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University of Glasgow (Crichton Campus)

Master of Philosophy

Covenanters and Conventicles in South West Scotland

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**This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy
in History at the University of Glasgow.**

May 2012

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Professor Ted Cowan

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ABSTRACT

Covenanters and Conventicles in south west Scotland.

The Covenanters were a group of individuals from varied backgrounds who supported the National Covenant and carried out many activities to prevent the imposition of an episcopal church on the people of Scotland by James VI, Charles I and Charles II against the will of the Scottish people. The study reviews some of the literature which has been written about the Covenanters and the services or conventicles which they held out in the fields. Their aim here was to continue their form of worship led by their own ministers. They had been outed from the parishes they served because they refused to comply with a decree which required that their ministry had to be approved by a local bishop. This was against their strongly held beliefs that the king and bishops did not govern the running of the church. They believed that they served God and not the king.

The study explores the area of Dumfries and Galloway and describes some of the monuments which were erected to commemorate the dedication of Covenanters who gave their lives. Emphasis is placed on conventicles and where these were held as well as accounts of interviews of present day Church of Scotland clergy, who arrange and hold annual conventicles. One of these sites at Skeoch Hill is described in detail, as the writer visited it and photographed the memorial, which has been erected to commemorate the event. The study concludes by trying to show that the contribution the Covenanters made was an important one and their sacrifices contributed to the establishment of the present day Church of Scotland as well as enabling individuals who live in the 21st century to worship in freedom.

Covenanters and Conventicles in South West Scotland

Introduction

The idea behind this study began after a visit to Dalry to see the Burning Bush, a monument to the Covenanters. This set in motion a train of thought to discover who the Covenanters were. As a result it is hoped to provide in this study a snapshot of who the Covenanters were and why their cause became so popular among the people of Scotland. Indeed it became a very popular movement mainly because of the opposition to the proposals of James VI, Charles I and Charles II to impose unwanted changes in worship. This thesis investigates the origin, growth, development and function of conventicles during the period 1660 – 1688. An attempt will be made to ascertain why Dumfries and Galloway became a major and popular centre for Covenanting activity.

The study comprises five chapters. The first explores the subject of the Covenanters. A definition of the word *Covenanter* is included, along with a description of the historical background behind what the Covenanters set out to do. Chapter 2 explores the subject of worship in Covenanting times. In Chapter three the word *conventicle* will be defined and this sets the scene for how these events came about, as well as identifying the main conventicle sites, to describe them and photograph them. Photographic evidence is included along with details of the ministers who preached at these acts of worship. Chapter four includes citations from sermons, along with informations on the Societies. The final chapter describes memorials and memorialisation. This includes a survey of local memorials.

The study concludes with an attempt to assess the effect that conventicles had in strengthening the faith of Covenanting individuals at the time and in the later development of the Church of Scotland.

It is intended to explore the idea of a conventicle, why it was necessary to hold them, why there were so prevalent in Dumfries and Galloway and why they were supported by loyal members of the Covenanter movement, as well as to analyse what went on at conventicles.

The major primary sources consulted include: Robert Wodrow's (1) *A History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, Brown (ed) (2) *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* and the website *Records of the Parliament of Scotland*.(3) Most of these were written in the 19th century with the exception of the RPC which recorded events and decisions by the Privy Council of Scotland as they happened. Secondary sources consulted include: J.K. Hewison's (4)*The Covenanters*, written in the 19th century and published at the beginning of the 20th century is invaluable as Hewison spent most of his life in Dumfriesshire and was surrounded by accounts of the Covenanters as well as being a minister himself. His local knowledge was a real asset in his work. *The Martyr Graves of Scotland* by J.H. Thompson (5) gives a detailed account of how the Covenants came into being and how some of the battles, such as Drumclog took place. Thompson visited all the sites in his book during his life as a parish minister in the 19th century. He describes the walk over the Enterkin Pass and is very aware of how isolated some of the Covenanter graves are, so he carefully describes how to find them. For example he also describes how to find the Communion Stones at Skeoch Hill, which are not as remote as some sites, but do take some finding. *The Fifty Years Struggle of the Scottish Covenanters* by James Dodds (6), written in 1861, The sources referred to and written in the 19th century have been invaluable and it should be born in mind that, although the authors were living within two hundred years of the Covenanting cause, there were still artifacts from the time

(1)Wodrow, R.A *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* Solid Ground Christian Books (Homewood, USA, 2008)

(2) Brown, P.H.(ed) *Register of the Privy Councilfor Scotland*

(3) rps.ac.uk *Records of the Parliament of Scotland*

(4)Hewison, J. K.*The Scottish Covenanters*, J.Smith, (Glasgow, 1947)

(5) Thompson, J.H. *The Martyr Graves of Scotland*, Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, (Edinburgh, 1903)

(6) Dodds, *The Fifty Years Struggle of the Scottish Covenanters*, Edmondston and Douglas, (Edinburgh, 1861)

and family folk lore which was passed down orally through the generations. Recent books which include *In the Steps of the Covenanters* by A. S Horne and J. B. Hardie (7) which was written in 1974 and *Standing Witnesses* by Thorbjörn Campbell (8) written in 1996. Campbell uses much of Thomson's material, but gives grid references to help find the sites. More recent books by David Stevenson give a very comprehensive cover of the Covenanters by a rigorous, well-respected academic historian. In a separate section on worship, Sprott's book on the *Worship of the Church of Scotland* (9) gives an invaluable account of how worship developed from 1638. The diaries and sermons of prominent Covenanting ministers, such as John Blackadder (10) (written in 1826) are an invaluable insight. This particular book gives an insight into the life of his parish in Troqueer, Dumfries before he was outed and became a travelling Covenanter, preaching at Conventicles. The book concludes with an account of Blackadder's imprisonment on Bass Rock and the detailed conditions there. *Sermons delivered in times of Persecution in Scotland* (11) has also been consulted. This gives an idea of the sort of sermons preached to listening Covenanters by a variety of different ministers including Peden, Shields, Cargill and Guthrie. Newspaper reports have also been sought, giving details of modern conventicles in the south west of Scotland. More details of some of the sources described above are included in the selective literature review.

Another source which has been invaluable for this study has been the various monuments erected in memory to the Covenanters. These have been visited and are described later in a separate chapter. They help to provide a folk

(7) Horne, A.S and Hardie, J.B. *In the Steps of the Covenanters*, Scottish Reformation Society, (Edinburgh 1974)

(8) Campbell, T. *Standing Witnesses*, Saltire Society, (Edinburgh, 1996)

(9) Sprott, G.W. *The Worship of the Church of Scotland*, Blackwood, (Edinburgh, 1893)

(10) Blackadder, J. and Crichton, A. *Memoirs of the Revd. Blackadder*, Tait, (Edinburgh, 1826)

(11) Howie, J. *Sermons Delivered in Times of Persecution in Scotland*, reprint Pranava Books, (Delhi 2008)

memory for the benefit of individuals living in the present time.

Interviews have been conducted with two ministers: Dr. David Bartholomew, minister of Dalry Parish Church, who has re-started Conventicle services and the Revd. Christine Sime, minister of Moniaive and Dunscore, who also has experience of Conventicles. Mrs Moira Aitken, a retired minister's widow, who has attended conventicles, was interviewed. Contact has also been made with the Rev. Bob Hogg, minister of Sanquhar, who holds annual conventicles and the Rev. Dr Maurice Bond who holds an annual service in St..Michaels Church Dumfries to commemorate the Covenanters

Literature on the Covenanters: A Selective Review

One of the first and most useful books specifically on the subject of the Covenanters is Robert Wodrow's *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*. This was originally published in two large volumes in 1721 and 1722, but has since been re-published in four. Wodrow was born in 1679, at a time when his family was being harassed by the authorities. 'Wodrow's father-in-law Patrick Warner had preached in the fields and had undergone imprisonment and exile,' (1) a period when, according to his own memoir the 'violence of persecution was raging with more than ordinary fierceness' (2) and mostly directed against the Covenanters.

As a young boy, Wodrow witnessed soldiers searching and ransacking the family house in the process of looking for his father. The father escaped from the house disguised as '...the servant of the physician (who attended his wife) in a cloak and carrying a lantern and went into hiding.' (3)

There was a fierce battle at Bothwell Bridge in 1679 between the forces of the

(1) Wodrow, R. *Correspondence*, 1:20-21

(2) Wodrow, R. *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, reprint by Solid Ground Christian Books, (Birmingham, USA, 2008), Book 1, ii

(3) Wodrow, R. *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, Book 1, ii

crown and a group of Covenanters. According to Wodrow 'There cannot be any full account given of the slain because they were just murdered up and down the fields...The soldiers brought in few or no prisoners, but cut off all they met with'(4) The battle was a consequence of the constant harrowing of ordinary people by the troops, some of whom were from the Highlands and had a reputation for being harsh. The Earl of Monmouth was in command of an army of 10,000 men and by contrast the Covenanting army was tired and dispirited and reduced at 4.000 men.

It is estimated that two to four thousand men were killed and 1,200 covenanters survived on the spot. Ian Cowan comments that 'Monmouth restrained the dragoons from widespread pursuit and repudiated suggestions that all prisoners should be put to death.'(5) '...three or four hundred of the rabble may be transported to foreign plantations...so that they may never be capable to return for creating new disturbances. The remainder, with the exception of the principal malefactors were liberated after pledging themselves never to rise in arms again.'(6)

Wodrow eventually became minister of Eastwood near Glasgow. His book was intended to serve as a practical instrument to revive the faith of the members of the kirk. Wodrow's work belongs to the tradition of martyrology which played so important a role in the development of Protestantism, although the Covenanters did not specifically provide martyrology in their cause.

Wodrow used public records, original papers and manuscripts of that time in his research. His working methods included first- hand accounts of the period in the history of the Church of Scotland, such as the assassination of Archbishop Sharpe. This was chosen, by the writer, as it was an important event in the Covenanters' lifetime. He records the official account along with an alternative one from elsewhere. His second account appears to include first hand comments

(4) Wodrow, R. *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* , Book III 108

(5) Cowan, I.B. *The Scottish Covenanters 1660-1688*, Gollancz, (London 1976), 99

(6) *Register of the Privy Council*, 3rd series vi, 257, 263

from individuals who were present. Both accounts are fairly long, so only the essential information is included in the discussion.

The official account confines itself to the detail. It begins with the fact that Archbishop Sharp left the village of Kennoway near St. Andrews, where he had stayed for the night with his eldest daughter and four servants. They boarded the coach, after the archbishop seemingly had a premonition about what was to happen and what was described as ‘a pious and serious discourse with his daughter.’ (7) Soon after this, the coachman perceived some horsemen on the spur after them. He called to the postillion to ‘drive on for those men had no good in their minds.’ (8) The archbishop looked out to see what was happening and turned to his daughter and said “Lord have mercy on me my poor child for I am gone.” Four or five ruffians fired at the coach, but touched neither of them in the coach. The postillion was wounded in the face. The pursuers fired again; one of them had his pistol so near the archbishop that his gown was burned. The prelate suffered a sword wound in the area of the kidneys. The assailants called on the archbishop to “Come out, cruel and bloody traitor.” The archbishop did as he was bid, saying “Gentlemen, you will spare my life and whatever else you please to do you shall never be questioned for it.” His attackers told him that there was no mercy for a Judas, an enemy and traitor to the cause of Jesus Christ. The archbishop pleaded for his daughter to be spared. He fell on his knees and prayed with these words: “Lord, forgive them for I do.” While this was happening he was wounded in three places. After this his pockets were rifled and some papers as well as his Bible, a night bag and a girdle were taken. They also robbed his daughter of some gold and other things which she kept in a small box. The servants were also robbed and had their guns taken from them. The formal account ends with the words ‘The place where this horrid murder took place is called Magus-muir within two miles of St. Andrews.’ (9)

Wodrow’s own account of Sharp’s assassination comes after a narrative about a

(7) Wodrow, R. *A History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, Vol. 3. 45

(8) Wodrow, R. *A History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, Vol. 3. 46

(9) Wodrow, R. *A History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, Vol. 3. 46

visit to Edinburgh by the archbishop. Wodrow preferred the reports of the assassins to the official versions. He condemned the act of assassination, but he knew his account needed delicate handling. He used the other accounts to show that, as they had suffered much from persecution, the individuals involved were provoked into the actions they took. The murder was unpremeditated and, although most Presbyterians were glad to be rid of their enemy, they tended to be shocked at the bloody manner of Sharp's death. Sharp was returning in his coach to St. Andrews by way of Kennoway, where he stayed the night. He and his daughter and servants set off for St. Andrews and were followed by a horseman who approached the coach and 'looked in to see if the bishop was in it. The archbishop cried out to the coachman to "drive." (10)The gentleman (who was following) cast his cloak from him and came behind at full speed. While pursuing, one of the archbishop's servants, named Wallace turned and cocked his weapon, but it was taken from him. Meanwhile as the coach drove furiously away, they fired their muskets at it, but could not stop it till the person who was seated upon the fleet horse came up to the coach crying out "Judas be taken." Eventually the coach came to a stop and the archbishop was again ordered to come out. As before, the prelate refused, inciting more gunfire. While remounting their horses, assuming Sharp to be fatally wounded the soldiers heard the daughter say: "There is life yet.". Eventually the coach came to a stop and the archbishop was again ordered to come out. The prelate again refused and was shot. After a lengthy conversation, which Wodrow records, the archbishop was struck on the face with a crooked sword and died. An illustrated Bible was taken, along with some fine pistols and some papers. The assassination took about three quarters of an hour.

The difference between the two accounts seems to be that Wodrow had the opportunity to speak to some of those who had witnessed the assassination. This emphasises how he went to a great deal of trouble to find out about events at first hand before recording his accounts and to make as sure as possible that they were accurate. Also Wodrow was sympathetic to the murderers, so this has a bearing on his account. It is very evident that Wodrow was sympathetic to the Covenanting

(10) Wodrow, R. *A History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, vol. 3 46

cause.

The assassination of the Archbishop was a very unpleasant affair. It seems to have been a spur of the moment decision on the part of the assassins, for, according to Julia Buckroyd, they appeared to be there ‘to take action against the sheriff depute of Fife who had been involved with much of the persecution.’ (11) The sheriff had been warned about the fact that he was being sought, but the pursuers were then told of the proximity of the archbishop’s presence locally, so they decided to act. Their initial shots towards the archbishop had little effect, so the assassins had no alternative but to stop the coach. This gave them the opportunity to explain their motives to him as well as to remove papers and arms from the coach. It also gave the archbishop the chance to identify his assailants.

Although Wodrow used official documents for his writing, he was selective with these and did not always follow them. At an early stage in his book Wodrow warns his readers that they will encounter ‘...a very horrid scene of oppression, hardships and cruelty...which could not be credited in after ages.’(12) He then embarks upon a description of some of the events which led up to the proclamation against the holding of conventicles in 1665.

He includes the Proclamation by the Committee of Estates in 1660

‘against unlawful meetings and seditious papers, prohibiting and discharging majesty’s kingdom of Scotland... All sheriffs of shires and magistrates of burghs are ordered to be careful that no such pernicious and dangerous meetings be permitted.’ ‘...all unlawful and unwarrantable meetings and conventicles in any place within his majesty’s kingdom of Scotland.’(13)

This is the first time Wodrow refers to conventicles and, from the phraseology, it is clear that the Committee of Estates regards these events as potentially dangerous to the good conduct of the country. He includes accounts of proceedings in and around the Scottish Parliament and information about communications between the king and his ministers, bishops and members of the nobility. It is worrying to note Wodrow’s comment that much legislation and many proclamations were passed ‘without any great reasoning. Sometimes five or

(11) Buckroyd, J *The life of James Sharp*, J. Donald, (Edinburgh, 1987) 107

(12) Wodrow, R. *A History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* 1, 57

(13) Wodrow, R. *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, Book .1 174

six acts of great consequence were passed in an afternoon.’ (14) This is difficult to verify.

Wodrow seems biased against the soldiers, as he gives no explanation for their behaviour but it would not have been in his interest to falsify information, for he was a respected historian trying to give accounts of events that had happened, but this bias can be a concern. His work includes copies of letters to and from members of the nobility and proclamations on behalf of the king. There are occasions when he might avoid official accounts altogether. One example of this is the account of the skirmish at Enterkin in 1684, in which a number of Covenanter prisoners, escorted by soldiers were rescued in an ambush. Wodrow used a narrative left by one of the prisoners, who claimed that ‘the soldiers answered with a volley of shot.’(15)

He also used the Privy Council records for this period which might differ from other accounts, but he was anxious to give as accurate an account of events as possible. As far as the rescue of covenanters at Enterkin both Wodrow and the Privy Council include details. *The Register of the Privy Council* refers to a deposition by Robert Lauchlison who is described as a rebel and fugitive.

‘As to the attack at Enterkin or knowing of any that were there or hearing of them depones negative thereto and that he knows not nor frequented with any rebels except John Weir and Robert Morrien and this is true and knows no more as he shall answer to God and he declares he cannot write.’(16)

The Privy Council ordered a judicial inquiry after the event and all the parishioners from the area were ordered to assemble in Dalgarno to give evidence. Other efforts were made to track down the rescuers. Wodrow recounts how the Laird of Lag ‘...held a court at Carsphairn church.... He called all the parishioners one by one and upon oath made them declare what they knew about any persons

(14) Wodrow, R. *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, Book 1, 107

(15) Wodrow, R. *A History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, Book 4, 172-173

(16) *Register of the Privy Council*, 3rd series, vol. X, 332

hiding or wandering in the neighbourhood.’(17)

Both Wodrow and The RPC list a series of names of people who were arrested on suspicion of being at Bothwell Bridge and suspected of being involved in the Enterkin rescue. They were rounded up by geographical area of parish and questioned as to their whereabouts at the particular time.

Wodrow seemed prone to follow whatever evidence would place the authorities in the worst light. He also included an account of an order which Thomas Morgan, commander in chief of the king’s forces in Scotland, had received from the king to arrest Lord Wariston and secure him in Edinburgh Castle. The significance of this is that Wariston, one of the principal leaders of the Covenanting movement, had become even more important and therefore a target for the king to arrest.

One of the drawbacks with Wodrow’s narrative is that it begins in 1660 without covering the early period of Covenanting activity. His work was the standard reference book used by Presbyterians for quite some time and it gives a detailed picture of the situation of the Covenanters from 1660 to 1686.

J. K. Hewison’s book *The Covenanters: A History of the Church of Scotland* contributed to work on some of the memorials to the Covenanters. He admits that he was pro Covenanter, acknowledging that ‘In my youth it was my privilege to dwell among the peasantry whose ancestors fought and fell for the Covenant.’(18) He goes on to say that ‘I have elsewhere lingered to hear woeful tales from the descendants of the favourers of Episcopacy, who suffered at the hands of the rigid Presbyterians. To be sure of my ground, I have visited scenes hallowed by the memories of Romanist, Reformer and Rebel from Orkney to the Water of Blednoch, from Dunnottar to Eilean Gherig.’ (19) Hewison does try to be objective. His study begins with an emphasis on how Knox helped to establish the Church of Scotland. As he indicated ‘Many able and cultured priests entered

(17) Wodrow, R. *A History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, vol. 4, 174

(18) Hewison, J. K. *The Scottish Covenanters*, Bibliolife reprint 1913, Vol. 1, x

(19) Hewison, J. K. *The Scottish Covenanters*, Vol. 1 xi

into the Reformed Church and thus ensured the success of its ministry.’ (20) He believes that the life of the Roman Catholic Church was ‘well nigh over’ and he credits Wycliffe, Huss, Colet, Luther and Calvin with turning religious thought into new channels. Hewison describes the Covenants signed between 1556 and 1689 as being bonds whereby people became members of the Church of Scotland first as individuals and secondly as a corporate body, who bound themselves to serve God. He considers that the covenant in its various forms was ‘a defensive bond whereby members of the Church of Scotland first as individuals and secondly as a corporation, both clergy and laity, bound themselves to conserve both the autonomy of the church and the state.’(21)

He charts the history of the Covenanters very thoroughly throughout his work. He has a number of different descriptions of the Covenanters, including ‘...a rigid sect in the Christian church’ (22) and a ‘...rebellious party in the sixteenth and seventeenth century (23). However he also describes them as ‘brave and defensible patriots.’ (24) His central concern seems to be to portray an account of the Covenanters and he seems to succeed. For example, the chapter on the liturgy by William Laud gives much more background than tends to be found elsewhere, including great detail of the costumes worn by the king, the bishops and even the king’s horse on the day of the service for the proposed introduction of the new liturgy in St. Giles Cathedral. He doesn’t mention his sources for this. He includes a very comprehensive appendix with some useful documents such as the Cess. He also includes details of the ordination of ministers into the Church of Scotland. It is difficult to do him full justice in any review. He is surpassed only by Wodrow, but lacks the latter’s

(20) Hewison, J. K. *The Scottish Covenanters*, Vol. 1, 5

(21) Hewison, J. K. *The Scottish Covenanters*, Book 1, 7

(22) Hewison, J.K. *The Scottish Covenanters*, Book 1 ix

(23) Hewison, J. K. *The Covenanters*, Book 1, ix

(24) Hewison, J. K. *The Covenanters*, Book 1, ix

bias.

James Barr was born in Fenwick, which had a rich history of association with the Covenanters; his book *The Scottish Covenanters* was published in 1947. The book gives much background detail on the subject, beginning with a list of those who were martyred at St. Andrews, followed by a description of the ministry of John Knox, the two *Books of Discipline* and details of the attempt to impose episcopacy. The latter part covers Covenanting activities in the various counties. It also discusses individuals who were exiled to other countries for supporting the Covenanting cause. Barr lists the names of the Lords of the Privy Council who imposed the punishments on individuals who defied the laws on worship. He proceeds to describe the work of the United Societies.

The final part deals with the people of the Covenant and Barr emphasizes the fact that Covenanters came from all walks of life and from across the whole spectrum of society. This is a very useful book and much of the content is pertinent to this study. Barr includes information not found elsewhere, for instance the background on the Societies.

Ian Cowan, writing in 1968, makes an important point when he states that authors ‘...have tended to concentrate on the later phases of the movement rather than on the years when the Covenants commanded widespread support.’ (25) and he also emphasizes that the best of the specialist materials have been concerned with ‘the concept of the Covenant’ (26). He makes a further useful observation when he states that ‘...the Covenanters were more successful in presenting their case than their opponents.’ (27) Cowan considers ‘Matthieson and Hewison to be the only fairly reliable secondary authorities’. (28) On the subject of the

(25) Cowan, I. B. *The Covenanters: a revision article*, *The Scottish Historical Review*, (Edinburgh, 1968) 35

(26) Cowan, I.B. *The Covenanters: a revision article*, *The Scottish Historical Review*, (Edinburgh, 1968) 35

(27) Cowan, I.B. *The Covenanters: a revision article* 36

(28) Cowan, I.B. *The Covenanters: a revision article*, 36

background to the riot in St. Giles, Cowan was more forthcoming in his book entitled the *Scottish Covenanters*. The issues which led up to the riot included the fact that Charles had been relying more and more on the Episcopal bench of his Privy Council, and whole burghs were bearing increased taxation, Edinburgh in particular incurring more costs. A new parliament house was needed and all these items had to be paid for. The final catalyst was the introduction of the new Prayer Book. Four committees were formed to deal with petitions from individuals who had grievances. These committees were made up of nobility, gentry, ministers and burgesses and, since they sat at different tables in Parliament House, they became known as the Tables. The book begins with the death of James VI and the drawing up of the National Covenant. It concludes with a description of post Restoration Scotland. Subjects dealt with include the Restoration settlement, the divided church and the Pentland Rising. Cowan raises doubt about the situation whereby Indulgences were granted to former ministers. An Indulgence was a form of permission to exempt ministers who had been ousted from their parishes, but who had 'lived peaceably' and were permitted to return to their own parishes on certain conditions. He describes the deterioration of the situation leading to the Battle of Bothwell Bridge and deals with the situation between the Cameronians and the Presbyterians after the battle, He goes on to describe the circumstances underlying the so-called 'Killing Times'. He shows how Presbyterianism triumphed and helpfully surmises that '...the history of the Covenanters is not entirely one of religious bigotry but rather part of a more general struggle by the church against the intolerance of the state,' (29) The book ends on a note of optimism, painting a picture of Scotland recovering from what the author cites from Sir Thomas Browne as '...the most pitiful chapter in our annals.' (30)

An author who has made a major contribution to the literature on this subject is David Stevenson. He has written four books on different aspects of the Covenanters, as well as a number of journal articles. Two of the books have a

(29) Cowan, I. B. *The Scottish Covenanters*, Gollancz, (London, 1976) i

(30) Cowan, I.B. *The Scottish Covenanters*, 163

special relevance to this study. His first book, *The Scottish Revolution*, sets out the reason for the writing of the book in the first place, namely the lack of any detailed modern study of the period. Stevenson includes a discussion of the rule of Charles I and explains how discontent in Scotland spread. As Stevenson states: ‘Charles inherited a fairly ordered kingdom of Scotland in 1625; less than thirteen years later the majority of his Scots subjects of all classes united in opposition to him.’ (31)

He describes the imposition of the Prayer Book by the King and the compilation of the National Covenant. He also gives information about the background behind the organisation of the opposition to King Charles’ policies. Stevenson maintains that, ‘... after the 1633 parliament, various groups of lairds, nobles and others who were all discontented with the king’s conduct met irregularly and informally to lament the state of affairs and discuss remedies.’(32)These meetings were kept secret. After the trouble began, the Covenanters were anxious to portray the revolt against the introduction of the prayer book as a spontaneous rising. Royalists however claimed that troubles were a result of a secret conspiracy by some nobles for their own selfish ends. He analyses the Glasgow Assembly, the first Bishops’ War, the failure of the Treaty of Berwick, the second Bishops’ War, the Treaty of London, the Rule of the Covenanters from 1641 to 1643 and the Solemn League and Covenant.

