is what was done with them; the ashes of sacrifice, mixed with pure water was shaken upon them with a hyssop stick. And this signified that everyone, who is filthy or soiled from the desires of the body, should mix the ashes of the thoughts of death with the pure water of penance and shake them on the soul with the hyssop of prayer': *TBGB*, pp 14-15.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp 135-6.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.136.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.137.

‘errors’, as elucidated by Keating, were tenets of Protestant belief. While Keating does not explicitly attack the Reformist stance on this issue at this point, he later rails against the thinking of Luther and Calvin, while simultaneously using St Augustine to defend the doctrine of Purgatory. Citing Augustine’s teaching that the souls of the dead are given relief when their living friends bestow alms in church on their behalf, Keating writes:

*Tuig, a dhuine, as na háitibh se S. Augustine gur chreid sé go cinnte purgadóir do bheith ann, 'na mbeidís anmanna na bhfiréan i ngioll ré díol na bhfiach nachar dhíoladar féin ré linn a mbeatha. Agus fágbhaim fá bhreathnughadh gach aon-duine agá mbeith ciall fhalláin, cíá is córa, teist an phríomh-ughdair dhearbhtha S. Augustine – atá 'na iolar ós na héanaibh 7 'na ghréin ós reannaibh nimhe, idir dhochtúiribh eagnaidhe fromhadh ar a oibreachaibh, 7 do bhí naomhtha 'na bheathaidh, 7 do bhí fós leath-astoigh do cheithre céad bliadhain d'aimsir na n-apstal – do chreideamhain, nó an bráthair bréige Luitér, nó an canánach cealgach coinneal-bháitte Cailbhín, nó gach millteach míorúnach oile dá leanann dá slighthibh saobha seachránacha?*²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ ‘Understand, [reader], from these passages of *S. Augustine*, that he believed firmly that Purgatory exists in which would be placed the souls of the righteous in order that they might pay the debts that they did not pay during life. And I leave it to the judgement of everyone who is of sane reason, as to which is more correct to believe, the testimony of the approved prime author, *S. Augustine* – who is an eagle among the birds, and a sun among the rays of heaven, between the learned doctors of the Church, of which thousands of learned doctors source his works, and who was a saint in his life, and who was still within four hundred years of the time of the apostles, or the brother of lies, Luther, or the deceitful, excommunicated, canon, Calvin, or every other destructive, malevolent [person] that follows their perverse and erroneous ways?': *TBGB*, p.157. Keating challenges the views of the Reformers on other key issues such as the relationship between faith and good works: *ibid.*, pp 58-9.

He praises those who practice the custom of offering their Masses for their friends, detained in Purgatory, and also those who are friendless and with no one to pray for them.²⁰⁷ He is quick to criticise those who remain indifferent to the plight of such souls. He reminds the reader that when a person is lying on a sickbed, crying aloud, the physician arrives to help him. Similarly, when a pig squeals, his fellow pigs rush in unison to aid him. However, the soul of the righteous one that cries out and weeps in Purgatory finds no one to answer his call.²⁰⁸

There was also much within his own church that Keating was displeased about, and it is here that his thoughts mirror the kind of observations made, both by the Catholic synods of the first half of the seventeenth century in Ireland and writers such as Aodh Mac Aingil and Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire. It is in these passages also that Keating shows himself to be acutely aware of the need to implement the recommendations of Trent. While discussing the requirements of the souls in Purgatory, Keating identifies six things which those detained there rely on most, namely the mercy of God, the intercession of the saints, priests who offer Mass for their souls, the good works they themselves have performed in life, the integrity of executors of wills, whose responsibility it is to use the legacy in the exact manner willed by the deceased (for Masses, alms etc.), and finally, the intercession of Christians in general who offer their prayers and Masses for the souls of friends and strangers alike.²⁰⁹ The negligence of some priests in this regard is berated by Keating. He condemns priests who, having received a legacy, postpone the celebration of Masses for the deceased soul or, instead, offer Mass for two or three souls simultaneously when obliged to offer a single Mass

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p.149.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., pp 138-9.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., pp 140-50.

