

book. Similarly the genealogy from Adam to Noah the first time, being recalled again by Matthew. Observe in like manner the pagan authors glorifying the battle-rolls of their princes and countries, instructing their disciples regarding them one after the other, as is clear by Virgil and Florus.

[2] Authoritative writers assert that there were learning and panegyric literature in Ireland as early as any other country in western Europe, that they [sc. the Irish] had poets, students and gilders of poetry, law and history in their own language and in others. That is attested to by her numerous saints, churches, schools, writings and works.

The dark deep ocean, the awful strange current: it is only foolishness to contend with it, it is no route for the ignorant.

Our own poets have left no style untried, nor have those who dared to abandon the path of the Greeks and celebrate our homeland's deeds deserved the least honour.

The Muses have granted to men talents for metres.

[3] In any case, the writer of this collection of poems is Father Nicolás alias Fearghal Dubh Ó Gadhra a brother of the Order of St Augustine, who enjoyed status and high honour in the Order in many locations in this kingdom after first completing his education in Spain. He was banished along with everyone to the Low Country in Cromwell's time, where he wrote this book in the city of Lille at every interval that he got, spending further time collecting them [sc. the poems] from the manuscripts wherein he found them.

[4] We read that poetry is older than prose, that it is more easily memorized and more artistic. Here in particular there is poetry of every usual type: religious pieces, infancy poetry, praise poetry, graduation poetry, didactic poetry, love [poems], historic poems, droighneach, ógláchas, lament etc. However the Iomarbhágh and a number of good poems that were taken from the book through a sort of a perversely enthusiastic or (more correctly) wretched curiosity, it is desirable that they should be replaced with like poems, since it is clear from scripture that there is nothing new under the sun.

[5] And, adhering to that counsel, a person who has spent his time in learning and who leaves his work to an ignorant person, by that teaching he devalues his work, in the event that this [work] is understood only by someone like the person who made known the writing of the hand on the wall.

[6] Having considered the above remarks, understand (dear reader) the extent of the writer's affection and kindness towards his nation in general and his kin in particular on whom he has bestowed this heir. Rebuke him gently if you find an error of metre or writing in it and he will be satisfied with his work. He asks your prayer in eternal life Amen. He is now alive and well in Banada 5 June 1686.

Continental catechisms and their Irish imitators in Spanish Habsburg lands, c. 1550–c. 1650

Salvador Ryan

In his discussion of sixteenth-century changes in catechesis, especially as they pertained to the activities of the Jesuit order, John W. O'Malley observes:

There was a movement away from the fundamentally oral character of catechesis, in which the lesson was conveyed by lectures or sermons and learned in verses often set to tunes, to study from printed texts. The question-and-answer format practically drove out other forms ... Substructures governed by a particular theological viewpoint began to be introduced into texts, even though traditional materials like the Creed and the Decalogue were retained. This led to overt or covert attempts to turn the text into an instrument of religious polemics or a summary of confessional orthodoxy. What resulted was a tendency to make catechesis more an exercise of mind and memory than a continuation of its more traditional function as an initiation into Christian life and religious practice. The Jesuits came to reflect, promote, ignore and sometimes resist these changes, and their practice of catechesis varied in different territories, even though the effective network of communication within the society helped them maintain a certain common outlook. Especially in the first fifteen years, they were more in touch with earlier traditions of catechesis, which they infused with energy and enthusiasm.¹

It is clear from O'Malley's remarks, that when it came to catechetical methods in the early modern world (even those from within a particular religious order

¹ John W. O'Malley, *The first Jesuits* (Harvard, 1994), p. 118. Before Luther the word catechism meant not a book, but oral teaching by question and answer, see Mícheál Mac Craith, 'An onóir do Dhia, a cclú dár náision agus d'Ord San Froinsias', *Éire agus Eoraip san 17ú haois. Léachtaí Cholm Cille*, 38 (Má Nuad, 2008), p. 101. The shift in the understanding of the term 'catechism' is captured in the following article title: Milton McGatch, 'Basic Christian education from the decline of catechesis to the rise of catechisms' in Milton McGatch (ed.), *Eschatology and Christian nurture* (Farnham, 2000).

or society) there was no such thing as a 'one-size-fits-all' policy. Rather, the practice of catechesis in various territories aimed at a variety of different groups called for some degree of flexibility in the approach taken. This consideration is a crucial one as it has important implications for Irish-language catechisms produced in the Spanish Habsburg territories between 1593 and 1645.

Two of the Irish-language catechisms examined below were produced at the Irish Franciscan house of St Anthony's College, Louvain (Bonaventura Ó hEodhasa's *An teagas Críosaíde*,² first published in Antwerp in 1611 and in a later edition by means of a newly acquired printer at St Anthony's College (discussed in Raymond Gillespie's essay), and Antoin Gearnon's *Parrthas an anma*³ in 1645). A further two catechisms were produced in other locations – Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of 1593,⁴ compiled in Salamanca and Theobald Stapleton's *Catechismus*,⁵ published in Brussels in 1639. The provenance of a fifth quasi-catechetical tract, found in RIA, MS 23 L 19 (1006), which also contains the 1593 catechism and which T.F. O'Rahilly suggested might also be by Ó Maolchonaire, remains unknown and undated.⁶ The link between the 1593 catechism and the others produced at St Anthony's College lies in the fact that its compiler, Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire, who translated the text from a Spanish original by the Jesuit, Jerónimo de Ripalda (1536–1618), later became a founding member of the Franciscan community at St Anthony's College and participated in the college's publishing enterprise by producing another translation of a spiritual work, *Desiderius*, in 1616, which contained significant additional material that was directed specifically at a contemporary Irish audience. This essay contends that these five tracts (four of which we know to have been produced on the Continent and three of which were produced in the Spanish Netherlands) were quite different works, espousing different approaches and objectives and addressing themselves to different audiences. Just as the early Jesuit catechisms often hung, sometimes awkwardly, between older and more recent catechetical strategies, Irish-language catechisms were to replicate this trend some decades later. What follows is an attempt to contextualize these five catechetical tracts both temporally and geographically. The former concerns their place in the general history of catechesis from the later Middle Ages to the Tridentine reform, and the latter their relationship to continental catechisms of the mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries. Throughout, it is argued that the disparity of approach evident in these works points not only to different intended audiences but also more fundamentally to the often fractured nature of Tridentine

² Bonaventura Ó hEodhasa, *An teagas Críosaíde*, ed. Fearghal Mac Raghnaill (Dublin, 1976).

³ Antoin Gearnon, *Parrthas an anma*, ed. Anselm Ó Fachtna (Dublin, 1953). ⁴ Brian Ó Cuív, 'Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of Christian doctrine', *Celtica*, 1 (1946–50), 1–63. ⁵ *The 'Catechismus' of Theobald Stapleton* (Brussels, 1639; rpt, Dublin, 1945). ⁶ Brian Ó Cuív, 'A modern Irish devotional tract', *Celtica*, 1 (1946–50), 207–37.

reform at a local level. Here the business of Catholic reform often manifested itself as a kaleidoscope of differing expectations, strategies and routes rather than a top-down, fully cohesive Tridentine march into the seventeenth century.

