

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article accepted for publication by Edinburgh University Press in Scottish Historical Review. The Version of Record is available online at:
<http://www.euppublishing.com/doi/abs/10.3366/shr.2017.0333>

Sheltering under the Covenant: The National Covenant, Orthodoxy and the Irish Rebellion, 1638-1644

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Abstract

The Irish Rebellion of October 1641 drove large numbers of clerical migrants across the Irish Sea to Scotland. These ministers brought news of Protestantism's plight in Ireland, petitions for charitable aid and, in many cases, requests to work as preachers in Scotland. Historians have long recognised the social and religious links between Ireland and Scotland in the mid-seventeenth century and have seen these men as part of a wider effort to establish Presbyterianism across Britain and Ireland. Such an argument fails to understand the complexity of mid-seventeenth-century Presbyterianism. This paper explores these petitions for work and the less-than-enthusiastic response of ecclesiastical authorities in Scotland. Rather than automatically embracing Irish ministers as fellow Presbyterians, the Covenanted Kirk leadership was aware that the infant Presbyterian congregations in Ireland had followed a very different course to their own. Rather than fellow sufferers for Christ's cause, or part of a wider Covenanted network, Kirk leaders needed to assess Irish ministers for their godly credentials.

Introduction

On Saturday 4 June 1642, the congregation of the coastal town of Ayr convened to hear a preparation sermon in readiness for the communion celebration the next day. In the pulpit stood the assistant minister of the parish, William Adair. In Ayr, the annual communion celebration was spread across two weekends and, unlike attendance at regular sermons, the church of St John the Baptist was full as parish dignitaries sat arrayed in order of their social standing.¹ William Adair had orchestrated another, deliberate, piece of drama for the end of the sermon. Two women, Bessie Barr and Elspeth Moncur publicly came before the congregation confessing their sin of 'taking that godles oath in Yrland' that condemned the Scottish National Covenant and upheld an Anglican view of Church government. As the two women faced the congregation, showing repentance for their fault, Adair accepted their apology and granted the two women access to the communion table the following

¹ N[ational] R[ecords of] S[cotland], CH2/532/1, f. 40; H. Scott, *Fast Ecclesiae Scoticae*, 8 vols (Edinburgh, 1915-1929), 3, p. 8; A. Mackenzie, 'Church from the Reformation till 1800', in A. I. Dunlop (ed.), *The Royal Burgh of Ayr: Seven Hundred and Fifty Years of History* (Edinburgh, 1953), p. 110. My thanks to Dr Michelle Brock for discussions on the subject of Ayr's ministry.

day.² While those guilty of particularly heinous sins were often paraded before a communion in 'a sort of orgy of self-examination, recrimination and repentance', the parishioners of Ayr had encountered a handful of people apologising for the same 'godless oath' in Ireland in the previous three months.³ Unlike all other penitents in Ayr that year, these individuals were apologising for events that had happened outside of Scotland.

Those apologising for taking what became known as the 'Black Oath' had fled to Ayr from areas in the north-east of Ireland. Like other parishes on the west coasts of England, Scotland and Wales, Ayr had responded to a huge influx of people from Ireland following the outbreak of armed rebellion in Ulster in October 1641.⁴ Historians see the experience of these Protestants fleeing from Ireland fitting into a wider, pan-European, Protestant worldview that emphasised suffering. Ethan Shagan suggested that publications reporting the escalation of violence in Ireland in 1641 and 1642 contextualised events 'within a well-established view of history' that pitted loyal Protestant forces against an aggressive Catholic enemy.⁵ The seventeenth-century authors of such works sought to promote the idea that the existence of a Catholic majority in Ireland was a threat to Protestant stability in England and Scotland.⁶ The fact that many of these individuals had moved from their places of birth to Ireland within living memory increased the intimacy of their stories to congregations in Scotland. One recent doctoral thesis went as far to suggest that returning to Scotland following the Irish Rebellion took on special theological significance for Ulster Presbyterians allowing them to cement their image as Protestants suffering for Christ's cause.⁷ The idea that Irish refugees fed into a wider vocabulary of Protestant suffering remains a significant aspect of recent studies on the impact of the Irish Rebellion despite acknowledgement that the reality on the ground was far more untidy and less clear-cut.⁸ In this scheme, the providential views of Scottish and Irish Protestants were wholly compatible with each other.

Developments in diasporic literature, however, suggest that despite such connections, the experience of migration could create cultural dissonance with a migrant's place of origin. This

² NRS, CH2/751/2, f. 372.

³ M. Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven, 2002), pp. 94-96; NRS, CH2/751/2, ff. 366v; 370; 372.

⁴ K. J. Lindley, 'The impact of the 1641 Irish Rebellion upon England and Wales, 1641-5', *Irish Historical Studies*, 18 (1972), p. 147.

⁵ E. H. Shagan, 'Constructing discord: Ideology, propaganda, and English responses to the Irish Rebellion of 1641', *Journal of British Studies*, 36 (1997), p. 7.

⁶ E. Darcy, *The Irish Rebellion of 1641 and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms* (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 81-90; M. C. Peters, 'Use and misuse of the 1641 Depositions', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Ulster, 2012), pp. 21-4; R. von Freideburg, 'The continental counter-Reformation and the plausibility of the Popish Plots, 1638-1642', in C. W. A. Prior & G. Burgess (eds), *England's Wars of Religion Revisited* (Farnham, 2011), pp. 72-3.

⁷ B. A. Vann, "'Space of time or distance of place": Presbyterian diffusion in south-western Scotland and Ulster, 1603-1690', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Glasgow, 2006), p. 186.

⁸ T. Barnard, "'Parlour entertainment in an evening"? Histories of the 1640s', in M. Ó Siochrú (eds), *Kingdoms in Crisis: Ireland in the 1640s: Essays in Honour of Donál Cregan* (Dublin, 2000), p. 21; D. A. O'Hara, *English Newsbooks and Irish Rebellion 1641-1649* (Dublin, 2006), pp. 33-5.

literature encourages scholars to see migrating communities in a different light: rather than privileging the 'point of "origin" in constructing identity' one needs to appreciate the 'differentiated and highly diverse forms of...settlement' that could transform ideas originally carried by migrants.⁹ The idea of transplantation is no longer tenable and in its place is a far more nuanced dialogue of cultural exchange where communities are 'outcomes of processes'.¹⁰ Naturally, while this process of assimilation and adoption helped integration into host communities, it culturally shifted the migrant communities further from their former homes.

The fact that historians see little cultural distance between Scottish expatriates returning from Ireland after 1641 and Scottish communities is puzzling because the idea that Scottish and Irish forms of Presbyterianism were actually very different is now widely accepted. In 1991, Raymond Gillespie stressed that despite connections between Scottish Presbyterians and worshippers in Ulster, seeing them as umbilically linked ignores the very separate trajectories taken by each.¹¹ Adaptation was not accidental but necessary. Studies of the establishment of Presbyterianism in Ulster during the first half of the seventeenth century have noted that 'it is only when religious structures either fit or successfully overcome the social condition of their host societies that they can achieve a lasting and secure presence, let alone dominance' in a region.¹² Indeed, definitions of 'Scottishness' in Presbyterian circles in nineteenth-century Ireland 'could be deployed at certain times for specific reasons' but were always couched in a very different social, cultural and political setting.¹³ These alterations present intriguing scenarios when one assesses how Irish Presbyterianism interacted with that of mainland Scotland. How these areas of dissonance and dislocation interacted is a field ripe for study.

Even within Scotland, single religious labels like 'Protestant' or 'Reformed' rarely do justice to the complexities and disagreements within religious groupings. Strands of religious thought were not static and continued to develop in response to contextual stimuli. It is now a mainstay of studies of Scottish Protestantism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to recognise the importance of local

⁹ F. Anthias, 'Evaluating "diaspora": Beyond ethnicity?', *Sociology*, 32 (1998), p. 558; W. Safran, 'Diasporas in modern societies: Myths of homeland and return', *Diaspora*, 1 (1991), pp. 95-6.

¹⁰ F. B. Adamson, 'Constructing the diaspora: Diaspora identity politics and transnational social movements', in T. Lyons & P. Mandaville (eds), *Politics from Afar: Transnational Diasporas and Networks* (London, 2012), pp. 152-5; C. M. M. MacDonald, 'Imagining the Scottish diaspora: Emigration and transnational literature in the late modern period', *Scottish Historical Review*, 92 (2013), pp. 137-40.

