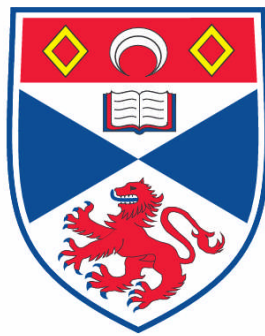


**HEART-WORK: EMOTION, EMPOWERMENT AND AUTHORITY  
IN COVENANTING TIMES**

**Louise Anderson Yeoman**

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD  
at the  
University of St. Andrews**



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Heart-work: emotion, empowerment and  
authority in covenanting times.

by

Louise Anderson Yeoman

Submitted to the University of St Andrews, in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy, on the 22nd of August, 1991



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## Abstract

'Heart-work' is an examination of the inner world of the covenanters; particularly with regard to authority, empowerment and affective experience. It examines the covenanting phenomenon of conversion, which placed believers in touch with a comforting, empowering and guiding inner sense. It explores the manifestations of this inner sense, and also considers the covenanting attitudes to reason, emotion and feeling which were influenced by the centrality of this spiritual inner sense in covenanting devotion. There has also been a study of its effects on both theories of authority and practical behaviour. Both the public political climate of declarations and polemic, and the personal spiritual arena of diaries, letters and autobiographies have been explored. Modes of worship and attitudes to ceremonies are covered, as is the response of normally disadvantaged groups such as women and the lower classes to covenanting Calvinism. Modern psychotherapy theory has been used in some cases to explain why certain process and doctrines had certain effects. In conclusion, it seems that Scottish presbyterianism relied for its effects on breaking through to a deeper level of spiritual experience in its adherents. This experience, which was connected to feeling rather than reason, was open to all persons. It was connected with the doctrines of the 'mystical body of Christ' and of the covenant by which Christ's total sovereignty within and without was recognised. Those who experienced it were profoundly affected by it and often found themselves empowered to stand up to their social superiors as a result. This inner spiritual experience was the motive force behind covenanting practice, and efforts to foster and preserve it, led to clashes with the episcopalian royal establishment, since the experience itself was closely linked to a certain framework of devotions which its adherents would not suffer to see tampered with.

## Acknowledgements & Dedication

I would like to acknowledge all the help and support which I have received from my family and friends. Especially, I would like to thank Clive Davenall, who made my Edinburgh research both pleasant and possible, Jane Ann Liston, who proof-read my work (any mistakes are, of course, my own!), and Bruce Ryan whose computer know-how and general friendliness has been a great support. I would like to acknowledge my debt to my supervisors, Professor Christopher Smout and Professor David Stevenson, who have been most helpful and supportive to me, and also my debt to Mhairi McMillan, St Andrew's Student Counsellor, who introduced me to the person-centred approach and encouraged me in my researches. Finally, may I thank my poor persecuted flatmates for putting up with me - Dave, Simon, Bruce, Julie, Chiddy, Vizzy, Mary, Mandy, Trish, Yu-ping, Sue, and Hulya - not forgetting Graham, for all his letters, pizzas and support. Thanks to you all. This thesis is, of course, dedicated with love to my mother, Isabella Grant Arnott.

Louise A. Yeoman, St Andrews, 20/8/91.

## Abbreviations

AJW, I. Archibald Johnston of Wariston's diary 1632-39,  
(Edinburgh, 1911) Scottish History Society, first series.

AJW, II. Archibald Johnston of Wariston's diary 1650-54,  
(Edinburgh, 1919) Scottish History Society, second series.

AJW, III. Archibald Johnston of Wariston's diary 1655-60,  
(Edinburgh, 1940) Scottish History Society, third series.

AJW, twentieth century transcript. Archibald Johnston of Wariston's diary, the fuller transcript for 1655-60, National Library of Scotland mss 6247-6258.

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## Preface

This thesis is an attempt to explore the inner world of the covenanters - especially with regard to personal change and inner authority. It is based on the hypothesis that real psychological changes happened in those who had conversion experiences, and it is hence an exploration of those changes which were sustained and encouraged by a life of prayer, repentance and worship.

Modern psychotherapeutic theory has been used in order to explore the conditions which cleared the way for spiritual experience. This is in no way intended as a reductionistic exercise in 'explaining away' religious happenings. The covenanters themselves were aware of two levels in the person - that of the conscious attempts to repent and stir the emotions which lay within the grasp of human capabilities, and that of what they termed saving grace: the deeper, spontaneous uncontrollable and unbiddable level of the spirit, which was made way for by the clearing out process - 'drying the timber that it might sooner take fire when casten into it', to quote minister Mr David Dickson.<sup>1</sup> (see chapter five). The aim of the author in employing such theory is to explore the intentional level which made way for change, and also to point to the applicability of modern theories to seventeenth-century experiences of change and inner authority.

This approach has also been used to consider the psychological effects of certain doctrines which were preached, especially that of predestination. Whilst the stated reason for preaching such doctrine was that it was believed to be scriptural, in practice it could be seen that it

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<sup>1</sup>David Dickson, *Select practical writings of David Dickson* (Edinburgh, 1845), 220.



played an important functional role in clearing the way for contact with inner experience. (This is explored in chapter one.) Part of my argument is that, whilst in public confrontation with opponents, covenanters would inevitably give arguments from scripture as the reason for their stance, in actual fact their rationale seemed also to come from experiential sources. There seems to have been a very strong element of practical and satisfying experience involved in covenanting worship, and exploration of private sources, such as diaries and autobiographies, shows that this inner experiential dynamic has often been totally overlooked by historians, who have taken public assertions of scriptural motives at their word, and who have thus missed the private world of the practising covenanter. This private world worked on the dynamics of maximising inner spiritual contact, and minimising ‘polluting’ outer contact with those who were not held to be properly recognising the sovereignty of Christ; within, in conversion - and without, in His headship of the Kirk. Its major dynamics were the ‘sovereignty of Christ in covenant with the elect’ doctrine and the doctrine of being part of the ‘*mystical body of Christ.*’ These doctrines are explored in the text.

Such exploration of the inner world reveals that Scottish popular Calvinism was not the intellectual and externally preoccupied creature that some have asserted it to be. Gordon Donaldson in his book The faith of the Scots (London, 1990) accuses the main body of the covenanters of putting too much emphasis on outer circumstances of worship, whilst he lauds Hugh Binning and Robert Bruce as exceptions for their inner spirituality. This view is not borne out by my research. The inner spirituality of Bruce is a hallmark of covenanting devotion and not an exception. The outer preoccupation, which Donaldson detects, was merely a balance to an intense life of inner devotion. Concern with the doctrine of the inner sovereignty of Christ was expressed

symbolically by actions such as declarations and separations from those whom covenanters saw to have denied that sovereignty, but this was done in the name of maximising spiritual experience and inner contact - see chapters three and six - and not as an alternative to it. It was Mr Robert Blair's inner spiritual meditations on the sovereignty of Christ which led him to accept presbyterianism; likewise, Mr David Dickson was confirmed in his presbyterian path by overwhelming spiritual comfort and experience on refusing the authority of bishops, whilst Henderson was wont to convert his episcopalian fellows to presbyterianism by taking them along to non-episcopalian prayer meetings where they 'found so much of the spirit' that they were immediately impressed.<sup>1</sup> The seeming outer emphasis in presbyterianism came, in the most part, from a desire to protect the inner world from being smooored by exposure to a 'lifeless' time-serving episcopal ministry, and ceremonies which were perceived to be either useless in stirring up inner experience, or threatening to the headship of Christ and thus likely to lead to him withdrawing his inner spiritual presence in disgust (see Rutherford's Letters<sup>2</sup>).

This inner experiential tradition was not at all intellectual. It was built on what was known as 'heart-work': inner-feeling, spiritual experience of great intensity, which was reached by turning the awareness inwards, stirring up the self in emotional repentance and meditation, and thus making way for this deeper level of experience to come through. This form of piety was practised also by episcopalians, such as Leighton, Forbes of Corse and Mr William Struther, and for this reason they have been included throughout this study. On this inner

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Wodrow, *Analecta, or materials for a history of remarkable providences mostly relating to Scottish ministers and Christians*, (Edinburgh 1842-43)

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Rutherford, *Letters of Samuel Rutherford with a sketch of his life and biographical notes of his correspondents by the Reverend A. Bonar D.D.* (Edinburgh 1984)

level, differences as to supralapsarian and infralapsarian Calvinism are fairly inconsequential, whilst differences over church government show in differing attitudes of trust with regard to external authority, and differing attitudes over regenerate authority - see chapter two. This attitude did not seem to be shared by other high-ranking episcopalians, notably Bishop William Forbes of Edinburgh, and it is highly doubtful that men like Spottiswoode would have practised it either. Perhaps the most acute comment made on men like Leighton was that of Sir James Stewart of Coltness, himself a man possessed of an inner spiritual life of great vitality. He noted that 'a stammering sanctity is bad in a churchman'.<sup>1</sup> The episcopalian 'saints' were respected for their spirituality, but lamented for their unwillingness to defend the older Scottish tradition of inner 'heart-work' against what was seen as the English trend to 'outer' ceremonial and 'worldly' court bishops, which was identified with the road to popery.

The aim of the thesis is thus to examine this tradition of 'heart-work', from its *sine qua non* of conversion (chapter one) into its troubled relation to outer authority (chapter two) and its surprising exclusive tendencies which led to an inner tradition causing so much concern with outer declarations (chapter three). The nature of the tradition and its effect on interpretation of the bible are explored in chapter four, whilst in chapter five an attempt is made to explore its spiritual experiences in depth, and the practical consequences of these spiritual experiences and their subversive potential is explored in chapters six and seven.

This area of Calvinist spiritual experience and its effects has been explored in an interdisciplinary way by other historians, most notably by Americans, Charles Lloyd Cohen, Phillip Greven and Leigh Eric

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<sup>1</sup>Coltness collection MDCVIII - MDCCXC, (Edinburgh, 1842)

Schmidt, in their books God's caress, The Protestant temperament: patterns of child rearing, religious experience and the self in early America (New York, 1977) and Holy fairs: Scottish communions and American revivals in the early modern period (Princeton, 1989) Whilst Greven and Cohen have both studied predominantly New England experiences, Leigh Eric Schmidt has studied in depth the Scottish communion experience, using a background of anthropology to aid in his analysis. Charles Lloyd Cohen in his book God's caress has studied the Puritan conversion experience and has looked at lash of law preaching in the light of double bind theory. His notion of 'emptying' in the conversion process and his emphasis on the primacy of conversion are both well borne out in comparison with the Scottish experience. Leigh Eric Schmidt, however, shows well what was the most distinctive aspect of Scottish piety; the highly intense communion season and the emphasis on union with Christ in his mystical body, which was an important part of it.

My work differs mostly from theirs in its roots in the *person-centred* tradition of humanistic psychotherapy, which has led me to point up different parallels with psychotherapy theory and which has strongly influenced my ideas on inner authority. Similarly, my concern with exploration of the inner world and its consequences for both outer and inner authority has led me to explore the Scottish context very widely, examining theories of authority, defiance of authority, and the processes of prayer and spiritual experience - particularly with regard to experiences like enlargement of heart, liberty in prayer, 'text-getting', visions and the framework of providential decision-making which have received little attention elsewhere - although the concept of providential decision-making with regard to Cromwell has been explored in an article by Blair Worden - 'Providence and politics in Cromwellian England'

published in D. Beales and G. Best, History, society and the churches: essays in honour of Owen Chadwick (London, 1985) pp125-145. On the whole, however, this dimension of history has been neglected by current Scottish covenanting historians, who have tended to place their emphasis on political events or on the outer face of the presbyterian Kirk's hierarchy of courts. There has been little concern with spiritual experience, and thus a lack of understanding of how key figures, like Archibald Johnston of Wariston, Mr Alexander Henderson and Argyll might have been motivated, or of how the movement drew popular support for doctrines which do not readily suggest themselves as material of great appeal.

The major missing piece of this Scots jigsaw is why covenanting spirituality appealed to so many people. What did its adherents get out of it? My answer is that they attained to a hitherto unprecedented degree of inner authority and that they also obtained remarkable spiritual experiences. I am certainly not attempting to explain the whole of the covenanting movement, with regard to the National Covenant and Solemn League in those terms - since there were important economic, political and social factors also at work - but I am attempting to explain why the spiritual style affected by Henderson, Bruce, Wariston, Fleming, Katherine Collace and Marion Laird gripped them in the way it did.

A few words need to be said about my methodology. I have sampled widely across the covenanting period taking references from the 1580s to the eighteenth century. It is possible to do this, since the basic core doctrines of covenant, the sovereignty of Christ, as surrendered to by the elect in the inner covenant of grace, and the 'union into the mystical body within the covenant' remained constant from the time of Mr Robert Bruce in the 1580s-90s (and perhaps earlier), through

to as late as the later eighteenth century in some groups who still swore to the covenants and pursued the same conversion-orientated divinity. The crucial experiences which I wished to explore were those based on the inner conversion contact with Christ, by which the believer bound his or herself in covenant to surrender to the sovereignty of that inner source of guidance and love, and the unitive emphasis based on the doctrine of the mystical body, which also fuelled the ‘clearing out’ processes of worship and association, designed to ready the believer for spiritual experience; since it was these doctrines which led to an inner emphasis and to contact with an inner authority. In general, my usage has been to refer to the 1590-1637 period as ‘early’. The 1638-1660 period may be seen as the heyday of this style of divinity. Material from 1660 onwards has been referred to as belonging to ‘later’ covenanting times, since the tradition was then much more of a minority persuasion. References to the ‘Covenant’ or the ‘Covenants’ refer to the actual documents the ‘National Covenant’ of 1638 and the later ‘Solemn League and Covenant’ of 1643; whilst covenant with a small ‘c’ refers to the inner covenant of grace by which the elect believer gave herself over to the sovereignty of Christ. Finally, it remains to be said that I have made use of sources at which others might look askance, such as Robert Fleming’s The fulfilling of the scripture, Howie of Lochgoin’s The Scots worthies and Wodrow’s Analecta . My reasons for doing so were that in Wodrow and Fleming there is much first hand material which is reliable, whilst anecdotal evidence from all three is frequently given credit by reference to first hand sources such as diaries and autobiographies which show that events described by the ‘collectors’ in their works were certainly credible, and probably true. Also, I have drawn attention occasionally to stories which were almost certainly hagiographical fictions, since it is also important to examine the public

relations image which defenders of presbyterianism wished to purvey, and to note which stories they were happy to have circulated with regard to their cause. The latter category of data can usually be spotted fairly well by its tendency to fit into recognisable folk-tale categories, familiar to the anthropologist, but for which there is no good evidence to be found occurring in the first hand primary sources.

Chapter one.

**Conversion - the pearl of great price**

‘We would have peace of mind but we will not look within’, so says the philosopher hero of Matthew Arnold's famous poem ‘Empedocles on Etna’; however, for the Calvinist, to look inside the psyche was to encounter a miasma of foulness, ‘a cage of unclean birds’ to use a popular biblical quote of the time, and yet only by looking within was the believer to find his or her right relation to God, to experience him or herself as totally evil, helpless and depraved. This, said Calvin, was how it truly was, God was everything, pure, holy, good, puissant, whilst the believer was nothing - zero as opposed to infinity. Yet just as in the beginning was the Word- the creation out of nothingness, so out of the contemptible chaos of man's moral disorder could come the miracle of grace. There in the swamp of humanity where all our righteousnesses are as ‘filthy rags’ or ‘menstruous clouts’<sup>1</sup> to quote Archibald Johnston of Wariston, could somehow arise the miracle of the image of God in man- capable of doing good, not only evil, capable of ‘discerning spiritual truths’, of forsaking his evil ways. This, said Mr Robert Fleming, was a true miracle, a ‘marvellous power which makes willing divorce between men and idols, which changes one species into another, estranges men from worldly interests, and takes their heart off what was their right eye.’ This force had the power ‘to make men melt and dissolve in tears’.<sup>2</sup> It was thus a truly wonderful thing, but how was this pearl of great price to be obtained? After all, if man was such a horribly deformed puny creature, what possible interest could God have in him at all? Never mind giving his only begotten son

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<sup>1</sup>Diary of Archibald Johnston of Warriston 1632-39 (Edinburgh 1911), I, 171.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Fleming, The fulfilling of scripture (Edinburgh 1845), I, 238, 244.



to pull this singularly unattractive creature out of a mess which the theologians proclaimed to be of its own making. Yet somehow the ministers maintained that Christ out of infinite mercy had prevailed upon his father via the first ever covenant to give him some of 'his own' - the elect - who would be suffused with this power of grace and thus raised up from the mud of mankind, and into communion with the divine. It was this view, characteristic of mainstream Scottish divines, which was purveyed by their catechisms and confessions. In Scotland, the office of Christ the 'mediator' was an all important part of belief, for without him, 'God was a consuming fire' to quote Mr Andrew Gray.<sup>1</sup>

According to orthodox Scottish divinity, then, Christ's elect, for whom alone he died, had had their names written in the book of life from before all time, not for any good thing they might have done, but simply for the Deity's good pleasure. (The popular Mr David Dickson might be cited as a whole-hearted purveyor of this view.)<sup>2</sup> This was all very fine for maintaining the awesome majesty and absolutism of God, and not pretending more status for man - 'that poor naughtie worm'<sup>3</sup> - than he was due, theologically speaking, but in practice, surely such a viewpoint and the fatalism and passivity it would have seemed to imply could be nothing but destructive? Yet as examination of the lives of Scots who professed to live by such dogma shows, they were far from passive in their habits, and not only did this doctrine produce surprisingly positive results in their lives, but it also corresponded to practical realities of the spiritual world which they had experienced. It was this practical, experiential side of the Calvinist experience which gave it its remarkable strength, and made it so that men could say 'and

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Gray, Directions and instigations to the duty of prayer, being the sum and substance of nine sermons (Edinburgh 1680), 15.

<sup>2</sup> David Dickson, Select practical writings of David Dickson (Edinburgh 1845), 211.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Abernethie, Abjuration of popery (Edinburgh 1638), 10.

not from report, I do surely feel, I enjoy, I am persuaded that this is the Lord, and thus they have come forth from him with such a change on their soul that even bystanders can see where they've been' - to know spiritual truths 'as truly verified on the heart as they are written before their eyes in the Word.'<sup>1</sup> These were the words of Mr Robert Fleming a covenanter of the 1660s who carried on in exile the tradition of the earlier preachers such as Dickson, John Welch of Ayr, Mr Robert Blair and Mr Robert Bruce, who were prominent in the earlier years of the century.

This sort of theology was by no means peculiar to Scotland; the work of American scholars like Charles Lloyd Cohen and Phillip Greven has shown clearly its influence and dispersal in the new world. There are, of course, a plethora of writers on English puritanism and dissent who have chronicled a similar sort of piety in the old world itself: to name but a few, Jacqueline Eales, Michael Walzer, Christopher Hill and C.H. Firth are well known. The less-amply chronicled Scots variant of Calvinism is, however of equal interest for several reasons. Firstly, it was connected with a surprisingly deep and important sacramental experience; secondly, it proved not only surprisingly resistant to the inroads of sects like the Quakers, but also surprisingly narrow-minded - unlike English independency; thirdly, though no less uncompromising in its theory of the elect, it absolutely refused to follow the gathered churches approach of New England. Fourthly, the subject has so obsessed Scots, that a whole tapestry of material, shrouded in a national mythos of resistance to superior power and defiance of the state, has survived. Does the popular myth hold up? It might be said that the popular conception of the covenanters in Scotland represents our own version of the '1066 and all that' categorisation of the combatants of the

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<sup>1</sup> Fleming, Fulfilling of scripture , I, 133.

Civil War, neither 'right but repulsive' nor 'wrong but wromantic', the covenanters are rather 'repulsive but romantic', being generally regarded as popular heroes and heroines with an attachment to a very unpopular and distasteful creed. Yet if this viewpoint is taken, then we are left with the abiding puzzle of how such a creed could hold the allegiance of a large group of very well educated and often influential people.

To begin with, it must be said that the Calvinist idea of God can be seen to have intellectual appeal. God is omnipotent, omniscient, awesome and mighty. Take for instance Mr George Gillespie's description of God for the Westminster Assembly - 'God, thou art a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in thy being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.'<sup>1</sup> Truly the sort of being one would expect to speak from a whirlwind, but however much this sort of definition may be seen to derive from the mediaeval schoolmen's concept of the Almighty, in Scotland one was expected to experience this majesty at first hand. Gillespie, for example, produced the invocation given above after being sent to spontaneous prayer for inspiration - for direct contact with God. Take for example the experience of that interesting and controversial man, Mr Thomas Abernethie, who converted first from presbyterianism to catholicism, and thence, in 1638, from being an active Jesuit back to being a good presbyterian Calvinist again. His conversion back to his original faith hinged on a direct encounter with the divine, and a realisation of the innate sufficiency of divine contact in overcoming the need for human intermediaries. Abernethie pondered how, if he had sinned against God, confessing to a mere mortal was supposed to help. He started to believe that he could go to God without a priest, and found a sense of God characterised by a strong feeling of utter dependence. It was God, he

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<sup>1</sup> W. M. Hetherington, The presbyterian's armoury (Edinburgh 1846), I, xviii.

said, 'who created me, who by withdrawing of thy helping hand might have redacted me to nothing again'. He was overcome by a sense of the deity's overwhelmingness, and spoke of God's 'infinite multitude of angels as soldiers', addressing him in awestruck terms - 'O infinite ocean, and superabundant treasure of mercie, What shall I say?...Poor naughtie worm. Thou wilt have mercy on whom thou wilt have mercie.' God's laws, says Abernethie, are not as man's laws. He is 'unsearchable', his 'ways past finding out' for 'who has been his counsellor?'<sup>1</sup> Abernethie had a direct experience of this God when he was 'illuminate with an extraordinary light'<sup>2</sup> whilst reading scripture, a light which he tells us converted him on the spot straight back to protestantism. The sense of awe in his conversion account seems to be a direct result of this experience. One is left to ponder just how much the theology shaped the experience, yet also to consider just how much these sort of experiences led to the theology in the first place.

So we find ourselves contemplating the chicken-and-egg puzzle explored by anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who sees religion as being both 'a model of, and a model for' society<sup>3</sup>. It expresses mental states which are already there, and serves to shape mental experience by providing the only viable vocabulary of most early societies for dealing with the inner recesses of the mind. It also, however, articulates what one ought to feel and ought to do on having certain experiences. The language becomes a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy. If the dominant religious tradition of a country tells its inhabitants that contemplation of the moral law in the Old Testament should cause them terrors for their sinfulness, and may then lead them to a vivid confrontation with and experience of an angry, awesome, omnipotent God, then they are hardly

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<sup>1</sup> Abernethie, *Abj. popery*, 10, 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays* (New York, 1973), 93.

likely to start reporting experiences of a tolerant and latitudinarian God who is going to be pleased with their devotions provided that they go to church every Sunday and learn the Lord's Prayer. Or if members of the congregation were having these experiences, then they definitely were not revealing them in seventeenth century Scotland- but quibbles like this aside, it is true to say that in some very important cases about which we know, inner experience which fitted this Calvinist concept of God was very important. Like Abernethie, the highly influential Mr Robert Blair had also a strong conviction of the power of God which came to him from the experience of problems in his devotions, which caused him to feel that all his power in his calling came from God - who held all power - and not from himself.<sup>1</sup> Mr Samuel Rutherford characterised his feelings in the quote from Augustine that the Lord was a milk-nurse to feed him, so where was his merit? He railed on those who would have 'influences of the father that are at our hand and under the power of our free will', for him the 'influences of grace' were like 'fowl flying in the wood which we cannot command.'<sup>2</sup> Mr James Wood, who started out as an Arminian, was forcibly struck in prayer as to 'why he should pray to God for that which he could doe himself'<sup>3</sup> and realising that he could do nothing for himself was easily converted by Mr Alexander Henderson. Mr David Dickson, another prominent minister, spoke of himself as 'a feeble soul supported in my need'<sup>4</sup> and relied so completely on divine support that without it he was struck dumb in front of the General Assembly. In fact the accounts of conversion and personal experience of most of the more renowned presbyterian ministers of the earlier half of

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Blair, The life of Mr Robert Blair, containing his autobiography from 1593-1636, with supplement to his life and continuation of the history of the times to 1680 by William Row (Edinburgh 1848, Wodrow society), 21-22.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel Rutherford, Influences of the life of grace (London 1659), 158, 161, 163.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Wodrow, Analecta, or materials for a history of remarkable providences, mostly relating to Scotch ministers and christians (Edinburgh 1842-43 Maitland club), I, 29.

<sup>4</sup> Selected biographies (Edinburgh 1845, Wodrow society), I, 319.

the century contain spiritual experiences where they perceive themselves, like Thomas Abernethie, to be ‘poor naughtie worms’ upholden by a God from whom all power came. Even one of the more controversial Aberdeen Doctors - John Forbes of Corse, a Calvinist episcopalian - spoke of ‘learning from former exercise that faith is not of ourselves but is the free gift of God.’ He too spoke of God being ‘unsearchable’ and beyond human rules - ‘Who shall hath first given to him and it shall be recompensed again?’<sup>1</sup> Thus we find men who were unshakeable in their conviction, for whom the words of the catechism were matched by real experience of life. They felt themselves to be depraved and powerless, they felt God to be upholding them - but this still only scratches the surface. How did they come to this pessimistic view of themselves which seemed to assign every good to an inscrutable outside force of great majesty?

The operative term was ‘evilness of heart’. In the revealing words of Alexander Henderson, the joint author of the national covenant of 1638,

it is not an easy matter to have commandment over our own hearts- no one can command their own outward senses as they please and even less can we control thoughts and if we make not a covenant with all, both within and without we cannot keep them. Make a covenant with your hearts and minds so ye may with present hearts and united forces at this time worship and honour and serve God <sup>2</sup>

Here we find not only the problem at issue, but also why it was a problem - total control was being sought of the inner world of the psyche. Christ, said William Guthrie, another noted covenanter, ‘must

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<sup>1</sup> John Forbes of Corse diary, Scottish Record Office mss, CH12/8/6, 16 , 18.

<sup>2</sup>Rev. R. Thomson Martin, Sermons, prayers and pulpit addresses of Alexander Henderson (Edinburgh 1867), 189.

be absolute Lord or nothing'.<sup>1</sup> That absolutism included the thoughts of the believer. Henderson again tells us that

a good thought is agreeable to the word of God. An evil thought is a breach of it. Good thoughts are commanded and bad thoughts forbidden by it and it is in these affections of love and hatred that the Lord looks most into, so when these are right, all the rest are right.<sup>2</sup>

Calvin said as much in his analysis of the first commandment, that 'thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and strength and might.' The Geneva theologian insisted that the fact that we were not loving God with all our hearts one hundred per cent of the time was evidence of our irremediable wickedness and a cause for sorrow. What was at issue here was a sort of moral perfection- 'this is the way of God's children' said Henderson, 'They all aim at perfection'<sup>3</sup>.

In taking this attitude towards control of the inner man, Henderson echoes a concern of the early church, most notably he carries echoes of Augustine<sup>4</sup>, who contended that sexual intercourse was sinful because it was not done in a rational and controlled way. Adam and Eve in paradise, he contended, had had total rational control of their genitals and feelings so that their behaviour was seemly, rational and therefore decorous and un sinful, as opposed to the unseemliness of man's normal spontaneous uncontrolled desires. It was the control of this basic spontaneous part of man that Calvinism at first glance seemed to unconditionally advocate - and indeed this is where the popular image of Calvinist preaching and behaviour comes from. The reason for this obsession with control was simple - to give free rein to one's lusts and urges inevitably meant breaking the law of God and especially the commandments. The Bible was quite clear on this, he who broke one

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<sup>1</sup> William Guthrie, The Christian's great interest in two parts (Elgin 1851), 108.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson Martin, Henderson's sermons, 309.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p. 431.

<sup>4</sup> Herbert A. Deane, The political and social ideas of St Augustine (1963, New York), 55.

commandment, it was as though he had broken all of them, but what remained to be explained was why the Calvinist interpretation of the commandments was so grossly extended to include a whole range of extra sins not conceived of in the original Hebrew documents. For instance, honouring thy father and mother was extended to cover any disgruntled thoughts against one's magistrates or ruler, whilst simply conceiving attractions towards one's tenant's daughter in church was considered to be a terrible clutch of sins which broke several. The concepts of idolatry and adultery were similarly expanded so that any extreme love for wife and family or some other treasured part of one's life, became a serious commandment-breaking sin which involved removing God from his prescribed position as utter Lord of one's heart. That this was the case can be seen both from the catechisms of the time and from diary sources such as Archibald Johnston's diary.<sup>1</sup> So when a Calvinist preacher spoke of 'obeying God's Law' he meant some thing very much stricter than we might at first imagine.

This obsession with behavioural and thought control was matched by an unrelenting assertion that such control was impossible due to the depravity of man. Control was good, believers were told, but it was beyond their ability to attain; nonetheless, failure to attain it meant that they all deserved to be sent to hell. The fact that they could not obtain the desired level of control was the evidence of their 'evilness of heart' for which they deserved to be damned. This kind of preaching was known as 'lash of law' or in Scotland more commonly as 'lau-work'. Its earliest clear examples may be found in the preaching of Mr Robert Bruce and Mr John Welch of Ayr in the 1590s, but it is a feature of Scottish devotion which is strongly present throughout the seventeenth

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<sup>1</sup> Twentieth century transcript of Warriston's later diary, Scottish National Library mss 6248, pp 59, 64 ; also see the larger catechism of the Westminster Assembly.



century and into the eighteenth century. Many examples of this sort of preaching can be found; for instance Mr John Welch of Ayr stated that the law prepared a man that he must see ‘firstly his sin, secondly the curse of God, thirdly the need to keep the commandments, fourthly the impossibility of keeping them’.<sup>1</sup> Alexander Henderson, in 1638, spoke of the law as ‘an iron chain tying men to the curse of God’. He further went on to say that ‘everyone who in any degree does not obey the law is damned. If you keep some but not all it is no good.’<sup>2</sup> He too believed that, due to complete depravity, man was unable to do this. Mr David Dickson spoke of the Holy Spirit convincing men ‘of their complete inability to satisfy the law or to deliver themselves from the curse thereof either by action or by obedience, so overturning all confidence in himself or in his own works’.<sup>3</sup>

It was stressed heavily, nonetheless, that man's inability to fulfil the law did not excuse him from attempting so to do, or from being sent to hell for failing. Mr William Guthrie, a popular preacher of the 1650s, proclaimed that even if a man did not have the power to believe, it was still his duty - ‘for the Lord commands you for a reason to make you sensible of your inability to do the thing so that you put it on him to work it.’<sup>4</sup> ‘He has promised the New Heart and he will give it’, said Guthrie, ‘the Lord uses these commands and invitations and man's meditation on the same and their supplication about the thing to convey power unto the soul to perform the duty, for he will be enquired of to do these things.’<sup>5</sup> Here we have the vital clue as to just why this brand of hell-fire preaching was pursued. The tenets of ‘lau-work’ preaching

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<sup>1</sup> John Welch (of Ayr), Forty- eight select sermons preached by Mr John Welch of Ayr, the two last of them being his farewell sermons, immediately before he was apprehended, to which is prefixed a history of his life and sufferings with some prophetic letters. (Glasgow 1771), 133.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson Martin, Henderson's Sermons , 4.

<sup>3</sup> Dickson, Select practical writings , 216.

<sup>4</sup> Guthrie, Christian's great interest, 186.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

were uncomfortable and anxiety provoking in the extreme, but they had a purpose; that purpose was to convince men that their everyday selves were irremediably evil, and that their everyday paradigms of thinking were no good when it came to relating to God, so that they should look for another method of dealing with their souls - the covenant relation of conversion and dependence on a God who is actually experienced, not just believed in - a God who furnishes the inner power to keep his law.

What exactly did this relationship to God entail? According to William Guthrie, man had to 'quit his own righteousness, subject himself to God's ordinance, profess his satisfaction with this device, and oblige himself to seek salvation by Christ.'<sup>1</sup> In Marion Stewart's covenant she pledged herself to 'from my heart accept and close with him, to renounce satisfaction with vain things of this world, to watch that my heart not wander and to resign myself and all my concerns to God.'<sup>2</sup> In other words to close with Christ meant to deny all ability to do good for oneself or for others, or to gain good from worldly things. Good was held to come only from God. As an Edinburgh minister of the 1620s, Mr William Struther, put it: regeneration was a 'foreign wit and will' and there could be no safety but in hating the 'evil one in our self.'<sup>3</sup> Scripture, asserted Mr John Welch of Ayr, 'says that we are dead in sin and a dead man cannot move except by another.'<sup>4</sup>

This dependence on another seemed to imply a complete passivity, but was not exactly that; the point was that whilst only the Holy Spirit could give the ability to perform duties, and it would only give that ability to the elect, whose position was foreordained, nonetheless, as we have noted earlier, the believer was supposed to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.147.

<sup>2</sup> Covenant of Marion Stewart, Scottish National Library, mss. Wodrow octavo XXXI, 211.

<sup>3</sup> William Struther, Christian observations and resolutions or the daillie practice of a renewed man. I. II. centurie with a resolution for death (Edinburgh 1628), 132.

<sup>4</sup> Welch (of Ayr), Select sermons , 158.

continue trying to fulfil his duties and to 'sorrow as if for a first born'<sup>1</sup> because he could not. So the relationship to God not only involved a great deal of attempted behavioural change, which the preachers admitted was impossible, but also severely upsetting oneself because it was not possible. To us this sounds strange, and a contemporary Catholic convert Mr John Walker agreed; he claimed not to be able to find evidence for the necessity of this sort of conversion in scripture, and furthermore asserted that 'it hath made diverse to be troubled in spirit and to lose their wits'<sup>2</sup>. He simply could not accept that thousands should be damned for doing what they could not help - said Mr Walker: 'the light of nature would not allow me to impute such cruelty to God'.<sup>3</sup> We might be tempted to agree with him.

How on earth, we might ask, could the presbyterian ministers preach such a thing? The answer was that, first of all, they were convinced that it was scriptural, and secondly, in a striking and, at the time, inexplicable manner, it seemed to produce results. These results were, amongst other things, the 'new heart' and the believer's 'union with Christ' which they made so much of. The contention of the seventeenth century preachers was that this sort of 'godly sorrow for sin'<sup>4</sup> caused by realising our offence to God by having sinful thoughts and doing sinful deeds led into a state where the renewed man served God in 'a newness of spirit'<sup>5</sup> and indeed most of all, conversion was linked with behavioural change of a noticeable and usually positive type. For instance, there was Col. Strachan whose conversion led to 'the amendment of his very lewd life'<sup>6</sup> or the persons of 'substance and

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<sup>1</sup> Guthrie, The Christian's great interest , 158.

<sup>2</sup> John Walker, The presbyterie's triall (Paris 1657), 186.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p.119.

<sup>4</sup>John Forbes of Corse diary, S. R. O. mss CH12/8/6 , 243.

<sup>5</sup> Guthrie, Christian's great interest , 114.

<sup>6</sup> Records of the Church of Scotland with notes and historical illustration by A. Peterkin (Edinburgh, 1838), 660.

influence' mentioned in Wodrow's Analecta who developed a 'very serious and tender walk' which discovered to others their conversion.<sup>1</sup>

That conversion produced behavioural change in many people of the time cannot be disputed, but when it came to just how one attained this desirable state, the theologians had to grapple with some very tricky theoretical problems. The ministers could not say that man's efforts at attaining to godly sorrow and trying to do his best had anything to do with conversion, for this would have destroyed the whole point of their teaching, which was that man was completely depraved and that the source of power and enablement to do good came from outwith his own abilities. On the other hand, by saying that nothing man did was any good at all, they ran the risk of promoting antinomianism because, if it made no difference how a man behaved, why should he keep the law at all? The answer they propounded was that man should keep the law because God told him to, and he should be ashamed to show such ingratitude by being sinful; and further that whilst one could not bribe God into saving oneself by good behaviour, a lack of good behaviour tended to indicate that one was not saved at all - for a good tree, it was said, such as one of the elect, produced good fruit. Or alternatively, as a pious friend told Marion Laird (a later covenanter of this tradition in the eighteenth century), she should be like the man with the withered hand whom Christ ordered to stretch it out, for 'he obeyed the command and the power came along with it'.<sup>2</sup> Earlier, Mr David Dickson had confronted the problem by saying that whilst the Lord was not bound to any preparatory course of good action that man might take, man was bound to behave so, because preparatory acts might bring him nearer -

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<sup>1</sup> Wodrow, Analecta, II, 389.

<sup>2</sup> Marion Laird, Memoirs of the life and experiences of Marion Laird (Edinburgh 1775), 16.

‘like the drying timber, to make it sooner take fire when it is casten into it’.<sup>1</sup>

This was consonant with a major tack in Calvinist thinking, which was that God was not bribable, and not bound, by man's actions. He was an uncontrollable, unsearchable force who could not be tamed, and who could not be coerced. As one Biblical verse put it- ‘the spirit is like a wind, it bloweth where it listeth.’ No one was guaranteed salvation by any act that he or she might perform, because God was not beholden to anyone for anything. This awesome God can seem to be a terrifying prospect, for the conception seems to imply that, whatever a man does, he cannot ensure that he or his loved ones will be saved. On the other hand, this was an image of God which told things as they were, so to speak, for in the seventeenth century nothing was certain, except the perennial death and taxes, and man was dependent on many an unpredictable and uncontrollable force - whether it was the weather which determined whether the harvest failed or not, or the favour of the king, which determined whether their head would roll or not. Thus, to be the helpless pawn of outside circumstances was not a bad description of much of early modern life, and was not perhaps a totally unreasonable conception of a God who was, after all, supposed to have created this world. Yet the desired impression which was to be taken from this idea was that man should see himself to be helpless and should totally devalue his worldly strategies, for it was only when he had done this, that scripture indicated that his distant Lord might wish to take possession of the property, and, so to speak, renovate the interior.

How one managed to explain this strange occurrence was problematical, but what was obvious was that at this point something did usually happen which produced both behavioural change, and noticeable

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<sup>1</sup> Dickson, Select practical writings , 220.

spiritual experience: the divines were very clear on that, which is why they insisted that their system worked, despite the dangers of despair or moral nihilism. Said William Guthrie: 'a damned soul, becomes more wicked the more it hears of grace, but the sons of Jacob the more they hear of grace the more they wrestle for it.'<sup>1</sup> In other words, the elect were of a type such that they would naturally want to do God's will, because of the sort of people they were, without an incentive scheme of damnation or salvation appended to it to encourage them. Dickson echoed Guthrie's point of voluntarism, saying that after conversion, a man becomes active, able to will and do good, that it 'openeth eyes of understanding that he doth behold the wonders of the law'. God removes natural blindness and 'doth in no ways destroy a man's judgement, but doth correct, heal, help and perfect it, so a man deliberately chooses this blessed way to salvation, and to renounce all confidence in his own works.'<sup>2</sup>

Conversion, according to Dickson, did not take away free will, but perfected it, by purifying it at source. The idea was that man became a 'new creature', a totally different sort of being, or rather that this new sort of being began to grow in man making him capable of acting in ways of which he had previously been incapable. This new creature would have 'the law written in its members'<sup>3</sup>. It would have a 'new heart' which would be a loving heart given by God.<sup>4</sup> They would, according to Guthrie, 'acknowledge the Law as good, holy, just and spiritual' becoming 'servants of righteousness' and endeavouring to 'keep the conscience clean'.<sup>5</sup> 'Now' said Dickson, 'a spiritual faculty is added to the soul- an ability for doing what is pleasant unto God.' 'This

<sup>1</sup> W. H. Carlaw, Heroes of the covenant - life and times of W. Guthrie (Edinburgh, 1900), 52.

<sup>2</sup> Dickson, Select practical writings, 218.

<sup>3</sup> Welch (of Ayr) Select sermons, 250.

<sup>4</sup> Carlaw, Guthrie of Fenwick, 41.

<sup>5</sup> Guthrie, Christian's great interest, 63.

is', he tells us, 'the new life, it has in it the principles of all saving graces and habits'<sup>1</sup>. This new inner self did not, however, have a clear field in which to operate. It was still faced with the rump of the old sinful self which would struggle against the actions of the new, and deeper force of spirit in the personality. As John Welch of Ayr put it, there is 'never one that is called but that they have a law in their members rebelling against the law of mind', and thus they had a lot of work to do 'purging the conscience from dead works, and serving the living God,' for according to Welch 'as long as monsters dragons and devils are dwelling in the heart and keeping the castle peacefully, all religion is in vain'. 'Cease to do evil', admonished Welch, 'seek judgement, defend the oppressed, defend the widow and the fatherless. Make the heart clean and keep it clean. Draw it out before the light of God's word to see its inner foulness' - in this manner was the battle to be fought.<sup>2</sup> So the state of the elect was to have gained an inner ability to want to do good and to find doing good pleasant, but this faculty was only a struggling seedling in them, which was supported and upheld by the power of God, but which had to do battle against 'monsters' and 'dragons' of inner corruption.

This was how one avoided the blasphemous bribery of God, one did good deeds not because one wanted to get a good turn in recompense from the Almighty, but because, after one's change, to do good was as natural and pleasant to one, on a deeper level, as it was for a plant to turn towards the sun, or for an animal to seek warmth and shelter. According to the ministers, all deeds should be done out of this natural spontaneous love of God. Henderson was quite clear on this, it was not enough to be 'impressed by threatening, but we must move from love of God. God is the fountain of love and we are as streams, moved to obedience out of

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<sup>1</sup> Dickson, Select practical writings, 218.

<sup>2</sup> Welch (of Ayr), Select sermons, 250, 385.

love.’<sup>1</sup> ‘Thus’, said John Forbes of Corse, ‘assurance of salvation, does not beget tempting of God and but makes them more cheerful and careful to please God and to make their calling and election sure by the right use of means.’<sup>2</sup> So the net result of the legal terrors mentioned above was that the believer broke through to a hitherto-undiscovered layer of the self, in which the power of the Holy Spirit seemed to become manifest and which allowed a change of behaviour; from this layer, authority could come.

It becomes clear from the study of the conversion doctrine that what the ministers were talking about was a ‘new self’, a deeper level which could be broken through to in the person, which would react not in a sinful, thoughtless and uncaring manner of normally selfish humanity, but in a loving, connected responsible manner, characterised by deep awareness of one's duties to God and to others. This approach to the problem of evil contended that the usual mental level of human interaction was inadequate, and that a deeper level must be reached in the self before humans could respond caringly and responsibly to others. This hypothesis of a deeper, wiser level in the soul bears striking resemblances to the modern theory of the person centred approach, where psychologist Carl Rogers spoke of an inner ‘organismic self’ which could be contacted in therapy, out of which constructive, satisfying and caring human behaviour could come. When we examine the Calvinist notions of conversion and the ‘new creature’ in conjunction with modern theories such as the person centred approach, we can find parallels which not only suggest that there is a genuinely important empirical phenomenon in this area to be studied, but which also may provide a modern ‘key’ by which we can relate to seventeenth century

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<sup>1</sup> Thomson Martin, Henderson's sermons, 414.

<sup>2</sup>John Forbes of Corse diary, S. R. O. mss Ch 12/8/6, 45.



Calvinist descriptions of the inner world despite their often unfamiliar language and seemingly strange and irrational assertions.

## II - A key to the inner world?

Familiarity with modern writings in the sphere of humanistic psychotherapy provides parallels with seventeenth century notions of personal change. The major difference encountered is that whilst a modern counsellor will voice a theory of behaviour in terms like 'organismic self', 'unconditional positive regard', 'be-spontaneous paradox' or other such technical terms which relate solely to what are perceived as psychological phenomena; seventeenth century thinkers speak in metaphysical terms of 'the Holy Spirit', 'the perseverance of the elect' or 'sight of sin' and 'law-work'. Their terms used for the inner world also imply important statements about the outer world, viz. that an omnipotent trinitarian God exists and that he is sending some people to heaven and some to hell and that those whom he has elected to heaven can never fall from his grace. Bearing this very significant distinction in mind, where the realities of the inner world are explained in terms of, and seen to imply, metaphysical realities, we can still find very important similarities with the concepts of modern, usually non-metaphysical psychological theorists.

In their book Person centred counselling in action, David Mearns and Brian Thorne spoke of 'a poor self concept and countless internalised conditions of worth as typical attributes of clients for counselling.'<sup>1</sup> They said 'it is as though these people are living according to a kind of legal contract and that they have only to put one

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<sup>1</sup> D. Mearns and B. Thorne, Person centred counselling in action (Sage Publications 1990), 7-8.

foot wrong for the whole weight of the law to descend upon them.’<sup>1</sup> The parallel with the experience of those suffering from ‘sight of sin’ under ‘lau work’ is remarkable. Further, this same branch of psychotherapy, founded by psychologist Carl Rogers, holds a concept called ‘organismic self’ which bears a striking similarity to the idea of ‘a new heart’.

In the paradigm of person centred counselling, the aim is to free clients from the terror of trying to live up to unattainable internalised conditions of worth - a very similar role to the concept of assurance in early protestantism. This effect is reached towards in modern person centred counselling via the attitude of the counsellor who responds to the client with ‘unconditional positive regard’, ‘genuineness’ and ‘empathy’. By exploring themselves in the context of this approach, it is hoped that clients will begin to establish a better contact with their organismic self, which is hypothesised to provide an inner source of comfort and a wise source of guidance. This is found to be empowering, and frees the client from slavish and frightened subservience to internalised conditions of worth ( and indeed also from those in the client’s life who might in the present try to wrongly impose their own conditions upon him or her), and from the headlong flight to escape the unpleasant feelings engendered by these inner conditions by immersing oneself in defences such as alcoholism, workaholism, consumerism and other compulsive patterns of behaviour designed to avoid awareness of unpleasant experiences. The method is said to work by connecting the person in question to an authority source directly within him or her. In this respect, the person centred model shows some surprising correlations to seventeenth century experience, and may provide a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.7.

tentative explanation of what made Puritan doctrine so successful for many active individuals.

At first there seems to be a glaring contradiction: the doctrine of Calvinism speaks of man's total depravity, and considers him to be a wretched sinful creature, whilst the person-centred approach speaks of 'unconditional positive regard' for the client as the means of eliciting change - how can such differences be reconcilable? The answer is that Calvinism does contain its own version of 'unconditional positive regard', namely the doctrine of perseverance of the elect, which states that the elect can never fall and are loved by Christ no matter how unworthy they might be personally. According to William Guthrie, 'God's covenant favour to his people has no reason, cause or motive in us.'<sup>1</sup> But 'how', the believer asks, 'can saving work go on in the heart of one so unworthy and fickle?' 'Nothing', said Guthrie, 'was too hard for the Lord. Everything will perish, sun sea heaven, earth, but not the Lord's people'.<sup>2</sup> According to the minister who comforted Bessie Clarkson, 'God gives not to the worthy but to the unworthy'<sup>3</sup>. He then went on to quote to her the example of sinful Old Testament saints like David and Job who were saved despite terrible sin. John Welch of Ayr and Mr William Struther put their emphasis on the eternal decree, explaining how those 'able to grip Christ ever so weakly' were saved for ever being within the covenant where 'God was bound to be your God and to forgive your sins' or how 'resting on the decree shall attain the end, for both ends of the chain are fastned in God's heart, yea fastened in

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<sup>1</sup> Guthrie, Christian's great interest, 62.

<sup>2</sup> Carslaw, Guthrie of Fenwick, 48.

<sup>3</sup> William Livingston, The conflict in the conscience of a deare Christian named Bessie Clarkson which she lay under three years and a halfe with the conference that passed between her pastor and her at diverse times newly corrected and amended, 38.

his heart'<sup>1</sup> so that the believer was safe, loved and forgiven for all time as soon as he or she could find confidence of being one of the elect.

The work of presbyterian ministers was thus two-fold. Firstly, they were concerned to lay on the lash of law: to bring believers to the point where they had *sight of sin and terror of the law; and secondly*, having scared the believer nearly out of his or her wits, it was their business to comfort the believer to the point where they could re-establish connection to a stronger, much more authoritative self than their pre-conversion persona by convincing the believer of the unconditional love of God, and helping them to establish a direct, independent contact to that level of self, wherein was held to manifest the Holy Spirit and the union with Christ which was the hallmark of Scottish presbyterian piety.

In the latter phase, the ministers behaved very much like person-centred counsellors, and the person centred approach is very helpful in understanding why their preaching worked the way it did. In the former phase, which unfortunately has given us our popular image of Calvinism, they behaved in a way which would be considered outrageous in present day counsellors, actually precipitating the mental crisis they were supposed to cure. That it was considered not enough to have merely the first of these approaches is evidenced from the view taken of Mr Owen Glendinning, the initiator of the Six-Mile Water revival in Ireland. In the late 1620s, Mr Glendinning successfully terrorised his own rather hard bitten congregation of settlers to such an effect that pandemonium ensued in church; however, having wakened the consciences of his flock, he then proved to be no good at all at consoling them. Luckily for the good people of the area, the other local ministers called in Mr Josias Welch, the son of the celebrated Mr John

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<sup>1</sup> Welch (of Ayr), Select sermons, 439. Struther, Christian observations, 52.

Welch of Ayr, who rose to the occasion magnificently, and left behind an extremely pious and devoted population, who were well established in their faith, and committed enough to put up a great deal of resistance thereafter to the encroachments of the Irish Episcopate.<sup>1</sup>

Conversion began typically with 'sight of sin'. By this was meant that the believer was suddenly brought up short; from thinking that everything was right in the world and following the unconscious dictates of convention, the person involved suddenly began to think of her or himself as an individual with responsibilities for her or his own conduct, and indeed as an individual who had a duty to scrutinise that conduct with regard to an ideal standard of behaviour. Moments of sight of sin seem to represent a genuine step forward for the individual, in the sense that it stopped them from relating to their inner psyche as an unalterable and unconscious constant - a sort of 'black box' which motivated the creature it was embedded in to perform in certain ways, but which was never opened up and scrutinised for workings - and which was thus not amenable to modification or repair-work. The contents of this 'box' were likely to be a set of patterns and injunctions drawn from the subject's parents and from society at large, which went unquestioned.

The person involved might have been treated in a less than positive way by the world, in which case she or he might consider their self to be worthless, or the subject's experience might have been of a devoted family where, such was the child's desire to please her or his loving parents, that the idea of displeasing the parent induced very strong anxiety which was difficult to tolerate. This latter position was definitely the case of extremely noted female saints, Emilia Geddie and Lady Anna Halkett. Anna, 'greatly feared being chid' by her beloved

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<sup>1</sup> W.D. Baillie, The Six-Mile Water revival, (Belfast 1984), 1.

mother<sup>1</sup>, whilst Emilia would ‘rather have been beaten than angered her mother’<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, Alexander Jaffray and John Forbes of Corse reported considerable trouble with their fathers. Jaffray remarked that his father was very ‘passionat’<sup>3</sup> and difficult to deal with, whilst Forbes continually lamented his bad relations with his father, but blamed himself for he ‘had not so patientlie, reverentlie, and sincerelie honoured and served him as I ought’.<sup>4</sup> The result of this sort of experience would be that the subject would have very little confidence in her or himself where personal aims might fall foul of the displeasure of either society or parents. Even if these parents were long dead, their internalised presence could still dominate the mind. Lack of personal awareness made these sort of ‘parental injunctions’ impossible to tackle, since for most people there would not be a deeper level of strength from which to base a challenge.<sup>5</sup>

The first stage to mounting such a challenge was to recognise that one's current state was either not acceptable, or liable to lead one to damnation. Often the determining factor was a chance remark, as in the case of Mr Andrew Morton who heard a bystander on a tennis court say of him ‘Oh that young man swears fearfully.’<sup>6</sup> Jean Shields, when aged between ten and twelve, heard neighbours speaking of someone say ‘nay, but that is a great sin’ and thought herself ‘guilty of worse’<sup>7</sup> and was smitten in conscience. Mr William Guthrie heard Mr Samuel Rutherford say in addressing his St Andrews lecture class, ‘I fear some of you may

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<sup>1</sup> Autobiography of Anne, Lady Halkett, Introduction. (London 1875 Camden society)

<sup>2</sup> Life of Emilia Geddie (1805 London), 13.

<sup>3</sup> Diary of Alexander Jaffray, (London 1833), 54.

<sup>4</sup> John Forbes of Corse diary, S.R. O. mss CH12/ 8/6 , 81.

<sup>5</sup> In this regard I follow the line of Erich Berne’s work in transactional analysis, which has been applied to religious experience by therapists, Muriel James, and Louis M. Savary, in their book The power at the bottom of the well. (New York 1974).

<sup>6</sup> Wodrow, Analecta, II, 119.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p.4.

be strangers to grace and yet think you have religion'<sup>1</sup>, whilst Jean Shield's daughter, at a similar age to her mother, was awakened by hearing an elder say 'that with so many children, it was not likely that they would all go to heaven.'<sup>2</sup> Thus, people who were often little more than children began to seriously consider their lives and how to conduct them, opening up a field for inner search and inner experience. This sort of experience was matched by an equivalent emphasis in doctrine; for instance, Mr John Welch claimed that 'the book of your conscience must be opened or you will go to Hell'<sup>3</sup>; a definite incentive to personal growth and self awareness. This inner road to pastures new and the potentiality of greater personal authority over one's life, was not, however, a delightful primrose path, but rather it was a veritable way of thorns which led to the 'strait gate'.

The characteristic experience which followed this initial awakening was almost uniformly extremely unpleasant. Grizell Love had three years of 'blasphemous temptations,' and trouble with witches and Satan. She was even tempted to destroy the Bible, and feared that she had an evil spirit like Saul.<sup>4</sup> John L. a schoolmaster, had blasphemous thoughts, conceived 'base and unworthie shapes of God', left off food, thought himself 'viler than a poisonable beast', 'would have spat in his own face' had it been possible, and was tempted with thoughts of suicide<sup>5</sup>. Bessie Clarkson had three and a half years trouble of mind and would have been 'burnt quick' (that is - alive) to be sure of salvation.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, Janet Wood's terrors only lasted 48 hours, during which she thought the Devil would come and take her.<sup>7</sup> But Mr

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<sup>1</sup>Wodrow, *Analecta*, I, 277.

<sup>2</sup>Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 4.

<sup>3</sup>Welch (of Ayr) *Select sermons*, 66.

<sup>4</sup> Grizell Love, autobiography, Scottish National Library, Wodrow mss. 72, 108.

<sup>5</sup>Wodrow, *Analecta*, I, 241-245.

<sup>6</sup>Livingston, *Bessie Clarkson*, 12, 1.

<sup>7</sup>Wodrow, *Analecta*, I, 53.

John Walwood claimed in a sermon to know a godly man who had had 'terror of soul for seventeen years',<sup>1</sup> but said that this was acceptable so long as the person involved won through in the end. However Wodrow recorded that Mrs Campbell 'a good Christian, and minister's wife, despatched herself with a bridle under despair', and also that 'two other ministers wives were gone distracted'<sup>2</sup>. In Kirkcaldy, there was also the case of a very godly woman who hanged herself after hearing a sermon, but the minister was so convinced that she was saved that he had her buried in the churchyard, despite the stigma attached to 'self-murder'.<sup>3</sup>

So common was this experience even in the early eighteenth century, that, when Mr and Mrs Wodrow were woken, hearing one of their servant girls 'mourning and groaning' in the middle of the night, they were quite unperturbed and thought it merely 'the fruit of her seriousness for which we had her recommended' As a matter of fact, the poor woman was distracted nearly out of her mind, since she was carrying an illegitimate baby as the result of a rape.<sup>4</sup> That such heartfelt agony was automatically assumed to be ordinary spiritual devotion, barely worth a comment, speaks volumes for the traumatic nature of the process of the 'new birth'. But the necessity for such exercise was near undisputed, apart from the contention that there were admittedly some whom God called sweetly, like the Biblical Lydia, or elect infants<sup>5</sup>, terrors were on the whole a good thing for they 'hold you under that you wax not proud' and 'you must have something to exercise your faith'.<sup>6</sup> Whilst John Forbes of Corse, speaking of the later more peaceful spiritual state which the converted might eventually expect, commented

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<sup>1</sup> Mr John Walwood, sermon on 1 Peter IV, v18, bound with Patrick Gillespie, Rulers' sins -the causes of national judgements, (Edinburgh 1718)

<sup>2</sup>Wodrow, Analecta , II, 53.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p.119.

<sup>4</sup>Wodrow, Analecta , IV, 29.

<sup>5</sup> Welch (of Ayr) Select sermons , 104.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. p.105.



that 'we come not to this calm but after a tempest of misery through sin and weightiness therof' having been 'laden and wearie under the burden.', 'that man deceiveth himself,' said Forbes, 'who imagineth victory without a fight.'<sup>1</sup>

Why was this process so unpleasant? A modern answer would be that the believers were caught in what is termed a 'be-spontaneous' paradox.<sup>2</sup> Such a paradox is defined as a contradictory injunction, 'an order whose overt content contradicts its pragmatic presupposition'.<sup>3</sup> For instance, Watzlawick cites one mother's injunction, 'Remember that you must not even think of that forbidden thing', a statement which describes very well the situation of sufferers from blasphemous thoughts under the law. This, says Watzlawick, is a confusion of active and passive negation, for forgetfulness or the absence of a thought is an involuntary procedure - a passive negation which is an absence of thought  $x$ ; but to will oneself to forget (the active negation) requires consciousness of the absence of thought  $x$ . The state of mind desired by the injunction cannot be attained by attempting to obey the injunction. Take an example, Grizell Love was motivated to destroy the Bible - merely to think of such a thing was to her terribly blasphemous, the thought came into her mind spontaneously, in a way she had no control over; to actually forget it, she would have been best to just gloss over it and to have gone off and, say, done some knitting. The thought about the Bible would then have just slipped back out of the focus of her conscious mind into the unconscious ground of her perception, where it would not have been a problem. What actually happened was that, because of the subjective importance which she had attached to this thought, she instead repeated

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<sup>1</sup>John Forbes of Corse diary, S.R.O. mss CH /12/8/6, 58.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Watzlawick et al. The Invented Reality. How do we know what we believe we know? (Norton 1984), 184.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

to herself 'I must not think of destroying the Bible, I must not think of destroying the Bible' (active negation); thus the hated thought stayed as the figure in the foreground of her perception and caused her severe anxiety. This shows the great danger of trying to interfere with spontaneous trains of thought and habitual unconscious behaviour by direct willpower. Attention to the hated thought or compulsion may simply keep it in the mind occupying an important and influential place.