for each soul.²¹⁰ Priests who accept money for the celebration of Masses for the dead and then commit mortal sin before the offering of the Mass lessen the relief that the soul in Purgatory receives.²¹¹ In this case, the substantial merits of the Mass alone are gained by the soul. It is clear that Keating understood that priests, who celebrated Mass with reverence and piety, while in a state of grace, drew down increased blessings on the person for whom the Mass was offered.²¹² Also deserving of reproach were priests who accepted money for the offering of Mass for the deceased and then did not fully celebrate the Mass, postponed it indefinitely or transferred the responsibility to another priest, while offering him a reduced sum of money for his efforts.²¹³ Just as Aodh Mac Aingil recommended his readers to be discerning regarding which priest they chose as confessor, Keating advocated similar care in selecting a priest to intercede for one's deceased family or friends:

*Más maith leat cúram do chur ar neach um Dhia do ghuidhe ar do shon, déana dícheall ar do chommaoin do chur ar an tí is ionnraice do-ghéabhair, ós é is mó éistfeas Dia ar do shon.*²¹⁴

The ways by which souls in Purgatory are best assisted, according to Keating, are the offering of Masses, the prayer of the faithful community, the giving of alms and the

²¹⁰ Ibid., p.142.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² While making this statement, Keating, nevertheless, qualifies it by upholding the intrinsic value of the sacrament itself, regardless of the worthiness or dispositions of the minister, as contained in the term *opus operatum*.

²¹³ Ibid., p.143.

²¹⁴ 'If you wish to give the responsibility to someone to pray to God on your behalf, make sure to bestow your favour on the most honest person that you will find; for God will listen more to him on your behalf': *ibid.*, pp 142-3.

practice of fasting.²¹⁵ The practice of prayer, fasting and almsgiving was widely encouraged in Tridentine catechisms.

In a similar fashion to the manner in which Aodh Mac Aingil and others criticised the approach taken by many to the Sacrament of Penance, Geoffrey Keating, familiar with the pastoral situation in Ireland, also had reservations about its practice. He outlines three reasons why souls go to Purgatory: '*na peacaidh shologhtha, na peacaidh do-bheirid i ndearmad san bhfaoisidin, 7 na peacaidh chuirid san bhfaoistin is nách ráinig leó lóir-ghníomh do dhénamh ré linn a mbeatha.*'²¹⁶ While confessions rendered incomplete through the forgetfulness or lack of opportunity of the penitent merited detention in Purgatory, far more serious were the cases where lack of completion was deliberate on the part of the sinner. Thus Keating criticises three types of people who confess neglectfully. The first hides his own sins and reveal the sins of others, the second speaks only of his own holiness and innocence while there, and the third relates details that have no relevance to the subject matter of the confession itself.²¹⁷ He also recognised such an attitude among those who listened to sermons:

Mo thruaighe dom dhóigh is eadh is nós dóibh amhail do-níd na h-éageráibhthigh. An tan iomorra at-chluinid san tseanmóir coire troma dá gcor i

²¹⁵ Ibid., pp 156-7.

²¹⁶ 'venial sins, the sins they forget [to tell] in confession, and the sins they recount in confession but did not have the opportunity to do penance for during their life': *ibid.*, p.153.

²¹⁷ Ibid., pp 281-3. See Aodh Mac Aingil's similar thoughts on the issue in *SSA*, p.61. Interestingly, both Mac Aingil and Keating use the Pharisee character in Luke 8 as an example of the kind of penitent who is only interested in recounting his good deeds and, simultaneously, the sins of others.

*leith an phobail, adeirid gurab ris an tí se nó ris an tí oile bheanaid siad, 7 ní thuigid iad féin do bheith cionntach ionta.*²¹⁸

The kind of practices that Keating might have discouraged in sermons are hinted at in a passage denouncing the folly of the young who do not consider their last end:

*Gidh eadh fa-ríor, ní thuigthear cor na cinneamhna go cuimhneach lé hógaihb uallacha éigríonna na haimsire se, an tan bhíd ag breith a ruaig reabhraidh, 7 ag imirt a mbáire baoise, ag déanamh cluiche lúibe 7 liathróide, ag lámhach bonnsach 7 bior-ghaoitheadh, 7 ag eatrasa 7 ag iomáin 7 fós ag ól 7 ag imirt, ag beannradh 7 ag breasnaigheacht. Agus mo thruaighe na trocha nach tuigid mar thig an bás go hobann dá bhfuadach leis go meinic an uair is mó is bhíd i n-árach a n-il-chleas 7 a n-antlás.*²¹⁹

