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### Abstract

Protestant Scotland demonstrated a remarkable unity and unparalleled resistance to schism in its first century. This article addresses the core principles that facilitated resistance to diversification and the degree to which Reformed theology framed Scottish understandings of both the nation as church and the nature of a Christian Commonwealth. These views were rooted in the Scottish Protestantism from the beginning in the confession of faith, liturgy, secular and ecclesiastical legislation, and theological formulations, and can be traced back directly to Knox's experience in Geneva. This chapter explores the strengths and weaknesses of Reformed theological solidarity in early modern Scotland, as well as its points of strain, eventual fragmentation and dissent.

### Keywords

covenant, Reformed theology, federalism, ecclesiology, Calvin, John Knox, covenanters, Robert Barclay

## 25

What is meant by 'theology' in the period between

## **Boundaries of Scottish Reformed Orthodoxy, 1560–1700**

R. Scott Spurlock

### **Introduction**

This chapter proposes that key Reformed theological principles set in place at the outset of Scotland's Reformation fundamentally shaped the broad trajectory of Scottish Protestantism and set the parameters of orthodoxy, while at the same time establishing sometimes

contradictory impulses that became increasingly fragmentary by the middle of the seventeenth century and required recasting by the eighteenth—especially outside the universities.

## **Parameters of Scottish Reformed Religion**

In 1560 the Scottish Parliament established Protestantism as the state religion and explicitly framed it with a theologically Reformed confession of faith. The document set out key aspects that would typify Scottish Reformed theology. At the outset, the preamble of the confession declared the new religion to be established by the Estates of Scotland—the three historical constituencies in the Scottish Parliament: the nobility, burghs, and clergy—‘with the Inhabitants of the same’, meaning the whole nation of Scotland was being committed to upholding Protestantism. The declaration further asserted the new religious paradigm was being established for ‘the glory of God and maintenance of the commonwealth’ (Calderwood 1842–9: II, 16). Hence Protestantism became a hallmark for the unification of the Scottish political state.

The roots of this ideology had been mooted by John Knox the year before the Reformation when he wrote to the nobility declaring that any group, city, province, or nation that professed the true Protestant religion had entered into the ‘same leag[u]e and covenant’ that God had made with Israel (Knox 1846–64: IV, 505). Thus, Scotland was, through the proclamation of the three Estates in Parliament, committed by proxy to Protestantism at the national level, with the whole population—like the Jews before them—falling under established covenanted obligations. As a result, from the outset of the Scottish Reformation the ecclesiology and application of baptism was highly inclusive, with the order of baptism invoking Christ’s command to ‘preache and baptise all without exception’ – seemingly a

conflation of Mark 16:15 and Matthew 28:19 (Church of Scotland 1565: 64). The corporate (and national) nature was also emphasized, stressing that baptism within the community of faith is mark of the ‘league & couenant made betwene God & vs, yt he wilbe our God. & we his people’ (Calderwood 1842–9: II, 101–2). This was framed in line with the advice of Calvin to Knox that baptism should not be limited only to the children of the godly, because ‘wherever the profession of Christianity has not wholly perished or become extinct . . . no one is received to baptism in respect or favour of his father alone, but on account of the perpetual covenant of God’ (Knox 1846–64: 96). Calvin explicitly referenced the thousand generation covenant (Exodus 20:6; Deuteronomy 7:9) invoked in the 1556 Genevan service book (Maxwell 1965: 105) and his *Institutes* (VI.16.9), and it persisted in the Scottish liturgy from the first version of 1562 (Church of Scotland 1565: 63).

While ecclesiology was inclusive, this mixed multitude created a strong need for discipline to be ‘ministered . . . whereby vice is repressed and virtue nourished’ (Calderwood 1842–9: II, 28). In fact, this was understood to be so important that from this foundational document of Scottish Protestantism discipline is identified as one of the three marks of the true church along with the Word rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered (Calderwood 1842–9: II, 28). The *First Book of Discipline* (1560) went on to assert ‘To Discipline must all Estates within this Realm be subject if they offend’, that is the constituent components of the Scottish society, a view reiterated in the *Second Book of Discipline* (1578) (Kirk 1980: 169). Thus the early Reformed declarations on the nature of the Church, while consistently emphasizing that it comprised confessing believers, implicitly saddled the obligation to believe and be obedient upon all Scots. This should not be surprising for Knox, like other Reformed theologians where magisterial reform represented a real possibility, tended to ‘confound church and nation’ and drew heavily on the Old Testament for framing expectations of God’s engagement with corporate peoples (Kyle 1984: 486). As such,

