Repression and Religious Dissent
In Scotland, 1660-1689

The long pre-occupation of the Scottish people with religious issues has created an image of a narrow bigotted nation determined to go to any extremes in order to ensure religious conformity. On examination, however, the Scots emerge from the religious holocausts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with a degree of tolerance unknown in most other countries at this period.

In the pre-Reformation period even the assiduous Knox could only find a handful of sufferers for the Faith, while after that event, John Ogilvy emerges as a solitary and anomalous martyr as official policy towards Jesuits was not execution, but deportation. Calvinists, who had few qualms about condemning witches, had apparently greater scruples about burning heretics, and it is Knox who in characteristic mood tells of a priest who deserved death for saying mass, but instead was "set upon the Market-crosse for the space of three or four hours" while the boys and others cast eggs at him.¹ Throughout the seventeenth century this relative degree of tolerance remained undisturbed, and although Catholics might be disciplined and on occasions fined, persecution seldom overstepped this mark. From time to time, "seminary and masse priests and trafficquing papists" were ordered to leave the country under pain of death, but the imprisonment of a Catholic priest, George Young, on the Bass rock in 1679, appears to be unique.² The seizure of "popish bookes, chapletts, beads, surplices and other popish vestments" at Leith in 1672 also demonstrates a vigilance for such cargoes but the deportation of those found dealing in books and papers of Popish tendency was not always
enforced. The efficacy of these and other similar measures is very questionable. Attempts at the enforced education of the sons of notable Catholics were certainly to little avail and amid Catholicism at large, adherents in Banff who resorted “publicly to masse every lord’s day” were by no means alone in their action. Despite apparent official concern at this state of affairs, it would appear that insofar as the Catholic problem was restricted to a limited number of adherents within fairly well-defined and often remote areas, punitive measures of an intermittent nature were deemed sufficient to contain a religious minority which offered no direct challenge to the state or the established church.

Protestant non-conformity was treated with equal caution. Andrew Melville may have been imprisoned and eventually banished for daring to oppose the king on the issue of state intervention in ecclesiastical matters, but of some fifty-four ministers brought before the court of high commission for ecclesiastical misdemeanors between 1610 and 1638, only seven were deprived and not restored to the ministry. When the tables were turned in 1638, the triumphant Presbyterians framed outrageous charges against the bishops, who in consequence were deprived of office, but rancour went no further than the indictments.

New and more uncompromising attitudes were, however, becoming more apparent at this juncture, but with the exception of the slaughter, culminating in the execution of many Catholic prisoners after the battle of Philiphaugh, during the Montrose campaign of 1644-45, disputes over religious issues even in the early covenanting era were polemical rather than physical. Even entry of the sects into Scotland made little difference in this respect. The “Brownists” who appear to have been the first to penetrate Scotland were accused of holding “sedicious conventicles” as early as 1624, and opposition on the ground that such gatherings were a threat to the established church and its authority was immediately forthcoming. Action against them was, however, fairly inconclusive, and some ministers even contended that it was profitable to meet for private prayer. Similar arguments, re-inforced with theological objections, met the entry of Anabaptists, Congregationalists, Independents and Quakers during the Cromwellian period in which enforced toleration allowed a degree of latitude to sectarians which they might otherwise have found lacking. Nevertheless, the fears expressed were in reality groundless as support outside the actual army of occupation was minimal and the end of the Protectorate saw the virtual disappearance of all but the Quakers.