Other criticisms of Irish practice elucidated by the synods, such as the general behaviour at funerals and wakes, were also addressed by Keating.²²⁰ While endorsing the legitimacy of holding wakes, he cautions against the excesses of some, distinguishing between moderate and immoderate weeping.²²¹ Detailing how he,

²¹⁸ 'I consider it a shame the way they imitate the impious. When they hear the community being accused of serious sins in a sermon, they say that they pertain to this person or that, and they do not consider that they, themselves, are guilty of them [also]': *TBGB*, p.26.

²¹⁹ 'Alas, however, the proud youth of today are not mindful of and do not understand the blow of fate when they attaining their [sporting] victories, when playing "goal folly", engaging in the game of hoops and balls, hurling the javelin and spears, [eatrasa], and hurling, drinking, playing and courting, and chatting idly. Alas, they do not understand the shortness of life [and] how death comes suddenly to snatch them, often at the time in which they are most relying on every trick and merriment': *Ibid.*, p.19.

²²⁰ For examples of synodal legislation regarding funerals and wakes see Forrestal, *Catholic synods in Ireland, 1600-1690*, pp 53-4, 69-70, 121-2.

²²¹ *TBGB*, pp 174, 183-5, 189.

himself, witnessed examples of such excess in Connacht, Keating insists '*nach dleaghair dhóibh cumhaidh anorduighthe do bheith orra, amhail do bhíodh ar na págánchaibh, ag nach raibhe súil ré a chéile d'fhaigsin tar éis na beatha so.*'²²² In summary, then, while *Tri bior-ghaoithe an bháis* exhibited an essentially pre-Tridentine piety that was popular and attractive to many because of the familiarity of its language and style, it did not shy away from some of the issues raised by the Council, such as the necessity of frequenting the sacraments, the requirement that the lives of priests be holy, and the refutation of error regarding beliefs such as Purgatory, the Sacrament of Penance and the importance of faith being accompanied by good works for the salvation of the individual.

Tridentine influences in bardic poetry

Perhaps one of the most difficult tasks for any historian wishing to identify signs of Tridentine influence in early modern Gaelic Ireland is to find such evidence in the religious compositions of the bardic poets. Much of the verse composed by poets living in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (when one might expect such influences to appear) mirrors what went before it in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in style and content. This should come as little surprise. Poets such as Aonghus Fionn Ó Dálaigh, Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird, Maolmhuire, son of Cairbre Ó hUiginn and Diarmuid Mac an Bhaird lived between two worlds: one that was very familiar and comfortable (encompassing the spirituality with which they were reared) and another that was only beginning to filter slowly back to Ireland in the wake of the Council of Trent. Therefore, their treatment of religious ideas, in the main, reflects what has been identified as popular late medieval devotion in earlier chapters, and thus,

²²² 'that it is not right for them to grieve inordinately as the pagans, who held no hope of seeing each other again were accustomed to doing': *ibid.*, p.185.

much of their poetry has been deemed to embody a genuine expression of that devotion. However, it must be remembered, too, that during their lifetimes, a process of change was unfolding before their eyes, bringing with it some subtle changes that even they began to take account of. It is noted above that Diarmuid Mac an Bhaire's exhortation to 'believe sincerely that God was born and that he went under the tomb' illustrates the influence of the catechetical programme advocated by Trent.²²³ Baithghalach Mór Mac Aodhagáin also exhibits an interest in catechesis with a statement that could have appeared just as easily in Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa's *An Teagasg Críostaidhe*: 'These three are all one powerful God, not three Gods.'²²⁴ The theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, around which Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire structured his 1593 catechism (borrowing the idea from Peter Canisius) are requested by Mac Aodhagáin, further indicating the Tridentine influence on his work: 'O Trinity...do Thou increase my hope, my charity and my faith.'²²⁵

One of the features of the later poetry of the bards is an increased expression of belief in the Real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, perhaps influenced by Trent's renewed focus on the sacraments, but almost certainly highlighted in response to the reductionism of Protestant theology in this regard. Belief in the power of the Catholic Eucharist often appears juxtaposed with the perceived inadequacy of its Protestant equivalent. This is certainly the case in a poem composed by Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaire, which relates his experiences in Scotland around 1581.²²⁶ He comments that 'in this fair-flowered land I receive not the Lord's Body.'²²⁷ The value of what he has

²²³ *ADD* 56, v.24.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 57, v.7.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, v.5.