The most important debates in the Scottish parliament were those concerning whether or not the holding of private prayer meetings or conventicles was compatible with the Presbyterian system. After the trouble began, prayer meetings became more widespread, especially in the south west. Stevenson indicates that many Covenanters were opposed to conventicles, believing that they were likely to undermine family worship on the one hand and the worship of the parish in the kirk on the other. However, conventicle holding continued and prayer meetings were increasingly accepted as compatible with Presbyterianism. The book concludes with a description of the triumph of the Covenanters.

(31) Stevenson, D. *The Scottish Revolution*, J Donald, (Edinburgh, 2003) 16

(32) Stevenson, D. *The Scottish Revolution*, 56

The Covenanters' fight was a national one and it was inspired by calls for 'liberty' - the word was so defined as to include imposing their intolerant religious ideas on the rest of the population of the British Isles by force if necessary. The Covenanters felt they were on the road to success. The 1641 Settlement deprived the king of all power in Scotland. By abolishing the bishops he lost the means of controlling the kirk and parliament. He agreed in general terms that ecclesiastical matters would be settled in the assembly and civil matters would be settled in parliament. The king still had considerable power in England and as Stevenson points out '...the history of Scotland throughout the seventeenth century was dominated by the question of relations with England.' (33)

Overall David Stevenson has treated his subject matter very thoroughly and provided information and insights not found elsewhere.

In his second book, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, Stevenson continued his investigation of the role of the Covenanters. Their main aim was to ensure that Charles I did not get his way in imposing episcopacy and the prayer book upon Scotland. However they did not achieve all that they set out to do. They were driven by a conviction that God would lead them to triumph. They helped Parliament to a victory, but they did not facilitate a Scottish dominated Presbyterian Britain. Stevenson discusses the Civil War in great detail and he goes on to elaborate on how the Kirk Party developed and how Cromwell invaded Scotland. He concludes his second book with a chapter entitled 'The Scottish Revolution.' He reminds us that, 'Securing true religion in Scotland and reforming religion in England were of central importance to the Covenanters' (34) However, although the first National Covenant had been very successful, it was soon clear that the second one would not be so acceptable. The Covenanters had played an important part in the development of the kirk, but, because the radical ministers had been carried away by early success and had attempted too much, they proved unable to dominate society in Scotland. The kirk struggled to

(33) Stevenson, D. *The Scottish Revolution*, 56

(34) Stevenson, D. *The Scottish Revolution*, 312

maintain and secure its position. Overall Stevenson believed that the Covenanting movement was a failure. His work makes a valuable contribution to this subject.

Silent Witnesses by T. Campbell was published in 1996 and includes a detailed gazetteer to, and descriptions of, graves and memorials in memory of Covenanters. Unlike *Thompson's Martyr Graves of Scotland*, these are arranged in alphabetical order and give inscriptions and very useful information as well as grid references to enable their access via Ordnance Survey maps. Information in this book was collected as a result of visits by the author to the principal memorial sites over a period of years. As part of this, Campbell 'uncovered often dramatic and tragic stories' (35) although many of these have been well-known for centuries. One example is that of the parish of Troqueer in Dumfries. Five paragraphs describe the background to John Blackad(d)er, the former minister of Troqueer Parish Church who endured hardship and cruel treatment for the Covenanting cause. The entry concludes with the epitaph on the plaque, which was erected in the church in 1902,

Died on the Bass Rock after five years imprisonment

Anno Dom: 1685 and of his age 63 years.

The book includes a detailed, historical introduction to the whole of the Covenanting period, concluding with detailed appendices including names of individuals and where they were executed as well as a list of prisoners who were deported and shipwrecked by district. The book mentioned earlier by Thompson (36) is thorough in that it describes numerous graves and memorials in different parts of Scotland. They are described as a result of Thompson's personal visits to the sites concerned and are arranged geographically. It also gives detail of the background to the Covenanters and several battles that took place between government troops and Covenanters. The book helps to promote a folk memory of the Covenanters and their work. This enables the present day generation to understand and appreciate what the Covenanters set out to do and why.

(35) Campbell, T. *Standing Witnesses*, Saltire Society, (Edinburgh, 1996) foreword.

(36) Thompson, J.H. *The Martyr Graves of Scotland*, Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, Edinburgh, 1877)

This thesis attempts to explore the subject of the Covenanters in Dumfries and Galloway, how and why they came into being and why the south west of Scotland became a centre of Covenanting activity. It sets out to explore how they worshipped in barns and fields when their ministers were banned by James VI, several journal articles seem to be the only sources of information on Charles I and Charles II. This section has attempted to review some of the literature on the Covenanters. There is very little source material on conventicles. The *Register of the Privy Council*, *the Records of the Parliaments of Scotland* and conventicles, as writers on the Covenanters appear to have overlooked the subject, which is surprising, as they are an essential part of the subject. Having interviewed several local ministers, who still hold conventicles, it would appear that they rely partly on oral traditions as well as books for their sources.

One of the ways in which the Covenanters communicated with one another and the general population was by the use of pamphlets. In the first instance a pamphlet was in the form of a short quarto sized book. Quarto tended to be 9" x 11" or 229mm x 279mm. The contents varied from one sheet in length to a maximum of twelve sheets in length or between eight and ninety-six in quarto and fastened with two fairly loose stitches on the left margin. With the works stitched or bound they were ready for sale. Effective distribution was the foundation of success. Pamphlets did not require binding and were sold stitched with the pages. When Charles planned the new service book there was a series of delays with the printers. This gave the opponents time to produce propaganda against the new book. Initially pamphlets on behalf of the Scots were produced in the Low Countries, but this was expensive so, according to Stevenson 'The Glasgow Assembly commissioned a printer and passed legislation to control printing in Scotland.' (37)

Baillie believed that one of the ingredients for the success of pamphlets was their brevity. George Gillespie wrote a pamphlet anonymously, which was 350 pages long. This was followed by a second, which was only four pages long and was entitled *Reasons for which the Service Book, Urged upon Scotland, Ought to*

(37) Stevenson, D. *A Revolutionary Regime and the Press, The Library 6th series*, (1985) 7

be Refused (1638). Baillie was impressed and sent a copy to a friend William Spang in Holland.

A further series of pamphlets followed. Those issued by the Covenanters shared a distinctive layout. Those printed in Amsterdam and Leiden, Glasgow and Edinburgh were plain quarto with the title page open and simple with plenty of white space, a title and a central printer's ornament. A second phase of covenanting propaganda was begun with *A Short Relation of the State of the Kirk of Scotland since the Reformation of Religion, to the Present Time for Information, and Advertisement to our Brethren in the Kirk of England*. This pamphlet was three sheets long and was circulated in England and Holland.

It included a historical account of Kirk discipline and an emphasis of the close links between Scotland and England. An exchange of pamphlets then took place between pro-Covenanters and their opponents. These were followed by a two sheet pamphlet issued in February 1639, entitled, '*An Information to all Good Christians*'. According to Baillie this did 'good service'. 'It tried to generate support for the calling of an English Parliament.... The message it contained encouraged the king to issue his *Proclamation and Declaration* of February 27 1639, accusing the Scots of trying to seduce the English through letters and the multitude of their printed pamphlets.' (38) 10,000 copies were published and the king ordered it to be read in every parish church and copies sent to Scotland and Amsterdam. A further pamphlet *the Remonstrance of the Nobility* was published by the Covenanters in 1639, indicating '...a growing conflict between regal and divine authority.' (39)

Covenanting authors tended to express themselves with 'a distinctive and sombre voice' in contrast to the 'abrasive diction of the king's writers.' (40) The Covenanter pamphlets used measured tones and spoke as though they represented

(38) Raymond, J. *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain*, C.U.P. (Cambridge, 2009) 176

(39) Raymond, J. *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* 177

(40) Raymond, J. *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain*, 177

a gathered people or community. As a result they appeared to secure their readers' good will. The Covenanters' pamphlets were printed in Amsterdam and Leiden, then in Glasgow and Edinburgh. They were plain quarto in format. The title page was open with plenty of white space. Scottish printing remained limited in quantity compared with that in London, but it had a disproportionately significant effect south of the border. This was partly because of the effective distribution and sympathetic reception of the pamphlets. Also there was slack in the productive capacity of Scottish printing houses which enabled sudden expansion when necessary. David Stevenson points out that 'The propaganda war was won by the covenanters-and not just in Scotland. They knew well that they could not hope to defeat Charles in the war which was approaching if opinion in England rallied behind him. They aimed an intense propaganda barrage at England, stressing that they had no quarrel with the people of England; indeed, as their grievances against the king were the same as those of the English the people were urged to co-operate to gain redress. Printed pamphlets formed a major part of this propaganda offensive.'(41)

Baillie was not alone in believing that covenanting propaganda swayed the minds of the godly in England. The Venetian ambassador commented that it was 'to keep the English Puritans steadfastly in their favor' that the Scots distributed so many papers.'(42)

Distributing pamphlets into England sometimes ran into difficulties. Secretary of State Windebank had the post searched regularly and discovered multiple copies of pamphlets and letters. The letters expressed sentiments hostile to the king's cause. Carriers were more secure, although they were more expensive. Most useful were networks of supporters who could transport and distribute multiple copies of pamphlets. Archibald Johnston ensured that the north of England had ample supply. A servant of his was arrested near Carlisle with a cloak bag full of books. The means of distribution were on the whole effective and large numbers of pamphlets made their way from the north of England to the

(41) Stevenson, D. *A Revolutionary Regime and the Press*, The Library 6th series, (1985)323

(42) *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1638-39* 511-512

streets of London. ‘Samuel Vassal MP for the city of London was discovered circulating Scottish books.’ (43)

It can be concluded that pamphlets seemed to be an effective way of communicating the message of the Covenanters to people in England and trying to gain their sympathy for their cause.

(43) Russell, C. *Fall of the British Monarchies*, Clarendon, (Oxford, 1995) 61

Chapter 1

Who were the Covenanters?

This chapter will outline who the Covenanters were and define what the Covenants set out to achieve. The Covenanting movement was very popular because of the number of people who signed up when the Covenants were circulated around the country. The Covenanters were a group of Scottish individuals from all walks of life who felt very strongly about their cause that the king should not dictate how they should worship nor who should govern their church. They were ‘those who subscribed to the first National Covenant of 1638 and then the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 and who regarded these as symbols of devotion to true religion.’(1) Religion was an important part of this, especially the spiritual and emotional aspects of faith, but the Covenanters’ aims also had a political dimension. The Covenanters’ strong opposition to episcopacy was due to the fact that they saw bishops as being the king’s way of implementing the changes that the king was trying to impose on the Church of Scotland.

The National Covenant had three sections. The first was a repetition of the King’s Confession which was originally drawn up in 1580 and vigorously denounced all kinds of popery. The second part, drawn up by Johnston of Warriston, specified the Acts of Parliament which suppressed Popery and established the Protestant religion in Scotland. The third part, which is attributed to Alexander Henderson was the new Covenant applicable to the times and was directed at the “novations” in government or worship as introduced under episcopalian rule which are declared to have no warrant in the Word of God and to be contrary to the Articles of their Confession of Faith. It proceeds:

“We promise and swear, by the great Name of the Lord our God to continue in the profession and obedience of the aforesaid religion; and that we shall defend the same, and resist all these contrary errors and corruptions, according to our vocation, and to the uttermost of that power that God hath put in our hands, all the days of our life.”(2)

(1) Henderson, G.D. *The Church of Scotland*, Youth Committee (Edinburgh, 1939)77

(2) Barr, J. *The Scottish Covenanters*, J.Smith, (Glasgow, 1947) 19

When the National Covenant was presented to Parliament the following phrases were of interest

‘...we shall in all honourable and just ways endeavour to preserve union and peace between the three kingdoms of Scotland, England and Ireland. Read in audience of the king’s majesty and the estates of parliament who approve the same and appoint the said oath to be taken by all members of parliament and in all parliaments hereafter before they proceed to any act of determination.’(3)

In other words the Covenanters’ cause was not just related to their religion but also to the politics and well-being of the Scottish nation. This meant that, by becoming a covenanted nation, the people of Scotland were all being encouraged to have a say in the government of their country. Knox’s ideas had considerable influence on those who became Covenanters. He held the belief that Scotland was “one nation under God”. He totally opposed any government which would give absolute power to a ruler. Ideally his wish was for a nation (and this included both rulers and subjects) which should recognise that the ultimate authority is God, who must be obeyed. Church and state should be separate, and each would be responsible to the sovereign God.

As Ted Cowan points out

‘the idea of the covenant predated the Reformation of 1560. A covenant was essentially a compact, contract or promise for eternity to which God and his people were parties as in the Old Testament... People in the sixteenth century studied their Bibles, but they were not necessarily biblical scholars. The notion of the covenant which Scots were attached to was that one entered into a covenant for the purposes of civil as well as for religious reform.’(4)

This shows that bonds oaths and covenants provided a firm basis for the understanding of the formation of government.

James VI spoke in the House of Lords in 1609 and indicated that the rival theories on ultimate authority were embodied in two rival covenants. Philippe

(3) *Records of the Parliaments of Scotland*, 1641/8/5

(4) Cowan, E. J. ‘The Making of the Scottish Covenant’ in Morrill, J. (ed) *The Scottish National Covenant in its British Context 1638-51* Edinburgh University Press, (Edinburgh, 1990) 70

Mornay discussed the idea in a tract *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*. He suggested that ‘at the coronation of Old Testament kings a two-fold covenant was sworn: the first between of God, the king and the people so the people might be the people of God; the second covenant was between the king and the people, that the people shall obey faithfully, and the king command justly.’ (5)

In trying to interpret this, the first covenant there is only an obligation to piety; in the second to justice. In one the king promises to serve God religiously and in the other he promises to rule the people justly. By the one he is obliged with the uttermost of his endeavours to procure the glory of God and by the other the profit of the people. Mornay was a believer in the popularity of the monarch and he did not doubt that if the monarch broke the contract, the representatives of the people had the right and the duty to resist him.

When James VI died, he was followed by Charles I, who thought that he could easily follow in his father’s footsteps and rule Scotland from a distance. The first of his actions which inflamed Scots generally was the Act of Revocation in 1625, ‘introduced with a secrecy which aroused suspicion and apprehension and gave opportunities for exaggerated rumours and the formation of ill-informed criticism.’ (6)

The Act cancelled all grants made of crown property since 1540. The Act cancelled all grants made of crown property since 1540 and rescinded all dispositions of ecclesiastical property and the erections of such property into temporal lordships. When Charles I came to the throne, the idea of the twofold covenant described earlier was not put into practice, as he believed that God had appointed him to rule, whereas Knox tended to follow earlier thinking that, since royal authority came from the community, the king was obliged to rule for the communal good. Charles was a Protestant, but he was used to a world of pomp

(5) Cowan, E. J. ‘The Making of the National Covenant’ in Morrill, J. *The Scottish National Covenant in its British Context 1638-51* 83

(6) Donaldson, G. *The Making of the Scottish Prayer Book*, Edinburgh University Press, (Edinburgh, 1954) 3

and ceremony in England and its church. He expected these practices to continue in the Episcopal Church in Scotland. The Scots, however, opposed as they were to idolotry were more used to bare churches and simple religious practices.

When Charles tried to introduce a version of the English Prayer Book into Scotland it caused a great deal of mistrust by the Scots, as most of them were trying to remain true to the Church of Scotland. The greatest insult to the Scots was when, in 1633, the king held a lavish coronation service in St Giles' Cathedral. Although few nobles attended, they and the clergy were robed in rich clothes. The ordinary people refused to be pressurised by the king and government. What Scots objected to was the idea of having a whole *English* liturgy imposed upon them and they also felt that this was more in line with the Roman liturgy. They also objected to the fact that it was proposed to be used in all churches.

On 23 July 1637 in St Giles Church Edinburgh as the dean climbed the steps into the pulpit to begin the service he was hit by a stool, thrown by a woman in the congregation. The service never started, as there was a riot. As Donaldson indicates, 'the riot was not a spontaneous outbreak, but the chosen occasion for a demonstration by a powerful opposition which was already organised into something little short of conspiracy.'⁽⁷⁾ People in the congregation were rebelling against the imposition of a new prayer book drawn up by Archbishop Laud. As a result of a riot, work quickly proceeded to draw up a National Covenant.

The first presentation and signing of the National Covenant took place in Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh on 28 February 1638. It was signed by many individuals that day and in those following. Copies were distributed to all the churches in Scotland and many signed on behalf of others who could not read or write. King Charles rejected the Covenant, as he saw it as a challenge to his "Divine Right" and this was part of an ongoing disagreement between him and the people of Scotland." As Ted Cowan points out

(7) Donaldson, G. *The Making of the Scottish Prayer Book*, Edinburgh University Press, (Edinburgh, 1954) 83

‘What was truly remarkable was the phenomenon which has attracted surprisingly little comment, namely that the Covenant was a physical document which people actually signed...it was the civil dimension that was being addressed, a new era of contract and justification.’(8)

The first National Covenant was followed by another, known as the Solemn League and Covenant. This second Covenant stated its aims as ‘...the glory of God, the honour and happiness of the king and the liberty, peace and safety of the two kingdoms.’ (9)

Only two of the six articles of the Covenant are solely concerned with religion. The other four are mainly concerned with constitutional matters and relations between the kingdoms. Both sides undertook to observe the 1641 peace treaty, but other proposals intended to bring the countries into a closer relationship met with a less favourable response. Military assistance was offered by Covenanters in return for establishing Presbyterianism in England. The Covenant was drawn up in August 1643 and signed by the English. The Covenanters were to supply 18,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry. The Parliamentarians benefited quickly when the Scots under the Earl of Leven assisted in the defeat of the Royalists at the Battle of Marston Moor in July 1644. However the English were unwilling to adhere to their side of the pact to implement changes in worship and the contract began to crumble.

Ted Cowan makes a very useful contribution to the information on the Solemn League and Covenant. He points out that ‘it has received much less attention than the Covenant of 1638.’ (10) It also ‘represents a moment of

(8) Cowan, E.J. and Finlay, R.J. ‘The Covenanting Tradition’ in *Scottish History*, Edinburgh University Press, (Edinburgh, 2002) 122-3

(9) Stevenson, D. ‘The Early Covenanters and the Federal Union of Britain’ in *Scotland and England* 170

(10) Cowan, E.J. ‘The Solemn League and Covenant’ in Mason. R. A. *Scotland and England*. 182

supreme importance in British history (11)

It also set out to unify worship in the two countries. After the Covenant had been signed and agreed, it was sent to London for ratification by parliament. Negotiations then took place to raise money to pay for military preparations. Most of the money raised was used to raise an army in Scotland in preparation for any emergency which might arise in England. The Covenanters were in a situation where they could never admit that what they were doing was wrong. They strongly believed that they were fighting for their faith and, in so doing, eternal Salvation was at stake. As Stevenson points out the Solemn League and Covenant was ‘ a civil league as well as a religious covenant.’(12) The civil side committed Scotland to ‘provide military assistance against Charles I.’ (13)

Between 1645 and 1646 negotiations took place between England and Scotland to bring the two countries closer together, but these were inconclusive. As Stevenson points out ‘if there was not to be direct co-operation between the two parliaments in controlling armed forces, the covenanters wanted the king to be involved in their control.’ (14)

The day after Charles’ execution, his son Charles II was proclaimed king at the cross in Edinburgh. One of the conditions of his succession was that he should subscribe to the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant, but he soon changed his mind, as he felt he had agreed to it under duress. In July 1644 the Covenanters helped the Parliamentarians to win a victory at Marston Moor, This was followed by other defeats and Charles was imprisoned in

(11) Cowan , E’J. ‘The Solemn League and Covenant’ in Mason. R. A. *Scotland and England* 199

(12) Stevenson, D. The Early Covenanters and the Federal Union of Britain in Mason, R.A. (ed) *Scotland and England*, J Donald, (Edinburgh, 1987) 170

(13) Cowan E. J. ‘The Covenanting Tradition’ in *Scottish History*123

(14) Stevenson, D. ‘The Early Covenanters and the Federal Union of Britain’ in Mason, R.A. *Scotland and England, 1286-1815*, J.Donald, (Edinburgh, 1987) 173

Newcastle. The English backed out of the Solemn League deal and as Claire Watts points out ‘rifts started to appear within the movement.’ (15) and Covenant. Parliament restored patronage in 1662 which ordered all entrants to the ministry to gain approval from their bishop before ministering to congregations. This paved the way for covenanters to meet for worship out in the open, as they were unwilling to be dictated to by the king.

From the Covenanters’ point of view, the king had broken the (National) Covenant, but **they** kept it. Where necessary they took to the hills and held services in the open air. Some of the early action involving Covenanters took place in Galloway, described by Wodrow as a ‘rising’ (16), This began in Dalry and involved four men who had been hiding in the hills near to Dalry. As Wodrow relates

‘They had come into the village to get a little refreshment. Afterwards they accidentally met with three or four soldiers who had seized a poor old man and were going to strip him naked and set him upon a red hot grid iron and were using unheard of torture and barbarities towards him (that they might make money out of him to satisfy for his church fines.) The men entreated the soldiers to let him go ‘and desist from their severities.’(17)

In a scuffle, one of the sixteen soldiers was killed and the rebels moved on to Irongray churchyard near Dumfries where they formed themselves into an army of volunteers. Realizing that matters were becoming serious they decided to kidnap the local commander, Sir James Turner and hold him while negotiations took place with the king. Turner was stationed in Dumfries. He was seized and taken under guard via Carsphairn to Ayr and thence to Lesmahagow. Alexander Robertson, a well known preacher, was preaching at a conventicle nearby and he then accompanied the group. Turner mentions and describes his journey in captivity to Ayr in detail. Although captured by the Covenanters he appears to have been well looked after. ‘Master Henderson obtained leave that I might dine with him at his house. Though he and I be of different persuasions, yet I will say

(15) Watts, C. *The Covenanters*, National Museum of Scotland, 2011

(16) Wodrow, R. *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, Volume 2, 17

(17) Wodrow, R. *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, Volume 2, 17

that he entertained me with real kindness.’(18)

Other supporters joined the Covenanters on the way. When they reached Lanark they were 2000 strong. Of these, 1100 resolved to turn back because they felt that it would be futile to fight against the superior forces of General Dalziel, waiting for them at Rullion Green. A group of the more determined ones decided for their part in this incident. Their lands were forfeited and McLellan was sentenced to death. Turner was eventually released. ‘Here was an end of the rebellion and my imprisonment.’ (19)

Of all the places in Scotland the southwest seems to have been **the** area where support for the Covenanting movement was at its strongest and this is where most of the conventicles were held.

J. K. Hewison describes how ‘...later on May 25, 1679 a group of Covenanters held a conventicle in Avondale. They then prepared a statement and met at Rutherglen to publish this. It became known as the *Rutherglen Declaration*. The group persuaded the local magistrates to accompany them to the market cross. Douglas prayed and addressed the crowd, a psalm was sung and Hamilton read out the statement, which consisted of seven sections. It began with the words “...as true members of the Church of Scotland” they added their testimony to that of those who had suffered against all the statutes for overturning the work of the Reformation, establishing Episcopacy, renouncing the Covenants, outing the Ministry, imposing Restoration Day, setting up the Royal Supremacy, authorizing the Indulgence, and against the illegal acts of the Privy Council. (20)

The Declaration was then attached to the cross by the Marquis of Hamilton along with the list of changes (outlined above) and these were thrown on to the fire. Graham of Claverhouse, (Viscount Dundee) was sent by the authorities to track the demonstrators down, but he failed to find them. However he was told

(18) Turner, J. *Memoirs*, Edinburgh, 1829) 153

(19) Turner, J. *Memoirs*, 189

(20) Hewison, J.K. *The Dalry Rising*, DGNHHS III, 14, 199-200, (Dumfries) 28

that they intended to meet at Drumclog on Sunday June 1, 1679.

Reflecting on the above events, one can see immediately how both sides were dramatically opposed to one another. The king on the one hand was determined to carry out his reforms and be seen as the head of the church. On the other hand the Covenanters were equally determined that their forms of worship should be put in place without interference from the king. They had set themselves what seemed an impossible task, as they were up against the might of the crown and many of the nobility. The authorities had the resources to implement the king's wishes, whereas many, but not all, of the Covenanters did not have the resources. The crown consisted of nobles and ecclesiastics tended to look after their own interests, whereas the church seemed to stand up for the rights of common people, with whom it remained in touch. This again emphasizes how vitally important the church was to ordinary individuals.

Many parts of Ayrshire are rural and remote, just like Dumfries and Galloway, and this made it easier for the Covenanters to hold conventicles, as well as to seek refuge whilst they were avoiding their persecutors. There are a number of individuals who have been identified as having displayed special bravery, dedication or other characteristics in the Covenanting movement. These, along with those described above, give an insight into how Covenanters were so dedicated to and motivated by their cause. On the other hand the dragoons took their work and, by implication, loyalty to the cause of the King and his followers seriously. Not only were they dedicated to the cause of tracking down and capturing the Covenanters, but they were ruthless in the way they carried out their task.