comprehensive church attendance was pressed, at least theoretically, so that ‘the reprobate may be joined in the society of the elect, and may externally use them the benefites of the World and Sacraments’ (Calderwood 1842–9: II, 36). The challenge of governing a mixed multitude fuelled the presbyterian imperative felt by men like Andrew Melville, who played a prominent role in writing the *Second Book of Discipline*. In order to define its breadth, while at the same time protecting its integrity, the *Second Book* provided a threefold definition of the Church, comprising: (1) the visible church of all confessors including hypocrites; (2) the invisible church made up of the elect only; (3) the office bearers to whom the power to govern is given directly from Christ. By providing a distinction between multiple forms of membership distinct from those entrusted to rule, the definition sought to protect the integrity of church governance and give it divinely sanctioned authority (Kirk 1980: 163). Hence the role of discipline was not exclusionary, but rather sought to bring about correction, reconciliation, and ultimately inclusion.

Church membership represented the expected norm, and the use of church discipline, even excommunication, served to correct behaviour through social marginalization in order to restore membership and community (Knox 1846–64: II, 230). Therefore, drawing directly from Calvin, while excommunication prevented participation in the sacraments it did not ‘forbid . . . the hearing of sermons’, because these may ‘occasion to repent’ (Church of Scotland 1565: 117). But more significant evidence for the treatment of the whole population as part of a corporate body responsible for godly obedience and observation of religious duties came in the practice of General Fast. These nationally or locally implemented periods of fasting and repentance were intended to avert God’s judgement against the community and were compulsory for the whole population. In this Scotland went beyond the Huguenots or even the Dutch in assuming the Kirk’s discipline ‘was assumed to embrace the entire population of the kingdom, irrespective of rank’ (Dawson 2009: 124).

The question of how this conceptual development took shape remains unanswered. Within this tradition, the Reformed Church emphasized the distinction between civil and spiritual government, the former residing in the godly monarch and magistrates, the latter being the preserve of the Church. Both realms were of course equally subject to God; therefore they could work together for the maintenance of a godly commonwealth, though the obedience to one could be conditional on its obedience to the other. While scholars have addressed the Scottish version of the two kingdoms theory, what has not received much analysis is the fact that while the theory sets out two distinct but interrelated jurisdictions, it implies a unitary constituency. Moreover, although theoretically voluntary and conditional on profession of faith, membership was in fact coercively enforced (Graham 1996: 74). By 1562 the General Assembly denounced the continued pervasiveness of sin in the country and lamented the risk of God's wrath being poured out on the whole nation, not just members of the Church, and called for Parliament to pronounce the death penalty for blasphemy, idolatry, and adultery (Church of Scotland 1839–45: I, 21). In Reformed Scotland the concepts of the church and the godly commonwealth inhabited the same space. From the church's perspective the role of the state was to facilitate and support the church, while from the state's perspective the discipline of the church upheld the morality and integrity of the godly commonwealth. This was to a large degree set out in the 1567 General Assembly declaration that the coronation of the monarch would be dependent on first making a 'faithfull league and promise to the true kirk of God' and its Reformed profession, a demand reiterated in the 1581 King's Confession that required the monarch and all those holding office to profess the Protestant religion (Church of Scotland 1839–45: I, 108–10). By 1598, Parliament even declared that all subjects of the Scottish crown 'should embrace the religion presently professed' and ordered all subjects to hear the word preached and partake in the sacraments

(Scotland, Parliament 2007–19: 1598/10/2). Therefore, to be fully Scottish was to be Protestant.

## **Covenant and the Unity of Early Modern Scottish**

### **Theology**

It has recently been claimed that Scotland's long Reformation should be understood as the formation of a confessional state, albeit this assertion under appreciates the role a distinctive theological tradition played in the development of Protestant Scotland (Stewart 2016: 12). Arguably the most prudent study of early modern Scottish Reformed theology, and its broad coherence across presbyterian and episcopal predilections, is David Mullan's *Scottish Puritanism, 1590–1638*. However, this too identifies a purported paradox in Scottish Reformed theology originating in Knox, who introduced, 'even if unwittingly . . . two distinct covenanting ideas: one, a national, corporate, sociological construct absent from Calvin, the other very much focused on the individual salvation of those elected to grace from eternity' (Mullan 2000: 179). T. F. Torrance also claimed an innate, albeit only nascent, tension in Knox that later Scottish theologians developed into a 'bifurcation' between an evangelical tradition that remained true to Knox and Calvin and the federal theology of the covenanters which resulted, in his view, in two distinct traditions of Scottish Reformed theology (Torrance 1996: 64). Within this milieu determining what is orthodox and what held a distinctive Scottish theological tradition together has become obfuscated.