On the surface the attitude of the authorities to the continuance of this sect was uncompromising. In 1663 when it was revealed that there were “several meetings of Quakers in Edinburgh, both on the week day and Sabbath in tymes of divine worship who seduces many to follow after their mischievous practices”, it was enacted that houses were not to be let to Friends and “if need beis that they take the keys of their houses from them”. Such action if fulfilled had little apparent effect and two years later “great multitudes of ‘quakers’ who frequently and avowedly met in Edinburgh” were to be imprisoned. Elsewhere similar action was contemplated. In Aberdeen, the bailies imprisoned a shoemaker “one Richard Rae ... a quaker born in Drumfriese” for holding conventicles, but again with little apparent effect as the Friends continued to attract adherents within the burgh and by 1683 had not only erected “publick burial places”, but also built schools “for traineinig up their children in their godles and heritcall opinions.” The experience in Montrose in which fifteen Quakers were imprisoned in the tolbooth after one of the burgesses, William Napier, began to hold conventicles in which “they had such pretendit devotion as they pleased to devyse, whereupon a great confusion and tumult was lyke to have been made,” was very similar. So too in the South-east of Scotland, where in 1673 eleven Friends were imprisoned in Kelso tolbooth. Unlike the Catholic minority the Quakers could not count on much powerful support, land proprietors such as Sir John Swinton in Berwickshire being the exception rather than the rule. Nevertheless, persecution at best was intermittent. An order to the sheriffs of Teviotdale, Lanark and Aberdeen in 1667 to arrest all “men quakers” and lodge them in the tolbooth of Edinburgh points to an accepted solution of a period of incarceration followed by equally early release. It was readily admitted that lengthy imprisonment might be counter-productive and lead to a hardening of “pernicious opiniones” and on these grounds one prominent Quaker, Walter Scott of Raeburn, who had also had his children taken from his care, was transferred from Edinburgh tolbooth to that of Jedburgh where his friends might visit and re-convert him. Only one Quaker, Hector Alan, skipper of Leith, seems to have been punished more rigorously and sent to the Bass,
but his real crime does not appear to have been teaching "severall erroneous heretical and blasphemous tenets" but interrupting sermons in various parts of the country. Otherwise public policy inclined towards leniency and Quakers may have suffered more from private than public vindictiveness as in the case of Thomas Dunlop, who significantly appealed in 1682 for justice to the council against his eviction from his house in Musselburgh and being thereafter forced to live in the fields with his wife and children for "no other reason but because he was in fellowship of the people called Quakers".

The comparative immunity from persecution enjoyed by Catholics and Quakers was also at first enjoyed by dissenting groups within the established church which after an uneasy compromise during the earlier covenanting period had finally split in 1651 when Samuel Rutherford, minister of Anwoth, and twenty-one fellow ministers declared the General Assembly in which they were present to be unconstitutional and invalid.

The struggle between Protesters, as Rutherford and his associates came to be called, and the majority party, or Resolutioners, dominates the period 1651-60. Practical bids to obtain control of the church by one or other factions led to the exclusion of ministers of both persuasions from exercise of their functions. Repression was certainly ruled out by the policy of toleration advocated by the Cromwellian regime, but it is also important to recognise the very real bond of agreement which continued to bind both parties. Nevertheless, the Restoration found Presbyterians divided and this weakness undoubtedly aided the re-imposition of episcopacy which royal autocracy favoured. The Protesters alone pressed for the implementation of the solemn league and covenant, and in this were opposed by the Resolutioners who were prepared to settle for a Presbyterian establishment in Scotland. If, however, the Resolutioners were prepared to make these concessions, their anti-erastian wing was not willing to be diverted from the doctrine of the two kingdoms and wished to revive the powers of the general assembly. In this desire at least they were aligned with the Protesters who were themselves divided into erastian and anti-erastian factions. Faced with these attitudes Lauderdale, who had hoped to find a solution compatible with the power of the king, settled for royal autocracy and a moderate episcopacy. In this he was followed by a majority of the nobility and those Resolutioners who either accepted the settlement through a change of heart or while remaining Presbyterian in their opinions conformed because they would not "separate from the Church of God".

Had opposition to the settlement remained divided, few difficulties might have ensued; but the act for presentation and collation of June 1662, brought divisions to a head. Whereas this act had been designed to oust a few prominent Protesters, some 270 ministers including the flower of the Resolutioner clergy in Lothian and Fife were eventually deprived for non-conformity. Even before the final date for compliance with this act, the council had anticipated successive deadlines and several recalcitrant ministers who had refused to sign the oath of allegiance unless they were allowed specifically to exclude the king's spiritual authority were called before parliament. All but one expressed their scruples in a written submission and for their pains were imprisoned and only released under sentence of deposition and expulsion from their parishes. Action against such recalcitrants was until the end of 1662 reserved for Protesters and others who were considered most dangerous to the stability of the church, but even with this reservation some 200 depositions had been effected before the period of grace finally expired on 1 February 1663. Thereafter the deposition of the less important dissenters commenced. Government convenience dictated that Presbyterian dissent should be curbed as a threat to royal autocracy. Catholics and Quakers who constituted no such threat could be treated fairly leniently; not so the Presbyterian. For as congregations followed the example of their ministers and thereafter attended conventicles held by them in houses and barns or in the fields, their adherents came to constitute a sizeable proportion of the Scottish people. In this situation, religious repression, of which the first foretaste had been the unparalleled execution of James Guthrie, minister of Stirling in June 1661, became increasingly meaningful.