¹¹ R. Gillespie, 'An army sent from God: Scots at war in Ireland, 1642-9', in N. MacDougall (ed.), *Scotland and War AD79-1918* (Edinburgh, 1991), pp. 113-14.

¹² R. Armstrong, 'Ireland's Puritan revolution? The emergence of Ulster Presbyterianism reconsidered', *English Historical Review*, 121 (2006), p. 1049; R. Gillespie, 'Scotland and Ulster: A Presbyterian perspective, 1603-1700', in W. P. Kelly & J. R. Young (eds), *Scotland and the Ulster Plantations* (Dublin, 2009), p. 105; R. Gillespie, 'The Presbyterian revolution in Ulster, 1600-1690', in W. J. Sheils & D. Wood (eds), *The Churches, Ireland and the Irish* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 159-70.

¹³ A. R. Holmes, 'Presbyterian religion, historiography, and Ulster Scots identity, c. 1800 to 1914', *Historical Journal*, 52 (2009), p. 617.

flexibility in the application of ecclesiastical policy.¹⁴ Even such seeming polarities as 'presbyterian' and 'episcopalian' have come under scrutiny as the emergence of the National Covenant in 1638 served to further muddy the waters of religious identity.¹⁵ Moreover, the shared use of labels like 'Protestant' or 'godly' did not create automatic compatibility and often collapsed when put under further scrutiny.¹⁶ When assessing Anglophone religious cultures these labels were part of a shared discourse but their definitions and contextual underpinnings could differ markedly.

For all of the Kirk's encouragement of the Protestant cause in Ireland, refugee ministers who arrived on the shores of Scotland between 1641 and 1643 were not truly members of the same Church - they could not simply merge into the Scottish Kirk. The subscription of the National Covenant in Scotland in 1638, and the events that surrounded it, created a critical, albeit temporary, point of divergence between Protestants in Ireland and those in Scotland. Clerical refugees could not be automatically accepted as preachers in the Kirk following the Covenant. As such, clerical refugees represented an unknown commodity and potential threat to the new Church settlement in Scotland. Protestant clerics who fled from Ireland to Scotland provide a valuable cultural intersection to assess the experiences of different modes of Presbyterianism and the friction that occurred when they collided.¹⁷ Beyond regular suits for charity, the new Covenanted Kirk leadership was unwilling to immediately accept them as genuine, unfeigned, Covenanters. Not all Presbyterians were alike: Such men would have to prove their adherence to the Kirk's new definitions of orthodoxy.

Rebellion and the Threat to Reformed Protestantism

Following plantations of Irish estates in the early seventeenth century, communities of English and Scottish settlers dotted the eastern seaboard of Ireland. Initially, ministers who faced persecution for their beliefs in the Kirk of Scotland, found a safe haven in Ireland to practice their more extreme forms of Protestantism. This first section will outline the permeability of Scottish and Irish forms of Presbyterianism and how, initially at least, they shared a common goal of protecting Reformed Protestantism. Repeated waves of movement between Ireland and Scotland, driven by political changes in both kingdoms, crystallized this bond. When pressured by the government in Ireland, individuals could easily cross back into Scotland and find their ideas compatible with the land of

¹⁴ J. McCallum, *Reforming the Scottish Parish: The Reformation in Fife, 1560-1640* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 231-234; Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, p. 403.

¹⁵ A. R. MacDonald, *The Jacobean Kirk, 1567-1625: Sovereignty, Polity and Liturgy* (Aldershot, 1998), p. 182.

¹⁶ R. Armstrong & T. Ó hAnnracháin, 'Alternative establishments? Insular Catholicism and Presbyterianism', in R. Armstrong & T. Ó hAnnracháin (eds), *Insular Christianity: Alternative Models of the Church in Britain and Ireland, c. 1570-c. 1700* (Manchester, 2013), p. 2; A. Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought 1600-1640* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 534-7.

¹⁷ See J. E. A. Dawson, 'Ulster and the New British History: From Reformation to Revolution', in E. Longley, E. Hughes & D. O'Rawe (eds), *Ireland (Ulster) Scotland: Concepts, Contexts, Comparisons* (Belfast, 2003), p. 184.

their birth. The subscription of the Black Oath, however, created a line in the sand: delineating those who were orthodox on the one side of the Irish Sea in Scotland and those who had remained and conformed to the new Church of Ireland. The Irish Rebellion of 1641 would force Scottish settlers in the north of Ireland back to Scotland. Initially at least, these refugees received a charitable and warm welcome and were, on the surface, identified with the same Protestant suffering as those who had fled Ireland in the decades before.

Pressure from authorities in Dublin to bring nonconformists to heel pushed a number of settlers back across the Irish Sea to the places of their birth. Alarmed at the level of religious dissent in the north-east of Ireland, Thomas Wentworth, Lord Deputy of Ireland, implemented a series of acts that aimed at curbing the latitude enjoyed by Scottish settler communities. Dissenting ministers were forcibly removed and, at a meeting of the Convocation of the Church of Ireland in 1634, a 'minimum doctrine' was established that attempted to reduce the breadth of worship found in Ireland.¹⁸ A separate Court of High Commission was established in 1635 to prosecute those who dissented from the new, more stringent, requirements. Wentworth expected the most vehement nonconformists to leave Ireland and return to Scottish shores.¹⁹

These individuals reintegrated very well with the prevailing religious climate in Scotland. A communion celebration in April 1637 in Irvine, Irvine Presbytery, attracted 'sundrie...ministers of Christ, and gracious professors of the trueth now banished out of Ireland by the bishops'.²⁰ In 1638, communion celebrations in Stranraer attracted large numbers of people who had fled from Ireland while the families settled in the area and had their children baptised in the area.²¹ Returning ministers gained notoriety in certain godly circles in the lowlands.²² Henry Guthrie, looking back from later in the century, recalled 'they came over to Scotland, with a great noise of the persecution they had met with, and were looked upon by their friends here as so many martyrs' while receiving hospitality and opportunities to preach.²³ James Hamilton, a minister who had fled Ireland in 1636, was appointed to the parish of Dumfries, Dumfries Presbytery, in 1638 due to the 'universal love and approbation of the godly' in the region who stage-managed his election to the ministry there.²⁴ While only a handful

¹⁸ H. F. Kearney, *Strafford in Ireland 1633-41* (Manchester, 1959), pp. 114-16; J. McCafferty, "'God bless your free Church of Ireland": Wentworth, Laud, Bramhall and the Irish Convocation of 1634', in J. F. Merritt (ed.), *The Political World of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, 1621-1641* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 191-4; M. Perceval-Maxwell, 'Strafford, the Ulster Scots and the Covenanters', *Irish Historical Studies*, 18 (1973), pp. 535-9.

¹⁹ Kearney, *Strafford in Ireland*, p. 116; Perceval-Maxwell, 'Strafford, the Ulster Scots and the Covenanters', p. 528.

²⁰ J. Row, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland, from the Year 1558 to August 1647* ed. D. Laing (Edinburgh, 1842), p. 407.

²¹ *Select Biographies*, ed. W. K. Tweedie (Edinburgh, 1845), p. 161.

²² *Records of the Kirk of Scotland: Containing the Acts of the Proceedings of the General Assemblies from the Year 1638 Downwards*, ed. A. Peterkin (Edinburgh, 1838), pp. 147-8.

²³ *The Memoirs of Henry Guthrie, Late Bishop*, ed. G. Crawford (n.p., 1748), p. 15.

²⁴ P. Adair, *A True Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, ed. W. D. Killen (Belfast, 1866), p. 58; Scott, *Fasti*, 1, p. 74.

of prominent ministers returned to Scotland, they found a friendly welcome within some of the more zealous Protestant circles.²⁵

Discussions over the impact of the exiled ministers revolved around the compatibility of their thought with the established Kirk of Scotland. Opponents of the National Covenant claimed that such men had no right to hold clerical positions in Scotland. In November 1638, six members of the Scottish episcopate protested to the Glasgow Assembly that a number of its members 'are known to be such as have either Beene schismatically refractary and opposits to good order...under the censures of the Church of Ireland for their disobedience to order'.²⁶ These ministers had, after all been removed from their posts in Ireland under Wentworth's conditions. In defending themselves, ministers who had spent time in Ireland insisted that their theology was attuned to that of the Covenanter leadership and that they fitted into a much larger project. Robert Blair, a minister who had left Ireland in the early 1630s, stressed that the position of ministers who had returned to Scotland was entirely compatible with the rest of the Covenanted Kirk and that if he or his colleagues from Ireland were found guilty of a crime, so too must the Assembly.²⁷ While there was certainly awareness of the potential for difference between dissenting Irish and protesting Scottish ministers, the emphasis on unity at this stage is important. Robert Baillie, attuned to the problem, noted 'sundrie of us would have wished' that ministers who had come from Ireland 'had not been chosen commissioners' to the Assembly because of the question marks over their positions in the Kirk of Scotland but admitted that 'the excellent gifts of the men would not permitt the electors to passe them by'.²⁸ Covenanter leaders, while aware of the unusual nature of the position of those who had fled Ireland, did not question their theological commitment to a distinct, and acceptable, form of Presbyterianism.