However, a close reading of Calvin demonstrates the foundations from which Knox could derive both the principles of a broad inclusive external covenant (general election) and the soteriologically specific covenant of election (special election) directly from Geneva. The 1585 Edinburgh edition of William Lawne's abridged version of Calvin's *Institutes*,

presented in a dialectic, quasi-catechetical form, applies a particularly nationalistic focus where the chapter on ‘Eternal Election’ discusses Abraham (III.21.7).<sup>1</sup> It asks the question ‘Why is not the general electio of one people alwayes sure and certain?’ before explaining that since ‘God doeth not straight way geve those the Spirit of regeneration . . . vntill the end in the same couenant’ the elect will experience justification while the reprobate will not. This is not surprising, but it is framed in an overarching discussion of the general election of the ‘whole issue of Abraham’ including Ishmael, Esau, and the tribes of Israel. However, the text reminds the reader, referencing ‘generall election, ‘it lieth in [God’s] will, what shall be the estate of euery nation’ (Lawne 1585: 238–9). He further emphasized the promise of God’s mercy down to a thousand generations (Lawne 1585: 96, 349). This provided a powerful model for understanding a visible and inclusive church, particularly when the covenant promises were understood as generational, and demanded active pastoral working among a mixed multitude of the specially elect and reprobates. What will follow is a reassessment of the role that covenant played in framing both a (compulsorily) inclusive ecclesiology and a near comprehensively held emphasis on limited atonement (even in cases where men like Fraser of Brea proposed the theoretical possibility of universal atonement) which together demanded a priority of emphasis on practical, pastoral theology and comprehensive social discipline. This inclusivist and pastoral approach to Reformed theology provided—arguably—the most schismatically resistant national Protestant church in the first century of the Reformation (Donaldson 1972).

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<sup>1</sup> USTC claims this Thomas Vautrollier first edition of *An Abridgement of the Institution of Christian Religion* was published in London, despite an Edinburgh imprint and an approbation ‘cum privilegio Regali’ – representing permission by the Scottish authorities. However, the publication of James VI’s *The essayes of a prentise in the divne art of Poesie* (1584) and a royal proclamation in 1585 both with Vautrollier’s imprint and the same ‘Anchora Spei’ device suggest all three works were produced in Edinburgh, as he did not remove to London until 1586.



The underpinning schema of early Reformed theology in Scotland was God's covenantal engagement with the world and it was this framework that enabled the expectation of inclusive outward membership, the preaching of salvation for the elect, and comprehensive discipline of the whole community to be upheld. As Robert Rollock famously declared, 'all the worde of God appertaines to some couenant: for God speaks nothing to man without the couenant' (Rollock 1849: I, 6). While Rollock played a pivotal role in the formulation of covenant theology, the soteriological emphasis upon the effectual calling of the elect has overshadowed his emphasis on the ongoing need for the covenant of works. One covenant is not displaced by the other in his thought. Instead, like Zacharius Ursinus, he viewed them as a singular promise in twofold expression (Rollock 1849: I, 34). While the covenant of grace brings salvation to the individual through their election in Christ, the covenant of works 'provides a means for conversion' and constraining the confessing community to godliness. Hence Rollock emphasizes that God 'hath manifested the whole doctrine of both covenants to his Church' (Rollock 1849: 274). Rollock understood the church to be broad and inclusive and not simply comprising those who find assurance in their sense of election. Speaking of both church and commonwealth, he declared it 'is a minister of Sathan, that seeing a man faithfull in any calling, goeth about to seuer them . . . whom God hath ioyned together' (Rollock 1603: 15) But whom has God so joined together?

For Rollock, it is a Christ-professing community, expressed in both church and the commonwealth. He, like Knox before him and the majority of early modern Reformed Scottish theologians after him, relied primarily on the Old Testament for interpreting God's engagement with corporate bodies. He argued that both the covenants of works and grace had also been struck with the 'old church and people' from 'Adam to the Apostles', though the covenant of grace was not fully clear (Woolsey 2012: 519). 'O how loath was he to cast away that nation that he had chosen of old from among all nations!', Rollock declared. 'A people

that he hath once begun with, O how loath will he be to cast away that people! Scotland hath a proof of this, I dare say it!’ (Rollock 1849: II, 525). In fact, elsewhere, Rollock described ‘the whole kingdom of Christ’ to relate to both church and commonwealth (1849: II, 12). While scholarly attention has rightly emphasized the significance of Rollock’s contribution to the development of federal theology, particularly in relation to soteriological formulations, he also needs to be recognized for his continuity with the ecclesiology and sacralizing of the Christian commonwealth that typified Scotland’s Reformation (Letham 1983). Rollock understood that covenant served as the binding agent of a Christian commonwealth, when it recognized the headship of Christ (Rollock 1603: 176). For Rollock the visible church and the Christian society, or commonwealth as he termed it, were inextricably linked and although they possessed distinct jurisdictions, they represented a shared constituency. His views were spread widely through his writings, preaching, and the pulpits of the many ministers whom he trained.

