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**Exporting Radicalism within the Empire: Scots Presbyterian
Political Values in Scotland and British North America, c.1815 –
c.1850**

Valerie Wallace

M.A., M.Phil.

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of History

Faculty of Arts

University of Glasgow

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Abstract

This thesis offers a reinterpretation of radicalism and reform movements in Scotland and British North America in the first half of the nineteenth century by examining the relationship between Presbyterian ecclesiology and political action. It considers the ways in which Presbyterian political theory and the memory of the seventeenth-century Covenanted movement were used to justify political reform. In particular it examines attitudes in Scotland to Catholic emancipation, the Reform Act of 1832, the disestablishment of the national Churches, and the Chartist movement; and it considers agitation in Upper Canada and Nova Scotia for the disestablishment of the established Church and the institution of responsible government. It emphasises the continued relevance of religion in political culture, tracing the survival of the Scottish Covenanted tradition and charting its significance within the wider British empire. It argues that there existed a transatlantic Presbyterian community and that to some degree Presbyterian-inflected radicalism in this period was a North Atlantic phenomenon.

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Abbreviations

Journals

<i>CHR</i>	<i>Canadian Historical Review</i>
<i>CNSHS</i>	<i>Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society</i>
<i>HJ</i>	<i>Historical Journal</i>
<i>IR</i>	<i>Innes Review</i>
<i>JCCHS</i>	<i>Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society</i>
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>OH</i>	<i>Ontario History</i>
<i>P&P</i>	<i>Past and Present</i>
<i>RSCHS</i>	<i>Records of the Scottish Church History Society</i>
<i>SHR</i>	<i>Scottish Historical Review</i>

Newspapers/Periodicals

<i>AR</i>	<i>Acadian Recorder</i>
<i>CA</i>	<i>Colonial Advocate</i>
<i>C&A</i>	<i>Correspondent and Advocate</i>
<i>CC</i>	<i>Chartist Circular</i>
<i>CCEPR</i>	<i>Canadian Christian Examiner and Presbyterian Review</i>
<i>CP</i>	<i>Colonial Patriot</i>
<i>CSM</i>	<i>Church of Scotland Magazine</i>
<i>CW</i>	<i>Canadian Watchman</i>
<i>ECI</i>	<i>Edinburgh Christian Instructor</i>
<i>ETM</i>	<i>Edinburgh Theological Magazine</i>
<i>GA</i>	<i>Glasgow Argus</i>
<i>HTA</i>	<i>Herald to the Trades Advocate</i>
<i>PM</i>	<i>Presbyterian Magazine (Scotland)</i>
<i>PrM</i>	<i>Presbyterian Magazine (Upper Canada)</i>
<i>PO</i>	<i>Pictou Observer and Eastern Advertiser</i>
<i>PR</i>	<i>Presbyterian Review</i>
<i>RG</i>	<i>Loyal Reformers' Gazette/ Reformers' Gazette</i>
<i>SA</i>	<i>Scottish Advocate</i>
<i>SG</i>	<i>Scottish Guardian</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Scottish Presbyterian</i>
<i>SPr</i>	<i>Scottish Protestant</i>
<i>SPt</i>	<i>Scottish Patriot</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Scots Times</i>
<i>TB</i>	<i>The Banner</i>
<i>TC</i>	<i>The Constitution</i>
<i>TEM</i>	<i>Tait's Edinburgh Magazine</i>
<i>TG</i>	<i>The Globe</i>
<i>TN</i>	<i>The Novascotian</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>True Scotsman</i>
<i>TWM</i>	<i>Toronto Weekly Message</i>
<i>USM</i>	<i>United Secession Magazine</i>

‘The earth and heavens are shaken. The spirit of revolution is abroad among the nations. Brooding upon the chaotic mass of kingdoms of the old world, its influence is quickening into action the causes that are to operate in establishing a new order of things...The principles of civil and religious liberty are gradually undermining the systems of despotism, by which the unalienable rights of man, bestowed on him by his Creator, have been withheld from millions through successive ages.’

The Reformed Presbyterian, March 1837

Introduction

This thesis challenges traditional interpretations of the age of reform by rehabilitating ecclesiology as a central component of radical discourse. By tracing the legacy of Scotland's Covenanted tradition, it specifically examines the Presbyterian underpinnings to political radicalism and reform movements in Scotland from 1815 to around 1850. Second, looking at British North America as a case study, it suggests that Scottish Presbyterian ideas were exported within the British empire where they were similarly instrumental in inciting political agitation. Christopher Bayly has demonstrated the 'interconnectedness and interdependence of political and social changes across the world'. Highlighting the global resonance of national events and revolutions and tracing worldwide ideological cross-currents, Bayly insists on the importance of transcending 'the boundaries of states and ecological zones' especially when examining the workings and implications of empires.¹ Following Bayly's work, this thesis is an attempt to situate Scottish political reform within an Atlantic world context.

The first section of the thesis traces the survival into the mid-nineteenth century of a tradition of Scottish radicalism which was based on Presbyterian political theory. This tradition was sustained by a narrative of Scottish history which represented the Scottish Reformation and the Covenanted rebellions of the seventeenth century as episodes of popular resistance against a tyrannous Catholic or Anglican hierarchy. Scottish Presbyterians, particularly the more orthodox extremist dissenting groups, championed ideas of divinely-bestowed popular sovereignty and democratic government, while they defended Christ's spiritual headship of the Church against the encroachment of episcopopapist supremacy. For them, civil and religious liberties were intertwined. This thesis argues that these values, coupled with the symbolism of the Scottish radical past, continued to inspire political agitation against the British government at least until the decline of Chartism. Some of those who sought universal suffrage or some degree of parliamentary reform justified their pleas with reference to Presbyterian ecclesiology. Many believed that Catholic emancipation threatened political liberty while others regarded Chartism as a means to bring about a second Covenanted revolution. Moreover, the Scottish voluntary campaign for the disestablishment of the national Church, an outgrowth of Presbyterian ecclesiology indebted to the Covenanted legacy, developed into a radical political movement which challenged notions of a religiously-based society and government,

¹ C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 1-2.

assaulted the established social hierarchy and called for political reform along democratic lines. Religion then and the Covenanting tradition in particular, continued fundamentally to shape political thought and to provide the justification for radical action.

In recent years historians have grappled with the concept of radicalism. In an effort to move beyond the Marxist approach to the history of political reform and revolution, some scholars have questioned the extent to which there exists a consistent radical ideology in English history, or a national radical tradition which can be traced through time. One critic of Marxist methodology is J.C.D. Clark, whose work represents something of a watershed in the historiography of radicalism. Clark insists on the importance of dissenting theology to the emergence of social and political unrest in eighteenth-century England. Adopting what has been described as a 'linguistic' approach,² Clark maintains that radicalism only emerged in the 1820s when it was associated with Benthamite ideology: a 'fusion of universal suffrage, Ricardian economics and programmatic atheism'.³

Much of the criticism of the Marxist method has centred on its definition of radicalism as 'class-based protest' associated with a class-conscious industrial and urbanised society. As Edward Royle has noted, class and radicalism 'have come to occupy the same historical space'.⁴ Radicalism, in Scotland as well as in England, has typically been defined as a political movement by a new working class primarily to achieve an extension of the elective franchise – household suffrage or universal male suffrage after the 1832 Reform Act – as well as the secret ballot and more frequent parliaments. These political aims, it has been argued, were regarded as a means to bring balance to society and relieve the oppressed worker. Working-class radicalism has been described as an example of popular politics; it involved extra-parliamentary popular political action including mass petitioning, rallies and demonstrations as well as physical-force activism including rioting. Owing to the equation of radicalism with working-class consciousness and industrialisation, historians have paid great attention to strikes, combinations and early trades union activity.⁵ This approach has been widely applied to studies of parliamentary

² G. Burgess & M. Festenstein (eds.), *English Radicalism, 1550-1850* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 8–9.

³ J.C.D. Clark, 'Religion and the Origins of Radicalism in Nineteenth-Century Britain', in Burgess & Festenstein (eds.), *Radicalism*, p. 241.

⁴ E. Royle, 'The Language of Class and Radicalism', *History Review*, 29 (1997).

⁵ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963: London, 1991 edn.); J. Young, *The Rousing of the Scottish Working Class* (London, 1979); W.H. Fraser, 'Patterns of Protest', in T.M. Devine & R. Mitchison (eds.), *People and Society in Scotland Volume 1 1760-1830* (Edinburgh, 1980). See also, T. Clarke & T. Dickson, 'The Birth of Class?', in Devine & Mitchison (eds.), *People and Society*, pp. 292–309 and C.A. Whatley, *Scottish Society 1707-1830: Beyond Jacobitism towards Industrialisation* (Manchester & New York, 2000), for a traditional account of the emergence of radical politics in Scotland.

reform and early nineteenth-century political culture, as well as to radicalism. Analyses of the Reform Bill agitation have investigated the existence of class conflict or class cooperation and have presented the Bill as the moderate response to the radical demands of the industrialised and unrepresented masses. Traditional accounts of this period have paid great attention to social and economic change.⁶ As Roland Quinault has observed, economic change became, in the eyes of historians, interconnected with the onset of parliamentary reform. After Arnold Toynbee's Oxford lectures on 'Industry and Democracy' in 1881, scholars tended to accept at face value the hypothesis that the industrial revolution – a field of study dominated by economic historians solely – inevitably led to political liberalism.⁷

'Revisionist' historians have criticised this 'old analysis' as reductive, and have attempted to re-include in the investigation of radicalism the study of high politics, the history of ideas, and the influence of older traditions, as well as to recognise the autonomy of the state, and cycles in the world economy. Criticism of the old analysis has emphasised the importance of gender divisions and the existence of political and religious identities which cut across class lines.⁸ As Christopher Bayly has observed, working-class consciousness was a consequence of turmoil and revolution rather than its cause.⁹ Indeed, according to David Cannadine, the Marxist-liberal histories, which linked 'economic change, the making of a class, and revolutionary politics, have very largely been given up'.¹⁰ As Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein have noticed, historians of radicalism – and the same is true of reform – have shown a tendency to ignore religious motivations.¹¹ Surveys of the first half of the nineteenth century tend to focus on Peterloo; on 1832 and on Chartism; while the campaign for Catholic relief; for the abolition of slavery; or for the disestablishment of the churches – regarded as purely religious phenomena – have been treated as separate chapters or ignored entirely.¹² The socio-economic and intellectual origins of political ideology have been considered, while the spiritual, theological and ecclesiological have been overlooked. 'Even though religious institutions and theology

⁶ See for example, F.A. Montgomery, 'Glasgow and the struggle for parliamentary reform, 1830-1832', *SHR*, 61 (1982); W.H. Fraser, *Scottish Popular Politics, From Radicalism to Labour* (Edinburgh, 2000), pp. 48–52.

⁷ R. Quinault, 'The Industrial Revolution and parliamentary reform', in P. O'Brien & R. Quinault (eds.), *The Industrial Revolution and British Society* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 183–5.

⁸ R. McWilliam, *Popular Politics in Nineteenth-Century England* (London & New York, 1998). See also G. Stedman Jones, 'Rethinking Chartism', in G. Stedman Jones (ed.), *Languages of class: Studies in English working class history 1832–1982* (Cambridge, 1983).

⁹ Bayly, *Birth*, p. 191.

¹⁰ D. Cannadine, *Class in Britain* (1998: London, 2000 edn.), p. 12.

¹¹ Burgess & Festenstein (eds.), *Radicalism*, p. 11.

¹² For example, W.H. Fraser mentions Catholic emancipation only twice in his monograph on *Scottish Popular Politics*.

were occasionally investigated,' James E. Bradley argues, 'they were readily parsed into sociological categories and thereby rendered impotent.'¹³

However, historians have started to take religion seriously. Stewart J. Brown has demonstrated the extent to which church issues dominated the political domain and a belief in providence shaped nineteenth-century worldviews. Recognising the centrality of theology in political culture, Alexander Llewellyn insists that the 'spirituality awakened by the Oxford reformers is as worthy of notice as the "principle of utility"'. Ian Machin has underlined the prominence of church issues in political debate during the age of reform, while Richard Brent has highlighted the Anglican base of liberal Whiggism in the 1830s. Eugenio Biagini's *Citizenship and Community* collection, meanwhile, has emphasised not only the 'continuing importance of religion' in the late Victorian period, but also the 'crucial role played by intellectuals in deciphering and articulating popular protest'. Elsewhere Boyd Hilton has explored the religious foundation to early nineteenth-century economic thought.¹⁴

Moreover, the work of Bradley and Clark has located the origins of eighteenth-century English political unrest in anti-Trinitarian theological heterodoxy and nonconformist ecclesiology. Experience of democratic church government, a belief in Christ's headship of the church – or lack of belief in Christ's divinity – and individualistic faith caused dissenters across Britain to adopt an anti-clerical attitude which evolved into a general anti-establishment position easily transferred from the religious to the political sphere.¹⁵ Ian McBride argues that rebellions cannot be explained solely in terms of religious philosophy; social grievances and political upheavals helped generate the conditions required for popular unrest. Nevertheless, as McBride observes, for contemporaries radicalism was, to a great extent, the 'direct translation of alternative

¹³ J.E. Bradley, 'The Religious Origins of Radical Politics in England, Scotland, and Ireland, 1662-1800', in J.E. Bradley and D. Van Kley (eds.), *Religion and Politics in Enlightenment Europe* (Notre Dame, 2001), pp. 236–7.

¹⁴ S.J. Brown, *The National Churches in England, Ireland and Scotland, 1801-1846* (Oxford, 2001); S.J. Brown, *Providence and Empire: Religion, Politics and Society in the United Kingdom 1815-1914* (Harlow, 2008); A. Llewellyn, *The Decade of Reform: The 1830s* (Newton Abbot, Devon, 1972), pp. 15–16; G.I.T. Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain* (Oxford, 1977); R. Brent, *Liberal Anglican Politics: Whiggery, Religion, and Reform 1830–1841* (Oxford, 1987); E.F. Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and Community: liberals, radicals, and collective identities in the British Isles, 1865-1931* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 4; B. Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought 1785-1865* (Oxford, 1991).

¹⁵ Bradley, 'Origins', p. 200.

theologies into the political sphere.’¹⁶ As Bradley notes, ‘the importance of Nonconformity for the origins of modern radicalism is now widely recognised.’¹⁷

Elsewhere, by highlighting the complexity of dissenting culture, David Hempton has qualified the thesis of Élie Halévy, who argued that nonconformity provided a channel for radical impulses, thus serving as an antidote to Jacobinism.¹⁸ Hempton links Primitive and secession Methodists with radical causes, but insists on the tendency of Wesleyan Methodists to advocate conservatism.¹⁹ On the other side, Eileen Lyon has downplayed the significance of divisions among dissenters. Lyon tackles the early nineteenth century, whereas Clark and Bradley have focused more on the eighteenth, and maintains that religion and radical culture remained fundamentally interlinked. According to Lyon there existed a sort of ‘Christian radicalism’: a multi-denominational phenomenon influenced by the basic tenets of Christianity. Popular Christianity was, Lyon claims, ‘a form of legitimating rhetoric for politically radical action’. According to Lyon, Christian radicals throughout Britain, dissenters and members of the establishments, orthodox and heterodox, ‘drew from scripture similar basic understandings’ which underpinned critiques of government. Thus, Christian radicalism ‘transcended denominational barriers’.²⁰

Lyon also argues for a broader and more fluid conception of radicalism, as does Bradley, who supports what Burgess and Festenstein have described as a ‘functional approach’.²¹ J.C. Davis has argued that the term radicalism can be applied to any movement which harnessed extra-parliamentary action to achieve a measure of far-reaching change in the socio-political order. Criticising the theories of Christopher Hill and E.P. Thompson, many scholars have tended to stress the lack of continuity between early modern unrest and nineteenth-century protest.²² But, as Lyon has noticed, there was definite continuity with regard to scriptural influence. However, Lyon’s work is rather anglocentric, as is the work of Clark and Bradley. Hempton does attempt to take a four nations approach, but his analysis of Wales and Ulster – where his expertise lies – is more profound than his more cursory assessment of Scotland. As yet no one has attempted to

¹⁶ I. McBride, *Scripture Politics: Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998), p. 9.

¹⁷ J.E. Bradley, *Religion, Revolution, and English Radicalism: Nonconformity in Eighteenth-Century Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 7. See also Quinault, ‘Revolution’, pp. 189–90, who insists on the importance of religious dissent and regional identity during the parliamentary reform debates.

¹⁸ É. Halévy, *A History of the English People 1815–1830* (London, 1926).

¹⁹ D. Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland: From the Glorious Revolution to the Decline of Empire* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 31–2, 35–7.

²⁰ E.G. Lyon, *Politicians in the Pulpit: Christian Radicalism in Britain from the Fall of the Bastille to the Disintegration of Chartism* (Aldershot, 1999), p. 5.

²¹ Lyon, *Politicians*, p. 4; Burgess & Festenstein (eds.), *Radicalism*, p. 8. See also the introduction to A. Burns & J. Innes (eds.), *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780–1850* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 33.

²² J.C. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the historians* (Cambridge, 1986).

reassess Scottish radical culture in the early nineteenth century taking into account the religious dimension to political ideology. As Eugenio Biagini rightly observes, ‘especially in the case of radical politics’, a nuanced approach is necessary to account for the ‘plurality of identities and experiences’ in a multinational Britain.²³ Lyon may be right to emphasise the existence of a general Christian radicalism, but religious and political culture in the British Isles in this period was far from uniform. Indeed, the dissenting community was more diverse than even Hempton has appreciated. The complexity of Scottish religion must be considered.

Until the appearance of Gordon Pentland’s focused monograph in 2008, the history of political reform movements in Scotland was an unaccountably neglected area of study. Usually tacked on to the end of books dealing with the British age of reform, the distinctive aspects of Scottish political culture have been to some extent overlooked. Those who have studied this period have tended to investigate labour relations looking for the origins of trade unions and tracing, anachronistically, the genesis of modern socialism. Pentland’s book, however, is an excellent recent account of the peculiarly Scottish debates for political reform between 1820 and 1833, which analyses the influence of Covenanting rhetoric as well as the impact of the Reform Act on church politics after 1832. Nevertheless, Pentland’s attention is focused on the impact of reform on Scottish national identity, and thus the relationship between radicalism, reformist politics and religious ideology remains for the most part an unexplored aspect of Scottish history.²⁴

Other works have explored the link between religion and Scottish political culture. Iain Hutchison’s survey of Scottish politics after 1832 acknowledges the significance of church issues during political elections, while Ian Machin, particularly focusing on the period between 1840 and 1930, has explored some of the links between democratic politics and the drive for disestablishment in Scotland.²⁵ W. Hamish Fraser has charted some of the radical activities of dissenting ministers, while Donald Smith has explored the Scottish church’s role in social activism, and suggests that the Covenants remained inspirational symbols. Jean Christodolou meanwhile, has discerned some of the Christian influences on Scottish radicalism. Christodoulou analyses the radical activities of the Glasgow Universalist Church concluding that ‘throughout the nineteenth century in Scotland

²³ Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship*, p. 2.

²⁴ G. Pentland, *Radicalism, Reform and National Identity in Scotland, 1820-1833* (Woodbridge, 2008).

²⁵ I. Machin, ‘Disestablishment and democracy, c.1840-1930’, in Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship*, pp. 120–47. See also Machin, *Politics*.

popular religion often provided the impetus for political ideas.’ Nevertheless, a proper analysis of the political influence of Presbyterian ecclesiology has yet to be carried out.²⁶

As in England, scriptural influence was a consistent element in radical Scottish discourse. Indeed, though many historians have to a great extent rejected notions of continuity in the history of radicalism, in Scotland scholars have been, by contrast, preoccupied with the idea of a Calvinist radical or Covenanting tradition. E.P. Thompson and others have implied that Scottish Calvinism subdued the masses. The Scottish Kirk, some have argued, was an agent of social control after 1688 and thus radicalism failed to emerge in Scotland as it did in England.²⁷ This accounts, Thompson explains, for Scotland’s exclusion from his study of the making of the English working class.²⁸ Though Thompson is right to highlight cultural differences within the British Isles, historians are now challenging the claim that Scottish society was distinctively quiet or conservative. Indeed, Christopher Whatley has convincingly demonstrated how rebellious eighteenth-century Scottish lowlanders could be.²⁹ Others have uncovered the extent to which Scottish people in the eighteenth century were inspired by the memory of the Reformation and the example set by their seventeenth-century Covenanting forebears.³⁰

The interpretation of the Reformation as a grass-roots rebellion which secured to the Scottish people their personal liberty from dictatorial priests; their right to participate in ecclesiastical and civil government; and their right to resist a tyrannous monarch, would be perpetuated by Presbyterian historians well into the nineteenth century. Presbyterian political theory, which championed popular sovereignty, democratic church government, and denounced erastianism, provided the justification for resistance to established authority. The central tenet of Scottish Presbyterianism was the two kingdoms ecclesiology originally formulated by Andrew Melville in the post-Reformation period. This would bring Scottish Presbyterians, establishment and dissenting, into conflict with the monarch and Parliament well into the nineteenth century. Indeed, the Kirk, the dissenting sects and Scottish Calvinism in general are now seen as sources of political disaffection.

²⁶ Fraser, *Scottish Popular Politics*; D. Smith, *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest* (New York, 1987); J. Christodoulou, ‘The Glasgow Universalist Church and Scottish Radicalism from the French Revolution to Chartism: A Theology of Liberation’, *JEH*, 43 (1992), p. 622.

²⁷ This approach of course fails to appreciate the spiritual role the Church played in people’s lives.

²⁸ Thompson, *Making*, pp. 12–13.

²⁹ Whatley, *Scottish Society*; C. A. Whatley, ‘An Uninflammable People?’ in I. Donnachie & C.A. Whatley (eds.), *The Manufacture of Scottish History* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp. 51–71.

³⁰ On the Scottish Covenanting tradition see e.g., E.J. Cowan, ‘The Covenanting Tradition in Scottish History’ in E.J. Cowan & R.J. Finlay (eds.), *Scottish History: The Power of the Past* (Edinburgh, 2002); T. Brotherstone (ed.), *Covenant, Charter and Party* (Aberdeen, 1989); G. Walker & T. Gallagher (eds.), *Sermons and Battle Hymns: Protestant Popular Culture in Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1990).

This Presbyterian tradition of radicalism was bolstered by the Covenenting period, which again saw popular mobilisation and revolt. The seventeenth-century Covenanters argued that civil government was contractual in nature, condemned passive obedience, and, inspired by the resistance theories of George Buchanan, Samuel Rutherford and Alexander Shields, advocated the right to resist the government.³¹ Then, throughout the eighteenth century, Presbyterian principles and the Covenenting legacy, which became embedded in the popular mindset of lowland Scotland, provided the inspiration and validation for political reform and popular political action, especially amongst the descendants of the Cameronians and the Seceders – a breakaway body who objected to the Patronage Act and who continued to uphold a Covenenting testimony. A sincere belief in Presbyterian principles inspired protest against the Act of Union, which for some was an infringement of Covenenting obligations since it secured Anglicanism in England instead of a uniform Presbyterian system throughout the British Isles. Moreover, commitment to Presbyterian church government, popular sovereignty, suspicion of Anglican rule and the memory of earlier Presbyterian rebellions, spurred the Galloway Levellers to rebel against enclosure in 1724; encouraged resistance to the malt tax levied in 1725, as well as to other unwelcome imposts; soured relations with Westminster during the Porteous affair in 1737; and instigated numerous revolts against the Patronage Act.³²

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the patronage controversy became intertwined with secular politics. As Richard Sher and Alexander Murdoch have noticed, anti-patronage protesters utilised the rhetoric of political radicalism to campaign for ecclesiastical reform, while political activists exploited ‘the deep-seated religious sentiments of the Scots Presbyterians’ on behalf of secular causes.³³ But religion and politics were linked to a much greater degree; in many respects the political radicalism of this period had a fundamental religious foundation. The Drysdale bustle, which occurred after the Edinburgh town council asserted its right to appoint clergymen without consultation with the General Session, led to demands for burgh reform and the institution of a more open system of election. This reform was, in the words of Richard Sher, ‘widely perceived as an act of religious as well as civil purification.’ The Edinburgh radicals ‘drew heavily upon a distinctively Scottish tradition of radical Presbyterianism.’ As Ned Landsman has shown, in Glasgow resistance to patronage ‘helped to disseminate both the

³¹ H. Macpherson, ‘Political Ideals of the Covenanters, 1660-1688’, *RSCHS*, i (1926).

³² R.A. Houston, “‘Bustling Artisans’: Church Patronage at South Leith in the 1740s and 1750s”, *Albion*, 26 (1994); K.J. Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland 1780-1815* (Edinburgh, 1979), pp. 168–76.

³³ R. Sher & A. Murdoch, ‘Patronage and Party in the Church of Scotland, 1750-1800’, in N. Macdougall (ed.), *Church, Politics and Society: Scotland 1408-1929* (Edinburgh, 1983), p. 206.

spirit and habits of liberty.’ Evangelical ministers and their supporters, who held meetings, published pamphlets, satirical cartoons and broadsides, participated, Landsman claims, ‘in something very much like democratic, interest politics.’ The controversies of 1762, therefore, provided models for future popular political action.³⁴

In the 1770s Presbyterian principles again played a significant role in fomenting popular unrest. The proposed repeal of the penal laws against Catholics triggered disturbances in Scotland, especially in the west, where protesters rioted and anti-Catholic propaganda was issued from the press. Though ignored by historians keen to downplay the less progressive aspects of political culture in this period, anti-Catholic agitation contributed to the development of popular political consciousness. Repeal was debated within the General Assembly; societies were formed in Edinburgh and around Glasgow, which encouraged petitioning to resist the legislation; while handbills were scattered to incite rioting.³⁵ The Covenanters printed a violent denunciation of the repeal legislation, which, though obviously a prejudiced document, also enshrined a common Presbyterian belief: that Catholicism promoted civil tyranny. Erastian supremacy, the Covenanters argued, was a political engine used to enslave mankind. They declared the penal laws to be laws of ‘self-preservation’ in place to protect the liberties of civil society. The laws were an integral part of the constitution, it was claimed, which underpinned the Protestant church-state and protected civil and religious liberty by excluding Catholics from positions of power.³⁶ Other protesters sincerely believed the nation protected liberty by depriving Catholic subjects of their civil rights. The Rev. Archibald Bruce, Antiburgher Professor of Divinity at Whitburn, argued that ‘in Britain the legal maintenance of the Protestant religion, and the fullest security of its professors against the tyranny and perfidious arts of Romanists, is a prime object of policy, and the laws to that effect are made a distinguished and essential part of our happy constitution. Our civil and religious privileges are those twisted intimately and inseparably together; and the one cannot be touched or injured, but the other must also be affected.’³⁷

³⁴ R.B. Sher, ‘Moderates, Managers and Popular Politics in Mid-Eighteenth Century Edinburgh: The Drysdale ‘Bustle’ of the 1760s’, in J. Dwyer, R.A. Mason, & A. Murdoch (eds.), *New Perspectives on the Politics and Culture of Early Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1982), pp. 194–5, 202; N.C. Landsman, ‘Liberty, Piety and Patronage: The Social Context of Contested Clerical Calls in Eighteenth-Century Glasgow’, in A. Hook & R. Sher (eds.), *The Glasgow Enlightenment* (East Linton, 1997), pp. 220–1.

³⁵ R.K. Donovan, *No Popery and Radicalism: Opposition to Roman Catholic Relief in Scotland, 1778-1782* (New York & London, 1987).

³⁶ *Testimony and Warning against the Blasphemies and Idolatry of Popery, the Evil and Danger of Every Encouragement given to it* (Edinburgh, 1779).

³⁷ Archibald Bruce, *Free Thoughts on the Toleration of Popery* (Edinburgh, 1780), p. 5.

In Ireland, Covenanting Presbyterianism, which had been exported to Ulster in the seventeenth century, had a similar legacy. Early agrarian rebellions in Ulster, including the Oakboys and Steelboys risings, were underpinned by anti-establishment theories nursed within the non-Anglican churches. Presbyterians, like Catholics, were subject to civil disabilities in Ireland, and Presbyterians were driven to rebel in order to preserve, as they thought, the civil and religious liberty secured by their Scottish ancestors. In the 1780s the 'Peep O' Day' boys protested against the relaxation of the penal laws which saw increased toleration of Catholicism; perceived as evidence of the Church of Ireland's support for Rome.³⁸

Covenanting political theology was to a great extent a fusion of democratic political beliefs and religious imperatives. As John Brims and Ian McBride have shown in their respective works, Covenanting political theology and the symbolism of Scotland's radical past continued to inspire political radicalism in Scotland and in Ulster in the turbulent 1790s.³⁹ In Scotland Seceder ministers, including Professor of Divinity George Lawson, were associated with the Friends of the People. In a manuscript on political subjects Lawson defended political radicals against charges of sedition, championed the right of petition, and for eighteen pages argued in favour of efforts to retain 'redress of the grievances of our country.'⁴⁰ Archibald Bruce was an outspoken critic of the establishment during this intense period. He printed politico-religious tracts on his own printing press denouncing the Kirk for its erastian constitution which sanctioned patronage and deprived people of their democratic right to appoint their pastors. Bruce argued that the Scottish Reformation had secured civil and religious liberty and that the democratic movement in the 1790s was the continuation of the battle waged by the Covenanters. As Brims has noted, these beliefs were likely to 'draw those holding them into supporting the sort of radical political reforms which would take power away from the hated nobility and place it in the hands of the common people.'⁴¹ Indeed, Bruce explicitly defended the freedom of the press, denounced religious intolerance and declared that he was 'glad to see so many spirited advocates raised up to plead the cause of political freedom and the right of prosecuting a civil reform.'⁴²

³⁸ McBride, *Scripture Politics*, pp. 32–3; D.W. Miller (ed.), *Peep O' Day Boys and Defenders: Selected Documents on the Disturbances in County Armagh, 1784-1796* (Belfast, 1990).

³⁹ J. Brims, 'The Covenanting Tradition and Scottish Radicalism in the 1790s', in T. Brotherstone (ed.), *Covenant, Charter and Party*; McBride, *Scripture Politics*.

⁴⁰ John Macfarlane, *The Life and Times of George Lawson D.D.* (Edinburgh, 1862), p. 396.

⁴¹ Brims, 'Covenanting Tradition', pp. 52–3.

⁴² Quoted in Brims, 'Covenanting Tradition', p. 55; see also David Scott, *Annals and Statistics of the Original Secession Church* (Edinburgh, 1886), pp. 520–1.

Meanwhile, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the church of the Covenanters, was regarded by contemporaries as ‘a little nursery in which the leading principles of sedition are nourished, supported and avowed.’ It was discovered that some RPs were attending revolutionary clubs,⁴³ and although the Church condemned this, it did not object to the aims of these societies, but only the religious diversity of their membership.⁴⁴ However, the democratic movement in general did not appeal to the Covenanting tradition to justify its actions. As Brims has observed, in order for it to survive members had to avoid ‘sectarian divisions’. Only when the movement had begun to disintegrate, and when constitutional methods had failed, Brims maintains, did reformers resort to violent language. In 1794 a group of Lanarkshire weavers posted handbills and letters reminiscent of the Sanquhar Declaration: ‘in the name of god we do cast of the authority of that tyrant and usurper known by the name of George III Rex for his treachery and perjury in violating the whole laws of both God and man usurping the headship of the church, introducing popery and slavery...we declare war against him by taking up arms and standing one by another to the utmost of our power.’⁴⁵ This demonstrates that although there was no link between the ideology of Jacobinism and Covenanting, Presbyterian theory continued to underpin some of the radical thought during this critical political era.

As Ian McBride has observed, to a great extent Presbyterian radicalism was also at the bottom of the Irish rebellion in 1798.⁴⁶ Both rational dissent nursed within Irish New Light⁴⁷ factions – which in the early eighteenth century embraced Arianism and rejected the Westminster Confession of Faith – and older dissenting ideologies found within the orthodox sects of Covenanters and Seceders, contributed to the emergence of Irish radical politics. There was significant support for the French Revolution amongst the dissenting ranks in Ireland. The Volunteer forces, which formed the mainstay of the United Irishmen, had the backing of the Covenanters. Indeed, the Rev. William Staveland, a Covenanter preacher, led the Knockbracken company.⁴⁸ Though the Reformed Presbyterians officially condemned participation in the rising, and denounced the United Irishmen on account of their ‘practices immoral’ and ‘principles deistical’, two RPs were executed, while others

⁴³ Thomas Binnie, *Sketch of the History of the First Reformed Presbyterian Congregation, Now Great Hamilton Street Free Church, Glasgow* (Paisley, 1888), pp. 63–4.

⁴⁴ Peter Macindoe, *A Vindication of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1830), pp. 4, 13, 27–8.

⁴⁵ Brims, ‘Covenanting Tradition’, pp. 57–9.

⁴⁶ McBride, *Scripture Politics*; see also, Hempton, *Religion*, pp. 94–9.

⁴⁷ Irish ‘new light’ Arianism should not be confused with the theologically orthodox Scottish ‘new licht’ (see below).

⁴⁸ A. Loughridge, *The Covenanters in Ireland* (Belfast, 1987), pp. 27, 44.

were arrested or fled to the United States. The sermons of RP clergymen were considered to be seditious and inflammatory.⁴⁹

To what extent did these values remain influential? Is it possible to detect the legacy of the Covenanters in the first half of the nineteenth century? Did Presbyterian political theology – a curious blend of religious conservatism and political liberalism – continue to inspire commitment to democratic reform? The purpose of this thesis is to question how far Presbyterian values continued to have political relevance. Following the lead of Arthur Burns, Joanna Innes and others, this thesis will attempt to ‘rethink’ the age of reform by exploring some of the links between moral and institutional reform.⁵⁰ Covenanting values and Presbyterian ecclesiological debate were necessarily concerned with constitutional issues and questions of sovereignty. Thus, the first half of this thesis will focus primarily on the campaign for Catholic emancipation; the movement for parliamentary reform and the disestablishment of the Churches, which culminated in the Chartist struggle. It will demonstrate that political reform movements continued to be indebted to this aspect of Scottish culture. Reformist rhetoric was infused with reference to the Covenant as a symbol of resistance but Presbyterian political theory also underpinned the ideological motivations of some reformers. Those who supported – or, in the case of Catholic emancipation, resisted – political reforms justified their position according to Presbyterian anti-clericalism and ideas of popular sovereignty; while the desire to achieve a godly commonwealth and to maintain the Kirk’s independence from the state continued to underpin political protest. Some remained committed to a strict Covenanting agenda, seeking to establish the national Covenants of 1638 and 1643 as the basis of the British constitution. One of the aims of this thesis will be to highlight the interwoven nature of political and religious reformist ideology; society was to a great extent divided between those with an ‘old light’ view of the church’s relation to state; i.e. those who believed the state should have a religious basis; and those who favoured disestablishment and increased secularisation. This ‘church question’ dominated the political domain and it cut across class and party lines.

Like Lyon and Bradley this thesis also argues for a broader understanding of radicalism. In Parliament Radical MPs sought further democratic change after the Reform Act, but ‘radical’ is a term which was applied and understood in a variety of ways. The Reformed Presbyterian Church was radical in that it desired a Covenanting revolution in church and state. Covenanters sought to reconstitute the British government, to remodel the

⁴⁹ Loughridge, *Covenanters*, pp. 44–9.

⁵⁰ Burns & Innes (eds.), *Rethinking*, pp. 2–3.

constitution, to reform the Kirk and to overthrow the Church of England and Ireland. Presbyterian voluntaries, those who campaigned for the separation of church and state, were considered radicals who sought to overthrow the theological basis of society. The voluntary controversy, an assault on the existing church-state, was, this thesis argues, a form of early nineteenth-century radicalism which had a profound impact on political culture. It satisfies the criteria for radicalism set by J.C. Davis: it was a politicised movement which sought ecclesiastical and democratic reform via extra-parliamentary popular agitation. In its approach to radicalism this thesis thus blends all three approaches outlined by Burgess and Festenstein. Following the linguistic approach it recognises how contemporaries applied the term radical but rejects the rigid definition set by J.C.D. Clark; following the functional model it applies Davis' criteria to the voluntary controversy; and following the substantive approach exemplified by Christopher Hill and E.P. Thompson, it recognises the enduring significance of a Calvinist radical tradition.

The thesis does not provide a comprehensive analysis of the origins of Scottish radicalism or of all the theoretical and philosophical motivations of key reformers. Rather, it focuses primarily on extra-parliamentary agitation and on what may be considered an obscure and archaic aspect of political thought: Scottish Presbyterian theory. Many of the figures mentioned here were minor and obscure clergymen whose views were not widely subscribed. At other points however, Presbyterian thought dominated the political landscape – encouraging, it should be mentioned, political conservatism as well as reformist thought – and its significance should not be underplayed. Indeed, that Presbyterian theory continued to provide the justification for political thought and action at least until the middle of the nineteenth century is a significant finding. The age of reform can thus be linked to earlier agitation stretching from the early modern period; as this thesis will suggest, it is possible to talk about a Scottish Covenanting, or Calvinist radical, tradition.

An original intention of this thesis was to include a fuller discussion of Presbyterian radicalism in Ireland, where the legacy of the Covenanters was likewise significant. Irish Presbyterianism in this period has traditionally been represented as conservative, the radical aspect having been, as Kevin Whelan has argued, fully exported to the United States in the aftermath of the 1798 rebellion.⁵¹ However, especially within the dissenting bodies, remnants of politicised Presbyterian radicalism did survive, as the protest

⁵¹ K. Whelan, 'The Green Atlantic: radical reciprocities between Ireland and America in the long eighteenth century', in K. Wilson (ed.), *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 216–38.

surrounding the Belfast Academical Institution and the tenant right movement testify.⁵²

Owing to spatial constraints however, the Irish context is only briefly mentioned.

Nevertheless, as Ulster belonged to the wider Presbyterian Atlantic community, it is still important to highlight some of the Irish contributions to the politico-religious debates of the time.

The pamphlets, sermons and speeches of individual clergymen will be examined as will the periodical literature published by the various Presbyterian denominations in Scotland, and to a lesser extent in Ireland. Moreover, the newspaper press will be analysed in order to determine the extent to which Covenanting values were diffused within society. The first half of this thesis will be divided into different subsections. First, it shall provide background information on the Covenanting tradition and Presbyterian political theory in Scottish society in the early nineteenth century. Next it will consider the debate surrounding Catholic emancipation and the Reform Bill, investigating the extent to which the Covenanting tradition and Presbyterian values remained instrumental. It will then consider the voluntary controversy of the mid-1830s – a debate indebted to the Covenanting legacy – which evolved into a radical movement culminating in the Chartist campaign of the 1840s. As this thesis will suggest, voluntarism, as well as the symbolism and ideals of the Covenanting past, shaped the Scottish Chartist movement.

Exporting Radicalism within the Empire

The second half of the thesis examines the Covenanting legacy in the British empire. In a new era of global history, scholars have focused less on the history of independent nation-states and placed more emphasis on, as Kevin Kenny explains, ‘broader transnational, cooperative, or global contexts.’⁵³ In recent years scholars have shown increasing interest in the transatlantic interchange of peoples and ideas and the existence of an Atlantic culture. Indeed, Bernard Bailyn has charted the rise of Atlantic History as a discipline.⁵⁴ Miles Taylor, meanwhile, has stressed the importance of a global or imperial perspective when examining the age of reform. As Elaine McFarland has observed, British and Irish

⁵² See McBride, *Scripture Politics*, pp. 211–23, 223–4; P. Brooke, *Ulster Presbyterianism: The Historical Perspective 1610-1970* (Dublin, 1987), pp. 170–3, 183–7; P. Bew & F. Wright, ‘The Agrarian Opposition in Ulster Politics 1848–87’, in S. Clark & J.S. Donnelly Jr. (eds.), *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest 1780-1914* (Manchester, 1983); F. Campbell, *The Dissenting Voice: Protestant Democracy in Ulster from Plantation to Partition* (Belfast, 1991).

⁵³ K. Kenny (ed.), *Ireland and the British Empire* (Oxford, 2006), p. 3.

⁵⁴ B. Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concepts and Contours* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

historians have too often adopted an ‘isolationist stance’ when studying political reform.⁵⁵ Taylor has traced the impact of the 1848 revolutions – long thought to have had minimal influence on British society – in the wider British world; in the colonies of the Mediterranean, in the Caribbean, North America, the Cape, India, Africa and Australasia. Similarly, he has drawn attention to the imperial dimension to the debates surrounding the British Reform Act which indirectly contributed to rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada, Jamaica, war in north-west India as well as political agitation in Britain and Ireland.⁵⁶ Elsewhere, historians have become increasingly preoccupied with the idea of a Scottish empire – and a Scottish Atlantic – and have attempted to highlight the cultural distinctiveness and contribution of Scots within the wider world.⁵⁷ However, as McFarland points out, ‘the picture of how Scotland fits into a network of international democratic politics is still incomplete.’⁵⁸ As Bayly observes, it is possible to write a global history of ideas which highlights the ‘multi-centred origins of ideological production’.⁵⁹ Inspired by these trends, this thesis traces the transmission of Scottish Presbyterian values, via Ireland as well as from Scotland, to the British North American colonies; specifically to Upper Canada and Nova Scotia.

This thesis is indebted to the work of Carol Wilton and Jeffrey McNairn, which has emphasised the British origins of reformist ideologies in Upper Canada, as well as the development in the colony of a politicised public sphere.⁶⁰ Until recently, historians of Canadian politics had generally attributed the radical aspect of political culture to American influence. Scholars are now appreciating the circumatlantic flow of ideas which linked British North America with Europe, as well as the reciprocal relationship which existed between the United States and Britain.⁶¹ The role of religion in Upper Canadian political culture has likewise been highlighted and in two insightful essays Michael Gauvreau has pointed to the significant relationship between radical politics and dissenting

⁵⁵ E.W. McFarland, *Ireland and Scotland in the Age of Revolution* (Edinburgh, 1994), pp. vi–vii.

⁵⁶ M. Taylor, ‘The 1848 Revolutions and the British Empire’, *P&P*, 166 (2000); M. Taylor, ‘Empire and parliamentary reform: the 1832 Act revisited’, in Burns & Innes (eds.), *Re-thinking*. See also M. Taylor, ‘Joseph Hume and the Reformation of India, 1819-1833’, in Burgess & Festenstein (eds.), *Radicalism*, pp. 285–308.

⁵⁷ M. Fry, *The Scottish Empire* (Edinburgh, 2001); T.M. Devine, *Scotland’s Empire 1600-1815* (London, 2004); A. McCarthy (ed.), *A Global Clan: Scottish Migrant Networks and Identities since the Eighteenth Century* (London & New York, 2006). On the enduring appeal of the Scottish Atlantic paradigm, see J.R. Torre, ‘The Scottish Atlantic’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, lxxv (2008).

⁵⁸ McFarland, *Ireland and Scotland*, p. viii.

⁵⁹ Bayly, *Birth*, p. 471.

⁶⁰ C. Wilton, *Popular Politics and Political Culture in Upper Canada 1800-1850* (Montreal & Kingston, 2001); J.L. McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge: Public Opinion and Deliberative Democracy in Upper Canada 1791-1854* (Toronto, 2000).

⁶¹ S. Strauss, ‘The American Myth in Britain’, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 72 (1973).

ideology.⁶² Building on this work, this thesis argues that to a certain degree, Scottish Presbyterianism underpinned colonial unrest in British North America before the dawn of responsible government in 1848-9.

Gauvreau is influenced by the work of J.C.D. Clark who has charted the exportation of Calvinist resistance theories to the thirteen colonies where he claims they were instrumental in inciting colonial unrest leading to the American Revolution. According to Clark, Alexander Craighead, Covenanter minister in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, 're-emphasised the Covenanter roots of political contractarianism'. Craighead and his followers renewed the Covenants in Middle Octorara, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania on 11 November 1743, denouncing George II as a 'sworn Prelatick'. In 1764 the residents of Pennsylvania's backcountry, mostly Scots-Irish Presbyterians, marched on Philadelphia hoping to bring an end to the Quaker control of civil government. They issued a set of grievances which included the inequitable distribution of Assembly seats. Increasingly, these rebels focused on the imperial connection as the root of their troubles. A Philadelphia Stamp Commissioner complained in 1766 that the Presbyterians had become as 'averse to Kings, as they were in the Days of Cromwell, and some begin to cry out, *No King but King Jesus*'.⁶³ Presbyterianism continued to underpin American radical culture into the nineteenth century, as Kevin Whelan has shown. Ulster Presbyterian exiles, including some from the Reformed Presbyterian Church, who fled from Ireland in the aftermath of the 1798 rebellion, contributed to the development of democratic Republican ideology.⁶⁴

In the American revolutionary period, Nova Scotian rebels were drawn from the Scots and Scots-Irish population of Pictou and Cumberland Counties. It seems the Congregationalist as well as the Presbyterian population in the province were guilty of sedition as was reported by Major-General Massey in November 1772: 'they are well inclined to be Rebellious, as any part of the Continent, and...until Presbytery is drove out of his Majesty's Dominions, Rebellion will ever continue, nor will that set ever submit to the Laws of old England'. The attack on Fort Cumberland in 1776 was, according to Massey, perpetrated by the Irish Presbyterian settlers in the vicinity, who 'almost to a man'

⁶² M. Gauvreau, 'Covenanter Democracy: Scottish Popular Religion, Ethnicity, and the Varieties of Politico-religious Dissent in Upper Canada, 1815-1841', *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 36 (2003); M. Gauvreau, 'Reluctant Voluntaries: Peter and George Brown; the Scottish Disruption and the Politics of Church and State in Canada', *JEH*, 25 (2001).

⁶³ J.C.D. Clark, *The Language of Liberty, 1660-1832: political discourse and social dynamics in the Anglo-American World* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 260-1, 264-5.

⁶⁴ Whelan, 'Green Atlantic'.

joined the rebels.⁶⁵ These included residents of Pictou, Amherst and Jolicure, areas which became Seceder and Covenanting strongholds.