The compilation of any catechism involves the making of choices: of structure, style and length certainly, but also choices that pertain to the weighting of material – which matters should receive most attention, for instance. Of course this last point is inextricably linked to the very *raison d'être* of the catechism itself: the impartation of a degree and level of doctrine that one should reasonably be expected to know (in this period, often by heart). The question of what a Christian should be expected to believe was central, therefore, to the genesis of all catechisms. However, the answer to this seemingly innocuous question was not easily arrived at; indeed it was often far from clear to those who set about implementing the Tridentine ideal of widespread catechetical formation. In the later Middle Ages, the answer at least seemed to be a lot more straightforward. It might be argued (up to a point) that a little ignorance mixed with a willingness to subject oneself to greater authorities could, indeed, be a virtuous thing, preserving the less educated from rather sticky situations. One late medieval English sermon for Easter, while touching the subject of transubstantiation, contains the line 'I think if you are an uneducated man, you should not investigate any further than what the holy church teaches you ...'.⁷ The virtue that was understood to lie in admission of one's inadequacy did not apply to the uneducated alone. John Mirk in his *Festial* includes a story about thirteenth-century English bishop, philosopher and theologian, Robert Grosseteste (c.1175–1253), who was assailed by demons as he lay on his deathbed. They disputed with him on matters of the faith to such an extent that he became almost convinced of their arguments and was on the edge of despair. At that point the Virgin Mary appeared to him, saying 'My servant, say you believe as holy Church does'. As he cried out 'I believe as holy Church believes' the demons fled and he died peacefully.⁸

While this tale may represent Mirk's particular anti-intellectual bent, the declaration 'I believe as the Church believes' remained in use for some time to come, assuming a new importance in the age of confessional conflict. The frequently cited declaration of the Wexford boatman, Matthew Lamport, in the wake of the Baltinglass rebellion in 1580 – 'I do not know how to debate these things with you; I only know that I am Catholic and that I believe in the faith of my holy mother the Catholic Church' – demonstrates its longevity.⁹ Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin highlights the perceived usefulness of a degree of Catholic ignorance in the Reformation period when he draws attention to the Catholic

⁷ Judy Ann Ford, *John Mirk's festial: orthodoxy, Lollardy and the common people in fourteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 61. ⁸ Ford, *John Mirk's festial*, p. 94. ⁹ Raymond Gillespie, *Devoted people: belief and religion in early modern Ireland* (Manchester, 1997), p. 26.

perception that 'the peasant who could just about mumble his *Credo*, *Ave Maria* and *Pater Noster* and who made his Easter confession and communion was still safer from hellfire than a bishop of the Church of England'.¹⁰ The Irish Jesuit, Fr Richard Conway, who once explained how the prohibition of Catholic schools was designed to fill English universities with the children of the wealthy Irish in order to make heretics of them adds, tellingly, 'but the natives did not go to England; they preferred rather to remain in ignorance than to run the risk of becoming heretics'.¹¹ In 1571, the year before he returned to Ireland from continental Europe to become bishop of Cork and Cloyne, Edmund Tanner had a survey compiled on the pastoral situation in Ireland drawn from the accounts of 'grave men'. This survey presented a familiar portrait of the widespread lack of basic Christian doctrine among the laity and the poor quality of clergy. However, the report remarked, with no small degree of reassurance, that despite the ubiquitous superstition and ignorance 'not a hundred heretical Irishmen were to be found throughout the island'.¹² Here, once again, ignorance was perceived to act almost as a shield against reformist doctrine. In his spiritual work entitled *Desiderius* (1616) Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire, in a section devoted to the contemporary Irish situation, warns his readers not to enter into disputation with Protestants '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'.¹³ This advice was also found in Old English recusant works of the period as is evident from John Copinger's *A mnemosynum or memorial to the afflicted Catholices in Ireland* (Bordeaux, 1606), which advised Irish Catholics to avoid attempting to convert Protestants (here expressly Calvinists) for heresy was 'an infernall and contagious mischiff-effe ... neither is there any other remedie but to flie'. Catholics were neither to dispute nor doubt points of doctrine but 'believe them simply with the universall Church'.¹⁴ In the light of this Catholic penchant for declaring one's confessional stance rather than plumbing the depths of its mysteries, we may ask what position the Irish-language catechisms produced on the Continent took on the matter: just how much understanding was expected of their Catholic audiences? In exploring this question, it is crucial that we take into account

¹⁰ Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin, *Catholic Reformation in Ireland: the mission of Rinuccini, 1645-1649* (Oxford, 2002), pp 65-6. ¹¹ Edmund Hogan (ed.), *Distinguished Irishmen of the sixteenth century* (London, 1894), p. 38. ¹² Brendan Bradshaw, 'The English Reformation and identity formation in Wales and Ireland' in Brendan Bradshaw & Peter Roberts (eds), *British consciousness and identity: the making of Britain, 1533-1707* (Cambridge, 2003), pp 58-9. ¹³ Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire, *Desiderius: otherwise called Sgáthán an Chrábhaidh*, ed. Thomas F. O'Rahilly (Dublin, 1955), p. 158. ¹⁴ Quoted in Elizabethanne Boran, 'Printing in early seventeenth-century Dublin: combating heresy in Serpentine times' in Elizabethanne Boran & Crawford Gribben (eds), *Enforcing Reformation in Ireland and Scotland, 1550-1700* (Farnham, 2006), p. 45.

the size, layout and content of each of these works and, from this, deduce what the intended use of each may have been.

Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of 1593, a translation of Spanish Jesuit Jeronimo de Ripalda's *Doctrina Cristiana con una exposicion breve* (1591) at just 20 pages in manuscript form, adopts the by now popular question-and-answer format in addition to a three-fold division under the titles 'Faith', 'Hope' and 'Love'.¹⁵ However, equal weight is not given to each section. In terms of content, the section on Faith, which deals with the articles of the Creed, comprises roughly 15 per cent of the whole in contrast to the third section on Love, which outlines how one should live morally – including treatment of the Commandments, the Sacraments, the Works of Mercy, Virtues and Vices, Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Eight Beatitudes, etc. – comprises roughly 70 per cent. Before introducing the Creed, Ó Maolchonaire emphasizes the necessity of understanding the principal elements of the catechism well. In reply to the question of how one can learn to develop a strong faith, he replies 'by understanding the Creed well' and in the case of hope, 'by understanding the Our Father well', and how we can best work for God, 'if we understand the Commandments well we should keep them, and if we understand the sacraments well we should avail of them'.¹⁶ The answer to the subsequent question is more interesting still: 'Are we obliged to understand these things and have knowledge of them?' the reply being 'Yes, for you cannot fulfill (perform) them if you do not understand them'.¹⁷ Here, at least, it seems that Ó Maolchonaire's translation of Ripalda's catechism throws down the gauntlet before what might be termed the traditional 'faith neglecting understanding' approach. However, the question of just what level of understanding was expected of the audience of the Ripalda / Ó Maolchonaire catechism is related to the very nature of that audience.