Robert Bruce shared these impulses. Like Rollock, Bruce preached the covenant of grace to knowingly mixed congregations, emphasizing that God only dwelled in the hearts of the elect—and they were a ‘chosen few’ (Bruce 1607: 300). Therefore, just as there had been among the Israelites, Bruce emphasized the continued need for preaching the covenant of works and the rule of the law because ‘maketh them keepe an externall society’ (Bruce 1617: 341–2). This thought follows directly in line with Calvin’s threefold use of the law, but the application of it to a nation was a significant move beyond its implementation in a city state. While Bruce may remain known principally for the intimacy of his pastoral and sacramental theology, he equally upheld the national nature of the Kirk and the imperative for discipline. In deeply pastoral sermons on Isaiah 38, published posthumously, he reminded his audience of the blessings and obligations resting upon Scotland, declaring that God had once chosen the Jews but had translated his tabernacle to Scotland (Bruce 1617: 300).

These priorities should not be thought the sole preserve of Reformed theologians of a presbyterian outlook. The 1616 General Assembly, which had a heavily episcopalian disposition comprising all Scotland's bishops and a large number of representatives from the north-east, including Patrick Forbes of Corse, produced a proposed new confession of faith that emphatically declared the doctrine of double predestination as well as profession of the Protestant faith and membership in the Kirk as requirements of being 'true subjects' of the Scottish crown (Church of Scotland 1839–45: I, 1132–39). In the locality, men like William Cowper, minister of Perth (1595–1613) and then bishop of Galloway (1613–19), expressed Reformed, election-based soteriology and upheld a covenant-based inclusive that demanded rigorous discipline, while at the same time remaining deeply committed to defending episcopal government (Todd 2004). A similar approach might be understood in John Forbes of Corse's emphasis on the corporate nature of election in what he termed 'compredestination', which served as the foundation for his high doctrine of the sacraments (Torrance 1996: 88). These principles were largely uncontested by supporters of presbyterianism or episcopacy, and despite periods of vehement disagreement over liturgical innovations there is little evidence of any sectarian impetus in Scotland over matters relating to the locus of salvation or the comprehensive scope of the national church. Even critics of the Five Articles of Perth, whom the bishops accused of being nonconformists and meeting in 'conventicles' during times of public worship, denied schismatic or separatist intentions (Coffey 1997: 192). Scottish nonconformists of the 1620s remained thoroughly committed to the principle of a national church and Rutherford, who had participated in conventicles, later declared attendance at private worship during the time of public worship to be 'Brownism . . . the act of separation' (Rutherford 1984: 578–9). Therefore an undivided national church remained a shared principle rooted in covenantal assumptions.

# From the Covenant of Works to a Twofold Covenant of Grace

Fusion of commonwealth and church was not necessarily explicit in the 1581 King's Confession, although David Calderwood would indeed look back on this event as formal recognition of Scotland's covenanted status (Calderwood 1620: 26–7). Yet this was not uniformly recognized in the intervening period, because in 1600 James Melville called Scotland to follow the Judean kings Asa and Josiah in making 'solemne Covenants and Bands . . . betwix God and the King, God and the peiple, and betwix the King and the peiple, beginning in this present Assemblie, and sa going to Provincialles, Presbyteries, and throw everie Congregation of this land' (Melville 1842: 490–1; Calderwood 1842–9, VI, 107). This formalizing of the corporate expectations in trilateral commitments between God, the king, and the people of Scotland made what had been implicit now explicit. Eleven years previously, a band had been subscribed on the order of the privy council by 'all noblemen, barons, gentlemen and others' promising to uphold the true religion, the monarchy, and the nation in the face of feared international plots (Calderwood 1842–9: V, 49). In 1596, the General Assembly renewed the King's Confession, explicitly calling it a covenant, after which 'particular synods and presbyteries' followed suit under the direction of it being a 'covenant between God and his ministrie' (Calderwood 1842–9: V, 388, 433). In response to Melville's call for national covenanting, the General Assembly duly ordered in 1601 that a fast and 'renewing of the covenant with God . . . to be kepted universallie in one weeke' (Calderwood 1842–9: VI, 112). This was replicated in 1606 when the king 'with all his subjects standing fast bound to God by a most solemne covenant, sworne and subscribed throughout the land' (Calderwood 1842–9: VI, 394). John Forbes of Alford, soon to be exiled in Middleburg, warned the General Assembly of the gravity of the covenant 'all the whole

land' had made with God and warned that it must not be broken (Calderwood 1842–9: VI, 474). The importance in asserting this here is that even before the signing of the National Covenant in 1638, the whole of Scotland was understood to be explicitly covenanted with God.