Despite the similarities between these episodes of unrest in the Atlantic world, few have considered the role of Presbyterian dissent in British North American culture in the early nineteenth century; a location and time period which have been less well served by scholars of Atlantic studies.⁶⁶ Unlike many celebratory histories of Scottishness in Canada, which account for the disproportionate number of Scots active in Canadian politics by hinting at ethnic superiority,⁶⁷ Gauvreau's work is a subtle analysis which underlines the complexity of Scottish Presbyterian dissenting culture and attributes the political unrest in Upper Canada to the influence of Presbyterian political theology. Gauvreau has argued that radicalism in Upper Canada originated to a degree in the dissenting churches, particularly those established by Presbyterian Seceders, who resisted the dominance of Anglicanism established in church and state. The influence of Scottish Presbyterian voluntarist ideology was particularly significant as it encouraged resistance to Anglican exclusivity especially during the contentious debate on the clergy reserves. Upper and Lower Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick (after 1784) and Prince Edward Island (after 1769) all had representative Assemblies, elected by the population, and Legislative Councils, nominated by the Crown. Each colony had a Lieutenant-Governor, accountable to the Governor-General in Quebec, who was responsible for the nomination of officials and who headed the executive. In Upper Canada the Executive Council was composed of members of the Legislative Council and met separately, but in Nova Scotia the nominated Council performed both legislative and executive functions. Since the Councils tended to defend the interest of Anglicanism and could block all measures passed by a dissenter-supported Assembly, reformers who disliked the dominance of the Church of England viewed the nature of colonial government as the root of the problem.

Building on the work of Gauvreau, one chapter of this thesis will investigate more thoroughly the impact of the Covenanting tradition in Upper Canada. It will, moreover, apply Gauvreau's argument to the colony of Nova Scotia where Scottish and Ulster-Scots settlers were also numerous. It will assess the impact on Nova Scotian political reform of Scots Presbyterian political values, again underlining the particular influence of the voluntarist strand of the Covenanting tradition. Most pre-Confederation histories of Canada tend to be localised studies of individual provinces. By highlighting the impact of

⁶⁵ S.D. Clark, *Movements of Political Protest in Canada 1640–1840* (Toronto, 1959), pp. 65–71.

⁶⁶ R.W. Vaudry makes this observation in his *Anglicans and the Atlantic World: High Churchmen, Evangelicals, and the Quebec Connection* (Montreal & Kingston, 2003), p. 5.

⁶⁷ See for example, W. Stanford Reid, *The Scottish Tradition in Canada* (Toronto, 1976).

Presbyterian values in each colony, this work will underline an aspect of a shared political culture which existed in British North America before 1867.⁶⁸

Though many scholars have examined the cross-currents of intellectual thought during the enlightenment, and the transatlantic nature of evangelicalism,⁶⁹ less has been written on the voluntarist debate on the relationship between church and state and its Atlantic context. One of the only studies to assess voluntarism and to place it in a wider setting is Edward Norman's *The Conscience of the State in North America* which emphasises the British influences on North American voluntarism. As Norman observes, religious dissenters in America regarded assault on the church establishment as a means to open up the full benefits of the British constitution to themselves. Voluntarism was thus translated into political radicalism. In British North America, Norman argues, dissenters drew on the experience of the thirteen colonies and allied with political radicals to battle for equality.⁷⁰ Like Norman, this thesis will situate British North America in a transatlantic context. This thesis will, however, examine the distinctive Scottish contribution to the voluntary debate and its wider impact, an aspect of the phenomenon overlooked by Norman.

As Hilary M. Carey has observed, 'religion is still only a minority concern within the broader field of imperial history'. Indeed, though interest is growing, imperial historians have tended to overlook the development of religion within settlement colonies, and as Carey notes, though much work has focused on the role of religion in forging a British national identity, 'there has been less interest in how religion worked to hold together the imagined British World'.⁷¹ However, Fiona Bateman has highlighted the existence of an Irish Catholic spiritual empire in the early twentieth century.⁷² Similarly, this thesis, by invoking the idea of 'informal empire', will argue that there existed a Presbyterian empire of Scots and also Ulster-Scots – a group largely invisible in Irish imperial historiography.⁷³ The notion of informal empire was first advocated by historians who sought to outline the economic links which bound countries in relationships of dependency within and outside the official British empire. It will be argued here that there

⁶⁸ The tendency of historians to downplay the similarities between the movements for political reform in the British American provinces in this period is noted in J.M. Bumsted, 'The Consolidation of British North America, 1783–1860', in P. Buckner (ed.), *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford, 2008), p. 52.

⁶⁹ On global evangelicalism see G.A. Rawlyk & M.A. Noll (eds.), *Amazing Grace: Evangelicalism in Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States* (Montreal & Kingston, 1994).

⁷⁰ E. Norman, *The Conscience of the State in North America* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 1–8.

⁷¹ H.M. Carey (ed.), *Empires of Religion* (Basingstoke, 2008), pp. 1, 3.

⁷² F. Bateman, 'Ireland's Spiritual Empire: Territory and Landscape in Irish Catholic Missionary Discourse', in Carey (ed.), *Empires*, pp. 267–87.

⁷³ See K. Kenny, 'The Irish in the Empire', in Kenny (ed.), *Ireland*, pp. 112–13.

existed an informal ideological and religious empire; a network of churches and missionaries which facilitated the transmission of peoples and ideas.

Overseas religious missions were central to the emergence of an interconnected nineteenth-century world. As Christopher Bayly points out, 'linked missionary activities within and outside the purview of the British Empire' helped to heal the breach in the English-speaking world caused by the American Revolution.⁷⁴ Recognising this, scholars have begun to investigate the ecclesiastical and theological dimension to the process of globalisation. Rowan Strong has examined the imperial aspect of nineteenth-century Anglicanism, while Andrew Porter has studied the contentious relationship between mission and empire.⁷⁵ This section, partly indebted to Porter's work, will suggest that missionaries, as well as laymen, inspired by Scottish Presbyterian values, campaigned for responsible government in Upper Canada and Nova Scotia in a bid to limit the influence of a dominant Anglican establishment. Though as Esther Breitenbach observes, Scottish missionaries rarely critiqued the concept of British imperialism, 'they were intermittently critical of...aspects of imperial administration and policy'.⁷⁶ Likewise, Ulster Presbyterian missionaries, as well as immigrants, were instrumental in challenging colonial authority. As Jock Philips has observed with regard to New Zealand settlers, Scots and Ulster-Scots shared a common Presbyterian tradition and a 'resistance to English aristocratic pretention' which may have encouraged a sense of qualified allegiance to Britain.⁷⁷ Thus, the thesis argues that, like Anglicanism, Presbyterianism had an imperial dimension, helping to contribute to the creation of an interconnected world; but it also undermined the political structure of this world, as its ideas influenced radicals and reformers who sought political change. As Carey observes, 'although the churches and their clergy could supply propaganda in favour of empire, they might just as easily be found subverting colonial power structures for Christian purposes.'⁷⁸

Jessica L. Harland-Jacobs has approached the study of British freemasonry from a global perspective. She has charted the international network of freemasonry in order to investigate 'the historical process of globalisation'. Tracing the development of a particular

⁷⁴ Bayly, *Birth*, p. 357.

⁷⁵ R. Strong, *Anglicanism and the British Empire 1700-1850* (Oxford, 2007); A. Porter, *Religion versus empire? British Protestant missionaries and overseas expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester, 2004); A. Porter, 'Religion, Missionary Enthusiasm and Empire', in A. Porter (ed.), *The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999).

⁷⁶ E. Breitenbach, 'Religious Literature and Discourses of Empire: The Scottish Presbyterian Foreign Mission Movement', in Carey (ed.), *Empires*, p. 96.

⁷⁷ J. Philips, 'Common ground in the Antipodes? Migration from Ulster and Scotland to New Zealand, 1800-1945', in W. Kelly & J.R. Young (eds.), *Ulster and Scotland, 1600-2000: History, Language and Identity* (Dublin, 2004), p. 70.

⁷⁸ Carey (ed.), *Empires*, p. 11.

cultural institution across the British empire, Harland-Jacobs maintains, presents an alternative way ‘to “do history” outside the restrictive framework of the nation state’. Moreover, merging a national with an imperial perspective on freemasonry enhances, this author claims, our understanding of freemasonry itself. In a similar vein this thesis will view the cultural institution of Scottish Presbyterianism from a wider perspective in an attempt to enhance our understanding of that particular institution, but also in an attempt to present an alternative interpretation of British imperial history.⁷⁹

Owing to the constraints of time and space, the thesis will deal primarily with British North American colonies as case studies, hoping that this investigation will provide an introduction to the transmission of Presbyterian radicalism in the empire more generally. It will provide an overview of the ways in which Presbyterian values were transmitted across the Atlantic and domestically within the colonies, and then, in separate chapters, it will specifically examine the political culture of Upper Canada and Nova Scotia. Though it is recognised that Scottish Presbyterianism did have a cultural legacy elsewhere in British North America, it will by necessity touch only very briefly on New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Lower Canada. As in the first section of the dissertation, the analysis presented in the latter chapters is based on sermons, pamphlets and periodical literature, supplemented by archival sources gathered in repositories across Canada. By way of a conclusion this thesis will suggest that Presbyterian-inflected radicalism during the age of reform was a North Atlantic phenomenon. There existed an Atlantic spiritual community of Scottish Presbyterianism and each of the reform movements in Scotland, Nova Scotia and Upper Canada, as well as in Ulster, had transatlantic relevance. However, this thesis will end by suggesting that in order fully to appreciate the significance of Scottish Presbyterianism within the empire, a global perspective must be adopted. The Atlantic community was only part of a wider globalised network.

⁷⁹ J.L. Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire: Freemasons and British Imperialism, 1717-1927* (Chapel Hill, 2007), p. 8.

Section One:

**Presbyterianism, Radicalism and Reform in Scotland, c.1815 –
c.1850**

1. Presbyterianism in Scottish Society in the Early Nineteenth Century

The early nineteenth century has often been portrayed as a period of secularisation. Industrialisation and urbanisation, so the traditional argument goes, rent asunder parish communities and changed significantly established patterns of life. However, as this section will show, early nineteenth-century Britain remained an intensely pious place. In lowland Scotland in particular, Scottish Presbyterianism had a significant bearing on people's lives. Indeed, the first decades of the nineteenth century were religiously charged as the acolytes of Archibald Bruce and George Lawson and the wider community grappled with theological controversy and celebrated a Presbyterian legacy. This section will give some background information on Presbyterian political theory and its wider social and political impact after 1815.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church

Early nineteenth-century Scots attended a proliferation of churches, including many thriving dissenting sects. One of the smallest of these was the Covenanter or Reformed Presbyterian Church (RPC), whose members claimed to have descended from the original Cameronian martyrs. In the nineteenth century Reformed Presbyterians developed the political theory their Covenanting ancestors had first begun to espouse in the seventeenth century. They published treatises outlining their view of church-state relations and justified their continued dissent from the body politic. As well as underlining the distinction between the spiritual and temporal spheres, they argued that civil government was a divinely sanctioned institution, supervised by God. Thus, the magistrate had a duty to further the cause of true religion by supporting a church establishment; but further, the political affairs of the country were, the church claimed, to be conducted piously with an eye to the moral precepts laid down in the Bible.

¹ Nations fortunate to enjoy the light of revelation and the ordinance of civil government were obligated to frame their constitutions and subsequent government policies according to God's will. If civil government failed to conduct its business morally then inhabitants could justifiably dissent from society and refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy of government. In fact, this was imperative in order to avoid being held, along with the rest of

¹ 'A Magistratical Catechism, on Christian Principles', *SP*, March 1836.

the nation, accountable for national sins at Judgement Day. The Rev. Samuel B. Wylie argued that any political deed of a nation ‘which has the revealed word, and yet despises it, refusing to graft its laws and regulations upon it’ could not bind the conscience.²

The Covenanters celebrated the passing of despotic rule. They clearly stated that civil government should be divided between legislative, executive and judicial branches, providing the executive was cheap, had few prerogatives and was always subservient to the legislative branch. They insisted on the commonwealth’s right to draft the constitution and to resist a government which had ceased adequately to perform the duties prescribed to it: ‘when civil power degenerates into despotism’, it was said, ‘it ceases to be the moral ordinance of God for good to man. The abuse of power, in certain cases, forfeits the use; and the people may justly plead exemption from allegiance to their sovereign when he daringly violates constitutional laws’.³ To contemporaries it seemed that the constitutional arguments of the Covenanters would lead them to advocate republican government. Keen to disprove allegations that they were disloyal to the crown, the church insisted on the peaceful and respectful nature of its protest against the government.⁴ The Rev. Peter Macindoe, spokesman and apologist for the nineteenth-century Reformed Presbyterian Church, quickly skipped over the question of the legitimacy of monarchy in his treatise on political power, by stating that Britain was lucky enough to enjoy an *elective* monarchy. For, Macindoe argued, while elective monarchies had resulted in civil wars in some countries, it was the indisputable right of subjects to elect their ruler.⁵ Elsewhere Irish Covenanters ambiguously declared that the precise form of civil government, whether republican or monarchical, was unimportant, as long as it was moral and popularly elected.⁶ American Covenanters enthusiastically declared republicanism to be the form of government nearest to perfection, and their writings, some of which patently avowed republicanism, were popular in Scotland.⁷ Thus, it seems the Scottish Covenanters may have welcomed the institution of republicanism in Britain, as a move closer to their idea of the ideal popular government.

² Samuel B. Wylie, *The Obligation of Covenants* (Paisley, 1816), p. 35.

³ ‘Magistratical Catechism’, *SP*, Sep 1836. See also Peter Macindoe, *The Application of Scriptural Principles to Political Government* (Edinburgh, 1831).

⁴ Peter Macindoe, *A Vindication of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1830), pp. 20–22.

⁵ Macindoe, *Application*, pp. 127–38.

⁶ ‘Declaration of the Principles of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod in Ireland, on the subject of Civil Government’, *SP*, March 1838.

⁷ See for example the work of Alexander McLeod, Covenanter minister in New York, and its vindication by a fellow Covenanter in Scotland: Alexander McLeod, *Lectures upon the Principal Prophecies of the Revelation* (Paisley, 1815); [a Cameronian] *Remarks on A Review of Dr McLeod’s Lectures upon the Principal Prophecies of the Revelation in the Christian Repository for 1816* (Paisley, 1822).

Nevertheless, there was a limit to Covenanting democracy. They declared that an immoral government elected by the majority of people could never be regarded as legitimate. The ‘modern notion’ that ‘any government which is approved by the majority of the inhabitants in a country is the moral institution of Heaven’ was groundless. Indeed, this signified ‘sovereignty uncontrolled by the precepts of scriptural morality’. Public opinion was not infallible; it had to be amenable to divine revelation. This was a development of an idea first expressed in the Queensferry Paper – a Cameronian document from 1680 – which had argued that government should be founded on the word of God rather than on ‘a plurality of votes’. On this issue the RPs differed from contemporary utilitarian theorists.⁸

This political ideology caused the Covenanters to speak out about the political events of the period. As Elaine McFarland comments, the Covenanters adopted an anti-authoritarian position, thus ‘building on the emphasis on civil as well as religious liberty expressed within the Covenants’.⁹ They continued to testify against the state as erastian and uncovenanted; complained that Anglican supremacy continued to exist and that popery was again advancing. By the end of the eighteenth century, members of the church agreed to pay taxes and sit on juries but until 1863 they still refused to vote at elections or hold public office. They also adapted their Covenanting critique of society to take into account modern grievances. In 1816 they held a public fast complaining that the constitution was not modelled according to divine commands and that Parliament was composed of impious men. Refuting the arguments of the new lights, or new lights (see below), they insisted that politics was still bound up with religion. They contended that commercial distress was inflicted by a wrathful God who punished the nation for its violation of divine commands and insisted that a covenanted reformation would heal the country’s wounds.¹⁰

The RPC was still a minority organisation in the early nineteenth century but its popularity and respectability were increasing. The church was most popular in the southwest and west central regions and had three presbyteries, its own theological seminary and professor.¹¹ Some of the RP clergymen were highly regarded by the religious community and their services and speeches at public meetings were well-attended. According to one contemporary, people queued outside to hear the preaching of William Symington, minister in Stranraer and then Glasgow. In 1814 it was recorded in the

⁸ Macindoe, *Application*, pp. 153–6. For the Queensferry Paper see G. Donaldson, *Scottish Historical Documents* (1970: Glasgow, 1999 edn.), pp. 240–1.

⁹ E.W. McFarland, *Ireland and Scotland in the Age of Revolution* (Edinburgh, 1994), p. 9.

¹⁰ *Act of the Reformed Synod for a Public Fast with a Summary of its Causes* (Glasgow, 1816).

¹¹ See Matthew Hutchison, *The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland: its Origin and History* (Paisley, 1893), pp. 246, 255.

Glasgow congregational minutes that owing to 'increasing demands for seats in the Meeting House', which at that point held 600 people, new accommodation should be sought. As a consequence, a new church with space for 1100 people and funded by the congregation, was built in Great Hamilton Street in the east end of the city.¹²

In Ireland the Reformed Presbyterians won converts from the Synod of Ulster and the Secession after both of those groups accepted an increase of the regium donum in the first decade of the nineteenth century. However, the RPC, which by 1880 had 4800 communicants in Ulster, was divided by successive disputes. In 1808 the church split over the issue of government structure, and in later years over voluntary principles. The Rev. Thomas Houston defended the orthodox position championing the magistrate's right to discipline blasphemers and Sabbath-breakers. In response the Rev. John Paul accused Houston of preaching persecuting principles. The church declared in favour of national establishments and around 1842 Paul and his Eastern Presbytery withdrew from the Reformed Presbyterian Synod.¹³ The Synod, or the Houstonite wing, retained 23 congregations. The Eastern Presbytery was composed of eight or nine congregations, sanctioned voting at political elections and leaned towards voluntarism.

The Secession (new light)

Traditionally the Seceders had shared similar views with the RPs on theology, ecclesiology, political theory and history; but at the turn of the century, the Secession was in general receptive to new light philosophy. The Seceders had divided in 1747 over the Burgess Oath and at the end of the eighteenth century new light ideas caused further divisions. The publication of a new edition of the Secession's doctrinal and historical testimony, in the Burgher synod and then in the Antiburgher synod, caused the Seceders to question the continued relevance of the national Covenants. Those who adopted a new light position condemned the clauses of the Covenants which endorsed the persecution of subjects on account of their religious beliefs. The pledge of the Solemn League and Covenant to 'extirpate popery and prelacy' was censured and the Covenants were considered no longer applicable to modern times. Likewise, the new lights criticised the power of the civil magistrate to enforce religious conformity, which, they believed, was enshrined in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Rigid believers in two kingdoms

¹² Thomas Binnie, *Sketch of the History of the First Reformed Presbyterian Congregation: Now Great Hamilton Street Free Church* (Glasgow, 1888), pp. 92–5.

¹³ A. Loughridge, *The Covenanters in Ireland* (Belfast, 1987), pp. 65–6; James Seaton Reid, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland* (2nd ed., 3 vols., Belfast, 1867), III, p. 442.

ecclesiology, the Seceders had always been suspicious of the interference of the temporal powers in sacred matters. In the eyes of the Seceders, the erastian nature of the British constitution had caused the state to usurp Christ's throne, degenerate into a civil and ecclesiastical tyranny and persecute religious non-conformity with ease. Thus, the new lights regarded with suspicion the magistrate's role as moral superintendent and sought to curb its powers *circa sacra*. In 1799 the Burghers divided into the old light Burghers and new light Burghers and in 1806 the Antiburghers followed suit becoming the old light Antiburghers and new light Antiburghers. The new lights were regarded as politically disaffected and it was implied by the Rev. William Porteous of the Kirk that by denying the magistrate certain rights the Seceders had thrown off their allegiance to the government. James Peddie, a new light Burgher, wrote an explanatory letter to William Pitt, insisting that his denomination remained loyal.¹⁴ In 1820, inspired by the union of Seceders in Nova Scotia in 1817, the new lights united to become the large and powerful United Secession Church (USC). According to a newspaper report, 'multitudes' turned out to witness the union, an 'event memorable in the history of the Secession'.¹⁵ By 1839 the USC had 361 congregations, 357 ministers and 261,345 followers.¹⁶

New light principles led some Seceders to question the fundamentals of church-state relations and around 1829 some clergymen took their new light position to its logical conclusion: voluntarism. The voluntarist argument against the existence of a church establishment was multi-faceted. It was argued that establishments were unscriptural without any warrant from God's word; and, since they enforced unity and were controlled by the civil government, they tended to promote the evolution of tyranny and persecution in the state. Seceders were so disenchanted with the erastian nature of the constitution and its various flaws that they were driven to a voluntary position. As a consequence of these ecclesiological beliefs, some voluntaries began to articulate a secular theory of civil government. In their eyes, the civil magistrate had no business interfering in religious matters or setting up national establishments of religion: conscience was an individual's only guide.

¹⁴ William Peddie, *Discourses* (Edinburgh, 1846), pp. 70–6.

¹⁵ 'Re-union of the Secession Church', *AR*, Mar 10 1821. On the Seceders and the new light debates see John McKerrrow, *History of the Secession Church* (Glasgow, 1841).

¹⁶ G.I.T. Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain 1832 to 1868* (Oxford, 1977), p. 114.

The Relief Church and the Glasites

As Colin Kidd has noted, ‘the debates which raged over the authority of the civil magistrate in Scotland during the 1790s owed less to the examples of the American and French Revolutions than to the Covenanted inheritance of the seventeenth century.’¹⁷ Indeed, the Relief Church approved of the maxims on religious liberty in the French Declaration of Rights, as they considered them to mirror their own long-held beliefs. The Relief Church advocated voluntaryism some time before the United Seceders. Like the Secession, the Relief Church was born out of a patronage grievance in 1752. Its founder was the Rev. Thomas Gillespie who was deposed from the Kirk on account of his objection to the enforcement of the patronage law. Gillespie, born in Duddingston near Edinburgh to dissenting parents, studied at the Divinity Hall of the Seceders and then at Philip Doddridge’s dissenting academy in Northampton before he returned to the Kirk in 1741. Gillespie took issue with the Secession’s commitment to covenanting and he signed the Westminster Confession with an explanatory clause objecting to the civil magistrate’s spiritual power. He was one of the first voluntaries within the Scottish religious community. This early voluntaryism has been attributed to the influence of Doddridge who lectured that ‘the civil magistrate should not so interpose in matters of religion or rites of worship as to inflict any penalties on his subjects on account of them’, but Gillespie was also a theologically orthodox Calvinist, strongly opposed to lay patronage and committed to the principle of the headship of Christ. The Relief Church insisted on the separation of the spiritual and temporal spheres: Jesus Christ was head of the former and in the latter ‘all power and authority originate from the community’. The Relief – ‘an asylum for “Christians” in general “oppressed in their Christian privileges”’ – steadily gained ministers and followers who believed that the church and state ‘should not be kneaded together’. The Relief Church and the United Secession entered into a union in 1847 to become the United Presbyterian Church.

However, the Glasites were the earliest voluntaries in Scotland. The Rev. John Glas, Kirk minister of Tealing near Dundee, was deposed in 1728 for his objection to covenanting uniformity. Glas insisted that the New Testament provided no justification for national churches. He condemned the persecuting power of the civil magistrate and rejected the authority of the national Covenants. According to the historian of the Relief Church, Gavin Struthers, the voluntaryist opinions of Glas and his assistant Robert

¹⁷ C. Kidd, ‘Conditional Britons: The Scots Covenanting Tradition and the Eighteenth-Century British State’, *English Historical Review*, cxvii (2002), p. 1174.

Sandeman, greatly influenced the clergy of the Relief. Struthers maintains that Glasites/Sandemanians would have been very popular in Scotland if not for their heterodox views on Christ's atonement. They had a few churches in the urban centres of Scotland, but were more influential in England and in North America.¹⁸

The Secession (old lights)

Meanwhile, the Constitutional Presbytery or the old light Antiburghers, led by Archibald Bruce and Thomas McCrie, believed that the Secession should not swerve from its long-held Covenanting position. They continued to criticise the erastian nature of the state but defended the traditional 'nursing father' role of the civil magistrate. They hoped that dissenters would in the future be able to re-enter a purified Kirk. In the past the Seceders and the Covenanters had split hairs in their debates over the legitimacy of the uncovenanted Hanoverian monarchy, to which the Seceders had sworn their allegiance, an unconscionable act in the eyes of the Covenanters. Nevertheless, their views of the divine sanction and holy purpose of civil government had always been similar.¹⁹ As the old light Seceder the Rev. George Stevenson explained: 'though civil government has its foundations in natural principles, it does not follow that nations and their governments, as such, have nothing to do with supernatural religion; for even natural law, which they are necessarily under, binds the subjects of it to recognise, embrace, and practice whatever God shall be pleased to reveal as the rule of their duty.'²⁰ In 1827 the old light Antiburghers united with the Synod of Protestors – those Seceders who had refused to join the United Secession in 1820 owing to their belief in the perpetual obligation of the Covenants – and became the Original Seceders.²¹ In 1844, William White, an Original Secession minister in Haddington, argued that the nation remained bound by the national Covenants. He argued in favour of excluding the ungodly from political positions and justified rebellion against higher powers: the 'body politic in which all power is radically inherent, from which all authority emanates, - which is superior to kings and parliaments', was, in White's opinion, only duty-bound to obey God.²²

¹⁸ Gavin Struthers, *History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church* (Glasgow, 1843), pp. 12, 33–4, 117–8, 164, 239, 272, 300, 381; D.B. Murray, 'The Influence of John Glas', *RSCHS*, 22 (1984–1986).

¹⁹ Kidd, 'Conditional Britons'.

²⁰ George Stevenson, *Treatise on the Offices of Christ* (2nd ed., Edinburgh, 1845), p. 495.

²¹ See David Scott, *Annals and Statistics of the Original Secession Church* (Edinburgh, 1888), p. 69. Of the old light Burghers who did not join the Original Seceders, two entered the Kirk, one joined the Reformed Presbyterians, one joined the United Seceders and four entered the Free Church in 1852.

²² William White, *Christ's Covenant the Best Defence of Christ's Crown* (Edinburgh, 1844), pp. 12–15.

The Church of Scotland

The Church of Scotland was the established Church and as such had responsibility for the spiritual needs of the majority of the country. It administered poor relief and education through parish schools, as well as the rites of passage, including marriages and funerals, to most of the population of Scotland. It thus had a significant bearing on people's lives. The Church contained within it many shades of opinion, and its members were only loosely grouped under party headings, but broadly speaking the Kirk was divided between Moderates and the Evangelical or Popular Party, whose main point of contention was lay patronage. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, the Moderates, who had been allied with the Dundas interest in Scotland, tended to be conservative in political affairs, favouring the maintenance of the status quo. They had come to accept an element of state control in Kirk business and were firm in their belief that religion was subordinate to civil law. In the early nineteenth century the Evangelicals became increasingly dominant in the General Assembly. Led in succession by Henry Moncreiff Wellwood, Andrew Thomson, and Thomas Chalmers, the Evangelicals had links with the Whig party, tended to be doctrinally orthodox, and supported the abolition of slavery and an alleviation of the patronage grievance.²³ They favoured evangelical efforts and encouraged missionary enterprise both domestically and abroad; the establishment of Sunday schools and the circulation of the Bible. Kirk Evangelicals and Reformed Presbyterians enjoyed increasingly friendly relations owing to their similar views on ecclesiology and their pride in the Church's heritage. Both groups believed in the spiritual independence of the Church and regarded state control as a violation of divine law.

Indeed, like the RPs, the Evangelicals maintained traditional beliefs in the magistrate's role as nursing father to the Church, as had been enshrined in the Westminster Confession of Faith; though some, like Thomas Chalmers, were uncomfortable with the wording of chapter 23 of the Confession, which seemed to imply a persecuting power. Nevertheless, most agreed that while the monarch could not control religious affairs, he or she had a duty to ensure that true religion was defended and promoted in the nation; a nation which God providentially influenced. In 1839 the Kirk absorbed a majority of old light Burghers who likewise believed that nations had a moral character, and that the civil magistrate should acknowledge God basing statutes on scripture. At the union of 1839 the Kirk declared that they heartily concurred with the old light Burghers 'in confessing the

²³ For evidence of the political affiliation of the parties in the Kirk, see 'Essay on Parties in the Church of Scotland', *The John Knox*, April 3 1824.

great obligations under which we lie to our forefathers in the year 1638, and several years of that century immediately following'.²⁴ After this union, however, the Kirk divided at the momentous Disruption of 1843 when around one third of all ministers in the Church voluntarily left to form the Free Church of Scotland. The Disruption was the culmination of a decade of conflict with the state over the extent of the Kirk's spiritual independence.

In Ulster the new light controversy and voluntarism seem to have made less of an impact. The Irish Antiburghers welcomed the new Scottish testimony while in the Burgher wing the conflict was defused by the insertion into the formula of an explanatory clause on the powers of the civil magistrate. Though a minority of Antiburghers dissented, the Seceders reunited in 1818. At the time of the union there were 97 ministers.²⁵ However, while the Secession seems calmly to have countenanced new light principles, voluntarism seems to have made little headway in Ulster where both the Secession and the Synod of Ulster continued to sanction the church-state connection by accepting a government grant. This *regium donum* was introduced to discourage seditious activity among the Presbyterian community in Ulster.²⁶ However, in 1811 the Rev. James Bryce of the Antiburghers withdrew in protest at the synod's acceptance of the terms of the grant, and he took some congregations with him. There was also a vocal minority of voluntaries in the Belfast Voluntary Church Association, backed by the Rev. John Paul of the Covenanter Eastern Reformed Presbytery, which, in 1836, invited the Rev. John Ritchie, leading voluntary minister in Scotland, to participate in a debate with the Rev. Henry Cooke, a forceful personality in the Synod of Ulster.²⁷

Nevertheless, the mainstream in Ulster endorsed the establishmentarianism represented by Cooke, and in 1834 the Secession joined forces with the Synod of Ulster to battle the Arianism found within the Synod's ranks. Cooke denounced heterodox Arianism but also theologically orthodox Scottish voluntarism, and became the determined supporter of conservative scriptural politics. After the government finally equalised the *regium donum* in 1838, a union between the Synod and the Secession was secured in 1839.²⁸ A closer link was forged between the Synod and the Church of Scotland when Cooke visited Scotland in 1836 to defend the establishment principle. While his politico-

²⁴ Scott, *Original Secession Church*, p. 69.

²⁵ D. Stewart, *The Seceders in Ireland* (Belfast, 1950), pp. 100, 123, 185.

²⁶ Seaton Reid, *History*, III, p. 405; Stewart, *Seceders*, p. 115.

²⁷ J.L. Porter, *Life of Henry Cooke, D.D. L.L.D* (London, 1871), pp. 296–301. On Cooke, see also F. Holmes, *Henry Cooke* (Belfast, 1981); P. Brooke, *Ulster Presbyterianism: The Historical Perspective 1610-1970* (Dublin, 1987), pp. 158, 160–1; Irish Covenanters were described as 'decided voluntaries' in 'The Covenanter', *ECI* April 1835.

²⁸ According to Seaton Reid, six or seven Seceder congregations refused to join the union. Seaton Reid, *History*, III, p. 480.

ecclesiastical vision alienated both Irish and Scottish voluntaries, and other establishmentarians who favoured political reform, Cooke's mission generally strengthened the bonds between the Kirk and the Ulster Synod.

The voluntary debate helped align the thought of the Original Seceders and Kirk Evangelicals with that of the RPs. The Original Seceders insisted that they had always agreed with the RPs that the mediator held moral dominion over nations and that the Covenants remained binding on the nation in their civil aspect as well as in their ecclesiastical.²⁹ Likewise the debate enabled the Kirk to see the similarities the Church shared with the old light dissenters. Thomas McCrie became a spokesman for the Kirk and increasingly the Kirk, the Original Seceders and the RPs articulated similar demands for the maintenance of an establishment and for a religious foundation to British political life. Each denomination (including the voluntaries who believed they were liberating the populace from a tyrannous establishment) claimed to be the heirs to the Covenanting legacy.³⁰ Nevertheless, a mood of cooperation did not completely eradicate old antagonisms and divisions: the onset of the voluntary conflict caused the deepest division the Scottish religious community had seen for decades.

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Though attendance at church decreased in some urban centres, Presbyterianism continued to be a dominant force in Scottish life. Indeed, John Gibson Lockhart recorded in *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk* that the 'old feelings and principles' of their Covenanting fathers were still retained by the people of Glasgow and the west of Scotland.³¹ This was a period of intense evangelical fervour when Bible and missionary societies, and Sabbath schools, multiplied in number and when denominational periodical literature poured out from the press. Around the year 1830, Glasgow, described by one contemporary as the 'Gospel City', with a population of 203,000, had over 50 churches; 21 city and nine parochial missionaries; 300 Sabbath-school teachers with 12,000 pupils; 600 tract distributors, issuing 30,000 tracts per month; 20 temperance associations; a Children's Mission; a Christian Instruction Society and a Philanthropic Society dedicated to achieving a religious revival.³² Many people continued to esteem the religion of their forefathers. In his autobiography, the Rev. John G. Paton, RP minister and missionary to the New Hebrides,

²⁹ 'Opinion of Original Seceders on the Mediator's Dominion, and the National Covenants', *SP*, Sep 1844.

³⁰ 'Who are the Successors of the Scottish Martyrs?', *SP*, Jan 1846.

³¹ John Gibson Lockhart, *Peter's Letters to His Kinsfolk*, William Ruddick ed. (Edinburgh, 1977), pp. 21–9.

³² [anon.], *The Autobiography of a Scotch Lad* (Glasgow, 1887), pp. 30–1.

recalled that during his boyhood in the 1830s, the dissenter families in the village where he lived used to walk eight miles every Sunday to attend various churches in Dumfries rather than attend the local established Kirk. He remembered that his father and the other villagers spent the journey discussing theological controversies.³³ Another boy's father in 1820s Galston, Ayrshire, walked eight to ten miles to attend the nearest Secession Church. He used to memorise the heads of the minister's sermon and write them down when he returned home. This boy grew up to be an apprentice to a printer in Glasgow, a Reformed Presbyterian layman who specialised in printing the works of local clergymen.³⁴

Indeed, the significance of the divisions and disputes within the many Presbyterian sects was felt at congregational level. James Peddie was ostracised by his family after his conversion to new light principles, and William Peddie, his son, grew up estranged from his uncle who lived along the road.³⁵ According to George Lawson's biographer, some of the 'bitterest Old Light men' were residents of Stirlingshire, where 'the controversy raged keenly.' Apparently some congregations 'were torn asunder in the most alarming manner. Men, women, and children rushed into the fray, and threatened an extensive secession.'³⁶ A fictional account of the old light/new light split is provided in J.M. Barrie's *Auld Licht Idylls*. The new lights in Thrums, the fictional setting for the novel based on Barrie's home town of Kirriemuir, had formed a majority at the split, so the old light minister left the church with his followers and preached on the 'commonty'. The old lights then saved money for a new church and forty years after the division a cluster of determined members remain: 'the Auld Licht kirk', the narrator informs us, will remain open so long as it has one member and a minister.'³⁷ Likewise, voluntaryism was not just an obscure ecclesiological question which concerned only clergymen-theorists; rather, in the opinion of one contemporary, it was an issue which 'stirred society very deeply.' According to this account, 'there was not a town, perhaps not a village, into which the conflict had not entered, and been eagerly discussed at the fireside, on the platform, and in the press.' In Dalkeith, the question was debated at numerous public meetings.³⁸ The Kirk minister of Perth bore witness to the trouble caused in his parish by the infiltration of voluntaryism, which had 'produced a separation among brethren in matters upon which they should be cordially united'.³⁹ In Fenwick – a community of weavers and Seceders – the Improvement

³³ John G. Paton, *John G. Paton: Missionary to the New Hebrides: An Autobiography* (London, 1889).

³⁴ [anon.], *Scotch Lad*, pp. 10, 26–8.

³⁵ Peddie, *Discourses*, p. 2.

³⁶ John Macfarlane, *The Life and Times of George Lawson D.D.* (Edinburgh, 1862), p. 359.

³⁷ J.M. Barrie, *Auld Licht Idylls* (London, 1898), p. 61.

³⁸ Alexander Mitchell, *Political and Social Movements in Dalkeith from 1831 to 1882* (n.p., 1882), pp. 24–5.

³⁹ *The New Statistical Account of Scotland Vol. X. Perth* (Edinburgh, 1845), p. 119.

of Knowledge Society discussed voluntarism for three nights and decided in its favour. Some residents burnt in effigy the Rev. Robert Fergusson, the local parish minister, who had attempted to take down the houses of dissenters on his glebe.⁴⁰

An analysis of the extensive periodical press of this period reveals the importance of these ecclesiastical divisions. In Scotland numerous religious periodicals were distributed; some acted as the mouthpieces for particular denominations while others were broadly Christian in tone. As Christopher Bayly has observed, ‘religious literature was at the forefront of the print revolution.’⁴¹ The Burgher Seceders, Antiburghers, Relief Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church published their own denominational periodicals. The RPs, who believed the periodical press could counter the efforts of the ‘supporters of tyranny’, launched the *Reformed Presbyterian Monitor* in 1826, followed by the *Scottish Advocate* in 1832 and then the *Scottish Presbyterian* in 1835. The *Monitor*, which cost six pence, was introduced ‘to counteract workings of disaffection to the principles of the covenanted reformation’ and was sold in Glasgow, Paisley, Johnstone, Kilmarnock and Edinburgh.⁴² The *Advocate* and the *Presbyterian* seem to have enjoyed fairly wide distribution for minor publications and were reviewed favourably in the more mainstream evangelical Kirk magazines. In 1843 the *Presbyterian* had reached a circulation of over 1200 and had doubled in size from one and a half sheets to three.⁴³

Moreover, John Howie’s popular martyrologies continued to be reprinted into the 1800s and the overwhelming success of nineteenth-century Covenanting histories, both non-fiction and fiction, demonstrate the continued resonance of the country’s religious past. The publication of Walter Scott’s *Old Mortality*, with its sympathetic portrayal of Episcopalians and depiction of Covenanters as extreme fanatics, caused an outcry, and a press war, as Thomas McCrie, who also produced the wildly successful *Lives of Knox and Melville*, took up his pen to defend his ancestors in the pages of the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*.⁴⁴ For many years Scott was chastised in the pages of the press, including *The Scotsman* which declared it ‘the duty of every Scotsman’ to read McCrie’s noble review.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ G. Neilson, ‘The Fenwick Improvement of Knowledge Society, *SHR*, 17 (1919-20), pp. 121, 126, 133; J. Kirkwood Fairlie, *Matthew Fowlds Centenarian Weaver 1806-1907 and Other Fenwick Worthies* (Kilmarnock, 1910), p. 176.

⁴¹ C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 333, 357.

⁴² See the prospectus bound with the first volume of the *Reformed Presbyterian Monitor* for 1826.

⁴³ ‘State and Prospects of Scottish Presbyterian’, *SP*, Nov 1843.

⁴⁴ D.M. Murray, ‘Martyrs or madmen? The Covenanters, Sir Walter Scott and Dr Thomas McCrie’, *IR*, 43 (1992); D. Mack, ‘“The Rage of Fanaticism in Former Days”: James Hogg’s *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and the Controversy over *Old Mortality*’, in I. Campbell (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction* (Manchester, 1979).

⁴⁵ *The Scotsman*, Jan 25 1817.

Scott copycats aimed at emulating the author's style while counteracting his representations by producing novels glorifying the Covenanting past.⁴⁶ Meanwhile James Hogg and John Galt produced novels set in Covenanting times or notably influenced by them.

In some areas Covenanting folktales continued to be told well into the nineteenth century. In 1888, Thomas Binnie, author of a history of the first Reformed Presbyterian congregation in Glasgow, recorded that in Galloway the feeling of resentment towards those who had persecuted the Covenanters had not yet died away. According to Binnie the descendants of the alleged persecutors were treated as outcasts in the community while in Nithsdale one man expressed popular feeling by making an annual pilgrimage to Dunscore in order to dance on the grave of Robert Grierson of Lag.⁴⁷ Indicative of the grip Covenanting mythology had on the Scottish imagination is the popular support given to the scheme to renew and to erect memorials to the fallen martyrs. A society was instituted in Renfrewshire and Ayrshire dedicated to repairing gravestones in the region. Collections were gathered to fund the erection of these stones which are to be found all over the south-western landscape.⁴⁸ The unveiling of these monuments was attended by crowds who came to hear ministers preach a sermon of thanks to the honoured martyrs; these sermons were often published.⁴⁹ A sermon at Priesthill, at the grave of the martyr John Brown, was reputedly attended by several thousands, members of a variety of denominations, who travelled from as far away as fifty miles. Held in the open air, these gatherings were akin to the conventicles of the seventeenth century. Moreover, in 1838 the bicentenary of the signing of the National Covenant was commemorated with public meetings throughout the country. At the Edinburgh meeting chaired by Sir George Sinclair MP, successive clergymen delivered speeches celebrating Presbyterian history and ecclesiology.⁵⁰ In 1841 a society for 'maintaining and diffusing the principles of the second Reformation' was established in Glasgow. This society organised public lectures which were later published in pamphlet form. Auxiliary societies were formed in Edinburgh, Paisley, and Greenock.⁵¹ Of course the values of Presbyterianism continued to be propagated by clergymen in their

⁴⁶ See e.g., Henry Duncan, *William Douglas, or, The Scottish Exiles* (Edinburgh, 1826); see also the works of Thomas McCulloch discussed below in section two, chapter three.

⁴⁷ Binnie, *Sketch*, pp. 25–6.

⁴⁸ T. Campbell, *Standing Witnesses* (Edinburgh, 1996); J.J. Coleman, 'The Double-Life of the Scottish Past: Discourses of Commemoration in Nineteenth-Century Scotland' (Glasgow Univ. Ph.D. Thesis, 2005).

⁴⁹ See e.g., William Symington, *The Character and Claims of the Scottish Martyrs* (2nd ed.: Paisley, 1833); J.W. Macmeeken, *The Martyr's Sepulchre* (Mauchline, 1859).

⁵⁰ S.J. Brown, *The National Churches of England, Ireland and Scotland, 1801-1846* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 296–7.

⁵¹ *SP*, March 1841.

sermons. As shall be seen, the Rev. Patrick Brewster of Paisley sermonised on the qualified obedience owed to the higher powers, as did the Rev. William Anderson of John Street Relief Church in Glasgow.

Clearly, the legacy of the Covenanters continued to be a source of inspiration to communities, especially communities of dissenters who held steadfastly to their Presbyterian principles and whose churches were organised democratically. Though, of course, the seventeenth-century Covenanters were not advocates of religious toleration in general, by the nineteenth century a historical narrative had developed which celebrated the Covenanters as the champions of civil and religious liberty. This legend of the Covenanters was sustained by the various Presbyterian churches – which all claimed to be upholding their legacy – by folk memory, acts of commemoration, historical accounts and works of fiction, and it was hugely inspirational, particularly to those who sought reform. Donald Smith has noted that the strength of nineteenth-century radicalism tended to lie in the areas of Scotland where the Covenanting movement had been strongest.⁵² The culture of Presbyterianism and the legacy of the Covenanters helped to generate an independent and defiant spirit, especially in the south west and amongst highly intelligent and politicised weaving communities. For example, the Kilmarnock population had a history of resisting patronage, and at a meeting held in 1819 to agitate for universal suffrage, a flag from the battle of Drumclog was held aloft. The protesters carried banners which read ‘No Lords, no Bishops’.⁵³ A rising nearly took place in the town in 1820 and Chartism was later very popular.⁵⁴ Elsewhere in Strathaven the battle of Drumclog was celebrated in 1815 by the ‘democratic people’ of the region who desired to notice and bring into view ‘every occurrence whether recent or ancient where successful resistance has been opposed to any regular or established Government, or constituted authority’. A procession of hundreds visited the site where the Covenanters defeated Claverhouse. Accounts of this re-enactment were printed in newspapers and distributed in pamphlet form.⁵⁵

The village of Fenwick has a similar history. The community was composed almost entirely of Burgher Seceders who left the Kirk en masse after a patronage dispute in 1780. The days of the Covenant and the early Secession were said to be ‘most important elements’ in moulding the character of Fenwick’s inhabitants. Two monuments to Covenanting martyrs were unveiled there in 1854 and one resident found even the

⁵² D.C. Smith, *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest* (New York, 1987), p. 165.

⁵³ James Paterson, *Autobiographical Reminiscences* (Glasgow, 1871), p. 71.

⁵⁴ Archibald McKay, *History of Kilmarnock* (4th ed., Kilmarnock, 1880), pp. 137–47, 230–5, 251.

⁵⁵ William Aiton, *A History of the Reencounter of Drumclog, and Battle of Bothwell Bridge, in the month of June, 1679* (Hamilton, 1821), pp. 7, 99.

Reformed Presbyterian Church too impure. Matthew Fowlds, member of the Fenwick Weavers' Society, was an elder in the Secession church and 'brought up in a fairly strict school of theological orthodoxy'. Apparently 'he liked to talk on Church affairs and politics, being a strong Liberal all his life.' Fowlds subscribed to the *Ayr Advertiser*, a pro-Reform newspaper, which was shared amongst the community, and was a member of the Fenwick Improvement of Knowledge Society. Members of this Society declared themselves in favour of republican government, popular sovereignty and universal suffrage. They also celebrated Presbyterian government and the memory of the Covenanters, championing the assassination of Archbishop Sharp as an act of patriotism.⁵⁶

Thus, in the early 1800s the tradition of Covenanting was very much alive. The son of Robert Wallace, editor of *The Scotsman* in the 1870s, commented on its enduring significance. Wallace's grandfather had been an 'ardent Jacobin' and an elder in the Relief Church. Two generations on the Wallace family continued to read Covenanting lore: this 'old-world Calvinist upbringing...was', Wallace claimed, 'a direct tradition from the Reformation times, down through the Covenanting period, the King William and Carstares settlement, and the stern "Relief" dissent, from which my father had received it, and was passing it on in nearly unimpaired form. I am certain that my father did to the best of his power in his family what his father did in his. And what was done in our household was done in the great majority of similar households over the country.'⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Neilson, 'Fenwick'; Fairlie, *Fowlds*, pp. 1–3, 51, 96, 105–17, 160–1, 163, 166, 175, 196–8.