Wodrow sheds some light on the backgrounds of some of the Covenanters by saying that '...the prisoners who were executed after the battle of Rullion Green were most of them illiterate persons, of very common education.'(21) Others were quite wealthy and well read. Turner describes how he 'was the second time commanded to the Stewartrie...to put the laws concerning church ordinances in

(21)Wodrow, R. *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, Book 2 58

execution' (22) He stayed two months and reduced it to '...indifferent good order by censing on some and by censing and fining others and by fair means prevailing with many.' (23)

In a later volume, reference is made to the fact that Turner was under investigation for the fines and other amounts he had collected on behalf of the crown. He was called to account for his actions. In 1668 these amounted to thirty thousand pounds Scots as well as 38,000 for quartering soldiers. The Register also states that no information was returned in respect of parishes in Galloway where people rose in rebellion.'(24)

To summarise, the Covenanters were a dedicated and determined group of Scots who wanted to retain the forms of worship they were used to, and did not want to be dictated to by the king, nor did they want to have to use a form of service drawn up by the king's archbishop, Laud. As a result they were prepared to leave their homes and villages and go out into the fields and hillsides to carry out acts of worship under the leadership of their own ministers rather than other clergy who were appointed by bishops under the auspices of the crown.

Details of some of the covenanting ministers now follow. There is no doubt that their ministry and courage made conventicles the success that they became. Some extracts from sermons that they preached are included. John Blackader, a well-known covenanting minister, attended St. Salvator's College, became a licentiate of St. Andrew's Presbytery and was ordained into the Barony Parish in Glasgow in 1655. He took part in the Battle of Bothwell and ministered in the Edinburgh area, before going to Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway to minister and preach. Wodrow reports him continuing to preach in the fields. He was eventually put to death by hanging. One of the best known was Alexander Peden, mentioned above. He was born in the parish of Sorn in Ayrshire. After attending university he was employed as a teacher, precentor and session clerk at Tarbolton. Eventually he

(22) Turner, *J. Memoirs*, 140

(23) Turner, *J. Memoirs*, 141

(24) *Register of the Privy Council*, 1666, 409

was appointed as minister to the parish of New Luce in Galloway. Here he stayed for about three years until, like many others, he was outed. In 1666 a proclamation was issued against him and other colleagues for holding conventicles, preaching and baptising children at Ralstoun in Kilmarnock and at Castlehill in Craigie parish in Ayrshire. When he did not appear to answer the charges, he was declared a rebel. He joined the covenanters and spent some of his time in Ireland and in parts of Scotland. Sometime after this, Peden was sentenced to prison on the Bass Rock. John Welsh, although outed from his parish of Irongray, continued to preach there at least once a week and his followers used swords and pistols to protect themselves against possible attack. Welsh is reputed to have baptised many children. At one point there was a bounty of £500 on his head, a very large amount of money in those days, emphasising the determination of the authorities to arrest him and to have him out of the way. John Blackader first upset the authorities by ‘...not keeping an anniversary day of thanksgiving for the king’s restoration and not obtaining a lawful presentation and collation from the archbishop.’(25)

G.D. Henderson observes that the preachers at the conventicles tended to have ‘a strong evangelical appeal’ (26) in their style of preaching. Before they were admitted to the church, their training, which was long and rigorous, taught them to dispute the Scriptures. The depth of knowledge that they acquired gave them confidence, promoted flexibility and adaptability and helped them to preach fluently. One of these, David Dickson, was professor of divinity at Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities and a well regarded preacher. He wrote some commentaries on aspects of the Bible, which are still in print today. Spurgeon gives a moving account of a covenanting Communion by Dickson and some colleagues by the river Tweed. He concludes with the words ‘All over Scotland the straths and dells and vales and hillsides are full of Covenanting memories to this day. You will not fail to meet with rock pulpits whence the stern fathers of the Presbyterian Church thundered forth their denunciation of Erastianism, and

(25) Blackader, J and Crichton, A. *The Memoirs of the Revd J Blackader*, 75

(26) Henderson, G.D. *Religious Life in 17th century Scotland*, 218

pleaded the claims of the King of Kings.’ (27) In other words, the preachers were well educated in theology and well prepared for their task.

James Durham was one of the most popular preachers and an expert in exegesis and he tried to be practical in his teaching. John Livingstone often spoke about the rights of kings and magistrates. They developed other gifts such as writing and singing. James Guthrie was inducted to the parish of Lauder in 1638 and in 1646 he was appointed to attend the king in Newcastle. He was translated to Stirling where he became leader of the Protesters. At the same time he was a professor of moral philosophy at St. Andrews. In 1660 he was captured at a private meeting in Edinburgh. He was also noted for his powerful sermons. William Guthrie went to St. Andrews and studied under his cousin James. He was described by Matthew Crawford, the minister at Eastwood as having “converted and confirmed many thousand souls, and was esteemed the greatest practical preacher in Scotland.”(28) He and John Semple are said to have had excellent voices. Peden also enjoyed singing. Richard Cameron is thought to have been made in the fire and brimstone mould and was an engaging preacher. Peden was described as a man of massive frame and of noble and impressive countenance. James Nisbet who attended many of his meetings wrote the following about Peden: ‘...such was the weighty and convincing majesty that accompanied what he spoke that it obliged his hearers both to love and to fear him. I observed that every time he spoke, whether conversing, reading, praying or preaching, betwixt every sentence he paused a little, as if he had been hearkening what the Lord would say to him, or listening to some secret whisper.’ (29)

Against this background and the times they lived in, one can understand how some ministers were much loved and respected by their parishioners. They set excellent examples of self sacrifice for the Covenanting movement.

(27) Spurgeon, C.H. *Lectures to my students*, Passmore and Alabaster, 1906, 230

(28) Barr, J. *The Scottish Covenanters*, 106 and Stevenson, D. *Conventicles and the Kirk*, 106

(29) Johnson, *Peden*, Mournie Missionary Reprint, 6

Chapter 2

Worship during the time of the Covenanters.

This section explores the concept of worship to see how it impacted upon the Covenanters in their daily lives. Worship was an essential part of a covenanter's life and Christians still regard it as vital part of their daily routine. Evelyn Underhill defines *worship* as '...the response of man to the Eternal.' (1)

She goes on to indicate that '...the object of worship is to lead human souls, by different ways to that act of pure adoration which is the consummation of worship.' (2) Worship is also an activity which involves a community of people, usually in an appropriate building such as a church. These individuals often contribute to the worship by singing or reading passages from scripture and, in some instances, an individual might lead prayers instead of a minister taking the entire part. There is a shortage of published primary materials on this subject. Sprott (*The Worship of the Church of Scotland in Covenanting Times*) seems to be the main authority, but he gives very few details of his sources. G.D. Henderson (3) includes a useful section on worship and C.G McCrie (4) is very helpful too, but his index and references are poor. Burnet (5) and Maxwell (6) are useful sources as well.

It seems helpful to set the scene in 1560 to ascertain what worship consisted of before the Covenanters became established. On August 24 1560 the

(1) Underhill, E. *Worship*, Crossroad, (New York, 1936) xi

(2) Underhill, E. *Worship*, xii

(3) Henderson, G.D. *Religious Life in 17th Century Scotland*, Cambridge, (London, 1937) 148

(4) McCrie. *Worship in Presbyterian Scotland*, Blackwood, (Edinburgh, 1892)

(5) Burnet, G. *The Holy Communion in the Reformed Church of Scotland*, Oliver and Boyd, (Edinburgh, 1960)

(6) Maxwell, W. *A History of Worship in the Church of Scotland*, O.U.P. (London, 1955)

Scottish Parliament ‘...passed three Acts abolishing the Pope’s jurisdiction within the kingdom and annulling all teaching and practices contrary to the Protestant faith. By the third of these, it became a criminal offence to hear or say Mass, punishable by death.’ (7)

Forrester and Murray have provided a very useful source on worship in Covenanting times. In it the late Gordon Donaldson points out that ‘experiments in worship had made headway before the Roman rite was prohibited in 1560.’ (8) In 1543 ‘the preaching of the word of God’ (9) was authorised by government and acknowledged as an element in public worship. In 1552 a Catechism was issued. This gave individuals the Commandments, the Apostles Creed and Lord’s Prayer in their own language, helping them to prepare for Communion. A Godly Exhortation was published in 1559. It set out to encourage individual lay people to focus on Communion. According to Donaldson, ‘...reformed worship had been emerging at unofficial levels.’ (10) For example George Wishart, a well known preacher, had been preaching widely and administering Communion according to a reformed model in a number of places between 1544 and 1547. By the mid-1550s congregations were organised, sometimes on a secret basis. They became known as ‘privy kirks’. Their services included confession, readings, exposition and prayers of thanksgiving and intercession. Some of these groups of worshippers met without any ordained minister and discussed the scriptures among themselves rather than listening to sermons. They may also have celebrated Communion under one of their number, who had no authorisation or qualification other than acceptance of their leadership by the group. This is

(7) Thomson, T. ed, *Acts of Parliament of Scotland*, volume ii (London, 1814-75) 534-5

(8) Donaldson, G. *Reformation to Covenant* in Forrester, D. and Murray, D. *Studies in the History of Worship in Scotland*, Clark, 1996, 37

(9) Donaldson, G. *Reformation to Covenant* in Forrester, D. and Murray, D. *Studies in the History of Worship in Scotland*, T. and T. Clark, (Edinburgh, 1996) 38

(10) Donaldson, G. *Reformation to Covenant* in Forrester, D. and Murray, D. *Studies in the History of Worship in Scotland* 38

referred to by Knox. (11) ‘There is no evidence that the idea of conducting worship without written or printed guidance had taken root.’ (12)

Members of the congregation wanted ‘common prayers’, in which the people would take part with books in their hands instead of being more or less passive while a service was conducted by a priest who alone had a book. One assumes that printed materials were available from countries in Europe where the Reformation had been accepted. Before any Prayer Book was published there is evidence that ‘primers were available.’(13)

One of the first pieces of legislation which governed worship was the First Book of Discipline in 1561. It laid down a number of requirements for worship including: the frequency of communion services and the content of these and other services. Regarding ‘the Sacrament of the Lord’s Table is to be administered four times a year and in such a way as to avoid ‘the superstition of the times’.(14) In other words Communion was to be arranged so as to avoid Christmas and Easter because of previous associations with these seasons in the Roman Catholic Church. ‘The structure of Sunday morning services was shaped by the attitude to the Lord’s Supper. It had been hoped that communion services would be held every Sunday as **the** main service.’(15)

In spite of all the work put into the First Book of Discipline, it was rejected by the provisional government. It was followed by the Second Book of Discipline which was drawn up, but there is disagreement as to when it was published. It was published in draft form, but the final draft appeared in 1621. (16)

(11) Knox, J. *A History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Nelson, (London, 1949) I 148, II 277, 321

(12) Donaldson, G. ‘*Reformation to Covenant*’ in *Studies in the History of Worship in Scotland*,

(13) Butterworth, G.C. *The English Primers, 1529-45*, (Philadelphia, 1953)

(14) Cameron, J.K. *The First book of Discipline*, St Andrew Press, (Edinburgh, 1972) 41

(15) Donaldson, G. ‘*Reformation to Covenant*’ in *Studies in the History of Worship in Scotland*, 41

(16) Kirk, J. *The Second Book of Discipline*, St Andrew Press, (Edinburgh, 1980)154

The Second Book had thirteen chapters and ‘is the first explicit statement of Scottish Presbyterianism.’ (17) It makes very interesting reading and covers subjects such as church and state, vocation and ordination, ministers and bishops, kirk sessions, elders and the general assembly.

Knox brought a book that he had compiled whilst in Switzerland. It was known as the Psalm Book or Book of Common Order and was adopted formally by the General Assembly in 1562 and continued in use until supplanted by the Westminster Directory in 1645. The Book of Common Order recommended that communion services be held monthly as a minimum. Donaldson emphasises that ‘People had long been accustomed to communicate once a year at Easter and ministers would not celebrate with few or no communicants.’ A shortage of ministers made weekly and monthly celebrations in most parishes impossible. The language used in the reformed worship was ‘the vernacular, spoken in a strong clear voice.’ (18) The difference this made was profound. The congregation now listened and felt part of the proceedings, as they understood what was going on. They were active participants rather than passive observers. Psalms set to common tunes which were easily learned were included. People came forward to sit at the communion table when receiving communion. This helped to emphasise the corporate nature of worship

Holy Scriptures were translated and made accessible to the people. Bibles were placed in all the churches and the Scriptures were read daily so that those who could not read might hear, Frequent communion was recommended, but due to the shortage of ministers and the opposition experienced by Calvin in Geneva against weekly communion made it impossible. Worship was an essential part of the life of a Covenanter as of most other people. They wanted this to continue and not be altered or dictated by the king. During the time of the Covenanters ordinary individuals tried to continue to be faithful to God and to worship regularly, both at home and in their church, but this was often difficult, for the king and those who

(17) *The Second Book of Discipline*, vii

(18) Maxwell, W. *A History of the Worship in the Church of Scotland*, OUP, (London, 1955) 49

acted on his behalf were in the process of implementing changes to the church and to the pattern of worship, which were alien to the wishes of those who supported the Covenanting cause. The Covenanters may have been individuals, but, as Underhill pointed out ‘...they came before God as members of a great family, part of the Communion of Saints, living and dead.’ (19) Ian Cowan suggests that, after the Reformation ‘emphasis was placed on the parish’ (20) to encourage people to worship on a regular basis, similar to the situation in the medieval church. ‘The English Prayer Book was read in the parish churches of Scotland, but it was soon superseded by the ‘Book of Common Order.’ McCrie emphasises that ‘the principle regulating all the divisions and details of the book is the sole and supreme authority of Scripture.’ (21)

The Book continued to be used for regular worship until 1645. The only change was made by the Assembly of Perth in 1618, which decreed that Communion should be received by participants while kneeling. It also dictated that those who were sick should receive the Sacrament privately and that children should receive Episcopal Confirmation before they were able to receive Communion. The other decision that was reached was that the Church should observe the days which were kept throughout the Christian world to commemorate Jesus’ Birth, the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension and the coming of the Holy Ghost. These were not popular changes because it was felt that they were reminiscent of the Roman Catholic Church and were being imposed by the king.

Worship tended to be led by a reader from the lectern, comprising praise and prayer along with reading(s) from Holy Scripture. It sometimes included the Decalogue and the Creed. At this point in the service, the minister would enter the pulpit and, after a short private devotion he proceeded to pray, preach a sermon, lead intercessions and conclude with the benediction. In the absence of a minister

(19) Underhill, E. *Worship*, 81

(20) Cowan, I.B. *The Scottish Reformation*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, (London) 139

(21) McCrie, C.G. *The Public Worship of Presbyterian Scotland Historically Treated*, Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1892)107

the service would be devotional and led by a reader. In all the towns and main villages churches tended to hold morning and evening services and they were open all day to enable individuals to make private devotions. A number of parishes which opposed the Perth Articles used the Book of Common Order as a resource rather than as a liturgy since ‘...the liberty vested in the officiating minister, the discretionary power left with him to employ to modify, or to omit the forms of prayer provided.’(22)

When the King tried to force a Book of Prayer on the Church with the agreement of the Assembly and Parliament, this raised real anger among ordinary church-goers throughout the country, who would not have been consulted at this time anyway. The National Covenant was the eventual result. The planned prayer book was credited to William Laud whose handwriting was discovered in notes in 1636 (23) Laud believed that ‘Puritanism and Presbyterianism should be obliterated altogether.’(24) However Donaldson points out that the Scots were consulted by the inclusion of the Bishop of Dunblane, (James Wedderburn), who appears to have made a number of suggestions for changes to the text including the inclusion of the Psalter, the inclusion of new offertory sentences. He was assisted by other senior clerics including the bishops of Edinburgh, Moray and Brechin.

As often happens in situations such as this, there tend to be differences between the factions, with some being more extreme than others. During the Glasgow Assembly in 1638, the offending books were withdrawn, but this did not satisfy everybody and the more extreme members abolished not only the Perth Articles but also Episcopacy. Sitting to receive Communion was restored and the private administration of the Sacraments and the observance of anniversaries were strictly prohibited. Some individuals found it very regrettable that they were discouraged from enjoying religious and social events associated with Christmas. The Christmas vacation in the Courts of Justice was abolished, along with the

(22) McCrie, C.G. *The Public Worship of Presbyterian Scotland Historically Treated*, 113

(23) Donaldson, G. *The Making of the Prayer Book of 1637*, Edinburgh University Press, 1954,

(24) Hewison, J.K *The Covenanters*, book 1, 211

traditional school holidays. These changes were brought about by the First Book of Discipline which abolished the celebration of Christmas. The hope of the Covenanters was to restore their worship to the state which existed before King James started to alter it. However a group of Scots who lived in Ulster refused to use the English form of worship and they held separate meetings among themselves for prayer and conferences. They sometimes spent Saturday and Sunday nights in religious exercises, in addition to attending services on Saturday, Sunday and Monday nights. Some of the members of this group rejected all forms of prayer, including the Lord's Prayer and the reading of Scripture, without any form of exposition.

When the Assembly of 1639 was held, a number of small conferences were also arranged to try and limit the differences that had arisen. They were '...afraid of the injury that would be done by showing their divisions to the world.' (25) Initially the Assembly prohibited any changes in public worship, but individuals soon became alarmed at the changes, as they were on the increase. The following year an Assembly was held in Aberdeen which concentrated on the subject of ritual in worship. It censored the printer of the *Book of Common Order* for shortening one of the prayers and passed an act against idolatrous monuments. This led to the destruction of crosses in churches and open places, the damaging of statues of individuals and the breaking of stained glass windows. After listening to the evidence against the innovators of worship described above, an Act was passed and adopted, prohibiting further changes in worship without the permission of a General Assembly. It also reaffirmed the permission for parishes to read and use set prayers by ministers who were expected to '...cultivate the power of leading devotions of a congregation so as to meet and give expression to the spiritual wants and cravings of the earnest and living members of the Church.'(26)

(25) Sprott, G.W. *The Worship of the Church of Scotland in Covenanting Times*, Blackwood, (Edinburgh, 1893), Lightning Source, (Milton Keynes, reprinted 2010) 9

(26) Free Church of Scotland *A New Directory for the Public Worship of God*, 2009, 5

The Act caused offence among the innovators, such as McLellan of Kirkcudbright and David Dickson of Irvine and, not surprisingly, they ignored it. The next Assembly met at St. Andrews in 1641 and was adjourned to meet again in Edinburgh a week later, as there was much to consider in private meetings. The main issue for discussion was how to suppress Brownism. Robert Browne was an Englishman, who had tried to set up independent congregations in England, for which he was imprisoned. After being released, he spent time in Holland with his followers, but he soon left there for Scotland. Browne was allegedly “...of a quarrelsome nature” and ‘mentally unstable’. (27) He returned to England and became rector of Adchurch in Northamptonshire. The Brownites had tried to bring in innovations to worship, but the Assembly resolved that churches in Scotland and in England should have one Confession, one Directory for Public Worship, one Catechism and one form of Church Government. Alexander Henderson was charged with the task of preparing the documents beginning with a Directory of Worship.

During 1641 the Presbytery of Edinburgh published a warning against Brownism which was read in all the pulpits of the city. At the next Assembly at St. Andrews in 1642 there was much further discussion about ‘novations’ and, as a result, a new act was drafted forbidding any new innovations in worship. This provoked further discussion. Some members wanted to remove the use of the Lord’s Prayer in public worship, but instead it was proposed that the Gloria and private prayer said by the minister in the pulpit be discontinued. In the end the assembly compromised and agreed ‘...that a Directory for Divine Worship... be made ready by next assembly’ (28) and prohibited any further innovations being introduced. This Act, which was designed to satisfy all, was regarded as a triumph for the innovators.

The main achievement of the 1642 assembly was the approval of the Solemn League and Covenant. King Charles had given the Covenanters all they

(27) Cross, F .L. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford University Press, (Oxford, 1961) 201 and 202

(28) *The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, Amazon, 2011, 163-164

had asked for. He had also bestowed honours on the leaders in the hope that they would remain neutral between him and those in England who were unhappy with his ideas for reform there. The Directory for the Public Worship of God replaced the Book of Common Order in 1645. As a result of this, the idea of a Scottish Directory was abandoned. The Book of Common Order continued to be used for guidance until 1645. From 1640 the reading of prayers by the clergy was phased out, as was the use of the Lord's Prayer by the clergy, the Gloria, and kneeling for private devotions. The literature gives no reasons for their disuse. In most places the people had joined in the reciting of the Lord's Prayer. In a number of places where there had been services during the week, ministers gave talks in place of morning and evening prayer. One of the important sections of the Westminster Directory was that of *Praise*. In Lightfoot's 'Journal' there is an entry which states: 'Then was our directory for singing psalms read over to the Scots Commissioners, who were absent at the passing of it; Mr Henderson disliked our permission of any to read the psalms line by line.'(29)

The idea behind the reading of the psalms line by line was to help individuals in areas where they were unable to read. Patrick indicates that 'except for the very first years of Presbyterianism, there can have been few periods of the Church's history when sacred song was allowed a more meagre part in the services.'(30) There were several reasons for this. Firstly emphasis was placed on preaching and singing was not considered important. Those who tried to implement change did their best to encourage congregational praise. For a while most towns had established song schools to train young people to sing and give them the skills to read music, but these declined and disappeared. In the original Psalter there had been 105 tunes and each of these were likely to be linked with two psalms. There was also a deal of variety in the metres of the psalms so a new type of tune was required. This resulted in twelve tunes which matched the Psalter

(29) Lightfoot's *Works* vol xiii, 344 cited in McCrie, C.G. *The Public Worship of Presbyterian Scotland Historically Treated*, 204

(30) Patrick, M. *The Psalmody of Covenanting Times*, in Church Service Society Annual, May 1933-4, Fife.4

of 1615. The tunes were called Common Tunes. Each of them was given a name and they could be sung with any psalm of eight syllables in the first line and six in the next. The names given tended to be from places. They include: French, London, Dumfermline, Dundee, Abbey, Martyrs and Elgin. Patrick states that ‘It is clear that they won favour, for, in successive Psalters the number went on increasing until in that of 1635... there were thirty-one.’(31) Music was also published.

Five years later, the Synod of Lothian appointed a committee “to consider whether or not in every congregation when the people are gathered, there shall be singing of psalms and reading of chapters both before and after noon on the Sabbath Day.” But no place was given to it in the new Directory of Public Worship in 1645. This set the norm for public services and only included two psalm portions, one was optional. As a result, singing in public worship approached the verge of extinction. This coincided with the heart of the Covenanting period. Patrick states that ‘An Aberdeen printer published a collection of tunes unofficially in 1666.’(32) It contained twelve tunes which were: Common Tune, King’s Tune, Duke’s Tune, English Tune, French, London, Stilt (York), Dumfermline, Dundee, Abbey, Martyrs, Elgin and Bon Accord. The intention was to use these to accompany psalms. By the end of the century these twelve became the musical tradition of the Church of Scotland. In view of this, the Covenanters’ tunes are likely to be found among those named above. Renwick’s first public meeting was in the remotest recess they could find. In the silence of the moors, mosses and hills sound carries far and singing was likely to betray the participants. There are instances of particular associations between psalms and Covenanters. For example Andrew Hislop, a 17 year old youth, refused to betray his friends and was executed. Before he met his end he sang a few verses of this psalm:

(31) Patrick, M. *The Psalmody of Covenanting Times*, 42

(32) Patrick, M. *The Psalmody of Covenanting Times*, 43

The mighty Lord is on my side,

I will not be afraid

For anything that man can do

I shall not be dismayed. (33)

a draft copy was presented to a special meeting of the General Assembly in January 1645. This only prescribed two psalm portions for use in worship. After considering the document very carefully, the General Assembly requested that several alterations be made. Firstly it was hoped that weddings would only be carried out in the parish church and secondly the Creed was included to enable parents or godparents to recite at a baptism rather than answering questions.

The Westminster Assembly and the English Parliament approved the alterations and the General Assembly not only approved the Directory, but ordered that it be put into practice as soon as copies could be provided. The first edition was published in March 1645 and on May 27 1645 the Commission of Assembly authorized a Scottish edition to be published. It sent copies to all Presbyteries, along with instructions to use the book immediately. Parishes were reluctant to make the change. They were reluctant to part with services led by a reader on weekdays and on a Sunday if the minster was ill. The Church intended that the Directory would be implemented and followed to the letter, but many clergy refused to do this. However they did read portions or chapters of Scripture along with an exposition. The Assembly of 1647 tried to enforce the practice of parish and the Assembly of 1648 approved two Catechisms, the Shorter and the Larger. The Creed was included in both. In many churches, services held in an afternoon involved the teaching of the Catechism and a shorter one was intended for those who were ill.

So far this section has dealt with worship during Covenanting times, but no mention has been made of the worship which happened at a conventicle. A phrase which was sometimes used by Covenanters to

(33)Wodrow, R. MSS.,xli,236

describe the setting of outside worship was the fact that they took place ‘under the dome of heaven.’(34) As Burnet points out ‘There is no record of any field Communion being held under cover of darkness.’(35) What was common at conventicles was preparation of communicants for Communion beforehand. Wodrow recounts an occasion of a visit to Obsdale in the highlands, where a service was held in the house of Lady Fowlis. Three ministers were present and each preached a separate sermon. (36) had long distances to travel on foot to where a Sacrament was reported to be taking place were on the road through the Friday night. Many remained all weekend up to the Monday thanksgiving and bivouacked as best they could in the open or returned to nearby villages or towns for the night.