In addition to the eviction and banishment of ministers, the fining of dissenters became standard practice. An enactment of 10 July 1663 declared that "all and every ... person or persons who shall heireafter ordinarily and wilfully withdraw and absent themselfs from the ordinary meetings of divine worship in their one paroch church on the lord's day (witherupon the accompt of poperie or other disaftection to the present government of the church)" should be fined. With this enactment — "the bishops' Drag Net" and the passing of acts against the holding of conventicles, the necessary
statutory authority to proceed against conventiclers, on either or both counts, had been obtained. But not all deprived ministers were overt conventiclers, and, in order to ensure total compliance with these edicts, council enacted on 13 August 1663 that all recalcitrant ministers should either conform within twenty days or remove with their households twenty miles from their churches, six miles from a cathedral city and three miles outside a royal burgh.\textsuperscript{27}

This legislation had little immediate effect and conventicling actually appears to have increased in the south-west which at this juncture was the principal area of this form of disaffection. In September 1663 Sir James Turner was ordered to Kirkcudbright after a local contingent of foot guards had failed to prevent a young non-conformist minister, Alexander Robertson, from preaching in the vacant church of Anwoth.\textsuperscript{28} Armed forays of this nature tended to encourage the assumption that ultimate success would only follow if activity in this direction increased. The new archbishop of Glasgow, Archbishop Burnet, emerged as a strong advocate of such a policy and the military repression which characterises the years 1664-5 owes much to his personal inspiration. The archbishop of St Andrews, James Sharp, was always much more cautious in this respect, preferring more subtle, and none the less effective means of encouraging religious conformity. To this end Sharp advocated the re-establishment of the Court of High Commission which he secured by a warrant of 16 January 1664.\textsuperscript{29} The court dealt with a great variety of offences, including withdrawal from services of the established church. The oath of allegiance enacted in 1663, which entailed recognition of the king's spiritual authority, became the touchstone in many of these cases.\textsuperscript{30} Offers to take the oath in a modified form were unacceptable and the fines imposed for failure to comply frequently proved financially ruinous. Punitive measures on this scale could deal with individual cases of disobedience, but it could not solve the widespread problem of conventicling and non-church going in the dioceses of Glasgow and Galloway.

In the circumstances, military activity increased and the activities of Turner and his forces became increasingly arbitrary. Scheduled fines were far exceeded, others suffered from the quartering of soldiers and the general brutality of the operations seems beyond question although, according to a certificate subscribed by several of those who suffered at Turner's hands, "Sir James had used them civilly and discreetly".\textsuperscript{31} These operations which achieved only limited success were quickly followed by further repressive legislation including yet another act against conventiclers which declared them to be "seminaries of separation and rebellion" and frequenters of them to be traitors to be apprehended by "all our public ministers".\textsuperscript{32} The deft twist whereby religious dissenters might be dealt with as traitors was already to the fore in this legislation in which the subtle hand of Burnet can be readily discerned. The screw was turned tighter and tighter. Fining, which pressed more and more heavily upon the heritors, became more rigorous as the extensive powers already possessed by Turner were extended by his own initiative. Among charges levelled against him were extorting billet money for those over and above the number of soldiers actually quartered on recalcitrants, the resurrection of charges on previous offences and fining parishioners for non-church going in parishes in which no minister was settled.\textsuperscript{33} These injustices proved to be the last straw and led after a chance incident to the outbreak of the Pentland Rising in November 1666.

The suggestion that all frequenters of conventiclers were traitors was given further impetus by this rebellion which ended in failure at Rullion Green. Some eighty prisoners were taken after this battle and of these twenty-one were hanged before an order to the Edinburgh magistrates "to take due and remove the gallowes at the mercat croce" brought the executions to an end.\textsuperscript{34} The hunt for fugitives in Ayrshire and elsewhere resulted in another fifteen executions but a judicial total of thirty-six was not excessive in view of the 1,100 insurgents at one time in arms.\textsuperscript{35} On the other hand, several only cheated the gallows by dying of their wounds, while failure to apprehend many of the prominent insurgents meant that they could only be sentenced in their absence.