⁵⁷ J. Campbell Smith & W. Wallace (eds.), *Robert Wallace: Life and Last Leaves* (London, 1903), pp. 5, 11, 42, 60.

2. Radicalism and Reform in Scotland, c. 1815-c.1850

As scholars have observed, religious dissenters continued to be at the forefront of agitation for political reform in the first few decades of the nineteenth century; heterodox theology, and as James Bradley has noticed, anti-hierarchical ecclesiology, continued to inspire radical ideology. Many believed British society should be Protestant and claimed that the British constitution had, since the 1688 revolution, rested on Protestant foundations. Conservative High Church Anglicans argued that Anglicanism lay at the heart of British ecclesiastical and political life, administered by the King and his spiritual lords, and defended by Parliament. Dissenters were considered by many to be second-class citizens who refused to conform to the established Church and were thus often treated as suspicious characters. This second-class status was sanctioned by the law which insisted that only practising Anglicans could sit in Parliament or in local government. Thus, demands for political change naturally came from dissenters, who resented their position of inferiority, and whose ecclesiology or theology rejected the hierarchy propagated by a conservative Anglican church-state, which in the wake of the French Revolution continued to advocate obedience to higher powers.

Many Presbyterian dissenters in particular continued to issue forth their traditional critiques of British society and government, dominated as it was by the Anglican Church. In England anti-clericalism continued to permeate radical rhetoric and challenges to Anglicanism were discernible during the reform campaigns of 1817-19 and the Peterloo demonstration in 1819. Articles attacking the Church of England for its great wealth also appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1820.¹ English dissenters had an alternative vision of British society; they desired latitude and the end of Anglican exclusivity in church and state. They battled for the admission of non-Anglicans to municipal office before the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828 and, to a lesser extent, for Catholic emancipation in 1829. The natural critics of hierarchy and the power of the Lords, they could likewise be seen in the pro-reform ranks which advocated parliamentary reform before and after 1832.

In Scotland society was still defined by some in theological terms and a political ideology rooted in Presbyterian theory provided the justification for participation in radical and reform movements which sought the reform of the British government. As has been seen, Presbyterian thought had a political aspect. It was mostly concerned with the

¹ J.C.D. Clark, *English Society, 1660-1832* (1985: Cambridge, 2000 edn.), p. 497; G.I.T. Machin, *Politics and the Churches in Great Britain, 1832 to 1868* (Oxford, 1977), p. 17.

church's relation to the state, as well as the specific function of the civil magistrate, the origins, nature and execution of civil government. Thus, clergymen naturally commented on, and tried to influence, political events. Many continued to believe that God visited plagues on nations for their sins and justified political reform with reference to biblical prophecy.² The Calvinist radical tradition provided communities with a model and justification for resistance to the government and Presbyterian theory underpinned critiques of the British state. Greenock reformers, who petitioned for universal suffrage and annual parliaments in 1819, condemned members of the established clergy for their insincere piety and support of political oppression. The reformers acknowledged their respect, however, for the Rev. Neil Douglas, a Universalist preacher in Glasgow arrested for political sedition in 1817.³ Douglas had originally been a Relief minister who protested against patronage and believed firmly in Christ's headship of the Church. Douglas apparently declared that the King of France had been justifiably held to account by his subjects for his inept conduct and insisted on the necessity of political reform and petitioning. After his trial, which collapsed owing to insufficient evidence, Douglas vindicated his action, declaring it his duty to testify against the restoration of the 'old tyrannic and idolatrous systems which our forefathers resisted.'⁴ After the 1820 rising, moreover, Thomas Chalmers claimed that dissent had inspired radicalism in Glasgow. In letters to William Wilberforce he claimed that weavers, who had led the protest, had acquired 'their talent for public management...from the circumstance of being the members of a dissenting congregation.' The weavers thus offered 'the melancholy combination of a fierce restless and dangerous politics, with a regular and respectable habit of attendance upon the ordinances.'⁵

To an extent the radical and reform movements of the early nineteenth century continued to be indebted to Presbyterian ecclesiological theory. As has been seen, the

² See for example, *The Present Revolutions in Europe, and Other Signs of the Times, compared with Scripture Prediction and History, shewing that in 1822, the Regeneration of the European Dynasties will be Completed* (Glasgow, 1820).

³ *The Old Whig of Greenock Unmasked* (Glasgow, 1819).

⁴ Neil Douglas, *Strictures on the Author's Trial, Declaration before the Sheriff, Remarks on the Crown Evidence and some important information respecting the cause of Reform* (Glasgow, 1818), pp. 3, 13, 66–70; Neil Douglas, *An Address to the Judges and Jury, in a Case of Alleged Sedition* (Glasgow, 1817), pp. 25–6, 33–6; John Dow, *The Trial of the Rev. Neil Douglas, before the High Court of Justiciary, at Edinburgh, on the 26th May 1817, For Sedition* (Edinburgh, 1817), pp. 2–3, 7, 17, 23, 27–8; J. Christodoulou, 'The Glasgow Universalist Church and Scottish Radicalism from the French Revolution to Chartism: A Theology of Liberation', *JEH*, 43 (1992), pp. 609–13.

⁵ William Hanna, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers, D.D. L.L.D.* (3 vols., Edinburgh, 1851), II, pp. 257, 262–5. On the 1820 rising see F.K. Donnelly, 'The Scottish Rising of 1820: A Re-interpretation', *Scottish Tradition*, 6 (1976); G. Pentland, "'Betrayed by Infamous Spies'? The Commemoration of Scotland's "Radical War" of 1820', *P&P*, 201 (2008). For an older nationalist account see P. Berresford Ellis & S. Mac A' Ghobhainn, *The Scottish Insurrection of 1820* (London, 1970).

legacy of the Covenanters remained hugely relevant to many Scots. Some reformers remained committed to a strict Covenanting agenda while some continued to resent the existence of the bishops in the House of Lords, the exclusive position of Anglicanism and the very existence of hierarchy in general. The following sections of part one of this thesis will consider the significance of Presbyterianism during Scotland's age of reform looking particularly at the debate surrounding Catholic emancipation; the movement for parliamentary reform before 1832; the voluntary movement in the 1830s, and Chartism.

(i) Catholic emancipation

The Scottish context of the debate over Catholic emancipation in the 1820s has been to some degree overlooked, especially in studies of radical or popular politics in this period. Robert Kent Donovan has produced an excellent monograph on the controversy surrounding Catholic relief in the 1770s and its impact on popular politics; but no similar study for this later period has yet been carried out.⁶ As this section will show, the debate over Catholic emancipation in Scotland was inextricably linked to Presbyterian political ideology. The protest over the proposed legislation provides evidence of the enduring appeal of Covenanting ideas. Many believed emancipation would jeopardise their ideal vision of a Scottish godly commonwealth; while others saw repeal as a threat to British political freedom and civil liberty. The pursuit of Covenanting reforms and the desire, as they saw it, to stave off political despotism, encouraged many old light Presbyterians to protest against emancipation. New light voluntaries on the other hand, keen to challenge what they regarded as a tyrannous church-state, were driven to defend the legislation.

It has been argued that the pressures of successive wars, and an awareness of the debt due to Catholic servicemen, allowed British politicians increasingly to regard the repeal of the penal laws against Catholics, and some measure of toleration towards that religion, as equitable and necessary. The parliamentary debate over the Roman Catholic Relief Act in 1778 was generally a calm one – though it caused a significant amount of unrest out of doors including the infamous Gordon Riots – and the measure was cheered in the Houses of Parliament as it passed. The 1801 Irish Union, envisaged as a cure to the enduring nightmarish problem of Ireland's misrule, was passed on the understanding that Catholic emancipation would soon follow. George III's refusal to countenance this

⁶ R.K. Donovan, *No Popery and Radicalism: Opposition to Roman Catholic Relief in Scotland, 1778-1782* (New York & London, 1987).

measure since, as he saw it, it would involve a violation of his coronation oath to defend the Protestant Church, led to the resignation of William Pitt. As the first decades of the nineteenth century wore on, support for Catholic emancipation grew and became the platform which unified the various groupings of Whigs in opposition. Desperate to retain supremacy and aware of the divisiveness of the Catholic question, the Tories formed successive governments on the understanding that emancipation would not be discussed. However, the pressure mounted by Daniel O'Connell and the Catholic Association in Ireland forced the government to consider the expediency of repealing the laws which debarred Catholics from entering Parliament. Following the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, the emancipation of Catholics was secured in 1829.⁷

While, as Linda Colley has noticed, support for Catholic emancipation was on the rise in this period, older hostilities remained. Indeed, G.I.T. Machin contends that the majority of the population of Britain vehemently opposed the measure. High Church Tories, represented initially by Robert Peel and by Lord Eldon, were ideologically committed to opposing emancipation, believing it would violate the principles of Britain's Protestant constitution.⁸ Likewise in the localities and among the populace, there continued a deep-seated hatred and fear of Catholicism. This intense feeling had been displayed during the Gordon riots and agitation against Catholic relief in the 1770s. For some the countenance given to 'popery' was seen as evidence of the country's backsliding and descent into immorality. Machin has outlined the facets of the anti-Catholic argument in England. Old arguments against Catholicism on doctrinal grounds were employed during this controversy, as was the claim that Catholicism was an ambitious and persecuting religion, whose votaries, if again given power, would strive to convert the nation by means of an inquisition. Fundamental to the anti-repeal position was the long-held belief that Catholics were political dissidents unable to swear their allegiance to the crown. As the Pope claimed a temporal as well as a spiritual allegiance, it was impossible for Catholics in Britain and Ireland to remain loyal to the British throne.⁹ It was claimed by some anti-repealers that the British constitution, at least as far as it pertained to England, was Anglican, as by the Revolution Settlement it excluded Catholics from the throne and non-Anglicans from political power. Lord Eldon stated his view of the connection of the

⁷ L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation* (New Haven, 1992), pp. 324–34; J. H. Hexter, 'The Protestant Revival and the Catholic Question in England, 1778-1829', *Journal of Modern History*, 8 (1936).

⁸ G.I.T. Machin, *The Catholic Question in English Politics 1820 to 1830* (Oxford, 1964), p. 5. On the resistance of some High Church Tories to the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts which they believed subverted the principles of the Protestant constitution, see G.I.T. Machin, 'Resistance to the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, 1828', *HJ*, 22 (1979), p. 127.

⁹ Machin, *Question*, pp. 15–16.

spiritual and political sphere: 'that Church [of England]...was not an establishment erected for mere purposes of convenience, but was essentially and inseparably connected with part of the State...The Constitution required that the Church of England should be supported: and the best way of affording that support to her was to admit only her own members to offices of trust and emolument.'¹⁰

The Catholic question was debated intensely within Parliament and on the street, and according to Machin, over 400 petitions against emancipation were submitted to the House of Commons in 1825. In 1826 the general election was fought primarily on the issue of emancipation with clubs formed specifically to prevent the return of pro-repealers.¹¹ As well as in Manchester, Liverpool and other regions in England and Wales, in Scotland the protest against the proposed emancipation of Catholics was fierce. 21 petitions with 24,000 signatures were dispatched from Glasgow; 53 petitions came from Dundee, to which the press claimed every adult male had added his name. Anti-Catholic sentiment was so much in existence in these places not only because of the threat of Irish immigration and its economic consequences, but also, Colley argues, because of a feeling that emancipation of Catholics was an assault on the identity of Britons. Anti-Catholicism and Francophobia had defined Britain for decades and had helped to forge a nation. For many in Scotland, anti-Catholicism had been bound up with Scottish identity, with Scottish Presbyterianism, since the Reformation, and the history of the Scots as defenders of popular liberty against tyrannical popery and prelacy had a powerful grip on the lowland imagination. The clamour against the proposed bill was considerable, though on the other side the pro-Catholic movement was far from silent. Public meetings, petitions, handbills, newspapers, sermons and church courts discussed the issue and it involved every portion of the community, cutting across class lines. The fate of Catholicism in Britain gripped the nation and threw up questions about the nature of the constitution. In Scotland the debate over repeal engaged with the arguments emanating from Westminster but was linked to the ecclesiological debate over the extent of the civil magistrate's power; a debate which had absorbed the attention of a portion of the Scottish community for centuries.

In total Scotland sent 370 petitions to the Houses of Parliament in 1829 with only 25 of that number in support of the proposed bill. As noted by Iain Muirhead, reaction against the motion was more violent in the west of Scotland, where memories of

¹⁰ Quoted in S.J. Brown, *The National Churches of England, Ireland and Scotland, 1801-1846* (Oxford, 2001), p. 139.

¹¹ Machin, *Question*, pp. 54-5, 69; G.I.T. Machin, 'The No-Popery Movement in Britain in 1828-9', *HJ*, 6 (1963). On the frenzied popular reaction to the bill in England and Ireland see W. Hinde, *Catholic Emancipation: A Shake to Men's Minds* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 137-42.

persecution lingered and where immigration was more pronounced, than in the east. There was trouble at the Trongate in Glasgow when the opposing sides battled for signatures from neighbouring venues. In Glasgow William McGavin, who was influenced by the anti-Catholic pamphlets of the Rev. Thomas McCulloch in Nova Scotia,¹² also launched the *Scottish Protestant*, a series of anti-repeal tracts issued every few days. These listed the number of protests which were being dispatched from Greenock, Gourock, Denny, Tillicoultry, Drymen, Dunblane, Callendar, Cumbernauld, Whitburn, Bothwell, Linlithgow, Urr, Dumfries, Sanquhar, and Kirkcudbright. There were riots in Inverness and Thurso where windows were smashed and firearms discharged. The purpose of McGavin's publication was, it proclaimed, to disprove the notion that Scotland was apathetic.¹³ The *Scottish Protestant* was succeeded by the *New Scots Magazine*, which insisted that emancipation would subvert the constitutional principles of 1688 and the Union of 1707.¹⁴ The Kirk was also active and its clergymen were accused during a debate in the House of Commons of delivering violent sermons designed to inflame parishioners and encourage them to sign petitions. In Glasgow the General Kirk Session wrote to George IV beseeching him to withhold his consent and the Presbytery of Glasgow was unanimous against the measure; the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr voted against it 57 to 6. The old light Seceders likewise protested against the bill and petitions were dispatched from the Antiburgher Presbyteries of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth and Dunfermline, and Stirling and Falkirk; and from the Burgher Presbytery of Edinburgh and congregations of Glasgow, Airdrie, Perth, Kirkcaldy and Renton. Likewise in the north east where the Kirk had been active through the SSPCK and where evangelical revivals had occurred, the feeling against repeal was strong.¹⁵

While mass hysteria and popular bigotry were doubtless in evidence,¹⁶ the old lights in the Kirk, in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, and in the Secession, protested against the admission of Catholics to political power owing to their ecclesiological views.

¹² J.F. McCaffrey, 'McGavin, William', in N.M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 514. On McCulloch, see below, section two, chapter three.

¹³ *SPr*, 13 Mar 1829; 'The Public Opinion of Scotland', *SPr*, 18 Mar 1829; 'The Public Opinion of Scotland', *SPr*, 24 Mar 1829, 'Valedictory Address', *SPr*, 26 Mar 1829.

¹⁴ *New Scots Magazine*, Feb 1829.

¹⁵ I.A. Muirhead, 'Catholic Emancipation: Scottish Reactions in 1829', *IR*, 24 (1973), pp. 27–41. For the old light Burgher protest against emancipation, see David Scott, *Annals and Statistics of the Original Secession Church* (Edinburgh, 1886), pp. 46–7, 57. See also 'Synod of Glasgow and Ayr', *ETM*, Nov 1828; 'Presbyteries of Lanark & Glasgow and Original Burgher Presbytery of Stirling', *ETM*, March 1829.

¹⁶ Rev. Matthew Gardiner of Bothwell reportedly exclaimed to his parishioners that if they did not sign petitions against the motion 'they would shortly have their throats cut by the bloody papists'. One correspondent in the *Glasgow Herald* declared that Gardiner was preparing for a new Battle of Bothwell Bridge. See I.A. Muirhead, 'Catholic Emancipation in Scotland: the Debate and Aftermath', *IR*, 24 (1973), p. 110; R.M.W. Cowan, *The Newspaper in Scotland: A Study of its First Expansion 1815-1860* (Glasgow, 1946), p. 115.

High Church Anglicans shared with old light Presbyterians, similar views on the religious foundation of the British constitution and political life. Still subscribing to the idea of a godly commonwealth and a covenanted nation, some anti-repealers believed the community was duty-bound to resist the advancement of what they regarded as irreligion. Many still believed that uniformity in religion could be achieved and that only uniformity in the nation would satisfy a wrathful God who would punish the country for her transgressions. Scotland was still obliged to strive for national godliness owing to the Covenants sworn in the seventeenth century. These had pledged the extirpation of popery and the establishment of Presbyterian rule in both church and state. Moreover, this ideal of a covenanted nation was enshrined in the Westminster Confession of Faith and in the two kingdoms ecclesiology of the Scottish Kirk, which assigned the magistrate a duty to protect the Truth, as represented by the Kirk, and to repress heresy. Furthermore, the monarch was obliged to swear to protect the Scottish Church at his or her accession. The Revolution Settlement, which excluded Catholics from the throne, and the Union of 1707, had ensured the protection of the Kirk, which this legislation appeared to assault. In 1825 the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr debated the question of repeal and concluded that Presbyterian ministers who had subscribed to the Westminster Confession, which was all of them, could not conscientiously advocate Catholic emancipation. According to the Rev. John Lee, a correspondent of Lord Eldon, the repeal measure was in direct opposition to the Confession. As noted by Muirhead, ‘even in the early nineteenth century the old ideas of religion, church and state were not far below the surface’. The Edinburgh petition against emancipation, drafted by Thomas McCrie, was said to have ‘exhaled the very odour of the Covenant’.¹⁷

The Covenanters, who were still committed to achieving the establishment of Presbyterianism throughout Britain, unsurprisingly supported repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts,¹⁸ but they were completely opposed to the admission of Catholics, and they printed publications expounding on the dangerous nature of the legislation. They insisted that by impeding the access of Catholics to government, they were actually

¹⁷ Muirhead, ‘Debate’, pp. 103–5.

¹⁸ Scottish Presbyterians were subject to the test on appointment to office in England, though not in Scotland, and to posts in the armed forces. There had been a low-key campaign for the repeal of the Test Act in the early 1790s but this had been thwarted by the Moderate wing of the Kirk which was desperate to disassociate the Church from radical English dissent. See G.M. Ditchfield, ‘The Scottish Campaign against the Test Act, 1790-1791’, *HJ*, 23 (1980). Now, many supported repeal, including the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, the Synod of Fife – who petitioned the House of Lords in April 1828 – and the Rev. Thomas McCrie and the old light Antiburghers. See e.g., ‘Synod of Glasgow and Ayr’, *ST*, 12 April 1828. See also *Minutes of the Constitutional Associate Presbytery: Containing the Deed of Constitution, with the Reasons; and an Act for a Public Fast* (Edinburgh, 1807).

defending civil liberty. William Symington, a leading figure in the RP Church, published a pamphlet against repeal which was sold by booksellers in Glasgow, Stranraer, Paisley, Greenock, Edinburgh, Dumfries and London. The tone of the Covenanting protest was more measured now than it had been in the 1770s and Symington argued that his opposition to emancipation stemmed not from personal animosity to individual Catholics but from a belief in the flawed nature of Catholicism as a system. Symington began his attack by outlining the various perceived errors of the Catholic faith, drew attention to its tendency, in his eyes, to persecute and to deprive individuals of liberty. Moreover, Catholics were, Symington claimed, more likely to be traitorous given their allegiance to a foreign power. The minister endorsed the common belief that Catholicism through its hierarchical structure and ties with the state, promoted arbitrary rule and persecution. Indeed, the spirit of Catholicism was declared to be ‘that of an unmitigated despotism’, which the Scots had struggled successfully against in the past. Most importantly, this piece of legislation was in essence a declaration of war against God since it flouted divine commandments to support Truth instead of error, to strive for uniformity in religion, and to model the constitution and direct policy according to God’s will: ‘to lend support to a system which the Almighty has threatened to destroy’, the minister declared, ‘is to act in opposition to the revealed purposes of Heaven, and thus to fight against God.’ Civil government was an ordinance of God established for a divine purpose and Symington argued that not every member of the community had a natural right to a seat in Parliament. In order to merit such a position of trust, a person had to possess the necessary moral qualifications. In Symington’s opinion, ‘papists, by the tenets of the religious theory they choose to profess – tenets, which stamp them with the character of aliens, and which destroy even their free agency – are as much disqualified from sitting in Parliament or holding office under a Protestant government, as is the person who is born deaf and dumb. The disqualification is indeed moral; but it is as complete as the physical one just named, or even the mental one of insanity itself.’ Symington argued that the constitution in Scotland, as settled by the Revolution, the Claim of Right and the Union, safeguarded the Protestant religion. ‘How can those who revere those deeds’, the clergyman asked, advance the Catholic claims? The Covenanters condemned the countenance given to Catholicism by members of Parliament and refused categorically to accept the argument that emancipation was a necessity on the grounds of political expediency.¹⁹

¹⁹ William Symington, *Popery, the Mystery of Iniquity* (Glasgow, 1829).

The Reformed Presbyterian Church passed resolutions against the bill which reiterated Symington's points. The Church declared its support of the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts but testified 'against rejecting altogether the principle of the necessity of moral and Christian qualification in those who are admitted to power and office in the state'. Political expediency was declared to be an improper test of a public measure; indeed, it was 'pleaded in vain where moral principle and obligation are implicated'. A public fast was held during which the Covenanters bore testimony against a motion which, in their eyes, disobeyed the 'authoritative prescriptions of the Word of God, respecting the ends of civil government' and was inimical to 'national liberty and prosperity'.²⁰ Looking back on the effects of emancipation in 1840, and what was perceived as the threatening advance of Catholicism at home and abroad, the Covenanters declared Britain's safety to lie 'in retiring back upon the principles of 1638'.²¹

Archibald Mason, RP minister in Wishaw, interpreted events with reference to passages in Revelation chapters 16 and 21. Mason argued that at the pouring out of the seventh vial, the church would be purified and everything in 'Roman earth' would be 'smitten'. The 'vials of wrath' would abolish popery and annihilate despotism, which, Mason declared, was an 'abomination before God.' Before this could take place, however, the pouring out of the sixth vial on the Euphrates had to be accomplished. Mason argued that the river Euphrates, which provided security to the city of Babylon, represented the Turkish empire's support of the 'Antichristian system' of Catholicism. The destruction of the Euphrates symbolised the eradication of the Turkish empire which would in turn lead to the overthrow of Antichrist. 'Islamism is a kind of Euphrates to Popery', Mason claimed, since the Turkish empire presented no threat to the Pope; indeed, Mason insisted, both Islam and Catholicism were false religions, 'set in opposition to the civil rights and religious privileges of mankind.' The pouring out of the fifth vial, which involved an assault on the secular tyranny of the 'beast's throne', was already taking place, and, Mason warned, any attempt on the part of the legislative and executive powers to 'negotiate and arm in support of the eastern' powers or to 'legislate in favour of the devoted subjects of the western' would involve them in fighting against God and impeding the onset of a new millennium.²²

²⁰ *Resolutions Adopted by the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland, met at Glasgow, April 22nd 1829, its First Meeting After the Bill, to admit Roman Catholics into Parliament, had passed in to a Law* (n.p., 1829).

²¹ 'Catholic Emancipation', *SP*, March 1840.

²² Archibald Mason, *Remarks on the Seventh Vial, Symbolizing the Fall of Popery and Despotism* (Glasgow, 1827), pp. 4–20; Archibald Mason, *Remarks on the Sixth Vial, Symbolizing the Fall of the Turkish Empire* (Glasgow, 1827), pp. 5–10, 15, 24, 26.

Michael Willis, meanwhile, a minister in the old light Burgher denomination and later Principal of Knox College, Toronto, published a pamphlet outlining his view of the subject. According to Willis, the Bible stated that Catholicism was to be overthrown by civil as well as spiritual powers. Agreeing with the Covenanters, he argued that Catholics were morally unqualified for political rule. Willis contended that the law of nature, itself of divine origin, stated that the constitutions and legislatures of nations should acknowledge the deity. Civil and ecclesiastical government had sprung from the same source and their cooperation enabled each sphere to retain its independence. The minister admitted that in times past the state had crippled the church and stripped subjects of their rights. However, he also maintained that some state control of religion was necessary. For Willis this question of the admission of Catholics to Parliament was an ecclesiological one and he insisted on the duty of the state to further the cause of God. 'The relation of ruler and subject', he said, 'is not founded merely in the will of man, and the principle of utility and convenience, but in the will of God.' Britain, a nation fortunate to enjoy the light of revelation, was compelled to deprive non-Protestants of political power. Indeed, in Willis' words, the admission of Catholics to Parliament was a 'moral evil'. A civil war, which in the eyes of most was to be avoided at all costs, was, in Willis' view, preferable to the violation of divine commands: 'better, we say, contend with man than contend with God; better meet any inconvenience in the path of duty, than provoke Divine judgments in departing from it.'²³

Drawing on his interpretation of Presbyterian theory and Scottish history, Thomas McCrie frequently preached against the measure from the pulpit. While he viewed the admission of Catholics as objectionable owing to the religion's political character and the allegiance Catholics bore to a foreign power,²⁴ he also regarded the legislation as a violation of Covenant pledges which would expose the nation to God's judgment. Henry Cockburn remarked that McCrie 'naturally enough imagines that he is living in the days of Knox.'²⁵ Depressed at what he regarded as the Whigs' defection from the principles of 'old Whiggism', McCrie predicted that the measure would pass. Nevertheless, he drafted the Edinburgh petition which was reportedly signed by 13,150 people. He described his public

²³ Michael Willis, *The Religious Question, Involved in the Proposed Concessions to Roman Catholics* (Glasgow, 1829). For Willis's view of church-state relations see his *Lectures on Church Establishments. Lecture III* (Glasgow, 1835).

²⁴ The Rev. John Smyth, minister of St. George's kirk in Glasgow, also took this view. He argued that any other ground of exclusion would be a 'usurpation of the rights of conscience'. See John Smyth, *A Discourse on the Duties of Mankind, as Subjects of Civil Authority* (Glasgow, 1829).

²⁵ 'Cockburn to Kennedy, 13th March 1829', in Henry Cockburn (ed.), *Letters Chiefly Connected with the Affairs of Scotland* (London, 1874), p. 208.

condemnation of the bill as ‘personal exoneration’.²⁶ Moreover, in 1828 the Original Seceders, the body to which McCrie belonged, renewed the national Covenants owing to the ‘countenance given to popery by the government’. The admission of Catholics to Parliament was resisted by many, the Seceders declared, and ‘dangerous to liberty’.²⁷

Meanwhile, those Presbyterians illuminated by the new light tended either to support repeal or dispassionately to regard it as an inevitable step. New lights celebrated the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, considered by them as ‘statutes of tyranny and oppression’ which imposed ‘a stigma’ on dissenters.²⁸ The new light philosophy of the United Secession, which argued for the separation of civil and ecclesiastical affairs, and against the establishment of a godly commonwealth – the aim enshrined in the Covenants and arguably in the Westminster Confession, – caused many members of that Church to regard the Test and Corporations Act as outdated and unjust.²⁹ The *Edinburgh Theological Magazine (ETM)*, the organ of the United Secession, also charted the progress of the Catholic Association in Ireland and of the Catholic repeal bill in Parliament. Initially the *Magazine* defended the laws excluding Catholics from Parliament. It was argued that while no religious belief could debar a subject from political rule, the civil aspects of Catholicism, the desire to ‘put all civil power in priests’ hands’ disqualified its adherents. This reasoning allowed United Seceders and other dissenters to support the repeal of the Test and Corporations Acts while distancing that cause from the Catholic question.³⁰ When repeal became increasingly likely, however, the *Magazine* condemned both the Catholic Association and the Brunswick Clubs for going to extremes. Critical of the interference of the state in religious affairs, the United Seceders argued that the cause of Protestantism would not suffer as a result of repeal, since it was ‘the cause of truth, and needs not the arm of the civil power to uphold it’.³¹ Some Seceders declared their abhorrence of Catholicism but were prepared calmly to accept emancipation; others, like the Rev. Henry Renton in Kelso, were firmly in favour of the legislation.³² If all religious denominations were put on an equal footing, it was firmly believed that Protestantism would prevail.³³

²⁶ Thomas McCrie, *Life of Thomas McCrie D.D.* (Edinburgh, 1840), pp. 314–18.

²⁷ *Act For Renewing Our Covenants; By Associate Synod of Original Seceders* (Edinburgh, 1828), p. 12.

²⁸ *ETM*, April 1827.

²⁹ *ETM*, March 1828.

³⁰ *ETM*, March 1827.

³¹ *ETM*, March 1829.

³² Renton edited the pro-repeal paper the *Edinburgh Star*. See his editorial for June 13 1826. See also Henry Renton, *Memorials of the Rev. Henry Renton, M.A.* (Kelso, 1877), p. 67.

³³ *ETM*, April, 1829.

Thomas Chalmers, whom Muirhead has argued was influenced by new light principles at this point, took up this argument of the Seceders. He preached twice in favour of emancipation, at Belfast and in London, and spoke again in its favour in Edinburgh.³⁴ In this speech he contended that repeal was expedient since Catholicism was better combated by the pen – by the circulation of the Bible – than by the sword. ‘The kingdom of God’, he proclaimed, ‘which is not of this world, refuses to be indebted for its advancement to any other.’³⁵ He believed that establishments could prosper from healthy competition and on the passing of the legislation repealing the Test and Corporation Acts he expressed his hope that the Church of England would thrive now that dissent was unshackled. The Scottish Kirk, he observed, had required no such legislation to ensure its survival. To his presbytery Chalmers declared his support for Catholic emancipation on principle, insisting that the church-state theocratic model represented in the Old Testament was irrelevant to modern times. By contrast, the New Testament instructed subjects to obey irreligious rulers, as did the Westminster Confession, which stated that infidelity or difference of religion did not invalidate the authority of a magistrate. Thus, the exclusion of Catholics from Parliament was unjustifiable and had only occurred owing to the political aspect of the religion. Some others in the Kirk agreed with Chalmers on this point.³⁶ Muirhead suggests that Chalmers spoke only of the speedy eradication of popery to the pro-repeal meeting in Edinburgh, which dwelt also on alleviating the troubles of Ireland, because most people were not ready to accept new light views.³⁷ This was certainly the case within the United Secession and the Relief churches where the opinion of the ministers was often at odds with that of the congregation. When one Relief minister declared his support for the bill, the congregation literally threw him out of the church. In the Secession, some congregations insisted on meeting and drafting anti-repeal petitions even without the sanction of their ministers.³⁸

Some who supported the bill attempted to manipulate Scottish emotions by appealing to the Covenanting past. It was argued in a broadside, probably written by a new

³⁴ In 1817 Chalmers had preached a sermon before the Edinburgh auxiliary branch of the Hibernian Society calling for an end to anti-Catholic prejudices which he believed were the ‘irrational expressions of piety’. See S.J. Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 112–13.

³⁵ Hanna, *Chalmers*, III, p. 238.

³⁶ These included the Rev. Patrick McFarlane, the Rev. Patrick Brewster of Paisley and the Rev. J. Wylie of Carlisle as well as two members of the Presbytery of Linlithgow; see Muirhead, ‘Debate’, p. 115. The Rev. Henry Duncan of Ruthwell likewise favoured repeal and declined to draw up an anti-repeal petition as requested by his parishioners. Duncan believed that justice and political expediency demanded the act should pass. See George J.C. Duncan, *Memoir of the Rev. Henry Duncan* (Edinburgh, 1848), pp. 185–6.

³⁷ Muirhead, ‘Debate’, pp. 112–13.

³⁸ Muirhead, ‘Debate’, p. 116; Gavin Struthers, *History of the Rise, Progress and Principles of the Relief Church* (Glasgow, 1843), p. 456. Ultimately, however, a significant proportion of dissenters welcomed new light voluntarism (see below).

light dissenter, that the Anglican Church despised Presbyterians almost as much as Catholics, and, by opposing repeal, Scots Presbyterians were helping to prop up the English establishment. When this Church had persecuted Presbyterians, many Scots had found refuge among Catholics in Ireland. It was time that this favour was repaid, this author claimed, and a concerted effort made to liberate Catholics from the same oppression endured in Scotland two centuries earlier. Catholicism had changed its character and was no longer the persecuting religion it had once been. Indeed, Presbyterians had been likewise guilty of persecution, as was clear from the principles enshrined in the Westminster Confession.³⁹ Others described the Covenanters as products of an illiberal and intolerant age who were as guilty of persecution as Roman Catholics. The Covenanters insisted on their right to punish idolaters but denied the right of Catholics to persecute those who dissented from the Church of Rome. Since each church sincerely believed in its own teachings, one commentator asked, who was to decide which was the right way?⁴⁰

The debate over Catholic emancipation came to widen the division between old and new light as it drove the latter to adopt a voluntarist position. Much of the discussion over repeal centred round the role of the established church and its relation to the state. Indeed, Michael Willis believed that the Catholic question would ultimately decide ‘whether the opinion shall become triumphant, that civil and ecclesiastical society should be altogether disunited, or not?’ This question was really the crux the matter. Willis contended that those pro-repealers who deplored voluntarism – which included Chalmers who believed competition from different sects would strengthen the establishment – were deluded and ignorant of the implications of their support for emancipation. The admission of Catholics, Willis insisted, would sever the links between church and state and institute voluntarism.⁴¹ Dissenters in England had long complained of their unfair treatment and inferior status and some supported the admission of Catholics to Parliament hoping that it would weaken the Anglican establishment and its close links with civil government. In Scotland, Andrew Marshall, United Secession minister in Kirkintilloch, came to a similar conclusion when he preached what would become an infamous sermon on April 9th 1829.

³⁹ Muirhead, ‘Debate’, p. 114.

⁴⁰ [anon.], *A Cloth-Brush for Cleansing the Cob-webs of Catholicism from a Cameronian’s Coat* (Edinburgh, 1826).

⁴¹ Willis, *Religious Question*, p. 36. At a voluntary lecture series in 1835, William Anderson, a hugely popular preacher in John Street Relief Church in Glasgow, pointed out the inconsistency of simultaneously advocating catholic emancipation and establishmentarianism. He asked whether Daniel O’Connell, whom Chalmers and Andrew Thomson by their support of emancipation had assisted to his seat in the Commons, was qualified to support Presbyterianism. Anderson recommended that the Church better purge the legislature of Catholics, remodel it by Presbyterian rule and adopt the Covenant, before it argued for the maintenance of a church-state with a divine commission to support the Truth. See George Gilfillan, *Life of the Rev. William Anderson L.L.D.* (London, 1873), pp. 88–9.

Marshall insisted that once granted full civil equality, Catholics would begin to demand the establishment of the Catholic Church in Ireland on the grounds that they composed the majority of the country's population. The fear of Catholicism as a political system might be well-grounded; was not it better, Marshall asked, to dissolve the link between church and state and remove the threat of persecution? 'Let church and state', he said, 'stand each on its own basis, as far asunder as God has put them – give to every denomination a fair field, and no favour, which is all that my denomination can claim, and this will be throwing oil on the conflicting billows, this will bring about surely and speedily the wished for calm'. Marshall argued that church establishments were inequitable and unscriptural. Bound up with the state, their existence created a hierarchical society and a sub-class of subjects who were unfairly treated. Membership of an established church did not necessarily engender loyalty to the state; indeed, Marshall claimed, loyalty that is bought 'is worth nothing'. Instead, he insisted, churches should be supported by voluntary contributions only.⁴² Marshall's sermon was probably influenced by the Rev. John Ballantyne's earlier pamphlet: *A Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches*. In this work Ballantyne argued that the established Churches were inequitable institutions which commanded the support of less than half of the population. He argued in favour of free trade in religion, the appropriation of church property, and insisted that the Kirk's two kingdoms theory was 'a vision of fancy'.⁴³

Developing Ballantyne's argument, Marshall took the new light principles of the Secession to a voluntarist conclusion. The backsliding of an erastian state which interfered too readily in ecclesiastical affairs had caused Seceders to testify against church and constitution since the 1730s. Now with the emancipation of Catholics and the prevalence of dissent, some Seceders began to argue against the existence of a church-state in Britain. In their eyes it was unworkable, illogical and oppressive. History had proven that civil and ecclesiastical power could not merge without disastrous results. Some voluntary Seceders argued for the entire separation of politics from religion, insisting on the secular nature and concerns of civil government. They insisted that the New Testament provided no justification for church establishments or godly commonwealths. G.I.T Machin suggests that as the Kirk was less vulnerable than the Church of England, Scottish dissenters had fewer 'tangible objects' to attack. Thus, theoretical arguments for voluntarism appeared at an early stage in Scotland. However, as well as the inheritance from the Scottish Enlightenment – the social theory and political economy which pointed

⁴² Andrew Marshall, *Ecclesiastical Establishments Considered* (Glasgow, 1829).

⁴³ John Ballantyne, *A Comparison of Established and Dissenting Churches* (Edinburgh, 1827), p. 30.

to individual freedom and free trade – it is clear that new light theory and two kingdoms ecclesiology in part gave birth to the controversy; these foundations were highlighted by voluntaries desperate to validate their position.⁴⁴ Apologists for voluntarism explained that the early Seceders had never been enamoured with the dream of a state church.⁴⁵ The Rev. William Peddie claimed that the dissenting position occupied by the Seceders ‘was highly favourable to the adoption of right views of the spiritual nature of Christ’s kingdom’. ‘It may be affirmed’, he said, ‘that in the writings of the seceding fathers will be found the distinct germ of that which Voluntarism is only the development.’⁴⁶ Elsewhere the Rev. Andrew Ferrier of Airdrie insisted that those who ‘had been most anxious and active in the defence of [Christ’s] independent and spiritual supremacy...in opposition to the thralldom imposed by civil powers, have been usually exposed to persecution.’ The most stringent adherents of two kingdoms ecclesiology had been driven to a voluntarist position by the despotic behaviour of civil powers.⁴⁷

This reasoning allowed some people to campaign for civil rights for dissenters and calmly to accept the admission of Catholics, and later of Jews, to political life.⁴⁸ The *Glasgow Herald* reported in April 1829 that ‘among the various descriptions of persons who have united in urging the Catholic claims a numerous and most energetic portion is composed of those who labour to overturn all Church establishments whatever. Indeed they are so confident of the present measure being a prelude to a complete revolution in the Church...they cannot help displaying pretty openly the satisfaction they enjoy’.⁴⁹ This anti-establishment ethic was transferred to the political sphere and encouraged voluntaries to criticise all monopolies. Thus, as will be shown, voluntaries came to support the widening of the elective franchise.

The debate over Catholic emancipation was an immeasurably significant one which shook the religious foundations of the British state and generated significant popular protest. An analysis of its Scottish context demonstrates the enduring significance of

⁴⁴ This development of voluntarism within the Secession has yet to receive adequate attention from historians.

⁴⁵ Brown, *Churches*, p. 177; J. B. Mackie writes that the nineteenth-century voluntary dissenters were ‘taught in the same religious school which recognised Melville’s doctrines of the two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland’. J.B. Mackie, *The Life and Work of Duncan McLaren* (Edinburgh, 1888), p. 167. According to William Cunningham’s biographers, moreover, ‘the Scotch Seceders, it is well known, had long been more or less leavened with anti-Establishment principles, so that the sturdy preacher in the west scattered his seed in fully prepared soil.’ See Robert Rainy & James Mackenzie, *Life of William Cunningham, D.D.* (London, 1871), p. 88. These accounts do not take into consideration the voluntarism of Thomas Gillespie and the early Relief Church influenced by the teachings of Philip Doddridge and English nonconformity.

⁴⁶ William Peddie, *Discourses* (Edinburgh, 1846), pp. 12–13, 92.

⁴⁷ Andrew Ferrier, *Nebuchadnezzar’s Golden Image: A Sermon on Civil Establishments of Religion* (Glasgow, 1836), p. 36.

⁴⁸ See ‘Jewish Disabilities’, *USM*, April 1845.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Muirhead, ‘Debate’, p. 118.

Presbyterian theory and strict Covenanting ideals. For many Scots Presbyterians the Catholic question concerned civil as well as religious liberty. It widened the divisions between dissenters and establishmentarians in England and created a fault line in Scottish society. Concern over the advancement of Catholicism, the future of church establishments, and of the godly state in general, resurfaced during the agitation for parliamentary reform. These were themes which continued to shape British politics at least until the middle of the century.

(ii) Parliamentary and Burgh Reform

The Scottish movement for parliamentary and burgh reform in the 1820s and 30s has been an understudied area of historical research. Michael Brock's monograph, which deals with reform in Britain generally, appeared back in 1973, while William Ferguson and Michael Dyer have focused only on the specific mechanics of the Scottish Reform Bill. Fiona Montgomery's research has examined the parliamentary reform movement for evidence of class conflict or class cooperation. cursory, though helpful, commentary on the Reform Bill has appeared in monographs on the long eighteenth century – Linda Colley's *Britons*, for example – but nothing comprehensive had been published specifically examining reform or the political culture surrounding it, until Gordon Pentland's monograph, which analyses the Scottish context of parliamentary reform and extra-parliamentary agitation, appeared in 2008.⁵⁰

Pentland's research examines the creation of a movement for reform in Scotland, which was national and patriotic both in a Scottish and a British sense. Outlining the various radical traditions which inspired this movement, Pentland draws attention to the ways in which the memory of the Covenanters and the resistance of the seventeenth-century state motivated nineteenth-century reformers as had been the case in the 1790s. Allusions to Covenanting bravery peppered stirring speeches and newspaper articles, and during reform processions, artefacts from Covenanting days were held aloft. *The Scotsman* encouraged residents of Edinburgh to sign the reform petition with the same determination

⁵⁰ M. Brock, *The Great Reform Act* (London, 1973); W. Ferguson, 'The Reform Act (Scotland) of 1832: intention and effect', *SHR*, 45 (1966); M. Dyer, "'Mere detail and machinery': the Great Reform Act and the effects of redistribution on Scottish representation, 1832–1868", *SHR*, 62 (1983); F. A. Montgomery, 'Glasgow and the struggle for parliamentary reform, 1830–1832', *SHR*, 61 (1982); F.A Montgomery, 'Glasgow Radicalism 1830–1848' (Glasgow Univ. Ph.D. Thesis, 1974); Colley, *Britons*, pp. 334–50; G. Pentland, *Radicalism, Reform and National Identity in Scotland, 1820–1833* (Woodbridge, 2008); G. Pentland, 'Scotland and the Creation of a National Reform Movement, 1830–1832', *HJ*, 48 (2005); G. Pentland, 'The Debate on Scottish Parliamentary Reform', *SHR*, 85 (2006).

shown by the signatories of the Solemn League and Covenant two hundred years before.⁵¹ George Gilfillan, author and United Presbyterian minister in Dundee, recorded in later years his memories of the reform movement: 'the Scottish people flung themselves into even the Reform Bill and chartist agitations with greater spirit, because the field-meetings then held, and the peculiar kind of popular excitement, and the prayer which was...often mixed up with politics and political assemblies, reminded them of Covenanting days...One gifted man...alluded...to the days of the Covenant, and spoke of the coming of new Drumclogs and of more fortunate Bothwells, and pointed to the Pentlands and the Bass...it was felt that the manes of the murdered in the cause of liberty would soon be propitiated.'⁵² In this way the reformers were appealing to a peculiarly Scottish tradition, but one which was in no way national, and, as had been discovered in the 1790s, one which had limited appeal. Still, the Covenant was evidently a particularly enduring symbol of defiance and pride. As noted by Pentland, the renewal of a Covenanting memorial to martyrs from Strathaven shot in 1685 underscored the link between the Reform agitation and the days of the Covenant; its inscription read: 'Renewed by the Reformers of Avondale at the passing of the Reform Bill – ANNO DOMINI. 1832'.⁵³ According to Henry Cockburn, to the Scots the Reform Bill agitation was 'an old Covenanting business'.⁵⁴

As Pentland has argued, 'a rigid distinction between religion and politics is impossible to sustain for this period.'⁵⁵ Indeed, some reformers referred to Covenanting times not just in the interests of oratory, but owing to ideological conviction. This section will thus focus on the influence of Presbyterian political theology and suggest that religion had more to do with the Reform debates than has been hitherto recognised. By examining the denominational literature of this period, one discovers explicit religious justifications for parliamentary reform. In England the Anglican interest tended to oppose the Reform Bill, regarded as posing a threat to the Church's existence, while dissenters who desired an end to Anglican supremacy voted to return reforming MPs to Parliament.⁵⁶ As G.I.T. Machin has noticed, support for the Reform Bill depended for some on their view of Catholic emancipation. It was believed that repeal, a measure denounced by a majority of the populace, had passed the House owing to the corrupt nature of the parliamentary representative system. Thus, it seemed, an extension of the franchise would succeed in

⁵¹ Pentland, 'Movement', p. 1021.

⁵² George Gilfillan, *The Martyrs, Heroes and Bards of the Scottish Covenant* (2nd ed., London, 1853), pp. 164–6.

⁵³ Pentland, 'Movement', p. 1020.

⁵⁴ K. Miller, *Cockburn's Millennium* (London, 1977), p. 36.

⁵⁵ Pentland, *Radicalism*, pp. 9, 140–6.