Afraid that more Presbyterians in the northern counties of Ireland would join with their brethren in Scotland, the Crown sought to publicly repudiate the National Covenant across the Irish Sea. In response to the General Assembly's protest against Royal intervention in ecclesiastical affairs, at the end of 1638, Wentworth was permitted to impose a separate oath of allegiance that rejected the National Covenant.²⁹ Facing prosecution from this 'Black Oath', larger numbers of Scots removed themselves and their goods from around Down, Tyrone and Derry to avoid taking the oath.³⁰ While the precise scale of the removal of Scottish residents from the north of Ireland in the wake of the

²⁵ Vann, "Space of time or distance of place", p. 147-9.

²⁶ *The Declinator and Protestation of the Archbishops and Bishops* (London, 1639), p. 10.

²⁷ Peterkin, *Records*, p. 148.

²⁸ *Letters and Journals*, 1, p. 147

²⁹ K. Forkan, "The fatal ingredient of the covenant": The place of the Ulster Scottish colonial community during the 1640s', in B. Mac Cuarta (ed.), *Reshaping Ireland 1550-1700: Colonization and its Consequences* (Dublin, 2011), pp. 264-6; Perceval-Maxwell, 'Strafford, the Ulster Scots and the Covenanters', pp. 535-539; J. S. Reid, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland* (Belfast, 1853), 1, p. 233.

³⁰ Adair, *A True Narrative*, pp. 60-61.

Black Oath is unknown, it was substantial enough to leave clusters of land vacant and open for resettlement.³¹

Like the celebrity preachers that preceded them, upon their return to Scotland, those fleeing from the Black Oath were welcomed into the Covenanted Kirk of Scotland with few questions asked of them. Ministers who arrived were invited to preach in vacant parishes and put on the fast track to obtaining permanent livings in the Kirk of Scotland. In January 1640, Lanark Presbytery accepted a petition from Patrick Fleming, 'latelie escaped out of Irland', to 'exerceise...his giftes' in the region.³² A petitioner described as a 'distressed man quo cam fro[m] Ireland' appeared in St Monance, St Andrews Presbytery, in March 1640 although one cannot be sure that his suffering was connected to the Black Oath.³³ Although these individuals can be difficult to trace in local source material, by September 1640, Robert Baillie commented how 'most of thir good people flying over to us [from Ireland], were heartilie embraced of us all'.³⁴

Moreover, Covenanter leaders emphasised their unity with the position of Presbyterians in Ulster during the impeachment and subsequent trial of Wentworth. Indeed, Wentworth's actions clearly 'strengthened the militant identification between Ulster Scots and the Covenanting movement'.³⁵ Importantly, Covenanter leaders rarely articulated any differences between Ulster and Scottish Presbyterianism.³⁶ Wentworth's trial represents a critical moment: when the identification of the sufferings of Ulster Presbyterians with the birth pangs of the Covenanter movement was complete.

Anti-Presbyterian activity reduced significantly after Wentworth's death in May 1641, allowing a new *status quo* to emerge. Looking back from later in the century, John Livingston surmised that 'religious people' had left Ireland between 1637 and 1639 and that those who remained had done so either out of choice or through want of means.³⁷ This created a clear divide between the usually porous religious cultures of the 'North Channel World'.³⁸ How many committed Presbyterians remained in Ireland, but were unable to travel to Scotland, was unknown. Many may have simply resorted to secret services beyond the view of the authorities. However, as the mass movement of peoples across the Irish Sea slowed down in mid-1641, establishing the Covenanted credentials of those left in the northern counties of Ireland was a needless exercise. The Black Oath had effectively separated the Protestant communities of Ulster and Scotland.

³¹ Darcy, *The Irish Rebellion*, p. 51.

³² NRS, CH2/234/1, f. 157.

³³ NRS, CH2/1056/1, f. 115.

³⁴ *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, 1, ed. D. Laing (Edinburgh, 1841), p. 266.

³⁵ A. I. Macinnes, 'The origin and organisation of the Covenanting movement during the reign of Charles I, 1625-41: With a particular reference to the west of Scotland', 2, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Glasgow, 1987), p. 371.

³⁶ J. White, *Militant Protestantism and British Identity, 1603-1642* (London, 2012), p. 102.

³⁷ *Select Biographies*, ed. W. K. Tweedie (Edinburgh, 1845), pp. 165-6.

³⁸ J. Ohlmeyer, 'Driving a wedge within Gaeldom: Ireland and Scotland in the seventeenth century', *History Ireland*, 7: 3 (1999), p. 30.

This *status quo* was shattered in October 1641. A group of Irish Catholic nobility sought to quickly seize strategic strongholds in Dublin and Ulster. From its origins as a rather limited rising of Irish nobles, details of the plot leaked out and the rising spread from Ulster south across eastern Ireland. By the end of 1641, most of Ireland was experiencing intense rebel activity with newsbooks and refugees reporting unprecedented levels of interpersonal violence. In some areas, and in an effort to divide settler communities, rebel commanders promised to protect communities made up of Scottish migrants, but the deepening of the conflict broke any sense of neutrality for Scottish settlers.³⁹ Bands of armed Protestants, both English and Scottish, attempted to repulse attacks but only served to increase the severity of the violence.⁴⁰ While recent histories have noted how this was far more complex than a simple battle pitting Protestants against Catholics, rumours started circulating relating to the aims and intentions of the rebels.⁴¹

Large numbers of settlers who could afford to do so used any means possible to escape, often returning to Scottish shores for the first time since the signing of the National Covenant in Scotland and imposition of the Black Oath in Ireland. Parishes along the Solway Firth estuary petitioned the Synod of Galloway in December 1641 for help in providing for those who had arrived from northern parts of Ireland.⁴² By mid-1642, the Privy Council received reports that around four thousand refugees were scattered across presbyteries on the west coast with particular concentrations at settlements like Stranraer, Portpatrick and Glenluce.⁴³ As the conflict in Ireland continued, the number of refugees increased.⁴⁴ Refugees who had arrived along the west coast moved inland roads into the Central Belt - creating problems for the distribution of charitable payments. By 1643, the minister Samuel Rutherford publicly lamented the suffering of those individuals still in Ireland

Prayers and praises must bee the rent paid to him to whom belongeth the issues from death. The Lord hath a great worke now on the wheels in Britaine; Bee very charitable of our Lords dispensation, though the slaine of the Lord bee many in England and Ireland, looke not on the dark side of Gods providence, or on the blacke and weeping side of his dispensation, widowes are multiplied almost as the sand of the Sea, children weepe and cry, alas my father! Mothers in Ireland die twice:

³⁹ M. Perceval-Maxwell, 'The Ulster Rising of 1641, and the Depositions', *Irish Historical Studies*, 21 (1978), pp. 155-60.

⁴⁰ N. Canny, 'What really happened in Ireland in 1641', in *Ireland from Independence to Occupation 1641-1660* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 33.

⁴¹ J. Cope, 'The experience of survival during the Irish Rebellion', *Historical Journal*, 46 (2003), pp. 295-316; *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, 7, ed. P. Hume Brown (Edinburgh, 1906), pp.150-1.

⁴² NRS, CH2/341/1, f. 14v.

