

John Geddes: A Mission Completed

The Seven Years' War, in which the two Bourbon powers, France and Spain, were allied against Great Britain, had ended in 1763. Nevertheless, relations between Britain and Spain were very strained in the year 1770, when Geddes arrived in Madrid. There were various causes: Spain was continuing its refusal to pay ransom money to Britain for the return of the Philippines, the British were making little effort to prevent the contraband trade which many British subjects were carrying on in many places on the Gulf of Mexico and, in fact, throughout the Spanish colonial empire; and the two countries were in serious dispute regarding ownership of the Falkland Islands. An English settlement had been established there in 1766, but the settlers were expelled by a Spanish expedition from Buenos Aires in 1770. During the time of Geddes' negotiations and his first years in Spain, relations between the two countries worsened because of this confrontation. Britain demanded Spanish withdrawal and compensation; Charles III, confident of French support, was defiant. But he had miscalculated. The French would not back him up and so, unable to take on the English sea power on his own, he had to send a formal apology to London and give orders for the Spanish garrison to be withdrawn and the English settlers reinstated.

None of this appears in Geddes' Memoirs. It is noticeable, indeed, how little reference is made by him in his correspondence to the political and diplomatic events which were the background to his work. At the same time, one should not be surprised at this, because he was carrying out his negotiations chiefly with officials who were not involved in the direction of Spain's relations with other countries; moreover, Spanish hostility to Britain was not without its religious undertones and the Spaniards knew that the British seminaries had been founded in their country, and continued to exist there, because of the difficulties which would have been experienced in having similar institutions at home; those who came to Spain, therefore, on business connected with the colleges were welcomed as giving testimony, by their presence in the country, of

Spain's championship of the interests of the Catholic Church. Finally, it must not be forgotten that, in times that lacked the means of communication known nowadays, ordinary people were not, to anything like today's extent, aware of or interested in matters of a country's foreign policies. From the record that he has left of his years in Spain, therefore, it is clear that the strained relations which existed in 1770 between the two countries and their subsequent worsening did little, if anything, to hinder the progress of Geddes' negotiations for recovering and re-establishing the college. If they had any effect, it probably was a beneficial one since the Spaniards would become more convinced of what Geddes and, through him, the Scottish bishops so frequently pleaded: the shortage of priests, the lack of material resources and, in consequence, the deplorable state of the Catholic religion in Scotland.

Geddes' negotiations for the recovery of the college and its rightful possessions and for the transfer of these to Valladolid occupied eleven months. They were months of patient, unremitting work—drawing up memorials, plans and petitions; making visit after visit to the multitude of officials who, in one way or another, were involved with the object of his mission. In his *Memoirs*, he gives very detailed accounts (which will not be repeated here) of many of these documents and interviews; but, from time to time, even he has to admit that the long story will have to be cut short: "By this time perhaps the Readers of these *Memoirs* will begin to be wearied with the too minute Narration of what Mr. Geddes was doing... We shall therefore now proceed to relate how this *Affair* went on towards a *Decision*."¹

The position when Geddes arrived in Madrid in April 1770 was that the Extraordinary Council (the sub-committee of the Council of Castile, set up to deal with property which had belonged to the Jesuits or which was presumed to have belonged to them) had recommended that the former Scots College in Madrid be united to the Irish College of Alcalá. This recommendation had been accepted by Charles III and had been confirmed by a royal *cédula* (or letters patent). The union had been decreed on the assumption that the Scots Catholics were so few in number that they were unable to send superiors or students sufficient for the Madrid college. But the decree contained two very important conditions; firstly, Scots students were to be admitted to the united college at Alcalá; and secondly, that, if the Scots should ever be able to send sufficient numbers, the Irish would leave the Alcalá college to them and remove themselves to the Irish College in Salamanca. The Irish in Alcalá had already been given the Scots' vestments, chalices and household furniture, plus money to the value of 60,000 or 70,000 *reals* (about

1. *Memoirs*, no. 99

£700) but, in spite of their efforts, had so far been refused permission to transfer the library to Alcalá.

Geddes' task was obvious—to have the *cédula* rescinded and the union dissolved. In fact, the Spanish authorities fairly readily admitted the justice of the Scots' claim and expressed themselves willing to grant it; but they had their own ideas of *how* justice ought to be done and it was in trying to get them to decree a solution which *he* considered satisfactory that nearly drove Geddes to distraction. After summarising the procedure by which affairs such as his were supposed to be conducted and explaining the function of the various officials who had to be involved, he expressed his feelings of frustration thus:

“It may be easily inferred that, however necessary such a Variety of Steps may be to avoid Mistakes and Deceits, yet Delays must be inevitable. The Person who solicits the Determination of any Affair must pursue his Petition from Person to Person, sometimes forwards, sometimes backwards, sometimes up, sometimes down, endeavouring always to procure a favourable and speedy Decision, until he at last obtain the Sentence; and when it does come, how often is it far from giving entire Satisfaction! To be engaged in such Labyrinths must be disagreeable even to those who are well acquainted with the Language of the Country and the Customs of these Courts of Judicature; but still more so to a Stranger, at first almost totally ignorant of both. However, a Sense of Duty and a sincere Desire of promoting the Glory of God and the eternal Good of Souls makes that easy which, without some such high Motives and the Light of Heaven, would seem to many Persons quite intolerable.”²

There is no need to stress that the success of Geddes' mission required a high degree of prudence, patience and energy. But there was another facet of Geddes' character which undoubtedly contributed a great deal to his success, a quality which becomes strikingly obvious during the years after his return from Spain, particularly when the inevitable comparisons were made with Bishop Hay; this was his ability to get on with everyone with whom he came into contact—tolerant of others' failings, understanding their point of view, avoiding the impression that he was a paragon himself, he was able to win respect and affection at the same time. Friendliness was the outstanding characteristic of Geddes' personality and his greatest asset in life.