Burnet tells us that ‘the majority of a crowd which came was in an exalted and receptive condition of soul, very sure that the Lord had “spread a table before them in the presence of their enemies.” None could be sure that it might not be his last Communion. The heightened sense of “the terror by night or the arrow that flieth by day” the sympathy of nature’s moods an solitudes and the direct, simple and passionate prayers and action sermons all created an atmosphere of tense solemnity which was the keynote of these services.’ (37) Blackader informs us that ‘there was a short top table across the head of some long tables.’ (38) He gives a graphic description of a Communion at East Nisbet in Renfrewshire in 1677. As there had been rumours of an attack by dragoons, additional precautions were taken before the preparation began and after this the tokens were distributed. The tokens were small and usually made of lead, were given by the elders to all who satisfied them with their conduct and knowledge. On the appointed Sunday those who had tokens took their turn and gathered at long tables which had been

(34) Burnet, G, D, *The Holy Communion in the Reformed Church of Scotland*, 147

(35) Burnet, G, D, *The Holy Communion in the Reformed Church of Scotland*, 148

(36) Wodrow, R. *A History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, vol. 3 285

(37) Burnet, G B. *The Holy Communion in the Reformed Church of Scotland* 149

(38) Blackader, J. and Crichton, A. *Memoirs of the Rev. J. Blackader*, 206

erected in the middle of the church and here they received the bread and wine which was distributed by the minister through the elders. Sometimes it was necessary to hold Communion services on consecutive Sundays because there was insufficient space to accommodate everybody at one time. If members moved from one parish to another they needed to take a testimonial with them and give it to the Kirk Session in the new parish.

Blackader tells us that the tokens were only given to those whom the ministers knew to be free from public scandal.

‘On the Sabbath morning the Communion tables were spread on the greensward and the people arranged themselves in decent order, but only those with tokens were admitted...the communicants entered at one end and retired at the other back to their seats on the hillside. Five ministers (Welsh, Blackader, Dickson, Riddel and Rae) took part and the service was undisturbed. All the people, heartily offering up their gratitude, and singing with a joyful noise to the Rock of their salvation. There were sixteen tables in all with about two hundred at each so that the communicants totalled over three thousand. On the Monday Blackader conducted the thanksgiving service.’ (39)

Thomson refers to the communion stones at Irongray (Skeoch Hill) and gives more detail.

‘These consisted of four parallel rows of flat stones on which the communicants sat and were about sixty feet in length and accommodated about thirty persons. Between each two rows there is a stone here and there that may have been supports for a plank or wooden dail on which the bread and wine were passed along. At the south end there was a circular pile of stones about four feet high built up to form a serving table for the ministers. At each table about a hundred and twenty could be seated.’ (40)

The main difference in worship between what took place in church and conventicle was the fact that a conventicle was outside. Officiating ministers tended to be well known and they would move from place to place. Numbers attending tended to be large, although these were often exaggerated. Blackader states it was “very numerous”. The actual form of service was probably identical to that which took place in church, although there would be a different atmosphere, as the ministers and congregation would be concerned as to whether

(39) Blackader and Crichton, *Memoirs of the Rev. J. Blackader 199-307*

(40) Thomson, J.H. *The Martyr Graves of Scotland*, 486

they would be interrupted by dragoons. Little detail of the actual services is given. Mention has been made of the preparation for Communion. Burnet states that ‘Catechising was regarded by both authorities as an essential preliminary to the Communion.’ (41) Catechising was essential because of the ignorance and illiteracy of the overwhelming majority of the people.’(42)

In summary, the main changes which were made between 1645 and 1648 were the discontinuance of a daily service, of private devotion on entering church, of read prayers, of the reading of Holy Scripture, of the Gloria, of taking up the offertory during Divine Service and the growing disuse of the Lord’s Prayer. These changes were thought to be more in line with the idea of Presbyterian worship.

In the Church of Scotland Holy Communion was not regarded with the importance it had been in the past. The focus became preaching the Word. Communion was not the main emphasis of worship as the mass had been in Catholicism. Many people felt unworthy to receive Communion so it tended to be observed once a year and there was a great deal of individual preparation for this. As time approached the minister went to visit every person in the parish to test people’s knowledge. People had to know the Apostle’s Creed, the Lord’s Prayer and the Ten Commandments. Individual behaviour had to be reviewed. In some places elders were asked to encourage individuals who had disputes with their neighbours to resolve the situations or be barred from attending Communion. Again the influence of Moses may have played a part.

This section has attempted to outline the status of worship during Covenanting times and to describe how this developed. It has also tried to show the difference between worship in churches and at conventicles. In fact as Foster indicates ‘As to the worship, it’s exactly the same both in the church and

(41) Burnet, G.B. *The Holy communion in the Reformed Church of Scotland*, 158

(42) MacDonald, *Covenanters of Moray and Ross*, 31-32

conventicle.’ (43) One might challenge this, as outdoor worship in fields would seem likely to be different. Thomas Morer, an English army chaplain who was based in Scotland, made the helpful comment that ‘..the Episcopalian Church have hitherto used no liturgy at all, no more than the Presbyterians who now govern’ (44) These accounts cannot be dismissed, but they are misleading in that they imply that there was uniformity in practice. For example the Lord’s Prayer, the Doxology and the Creed were far from universal. Morer’s outline looks more like the Directory than the Book of Common Order. Morer also opined that ‘presbytery and episcopacy might come and go, but the kirk session discipline went on and the public denunciation of offenders continued to enliven public worship.’(45)

(43) Donaldson, G. *Covenant to Revolution in Studies in the History of worship in the church of Scotland*, 69 and *Ecclesiastical Records of Aberdeen*, pp lxv - lxix

(44) Donaldson, G. *Covenant to Revolution in Studies in the History of worship in the church of Scotland*, 69 and *Ecclesiastical Records of Aberdeen*, pp lxv - lxix

(45) Donaldson, G. *Covenant to Revolution in Studies in the History of worship in the church of Scotland*, 70 and *Ecclesiastical Records of Aberdeen*, pp lxv - lxix

Chapter 3

Conventicles

In 1662 about four hundred ministers of the Church of Scotland left their churches and manse rather than conform to the demands of the king and Parliament that they should be approved by their local bishop before continuing their ministry. As a result of this most the congregations who worshipped in the parishes followed suit and worship started to take place in barns, fields and on the open moorland. These services became known as conventicles. A conventicle has been defined as ‘a secret or unlawful religious meeting typically of Non-Conformists.’⁽¹⁾

The origin of the word is from the Latin *conventiculum*, a (place of) assembly. The word is a diminutive of *conventus*, an assembly or company. The noun is derived from the verb *convenire* meaning to come together for a meeting. It is often used in the context of an outdoor gathering, but it is also applicable to meetings held indoors, whether in a house or a barn.’ The distinction became important in the later years of the Restoration when limited indoor and outdoor meetings were allowed under the Indulgences, but attendance at an outdoor meeting was liable to the death penalty. An early Christian who suffered during in the Reformation, George Wishart (1513-1546) was forced to preach in the fields near Mauchline in Ayrshire when the sheriff barred him from the church. When Hugh Campbell of Kinyeancleuch offered to break into the church, Wishart gave the following advice: ‘Brother, Christ Jesus is as potent upon the fields as in the kirk; and I find that He himself often[er] preached in the desert, at the sea side, and other places judged profane, than that He did in the Temple in Jerusalem.’⁽²⁾

In some ways it could be argued that Jesus himself led conventicles, as he was

(1) *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, (Oxford, 1952) 262

(2) Spurgeon, C. H. *Lectures to my Students*, Hendrickson, Massachusetts (2010) ,230

banned from the Temple. Wishart was understandably reluctant to break into the church, as he supported the idea of conventicles, but he did not wish to add further penalties against him by invading a kirk.

John Knox stated that in an earlier stage in the history of the Scottish Church ‘The brethren in every town at certain times should assemble together, to Common Prayers, to Exercise and Reading of the Scriptures’. (3)

There is comparatively little written about conventicles, but this section tries to redress that. It is difficult to find specific references as to when the first one was held. James VI referred to ‘an assembly of ministers in Aberdeen in 1605, (who had been ordered to disperse) as a ‘conventicle’ (4). The assembly was prorogued at the time. David Stevenson opined that ‘their origin may date from the introduction of the Five Articles of Perth’ (5) It is interesting to note that the composition of the assembly at this time was made up of a majority from north of the Tay, which tended to favour episcopacy. ‘The recorded votes by members south of the Tay showed a majority of 7 against the king’s articles, but those from the north were in favour by a majority of 26 to 8.’ (6)

The Articles were passed in 1618 and caused a certain amount of disagreement among dedicated members of the church, especially from the South of Scotland. They stated that members of congregations should kneel to receive communion, agreed on the dates of festivals in the Christian year, the rite of confirmation by bishops and private administration of baptism and communion.

(3) Laing, ed. *Works of John Knox*, i 298-300

(4) Donaldson, G. *Scottish Church History*, Scottish Academic Press, (Edinburgh, 1985) 207

(5) Stevenson, D. *Conventicles in the Kirk*, RSCHS 18, 1973, 101

(6) *Register of the Privy Council*, XIII, 558-65

David Stevenson shed some new light on the subject of conventicles, indicating that ‘...most ministers considered such meetings incompatible with Presbyterianism, while a radical minority supported the meetings.’ (7)

Stevenson traces the history of private meetings during the twenty years prior to 1619. There was general agreement among ministers that the established kirk was a true kirk, even though it was corrupt, due to changes imposed by the monarchy. In practice this meant that there were different obediences given to it. Some ministers gave the kirk their complete obedience, despite the perceived corruption. Some, on the other extreme looked at separation and disowning the church completely, but this was generally regarded as being out of the question. They refused to agree to its corrupt services or to obey its corrupt hierarchy, but still regarded themselves as part of it. Most appear to have reluctantly accepted the situation rather than agree threaten the order and unity of the kirk, but many refused to recognise or practise the changes put forward in the Five Articles of Perth.

Stevenson describes a situation where three individuals were summoned before the court of high commission in Edinburgh for not observing Christmas. This was one of a number of incidents in which controversial matters were discussed and acted upon by ministers and others who had strong views about changes proposed by the king and his ministers to change the way of worship. In 1620 there were ‘private meetings of some good Christians in Edinburgh which the town’s ministers called ‘privy conventicles’. (8) Two of the members of this group, Mean and Rig were summoned before the Privy Council for refusing to kneel at communion. Mean was an elder and Rig a merchant and baillie. Four others were also summoned. They were regarded as ‘the leaders of resistance in Edinburgh’ (9)

(7) Stevenson, D. *Conventicles in the Kirk, 1619-37*, RSCHS, 18, 99

(8) Donaldson, G. *Scottish Church History*, 208. Calderwod, D. *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, Wodrow Society, iv,449

(9) Stevenson, D. *Conventicles in the Kirk*, RSCHS, 18, 102

The archbishop of St. Andrews denounced Mean as one who held private conventicles as well as keeping a Brownist minister in his house. Mean denied that the minister had taught in his house, but he implicitly admitted that there had been a minister in his house and that meetings had taken place. He was banished to Elgin and the rest of the group were banished from Edinburgh, to places unspecified. (10)

Rig (mentioned above), Baillie of Blackness was confined in Blackness Castle and fined £50,000 Scots, in 1624, though the fine seems to have been cancelled by the Privy Council. (11) Also John Hamilton was fined 20,000 merks for conventicling. Stevenson points out that ‘It seems that some of the bishops had some sympathy with the dissidents’ point of view and had no stomach for harsh persecution.’ (12)

At one point John Mean’s son became minister at Anwoth. This is recorded in the *Register of the Privy Council for Scotland 1622-5* and some of Mean’s wife’s relations married ministers. One of his wife’s sisters married Robert Blair and two nieces married John McLellan and John Livingstone. These two were ministers of Kirkcudbright and Stranraer respectively and remained loyal to the Presbyterian system, but they moved to Bangor in Northern Ireland quickly, to avoid being brought before the bishop. Although many members were receiving oppression from the king and the authorities, the authorities sometimes turned a blind eye and only prosecuted those who were blatant in their defiance of the king’s proposed measures. Livingstone comments that “...in Ireland he had public worship free of any inventions of men.”(13) It might appear that some of the radicals in the kirk had moved towards separation, but this never happened.

Conventicles continued to be held in Edinburgh and the south west and, although these were regularly sought by the dragoons, they were not eradicated. In

(10) Stevenson, D. *Conventicles in the Kirk*, RSCHS, 18, 1973, 103

(11) Wodrow, R. *A History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, 1 430

(12) Stevenson, D. *Conventicles in the Kirk*, RSCHS, 18, 1973, 103

(13) Wodrow, R. *Select Biographies*, i 142

fact there was an increasing determination on the part of individual members of the Covenanting movement to pursue their aims. A combination of the king's conduct in the parliament of 1633, the new *Book of Canons* of 1636, the news that a further liturgy was to be imposed and further rumours provided what Stevenson describes as 'a spur to mounting fear, frustration and determination to resist.' (14)

In spite of the threats and possible banishment, conventicles continued to be held, much to the annoyance of both bishops and the king. James' proclamation prohibited any criticism of the church and king.

'We straitlie prohibite, that none of our subjects, of whatever estate or, presume or take upon hand to meet or convene in ani private house or place, to anie preaching, exhortation, or such religios exercise...And they attempt not to impugne, by discourse by word or writt, the true religion or lawfull discipline of the church, approven and authorised by our laws and acts of parliament. Or slander us with false suggestins, as persecuting the professors of true religion...If ani herafter shall be dylie verified to doe in the contrarie in anie of the premises, they shall be esteemed and reputed seditious, turbulent and rebellios persons, contemnors of our authorite, disobedient to the lawes of the church and kngdome and punished in their persons and goods with all extremities, in exemple of others.' (15)

Magistrates were authorised to be vigilant in their area and to prevent such events from happening. Many congregations refused to attend church services led by a placeman in their own parish church. Instead they and their former ministers set up alternative places of worship in fields, woods, barns or large houses. This was especially so in south west Scotland. For example, in the Kirkcudbright presbytery fifty ministers were recorded as being evicted from their parishes in 1663 because they refused to go before their bishop to seek approval of their post.

The essential characteristics of a conventicle were prayer, psalms or paraphrases (which were usually sung), one or more readings from the Bible and Bible teaching in the form of a sermon. There would often be baptisms and sometimes Communion would be celebrated. The Register of the Privy Council records an account by Lady Holme that 'she had seen Renwick, the rebellious

(14) Stevenson, D. *Conventicles in the Kirk*, RSCHS, 18, 1973, 103

(15) Calderwood, D. *The History of the Kirk of Scotland*, Wodrow Society, (Edinburgh, 1923) Vol7 613-4

preacher and she heard him lecture on the second chapter of Ezekiel from verse 7 onward and there was one child baptised.’(16)

The government and church authorities became very concerned about the prevalence of conventicles and the number not attending worship in their normal church, as they felt that they could not control what was taking place. The church authorities were able to estimate the number of people not attending, as the placemen were expected to provide a list of those who had absented themselves.

Participants at conventicles looked upon them much as ‘the Israelites viewed the Ark of the Covenant in the wilderness, as the presence of God.’ (17) Conventicles were conducted in a peaceable and edifying manner. Even though they were outlawed, this did not deter either those who attended them or the ministers who led them. For example such individuals as John Welsh, John Blackadder, Donald Cargill and Alexander Peden were often present either singly or together. Individuals who absented themselves from worship in their local parish church could be fined large amounts and they might also have their property or belongings confiscated. These punishments were harsh on what was already a poor population. In the case of districts where a number of people absented themselves from worship in church, armed dragoons were often quartered among them. This meant that the soldiers were placed in the property and took what food they could find in a house and consumed it themselves. They often caused damage to property and took any animals, crops and other belongings at the same time. The soldiers had the power to break up conventicles and to hunt down those who worshipped at them. If individuals were caught travelling from one place to another with a Bible in their possession, they could be punished by being shot on the spot just for carrying a bible. Wodrow mentions a proclamation by the committee of Estates against unlawful meetings and a seditious paper issued later on in August 1660. This specifically prohibits and discharges ‘... all unlawful and unwarrantable meetings and conventicles in any

(16) *Register of the Privy Council*, Volume X, 615

(17) Moore, E. *Our Covenant Heritage*, Christian Focus Publications, (Tain, 2000) 61

place within his majesty's kingdom of Scotland without his specific permission.'(18)

Here are some examples of fines which were imposed on families from different parishes for non-attendance at church. The assumption may have been made that they also attended conventicles. In two parishes the number of families is not identified. The contents were included in a letter from a man in Galloway in 1666

The parish of Dalry: 43 families		£9,577	6s	8d	
Balmaclellean	49 families	£6,430	10s	4d	
Balmaghie	9 families	£425	11s	8d	
Kirkcudbright	18 families	£2,580	0s	0d	
Kells Parish		£466	13s	4d	
Crossmichael		£1,666	13s	4d	
Parton	24 families	£2,838	9s	4d	(19)

At the time these figures were an appalling drain on the resources of families who were already very poor. It is difficult to find documentary evidence of the wages paid to labourers at the time. According to one source some labourers were paid ten pence per day, for carrying hay the rate was one shilling per day with board, harvesting attracted thirty shillings per month, reaping two shillings and sixpence per acre, mowing varied between eight pence and one shilling and a penny, threshing varied between one shilling and two shillings and eight pence per quarter. An artisan was paid ten pence per week, a wright two shillings and sixpence per week and a mason three shilling per week.

(18) Wodrow, R. *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* 174

(19) Letter in Wodrow, R. *A History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, Volume 2 10 1666

Also it must be remembered that some of this work was seasonal. Looking again at the figures in (19) above, one cannot understand how on earth people survived, let alone pay fines to a government which was oppressing them. It would seem impossible and one can understand how they revolted against their treatment. In some of the villages the actual population was very small indeed.

Charles II issued a proclamation in 1665 against the holding of private meetings, with the intention of making people attend the churches which were not being supported because they had adopted an Episcopalian polity. He described a conventicle as being ‘a most dangerous and unlawful practice.’(20) Other venues for conventicles in south west Scotland include Glencairn, Dunscore, Corsack Wood, Skeoch Hill (described elsewhere) New Cumnock, Maybole and Loudoun Hill The last three are in Ayrshire.

The Privy Council records a proclamation in 1669 concerning conventicles in the Kirkcudbright area which states:

‘The Lords of his Majesties Privy Councill, considering how far the keeping of conventicles is contrary to law and tends to the disturbance of the peace and quiet of the kingdom, and that, notwithstanding therof, conventicles are kept and frequented in ...and the stewartry of Kirkcudbright, have therefore thought fit to prohibit and discharge, like as they do herby prohibit and discharge all heritors whatsoever within their houses or in the lands belonging to them, certifying them, if they shall contravene, that each heretour in whose bounds or lands any conventicle shall be kept shall be fined in the sume of fifty pounds sterling *toties quoties*. (21)

Parliament passed a further severe and memorable Act the following year

‘We statute and declare that whosoever, without licence and authority shall preach or pray at any meeting in the fields or in any house where there be more persons than the house contains so as some of them be without the doors (which is hereby declared to be a field conventicle) shall be punished with death; and any of His majesty’s subjects seizing or securing such persons shall receive a reward of 500 merks.’(22)

(20) Wodrow, R. *A History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, 1 430

(21) *Register of the Privy Council*, (Edinburgh, 1669) 3

(22) *Records of the Parliaments of Scotland*, 1670/7/11

A member of the nobility who was in authority, the Duke of Lauderdale, also passed an Act in Council on 26 April 1676, decreeing a penalty of £50 on any heritor who should allow a conventicle to assemble on his lands. One of the well known field preachers decided that the best reply Covenanters might make was to hold a conventicle on the duke's land for the reason that "it was but fair that the author of so oppressive an act should be first to suffer under it." (23) As a result of this, 'on the next Sabbath a conventicle was held on the Blue Cairn in Laudermoor with (it is said) about four thousand people in attendance and many more were held on that site with William Veitch often presiding.' (24)

Claims have been made for very large numbers attending these events. For example a conventicle was held at Skeoch Hill in 1678 at which over six thousand are said to have attended and three thousand received communion. If one stands back and takes a hard look at these numbers, they do not seem feasible in the spaces where the services were held. Also, being realistic, if many people were travelling round the countryside it would seem very likely that they would have been seen either by dragoons or by others who would have almost certainly have reported such happenings to the authorities. Those who have described the situation seem likely to have been trying to emphasise the fact that the outdoor conventicles were well attended. They would have a motive of trying to enlist further support for the Covenanting movement as well as painting a picture of extensive support for the cause. If one looks back to Jesus' time, most of his work took place out of doors either in open countryside or by the side of the Sea of Galilee. The story of the feeding of the five thousand makes a similar claim and the gospel writers may well have been trying to convey the message that Jesus' meetings were attended by a lot of people. In the case of the Covenanters there just is insufficient room in places such as Skeoch Hill for several thousand people to gather and hear what was being said at one time. Also the overall population of Scotland was not that large at the time. One can only speculate how many attended – perhaps several hundred would be more realistic.

(23) Barr, J. *The Scottish Covenanters*, 193

(24) Barr, J. *The Scottish Covenanters*, 193

Other conventicles were held on Skeoch Hill in the parish of Irongray, Corsack Wood and Castle, near Dalry, Moniaive, Kirkbride near Durisdeer, Balmaclellan, Dalscairth Hill near to Troqueer, Glengaber near Holywood, Glencairn, Drumclog and Marscalloch near Carsphairn.

According to Wodrow, ‘...it was the radicals who held private meetings to pray, sing psalms and discuss the state of religion’ (25), but this was not necessarily so, as it seems that most covenanters who wanted to worship outside their parish churches would hold such meetings. ‘Private meetings were forbidden except for religious exercise in families, which might be joined by any visitor eating or lodging with the family, but no other stranger.’ (26)

How family meetings could be regarded as political is difficult to understand. Their main aim was to worship and discuss aspects of their faith, but it can seem difficult to separate politics from religion. If they were attended, despite government edict, they were ipso facto political.

Ryrie points out that the devotional life of a Protestant was centred on prayer, which was ‘...usually unscripted or else biblically based’ (27) Prayer often included the singing of psalms and other religious music. However there were occasions when singing was not practical. For example a conventicle being held overnight would definitely attract unwanted attention. In addition, the Protestant tradition involved private and group study, a tradition which also valued reading, learning, thinking and discussing or arguing with others. As members of the Church of Scotland they would also value the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. Conventicles would facilitate the continuance of such observance outwith the church buildings. As Ryrie indicates, some congregations ‘gathered irregularly in noble households.’ (29) Some of these included Roger Gordon of

(25) Wodrow, R. *Select Biographies*, i 144

(26) *Register of the Privy Council*, 1622-5, vii 612-13

(27) Ryrie, A. *Congregations, Conventicles and the nature of Early Protestantism, Past and Present*, 191(Oxford, 2006) 52

(29) Ryrie. A. *Congregations, Conventicles and the nature of Early Protestantism*, 75

Earlston Anna, Countess of Wigtown, Blair of Dunskey, McClellan of Barscobe and Kirkwood of Sanquhar. Ryrie provides much information on how and where people met to worship and pray, also describing some of the activities which made up privy kirks in Edinburgh and Dundee. ‘These were essentially groups of individuals who formed a congregation with all the attributes of a self-regulating church, but which operates in secret.’ (30) He also emphasises that ‘the privy kirk has an established, indeed central place in accounts of the growth of Scottish Protestantism.’ (31)

However by the time of the Covenanters, congregations were tending to meet elsewhere because many of their ministers had been outed. In the south west of Scotland there was strong feeling among the clergy that after they were evicted from their parishes, their ministry should continue and, initially, there seems to have been no shortage of those who were willing to preach and minister the sacraments at conventicles and there were many parishioners who were willing to participate. Ministers such as Alexander Peden of Glenluce, Gabriel Semple of Kirkpatrick Durham, John Blackadder of Troqueer, Robert Archibald of Dunscore, John Welsh of Irongray, John Semple of Carsphairn and others were among those who came forward to minister. After the restoration of Charles II, the outdoor meetings held by covenanters became very large by comparison and might continue over a weekend. The government did not believe one crucial factor, which was often declared by the Covenanters namely that the arms they carried were defensive. The covenanters were driven to carry arms as a means of self defence in case they were attacked by dragoons during a conventicle. The government believed that Covenanters might be heading to create an armed rebellion. Their fear was not unreasonable. This was why the government took steps to increase the number of armed dragoons patrolling the area as well as arresting more individuals, who were suspected of taking part in conventicles The Privy Council passed an Act in 1663 against the Galloway ministers

(29) Ryrie, A. Congregations, Conventicles and the nature of Early Protestantism, 75

(30) Ryrie, A. Congregations, Conventicles and the nature of Early Protestantism ,46

(31) Ryrie, A. Congregations, Conventicles and the nature of Early Protestantism, 47

“who, contrary to the order of council...do continue at their former residence and churches, but in manifest contempt thereof, and contrary to the indulgence granted them by the late act, dated December 23 last, do yet persist in their wicked practices, still labouring to keep the hearts of the people from the present government in church and state, by their pernicious doctrine.” (32)

The ministers listed in the Act included:

Archibald Hamilton of Wigtown, William Maitland of Whithorn, Robert Richardson of Mochrum, George Wauch of Kirkindair, Alexander Ross of Kirkowan, Alexander Fergusson at Sorbie, Alexander Peden of Glenluce, Patrick Peacock at Kirkmabreck, William Erskine at Garston, Adam Kay at Borg, Robert Ferguson at Boitti, Samuel Arnot at Tongland, John Wilkie at Twynam, James Buglos at Crossmichael, Thomas Warner at Balmaclellan, John Cant at Kells, Adam Alison at Balmagie, John McMichan at Dalry, John Duncan at Dundrennan and Rerick, Thomas Thompson at Parton and Alexander Smith at Cowend and Siddock.” (33)

This list is included to show what strength of feeling there was in the church community of clergy in south west Scotland against the Acts that had been passed, although not all these ministers necessarily became involved in leading conventicles. But, in the emotive language of A.S. Morton, ‘The outed ministers were not silent, nor did they desert their flocks. They became if possible, more faithful and zealous in their work, and showed a firmness of principle and contempt of suffering which greatly endeared them to their people. (34) For example, Gabriel Semple was outed from his parish of Kirkpatrick Durham in 1662. ‘He went to stay with Neilson, the laird of Corsack. Initially he preached in Corsack Castle, in 1688, but, when the space ran out, he took to the garden. Soon that became too small, so Semple went into an open field.’ (35)

The laws which were brought in to outlaw conventicles were severe and drove worshippers to protect themselves. As a result congregations were soon guarded by bands of determined and even desperate men. Inevitably the conventicles had led to persecution and eventually even harsher measures were introduced such as the ‘Bishops’ Drag-net’ (1663), which forced attendance at services at the local

(32) *Register of the Privy Council*, 1663, 338-339

(33) *Register of the Privy Council*, 1663, 396-397

(34) Morton, A.S. *Galloway and the Covenanters*, Garner, (Paisley, 1914) 100

(35) Morton, A.S. *Galloway and the Covenanters*, 100

parish church run by curates. Non attendance was reported by the curates and fines imposed. Other measures included: the activities of the Court of High Commission (from 1664), which put restraints on the press and imposed fines of £20 per month for people who ‘frequented not the established worship. Clergy who refused to comply with the court were deprived of their living. The Assertory Act (1669) set up the king’s supremacy over the Church. Through it a test was put to Scots Episcopal clergy, which tied them to maintain all the king’s privileges. It was granted by Act of Parliament. Clergy were aware of the snare and how Christian courage was needed to refuse the test. Some were deprived of their livings. A third measure was Letters of Intercommuning (1675) which empowered magistrates of several boroughs to seize any persons who were or should in future be intercommoned. All subjects were forbidden to intercommune with, harbour or relieve any of the persons who should be intercommoned. These measures mark the stages of government determination to stop conventicles from taking place. The action against those who attended conventicles was in the hands of officers and troopers whose task was the elimination of the covenanters. They had little regard for life and even less for piety.