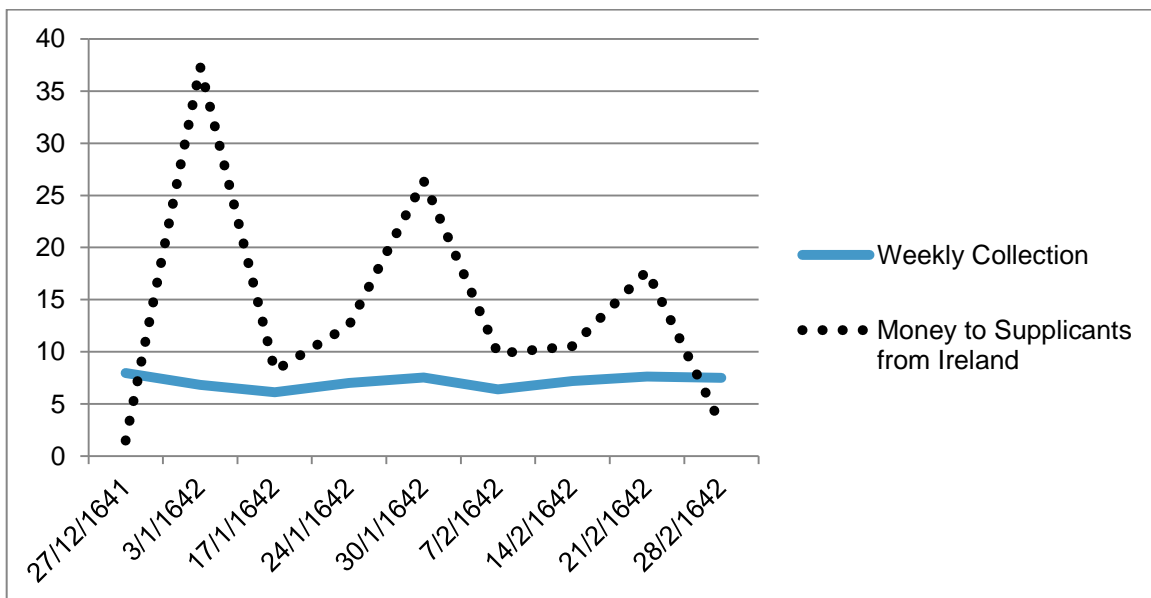
⁴³ *Privy Council*, 7, p. 267; NRS, CH2/341/1, f. 20v.

⁴⁴ D. Stevenson, *Scottish Covenanters and Irish Confederates: Scottish-Irish Relations in the Mid-Seventeenth Century* (Belfast, 1981), p. 53.

when they see their children slaine before their eyes, and then are killed themselves.⁴⁵

Stories conveying such images became increasingly common in the parishes of the south west, as groups of refugees arrived - sometimes in small groups and, on other occasions, in large convoys.

Parishes responded with piecemeal collections but the sheer scale of aid required and the unpredictable surges in demand quickly exhausted modest poor funds. Figure 1 shows the weekly alms collections in the parish of Ayr, Ayr Presbytery, in pounds Scots for the first two months of 1642.⁴⁶ While regular weekly collections remained relatively steady, the money distributed to supplicants described as coming from Ireland was liable to wild fluctuations. The size of the spikes themselves, however, does not accurately reveal the number of supplicants. These surges could take the form of either a few large or many smaller payments. For example, much of the large increase on 3 January 1642 relates to a bulk payment made to the minister of Stranraer for refugees arriving there rather than for those who had found their way to Ayr. The weekly collection was not the parish's only source of poor relief. Naturally, Ayr's session held a small amount of money in reserve and relied on a number of other sources of parochial income - such as fines and property rents - to supplement their weekly collections. However, with demand regularly outstripping the amounts of money raised by weekly collections, the weight of supporting refugees coming from Ireland was very heavy even for a relatively wealthy burgh like Ayr.



⁴⁵ S. Rutherford, *A Sermon Preached to the Honorable House of Commons: At their late Solemne Fast* (London, 1643), pp. 9-10.

⁴⁶ NRS, CH2/751/2, ff. 362v-5v.

Authorities in Edinburgh made a concerted effort to organize charitable aid for the refugees in early 1642 when 'the full extent' of the rebellion became clear.⁴⁷ On 1 February 1642, the Privy Council recorded how it found itself 'everie way obliged to helpe and releive the calamitous condition of these poore people', insisting that 'the cause for whiche they suffer, being loyaltie and religion, will be powerful motives with all good subjects liberallie to contribut...for the refreshment and comfort' of the refugees.⁴⁸ The Council's obligation emphasised the idea of Christian charity and ordered regional presbyteries to 'use all the powerfull and persuasive wayes the can, in thair sermons and other wayes, to stirre up their flocks liberallie and cheirfullie to contribut in this erand'.⁴⁹ This money would be collected by local kirk sessions and burgh councils and then passed onto approved intermediaries to be counted and distributed.⁵⁰ Ministers responded with powerful sermons in the weeks that followed. In mid-February, Matthew Wemyss, minister of the Canongate, Edinburgh Presbytery, announced the collection to his congregation by emphasising the 'many thousands of men, women and children had fled furth from Irland of Scottish people unto Irving, Ayr and Glasgow'.⁵¹ Underlining the seriousness of the situation, the Privy Council's instructions found their way to parishes across Scotland with remarkable efficiency despite the lack of a General Assembly to inform ministers of the collection directly. Even presbyteries in the north of the country, such as Ellon, were aware of the collection by March.⁵² Stranaer Presbytery received the first payment of two thousand pounds Scots from authorities in Edinburgh in April 1642, although much of this was used in feeding and clothing those who had already arrived.⁵³

Collections for Irish supplicants could be divisive and the considerable amounts of money involved invariably raised the spectre of corruption.⁵⁴ There were other, more locally experienced, problems brought about by the number of wandering refugees, though. The movement of Irish supplicants was so pronounced that parishes started diverting charitable funds to deal with migrants on their own doorstep. In January 1642, the session of Dunfermline recorded that while the congregation had made a 'liberall quontribution' for the refugees from Ireland, a part of the collection was held back and 'distribute to some of the saids distrest people as the come heir sundrie tymes'.⁵⁵ Two months later, the members of nearby Kirkcaldy Presbytery lamented the sheer number of Irish supplicants arriving in the region and petitioned the Privy Council for permission to 'keipe a part of

⁴⁷ A. I. Macinnes, *The British Revolution, 1629-1660* (Basingstoke, 2005), p. 142.

⁴⁸ *Privy Council*, 7, pp. 189-90.

⁴⁹ *Privy Council*, 7, p. 190.

⁵⁰ J. R. Young, "'Escaping massacre": Refugees in Scotland in the aftermath of the 1641 Ulster Rebellion', in D. Edwards, P. Lenihan & C. Tait (eds), *Age of Atrocity: Violence and Political Conflict in Early Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2007), pp. 220-2.

⁵¹ NRS, CH2/122/3, f. 462; Scott, *Fasti*, 1, p. 24.

⁵² NRS, CH2/146/3, f. 126.

⁵³ NRS, CH2/341/1, f. 20v.

⁵⁴ O. P. Grell, 'Godly charity or political aid? Irish Protestants and international Calvinism, 1641-1645', *Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), pp. 748-53; Young, "'Escaping massacre'", p. 240.

⁵⁵ NRS, CH2/592/1/1, f. 15.

that whilk they sall collect for the support of the single persones who comes abroad'. They were informed by the Privy Council that 'thair may be some of the generall collection for the people of Yrland keiped for particular persones that comes along to ther shyres'.⁵⁶ Haddington Presbytery followed suit in the same month and, in April 1643, Elgin Presbytery voluntarily decided to do the same.⁵⁷ The number of refugees moving from Scottish-dominated regions of Ireland was placing unprecedented demands on charitable resources and forced a certain degree of flexibility in centralised collections.

Protestant clerics and their families swelled the ranks of refugees fleeing the conflict and seeking charitable aid. As landowners and symbols of the Protestant faith, ministers were prominent targets for rebels in Ireland.⁵⁸ In April 1642, Dunoon Presbytery petitioned the Privy Council, to inform them of three Protestant preachers and their families who had arrived in Bute 'having brocht nothing with them, either cloaths or moneys, that could helpe or sustein them', who had relied on the charity of the two parishes on the island for help.⁵⁹ Such figures could be remarkably mobile. In the same month, on the other side of the country, Brechin Presbytery recorded the case of Walter Lamont, a 'persequit minister from Irland' who requested charity from the ministers of the region.⁶⁰ Perhaps unsurprisingly, ministers in Scotland urged the necessity of supporting these individuals. The money distributed to clerical refugees was always higher than regular, lay, supplicants.