It was Philip Perry, the English bishops' agent and the rector of the English College in Valladolid, who had done the preliminary work of finding out the value and the extent of the Scottish claims and who had urged the bishops to send their agent with the least

2. Ibid., no. 54.

possible delay. It was he who met Geddes when he arrived in Madrid and befriended him there. And all during Geddes' months in the capital, it was he who was constantly at his side, introducing him to officials and useful contacts, advising him on problems as they arose, helping him in the composition of the many petitions that had to be prepared. The Scots College in Spain owes a great debt of gratitude to Philip Perry for the share he took in bringing Geddes' mission to a successful conclusion. It was Perry also who convinced Geddes that the most satisfactory solution for the affair would be the transfer of the college to Valladolid; Perry urged the benefits that would accrue to both colleges through their being in the same town together. Geddes agreed with him and, besides, saw other advantages in Valladolid: the climate was more bearable and healthy than at Alcalá, provisions would be cheaper, the seaports nearer; "never was the Neighbourhood of the Court looked upon as very advantageous to a Seminary." The possibility of reopening the college in Madrid was not broached by either Geddes or the Spanish authorities, probably because the reconversion of its flats into a seminary would have involved considerable expense and the subsequent loss of a valuable source of income, the rents.

In this history, the part of villain is played by Francis Lane (or O'Lean) who had arrived at the beginning of the year to be rector of the Irish College at Alcalá, where he had been a student. From the start, Perry warned the Scots: "He is of an active temper and, as far as I can discover, no ways averse to manage Scotch money."³ Not only this, but, soon after his arrival and because of the new wealth of his college, he committed himself to accepting an increase in the numbers of students from Ireland. In somewhat cloak-and-dagger fashion, Geddes continued to keep his identity as secret as possible in order not to alert the Irish at Alcalá. Thus, in his lodgings he was known only as Don Juan de la Gran Bretaña. But one night, after he had been in Madrid about a month, he and Perry walked right into the rector of the Irish College of Salamanca and, unless by resorting to lies, further concealment of his identity became impossible.

Before this encounter, there had been an occurrence that afforded Geddes some wry amusement.

"Though of itself it may seem trifling, yet it may be related as being something comical and likewise because it may serve as a Warning how cautious we should be in our Speech. Mr. Maginnes, the Vice-Rector of the Irish College of Alcalá, was then in Madrid and it so happened that the very Barber in whose House he lodged was the Person who came himself or sent his Boy to shave Mr. Geddes. Both the Master and the man were talkative. Mr. Geddes encouraged

3. College archives 52/3/1.

them in this that he might learn some Spanish from them. The Lodger was soon mentioned and they seemed to take a Pleasure in relating what he was wont to say to them. By these means, Mr. Geddes was informed that Mr. Maginnes, in his Conversations with his Landlord and Landlady, often dwelt with the greatest Satisfaction on the valuable Acquisition his College had made in getting the Scotch College joined to it. He, Mr. Geddes, did not indeed chuse to incite them to this tattling; but he allowed them sometimes to talk on; this gave him some Light into the Designs and Dispositions of the Irish, and he was diverted, and at the same time mortified, in hearing how Mr. Maginnes had expressed himself concerning the Church Vestments, Furniture, Money and Lands of the Scots. He asked one Day of the honest Barber, 'Who these Scots whom he mentioned were? How they had come to lose their College? Why it had been given to the Irish?' with several other Questions of the same Nature to which the Man could give little Answer; but said he would inform himself of his Irish Guest, who in fact gave him some imperfect Account of the Matter; and, in the end, the Barber came to find that Don Juan de la Gran Bretaña had something more to do with the Scots and their College than he had at first been aware of."⁴

Not all the Irish in Spain were antagonistic to the Scottish claims; several admitted their justice. And, to be accurate, Lane was not able to offer a great deal of real resistance to the success of Geddes' mission, though many of the clerks of the Council were recipients of small presents to encourage them to delay, if possible, consideration of the Scottish claims.⁵

At one stage, Lane asked Geddes to meet him in Madrid. They had a series of meetings, in fact, in which the Irishman assured him that the Spanish authorities would either never undo the union of the colleges already decreed or else would take an unconcionable time to arrive at any decision; therefore it would be much better to settle "out of court." He offered to have any Scots who came out to Spain accommodated wherever Geddes should choose, if there were no room for them in Alcalá. At another meeting, he offered Geddes the post of prefect of studies at Alcalá and an equal share with himself in the government of the house. When Geddes refused these overtures, Lane "passed to speak of the Obligation the Scotch had to the Irish for St. Columba. Mr. Geddes might have observed that the Irish were as much obliged to Scotland for St. Patrick, but that did not occur to him. He said that St. Columba's having been instrumental in giving to Scotland the Faith was not at all a Reason why the Irish should now take from the same Country the means of preserving the Remains of that same Faith and the best Helps for recovering it. Mr. Lane was displeas'd, departed in

4. *Memoirs*, no. 68.

