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CATHOLIC THOUGHT IN LATE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SCOTLAND: GEORGE HAY AND JOHN GEDDES

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Catholic thought in eighteenth-century Scotland has certainly not been ignored by modern scholarship. This chapter focuses on two individuals in particular – Bishops George Hay (1729-1811) and John Geddes (1735-99) – as worthy representatives of the period. The idea generally of a ‘Catholic Enlightenment’ has become more accepted in scholarly circles (Robertson 2016). Such acknowledgement is a natural development in conceptual thinking once identification of ‘enlightenment’ with a particular French incarnation – male, agnostic, allied with radical thought – has been ‘downgraded’ as typical of the more universal experience (Outram 2013: 1-9). Ulrich L. Lehner summarises the mission of Catholic ‘enlighteners’ as two-fold: to explain the dogmas of Catholicism in a new language in the face of scientific and philosophical developments and the reconciliation of Catholicism with modern culture (Lehner, 2016: 7).

With reference to Scotland specifically, building on the seminal work of Mark Goldie (1991, 1992, 1994), Christopher M. S. Johns has observed that a group of Catholic writers shared a ‘religious view of social progress’ with other intellectuals in enlightened Europe (Johns 2015: 2-3). Certainly, Bishop George Hay, in the aftermath of assaults on Catholics in Edinburgh and Glasgow in 1779, expressed incredulity that such events could take place ‘in this enlightened age when all Europe is adopting the most liberal and humane ideas’ (Hay, 1779: 38-39; Goldie, 1991: 43-44). This was ‘enlightenment’ which was self-conscious and self-aware with, moreover, a shared theological lexicon which crossed denominational lines and made for mutually comprehensible discourse between parties, even where disagreement otherwise might be profound.

George Hay (1729-1811)

George Hay was not born a Catholic. Raised as an Episcopalian, his aspirations to become a surgeon (for which reason he commenced study at the University of Edinburgh) were effectively blocked on his conversion to Catholicism in December 1748, at the age of 19. After a short period as the proprietor of a chemist's shop, he entered the Scots College in Rome in September 1751, being ordained priest on 2 April 1758 and returning to Scotland in August 1759. He was nominated a coadjutor bishop in the Lowland District of Scotland in 1768 and Vicar Apostolic in December 1778, aged 49. After long years of service, he died at Aquhorties (Aberdeenshire) in October 1811 (Gordon 1867; Kerr 1927; Halloran 2004).

Such is the basic outline of the key stages of the eventful life of Bishop George Hay. It was a life taken up by a great many pastoral concerns (Anson 1970). Yet, in the midst of his episcopal responsibilities, Hay found time to pick up his quill and dedicate himself to a series of works of varying lengths, touching on theology, spirituality, apologetics and, indeed, economics. The whole of his *corpus*, though not of the front-rank in terms of originality or rhetorical expression, is nevertheless impressive in terms of the sheer number of words produced and the evident tenacity and dedication which their redaction must inevitably have demanded.

The first major work by Hay is *The Scripture Doctrine of Miracles Displayed*, published in 1775 (Strain 1873a, 1873b). Hay makes clear the central argument of his treatise at its outset: miracles require argument from Scripture, no matter should such argument evoke the ridicule of the likes of David Hume and others (Strain 1873a: viii-ix). Hume's *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, with its subversive section on miracles, had been published almost three decades before. Hay sarcastically refers to Hume's 'vaunted precision', attesting that both John Locke and Hume defined the miraculous inadequately. In

his own quest for a satisfactory definition, Hay displays familiarity with the treatise on miracles written by the Huguenot exile, Abraham le Moine, in 1747 (1). Alert to the ‘poverty of language’ in dealing with supernatural realities, he refers to words as ‘arbitrary signs’, subject to an imposition of meaning at the pleasure of the interpreter or reader. His final definition projects a drive towards clarity: ‘an extraordinary effect produced in the material creation, either contrary to the known laws of nature, or besides the usual course of nature, above the abilities of natural agents, and performed either by God Himself, or by His holy angels’ (14). The latter part of the definition underlines a principal theme of Hay’s argument throughout the work, i.e. that ‘miracles are not reserved to God Himself’ (16–17). Indeed, he differentiates between *relative* miracles performed by created agents (e.g. angels) and *absolute* miracles performed by God Himself.