²²⁶ Caball, *Poets and politics: continuity and reaction in Irish bardic poetry, 1558-1625*, p.80.

²²⁷ *ADD* 53, v.4.

forfeited by coming to Scotland is indicated in the statement: ‘were all Alba mine, alas! O God, that I came overseas to be without Mass or clergy.’²²⁸ He continues in this vein by exclaiming ‘Had I all Alba’s smooth gold and all the silver in this cool fresh land of fair peaks – better once to hear Mass than it all!’²²⁹ Mac an Bhaird’s conviction that the Protestant service is inadequate for his requirements rests on the fact that ‘Alba...believes not as she should that the High-King’s blood flows into the host.’²³⁰ His outline of this fundamental Eucharistic belief, in addition to the insistence that it *should* [my emphasis] be believed, is catechetical in tone, mirroring passages in many versions of the catechism of Trent, which highlight the necessity of belief in the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ. Aonghus Fionn Ó Dálaigh expresses this conviction more explicitly when he states ‘I believe in the noble wafer by whom our salvation was secured, in Thy flesh and blood and also in Thy humanity.’²³¹ He continues to express his belief as follows: ‘I believe from my heart in Thee as God. What I mean, I swear to Thee. I believe in Thee in the wine and host; Thou art Christ in the round wafer.’²³² Such a confession of faith closely resembles the teachings of Trent primarily and secondly, the transmission of those teachings in synods such as the Synod of Armagh, held at Drogheda in 1614:

The faithful must be taught that the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ, are really offered in this sacrifice; that they are truly and really partaken

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, v.5.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, v.7.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, v.8.

²³¹ *DD* 14, v.1. Other poems by Ó Dálaigh on the Eucharist can be found in *AFOD* 16 and 17.

²³² *Ibid.*, v.4.

of by those who receive...that Christ is entire under each species...nay, under each particle, however small, as well as in a large host.²³³

Bonaventura Ó hEoghusa's advice to the unlearned who had an upbringing deprived of discussion of the articles of the faith, namely that apart from the fundamentals of Christian doctrine, they must be prepared to 'believe what the Church deems fit to believe'²³⁴ is echoed in Ó Dálaigh's poem also: 'I believe as the Church believes since it is no small-minded belief, what it is right to believe while consuming it.'²³⁵ Although the exhortation to 'believe as the Church believes' was not actually new, Ó Dálaigh's use of the term may well have been influenced by some catechetical instruction he received. It is clear, from a poem written on the subject of the Sacrament of Penance, that Aonghus was aware of the nature of sin and its many manifestations. Illustrating the fact that poets such as Ó Dálaigh lived a dual existence, with a foot in both the older, late medieval piety and its early modern and Tridentine successor, Aonghus uses both the Seven Deadly Sins and the Ten Commandments as moral formulae for identifying sin.²³⁶ He also shows that he is aware of the sinfulness of swearing, something that Counter-Reformation Jesuits and friars alike were keen to stamp out: 'Often falsely I swear by the book or other holy things. Pardon my perjury!'²³⁷ Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaired, commenting on what one should bring before one's maker in death, makes mention only of the commandments and also one of the recommendations for

²³³ Forrestal, *Catholic synods in Ireland, 1600-1690*, p.65.

²³⁴ 'atá dh'fhiachaibh ortha fós bheith ullamh dochum an uile neitheadh do chreideamh agá bhfoillséocha an eaglas gurab cóir a chreideamh': *TC*, p.32.

²³⁵ *DD* 14, v.2.