5. Geddes to Peter Grant, Rome, 6th July 1770. (Columba House 5-P.)

something of a Warmth, and probably lost all Hopes of bringing Mr. Geddes into his Measures."⁶

Despite these rather painful dealings with Lane, Geddes considered that he was on better terms with the Irishman than were many of the latter's fellow-countrymen; he remarked to Bishop Hay that the students at Alcalá "desire nothing more than to get rid of him."⁷ Before the end of 1771, Lane had resigned and gone.⁸

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Geddes, it will be remembered, arrived in Madrid armed with a letter of introduction from the Spanish ambassador in London to the first secretary of state (the minister who dealt with foreign affairs), at that time the Marquis of Grimaldo, "the bourgeois Biscayan who boasted of noble Italian origin."⁹ Geddes therefore began his negotiations, three days after his arrival in the capital, by presenting himself to Grimaldo who, in his turn, gave him a letter of introduction to the person who was president both of the ordinary Council of Castile and also of the Extraordinary Council which dealt with Jesuit affairs. This was the Count of Aranda, the man who had carried out with great efficiency, three years previously, the royal order suppressing the Society in Spain. He was to fall from grace a few years later over the humiliation his country suffered in the Falkland Islands affair, of which he was the chief proponent. Aranda advised Geddes to draw up a petition detailing the Scots' claims, which should then be presented to the Extraordinary Council. This was normal procedure in such cases. The Council could then, if the case was an obvious one, give its decision at once; but more often it asked first for a written opinion or dictamen from the fiscal (the Council of Castile's chief legal adviser who, of course, had assistant lawyers to help him in his work). Sometimes a case was remitted to the fiscal a second time. All this applied to cases in which the Council was competent to decide. But on other occasions when the matter was of greater importance (and Geddes' claim turned out to be one of these), the Council could only send its advice, through the Minister of Grace and Justice, to the king himself, asking him to issue a royal *cédula* by which the case would be decided. Since the union at Alcalá had been decreed by royal *cédula*, so had any dissolution to be; and Geddes' hopes of a speedy and favourable result were hindered by the Extraordinary Council's not being eager to expose itself to the embarrassment of proffering the king advice exactly opposite to that which it had recently given.

6. *Memoirs*, no. 80.

7. Geddes to Bishop Hay, 4th February 1771. (Columba House 5-Q.)

8. *Id.*, 26th October 1771. (*Ibid.*, 5-Q.)

9. *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. VI, p. 136.

Geddes' petition to the Extraordinary Council asked for the annulment of the royal order uniting the Scots College with the Irish at Alcalá and, for this, he adduced four reasons:

"The Churches of England, Scotland and Ireland, though they have the same temporal Prince, are entirely independent of one another in their Ecclesiastical Government; and therefore could not have their Subjects mixed in the same House together without great Inconveniencies ...in fact the Founder of the very Scotch College in Question had expressly required in his Charter of Foundation that all the Students of his College should necessarily be natives of Scotland. In the second Place he observed that it could scarcely be expected that there would be long Concord among Irish and Scotch Boys in the same House, especially as it was well known that the Irish of the different Provinces of their own Island seldom agree among themselves, when they live in the same College. In the third Place he objected against the Air of Alcalá de Henares as hot and sultry and not fit for the Scotch, who are Natives of a cold northern Climate to whose Complexions Valladolid seemed to be better adapted. He finally added that ... the Irish ... could not be supposed to have the same Zeal for the spiritual Good of Scotland; nor to be so proper for training up Missionaries for that Country as the Scots themselves." The petition then gave an assurance that, in spite of the Irish insinuations, the Scots would be able to send out masters and boys as soon as the decree of union was annulled and a house provided; it asked for an order decreeing that the Irish take no more Scottish property to Alcalá and return all the goods and money previously removed there; and requested the Council to decree the re-establishment of the Scots College in the city of Valladolid, where there already existed the prospect of a suitable house.¹⁰

Perry put this petition into Spanish for Geddes and together they took it, on 19th April, to D. Pedro Rodríguez Campomanes, the above-mentioned fiscal or chief legal adviser to both the Council of Castile and the Extraordinary Council. This outstanding man—jurist, statesman, economist, writer, historian—was in a position of great influence and indeed was the Spaniard to whom the success of Geddes' efforts owed most. From the start, he treated him honourably and considerately. At times, it is true, Geddes felt that Campomanes was not acting as expeditiously as he might have, although he realised that he was an extremely busy man and that, while he favoured the Scots, he had to proceed with caution because, earlier in his career, he had been beholden to the good offices of Sinnot, the rector of the Irish College of Salamanca.¹¹ Campomanes himself lost his temper with Geddes' importunity on one occasion, "asking

10. *Memoirs*, no. 57, and College archives 19/122.

11. Geddes to Peter Grant, Rome, 6th July 1770. (Columba House 5-P.)

of him with some warmth, 'whether he imagined he had nothing else to think of but only his College?'"¹² (Campomanes later became a count and was made president of the Council of Castile, in which position he contributed much to the many reforms and improvements in all spheres of national life which Charles IV achieved, especially after 1783.)

At their first meeting, he received Geddes in a kindly manner but, for some reason which Geddes never discovered, declined to accept the petition in Spanish and requested that a new version be drawn up in Latin.¹³ This was only the first of a series of petitions or representations that Geddes had to submit between Easter and Christmas of that year, 1770. Their general subject was the Scots' claims and aspirations, and the needy state of the Church in Scotland. In his *Memoirs*, Geddes details eleven separate petitions which he had to draw up.¹⁴ In particular, he had to submit to the Extraordinary Council a memorandum giving detailed proposals and plans for the re-established college. For this purpose, he studied the charter of foundation made by Colonel Semple and was allowed to know the state of the college rents. The memorandum he drew up under three heads: the purpose of the college and the type of studies to be undertaken; the number of students; the location of the college. As to the first, he said that, faithful to the founder's wishes, the college would prepare young Scotsmen so that, ordained to the priesthood, they might work for the conversion of their native land; the college would therefore provide instruction in humanities, in philosophy and in theology and, since its aims were similar to those of the English College of Valladolid, the rules also would be the same. Secondly, there would be a rector and three masters, one for each subject. After allowance had been made for various necessary expenses (*viz.*, foundation Mass stipends, the administration and upkeep of the Madrid property, the salaries of the rector and masters, and an annual remittance to the Scottish bishops to allow them to set up a fund for the travelling expenses of boys coming to the college), there would be enough money left from the college's annual income to allow for the upkeep of twenty boys (reckoning the fees at 2,500 *reals* per student per annum).¹⁵ Lastly, the Duke of Alba had a house in Valladolid which could be purchased and adapted to provide the necessary accommodation: chapel, library, classrooms, refectory, individual rooms for the rector, masters and older students, a dormitory for the younger boys, and servants' quarters.¹⁶

12. *Memoirs*, no. 101.