In 1666 proceedings were taken against a number of outed ministers (probably at the instigation of the Bishop of Galloway) for holding conventicles and baptising and preaching against the law in Church and State. In 1670 further emphasis against unlawful meetings was made in an Act which stated that ‘...no outed ministers who are not licensed by the council... presume to preach, expound Scripture or pray in any meeting except in their own houses and those of their own family. (36) Anybody found to have contravened this Act was likely to be imprisoned until they agreed not to offend again under penalty of 5000 merks. The same Act made magistrates of royal burghs liable for any conventicle held within their burgh to such fines as they thought fit to impose. This was ‘to endure for only the space of three years, unless his majesty should think fit to continue them longer.’ (37)

(36) *Records of the Parliaments of Scotland, 1670/7/11*

(37) *Records of the Parliaments of Scotland, 1670/7/11*

A further Act was passed in 1672 against keepers of conventicles and withdrawers from public worship. It stated:

‘his majesty, considering the slow progress that has been made in putting these acts into execution for the time bygone, does therefore with advice aforesaid statute and command that all sheriffs, stewards, lords of regalities and their deputies and magistrates of burghs with their respective jurisdictions, shall from henceforth be careful in putting these acts into due execution, against keepers of conventicles and withdrawers from public worship.’ (38)

Each sheriff, steward, baillie and magistrate was expected to submit returns of numbers being proceeded against annually to his majesty’s council. Failure to do so incurred a fine of 500 merks. This indicates the continued pressure from the king and the authorities to end the holding of conventicles and to stop people from withdrawing from worshipping in their local parish church. Indeed the pressure seems to have become more extreme in proportion to the increased number of proclamations that were issued.

D.E. Easson expressed surprise that parish records in the form of Session Minutes in some places were ‘kept perfunctorily’, (39) and he found a far fuller record of covenanting episodes in the Lothian parish of Carrington. He describes the ministry of James Kilpatrick from his ordination in 1660 to his outing in 1662 because he refused to be ordained by the bishop of Edinburgh. He was replaced in 1663 by Mr. John Collier, who had come from Firth and Stenness in Orkney.

After a short time in the parish, a second minister had to deal with indiscipline within his congregation including a woman who used bad language towards her neighbour. The kirk session decreed that the woman should be put in the joughs, stand in them at the kirk door, until the minister was in the pulpit, after which the woman should acknowledge her crime before the congregation on her knees. The woman’s husband threatened that, if any person should come to take his wife to the joughs, he would attack them. As a result of this, both the woman

(38) *Records of the Parliaments of Scotland, 1672/6/51*

(39) Easson, D.E. *A Scottish Parish in Covenanting Times*, 103

and her husband were ordered to be put into the pit in Dalhousie Castle until they were prepared to obey the kirk session. In the end the woman stood in the joughs (which were metal collars attached to a wall) as ordered and appeared in public before the congregation.

It appears that the minister was also having some personal problems, although these are not described. The presbytery was summoned to Edinburgh to meet the bishop, along with the minister. He was ordered to disentangle himself from anything which might be an impediment to him in the discharge of his duties. The records then show that the laird held a conventicle at his house and that the elders of the kirk left, bringing about the collapse of the system, as the ministry of the parish was taken over by Covenanting preachers.

As a result, a number of conventicles took place. One of these was described as being held in ‘James Willson’s barn... had a great multitude without dours,’ whose preacher was Mr. James Riddel. (40) The minister of the parish seems to have been blamed for allowing other preachers to be present in the area including John Blackadder, James Welsh and Mr. Selcraig. ‘The minister sent his precentor with a letter to a George Johnstone, one of the preachers and outed minister of Newbattle “desiring him not to meddle with his parish.” (41) This appeared to have no effect, as a record reads ‘Of all the parish there was but 18 persons in the kirk and these few that did come were mocked by the rest as they came through Carrington’ (42) The reader and schoolmaster were evicted from the church and the school house. It also reports that John Blackadder stayed at a local house after preaching at conventicles held at Ancrielaw (to the west of Carrington) the previous Friday.

As oppression worsened the locations of conventicles became increasingly remote in rugged landscapes, such as Carsphairn, Lochenkit, Kirkconnel, Glenvogie and the Lorg (Ken Valley) For example, in 1678 the tax known as the

(40) Easson, D.E. *A Scottish Parish in Covenanting Times*, 103

(41) Easson, D. E. *A Scottish Parish in Covenanting Times*, 118

(42) Easson, D.E. *A Scottish Parish in Covenanting Times*, 120

‘cess’, mentioned earlier, was introduced to pay for the maintenance of troops to suppress them. The more the oppression increased the more people attended conventicles carrying arms, for their own protection.

The incident of a cooper being examined regarding a baptism at a conventicle is recorded. When the minister, Mr Collier was asked to take the Test in 1684, he refused and, as a result, his career at Carrington ended. A successor was found and appointed, but only for a short time. Easson poses the question as to whether Covenanting enthusiasm had waned or gone underground. He notes that ‘...somewhat later in 1691 the parishioners (with a few exceptions) were coming back to the deserted kirk.’ (43) On 25 May 1695 an Episcopalian incumbent, David Lammie was deprived of his living for failing to read the proclamation of Estates regarding the cessation of obedience to James. Easson describes accounts of conventicles taking place in the area near to Carrington, which is not strictly in the south west of Scotland, but it gives a clear picture of the happenings similar to those in that region. Land was covered in woodland and the river valleys were havens. Communications in the south west tended to be very poor with few maintained roads. People and goods tended to use paths for pack horses. It was difficult for horses and cavalry to follow a quick footed Covenanter in these conditions. In the hills of Dumfries and Galloway the moors are still quite desolate in places. In conventicle times the hills were inaccessible except for those with local knowledge, such as shepherds.

In *Peden*, Johnson describes the countryside in these words:

‘There is a distinct region in the south west of Scotland, from Upper Clydesdale and Nithsdale to the Solway, a land of intricate rolling hills, clear streams, remains of ancient forests with, on the one hand, green smiling valleys that stretch to the sea and at their heads, on the mountain summits, breadths of waste moorland and labyrinths of bog and morass.’ (44)

In the early days it was likely that clandestine meetings might not be discovered, but, in later times there was more chance of discovery because spies

(43) Easson, D.E. *A Scottish Parish in Covenanting Times* 123

(44) Johnson, *Peden*, Missionary Trust reprint (1988) 65

and informers might reveal locations of meetings and dates to the authorities. At first some of the ousted ministers tried to carry on their pastoral work in private homes, barns and any other buildings that were available. Some stayed in their manses until they were forcibly removed. Others were lucky enough to receive the support of influential patrons who shielded them from the authorities for a while. As the size of the congregations grew, indoor meetings became increasingly difficult so they spread to more open spaces and farmers' fields. However, the increased visibility of the meetings drew comments from those who did not share the views of the conventiclers such as magistrates, curates and others. Division also arose between the ousted ministers and the curates who replaced them. In some cases the congregation wanted to remain loyal to 'their minister'.

In some places, such as Irongray and Kirkcudbright, there was resistance to the new ministry by local women who held demonstrations and tried to prevent the curate taking up his post. The penalties for being involved in such events became increasingly harsh. In Irongray 'a party of soldiers was beaten off with stones by a group of women.' (45) The lady who led them was initially sentenced to be banished to Barbados, but the authorities relented. Anderson states that 'at field meetings women were often present.' (46) These actions sometimes led to domestic strife and occasionally women were known to leave home rather than comply with the courts. In later years if the zeal of the ladies continued, the government began to heavily fine the husbands whose wives refused to attend church. Punishment could be very severe indeed, such as the case of Sir William Scot of Harden, whose wife refused to hear the curate. As a result 'He was imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle. He paid £15,000 and appealed to the Privy Council for leniency, but achieved nothing. His wife still refused to listen to the curate, so she left home and moved to Newcastle. (47)

(45) Anderson, J. *Ladies of the Covenant*, Redfield, (New York, 1851) xxiv

(46) Anderson, J. *Ladies of the Covenant* xxv

(47) Anderson, J. *Ladies of the Covenant* xxv

Between being outed from their parishes in 1662 and April 1666 there were several ministers in Galloway and Nithsdale who continued preaching more or less openly. They were supported by local landowners. One of these was John Neilson of Corsack who gave shelter to Gabriel Semple and John Welch. The former had a large congregation of followers to whom he felt obliged to minister on every possible occasion. Neilson suffered for helping these ministers when the curate, Colin Dalglish informed on him. Some conventicles were so well attended that accommodation became a problem. For example, on one occasion, John Blackadder reported that ‘...some of the branches on the trees in Dundonald Wood were broken from the weight of persons climbing up to hear him. However, Blackadder was forced to seek shelter elsewhere.’ (48)

As a result of the Pentland Rising, conventicles tended to be held more secretly. The area of Kelso and Jedburgh was the home of Henry Hall of Haughshead, who became an intermediary between the ministers and the untaught villagers. Hall was forced to leave his estate in 1665, but he later farmed in Northumberland.

‘John Welch, although outed from his parish of Irongray, continued to preach there at least once a week and those who frequented his conventicles convened together and were armed with swords and pistols to protect themselves against possible attack.’ (49) Welch is reputed to have baptised many children. At one point there was a bounty of £500 on his head. This was a very large amount of money in those days, so it emphasises how much the authorities wanted to arrest him and to have him out of the way.

The Government was well aware of the incidence of conventicles and had arranged for Sir James Turner to be placed in Dumfries and to deal with them. ‘Amongst those who attended these was Elizabeth Cunningham, Lady Hilderston, who was fined 400 merks for allowing a conventicle to be held in her house,’ (50)

(48) Wodrow, R. *A History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, vol. 4 41

(49) Blackader, J. and Crichton, A. *Memoirs of the Revd. J Blackader*, 138

(50) Horne and Hardie, *In the Steps of the Covenanters*, 81

but unfortunately Horne and Hardie do not include the finer detail of this family. The latter name five individuals who were fined for being at the same meeting and one of these was imprisoned until he named the presiding minister. Horne and Hardie emphasise that ‘Not all of the sites (in their book) are easy to find... but usually they are in a small hollow with natural surrounding heights providing look-out posts to enable the worshippers an easy escape if troopers happened to spot these meetings.’ (51) An example of such a site is the one on Skeoch Hill in Kircudbrightshire, where there are Communion stones still in situ. There is a photograph of this site on page 108.

One of the initial Acts was passed to have effect for three years in the hope that ‘his majesty’s subjects will give such cheerful obedience to the law.’(52), but it appeared to have little or no effect and it was renewed in 1672. Punishments became increasingly more severe. Initially those caught taking part in conventicles could be ‘imprisoned under pain of 5000 merks not to do the like thereafter.’ (53) People from humble backgrounds would be fined according to their means. For example some individuals were fined ¼ of their yearly rent. Each tenant who was labouring on the land might be fined £25 Scots, a cottar might pay £12 Scots and a serving man 1/4 of the yearly fee. A master or mistress who hosted a conventicle was likely to be fined double what they might pay for being present. A later Act doubled these fines. An Act of 1681 made ‘landlords liable to pay the fines of their tenants, to present them to justice or to move them off the ground’ (54) and showed how determined the king and the authorities were to stop conventicles from taking place. On the other hand they showed how much the ordinary population felt really strong about their faith and were as determined to persevere in the holding of conventicles. Ultimately the punishment for taking part in a conventicle could be death.

(51) Horne and Hardie, *In the Steps of the Covenanters*, 79

(52) *Records of the Parliaments of Scotland*, 1681/7/12

(53) *Records of the Parliaments of Scotland*, 1681/7/12

(54) *Records of the Parliaments of Scotland*, 1681/7/17

Through their work, the preachers set out to achieve two objectives: firstly to keep alive the spirit of resistance to tyranny and, secondly they carried on an evangelical campaign. There is no objective evidence as to how successful they were. One of Welsh's colleagues was Richard Cameron. He was a native of Falkland in Fife and, after university he became precentor of his local Episcopal Church and a teacher in the local school. During this time he listened to a Covenanting minister in the fields. As a result of this he became a convert and moved to Roxburgh, where he became a tutor to Sir William Scot's family. Whilst there, he went to listen to John Welsh in Teviotdale. He was ordained into the Covenanting ministry and persuaded to go to Annandale where he preached in a field. though exact location is not known. He spent a while in Holland preaching in the Scots Kirk in Rotterdam. He was then persuaded to gather other field preachers and return to Scotland. Here he worked very hard in Clydesdale and Ayrshire, preaching at many conventicles. He is remembered for an act in Sanquhar. It was the *Sanquhar Declaration*. The document called for the deposition of Charles. The group had cast off the authority of their monarch. Shortly after this event Richard was out on Ayrsmoss, which is a bleak stretch of mossy ground extending through the parishes of Sorn, Auchinleck and Muirkirk in Ayrshire when a group of dragoons was seen approaching. The Covenanters prayed for protection, but they were outnumbered. Nine of them were killed, including Richard and Michael Cameron.

Ruth Richens describes two decades in the life of a Covenanting family. Archibald, a member of one of the families was executed in Glasgow in 1684 after being found guilty of being present at the battle of Bothwell Bridge. He was one of a family from the parish of Lesmahagow who originated from a farm close by the village of Crossford near Lanark. Many families were tenant farmers and there was little if any social mobility. As Richens points out 'They were people whose learning was centred on the Bible and the sermons they heard.'(55)

The family were concerned about the possibility of members of the Highland Host being quartered on them. The farm had been in the ownership of

(55) Richens, R. *The Stewarts of Underbank*, Scottish Historical Review, 1985, vol LXIV, 2, 107

the Duke of Hamilton for some time and he was suspicious of the motives behind employing the Highland Host, ‘deploring the hardships endured by those who had troops quartered on them.’ (56)

The Duke believed in supporting his tenants and also that peace was best served by allowing freedom of worship. He was cited for not suppressing field conventicles and was annoyed at his sheriff depute because he plundered tenants elsewhere for religious nonconformity. By the standards of the time, the Duke might be described as lenient and Richens believed that his wife was probably a moderating influence on him. Most of the Stewart family seem to have been loyal Covenanters and had witnessed the preaching of Donald Cargill in the woods at Underbank in 1681. After Cargill’s execution, a General Correspondence of the Praying Society was set up in a remote farm near to where the family lived, to plan a march on Lanark in 1682 when the Test Act was burned. Most of the individuals who were involved in this were ferried across the Clyde by boat. The parish was near to the battle sites of Drumclog and Bothwell Bridge. Richens paints a picture of how a Covenaning family coped with the difficulties which were thrown at it during a very trying time for those whose Christian faith was important to them.

G. D. Henderson indicates that ‘the conventicle attracted not merely the most devout and strictest of the Presbyterians, but others who were drawn by the excitement and glamour, the secrecy and the risk, the novelty and picturesqueness modern revivalistic meetings. Some attended out of mere curiosity, going with the crowd, at times even unaware who was preaching. Prisoners before the Privy Council made such claims as: “it was out of simplicity he went there” “went only out of curiosity”; out of ignorance and promises never to go to any such meeting hereafter” (57)

Many prisoners wasted away in appalling conditions in prison, whilst others were deported to plantations. There was a stage when shooting on sight

(56) Richens, R. *The Stewarts of Underbank* , 108

(57) Henderson, G.D. *Religious Life in 17th Century Scotland*, 180

tended to be the rule. Some of the sufferers might well have been extremists, some of the preachers may well have been carried away by their enthusiasm and believed that they were inspired by the word of God. ‘Some may have been stupid and deluded, but others were simple, honest souls only concerned for the peace that passes understanding, rejoicing to suffer for Christ’s sake’. (58)

It was the political side which concerned those in authority. The government position was that punishment was for breach of the law and the main offences were treason. Conventicles were looked upon as ‘seminaries of treason’ (59). In some ways this was not an unreasonable point of view.

There was a body of intelligent and well informed ladies, such as wives of lairds and of the nobility who expressed strong disapproval to interference with their worship. The wives of Adam Gunnoquhen, Jon Halliday, John Mc Staffin James Huntar, Alexander McClean, Alexander Keuchtoun, Jon Carsan, Alexander McKy and Samuel Carmont were involved in a riot in Kircudbright, when they and others demonstrated against the installation of a curate to replace an ousted minister. Two of the men, McStaffin and McClean were ordered by the Lords of Council to ‘present their wives before the Council’ (60) whilst the men were held in the Edinburgh tollbooth. James Huntar did not appear and was treated for contempt of court. Some of these women allegedly attended conventicles. ‘We find them, in every station of life, maintaining their fidelity to their conscientious convictions in the midst of severe sufferings.’ (61) The king and authorities were more and more determined that a stop should be put on the holding of conventicles.

(58) Henderson, G.D. *Religious Life in 17th Century Scotland*, 182

(59) Henderson, G.D. *Religious Life in 17th Century Scotland*, 183

(60) Anderson, J. *Ladies of the Covenant*, xxii

(61) Anderson, J. *Ladies of the Covenant*, xxiii

Chapter 4

Some Covenanter Sermons and the Societies

One way of ascertaining the fervour of the Covenanters is to examine some of the sermons which were preached. Most of these were not recorded, as any written material might fall into the hands of the dragoons or other opponents of the Covenanters and be used in evidence against them. However there are some sermons which have been published and these will be examined below.

Although they are not strictly sermons, Samuel Rutherford wrote a number of letters to encourage his readers in their faith. In the letters he wrote while ‘...confined to Aberdeen and inhibited from all public ministry.’ (1) Samuel Rutherford tries to be positive and encouraging to his readers. Using verses from the Psalms he talks about the Troubled Soul and uses examples from his own experiences to help others not to feel depressed about the situation in which they find themselves. He tells his readers to ‘Hold fast Christ in the dark ... believe in a patient on waiting and believing in the dark. Ye must learn to swim and hold up your head above the water, even when the sense of His presence is not with you to hold up your chin.’(2)

Rutherford talks about Christ not always being present in a person’s life, but he encourages his readers to resist any temptations which come along. As he points out ‘Sometimes Christ has an errand elsewhere.’ (3) In another letter Rutherford talks about the Way of Peace and he refers to Jesus as a Nail hung in a secure place. He encourages his readers to hang on and depend on Jesus, for they will ‘find sweet security in dependence on Him, since the weight of heaven and earth, of redeemed saints and confirmed angels, is upon His shoulders. Alexander Peden has been referred to frequently in this study. He is described by James Dodds as

(1) Smith, H., (ed). *Extracts from the letters of Samuel Rutherford*, Scripture Truth Publications, (Crewe 2008) 21-22

(2) Smith, H. (ed) *Extracts from the letters of Samuel Rutherford*, 21

(3) Smith, H., (ed). *Extracts from the letters of Samuel Rutherford*, 25

‘the sage, the humorist, the rhapsodist, the devout believer and mystic.’ (4)

Peden appears to some people to have been ‘some obscure, ranting vagrant, half-crazed non-descript.’ But on the other hand he was just the opposite. James Dodds describes him as a gentleman (in the best sense of the word). Peden appears to have been a friend of a number of the noble families in the west of Scotland, including: the Boswells, the Campbells, the Fergusons and the Fullertons. There is no exact account of Peden’s appearance, but he seems to have been physically large with a noble and impressive countenance. James Dodds cites an individual who had conversed with Peden and describes an occasion of one of these as ‘He laid his *heavy hand* on my shoulder.’ This was to show Peden’s zeal and conviction as well as his physical appearance. After being evicted from his Glenluce parish he was a virtual outlaw, but his sermons were described as fantasia which started from a theme and running away on the impulses of the moment, but returning ever back and back upon the theme with which it began. At times Peden could be very down to earth and he bore the cares, sorrows and joys of his brethren.’ On one occasion when he was preaching he saw David Mason, a ‘religious pretender’ nearby and referred to him as the Devil’s Rattle-bag, as he was known as an informer for the dragoons. Peden is alleged to have said “We don’t want him here.” The nick name that Peden gave Mason clung to him. When Mason complained to his minister about this, but the minister told him that he had deserved it. It was given to him by an honest man.

‘He could mount in preaching to great heights – rugged to be sure, but sublime and solemn. In one sermon he spoke of the living who are yet dead; for” when God comes to call the roll of Scotland He shall find many blanks – dead ministers, dead professors, dead men and women though going on their feet There are those who “are plunging in the world” O sirs he cried will ye trust God and give him credit? If so He will help you at all your work.”(5)

Peden went on to encourage his listeners to act and save their country by renewing

(4) Dodds, J. *The Fifty Years Struggle of the Scottish Covenanters*, Edmonston and Douglas, (Edinburgh, 1861) 330

(5) Smellie, *Men of the Covenant*, Banner of Truth Trust, (Edinburgh, 1962) 465

their faith and trust in God. Three years before his death he preached to his parishioners in Genluce in 1682. His subject was the parable of the Vineyard and the husbandman who killed his eldest son. Peden began by asking his listeners ‘Now there is fruit called for from these husbandmen. What fruit is this? Ye will say. This fruit, sirs is not such fruit as you pay your rents with, as corn, hay or the like that your hearts love well. Then what fruit is this that is called for? Why it is faith and repentance, love to God and obedience to His revealed will, which ,any of you, yea the most part of you are as great strangers to as if ye had never heard this everlasting gospel preached unto you’ (6)

He was both critical and encouraging and he urged his listeners to continue with their faith and their work side by side for the sake of their country. Peden continued: “Now, people of God, What are you doing when such dreadful wrath is at hand in Scotland this day? He is not worth his room in Scotland that prays not half his time to see if he can prevent the dreadful wrath that is at the door, coming on our poor mother-land. O sirs ye must pray ploughing, harrowing, reaping, and at all your other labours – when ye are eating and drinking, going out and coming in, and at all your other employments. It is God that makes heaven pleasant; it is communion that makes heaven. Do ye long to be there, people of God?” (7)

Later in the sermon Peden asks “Where is the Church of God in Scotland, sirs this day? It is not among the great clergy. I will tell you where the church of God is. It is wherever a praying young man or woman is at a dyke- side in Scotland; that’s where the Church is. A praying party will go through the storm. But many of you in this countryside know not these: the weight of the broken Church in Scotland never troubles you. The loss of a cow, or two or three beasts, or an ill market day, goes nearer your hearts than all the troubles of the Church of God in Scotland ... our Lord will be your company Himself... He will be with those of you who resolve to follow him in this stormy blast that is blowing upon his poor

(6) Dodds, J. *The 50 Years struggle of the Scottish Covenanters*, Edmonston and Douglas, (Edinburgh, 1886) reprinted Michigan 2010 340

(7) Dodds, J. *The 50 Years struggle of the Scottish Covenanters*, 340

Church in Scotland at this day.’ (8)

What is Peden trying to say to his listeners? He seems to be encouraging them to bring their faith into everything they do in their daily lives, whether they are out in the fields or indoors. Wherever individuals are, that is where the church really is. The future of the church is in their hands and they need to be fully aware of that. People need to keep working at their appropriate tasks, but they also need to be aware that God is with them in all that they undertake. The church is all round them and they need to ensure that it continues as it is and is not changed into something that is alien to the people’s wishes. As with most Presbyterian sermons, this was a long one and it shows how Peden wanted his listeners to pray and to look after the Church of Scotland and not let it be destroyed by the king and his ministers. Peden and other ministers often used the Psalms. There is an instance of him using Psalm 32 and repeating verse seven:

Thou art my hiding place,
Thou shalt
From trouble keep me free,
Thou with songs of deliverance
About shalt compass me

This is reported to have happened early one morning when he went up the side of a nearby burn to pray. He added further words of his own to comfort his companions:

“These and the following sweet lines I got at the burn side this morning and we’ll get more tomorrow, and so we’ll get daily provision. God was never behind with any that put their trust in him, and He will not be in our common, nor none who needily depends on him; so we will go on in His strength making mention of his righteousness, and of His only.” (9)

(8) Cameron, *Peden the Prophet*, Blue Banner, Edinburgh 1996 10

(9) Cameron, *Peden the Prophet*, 18

On another occasion when he sensed that the end of his life was near, Peden preached with the following words:

‘My Master is the rider, and I’m the horse. I never love to ride but when I find the spurs. I know not what I have to do among you this “night”. He wished it might be for their good, for it would be the last. “There are some things I have to tell you this night, and the first is this. A bloody sword, a bloody sword, a bloody sword for thee, O Scotland, that shall pierce the hearts of many. The second is this: Many miles shall ye travel, and shall see nothing but desolation and ruinous wastes in thee, O Scotland. Again: many a conventicle has God had in thee, O Scotland, but ere long, God shall have a conventicle that will make Scotland tremble. God send forth a Welwood, a Kid, and a King, a Cameron and a Cargill, and others to preach to thee; but ere long, God shall preach to thee by fire and sword. God will let none of these men’s words fall to the ground, that He sent forth with a commission in His name: He will not let one sentence fall to the ground, but they shall have a sure accomplishment to the sad experience of many.’(10)

After the sermon, Peden said in prayer

“Lord, Thou hast been both good and kind to old Sandy through a good tract of time and given him many years in Thy service, which have been but as so many months: but now he is tired of the world, and hath done all the good in it that he will do; let him win away with the honesty he has, for he will gather no more.” (11)

Peden appears to be saying that conditions will change in Scotland for the good of the Covenanters. They may well have had some inspiring preachers but God will implement change in the Covenanters’ favour.