⁵⁶ Brock, *Great Reform Act*, p. 199; W.G.H. Cook, 'Electoral Reform and Organized Christianity in England I', *Political Science Quarterly*, 39 (1924), pp. 488–499; Machin, *Politics*, pp. 23–4.

reversing Parliament's decision.⁵⁷ Besides this rationale, in Scotland support for the Bill came from both old and new lights and was justified according to both theories of church and state. While some Moderate Kirkmen – the opponents of patronage – allied as they were to landed interest, were ambivalent about the legitimacy and appropriateness of franchise extension, the Reformed Presbyterians, the Relief, Seceders – both old and new light – as well as some Kirk Evangelicals, tended to defend the extension of the franchise owing to democratic views of civil government, popular sovereignty and the participation of the lower classes in the political process.⁵⁸ The old lights tended also to regard the Reform Bill favourably as potentially ushering in a new age of spiritual regeneration when the national Church would be rehabilitated with the aid of the state as its moral superintendent. The voluntaries, ideologically opposed to the idea of a church-state, hoped Reform, by giving dissent a political voice, would ultimately lead to disestablishment in Britain and Ireland (as well as in the colonies). As Machin has observed, 'the desire for voluntary, non-established religion or spiritual freedom depended on franchise extension for its more effective expression in politics and its greater hope of realisation'.⁵⁹

Many dissenters and evangelicals in both England and Scotland identified with the Whig party and regarded its members as the inheritors of a seventeenth-century tradition: the defence of religious liberty. The Whigs were portrayed in histories by Lord John Russell and others as having always been defenders of popular rights, with a history of advocating constitutional reform stretching from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. In this way, Whig spokesmen legitimised their party's dedication to reform measures.⁶⁰ Several Presbyterians likewise perpetuated this myth. It was believed by many that the origins of the Whig party were rooted in Presbyterian dissent – those who had originally toiled for civil and religious freedom – and works like those by Thomas McCrie, who described himself as a 'true whig', elaborated on the Presbyterian commitment to liberty.⁶¹ McCrie's *Life of John Knox* was reviewed in the influential Whig magazine, the *Edinburgh Review*, which praised the book for shedding light on the close link between civil and

⁵⁷ Machin, *Politics*, p. 22; Pentland, *Radicalism*, p. 70.

⁵⁸ Some Evangelicals were also noted opponents of Reform. After Thomas Chalmers refused to participate in the Edinburgh celebrations to mark the passing of the Bill, his windows were smashed. See D.C. Smith, *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest* (New York, 1987), p. 78.

⁵⁹ I. Machin, 'Disestablishment and democracy, c.1840-1930', in E. Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and Community: liberals, radicals and collective identities in the British Isles, 1865-1931* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 120.

⁶⁰ R. Brent, *Liberal Anglican Politics: Whiggery, religion and reform, 1830-1841* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 42-9.

⁶¹ See also John C. Colquhoun, *The Moral Character of Britain the Cause of its Political Eminence* (Glasgow, 1832) which credits the evangelical revival with originating the movement for political reform. According to Colquhoun, the reformed church could not be disjoined from civil liberty which had allowed Protestantism to flourish.

religious liberty, the struggle for which had begun at the Reformation. According to the reviewer, there was a 'natural affinity between genuine Presbyterianism and genuine Whiggism'.⁶² The phenomenal success of McCrie's works indicates the credibility and weight of this historical narrative in the Scottish imagination. *The Scotsman's* review of *Life of Melville*, declared the country to be deeply indebted to McCrie who had brilliantly illustrated the way in which the political freedom of the country was 'owing to the noble exertions of our ancestors'.⁶³

Committed to expedient policies and unwilling to jettison a utilitarian Anglican establishment, the Whigs soon alienated some portions of the Presbyterian community. They were regarded as having abandoned the mantle of their forebears, sacrificing the divine imperatives so important to their ancestors. However, initially many Presbyterians keenly lent their support to Whig party projects including burgh and parliamentary reform. As John Gibson Lockhart wrote in *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, '[churchmen] are all Presbyterians and Calvinists, and so, in spite of themselves, they are, and must be Whigs. A few indeed, may endeavour to persuade themselves and others they are Tories; but they wear the cloak of Geneva, and they are the descendants of John Knox – and that is sufficient.'⁶⁴ This is, of course, a simplistic assessment; but, sympathetic to the Whig party, many evangelical Presbyterians, clerical as well as lay, did engage in the debate on the Reform Bill owing to their conception of liberty and the bearing they believed the legislation would have on ecclesiastical affairs. Indeed, many orthodox Churchmen would have regarded the triumph of the Whigs at the 1830 election as the dawning of a new era, when reform would eventually triumph.

Owing to their theory of civil government and the inalienable right of the community to draft the constitution by which they were to be governed, the Covenanters supported moves for political reform and the extension of the franchise. While declaring Catholics unfit for political rule, the Covenanters saw no inconsistency in simultaneously arguing for wider suffrage. Dissenting voluntaries accused the RPs, who sided with the Kirk during the heated voluntary/establishment conflict of the 1830s (see below), of holding principles the 'most radical and revolutionary on earth'. In response, Peter Macindoe declared that no comment on political topics had ever been issued in the church's official statements. Certainly, there had been no specific discussion on issues like

⁶² *Edinburgh Review*, July 1812.

⁶³ 'Literature', *The Scotsman*, Jan 1 1820.

⁶⁴ John Gibson Lockhart, *Peter's Letters to His Kinsfolk*, William Ruddick ed. (Edinburgh, 1977), p. 21

suffrage or vote by ballot.⁶⁵ But elsewhere Macindoe expressly encouraged the discussion of political topics from the pulpit. Indeed, he declared it shameful that clergymen, being educated in biblical liberty, had not been more energetic than the secular press in advocating political reform.⁶⁶ Moreover, in the months leading up to the passing of the Reform Bill in the Houses of Parliament, Macindoe explicitly discussed franchise extension in a lengthy book outlining Covenanted political principles.

This book was entitled *The Application of Scriptural Principles to Political Government* and set out the main tenets of Covenanted political thought. The publication of this treatise in 1831 suggests that the Covenanters were keen to engage in public debate about political reform and influence the direction it would take. In the book Macindoe highlighted the Covenanted belief in the moral foundations of civil government, popular sovereignty, and the divine right of the community to appoint and remove their rulers; he mused that the present was one of the most important eras through which the country had passed. Indeed, it would soon be decided ‘whether the natural rights of the community or the arrogant claims of the corporations, - whether the essential principles of equity, or the arbitrary maxims of absolutism, shall gain the ascendancy’. Macindoe recorded his belief in the benefits of the diffusion of political information amongst ‘all classes of society’. In opposition to contemporary arguments which stated that the lower orders were too uneducated and mentally ill-equipped to merit the elective franchise, Macindoe declared that God had bestowed on every human the ability to understand politics: ‘all men are born on an equal footing as to political rights...all have by nature the same original powers, intellectual, moral, and physical...the poor have minds as precious in the sight of God as those of which the rich can boast’. Indeed, it was the duty of every individual to be adequately informed given that the responsibility for forming a government lay with the community. It was crucial therefore that every member of the community also possessed the right to elect the civil magistrate and Macindoe declared his unequivocal support for the Reform Bill:

The legislature ought to be chosen by the community...should the great measure of reform carried the other day...by a majority of the Commons, pass into a law, the people shall have recovered the elective franchise to a greater extent than it has ever been enjoyed, even in this ancient land...I affirm that it is the undoubted right of the community to elect their representatives in the legislature. When any individuals thrust themselves into that house,

⁶⁵ *Statement of the Berwickshire Bible Society, read at its institution January 14th 1835* (Dunse, 1835); Peter Macindoe, *Defence of the Reformed Presbyterian Church from Attacks in “Statement of the Berwickshire Bible Society”* (Edinburgh, 1835), pp. 6–7.

⁶⁶ Peter Macindoe, *A Vindication of the Reformed Presbyterian Church* (Edinburgh, 1830), p. 9.

without *their* consent, even though they have the patronage of the greatest peer, or the mightiest prince in the kingdom, they are downright usurpers. They are occupying seats to which they have not been invited, performing services for which they have not been engaged, and forging legal fetters, which it were no more than virtuous resistance to throw back in their faces. Only those who have been raised to this dignity by the unbiased suffrages, or with the implied consent of the people, are qualified to pass laws entitled to their conscientious obedience.

Indeed, Macindoe, by advocating near universal suffrage, only excluding criminals and those incapacitated by insanity, implied that the Reform Bill did not go far enough:

we cannot but think, that population ought chiefly to regulate the number of representatives which any district delegates. Will any one argue, that five millions of active men – the working classes who have no other property than their labour – are of little value in the state? Will any one say, that their political rights deserve no protection, and their just wishes no deference? Surely, if the legislature should represent all the elements of power in the kingdom, land, money, trade, learning, intelligence – is it just to exclude the *physical strength*, by which its wealth is created, its battles fought, and its honours upheld?⁶⁷

In order to disarm the enemies of franchise extension who maintained that the ignorance of the public justified their exclusion from the political process, Macindoe advocated the removal of taxes on the press and the development of the education system. However, he was careful to stress that diffusion of political information should on no account be separated from the study of Scripture. He warned that an immoral community wielding political rights would bring down God's judgment, as had been seen in France during the excesses of the revolution. A pious politicised community, however, would cleanse the nation and rest its government on a proper religious bottom.⁶⁸

Macindoe's book was favourably reviewed in the more mainstream Kirk magazines. The *Presbyterian Review* described it as a 'valuable and seasonable treatise on a much neglected but most momentous subject.'⁶⁹ The *Edinburgh Christian Instructor*, meanwhile, endorsed the publication calling for its wide distribution.⁷⁰ The *Scottish Guardian* newspaper recorded its delight at the fact 'the old true-blue Covenanters' were 'once more taking the field – coming down from the hills where once they successfully fought the battle of religion and liberty, to our great manufacturing cities.'⁷¹ Indeed, the RP Church was declared to be 'much better informed on the scriptural principles of

⁶⁷ Peter Macindoe, *The Application of Scriptural Principles to Political Government* (Edinburgh, 1831), pp. iii, 6–12, 180–3.

⁶⁸ Macindoe, *Application*, pp. 35–8.

⁶⁹ 'Critical Notice', *PR*, March 1832.

⁷⁰ *ECI*, May 1832.

⁷¹ 'The Presbyterian Magazine and the Scottish Advocate 1832', *SG*, Dec 11 1832.

governments and churches than the established Church'.⁷² Many evangelical Kirkmen shared Macindoe's views on civil government and political reform. One author in the *Presbyterian Review* advised all those with concern for the church to keep abreast of political developments, especially since measures respecting the liberty of the community were under discussion. This development demanded 'everyone whatever his professions to assume attitude and proclaim sentiments of a freeman', always remembering the sacrifices of the Covenanters who had imbibed the 'daring spirit of liberty', civil as well as religious.⁷³ Others supported Reform owing to the beneficial influence they believed it would have on Scottish religion. In particular, some saw parliamentary reform as a means to repeal the Patronage Act.

Indeed, a movement to revise the law of patronage galvanised the populace before 1832 helping to generate support for Reform.⁷⁴ A 'Society for Improving the System of Church Patronage in Scotland', whose aim was to buy up patronage rights from patrons and invest them in congregations, was established in 1824. By 1831 there were thirty-seven branches of the Society outside of Edinburgh and numerous petitions were sent to Parliament.⁷⁵ The *Church Patronage Reporter* was launched in 1829 to report on the movement. A meeting at Midmar, apparently reminiscent of Covenanting times, was attended by 400-500 people. In Carnoustie, people unable to find a space inside the meeting venue reportedly listened at windows outside. A letter from Aberdeen advised the circulation of reports on the movement amongst the 'plain country people' in order to awaken those members of society in a 'humbler but equally respectable sphere.' An older resident in a rural locality, meanwhile, bore witness to the beneficial influence of the freedom of the press in popularising the movement.⁷⁶ At a Greenock meeting the Rev. Mr McBean spoke on the necessity of applying to the government for redress and on the importance of popular pressure, as did an Aberdeen committee member who spoke thus: 'let the cry which our country has sent forth wax louder and louder; let Parish after Parish join in it, and add to its thunder; and we are persuaded, when Scotland's united voice shall be heard in parliament, and around the throne, the cause, to which we are now giving our prayers and our exertions, may be considered as won'.⁷⁷ An article printed in the *Presbyterian Review*, meanwhile, declared the Reform Bill to be of great import. As a

⁷² 'Editorial', *SG*, Dec 26 1832. For the Kirk's admiration of the Covenanters, see also 'Critical Notices', *PR*, Sep 1831 and Sep 1836.

⁷³ 'Prospects of Britain by J. Douglas', *PR*, Nov 1831.

⁷⁴ Pentland, *Radicalism*, pp. 46-8.

⁷⁵ Brown, *Churches*, p. 190.

⁷⁶ See 'Freedom of the Press and Church Patronage', *Glasgow Free Press*, Feb 11 1826.

⁷⁷ *The Church Patronage Reporter*, Dec 1830.

consequence of its passing, Parliament would become morally sound and better represent Scotland resulting in an amendment of that enduring grievance: the Patronage Act.

With regard to Scotland, and particularly the Church of Scotland, there are some who think that the passing of the bill will be productive of beneficial effects, inasmuch as it will not only introduce into Parliament, from this end of the island, some men who will be ready, both to avow an attachment to our church in the high council of the nation, and defend it there; but that it will bring about a practical amendment in the law of Church Patronage, so long complained of by many. Patrons, for the sake of their political influence, will find it necessary to consult more than they have hitherto done the wishes of the people, and particularly of those by whom they expect to be politically supported.⁷⁸

A petition from the Presbytery of Dunblane presented in April 1831, asking the legislature to grant Kirk ministers the power of voting, suggests that the Church of Scotland was keen to ensure its interest was represented in the new reformed Parliament.⁷⁹ This move was opposed by Andrew Johnstone MP, who argued in favour of disestablishment.⁸⁰ Petitions against patronage continued to flow into the General Assembly in the early months of 1832 when the Assembly began to debate the propriety of passing the veto law. The *Scottish Guardian*, which represented moderate reform in church and state, approved of the veto, as it did Reform, because it prevented universal suffrage while it allowed the respectable portion of society a say in the government of its affairs.⁸¹

The *Scottish Guardian* was a weekly newspaper established in January 1832, edited by the Rev. George Lewis, with the Rev. Robert Buchanan, a future leading figure in the Disruption, as chief writer. It was intended to be a contribution to the political press rather than a denominational periodical published to represent the views of a particular church, though it did in fact represent the views of the Evangelicals in the Kirk. It was religious in tone and its aim was to comment on the religious aspect of political culture. The paper's commentary, which 'sought to harness current enthusiasms' provided a significant contribution to the debate on parliamentary reform.⁸² The *Guardian* pointed out the ancient religious origins of political liberty and justified reform with reference to the spiritual needs of the country. The aim of the paper was not to 'promote the cause of any political party in the State' but to 'help pour through press sound, religious and moral principles and

⁷⁸ *PR*, July 1831.

⁷⁹ Hansard HC Debs., 3rd Series, Vol III, 14 April 1831, col., 1348.

⁸⁰ Pentland, *Radicalism*, p. 122.

⁸¹ 'Church Patronage', *SG*, May 22 1832.

⁸² Cowan, *Newspaper*, p. 40.

[to intermingle] our common Christianity with public and national interests and discussions': in short, to 'bring religion into the public sphere'.⁸³

Those at the *Guardian* office declared themselves to be the 'firm friends of Reform' believing that a reform of Parliament would result in a reformed Church able confidently to defend the establishment cause: 'as in former days, purity in the Church prepared the way for purity in the State; so we believe Political, is now the harbinger of Ecclesiastical Reform, and that our national establishments, purified from every abuse, will be left only the more powerful to save the cause of Christianity at home and abroad.' In answer to anti-reformers who declared that franchise extension would not increase national happiness, the *Guardian* declared that its consequent effect on the religion and morals of the country – the diffusion of scriptural education and an increased number of parish churches – would improve quality of life.⁸⁴ In the same issue the *Guardian* indicated that it supported the Reform Bill as an advocate of moderate reform only. The paper claimed to represent middle class ten pound voters; men who were the most conscientious and moral inhabitants of the country and those who composed the 'bulk of our Christian congregations'. If this portion of the community had been able to wield its voting rights earlier in the century, the *Guardian* claimed, the 'old and crazy despotisms of Europe, the last crutches of Popery' would not have been so long supported. Neither would slave trade abolition nor the reform of the Churches of England and Ireland have been so long resisted.⁸⁵

Many were concerned in the months before the Bill finally passed, that Parliament was becoming increasingly scornful of its religious obligations and, as a consequence, was ripe for reform. During the cholera epidemic in the winter and spring of 1832 it was proposed that the government appoint a national fast day to acknowledge the nation's sins and pray to God for deliverance. There was also a debate in the House over the wording of the preamble to the Cholera Act for Scotland – 'whereas it has pleased Almighty God to visit these kingdoms' – which attributed the outbreak to Providence. Joseph Hume denounced this language as uncalled-for 'cant, humbug and hypocrisy'. Some members castigated Hume for his blasphemy, and the House voted 55 to 10 in favour of the preamble. The Solicitor-General, Henry Cockburn, who had drafted the act, explained that while the English Cholera Act did not contain such an acknowledgment, he believed the wording would satisfy the Scottish people; for all the correspondence he had received from

⁸³ 'The Great Practical Error of Religious Men', *SG*, Jan 27 1832.

⁸⁴ 'Moral Reform', *SG*, Feb 21 1832. See also, 'Christian Education, the Only National Specific', *SG*, May 1 1832.

⁸⁵ 'Address' and 'Editorial', *SG*, Jan 17 1832.

Scotland regarding cholera had spoken of the epidemic as an ‘infliction of Providence and one which was only to be removed by his aid’.⁸⁶

However, the debate, as well as the rejection of Spencer Perceval’s recommendation that Parliament include in the Reform Bill a few lines intimating its gratitude to God for the measure, seemed to signify to some the increasing secularisation of civil government. Indeed, the cholera sermons and providential rhetoric uttered at this time provide evidence of the theologically-inspired political visions of many contemporaries. Thomas Chalmers was shocked at the reaction to Perceval’s motion and hoped that ‘a spectacle so appalling will not be offered as that of a legislature dissociating God from the management of his own world, and practically disowning him as the Governor amongst the nations and families of the earth.’⁸⁷ Like its cotemporary publications, the *Guardian* voiced its concern over Parliament’s refusal to acknowledge divine providence; evidence of which could be seen in the outbreak of wars, or pestilence. If anyone should acknowledge the presence of God in the universe, the *Guardian* argued, it was the friends of Reform, since it was ultimately Him to whom they would be indebted for the success of the measure: ‘indebted to the Providence of God, for the measure of freedom they already possess, to the same Providence they ought to look for its extension.’ Indeed, thanks were due to God for limiting the effects of cholera in Britain where an extreme outburst might have provided an obstacle to the progress of reform. This was evidence that Britain was a nation favoured by God.⁸⁸ The *Guardian* supported the call for a national fast, expressing concern over the fact Cabinet meetings had lately been held on the Sabbath. A fast was needed in order to distinguish British reform principles from those in irreligious France where the complete abolition of the Sabbath was proposed. In fact, the *Guardian* insisted, the pestilence was a blessing since it would lead to a moral regeneration in Britain and in France where it would render the French people ready to enjoy political rights.⁸⁹

Elsewhere, Macindoe published a pamphlet which declared the cholera epidemic to be evidence of divine intervention and censured the nation for overlooking the influence of God’s hand in the political affairs of the time.⁹⁰ Likewise, John Purves, Kirk minister in

⁸⁶ Hansard HC Debs., 3rd series, Vol VIII, 14 Oct 1832, cols., 438–40.

⁸⁷ Chalmers expressed this opinion in a letter of December 31 1830 to Sir Andrew Agnew; see Thomas McCrie, *Memoirs of Sir Andrew Agnew of Lochnaw Bart.* (London, 1850), p. 108.

⁸⁸ ‘Address’, *SG*, Jan 17 1832. See also *ECI*, Dec 1831; ‘Notices of Periodicals’, *PR*, July 1831.

⁸⁹ ‘Moral Corrected By Physical Disorders’, *SG*, April 20 1832.

⁹⁰ Peter Macindoe, *Considerations on the Moral Causes, Objects, and Preventives of Pestilence* (Berwick, 1832). For contemporary opinion on cholera as evidence of divine judgment, see also Andrew Marshall, *The Fear of God’s Judgments Improved* (Glasgow, 1832); For evidence of millenarianism during the Reform

Jedburgh, warned his congregation, and the people at large through the publication of his fast day sermons, that a wrathful God visited plagues on nations on account of their sinfulness. In Purves' view, the cholera epidemic was punishment for the country's irreligion, the increase of popery, and significantly, for the worldly policies emanating from Westminster. Purves condemned the decision to erase God's name from 'public deeds' and insisted that only when rulers began again to acknowledge divine providence would cholera be eradicated from the land.⁹¹ An article in the *Scottish Guardian* for March 9 declared that two parties existed in Parliament at the present time; not Whig and Tory, but Christian and Infidel. The writer asserted that every Scottish MP should belong to the Christian side and condemned Hume and William Gillon, the two Scots who had objected to the insertion of the clause acknowledging the Deity in the Scottish Cholera Act. According to this writer, Hume and Gillon, owing to their 'act of open defiance to the religious sentiments of Scotland' no longer deserved the support of the country. It mattered not that these MPs were advocates of Reform; their transparent atheism did more harm to the cause than anything else. The article observed that Gillon had entered Parliament under the old parliamentary system and the writer recorded his hope that after Reform, neither Hume nor Gillon would be re-elected.⁹² Certainly, so the writer believed, in Scotland Hume would canvass in vain after his recent behaviour. 'If the Reform Bill be good for anything', the writer argued, 'it is that our Scottish members may reflect the religious sentiments of the people of Scotland'.⁹³

Endorsing most of these views was James Douglas of Cavers' *Prospects of Britain*, a timely and prophetic book, published on the eve of the passing of the Reform Bill. This book was reviewed favourably in some of the evangelical Presbyterian magazines owing to its religious tone and its emphasis on the moral foundations and obligations of civil government. Douglas declared the omission of God's name from public acts and the scorn with which His providence was treated, as 'the darkest feature of all time', particularly since God was 'especially bound to pour contempt and ruin on those princes and ministers who would exclude Him from the government of his own world.' It was clear from Scripture, Douglas argued, and its record of the Jewish republic and sanction of democratic church polity, that God favoured liberty. The extension of liberty was an 'acceleration of

movement see Alexander Keith, *The Signs of the Times* (Edinburgh, 1832); James A. Haldane, *The Signs of the Times Considered* (Edinburgh, 1832).

⁹¹ John Purves, *Our Danger and Duty* (Edinburgh, 1832). For a similar perspective see James Harper, *The Signs of the Times: A Sermon* (Edinburgh, 1831). James Giffen insisted that the rulers in the House of Commons were not 'men of god.' See his sermon, *The Lessons Taught by the Desolation Made in the Earth* (Irvine, 1832), pp. 16–17.

⁹² An advocate of disestablishment, Gillon actually had much support. See below, p. 79.

⁹³ 'Messrs Hume and Gillon', *SG*, Mar 9 1832.

the approach of the reign of God' and would reform the House of Commons, currently composed of atheists who, in Douglas' opinion, came close to the French revolutionary government in their near denial of God's providence. It was necessary that the House of Lords be likewise reformed so that in future it could be composed of 'god-fearing' nobility. Douglas supported the abolition of the Corn Laws and advised against involvement of the nation in continental wars; wars which were 'against liberty' in essence by helping to buttress the tyrannical and papal monarchies of Europe. Douglas further predicted that the Reform Bill would necessarily lead to the downfall of church establishments. He declared voluntaryism to be the best system in theory but admitted that in practice the supply of voluntary ministers would be unable to meet the demands of the country. Douglas concluded that if an establishment had to exist in Scotland, it was essential that it be as popular as possible and advised the speedy abolition of patronage.

A contemporary reader scribbled in the margins of an edition of *Prospects*, commenting on the inconsistency of Douglas' views. In the opinion of this reader, it was inconsistent to advocate voluntaryism while simultaneously pleading for a moral nation and civil government accountable to God.⁹⁴ The *Presbyterian Review* agreed with Douglas' conclusions for the most part, especially the necessity of amending the Patronage Act though it questioned his conclusions regarding voluntaryism.⁹⁵ Reformed Presbyterians also praised Douglas's work. The *Scottish Advocate's* reviewer insisted that Douglas was correct when he had declared civil liberty to be a means to an end and not an end in itself. Indeed, according to this author, parliamentary reform would only be regarded as beneficial if it led to a reformation of religion and morality in the community.⁹⁶

Stimulating reformers in their determination to get the Bill passed, was the pressing issue of Irish education. The details of the government plan for a national board of education in Ireland were unveiled in November 1831 and generated much agitation in the early months of 1832. The government plan involved the composition of an interdenominational board which would supervise all aspects of schooling including scriptural education. The intention was not to erase religious teaching from the curriculum entirely, but to limit spiritual instruction to one day a week when selections from the Bible, chosen by the board, would be studied. The furore caused by this controversy is indicative of the significance of religious and moral issues at this time. Numerous petitions were drafted, including ones from the Presbyteries of Glasgow, Stirling, Paisley, Synod of Fife,

⁹⁴ James Douglas, *The Prospects of Britain* (Edinburgh, 1831). The copy with these comments scrawled in the margin is held by Glasgow University Library Department of Special Collections.

⁹⁵ *PR*, Nov 1831. See also the reviews in the *SG*, Jan 17 1832.

⁹⁶ *SA*, May 1834.

and a 'numerous and respectable meeting of clergy and inhabitants of Aberdeen'. Handbills were circulated and large meetings were likewise held in Glasgow and Edinburgh, where MPs addressed the crowd.⁹⁷

Its critics objected to the plan on several counts. First, they declared it the duty of the civil magistrate, as the nursing father of the Church, to encourage the dissemination of religious truth, and by limiting the time devoted to scriptural study and by prescribing which portions of scripture could be studied, the government would be failing in its duty to God. Sanctioning the teaching of Catholicism in schools and allowing Catholics to oversee the education of Protestant subjects, together with the endowment of Maynooth College and the admission of Catholics into Parliament, suggested to many that the government was keen to hasten the re-conversion of the country to popery. In the eyes of some, it was madness for the government even to attempt to draft a plan for an education system which was not rooted in Protestant foundations. Education, which concentrated primarily on practical, secular subjects divorced from scriptural principles, was, in their eyes, fundamentally deficient.

Ulster Presbyterians, under the leadership of Henry Cooke, passed resolutions against the motion in January, and in May the Scottish General Assembly petitioned Parliament against aspects of the government's plan.⁹⁸ The Covenanters in Ireland passed resolutions insisting that the memory of their forefathers would encourage Covenanters to 'raise aloud the voice of their testimony, and...cry mightily to God against the establishment and continuance of this abomination'.⁹⁹ The pages of the *Scottish Guardian* were peppered with news and complaints about the progression of the government's policy. Orthodox Presbyterians with old light views expressed a sense of foreboding regarding the tendency of government to draft its policies according to political expediency without due regard to the dictates of morality. Thomas McCrie, who strongly objected to the proposals, attended the Edinburgh meeting where he delivered a stirring speech later printed in the *Guardian*.¹⁰⁰ In this speech McCrie expressed his disappointment at what he regarded as the desertion of the Whigs from their original principles.¹⁰¹ The introduction of this policy meant that for many Presbyterians, the widening of the franchise and the

⁹⁷ 'Irish Education', *SG*, May 18 1832.

⁹⁸ Brown, *Churches*, p. 157; see also Henry Cockburn, *Journal of Henry Cockburn* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1874), I, p. 45.

⁹⁹ 'New System of Education', *The Covenanter*, April 1832.

¹⁰⁰ 'Irish Education', *SG*, May 18 1832. See also, 'Education in Ireland', *PR*, July 1832.

¹⁰¹ For the full transcript of McCrie's speech, see 'Speech at the Meeting on Education in Ireland, - May 11, 1832', in McCrie, *Life*, appendix no. viii, pp. 473-9.

election to Parliament of moral men, the portion of the population the *Guardian* claimed it represented, was all the more crucial.

The voluntaries took a different view of Irish education plans and of parliamentary reform in general. They viewed the interdenominational education policy as an assault on the principle of establishment believing religious instruction should be left to parents and to churches.¹⁰² Indeed, the United Seceders were denounced by the Church of Scotland for Joseph Hume's endorsement of the plan on their behalf. Their alliance with Hume and support of the scheme was apparently indicative of voluntary infidelity and radicalism.¹⁰³ The voluntaries, moreover, did not necessarily agree that the cholera epidemic had been caused by the nation's sin and that civil government had a duty to enshrine morality.¹⁰⁴ The state was not the church in their eyes, and they supported the Reform Bill owing to the impetus franchise extension would give to the voluntary movement, as well as on the basis of Presbyterian theory of democratic government. Voluntaries, who objected to the existence of bishops in the House of Lords, naturally denounced that chamber for its obstruction of the Bill. The battle to achieve Reform was regarded by the voluntaries as a continuation of the fight to secure civil liberty they believed had been started by their Presbyterian predecessors.¹⁰⁵

The *Edinburgh Theological Magazine* also reviewed Douglas of Cavers' *Prospects of Britain*. Its reviewer naturally picked up on Douglas' commendation of voluntaryism but unsurprisingly disagreed with him on the inadequacy of voluntary ministerial supply. However, the *Magazine* declared its support of Douglas' views on most things. Here, the *Magazine* pointed out, a Christian writer insisted on the political aspect of Christian duty. Indeed, this reviewer claimed, it would be absurd if a Christian did not regard the present political developments with enthusiasm since, he said, every one ought to be the 'ardent advocate of civil liberty, a warm supporter of every liberal measure, and a strenuous defender of those rights which the diffusion of Christianity tends to secure, and the security of which aids the diffusion of Christianity'. The reviewer used this opportunity to declare his own opinion on the status of the Reform Bill as it made its way through Parliament. The *ETM* review was written when the Bill had been stalled by the House of Lords and had caused a furore in the country, triggering demands for the abolition of the Upper House and universal suffrage. Nevertheless, the reviewer insisted he was confident that the

¹⁰² *USM*, Feb 1833. The Rev. William Anderson spoke at the Edinburgh meeting in favour of the scheme; see Gilfillan, *William Anderson*, p. 95.

¹⁰³ Andrew Gray, *Irish Education. Reply to the Rev. Henry Angus* (Aberdeen, 1832).

¹⁰⁴ See the reviews of the cholera sermons in *ETM*, Aug 1832. This was not always the case. Andrew Marshall and Hugh Heugh both saw cholera as the infliction of providence.

¹⁰⁵ 'On the Duties of Subjects', *USM*, March 1833.

country would benefit at last: ‘we see nothing in the events of the last few weeks to change very much the prospects of Britain, unless for the better’. Another positive outcome of the Lords’ defiance was the impetus it provided to the voluntary cause. According to the *Magazine*, the action of the Lords provided better evidence of the impracticality of the church-state connection than any that Andrew Marshall’s writings could supply.¹⁰⁶

The *Edinburgh Christian Instructor* was critical of the extremism of the voluntaries who were denounced as political agitators. The Kirk magazine expressed concern at the ‘tinge of republicanism’ in Douglas of Cavers’ political creed and what seemed to be independentism in his ecclesiastical views.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, while some in the Kirk championed Reform, others were quick to criticise voluntary clergymen for their vocal political activism in support of the Bill. One Kirkman accused a voluntary minister of haranguing communicants during the Lord’s Supper on the Reform Bill, the Corn Laws and free trade. Elsewhere in Fife, a gentleman listening to the sermon of a voluntary minister apparently remarked ‘that he might have been as well employed at home reading the *Scotsman* newspaper as in the meeting-house.’ The local political union in this region allegedly invited this minister to deliver his sermon again at their next meeting.¹⁰⁸ Apparently, the Rev. Henry Renton of Kelso, at the rejection of the Reform Bill by the Lords, delivered a ‘violent tirade’ which breathed almost revolution, abused the bishops and hinted that the King was of ‘no utility’.¹⁰⁹ Renton was a decided liberal who edited the *Edinburgh Star* and who campaigned in favour of Catholic emancipation, slavery abolition and parliamentary reform. In his youth he had been member of the Fox Club in Edinburgh and in his later years he stimulated reformist activity in Kelso.¹¹⁰ The Rev. Hugh Heugh apparently involved himself in political agitation in order to sever the link between religion and politics; indeed, according to his son-in-law and biographer, ‘it was as being favourable to the accomplishment of this result that he chiefly valued the measure of Parliamentary Reform.’¹¹¹ Andrew Marshall, meanwhile, insisted that the establishment principle was ‘hostile to good government’ and could not be ‘reconciled with liberty on the one hand, nor with pure and scriptural loyalty on the other.’ In 1831 he pleaded for a reformed parliament which would be receptive to voluntary petitions.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ See the review in *ETM*, Dec 1831.

¹⁰⁷ *ECI*, Dec 1831; ‘Ecclesiastical Establishments, and hostility to them’, *ECI*, May 1832.

¹⁰⁸ *An Exposure of the Sentiments and Projects of the Voluntary Church Associations; in a letter to the Reverend Gentleman who constitute them* (Edinburgh, 1833), p. 29.

¹⁰⁹ *A Second Exposure of the Sentiments and Projects of the Voluntary Church Association* (Edinburgh, 1833), p. 6.

¹¹⁰ Renton, *Memorials*, pp. 65, 67, 73–4.

¹¹¹ Hamilton M. Macgill, *The Life of Hugh Heugh D.D.* (2nd ed., Edinburgh, 1852), p. 239.

¹¹² Andrew Marshall, *Ecclesiastical Establishments Farther Considered* (Glasgow, 1831), pp. 301, 324.

The Rev. William Anderson, immensely popular minister of the Relief church in John Street, Glasgow, delivered a sermon on the Reform Bill from his pulpit in September 1831. Anderson's sermon, the subject of which was *Christian Loyalty to Earthly Princes*, was delivered in celebration of the coronation of William IV. Denouncing the doctrine of passive obedience and hereditary right, Anderson made a case which reconciled loyalty to the crown with ideas of conditional allegiance and popular sovereignty. According to Anderson, civil government was an ordinance of God, but since sovereignty was invested by God in the people, who were charged with the task of drafting the constitution, only those governments nominated or approved by the populace could be described as legitimate and divinely sanctioned. It was evident that in the religious sphere the Church's authority was the ordinance of God conferred through the people who interpreted Scripture and advanced pastors to office: 'shall we allow Kings', Anderson asked, 'a wider toleration than the Ministers of Christ?' Thus, the Reform Bill was a good measure and the minister declared that he united 'with the millions of my countrymen in remonstrating against the curtailment which we suffer of the constitutional rights of British subjects, not to speak of our equitable rights as Men, free born of the Creator.' Anderson proclaimed that the 'borough-mongering faction, and all who deny Elective Franchise to any honest man who pays his debts and lives soberly' were challenging the principles of the constitution 'so as to expose themselves to the doom which is threatened by the apostle.' In spite of its virtues, if the Bill did not pass, Anderson warned, revolution was not justifiable, since peaceful protest, in the form of petitioning, the press and the force of public opinion, was still an option.¹¹³

The words of the Rev. John Ballantyne carried a more threatening tone. He advised the government not to put the loyalty of voluntaries to the test, nor to delay Reform which would give them their equal rights. The maxim 'no bishop, no king' had led to revolution and regicide before; now, Ballantyne warned, 'no church establishment, no king', might have similar consequences; after all, he observed, the armed forces were mostly composed of voluntaries.¹¹⁴ In May 1831, Ballantyne's voluntary pamphlet was reviewed in the *ETM*. This gave the reviewer an opportunity to express his pro-Reform views. He hoped that the spirit of reform would spread once parliamentary reform had been accomplished, resulting in the eradication of corruption in the Church. According to the reviewer, a greater amount of abuses had crept into the Church than into the unreformed parliamentary system and he

¹¹³ William Anderson, *Christian Loyalty to Earthly Princes. A Discourse occasioned by the Coronation of His Majesty, William IV* (Glasgow, 1832).

¹¹⁴ Ballantyne, *Comparison*, pp. 91–4.

declared that there existed ‘no reason why the pruning knife should be appointed to the latter, while the former is left untouched.’¹¹⁵ Elsewhere in Ulster, the Rev. John Paul, who backed Catholic emancipation, the Reform Acts, the abolition of tithes and an end to slavery, endorsed the re-publication in 1831 James McKinney’s *View of the Rights of God and Man*, the work of a Covenanter and United Irishman. In the opinion of Peter Brooke, Paul’s writings were written in a spirit of ‘revolutionary optimism’ reminiscent of the United Irishmen.¹¹⁶

The United Secession urged Scottish dissenters to make more of an effort to cooperate with each other and with dissenters in England. At a time when the fabric of society in Europe was loosening, when kings were losing their thrones and ancient constitutions changing, it was imperative dissenters recognised their common aims and harnessed their energy to ensure the disestablishment of the national Churches across the British Isles. The *Edinburgh Theological Magazine* recommended the formation of a Society of Dissenters in Scotland, modelled on the existing English society and prepared to work with that body to achieve religious liberty. The passing of the Reform Bill would be a momentous occasion as it would give dissenters power to further their cause:

By having the elective franchise conferred upon [dissenters], in common with the rest of their countrymen, they will acquire a political influence, which they have not hitherto possessed...The first use which they ought to make of this influence, should be, to endeavour to get returned to Parliament a certain number of individuals who shall represent, in the Supreme Council of the nation, their opinions, their feelings, and their interests...We are not aware of *a single instance*, in which a member of Parliament has been chosen from among the Scotch dissenters. They have hitherto, *as dissenters*, been wholly unrepresented. This ought not to be.

The *ETM* pointed out that the Bill proposed to allot two members each to Glasgow and Edinburgh, and advised the formation of a united dissenting movement across the central lowlands whose aim it would be to return at least one MP from either of the two cities. It was encouraging, this writer observed, that the dissenting interest was strong in many other districts of Scotland besides the two urban centres, as well as in several of the larger English towns. An MP representing this interest would be duty-bound to support the voluntary cause in Parliament.¹¹⁷ Meanwhile, *The Scotsman*, a paper committed to reform and hostile to church establishments, opposed the proposed exclusion of clergymen from

¹¹⁵ *ETM*, May 1831.

¹¹⁶ P. Brooke, *Ulster Presbyterianism: the Historical Perspective 1610-1970* (Dublin, 1987), pp. 160–1; for Paul’s political views see, *The Signs of the Times* (2nd ed., Belfast, 1835).

¹¹⁷ ‘What Ought Scottish and English Dissenters To Do at the Present Crisis?’, *ETM*, Feb 1832.

the franchise. Though the established ministers had ‘for the past fifty years been partners in the unholy league of the borough-mongers’, this action would likewise exclude dissenters and it was hoped that once reform had been achieved the established church would come to ‘act a part more worthy of its founders’.¹¹⁸

On the 24th August 1832, the morning of a jubilee held by the parishes of Kirkintilloch, Campsie, Kilsyth and Cumbernauld, Andrew Marshall addressed his congregation. This address was delivered and published at the request of 200-300 residents of this region desirous to hear Marshall, the great voluntary champion, speak on this occasion. Marshall expressed his gratitude that the days of no representation, fruitless petitioning, gagging acts and spies were over and that the reformers had managed to defeat the Bill’s formidable enemies: the aristocracy and the established Church, which in opposition to Presbyterian ecclesiology, constituted a branch of the legislature whose interest was opposed to Reform. Marshall also hoped that the Bill would bring about further change. In particular he hoped for alleviation of the distress felt by the labouring portion of society and the abolition of monopolies, which would directly influence the fate of the workforce. Above all however, Marshall hoped that Reform would lead to disestablishment and the implementation of the voluntary principle. According to Marshall, the chief reason for his addressing the public at this time, both verbally and in print, was to advocate the voluntary cause. Indeed, Marshall made it quite clear that while he cared for the well-being of the community, his support for the Reform Bill was inspired by, more than by any other cause or conviction, his commitment to voluntarism: ‘the reform of parliament, the improvement of our other public institutions, the amelioration of our whole national policy, would awaken comparatively little of his zeal,’ he said, ‘were it not for his belief that the change must contribute, through the blessing of Heaven, to extend the limits and to unfold the glory of that kingdom which is not of this world.’¹¹⁹

The voluntarist argument found favour with Peter Mackenzie, editor of the *Loyal Reformers’ Gazette*, which became the *Reformers’ Gazette*, and secretary of the Glasgow Political Union. Mackenzie was influenced by the preaching of voluntary clergymen and in the pages of his *Gazette*, the first issue of which appeared in May 1831 and which reached a circulation of 20,000,¹²⁰ he attacked the established Churches and asserted that only parliamentary reform and voluntarism could bring about a more equitable society.¹²¹ The

¹¹⁸ Cowan, *Newspaper*, p. 78.

¹¹⁹ Andrew Marshall, *Meditations for the Reform Jubilee* (Glasgow, 1832), pp. 21–2.

¹²⁰ Pentland, ‘Commemoration’, p. 150.

¹²¹ Mackenzie criticised the voluntary clergymen, including William Anderson and John French, whose ministrations he said he had attended with ‘respect and veneration’, after they signed a petition against the

state church was, he said, ‘worse in principle, if there is any principle about it, than all the cases of all the rotten boroughs in England put together. Down it must come. Every day, indeed is hastening its downfall, and we glory in driving a nail into its coffin.’¹²² State religions were condemned as unscriptural ‘heathenish institutions’ while their members were dubbed more the ‘followers of Mahomet, who courted wealth and power, than of the meek and lowly saviour.’ Priestcraft was described as one of the ‘greatest enemies to free and liberal institutions’ and after the Lords blocked the Reform Bill, Mackenzie pledged himself to assist in ‘bringing down that Church to its proper level.’ He declared it his hope that the bishops would be excluded from the reformed Parliament, as the Covenanters had striven to do, and confined to ‘the proper place prescribed for them by the Bible.’¹²³ One reader, who complained that his parish minister preached sermons subtly attacking reform, thanked Mackenzie for his warnings about the despotic nature of establishments.¹²⁴ The paper also favourably reviewed William Anderson’s sermon, *Christian Loyalty to Earthly Princes*. Anderson was described as a ‘Christian patriot’ who attacked the principles of divine right and non-resistance.¹²⁵

Similar opinions were voiced in the *Herald to the Trades Advocate*, a pro-Reform paper. Described as a ‘curious mixture of the eighteenth-century critique of old corruption and Benthamite utilitarianism’,¹²⁶ the *Herald* also expressed Presbyterian ideas of popular resistance. The paper condemned clergymen for advocating the principles of passive obedience when they ought to be instructing their parishioners in politics. The *Advocate* argued that the people had a divine right to rule and to hold the magistrate accountable for his actions. Now that the church-state connection was loosening, the paper proclaimed, tyranny would fall.¹²⁷

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Maynooth grant. In Mackenzie’s opinion it was hypocritical of voluntaries to sign a petition which included the expression ‘it is the duty of all Governments to support church establishments’. French explained that he had not realised the petition’s wording before putting his name to it. ‘Glasgow Clerical Petition’, *RG*, July 30 1831; ‘Glasgow Clerical Petition Once More!’, *RG*, Aug 6 1831; ‘Maynooth Petition – Bigotry in Glasgow!’, *RG*, Aug 20 1831.

¹²² ‘A Voice from the Kirk of Kilbarchan’, *RG*, May 5 1832.

¹²³ *RG*, Oct 15 1831; *RG*, June 29 1833

¹²⁴ ‘D.D. St George’s’, *RG*, April 14 1832.

¹²⁵ ‘Christian Loyalty to Earthly Princes’, *RG*, Jan 7 1832.

¹²⁶ Pentland, *Radicalism*, p. 150.

¹²⁷ ‘To editor’, *HTA*, Oct 6 1830; ‘To editor’, *HTA*, Nov 20 1830; ‘Passive Obedience; or Non-Resistance’, *HTA*, Dec 4 1830.

The Reform Acts passed in July and August and jubilees held over the country celebrated the legislation as a triumph.¹²⁸ However, with a sense of relief came a new sense of responsibility. Lists of new electors were pinned to parish church doors and the newly enfranchised were pressured by their neighbours to register for the vote. It was discovered that one eligible voter in Paisley, an elderly cowfeeder, had neglected to register and a crowd marched to his home, showered him with stones and called him a traitor.¹²⁹ The Glasgow Political Union exerted pressure on members to exercise their voting right on behalf of the movement for further reform. Pamphlets were circulated around the city instructing new voters on how to exercise their right responsibly, some of which urged electors not to vote rashly for radical members.¹³⁰ Others were interested in returning a legislature which would address moral issues and either strengthen or dismantle church establishments.

The voluntaries declared the passing of the Reform Bill to be a ‘very great point gained’ but prophesied that its success would depend on its operation. The first reformed parliament had important issues to address: colonial slavery, the distress of Ireland and the state of the national Churches, and how these issues were tackled would depend on the character of the MPs returned by the enfranchised. The *ETM* warned that electors ‘should be at due concern and pains to discharge that duty aright, as a sacred trust which they owe to their country and to God’.¹³¹ After the passing of the Bill, the Eastern Presbytery of the Reformed Presbyterians in Ireland, who had by this point developed something of voluntaryist hue, described the measure as one of ‘great importance’ and franchise-extension and the eradication of rotten boroughs as ‘great improvements’. Celebrating the abolition of the Test Act and compulsory church cess, the voluntary Covenanters in Ireland looked forward to a day when tithes would be eliminated and the absurd church-state connection severed.¹³²

However, the Covenanters in general were rather ambivalent about Reform. They had supported the agitation and the Reform Act when it passed was hailed as a blessing to the nation. Nevertheless, the franchise, which had been bestowed on several members of the RPC for the first time, was seen as something of an ambivalent gain. Approving of Reform on principle, the Church disapproved of exercising voting rights in practice, forbidding its newly enfranchised members to elect members of Parliament. The Synod

¹²⁸ See Cockburn, *Journal*, I, pp. 33–4; ‘Reform Rejoicings’, *SG*, Aug 21 1832; ‘Hawick Reform Jubilee’, *SG*, Aug 10 1832.

¹²⁹ ‘Paisley’, *SG*, Aug 31 1832.