13. College archives 19/24.

14. Cf. also College archives 19/24-26.38-50.122; 54/5.6.8-12.

15. This proved too optimistic and, in 1777, Geddes had to ask the Spanish authorities to reduce the number of students that he had to accept to sixteen—a request to which no objection was made.

16. *Ibid.*, 19/45.

During these months, Geddes engaged in constant lobbying and, in the *Memoirs*, there is explicit mention of thirty-four different visits which he made to various officials; there must have been far more visits because, in addition to the meetings individually noted, he adds from time to time in the *Memoirs* a phrase such as "and Mr. Geddes was obliged to be with him on that Account many repeated times."¹⁷ Yet he remained in good health and was able to write to Hay: "I have never in my life had my stomach better than since I have been in Madrid"; and "I cannot say that the heats have been very disagreeable to me."¹⁸

Assurances of good will and promises that justice would speedily be done came frequently, but Geddes fretted about the lack of action.

"He could not help the beginning to feel a good deal of Pain at the Delays he was meeting with... All those to whom he had applied had owned that his Claim was well founded and had assured him he would have Success; but he could not perceive that much tending to put him into Possession had been done. He dreaded that it would not be easy to get over the Difficulties to which the late Arrival of a Scotch Agent had given Occasion... But although these and other Reflections made him more uneasy than he had perhaps ever been before, yet he gave to his Bishops in Scotland as favourable a Picture of things as he could with Truth, thinking it needless to cause Pain to them without any Advantage."¹⁹

Peter Grant, the agent in Rome of the Scottish mission and a brother of Principal Grant of Douai, got several notabilities in Rome, including the Cardinal Duke of York, to write to Spain on Geddes' behalf. He himself, in Madrid, secured the good offices of various persons of influence, including the Duke of Alba (to whom Perry sold the English College property in Madrid), Monsignor Marchisio, the Minister of Modena, (who offered to make Geddes his secretary, an opportunity that Geddes declined), and Count Hippolytus Vincenti, "who acted in the place of a Nounce, there having been no Person in Spain with the Character of Nounce from the time of the Expulsion of the Jesuites; nor were the Differences between the Holy See and the Court of Madrid as yet finally settled."²⁰ Vincenti turned out to be an old school-fellow of Geddes, when they were both "in Logicks" in the *Collegio Romano*.

While Geddes' male acquaintances were exerting their influence on his behalf at court, two convents of nuns had promised to assist by their prayers. Through Dr. Perry, he had discovered that the Discalced Carmelite convent of St. Anne had an abbess of Irish

17. *Memoirs*, no. 76.

18. 30th September and 8th October 1770. (Columba House 5-P.)

19. *Memoirs*, no. 82.

20. *Ibid.*, no. 74.

extraction, named O'Connell; and in the Salesian convent of the Visitation there was a Scots nun, called Campbell. He had heard her spoken of while he was still in Scotland; she was a convert, related to the family of Kilravock, and when her husband, James Campbell, a retired naval lieutenant, died within three years of their coming to live in Spain, she had entered the convent.²¹

Perry also introduced Geddes to Alexander Munro, a Scotsman, who had recently come to Madrid as British consul general. Though he was not a Catholic, he and Geddes quickly got on terms of intimacy with each other and he proved a most helpful person in securing recommendations and introductions. Munro was keen that the Scots should be placed in Alcalá, so that he might the more easily visit his fellow-countrymen but, though disappointed by Geddes' insistence on Valladolid, he continued to be of great help. During Geddes' ten years in Valladolid, the two men corresponded regularly²² and met whenever Geddes went on business to Madrid.²³ During these later years, Geddes was able, in his turn, to do a favour for his friend by writing to Peter Grant in Rome in order to ask him to petition for a dispensation to allow Munro to marry a Catholic; the proposed nuptials, however, did not take place.

For the first few months of Geddes' stay in Madrid, he hoped to be able to buy a house that the Duke of Alba owned in the Calle de los Francos (now the Calle Juan Mambrilla) in Valladolid and install the college there. Perry was the intermediary by whom the initial contacts were made, since he was already doing similar business with the Duke in arranging to give him the property of the English College of St. George in Madrid in exchange for lands near Valladolid which had formerly belonged to the Jesuits and which the Duke had acquired.

"But as the same two [Geddes and Perry] were walking in the Gardens of the Buen Retiro one afternoon, two Collegians of the College of Santa Cruz in Valladolid, called Landizabal and Sobrado, whom Dr. Perry knew, fell in with them. And Sr. Sobrado, having learned who Mr. Geddes was, asked why he had not petitioned for a Part of the College of St. Ambrose that had belonged to the Jesuites in Valladolid, for his College. Mr. Geddes answered that he had never been at Valladolid nor heard of such a College, and that perhaps a Proposal of that Nature would not be agreeable. Sobrado replied it probably would and insisted in his Advice, to follow which

21. *Ibid.*, no. 93.

22. There are eighty letters from Munro to Geddes in the college archives (52/1/1-80). Munro left Spain in 1779, presumably because war had been declared against Great Britain. He was later knighted.

23. They also met at least once in Medina del Campo. (*The Innes Review*, vol. XVIII (1967), art. cit., p. 45.) The occasion was a visit which Munro was paying to the statesman, the Marquis de la Ensenada, living in retirement. (Geddes to George Mathison, 19th March 1779. Columba House 6-I.)

