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# **The Influence of Calvinism on Scottish Literature**

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the influence which Calvinism has had on Scottish literature, directly as a theme in itself and indirectly as a social influence on the history of the nation. We have concentrated on a small group of novels, written between 1816 and 1824, which represent the peak of Calvinism as a literary influence in the historical theme of the Covenanted movement and the theological theme of hyper-Calvinism, which themes we treat separately.

Before our main critique, we examine in Part One of this thesis the theological and historical background of the novels concerned. In Section I, we trace the development of Calvinism from the works of Calvin himself to a hyper-Calvinism which Calvin would scarcely have recognised, then give an account of the historical background to the Covenanted movement, that the literature may be fully appreciated and understood in its historical and theological context. Section II sketches the influences which came to the fore in the Enlightenment, which provide the immediate cultural background for the writers whose work we examine. We give special attention here to the influence of Robert Burns, who, we argue, made possible the theological debate which we examine in Parts Two and Three by tackling theological themes in his work.

Part Two examines over six sections the literary portrayals of the Covenanters and the Killing Times in selected works of Scott, Hogg and Galt. Section I explains briefly how the novels came to be written and how they were seen to relate to each other; Sections II, III and IV in turn give theological critiques of Scott's *Old Mortality*, Hogg's *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* and Galt's *Ringan Gilhaize*. We also demonstrate in Section IV how Galt portrays the social and theological changes in Scotland during the Enlightenment period. Section V examines the various novels' distinct portrayals of John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, equally lambasted as "Bloody Clavers" and lauded as "Bonnie Dundee"; his characterisation is a key element to understanding each author's sympathies and

prejudices. Section VI examines how the novels portray the prevailing superstition of the times and in light of this ponders how well established Reformed theology was in Scotland and the implications for the claim that Scotland was a Covenanted nation.

In Part Three, we examine the portrayal of hyper-Calvinism in the psychological novel. While we note Scott's portrayal of the psychological turmoil of Jeannie Deans and her father in *The Heart of Midlothian* as they confront a crisis of faith, we mainly give a critique of Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* as an exposition of the consequences of the extrapolation of a certain theological thesis to its logical conclusion.

Part Four highlights the decreasing influence of Calvinism and theology in general after the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We give an overview of our findings in our Conclusion; our personal considerations on the relevance of Calvinism in Scottish life and literature today we reserve for a Postscript.

## Abbreviations

**B.B.** – The Brownie of Bodsbeck

**C.U.P.** – Cambridge University Press

**D.S.C.H.T.** – Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology

**I.V.** – An Informatory Vindication

**N.D.T.** – New Dictionary of Theology

**O.M.** – The Tale of Old Mortality

**O.U.P.** – Oxford University Press

**R.G.** – Ringan Gilhaize

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## Introduction

Although the main subject matter of this thesis comprises of a small cluster of Scottish novels which appeared in rapid succession between 1816 and 1824, the emphasis of this thesis is essentially theological and not literary: we seek to give a theological critique of literary works with strongly theological themes.

In commencing our study, we wished to examine what sort of influence the doctrine of Calvinism has had on the cultural life of Scotland. Our particular interests led us to concentrate on the influence of Calvinism on the nation's literature. A superficial glance along the bookshelf may lead one to the conclusion that the immediate influence of Calvinism on Scottish literature was to bring it to a grinding halt<sup>1</sup> but once the 18<sup>th</sup> century had recovered from the traumas of the 17<sup>th</sup> and writers (particularly Burns) had once again turned to matters theological in their work, the influence of Calvinism in the life of the nation began to appear as a strong literary theme.

As the strongest single Calvinistic influence in Scottish literature seemed to have been the novels written on the Covenanting movement by Scott and his contemporaries, these seemed the best starting point. Contemporaneous with these was Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, the first great psychological novel; together, they provided an important nucleus to examine the main influences of Calvinism on Scottish literature.

Most critical works on the literature under review give little emphasis to the theological theme of the texts, concentrating on their literary merits and psychological content and are consequently of only secondary interest to us. Our critique, therefore, is essentially our own, with the notable exception that, for

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<sup>1</sup> But see p.29f.

reasons stated,<sup>2</sup> we coincide with that of Scott's contemporary Thomas McCrie on the portrayal of the Covenanters in *The Tale of Old Mortality*. For the main texts, we used the Mack editions of *Old Mortality* (1999) and *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* (1976), the Wilson edition (1984) of *Ringan Gilhaize* and the Wain edition (1987) of *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, also consulting Gide's introduction of 1947. For our reference to *Redgauntlet* we used the Waverley Novels Popular Edition of 1891-2, the notes of which we also consulted for all of Scott's novels here considered.

Several of the critical works we consulted are worthy of special mention on various points. Gifford has done the literature of the period sterling service as critic and editor. Ferris is particularly useful on the different beliefs on the function of the historical novel held by the various authors. Daiches's essay on Scott's achievement is still a serious appraisal. Kerr and Watson give some interesting opinions on Scott's characterisation, as does Sefton on his own religiosity. Brown provides some interesting references to works by other critics on Scott's portrayals of Claverhouse and the Covenanters. Crawford<sup>3</sup> has the warmest praise for *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*. On Galt, Frykman's brief pamphlet was revealing on Galt's cultural formation. Ferris again provided useful information on the contemporary reaction to *Ringan Gilhaize* and some important comments on its structure; in contrast, P.H. Scott is particularly praiseworthy of *Ringan Gilhaize* as "a new experiment in narrative technique."<sup>4</sup> Simpson usefully draws attention to the Antinomian link between the Marrow Controversy and James Hogg via Rev. Thomas Boston of Ettrick.

Theology we find easier to read than to read about; for Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* we used the Beveridge edition of 1949. For secondary texts, the *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* and the *New Dictionary of Theology* provided several useful articles: most notable in *D.S.C.H.T.* were Lachman's *Marrow Controversy* and Macleod's *Covenant, Solemn League and,*

<sup>2</sup> See p.46.

<sup>3</sup> See Crawford, Thomas, 'James Hogg: The Play of Region and Nation', in Gifford, Douglas (ed.), *The History of Scottish literature. Vol. 3: The Nineteenth Century*, Aberdeen University Press, 1988, p.96.

<sup>4</sup> Scott, P.H., *John Galt*, Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985, p.87

which deals thoroughly with Federal Theology, although we did find Walker a great help in distilling the essence of the matter from Macleod. Bell gives a thorough examination of the doctrine of assurance but for our purposes it proved to be a lot to digest. Toon we found extremely useful on the influence of Rationalism on high Calvinism, leading to hyper-Calvinism, although the lack of an index is unhelpful.

For the historical chapters, we selected a few comprehensive works. On the Covenanters, we found Donaldson's *James V – James VII* provided the most detailed account, although the analyses of Mackey, Mullan and David Stevenson proved more revealing. For primary sources, Rutherford's *A Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist* and the collected proclamations of the Covenanters from Renwick's *An Informatory Vindication* onwards gave a fascinating insight to the theological turmoil of the 17<sup>th</sup> century which inspired the literature which forms the essential subject matter of this study. For the Enlightenment, the sterling works of Herman and Broadie were a revelation as regards the immediate cultural background of the writers under examination.

Finally, the Internet provided a welcome resource of information and even whole texts at the click of a mouse.

## Part One – Background

### I – Theological and Historical Background

#### i -Developments in Calvinism

The Reformation came late to Scotland, after most of the great theological debates had been settled. Essentially, the Scottish reformers like John Knox (1514-1572) and Andrew Melville (1545-1622) accepted the works of John Calvin (1509-1564), with its teaching of assurance of salvation for the Elect, as the definitive systematic exposition of Christian Scripture, relying particularly on Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* for the Scots Confession of 1560. The covenanting model was first used for ecclesiastical purposes by the Lords of the Congregation in 1557, who signed their Band as a call for the new faith. Subsequent Scottish theologians from Robert Rollock (1555-1599)<sup>5</sup> onwards attempted to make this theology fit a federal model, originally in a two-fold framework of a Covenant of Works (which paralleled "the way of life given to Adam"<sup>6</sup>) and a Covenant of Grace (which paralleled the Gospel).

Although nowhere described by Scripture as a 'covenant', Covenant theologians argued that the asymmetrical relationship between God and Adam contained all the elements of one: two partners (God and Adam, who represented all mankind [see Rom.5:14]); a stipulation (perfect obedience); and a clear promise or threat (of life or death) with reference to this. Adam's representative rôle explained, as the Federalists understood it, the imputation of original sin, the transmission of a corrupt nature and the eternal punishment of minors who had committed no actual sin. Although the Covenant of Works was "no longer in force as a probationary framework",<sup>7</sup> the principles of "Do this and live" and "The soul that sins shall die" were. Salvation by works was impossible due

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<sup>5</sup> See Bell, M. Charles, *Calvin and Scottish Theology. The Doctrine of Assurance*, Edinburgh: The Handsel Press, 1985, p.52.

<sup>6</sup> Godfrey, W.R. ("W.R.G."), 'Law and Gospel', in *New Dictionary of Theology (N.D.T.)*, eds. Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, Leicester: InterVarsity Press, c. 1998, p.380

<sup>7</sup> Macleod, D., 'Covenant, solemn league and', in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology (D.S.C.H.T.)*, org. ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron, Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993, p.215

to humanity's moral and spiritual helplessness (see Rom. 8:3).

The later three-fold framework, which introduced a Covenant of Redemption between the Father and the Son, was largely disfavoured as an unnecessary confusion. *The Sum of Saving Knowledge* (1650), a summary of federal theology attributed to David Dickson (1583-1663) and James Durham (1622-58) which was so well-received that for centuries it was published along with the Westminster documents,<sup>8</sup> expounds on the Covenant of Redemption under the heading of the Covenant of Grace (*Head 2*), thereby treating them as synonymous.

There remained, however, the question of with whom the Covenant of Grace was established. Although Calvin nowhere uses the phrase "Double Predestination", it aptly describes his definition of the doctrine of Predestination:-

...the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation...

- *Institutes*, 3.XXI.5<sup>9</sup>

Here we find the supralapsarian element of Calvinism which later generations were to emphasise. Calvin may only imply that "whatever he wished to happen" covers every detail (3.XXIII.12) but grace is not "promiscuous" (3.XXI.7), i.e. extended universally.

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<sup>8</sup> See *The Subordinate Standards and Other Authoritative Documents of the Free Church of Scotland*, Edinburgh: Johnstone, Hunter, & Co [no date].

<sup>9</sup>Most 20<sup>th</sup> century exegetes reject this in light of 1 Tim. 2:4.

How, therefore, was one to know oneself to be of the Elect? Calvin maintains that Christ, the object of faith, is also the assurance of calling and election (see *Institutes*, 3.XXIV.5) but his disciple and successor in Geneva, Theodore Beza (1519-1605) separated the two, citing one's sanctification as sufficient proof of salvation, with reference to II Peter 1:10.<sup>10</sup> This was picked up by William Perkins (1558-1602), who uses the phrase "ineffectual calling" for "certain fruits of the elect" which the reprobate might display,<sup>11</sup> and refers doubters to their own consciences for assurance of salvation.<sup>12</sup> Perkins's definition of faith as "apprehending and applying Christ"<sup>13</sup> leads, Kendall argues, to introspection and an anthropocentric soteriology of salvation by works: "Since there is no way, apart from extraordinary revelation, that one can know he is one of those for whom Christ died, one must *do* certain things to infer his assurance". However, while Calvin maintains that Christ is the assurance of calling and election, he also states that "inward calling is an infallible pledge of salvation" (3.XXIV.2), with reference to Isaiah 65:1. Beza may have erred in separating the object of faith and the ground of assurance but his centrality of the conscience is rooted in Calvin's "inward calling".<sup>14</sup>

Beza's derivations from the teaching of Calvin were enshrined as Calvinist orthodoxy in the conclusions of the Synod of Dort (1616-1619), which the Scottish federal theologians accepted unreservedly. The Synod defended the doctrine of limited atonement against the teachings of Jacob Arminius, who was condemned as a heretic for maintaining that Christ's atonement was for all mankind (although only believers could benefit). Limited atonement was one of the five points defined by the mnemonic TULIP, accepted as orthodox Calvinism: Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace and Perseverance. This "five-point Calvinism" has been criticised as presenting a "truncated"<sup>15</sup> view of reformed theology but it has remained the standard against which all who call

<sup>10</sup> See Kendall, R.T., 'The Puritan Modification of Calvin's Theology', in Stanford Reid (ed.), *John Calvin. His Influence in the Western World*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Academic Books, 1992 p.205.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.204

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.205

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.209

<sup>14</sup> In attributing the doctrine of Double Predestination to Beza, Kendall argues that Calvin believed that Christ "died indiscriminately for all people"! But see Calvin, J., *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. Henry Beveridge, London: James Clarke, 1949 (two vols.), 3.XXIII.3.

<sup>15</sup> Jones, R.T. ('R.T.J.'), 'Reformed Theology', in *N.D.T.*, p.570

themselves “Calvinist” are measured.

Emphasis on the “inward calling” led to the renewal among the English Puritans of Antinomianism. This was resisted in Scotland by the leading Covenanter Samuel Rutherford who, in his *A Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist* (1648) cites contemporary writers like John Saltmarsh and others on the assertion that the regenerate are perfect and cannot sin (p.50); God does not account for what seems like sin to “*our lying sense*” (p.6). Rutherford presents the Puritan Antinomians as arguing that “the law is now in the Spirit” (p.9) and that “both the persons and workes of believers are perfect free of sin, then must they be perfectly agreeable to the law” (p.24). Justification and conversion to Christ are entirely works of the Spirit, “without all power of man, and so it is not visible, nor ecclesiastick” (p.30).

Rutherford’s opposition to Antinomianism was based on his regarding faith, not as a promise, but as an act of belief (but not a work), in defiance of contemporary Antinomians like Tobias Crisp (1600-43) who “regarded justification as eternal and dismissed the human response to grace as of no importance,” leading to a state of anarchy. Writers like Rutherford were to suppress in Scotland the worst excesses of Antinomianism (he accuses them, among other things, of wife swapping [*Spiritual Antichrist*, p.18]) but they nevertheless followed Beza’s line on the centrality of the conscience in drafting the Westminster Confession,<sup>16</sup> which displays “a Calvinism more rigid than Calvin’s”.<sup>17</sup> The Confession treats faith and assurance separately, stating that “infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith”.<sup>18</sup> This restated what Perkins’s followers like John Preston (d.1628) had come to call the direct act (faith) and the reflex act (assurance), the latter of which is, so Kendall quotes Preston, “grounded upon our owne experience.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, while the federalist framework kept at bay the more extreme points of Antinomianism, the Westminster

<sup>16</sup> See Kendall, *op. cit.*, p.213.

<sup>17</sup> Burleigh, J.H.S., *A Church History of Scotland*, London: O. U.P., 1960, p.226

<sup>18</sup> Kendall, *op. cit.*, p.214

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.212

Confession by its soteriology was to admit the rôle of the conscience.

The Westminster documents were to go virtually unchallenged within Scottish Presbyterianism until the Marrow Controversy of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, a previously obscure book by the English Puritan Edward Fisher, published in 1646, came to the fore while the General Assembly was dealing with a semantic point which became known as the Auchterarder Creed.<sup>20</sup> The book was recommended by Rev. Thomas Boston of Ettrick to address the salient point and was soon circulating privately. Republished in 1718, it was soon condemned for teaching assurance of salvation, universal atonement and salvation for sinners who had not yet attained holiness. Fear of eternal punishment and hope of reward were said to be not proper Christian motives for seeking salvation and the believer was not under the Mosaic law,<sup>21</sup> which last point raised once more the spectre of Antinomianism.

While this theology found its supporters in the Church of Scotland who defended it as Biblical, it was difficult to reconcile with the subordinate standard of the Westminster Confession and the still prevalent mindset of federal theology. Its defenders saw the covenant of grace as a testament which contained God's promise of free grace in Christ offered to all; the majority still adhered to the notion of a contract with mutual obligations.<sup>22</sup>

The refusal of the growing majority of Moderates, men of their time in their rationality, to accommodate Marrow theology is paradoxical, for the line taken by

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<sup>20</sup> See Drummond, Andrew L. and Bulloch, James, *The Scottish Church 1688-1843*, Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1973, p.33.

<sup>21</sup> See *Ibid.*, p.37.

<sup>22</sup> See Lachman, D.C., 'Marrow Controversy', in *D.S.C.H.T.*, p.546ff.

the “Marrow men”, especially with regard to fear of hell, was much more in keeping with the times than the Subordinate Standard. Rationalism, however praiseworthy otherwise, was an assault on the *status quo* and the 17<sup>th</sup> century had been one sorry tale of the consequences of such. According to the growing band of Moderates, the Church should emphasise a moral Gospel of Christian and civic duty, deliberately forging alliances with the educated. When the strongest defenders of Marrow theology seceded in 1733 under the leadership of the brothers Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, The Church of Scotland was left in the hands of those who were determined to keep the Church shackled for the sake of the peace to a Subordinate Standard which was at odds with the principles of the time.

Meanwhile, Calvinism was redefining itself. The high Calvinism of the late-17<sup>th</sup> century was a rationalist attempt to re-establish Calvinism after the onslaught of Arminianism. From this there was to emerge the doctrine of hyper-Calvinism. According to Toon,<sup>23</sup> this system emphasised “the honour and glory of God” while “minimising the moral and spiritual responsibility of sinners to God”. In stressing God’s eternal “immanent acts” of justification, adoption and the covenant of grace, the “central message” of Christ crucified was “obscured”. This, combined with the doctrine of irresistible grace, which made man’s rôle in regeneration and conversion entirely passive, led to the conclusion that the offer of grace could only be made to the Elect, not generally from the pulpit. Assurance of salvation came from inner conviction, resulting in introspection rather than evangelism. Inevitably, this opened the way to Antinomianism for, although Toon argues that the advocates of this theology did not live out Antinomianism, John Gill (1697-1771) defended the doctrine of Saltmarsh and Tobias Crisp that sin could not harm the believer.<sup>24</sup> Just how far this idea could be taken, as a literary device at least, was to be seen in Scotland’s most outstanding single work of literature in its time.

## ii - The Covenanting Movement

Theological debate over the appropriate form or even the initial suitability of the

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<sup>23</sup> See Toon, Peter, *The Emergence of Hypercalvinism in English Nonconformity 1689-1765*, London: The Olive Tree, 1967, p.144f.

<sup>24</sup> See *Ibid.*, p.145.

covenanting model may seem merely academic but it could not help but have practical consequences. Federal theology, like reformed theology in general, was particularly concerned with “the corporate dimension of the gospel”<sup>25</sup> and the covenanting model would dominate the life of the nation at all levels for the greater part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The Scottish Kirk had, under the would-be absolutist King James VI, developed a hybrid system of presbyteries and bishops’ synods which pleased nobody initially but at least proved workable. It was challenged by James’s determinedly absolutist successor, Charles I, whose innovations in land reform, the professionalisation of the judiciary and the use of crown-appointed senior clergy as lay governors left the formerly influential nobility purposeless. In addition, higher, wider and more regular taxation to pay for the operation of government and grandiose public projects like the new Parliament House and the erection of St. Giles, Edinburgh into a cathedral particularly caused resentment among the local burgesses. The situation in Scotland during the 1630s was therefore one of a largely redundant former ruling class and a bourgeoisie increasingly taxed for unpopular purposes of little obvious benefit. The upper and middle classes of Scotland had grievances from a common source, but they lacked pretext and popular backing to challenge the Crown. This grievance Charles I was to provide through his interference in the Kirk.

The 1636 Code of Canons reaffirmed James’s Five Articles of Perth, a dead letter which had prescribed kneeling at communion, a Christian Calendar, confirmation and private communion and baptism, all accepted by the General Assembly of 1618 but never enforced. The Canons further accepted the principle of liturgy without mentioning quintessentially Presbyterian elements like Kirk sessions. When, in 1637, a Prayer Book was introduced, the preface commanded use by royal prerogative alone, “an unprecedented example of arbitrary rule”<sup>26</sup> in either kingdom which was enough alone for constitutional confrontation without the popular outrage engendered by the papistical impression created by stipulations such as placing the communion table against the east wall - and this while the Thirty

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<sup>25</sup> Jones, R.T., *op. cit.*, p.569

<sup>26</sup> Donaldson, Gordon, *The Edinburgh History of Scotland. Vol. 3. Scotland: James V – James VII*, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1978, p.310

Years War was raging!<sup>27</sup> All this provided a good pretext for the disgruntled aristocracy to rouse popular feeling. “Conventicles” of independent worshippers dissatisfied with Episcopalianism had always existed, in some areas since before the Reformation; these now readily served as cells of opposition. Orchestrated riots in St. Giles led to petitions, demonstrations and delegations which in November were formalised into the Tables, who drew up the National Covenant of 1638, to be signed in the localities.

Despite its religious pretext, the “sober and dignified”<sup>28</sup> Covenant is obviously political in intent in its appeals to precedent against royal prerogative (including the declaration of Arbroath), the repetition of the anti-papistical Negative Confession signed by James VI in 1581 and its protest against the subversion of “our liberties, laws and estates,” *i.e.* the Prayer Book, the Canons and the employment of bishops in civil offices but notably excluding Assembly-approved Episcopal government and the Five Articles. Overtly, the National Covenant merely proposes a reversion to James VI’s compromise<sup>29</sup> but it was vague enough for many ministers to sign with misgivings that it could be abused.<sup>30</sup> These misgivings were not unfounded for, when sympathisers at court warned of an armed response,<sup>31</sup> the “Covenanters” reacted by raising funds for foreign arms.

The presbyteries then took this initiative further by ordaining their own clergy, ignoring the bishops. Lord Advocate Sir Thomas Hope’s upholding the Covenant and declaring episcopacy illegal left Charles little constitutional room for manoeuvre and he accepted the revocation even of the Five Articles. The Glasgow Assembly of November 1638 revived the old Reformation ban on bishops and, on the grounds of ecclesiastical independence, encroached upon Parliament’s remit to effect the revocations agreed by Charles.

Charles responded with military action, commencing the “Bishops’ Wars” of 1639

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<sup>27</sup> See Burleigh, *op. cit.*, p.216.

<sup>28</sup> Stevenson, David, *Saltire Pamphlets New Series 11. The Covenanters. The National Covenant and Scotland*, Edinburgh: The Saltire Society, 1988, p.35

<sup>29</sup> Mullan views this allying with the aristocracy as opportunistic on the part of the covenanting clergy. See Mullan, David, *Scottish Puritanism 1590-1638*, Oxford: O.U.P., 2000, pp. 319-22.

<sup>30</sup> See David Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p.42.

<sup>31</sup> See *Ibid.*, p.328.

and 1640. When pre-empted with the taking of Dalkeith and Dumbarton and the raising of a boom across Leith harbour, he agreed to a Parliament and a General Assembly, which together declared the office of bishop ungodly. This was totally impossible for Charles to accept as Defender of the Faith but when he called the Short Parliament in April to raise funds for war against the Covenanters, he provoked the English Civil War. The Covenanters responded by taking northern England, demanding indemnity for withdrawal.

There now arose a split between those who thought the National Covenant had served its purpose and those who wanted to use it to further constitutional changes. When the 1639 Assembly and Parliament enforced the Covenant, "It was elevated into an end".<sup>32</sup> In August, Montrose led the signing of the Cumbernauld Bond, a pledge to promote the "public ends" of the Covenant, not the "particular and indirect practising of a few".<sup>33</sup>

Throughout this time, the Covenanters insisted that they were loyal to the Crown; Charles I had merely acted on bad advice. It was from this perspective that, in 1642, the King's Commissioner Hamilton suggested that the Roman Catholic Queen, Henrietta Maria, take up residence in Scotland as Queen in Parliament, that she might enact legislation – on sound Covenanter advice. This proposal underlined the separation of the person from the office and would have allowed Scotland to "turn aside the King's commands without incurring the taint of treason"<sup>34</sup> - and have kept Scotland out of the English Civil War, with both sides now appealing for help. The Privy Council published only the King's appeal, to the General Assembly's ire. The Kirk was now taking a say in matters temporal: a new proposed league with England led, in addition to military accord, to the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 and the Westminster Confession with the Longer and Shorter Catechisms. This attempt to foist Presbyterianism on England failed: the emphasis in the neighbouring kingdom was on a strong lay voice, whether through Church courts or Parliament, the Westminster model they found too clerical.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Donaldson, *op. cit.*, p.327

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.328.

<sup>34</sup> Mackey, Walter, *The Church of the Covenant 1637-1651*, Edinburgh: John Donald, 1979, p.66

<sup>35</sup> See Donaldson, *op. cit.*, pp.331-2.

Meanwhile, enforced subscription to the Solemn League and Covenant was causing divisions. Consequently, while a strong Scots army invaded England under Alexander Leslie in 1644, Montrose led a largely Highland and Irish royalist army in the north. To Montrose, no further action against the Crown was justified as the terms of the National Covenant had been achieved. His victory at Kilsyth in 1645 - and Charles's defeat at Naseby by the largely non-Presbyterian Parliamentarians - astounded the Covenanters, who could not understand why they, fighting God's battle, had lost against a traitor. However, few Lowlanders joined Montrose and his support quickly dispersed, leading to defeat by Leslie at Philiphaugh, Selkirkshire in September.

Defeated in England, Charles surrendered to the Scottish army there in May, 1646. Failing to agree terms, the Scots left Charles to the Parliamentarians. By December 1647, the Engagement was agreed upon: Scotland was to be Presbyterian and England was to adopt Presbyterianism for a three-year trial period. The Assembly, however, now largely free of aristocratic control, defended the Solemn League and Covenant entirely.<sup>36</sup> When the Scottish army was defeated near Preston in August, 1647, the supporters of the Assembly stepped into the void.

The south-west had always been radically Protestant, the "slashing communicants" of Mauchline,<sup>37</sup> who had been dispersed by government troops at Loudoun-hill before Preston [see above], now rallied and took Edinburgh in the "Whiggamore raid". Their new government depended on the despised sectarian Cromwell to purge all former Engagers and protect the "rump" parliament which passed the Act of Classes in January, 1649. This excluded from public office Engagers, supporters of Montrose and other malignants on a sliding scale for periods ranging from one year (for the immoral) to life (for leaders). Readmission by Kirk examination effectively gave the Assembly an absolute veto on all appointments public as well as ecclesiastical. Furthermore, the abolition in March of lay patronage lessened even

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<sup>36</sup> Mackey, *op. cit.*, p.74, argues that two distinct revolutions, one feudal, working through Parliament and one anti-feudal, working through the Assembly, converged in the National Covenant and split over the Engagement.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p.174ff, argues that the Mauchline Rising was an economically-motivated peasants' revolt.

further the Kirk's dependence on the nobility and gentry.<sup>38</sup> Scotland was now virtually a federalist theocracy.

This situation was immediately tested by the execution of Charles I. Scotland, outraged at the execution of *its* lawful king without consultation, promptly offered the crown to his heir, on condition of his signing the Solemn League and Covenant. This was eventually agreed in June 1650, prompting invasion by Cromwell, who defeated the Covenanting forces at Dunbar.