What is certainly noteworthy is Hay’s categorisation of certain historical periods according to their treatment of the miraculous. For Hay, despite the fissures created by the Reformation, there was still a shared acceptance of the concept of what constituted a ‘miracle’ though the Reformers were inclined to explain the miraculous in terms of the ‘agency of Satan’ in contrast to the age of ‘Deism and Freethinking’ when miracles have become ‘juggling tricks and human imposture’ (21–22). Hay has little patience with the rejection of the miraculous, appealing to the testimony of reliable authorities, such as Justin Martyr, Sulpicius Severus and St Augustine (Strain, 1873b: 187). He is also insistent in demonstrating that the Church does not take a facile, credulous approach to the miraculous, referring to the strict examination of the veracity of miracles as part of the protracted canonisation process (221).

As an appendix to the *Miracles* volume, the reader finds a treatment of the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation (231–87). This work, presented in the style of a Platonic dialogue between ‘Orthodoxus’ and ‘Philaretus’, was a product of Hay’s combative private

and public exchanges with William Abernethy Drummond (1719–1809), latterly Episcopal Bishop of Aberdeen. Once again, Hay makes the appeal to Scripture, arguing for the need to use the Word of God in the defence of the doctrine (232). At the same time, arguments for transubstantiation have to be reconciled with ‘sound philosophy’ and Hay states (in the person of ‘Orthodoxus’) that his aim is to explain Catholic teaching on the grounds of philosophy of mind and common sense, referring specifically in so doing to the work of Thomas Reid (1710–96) and James Beattie (1735–1803) (242–43). Central to Hay’s thinking is the argument that the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation is ‘plain and intelligible’ – or, rather, the reasoning behind the doctrine is (252). Once again, as the dialogue progresses, there is evidence of Hay’s breadth of reading. Cardinal Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621), Honoré Tournély (1658–1729), and François-Xavier de Feller (1735–1802) are summoned as witnesses for the defence of the Catholic understanding of transubstantiation (257–62); Dr John Tillotson (1630–94), onetime Archbishop of Canterbury, is presented as an originator of contemporary anti-transubstantiation arguments (271).

The main body of Hay’s writing forms something of a trilogy: *The Sincere Christian* (1781), *The Devout Christian* (1783), and *The Pious Christian* (1789). The first and second of these works form a very extended treatise on the living of a Christian life in the face of challenging times; the third volume is essentially a compendium of scriptural extracts, prayers and meditations.

The full title of the 1781 volume is *The Sincere Christian instructed in the Faith of Christ from the Written Word*. The purpose of the volume is to aid the reader in the securing of eternal life, with Hay urging assiduity in instructing oneself in ‘divine knowledge’. He seeks, at the outset, to place the importance of his subject-matter in context, asking what it profits a person to understand the motions of the stars, measure of the earth,

whole circle of human sciences, if one remains ignorant of the ‘science of the saints’ (Strain 1871a: 2).

The work seems to have been intended as an aid for preachers and ecclesiastical students for Hay gives his stated aim of presenting the great truths of Christianity ‘in a regular orderly method’ as a help ‘to those who are to instruct others and to those who are learners’. Too many theological works, Hay asserts, are written for the learned ‘rather than the ignorant’, assuming readers to be ‘better instructed’ than they actually are. His intent in the present work is to assist ‘the most unlearned’, allowing God himself to speak through his Scriptures. Hay interprets such an approach as a means to presenting the original, authentic charism which gives life to Christian belief and practice. Recourse to the Scriptures themselves ‘cuts off all occasion for human sophistry’ (3). Such comments by Hay allow one to surmise his basic theological instinct, which is to allow God himself to take centre stage. To do other than this is to be seduced by the acuity of the human intellect. Theology – divine knowledge — is about God, not about the human author who writes the commentary or treatise, no matter how clever or knowledgeable. Throughout *The Sincere Christian*, the presentation of each chapter remains the same: a catechetical dialogue (question-and-answer) on the chapter’s theme, followed immediately by a collection of scriptural quotations to provide ballast for the arguments.