But what had these men died for? The earl of Rothes who saw them as 'dam incurriage phanatics' declared that he was not 'wearie of causing hang such rebellious traitors'.\textsuperscript{36} Legally he was correct in regarding them guilty of treason, but was he equally accurate in regarding them as fanatics? What had caused the Pentland Rising? What had its supporters hoped to achieve? In essence the rebellion was spontaneous, arising from the persecution of conventiclers, but it is not at all certain that the renewal of the covenants during the course of the rising meant that the Covenant was to be enforced. The
mitigation of conditions in Scotland was much more to the fore and in this respect their principal complaint was "at the bishops newly sett up in the land". It is clear, moreover, that religious grievances were not the sole reasons for the rising as economic and social discontent also played their part. Lairds smarting under restrictive jurisdictions which had been re-imposed at the Restoration may have supported the rebellion in their search for social justice.

If their wider hopes remained unrealised, those who died achieved something by their actions, as after the suppression of the rising a new policy of conciliation was adopted by the government. This was to prove basically unsuccessful, but this conciliatory period reveals very clearly the diverse nature of the conventicles' cause. In essence governmental policy was one of indulgence by which attempts were made to adopt a conciliatory attitude by authorising ousted ministers to hold indoor meetings at times other than that of the established church services. This policy contained in two indulgences of 1669 and 1672 ultimately resulted in about eighty parishes being served by non-conformist indulged ministers, who were to constitute an important peaceful alternative to the established episcopal church.

The policy of the administration had not relied solely on conciliation, however, for coupled with each of the Indulgences were further coercive measures against ministers who had either not been indulged or refused to accept the limitations imposed by the Indulgences. A further proclamation prohibiting conventicles was issued on 3 February 1670 and stern action was taken against those associated with them by fines and imprisonment. Transportation to the Barbados or Virginia appears at this juncture as a more powerful deterrent although this at first appears to have been exclusively reserved for those connected with the Pentland rising. Legislation with its associated penalties was, however, to no avail and conventicles both in the fields and increasingly in houses within burghs continued unabated. In short the policy of Indulgence had done little or nothing to ease the conventicling problem and may even be held to have promoted it.

The combination of field and house conventicles presented a formidable array of opposition for the council who must have been thankful that these twin pillars of Presbyterian support were largely, although not exclusively confined to areas south of the river Tay. In the South, however, attitudes were hardening partly in the face of continued repression, but also through bitterness towards the indulged. As time went on the uncompromising attitude of the more radical of the field preachers led them to make even more vigorous attacks on the authority of the state and in so doing they not only created a greater gulf than before between themselves and the moderates, but also intensified the Council's fear of another armed rebellion.

As this fear grew, pressure upon the conventiclers was stepped up. The apprehension and imprisonment of field preachers was accompanied by a more intensive policy of fining and quartering those who attended conventicles. The fear of active resistance at such gathering in an indemnity issued in June 1670 that if conventicler in arms be killed or wounded in resisting arrest then any members of the king's forces involved were to be regarded as "harmless and skaiethes and not lyable to any persure, civill or criminell". Such measures were, however, by no means the only ones. The new state prison on the Bass Rock in the Firth of Forth was deemed a fitting place of incarceration for the most persistent of the field preachers of whom several, including Robert Gillespie and Alexander Peden, were lodged there during 1673-74. As pressure increased on the conventiclers so did the number of prisoners rapidly multiply during 1676-77. Prisoners who were prepared to give bonds of caution were however released from time to time. Ill-health was often advanced as the reason for release and conditions on the tiny island on which there was no fresh water certainly cannot have been conducive to the prisoners' well-being. Their plight was not entirely without remedy, however, and while no prisoner was allowed his own servant, women were appointed by the governor to attend upon the prisoners who, unless in close arrest, were also "to have the liberty of the ile in the day tymes ... providyed that he permitt none but two of them at once to have that liberty". In an island which is only a mile in circumference and rises three hundred and fifty feet out of the sea, the opportunity for exercise was perhaps limited, but it was a concession which many less fortunate prisoners held in other prisons throughout the country would certainly have welcomed. It is uncertain whether the accusation that Lord Advocate MacKenzie in taking office in 1677 found the jails full of prisoners whom his predecessor Sir John Nisbet "had left in chains, because he had neither been bribed to prosecute
them nor bribed to release them” is true, but it is unquestionable that conventilers were frequently detained for long periods without trial.\textsuperscript{43} Eight such prisoners petitioned the council for their liberty on the grounds that they had been detained “in the tollbooth of Stirling thes threttime moneths to the sad loss and utter ruine of them and there poore famellies, who are most pairet put to begine for want of us who should wine their liveing”.\textsuperscript{44} Their petition was granted on condition that they gave a bond not to attend conventicles, but this they refused to do, and council then ordered their transportation, which with the exception of one prisoner who was thought to be dying was duly effected. In pursuing this course of action, the council can be accused of a degree of vindictiveness, but it can be equally maintained that a consistent policy following the rule of law was being maintained. Liberation from prison could normally be secured by subscription of a bond promising not to attend conventicles. Finding sufficient surety against the breaking of this promise posed a problem for the very poor, but refusal to take the bond, rather than failure to find caution appears to have lain behind most extended confinements.