¹³⁰ See e.g., *Letter to the Electors of Glasgow under the Reform Bill. By an Elector* (Glasgow, 1832).

¹³¹ ‘Britain’s Present Exigencies, Civil and Religious’, *ETM*, Nov 1832.

¹³² *Signs of the Times*.

reported in 1833 that ‘the late Reform Act, while it confers an important political right on a large body of the people, has not removed the principal evils of the constitution, and...has not materially affected the grounds on which this church has exhibited a testimony against them’.¹³³ The state was still illegitimate, and since the representative effectively swore the required oath of allegiance on the elector’s behalf, the Covenanters resolved to abstain from voting to avoid being implicated in the nation’s sin. The Church continued to object to the establishment of Anglicanism in England and Ireland, and the proclaimed supremacy of the monarch.¹³⁴ Thomas Houston of the orthodox Irish Covenanters considered it inexplicable that sincere Christians would ‘take part in electing’ immoral men ‘to bear rule over them’. Houston praised the Covenanted legislation of 1649, which had debarred impious men from political rule, and declared that while it was their duty to ‘support and zealously maintain all that is calculated to promote rational and scriptural liberty and the equal rights of men’, it was far more important to be zealous for the rights of God.¹³⁵ Indeed, the Covenanters insisted that the modern Whigs paled in comparison to the reformers of the seventeenth century. Though the Whigs had achieved much by extending the franchise, by reforming the Churches, by diminishing taxation and by abolishing monopolies, they had failed to abolish patronage, institute a system of scriptural education, or base policy on scripture precepts. Indeed, it was known that professed Deists were in possession of parliamentary seats and that Cabinet dinners were held on the Sabbath. The seventeenth-century reformers on the other hand, who had pledged the ‘extirpation of popery and prelacy’, deserved to be honoured for their political piety.¹³⁶ Before the elections in Glasgow to return MPs to the first reformed Parliament, a letter appeared in the *Scottish Guardian* newspaper by a ‘conscientious reformer’ which represented these views. ‘Will not I’, this correspondent asked, ‘and others, who send a man to represent us in parliament, be held as approving of and binding ourselves to support the present Erastian constitution in all its essential parts?’ This was a question which ‘came home to the conscience of not a few here’ and, despite the pressure exerted by Political Unions united to achieve the election of reforming MPs, this correspondent declared he would abstain on polling day.¹³⁷

¹³³ ‘Report of Synod’, SA, May 1834.

¹³⁴ ‘On Elective Franchise’, SP, Jan 1843.

¹³⁵ Thomas Houston, *The Christian Magistrate* (Belfast, 1832), pp. 27–9; ‘The Duty of Public Social Covenanting’, *The Covenanter*, July 1832.

¹³⁶ ‘The Reformers of the 16th and 17th centuries superior, in several respects, to the Reformers of the 19th’, SA, Aug 1834.

¹³⁷ ‘A Few Queries By a Conscientious Reformer’, SG, Sep 25 1832.

The Covenanters were preoccupied with what they perceived as the deviation of government and the nation at large from religious concerns. Thus, while they were determined to stand aloof themselves, they recognised that the times were propitious and could usher in a new age of moral reform. At one point they considered publishing and distributing at election times a pamphlet which outlined the dangers of supporting a sinful government.¹³⁸ Instead, however, the Covenanters issued instructions to new voters urging them to remember the ultimate aim of political reform: the achievement of a godly commonwealth. They urged people to vote in Christian legislators of a high moral calibre. As has been seen, the Covenanters made it clear that legislators must possess scriptural qualifications in order to be fit for government. It was, therefore, ‘the duty of all electors in a Christian country to put into office men of religious character’.¹³⁹ They saw the additional endowment awarded to Maynooth College in 1845 as the result of the failure of the populace to elect suitably pious candidates.¹⁴⁰

Kirk evangelicals meanwhile were also concerned with securing national moral regeneration. This involved the end of troubles in Ireland, and the reform of the national Churches in order to safeguard their existence. The *Scottish Guardian* hoped that religion and liberty would continue to advance as partners and that the reformed Parliament would be of religious composition, favouring the sanctification of the Sabbath. The *Guardian* agreed with the Reformed Presbyterians that it was a Christian’s duty ‘to return those who will uphold Protestant Institutions’ and a debate commenced in its pages regarding the eligibility of potential candidates for Glasgow. The paper disagreed with a correspondent, in a contemporary paper, who had insisted that Catholic emancipation and the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts had rendered the religious predilection of members of Parliament inconsequential. The *Guardian* insisted that it was becoming every day more crucial that Protestant MPs were returned to Parliament in order to direct government education policy in a proper direction.¹⁴¹ The editor warned that the nation must learn to favour what was right above what was expedient.¹⁴²

The five Glasgow candidates began their election campaign, which involved touring the region, holding public meetings, and the publication of their political views in the press. Every candidate expressed a desire to see the Churches of England and Scotland

¹³⁸ *SP*, Sep 1843.

¹³⁹ ‘Religion, An Important Qualification of Legislators’, *SA*, Jan 1834; ‘On the Choice of Legislators’, *SA*, Feb 1834; ‘The Injurious Tendency of Political Agitation’, *SP*, May 1835.

¹⁴⁰ ‘The Maynooth Endowment’, *SP*, May 1845.

¹⁴¹ ‘What Has Religion to do with Our Representatives?’, *SG*, July 20 1832; ‘Editorial’, *SG*, July 24 1832.

¹⁴² See ‘Editorial’, *SG*, June 29 1832; ‘Our City Members of Parliament’, *SG*, July 3 1832; ‘To Household III’, *SG*, July 6 1832; ‘Editorial’, *SG*, July 13 1832.

reformed. As well as supporting burgh reform, the repeal of the Corn Laws and free trade, the abolition of slavery and the improvement of the judicial system, James Ewing declared himself to be a ‘friend to the commutation of tithes and the removal of abuses of Church Establishments’. James Oswald likewise declared himself to support the reform of the Church; in Dumbarton, J.C. Colquhoun said that he would demand the reform of the Patronage Act.¹⁴³ Likewise in Stirling and Lanarkshire the church question dominated pre-election debates and in Douglas there was a riot when the Kirk minister refused to ring the church bells to mark William Gillon’s successful election. Gillon, who was committed to disestablishment, was returned for the Lanark burghs.¹⁴⁴

Several of the election candidates declared themselves to support burgh reform, an issue which was bound up with the patronage cause. The need for reform of the closed system of town council self-election had been recognised in the late 1700s. Now the Whigs proposed to bestow the local government franchise on those awarded the right to vote in parliamentary elections. Burgh reform, doubtless regarded as a natural follow-up measure to the Reform Act, caused little heated debate – a meeting in the Black Bull in Glasgow on burgh reform was ‘thinly attended’¹⁴⁵ – but parliamentary candidates in the 1832 general election still included it in their manifestos.¹⁴⁶ For some the cause of burgh reform was inextricably linked to the reform of lay patronage, since by the 1712 Patronage Act, town councils were awarded the right to present incumbents to parish churches within the burgh. An open system of local government election would enable burgh citizens a greater say in the nomination of their clergymen by allowing them to vote town councillors of their choice. Henceforth, town councillors would be answerable to citizens for their actions, including the presentations made to church livings.

The *Scottish Guardian* declared the burgh reform bill to be ‘second only in importance to the Reform Bill itself’. It was hailed ‘with not less satisfaction’ than parliamentary reform, ‘from the salutary influence it will undoubtedly have on the question of Church Reform.’ Lord Moncrieff proclaimed burgh reform to be a measure ‘fatal to Patronage in our cities.’ He continued, ‘these reforms in the civil polity of our country

¹⁴³ [John Crawford], ‘To the Electors of Glasgow’, *SG*, July 13 1832; [J.A. Ewing], ‘To the Prospective Electors of Glasgow’, *SG*, July 13 1832; [J. Oswald], ‘To the Electors of Glasgow’, *SG*, July 13 1832; ‘To editor’, *SG*, July 20 1832; [J.C. Colquhoun], ‘To the Electors of the County of Dumbarton’, *SG*, July 24 1832. See also [Robert Carrick Buchanan], ‘To the Working and Independent Electors of the County of Lanark’, *SG*, Nov 13 1832. On the Glasgow election see also, J.F. McCaffrey, ‘Political Issues and Developments’, in W.H. Fraser & I. Maver (eds.), *Glasgow Volume II: 1830 to 1912* (Manchester, 1996).

¹⁴⁴ Pentland, *Radicalism*, p. 160; ‘Representation of the Burgh [Stirling Advertiser]’, *SG*, Sep 25 1832; Lanarkshire Election’, *SG*, Dec 7 1832.

¹⁴⁵ ‘Burgh Reform’, *SG*, Mar 29 1833.

¹⁴⁶ See ‘Mr Bontine’, *SG*, Oct 26 1832; [J.A. Ewing], ‘To the Independent Electors of Glasgow’, *SG*, Dec 11 1832; ‘Editorial’, *SG*, Dec 4 1832.

foretell, in no dubious manner, the coming agitation should patronage be allowed to linger in the Church'.¹⁴⁷ As in the general elections, after the passing of the Burgh Reform Act in 1833, newly-enfranchised local government electors were instructed to exercise their right responsibly. The RP Church abstained from voting both locally and nationally but the Kirk urged citizens to vote for moral candidates prepared to uphold the cause of a righteous nation.

The Rev. James Lewis, minister of New Kirk in Leith, published in the aftermath of burgh reform, a pamphlet which underlined the link between religion and politics. Lewis insisted that a voter could not, nor should he attempt to, unchristianise himself on polling day. Indeed it was crucial that civil magistrates, as nursing fathers of the church trusted with the suppression of irreligion, should be men who 'fear God...hating covetousness'. This extract from Exodus 18:21 was a favourite quote at this time, thought to be a divine command highly relevant now in a post-Reform era.¹⁴⁸ Elsewhere, the editor of the *Scottish Guardian* warned readers that the future moral and social character of the cities was at stake and to elect at the approaching burgh election 'God-fearing men concerned with civil and sacred liberties'. In successive editorials they counselled voters supplicating them not to forget their Christian obligations at polling day: 'let Christian electors eschew these principles which go to defraud Christ of his Kingship over this world and on the occasion of the first exercise of their Burgh privileges, show that they prefer those who prefer their Master, and will seek to lay their power at the feet of Christ.' It was expected that new corporations would petition Parliament asking to be stripped of their patronage rights.¹⁴⁹

Meanwhile, on the other side, voluntaries urged voters to nominate those who favoured disestablishment. In Ireland, the voluntary Covenanters hoped reform of the Irish corporations would follow the Scottish and English measures, and would help bring down the Church of England monopoly there. Previously, closed councils had returned members of Parliament hostile to change.¹⁵⁰ The *Paisley Advertiser* warned that voluntaries were striving to get as many as possible of their followers elected to the town councils. Once elected, the *Advertiser* warned, the voluntary councillors would begin their attack on the Church, first by reducing ministerial stipends.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ 'Lord Moncrieff's Views on Church Patronage', *SG*, April 2 1833.

¹⁴⁸ James Lewis, *The Christian Duty of the Electors of Magistrates, and of the Elected* (Edinburgh, 1833).

¹⁴⁹ 'Approaching Burgh Election [Paisley Advertiser]', *SG*, Sep 3 1833; 'Editorial', *SG*, Oct 4 1833; 'Editorial', *SG*, Oct 15 1833; 'Editorial', *SG*, Nov 1 1833; 'Editorial', *SG*, Nov 5 1833; 'Vacancy in the Trinity College Church, Edinburgh', *SG*, Nov 5 1833; 'Editorial', *SG*, Nov 8 1833.

¹⁵⁰ *Signs of the Times*, p. 33.

¹⁵¹ 'Approaching Burgh Election [Paisley Advertiser]', *SG*, Sep 3 1833.

It is clear from these episodes that parliamentary and burgh reform, while justified on account of Presbyterian ideas of popular sovereignty, and with reference to the example set by Covenanted martyrs, was, for its own sake, considered of minor importance to many. The most significant issue was the survival of the established Church. For some the established Church was an indispensable attachment to the state; a state which rested on scriptural foundations and nursed the moral health of the nation. For others political reform was regarded as the next step on the road to disestablishment and the institution of voluntaryism in Britain. In the aftermath of the parliamentary and burgh reform acts, the voluntary controversy reached its peak in Scotland.

(iii) Redefining Radicalism: the Voluntary Controversy of the 1830s

By the 1830s, a deep gulf existed in Scottish society over matters of ecclesiology. Theories of the church's relation to the state underpinned attitudes to politics and to political reform in particular. Catholic emancipation created a divide between those who adhered to traditional views of the divine origin and purpose of civil society, and those who believed in the complete separation of the spiritual from the temporal. These beliefs coloured attitudes towards the cholera outbreak and Parliament's failure to acknowledge divine providence in its affairs; the issue of scriptural education in Ireland; and the Reform Bill. Whigs and Tories, and members of the working, middle and upper classes, often found themselves on the same side of the old and new light battle lines; since the need to acknowledge the religious foundation of British society – though there were various interpretations of what this foundation was or should be – superseded all other issues in order of importance.

As Stewart J. Brown has argued, the voluntary contest between Kirkmen and dissenters, which raged from 1829 to 1843 reaching its height in 1834-5, was a hugely significant event and an important cause of the great secession from the established Church in 1843. In the aftermath of Reform, the pressure exerted by voluntary dissenters encouraged the Church to become more popular in order to participate in an increasingly competitive market. The Kirk highlighted its concern for the poor and its ability to provide nationwide spiritual instruction and education free of charge through government assistance. The Church had an obligation to superintend the moral health of the nation and its alliance with the state allowed it to perform its duties. The voluntary onslaught challenged this idea of a godly commonwealth, and gained the support of the Whig

government, who for pragmatic reasons countenanced voluntary claims. The relationship between the Kirk and the government was irreparably damaged as a consequence.¹⁵²

It is argued here that the voluntary controversy had an even greater significance than that suggested by Brown. The contest has been relatively ignored by historians of political radicalism and popular politics in this period. Those who have noticed the influence of these religious issues on Scottish politics have still tended to see religion and politics as occupying two distinct spheres and have failed to emphasise the extent to which political thought had a religious basis.¹⁵³ But as has been seen, divisions over the relationship between church and state had existed in Scotland for some time having an important influence on the debate over parliamentary reform. Here it is argued that to some extent religious and political radicalism cannot be divided; that Presbyterian ideology justified both political and religious reform. As one nineteenth-century commentator remarked of Edinburgh in the 1830s: it 'was the centre of turmoil, in which politics and religion were blended, as they must needs be so long as the state is the sponsor for the Church.'¹⁵⁴ The Scottish voluntary controversy of the 1830s, a movement for the separation of church and state, is, this thesis contends, an example of early nineteenth-century radicalism. As Ian Machin has observed, 'the demand for democracy and the demand for disestablishment' had been linked during the English civil war and the American and French Revolutions.¹⁵⁵ Likewise in Scotland, radicalism was, to a certain degree, a concept bound up with ecclesiological debate. Radicals were defined as those who sought further democratic change after the Reform Act, but also as those who sought the overthrow of the church establishment. Indeed, in Scotland, where society was still understood in theological terms, these two aims were to a great extent interwoven. Voluntaryism was a politicised movement which sought constitutional reform via extra-parliamentary popular agitation.

After the Reform Bill, the battle between voluntaries and establishmentarians became more ferocious as it came to dominate the political arena and was fought out on the hustings. According to Richard Brent, by the middle of the 1830s, dissent developed political self-consciousness as it allied itself with the Whig party in an attempt to achieve

¹⁵² S.J. Brown, 'Religion and the Rise of Liberalism: The First Disestablishment Campaign in Scotland, 1829-1843', *JEH*, 48 (1997). See also Brown, *Churches*, pp.176-84; S.J. Brown, *Providence and Empire 1815-1914* (Harlow, 2008).

¹⁵³ For example, in his analysis of Scottish newspapers, R.M.W Cowan allotted chapters to 'Religion, 1815-32' and 'The Church in Conflict, 1833-47' while politics, economics and social aspects were all discussed separately. Cowan, *Newspaper*.

¹⁵⁴ A.R. Macewen, *Life and Letters of John Cairns, D.D. L.L.D.* (London, 1895), p. 38.

¹⁵⁵ Machin, 'Disestablishment', p. 125.

ecclesiastical and political equality.¹⁵⁶ ‘An Address to the Reverend Leaders of the Voluntary Church Movement’, published in the *United Secession Magazine*, described the Reform Bill as a sword with which the voluntaries could fight their battle. Reform had ‘lifted up the despised Seceder from his humble walk, to an authority upon the affairs of his country which shall yet effect a change upon its ecclesiastical institutions for the glory of God’.¹⁵⁷ Andrew Marshall continued to espouse the beliefs he had first uttered in 1829, and his colleagues soon took up their own pens to defend his position. Establishments were attacked on principle: they had no sanction in scripture and generally violated two kingdoms ecclesiology. They were, moreover, persecuting and tyrannous once instituted, and examples from the Bible and from history were used to illustrate the atrocities committed by established churches in the past. The sufferings of the Covenanters was a local and particularly emotive example of the brutality of establishments; and the Kirk’s history of corrupting state interference and the futile resistance to it, demonstrated the poisonous influence of state control.¹⁵⁸ Voluntaries pointed to the success of the voluntary system in the United States and argued for the same freedom in the religious marketplace as in the trading. This belief in the unscriptural, impractical and inequitable nature of church establishments led some voluntaries to espouse a political theory opposed to that articulated by old light Presbyterians. One of the most proficient of the voluntary spokesmen, Andrew Dick, published a treatise on the origin and purpose of civil government which denied that political affairs of the country had to be directed according to God’s will: the end of government, Dick wrote, is the ‘preservation of peace between man and man, and not the accomplishment of any religious enterprise’.¹⁵⁹ Providence could still direct national affairs; however, while civil government had divine sanction, it had been instituted for secular purposes only.

The post-Reform era was a dangerous one for the Kirk. In Ireland Catholics and Presbyterians had long complained of tithes, an enduring grievance, and in 1831 ceased to pay the offensive tax resulting in riots and violent clashes with authority. Westminster passed expedient legislation including the Irish Church Temporalities Act of 1833 which reduced the number of Anglican bishoprics in Ireland and abolished church cess, while in England the government began to question the utility of the Church of England. In Scotland the Kirk felt the need properly to address the enduring patronage grievance and to promote the Church as a popular institution dedicated to meeting the needs of the

¹⁵⁶ Brent, *Liberal Anglican Politics*, p. 24.

¹⁵⁷ ‘Address to the Rev. Leaders of the Voluntary Church Movement’, *USM*, Sep 1834.

¹⁵⁸ See e.g., Marshall, *Ecclesiastical Establishments Considered*; Marshall, *Farther Considered*.

¹⁵⁹ Andrew Coventry Dick, *Dissertations on Church Polity* (1835), p. 6.

expanding population in the central lowlands. In response to the voluntary argument, spokesmen for the Scottish Church did not deny that there existed impurities in the Kirk but refused to admit that establishments were generally impolitic or that they lacked scriptural sanction. Rather, the Kirk with its Presbyterian government and its two kingdoms philosophy could be, they thought, the perfect establishment: one supported by the magistrate whose duty it was to further the interests of religion, but one which controlled its own affairs and denied the magistrate the right to interfere.

Through the pages of the ultra-conservative *Church of Scotland Magazine (CSM)*, moreover, staunch establishmentarians denounced voluntaries as radicals determined to subvert the constitution in church and state. For establishmentarians with an old light view of church-state relations, meddling with the system of church government and demanding the abolition of church establishments was akin to overthrowing monarchical government and instituting republicanism in its place. Voluntaryism, to them, was atheistic and profoundly revolutionary, though many of its proponents were in fact intensely pious and doctrinally orthodox, as it appeared to deny the divine ordination of civil government and the influence of divine providence in day to day affairs.¹⁶⁰ It was a challenge to the constitution of Great Britain, which since the Revolution of 1688 had been irrevocably bound up with Protestantism by excluding Catholics from the succession. It was, moreover, a challenge to the Revolution Settlement in Scotland and the Act of Union which had secured Presbyterianism in the country. That a Protestant establishment was a fundamental component of the political life of Great Britain was clear from the existence of the bench of bishops in the House of Lords, from the monarch's role as Head of the Church of England, and in Scotland from the Presbyterian stipulation enshrined in the Westminster Confession that the monarch should be nursing father to the Church. Moreover, voluntaryism challenged the traditional parochial structure in Scotland, and the traditional mechanism for maintaining social order, overseeing education, and dispensing aid to the poor;¹⁶¹ and by challenging the idea of a church-state and a uniform system of religion, voluntaryism appeared to undermine the means by which morality was infused into society. It would, the defenders of the church-state argued, change the 'frame of our government' and 'our jurisprudence'. Voluntaryism would, in fact, result in nothing less

¹⁶⁰ 'The Duty of Rulers to Aid the Church Proved from the Nature of Civil Government as well as from Natural and Revealed Religion – By a Layman', *CSM*, June 1835.

¹⁶¹ Voluntaries tended to support legal assessment of poor relief since dissenters could not benefit from kirk session aid. Thomas Chalmers on the other hand advocated charitable giving and the complete abolition of legal assessment.

than a revolution: the ‘whole spirit and principles’ of the voluntaries, it was argued, ‘are those of insubordination and anarchy’.¹⁶²

Thus, voluntaries were regarded by a portion of the community as dangerous, seditious people, who, by disseminating their revolutionary principles and by generating mass political activity, were out to subvert all traditional order and authority in society. Voluntaryism and political radicalism were considered to be one and the same, described as ‘twin sisters’.¹⁶³ There was, Kirk spokesmen pointed out, a close association between voluntary clergymen, Irish O’Connellites and members of the Radical party in Parliament who advocated far-reaching political reform.¹⁶⁴ Those who desired the overthrow of the Church would, they claimed, naturally desire the overthrow of monarchical and hierarchical society and the institution of a more popular government.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, the Kirk was right to point out this affiliation between voluntaryism and political radicalism; voluntaries also referred to themselves as radicals or as allied to the radical cause.¹⁶⁶ According to Iain Hutchison, voluntaries ‘tended to be radical in politics in part perhaps because of their democratic ecclesiastical structure, in part probably because they had suffered until the 1820s from religious discrimination embodied in legislation, and also because the Scottish state church was identified with the unreformed political regime.’¹⁶⁷ Therefore, it is essential that the historian of political radicalism take this controversy seriously; only by examining the voluntary controversy can one really appreciate the nature of radicalism in this period. To many Kirkmen and establishmentarians, radicals were defined as those who challenged the religious foundation of society. John Cormack told the parishioners in his Kirk that those who desired the overthrow of the monarchy began by ‘sapping the foundations of the church’, the very pillars on which the throne rested.¹⁶⁸

Voluntaryism was the most intensely debated issue dominating the public and political domain at this time. ‘There has arisen a hue-and-cry, the like of which Scotland

¹⁶² ‘On the Effects of Abolishing the Power of the Civil Magistrate about Matters of Religion’, *CSM*, Nov 1835; ‘Voluntary Truths Elegantly Expressed’, *CSM*, Aug 1834. See also, ‘On the Present Outcry Against the Established Church’, *PM*, Jan 1833.

¹⁶³ ‘Voluntaryism and Radicalism Twin Sisters’, *CSM*, June 1835. The Moderator of the General Assembly described the Irish voluntaries who invited Rev. John Ritchie to debate with Henry Cooke as the ‘Belfast Radicals’. Porter, *Cooke*, p. 320.

¹⁶⁴ *Exposure; Anglo-Scotus Again* (Newcastle, 1834).

¹⁶⁵ A review of Marshall’s first sermon defended hereditary monarchy and nobility and asserted that a repeal of the laws of entail and primogeniture would constitute a ‘fatal blow at the integrity of the constitution’. *Review of Marshall’s Sermon on Ecclesiastical Establishments* (Glasgow, 1829), pp. 13–14.

¹⁶⁶ See for example an article in the *Reformers’ Gazette* in Oct 28 1837 about ‘A Campsie Voluntary Rat’ who had been a ‘Radical’ but was now writing in favour of endowments.

¹⁶⁷ I.G.C. Hutchison, *A Political History of Scotland 1832-1924: Parties, Elections and Issues* (Edinburgh, 1986 edn), p. 17.

¹⁶⁸ See ‘Review of Pastoral Hints to his Parishioners by John Cormack’ in *USM*, April 1835; Gray, *Irish Education*. Gray described voluntaryism as a ‘jumble of religious and revolutionary politics’.

has not seen or heard since the days of the Covenant', wrote Henry Cockburn in 1835; 'temper and sense have been lost sight of. Meetings, lectures, pamphlets, and placards abound.'¹⁶⁹ In September 1832 the Edinburgh Voluntary Church Association was founded by members of the United Secession Church. In November a Glasgow branch was established and by September in the following year another ten local divisions had been born. In May 1834 voluntaryism became a nationwide phenomenon when the British Voluntary Society was formed in London; in December of that year the Central Board of Scottish Dissenters was established to oversee the campaign. The Glasgow-based *Voluntary Church Magazine* was launched in March 1833, followed by the *Edinburgh Voluntary Churchman* in August 1835. Both sides issued countless published pamphlets; innumerable speeches and sermons were delivered in churches and at specially-organised meetings; deputations and addresses were sent to Parliament; individuals canvassed in the streets for signatures to mass petitions, while posters were displayed and handbills scattered across different regions. According to Lord Aberdeen, 'never had any question of domestic policy so much agitated the people of Scotland since the union of the two kingdoms'.¹⁷⁰ In Ulster the great debate between John Ritchie and Henry Cooke lasted for two evenings and was attended by 400 people. Printed editions of the debate sold in their thousands across Scotland and Ireland, were recommended in several contemporary publications, and were read in Nova Scotia.¹⁷¹ Writing in 1837 Cockburn proclaimed, 'everything in the empire is tinged for the present with the Church'.¹⁷²

Kirkmen described the agitation of the opposing side as 'voluntary mania'. The public meetings – reported to have been held throughout the country from Dingwall to Dumfries – 'inflammatory harangues', preachings, and political sermons were enough to 'set the whole world in a tumult, and overturn the whole framework of society'.¹⁷³ As reported in the *CSM*, the Glasgow petition against church establishments was displayed all over the city and in the suburbs. The petition was available for signing in 'dissenting vestries, and in dramshops, and places where profane, radical, and even blasphemous publications are sold.' According to the *Magazine*, those who signed the petition included 'atheists, infidels, low Irish, and others of a similar stamp'. The *Magazine* warned that 'placards directing to sign [the petition] were posted over the city of such a nature as to catch all classes'. These included those in the Church of Scotland who might, the

¹⁶⁹ Cockburn, *Journal*, I, pp. 90–1.

¹⁷⁰ Quoted in Brown, 'Liberalism', p. 2

¹⁷¹ *The Voluntaries in Belfast* (3rd ed., Edinburgh, 1836).

¹⁷² Cockburn, *Journal*, I, p. 136.

¹⁷³ 'Voluntary Principles...', *CSM*, June 1834 and Dec 1834.

Magazine cautioned, be persuaded to sign the petition by the cries of ‘no bishops’, ‘no priestcraft’ or ‘no patronage’ – the grievances which had inspired protest against the establishment for centuries. The canvassers were ‘a perfect nuisance to the community, laying hold of persons of all classes who passed – magistrates, clergy of the church, gentlemen, young and old, work people, boys of all ages, pressing them to sign’. Tables with petitions were apparently stationed in the open air, on bridges and at the entrances to the city, while torches ‘blazed in the evening, to attract the people from the factories’.¹⁷⁴ There was a similar petition war in Dunfermline where the United Secession claimed they had acquired 2795 names in contrast to the Kirk’s 1000 signatures.¹⁷⁵ The voluntaries had, according to their opponents, ‘raised a hue and cry over the length and breadth of the land, and gone from city to city, agitating the public mind, disturbing the peace of society, and setting all men by the ears.’¹⁷⁶

As well as challenging the voluntaries in the press, the Kirk looked to its own affairs and set about eradicating some of the grievances so long complained of. Imitating the voluntary associations, the Kirk established Church Societies, whose meetings were advertised in handbills and announced from Kirk pulpits.¹⁷⁷ Chalmers described these efforts to mobilise Kirk support as ‘internal Voluntaryism’.¹⁷⁸ Also common at this time were meetings of the Anti-Patronage Society where the Rev. Thomas McCrie condemned patronage while upholding the establishment principle.¹⁷⁹ The Church rejected the notion that the establishment had ever been guilty of persecution or oppression, and drew attention to the Church’s past associations with liberty. Kirkmen tried also to defend the Church of England, the Kirk’s ally in the defence of establishments, from the accusation that its character was tyrannous, by reminding readers that it had been the Anglican bishops who had first led the resistance to James VII and II before the Revolution.¹⁸⁰ Meanwhile, the Kirk launched its church extension campaign which Chalmers strove to make a popular movement uniting rich and poor, and which sought to solve the perceived problem of the spread of irreligion and disillusionment.¹⁸¹ The Kirk applied to Westminster for a partial endowment for these new churches, which the Church intended to erect in

¹⁷⁴ ‘Glasgow Dissenters’ Petition’, *CSM*, May 1834. According to Henry Cockburn 40,000 signatures appeared on the Glasgow petition. Cockburn, *Journal*, I, p. 58.

¹⁷⁵ *USM*, Sep 1835.

¹⁷⁶ ‘Voluntary Principles...’, *CSM*, June 1834.

¹⁷⁷ ‘The Formation of a Church Society in Dundee’, *PM*, June 1834.

¹⁷⁸ Brown, *Chalmers*, p. 238.

¹⁷⁹ ‘Dr McCrie’s Speech at the Edinburgh Annual Meeting of the Anti-Patronage Society’, *PM*, Jan 1834.

¹⁸⁰ ‘The Memorial of the Edinburgh Dissenters and Others, to Earl Grey and the Other Members of His Majesty’s Government’, *CSM*, March 1834; ‘The Church of Scotland, the Friend of Liberty’, *CSM*, Sep 1834.

¹⁸¹ Brown, *Churches*, p. 194.

deprived urban areas. The voluntaries condemned this move and through their own petitions, memorials and deputations to Parliament, tried to prevent the success of the application. According to Adam Black, member of the Edinburgh town council, the debates over church extension were ‘conducted with great acrimony and kept alive in Edinburgh, to a degree unrivalled in any other important city of the empire, an amount of sectarian jealousy and bitterness that has wrought unspeakable evil’.¹⁸² Unable to ignore the loud protest of the voluntaries, and keen to investigate the effectiveness of the Scottish Church, the government created a Royal Commission of Inquiry on Religious Instruction in Scotland, similar to the Ecclesiastical Commission set up in England, sent to investigate and report on church accommodation, attendance and finance. The commission’s investigations in Scotland caused the hostility between the opposing sides to reach a pitch as each accused the other of misrepresenting their numbers.¹⁸³

The principled position of the voluntaries led them to protest more fervently against the Edinburgh annuity tax – a church rate of 6 percent of house and shop rental value, levied to provide funds for the support of the established clergy in the city. In 1833 a campaign against this impost commenced, described as being similar in nature to the Irish tithe war.¹⁸⁴ ‘One of the chief and bitterest motive powers in the politics of Edinburgh’, the controversy continued for over 30 years.¹⁸⁵ Voluntary dissenters refused to pay the tax, as did some conscientious established clergymen who disagreed with it, and by April the arrears had risen to 11,000 pounds (only 173 pounds had been paid). The city could ill-afford this non-payment and by the summer the goods of non-payers were seized. When this move proved ineffective, the dissidents, including William Tait, publisher of *Tait’s Magazine*, were imprisoned. The prisoners tended to have much popular support and on their release processions of thousands with banners and music met the men to escort them home.¹⁸⁶ At the end of the year, the number of those prosecuted for non-payment totalled 846. After burgh reform, the newly elected Edinburgh town council, which included several dissenters, attempted to settle the dispute, suggesting to the Kirk that a reduction of the number of city clergymen and their salaries would be requisite. This proposal the Kirk refused to contemplate.¹⁸⁷ Henry Cockburn declared that ‘radicals and dissenters’ in the

¹⁸² Alexander Nicolson (ed.), *Memoirs of Adam Black* (Edinburgh, 1885), p. 94.

¹⁸³ See Mackie, *McLaren*, pp. 171–3.

¹⁸⁴ Brown, ‘Liberalism’, p. 689.

¹⁸⁵ Nicolson (ed.), *Memoirs*, p. 85.

¹⁸⁶ Cockburn, *Journal*, I, p. 52.

¹⁸⁷ Brown, ‘Liberalism’, p. 690.

town council out to suppress the Edinburgh clergy and diminish taxation had come to 'open war with the presbytery'.¹⁸⁸

The civil disobedience of the non-payers was reminiscent of the behaviour of the seventeenth-century Cameronians who had resisted payment of taxes and had their goods seized as a consequence; and, indeed, the voluntaries exploited this fact by portraying themselves as the descendants of the Covenanters who obeyed God rather than man and who were prepared to risk everything for the cause of civil and religious liberty. In printed pamphlets the voluntaries justified their position and celebrated those who had been imprisoned or prosecuted as martyr heroes.¹⁸⁹ Two of those imprisoned, Thomas Russell and Thomas Chapman, were, on their release, honoured with a soiree in the Waterloo Rooms. At this event, chaired by the Rev. John McGilchrist and apparently attended by crowds of people, the men were described as 'true witnesses for the truth', who deserved to be classed with 'that host of venerable men, who, under the name of Puritans in the south, and Covenanters in the north, so nobly endured in the cause of religious liberty all that oppression could inflict'. Russell and Chapman declared the annuity tax to be a human law which violated liberty of conscience. Compulsory assessment was in opposition to the will of God, as expressed in the Old and New Testaments.¹⁹⁰ In January 1838 the voluntaries threatened to launch a national campaign of non-payment of taxes.¹⁹¹ According to the *CSM*, the voluntaries were seditious radicals who were inciting the populace to revolt. Andrew Marshall had apparently encouraged the Scottish peasantry, whose first duty it was to defend religious liberty, to stop paying taxes, to accept the spoiling of their goods and 'resist to the blood'. Given the example of the dissenting clergy, the *Magazine* claimed, the threatening nature of the language heard at meetings to defend the cotton spinners arrested in 1837 on suspicion of murder, was unsurprising. The *Magazine*

¹⁸⁸ Cockburn, *Journal*, I, pp. 56–7.

¹⁸⁹ See e.g. Duncan Maclaren's *History of the Resistance to the Annuity Tax* (Edinburgh, 1836).

¹⁹⁰ 'Soiree in Honour of Councillor Russell and Mr Chapman', *Edinburgh Voluntary Churchman*, June 1836; *Report of the Speeches Delivered at the Soiree given as a Public Testimony in Favour of Councillor Russell and Mr Chapman for their uncompromising conduct in reference to the Annuity Tax* (Edinburgh, 1836); Thomas Russell, *The Annuity Tax Opposed to the Law of God, and Therefore Not Binding on Man: In a Letter to the Members of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1836). See also 'The Established Church in Edinburgh, and the Annuity Tax', *CSM*, Nov 1836. The Rev. John Brown gave evening lectures on civil obedience in December 1837 and January 1838 during which he preached that obligation to obedience ceased when the magistrate issued commands at variance with the law of God. Brown refused to pay and had his goods seized. He later moved to the suburbs where the tax did not apply. See John Cairns, *Memoir of John Brown D.D.* (Edinburgh, 1860), pp. 180–90.

¹⁹¹ Brown, *Providence and Empire*, pp. 104–5.

reminded the Rev. Ralph Wardlaw that he had earlier helped appease the Glasgow population during the 1820 rising.¹⁹²

Voluntary clergymen were denounced as ‘political demagogues’.¹⁹³ In a public meeting at the Gorbals, the Rev. William Anderson was heard championing voluntary principles,¹⁹⁴ while the speeches of Hugh Heugh were described as ‘radico-religious liberalism’ and ‘rabid republicanism’ designed to ‘stimulate the multitude to rebellion’.¹⁹⁵ A voluntary meeting organised in Heugh’s church was reported by the *CSM* to have been a raucous affair. Before the meeting large posters were apparently displayed on the streets condemning Kirkmen as ‘enemies of religious liberty’, while, before the commencement of the assembly, a drum was sounded through the suburbs to ‘rouse the rabble’. During the meeting women stomped their feet and according to the *Magazine*, which must have had an informer present to report on proceedings, ‘the old revolutionary cry of France, “Les évêques à la lanterne!” – in Scottish phrase, “hay the clergy on the nearest lamp-post” – required only to have been sounded to have met with many a ready response.’ ‘Nothing’, the *Magazine* proclaimed, ‘but a strenuous united adherence to our national institutions will save us from anarchy and ruin.’¹⁹⁶ Another fracas occurred in Dundee when the Kirk’s Church Society meeting was gate-crashed by the Political Union who had beforehand displayed incendiary placards inviting the people of Dundee to follow them. The Union was intent, Kirk spokesmen claimed, on overawing the ‘community of Dundee by an exhibition of the fiercest democracy and the most frantic voluntaryism’. The gate-crashers apparently ‘made threats of personal violence, accompanied with the wildest and most menacing gesticulations’. Men had been heard to cry ‘Three cheers for a republican government! And three cheers for Dr Ritchie, the advocate of Voluntary Churches!’¹⁹⁷

The war against the establishment was waged on the hustings at municipal and parliamentary elections, as well as in the streets and in the press. As has been seen, the church question had been instrumental during the election of the first reformed Parliament, and it continued to dominate election campaigns for some time.¹⁹⁸ According to reports in the *CSM*, in Paisley in 1834 Sir Daniel Sandford, who stood for the ‘Kirk’, defeated the

¹⁹² ‘Retrospective and Prospective Glances’, *CSM*, Jan 1838. On the Glasgow cotton spinners trial see W.H. Fraser, ‘The Glasgow Cotton Spinners, 1837’, in J. Butt & J.T. Ward (eds.), *Scottish Themes* (Edinburgh, 1976).

¹⁹³ James A. Haldane, *The Voluntary Question Political, Not Religious* (Edinburgh, 1839).

¹⁹⁴ ‘Political Dissenting Ministers’, *CSM*, August 1834.

¹⁹⁵ ‘Glasgow Voluntary Church Society’, *CSM*, Jan 1836.

¹⁹⁶ ‘Mr Colquhoun’s Bill and Meeting in Dr Heugh’s Chapel’, *CSM*, June 1834.

¹⁹⁷ ‘Church Society’, *PM*, June 1834. ‘On the Present Dangers and Duties of the Church of Scotland’, *CSM*, June 1834; ‘Voluntary Truths’, *CSM* August 1834.

¹⁹⁸ In 1840 the Kirk formed the ‘Church Defence and Anti-Patronage Electoral Association’. Hutchison, *Political History*, p. 47.

‘Radical party’ whose grand object was to effect disestablishment. That a Kirkman had won in Paisley – a hotbed of radicalism – was declared remarkable. While boasting that no Kirk clergyman had lowered himself so much as to cast a vote at the election, the *CSM* declared that almost all the voluntary ministers of the region had done so, including one Seceder who had been roused from his bed for the purpose.¹⁹⁹ The *Magazine* likewise celebrated the defeat of James Aytoun, ‘the Radico-Voluntary candidate’ for Edinburgh, who had apparently been conquered by Kirk support.²⁰⁰ A broadside from the election in support of Aytoun, which proclaimed that ‘the dissenters in Whole/ Shall come to the poll’ testifies to the support lent to the Radical candidate by dissenters.²⁰¹ Cockburn worried about the popularity of the Radical politicians in Edinburgh who had gained strength ‘through these cursed church questions.’ Radicals would, Cockburn declared, ‘vote for nobody who does not pledge himself against Patronage, and against the marriage of Church and State’.²⁰² The candidates at an election in Greenlaw, Berwickshire in January 1835, Sir Hugh P.H. Campbell and George Buchan of Kelloe, were criticised for their abusive remarks directed at voluntaries while on the hustings. Voluntary clergymen were denounced by the gentlemen as ‘busy, meddling, political agitators’ and ‘radicals and destructives’ who made ‘use of their influence over their congregations for political purposes’.²⁰³

The staunch defenders of the Kirk accused the voluntaries of allying themselves with Irish Catholic immigrants who had imported into Scotland their radical O’Connellite and Ribbon politics, and their intense hatred of the Protestant Anglican establishment. According to the report in the *Church of Scotland Magazine*, Irish Catholics formed a portion of those who signed the Glasgow petition. At a meeting of Catholics in Scotland in 1836, the voluntary cause was championed and, oddly enough, Kirkmen were condemned for forsaking the apparent grand principle of their Covenanting forebears: liberty of conscience.²⁰⁴ Those who would be voluntaries had come, reluctantly in some cases, to support Catholic emancipation, and then owing to voluntary utilitarian principles of majority rule, to sympathise with the Catholic battle against the Protestant ascendancy in

¹⁹⁹ *CSM*, April 1834.

²⁰⁰ ‘Edinburgh Election’, *CSM*, July 1834.

²⁰¹ *Aytoun, the Friend of the People!!*, <<http://www.nls.uk/broadsides/broadside.cfm/id/16508>>. The words of another broadside indicate that the Kirk was less supportive: ‘Though the Clergy, perhaps, may not say “AMEN!” To the plans of Provost Aytoun’. See *Huzza! For Provost Aytoun!! A New Song*, <http://www.nls.uk/broadsides/broadside.cfm/id/15531>.

²⁰² Cockburn (ed.), *Letters*, p. 506.

²⁰³ Adam Thomson, *The Church and the Voluntaries* (1835).

²⁰⁴ *CSM*, April 1836.

Ireland.²⁰⁵ Voluntaries dined with Daniel O’Connell when he visited Edinburgh in 1835. According to the *CSM*, Andrew Marshall had become O’Connell’s champion. Moreover, the Rev. John Ritchie was invited to Ulster in 1836 by members of the Belfast Voluntary Church Association where he proclaimed that Ireland needed universal reform and a liberal government. He also defended the alliance of voluntaries with Catholics.²⁰⁶ To some church-state defenders, this alliance with Catholicism was more evidence of the irreligious and immoral nature of voluntaryism. O’Connell, ‘whom Satan’ had ‘raised up as his principal instrument in our age and country for promoting his cause’, was declared to be ‘the commander-in-chief of the allied armies of Popery, Infidelity, and Voluntaryism’.²⁰⁷

The voluntaries were certainly guilty of some of the Kirk’s charges. They did rouse the populace, disobey the law, ally themselves with Irish radicals, and did abuse the aristocracy and Tory party. They regarded Kirkmen as espousing divine right arguments to justify tyrannical rule and accused them of defending the aristocratic interest and inhibiting any measure of democratic reform; in their eyes the alliance with and dependence on the state caused establishments to become oppressive and hostile to liberty. In the June issue of the *United Secession Magazine* for 1834, supporters of the Kirk were accused of having ‘allied themselves with the aristocratic, against the other classes of the people’ and having ‘opposed the march of liberty with so forward a zeal, that the *Clergy* in every part of the country are now associated in the minds of the people with the bitterest enemies of political and religious reformation.’ James Esdaile, an apologist for the Kirk, was accused of espousing a political philosophy similar to the Cavaliers of the Restoration. Esdaile’s condemnation of the voluntaries, described as a ‘mongrel race’, was denounced as ‘Tory rancour’.²⁰⁸ Voluntaries condemned the poisonous influence of the Anglican Bishops on the religious and, as members of the House of Lords, on the political life of the country. Voluntaryism would, they believed, ‘eradicate abuses which for ages have struck their roots into the very vitals of the British constitution-which, for their support, draw upon the wealth, the influence, and pride of a powerful aristocracy...and which are intertwined with

²⁰⁵ In 1839 Marshall published another pamphlet which re-stated his belief that only disestablishment could remove the threat of a politicised Catholicism but he also expressed his support for O’Connell and his voluntaryist position. Andrew Marshall, *The Only Security Against Increasing Popery: A Discourse* (Edinburgh, 1839). In an earlier pamphlet he claimed that Catholics had ceased to desire secular power. Marshall, *Farther Considered*, p. 303.

²⁰⁶ *Voluntaries in Belfast*, p. 13.

²⁰⁷ ‘The Established Church in Edinburgh and the Annuity Tax’, *CSM*, Nov 1836.

²⁰⁸ *USM*, June 1834. Esdaile declared his support for ‘conservative principles of government’. He admitted he had been wary of the Reform Bill and had opposed Catholic emancipation. In his opinion the end of government was to ‘glorify God.’ See James Esdaile, *The Voluntary Scheme without Foundation in Scripture, Reason or Common Sense* (2nd ed., Perth, 1834).

the existence of a thousand selfish interests within Windsor and Lambeth'.²⁰⁹ This suspicion of the spiritual and temporal lords led the voluntaries naturally to sympathise with the anti-aristocratic movement to repeal the Corn Laws and to extend the franchise. According to the Rev. John Brown, the voluntary body was composed of members from a variety of different denominations, but could be generally described as 'holding...a political creed decidedly liberal, though varying in shades from the Whiggism of 1688 to the Radicalism of 1840'.²¹⁰ Voluntaries had supported the Reform Bill owing to Presbyterian theory of democratic government, and the impetus an extension of the franchise would give to the voluntary movement. Many voluntaries now remained committed to civil reform. In 1836 the Rev. Andrew Ferrier of Airdrie declared that 'genuine political reformers cannot but perceive that the state religion is inconsistent with civil liberty; and that, with the progress of civil reform, there must be an entire separation between the Church and the State.' According to Ferrier, establishments precluded free thought as in the time of the Stuarts.²¹¹ Indeed, a revolutionary threat was implicit in the following voluntary writings: 'the meanest subject of Christ's kingdom has as good a right to all the privileges of it, as the greatest prince on earth...if [the civil magistrate] countenance one part of their subjects, in harassing and distressing the rest, as was too much the case in the cruel state-uniformities of the last century, they are rather tyrants, than nursing fathers and mothers to the church as they invade the sacred prerogatives of Christ, and the rights of his people. And every such invasion is a step towards the overturning of their throne.'²¹²

Many voluntary ministers were unashamed political activists who championed reformist causes, including, as shall be seen in section two of this dissertation, the demands of Presbyterian political radicals in the colonies of Upper Canada and Nova Scotia. Andrew Marshall was accused of canvassing in favour of a liberal election candidate who had declared himself opposed to the church endowment scheme.²¹³ John Cairns, a student at Edinburgh University from 1834, who later became a minister of the United Secession Church, championed the Whigs on the hustings in 1835. He was a member of the Diagnostic debating society at the University. Here violent debates took place between establishmentarian and voluntary students. During his time in the society Cairns

²⁰⁹ 'Address to the Rev. Leaders of the Voluntary Church Movement, *USM*, Sep 1834.