Certain key themes can serve to illustrate further Hay’s approach. His discussion concerning the possibility that the Pope might, in certain circumstances, be infallible is reflective of the state of the question in the eighteenth century and a reminder of the range of views before the conciliar definition on the issue in the second half of the next century. Is the Head of the Church infallible? Hay points out (188-89) that such a proposition is not an article of ‘divine faith’, nor has the Church ever made a decisive declaration on the matter. Nevertheless, Hay evidences an ability to reflect critically on what he has read, noting

apparent contradictions or misunderstood implications. Honoré Tournély, he notes, had written against the infallibility of the Holy See (193) yet Hay records that the same author had argued that, should bishops be divided on a point, the Christian community should adhere to the position which is supported by its Head. Hay implies that Tournély has failed to draw the obvious conclusion from his own argument, stating that ‘from all of which, the infallibility of the Head of the Church naturally flows’ (194).

An example of an even more extended treatment of a topic is the question of whether a person can be saved outside the Church, specifically outside the Catholic Church. This was a hotly contested issue with high stakes in terms of claims of exclusive soteriological and ecclesiological boundaries. Hay grounds his own argument in making it clear that the subject under discussion was not only a *Catholic* issue. He points to the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) with its reference to the fact that ‘out of the Church of Christ there is no ordinary possibility of salvation’ (Strain 1871b: 264) and reiterates later the fact that both the Church of Scotland and the Church of England teach the same doctrine (281-82). Indeed, the former Church had been consistent in its insistence that ‘out of which Kirk there is neither life nor eternal felicity’, as stated in the 1560 Confession of Faith (338).

There is considerable discussion of the concept of ‘invincible ignorance’ and whether it is possible for someone who has lived a good life outside of the Catholic Church to be saved. There is certainly a sense, between the lines, that Hay is not entirely comfortable with what he is having to write. It is a sense suggested by the laborious development of arguments which he produces. Particularly significant, for example, is his ‘common sense’ depiction of current attitudes in the face of the question of the possibility of salvation for those who live and die in a ‘false religion’. Hay finds himself having to conjure up arguments which might serve within contexts where persons do not wish to think of their own friends (and, in some cases, families) as ‘unsaveable’ (328). Hay is clearly aware of the very real *human*

implications of his ‘extra ecclesiam’ arguments. It is in reading such a passage that one can best see made plain the authorship of a pastoral bishop rather than a university professor. Ultimately, however, it also illustrates something of the unbending, rigorist streak which was part of Hay’s nature and defined many of his personal relationships, particularly in the latter part of his life (Anderson 1963). For Hay it was an act of charity to inform contemporaries that salvation required ‘being members of His Church and having the true faith of Jesus Christ’ (Strain 1871b: 281). Insistence on the fact that this true faith resided in his own Catholic community was an act of love – the truth must be spoken - and to present it as otherwise was to be guilty of misrepresentation and slander (283).

The next book in the trilogy, *The Devout Christian instructed in the law of Christ etc.* (1783), opens with a rationale for its composition. Its predecessor, *The Sincere Christian*, writes Hay, ‘endeavoured to facilitate . . . progress towards the true faith by pointing out the only sure way which can conduct them to it, explaining in an easy and familiar manner the necessary articles of Christian faith, the knowledge and belief of which are required to constitute a well-instructed Christian’ (Strain 1871c: 5). The new work, *The Devout Christian*, takes its inception from a desire to remind the reader that ‘he must not flatter himself that his work is done and his salvation secure’. In short, *The Sincere Christian* was a survey of what must be believed; *The Devout Christian* is conceived as a discourse on the practical ramifications of what is believed, i.e. a response to the question ‘how must I live my life?’ The core of the structure of the volume is the Ten Commandments: it is an ambitious work in terms of range and intent.