²³⁶ *AFOD* 39, vv 3-9.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, v.10.

penance advocated by the Council of Trent: 'Take as *viaticum* almsgiving, fasting, prayer, and obedience to the commandments; for thou shalt never return.'²³⁸

The treatment of the Virgin Mary in bardic poetry of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries shows little sign of diminishing her importance or power. Poets such as Aonghus Fionn Ó Dálaigh exhibit huge devotion to her as evidenced by the number of poems dedicated to her honour.²³⁹ Similarly, Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird proclaims her mighty intercessor and Co-Redemptrix:

As heavy on her as on Him was the heavy stone flag; the tombstone on the
Prince of mercy pressed Mary too /

Great the reward for her pain; she has the couch due to her in Heaven of the ten
holy ranks; thou must do naught to offend her.²⁴⁰

Sometimes she received recognition for favours she could not have possibly bestowed. This is surely the case when Mac an Bhaird anachronistically relates how the biblical character, Job, gave thanks to the 'dear God and the sweet gracious virgin for any alms given his wife' during a time of distress.²⁴¹ In some instances, however, it seems as if the poet is eager to defend the role of Mary and, concomitantly, his devotion to her, against what he must have recognised as some sort of attack. Aonghus Fionn Ó Dálaigh certainly uses this kind of language, stating that 'not wrong my praise of Mary, guiding wand of the six hosts.'²⁴² In another poem, he defiantly declares that 'I cease not to claim that woman, O Jesus, as Advocate on Doomsday', adding that he 'could not over

²³⁸ *IM* 1928, p.192, v.4.

²³⁹ For an overview of Aonghus's treatment of the Virgin Mary in his poetry see O' Dwyer, *Mary: a history of devotion in Ireland*, pp 189-99.

²⁴⁰ *IM* 1928, pp 195-6, vv 42-3.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.264, v.14.

²⁴² *AFOD* 10, v.1.

praise her.²⁴³ Some other poets, however, wished to move away from a portrayal of Mary powerfully commanding her Son. Tadhg, son of Giolla Brighde Mac Bruaideadha, in a poem written sometime between 1581 and 1612, requests Mary's intercession in a manner that hints at a mellowing of her power: 'Do thou, O Virgin Mary, ask for my soul (from God); thou art highest in heaven's glory; a prayer to thy father, heaven's king, will make his mercy greater.'²⁴⁴ In this instance, Mary petitions rather than commands. A far more explicit example of a reduction of the power accorded to Mary is found in the poetry of Gofraidh Mac an Bhaird (*fl. c.* 1600). Addressing Christ, he pleads for pardon in the following manner:

Show forth to us thy timely mercy for the sake of the dear Virgin Mary, thy nurse; owing to Thy drinking at her breast, do Thou put, *though Thou art not bound to do so* [my emphasis], Thy hand 'neath our burden.²⁴⁵

Although Christ should show mercy for the sake of His mother, He is nevertheless, free in this instance, to decline.²⁴⁶ However, such portrayals of Mary in a clearly subordinate role were, even at this time, the exception rather than the rule in bardic poetry.

While Geoffrey Keating was pleased to make use of the religious verses of some bardic poets to convey his message in *Trí bior-ghaoithe an bháis*, Keating's work would also influence the poetic compositions of other Gaelic poets later on. The fact that some verses, composed shortly after Keating's work was published, exhibited both subtle indications of his style and a more blatant borrowing of one of his tales testifies to the

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 11, vv 9, 11.

²⁴⁴ *BOH* 7, v.26.

²⁴⁵ *ADD* 51, v.2.

²⁴⁶ Compare Mary's role in this example with earlier portrayals of her pervasive power; see *PB* 21, v.6; *DDé* 19, v.19; *ADD* 68, v.36.

popularity of *Trí bior-ghaoithe an bháis* and confirms the success of its transmission. A verse from a poem by Muiris, son of Dáibhí Dubh Mac Gearailt (c.1565-1630), warning of the imminence of death, closely resembles both the style and language of some its passages:

*T'aithrige ar cairde ná cuir as ucht fhaide do shaoghail; tig an téag uair nach saoire; a thruaigh, créad nach cruadhchaoine?*²⁴⁷

Another poem, sometimes erroneously attributed to Muiris, also contains a direct borrowing from Keating's work, namely the story about 'Mac Raicín'. Addressing death, the poet states: '*Cosmhail tú le fear ósta agá mbí deora fá chaithis; ar n-imtheacht adeir dá lamhughadh: "tabhair sásughadh 'nar chaithis!"*'²⁴⁸ Examples such as these illustrate that Keating was already reaching a particular audience and, what's more, was making an impression.