²¹⁰ John Brown, *What Ought the Dissenters of Scotland to do in the Present Crisis?* (Edinburgh, 1840), pp. 5–6.

²¹¹ Ferrier, *Golden Image*, pp. 14, 18.

²¹² Andrew Thomson & Gavin Struthers, *Historical Sketch of the Origin of the Secession Church and the History of the Rise of the Relief Church* (Edinburgh & London, 1848), p. 314.

²¹³ Andrew Marshall, *Calumny Refuted* (Glasgow, 1835), pp. 24–6.

championed Catholic emancipation; the abolition of the Corn Laws; freedom of the press; vote by ballot and the exclusion of bishops from the House of Lords. In Cairns' opinion establishments were 'not conducive to the political well-being of a country'. According to Cairns' biographer, voluntaries were 'samples of the not infrequent blend between Radicalism in politics and Toryism in theology.'²¹⁴ John Ritchie acknowledged the relationship between political radicalism and voluntaryism during his debate with Henry Cooke. Cooke accused Ritchie and his fellow radicals of seeking to let loose 'fierce democracy' and with the 'Radical axe' to hew 'the trunk of kingly power'. 'The Voluntary Associations' said Ritchie, in response, 'are politically accused of borrowing aid from Radicals. And why should they not? Where is the harm in Radicalism? What does Radicalism signify? It signifies going to the root of a matter.'²¹⁵

Clergymen were not the only voluntaries to articulate radical political demands. As has been seen, voluntary radicalism was in evidence in Edinburgh during the 1834 election. In 1838 the Fenwick Improvement Society advocated universal suffrage, vote by ballot and the separation of church and state. They likewise defended the Canadian rebels and toasted to the 'speedy adoption of republican principles throughout the world.'²¹⁶ At the beginning of 1838 the Whitburn Political Union petitioned for universal suffrage and against the grant of additional endowments to the Kirk.²¹⁷ The infamous Dr. John Taylor, moreover, later a strident Chartist, insisted that the union of church and state was 'unscriptural, impolitic and tyrannical'. The Scottish Radical Association formed in 1836 with Taylor as president sought universal suffrage and a voluntary church system. As W. Hamish Fraser has observed, the fact that voluntaryism was on the Association's agenda, 'reflected the extent to which church issues were intruding on the Scottish political scene.' William Thomson, the editor of the *Weavers' Journal*, failed to get the Association to avoid the 'mixing up of religious matters with their political movements'.²¹⁸ Meanwhile in 1835, John Stevenson, a radical and participant in the 1820 rising inspired by the Covenanters, who published a vindication of the Strathaven rebel John Wilson, attacked his local parish minister, the Rev. James Proudfoot, for his conservative opinions. The 'history of nations', Stevenson proclaimed, and 'the sad experience which we gather from the ongoings of the current times, accord in testifying, that a State-paid Clergy will ever be

²¹⁴ Macewen, *Cairns*, pp. 39, 93–4, 114.

²¹⁵ *Voluntaries in Belfast*, p. 13.

²¹⁶ G. Neilson, 'The Fenwick Improvement of Knowledge Society, *SHR*, 17 (1919–20), pp. 121, 123, 128–9.

²¹⁷ 'Whitburn Political Union', *GA*, Feb 15 1838.

²¹⁸ W.H. Fraser, *Dr John Taylor, Chartist: Ayrshire Revolutionary* (Ayr, 2006), pp. 24, 33. As Joan Christodoulou has observed, the Universalist Church also influenced this association. Its founder, John Fraser, was a leading member of the church. Christodoulou, 'Universalist Church', p. 617.

found, not in the van of freedom's battles, but entrenched behind her deadliest adversaries...whispering slavish flatteries in the ear of greatness, and grovelling in the dust before the oppressors of their kind.'²¹⁹

Voluntary radicals frequently denounced establishmentarian Kirkmen as political conservatives. The *Reformers' Gazette* and the *Glasgow Argus* accused Churchmen of resisting electoral reform, and neglecting the interests of the poor while maintaining an alliance with the aristocracy. There was some truth to this. The CSM was staunchly conservative, while in the 1837 elections, only one Kirk minister in Roxburghshire, and only one in Midlothian, voted liberal.²²⁰ Kirkmen were often associated with the landed gentry while dissenters found support among the manufacturing and urban portion of society; nevertheless, this alliance cannot be explained purely in class terms. The Conservative Operatives' Association declared its intention to uphold the British Constitution as established at 1690. Its main priority was 'to defend the Ecclesiastical and Educational Establishments of Scotland as an integral part of that Constitution.' It supported church extension and non-intrusion.²²¹ As Iain Hutchison has observed, evangelical Kirkmen 'were differentiated from voluntaries largely by their absolute commitment to the establishment principle which naturally suggested a close affinity to moderate Conservatism, with its proclaimed role of stopping rash and destructive assaults on existing institutions.'²²² Henry Cooke was a staunch establishmentarian and political conservative. His political principles were, according to his biographer, 'wedded to his religious principles', and developed in the pulpit as well as on the platform. He believed that in battling voluntarism he was likewise stemming the tide of political radicalism.²²³

Nevertheless, an adherence to establishmentarianism did not preclude support for political reform. As has been seen, many evangelical clergymen supported the Reform Act, viewing it as a means morally to regenerate the country. Reformed Presbyterians, who espoused a political theory which championed ideas of divinely-sanctioned popular sovereignty, advocated near universal suffrage. Thomas Chalmers acknowledged that

²¹⁹ John Stevenson, *A True Narrative of the Radical Rising in Strathaven* (Glasgow, 1835), p. 16; Pentland, 'Commemoration', p. 156.

²²⁰ Hutchison, *Political History*, p. 19. James McCosh, member of the Presbytery of Arbroath, said that he regretted the extent to which evangelical Kirkmen 'threw themselves openly into the Tory side of politics' after the excesses following the Reform Bill. David K. Guthrie & Charles J. Guthrie (eds.), *Autobiography Thomas Guthrie D.D. and Memoir* (2 vols., London, 1874), I, p. 340.

²²¹ See J.T. Ward, 'Some Aspects of Working-Class Conservatism in the Nineteenth Century', in Butt & Ward (eds.), *Themes*, pp. 141–51; Hutchison, *Political History*, p. 19.

²²² Hutchison, *Political History*, p. 17.

²²³ Porter, *Cooke*, pp. 264, 301. Cooke espoused establishmentarianism and political conservatism in the Ulster-based *Orthodox Presbyterian* magazine. See for example, 'Establishments', *Orthodox Presbyterian*, April 1834.

radicalism had become equated with voluntaryism but he claimed that the Kirk better represented the radical cause of the common man. In his eyes, voluntaries were the advocates of laissez-faire theories who championed economic individualism at the expense of the poor.²²⁴ However, voluntaries objected to what they regarded as the dictatorial paternalism exhibited by Chalmers who disapproved of popular election in church as well as in state. Many associated the establishment with the landed elite and the forces of conservatism. Contemporaries did not often regard voluntaries as the representatives of the middle-class industrialist; rather they were seen as attempting to liberate people from the domination of tyrannous hierarchy. Thus, voluntary radicalism had a profound impact on Scottish political culture.

Indeed, the radical press of the 1830s – including, as Fiona Montgomery has noticed, the unstamped press of Glasgow – which demanded further political reform including an extension of the franchise, frequently championed voluntary principles.²²⁵ According to one establishmentarian, there was ‘sympathy of political feeling’ between voluntaries and the ‘Radical and Infidel press’.²²⁶ Indeed, what is clear from an analysis of the radical literature of the period is that some advocates of further political reform championed voluntaryism owing to religious conviction. Their commitment to disestablishment and to political reform, including an extension of the franchise, stemmed from a sincere belief in ecclesiological theory and of the oppressive character of the Protestant hierarchical state. *The Scotsman*, vociferous supporter of the Reform Bill, simultaneously advocated voluntaryism. Many of the paper’s editorials during the 1830s were penned by Duncan McLaren, a voluntary and reform champion. In an article printed in September 1838 *The Scotsman* declared its support for ‘the Voluntary system in religion out and out’ as well as vote by ballot. The ‘American democracy’ was held up as ‘the model of a nearly perfect government, to which all nations would approximate as their intelligence increases’.²²⁷ McLaren shared a pew with John Ritchie, proprietor of *The Scotsman*, in the church of Rev. James Peddie, president of the Voluntary Church Association. McLaren, described as having a ‘mind trained in the old Scottish Covenanted spirit’ protested in favour of parliamentary reform and against the Corn Laws for many years. According to his biographer, he ‘laboured to secure the parliamentary franchise for

²²⁴ Hanna, *Chalmers*, III, p. 433; Brown, *Chalmers*, p. 232.

²²⁵ F.A. Montgomery, ‘The unstamped press: the contribution of Glasgow 1831-1836’, *SHR*, 59 (1980), p. 162.

²²⁶ *Exposure*, p. 14.

²²⁷ ‘The Radicals and Ourselves’, *The Scotsman*, 19 Sep 1838. *The Scotsman* steered a more moderate course in later years as McLaren and the voluntary radicals distanced themselves from the paper. See Mackie, *McLaren*, p. 158.

every member of the commonwealth – for every man and woman householder, as a right as well as a trust, just as the ecclesiastical franchise was regarded as part and parcel of the membership of his church'.²²⁸

Likewise, the *Glasgow Argus* simultaneously championed voluntaryism and political reform. The *Argus* explained that it supported voluntaryist theory on account of its scriptural validity. The paper printed reports from meetings of the Voluntary Church Associations as well as reviews of the pamphlets written by leading voluntary clergymen. Indeed, in April 1834, the editor announced that he had attended a meeting of the Balfron Voluntary Church Association and had been pleased with the speeches of the clergymen he had heard.²²⁹ Elsewhere, the paper reported, at a dinner held in honour of James Oswald MP, a toast was given to the 'reform of the Church, and the extinction of its political power.' The speaker declared that the separation of the spiritual from the temporal was a goal to which true reformers held dear. Christianity was defaced by such a connection, he said, and during the struggle to secure the passing of the Reform Act, reformers had been thwarted by the influence of a corrupt church. The editor of the *Argus* insisted that reformers must now pledge themselves to achieve the church's separation from the state.²³⁰ In March 1834 the paper listed the petitions for disestablishment and the expulsion of the bishops which were currently being dispatched to Parliament from across Scotland. A petition from Newburgh asserted that an established church was unscriptural, unreasonable and fostered a spirit of tyranny and merciless oppression.²³¹

The Agitator, a Glasgow paper, denounced monarchy, hereditary aristocracy and Protestant hierarchy while it declared the established clergy to be enemies to 'popular liberty' who ought to be 'crushed'. It was declared to be 'downright tyranny' to force people to support a church to which they did not belong and the Church was said to be an abomination which had to fall. 'We must expose the monster', the paper proclaimed, 'and raise a hue and cry, which will reverberate from one end of the country to the other, against a system of day-light plunder, oppression and imposture, which taxes the poor and taxes the country for the support of an idle, fat, pampered, and burdensome gang of hypocritical parsons, and the maintenance of an unnecessary and useless establishment.' Monarchy, aristocracy and priestcraft were banded together, the *Agitator* claimed, 'for the purpose of perpetuating a system of public plunder.'²³² *The Radical Reformer's Gazette*, meanwhile,

²²⁸ Mackie, *McLaren*, pp. 139–40.

²²⁹ 'Editorial', *GA*, April 24 1834.

²³⁰ 'Dinner to Mr Oswald', *GA*, Sep 26 1833.

²³¹ 'Church and State', *GA*, Mar 31 1834. See also, 'Church and State', *GA*, Mar 17 1834.

²³² 'The Church', *The Agitator*, Mar 9 1883; 'Another Spy', *The Agitator*, April 13 1833.

declared that it would never lend its aid to support the abominable and unnatural connection of church and state: ‘the offspring of it in all countries, and in all ages’, it was claimed, ‘has been religious persecution.’²³³ The *Western Independent*, a paper produced for Paisley, Renfrewshire and Johnstone, denounced church establishments as more dangerous than trade unions. Indeed, ‘clerical unions’ supported by the authority of the civil magistrate were unjust and oppressive, and ‘destroyers of civil and religious liberty’.²³⁴ William Tait in his *Edinburgh Magazine*, advocated further extension of the franchise, sympathised with trade unions and criticised the established clergy and the House of Lords.²³⁵ The *Scots Times*, which declared in favour of voluntarism in 1829, was likewise sympathetic.²³⁶

Mackenzie’s *Reformers’ Gazette*, in the aftermath of the Reform Act, continued vehemently to support the voluntary cause while advocating household suffrage and vote by ballot. The existence of church establishments was described as having no foundation in Scripture and as having been maintained by bloodshed, persecution, barbarous princes and the propagation of divine right theory.²³⁷ Indeed, establishments were ‘the normal schools of clerico-political agency, where, under the screen of sanctity, gravity, and religious pretext, they tamper with the sacred exercise of the People’s indomitable political rights.’²³⁸ The paper repeatedly printed articles attacking church establishments for their corruptness and their opposition to liberal reform. In 1834 the Glasgow Political Union, of which Mackenzie was secretary, met to discuss the voluntary question. Mackenzie hoped that the bishops would get a ‘good skelping’.²³⁹

It is clear then that some political radicals not only saw disestablishment as integral to their platform, but that voluntarist ecclesiological theory originated their views on the necessity of political reform and the institution of popular government. A poem allegedly written by the Rev. Adam Johnstone of Rutherglen underlined the link between voluntarism and Mackenzie’s *Reformers’ Gazette*. It contained the lines: ‘Renounce all connection with Radical knaves, Abjure the “Dissenters” – O, turn from their ways... This Reformers’ Gazette you never should read, For it is the work of the Devil indeed... Directing your venom on Priests and at Kings; Ye are foes to the Kirk, ye are foes

²³³ ‘J.C. Colquhoun of Killermont’s Lecture’, *The Radical Reformer’s Gazette*, Nov 17 1832.

²³⁴ ‘Editorial’, *The Western Independent*, June 10 1834.

²³⁵ See e.g., ‘Political Register’, *TEM*, Oct 1837; ‘The Trial of the Cotton Spinners’, *TEM*, Feb 1838.

²³⁶ See e.g., ‘Ecclesiastical Establishments’, *ST*, June 13 1829.

²³⁷ ‘Scottish Church Establishment’, *RG*, April 27 1833.

²³⁸ ‘The Church’, *RG*, Mar 3 1838.

²³⁹ ‘Glasgow Political Union’, *RG*, Mar 1 1834.

to the State...'²⁴⁰ The extent to which voluntaryism percolated into society and Scottish politics, as well as the extent to which voluntary ideas were fused with radical political ideas in the minds of contemporaries, can be gauged from the following letter written from Bathgate in July 1835, by Alex Weir to Sir George Clerk, Conservative member of Parliament and 6th Baronet of Penicuik:

Mr Lynn, the Tenant of Cobinshaw, came to me and asked...if I thought that there would be a separation betwixt church and State etc? As I...did not know whether he was an Old-light or New-light Seceder, or a member of the Church of Scotland, I asked him what church he went to? To which he replied, to Mr Fleming's Meeting house in West Calder...I ...told him that I had heard that Mr Fleming was a great politician, and that he had taken a very active hand in canvassing during the former and late elections, which I thought did not become a man of his profession. He told me that it was true, and that he had now politics, both in his prayers and preachings, which he did not agree with. I then advised him strongly to go and hear Mr Learmont the parish minister...I then asked him what newspaper he read, and he told me that the only one was the Scotsman. I observed that in my opinion it was a very dangerous one, as it was a strong advocate for Voluntaryism, and if the Voluntaries and Radicals (for I looked upon them as one party) succeeded in robbing the Church, it was not improbable that they would soon pay little respect to private property.

Weir advised Clerk to encourage the circulation of the *Scottish Guardian* to promote establishmentarian views amongst the tenantry.²⁴¹

Moreover, voluntaryism was associated by contemporaries with labour activism; radicalism traditionally assessed as class-based and secular. The *CSM* had associated the voluntaries with the cotton spinners strike by asserting that the radical rhetoric of some clergymen was inciting revolt. But this association was one also acknowledged by the cotton spinners union, who condemned William Weir, the editor of the *Glasgow Argus*, for his failure to defend the accused spinners during their trial. The union spokesman described Weir's stance as unusual since he was a 'great speechifier at public meetings in favour of the voluntary principle and the repeal of the Corn Laws'; the implication being that these beliefs should naturally lead Weir to support this industrial action.²⁴²

Historians have noted the support lent by dissenters to the Corn Law repeal movement. Dissenters have been labelled as representatives of the middle classes, the manufacturing interest, which sought to challenge the dominance of the landed aristocracy and defend commerce. Dissenters were highly represented in the Anti-Corn Law League in

²⁴⁰ 'The Black Coats', *RG*, Sep 28 1833.

²⁴¹ 'Alex Weir to Sir George Clerk', in J.I. Brash (ed.), *Papers on Scottish Electoral Politics 1832-1854* (Edinburgh, 1974), pp. 33-6.

²⁴² 'Cotton Spinners' Trial', *GA*, Jan 25 1838.

England, and in Scotland attended meetings to campaign for the repeal of the Laws. In 1842, 500 ministers, including 350 from the voluntary churches, attended an anti-Corn Law rally in Edinburgh. Hugh Heugh introduced Richard Cobden to Duncan McLaren who became an active member of the League. McLaren was assisted by a committee of anti-Corn Law activists in Scotland which included Thomas Russell, the annuity tax protester, and the Rev. John McGilchrist. One of McLaren's closest friends and an ally in the cause was the Rev. Henry Renton of Kelso. McLaren instituted an inquiry into the effects of the Laws and received answers from around 500 dissenting clergymen who condemned the legislation.²⁴³

However, as historians have observed, dissenters supported the movement, not just as representatives of manufacture, but as voluntaries who objected to monopolies in the church as well as in the state.²⁴⁴ The Fenwick voluntaries declared their support for the repeal of the Corn Laws in January 1839 and in Dalkeith, where voluntaryism had taken root, anti-Corn Law meetings were held.²⁴⁵ Moreover, some clergymen defended free trade with arguments drawn from Scripture. That God had provided a bounty available for all was a time-long argument employed by radical Puritans in seventeenth-century England, and by Covenanters in eighteenth-century Scotland. In 1841, the Rev. Joseph Hay of the United Secession Church attended and spoke at an 'anti-bread-tax and free trade' meeting held in Arbroath. Hay described the unscriptural and inequitable nature of the Corn Laws and trading monopolies: 'to have an abundant supply of corn placed near us, in continental countries, which we can at any time procure at a cheap rate, is as real a provision of a merciful and benignant Providence for the comfort of our nation, and the supply of its families, as though it were reared upon our own soil... Levying of tribute must not be such as to thwart and frustrate the designs of Providence.'

Hay's speech, along with the others delivered at this meeting, was printed in pamphlet form. Appended to the publication was a warning to the established clergy, encouraging them to participate in the debate. The pamphlet declared that Kirkmen stayed aloof from the campaign since they feared that the repeal of the Corn Laws would affect their stipends.²⁴⁶ The Kirk was criticised for condemning the participation of the clergy in

²⁴³ Duncan McLaren, *The Corn Laws condemned on account of their Injustice and Immoral Tendency by upwards of Five Hundred Ministers of different denominations resident in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1842); Mackie, *McLaren*, pp. 225–6, 232–4. On Renton's support of Corn Law repeal see Renton, *Memorials*, p. 67.

²⁴⁴ R.F. Spall Jnr., 'The Anti-Corn-Law League's Opposition to English Church Establishment', *Journal of Church and State*, 97 (1990).

²⁴⁵ Neilson, 'Fenwick', p. 135; Alexander Mitchell, *Political and Social Movements in Dalkeith from 1831 to 1882* (n.p., 1882), pp. 27, 38.

²⁴⁶ In England the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836 had linked the incomes of established clergymen with the price of corn. The *Anti-Corn Law Circular* denounced the 'Bread-Taxing Bishops' while the *Scottish Patriot*

politics when its own members frequently contributed conservative articles to the public press and appeared at elections as ‘violent partisans’. The Kirk was reminded that the repeal of the Corn Laws was a religious and moral question and involvement in this campaign was justified by Scripture. The author of this pamphlet listed certain biblical quotes which he hoped would be interpreted as expatiating on the ‘unholy character of the Bread Tax’. These included Prov. xi. 62: ‘He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him’ and Matthew vi.11: ‘give us this day our daily bread’.²⁴⁷ Some of these arguments were taken up by Chartists and by the Rev. Patrick Brewster of Paisley, the controversial Kirk minister and Chartist defender (see below).²⁴⁸

The voluntaries in Scotland argued that the Corn Laws helped to prop up church establishments. As a consequence of the Laws, the population was obliged to pay more for their corn; this provided landowners with a fund to support the establishment, which as heritors they were obligated to do. In this way, despite the lack of a tithe burden, the Scottish population indirectly paid for the upkeep of the Church. If heritors were not obliged to support the Kirk, the voluntaries argued, landowners would be deprived ‘of one of their strongest arguments in defence of the iniquitous corn laws’. The *Glasgow Argus* claimed that the Kirk had petitioned Parliament against repeal in 1827. When the Kirk posted placards denouncing this assertion as a ‘voluntary falsehood’, the editor printed the petition in full. A clergyman in Crieff, meanwhile, was accused of asserting that ‘true religion’ depended on the permanency of the Laws.²⁴⁹ Kirkmen argued that the funds provided by landowners for the upkeep of the church, and accrued through the sale of corn, were, like the bishops teinds, private property which could not be appropriated. The teinds were tithes on land originally belonging to the Catholic Church, but which had been transferred to lairds at the Reformation.²⁵⁰

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observed that the ‘teinds on which the established clergy fattened’ were enhanced by restrictions on food. See Brown, *Churches*, pp. 330–1.

²⁴⁷ See *Report of the Speeches Delivered at the Anti-Bread-Tax and Free-Trade Meeting, held in Arbroath, April 12, 1841: to which are appended, a few words to tee-totallers, Chartists, and the Clergy* (Arbroath, 1841).

²⁴⁸ Some Kirk ministers supported Corn Law repeal, including the evangelical Rev. Robert Burns of Paisley who was a member of the Anti-Corn Law League and apparently the only Kirkman to attend the Glasgow banquet held in honour of Richard Cobden. See R.F. Burns, *The Life and Times of the Rev. Robert Burns, D.D.* (Toronto, 1873), pp. 96–7.

²⁴⁹ ‘The Church Established in Scotland and the Corn Laws’, *GA*, Feb 26 1838; ‘True Religion in Scotland Depends on the Permanency of the Corn Laws!’, *GA*, Mar 19 1838.

²⁵⁰ ‘To editor’, *CSM*, March 1834.

Though the report of the Royal Commission advised that additional churches were necessary in Scotland, the Church was disappointed when the government failed to provide an additional endowment, recommending instead that the Church should utilise the bishops' teinds. The teinds were used to provide stipends for ministers in rural parishes where the local landowners, who had received the bulk of the teinds were legally obliged to provide for the upkeep of church buildings. This appropriation of the teinds was perceived as an assault on private property which would alienate the gentry from the Kirk. To some in the Church the government appeared to be intriguing with the voluntaries to shake the ecclesiastical foundations of society and they regarded the actions of the Whigs as a betrayal. For some the Church of Scotland had long enjoyed associations with Whiggism but the party's recognition of dissent and its seeming desire to secularise the nation were severing the links between the old allies. According to the *Presbyterian Review*, 'old Scotch Whiggery' had descended into two branches: politico-religious Whiggery and religio-political Whiggery. The second branch directed political policy according to divine imperatives, while the first, which was favoured by the monarch and Parliament, relegated religion and directed policy according to expediency. The Whigs were, the *Review* declared, 'the purest specimens of corrupted Whiggery' and 'the most unscrupulous assertors of a political philosophy, which is opposed throughout to all the grand and venerable features of the old whiggery of the covenants.'²⁵¹ In 1837 Henry Cockburn described the Kirk as behaving 'alarmingly wild'. 'Nothing is so rare at present', he wrote, 'as to find a clergyman not in hostility to the most liberal Government we have ever had'.²⁵²

The Whigs were, in general, pragmatic men who refused to discountenance the claims of dissent, and the government's refusal to grant additional funds to the Kirk soured relations between the Kirk and Westminster which culminated in the Disruption in 1843. In the end, however, the Whigs believed in the utility of liberal church establishments, and were probably not prepared seriously to consider voluntaryism.²⁵³ The Scottish Whigs were to a degree seriously attached to the Kirk and, during the 'ten years' conflict' over patronage, the claims of the Scottish establishment were defended in Parliament. As the evangelical wing of the Kirk came to espouse non-intrusion as its unifying doctrine, many

²⁵¹ See the review of the *Edinburgh Review* in *PR*, April, 1844. See also, 'Address of a Radical Reformer to his Brother Reformers', *CSM*, Sep 1835.

²⁵² Cockburn, *Journal*, I, p. 137.

²⁵³ G.F.A. Best, 'The Whigs and the Church Establishment in the Age of Grey and Holland', *History*, 45 (1960).

in the Whig party came to the church's defence.²⁵⁴ Iain Hutchison writes that by 1840, as the Whigs regained support, the alliance between voluntaries and political radicals ended; the implication again being that voluntaries and radicals were two separate groupings.²⁵⁵ Voluntaries organised themselves into a single-issue interest group and voting bloc. Those whose primary aim was to see disestablishment effected in Britain chose only to elect a candidate who pledged himself to voluntaryism. Where no such candidate was available, some voluntaryists recommended staying neutral to put pressure on the Whigs who were appearing to collude with non-intrusionist Kirkmen.²⁵⁶ The defeat of Adam Black, voluntary publisher and brother-in-law of William Tait, at the election for Edinburgh's Lord Provost, encouraged the voluntaries to detach from the Whigs.²⁵⁷ Other political radicals, Hutchison writes, whose main priority was further parliamentary, social and economic reform, were willing to sacrifice voluntaryism. Moreover, Hutchison argues, voluntaries were mostly middle-class and unwilling to identify themselves with Chartism. George Mills, who stood as a Chartist in 1841, lost support despite his adherence to voluntaryism.²⁵⁸

However, the church question was not as divorced from political reform as Hutchison has represented. Not all voluntaries spurned Chartism. Indeed, Andrew Marshall believed that since non-intrusionists in the Kirk were now seeking an alliance with the Whig party, the time had come for voluntaryist clergymen to make common cause with the Chartists. As pointed out by the Kirk, the voluntaries drew much support from tradesmen and the unenfranchised portion of the community.²⁵⁹ It seemed natural to the Kirk that as atheistic anarchists who desired the overthrow of the whole religious and social structure, the voluntaries would sympathise with the attempt to secure universal suffrage. It was reported in the *CSM* that 'the Voluntary organs are crying on the trades, and others to revolution, both in England and Scotland.'²⁶⁰ The voluntaries were aware that by enlisting the support of the unenfranchised, their numbers would greatly improve and their attack on the Kirk would be more formidable. As a consequence, some voluntaries were encouraged

²⁵⁴ Miller, *Cockburn's Millennium*, p. 261.

²⁵⁵ Hutchison, *Political History*, p. 39.

²⁵⁶ Brown, *Crisis*, pp. 5–6; John Macfarlane & Andrew Marshall, *Dissenting Neutrality: or, the Perthshire Election* (Edinburgh, 1840).

²⁵⁷ For the election battle see Nicolson (ed.), *Memoirs*, pp. 113–16.

²⁵⁸ Hutchison, *Political History*, p. 40.

²⁵⁹ However, not every person signed voluntary petitions as a matter of principle. One impoverished weaver explained that he supported the voluntary campaign as a result of his frustration at the Kirk's failure to provide for the poor. He retained his faith in the principle of establishments. See *A Short Account of the Life and Hardships of a Glasgow Weaver; with his opinion upon the question at present in hot dispute between churchmen and voluntaries* (Glasgow, 1834).

²⁶⁰ 'Voluntary Truths Elegantly Expressed', *CSM*, Aug 1834.

to support wider suffrage as an expedient measure, beneficial to the cause, while others were committed to franchise extension on principle. As will be discussed in the next section, to some extent Chartism can be seen as the culmination of the politicised voluntary movement. Some, though by no means all, voluntaryist clergymen and laymen regarded Chartism as a means to bring about disestablishment. Others, including some establishmentarian Presbyterians, justified Chartism with reference to Presbyterian political theology, biblical interpretation and the Covenanting past.

(iv) Chartism

Chartism has been described as the first working-class political movement in Britain, which sought to alleviate the stress of the labouring population through political reform. It officially took root in London in 1837 when the London Workingmen's Association drafted the People's Charter which listed the reforms the movement sought: universal male suffrage, vote by ballot, payment of MPs, the abolition of property qualifications, equal electoral districts and annual parliaments. The movement gained momentum in 1838-9 when meetings and demonstrations were held across Britain. It was revived again, after many arrests, in 1842 when the National Charter Association, with auxiliary branches and a weekly subscription, was established to mobilise the populace. In the May of that year a petition was presented to Parliament reportedly bearing 3,300,000 signatures. Chartist agitation was revived at times of acute un-employment, resurfacing again in 1848.²⁶¹ However, Chartism was not just the child of economic distress and the manifestation of a new working-class consciousness. In form and focus it was indebted to reform movements which had preceded it.²⁶² As Christopher Bayly observes, Chartist ideology 'represented not so much an early form of class-based socialism as a harking back to eighteenth-century demands for an end to corruption and taxation. Radical Chartists promoted a vision of virtuous communities of pious freeholders'.²⁶³ In England, Chartism was, to a degree,

²⁶¹ Brown, *Churches*, pp. 332-7. Two older accounts of Scottish Chartism are L.C. Wright, *Scottish Chartism* (Edinburgh, 1953) and A. Wilson, *The Chartist Movement in Scotland* (Manchester, 1970). See also W.H. Fraser, 'The Scottish Context of Chartism', in T. Brotherstone (ed.), *Covenant, Charter and Party* (Aberdeen, 1989); R. Duncan, 'Chartism in Aberdeen: Radical Politics and Culture 1838-48', in Brotherstone (ed.), *Covenant*, pp. 78-91.

²⁶² G. Stedman Jones, 'Rethinking Chartism', in G. Stedman Jones (ed.), *Languages of class: Studies in English working class history 1832-1982* (Cambridge, 1983).

²⁶³ C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford, 2004), p. 159.

linked to nonconformity;²⁶⁴ here it is suggested that in Scotland Chartism was in some ways another expression of Presbyterian radicalism.

Historians have emphasised the extent to which Scottish Chartism differed in character to the English movement. It has been argued that Scottish Chartists favoured moral force and were influenced by Scottish reform traditions. Like the movements for reform in earlier years, Chartism in Scotland drew on a mixture of inspirational narratives and historical figures including the myth of the Norman Yoke and the ancient constitution; Wallace and Bruce; Hampden and Russell; George Washington; the radicals of the 1790s; as well as the Covenanters. As a consequence, Chartist rhetoric was at once British and Scottish; it could engage with the British movement but was also coloured by local circumstance and history. In Scotland it was also influenced by the country's Presbyterian heritage. Scottish and English Chartists were frustrated at the perceived failure of the Church and its ally, the landed interest, to provide for the poor; their rhetoric was thus anti-clerical; but the establishment of Chartist churches proves that Scottish Chartists were not keen on renouncing religion altogether. As reported in the *Scottish Patriot*, the Chartist church meetings were extremely well attended while a letter from a Chartist divinity student insisted that liberty and irreligion were not compatible.²⁶⁵ Indeed, the Charter was declared to be based on the principles of Christianity,²⁶⁶ and addresses from Chartists were submitted to the Relief and the United Secession Churches. That sent to the United Secession insisted that members of the Church could not possibly object to the principle of universal suffrage: 'to say...that the working man is not qualified to use the elective franchise in the management of civil society, is to affirm that the institutions of man are more elevated in their character than the institutions of the Messiah'.²⁶⁷ Jean Christodoulou has highlighted the influence of the Universalist Church on Scottish Chartism, particularly on the *True Scotsman* newspaper edited by the leading Universalist John Fraser;²⁶⁸ here it will be suggested that, inspired by the memory of rebellion, Chartists

²⁶⁴ D. Jones, *Chartism and the Chartists* (London, 1975), pp. 50–1; E. Yeo, 'Christianity in Chartist Struggle 1838–1842', *P&P*, 91 (1981).

²⁶⁵ 'Bridgeton', *SPt*, Sep 21 1839; 'Chartist Sermons', *SPt*, Oct 5 1839; 'To Editor', *SPt*, Feb 6 1841.

²⁶⁶ T.C. Smout, *A Century of the Scottish People 1830–1950* (London, 1986), p. 200; 'Charter', *CC*, Dec 14 1839; Smith, *Passive Obedience*, pp. 163–4. Tony Clarke has questioned how far Scottish Chartism was characterised by moral force and a distinctly religious flavour. Drawing attention to the existence of Chartist churches in England, he downplays regional differences and questions 'the extent to which religious influence necessarily distanced the movement in Scotland from the mainstream of the movement in Britain.' As is argued here, Scottish religion was distinctive enough to lend Chartism in Scotland a unique hue. See Tony Clarke, 'Early Chartism in Scotland: A "Moral Force" Movement?', in Brotherstone (ed.), *Covenant*, pp. 106–21.

²⁶⁷ Smith, *Passive Obedience*, pp. 159–60.

²⁶⁸ Christodoulou, 'Universalist Church', pp. 618–21.

drew on Scottish Presbyterianism to justify their actions and aims. Chartism also became associated with the politico-religious radicalism of voluntaryism.²⁶⁹

As the Reform agitation was peppered with references to the days of the Covenant, so Chartism was similarly inspired. In the opinion of George Gilfillan, the Scots campaigned for the Reform Bill as well as the Charter with such gusto because they were reminded of Covenanting times.²⁷⁰ According to Donald Smith and Alexander Wilson, the Chartists believed they were part of Scotland's radical tradition: 'the Chartist movement', Smith says, 'became for its participants in Scotland merely a continuation of the age-long struggle carried on by their forefathers for civil and religious liberty.'²⁷¹ The *Chartist Circular*, newspaper of the cause which reached a circulation of over 20,000,²⁷² printed by the Universal Suffrage Central Committee for Scotland and distributed by pedlars in the 'humble clachan, or thinly peopled parish', hills and glens,²⁷³ printed stories and slogans designed to boost morale. In December 1839 the paper printed a tale of Covenanting bravery with a postscript intimating that the example of the martyrs should not be forgotten: 'may their deeds and their examples not be lost upon their descendants! They have likewise a battle to fight, though not with the sword. Socially, as well as politically, society must be remodelled in accordance with the dictates of a stern morality...as we look on our forefathers, so will our descendants look upon us, *If we enact our parts with equal honour*'.²⁷⁴ A radical meeting in Stirling, meanwhile, where the Charter was adopted, was reminiscent to one onlooker of the Covenanting times. Indeed, according to this commentator, this 'present meeting was only carrying out the noble principles which were then begun – civil and religious liberty'.²⁷⁵ Physical-force activist George Julian Harney insisted that 'it was not the moral-force psalm-singing section of the Covenanters that gained religious freedom for Scotland.'²⁷⁶ At a Chartist rally on Glasgow Green in 1838, moreover, demonstrators from Strathaven carried a flag from the battle of Drumclog.²⁷⁷

The Chartists employed eighteenth-century terms; they spoke of divine right and despotism, a parasitic landed class, and corruption in the government and in the Church,

²⁶⁹ Ian Machin has observed the link between English nonconformist voluntaryism and Chartism but the relationship between voluntaryism and Chartism in Scotland has yet fully to be explored. Machin, *Politics*, p. 110.

²⁷⁰ Gilfillan, *Martyrs*, pp. 164–6.

²⁷¹ Smith, *Passive Obedience*, p. 164; Wilson, *Chartist Movement*, p. 138.

²⁷² Jones, *Chartists*, p. 99.

²⁷³ Preface to bound volume of the CC (Glasgow, 1841).

²⁷⁴ 'A Legend of the Covenanters' and 'Story of the Rev. Myddleton in Ayrshire', CC, Dec 14 1839.

²⁷⁵ 'Public Meetings. Radical Demonstration at Stirling', TS, Nov 17 1838.

²⁷⁶ Pentland, 'Commemoration', p. 155.

²⁷⁷ Smith, *Passive Obedience*, p. 165.

which combined, indoctrinated the population in the principles of passive obedience.²⁷⁸ This doctrine, long abhorred in Scotland, was condemned in no uncertain terms. This is not surprising, given that the Church of England distributed tracts ‘unmasking’ Chartism and encouraging obedience, while the Kirk generally regarded the movement as atheistic and revolutionary and discouraged involvement in politics.²⁷⁹ According to Stewart J. Brown, the Church viewed the movement as a rejection of ‘the paternalistic Christian social order’. Chalmers regarded Chartism as evidence of the breakdown of parish-based society; the movement doubtless gave inspiration to the non-intrusion and church endowment campaigns.²⁸⁰ Passive obedience was the doctrine which the Covenanters had defiantly resisted in the seventeenth century, and, according to the Chartists, it continued to be a fundamental component of popular education as dispensed by churches and schools.²⁸¹ It taught the people to be satisfied with their lot otherwise a wrathful God would punish them. These teachings could be heard in the churches throughout the country because, the *Circular* declared, ‘masters and ministers do not wish the people to be so enlightened, as to understand and demand their natural and Christian rights.’ The clergy were held up as greedy, overpaid tools of the state through which its political preaching flowed. They played the game of political priestcraft, it was argued, and helped oppress the people while they enjoyed inflated salaries. The *Circular* urged people to realise that there was nothing mystical about the clergy or their aristocratic allies. True religion could be found within and Chartists preferred to spend the Sabbath reading their bibles at home, or listening to a genuine lay preacher, than attend their established Kirk. ‘The peasant’, the *Circular* declared, ‘is as sacred as the earl – and the mechanic as sacred as the minister.’ Thus, the Chartists expressed their frustration at the Kirk and attempted to solicit the support of the dissenting churches which held similar views on the corrupting influence of state control of religion and a contemptuous disregard of hierarchical society. Spurned by these churches, which could not, their spokesmen claimed, conscientiously partake of political affairs, Chartists established their own churches where their claims would be heard: ‘with the help of God, with the bible in the one hand, and the Charter in the other,

²⁷⁸ On the influence of eighteenth-century radical ideas of old corruption, see Montgomery, *Glasgow Radicalism*, pp. 33–5; Fraser, ‘Scottish Context’, p. 71.

²⁷⁹ Faulkner, *Chartism*, pp. 60–1; Cook, ‘Electoral Reform’, p. 499; Smith, *Passive Obedience*, pp. 153–7.

²⁸⁰ Brown, *Churches*, pp. 333–4.

²⁸¹ The *Scottish Patriot* asked for new schools which would educate the younger generation on the principles of democracy rather than passive obedience and non-resistance. ‘Chartism in Greenock’, *SPT*, Jan 2 1841.

with religious veneration, patriotic firmness, and political honesty, [the people] have...resolved to work out their own salvation'.²⁸²

This criticism of the Church and the hierarchical society which it helped to buttress was accompanied by the assertion that the true source of political power lay with the populace: 'all lawful authority, legislative, and executive, originates from the people. Power in the people is like light from the sun – native, original, inherent, and unlimited by anything human. In governors, it may be compared to the light of the moon; for it is only borrowed, delegated, and limited by the intention of the people, whose it is and to whom governors are to consider themselves as responsible, while the people are answerable only to God'. It was implied that popular sovereignty had been a divine gift and that stripping the people of their right to participate in politics was a violation of God's will. Indeed, it was 'treason against Heaven'. The Bible included within its pages no mention of hierarchy and it was clear that every person was equal in the eyes of the Lord: 'a simple democracy was the only order of government he instituted... the liberty for which we contend, is an emanation from the Deity'. It was clear also that God favoured democratic and republican rule, as the Jews had chosen rulers from among themselves; when they desired a King, God had given them one as a curse. Hereditary monarchy was flawed and indefensible given that the line had been broken many times. Indeed, the 'popery of religion and the popery of politics' protected the monarchy and aristocracy, encouraged corruption in the government and prevented the humble population from acquiring its rights. The Chartists believed likewise that every soul was entitled to a share of nature's bounty. Quoting Matthew vi.11: 'give us this day our daily bread', they declared that God had never divided society into ranks and had provided food for all. Thus, the Corn Laws were anti-scriptural enactments 'written with a pen of steel dipped in the blood of the poor'; but, it was argued, these laws could only be repealed once a reform of Parliament had taken place.²⁸³

According to Jean Christodoulou, the belief in the equality of men and the divine right to nature's bounty was derived from the thought of the Universalist Church. However, established by Neil Douglas of the Relief Church, this denomination had

²⁸² 'The Religious Education of the People', CC, Nov 30 1839, 'Political Education of the People', CC, Dec 14 1839, 'Commercial Education of the People', CC, Dec 28 1839, Jan 11 1840. Existing churches viewed Chartist churches as purely political and their establishment as unscriptural. However, it seems the Chartist churches espoused an orthodox creed demonstrating the influence of Calvinist Presbyterianism on the Scottish populace. The Greenock Chartist Church insisted that preachers be chosen by the congregation and condemned seat rents as unscriptural, which is indicative of the extent to which current practices within the Kirk were resented. See Smith, *Passive Obedience*, p. 170.

²⁸³ See the issues of the CC for Sep 28 1839, Oct 12 1839, Oct 19 1839 and Nov 9 1839. See also 'Physical Improvement, Or the Triumph of the Charter, Must Precede the Spread of Christianity Among the People', CC, Oct 26 1839 and 'The People the Source of Power', CC, Jan 18 1840.

Presbyterian origins. The Chartists' emphasis on popular sovereignty and suspicion of clerical hierarchy could have been inspired in part by their Scottish Presbyterian heritage. Certainly, the views espoused in the *Chartist Circular* were similar to those advocated by the Rev. Joseph Hay at the free trade meeting in Arbroath and others who supported the repeal of the Corn Laws and were keen to emphasise the entitlement of all to natural resources. Some voluntary Presbyterians, moreover, attempted to ally their cause with Chartism. Voluntarism and Chartism sought the overthrow of monopolies of power in both church and state. Indeed, Chartists specifically called for disestablishment at the Chartist Convention in 1851.²⁸⁴ As Richard Masheder, a Cambridge fellow, observed in 1860, 'it is by annual Parliaments, equal electoral districts, and "a reasonable remuneration to members of Parliament", that Dissent calculates upon reaching the goal proposed – the separation of Church and State'.²⁸⁵

In 1840 Andrew Marshall addressed his colleagues on the necessity of attracting the support of the unenfranchised community. Marshall began by intimating his aversion to the demagogic leaders of the Chartists but insisted that dissenters must make every effort to win the Chartists over. Considering their aims, Marshall concluded that there existed no rational reason why the franchise could not be further extended. He declared: 'all men are equal – I mean, all entitled to equal rights...There is no man living, no man of good character, how low soever his station, how poor soever his circumstances, upon whom I could turn round and say – Sir, I am entitled to other rights and other privileges than you'. The law connecting franchise entitlement with property Marshall declared to be an 'insufferable Tory maxim'. He argued that morality and religion best qualified people to vote, denouncing many of the enfranchised who defended the Corn Laws and trade monopolies as morally bankrupt; the humbler classes, Marshall insisted, exhibited more piety and principle than those above them. He condemned the infidel Chartist leaders who had set up political churches devoid, Marshall thought, of religious creed, but sympathised with the movement's followers who required only direction from clergymen to continue faithful. He denied that voluntarism had given birth to Chartism as some Kirk supporters claimed; Chartism had grown out of disappointment at Reform. Nevertheless, voluntarism had benefited from the support of the unenfranchised who had attended its public meetings and subscribed its petitions. The clergyman insisted that though he did not mean to campaign for the Charter, his position as a church minister would not prevent him from publicly declaring his opinion on franchise extension: 'may we not avow', Marshall asked

²⁸⁴ H.U. Faulkner, *Chartism and the Churches: a Study in Democracy* (1916, London, 1970 edn), pp. 33–9.

²⁸⁵ Quoted in Machin, 'Disestablishment', p. 120.

his colleagues, ‘on all proper occasions, that we are in favour of a more extended suffrage – a suffrage greatly more extended than what we now enjoy – that we deem it reasonable in itself, reasonable in any circumstances, and that, in the present circumstances of the country, we hold it to be altogether necessary?’ He urged his colleagues to advocate the cause of the Chartists, to mingle with them, and reclaim their allegiance to the dissenting churches. Marshall declared universal suffrage to be the fundamental doctrine of the British Constitution as articulated by Blackstone, and urged his co-religionists publicly to avow this view.