Nothing, writes Hay at the outset, is more detestable to God than a ‘double-minded man’ (1). Here is another key insight into Hay’s priorities – a detestation of the hypocritical in matters religious. But the devout Christian requires proper guidance in seeking to grow in authenticity of life, both private and public, particularly in terms of religion. Hay aims to be

brutally frank in stating that there were, in his contemporary world, ‘numberless conflicting Christian sects’ and it was a matter of common sense that not all of these sects could be right. Where is the ‘one true Church’ to be found? In responding, Hay touches once again on a recurring *leitmotiv* of his theological writing: true sincerity and authenticity of heart before God is an absolute necessity if one is to make the journey towards a totally satisfactory answer to such a fundamentally important question. The answer, Hay suggests, is not just an intellectual one but emerges out of a *practical* response to the gift of God, which is faith (5). It is in this context that he characterises belief in salvation by faith alone as a ‘fatal error’ (6). Rather, faith is a first step towards salvation and is insufficient alone to merit heavenly reward (14). Faith has to be full of life and seen to be so through action: ‘the practice of good works, the works of virtue and piety, by obedience to the commands of God, is so necessary for securing our salvation’ (15).

The final volume of the three, *The Pious Christian instructed in the Nature and Practice of the Principal Exercises of Piety* (1789), is conceived along different lines to its two predecessors. While there is still a catechetical element, the book is predominantly a manual of prayers and invocations for use in church and in the home (Strain 1871e). As such, it takes its place amongst the lineage of such influential works as *The Garden of the Soul* (1740) by Bishop Richard Challoner (1691–1781), Vicar Apostolic of the London District, whom Hay knew and profoundly respected. Indeed, Hay makes particular recommendation to his readers of the writings of both Bishop Challoner (*Think Well On't* of 1728 and *Meditations for the Whole Year* of 1753) and Francis de Sales (1567-1622) (19). Inspired by such authors, Hay structures *The Pious Christian* around a series of chapters which touch on a broad range of devotional life, including Morning Prayers, Assisting at Mass, Litanies and Prayers for the Sick and Dying.

The Pious Christian commences with the drawing of a distinction between ‘devotion’ and ‘piety’. For Hay, these are not synonymous terms. Devotion is a readiness of will to do what is agreeable to God; piety is actual service rendered to God (1). An example of such active piety is the discipline of reciting the Rosary, as commended by Francis de Sales (153, 157). Here one finds Hay aligning himself with the more psychological approach to prayer of Ignatius of Loyola (as well as Francis de Sales) in seeking to instil a willingness in the praying individual to use their imaginative faculties to place themselves mentally at Golgotha when meditating on the crucifixion and death of Christ. Empathy with the sorrow of Mary, Christ’s mother, is urged. Such appeal to the imagination and the emotions may strike one as rather odd in a man who can come across as exceptionally austere. But such writing is a corrective to such a one-dimensional portrait of Hay. He was also a fiddle-player, with a love too of a good song (Noden 2012, 248-49). Moreover, anyone who had lived in Rome for as long a period as Hay had done could not but have been marked by the vivid and colourful statuary of Christ’s passion and Mary’s consequent suffering as displayed in the churches and processed in the streets of the city (Johns 2015).