Therefore National Covenant did not represent an innovation, but rather confirmation of a perceived reality. The full significance of this, however, only came to be unequivocally expressed in the years that followed. One of the key expressions of covenanting theology in the 1640s and 1650s came in the form of a biblical commentaries series orchestrated by David Dickson (Gribben and Mullan 2009: 14–15). This intentional collaboration drew on both university-based academics and parish ministers, spanning the Protester/Resolutioner divide. Noted for their similarity in approach and style, the commentaries upheld in the clearest of terms the dual emphases on the covenanted obligation of a people elected by God and the soul-nurturing required for ministering to tender consciences. The themes, which reflected Scotland's own covenanted status, naturally came to the fore as the majority of the commentaries addressed Old Testament books. In his commentary on the minor prophets, George Hutcheson declared in unequivocal terms 'it doth contribute to set out the glory of Christs Kingdome under the Gospel . . . he brings whole Nations in visible Covenant with him, and maketh a whole Nation to become a National visible Church' (Hutcheson 1654: 61–2). While discussing God's dealing with Israel and Judah, Hutcheson clearly had his eye on Scotland. However, even in his commentary on Matthew, the national nature of the church came to the fore in David Dickson's analysis: 'Whosoever are born within the compasse of a Nationall covenant with God, are children of *the Kingdome*, that is, have an external title to be heirs of *the Kingdome*' (Dickson 1651: 86). Rutherford and other covenanters shared this view that the nation was indeed a church. In fact, Rutherford went as far as to declare that no child born in Scotland, even if their parents were reprobates, should be denied baptism on the

grounds of being born in a covenanted nation (Rutherford 1655: 76). David Dickson rejected the need to enquire into an individual's election or reprobation as a precondition to membership in the external covenant of church membership, because God 'excludeth no man from embracing the covenant; but, on the contrair, he opens the door to all that are called, to enter into (as it were) the outer court of his dwelling house' (Dickson 1664: 94–5). This was possible in the covenanting mind because of a recasting of the imposition of law and the obligation of church membership as integral parts of the covenant of grace (expressed as a general election of the nation), rather than the covenant of works. Rutherford identified the events at Sinai as a 'darker dispensation' of the covenant of grace (Rutherford 1655: 58–65). He understood this by recasting Rollock's view of a single covenant with a twofold expression (works and grace) into a singular covenant of grace with 'external' and 'internal' dispensations. While only the elect were subject to the internal covenant of grace, all of Scotland, like Israel before them, were partakers of an external covenant of grace which bound them to godly obedience. It should be noted Rutherford recognized the problem with forcing individuals to express faith if they had none, but emphasized the failure of an individual to fulfil religious obligations as undermining a Christian society (Rutherford 1649: 51ff.). This general principle seems to have become implicitly accepted in covenanter thinking, even if expressed diversely, but it should not be viewed as a wholesale shift from ideas derived from Calvin and Knox and applied (if not fully articulated) in the early years of the Scottish Reformation. The bitter divisions of the Protester/Resolution dispute during the Interregnum did not represent a conflict over the accepted soteriological and ecclesiological principles set out above, but rather a vehement disagreement about how to deal with the loss of control by the godly over the reprobate majority. As Hugh Binning put it 'What is now the great blot of our visible church? Here it is, the most part are not God's children, but called so; and it is the greater blot that they are called so, and are not' (Binning 1839–40: II, 409).