Marshall’s speech was poorly received by some members of his audience. His endorsement of Chartism was bold at a time when the movement was widely regarded as dangerous. Despite interruptions from the crowd, Marshall asserted his belief that the followers of Chartism – the humble population of Scotland – if encouraged by a little compassion, would become what they had always been in the past: ‘the mainspring and stay of every movement in favour of liberty, either civil or religious’. Marshall was prevented from finishing his speech, but in a printed version of his address, he restated his aims and desires.²⁸⁶

Although Marshall was shouted down at the meeting in Edinburgh, the *Voluntary Church Magazine*, in its review of the published speech, declared its willingness to consider the minister’s recommendations. Again stating that dissenters had lost the support of the Whigs to non-intrusion, which aimed, it was claimed, at rooting out dissent from the land, the *Magazine* entreated its readers to read carefully Marshall’s thoughts on Chartism and seriously to consider how necessary it was for dissent to ally itself with the unenfranchised. Since the esteemed minister had been unable at the meeting to finish his speech, the *VCM* printed its conclusion. Although the *Magazine* advised its readers to ‘reflect long and prayerfully before they fairly identify themselves with the views of modern Chartism’, Marshall was the man whose radical views had first led them down the voluntary path, and consequently his ideas were to be carefully considered. The *Magazine* noted its disapproval of the way in which Marshall had been treated in Edinburgh and declared that had he delivered his speech in Glasgow, he would have been heard with patient respect.²⁸⁷

The *United Secession Magazine* dedicated a portion of its March issue in 1841 to the subject of Chartism. The *Magazine* referred to Marshall’s pamphlet which, the *USM*

²⁸⁶ Andrew Marshall, *The Duty of Attempting to Reconcile the Unenfranchised with the Enfranchised Classes*. (Edinburgh, 1840).

²⁸⁷ *Voluntary Church Magazine*, Feb 1841.

was confident all of its readers must have read. This article supported Marshall's argument and made it clear to readers that the poor reception of his speech in no way indicated that dissenters generally disapproved of the opinions expressed. 'It is certain', the article insisted, 'that he was called to order solely on account of alleged irrelevancy. Numbers who approved of the step which was taken, declared freely that they had no objection to Mr Marshall's remarks, except that they did not relate to the business of the meeting.' The *Magazine* remarked that while voluntaryism and Chartism were quite distinct, there did not 'appear to be the slightest inconsistency between the two'. It was quite probable that given the right encouragement, Chartists would come to adopt a voluntaryist position, and give up their attempts to set up alternative Chartist churches; which, since membership was contingent on subscription to the Charter, were in voluntary eyes akin to political state churches.²⁸⁸ The *USM* recorded its desire that, in order to turn out the non-intrusion Whigs, an alliance might be formed between voluntaries, Chartists and Corn Law repealers.²⁸⁹

Other voluntaries besides Marshall did demonstrate their support for Chartism. The Rev. George Campbell, minister of the West Relief Church in Strathaven, attended a Chartist meeting in 1839 and prayed for universal suffrage.²⁹⁰ In 1848 the Rev. William Anderson attended a meeting in Glasgow of reformers dedicated to achieving radical democratic reform,²⁹¹ and was affectionately praised in the *Scottish Patriot*.²⁹² John Ritchie, the great voluntary champion, took part in the Complete Suffrage Movement, which had similar aims to those of Chartism, and spoke in 1844 at the unveiling of a monument on Calton Hill to the political martyrs of the 1790s. He was also a member of the Universal Suffrage Central Committee of Scotland and addressed memorials to the Relief and the United Secession.²⁹³ Abram Duncan, a preacher in Chartist churches, was a champion of voluntaryism, while Archibald Browning, a former Seceder who withdrew from the Church in 1841 owing to doctrinal differences, defended his choice to preach in Chartist churches. In 1839 and 1841 he published works which championed universal suffrage and the cause of the working man, insisting on the clergyman's duty to inculcate the humane principles of Christianity.²⁹⁴ Moreover, a pro-voluntary history of the

²⁸⁸ 'Chartism', *USM*, March 1841

²⁸⁹ 'Dissenting Neutrality', *USM*, June 1840.

²⁹⁰ 'A Christian Patriot', *TS*, Feb 24 1839.

²⁹¹ J. Fyfe (ed.), *The Autobiography of John McAdam (1806-1883)* (Edinburgh, 1980), p. 16.

²⁹² 'Clerical Sketches', *SP*, Mar 6 1841.

²⁹³ W.H. Marwick, 'Social Heretics in the Scottish Churches', *RSCHS*, xi (1953), p. 231.

²⁹⁴ Archibald Browning, *A Lecture on Universal Suffrage* (Edinburgh, 1839); Archibald Browning, *Obstructions to Popular Freedom: A Lecture; Addressed to the Working Classes of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1841). The former pamphlet was addressed to the Working Man's Association in Dunfermline and printed at the *True Scotsman* press.

Secession and the Relief churches published in 1848 voiced support of political unions and by implication Chartism. Though, this publication stated, these churches were opposed to religious covenanting, 'national bonds and confederacies...may be entered into...when the matter of the league [is] consistent with the civil and religious liberties of men.' Indeed, the authors rejoiced 'to see the eyes of the nation beginning to discover the propriety of forming such political confederacies when they are necessary'. Were the inhabitants of Scotland to 'enter into political combinations of this kind', the authors claimed, 'the nation would stand forth with energy and appear a formidable body against its oppressors.'²⁹⁵ Elsewhere, at a Chartist meeting in Kilsyth, it was declared inconsistent for voluntary clergymen to withhold their support of universal suffrage and the Anti-Corn Law League. A Chartist address printed in the *Scottish Patriot* insisted that dissenters, who pleaded for congregational election, but not for universal suffrage in the political sphere, were hypocritical: 'the man who does not see through such an absurdity', the address exclaimed, 'must be blinded by prejudice or ignorant of the principles of Dissenters.'²⁹⁶ The Fenwick voluntaries, meanwhile, celebrated the advent of Chartism. In January 1839 they hailed 'with the most intense feelings of approbation, satisfaction, and delight the present movement characterised as the national movement for universal suffrage.' They toasted the 'downfall of Priestcraft' and praised Patrick Brewster and the 'little band' of clergymen who were taking part in the present movement.²⁹⁷

Many newspapers supported both voluntaryism and Chartism. Marshall's pamphlet was enthusiastically reviewed by one correspondent in the *Glasgow Argus*.²⁹⁸ This review eagerly recommended the publication, and of voluntary clergymen it declared: 'why should they seem to be, what they really are not, indifferent to the civil rights and properties of the people, with whose interests their own are properly connected?' The reviewer urged the ministers to proclaim their support for an extension of suffrage, which would 'pave the way for that important measure which they desiderate – the separation between church and state'.²⁹⁹ The *True Scotsman*, a Chartist organ launched in October 1838, began publication with an address to the Rev. James Peddie and the Central Board of Scottish Dissenters. The editor asked Peddie to consider laying the following resolutions before the Board: that God guided the present movement for universal suffrage; that a reformed Parliament would

²⁹⁵ Thomson & Struthers, *Historical Sketch*, p. 319.

²⁹⁶ 'Spirit of Reform', *SPt*, July 6 1839; 'Address to the Chartists of Scotland', *SPt*, Nov 2 1839.

²⁹⁷ Neilson, 'Fenwick', pp. 134, 136.

²⁹⁸ However, the *Argus* itself was not an advocate of Chartism. William Weir disapproved of physical-force activism, as had been demonstrated by the cotton spinners, and which the early Birmingham Chartists appeared to represent.

²⁹⁹ *GA*, Feb 1 1841.

bring about voluntarism; that the Board would hail the prospect of such a Parliament as they ‘think it morally impossible that...the working man of Great Britain would elect, as their representatives men who could tolerate...the present union between Church and State.’ The editor insisted that ‘non-electors’ formed the bulk of voluntary congregations and sympathised greatly with the voluntary cause. He implored Peddie to affirm the cause of Chartism.³⁰⁰ Indeed, in another article, the *True Scotsman* informed Andrew Marshall that Chartism ‘embraces Voluntarism’; ‘reduce your faith to practice’, Marshall was told, ‘and you are a Chartist.’³⁰¹ In numerous articles the paper denounced the Kirk’s endowment scheme, and criticised establishmentarianism as ‘oppressive in its very nature’, with no foundation in the Bible.³⁰²

An article in the *Scottish Patriot*, meanwhile, entitled ‘Civil and Religious Liberty’ insisted that true religious liberty involved the eradication of civil distinctions; something which would only occur as a consequence of civil reform. ‘What an impulse this should be’, the paper proclaimed, ‘to all who seek to obtain the Charter!’³⁰³ A correspondent addressed Marshall in a letter printed in the paper in January 1841. He warned Marshall that Parliament as it was currently constituted would never disestablish the Churches; only Chartism would bring this about. The paper also printed a debate between a correspondent who criticised the Glasgow Voluntary Church Association for abandoning the Chartists and ‘a Voluntary’ who defended his associates. According to this ‘Voluntary’, universal suffrage was indeed an indisputable right. Though, this correspondent claimed, the Association had decided not to campaign as a group, individual voluntaries were perfectly free to campaign independently. The respondent insisted that voluntaries should test potential MPs on suffrage as well as on voluntarism.³⁰⁴

The *Patriot* also advertised the weekly meetings held in the Gorbals to discuss the rebellious attitude of the Kirk, which was currently embroiled in the ten years’ conflict. At one of these meetings the Church’s tie to the state was described as a curse; every establishment became persecuting: ‘every Scottish Mother’, a speaker declared, ‘tells her child of the bloody Claverhouse; but she ought rather to tell of a cruel-spirited established clergy.’ It was suggested that a remedy for the Church’s problems would be the dissolution of the ‘anti-scriptural connection with State’, and the appropriation of the teinds to the

³⁰⁰ ‘Central Board and the People’s Charter’, *TS*, Oct 20 1838.

³⁰¹ ‘The Great Voluntary Meeting in Edinburgh’, *TS*, Jan 2 1841.

³⁰² ‘To the Rev. Mr Stark, Burgh Missionary, Lanark’, *TS*, Mar 16 1839; ‘Voluntaries, Read This! The Connexion of Voluntarism and Universal Suffrage’, *TS*, Feb 9 1839.

³⁰³ ‘Civil and Religious Liberty’, *SPt*, Oct 19 1839.

³⁰⁴ ‘To the Rev. Andrew Marshall’, *SPt*, Jan 2 1841; ‘To the Members of the Glasgow Voluntary Church Association’, *SPt*, Jan 16 1841.

maintenance of the poor, thus placing all denominations of Christians on a 'just and equal footing'.³⁰⁵ Voluntary Chartists infiltrated a non-intrusion meeting in Airdrie where they took over the meeting and declared in favour of disestablishment. They resolved to petition not for the abolition of patronage, but for universal suffrage, since only with an extension of the franchise could voluntaryism be secured.³⁰⁶ On the non-intrusionists the editor of the *Patriot* proclaimed thus: 'the State and the Church, linked together, have been the adamant chain from which the goddess of liberty and the principles of pure religion, have struggled so long to be freed...let the tongue of the Charter speak aloud, and in a tone rendered dignified by justice, hush the discordant croakings of power-hunting priestcraft.'³⁰⁷ Elsewhere, the *Ayrshire Examiner*, a paper sympathetic to Chartism, published articles which advertised voluntary meetings and lectures and condemned the Kirk's endowment.³⁰⁸ The *Edinburgh Weekly Chronicle*, another Chartist sympathiser, was said 'to be on the point of becoming the organ of voluntary churchmen in 1834,'³⁰⁹ while *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, which also vocally defended Canadian Presbyterians and the Canadian rebellions, likewise leaned towards Chartism.³¹⁰

Despite evident strong ties between voluntaryism and Chartism, some old light Presbyterians were also sympathetic, justifying the movement according to Presbyterian ideology and a Covenanting vision. The *Dumfries Times*, which sympathised with Chartism and advocated Complete Suffrage and free trade, championed non-intrusion, condemning the Kirk's Veto Act for its undemocratic character. The *Montrose Review* expressed similar views.³¹¹ The most noteworthy Chartist clergyman, in fact, was the Rev. Patrick Brewster, evangelical Kirk minister of Paisley who campaigned against patronage in a bid to purify the Church. Brewster was a member of the Complete Suffrage Convention and the Scottish Chartist Convention of 1842. In 1840 Brewster's Presbytery declined to appoint the minister as Commissioner to the General Assembly, stating that he was neglecting his parish duties in order to attend political meetings. In 1841 the Presbytery of Glasgow accused the minister of preaching inflammatory sermons of a political nature from his own pulpit, as well as to a group of Chartists whose principles were 'unchristian and demoralising'. Brewster was accused of bringing the 'Rulers and the

³⁰⁵ 'Paisley', *Spt*, Feb 13 1841; 'Chartism and Ecclesiastical Rebellion', *Spt*, Feb 27 1841.

³⁰⁶ 'Defeat of the Non-Intrusionists And Glorious Triumph of Universal Suffrage Principles at Airdrie', *Spt*, Mar 20 1841.

³⁰⁷ 'Non-Intrusionists', *Spt*, Mar 20 1841.

³⁰⁸ See e.g., 'Ayrshire Voluntary Church Association' and 'Editorial' in *Ayrshire Examiner*, Oct 26 1838.

³⁰⁹ Cowan, *Newspaper*, p. 137.

³¹⁰ 'Canada – Standing Armies', *TEM*, Nov 1837; 'Canada', *TEM*, July 1828; 'The Chartists', *TEM*, June 1839.

³¹¹ Cowan, *Newspaper*, pp. 154, 162.

Government of the country into contempt and hatred by charging them with heinous crimes in the enactment, maintenance and administration of the laws'; of leading the people 'to look upon their rulers as tyrants and oppressors'; and of stating 'that the people were entitled to get back the land'. In response Brewster described the followers of Chartism as moral and religious. Insisting that the movement was indestructible, he declared that Chartism would advance until its principles were enshrined in the constitution. The first case against the minister was dropped, but in 1842, in spite of a petition signed by 1600 members of his congregation, the Assembly charged Brewster with libel and ordered his suspension for one year. Distracted by the Disruption, however, this decision was never enforced.³¹²

The libelled sermons were collected together and published by the author in 1843 with an appendix which justified his behaviour. In these sermons Brewster defended the clergyman's role as social commentator and political activist. He declared that religion and politics were intertwined and that principles of liberty could be discerned in the gospel. He condemned priestcraft and the erastian nature of church-state connections. The Churches had been made the tools of the ruling power in times past, he declared, obligated to preach passive obedience and further the interest of the government. Sermonising on this strand of political action was, hypocritically and inconsistently, expressly encouraged. Fortunately in Scotland, Brewster noted, the Reformation had broken this alliance and secured to the people their civil and religious rights. However, gradually the Scottish Church had lost its independent spirit, greatly owing to the burden of patronage, and could now be found instructing the people on their duties of submission to the ruling interest. This behaviour, he insisted, was in opposition to the practice of previous generations of Scottish clergymen and to the social action presented in the Bible, which revealed Jesus Christ teaching and feeding the poor. Although he admitted that famine and pestilence were often visited on a nation as a just punishment from God, Brewster insisted that much suffering in the world proceeded from the hand of man and was not to be tolerated. Indeed, it was blasphemous to submit in such cases. Brewster blamed the condition of society on the existence of the corrupting influence of state control of religion and on the failure of clergymen to realise their proper duties: to preach the doctrines of resistance to the government and the equality of men, and to encourage charity: 'the chief cause, undoubtedly, is the unfaithfulness of those to whom the word of God has been entrusted, who have either themselves abused the

³¹² Brewster pointed out that the Church was not setting a good example by rebelling against the judgement of the supreme court on disputed patronage cases. See Patrick Brewster, *The Seven Chartist and Military Discourses* (Paisley, 1843), appendix, pp. 410–11, 414, 416; Smith, *Passive Obedience*, pp. 181–2.

influence, which their sacred office conferred upon them, to obtain wealth and power and dignities of the world, or who have basely conspired, with its wicked rulers, to deceive and subjugate the people...their main design being to make men forget their high rank of EQUALITY as rational and immortal creatures and so to crush their spirits under a stern despotism'.³¹³

Brewster also espoused the argument developed in the speech of Joseph Hay and in the pages of the *Chartist Circular*: that God had provided food for all of mankind. Instead of following the scriptural code, the ruling classes had enacted laws which deprived the workforce of the fruits of their labour and exacted disproportionate amounts of taxes from them. The Corn Laws were, Brewster exclaimed, 'cruel and impolitic' and by depriving operatives of the opportunity to provide goods for foreign export, the Laws had reduced the British worker to a condition similar to that of a 'negro slave'. However, Brewster denied that free trade was always desirable, instead arguing for a revival of the principles of moral economy. Basing one sermon on a line from Ecclesiastes, v.9: 'the profit of the earth is for all', Brewster argued that it was the 'duty of every government to protect the interests of all classes of the community, and first of all so to regulate the home and foreign commerce, as to provide a sufficiency, or even an abundance of the means and comforts of life.' After the Restoration, Brewster contended, the aristocracy had instituted laws which flouted this concept.³¹⁴ The Scottish Poor Law was, moreover, inhumane, as it deprived the needy of the right to beg and failed to provide a fixed provision for the poor, unlike the old Poor Law of England which conformed with the 'benevolent spirit of Christianity, and with the express command of God' and gave a 'sacredness of character to the statute book' which contained it. However, 'in spite of the clearest commands of divine truth', the English Poor Law had been amended according to the dictates of 'Infidel Philosophy'.³¹⁵

Brewster was not the only orthodox Presbyterian who sympathised with the Chartists. As one might expect, given the inspiration to the movement provided by Covenanting heritage, the Reformed Presbyterian Church offered its qualified support. In 1816 the Reformed Presbyterians had held a public fast and included in their list of causes the deplorable condition of the labouring classes, thousands of whom were 'deprived of labour' and 'reduced to great want.' Similarly, in a pastoral address of 1842, the church testified to the hostility that existed between capital and labour, and the grief felt by both

³¹³ See Brewster, *Discourses*, pp. 26, 186–7, 213–14, 249, 276–313.

³¹⁴ Brewster, *Discourses*, p. 206.

³¹⁵ Brewster, *Discourses*, pp. 74–5, 89, 95, 156–8. In 1841 Brewster requested aid before his kirk session for the distressed weavers in his parish. According to the Poor Law, the able-bodied poor were ineligible. R.A. Cage, *The Scottish Poor Law 1745-1845* (Edinburgh, 1981), pp. 131–2.

operatives and their employers.³¹⁶ ‘Large masses of men influenced by the pressure of commercial distress’, were, the Covenanters acknowledged, striving for political reform in the hope of alleviating their suffering. However, like the Kirk, the RPs viewed voluntaries as infidels who denied that civil government had a moral foundation, and Chartists who desired the overthrow of the establishment and set up their own churches, were similarly regarded. Its aims were understandable, but the RP Church criticised Chartism for what it regarded as its irreligious quality. In its eyes, the movement appeared to countenance atheistic political theories which insisted on the natural right of all to rule but which neglected to acknowledge the divine origin of this right and the necessity of submitting to God.³¹⁷ Commercial distress was, the Covenanters insisted, evidently inflicted by an enraged deity who disapproved of erastian hierarchy; the separation of politics from religion; the rise of popery, Arminianism, Tractarianism, intemperance, and immorality; and the too prevalent incorporation of citizens, through voting at political elections, with the sinful body politic; and, according to the RP Church, rather than remain committed to human agency, the Chartists should seek relief from God and strive to establish Covenanting principles. In 1842, the Church suggested renewing the Covenants once again because, they declared, ‘political systems are advocated, characterised by a deep revolt against the rightful supremacy of the Redeemer, as governor among the nations.’ Indeed, those who desired reform ‘sought a mitigation of their calamities, not in humiliation before God on account of sin, not in deeper reverence for his law as revealed in scripture, not in prayerful efforts to reduce the civil constitution of these lands into conformity with a scriptural standard, but in the idle advocacy of theories destitute of the slightest recognition of Him whose name is above every name, and unto whom every knee should bow, and every tongue confess’.³¹⁸ Still, despite its apparent unfortunate alliance with infidelity, the Covenanters supported the drive towards further democratic reform. The implementation of the People’s Charter, or similar radical demands, would properly institute popular sovereignty, remove hereditary monarchy, and prepare the nation for a moral reformation. ‘May we not hope’, they declared, ‘that infidelity, by wresting the power from the few, and committing it into the hands of the many, is paving the way for the triumph of the truth?’ The RPs remained committed to the aims of their seventeenth-century forebears. They regarded Chartism as laying the groundwork for the institution of a third Reformation which would see both the final eradication of popery and prelacy and the adoption of the

³¹⁶ *Act of the Reformed Synod for a Public Fast with a Summary of its Causes* (Glasgow, 1816); *Pastoral Address, Containing Causes of Fasting* (Glasgow, 1842).

³¹⁷ ‘Chartists’, *SP*, March 1840.

³¹⁸ ‘Pastoral Address on the Subject of Covenanting’, *SP*, Sep 1842.

National Covenant as the basis of Britain's constitution: 'when the people have once obtained the chief command of the affairs of the kingdom, there will then be no rival power to usurp the prerogatives of Zion's king...there will then be no resistance...to the heavenly politics of the Scriptures being carried into effect; and there will then be no host of antichristian Prelates, with a popish or prelatical monarch at their head, to spurn the obligation of the national covenant engagements, the once glorious platform of the British constitution. There will, in short, be no *organised* opposition to the peculiar principles of the Reformation'. The Covenanters firmly believed that fulfilment of Covenant obligations could yet be achieved: as God had pledged to remember his Covenant with the nation of Israel after it had been broken, so he would remember his Covenant with the Scots.³¹⁹

(v) Conclusion

As the first section of this thesis has shown, Presbyterianism remained a significant force in Scottish political life well into the Victorian period at least. Many remained committed to the goal of achieving a godly commonwealth and spiritual independence for the Kirk, while others sought disestablishment. A belief in popular sovereignty and the tyrannous nature of hierarchical government in church and state drove many to press for political change. Theology and ecclesiology underpinned political and social visions, inspiring radical political thought and action. While the minority Reformed Presbyterian Church continued to strive for the principles enshrined in the national Covenants of 1638 and 1643, for others the Covenants represented inspirational symbols, encouraging resistance to the government. Voluntaryism, an offshoot of Presbyterian theory inspired by the Covenanting inheritance, developed into a widespread political movement whose aim was to challenge the existing church-state hierarchy, and which culminated in the Chartist campaign of the 1840s.

An analysis of the impact of Scots Presbyterian political values cannot be confined to Scotland however. As Colin Kidd and others have observed, the political legacy of the Covenanting tradition is perhaps most obviously seen in the modern politics of Ireland, where Ian Paisley has acknowledged his debt to the political teachings of the Rev. William Symington, and the United States, where Covenanting has partly been appropriated by the

³¹⁹ 'On the Bearings of the Distinctive Principles of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, on the Present State and Prospects of Civil and Ecclesiastical Society', *SP*, May 1838.

Christian Right.³²⁰ The next section of this thesis will chart the exportation of Presbyterian political ideology within the Atlantic world, investigating in particular the extent to which Presbyterianism impacted on British North American political culture.

³²⁰ C. Kidd, 'Conditional Britons: The Scots Covenanting Tradition and the Eighteenth-Century British State', *English Historical Review*, cxvii (2002), pp. 1175–6; D. Miller, *Queen's Rebels* (Dublin, 1978).
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Section Two:

Presbyterianism, Radicalism and Reform in British North America, c. 1815 – c.1850

1. North Atlantic Presbyterianism

As Stewart J. Brown has noticed, by the mid-nineteenth century the Scottish Kirk regarded itself as the centre of world Presbyterianism.

¹ The Kirk and the various dissenting denominations in Scotland were part of a community which extended beyond the shores of Britain. Transatlantic relationships were strengthened in this period as Presbyterians in the Atlantic world participated in the same debate over the future of the church-state. The 1876 Alliance of the Reformed Churches, but also the First International Convention of Reformed Presbyterianism in 1896, attended by delegates from North America, Ireland and Scotland, signalled the extent to which Scottish and Irish Presbyterianism had become an international phenomenon. The second section of this thesis examines this transatlantic community of Scottish Presbyterianism. It charts the exportation of Presbyterian political values to the British North American colonies, and demonstrates the ways in which these values shaped political thought and action. In Upper Canada and Nova Scotia, it will be argued, Scottish and Irish Presbyterian missionaries and immigrants contributed to movements for political reform; in the former colony they helped spark a rebellion. The ecclesiological debates which coloured political thought in Scotland were relevant also in the colonies. Events in British North America in turn impacted on Scottish religion and politics. Ian Machin has highlighted the American, French, and Italian influences on the British disestablishment campaigns; a similar case could be made for Canada. As Hilary Carey has observed, ‘ideas of disestablishment had long been anticipated in the colonies which in this respect acted as laboratories for religious experiments back home’.²

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It is estimated that around five million Britons emigrated to North America and Australasia between 1815 and the mid-1860s. Emigration to British North America rapidly increased after 1815 when more and more migrants chose to settle in the northern British colonies rather than in the United States. Upper Canada became a colony in its own right according

¹ S.J. Brown, *The National Churches in England, Ireland and Scotland 1801-1846* (Oxford, 2001), p. 298.

² H.M. Carey (ed.), *Empires of Religion* (Basingstoke, 2008), p. 10. For Machin’s commentary on the United States, France and Italy, see I. Machin, ‘Disestablishment and democracy, c.1840-1930’, in E.F. Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and Community: liberals, radicals, and collective identities in the British Isles, 1865-1931* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 125–6.

to the terms of the 1791 Constitutional Act and immigrants from Britain were encouraged to settle in its vast territory. An estimated 924,521 British people arrived in British America between 1815 and 1849. This number does not include those émigrés who re-settled in Canada after emigrating from Britain to the United States. By 1860, sixty percent of Canadians were of British origin.³ A significant proportion of this number came from lowland Scotland. Immigrants tended to settle in places where friends or relatives were already situated and often swathes of people from the same neighbourhoods migrated together. As a result, communities emerged composed primarily of Scots and their descendants. When in 1833 the Rev. William Proudfoot visited Dumfries, Upper Canada, he declared: 'I fancied myself in Scotland, for everything I saw was just as things are in Scotland.'⁴ Pictou and Cumberland County in Nova Scotia and Westmorland County in New Brunswick were populated by many immigrants from Scotland and the north of Ireland. By 1871, Andrew Clark has argued, Nova Scotia was roughly divided into a 'Scottish east and an English (largely New England) west'.⁵ As noted by Michael Vance, many of those who departed Scotland's shores had been involved, or had the potential to become involved, in radical political activity. *The Scotsman* apparently attributed the increased interest in emigration to the failure of Lord Liverpool's administration to adopt a policy of electoral reform. *Hints to Emigrants* by the Rev. William Bell, minister in Perth, Upper Canada, informed potential settlers of the political liberty which existed in the colony where land was easy to come by and the elective franchise was bestowed on the majority of the population.⁶ Vance suggests that radical political ideology may have influenced members of the emigration societies organised in Calton, Bridgeton, Anderston, and Rutherglen, amongst other places. Membership of these societies was monitored in later years to expunge this radical element.⁷ However, this spirit of dissidence was evidently transferred to British North America; Scotsmen made up a significant proportion

³ E.J. Errington, 'British Migration and British America, 1783–1867', in P. Buckner (ed.), *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 140–1.

⁴ University of Western Ontario Archives [UWO], William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 2, Journal 6, 'Jan 30th 1833'.

⁵ A.H. Clark, 'Old World Origins and Religious Adherence in Nova Scotia', *Geographical Review*, 50 (1960), p. 322. See also E.J. Cowan, 'From the Southern Uplands to Southern Ontario: Nineteenth-Century Emigration from the Scottish Borders', in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Scottish Emigration and Scottish Society* (Edinburgh, 1992); M. Harper, 'British Migration and the Peopling of the Empire', in A. Porter (ed.), *The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999).

⁶ William Bell, *Hints to Emigrants* (Edinburgh, 1824).

⁷ M.E. Vance, 'The Politics of Emigration: Scotland and Assisted Emigration to Upper Canada, 1815–26', in Devine (ed.), *Emigration*.

of the population of the regions of Lanark and Galt, areas which became highly politicised centres of reformist activity.⁸

But to what extent did this radicalism have a religious basis? Vance has focused on the trades background of Scottish radical immigrants but many settlers were also devout Presbyterians. Mostly everyone in Dumfries, Upper Canada, was a Presbyterian and many were Antiburgher Seceders.⁹ Immigrants from Glasgow, Lanark and west central Scotland, who peopled Lanark County, petitioned the government for the services of a Presbyterian minister.¹⁰ Though some second generation immigrants reached adulthood without hearing a sermon, many emigrants departed their native country firmly attached to their religious principles. On arrival in the colonies settlers desperately supplicated the churches at home to send out preachers, and in place of formally organised congregations, prayer societies were arranged. The first settlers from Dumfries in Scotland who arrived in Pictou, Nova Scotia, in the 1770s were apparently 'all religiously educated' while some were 'decidedly pious'. Residents from this region flocked to hear the missionary James MacGregor when he arrived.¹¹ Family worship was carried on dutifully in a remote settlement near Galt, where worship was conducted in a log barn before a church was erected. According to one contemporary, in Galt itself 'the attendance upon religious ordinances, after proper places of worship were obtained, was large and regular. The locality had always been conspicuous for this, particularly on the Sabbath, which was in earlier times, with very few exceptions, observed with a Scottish strictness quite in contrast with modern ideas.'¹²

Though emigrants often complained about the lack of ministerial guidance in the colonies, increasing numbers of ministers migrated either as missionaries sent by the church or as emigrants who voluntarily traversed the ocean with their families. The Burgher synod of Seceders sent their first missionaries in 1766. The Rev. James MacGregor was dispatched to Nova Scotia by the Antiburgher Seceders in 1786. He was followed by Duncan Ross and John Brown; Thomas McCulloch arrived in 1803. At the time of the union of the Antiburgher and Burgher presbyteries in 1817, the Synod of Nova Scotia – later the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia – had 19 ministers, 14 of whom were from the Secession denominations (three were from the Kirk and two were English Independents). Presbyteries of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island were organised

⁸ M.E. Vance, 'Scottish Chartism in Canada West?: An Examination of the "Clear Grit" Reformers', *Scottish Tradition*, 22 (1997), p. 62.

⁹ UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 2, Journal 6, 'Jan 30th 1833'.

¹⁰ See Bell, *Hints*, p. 81.

¹¹ George Patterson, *History of the County of Pictou, Nova Scotia* (Montreal, 1877), pp. 112, 145.

¹² James Young, *Reminiscences of the Early History of Galt and Settlement of Dumfries in the Province of Ontario* (Toronto, 1880), p. 86.

in 1820 and 1821 in association with the Synod.¹³ Meanwhile, in 1818 a minister of the Relief, Henry Patterson, also ministered in St Andrews Church in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and was succeeded by another Relief colleague, Thomas G. McInnis. McInnis later joined the Kirk and was replaced by a Kirk minister in 1820.

In Upper Canada the Presbytery of the Canadas was formed in 1818 by William Bell – originally a Burgher minister in Rothesay – William Smart, William Taylor and Henry Easton. Smart, whose parents were members of John Brown's Secession congregation in Haddington, was sent by the London Missionary Society to Brockville in 1811. They were joined by, amongst others, William Jenkins, a Seceder from Forfar, who became minister in Markham in 1817, and James Harris, a Seceder from Monaghan, Ireland, who became pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Toronto. This Presbytery became the United Synod in 1831. The Rev. William Proudfoot, missionary of the United Secession Church, proceeded to London, western Upper Canada, in 1832 where he organised a separate voluntarist Missionary Presbytery in 1834. Archibald Bruce, Professor of Theology at the Antiburgher Divinity Hall, apparently educated seventeen North America-bound missionaries between 1787 and 1805.¹⁴

A few Kirk clergymen ministered in the colonies before the establishment of the Glasgow Colonial Society in 1824, but after the organisation of this body, chaired by Lord Dalhousie and administered by the Rev. Robert Burns, minister in Paisley, the number of Church of Scotland missions rapidly increased. Only Kirk ministers were dispatched, as stipulated by the Society's code of regulations, and these included the Rev. Kenneth McKenzie, originally from Stornoway, who settled in Pictou in 1824. Kirk ministers also settled in Upper Canada, establishing their own Synod distinct from the United and Missionary denominations. Thomas C. Wilson settled in Perth alongside William Bell in 1830 and William Rintoul set up in Toronto an alternative Presbyterian Church in association with the Kirk.

The Covenanters also had their missionaries. The seventeenth-century movement had been to some extent imperialistic as the Solemn League and Covenant had engaged its subscribers to strive for the establishment of Scottish Presbyterianism in England and Ireland. The Covenanters had also looked further afield, hoping to extend the movement to

¹³ John McKerrow, *History of the Foreign Missions of the Secession and United Secession Church* (Edinburgh, 1867).

¹⁴ W. Klempa, 'Scottish Presbyterianism Transplanted to the Canadian Wilderness', in C.H.H. Scobie & G.A. Rawlyk (eds.), *The Contribution of Presbyterianism to the Maritime Provinces of Canada* (Montreal & Kingston, 1997), p. 9.

the European continent.¹⁵ By the end of the nineteenth century, Covenanting had become a transatlantic phenomenon with, as has been seen, a fully established and thriving minority church in the north of Ireland, as well as in the United States.¹⁶ In 1830 a meeting of the Irish Reformed Presbyterian Synod, attended by William Symington from Scotland and Alexander McLeod from New York, agreed to draft 'a mutual Bond and Covenant, divested of local peculiarities and adapted to the state of the Reformed Churches in Britain and America, and to the condition of the Church of Christ throughout the world'.¹⁷ Covenanting missionaries were committed to universal political reform and in the United States they were one of the first groups to protest in favour of slavery abolition.¹⁸ The Rev. James Milligan, Reformed Presbyterian minister from Vermont, toured Canada in 1829 and 1830 organising praying societies and performing baptisms. In 1833 the Rev. James McLachlan was dispatched by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland and he organised a congregation in Ramsay, near Perth. Within four years McLachlan had 125 members in his congregation.¹⁹ He ministered there until 1851 when he moved to the United States; at which time his congregation was placed under the jurisdiction of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America's Presbytery of Rochester. The Rev. John McLachlan, who ultimately joined the Free Church, came to Galt in 1846 and then moved to Toronto. The Rev. James Geggie ministered on behalf of the Scottish Covenanters from 1838-1840 in Megantic County, Lower Canada, before he fell out of favour with the Church for neglecting his duties. The Rev. Joseph Henderson appears to have settled in Hamilton around 1853 where he preached RP principles.

The first proper Reformed Presbyterian missionary to the Maritime district was the Rev. Alexander Clarke, from Kilrea, County Londonderry, sent by the Irish Synod in the summer of 1827. Clarke arrived in St. John, New Brunswick, where he found only a small number of Covenanters and a 'spirit of Toryism' which, in Clarke's opinion, made it 'no easy matter for an RP minister to get into a church to preach at all'.²⁰ He settled instead in Amherst, Nova Scotia in the Chignecto region where there existed several Covenanting families who had left Ulster on account of tithes. By 1834 he had three congregations at Little Shemogue, Amherst and Goose River, as well as four preaching stations at Nappan, Sackville, Jolicure, and River Herbert. In 1831 he was joined by the Rev. William

¹⁵ S.A. Burrell, 'The Apocalyptic Vision of the Early Covenanters', *SHR*, 43 (1964).

¹⁶ E.M. Robinson, 'Immigrant Covenanters: Religious and Political Identity, From Scotland to America' (University of California, Santa Cruz Ph.D. Thesis, 2004).

¹⁷ 'Meeting of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod', *Orthodox Presbyterian*, July 1830.

¹⁸ R.A. Roth, 'The First Radical Abolitionists: The Reverend James Milligan and the Reformed Presbyterians of Vermont', *New England Quarterly*, 55 (1982).

¹⁹ G.J. Lockwood, *Beckwith: Irish and Scottish Identities in a Canadian Community* (n.p., 1991), p. 186.

²⁰ E. Hay, *The Chignecto Covenanters* (Montreal & Kingston, 1996), p. 13.

Sommerville, of County Down, likewise sent by the Irish RP Synod. Sommerville settled in Lower Horton (Grand Pré), where the Presbyterian population had built in 1811 what became known as the Covenanter Church.²¹ The two missionaries established the Reformed Presbytery of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia in April 1832. Clarke and Sommerville worked together harmoniously until 1838 when friction began to develop owing to Clarke's involvement in politics. Clarke was formally expelled from the Irish Synod in 1847 and until his death in 1874 the missionary associated with the General Synod (new school) of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America. Sommerville and the Rev. Alexander McLeod Stavelly, who arrived in New Brunswick in 1841, reorganised the colonial Synod in 1845 and continued to adhere to traditional Covenanting standards insisting on the relevance of the Covenants in the colonies of the British empire.²² In 1872 there were still 32 heads of families listed as Reformed Presbyterians in Grand Pré.

Missionaries transported to the Canadian colonies the religious values and traditions of the mother country. They disseminated through preaching and publications the principles they had imbibed in the divinity halls of some of the sternest sects in Scotland. The Rev. Hugh Graham, a Burgher minister in Nova Scotia, wrote in a letter in 1811 that for the last six years he had gathered local young people at his house in winter evenings to listen to and be quizzed on lectures by the Rev. George Lawson.²³ The Rev. James McLachlan, meanwhile, was instructed by the Reformed Presbyterian Church to propagate Covenanting values as far and wide as he could.²⁴ According to Eldon Hay, historian of the Chignecto Covenanting movement, the Covenanting tradition was kept alive in that region by Clarke and his missionary colleagues who preached and spoke regularly about the martyrs of the seventeenth century.²⁵ One resident of the Chignecto region recalled the stern piety of his grandfather: 'Grandfather was very strict – he had been brought up by a Covenanter, the sternest kind of Presbyterian – no hot meals were served on Sunday unless grandmother was not well and then she was allowed a cup of hot tea. If the fire went out on

²¹ H.A. Davidson, *Winds of Change: The People of the Covenanter Church* (Wolfville, NS, 2003), pp. 23, 87.

²² See William Sommerville, *The Social Position of Reformed Presbyterians, or Cameronians* (Londonderry, NS, 1869).

²³ James Robertson, *History of the Mission of the Secession Church to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island* (Edinburgh & London, 1847), pp. 38–9.

²⁴ 'Instructions to McLachlan', SA, Nov 1834.

²⁵ Hay, *Covenanters*, p. 23. On February 16 1835 Sommerville dined at the house of Elihu Woodworth, deacon of the Covenanter Church, where he apparently got into a dispute with Elihu's son over King Charles and the Covenanters. F.I. Woodworth & W. Kirkconnell (trans. & ed.), *The Diary of Deacon Elihu Woodworth 1835-1836* (Wolfville, NS, 1972), pp. 5–6.

Saturday night, it stayed out until Monday.’²⁶ In 1843 the RP congregation of Grafton, organised by the Rev. William Sommerville, recognised the continuing obligation of the National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant. This declaration was renewed in 1849 and again in 1850.²⁷ According to future Canadian Prime Minister Sir Robert Laird Borden, who sometimes attended Sommerville’s church with his mother, Sommerville ‘succeeded in imposing upon the greater part of the Presbyterian congregation at Grand Pré the peculiar views of his sect respecting the relations of Church and State.’²⁸

The difficulties of establishing missions and consolidating colonial churches did encourage ministers to embrace ecumenical action, but it did not eradicate all prejudices. James MacGregor initially refused to join the Presbytery of Truro in Nova Scotia, organised by Burgher Seceders, owing to his affiliation to the Antiburgher synod in Scotland. On his refusal MacGregor remarked: ‘I believe that every honest Scottish emigrant that goes abroad carries with him a conscientious attachment to the peculiarities of his profession, which nothing but time and a particular acquaintance with the country he goes to will enable him to lay aside. It may be so with more Scotchmen, it was so with me.’²⁹ It took another two decades before the Seceders in Nova Scotia united in one body, recognising the irrelevance of the patronage question in a country where patronage did not exist. William Bell frequently quarrelled with James McLachlan over their respective territories in the Perth region of Upper Canada and William Proudfoot declined the invitation to join the United Synod because of that body’s failure to adopt a voluntarist ecclesiological position. The United Synod negotiated a union with the Canadian Kirk but rejected their high-handed terms in 1832; the two bodies only united in 1840. Relations between the Kirk, the United Synod and the Missionary Synod in Upper Canada were often tense while in Nova Scotia the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia and the Kirk were violent enemies. The Disruption was also exported to British North America and Free Synods were formed in Upper Canada and Nova Scotia in 1844 and in New Brunswick in 1845. The tendency of Scottish Presbyterians to quarrel and divide was thus fully transmitted to the colonies.

Many immigrants also retained their beliefs, prejudices and attachment to the churches they had attended in Scotland and in Ulster. According to George Patterson, the grandson of James MacGregor, ‘the Scotch and Scotch Irish as thoroughly transplanted to

²⁶ Davidson, *Winds of Change*, p. 53.

²⁷ Acadia University Archives, Rev. William Sommerville Letters and Papers 1832-1860, File 1900.189, ‘1843 Agreement and Declaration in Trust of the Reformed Presbyterian Congregation of Cornwallis’.

²⁸ H. Borden (ed.), *Robert Laird Borden: His Memoirs* (3 vols., Toronto, 1938), I, p. 6.

²⁹ Robertson, *Mission*, p. 85.

this western wilderness the sturdy Presbyterianism for which their covenanting forefathers had shed their blood'.³⁰ On a tour through the western part of Nova Scotia in 1819, the Rev. John Sprott discovered many Presbyterians who came 'fifteen miles to hear me preach an old Cameronian sermon'.³¹ In London William Proudfoot met Antiburghers during his missionary tours in the Proofline region, who, despite the unavailability of a preacher of their choosing, refused to join his voluntary-inclined church. He also met a Mr Waugh, an old light Seceder from Roxburghshire, who informed Proudfoot of the 'violent differences' between the Presbyterian colonists in the English Settlement. Some were 'high Kirk', others 'keen antiburghers' and no one could agree on an acceptable minister. Meanwhile in Dumfries Proudfoot met 'a nest of as violent antiburghers as ever existed in any part of Scotland'.³² There were also communities of Antiburghers in Galt, Guelph and Esquesing found to hold rigid principles. The United Synod's union negotiations with the Kirk were controversial since some in the United Synod leaned towards voluntarism while others upheld the establishment principle. An elder in James Harris's church in Toronto declared that the congregation would insist on Harris's resignation if he assented to a union with the Kirk.³³ In Perth Bell's congregation split after a dispute over psalm singing; some members joined the Reformed Presbyterians.³⁴ Elsewhere, a Mr Orr from Stamford near Niagara Falls, a settler from the United States, wrote to his former church the Associate Church in the United States – a body of strict Seceders who had refused to join the Associate Reformed Church³⁵ – asking them to send a missionary to his region since his conscience did not allow him to attend any other denomination.³⁶ In Pictou, Nova Scotia, and in the region of Perth, Upper Canada, Highland Scots expressed their dissatisfaction with the unfamiliar lowland Seceder missionaries and requested ministers from the Kirk.³⁷ In the words of Isabel Skelton, 'two centuries of religious strife and religious discussion shaped and established the thought and interest of Canada's earliest Scottish immigrants.'³⁸

³⁰ George Patterson, *Memoir of the Rev. James Macgregor D.D.* (Edinburgh, 1859), p. 68.

³¹ George W. Sprott (ed.), *Memorials of the Rev. John Sprott* (Edinburgh, 1906), p. 2.

³² UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 2, Journal 6, 'Jan 30th 1833'.

³³ UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 1, Journal 2, 'Sep 24th 1832' and 'Nov 9th 1832'.

³⁴ J.R. Ernest Miller, *175 Years of Presbyterian History: First Presbyterian Church and St. Andrew's Church, Perth* (n.p., 1992), pp. 7–8, 15.

³⁵ The Associate Reformed Church was formed as a result of a union between Reformed Presbyterians and Seceders in the United States.

³⁶ William Gregg, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the Dominion of Canada* (Toronto, 1885), p. 553.

³⁷ See *Report of the Fund of the United Associate Synod For Religious Purposes and Particularly Missions to the Destitute Parts of the Country* (Edinburgh, 1835).

³⁸ I.B. Skelton, *A Man Austere: William Bell, Parson and Pioneer* (Toronto & Halifax, 1947), p. xviii.

The religious values and traditions of Scotland were exported to the colonies and circulated there in print form. Private letters from friends and official correspondence from missionary committees of church courts brought news of the religious and political climate at home. Recent pamphlets published in Scotland were often included with correspondence for a missionary's perusal and tracts were sent and received for circulation in his locality. Proudfoot spent his leisure time reading topical publications including Marshall on ecclesiastical establishments: 'the more frequently I look into the subject', he declared, 'the more thoroughly I am persuaded that the ground he occupies is safe and solid'. Proudfoot later lent this particular publication to a neighbour whom Proudfoot believed held erroneous establishmentarian views.³⁹ John Sprott, on the other hand, enjoyed perusing pro-establishment publications forwarded by friends in Scotland.⁴⁰

Religious periodicals also found their way to the colonies. As Miles Taylor has observed, religious newspapers and periodicals circulated in the colonies contributing to the creation of a politicised public sphere and helping to generate colonial unrest.⁴¹ Alexander Russell, resident in Leeds, Quebec, read three issues of the rather obscure *Scottish Advocate*, the organ of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, in 1833. Russell passed on these magazines, which had been left by another gentleman who had visited Leeds, to a neighbour, and requested more from a friend in Scotland.⁴² In June 1833 Proudfoot received from friends the first issue of the *Voluntary Church Magazine*. Given that this periodical was launched in the March of 1833, Proudfoot did not have to wait too long for the latest news. Proudfoot also read the Scottish *United Secession Magazine* which was marketed at foreign as well as domestic readers. Its editors hoped that the magazine's title would appeal to the Secession's friends 'far off in foreign lands' who would 'hail the tidings that she is still blessed and is still a blessing'.⁴³ The *Magazine* was available for sale at a bookseller's in Pictou, Nova Scotia.⁴⁴ As shall be seen, copies of the *Church of Scotland Magazine* also circulated in Nova Scotia where the establishmentarian views espoused in its pages influenced colonial opinion. One of its rival publications, the *Voluntary Church Magazine*, was also recommended to Nova Scotia's residents on the basis that it was cheap at 4d and espoused anti-establishment principles.⁴⁵

³⁹ UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 4, Journal 22.

⁴⁰ Sprott (ed.), *Memorials*, p. 36.