Unlike lay supplicants, the petitions of ministers and their families were usually directed to higher Kirk courts - like the national General Assembly or a provincial synod - rather than individual parish kirk sessions. This allowed their stories of suffering to reach a far wider audience and, naturally, generated larger amounts of financial aid. The General Assembly meeting of July 1642 recommended the widow of Thomas Murray, minister of Killyleagh, Co. Down, to provincial synods across the country. Over the next eighteen months, provincial synods and regional presbyteries heard how Murray 'wes cruellie murderit and hanged on a trie betuix tuo uther gentlemen by the cruell rebellis in Ireland' and that his wife 'hir awne body maimed and woundit', the marks of which could evidently still be seen. Large collections directed at Murray's widow soon followed.⁶¹ In November 1642, James Bannerman, former minister at Baltimore, petitioned the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale for financial aid stressing how 'by the cruell rebellious Irishes he wes robbed of his goods

⁵⁶ NRS, CH2/224/1, f. 378.

⁵⁷ NRS, CH2/185/5, f. 135; NRS, CH2/144/1, f. 80.

⁵⁸ Peters, 'Use and misuse of the 1641 Depositions', pp. 152-5.

⁵⁹ *Privy Council*, 7, p. 546.

⁶⁰ NRS, CH2/40/1, f. 38.

⁶¹ NRS, CH2/1132/18, f. 16; NRS, CH2/144/1, ff. 80-1; *The Records of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale 1589-1596, 1640-1649*, ed. J. Kirk (Edinburgh, 1977), pp. 166-7; J. S. Reid, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, 1, new edn (Belfast, 1867), p. 333; *The Hamilton Manuscripts*, ed. T. K. Lowry (Belfast, 1867), p. 35. This case was not included in Alexander Peterkin's investigations into the General Assembly and presumably fell under 'references and overtures', Peterkin, *Records*, p. 333.

and geir and put fra his chairge'.⁶² Bannerman had quickly become ill as a result of his injuries and had lost his right eye making his suit for charity all the more urgent. In March 1643, the ministers of Linlithgow Presbytery heard the petition of Barbara Stewart whose husband and son, both preachers, were both 'killed by the rebelles' in Co. Tyrone while any wealth that she had managed to take with her was subsequently stolen. Stewart's stories of suffering and murder elicited a response: the ministers of the region raised just over fifty pounds Scots for her in under a week.⁶³

Any connection with Presbyterian principles was likely to enhance a charitable supplication but such cases were remarkably rare. The widow to Peter Sharpe, preacher at Drumbo, Co. Down, emphasised her husband's orthodoxy in her petition to the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale in 1642. She was quick to record how her husband 'being ever in defence of God's cause...was citted by the biscopbes to Dublein to underly ther censures'. Sharpe died before he could answer their summons. Sharpe's widow used her husband's encounter with the anti-Presbyterian Court of High Commission as a stamp of his orthodoxy.⁶⁴ Marking Sharpe's dissent from the Black Oath was an important part of his wife's case for help. Ministers more frequently cited God's providence than their ecclesiastical preferences in petitions for aid. In 1643, Elgin Presbytery provided a large one-off payment to Patrick Glass, 'a distressed minister who be God's speciall providence hairdie escaped with his lyfe out of Ireland'.⁶⁵

The Kirk leadership's response to the Irish conflict went much further than financial aid. Their support for ministers coming from Ireland underlined a larger concern for the safety of Reformed Protestantism. Following discussions in November 1641, in April 1642, a Scottish force of around three thousand men set sail from Ayr, consisting of enlisted soldiers and ministers who would go on to establish Presbyterian structures in Ulster. Another seven and a half thousand troops would follow later in the year.⁶⁶ Boats were commandeered from the Clyde and along the west coast to help transport the troops across to Carrickfergus.⁶⁷ Once operational, the army Presbytery's first disciplinary actions in Ireland are telling

divers ministers and others who had taken the Black Oath, and been instrumental in ensnaring others in it, and had gone on in a course of conformity and defection, upon an intimation from the Presbytery, did

⁶² *Lothian and Tweeddale*, p. 150; Young, "Escaping massacre", p. 232.

⁶³ NRS, CH2/242/3, ff. 109, 115.

⁶⁴ *Lothian and Tweeddale*, p. 150.

⁶⁵ NRS, CH2/144/1, f. 77.

⁶⁶ Stevenson, *Scottish Covenanters and Irish Confederates*, pp.49-51, 55-6, 65; D. Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution 1637-44*, new edn (Edinburgh, 2003), pp. 244-5.

⁶⁷ Armstrong, 'Ireland's Puritan revolution?', pp. 1048-1050; E. M. Furgol, 'The military and ministers as agents of Presbyterian imperialism', in J. Dwyer, R. A. Mason & A. Murdoch (eds), *New Perspectives on the Politics and Culture of Early Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 106-9; E. Murphy, *Ireland and the War at Sea 1641-1653* (Woodbridge, 2012), p. 14; *Privy Council*, 7, pp. 170-1, p. 553.

come and own their sinful defection, and made the same acknowledgements in these places where they had been particularly scandalous.⁶⁸

Ministers who had signed the Black Oath could not sign the National Covenant without committing perjury. The Kirk leadership had expelled ministers who spoke against the Covenant in Scotland but their authority held no force in Ireland.⁶⁹ The differing position of the Black Oath in Ireland and Scotland would become a critical pivot in the relationship between Irish and Scottish Presbyterians.

The Covenanter leadership's concerns over the condition of Ireland urged further action but leading churchmen were uncertain over how far they could intervene. Following the outbreak of rebellion, the ministry of northern parts of Ireland was itinerant at best and, at its worst, depleted of the necessary manpower to function. In August 1642, communities in the north of Ireland presented the first of what would become a litany of petitions to the General Assembly asking for help as 'the sword of the Rebels, hath bereft us of our friends, and spoiled us of our goods, and left us but a few, and that a poor handfull of many, and hath chased from us the rest that were called our Ministers'. The petitioners were quick to point out that a great many of their ministers had fled to Scotland prior to the Rebellion 'who being chased into Scotland, were not altogether un-usefull in the day of your need', identifying the important role migrating ministers played in the formation of the National Covenant. The petition asked that 'these so unjustly reft from us' should be send back *en masse* or declared 'transportable' from their congregations in Scotland to transfer back to Ireland. The petitioners claimed that this was not only through 'necessity, but equity'. These ministers still held positions in Ireland: they had a moral and legal obligation to return.⁷⁰ In response, the General Assembly were 'loathe to usurpe without their own bounds, or stretch themselves beyond their own measure' and appointed a delegation of ministers to go to the northern counties of Ireland for four months at a time.⁷¹ Ministers undergoing their clerical trials, known as 'expectants', were also encouraged to look to Ireland for preaching opportunities.⁷² In all of the petitions that followed, the General Assembly's response always stopped short at offering permanent ministerial candidates citing their own dwindling stock of orthodox clerics.

Scholars assessing this Scottish mission to Ireland usually consider the General Assembly's actions as an attempt to control Ulster Presbyterianism.⁷³ The Assembly's actions were intended to

⁶⁸ Adair, *A True Narrative*, p. 95.

⁶⁹ C. R. Langley, *Worship, Civil War and Community, 1638-1660* (London, 2016), ch. 1; K. M. MacKenzie, 'Restoring the nation? Hamilton and the politics of National Covenant', *International Review of Scottish Studies*, 36 (2011), pp. 68-70.

⁷⁰ Peterkin, *Records*, p. 331.

⁷¹ Peterkin, *Records*, p. 332.

⁷² Peterkin, *Records*, p. 333.

⁷³ Furgol, 'Presbyterian imperialism', pp. 107-10.

protect Covenanted orthodoxy in Scotland. For all of their knowledge of Ireland, the General Assembly viewed the ministers sent across the Irish Sea as highly orthodox to the Covenanted cause.⁷⁴ As such, the General Assembly and Privy Council placed considerable pressure on local judicatories to free the relevant ministers from their parochial charges. In March 1642, Stranraer Presbytery politely declined the Privy Council's request to send John Livingstone to Ireland, only to reverse their decision three weeks later following pressure from both Livingstone and senior clerics in the Central Belt.⁷⁵

The General Assembly tried to ensure that the standards established within the Kirk of Scotland, not necessarily the structures, were applied without alteration in Ulster. While the Assembly asked the ministers traveling to Ireland to follow the 'direction of Jesus Christ' in preaching to distressed congregations, it warned that their behaviour must be 'according to the doctrine and discipline of this Church in all things'. To promote best practice and ensure accountability, in August 1643, the General Assembly ordered that a member of the army Presbytery in Ireland should be present at every session of its meetings.⁷⁶ All ministers travelling to Ireland were to 'be comtable to the Generall Assembly of this Kirk, in all things'.⁷⁷ Kirk leaders were unwilling to jeopardise the stability of their own Church by allowing differences to emerge between themselves and their colleagues sent to Ulster. Subsequent requests to send ministers to permanently reside in Ulster were rejected 'in regaird of the present conditione of this Kirk' and the increasingly limited supply of fully orthodox ministers.⁷⁸ Robert Baillie succinctly expressed the problem 'lest all the men that went over to that land should be in danger, in the first settling of that church...favour any differences from our church'.⁷⁹ Baillie was aware of the uneasy unity established within the Kirk and guarded against the prospect of further division.⁸⁰ Ensuring that the men attending Ireland were theologically orthodox, and that they returned in such a condition, was essential in pursuing the Covenant's aim of protecting Scottish religion.