There are a number of features in this catechism that suggest that it was designed for the use of children or adults with little education. First, there is its question-and-answer format, presented as a dialogue between a master and a disciple. In itself, this format did not always result in a simple and straightforward catechetical style; however, it was certainly the preferred choice of catechisms designed for the young or uneducated. This is clearly exemplified in the full title which the Jesuit Peter Canisius gave to his catechism of April 1555: *Summa doctrinae Christianae, per quaestiones tradita et in usum christianae pueritiae nunc primum edita* ('A compendium of Christian doctrine developed by means of questions for use by Christian children, now published for the first

¹⁵ Ó Maolchonaire's catechism is a fairly straightforward translation of de Ripalda; however, it omits some material in the process, e.g., some lines on how to assist at Mass (in Latin) and an enumeration of the 15 mysteries of the Rosary, both towards the end of the Spanish original. ¹⁶ Ó Cuív, 'Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism', 165. ¹⁷ *Ibid.* Note that the emphasis is on 'performing' or 'doing', which tallies with the above percentages.

time').¹⁸ The simplicity of style of this catechism also lends itself to a young audience. However, Canisius' *Catechismus minimus* (Short catechism) of 1556 proved more accessible still to the very young and uneducated. Short catechisms such as this one, which imparted doctrinal essentials in question-and-answer style (and to which category the catechisms of Jerónimo de Ripalda and Diego de Ledesma belong), were designed to be learned by heart; the Italian title for the *Catechismus minimus* is particularly revealing of its purpose; it was called *Dottrina Christiana breve da imparsi a mente*.¹⁹ In addition, in the original Spanish version of his catechism Ripalda occasionally uses verse summaries of material for easy memorization before proceeding to the master-disciple dialogue. Consider, for example, the following extract on the Sign of the Cross:

Todo fiel Christiano / es muy obligado / a tener deuocion / de todo coraçon / con la santa Cruz / de Christo nuestra luz; / Pues en ella quiso morir / por nos redimir / de nuestro peccado / y del enemigo malo. / Y por tanto, / te has de acostumar / a signar y santiguar, / haziendo tres Cruces. / La primera en la frente, / porque nos libre Dios de los malos pensamientos. / La segunda en la boca, / porque nos libre Dios de las malas palabras. / La tercera en los pechos, / porque nos libre Dios de las malas obras. / diciendo assi / Por la señal / de la santa Cruz de nuestros enemigos, / libra nos Señor, / Dios nuestro. En el nombre del Padre, / y del Hijo, / y del Espirita santo. / Amen Iesus.

(Every faithful Christian is strongly obliged to have wholehearted devotion to the Holy Cross of Jesus Christ, our light, because on it he sought to die to redeem us of our sins and the evil enemy. And therefore, you are to become accustomed to sign and cross yourself, making three crosses. The first on the forehead, so that God may free us from evil thoughts. The second on the mouth, so that God may free us from evil words. The third on the chest, so that God may free us from evil deeds. Saying the following: by the sign of the Holy Cross, free us Lord, Our God, from our Enemies. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen Iesus.)²⁰

18 Berard L. Marthaler, *The catechism yesterday and today: the evolution of a genre* (Collegeville, 1995), p. 44. Canisius continued to develop catechetical resources that facilitated greater access to Christian doctrine for specific groups. In Jan. of the following year (1556) he produced a catechism for children, students and those lacking formal education as an appendix to a grammar book. This ran to a mere 16 pages and the number of questions was reduced to 59 (from a total of 211 in the previous work). See P. Begheyn, 'The catechism (1555) of Peter Canisius, the most published book by a Dutch author in history', *Quaerendo*, 36:1-2 (2006), 56. For children's catechisms see Karen E. Carter, *Creating Catholics: catechism and primary education in early modern France* (Notre Dame, IN, 2011). 19 I am grateful to Simon Ditchfield for bringing this point to my attention, see Simon Ditchfield, 'Decentering the Catholic Reformation: papacy and peoples in the early modern world', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 101 (2010), 186-208. 20 Juan

Curiously, Ó Maolchonaire does not place these in verse form in his Irish translation, although his confrere Bonaventura Ó hEodhasa would incorporate something similar into his *An teagasg Críosaíde* of 1611. Luis Recines, who draws attention to the different grades or levels of catechism in this period, observes that just a step beyond the basic catechism that also attempted to teach young children to read, was found *la incorporación del verso, como medio que facilita el aprendizaje y la memorización, aunque en ocasiones los versos resulten notablemente deficientes en métrica o rima* ('The incorporation of verse as a medium which facilitated learning and memory even if on occasions the verses notably resulted in deficiencies in metre or rhyme').²¹ Ó Maolchonaire's catechism was sent to Ireland in 1598 but was never printed. It is not known how successful the catechism was or to what extent it was ever used. All that is known is that some 13 years after it was sent to Ireland, the first Catholic catechism published in the Irish language was to emerge from the community of St Anthony's College, Louvain, compiled by Bonaventura Ó hEodhasa and printed at Antwerp. This catechism adopted a very different approach to Ó Maolchonaire's and had slightly different expectations of its audience.²²

Bonaventura Ó hEodhasa's *An teagasg Críosaíde* adopts the broad structure of the Canisian catechisms, but much of the substance of Ó hEodhasa's material derives from the Jesuit Robert Bellarmine's *Christianae doctrinae copiosa explicatio* of 1609, a debt that he does not acknowledge. Ó hEodhasa chooses, however, not to use the question-and-answer format, but prefaces his sections with verse summaries of their contents in order that they might be easily remembered. Much has been made of this approach by commentators in the past; however it was certainly not innovative and was quite a common late medieval and early modern catechetical method. Indeed, what might be termed the first Franciscan catechism, Guiral Ot's *Catechismus scoliarum novellorum* (1338), dedicated to the duke of Calabria, was a rhyme catechism designed for the use of young pupils.²³ Likewise Wilhelm von Lenzfried's *Ermahnung und katechismus: O Cristen mensch bis vermant ernstlich was hie geschriben ist lis vernünfftiglich*, printed around 1496, contained 30 versified admonitions to live a God-fearing life.²⁴ Religious songs were taught to children and their mothers by the Capuchin Felice da Cantalice (d. 1587) while

M. Sanchez, *Doctrina Cristiana del Jeronimo de Ripalda é intento bibliográfico de la misma: años 1591-1900* (Madrid, 1909): translation from Brian R. Larkin, 'Liturgy, devotion and religious reform in eighteenth-century Mexico city', *The Americas*, 60:4 (2004), n. 24. 21 Luis Recines, 'Los catecismos del XVI y su modo de presentar la fe', *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia*, 3 (1994), 198. 22 Ó hEodhasa, *An teagasg Críosaíde*, ed. Mac Raghnaill; also Salvador Ryan, 'Bonaventura Ó hEodhasa's *An teagasg Críosaíde*: a reassessment of its audience and use', *Archivum Hibernicum*, 58 (2004), 259-67. 23 Bert Roest, *Franciscan literature of instruction before the Council of Trent* (Leiden, 2004), p. 247. 24 Roest, *Franciscan literature of instruction*, pp 253-4.