The army may have given up its strong position due to inclement weather rather than the alleged intervention of clergymen ignorant of military tactics but the zealous application of the catch-all final clause of the Act of Classes to purge unworthy reprobates "destroyed the professionalism of the officer corps"<sup>39</sup> as well as depriving the army of many of its best soldiers. The defeat split the Assembly: one minister, James Guthrie, called for greater application of the Acts of Classes in the Western Remonstrance (drawn up in Dumfries on 17 October) but the Assembly made a Resolution to let fight all "who were not excommunicated, forfeited, notoriously wicked or obstinate enemies of the covenant";<sup>40</sup> still exclusionist, but at least allowing honest, seasoned troopers of unrefined speech to fight for their cause.

After Charles II's coronation, the rescinding of the Act of Classes permitted the raising of a national levy. The invading Scots army was defeated at Worcester, leading to an effective union with the Commonwealth in 1652. A policy of toleration was adopted towards non-Presbyterians but Guthrie's Remonstrants, as

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<sup>38</sup> See Donaldson, *op. cit.*, pp.338-9.

<sup>39</sup> Michison, Rosalind, *The New History of Scotland. Vol. 5. Lordship to Patronage. Scotland 1603-1745*, London: Arnold, 1983, p.60

<sup>40</sup> Donaldson, *op. cit.*, p.342

“Protesters”, objected to pluralism and, for the first time, set up schismatic courts where there were presbyteries with Resolutionist majorities.

It should be noted that there was genuine scope for the application of Class Four even to the Covenanted army for, while the Kirk had been politically engaged, the country had sunk into such general debauchery that some welcomed the demise in 1653 of the General Assembly, which had “seemed to be more sett upon establishing themselves than promoting religion”.<sup>41</sup> Personality cults and the idolisation of the Covenants followed naturally from promoting the Covenants for their own sake: instead of the Gospel, ministers were preaching their own conclusions as inevitable, logical derivations of Scriptural teaching, quartering no opponents. While they were so occupied, even to the neglect of Holy Communion, sin and irreligion were rife. Spiritual leadership had lost its focus; consequently, the flock was left without a shepherd.

The Resolutioners, despite their loyalty to the (covenanted) King, were able to cooperate with the Cromwellian régime. After the restoration of Charles II, however, the Presbyterians found themselves victims of their own machinations. The Westminster documents only required – at English insistence – that church government be “according to the Word of God and the example of the best reformed churches”.<sup>42</sup> This was not necessarily Presbyterian; the Resolutioner leader James Sharp returned from negotiations with the King as Archbishop of St. Andrews. To the Protesters, this was betrayal: the Covenants were perpetually binding on the whole of Scotland; 1648-9 had been the idyll; they recognised no General Assembly after that of 1650, which they had dominated, or acknowledged presbyteries with non-Protester majorities, thereby wrecking the system of church courts. Protesters meeting in Edinburgh to propose an address to the King were seized and all unauthorised meetings were forbidden. Guthrie became the first Reformed preacher to be executed in Scotland.

Charles II attempted to revert to James VI’s régime with the Act Rescissory of 1661

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<sup>41</sup> See Donaldson, *op. Cit.*, p.355.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.331

but, in 1662, episcopacy was established, with lay patronage, and the Covenants and private conventicles outlawed. Not all ministers could accept patronage or the authority of crown and bishop to summon church courts and many, especially in the south-west, were deprived, to be replaced by licentiates, styled curates, or “gownsmen”, who were generally unpopular.<sup>43</sup> Some preferred to follow their local clergy into field conventicles. David Stevenson<sup>44</sup> argues that many who went out at this time were a second wave of objectioners who had not initially supported the Covenants and would have accepted a more moderate Establishment; if so, the Crown’s response to this schism was doubly tragic. A 1663 Act fined all who did not attend their local parish churches, with troops used to extract fines and scatter conventicles. The English war against the Dutch in 1665 raised fears of a rising, so repression was increased, itself provoking in 1666 a rising which marked the definitive breach of the Covenanters with the aristocracy, for no magnates were involved. Although Sir James Turner, the commander of the south-west forces, was captured, the thousand men who marched on Edinburgh were defeated at Rullion Green.

The government’s “Indulgence” now attempted conciliation with a wide amnesty permitting “toleration” outside the Kirk: restored Presbyterian ministers served under restriction, but with no obligation to renounce Presbyterianism. This split the Presbyterians, with exiled ministers now denying the validity of Episcopalian ordination, rejecting the ministration of the indulged and, for the first time, conducting their own ordinations to assure a covenanted succession. Army cutbacks allowed conventicles to spread unchecked into the Lothians and Fife. Therefore, even while the phase of conciliation continued, there did not “have to be”<sup>45</sup> but there was a proclamation (1669) fining heritors on whose lands conventicles were held, an act of parliament (1670) fining unlicensed ministers and their congregations and condemning field preachers to death, and another statute (1672) making baptism by lawful ministers compulsory and illegal ordination punishable by banishment or imprisonment, all leading to renewed repression in 1673.

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<sup>43</sup> McCrie (attrib.) quotes an anonymous bishop who had the curates for, among other things, “the dregs and refuse of the northern parts”. See McCrie, Thomas (attrib.), *A Vindication of the Scottish Covenanters*, Glasgow: Andrew Young, 1824, p.29. Burleigh, however, considers the curates’ reputation to have been exaggerated (see Burleigh, *op. cit.*, p.246).

<sup>44</sup> See David Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p.61.

<sup>45</sup> Donaldson, *op. cit.*, p.369

In 1675, letters of intercommuning were first issued, ostracising Conventiclers. From 1677, heritors and masters were answerable for the loyalty of even outlaws resident on their lands. This was largely unworkable, at least in the west, where conventicles, with armed guards, were growing in size. Parliament ignored the heritors' recommendation, perhaps from personal motives,<sup>46</sup> of toleration, instead quartering the (largely) Highland host on the disaffected areas in July 1678. Conventicles now concentrated into larger, semi-permanent assemblies, making conflict inevitable.

In March, 1679, government troops engaged with a conventicle at Lesmahagow and then, on 3 May, Archbishop Sharp was famously murdered before his daughter after a chance encounter on Magus Moor. His murderers fled to Rutherglen, joining the local Conventiclers to frame the Rutherglen Declaration<sup>47</sup> of 29 May, denouncing all Acts against the Reformation and the Covenants up to the Act of Supremacy and burning copies of the same. On 1 June, the first encounter with Captain John Graham of Claverhouse took place, when an armed conventicle defeated his troop of horse at Drumclog.

This new Conventicle force easily took Glasgow, but wasted its opportunity in debate. After the significant defeat of Bothwell Bridge on 22 June, very few Conventiclers remained under arms, led by Donald Cargill, Hackston of Rathillet (one of Archbishop Sharp's murderers) and Richard Cameron. In June 1680, these "Cameronians" declared themselves "the Representatives of the true Presbyterian Church and Covenanted nation of Scotland" in the Sanquhar Declaration,<sup>48</sup> disowning the King on the grounds that, by breaking the Covenants and usurping God's prerogatives, he had lost all right to the Crown.<sup>49</sup> This was entirely consistent with the view that the Covenants were binding on the whole nation for all time in the light of Calvin's *Institutes* on the State (4.XX.32) but Sanquhar took the principle beyond that endorsed by Calvin. While Calvin urged resistance of

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<sup>46</sup> According to Mitchison, *op. cit.*, p.87, "many of the gentry complained that they could not keep their wives from conventicles"!

<sup>47</sup> For the full text of the Rutherglen Declaration and all subsequently published Covenanter declarations, see Renwick, James, *An Informatory Vindication...[I.V.]*, which reproduces them in full.

<sup>48</sup> See *I.V.*, pp.119-20.

<sup>49</sup> This point of view is also expounded in the anonymous, uncirculated Queensferry Paper. See [http://queensferry.members.bccb.net/html/q\\_.htm](http://queensferry.members.bccb.net/html/q_.htm).

ungodly rule, mob rule was no option (4.XX.23), even in the face of absolute tyrants, who are “raised up... to punish the people for their iniquity” (4.XX.25; see also 29). The Cameronians, however, openly declared war on the King “And against all such as have any way strengthened him...”<sup>50</sup> The first campaign of this war ended with defeat for the Cameronians at Airds Moss in July. Their *Apologetic Declaration*,<sup>51</sup> published at Lanark in 1684, accepted military defeat with the loss of all their leaders as divine punishment but also reiterated in greater detail the Cameronian case against the King.

Naturally, the Cameronians opposed the succession of the Roman Catholic James VII and II in 1685 but missed the opportunity to rise against him. While serving as Commissioner in Scotland under his brother Charles II, James had ensured his own hereditary rights and, in 1681, imposed the Test Act on all office-bearers, the electorate and members of parliament, leading to renewed harrying of Cameronians and the expulsion of many indulged ministers. Even many curates refused this oath, which upheld royal supremacy and church government as it stood, as inconsistent with itself and were consequently deprived. Opposition was widespread but failed to unite: the opportunistic Earl of Argyle had to flee a death sentence when his enemies argued that his taking the Test Oath only “in so far as it was consistent with itself”<sup>52</sup> was treasonable and he was executed when his rising on James’s succession failed to win even Cameronian support, for he not a Covenanter.<sup>53</sup> Despite this Cameronian passivity, James’s second parliament outlawed the National covenant and attending conventicles on pain of death, at a time when Roman Catholics were newly allowed private worship, but from June 1687 freedom of public (indoor) worship was made universal, losing James the support of the Episcopalians without gaining him that of the Presbyterians.

The *Apologetical Declaration*<sup>54</sup> of 1684 and the *Informatory Vindication*<sup>55</sup> of 1687 elaborated the Cameronian thesis under the ministry of James Renwick. The *Informatory Vindication* is the ultimate definition of the Cameronian thesis,

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<sup>50</sup> See *I.V.*, p.119.

<sup>51</sup> See *I.V.*, pp.120-7.

<sup>52</sup> See Donaldson, *op. cit.*, p.380.

<sup>53</sup> See *I.V.*, p.17.

<sup>54</sup> See *I.V.*, pp.127-42.

<sup>55</sup> See *I.V.*, pp.3-127.

attempting to erase the more extreme points of the *Apologetical Declaration* while presenting the Cameronians as strongly principled, yet moderate. Most copies of the *Apologetical Declaration*, with their declaration of war against Charles II, his supporters and all who acknowledged him, had been badly worded:<sup>56</sup> the Cameronians now distinguished between “*hostil war & martial insurrection*”<sup>57</sup> on the one hand and “a war of *contradiction & opposition by Testimonies &c.*” on the other. Far from waging total war, the Cameronians disowned “as horrid murder, the killing of any *because he is of a different persuasion & opinion from us*”. Nor did the Cameronians expect those who disagreed with them to accept “every incident expression & word”<sup>58</sup> but only “the intentional scope” of their argument, which was, nevertheless, extremely thorough on their grounds for separating themselves from the Established Kirk.<sup>59</sup> Thus while the traitor Sharpe had been a legitimate target, not all non-Cameronians were to be viewed as under sentence of death.

The Cameronians, however, were still defensive. The *Informatory Vindication*, while reiterating their stance on a principle based on the Word of God and “whatever is founded thereupon and consonant thereunto”<sup>60</sup> (such as the Covenants and the Westminster documents) included in this principled defence of the Reformation “Defensive war against the usurpers of our Ecclesiastical & Civil Liberties” (p.26). That the Cameronians were in the minority did not matter:

“...the more faithfull and better part of that Land, in the time of National & universal Apostacy, & compleat & habitual Tyranny... may reject & refuse the Magistratical Relation between the tyrant and them”

- p.30

This doctrine, referring as it does to the “Magistratical Relation”, distinguishes between the person and the office<sup>61</sup> and is a direct application of Calvin’s teaching on due obedience in the *Institutes* (4.XX.22). Right is not always on the side of the majority; the Cameronians considered their own to be a case in point.

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<sup>56</sup> See *I.V.*, p.53.

<sup>57</sup> *I.V.*, p.54.

<sup>58</sup> *I.V.*, p.56.

<sup>59</sup> *I.V.*, pp.59ff.

<sup>60</sup> See *I.V.*, p.25.

<sup>61</sup> As did the Covenanters regarding Queen Henrietta Maria (see p.15).

Nevertheless, they still disowned “unwarrantable excesses”<sup>62</sup> and unauthorised actions taken without due consideration among the scattered remnant, which consulted diligently among itself through correspondence before making final decisions.<sup>63</sup> Most significantly, the *Informatory Vindication* condemns one James Russell for “pressing indifferent things as the most necessary duties”, such as the names of days and months. (Presumably, their pagan origins were objectionable.) This incident clarifies the mindset of the Cameronians, at once distancing themselves from their enemies and rejecting those who went unreasonably far in their determination to be pure in doctrine and practice: not only were they an authentic remnant of the true Presbyterian Church of Scotland, they were a moderate one that conducted its business in a perfunctory manner after due consideration and, unlike Russell, did not go beyond the pale:-

“... our study is, to keep our selves unpolluted with the abounding Abominations of this our day, & to hold fast the Truths of God, not losing them among our hands, but conveying them down to the succeeding generation, equally guarding our selves against right & left hand extreams.”

- *I.V.*, pp.43-4

As the Cameronians could look to others more extreme, they considered themselves moderate.<sup>64</sup>

James’s policy of encouraging conversion for favours won few nobles for Roman Catholicism, chief among whom were the Earls of Perth and Muray. Accordingly, when revolution came in England in 1688 and James called the Scottish army south, he created a power vacuum in Scotland. The Covenanters of the south-west now rose against the curates, even forming wandering bands to oust the popular ones,<sup>65</sup> and the Edinburgh mob sacked James’s Roman Catholic chapel in Holyrood Abbey.

<sup>62</sup> *I.V.*, p.12

<sup>63</sup> See *I.V.*, pp.46-50.

<sup>64</sup> McCrie (*op. cit.*, p.84) refers to the “Gibbites, or Sweet Singers”. David Stevenson (*op. cit.*, p.66) identifies John Gibb as a ship’s captain whose new covenant rejected, *inter alia*, “all previous covenants”!

<sup>65</sup> See Ferguson, William, *The Edinburgh History of Scotland Vol. 4. Scotland: 1689 to the Present*, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1978, p.104.

Presbyterianism, and the Covenanted movement, had one last chance.

When the convention met in March 1689 to decide between James and William of Orange, James's threatening letter frightened the waverers into the camp of William, who at least promised to safeguard Protestantism. In April, the Convention passed the Claim of Right, condemning James as an arbitrary despot, banning Roman Catholics from the throne and offering the throne to William and Mary. Prelacy was abolished in July; after James's cause was lost with the death of Claverhouse (latterly Viscount Dundee) at Killiecrankie, the Act of Supremacy was abolished, in 1690. Presbyterian government was restored to the Kirk, with the Standards of Westminster but without the Covenants. Powers of patronage were invested in the heritors and parish elders under presbytery supervision, although this was reversed by the Patronage Act of 1712. Despite its Erastian nature, the three Cameronian ministers accepted the settlement which, together with the split caused by the decision to form a regiment in order to aid the lesser of two evils in 1689, proved the end of the Cameronians as serious players in Scottish ecclesiastical politics. They remained leaderless and disunited until Hepburn and McMillan joined them in the 1700s, afterwards serving as a focus for localised ecclesiastical dissent. In 1743, they formally constituted themselves as the Reformed Presbyterian Church.<sup>66</sup>

### Conclusion

The Covenanted movement had been born of the formally ruling nobility and the increasingly-wealthy burgesses trying to use popular religious unrest as a vehicle for their own grievances, only to unleash a force which grew too powerful for them to control. The Covenants, which had been drawn up as means to an end, quickly became regarded as means in themselves by the more extreme among their supporters, who regarded them as the logical, obligatory expression of sound theology, binding on the nation on whose behalf they had been signed but leading, as

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<sup>66</sup> The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland still uses the banner "For Christ's Crown and Covenant".

Rutherford latterly admitted, to an obsession with controlling the state<sup>67</sup> rather than preaching Christ crucified.

Theologically, the Covenant movement, like the National Kirk, was based largely on the teaching of Calvin but again like the Kirk it was subject to other influences along the way. The elements in Calvin's teaching which later became defined as Double Predestination raised doubts about the certainty of individual salvation. While Calvin directed believers to Christ Himself for assurance of salvation, he also spoke of the Inward Calling, leading to subjectivity in the second and third generations of his disciples. The Council of Dort, which systematised Calvin's systematisation of Scripture into the mnemonic TULIP, gave the impression to some through its teaching of Unconditional Atonement that believers could do no wrong. Coupled with the internal subjectivity of Inward Calling, this led to a strong Antinomianism which, although of limited influence in Scotland, was still implied in the soteriology of the Westminster Confession.

By the time of the Revolutionary Settlement, the small, extremely radical second wave of Covenanters had been reduced to a rump, generally left outside the mainstream of Church life. Attacks on Westminster orthodoxy now came from those influenced by Puritan literature who discovered a framework of belief which they accepted as essentially biblical but which was at odds with the prevailing orthodoxy. The prevailing Moderates were tied for the sake of a quiet life to defending a status quo which they no longer believed in so those who openly believed in a less severe theology were forced to secede. There also re-emerged, via hyper-Calvinism, a latent Antinomianism.

By the time of the literary activity with which this thesis is primarily concerned, the Moderates had achieved the ascendance in the Kirk but a new rise in Evangelicalism was swelling. The original seceders<sup>68</sup> had fragmented and a more liberal, second secession had taken place under Thomas Gillespie in the 1750s. The Reformed Presbyterian remnant held on, the Episcopalians regrouped, the non-conformists

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<sup>67</sup> See Mitchison, *op. cit.*, p.63. Mitchison sees the Covenanting movement as following the same pattern as the French and Russian Revolutions. David Stevenson (*op. cit.*, p.53) likens the Westminster negotiations to the Russian exportation of the Revolution.

<sup>68</sup> See p.12

(chiefly the Baptists and Congregationists) made an appearance and increasing Irish immigration brought Roman Catholicism back to west central Scotland. The 130 years following the Revolutionary Settlement of 1689 had proved to be much more peaceful than the previous 130 leading from the Reformation but no less profound in changes. The reasons for this theological pluralism were to be found in an intellectual and cultural movement which was to transform life in Scotland and be felt all over Europe and beyond.

## II - The Scottish Enlightenment

### *The Origins and Direction of the Enlightenment*

“Seek the praise, my dear Sandy, of Humanity and Moderation... Unnecessary severity creates pity.”<sup>69</sup> That this advice from philosopher David Hume (1711-76) to his cousin, the Solicitor-General Alexander Home of Eccles, was given and heeded regarding the trials after the Battle of Culloden (1746) underlines the major changes in culture and government polity which had taken place in the less than sixty years which had passed since the Revolution Settlement.

The Enlightenment has been traditionally associated with Edinburgh but it was more broadly based across the Lowlands. Herman describes Glasgow and Edinburgh as “the twin halves of the Scottish Enlightenment”<sup>70</sup> - and notes that Aberdeen did not fail to make its contribution. Herman sees a paradoxical situation whereby, although Edinburgh was more liberal in its ideas, with Moderate ministers strongly active in the city’s intellectual life, and Glasgow was more traditional and still much more obviously Calvinistic in its thinking, it was the new money of the entrepreneurial Glasgow which proved more innovative. The tobacco merchants in their enforced idleness while their ships were at sea were just as likely to form philosophical societies and clubs as their Edinburgh counterparts. Whereas, however, Glasgow produced associations of a more mercantile bent, like the Political Economy Club, Edinburgh’s old money of aristocratic families, bankers, master craftsmen and lawyers along with Moderate ministers who believed in morality and religion as a foundation for cultured society for the common good, produced a broader based, more abstract and literary intellectualism, which expressed itself in the likes of the Select Society (f.1754) and its successor, the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufacturers and Agriculture in Scotland (f.1763). Herman opines that the engineer James Watt (1736-1819) could never have flourished in Edinburgh; arguably, he could have ventured the same opinion of Robert Adam’s fortunes had he attempted through architecture to “pass on to

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<sup>69</sup> Herman, Arthur, *The Scottish Enlightenment. The Scots’ Invention of the Modern World*, London: fourth Estate, 2002, p.133

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p.161

modern Britons the spiritual power of Greece and Rome<sup>71</sup> based in Glasgow. It was Glasgow which provided the living laboratory in which Adam Smith (1723-90) made his initial observations which culminated in his *Wealth of Nations* (1766) but it was Edinburgh which provided a close-knit community of active minds living cheek-by-jowl in the confines of the Old Town until it moved *en masse* to the more rarefied atmosphere of the New Town.

The intellectual atmosphere in which Smith worked was informed by the ideas of Moderate ministers like William Robertson (1721-93), Principal of Edinburgh University, and Hugh Blair (1718-1800), who saw Christianity as a socially refining and civilising influence. Although still in the minority in the 1750s, the Moderates were strongest in the cities and therefore a greater number of them had easier access to Edinburgh for the General Assembly. This domination showed when a move to censure the atheist David Hume failed in 1756.

This influence can be seen most strongly in the works of Adam Smith. A former student at Glasgow of Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), Smith combined Hutcheson's idea of an inbred moral sense with that of Lord Kames (1696-1782) and his student David Hume that morality arises out of human aspirations, arguing for a more basic and instinctual inborn moral sense or "fellow feeling"<sup>72</sup> than Hutcheson had, which sense was used to judge the motivating passions behind actions. This agreed with Hume's point that people were governed by passions - not by reason, which one only used to get what one wanted.<sup>73</sup>

This idea informed Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), in which he argued that the human conscience was one's social self. Everyone should leave each other alone to pursue their own happiness. This moral philosophy Smith later applied to his *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1766), again combining the ideas of Hutcheson (personal liberty) and Kames (sense of identity through ownership of property), to argue for co-operation in the pursuit of self-interest - but for the ultimate benefit of the consumer, not the businessman.<sup>74</sup> Smith

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<sup>71</sup> Herman, *op. cit.*, p.156

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p.174

<sup>73</sup> See *Ibid.*, p.169.

<sup>74</sup> See *Ibid.*, p.185.

did not set out to found a new science of political economy; he merely observed that the free market provided the best historical example for the provision of society's needs, with the proviso that government had to give "the most serious attention"<sup>75</sup> to the "bad effects of high profits":-

The minds of men are contracted, and rendered incapable of elevation. Education is despised, or at least neglected, and heroic spirit is utterly extinguished."<sup>76</sup>

Smith's concern was for the moral, physical and spiritual well-being of all, not the economic advancement of the few. By the time *The Wealth of Nations* came to prominence, however, in the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this had become overlooked and the work was used to justify the doctrine of *laissez faire*.

The Enlightenment placed Scotland at the forefront of intellectual activity in Europe but this was at the expense of a large part of its identity. The Rationalism of the 18<sup>th</sup> century had given rise to the 'teleology of civility', or doctrine of evidence of purpose or design. Applied to history, it was observed that the "personal liberty and independence"<sup>77</sup> of the Germanic peoples was superior to the fecklessness of the Celts. Consequently, if Scotland were to achieve its full potential, it had to be by ditching its gory past of fanaticism and internecine conflict and embracing the Germanic culture of the neighbouring kingdom. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the much-reduced Celtic influence in Scotland would have become the stuff of nostalgia.

### *The Resurgence of Scottish Literature – with a Theological Voice*

In view of the differences between the two cities, it was perhaps inevitable that Robert Burns should gravitate towards the cultural milieu of Edinburgh rather than Glasgow. Scottish Calvinism saw man's "chief and highest end"<sup>78</sup> as "to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him for ever" in worship. Although this led to a

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<sup>75</sup> Herman, *op. cit.*, p.186

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p.186

<sup>77</sup> Pittock, Murray G.h., 'Historiography', in Broadie, Alexander (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, Cambridge: C.U.P., p.265

<sup>78</sup> *The Scots Confession 1560 and Negative Confession, 1581*, intro. G.D. Henderson, Edinburgh: Church of Scotland, p.51

neglect of imaginative literature and even of hymns,<sup>79</sup> the literary dearth in 17<sup>th</sup> century Scotland was probably due more, initially at least, to the absence of royal patronage after 1603. With the possible exception of Robert Henryson (d. *circa* 1508), the medieval makars had been courtiers or kings and even the most extreme Covenanters were not without their poets. It was only in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, that Scotland, again found a strong literary voice. The dramatist and anthologist Allan Ramsay (1686-1758) reintroduced the reading public to the works of the makars, inspiring later writers like Fergusson and Burns. The extreme Calvinist preoccupation with directly glorifying God with every expression also found a voice in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Gaelic poet Dughall Bochanan (1716-1768). Bochanan destroyed his nature poetry as ungodly upon coming to a personal faith; the argument that poetry inspired by the beauties of nature glorified the Creator seems not to have persuaded Bochanan, if indeed he was aware of it. His later, surviving work reflects the more morbid preoccupations of Scottish Calvinism: the title of his 264-line meditation on death, *An Claiqeann* [The Skull], is indicative of his small, surviving *oeuvre*.

A similar voice was not to be found in Lowland writing. By the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Covenanters had become a theme for fireside debate and historical revisionism. Robert Fergusson (1750-74), sadly overshadowed by his near-contemporary Robert Burns (1759-96), demonstrates in his *The Ghaists: A Kirk-Yard Eclogue*<sup>80</sup> a disparaging attitude towards the memory of the Covenanters, revering instead the memory of the Lord Advocate "bluidy" Mackenzie

Whase laws rebellious bigotry reclaim'd,  
Freed the hail land frae covenanting fools,  
While erst ha'e fash'd us wi' unnumber'd dools,...

- ll.126-8

Burns, on the other hand, viewed the Covenanters, if not life in general, much more seriously. While Fergusson resented the Covenanters as would-be killjoys, Burns,

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<sup>79</sup> This was in stark contrast to Calvin's theonomous view of the arts. See Knudsen, Robert D., 'Calvinism as a Cultural Force' in Stanford Reid (ed.), *John Calvin. His Influence in the Western World*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Academic Press, 1982, p.14.

<sup>80</sup> See Scott, Tom (ed.), *The Penguin Book of Scottish Verse*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970, pp.297-302.

no less reckless in his personal life than Fergusson, still revered their memory, like most Scots. Burns, a convinced democrat who saw Mankind as a brotherhood created equal before God, viewed the Covenanters as freedom fighters:

**The Solemn League and Covenant**

Now brings a smile, now brings a tear.

But sacred Freedom, too, was theirs:

If thou'rt a slave, indulge thy sneer.

- *The Solemn League and Covenant*

Although this overtly politicised opinion was atypical of the majority, Burns was nevertheless to be numbered among them.

Although there are hints in Burns's work of the controversy which still raged unofficially while the Kirk was confined by the Westminster Confession as its subordinate standard, it gives more of a personal impression of a very spiritually-minded man who faced and frequently succumbed to carnal temptation, much to his regret in his more sober moments. He clearly identified openly with Kirkmen of Moderate principles but his much-overlooked devotional works show a stark realisation of divine power and authority when ill-health and a premature death-bed forced him to cold self-examination.

Burns's contempt for the doctrine of Double Predestination and the hypocrisy of some of those who adhere to it finds ample expression in his superb satire *Holy Willie's Prayer*,<sup>81</sup> in which he ridicules the concept of a God

Wha, as it pleases best Thysel,

Sends ane to heaven an' ten to Hell

A' for Thy glory,

And no for onie guid or ill

They've done before Thee!