One further passage from *The Pious Christian* is deserving of particular note here as it is unusual in making reference to a present and recent popes. This is untypical of Hay; not that there is a deliberate avoidance of such references to contemporary and near-contemporary pontiffs but, rather, it underlines that Hay is no prototypical ultramontane. He addresses the question ‘why are these virtues so necessary?’ in relation to faith, hope, and charity as well as, more specifically, meekness, patience, purity of intention, conformity to the will of God, and humble contrition for sins (Strain 1871e: 131–32). His response to the question occasions mention of a plenary indulgence granted by Pope Benedict XIV (1740–58) to anyone who might perform virtuous acts every day for a month (i.e. internal acts of mind and will prompted by the recitation of certain prayers), confessing their sins and

receiving communion at least once during the course of that month, and praying for the good of the Church and the peace of Christendom. The indulgence had been confirmed by his successors, Clement XIV (1769-74) and ‘his present Holiness’, Pius VI (1775–99).

What is so obvious here is that Hay refers to the popes, not as the authors of theological or teaching texts, but in terms of their spiritual power. Popes simply do not feature very often in his works. Mark Goldie has referred to Hay and John Geddes as ‘tame Erastians’ (Goldie 1991: 59–60), inhabiting a quite different world from the self-consciously triumphalist and ultramontane Victorian Church of Cardinals Nicholas Wiseman (1802–65) and Paul Cullen (1803–78). Hay’s world simply disappeared as a new era was catapulted into being with the onset of the French Revolution in the same year as the first publication of *The Pious Christian*. Hay produced other works, such as on usury (1774), as well as a number of pamphlets on current events and a voluminous quantity of letters. But it is his work on miracles and his trilogy on the Christian life which were most influential in terms of their contemporary impact. Cormac Begadon has demonstrated that Hay was, of all the Vicars Apostolic of the period in England and Scotland, the most popular author amongst a Dublin readership (Begadon 2011: 334). Recollection of such popularity of Hay’s works beyond Scotland has been largely lost but renewed awareness of such a reception allows modern scholars to point towards Hay’s ability to address aspects of Catholic theology with a clarity and logic which was appreciated by literate and educated persons. He was not a popularist in his theological writing – not for him a ‘dumbing down’ of content – but, grounded in his own philosophical and theological education in Rome and elsewhere, he was an elucidator.

John Geddes (1735-99)

Though some six years younger, the student years of John Geddes coincided with those of George Hay at the Scots College in Rome (McMillan 2000: 50). This was the basis of a respectful friendship between the two. Geddes, a native of the Enzie in Banffshire, had been brought up as a Catholic, educated at Rathven, Cairnfield, Litchiestown, and Preshome before commencing his Roman sojourn in 1750. Ordained priest in 1759, he served the Shenval mission until 1762 when he was removed to take charge of the small seminary at Scalan, from whence he was again transferred to the charge of the mission in Preshome in 1767. He was appointed rector of the Scots College in Spain some three years later and was responsible for the oversight of the formal transfer of the College from Madrid to Valladolid in 1771. This period in his career is particularly revealing of Geddes's diplomatic and social talents — steely determination married to cultured charm, a winning combination. In 1780, Geddes was consecrated bishop and returned to Scotland the following year as Bishop Hay's coadjutor in the Lowland District. He died in 1799 after several years of ill-health, never having achieved what should have been his destiny, i.e. succeeding Bishop Hay as Vicar Apostolic (Anderson 1967; Briody 2015; Watts 1999).

Geddes has not left behind a body of published work which can be compared in quantity to the writings of Hay. In terms of originality and quality of critical scholarship, he is clearly overshadowed by his cantankerous and iconoclastic cousin (also a priest), Alexander Geddes (1737—1802). It is once again a measure of the man that John Geddes maintained good familial relations with his cousin throughout his life despite Alexander's accruing reputation for heterodoxy, particularly in the field of biblical exegesis (Fuller 1984; Johnstone 2004; Goldie 2014). Nevertheless, there are glimpses of Geddes's theological positions in several of his somewhat disparate writings. When studying these, it is important to be mindful of the positive impression which Geddes made on the *literati* circles of enlightenment Edinburgh and elsewhere, including representatives of the judiciary and civil

life, as well as members of the Moderate party in the Church of Scotland such as William Robertson, Principal of the University of Edinburgh. Most famously, Geddes's encounter with Robert Burns, at the outset of the Ayrshire poet's career, led to a mutual admiration which is testified to in correspondence (Turnbull 2016). Moreover, Geddes was elected corresponding member of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1781 and, indeed, contributed to its activities in aiding in its administration (Goldie 1991; Kafker and Loveland 2007).