Mr. Geddes was immediately much inclined because the House would already be in the Form of a College; but Dr. Perry did not seem to relish it because he thought the Jesuites might still possibly return; and besides he had had the other Scheme of the Duke of Alva's House long in his Mind. This was the first mention of the settling of the Scotch in the College of St. Ambrose, and it was made on the 30th of July."²⁴

Geddes remained very attracted by the San Ambrosio suggestion since it would not necessarily have to be purchased and because it would require much less work to make it suitable for use.²⁵ But, so as to avoid further delay in achieving the restoration of the Scots' property and the re-establishment of the college, he allowed the earlier proposal about the Duke of Alba's house to go forward. It was measured and a plan of it made which Geddes presented to the Extraordinary Council.

It will be recalled that, right from the start of his mission, the Spanish authorities had been urging Geddes to bring masters and boys out to Spain. The ambassador in London had made out the passport for Geddes and two others and had given him enough money for the travelling expenses to Madrid of three persons. In Madrid, he had been told frequently that his claims and ambitions would appear more realistic if at least a nucleus of a community were in evidence. Geddes was quite aware of this, especially since the Irish justified the incorporation of the college with their own at Alcalá and the expropriation of the income on the grounds that Scotland was unable to supply personnel for the college. At the same time, Geddes was fearful lest he should have masters and students brought out to Spain and no college to put them in because of failure or protracted delays in his negotiations.

This dilemma was bound up with another of Geddes' problems—money. At the end of August, the Spanish authorities had given him, for his own maintenance, an interim payment of 3,000 *reals* from the money which had been accruing from the Madrid college rents and he was also told that he might, if he cared, assume the obligation of saying as many of the foundation Masses as he wished. Geddes was assured by the fiscal, Campomanes, at the beginning of October, that a favourable outcome of his negotiations was now certain and that therefore he should send for the masters and boys. Though still harbouring misgivings, Geddes thought it better to follow the fiscal's wishes in order to disprove the Irish contention that the Scots had no boys to send and so, on 8th October, he wrote to Bishop Hay and asked him to send two masters and twelve boys. A week later,

24. *Memoirs*, no. 95.

25. In the event, the only urgent repairs required in San Ambrosio were the replacement of broken window panes and a coat of whitewash on the interior walls.

he added the caution: "I beg you would write to those who send off the boys to see none of them come off with the Itch."²⁶

The problem arose of finding money for their travelling expenses. The Extraordinary Council refused to advance any funds for this purpose but Alexander Munro, the consul general, came to the rescue by requesting one of his friends, D. Miguel Mathias de Sobrevilla, a cloth merchant,²⁷ to give Geddes a bill for £100 drawn on his London correspondent. This bill was sent to Hay by Geddes along with his letter. Geddes was able later to return Sobrevilla's kindness not only by repaying the loan in the following March but also by choosing him to be administrator of the Scots' property in Madrid when the administrator who had been appointed by the Extraordinary Council before Geddes arrived in Spain died in 1772.

The contingent from Scotland did not arrive until early in 1771 but, before that, Geddes had succeeded in having sent to Spain, from the colleges in Paris and Douai, one master and three students. When passing through Paris the previous March, he had tried to persuade Principal Gordon to allow him to have Henry Innes as one of the masters, but instead had had to be content with John (John Baptist) Gordon who, at the time, was twenty-two years old and a deacon studying theology. He seemed to Geddes to be a reasonably good prospect, pious, intelligent, sociable enough; "but his Mind was rather confined and he was subject to suspect and to repine too much, which are Indications of a Tendency to Melancholy."²⁸ Geddes also tried to get Alexander Cameron, then a student in Rome, as his second master, but the bishops had someone else in mind and therefore did not allow Cameron to go. John Gordon left Paris on 10th November 1770 and reached Valladolid on 11th December. With him were the first three students for the re-established college: Henry Ogilvy and Adam Tyrie, both from Douai, and Alexander MacDonell (or Macdonald), from Paris.²⁹ Geddes had urged the two principals at Paris and Douai to send "none, but such Boys as might truly be Models to the rest by their Behaviour in every Respect."³⁰ Grant of Douai had indeed recommended Ogilvy as "one of our best geniuses" and Tyrie as "a very fine boy of moderate capacity,"³¹ but, in the event, Geddes was very ill-pleased by the calibre of the three who came. Ogilvy, who, like Geddes, was from Corridoun in the Enzie, "wanted judgment and solidity;" Tyrie was "childish, weak and inconstant in his Behaviour." Both had been wavering in their resolve even while at Douai and both left Valladolid

26. 15th October 1770. (Columba House 5-P.)

27. College archives 19/97.

28. *Memoirs*, no. 141.

29. The cost of an individual journey from Paris to Valladolid was just over £16. (College archives 19/112.)

30. *Memoirs*, no. 143.

31. To Geddes. 25th October 1770. (College archives 52/4/3.)

after a few years without having persevered to the priesthood. MacDonell, from the Highland District, had shown himself so indolent and awkward in Paris that his superiors had decided to send him home, but his bishop ordered him to go to Valladolid instead; Geddes then "had reason not to be well-pleased, though this Alexander MacDonell afterwards turned out much better than had been expected"³² and was ordained to the priesthood in 1776 or 1777. On arrival in Valladolid, the little group of four was lodged temporarily in the English College, as had been previously arranged between Geddes and Perry.