Another Covenanting preacher who has left some sermons was Blackader. One of these is included in the book *The Memoirs of the Reverend John Blackader* and is centred on the text of Psalm 126 verses 1 and 2 “When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dreamed. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing.”

Blackader used the verses to illustrate the situation the Covenanters were in

(10) Cameron, T. *Peden the Prophet* 19

(11) Cameron, T. *Peden the Prophet* 19

‘It is not all lost that is in peril: a kirk may be very far casten down; and yet not destroyed; the people of God may be led into a very strong and longsome captivity, yet they may be turned back again...But there is also a time of joy and gladness to the truly godly, as ye may see in these words, for they have had some days of sorrow and affliction, and now they are beginning to get some days of joy and rejoicing.’(12)

Blackader is trying to give his listeners encouragement to persevere through the difficulties that they were experiencing and to look ahead to the future. The preacher continued with his sermon by breaking down and analysing the words of the Psalmist into phrases. He told his listeners that they have a doctrine drawn from experience -

‘they reap the fruit of joy, after the seedtime tears and therefore says the Psalmist, “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy”...the day of tears, though the days of Zion’s calamity is the Christian’s seed time; for he shall may receive double, - and if he sow much, he shall reap the more. Many of you never or will never live to see such a day, but I am sure of this, that whether ever or no ye see the return of our captivity, they who have escaped of the Lord to sow in this valley of tears shall son or syne see better days.’ (13)

Blackader went on to indicate that ‘His God’s time of delivering his people is when their power is all gone, and they have no man to plead their cause, or speak a good word for them. That is his wonderful time.’ (14)

Here he is trying to give the Covenanter listeners hope and to raise their morale. There must have been times when individual Covenanters felt depressed when they saw that it was impossible for them to continue to worship in the way they had chosen as well as making their lives uncomfortable and even unbearable. They may well have thought that their suffering and that of the Church they loved might never end.

As was stated earlier the Covenanting preachers’ sermons tended to be long and most of them seem to have been prepared to be delivered without notes

(12) Blackader, J. and Crichton, A. *The Memoirs of the Rev. John Blackader*, 315

(13) Blackadder, J. and Crichton, A. *The Memoirs of the Rev. John Blackader*, Tait, (Edinburgh, 1826) reprint Lightning Source, (Milton Keynes, 2010) 316

(14) Blackadder, J. and Crichton, A. *The Memoirs of the Rev. John Blackader* 321

which was quite an achievement in spite of the fact that the ministers concerned had received thorough training. The sermon described above continued for some time and finished with a closing section, in which Blackadder said, “I say no more at this time, but desire you to remember the words of the text, and to live in faith that the Lord will yet turn our captivity and take vengeance on his and our enemies. Follow him in the way of duty; and may the Lord give you grace to exercise patience on the promises till he come. And to him who can do it be glory and praise for ever. Amen.” (15)

The Societies

One of the developments which took place during the time in which the Covenanters were being persecuted was that of the Societies. These were groups of Covenanters who met together and were a means of supporting individuals’ spiritual lives. Horne and Hardie indicate that these groups of people were ‘widely scattered.’ (16)

The groups met together for prayer and fellowship and they produced General Correspondence which was circulated on a regular basis and this kept individuals up to date with the struggle which was taking place. Alexander Smellie referred to the homes in which these meetings took place as being “homes of earnest prayer and patient study of the Scriptures.”(17) The first such meeting took place in Logan House in the parish of Lesmahgow on December 1681 and, from then on until the revolution settlement, individuals met wherever it was safe and convenient to do so. Meetings might take place near where conventicles happened. For example there is a record of a meeting at Tala Linn in the parish of Tweedsmuir on June 15 1682.

The purpose of these meetings was to review the situation related to the Church in Scotland and this in turn was worked out along four specific lines.

(15) Blackadder, J. and Crichton, A. *The Memoirs of the Rev. John Blackader* 335

(16) Horne, A. S. and Hardie, J. B. *In the Steps of the Covenanters*, Scottish Reformation Society, (Edinburgh, 1974) 92

(17) Smellie, A. *Men of the Covenant*, Banner of Truth Trust, (London, 1962) 378

Firstly to draw up Declarations which were in fact personal statements of belief. In practice they were reaffirming the Covenanting position and applied to each situation as it arose. Secondly, rules were drawn up regarding the terms of communion, which were strictly enforced and “close communion was observed. Any individual who compromised the Covenanting position with either clergy or government was barred from taking part in the sacrament. Thirdly there was a tradition of erecting or repairing memorials to Covenanting individuals, trials or executions. This was one of the key parts of meetings. The fourth purpose of a Society meeting was to make arrangements through appointed representatives to plead for the Covenanting cause in other lands such as Holland.

A number of young men had been sent to Holland to train for the ministry and a number of ministers had been forced to flee to Holland as exiles. Some ministers had safe passages from Holland to Scotland arranged in order to return and minister to the Covenanters who remained in Scotland. Patrick Walker in his book *Six Saints of the Covenant* (18) details some of the rules which governed the Society meetings. These illustrate a depth of spirituality which has been forgotten. At the height of their power these groups consisted of approximately seven thousand individuals, many of whom were women. When one considers that the groups were not supposed to exceed twelve in number there must have been many groups around.

There were twenty-three rules. The following are included to give a flavour: (19)

1. ‘It is the duty of private Christians to meet together for their mutual edification, by prayer and conference.
2. There (should be) few more than ten or twelve in a society.

(18) Walker, P. and Fleming, D.H. *Six Saints of the Covenant* , Hodder, (London, 1901) 83-87

(19) Barr, J. *The Scottish Covenanters*, J. Smith, (Glasgow, 1947) 254

3. When any society society increaseth much above ten or twelve, it is fit that they divide themselves in two.
4. That none be invited or upon his own desire be brought into any society but by the advice and consent of all the society.
5. If one society or more desire to set apart a day for humiliation and prayer let it be done by grave deliberation and by correspondence with other societies.
6. In all their debates, reasonings and actings, one with another let them be conducted in a brotherly way.

The groups have been criticized for their narrowness of approach, but, as James Dodds has indicated, in their ‘Informatory Vindication’, they established a sound foundation for Christian Fellowship.’ They dealt with the relations of the Societies with foreign churches. It was alleged that the Societies had ‘...taken the power of church government into their hands and had already entered into relations with churches in Holland, Helvetia and Geneva.’(20)

The answer of the Societies was ‘to declare their adherence to all the sworn and received principles of the Church of Scotland and our wrestling against the current times’ defections: and also to represent to foreign churches their sad, broken and low case, to the end they might commiserate and help them by their prayers and otherwise; and that they (the Societies) might know in what state affairs were among these churches abroad- which things might conduce both to their own advantage, according to their places and power, and to that of the foreign Churches, all strengthening the interest of Christ the against the blows, underminings and cruelties of the adversary.’(21)

The *Informatory Vindication* (22) is a long and complicated document, but it set out to define the position of the Societies as a platform of Christian fellowship, which no other sect or denomination could have drawn up at the time. They seemed to anticipate the Revolution so they also prepared for modern

(20) Barr, J. *The Scottish Covenanters*, 255

(21) Barr, J. *The Scottish Covenanters*, 256

(22) www.truecovenanter.com/societies

missionary societies

There is insufficient space in this study to go into more details, but the above outline gives an idea of what was covered.

Chapter 5

Re-enactment and Memorialisation

Since the end of the Covenanting period, conventicles have continued to be held and continue to be held for a variety of reasons. In some instances individuals have set out to remember and commemorate the dedication of those who attended conventicles.

Although they took place long after the Covenanting times, it shows that clergy were still interested in keeping the awareness of conventicles alive, as well as helping to raise money for monuments to Covenanters who had been killed in the cause of their beliefs. The first describes a sermon preached at the Martyr's Grave near to Barneywater in the parish of Girthon.

'The sermon was preached by the minister of Girthon and a collection was made for the purpose of erecting a monument to the memory of Robert Fergusson fields. The morning was wet and dreary and had every appearance to be unfavourable for the occasion. The text chosen for the occasion was from Daniel, chap. 3d, verses 17th and 18th, but he read from the 8th to the 19th verse... The service of the day terminated, collection on the spot upwards of £13; cash formerly given by Mr R. C. Fergusson, M.P. £5.'(1)

Another similar extract was published in the same year in a different newspaper. This means that there were three services to commemorate conventicles in one year. The third one took place at Auchencloy near Loch Ken, where there is a memorial. The service was reported in the *Dumfries and Galloway Courier* (2). The monument is dedicated to several Covenanters who were executed there in 1684. The service was conducted by the same minister as in the first extract. The fact that individuals could meet outside towns and villages and assemble for worship without the awareness of the local law enforcement agencies was facilitated by the terrain. The places they chose came to mean a great deal to them. This idea has been identified by Pamela Stewart and Andrew Strathern. As they pointed out in the introduction to their book 'Ethnographers

(1) Anderson, J *Ladies of the Covenant*, xxiii,

(2) *Dumfries Standard*, Dumfries, 1835

have realised from their field experiences how perceptions of and values attached to landscape encode values and fix memories to places that become sites of historical identity.’ (3)

It cannot be overemphasised that the landscape in the Galloway area of Scotland was a vital part of the Covenanters’ struggle with the kings and military authorities. The authors mentioned above make a very valid point that ‘...history is continuously in the making and remaking of ideas about place, realigning or differentiating place in relation to notions of community. Essentially...landscape provides a wider context in which notions about place and community can be situated.’ (4)

A further suggestion is made in that ‘...the sense of place and embeddedness within local, mythical and ritual landscapes is important. The senses of place serve as pegs on which people hang memories, construct meaning from events and establish ritual and religious arenas of action.’ (5) Relating the above ideas to the subject of the Covenanters and conventicles in south-west Scotland, the sense of place is very important in the events surrounding the Covenanters. For example, Dalry is still crucial to historians as the starting place of the episodes which led to the Pentland Rising and this was one of the reasons for the erection of a sculpture in memory of the Covenanters at the entrance to Dalry village in 2004. The landscape of the area is still important enough to encourage local clergy to hold services in some of the original sites.

Stewart and Strathern have further elaborated on their work by stating that

‘Landscape refers to the perceived settings that frame people’s senses of place and community. A place is a socially meaningful and identifiable place to which a historical dimension is attributed. Community refers to sets of people who may identify themselves with a place or places in terms of commonality shared values or solidarity in particular contexts.’(6)

Landscape is a horizon of perceptions which provide both a foreground

(3) Stewart, P.J. and Strathern, A. *Landscape, Memory and History*, 1

(4) Stewart, P.J. and Strathern, A. *Landscape, Memory and History* 3

(5) Stewart, P.J. and Strathern, A. *Landscape, Memory and History*,5

(6) Stewart, P.J. and Strathern, A. *Landscape, Memory and History* 4

and background in which people feel themselves to be living in their world. It can apply to rural and urban sites because they are moulded by human actions. It can often serve as a marker of continuity with the past as well as a reassurance of identity in the present and a promise for the future. The importance of landscape within the memory of the covenanters not only manifests itself in the topographical locations of the various historical events but also in the ritual traditions of conventicles. The landscape of the Glenkens was especially important during the troubled times of the Covenanters who would make full use of their local knowledge of the landscape, as it offered shelter as well as hollows in which to hold conventicles. For example, when Dr Bartholomew holds an open air service at the Lorg he is aware that the area is virtually unchanged. It connects the community to their ancestors, their land and a re-interpretation of the past and links people with a conceptual place. The nearby hollow known as the Whigs Hole (7) remains in the community's memory because of the place name, anchoring it within the period of the Covenanters, the ancestors involved and as place of activity. Relating this to the area and events of south west Scotland, the Covenanters identified places in the area with the values they all shared about the strength of their faith and their opposition to the changes the king proposed.

During and after the events when many were executed on the spot or in the various prisons, the sense of the countryside of Dumfries and Galloway being a special place became more and more set in the minds of the individuals concerned and in those of their families, successors and members of the communities. This is further emphasised by the presence of memorials, which were erected in their memory. Books are also very important in remembering the Covenanters, but thanks to some present day clergy, the importance of time and place has not been forgotten, nor have the events which took place in the seventeenth century.

(7) J.H. Thomson, *The Martyr Graves of Scotland*, Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, (Edinburgh, 1903) 115

According to Thomson, the term 'Whig' has two origins. One is derived from whig meaning '...the sour water that gathers beneath the lapped milk before it is churned...' The other meaning refers to '...all that opposed the Court...'

Several clergy have been interviewed to discover what happens and these are included below. These still arouse interest from local people, as they come to celebrate the conventicles. It has not been possible to interview any who attend, except Mrs. Aitken, but they seem to come for a variety of reasons such as curiosity, a love of history, interest in their local area as well as being aware of their faith. In many ways the landscape is unique and, without its special character, conventicles could not have been held. Skeoch Hill for example is very remote and the weather there can be very extreme and yet members of the Covenanting movement seem to have met there fairly frequently to worship. They and their ministers had all been forced to leave their churches or else accept the changes imposed by the kings. The wilderness in Scotland was not unlike that of Palestine, except that the Scottish weather was more extreme. Covenanters were well aware of the landscape situations that Jesus preached in, often to avoid Jewish authorities and Roman soldiers. In that sense the Covenanters' situation was not dissimilar, except that their adversaries were dragoons and their superiors.

In the previous chapter an attempt has been made to describe what a conventicle was and to identify where some of these took place in south west Scotland. The geography of the area of Dumfries and Galloway lent itself to the holding of conventicles in that the ministers who led them and those who attended were able to find places where these services could be held. Initially the conventicles took place undetected, but eventually those involved in carrying out the king's wishes became aware of where and when a conventicler might take place. The main primary sources are the Register of the Privy Council of Scotland and the Records of the Parliaments of Scotland. To some extent those who attended conventicles may well have seemed to be extremists, but their strong beliefs and commitment enabled their wishes for certain forms of worship to stay at the forefront of the development of the Church of Scotland and for the wishes of the Stuart kings to impose episcopacy to be denied.

The last true conventicle was held at Riskenthorpe in Selkirkshire in 1688 and was attended by James Renwick. According to J. Hogg 'when Renwick prayed that day few of his hearers' cheeks were dry. Renwick was apprehended

on February 1st 1688 in Edinburgh and later executed.’ (8) Conventicles came to an end at the end of the 17th century, but there are a number of present day clergy in the Church of Scotland who wish to remind their members of their rich heritage and, as a result, they hold services to commemorate the Covenanters. Several ministers have been interviewed to discover what happens.

When one of the ministers, Dr. David Bartholomew was appointed to the parish of Dalry, he discovered that his predecessor had re-introduced the holding of an occasional conventicle in the parish and he decided to continue this. He realised that he would need to carry out some research to familiarise himself with the concept and the content before becoming directly involved. As a result he has found some interesting information.

Dr Bartholomew was appointed minister in Dalry in 1994 and, as such, he is responsible for the parishes which make up the Glenkens (Dalry, Carsphairn, Kells and Balmaclellan.) His predecessor had held a baptism at the Holy Linn which is near to Balmaclellan, using water from the stream. (This is a site where Mr. Verner the ejected minister of Balmaclellan preached and baptised 36 children at one time in Covenanting times. (9) Dr. Bartholomew decided to follow suit and soon discovered that there was some local interest. In fact some seventy people attended, most were over fifty. Soon after this the Scottish Covenanter Memorials Association expressed an interest in erecting a new monument in the parish of Dalry. Meetings to discuss this were held in the manse and Dr. Bartholomew hosted these and led the dedication service after the Burning Bush monument had been erected in 2004. Since then a conventicle has been held every year in one of the parishes. The venues are as follows:

2005 Lorg 2006 Auchencloy 2007 Blackwater

2008 Holy Linn 2009 Marscalloch

2010 Larg Moor 2011 Dalry

(8) Hogg, J. in www.sorbie.net/covenanters.htm

(9)Horne, A S and Hardie, J.B. *In the Steps of the Covenanters*, 28

The idea behind holding these events in different places is to include all the parishes. As far as the content is concerned a copy of each of the services is included in Appendix 1. Dr. Bartholomew prefers a modern form of worship, but he appreciates the occasional one which follows the ideas of the Covenanters. He had never been to a conventicle before coming to Dalry, but he understands that conventicles held in the Ayrshire area tend to have had two hymns and psalms. He admitted to enjoying singing in worship and tends to include five items, because of this and he feels that it encourages the feeling of corporate worship. Dr. Bartholomew is unsure when the Scottish Psalter was introduced and is not aware of the existence of a list of psalms from which the Covenanters selected their favourites. He also pointed out that paraphrases were used in worship. He emphasised that singing was unaccompanied and especially at conventicles.

Dr. Bartholomew emphasised how, in the past, poor folk read their Bibles regularly at home and outside and he cited an example of a shepherd being observed reading his Bible outside and being shot on the spot by dragoons who suspected him of being a Covenanter supporter. When discussing why conventicles were important in individuals' lives, Dr. Bartholomew felt that ministers had baptised family members, preached and carried out burials as well as celebrating Communion in parishes, until the Government had ridden roughshod over ministers and people by evicting the ministers they respected and liked because they would not agree to obey the wishes of the king.

Dr. Bartholomew expressed the opinion that the people who lived in Galloway had tended to be strongly independent and, when soldiers were sent to bring them to order, the soldiers probably threw their weight around without being found out because they were away from places where they were supervised. He also expressed caution that in the twenty-first century individuals tended to romanticise the situation in which conventicles were held.

Dr. Bartholomew indicated that he felt privileged to lead a conventicle, especially the one at Auchencloy, where one had also been held in 1835 to raise money to erect a monument in memory of those Covenanters who had been

murdered there.

One of the aspects which appeals to Dr. Bartholomew in preparing for a Conventicle is the range of good vivid stories which can be told at such events and the fact that one can connect with the individuals locally. Also it is good that the places where Conventicles were held, such as Skeoch Hill are still in existence. Dr. Bartholomew revealed that he had been to Earlston Chapel, where earlier Covenanters, such as Alexander Peden had met for mutual support and quiet worship and reflection. This and other sites, like Lorg in the Ken Valley, help 21st century people to imagine and appreciate the conditions in which Covenanters met and worshipped. In a recent conventicle at the Lorg, Dr. Bartholomew felt that the words of Psalm 23 had a special significance for those who attended with the surroundings of the river Ken flowing nearby.

Discussing the Covenanters and the effect their actions had on the Church of Scotland Dr. Bartholomew expressed the opinion that they had helped the Presbyterian spirit. They had stood firm for their principles that Jesus Christ was the head of the Church and not the king. Dr. Bartholomew felt positive about the future of Conventicles in the area. He said that Kirkconnel had held more than the Dalry area, but there had been one in Wigtown and Drumclog recently.

A second minister who was contacted was the Revd. Christine Sime, whose parish is Moniaive and Dunscore. Both of these churches have links with Covenanters and Revd. Sime has held a number of Conventicles in the area. Like Dr. Bartholomew Rev. Sime has also been in her post since 1994. When she was appointed she soon discovered that there was a history of holding Conventicles locally and she wanted to continue this, although her knowledge was limited, so it was a steep learning curve for her. Fortunately there were several people who were familiar with the subject and she found them very helpful. The most recent conventicle had been held earlier in 2010 near to the Renwick monument. Unfortunately the weather was very inclement on this occasion, but fifteen individuals attended, which was very encouraging. In the tradition of the Covenanters, the parish has a policy of not cancelling an event even if the weather is bad. She has held a conventicle on Skeoch Hill at which the sacrament of Communion was celebrated. There were over fifty people present and they walked

from different directions over the hills. A sheet containing the order of service had been prepared and distributed to those who attended. She was surprised how appropriate the site was for worship and was pleased when one of the congregation who had stood on the edge of the site told her that he could hear every word of the service and, in particular, her sermon. The Rev. Sime felt very privileged to preside at this service. She pointed out that, as the site was in Irongray Parish, permission had to be sought from the parish as well as the landowner, although this presented no difficulties.

The Rev. Sime felt that landscape was very important to the Covenanters. It enabled them to hide as well as to move about in comparative secrecy. Covenanters who were local would tend to know the area, whereas the dragoons were less likely to know it. She was especially impressed with the location of Skeoch Hill and the atmosphere it provided. Rev. Sime has held conventicles at other sites in her parish area including Penpont and Ingliston Mains. She has attended one at Kirkbride which is nearer to Durisdeer parish and others at the Renwick monument in Moniaive in 1997, at the Smith Stone near Moniaive in 1998, at Alan's Cairn on Altry Hill near Tynron, in Glencairn kirkyard in 2000, in Tynron kirkyard in 2001, at Ingliston Mains near Moniaive in 2002, at Dalgarnoc (Thornhill) in 2003, at Lochenkit (Larghill, Urr parish) in 2004, at Brockhillstone Farm, Dunscore in 2005, at Dalveen Farm in 2006, Skeoch Hill in 2008 and at the Renwick Preaching Stone in 2009.

The Rev. Sime was not aware of any list of psalms used by the Covenanters. It seemed likely that they would be chosen because of their suitability for the occasion. For example, if the conventicle was held at a location in the hills, it would seem likely that Psalm 121 would be chosen. The important factor was the fact that members of the congregation would know the words of the psalm by heart and be able to join in. She believed that Covenanters felt that it was important to continue to worship in a way that was familiar to them and, where possible, to be led by their own minister or one who was familiar to them. She acknowledged that the logistics of administering communion would have been difficult in a large Conventicle, but if there were several ministers present they would share the tasks.

On the issue of continuing to hold conventicles, the Rev. Sime was very enthusiastic and she expressed her determination that they should continue. “Conventicles are an important part of our heritage. They helped to keep Presbyterianism alive. The Covenanters gave a great deal (often their lives) and we living in the 21st century need to appreciate and remember what they have done. It is also important that young people learn about them.”

The minister indicated ways in which young people might learn about the Covenanters and conventicles. She was aware that some of the local Cubs had visited the site of a Covenanter monument and were very enthusiastic about what they had learned. Through her links with the local school she hoped to convey the information to pupils there and she indicated that older youngsters might learn about the subject through such activities as the Duke of Edinburgh Award challenges. At the conclusion of the interview the Rev. Sime expressed the opinion that the Covenanters made a great deal of difference to the development of the Church of Scotland, for, without them and their efforts to keep Presbyterianism, one could not guess what might have happened.

Another minister who was contacted was Dr. Bond, whose parish, St. Michaels, is in the centre of Dumfries. The graveyard there contains a number of memorials to Covenanters and Dr. Bond holds an annual service in memory of the Covenanters usually in September, but this is a service held indoors and is not a conventicle in the true sense of the word. When Dr. Bond first came to St. Michaels he looked at all the facets of the history which are centred around St. Michael's and he tries to give each of these special links a place in the worship of the parish. In the instance of the Covenanters the service is conducted inside the church where the congregation sing psalms as well as hymns accompanied by the church organ. The service is not unlike a usual weekly service although there is a guest speaker, usually someone from the Covenanting Association (who) comes along and talks about religious freedom and tolerance and maintaining the Presbyterian heritage. The intention of this service is to continue the memory of the Covenanters in a modern manner without taking the form of a proper conventicle. St. Michael's is an urban church and it does not have sufficient open area around it for the whole congregation to gather outside. The annual

Covenanting service is an inclusive one and enables the whole congregation, often two to three hundred in number, some of whom are disabled or who have difficulty with mobility as well as babies in prams and small children. The service is held at the usual time it is likely to be attended by the usual parishioners and, hopefully, it informs people who would be otherwise uninterested or who would be unable to make the effort to attend a conventicle in the hills. Dr Bond expressed hope that there might be an interest from young people in the Covenanting topic.