- ll. 2-6

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<sup>81</sup> See Burns, Robert, *Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. James Barke, London and Glasgow: Collins, 1944.

Like the ministers whose side he takes in *The Kirk's Alarm*, he takes the simple view

**That what is not sense must be nonsense-**

**l.6**

His own philosophy and theology are concisely given in his *Epistle to a Young Friend*. Life is unfair and most men are not to be trusted (vv.2-5), which sentiment obviously reflects the Bard's own, well-documented experience. "The sacred love o' weel-plac'd love" (v.6) is to be indulged "Luxuriantly" but the "illicit" is to be avoided. His final word deflects any accusations of hypocrisy:

**And may ye better reck the rede,**

**Than ever did th' adviser!**

**- ll.87-8**

Like the Seceders, he deplores using the threat of Hell as a means of social control:

**The fear o' Hell's a Hangman's whip**

**To hand the wretch in order,**

**- ll.57-8**

Burns advises his young friend Andrew rather to follow his own sense of honour. God is to be honoured and will not be mocked:

**The great Creator to revere**

**Must sure become the creature;**

**...**

**An atheist-laugh's a poor exchange**

**For Deity offended!**

**- ll.65-6, 71-2**

**and at times when conscience offers insufficient strength in the face of temptation**

A correspondence fix'd wi' Heav'n  
Is sure a noble anchor!

- ll.79-80

Burns is little associated with prayer in the popular mind but several of his Prayers portray a troubled, remorseful soul before a justly judging but loving and forgiving God. In *Prayer under the Pressure of Violent Anguish*, Burns refuses to accept that the Almighty could “act / From cruelty or wrath!” (ll.9-10), so his affliction must be “To suit some wise design” (l.14) which he prays God may give him the strength “To bear and not repine!” (l.16). *A Prayer in the Prospect of Death* attempts to reason with God, who has formed the poet “With passions wild and strong” (l.10) but he admits finally that where he has intentionally sinned he can only rely on God’s goodness which “still / Delighteth to forgive” (l.20). In *Stanzas Written in the Prospect of Death*, Burns admits that, although God may be free of all motives of “cruelty or wrath”, there is nevertheless a fearful side to His nature:

I tremble to approach an angry God,  
And justly smart beneath his sin-avenging rod.

- ll.8-9

There is no irony at work here: this is a remorseful soul who fully accepts God’s right to punish and discipline him. Although “loth to leave this earthly scene” (l.1), he fears that, should he repent and “promise never more to disobey” (l.11) and should God restore him to health, he would only sin once more, “Again exalt the brute and sink the man” (l.15). This last line is particularly significant for it is effectively a condemnation of the very lifestyle for which Burns is most revered by would-be acolytes who do not read his poetry.

Burns may have resigned himself in life to his weaknesses (while accepting the consequences of his actions, as witnessed by *Welcome to a Bastard Wean*) but at the critical moment he could only bow before God and plead for mercy. A sense of sin is still very strong in his work; despite his leanings towards Moderatism, repentance was still a spiritual necessity.

Burns is perhaps most a man of his age in his inspiration and in his scepticism towards superstition. He inscribes his works with quotations from Goldsmith and Pope as well as Gawin Douglas and Scripture and his *Address to the Deil*, while it betrays no disbelief in the Evil One, satirises those who perceive the Devil in every night-time shadow and sound far more subtly than does his glorious *Tam o' Shanter*, set in Kirk-Alloway "Whare Ghaists and houlits nightly cry" (l.88). The *Address* offers an important insight into Burns's awareness of his situation before God, even when indulging himself: although writing under the inspiration of John Barleycorn, he is determined to "turn a corner jinkin" (l.119) and cheat the Devil yet. His flesh may be weak, but he knows whose side he is determined to be on – and hopes that the Devil himself might yet repent (v.21).

The emergence of Burns as the greatest Scottish poet after the Reformation – and one of the great writers of world literature - demonstrates a clear change in the social and cultural life of the country by the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. His work reflects the spread of new ideas of freedom and equality. His theology was far from what would later be termed "liberal" but he rejected that in Scottish Calvinism which struck him as nonsensical and which bred hypocrisy and double standards, along with the persisting superstition of the countryside. He drew his inspiration from a much wider canon than Scripture and, although he warned the young ladies of his acquaintance that novels "make your youthful fancies reel" (*O, Leave Novéls*, l.6) he himself attended dancing classes "in absolute defiance"<sup>82</sup> of his father. And of course, he did not view the beauties of nature or romantic love as unfit subjects for the pen of a man of faith, nor did his readership find them objectionable.

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By the second decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the old, largely rural, parish-based Scotland had passed into history. Inadequate response to urban immigration on the part of the Kirk had produced an unchurched, pagan generation<sup>83</sup> and new political and philosophical ideas had weakened the Kirk's hold on people's thoughts and

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<sup>82</sup> Burns, *op. cit.*, p.12

<sup>83</sup> See Drummond and Bulloch, *op. cit.*, pp.143ff.

actions. New ideas were about and the intellectual climate was now free enough for a major re-examination of Scotland's history, social, political and theological. The Edinburgh of the Enlightenment produced the very man for the task – and his was not a lone voice.

## Part Two

### **Literary Portrayals of the Covenanters and the Killing Times in the Works of Scott, Hogg and Galt**

#### **I – Genesis**

In May, 1816, Sir Walter Scott received a visit from his friend Joseph Train.<sup>84</sup> On Train's remarking favourably on a portrait Scott owned of the royalist General John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, Scott asserted that "No man has been more traduced by his Historians". In discussing the literary possibilities of Claverhouse's life and times, Train suggested a narrative *à la* Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, delivered through the historical character of Old Mortality, as a suitable literary device to satisfy the 'Western zealots' who still revered the Covenanters persecuted by Claverhouse. The novel appeared later that year, to less than universal acclaim for its historicity.

Meanwhile, James Hogg, who shared Scott's publisher, was working on his own novel about the times, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*,<sup>85</sup> which was delayed in publication and did not appear for another two years. Scott did not find it worth the wait. Later, in 1823, there appeared John Galt's *Ringan Gilhaize*,<sup>86</sup> a deliberate response to *Old Mortality* in which Galt sought to reverse what would now be termed Scott's historical revisionism. Between them, with their varying portrayals of the Killing Times, the Covenanters and particularly Claverhouse, these three novels demonstrate not only different interpretations of the Killing Times but also different approaches to the portrayal of history in the novel.

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<sup>84</sup> See Scott, Sir Walter, *The Tale of Old Mortality* [1816], ed. Douglas S. Mack, London: Penguin, 1999, pp.xx-xxi.

<sup>85</sup> Hogg, James, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* [1818], ed. Douglas S. Mack, Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1976

<sup>86</sup> Galt, John, *Ringan Gilhaize* [1823], ed. Patricia J. Wilson, Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1984

## II - Scott: *The Tale of Old Mortality* (1816)

Sir Walter Scott (1771 - 1832) was raised in Edinburgh and the Borders, imbibing the stimulating culture of the Enlightenment city and the exciting folklore of the lawless countryside. By the time Scott was born, the ideas of the Enlightenment had taken hold on the intellectual life of the nation: Scotland's pursuit of advancement through the embracing of Germanic liberty in a unified British state had reduced the Celtic element of the nation's culture to a memory distant enough to be viewed with sentimentality. Scott, an alleged Episcopalian<sup>87</sup> who "dreaded" religion as a threat to good government but who nevertheless felt the Tory's fear of anarchy,<sup>88</sup> saw this national redirection – or reinvention - as necessary but lamentable. He had nothing to say on the Highland Clearances because they seemed inevitable to him,<sup>89</sup> a clear example of the *laissez-faire* attitude which his generation had derived from the work of Smith.<sup>90</sup> However, in Scott new ideas were to redress the balance in a new synthesis.

Scott was aware that the past was slipping away<sup>91</sup> and he was "infuriated"<sup>92</sup> by the smug contempt in which it was now held by those who felt they had escaped it.<sup>93</sup> In Scott, however, there merged the Enlightenment ideas of advancement and progress in society with the Romantic concept of the equation of the primitive with the authentic, as epitomised in the "noble savage" of Rousseau,<sup>94</sup> itself inspired by the spurious translations from "Ossian's" Gaelic by James Macpherson (1736-96). The influence of the romantic element in Scotland's past had come full circle, although it is perhaps too glib to categorise Scott as a Romantic novelist.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Henry Sefton discusses this point thoroughly. See Sefton, Henry R., 'Scott as Churchman', in *Scott and his Influence. The Papers of the Aberdeen Scott Conference, 1982*, ed. J.H. Alexander and David Hewitt, Aberdeen: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1983, pp.234-42.

<sup>88</sup> See Hogg, James, *Anecdotes of Sir W. Scott*, ed. Douglas S. Mack, Edinburgh: Scottish Academic press, 1983, pp.37-9.

<sup>89</sup> See Herman, *op. cit.*, p.256.

<sup>90</sup> See pp.29-30.

<sup>91</sup> See Herman, *op. cit.*, p.248.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p.261

<sup>93</sup> See p.29.

<sup>94</sup> See Pittock, *op. cit.*, p.261.

<sup>95</sup> See Daiches, David, *Literary Essays*, Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1966, p.88f.

Scott's anthologising was an attempt to preserve Scotland's authentic folk literature; his original literature (his first works in the 1790s were translations of Burger and Goethe from the German) was an attempt to unite the part-Celtic and (allegedly) part-Saxon nation of Scotland into a whole, emphasising the noble and spirited in both elements in order to unite them in pursuit of liberty and advancement while underlining why the nation had had to take the path it had chosen in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Giving up poetry for prose after the success of Byron threatened to eclipse him as a writer, Scott won an audience for the new literary form of the historical novel (rescuing the novel from the slightly disreputable image it had enjoyed since the days of *Moll Flanders*)<sup>96</sup> and almost single-handedly created a popular image of a noble, romantic past which the heirs of the Enlightenment could be proud of, in an anticlassical idiom based on medieval forms which was nevertheless acceptable to the literary establishment as historical.<sup>97</sup>

It was in this context that Scott, in only his fifth novel, risked offending with his panegyric of Claverhouse a public which believed in "the fidelity of tradition",<sup>98</sup> not in the use of history as illustration,<sup>99</sup> and expected him to champion their heroes the (latter)<sup>100</sup> Covenanters, who were still generally regarded as martyrs for religious freedom. Although Scott claimed to have consulted a wide range of sources, oral and written, his was a re-interpretation of history in an original story which was more of a reflection on the past than an adherence to the prevailing understanding of it.<sup>101</sup>

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**The title *The Tale of Old Mortality* is deceptive: Old Mortality was an itinerant who tended the graves and tombstones of martyred Covenanters in south-west Scotland**

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<sup>96</sup> Note Burns's reaction to the novel (see p.36).

<sup>97</sup> See Herman, *op. cit.*, pp.253-4

<sup>98</sup> See Ferris, I, *The Achievement of Literary Authority. Gender, History and the Waverley Novels*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991, p.162.

<sup>99</sup> See Daiches, *op. cit.*, p.90.

<sup>100</sup> See p.19.

<sup>101</sup> See Ferris, *op. cit.*, p.162.

but the novel neither concerns his life and work nor reflects his sympathies. The narrator, one Mr Pattieson, purports to have collected the (fictitious) tale from Old Mortality's verbatim account but not without consulting "the most authentic sources of tradition, afforded by the representations of either party" (p.13), including further oral sources as well as written ones. The narrative is thus removed from the source and, by implication, purged of bias. While the principle of further research is certainly justifiable for confirmation of detail and provision of national and historical perspective, it is a deception towards the expectations of the readership and disrespectful of the deceased to use the name of one who so revered the Covenanters as the title of a novel which so obviously displays the biases and prejudices of Pattieson, who shows himself a man of his time through his vocabulary and opinions, denouncing the Covenanters' "intolerance and narrow-minded bigotry" and describing Old Mortality, in the language of the Enlightenment, as "a pious enthusiast" (ch.1). The suffering preachers he portrays as madmen and he champions the Covenanters' most reviled enemy as a gentleman. Scott further distances himself from Old Mortality – and Pattieson – by means of the facetiously-named schoolmaster editor Jedediah Cleishbotham but the novel, centred as it is around a fictitious event, is Scott's and no-one else's and he must bear responsibility for the editorial narrative as well as the misleading nature of the title.

Old Mortality appears only briefly, in the introduction, to represent the futility of attempting to keep alive historical memory in later generations. He regards his labour as 'a sacred duty ... trimming, as it were, the beacon-light which was to warn future generations to defend their religion even unto blood' (p.10). However, although his memory is still revered (p.12), his work dies with him for no-one continues it after him and by the time of Pattieson's narrative, the gravestones are decaying (p.13). Even to the martyrs' own spiritual successors, the Cameronians<sup>102</sup> who had once extended Old Mortality hospitality (p.10), the Covenanters are merely part of hallowed folklore, irrelevant to daily life. People may, like Galt's Balwhidder,<sup>103</sup> indicate the gravestones to their sons and exhort them to be ready to fight to the death for the cause (p.7) but they share the common superstition that the martyrs' gravestones are miraculously surviving after Old Mortality's attention

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<sup>102</sup> See p.20.

<sup>103</sup> See p.61.

while others disintegrate (pp.12-3). This detachment from the past is partly explained by the circumstances which impede Pattieson's research (p.13): changing patterns in agriculture had stimulated rural emigration, weakening collective folk memory.

The ultimate failure of Old Mortality to maintain beyond his own lifetime a memorial to those whom he revered is a tragedy, ironically underlined by his nickname. By implying this, Scott (for it is he) clears the way for his own narrative and his own interpretation of the dead past, compiled from many sources oral and written, probably more informed on the overall picture than Old Mortality was but expressing sympathies fit to have the martyrs bursting out of their graves in wrath and indignation.

Scott opens his narrative with a brief sketch of the ideological divisions prevalent in Lowland Restoration Scotland and their political consequences, using editorial comment and historical licence. Scott makes the accurate observation (pp.14-15) that Acts of Council enforcing certain observances only forced many to take a stand on matters of conscience such as the playing of musical instruments, dancing and general merry-making, which might otherwise have seduced the younger generation into conformity. He does so by resorting to a fictitious assembly dated 5 May, despite the King's birthday celebrations on the 29<sup>th</sup>, the 5<sup>th</sup> being conveniently close to the murder of Archbishop Sharp on the 3<sup>rd</sup><sup>104</sup> to allow Balfour to flee from Fife to central Lanarkshire and meet young Morton on that date, thereby providing a pretext for involving young Morton in the plot.<sup>105</sup>

Sharp's murder is itself a significant event but the circumstances occasioning it allow Scott to explore the psychology of the Covenanters in addition to their theology. In so doing, Scott is the only author within the scope of this study who truly explains the motivation of the Covenanters, despite, or rather, because of, his disagreement with them: he explains their motivation precisely in order to express his disagreement, if not disapproval.

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<sup>104</sup> See p.20.

<sup>105</sup> See Sir Walter Scott, *O.M.*, p.16n.

The more extreme adherents to The Solemn League and Covenant<sup>106</sup> regarded it as an eternally-binding contract on the entire nation of Scotland and, to Balfour<sup>107</sup> and his ilk, those, including Charles II, who betrayed it,<sup>108</sup> were traitors against God and the established order, not only to be actively resisted but also to be treated as legitimate targets for violent action.<sup>109</sup> This claim to constitutional legitimacy explains why the Covenanters were willing to form a rebel army against the government of the day but it does not fully explain why they were willing to assassinate an unarmed and defenceless elderly man. Extreme Antinomianism,<sup>110</sup> of which Scottish Calvinism was not exempt, concluded that no act committed by one of God's Elect could possibly be sinful, otherwise God would not allow it to take place. Accordingly, any opportunity for action which presented itself had to be acted upon: if an arch-traitor to the Covenant appeared on a barren moor without a soldier in sight to aid him, then the circumstances must be from God and the traitor should be advantageously executed. As the narrator of *Old Mortality* explains,

In their excited imaginations the casual rencounter had the appearance of a providential interference, and they put to death the archbishop, with circumstances of great and cool-blooded cruelty, under the belief, that the Lord, as they expressed it, had delivered him into their hand.  
- p.33

Clearly, the Covenanters are not Scott's heroes: the reasoning voice in *Old Mortality* is, despite family associations, distinguished from the Covenanters by conviction and temperament. Through Morton, Scott emphasises the social grievances of those branded traitors for acts of common decency rather than the social and political grievances of those fighting and suffering for the cause. Scott admits that barbarities were committed on both sides (almost as if the one justified the other) but he leaves the impression that the Covenanters have no business taking up arms for their cause. Apart from the hero and one old woman of admirable piety and compassion, the worthy, including Claverhouse, are all firmly on the right side of

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<sup>106</sup> See p.15.

<sup>107</sup> Lukács's Marxist reading of *O.M.* has Balfour appearing "in order to fulfil his historic mission". See Lukács, Georg, *The Historical Novel*, tr. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell, London: Merlin Press, 1962, p.38.

<sup>108</sup> McCrie (p.139) notes that the Restoration Settlement was in breach of Charles II's Coronation Oath.

<sup>109</sup> See pp.20-1.

<sup>110</sup> See pp.9ff.

the law.

Morton's debate with Balfour<sup>111</sup> explores the polemics of Covenanting theology and highlights the Covenanters' justification for their actions. The application of theology to life, Balfour protests, can work disturbingly against natural feeling, especially when called to obey even to the shedding of (another's) blood:-

“... Think you not it is a sore trial for flesh and blood to be called upon to execute the righteous judgements of Heaven while we are yet in the body, and retain that blinded sense and sympathy for carnal suffering which makes our own flesh thrill when we strike a gash upon the body of another?”  
- p.43

This proper “sense and sympathy for carnal suffering” is not lacking in Balfour, making him prone to doubt

“... the origin of that strong impulse with which their prayers for heavenly direction under difficulties have been inwardly answered and confirmed, and confuse, in their disturbed apprehensions, the responses of Truth himself with some strong delusion of the enemy...”

Here we see the disturbed Antinomian conscience, despite inward confirmation of the theory, finding the practice too much for finer feeling, leading to doubts about the source of the inward confirmation. (This inner turmoil further expresses itself in nightmares; see *O.M.*, p.59). Morton, by contrast, opines that, if an action prove unnatural to one's God-given conscience, its consummation cannot possibly be the will of God. His strong scepticism regarding divine inspiration prompting “a line of conduct contrary to those feelings of natural humanity, which Heaven has assigned to us as the general law of our conduct” momentarily disturbs Balfour, who retreats hastily into the realms of his own logic and attributes Morton's lack of vision to his spiritual state, he being “yet within the dungeon-house of the Law”. The natural human conscience may serve for the normal course of affairs, but these are

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<sup>111</sup> Kerr is not impressed by this argument, dismissing it as “one absurd prejudice meeting its opposite head-on.” See Kerr, James, *Fiction Against History. Scott as a Story-Teller*, Cambridge: C.U.P., 1989, p.47.

exceptional times, requiring, as in wartime, exceptional measures:-

**Trow ye, that in this day of bitterness and calamity, nothing is required at our hands but to keep the moral law as far as our carnal frailty will permit?-think ye our conquests must be only over our corrupt and evil affections and passions?-no-we are called upon when we have girded up our loins to run the race boldly, and when we have drawn the sword to smite the ungodly with the edge, though he be our neighbour, and the man of power and cruelty, though he were of our own kindred and the friend of our bosom.”**

In the end, it is a question of who has the rule of law on their side. Morton opines that these sentiments, imputed to the Covenanters by their enemies, “palliate” (not “exculpate”) the admittedly “cruel measures” directed by the Council against them. “They affirm,” Morton asserts, “that you pretend to inward light, and reject the restraint of legal magistracy, and national law, and even of common humanity, when in opposition to what you call the spirit within you” – which spirit (note the small case) is their ultimate guide. Balfour rejoins that the Covenanters merely defend the true constitution:-<sup>112</sup>

**“it is they, perjured as they are, who have rejected all law, both divine and civil, and who now persecute us for adherence to the Solemn League and Covenant between God and the kingdom of Scotland, to which all of them have sworn in former days, save a few popish malignants, and which they now burn in the market-places and tread under foot in derision.”**

- pp.43-4

**Such ones are to be destroyed as civil, political and religious enemies, in God’s name**

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<sup>112</sup> See pp.20-1.

and to His glory.

Scott's representation of the Covenanters contradicts the popular perception of his time. They may be bound into a common identity and sense of purpose by the Covenant but, far from being a faithful remnant, fortified by persecution, they are superstitious, psychologically disturbed social misfits in danger of degenerating into nothing more than an outlaw band without the wise, united leadership that the Nonconformists had enjoyed in the day of Silas Morton (p.182), susceptible to the unwise advice of the zealous on military matters.<sup>113</sup> The Indulged clergyman Poundtext has sense enough to recognise that the ghastly Habakkuk Meiklewrath, with his talk of slaughtering women and dashing babies against rocks and whose eyes "betokened a bewildered imagination" (p.180), has lost his reason after years of imprisonment. (Poundtext's further fear that "an evil spirit hath possessed him" [p.181] is made in the light of his own understanding of Scripture and the evidence before him.) Young Macbriar, worn and fatigued at twenty by torture and the deprivations of "a fugitive life" (p.153) and with a "hectic blush of joy" colouring his "pale yet striking features", has taken refuge in the same extreme, vengeful theology as Meiklewrath. Already he is an impressive preacher in the Covenanting mode, a style demonstrated uniquely by Scott (pp.154-5), and he can easily be imagined exhibiting the same spirit as Meiklewrath before he is much older.

The war-footing of the 'whigs' allows them to regard all those who do not support them as legitimate targets for their own provision and they 'are said to insult and disarm the well-affected who travel in small numbers' (p.24). Naturally enough, this lawless band of 'hill folk' becomes a focus for those fleeing the law (see p.57), not only those who cannot obtain from their landlords certificates affirming their

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<sup>113</sup> McCrie, *op. cit.*, attributes the advice to fight on to "a few private gentlemen"; only a small minority of the clergy present were of Meiklewrath's opinion.

orderly lifestyle (see p.57n.)<sup>114</sup> but undoubtedly also some common criminals who found safety and refuge in numbers. We see thereby in the Covenanters parallels with the 'broken men' of the Highlands, chief among whom was Rob Roy Macgregor, the eponymous hero of another Scott novel and, far from being 'Scotland's Robin Hood' as some historical revisionists delight in portraying him, the leader of a band of brigands intent only on their own enrichment. Nor are the morals of the Covenanters what might be expected of people who take the Scriptures strictly: according to Jenny, the young Whigs are just as big a danger to a young woman travelling on her own at night as are the redcoats (p.91).<sup>115</sup> Bearing in mind the number of women and children among the Covenanters (p.133) and the binding nature of the Covenant on succeeding generations, they have the makings of a self-perpetuating outlaw community which, if the political situation had remained unchanged, may have become an isolated criminal class, turning the hills of the Southern Uplands into bandit territory and justifying their *modus vivendi* by the grievances of their ancestors, with the spirit of the faith of their ancestors having little or no bearing on them as a society or as individuals.

While the combatants and those preachers who have been tested in the crucible of persecution may be portrayed as disturbing social menaces, others are made to look merely ridiculous. Even in the midst of their plight, Mause and Kettledrummle receive scant respect:-

... the voice of the preacher emitted, in unison with that of the old woman, tones like the grumble of a bassoon combined with the screaming of a cracked fiddle. - p.125

Scott caused great offence in his time among those who still revered the martyrs as heroes with these pen portraits, as can be seen in Thomas McCrie's review of *Old Mortality* in the *Christian Instructor* of 1817, republished in 1824 as part of *A Vindication of the Scottish Covenanters*. Although it is arguable that the description of Kettledrummle's sermon as veering between the sublime and the burlesque (see

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<sup>114</sup> See p.20.

<sup>115</sup> See also p.18.

*O.M.*, p.152) must be admitted as authentic of a type,<sup>116</sup> it is in fact, according to McCrie, a “most inexcusable and outrageous misrepresentation” (see *Vindication*, p.92) of Mr John King, on whom McCrie argues Kettledrummle was based and whose surviving speeches betray nothing of the “mean, coarse, incoherent, and rhapsodical” (p.87) which Scott attributes to him. Scott’s characterisation of Mause, however, requires more detailed criticism for in this character Scott himself, arguably, descends into the burlesque, to the detriment of the novel, with consequences which have persisted and worsened beyond his time so that McCrie’s valid critique requires urgent restating.

Mause’s “ridiculous, extravagant and raving rhapsodies” (see *Vindication*, p.37) at coming among the Indulged (*O.M.*, pp.59-60)<sup>117</sup> are juxtaposed against the solid, determined common sense of her son Cuddie, who has no head for theology. His Godly deference to those who enjoy “a place o’ dignity” (p.122), including his mother herself, is tested by his mother’s tactless inability to keep her own council when their securing a livelihood depends upon her not condemning the beliefs of Cuddie’s prospective employers. His own lack of objection to his mother’s “clavers” (p.60) on the grounds that “they aye set [him] sleeping” comes as a jolt to a readership sympathetic to Mause’s dilemma of conscience and, by making her scruples a matter of jest, Scott trivialisingly reduces Mause to a caricature of a type which was to become a stock-in-trade of popular fiction, persisting down to our own time in popular television drama: the religious eccentric who personifies religiosity as something unsociable, if not akin to madness. Scott may be making a historical point regarding how easily and unjustly “a douce quiet family” (p.73) like that of Milnewood’s could be brought to ruin in such times by introducing onto the premises at an inopportune moment an unassailable old carle whose opinions no strong government need heed or fear, but her reaction to the Test<sup>118</sup> in a hackneyed torrent of condemnatory language and an absurd overabundance of Scriptural references in a parody of the preachers of the day was objectionable in Scott’s time

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<sup>116</sup> David Brown quotes James Anderson’s defence of Scott on this point: “Scott speaks the language [of the Covenanters] like a native.” See Brown, David, *Walter Scott and the Historical Imagination*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974, p.74. Lars Hartveit, however, finds Bessie Maclure unconvincing. See Brown, *op. cit.*, p.89.

<sup>117</sup> See p.19.