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As early as the end of August in that year of 1770, the fiscal, Campomanes, had submitted his dictamen, or official opinion, to the Extraordinary Council. It recommended that the Alcalá union be dissolved, the Scots be permitted to change from Madrid to Valladolid, and the old college be adapted so that all of it might be let to tenants and bring in rent. The Council was favourable but pointed out that, since the Alcalá union had been brought about by the *cédula* of the king himself, a similar royal intervention was needed to end it. Once Geddes had written to Hay at the beginning of October asking for a dozen boys to be sent from Scotland, Campomanes prepared a second dictamen which added some supplementary points to his first opinion. But there were delays before this second opinion was presented to the Council and further delays before the Council came to any definite recommendation. Finally, on 22nd November, the Council delivered itself of its decision, and a most unpleasant shock it was for Geddes. Reluctant to ask the king to revoke the *cédula* of union which the Council itself had recommended, it had now decided to advise the strange kind of compromise solution that had, earlier, been mentioned to Geddes, who had regarded it as only a last resort,³³ viz., that the Irish be removed from Alcalá and sent to their countrymen at Salamanca, leaving the former to Geddes and the Scots; and if Geddes was not happy with this arrangement, he should have recourse directly to the king.

Though upset and puzzled by the turn of events, Geddes calmly and wisely decided that the Irish themselves would be very unwilling to leave their settlement in Alcalá and would therefore even assist him, at least indirectly, in getting to Valladolid. Next day, he saw Sinnot, the rector of the Irish College in Salamanca with whom he was on good terms and informed him "that he would do well to prepare Lodgings for several new Collegians. Mr. Sinnot asking,

32. *Memoirs*, no. 145.

33. College archives 19/38.

'What was meant by that?' ...At first he would not believe what was said to him but, being convinced of the truth of what Mr. Geddes affirmed, he began to make many objections... Mr. Sinnot was alarmed, as Mr. Geddes had expected, and went that very night to the Fiscal to show him the Injustice there would be in depriving them of a College that had belonged to their Nation for so many years, with what else he thought proper to say."³⁴

Geddes also appealed to the Council to reconsider its decision but, despite his lobbying and Campomanes' support, he was told on 18th December (just after he had learned of the arrival in Valladolid of John Gordon and the first three students) that the Council reiterated its earlier recommendation that the Scots be settled in Alcalá.³⁵ The very next day, Geddes took the Council at its earlier word and presented a memorial to the Minister of Grace and Justice for direct submission to the king.³⁶ Three days later, on 22nd December, the king informed the Council that he would have no objection to the Scots being allowed to settle in Valladolid, should the Council consider such a course expedient. The main obstacle to the Council's agreeing to Geddes' wishes had now been removed and, a month later, after the usual round of intensive lobbying by Geddes and the Council's usual slow consideration of all the relevant memorials, opinions and plans, that body finally consented, on 18th January 1771, to the dissolution of the Alcalá union and the transfer of the Scots College from Madrid to Valladolid.³⁷

Before this, Geddes had become convinced that the college of San Ambrosio would be a more suitable place for the college in Valladolid than the Duke of Alba's property. These views were reinforced by letters from John Gordon in Valladolid³⁸ and from the vice-rector of the English College there, Joseph Shepherd,³⁹ both of whom felt that San Ambrosio was the preferable location; they added that, of the two parts of San Ambrosio, the older seemed better suited to the Scots' needs. There had indeed been royal *cédulas* of 1769 decreeing that the new (or western) part of San Ambrosio be converted into a hospital and the old part into a school, to be called the Convictorio Carolino; but nothing had been done to put these decrees into effect. The authorities at Madrid, therefore, agreed to the Scots going to San Ambrosio instead of the Duke of Alba's house, especially as necessary changes in the latter would have been fairly costly.

On 15th March, the Council ordered word to be sent to the

34. *Memoirs*, nos. 129-131.

35. College archives 19/81.

36. *Ibid.*, 19/46.

37. *Ibid.*, 19/83.

38. *Ibid.*, 52/3/19.

39. *Ibid.*, 51/7/42.

Intendente-Corregidor of Valladolid (the governor of the city) to accommodate the Scots in the new part of San Ambrosio⁴⁰ and, although Geddes had been advised that the old part was better adapted to his purposes, he made no objection to the Council's orders, "especially as ... Hopes were given him that he would get as much more of the adjoining Building as he should find necessary."⁴¹ In fact, the Intendente wrote back to the Council to say that the Scots should be lodged in the old part, as the newer wing was too small for them. The Bishop of Valladolid had had some idea of installing his own diocesan seminary in this older part of San Ambrosio but, in the event and fortunately for Geddes' hopes, he did not press this project. Campomanes, in fact, assured Geddes that "there would be no Difficulty in getting Leave for him and his Countrymen to live in the old Part of the same House until the other Part should be put in order."⁴²

Before completing his business in Madrid, Geddes had to attend to financial matters. In fact, he had been far from idle in previous months, trying to have the revenues of the Madrid college kept from the Irish and allocated to him for the needs of the new community. Immediately after the decree authorising the re-establishment of the college in Valladolid, the Extraordinary Council ordered definitively that no more Scots money be paid to the Irish.⁴³ A few days later it decreed that the Scots money which had been taken to Alcalá and which had not been spent be brought back to Madrid. 20,000 *reals* were sent to the Intendente of Valladolid for the use of the Scots once they were established in San Ambrosio; this money was to be put in a box. of which there would be two keys, one kept by the Intendente and the other by the rector. The remainder of the money (about 6,000 *reals*) was handed over to Geddes there and then for the immediate expenses of himself and his community of four in Valladolid.⁴⁴ Permission was given in February to pack the books of the library (which, it will be remembered, had never been sent to Alcalá) ready for despatch to Valladolid. But there was no order yet concerning the return of the vestments, chalices etc. taken to Alcalá.