Both Resolutioners and Protesters thus agreed the church should be an inclusive mixed multitude, but disagreed about how to wrestle back control from the ungodly. The abject failure of the covenanting movement caused a great existential crisis within the Kirk. One of these expressions came in the form of the first substantive challenges to the nationally constituted Church. In the wake of Dunbar, a number of queries about the very nature of a covenanted nation began to arise. The most significant and sustained of these from a Reformed theological perspective led to the formation of an Independent congregation in Aberdeen in November 1652 under the leadership of Alexander Jaffray, former provost of Aberdeen, and a number of academic staff from Marischal College. Their primary concerns were focused on the lack of real discipline that could be applied in a comprehensive national church, resulting in mixed local congregations and the inevitable inclusion of ungodly communicants in the Lord's Supper which they claimed 'profaned' the Lord's table. The congregation disbanded before the end of the Interregnum, but it is significant for being the first explicit claim for an ecclesiology that prioritized limited church membership (Spurlock 2007: 100–40). Similar claims during Robert Browne's visit to Scotland in the 1580s found no traction (Calderwood 1842–9: IV, 2, 3). Ultimately, the Interregnum government shattered the vision of a comprehensive national Kirk by suspending the General Assembly from 1653 and explicitly making attendance, membership, and submission to presbyterian discipline voluntary.

## **Restoration Recasting**

The Restoration settlement, which systematically deconstructed presbyterian hegemony and eventually banned subscription to the covenants, raised serious challenges for a nation committed to these principles for nearly a century. For men like James Stewart, the situation

was clear, ‘almost as to the number of persons, the Church of Scotland was of equal extent with the Nation, and in that respect of all other National Churches, did most resemble the old Church of the Iewes’ and as such ‘this whole Nation is perpetually joyned unto the Lord’ (Stewart 1667: A2r–A3, 183–4). As a result of Scotland ‘being a nation so solemnly and expresly engaged by Covenant unto God, & one with another . . . there lyeth upon all and every one of us an indispensible duty’, which explicitly included upholding the presbyterian government of the church (Stewart 1667: 150). Similarly, men like John Guthrie, James Renwick, and Alexander Shields claimed the Scotland persisted in being a covenanted land and the obligations of the people to be members of a single visible church could not be abandoned (Guthrie 1663: 2, 8; Renwick and Sheills 1744: 23, 39). The crux of the matter for them was not ecclesiological; they upheld the ideal of a nearly all-inclusive church just as the Restoration Church did—a commitment they demonstrated by criminalizing the Quakers and Baptists in particular, and all dissenting in general. What the hardline covenanters identified above could not abide was the usurpation of presbyterian church governance. However, this was a contested point because the exclusion of episcopacy in the 1638 National Covenant, known as the Glasgow Declaration—added at the General Assembly held in Glasgow in December 1638—was viewed by many as a post-subscription addendum applied retrospectively ten months after signing began. As a result, Andrew Honyman, a covenanter who accepted the bishopric of Orkney in 1664, argued Scotland continued to be a nation in covenant with God in the tradition established in 1581, but free from the ‘contrived [ambitions to] extirpate Episcopacy’ (Honyman 1662: 24). He therefore turned the tables on the author of *Naphtali* and the post-Restoration covenanters accusing them of schism ‘Under pretence of keeping one Article of the Covenant, and that not rightly sensed, they are most guilty of the breach of many of them’ (Honyman 1669: 142). Robert Leighton, who also accepted a Restoration bishopric, shared this view. For Leighton the covenants’ faults—both



National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant—lay with their focus on external things: ‘Religion did not consist of external things, whether of gouernment or ceremonies, but “in righteousness, peac, and joy of,” &c.’. He argued Scotland entered into the National Covenant too rashly and needed it ‘to be repented for’, because ‘we placd mor religion in opposing ther [episcopal] ceremonies then in the weightiest matters of the law of God’ (Brodie 1863: 221). Leighton too persisted in understanding the people of Scotland as being a covenanted people, but stressed God’s unilateral covenant faithfulness rather than the covenant’s bilateral nature (Leighton 1693: 333).

As early as 1661 Leighton told Alexander Brodie, with reference Psalm 99, that in ‘Gods dealing with his people, *he was favourable to them though he took vengeance on their Inventions*. A good Cause and a Covenant with God, will not shelter an Impenitent people from sharper Correction’ (Leighton 1692: 220). Thus the judgement against Scotland had been a corrective for his people. Leighton did not deny the external covenant, or the national nature of the church, instead he emphasized God’s commitment to fulfilling covenant promises in the lives of the elect. However, for the vast majority of Scots, interpreting the correct path in the wake of the Restoration’s condemnation of the covenants was not easy. Alexander Brodie might be described as a partial conformist, as he attended church, but refused to participate in episcopal communion. He continued to believe that the Scots, like the people of Israel, could covenant and swear for themselves and their progeny to maintain the worship of God and renounce idolatry (Brodie 1863: 367). Though he wrestled with his conscience to make sense of the best course of action he could not ‘unchurch’ the national Kirk by separating into conventicle worship, although he did occasionally attend communion in conventicles, and ‘held it lawful to tak baptism from thes that conformed’ (Brodie 1863: 378). The views of hardliners like Stewart, Renwick, and Sheills as well as conformists of different kinds such as Honyman, Leighton, and Brodie all upheld the obligation to a broad,

inclusive church. They also shared views of Reformed soteriology (limited election) that would fall within the bounds of orthodoxy. What they disagreed on was whether there was a *jure divino* form of church government, but this arguably did not drive any of them beyond the hallmarks of the early Reformed principles, which remained intact.