<sup>118</sup> See p.21.

and is even more so today: it betrays a total lack of sympathy on the part of Scott for Mause in her dilemma (presumably she has, in Scott's opinion, no business not taking the Oath); it implies that Mause as a woman has no business in acting the preacher, an anachronistic point of view to an age such as ours in which even the most conservatively evangelical are benefiting from the perspectives of, if not Feminist Theology, then at least a female perspective on theology; and, while it all may have seemed funny to Scott's co-religionists and offensive to those who, like McCrie and Galt, would have expected Mause to be treated with the reverence due a martyr, a whole chapterful of such sustained, unrestrained and unyielding religious hysteria is nothing less than wearisome to readers who have tired of this sort of thing, it having latterly come to be presented as serious character study definitive of a whole section of society which is to be shunned by 'normal' people. Parody runs the danger of becoming its own victim.<sup>119</sup>

Bessie Maclure is the most sympathetically portrayed of the Covenanters, for she has suffered, like Morton, for obeying her God-given conscience before the dictates of her cause. Despite her having lost two sons to the cause, she nevertheless saw fit to shelter the wounded Evandale after Bothwell Brigg,<sup>120</sup> for which act of Christian charity she has been ostracised by her co-religionists, who would have had her be to him "what Jael was to Sisera" (p.328, see Judges 4:21). This, together with her warning Balfour (while accompanied by Morton [p.35]) of "a lion in the path" shows her "willing to save the life o' friend and fae" (p.331), which disposition, in the absence of narrative comment to the contrary, we may conclude to meet with Scott's approval. Bessie thereby serves as a moral lesson to those who would dare take up arms against God's secular anointed: no matter how sincerely one's rejection as "Erastian" of a religious establishment based on parliamentary legislation, like that of the Settlement of 1690 under William and Mary (p.331),<sup>121</sup> it is rather one's duty to endure. Scott, however, notably fails to address the earlier ecclesiastical compulsions such as fines for not attending the local parish kirk.<sup>122</sup> This leaves unanswered the question as to whether he disapproved of such

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<sup>119</sup> In discussing Poundtext, Scott expressed regret on this point, stating that had he known what reaction to expect he would have used "a higher tone". See Scott, Sir Walter, *The Heart of Midlothian* [1818]. Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1891, p.866 (Note O).

<sup>120</sup> See p.20.

<sup>121</sup> See p.24.

<sup>122</sup> See p.19.

legislation as unjust and therefore contributory to the Covenanters' uprising, or whether he believes the Covenanters should have accepted the Indulgence, keeping any qualms of conscience to themselves.

Scott's general sympathies are clear from the characters who receive his approval for their honour, loyalty and bravery. Henry Morton, the undoubted hero of the novel, is at home in polite society and, although he becomes embroiled with the Covenanters, he has no time for their zeal and is never of them. He is undauntingly courageous, with 'a firm and uncompromising detestation of oppression, whether in politics or religion' (p.109). He condemns the injustice of Cuddie's captivity as "the most infamous and intolerable oppression" (p.122) and, as one 'claiming only the ordinary rights of Scottish freemen' (pp.220-1), seeks no more than that claimed in his time "by the Apostle Paul himself" (p.124).<sup>123</sup> Apparently, this does not include the right to worship as one sees fit.<sup>124</sup> Accordingly, he takes up arms against the government, not for any ecclesiastical reason sanctioned by Calvin,<sup>125</sup> but because of injustices wrought on loyal, innocent subjects like himself and his family in the name of suppressing a rebellion the origins of which they disown. Accepted as a 'leader and councillor' (p.178) on the strength of his parentage by the hill-folk (who, for a gathered body of true believers, are curiously respectful of persons on this point), he is sensible enough to despair of the factionalism among the hill-folk under "a bloodthirsty madman ... an old scholastic pedant" and, in Balfour's own words, "a desperate homicide" (p.182).<sup>126</sup> He is brave and unflustered in the face of Bothwell's bullying and holds his own in theological discussion with Balfour without ever going beyond the bounds of respect due to a former companion-in-arms of his late father. His bravery and good manners commend him as much as does his sense of right and the good word of a noble loyalist such as Major Bellenden puts the

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<sup>123</sup> Kerr, *op. Cit.*, p.51, argues that Morton himself twists Scripture here.

<sup>124</sup> McCrie, *op. cit.*, p.76, sees Morton's "necessarily" being guided by his uncle's sentiments in religion (see *O.M.*, p.35) as "passive obedience with a witness!" leading to Hobbes's "wicked principle" that one must conform to the norms of one's society.

<sup>125</sup> See pp.20-2.

<sup>126</sup> Watson is unconvinced by Morton, whom he never sees expressing "intellectual conviction" about his principles, while surrounded by "satirical figures" who never cease doing so "in endlessly pedantic or comic fashion". See Watson, Roderick, *The Literature of Scotland*, Basingstoke and London: MacMillan, 1984, p.262.

ultimate seal of approval on his character. However, as Kerr points out,<sup>127</sup> Morton is operating from the privileged position of the lower gentry as a self-styled moderate and “not as a clear-eyed champion of universal rights”. This makes it all the more ironic that the grounds on which Balfour sees fit to take up arms against divinely-ordained government lie outwith the scope permitted by Calvin and, they would say, scrupulously adhered to by the Covenanters. Calvin would have Scott’s apparently moderate hero for a wicked rebel against the instrument of a chastising God.

Bellenden is, like Balfour, a former companion-in-arms of old Morton, having served under Montrose.<sup>128</sup> He is loyal, fair and faithful: although he finds Claverhouse’s duties not to his liking (p.98), he is sufficiently loyal and devout an Episcopalian for Edith to doubt whether he would approve of her taking “any interest in a Presbyterian” (p.99). This is, however, to underestimate his fairness in assessing the character of young Morton and his faithfulness to the memory of his old companion:-

“He was a brave soldier; and, if he was once wrong, he was once right too.”

Such a fine point would have been lost on Serjeant Bothwell, to whom all of compromised loyalty, such as the Indulged, are traitors worthy of the worst he can do. In him are personified the worst excesses of the soldiery, sequestrating goods on the flimsiest of pretexts beyond their authority and using the Test Oaths as a blunt instrument for bullying and extortion. Despite this, he is no mere scapegoat, but a loyal, brave soldier who meets his death defiantly, “fearing nothing” (p.140) and, thereby, ultimately winning the reader’s respect.

## Conclusion

Far from being a celebration of the Covenanters and their cause, therefore, *Old Mortality* is a decidedly unfavourable reinterpretation of the movement. Rather than heroic stalwarts of a noble cause, they are unjustifiable, traitorous murderers

<sup>127</sup> See Kerr, *op. cit.*, p.52.

<sup>128</sup> See p.15.

who bring unjust suffering upon those among whom they come. Without tackling Covenanting theology systematically, Scott characterises the movement's preachers and soldiers as dysfunctional individuals driven to extreme actions by the logical conclusions of their own ideas and their perception of themselves as God's own, charged with establishing His Kingdom on earth in the manner of the Children of Israel entering the Promised Land, sweeping aside as traitors even those who would be their fellow-travellers up to a point. In the character of Mausie, their foibles and oratorical style are made to look ridiculous in a manner which was to become caricaturistic until readers (and viewers) lost touch with what it was meant to parody and, overlooking Bessie Maclure, mistook the caricature for the real thing, a perception which spoils the novel for the more informed among later readers by making Scott's attempt at humour look merely insulting. Scott's sympathies are with the brave and the loyal: those loyal to the Crown and, above all, those who are brave enough to oppose tyranny and injustice when it threatens basic liberties. Yet in this he goes further than the Calvinistic teaching followed by the Covenanters, which endorsed opposition to civil government only when the religious liberties and ecclesiastic establishment which the government was bound to uphold were violated, whereas Scott implicitly endorses Morton's taking up arms against the infringement of civil rights, which Calvin calls upon the faithful to endure. To Calvin and the Covenanters, God's prerogative is the only cause which merits armed opposition to divinely ordained government; Scott seems to suggest, Episcopalian that he is, that opposition to the Indulgence was at best unnecessary hair-splitting and at worst a sin against the Lord's anointed. While civil liberties may be fought for, this right does not extend to the Church's determining its own form of government.

### III – Hogg: *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* (1818)

James Hogg (1770-1835) was born into poor farming stock and was largely self-taught, he left school at the age of seven after the failure of his father's farm. Although he came to prominence through his close association with Scott as an anthologist, his first poem appeared in 1794, two years before Scott's first published work. Although he spoke loyally of Scott as his greatest friend, Scott seems to have regarded him mainly as a useful tool: Hogg received no support or encouragement in his magazine project of 1810, *The Spy*, which lasted only a year; he seems to have been generally regarded as a rural buffoon within Edinburgh literary circles. His first success came with *The Queen's Wake* (1813), described by Thomas Crawford<sup>129</sup> as "a spiritual allegory". Giving up poetry for prose after Scott directed the reading public's interest away from verse to the historical novel, Hogg's first attempt was a novel on the effect of the Killing Times on the people of the Borders, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*.

The stark contrast which *The Brownie* made with Scott's *Old Mortality*, which had addressed the same general theme two years previously, caused many readers to regard it as a direct response to Scott's reinterpretation of the times. This Hogg denied: *The Brownie* was directly contemporaneous with *Old Mortality* but its production had been inexplicably delayed by Scott and Hogg's common publisher, Blackwood.

The reasons for this delay are unrecorded but it is not difficult to imagine why a publisher should not want to publish simultaneously two novels which gave such contradictory perspectives on the one theme, especially when one was written by a well-established (although still anonymous) historical novelist and the other by a rustic upstart who had previously proved to be a useful assistant in collecting folksongs and now aspired to cut an independent figure for himself as a novelist in literary Edinburgh. A two-year delay in the publication of *The Brownie* may have made the novel look like a response to *Old Mortality*, but to publish simultaneously with his own a novel with a contradictory perspective might have seemed to Scott a

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<sup>129</sup> See Crawford, *op. cit.*, p.91.

direct affront by Blackwood. There is no evidence that Scott was privy to any deliberate suppression of *The Brownie*, despite the novels' obvious similarities, chief of which is their central heroic figures who are not of the Covenanters but are made to suffer along with them. The offence which Scott took at *The Brownie* seems to have been a genuine reaction to an unpleasant shock.

The novel is set in 1685, during the Killing Times, and has two intertwining themes: the sheltering of a group of the most extreme Covenanters by Katherine, unbeknown to her father, Walter Laidlaw of Chapelhope, and the tribulations and subsequent trial of Walter for allegedly sheltering Covenanters himself on the flimsiest of evidence, unrelated to his daughter's actions. As often with a first novel, Hogg wrote about what he knew, crafting his story out of tales heard in childhood. It is limited in range: unlike Galt and, to a lesser extent, Scott, he does not set his tale within the wider context of the Covenanting movement or even the Killing Times. Like Galt, however, in stark contrast to Scott, he is "structured by the fidelity of tradition"<sup>130</sup> in his approach to history: while Scott was merely reflecting on the past, Hogg and Galt were attempting at authenticity in their admittedly fictionalised accounts to keep alive the memory of what sort of things actually happened to real people.

Although he resorted to established sources like Wodrow, and expanded the work in the second edition to make it more encompassing (for example, adding to Nanny's song on Bothwell Brig<sup>131</sup> verses which dwelt specifically on the Covenant [see p.43n]), he is writing from the perspective of an Uplander and is concerned only with how the Covenanting Movement and the persecution it engendered encroached upon the non-Covenanting, loyal people of the Uplands in the immediate aftermath of Bothwell Brig, subjecting them unjustly to misery and deprivation. The account of the lad coming from Moffat being shot for 'carrying more bread than they thought he could well account for' (p.13), for example, Mack does not trace in his critical edition, so we may attribute it to the local folklore. Even so, Hogg is not free from taking liberties, if not succumbing to superstition himself. The name Walter Biggar, for example, was appropriated from a neighbouring gravestone for one of

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<sup>130</sup> Ferris, *op. cit.*, p.162

<sup>131</sup> See p.20.

the Covenanters buried in Ettrick kirkyard (see p.79n.). The route followed by Claverhouse in pursuit of the Covenanters may have been preserved by collective folk memory as he maintains (see p.76) but even to Hogg the route seems “impossible” unless Clavers really was infernal – a suggestion which the narrative voice will not openly dismiss. The endurance of the hoofmarks of Claverhouse’s horse, which Hogg claims to have observed ‘in awe and astonishment’, we leave to students of other disciplines to ponder.

Hogg’s account of the Killing Times is largely anecdotal but he defends the underlying tradition as ‘descended from source, and by such a line, as amounts with [the narrator] to veracity’ and, although none of these incidents are corroborated by Wodrow and Huie (or “Howie”),<sup>132</sup> others of like ilk ‘fully corroborate them’.

Scott may have found unacceptable Hogg’s material from the oral tradition but that is not to say that Scott discounted the tradition itself: in the Magnum Opus edition of *Old Mortality*, published after the first edition of *The Brownie* (see *B.B.*, p.107n.), Scott attributes to *Old Mortality* himself the anecdote about the severed head being used as a football by government troops. Although far from authenticating all Hogg’s material, this incidence does establish Hogg’s oral tradition as a plausible source which cannot be dismissed out of hand.

From this tradition, Hogg illustrates Claverhouse’s *modus operandi* through a series of acts which would be defined as war crimes under the Geneva Conventions. The dispersal of a Conventicle at Bewly, Roxburghshire one Sunday morning resulted in over one hundred dead and wounded and the same may have happened that evening at Helmburn-linn, Selkirkshire had the alarm not been raised (see p.102). The targeting of the preachers and ‘the most respectable in appearance’ of their hearers sought to deprive the Conventiclers of leadership, with many leading family names of the area listed among those taken to Edinburgh (see p.103) and the herding together of the entire population of Annandale, parish by parish, to take the Oath<sup>133</sup> on pain of death gave the government a valid legal reason to take strong action against the slightest hint of further trouble in the area at a time when the possession

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<sup>132</sup> See Hogg, *B.B.*, p.105n..

<sup>133</sup> See p.21.

of an old gun-flint was judged sufficient proof of rebellious intention (see pp.110-1).

Although Hogg develops only Claverhouse and Macpherson as *personae* among his military characters, the atrocities committed by the soldiers under cover of duty are clear enough. The torturing and feigned shooting of children (pp.68-70) is testified to in Wodrow (n.), although the blindfolding is Hogg's addition. Nanny's reference to the Calvinistic doctrine of Providence is considered whiggish by Captain Bruce, who commands Nanny to "renounce Providence, and all that I bid you to renounce" on pain of death, as if he had plenipotentiary powers (pp.49-50).

Sometimes, indeed, the Killing Times served as an excuse for actions with ulterior motives. Hogg cites the case of Captain Bruce finding family prayer a good enough excuse to have shot a tenant farmer of the Earl of Traquair 'who would neither cultivate his farm nor give it up' (p.53), for which favour we may imagine the Earl was suitably grateful. Hogg asserts there were many such cases, with scarcely any records of subsequent redress.

Mack notes (p.xviii) how Hogg attempts in *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* to recreate the atmosphere of the storytelling from which he derived his material. As a history of the effects of the Killing Times on the people of the Southern Uplands, the main characters of *The Brownie* are all locals; otherwise, as Mack argues (p.xv), Hogg would, like Scott and Galt, have made Covenanters and Royalists the central figures. Claverhouse and the Lords of the Congregation are only comparatively minor characters in *The Brownie* (although the same is true of *Ringan Gilhaize*); of the government soldiers, only Serjeant Daniel Roy Macpherson need be developed as a character, to aid the sub-plot of Walter's arrest and trial to its climax; the rest are mere tin soldiers to be positioned and manoeuvred as part of Hogg's *exposé* of Claverhouse's atrocities. The most substantial characters, Walter and the members of his household, each personify a philosophy of life: Walter is the honest, loyal man, sceptical of religious sham but without the power of imagination to dismiss

superstition,<sup>134</sup> who will not allow his loyalty to the Crown to override his principal duties as a human being; his wife Mausie, despite her show of piety and devotion, is deeply superstitious, although not entirely devoid of sense, as witnessed by her reply to Captain Bruce when he commands her to put her Bible on the fire (p.55); their daughter Katherine shares her father's humanity and, in the innocence of youth, unthinkingly goes further in practical help than her father might have dared in her position; and Nannie the kitchen help is a crypto-Covenanter.

Walter, like Morton in *Old Mortality*, is not of the Covenanters, but becomes counted among them. Whereas, however, Morton is portrayed as the reasonable face of what those who will not accept episcopacy should be, Walter is much more generally tolerant, revering, out of respect for his neighbour's conviction, anything and everything which anyone may hold sacred, without himself making any great fuss about religion, so that, despite his attested generosity (see p.167) and his ability to see through the Curate Clerk,<sup>135</sup> he was considered apathetic on matters of dispute (p.14). The weaver is surprised that Walter has never heard of the 'apologetical declaration' (p.108) – but then, neither apparently has Mack, if his scarce annotations are indicative. Like Henry Morton, Walter has no theological sympathies either with "leagues, and covenants" (p.23), for "there's a good deal o' faction and dourness in them", yet, also like Morton, he still extends aid to those who need it, regardless of ideology or circumstance. If the Lord will not pardon the starving Covenanters for stealing one of Walter's sheep, as Walter himself does, then "he's no what I think him" (p.22) and he finally approves Katherine's helping the Covenanters, all political considerations aside:-

"Deil care what side they war on, Kate!... ye hae taen the side o' human nature; the suffering and the humble side, an' the side o' feeling, my woman, that bodes best in a young inexperienced thing to tak." - p.163

Despite this centrality of local interest, however, the novel does contain enough in characterisation and editorial comment to give sufficient portrayal of the Covenanters or in commentary on their times to inform our study and invite

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<sup>134</sup> See pp.79ff.

<sup>135</sup> See p.18.

comparison with the perspectives of Scott and Galt.

*The Brownie of Bodsbeck* is not unsympathetic towards the Covenanters, although not intended as a defence of them. Hogg attests to the Covenanter's good heart in the face of death, dying 'with such apparent satisfaction' (see p.138) but admits that 'some of the Covenanters said violent and culpable things, and did worse' (p.75), although he stressed that 'the whole body' should not be blamed for these. These are the most "stern and severe" (p.161) of the persecuted, expelled from the greater body of the remnant, who see fit to act "on the principle of retaliation ... holding that to be in consistency with the laws of God and man". The shooting of the chaplain of Saint Mary of the Lowesby for a spy by some two or three on their own initiative, far from being a legitimate act of war, was 'a rash and unpremeditated act' (p.13), taken in defiance of accepted praxis,<sup>136</sup> the cure of which, 'as might well have been foreseen, ... proved worse than the disease'. The nearest Hogg comes to defending the Covenanters is to plead on their behalf that they were desperate men in desperate circumstances – 'and what will not desperate men do?' (p.12).

Theologically, Hogg's Covenanters are strict Federalists, to whom Clerk's doom "is fixed and irrevocable" (p.115). Scripture is their absolute, uncompromising and timeless authority: "... woman sinned an' woman maun suffer" concludes Nanny (p.96), with all that that implies for the place of women as well as Katherine's suspect character. Despite their political stance and military rebellion, they are not Levellers, believing in material reward for physical labour (p.162); the righteousness shown in Katherine's charity towards them will reap further blessings for her father (see p.164).

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<sup>136</sup> See p.23.

As regards praxis, Hogg, like Scott, portrays the Covenanters as a body of men bound together by ideology and adversity, fortified by the sacrifice of martyrs. ‘The *Doctor Chap*’, as Walter calls him, describes them, in language reminiscent of the *Informatory Vindication*, as “a poor despised remnant” (p.31) who can only ever obtain their liberties by standing up “for the truth of the reformed religion”. Hogg’s Covenanters, however, seem more overtly optimistic of the future than Scott’s, although their millenarian hopes may be no more than desperate wishful thinking for their own encouragement:-

‘We have seen our friends all bound, banished, and destroyed; they have died on the field, on the scaffold, and at the stake; but the reek o’ their blood shall drive the cruel Stuarts frae the land they have disgraced, and out of it a church of truth and liberty shall spring.’ - p.24

Hogg also portrays the Old Testament imagery appropriated by the Covenanters, who had looked to the Covenant between YHWH and the children of Israel for their political model of Church/State relations:-

‘There is still a handfu’ remaining in Israel that have not bowed the knee to Baal, nor yet kissed him – that remnant has fled here to escape the cruelty of man, ...’

It would appear, however, that this compact was entirely one-sided, for no Obadiah (see I Kings 18:4) comes to their aid. When their attempt at an Old Testament praxis breaks down in the face of starvation, they simply suspend it rather than re-think it or accept their abandonment, killing one of Walter’s sheep and trusting to the Lord’s forgiveness: “It was a great sin, nae doubt, but the necessity was also great” (p.22).

When the end does come, they face it unflinchingly. The interrogation of ‘Walter Biggar’ and his companions by Claverhouse, brief and precise as it is, allows Hogg

to sketch the Covenanters' political theology as well as to portray them as admirably unflinching stalwarts, although these are the most violent of the rebels, whose actions Hogg could not condone. They would indeed "pray for the king", but only "for his forgiveness, in time and place convenient, but not when every profligate bade them, which were a loathful scurrility, and a mockery of God" (p.77). This is at once a declaration of faith, a political statement and a direct personal defiance of Claverhouse, any one of which would have sufficed to have them shot. Their further refusal to acknowledge the king as 'right and lawful sovereign' on the grounds that he is a tyrant, an oppressor and a usurper who has "trampled on every civil and religious right" makes Hogg's *précis* complete and seals their fate.

More than any of the other novels, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* portrays the impact of the imposed curates.<sup>137</sup> The 'gownsmen' Clerk was appointed 'to instruct the inhabitants in the *mild* and *benignant* principles of prelacy' (p.12). The italics are Hogg's, as is the irony. Shunned by Walter, who sees through him, Clerk cultivates what parishioners he can, exerting a strong influence over Maron, whom Clerk flatters 'for her deep knowledge in true and sound divinity and the Holy Scriptures, although of both she was grossly ignorant' (p.14). Clerk is stereotypical of the image of the time that has come down through history: a drunkard, a gambler, at once misogynistic and a womaniser, and a determined spy against the Covenanters, with the further characteristics of ignorance and superstition and, above all, fanaticism, 'for it was the age and the country of fanaticism, and nothing else would take' (p.13). It was an age of extreme, irreconcilable opinions, with no mutual respect or desire to live and let live.

Clark's dishonesty is seen in his vouching for Walter's family to Claverhouse but not for Walter himself, bearing false witness against him for 'a selfish purpose' (p.74) and lying to Maron that Walter was perfectly safe (see p.87). Maron unwittingly provides opportunity for his 'selfish purpose' by confiding in him her

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<sup>137</sup> See p.18.

suspicious about Katherine's being possessed but Katherine plays on Clerk's superstition, defending her virtue from the somewhat unorthodox form of exorcism he proposes by threatening to "bring those out of the chink in the wall, or from under that hearth, that shall lay you motionless at my feet in the twinkling of an eye, or bear you off to any part of the creation that I shall name" (p.88). Although her chilling aspect on saying this only makes him suspect that she might be truly possessed after all (see p.89), he faints upon seeing the 'Brownie'; like Walter, he can think of no other explanation for the phenomenon before him than a supernatural one – and the Covenanters are not slow to exploit his fears in the way they address him, causing him to flee into destitution (see pp.115-7).

The one admirable royalist in *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* (apart from Walter himself) is Serjeant Daniel Roy Macpherson. This member of the Highland Host who has charge of Walter as prisoner, while sympathetic towards the sufferings of the Covenanters, is weary of their overt spirituality and betrays a view of Heaven which is less egalitarian than that of Calvin:-

"... such poor crhazy maniachs, who will pe filling your ears full of their rejoicings in spirit, and of Haiven! And Haiven! Just as if they were all going to Haiven! Cot t\_\_n , do they suppose that Haiven is to pe filled of such poor insignificant crheatures as they? Or that Cot is not a shentleman, that he would pe falling into such a cohmpany?"  
- p.106

While the Covenanters may not be gentlemen, however, Walter most obviously is, and is worthy of the Macpherson's sage advice. This is based on what Macpherson has seen of the Lords of the Congregation and is a damning indictment of the justice of the times:-

"... do not you pe praggng and poasting of Jaisus to be your chief; and always proving yourself to pe of the Clan-Mac-Jaisus,..."

otherwise,

“... you will be dancing a beautiful Highland shig in the air to a saulm tune...”  
 - p.107

In other words, if Walter depends on proofs of loyalty and want of evidence to the contrary, he is a dead man. Rather, Macpherson advises

“take you great and proud offence at some of their questions and their proofs; and you may be making offer to fight them all one by one, or two by two, in the king’s name, and send them all to hell in one pody; you cannot be tanning them too much sore.”

In the end, Walter does well to take Macpherson’s advice, to a standing ovation (see p.141) and the dismissal of his case on security, prompting Walter to comment

“ye’re a wheen queer chaps! Ye shoot fock for praying an’ reading the Bible, an’ when aue curses an’ damns ye, ye ca’ him a true honest man!”

- p.142

## Conclusion

*The Brownie of Bodsbeck* is the antithesis of *The Tale of Old Mortality*: where one is condemnatory of the Covenanters, the other is comprehensive, if not altogether approving; where one admits to atrocities committed during war as a regrettable inevitability even under the best of commanders, the other loudly condemns the unjust and inhumane treatment meted out to the loyal and the innocent. While it may seem inconceivable that Scott and Hogg should have been unaware that they were simultaneously writing novels on the same general theme, the fact that the results were so contradictory, to Scott’s profound displeasure, suggests that both writers kept their cards especially close to their chests.

#### IV Galt: *Ringan Gilhaize* (1823)

The gradual change in the social climate from the Enlightenment into the time of the Romantic movement can be traced through the novels of John Galt (1779-1839). Although his was not the cultural *milieu* of Edinburgh, having been born in Irvine, he nevertheless imbibed the learning of the Enlightenment through the writings of the great philosophers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century thanks to the well-stocked public library in Greenock,<sup>138</sup> where he lived from 1789 until he left for London in 1804.

Galt generally concentrated in his novels on sketching the social changes which had taken place within living memory, exhibiting, like Jane Austin, the talent for character observation which Scott so admired.<sup>139</sup> *Annals of the Parish* (1821), for example, particularly demonstrates changes in religious life over the period of the personal rule of George III (1760-1810), opening with violent protests at the Rev. Micah Balwhidder's placing by a patron against the wishes of the parishioners (Ch.I) but ending with a tearful retirement and a call to the youth of the parish to remember and, if necessary, emulate the martyrs:-

“I do not counsel passive obedience; that is a doctrine that the Church of Scotland can never abide; but the divine right of resistance, which, in the days of her trouble, she so bravely asserted against popish and prelatice usurpations, was never resorted to till the attempt was made to remove the ark of the tabernacle from her.”

- *Introduction*

Balwhidder may have given in after initial resistance to such social innovations as tea-drinking (Ch.III – Year 1762) and the theatre (Ch.XXXVI – Year 1795) as sinful indulgences, but the Kirk's constitution remains as unshakable as Balwhidder's resolve to defend it – and the memory of the Covenanters seems still strong.

Despite new ideas leading to new standards of behaviour even among the faithful, Balwhidder's religious scruples were to persist until Galt's own day. *The Ayrshire Legatees* (1820-1) reveals divisions in norms of Christian living across the

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<sup>138</sup> See Frykman, Eric, *John Galt and Eighteenth Century Scottish Philosophy*, Greenock: Greenock Philosophical Society, 1954, p.9.

<sup>139</sup> See Scott, P.H., *op. cit.*, p.78.

generations and between the neighbouring kingdoms. Young Mr. Snodgrass hides his copy of *Ivanhoe* from disapproving eyes (ch.6); the acceptance of a Sabbath dinner invitation at a private house by Mrs Pringle and her daughter Rachel while in London causes concern back home, even though their hostess gives consideration to their Presbyterian scruples and stops her daughter from playing the harp for their entertainment (ch.5). Nevertheless, as Galt portrays in *The Last of the Lairds* (1826), the old, largely rural, parish-based Scotland had passed into history. Inadequate response to urban immigration on the part of the Kirk had dechristianised a generation<sup>140</sup> and although the moral atmosphere was such that *The Last of the Lairds* was not published in unexpurgated form during Galt's lifetime (indeed, not until the present writer's lifetime), the Enlightenment had weakened the Kirk's hold on people's thoughts and actions. Nevertheless, Balwhidder was not alone in revering the martyrs and his creator was to come to their defence in response to Scott's ridicule in the "unique"<sup>141</sup> novel, *Ringan Gilhaize*.