The Irish who travelled in large numbers to educational centres on the continent, from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards, were exposed to a new set of ideas, which were, themselves, influenced by the decrees of the Council of Trent and a general re-evaluation of the presentation of Church doctrine and practice. Although one can be certain that the process by which the general European populace assimilated these ideas was slow and laborious, the pace of change in universities and newly founded seminaries was somewhat faster. Those Irish who entered orders such as the Jesuits and Franciscans, or trained in Europe for diocesan ministry at home, bore the

²⁴⁷ 'Do not postpone your confession to the length of your life; death comes at an hour you do not expect; Alas, why do you not weep bitterly?': *DMMD*, 5, v.17. If Muiris was, in fact, influenced by the published version of Keating's work, then perhaps he was still alive after 1631.

²⁴⁸ 'You are like an innkeeper where drink is consumed; on leaving he says to his guests "Make satisfaction for what you drank!": *DMMD*, 12, v.10. See Cunningham, *The world of Geoffrey Keating*, pp 196-7.

unenviable responsibility of introducing religious reform in Ireland. This chapter has examined the process by which Tridentine reform was attempted in Ireland. Firstly, an educated and capable episcopate was required for such a task. Political events, however, ensured that, by the end of the first decade of the seventeenth century, most bishops no longer resided in Ireland, which, for a time, hampered progress. The records of the Jesuit order provide an important insight into the manner in which a small, but dedicated, body of men attempted to implement Tridentine norms in Ireland. Their principal work revolved around catechesis and restoring people to sacramental practice, which, themselves, were two of the main concerns of the Council of Trent. It is argued here that the literary output of orders such as the Franciscans at Louvain illustrates that most of these concerns were similarly expressed and held by the friars also. While the Jesuits worked mostly in urban centres, it is not difficult to imagine that the mendicant friars, returning to Ireland from the continent, would have engaged in much the same kind of activity in their respective areas, covering much more of the Gaelic world than the Jesuits did. In essence, priests returning from Europe, regardless of whether they belonged to a particular order or diocese, carried the same responsibilities *vis à vis* the Tridentine programme, by virtue of their ordination into the One Holy Catholic Apostolic Church, proclaimed by Trent. The Jesuit order was hugely influential in the education of friars as well as seculars, and no priest educated in continental seminaries could possibly have avoided some contact with the thoughts of at least some Jesuit theologians and catechists. This is one of the reasons why much of the activity of Jesuits in Ireland can offer insights into what some of the pastoral activity of other orders might have consisted of. It is fortunate too, that the Jesuit accounts provide some glimpse of the reactions of those to whom they ministered. On the other hand, however, the implementation of Trent in Ireland should not be seen as a homogenous project.

Condemnations of some Irish practices gained mixed receptions, as instanced in Aodh Mac Aingil's response to the concerns of *Propaganda Fide*. Synods did not always agree on the standardisation of church practice. Preachers were not always inclined to leave behind imagery and methods that were familiar and comfortable, even if they pertained to an older spirituality, as in the case of Geoffrey Keating. All in all, although concerted efforts were made to bring about necessary changes in Irish Church life in the first half of the seventeenth century, the need to proceed stealthily and carefully was recognised. For that reason, one can agree with Bernadette Cunningham's synopsis, that the Catholic Reformation in early seventeenth century Ireland 'was likely to be a conservative affair.'²⁴⁹

²⁴⁹ Cunningham, "Zeal for God and for souls": Counter-Reformation preaching in early seventeenth-century Ireland', p.126.