they worked in an effort to help them internalize Christian doctrine and also to preserve them from the dangers of secular song; a similar motivation (although in a different context) is also to be found in the composition of 60 religious lyrics by Franciscan Bishop Richard de Ledrede of Ossory (d. 1360) for use by his cathedral clergy.²⁵ In 1527, Juan de Ávila (1500–69), apostolic preacher in Andalusia and a reformer influenced by Erasmus, published a catechism written in verse and designed to be set to simple tunes. It was called *Doctrina Cristiana que se canta*.²⁶ The effectiveness of singing as an aid to memory is borne out by the fact that in 1598 Bishop Dimas Loris of Barcelona ruled that children in his diocese should be made to sing the catechism of Jesuit Diego de Ledesma in Catalan once a day.²⁷

Ó hEodhasa clearly took the Jesuit exhortation to 'adapt yourselves to the people's capabilities'²⁸ to heart and ensured that his catechism could be accessed at different levels. While the absence of a question-and-answer format suggests that this work was primarily designed for use by priests, the inclusion of verse summaries of material before each section reached out to a wider audience. It is instructive that it is these verse summaries of his work which proved to be the most popular elements of Ó hEodhasa's catechism that circulated in the Irish manuscript tradition. Support for a strategy of accommodation could be found even in the official catechism of Trent, the *Roman catechism* of 1566, which advises its readers (primarily parish priests): 'But as in imparting instruction of any sort the manner of teaching is of the highest importance, so, in the instruction of the Christian people, it should be deemed of the greatest moment. For the age, capacity, manners and condition of the hearers demand attention that he who exercises the work of teaching may become *all things to all men* to gain all to Christ'.²⁹

The wide variety of catechisms that were produced in the aftermath of the Council of Trent testified to the various needs of their audiences. Shortly after the first edition of Peter Canisius' 1555 catechism, the Spanish Jesuit Diego de Ledesma (d. 1575) published in Italy a catechism for the 'very ignorant' and another for the 'less ignorant'.³⁰ Each catechism had a specific purpose and target. The catechisms prepared for mission territories, likewise, were adapted for the very particular needs of their audiences.³¹ While de Ledesma's

25 *Ibid.*, p. 286; also Richar Leighton Greene (ed.), *The lyrics of the Red Book of Ossory* (Oxford, 1974), p. iv. 26 O'Malley, *The first Jesuits*, p. 116. 27 Henry Kamen, *The phoenix and the flame: Catalonia and the Counter-Reformation* (London, 1993), p. 352. On Jesuit songs set to popular melodies see Dietz-Rüdiger Moser, *Verkündigung durch Volksgesang. Studien zur Liedpropaganda und Katechese der Gegenreformation* (Berlin, 1981). 28 David Gentilcore, "Adapt yourselves to the people's capabilities": missionary strategies, methods and impact in the kingdom of Naples, 1600–1800', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 45:2 (1994), 269–96. 29 *The catechism of the Council of Trent*, trans. Theodore Alois Buckley (London, 1852), p. 7. 30 O'Malley, *The first Jesuits*, p. 124. 31 See, for example, Peter Phan, *Mission and catechesis: Alexandre de Rhodes and inculturation in seventeenth-century Vietnam* (New York, 1998).

catechism was based on that of Canisius, it went through many editions and was used among the indigenous people in the French territories in Canada.

Ó hEodhasa recognized that different demands should be made on his hearers, according to their intellect; however, in doing so, he lowered the bar significantly from that held by Ó Maolchonaire. At the end of his long list of categories of people and what they should know, he concludes by remarking:

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 all of these, but they are obliged to clearly *believe* [my emphasis] 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 to be ready to *believe* all the things that the Church considers fitting to believe.³²

Here, there is little indication that belief necessitates understanding. No difficult questions regarding the reasons for belief were likely to be cast at the least instructed of Ó hEodhasa's audience. The diocesan priest, Theobald Stapleton, would later rail against this kind of 'learning by rote' in his catechism of 1639, preferring that the uninstructed would know and understand the substance of their answers instead. Even though Ó hEodhasa's work is much longer than Ó Maolchonaire's translation of Ripalda and comprises extensive discussion of topics, nevertheless his treatment of important questions of faith sometimes appears facile. For instance, he uses a succession of arguments 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 hEodhasa states that it militates against all reason to claim that figures such as Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, Gregory and others were deluded.³³ This argument by recourse to the authority of significant ecclesiastical figures, especially the Fathers of the Church, was not at all unusual; the English priest-scholar and translator of the Douai version of the Bible, Gregory Martin (d. 1582), in his work *A treatyse of Christian peregrination*, published at Rheims in 1583, argues at one point 'But thou art a reasonable man, thou wilt beleve those that in thine own iudgemente are worthye of credit, if they tell it thee. To omit *S. Ambrose, Chrisostome, Hierome*, and others ... let *S. Austen* suffice'.³⁴ However, Ó hEodhasa moves from these universally important figures, adding to the list some saints to whom the Gaelic Irish had particular devotion,

32 Ó hEodhasa, *An teagasg Críostaidhe*, ed. Mac Raghnaill, p. 32. 33 *Ibid.*, p. 18. 34 Ceri Sullivan, *Dismembered rhetoric: English recusant writing, 1580–1603* (Madison, NJ, 1995), pp 88–9.

namely Patrick (who brought Ireland to the faith and exiled poisonous snakes from the land, performing many incredible miracles), Columcille, Brigid, Ciarán and many more 'whose sanctity and miracles cannot be verified'.³⁵ Furthermore, in his concluding section on the nature of the Trinity, Ó hEodhasa 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* ('I believe in the gods') instead of *Creidim a nDia* ('I believe in God')!³⁶ This position adopted by *An teagasg Críosaíde* appears not all that far removed from the fundamental exhortation to 'believe as the Church believes'.

In his discussion of the controversial topic of images, Ó hEodhasa argues that it is unreasonable to claim that God would not approve of images, given the amount of benefits that they perform, citing in particular their usefulness to the unlearned: '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 [the people's] devotional spirit to afford them love and honour, to give them thanks for their gifts and to provide them [the people] with the desire to follow their example according to their ability'.³⁷ However, Ó hEodhasa was also anxious to highlight that the benefits of images were not confined to the illiterate alone. They are also identified as useful aids for the learned, he argues, since iconography is transmitted to the mind far more quickly than something that is read.³⁸ In many respects, one could argue that Ó hEodhasa's catechism is the most retrospective of the five works examined here. Its retention of the Latin of common prayers such as the Our Father and Hail Mary alongside their appearance in Irish in both verse and prose once again allows for different audiences and does not exhibit the same kind of concern for praying in the vernacular that catechisms such as Theobald Stapleton's would later on.