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Ever since the appearance of *Waverley*,<sup>142</sup> Galt had disapproved of Scott's interpretation of Scottish ecclesiastical history and *Old Mortality* spurred into action the creator of the Reverends Balwhidder and Pringle:-

...I thought he treated the defenders of the Presbyterian Church with too much levity, and not according to my impressions derived from the history of that time. Indeed, to tell the truth, I was hugely provoked that he ... should have been so forgetful of what was due to the Spirit of that epoch, as to throw it into what I felt was ridicule.<sup>143</sup>

Unlike *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, *Ringan Gilhaize* is a systematic justification of the steps taken by the Covenanters in response to government action. Galt did not

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<sup>140</sup> See p.36.

<sup>141</sup> Scott, P.H., *op. cit.*, p.79.

<sup>142</sup> Galt's Rev. Dr. Pringle remarks that the novel was "no so friendly to protestant principles as I could have wished". See Galt, John, *The Ayrshire Legatees* [1820-1], Edinburgh: James Thin, p.6.

<sup>143</sup> Hogg, B.B., p.xii

share the sentiments of the Covenanters<sup>144</sup> but his novel is an attempt to restore to the public consciousness the true historical perspective as Galt understood it and which Scott has distorted with his romantic portrayal of “Bonnie Dundee”.

Not only does Galt present the Covenanters as a continuous pious folk movement which persists after it loses its noble leadership, he further presents the Covenanting movement as a natural progression of the Scottish Reformation, making *Ringan Gilhaize* the most historically ambitious novel within our study. Dissatisfaction at the nobility's not opposing the execution of Walter Mill by the Church is expressed with wistful nostalgia for the days of Wallace and Bruce (p.31).<sup>145</sup> This widens the scope of the novel to take in the general rights of freedom and justice and, by association, raises memories of the Declaration of Arbroath,<sup>146</sup> which document is reproduced in its entirety in the postscript and which, along with contemporaneous references, provides a historical defence for the Covenanters' attempt to bring down the Lord's anointed.

Galt employs a very contrived literary device to tell his story. It is a narrative by the man who shot Claverhouse at Killikrankie,<sup>147</sup> recounting the ecclesiastical history of Scotland with all its social and political implications since the days of the Reformation through the part played therein by himself and his family. From his grandfather's time in domestic service to the nobility down to the destruction of his own family after the Restoration, this “new experiment in narrative technique”<sup>148</sup> reads like a series of consequences. The fugitive Ringan's finding himself sheltered in a bishop's house, where he can overhear the Privy Council with the Roman Catholic convert Lord Perth<sup>149</sup> declaiming “*Down with the Presbyterians!*” (Book III, Chapter XXII, page 287) is typical of how Galt uses the Gilhaize family as minor players and chorus to recount by association, if not active participation, the main events in the history of this period, which the contemporaneous general reader would have recognised by allusion – unlike readers of our time, who would require

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<sup>144</sup> See Galt, *R. G.*, p.xi

<sup>145</sup> By referring to John Knox's long hair and beard “like those of the ancient patriarchs who enjoyed immediate communion with God” (Bk.I, Ch.XVII, p.64), Galt even goes so far as to imply continuity with Biblical times!

<sup>146</sup> See p.14.

<sup>147</sup> See p.24.

<sup>148</sup> See Scott, P.H., *op. cit.*, p.87.

<sup>149</sup> See p.23.

to study the history of the period to identify all the events. Galt's motive is not to tell the history, but to justify the part of the Covenanters in it by giving an inside narrative. Thus, while the events of the Bishops' Wars<sup>150</sup> (II.XV.156-7) and the Whiggamore Raid<sup>151</sup> (158) are referred to, such etiquettes are nowhere used, requiring greater effort from readers than would have been necessary in Galt's time.

The historical and theological defences are intertwined throughout the novel, which opens with reference to Knox's 'right of resistance'.<sup>152</sup> Erskine of Dun's plain speaking to Mary of Guise on rulers meddling "with the consciences of their subjects" (I.XVIII.71) justifies not only the Reformation, but also the Covenanting movement, which is at once a defence and a continuation of it. The imposition of the Prayer Book<sup>153</sup> is portrayed as the crisis point in what is perceived to be Charles I's attempt at Counter-Reformation. Ringan's father receives the news as a harbinger of ill omen:-

"This night we may be spar't to speak in peace of the things that pertain unto salvation; but the day and the hour is not far off, when the flock of Christ shall be scattered and driven from the pastures of their Divine Master."  
– II.X.140

These days were still far enough off but Galt moves his narrative swiftly on to the period which most concerns him by truncating the rest of Charles I's reign into the next eighteen pages. Charles I is 'mourned as a victim' (II.XVI.159) of ineffectual

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<sup>150</sup> See p.14f

<sup>151</sup> See p.16.

<sup>152</sup> See pp. 20-3.

<sup>153</sup> See p.13.

counselling<sup>154</sup> and Galt proceeds to recount how Charles II and, later, James VII and II, treated Scotland, which remained loyal to the Covenanted Charles II throughout the Cromwellian Commonwealth, ‘for its faith and loyalty’. By making this assertion more than half-way through the novel, Galt renders everything heretofore background to explain the origins and justify resistance to the persecutions of the Killing Times.

From the outset, the signators of the Covenants are portrayed as reasonable, serious people, looking initially to the nobility as their natural leaders to direct them in their orderly protests against their grievances. Thus, when the parishioners of Quhairist march to ‘the renewal, at Irvine of the Solemn League and Covenant’,<sup>155</sup> it is after worship and without the “silly device” (II.XII.147) of a banner. Like Balquhider after them, they have no time for the doctrine of passive obedience,<sup>156</sup> walking out *en masse* when Sundrum preaches it from Romans 13:12 (II.XI.145) but they are, like Ringan’s father, essentially loyal to the King, although ‘against a usurpation of the Lord’s rights’ (144). Even after they have grown ‘harsh and angry’ at the duplicity of Charles I, risen in the Bishops’ Wars<sup>157</sup> (II.XV.157) and signed the Remonstrance<sup>158</sup> (II.XVI.161), they accept Charles II in good faith once he accepts the Covenants. When Charles II reneges on the Covenants after the Restoration,<sup>159</sup> the men of the West look to the nobility once again ‘to renew the Covenant’ (II.XVIII.166) and are surprised at their tardiness. Although the Bonds are at first acceptable, Ringan justifying them to himself as a mutually-binding contract between himself and the King, the new Bonds of 1677 which made the signators responsible for all resident on their land, including fugitives, ‘exasperated [the West] into a rebellion’ (III.VIII.238).<sup>160</sup> It is the ‘envy’ (II.XX.172) of the curates which leads to the prohibition of Conventicles and then ‘the attempts to disperse [them] by the sword brought on resistance’. Claverhouse’s commission to put to

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<sup>154</sup> See p.15.

<sup>155</sup> Such use of anachronism was an established literary device (see *R.G.* p.119n.) and Galt makes free use of it. However, the novel is not free of erroneous anachronisms: for example, St. Giles is referred to as a Cathedral before 1633 (I.IX.33) and his reference to ‘the abbey towers’ and ‘the Reformation-leavened town of Paisley’ (I.XII.46) appear inaccurate. See Rowland, David, *Pictorial History of Paisley*, Darvel, Ayrshire: Alloway Publishing, p.8.

<sup>156</sup> See p.61. Also Calvin, *op. cit.*, 4.XX.

<sup>157</sup> See pp.14-5.

<sup>158</sup> See p.17.

<sup>159</sup> See p.18.

<sup>160</sup> See p.20.

death all found under arms at Conventicles forced them to congregate in overwhelming numbers and led to the second rising, culminating at Bothwell Brig (see III.X.243-4).<sup>161</sup>

In their resistance, however, the Covenanters do not regard themselves initially as rebels (see II.XX.174). They are Christians struggling to preserve the independence of God's Reformed Kirk, with no material ambitions beyond the freedom to worship as they understand God requires.<sup>162</sup> As Swinton says, "It would hae been a black day for Scotland had her children covenanted themselves for temporal things" (II.XVIII.170), although Ringan concedes that those who did join from such motives should be regarded as rebels (see III.XIV.256). Only after the rape of Ringan's niece by billeted troops does a fight for spiritual rights become a personal vendetta against Charles II (see III.IX.242) and it takes the death of his wife and daughters to make Ringan himself resolve to bring down the King, but only as God "didst take the sceptre from Saul" (III.XV.264, see I Sam. 13:13-14).

It is in this context that we must consider Ringan's attitude to armed rising and to the death of Sharpe.<sup>163</sup> Ringan admits his killing a soldier for torturing a fellow-traveller was rash but justifies his act in that therein 'there was also redemption and glory' (II.XXIII.183). This was the point of no return and the act received Biblical endorsement: 'The hills, as it were, clapped their hands... the valleys shouted of freedom' (see Is. 55:12). Ringan likens the death of Sharpe to that of a captain of a host going to war without arms (see III.XIV.259) and quotes Sir Davie Lindsay on the Death of Cardinal Beaton:-

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<sup>161</sup> See p.20.

<sup>162</sup> See pp.20-3.

<sup>163</sup> See p.20.

“Although the loon be well away,  
The fact was foully done.”

The theological element of the novel is reinforced by a predestinarian fatalism which traces the Gilhaize family's rôle throughout the Reformation/Covenanting period (Ringan's grandfather in the Reformation, his father and brothers in the Bishops' Wars) leading to the final shot from Ringan's pistol which saves Scotland for the true Presbyterian faith. This pivotal moment is not foretold specifically but old Michael Gilhaize is fey enough to see that “the Lord had not gifted [Ringan] with such zeal without having a task in store for [his] riper years” (I.VI.22). The memory of his grandfather is to return to Ringan at key moments such as the reading of the Prayer Book in St. Giles<sup>164</sup> (II.X.140) and the elevation of James Sharpe to the Archbishopric of St. Andrews<sup>165</sup> (II.XVII.163) and increasingly in Part III but still as the novel draws to a close he does not know precisely what the task is (III.XXXI.316) until the opportunity to assassinate Claverhouse presents itself in the final two chapters. Ringan, like the killers of Sharpe before him, takes advantage of the fortuitous circumstances to remove from the scene one who could yet win the day for the Stuarts (III.XXIX.313). Even military set-backs are explained Providentially: despite Ringan's conviction that the advance on Edinburgh is to end in disaster, he is confident that good will eventually come of evil (see II.XXVI.191) and sees Loudon-hill<sup>166</sup> as a rallying-point ‘by which the rope of sand, that the Lord permitted Monmouth to break at Bothwell Brig, was soon formed’ (III.XI.249). This thread is itself reinforced with occasional Providential touches like Michael's being guided to Kilwinning (I.XIII.51) and ‘an inward prompting of the spirit’

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<sup>164</sup> See p.13.

<sup>165</sup> See p.18.

<sup>166</sup> See p.16.

(II.V.123) moving him to action.

Although biased in its historical narrative in favour of the Covenanters, the narrative attempts overall to note reservations and give credit wherever due. Mary of Guise is most sympathetically portrayed (see LXVI.61) and “means well; but her feminine fears make her hearken to counsels that may cause the very evils whereof she is so afraid” (LXVII.65). Knox speaks approvingly of the Culdees for their piety, purity and spiritual independence of Rome (see LXX.79) and Michael laments the loss of knowledge, especially medical, entailed by the dissolution of the monasteries, although the loss was well worth it (see I.XXVI.96). Even the honesty of the curate who refused to betray the Covenanters hidden by his betrothed that he might denounce them to the authorities is noted, the betrothed’s subsequent demise providing a moral tale (see III.IV.226-7).

The Covenanters, however, receive less criticism than they might. The narrative notes that some had reservations about the polity of iconoclasm (see I.XIX.74) and even the death of Sharpe (III.X.243); Ringan himself is critical of the poor council of officers with ‘stubborn notions of military honour’ (II.LXXVI.191) and ‘heated and fanatical spirits’ who looked only to Providence, which council led to defeat at Rullion Green.<sup>167</sup> He also considers the Rutherglen Declaration<sup>168</sup> to have been ‘rashly counselled’ (III.XI.246), engendering ‘tribulation ... detrimental to the religious purpose of our journey’, although he later approves of the Sanquhar Declaration<sup>169</sup> (III.XVI.266). Nevertheless, although Gilhaize keeps his powder thoroughly dry on the points of contention which were to prove the downfall of the Covenanting movement, he makes no mention, for example, of the divisions caused by the formation of a Cameronian regiment to fight for the non-Covenanted William and Mary<sup>170</sup> (III.XXXI.313). Such omission may be justified as a literary device: mentioning such divisions would continue the narrative beyond the death of Claverhouse, the intended climax of the novel, but Galt’s omitting to mention that Argyle received no support against James VII and II because he was not a

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<sup>167</sup> See p.19.

<sup>168</sup> See p.20.

<sup>169</sup> See pp.20-1.

<sup>170</sup> See p.24.

Covenanter<sup>171</sup> can only be deliberate suppression of detrimental fact.

## Conclusion

Undoubtedly, *Ringan Gilhaize* is the most historically detailed and theologically informed of the novels under consideration. Yet, ultimately, the novel fails to entertain. Galt was criticised at the time for straying from his humorous anecdotal style into the historical novel, for he was even more bound to the fidelity of tradition than Hogg. The *Edinburgh Magazine* criticised *Ringan Gilhaize* for “straining after effect”,<sup>172</sup> describing it as a work which is “neither history nor novel, but combines ... the defects of both – the flippancy of fiction without its interest, and the dullness of a chronicle, without its veracity.” Also, it is ironic, in view of the offence taken by Galt at Scott’s ‘levity’ as exemplified in the exaggerated characterisation of Mausie, that Galt should fall into the same trap with his narrator’s anti-Romanism. This is of course what the Episcopalian Scott needed reminded of: Rome was the Antichrist and any attempt to return to its ways must be resisted as a threat to Protestantism, all of which the narrator Gilhaize stresses at every opportunity. On page one alone, we read of “the worshippers of the Beast and his Image”, “the sorceries of the gorgeous Roman harlot”, “the delusions of the papistical idolatry” and “Babylon”. This may reflect fairly the prevailing Protestant opinion of Roman Catholicism in Gilhaize’s – and Hogg’s - time but even the few readers who still hold this view must find tiresome the narrative’s relentless insistence on the point throughout the novel, as if concerned not to commit a sin of omission. This insistence reduces the novel to the level of propaganda, and, along with Galt’s attempt at the already archaic style and tone of the devotional works of the Covenanters themselves,<sup>173</sup> makes the novel unreadable for many general readers. Although hailed by some as “a neglected masterpiece”,<sup>174</sup> *Ringan Gilhaize* is likely to remain neglected, masterpiece or not, as long as it offends prevailing pluralistic opinion.

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<sup>171</sup> See p.21.

<sup>172</sup> See Ferris, *op. cit.*, p.163.

<sup>173</sup> See Galt, *R.G.*, p.xiii.

<sup>174</sup> See Wilson, P., ‘*Ringan Gilhaize* – a Neglected Masterpiece?’ in Whatley, Christopher A. (ed.), *John Galt 1779-1979*, Edinburgh: Ramsay Head Press, 1979, pp.120-50.

## V – The portrayal of Claverhouse

However else Scott was revered as the greater craftsman, he was isolated within his literary circle in his opinion of Claverhouse. Even in *Adam Blair*, set in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, J.G. Lockhart, Scott's own son-in-law, cannot let pass the opportunity to declare his sympathies against "bloody Clavers ... the butcher Dalyell ... and ... *false Lauderdale*."<sup>175</sup> Each author brings his own perspective to the Killing Times and, in addition to providing some surprising insights to the nature of the spirituality of the times, these novels betray the historical and theological prejudices of their respective authors, especially as regards the *persona* of Claverhouse.

The persistence of superstition as well as the use of fear and belief as "a hangman's whip"<sup>176</sup> [see p.33] perhaps shed a certain light on Claverhouse's reputation at least down to Hogg's time: rural Scotland at least was just the sort of society in which Claverhouse could be used as a story to frighten the children, as the Black Douglas had been in his time by the English. In each of the novels we discuss, Claverhouse is so powerful and polemic a *persona* and so central to the machinations of each novel that he is likely to determine the sympathies of the lay reader, certainly one with no previous knowledge of the Covenanting Movement. Our study must therefore address the portrayal of Claverhouse in these novels, especially as the first one published was written expressly in his defence and the third one was written in response to this. This requires a close reading to peel away the prejudices of the individual authors as well as a considered evaluation of their sources for reliability.

### Claverhouse in *The Tale of Old Mortality*

The Episcopalian Tory Sir Walter Scott could hardly regard the Covenanters as heroic martyrs. The cause of liberty may have been noble; the Covenanters may have been braw fighters; the government may have been unduly harsh and unjust; but ultimately Scott's sympathies were for the rule of law and the "traded" John Grahame of Claverhouse, whom he wished to incorporate into his heroic pantheon

<sup>175</sup> Lockhart, J.G., *Adam Blair* [1822], intro. David Craig, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1963, p.18.

<sup>176</sup> See p.32; also, p.12.

of Scottish history.<sup>177</sup> Train's suggestion regarding the character Old Mortality<sup>178</sup> (whom Scott later claimed to have met in early life) allowed Scott, in a narration originating ostensibly from a Covenanter hagiographer, to rail against murderous rebels while giving due credit by taking as his hero a gallant young gentleman of the indulged Presbyterians who only joins the "hill-folk" because he must flee harsh laws which seek to punish him for observing the sacred, unwritten code of hospitality. *Old Mortality* is supposed to be a sanitised, unbiased account of historical events<sup>179</sup> but, just as much of the plot, including the siege of Tillietudlem, is fictitious, so, too, are many of Claverhouse's circumstances, if not his characterisation.

Claverhouse's name is first mentioned in *Old Mortality* in association with a "regiment of life-guards" but, as Mack points out (p.28 n.), Claverhouse was "only a captain of a troop of horse" in 1679, when the tale opens. He took command of a newly-formed regiment only in 1682, when he was promoted to the rank of Colonel. (He became a General in 1686.) Mack explains this (p.358) as a deliberate ploy to give Scott's "most important royalist character" greater seniority, expressing no disapproval of this literary device. Certainly, if its intention were merely to focus attention upon an important character or event, as Our Lord's status as Lamb of God is underlined in John's Gospel by shifting the Last Supper from the Thursday to the Friday in order to identify Him more closely with the Passover lamb, this might be justified. However, Scott's declared purpose in writing the novel was to rescue Claverhouse from infamy. If his intention is to dispel falsehoods, he must himself be scrupulous in his detailing of historical characters, even when using them to recount a fiction.

In contrast to his passive approval of the early promotion of Claverhouse, Mack has Edith's statement that the "unhappy primate" was Claverhouse's "intimate friend and early patron" (p.89) for an exaggeration (n.). Claverhouse did study at St. Andrews during Sharpe's time as archbishop but how far Edith may be

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<sup>177</sup> Critics vary in their appraisal of Scott's portrayal of Claverhouse: Brown, *op. cit.*, p.78, quotes Mathias's argument that Claverhouse's cruelty (like Burley's enthusiasm) is exaggerated in *O.M.* for effect; the Calders, however, take the portrayal as authentic. See Calder, Angus and Jenni, *Scott*, London: Evans Bros., 1969, p.30.

<sup>178</sup> See p.36.

<sup>179</sup> See p.39.

exaggerating is unclear. Andrew Murray Scott in his biography of Claverhouse, *Bonnie Dundee*, quotes Rev. Thomas Morer, writing in 1702, as saying of Claverhouse,

...he was admired for his parts and respects to Churchmen, which made him dear to the Archbishop of that See, who ever after honour'd and lov'd him.

- p.6

These words are, however, open to interpretation, a pedagogical relationship can lead to fond memories without ever having been as intimate or as practical as Edith implies. Further investigation would be required to clarify this point but Morer's use of the word "lov'd" allows Scott to imply, through Edith, not only that scrupulosity in imposing the law is to be doubly expected of Claverhouse where he has an additional personal motive, but also further exaggerates the personal importance of Claverhouse as a social figure.

As to Claverhouse's reputation and character, Scott has his good fame go before him. Under arrest for giving succour to a fugitive from justice, young Morton, despite Edith's protest that he is lost ere he is tried (p.88), fully places his confidence in Claverhouse:-

"Claverhouse, though stern and relentless, is, by all accounts, brave, fair, and honourable. ... And, indeed, in a time when justice is, in all its branches, so completely corrupted, I would rather lose my life by open military violence than be conjured out of it by the *hocus-pocus* of some arbitrary lawyer, who lends the knowledge he has of the statutes made for our protection, to wrest them to our destruction."

- p.88

It is preferable, in the eyes of the hero, who sets the moral tone throughout the novel, to die at the hands of an honest soldier, bound by duty to impose the ultimate sentence, than it is to fall into the machinations of a corrupt judicial system, compared to which the dutiful, gentlemanly Claverhouse cannot seem so dark.

When Claverhouse does make his appearance, he is treated to an extremely flattering narration. Scott gives a detailed physical description, doubtlessly based on the portrait of Claverhouse which he possessed, of an almost effeminate-looking man whose 'gesture, language, and manners, were those of one whose life had been spent among the noble and among the gay' (p.100). Scott then proceeds to sketch a character portrait which presents the inner man as equally attractive:-

The severity of his character, as well as the higher attributes of undaunted and enterprising valour which even his enemies were compelled to admit, lay concealed under an exterior which seemed better adapted to the court or the saloon than to the field. The same gentleness and gaiety of expression which reigned in his features seemed to inspire his actions and gestures; and, on the whole, he was generally esteemed, at first sight, rather qualified to be the votary of pleasure than of ambition. But under this soft exterior was hidden a spirit unbounded in daring and in aspiring, yet cautious and prudent as that of Machiavel himself. Profound in politics, and imbued, of course with that disregard for individual rights which its intrigues usually generate, this leader was cool and collected in danger, fierce and ardent in pursuing success, careless of death himself, and ruthless in inflicting it upon others. Such are the characters formed in times of civil discord, when the highest qualities, perverted by party spirit, and inflamed by habitual opposition, are too often combined with vices and excesses which deprive them at once of their merit and of their lustre.

- pp.100-101

The Claverhouse of Scott is an iron hand in a particularly scented velvet glove, corrupted, if at all, only by the ravages of "civil discord" – and even these only force his duty, without bending his inclinations (see p.101). His reasons for not releasing Morton to his Royalist friends are entirely pragmatic: Morton is just such "a lad of fire, zeal, and education" (p.116) that the Cameronians are waiting to rally around; the sparing of his life is too dangerous. Any military action Claverhouse does take is against open, armed rebellion and, while his soldiers may carry out extortion, theft and intimidation (see ch.8), this is in unauthorised excess of their powers of

sequestration.

What impression, therefore, does Scott give of Claverhouse? He is a handsome, imposing figure of natural nobility and ruthless sense of duty whose social status is deliberately exaggerated to give this paragon of manly and patriotic virtues greater importance. He is on the side of the law and right is on his side, despite the injustices of the times. Not only has Scott cleared him of the infamy assigned to him by his detractors; he has made him irreproachable and thereby a vindication of the suppression of the Covenanters and their politico-theological ideology.

### Claverhouse in *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*

Although predating *Old Mortality*, delays in publishing caused Hogg's novel to appear two years after Scott's. When it eventually did appear before the public, Scott liked it "very ill"<sup>180</sup> as "a false and unfair picture of the times and the existing characters altogether". Hogg replied, "It is the picture I hae been bred up in the belief o' sin' ever I was born and I had it frae them whom I was most bound to honour and believe." Hogg had been brought up in a society where the events of the Killing Times had survived in collective folk memory; he comments that children of one child baptised by Renwick were still alive, so his sources are only two generations removed from the time of the events, enough to keep the narrative pure, although he also drew greatly from Robert Wodrow's *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* (1721), which is considered strongly biased towards the Covenanters.

Claverhouse, like the Covenanters themselves, is incidental to *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*,<sup>181</sup> only of interest insofar as he is responsible for the ill-treating of the

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<sup>180</sup> See Hogg, *B.B.*, p.xii.

<sup>181</sup> See p.54.

loyal and innocent. Hogg's characterisation of him is the opposite of Scott's: although "bonny" (p.50) enough for Nanny to address him as "dear bairn" (p.51), he is an ambitious, vengeful, truly Machiavellian figure with "the nature of a wolf and the bravery of a bull-dog" (p.171).

In *The Brownie*, Claverhouse is motivated by revenge for the deaths of four of his soldiers and their guide: the Covenanters are presumed guilty, the locals complicit. Claverhouse swears a terrible revenge 'by the blessed Virgin and all the Holy Trinity, utterly to extirpate the seed of the d\_\_med whining psalm-singing race from the face of the earth...' (p.17). This goes beyond ruthless dedication to painful duty. That there is, apparently, no trace of this event in the records of the Privy Council is attributed to Claverhouse's concealing the facts, presumably detrimental to his reputation as a commander.

His revenge is taken, not on the Covenanters themselves, but on the local populace which has little direct contact with the Covenanters and whose sympathies are generally loyal. He is portrayed through his behaviour towards Walter and his household, behaving from the minute he enters the house in a way which the loyal Walter, who has been looking forward to welcoming Claverhouse, having prepared for his arrival, would have refused to believe of any King's officer, 'laying hold' of Katherine 'in the rudest manner' (p.52) and prompting Walter to clasp Claverhouse and Sir Thomas Livingstone by the neck, almost strangling them so that they cannot identify themselves as he demands. Consequently, Claverhouse jumps to the conclusion that "it is apparent that this is the nest and rendezvous of the murdering fanatics who infest this country" and seeks the slightest proof for this assumption. The victuals which Walter has had prepared for Claverhouse and his men are presumed to be for the whigs (p.67) and Claverhouse is not satisfied by Walter's

proffering to take the Test and the Oath of Abjuration (p.80).<sup>182</sup> He has decided upon Walter's guilt and will not be refuted.

The worst extremes of the persecution short of death, however, are meted out to John Hoy, a shepherd of Walter's. Having attended a Conventicle unaware of its illegality ("it's a wild place this – we never hear ony o' the news" [p.60]), despite having walked out on hearing James Renwick say "mair than gude manners warrantit" against the King, Hoy is subjected to utterly barbaric treatment on Claverhouse's direct orders: he is branded on the cheek, his ears are cut off, he is fined 200 merks and is made to take the Oaths twice, with a third not to repent of them. These innocent people who have disbelieved any adverse tales they may have heard of the behaviour of the King's officers are persecuted by a vicious monomaniac who is likely, in Hoy's words, to "make mae whigs wherever ye show your face, than a' the hill preachers o' Scotland put thegither" (p.66).