Clerical Careers and Covenanted Orthodoxy

The ministerial refugees who arrived on Scottish shores in the early 1640s were, then, entering a context of changing of orthodoxy. However, as skilled migrants, a small number of clerical refugees quickly petitioned the relevant authorities in an attempt to obtain regular income through preaching

⁷⁴ W. Row, *Memoirs of the Life of Robert Blair*, (Edinburgh, 1754), p. 96.

⁷⁵ NRS, CH2/341/1, ff. 17-8.

⁷⁶ Peterkin, *Records*, p. 360; NRS, CH2/198/2, f. 101.

⁷⁷ Peterkin, p. 332.

⁷⁸ *Commissions*, 1, p. 33.

⁷⁹ *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, 2, ed. D. Laing (Edinburgh, 1841), p. 48.

⁸⁰ A. D. Campbell, 'Episcopacy in the mind of Robert Baillie, 1637-1662', *Scottish Historical Review*, 93 (2014), pp. 29-55; Langley, *Worship, Civil War and Community*, pp. 28-33.

and other clerical services. Unlike those ministers who arrived in Scotland prior to 1641, the actions of those who fled from Ireland after the Irish Rebellion reveal the fragile unity between Irish and Scottish Protestants. Theological ideas that received so little attention in petitions for charity took on huge significance when a refugee minister sought a place in the Covenanted Kirk. Being generally Protestant was not enough. As such, even in areas with huge numbers of vacant parishes, ministers fleeing Ireland found it difficult to immediately obtain a permanent living. Due to suspicions over their loyalty and this strict admissions procedure, the number of refugee ministers who sought to preach in the Kirk of Scotland, on either a permanent or temporary basis, was remarkably low. After the trauma of rebellion in Ireland, those ministers who did try to find positions in the Kirk of Scotland needed to prove, above all, their commitment to Covenanted orthodoxy.

Despite the earnest nature of petitions from refugee ministers, Kirk leaders were initially reluctant to consider these men for permanent clerical positions in Scotland. One modern observer obliquely referred to these ministers as 'crypto-Presbyterians' and the Covenanter leadership in Scotland was similarly unsure of their orthodoxy.⁸¹ In March 1642, Linlithgow Presbytery permitted James Mirk, 'ane minister of Irland latly and cum from their becaus of the trowbills', to preach before them in place of another minister who was ill. Mirk's sermon was approved and later in 1642 he appeared before the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale noting how 'he lived in Ireland...in very good account and estimation with the best where he lived for the space of seven years' and that he hoped it 'shall please God to oppen a door for him for the use of his talent' in the province.⁸² Despite Mirk having proven his talents in preaching before Linlithgow Presbytery, the Synod would not be drawn on the petition. The Synod's rejection of Mirk's request for a permanent preaching position did not extend to his charitable support: the Synod continued to recommend him to the charity of local presbyteries.⁸³

Many within the Covenanter leadership suspected that clerics who had been able to remain in Ireland until 1641 had done so by either subscribing Wentworth's Black Oath or conforming to the Church of Ireland's episcopal structure. The majority of the Kirk leadership feared that ministers who arrived in Scotland after 1641 had only done so through necessity and not genuine commitment to Covenanted Presbyterianism. In early 1642, Paisley Presbytery met George Maxwell, a cleric who had trained in Glasgow and then moved to Ireland as a preaching deacon. Upon fleeing the rebellion in late 1641, Maxwell insisted that he was 'frie of takeing the oathe there' and was, in his opinion, able to subscribe the Covenant. The Presbytery was unwilling to accept Maxwell's word but was unable to obtain any proof to reject his claim.⁸⁴ The Kirk leadership's assumptions that those who had

⁸¹ Furgol, 'Presbyterian imperialism', p. 105.

⁸² *Lothian and Tweeddale*, p. 134.

⁸³ NRS, CH2/295/2, ff. 149-150v; NRS, CH2/185/5, f. 167.

⁸⁴ NRS, CH2/294/2, f. 162-3.

managed to stay in Ireland after 1639 had done so through rejecting the Covenant coloured their views of ministers leaving Ireland throughout the early 1640s. While authorities endeavoured to moderate a dispute between John Book, minister at Kirkliston in Linlithgow Presbytery, and a small group of his parishioners in 1644, they refused to countenance Book's brother, James, preaching in the parish 'because he had taken his oath in Ireland and had not manifested his repentance thairfoir'.⁸⁵ James Book had successfully received a sizeable charitable donation in July 1643 but struggled to obtain meaningful employment in the Kirk once authorities became suspicious of his conduct in Ireland.⁸⁶ Unsure how far they could trust such ministers, Kirk authorities were remarkably conservative in accepting them as Covenanted colleagues.

Proving the orthodoxy of any minister was of paramount importance and was increasingly difficult in cases of refugees. Discussions at the General Assembly meetings in 1641 and 1642 over how transferring ministers were to prove their qualifications were particularly pertinent to those coming from Ireland, as Irish ministerial refugees rarely had the necessary paperwork from 'the Presbyterie whence he comes' to verify their good behaviour.⁸⁷ As such, local authorities repeatedly faced challenges when trying to prove the credentials of a refugee preacher.

Unsurprisingly, ministerial refugees who sought employment in the Kirk went to great lengths to prove their loyalty to the Covenant and explain why they had remained in Ireland after the imposition of the Black Oath. Without sufficient references vouching for their good behaviour, supplicants needed to emphasise their orthodoxy in other ways. In July 1642, Paisley Presbytery allowed William Mure, 'sometyme preacher of God's Word in Ireland' to sign the National Covenant but only if he publicly promised that he had not taken the Black Oath in Ireland.⁸⁸ Adam Ritchie, a minister who had fled from Ballycastle, Co. Antrim, made an effusive display of public repentance in March 1642 in Ayr for 'taking the Yrish oath in Irland, and for communicating and using of superstitious rites and ceremonies used in the sacraments thair and in marieing of people with a ring'.⁸⁹ Making public displays rejecting the Black Oath were essential if clerical supplicants were to find permanent positions in the Kirk of Scotland.

Providing these men with permanent posts was problematic but local authorities in areas with numerous vacant parishes took a slightly different stance. Following the subscription of the National Covenant, large numbers of parishes stood vacant. There was a shortage of suitable clerics in the early 1640s following the deposition of over eighty ministers between 1638 and the outbreak of the Irish Rebellion in October 1641, with at least fifty-two qualified ministers losing their jobs in 1639

⁸⁵ NRS, CH2/242/3, f. 151.

⁸⁶ NRS, CH2/242/3, ff. 126, 132.

⁸⁷ Peterkin (ed.), *Records*, p. 321.

⁸⁸ NRS, CH2/294/2, f. 170.

⁸⁹ NRS, CH2/751/2, f. 366v; A. F. Scott Pearson, 'Alumni of St. Andrews and the settlement of Ulster', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 14 (1951), p. 8.

alone.⁹⁰ Faced with such problems, refugee ministers could provide a welcome source of additional manpower to desperate local presbyteries. In an early example, in February 1642, Peebles Presbytery accepted the petition of John Horsbrugh, the former minister of Glenarvy, Co. Antrim, who 'desyred he might have warrand to exercise his gift duiring his abode' in the town of Peebles.⁹¹ The minister of Peebles had already requested additional help and made use of Horsbrugh until his son returned from Cambridge to help preach in September 1642. These local decisions were aimed at preventing pulpits from falling silent. Following the death of their minister Henry Makgill in December 1642, the session of Dunfermline relied on *ad hoc* preaching to ensure religious services continued until a permanent replacement was found. The refugee James Mirk preached in Dunfermline 'twyse or thrise' in the early part of 1643 and was rewarded with monetary donations and bed and board in the parish.⁹²

In arranging temporary preaching provision, local presbyteries permitted oral testimony of a minister's orthodoxy rather than the written proofs required by senior authorities for permanent posts. Presbyteries often had existing connections with congregations in the north of Ireland and used them to test the suitability of refugee ministers to preach. James Mirk's preaching in Dunfermline relied on pre-existing connections with another temporary incumbent, Henry Smith, a minister who had served in Ireland before fleeing the Black Oath in late 1640.⁹³ Such differences in procedure were permissible with temporary preachers. In March 1653, Paisley Presbytery was more concerned to prove that those 'who came out of Ireland and heir supplied the vacand kirks' during the 1640s were appointed on merit 'at the earnest desire of the people of the respective places with consent of the Presbyterie'.⁹⁴ Popular calls for regular preaching forced such a flexible approach.