The third significant early seventeenth-century Irish catechism to be considered is that of Theobald Stapleton, a priest of Cashel diocese who spent 12 years ministering in Ireland before returning to the continental Europe where he had a catechism published in Brussels in 1639.³⁹ This catechism takes the form of a dialogue between master and disciple using the familiar question-and-answer format; however, the answers to the questions are much lengthier than those in Ó Maolchonaire's 1593 catechism. Clearly, therefore, it was not expected that the young would memorize each answer. The catechism was first written in Latin and then translated into Irish; in contrast to the catechisms discussed above, then, Stapleton's book is wholly bilingual.⁴⁰ It is perhaps in

this work that the most obvious departure from previous approaches can be observed. In the prologue to Stapleton's work, he argues strongly against the old minimalist approach that required the Christian simply to 'believe what the Church believes'. This, he states, is no longer sufficient '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]'.⁴¹ Addressing those who are charged with instructing people in Christian doctrine, Stapleton challenges them not to neglect the most uneducated in their efforts: 'Many believe that it is difficult to teach the catechism to old people and to those of dull intellect', he begins, proceeding to recommend that elements such as the Our Father, Creed and Commandments be revealed to them, 'in order that they might *understand* [my emphasis] what they believe, what they pray, what they do and what they receive'.⁴² He advocates that catechists should 'question them with gentle, easily-understood words, according to their intellect and understanding, for it is only thus that they will respond (with) the substance of the matters that will be asked of them'.⁴³

For Stapleton, knowledge is the key to understanding and ultimately to salvation. The prologue to his catechism returns to this theme repeatedly. He does not shy away from the great mysteries of the faith, stating that 'I propose to explain every mystery to you in this book in an easy manner, so that in breaking the nut for the child he can taste its kernel', claiming that it is not on the outside of the nut that its sweetness is to be found.⁴⁴ Later in the prologue he comments: 'I cannot prevent it from paining me, with great distress and sorrow, when I see many Christians who are astray in the world with a lack of knowledge of the most essential elements, i.e., the Our Father, Creed and Commandments of God'.⁴⁵ He admonishes priests who are careless and neglectful and who do not instruct their people and also decries the apathy of Christians who do not desire to receive instruction, which, in turn, allows ignorance to grow.⁴⁶ While he allows for the case of Christians who are ignorant through no fault of their own (stating that they do not, therefore, commit mortal sin), Stapleton declares that 'ignorance will not save those who could have had access to these things and those who state that they would rather not know the articles of faith or the commandments for fear that they will not

explicatio (1609) and much of the Latin of Stapleton is taken word for word from Bellarmine. Bellarmine's *Copiosa explicatio* was a teacher's book arranged in question-and-answer format with the disciple posing the questions and the master responding (in contrast to Bellarmine's *Dottrina Cristiana breve* for children in which the questioning is done in reverse). Interestingly, Stapleton departs from the *Copiosa explicatio* in having the master pose the question and the disciple respond. ⁴¹ *Catechismus of Theobald Stapleton*, prologue, § 4. ⁴² *Ibid.*, prologue, § 17. ⁴³ *Ibid.*, prologue, § 17. ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, prologue, § 1. One wonders whether Stapleton is suggesting here that easily memorized formulae are no substitute for true understanding. ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, prologue § 8. ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, prologue, §§ 11, 18.

³⁵ Ó hEodhasa, *An teagasg Críosaíde*, ed. Mac Raghnaill, p. 18. ³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12. ³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 58-9. ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 59. ³⁹ See especially Thomas Wall, 'Doctrinal instruction in Irish: the work of Theobald Stapleton', *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 5th ser., 62 (1943), 101-12. ⁴⁰ Stapleton's catechism is heavily influenced by Robert Bellarmine's *Christianae doctrinae copiosa*

be able to keep them'.⁴⁷ In the latter case, he judges that absolution should be refused to those who do not have the intention of learning these things.⁴⁸ Essentially, for Stapleton, lack of knowledge leads to damnation: 'They think that it is enough for salvation if they go with the other Christians to the church and, with that, there is no danger of Hell ... It is thus that many of them are damned on account of lack of knowledge of the things that are necessary for their salvation'.⁴⁹

Stapleton explains that his rationale for producing a catechism in the Irish language, in the light of his pastoral experience in the country, was that people might 'know the catechism in their native language in order that they might *understand its meaning* [my emphasis] clearly, for there is no way [currently] in which the common people can understand it'.⁵⁰ He then refers to a purported Irish ineptitude for foreign languages to illustrate his point: 'The Irishman (for some reason) cannot speak a foreign language nor understand it if they do not learn it from the beginning. In the same way, for the poor, simple, Irish lay person; how would he comprehend a Latin, English or French sermon (or one in any other language) without learning it from the beginning? If you were to ask him what the sermon said he has no answer except that he does not understand'.⁵¹ This brings Stapleton on to another, more practical point: that of the recitation of everyday prayers:

Therefore it is a great pity for the Irish that they only know Irish and that they go about praying the Our Father, Creed and other prayers of the Church in very broken Latin and still without knowing what they are saying, but, instead, chattering like a parrot or jackdaw trying to talk; and if you ask them what they are saying they have no answer for you except that they do not understand what they are saying.⁵²

The Franciscan, Aodh Mac Aingil, also concerned himself with this problem of praying without understanding in his 1618 tract on penance, *Scáthán shacramuinte na haithridhe*, stating that only if a penitent understands Latin should he recite the *Confiteor*. If not, even though he might know the *Confiteor* by heart, he should recite it in Irish to 'move his spirit to devotion'.⁵³ This concern, like most others preoccupying Tridentine Catholicism, was not new. In his sermon on the Lord's Prayer in the late fourteenth-century *Festial*, John Mirk advocates prayer in the vernacular for the laity on similar grounds: 'Then you should know at the beginning that it is much more useful and meritorious for you to say your *Pater Noster* in English than in Latin, as you do. For

⁴⁷ Ibid., prologue, §§ 12, 19. ⁴⁸ Ibid., prologue, § 20. ⁴⁹ Ibid., prologue, §§ 23, 24. ⁵⁰ *Catechismus of Theobald Stapleton*, prologue, § 26. ⁵¹ Ibid., prologue, § 27. ⁵² Ibid., prologue, § 28. ⁵³ Aodh Mac Aingil, *Scáthán shacramuinte na haithridhe*, ed. Cainneach Ó Maonaigh (Dublin, 1952), pp 105-6.

when you speak in English, then you know and understand well what you say and, so, by your understanding, you gain fondness for it and devotion in saying it'.⁵⁴ The Spanish Jesuit Gaspar Astete (d. 1601), who was the author of a simple catechism that was very similar to that of Jerónimo de Ripalda, also agreed that Latin was not always suited to the devotions of 'women and other lay people'. In a 1598 work entitled *Del gobierno de la familia y estado del matrimonio*, he observed that 'some serious spiritual persons often feel more devotion when praying in Spanish than in Latin and it is no wonder'.⁵⁵

Stapleton's catechism of 1639 constitutes an attempt to move away from the practice of learning by rote. Just over a hundred years later, Andrew Donlevy, prefect in the Irish College, Paris, in the preface to his bilingual catechism (English and Irish) published in 1742,⁵⁶ so closely captures much of what Stapleton was trying to achieve that the extract is worth quoting at some length:

The bulk of this catechism may at first view appear too large to those who are accustomed only to the little abridgements designed chiefly for children. ... they will find that each half contains many things intended, not for being committed to *memory*, but for enlightening the *understanding* and moving the *will* to virtue ...