While Scott admits to Claverhouse's Machiavellian spirit (and elsewhere even places him, bemused, in devilish company in the afterlife),<sup>183</sup> it is Hogg who brings out this side of the man's character. In their campaign through Eskdale, Claverhouse contrives at the appearance that it is the former Covenanter Sir James Johnston of Westeraw, with his exaggerated account of the strength of the Covenanters in the area and his insinuations that the whole dale need be made an example of (p.82), who is responsible for the worst atrocities. The more forward Sir James is, the more shy, backward and seemingly reluctant is Claverhouse, so that Royalist atrocities in the area are blamed firmly on Sir James (p.84), as in the example of Andrew Hyslop: Claverhouse expresses reluctance to having Hyslop shot for not denouncing his mother's actions in sheltering a dying Covenanter so Sir James has to insist on the execution, which act, along with the eviction of many of his own tenants, leaves "the silly turn-coat a pirl to wind" (p.86).

### Claverhouse in *Ringan Gilhaize*

The narrator of *Ringan Gilhaize* readily admits of Claverhouse's military prowess

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<sup>182</sup> See p.21.

<sup>183</sup> See *wandering Willie's Tale* in Scott, Sir Walter, *Redgauntlet* [1818], London: Adam & Charles Black, 1892, p.407.

but, as a deliberate response to the panegyric *Old Mortality*, it is highly critical of Claverhouse as an individual. This polemic is hinted at in Gilhaize's narrative:-

...the implacable rage with which Claverhouse persecuted the Covenanters has been extenuated by some discreet historians, on the plea of his being an honourable officer deduced from his soldierly worth elsewhere; whereas the truth is, that his cruelties in the shire of Ayr, and other of our western parts, were less the fruit of his instructions, wide and severe as they were, than of his own mortified vanity and malignant revenge.

- p.246

Claverhouse's distinguished service is of no interest to one who champions the innocent whom he tyrannised. Claverhouse may have met Gilhaize 'manfully' in hand-to-hand combat at Loudon-hill (p.248)<sup>184</sup> and mustered 1,700 troops within a month of the King's flight (p.313), when he could still have delivered victory to the House of Stuart, but Galt finds nothing admirable about him as either an officer or a gentleman. Galt recurses to Wodrow to accuse Claverhouse of giving order to fire at Loudon-hill 'without any parley or request to know whether we came with hostile intent or no' (p.248) and to reinforce his assertion that Claverhouse was motivated in his ravaging of the west by 'vanity chastised' (p.249) but he further bolsters his thesis with his own inventions and half-truths. Reference is made to vague characters ('Ebenezer Muir's grandson' [p.140], 'Robert Brown's brother' [p.272]) who suffer at the hands of either Claverhouse or his troops and Gilhaize's own son Joseph is beheaded on Claverhouse's order (p.291). In having Joseph suffer the actual fate of Richard Cameron,<sup>185</sup> viz. his head being placed on the Netherbow on the orders of the Privy Council, Galt gives Gilhaize personal motivation for revenge, despite his pledge to commit justice, making it all the more

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<sup>184</sup> See p.16.

<sup>185</sup> See p.20.

fitting that it be Gilhaize who kills Claverhouse at Killiecrankie<sup>186</sup> and saves the revolution.

### Conclusion

The lay reader may feel frustration at such contradictory portrayals of a single character. Scott positively champions Claverhouse; Hogg has him for an animal; Galt is more willing than Hogg to admit his military skill but still rejects Scott's portrayal. It would be easy to say that the truth probably lies somewhere between the extremes but it is perhaps correct to say that, in this case, Scott and Hogg were both right. It may well be that Claverhouse, having died at Killiecrankie, served as a scapegoat for all Royalist atrocities of the Killing Times, but this can be true only of written histories; Upland peasants would have no reason to substitute Claverhouse's name in their oral accounts for anyone else's. Scott may have learned only part of the truth from descendants of social acquaintances of Claverhouse but there are enough recent examples of bloodthirsty sadists who knew how to behave in polite company to bear out the plausibility of Scott's sources. If such oral evidence is admissible in the case of Scott's sources, it is even more so in the case of Hogg's, with his scant removal of acquaintance from the persecuted. Furthermore, Hogg demonstrably sifts his material, as in the case of the priest of Saint Mary of the Lowes (pp.12-13), whose bad name as 'a most horrid necromancer' Hogg attributes entirely to fabrications by his murderers, who, as in the case of Sharpe, acted on their own initiative without general concurrence.<sup>187</sup> Evidently, Hogg did not believe everything he had learned at the feet of his elders. We conclude, therefore, that Scott and Hogg's portrayals of Claverhouse are, while apparently at variance, entirely compatible. It is not an unreasonable deduction from the evidence available that Claverhouse was cunning and ruthless, knowing how to impress those who needed impressing, yet driven by a paranoid bloodlust which was Stalinist in its unthinking pursuit of ever-present enemies; nor is it incumbent on the reader to accept or reject automatically the opinion of such a character on his enemies and their theology on the strength of the narrator's (i.e. the author's) obvious prejudices.

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<sup>186</sup> See p.24.

<sup>187</sup> See p.23.

## VI - The Extension of Reformed Theology in 17<sup>th</sup> Century Scotland

This part of our study is made with specific reference to the still endemic superstition of the period, into which the texts under consideration give a remarkable insight. The collective weight of their testimony scotches the myth of an entire nation (with the exception of a few Roman Catholic enclaves) being won within a year to a saving, informed faith free of all vestiges of paganism and ignorance. Ancient beliefs persisted after the Reformation<sup>188</sup> into the Covenanting period - even in the most stoutly Covenanting areas - and beyond, bringing into question the extent of true theological conviction and spiritual awareness even among the Covenanters.

The 'little cowards' of Cleishbotham's school are, of course, afraid of the cemetery at night (*Old Mortality*, p.6) but the narrator of *Ringan Gilhaize* testifies to 'the common fears and superstitions ... of our simple country folk' (p.176), who, in Ayrshire, were Presbyterians to a man. (We have already commented on Burns's portrayal of this superstition a century after the Killing Times.<sup>189</sup>) The Upland areas had 'a wild and strange solemnity ... with much fantastical beauty' which still lent themselves to tales of 'sullen wizards and gamesome fairies' (p.317). This is seen most strongly in *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* (p.146f).

Superstition is central to the development of the plot and even the very premise of *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, viz. that the local population was persecuted by government troops because of the presence among them, unbeknown to them, of the

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<sup>188</sup> The 1616 Assembly condemned continuing pilgrimages to ancient pagan sites. See Wormald, *op. cit.*, p.136.

<sup>189</sup> See p.34.

King's sworn enemies.<sup>190</sup> In his introduction to the 1837 edition, Hogg stresses (pp.169-70) that the Covenanters who took refuge in the Southern Uplands were all from the west (i.e. Ayrshire and Renfrewshire) and 'were consequently utterly unacquainted' with the local inhabitants, knowing 'neither ... their religious principles, nor the opinions which they held regarding the measures of government'. Consequently, they kept their presence secret, leaving the locals to interpret as best they could the night-time sound of the Covenanters' sung worship and the sight of their burning lights in areas uninhabited within living memory (p.11). The very title of the novel refers to a common superstition that brownies helped surreptitiously with domestic and farming chores, Maron, with her 'weak and superstitious mind', gratefully leaves out cakes and bowls of milk for the Brownie (p.113, see also p.123). (If she had left out a suit of clothes, he would have left for good). This superstition provides an obvious explanation for the nocturnal acts of gratitude committed by the Covenanters for aid received from Maron's daughter Katherine, including the harvesting of at least five acres of corn in one night while her father, Walter of Chapelhope, is under arrest and *en route* to trial in Edinburgh (p.134).<sup>191</sup>

From the beginning, Maron believes the Brownies to be Legion (p.6) due to the number of strange happenings; even the comparatively sceptical Walter knows not what to think (p.7). Walter notices that Kennedy, in delirium after having fallen down a pit full of singing fairies (p.28), must have been 'borne through the air' as he says, for the moss on his shoes has not been washed off in the wet grass. Gradually, he comes to believe 'as faithfully in the Brownie of Bodsbeck as the rest of them' (p.35), convinced even that Katherine is in 'conjunction' with evil spirits (p.146). Inevitably, he believes the worst on seeing Katherine in the presence of the 'Brownie' (p.150) until the final *dénouement* of the novel. This is all the more remarkable for Walter's having accosted the Covenanters shortly after Kennedy's misadventure (pp.21ff); he fails to connect them with the events which provoke a

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<sup>190</sup> See pp.20-3.

<sup>191</sup> When the Laird's servant in Sir Walter Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian* finds Jenny Deans relieving the milch cow at what is, for the servant, an early hour, she takes Jenny for the Brownie and suffers a screaming

general terror in the population (p.29), beyond suspecting that the Covenanters have raised the spirits of the dead for their own ends (see p.157). It takes a welcome from the 'Brownie' himself in the name of "the God of Heaven" (p.159) to assure Walter that this is no malignant being and for faith to triumph.

'The rest of them' extend to the general population of the area. The incident when the 'Brownie' appears before them gives vivid insight into the psychological, quite apart from the spiritual, power of prayer. Davie Tate's taking the Brownie for the ghost of 'Kirko' (see pp.123-5), causes the household to fall to prayer, with Davie leading (see p.126). The preservation and transmission of this prayer, which Hogg affirms is genuine (see p.127) is worthy of comment. The prayer is described as a 'ludicrous' attempt at solemnity, preserved 'as a warning ... never to ask ignorance or absurdity to perform this sacred duty in public'. The lengthy fragment is from a prayer which was made only once, before unsophisticated people, at least one of whom Hogg sees fit to describe as 'stupid' (p.126). Hogg nevertheless maintains that 'There is scarcely a boy in the country who cannot recite scraps of Davie Tait's prayer'. While it can of course be read as a 'glorious'<sup>192</sup> comic fabrication, it has, if there be the remotest truth in this, fantastic as it may sound, significant implications for the authenticity of tales preserved by oral transmission, including key passages of Scripture similar to Davie Tate's prayer in nature, if not in depth of wisdom or quality of prose. This poor imitation of the Covenanters' style of allegory and Scriptural references (see pp.127-9) is significant for its impact on its listeners. This preserved part was 'meant as a fence against the spirit that had set up his rest so near' (p.127) and it had the desired effect: 'Thus fenced, a new energy glowed in every breast' (p.129) and they continued their fellowship in Scripture and song. Yet the next morning, Tate's faith, such as it is, gives way (see p.136) on realising that the apparition had been the too-solid 'Brownie' and no ghost. The power behind his prayer was entirely his own and its effect on its hearers anything but spiritual. Despite this, Hogg maintains that events perceived as supernatural caused the locals to turn to God through family worship:-

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fit. See Scott, Sir Walter, *The Heart of Midlothian* [1818], ed. Claire Lamont, Oxford: O.U.P., 1982, p.252.

<sup>192</sup> See Hogg, *B.B.*, p.xix, quoting Edith C. Batho.

... that age introduced a spirit of devotion into those regions, which one hundred and thirty years continuance of the utmost laxity and indecision in religious principles has not yet been able wholly to eradicate.

– p.12

It is important to distinguish between superstition and belief in devils and ghosts as active agents, which belief was – and remains - a tenet of faith for those who adhered to what would in later times be termed a fundamentalist (that is, literal) understanding of Scripture. Even if brownies and fairies could be dismissed as mere inventions, devils and ghosts could not, for Scripture affirmed their existence. Such belief provokes an extreme crisis of faith in Nanny, the kitchen help (p.118f). Perhaps not free from superstitious belief in brownies herself, attributing the deaths of the soldiers and their guide to “nae human hand” (see p.51), she defies spirits in a declaration of faith:-

“If they be good spirits, they will do me nae ill; and if they be evil spirits,  
they hae nae power here”

- p.97

although she fears that her faith could better withstand the shock than could her wits (see p.98). When she comes to believe she has seen the ghost of her husband, lost at Bothwell Brig, her crisis is acute: if such a godly man is an unredeemed, outcast spectre, what hope has she? It falls to Katherine, who knows the true identity of the ‘ghost’, to reassure Nanny of God’s mercy and her late husband’s salvation, attributing the sight to Nanny’s imagination (p.119).

Scott portrays the Covenanters themselves as superstitious in *Old Mortality*. Claverhouse’s fleet, pure black horse was widely imagined among the Covenanters to have been a gift from “the great Enemy of mankind” (p.99) and more than one silver dollar is sacrificed to make slugs of the only material that can supposedly kill Claverhouse (p.142).<sup>193</sup> Balfour has Archbishop Sharpe put to the sword because, for all his rejection of the superstitions of Rome, even he believes that “Firearms will not prevail against him” (p.45).

<sup>193</sup> Significantly, Galt omits all reference in *R.G.* to the silver bullet which allegedly killed Claverhouse, as a superstitious distraction from his serious intentions.

The Scotland of the Covenant was not, therefore, a theologically pure land exalted to new heights of enlightened spirituality with the banishment of pagan superstition and Romanism. Persisting superstition brings into question how far the new teaching extended beyond the educated, decision-making classes. Even the Covenanters sheltered suspicions which exceeded faith and entered the realms of superstition - and it is astonishing that their descendants should share the collective delusion that the gravestones maintained by Old Mortality in his day had remained unsullied (see *O.M.*, p.12).

## Part Three

### Hyper-Calvinism in the Early-19<sup>th</sup> Century Psychological Novel

Some Cameronians accepted the new Established Kirk, which was still uncompromisingly Calvinistic as regards personal salvation. Scott touches upon the problems of conscience they faced in relation to Church and State in *The Heart of Midlothian*. This period also provides the setting for the psychological novel *par excellence*, James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*.

#### I – Scott: *The Heart of Midlothian*

In this novel, Scott discusses God, grace and mercy as nowhere else.<sup>194</sup> While Gifford is probably reading too much into the effect on Scott of pondering Pattieson and his sympathies, it remains true that Scott treats Covenanting scruples much more sympathetically in *Heart of Midlothian* than in the earlier *Old Mortality*.<sup>195</sup> The heroine of the novel, Jeannie Deans, faces a crisis of conscience: to break the ninth commandment, or let her sister Effie be condemned to death. Prayer provides no revelatory escape from the dilemma (p.144); her father, an old Covenanter who cannot accept an uncovenanted Kirk or State or even give sworn testimony under the auspices of such a State, hopes fervently that Jeannie might see fit to do so: ‘in

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<sup>194</sup> See Hewitt, David, ‘Sir Walter Scott’, in Gifford, Douglas (ed.), *The history of Scottish Literature. Vol.3: The Nineteenth Century*, Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, p.81.

<sup>195</sup> Watson, *op. cit.*, p.263, sees Deans father and daughter as embodying “the Presbyterian strengths and the moral seriousness which Scott had failed to evoke in Henry Morton and the Covenanters of *Old Mortality*”.

things of a doubtful and controversial nature, ilk Christian's conscience sould be his ain guide' (p.198). Unfortunately, Jeannie sees neither doubt nor controversy in the case and cannot see fit to interpret the commandment literally, permitting false witness *for* her neighbour (p.199). The problem is resolved by Jeannie's bravery and resourcefulness, halfway through the novel (to its detriment).

The novel also hints at the moral and social consequences of the doctrine of Double Predestination. George Robertson, responsible for Effie's predicament, describes himself as 'a wretch, predestined to evil here and hereafter' (p.152), he can do nothing for his eternal condition, so he does not strive to evade evil in this life, precisely the consequences which the critics of predestination<sup>196</sup> feared. It fell to a less prolific but arguably even greater writer than Scott to provide the ultimate treatment of this dilemma in world literature.

## II – Hogg: *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*

*Memoirs and Confessions* is by far the greatest of Hogg's novels and is the first great psychological novel of European literature. Although often associated in the popular mind with the Gothic tradition (of which Hogg was a keen reader) its darkness is much more a product of the theology of his country and the folk tales of his own land.<sup>197</sup> It is surely significant that Hogg was raised in Ettrick, where memories of Thomas Boston and accusations of Antinomianism would have lingered.<sup>198</sup> It has been described as "seminal and basic to the Scottish metaphysical

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<sup>196</sup> See p.8.

<sup>197</sup> See Gifford, Douglas, *James Hogg*, Edinburgh: Ramsay Head Press, 1976, p.141.

<sup>198</sup> See p.11.

tradition”.<sup>199</sup> André Gide gave the final word on the pedigree of the novel to his translator, Dorothy Bussy:-

“This book is Scotch to its very marrow; no Englishman could possibly have written it. Its whole atmosphere, the very form and substance of its Puritanism, is essentially Scottish. You will find its counterpart and predecessor in Burns...”<sup>200</sup>

Bussy then refers to *Holy Willy's Prayer*.

*Memoirs and Confessions* covers important psychological themes as well as theological and historical ones but it is, essentially, a moral tale, warning against the dangers of taking ideas too far. Although Covenant theology arguably “prevented Calvinist thinking slipping into anti-nomianism”<sup>201</sup> in Scotland, there was still an influence from English Puritans<sup>202</sup> who took the basic Calvinistic thesis that only God’s Elect have the assurance of salvation by grace, from which grace the redeemed cannot fall, and extrapolated it to the conclusion that the Elect can do no wrong; that is to say, not that the elect cannot commit acts which would ordinarily be considered sinful, but that such acts committed by the Elect in the advancement of Christ’s Kingdom must be permissible, or else God would not allow it. While this argument can only be justified theologically by the most extreme Antinomianism,<sup>203</sup> this doctrine is used by Gil-Martin to lead the young Robert into perjury and murder, ostensibly for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom but leading ultimately to Robert’s downfall as a penniless fugitive who takes his own life. The novel is an “attainment of the diabolical sublime”,<sup>204</sup> a searing indictment of a theocratic society so shackled to its own theology that it cannot see how those of evil intent (if not the Forces of Evil themselves) can use this same theology as a mask behind which to work their own ends.

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<sup>199</sup> Pick, J.B., *The Great Shadow House*, Edinburgh: Polygon, 1993, p.24.

<sup>200</sup> Hogg, James, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, intro. André Gide, London: Cresset Press, 1947, p.8.

<sup>201</sup> Mitchison, *op. cit.*, p.27

<sup>202</sup> See p.10f.

<sup>203</sup> André Gide, *op. cit.*, sees Robert as a definitive Antinomian, worthy of Luther’s former student Johannes Agricola (1492-1566), who was closely associated with this theology.

<sup>204</sup> Pick, *op. cit.*, p.18.

## Setting

The story is set at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a time when religious dispute was “a perfect rage” (p.26) and begins with the marriage of George Colwan, Laird of Dalcastle, to a Miss Orde of Glasgow. From this unhappy marriage there are born two sons, George and Robert, the latter being disowned by Colwan. Robert’s parents represent quite different schools of popular theological thought, neither of which is presented as a proper portrayal of the Reformed faith. Colwan fears neither God nor man: he “had not intentionally wronged or offended either of the parties, and perceived not the necessity of deprecating their vengeance” (p.30). Although not, as we shall see, altogether impious, he clearly does not see himself as needy of salvation, far less does he rejoice in or overtly desire it. A starker contrast within Christendom than that between Colwan and his bride is hard to imagine: Lady Dalcastle, who disdains from the outset to be known as “Mrs. Colwan” (p.31), demonstrates an extreme piety; yet hers, according to the narrator, is *not* Reformation theology. Lady Dalcastle “was the most severe and gloomy of all bigots to the principles of the reformation. Hers were not the tenets of the great reformers, but theirs mightily overstrained and deformed” (p.30). Such was her severity that she would not even dance at her own wedding, the festivities of which “partook of all the gaiety, not of that stern age, but of one previous to it.”

Despite this contrast, Colwan and his lady both see a fundamental dichotomy between the sacred and the sensual. Colwan is bemused, if not perturbed, by his wife’s wish that they pray together on their wedding night. Although prayer is “ever so beautiful, and ever so beneficial,” (p.32) he expresses the fear that overuse would be “constantly making a farce of it.” (It is notable that the Church of Scotland still uses just this argument to refrain from more frequent celebration of Communion.) “It would be like reading the Bible and the jest-book, verse about,” he argues, “and would render the life of man a medley of absurdity and confusion.” Neither character betrays any concept of sexual intercourse as something for which to thank God, or as a physiological representation of the spiritual union between God and man *à la* the Song of Solomon – the pious Lady Dalcastle’s silence on this point speaks volumes. To the bride, sexual duty must wait for prayers, without providing prayer with any theme of thanksgiving or dedication; to her husband, the solemnity of prayer, however commendable in itself, has no place in the carnal

delights of a wedding night, its imposition at once spoiling the fun and compromising its own dignity. His reference to “the Bible and the jest-book” indicates that this dichotomy is not limited to the sensual: spiritual and devotional life is to be lived out quite separately from anything that is amusing or fun.

Colwan and his lady therefore serve in their different ways to portray a society which fails to reconcile spiritual and temporal, especially carnal, practices and which is split over theologies which, according to the narrator, are not truly of the Reformers. Rather than being a dynamic faith, permeating and transforming life, Lady Dalcastle’s hyper-Calvinism<sup>205</sup> is a dead weight which deprives her of any charm or amusement and fails to commend itself to her husband, who gives religious devotion a somewhat secluded and limited place in life, secondary to although necessarily uncontaminated by carnal pleasure. The effects of this is seen even more starkly in George and Robert, who are raised separately, George by Colwan and Robert by Lady Dalcastle and Wringhim the minister.

That the Colwans should, after agreeing upon a separation, with the division of the house into independent apartments on upper and lower floors, be reconciled just long enough to consummate their marriage, resulting in the birth of a son whom his mother “never once desired to see ... from the day that he was born” (p.43) may strike the reader as contrived, even more so the birth a year later of a second son whom Colwan refuses to recognise, although the narrator opines that the child’s legitimacy “is more than probable”.<sup>206</sup> The matrimonial split does, however, give each parent a child on whom to practice their theology, providing an ideal setting for the demonstration of the influence of nurture upon young minds, Colwan and the adopting Wringhim producing two very different sons.

George “was a generous and kind-hearted youth; always ready to oblige, and hardly ever dissatisfied with any body”; in contrast, Robert, brought up in Glasgow by his mother and Wringhim, “was easily inured to all the sternness and severity of his pastor’s arbitrary and unyielding creed”, which creed does nothing to still his

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<sup>205</sup> Hogg sets his novel in the early years of this theology’s development. See p.13.

<sup>206</sup> Not all agree: see Pick, *op. cit.*, p.19; Letley, Emma, *From Galt to Douglas Brown. Nineteenth-Century Fiction and Scots Language*, Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988, p.24f; Hogg, James, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, ed. John Wain, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987, pp.22-3.

“ardent and ungovernable passions” (p.44, see Col. 2:23) or dispel his “sternness of demeanour from which other boys shrunk.”

This “arbitrary and unyielding creed” of Wringhim’s is unloving, unforgiving and unconcerned for the Reprobate, his concerns being entirely for the Elect. His spiteful prayers against Colwan betray him as entertaining no hopes or wishes that his adopted son’s male parent may prove to have been a member of the Church Invisible<sup>207</sup> all along, speaking “nothing but evil” (p.43) of Colwan and George. Although taught to pray intercessionally regularly – twice a day, seven times on Sundays - Robert “was to pray only for the elect, and, like David of old, doom all that were aliens from God to destruction.” Such conditioning produces a hateful, spiteful youth who prays “that the old hoary sinner might be cut off in the full flush of his iniquity, and be carried quick into hell” (p.44); his equally fervent prayer “that the young stem of the corrupt trunk [from which Robert himself stems!] might also be taken from a world that he disgraced” is tempered only by the proviso “that his sins might be pardoned, because he knew no better.”

As for Robert’s own sin, his acceptance of predestination<sup>208</sup> allows him no conviction of salvation and he still suffers under the burden of original sin. Wringhim’s declaration that his prayers on Robert’s behalf have resulted in “as yet ... no certain token of acceptance” (p.111) awaken Robert to the possibility that his name might not be in the Book of Life and that, if so, nothing can bring about its inclusion. Self-consciously, he turns to his own dutiful prayer but, despite his earnest repentance of the particular sins which he can remember and his general repentance to include forgotten ones (pp.118, 122), he cannot rid himself of original sin, with which only God can deal by spiritual regeneration, if He so choose. Such preoccupation with sin and damnation leads to increased zeal for the Lord, as witnessed by his clyping on old Barnet (pp.113-4) and, ironically, to the multiplication of Robert’s sin, especially lying, to which he “was particularly prone” (p.118), this he takes to such an extent that he has to testify, “I found myself constantly involved in a labyrinth of deceit, from which it was impossible to extricate myself.” He would find himself even further implicated in this once

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<sup>207</sup> See Calvin, *op. cit.*, IV.1.7.

<sup>208</sup> See p.8.

assured that he was free of original sin.

The criteria for assessing whether God has dealt with one's original sin, in the light of the teachings of the disciples of Beza,<sup>209</sup> is no more than personal conviction, which of course can be dangerously subjective. Robert's suffering at not receiving the salvation which he so earnestly desires is compounded by the assurances of Wringhim that he is indeed under condemnation, for, if such a powerful man of God as his "father", as he styles Wringhim (p.111), cannot wrest from God the assurance of Robert's election for salvation, then it begins to look as if Robert has not found favour with the Lord, Who will have mercy on whom He will have mercy and on no others. Robert's dependence on Wringhim for spiritual assurance, (despite his own apparent theological creativity, as witnessed by his definition of "Ineffectual Calling" [p.110]),<sup>210</sup> leaves him incapable of moral and spiritual evaluations: it does not puzzle him that God should give the desired assurance by answering Wringhim's prayers (p.124), rather than his own. This surrendering of judgement to and dependence for spiritual aid on those whom he considers his superiors in such matters leave Robert vulnerable to manipulation, easy prey for one with even the most superficial resemblance of theological propriety. This process commences the very morning that Wringhim and Robert's mother welcome him to the community of the just with the news that "*he* [Wringhim] had at last prevailed".

Gil-Martin<sup>211</sup> finds a rich soil in Robert, who is already satisfied that the Elect are justified in committing, in pursuit of God's will, acts which are normally considered sinful (p.119). Robert comes to this conclusion from Wringhim's teaching, which already goes further than Calvin's. Gil-Martin extrapolates it with such charm and conviction that finally he commands Robert in a course of action ostensibly to champion the cause of Christ (see p.140) but which defies basic Christian principles of which Robert has by this time long lost sight.

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<sup>209</sup> See p.9f.

<sup>210</sup> But see p.9.

<sup>211</sup> Pick sees *Memoirs and Confessions* as a satire on Calvinism, weakened by the introduction of Gil-martin (*op. cit.*, p.20). Gifford seems to find Gil-Martin at home in a satire "on formalized religion"; see *James Hogg*, pp.168-9.

### The Development of the Theological Argument

The more extreme Calvinists, as personified by Wringhim, concluded that, not only could the Elect not fall from grace, but that they could do no wrong,<sup>212</sup> an idea considered “delightful” (p.39) by Lady Dalcastle. If any take offence at the Elect, the fault lies with the offended:-

“If I do evil to anyone on such occasions, it is because he will have it so ...  
the evil is not of my doing.” - Wringhim to Colwan, p.40

This may seem an obvious abdication of personal responsibility but, from the point of view of Wringhim and his ilk, it is a sound theological argument: if, by the grace of God, the Elect can do no wrong, then the blame for any offence taken at their actions must lie with those who oppose the will of God. Even if we admit this thesis, however, it cannot be properly used to justify Robert’s actions on his own initiative, far less those into which Gil-Martin leads him.