When a large range of the kind of matter which occurs in spontaneous thoughts are labelled as evil with potentially terrible consequences, as they were by Calvinist doctrine, the result is a near constant state of anxiety for those who tried consciously to suppress them, which could be a major problem. That this was the case was directly witnessed to by Wodrow who cited the case of Mr McCulloch, a minister who was 'haunted exceedingly with atheistical thoughts and blasphemous injections in meditation and prayer, and essaying to act faith'.<sup>1</sup> His situation was, thought Wodrow, a particularly acute one and he noted that 'thoughtful studious persons were most haunted with these' and that 'studious melancholy persons ought to guard against them from the very start.'<sup>2</sup> Even though the more spectacular cases of blasphemous 'atheistical' thoughts might be found in men like McCulloch, nearly all explicit records of presbyterian personal piety showed traces of this basic sort of conflict where the subject tried to actively negate spontaneous thoughts deemed sinful, and consequently heightened his or her level of distress, becoming immersed in protestations about evilness of heart, and extreme 'godly sorrow'. Leading to the situation described by Sato, who states that 'Obsessions come from the conflict between some primary disturbance and the

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<sup>1</sup>Wodrow, *Analecta*, IV, 279- 281.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

struggle to get rid of that disturbance directly. The struggle does not make the situation better, but it causes more trouble; however, when one leaves himself to the dynamics of the situation, then the urge for health arises and the disturbance cures itself.’<sup>1</sup>

Here we find the key concept, which shows the way out of this problem, 'when one leaves himself to the dynamics of the situation then the urge for health arises and the disturbance cures itself.' Let us take an example, this time from Watzlawick: Franz, a young Austrian boy, comes across a flower bed with a prominent notice affixed proclaiming 'Do not trample on the flowers, By Order'. His inner rebellious instincts aroused (his evilness of heart, as a Calvinist would say), he automatically wants to have fun trampling on the flower beds, but he is deathly afraid of the park keeper (the thunderings of the law). He cannot make his sinful desire go away, but he is afraid of the consequences. Suddenly, his attention turned inward by his dilemma to his own inner feelings, he is struck by an inspiration: 'These flowers are beautiful!', he has contacted his own inner authority and found the answer to his dilemma.<sup>2</sup> Instead of being constrained by some outside authority which labels his own desires as sinful, he has contacted an inner empathic authority, which is very much his own, and which functions through love, in a positive way. If one can instinctively see and feel that flowers are beautiful then the prohibitions of an austere law against flower-trampling are simply irrelevant.

A similar experience was had by seventeenth-century believers who were caught in the paradoxes mentioned above, from terror over the sinfulness of their minds and their inability to control their thoughts which they thought they ought to be able to control - they suddenly

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<sup>1</sup> Sato, quoted in L. Seltzer, Paradoxical strategies in psychotherapy, a comprehensive overview and guidebook (Wiley, 1986), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Watzlawick, Ultra Solutions. How to fail most successfully. (Norton 1987), 42.

found themselves in touch with a spontaneous process which they could not control and which was yet somehow the answer to their prayers. This was the new heart which saw the wonders of the law and which was naturally inclined to do good out of a spontaneous inner sense awakened after the initial lash of law crisis. (How precisely it was cultivated in practice beyond the initial conversion crisis will be discussed in detail in chapter five.) In this way, the danger of antinomianism was circumvented; the believer could have all the reassurance of the ‘perseverance of the elect’ doctrine, without society having to fear that this freedom would be abused, for it was simply in the nature of the level broken through to by this process that it should not want to trample flowers or commit other sinful acts of an anti social type. In the words of A. and B. Ulanov in their book on prayer Primary speech, ‘one of the immediate effects of paying attention to our own desires is to experience changes in the desires’<sup>1</sup> (the Ulanovs speak of prayer as being the discovery of what in fact we do desire<sup>2</sup>). It will be sufficient to state here that the crucial factor which was deemed necessary in the seventeenth century for fostering the growth of inner contact with the empowering spirit was attention to the inner world via conceived prayer, meditation on scripture, and repentance and self-examination.

This idea of attention to the inner world which transforms is in fact mirrored by current academic research in the field of psychotherapy by Eugene Gendlin of the University of Chicago.<sup>3</sup> Gendlin, and his researchers set themselves the task of discovering just why certain clients succeeded in therapy whilst others failed. To their surprise, the likelihood of success was not correlated to anything in particular that the

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<sup>1</sup>A. and B. Ulanov, Primary speech - a psychology of prayer ( Atlanta, 1982), 24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.17.

<sup>3</sup> Eugene T. Gendlin, Focussing (Bantam books, 1981), 3-9 .

therapist did, but to whether the client was capable of contacting an inner sense of feeling which seemed to locate itself in the body, and which, if attention was focussed on it, seemed to 'shift', in a fairly spontaneous way; however, without attention being 'focussed' in a way which brought attention to this sense, nothing would happen. These shifts in 'felt sense' which established an inner authority unique to each client, could not be made to order, nor can what will come out of them be predicted, but something can be done to make circumstances propitious for them - as in David Dickson's simile of 'drying timber that it should sooner take fire'. The procedure involved comes strikingly close to the presbyterian *sine qua non* of 'conceived prayer' (prayer which is not of a set form, but which should ideally come in a spontaneous flood from the heart, and which was associated closely with remaining in lengthy contact with one's feelings). The concept also fits in well with recorded evidence of the secondary stages of the conversion experience.

A short description of Gendlin's technique would be in order. Firstly one 'clears a space' by noting what one feels and what is bothering one and putting these concerns to one side; one then picks a particularly significant problem to focus on, and gets in touch with the 'felt sense' associated with the problem; next one attempts to 'get a handle', a word or phrase or image which comes out of the 'felt sense' and fits it. One stays with this contact to the 'felt sense', and then 'asks' it what one should do about it or what it needs to happen. This asking involves waiting 'for the feeling to stir and give you an answer' - the 'felt shift'. Finally one must 'receive' what comes from the felt sense in an accepting way, protecting it from 'critical voices that interrupt'.<sup>1</sup> Whilst this fits much more closely to the radical presbyterian habit of

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p.173.

providential decision-making to be discussed in a later chapter, it also contains important elements which may help make sense of some elements in conversion.

In particular, the most common way in which a case of lash of law terrors was resolved was by either 'text-citing', or 'text-getting'. In such cases either a group of the local godly would visit the afflicted believer and attempt to cite texts from the Bible which would convince the sufferer of his or her election, or the sufferer would personally find that a convincing Biblical text came to mind with an extraordinary feeling attached to it, which was considered to be a direct communication from God. Take for example the interesting case of Robert King, a later believer in the covenanting tradition, around the turn of the eighteenth century, who spoke on his deathbed of how he had first been awakened 'with that word- to be carnally-minded is death'; however he had been comforted later with two other texts 'All things shall work together for their good who grieve not the spirit' and 'As ye have received Christ Jesus so walk in him'. Wodrow immediately asked him 'How he was satisfied that these were not from bare remembrance?' To which the answer came that 'they had a humbling power upon his soul and he wondered at it and they filled him with so much love to Christ.' He also spoke of scripture places coming to his mind 'most sweetly'.<sup>1</sup>

The point was in text-getting that the scripture places which came to mind should have power - that they should be connected with an inner shift in feeling, and not be products of 'bare remembrance' which was no good. The coming of the text represented a dramatic shift in inner mood, as in the case of Agnes Patoun, who, up to that moment under terrors of law, had 'It is done, It is done' borne in upon her, whilst hearing of marks of grace at a sermon. From that point, she said, the 'spirit of God

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<sup>1</sup>Wodrow, *Analecta*, I, 309.

bore witness to them in her' and she was 'filled with unspeakable joy'.<sup>1</sup> Incoming of scripture was so powerful that it could even happen to and affect the mental balance of people dead set against religion. John Colt from Aberdeen, in an experience which again took place in the later years of the century, heard it as 'a voice within'. 'At length', says Wodrow, 'the trouble seized his body, he quite lost his stomach and could eat little, yet durst tell nobody, thinking the incoming of scripture perfectly unsuited to one such as he.' However, this psychological phenomenon seems to have given him no comfort for 'He grew distracted after a sermon and ran away stark naked'.<sup>2</sup> (One gets the impression that the sort of sermons preached in those days, must have been a great deal more dramatic in their effects than their modern equivalents - 'How different, how very different from the home life of our own dear Kirk! we might say.) From this we can hypothesise that the incoming of scripture was associated with contacting some inner sense of feeling. A verse of scripture acting like a handle in focussing would somehow attach itself to the believer's situation and become associated with a 'felt shift' of important proportions which was seen often as the initial establishment of inner contact with God of a saving nature.

The other method tended to involve a group of godly helpers assembling to cite the correct Biblical lines which would free the desired response by seizing upon the believer's mind and effecting an inner felt shift in the believer, with the effects of convincing him or her of their claim to be among the elect, and thus their place in the unconditional love of God. One of the foremost trouble shooters in this area was Mr Alexander Henderson, an important minister of the first half of the seventeenth century, who had a reputation for succeeding where others

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<sup>1</sup> Agnes Patoun conversion account, Scottish National Library, Wodrow mss octavo XXI, 213.

<sup>2</sup> Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 314.

had failed; for instance in his assurance of Mr James Welwood, who 'was of a piercing wit and had repelled all Mr Alexander's comforts'. As Henderson got up to leave, Mr James blessed God for him and remarked upon his great love for Henderson, who at once came back to him with the Biblical quote concerning 'love to the brethren' as a sure sign of election. Upon this we are told that 'Mr James anchored faith. It being the first comfort to him.'<sup>1</sup> Henderson himself had had a remarkable conversion caused by Mr Robert Bruce's use of an apposite text in a sermon which struck home to Henderson's heart powerfully.<sup>2</sup> That text citing was the normal way of dealing with 'cases of conscience' can be seen from an interesting little pamphlet, entitled The conflict in the conscience of Bessie Clarkson, which tells of a godly woman who was having terrible experiences with legal terrors, and of her minister's efforts to comfort her.

This little pamphlet was held to be exemplary of true religion and presumably was also meant to be a good example of how a minister should tackle such a difficult case. Throughout the interview between Bessie and her minister, Mr William Livingston, the latter tries to reassure her by citing Biblical parallels to her condition, and interpreting her symptoms as good signs of her election, via contemporary doctrine. In fact this example gives a strong clue to what constituted potentially effective method for dealing with someone thus troubled, for it is very obvious that Livingston is attempting to produce a shift in his parishioner by 're-framing' her problems e.g. Bessie complains that she cannot find faith, but instead of regarding this as negative, Livingston regards it as positive for 'to know want of faith is a degree of faith'.<sup>3</sup> She feels so unworthy that she cannot pray; instead of condemning her for

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<sup>1</sup> Rev T. Mc Crie, Miscellaneous writings (1841), 'The Life of Henderson', 8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.5.

<sup>3</sup> Livingston, Bessie Clarkson, 6.



not praying, the minister latches on to her feeling of unworthiness, claiming that this is a good thing, 'because God gives not to the worthy but to the unworthy'. In fact at this point Livingston is following a technique used by modern therapists such as Sheldon Kopp, where 'the meaning of behaviour is redefined, so that avoidances become acts of healthy participation'<sup>1</sup>. He is following exactly the technique which is used for dealing with people caught in situations like the 'be-spontaneous' paradox, in which 'the symptom is made meaningless, by taking it out of its environment. Once alienated from the whole which has nurtured it (in this case, the context where Bessie has labelled it as evidence of her lack of election and hence something which she ought to be continually obsessed with, and distressed about), the symptom dies from lack of sustenance.'<sup>2</sup>: i.e. since it is no longer something to worry about, she may let it comfortably drop out of her mind. Unfortunately, good though Mr Livingston's method is, it does not succeed with poor Bessie, so ingrained is her sense of evilness and self-worthlessness that she is unable to accept any other interpretation of her condition than that she is a bad person and reprobated to hell. Mr Livingston is simply unable to find the right key to Bessie's 'felt sense' and inner authority which would bring about the necessary inner shift in her feelings; however, he continued to show her his own equivalent of unconditional positive regard by considering her to be one of the elect and behaving to her in a very loving and accepting way.

Without the contact with the inner feeling of the felt shift and associated text of scripture, the believer would often remain stuck in the self-loathing phase of lau-work, and would not go on to develop inner authority; thus it was a major concern of the ministry to reassure people

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<sup>1</sup>Kopp's strategy, as discussed by L. Seltzer in *Paradoxical Strategies* , 14.

<sup>2</sup>L. Seltzer, *Paradoxical strategies* , 159.

as well as to waken their consciences. This attempt to reassure eventually crystallized more and more into the use of certain agreed 'marks' of election which were purveyed in sermons or written-up in books as a handy sort of do-it-yourself guide to establishing the absence or presence of election.

Marks of election may be said to be the conveniently packaged product for a mass market as opposed to the sorts of 'self-therapy' and one-to-one personal counselling which have been dealt with above. They were ideally supposed to produce much the same kind of inner change, in much the same way, but this particular approach to the problem also had the advantage of setting standards which allowed others to judge whether they thought someone was elect or not, and also of plainly defining any sort of antinomianism as non-elect behaviour. As the important New England theologian Thomas Sheperd said, they were to 'satisfy the consciences of other men' and we should 'bring men unto rules, not rules unto men'<sup>1</sup>. Sheperd was widely read in Scotland and his books, which dealt with precisely this subject of the marks of conversion, were very popular indeed with the covenanters. Similarly, Mr Alexander Henderson, an extremely influential minister of the earlier half of the century, used the technique in his sermons as part of his approach to conversion preaching and assurance.<sup>2</sup> Marks consisted of items such as 'loving the communion of saints, delighting in their society, self examination to see if one loves the service of God most of all things, and grace striving in thee against bad company'<sup>3</sup> to quote a few of those given by Henderson. Unfortunately, this method which was especially popular with the later covenanters, had grave drawbacks, for

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<sup>1</sup>N. Pettit, The heart prepared grace and conversion in Puritan spiritual life (Yale University 1966) , 109.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson Martin, Henderson's sermons, 138

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

it could easily lead to a ‘covenant of works’ situation, to use the technical term for the earlier-mentioned problem of trying, by despicable and inadequate human good behaviour, to bribe God into giving one salvation, and living in constant anxiety of being incapable of doing enough to merit such a reward. The believer might try to produce the marks out of his or her own initiative, rather than leaving them to be worked in the soul by the Holy Spirit in the manner which represented proper conversion and establishment of the new self. On the other hand, a believer might despair on not finding certain marks present in his or her case.

Many of the more celebrated Scots divines stated caveats about this method: for instance George Gillespie, one of the more radical but highly respected ministers of the late 1630s and 1640s, warned that ‘marks of sanctification contribute to our consolation, not to peace with God’<sup>1</sup>; however on the plus side he did feel that they were necessary to check against ‘delusions of grace’. ‘The Holy Spirit’, he said, would remove the ‘disease of mind’ which did not accept that a believer had the marks. Gillespie also noted how the outer marks were only efficacious if witnessed to by the inner spirit. ‘The evidence of the spirit gives strength to the marks’, he said, but ‘we need both spirit and evidence’. The slightly-later William Guthrie warned that ‘the new creature is not found in all degrees in everyone’, thus ‘when judging our state we must do so at a convenient time, not when in our worst case, because one or the other side will prevail at different times’.<sup>2</sup> Guthrie also feared trouble where believers ‘do not know the marks,’ or where they went for ‘marks which are too advanced’. ‘The saved are not above the power of every sin’, admonished Guthrie, and ‘do not have access to

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<sup>1</sup> Mr George Gillespie ‘Miscellany question XXI on assurance’, in Hetherington, Presbyterians Armoury, 104.

<sup>2</sup> Guthrie, Christian's great interest, 120.

God in prayer all the time... not everyone who has a gracious state can answer all objections to it, although they may be saved,' but on the other hand we must beware 'vain confidence'.<sup>1</sup> The earlier David Dickson felt that 'marks should be given sparingly and siccarly, so as to lead to imputed righteousness', because otherwise they were 'ready either to lead to a covenant of works or, if not sound to discourage.'<sup>2</sup> Despite all these strictures, the use of marks was still extremely popular and most presbyterian diarists or writers of autobiographies allude to having read books on marks of sanctification, or to hearing sermons and trying in both cases to apply the marks to themselves, either with the result of great assurance, as Archibald Johnston of Wariston felt after reading one treatise<sup>3</sup>, or with great alarm, as with the case of Jean Collace, who seriously questioned her state when it did not fit the marks given at a sermon in Edinburgh.<sup>4</sup> These vagaries may be said to come from the difficulty of speaking to individual problems and inner senses through mass media.

One other method by which Scots attained to the inner authority state of conversion must be mentioned, and this was via the peculiarly important, and, in the seventeenth century, seemingly unique, Scots institution of the communion season. A communion season was marked by at least three days of intensive preaching, as well as the keeping of a fast day. Over this time a communicant might hear as many as a dozen sermons, besides the exhortation at the communion table and the central rite of the bread and wine. The believer was also likely to participate in all-night prayer vigils, and to meet with godly people from up to a hundred miles away, depending on how celebrated the relays of

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p.68-71.

<sup>2</sup> Wodrow, *Analecta*, I, 167.

<sup>3</sup> *AJW*, I, 100. The book in question was Timothy Rogers' *The righteous man's evidences for heaven*.

<sup>4</sup> Life of Jean Collace, Scottish National Library, Advocates mss 32.4.4, 80.

preachers were. Communion season sermons often had to be held outdoors, not only in times of persecution, but in ordinary circumstances also, because a well known preacher could draw a crowd of well over a thousand.<sup>1</sup> The preaching was likely to be a very spicy, a heady mix of the Song of Solomon and the Book of Revelation being quite popular sources of exhortation at these occasions<sup>2</sup>; for communions were regarded as uniquely important occasions where the faithful experienced particularly close union with Christ and the other saints, and so their love union with the head of their church and with each other was stressed whilst they were also admonished to be on their guard against the forces of the Antichrist, and to remember that the fate of the unregenerate would be to suffer the second death in the lake of fire and brimstone.

Such a highly charged atmosphere was very conducive to conversion experiences, and indeed such experiences were known to happen en masse as in the renowned Kirk of Shotts experience, where a hell-fire lash of law sermon by Mr John Livingston procured nigh on 500 conversions according to one account.<sup>3</sup> Mr John Carstairs, at a noted communion where the congregation was detained inside the church by storms, began an impromptu discourse at which between 200 and 300 people were said to have been converted. At another communion served by Carstairs, there was a strange motion upon all the hearers at the singing of the 24th Psalm: 'all the house were strangely affected and a glory seemed to fill the house.'<sup>4</sup> At Six-Mile Water communions, such was the conversion rate that Mr Stewart, one of the ministers, records 'a

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<sup>1</sup> See Leigh Eric Schmidt, 'Scottish Communions and American Revivals' D. Phil dissertation on microfilm, (Ann Arbor microfilms 1987) Scottish National Library.

<sup>2</sup> *AJW*, I, 37. Henderson preached on Revelations whilst Mr William Arthur preached on the Song of Songs.

<sup>3</sup> L. E. Schmidt, 'Scottish communions, American revivals.', 43.

<sup>4</sup> Rev William Ferrie, *Life of the Rev. John Carstairs* (Edinburgh 1843) 18. Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 135.

dozen a day carried out of doors as dead, and those men who formerly feared not to put the whole market town in a fray with their swords'<sup>1</sup>. These mass occasions were thus also reckoned to be capable of leading to mass conversions, and, whilst the numbers quoted might have been exaggerated, there is no reason to suppose that the basic assertion that numbers of people could, and did, have conversion experiences at these gatherings was untrue.

Communion also attracted people in various stages of conversion, for we are told that, in the 1620s revival in the south-west, Mr David Dickson's communions were thronged with 'people under exercises of soul and soul concern come from every place about'.<sup>2</sup> There were striking individual conversion experiences at these occasions too, such as that of Archibald Johnston of Wariston's father, who was brought to 'extraordinary exercise' by a communion, such that he was in despair and terrors for eight days before he had a remarkable experience of 'acceptance and reconciliation with the Lord'.<sup>3</sup> Wariston also dated his own conversion from an experience in a West Kirk communion when he was fifteen, which caused him to leave off licentious company and to feel that he was 'called'.<sup>4</sup> Mr John Spreull remembered how 'the words of our old Geneva liturgy stuck into me, that through him we have life, liberty etc' and counted this as the most likely date of his conversion. Even a hostile witness, the episcopalian Mr Burnet, later a bishop, spoke of many 'conversions wrought at these communions';<sup>5</sup> thus the Scots practised a singular version of this institution which seemed to be particularly productive of this change in inner being which their doctrine sought to produce. Though it represented a highly-significant part of the

<sup>1</sup> W. D. Baillie, *The Six-Mile Water revival*, 17.

<sup>2</sup> L. E. Schmidt, 'Scottish communions, American revivals', 53.

<sup>3</sup> *AJW*, I, 56.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p.125.

<sup>5</sup> L. E. Schmidt, 'Scottish Communions and American revivals', 61.

Scottish divines' pride in this institution, the part which the communion season played in conversion was considered mostly to be a happy by-product of the real aim of the festival, which was to celebrate the union of the elect with Christ, to encourage self examination, and to thus enhance the believers connection with Christ, which was the channel by which continued sanctification and spiritual progress came, but despite this, its success in converting believers was quite notable.

It can thus be seen how much of the thrust of Scottish presbyterian religion was to provide the conditions which were regarded as propitious for a sort of inner shift inside the believer - an inner shift which led to greater inner authority, self-awareness and a certain form of behaviour associated with being elect. The steps towards attaining to this inner authority were extremely traumatic on the whole, but the compensations were to feel oneself to be the subject of God's unconditional love, and to feel oneself to be in direct communion with God as one of the saints with a direct line to God for guidance via the Holy Spirit. This condition was aimed for via both the preaching of lash of law and certain sorts of pastoral counselling and also by the use of marks. It might further come about at communions which seemed to be very propitious circumstances for it. The implications of encouraging this sort of personal authority, where the believer was guided by the spirit from within rather than by the strictures of society, whether internalised as parental injunctions, or present externally in the authority of king, magistrate, parents, laird or bishops, had a variety of interesting consequences which will be explored in the remainder of this thesis. It is also to be noted, however, that these inner changes and some of the strategies employed in fostering them show interesting resemblances to modern approaches and experiences in psychotherapy; the implications of these resemblances remain to be explored.

Chapter two.**Authority: inner sovereignty and outer debate.**

*Authority, a matter so dangerous that the flesh shakes to enquire into it.*

- Alexander Brodie of Brodie, 1653<sup>1</sup>

The inner authority which was attained by conversion was an alarming and complicated thing, since it did not fit easily into the preconceptions of a society which ordinarily viewed philosophic discourse as the acme of sound debate. Philosophy was the main subject taught at universities and even ministers found themselves engaged in several years study with their Aristotle before coming into contact with their flocks. It was this formal, public method of discourse which was usually employed in setting forth theories of authority in print, but this does not give the entire picture; in a sense it may be said that those early modern people, who tried to consider and work out theories of authority, found themselves rather like the unfortunate centipede celebrated in popular verse, who 'lay distracted in a ditch, considering how to run' after some unkind insect questioned him as to how he managed with so many legs. The moral being that we often do things without knowing how or why we do them, and when asked to consider the underlying theory, reasons, mechanism or motivation for our actions, simple things which we take for granted can seem unbelievably complicated, and even frightening. This is because of the way our mind works. Philosopher Michael Polanyi,<sup>2</sup> considered this problem in his work The tacit

<sup>1</sup> Diary of Alexander Brodie of Brodie 1652-89 and of his son James Brodie of Brodie 1680-85, (Aberdeen 1863), 71.

<sup>2</sup>M. Gelwick, The way of discovery- an introduction to the thought of Michael Polanyi (1977)



dimension, (London, 1967) where he developed the concept that human minds have ordinarily two ways of doing things, the tacit and the explicit.

Let us take for example a particular working researcher; to write up a thesis chapter is, for her, an explicit act - she is making explicit to you her thoughts on seventeenth century theories of authority - but when that same researcher was reading the books and manuscripts which provided the data, she was using a tacit sense of what she considered interesting to decide what to note down and what to leave out, and to decide when she had 'enough' data and when it was 'right' to move on to another phase of research. Such a person might have had great difficulty in explaining at the time the selection criteria involved, or why she felt she had at some point 'enough' and not at others. This was because she was using processes which were ordinarily unconscious and reflexive to her; if she were asked to justify her decisions at the time, she might have pointed to an inner sense of what was 'right' in her work, or to experience which gave her a feel for what she was doing, or she might have simply tried to rationalize her inner feeling in a variety of different ways to satisfy her inquisitor on the matter - at which point she would have had to have tried to make her inner hunch explicit and thus accessible to other people. So we see at work the inner sense which is unconscious, peculiar to the one person who is in contact with it, experiential, in that facility with it is linked to practice as much as to inborn factors, and which normally operates in an unexplored manner.

When we act upon our tacit sense in a matter which is very important to us, and are challenged by others as to the validity of our decisions, one of two things can happen. Firstly, we may react in a defensive way rationalizing our actions, trying to convince the other person that we are right, doing whatever we can to protect our inner

sense from being challenged. In this case, the rationalizations which we produce may or may not be the real ones which have produced our position, but either any stick will do with which to beat our opponents, or we may not know what our real motives were, because they lie in a still unexplored region of our psyche. In this situation, insoluble arguments can develop because neither side is really listening to the other; both parties are reacting out of their own inner, tacit senses, which are not negotiable, which cannot easily be changed by this form of discourse. Thus, the more they feel threatened by an opponent's lack of sympathy, the less likely they are to open themselves to change. Secondly, and much more rarely, the person challenged may truly open themselves to their inner sense, to exploring it by a mechanism such as focussing or prayer, or simply entering into a slow process of making tacit assumptions into explicit assumptions so that a closed non-negotiable feeling becomes open to change. As Carl Rogers discovered, this second sort of process usually requires favourable conditions such as 'empathy, genuineness and unconditional positive regard'<sup>1</sup> in order for it to take place, since any threat to this inner sense by judgemental behaviour or hostility and scepticism usually makes its possessor feel extremely vulnerable, threatened, and likely to clam up and to become similarly hostile. When this human process of change, argument, and relation to tacit sense is considered, it begins perhaps to provide some explanation as to the peculiar muddle of the seventeenth century argument about authority.

The first point to be kept in mind is that, for most seventeenth century people, relation to authority was something which lay in the tacit, not the explicit, dimension. It was something into which to delve might cause them great anxiety. That the local laird was an authority,

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<sup>1</sup>Carl Rogers, as quoted by Mearns and Thorne, Person centred counselling in action, 5.

and even more so, that the king ought to be obeyed, simply went without saying. Indeed, for nearly all of the population, these were valid assumptions, but some people felt that inbred deference was not enough, and felt that they should provide theories as to why this should be so. Amongst these people was no less a person than king James VI and I himself, whose squabbles with the English common-law establishment and the Melvillian Kirk led to him developing theories of royal prerogative. Now, to make something explicit is not necessarily a good thing, for once someone has excavated something from the unconscious and clothed it in words, it then becomes public property of anyone who has heard of it, and who can handle the concept well enough to dispute upon it. From being an unconscious, and hence unquestioned, assumption, it could become open to every would-be theologian or philosopher to dispute upon it, and this was something which could lead to unforeseen consequences and unsettling results. In the seventeenth century, this had become only too true of authority. The legacy of the Reformation, which had led to crises of conscience and the challenging of established regimes, had not been lost, but had developed further; the continued arguments between catholic and protestant, and protestant and other sorts of protestant, and, in the interesting and unique English situation, king and lawyers ensured that this happened. The basis of authority had thus, to a large extent, entered the explicit dimension, but this high profile was not the whole story of what was going on.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed picture of the divine right and contractual theories being advanced at the time, a very useful book is J.P. Somerville, *Ideologies and politics in England 1603-40* (London, 1986) which puts forward an excellent picture of these issues as they were discussed within the unique English framework which was shaped by attitudes to the common law. Somerville has also recently edited a collection of the writings of the popular English divine right theorist, Sir Robert Filmer, in his book *Patriarchia and other writings* (Cambridge, 1991). For an overview of the political thought of the period, the reader might want to refer to the work of Quentin Skinner, *The foundations of modern political thought* (New York, 1978) Volume II. However it must be remembered that due to its unique institution of the common law, the English authority debate is quite different to that pursued elsewhere.

Authority arguments made useful sticks with which to beat an opponent, even if the real grudges behind a dispute lay in the more mosaic realms of noble rivalry and desire for patronage; it always made for a good image to take a very high and sophisticated moral tone, and to clothe any old faction-fight in very high sounding terms about 'fundamental laws' and the divine rights of monarchs. Whilst the 'papist parls' of the 1590s were not to be heard declaiming about papal rights of deposition against a heretic king whilst in pursuit of their schemes around the Spanish blanks conspiracy, by 1638 blasts of ideology from disaffected nobles and gentry were much in evidence in the many protestations issued anent the covenanting struggle. By this point, growing interest in explicit theories of authority was no longer merely the realm of dedicated and boldly enquiring scholars like George Buchanan of the 1560s. Typically, though, the job of providing ideological justification for whatever was going on was left to the churchmen of either side - the Hendersons and Bishop Maxwells of the time, whose particular function it usually was either to make the tacit explicit, or to denounce those whom one did not trust for delving into sensitive tacit assumptions like royal authority. We must, at this point, be very careful to note that not all who parroted the arguments and reasons described in these documents, were necessarily motivated by them. As if this were not complicated enough, we then have to consider whether those who were writing the documents were giving us a clear enough explicit picture of what they were doing. Do their published works clearly represent their own feelings? Or were they themselves having problems explaining what was going on? How much was rationalizing and logic-chopping for the sake of bedazzling and confounding their enemies, and how much was connected with their real

inner sense of what constituted authority, and of what had to be protected at all costs?

The fundamental disagreement seemed to be over what was sacred, i.e. what was not to be meddled with and delved into. One could perhaps find as many opinions as one could find people as to whom was allowed to tamper with what, and what was not to be tampered with at any cost. It was therefore, very much a question of trust: whom or what did one trust? Trust is perhaps a tacit quality *par excellence*, it is generally not easy to say explicitly just why one trusts one person and not another, but it is the sort of judgement which humans tend to make at a fairly instinctive level. To say that one trusts someone is generally to admit to having an inner sense about that person which is on the whole sympathetic and the result of having good experiences of that person. It is hard to say what makes trust, and hard to say what breaks it, but once broken it is usually extremely difficult to re-establish. It might be said that trust and anxiety form the two main psychological motors behind theories of authority. But trust has limits, and when those limits are crossed, anxiety occurs.

How far was anyone to be allowed to go? The trouble with the king's proclamation according to Mr Robert Baillie, was that 'nothing gave us a tolerable security of anything'.<sup>1</sup> The trouble with presbyterians, according to Bishop Leslie, was much the same question of 'where will it all end?' He pointed out that if one couldn't have bishops on the grounds of 'Be ye not called Rabbi' then one could not have ministers of any sort, and then there would be spiritual anarchy - since, in the Bishop's opinion, the biblical text was addressed to all Christians, whilst the presbyterians saw it as an injunction against

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<sup>1</sup>The letters and journals of Robert Baillie, Principal of the University of Glasgow, 1637-1662 (Edinburgh 1841 -42), I, 140.

hierarchy in the church, and pride in titles.<sup>1</sup> In these two quotes we perhaps see the salient issue of the ideological struggle which went on. There were certain assumptions which most people held, for instance that there had to be ministers, or that there ought to be a king ruling the commonwealth, or that women were second class citizens. Anything which contradicted these assumptions was held to be *de facto* ridiculous or dangerous, and indeed was likely to excite a large measure of anxiety, for to raise debate about it was to threaten the tacit foundations of everyday life, in the same way as in the example of the centipede. Reactions to such a sortie onto forbidden ground tended to be both fearful and extreme, not to mention very defensive. Unsurprisingly, a common way of arguing was to take anything, and draw it to its extreme logical conclusion where, it was hoped, it would seem to encroach on these sort of areas. For instance, Baillie in commenting on the Aberdeen Doctors' theory of authority was outraged and alarmed because it held no way to 'prevent conversion to Turkism',<sup>2</sup> if the king should command it. The fact that converting the Scots to Turkism was the very last thing on poor Charles I's mind did not enter into Baillie's reasoning. According to Bishop Leslie, presbyterians advanced their faction by insinuating into the weaker sex - 'for these teachers allow them to be at least quarter-masters with their husbands'<sup>3</sup>. In both cases, an attempt is made to lead the argument into the tacit area of shared assumption, to which any challenge would provoke severe anxiety.

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<sup>1</sup>Bishop Henry Leslie, *A treatise on the authority of the Church* (1637 Dublin), 1.

<sup>2</sup>Baillie, *Letters and journals*, I, 89.

<sup>3</sup>Leslie, *On authority*, 5

## II - The flow of authority and 'outer' trust.

This break can perhaps best be viewed in the context of an interesting ideological dispute which surfaced most notably in the course of the events which followed in the wake of 1638 . The dispute centred around what might be termed 'the broken power circle'. Bishop John Maxwell claimed that kings held their authority immediately from God. His picture of authority was that power flowed directly from God to the king who mediated it downwards through the hierarchy which governed the people; the broken connection was between the people and God. Rutherford, on the other hand, claimed that power descended from God to the people, and that God gave the king authority 'mediately, by the consent of man'<sup>1</sup>: thus Rutherford, the presbyterian divine, breaks the connection between God and the king, unless, of course, the king is a regenerate man like David or Solomon, who were made special cases both by Rutherford and by the much earlier presbyterian author of The second book of discipline.<sup>2</sup> What was the reason for this interesting divergence of theory? Rutherford was anxious to prove that God worked mediately, through the people; on the other hand, Bishop Maxwell's assessment of the people was hardly complementary 'the basest extract of the basest of irrational creatures- the multitude'.<sup>3</sup> Why, we might ask, was Rutherford so keen on authority flowing through the people, who, even according to his own Calvinist doctrine, should have been mostly unregenerate and hence destined to be faggots of hell fire? What precisely did he mean when he used this term? The answer was that Rutherford was not concerned with some theory of 'proletarian rights',

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Rutherford, Lex Rex or the law and the prince, printed in The presbyterian's armoury, III, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Rutherford, Lex rex, 20. The second book of discipline with commentary and notes by James Kirk (1980), 216.

<sup>3</sup> quoted in Rutherford, Lex rex, 21.

but with a theory of how the universe worked, and in that theory God could work through whom he liked, how he liked; in this case, the 'people' must be thought of solely as a medium through which God might work and this could mean anybody.

Rutherford held a providential view of the universe, in which even the unregenerate were tools of God - this is explained more fully by William Guthrie, a friend and sympathiser of Rutherford, in his popular book The Christian's great interest. It could happen that the unregenerate were used by God as unwitting tools of his policy, but it also happened that God's elect were also, and especially, moved by God to do his will.<sup>1</sup> More flesh is put on the bones of this argument when we look at the sermons which Mr Alexander Henderson was preaching in 1638. Henderson claimed that if all would join to the covenant, then God would change the King's heart. Henderson also spoke of the Scottish reformation as having been brought in by the Lord with everything against it. 'Only the power of God.. makes the gospel effectual and makes it continue', he concluded. His emphasis was on power being directly imparted by God, he spoke of 'nobles whom Jesus Christ hath nobilitat in deed'; but also of the remedy for division being to let 'ilk ane say for himself, and ilk ane who knows the Lord promise to serve him'.<sup>2</sup> Mr James Cunningham, the minister of Cumnok who petitioned the privy council just as the trouble over the service book broke out, perhaps summed up this feeling of direct divine intervention best, he told the Lords that 'a divine providence may be appointed for this time' and implied that, if they did not do something, then God was likely to do

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<sup>1</sup> Guthrie, Christian's great interest, 150.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson Martin, Henderson's sermons, 61. J. Kerr The covenants and the covenanters: covenants, sermons and documents of the covenanted reformation (Edinburgh 1895) p162, David Stevenson 'Church and people under the Covenant' Scotia 1977, 30. and Thomson Martin, Henderson's Sermons, 61.



something sudden and unexpected.<sup>1</sup> The implication was definitely that God was working through the people, but what manner of work was this?

An interesting parallel to this may be found in the presbyterian motif of the godly child. In accounts of conversion, godly children were regarded with particular interest, since they were proof of miracles - they were weak instruments whom God worked through; take, for example, the cases of Lord Jedburgh's child whose remark 'banning bairns go to hell' was instrumental in her father's conversion, and Wariston's first wife as a child, whose remark to her uncle about getting up as early to go to worship as to earn money, were both taken as notable instances of the Lord speaking directly through an extraordinary means.<sup>2</sup> In both cases the words spoken were given special authority seeing that they 'proceeded from a bairn' - the opposite of what we might expect.<sup>3</sup> Compare this approach with Henderson's communion sermons on the crossing of the Red Sea in which he told his congregation not to be dismayed at any comparison between their 'base silly spirits'<sup>4</sup> and the heroes of the Old Testament, for the Lord 'applies his power to very weak things'.<sup>5</sup> It would seem from this that in some form the presbyterian outlook included a concept of power, by which traditionally despised and overlooked groups, normally excluded from authority, could become channels for God's will. What they did was not of their depraved 'base and silly selves', but of something else moving through them for its own purposes; and perhaps here we find a critical 'trust point' - some ministers were prepared to believe that God could move through the people and were prepared to trust in 1638 that such a

<sup>1</sup> A speech of the minister of Cumnok, Scottish Record Office mss GD/16/46/25.

<sup>2</sup> Wodrow, *Analecta*, I, 11. AJW, I, 62.

<sup>3</sup> AJW, I, 62.

<sup>4</sup> Thomson Martin, *Henderson's sermons*, 124.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 159.

movement was happening. Rutherford's work 'Lex rex' was an attempt to fit a discursive framework of argument around this key perception, to show that such a thing was possible - since the records of the Bible pointed to similar instances, and to dismiss counter claims that it was illegal and unscriptural.

Whilst he did make the occasional barbed aside about Charles's counsellors,<sup>1</sup> Rutherford was not so much concerned to argue that such a movement of holy will was happening then, as to lay down the general principle that the king was not absolute and that he was answerable to God especially for his stewardship of the people; thus he argued that God could work mediately through the people to dispose of a king. This sort of philosophising missed out one crucial point, however; just how was one to tell when this sort of thing was going on - i.e. that God was working through the people and raising them against an unjust king? How was one to discern such a thing from a popular revolt, not moved by God, but carried through for explicit, selfish reasons? The answers to such complex questions could only be subjective, and deeply dependent on a personal sense of what was going on - thus Rutherford's ultimate authority, upon which he relied to keep the king in bounds, was inextricably tied to a tacit inner sense of what was going on and who to trust.

This raises an interesting question of where other people stood with regard to such an assertion. The contrary argument usually opposed to this viewpoint tied everything to the will of the king, whom Archbishop Spottiswoode asserted 'it was religion to obey'. 'There is nothing so great as the evil of disobedience', he declared to the Perth general assembly<sup>2</sup>, thus shocking Robert Blair, who wrote that the

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<sup>1</sup> Rutherford, *Lex rex*, 36.

<sup>2</sup> *Miscellany of the Spottiswoode society* (Edinburgh 1844), I, 5.

bishop's arguments amounted to nothing other than 'it is the king's will'.<sup>1</sup> This was another species of subjective authority - another trust point - did one trust the king, or perhaps to state another version of this dilemma, how did one reconcile trust in the institution of monarchy with a king whom one did not trust? Again this was a question of inner feeling - how far could one tolerate uncertainty and questioning in such an area of anxiety? - and here the attitude of the Scottish bishops was an interesting case in point .

The more radical bishops were believers in *jure divino* episcopacy, like Laud. The most notable case of this in Scotland was Bishop William Forbes of Edinburgh, whose book of 'modest and pacific considerations' ( to translate its title from Latin) was actually the sort of thing more likely to start a riot than to encourage devout and tranquil thoughts amongst his countrymen. He felt that, once a law was made, there was no more room for conscience<sup>2</sup> so he evidently trusted the king to get things right. Spottiswoode, the archbishop of St Andrews, felt that 'private men must not control public judgement, but the direction of superiors should determine conscience'.<sup>3</sup> So Spottiswoode evidently not only trusted the king but also distrusted the people - those who were outside the usual framework of office holding, as his use of the word 'private' implies. In other words, it would be fair to say that he restricted any discretion of judgement to those who had been entrusted with office by the king - such as himself, since he refused personally to wear a surplice at the funeral of James VI and I, despite the 'direction of superiors'<sup>4</sup>. It would have been very probable that he did not believe

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<sup>1</sup> Blair, *Autobiography*, 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> See Bishop William Forbes' book *Considerationes modestae et pacificae, editio quarto cum versione anglica* (Oxford 1850-1856), table of contents. and Mr George Gillespie, 'Against the English popish ceremonies', in *Presbyterian's armoury*, I, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Gillespie, 'Against the English popish ceremonies', in *Presbyterian's armoury*, I, 1.

<sup>4</sup>personal communication, from D. Stevenson.

that God was working tacitly or mediately, through any of those who were opposing royal policy at the time he made his statement, and also to say that he almost certainly did not trust them in matters of conscience. This emphasis on the king did not, however, save the bishops from the problems of finding ultimate authority tied to something basically arbitrary and mutable; in this case, the explicit will of the king. So, to start with, on both the radical wings, presbyterian and episcopal, two basic, shifting, ultimate authorities had been adduced: on the one side, the dreadful problem of deciding just what constituted an extraordinary situation with God working tacitly through, amongst others, the frightening variable of the common people, or, on the other, the dreadful problem of tying ultimate authority to the fickle and shifting, but explicit, will of a man who was not to be resisted. Given the circumstances of the three kingdoms under Charles, both of these approaches were fraught with danger for the assumptions of the other group. Trusting God working through the people violated the strongest gut assumptions of the divine right radical group; being told to trust and submit to the king as he encroached onto areas of worship, whose practice was deeply rooted in the Scottish psyche with matters of eternal life and eternal death, violated the deepest spiritual assumptions of the presbyterian group. Both theories encroached on deeply-held inner senses of what was right, producing hysteria in the opposing group as its assumptions were felt to be violated. Was there a middle ground to be found here at all?

### III - Inner trust and spiritual experience; 'radical' episcopalians and 'spiritual' episcopalians

Strangely enough, there were definite shades of confusion. So far we have only glanced at the problem of trusting the king, but there was another related problem of trust which had much to do with the subject matter of that dispute, and this was - how far did or could people trust their inner spiritual experiences to guide them, and how comfortable did they find it to function in this inner realm? In fact, we may say that there were three important axes of trust/distrust operative in seventeenth century Scottish religious squabbles: how far one trusted the king as an arbiter of religious policy, how far one trusted the people in any capacity, either as channels for the working of God or as fit to be exposed to the deeper mysteries of spirituality, and how far one was happy to allow expression of one's own or others' personal spirituality without demanding some kind of restraint; in other words whether one thought that expression to be seemly or threatening. Take, for example, Laud, whose interference helped spark the Scottish furore - Laud trusted the king very highly, whom he considered to have been made an ecclesiastical person by his coronation, and gave him great powers in church matters, although the two did not always see eye to eye.<sup>1</sup> He distrusted the people very greatly, considering that 'most folk are too giddy, too heady and shallow to interpret scripture'<sup>2</sup>. His attitude to his own intense piety was that it was too personal to display in public, and perusal of his diary shows that he recorded spiritual happenings, even of a most intense kind, but briefly, describing little self-examination; e.g. his dream about Christ which would have sparked a great deal of comment in most of the presbyterian diaries is recounted sketchily, and there is evidence of some discomfort with this kind of occurrence. 'I am not much moved with dreams', he tells us, speaking of another incident

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<sup>1</sup>C. Carlton, *Archbishop William Laud* (London, 1987), 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 41.

where he dreamed of reconciliation with Rome, ‘but this one I saw fit to recall’, the reason being that he was ‘troubled’ by it.<sup>1</sup> So Laud did have an inner spirituality, but seemed unhappy with analysing it, and certainly did not take the kind of public measures which encouraged delving into this kind of experience, in contrast to, as we shall see, the emphasis which many Scots ministers, and even some Scottish episcopalians, did put upon their flocks, not only having such personal experience, but also fostering and exploring it in public and private to varying degrees.

Of the Scots bishops who were closest to Laud in their theories of authority, we have very little record of their private spirituality, but we do have statements which would seem to show in them a similar approach to expression of spirituality, given that these statements represented their own views and not the parroting of a party line. Spottiswoode seems to have linked bringing personal spirituality into the explicit public realm with confusion. In his discourse on the Perth Articles, he speaks as to how ‘ceremonies.. cover the nakedness of public actions, and distinguish them from private business, the neglect of this in any state breeds confusion.’<sup>2</sup> For a Scot who was a bishop in the Church of Ireland, Henry Leslie, the wills of private men had to be controlled for ‘order and decencie’<sup>3</sup>. The implication was that ‘private men’ were to be subordinate, that there was to be one seemly form of public expression of piety, and if one’s inner piety disagreed or was more intense, then one was to keep quiet about it, at least, to avoid confusion or unseemliness. What this proper form of public worship entailed was a decorous participation in well-scripted ceremonies to ensure that nobody departed from the straight and narrow of what was

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<sup>1</sup> Autobiography of Dr William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, and martyr, collected from his remains (Oxford 1839), 187, 201, 234.

<sup>2</sup> Spottiswoode society miscellany, I, 68-9.

<sup>3</sup> Leslie, On authority, p104.

considered to be correct - hence the emphasis against conceived prayer and on set forms such as those of the service book. Presbyterian worship, whilst it also contained public/private divisions and concern to avoid heresy, saw rote forms as dangerous in that they did not help to kick up the kind of shocking emotional experience which they saw as vitally necessary to the key conversion experience. They therefore liked there to be certain kinds of room for variety in worship at the discretion of the minister so that he could always tailor his activities to suit the spiritual needs of his congregation. Such variety could however be very disturbing for some people. There was also the very vexed concept of headship of the church at issue - it was not only what was dictated but who was to dictate it. Presbyterians did not see Charles as a channel for the authority of God as it operated in the church; they seemed to prefer the concept of God working through a multiplicity - with its consequent possibilities of dispute as to whom exactly God was working through, and who had understood Him aright - to the idea of one man dictating all, and thus ensuring uniformity.

It is interesting at this point to note the views of Scottish catholics, like Mr John Walker who converted to catholicism from presbyterianism. Walker was disturbed by any perturbation at all from unity. He disliked spontaneous individual prayer, and was aghast at ministers changing their minds about anything, since to his mind there could be only one right way, and therefore any suggestions of alternative means of expression or of disagreement was seen by him as an automatic mark of falsehood.<sup>1</sup> He seemed to like religious matters to remain tacit, in the sense of beyond controversy, and so being second nature. To his mind, religion should have been beyond explicit questioning and debate; anything else provoked for him extreme anxiety,

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<sup>1</sup>Walker, *Presbyteries tryall*, 4, 19, 73.

for the idea of having to make choices in such an important area seemed to him to be genuinely hair-raising.

Those whose tendencies were in this direction can perhaps be said to show a need for certainty, a lack of faith in the individual, a low tolerance for singularity, and a dislike of explicit debate with relation to authority and religion. They tended to want religion to be something one did; part of a passive, almost unconscious 'fabric of order and authority', to quote Spottiswoode,<sup>1</sup> rather than something into which one enquired and which one debated. Perhaps also they viewed any personal deviation as an implied criticism of the establishment, rather than a genuine outpouring of praise or inspiration, possibly because, like Laud, they were not entirely happy with outpourings of their own spirituality - if they had any genuinely deep contact of this nature at all. Walker's account of his conversion to catholicism contains no account whatsoever of any spiritual experiences; it is merely a record of academic debates with catholic acquaintances - very, very unlike Abernethie's record of his conversion from catholicism to presbyterianism, which *did involve a remarkable and shocking encounter with the supernatural*, as far as the subject of the account could comprehend it.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to be quite sure, because those involved left little in the way of personal record about their own experiences, with the exception of Walker, whose account shows no discernible spiritual experience at all; simply anxiety, followed by enquiry of a catholic friend, followed by anxiety followed by enquiry of a catholic friend. He seemed to be content to let other men do his thinking for him, always being reassured by one outside authority or another. His form of reflection seemed to consist of avoiding confrontation with the tacit as far as possible, and trying to relegate

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<sup>1</sup>Spottiswoode society miscellany , I, 5.

<sup>2</sup>See chapter one.



areas such as authority and religion which impinged on it to a level where they were not his responsibility and he did not have to think about them. This lack of spiritual experience seems interesting, since we know of very many catholics who had pronounced spiritual experiences of the most intense kind, but this was definitely not what catholicism was related to by most seventeenth-century Scots. Abernethie, who was a Jesuit, did not speak of catholic spiritual experience, but spoke scathingly of its bedrock of Aristotelian philosophy. On the whole, those who were closest to the catholic position recorded least spiritual experience. Perhaps this in itself is a rather telling state of affairs, either these people did not have strong individual experiences to write down, or they were not comfortable enough with them to feel able to write them down at length. All in all, it seems to point to a wish to keep as much as possible relegated to the tacit areas of the mind, and out of the reach of debate.

Very different are our next group, who score highly in their trust rating of the king, more highly in their willingness to trust the people with a role in spirituality composed of more than mere outward participation in decorous, officially sanctioned ceremonies in church, and much more highly in their comfort with their own spiritual experience. In fact at this point we may talk of entering a sliding scale; for those who fall into this broad category tended to be individualists rather than forming any definite sort of faction. They were neither a group phenomenon like the later protesters, nor a court faction in favour like the more radical bishops. (N.B. here the word radicalism is used simply to indicate that the bishops fell towards an extreme mark on various counts, viz. their great trust of the king combined with their extremely little trust of the people.) Those who were prone to these kind of traits tended to be episcopalian, but placed a very high value on

spiritual experience, which they encouraged in their flock. They make the most interesting comparison of all with the more anti-monarchical and anti-hierarchical presbyterian groups, and were often highly-regarded by their presbyterian brethren; for instance Robert Leighton was regarded by Sir John Stewart of Coltness as a 'Nathaniel' who had been seduced by the court, rather than as a 'Judas' which term he applied to Leighton's fellow Scottish restoration bishops.<sup>1</sup> Stewart, who knew Leighton well, also made a very interesting and possibly revealing comment about him to the effect that - 'a stammering sanctity is dangerous in a churchman.'<sup>2</sup> Here perhaps lies a clue as to where such individualists as Leighton fitted in; a very similar comment might have been made about John Forbes of Corse who was regarded by his presbyterian brethren as 'neither heretical nor schismatick, and sound on all controversies' at his examination upon his dissent to the Covenant.<sup>3</sup> His sole offence had been to declare on ground of conscience that he could not sign the covenants. Both men were possessed of a very rich spirituality which was catholic in the best sense of the word - Leighton had amongst many other things read Thomas a Kempis and highly recommended him to his students at Edinburgh.<sup>4</sup> Forbes was an expert on the fathers, and made out his scholarly opposition to catholicism on the grounds of his encyclopaedic knowledge of Christian teaching of all ages down to his own time.

The problem, as far as the presbyterians of all shades were agreed, was that these two did not recognise the menace of hierarchy, and of letting the king appoint bishops, thus getting his secular claws into the church, and providing an inlet for Antichrist. Leighton and

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<sup>1</sup> Coltness Collection MDCVIII- MDCCXC (Edinburgh 1842, Maitland club), 23.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.24.

<sup>3</sup> Forbes of Corse, diary, S.R.O. mss.Ch12/8/6, 288.

<sup>4</sup> A. Phillip DD, *Devotional literature in Scotland* (London 1923), 28.

Forbes had trust in the king, and trust in the office of episcopacy. In fact, it may be said that their real problem with understanding the presbyterian position was that they either were regenerate bishops, or were very well acquainted with fine models of regenerate episcopalianism - good men who took their duties seriously, pastors and shepherds rather than courtiers of the ilk of the hated archbishops Gledstones and Spottiswoode. When John Forbes's father, bishop Patrick Forbes, was presented with a royal letter supposed to sway his mind in a dispute between heritors, he remarked that 'he was indeed indebted to the crown for his position, but his conscience was his Gods'<sup>1</sup>. Forbes of Corse himself was very unpopular at court because he refused to take Laud's view of episcopacy as *jure divino*, insisting that it was merely good and convenient, but not a mark of a true church.<sup>2</sup> This was certainly not as bad as the *jure divino* theories of Laud and William Forbes, but it did completely block Forbes of Corse from sharing the perception of the covenanting movement, that the house was on fire and drastic measures needed to be taken in 1638. He could only lament their 'unpeaceableness', when they saw the whole of their religion, to which he too claimed to subscribe, about to go up in flames.<sup>3</sup> This sort of failure to empathise with the real fears of his colleagues was also true of Leighton, who was only too surprised to find himself suddenly being expected to countenance bloody persecution of his old friends in the time of the later covenanters. Both might have been characterised as being just too otherworldly Nathaniels, who were not aware of the potential dangers to even their own sort of spirituality, from either

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<sup>1</sup>W.G.S. Snow, The times, life and thought of Patrick Forbes bishop of Aberdeen, (London 1952), 111.

<sup>2</sup> Donald Mc Millan, The Aberdeen Doctors- a notable group of Scottish theologians of the first episcopal period 1610-38 and the bearing of their teaching on some questions of the present time (London 1909), 55.

<sup>3</sup> Forbes of Corse diary, S.R.O. mss.CH/12/8/6, 90.

conscience-driven troublemakers like Laud , who had preached unity, but then followed policies which were extremely divisive, or from the church being in the hands of a man who was essentially a politician and a time-server, like the later Archbishop Sharp. It can be said that, in their preference for a system which by its conciliar nature minimised the damage which could be done in the Kirk by a single strong-willed or weak-willed man at the helm, the presbyterians showed themselves to be much more astute in some ways than their gentle colleagues; who perhaps were convinced that all churchmen were essentially lambs like themselves, and who did not perceive how the system of royal appointment of bishops could actually lead to the whole church being submitted to the caprice of what could seem like a single ravening wolf, bent on his own ends for reasons of conscience or politics. Thus, Leighton and Forbes failed to appreciate the anxieties of their presbyterian colleagues to whom they were in other ways quite close. The Replies and duplyes of the Aberdeen Doctors controversy with the covenanters, in which Forbes took part, are full of what can only be described as bewilderment on the Doctors' part as to what the covenanters seem to be making such an unholy fuss about. The covenanters' argument amounts to saying that there is a state of emergency. The Doctors' riposte to this is more or less, what emergency, and why are you breaking the law? You have a perfectly good king, and we have a perfectly fine set of laws, and the king has even agreed to withdraw the service book which you disliked so much, so where on earth is the problem, and on what authority are you doing all these unusual things?<sup>1</sup>

This was all very much a question of how inner sense related to outside authority. Whilst John Forbes shared with the most radical

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<sup>1</sup> Generall demands concerning the late Covenant, (Aberdeen 1638), 4 - 45.

presbyterians an ecstatic spirituality which could lead to him shedding floods of tears with joy or repentance, for instance, as in the case when he 'watered' his psalm book with tears of 'unspeakable consolation',<sup>1</sup> his inner sense, unlike theirs, was not upset by the prospect of royal supremacy, nor did he feel that it was threatened by the Perth articles. That he did accord a large measure of authority to his own inner feelings of 'conscience' is evident by his dogged refusal to sign the Covenant, and by other statements which he made; for instance, in an argument about usury with a friend he said 'I told him that an act of parliament will not warrand us before God's tribunal'<sup>2</sup>; this was very different from the opinion of Spottiswoode who, as noted earlier, said that the judgement of superiors should determine conscience. Forbes seems to be quite clear that conscience was the individual's responsibility, whatever the judicatories said - thus he seemed to have placed it squarely in an inner tacit dimension; it was not to be coerced by explicit outer authorities. Similarly, in his private diary, rather than in his printed works, Forbes gives a clue to what lay behind his own theology; he said that he disliked popery 'because it alleges that we cannot be sure of gifts of the spirit such as justifying faith, hope and charity. It is an enemy to comfort and repugnant.'<sup>3</sup> Thus, it is obvious that he did find the spiritual life of Calvinism congenial and comforting, since the doctrine he was talking about is perseverance of the elect - one which Laud abhorred. For this reason he adduced not places of scripture and texts from the Fathers - which he was abundantly capable of doing - but grounds of inner experience and inner satisfaction. In this respect he is very similar to presbyterian diarists - but unlike them he did not feel threatened by Charles and Laud. He rates highly on his relation to his own inner

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<sup>1</sup> Forbes of Corse diary, S.R.O. mss CH/12/8/6, 72.