At least some of these refugee ministers intended such measures to be temporary. This was particularly the case between 1642 and 1643 when the success of Protestant forces in Ireland suggested that it was only a matter of time before the rebellion was subdued.⁹⁵ Thomas Hogg, a minister fleeing Co. Fermanagh, asked the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale to consider him for a ministerial post in the province in 1642 and sought financial support to allow his family to follow him to Scotland. While the Synod demanded that local ministers ensure Hogg signed the Covenant before allowing him access to financial aid, Hogg was careful to remind the Synod that 'he thinks himself bound in conscience rather to live in Ireland for the comfort of that distressed people there'

⁹⁰ D. Stevenson, 'Deposition of ministers in the Church of Scotland under the Covenants, 1638-1651', *Church History*, 44: 3 (1975), pp. 324-328, 335. For an opposing view see, R. Armstrong, 'Protestant churchmen and the Confederate wars', in C. Brady & J. Ohlmeyer (eds), *British Interventions in Early Modern Ireland* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 233.

⁹¹ NRS, CH2/295/2, f. 137.

⁹² NRS, CH2/592/1/1, f. 22v.

⁹³ NRS, CH2/592/1/1, ff. 20-2v; Scott, *Fasti*, 5, p. 5.

⁹⁴ NRS, CH2/294/3, ff. 132-3.

⁹⁵ S. Wheeler, 'Four armies in Ireland', in J. Ohlmeyer (ed.), *Ireland from Independence to Occupation 1641-1660* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 45n.

and, as such, would only temporarily require employment in Scotland. Hogg then asked the Synod to petition Viscount Claneboye, a well-known godly patron in Co. Down, to facilitate his speedy return.⁹⁶ Later in 1642, the Earl of Traquair and Peebles Presbytery offered John Horsbrugh, noted above, the opportunity to preach at the vacant parish of Kailzie while the parish was restructured. Horsbrugh refused only because he was 'daylie expecting his father's advertisement to returne to his charge' in Ireland.⁹⁷ Temporary preaching positions could suit those refugee ministers who were determined to make a quick return to Ireland.

The casual nature of these positions left them open to exploitation. Ensuring due process in allowing these individuals to subscribe the Covenant was essential and authorities could become suspicious if ministers casually worked in a local parish. In March 1642, parishioners in the parish of Stoneykirk, Stranraer Presbytery, accused their minister, Gilbert Power, of receiving a non-Presbyterian minister who 'fled out of Ireland for feare of the Irish'. The parishioners' petition to the Presbytery noted how such an act was 'more then any minister might doe' and raised further doubts over Power's own questionable commitment to the Covenant.⁹⁸ Adding to the severity of the allegation, one of the parishioners asserted that the Irish refugee in question was Power's brother-in-law although this was never proved.⁹⁹ Allowing refugee ministers from Ireland to sign the Covenant was a contentious business as authorities needed to maintain orthodoxy.

Blocked from permanent positions in Scotland's parochial ministry, ministers coming from Ireland found other ways to support themselves and their families by working as regimental chaplains. Presbyteries universally resented demands to provide ministers for the army. In 1642, Jedburgh Presbytery was happy to send John Scott, a young man undergoing his clerical examinations, to act as chaplain to the Earl of Lothian's regiment going to Ireland hearing 'that for the service of the Kirk in this Irish expeditioun divers young men throwtout...the kingdome had ressaved admisionne to the ministrie'.¹⁰⁰ Sending expectant preachers was a common tactic that authorities in Edinburgh soon acted upon. The Commissioners of the General Assembly chastised Linlithgow Presbytery in January 1644 for sending trainee ministers to the army instead of the 'abill actuall ministers' that authorities in Edinburgh expected.¹⁰¹ Presbyteries were unwilling to allow their most talented preachers to leave their parishes as Paisley Presbytery lamented in June 1644

⁹⁶ R. J. Hunter, 'Hamilton, James, first Viscount Claneboye (c.1560-1644)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. L. Goldman (Oxford, 2004).

⁹⁷ NRS, CH2/295/2, f. 146.

⁹⁸ Scott, *Fasti*, 2, p. 353.

⁹⁹ NRS, CH2/341/1, ff. 18v, 25v.

¹⁰⁰ NRS, CH2/198/2, f. 101; Scott, *Fasti*, 2, p. 135.

¹⁰¹ NRS, CH2/242/3, f. 140.

They were fewe in number, some kirks unplanted [vacant], and many weake, old, and unhable to under goe the charge and have presentlie appointed on[e] of their number to be preacher to my Lord Chancellor's regiment, could not spare any other at this tyme.¹⁰²

As we have seen with the casual employment of ministers fleeing Ireland, in areas like Paisley, good ministers were at a premium. Clerics fleeing from Ireland presented ideal substitutes to act as regimental chaplains. Their lack of attachment to a parochial charge reduced the amount of disruption when the army needed willing preachers and gave them the opportunity to prove themselves as both zealous preachers and loyal to the Covenanted cause.

The circumstances of refugee ministers, free from the ties of parish responsibilities, combined with one key political milestone to clear the way for them to prove their commitment to Covenanted Presbyterianism. From late 1643, the introduction of the Solemn League and Covenant bound subscribers across England, Ireland and Scotland to protect Reformed religion against the threat of aggressive royal policy. The Solemn League and Covenant represented a watershed moment for Irish communities so long as subscribers showed their penitence for previous misdeeds. Ministers from Scotland and members of the army presbytery in Ireland offered the new oath to Irish communities in late March and early April 1644 ensuring that 'in explaining it before they proposed it to the people...clearing every article of it'.¹⁰³ The wide-reaching nature of this new oath superseded the effects of the Black Oath. How one defined loyalty had changed.

The Solemn League and Covenant provided a foundation for refugee ministers to enter the ministry rather than a guarantee. Indeed, while candidates for the ministry could now *apply* for a post in Scotland, they still needed to show their orthodoxy in preaching. In July 1646, the ministers of the Synod of Moray recorded the case of a cleric 'coming from Ireland' who wished to be considered for a place in the province. The minister, who was not named, had 'testimonie under the hands of two other preachers who with him came from Ireland in the tyme of this late persecutione no being resident with us'. The Synod, unclear of the truth of the claims, could not decide whether to examine the man more closely or simply allow him to take up a vacant charge in the province. The case was passed up to the General Assembly with the note 'we desire the rather to be resolved' because of the 'preparative' or precedent that their decision would set.¹⁰⁴ The following month, the Commissioners of the General Assembly ordered that, in such cases, 'the Presbitrie may admit such to preach as

¹⁰² NRS, CH2/294/2, f. 205.

¹⁰³ Reid, *History*, 1, pp. 423-4.

¹⁰⁴ NRS, CH2/271/2, f. 14.

expectants' effectively allowing the minister's petition but only accepting him as a trainee minister.¹⁰⁵ While this rather oblique status - lying somewhere between a regular expectant and a fully-fledged minister - did not give refugee ministers parity with those already in the Kirk of Scotland, it allowed them to provide a key source of additional manpower in roles as military chaplains.