## Reframing the Bonds

The fruits of Scotland's Protestant theology were not all born in the Reformed tradition; in fact arguably Scotland's most distinctive theological contribution came as a reaction against it. Robert Barclay (1648–90) received his education in the Scots College in Paris under the tutelage of his uncle, and was exposed to a diversity of religious opinion through the household of his maternal grandfather, Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun. His own conviction occurred in 1666, after which he became the primary theological spokesperson for the Society of Friends. In 1676 he published *Theologiae Verè Christianae Apologia*, with an English version appearing two years later. By the end of the eighteenth century it had gone through forty-eight English language editions, as well as multiple Dutch, German, and French editions and singular publications in Spanish and Danish. Norwegian and Arabic editions followed in the nineteenth century. In its original Scottish context, Barclay's voice resounded as a counterblast to a century of Reformed theological dominance, disputing limited atonement and the imperative for a comprehensive visible church. Unlike previous Quaker theologians, Barclay approached the subject systematically and referenced patristic, medieval, Catholic, and Protestant thinkers with equal clarity. This was the result of his own theological formation. His *Apology* followed a pattern set out in his earlier *A Catechism and Confession of Faith* (1673), which loosely framed its doctrinal points in response to the Westminster Confession of Faith, but with some significant reordering that reflected four key

theological distinctives to the Reformed tradition of Scotland: the nature of Scripture, the scope of salvation, the immediacy of Christ, and by correlation the nature of the church.

Whereas the Westminster Confession begins with Holy Scripture, Barclay begins with ‘The Foundation of True Knowledge’ and ‘Immediate Revelation’, before turning to Scripture (and completely ignoring God’s eternal decree). This is consistent with the broader Quaker belief that the inner light is the same revelatory source experienced by the biblical authors, and therefore is essential for appropriately understanding and interpreting Scripture. In this respect, Quakers emphasized the source of revelation being the Spirit of God as revealed in Scripture, rather than Scripture being the revelation of God itself. Scripture thus becomes secondary as a source of revelation and subordinate to the spirit (Barclay 1678: sig. B3v). Barclay’s starting point of a highly Christocentric doctrine of revelation, with an emphasis on the immediacy of God, rather than emphasizing the sovereignty prioritized by Reformed theologians, led to a radically different theological system. He decried the rigorous doctrine of predestination, declaring ‘The gospel invites all; and certainly, by the gospel, Christ intended not to deceive and delude the greater part of mankind, when he invites and crieth, saying: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”’ (Barclay 1678: 120). According to Elton Trueblood, the innovation of Barclay is the prioritization of the ‘Logos doctrine’, and its centrality and underpinning for his whole theological system (Trueblood 1968: 155). Barclay did not deny the Fall, but argued that Christ’s passion made possible the universal redemption of humankind because all people are able to be ‘disjoyned from this evil Seed, and united to the *Divine Light*’ (Barclay 1678: 57). Barclay’s view that the free offer of the Gospel is available to all would be foundational to subsequent Quaker theology (as it had been before), but it was through his reading of Barclay that John Wesley came to embrace his concept of prevenient grace that allowed his re-appropriation of ‘Arminianism’ (Crofford 2010: 78–83). In this respect alone, Barclay’s

impact is near immeasurable. Quakers would persist in Scotland as a remnant, but Barclay's formalizing of Quaker theology and his far-reaching networks affirmed their significance in a growing transatlantic community. The *Apology* stood the test of time and served as the intellectual justification and defence of Friends' theology for more than a century and anticipated later criticism of the Reformed tradition. Even Voltaire, who could be scathing of religious incredulity, noted that Barclay's apology was 'a work as well drawn up as the subject could possibly admit' (Voltaire 1762: 50).