The first text which might be considered is Geddes's treatise on duelling by which he presents a case for the abolition of the custom (Geddes 1790). This was a text with its finger-on-the-pulse of a serious contemporary issue and, indeed, it appeared posthumously in a French edition (Geddes 1801). It is not predominantly a theological text though its structure is, to some extent, modelled on scholastic textbooks such as Geddes would have encountered in his studies, with definition of an issue, objection and then response. Geddes would seem to be implicitly building on the condemnations both of the Council of Trent and of Pope Benedict XIV relating to the matter (Chadwick 1980: 137) but it is the likes of John Mair (1467–1550) that he explicitly quotes in discussing duels in Scotland in medieval times. There is a clue here that Geddes wanted his treatise to have the most general audience possible, not confined by denominational boundaries. For Geddes, the duel is 'downright murder' (5), deaths as a result of which it is difficult to justify if the fatal outcome of, for example, a drunken dispute (15).

Geddes appeals to his readers' fear of divine judgement as surely reason enough to shun the duel but he has a dedicated section for those who identified themselves as atheists. 'I hope the number of atheists is still but small', he writes before continuing: 'But be that as it will, whoever unfortunately doubts of there being a Ruler of the world . . . ought nevertheless to reflect that there can scarcely be a more serious matter for him, even according to his own

principles, or rather fancies, than the putting of himself into the greatest danger of being at once plunged out of existence back into nothing' (15-16). However, Geddes's next passage provides a salutary corrective for modern scholars who might over-emphasise the increasing demise of religion in the Enlightenment period. At the outset of what is, effectively, the most theologically dense section of the treatise, duelling is presented as 'contrary to the first principles of natural religion': 'let us address ourselves to the generality of mankind, who not only believe that God has made them and all other things, but has also prescribed to us a law, and will call the violators of this law to an account for their transgressions' (16). Again, it is the absence of references to ecclesiastical sources which is striking in these pages. The appeal is to all right thinking Christians. Geddes continues: 'Does not true philosophy – does not ordinary prudence, and even common sense, dictate, that we should put an infinitely greater value on the approbation of the Ruler of the universe, which is of eternal consequence to us, than on the capricious opinion of a few, and those the least to be regarded' (17)?

Ultimately, for Geddes the duel is incompatible both with Christian morality and Christian humility: 'The Christian religion enjoins universal, sincere benevolence to our fellow-creatures, as one of our most essential and indispensable duties, and requires of us, not only that we carefully avoid the doing of any harm to others, but also that we strive to do them good, and that even to our most inveterate enemies, in obedience to our God' (18-19). Christians are beholden to such duties as implied here by Geddes because of the salvific actions of Christ (19). In lines which have deep roots in Catholic ethical teaching across the centuries, Geddes makes the case for seeking 'true knowledge of one's self' and the removal of 'the unsafe rubbish of self-conceit' (19). In appealing to the use of common sense and philosophy in achieving such knowledge, one notes a hint of the latitudinarian in Geddes, an openness to seeking common ground in appealing to the even-handed, educated person of his

day, an intellectual (indeed, theological) sociability which did not always endear him to his superior, George Hay.