In March, before he left the capital, the Council allowed Geddes another 13,000 *reals* out of the Madrid college revenues; with this, he repaid the debt to Sobrevilla, bought some books and returned 2,000 *reals* to the administrator to distribute as he thought fit among

40. *Ibid.*, 19/88.

41. *Memoirs*, no. 157.

42. *Ibid.*, no. 165.

43. Geddes to Bishop Hay, 14th June 1771. (Columba House 5-Q.)

The annual income at the time was about £700 or 63,000 *reals*, derived mainly from rents of that part of the Madrid property which was let as dwelling houses (£230 p.a.), the pension on the bishopric of Cadiz (£100) and revenues from various public debts and other sources (£300).

44. College archives 19/84.

the clerks and minor officials of the Extraordinary Council. (From Valladolid, he later sent another 3,000 for the same purpose). He made the wry comment: "It may be however here observed that probably had Mr. Geddes been as well acquainted with the Pages and Clerks of the Offices now as he was afterwards, he might have got his Affairs despatched some Months sooner."⁴⁵ The secretary of the Extraordinary Council received "a small Clock that had been in the College, but which was old and stood in Need of mending" and the administrator "a Scotch Watch worth £5."⁴⁶

"No sooner had the Scotch Bishops received the Letter from Mr. Geddes of the 8th of October, in which he told them that they might send Boys to Spain, than they had made those they had in Readiness undertake their Journey."⁴⁷ Six boys belonging to the Lowland District left Aberdeen in November and, after being delayed in London some weeks, reached Bilbao on 24th January. Of the five guineas they had been given to cover expenses there, one had been stolen on the ship, but what remained fortunately proved sufficient.⁴⁸ As Geddes did not know where they would arrive, he had arranged for them to be taken care of at whatever port they landed and thence sent on to Valladolid. "These gentlemen [the three brothers who had been asked to look after the boys if they appeared at Bilbao] sent them on three or four Mules with two Men to attend them for Valladolid, whither they arrived on the 3rd of February," bringing with them sixteen letters from Scotland and three watches;⁴⁹ they also were received and accommodated in the English College.

Another six students, this time from the Highland District ("solid sensible lads of 16")⁵⁰ and who, for reasons of prudence, had come to Spain on a different ship reached Santander on 14th February and got to Valladolid on 23rd. This latter group was accompanied by the other master that Geddes needed as his vice-rector. The bishops had not given him Alexander Cameron (then at Rome) as they intended to send Alexander Macdonald, son of the laird of Bornish and, at that time, the missionary in Barra.⁵¹ Macdonald had got the length of the Scottish mainland on his way to Valladolid but, "on account of the great Complaints of the People of Barra for his Departure, it was thought more proper by the two Bishops Macdonalds" to allow him to return to the island.⁵² From Arisaig he wrote to Geddes to say that, although he had been reluctant to leave Barra, he was now even more upset at the cancellation of the bi-

45. *Memoirs*, no. 167.

46. *Ibid.*, no. 167.

47. *Ibid.*, no. 161.

48. John Gordon to Geddes, 6th February 1771. (College archives 52/3/21.)

49. *Memoirs*, no. 161, and John Gordon to Geddes, 6th February 1771. College archives 52/3/21.)

50. Geddes to Peter Grant, Rome, 12th July 1771. (Columba House 5-Q.)

51. He became Vicar Apostolic of the Highland District in 1780.

52. *Memoirs*, no. 162.

shops' orders.⁵³ In his place, the bishops sent Allan Macdonald of Morar and it was he who arrived in Valladolid at the end of February 1771. A few days later, Gordon wrote from the English College, saying that, although their hosts were very kind, the Scots community found itself much cramped for space; the fifteen boys had only five rooms among them and spent most of the day studying in Gordon's room; and despite Geddes' warning, five of the Highland group had arrived with the itch.⁵⁴

With his main objectives achieved, Geddes was anxious to leave Madrid and join his community at Valladolid. One day in February, one of the officials with whom he had been dealing, and himself an Asturian, suggested that the Scots should consider the Asturian capital of Oviedo as an alternative to Valladolid but, although Geddes saw something in favour of the suggestion, it had come so late and when all had been settled that he did not pursue the possibility.

* * *

After three or four days spent in leave-taking,

"Dr. Perry and Mr. Geddes left Madrid on St. Joseph's Day and arrived at Valladolid on the 22nd of March. There they were received with open Arms by the English and Scots in St. Alban's, who between them made a numerous House. The Scots were now eighteen, and the English much about the same Number."⁵⁵

Geddes was in good humour when he wrote to Hay for the first time from Valladolid. He had found all, both young and old, well on his arrival and was very pleased with his two companions, Macdonald and Gordon; "the bread here is commonly the best I have seen... the people are social and beneficent... but what is said of their Indolence, of their being far behind some others in the Arts and Sciences, of their bad Inns, of their great Esteem of their own Country etc. is true in a great Part;" the Santander Inquisitor had confiscated some of the books that Macdonald had with him but he (Geddes), before leaving Madrid, had been to the house of the Grand Inquisitor (an extremely good-natured man and "you see nothing of that honour which the idea of the Grand Inquisitor of Spain has commonly connected with it") and orders had been sent to Santander to release the books at once.⁵⁶ In a letter a few days afterwards to Peter Grant in Rome, he paid sincere tribute to the English for all that they had done: "I scarcely think there has ever

53. College archives 51/6/5.

54. 1st March 1771. (*ibid.*, 52/3/22.)

55. *Memoirs*, no. 169. (The English were twenty in number: rector, three masters and sixteen students.)