<sup>2</sup> Forbes of Corse diary, S.R.O. mss.CH/12/8/6, 83

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p.154.

spirituality, which he is happy about expressing even to the point of public tears at communion.<sup>1</sup> He rates highly with regard to expecting others to exercise conscience, and in encouraging a self-reflective conversion orientated spirituality amongst his flock;<sup>2</sup> however he puts great stress on ‘moderation’, ‘tranquillitie’ and on eschewing schism.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, when Forbes and his friends spoke of ‘just authority’ in the context of asking on what authority the covenanters were acting in the Replies and duplies,<sup>4</sup> it was obvious that they meant external authority in the shape of the king and the laws, not conscience, although they did plead grounds of conscience for themselves in their use of the Perth Articles, rather than Royal authority. Nonetheless, the impression given was of a very high view of royal authority, so high that it was counterproductive in at least one case; Mr Robert Baillie was so incensed by the untrammelled power that the Doctors’ position seemed to give to Charles that he was at once wholly won over to the covenanting side, despite his favourable view of limited episcopacy.<sup>5</sup>

The only conclusion which can be drawn was that personal positive spiritual experience of the Five Articles and episcopacy, coupled with trust of the king, and an inner disposition not to disturb the peace, motivated Forbes so strongly as to make him incapable of empathising with the covenanters’ perceptions. It seems thus to be the case that very lively spiritual experience was not necessarily determinant of one’s theories of authority, or was determinant of them in a latent, rather than an active sense. Nothing in the Laudian reforms seriously disturbed Forbes's spiritual life, but the covenanters ‘unpeaceableness’

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p. 288.

<sup>2</sup> Forbes of Corse diary, S.R.O. mss CH/12/8/6, 90. See his sermon ‘Rejoice in the Lord alway’ on experience of the Lord’s ‘powerful operative word’

<sup>3</sup>ibid p 90 , G.D. Henderson, Religious life in seventeenth-century Scotland (Cambridge 1937), 45.

<sup>4</sup> Generall demands concerning the late Covenant, 4 - 5.

<sup>5</sup> Baillie, Letters and journals, I, 89.

certainly did, and on their arrival in Aberdeen, Forbes preached against them on one of their own favourite texts - 'Fear God and not man'.<sup>1</sup> He did have a strong conscience and spiritual sense, but it was not one that relished strife and confrontation. He did not like to see battle lines drawn in the arena of the tacit - perhaps he was not sure explicitly how to draw them? - but when pushed he would make a stand on inner authority, though he was not consistent in this, since he would also cite outer authority in some cases. He realised that Charles, whatever his other failings, was not going to re-introduce catholicism, which might well have evoked in Forbes similar panic to that which the covenanters felt over the service book.

But the question remains - how could someone with such a strong view of conscience preach a strain of doctrine which in itself left no room for conscience to be exercised? His published explicit theory and his actions based on his tacit sense of what was right do not accord. The answer seems to be that, however else he differed from Maxwell and Laud, Forbes did share their 'broken power circle' theory of authority and not Rutherford's, to whom he was much closer spiritually. He preferred the explicit will of the king to the knotty area of personal sense and how to enforce one's own onto other people. He was much distressed over the covenanters' attempts to enforce their interpretation of the Covenant and Scots Confession, and this may be a clue as to his general disposition; he was happy for himself to act from his inner sense, but was extremely unhappy at the idea of imposing this on others, or seeing others attempt to impose theirs on those who did not share their views.

In the Duplyes to which he subscribed, the king's authority is said to come directly from God, to resist the king was to resist God, and,

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<sup>1</sup> Forbes of Corse diary mss, S.R.O. CH/12/8/6, 90.

crucially, the king was seen as a *persona mixta*, an ecclesiastical person with rights in the church, even though on other occasions Forbes can be heard holding forth on two-kingdom theory in his alarm at the covenanters' use of 'lay' elders at the 1638 Glasgow Assembly, which he did not think proper.<sup>1</sup> He felt that 'laicks' should not prescribe to pastors 'what they should teach and what they should refute', and yet he was quite prepared to allow the king to enforce the service book, of which he admitted his dislike, upon the Kirk. These two key objections of Forbes's go a long way towards explaining the nature of his disagreement with the covenanters, and also towards explaining his own apparent inconsistency. The fact was that regenerate man though he himself was, and was well reputed to be, Forbes did not consider regeneracy - that life of inner spiritual growth and inner experience to which conversion was supposed to lead - to be a license to meddle in ecclesiastical affairs, if one was not what he considered to be a proper ecclesiastical person. He did not consider unregeneracy to be a bar to stewardship of church affairs, if one was a properly constituted ecclesiastical person. This was perhaps the most explosive issue of all: what did regeneracy entitle one to meddle with, and how far could anyone tolerate an unregenerate person interfering in the church and state?

Similarities to Forbes's attitudes can also be found in two other characters who seem to fall into the same area - active spiritual life, preaching to others an active inward directed spiritual life, and high trust of the king - namely Mr James Baillie and Mr William Struther. Struther was a conforming episcopalian minister who nevertheless won the high regard of no less an extreme presbyterian than Archibald Johnston, Lord

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 237. Rev David Stewart, 'The Aberdeen Doctors and the Covenant', *RSCHS*, 37.



Wariston<sup>1</sup>. Whilst Struther preached a totally orthodox, non-Arminian style of conversion-centred piety which put a large focus on the emotions, he shows an interesting tendency to admonish that such piety, indispensable as it was, should not, so to speak, be done in the street where it might frighten the horses, for ‘even the most sincere affection anyways uttered will find uncharitable censure. In public the expressions of our hearts must be moderat, our tears that would burst out must be turned into groans, our groans into ejaculations, our ejaculations into soul speech with God, our full utterings must be for our chambers when we may use gestures of body, speeches etc.’<sup>2</sup> Struther disliked what he termed to be ‘scruples and schism’ which he felt showed ‘want of charity and an opportunity for the papist’, but he was similarly opposed to politicians (the word ‘politic’ tends to be a term of abuse in his work for those who have no spiritual conscience), who he said would rather have an ‘obsequious trencher ministry’ and who ‘grudged the church patrimony’<sup>3</sup>; however, he was adamant that ‘prayers and tears’ were the licit weapons of the church, and he had great faith in these.<sup>4</sup> Struther's view of the position of the king was both interesting and illuminating - he said that ‘Princes have not passion like privat men, for God hath wisely separated power from passion’<sup>5</sup>. The implication was that Struther either thought that kings were *ex officio* elect or that, by virtue of their position, they were endowed with qualities which were very closely linked with the normal image of the regenerate man. Monarchies he held to be ‘remedies for infirmitie’ and he was quick to point out that ‘courts breed civility as well as vice.’<sup>6</sup> Struther's trust in

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<sup>1</sup>AIW, I, 164.

<sup>2</sup> William Struther, *True happiness or King David's choice. Begunne in sermons and digested in a treatise* (Edinburgh 1633), 94

<sup>3</sup> William Struther, *Scotland's warning or a treatise on fasting* (Edinburgh 1628), 25 - 26.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.45.

<sup>5</sup>Struther, *Christian observations* (first century), 125.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. (second century), 225.

the status quo thus extended to quite a high degree - he evidently regarded it as a fairly direct channel for the work of God, not one in need of great reform by the power of God mediated through the godly, and certainly not as a sink of iniquity mostly full of the tools and handmaidens of Antichrist.

Mr James Baillie was a divine who preached a sermon at the court in London, with special regard to his fellow Scots there in 1626. His piety was also deeply predestinarian and conversion-orientated, and he was radically anti-catholic, believing the pope to be Antichrist. He was deeply into heart-work; that is, the emphasis, more normally presbyterian, on religious feeling as the only true form of spiritual knowledge, and he contrasted this with the uselessness of what he termed 'classical ostentation' which he declared 'only goes in one ear and out the other, but never descends to the heart for its circumcision and mollification in times to come'.<sup>1</sup> He also used lash of law style preaching, in which he maintained that conversion could not be had without 'sorrow and paine, like a woman in labour' - all very puritan, we might say, except that in the same sermon he lambasts Puritans, as 'Tares amongst the wheat' who 'hold none to be professors of the gospel except themselves'. He counter-charges them, just as they would have charged him, 'your profession is but lip labour, trying to demolish the house by schism'<sup>2</sup>. As well as the issue of unity, the regeneracy motif is here too, for 'lip labour' is the opposite of 'heart-work' which was a sign of regeneracy. Puritans, according to Baillie, 'hold none to be professors of the gospel except themselves', and there the regeneracy issue seems to have surfaced too - in essence Puritans would seem to have been, to his mind, people who thought they were elect, but who were not really,

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<sup>1</sup> J. Baillie, *Spiritual marriage* (London 1626), Introduction.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.13.

because troublemaking is not a sign of elect behaviour, and who claimed that no-one else was elect. People whom Baillie seemed to have no trouble thinking of as being elect were the Scottish nobles, whom he considered to be 'godly', and whose fathers he eulogised as having 'expelled the children of Dagon' from Scotland.<sup>1</sup> The expressions which he uses of them in this context tended to imply elect behaviour. Neither Baillie nor Struther identified himself with the ousted presbyterian ministers of their time - roughly the 1620s - despite the fact that their style of devotion and theory of spiritual experience were remarkably similar in substance to theirs. Two key issues seem to have lurked beneath the surface, namely, the role of regeneracy in relation to authority, and a preoccupation with unity - as we will soon see, the style of the presbyterian ministers tended to be very different on these matters.

#### IV- The presbyterian camp up to 1660; conscience and inner authority.

To begin with, it is important not to regard the presbyterian ministers as a homogeneous group. It may have been true that, by subscribing the anti-episcopal, anti-ceremonial Covenant, they were all prepared to hang together, but once they did find themselves as the party in power, there were near-endless internecine squabbles amongst them which tended to follow uncannily similar lines to the earlier disputes with the bishops over what did, or did not, constitute popish tyranny against the Christian conscience. To separate them roughly, it may be said that the ministers tended to fall into two groups: on the one hand there were those who reacted less trustingly to the king and supreme authority than their brethren, more trustingly on the issue of a deep

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. introduction.

spiritual life for people other than themselves, and most trustingly towards their own inner sense and spiritual experience, whilst the other side, which still contained a lot, if not quite so many, ministers who related very well to their own inner sense, reacted more trustingly to the king and to supreme authority, and less trustingly towards deeper development of spirituality in the common people. These groups of ministers both related very strongly to groups of the laity who shared their views, and whilst these differences between brethren were visible almost straight away in the 1640s in the first round of the perennial private prayer group meeting controversy, they were most sharply to be seen in the protester-resolutioner controversies of the 1650s. Let us examine, then, the sort of views being promulgated about conscience and authority by these groups, and see what, if any, light they shed on the issues raised above.

Presbyterians, too, had their own form of absolutism, but in their case it was not the absolutism of the king's will, but the absolutism of the tacit realm of the conscience, or the absolutism of Christ, or so they usually claimed. This idea spanned the covenanting movement, from its earliest roots in the Melvillians who had sworn to the 1596 covenant, all the way through to the 'nae king but Christ' radicalism connected to the Sanquhar declaration of the 1680s. According to the later covenanter Mr Robert Fleming, conscience was 'something within, which maketh men afraid to be alone with themselves, yea will cause them to go abroad and frame diversions to be out of its noise.. is it not strange to see such a power in a man's breast and yet against him?'<sup>1</sup> This power set up against man was closely identified with the divine will; take for instance the earlier Mr David Dickson's stand on conscience against episcopacy: he felt that he had no 'clearness' to take a declinatour back, and when he

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<sup>1</sup>Fleming, *Fulfilling of the scripture*, I, 255, 258, 259.

finally refused to do so, he met with 'joy and approbation from God'.<sup>1</sup> James Guthrie, in the 1650s, identified conscience as the foundation of the church, which he said 'must have a root in conscience' or it would not 'subsist in outward profession'.<sup>2</sup> So, conscience was something inner which protested against man's sinful desires and also something essential. 'It is Christ's order', said Guthrie, 'that every believer should have the judgement of discretion, whether the judicatories of the Church speak according to the scripture and whether they ought to obey or submit' and in this he was echoed by the earlier less radical Henderson in the 1630s.<sup>3</sup> Both ministers were unanimous that, if the fruit of conscience was division, then it was better to have division than 'that they should all go posting to perdition together'<sup>4</sup> or that they should have a 'sinful unity' with 'loss of good conscience'.<sup>5</sup> Mr George Gillespie contended in the 1630s that 'he who contemneth the conscience, contemneth God', for in his opinion the conscience was 'God's deputy'.<sup>6</sup> John Welch, one of the earliest Melvillian covenanting divines held as early as 1605 that 'we must never bind our consciences in the meanest to men or angels'.<sup>7</sup> James Guthrie was more explicit in saying that the 'power over the conscience belonged only to Christ' (1650s),<sup>8</sup> and here the perceived conflict with those accused of going against conscience comes into focus. George Gillespie in the 1630s accused Archbishop Spottiswoode of trying to 'Bind consciences by mere human constitution', Mr Andrew Ramsay, his contemporary,

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<sup>1</sup> Dickson, *Select practical writings*, xxii.

<sup>2</sup> James Guthrie, *Protestors no subverters and presbytery no papacy, or a vindication of the protesting brethren and of the government of the Church of Scotland from a late pamphlet entitled a declaration* by James Wood, (Leith 1658), 17.

<sup>3</sup> J. Guthrie, *Protestors no subverters*, 48. Thomson Martin, *Henderson's sermons*, 44.

<sup>4</sup> Thomson Martin, *Henderson's sermons*, 82.

<sup>5</sup> J. Guthrie, *Protestors no subverters*, 48.

<sup>6</sup> Gillespie, 'Against the English popish ceremonies', in *Presbyterian's armoury*, I, 12, 33.

<sup>7</sup> Welch (of Ayr), *Selected sermons*, 26.

<sup>8</sup> J. Guthrie, *Protestors no subverters*, 102.

accused the Pope of trying to do the same, and Mr James Guthrie by 1653 accused his fellow presbyterian ministers who had adhered to the public resolutions and the actions of the St Andrews general assembly of doing likewise.<sup>1</sup> The Guthrie quote is worth giving in full: the public resolutioners were to his mind ‘setting up the wills of men for a law, and establishing an arbitrary and tyrannical power over our consciences.’ This, said Guthrie, was ‘tied to iniquity’.<sup>2</sup> The concept of setting up the will of man as an authority over that of the inner sense of conscience in religion was what was known as ‘will-worship’ - deciding that man knew better than God, and, according to the earlier Mr Ramsay, it was clearly ‘disallowed by scripture’. This, said Henderson in 1638, was to make ‘man have dominion over our faith, and to make faith stand in the wisdom of man and not in the power of God’,<sup>3</sup> which, given presbyterian opinions about the depravity of man, was not saying very much. The issue of conscience was an issue of sovereignty - how far should man be governed by his inner sense which he contacted via the presbyterian conversion experience, and could this stand against the threatenings of outer judicatories?

It was here that the presbyterians made their distinction between public and private behaviour. The conscience was not of the selfish and corrupt man, but of God, it was, to quote Fleming, ‘against carnal gain.’<sup>4</sup> The conscience was God's deputy and of God, and the root of the church, and subject only to Christ; what fitter engine to be governed by, since it was not of depraved man? At this point it must be said that the emphasis on ‘conscience’ with its linkage to an inner sense as the root of the church sounds very suspiciously like a cover for the notion of

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<sup>1</sup> Gillespie, ‘Against the english popish ceremonies’, in *Presbyterian's armoury*, I, 3. Andrew Ramsay *A warning to come out of Babylon* (Edinburgh 1638), 19. J. Guthrie, *Protestors no subverters*, 48.

<sup>2</sup> J. Guthrie *Protestors no subverters*, 48.

<sup>3</sup> Mc Crie, *Miscellaneous writings*, 60.

<sup>4</sup> Fleming, *Fulfilling of the scripture*, I, 255.

regenerate authority, the concept that power could only be properly exercised under the guidance of those who were converted. In fact the notions seem to be fairly close; for instance, take Henderson's passage about the judgement of discretion - 'the judgement of weighty things belongs chiefly to those most inspired by the spirit of God, but judgement of discerning things belongs to each particular Christian, which is not to make everyone the judge of weighty things, but everyone ought to judge for himself, and ought to be persuaded of them before he practice them.'<sup>1</sup> Now the judgement of discretion was virtually synonymous with the consulting of conscience, the two terms could be used interchangeably, and both arose in the same context of disobedience/obedience to authority, but Henderson's words seemed to indicate that ability to use this function of conscience was tied to 'being inspired by the spirit' - a mark of regeneracy. In the Westminster confession and larger catechism, peace of conscience, and 'walking in good conscience' were associated with the elect. It was seen as the 'operation of the spirit' and, in the wicked, conscience was held to be something that they could not bear; being given over to 'horrors of conscience' was held to be a punishment for their sins. They could not stand to live with their inner tacit being. However, in Chapter XX in which liberty of conscience was discussed, we find the assertion that God alone was 'Lord of the conscience' and that to believe the doctrines of men or to obey their commandments to do anything contrary to God's word was to 'betray true liberty of conscience'.<sup>2</sup>

Who on earth was to determine what was of man and what was of God? Who but the Holy Spirit speaking in scripture- 'the supreme Judge

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<sup>1</sup> Thomson Martin, *Henderson's sermons*, 44.

<sup>2</sup> The Westminster confession of faith, the larger and shorter catechisms, with the scripture proofs at large together with the sum of saving knowledge, (London 1958) see the table under 'liberty of conscience'

by which all controversies of religion are to be determined' and who above all had access to the Holy Spirit, but most of all the elect to whom the Spirit was promised by the covenant of grace. The whole table entry to the combined catechism and confession of faith is concerned with the workings of the Holy Ghost on, and for, the elect; most especially the spirit is concerned with witnessing to them their adoption and union with Christ.<sup>1</sup> However, by the time of the protestor resolutioner split of the 1650s and, more especially, the later covenants (post 1660), we start to hear of more weight being put on the judgement of the 'generality of the godly' - the sort of people who did have conviction of this union with Christ, or who strove for it. In Mr James Guthrie's reply to those who criticised him for using this concept 'What minister will not lay more stress on the judgement of those who live in godliness, rather than those who live against it?',<sup>2</sup> he claimed that this was a crucial item of doctrine against the engagers, and in fact remarked at the time of the engagement that those supporting it were a faction, as opposed to the 'nation and Israel of God who opposed them.'<sup>3</sup> In the later covenants it should be noted in passing that the same idea prevailed; the curates were not to be heard because 'It would be considered what people are most inclined to when they attain unto most nearness of God and it will be found that they have greatest averseness from hearing them'.<sup>4</sup> Both these statements come in the context of debates on the role of conscience in the church; the first quote of Guthrie's came in an argument over the legitimacy of the Kirk's stand on conscience against an unrepentant king, that of Welch of Irongray on the curates, in the context of resisting

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<sup>1</sup> See topics in the table of chief matters under the headings of 'conscience', Holy Ghost' and 'liberty of conscience'. in the Westminster confession of faith.

<sup>2</sup> An answer to the declaration of the pretended assembly (Leith 1653), 106.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Baillie, Letters and journals, III, 59.

<sup>4</sup> John Welch (of Irongray), Fifty and two directions (Edinburgh 1703), 29.



the bishops who 'would have mastery of your consciences or nothing else'.<sup>1</sup>

There thus seems to be some kind of link between conscience and regenerate behaviour which is not fully explored. Certainly both are held to be the product of outside divine influence, and hence things which escape from participation with the depravity of man; and it is thus that they are reckoned to carry authority. The theory of the more radical ministers especially seemed to hint that the most regenerate people were the most likely to make the right decision in conscience, and it was conscience which seemed to carry, mediately from God, supreme authority for nearly all presbyterians, even though they often disagreed on what was conscience and what disobedience amongst themselves, which shows the difficulties of taking guidance from this tacit level, where instinctive feelings had somehow to be converted into acceptable grounds for defiance of authority.

#### V- Relations to outer authority

To explore fully this issue of the ascription of supreme authority to an inner sense of conscience which is connected with the Holy Spirit, perhaps it would be enlightening to consider for a while just how these people reacted to the traditional outer authority par excellence- the king - and to his creatures - the bishops. If authority, for presbyterians, was something which had to come from outside corrupt man, did they feel that the authority of king and bishops came from that legitimate source? The answer in the case of the bishops was definitely no. The protest was that bishops were not scriptural, and that they represented a blurring of

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<sup>1</sup> John Welch of Irongray, The Churches' paradox or the substance of a sermon preached at Cambusnethan, ( no date or place of publication), 17.

what was maintained to be a critical line between church and state - the so called two-kingdoms theory, as set forth in the Second book of discipline. This second defence was supposed to prevent unqualified magistrates meddling in the vital area of doctrine, but it was also supposed to prevent 'lordly prelates' meddling in the state, and spending more time on benefice and promotion seeking at court than attending to cure of souls in their parishes. All of this, however, was supposed to be strictly scriptural, and in essence, nothing in religion was considered to be valid unless it had at least the backing of this authority untainted by depraved man, par excellence. The Westminster Confession was adamant-

The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture; unto which nothing is at any time to be added, whether by new revelations of the spirit or by the traditions of men.

but it then goes on to say

Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word; and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence according to the general rules of the word which are always to be observed.<sup>1</sup>

From this we can see that, though scripture was held to be of the incorrupt almighty God, there were some areas where human discretion was supposed to have been legitimate - but the presbyterians argued that the areas in which the later Stuart kings had sought to interfere, namely those of episcopacy and the Perth articles, were not legitimate. They

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<sup>1</sup>Westminster confession, chapter I paragraph, VI.

took their positions as the qualified interpreters of scripture very seriously, and they were convinced that the office of episcopacy was not scriptural. Mr Andrew Cant contended that the bishops were ‘bastard bairns’ who had ‘no warrant in scripture’, but who served ‘man’s wrath and vengeance’<sup>1</sup>. He considered that the ‘false doctrine and tyranny’ of the bishops in their efforts to impose ‘laws on the conscience of God’s people’ were ‘marks of Antichrist’.<sup>2</sup> He considered prelacy to be a ‘poisoned fountain’ which to his mind constituted a dire emergency in the Kirk and which required drastic action, but crucially, he said this was to be done by ‘the power of God’<sup>3</sup> - in other words mediately by God rising up through the people.

Here we find regeneracy implications again, the bishops are ‘servants of man’s wrath and vengeance’ - hardly marks of election, and they are considered to have shown the exact antithesis to marks of election - ‘marks of anti-Christ’. The effort is obviously being made to tag the bishops as unregenerate men who are destined to hellfire. Why? Because they imposed ‘laws upon the conscience of the godly’ - because they attempted to dictate to people who were regenerate, against the inner sense of conscience which was fostered by regeneracy. Here the traditional public and private distinction was perhaps being subtly and unconsciously subverted, even at the same time as it was being publicly proclaimed - as in Cant’s assertion that nobles were ‘the naturall mountains of the kingdom’ as opposed to the artificial ones of the bishops, which was given in the same sermon.<sup>4</sup>

Traditional public men were nobles and gentry - those with a stake in the kingdom - land: because of their land holding, it was

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<sup>1</sup> Mr Andrew Cant’s sermon, Glasgow 1638, J. Kerr, *Covenant and covenanters*, 94.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p.111.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 121.

<sup>4</sup> Kerr, *Covenants and covenanters*, 113.

considered that what was good for them was good for the kingdom, and to act against the commonwealth, with whose fate they were so much bound up in would have been insanity against enlightened self interest - to see this theory being debated in an avowedly Puritan context, one need only look at the Putney debates where Cromwell disputed with the Levellers over the vote. In the case of the bishops, however, Scottish presbyterians did not see their extensive land holding as a guarantee of public behaviour- quite the contrary. Henderson, preaching at the same time as Cant, in a socially conservative outburst which in the context of his Calvinist beliefs had more far-ranging implications described the prelates as the 'grass that grows on the housetop' - they had ideas above their station - worse, they had pride - 'the sort of drunkenness which base men who are promoted are prone to.'<sup>1</sup> The unmistakable implication was that they were private men, not fit to be entrusted, but also that they behaved in unregenerate ways. Here were unregenerate men, minions of Antichrist, let loose in the church to give policy to the godly against the light of the very vice-regent of God within them.

'To be a pastor', said Mr Andrew Ramsay, was 'not a call to hardlie domineering authority', for pastors did not have power of their own. 'We doe it but ministerially', he said, thus if the conscience was God's deputy, then so was the minister - a channel for God's power. The trouble with the prelates, according to Ramsay, was that they were not using spiritual power, because they did not act exclusively in Christ's name. Thus they were using 'lordlie power' rather than spiritual for the role of a pastor was one of 'a servant to be deuitful and watchful' not one of a master - his master was Christ to whom he owed complete allegiance, and upon whose grace he was solely dependent for any good

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<sup>1</sup> Thomson Martin, *Henderson's sermons*, 317, 355.

that he might do.<sup>1</sup> This was extremely close to conversion theory, where the correct attitude was stipulated to be one of complete dependence. The only channel through which power could flow was through 'loathing of self', humbling of self, and repentance; any other attitude was criticised as will-worship, and arrogating to the corrupt self too high a power. This attitude seems to have been unconsciously transferred to the bishops, where it was mixed up with traditional social prejudice against men of 'base origins' who had social climbed their way to the top. The prelatie attitude was incorrect by both sets of standards current at the time. They had no breeding and were not independent of the Crown due to hereditary title - the usual social claim to deference in early modern times - and neither did they fit into the doctrine of regeneracy and the conversion centred emphasis on denigration of human powers and dependence on God, which was directly experienced in the inner man through the incoming of texts, liberty in prayer, and conviction of the unfailing divine love. Compare the image of the bishops as proud, haughty and concerned with worldly things with the ideal of presbyterian piety 'to grow downward in humility and inward in heart knowledge of yourselves... abhor pride'.<sup>2</sup> In fact it is specifically said how little use the bishops were supposed to be in the way of producing conversions,<sup>3</sup> and this was to be a major grudge not only against the bishops, but against all those who took the side of superior authority, which tended to give more weight to qualifications on paper than to spiritual qualifications - for instance, in the case of the later public resolutioners, Mr James Guthrie spoke of the offence of having ministers thrust in on the godly 'who knew not how to speak a word in

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<sup>1</sup> Mr Andrew Ramsay, sermon in Riddell of Ardnamurchan family book, 30th Dec 1638, Scottish Record Office, mss GD1/395

<sup>2</sup> Welch (of Irongray), *Fifty and two directions*, 22.

<sup>3</sup> Wodrow, *Selected biographies*, I, 74.

season to a weary soul'.<sup>1</sup> This conversion centred emphasis produced real problems when those who adhered to it saw those in authority to be amongst the unconverted, and herein lies a clue to the alarm which conversion-centred presbyterians felt at the conduct of the king, as compared to the lack of alarm shown by the 'spiritual episcopalians' who were familiar with examples of regenerate episcopacy, and who seemed to consider the king to be an ecclesiastical person and hence a channel for God. There was a tacit and explicit split here: ostensibly, bishops were decried because the institution was said to be against scripture, but in actual practice the animus against bishops seemed to draw its power from a strange mix of traditional social prejudice against base men in high places, and a much more radical outlook in which anything, or anyone, who was seen to place obstacles in the way of the all-important conversion experience, and the mentality of utter inner dependence and interiority which accompanied it, was perceived as fair game for denunciation.

The presbyterian attitude to the king seemed to contain similar dynamics. When James VI had his original coronation in Scotland there was a controversy anent anointing; on the one hand, John Knox objected vehemently, on the other, the bishop of Orkney was extremely keen to have the king anointed. Knox claimed that anointing made the king into a *persona mixta* - who straddled both the two-kingdoms, and who was by virtue of this ceremony empowered to interfere with both, hence the Geneva-trained divine would have nothing to do with such a dangerous precedent, but as far as the majority of the Scots elite were concerned it was essential. The difference of emphasis could be seen in the reports of the coronation: the register of the privy council stated that 'Father Adam, bishop of Orkney, anoyntit the said most excellent Prince - king

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<sup>1</sup> J. Guthrie, *Protestors no subverters*, 22.

of this realm and the dominions thereof, investit and inaugurat his Grace' and lastly 'put the crown royal upon his head.'<sup>1</sup> Calderwood, who reported Knox's protest, said simply that James was crowned, but it is obvious from the privy council description that James's being anointed seemed to be the operative ceremony, not the crowning which comes last. The king is considered 'inaugurat' from the point of the anointment. In the seventeenth century, this controversy over anointment was alive and well, and the presbyterian party simply refused to have Charles II anointed at his coronation at Scone.

So why such a fuss over a seemingly innocuous, and highly significant national ceremony? The answer was that the ceremony of anointment was connected to regeneracy and the channels of grace through which God's power was supposed to flow. Anointment was supposed to confer sacredness. It was typical of Christ's anointing with the spirit, and bishop Sancroft said so at James's English coronation in his prayer 'we beseech thee, O Holy Father, plenteously to pour out upon them both all the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, which thou didst of old confer upon thy chosen servants by this ministry through him who was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows Jesus Christ.'<sup>2</sup> In fact the anointing was surrounded with imagery related to the descending of the Holy Spirit. The hymn 'Veni creator' associated with the down pouring of the spirit in Acts ii, 2-4, was usually sung at this point. In this hymn, grace is sung of as the 'unction spirituall'. When Laud blessed the oil at Charles I's English coronation, he asked that the spirit give to the king grace. In another prayer it was asked that 'he may joyfully receive the state of supreme government by the gift of thy supernatural grace'. The anointing was further associated with God's

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<sup>1</sup> Register of the privy council of Scotland, (1877, H.M. General Register House, Edinburgh), I, 543, Calderwood, History of the Church of Scotland (Edinburgh 1843, Wodrow society), II, 384.

<sup>2</sup> Coronation of Charles I, (Henry Bradshaw Society 1892), introduction.

making of Aaron into a priest; it was stated how God ‘didst consecrate thy servant Aaron a priest by the anointing of oil, and afterwards by the effusion of oil, didst make kings, priests and prophets to govern thy people Israel’. Charles was to be blessed so that he might ‘imitate Aaron in the service of God.’ The prayer after anointing asked Christ to pour his anointing power down on the king ‘so by this invisible gift thou maiest receive invisible power’.<sup>1</sup> As if this was not bad enough in presbyterian terms, the prayer over the king's ring went on to ask that ‘What he sanctifies may be Holy, what he shall bless may be blessed,’ and that he should be a mediator between church and laity.<sup>2</sup> Unsurprisingly this prayer was dropped for Charles’s Scottish coronation, where it might have caused an outcry; it seemed to ask for supernatural powers for the king, and in Scotland the only person thought of as a mediator with supernatural powers was Christ himself. When the vocabulary of anointing was used amongst presbyterians, it was used to speak of the conversion experience, not of the divine powers of kings - for instance, Marion Laird, a later covenanter, spoke of Christ anointing the elect and said that ‘we have an unction from the Holy Ghost by which we know all things’<sup>3</sup>.

Mr Robert Douglas made a similar point in his coronation sermon for Charles II. He gave a learned discourse on the use of anointing in the Bible, and how it was typical of Christ, and too connected to the regime of the hated bishops to be appropriate. Douglas stressed that the king did not need oil; he flatteringly told Charles that he was anointed anyway, but went on to say that grace was much better than oil, that grace was evidently not obtained from the oil, and thinking of grace should put the

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<sup>1</sup>Coronation of Charles I, 21, 31, 34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.41.

<sup>3</sup> Marion Laird, *Memoirs*, 124.



king in mind of the gifts he ought to have<sup>1</sup> - but by the theology to which Douglas himself subscribed, the king could not have these gifts except by the workings of the spirit through regeneration. Douglas said that the king was supposed to 'reign according to God's will' and that the chain of authority would be broken if the king did not reign according to God's will - but who could properly discern God's will but the elect? For instance, take Mr Robert Fleming's discourse on how 'a serious Christian getteth a view of scripture and scriptural things that the most piercing eye of an unsanctified schoolman cannot reach - yea by the practice of truth, nearness to God and retiring of the soul to him hath oft got more light in one hour than others by many days putting their invention and judgement on a rack.'<sup>2</sup> True discernment of God's will seemed to lie best with the elect.

Again the question is not clear cut. Mr Patrick Gillespie seemed about to tackle the problem of an unregenerate king head-on in his sermon - Ruler's sins- the causes of national judgement , where he denounced the Stuart family for its behaviour, speaking of the 'sins of a family that is not terminate in one person but which hath gone on in opposition to God and persecution of his people from grandfather to son to grandchild', and unlike Manasseh, a wicked king of Judah who had repented, the Stuarts had not even had it in them to repent. The implication here was explicitly of unregeneracy, but after describing the horrible judgements which sinful monarchs could bring on the land, Gillespie seemed to stop short with a disclaimer that he 'meant not' that men could not live satisfactorily under an unregenerate king, but that conversion would improve the king<sup>3</sup> . Yet the whole thrust of his sermon had been that conniving with unjust, unregenerate rulers brought plagues

<sup>1</sup>Kerr, Covenants and Covenanters, 349-385.

<sup>2</sup> Fleming, Fulfilling of the scripture, I, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Mr Patrick Gillespie, Ruler's sins the causes of national judgements (Edinburgh 1718) , 15, 18.

on the land, and that the people should have withstood the 'abominations of Manasseh' and by analogy that they should have withstood Charles. He seemed to act from a tacit assumption that lawful authority came from regeneracy, but the idea of taking this principle to its logical explicit conclusion - that Charles was unregenerate and hence not truly fit to govern - was too anxiety-provoking for even this firebrand minister of the protestor faction to draw it out.

There seems, in this case, to have been some sort of holy fog, notions of through what channels grace was conferred and how essential it was in a ruler seem to have been blurred or inconsistent. It was perhaps for most people, as it was for Brodie of Brodie, too anxiety-provoking for them to enquire much into and yet they had a sense for when something was definitely felt to be wrong. There was a large fuss around the implication that anointment might have been supposed to confer grace, and unregenerate behaviour in a king was regarded as little short of catastrophic. How an unregenerate king could be supposed to know the will of the Lord so essential for his authority, which it took the godliest people of all hours of anguished prayer to properly distinguish - as we shall see later - was not stated - unless he was simply to take his policy almost wholesale from his regenerate ministers, whose job it would be to keep him on the rails. It was thus fairly evident that the fact, or lack of it, of the king's regeneracy was seen to have very important consequences for how his godly subjects felt about and reacted to him, but they were very hesitant indeed in producing an explicit theory which related to this matter. They seemed to prefer instead to make explicit declarations of respect and obedience to the monarch, when it was evident that really they were first and foremost subjects to king conscience - the primacy of the none-too-coherent inner sense which told them not to trust Charles and his innovations.

Now this doctrine associated with anointing is also interesting when viewed in context of two-kingdom theory. Removing anointing should have in theory removed the king's pretext for interference in ecclesiastical affairs, which the ministers distrusted so highly, and which they had appealed to conscience about. Here we may wonder just how far they realised what they were doing explicitly and how it appeared to others. The whole squabble seems to point to a presbyterian distrust of the king as a channel for inner grace. They did not believe that he had it *ex officio*, and the way in which they acted in some quarters seemed to imply that they they did not think he had it at all. Douglas, considered by the protestors to be an ultra-royalist, would not even concede to Charles the ceremony of anointment, although he tried to imply that he thought the king did not need it, but later protestor ministers would not even pray for the king, and even some resolutioner ministers shifted to this position later. Hardly a position which suggested that they they thought Charles either regenerate or authoritative. This distrust that dared not speak its name in the context of regenerate authority, can perhaps be seen in another area where tacit assumptions seemed to override official theory, namely in the context of scandal and two - kingdoms theory.

Scandal was defined by the great presbyterian theorist Mr George Gillespie as ' a word or deed proceeding from me, which is, or may be, the occasion of another man's falling, halting or swerving away from the straight way of righteousness'. It was opposed by Gillespie to 'edification'. Edification and scandal, said Gillespie, were 'not compatible'. Scandals were those things which 'hinder our edification and growth in faith and plerophory, and make us stumble instead of going forward'.<sup>1</sup> (note - plerophory is a technical theological term

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<sup>1</sup>George Gillespie, 'Against the english popish ceremonies', in *Presbyterian's armoury*. I, 43.

meaning assurance of grace) He then went on in a complicated argument with much citing of Latin and Greek texts to prove that ‘when scandal is known to follow upon anything, if it be not necessary, there is no respect whatsoever that can justify it’.<sup>1</sup> Now this can be seen to be a very subjective construct- what constituted the path of righteousness? What constituted ‘edification’ or growth in faith? Since ‘the scandal not to be cared for is only in necessary things... from which we may not abstain, though all the world should be offended at us’<sup>2</sup> - who was to define what was necessary? Who but the ministers, of whom it was said that ‘all godlie princes and magistrates aucht to heir and obey their voice and reverence the majestie of the sone of God speaking be thame.’<sup>3</sup> In the context of church reform, and pointing out that examples of church-reforming monarchs in the Old Testament were not applicable to current affairs as far as the Melvillian Kirk was concerned, the early presbyterian ministers claimed to be keeping strict boundaries between Kirk and state, but the concept of scandal, which seemed to be prevalent with them, and which was used later against the Perth articles, was highly flexible, and also shaded easily into the function of the Kirk of rebuking sins and maintaining discipline. It did not seem to keep within the boundaries of the ecclesiastical kingdom.

It was the Melvillian Kirk in James’s time which first outlined this concept. Whilst it never advanced an explicit theory of regenerate authority, it felt itself to be quite justified in decrying the monarch’s more notorious sins, and even felt itself to be justified in meddling from time to time on behalf of the godly in civil affairs which can be found in the context of Melvillian St Andrews. There, the unpopular old council of well-connected local gentry and their henchmen was replaced with

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p. 45.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Second book of discipline, 216.

those who Mr James Melville considered to be 'the best part of the Toun'. The godly men returned the favour of the Kirk's support by planting a proper, and very radical, ministry in the city. The Kirk session was quick to punish the 'scandal' given by the former councillors who had then invaded the city, forcing them to compear and to sign oaths of obedience to the new councillors; rebellious ex-councillor Mr David Russell who tried to take a civil court action complaining of duress by the Kirk session was forced to compear and to do humiliation for the 'public scandal' of his behaviour<sup>1</sup>. Here 'scandal' showed its true colours; it was capable of leaping the bounds of two-kingdom theory, and with its antithetical twin 'edification' it was a very popular stick with which to beat the royal administration

Bishops were 'scandalous' and ceremonies gave scandal and caused the weak, or those of 'tender consciences', to stumble.<sup>2</sup> In this, more ecclesiastical, guise, it was a common complaint. The English bred Lady Anna Halkett gave up kneeling at the sacrament in Scotland because 'it scandalised decent people'.<sup>3</sup> Brodie of Brodie was seriously upbraided by Mr Thomas Hogg, in the time of the later covenants because his hearing of the curates was held to be a 'scandal'<sup>4</sup>. Mr James Guthrie claimed that the public resolutioners, by receding from the anti-engagement doctrine on 'qualification of instruments' had given 'cause for scandal' by this and by 'allowing malignants to call ignorant ministers'.<sup>5</sup> In other words, scandal was a magnificently subjective concept which amounted to upsetting the tacit sense of the godly about how things were to be done. It was usually defined by the inner sense of

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<sup>1</sup> The register of the St. Andrews Kirk Session (Edinburgh 1890, Scottish History society), II, 778.

<sup>2</sup> Gillespie, 'Against the English popish ceremonies', in Presbyterian's armoury, I, 43.

<sup>3</sup> Lady Anna Halkett, Meditations upon seven gifts of the Holy Spirit together with sacramental meditations on the Lord's supper (Edinburgh 1702), 56.

<sup>4</sup> Brodie, Diaries, 71.

<sup>5</sup> J. Guthrie Protestors no subverters, 90.

the person who claimed that a scandal had been given. One desisted from something not necessarily because it was wrong, but because it either upset decent people, or might upset them, or had personally upset you. It was used either when the authorities were behaving in unregenerate ways, or when they were bringing in customs and orders which interfered with regeneracy in the shape of the inner spiritual growth of the godly as assisted by powerful conversion-orientated ministries.

It was a great excuse to denounce one's social superiors because their misbehaviour was a 'public scandal' or to rebuke them on the related ground of 'edification' as in, for instance, an early exchange between James VI and the Melvillian kirk in the shape of his questions to the 1596 general assembly.

Quest 5 - is it lawfull for a minister to use farder applicatioun nor that quilk may edifie his own flock, or is the haille world the flock of everie particular pastor? -

Ans - a minister may declar and apply the word of God throwout the haille scripture and His works wrocht throwout the haille warld, for the glorie of God and the edificatioun of his particular flock.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, a minister could make any political comment he liked from the pulpit upon the king's bad behaviour if he so wished, and thought it was to edification - and it would be no scandal. In question 8 of this question and answer session between the 1596 Assembly and James, it is said that all 'publict' vices against the commandments (and remember how extensive these were supposed to be - see chapter one) could be publicly reprov'd by a minister acting in the public interest.<sup>2</sup> That scandal,<sup>1</sup> or to give it its old Scots form 'sklander', is a special case which breaks boundaries is again seen in question 31, where in cases of

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<sup>1</sup> The diary of Mr James Melville 1556-1601, (Edinburgh 1829, Bannatyne club), 258.

<sup>2</sup> James Melville's diary, 259.

'sklanderous' crimes inferior synods to the assembly may deal with cases which would normally be geographically *ultra vires*.<sup>1</sup> Even the king's household is subject to the local presbytery in case of 'sklander'. There follows a detailed discussion of 'sklander' in varying contexts, which leads to the question (40) 'should presbyteries be judges of all things that imports sklander and gif sa bewharof are they nocht judges?'<sup>2</sup> The answer is basically 'yes' and anything which is against the word of God is matter for the presbytery, and it is their business to separate 'everie saull from their sklanderous knawin sin, lest it sla(y) him and his blud be cravit at thair hands'. The Latin quote given from Martyr is 'Nihil est ad quod Dei verbum se non extendit, ac proinde censurae ecclesiasticae',<sup>3</sup> but they claim there is nothing in this which should 'twitche that whilk the civil magistrat does'.<sup>4</sup>

This was, however, not what the civil magistrate thought, and James made his opinions abundantly clear in his own work Basilicon Doron with some indignant assertions, cited quite accurately by James Melville in a precis of the work's views on presbyterians, which he gave in his famous diary - 'the king should judge if a minister vag from his text in the pulpit' and 'The ministers should not mell with matters of esteat in the pulpit', 'the minister that appeales from the king's juducatur in his doctrine from pulpit should want the head' and 'Puritans are pests to the commonweil and Kirk of Scotland'. Along the sides of these heads, an appalled James Melville who obviously thought that he and his friends, who had answered the above questions, were being aimed at, has commented 'the righteous Christ knawes what wrang he and his servants gettes heir'.<sup>5</sup> James concludes that 'there mon

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p.261.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.262.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p.263.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>James Melville's diary 295, compare the 1611 version of Basilicon doron pp46-52

be bishops for a preservative against their poison.' In other words, the church's habit of rebuking scandal to the point of denouncing James's conduct and misbehaviour had helped bring down upon them the wrath of the king and the yoke of episcopacy. James objected to them because he felt that they were mixing the two-kingdoms to their own advantage and his detriment, without limitation, so he was determined to mix the two-kingdoms, via the bishops and his *persona mixta* interpretation of kingship to his own advantage, in what seemed to the presbyterians to be an unlimited way. Each side thought the other to be arbitrarily imposing its own selfish will, rather than acting from an inner sense which stemmed from a higher source.

Thus scandal was seen by James as a break in the two-kingdoms hedge, by which the ministers were perceived to be over on the other side where they had no business, but did they never let any layman over onto their side? The answer to this must be that they did - one need only look at the surfeit of lay elders at the Glasgow assembly and the protestor habit of scandalising the resolutioners by *having laymen at private prayer meetings* to realise that this often happened under the rubric of godly men involving themselves in the legitimate duties of Christ's cause in a time of trouble. Indeed, amongst the more radical ministers, close association with the non ordained godly in prayer groups was an old and enduring habit. Here again edification was invoked. Mr James Hamilton contended that such meetings were 'commendable and Christian and edifying to meet in the day of temptation in a voluntary way for seeking of the Lord's face, for encouragement, and for considering what to do anent threats and snares, not as a judicatory'.<sup>1</sup> In the case of the Glasgow assembly, the only real objection against lay elders, whom Henderson was praising as 'nobles

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<sup>1</sup> James Hamilton, *A reply to the answer to the letter by the protestors*, (Leith 1653), 60.



nobilitat by Christ', came from none other than the Aberdeen Doctor, Mr John Forbes of Corse, who felt that they were 'muddying' the two-kingdoms. Obviously, for Forbes, assumed regeneracy was not a reason to admit lay people to ecclesiastical assemblies.<sup>1</sup> In fact the doctrine of the two-kingdoms begins to look very inadequate in the face of how it was interpreted and acted upon in practice. It seems that, where those assumed to be 'godly' regenerate men were concerned, they could wield wide influence in the Kirk, and the Kirk would go to great lengths to assist them, but when it came to men, and even the king, behaving in unregenerate ways like consorting with papist earls, denouncing the ministers' doctrine, and supporting bishops and ceremonies denounced by the Kirk as scandalous, then the Kirk saw no problem in what amounted directly to political comment, of a sort which it must be considered naive of them to have thought that kings should stand for. It seemed to be alright for them, according to the doctrine which they preached, to stir up feeling against the king's behaviour or policy, but it was not alright for the king to censure them, and the implication of The second book of discipline's distinction between the godly princes of Judea and the current monarchies, combined with their refusal to have anything to do with those ceremonies which were designed to help bring down special supernatural grace on the king, seems to suggest that the underlying reason was that they suspected the regeneracy of the Stuart monarchs, and were not prepared to believe that by being a king one could have most of the virtues of regeneracy almost *ex officio*, including the right to meddle in the Kirk, without any qualification either of grace or of learned languages and divinity.

The contrast here can be clearly seen with the spiritual episcopalians, Struther and Forbes of Corse, who did apply to the king

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<sup>1</sup> see above.

*ex officio* regenerate virtues, and who were uneasy with other boundaries being violated whether the men involved were regenerate or not. The question was vexed, but it seems to be that the presbyterians on the whole assigned ultimate authority to an inner sense of some sort. Spiritual episcopalians were familiar with inner senses themselves, but when controversy arose, they preferred still to credit ultimate authority to the king, even though they might frequently cite conscience with regard to many things - as Forbes did. Formally they stuck to a form of divine right theory, which did not bring in the concept of the power of God flowing up through the people, something which presbyterians were on the whole happier to do, because in 1638 the concept of regenerate people was more readily acceptable to them than that of regenerate bishops or a regenerate king. The analogy with the chosen people of Israel presented itself to them more readily than the image of Charles as a Josiah or David or Solomon. Perhaps their suspicions of his popish wife and their fear of Laud's intentions contributed to this. In terms of spirituality, it is very hard to distinguish a John Forbes of Corse from a Mr Samuel Rutherford. Both have very similar conversion centred experiences of deep intensity and both preached very much the same sort of doctrine from the pulpit with relation to conversion and spiritual experience in the people - examination of the doctrine preached in Aberdeen via Forbes's diary shows that the people were receiving very little that Rutherford could have objected to, despite the no doubt fervent theological tussles which the two of them might have had with each other over more abstruse items of theory and doctrine. The fact remains, however, that for popular consumption, men like Forbes and Struther preached very little which would upset even radical presbyterians. Mr Struther even had that most radical presbyterian of all - Archibald

Johnston of Warriston - singing his praises and reading his books<sup>1</sup>. Thus, we may say that, between these two groups, the difficulty was very probably related to a matter of trust, just as the more noticeable gulf between the views of these two parties and the Laudians was also related to matters of trust. Laudians distrusted the people much more, trusted the king to a great extent, and either did not speak of their own inner spirituality or tended to distrust it enough to keep it quite firmly in the closet more than the 'spiritual episcopalians', who also had their hang-ups would, and much more than the most radical presbyterians would. The presbyterians, whose divisions we have not yet explored in full, also seemed to divide up on lines related to trust - trust of the king and trust of the people, and trust of inner sense being important dimensions to this.

So what is to be made of this bewildering diversity of viewpoints? We have seen that inner sense or spiritual experience does not necessarily tend to funnel one into one sort of camp or another, but what seems to be crucial is one's perceived view of how important inner spiritual experience or grace is, who one thinks has it, and whether one trusts someone who may not have it. The confrontational habits of seventeenth-century discourse, with their intolerance of inconsistency, were not the sort of place where these blurred and vexatious issues could be explored easily. What one finds in them is a succession of 'extremist arguments': trying to pin on an opponent a position to which he never subscribed, and using the finest brand of biblical nit - picking and philosophic sophistry to try to prove that what he says contains some inconsistency in syllogism somewhere. When this is contrasted with what people actually did, or with what they said elsewhere, it becomes obvious that the issues were far from clear-cut. In fact, the main medium

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<sup>1</sup>AJW, I, p342-44

which can be said to have changed peoples views on authority was usually prayer, when believers could bring themselves to open up these questions in dialogue with their inner feelings. In these private contexts, unhindered by venomous criticism, men like Johnston of Warriston, and a more famous example although he was not a Scot, Oliver Cromwell, could, and did, change their views, but in the snake-pit of public polemic, what usually went on was a slanging and slandering match of great intellectual agility which changed nothing, because for most seventeenth-century people, like for example Alexander Brodie of Brodie, there was a 'fear' of enquiring into 'authority'; something 'so dangerous that the flesh shakes to enquire about it'.<sup>1</sup>

Yet enquire into it some of them did, raising issues which obliged a great many more people to consider the matter seriously. However, the fear was still operative, causing great anxiety; it was almost as though anyone who disagreed with one, in either direction outside of a narrow band, was a 'malignant' or an 'enthusiast'. Both words encapsulate many fears: those of tyranny and those of anarchy. An inner personal sense told one where one stood on the scales of trust involved, and also in a different way, what tacit areas one could bear to see excavated and discussed, and which one wanted at all costs to remain sacrosanct and immune from explicit discussion. One might relate to this sense in a tolerant way - refusing to impose it on others, or in an intolerant way, feeling that it was imperative to impose it on others, or one might want that area to be as completely shut off from the world as possible. Inner senses are not fixed things, they can be moved in the conditions mentioned above, and as we shall shortly see, they could especially be moved by spiritual experience, if one was prepared to be open to it rather than closed off by anxiety, even to raising such 'dangerous'

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<sup>1</sup> Brodie, *Diaries*, 71

questions, let alone to beginning the serious inner exploration which could result in such an inner 'felt shift'.

### Chapter three

#### **Christ versus Antichrist - A covenant within and without.**

As we have seen, relationships to inner sense and authority were extremely tricky and delicate questions. The questions of trust - trust in oneself, trust in the king and external mechanisms of government, trust in the people - all determined just what form one's views on regeneracy, inner spiritual experience, and their connection to authority, would take; but one result of this kind of melange of views about what was Christ's kingdom and what was Caesar's was the prominent part taken by a very radical form of theology with important implications for both theories of authority and the relationship to inner experience - namely that of apocalyptic, with its concern on separating out from the ungodly who would bear the mark of the beast.

Before plunging into this vexed, but fascinating, area, it is necessary to spin a thread to lead us through the labyrinth of associated conceptions which tended to form this particular part of covenanting psychology. The dominant idea associated with the Apocalypse was that of 'mixture' - the necessity for the people of Christ not to intermix with the people of Antichrist. Mixture gave rise to fears of being caught up with the damned who were about to be thrown into the fires of hell - and hence to fears of damnation. Given the presbyterian habit of reading the Bible as a homogeneous document in which the happenings of the Old Testament purposely prefigure the happenings of the New Testament, it must be borne in mind that the appropriate texts relating to mixture are not necessarily just those of the Book of Revelation. The theme of 'coming out of Babylon', i.e. eschewing the ways of the tainted and ungodly to avoid judgements and damnation, is to be found almost throughout the Old Testament, and in fact it would be fair to say that St

John of Patmos's Jewish background and knowledge of the Hebrew Bible was probably also very important in shaping his conception of the Apocalypse. Thus Old Testament texts on separation from the ungodly are an important part of this way of thinking, which was most acutely characterised by those involved as part of the struggle of Christ against Antichrist.

This needs especially to be borne in mind in the case of ideas about covenant. Covenant was both that which drew together the godly - the chosen - and that which separated them from the ungodly- the children of Antichrist and Satan. It was also related by presbyterians to the seal which the Lamb gave to its followers in Revelation, and contrasted with the mark which Antichrist gave to his followers in that same book. Again, we find an Old Testament concept which was employed by the covenanters in the urgent context of perceived oncoming Apocalypse.<sup>1</sup>

As well as being manifest in external leagues amongst the godly, such as the National Covenant, the idea of the covenant itself was connected to a theology of inner dependency and spiritual experience which was linked with the kingdom of Christ and contrasted with the worldly, sinful and self-centred habits of the unregenerate, who relied on their own abilities and not on God. Inner covenant was concerned with keeping oneself pure and divorced from sin by cleaving absolutely to Christ, the heavenly bridegroom. Again, apocalyptic imagery was used of the believer as the pure and chaste and un sinful 'bride of the Lamb' in

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<sup>1</sup>The concept of the covenant was discussed in what was known as federal theology (latin- foederus, a treaty or pact, hence federal, of covenants or pacts). The major 16th century exponent of this theory in Scotland was Mr Robert Rollock of edinburgh whose work is discussed in Arthur Williamson, Scottish national consciousness in the age of James VI : the apocalypse, the union and the shaping of Scotland's public culture (Edinburgh, 1979). Williamson also discusses apocalyptic, as does S.A. Burrell in his article 'The apocalyptic vision of the early covenanters' in Scottish Historical Review, xliii 1964, 1-24 and 'The covenant ideal as a revolutionary symbol in Scotland 1596-1637' in Church History, xxvii, 1958, 338-50. Both writers look at both covenant and apocalyptic, stressing the profound effects of these concepts on the Scottish psyche of the time.

Revelations. All these notions of covenant, within and without, as the people of God standing against the works of the devil were intermixed with apocalyptic - one reason for this was the circumstances of the time but another was that the idea of covenant simply fitted in neatly with the message of St John to stand by Christ and be counted through the most heavy persecutions, whilst refraining totally from the tainting abominations of the beast.

Apocalyptic was also used to underscore the necessity of conversion, and was connected strongly to it because of its conception of the small number of the elect who would belong to Christ, and thus be spared the second and final death in the lake of brimstone and fire. Mr John Welch emphasised that everyone would see the Last Judgement and so they had to act at that time when grace was possible instead of leaving it till too late. 'How', asked Welch, in 1600 'will you compear before his throne if not cleansed in the blood of Christ?'<sup>1</sup> To Welch, the Last Judgement was a 'fundamental stone to be laid next to the heart in building up Christ'.<sup>2</sup> He seemed to see the concepts as necessary for building up the mental tension which helped to induce conversion, and for producing the right attitude of awareness and constant readiness in the already converted for whom the 'second fruit of repentance' was to be a 'daily waiting for the coming of the Lord through the clouds'.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the saints were to keep themselves ready, for they had no idea when their master was to come to repossess his vineyard, but they were to live in expectation of it.

Similar use of apocalyptic could be found subsequently in Henderson, who insisted on purity and a 'covenant within', as well as the 'covenant without' of the National Covenant, which he had just been

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<sup>1</sup> Welch (of Ayr), *Selected sermons*, 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 142.



preaching in favour of in 1638, for he said - 'Christ shall come and we shall be presented before him'. Ramsay, preaching at roughly the same time, used apocalyptic to stress that his flock should not put their confidence in any earthly thing, because absolutely everything of that nature would pass in the last days.<sup>1</sup> Welch, the much admired Melvillian churchman whom the 1638 Covenanters regarded as a prophet, categorically interlinked the terminology of conversion and apocalyptic, arguing that 'there will be no service to God except that thou knowest that thou art made a freeman and burgher of that New Jerusalem. No service to God till first thou believe that he hath delivered thee from the hands of the Devil.'<sup>2</sup> In these cases it can be seen how the inner world was stressed as permanent and saving - to go through the process of the Apocalypse one had to be converted, one had to be saved.

For Welch, to be converted was 'to be a citizen of that New Jerusalem descending out of the heavens from God';<sup>3</sup> but this was much more than some rhetorical device which would work the good burghers of Ayr into some suitable state of anxious piety and desire for more sermons; Welch was absolutely clear that he and they were living in those last times. Anent his 1605 protestation against James VI and I, Welch stated, after speaking of those persecuted by the monarchy in the context of the 'souls under the altar' of the Book of the Apocalypse, that it was the business of the privy councillors to have said to James that 'Christ's kingdom is now at hand and I am bound by a special Covenant to maintain it, and I should speak for it though I should perish'<sup>4</sup>. Here again covenant and apocalyptic were linked. The covenant, in this case presumably the Melvillian Covenant of 1596, was seen to bind one to

<sup>1</sup> Thomson Martin, Henderson's sermons, 169. Riddell of Ardnamurchan family book, Ramsay's sermon Matthew 24 ; v27-32, S.R.O. mss GD1/395.

<sup>2</sup> Welch (of Ayr), Selected sermons , 383.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 427.