Such actions in themselves achieved little and as this became apparent even more determined action came to be taken against conventilers. A policy, first attempted in 1674, of requiring landowners to become surety for their tenants was revived in 1677, and when the heritors of Ayrshire and Clydesdale refused to comply with this edict which they considered impracticable, their consent was enforced by fining and the quartering of a highland host upon all recalcitrants.\textsuperscript{45} This exercise in repression may have been deemed successful by Lauderdale, but several numbers of the nobility expressed doubts about the wisdom of a policy which achieved little beyond the impoverishment of their tenants. Such a policy was in fact futile and with this realisation, repressive policies were intensified. Transportation now became a recognised means of dealing with Conventilers whereas previously this punishment had been used but sparingly.

As government attitudes hardened so too did the temper of the conventilers. Some conventicles in the South-west never totally dispersed and met in predetermined places where they were joined by other adherents. As they grew in strength it is obvious that their aims began to shift as the opportunity for exerting pressure upon the King and council for the implementation of their demands became more

and more feasible. What these demands were to be was never entirely certain, but it seems obvious that although the principles of the Covenant were still accepted, the solution to be demanded was seen within a Scottish framework. Within this context all would have agreed that a presbyterian establishment within the church was their ultimate goal, but as to the nature of that church and its relationship with the state, opinion was deeply divided ranging through various degrees of compromise to the total rejection of all state authority.

This attitude which was more prominent among the laity than among the clergy was to lead to the murder of Archbishop Sharp which in turn made armed insurrection inevitable. The decision appears to have been taken at a conventicle at Avondale on 25 May 1679 and following a preliminary skirmish with government forces at Drumclog the conventiling army encamped at Bothwell Bridge where they were to be totally defeated on 21 June 1679.\textsuperscript{46} At the end of the day all who had taken to arms could be considered traitors. Yet the government seemed initially to recognise its own part in bringing about the rising. Only two radical preachers were executed, but plans made to deport some three or four hundred prisoners were cancelled in favour of a royal indemnity which pledged them never to rise in arms again.\textsuperscript{47} Most subscribed but some four hundred remained obdurate and in face of this obstinacy, government attitude hardened and criminal proceedings were initiated against nine men who refused to acknowledge that the rebellion had been treason and the death of the archbishop murder. The council used every means to persuade the remainder to sign the bond. Another hundred, re-assured by the decision of several Presbyterian ministers that the bond might be lawfully subscribed, decided to comply.\textsuperscript{48} Others were released unconditionally while others solved their dilemma of conscience by escaping. Among the remaining three hundred, some who eventually wished to subscribe were ostracised by their fellow, and further chaos resulted when some of those who wished to sign rescinded their decision under this pressure. As confusion mounted, the council decided to solve the problem by deporting two hundred and fifty-eight of the prisoners, most of whom unfortunately perished in a shipwreck off the Orkney Islands.\textsuperscript{49}

Of the thirty men eventually arraigned on charges of treason and for failing to acknowledge that the killing of the archbishop was murder, all were given an opportunity of subscribing the bond and all
but six, who were hanged, subscribed. In this light government action was not unduly vindictive. Even the confinement of the majority of the prisoners in huts in a vacant walled-in part of what became Greyfriars' churchyard might also be considered a better fate than imprisonment in conventional insanitary and overcrowded prisons. The season of their confinement for the majority extended only over the summer and lack of adequate security made escape a practical possibility for a not inconsiderable number. Toleration once again seemed to be possible, and indeed for a time with the issue of a third indulgence immediately following the battle of Bothwell Bridge it seemed that a policy which would have isolated all but the most fanatical of the field preachers and their followers would be pursued.