Such sensitivity to a broader audience for his writing is clearly seen in the Preface of Geddes's pamphlet on the life of St Margaret of Scotland (1045–93) (Geddes 1794). As has already been noted by Matthew Kilburn (2004), Geddes is almost apologetic in tone in seeking the forbearance of any Protestant reader who might alight upon the pamphlet, given that the religious context of Margaret's lifetime was different from 'what has prevailed in Britain for some time past' (5). The pamphlet can be described in terms of genre as hagiography but not in a pejorative sense and the text certainly cannot be considered 'credulous'. Taking his cue from the Bollandists' rigorous approach to the sources of saints' lives – particularly the ground-breaking work of Daniel Papebroch SJ (1628–1714) – Geddes's text is littered with references to medieval authors (including William of Malmesbury, Matthew Paris and Hector Boece) and near-contemporary works (for example, Richard Challoner and Alban Butler).

For Geddes, the life of Margaret is essentially an exemplar for anyone seeking a path towards Christian perfection (19). She is filled with faith, 'the foundation of all supernatural virtues' and 'hearkened with an entire submission to the catholic church, which assisted by the divine Spirit, always holds and faithfully delivers down all those truths, without any possibility of falling into error' (35). In stating that Margaret was even glad when her good actions were sometimes misunderstood, Geddes emphasises that the persecuted state makes one 'more like to our Saviour' (36). For criticism there was of Margaret with some 'modern authors' having accused her of spending too long in prayer. Here Geddes touches implicitly on the age-old discourse on the respective merits of the contemplative and the active in responding to the will of God (a choice of roles represented by the two sisters, Martha and Mary, in the Gospel of Luke). Geddes proposes a nuanced solution: it is possible to be both

contemplative *and* active: ‘It is indeed observable, that very often they who give most of their time to devotion, are those who likewise perform the greatest things for the real good of mankind’ (38).

Geddes was clearly influenced by the increasingly more sophisticated approaches to historical interpretations that characterised the Enlightenment period. There is a need to judge people and events by the standards of their own age, not one’s own (58). He is keen not to be seen as simplistic in his acceptance of the apparently inexplicable, commenting that claims made for a vial of miraculous oil had yet to be tested by scientific method (40). To charges that Margaret’s regime of fasting was worthy of condemnation, potentially having hastened her own premature death, Geddes responds with the psychological insight that ‘she may have had many other reasons for acting as she did that are unknown to us’ (41–2). It is a reminder of developing appreciation of psychological states long before the development of a distinctive academic discipline in the late nineteenth-century (Hatfield 1994: 383–84).

Part of what Geddes aimed to do in the life of Margaret was to underscore the demanding procedure applied by the Church before a deceased person could properly be declared a saint and venerated at the altars of churches throughout the world. It took the passage of more than 150 years before Margaret was finally declared a saint by Pope Innocent IV in 1250 (49). The message here to his contemporary world was that canonisation is a matter of due process and considered study – the implication being that one would have to be truly prejudiced not to appreciate the rigour and merits of the slow-moving procedure over generations.

This appeal to ‘reasonableness’ is evident also in Geddes’s contributions to the Third Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Kafker and Loveland 2007). At the request of the Editor, George Gleig (1753-1840), future Episcopalian Bishop of Brechin and Primus, Geddes prepared an article on the ‘Pope’ (Geddes 1797a). This is Geddes as both Catholic

bishop and Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland as he seeks, primarily, to outline in some detail the machinations of papal elections. His treatment of more controversial aspects is a model of moderation and awareness of others' sensibilities. One is reminded of Hay's own treatment of the question of infallibility on reading Geddes's observation that 'some Catholic divines are of the opinion that the pope cannot err, when he thus addresses himself to all the faithful in matters of doctrine' (377). However, 'this infallibility of the pope, even when he pronounces in the most solemn manner, is only an opinion, and not an article of Roman Catholic faith'. He embraces head-on the thorny issue of popes whose actions have 'given scandal and done harm to religion' (378). Such faults have often been 'exaggerated' and their conduct 'misrepresented' but, in any case, no Roman Catholic is 'obliged to approve what they have done; nay, without acting contrary to his religion, he may judge of them freely, and blame them if he think they deserve; only he will do it with respect and regret'. Within a matter of decades, advocacy of such a position would be difficult to maintain in Scottish Catholic circles. He ended the entry with a bracing appeal to 'Christians of all denominations' to 'endeavour to understand one another better than they have often done' (378).