<sup>4</sup> Wodrow Sel. Biog, II, 17-28

the side of Christ against Antichrist, but the tone of living in the persecution of the latter days is obvious, and leads us to the question - why all this urgency? Why did they think that they were living in the Latter times?

The common interpretation of the success of the Scottish reformation carried more than a whiff of apocalyptic about it. These things were, as even James VI conceded, 'extraordinarily wrocht'<sup>1</sup>. In the 1596 Assembly, one of the original ministers involved told the assembled ministers how God had mysteriously carried the gospel through to victory in Scotland against all opposition and Henderson in his 1638 sermons also alluded to this view of things.<sup>2</sup> The great ministers of the reformation were regarded as prophets, despite the fact that special revelation of that sort was meant to have ceased - as was explicitly stated in the Westminster Confession and adhered to by all churches - except for some of the more extreme sectarians. As we have seen, the concept of God moving directly through the people in extraordinary times to fight the machinations and innovations of Antichrist, was a key concept of the 1638 Covenanters, but for the 1596 Covenanters the apocalyptic context was even stronger.

The years leading up to the 1596 covenant were marked by apocalyptic fervour and fears in Scotland. The fear of a Spanish invasion in 1588 and again as a result of the Spanish Blanks controversy in 1593, had led to a great deal of apocalyptic speculation by men as diverse in their viewpoints as Napier of Merchiston and King James VI. Whilst James had called for the people to trust in their king, Merchiston had called for them to trust in themselves and the power of the Lord, which would move them to further reformation in themselves, in their

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<sup>1</sup>James VI and I, Basilicon Doron, (Scottish text society, 1944-50) 2 vols, I, 75.

<sup>2</sup> Kerr, Covenants and covenanters, 60- 61

households and in their cities. Merchiston saw kings as being in league with Antichrist. He put his faith in the godly, zealously striving to carry out the word of the Lord. Significantly, the matter of his book, first begun in Latin in 1588, so concerned him that he felt obliged to render it at once into Scots, so that the generality of folk could understand its warnings. The edition of 1593 was so successful that another was brought out the following year in 1594. alone. It continued to be reprinted from time to time thereafter, with a fifth edition coming out at the height of the covenanting regime in 1645.<sup>1</sup>

Given the quarrels which had been going on in Scotland in Welch's time between the godly and the hostile secular establishments and their supporters, it is possible to see some of the domestic context from which these beliefs had evolved. In St Andrews, for instance, there was a thorough-going feud between the well-connected Lermouth establishment and the more godly elements of the local lairds, merchants and craftsmen of the time. The tendency of the Crown, except when it was under severe pressure, to side with the extremely corrupt local establishment who had set their face strongly against Melvillian reformation and the planting of an adequate ministry which could cope with the size of the town showed plainly whose side they were on. If the Crown would not help provide for what Welch's friends, the Melvilles, saw as the *sine qua nons* of a proper preaching ministry and correct discipline to make sure that the poor sheep of Christ did not go to hell for lack of knowledge of the gospel, surely they were on the side of Satan? This was a terrible problem, for authority was not supposed to behave like this. If authority were to be on the side of Antichrist, then

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<sup>1</sup> see Aldis, List of books printed in Scotland before 1700, including those printed furth of the realm for Scottish booksellers (National Library of Scotland, 1970). see entry for 1645, 1593 and 94. also Napier of Merchiston, A plaine discoverie of the whole revelation of Saint John. (Edinburgh 1593 , sig A4 v 2.

how were the godly to collaborate with it and remain pure? If they collaborated then they fell into danger of 'mixture', if they castigated authority and refused to collaborate with it, then they risked anarchy, for how could a society function without its traditional government?

The situations which gave rise to these fears could be seen elsewhere in Scotland. John Welch himself was forced out of his first parish by an ungodly laird and his influential supporters whose assaults made life hell for the famous minister. Later, the celebrated Mr Robert Boyd of Trochrigg was given the same treatment by his unregenerate parishioners and their hostile betters in Paisley, and from Rutherford's Letters it seems obvious that Marion Mc Naughton's husband in Kirkcudbright was coming in for similar persecution from influential but ungodly members of the local establishment.<sup>1</sup>

The root of this sort of evil could easily be seen in St Andrews.<sup>2</sup> The main problem that the council seemed to find with an active reformed ministry was having to pay for it. That it was not so much a matter of doctrine was suggested by the council's willingness to have famous radicals like Mr Robert Bruce suggested as ministers for the first charge, but as soon as it was suggested that, to cope with a parish the size of St Andrews there must be a second charge and a third charge, for whose ministers the councillors and their ilk would have to pay, then there was great opposition on the part of the Establishment. There was very little in the way of theological quarrels in St Andrews, apart from a complaint about Mr Robert Wallace preaching seditious doctrine likely to turn the lieges against the council, but there was a great deal of self

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<sup>1</sup> W. M. Metcalfe, A history of the county of Renfrew from the earliest times (Paisley, 1905), 241. Rutherford, Letters, p126-127, Welch (of Ayr), Select sermons, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Cf my undergraduate dissertation, Louise A. Yeoman, 'Godly Revolution in St Andrews 1588-96', M.A. honours, Modern History 1988, St Andrews University, which shows how Napierian apocalyptic seemed to have had a hand in providing the ideology for a purge against the burgh's corrupt Lermouth establishment. The author is happy to provide information on this or to copy on to disc a shortened form of the work for anyone who is interested.

interested complaining designed to shirk the financial burden of a reformed ministry. For instance, the complaint in 1596 that brought down radical Mr David Black was said by James Melville to have owed much more to the fact that his manse was acquired to the prejudice of a well-connected local laird than to anything which he had preached. Whilst the best complaint that the council could bring against Mr Robert Wallace, with whose doctrine they had once disagreed, was his 'wakeness and imbecilitie of voice'. This complaint was easily disposed of, since they were asked whether, with their seats 'sae commodiously set towards the front of the Kirk, whether they hard him or nocht?'; to which they had to answer 'yes'<sup>1</sup>. However they still tried to refuse to pay his stipend. This was the sort of thing which could easily be interpreted in terms of apocalyptic - the 'cauld haile of partialitie'<sup>2</sup> which Napier complained of. The trouble was that the high baseline knowledge demanded of ordinary Kirk-goers as the prerequisite for conversion required expensive education and an expensive ministry to implement, whilst one of the main features of the Reformation settlement in Scotland was that vast amounts of church income and property were expropriated to the nobility and gentry and oligarchies of Scotland who were very loath to part with it thereafter.

This use of resources by the crown for the ends of secular patronage, rather than those of ecclesiastical improvement, was also involved in the resentment of the covenanters against the bishops - a resentment which also stemmed from Melvillian times. Bishops rarely seemed to be short of money, since they were significant landholders, and seldom seemed to be employing their resources on what the Melvillian ministers and their successors, the covenanters, would have

<sup>1</sup> M.C. Smith, unpublished thesis 'The register of the St Andrews presbytery 1586-1605', St Andrews 1985, 132-133, as quoted in my undergraduate dissertation. See footnote above.

<sup>2</sup> Napier of Merchiston, A plaine discovery of the whole Book of the Apocalypse (Edinburgh 1611),

considered to be pious uses. The archbishop of St Andrews in the 1590s was notorious, for instance, for his stinginess over stipends, and for the debts which his unruly family had managed to accumulate. That the ministers characterised the king's bishops as 'lording prelates' and 'beastly bellie gods,'<sup>1</sup> both in 1638 and in 1610, taking a consistently negative attitude to what they saw as the bishops' pomp, was unsurprising. As far as salvation went, it was not the local superintending bishop who was held to be vital to salvation, but the preaching ministry in the frontline of Scotland's parishes. Thus bishops represented unworthy competition for scarce and vital resources, as far as their opponents were concerned. They were also by their union of sacred and secular functions, the epitome of mixture. Furthermore, they were held to be without warrant from scripture, and thus in presbyterian minds held the status of an invention of depraved man. In addition they were not considered to be of the inspired and interior kingdom of God and were not seen adequately to support that kingdom of Christ in the trenches of the preaching ministry against Antichrist.

In the context of national apocalyptic paranoia engendered firstly by the Armada, and secondly perpetuated by the successes of the catholics in the Thirty Years War, such failings were very much seen as treason in time of warfare. In his sermon advising his congregation to 'Come out of Babylon' in 1638, when such attitudes were still rife, Mr Andrew Ramsay made no bones about connecting bishops with Antichrist. His whole sermon was given in the context of a converted Jesuit, Mr Thomas Abernethie, telling all about catholic plots against Scotland, which aimed to use the bishops and their innovations to draw Scotland back to Rome<sup>2</sup>. Thus the bishops seem to have fallen foul of

<sup>1</sup> Cant's Sermon in Kerr, Covenants and covenanters p94. and also John Row, History of the Church of Scotland from the year 1559 to August 1637 (Edinburgh 1842, Wodrow society), 289, 295, 303.

<sup>2</sup>Ramsay, A warning to come out of Babylon.

apocalyptic fears; they were not viewed by the Melvillian and covenanting factions as having any true role in an urgent battle against Antichrist, but rather as a dangerous fifth column who would never stand up for the powerful preaching ministry which was seen as the only antidote to Antichrist.

It would seem, then, that paranoia about the international strength of catholicism, coupled with what seemed to be the wicked disregard at home for providing a powerful saving ministry, helped to provide an apocalyptic framework where the senior officers of the Church were viewed as traitors by many of their footsoldiers. The menace of widespread damnation (a concept to be found in the Revelation of St John) was everyday present before the eyes of the presbyterians. They also saw the march of what they regarded as the catholic armies of Antichrist and feared that they might be sold out into their clutches, and hence into imminent peril of damnation. Archibald Johnston of Wariston was to be found in the 1650s wondering at length as to how amazingly large the number of the damned must be, given the very short space of time in the very few places where the gospel was preached in 'purity'<sup>1</sup>. For such people who put their emphasis on the fear of damnation, the touchstone of soundness for an action had to be whether it was conducive to conversion, or whether it involved mixing with unclean things which could lead to damnation and which would be severely reprehended on the day of the Last Judgement. After all, if they were living in the last days, then the message of the Good Book was quite clear, they were to be very, very careful indeed as to whom they associated with, as false prophets would abound, and they were to make sure that they could be seen plainly to be under the seal of the Lamb and

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<sup>1</sup> AJW, Twentieth century transcript, N.L.S. mss 6251, 159.

not under the mark of the beast. It is easy to see how the covenants came out of such a mentality.

On the other hand, the behaviour of men like James seemed to be more orientated towards a fear of anarchy, not towards a fear of contamination, and hence ultimate and eternal death. James might pay lip service to concepts like advancing the cause of true religion, but when it came down to it, his political survival depended on how well he could manage the nobles by means of patronage. Astute management was his primary concern, not raising the spiritual consciousness of the masses, and so he preferred to support his managers - the elites and the bishops - with influence and patronage, rather than to support what he saw as the rowdy 'democratical' preachers. Perhaps the most striking act of his reign in these terms was the creating of the lordships of Erection out of old priory and monastic lands instead of giving these revenues over to the Church as the Melvilles fervently desired. James's fear was of anarchy, and for this reason he was determined to impose hierarchy on the church; however, the fears of the devout covenanters were of damnation, and they saw James's hierarchy with its expensive habits and its general reluctance to encourage the kind of self-reflective piety associated with saving conversion as, at best, a pestilent travesty of what true episcopacy should be, and, at worst, as the minions of Antichrist who were directly against salvation.

## II - The real two kingdoms.

This fear of being associated with corrupt outer regimes which had not the saving interior spirituality which was held to come with conversion, led to a tendency to split the world mentally into two implacably opposed kingdoms, and also to a tendency to look for ways



in which to make this division manifest. As Archibald Johnston of Wariston put it, we were all 'either servants of Christ or of the Devil'.<sup>1</sup> Wariston continually made contrasts, for instance he considered that he had 'offered up' his new born child 'as hartily' to Christ as 'any witch would to her master the Devil'.<sup>2</sup> In Wariston's twenty-one point plan for godly governance and correctness, one of his points was to do much visiting around the country to see 'how Christs kingdom is born up and Satan's borne doun'.<sup>3</sup> To take a later example of a disastrous split in the covenanting party fostered by this sort of mentality; in 1651 Wariston characterised his former brethren in the National Covenant, the public resolutioners, as 'an anti-covenanted party, in an anti-course, for an anti-power to God, godlyness and the godly.'<sup>4</sup>

Such viewpoints did not make for toleration, particularly not given the fact that those characterised as an anti-covenanted party on an anti-course for an anti -power to God, godlyness etc, supported the same Covenant as Wariston, and pressed for the same doctrine and the same system of church government. Their only difference was on whom they thought fit to help them fight a war against those acknowledged as enemies by both sides in this faction dispute. Yet that was enough to make them workers for Satan, and hence part of the other side. Alexander Brodie of Brodie, on a similar subject, even opined as to how moderation led to persecution, because 'Moderation is not of the Lord, springs not from holiness, will turn all religion to nature. The next step will be to hate all who are zealous for the Lord, and against wickedness and to condemn all those not of that (moderate) temper.'<sup>5</sup> Here the villain was the sort of common sense to which the public resolutioners

<sup>1</sup> AJW, Twentieth century transcript, N.L.S. mss 6251, 143.

<sup>2</sup> AJW, II, 152.

<sup>3</sup> AJW Twentieth Century transcript N.L.S. mss 6248, 57.

<sup>4</sup> AJW, II, 150.

<sup>5</sup> Brodie, Diaries, 55.

had appealed in the fight against Cromwell; that it was legitimate for all - even bad men to come together to defend their country in time of need.

This mentality had been prominent in the early days of the Covenant; Henderson, preaching in 1638, long before the later splits within the movement, spoke in a similar vein. Take his rather striking image of the 'pleugh of Satan' drawn by

good men held by him and the evil angels and they have a kind of music which they whisper into the oxen's lugs to make them go faster, and that is the allurements and provocations of the world. The oxen may be princes when they turn persecutors of the Kirk, prelates or politicians.

The Kirk is afflicted, but its enemies do not prevail, their 'pleugh' the plough of Christ still goes forward. 'Thus' said Henderson, 'the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent will never agree. There can be no mediocrity. Those who love not Sion, hate Sion. Lukewarmness is as great an opposition as can be.' This is plain apocalyptic. The lukewarmness being alluded to is that of the Laodiceans, but we can see how this principle of eternal warfare is taken back by Henderson to the early stages of Genesis, where the disputed verse about 'the seed of the woman' who are to bruise the head of the 'serpent' occurs.

The framework is that of eternal antithesis which allows for no collaboration with the other side, yet, as we have seen from the Wariston quotes, the doctrinal matter which separates the seed of the woman from those who, to borrow Henderson's image, are 'held by Satan' to draw on his 'pleugh' may be knife-edge thin. Being 'correct' was evidently very difficult. Take Henderson again - 'all worship not done according to God's word is done to the devil. What is not of the Good spirit of God is from the evil spirit of the Devil.'<sup>1</sup> Again, we might note the effects of the philosophic attitude in the mind-set of seventeenth-century men; it

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<sup>1</sup> Thomson Martin, Henderson's sermons, 148.

was a case of 'tertium non datur'. There could be no middle way; there was only one right way, and everything else was wrong, and knowing what was that right way which led to salvation was a desperate problem. Not to find the right way or to become mixed up with the machinations of Antichrist was deadly, and yet this frightening division of the world into the saved and damned with no safe middle ground between, was a major feature of Calvinist thought.

The Calvinist doctrine could cope with the enormous paradox of the depravity of man who was expected under the law to be capable of perfection - it did it by breaking through to grace - cf. chapter 1 - but it did not often bother to explain why there was only supposed to be one way to God, and why, if it were theirs, so many of the rest of the world were going to hell directly, almost without any chance of salvation. The strength of the subjective spiritual experience of conversion, combined with the reading of scripture which supported it, brooked no argument. Only some people had the 'saving' conversion experience, so only some people were going to heaven; the problem was, to winnow out those who were going to hell from positions of power where they would aid Antichrist.

Thinkers of the time do not (as shown above in the example of Wariston considering this issue) seem to have been overly disturbed by the numbers considered to be damned - except as cause for extreme thanksgiving that God in his unspeakable mercy had chosen to save them. Like the anecdotal lady who read the sermons of Jonathan Edwards 'just for the terror', they were stirred to a high pitch of emotion by the rhetoric of the Apocalypse which claimed that great things would be done for they few, so long as they did not compromise and so long as they 'kept their garments clean' and 'unspotted'. The rest of humanity who did not follow their path were objects of fear and pity as far as they

were were concerned. 'Oh Lord', entreated a horrified Wariston, considering the 'errors' and 'lack of tenderness' of the 'sectaries', 'leave us not to ourselves.'<sup>1</sup> The counterweight to the euphoria of being one of the saved, a putative citizen of the New Jerusalem, was the fear of unwittingly falling into the clutches of the beast, and whatever one did was service either to one or to the other, so one had to be sure, and one had to be questioning all the time.

### III - correct sovereignty in the soul.

If we consider the attributes given to these two kingdoms - that of Christ and that of Antichrist - it becomes evident that the kingdom of Christ was considered to be both interior and superior. The exterior world was only considered to be good in so far as it was rightly inspired by God from inside. It thus had to be subject to the inner rulings of the spirit, or else it was held to be of the evil outer kingdom of Antichrist. As we have mentioned before, pomp and hierarchy had a bad reputation with the godly. Mr Daniel Douglas, a later protestor minister of the 1650s, was prepared to hack at all the sinews of the seventeenth century social body in his quest for piety. The protestor minister railed against all those who opposed piety - 'Lords, ladies, gentlemen, ministers, Fathers, Mothers, and whoever' and denounced the curse of God upon them. 'In the Merse', he continued, 'ye say the minister said such and such, this laird said thus and thus - the curse of God be upon them for it.'<sup>2</sup> Here we see the necessity to question and check, mentioned above, taken to its logical conclusion - all the sinews of society which were held to obviate the dread fear of anarchy, were to be denounced and

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<sup>1</sup> AJW, II, 119.

<sup>2</sup> David Humes diary, National Library Scotland, mss Wod Oct. XV, 78-79.

cursed if they appeared against piety - the inner kingdom of Christ. Hierarchy was not in this quote held to be integrally bad, but it had to watch its step; it was definitely ancillary to piety, and not the other way round. Here we have a sort of hierarchy against hierarchy; it had to occupy a lower rung on the table of values, since the highest value was that of the inner connection in the soul to Christ which ensured right behaviour and doing God's will against Antichrist.

In fact, it is not so much a hierarchy as an inversion of values. Rulers have put their selves where the will of God ought to be. Take Andrew Cant's sermon on bishops, where the theme of inversion is developed into more everyday examples -

Wo unto them, and the man in the head of their kirk, whose cross and trumpery they would put on the chaste spouse of Christ!.. Marriage is lawful, but when the man beasts himself in carnal pleasure, the wife marries the man. Buying of farms is lawful, unless a man become a slave to gain that takes away the soul, then the farm buys the man. Husbandry is lawful but when a man yokes his neck under the world it trails and turmoils him so he can not take on the yoke of Jesus. So for Jesus sake cast away all excuses and come away now and marry Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The apocalyptic theme was here again bonded deeply to conversion preaching. The bishops, according to Cant, had been turning the bride of the Lamb into the whore of Babylon by decking her with the whorish, outer, 'trumpery' of ceremonies. This exterior show was not the Christian ideal; that was to marry Christ, and to inform all exterior behaviour in the light of that inward spiritual marriage. Bridal imagery was very strongly connected to the Book of Revelation as well as to the Song of Solomon; it was an image for the inner covenant of grace by which a man subjected himself to the headship of Christ the bridegroom. Only

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<sup>1</sup> Kerr, Covenants and covenanters , 100.

those who were within this marriage covenant with Christ would be saved on the day of the Last Judgement.

It was, however, an absolute relationship of complete subjection, and thus nothing else could be allowed to usurp the primacy of that inner kingdom which dictated one's whole approach to life. One had therefore to be aware all the time of one's motives, to question, not to be submerged in the rat-race of business and scheming, nor to be so overcome with lust that the mind could not be raised above carnal pleasures. In all things, the will of God, which represented the kingdom of Christ, was to be enquired of and to come first. There had to be watchfulness, that its prerogatives were not encroached upon. Such was the obsession with this that Wariston prayed 'to keep from offending God by the verrie first thoughts, desires, wisses of lust.'<sup>1</sup> It was not enough, however, for the believer merely to be vigilant in thought, he or she also had to be vigilant in action against the antichristian threat presented by the unregenerate actions of the state, and it was the state that this vigilance was often turned against.

#### IV - Powers and principalities; The Antichristian state.

The sheer litany of complaint against secular power is staggering. James Melville might have commented on James's expostulations anent 'proud puritans' that 'The Righteous Christ knawes whit wrang he and his servands gettes heir'<sup>2</sup>, but given the utterly consistent execration in the name of Christ versus Antichrist heaped upon kings, prelates, and later, the nobles - after many of them had backed the wrong horse in the engagement in 1648 - one could see why the Stuart monarchs might

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<sup>1</sup> AJW, I, 113.

<sup>2</sup> James Melville's diary, 295.

have been feeling a little insecure about the presbyterian ministry. John Welch, as early as 1600, spoke of outward glory as being for 'babel and Antichrist',<sup>1</sup> and energetically confronted the king over his attempts to impose bishops and to pull the teeth of the General Assembly. The Scottish pre-Westminster psalm book at psalm II began with the line 'the kings and rulers of this world conspire and are all bent against the Lord and Jesus Christ who to us he sent.'<sup>2</sup> Later Henderson, in 1638, expounded that 'Satan he has great straik with the rulers and great doctors of the world' and even in the same twelve months as he was expatiating on 'nobles nobilitat by Christ', he was telling his congregation at Leuchars 'not many noble has the lord chosen. The kings of Israel were all wicked and most of the kings of Judah'.<sup>3</sup> Andrew Cant in 1638, picking up Welch's earlier theme, expatiated on how 'Satan gets in through lordly supremacy, pomp and fairding and whorish busking, mixtures, Laodicean temperament, men's precepts, medley of rites, wolves, imposters and builders of Jericho.' He held that the Covenant was a 'cleansing of the temple' and continued 'Ye know that secular princes uphold Antichrist, and prelacy in this land was upholden by secular power'.<sup>4</sup> Here splendour and scheming princes were linked.

Note, however, that in the same sermon, while Cant was holding forth on these evils of hierarchy, he was also praising the nobility as 'the natural mountains of the kingdom' as opposed to the 'artificial mountains' - the prelates.<sup>5</sup> The covenanters would have loved to have had an ideal godly prince and godly nobility - indeed they often found

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<sup>1</sup> Welch (of Ayr), *Selected sermons*, 279.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. Neil Livingstone *The Scottish metrical psalter of A.D. 1635, reprinted and illustrated by dissertations notes and fascimiles*. (Edinburgh, 1864), Ps II.

<sup>3</sup> Thomson Martin, *Henderson's sermons*, 484.

<sup>4</sup> Kerr, *Covenants and covenanters*, 81, 118.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 111.

godly lairds who supported them, but they were continually being alarmed and disappointed - hence the bitterness of their rhetoric. After the praises of the nobility in 1638 the tune changed considerably, so that by the 1650s we hear Wariston, himself of gentle birth, corruscating 'our proud godles nobility that tyrannized over the commons',<sup>1</sup> and considering it justice that they were 'brought doun'. At roughly the same time, Mr Daniel Douglas, mentioned above, declared that 'he was convinced our Lairds and ministers in the Merse were Antichrist'. So even ministers could be counted as part of the godless hierarchy. By the time of the later covenants, in the 1670s, one could hear rhetoric like that of Mr John Welwood who declared

The lord has a sword prepared for our king, our councillors our nobles, our declaration takers, prelats, curates , lukewarm gentlemen. They are no more than a pile of grass, nothing and less than nothing, and he will care no more for that abominable party whom we call rulers, to tread them into the lowest hell, than I care when I tread a worm under my feet. The lord is going in battle array before them.<sup>2</sup>

He went on -

Our great folks, our declaration takers, hellish prelats, abominable curates, selfish, wicked noblemen. God will throw them down and make their posterity beggars... few even of ministers will be spared. our rulers are incarnate devils...gentlemen likely to be saved you can write on 3 inch of paper. Few ministers and only some more Christians. There are not twenty noblemen and gentlemen in Scotland who will appear for God.. many will curse the day they were laird and lord, that ever they had riches, but will wish they had a brat about their head and were going from door to door<sup>3</sup> .

This is pretty comprehensive, and a very fine indicator of what a strange and many-faceted beast Scottish Calvinism was. Those who

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<sup>1</sup> *AJW*, III, 47.

<sup>2</sup> John Welwood, *Sermon Peter IV v18*, 22.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*



have read Gordon Marshall's Presbyteries and profits may well find themselves somewhat bemused after having seen so much apparent evidence for social conservatism and concepts of godly prosperity.<sup>1</sup> Indeed the careful delineation of the respective duties of masters and servants, and exhortations to pious duties pointed out in that book, can seem like the smile on the face of the tiger when we consider just what sort of hellfire anti-hierarchical rhetoric the covenanters were capable of producing when roused, and particularly when they were roused over the misbehaviour of their betters, as they saw it.

This kind of protest rhetoric tended to be strongly apocalyptic. Take the death bed exercise of Robert Jameson's wife, who declared in 1660 that 'the purses of noblemen are stuffed with the blood of the saints' and who visualised not only 'Christ on a throne' but also 'bloody thrones'; again we find an echo in the 'suffering of the precious' to the suffering which will initiate the Apocalypse - the cries of the souls under the altar.<sup>2</sup> The Book of Revelation, with its focus on martyrdom and strife, made a natural text for believers who felt themselves to be under persecution from their own more highly placed countrymen. One might almost think that the Pope who was supposed to be Antichrist was forgotten, given the anger and apocalyptic rhetoric which was lavished on the native hierarchy of Scotland.

The potential key to this kind of response comes once more in the concept of supremacy - namely the concept of the supremacy of Christ taking precedence over that of the hierarchy. We might argue that conservative divinity, telling the mob to keep in their place, was all very well, provided that the hierarchy, as perceived by the radical ministers, was staying in its place. If the minister involved was conservative, or the

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon Marshall, Presbyteries and profits - Calvinism and the development of capitalism in Scotland, (Edinburgh, 1980), 72-73.

<sup>2</sup> 1652 Exercise of a dying Christian, N.L.S. mss Wod Oct XV, .

government was being fairly uncontroversial, or if a particular minister's fears of anarchy had been stimulated to the point where his concern for preaching the supremacy of Christ was eclipsed by a desire to expatiate on the traditional right ordering of society, then very socially-conservative preaching would result. If, on the other hand, he gave way to his desire to lambast the king, prelates, nobles, gentry *et al* for forgetting themselves with regard to Christ and needing to be brought down by others not necessarily so well-born as they, then social radicalism could be the order of the day in the pulpit. It all depended on which fears were uppermost in the mind of the minister - those connected with Antichrist and damnation, or those concerned with anarchy and the maintaining of social order.

The real issue in the apocalyptic was this - were the rulers of the country knuckling under in their subjection to Christ? If not, something had to be done about it - even, if necessary, by the people. In the words of later covenanter, Mr Robert Fleming: 'It is strange that those who seek subjection from others should deny so avowedly their subjection to the Great Judge. The kings and rulers of the earth have agreed with one consent to make war on the Lamb and to give their strength for upholding Antichrist.'<sup>1</sup> For Katherine Collace, another later covenanter, 'the curates's foundation lay in the overturning of His kingdom by the oath of supremacy'. She had 'sworn in the Covenant to extirpate prelacy, but by hearing upheld it' so she was 'very troubled and mourned for a week'.<sup>2</sup> From this we can see that much of the work of establishing whether one was furthering Christ or Antichrist came under the heading of acknowledging the supremacy of Christ; and making sure that others did so too, even if the others were one's social superiors.

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<sup>1</sup> Fleming, Fulfilling of the scripture, I, 212.

<sup>2</sup>Katherine Collace/Ross, Memoirs of spiritual exercises of Mistress Ross, written with her own hand. (Edinburgh 1735), 17.

Katherine was on more than one occasion moved by God to rebuke her social superiors for not acknowledging the supremacy of Christ: for instance, she spoke of being put upon 'a hard piece of work, to rebuke the gentleman in whose house my sister was staying, for declaration taking, warning him of the wrath of God'. She went on to note with regard to this that 'we are to search to know the mind of God in every remarkable circumstance. When the heart remains unsatisfied, we should go on enquiring until it is satisfied'.<sup>1</sup> In other words this process of inner seeking was more important for her than deference to her social superiors. God was to be enquired of in the heart, to know whether the believer was doing God's work or that of Antichrist; and if the secular rulers were not listening to this God of the heart then their authority was compromised.

The emphasis was on an inner authority which was considered to be far superior to any external trappings of power - and to return to Mr Andrew Cant's sermon mentioned above, this kind of spiritual interiority could be a source of national pride -

How far other nations have outstripped Scotland in naturals, we have outstripped them in spirituals. Her pomp is less, her purity more. They had more of Antichrist than she, She had more of Christ than they. They have but an ill said mass in England. Satan gets through in lordly supremacy, pomp and fairding, whorish buskings.. men's precepts, medley of rites.<sup>2</sup>

The emphasis was against externals, just as Katherine Collace's internal experience and conviction allowed her to authoritatively rebuke lairds who were by the external hierarchy her superiors, so Scotland's more inward, purer religion was considered to take precedence over that of England, which seemed to stress external ceremonies and trappings.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p.38.

<sup>2</sup> Kerr, Covenant and covenanters, 77-79.

This emphasis on the internal realm can be seen in vital Scottish documents like the National Covenant itself which begins with the words ‘We all and everyone of us underwritten protest that after long and due examination of our consciences in matters of true and false religion.’ The immediate emphasis is internal - it is in the sphere of the conscience, and not of some fiat from an external hierarchy. In fact the Covenant often reads like a litany of damning of external ceremonies, external hierarchies, external trappings. It denounced those innovations for which there was ‘no warrant in the Word’, but the Word from which all warrant was derived had to be interpreted in the light of the internal spirit of God(cf Large catechism). The primacy of the interior world seemed manifest; in the first few sentences we hear

we are now thoroughly resolved in the truth by the word and the spirit of God; and therefore we believe with our hearts, confess with our mouths, subscribe with our hands, and constantly affirm before God that this only is the true Christian faith and religion.

- note the order of the wording, the truth had first to be believed with ‘our hearts’ before any actions related to it were listed. The emphasis was internal. All legitimate action had to begin rightly in this internal sphere before any external action could be valid before God.

This was a standard piece of doctrine;- note John Welch’s sermon on conversion and apocalyptic, where he admonishes that unless ‘thou knowest that thou art made a freeman and burgess of that New Jerusalem... there will be no service done to God... first thou must believe that he hast delivered thee from the hands of the devil’.<sup>1</sup> The kingdom of Christ was an inner one from which externals must proceed in order to be valid; without this clear internal mandate from the spirit,

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<sup>1</sup> Welch (of Ayr), Selected sermons , 383.

one was a servant of Antichrist. The order - the godly ladder of values with the internal kingdom of Christ at the top - is important.

It was in and from this inner kingdom that the Lord worked and gave authority and encouraged the people to covenant against the abuses of their governments - take Henderson speaking in 1638: 'Surely it is the Lord only who has done it.. The Lord is the doer in the Covenant'.<sup>1</sup> How does the Lord work? Henderson again tells us that it is by acting on the 'heart of the king', and if all joined themselves to the Covenant, then God would 'change the heart of the king'.<sup>2</sup> We have already seen how presbyterian theories of authority tended to involve God acting through 'secondary causes' by moving the hearts of the people to do his work - to quote another favourite presbyterian Biblical text used with reference to the Covenant 'thy people shalt be willing in the day of thy power'.<sup>3</sup> In other words, they would be specially moved by God. The covenanting God was a God who worked on hearts, and it was this inner activity, or inner impulse from which legitimate acts or correct interpretation of the Bible could issue, which was being contrasted to the external 'lording Prelats' and 'trumpery on the chaste spouse of Christ' to which the Covenanters objected as marks of Antichrist.<sup>4</sup>

#### V - Separation; the Scottish disease.

This concept of interiority and heart-work sounds highly attractive, but in practice, given that it was coupled with a strict desire for purity, in the apocalyptic mould it had some uncomfortable results. It was due to this perception of spiritual life that the kingdom was riven

<sup>1</sup> Thomson Martin, Henderson's sermons, 196.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.162.

<sup>3</sup> Kerr, Covenants and covenanters, 54.

<sup>4</sup>Riddell of Ardnamurchan, sermon Matthew 24 V 15- 29, S.R.O. mss GD 1/395, Kerr, Covenants and covenanters, 96.

apart in the protestor-resolutioner controversy of the 1650s. The conservative resolutioner Mr Robert Baillie was incensed by the purity-driven stance of the protesters, declaring it to be a 'seed of hyperbrounism which had been sown in the minds of sundry soldiers, that it was unlawful to join with such and such men for fear of sin and judgements'.<sup>1</sup> In the typical manner of the time, which inevitably categorised another man's religion as selfish hypocrisy, Baillie declared that the damaging split in Scotland's armies was all due to corrupt officers who wanted to blight the call-up, so that they could pocket the money for non-existent soldiers. Contrast his statement with those of the protester lay-elder, Wariston, who with tears 'spak of my fears of mixture which would draw the Lord's controversy on us'<sup>2</sup>. Wariston was just as appalled by the English sectarians marching against Scotland as Baillie and the resolutioners, who were anxious to put an army of any sort together to resist the Cromwellian threat; but for Wariston and his ilk there was a higher principle at stake. As the appalled protester commented of both Cromwellians and resolutioners: 'saifty makes both leap over all rules in using any means or instruments whatsoever.'<sup>3</sup>

Wariston's own evaluation of the situation was definitely apocalyptic; he spoke of 'the Lord keeping armies in Scotland till he had gotten out all the testimonies he wanted, then he would remove the armies' and also of 'Christ getting in testimonies before the end.' Thus God was 'setting up the malignant party' who would be 'the abomination of desolation' in the 'holy place' of the General Assembly. He spoke in terms of 'a testimony for Christ against so abominable a defection'<sup>4</sup> - this was very much akin to the rhetoric of John against the

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<sup>1</sup> Peterkin, Records of the Church of Scotland, 660.

<sup>2</sup> AJW, II, 144.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 58.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 80, p. 104.

backsliding churches of Asia Minor. It was fairly obvious, then, that Wariston's emphasis lay not on 'safety', but on purity in the face of an apocalyptic threat. In this, he was following the well-worked out ideology of George Gillespie, who in his 'Miscellany Questions' treated carefully of the subject of with whom it was allowable for the godly to confederate and under what circumstances. In his testimony to the Kirk, of which he had not long since been moderator, Gillespie warned of the 'sin of complying with malignants which will bring down the wrath of God'. He thought of the royalist party as 'the malignant seed of the serpent' - they were obviously on the side of Antichrist - and, further, he cited scripture to the effect that 'helping of wicked men or joining or mingling with them is a sin. This sin ensnares the Godly into diverse other sins and is punished by judgements...utter destruction comes from this sin.'<sup>1</sup>

The term 'snares' was a favourite word of the protesters. They saw snares everywhere in public business, liable to lead them into sin or into complying with Antichrist, rather than keeping their garments unspotted. They tended to adhere more strictly to the 'qualification of instruments' doctrine, developed at the time of the engagement in 1648, which amounted in practice to a strong demand for the employment of regenerate men in all positions of trust. They therefore distrusted the employment of those whom they did not consider to be regenerate; however socially well-qualified or talented these men might be, they had not the *sine qua non* of generally surmised conversion, and hence were to be shunned as the 'seed of the serpent'.

This marriage of Apocalyptic with regeneracy authority theory had disastrous implications for trying to manage any national enterprise for which the prospective citizens of the New Jerusalem were likely to

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<sup>1</sup> John Howie of Lochgoin, Scots worthies (Edinburgh 1870), 355- 56.

be in short supply. Not only this, but even in the case of those whom the protestors would admit were almost certainly regenerate, for instance resolutioner and notedly spiritual and powerful preacher Mr David Dickson; if they did not agree wholesale with what the protestors considered to be their duty in that time of crisis, then they too were to be shunned and cut off from the rest of the godly people, and faced with demands that they repent.

Moderation of any sort led to vituperation, as in Archibald Johnston of Wariston's denunciation of the famous and well-respected, but pacific, Mr James Durham, for his 'politic halting between two opinions'.<sup>1</sup> Here we see Wariston being guilty of the same blindness as his sworn opponent Baillie. He in no wise could see that Durham's attempts to mediate in, rather than to exacerbate, the protestor-resolutioner controversy stemmed from a deep spiritual conviction of what was right. To Wariston, because he did not agree with Durham's stance, the peace-making minister is viewed as 'politic', a term of abuse, connoting superficial and selfish reasoning which was not of God.

As in St John's deploring of those who compromised or who preached lines of Christianity of which he disapproved, such as the woman whom he labelled 'Jezebel' in the Book of Revelation - other people's religions were seen as a threat, and not as valid ways of perceiving a situation. Those who held other political views as a result of their spiritual convictions were ascribed selfish motives for their behaviour. Those who dared to practice or advocate differing religious behaviour in public were subjects for unparalleled anxiety. In the seventeenth century, those who dared to criticise Church or doctrine as defined by the one national religious confession of the country were perceived as a social menace. When confronted by someone who had

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<sup>1</sup> AJW, II, 132.



heard the views of the opposition and who had been capable of seeing their point of view, Wariston's immediate reaction was a resolution to 'absteane from intimate conversation for I see more and more that it shakes men.'<sup>1</sup> This was his reaction to a former friend, Alexander Jaffray, who had changed his mind on church government. His reaction to Swinton, who had decided that 'family exercise' in worship was no longer necessary, was that he 'was a terrible scarecrow to keep us from fellowship with God's enemies'.<sup>2</sup>

A closed mind seemed to be considered a virtue; however this was insisted on in some cases and not in others. Wariston closed his mind against the sectarians, but seemed to keep his mind very open on the subject of whether he should collaborate with Cromwell. Similarly, Baillie, his sworn enemy, had also shown flexibility in his beliefs about authority. Both were capable of some revision of their views, Baillie by studying learned authorities, Wariston by opening himself up to a process of prayer known as providential decision-making. Yet over the issue of employment of unregenerate men in the covenanting cause, each set their face against the other; more importantly, those who were formerly spiritually very close allies, like Wariston and David Dickson, or ex-Irish ministers like John Livingston and Robert Blair, were separated over the issue. It was the sort of thing which was to be seen frequently in the later history of the covenanting movement, when godly and previously happily cooperative men and women were suddenly divided over issues like the indulgence or whether to join the national Kirk in 1689. The rhetoric used in such cases inevitably drifted into the apocalyptic mould of 'come out of Babylon' and into its particularly Scottish form of declarations, protestations and testimonies, to prove

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<sup>1</sup>AJW, II, 149.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p. 143.

that one had separated from the children of Baal and the seed of the serpent.

Take, for instance, the line of a pamphlet of godly self criticism after Bothwell Brig. The offences of the godly party which led to their downfall were ‘admitting unregenerate men to counsel... admitting the Erastian party and scandalous persons... defending of the indulgence... approbation of the tyrant’s sacriligious supremacy which spoiled Christ... not separating from the corrupt party’<sup>1</sup> - not a word about lack of numbers, problems with tactics, generalship etc. Everything was made to hinge upon apocalyptic purity, which could only be maintained by further and further purges, designed to ward off the judgement of God. This was in the latter half of the seventeenth century, but we can find a declaration of the sort of principles which led to this as early as 1606, when in the ministers protestation to the king, Patrick Simson said that ‘the least overpassing of the bounds set by God himself bringeth man under the fearful expectations of temporal and eternal judgements’.<sup>2</sup> In the minds of the godly, there was a narrow line to be trodden; if one strayed from the path, ‘overpassing of the bounds set by God’, then fearful judgements would result; when the mind was focussed purely in this metaphysical sphere of judgement, then a loss of contact with stark reality could result. When this metaphysical concept was linked to strident apocalyptic demands for purity, insisting that the children of Babylon be excluded from the armies of the Lord, then actual disaster tended to result.

The fear of ‘mixture’ was thus the fear of being led from the path of the straight and narrow into an abyss, but ,unlike those who relied on external authorities to tell them where the safe path was, the more

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<sup>1</sup> William Wilson, A true relation of the events which happened at Bothwell Brig ( Glasgow 1797) ,44- 45.

<sup>2</sup> Howie, Scots Worthies, 272.

spiritual covenanters insisted on finding the path for themselves, and tended to mistrust external guidance from outwith their converted ranks as the siren songs of Antichrist, trying to pull them down into the abyss. However, this very empirical approach inevitably led to the godly taking up different positions because their internal senses told them different things about whom to trust, or how far to go, when it did come to external authorities - in other words, it came into conflict with the 'anarchy' part of their fears.

Fear of judgements and punishment was not, however, the whole story; take Henderson's treatment of this situation, that believers must 'separate from idolaters'. For Henderson, God was saying 'If you stay away from idolaters I will be a Father to you and you shall be my sons. God will dwell with you if you have no fellowship with idolaters, and you should be touched by the presence of God at all times'.<sup>1</sup> It was not just a question of salvation but also one of maintaining the Lord's approval and presence, and this was an important part of determining where exactly to draw the line about separation (see chapter six). One could have social approval or the approval of God, because, in the question of supremacy discussed above, the two were often at loggerheads, and so represented the sort of God/Caesar choice that was so much a feature of the Apocalypse . However, the question remained as to quite how one made that choice, and a sense of the Lord's presence was an important part of it.

For the most part churchmen were more likely to descant upon the necessity of separating out from the sons of Belial than to say actually how that judgement was to be made. Gillespie cited apocalyptic against toleration, declared that the covenant was to avoid the ensnaring of the people of God with idolaters, complained that it was distrust of God 'to

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<sup>1</sup> Thomson Martin, Henderson's sermons, 405 - 406.

confederat with the sons of Belial', and maintained that it was one's duty to purge the state of the ungodly. The purging could not be perfect until the Last Judgement, but in the meantime it was a duty to try and purify the commonweal as much as possible.<sup>1</sup>

#### VI - Declarations and dangers.

This kind of theory led to a Scottish preoccupation with line-drawing, hence resolutioner minister Mr David Dickson's comment on the Westminster assembly, that it would be worth it 'if only for the right stating of the question between us and all adversaries of the true doctrine'.<sup>2</sup> In this, he was echoed by protestor Archibald Johnston of Wariston in the 1650s, who made a very similar comment, but over the issue of the Dunfermline declaration, anent the protestors' worries about the king's commitment to the cause. Wariston spoke of it as 'clearing all mistatings of the question in our appeal to God'.<sup>3</sup> This can be seen in the context of Wariston's picture of himself as 'one of God's leading witnesses in these baksliding times'.<sup>4</sup>, or, a little later in the context of Mr Robert Fleming's statement of duty in 'these latter times to witness against defection... *una Athanasius contra totem*'.<sup>5</sup> Here it could be seen that apocalyptic theology, whilst leading to social radicalism on the one hand, could also lead to a religious 'fussiness', on the other as it brought forth an obsessive welter of nit-picking declarations, confessions, catechisms, and testimonies - all designed to separate the sheep from the goats, to separate the Lord's people of the covenant from the 'sons of Belial', 'Babels brats' and the 'seed of the serpent'. It was as though the

<sup>1</sup> George Gillespie, 'Miscellany questions' in Presbyterians armoury, II, 71 - 77.

<sup>2</sup> Baillie Letters and journals, lviii- lvix.

<sup>3</sup> AJW, II, 17.

<sup>4</sup> AJW, twentieth century transcript, N.L.S. mss 6250, 46.

<sup>5</sup> Fleming, Fulfilling of the scripture, I, 7.

presbyterian divines were trying methodically to pare away everything which was not of that cherished inner sense that they prized above all else.

If someone had gone on in an apocalyptically tainted course, the only way they could be accepted back into the fold was to swear to toe the correct party line and to repent in tears for his or her misbehaviour, otherwise the judgements of God would come upon him/her. This caused much of the furore over the king; Wariston wrote to Charles II, admonishing him to 'remove the Lord's controversy with his house'.<sup>1</sup> The king's refusal of the Dunfermline declaration was seen as evidence of the 'Lord's controversy' with him and his house by the creators and supporters of the Westland remonstrance.<sup>2</sup>

When crisis threatened, the covenanting habit was to issue such declarations; for instance, the panic over the success of Montrose and the carrying through of the engagement, gave rise in the later 1640s to the 'Solemn acknowledgement of publick sins and breaches of the Covenant, and engagement to all the duties contained therein which do in a special way relate to the dangers of these times'. The language of this is of 'being exercised' over afflictions, and of being 'humbled' before the Lord. It went on

and therefore being pressed with so great necessities and straits and warranted by the word of God, and having the example of God's people of old who in the time of their troubles ... did humble themselves before him ,and make a free and particular confession of their sins... and did engage themselves to do no more so, but to reform their ways.<sup>3</sup>

This was considered to be the proper sort of behaviour which the king was supposed to take, to ward off God's displeasure with his house - a

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<sup>1</sup> AJW, II, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Westland Remonstrance, Peterkin, Records of the Church of Scotland, 604-608.

<sup>3</sup> 'Solemn Acknowledgement of...sins...and engagement to duties' reprinted in The Westminster confession of faith, (London 1958)

withdrawing of himself from sin and, of course, the sinful. 'Complying with malignants' being considered a great sin, and since most of the 'malignants' were staunch royalists, it can be seen why Charles II was not enamoured of this approach at all.

Issuing such statements, and being emotionally affected by them, was an extremely important part of Scottish religio-political culture. The Solemn Acknowledgement considered itself to have its roots in the 1596 covenant, the 1567 'covenant' and, of course, the National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant. As mentioned above, religious Scots would draw up a declaration or protestation under almost any circumstances of disagreement, to make sure of the 'right stating of our question before God' - to prove who was pure and of the forces of Christ. This culture was rather different from both that of the Cromwellian New Model Army and the culture of the English Independents. Whilst Brodie of Brodie claimed that 'they cannot love the Lord who hate not every false way'<sup>1</sup>, considering toleration to be 'forbearance of blasphemy'<sup>2</sup>, he considered the Independents to be prone to 'Antichristian tyranny' in their congregations, whilst one of the main Independent complaints was of 'Antichristian tyranny of presbytery'.<sup>3</sup> The Independents, with their focus more on the congregation and less on the national 'children of Israel' image of the covenanters, who continued to see themselves, despite their later disasters after the restoration, as 'a special people to himself above all other people that are upon the face of the earth, his espoused land and covenanted kingdom',<sup>4</sup> were not concerned to run about making

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<sup>1</sup>Brodie, *Diaries*, 59.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p. 20.

<sup>4</sup>Howie, *Scots worthies*, 503.

‘national’ declarations; their form of apocalyptic separation was the gathered congregation.

This the presbyterians would in no way have, and they produced elaborate arguments, especially in the case of the protestors, as to why it was legitimate to communicate with someone at the sacrament, but not to fight with him in the army; this was because the vision of the covenanters was especially national. Scotland had to be a pure, purged and godly Israel waiting for the Lord to gather it in at the rapidly approaching end of days. The Kirk and State must be, as far as possible, dutifully subject to Christ in the proper hierarchy of faith - his supremacy could not be compromised. The attachment to the headship of Christ doctrine - of Christ governing over a right-ordered state - was part of the presbyterian dream in which kings, acknowledging their due subjection to the redeemer, behaved themselves as ‘nurs fathers’ to the Kirk, instead of as minions of Antichrist. So it came about that a creed which made saving heartwork the foundation of faith and the kingdom of Christ against Antichrist, became so seemingly concerned with externals. Whilst for other groups, maintaining purity from the unregenerate world to follow the inner Christ meant drawing away from it into discrete congregations, for the presbyterians it tended to mean all-out warfare, by means of declaration and purge waged on a national stage - warfare whose sides were determined, in many ways, by inner intuitions of what was of Christ and what was of Antichrist and where to draw the line.

This inner dimension was the hidden part of an iceberg whose tip was evident in declarations like the National Covenant and the Solemn Acknowledgement. Mr David Hume, a protestor minister, spoke in terms of ‘to depend on Him to lay every weight upon him is my part in

the covenant'.<sup>1</sup> He was meaning the covenant of grace which belonged to the kingdom of Christ, separating it out from that of Antichrist. John Welch saw this inner covenant as a 'reconciliation, renewed by sorrow and mourning, searching for the spirit in the heart.'<sup>2</sup> Whilst Mr William Struther saw it as 'a conduit conveying God's goodness towards us via personal union with Jesus Christ'<sup>3</sup>. For William Guthrie it meant- 'resolving not to be for another... for God... against Belial'.<sup>4</sup> Henderson stated that the 'people of God by necessity enter into the covenant, their sins are forgotten, the law written in their hearts. The Lord gives strength to keep the covenant'.<sup>5</sup>

From the situations to which it was applied, it can be seen that covenant theology was definitely related both to apocalyptic separation, and to the inner life associated with conversion; but how did this fit with national covenants and declarations? Henderson pointed out that 'few... understand what God has promised to do for his covenanted people. Many in the covenant do not understand it.'<sup>6</sup> He saw the Lord as 'the doer in the covenants'<sup>7</sup> and elaborated on this theme 'if thou hast established us as people to thee and thou wilt be a God to us, there will be a change in us and this change it will begin at the heart, and then be seen outward in life and conversation'.<sup>8</sup> It was thus that Henderson began to indicate how the inner covenant of election, which winnowed out the people of Christ from the sons of Belial, related to the outer Covenant, which formally was a public drawing out of the godly from the ungodly in the midst of an apocalyptic crisis. Henderson spoke of the

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<sup>1</sup> David Hume's Diary, NLS mss Wod Oct XV mss, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Welch (of Ayr) *Selected sermons*, 104.

<sup>3</sup> Struther, *Christian observations* (the first century), 56.

<sup>4</sup> Guthrie, *Christians great interest*, 107.

<sup>5</sup> Kerr, *Covenants and covenanters*, 59.

<sup>6</sup> Thomson Martin, *Henderson's sermons*, 254.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 196.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p. 142.



Covenants as ‘the return of those fervent prayers uttered and sent up to heaven at those most profitable aedification meetings when the public meetings were for the most part corrupt’ and continued: ‘if the Lord does not touch the king's heart it is because of our sins’.<sup>1</sup> He evidently felt that the power of inner purity could influence outer events. For Henderson, the power of the Lord was an inner power, which flowed through those who cleaved to their own inner realm of Christ, shunning the distractions and corruptions of the outer world which might lead them away from it; and, once one had this power, it was necessary continually to cleave to it, and to bear witness that one was so doing, to carry out one’s own part of the mutual covenant with God.

Separating out was a source of power. For presbyterians, the purity of the kingdom of Christ was related to God’s willingness to move in a land. Speaking of the Covenant, Henderson said that ‘It has wicked persons in it, but faith will prevail.’ He compared it to the faith of the Israelites at Jericho, where ‘unbelief’ was passed by, and the ‘faith of the whole people’ taken into account.<sup>2</sup> The power house of the Covenant comprised of the pure, who, like those praised by St John, did not compromise, and on their strength of faith, the nation as a whole could be borne up, even under the weight of a proportion of misbelievers; however, Henderson’s successors the protestors would have been much more worried in this case about fears of mixture and contamination by association. Despite this, the vision of the protestors was still national; they thought that everyone in the nation should come up to their standards of purity, or should be made to repent for not doing so. In this, the Scots differed greatly from the English Independent point of view which saw covenant as a private agreement between God and

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid p. 206.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 161.

individuals in a gathered congregation, and which saw no need to reform the state further than to the point where the government would tolerate congregations of the godly without interference; at least, this was the case in England after the abortive Barebones parliament. Matters were different in Scotland, where demands for a godly government were seen as part of the destiny of ‘the nation and Israel of God’.

The aim of the Covenants themselves was to cast a net in which as many of the converted godly who carried the power of saintly purity would be caught as possible, and as few unbelievers, thus forming a key body of witnesses come the Apocalypse. Through the conduits of the godly - who were continually repenting and cleansing themselves of sin, so that God would move through them - the Almighty would act, and would save his people from all the catastrophes which might alight on them in the latter days. ‘Leave the performance of the promise to God’, said Mr William Guthrie, speaking of the difficulties which covenanters faced when ‘the king who should be a defender of the faith is its persecutor’.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Katherine Collace did not countenance relying on force or using violence because ‘it is not the enemy but the Lord we have to do with’<sup>2</sup>, and thus the emphasis in the Westland Remonstrance against the sins of ‘hearkening to flesh and blood’ and ‘counsells of men’ so that ‘The Lord was provoked by their politic way’<sup>3</sup>. It could be that the perception of apocalyptic circumstances led to a kind of enthrallment to the metaphysical dimension with a consequent lack of practicality when it came to fighting earthly battles. Covenanters were to cleanse themselves, so that the Lord would move through them, and to rely on the power of the Lord, who was about bringing all things to a suitable conclusion via the happenings of the Apocalypse. Nonetheless,

<sup>1</sup> Carslaw, Guthrie of Fenwick, 48.

<sup>2</sup> Katherine Collace/Ross, Memoirs, 80.

<sup>3</sup> Westland Remonstrance. Peterkin, Records of the Church of Scotland, 604-606.

they were still to seek conversion to the cause of Christ of the establishment, rather than withdrawal into gathered congregations.

Covenanters were to trust the Lord whom they met in their hearts, when those hearts were stirred by the preaching of the word, the reading of the word or by prayer, and he would show them salvation. They had to depend on this sense, even if it went completely contrary to the traditions and accepted common sense and political wisdom of their day. For them, if there was to be a choice between anarchy and damnation, then even if it did lead to social upheaval, invasion, and a massive shock to established society, many of them, as in the case of the protestors, would cleave to what they saw as salvation and damn the social consequences of their disobedience to corrupt 'Antichristian authority'. After all, if it was the Apocalypse which was upon them, then only inner contact with God could help them at all. They were to cleave to the inner kingdom and to shun the outer pomp. They were to band together publicly under covenants as witnesses against the ways of the beast, and, as far as possible, to draw themselves out from the sons of Belial, (although, if their faith was strong, according to one interpretation, a few sons of Belial wouldn't spoil the broth) but others in the covenanting movement, especially from the 1650s onward, were much more circumspect about associating with any other than the purest of the pure. For action to be valid, it had to come from the inner kingdom of Christ, where God moved through the heart - but how was one to tell what was God moving through one, guiding one and leading one in his ways, and what were the machinations, lusts and greeds of one's own selfish heart, working for Antichrist and leading one to Armageddon? This is an interesting question, and one which we will have to examine at length.

### Chapter four

#### **Heartwork- the spirit and its framework.**

What was it that made the covenanters reject seemingly innocent ceremonies? Why did apparent trivia, like the sign of the cross in baptism or private communion for the dying, stir up such vehemence of feeling? The standard answer is that such ceremonies were not in the Bible and were therefore inadmissible, but it takes little familiarity with scripture to know that most of the outer paraphernalia of that most hallowed covenanting rite of the Lord's supper were not in the Bible either - institutions like communion tokens, and the Monday thanksgiving ceremony are not to be found in the gospels, and yet there was no fuss made about them. Here, a different underground strand of justification breaks in. In print the controversies all hinged around nuances of scripture, and arguments that to imitate the rites of popery would bring in popery, but in practice a substantial body of complaint against the ministries and ceremonies of the bishops was built on the grounds that they were 'formal', that they lacked both emotional and spiritual power.

This kind of lore speaks of feeling rather than reason, of experience rather than external authority, of improvised spontaneous sermons and conceived prayer, full of the spirit, rather than elegantly classical discourse full of citations of the Fathers. It was an approach which disdained ceremonies unless they came from the spirit and were held to accord with the Bible; but crucially, it interpreted the Bible in the light of the validating inspirations of that same spirit. It was an approach commonly known as heart-work.

Heart-work was different from head work; it was a kind of knowledge. To take the words of one of the older 'Irish' ministers, Mr

Robert Blair, it was important not to rest on ‘brain frothy knowledge as opposed to affectionate and practical knowledge which stirs up to endeavours and earnestness’<sup>1</sup>. To simply know something intellectually was not enough - it had to be felt and acted upon. For instance, Blair himself had been taught by the earlier minister, Mr Robert Bruce, who was most active in the 1590s. In a sermon, Bruce preached at length about the immortality of the soul. Blair was puzzled as to why the great man had chosen to belabour such an obvious point, to which Bruce replied that ‘a serious impression of it in the heart was very different from a notion swimming in the head.’<sup>2</sup> Again heart and head were contrasted; and the knowledge of the heart was seen to be more important. The distinction being made here is an interesting one; it was not enough to know something, a believer had to feel it and be able to act upon it. The implication seemed to be that, if there were not strong feelings attached to what was known, then the knowledge would lie about like a useless piece of junk in the mind, never producing right action. Yet this is also reminiscent of a remark by William James the psychologist in his great study ‘Varieties of Religious Experience’. ‘It is as if’, said James,

There were in the human consciousness a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we may term ‘something there’ more deep and more general than any of the special and particular senses by which the current psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed... So far as religious concepts were able to touch this reality-feeling they would be believed in spite of criticism even though they might be so vague as to be totally unimaginable.<sup>3</sup>

This James quote seems remarkably apt as one tries to fathom what the preachers meant by such words. They were talking about

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<sup>1</sup>Blair, *Autobiography*, 23.