However, this was not to be; the arrival of the duke of York in November 1679 and the removal in October 1680 of the duke of Lauderdale from his office of Commissioner heralded a new policy. As long as he remained in power, moderate presbyterian opinion had been little disturbed by the repressive policies aimed at conventicles. With his removal extremists and moderates alike were to be indiscriminately penalised in an attempt to remove all trace of schism from the church.

The opportunity to do so was undoubtedly presented by the survival of a small sect of covenanting Presbyterians — the Cameronians as they came to be called after their leader Richard Cameron — who although they could no longer claim to represent the Presbyterian viewpoint purported to do so in a series of declarations in which Cameron and his associates disowned the king and declared "a war with such a tyrant and usurper". Reaction was swift and with the death of Cameron at Airds Moss and with the execution of several adherents including their sole remaining field preacher, the Cameronian cause suffered a heavy blow. Most of those who were executed could have saved themselves by acknowledging the authority of the King, but this they refused to do. In addition those who had preceded Cargill to the gallows repudiated all other ministers other than he, and in this last extremity the remnant finally separated themselves from the main body of Presbyterian dissent. Persecution, however, was not exclusively reserved for Cameronians and thereafter the government treated all dissenters as part of a single problem. As field conventicles had been effectively curtailed following Bothwell Bridge, house conventicles became the special object of the council's concern. The privileges offered under the third Indulgence were virtually withdrawn in May 1680 and all but one of the licences were recalled during the course of the year. In the following year the process of withdrawing concessions from indulged ministers continued. Many of these now chose exile in England into which they were followed by such of the ousted ministers who were not imprisoned in Scotland. By the close of 1681 the problem of dissent, both moderate and fanatical appeared to have been resolved.

Any hopes in this direction, however, had already been unwittingly shattered by the passing of two acts of parliament on 13 August 1681. The first of these — a succession act — in securing the right of hereditary succession ensured that James, duke of York, would succeed to the throne, while the second — a Test act — required office holders to swear that they held the protestant faith as expressed in the Scots Confession of 1560, and to recognise the King as supreme in all causes temporal and spiritual. Difficulties were at once raised, not only as recognition of the King's supremacy inconsistent with the Scots Confession, but the Test Act taken in conjunction with the earlier act of succession involved the eventual acceptance of a Catholic sovereign as head of the Church. As a result of these inconsistencies many ministers refused to take the test and about fifty ministers were deprived in consequence. The secession from the established church of a group of moderate ministers inevitably added a new dimension to the dissenters' cause. For although about twenty went south and conformed to the Church of England, others acceded to non-conformity. The implementation of the Test Act brought further lay and clerical adherents to a cause which could convincingly associate itself with the defense of protestantism within the realm.

Faced with this new problem, the Council stepped up its campaign of persecution. If the Cameronians alone had been persecuted, governmental policy might be vindicated, although the fears upon which repression was based were generally unfounded, for after the death of Cameron and Cargill, the "Remnant" continued not as an active opposition but as an interrelated group of praying societies. The persecution as Cameronians was, however, inextricably bound to the harrying of presbyterianism in general.

Throughout the years 1681-1684, persecution involving the execution of Cameronians and the imprisonment and the deportation of Conventiclers escalated. Spurred on by the appearance of James
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Renwick as ordained minister to the “Remnant” in September 1683 and the revival of field conventicling, the Council, haunted by the fear of another rebellion, redoubled its efforts against dissenters. If doubts were occasionally about the wisdom of such a policy, the publication by Renwick and his associates on 8 November 1684 of the “Apologetical Declaration” in which they re-affirmed their war against the State served to convince them of the righteousness of their course. An abjuration oath was framed and those who refused it were to be arbitrarily shot — the killing times had commenced.