56. Geddes to Bishop Hay, 2nd April 1771. (Columba House 5-Q.)

been a more cordial Union between the two Nations than this temporary one. Their Boys and ours seem Brothers and you may expect that there is all Harmony between the Superiors and us."⁵⁷

Naturally, one of the first things Geddes did on arrival in Valladolid was to have Dr. Perry present him to the bishop and the governor of the city. He found the latter, D. Angel de Bustamante, an extremely kind and affable person and their future relations were always good, in spite of the fact that the governor, or one of his officials, had to be present, with his key, to allow Geddes to get money from the box in which it had to be kept when remitted from Madrid. The bishop, Dr. Manuel Rubin de Celis, he also found cordial, though less so than the governor, perhaps merely because of his temperament or perhaps because he had to abandon any plan he might have had to install a seminary of his own in San Ambrosio.

When the governor visited San Ambrosio in company with the English and Scots superiors, he agreed that the new part was far too small (only about six rooms were available) and consented to ask the Extraordinary Council to procure a royal *cédula* to install the Scots in the much more suitable old part. In the meantime, Geddes wrote to Madrid for official permission to use the old part provisionally.⁵⁸ Towards the end of April, he went further, submitting a memorial to the Council asking that the college be settled not merely provisionally but permanently in the old part.⁵⁹ However, this memorial arrived in Madrid too late to prevent the Extraordinary Council, at its meeting on 19th April, giving the Scots permission to use the older part of the college only temporarily and advising the king to issue a *cédula* allocating them the newer part as their permanent home. Geddes was informed of these decisions by a letter of the secretary of the Council of 8th May⁶⁰ and the appropriate *cédula* was indeed issued, copies being sent to the bishop and the city governor.⁶¹

As this decision was now seen to be so clearly impracticable, both the governor and the bishop agreed with Geddes that the Scots should go ahead and take over the old part, at least in the meantime. The petition to allow the Scots to settle permanently in the old part of San Ambrosio was finally granted and the necessary royal *cédula* signed on 5th December of that year, 1771. (Appen-

57. 6th April 1771. (Ibid., 5-Q.)

At Geddes' suggestion, the Scottish bishops sent a letter of appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Perry for his "known zeal, unwearied diligence and indefatigable activity... crowned with the desired success." (English College, Valladolid, archives, E.1^o; transcript 2/88. Quoted in *Registers of the English College at Valladolid*, Catholic Records Society, vol. XXX (1930), p. liv.)

58. 27th March 1771. (College archives 19/53.)

59. Ibid., 19/54.

60. Ibid., 19/89.

61. *Memoirs*, no. 175.

dix II A). A month later, on 12th January 1772, the juridical establishment of the college in San Ambrosio took place when, in the presence of the vicar general of the diocese representing the bishop and also of the English priests and various civic officials, a notary read the *cédula* and the governor, acting in the name of Charles III, put the Scots in formal possession.⁶²

Things, however, had not stood still between Geddes' arrival in Valladolid in March 1771 and the final concession of this last *cédula* nine months later. From the start, he held many discussions with the masters and the students concerning the methods to be employed in order to try to put piety, studies and behaviour in the community on a proper footing. (In the meantime the Scots were following the same rules as the English students and were also dressed like them). Geddes characteristically "had also been making some Acquaintances in the City itself... The buying of necessary household Furniture, the procuring of Servants, the treating with the Butcher, the Baker and other Tradesmen and the like gave him a good deal of Employment."⁶³

Once the bishop and governor had agreed in mid-May that the Scots might provisionally occupy the old part of San Ambrosio, Geddes called in some stone-masons to construct walls in order to separate this part from the rest of the college.

"During these Days, as was very natural, the Scots paid frequent Visits to the House in which they were soon to dwell; and after they considered it all, on the 23rd, the Boys made choice of their Rooms, according to the Order in which they were considered to be by their Superiors."⁶⁴

"Things being now in Readiness for the Removal of the Scots, on the 29th the Bishop and the Intendant of the City met Mr. Geddes in St. Ambrose's College by Appointment and saw the Divisions had been made according to what had been settled; the Bishop gave Leave for the celebrating Mass in the domestic Chappel near the Porter's Lodge for an unlimited time;⁶⁵ and the Intendant promised to give the Keys that evening to Mr. Geddes, as he actually did."⁶⁶

Much of 31st May was spent in transferring beds and furniture from the English College and, at last,

"After Supper that Evening all the Superiours and Collegians of

62. Viz., the present main corridor from the front door to the kitchen, with the rooms along it and the corridor and rooms above it; in addition, the large *patio* or courtyard and the small garden.

63. *Memoirs*, no. 176.

64. There were twenty-seven or twenty-eight rooms in the old part of the college, each having its *alcoba* or recess for a bed. (Geddes to Bishop Hay, 14th June 1771. Columba House 5-Q.)

65. The Jesuits called this the "Capilla del Examen." Geddes later made it into a library. Today it is the room in which callers are received.

66. *Memoirs*, nos. 178-179.

both Colleges passed together from St. Alban's to St. Ambrose's. When they entered in here, they went directly to the Chappel and Mr. Geddes said the Litanies of Jesus and of the Blessed Virgin, called of Loreto, the rest answering. When this was done, the two Colleges took Leave of one another very affectionately, the English wishing the Scots all Happiness in their new Habitation, the Scots expressing their Gratitude for the Hospitality the English had shown them. The English returned home, the Scots retired to their Rest."⁶⁷

"I hope no one thinks it was wrong in us," wrote Geddes to Hay a fortnight later, "to seek or accept a House that had belonged to the Jesuites; better that we possess it than that it fall to ruins for want of Inhabitants; besides many other considerations."⁶⁸

67. Ibid., no. 180. "*Ex hoc Collegio ad Collegium Divi Ambrosii hujus almae Vallisol. Civitatis transmigrarunt hora quasi octava vespertina.*" (*Registers of the English College at Valladolid*, p. 198.)

68. 14th June 1771. (Columba House 5-Q.)