<sup>2</sup>Fleming, *Fulfilling of Scripture*, I, 297.

<sup>3</sup>W. James, *Varieties of religious experience: a study in human nature* (London, 1902), 58.

concepts which took on an intense aura of reality from some connection with an inner sense. Their language concerning matters of the spirit is difficult to comprehend unless this and other unfamiliar inner processes are examined and understood, for there was a whole unique wealth of vocabulary expressive of particular spiritual feeling in the context of knowledge of God, contact with the spirit, and confirmation of doctrinal truths, which was used by covenanting ministers and laity. The terms are unfamiliar, but in the case of heart-work, they seem to connect to a certain sort of feeling which was instrumental in validating beliefs. This feeling was connected with the idea of being taught by the spirit - validating beliefs and showing doctrines to be true in an incontrovertible fashion. Take, for instance, the words of prominent covenanter Mr Alexander Henderson from one of his 1638 sermons - 'many understand a thing and do not believe it. They can conceive and take up well enough what is spoken but not mixed with faith - so that it does them no good. Faith keeps the word fast in our hearts. Though you do not understand it at the time, the spirit will bring it back to you in the day of your need.'<sup>1</sup> Here, faith is also implicated in making beliefs stick and become operational. It works with the spirit to make lasting impressions on people of the reality, truth and usefulness of the preacher's words. Again intellect is not enough - it needs that certain X - factor which makes the concepts that the intellect has apprehended suddenly seem significant and moving.

Henderson's words also help demonstrate the main problem in exploring this area; the interchangeability of terms which link to the same concept - 'heart-work,' 'affectionate and practical knowledge', 'faith', 'the spirit', 'liberty', 'power', 'liveliness' and 'freedom' are all involved - and one man's 'serious impression on the heart' is another's

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<sup>1</sup> Thomson Martin, Henderson's sermons, 417- 418.

‘experimental knowledge’. Perhaps the whole business was most fully expressed by William Guthrie in his book ‘The Christians Great Interest’

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must be cordial and hearty for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. The matter must swim not in the head or understanding, but it must be in the heart - not just persuaded but affectionately persuaded, loving and liking the thing - a heart business, a soul business, yea, not a business in the outer courts of the affections but in the flower of the affections and in the innermost cabinet of the soul where Christ is formed. Christ as the bridegroom will have the heart or nothing, love or nothing, marriage love which goeth from heart to heart, love of espousals or nothing.<sup>1</sup>

From this we can see the strong link between knowledge, duty, love and enablement through love which characterised this strand of powerful covenanting doctrine- a sort of doctrine which seemed to excite fundamentally moving spiritual experience of a sort which brooked no contradiction, for the simple reason that no argument or edict could feel as powerful and right as these fruits of the spirit.

This was part of the conversion doctrine of the new heart, by which ‘a man's duty becomes native and kindly to him, loving all God's people’ - to quote Guthrie again,<sup>2</sup> and love was a major part of this spiritual experience. Melvillian minister Mr John Welch, a contemporary of Bruce, spoke of the conscience depending on ‘knowledge’ and the ‘work of the Holy Ghost’ as he developed his theory of heart-work. He spoke of the believer being ‘ravished with love of God’ having all his or her delight ‘in his presence’. Welch spoke of how saints sometimes got the ‘love of God by the spirit shed out as a flood on the soul. The heart exults and death, hell, sin and the grave are

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<sup>1</sup> Guthrie, *Christian's great interest*, 163.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.112.

all defied' as an experiential perception which could come to a saint.<sup>1</sup> This was fairly strong meat. It is easy to see the attractions of a faith which could deliver this kind of inner experience, where love, espousal, and even union with Christ were fairly common experiences associated with the spirit. Welch, who was a very popular preacher, with sermons in constant circulation amongst the godly, provides good examples of this kind of spirituality.

Every night before bed mark God's mercies to you as love tokens from your husband. What we should esteem of is the continual presence of God in our hearts, for therein stands our happiness, and our life, where the Lord is, there is life, liberty, and comfort. Your heart must ay be in heaven.<sup>2</sup>

There is little ceremonial emphasis here, the spiritual focus seems to be on a continual presence which is not bound to certain rites. In fact, the whole conversion theory, adhered to by Welch and his brethren, conceived of conversion as the setting up of this permanent loving relationship of presence between the believer and God. It was not a state which was tied to ceremonies, but a real internal change. As has been noted earlier, this relationship to the spirit was tied to a concept of sovereignty - nothing was to take precedence over the spirit within, unless it was the words of the Bible, but it was also tied to very strong concepts of fellowship in the body of Christ. These relationships were expressed for believers symbolically in certain ceremonies, such as presbyterian sitting communion, but they could also be blighted by other ceremonies such as an episcopal kneeling communion (which ruptured the strong fellowship feeling by its emphasis on individual receiving) or by ecclesiastical forms such as 'hearing the curates' (which ruptured the strong sovereignty dimension for believers by demanding that they recognise their earthly monarchs' commands concerning the church,

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<sup>1</sup>Welch (of Ayr) Selected sermons, 324.

<sup>2</sup>Welch (of Ayr), Selected sermons, 377, 380.



rather than what they saw as Christ's headship and command). Katherine Collace judged that her spiritual life was greatly hindered by attending the government-sanctioned sermons of the restoration church, precisely because she believed that this was violating the sovereignty issue, and consequently found herself greatly helped by avoiding them.<sup>1</sup> In other words, this relationship to the spirit was not utterly dependent on the external rites of the church but there was some connection.

In his influential consideration of the role of the spirit in conversion, Mr John Forbes of Alford, one of the banished Melvillian ministers of the 1606 controversy with the king, said of the estate of the elect that

the operative degree is when the spirit pours in the love of God and all the graces revealed in the Word and sheds them abroad in the heart as faith, and so makes the heart to receive, enjoy, and possess the promise by imprinting therein. So if a man could see the soul of a true child of God he should see engraven on it mercie , peace, love, righteousness, life, joy, and Christ himself and all the promises of God and Christ written therein.<sup>2</sup>

The condition of the elect, then, was to carry within themselves a source of love, joy, guidance and strong consolation, which was somehow to be fostered.

We can see this independent source acting in one of the most important radical ministers, Mr Samuel Rutherford, who felt that his exile to Aberdeen for non-compliance with the earlier episcopal regime to be a delight, which fostered his spiritual communion and marriage with Christ. Rutherford speaks of Christ as a sleeping beloved, who is woken up by noisy irreverent bishops and ready to depart because of this. Yet despite these bishops, with their 'dumb antichristian ceremonies', Rutherford himself was not stunted in his devotions telling

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<sup>1</sup>Collace/Ross, Memoirs, 16.

<sup>2</sup> John Forbes of Alford, Letter to the Merchant Adventurers at Stoad. (Middelburg 1617), 38.

of his 'sweet communion when Christ and we are through other and no longer two.' He contrasts the 'dumb'-ness of the bishops' ceremonies with the fact that he worships a 'speaking Christ', with whom he tells Lady Kenmure 'we must be oft communing'.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the accent was clearly on an inner condition, and the question of ceremonies became, under such circumstances, a matter of what would foster this inner relationship, and what would express it. It is interesting to note here that similarities could be drawn between Rutherford's eulogies of union with Christ and the words of catholic mystics who also spoke of this kind of love, but whilst mystics were considered to be the *creme de la creme* of other churches, in the Scottish context developing an inner love relationship with Christ was held to be the normative route to salvation through saving heart-work.

In seventeenth century Scotland, however, mystical love experiences were not confined to presbyterianism. One of the most important presbyterian modes of expression and fostering of an inner love union with Christ was the sitting communion; however, one did not need to be an implacable opposer of the Perth Articles to have strong covenant relationship type experiences at it. In the cases of Mr William Struther and Mr John Forbes of Corse, we have men who endorsed the idea of the permanent loving covenant relationship between Christ and the elect, whilst conducting and attending episcopal communions, and whose spiritual experiences were every bit as striking and deep as the most mystically inclined saints of the later covenants and the celebrated protestor communions of the 1650s. The normally restrained Mr Struther, who insisted so much on public decorum, declared of communion

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<sup>1</sup> Rutherford, Letters, 46-56.

we eate him when we dissolve in the sense of love. He feeds us and is fed by our growth in grace. Then our heart is drawn to his, and sucketh his heart in us. We thrust the tongue of our desire into his wounds and drink largely out of them.

He goes on to liken Christ to a breast nourishing the faithful and concludes 'we are digested when we are transformed.'<sup>1</sup> Forbes spoke of his great 'sense of the saviour at receiving' and of 'heavenlie and abundant consolation through the mercy of my God upon me as neither can my mouth utter nor can my pen express, neither could my heart comprehend it, but it comprehended and filled my heart with peace, strength and joy in the Holy Ghost.'<sup>2</sup> Both men showed strong inner experiences, but they were not spiritually upset by the headship of the king in the church. Perhaps they were so much individuals in style that the fellowship issue did not worry them either. Both had a strong concern with outer decorum, and a willingness to work within spiritual frameworks which the covenanters found to be restrictive. It might be said that what they lacked was the inbred suspicion of the establishment, which the apocalyptic speculations of the Melvillian church had made a live spiritual issue as part of the whole culture of presbyterianism. In the clearing-out process, which was an important part of establishing contact between the believer and his or her God, the presbyterians saw civil interference in the church as an important obstacle to be cleared out - perhaps because of often unspoken perceptions that the royal regime was unregenerate. Their desire for outer political 'purity' of this sort to accompany inner experience was not shared by Forbes, Struther, and, latterly, Leighton.

Demands for political 'purity' aside, it must be said that ecstatic love experiences at communion were very close indeed to the heart of

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<sup>1</sup> Struther, *True happiness or King David's choice*, 105.

<sup>2</sup> Forbes of Corse diary, S.R.O. mss CH12/8/6, 55.

the covenanting experience. For instance, in the 1670s, Jean Collace recorded 'the sense of presence and his love shining in my soul' at a communion<sup>1</sup>. At a 1650s protestor communion, Mr David Hume spoke of wanting 'more and more to fall in love with the Lord'. He continued: 'thou art my kind tenderhearted father said the heart, do with me quhat ever seems good to thee said the heart'.<sup>2</sup> Archibald Johnston of Wariston was regularly inclined to have extreme experiences at communions, where he could be possessed either by 'extreme joy' or the 'sensible possession of God' which would make him shed floods of tears.<sup>3</sup> If equivalent rhapsodies were to be obtained by episcopal ministers at episcopal communion rites, in the context of the same covenant theology, then it is necessary to explore the differing presbyterian attitude which led them to pursue their quest for purity via rejecting the Perth ceremonies and episcopacy.

The most active polemicist of the early seventeenth-century innovations controversy, Mr David Calderwood, was very clear on the points of difference which he saw between the pastor and the prelate, in his pamphlet of that name - 'What is a Puritan?', thundered Calderwood, 'he is against Antichrist and for free grace, for God's will alone in the church, and the power of religion in the heart against the sins of the time.'<sup>4</sup> The problem with men like Struther and Forbes was not that they lacked 'religion in the heart' or that they failed to support 'free grace'; both were very orthodox in their conversion theory, as was mentioned earlier. The real problem they posed for people like Calderwood may be said to lurk under the rubric of 'for God's will alone in the church'. This is another of those very elastic little phrases which concealed a great

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Collace, autobiography, NLS mss, Adv 32.4.4, p107 verso.

<sup>2</sup> Mr David Hume's diary, NLS. mss Wod Oct. XV, 26.

<sup>3</sup> *AJW*, I, 217, 250.

<sup>4</sup> Calderwood, 'Pastor and Prelate' in *The Presbyterian's Armoury*, I, 17.

deal of tacit assumptions about how things were to work. On the face of it, this phrase refers solely to the use of non-scriptural ceremonies in the church, such as the Five Articles of Perth, but it carries a weight of other connotations and assumptions besides.

Forbes of Corse thought of the Five Articles as ‘convenient’. He saw no doctrinal problem in kneeling at communion for he saw a distinction between ‘worship of’ and ‘worship in the presence of’ the communion bread. This was enough to satisfy him that kneeling was a ‘nocent ceremony’.<sup>1</sup> By the 1630s, Laud, in his position as an English archbishop with the ear of the king, and thus the wielder of real power (via Charles) in the Church of Scotland, was enraged by this viewpoint. He saw the ceremonies as being necessary for decorum and not as mere conveniences.<sup>2</sup> His viewpoint was supported by contemporaries such as Bishop William Forbes of Edinburgh. Bishop William disdained the views of his Calvinist brethren, and had no time for heartwork at all. ‘Let us rather follow the fathers than a party of moderns’, said the bishop. He had no time for justifying faith, and looked askance on the sort of devotional feeling to be found in the conversion theology which was followed by Forbes of Corse and Struther as well as by Wariston, Bruce and Welch.<sup>3</sup> ‘God’s will in the church’ was opposed by Calderwood to that of man - and the men who were trying to impose their will in the church were not moderates like Struther and Forbes of Corse, who preferred to eschew division if it could possibly be managed. The will of man in the church was being pushed by activists like Laud and Bishop William Forbes. They cited the Fathers and traditions of the Church in support of those things which they saw to be God’s will - and

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<sup>1</sup> Mc Millan, *The Aberdeen Doctors*, 53-55, 139.

<sup>2</sup> Mc Millan *The Aberdeen Doctors* p 55

<sup>3</sup> Dr William Forbes, *Considerationes modestae et pacificae*, 7 13.

this was for a particular reason. The definitive source of guidance was the Bible, but this had to be interpreted.

## II. The emphasis on experience

To the question of how does one interpret the Bible, there were two major answers in the seventeenth century. Firstly, there was the school of thought which saw it in the light of reason and tradition, as mediated by a hierarchy which maintained, as far as possible, continuity with its predecessors. Secondly, there was the school of thought exemplified in the covenanters which tended to interpret the Bible in the light of both spiritual experiences and ever-more careful exegesis of the original texts. To take the example of that careful and articulate later commentator, Mr Robert Fleming, who gave great thought to this question of scripture in the years succeeding the restoration, the Bible was seen as ‘a practical history, written and acted upon the heart and conversation of the Saints as on a stage of theatre... the naked theory of scripture is to experience as the map is to the country.’<sup>1</sup> It was a major part of the argument of Fleming's book The Fulfilling of the scripture that scripture was well interpreted by experience. For covenanters like Fleming, going back to the sources meant not only having a ministry skilled in the learned languages, it meant also going to the wellsprings of the converted heart where the promises of scripture were continually being re-enacted, and with the perspective of this heart looking out into the world and noting God's providences there. Thus the expression ‘God's will alone in the church’ meant not only scripture, but scripture interpreted in terms of the heart wherein God wrote his promises and supplied his spirit for the interpretation of the Bible .

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<sup>1</sup> Fleming, Fulfilling of scripture , I , 28, 57.

What was at issue here was matters of interpretation, not only of how one interpreted the Bible, but also how one interpreted spiritual experience. The particular meaning assigned to forms of spiritual experience was crucial in forming one's attitudes to both the ceremonies and the episcopal hierarchy and clergy. Take, for instance, the response of a contemporary of Fleming - Alexander Brodie of Brodie - to his local minister. He criticised the man for 'not labouring to work on the affections' and further contended that a minister should have 'personal experiences of what he preaches.'<sup>1</sup> It was not enough that a minister should be ordained by the right people - he had to be spiritually experienced and skilled in interpreting and bringing forth spiritual experience in others. Katherine Collace, another later covenanter and a friend of Brodie, echoed this demand when she lamented the plight of herself and her sick sister - 'a terrible case - both likely to die and no-one near that understood soul work'.<sup>2</sup> In both cases spiritual experience was given a particular importance.

The notion that spiritual experience in a minister was very important was not confined to the stricter presbyterians; Bishop Patrick Forbes felt that a minister 'must have light and feeling of his own... love of God begotten by divine motion... a heart to pray for light and study scripture and a sweet delight therein and taste of spiritual joy.'<sup>3</sup> Mr William Struther, a very spiritual minister who was also episcopal in practice, spoke of the importance of having 'affection in preaching so our stile will be emphatick'.<sup>4</sup> He also felt that ministers should have experience, for 'experience gives authority from conscience, and confidence leading them to speak effectuously uttering their very heart

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<sup>1</sup> Brodie, *Diaries*, 165-66.

<sup>2</sup> Collace/Ros, *Memoirs*, 36.

<sup>3</sup> Bishop Patrick Forbes, *A learned commentarie on the Revelation of Sanct John* (Middelburg 1614), 55- 56, 87.

<sup>4</sup> Struther, *King David's choice or true happiness*, 101- 102.

in speech.’<sup>1</sup> Such sentiments would have been very welcome to any covenanter, although we have already noted that episcopal ministers tended to be fairly strict about spiritual experience, not empowering the un-ordained to meddle in spiritual affairs. The episcopal ideal was often the spiritual minister, but better an unspiritual correctly ordained pastor than a charismatic or upper class lay-person interfering in the church, however spiritually well-gifted. (see above chapter two) These happy notions of a properly spiritual ministry, which enjoyed the sort of experiences which were as common to Struther and Forbes as they were to Rutherford and Wariston, were not popular with the management, so to speak. Even when the ecclesiastical management was in the hands of the much more spiritual Archbishop Leighton, there were still problems, for, as an archbishop in a church headed by the later Stuart kings, he had to employ conforming ministers as opposed to ‘spiritual’ ones.

For Laud, spiritual experience was a problematical yet ‘comfortable’ passage,<sup>2</sup> but to radical covenanters it was utterly essential. It was also considered necessary that rites in church should be designed so as to make error as to the importance and nature of spiritual experience as unlikely as possible. This was where Forbes of Corse and Struther fell foul of those who were their genuine brethren in many ways. Forbes’s delicate distinctions between ‘worship of’ and ‘worship in the presence of’ were felt to be a danger to salvation, since it might be all too easy for some naive worshipper to devalue the necessity of the spirit working within with regard to the supposed efficacy of some ‘holy’ lump of bread, and thus to lose his or her soul by resting on the potency of unfounded superstition, rather than on the saving internal changes wrought by Christ within. This was also the danger of a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter two for discussion of this



careerist ministry seeking episcopal preferment, that it would know nothing of the vital soul work which characterised the experiential search for God of the radical covenanters. This doctrine of spiritual experience as the vital criterion for salvation, which was to be preferred to any considerations of social order or of obedience to superiors, and which was to be preserved from misinterpretation at all costs, was the characteristic view of radical presbyterians which distinguished them from men like Struther and John Forbes of Corse. The latter two felt - not entirely unreasonably - that such was the power of the spirit that a few minor ceremonies would not prevent it from operating efficiently, whilst to quarrel over these few minor ceremonies was to invite the great dangers of schism, social disruption and anarchy. It might be said that priorities differed between maintaining what might be described as 'right' spiritual experience as opposed to 'right' ceremonial and social behaviour.

Some of the presbyterian objection to strictly prescribed ceremonies might have had something to do with the high valuation which covenanters gave to spontaneity and inspiration in worship. Such spontaneity could be problematical, as in the case of conceived prayer which Brodie of Brodie felt had led to 'extravagancie' and 'disorder', but he contrasted this with the English liturgy with its 'no prayer but the Lord's prayer' and its rote praying for the royal family, and exclaimed 'Lord! is this to worship thee! Is this prayer ! I could not live on this diet without prayer and communion with God.'<sup>1</sup> He described the post-Restoration public worship as 'formal, stinted and devised' and went to it grudgingly, out of duty and to set an example.<sup>2</sup> One of the major objections to the English liturgy was that it used set forms of prayer

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<sup>1</sup> Brodie, *Diaries*, 218- 225, 231.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 254.

which did not stir up the spirit, and one of the major objections against the ministry of the church in its episcopal phases was that they were careerist and preached lamely without the spirit.

The covenanting ideal was very different. Ministers were to seek the spirit. The spirit came when it pleased and could not be produced to order, but there were practices which seemed to encourage it to be manifest. Bruce considered that without 'spirit and power', preaching could not be effectual to salvation.<sup>1</sup> He felt that the main business in preaching lay in 'getting the soul wrought up to a suitable frame', i.e. one which would provide a suitable medium for the spirit, since 'preaching depends solely on the spirit of God'.<sup>2</sup> The presbyterian minister - though he would usually be a university graduate of some academic talent at least - was not to 'trust to himself',<sup>3</sup> but to seek the action of the spirit of God, for reason and academic gifts were not the same as the effectual presence of the Holy Ghost. Mr Matthew Ramsay once prepared a prayer in painstaking detail so that it should be attractive to his hearers; the alleged result was that he heard a voice saying 'thou trustest to thyself, behold, I will leave thee to thyself',<sup>4</sup> with the result that he completely dried up in the middle of his service. This was an interesting dramatisation of the Calvinist doctrine of total depravity. Human devices in worship, even in the preparing of sermons, were not considered to be good enough; the spontaneous sermon which came not from scholarship but direct from the inspirations of the spirit was the most valued. 'Preaching', said Mr William Struther, elaborating on a theory more ordinarily the province of his presbyterian brethren, should be a 'spiritual miracle of spiritual power on the soul without mixture of

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<sup>1</sup> Fleming, *Fulfilling of scripture*, I, 118.

<sup>2</sup> Fleming, *Fulfilling of scripture*, I, 118.

<sup>3</sup> Wodrow, *Analecta*, III, 293.

<sup>4</sup> Wodrow, *Analecta*, III, 293.

human wisdom'.<sup>1</sup> Compare this with the remarks of radical presbyterian minister Mr George Gillespie, who commented that the spirit was received both through the sacrament and through preaching, but the sacrament was more pure as there was 'less human wisdom mixed in it'.<sup>2</sup> Both were concerned in attaining to as pure contact with the spirit as possible. In fact, the spirit was seen as a staunch ally to be respected and sought in preaching. Mr David Hume affirmed that 'the spirit can give what to say in that very moment and this I have experience of'.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the most famous exponent of this sort of extemporare spiritual preaching was Mr John Livingston. Livingston made his name as an itinerant preacher working at communions in the summer. He was most famous for the mass conversions which resulted from his sermon at the Kirk of Shotts communion. On this occasion, he was called on unexpectedly to deliver a sermon of thanksgiving on the Monday morning, an unusual enough event in itself at the time. He took the theme of 'a new heart', and as a shower of rain came on, he used it to illustrate his points by preaching that his audience were lucky that it was merely rain coming down on them and not 'fire and brimstone as on Sodom and Gomorrah'.<sup>4</sup> He had this advice for other ministers - 'when you are pressed to say anything you have not premeditated, do not offer to stop it, you know not what God has to do with it.'<sup>5</sup> These ideas were most succinctly put together later by that indefatigable student of the spirit, Mr Robert Fleming:

Is it not seen with what liberty these do sometimes pray and are as a ship with a full gale before the wind - and it is then easy to preach, when at other times there is a shut door, and when the church at a special turn in her condition may have

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<sup>1</sup>Struther, Christian observations (Second century), 32 -33.

<sup>2</sup>George Gillespie, 'Against the English popish ceremonies', in Presbyterian's armoury, I, 99.

<sup>3</sup>Mr David Hume's diary, NLS mss Wod Oct XV, 17.

<sup>4</sup>W. Coupar, Scottish revivals (Dundee 1918), 33.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

high spiring tides of the gospel.. that make the rich choose poverty, and even the worst of men to sometimes get convictions of the Word. When we are in such times of mercy and enlargement there is a remarkable change both on men's inward frames and on the outward face of the church, then instruments are raised of the Lord with discernible elevation of their spirits to act and do exploits.<sup>1</sup>

So the spirit was a tide, not only discernible ebbing and flowing in each church service, but also an important tide in the affairs of men. With their view of a fluctuating world in which the gales of the spirit blew where they listed, it is perhaps unsurprising that many presbyterians were not attracted by the less dynamic, and more formal, English service, which must have seemed somehow inadequate for expressing the power, spontaneity and capriciousness of the almighty spirit, which they valued so highly that in its name they were quite often prepared to consider upsetting the decorous apple-cart of social authority.

The importance of spiritual experience was a major theme within presbyterianism, which could, and did, lead to surprising splits within the movement because of this vital question of priorities. For instance, Calderwood, as mentioned before, was an implacable opponent of the bishops and their ceremonies - yet he was also an equally implacable opponent of private prayer meetings, which met to seek precisely the sort of spiritual experience which Calderwood would have accused the bishops of stifling via their pomp and 'formal ceremonies'. He feared such private meetings much as Baillie, his contemporary of the early seventeenth-century, did, because they smacked of 'Brounism', or 'hyper-brounism', to use one of Baillie's favourite terms for those whose spirituality displeased him.<sup>2</sup> When Baillie found some yeomen in his congregation disagreeing with the use of the Gloria Patri as a

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<sup>1</sup> Fleming, *Fulfilling of Scripture*, I, 155- 156.

<sup>2</sup>Stevenson 'The Radical party in the Kirk 1637- 45' J.E.H April 1974 p 139, p 142.

‘humane popish invention’ of ‘vain repetition’,<sup>1</sup> he did not commend them on their search for valid spiritual experience, but instead launched himself into an agitated discourse warning them that this rejection of authority in one small matter was likely to lead to the ruination of all religion and to spiritual, if not social anarchy. In this sort of ‘hole in the dam’ reasoning, where rejecting one small ceremony associated with the psalms was held to be likely to lead to casting off the psalms, which would lead to casting off the church and all moral bounds, we see an interesting reflection of a similar argument about popish ceremonies made a few years later in 1638 by Henderson, but which took an interesting complementary tack to that of Baillie.

Henderson did believe in private prayer groups - so much so that he held the covenants to be the ‘return of those fervent prayers uttered and sent up to heaven at those most profitable aedification meetings when the public meetings were most corrupt.’<sup>2</sup> He did not, as it happened, support the case against the Gloria Patri advanced by the yeomen, but saw dangers on both sides. The influential co-author of the Covenant began with a strong denunciation of the bishops’ ceremonies. Such protest, said Henderson, was not ‘a needles noise... the thing may be little but the danger is great’ of being ‘beguiled by man intruding into these things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up in a fleshly manner... taking it upon himself to be lord and Jesus, bringing into the Kirk whilk he hath not allowed.’<sup>3</sup> According to Henderson, this led to the danger of bringing ‘strange fire’ into the church - of worshipping God not according to his Word and thus breaking the second commandment as Henderson interpreted it. He likened such innovation

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<sup>1</sup> Livingston, *The 1635 metrical psalter*, 36-37.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson Martin, *Henderson’s sermons*, 199.

<sup>3</sup> Thomson Martin, *Henderson’s sermons*, 33.

to leaven (yeast) and warned that a little was capable of infecting the entire lump. 'Once admit freewill', he argued, and there is no election of the free grace of God. Once there is no certainty of election, there is the possibility of universality of election that Christ died for all men, and the possibility that man could resist the strong grace of God, thus there would be no perseverance of the elect. Similarly, once admit justification by inherent righteousness and we must admit preparation to be in us, thus meriting by good works, thus denying certainty of faith, and thus denying the word of God.<sup>1</sup>

Here we see predestination as it was perceived by its adherents - as a safety rail, which would keep the believer on course for God even if she or he were to wobble - but to be safe, it had to issue from infallible God and not from sinful man. To be saving, it had to be kept crystal-clear of all human impurities, whether from the traditions of bishops or the imaginings of some over enthusiastic presbyterians. The whole point of predestination in pastoral terms was that it was supposed to be comforting, since it made it possible in the here and now to obtain assurance. Popery was decried, with its emphasis on works, because it did not allow such assurance to be had, and because it was seen to restrict access and expression of the inner spirit. The merest whiff of popery in a ceremony was enough to produce one of these chains of logic, by which seventeenth-century men liked to argue, whereby one small sign of the cross was seen to be the gateway to a hell which would deny all assurance, comfort and contact with the saving spirit (not to mention bringing in the Spanish inquisition, rape, pillage, murder, children being put to the sword and assorted terror stories, which many people had come to associate with catholicism, especially after the Irish rebellion).

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<sup>1</sup> Thomson Martin, Henderson sermons , 50.

Herein lay a problem - the evidence of assurance, which was seen as such an important facet of protestantism, came most often from spiritual experience which had to be interpreted by its human subject. In the words of the early conversion theologian, John Forbes of Alford:

So whatever the Word doth persuade our heart touching God and his love in Christ, that is the testimony of the spirit and therefore when hearing the word of God, our hearts receive any assurance or persuasion of redemption, or remission of sins &c the same must be the spirit's testimony... but still we must not mistake the spirit's testimony, for the spirit, by the word persuades in two manner of waies... specially - 1. when it witnesses and reveals of grace particularly to a man but imprints not the thing revealed in the heart, neither seals it in the soul. 2. When the promise is written in the heart and sealed in the soul: this is the Covenant with the elect, assurance of God's effectual speaking, when he writes the testimony in the heart - the word must abide in the heart.<sup>1</sup>

In covenanting presbyterianism, particular stress was laid on spiritual experience as a sign of conversion. It was also held to be the major indicator of progress in grace, rather than an emphasis on works as in the catholic church or as in the opinion of Bishop William Forbes of Edinburgh. Thus, fostering the spirit and promoting a form of worship, which was considered to be most likely to stir up the working of the spirit in the congregation, was considered to be vital above all considerations of decorum or royal wishes; for the assurance of the elect, which was the bedrock of Calvinism, came down to the heart where the spirit was to be found bearing testimony. There was, however, a perennial danger of either mistaking that validating supernatural witness or of trying to replace it with the imaginations of head or hierarchy. This led to a constant confused and anguished struggle as to whether or not

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<sup>1</sup>Forbes (of Alford), Letter , 17.

one ceremony or another, or one intuition or another, or one experience or another, was valid.

### III- Validity.

Perhaps the definitive factor in true presbyterian spirituality was this emphasis on the validation of rites and illumination of scripture by the experience of the heart. Followers of other doctrines might have had almost exactly similar experiences, but would not have given so much weight to the experiencing of the correct inner feelings as an indicator of salvation, nor would they have given inner spiritual experience such an important role in interpreting the Bible and validating the conduct of religious worship. We have already seen the emphasis which the earlier ministers, who were trained in the Melvillian tradition, gave to heart-work and the need for the inner testimony of the spirit. Welch, Bruce and Forbes of Alford were contemporaries who played an active role in the struggles of the Melvillian church against the Bishops. Whilst little in the way of personal records of spiritual experience survives from the sixteenth century, what we do have suggests that the kind of near-ecstatic spiritual experience, which we find so much commended in such an articulate manner in the seventeenth century, did exist but that the conventions for expressing it were in the process of developing.

Instances of deep, heart-felt, spiritual activity are recorded, as in the case of the signing of the 1596 covenant at the General Assembly, and as in the case of a 'most heavenly' evening of 'godly conference'



held by James Melville with his friend the St Andrews' merchant James Smith<sup>1</sup>. The foundations of the highly interior and spiritual approach to the Scottish communion were laid in Bruce's sermons on the sacrament with their emphasis on 'heart preparation', and 'union with Christ'. Bruce placed strong emphasis on how Christ worked within the believer; 'a spiritual feeling, that in your own heart and conscience you may find the effect of his word.'<sup>2</sup> He further went on to say that the believer must 'remove outward senses, natural notions, natural reason, and follow the sight and information of the spirit of God... which opens the heart as well as the mind'.<sup>3</sup> This approach is also found in Mr John Welch, who considered the first and second commandments in terms of the inner duties of the heart,<sup>4</sup> whilst Forbes of Alford developed the theory of the work of the spirit speaking to the heart in conversion to new levels of explicit articulateness. The first proper spiritual conversion account which we have - that of Lady Jean Livingston - already discussed in chapter one - surfaced in 1600. About which time we also find the spiritual poetry of Lady Elizabeth Melville 'Ane Godlie Dream' being put into print. We thus have reason to suspect - especially from Bruce's sermons which date from roughly 1588-1593 - that the Melvillian church was not composed solely of a group of scholarly Hebrew-and-Greek-reading pedants, who would quibble over every small point of translation of scripture and indulge their academic controversies with hell-fire diatribes of threatened damnation to their opponents who read the texts differently. It is more than likely that the kind of spiritual motives, which we find frequently in the seventeenth century, had been evolving over some time - even from as far back as the time of Knox,

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<sup>1</sup>James Melville, *Diary*, 278, 233.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Bruce, *Mystery of the Lord's supper, sermons on the sacrament preached in the Kirk of Edinburgh in AD 1589* (London, 1958), 92.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p.93-95.

<sup>4</sup>Welch (of Ayr) *Selected sermons*, 369-370.

whose letters to his spiritually-troubled mother-in-law read exactly like a seventeenth century case of conscience. Knox, too, objected to what he termed 'creature worship' as an obstacle between the soul and God, and laid a great deal of emphasis on celebrating the communion rite. In fact, when Knox was first gathering the Scottish church, he placed more importance on ensuring the initial celebration of the sacrament than he did on setting up preaching. <sup>1</sup>

It seems probable, then, that there may have been a very deeply rooted Scottish experiential strand of Calvinism stretching right back to the time of the Reformation, which was gradually becoming better and better at expressing itself, and developing a vocabulary which could be comfortably used to handle inner events of the heart in an acceptable theologically-sound way. Much of seventeenth-century divinity seems to be working in this area. Books like Dickson's Therapeutica sacra, Rutherford's Influences of grace, William Guthrie's, The Christian's great interest and Fleming's Fulfilling of the scripture were all important steps in the exploration of spiritual interiority. All these works were dedicated in one way or another to helping solve a vitally important problem - if God spoke in the inner world, and if it was necessary to hear his voice in order to perform valid religious acts, it was also necessary to distinguish what was of God from what was a matter of 'carnal reason' or personal imaginings which could lead the believer astray, therefore the inner world of the heart and of experience had to be explored and brought to light.

Inner vision was not allowed to contradict or neglect scripture - hence presbyterian opposition to groups like the Quakers - but it was vitally necessary for correct worship as far as a very influential group of presbyterian ministry and laity were concerned. The outer form had to

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<sup>1</sup> Mc Millan, Aberdeen Doctors, 130.

correspond to a pure, inner inspiration which could be held to accord with scripture. For instance, Mr Robert Blair, one of the Irish ministers of the 1620s and 30s joined a 'meditation on Christ's inward Kingdom with a meditation on the outer government of the Kirk', and remarked how 'growth in grace' led to confirmation of presbyterian church government.<sup>1</sup> Bessie Clarkson, a contemporary of Blair, took the matter of inner correctness to a greater length, complaining that she could not even say 'Jesus intercede for me'; it would be a lie without faith in her heart.

Perhaps the most influential theologian on this issue was Mr George Gillespie, whose book A dispute against the English popish ceremonies was widely popular in 1638. Gillespie asserted vigorously that, for worship to be acceptable, it must proceed from 'an inner action of grace in the soul'<sup>2</sup> and did not flinch to describe the ceremonies enjoined by the English church as 'soul murder'.<sup>3</sup> He noted that want of private communion could not 'stay the holy Spirit',<sup>4</sup> and objected that ceremonies in general 'obscure the substance of religion'. Worship, according to Gillespie, should not consist in outer show, but should be 'glorious within' so as not to take away 'the zeal, power and life.. We should worship God in a lively way to press the power of godliness on the consciences of professors'.<sup>5</sup> That Gillespie was a brilliant biblical scholar who continuously cited intricate points of translation from scripture, and who referred to a vast gallery of learned sources in support of his arguments is not to be glossed over, but he did so in support of the thesis that interiority mattered in religion. His scholarly

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<sup>1</sup> Blair, Autobiography, 30.

<sup>2</sup> George Gillespie 'Miscellany questions' No. XXI, in Presbyterian's armoury, II, 104.

<sup>3</sup> George Gillespie, 'Dispute against the English popish ceremonies', in Presbyterian's armoury, I, 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> George Gillespie, 'Dispute against the English popish ceremonies', in Presbyterian's armoury, I, 37, 59.

reason was the tool with which he justified the vivid spirituality for which he was renowned - he even sought the inspiration for his formidable arguments in prayer, as we know from accounts of his career at the Westminster Assembly. It was Gillespie's inspiration in prayer which produced the definitive presbyterian account of the Almighty - 'God, thou art a spirit infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in thy being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, truth' - used in the Westminster Assembly's larger catechism.<sup>1</sup> It was also Gillespie who defended presbyterianism against all-comers, stepping into the breach unprepared against the famous John Selden, relying on the power of his spiritual contact with God to guide his extemporare argument. As he remarked later 'complete dependence on God is better than gifts and parts'<sup>2</sup>. Reason and biblical scholarship mattered to Gillespie, but what was important was a right hierarchy of faculties, with the inner world of the spirit occupying the highest rung, in its role as the illuminator of scripture and the guarantor of election and right conduct.

There was a kind of spiritual absolutism at work here, and it was not a matter of a small lunatic fringe; two of its most enthusiastic theologians were highly respected Moderators of the Kirk - Gillespie and Henderson.

Gillespie mounted a brilliant scholarly attack on the English manner of ceremony, whilst Henderson, in a series of sermons in the critical year of 1638, pushed on the same theme of the vital need for an inner life in religion, as opposed to what he saw as the 'formal' manner of the English devotions. Henderson also linked his pleas for interiority with the concept of outer revolution - 'to have reformation in the Kirk', he told his audience, they must 'have reformation in their own hearts'

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<sup>1</sup> *Presbyterian's Armoury*, I, Introduction p. xxviii .

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. xxxvii.

beforehand. Otherwise God would not take their pleas for deliverance 'in good part'.<sup>1</sup> Like Gillespie, Henderson was a stern upholder of the Bible, as a rule - 'If it has not a warrant from from scripture, then it is enough to persuade us that something is wrong', admonished Henderson, in one of his sermons at St Andrews, but this was not the whole of his position.

For Henderson, the outer commands of the word could only be obeyed by contact with an inner source without which there could be no valid religion. Take, for instance, Henderson's directions concerning prayer -

and it cannot be a safe way of prayer to set down a set form of prayer with many repetitions, for we must say only these things as our hearts direct us. For if our hearts direct us not, and we be not stirred up by the spirit to it then we are at but profane babbling and idle repetition. If done without the spirit, then it is nothing but sin.<sup>2</sup>

Later, Mr William Guthrie concurred in this view of the primacy of the heart, proclaiming 'cursed is he that offereth a corrupt thing to God by superficial service with the outward man and the heart afar off. His deeds are not acceptable and his sacrifices are an abomination'; whilst Samuel Rutherford, writing in this vein in the 1650s, went further - 'Always look to see the spirit in things and not to carnal strength. It is not enough to eat and drink, except the spirit act the man to eat and drink for God' - even exhorting that the spirit in the heart must be right for the most ordinary of actions. Later covenanter Donald Cargill remarked that he 'durst not pray when his heart was not affected and came not up with my mouth'<sup>3</sup> or in the words of his contemporary, Fleming, 'we need a heart to close with light... light and counsel tryst man in following the

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<sup>1</sup> Thomson Martin, Henderson's sermons , 120.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 351.

<sup>3</sup> Guthrie Christian's great interest ,156. Rutherford, Influences of the life of grace , 181. Donald Cargill in Howie, The Scots worthies , 507.

command and practice of known duty.’<sup>1</sup> Another of their contemporaries, John Welwood, railed as to how there must be ‘serious heart work’ to the point of ‘forgetting all other things’ so that the elect could behave properly in the time of persecution of the 1670s.<sup>2</sup> Preoccupation with the work of the spirit in the heart as a necessity for correct worship and action was thus a feature of covenanting divinity from its earliest roots, up to and including the later preachers of the ‘Killing Times’. The only true validity came from the heart, in which the spirit moved; correct worship could not take place without it. The Bible could not be properly read and interpreted without this action of grace; it witnessed to election and then guided the elect in right action. It could also, as we will see, either uphold existing interpretations of doctrine or institute new forms in worship by its own authority.

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<sup>1</sup> Fleming, Fulfilling of scripture, I, 81.

<sup>2</sup> Wellwood, I Peter IV v 18, 30.

IV- Justification by the Spirit.

The most important Calvinist doctrines were, in practice, justified not only from scripture but also from experience. Books like Gillespie's Dispute against the English popish ceremonies cited scripture and learned authorities in abundance, as did sermons which sought to show that catholic ceremonies were the 'rudiments of man' condemned by St Paul.<sup>1</sup> In more private sources, however, the emphasis shifts, and very often, in an argument or consideration of basic Calvinist doctrine, an appeal would be made to experience, either in conjunction with scripture, or even in support of scripture, but for presbyterians, it must be said, experience was never to be cited against scripture.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, in more informal sources, such as diaries, autobiographies and letters, everyday life and worship experience played a very significant role, and was often decisive in matters of personal belief. Mr Robert Fleming's book, published in the 1660s, The Fulfilling of the scripture, is remarkable in that it takes this normal experiential mode of discourse, alluded to elsewhere, and elevates it into the major theme of a large work. He was by no means the first minister to refer to inner experience as an authority which supported Calvin's doctrine, but the articulate and fully developed exploration of the subject in his work is remarkable, and perhaps represents the high water mark of the lively and spiritual Calvinism which was so prominent in many of the most exciting events of the Scottish seventeenth century.

Despite his high conception of scripture, which he declared 'more certain than an immediate audible voice from Heaven',<sup>3</sup> Fleming felt that it was 'a great concernment to know that scripture hath such a

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<sup>1</sup> Ramsay, Warning to come out of Babylon (1638).

<sup>2</sup> G. D. Henderson, Religious life in the seventeenth century, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Fleming, Fulfilling of scripture, I, 10.

witness as experience... Oh what an empty thing should religion be if it had not this word experience in its grammar, that secret and sure mark by which the Christian knoweth the scripture is of God.’<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon of strong felt-experience linking itself to a text of scripture has already been discussed in the context of conversion, which was the gateway and initiation to this kind of experience of the heart. It was linked with very strong feeling of a persuasive nature; however there was also a variety of this which we might term ‘empirical experience’ which was not quite the same thing as the experience mentioned above.

‘Empirical experience’ was conviction of the correctness of doctrine, gained from the deep, inner self-examination, which was encouraged by Calvinist models of repentance. For instance, Mr David Dickson based his argument in Therapeutica Sacra on the results of self-examination. He observed ‘the inconstancy and instability of the will’, and spoke of ‘experience of this and of our heart deceiving us frequently and after we have made promises and vowes need not make us despair for we should lean less on our own strength and more on Christ’s power.’<sup>2</sup> He thus reasoned that it was ridiculous to suppose that Christ had ‘suspended the fruit of his sufferings on the frail mutable inconstant, corrupt free-will of man’, and used his observation of the human psyche to ridicule Arminians whom he advised to ‘go away to God and tell him that ye have such high power’. Mr Alexander Dunlop commented on the same subject that ‘Arminians do not know their own heart that speak so of the power of free will.’<sup>3</sup> Here, psychological examination was used to justify a key doctrine - that of the depravity of man and the consequent need for God’s infallible device of election and predestination.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Dickson, Select practical writings, 278.

<sup>3</sup> Wodrow, Analecta, III, 12.



'Text-getting', however, should be distinguished from the products of this habit of psychological examination, since it was individual, strongly linked to the processes of prayer, and was always described as a result of the action of grace; its strong connection to conceived prayer will be examined again later in depth. It was not a process of reflection on psychological processes, but related experiences were often considered as general evidence for certain doctrines or interpretations of scripture. Fleming was evidently familiar with it - he spoke of how 'many Christians can show by the Word how their first acquaintance with the Lord did begin. How some particular truth like a pickle of corn thrown at their heart by the great husbandman was made to take life and grow.'<sup>1</sup> This is very clearly 'text-getting' as discussed in chapter one. Later in Fleming's discourse, he reflected on the consequences of such experience. He compared spiritual experience to the scientific 'heureka' of discovery, and went on to comment that 'conversion is such an experiment that Christians can say and not from report 'I do surely feel, I enjoy, I am persuaded that this is the Lord'; matters like prayer and providence were held to be 'a sensible demonstration of the things of God. We see these things with our own eyes and not with the eyes of others.'<sup>2</sup> At this point, Fleming was rationally observing the general nature of spiritual experience, as a scientist might comment on a series of experiments, i.e. he was being a religious empiricist. Empirical arguments in support of Calvinist doctrine were drawn both from psychological observation of the everyday behaviour of the mind and also from consideration of the general nature of spiritual experience. Sometimes, however, a believer would simply declare that something was the case or should be the case

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<sup>1</sup> Fleming, *Fulfilling of scripture*, I, 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 132.

because he or she had just had direct divine inspiration of the 'text-getting' variety, or a related form of spiritual experience. Thus, validating a practice or view in covenanting presbyterianism could produce an interesting variety of forms of experiential justification.

Often deductions were made from spiritual experience - for instance, James Mitchell of Dykes, an active saint of the 1630s, spoke in a personal communication to a friend of his experience of 'the spirit of prayer being poured upon him in such a lively and powerful manner during the days' but at night he felt 'emptied...dead and cast down'. His friend notes that by this 'he was at that time convinced that the disposition and influence of spiritual and lively prayer came only from heaven and from no natural abilities that were in man'.<sup>1</sup> This was a confirmation of the Calvinist doctrine of the helplessness and depravity of man in spiritual matters. John Forbes of Corse comforted a troubled divinity student, who was afflicted with 'hardness of heart', by telling him that it was 'an experience that we may learn how weak and corrupt we are so we believe not in ourselves but in God who works in us'.<sup>2</sup> In this case, a psychological situation was used to validate a belief. As was the case with Archibald Johnston of Wariston and Mr George Hall who quarrelled with a radical sectarian - probably an early Quaker sympathiser - one Francis Wadcock, who 'denied sin in the regenerate'; in this case Wariston and his ally 'cited scripture and did testify to the evil imaginations of their own hearts.' What was at issue was their observation of their psychological condition, which was appended to scripture. In another case Wariston spoke of how our 'experience should be as many seals appended to the treuth as superstitious folk hing belts and crutches about the wells be Satans delusions.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Howie, *Scots Worthies*, 336 .

<sup>2</sup> John Forbes of Corse diary, S.R.O.mss CH12/8/6, 3.

<sup>3</sup> AJW twentieth century transcript, NLS mss 6247, 84.

So, experience was often used in conjunction with scripture, but it could even be used to validate scripture, as in the case of Katherine Collace, a later covenanter, who, after a profound ‘text-getting’ experience, denounced the Quakers, for, as she said ‘I conceived such glory to be in the Word, that when I apprehended such a fullness to be in two or three testimonies. I thought what fullness behoved there to be in the whole? Upon which I felt disgust at the Quakers for undervaluing the written word’.<sup>1</sup> She continued: ‘The Lord answered me by making an impression upon my heart of the principal truths professed by the Church of Scotland and persuaded me that these and nothing but these would he own.’<sup>2</sup> Here we see the particular power of the ‘text-getting’ experience. Note that it acted directly; Collace did not cite scripture against the Quakers, she cited spiritual experience in the context of scripture. She believed in the doctrines of the Church of Scotland, not because of some argument from scripture, but through ‘an impression on my heart’. This was very powerful stuff, but such experiences did not convince everyone; for instance, Henderson converted the prelatical Mr James Wood by taking him to a presbyterian prayer and conference meeting where he ‘found much of the spirit’, but in Wood’s opinion ‘he behoved to be convinced in his reason also, for he was a man and ready to be imposed on by his affections’. So Henderson gave him Calderwood’s much respected Altare Damascenum to read and this was good enough for Wood.<sup>3</sup> It is thus possible to see that experience was not only of differing sorts, but played a role of differing importance for differing people. It was not always respectable, and fluctuated in its relationship to scripture from the office of handmaid to an important role

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<sup>1</sup> Collace/Ross, Memoirs, 28-29.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Wodrow, Analecta, I, 29.

as guarantor, depending on how strong the experience was, and the tendency of the person involved to trust her or his inner experience.

In the cases above we have looked at instances where experiences, either of one's psychological condition or of accesses of the spirit, were important in upholding orthodox Calvinist or presbyterian; beliefs: however, spiritual experience, and in this case we are talking exclusively of the sort of visceral persuasion connected with 'text-getting', could also be a factor in innovation, with varying results. In these cases, however, strong spiritual experience was not linked with scripture. Interestingly enough, most of the cases where spirit, unsupported by scripture or normal procedure, was allowed to dictate were at communions. The most notable case of a spirit-dictated innovation was the Monday thanksgiving service after communions. This innovation was the direct result of the stunning spiritual experience of the Kirk of Shotts revival, where the Monday thanksgiving service was practised as an unusual afterthought. So striking were the results of John Livingston's extemporare sermon in terms of conversions, that the habit of the service came to be generally used.<sup>1</sup> It was considered so successful that, in the eighteenth century, when ministers began to depart from this model, Marion Laird, a noted saint whose piety still followed the covenanting mode of the previous century, wrote: 'How reprobable are ministers who are for putting away all the preachings about sacramental occasions but the fast day and the Sabbath day's preachings, when the Lord was pleased to give so much of his countenance on these days. They are depriving poor souls of a feast.'<sup>2</sup> The rationale here is not scriptural - it is solely practical. The validation comes from the workings of the spirit, not the interpretation of scripture.

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<sup>1</sup>Fleming, Fulfilling of scripture, II , 95.

<sup>2</sup>Laird, Life, 38.

The communion could very much be considered to be the field of the spirit. It certainly carried an immense spiritual weight; in an extraordinary occurrence, Mr Robert Bruce was left on his own in a position where, though unordained, it plainly became his duty to celebrate the communion in Edinburgh. This act was considered as a *de facto* ordination because the occasion had been so evidently 'blessed' by the 'power of the spirit'.<sup>1</sup> At another communion, established procedure was broken because the serving minister, Mr James Carstairs, 'had so much of the spirit on him, that no other minister would take it upon himself to relieve him'. As a result, Carstairs went on to serve the unusual number of 8-10 tables. This is but a minor variation compared to the enormity of the Bruce ordination, but it serves to show that, in the context of this rite, a spiritually guided flexibility could be discerned. The purpose of the communion was 'growth in grace',<sup>2</sup> and hence its whole purpose was to foster spiritual experience through union with Christ. We have already noted the importance which Knox placed on communion in the nascent Reformation Church. The vital place which the institution held in presbyterian life speaks volumes for the nature of the Scottish faith. A committed saint like Wariston would attend as many as fifteen of these large festivals in one year. Each one would involve a fast day, a preparation day, a Monday thanksgiving service, all night prayer vigils, the day itself with its multiple sermons and exhortations surrounding the act, a concourse of hundreds of people who had come many miles for the event; and at it, the true saint was expected to have floods of tears and rapturous spiritual experiences.<sup>3</sup> It is, therefore, interesting to note that, in this most hallowed institution which

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<sup>1</sup>Wodrow *Select Biographies*, I, 305.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Bruce, *Sermons on the Sacrament*, 71- 72.

<sup>3</sup>See Leigh Eric Schmidt 'Scottish Communion American revivals' for an in depth discussion of the communion season in Scottish presbyterianism.

the covenanters fought tooth and nail to defend from English 'innovations', they were innovators themselves, citing not the authority of tradition, or even of scripture, but that of the spirit.

Besides these communion-related instances of innovation, there was one extraordinary case of spiritual validation in ecclesiastical affairs which was not directly connected to a communion. This was the irregular ordination of John Semple, a precentor in Ireland. He had not had the standard classical education which was demanded of a minister, but was simply an ordinary literate layman who was, in his office as precentor (leader of the singing), taking a psalm before the minister came to preach his sermon and begin his service. In this case, the minister was late, and so Semple began to make observations on the psalm, which he did with 'so much of the spirit' that it was considered remarkable. The minister, on hearing of it, examined him and straightaway had him licensed to preach in private and to exhort. He took to preaching in barns and converted many. Eventually he was licensed as a minister. It is interesting to note that this occurred in the wake of the Six-Mile Water revival in Ireland, where communion seasons were connected with an extraordinary outletting of the spirit - perhaps this unusual religious fervour made the climate more favourable for spiritual legitimation - but nevertheless the only parallel to this incident is the Robert Bruce ordination mentioned above, and Bruce was a figure of outstanding authority in the presbyterian community even before his ordination. It could be that the 'frontier' type situation in Ireland was contributory to this willingness to seek the legitimation of the spirit, where normal presbyterian authority was hard-pressed in its battles with catholics, bishops and unruly settlers.

It is interesting to note that it was Irish/Scottish ministers who were notorious for innovating in their desire for spiritual worship. The

so-called 'Irish innovations', by which kneeling in the pulpit, singing the Gloria Patri, and some other very minor presbyterian ceremonies were rooted out of the Scottish service, were founded on the principle of discouraging vain repetition and formal ceremony. That such views were founded on spiritual experience is certainly possible. For instance, an anonymous Edinburgh manuscript expresses views very similar to those alluded to in a letter between Samuel Rutherford and a friend round about the time of this controversy. Rutherford was a radical Scots minister who had strong connections with the radical Irish congregations. The document, if not written by him, was written by someone of similar views. It spoke of reasons against the holding of Sabbath fasts. In particular, it complained that there was 'much deadness on ministers and people', and that the fast 'did not refresh people', most significantly of all, it was alleged that 'God shows no powerful presence in them'<sup>1</sup>. It went on to consider many other matters of procedure in worship, with regard to the workings of the spirit, and also raised a curious distinction as to where it was permissible to use private prayer in the course of public worship, which identifies it as being probably by Rutherford. This paper could have been written by either an 'Irish' minister or a Scottish sympathiser like Rutherford - but either way, it showed a tendency to justify religious forms with regard to whether they seemed to foster the presence of the spirit or not, and it was certainly against the established mainland procedures. This attitude of critically assessing a form of worship according to 'how much of the spirit' was found in it, was an ecclesiastical equivalent of the personal providential decision-making which formed an important part of the lives of many saints; however, in theory, matters of conduct in church government

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<sup>1</sup> Edinburgh University Library, Laing mss II. 23, p4. and Rutherford's Letters, 578.

were supposed to be governed fairly strictly by scripture and by the established rules of the Kirk.

That spiritual decision making could become an argument - even if only a minority argument in the Kirk - was a significant departure from the usual way of doing things, and symptomatic of the problems faced by the presbyterian church, which had to accommodate a vast variety of different attitudes to, and relationships with, the spirit amongst its flock. Some felt that all worship, however scriptural, without the spirit was 'dross and dung'; others seemed to feel that almost any spiritual experience at all was a dangerous business always likely to boil over into enthusiasm, if not regulated in a draconian fashion. Due to this, we find that there was almost always some kind of squabble in progress in the Church over issues such as private prayer meetings, use of read prayers, the need for spiritual repentance rather than bare repentance, qualification of instruments, indulgences and degrees of non-cooperation with the sinful state. The subtext of these many different squabbles was almost always linked to some matter of the role or necessity or presence of the spirit. As we have seen, the emphasis given to scripture, and the emphasis given to the experiential spirit, could differ widely between nominally Calvinist individuals. Similarly, there was a strong tendency in the Kirk to prefer a form of worship seen as most conducive of intense spiritual experience, rather than forms of worship seen as most conducive to decorum and social order. It was very much a matter of personal psychology which determined where, on these axes, a given believer would find him or herself. Despite this, the Kirk insisted on having standards, so as to edit out the non-spiritual traditions of men, and the 'phantasies' of what they saw as the deluded sectarians. They were honestly searching for spiritual truth - for a rock on which to build a Godly House. The best they could do was to try to



provide, via the Westminster confession and larger catechism, some sort of agreed structure which mooted the main presbyterian consensus on scripture as something definite and defined for the Kirk to hold onto, whilst its more spiritually adventurous souls continued to probe the depths and heights of their spiritual experience in a way which was both utterly fulfilling for them and desperately unsettling for society in many ways.

Chapter five**The order of affections**Modes of access

We have noted that Scottish presbyterianism seemed to revolve around experience in the heart, but what was this experience? How did it relate to concepts of feeling, spirit and emotion, and what were the implications of a shift in emphasis to this problematical inner realm? If grace was a free gift from God, then surely there was nothing for the believer to do except wait patiently, like Mary in the annunciation, for influences of grace to strike in the heart or not. Yet whatever the theory of man's total helplessness to effect anything in his salvation, in practice there was an involving pattern of devotions held up for the believer to follow, which was designed to assist him or her in taking up a right attitude towards God, from which position the believer might attain to great spiritual comforts, if the Lord were pleased to pour out his spirit upon the supplicant. The ministers would deny any causal connection between performance of these pious exercises and obtaining the spirit, but never the less, those who did not carry out such exercises were held to be reprobate and to lack 'fellowship with God and tenderness'.<sup>1</sup> When the sectarians of the 1650s tended towards claiming grace without the strenuous interior exercises characteristic of presbyterian piety, men like Wariston were shocked, and considered them to be 'terrible scarecrows'.<sup>2</sup> Worship and other practices aimed at clearing away the dross of everyday sin and accessing an inner core present in the believer, had been honed to a high degree of intensive piety which was considered to be normal for a saint of God. The inner core itself both directed the

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<sup>1</sup>AJW, II, 119.

<sup>2</sup>AJW, II, 143.

believer in life and brought forth extremely strong feelings which were revelled in by those who experienced them. This kind of piety could be peculiarly difficult to accommodate within the context of normal seventeenth-century ideas about authority, reason and propriety.