A retired minister's widow, Mrs Moira Aitken was contacted and a long telephone conversation was held on November 17, 2010. Mrs. Aitken's husband had been the minister at Kirkpatrick Irongray before he died. As such he re-introduced regular conventicles at Skeoch Hill. These were well attended and this was partly due to local farmers who transported attendees by tractor over the marshy and uneven terrain. The Rev. Aitken used psalms such as 121 or a paraphrase of this which was well known by those who attended. A communion service formed part of this and those who came appreciated this. Mrs. Aitken felt that it was a privilege to attend a conventicle in a place where Covenanters had worshipped in the 17th century. Mrs Aitken also pointed out that the Covenanting Societies played an important part in keeping individuals informed about when and where a conventicle was to be held. More will be said about the Societies below.

Mrs. Aitken pointed out the important work of the Rev. Bill Scott, former minister of Durisdeer, who died in 2009. He had been the longest serving minister of the Church of Scotland and was responsible for holding annual conventicles at Kirkbride (near Enterkin) within Durisdeer parish. Enterkin is significant in Covenanter history because of a famous ambush of dragoons who were escorting covenanter prisoners to Edinburgh through the Enterkin Pass. The dragoons were ambushed by Covenanter soldiers who rescued and freed their colleagues. The Kirkbride conventicles were usually well attended.

Another member of the clergy was contacted, the Rev. Bill Hogg, who is minister of Sanquhar. He was contacted by letter initially and replied by e-mail.

(Appendix) He supplied the following information on the conventicle at Kirkbride. ‘

This takes place on the first Sunday in August and is shared by the parishes of Durisdeer and Sanquhar because the old parish of Kirkbride was divided between those two. Of course folk from other parishes do attend. We meet at the ruins of the Kirkbride Church near Coshogle farm between Sanquhar and Thornhill. The format is well-established – unaccompanied psalm singing, scripture readings and a sermon (actually some call it the ‘Kirkbride Preaching’) and a member of Durisdeer recites a locally written poem about Kirkbride which refers to the Covenanting days. Sanquhar has recently started to hold its own conventicle on the first Sunday in July – combined with a church picnic. We don’t meet at a particularly historic site but in Euchar Glen which has some Covenanting associations’. (10)

None of the clergy contacted originated from the Dumfries and Galloway area and it is only by moving into their respective parishes that they have become aware of the rich heritage of Covenanting history that underpins the Church of Scotland. It is very encouraging that each of them wishes members of their congregations to find out and experience something of what their forebears did to witness to their faith and to show their strong feelings in opposition to the plans of the kings to change the tradition of worship in the Church of Scotland. They seem to be supported by a small group of enthusiastic followers.

It is mainly due to a dedicated group of Christians who wanted to support the ministers of their respective parishes who had been expelled from their post just because they refused to have their appointment approved by a bishop, of whom most of them did not approve as a matter of principle. As Presbyterians they were more in tune with members of the local Presbytery listening to them preach and then approving the appointment. After all the congregation would be going to be ministered to by the new appointee. The ministers who were interviewed are to be commended for helping to keep alive the idea of conventicles.

(10) Hogg, B. E-mail to D.M. in Appendices 2

As Dane Love emphasises, ‘since death is one of the most significant parts of a person’s life, ever since the beginning of time man has made much of his burial customs.’(11)

Balchunas also pointed out that ‘Death comes knocking on every door and we have no choice but to mourn silently while life passes away. The possibility of death is always with us...but we turn a blind eye towards death.’(12)The covenanters never had the chance to turn a blind eye, because they were always surrounded by death, whereas we in the twenty-first century are affected by it less.

One of the most common ways of dealing with the loss of a loved one is to erect a memorial. Memorials are an important part of every culture. They allow individuals to remember a deceased loved one or an important public figure. There are many memorials to those who gave their lives during various wars. In various parts of Scotland there are memorials to remember those who gave their lives for the cause of the Covenanters. A description of some of these follows below, along with an examination of why they supported the cause.

In trying to identify with those who took up the Covenanting cause, one cannot help, but respect them for the way they denied themselves and dedicated their lives to the cause. They are also remembered for the dramatic contribution and sacrifice they made to the cause of the Covenanters. Those who were ordained may have received a stipend to live on, but that did not amount to much and their accommodation was provided by the church. If they were ousted from their parish, their accommodation and income would cease. Most of the other supporters were also from humble backgrounds and would have very little to live on, so they depended on supporting one another. A few of the nobility may have had better incomes, but they were in danger of losing these if they were arrested for being members of the Covenanting movement. The dragoons took their work and, by implication, their loyalty to the king and his followers seriously. Not only

(11) Love, D. *Scottish Kirkyards*, R. Hale, (London, 1989) 19

(12) Balchunas, V. *The importance of memorials in the grieving process*, Ezine articles.com 2011

were they dedicated to the cause of tracking down and capturing the Covenanters, but they were ruthless in the way they carried out their task. This can be borne out by an incident involving a teenager by the name of George Wood, who lived in Sorn near Ayr. Little is known about him other than the fact that he was shot by a soldier called John Reid. Two memorial stones have been erected in Sorn churchyard in memory of George Wood. The older one states: “Here lyes Gorg Wood, who was shot at Tinkhornhill, by Bloody John Reid (Trooper) for his adherence to the word of God and the Covenanted work of the Reformation. “ (13). It is unusual for a stone to include the killer’s name as well as the victim.

Wodrow records that when Reid was challenged for what he had done, the trooper replied:”He knew him to be one of the Whigs, and they ought to be shot wherever they were found.” (14) This story cannot be verified.

There are many monuments dedicated to Covenanters who gave their lives for the cause and some of these are described in more detail later in this study. All Covenanters were inspired by the past. In Archibald Johnstone’s family, where there were thirteen children, one of them is believed to have gone insane, perhaps because he took his faith too seriously. In some cases the Christian faith took over individuals’ lives completely. This was regarded by the father as being God passing judgement on his sins of ambition and pride. A reason had to be found to explain everything and divine logic needed to be used for every event from the trivial to the tragic. Covenanters took their faith and the message of the Bible very seriously and sometimes very literally. This supports a similar point made earlier by David Stevenson. Members of the Church of Scotland felt that they were coming closer to God through their worship and they had a particular regard for the way in which they practiced their Protestant faith. As a result of this there was a belief that Scottish Protestants, and especially Covenanters, were predestined for heaven by God at the beginning of time so if somebody, be they man or king, obstructed them, woe betide them.

The first of these was a man called John Brown, who was very poor

(13) Campbell, T. *Standing Witnesses*, Saltire Society, (Edinburgh 1996) 171

(14) Wodrow, R. *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, 4, 457

throughout his entire life. ‘Till the day he died he never owned much more than twenty sheep and a cow’ He lived in a small crofting cottage in Priesthill, Ayrshire and he ran a Sunday school for young people. In the summer the classes were held in a sheepfold and in the winter they met in the kitchen round a peat fire. John had a stutter and this dissuaded him from becoming a Covenanter minister. During his lifetime he met Alexander Peden, who spent a night in Brown’s cottage. One day John and his nephew went out to cut some peats, when Claverhouse and some dragoons arrived, looking for Peden. The two ran away, but they were caught and taken back to Brown’s cottage where they were interrogated in a rough manner and where the soldiers allegedly found some incriminating papers. John Brown was ordered to kneel and pray, which he did. Whilst he prayed the soldiers were ordered to shoot him, which they refused at first, but at Claverhouse’s insistence, they raised their weapons. Before he was shot, Brown’s wife appeared with two of the children. Her husband was then shot, not by the guards who took pity on the family, but by Claverhouse who shot John Brown ‘with his own hand.’ (15) Brown’s wife later buried him. Oral tradition has it that Brown’s wife consoled herself by comforting others who were in a similar position.

Another Covenanter who was active at the end of the Covenanting times was James Renwick. Born in Moniaive (16) of humble parents, Renwick was reputedly able to read the Bible at the age of six and later went to Edinburgh University, where he gained his MA degree, but refused to swear the Oath of Allegiance. This was required from all who were likely to might assume positions of authority, but those who supported the Covenanting cause refused to swear the oath. Within a short time Renwick went to Gröningen to study under John à Marck, who recommended him for ordination within six months of his having arrived. Renwick returned to Scotland to preach at conventicles. ‘He witnessed the execution of Donald Cargill in 1681 and it was this event which persuaded

(15) Wodrow, R. *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, 245

(16) Wodrow, R. *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, volume 4, 454

him to commit himself even more to the Covenanting cause.’ (17)

In 1684 he was proclaimed a traitor and rebel and an edict was issued forbidding anybody from talking to him or communicating with him in any way and no-one was allowed to supply him with food or drink or accommodation. The penalty for disobeying this was to be condemned as a criminal. In spite of this Renwick, continued his ministry and is reputed to have baptized six hundred children in a year. He soon became well known across the south west of Scotland. Renwick met Alexander Peden and was pursued by the authorities for his activities. He had several narrow escapes, but eventually he was arrested in a friend’s house in Edinburgh and, after a trial, Renwick was sentenced to death. He was twenty – six when he died. Wodrow describes him as ‘a zealous, pious and serious youth.’(18)

Renwick had also declared against the Toleration Act which permitted moderate Presbyterians to be exempt from the penalties which were applied against practicing Covenanters. Before his execution he was given several opportunities to acknowledge the king’s authority, to pay the cess collected to pay for the quartering of soldiers in villages, which he owed and to plead guilty for using defensive arms, but he refused. James Renwick was the last Covenanter to be ‘martyred’.

One has to consider how individuals like Renwick were so dedicated to their faith and so motivated to give up their lives for what they believed in. Some, like Renwick came from humble backgrounds. His father was a weaver and his mother died, giving birth to him. The parents’ motivation was something special to make them so committed to the Covenanting cause. It also highlights the compatibility of piety and humility.

All the Covenanters who have been described above were men but the women played an important part too. They suffered enough along with their families by having property and belongings confiscated. One family who were the

(17) Wodrow, R. *A History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, volume 4, 454

(18) Wodrow, R. *A History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, volume 4, 454

exception to this, were the Wilsons who lived at Glenvernoch Farm near Wigtown. Margaret Wilson was the daughter of Gilbert and she (aged eighteen) and her younger sister (aged sixteen or thirteen) along with a neighbour, Margaret MacLachlan (aged 63) was accused of having attending some conventicles. They were tried and found guilty, even though the girls were but children at the time of these battles. The sentence stated they were to be "...tyed to palisades and fixed in stand till the flood overflowed them and drowned them." Agnes, the younger was reprieved when her father agreed to pay a bond of £100 when asked by the authorities. The two Margarets are reputed to have drowned, as they refused to recant or swear the Oath of Abjuration. There is some controversy over whether they were actually drowned, as a reprieve was supposedly granted by the Privy Council, This was reported by the then sheriff of Dumfriesshire and the reprieve was allegedly issued on 30 April 1685 and the women were supposed to have been drowned on 11 May 1685. There is a record of a reprieve in the *Records of the Privy Council* for 1685-6 (19). One can only speculate as to the truth of the matter. Perhaps the paperwork for the reprieve did not reach Wigtown in time. Perhaps it did arrive and the story has become part of Scottish folklore.

Local people have erected monuments to the women both in the churchyard and in the estuary where the sentence was believed to have been carried out. In addition, as Ted Cowan points out '(Margaret McLachlan) acknowledged that the Apologetical Declaration was traitorous, tending to rebellion and sedition, and contrary to the word of God.' (20) She changed her mind and was willing to abjure. A number of heated discussions have taken place in the past between the sheriff, the Rev. Stewart, Alexander Shields and Dr. Gilbert Rule, but no firm evidence has been found to support the idea that the women were executed. In addition it should be pointed out that Agnes would have been aged 7 when the Battle of Bothwell Bridge took place and the law restricted the swearing of the oath to those over the age of sixteen.

(19) *Register of the Privy Council* (Edinburgh) 3rd Series vol. xi, 1685-6, 286, 33

(20) Cowan, E. J., 'The Covenanting Tradition in Scottish History', in Cowan, E. J and Finlay R. J. (eds.) *Scottish History*, Edinburgh University Press, (Edinburgh, 2002) 132

Another very controversial issue concerns the graves and monuments and exactly when they were erected. Indeed, ‘Some cairns may well have been erected immediately after the killings and many still bear crude, sometimes barely literate inscriptions – and very moving they are – but almost none are original.’ (21)

It would appear that many of the memorials were put in place long after the deaths. No irreverence or disrespect is intended to the memory of the individuals concerned, but neither of the women involved in the supposed execution originated from Wigtown. Margaret Wilson was from the neighbouring parish of Penningham, which is north east of Wigtown and, nearer to Newton Stewart, than to Wigtown. Whether or not the above incident took place one can never be sure, The cemetery in Wigtown and the Covenanter memorial are particularly thought provoking places and make one ponder what really attracted people to the Covenanting cause.

Another devout individual was John Nisbet, a veteran soldier who had served in the Thirty Years War and had come home to marry Margaret Law and they settled down to what at first seemed a comfortable life until 1661, when Charles caused Covenanters to rise up against his imposition of worship which was alien to most people. John was involved in the Pentland Rising and left for dead on the battlefield. It took him a year to recover from his wounds. He was involved in both the Bothwell and Drumclog battles. His wife and family were evicted from their home and they wandered around the countryside trying to avoid the soldiers, but eventually his wife died. She was buried in Stonehouse Kirkyard. John was later captured by a relation, Captain Nisbet, who was in the dragoon guards, and taken to Edinburgh where he was cruelly tortured and sentenced to hang. As he was led to the scaffold he sang the beginning of the Magnificat and the first six verses of Psalm 34. He tried to speak to the crowds, but his voice was drowned by the drumming of the soldiers.

Another noted preacher and respected minister was Samuel Rutherford. He was born in 1600 at Nisbet in Roxburghshire. No account has been given of his

(21) Cowan, E. J. The Covenanting Tradition, in Cowan, E. J and Finlay R. J. (eds.) *Scottish History*, Edinburgh University Press, (Edinburgh, 2002) 136

conversion, but it is believed that it came at the end of his college career. In 1627 Rutherford was settled as minister at Anwoth on the Solway Firth, where he ministered to a scattered rural flock. He refused to obey the instructions to minister according to Episcopacy. As a result he was summoned to appear before the bishop of Galloway at a court in Wigtown and later in Edinburgh. He, like many others, was removed from his parish and prohibited from preaching anywhere in Scotland. Rutherford was exiled to Aberdeen where he had to remain within the city walls. During his time here he wrote extensively. In 1638 he left his place of exile during an uprising against Episcopacy and returned to Anwoth. From here he moved to St. Andrews where he became Professor of Divinity. His diary tells us that "...he accepted this post on condition that he would be allowed to continue his preaching." (22) While in St. Andrews he became a representative of the Church of Scotland on the Westminster Assembly. Four years later Rutherford became principal of the New College and Rector of the University. However, persecution began to rear its ugly head under the leadership of Charles II. Rutherford was relieved of his post and summoned to appear before the next Parliament on a charge of treason. Sadly Rutherford died before he could appear before the Parliament, as his health failed him.

In 1638, the nobility and the gentry signed the Covenant first before the ordinary people followed suit. Later in that year at the Glasgow General Assembly the nobility sat together in the centre, according to their rank or quality, although social rank was not allowed to usurp superiority in the Christian church.

Efforts have been made by some to show that the Covenanting movement comprised an upper or middle class movement, but this was not so. People of the artisan and lower class also belonged. For example: 'James Renwick was the son of a weaver, John Brown of Priesthill was a carrier, Patrick Walker was a pedlar, David Steel and Andrew Hyslop were shepherds.' Also in the roll of those who were on the run, and described as "rebels" and "fugitives" the names of those who were to be hunted down tended to be increasingly members of what are now

(22) Smith, H.. *Extracts from the letters of Samuel Rutherford* , Scripture Truth Publications, (Crewe, 2008) 9

known as working class, or rather the subordinate classes. Such occupations as weavers, shoemakers, smiths, masons and, commonly, servants were on the published lists of those who were imprisoned or executed.

In the early days of Covenanting there was considerable support from members of the aristocracy such as the Earl of Argyll, but there was little in the later phase. An increasing feeling developed against the nobility among the covenanters in the later stage. For example John Blackadder described them as the “great folk”. William Guthrie stated that “Christ gave himself for very few great folk”. Towards the end of the Covenanting campaign Alexander Shields said that “If the nobility had supported the cause, their allegiance would have been most welcome, but that clear duty they had abandoned.”(23) This is an interesting thought, but one can only speculate as to whether things might have been different.

There are many memorials to different Covenanters throughout Scotland, but, as this study is focusing on the south west of Scotland, those which were erected there will be concentrated on. Many of these monuments are situated within churchyards whilst others are found in the open countryside where the Covenanters died. Some of these occurred during battle whilst others were near houses where they had been hiding or resting. In many cases Covenanters were shot on the spot and were buried where they lay. In the case where they were buried in a church yard this might have been because a relative may have moved the body at a later stage.

The gravestones and monuments to the Covenanters are one of the most lasting of the trials and events of the time. They are a visual witness and remind us of the strength of feeling held by the men and women who made up the Covenanting movement. Ted Cowan views the gravestones and monuments as

(23) Barr, J. *The Scottish Covenanters*, 247

‘...Scotland’s first war memorials, even though the warriors of Christ that they commemorate were civilians.’(24)

This idea of the warrior paints a picture of the Covenanters as soldiers. The Covenanters did not set out to take part in armed conflict and they lacked any military training, but, as the dragoons became more persistent and were expected to defend themselves. ‘from the summer of 1684 there was... a progressive deterioration leading to the explosion of violence known as the “*Killing Time*.”’ (25)

It is not clear why this change came about, but it seems to coincide with the actions of Graham of Claverhouse. As a result some of the later conventicles tended to have armed guards on duty. Also Claverhouse rounded up a number of the participants who had allegedly taken part in the incident at the Enterkin Pass. In October 1684 landowners were arrested en mass and held in appalling conditions in places like Ayr Tollbooth until they took the Test. Such who signed were dismissed, and the recusants ordered to stay where they were, kept prisoner in the body of the church with armed guards on the doors. They were eventually released by their captors but confined to the town of Ayr. Understandably those who had been kept prisoner felt even more antagonistic towards the authorities.

Commemoration services for Covenanters who were killed at conventicles tended to be held at short notice, depending on the availability of a minister. Inscriptions on Covenanter memorials tend to give details of how the individual was killed, whereas inscriptions on war memorials, especially those which were constructed after the two World Wars, have language which tends to be plain and inoffensive. This is a real contrast to the tone used on many of the Covenanter memorials, as those who were erecting them felt bitter about the circumstances in which they found themselves.

(24) Cowan, E. J *The Covenanting Tradition in Scottish History* in Cowan, E. J and Finlay R .J. (eds.), *Scottish History* Edinburgh University Press, (Edinburgh, 2002) 136

(25) Campbell, T. *Standing Witnesses*, 18

The monuments are physical sites in memory of the people who died and the religious struggles in which they were involved, they make a political statement within the landscape. A. B. Jackson made a useful point when he said ‘A landscape without political history is a landscape without memory or forethought.’ (26) This is a very profound thought. It emphasises how important landscape in the lives of human beings at any time.

As was mentioned earlier, it is only when one visits a site such as Skeoch Hill that one realises how important the layout of the land was to the Covenanters, especially to the preachers. Some of the memorials and gravestones are sited on open land where Covenanters were shot. Whether they were buried in their local parish church yard, would depend on their family being willing to carry and bury the body.

On some occasions the place of burial of a Covenanter may have been marked out with a piece of rock, as there may not have been a minister to carry out a burial service. There were instances of bodies being buried, but later being disinterred, such as in Dalry churchyard, where ‘...a body was moved on the orders of John Graham of Claverhouse to the northern end of the churchyard on the edge of the cemetery’ (27).

Local communities are likely to have retained the knowledge of who was buried and where. This was also one of the tasks of the Societies which were mentioned earlier. Sarah Tarlow indicates that ‘It would be likely that a seventeenth century grave may have had no marker or been identified with only a piece of local stone to indicate the grave.’ (28) At the time, a gravestone would have been expensive and beyond the means of most ordinary people, but they and the community would still have wished a memorial of some description to have been erected to provide not only a memory of the individual Covenanter’s death,

(26) cited in Mayo, J. ‘War memorials as Political Memory’ *Geographical Review*, vol 78, no.1 (Jan.1988) 68

(27) Campbell, T *Standing Witnesses*, Saltire Society, (Edinburgh, 1996)33

(28) Tarlow, S. *Bereavement and Commemoration* Blackwell, (Oxford 1999) 110

but also as a reminder of the strength of faith the people had in their religion. The monuments which exist do not usually include the year when the monument was erected, possibly because they were often raised very much later. It is also possible that Robert Paterson (1713-1801) ('Old Mortality') may have fashioned some stones well after the burial. A number of stones, such as those in Balmaghie churchyard, are credited to Paterson (29)

It is interesting to note that there are no monuments or memorials to commemorate the deaths of government troops. Perhaps their resting place was a stone or a mound of earth which has either been forgotten or was desecrated by Covenanters after the incident. There appears to be no research into this issue.

One of the largest monuments has been erected in the twenty-first century in 2004 at the approach to Dalry village. This seems particularly appropriate, as St. John's Clachan of Dalry is where the lead up to the Pentland Rising began when a small group of Covenanters went to the aid of a farm worker who was being tortured by dragoons for non-payment of a fine. The memorial was planned by the Scottish Covenanter Memorials Association and the sculpture was designed and made by a former resident of Dalry who now lives in Sheffield. It is made of steel and commemorates a number of Covenanters who were active in the area. It is sited near the side of the main road below the High School and is very eye-catching. It depicts the Burning Bush and has a number of leaves attached to it, each of which is dedicated to a Covenanter whose name is carved on it. The Covenanters to whom the memorial is dedicated include: William and Alexander Gordon of Earlstoun near Dalry, Margaret MacLauchlan and Margaret Wilson who may have been drowned near Wigtown, John Brown of Priesthill near Muirkirk in Ayrshire, Richard Cameron, Captain John Paton of Meadowhead near Fenwick, the Rev. James Renwick and the Rev Alexander Peden. The memorial was dedicated at a special service by the local minister, Dr. David Bartholomew in 2004. It highlights the fact that memorials are still a very important part of peoples' daily lives. Through them people are able to respond to the deaths of

(29) Thomson, *The Martyr Graves of Scotland*, Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, (Edinburgh, undated) 369 (from which Campbell derives a good deal of his information)

individuals who have gone before us. A photograph is included below:



The Burning Bush monument in Dalry

As Sarah Tarlow points out, ‘As a class of evidence, gravestones (and memorials) are both history and archaeology, both text and artefact. They are both deliberately communicative and unintentionally revealing. They are a major source of evidence for the history of death, bereavement and commemoration’ (30)

(30)Tarlow, S. *Bereavement and Commemoration* Blackwell (Oxford, 1999) 2

The existence of memorials and monuments which were erected by someone who experienced their loss is testimony to bereavement. As Thomson indicates ‘It is hard to stay unaffected when one is confronted with the explicit evidence of somebody else’s sentiment’. (31) When one visits Covenanter memorials, one cannot help but feel a sort of empathetic sorrow, especially when one reads about how the former Covenanting individuals died. At the same time it is likely that there would have been a celebration of heroism, martyrdom and direct entry to heaven. More often than not they seem to have been shot on the spot and it seems likely that family members came and buried them later either at the site or in the local cemetery. The large number of memorials and gravestones dedicated to fallen Covenanters in the Glenkens parishes make it a useful area to explore further.

The Glenkens area covers the valley of the River Ken and includes the parishes of Dalry, Balmaclellan, Kells, Carsphairn, Crossmichael and Parton. It contains large areas of wild moorland and hills where many conventicles were held. The memorial at the entrance to the village of Dalry near to the High School mentioned above is one of the largest. One of the more remote memorials is to be found in the forest area at Auchencloy. This was erected in 1834 and commemorates Robert Ferguson, James McMichan (or McMichael) R. Stuart and J. Grierson. They were suspected of having been involved in the release of Covenanter prisoners who were being escorted to Edinburgh at Enterkin Pass. At least one man is buried there, but there may be others. Alison Burgess and some colleagues from Glasgow University (Dumfries campus) carried out some research on Covenanter memorials and their help is appreciated and acknowledged. She identified the fact that many of the memorials had ‘historically specific codes’. These enabled

‘the audience of the time to understand the sentiment of the message on a grave or memorial because; ‘...culturally and historically specific codes and conventions of representation impinge upon the formation of

(31) Thomson, J.H. Bodies, minds and human remains in Cox, M. (ed) *Grave concerns, Death and burial in England, 1700-1850*, York, Council for British Archaeology, 197-200

memorial writing- from the materials in which it is executed and the language it deploys, to its positioning in relation to visual and sculpted imagery.’(32)

The historically specific codes included within the inscriptions on Covenanter memorials are unusual because of the specific language used and the specific classification. The inscriptions fall into three main categories. The most common one on the thirty four early memorials within Dumfries and Galloway is

...for his adherence to
Scotland’s Reformation Covenants,
National and Solemn League.

This is seen in fifteen monuments and there are a further four which make reference to Scotland’s Reformation and the Covenants. Not only would this be instantly recognisable by the local communities, it is a constant reminder of what the Covenanters died for and hence an ever-present reinforcement of what the covenants reprecated.

The second category is found in ten inscriptions and includes reference to a specific passage of scripture. The phrase is:

‘...for his adhering to the word of God,
Christ’s kingly government in his house
And the Covenanted work of the Reformation
Against tyranny, perjury and prelacy. 1685 Rev. 12.11

The phrase ‘tyranny, perjury and prelacy’ refers to the Episcopal Church and its episcopal structure, which was against all that the Covenanter stood for in Christ’s kingly government.