Geddes also contributed respectively shorter entries on 'Saint' (1797b) and 'Holy Water' (1797c). In writing about saints, Geddes is once again intent on presenting the canonisation process as much more than routine official approval of popular superstition. Of particular importance to him is to emphasise the need for authenticity of Christian witness in the life of the person whose cause for sainthood is being forwarded. The principal question is 'whether or not the person proposed for canonisation can be proved to have been in an eminent degree endued with the moral virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance; and with the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity.' He is careful to evoke the name of Pope Benedict XIV, the author of a scholarly work on canonisation, acclaimed by many

contemporary scholars. Canonisation, Geddes seems to be arguing, belongs in the modern world of science and enlightened thought. Indeed, this same portrait of ritual as something to be appreciated as deeply symbolic in spiritual terms as opposed to redolent of ancient pagan superstition is to be found in Geddes's treatment of 'Holy Water'. He emphasises its customary use is to be found amongst the Orthodox as well as Catholics and references ancient writers, including Jerome and Bede. More particularly, the witness to authentic sacramental Christianity is underlined by making a connection between the sprinkled holy water and the water of baptism. This is typical of Geddes's sensitive understanding of the purpose of such an encyclopaedia entry. It is iconic of late eighteenth-century Catholic thought in Scotland as determined to find its place as a contributor to cultural knowledge and the good of society.

Towards the end of his life, Geddes produced a short reflection on death and the 'last things': death, judgement, heaven and hell (Geddes 1797d). More than half of the 16-page pamphlet is taken up with 'A prayer for obtaining a happy death'. While short, and more rhetorical than speculative, Geddes's text provides an intriguing Scottish contribution to the well-established Catholic tradition of *ars moriendi*, exemplified best in the early modern period perhaps by Cardinal Robert Bellarmine's more extended treatise, *The Art of Dying Well* (1619). Geddes shares Bellarmine's Augustinian relegation of the things of this world to 'secondary importance' (Vogt 2004: 32). As a consequence, he urges his reader to take on a 'salutary, active fear' in the face of the impending terrible judgement of God. In this sense, Geddes is a true inheritor of a Catholic eschatological imagination: 'some allow themselves to be dazzled by the deceitful appearance of the objects that surround them . . . and many circumstances must occur to terrify them, which will be followed by the horrors of death, judgement, and hell.' The prayer for a happy death which he offers is long and rather convoluted (yet Geddes has high expectations that it will be meditated upon three times a day

for a week and then every Sunday over a twelve-month period) but it offers the only example of explicit Mariology to be found in his work as he petitions Mary's powerful intercession with her divine son.

Conclusion

In addressing Catholic thought in late eighteenth-century Scotland, this chapter has sought to do no more than present significant exemplifications in the work of two particular individuals. George Hay and John Geddes cannot – and should not – be expected to carry the burden of representing the entire spectrum of contemporary Scottish Catholic thought. Nevertheless, consideration of their outputs allow the modern scholar to note in particular the following: (1) Scottish Catholic thought was in dialogue with the 'enlightened' culture of the eighteenth century; (2) both Hay and Geddes were widely read (Hay particularly so) in a range of 'modern' authors; (3) contemporary philosophy, particularly of the Common Sense school, made a considerable impact on the style and approach of both Hay and Geddes in their writing; (4) ecclesiological understanding, particularly in relation to the role of papacy, remained in the eighteenth century at some distance from the ultramontanistism which was so to characterise the Catholic Church in Scotland during the nineteenth century. Both George Hay and John Geddes had their faults and their weaknesses but, in an age of great change and at least one truly seismic moment (French Revolution), they demonstrated fortitude and industry in seeking to meet the challenges of the new age without diminution of belief in theism and, ultimately, in the universal Church which they sought so resolutely to serve amongst the scattered Catholic 'faithful' of eighteenth-century Scotland.

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