The first major obstacle between the believer and the core was sin. According to Wariston, sin 'eclips' the union with God and dims reason.<sup>1</sup> Sin was idolatry - since it involved setting a higher value on having one's own will than on doing that of God. By making a sinful lust more important than the law of God, the believer in effect exiled God from the heart. Guthrie spoke of idolatry as the great cause of God's wrath - 'putting God out of his room and tittle things in it'<sup>2</sup>. 'Sins', said Rutherford, 'bring withdrawal of influences of grace, spoiling the spiritual organs... (we must) put spirit in the room of self.'<sup>3</sup> In other words, one had to maintain the right inner order; the will of God always had to come first. And if one had put anything above God? Then one had to repent, and it must be said that, not only what we would recognise as sins such as greed, lust or drunkenness were being alluded to here, but inordinate love of family or others also counted as sinful idolatry - for instance, Wariston felt that the death of his first wife was because she 'distracted his affections from God'.<sup>4</sup> Thus, many attachments or habits which would seem to us innocuous were counted by covenanters as sin which interrupted the communion between believer and God, and hence blighted spiritual experience. To take a second example - when Wariston was about to remarry, he indulged in some pre-marital kissing with his fiancée, Helen Hay, and both found themselves not having those 'spiritual enjoyments' to which they were used; they stopped at once,

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<sup>1</sup> *AJW*, I, 143.

<sup>2</sup> *AJW*, II, 275.

<sup>3</sup> Rutherford, *Influences of the Life of Grace*, 157.

<sup>4</sup> *AJW*, I, 23.

since it was evidently spoiling their relationship with God, and thus it had to be sinful.<sup>1</sup> The method of setting right this kind of problem was repentance.

Repentance was a fundamental part of godly behaviour which involved sorrowing for sin. It usually involved the believer in an anguished frame of mind but it could also be intensely pleasurable - for instance, Wariston speaks of there being 'no true contentment but in the pouring out of the heart before God and the shining of his face on a penitent saule.'<sup>2</sup> So, repentance was considered to be a two-way thing - it involved a catharsis of guilt and shame for having offended God, and the consequent peace and relief gained from the full discharging of these sentiments were interpreted as the direct forgiveness of God. By repenting properly, the believer re-established contact with the benign and watchful presence of God in his or her life. Mr John Welch of Ayr, a very influential elder statesman of the presbyterian church, gave a series of in-depth sermons on repentance. He described it as 'breaking the heart', and, for it to be effectual, he said that the believer must have 'sense and feeling of the wrath of God... thou must seest earth trembling and hell opening up before thee'; and one should 'pray for remission' looking for an 'answer from the spirit or in the ministry of the word that thy sins are forgiven.'<sup>3</sup> Repentance thus brought one to a state of waiting where the Lord might vouchsafe one a personal communication from the spirit.

It is important to note here that the spirit is distinct from the emotional turmoil of the believer. First, the believer experiences terror at the wrath of God and sorrow for sin, then the spirit speaks to him or her, either through the ministry of the word (text-getting type experiences

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<sup>1</sup> *AJW*, I, 200.

<sup>2</sup> *AJW*, I, 193.

<sup>3</sup> Welch (of Ayr), *Selected sermons*, 67.

were common during sermons, see Chapter 1) or directly via prayer (one of the other most common settings in which text-getting occurred). In Welch's words, 'displeasure over hardness of heart is good for manuring the groun,' for, said Welch, 'repentance must bear fruit' in terms of 'amendment of life'. So it was not enough to have the right feelings, although this was helpful, and neither was it enough to do good works, which was the province of the already-converted, who were enabled to do this by the spirit, but emotional catharsis was evidently believed to bring people to a point at which it was more likely that the spirit would work through them than not. It was an emptying where, in place of the sinful self, the believer 'humbled' herself before God, so that God could 'dwell in the heart to heal bakslydings, mortify idols, and cast out vain imaginations.'<sup>1</sup> The point was that space had to be cleared for grace to come through, if it should choose to do so - and at some level the emotions, and the stirring up of emotions, were involved in this clearing operation. In the words of Welch, the believer was to 'watch and pray continuously, and purge and cleanse the heart by fasting and prayer'.<sup>2</sup> So there was a sense of somehow stripping away layers of habitual reaction, so that the new behaviour prompted by the spirit could come forth. This approach was a constant throughout covenanting times; 'Let your main task be to look to the inner man of your own heart', said Welch's grandson, Mr John Welch of Irongray, 'grow downward in humility and inward in heart knowledge of yourselves, abhor pride.'<sup>3</sup> The believer had to get used to working on this deeper level of the heart, but this inner world was ambiguous; as an earlier preacher, Mr William Struther, pointed out, the heart was both 'the fountain of faith and the forgehouse for Satan's iniquitie - the place of conception of all our sorrows.' The

<sup>1</sup> David Hume's diary NLS mss Wod. Oct XV, 41.

<sup>2</sup> Welch (of Ayr), Selected sermons, 166.

<sup>3</sup> Welch (of Irongray), Fifty and Two Directions, 22.

role of repentance was to stop this by afflicting the heart ‘between grief for sin and fear of wrath and holy indignation for offending so good a God.’<sup>1</sup> It was, in this sense, an attempt to change the inner core itself.

This attempt to stir up certain patterns of emotion was a common feature of most presbyterian forms of worship. Of the best known form, preaching, the emphasis was on having ‘powerful services’ giving ‘delight and soul satisfaction’ in worship.<sup>2</sup> Welch of Ayr considered preaching to be the main ‘means to repentance.’<sup>3</sup> Preachers could, and did, range over a variety of topics *stirring up different feelings*, depending on whether they believed that their congregation needed ‘sight of sin’ and ‘lash of law’ or comfort and consolation and ‘holding out’ of the promises of scripture. It must, therefore, be viewed as a flexible instrument. It is enough to note at this point that preaching was used for stirring up feeling as part of the conversion process, (See chapter one; in particular, the accounts of the Six-Mile Water revival and of Mr John Livingston’s preaching at the Kirk of Shotts) and, also, like other practices in worship, it could be perceived to be inspired by the spirit or not, and if it was, then it was considered to be far superior to the normal fare provided by ‘unspiritual’ ministers. Mr John Spreull, a radical covenanter of the west, and protestor lay elder, noted that he ‘could not distinguish between normal preaching and preaching in the power of the spirit, till I heard Mr David Dickson pressing that holiness could not be expected without Christ, no more than justification’.<sup>4</sup> Lady Henrietta Campbell, a later western covenanter made similar observations about her desire for ‘powerful... lively and soul satisfying services’ and described Mr Alexander Wedderburn’s sermons as being

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<sup>1</sup> Struther, *Scotland’s warning*, 52.

<sup>2</sup> Lady Henrietta Campbell diary, National Library Scotland mss Wod 31, 181-182.

<sup>3</sup> Welch (of Ayr) *Selected sermons*, 132.

<sup>4</sup> John Spreull, Remarkable passages, National Library Scotland mss Wod Oct XV, 16v.

‘full of power and presence’.<sup>1</sup> This was considered to be an important part of the spiritual nourishment of the elect. Preaching stimulated conversion, and, in comforting and strengthening the elect, thereafter helped them to grow in grace when it hit home to the heart with ‘life and power’ - Mr John Blakadder, for instance, preached a weekly sermon especially for the converted, so that he could speak particularly to their problems.<sup>2</sup> Other presbyterian habits, however, were designed to produce more specific emotional effects, rather than to simply effect conversion and act as remedies for soul trouble. One of the most highly regarded forms of worship of this sort was the fast.

Henderson, writing of events in 1638, showed a *high opinion* of the institution, and considered it to be a damning indictment of episcopacy that fasts were rare under it.<sup>3</sup> Fasting was not just the abstaining from food; in the words of John Forbes of Corse, ‘bodily fasting without spiritual mourning is like unto the fasting of the beasts in Nineveh’.<sup>4</sup> It was a day of ‘humiliation and affliction,’ a ‘holy and religious mourning for the wrath and anger of God kindled or threatening afore which the whole earth should tremble... in which we speak our own words for our own present danger,’<sup>5</sup> according to the Laing manuscript written by one of the more radical ministers in 1640. Mr William Struther considered it to need ‘extraordinary levels of devotion and affection... mourning like a woman for her first born.’ Believers were to ‘take order for the body to bring it to some feeling for that work that it may be afflicted as an instrument of evil to the soul, for humiliation of the whole man and contrition of heart’<sup>6</sup> It was also

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<sup>1</sup> Lady H. Campbell diary, NLS mss Wod 31, 182.

<sup>2</sup> Howie, *Scots worthies*, 607.

<sup>3</sup> Thomson Martin, *Henderson’s sermons*, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Forbes of Corse diary, S.R.O. mss CH12/8/6, 243.

<sup>5</sup> Edinburgh University, Laing mss, La II 23, 2v.

<sup>6</sup> Struther, *Scotland’s warning*, 59.

supposed to produce a change in behaviour; again, according to Struther, ‘whosoever after fasting walketh not in a newness of life is deceived by his seduced heart.’<sup>1</sup> It consequently carried the peculiar assertion that an almighty omnipotent God, who predestined everything, could somehow be persuaded by the lamenting of a mass of horribly depraved human beings.

Fasts were generally called in the face of national emergency, although private fasting was a very common exercise amongst the godly, as well as a part of repentance, and sometimes, it was also used in the pursuit of guidance. The idea was that it showed penitence for sins, and could somehow turn away the wrath of God, so it was really a special case of repentance. It may be viewed, perhaps, in the light of the prophet Hosea, who conceived of Israel as a harlot wife who had fallen away from her first love, and who had need to repent. Struther, in the treatise which he wrote for a general fast in the 1620s, spoke of the ‘Lord’s controversie’ with the land, and enumerated a list of sins including blasphemy, idolatry and frivolity of which he felt the nation had been guilty. In fasting, believers had to make an extra intense effort to get back ‘to the first process that God formed in us at the time of our conversion and to acquaint us with that process we shall see on the last day;’<sup>2</sup> thus the emphasis was on renewing the heart, by reaching an even deeper level of emotional intensity than that experienced in normal devotion. Out of this extraordinary, and perhaps even potentially disruptive, outletting of emotion, new, reformed behaviour was expected to come. Struther, a spiritual episcopalian minister, but one with a concern for public decorum, warns that ‘affection will break loose in sundry actions which in public we must suppress’; although he also said

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Struther, *Scotland’s warning*, 58.



that such displays of emotion were perfectly all right in private. His position might perhaps be summed up as one of 'not doing it in the street and frightening the horses' to borrow the phrase of Mrs Pat Campbell. This draws our attention to the fact that, despite the calls for deep emotional experience - and the assumption that deep emotional catharsis was a prerequisite for a change in behaviour and making room for the spirit to work - emotional expression was not an entirely respectable thing in the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, in terms of the fast, deep feeling was in order, and the inner state was symbolised by wearing sober clothing and abstaining from food. The accent was on humiliation of 'the whole man'<sup>1</sup> and the population tried, as far as they were in sympathy with the ideals of the fast, to attain to the correct attitude of mourning which might perhaps bring them to the point where - as in covenanting theory of sovereignty - the spirit might move through and find work for them.

There was strong emphasis in presbyterian devotion on the stirring up of affections through meditation, which was defined by Gillespie as 'The soul's speech to itself'.<sup>2</sup> Meditation on a variety of subjects was used to obtain the desired state of 'melting of the heart' or 'softness of heart' in everyday devotions. Archibald Johnston of Wariston, for instance, and his wife used meditation on the psalms to express their condition,<sup>3</sup> using the strong feelings generated by this to convert 'the soul's speech to itself' into the 'soul's speech to God' of prayer. It was also Wariston who recommended to the believer 'Would thou have thy heart soft? Dip it everyday in Christ's blood.'<sup>4</sup> In other words, the believer was to meditate every day and to be emotionally

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p.59.

<sup>2</sup> G. Gillespie, 'Against the English popish ceremonies', in Presbyterian's armoury, I, 106.

<sup>3</sup> AJW, I, 170.

<sup>4</sup> AJW twentieth century transcript, NLS mss 6249, 87.

affected by the thought of the Passion. John Welch of Ayr recommended looking ‘with the eye of faith on all God's creatures, seeing his majesty there’ or ‘Heavenly meditation on his whole law, word and works.’<sup>1</sup> Whilst Alexander Jaffray preferred to contemplate the Lord’s providence on a daily basis for the ‘stirring up of the heart to approach unto God,’ his meditation on the ‘benefits of despair in waiting on the Lord’ included ‘humility - drawn to pray oftener, convinced of the need for continued influences of grace... shown power of the Lord to save, stirred up to seek closer fellowship and communion with the Lord... knowing how to pity those who are tempted, to think how happy the dead saints are.’<sup>2</sup> Here we see the link of meditation to change in behaviour - it produced self-awareness which led to resolutions for behavioural change. It was a process which was held to be a mark of the elect; for instance Brodie said of the elect that they ‘loved the Lord much, prized pardon, wondered at his compassion, saw their own vileness. Mourned, watched and repented.’ He himself had ‘teares’ in thinking about the Lord's ‘goodness.’<sup>3</sup> The elect, apparently, were supposed to be continually *in dialogue with themselves about matters of religion*, through a form of devotion which coupled observation either of the self, or of providences, or of creation, or scripture with contemplation of what they ought to be in response to this, and strong emotion in response to their conclusions. For instance, John Forbes of Corse chose to meditate on the Song of Solomon. He linked the image of the bride, firstly to the Lamb’s wife in Revelation, then linked this in turn to the covenant of grace - ‘that the Lord's spirit will stay with his people,’ and further linked this to Zephaniah ‘neither by army, nor strength but by my spirit will I sustain thee.’ His emotional response to

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<sup>1</sup> Welch (of Ayr), Selected sermons, 360.

<sup>2</sup> Diary of Alexander Jaffray, 40.

<sup>3</sup> Brodie, Diaries, 47.

this was one of contentment that ‘the Lord comforts the soul in a way that worldly things can not,’ and his behavioural resolution, as a result of this feeling, was to practise increased ‘dependence’ on God.<sup>1</sup> Here again there was a definite role for feeling - but note the holistic approach of devotion - the intellect observes, the heart is affected, and action in behaviour results, but the middle stage is crucial, for, without the stirring up of the affections, it is difficult for the believer to get ‘access to the throne of grace.’<sup>2</sup> In the case of Wariston, feeling that he had made contact with God seemed to be very much attached to perceptions of strong emotional experience. For instance, in the case of his meditation of the Psalms, he speaks of ‘the spirit of God melting his heart, multiplying tears’ giving him ‘freest access to the throne of grace.’<sup>3</sup> Again, emotion seems to be linked to the context of behavioural change.

So what of that most emotive presbyterian ceremony of all - the communion - which seemed to include all other forms of devotion in its round of worship: fasting, preaching, prayer vigils, self-examination, repentance, meditation? What precisely was it supposed to effect? The sacrament itself was seen first and primarily as a union with Christ. In the words of the Scots Confession, ‘The faithful in the right use of the Lord’s table have sic a conjunction with the Lord Jesus Christ as the natural man cannot comprehend.’<sup>4</sup> Mr Robert Bruce, the great early presbyterian theologian of the sacrament, spoke of it as sharing ‘Christ’s sanctified human nature... a sanctifying union with Christ’ where ‘nothing more was to be wished than to be conjoined with Christ’.<sup>5</sup> The sacrament was considered to be a better thing even than the word preached; both Bruce and the later, but equally brilliant and respected,

<sup>1</sup> Forbes of Corse diary, S.R.O. mss CH12/8/6, 4-6.

<sup>2</sup> *AJW*, I, 174.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> J. S. Mc Ewan, *The faith of John Knox* (Edinburgh, 1961), 56.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Bruce, *The Mystery of the Lord’s Supper*, 39.

Gillespie agreed on this. Bruce felt that, by the sacrament, believers were given ‘the same thing as you get by the word but better - a surer apprehension’; whilst Gillespie wrote that believers were given the body and blood of Christ through preaching also, but in preaching there was more ‘human wisdom’ mixed in, so it was not so ‘pure’ as the sacrament.<sup>1</sup> What, then, was the main thrust of the sacrament? Bruce spoke of it as ‘our spiritual nourishment by Christ, to be witnesses to the world and to the Princes of the World who are enemies to our profession, to testify love to His members our brothers, a special remedy for our spiritual disease when we are likely to fall’ and as an occasion to ‘thank God for his benefits’<sup>2</sup>, but it was also strongly connected to growth in the spirit; as Bruce went on to say, it led to ‘growth of faith and increase of holiness’<sup>3</sup> so that the believer might say-

the bounds of my soul are enlarged... I grow in knowledge. I grow in apprehension. I grow in feeling... He changes the affections of my soul. He changes their faculties and qualities. Hearts and mind not changed in substance - but made new to the extent that we are new creatures<sup>4</sup>.

‘Christ works in you a spiritual feeling’, said Bruce, ‘that in your heart and in your conscience you may find the effect of his Word.’ The effect of having such new feelings was that the believer might obtain ‘strength’ to ‘lay hold of mercy’ so that he or she could amend sinful behaviour. Via the sacrament the believer was to obtain ‘strong resolve for bettering the self’. In the words of Bruce, ‘there is no other lesson in Christianity than this - to shake off your lusts and affections more and more to renounce yourself, so that you may embrace Christ.’<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 82., Gillespie, ‘Against the English popish ceremonies’, in *Presbyterian’s armoury*, I, 99.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Bruce, *The mystery of the Lord’s Supper*, 72.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 85, p.95.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 57.

It was not the believer, however, who threw off his or her own ‘lusts and affections’; the lusts and affections were changed by Christ, who, as we were told earlier, would change the faculties of the believer and work a spiritual feeling in him or her. What the believer did do, however, was to initiate the purging process of repentance, which was held to be necessary as preparation for attending a communion, and which made way for the spirit to work a permanent and more thoroughgoing reformation in the heart. Would-be communicants were to ‘remove all vain cogitations and earthly fantasies and filthy thoughts and everything which dogs your heart.’<sup>1</sup> They were to ‘sorrow for sin...to have feeling for sins offending so gracious a God...earnest sorrow and yearning’<sup>2</sup>, and also to remove ‘outward sense, natural notions, natural reason and to follow the sight and information of the Spirit of God.’<sup>3</sup> Again, we find that there was a strong role for expression of feeling in this process, as well as the role of feeling in repentance. Gillespie tells us that, at communion, the communicant should ‘meditate on Christ’s passion and its benefits.’<sup>4</sup> According to Leigh Eric Schmidt in his work on Scottish communion seasons, weeping in the course of these meditations was seen as ‘almost de rigueur’ and in the case of one late seventeenth-century writer of manuals of popular devotion as ‘absolutely necessary’.<sup>5</sup>

Such theory is borne out by contemporary accounts of communion experiences; for instance Johnston of Wariston spoke of ‘pouring out his heart’ at a Musselburgh communion, and was extremely upset when he went to a communion and did not get ‘abundancie of teares, quilk

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Bruce, *The mystery of the Lord’s Supper*, 105.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 68.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 93.

<sup>4</sup> George Gillespie, ‘Against the English popish ceremonies’, in *Presbyterian’s armoury*, I, 106.

<sup>5</sup> Leigh Eric Schmidt, thesis- ‘Scottish communions and American revivals’, 131.

grieved me'<sup>1</sup>; whilst John Forbes of Corse spoke of how God 'quieted ,  
refressed, and strengthened my soul at the Table.' He had a 'great sense  
of the Saviour with me at the receiving of the elements,' and felt his  
heart

lifted up to Christ in Heaven...having heavenlie and  
abundant consolation through the mercy of my God upon  
me as neither can my mouth utter, nor pen express, neither  
could my heart comprehend it, but it comprehended and  
filled my heart with peace, strength, and joy in the Holy  
Ghost, so I was ready and glad to be presently dissolved  
and to be with the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

Marion Laird, a covenanter of the eighteenth century, said of a  
sacrament where the preaching had followed a Song of Solomon theme,  
'I rejoiced with joy unspeakable,'<sup>3</sup> whilst Jean Collace, at a late  
seventeenth-century communion, spoke of being overwhelmed by 'a  
sense of his presence and his love shining in my soul.'<sup>4</sup> All four, despite  
their different times and sexes, had very strong experiences at  
communion; in Forbes, the sense of being carried away by a  
spontaneous movement of the spirit is perhaps shown most clearly.

This is in essence what was held to have happened at communions  
in the course of revivals - especially as in the case of the Kirk of Shotts  
communion where a spontaneous digression in an extemporare sermon  
produced absolutely unheard of results, with several hundred people  
being completely overcome with strong feelings of such unusual  
intensity that, for many, they represented a conversion experience and  
led to a change of life.<sup>5</sup> This phenomenon of extraordinary levels of  
emotional experience at communion was also noted at Stewarton, where  
it was considered to be the 'Stewarton sickness', at the Six-Mile Water

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<sup>1</sup> AJW, I, 96.

<sup>2</sup>Forbes of Corse diary, S.R.O. mss CH12/8/6, 55.

<sup>3</sup> Marion Laird, Memoirs, 30.

<sup>4</sup>Jean Collace, autobiography NLS mss Adv 32.4.4, 107v.

<sup>5</sup>See chapter one

revival in Ireland, at Cambuslang, and at two notable communions presided over by John Carstairs. Presumably it took place more often on an individual basis, as advanced saints would have rapturous experiences which seemed to be spontaneous tidal waves of feeling, so unusual when compared to normal emotional experience, that they were considered to be definite spiritual manifestations. This could well be that which Bruce was referring to, when he said of the communion experience that 'the bounds of my soul are enlarged'.<sup>1</sup> Preachers were quite clear that it was the duty of the communicant to get sorrow for sin, and to get 'feeling' for having offended so gracious a God, but experiences such as that of Forbes, or that of the communicants whom John Carstairs served 'in a strange rapture... wonderfully assisted... with a strange motion upon his hearers'<sup>2</sup> or the great effect on the converts of Kirk of Shotts - some of whom had been 'laid as though dead' after his thanksgiving sermon, were definitely perceived to be unusual and spontaneous workings of the spirit - free grace which could not be entreated. The way might be cleared by repentance, or emotional catharsis, but the experience of extraordinary and spontaneous upsurges of feeling was not held to be directly dependent on these procedures, since not every well-prepared for communion provided wide-scale experiences of the intensity of Kirk of Shotts, and on the individual level. One communion might produce more pronounced results than another; the level of intensity fluctuated. This extraordinary level of feeling which could not be turned on or off to order was characterised as the experience of free grace and the working of the Holy Spirit.

We have noted how a large part of the presbyterian life of devotion was concerned with stirring up emotions and discharging them,

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Bruce, *The mystery of the Lord's Supper*, 85.

<sup>2</sup> Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 148.

leading to a point at which unusual experience, identified with the movements of the spirit, might appear. Whilst communions and fasts were occasional happenings intended to push the limits, prayer was an everyday channel which could produce remarkable results. The ground work of prayer lay in meditation, which was used in preparation for serious converse with God. According to Mr Andrew Grey, a protestor minister of the 1650s, before prayer, a believer was supposed to 'meditate on our depravity, God's inconceivable highness and dignity' and to have 'deep impressions' of what he or she was going to say 'engraven upon the heart' so that they could have 'hearts inditing these things which we speak'.<sup>1</sup> When asked by Young Dalmahoy how to acquire the gift of prayer, it was this approach which Wariston took. He directed the young man to 'think on God's attributes, and on our abominations, and our necessities and to read in private a Psalm and pray upon it, then read it in the family and pray upon it, and he would find the gift of prayer grow in his hand'.<sup>2</sup> He spoke of making prayer 'fervent by meditation', saying that 'fervency' was good for 'prayer to prevail'.<sup>3</sup> This, however, was a preparatory process, for Rutherford was careful to stress that it was a gift from the Lord, and that it was not under direct human control. According to Rutherford, 'the first giving of the spirit is like wild flowers, pleugh, nor spade, can do nothing to make them grow in the garden or in-field. To pray for the spirit we must pray in the spirit...the spirit is in the Lord's keeping.'<sup>4</sup>

Prayer was seen by presbyterians as a means by which the Lord acted directly on the believer, as much as a means by which the believer might prevail upon the Lord. Many requests in prayer were for inner

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Gray, *Sermons on prayer*, 18.

<sup>2</sup> AJW, twentieth century transcript, NLS mss 6249, 88.

<sup>3</sup> AJW, I, 26-30.

<sup>4</sup> Rutherford, *Influences of the life of grace*, 169.



change, and it was seen as the pre-eminent channel for this. Henderson spoke of prayer ‘making the disposition more heavenlie...God draws the heart upwards, all graces of the soul, are exercised when we pray.’<sup>1</sup> Struther considered that prayer was for ‘illumination, life and affection, helping the mind to see more clearly and softening the heart to be more sensible’.<sup>2</sup> Brodie saw prayer as having an impact on his being - he felt that prayer was necessary to change his affections.<sup>3</sup> John Welch of Ayr regarded it as the ‘most important’ exercise for a godly person because ‘the spirit puts sparks of zeal and love into your heart when praying...It gets the chambers of his presence open to thee...in prayer the soul talks homely to God’; he saw it as the major channel of regeneration.<sup>4</sup> In Gray’s opinion, it served to ‘crucify lusts and to attain conformity with God...not to pray is to be remarkable servants to our lusts.’<sup>5</sup> It was a ‘dialogue between emptiness and fullness’.<sup>6</sup> In similar terms, Henderson also spoke of prayer as ‘asking of that inexhaustible treasury of all things with God.’<sup>7</sup> Prayer was thought to be capable of changing the inner man, so that he could react outwardly in new ways, informed by the grace inside him imparted by God via prayer.

Prayer itself was seen to consist in the exercise of affection, Mr William Struther, the spiritual episcopalian minister, placed his emphasis decidedly on feeling in prayer, proclaiming that true prayer is not in our words, but in our hearts. Words in public prayer are necessary for others to hear and follow us, and in private prayers, they serve to hold our minds constant, but the life of prayer standeth in faithful desires. For long speech is one thing, and a strong affection another, and the work of prayer is done more by groans than by

<sup>1</sup> Thomson Martin, *Henderson’s sermons*, 298.

<sup>2</sup> Struther, *Christian Observations* (first century), 19.

<sup>3</sup> Brodie, *Diaries*, 40.

<sup>4</sup> Welch (of Ayr) *Selected sermons*, 246-248.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Gray, *Sermons on prayer*, 28.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p.12.

<sup>7</sup> Thomson Martin *Henderson’s sermons*, 297.

words, and more by tears than by talk... it is by the cry of the heart... the work of the spirit is to bring forth sighs and groans, which cannot be uttered. We call him into ourselves when we call upon him. The best language of the heart is groans and sighs. God works this desire in the heart himself. Prayer is the laying of a desirous heart open to the fountain to drink in happiness.<sup>1</sup>

The whole point of prayer was, by Struther, held to be allowing the self to be overcome by feeling of such intensity that it cannot be expressed; it was union with Christ via the spirit. By prayer, the believer laid herself or himself open to ravishing emotional experience, which was not dependent on anything - it was a gift of God, worked by God and given to the believer. This happened despite their sinful human nature, so different from the utter goodness and purity which was conceived to be of God. To take the words of an Andrew Cant communion sermon, 'Behold and wonder that the king of Heaven will marry your heart'. This was the miracle of Scottish experiential divinity; it taught man to see the 'evilness' of his heart, yet, despite this glaring sight of sin, it also led him to experience the most ravishing intimations of divine love. This approach was by no means the sole province of Mr Struther. Radical protestor minister Mr Andrew Gray produces an almost exactly similar approach to prayer, thirty years later in the 1650s. He spoke of wordless prayer in which 'affection doth so swell and burst its banks, that he is clothed with a blessed impossibility to have the use of his tongue.'<sup>2</sup> Gray too, considered that 'the spirit of prayer doth more consist in the voice of affection than in words', giving rise to 'inexpressible, unutterable sighs and groans'. He went on to say that to 'speak what the soul and affections speak in prayer is to speak much.'<sup>3</sup> Thus the role given to affection in prayer was an extremely significant one. Mr William

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<sup>1</sup> Struther, True happiness or King David's choice , 50.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Gray, Sermons on prayer , 14.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Struther explained that the difference between catholics and protestants in prayer was that, for a protestant, prayer was a ‘great pleasure...being stayed from prayer is worse than heartscalde’; prayer was ‘no human delight’ but a source of ‘great contentment, to know God and be taught of him,’ whilst for the Roman Catholic, this blessed experience was a ‘penance.’<sup>1</sup> Prayer was seen as being a source of great pleasure, a process through which extraordinary feelings of great intensity were contacted. It was the business of the believer, according to Gray, to ‘distinguish the absence or presence of God in prayer, to lament God’s absence if absent’, and to have ‘sickness of love’ for any such absence.<sup>2</sup> Prayer was to him a ‘real spiritual enjoyment, being a conformity with God and having corruption abated.’ It was a dramatic act in which the grace of God was infused into a sinful human being.

## II -Anatomizing the inner world

As we have noted above, presbyterian worship stirred up strong experiences. *Some indication has been given that, although stirring up emotion was an important part of this process, it was certainly not identical with the workings of the spirit. Workings of the spirit were seen to be unusual feelings which swept over the believer, were spontaneous, could not be controlled, were identified with conditions such as ‘love-sickness’, and which, as will be seen, were given unusual weight in matters of guidance. This is merely a preliminary sketch; presbyterian saints had a great deal to say about their inner lives and experiences and their vocabularies are often puzzling. We have noted that institutions such as communions, fasts and prayer were supposed to produce inner, and consequently, outer change. They*

<sup>1</sup>Struther, Christian Observations (first century), 20- 21.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Gray, Sermons on prayer, 31.

produce inner, and consequently, outer change. They were also supposed to help bring about union with God. Communion and prayer often led to experiences of being infused with the spirit. Fasting was designed to bring the individual back to the state of union with God attained by the first conversion. In all these, the idea of union with God is paramount. Meditation, on the other hand, acts as a sort of handmaiden to all the above; it brings the heart to the point where it is open to receive the stamp of grace. Meditation is designed to stir up the feelings, but the spirit is in the keeping of God alone, and brings with it its own feeling, which was endowed with the attribute of efficacy. It did not consist in wallowing in a set of vivid emotions, but was held to have a real effect upon behaviour. 'Real enjoyments,' said Gillespie, 'make us moved and humble'.<sup>1</sup> 'Practice', he continued, 'is more important than knowledge. The promises are to the Christian that practiseth.'<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Marion Laird, the eighteenth-century servant girl, spoke that 'the Lord would bring home with power upon her heart all promises.' So, spiritual experience was associated with the power to change - it was not simply a discharging of emotion.

This can be seen in the emphasis on heart-work, which insisted that knowledge was not enough because it had no power, and brought forth no real changes in those who had it. To take a typical presbyterian argument, made in this case by episcopalian minister Mr Struther, 'Satan has knowledge - but it is no good without affection. Instruction makes men learned, but affection maketh them wise, it is one thing to know but another thing to possess'.<sup>3</sup> He condemned Arminians because, they speak of a moral suasion and not of moving the heart to receive. They break the proper dependence of man on Christ, holding them apart. They do not have real union

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> Struther, True happiness or King David's choice, 129, 136.

with Christ. God moves us to love him, and rejoice in him, so union and communion flowing from him are sensible.<sup>1</sup>

Note the importance which Struther attaches to 'affection'. He speaks of moving the heart to receive - which given Struther's writing on communion and fasting, probably alludes to the practise of meditation and stirring up of the emotions - but he then goes on to say that 'God moves us'. So there is a two way movement; the believer cannot produce saving grace in him or herself, but can move the heart to a point which is, to use Dickson's important metaphor, 'like the drying timber to make it sooner take fire when it is casten into it'<sup>2</sup> - but what happens at the point where the timber is dried?

William Guthrie spoke of the 'gracious operations of the spirit', of the 'seal of the lineaments of God's image revealed on men, communion with God refreshing the soul exceedingly, fellowship with God, access to God, liberty and free speaking to God.'<sup>3</sup> What did this entail? Wariston speaks of praying with his wife 'with great motion'. He had 'softness of heart' and was moved to tears.<sup>4</sup> Lady Culross spoke of 'enlargement and motion in prayer'; whilst Livingston spoke of 'liberty and melting of heart'.<sup>5</sup> Amongst these descriptions are several key concepts which were used in describing the communion with God experience. Any of the major points of contact mentioned above, and other channels such as scripture reading, godly conference, psalm singing and spontaneous conversion, could lead to these kinds of spiritual experiences. There was the feeling of being filled, almost to point of being consumed, by the unusual intensity of the experience; for instance in David Hume's diary we hear of 'J Hume's wife, seeking

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<sup>1</sup> Struther, True happiness or King David's choice, 135.

<sup>2</sup> Dickson, Selected practical writings, 220.

<sup>3</sup> William Guthrie, Christian's great interest, 130.

<sup>4</sup> AJW, I, 11.

<sup>5</sup> D. P. Thomson, Women of the Scottish Church (Munro and Scot, 1975), 39, 41.

light, and softness of heart, and met some in prayer that her heart was like to burst.’<sup>1</sup> This was related to the concept of enlargement; the subject of the experience felt the bounds of the self being expanded by an experience which could have had no secular parallel except sexual orgasm. It was no accident that experienced believers like Mr Samuel Rutherford reached for the vocabulary of the erotic ‘Song of Songs’ to describe their communion with Christ. ‘He kisses you with the kisses of his mouth,’ commented Rutherford, ‘what you love besides your husband Christ is an adulterous lover.’<sup>2</sup> Lady Henrietta Campbell, after the experience of ‘powerfull services’ in conventicles and ‘delight and soul satisfaction in worship’, felt herself to be full of ‘lovesickness for God’ from the ‘power and the presence’ which she had felt in the services of Mr Alexander Wedderburn.<sup>3</sup> Such was this experience that the ordinary secular experiences of the world looked pale by comparison. Lady Anna Halkett declared that the ‘heart enlarged with prospect of heavenly inheritance looks on itself as straitened and confined in this world...pent up in the body groaning in longing for enlargement.’<sup>4</sup> She also saw enlargement as being beneficial from the point of behavioural change, for ‘faith draws the power for virtuous actions...to have an enlarged heart so that I could run the way of the commandments. I will address myself to God who only can make me what that person believes me to be and what I ought to be’.<sup>5</sup> Enlargement, then, represented a kind of rapture, of ecstasy which was sought after and which was felt to possess regenerative power.

Liberty, however, though closely related to enlargement, was more connected to an ability to find words, which flowed along with the

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<sup>1</sup> David Hume’s diary, NLS mss Wod Oct XV, 169.

<sup>2</sup> Rutherford, Letters, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Lady H. Campbell diary, NLS mss Wod 31, 180- 184.

<sup>4</sup> Lady Anna Halkett, Seven meditations, 31.

<sup>5</sup> Lady Anna Halkett, Seven meditations, 45.

rapturous feelings of enlargement and heart-melting . Marion Laird spoke of how ‘the Holy Ghost hath enlarging, humbling, and sanctifying influence upon the soul’ so that she ‘gat liberty to converse with Him as a wife with a husband.’<sup>1</sup> She also spoke of how ‘near access to God’ filled her mind with ‘arguments,’<sup>2</sup> making her more articulate. This theme was taken up explicitly by Fleming, who spoke of how

prayer can lead to a sensible and marvellous change in their case, like the wind changing, access and liberty pour forth their souls to God when he hath filled their mouths with arguments and enabled them both to wrestle and to wait...is it not seen with what liberty these do sometimes pray and are as a ship with a full gale before the wind...that it is then easy to preach when at other times there is a shut door.<sup>3</sup>

So liberty in prayer was the opening of the self to the wisdom of God, which could pour through the believer, making the inexpressible expressible and producing guidance and resolution. It was also considered to be a ‘special work which witnesseth adoption’ - that is, election - ‘libertie or freedom accompanied with peace, boldness, confidence and rejoicing’, according to John Forbes of Alford.<sup>4</sup> It was a characteristic of elect experience which could lead to assurance - as a result of such experiences in prayer, Marion Laird ‘saw the love of God to be mine from all eternity.’<sup>5</sup>

Such experiences were certainly suspect to the unconverted who did not have these strange spiritual feelings. Even Fleming, a stout apologist for presbyterian spirituality, hastened to assure his readers that saving experience was not ‘extraordinary, not raptures or revelations or such as some of the saints have upon some singular account had, but something well grounded in the Word, the daily food of such as live by

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<sup>1</sup> Marion Laird, *Memoirs*, 37.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> Fleming, *Fulfilling of scripture*, 74, 156-157.

<sup>4</sup> Forbes (of Alford), *Letter*, 65.

<sup>5</sup> Marion Laird, *Memoirs*, 115.

faith.’<sup>1</sup> He was anxious not to see presbyterianism tarred with the brush of enthusiasm, and classed with what most of his contemporaries would have considered to be non-respectable, subversive sects such as the Quakers and anabaptists. However, note that he does not condemn the extraordinary experience that ‘some of the saints have upon some singular account had,’ but allows for it specially. In fact, it was both a perennial problem, and a perennial attraction, of presbyterianism that extraordinary experience of ‘raptures’ and ‘revelations’ might almost be termed to have been its bread and butter, in terms of the awe in which the noted presbyterian saints were held, and the considerable powers which were ascribed to them. The behaviour of such holy women and men was sometimes anything but respectable in terms of accepted seventeenth-century behaviour, but this did not prevent them from continuing to have remarkable experiences, and from justifying those experiences which they had.

### III-Reason and respectability.

In the seventeenth century, emotion was not totally respectable, and neither was anything associated with it. Despite their stress on ‘affection’, and on what we would identify as highly affective experiences, the ministers were very concerned to remain respectable, so that their doctrine might not lose appeal to more sceptical sections of the population. Ecstasies and panting could be denounced as well as sanctioned. In the case of the Six-Mile Water revival, Livingston and Blair saw the extravagant displays of emotion there, which included crying out, ecstasies and panting, as the work of the Devil, although

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<sup>1</sup> Fleming, Fulfilling of scripture, 71.



another minister, Mr Stewart, saw them as the work of God.<sup>1</sup> William Guthrie, a very spiritual protestor minister, who laid great emphasis on heart-work, also weighed in with the, at first glance, surprising injunction that ‘belief should also be rational. Man should move towards God in knowledge and understanding, taking up God’s device not making up his own’. He said that there should be ‘calmness of spirit, and as it were of cold blood in closing with Christ, not in a simple fit of affection which soon vanishes, nor in some outward distress. A man must act rationally, as being master of himself and in some measure able to judge of the good or evil of the thing as it stands before him’.<sup>2</sup> This seems to contrast with Guthrie’s normal emphasis on softness of heart and affection; however it does fit in with another theme. The main complaint about the displays of heightened emotion at Six-Mile Water from Blair was that they showed ‘no proper sence of sinfulness, or panting after a saviour.’<sup>3</sup> In other words, they did not show that they were grounded in real inner change, but seemed to Blair to be ephemeral. What was sought for was a solid change in affection which fitted a definite pattern.

Mr William Struther also tried to distinguish between proper religious affection and evil ‘passion’, as he called it. He claimed that God was ‘passionless’ and hence a pattern for the believer, because he ‘restrains our passions.’ Struther claimed that passion separated a man from God;<sup>4</sup> he associated passion with fickleness, wickedness and ‘beastlyness’ and the ‘new-fangled vanity of the world’, because passion was random in the sense that it lacked a ‘proper exemplar.’<sup>5</sup> Christ, however, was ‘a pattern of affections and dispositions’. The affective

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<sup>1</sup> Leigh Eric Schmidt, thesis, ‘Scottish communions and American revivals’, 17.

<sup>2</sup> William Guthrie, *Christian’s great interest*, 163-4.

<sup>3</sup> Leigh Eric Schmidt thesis ‘Scottish communions and American revivals’, 17.

<sup>4</sup> Struther, *Christian Observations*, 61-62.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

will was important, because this was what made the difference between man and Satan, for Satan's 'affections and actions are set crosse to his knowledge.'<sup>1</sup> So, good affection was that which proceeded from the pattern of Christ, and if affection fell into this devotional model then it was to be approved of. Mr Alexander Henderson made this point in one of his 1638 sermons. He said that

Love and hatred are not faults in themselves, it is what you hate or love that matters, so aince let the object of these affections be right, and then let thy affections be as bent as they can be. If you love God let affections be strong, if you hate his enemies then hate them with a perfect hatred. Many thinks that if they aince be changed by grace they must quit all their affections. No! No! Think not that.. There is no difference between the godly and the wicked in affections, only anent their objects whether God or the World.

Henderson further spoke of how God worked through the affections - it is by affection that God ties the heart to him and makes it quit all else. Above all affections look to your love and hatred for it is only these that brings about perfection.. It is pitiful when people about to die say, they never did anyone wrong in their lives and never consider what they loved and hated all their lives.

He also *pointed out that* 'people who serve God are likest him and so in so far as you love them you love him.'<sup>2</sup> So the affections were directed by a pattern given by God, who fixed the affections on the right objects, making the saints grow to be more like him. It was by scrutinising the self for this affective pattern given by God that the believer could tell whether he or she was one of the elect. So the presbyterian attitude was generally that right affection was the paramount thing. This constant pattern was the 'more solid part of Christianity', of which Mr Robert Fleming spoke. He identified the Devil as being connected with 'violent inroads, importunate solicitations, these impetuous motions with which

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 54. p.117.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson Martin, Henderson's sermons, 308-310.

people are strangely hurried and oft driven against light and judgement'.<sup>1</sup> So, believers were to beware of passions which did not fit the accepted emotional pattern of devotion, but nevertheless they were to look to right affection as a guide, and not reason.

Reason was respectable. Reason was seen as the gift of men, who were rational, as opposed to women, who were supposed to be prey to their passions and feelings. It was stoutly adhered to, and its methodology in the shape of Aristotelian philosophy was carefully dinned in to many of the sons of the elite, whilst nearly all the candidates for the ministry had some kind of background in philosophy from the universities in Scotland. This concern with reason was not, however, admitted through the portals of the church door in any other form than as a useful manner for developing a sermon or a polemic. One of the major arguments advanced by Mr Andrew Ramsay to show how shocking catholicism was, purported to illustrate how catholic dogma was built on philosophy - that

Transubstantiation was based on the logical treatise of quality... Freewill is from Aristotle's treatise of the efficient cause..Hierarchy was built on Aristotle's politics. Albertin the Jesuit in three volumes shows how their scholastic divinity is grounded on principles of humane philosophie, so it is said that the wisdom of the world is foolishness to God.<sup>2</sup>

Mr John Walker, a convert to Roman Catholicism, spoke of his shock at hearing a minister proclaim 'away, away with your reason, you must quit all reason and give poor Christ a lift.'<sup>3</sup> Grizell Love, a later covenanter, spoke of 'the work of sence and reason which contradicts the work of faith,'<sup>4</sup> whilst Mr John Welch writing in 1605, and Mr

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<sup>1</sup>Fleming, Fulfilling of scripture, 65.

<sup>2</sup> Abernethie, Abj. popery, 22- 23.

<sup>3</sup> Walker, The presbyterie's triall , 70,

<sup>4</sup> Grizell Love, Autobiograpy , NLS mss Wod 77, 127v.

Robert Fleming in 1660, were both patronising with regards to the devotees of reason. Welch commented that it 'was much to be lamented that men of learning and knowledge whose wit will go far with the law in matters of salvation are but babes,'<sup>1</sup> whilst Fleming pontificated as to how the spirit could do much more than 'unsanctified schoolmen.'<sup>2</sup>

At these points, however, the presbyterian pattern of affection was still strong, although it was not at all respectable with Laud and his circle nor with Laud's northern vassals, such as Bishop William Forbes of Edinburgh, and their intellectual heirs, like Sharp. By the turn of the eighteenth century the definite presbyterian emphasis on affective experience, right affection, and the overpowering experiences to be had from communion with God were under fire from within the Scottish Kirk itself, despite the post 1689 absence of the episcopal office. Wodrow, that tireless collector of presbyterian worship experiences - no matter how extravagant or strikingly unusual - was in an uproar, recounting in his *Analecta* the shocking nature of 'Mr Wallace's communion sermon' which had proclaimed 'Men's understanding enough to examine divine truths... making reason a rule'. It had trusting in the Lord to be 'a conviction of mind', and trust to be 'a mere assent or conviction' without anything of will or affection, far less of a relation to the mediator in whom only a holy God is accessible.

The stunned minister recounted how 'all was to be regulated by scripture and reason,' and bewailed how this particular school of preaching had 'nothing but haranguing and reason in their sermons.' He lamented how their idea of wisdom was 'all reason and reflection.'<sup>3</sup> This was on the eve of the Enlightenment, the age of reason which was to run clean counter to the presbyterian world of inner guidance from a spiritual

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<sup>1</sup> Welch (of Ayr) *Selected sermons*, 447.

<sup>2</sup> Fleming, *Fulfilling of scripture*, 28.

<sup>3</sup> Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 167-172.

sense closely linked with the affections, but even before the advent of the eighteenth century, the covenanting spiritual approach of heart-work tended to run into trouble, with its emphasis on spiritual experience, for its manifestations were certainly capable of being unsettling. Nevertheless, in the seventeenth century up to at least 1660, if not beyond, it was always either the dominant trend of thought in the Church, or carried a very large amount of weight. From this position it was able generally to dispense with the more intellectually respectable seventeenth-century prejudice against extravagant displays of religious feeling, and the result painted a picture very far from the all-too-common idea of Calvinist worship as something dour, dull and intellectual.

#### IV - Extravagant experiences.

Mainstream presbyterianism gave great leeway to displays of feeling and emotion. In his *Analecta*, Wodrow noted how Mr John Livingston was ‘an affectionat person.. who wept much and often began his work weeping.’<sup>1</sup> Nearby in his text, he noted how James Guthrie, the prominent protestor minister, ‘weeped in prayer and preaching, soe heartily and with such a pleasant countenance as it were a joy to him.’<sup>2</sup> In the Scots Worthies, another compilation of noted occurrences in the covenanting movement, Howie of Lochgoin noted down how Mr John Welch ‘allowed his affections full expression in prayer;’<sup>3</sup> thus fairly extravagant displays of feeling from the pulpit were ascribed to the most hallowed leaders of the covenanting movement. Indeed, so far were such displays of affection associated with covenanting religiosity that it was

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<sup>1</sup> Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 249.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 148.

<sup>3</sup> Howie, Scots worthies, 286.

noted in Mr David Hume's diary that 'PW said GT was out every morning and come in all begrutten, his son said he thought he should turn a Puritan'.<sup>1</sup> Tears in devotion could evidently earn one the usually pejorative title of Puritan, and in this instance it was definitely the affective style of GT's devotions, rather than anything else, which singled him out for it. The sort of extreme experience which led to such floods of tears were general sensations of extreme grief for sin, and extreme joy at the sense of the presence of Christ, or even both at once - Archibald Johnston of Wariston spoke of how extreme grief and extreme joy had clashed for him at a communion.<sup>2</sup>

Wariston, in particular, was subject to a veritable tempest of overwhelming sensations in his devotional life. In one prayer session he went from being deeply depressed to being greatly 'influenced with love', so that 'all griefs, and troubles waned away on a suddentie,' but he then proceeded to reproach himself for getting 'not so many tears for joy as for wrath'.<sup>3</sup> He could be so overcome in prayer as to have great floods of tears which 'interrupted my breath,' or even could be so caught up in his devotions to the point where he, allegedly, did not even notice that his wife had fainted.<sup>4</sup> After one particular communion he saw in himself a 'confusion of passions, desyre, joy, feare, grief, all swallowed up by ane full firm persuasive assurance.'<sup>5</sup> Again we find that there is the idea of the spirit as a stable ordering-force behind what would otherwise be the confusion of human emotions.

Such emotion was not merely private but was also connected to those most public acts of all, swearings to the National Covenant. When the Covenant was sworn at Currie, Wariston noted a 'visible sensible

<sup>1</sup> David Hume's diary, NLS mss Wod Oct XV, 58.

<sup>2</sup> *AJW*, I, 250.

<sup>3</sup> *AJW*, I, 102.

<sup>4</sup> *AJW*, I, 157, Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 119.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 123.

change' in the congregation.<sup>1</sup> At the Edinburgh Covenant swearing there were 'sighes and sobbes.'<sup>2</sup> Wariston also spoke of the spirit affecting 'even the spiritually blind - lasse and lad, pastor and people.'<sup>3</sup> Collective emotion could also be a factor at meetings - for instance in one of the Irish meetings in the wake of the Six-Mile Water revival there was 'enlargement and a melting frame on all the people.'<sup>4</sup> In a privy meeting of ministers against the service book, it was claimed that there were 'even unusual motions on those who were in other parts of the house' during a Henderson prayer, prompting Mr Weems of Lathoker to comment: 'Oh how strange a man is this, for he knocks down the spirit of God on all of us'.<sup>5</sup> This incident is reported by Fleming, who was writing twenty years later, and, his report may not be reliable, nevertheless it is interesting that in a work which was designed to show presbyterianism in a respectable light, he saw fit to mention this type of story; evidently, the author saw nothing wrong with it, and was not afraid of it being labelled as evidence of 'enthusiasm' in the covenanting movement.

Such experiences were truly at the heart of the covenanting life of devotion and Fleming himself eulogises their effects, proclaiming that 'the spirit causes abundant joy to spring up in the heart when there are no visible grounds for the same...like the dry bone gushing out water.'<sup>6</sup> Marion Laird, a much later covenanter, would have agreed with him; at a sacrament with a Song of Solomon theme she recorded how she 'rejoiced with joy unspeakable,' whilst in a later prayer session she had a text-getting experience in which she received, again from the Song of

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 327- 328.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 331.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Fleming, Fulfilling of scripture, II, 97.

<sup>5</sup> Fleming, Fulfilling of scripture, II, 107.

<sup>6</sup> Fleming, Fulfilling of scripture, I, 79.

Solomon, 'there will I give thee my loves;' when praying in a field, she reported that it was 'impossible to speak the joy and contentment I experienced.'<sup>1</sup> John Forbes of Corse, a spiritual episcopalian of the first half of the seventeenth century, recorded how he was 'prostrat on his belly before the Lord reading the Psalms in Hebrew' and interpreting them, when he received an 'extraordinary measure of peace' and 'wept abundantly' for God's 'great love to mankind.' He 'watered his book with tears' and received in his words 'unspeakable consolation.'<sup>2</sup> It can be seen from these experiences that the life of spiritual experience in covenanting times, although it also encompassed very intense grieving and sorrow for sin, produced very strong consolations indeed for the believer - so much so that its advocates were prepared to brazen out charges of enthusiasm, and to stick to their highly-charged methods of devotion even in the face of social disapproval - for it was possible even for covenanters to go too far.

Needless to say, of all people who tended to cross the line and go a bit too far, the most obvious case was Archibald Johnston of Wariston, that great and controversial presbyterian saint, who was afflicted by a strange sort of naive honesty in his extravagant devotional life. Of all people to whom the phrase might be applied, it could well be said of Wariston that he was as 'wise as a serpent and as innocent as a dove.' A cunning Edinburgh advocate and parliament man, he was also continually in spiritual hot water, possessed by either terrors or crises, which his equally frequent spiritual raptures never quite succeeded in driving away. Archibald was always trying, with a sad sort of perfectionism, to repent of his sins, to ascertain the will of God and to somehow work out how, despite all his sincere and heartfelt devotion to

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<sup>1</sup> Marion Laird, *Memoirs*, 32.

<sup>2</sup> Forbes of Corse diary, S.R.O. mss CH12/8/6, 72.



God and attempts to do the right thing, all his best-laid schemes went awry and his cherished and beloved family was continually beset with one tragedy after another. As if all this private agony were not enough, he also managed to make himself rather unpopular with his godly friends. It was common for Wariston to have not only emotional experiences, but also bodily experiences which accompanied them. After a communion, he had the sensation of a 'sensible possession of God' which 'made mine eyes stand amazed, and the bowels of mine belly turn upside down,' whilst his bodily trembling made the bed shake.<sup>1</sup> He was said by Wodrow to have described these 'bodily manifestations' as 'the sign of His coming in my flesh.'<sup>2</sup> His friend Sir John Chiesly was not amused, particularly since Wariston had a habit of letting other people read his papers wherein he had set down his spiritual experience. Chiesly claimed that this habit of Wariston's was responsible for resolutioner minister Mr George Hutchinson saying that 'some in the Kirk maintained trembling to be a sign of the presence of God.'<sup>3</sup> He further went on to upbraid Wariston, telling him that he found his devotional behaviour 'offensive...wryting at the Psalms, wagging my head and weavling my mouth in the singing', as Wariston recorded in the same diary which had given Chiesly such cause to scold him.<sup>4</sup> Wariston's bodily expressions of devotion had caught Chiesly's ire, and this is an interesting point to consider. Chiesly was outraged on two points: firstly, there was Wariston's honest, uncensored account of his devotional experiences, and secondly, there was the obvious oddness of his behaviour.

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<sup>1</sup> *AJW*, I, 219.

<sup>2</sup> Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 159.

<sup>3</sup> *AJW*, II, 213.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 277.

In his experiences, Wariston was not alone. Associations of spiritual feeling with physical consequences have been noted already - namely the panting, trembling and fainting which occurred at the communion seasons of the great revivals, but it is reasonable to suppose from individual accounts that such manifestations were perhaps more usual than this. Katherine Collace, a later covenanter, felt in the course of an extremely intense religious experience, the particulars of which, she said, she 'inclined not to mention', felt that this confirmation of the love of Christ had 'almost broken my body'.<sup>1</sup> On another occasion, she had such trouble in prayer that 'in every prayer I either swerft (fainted) or was near to it.' Her religious conflict at this time was so great that she ascribed to it the fact that she had fallen sick, saying that it was 'Satan opposing by breaking of her body'; when her spiritual troubles were resolved she at once got better.<sup>2</sup> Most interestingly of all, Mr John Skirling described his conversion, aged fifteen, by Mr Ephraim Melville, saying that 'he put a stirr in my stomach that never did go from it.'<sup>3</sup> There was thus quite an association between body and soul, and accounts of healing, or falling sick, being ascribed to phases in spiritual experience were common, but this strata of presbyterian experience was problematical; the spirit was not supposed to be connected with the fallen body which was supposed to be the seat of Satan, where was written the 'law in the members rebelling against the law in the mind.' No wonder Chiesly was uncomfortable with it in this respect. Secondly, such bodily experiences, connoting, as they did, a lack of control, were associated with the most outrageous sectaries and anabaptists, so allowing the body to be carried along with the spirit was enough to give anyone who associated decorum with spiritual correctness and right

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<sup>1</sup> Katherine Collace/Ross *Memoirs*, 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Wodrow, *Analecta*, III, 12.

order a genuine shock to the system. Note that Mr William Struther, the spiritual episcopalian minister whose language was often extravagant in its affectivity and use of devotional imagery, absolutely drew the line at the use of postures such as prostration and bodily gestures in public, admonishing his congregation that whilst it was a good thing for them to be so affected - they really must do that sort of thing at home .<sup>1</sup> The real issue here was one of control.

### V-Control and controversy

In covenanting spiritually, affections were stirred up but they were not to be controlled. It was the extra-personal force of the spirit acting in regeneration which was held to accomplish changes in behaviour. Attempts to work changes by acts of will were denounced, since the point was to trust in God and not in the feeble strength of sinful man. ‘You must understand’, exhorted John Welch of Irongray, ‘that to close with Christ means the absolute resignation of your self and all you have to God...this is the very form of sanctification. See that your hearts have no secret reserve.’<sup>2</sup> Samuel Rutherford admonished the believer to resign all to Christ on the grounds that ‘he will not be found wanting in his office of husbandry.’<sup>3</sup> ‘Influences of grace,’ according to Rutherford, were ‘fowl flying in the wood which we cannot command,’ and he contrasted this with what he saw as the blasphemous attitude of those who thought they should have ‘influences of the Father that are under our hand and under the power of our free-will.’<sup>4</sup> This view of the spirit as something which was not to be controlled, and which was beyond the

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<sup>1</sup>Struther, Scotland’s warning, 72.

<sup>2</sup> Welch (of Irongray), Fifty and two Directions, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Rutherford, Influences of the life of grace , 163.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

manipulation of man, was a strong one. Marion Laird held that the ‘life of the believer is a changeable life of absence and presence,’<sup>1</sup> whilst Mr John Walwood in a letter to Katherine Collace considered the same problem. He wrote to her, ‘I see that it is best for me to be moody and suffer from the damps, by them the Lord is gently and wisely piece by piece moulding me. Ay things are ebbing and flowing but God is ay the same.’<sup>2</sup> ‘Desertions’, he continued, ‘are so we can learn the life of faith...It is difficult to believe what is contrary to sence...our faith and apprehension of things vary, but things do not vary in themselves’.<sup>3</sup> The feeling of the ebbing and flowing of the spirit was tempered here by the life of faith - the doctrine of assurance which told the believer that, whatever variations he or she might find in the spiritual life, whether with liberty of prayer one day or straitened in prayer the next, they were safe despite their fears. As Forbes of Corse put it, ‘the spirit can specially be discerned upholding us in distress when our own spirit is ready to faint.’<sup>4</sup> So, the spirit was something unbiddable which came and went, and which was yet somehow always there upholding the elect, even though they were not always able to perceive it, so that they did not despair. The spirit was thus both constant and capricious. It could not be controlled, it could only be discerned and made way for; in the words of Melvillian minister, John Forbes of Alford, ‘the saint will feel strange affects wrought in their minds, which they neither know whence they come and whereunto they tend.’<sup>5</sup> Similarly, John Welch of Irongray warned the believer to look well to his or her soul because ‘God is

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<sup>1</sup>Marion Laird, Memoirs, 22.

<sup>2</sup>Walwood's letters, National Library Scotland, Wod mss 72, 2.

<sup>3</sup>Walwood's Letters, NLS Wod mss 72, 6- 6v.

<sup>4</sup>Forbes of Corse diary, S.R.O. mss, 58.