## Softening Demands

Quakerism would be a minority response, but the presbyterian vision of Scotland required recasting in light of the crisis brought by the Restoration. This took place in two key ways. First, John Brown of Wamphray presented perhaps the most significant reinterpretation of the Scottish tradition in post-Restoration Scotland, and allowed for a de-escalation of the inflexible hardline Covenanter commitment to national comprehension. Writing out of his Dutch experience, Brown emphasized the distinction of the *coetus electorum* (the elect) and the *coetus vocatorum* (the called). While this was not an innovation in Scottish Reformed thinking, his appropriated the distinction to reject the comprehensive claims of the Roman Catholic Church and the sectarian impulses that the New England Congregationalism and the Independents advocated (Macpherson 1903: 77). He accepted that there is an outward covenant that holds the visible church together, but whereas the formulations of the 1640s led Rutherford, Stewart, and hardline Restoration covenanters to demand national obligation, Brown re-emphasized the individual acceptance of the covenant through profession of faith as being the hallmark of church external membership. Thus a church need not be inclusive of an entire nation or people; neither should all professors be automatically admitted to

communion. Largely as result of the failure of the covenanting revolution and his own exile in the Netherlands, Brown provided an ecclesiological framework that removed the compulsory obligation of the non-elect to profess a feigned faith in order to be admitted to a comprehensive visible church. For Brown, the obligation of the Scots for godly obedience remained the ideal, but the emphasis on the visible church was replaced by the priority of the invisible church (Brown 1678: 360). In this regard, Brown of Wamphray created space within Scotland's Reformed tradition to reorder its ecclesiology.

The second change came in a re-prioritizing of personal faith. At the Restoration, Patrick Gillespie emphasized the challenges the covenants had wrought and the sense of frustration that must have been felt by those drawn into the visible church, but who were 'bastards' to the covenant of grace by being accounted members of the visible church but not recipients of the promises made to their fathers (Gillespie 1661: 345). Gillespie represents a shift in post-Restoration Reformed theology reflective of the growing discomfort with the inclusive ecclesiology of the covenanters and what it was perceived to have wrought. Although Gillespie did not fully articulate all the implications of his view, he did emphasize primacy of the covenant of grace as the 'gospel-covenant' and its direct import for the individual. More broadly, the suppression of presbyterianism and corporate covenanting led to an emphasis on a kind of vital religious piety that shaped an important sub-culture in the Church of Scotland from the 1660s through to the early eighteenth century (Mullan 2010), which would set the stage for evangelicalism. In relation to ecclesiology, this also had an important part to play, which is evident in the thinking of Thomas Boston. He explicitly rejected the compulsory nature of Scottish baptismal practice, framed around a thousand generation covenant, and Rutherford's view that all should be baptized where the Gospel is preached. Instead, Boston reiterated the need for a heartfelt, personal profession of faith by parents as a precondition for baptism and admission to church membership. According to Macpherson, he drew his views

directly from Rutherford, but radically reinterpreted them (Macpherson 1903: 85–9). Boston rejected a sect-like understanding of the church, which excluded all apart from the consistently godly, but demanded admission be voluntary rather than proscribed. While Boston's ideas were not new, his re-prioritization of the necessity for a vibrant profession of faith as a prerequisite for church membership and his rejection of the obligatory nature of the Kirk permitted a reconceptualizing of the role a presbyterian church might play in Scotland and opened a pathway for Secessionism.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it was rare during the first century-and-a-half of Protestant Scotland for the imperatives of a broad ecclesiology and the personal nature of salvation through particular election to be abandoned as fundamental principles of the established church—whether presbyterian or episcopalian. They continued to be held in—sometimes fragile—tension. As John Coffey has rightly argued, what historians (and theologians) have failed to acknowledge is ‘that the orthodox believed in both divine predetermination and human agency. As well as repudiating Arminianism they wished to counteract the Antinomian claim that the elect person simply had to “let go and let God”. Too many scholars have concentrated on one of these at the expense of the other, so producing seriously distorted accounts of theologians’ (Coffey 1997: 139). It is in fact the prioritization of these impulses, framed in the light of Old Testament narratives of God dealing with a chosen people that served as the foundation of Scottish Reformed theology. From the late sixteenth through most of the seventeenth century the parameters of Scottish Reformed ‘orthodoxy’ were set as an inclusive and uniform national church (based on covenant obligations) and the soteriological surety of election at the personal level. These two priorities provided a coherent framework understood to be

complementary and largely cohesive (even vehement debates over the form of church government did not displace these). The failure of the covenanting movement, however, began to show cracks in the integrity of this edifice which led to an increasing emphasis on either an individually focused ‘evangelical federalism’ or an externally and corporate prioritizing ‘covenantalism’ within Scottish Reformed theology. Although no references to the National Covenant or Solemn League and Covenant were made in the re-establishment of presbyterianism in 1690, these impulses persisted in the Kirk into the eighteenth century. It was diverging emphases on the personal and corporate imperatives in Scotland’s Reformed tradition, and attempts to address them, that drove the Secessionism of the eighteenth century (Myers 2016).

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