It is indeed a dangerous mistake to think that the amount of religious instruction, which is suited to children, is sufficient for persons of more mature years; or that it is enough to learn by rote the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Commandments, the Sacraments, without knowing either the meaning of what is repeated or the dispositions necessary for receiving the sacraments worthily.⁵⁷

Here, it might be argued, we find a fundamental shift in emphasis and, indeed, expectation. Catechesis in the later Middle Ages was primarily focused on preparing people to receive the sacraments worthily; therefore a basic level of knowledge was expected from all who wished to fully participate in ecclesiastical life. Thus the thirteenth-century Lincoln statutes of Robert Grosseteste ordered priests to teach their parishioners the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the seven sacraments, the seven works of mercy, the seven virtues and the seven vices (all later staples of Tridentine catechisms), all with a view to preparing 'the faithful for proper confession and [to] help them internalize the basic elements of Christianity'.⁵⁸ A Decalogue treatise entitled

⁵⁴ Ford, *John Mirk's festial*, p. 120. ⁵⁵ Kamen, *The phoenix and the flame*, p. 355. ⁵⁶ Andrew Donlevy, *The catechism or Christian doctrine by way of question and answer* (Paris, 1742). ⁵⁷ Donlevy, *Catechism*, p. 20. For the later catechetical tradition see Michael Tynan, *Catholic instruction in Ireland, 1720-1950* (Dublin, 1985). ⁵⁸ Roest, *Franciscan literature of instruction*, p. 232.

Die zehne Gebot, written in the form of a master-pupil dialogue by Würzburg lecturer Marquard von Lindau (d. 1392), was likewise designed as a preparation for the Sacrament of Penance.⁵⁹ Every Christian capable of learning the Ten Commandments by heart was required to do so; those who were not willing to at least attempt this were in danger of damnation; likewise those who sought to know more than they should!⁶⁰ Works such as these often gave the impression of considering knowledge of Christian doctrine as simply a means to an end: the worthy reception of the sacraments, the performance of good works, the avoidance of evil and, therefore, the hope of eternal life. The emphasis on *doing* rather than *knowing* or *understanding* can be discerned in some translations of Tridentine catechisms even in the seventeenth century. An English translation of Robert Bellarmine's 1609 catechism *Dichiarazione piu copiosa della dottrina Cristiana*, published in 1611, included the following quotation from St Augustine in its opening pages: 'Some things we learn that we may only know them and some other things we learn that we may also do them'.⁶¹ The quasi-catechetical tract found in RIA, MS 23 L 19 (1006) also betrays a utilitarian approach to Christian doctrine in its list of people who sin against the first commandment; it includes here 'whoever is ignorant of the things that he is obliged to know *in order to be saved* [my emphasis] as are found in the catechism: the Ten Commandments, the five commandments of the Church, the seven sacraments of the Church, the seven deadly sins, the Our Father and the Creed'.⁶²

Although Ó Maolchonaire and Stapleton both stress the importance of understanding the key elements of the catechism, the level of understanding expected by Stapleton was much higher. While both catechisms are in question-and-answer format, Stapleton's replies are much more lengthy and demanding. The following example illustrates the different level of questioning involved: First, Ó Maolchonaire:

M. Are you a Christian?

D. I am, by the grace of God.

M. Of whom is the name Christian used?

D. Of a person who has the Christian faith and declares it in baptism.⁶³

Now, Stapleton:

M. Are you a Christian?

D. I am, by the grace of God.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 248. ⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 248. ⁶¹ *An ample declaration of the Christian doctrine: composed in Italian by the renowned [sic] Cardinal, Card. Bellarmine. &c. Translated into English by R.H. Doctor of Divinity [sic] (1611).* ⁶² Ó Cuív, 'A modern Irish devotional tract', p. 218. ⁶³ Ó Cuív, 'Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of Christian doctrine', p. 163.

M. Why do you say 'by the grace of God'?

D. For it is not on account of my own good deeds or those of my father or mother or any earthly creature that I am a Christian, but by the grace of God and the great mercy of Our Lord Jesus Christ.⁶⁴

Clearly, Stapleton's students were examined in a higher register. This is borne out in numerous additional examples in which Stapleton's 'master' pushes his 'disciple' further, stretching his catechetical knowledge. In another passage he provokingly challenges:

M. You say that along with the Creed we must believe all that God reveals and the Church teaches. Tell me, did you see the Lord God in his three persons and yet one true God? And did you see the Lord Jesus Christ descending from heaven into the womb of the Virgin Mary? And did you see her give birth? And did you see the same Lord suffering the Passion, dying and descending to the depths and ascending to Heaven, sitting at the right hand of God the Father Almighty? Did you see the Holy Spirit descending on the same Lord after his baptism by John in the Jordan river or on the Virgin Mary and the apostles and other disciples on Pentecost Sunday ...?

D. No, I certainly did not; however I believe in all these things as if I had seen them clearly with my bodily eyes.

M. Why do you believe these things so firmly when you haven't seen them?

D. Because God orders that they be believed ... and God does not deceive or lie.⁶⁵

The contrast between Ó Maolchonaire's expectations and Stapleton's can be further observed in the question regarding the omnipotence of God. First Ó Maolchonaire:

M. How is God all-powerful?

D. Because he can do whatever he wills.⁶⁶

There the question is left. However, not so with Stapleton:

M. Why do we call God all-powerful?

D. Because that name is among the most appropriate names for God and the most suitable and he is called that here in order that we may not have any difficulty in believing that he made heaven and earth from

⁶⁴ *Catechismus of Theobald Stapleton*, p. 5. ⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 10. ⁶⁶ Ó Cuív, 'Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's catechism of Christian doctrine', p. 168.

nothing, as he wished, and there is nothing that he cannot do because he is all-powerful.

M. If it is true that God cannot die or commit sin, tell me, how can he be all-powerful?

D. My answer to that – to be able to die or to commit sin, this is not ability but disability.⁶⁷

Such a response (were it to be provided by a member of the laity) would surely demand a high degree of theological sophistication, especially if Stapleton hoped that the disciple would also demonstrate an understanding of its meaning.

The work known as *Parrthas an anma* ('Paradise of the soul') shares with Stapleton's *Catechismus* the fact that it grew out of the direct pastoral experience of its author in Ireland. After ordination on the Continent in 1635, the Franciscan Antoin Gearnon spent some years ministering in Ireland before returning as superior to St Anthony's College, Louvain, in 1644. Three years later he would return to Ireland to be appointed as guardian of the Franciscan convent in Dundalk.⁶⁸ Gearnon's work is divided into 12 sections which are depicted as individual trees in the Garden of Paradise. The work begins with an exposition of the first tree and its fruits. This tree is not, as one might imagine, faith, but, instead, daily spiritual exercise or practice and its fruit (according to the preface) 'the provision of knowledge of how to thank God on rising each morning, at midday and before going to rest at night, for all his gifts and to perform ones daily work and everything else that one does for the glory and honour of God'.⁶⁹ The primacy accorded devotional practice within *Parrthas an anma* dominates the work as a whole. The three trees nearest to the first tree are, according to Gearnon, 'Faith', 'Hope' and 'Love'. The fruits of these three are numbered as follows: faith provides 'full knowledge of God and of the heavenly mysteries', hope provides 'firm confidence that we will attain everlasting life' and love 'binds our souls lovingly and devoutly to it in this life and inseparably to it in the next'.⁷⁰ The remainder of the work consists of chapters (trees) devoted to the sacraments, knowledge of good and evil, prayer, the Mass, preparation for confession and Holy Communion, the passion of Christ, the Last Things and the spiritual alphabet (a synopsis of much of the book's content but with the aim not of providing knowledge per se, but instead 'to teach the Christian to order his life in a holy and virtuous manner').⁷¹ Gearnon explains that it is easy to acquire knowledge of the fruit of each tree for the work is clearly presented and easy to understand, being in the form of a pleasant conversation of question and answer. The reader (or