During the next three years some seventy-eight victims were summarily dispatched in the fields either for refusing the oath of Abjuration, attempting to resist or escape arrest. Most famous of all, however, is the case of the Wigtown Martyrs — two women supposedly drowned in the Solway for refusing the oath. Whether their deaths is “one of the best attested facts in history” or a covenanted myth is, however, irrelevant to the main point at issue. Accredited martyrs are sufficiently numerous to engage their supporters or detractors. With some justification those who died might be considered as a “desperat phanatical and irredeemable partie, who have brought us to the brink of ruin and disgrace”. In the circumstances such action may have been necessary, but what is more difficult to justify is the increasingly indiscriminate persecution of presbyterians who neither approved nor countenanced the extremist.

Presbyterians as distinct from Cameronians were seldom executed but their treatment was exceedingly harsh. One of the chief instruments of this policy was John Graham of Claverhouse who from 1682 pursued non-conformists in the south-west by quartering soldiers, pillaging houses and reducing families to near starvation. In his own words he “rifled so their houses, ruined their goods... that their wyves and schildering were brought to sterving”. His sweep of the countrysides was so efficient that few eluded the net of Claverhouse and his specially enlisted roughriders who scourred the countrysides by day and night. Soon Claverhouse could boast that this “contray now is in perfect peace”. This apparent success led to similar commissions being granted elsewhere and reports similar to that of Sir William Bruce from the shire of Kinross “that he had convened before him all who were present at the late conventicles, and fined them, and since, they have all, save a few, returned to their duty, and engaged to keep their parish church” pointed towards ostensible success. Widespread suffering was caused by the myriad of petty tyrants who under these commissions and others were authorised to proceed against all who had associated with rebels and absented themselves from their parish church. Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than the Regality Court of Malrose in which the bailie George Pringle of Blindlie relentlessly fined those within his jurisdiction “who have transgressed Acts of Parliament forbidding the frequenting of house and field conventicles, and keeping disorderly baptisms and marriages, and withdrawing from their own parish churches”. A few may have been culpable of more serious charges, but the vast majority fined in this court, some on more that one occasion, were simple Presbyterian non-conformists who were being harried for their religious rather than their political persuasion. This is equally true of many others who were transported to Carolina in this same period, thus relieving the pressure upon the prisons which in places such as Dumfries were full and overflowing with recusants. Most, if not all, of these deported in this manner were, however, of lowly status and fining and quartering remained the standard penalty for those of substance. Viewed as a whole it is clear that government policy had become the general extirpation of Presbyterianism at large. Claverhouse, one of the principal agents of this policy, certainly saw this as his allotted task when in a letter to Queensbury on 19 May 1684 he wrote: “I may cur people guilty of that plague of presbytry be convening with them...” Claverhouse’s optimism was, however, misplaced and even greater efforts to this end were required in the years ahead.

The intensification of these efforts to extirpate Presbyterianism was avowedly caused by the resumption of field conventicling following the arrival of James Renwick as minister to the Cameronians in 1683, and the Presbyterians themselves looking to the consequence of his mission and the greater severity thereafter practised against them denounced Renwick as “the great cause and occasion of all the troubles of the country”. All former policy of conciliation was totally reversed in November 1684 when the council embarked on the process of “outing” all the indulged ministers. Thereafter, all Presbyterian ministers whatever their degree of commitment to the principle of state control over the established church were to be indiscriminately persecuted. Fines, transportation and imprisonment in state prisons on the Bass in Dunnottar all took their toll in the harrying of Presbyterians back into the fold of the
established church. Transportation was seen as the final solution for obdurate Presbyterians, but it took time to effect. In the meantime, the prisons grew more crowded as the drag-net increased and became more indiscriminate in consequence. Elizabeth McCluine an old woman visiting a dying friend in Glasgow was arrested during a search for suspects and had been lodged both in the tolbooth of Edinburgh and in Dunnottar as had been Marion Forest who had gone there to visit her husband and was instead apprehended in a search for escaped prisoners.68 Conditions within such prisons were abysmal as a description of conditions in Dunnottar attests. One hundred and ten men and women were in one vault "where there is little or no daylight at all, and, contrare to all modestie, men and women promiscuously together and fourtie two more in another room in the same condition, and no person allowed to come near them with meat or drink, but such bread and drink as scarce any rationall creature can live upon, and yet at extraordinary rates".69 Most of the complaints of prisoners were about food for as one prisoner in the tolbooth of Stirling reported in November 1684 "we have gotten straw and clothes in abundance, and we get meat and drink enough for the payment, but it is very dear".70 Friends and relations could help out, but even this required caution and one prisoner warned prospective visitors:

If any of you com to us, com not rashly for ther is non that comes to sie prinsors, but they ar taken and sercht ver narly for leters and taken to the garde til they saw ther testificat and if they have non, they will not win out til they take the Test ore els ingadsh to com hom and send a testificat again such a day.71

Banishment was the ultimate punishment facing most of these prisoners. Many of these held in Dunnottar were eventually disposed of in this manner, being joined by others who had been apprehended after the Argyll rising. Nearly one hundred men and women, of whom seventy perished on the voyage, sailed from Leith on 5 September 1685.72 Smaller consignments left at regular intervals, some of these heading for voluntary exile in a small Scottish settlement in East New Jersey which had been founded by the Quaker, Robert Barclay of Uris in Aberdeenshire.73 As convicts or exiles, the journey ahead was arduous and uncertain and while some made a new life for themselves, many died in transit or in bondage. It was through such persecution and others which involved branding, cutting in the ear or simple neglect in prison rather than on the scaffold or in the fields that the dissenting Presbyterians suffered, not because they were traitors, but as religious non-conformists.

On the surface these repressive policies were successful and most flocks were driven back to their parish church by such means. Whether such a church could have held together for long is problematic, but in the event, this was not to be put to the test of time. Instead, when James VII, who had succeeded his brother as king in 1685, published in 1687 two Indulgences which were principally designed to aid his co-religionists, but also removed restrictions against other religious dissenters with the exception of those against field conventicles, the setting up of an embryonic Presbyterian structure began.74 Presbyteries and meeting houses were to be established and provisions were made for the licensing and ordaining students. Insofar as it could be accomplished within the terms of the privileges conceded to them, Presbyterians set about re-creating the body of their church, which at the Revolution of 1688 was poised to make a successful bid for establishment.75

The Revolution equally ended the persecution of the Cameronian remnant, whose leader Renwick had been executed in 1687, but they, as unwilling to recognise the newly established church, as that which they had struggled against for so long, were destined to remain as a small insignificant sect, as uncompromising and as fanatical as ever.76 To others, however, compromise had always been possible and it was to such a solution that the Indulged, the more moderate of the ousted ministers and ultimately the Church of the Scotland gave its blessing. In the battle towards this end the gulf which separated fanatical covenant and the most moderate of Presbyterians was never so great as may have been imagined. In their attitude to the state control of the church, Cameronians and Presbyterians were agreed in principle, but deeply divided in the practical application of that principle. In the last resort, the Cameronian was prepared to wage war against the state and die for his beliefs, whereas the more moderate Presbyterian who was always willing to compromise was not asked to die, if he acknowledged the authority of the king, but often suffered deprivation of liberty and other penalties for refusing to bow to the established Church. If this element of compromise was reprehensible to some, such attitudes eventually won the day for the
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presbyterian church. Nevertheless, an incalculable debt was owed to the more extreme groups who ensured by their sheer determination in the face of mounting repression that state control of the church would be minimised.

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The Role of the Scottish Catholic Society in the Determination of the Antigonish Movement

This paper intends to analyze the relationship between two different forms of identity consolidation, a Scottish Gaelic revival and a self-help co-operative movement. Both movements occurred in Eastern Nova Scotia in the interval between the end of World War I and the beginning of World War II.

In this paper these movements are seen as examples of that general process termed identity consolidation. This process is best understood in the context of Mol's work (Identity and the Sacred) on the relationship between religion and identity. Here, religion is broadly defined to include any social phenomena which may permit mundane social arrangements to take on a mantle of permanence that is usually associated with the sacred. Identity may be understood as the constant tendency within society to create a predictable niche for social existence. The term identity consolidation therefore means that identity becomes firmly established in all its aspects in and through some religious experience.

What this perspective assumes in that the explanation of stability in society is problematic; it argues that such stability can be grasped in its different forms as "identity" and that "religion" has special capacities permitting particular identity forms to appear so fixed in social existence that such identity becomes a means of insuring social stability. This assumption of problematic stability may be fleshed out if we understand society to be necessarily comprised of two opposing yet interrelated tendencies, those of adaption and consolidation. The metaphor is biological. In order for society to