The last category of five memorials does not include either of the phrases on the previous monuments. Most of the memorials also include some original poetry or

(32)Burgess, A. *The Covenanters:A Landscape and Memory*, M. A. Dissertation, (Glasgow University 2006) 30 and Hallam , E. and Hockey, J. *Death Memory and Material Culture*, Berg (Oxford, 2001) 169

narrative. A word that is often included is ‘martyr’, a word defined as a willingness to die for:

‘...one’s religion, one’s political ideas, or one’s community...The ideological content of martyrdom and its political, moral and emotional force are dynamics in contests where domination and submission are pitted against each other.’(33)

The concept of a ‘martyr’ would be evocative at the time when the monuments were being erected and would effectively raise a man from ordinary status to one who was extraordinary in the eyes of his family and the community. The phrase *Memento Mori* (Remember Death) is commonly seen on Covenanter memorials. The inscriptions tend to be the most evocative and powerful message which they contain or communicate. Hallam and Hockey state that ‘the form and content of memorial inscriptions has a profound effect upon the ways in which a (materialised) text works within memory.’ (34)

This is very evident when one examines the wording on Covenanter memorials. The obelisk at Auchencloy is in a remote area of the forest and this recalls the fact that some Covenanters were executed on the spot where they were caught. A photograph is included below: The obelisk was erected as a result of money raised from collections at services in the area in 1834.

(33) Castelli, E. *Martyrdom and Memory*, Columbia University Press, (Columbia, 2004) 33

(34) Hallam and Hockey *Death Memory and Material Culture*, Berg (Oxford, 2001) 169



Monument at Auchencloy

It stands on a mound in a small clearing and the gravestone is nearby. Both are inaccessible except to walkers, who need to consult a local Ordnance Survey map. The grid reference is NX603708. The site is approximately 5 km west of Loch Ken and the A762, where visitors should leave at Bennan Cottage and travel along the Raiders Road, looking out for a bridge which crosses the Black Water of Dee at Barney Water. The remote location of this memorial helps to emphasise the countryside that was used by the Covenanters to hold conventicles as well as to move around and avoid the dragoons. But some known conventicle sites were not that remote, e.g. Skeoch and Holy Linn.

Another memorial to a Covenanter can be found further down the valley in Crossmichael churchyard. There is only one stone in this churchyard, which is dedicated to William Graham who is believed to have been shot while escaping from his mother's house. According to Campbell there has been some confusion between William and his brother James who was executed in Edinburgh on December 9 1684. The confusion has arisen over the dates. Wodrow states that

William was ‘barbarously cut off by the soldiers ye 15 of March this year [1684]’. (35) What the brothers had done is unclear, but William was obviously being sought by the dragoons at the time of his shooting. The stone has been broken and is held together with iron clamps. .



Memorial to William Graham in Crossmichael Churchyard

There is a memorial at the Covenanting site on Skeoch Hill. This is engraved with the words: *This spot is where a large number of Covenanters met in the summer of 1678 to worship God and where about 3000 communicants celebrated the sacrament of the Lord's Supper...the adjacent stones were used as the Communion Table.* It is unusual in that it is 15 feet tall and has a model of a

(35) Wodrow, R. MSS xxxvi, 17 cited in Campbell, T. *Standing Witnesses*, 67

chalice at the top. There are four distinct rows 11 metres long of close set flat stones which are 1.5 metres apart. There is believed to have been a fifth row, but this is no longer in evidence. Two photographs are shown on the next page.



Skeoch Hill memorial



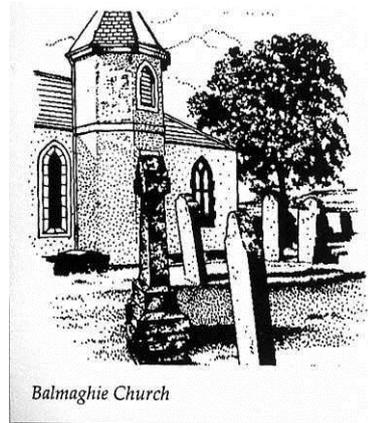
Communion stones at Skeoch Hill

Dalry churchyard contains a gravestone which commemorates two Covenanters, Robert Stewart and John Grierson who fell at Auchencloy, This is flat and is not very clear, but there is also a small blue stone commemorating the Covenanters. It is not dated, but is believed to have been placed in 2004 at the same time as the Burning Bush memorial was placed in Dalry. A photograph of the blue memorial is shown below:



Memorial stone in Dalry churchyard

Balmaghie churchyard is on the west side of the River Ken and further south, but it has the graves of two Covenanters with the same name: David Halliday. The first David Halliday was shot in February 1685 and his name sake in July of the same year. The first was shot with four others on Kirkconnel Moor and the second was shot in Twynholm, not far away. They may have been involved in the Battle of Bothwell Bridge in 1679. Another Covenanter was buried in Balmaghie churchyard. His name was also David Halliday. He was shot near to Kirkconnel by the Laird of Lagg. He also may have been at Bothwell Bridge. A picture sketch is shown on the next page:



Balmaghie churchyard monument to David Halliday

Balmaclellan is another of the Glenkens parishes and in the churchyard there are two memorial stones. The first is dedicated to Robert Grierson and recorded in *A Cloud of Witnesses*. He and four others were discovered in a cave at Ingliston on 28 April 1685 by Colonel James Douglas and his men and shot on the spot. They were not suspected of anything particular, just being Covenanters in hiding. On the outer wall of Balmaclellan churchyard is a memorial in the form of a statue to Robert Paterson who was often known as Old Mortality because he left his wife and family and travelled round the countryside setting up and repairing memorials to Covenanters.



Memorial to Robert Paterson

One of the other parishes in the Glenkens group is Kells, which includes the village of New Galloway. The churchyard here contains two monuments to Covenanters, Adam Macqwhan or MacWhan and Roger and John Gordon. It is not known what Adam was suspected of, other than the fact that he was taken from his bed with a fever and shot. One of the monuments is a tall one and is shown below. The first of these men may be linked with the remote stone found at Auchencloy between Clatteringshaws Loch and Loch Dee (described earlier).



Monument at Kells

Campbell maintains that there was a ‘...sudden falling off of (Covenanter) killings...after May 1685’ and ‘...persecution seemed to diminish markedly and permanently.’ (36) There was only one execution in 1686 and James introduced two Indulgences in 1687. This enabled a number of former outed preachers to be

(36) Campbell, T. *Standing Witnesses*, Saltire Society, (Edinburgh, 1996) 23

re-admitted. Indulgences also showed how some of the Covenanting hard-liners such as Cameronian and Renwickite supporters had become separated from other Covenanters and thus unrepresentative of the movement as a whole. The Covenanting movement spirit seemed to be flagging. James Renwick tried to revive matters, but was caught and executed in Edinburgh in 1688. This was, however the last major execution of the period. In 1688 James VII and II had to flee to Europe, while his daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange became joint sovereigns in his place. As a result, after a period of fierce strife, Episcopalianism was made illegal in Scotland. It was replaced by Presbyterianism. To all intents and purposes the Covenanters had achieved their aims and the worship and governance of the Church of Scotland.

Conclusion

Undertaking this study on the Covenanters and conventicles in south west Scotland has been most interesting and enjoyable. Living in south west Scotland it has opened one's eyes to discover more about what has happened in the locality in the past. The most useful primary sources for this study have been the *Register of the Privy Council*, the *Records of the Parliaments of Scotland* and Wodrow's *A History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*. Unfortunately copies of the Register are not available in local libraries, so one has to go to the National Library in Edinburgh to view them. Secondary sources which were most useful include: J.K. Hewison's *The Scottish Covenanters*, Barr's *the Scottish Covenanters*, Both of these were written by clergy with good academic credentials and local knowledge. The books by David Stevenson, who has become a modern expert on the subject, *The Martyr Graves of Scotland* by J.H. Thompson and *Standing Witnesses* by T Campbell have also proved useful. These list and give much detail on the various monuments to the Covenanters. Campbell is very up to date and gives grid references of the sites as well as illustrations. Gordon Donaldson's book on the *Making of the Scottish Prayer Book* is a mine of information. It gives a thorough account of how the book came into being beginning in the 1550's. It gives a detailed commentary on the content and makes an interesting comment that

‘...most of the features of the Scottish Prayer Book were of Scottish provenance.’(1)

A slim volume on the worship of the Covenanters by G.W. Sprott has been very useful. It begins with the situation as existed before the movement began prior to describing the various changes which happened during the life of the movement.

Several collections of sermons were consulted, including one by Blackader. This gave interesting insights into his life as a minister both before and after he was outed from his parish. Others by Peden and Rutherford proved useful

(1) Donaldson, G. *The Making of the Scottish Prayer Book*, Edinburgh University Press, 1954, 78

and interesting.

One of the activities of the Covenanters, which still bring admiration, respect and reverence is the conventicle. These were soon outlawed by king and parliament as possibly

‘...causing a disturbance of the peace of the kingdom or alienating or diminishing the affections of his majesty’s subjects from their due obedience to his majesty’s lawful authority.’(2)

Why did the south west of Scotland become one of the centres for Covenanting activity? It is difficult to say why, other than to point out that one of the first major incidents took place in Dalry. This involved a group of dragoons who had attacked a man because of non-payment of fines for non-attendance at church. They were in the process of trying to torture him over a brazier. A group of men were observing nearby. This was the beginning of a long conflict between ordinary people and the forces of the crown, which escalated and spread over the area.

Other factors for south west Scotland being the centre for Covenanting include: the dedication and perseverance and loyalty of people to their church and their clergy who had been outed, as well as their determined opposition to the dragoons. People were willing to give up their homes, be punished or tortured and even to die for the cause. The Covenanting movement was very popular and it has left a powerful folk memory for those living in the 21st century.

Although the Covenanters never achieved all their aims, they accomplished much. Ian Cowan made an important point at the end of his book when he said that

‘the history of the Covenanters is not entirely one of religious bigotry, but rather part of a more general struggle by the church against the intolerance of the state.’(3)

(2) Wodrow, R. *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, Book 1 430

(3) Cowan, I.B. *The Scottish Covenanters*, Gollancz (London, 1976) 147

The Covenanters have been looked upon in some circles as being bigoted. That may be a point of view, but they saw what was happening to the worship of their church in that the king was trying to impose episcopacy against the will of many of the people and they decided to make a stand. Henderson points out

‘The difference between the Covenanters and their friends on one side and their enemies on the other is one of temperament.’(4)

Throughout the seventeenth century there tends to have been what has been described as ‘continual swinging of the pendulum in Scottish religious life.’ (5) In applying this to the efforts of the Covenanters, one can see that some friends were turning against them. When many ministers were outed from their parishes, they were driven into barns, fields and open countryside to continue their ministry to their loyal congregations. Many of them were fined, had property confiscated, were imprisoned or sent away for non-attendance at their local church or for preaching away from their local church, because they had no choice unless they abandoned their principles.

The opposition to episcopacy by Covenanters was because they saw the bishops as agents of the king and they were completely against the changes he wanted to impose in the church’s worship. The king saw himself as appointed by God whereas the Covenanters believed that Jesus was the head of the church.

The Covenanters seem to have been very successful in what they achieved during the times of their activity. They are remembered in the 21st century by the conventicles which are still held in parts of south west Scotland. The monuments which were erected during Covenanting times and since, still draw visitors and the organisation which maintains and restores them, the Scottish Covenanter Memorial Association seems to be thriving. It has a membership of four hundred, all of whom are volunteers. Technical work on the monuments is carried out by professional sculptors who are paid from the association’s funds. A newsletter is produced three times a year. This organisation helps to publicise the memorials and to raise awareness of the Covenanters. Covenanters were very committed and

(4)Henderson, G.D. *Religious Life in 17th Century Scotland*, Cambridge U.P, (London, 1937)158

(5)Henderson, G.D. *Religious Life in 17th Century Scotland*, Cambridge U.P, (London, 1937)15

enthusiastic about their cause. In the twenty-first century the principle of freedom of speech and the freedom to worship where and when one chooses tends to be taken for granted in Britain. One of the positive actions taken by James was to make available printed copies of the King James Bible in English. Prior to this, only priests, monks, nuns and members of the nobility were able to read the Bible. Ordinary people had only received what the priest's interpretation of the Biblical message was. Protestants were now slowly becoming able to read for themselves and, with the help of the minister, to interpret what was God's message for them.

In a recent book about Moniaive, Sue Palmer-Jones describes how family groups met together to read the Bible. (6) Eventually Episcopalianism was made illegal in Scotland. It was replaced by Presbyterianism. To all intents and purposes the Covenanters had achieved their aims and the worship and governance of the Church of Scotland became independent of the crown and government. It still remains so today.

Wodrow makes an important point 'The gospel was for some years generally preached in fields through the south of Scotland, and that with success: God was unquestionably at work upon the hearts of people...both in conversion and edification. (7)

When William and Mary came to the throne, the situation in Scotland became more settled. This was the Glorious Revolution or the Bloodless Revolution (only in England). When Charles II was restored, he was not responsive to Parliament because of distrust. When James duke of York came to the throne, his overt Catholicism and the birth of a Catholic prince caused united opposition to him. As a result, some of the English aristocracy invited William of Orange and his consort Mary to come to England. James and his forces went to France and this enabled William and Mary to become joint sovereigns. Parliament had proved its superiority to the crown and was convened regularly. The king and queen belonged to the Anglican religion.

(6) Palmer-Jones, S. *The Story of Moniaive*, Art Garden, (Thornhill, 1999) 39

(7) Wodrow, R. *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, vol. 2, 497

To all intents the Covenanters had achieved all they set out to do. No longer was there a king who was dictating how individuals should worship. As Ian Cowan indicated ‘William finally signified his approval to an act establishing Presbyterian government in the church.’ (8) Wodrow includes an important point that ‘...the king and queen’s majesties, with advice and consent of the estates of parliament, do hereby abolish prelacy and all superiority in the church in this kingdom above presbyters.’(9)

Conventicles are still commemorated in the twenty-first century in a number of local parishes, including Dalry and Dunscore. The ministers in these parishes were interviewed and are very enthusiastic about keeping the memories of these events alive. They tend to hold services at or near the conventicle sites in all weathers each year. They try to recreate the atmosphere of the conventicle for the congregation who attend. In doing this they are making the present generation aware of their heritage.

(8) Cowan I.B. *The Scottish Covenanters*, 188

(9) Wodrow, R. *A History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, vol 4,484-5

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Appendices

I Notes of interviews with Clergy

II E-mail from Revd Bill Hogg re: Conventicles

Notes of Interview with Rev. Dr. David Bartholomew

DM: How did you first hear about the subject of Conventicles?

D.B. I knew that conventicles had been held in this area before I came and my predecessor held a baptism at the Holy Linn before I came in 1985.

The Covenanters still seem to be held in high regard in the area.

D.M. Are you aware of any other conventicles being held in South West Scotland recently?

D.B. Yes. I held one at the Holy Linn in 2000, when about 70 people from our parish and neighbouring ones gathered under the trees for this. I was involved in the preparation of the Covenanters memorial in Dalry in 2004 and this energised me to think about holding conventicles on a regular basis (possibly annually) Since then I have held regular conventicles in the area with one at the Lorg in 2006, Auchencloy 2007, Blackwater (near the Youth Hostel) in 2008, the Holy Linn in 2009, Marscalloch in 2010 and I plan to hold another, probably in Dalry, in 2011.

D.M. How important do you think the landscape of Galloway was in the Covenanters' cause?

D.B. Very important. The landscape gave them a feeling of peace and enabled them to get away from the soldiers who might be looking for them. It enabled people to find somewhere to meet out in the wilds.

D.M. What did an order of service for a conventicle include?

D.B. I found a tape from my predecessor which included two psalms, a hymn, a Bible reading and some prayers, but generally speaking I include two hymns, two psalms, prayers, a Bible reading and a sermon.

D.M. Was there a list of psalms used and were they accompanied?

D.B. There doesn't seem to have been a list of Psalms for Covenanting ministers to draw on. They probably used their favourites or ones which seemed appropriate to the occasion, such as Psalm 23 or 121

D.M. Why did people attend conventicles?

D.B. Ministers had baptised parents' babies and buried their dead, but when they were outed from their parishes the people did not want to be ministered to by the curates who were imposed on them. They preferred to have their own minister, so they had no alternative but to attend conventicles.

D.M. How important is it for conventicles to continue in the 21st century?

D.B. There is still considerable local interest and conventicles encourage a feeling of corporate worship, so it is important for them to continue

D.M. As a leader/participant at a conventicle how did you feel about taking part in such a historic event?

D.B. I counted it a privilege. It made me aware of the conditions and feelings of the original Covenanters. I personally prefer more modern forms of worship, but singing the Psalms brings the idea of conventicle alive. I also like the vivid stories of the people who led conventicles..

D.M. What was the age range of the group who attended the conventicles you led?

D.B. Mainly over 50, although there were a few under 50's there too, but no young people.

D.M. How much difference did the Covenanters make to the development to the Church of Scotland?

D.B. A great deal of difference. They helped to keep the Presbyterian spirit alive. They held firmly to the belief tht Jesus Christ was the head of the church and they helped to keep the purity of worship alive. Their lives, their dedication and their witness made a vital difference to the development of the Church of Scotland.

Master of Philosophy

For Participation of Human Subjects in Research

For

University of Glasgow (Crichton Campus), Dumfries.

Project Title: The Covenanters: Conventicles in South West Scotland – An investigation into how, why and where these were held and what their importance is for the Church in the twenty-first century.

I, DAVID SINCLAIR BARTHOLOMEW Of
The Manse, Dalry, Castle Douglas
.....

Hereby consent to participate in a study to be undertaken by David Morton Master of Philosophy in History

And I understand that the purpose of the research will aim to investigate how, why and where Conventicles took place and how important they were for Covenanters in the 17th century and as a witness for the Church today. This will include visiting the sites themselves, their location in remote parts of the Scottish countryside and the importance of these sites as place of worship or remembrance.

I acknowledge that:

- The aims, methods and overall purpose of the study have been explained to me by David Morton
- I voluntarily and freely give my consent to my participation in this study.
- I understand that the result of this and other interviews and enquiries will be used for research purposes.
- The tape or tapes and the accompanying transcript and notes are the result of one or more recorded interviews with David Morton
- Any reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of my spoken, not written word and the tape, not the transcript, is the primary document.
- The researcher will not name me without my explicit consent

I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the interview, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained will be returned to me or destroyed at my request.

Signed D.S. Bartholomew Date

I..... DAVID SINCLAIR BARTHOLOMEW
Living at..... The Manse, Dalry, Castle Douglas

Give my consent to the recordings made on.....

On the subject of.....

To be held in secure storage and deposited in the archival facilities within the Rutherford McCowan Building.

I would// would not **(Delete option not applicable)**

desire that the records and transcript of my interview be used as a permanent reference resource for use in research, publication, education, lectures and broadcasting as part of a collection of resources of value to Scottish culture.

This tape or tapes and the accompanying transcript and notes are the result of one or more recorded, voluntary interview(s) with me. Any reader should bear in mind when he/she is reading a transcript of my spoken word that the tape, not the transcript, is the primary document.

I hereby assign the copyright in my contribution to the University of Glasgow, Crichton Campus.

Signed..... D.S. Bartholomew..... Date.....

Accession number.....

DOCUMENT CLOSED UNTIL.....SIGNED.....

Interview with Rev. Christine Sime (Minister of Moniaive and Dunscore)

D.M. How did you first hear about the subject of conventicles?

C.S. When I first came here as minister I discovered that there was a history of holding conventicles on a regular basis in the parish. Little mention was made of them at college and I found out quite a lot from two elderly gentlemen who lived in the parish. I decided to hold a conventicle each year. This needed research before each new conventicle.

D.M. Were any held in the Glenkens area and if so where?

C.S. Yes at Renwick's Stone and at other Martyr stones and graves in the area. There are also regular ones held at Kirkbride near to here where about 50 to 60 people regularly attend.

D.M. How important do you think the landscape of Dumfries and Galloway was in the Covenanters' cause?

C.S. Very important indeed. They needed to be out in the open in order to worship and the landscape lent itself to the situation. Some of the sites, like the Renwick Stone are remote and have really good acoustics which enable those attending to hear the sermon.

D.M. What did an order of service for a conventicle include?

C.S. It included Psalms, paraphrases and a sermon.

D.M. Was there a list of Psalms?

C.S. No. We tend to choose Psalms we know and like and it was probably similar in Covenanting days. At the present day conventicles we tend to produce a service sheet which includes background information on the site, what originally happened there, the words of the Psalm or paraphrase to be used. In Covenanting times the singing would be led by a precentor and it would be unaccompanied.

D.M. Why did people attend conventicles and how did the logistics of ministering to large numbers work?

C.S. People attended conventicles because they couldn't attend the type of worship they were familiar with because there were no ministers to lead it.

D.M. How important is it that conventicles continue in the 21st century?

C.S. Conventicles are very much a part of life in the area. We need to make them more widely known by producing booklets and possibly developing history trails for children and young people. There used to be a member of the community who was an excellent raconteur who would tell children stories about the Covenanters. The children were often spellbound by what they heard. Scottish history seems to be becoming more important in the school curriculum and primary schools seem to welcome clergy more than they used to.

D.M. Do you feel that conventicles are still relevant?

C.S. Yes. It is good to go outside for worship. The church is having to review its use of buildings because of rising costs, so it is good to hold conventicles to enable people to worship together and to appreciate the difficulties that the Covenanters experienced.

D.M. As a leader/participant at a Conventicle how did you feel about taking part in such a historic event?

C.S. It was an honour and a privilege to be part of such a special event.

D.M. What was the age group who attended a conventicle?

C.S. In the past I believe whole families attended, but nowadays the age range varies according to the venue and the accessibility of the site. I suppose those who come tend to be around the age of fifty, but I know of some such as at Irongray or Skeoch Hill where farmers provide transport to enable people to reach the site by tractor and trailer, so the age group in these cases can be wider.

D.M. How much difference did the Covenanters make to the development of the Church of Scotland?

C.S. A great deal of difference. They enabled the Presbyterian way of worship to stay alive.

Master of Philosophy
For Participation of Human Subjects in Research

For

University of Glasgow (Crichton Campus), Dumfries.

Project Title: The Covenanters: Conventicles in South West Scotland – An investigation into how, why and where these were held and what their importance is for the Church in the twenty-first century.

I,CHRISTINE SINE.....Of
.....THE MANSE WALLACETON AULOGIRTH.....
.....DUMFRIES DG2 0TJ.....

Hereby consent to participate in a study to be undertaken by David Morton Master of Philosophy in History

And I understand that the purpose of the research will aim to investigate how, why and where Conventicles took place and how important they were for Covenanters in the 17th century and as a witness for the Church today. This will include visiting the sites themselves, their location in remote parts of the Scottish countryside and the importance of these sites as places of worship or remembrance.

I acknowledge that:

- The aims, methods and overall purpose of the study have been explained to me by David Morton
- I voluntarily and freely give my consent to my participation in this study.
- I understand that the result of this and other interviews and enquiries will be used for research purposes.
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- Any reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of my spoken, not written word and the tape, not the transcript, is the primary document.
- The researcher will not name me without my explicit consent

I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the interview, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained will be returned to me or destroyed at my request.

Signed.....Christine Sine.....Date 15/10/10

I..... CHRISTINE SIME.....

Living at..... THE MANSE WALLACETON.....

..... AULDEGIRTH DUMFRIES DG2 0TJ.....

Give my consent to the recordings made on..... 15/10/10.....

On the subject of..... The Covenanters.....

.....

.....

To be held in secure storage and deposited in the archival facilities within the Rutherford McCowan Building.

I would// would not **(Delete option not applicable)**

desire that the records and transcript of my interview be used as a permanent reference resource for use in research, publication, education, lectures and broadcasting as part of a collection of resources of value to Scottish culture.

This tape or tapes and the accompanying transcript and notes are the result of one or more recorded, voluntary interview(s) with me. Any reader should bear in mind when he/she is reading a transcript of my spoken word that the tape, not the transcript, is the primary document.

I hereby assign the copyright in my contribution to the University of Glasgow, Crichton Campus.

Signed..... Christine Sime..... Date..... 15/10/10.....

Accession number.....

DOCUMENT CLOSED UNTIL..... SIGNED.....

To: david.morton9483
@o2.co.uk
Subject: RE: information on
conventicles in the
Durisdeer area

Sorry for the delayed reply.

As for Conventicles ..

The Kirkbride Conventicle has been well established for many years at the instigation of the late Bill Scott, minister at Durisdeer for over 50 years.

It takes place on the 1st Sunday of August and is shared by the parishes of Durisdeer and Sanquhar - because the old parish of Kirkbride was divided between those two. Of course,

1

folk from other parishes do attend. We meet at the ruins of the Kirkbride Church near Coshogle farm between Sanquhar and Thornhill. The format is well-established - unaccompanied psalm singing, scripture readings and a sermon (actually some prefer to call it the 'Kirkbride Preaching') and a member of Durisdeer recites a locally written poem about Kirkbride which refers to the covenanting days.

Sanquhar has recently started to hold its own conventicle on the first Sunday of July - combined with a church picnic! We don't meet at a particularly historic site but in Euchar Glen which has some covenanting associations.

Christine Sime minister of Dunscore organizes annual conventicles at different historic sites in the area.

I don't know if this enough information but if you have any other questions, please get in touch

2

Yours

Bill Hogg