67 *Catechismus of Theobald Stapleton*, p. 16. 68 See Gearnon, *Parrthas an anma*, ed. Ó Fachtna, pp ix–xvii. 69 Gearnon, *Parrthas an anma*, ed. Ó Fachtna, p. 4. 70 *Ibid.*, p. 4. 71 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

hearer) is thus encouraged to collect his fill of fruit from the heavenly garden for the benefit of his soul.⁷²

The level of Gearnon's questioning on matters of faith more closely resembles the shorter catechisms of Canisius, Ledesma and Ripalda (including Ó Maolchonaire's translation) than that of Stapleton. The following examples provide a flavour of these:

Q. What is a Christian?

A. A baptized disciple of Christ who has accepted the Christian faith.

Q. Are you a Christian?

A. I am by the grace of God.

Q. Who is the Father of the Christian?

A. God Almighty.

Q. Who is the Mother of the Christian?

A. The Holy Roman Catholic Church.

Q. Who are his brothers?

A. Every Christian.⁷³

When introducing the Creed, the following question is asked:

What things does faith teach us?

A. To believe that there is one God in three persons and everything else that is found in the Creed.⁷⁴

Here the most fundamental point of Trinitarian theology is emphasized, while other truths are relegated to a reference to the text of the Creed which follows. As in the case with Ó hEodhasa's 'ignorant ... who had a barbarous upbringing' above, Gearnon's audience are enjoined to believe the most important articles of faith, of which there was no greater than the Trinitarian mystery. Gearnon's presentation of the Creed is quite traditional, in particular his assignment of each of the articles to an individual apostle, something which Ó hEodhasa also does in his catechism, but which is not done by either Ó Maolchonaire or Stapleton. In fact, Gearnon borrows much from Ó hEodhasa, but attempts to present the material in a clearer manner by breaking it down into a question-and-answer format.⁷⁵

However, *Parrthas an anma* is perhaps best remembered not for its catechetical elements but, instead, its devotional material that aimed at enabling

72 *Ibid.*, p. 6. For a more detailed discussion of this work see Salvador Ryan, 'A wooden key to open heaven's door: lessons in practical Catholicism from St Anthony's College, Louvain' in Edel Bhreathnach, Joseph McMahon and John McCafferty (eds), *The Irish Franciscans, 1540–1990* (Dublin, 2009), pp 221–32. 73 Gearnon, *Parrthas an anma*, ed. Ó Fachtna, p. 34. 74 *Ibid.*, p. 37. 75 Compare, for example, the use of the mirror analogy to explain the generation of God the Son in both works: Ó hEodhasa, *An teagasg Criosdaidhe*, ed. Mac Raghnaill, p. 11 and Gearnon, *Parrthas an anma*, ed. Ó Fachtna, p. 41.

the reader or hearer to sanctify every minute of the day from the action of putting on ones clothes in the morning (every item of which became linked to an event in Christ's passion narrative) to performing routine chores such as stoking the fire (when one could profitably consider the pains of hell).⁷⁶ This was clearly a handbook of practical Catholicism including morning prayers, evening prayers, Grace before and after meals, prayers before and after Holy Communion, litanies and instructions on how one should behave during Mass and when listening to a sermon, etc. However, works such as Gearnon's were not simply Tridentine products. Earlier Franciscan examples such as the *Een soon spiegel der simpelre menschen* ('Mirror for Christians') of Dietrich Colde von Münster (d. 1515), which presented to the laity 'all that should be known for the soul's beatitude' included the Creed, an explanation of the *Pater Noster* and *Ave Maria*, the Ten Commandments, a basic introduction to Trinitarian theology, Christology and eschatology, prayers to strengthen the faith in general, sins and virtues, including also prayer and meditation exercises for the various times of the day (in the morning, at the dinner table, at the minor hours and in the evening), and advice for parents wishing to raise their children as good Christians.⁷⁷ Dietrich Colde's later version of this work entitled *Christenspiegel* became enormously popular. In fact, Bert Roest observes that 'no other late medieval Franciscan work of catechistic instruction from the German lands and the Low Countries could compare in popularity with the *Christenspiegel*'.⁷⁸ Interestingly, this observation tallies with Anselm Ó Fachtina's comments regarding Gearnon's *Parrthas an anma* elsewhere: *ní foláir a rá gur ar éigin a foilsíodh leabhar spioradálta i nGaeilge ariamh a thaitnigh comhmór leis an bpobal* ('It must be stated that hardly was there ever a spiritual work published in the Irish language that was as popular with people').⁷⁹

In some ways, it could be argued that the quasi-catechetical tract found in RIA, MS 23 L 19 (1009) has much in common with *Parrthas an anma*. It concerns itself principally (according to its opening heading) with how the Christian should behave in order to be saved. Once again, the focus is more fundamentally on *doing* rather than *knowing*. In recommending suitable preparation for confession, the author of this tract advises the following: 'those who can read should read the following template on the commandments or have the priest read it to them'.⁸⁰ At the end of the tract, it further presumes a significant reading audience when it states that 'whoever would like to better understand these commandments and sacraments of the Church and deadly sins, read the Teagas Críosaíde that is in Irish in which there is more on these than is contained here'.⁸¹ The emphasis in this catechetical tract, which has been little

⁷⁶ See Ryan, 'A wooden key'. ⁷⁷ Roest, *Franciscan literature of instruction*, pp 254–5. ⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 256. ⁷⁹ Gearnon, *Parrthas an anma*, ed. Ó Fachtina, p. xvii. ⁸⁰ Ó Cuív, 'A modern Irish devotional tract', p. 217. ⁸¹ Ibid., p. 229. It is not clear which work is being referred to here.

studied and merits closer attention, is clearly not on the acquisition of the level of knowledge presented in Stapleton. In fact, the section headings suggest that it is far more practical, being aimed principally at sacramentalization rather than catechesis. The two are, of course, closely linked. However, the former sets its sights simply on equipping candidates with the bare minimum of catechetical preparation in order that they might avail themselves of the sacraments of Penance and Communion. The section headings in RIA, MS 23 L 19 are therefore instructive: (1) How a Christian should conduct himself in order to be saved; (2) Short Way to perform an annual or life-long confession; (3) How a Christian should receive Holy Communion. Here was all that one needed to re-enter sacramental life and to begin to live morally. The final summary of the tract's contents, in a similar vein to the Spiritual Alphabet found at the end of Gearnon's *Parrthas an anma*, was designed for the Christian on-the-go. In its treatment of the Ten Commandments and, in particular, of the first of these, the author states that those who 'are not ready to believe anything that they cannot verify with reason' are guilty of its transgression, and continues later by indicting 'anyone who is ignorant of the things that they are obliged to know for their salvation [my emphasis], namely Christian doctrine, the Ten Commandments, five precepts of the Church, seven sacraments of the Church, the seven deadly sins, the Our Father and the Creed'.⁸²