<sup>5</sup>Forbes (of Alford), Letter, 9.

carrying out a work in all souls, blinding enlightening, bettering or making worse...look well to what God is doing with your soul.<sup>1</sup>

This was (at least for the elect) the 'habitual renovation which importeth an abiding union with God,' which Ramsay referred to as the fruit of conversion in his 1638 sermon.<sup>2</sup> It was the conformity of the believer to the image of God which Guthrie described as

Union with Christ and a strange oneness between God and the believer. As husband and wife, head and body, not two but one and because of this bond the believer and God cannot hate each other, but have a strange sympathy...the Lord afflicted with the man's affliction...and he who toucheth the believer toucheth the apple of God's eye.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the spirit was seen as an external force which reached into the believer's life and carried out its will, moulding and shaping its subject into the image of God lost by the fall, replacing his or her sinful nature, in a process which was often fraught with highly charged emotion.

In the conception of the Scottish Calvinists, such a powerful, numinous force could not be reduced to a patter of set prayers, nor could it be manipulated like a horse in a gig by the correct set of actions on the part of a man. For covenanters, God - not impotent, ignorant helpless man - was in the driving seat, and who was man to set forms, times and prescribe standards to God? Firstly, the believer had to obtain a catharsis of emotions through repentance and meditation, to get the affections stirred up, to make way for the spirit; then, if the spirit so pleased, it would move through the believer, bringing with it experiences like enlargement and liberty of prayer. These overpowering sensations were so sweet to those who experienced them that they did not seem to care if the extravagant and often unnerving expressions or actions which accompanied them led to behaviour which would be described as

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<sup>1</sup>Welch (of Irongray), *Fifty and Two Directions*, 15.

<sup>2</sup>Ramsay, *Warning to come out of Babylon*, 3.

<sup>3</sup>Guthrie, *Christians great interest*, 167.

uncontrolled, and which would produce alarmed reactions from others. In fact, to preserve this style of affective spirituality, they were not afraid to take on the ultimate secular authority in the nation. When we recall Brodie of Brodie's heartfelt outcry at his exposure to the English liturgy of 'Lord is this to worship thee? Is this prayer? I could not live on this diet without prayer and communion with God,' we can understand what he meant. The intent of presbyterian worship was to work the believer up to a pitch at which emotion was discharged, and the spirit might sweep through him or her like a tidal wave, coming into his life to reorganise and pattern it forever. It was the spirit which set the patterns of devotional life and not man. This was the experience which the covenanters sought to preserve, and this was why, aside from their related concerns about popery, they were so horrified by the English notion of a liturgy which excluded conceived prayer. It left no room, as far as they could see, for the proper life of the affections which they considered to be true Christianity. To them, it shut the windows that the spirit might blow through.

Chapter six**Who does God flow through?**Providential decision making and the definition of community.

‘Lord give something of that old parliamentary spirit wherewith sometimes thou endewed me and acted me to thy honour and for thy people and interests’ - Johnston of Wariston 1659<sup>1</sup>

It might be said that the whole of presbyterian doctrine lies in a little distinction, not always clearly made, as to whom is the subject of a sentence, the actor in the action. The people...the godly people...The Lord...the Lord working through me...The imaginations of my own heart...Satan ... I...The spirit; in these beginnings of sentences lay the covenanting question, who was acting? God, man, or devil, the latter two being almost synonymous in negative connotations, and through whom did God act ? The covenanting universe was not a humanist one, peopled solely by men acting from their own good, or bad, but always human psyches. Men were castles, which could be kept by either God or the Devil, and the question in any matter of importance was, who was at home?

The covenanting vision claimed, in the course of various important historical movements, that God was at home - even in the normally ungodly mass of the people - and where God was at home, there was authority, striking and surprising as a rose on a dunghill, but nevertheless there to be recognised; hence the National Covenant was ‘The day of the Lord's power’.<sup>2</sup> ‘Only the Lord could have multiplied his

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<sup>1</sup>AJW twentieth century transcript, NLS mss 6254, 69.

<sup>2</sup>Kerr, Covenants and Covenanters, 60.

people so', claimed Henderson. The Reformation was another case, for again, according to Henderson, only the Lord could bring the Gospel into a land, uphold it and make it flourish. 'It is only the power of God which makes the gospel effectual and makes it continue,' he said, pointing out that it had nothing to do with the workings of the king or of traditional authority.<sup>1</sup>

The contention of the covenanters was that, at these junctures, God was working through his people. There was a lot of argument as to who were his people through whom the spirit worked, and there was also a lot of argument as to through what practices in worship the spirit would work, and there was much practical divinity - and some difficulty - involved in discerning when one had the spirit and what manner of experiences were spiritual; however, what was not at issue was that the spirit was working through everybody - elect and reprobate - as part of a great divine plan, but mapping the flow of the spirit - and hence the flow of authority - was a chief concern.

This raised the question that, if the spirit was working through everything, and all was part of God's plan, where did the important distinctions of elect and reprobate fit into things? This was explained originally by Knox; the reprobate thinks that he is doing his own will, but in actual fact is an unconscious beast, who is being used and exploited by God to bring about his own will, whilst the elect man or woman, as far as they could see God's will, would desire on the basis of his or her regenerate nature naturally to do it<sup>2</sup> - just as an ordinary person would have the natural sense to withdraw a hand from the fire, or to look for food when afflicted with hunger. The question was one of awareness in the light of divine law, which was assumed to be written in

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> McEwen, The faith of John Knox, 75.



the heart of the regenerate believer, but it was also one of transparency. The reprobate was used as a tool by the Almighty to do his will, but the spirit flowed directly through the elect, thus empowering them as, in a sense, plenipotentiaries for God.

The ideal covenanting believer, as noted before, showed rather interesting parallels to the traditional attitude of Mary, who, in the catholic tradition was held to be aware of God's will, and who also acquiesced to it being acted out through her, without interposing the blockage of sinful human will into the path of the divine. This was precisely the sort of relationship that covenanting saints sought with the divine - to be vessels through which the spirit moved, and which were moved and filled by the spirit. Johnston of Wariston stated this position clearly. He considered that nothing 'so eclips' the union with God, which gave all knowledge, as sin, which consequently would dim his reason and his ability to act; thus in the difficult business of drafting papers anent the king's prerogative, and the National Covenant, he desired to purge himself of sin, so that the spirit should use him as a 'conduit pipe.'<sup>1</sup> He was making himself open to the *flow of the spirit*; hence his statement in the quote given above that the spirit 'acted him' - made him move, giving, in effect, the role of puppet master to God. The point was that the believer had to be cleared out, so that the spirit would move through him or her, had to be awake to the promptings of the spirit, and, crucially, had to be able to discern the promptings and impulses of the spirit from the impulses of the sinful self, so as to be a conscious collaborator and vessel for the enactment of God's plan.

The paradox of responsibility being coupled with this emphasis on all-powerful, non-human, predestination can only be resolved by pointing explicitly to a concept usually noted and then passed by - the

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<sup>1</sup> AJW, I, 278.

sacramental emphasis stretching back to Knox, and seen most notably in commentators like Robert Bruce and George Gillespie, which insisted on a union with Christ inherent in the sacraments. Knox, according to Mc Ewan, believed that the immediate object of God's election was Christ, not men, therefore 'it is by Christ's calling of us, and in our union with him, that we partake in this election of God. It is not ours directly, but only mediately, through Christ... if it is Christ who is the object of election, and we are elect only in Him, then the sacraments in which we are united to Him grow and increase in significance.'<sup>1</sup> In other words, to state it baldly, there was a strand of Scots protestant theology stretching back to Knox, and in full flower with the covenanters, which was directly mystical, seeking direct spiritual union with Christ. The believer was aiming to die to his or her shallow self in order to be united to God via Christ. This union with God had several consequences: as far as the believer was in God and a channel for the spirit, he or she would see correctly, as God saw, he or she could be empowered to act by God, similarly if all that happened was part of the great plan of God, with whom the believer was united, then he or she could accept whatever befell as being meaningful and ordained for his or her good. He or she was seeking for a will to come through other than their own. They were incapable of being saved through their own egotistic, selfish, will, but they were capable of clearing the space through which a larger will could come, if it elected to do so. They were thus at one and the same time predestined - either they were part of Christ's chosen or not - and responsible - for it was the business of the chosen to clear space so that the inner spirit could come through in unitive occasions such as communion and opportunities such as prayer, if it wanted to do so. This practice of clearing the way for the union with God's will to manifest,

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<sup>1</sup> McEwen, The faith of John Knox, 79.

had consequences for the attitude which believers took to the happenings of the world, and also served to define them as a group apart.

Mr William Guthrie, a protestor minister of the 1650s, stated this attitude very clearly; 'Man', he said, 'should not be afraid of evil tidings since the Lord with whom he is one rules all things and doth what pleaseth him on heaven and on Earth,<sup>1</sup> therefore, man was to 'be not careful'. He was to take 'lawful care' and 'look to providence', to 'do his duty and leave the outcome to God'.<sup>2</sup> If he did his duty he moved towards closer communion with God, and hence an accepting attitude to God's plan and a realisation of his or her part in it. According to Guthrie's predecessor, Henderson, there was

no ill thing that comes upon us, but by the providence of the Lord. God has providence for ill, as well as providence for good, not only in punishment for sin, but in sin itself - but enemies do it from hatred, and God from love. One work may come from diverse motives moving to do the work.<sup>3</sup>

The elect were thus not to be distrustful of providence, as otherwise they might offend God, 'and bring his affliction upon us', in the words of Struther, for God evidently knew best what was good for the believer.<sup>4</sup>

The upshot of this was that the attitude of the elect to God was to be trustful and depending, so that they could submit to his will and let it come through them; but also because of their communion with him, they were empowered to ask after his ways - for the believer was a 'friend, knowing what his master doth.'<sup>5</sup> There could thus be 'intimacy and

familiarity between God and the believer.' The believer might be homely or familiar with God... may lay open the whole of his heart and impart all secrets to him without fear of a mistake and... may also enquire what God doth in so far as

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<sup>1</sup> Guthrie, Christian's great interest, 168.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.171.

<sup>3</sup>Thomson Martin, Henderson's sermons, 305.

<sup>4</sup> Struther, Christian observations (first century), 177.

<sup>5</sup> Guthrie, Christian's great interest, 170.

concerns his duty and warding off mistakes concerning the Lord's way.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, this enquiry was considered to be essential, so much so that Fleming warned that the believer had 'a grave duty to search God's providences.' Katherine Collace noted in her autobiography that 'We are to search to know the mind of God in every remarkable circumstance. When the heart is unsatisfied we should go on enquiring until it is satisfied.'<sup>2</sup> Believers thus felt themselves bound to look into 'motives, means, ways and ends, to see which is most for God's pure interest - not for safety or advantage,'<sup>3</sup> so that the spirit would flow through them and they might discern its promptings. Mr John Welwood noted, however, that it was 'hard to bring the will under His determination especially for small things... such darkness is in the understanding, that it is hard to take up the mind of God, hard not to question things afterwards, hard to wait for counsel.'<sup>4</sup>

Yet it was necessary to be very active and aware in this discipline, for it was noted by Wariston that 'the smallest thing in providence matters, the straying of an ass was part of God's great design.'<sup>5</sup> This tricky and difficult matter was not something to be left to the specialists either; Henderson noted that 'The judgement of discerning things belongs to every Christian'.<sup>6</sup> It was a matter of great importance, for it was an important part of the replacement of the depraved will of man with the divine will of God; however, getting to this desired spiritual state was an extremely arduous business and entailed making extremely high demands upon the congregation. It required a great deal of discipline and a lot of arduous psychological work to get into the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Katherine Collace/Ross, Memoirs, 38.

<sup>3</sup> AJW twentieth century transcript, NLS mss 6250, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Welwood's Letters NLS Wod mss 72, 5v.

<sup>5</sup> AJW, twentieth century transcript, NLS mss 6248, 77.

<sup>6</sup> Thomson Martin, Henderson's sermons, 44.

spiritual frame where such an undertaking could be carried out. It also carried a mental framework of its own which greatly influenced how those involved saw and reacted to their world. The practices involved in this discerning function were generally held to be peculiar to the elect and, for this reason, will be discussed in detail below.

Liberty in prayer and related experiences were held to be indicative of right action, showing as they did the definite flow of the spirit through the believer; for instance, when Mr John Spreull was shocked by the concept of toleration, so that his spirit was 'stirred' in prayer, he 'never attained to the like again and while I am pouring out my heart to the Lord, the thought darted in that I should be healed of an infirmity of the stomach which I had several years and it was.'<sup>1</sup> When Katherine Collace resolutely stayed away from the services of the curates in the 1660s, she found great 'spiritual comfort' and from then on 'found constant light from the Lord in opposing the prelates'.<sup>2</sup> Earlier covenanter Mr David Dickson refused to submit to James VI's bishops and found that after he had attempted to reach some kind of compromise with the episcopal authorities that he had trouble getting 'access in prayer;' however, the instant that he took up the offending paper which he had submitted, then he had his soul 'filled with joy and approbation'<sup>3</sup>.

This mechanism worked to designate what was sinful and what was not. John Welch of Irongray stated it baldly, 'It would be considered what people are most inclined to when they attain unto most nearness with God and it will be found that they have greatest averseness from hearing the curates.'<sup>4</sup> In fact, it was this issue of whom to have fellowship with which was most often the subject of this kind of

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<sup>1</sup>John Spreull, remarkable passages, NLS mss Oct XV Wod.

<sup>2</sup>Katherine Collace/Ross, Memoirs, 18.

<sup>3</sup>Dickson, Select practical writings, xxii.

<sup>4</sup>Welch (of Irongray), Fifty and two directions, 29.

'providential decision-making' probing. It could lead to such strong averseness to those seen as being outside the course of strictness indicated by the spirit, that Katherine Collace would not even have a member of a 'declaration taker's' family - where the head of household recognised royal authority in matters of religion - to nurse her baby.<sup>1</sup> If we view liberty in prayer as a fellowship experience with God in which the believer is filled with the Holy Spirit, then it would seem that the condition of having the liberty experience was not to associate with those through whom the spirit was not held to flow; the concept of 'being very tender of communicating with the sins of others.' Wariston noted how those who went over to the 'sectaries or malignants, though spiritual before, lose fellowship with God and tenderness'.<sup>2</sup> Even conversing with such people was considered to be dangerous; Wariston also recorded his horror of the danger of 'mingling' with such people, noting that it could 'shaik even the fixedest straungely.'<sup>3</sup> There seems to have been a very strong dynamic of purity at work here. The concept of mixture, and its overriding importance for the protestor party, has already been explored in earlier chapters; however, on the individual level, sustaining spiritual experience was evidently linked to right association. Contact with those of different views was considered to be polluting.

The yoking of overwhelming mystical experience to what may seem to us like pettifogging details of politics - like declaration-taking, or hearing the curates - seems to be a strange combination. Yet such issues were highly symbolic; there was a correct order to be kept in the soul. Christ within was to reign over private lusts, carnal ambition and conscience of man. Christ in all believers united them together in the

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<sup>1</sup> Katherine Collace/Ross, *Memoirs*, 45.

<sup>2</sup> *AJW*, II, 119.

<sup>3</sup> *AJW*, II, 148.

form of the spiritual body; to associate with someone who seemed not to subscribe to this inner order was to associate with someone whose heart was 'being kept by monsters, dragons and devils,' as John Welch of Ayr put it.<sup>1</sup> It was not enough simply to purge one's own heart of lusts and idols and known sins so as to obtain the presence of God, it was also necessary to scrupulously avoid 'confederation'.

The rationale which was employed here by elect providential decision makers, was the comparison of the Scots with the Old Testament Israelites, who were strictly forbidden to mingle with idolaters under pain of severe judgements from God. Covenanters were to 'avoid the sons of Belial, except where natural bonds or necessity of calling' were involved.<sup>2</sup> Revealingly, Gillespie commented, 'How can we take them that hate the Lord to help the Lord?' The danger was that the unregenerate would sway the judgement of the elect, hindering them in their ability to be at one with God. This problem can be seen if one examines Katherine Collace's problems in her providential decision-making. She lamented how she was 'unwilling to displease others', and how this 'woeful natural disposition' led to her overriding guidance which she had received in prayer, with catastrophic results for her life.<sup>3</sup> She noted scathingly of another woman believer that 'she thought that she was neighbourlike with those who were highly esteemed amongst us, and so I might soon be, for they were grossly departing from God.'<sup>4</sup> Mixing with those who seemed to have placed civil conformity higher in their hearts than the rule of Christ, and who might persuade one to do the same, was thus a peril and temptation, since the loud arguments of

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<sup>1</sup> Welch (of Ayr), Selected sermons, 385.

<sup>2</sup> George Gillespie, 'Miscellany questions' No. 14, in Presbyterian's armoury, II, 72.

<sup>3</sup> Katherine Collace/Ross, Memoirs, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p.16.

kin or social superiors might distract one from listening to the voice of God inside.

By contrast, associating with other godly people helped one to learn to trust and cultivate one's inner spiritual inspirations; this led to the emphasis on providential decision-making groups who prayed together and who looked for guidance on both personal and public matters. Such circles were to be found especially amongst the protestor faction, but were also to be found composed of a family and its godly relatives, as in the case of the Brodies of Brodie.<sup>1</sup> To take one example, Cromwell's troops found fourteen ministers at a meeting 'seeking the will of the Lord' as to whether to join the protestors; eventually they 'found it in their hearts to account the General Assembly a malignant usurped authority'.<sup>2</sup> Generally, what such groups were looking for was the liberty in prayer experience, or the getting of a relevant text with great emotional power attached to it, to confirm them in a course of action.

Curiously, liberty to pray was also linked to prognostication of death, for if one could not get 'liberty to pray' for someone's recovery, then it was held to be a sure sign of their approaching death. Wariston often noted this, as in the case of Mr Andrew Gray, and Jean Collace, a later covenanter, used it too in the case of Lady Kilraok.<sup>3</sup> In these cases, it also seems to have acted as an endorsement. In asking for the life of someone destined to die, believers would be inadvertently going against God's will - another indication that the experience might be defined as an ecstatic feeling of being in tune with God's will - of being an assenting part of his counsel. It was a feeling which was on all accounts

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<sup>1</sup> Brodie, *Diaries*, 57.

<sup>2</sup> W. Metcalfe DD, *History of the county of Renfrewshire*, 277.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Collace, autobiography, NLS Adv Mss 32.4.4 p 121v, AJW twentieth century transcript, NLS mss 6248, 131.



to be sought, and its continued absence was a sign that something sinful was going on - that the believer had dropped from his or her status as friend and informed servant through whom the spirit flowed, to that of a mere unconscious instrument which was likely to be the subject of some telling judgement.

It was also used very often in cases of marriage to establish whether the prospective marriage partner was gracious or not - again a case of establishing with whom one was or was not to be in fellowship. In the case of Wariston's consideration of matching his eldest daughter with her cousin James Johnston, Wariston went through an agony of prayer, fasting, and lot casting, being severely concerned as to whether the young man was of 'adulterous seed' or 'blissed seed.'<sup>1</sup> In the praying circle of protestor minister Mr David Hume, the issue of 'K.S.'s' projected marriage to Kingston, raised a great deal of clamour, with Hume noting that 'Children of God should not go into children of men and be unequally yoked.'<sup>2</sup> The matter was subjected to fervent prayer, looking for guidance especially of the 'text-getting' sort. The results being that on almost all sides K. S. was warned to desist, with few exceptions. Lady Mersington (one of the exceptions) found in prayer the text stating that 'It was better to marry than to burn'; a gentlewoman in the west praying upon it got 'to be carnally minded is death'. Elspeth, another member of that circle, declared after her consultations with God that 'K's suitor was a rotten atheist, and it was better for her to live with someone who had not a goat, who would be helpful to her in seeking God, for it would be long before his read prayers would come in before the throne with hers.' Mr Hume was alarmed by Kingston's 'carnal way of prayer'.<sup>3</sup> So prayer was important for providing answers as to whom

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<sup>1</sup> AJW twentieth century transcript, NLS mss 6247, 15.

<sup>2</sup> David Hume's diary, NLS mss Wod Oct XV, 97-117.

<sup>3</sup> David Hume's diary NLS mss Wod Oct XV, 104-117.

to associate with, but it was also an important indicator in itself as to whether someone was within the covenant of grace. Since poor Mr Kingston read his prayers, it was considered to be obvious that he was a 'rotten atheist', and not part of the communion of saints, despite his enthusiastic assurances to his future wife that she 'should have liberty to go where she liked, and to name a minister for his Kirk.'<sup>1</sup> From this case, it can be seen that a major function of providential decision-making was in establishing the bounds of the church invisible, and in determining whether believers were dealing with unregenerate men and women outside of the communion or not.

The elect were also seen as a specially privileged group, since the other important function of the spirit, as it flowed through the elect, was that, as Fleming put it, 'it bringeth in promises seasonably to their mind in the day of their strait and causeth the word to tryst suitably with their present case.'<sup>2</sup> Scripture 'text-getting' was used internally in conversion - again as a function of establishing who was in the communion and who was not, but it could also be used to make important decisions in the world; for instance, Johnston of Wariston received the text to stay in 'the calling wherein he was called' in the course of his consultations in prayer to find out whether he should be a minister or a lawyer.<sup>3</sup> When worried about being suddenly called to go and preach, John Forbes of Corse went to prayer and got the text 'Go, said the Lord, and I will be thy mouth to teach'.<sup>4</sup> This phenomenon was known as 'return of prayer.' Prayer was thus very definitely considered to be two-way - 'we impart our thoughts to God and He makes known his mind to us,' explained Mr Andrew Gray.<sup>5</sup> Gray was very clear that those in prayer for guidance

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p.97.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Fleming, Fulfilling of scripture, 79.

<sup>3</sup> AJW, I, 135-136.

<sup>4</sup> Forbes of Corse diary, S.R.O. mss CH12/8/6, 6.

<sup>5</sup> Gray, Sermons on Prayer, 4,

should wait for an answer. It was common for noted saints such as Welch of Ayr to spend as many as eight hours a day in prayer.<sup>1</sup> Guidance obtained from such practices was, however, not always clear as in the case of later covenanter Jean Biggart, who ‘wrestling in prayer as to the parliament got - our hedges are broken down - but not sure how to apply it, to the Kirk or to Neilston, praying that parliament would not meddle with the church’.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, prayer in this manner for guidance was an almost definitive sign of a covenanting spirituality. The few others of differing persuasions who did use it in Scotland had, almost to a man, been radical presbyterians who had later been swayed over to episcopacy such as Struther or Leighton, and of course, as always there was the highly enigmatic exception of Forbes of Corse, anti-covenanter with a private spirituality more similar to that of Wariston than that of his fellow episcopalian Bishop William Forbes of Edinburgh; but then Forbes was part of an entirely different fellowship group, which concerned itself more with the practices of the primitive church and the Fathers than with immersing itself in the radical Melvillian tradition which had moved his cousin Forbes of Alford.

The custom which underpinned the mechanism of text getting was the reading of ordinaries. One’s ordinary was the portion of the Bible which one read every day as part of a schedule to read the whole Bible through in a year. Again this was considered to be a very important part of elect behaviour. The result of this practice was that the subconscious mind of the believer had access to a whole stock of biblical images and quotes which it could throw up as symbols for guidance in the course of prayer, but ordinaries were also read for coincidence. Both Johnston of Wariston and Katherine Collace who were separated in time by about

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<sup>1</sup> Welch (of Ayr), *Selected sermons*, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 173.

ten years, and who belonged to different praying circles, used the practice, but also spoke of reading their children's ordinaries for 'providences'- images from the Bible which seemed to catch and encapsulate their feelings as though they had been deliberately scheduled by God to come up at that time to guide them and to aid them.<sup>1</sup> Wariston paid a great deal of attention to his ordinary and used it as guidance in the matter of whether he should take employment from the Cromwellian regime, by looking at the parallels of Elisha and Daniel and then applying them to himself.<sup>2</sup>

This was the another way in which providential decision-making tended to work with scripture. Men like Wariston had a habit of applying the imagery and lessons of the Old Testament wholesale to the political realities around them. Wariston compared Scotland to Israel at length as the promised land of pure worship and Church government, so they saw themselves as a small persecuted community like the old Israelites. Wariston spoke of the duty of the Kirk to flee from idols and idolithites, and, speaking of the Old Testament, remarked 'Nou all these things are written for our ensamples, upon whom the ends of the world ar come.'<sup>3</sup> To Wariston, Cromwell's army were 'Benhadad's troopers'.<sup>4</sup> He paralleled himself to Ezra and Nehemiah, and he applied the book of Daniel and the downfall of Belshazzar to Richard Cromwell, but saw himself as a Joseph being raised up out of poor Scotland to sit at Pharaoh's court.<sup>5</sup> In a similar vein, the protestor ministers gave dire warnings against collaborating with the malignant party, by making reference to the fate of the Israelites who collaborated with the Amalekites, and to the sins of Manasseh and the other kings of Judah

<sup>1</sup> AJW twentieth century transcript NLS mss 6250, 93. Katherine Collace/Ross, Memoirs 46.

<sup>2</sup> AJW twentieth centruy transcript NLS mss 6249, 118-121.

<sup>3</sup> AJW, I, 345.

<sup>4</sup> AJW, II, 39.

<sup>5</sup> AJW twentieth century transcript NLS mss 6254, 127, 177.

who dared to associate with pagan ways.<sup>1</sup> It was for this reason, in the first place, that the Scots decided to swear a covenant at all: it bound them together as a community, explicitly making an equation - Scotland equals Israel. This was how sermons worked when they took Old Testament examples and warned their congregations about, say, 'rebuilding the walls of Jericho'.<sup>2</sup> Such messages were applied directly by listeners to their own communal plight. The Bible took on a strange symbolic power over men like Wariston and Cromwell. When his naval ambitions in the Carribean failed, Cromwell did not reproach himself with military stupidity, he reproached himself with the 'Sin of Achan.' Their universe of meaning was one of time, since it allowed for a progressive degeneration of man as he tumbled towards the apocalypse, but it was also timeless; what was good for seventh century BC Judea was also good for seventeenth century Scotland or England in their minds. The predicament of the Israelites, a handful of godly, afflicted by many backslider, even within their own community and surrounded by enemies, was a perfect analogue for the feelings of 'elected' men and women in a generally 'civil' and 'carnal', nominally protestant society, surrounded on an international scale by the big catholic powers, who were every bit as terrifying to the Scots as the massive empires of Egypt and Persia must have been to the struggling Israelites.

It may be for this reason that covenanting Calvinists so easily and wholeheartedly slipped themselves into a tacitly-guiding biblical mental framework within which everything was evaluated in terms of whether it was 'pure' and 'unspotted', or whether it was deep-dyed idolatry, involving the practice of heathen ways and the collaboration with heathens which would assuredly bring God's judgement down on them,

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<sup>1</sup>Patrick Gillespie, *Rulers sins- the causes of national judgements*, 3-4.

<sup>2</sup> Thomson Martin, *Henderson's sermons*, 150.

as it had done on the Israelites. It helped them to shape their own image of themselves as a persecuted but pure community, against a godless world. Thus, there were two levels of functioning here; there was personal purity in abstaining from carnal indulgence and following approved spiritual exercise, which helped establish one's fellowship with God and hence membership of the elect community, and there was the issue of 'political' purity, by which the elect community strove to define itself and to separate itself out from the civil and carnal, abstaining from any collaboration with the unregenerate and their ways, which was a perennial social and political problem.

In the words of anthropologist Clifford Geertz, religion is both 'a model of and a model for.'<sup>1</sup> It both attempts to describe how things are, and attempts to tell people how to behave in the light of this, so it both inspires behaviour, and is seen as a commonsense description of how the world is. Covenanters had, to a large extent, decided that the framework of purity, judgement and persecution, displayed by the Book of Revelation and the Old Testament tribulations of the Israelites, produced a good working map of their community which told them how to behave. What induced them to take up this armoured camp mentality in the first place has been explored earlier in chapter three, but what is evident is that communion with each other and with God within the confines of the 'armoured camp' was highly satisfying. The providential decision-making phenomenon was an important part of this mentality. It was not always used for this purpose; 'text-getting' was also employed for 'secular' decisions, such as what career choice to make, or to determine whether something would succeed or not, such as Robert Blair's projected voyage to New England.<sup>2</sup> When the process is seen in

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<sup>1</sup>Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 93.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Blair, *Autobiography*, 107-117.

action, however, especially in diaries like Wariston's, it seems to be almost entirely locked in with a mentality which sought to stay pure, or which sought to act as the pure did. In Wariston's decision making process in the course of the National Covenant, his mentality was imbued with Old Testament identifications - Jeremiah, David, Egypt, rub shoulders in his thought with the 'Beast of Rome.'<sup>1</sup> His crucial analysis of the situation comes straight out of the book of Samuel, the bishops were 'longing with the Jews to be ruled as other nations about us, wearying of God's spiritual government.' He spoke of how they did not feed the people with 'the spiritual manna of God's word,'<sup>2</sup> and he proceeded to read Deuteronomy 29 and 30 on the Israelites' covenant, as he worked with Henderson formulating a response to Charles I's Service book; when coming to work on the king's prerogative he 'began to meditate on 143 Psalm.' He was greatly moved and gave himself over entirely to God to direct his walk in 'these difficult defective times.' He looked to have the 'like call and the like promise as the prophet Jeremiah' in his dealings in the covenanting struggle,<sup>3</sup> and his imagery in his decision making at this critical time was overwhelmingly that of the Old Testament, with here and there apocalyptic references to the beast or to Antichrist. It was a framework of a persecuted but pure community striving to maintain its privileged relationship with God. This was the framework within which Wariston meditated in planning his strategy against the king; this was the mental milieu out of which the National Covenant came.

At the depths to which covenanting spirituality excavated, it tended to uncover wellsprings of rapturous spiritual inspiration, but it did this within a framework of Old Testament and apocalyptic

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<sup>1</sup> *AJW*, I, 265- 271.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p.270.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p.275, p.277.

exclusivity which was very strong indeed. Adela Yarbro Collins, a scholar of the Apocalypse in its original historical context, saw it as an attempt to explain why, if Christianity were the truth, it had not conquered at once and why the faithful were being persecuted. She noted the strength of the purity dynamic in John's message, and his concern to see that syncretic tendencies were kept well out of the nascent Christian church. The doctrine's approach was that a large proportion of the population - i.e. the ungodly - were all going to hell, especially those 'who had not kept their garments unspotted' - i.e. those who had taken on pagan and worldly ways. The key concept here was idolatry; taking part in pagan practices was seen as an idolatrous pollution. It did link one in to one's local community, but on the other hand it was seen as cutting oneself off from one's true communion with God.

Let us look at the other context in which 'idolatry' was invoked as a concept for not collaborating with the ways of the world - money, social indulgence, and materialism. Struther saw the materialist man as a 'wretch rejected by both man and earth.' He condemned mining, as it showed a willingness to violate the Earth unnaturally for reasons of greed. He spoke of riches as 'deceitful, and changeable'. He saw money as an 'idoll dishonouring God.'<sup>1</sup> He was against 'private interest in business' because it was not like God, who sought the common good. The real aim should be unselfish participation in the communion of saints, and he who was selfish in terms of materialism was held to have committed a 'sort of self-excommunication'.<sup>2</sup> This ascetic emphasis is New Testament; if one turns to inner values then one despises money. Similarly, if one accesses spiritual values one's need to be bonded to

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<sup>1</sup> Struther, Christian observations (first century), 48-49.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.52.



God and one's fellow saints becomes more pressing than one's need to be bonded to the commonwail's 'civil' assumptions of having a good time, being nice to one's neighbours as much as possible whether or not they are terribly godly, deferring to social superiors even if they are behaving in unregenerate ways, and spending money on diversions. Struther, in the tradition of Mr Robert Bruce, saw the communion of saints as being opposed to natural bonds.<sup>1</sup>

Under this outlook, the body politic, and the ideals of good 'neighborheid' lost their grip on those who practised this intensive form of spirituality. They found instead much deeper bonds within their own community of the pure. Their cardinal assumption said that the majority of the body politic was rotten, and evidenced its rottenness by its carnal ways, which resulted from its lack of access to an informing spiritual source. Therefore, it was crucial to be on the watch for actions, which, out of charity or deference to civil authority, led one to collaborate with its rottenness, instead of bringing it to a more spiritual state where it would recognise the correctness of the elect and repent for its evil ways. This was the 'better part' chosen by the protestors, who saw disaster staring them in the face, as splits in the covenanting movement made the Scots vulnerable to the advances of the New Model Army, but who saw their ultimate importance to lie in being witnesses against the carnal nature of the former royalists, who had been accepted back into the communion of the church despite 'mock repentance', rather than in successfully repulsing the invader.

The importance of this sort of witnessing can especially be seen at the time of the Cromwellian invasion, which was marked by declarations and protestations as a large part of the spiritually-committed population saw their duty to consist in spiritual witness in the style of St

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

John and the style of the prophets against the 'defection' and 'bakslydings' of employing 'carnally-minded' men, as they tended to put it. Wariston's diary of the time is pre-occupied with the belief in the pre-eminent importance of testimonies. He commented that 'when Christ had gotten all his testimonies the end would come'<sup>1</sup> and concerned himself with making a 'testimony for Christ against so abominable an defection', speaking of 'co-witnessing with and for God'.<sup>2</sup>

Here the point of providential decision making surfaces again - the urge for attunement with God's will. If the godly led a certain sort of life, characterised by inner spiritual work and lack of outer pomp, then those who did not lead that kind of life were evidently outside the communion, so those who lived in a certain ungodly materialistic fashion contaminated by association any political position which they tended to hold. This was a major part of the doctrine contained in the 1648 'Solemn Acknowledgement of Publick Sins...and Engagement to duties...', which deplored the lifestyles of the time declaring that 'many of the nobility, gentry and burrows *who should have been examples of godliness and sober walking unto others have been ring leaders in excesse and rioting;*' the call in this document was for 'men of a blameless and Christian conversation, and of a known integrity and approven fidelity, affection, and zeal unto the cause of God.'<sup>3</sup> In other words, the anti-engagers were looking for the sort of men through whom the spirit of God would flow, those who were part of the communion of the elect, or at least those who eminently looked the part. Again to quote John Welch of Irongray, it was important to look to 'what people are

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<sup>1</sup> AJW, II, 80.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.90.

<sup>3</sup> Westminster confession, 366.

most inclined to when they attain unto most nearness with God',<sup>1</sup> in this way the New Testament and the Old Testament frameworks came together. The spiritual emphasis of the New Testament led to a certain way of life, the Old Testament and apocalyptic framework led to an emphasis on converting those who did not live this kind of life by refusing to associate with their ways and bearing witness against them . Note that Wariston was very clear indeed that those who departed from the protestor position were seen to change their manner of conduct , and they were held to have lost spiritual power as a consequence. He noted that 'those ministers that had run with the spate were lyke dry sticks and empty veshels,' and on the other hand, God had 'assisted and enlarged the gifts and graces of these sensibly who bore testimony against it,' and that those who had gone over to sectaries had lost the presbyterian way of behaving altogether. They lost 'tenderness' and were of a 'light carriage.'<sup>2</sup> Here it can be seen that the providential decision making framework saw grace to go with a kind of lifestyle. If the hallmarks of this lifestyle were missing in any party, including the king, then the Old Testament -Apocalyptic framework would cut in and *the instinct to exclude and avoid* from the elect community would come uppermost in the psyche.

It was necessary for the elect to recognise each other, to stick together, to have spiritual access to God to do his will, which was associated with maintaining a certain lifestyle, and to be witnesses of the way demanded by God's will, so as to convert and give testimony to the misbehaving majority of society. Those whose faces did not fit, or those who seemed to be compromising with others whose faces and lifestyles did not fit, could rapidly find themselves exiled from the communion of

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<sup>1</sup> Welch (of Irongray), Fifty and two directions, 29.

<sup>2</sup> AJW, II, 41, 104.

the saints, because the spirit would only flow through those who behaved correctly, and who remained solidly within the communion. Where there was no spirit, there was the devil at home keeping the castle. Where there was no spirit, there was no authority.

## Chapter seven

### **The covenanting experience**

It was earlier explained that presbyterian doctrine tried to look for something permanent and sustaining behind the evanescent world of riches, diversions, diseases, mortality, personal relations and political places, which could pull the rug out from under the feet of anyone - man or woman - at any time. The doctrine which evolved out of this milieu placed its emphasis on a spirit which was beyond those very social structures and assumptions whose inadequate comfort it was trying to replace with something better. In terms of cutting across social divides and providing those who were normally overlooked with justification for an active role in religious matters, it is possible to see how presbyterianism, in its covenanting form, was extremely upsetting for those who, on the whole, preferred to adhere to the traditional social values' structure. In fact, presbyterianism was not only beyond that particular set of values, it was also in many cases either implacably opposed to it, or asserted views about the spirit which could, in theory, wipe out the whole hierarchical social structure, depending on whom one discerned the spirit to be working through; however, this equality of elect access to the spirit, regardless of sex or social class, did not inspire much in the way of agitation of the sorts which we would recognise as nascent socialism or feminism. In fact, radical presbyterianism seemed to find the matter of social structure to be one of indifference - so long as the elite did not interfere with religious practice. Archibald Johnston of Wariston did not care overly about political structure for 'the security of God's people lies more in qualifications of persons intrusted than in forme of government.'<sup>1</sup> The emphasis, then, was not on social and

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<sup>1</sup>AJW, twentieth century transcript, NLS mss 6254, 121-122 .

political gain - but on something else. What exactly was that ‘something else’ for which women and websters and packmen and poor cottars, as well as marchionesses and marquesses were prepared to cut against powerful social expectations, which even led to a general rebellion against their king?

The usual answer to the question posed above tends to be a learned dissertation on the effects of the act of revocation, the ill-will generated by episcopal jostling with nobles for revenue and place in government, taxation, royal misunderstanding and inter-nobility feuds.<sup>1</sup> All have tended to be cited as much more important reasons for the outbreak of rebellion in Scotland, than anything to do with Jenny Geddes's mythical imprecation to the dean of Edinburgh to the effect that he would not say ‘mass in her lug’ ( the alternate rendering gives it merely as ‘De’il colic the waime of ye!’ - a fearsome Scottish curse). All these economic and social factors were extremely important, but the mere fact that a group feels that it is being ill-treated, or is adjudged by others to be facing oppression, does not mean that the group involved will rebel, or that a rebellion will work; for instance, women, despite often being the subjects of extreme hardship through out history, rarely, if ever, spoke out against their hard treatment until the later nineteenth century. Occasional voices like those of Christina De Pisan or Mary Wollstonecraft may have been heard to have spoken out in the past, but these were definitely isolated voices who were not part of a mass

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<sup>1</sup>There exists a rich literature on the political and ecclesiastical developments in early 17th century Scotland. On the ecclesiastical side , Walter Makey has looked at the Kirk in his book The church of the covenant 1637-51: revolution and social change in Scotland. (Edinburgh, 1979). David Stevenson has discussed the political scene at length in his books The Scottish revolution 1637-44: the triumph of the covenanters (Newton abbott , 1973) and Revolution and counter revolution in Scotland 1644-51 (London, 1977), Meanwhile, more recently Maurice Lee and Peter Donald have considered the circumstances which gave rise to the covenanting rebellion in Maurice Lee, The road to revolution: Scotland under Charles I 1625-37 (Urbana, 1985) and Peter Donald, An uncounselled king: Charles I and the Scottish troubles 1631-1641 (Cambridge, 1990). These political books, excellent though they are, tend to have little to say about the personal meaning of covenanting for those who supported it and who were prepared to give their lives for it.

movement. The real upsurge of agitation for women's rights did not actually come until the 1960s; was this because the situation of women had suddenly worsened? On the contrary, it was because expectations had risen and a theory had been developed by which to articulate those expectations.

It is not inconceivable that seventeenth-century rebellions had some similar factors involved. The normal noble method of exerting influence on the king, in times of stress, was either to wait on him for long periods of time at court, or to directly kidnap him with menaces in mind - both options almost as good as closed by James's move to the expensive and distant English court; thus when extremely provocative measures like the act of revocation were carried through, the nobles found themselves impotently protesting against what was just about the greatest threat possible to their power bases. Why, if it was so important, did nobody rebel over the act of revocation? Why was the service book the last straw, and not any measure of taxation or a direct argument with some parvenu bishop on the privy council? A tentative answer could be that, firstly, the nobles were still locked in the useless thought-frame of the 1590s and could imagine no fruitful method of proceeding, or that, secondly, pure greed and pique on the part of the wealthy class has never sounded too good as a rallying call for national rebellion; their grudges were too 'personal' for them to feel confident about trying to start a national rebellion.

The Covenant on the other hand, though it came as part of a tradition of national oaths stretching back to the Reformation, allowed a full imaginative leap for many people beyond the small band of its godly progenitors into a framework which fully envisaged Scotland as Israel. This collective framework allowed a collective merging of personal grudges behind a popularisation of what had, up to then, been a

minority perception. It 'liberated' feelings of resentment and oppression, and allowed them a suitable channel to course down with great energy. The covenanting framework, which had been that suddenly popularised minority perception, however, was not a moment in time, but a tradition, and one which generated vast amounts of what can only be described as mental energy in its strict adherents - the puritan zeal - seen so much as a hallmark of Calvinism. The power house for this came from striking experiences like enlargement and liberty in prayer which have been described above, and in its crusade against ungodly attempts on the sovereignty of Christ and a mission to rebuke ungodly superiors. It canalized this energy to striking effect.

An illustrative text in this matter may be found in Henderson's sermons, where he commented on providence that 'one work may come from diverse motives moving to do the work'.<sup>1</sup> Thus, to understand the concept of empowerment as it relates to the covenanting tradition, it is necessary to remember that, whilst for some the National Covenant represented the kind of mental leap which allowed a satisfactory catharsis of their grudges against the government (which came from other sources), for others it was merely another step in a tradition of empowerment which went on in those who were genuine adherents of the doctrine of the 'new heart', of either pre- or post- 1638. It is to this process, in these people, that we now turn - and that 'something else' which motivated the true covenanting believer beyond riches or power or the normal expectations and boundaries of society.

'How soon our greatest comforts are darkened and eclipsed!', lamented Brodie of Brodie, whilst Archibald Johnston of Wariston remarked how at any moment 'God might raise in a wife or any of our children every moment that carriage as would ensoure all the

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<sup>1</sup> Thomson Martin, *Henderson's sermons*, 305.



enjoyments and contentments of earth,'<sup>1</sup> thus Wariston felt that he was being shown the vanity of earthy 'contentments'. This theme of the lack of satisfaction which was to be had in the enjoyments of this world was perennially popular with the covenanting movement. Mr John Welch of Ayr spoke of the danger of 'putting anxieties away by pastime' and of how one should 'forsake sin though thou mightest get 10,000 worlds for it.'<sup>2</sup> Such an attitude to earthly enjoyments was generally shared; Mr William Struther spoke at length about the materialist man as a wretch,<sup>3</sup> whilst later covenanter Mr James Welwood claimed that 'the world has bewitched all the worldlings out of their wits and some of the saints of God in great measure.'<sup>4</sup> Mr Robert Fleming was characteristically thorough - the world was a source of 'vanity', it was 'unstable,' riches were 'uncertain', and all were 'equalized at death' -

Men's wealth only heightens their wants. People take sick and die in the courts of princes alsweel as in hovels. Voluptuous men are never satisfied, always moving from one thing to another, which showeth what great want is there...Even a small torment like the toothache will take away all pleasure.<sup>5</sup>

This is where the popular image of the Calvinist as a *kill-joy* mostly comes from. Their contempt for the world sprang from their inner emphasis. The world was held to be fleeting and sinful, but enjoyments such as liberty in prayer, growth in grace, and access to God were independent of circumstances. The saint could be suffused with spiritual joy and stability, even though she had just been thrown into the snow along with her bairns, without a penny to her name, or even though he were about to go disgraced to the scaffold for his principles; but to attain to this kind of inner self-sufficiency, it was felt to be necessary to shun

<sup>1</sup> Brodie, *Diaries*, 100, *AJW*, II, 271.

<sup>2</sup> Welch (of Ayr), *Selected sermons*, 39, 105.

<sup>3</sup> Struther, *Christian observations* (first century), 48-49.

<sup>4</sup> Marion Laird, *Memoirs*, 98.

<sup>5</sup> Fleming, *Fulfilling of scripture*, I, 282- 285.

the variable contentments of the world so that one had both the time, and the inclination, to turn inward to God for his saving presence. Mr David Hume, a protestor minister, spoke of 'renouncing the world and making him all in all...to renounce all idols. Let all that is in me be thine and thy covenant contain all.'<sup>1</sup>

This quest for spiritual succour and power was seen as going against all the usual instincts and expectations of seventeenth-century society. Mr Robert Fleming spoke of how 'Luther, Bucer and Zwingli carried a message which went opposite to men's carnal inclination.'<sup>2</sup> The usual human concern with accumulating wealth was decried. 'Covetousness is idolatry', said John Forbes of Corse, reprovingly, 'only one thing is to be sought - the light of God's countenance.'<sup>3</sup> Similarly, status, diversion and sexual distractions were not to be sought. Nor was one to associate with people because of bonds of kinship or neighbourhood if they were ungodly. Archibald Johnston of Wariston and his wife went so far as to speak to their son of 'parents giving to children as they would be for God, youngest or eldest.'<sup>4</sup> A totally different scale of values was at work here. The social and personal logic of grace was not that of normal society with its emphasis on kin, on social standing, on wealth and 'guid neighbourheid.' The networks of the godly, though they could and did work through family channels where the vital institution of household worship was at work, and could and did use social connections where folk of social standing were also part of prayer groups, were not confined to these channels but were capable of jumping them. The godly had networks which were particularly their own and these were built up via communions and

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<sup>1</sup> David Hume's diary, NLS mss Wod Oct XV, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Fleming, Fulfilling of scripture, II, 75.

<sup>3</sup> Forbes of Corse, diary, S.R.O. mss CH12/8/6, 43, 59.

<sup>4</sup> AJW, II, 271.

praying circles which were not dependent on the normal restrictions of kinship, locality or class.

The basis of this can be found in the insistence of Mr Robert Bruce in his series of sermons on the 'Mystery of the Lord's Supper.' Bruce insisted that 'the carnal bond was never esteemed by Christ'. The elect were all united in the mystical body of Christ. A much later covenanter of the eighteenth century still adhered completely to this doctrine of union - Marion Laird had a 'sweet soul ravishing view of our glorious High Priest the Lord Jesus Christ of his being anointed with the oil of joy above his fellows and of his anointing all the members of his mystical body.'<sup>1</sup> This doctrine, found most strongly in the communion emphasis on union in the body of Christ, led to jumps across social divides in the name of grace - for instance, in the 1650s, Brodie of Brodie's sister chided him for his attitude to godly folk of lesser station saying that they were 'to be heirs of glory with us and not to be disdained for outward things'<sup>2</sup>. Brodie was discomfited, though not quite convinced, by this, but the ideal of grace bringing all together, especially in the communion, was a strong one. George Gillespie, for instance, complained of the practice of the Independents in the 1640s of receiving the sacrament in pews for this 'shames the poor who have not pews'<sup>3</sup>. In the parish of Dalgety in the 1650s, examination was made before communion to see how masters were behaving to their servants 'with regard to godliness';<sup>4</sup> but, most strikingly, the results were seen in the revivals such as Stewarton and in the mixed prayer groups which were set up to combat episcopacy in the first half of the seventeenth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Marion Laird, Memoirs, 124. Mr Robert Bruce, The mystery of the Lord's Supper, 103.

<sup>2</sup> Brodie, Diaries, 180.

<sup>3</sup> George Gillespie, 'Miscellany questions', No 18 in Presbyterian's armoury, II, 96.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. William Ross, Glimpses of pastoral work in covenanting times: a record of the work of Andrew Donaldson, minister at Dalgety, Fifeshire (Edinburgh 1877), 122.

In the Stewarton revival of the 1620s the presbyterian process of conversion took off. Minister Mr David Dickson's sermons were so swamped out that he had to preach extra ones. The communion seasons drew huge audiences, some of whom even went to the lengths of settling there; many converts needed 'private dealing' for their problems of conscience in conversion, and soon the phenomenon drew attention. Among those who came to investigate were Mr Robert Blair, who felt that 'he had profited more from simple folk than they had from him,' the principal of the university of Glasgow, Mr Robert Boyd of Trochrigg, Anna, Countess of Eglintoun who 'much countenanced' the converts, and whose husband was 'very impressed with their wisdom' and also 'that famous saint Lady Robertland.'<sup>1</sup> So religion led to social superiors mixing with, and taking an interest in, those of lower social classes, for such ordinary folk were their co-heirs in grace from whom they might learn something. Lord Jedburgh kept Thomas Patoun, an eighty-four year old illiterate husbandman, at his table, and 'often prayed with him,'<sup>2</sup> or went to prayer group meetings with him, according to Wodrow. Eupham Mc Cullen, a poor woman in Kinneuchar (sic) was noted to be 'rich in faith and seldom prayed but that she got a positive answer,' was consulted with by Lady Culross, Lady Halhill and Mr Robert Blair, and on occasion she had cause to rebuke them.<sup>3</sup> Mistress Hutcheson, a border minister's wife, was often to be found praying with the 'websters' (weavers), and when some were shocked by her behaviour she said that she was 'glad to get them to pray with.'<sup>4</sup> The most noted case of godly authority crossing class boundaries might be seen in the stir caused by Margaret Mitchell, the prophetess whose

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<sup>1</sup> W. S. Coupar, *Revivals*, 26- 29.

<sup>2</sup> Wodrow, *Analecta*, I, 32.

<sup>3</sup> Wodrow, *Select Biographies*, I, 339.

<sup>4</sup> David Hume's diary, NLS mss Wod. Oct. XV, 73.

'heavenly speeches' electrified the Scots nobility who flocked to hear her at the time of the National Covenant. She had raptures in which she spoke at length about the situation of the time and the duties of her hearers.<sup>1</sup>

Graciousness in the theological sense was thus enough to make one's social superiors sit up and take notice in many cases, and lower class prayer groups were certainly recorded. John Livingston, one of the famous covenanting ministers of the earlier half of the seventeenth century, kept a Lanark prayer group with 'godly packmen,'<sup>2</sup> whilst Mr Robert Blair mentioned a prayer group of 'godly husbandmen'<sup>3</sup> who kept up their meetings in his absence, and Wodrow noted with evident admiration a strange variety of ad hoc prayer group practised by Patrick Mc Lewrath, a husbandman in Carrick, in which the men involved 'worked on their hearts, mutually imparted experiences and then sitting rocking with a cruning, singing way of voice...with tears running down their cheeks.'<sup>4</sup> They had not known of private prayer groups and so had made it up as they went along. Poor people, who had conversion experiences which led them to have extraordinary gifts or to join prayer groups or to have family worship were often noted, for instance, in David Hume's parish where he spoke of how there were 'several persons of the poor people yt had some real work. J Hume's wife told she had was seeking light and softness of heart and met with some in prayer that her heart was lyk to burst and she prayed with her son in her family.'<sup>5</sup> One of Mr Thomas Hogg's star pupils was a Gaelic tinker, John Card, who 'knew the old catechism very exactly' and, despite his little English, he was considered to be so gifted in attaining guidance in

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<sup>1</sup> *AJW*, I, 385.

<sup>2</sup> D. P. Thomson, *Women of the Scottish Church*, 36.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Blair, *Autobiography*, 93.

<sup>4</sup> Wodrow, *Select Biographies*, I, 338.

<sup>5</sup> David Hume's diary, NLS mss Wod Oct XV, 158.

prayer that Hogg would often go to consult him, or he would be put to prayer by the local godly community to determine what would happen in a crisis.<sup>1</sup> Brodie of Brodie noted the case of a poor woman, Catherine H., who had ‘spiritual terrors and apprehensions’ which led Brodie to consult ministers on her behalf and to hold a special day of humiliation for her in his house at which no fewer than five ministers were present praying for her.<sup>2</sup> Brodie often spent time in conference and prayer with her and with other afflicted local godly who were of low social status such as Christian Russell, Wil Innes and Elspet Fraser.

The mere fact that such diarists and autobiographers who were, before the time of the later covenants, either of gentry class or of the ministry, saw fit to mention what was going on with the poor people is significant; what is more significant is the time which they were prepared to bestow on conference and catechising with their social inferiors. Archibald Johnston of Wariston took this very seriously, going to great lengths as an elder to make sure that the poor understood the doctrine of election, that they knew how to use conceived prayer, knew their catechism and were convinced of the necessity of repentance.<sup>3</sup> Again, we see a manner in which the behaviour of the godly cut against the usual expectations. Men like Brodie and Wariston were very concerned about the spiritual problems of their tenants. Wodrow and the other ministers, who were writing at the time, paid as much attention to what the poorer members of their flock got in prayer as they did to what they themselves got in prayer, if they believed the persons involved to be genuinely holy. Where a minister or gentleman or gentle-lady was genuinely committed to the doctrine of election and its Scottish interpretation which made the poor to be ‘co-partners in Christ’s

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<sup>1</sup> Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 164.

<sup>2</sup> Brodie, *Diaries*, 167.

<sup>3</sup> AJW, twentieth century transcript, NLS mss 6250, 114-115.

mystical body with their superiors', they were often to be found conversing or praying with their social inferiors and taking note of their experiences in prayer. It was probably this factor that led to Mr Robert Baillie's alarmed caveat over the private prayer group controversy that those at prayer groups should 'be of such quality that they need not be ashamed to be found togidder'.<sup>1</sup> For not everyone approved of such familiarity between the classes on grounds of mutual edification and growth in grace.

## II - Weak instruments

The communion of grace produced by the mystical body doctrine was not the only way in which covenanting assumptions cut across the normal expectations of their world. The doctrine of election and of the growth of the 'new creature' also had significant consequences. The assumption that all men were equally depraved and incompetent in the sight of God, and were only able to do good or to be empowered by conversion or godliness, sat rather uneasily with the hierarchical assumptions of seventeenth-century society, which saw power as going with heredity and with royal favour and, to an extent, riches. This theory of regenerate authority has been well-researched before now. Charles Lloyd-Cohen in his study of the Puritan conversion experience in New England, God's Caress, noted how the object of the process seemed to be the 'actualizing of potential in a creature afflicted with disabling corruption,'<sup>2</sup> but the interesting thing was that this theory was applied universally - everyone was corrupted, and, hence, anyone, through grace, could become enabled. The preachers of the Scottish version of

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<sup>1</sup> David Stevenson, 'The radical party in the Kirk 1637-45' J.E. H. April 1974, 140.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Lloyd-Cohen, God's Caress (New York, 1986), 46.

this divinity paradoxically held out a wide promise via their doctrine of a narrow elect. According to one of the earlier preachers, Mr John Welch of Ayr, ‘Strong become weak, the weak strong... women despite their weakness have not spared to lay down their lives for Christ.’<sup>1</sup> No one was so low that this grace could not raise them up, he continued, ‘silly, weak and feeble creatures can overcome legions of Devils,’<sup>2</sup> and this was not just a pleasing possibility, it was a positive command: ‘God will not do it, he will have thou a weak and base creature do it...to fight legions of Devils. Jesus calls us to set our feet upon principalities and powers and worldly governors and princes of the air and spiritual wickedness,’<sup>3</sup> - a very wide brief indeed.

This stress on the universal individual responsibility to become empowered by grace, began to take on a much more definite shape at the time of the National Covenant, where, charged with preaching to the times, the ministers had to tell their congregations what was expected of them. Mr Andrew Cant chose to divide up his sermon, addressing each section of the population in turn as to what it was expected to contribute to the cause; of the common people he said that they were ‘to give whatever they have and it will be acceptable against the mountain of prelacy. Let me have your teares, prayers and strong cries. I am sure there is as great value in them as in the ram’s horns that blew at Jericho.’<sup>4</sup> Thus despite his agitation against the orders of the king, Cant’s sermon remained conservative in its appeal to the nobles as ‘the natural mountains of the kingdom’ who were to lead the fight, whilst the common people seem to have been given a fairly circumscribed role. Henderson’s contemporary set of sermons on similar anti-prelatical and

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<sup>1</sup> Welch (of Ayr) , Selected sermons , 152.

<sup>2</sup> Welch (of Ayr), Selectedsermons, 182.

<sup>3</sup> Welch (of Ayr), Selectedsermons, 182.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. J. Kerr, Covenants and covenaneters , 128.



pro- covenanting themes seemed to be much more radical. He told his hearers that they should not be dismayed if, in comparing their 'base and silly spirits' with those of the Old Testament heroes and heroines, they felt themselves to be wanting, for

God took the whole of the population through the Red Sea - because where faith is involved faults are passed by... the Lord applies his power to very weak things... God takes note of grace in young and old and in both sexes. So we should not despise the grace of God in any, although there be weakness and infirmity in that person'.<sup>1</sup>

This sermon shows clearly the universalism which could be an important factor; despite the doctrine of election, the whole people are to be taken through the Red Sea. Henderson was not addressing an elite; even people with what were normally considered to be disabilities such as being female or part of the 'base' people could be channels for the grace of God, which was to be respected. The congregation were warned that 'the Lord applies his power to very weak things.' In a later sermon, Henderson applied his mind to the events which had led to the rise of the National Covenant and gave his interpretation an avowedly radical twist - he saw the Covenant as putting the emphasis on 'the examination of our own consciences' - a duty which pertained to high and low - and then noted of the Covenant how God had begun 'with some few and these few not honourable and yet he has made it to cover the whole land.' It led Henderson to conclude that 'He has some gifts of His own bestowing allanerly whilk he will bestow upon the meanest and yet will deny to the proudest'.<sup>2</sup>

This analysis was quite definitely radical, and showed the conclusions to which presbyterian preachers could be led by their preoccupation with watching for the direction of flow of the spirit, and

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<sup>1</sup>Thomson Martin, Henderson's sermons, 124-127, 159, 178.