Wringhim may not take into account I John 2:1 but he could possibly, we may surmise, at least see fit to justify himself by a strict adherence to the Decalogue. However, while Wringhim fails to *identify* sin in his actions, Robert indubitably does. He admits to being a compulsive liar (see pp.118-9) and cannot defend his actions as Wringhim does because, in Robert’s case, the evil undoubtedly is of his doing.

Robert has to justify the evil he does as a means to a Godly end. His systematic campaign of lies against M’Gill, which betrays not only Robert’s own conceit but also the prejudices and preoccupations of his ecclesiastical grouping, is dutifully waged to make suffer “a wicked creature” (p.119) whose mother, it is rumoured, is a witch and who is obviously in league with the Devil himself: he indulges in the sinful practice of “drawing profane pictures” and even manages to surpass Robert at Latin. This campaign is waged despite M’Gill’s being innocent of everything of which Robert accuses him, and brings no condemnation: “...what a man or boy does for the right, will never be put into the sum of his transgressions.”<sup>213</sup> Any

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<sup>212</sup> See p.10.

<sup>213</sup> This Antinomian doctrine coincides perfectly with those condemned by Rutherford. See Rutherford,

blame for his actions, therefore, falls to God, Who alone can grant repentance: “I never sinned from principle, but accident...”

This is all the more remarkable for the M’Gill episode having occurred *before* Robert’s receiving assurance of salvation, during which time he put the blame for his actions on One Who would not stop him: “grace of repentance being withheld from me, I regarded myself as in no degree accountable for the failure” (p.122). Rather than admit that he did indeed sin most grievously before his conviction of election, he justifies his action at this time by arguing that he had not been able to repent of original sin by his own free will, so the blame of his actions in an unregenerate state must lie squarely with God, who withheld His grace from the would-be repentant. This he has been taught neither from Scripture nor by Wringhim, but it seems to Robert like a logical conclusion derived from what he has been brought up to believe and Wringhim’s assuring Robert of salvation serves only to confirm these thoughts.<sup>214</sup> Robert never expounds his theology to Wringhim, whom we might expect to be appalled at such a corruption of his own theology - which could in turn be condemned as a corruption of Calvin’s theology - but there is no guarantee that Wringhim would be able to refute or even resist it. Robert, like Wringhim before him, extrapolates an accepted thesis as far as it suits him to justify his going beyond the pale of the prevalent orthodoxy; he is soon to learn just how far this can be taken.

Gil-Martin’s convincing Robert to commit murder in the name of the cause of Christ demonstrates how a premise can be extrapolated along a given line of logic to a conclusion which, despite appearing ultimately to be at odds with the original thesis, can be defended by a series of steps which, although they may themselves seem erroneous when taken individually, can each be defended in turn as irrefutable so that the whole argument seems flawless. On the morning of receiving from Wringhim the assurance of his salvation, Robert takes off to commune with the Lord in the fields and woods of Finnieston, only to meet the singular individual with chameleon-like qualities (his appearance at their first meeting exactly matches that

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Samuel, *a Survey of the Spiritual Antichrist*, London, 1648, p.17.

<sup>214</sup> Under Dispensationist Theology, Robert could better argue that he had been acting for good while outwith a state of grace, under limited revelation; however, even this would require an admission of guilt and repentance once he knew better.

of Robert) who, Robert is later to learn, goes under the name of Gil-Martin. Gil-Martin introduces himself to Robert as a would-be acolyte, with assurances of concurrence regarding theology and the means to salvation (p.126). Robert, swelling with spiritual pride, tests Gil-Martin on works and on “the eternal and irrevocable decrees of God, regarding the salvation and condemnation of all mankind” and is satisfied. So far, so good, but Gil-Martin carries these ideas to such extremes that Robert “had a secret dread he was advancing blasphemies”, which Robert does not bring himself to express until his conscience is too overwhelmed by logic to function as intended.

The conclusion to which Gil-Martin eventually leads Robert is underlined by one central point of doctrine which Gil-Martin is keen to emphasise:-

He took care to dwell much on the theme of the impossibility of those ever falling away, who were once accepted and received into covenant with God, for he seemed to know, that in that confidence, and that trust, my whole hopes were centred. - p.127

This is the central focus of Gil-Martin’s entire argument: the one theological absolute is that the Elect cannot fall away, either by denying the Lord or by losing their faith or by continuing in or reverting to a life of sin. In Gil-Martin’s hands, Calvin’s conclusion becomes a new thesis which is used to justify a course of action antithetical to Calvin’s teaching in the *Institutes*.

The formal blessing which Robert receives from Wringhim the day after meeting Gil-Martin gives him a whole new vision of a purposeful future and lends credence to some doubts he holds regarding the prevalent praxis:-

“I give him unto Thee only, to Thee wholly, and to Thee for ever. I dedicate him unto Thee, soul, body, and spirit... May he be a two-edged weapon in Thy hand, and a spear coming out of Thy mouth, to destroy, and overcome, and pass over; and may the enemies of Thy church fall down before him, and be as dung to fat the land!” - p.130

Taking Wringhim's words literally, Robert is resolved to be not a "minister", but a "champion" of the Gospel. Wringhim has used his words literally heretofore; Robert sees no reason to interpret them any differently now.

The doctrine of Absolute Predestination leads, inevitably, to a question which duly occurs to Robert: if predestination is absolute, why preach the Gospel to those who will not accept it? (It does not occur to Robert to question the point of intercessory prayer for the Elect in the same light.) Furthermore, if it is clear what is to happen in the end times, why not work to anticipate them rather than endure that which is to be destroyed (in which argument he anticipates Karl Marx)? To Robert, the doctrine of Absolute Predestination

...made the economy of the Christian world appear to me as an absolute contradiction. How much more wise would it be, thought I, to begin and cut sinners off with the sword! For till that is effected, the saints can never inherit the earth in peace. Should I be honoured as an instrument to begin this great work of purification, I should rejoice in it. - p.131

With reference to nothing more than a few theological abstracts, Robert concludes it is his duty before God to slay all sinners – only one day after he himself has been assured of salvation! He now sees only two kinds of people in the world, the Elect and sinners, the latter fit only for destruction, more for the comfort of the former than for the completion of the will of God. So central is Robert to his own world view that he does not realise there must still be others, as yet unrevealed, to be numbered among the Elect. Motivated only by a particular fear of Hell, he has scrambled up into Heaven and now wants to prove himself by kicking away the ladder. This resolve is, however, still no more than theory, disabled by lack of "means" or "direction", and may be attributed to uninformed youthful zeal which could be checked by reference to the Parable of the Tares.<sup>215</sup> Nor is his concept of Absolute Predestination all that absolute: when Gil-Martin insists on "the infallibility of the elect, and the pre-ordination of all things that come to pass"

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<sup>215</sup> In this parable (Matt. 13:24-30), the Kingdom of heaven is likened to a wheatfield in which an enemy sows tares. The owner of the field declines his servants' offer to uproot the tares immediately, lest the immature wheat suffer damage. The parallel between the servants and Robert is clear: in their zeal, neither party foresees the inevitable, adverse consequences – even for the Elect – of their proposed actions.

(p.133), Robert finally retorts that “indubitably there were degrees of sinning which would induce the Almighty to throw off the very elect”, only to find himself apparently refuted:-

‘Why, sir,’ said he, ‘by vinding such an insinuation, you put discredit on the great atonement, in which you trust. Is there not enough of merit in the blood of Jesus to save thousands of worlds, if it was for these worlds that he died? Now, when you know as you do, (and as every one of the elect may know of himself) that this Saviour died for you, namely and particularly, dare you say that there is not enough of merit in his great atonement to annihilate all your sins, let them be as heinous and atrocious as they may? And, moreover, do you not acknowledge that God hath pre-ordained and decreed whatsoever comes to pass? Then, how is it that you should deem it in your power to eschew one action of your life, whether good or evil? Depend on it, the advice of the great preacher is genuine: What thine hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might, for none of us knows what a day may bring forth?’ That is, none of us knows what is pre-ordained, but whatever is pre-ordained we *must* do, and none of these things will be laid to our charge.’ - pp.133-4

This argument takes as its premise the essentially Protestant doctrine of the total sufficiency of the atonement for the removal of sin but by attributing sinful acts to God’s decree just as much as non-sinful acts, Gil-Martin makes each particular sin a part of the divine will, to be committed as an act of faith. This he backs up with “the advice of the great preacher”, preparing for the argument that the murder he is to propose is inevitable: it is sinful, he persuades Robert, to avoid any “sin” he has the opportunity to commit.

Gil-Martin’s argument depends largely on his quotation from “the preacher”. This is no reference to some obscure, if not fictitious, Puritan clergyman, but a

misquotation of *the Preacher* (Qohelet) in Ecclesiastes 9:10.<sup>216</sup> The second part of this verse actually reads “for *there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, where thou goest*”<sup>217</sup> (KJV). Read in context, the passage (vv.7-10) encourages the reader to make the most of life. It is aspirational, with its references to the wearing of white and anointing oneself with oil,<sup>218</sup> and recommends one to enjoy the fruits of one’s labour with the woman of one’s choice. The key to this is v.10b (the very part which Gil-Martin misquotes), a reminder of the joyless existence in the afterlife (*sheol*), still a vague concept in Judaism.<sup>219</sup> Life’s purpose lies in striving<sup>220</sup> to enjoy whatever God allows us. Gil-Martin’s misquotation gives 10a the same sense of urgency as is found in the Lord’s words to his disciples about working while it is day<sup>221</sup> and essentially expresses the Protestant work ethic but effectively Gil-Martin uses this to justify licentious behaviour in order to achieve God’s will. Nor is the work ethic as it was to become the true sense of the text in context. It is best understood as referring to “the task of the moment”,<sup>222</sup> whatever one has the opportunity of doing to find meaning in life, and can best be summed up in the phrase *carpe diem*.

While more recent scholars debate “what exactly Qohelet is asking his reader to do”,<sup>223</sup> whether to work hard or play hard, there was no doubt in the mind of Hogg’s contemporaries as to the parameters of licence binding upon v.10a:-

**I need not say, that whatever we are admonished thus to do, must be in its nature “lawful and right.” The hand may find to do what God has**

<sup>216</sup> Wain (Hogg, *Memoirs and Confessions*, ed. Wain, 1987) makes no reference to this in his footnotes.

<sup>217</sup> The closest Scriptural passage in sense to Gil-Martin’s words is James 4:14a, “Whereas ye know not what *shall be* on the morrow.”

<sup>218</sup> The colour white (see Jones, Edgar, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, Introduction and Commentary*, SCM Press, 1961, p.330) and anointing oil (see Barton, G.A., *Ecclesiastes (International Critical Commentary)*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1908, p.163) were signs of rejoicing but white raiment (which required careful washing) and perfumed oil were expensive and so were reserved for festive occasions (see Ginsburg, C.D., *Cohleth*, London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1861, pp.415-6.

<sup>219</sup> “Koheleth generally expounds the old Hebrew (and Semitic) view of the after-life as a shadowy, gloomy existence lacking in interest and activity.” Gordis, R.: *Koheleth – The Man and His World*, New York: Schocken Books, 1968, p.307.

<sup>220</sup> “Enjoy life, make the most of it, not because it is a regrettable second best, but because doing so bears the stamp of god’s approval (v.7). Pull out all the stops.” Davidson, R., *The Daily Study Bible. Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon*, Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, Philadelphia: Westminster press, 1986, p.64.

<sup>221</sup> See John 9.4.

<sup>222</sup> Hendry, G.S., ‘Ecclesiastes’ in *N.B.C.*, p.544

<sup>223</sup> Longman, T., *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Ecclesiastes*,

forbidden. But this, instead of being done with might, must not be done at all. – The exhortation may be extended to *all duty*, whether in reference to ourselves, to others, or to God.<sup>224</sup>

This near-contemporaneous work (published only three years before *Memoirs and Confessions*) makes the point which Robert misses and which could have saved him: the man of God is free to commit any act which *is not sinful in itself*. By failing to make this distinction, Robert falls into a career of sin for which, according to Wardlow, he will have to answer:-

O flatter not yourselves, as if the God who permits you to prosper, the kind and indulgent Author of all your undeserved and ill-requited blessings, approves or thinks lightly of your sins. He hates them; and he *will* punish them.<sup>225</sup>

Robert's instinctive reaction, when Gil-Martin makes a concrete proposal of this very nature, that he and Robert "make away with Mr. Blanchard" (p.140), is one of shock, for all his intellectual assenting to the theory. However, as he lacks the intellectual means of rebutting the suggestion and keeps his own council from those who *might* be able to correct him on this point, he is carried along by the weight of the argument to commit acts which he would otherwise consider absolutely wrong in themselves.

Robert's initial objection to murder is repeated when Gil-Martin proposes fratricide but George's lifestyle provides an urgent reason for the act:-

"The sin that he and his friends will commit this very night, will cry to heaven against us for our shameful delay!"  
- p.167

In order to prevent George from further offending God and stocking up wrath against himself, Gil-Martin and Robert must intervene with the surest way of

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Grand Rapids, Mich., Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmans, 1998, p.231

<sup>224</sup> Wardlow, Ralph, *Lectures on the Book of Ecclesiastes, Vol. II*, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1821, p.14

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, p.146

ending all opportunity of sin.

### *Memoirs and Confessions as a Novel*

“What,” in the words of the narrator (p.230), “can this work be?” The writer terms it a religious parable; the reader, the editor presumes, will take it as an allegory; the narrator himself “cannot tell”. Hogg subtly distances himself from the originally anonymous novel<sup>226</sup> and even from the unidentified editor by writing himself into the work as a gruff, Scots-speaking<sup>227</sup> shepherd (pp.230-4) who is ultimately uninterested in examining the alleged suicide’s disturbed grave (p.236), despite the apparently miraculous preservation of the body (p.233); he thereby renders himself inconsequential as one apathetic. The opinions expressed as to the nature of the work (p.230) and its historicity and as to the character of Robert (p.241-2) cannot therefore be taken on first sight as Hogg’s own. Rather, Hogg relies on literary techniques to make his point indirectly.

*Memoirs and Confessions* is not, ostensibly at least, a theological treatise, but a novel with a theological theme. Editorial comment is minimal, although significant;<sup>228</sup> opinions are usually expressed, not by the editor, but by the characters themselves. Scripture is barely referred to, not even to defend the differing theological opinions. The question of the orthodoxy of Antinomianism is answered by an interwoven series of subtle hints as to the true identity of Gil-Martin and of completely unsubtle comments from the chorus as to the characters of the main personages in the novel.

Through speaking their minds, the chorus of minor characters form a collective opinion on the main characters and their opinions which carries an air of authority by sheer volume and unanimity. To Mrs. Logan, for example, Wringhim is a “self-justified bigot” (p.94), although she is mistaken in assuming “there is little doubt” of

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<sup>226</sup> The first edition was anonymous. See title page reproduced in *Memoirs and Confessions*, ed. Wain, p.27.

<sup>227</sup> Letley (*op. cit.*,) argues that the use of Scots here “dourly deflates the Editor’s pretensions”.

<sup>228</sup> For example, p.75, where the narrator describes the idea of a chosen few guaranteed deliverance from which they could not fall away as “pharasaical”.

Wringhim's abetting Robert in the murder of his brother. Justice<sup>229</sup> is a Godly attribute and its working a Godly privilege; in contrast to the murderous Robert, Mrs. Logan and Mrs. Calvert desist from killing Robert when they have the opportunity: "Our hands shall be free of thy blood" (Mrs. Calvert, p.103). According to 'Scrape', most of the local population accounted Gil-Martin "uncanny" (p.185). Mr. Blanchard opines of Gil-Martin, "'I never saw any body I disliked so much in my life ... and if it be true that he is a stranger here, which I doubt, believe me he is come for no good'" (p.138).

The main theological statement of the novel is contained in Blanchard's answer to Robert's defence of Gil-Martin's powers of mind and theological prowess in a major speech which presents the theological moral of the novel:-

'It is for his great mental faculties that I dread him,' said he. 'It is incalculable what evil such a person as he may do, if so disposed. There is a sublimity in his ideas, with which there is to me a mixture of terror; and when he talks of religion he does it as one that rather dreads its truths than reverences them. He, indeed, pretends great strictness of orthodoxy regarding some of the points of doctrine embraced by the reformed church; but you do not seem to perceive, that both you and he are carrying these points to a dangerous extremity. Religion is a sublime and glorious thing, the bond of society on earth, and the connector of humanity with the Divine nature; but there is nothing so dangerous to man as the wresting of any of its principles, or forcing them beyond their due bounds: this is of all others the readiest way to destruction. Neither is there any thing so easily done. There is not an error into which a man can fall, which he may not press Scripture into his service as proof of the probity of, and though your boasted theologian shunned the full discussion of the subject before me, while you pressed it, I can easily see that both you and he are carrying your ideas of absolute predestination, and its concomitant appendages to an extent that overthrows all religion and revelation together; or, at least, jumbles them into a chaos, out of which human capacity can never select what is good. Believe me, Mr.

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<sup>229</sup> See Calvin, *op. cit.*, 4.XX.

Robert, the less you associate with that illustrious stranger the better, for it appears to me that your creed and his carries damnation on the very front of it.' - p.138

Here we find the central thesis of the novel: that it is possible to take theological ideas to "a dangerous extremity" which "overthrows all religion and revelation together". Typically, Hogg does not make Blanchard give a reasoned argument against the Antinomianism proclaimed by Gil-Martin and embraced by Robert; rather, Hogg depends on literary devices to make his theological point through Blanchard's speech. The speech is authoritative in tone, as befits an urgent warning from an experienced preacher to a much younger and easily influenced man. It introduces the concept of evil at the very beginning, referring to Gil-Martin's potential for evil which, combined with the "sublimity in his ideas" creates an impression of one on the verge of malevolent madness. This impression remains with the reader throughout the passage and informs Blanchard's remark on Gil-Martin's talking of religion "as one that rather dreads its truths than reverences them". What sort of person, after all, feels dread (as opposed to reverential fear) at the truths of the Christian religion, with its message of salvation - unless he be on the side of evil and therefore has good reason to dread the truths which he believes (see James 2:19)? A series of phrases of negative implication ("a dangerous extremity"; "the readiest way to destruction"; "overthrows all religion and revelation together") builds up an atmosphere of disapproval, leading through the central warning against the "wresting" of principles of religion or "forcing them beyond their due bounds" to Blanchard's final opinion at the end of the speech that Gil-Martin's extrapolation of absolute predestination "carries damnation on the very front of it". It is therefore Blanchard's firm, considered opinion that the Elect are *not* free to act with impunity in Christian service, rather, Antinomian predestination is a disaster waiting to happen. This opinion, although not argued systematically, is expressed in stern, uncompromising tones which, in the context of imaginative literature, carry moral weight; the reader is in no doubt that Robert is intended to accept Blanchard's advice and considered wrong not to. This can only make the reader wonder what sort of person Gil-Martin can be to propose what he does to Robert.

### The Identity of Gil-Martin

Throughout the novel there are hints that Gil-Martin is something far more sinister than a zealot who has, in the light of Christian first principles, overshot the mark in following his own line of logic. Gil-Martin's behaviour is not what one might expect of one who introduces himself to Robert as "come to be a humble disciple of yours; to be initiated into the true way of salvation by conversing with you, and perhaps by being assisted by your prayers" (p.126). Indeed, rather than their praying together, Robert finds himself diverted from prayer "by attending to the quibbles and dogmas of this singular and unaccountable being" (p.127), which "quibbles" are to prove more important for Robert than such a dismissive word might imply. Moreover, Gil-Martin refuses Robert's request to lead them both in prayer (p.135) on point of principle with a very negative argument: Gil-Martin "made a point" of never praying with others because most people "made it merely a selfish concern", when we should only "kneel before him in order to thank him for such benefits as he saw meet to bestow." Robert's reason for requesting prayer is not even inquired after and, if they should indeed thank God for benefits bestowed, why does he not proceed to do so? Far from learning from Robert's conversation and being assisted by his prayer, Gil-Martin clearly holds the upper hand, arguing Robert into submission "as usual", in a relationship in which prayer plays no part. His obvious use of deceit, evasion and manipulation make the reader untrusting of him and wary of anything he has to say.

Throughout the relationship, Gil-Martin's behaviour is dubious. His reaction (p.139) on learning Blanchard's opinions from Robert goes beyond righteous zeal: according to Robert, "his countenance kindled with indignation and rage; and then by degrees his eyes sunk inward, his brow lowered, so that I was awed, and withdrew my eyes from looking at him." His "indignation and rage" is not even offset by a proper sense of humour, for "he never was truly amused with any thing". He only ever smiles with contempt, as at Robert for accepting his argument for killing George (p.162) and rejoices only in the state to which he has brought Robert, "manifesting," according to Robert's observance, "a secret and inward joy at my utter despair" (p.221). Nor is the circumstance of Colwan's death totally pleasing to him, for Robert did not actually kill his father (p.173). He dissuades Robert from working conscientiously as laird (p.174), after persuading him that the capacity for

doing good with the estate was one more reason for the deaths of Colwan and George. His reaction, too, on learning that Robert owns Mrs. Keeler's lands (p.180), implies covetousness. Ultimately, he leads Robert into "vices and follies" before abandoning him to them: Robert recollects "In these my enlightened friend never accompanied me, but I always observed that he was the first to lead me to every one of them, and then leave me in the lurch" (p.190). Taking together his contempt for Robert's *naïveté* and his joy at Robert's suffering with his wild temper and his deceit, Gil-Martin's comportment appears something less than Christian.

There are stronger hints that Gil-Martin is other than Christian. When Robert inquires whether the book, not in English, which Gil-Martin is reading, is a Bible, he answers, "It is *my* Bible, sir" (p.132). The emphasis of this answer implies not that it is his personal copy of the Bible, as would a simple affirmative answer, but rather, that it is a particular book other than the Bible, by which he, uniquely, lives, as Christians live by the Bible. Likewise, his scruple about his name Martin, "it is not my *Christian* name; but it *is* a name which may serve your turn" (p.136), implies that there is nothing Christian about his having the name Martin. We may conclude from this either that Gil-Martin is unbaptised or, perhaps, that he is travelling incognito under an assumed name. This latter explanation occurs to Robert, who takes Gil-Martin to be Peter the Great of Russia, whom he knows to have so travelled about Europe (some sixteen years earlier – see p.137n.). Robert finds plenty in what Gil-Martin says to confirm this idea, for example:-

"I never go but where I have some great purpose to serve ... either in the advancement of my own power and dominion, or in thwarting my enemies."  
- p.149

Gil-Martin's attentions to Robert are particularly flattering:-

"Before I had missed such a prize as the attainment of your services, I would have travelled over one half of the habitable globe."

However, Gil-Martin's words will bear a sinister interpretation. When asked by Robert if all his subjects are Christians, Gil-Martin expresses no surprise at such a

question, as would any non-potentate, but rather replies

“All my European subjects are, or deem themselves so ... and they are the most faithful and true subjects I have.” - p.142

By so replying he acknowledges the assumption that he has subjects and indicates that they cover more than one continent and adhere to more than one faith, which is all consistent with the Russia of Hogg's time, if not of Robert's. However, his remark about subjects of his *deeming* themselves Christians lends weight to another interpretation. Nominalism, “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Tim. 3:5), may be common in nations and empires with official churches, but describing one as *deeming* oneself Christian could imply deliberate deception, or even that one has been deceived into believing that which is not Christian. It is further significant that Gil-Martin accepts from Robert the title “prince” (p.159) for, if his kingdom is not to be found in any atlas, what is he prince of? Furthermore, his pride in his oddly-worded response to Robert's inquiry after his family, “I have no parents but one, whom I do not acknowledge” (pp.136-7) is hardly in keeping with regal family pride, unless he be illegitimate or estranged from an only surviving parent. These scattered hints and implications, when taken together, create a distinct impression that not all about Gil-Martin is as it seems, which impression, taken together with Blanchard's extremely poor opinion of Gil-Martin, lead the reader to admit the possibility that this is no earthly prince, but rather, in the Biblical sense, a most worldly one (see John 12:31).

The awareness of this possibility makes some of Gil-Martin's statements highly suspect, with disturbing implications for those who depend on internal conviction for assurance of Election:-

‘For a man who is not only dedicated to the Kingdom of Heaven, in the most solemn manner, soul, body, and spirit, but also chosen of him from the beginning, justified, sanctified, and received into a communion that never shall be broken, and from which no act of his shall ever remove him, - the possession of such a man, I tell you, is worth kingdoms, because every deed that he performs, he does it with perfect safety to

himself and honour to me.'

- pp.149-50

In what way, we must ask, can the deeds of one who cannot by his own actions fall from grace redound to the glory of Gil-Martin? Surely, if the theology be sound, such deeds redound to the glory of God. If, however, the theology be unsound, and such deeds do indeed redound to the glory of Gil-Martin, then the whole text takes on an ironic tone and there arises the question of who such a one can be who is glorified by Antinomian acts. Notable also are the terms of Gil-Martin's promise of protection to Robert:-

'...no human hand shall ever henceforth be able to injure your life, or shed one drop of your precious blood, but it is on the condition that you walk always by my directions.'

- p.167

In response to Robert's questioning Gil-Martin's jurisdiction outwith his own domains, Gil-Martin replies,

'In whatever dominion or land I am, my purpose accompanies me, ... and it is only against human might and human weapon that I ensure your life, ... I have never broken word or promise with you. Do you credit me?'

Robert readily does credit Gil-Martin, although confessing incomprehension. However, Gil-Martin's promise requires closer inspection. The initial pledge is specifically that no *human* hand shall be able to injure Robert's life; this is compounded by Gil-Martin's stressing that it is *only* against "human might and weapon" that he insures Robert's life. Why this qualification? Even such a sycophant as Robert would hardly credit Gil-Martin with authority over the natural world - unless, perhaps, Gil-Martin has in mind a domain in a different realm entirely. Also, this promise is on the condition that Robert walk always by Gil-Martin's directions, not specifically by Christian doctrine. Gil-Martin is increasingly taking control of Robert's life and Robert still seems not to realise it.

This control is seen to be absolute when Robert protests to Gil-Martin that he has no

weapon, in an incident which provides the strongest hint of Gil-Martin's identity. Robert receives the reply, "The God whom thou servest will provide these..." (p.143) and the further assurance, "... he whom *thou* servest, will be ever at thy right and left hand, to direct and assist thee" (p.144). This second remark follows a vision, in which Robert sees an array of golden weapons. The vision comes out of "a cloudy veil" (p.143) which has covered his eyes on looking to Heaven for direction; he assumes therefore that the vision is from Heaven. The next day, however, when Gil-Martin himself presents Robert with a golden pistol, he does so, triumphantly, with the words, "See what thy master hath provided thee?" (p.144). Robert recognises the pistol from his vision and concludes, "Surely this is the will of the Lord", nevertheless, it remains that the one who actually supplies Robert with the pistol is Gil-Martin, who thereby lays claim to the title 'God' as well as 'master'.