Occupying an important military position and given access to the Solemn League and Covenant from 1644, refugee ministers gained important connections with prominent landowners who held powers of patronage. Despite the Kirk's attempts to reduce the power of lay patrons, access to a key stakeholder in a parish continued to hold significance for those wanting a permanent position in the Kirk before 1649.¹⁰⁶ The case of Patrick Glass, a minister who found his way to the north-east of Scotland in 1643 and had secured a position as preacher to an army garrison in Strathbogie by 1647, helps illuminate the transformation from unproven refugee to acceptable parish minister in the aftermath of the Solemn League and Covenant.¹⁰⁷ In the months that followed, the Hays of Rannes attempted to secure Glass a position within the regular ministry as a helper to the minister of Rathven. The Commission of the Kirk was eager for Glass to be rewarded for his proven loyalty to the Covenant, but the ministers of Fordyce Presbytery continued to hold doubts over the manner in which Glass had obtained presentation and, at one stage, revealed their opinion that Glass was a 'man thought not fitte for that place'.¹⁰⁸ Glass's need for a patron had divided the parish, though: the Hays of Rannes had connections with the deposed Bishop of Moray and some in the Presbytery accused Glass's backers of being 'disaffected'.¹⁰⁹ Glass's stock was, however, clearly on the rise as he gave a successful sermon before the Synod of Moray in April 1648 and his connections eventually bore fruit a year later when he was appointed minister of Edinkillie in nearby Forres Presbytery in June 1649.¹¹⁰ Glass had proven his loyalty by taking up a position with the military, and despite some lingering doubts, had successfully obtained a permanent living in the Kirk of Scotland.

Those who entered into service as military chaplains usually found their way to a regular, permanent, parish. This was particularly the case when ministers found that their opportunities back in Ireland continued to be limited. John Drysdale, a minister who had stayed in his charge at Portaferry at the outbreak of Rebellion in 1641, acted as chaplain to Viscount Claneboye's regiment and then as a member of the Scottish military Presbytery in Ulster. Drysdale attempted to continue his career in Ireland until he was ejected by the English invasion and occupation of the country in 1649 and 1650. In October 1650, his good service and orthodoxy were rewarded when he was

¹⁰⁵ *The Records of the Commissions of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, 1, ed. A. F. Mitchell & J. Christie (Edinburgh, 1892), p. 38.

¹⁰⁶ L. A. B. Whitley, *A Great Grievance: Ecclesiastical Lay Patronage in Scotland until 1750* (Oregon, 2013), pp. 41-58.

¹⁰⁷ *Commissions*, 1, p. 245.

¹⁰⁸ NRS, CH2/158/2, ff. 26v, 27v, 28, 30.

¹⁰⁹ NRS, CH2/158/2, f. 28.

¹¹⁰ NRS, CH2/271/2, f. 71; NRS, CH2/432/1, f.1v; Scott, *Fasti*, 6, p. 419.

appointed as a helper to Henry Calvert, minister of Paisley and a man who had also served in Ireland. Drysdale returned to Ireland as minister of Portaferry by 1656.¹¹¹ In 1647, the Commission of the General Assembly recommended Fergus Alexander, the former minister of Kilmud, to serve any vacant Scottish parish that was willing to accept him 'understanding [his] good carriage...with our Army in England'.¹¹² Alexander had preached in Scottish regiments and, finding no success in getting a permanent residence in Scotland, returned to Ireland in 1648 as minister of Grey Abbey in Co. Down.¹¹³ He was ejected from Ireland by the English government in 1650 and found employment in the newly formed parish of Barr in Ayr Presbytery three years later.¹¹⁴ The military service of these individuals, their shared reading of the Solemn League and Covenant and the sheer time they had spent in Scotland had effectively proved their Covenanted credentials.

Conclusion

Not all Presbyterians were equal. Historians appreciate the differences that existed between English and Scottish Presbyterians but assume that the Kirk had a rather more straightforward relationship with its 'sister' church across the Irish Sea. Certainly, Ulster and Scotland had a shared heritage but Wentworth's Black Oath that condemned members of Presbyterian congregations provided a yardstick with which early Covenanters could assess the commitment of those fleeing from Ireland. While those fleeing Wentworth in the late 1630s could expect a warm welcome, Kirk leaders were suspicious of those who had remained in Ireland into the early 1640s.

The outbreak of rebellion in Ireland raised the profile of Scottish Protestant settlers in their former homeland. Refugees fleeing the conflict attempted to return to their former home parishes in Scotland, bringing with them stories of Protestant suffering and Catholic brutality. While Covenanter leaders were horrified at the prospect of a Catholic insurgency across the Irish Sea and needed to deal with a massive influx of refugees, the mixture of Protestant ministers returning to Scotland presented a number of challenges.¹¹⁵ Communities responded with remarkable speed in supplying financial aid for these men and their families. Moving from charitable supply to a position of permanent employment, however, was not so straightforward.

The subscription of the National Covenant in Scotland in 1638 did not unify Presbyterian thought. Despite initially uniting Presbyterian opposition to the Church policies of Charles I, the Covenant eventually became a site of contention for different forms of Presbyterianism. Refugee

¹¹¹ Reid, *History*, 2, pp. 237-8; Scott, *Fasti*, 3, p. 164; *Historical Notices of Old Belfast and its Vicinity*, ed. R. M. Young (Belfast, 1896), pp. 103-4.

¹¹² *Commissions*, 1, p. 199.

¹¹³ Reid, *History*, 2, p. 214

¹¹⁴ Scott, *Fasti*, 3, p. 17.

¹¹⁵ Macinnes, *British Revolution*, p. 144.

ministers fleeing the Irish Rebellion were not automatically accepted into this changing context. As Kirk leaders could not vouch for the Covenanted credentials of these men, they were excluded from taking up permanent posts in the Scottish ministry. Provinces that had large numbers of vacant parishes had the money and opportunity to offer these migrants permanent positions in the ministry. However, in these cases, Kirk leaders stopped short of providing full-time employment and offered *ad hoc* preaching positions instead. Those clerics who had remained in Ireland until the outbreak of rebellion in 1641 were treated differently than those who had previously fled Wentworth's anti-Presbyterian campaign. The National Covenant had not made all of these men equal - it forced some of their differences to the surface.

Kirk leaders were unsure if clerics fleeing Ireland had signed the Covenant or, worse, if they had signed the Black Oath condemning it. Refugee ministers needed to prove an unfeigned commitment to the National Covenant or risk committing perjury. Such ministers could represent a dangerous fifth column of dissent within the Kirk's relatively new Covenanted identity. Serving as a regimental chaplain was dangerous and deeply unpopular with Scottish ministers, but provided refugee clerics with an opportunity to prove their loyalty. Such sacrifice in the face of the dangers of wartime provided refugee clerics with the chance to make important contacts with lay patrons and remove any lingering doubts over their loyalty.

The question over clerical refugees' orthodoxy foresees bigger divisions that would manifest themselves in the Kirk later in the 1640s over how far the Kirk could forgive those who had previously erred without invoking God's wrath. Lingering doubts remained over how ministers could remain in Ireland without signing the Black Oath or adhering to the ecclesiastical settlement there. These questions were not just about commitment to the Covenanted cause but to how inclusive a Covenanted church could be. Some individuals in the Kirk may have wanted to be the locus of a new Reformed Protestant unity, but others, like their counterparts in England, were unsure over how far they should accept sinners back into their community.¹¹⁶

The experience of clerical migrants fleeing the Irish Rebellion of 1641 underlines the complex social dynamics of identity formation in this period. What it meant to be a good Protestant was increasingly contested throughout the 1640s and 1650s: by Presbyterians and their opponents across Britain and Ireland. However, Presbyterianism was not, itself, united or unchanging. Following extensive campaigns aimed squarely at purging the Scottish ministry of those who were seen as a danger to the new religious settlement, Covenanter leaders were suspicious over the impact Scottish expatriates in Ireland could have on their mother country. During the vicissitudes of the

¹¹⁶ J. Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 189-90; K. D. Holfelder, 'Factionalism in the Kirk during the Cromwellian invasion and occupation of Scotland, 1650 to 1660: The Protestor-Resolutioner controversy', unpublished PhD thesis (University of Edinburgh, 1998), pp. 249-52; Langley, *Worship, Civil War and Community*, ch. 2; E. Vernon, 'A ministry of the gospel: The Presbyterians during the English Revolution', in C. Durston & J. Maltby (eds), *Religion in Revolutionary England* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 127-30.

1650s, Irish Presbyterians would in turn become eager to insulate their Church settlement from Scottish controversies.¹¹⁷ Despite their shared heritage, the different experiences of Scottish and Irish Presbyterians were not always compatible.

¹¹⁷ P. Kilroy, *Protestant Dissent and Controversy in Ireland 1660-1714* (Cork, 1994), pp. 17-22; *The Minutes of the Antrim Ministers' Meeting, 1654-8*, ed. M. S. Sweetnam (Dublin, 2012), p. 12.