Conclusion

The principal concern of this work has been to shed some light on the world of popular religion in Gaelic Ireland during the period 1445-1645. An endeavour, such as this one, faces a range of difficulties and problems. Defining the term 'popular religion' itself has been one of the most challenging of these. The perception that popular religion refers broadly to the faith of the 'ordinary person' as opposed to that of the more privileged members of society is hugely problematic. Surely late medieval and early modern societies were composed of a range of social orders, some only slightly more 'privileged' than others. It appears exceedingly simplistic, then, to divide society into just two categories – popular and elite. The idea that two distinct religious worlds existed and that 'never the twain [met]' just does not accord with an increasingly large body of evidence suggestive of the contrary. While the alternative definition of 'popular religion' (namely, personal engagement with the Godhead, encompassing an internalisation of doctrine) proposed here might not offer the perfect solution to the problem, it does emphasise, however, that a large gulf did not necessarily exist between the faith of the prelate and that of the peasant. The learned and the unlearned both drew from a well of doctrine and their respective interpretations of the same teaching did not always differ significantly from each other. In the world of late medieval and early modern religion, borrowings were undertaken on all sides.

Religious themes and doctrines appropriated by the Gaelic Irish in the late medieval and early modern periods in general demonstrate remarkable similarities to those commonly present in European devotional life. Throughout the period examined here, the Gaelic Irish continue to assimilate the latest continental devotions, interpreting them from within their own culture, and honing them, where necessary, so that they achieved

maximum impact. The devotional interests of the Gaelic Irish, then, show no significant variations from those of their European counterparts. The ministry of the mendicant orders, such as the Franciscans and Dominicans (particularly in their Observant forms), greatly facilitated the initial embrace and development of broad religious trends in Gaelic Ireland. The late medieval fondness for affective devotion, inaugurated and spread by groups, such as the Franciscans, quickly spread from continental Europe to Ireland, influencing the way people thought about their faith and preparing them for more specific emotive devotions such as the Cult of the Five Wounds of Christ or the Advocacy of Mary.

The religious works of the bardic poets provide a fascinating window into lay piety of the period. The poets not only demonstrate that they are in tune with current devotional developments: they succeed in taking broadly European themes and painting them in Gaelic colours, resulting in an impressive dialogue with God from within a particular culture. Their musings embody a classic illustration of the internalisation of religion. The devotional world that is found in pre-Tridentine Gaelic Ireland is essentially vibrant and thriving. While the institutional Church may have been suffering from poor organisation, badly-trained clerics and moral laxity in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, popular piety was very much alive and well. Contrary to many previous assessments of the quality of popular devotion in the late medieval period, this study has demonstrated that many of the manifestations of popular religiosity found at this time had more in common with orthodox doctrine than might initially be imagined.

The Council of Trent in the mid-sixteenth century sought to achieve two distinct goals: firstly, to regularise Church life by attempting a more systematic form of catechesis and by the promotion of a more regular sacramental life, and secondly, to defend what was thought worthy of defence against the criticisms of the Reformers. Irish clergy on the

continent, whose duty it was to implement the decrees of the Council at home, took these considerations on board. The catechisms and devotional works of the friars at Louvain, for instance, combine a concern for defining doctrine and its implementation with a defence of all that they held dear. What 'Tridentine norms' actually consisted of is not always clear. Many of the recommendations of Trent are already found in much earlier material of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Much of its advice regarding the Sacrament of Penance, for instance, mirrors that of writers such as Antoninus of Florence (1389-1459). What Trent did was not so much to innovate, but rather to provide a new impetus to the work of catechesis and provision of the sacraments. It is very difficult to distinguish, therefore, between a pre-Tridentine and Tridentine Gaelic Ireland. The process by which the decrees of Trent were introduced to Irish life was slow and cumbersome. What being Tridentine meant in the 1560s was not necessarily the same as what it would mean in the 1610s and 1620s. Those whose initial responsibility it was to make this 'transition' were, themselves, the produce of two worlds – an early formative devotional world in which they grew up, and a later world, in which they entered a world of serious study on the continent. However, these worlds themselves were not altogether distinct. Even at the heart of Counter-Reformation Europe lay the 'interpreters' of Trent who, themselves, had been brought up in a pre-Tridentine and even pre-Reformation environment. While the present work is divided into two sections (the first examining a devotional world before 'Trent' and the second discussing Tridentine concerns), it should be remembered that, for the most part, Church reform occurred very slowly over a long period of time. Therefore, what being 'Tridentine' entailed during the period examined here is not easily identified. What is certain, however, is that Gaelic Irish men and women, while attentive to unfolding religious developments, would continue to engage vibrantly with their God.

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