When Gil-Martin eventually tells his story, it is one which should give a clear warning to Robert:-

'The spirit that now directs my energies is not that with which I was endowed at my creation. It is changed within me, and so is my whole nature. My former days were those of grandeur and felicity. But, would you believe it? *I was not then a Christian.* Now I am. I have been converted to its truths by passing through the fire, and since my final conversion, my misery has been extreme. ... I, however, promise you this – a portion of the only happiness which I enjoy, sublime in its motions, and splendid in its attainments – I will place you on the right hand of my throne, and show you the grandeur of my domains, and the felicity of my millions of true professors.'

- pp.189-90

The key to this passage lies in Gil-Martin's having been converted to the *truths* of Christianity; it is quite possible to be convinced of the veracity of an argument without living by it and Gil-Martin's state is hardly that of one rejoicing in the Lord, even in the face of adversity. His spirit and nature have changed from those with which he was endowed at his creation, with a resultant alteration in his fortune from "grandeur and felicity" to extreme misery – and this as a direct result of his realising the truth of Christian teaching. His is the misery of one who has fallen

from a blessed state through his own action, only to realise tardily the truth of that which he rejected. Only one inescapable conclusion remains to the reader, one which renders the promise to Robert horrendous beyond irony: Gil-Martin is none other than the Devil incarnate.<sup>230</sup>

### Arguments against Gil-Martin

Extreme Scottish Calvinism, as personified by Wringham, is powerless to stop Gil-Martin: there can be nothing wrong with one whose declared theology is sound. Despite Lady Dalcastle's apt warning that the devil can take the form of an angel, Wringham rules that this stranger can be "no agent of the wicked" (pp.129-30). Robert can only resort to his own understanding of Scripture:-

"I stood on one argument alone, which was, 'that I did not think the Scripture promises to the elect, taken in their utmost latitude, warranted the assurance that they could do no wrong; and that, therefore, it behoved every man to look well to his steps.'"

- p.170

Gil-Martin, however, is unmoved on this point:-

"There was no religious scruple that irritated my enlightened friend and master so much as this. He could not endure it. And the sentiments of our great covenanted reformers being on his side, there is not a doubt I was wrong."

- pp.170-1

As for Robert's "crimes", they were only "a temporary falling off, a specimen of that liberty by which the chosen and elected ones are made free..." (p.188).

Robert is helpless to argue against Gil-Martin's referring to the "great covenanted reformers", whichever ones he has in mind, or even that "temporary falling off" is to be avoided by every effort. Robert is left miserably giving intellectual assent to a theology which he cannot treasure in his heart.

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<sup>230</sup> Gifford, *James Hogg*, p.170 notes the similarity of the name to "Gil-mouls" and "Gil-Mouly", Border folknames for the Devil.

### The Effect of Gil-Martin on Robert

Robert eventually realises that all is not well, when rumours come to him about acts he has allegedly committed while in fact being elsewhere at the time. Gil-Martin sneers at his suggestion that he might have a "Second Self" (pp.176-7), as he does at Robert's falling for his logic. Robert comes to suspect, naturally enough under the circumstances, that "the great enemy of man's salvation was exercising powers" over him (p.181) but he does not suspect Gil-Martin in this, although Gil-Martin's presence is becoming "irksome" (p.182) and he was obviously "possessed of some supernatural purpose of the source of which [Robert] was wholly ignorant." That he could be at once a Christian and a necromancer appears "inconsistent", so Robert concludes that Gil-Martin has "powers from on high". However, this does not stop him thanking God for his "deliverance" from Gil-Martin (p.186), "...whose presence and counsels, I now dreaded more than hell."

Robert's deeds, prompted by Gil-Martin, cannot of course have anything but a detrimental psychological effect on him, despite the logical answers his conscience receives. This is evident from the beginning: on his arriving home from his first encounter with Gil-Martin, Wringhim fears that Satan has "been busy" with him, such is his altered state of appearance (pp.128-9). Robert is aware of his suffering under the influence of Gil-Martin but, despite Robert's having "no peace or comfort out of his sight nor ... much in his presence" (p.166) he sees this ill-feeling as no more than the Christian's lot: "so true is it that a Christian's life is one of suffering." This influence disillusiones Robert regarding the things he once held dear and corrupts his attitudes as well as his actions: his mother's formally-revered opinions now seem "hackneyed" (p.141) and Wringhim's words "lose relish"; his mother, moreover, "with all her love and anxiety," (p.183) now "had such an insufferable mode of manifesting them" that her attention becomes "obnoxious" to him. Furthermore, after fleeing following his mother's suspicious disappearance (p.188), Robert thanks God for his temporary "deliverance" from Gil-Martin (p.186), although by now even the satirical tale of the devil in Auchtermuchty (pp.195ff) cannot make him realise what is happening to him.

Gil-Martin has brought matters to this point by subtle means:-

**“I could not say I had ever received an office at his hand that was not friendly, yet these offices had been of a strange tendency; and the horror with which I now regarded him was unaccountable to myself.” - p.216**

Unfortunately, this horror is insufficient for Robert to rid himself definitively of Gil-Martin, who protests that he is “wedded” (p.220) to Robert:-

**‘Our essences are one, our bodies and spirits being united, so, that I am drawn towards you as by magnetism, and wherever you are, there must my presence be with you.’**

Robert is to blame for his own sorry state, having drawn back after putting his hand (see Luke 9:62) to “the great work of man’s restoration to freedom”. Gil-Martin’s explanation for Robert’s circumstances takes the novel to the height of irony:-

**‘You have given some evil ones power over you, who long to devour you, both soul and body...’**

As if to confirm this analysis to the reader, Gil-Martin suggests a suicide pact as a release. He assuages Robert’s fears on the grounds that the “absolute nature of justifying grace” (p.225) is valid even here, although in the end he only assists Robert (with a hay rope, a feat impossible “if the devil himself had not assisted him” [p.231]) instead of joining him – once again leading him up to the point and then abandoning him. The “equivocal” (p.228) nature of the prayer he gives Robert to use “in great extremity” is “susceptible of being rendered in a meaning perfectly dreadful; but he reasoned against this, and all reasoning with him is to no purpose.” The use of the prayer releases him from turmoil but he is no longer confident about his spiritual state:-

**“...what I now am, the Almighty knows! *Amen.*” - p.229**

What indeed – having begun his narrative with mixed feelings about having ever met Gil-Martin (p.128), he now sees “approaching furiously” one whose “stern face” is “blackened with horrid despair” (p.230) but he remains resigned to his intended

course of action which, he finally realises, leads to destruction. “The hour of repentance is past”, he concludes, a disputable point theologically, but one which makes for an ending as horrific as any devised by Hogg’s Gothic contemporaries.

### Conclusion

*Memoirs and Confessions* shows up the fundamental weakness of hyper-Calvinism: if all acts of the Elect be sinless, willed by God, then even acts like murder will not be counted against them – and even if they are, the Atonement is valid even here. Robert seems to realise at the end where this doctrine can lead, but only, apparently, after it seems all too late. Dalcastle’s last “incoherent words about justification by faith alone, and absolute and eternal predestination having been the ruin of his house” (p.76) condemn extreme Calvinism for the extrapolations it derives from the Gospel by false logic, to the calumnification of the doctrine of justification by (grace through) faith, its ungodly fruits leading, not to the glory of the Lord, but to hell fire.

## Part Four

### The Decline of Calvinism as a Literary Influence

The literary squabble over the Covenanting Movement and more especially Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* virtually exhausted Calvinistic theology as a literary theme in Scotland. Scottish ecclesiastical history had been revised and reasserted from every point of view and the more extreme conclusions which could be developed from the theology had been thoroughly and unequivocally exposed, so that there was nothing more to say on the matter. Theology, Calvinistic or otherwise, would never again be such a dominant theme in Scottish literature and would be only scarcely revisited. Men of faith were increasingly free to express their literary talents without pushing their faith and opinions in their work.

The first obvious case in point is George MacDonald, who is best remembered now for his fairy tales and his influence on later writers such as C.S. Lewis, G.K. Chesterton and W.H. Auden. He did, however, turn to the then startling theological theme of universal salvation in novels such as *David Eiginbrod* (1863)<sup>231</sup> and *Lilith* (1895), a sustained allegory on life, death and repentance, in which even the eponymous she-devil (whose name is derived from Isaiah 34<sup>232</sup>) finds salvation.

Another such writer is Robert Louis Stevenson. Despite his strong personal faith, as evinced by his published prayers and the accompanying foreword by his widow,<sup>233</sup> the theological message of his work is extremely muted. Only in *Treasure Island* (1882/1883) do we find a direct call to repentance; Coxswain Hands replies to Jim Hawkins "I never seen good come o' goodness yet" after thirty years at sea.

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<sup>231</sup> See [www.slainte.org.uk/scotauth/macdodsw.htm](http://www.slainte.org.uk/scotauth/macdodsw.htm).

<sup>232</sup> See Long, Asphodel, *Lilith*, [www.amaranthine.freemove.co.uk/pages/goddess\\_writings/lilith.htm](http://www.amaranthine.freemove.co.uk/pages/goddess_writings/lilith.htm).

<sup>233</sup> See Stevenson, Robert Louis, *Prayers Written at Vailima*, intro. Mrs Stevenson, London: Chatto & Windus, 1906.

Otherwise, religion is little more than superstition, as seen in Dick Morgan's behaviour over the torn Bible (ch.XXIX) and even Long John Silver's unease over the changing of ships' names (ch.XI). The churchgoing Captain Hoseason of *Kidnapped* (1886) aboard his ship the *Covenanter* is a classic example of extreme Antinomianism. Livingstone's own theology, as far as it is developed, he confines to his essays:<sup>234</sup> most significant for our study is his retelling of the story of the Pentland Rising;<sup>235</sup> evidently, Stevenson feared the memory of the Covenanters was fading.

Although forgotten now, Calvinism finally found a poetic voice at this time that was at home in the secular as well as the sacred. John Huie's collected life's work, *The Singing Pilgrim and Other Poems* (1906), includes nature and even humorous poetry, although the greater part of his work was still an expression of his faith. Many of his works are too rigid in rhythm to be satisfying as poetry and would be better set to music as hymns but Huie still achieves a poetical expression of Calvinist theology which is at least competent verse. *What is your life?* provides its own answer: life is a preparation for Heaven. The path, however, can be rough: *Hope and fear* addresses the question of doubt and perseverance, directing the perturbed soul, as Calvin did, away from "Moods and feelings" (l.34) towards Christ: "Look to Him and doubt no more" (l.42). "*Took It Out Of The Way, Nailing It To The Cross*" revives the commercial imagery which the Federalists applied to the free grace of God's salvation through Christ:-

When doubts arise I look at His receipt,  
 "Paid," written with His blood.  
 ll.29-30

*"Till The Day Dawn, and The Shadows Flee Away"* is hardly in the same league as the works of St. John of the Cross in its ecstasy at the coming of Christ in the "starless night" (l.1) but the poem is the antithesis of James Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night* (1874) which, in its meditation on the newly-realised purposelessness

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<sup>234</sup> See Stevenson, Robert Louis, *Lay Morals*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1920.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.87-113

of a life ending in oblivion, is more numbingly and despairingly depressing than the first twelve chapters of Ecclesiastes, the writer of which can at least impart a final message of hope. Nevertheless, *The City* is much more aesthetically satisfying than Huie's cry from the dark night of the soul, *Desolate*: at least Thomas's conclusion that there is no God brings resolution to his work, whereas Huie's poem ends in the same anguish as it begins, leaving the reader with an unsatisfying open question.

More remembered than Huie, albeit for all the wrong reasons, the best-known example of a writer demonstrating his faith through his work in late-19<sup>th</sup> century Scotland is William McGonagall. Although his reputation as the world's greatest bad poet is arguably well-deserved, we venture to suggest that possibly, in the age of melodrama, this self-schooled tragedian's work sounded better the way he recited it. For our purposes, his *Poetic Gems*<sup>236</sup> demonstrate endorsement of much that was practical in the Scottish faith at this time, such as Sabbatarianism (*Jottings of New York*) and more especially poor relief and abstinence (*To Mr James Scrymgeor, Dundee*), as well as the assumptions of the time, regarding the still-expanding British Empire as a work of God not to be resisted, as witnessed by McGonagall's celebration of the defeat of Osman Digna in *The Battle of El-Teb*:-

And I think he ought to be ashamed of himself;  
For I consider he has acted the part of a silly elf,  
By thinking to conquer the armies of the Lord  
With his foolish and benighted rebel horde.

- ll.69-72

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<sup>236</sup> McGonagall, William, *Poetic Gems* [1890], Dundee: David Winter and Son, 1934

McGonagall also revisits the Covenanting movement in the eulogy *The Execution of James Graham, Marquis of Montrose*.

Although theology was not to disappear altogether from Scottish literature, the 20<sup>th</sup> century began as it intended to continue. George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901) and John Macdougall Hay's *Gillespie* (1914) portray essentially Godless societies in which evil predominates to the destruction of those who live by it. The lack of any moral frame of reference in *Green Shutters* is fatal for the drunken anti-hero, young John Gourlay because, without philosophy, in the words of John's professor, his "almost morbid perception" is "simply a curse" (ch.18) so he is helpless when his family face ruin and brings about their destruction by act (the murder of his father) and example (suicide). *Gillespie*, in contrast, has a more optimistic ending and is perhaps the closest the Scottish novel comes to proclaiming the Christian Gospel of salvation by the forgiveness of sins. *Gillespie* explores the work ethic: born of Calvinism and based on Scripture (see II Thess. 3.10), this ethic is portrayed as a godless way of life, distilled down to mere acquisitiveness for its own sake, leading, as in *Green Shutters*, to the destruction of the protagonist and his family, but at least with the realisation at the end by Gillespie of the error of his ways and the hope of salvation even for the perpetrator of so much evil.

Not until over a century after the publication of *Memoirs and Confessions* were the themes of the Covenanting movement and extreme Calvinism reconsidered in Scottish literature. Although he never achieved the literary greatness of Scott or Hogg or even Galt, John Buchan turned to the days of Montrose for his best novel, *Witch Wood* (1927). More than any of his predecessors, Buchan dwells on the persisting witchcraft of the Covenanting period. So convinced is the leader of the coven, Caird of Chasehope, of the absolute assurance of salvation that he believes he can indulge in the carnal pleasures of satanic rites and still be saved, his strict orthodoxy putting him as beyond reproach in the eyes of the Presbytery as Gil-Martin is to Wringhim, to the frustration and ruin of the new, young, zealous minister.

The Covenanters are also worked into the Marxist re-interpretation of history as

freedom fighters in Lewis Grassie Gibbon's trilogy *A Scots Quair* (1932-4), despite the doubts of the heroine Chris in *Sunset Song* (1932) that the Scots ever really "BELIEVED. It's just been a place to collect and argue, the kirk, and criticize God" (p.213) and the orthodox Marxist-Leninist view that religiosity is akin to madness, both Chris's strictly religious father (*Sunset Song*) and her second husband the Rev. Colquhoun, for all his left-wing politics (*Cloud Howe* [1933]), dying in madness. Otherwise, clergy are portrayed as carnal hypocrites, especially Gibbon (*Sunset Song*) and MacShilluck (*Grey Granite* [1934]). Grassie Gibbon's fellow-Marxist Hugh MacDiarmid also uses biblical themes or images in some of his greatest poetry, especially in the short, lyrical works of his first two anthologies, *Sangschaw* (1925) and *Penny Wheep* (1926).

The two greatest Scottish novelists of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Muriel Spark and Alasdair Gray, display the persistence of Calvinism as an essential element in the collective Scottish psyche and portray the need in a rapidly secularising and theologically diversifying society for one to seek meaning and truth for oneself. Spark's novels are more concerned with her conversion from Judaism to Roman Catholicism than any other theological theme<sup>237</sup> but in her largely autobiographical *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), in which Spark portrays a havoc-wrecking, latter-day Antinomian schoolmistress whose machinations have "a whiff of sulphur" (p.109) about them, the heroine Sandy turns to Calvin as part of a "birthright" (p.108) of which she feels deprived, in order to have something to react against, which she does, like Spark herself, by embracing Roman Catholicism.

The influence of Calvinism and Presbyterianism is more apparent in the works of Alasdair Gray. Gray often recurs to the useful "perspective device",<sup>238</sup> of religion. His semi-autobiographical masterpiece *Lanark* (1981), which portrays the young Gray's longing for God, contains "too many" Church of Scotland ministers (p.494) and *The Fall of Kelvin Walker* (1985) tells the story of a runaway son of a Session Clerk who eventually finds his own faith and becomes Moderator of his Church.

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<sup>237</sup> See especially Spark, Muriel, *The Comforters* (1957), *Robinson* (1958), *Memento Mori* (1959), *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963) and *The Mandelbaum Gate* (1965), Harmondsworth: Penguin.

<sup>238</sup> Gray, Alasdair, *Saltire Self Portraits 4. Alasdair Gray*, Edinburgh: Saltire Society, 1988, p.19

Walker's new-found faith is not shared by Gray, who gives a literary resolution to the question of the nature of God through the drunken, half-crazed sex maniac McLeish in *1982, Janine* (1984) who comes to recognise "the wee voice" (p.194) coaching him through life. Gray's own theology, however, is clearest in his poetry. His early works in *Old Negatives* (1989), which date from 1952 onwards, explore the nature of God; in *Sixteen Occasional Poems* (2000), he begs the question

God who sees all creation good  
Is to be achieved.

- *Genesis*, 11.5-6

The literature of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century betrays the sham of nominally religious division and an increasing void left where Calvinism once held sway. Edwin Morgan's *King Billy* (1963) exposes Scottish sectarianism as no more than tribalism and gang warfare born of poverty. *Good Friday* (1962) betrays a general ignorance and indifference regarding the meaning and even historicity of Easter. J.P. McCondach's *The Channering Worm* (1983) seeks, like *The City of Dreadful Night* before it, to demonstrate the futility of life without God as a purposeful focus. In Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993), humanity once again starts asking the big questions about life but in the Godless Scotland of the late-20<sup>th</sup> century, the smackhead Rent Boy seeks answers by shoplifting books on philosophy, not theology.

In Christopher Brookmyre's *Boiling a Frog* (2000), the sectarian divide is indicative of an apparently ineradicable religiosity in the institutional fabric of Scottish society, although the institutions themselves are considered increasingly irrelevant to most individuals. In Brookmyre's appraisal of the ecclesiastical state of Scotland the Roman Catholic Church has the ear of the media (always out for a provocative headline) more than the Church of Scotland because they have "retained an uncompromising fire-and-brimstone streak" while the "mainstream" Protestant churches have "all become a bit too mealy-mouthed", except for the "Wee Frees", who were "just too screamingly fucking mad for anyone to take them seriously" (pp.127-8). However, his pretentious attempt at a ridiculing satire redounds on him

through his demonstrable ignorance of Scripture, as witnessed by his reference to “Abraham’s sons [sic] seeing their father’s nakedness” (p.75, comp. Gen. 9:20-3).

The most significant late-20<sup>th</sup> century Scottish work with a theological influence – although not written from a faith perspective – was Edwin Morgan’s *A.D.* This dramatic trilogy (*The Early Years, The Ministry, The Execution*), commissioned to commemorate the millennium, dashed the Churches’ hopes for the celebration of what they insisted was the event’s true significance. The idiom of the play is uncompromisingly of Morgan’s own time and place and, while merely telling a good story, Morgan portrays Jesus in precisely the sort of homely manner that Gray’s Kelvin Walker finds so objectionable:<sup>239</sup> Jesus has a love-child (*The Ministry*, Act 4, Scene 3) and accepts that the disciple John is attracted to men (5.4). This is, however, no manifesto for Queer Theology: Jesus’s jarringly patronising words of comfort, “It must be difficult, being that way?”, are as mealy-mouthed as anything Brookmyre might expect of the Church of Scotland and offer no real comfort or resolution. *A.D.* suffered a very mixed reception, equally vilified as blasphemy and praised for its humanity and compassion. It remains to be seen whether this work attracts the attention of future audiences on its own merits.

### Conclusion

Having exhausted theology and church history as literary themes within the space of a decade in the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Scots writers were free to explore other themes and turn increasingly to other influences, writing from the perspectives of their different world views but without declaring their faith (or, increasingly, lack of it) on every page. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century proceeded, the question of the existence of God seemed to matter less and less: new writers at the end of the century seemed largely unconcerned about answering the question of God for themselves – and those who were did not revert to the faith of their fathers. Calvinism had left a huge void in the collective psyche, which carnal beings could only seek to fill with sensual indulgence and experimentation, a few inquiring souls wondering if there was anything more to life but hardly any turning to the increasingly-irrelevant institutionalised Churches for answers. People were on their

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<sup>239</sup> See Gray, Alasdair, *The Fall of Kelvin Walker*, Edinburgh: Canongate, 1985, p.73.

own but as long as there were sufficient distractions around to occupy them, they remained not unsatisfied.

## Conclusion

To argue that the immediate effect of Calvinism on Scottish literature was to almost halt all literary activity is to argue *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. It is, however, true that the Bible was considered sufficient for instruction in Mankind's main purpose of worship<sup>240</sup> and where it proved difficult to understand, the considered opinions of wise, Godly men were there to instruct. Only generations after the most extreme form of Calvinism, which went beyond Calvin's teaching on the atonement and its implications for Christian living, had burned itself out as a significant socio-theological force, could sincere Christians, including Burns, begin to express themselves literally without making a theological tract of every single work.

After Burns had exposed the humbug which blighted much of Scottish life in the name of God, writers were free to explore secular themes but theological themes were strong also – and necessarily so. Scotland was coming to terms with its past and its identity through literature, this exploration could not omit key events in Scottish ecclesiastical history, chief among which as a literary theme were the Killing Times and the most polemical teachings of Antinomianism. The major Scottish novelists of their day divided over reappraising and defending the legitimacy of the Covenanters' political and military struggle for a theological ideal, Scott portraying them as bigoted criminals, Hogg and Galt defending them as sufferers of injustice. This polemic was seen most clearly in the *persona* of Claverhouse, portrayed variously as the hero and the villain of the entire episode but always vividly and impressively, so as to sway the opinion of the reader. Inadvertently, through their clear portrayal of the widespread superstition which persisted after the Reformation even in the most staunchly Covenanting areas, historical novelists betrayed the shallowness of the personal faith of many, giving the lie to the common misconception that the Scottish Reformation had been virtually complete in geographical extent and in depth of individual spiritual regeneration and renewal.

In the psychological novel, Hogg's *Memoirs and Confessions* especially demonstrates the destructive consequences of Antinomianism on the individual. Thinking himself

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<sup>240</sup> See pp.29-30.

utterly dependent on God to work a miracle of salvation in his life and give inward assurance that it has come to pass, Robert is left dependent on the platitudes of his supposed betters. Weak-minded enough to accept that God has confirmed his election to Wringhim rather than to himself, Robert remains defenceless against the plausible Antinomian assurances of Gil-Martin that, as predestination is absolute, it is a sin to neglect even murder if apparently advantageous to the fulfilment of God's will. The atonement is sufficient to cover even suicide – the only apparent way out for Robert from the self-ruin into which the diabolical Gil-Martin leads him.

The literary efforts of Scott, Hogg and Galt effectively exhausted Scottish ecclesiastical history and Calvinism, the only theology to make any serious impact on Scotland heretofore, as major literary themes worth exploring. Henceforth, men of faith were to express their faith less and less in their work; literary activity had become a means of self-expression for the talented, with no obligation to serve some grand ambition through one's work or even to share personal faith. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century novel testified to the consequences of Calvinism's greatest legacy, a Godless work ethic, but the final message of *Gillespie* that there was more to life than this was drowned out by the outbreak of the First World War the same year. Atheistic Marxism found its champions to propose a new vision but this was soon dashed in turn by the Second World War and consequent Stalinist expansion. While inquiring young minds mid-century explored the question of God and did not leave Calvinism unexamined, they did not become Calvinists, although their conclusions influenced their work as much as had the faith of earlier writers. By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although theological exploration continued, the influence and importance not only of Calvinism but of Christianity in general was visibly waning. Religious thought and influence in Scottish literature now showed more in the treatment of institutional life at national level and the portrayal of a nominally religious bigotry. The notion of a personal God was becoming increasingly alien and knowledge of Scripture increasingly unfamiliar, both of which trends are reflected in the literature of the period.

## Postscript

‘... It has all been done before. The Arians, the Albigenians, the Jansenists of Port Royal, the English recusants, the Covenanters. So many schisms, annihilations and reconciliations. Finally the lion lies down with the lamb...’

- Muriel Spark, *The Abbess of Crewe*, Ch.1

The remaining few who readily identify with the Covenanters may have come down from the hills but the popular image of Calvinism in Scotland today is largely, as Brookmyre indicates,<sup>241</sup> that of an extreme minority, removed from the mainstream of national life. Its close identification with the ever-dwindling Gaelic-speaking population in the remote Outer Hebrides reinforces this view. Media focus on the actions and declarations of the smaller, more extreme Presbyterian churches, like their massed protests against the introduction of commercial flights to Stornoway on the Sabbath in 2002, declining on their holy day even to explain their case to the media, makes Calvinism seem a dismissible anachronism which, as Daiches says of the would-be Jacobites of *Redgauntlet*, is now “not even dangerous, ... only silly”<sup>242</sup> and which no longer inspires even the satire of *Holy Willie’s Prayer*.

It remains that, in nearly four and a half centuries of Protestant dominance, Calvinism has never found a lasting literary voice in Scotland of its own, despite holding theological sway for the greater part of that time. This is inevitable, for, unlike Calvin himself,<sup>243</sup> Scottish Calvinism has always regarded the arts as finding their true purpose in worship, not in God. The time may, however, have arrived for another theological reassessment which could leave Calvinism in Scotland free to articulate itself artistically. Scotland at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century finds itself at once revisiting the theological circumstances of the Antinomian Puritans and the historical circumstances of Scott. We have already referred to Queer Theology;<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> See pp.115-6.

<sup>242</sup> See Daiches, *op. cit.*, p.117.

<sup>243</sup> See p.30n.

<sup>244</sup> See p.116.

this is typical of postmodern theology in that it seeks to deconstruct and reconstruct theological absolutes around a thesis which is developed conveniently to a desired conclusion, much as Gil-Martin does; the theology may have changed, but not the methodology. Furthermore, as in the time of Scott, Scotland is rediscovering itself, with a new political semi-independence it still does not quite know what to do with and with the Enlightenment's fears of Scotland's independent past<sup>245</sup> still to the fore in the political establishment. The current time of reappraisal in theology and in national life is ripe for the Presbyterian Churches, especially the National Kirk, to reassess their commitment to Calvinism; the Westminster Confession may occupy the same position in the spiritual realm as the monarchy does in the temporal – not necessarily what people want, but what do you replace it with? - but until the Church of Scotland is clear about what it does and does not believe, people looking for answers will look elsewhere. Above all, those convinced by Calvin's thesis need to realise that much that has been said and done in his name as regards the doctrine of atonement (and the practice of worship) is spurious. Such a realisation could yet produce in Scotland a truly Calvinistic literature, although there are only so many ways of telling the Reprobate that they'll go to the bad fire. The nation might conclude, along with Muriel Spark,<sup>246</sup> that Calvinism is no more than something to react against, but at least such a definite, informed reaction would be a sign of a collective intellectual activity coupled with national self-awareness the likes of which has not been seen in Scotland for almost two centuries.

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<sup>245</sup> See p.29.

<sup>246</sup> see p.114.

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