<sup>2</sup> Rev J. Kerr, Covenants and covenanters, 39, 69, 70.

their concern as to just who were being channels for it. An undated sermon which, through internal evidence, would seem to belong to the later covenanting period, post-Restoration, protested that ‘the numerosest party of covenanters were poor comons... were there never a company in Scotland under such disadvantages of mater, appointment, and spentness in body who once, twice, thrice gave greater proof of tender respect for the glory of Christ?’<sup>1</sup> It was a viewpoint which seemed to have won much support, for by the eighteenth century, the indefatigable presbyterian apologist and historian, Mr Robert Wodrow, noted sadly ‘if the common people be lost, I doubt our nobility and gentry are not much to lean to.’<sup>2</sup> Mr John Welwood’s striking sermon of the later covenants, in which he implied that the entire nobility of Scotland and about ninety-nine percent of her gentry were going to hell, has already been mentioned in another context. The common people as a potential channel for grace which might raise them up against unjust superiors - because they were fitter channels for the spirit - was a real possibility given the presbyterian concept of authority which was discussed earlier, and it is interesting to consider what the results of this sort of preaching were in practice.

Attempting to analyse how popular presbyterianism was is fraught with problems. When ministers spoke generally about the godly people, they were rarely specific about their occupations or social standings. Occasionally, one finds indications of status, such as so and so was ‘a poor woman’, or a man merits the title of ‘Mr’ showing that he was a graduate, or a Laird is addressed by the name of his lands, but such data are patchy. We do know that in the earlier covenanting period some of the greatest magnates in Scotland were convinced presbyterians, such as

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<sup>1</sup> Edinburgh University Library, Laing Mss La II 23, unpaginated Sermon fragment.

<sup>2</sup> Wodrow, *Analecta*, IV, 274.

the Marquess of Argyll who had had a conversion experience, or the Earl of Cassilis who spent 'much time in secret prayer and kept the Sabbath and fast days.'<sup>1</sup> Some of the great ladies were very well known covenanters too, such as the Marchioness of Hamilton, the Countess of Eglintoun, Lady Linlithgow, the Duchess of Rothes, Lady Henrietta Campbell and others. Godly gentry were also much in evidence; men such as Brodie of Brodie and Archibald Johnston of Wariston; ladies such as Lady Culross, Lady Halhill, Lady Park, Lady Kilraok, Lady Robertland and an almost endless list of mentions of others throughout the covenanting autobiographies; however, determining the class nature of the mainstream of the covenanting movement is a much more difficult question. Many covenanters would have been able to read for their religious improvement, but not to write, since this was taught separately and not considered to be strictly necessary; thus one has to rely principally on mentions in the diaries, autobiographies and letters of their betters for indications of lower-class activity.

The only point which can be made with certainty was that no station seemed to offer a total bar to godliness; as mentioned above, John Card, a noted godly man was a Gaelic tinker who had very little English, the noted Eupham Mc Cullen was a 'poor woman in Kinneuchar.' The diaries do allude to poor women and men who 'prayed weel' or who had definite conversion crises. The diaries and collections, such as Wodrow's Analecta also refer to godly children, or to people converted at a great age. Noted saints could be found in the unlikeliest of circumstances. Whether there was a conversion bell-curve of some sort, with the highest concentrations of the godly being found around a certain locus of age or social status is impossible to determine due to the paucity of source material which would assist such a study - there were

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<sup>1</sup> Wodrow , Analecta , II, 150.

no Scottish gathered churches of the time which demanded conversion narratives from all members, thus in terms of hard facts it is very difficult indeed to assess the impact of covenanting doctrine on lower-class empowerment. On the other hand the incidents which are reported of lower class fervour and activity should not be ignored simply because of the lack of a statistical background, for when their content is examined in the light of seventeenth-century assumptions, one is tempted to borrow a sentiment from Dr Johnson, who, speaking of a woman preaching, remarked to the effect that it was like a dog walking on its hind legs, the wonder was not that it was done well, but that it 'was done at all.' Similarly non-gentry class activity and radicalism in the presbyterian cause may well have been a minority pursuit which is difficult to quantify, and which worked well for only a few isolated and small groups, but it is worth considering because any examples can be found of it at all.

### III Godly dreams / conservative nightmares

In Dalgety parish, under a protestor minister, a striking regime was imposed; all children, male and female, were to be sent to school and kept at it until they could read their Bible. Those who could not afford to send their children had their expenses paid for by the parish. When one John Lillie tried to take his daughter from school before she could read, he was cited to the session and fined for his contempt.<sup>1</sup> The session was also active in making sure that herding boys were allowed time off to attend church and to be catechised; normally such children were denied any education and were unable to attend religious services. The session 'dealt seriously' with their masters to make sure that proper

<sup>1</sup> Rev. William Ross, Pastoral work in covenanting times, 50.

provision had been made for their spiritual welfare and education.<sup>1</sup> The Kirk Session was very active in cases of poor relief, and saw to emergency cases promptly and with compassion, as well as taking good care of the ‘ordinary puir.’ The parish then went on to become a conventicle centre in post-Restoration days, where many parishioners were fined very heavily for continuing to hear their old minister.<sup>2</sup> It had a notorious reputation in the district for piety, and rude Aberdour youngsters yelled abuse at those whom they considered to be the ‘white mouths’ of Dalgety.<sup>3</sup> In this parish, evidently a sort of protestor-presbyterian ‘utopia’ had been set up with the support of the local gentry the Hendersons of Fordell. The population of Dalgety, who had been sorely neglected in terms of preaching provision and ministry, were then treated to the full works of catechism, communion, preaching and discipline, and some twenty-three families that we know of evidently liked it enough to risk huge fines for continued attendance at illegal preachings, long after the compulsion for them to attend presbyterian worship had been reversed.

In another protestor haven, *Mr David Hume’s parish in the Merse*, not only did Mr David comment upon the work going on in the souls of many of the poor people, but also he recorded how one John Edington pleaded that the Lord ‘would raise up poor contemptible ones to preach himself and to teach masters of Israel. even poor lasses and lads to teach these yt esteemed themselves Rabbies in this age’.<sup>4</sup> There too, there seemed to be a strong emphasis on working with groups much lower down the social scale than the gentry, in an empowering and respectful way.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 230.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 140- 141.

<sup>4</sup> David Hume’s diary, NLS mss wod Oct XV, 83.

It could well be that protestor parishes tended to be more radical with their dealings with the poor, not being content merely to catechise here and there, but working hard to raise consciousness via prayer groups and via education, but this possibility remains to be fully explored. Most interestingly, study of the protestor - resolutioner controversy outwith the printed literature which was meant for public consumption, shows that one of the major issues on the ground was that of private prayer groups and family worship. Mr David Hume recorded how 'Mr William Hume spoke against private prayer meetings and so to be barred from holding a kirk;'<sup>1</sup> this was considered to be a much worse sin than drunkenness. Resolutioner minister, Mr Robert Douglas, however, preached against 'meetings of persons of diverse families or congregations in a tyme of liberty of the public ordinance as seditious and tending to separatism and so has Mr J.H.,'<sup>2</sup> noted Archibald Johnston of Wariston in his diary. If the issue was sedition, then men like Douglas were obviously alarmed at the idea of prayer groups as an integral part of the worship of the lower classes. To take another related matter, protestor minister Mr Tweedie would not baptise the children of those who did not pray in their families, whilst neighbouring resolutioner minister Mr J. Hume and the resolutioner party in general were said to be utterly against family worship by protestor diarist Mr David Hume.<sup>3</sup> The implication was that the protestors were anxious that every family, however poor, should be active in prayer and religion, whilst the resolutioner ministers were more worried about this activity. One of the leading resolutioner ministers was Mr Robert Baillie, who specifically had wanted to restrict prayer groups on the ground of the 'quality' of people who were to be found consorting 'togidder.'

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>AJW, II, 211.

<sup>3</sup> David Hume's diary, NLS, mss Wod Oct XV, 42-46.

Henderson, then an episcopalian, took up his charge in nearby Leuchars in 1611, at the behest of the Archbishop, he was manhandled by a mob and found the church door barred against him.<sup>1</sup> In St Andrews itself, in 1593, the Kirk had supported the craftsmen of the town against the corrupt elite, and the elite had been none too pleased by this. This kind of activity presented a backdrop against which the later exploits of the covenanting commons could be viewed. In Ireland, where the royal government had been anxious to establish its control properly via the plantation, an influx of radical presbyterian ministers rapidly entrenched popular presbyterianism via the Six-Mile Water Revival, along with a diet of private prayer meetings which survived even the expulsion of the presbyterian ministers, much to the annoyance of Strafford's later regime. Mr John Livingston noted that his flock had been composed mostly of very rough folk, but that they had taken to religion most fervently, and he found that 'sanction of being barred from communion weighed very heavy on ordinary folk,'<sup>2</sup> and he noted their enthusiasm for prayer meetings and presbyterian communions. It was precisely this sort of thing which so enraged Bishop Henry Leslie, who railed that his opponents were guilty of 'faction' and 'antinomianism,' having forgotten that they needed a 'guide' in spiritual matters, and decrying the presbyterian belief in 'the inward testimony of God's spirit answering to the truth of their doctrine.'<sup>3</sup> Mass disobedience to ecclesiastical legislation amongst the baser sort in Ireland was an irritating enough spectre in itself; the idea that they might use the spirit in order to think for themselves in other matters must have been a rather frightening thought for those wedded to traditional ideas of hierarchy.

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<sup>1</sup> Rev t. T. Mc Crie, *Miscellaneous writings* , 4.

<sup>2</sup> Wodrow, *Select biographies*, I, 142.

<sup>3</sup> Leslie, *On authority* , 1j

It is to be surmised, then, that there seemed to have been a connection in the mind of some Scottish ministers between active religious practice by the lower classes and subversion, whilst others made no such link, and saw involvement in prayer by all, regardless of class, to be a good thing. We might tentatively link this matter in to a hypothesis of a 'universalist' protestor 'ethos', which was concerned to get all citizens up and running as active godly persons with an independent source of guidance coming to them through the 'conceived prayer,' and *seeking of the spirit practices which have been noted above* as an important part of godly practice. We might say that the protestors, trusting in the workings of the spirit, saw no problem in this - what was good for the middle, or gentle, class minister and his praying circle was good for everyone else, they thought. Not everyone was elect, but everyone should have the chance and the example of the elect lifestyle, so that the way was clear for the spirit to work through them, and surely the spirit would do no wrong. The resolutioner party, however, may well have contained many more who feared the consequences of practices becoming widespread, which they may even have practised quite happily themselves, but which they did not fancy would bring good results if every Tom, Dick, Elspot or Sally should be allowed to practise them.

In fact, if we turn our attention to some of the actions which were taken by godly folk who were not of gentle birth, in pursuit of their religious principles, we can see just why it was possible for gentle-folk and conservatives to become seriously alarmed, rather than heartened, at the thought of lower class 'godly behaviour'. In St Andrews and environs in the 1590s the Melvillian ministry and its supporters had worked hard to convert the people to radical presbyterianism, and some of them genuinely liked it as well; so much so that when Mr Alexander



Interestingly, however, with the exception of the later Galloway leveller revolts of the eighteenth century, the concept of empowerment by the spirit was generally not applied to insubordination in areas outside of those of religion. On the other hand, when it was applied to matters of religion it could produce striking manifestations such as the prayer book riots and the radical Galloway habits of turning up *en masse* to protest about ministers considered to be unsuitable or unspiritual with ‘clubs and staves,’ as in the case of the 1640s protest against Mr Gilbert Power, which led Baillie to exclaim against the ‘headyness of the people of Irvine.’<sup>1</sup> On another occasion, Baillie was shocked by some yeomen on his flock refusing to sing the Gloria Patri, and wrote at length about his horror of the dangers of ‘Brunism’ and religious anarchy which he believed to be attendant upon this small assertion of individual conscience.<sup>2</sup> He showed similar alarm over the case of the people of Glassfuir, and their disagreements about the presentation of a minister, daring to question the decision of the presbytery by citing the text of the National Covenant; he accused them of ‘brunistick-like follies due to the headiness of the reader.’ Baillie decried the congregation as ‘poor cottars’ and was evidently displeased that ‘these folks cares for no man’s opinions without his clear grounds’.<sup>3</sup> His correspondent in the matter, Archibald Johnston of Wariston, albeit concerned that as a national oath the Covenant should ‘abide a national interpretation of any question,’ was anxious, however, that ‘scruple be removed from the people who albeit ignorant and rash, yit perhappis are zealous.’<sup>4</sup> In conservatives like Baillie, the mere fact that inferiors should question anything laid down by their betters was matter for grave concern, but more radical

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, II, 45.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. N. Livingston, *The metrical psalter of 1635*, 36.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Baillie, *Letters and journals*, I, 239-241.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* II, Appendix p.460.

covenanters like Wariston did not see such questioning necessarily to be a bad thing; even if misplaced, it could be a sign of zeal.

Much more frightening for those who did not support their principles was the spectre of the armed conventicle or communion gathering. George Brysson, a later covenanter of low birth, was involved in several of these at the time of the later covenants and recorded his experiences, having fought off Dalhousie at one conventicle and Claverhouse at another.<sup>1</sup> The archetypal happening of this kind, was, of course, Mauchline Muir in 1648 where a communion gathering was turned rapidly into a small army with a view to beating off violence from the engagers, but it was *in the time of post-Restoration persecution* that such shifts became an important weapon in the covenanting resistance. The clandestine communions of this period, to which men came armed with anything they could find from clubs and pitchforks upwards, were well-organised, and could attract as many as two thousand people easily to a gathering at which as many as twelve ministers might preach. In effect, such communion gatherings were small, ready-made armies, their only problem *might be surmised to be* that of their original prototype; Lord Eglintoun noted that the Mauchline men had ‘done well and would have done better with officers’.<sup>2</sup> The problem with the fighting communion season crowd was that since they were mostly made up of ‘poor commons’, they tended to lack equipment, and a ready-made officer class, but the point must be made once more that whilst the form which such resistance took showed a striking willingness of lower class people not to knuckle under to what their superiors thought good for them, the content over which the battles were fought was strictly matters of the right to have presbyteries, or

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<sup>1</sup>George Brysson, autobiography, NLS, Wod 31, 8.

<sup>2</sup> W. Metcalfe DD, History of the county of Renfrew, 268.

sitting communions, or what preaching one liked, and nothing to do with social reform, or better wages, or obtaining the vote, or any such thing which would have threatened the status, property or position of their wealthy masters. Yet this drive for the right to hear what preaching they liked, and to eschew what ceremonies they disliked, was enough to seriously frighten the royal government and even moderate conservatives like Robert Baillie.

It was clear from the statements made by men like Baillie that they associated radical presbyterianism with lower class agitation - another case of the phenomenon we have already noted of 'guilt by association'. It did not matter to the conservatives that on the whole even the most radical protestors had not the slightest intention of upsetting the social apple-cart, so long as they could have their private prayer meetings and sitting communions. It was the mere fact that (rather like one Jesus of Nazareth) they liked to hang around with groups of less than socially respectable people, and to discuss matters of faith with them, which seemed to produce incipient hysteria amongst the brethren. Baillie fulminated about the exploits of 'Mr Patrick(Gillespie) and his yeoman elders,'<sup>1</sup> stigmatizing the whole of the protestor party as 'sillie yeomen' and describing the radical committee of the Westland army as 'some few mean persons who were totally led by Mr Patrick, and Sir John Chiesly'.<sup>2</sup> At the time of the later covenants, radical ministers such as Cargill and Cameron were decried because 'they took their doctrine from their hearers,' and for this reason some of their brethren did not consider them to be true ministers.<sup>3</sup> Earlier in the controversy over private prayer meetings conservative minister Mr Henry Guthrie showed that class-biased views were determining his

<sup>1</sup> Robert Baillie, *Letters and journals*, III, 142.

<sup>2</sup> Peterkin, *Records of the Church of Scotland*, 660.

<sup>3</sup> Howie, *The Scots worthies*, 548.

doctrinal position, as he claimed that the problem with private prayer meetings was that of 'base and unlearned persons expounding scripture'.<sup>1</sup> All this chimed neatly with the Roman Catholic position as expounded by one Father Baillie (no relation to the minister mentioned above), who denounced the presbyterian ministry as 'soutars, tailors and skimmers for the most part,' and declared that it was dreadful to have 'men and women, lads and lasses to read and expound the Bible as they listed.'<sup>2</sup> Apart from ranting at length about Calvin's alleged predilection for sodomy, Father Baillie's other charitable contributions to inter-faith relations included a specific denunciation of the 'Scots ladies and holy sisters who think themselves more holy and cunning than many of the ministers themselves.'<sup>3</sup> Here was the other accusation which conservative opponents of presbyterianism thought proved how inherently disreputable popular Calvinism was, and how no man of sense would associate himself with it - it was popular with women.

Bishop Henry Leslie seemed to be ascribing the whole success of presbyterianism in Ireland to its appeal to 'the weaker sex'. He claimed that, for the most part, 'their proselytes are of that sex' and sneered at how the Scots religion taught them to 'prattle on Divinity which they and their teachers understand much alike... St Paul forbade them to speak in church, yet they speak on church matters more than their share.' He maintained that the rest of presbyterianism's appeal to women lay in 'a desire of liberty and freedom from their subjection, for these teachers allow them to be at least quarter masters with their husbands,' and the good prelate concluded that 'They only prevail where women wear the breeches.'<sup>4</sup> This was a convenient smear tactic but, like most effective

<sup>1</sup> David Stevenson, "The radical party in the Kirk 1637 -45", J.E.H. April 1974, 143.

<sup>2</sup> Father Alexander Baillie, A true information of the unhallowed offspring of our Scottish Calvinian gospel (Wirstburgh, 1628), 10, 46.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> Leslie, On authority, 1-2.

propaganda, it contained a definite grain of truth. Presbyterianism was certainly not feminism, but it did seem to throw up a disproportionate number of active, respected and even literate and articulate women. Most of these women were of the gentry class, but a sizeable number, including highly regarded saints like Katherine Collace and Marion Laird, were not. In fact, the role of presbyterian women does seem to show a brand of female activism and assertion which is rarely seen in other seventeenth century contexts.

That there was a significant role for women in the field of religion was acknowledged in presbyterian preaching. Henderson specifically brought this topic into his sermons in 1638 and he reminded his congregation that women 'may mourn to God and have repentance and be confident of God and part of the cloud of witnesses.' He further observed that the 'faith of women is noted and commended by God,' instancing Old Testament saints such as Deborah and Jael, and also pointed out how, in the New Testament, women had followed Christ when all the men had fled, 'and therefore', he said, 'we must not judge of grace as we do of nature, for there may be Christian courage in women as well as men, albeit courage be not so natural to them, and they may adhere to Christ even when men forsake him.'<sup>1</sup>

The presbyterian assumption - that grace worked in most cases opposite to nature, which was assumed to be depraved - allowed for normal assumptions to be turned upside down. As we have seen already, radical presbyterians seemed to be of the opinion that it was possible for anyone of whatever age, sex, or status to have been designated as one of the elect, and hence opened as a channel of healing, regenerating and empowering grace, and if one was being infused with grace, then any 'natural' defects to which one was supposed to be subject due to sex or

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<sup>1</sup> Thomson Martin, *Henderson's sermons*, 335-336.

birth could well - in theory - be overridden by divine remoulding of nature. Whilst some of the most shocking implications of this theorizing were drawn out by the most daring English civil war radicals, on the whole, the idea that those who were converted, whether male or female, might be the only persons fit to hold or exercise authority, was slow to emerge. Nobody thought to recommend the vote for godly people, or political place for regenerated ladies, although in theory any disability could be cured by grace - the thought was simply too shocking, but on a tacit level it was obvious that movement was taking place. Again, as has been noted before, the most radical occurrences could not be guessed at from studying the official line of presbyterian declarations and assembly minutes (the historian will find nothing there about the ceding of more respect to godly women), but are indicated in personal diaries and autobiographies where incidents are recorded almost without comment which paint a striking picture of the role of women in godly society.

Wariston's diary is peppered with mentions of godly ladies with whom he had prayed, or was attending prayer groups, or with whom he was corresponding, or who had said notable things on their deathbeds. Rutherford discussed matters of state and politics quite happily with Marion Mc Naught. Brodie of Brodie recorded being upbraided by Katherine Collace, and how the ladies simply would not hear the conform ministers. In fact, women pop up so often in the works of the diarists as respected workers for the cause that one could be forgiven for suspecting that female saints represented the plain majority of activists on the ground, and for thinking that the typical picture of a radical Scots parish was one of the minister, as almost the only activist male, surrounded by a group of enthusiastic parish ladies, often including a formidable and indefatigable wife who would remain undaunted by the normal presbyterian hazards such as being thrown into jail, persecuted

by bishops, reduced to poverty, exiled or whatever, and, meanwhile, somehow managing to bear children and keep them alive in the middle of organizing prayer groups, and keeping up the full cycle of exhausting spiritual devotions. Such women certainly existed, as the autobiography of minister's wife Mrs Veitch showed. Mrs Carstairs and Mrs Durham often found themselves in jail or driven to and fro in the times of the later persecutions with their small children in tow.<sup>1</sup> Popular ministers, like Livingston or Rutherford, seemed to be surrounded by circles of godly women, often of high status, to whom they wrote letters. An early example of this kind of group clustered round Melvillian minister Patrick Simson in the first two decades of the seventeenth century, it included the Countess of Mar and Lady Erskine whom he had converted, Christian Justine, wife of the Dunblane Commissary, Helen Gardiner, wife of one of the local baillies, and his own wife, who knew Latin, with his approval.<sup>2</sup> Livingston described the activist ladies whom he knew in his 'Characteristics.' Rutherford's famous letters attested to his fondness for godly female correspondence. Noted female saints of noble birth, such as the duchess of Rothes, Lillias Graham, countess of Wigtoun, and the marchioness of Hamilton were responsible for protecting the most radical of the persecuted ministers by hiring them as household chaplains, and for forming the nuclei of important praying circles which congregated around the communion seasons,<sup>3</sup> using their wealth and status to provide patronage.

It might be instructive, however, to look at a group of women, most of whom were not of noble status, but who nevertheless seemed to lead active and influential lives, which seemed to have been stimulated by the radical presbyterian context in which they found themselves.

<sup>1</sup> Rev William Ferrie, Life of the Reverend John Carstairs, 28.

<sup>2</sup> Wodrow, Select biographies, I, 69, 101.

<sup>3</sup> D.P. Thomson, Women of the Scottish Church, 35-39.

These women were the female part of the praying circle, of which minister and diarist Mr David Hume was a member. The female protestor saints of Coldingham and its neighbouring parish were very rarely downtrodden. Most notable of all was neighbouring minister Mr Daniel Douglas's wife, Margaret Hutcheson, who, as we have noted above, was given to praying with the websters, and did not care what shocked society had to say to it. Neither was she moved by threats of excommunication from the ministers of Kelso, who were scandalised by her habit of staying in the Kirk after service, to exercise (in worship) until 'ten hours at night.'<sup>1</sup> She was very fond of long prayer sessions, and Mr David duly recorded some of her answers in prayer. In fact, she was recorded as instigating prayer meetings, and nothing was seen as being wrong with this.<sup>2</sup> Mr David also exchanged letters with her. They discussed his sermons and at a prayer meeting on the topic of 'bringing the heart more in love with God', Margaret herself was bold enough to examine the meaning of some texts in Revelation. Neither was she afraid to accuse Lady Hilton of keeping her servant from fasts.<sup>3</sup> In fact, she certainly seems to have been a formidable and respected woman in the circles in which she moved; however, Margaret Hutcheson was not the only example of active feminine piety in the area.

One of the major incidents recorded in the surviving manuscript diary fragment was Mr David's attempts to present himself as a suitor to the godly K.S., who was considering a richer, but not quite so godly, man as a prospective husband. The offers of the two to the lady in question were very revealing; Kingston, her richer suitor, offered her 'her liberty to go where she liked, to marry his son to one of her sisters,

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<sup>1</sup>David Hume's diary, NLS mss Wod Oct XV, 23.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.29.

<sup>3</sup>David Humes diary, NLS mss Wod Oct XV, 73.



to name a minister for his kirk;’<sup>1</sup> Mr David offered her that she should ‘command me and enjoy me and all that had or should have in the present world’; however sadly, she was not impressed, and said that ‘her spirit did not yield to being a minister’s wife.’<sup>2</sup> All this despite the fact that her face had been marked by smallpox; but it was evident from the offers made (liberty to go where she pleased would have been important for attending communions and prayer meetings) that her scruples as a godly woman were being respected. The grovelling tone of the men in the case suggests that, either despite her disfigured face she was possessed of some character of an attractive nature which led them to fall deeply in love in her, or that she was moving in a circle where godly women were highly regarded and sought after, even by less godly men - possibly both of these factors were operating.

When her case is put side by side with that of John Livingston’s match with Janet Fleming, where her ability to expone scripture and her facility in conference and prayer were the factors which clinched his decision to marry her,<sup>3</sup> it becomes apparent that godliness could earn a woman a vast amount of respect from her husband. Archibald Johnston of Wariston waxed lyrical about the godliness of his first young wife, who died tragically; his second wife, Helen Hay, was also recommended to him by her godliness and the young couple seemed to derive so much pleasure from praying in the spirit together that they even preferred this to innocent pre-nuptial dalliance, when it was felt that this was getting in the way of their enjoyment of God. Such respect for female godliness could represent an important power base for a woman from which to exert some control over a match. Of equal interest is the fact that, with the exception of Mr David, the prayer group which considered

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<sup>1</sup> David Humes diary, NLS mss Wod Oct XV, 97-98.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p.117.

<sup>3</sup> D. P. Thomson, Women of the Scottish Church , 41.

providentially the K.S. match for guidance was overwhelmingly female, composed of a lady in the west, a local godly saint called Elspeth, and Lady Mersington.<sup>1</sup> In fact, a study of Hume's diary fragment suggests that women in protestor society carried considerable weight in matters spiritual.

The other, much better known, area in which women were strikingly active was rioting. It has been fashionable to play down the significance of such occasions in which women assaulted bishops, ministers and even tax gatherers, and to say that they were poor pawns who were merely put up to this by the men, because they would be less likely to suffer the rigours of the law for their disobedience.<sup>2</sup> Whilst the relative immunity of women to the worst rigours of seventeenth-century repression must have been a factor, it should not be forgotten that they were capable of using this weapon for their own ends, and not necessarily for those of their husbands. Women connected with the covenanting cause can be evidently seen to consciously make use of this factor in their own calculations. For instance, in the riots and petitioning in the wake of the service-book controversy, Mr Robert Blair recorded in his autobiography the rather assertive stance of Barbara Hamilton, anent petitioning the king's representative. It was obvious from Blair's account that the women were not being 'put up' to mischief by more aware men, but that, as members of the godly community of Edinburgh,

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<sup>1</sup> David Hume's diary, NLS mss Wod Oct XV p98-104.

<sup>2</sup> I have often heard this view expressed at conferences, concerning the role of women in seventeenth-century protest- it does not square with my understanding of covenanting women. Those who would like to look at the issue in its wider context may find much of interest in the work of Natalie Zemon Davis in her article 'Women on top' in N. Zemon Davis, Society and culture in early modern France (Stanford, 1975). For English examples, an instance of a riot fomented by a woman may be found in John Walter's article in John Brewer and John Styles, An ungovernable people: the English and their law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (London, 1979) or in the article by Barbara Malament in B. Malament, After the reformation: essays in honour of J.H. Hexter (Manchester, 1980). For the activist doings of religious women in particular, comparable material may be found in Keith Thomas 'Women and the civil war sects' an article printed in Trevor Aston, Crisis in Europe 1560-1660 (London, 1965). For more on women in a specifically Scottish context, Rosalind K. Marshall's book Virgins and Viragos: a history of women in Scotland 1080-1980 (Edinburgh, 1981) has some material on activist seventeenth century women.

they were taking part in a council of war, at which they made suggestions as to how their particular advantages could be put to use for the covenanting cause. In effect, Barbara offered to take a problem in hand for Blair, and orchestrated petitioning the next day by ministers' wives, so as to obtain the best chance of having a petition accepted; when the technique of setting forward the oldest and most venerable woman present failed, she simply grabbed the king's commissioner bodily by the arm, thrust the petition into his hand and warned him impressively in the name of God to be responsible for executing its demands. This was hardly the behaviour of a weak instrument pushed into action by a canny and manipulative husband. In fact, when Mr George Gledstanes, episcopal minister of St Andrews, lamented in 1638 that the the popular devotional manual The practice of piety was turning 'all the ladies in Scotland puritane,'<sup>1</sup> the poor man had reason to be worried. The Galloway ladies thought nothing of turning up with staves and clubs to assault Mr Gilbert Power because he bowed in the pulpit and was hence likely to have been one of those 'soul-murderers who had not the spirit,'<sup>2</sup> as one popular spokes-person had it.

Presbyterianism was certainly associated in the minds of its adversaries with assertive women, and when one looks at presbyterian diary, autobiography, and letter sources, assertive women are readily to be found. Whilst spectacular riots with female shock troops were rare things, it was certainly the case that godly women were possessed of minds of their own which could prompt them to extreme action if they thought it was necessary. In the time of the later covenants, women also died for their creed. As far as matters spiritual were concerned, they

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<sup>1</sup> Wodrow, Biographical collections, Maitland Club, 32, (Edinburgh, 1834), 398.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Baillie, Letters and journals, II, 51.

were quite definitely prepared to be agitators, and martyrs for the cause. Such 'weak instruments' were prepared to take on a heavy burden.

#### IV - Rewards not of this world - inner experience and empowerment

Despite these shows of lower-class or female adherence to its cause, Scottish Calvinism has usually been seen as repressive and uncongenial to groups such as women and the poor. Covenanting piety was of an exceptionally rigorous sort, and, at first glance, it can be perceived as being positively cruel - especially to the poor and underprivileged. This was because it made no exemptions; it expected the same high standard from everyone. This is not necessarily a bad thing, since those from whom we expect least are usually those whom we marginalise and deprive of power for the same reasons. Early modern society did not expect a great deal in terms of accomplishment from women and the poor, since it considered them to be disabled; the other side of this coin was that such 'disabled' people, who had to be protected from themselves, were not suitable for holding positions of responsibility - they were both 'protected' and excluded by political processes. The covenanting Kirk operated no such exemption on grounds of mental inferiority in spiritual terms; everyone, pauper or princess, had to be fit to be a Christian soldier, or else they were evidently part of the legions of hell. Women, peasants and children over the age of about ten, were all expected to measure up to a demanding spiritual assault course. Archibald Johnston of Wariston was horrified that the old peasant women and herd boys on his estate did not adequately understand the doctrines of election and depravity of man,

and fervently endeavoured to, in his estimation, put them right.<sup>1</sup> He saw no excuse for even the meanest and most ill-educated people failing to practise family worship. On the other hand, a later episcopalian minister 'Mr Murdo Mc K.' was opposed to it, protesting that 'parents should not catechise or explain on scripture. Men should not be tied to perform duties which they cannot, lyk prayer in families.'<sup>2</sup> This attitude at first seems compassionate, on the grounds of understanding the problems of poor families, but it also contains the shadow of fear of subversion which surfaced over the private-prayer meeting controversy. Mr Murdo's reasoning is double edged - on the one hand, it objects against laying unnecessary burdens on the poor, on the other, there very likely hides in it the fear of the poor with the Bible in their hands, and the sanction to pray where and with whom they liked, which conservative ministers in Scotland played on so often. The Roman Catholic view of the time, as originally formulated by Tetzels, was that the scripture was a dangerous book which could lead into all kinds of heresy and error in the hands of the common people should they come across it, since they might thus fail to believe any one of sixty vital propositions whose denial would, in his view, lead unerringly to hell.<sup>3</sup> This was absolutely not the view of covenanting divines, who saw the Bible as the place in which the believer met God, and thus as an indispensable key to salvation but as a key which was comprehensible by means of the spirit to any who could hear it or read it.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, the whole paraphernalia of godly worship which accompanied the conversion process and beyond was also held to be necessary, so that a man or a woman might become a channel for the

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<sup>1</sup>AJW, twentieth century transcript NLS mss 6250, 114-115.

<sup>2</sup>Brodie, *Diaries*, 181.

<sup>3</sup>Mc Ewan, *The faith of John Knox*, 31-32.

<sup>4</sup>Henderson, *Religious life in seventeenth-century Scotland*, 1-2.

vital, regenerating spirit. In the light of this belief, presbyterian ministers insisted on high standards, because the spirit would not flow into unclean vessels. John Welch of Ayr insisted to his hearers that to serve God without understanding his commandments was a breach of covenant.<sup>1</sup> They were all to look over their consciences or be damned; no exemption for sex, poverty or age.<sup>2</sup> Mr Tweedie, a protestor minister, was so ruthless in his demands for prayer in families, or else no baptism for their children, that the local laird began to sign testimonials for the poor folk to get their children baptised elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> This approach did encourage poor folk to venture into areas which they would normally have left to their 'betters', and to become literate and thoughtful. It was unsurprising, however, that, given human nature and the very steep presbyterian demands, especially as practised by some of the radicals, that many poor people failed to live up to these high standards, and found themselves on the wrong side of the Kirk session accused of one lapse or another. Not everyone wanted the stern Calvinist morality which denied them almost all pleasing outer diversions, though the covenanters saw it as indispensable for turning people inwards to necessary saving experience, but for those of the normally underprivileged who did, there certainly was an experience to be had.

The rapturous experiences which it was possible to have in prayer have been examined already, but what has not been noted was the importance of these experiences in empowering their recipients to defy their superiors, or to survive terrible crises in life on the basis of their spiritual enjoyments. Katherine Collace was a good example of this; after her enjoyments in prayer upon renouncing the curates and conforming worship, she felt empowered to upbraid local laird Brodie of

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<sup>1</sup> Welch (of Ayr), *Select ed sermons*, 371.

<sup>2</sup> Welch (of Ayr), *Select ed sermons*, 39.

<sup>3</sup> David Hume's diary, NLS mss Wod Oct XV, 41-46.

Brodie, exhorting him to 'tender walking' and warning him of the offence which he was giving to the other godly people. Brodie was impressed enough to promise her that he would confer with minister Mr Thomas Hog anent the matter. <sup>1</sup> Hog himself was no sluggard when it came to denouncing gentry and, being convinced by his experiences that he had a warrant to bring them to task for their behaviour, preached a sermon on blood guiltiness which caused a furore, with Monro of Foulis claiming that he 'had slighted gentlemen useful for the Kirk Session and put in weavers and tailors instead.'<sup>2</sup> George Brysson, who had been an apprentice in Edinburgh when he began hearing the outed ministers and was converted, stood up, not only against his master and the local laird at home but also against his father who threatened to disown him, declaring that 'if it was for any vice then I would accept it but if it was for hearing the word of God, then he would have to disown me.'<sup>3</sup> This stand on principle impressed his father. The local laird, a Lord of Session, was less impressed when Brysson refused to sign a band against conventicles and wished to evict him - but then his Lordship conveniently dropped dead. Brysson went on to defy the curate also, and to fight at field conventicles and in Argyll's abortive rising. His whole course of disobedience was started by the striking spiritual experiences which he had on going to hear the covenanting ministers preach, so that he knew that 'these were the messengers of God and the curates' hyrelings.'<sup>4</sup> In his own words, 'the word of God was precious in those days and there went a converting power along with it... they were days of espousalls to me.'<sup>5</sup> Spiritual experience was thus a powerful motive

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<sup>1</sup> Brodie, *Diaries*, 340-341.

<sup>2</sup> Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 167.

<sup>3</sup> George Brysson, autobiography, NLS mss Wod. 31, 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p.1-2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

force for disobedience of superiors who were perceived as being ungodly.

It was also felt to be an enormous comfort in the face of worldly disaster. Peden, the later covenanting minister, 'preferred to ask folk to pray rather than to preach, saying that praying folk would get through the storm,' according to the Scots Worthies.<sup>1</sup> When government officers came to Mrs Veitch's house to take her husband, she comforted herself that it was God's will, and that they 'knew they could not go a hair's breadth beyond God's permission.' Finding herself left alone with six small children to care for, she got the following text in prayer 'Oh why art thou cast down my soul?' and hence a conviction that 'the Lord would preserve her and her children.'<sup>2</sup> When one of her children was dying and 'seemed not to lay death to heart as I would have had him,' she got a sense of comfort and 'positive answer of Christ' that the child was elected. She thus 'desired not to be out of heavenly discourse praying or listening to others pray.'<sup>3</sup> Having access to such an independent source of comfort, along with the conviction that any disasters which fell out to one were controlled by providence, and thus meaningful, allowed covenanters to bear the worst of persecution, and still to be prepared to defy their superiors. It also made the ordinary tragedies of seventeenth-century life, like the death of children, or the pain of illness, bearable, since spiritual rapture could overcome both. Katherine Collace spoke of how the Lord 'took both my children away from me in one month, but gave me a new tack of the gospel and made me well pleased with the exchange.'<sup>4</sup> When sick, she had her 'heart

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<sup>1</sup> Howie, The Scots worthies, 603.

<sup>2</sup> Memoirs of the Life of Mrs Veitch (Edinburgh 1846), 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Memoirs of the Life of Mrs Veitch, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Katherine Collace /Ross, Memoirs, 47.



taken up with Christ' and experienced raptures which she declined to mention.<sup>1</sup>

All in all, such experiences allowed one to be independent of circumstances. The covenanter could defy the ways and the fears of the 'worldlings' because she or he carried within an independent source of meaningfulness, comfort and guidance, which was not upset by social dislocation or tragedy. She or he could also, thus, carry a powerful reputation as a prophet or holy person within the community. As an endearing informant of one of Wodrow's sources told him 'when you are in company with phanaticks with their prayers you cannot be hurt'.<sup>2</sup> The Highlanders, who detested Wariston almost more than any man on earth, were none the less so impressed by his reputation as a prophet and holy man that they passed it round that Archibald had received an answer in prayer that the Lord's controversy with the Stuart House was at an end.<sup>3</sup> Wariston actually recorded in his diary a faith healing for which he seemed to have been responsible - curing Janet Arnott whose speech was 'layd'.<sup>4</sup> Saints like Katherine Collace, Marion Laird and Wariston were also much in demand as 'agony aunts,' going to prayer to get answers to the problems of those who had consulted them; for instance, Katherine Collace, after praying for a male acquaintance who had contacted her about soul trouble, told him that he was 'assured of his life if he did not go back to the sinful family he was in, but out of respect to them, he went backe,' and, of course, died.<sup>5</sup> One of Robert Blair's parishioners was nearly possessed by the devil, who he claimed had appeared to him, ordering him to murder the minister - a design which Blair assures us he would have accomplished, had he not had an

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. p. 14..

<sup>2</sup> Wodrow, *Analecta*, I, 33

<sup>3</sup> *AJW*, III, 287.

<sup>4</sup> *AJW*, twentieth century transcript, NLS mss 6247, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Katherine Collace/Ross, *Memoirs*, 49

intuition that evil was afoot and so protected himself. Blair was thus called in to drive the devil away when he was alleged to have said he would come to collect the man's soul; in response to this he organised the entire parish into an all-night prayer vigil, which enhanced his reputation with his congregation greatly.<sup>1</sup> Such exploits of healing and prophecy were accredited even to children, such as Emillia Geddie, who, when less than ten years old, was reported as having healed in the conscience several people who had severe soul-trouble of the variety discussed in chapter one, by way of her spiritually-guided ability to cite scripture texts.

These cases were not isolated; Wodrow's *Analecta* in particular contains many such accounts. It is not difficult to see, in the reputations of the noted covenanting saints, a parallel to catholic mediaeval saints who were credited with miracles. Whilst many of their neighbours would have had no wish to emulate the lifestyle of 'phanaticks,' that probably did not stop them from sometimes regarding the local godly people as a bit 'fey', a bit uncanny. Such dividends in status could mean a lot for an otherwise poor and unremarkable person - and it is not difficult to see that the line between being a noted godly woman and being reputed the local witch with second sight was often a fine one. The godly, as noted earlier, reported incidents where they claimed to have been able to discern, via liberty in prayer and other mechanisms, whether someone was going to die, or whether a match would succeed or no. This was not at all far removed from the village spey wife's domain. The rewards and dangers were roughly the same; being a holy man or woman could get one respect or it could get one persecuted, although numerically many fewer people were executed for illegal covenanting than were hanged for witchcraft.

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<sup>1</sup>Blair, *Autobiography*, 66-68.

The rewards for adventuring into what were seen as supernatural realms, without official sanction from the government which disliked radical popular religion, could be persecution and death, and also insanity. A number of cases are recorded, many by Wodrow but there are also good first hand accounts, of people who committed suicide or went mad, as a result of the processes set into motion by the deep inner searching within the hellfire and damnation framework, whose terrors were considered to be an important part of the conversion process. Even a minister's wife 'despatched herself with a bridle.'<sup>1</sup> In the same page, Wodrow reported two other ministers' wives gone distracted, and a godly lady in Kirkcaldy who also had hanged herself. Archibald Johnston's son and heir went mad, and tried to raise Satan. Another noted saint, Sir James Stewart, found his son and heir similarly afflicted with madness.<sup>2</sup> Godly Mrs Kelso's son went mad, cut his brother's throat and started a major fire in Glasgow. Her daughter also went mad and drowned herself. Mr Robert Bruce, the noted minister, also had children who were mentally disturbed. Brodie of Brodie had an insane brother.<sup>3</sup> All of the diarists and autobiographers noted severe terrors over their sinfulness. There were even cases of anorexia - where women had temptations which prevented them from eating, because they thought themselves to be so sinful.<sup>4</sup> The level of background mental illness in the seventeenth century is impossible to judge, so it is not possible to say statistically whether, amongst the reports of the godly community, we are seeing a disproportionate amount of mental illness; however, the emphasis in conversion on the terrors for sinfulness of 'lash of law' may

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<sup>1</sup>Wodrow, *Analecta*, II, 53.

<sup>2</sup> Brodie, *Diaries*, 384.

<sup>3</sup> Wodrow, *Analecta*, III, 168. AJW, twentieth century transcript, NLS mss 6253, 131-134. Brodie, *Diaries*, 139.

<sup>4</sup> Marion Laird, *Memoirs*, 23. *Life of Emillia Geddie*, 18, AJW, twentieth century transcript, NLS mss 6247, 174.

well bear a lot of the blame. Current thinking on schizophrenia sees it as having both environmental and genetic causes, where a genetically vulnerable individual may be tipped over the edge by stress which another would ride out without damage. The thought of hell yawning under their sinful souls is certainly credible as a source of nervous breakdown which would have constituted great peril for the vulnerable, and indeed a measure of hazard for any thoughtful person.

The whole matter of the relation between extraordinary spiritual experience and the extraordinary mental experience which we tend to classify as madness, is a hazy area. Spiritual experience could be both terrifying or utterly healing. It could set one on the path of a fulfilling life, or drive one to the halter. To take an interesting example, Grizell Love was a godly woman who became a visionary in a way which, had it turned up in a lower class twentieth-century context, would have almost certainly been termed schizophrenic, with her visions of angels with 'eyes of diamond,' 'fiery Chariots,' men up to 'their armpits in blood' and 'witches' dancing round her bed; and yet she declared, after these 'representations' had ceased, that she had found them to be thoroughly therapeutic - finding them to have brought her 'much sweet communion and fellowship with God and felt and observed great difference between the spirit then and now, then the spirit was out of the body, but now I found it sweetly united to the body in enjoyment of the love of God.'<sup>1</sup> All these visions had come after she had had three years of 'blasphemous tentations' and 'troubles with witches and Satan' when she had evidently been in a very disturbed frame of mind, but by working through those 'representations' which were extremely vivid to her, she seemed to have reached a point of integration and happiness. In fact, her experiences are exactly in line with some of the most radical

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<sup>1</sup>Grizell Love, *Autobiography* NLS Wod Mss 72, 183v.

modern theories about some cases which are diagnosed as schizophrenic illness, where hallucinatory visions are seen as split-off experience which the person involved needs to recontact and re-own for progress to result. Her visions also show the recently-described phenomenon of 'procession', where, once a hallucination is re-contacted by the person having it under the auspices of favourable, sympathetic conditions, it 'processes' and develops until the experience can be re-owned and integrated into the personality. Grizell's godly framework presumably allowed her to see her visions in a very positive light, so that she did not fear contacting them and thinking about their meaning.<sup>1</sup>

This provides a puzzling problem. If spiritual visions and schizophrenic hallucinations can show *analogous properties* like 'procession,' how does one tell if one is dealing with a harmless and spiritually uplifted visionary or, say, a very disturbed person like Mr Glendinning, the minister originally responsible for the Six-Mile Water revival, whose contemporaries at the time were well convinced of his insanity. Glendinning's revelations led to him asserting that to be saved one must lie on the ground in a certain posture and bellow into the earth; he also placed limbs into the fire to show that they would not burn, which of course they did. Eventually he ran off to look for the seven churches of Asia mentioned in the apocalypse, and predicted (unsuccessfully) the date on which the world was going to end<sup>2</sup>. The only workable answer seems to have been common sense and rule of thumb. In fact visions and other strange experiences, such as photisms, were recorded by some very famous saints - Blair, Wariston, Marion Laird, and Katherine Collace - who all described them as high points of their religious experience, and as positive empowering events, although

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<sup>1</sup>Personal communications with Garry Prouty, of Chicago center for counseling and psychotherapy research.

<sup>2</sup>Blair, *Autobiography*, 60-66.

other covenanters had equally vivid apparitions of the devil, and consequent terror. It is difficult to evaluate whether the positive aspects of this kind of intensive interiority outweighed the dangers. It is also interesting to consider that visions seemed to be a part of the life of most saints who seriously developed their inner spiritual lives - surely such people cannot all have been genetically predisposed in some way to have inner visions, since the common factor was their spiritual exercises, rather than anything else. If visions were sparked off by a routine of spiritual exercise, then this would have implications for how we regard the balance of environmental versus genetic circumstances in these experiences. Similarly, the experience of most people who have visions due to what is diagnosed as schizophrenia is very unpleasant and, until it processes, it usually seems very meaningless, whilst the visions of saints have a very strong tendency to be full of meaning and of positive feeling. Perhaps the difference lies in the relationship to the inner world, which would differ strongly between those who have deliberately sought inner experience within a disciplined framework, and those who suddenly find themselves overwhelmed by the contents of their psyche which their self-concept cannot accommodate.

It can be seen, however, that an adventure into that inner-world to which the seventeenth century covenanting gateway was the conversion experience, could be a very fraught enterprise indeed. Raptures and terrors, authority and persecution, determined stands against the habits of society - and sometimes the admiration of that society too - assurance and deep responsibility all lay along that road - and possibly madness and death as well. It is hard to sum up the covenanting experience in any other way than as an adventure of terrifying risks, but one which held for those who embarked upon it, the promise of everything - everlasting life and love. It did not promise material gain, nor did it intentionally assault

the structures of society in the name of the oppressed, although it did vocally remind masters of what it felt to be their duties to the poor. Its rewards - though there could be some social status in the role which it provided for the elect as the holy members of a community - were basically internal, although its determined stand against traditional authority in the name of scripture and religion certainly scared the ruling classes of Scotland greatly. Yet despite the terrors and despite the persecution, many of what were certainly the bravest and most passionate people - men and women - in seventeenth-century Scotland committed themselves to it, and the result was a striking phenomenon - a revolution which attempted to power itself on the inner change of the persons who were taking part in it - a phenomenon which we can only begin to try to understand.

## Conclusion

### **The outer and the inner**

Much of this thesis has been concerned with exploring the inner world of covenanters, yet it is also necessary to indicate just how that inner world was supposed to mesh with the outer frameworks of civil assumptions and scriptural exegesis. The covenanters were not Quakers, although their spiritual experiences may be said to be very similar. Archibald Johnston of Wariston pointed out to some Quakers, who warned him of his involvement with the later protectorate governments, that it was not enough merely to have some inspirations on the way to meeting, but these must be backed up by scripture.<sup>1</sup> Katherine Collace despised the Quakers, for she felt that they did not appreciate the 'sweetness' of scripture.<sup>2</sup> Wariston also was alarmed by what he saw as 'lack of tendernes'<sup>3</sup> - that is, a lack of application to the strong framework of devotion which characterised the daily life of a presbyterian saint. There was evidently a certain framework which went with being a presbyterian.

The point of this framework, which was held to be derived from scripture, was to put the saint in touch with saving spiritual experience of Christ, should they be elect. As has been indicated in the text, much of this framework was informed by inner sense; that it was 'lively' or 'powerful,' that adhering to it brought 'enlargement of heart' and 'liberty of prayer,' and that 'text-getting' supported it. This experiential side of presbyterian devotion has been much underestimated; too much emphasis has been put on Scottish Calvinism as an intellectual creed by some, whilst its contemporary detractors, like catholic priest Mr John

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<sup>1</sup>AJW, twentieth century transcript, NLS mss 6254, 75

<sup>2</sup>Collace/Ross, Memoirs, 28-29

<sup>3</sup>AJW, II, 119



Walker, considered it to be anti-reason, and accused it of blind emotionalism. Neither of these is actually the case; whilst some believers might have been predisposed to be either overly rational or overly emotional, in fact, the aim of covenanting spiritual life was to go beyond these categories to the unusual realm of the spirit, where liberty in prayer, enlargement of heart, and 'text-getting' experiences constituted a realm of felt meaning and experience which was certainly not reducible to ordinary patterns of emotional or rational behaviour. This range of phenomena provided the motive force of covenanting spiritual life. These experiences could determine or justify the framework itself, as shown in chapter 4, but the framework was what allowed contact with the experiences in the first place, as can be seen from chapter 5. Framework was used to contact experiences, and then experience might dictate and justify that framework.

For presbyterians, there was also a problem here; were someone to claim that they had a right to tamper with the framework, this might lead to its disastrous disintegration cutting other poor souls off from grace. The early Quaker was thus a potential menace who, usually having tasted his or her first experience of the spirit via the presbyterian framework, could be seen as determined to pull the ladder up after him or herself, thus leaving the important resources of the preaching ministry and devotional framework of repentance and communion unavailable to others. The episcopalian, however godly, was another potential menace who might interfere with the saving framework to please his master the king, or who might allow such a system and view of authority that promotion-seeking creatures of the king could interfere with the *modo salutis* any time they felt it would be politically advantageous. The Covenant may thus be seen in the same light as the American constitution; it was designed to safeguard from tampering, not 'life,

liberty and the pursuit of happiness,' but eternal life, Christian liberty, and the pursuit of salvation, as nearly three generations of Scots had come to understand them via the tradition of heart-work. The Scottish framework of sitting communion, unrestricted preaching, general fasts, conceived prayer and emphasis on family worship had shown itself more than capable of producing electrifying spiritual experience of the most rewarding kind. To offer to come and interfere with something, which, in the minds of its supporters, God had so eminently blessed in terms of legitimating spiritual experience, must have seemed like a species of wilful vandalism to them, whatever the innovators' cries of 'decorum' and orderly 'hierarchy'. Such perceived 'vandalism' against something which was seen to promote spiritual experience, could only come from the enemy of all spiritual experience - Satan - and his perceived lieutenant on earth - the Pope of Rome who was conceptualised as Antichrist.

The presbyterian system can be seen to have produced deep and rewarding inner experiences. It was effective. It precipitated personal crisis of a sort which could go badly wrong, but which mostly issued out into the questioning of normal assumptions and the attaining of a contact to an inner sense of love and empowerment. This contact to an inner authority allowed presbyterian believers to endure the many hardships of seventeenth-century life, and also to construct theories of authority which did not work on traditional hierarchical lines, but which instead could give high measures of influence to members of traditionally-disenfranchised groups, because they were held to be in contact with the deeper spiritual level of the soul which would inform them with right guidance. This insistence that grace could manifest in even the lowest members of society, and that it constituted a source of important authority, was truly radical. It was not always explicitly developed but

its effects were evident in practice, as groups like women and godly members of the lower classes did command respect, whilst traditional sources of external authority, such as the king, were castigated for their ungodly behaviour and even rebelled against.

This element of heart-work - its deference to an inner authority - has important parallels with the theory of empowerment advanced in person-centred counselling; that by becoming aware and exploring one's inner world in a climate of unconditional positive regard, empathy and congruence, it becomes possible for clients to contact an inner intuitive source of wise authority. Person-centred counselling was developed by a psychologist and historian, Carl Rogers, who had come from a presbyterian background, had been deeply influenced by reformation history and had also studied for the ministry. The school of counselling which he established shows remarkable resemblances to the early presbyterian emphasis on emotional catharsis, inner awareness, rejection of the idea that the inner world can be controlled by will, and celebration of a deeper level of spontaneous wisdom which is found within. It is remarkable to consider that such similarities may be found in the complete absence of presbyterian doctrines about predestination, the primacy of scripture, the atonement, the mediation of Christ and the depravity of man. The answer to this may be that the person-centred approach, developed by a thinker who was steeped in a presbyterian background, has somehow maintained the essential disciplines of presbyterian practice which led to contact with something deeper within. The core conditions of person-centred counselling sound uncannily familiar to anyone who has explored Rutherford's image of Christ as totally empathic, totally accepting, and yet also capable of communicating his deepest concerns to the believer, the 'speaking Christ', who Rutherford insisted was not to be found in the 'dumb,'

'external' ceremonies of the bishops, but only by turning inside. From this viewpoint, Rutherford's soteriology may be seen to contain the core conditions of Roger's theory of inner authority and personal change; however, it is evident that, in the presbyterian framework, more was made explicit and more structure was given.

These explicit structures of lash of law preaching, repentance, fasts, communions, sermons and prayer groups encouraged explicitly a life of emotional catharsis, inner awareness, searching personal honesty, and a continual emphasis on what they termed 'growth in grace'. It aimed to establish the individual in the firmest possible contact with an inner source of authority, love and guidance. It did this by encouraging individuals to clear themselves out of those things which were held to get in the way of this inner sense; this was the presbyterian theory of sin and idolatry. It also addressed the question of how one was to distinguish this voice from other voices within the internal world.

The non-directive ethos of person-centred counselling leads it to take a low profile, with little in the way of explicit structure, which means that few people know that this way of contacting an inner authority is actually open to them. For this reason, it is perhaps necessary to say a little more about it. Person-centred therapy is often viewed as being very individualistic in ethos, and even as 'selfish' and morally lax by some people, but this neglects several aspects of the person-centred approach which are perhaps not yet adequately spelt out in its theory, but which are distinctly evident in its practice. Firstly, whilst the person centred approach lacks the communal structure which presbyterians were led to develop through their doctrine of the mystical body of Christ, it is notable for facilitating interactions and communication between human beings, due to its success with eroding fears and insecurities through increased awareness. Developing ideas of

community beyond the already well-known and well-practised medium of encounter groups may be one of the next big steps in the person centred approach. Secondly, the person-centred approach is far from being a bed of roses; detractors are quick to seize on the condition of unconditional positive regard, and to interpret it as meaning that the person-centred counsellor must accept everything, however wicked. This completely neglects the third core condition of congruence, or genuineness, which involves genuinely stating what is felt, and also genuine action. It is difficult to entirely explain how this vital core condition works, but it can be compared to both the presbyterian 'rebuke,' and the Quaker habit of speaking as the spirit moves one. It is a straight statement of what one feels in one's own heart; thus there is no person centred obligation to acquiesce in perceived wickedness, but there is an obligation to be very clear as to what is going on inside us, and whether we are genuinely expressing our feelings that something is wrong, or simply indulging in pharasaic blaming of others. The former attitude of expression of one's genuine response does not violate the condition of unconditional positive regard, but the latter does. If I truly respect you, I will make my response plain to you, in a clear and constructive way. This attitude was taken by both Gillespie and Rutherford who made it plain that, whilst they still honoured and respected their king, they were not going to accept his behaviour, but were going to present their fears, disagreements and counter-arguments to him explicitly, and to take action on those feelings too. Again, the question of level appears; when is one expressing one's selfish, clouded, prejudiced views, which seek to shift blame onto others, and when is one responding genuinely from a clear level of the self reached by the practice of awareness of the inner world and the discipline to maintain that awareness? In this case, it can be seen that both presbyterianism and

the person-centred approach are equally likely to be accused of self-centred subjectivity, because both believe in a deeper authoritative level of the self which can be reached by the practice of a certain form of discipline. Again, looking at this deeper level of response in the mind is another direction in which person-centred theory is currently developing.

Covenanting presbyterianism, on the other hand, had a much higher profile. Via its structure based on traditional doctrine, it aimed to bring awareness to a large audience, and provided an easily accessible and highly public set of structures for that audience to use to develop its inner lives. In order to legitimate this structure, and as the *raison d'etre* of the structure itself, it had, not unprejudiced exploration of the inner world, but inner exploration of the person within a set of cast iron beliefs developed from the Bible. These beliefs gave motivation and emphasis for turning within, and questing to establish a deep inner contact, but they also shackled the inner world within the bands of exclusivist prejudice against other faiths, ways and lifestyles. It is a great shame, nonetheless, that so far we have chosen mostly to remember the covenanters for their structure of rigid, but guiding, beliefs, and not for the aim of that structure - the ravishing inner world of the spirit - to which so many of them attained, and which we find so hard to come to terms with and understand.

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