At the level of fundamentals (especially those key truths that were necessary for entrance to the sacraments) the issue of salvation was clearly at stake. A Breton translation of a simple catechism of the Jesuit Diego de Ledesma by priest and organist Tanguy Gueguen in 1622, in answer to the question *Hac euff so necesser gouzout an doctrin Christen?* ('is it necessary to know Christian doctrine?') states clearly *Ya, mar fell deomp bezaff saluet* ('yes, if we wish to be saved').⁸³ The requirement that laity reach minimum standards of knowledge before being admitted to the sacraments was regularly emphasized in synodal decrees and clergy were routinely reminded of this by reform-minded bishops. The 1614 synod of Dublin required knowledge of the articles of faith, the Trinity, the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ in addition to the Ten Commandments, the Our Father, Hail Mary and Apostolic Creed, before being admitted to Confession.⁸⁴ However, experiences elsewhere make it plausible to suggest that this regulation was not always strictly enforced. For instance, in 1580 the clergy of Barcelona were instructed to emphasize the importance of catechesis in the confessional by the following means: 'Then you will ask if he knows his catechism, specifically the *Pater Noster*, *Ave Maria*, *Credo*, articles of faith, the ten commandments of the law

⁸² Ibid., p. 218. ⁸³ *Doctrin an Christenien: texte de 1622 en moyen-breton accompagné de la version française et du texte en Breton moderne de 1677 avec préface et notes*, ed. Roparz Hemon (Dublin, 1977), p. 6. ⁸⁴ Alison Forrester, *Catholic synods in Ireland, 1600–1690* (Dublin, 1998), p. 68.

of God, and the five of the Church, and all that in vernacular or Latin ... And if he does not know, the confessor will tell him that if he persists in ignorance *the next time* [my emphasis] he will not be absolved'.⁸⁵

Before introducing his summary at the end of the work, in which the very elements necessary for salvation are contained, the author of RIA, MS 23 L 19 states in large script 'Here is the extent' followed in regular script by 'of the catechism that every Christian is obliged to *memorize* [my emphasis] under pain of damnation'.⁸⁶ At the end of the summary he states that 'every Christian is obliged also to know the Our Father and Hail Mary by heart'.⁸⁷ Directly following this injunction, the author refers interested parties 'who would like to better understand the Creed and Commandments and sacraments of the Church' to read the Teagas Críosaíde in Irish (once again, we do not know which work he had in mind). However, what is at least clear from this summary is the acknowledgment of a two-track catechetical system at work: *memory* (learning by rote) and *understanding* (something rather more ambitious, best exemplified in Theobald Stapleton's *Catechismus*).

It was not unusual for advocates of Tridentine catechetical reform to be wholly satisfied if they just succeeded in imparting sufficient knowledge to enable the doctrinally starved laity to approach the sacraments worthily once more.⁸⁸ This was quantifiable Tridentine success: it is no surprise that seventeenth-century missionaries routinely reported to their superiors how many souls were brought back to Confession and Eucharist as a result of their preaching (and thus put the soul once again on the way to salvation). Therefore an ability to recite the Creed and basic prayers such as the Our Father, Hail Mary and Confiteor, which opened up the gateway to the sacraments, was always going to be a primary concern. The role that memory and learning played in this is quite clear. However, the second stage of this process – helping people to understand what they believed and, indeed, what they prayed – presented a far greater challenge and one that was not without significant risk for, as discussed above, in a world besieged by 'heresy', a little knowledge could, indeed, be an immortally dangerous thing. The tension between memory and understanding carried by the Irish-language catechisms produced in Spanish Habsburg territories reflected wider tensions in the European Catholic Reformation where, at least at a local level, precise expectations were not always that clear and where the dividing line between late medieval and early modern catechesis could become quite blurred indeed.

⁸⁵ Kamen, *The phoenix and the flame*, p. 349. ⁸⁶ Ó Cuív, 'A modern Irish devotional tract', p. 227. The phrase 'bheith ina chuimhni' is weaker than Stapleton's 'eólus do bheith agaibh an airtegealuibh an chreidimh'. ⁸⁷ Ó Cuív, 'A modern Irish devotional tract', p. 229. ⁸⁸ For extended discussion of this point see Salvador Ryan, 'New wine in old bottles: implementing Trent in early modern Ireland' in Thomas Herron & Michael Potterton (eds), *Ireland in the Renaissance, c.1540–1660* (Dublin, 2007), pp 122–37.

Index

- Aachen 122
 Adam 156
 Aedh, king of Oirghialla 88
Agallamh na senórach 42
 Ailbhe, St
 Life of 131
 Ailill Find, king 89
 Albert of Austria, archduke 31–2, 49, 113
 Alcalá de Henares (Spain), Irish College in 23
 Allen, Cardinal William 67–8
 Alps 51
 Alpine Passes 44, 60
 Alsace 50
 Ambrose, St 112, 171
 Ambrosio, marquis of Spinola 41
 Andalusia 21
 Angelita, Girolamo 51
 Anglo-Norman families 42
Annála Ríoghachta Éireann (Annals of the Four Masters) 11, 15, 57, 92, 93, 94, 119, 123, 126, 129–31, 132, 133, 138, 157; *see also* Ó Cléirigh, Micheál 'Annales Dungalensis', *see Annála Ríoghachta Éireann*
 Annals of Inisfallen 132
 Antwerp 59, 86, 105, 108, 110, 148, 164
 Irish College in 23
 Archer, Fr James 34
 Ard na Rí, Co. Sligo 138
 Arundel, earl of *see* Howard, Philip
 Arras 49
 Assisi 52, 59
 Astete, Fr Gaspar
 catechism of 175
 Asturias 25
 Augustine, St 112, 171, 176
 Augustinian Order 137, 141
 missionaries 137
 Aytona, marqués de 54

 Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo 138
 Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow 165
 Banada (Augustinian foundation of), Co. Sligo 138, 140, 147, 154

 Barcelona 181
 Baronius, Caesare 133–4
 Basel 50, 62
 Bede, Venerable 134
 Bedell, William 86, 100
 Bellarmine, Fr Robert
 Christianae doctrinae copiosa explicatio 111, 169
 Dichiarazione piu copiosa della dottrina Cristiana 176
 Berach, St, life of 14
 Bergin, Osborn 93, 160
 Bernardine of Siena 114
 Bernard, St 18, 112
 Beza, Theodore 68
 Bible
 English translation of 68
 Irish translation of 86, 106
 New Testament 155
 Old Testament 86, 100–2, 155
 Bieler, Ludwig 127
 Black, Christopher 78
 Bohemia 32, 41
 Boece, Hector 134
 Bollandists 124
 Bologna 51, 68
 Bonaventure, St 111
 Boniface IV, pope 65
 Book of Common Prayer 86, 96, 106
 Book of Lecan, 157
 Book of O'Donnell's daughter 18, 138, 150
 Book of Sir John Maundeville 94
 Book of the Dean of Lismore 140
 Book of the O'Connor Don 18, 42, 135–6, 138–43, 147, 149–51, 154
 Bordeaux
 Irish College in 23
 Cistercian college in 23
 Borromeo, Cardinal Charles 60
 Bricne 89
 Brigit, St 11, 122, 172
 life of 15, 123, 126
 Brittany 26
 Breton language 181
 coast of 25, 26