⁴¹ M. Taylor, 'The 1848 Revolutions and the British Empire', *P&P*, 166 (2000), p. 172.

⁴² Library and Archives Canada [LAC], James Geggie Fonds, MG 24 J11, 'Alexander Russell, Leeds, QC Sep 1833 to Robert Geggie'.

⁴³ See the introduction to the bound volume of the *USM* for 1831.

⁴⁴ 'New Books and Stationary', *The Bee*, May 24 1837.

⁴⁵ 'Voluntary Church Magazine', *CP*, July 2 1833.

As well as imports from Scotland, colonial-based denominational periodicals were launched and circulated. Proudfoot edited the *Presbyterian Magazine*, a somewhat expensive and short-lived venture, on behalf of the Missionary Synod in 1843. The prospectus of the *Presbyterian Magazine* declared that it would advocate the voluntary principle and it was subscribed in Toronto, Kingston, Goderich, and the western districts. Meanwhile the United Synod launched the *Canadian Watchman*, and the Kirk produced the *Canadian Christian Examiner and Presbyterian Review*, edited by the Rev. Robert McGill in Niagara. In Montreal, the Kirk published the *Canadian Miscellany*, while *The Banner* appeared in Toronto in 1843 to defend the interests of the Free Church. In Nova Scotia, the Covenanters published the *Monthly Advocate*, though not until the second half of the century, while the Kirk-influenced *Pictou Observer and Eastern Advertiser* appeared in 1831 to offset the influence of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia which had earlier been championed by the *Colonial Patriot* newspaper.

The Canadian newspaper press frequently commented on Scottish news. A number of newspapers were established in Upper Canada in this period, including the *St Thomas Liberal* which served the western settlements; William Lyon Mackenzie's *Colonial Advocate*; the *Brockville Recorder*; and the *Bathurst Courier*. In November 1834 the *Correspondent and Advocate* had a circulation of 1400 while in December Mackenzie's *Constitution* had 1250 subscribers. According to J.J. Talman, along with the *Colonial Advocate* and Egerton Ryerson's *Christian Guardian*, these papers were the most popular of the colony.⁴⁶ In Nova Scotia, besides the *Pictou Observer and Eastern Advertiser* and *Colonial Patriot*, there appeared the *Acadian Recorder*, *The Novascotian*, and *The Bee*, amongst others. As J.S. Martell notes, after 1830 steamships and stage coaches facilitated distribution of newspapers.⁴⁷ Canadian editors subscribed to British papers, re-printing notable articles in their own editions. These colonial papers reported on important religious news including the annuity tax conflict, the Disruption and the progress of voluntarism, while articles on John Knox and the Covenanters regularly appeared. The *Pictou Observer* had a 'Scotch Intelligence' section which provided detailed accounts of the proceedings of the General Assembly.⁴⁸ Both the *Colonial Advocate* and the *Colonial Patriot* were edited by men with a particular bias for Scottish Presbyterianism. Some settlers also subscribed to the British press. Proudfoot read the *Wigtownshire Free Press* and the *Glasgow Argus*. In Nova Scotia, the editor of the *Colonial Patriot*, Jotham Blanchard, encouraged his readers

⁴⁶ J.J. Talman, 'The Newspapers of Upper Canada A Century Ago', *CHR*, 19 (1938), pp. 12, 16.

⁴⁷ J.S. Martell, 'The Press of the Maritime Provinces in the 1830's', *CHR*, 19 (1938), p. 24.

⁴⁸ 'A Scottish Covenanter', *AR*, Jan 26 1822; 'Biographical Sketch of Mr James Hislop', *CP*, July 30 1828; 'Monument to John Knox', *TS*, Nov 9 1825; 'The General Assembly', *PO*, Aug 3 1831.

to subscribe to *The Scotsman*. As in rural Scotland where residents passed one newspaper from house to house, Blanchard suggested that Nova Scotians club their money together and order a shared copy of *The Scotsman* for the Pictou community.⁴⁹ The Pictou Academy, meanwhile, took a yearly subscription to the *Edinburgh Review*.⁵⁰

As well as letters, pamphlets, tracts, periodicals, and newspapers, books which appealed to Scottish Presbyterian tastes were available to Canadian settlers. George Patterson wrote in 1859 that the first settlers in Pictou who hailed from Dumfries ‘brought with them a few religious books from Scotland’. Some of these were ‘lost in Prince Edward Island, but the rest were carefully read’.⁵¹ In 1832 titles available for sale by James Dawson in Pictou included the Westminster Confession of Faith in both English and Gaelic; *Scotch Worthies*, the Covenanting martyrology by John Howie of Lochgoin; and sermons by ministers of the Burgher and Antiburgher Synods.⁵² The society established by the United Secession to support Pictou Academy collected books to be shipped for the benefit of the Academy’s students.⁵³ Blackwood, the Edinburgh publisher, donated a collection of books, including McCrie’s *Life of Melville*, to Pictou Academy in 1826.⁵⁴ The Glasgow Colonial Society likewise arranged a book drop off point in Glasgow where donations could be deposited for shipping.⁵⁵ In 1832 Jotham Blanchard suggested that Nova Scotia establish itinerating libraries on the Scottish model, and on a visit to Scotland he acquired 100 volumes for the purpose. William McGavin, admirer of Thomas McCulloch and author of the *Protestant*, generously told Blanchard to take whatever he wanted from his personal library. A Glasgow bookseller meanwhile, donated McGavin’s own work on establishments while Blanchard acquired four copies of Ralph Wardlaw’s work on the Sabbath and 50 copies of Marshall’s *Ecclesiastical Establishments Considered*. The editor of *The Scotsman* donated a collection of sermons.⁵⁶ Moreover, as will be discussed below, the popular works of fiction produced by Thomas McCulloch, some of which were serialised in the *Acadian Recorder*, drew heavily on the minister’s Presbyterian heritage and the Covenanting folklore of lowland Scotland. Like so many of

⁴⁹ ‘Editorial, *CP*, Nov 25 1829.

⁵⁰ B.A. Wood, *Pictou Academy in the 19th Century* (n.p., 1997), p. 9.

⁵¹ Patterson, *Pictou*, p. 111.

⁵² ‘Catalogue of Books and Stationery on sale by James Dawson, Pictou’, *TN*, Oct 11 1832. On the availability of books from Scotland and the Scottish aspect of the Nova Scotian newspaper press, see also, Thomas McCulloch, *The Mephibosheth Stepsure Letters*, G. Davies ed. (Ottawa, 1990), pp. xxxi–xxxii.

⁵³ ‘Institution of Pictou’, *USM*, Feb 1829.

⁵⁴ Public Archives of Nova Scotia [PANS], Thomas McCulloch Fonds, MG 1, Vol. 555, File 47, ‘Letter from Mr Blackwood to McCulloch containing a list of books to be donated to “the Literary Institute of Pictou” Feb 22 1826’.

⁵⁵ *First Annual Report of the Glasgow Society (in connection with the Established Church of Scotland) for promoting the Religious Interests of the Scottish Settlers in British North America* (Glasgow, 1826).

⁵⁶ ‘Itinerating Libraries’, *CP*, Aug 4 1832.

his contemporaries, McCulloch was influenced by the works of Scott, but sought to rescue the reputation of the Covenanters damaged by their depiction in *Old Mortality*.

By the mid-nineteenth century people of Scottish descent populated a significant portion of the globe, and to some extent there existed a transatlantic Scottish and Presbyterian inflected culture. Settlers in Canada read the same books, worshipped in the same churches, believed the same theories, and were interested in the same news, as people across the ocean in the British Isles. As the colonial churches consolidated their positions, organising presbyteries, synods and seminaries, they developed distinctive Canadian characteristics – some to a greater degree than others – but informal connections with parent churches in Scotland, Ulster and the United States, were retained even after the Canadian churches operated independently. Church politics and ecclesiological thought had transatlantic relevance and the course of Canadian religion and politics, as well as Scottish, was affected by events which occurred, and ideas which circulated, within this international Presbyterian community. The Covenanting tradition was fully exported across the Atlantic. As shall be seen, the same religiously-grounded radical impulse was as influential in the British North American colonies as in Scotland.

2. Upper Canada

Historians of early nineteenth-century political radicalism in Upper Canada have often focused on the influence of American democracy while the impact of British ideas has gone unexamined. In her classic study of political unrest, Aileen Dunham represents Upper Canada as a battlefield on which were fought out the conflicting ideals of democracy, voluntarism, and popular education, represented by the United States, and monarchy, aristocracy and an established church, represented by Britain. In order to explain the survival of the British connection, historians have traditionally represented the British population in the Canadas as essentially loyal and conservative. The routing of the rebels of 1837-8, so the traditional argument goes, saw the eradication of the radical and fundamentally American element of Upper Canadian society.¹ Recently, historians have begun to appreciate the existence of a common Atlantic culture and the work of Carol Wilton, Michael Vance, Michael Gauvreau and others has examined the transmission from Britain of reformist traditions. Wilton discusses the tendency of reformers in both Britain and Upper Canada to appeal to notions of an ancient constitution and the rights of Englishmen secured by the Revolution of 1688-9, while Vance examines the exportation of radical ideas and experience peculiar to those emigrants from north Britain. Particularly, Vance focuses on the Scottish trades background of principal reformers in Upper Canada, looking at their exposure to industrial agitation in their country of origin.² Gauvreau, in two pioneering articles, is keen to give religion its proper place in the history of radicalism by highlighting the importance of a particular strain of Scottish Presbyterian radical thought, as articulated by United Secession missionary, the Rev. William Proudfoot. By so doing, Gauvreau highlights the importance of religion and ethnicity, helping to explain

¹ A. Dunham, *Political Unrest in Upper Canada, 1815-1836* (1927: Toronto, 1963 edn.), p. 16; S.F. Wise, 'Upper Canada and the Conservative Tradition', in A.B. McKillop & P. Romney (eds.), *God's Peculiar Peoples: Essays on Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Ottawa, 1993). See also S. Noel, 'Early Populist Tendencies in the Ontario Political Culture', *OH*, 90 (1998), p. 173, which argues that the radical Clear Grit movement exemplified an American-inspired outlook which contrasted with British loyalist and monarchical values.

² C. Wilton, *Popular Politics and Political Culture in Upper Canada 1800-1850* (Montreal & Kingston, 2000), p. 66; M.E. Vance & M.D. Stephen, 'Grits, Rebels and Radicals: Anti-Privilege Politics and the Pre-History of 1849 in Canada West', in *Canada 1849* (Edinburgh, 2001); M.E. Vance, 'Scottish Chartism in Canada West?: An Examination of the "Clear Grit" Reformers', *Scottish Tradition*, 22 (1997). See also, M. Stephen, 'Artisans, Plebeians, and Radical Reform in the British Isles, New South Wales, and Upper Canada, 1790-1838' (Saint Mary's University MA Thesis, 1999). Ted Cowan has also briefly noticed the involvement of Scottish lowland emigrants in Canadian radical politics. See E.J. Cowan, 'From the Southern Uplands to Southern Ontario: Nineteenth-Century Emigration from the Scottish Borders', in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Scottish Emigration and Scottish Society* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp. 70-3.

who took up arms in 1837 and why.³ These scholars, avoiding the tendency of historians to discuss Canadian history in isolation, have sought to situate Upper Canadian reform movements in an Atlantic context. This chapter shall build on Gauvreau's work, emphasising the significance of the role played by Proudfoot and his colleagues, both before and after the rebellion, but also by looking at the wider currency of Presbyterian political ideas and engagement with the Scots Covenanting tradition.

Drawing on the arguments of J.C.D. Clark, Gauvreau contends that as in Britain and the thirteen colonies, where the Church of England was the mouthpiece of the state, preaching values of passive obedience and divine right, in Upper Canada political dissent was organised along religious lines. The dominance of the Church of England, its monopoly of the clergy reserves and its exclusive charter for King's College, were perhaps the most significant and stirring political issues in the province in the pre-Confederation era. Historians have documented their role in both provoking the armed uprising in 1837 and motivating reformers in their agitation against the government in the years following the rebellion. Highlighting the importance of the popular voice, Wilton has underlined the significance of religion as a politicising force. The extensive petitioning campaigns and pre-election touring of both reformers and tories, demonstrate the importance accorded to public opinion. The Alien Act and the persecution of Robert Gourlay were issues which drew the ordinary Upper Canadian colonist into the political arena in the early nineteenth century but, according to Wilton, while these issues, as well as fiscal and legal grievances, helped stir the populace, religion was the key motivator and helped fasten ordinary people to the reform cause. Moreover, as Jeffrey L. McNairn has highlighted, emphasis on denominational equality, ecclesiological theory, the use of the printed word and the organisation of voluntary associations – some of which had a religious basis – could promote the development of the public sphere.⁴

Gauvreau has argued that Scottish Seceders, who were strongly represented in the reform ranks, were motivated in their defiance of the Anglican-tory regime not by a reformist ideology indebted to American republicanism, or by a vague general consensus

³ M. Gauvreau, 'Covenanter Democracy: Scottish Popular Religion, Ethnicity, and the Varieties of Politico-religious Dissent in Upper Canada, 1815-1841', *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 36 (2003); M. Gauvreau, 'Reluctant Voluntaries: Peter and George Brown; The Scottish Disruption and the Politics of Church and State in Canada', *Journal of Religious History*, 25 (2001).

⁴ McNairn rightly acknowledges that religion could as easily hinder this development; appeals to God to legitimate action were, as McNairn says, 'an attempt to supersede or short-circuit conversation; an attempt to trump or ignore the arguments of others by appealing to an ultimate, if contested, source of authority outside the public sphere itself.' See J.L. McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge: Public Opinion and Deliberative Democracy in Upper Canada, 1791-1854* (Toronto, 2000), pp. 14–15. On Gourlay and the Alien Act see Wilton, *Politics*, pp. 27–43; Dunham, *Unrest*, pp. 73–82.

that public opinion should be consulted in the political process, but by a strand of dissenting political ideology peculiar to Scotland. According to Gauvreau, by the 1830s, ‘a long popular tradition that viewed church establishment, aristocracy, and an episcopal polity as a single menace had turned many of the backwoods settlements of Upper Canada into querulous religious cockpits’. To the Seceders, Archdeacon John Strachan’s defence of the establishment was reminiscent of his Episcopalian ancestors’ attempts to enforce Anglican despotism on Scotland. As has been seen, Seceder clergymen brought with them the teachings of George Lawson and Archibald Bruce, and the Calvinist radical tradition – the defence of popular sovereignty, religious purity and the resistance of Anglican imperialism – was transmitted across the Atlantic. As Gauvreau observes, the Seceders were for a time the sole representatives of Scottish Presbyterianism in British North America and so their politico-religious views – particularly voluntarism – were influential in Scottish settlements. However, as this thesis shall demonstrate, the Canadian Kirk was hardly insulated from this tradition, and Kirkmen helped contribute to the dissemination of reformist ideas.⁵ Gauvreau argues that what he terms ‘Covenanter democracy’, would ‘play a prominent part in shaping the constitutional reform movement in Upper Canada and the drift towards the rebellion in the 1830s’. This rebellion in 1837 has thus far been a bit of a puzzle to historians, who, in regarding the uprising as an insignificant tussle perpetrated by a minor faction easily swept aside, or in focusing too much on socio-economic grievances as the root of the trouble, have overlooked the tensions inherent in British Canadian immigrant society, the important role played by religion and the traditions of political radicalism exported from the old world.⁶ Moreover, Upper Canadians, and, as shall be seen in the next chapter, Nova Scotians, were participating in a contemporary transatlantic debate over the changing relationship between church and state. In order fully to understand Canadian politico-religious culture, as Edward Norman has pointed out, one must be sensible on the various stands of thought emanating from Britain.⁷ One might argue that the reverse is also true.

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⁵ This argument challenges the overstated position of S.F. Wise who argued that the clergy of the Church of Scotland were ‘instinctively social and political conservatives’ and that ‘neither Presbyterians nor Catholics (with a few notable exceptions) objected to the principle of public endowment of churches’. Wise, ‘Conservative Tradition’, p. 175.

⁶ Gauvreau, ‘Covenanter Democracy’, pp. 68, 73.

⁷ E. Norman, *The Conscience of the State in North America* (Cambridge, 1968).

Dissenters in Upper Canada were subject to civil discrimination and, they believed, were viewed by Anglicans with contempt. ‘The episcopalian clergy in this country often assume airs as if they were something superior to other folks’ declared the Rev. William Bell, who took offence when the local Anglican minister in Perth refused to acknowledge him when they passed each other on the road.⁸ Non-Anglicans were obliged to apply to the local magistrate for a license to perform marriage services; a procedure many found humiliating.⁹ William Smart met with trouble in Brockville when he was nearly arrested for performing marriages and baptisms. Smart questioned the legitimacy of the exclusive right of Anglicans in the *Brockville Recorder*. Reflecting on past events, Smart wrote in later years ‘few can conceive of the heart burnings and vexations to which jealous and faithful ministers were exposed, till these and other causes of a civil nature culminated in the rebellion of 1837’.¹⁰ More infuriating to non-Anglicans than marriage laws were the clergy reserves. The 1791 Constitutional Act, designed to establish an Anglican church to disseminate ‘loyal’ principles in the new British American colony, set aside one-seventh of all land grants – in time every seventh lot of 200 acres – ‘for the support and maintenance of a protestant clergy’. Who exactly the words ‘protestant clergy’ denoted was not clear, but at the turn of the century many assumed that the Church of England was to be the sole beneficiary. The economic drawback of undeveloped land, most of which the Church was unable to lease, was a constant grievance and there was continued resistance to the reserves on fiscal grounds. Moreover, in time non-Anglican denominations, desperately lacking funds with which to consolidate their institutions, began to question the terms of the act and the audacious attempt to introduce an established church. The first to request funds from the reserves were Presbyterians from Niagara, whose church had been destroyed in the War of 1812. By 1830, the clergy reserves had become a hotly debated topic in the public press, in the legislature and among the various dissenting groups in Upper Canada. In his famous Report, Lord Durham had no reservations in naming the clergy reserves a grievance which had been a primary cause of the rebellion.¹¹ In 1840 when Lieutenant-Governor Charles Poulett Thompson (later Lord Sydenham) was negotiating a settlement of the reserves, not permanently achieved until 1854, he described the issue to Lord John Russell in the following terms: ‘no one who has not had the opportunity of examining on

⁸ Queen’s University Archives [QUA], William Bell Papers, ‘Life of William Bell Written By Himself’, Vol 12, mfm reel 586a, ‘Feb 1838’; F.A. Peake, ‘William Bell and Michael Harris, Early Missionaries – Perth, ON’, *JCHS*, xiv (2002).

⁹ QUA, William Bell Papers, ‘Life’, vol 1, mfm 585, ‘1817’.

¹⁰ United Church in Canada Archives/Victoria University Archives [UCA], William Smart Papers, F3195, Box 1, Files 1-6, Biography 1811-1849, ‘1826’; See also J.S. Moir (ed.), *Church and State in Canada 1627-1867: Basic Documents* (Toronto, 1967), pp. 140–9.

¹¹ R. Coupland (ed.), *The Durham Report* (Oxford, 1945), p. 96.

the spot the working of this question can correctly estimate its importance. It has been, for many years, the source of all the troubles in the province; the never-failing watchword at the hustings; the perpetual spring of discord, strife and hatred'.¹²

Lord Dalhousie, appointed Governor-General in 1819, and patron of the Glasgow Colonial Society, used his influence to support the Church of Scotland's claim to a significant share of the reserves on the basis of its co-established status in Britain. The Kirk claimed that as Upper Canada had been founded after 1707 it could only be regarded as a *British* colony where the Church of Scotland deserved official status. This claim was recognised by the colonial Assembly in 1823 but was quickly countered by Anglican opposition. Defenders of the Church of England's exclusive right argued that the Treaty of Union had guaranteed the establishment of the Kirk only in Scotland while Anglicanism was established in the territories belonging to the crown. Henry Esson, Kirk minister in Montreal, edited the *Canadian Miscellany*, a periodical which attacked the principle of Anglican exclusivity while pressing for the Kirk's right to government support. In April 1828 the *Miscellany* included in its pages a pastoral letter which defended the idea of dual establishment by pointing to the ecclesiastical settlement achieved in Britain at the Union of 1707. Alluding to the Covenanting past and to the domineering and persecuting spirit of an Anglican establishment, the Canadian Kirk declared that Anglican dominance threatened the civil as well as religious liberties of colonists.¹³ The law officers of the crown and the 1828 Canada Committee of the British Parliament acknowledged the rights of the Church of Scotland, which, until such times as the question was settled by the colonial government, was given a 700 pounds annual endowment in place of a share in the reserves.¹⁴

Egerton Ryerson, the leader of the Episcopal Methodists, initially advocated through his Methodist organ, the *Christian Guardian*, the appropriation of the reserves for the purposes of education and other secular improvements. The Missionary Synod, led by William Proudfoot, supported this move, advocating the entire separation of church and state. The clergy reserves debate was known in Scotland, as well as in Nova Scotia, contributing to the fiery domestic battle between establishmentarians and voluntaries. A memorial from Seceders in Montreal was printed in the Scottish *United Secession Magazine* in January 1837 raising awareness of the voluntary cause in the Canadas. The

¹² Moir (ed.), *Church and State*, pp. 190–1.

¹³ 'A Pastoral Letter from the Clergy of the Church of Scotland in the Canadas to their Presbyterian brethren', *Canadian Miscellany*, April 1828.

¹⁴ 'Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Civil Government of the Canadas, 22 July 1828', in Moir (ed.), *Church and State*, pp. 176–7.

Missionary Seceders believed it was ‘manifestly preposterous’ to create religious establishments in the British American colonies where ‘dissenters’ were numerous and where, unlike in the old world, institutions were not ‘interwoven with the whole fabric of the social system’.¹⁵

The United Synod likewise initially supported the secularisation of the reserves as did other smaller groups including the Baptists and Congregationalists, as well as the Church of Rome. The Seceders, both United Synod and Missionary, had a tempestuous relationship with the Church of Scotland clergy, who were accused of accepting bribes from the government to keep them silent on the clergy reserves and other political grievances. Despite the wrangling within the non-Anglican camp, all churches were infuriated at the attempts of Archdeacon John Strachan to misrepresent the status of their denominations in his statistical ecclesiastical chart, described by one contemporary as a ‘ridiculous’ document, which claimed that dissenters made up a smaller proportion of the population than Church of England adherents.¹⁶ John Strachan’s bold and ruthless campaign to defend the rights of the Church of England won him few friends. Originally associated with the Church of Scotland, he was represented as having been lured to the Church of England by the thought of worldly gain.¹⁷ The dominance of Anglicanism was the issue around which a discontented population with mixed ethnic and religious backgrounds could rally.

Strachan and his allies wielded much influence owing to their non-elected seats in the Executive and the Legislative Councils and consequently dissenters turned to the exclusive nature of colonial government as the source of civil and religious inequality in the colony. A letter written from Montreal in December 1827, which appeared in the *Glasgow Chronicle*, described Strachan as the ‘Vice-Roy over the Governor’.¹⁸ Although Upper Canadians were, to a degree, politically enfranchised, the representative Assembly was effectively powerless if the Governor-appointed Legislative Council, which included most members of the Executive, chose to be antagonistic.¹⁹ When in 1834 a reformist majority in the elected Assembly passed a bill secularising the reserves it was defeated in the Legislative Council. The practice of the Council in killing all attempts at legislation on

¹⁵ ‘The Church Question in the Canadas’, *USM*, Jan 1837.

¹⁶ John McGregor, *Historical and Descriptive Sketches of the Maritime Colonies of British America* (London, 1828), p. 111. The chart was reprinted in the *CA*, 20 Sep 1827. For the response to the chart see ‘Report of a Select Committee of the Assembly of Upper Canada on Dr. Strachan’s Ecclesiastical Chart, 15 March 1828’, in Moir (ed.), *Church and State*, pp. 173–5.

¹⁷ O.R. Osmond, ‘The Churchmanship of John Strachan’, *JCHS* (1974), pp. 46–7.

¹⁸ ‘Extracts from a letter in the *Glasgow Chronicle* of January 30 1828’, *Canadian Miscellany*, April 1828.

¹⁹ The electoral qualification was a forty shilling freehold in the country, or a five pound freehold or ten pound copyhold in towns. On the nature of colonial government see Dunham, *Political Unrest*, pp. 29–46.

this issue became, according to John Moir, an annual ritual.²⁰ Lord Durham reported on the exclusive rule of the 'Family Compact', who monopolised the Councils, the high public offices, the legal profession, the chartered banks and the senior positions in the Anglican Church. Indeed, the members of the 'Compact' mostly belonged to the Church of England, and, as Durham later wrote, 'the maintenance of the claims of that church has always been one of its distinguishing characteristics'.²¹

The discontented began to draft petitions, hold public meetings and form societies and political unions to achieve political and ecclesiastical reform. These groups, which included the Friends of Religious Liberty and the Constitutional Committee, whose members belonged also to the York Bible Society, were composed of members of a variety of disgruntled denominations. In early days especially, Methodists, who had denominational links with the United States, were regarded as republicans and targeted by Strachan in his famous sermon preached after the death of Bishop Mountain. They were described as 'the saddlebag faction' whose itinerant preachers distributed seditious tracts on their circuits and who challenged traditional institutions by emphasising individualism.²² However, Methodism was not the only reformist sect. At reform meetings, often held in Presbyterian churches, the Secession clergy mixed with members of the Assembly, such as Jesse Ketchum, who financed the first Presbyterian Church in York (Toronto). Ketchum and Marshall Spring Bidwell, an Independent in religion and leader of the reformers in the House, often attended the services of the Church's incumbent, Ketchum's father-in-law, United Synod minister James Harris.²³ In December 1830 one reform meeting took place in the York Presbyterian Church and its proceedings were recorded in the *Canadian Watchman*, the organ of the United Synod which had been funded by Bidwell and his father. Present there were Robert and William Warren Baldwin, the celebrated reformers credited with formulating the concept of 'responsible government'; Ketchum, Egerton Ryerson, and William Lyon Mackenzie, the legendary radical journalist and leader of the rebellion in 1837, while the Rev. William Jenkins, Presbyterian minister at Markham, was secretary. They drew up a petition, later transmitted to the British Parliament by their agent Joseph Hume, which advocated

²⁰ Moir (ed.), *Church and State*, pp. 181–2.

²¹ Coupland (ed.), *Report*, pp. 81–2.

²² John Strachan, *A Sermon Preached at York, Upper Canada, Third of July, 1825, On the Death of the late Bishop of Quebec* (Kingston, 1826), p. 15; Wilton, *Politics*, pp. 7, 12, 18–19, 45–6, 128–29; Curtis Fahey has shown how the Archdeacon regarded his struggle for the Church as a battle against revolution and republicanism. C. Fahey, *In His Name: The Anglican Experience in Upper Canada, 1791–1854* (Ottawa, 1991), pp. 89–97.

²³ S.D. Gill, *The Reverend William Proudfoot and the United Secession Mission to Canada* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter, 1991), pp. 75–6.

voluntary support of religious denominations, the secularisation of the reserves, equal rights regarding marriage licenses and the removal of clergy from civil government. The establishment of a non-denominational college was also high on the reform agenda.²⁴ This meeting and its aims were typical. The *Canadian Watchman* continued to report on political news, reprinting Bidwell's speech on primogeniture, tracking the progress of the Marriage Bill and the fate of the clergy reserves in the Assembly.²⁵ By the mid-1830s, reformist politicians and dissenting ministers were united in a formidable coalition which sought the establishment of responsible government; i.e. government executed by a cabinet holding the confidence of a majority of the people's representatives and accountable to them.

Indeed, some Seceder ministers were conspicuous for their support of reform and were regarded by the establishment as political dissidents. William Smart, quick to defend his rights in battles with magistrates over marriage licenses, gained a reputation for political activism in Brockville. Smart was responsible for drafting a petition to the House, revised by the elder Bidwell and circulated in the Leeds and Grenville district, for a change of the King's College charter.²⁶ Significantly, Smart believed in the power of the populace to effect change and he was positive that ministers had a duty to ensure the people were well informed. In the opinion of Smart, it was essential that pamphlets, newspapers, and the pulpit influenced public opinion, especially 'when great changes are to be wrought in politics and religion' and 'old institutions altered and adapted to the times'.²⁷ Both Smart and William Bell believed that a reform of the education system was essential in order for the province to progress. They believed, and stated in the public press, that the management of common schools, which, they claimed, were administered exclusively by Anglicans, should be reformed.²⁸ Meanwhile in the Presbyterian region of Galt, it was noted that the Rev. James Strang, originally from Stirlingshire, 'became a warm sympathiser with the movements going on throughout the Province in favour of Responsible Government and Religious equality'. Though his duties as a minister of the gospel prevented him from becoming a political activist, one near contemporary, James

²⁴ 'Religious Liberty', *CW*, Dec 24 1830; Wilton, *Politics*, pp. 46, 51–2.

²⁵ 'Upper Canada Parliament', *CW*, Feb 4 1831, 'Mr Bidwell's Speech', *CW*, Feb 18 1831.

²⁶ UCA, William Smart Papers, F3195, Files 1-6, 'Biography 1811-1849', see entry for '1820'.

²⁷ 'Public Opinion', *CW*, Jan 21 1831.

²⁸ QUA, William Bell Papers, 'Life', Vols 1-2, mfm reel 585, 'letter to Brockville Recorder'.

Young, remarked that ‘the impress of his opinions on affairs of State was marked among his congregation, and may be traced even to the present day’.²⁹

The formation of the United Synod in 1820 was regarded with suspicion. Smart wrote to the Governor-General insisting that no political agenda lay behind the Synod’s formation. He reminded Lieutenant-Governor Peregrine Maitland, in an address explaining the aims of the Synod, that the House of Hanover owed its throne to Presbyterians, who had ever been loyal to King and constitution. Elsewhere, William Bell had trouble in Perth with the half-pay officers stationed there, mostly Highlanders who were suspicious of the Secession and favoured the Church of Scotland. A few individuals wrote to Lord Dalhousie requesting the establishment of a Kirk minister in Perth since ‘the Secession churches were not sound in their political sentiments’.³⁰ Some residents in the region also condemned the Reformed Presbyterian Church and the work of its missionaries whose principles were said to be ‘hostile to the British constitution’, and ‘calculated to disturb the peace of civil society’.³¹

William Proudfoot

William Proudfoot was a notable reformer after his arrival in the province in 1832, although in early years he privately questioned what business he had with politics. Proudfoot was a United Seceder trained by George Lawson, who subscribed to Scottish periodicals in order to keep abreast of the latest theological and political disputations. Proudfoot amused himself by reading the history of the original Seceders declaring that ‘I feel fully satisfied that they acted rightly, had I lived then I would have joined issue with them.’³² Proudfoot’s career demonstrates how Presbyterian political theory – in this case the voluntary strand of it – was exported to Upper Canada and applied to the local situation.

Proudfoot read and also drafted articles attacking Strachan and church establishments for William Lyon Mackenzie’s radical newspaper, the *Colonial Advocate*.³³

²⁹ James Young, *Reminiscences of the Early History of Galt and the Settlement of Dumfries in the Province of Ontario* (Toronto, 1880), pp. 83–4, 148–51. On the public life in Galt see also McNairn, *Capacity*, pp. 66–7.

³⁰ UCA, William Smart Papers, F3195, Files 1-6, ‘Biography 1811-1849’, see entry for ‘1820’; QUA William Bell Papers, ‘Life’, Vol 2, mfm reel 585, ‘Oct 1821’.

³¹ See the letter from McLachlan dated April 1834 printed in the *Scottish Advocate*, Dec 1834.

³² UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 4, Journal 18, ‘Mar 24 1834’.

³³ UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 1, Journal 3, ‘Dec 27 1832’. On the 24 July 1837 Mackenzie wrote to Proudfoot informing him that his letter of subscription to the *Colonial Advocate* had been lost. Mackenzie forwarded the latest issue regardless. See Presbyterian Church of Canada Archives, 143

He described Mackenzie thus: ‘he advocates those measures which are for the good of the community in opposition to the selfish measures of the aristocracy. He is popular and he deserves to be so.’³⁴ Proudfoot also repeatedly contributed to the local London district newspaper the *St Thomas Liberal*, the press of which was vandalised in 1833.³⁵ He struck up a close friendship with its editor, schoolmaster John Talbot, which continued long after Talbot’s post-rebellion flight into exile in the United States. In later days he was friends with political reformer, George Brown, and in a letter to Brown, Proudfoot’s son described his father as one who had ‘done not a little in past times to advance the interests of liberal and constitutional Government’.³⁶ Although he was careful to watch the tone of his public declarations, in private his observations were less prudent and suggest that Proudfoot’s opponents were correct in supposing him to harbour republican sympathies. In his diary, commenting on Cromwell’s rule, he came to the following conclusions: ‘All the evil which remains in European society is supported and maintained by Kings. Might it not be a question of grave deliberation whether kings have been a greater blessing or curse to society...the struggles which society will thereafter have to undergo will be to get quit of kings and to adjust men every where to the position in which knowledge will put them, viz that they only are fit to rule themselves’.³⁷ In the May of 1833 he visited the United States and approved of the political system he found there.³⁸

Proudfoot edited, and contributed much to, the *Presbyterian Magazine*, the organ of the Missionary Seceders, which was published in 1843 for one year. In its pages Proudfoot elaborated on his politico-ecclesiastical views. He wrote with pride that Presbyterianism promoted liberty and democratic representation: ‘we cannot help observing, with much delight, that in proportion as civil society gets free from the yoke of oppression, or rises to sound views of national liberty, as opposed alike to anarchy and despotism, it approximates the great principles – particularly the principles of elective representation – which Christ has laid down for the government of his church.’³⁹ As a voluntary Proudfoot maintained that the separation of church and state would result in an improved civil government since it would then be impossible to buy the allegiance of religious denominations: the ‘measures of government’, he said, ‘will then have to be of such a kind

William Proudfoot Family Fonds, 1973-5010, Box 2 - Correspondence, File Mc 1834-1890, ‘Letter from William Lyon Mackenzie’.

³⁴ UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 1, Journal 2, ‘Nov 26 1832’.

³⁵ Wilton, *Politics*, p. 152; UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 6, Journal 30, ‘Feb 8 1840’.

³⁶ Library and Archives Canada [LAC], MG 24 B40, George Brown Papers, Vol. 2, ‘Letter from John J.A. Proudfoot to George Brown August 2 1858’.

³⁷ UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 1, Journal 3, ‘Dec 6 1832’.

³⁸ UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 2, Journal 11, ‘May 3 1833’.

³⁹ ‘Of Presbyterian Church Order’, *PrM*, April 1843.

as that their own excellence will commend them to the approbation of the governed'.⁴⁰ He argued that the spiritual lords in Parliament had held England back from achieving important reforms: 'it is a libel on Christianity to call such a state church as that of England, a constitutional Church of Christ. The Spiritual Dignitaries of that church, have ever been the enemies of all reform in the institutions of the country, and of civil and religious liberty. Highly advanced as Britain confessedly is, in intelligence and civilization, she would have been a hundred years farther advanced, but for her lawn-sleeve legislators.'⁴¹ Proudfoot believed that the authoritarian church-state, which had persecuted the revered Covenanters so violently, had the same impulse to persecute even in contemporary Canada. 'With the exception of the persecution of the Protestants in France,' he said, 'during the reign of Louis the Fourteenth, no persecution for religion has ever exceeded, in virulence and cruelty, that of the Covenanters in Scotland, by the Episcopalian Church of England. This Church has not now the all-powerful influence in the civil government of the nation that she once had; but judging from the writings of her defenders at the present time, and from her newspaper organs – even in Canada, she would persecute all who dissent from her, as fiercely as ever she has done, were she not restrained by the strong arm of the civil government-her creator'.⁴²

Voluntaryism became the orthodox position of political reformers since its application provided the best way of settling the reserves debate and ending Anglican dominance. In September 1832 Proudfoot dined with Jesse Ketchum who subscribed money towards the upkeep of a Missionary Secession church in London. Proudfoot described him as 'a determined enemy to establishments in religion', with 'very enlightened views of the subject.'⁴³ In 1839 Lord Durham commented in his Report on the prevalence of the voluntary principle in British North America and believed that the example set by the United States exerted influence on Canadian minds. Durham believed that the institution of an established church in the new world, where the immigrant population was varied and fluctuating, was impracticable and inequitable. He advised the repeal of all imperial legislation regarding the clergy reserves and warned that if the government continued in its attempts to erect a privileged establishment, the outcome would be the probable loss of the colonies.⁴⁴ Thus, according to Durham, owing to its applicability in a new world setting, the voluntary principle came to predominate in Upper

⁴⁰ 'Reasons for publishing', *PrM*, Jan 1843.

⁴¹ 'What Connexion has the Church with the World?', *PrM*, July 1843.

⁴² 'What Connexion has the Church with the World?', *PrM*, Dec 1843.

⁴³ UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 1, Journal 2, 'Sep 23 1832'; File 2, Journal 10, 'April 15 1833'.

⁴⁴ Coupland (ed.), *Report*, pp. 98–100.

Canada. However, some immigrants arrived in the colony with the arguments of Scottish and British voluntaryists fresh in their minds. That the Canadian debate over church and state mirrored in some ways the voluntary/establishment contest being fought in Britain should not be overlooked. William Proudfoot and the Missionary Seceders, who were steeped in a Scottish background of United Secession new light and voluntary principles, arrived ideologically committed to the separation of church and state. Proudfoot chastised George Ryerson, brother of Egerton, for his suspect and half-baked commitment to voluntaryism, declaring that his own position rested on scriptural convictions. In 1838 he complained that the Methodists had injured the voluntary cause two years earlier when they had advocated the division of the reserves amongst four denominations. Such a division was worse than Anglican supremacy, Proudfoot argued, since 'it was corrupting almost every church in the country'.⁴⁵ He reported to the United Secession Church that the Canadian government was at a loss to understand 'what sort of men we are, who refuse money when it is offered, while all other denominations are begging it.'⁴⁶ William Fraser, a voluntary Seceder from Pictou, Nova Scotia, who assisted Proudfoot in London, recorded his surprise after reading an Antiburgher pamphlet on establishments. He wondered how 'men of understanding...who may have every day before their eyes the evils of an establishment do not have more correct views of the constitution of the church. That declaration of our Lord my kingdom is not of this world should be sufficient to let the matter forever at rest'.⁴⁷ That Proudfoot's seeming preference for republicanism stemmed from the suspicion of civil authority and its invasion of the religious sphere, which had brought about the rise of voluntaryism in Scotland, is clear from the following commentary: 'in many of the old countries, the reigning Monarchs claim, as their divine right, the Headship of the Church in their own particular dominions; and the Roman Pontiff in the assumed character of Christ's Vicar, or substitute, claims supremacy over all the churches; but assuredly Christ never gave them as right to this Headship over the Church which they presumptuously claim...The professedly Christian kings of the earth, and the Roman Pontiffs have, to say the least of it, more frequently ruled over their kingdoms and their churches, as the vicereagents of the prince of darkness, than as followers of the meek and lowly Jesus'.⁴⁸ This ideological commitment to voluntaryism meant that, while the Ryersons were tempted by state aid to adopt a moderate position, Proudfoot and

⁴⁵ UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 5, Journal 29, 'Oct 29 1838'; Gill, *Proudfoot*, p. 90.

⁴⁶ 'Letter from Proudfoot', *USM*, June 1835. On the commitment of the missionary Seceders to voluntaryism see also 'Excerpt of Letter from Rev. Alexander McKenzie', *USM*, March 1837.

⁴⁷ UCA, William Fraser Fonds, 3100, File 1: 'Diary 1834-1835', entry for March 28 1835.

⁴⁸ 'What Connexion has the Church with the World?', *PrM*, May 1843.

the Seceders were steadfastly dedicated to the reformers' goal of secularising the reserves and establishing a more responsible government.⁴⁹

William Lyon Mackenzie

Thus far this chapter has made only brief mention of William Lyon Mackenzie. Over the years the interest in Mackenzie – the John Wilkes-like figure suspended from the Assembly six times and returned seven – has been huge. Much of this commentary has focused on Mackenzie's exposure to American republicanism and Jacksonian democracy.⁵⁰ Relatively little comment has been made by contrast on Mackenzie's Scottish background. Exceptions to this include William Kilbourn's biography, which waxes lyrical on Mackenzie's highland lineage and rebel blood inherited from his Jacobite ancestors, something about which Mackenzie did in fact boast.⁵¹ Michael Vance, Mark Stephen, and John Sewell draw attention to Mackenzie's upbringing in Dundee – a manufacturing centre and hub of political dissent – and his relation to industrial action. Sewell attempts to prove that Mackenzie was associated with the 1820 insurrection in west central Scotland, something first hinted at by P. Berresford Ellis and S. Mac A' Ghobhainn in their nationalist account of the rising.⁵² The inspiration provided by Joseph Hume, William Cobbett and other British radicals is also duly noted. Carol Wilton is keen to emphasise Mackenzie's constitutional rhetoric in his early days and his wish, shared by other reformers, to portray his tory enemies as the disloyal radicals out to subvert the British constitution.⁵³ What have gone unnoticed however, are Mackenzie's Presbyterian background and the debt his political thought owed to his religion.⁵⁴ Indeed, Gauvreau reduces discussion of Mackenzie almost to a footnote, merely highlighting that the

⁴⁹ Gauvreau, 'Covenanter Democracy', p.70.

⁵⁰ J.E. Rea, 'William Lyon Mackenzie – Jacksonian?', in J.M. Bumsted (ed.), *Canadian History Before Confederation: Essays and Interpretations* (Georgetown, ON, 1972). The 'agrarian' aspect and Jacksonian influence in Mackenzie's thought is also highlighted by J.M. Bumsted in 'The Consolidation of British North America, 1783–1860', in P. Buckner (ed.), *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 52–3.

⁵¹ W. Kilbourn, *The Firebrand: William Lyon Mackenzie and the Rebellion in Upper Canada* (1956: Toronto, 1977 edn.), p. 11.

⁵² Vance & Stephen, 'Grits', p. 188; J. Sewell, *Mackenzie: A Political Biography of William Lyon Mackenzie* (Toronto, 2002), pp. 13–37; P. Berresford Ellis & S. Mac A' Ghobhainn, *The Scottish Insurrection of 1820* (London, 1970), p. 293.

⁵³ Wilton, *Politics*, pp. 90–3.

⁵⁴ In a review of John Sewell's biography of Mackenzie, Chris Raible does draw attention to Mackenzie's Seceder background, a source of his political thought overlooked by Sewell. However, Raible himself has never fully expanded on this source in his own writings. See C. Raible, 'Review of Mackenzie: A Political Biography of William Lyon Mackenzie by John Sewell', *OH*, 95 (2003), pp. 99–100. John Garner has hinted that Mackenzie's demands for popular sovereignty can be attributed to his Presbyterian background but this point has not received adequate scholarly attention. John Garner, *The Franchise and Politics in British North America, 1755-1867* (Ottawa, 1969), p. 9.

provincial constitution drawn up by him in 1837 embodied voluntary ideas.⁵⁵ S.D. Gill, in his biography of William Proudfoot, remarks that Mackenzie was only a nominal voluntary, who attended a variety of churches, although he bore the marks of a Seceder, and whose admiration of the voluntary system stemmed from his experience of its utility in the United States, rather than from ‘any deeply held theological convictions’.⁵⁶

On the contrary, although Mackenzie admitted to having spent a portion of his youth waywardly, he was a sincerely devout man who dearly prized his Scottish Presbyterian identity. In an issue of *The Constitution*, he recorded the details of his family background. He noted with pride that both his grandfathers had fought for Charles Stuart but this delight in his Jacobite ancestry was easily reconciled with his and his mother’s strict adherence to Presbyterianism and deep respect for the struggles endured by the Kirk during its history.⁵⁷ Mackenzie may have descended from Highlanders but, as noted by Vance, he was born and bred in a lowland town, noted for its being a centre of religious dissent where the Secession predominated, as well as for being a nucleus of political dissension. Indeed, Mackenzie was a member of the Secession before he arrived in Upper Canada in 1820.

According to Mackenzie’s son-in-law and biographer, Charles Lindsey, Mackenzie’s mother was an ardent reader of the Scriptures and of ‘such religious books as were current among the Seceders.’ Mackenzie was drilled on the Catechism and Confession of Faith, and instructed by his mother to learn portions of the Bible by heart. Lindsey believes that the impressions made on Mackenzie’s youthful mind by this literature were never erased. Though in early days, Lindsey claims, Mackenzie was ‘no advocate of the voluntary principle’, it seems probable that Mackenzie was influenced by the new light ideas flowing from the United Secession, as it came to be in 1820.⁵⁸ At the point of Mackenzie’s arrival in Canada the United Seceders had not formally adopted voluntaryism as their defining ideology, but voluntaryism was arguably only the logical conclusion to the Synod’s new light argument. Mackenzie’s demands for the secularisation of the reserves and his views on the evil of state endowments were typical of any United Seceder. An article in the *Colonial Advocate* insisted on Christ’s headship of his church which was not of this world.⁵⁹ Furthermore, while he believed that the national Covenants and their apparent illiberal principles belonged to a less enlightened age, as a Seceder,

⁵⁵ Gauvreau, ‘Covenanter Democracy’, p. 75.

⁵⁶ Gill, *Proudfoot*, p. 90. Rea attributes Mackenzie’s support of voluntaryism to the influence of Andrew Jackson’s views on the separation of church and state. See Rea, ‘Jacksonian?’, p. 342.

⁵⁷ ‘Who is this Mackenzie!’, *TC*, Feb 8 1837.

⁵⁸ Charles Lindsey, *William Lyon Mackenzie* (1862: Toronto, 1912 edn.), pp. 35, 40, 94.

⁵⁹ ‘Church and State’, *CA*, Nov 1 1832.

Mackenzie revered the Scottish Covenanters. While on a visit to New York in 1832, he made a point of attending the church service of the Reformed Presbyterian minister Alexander McLeod, whom he described as ‘a steadfast Presbyterian of the old school; the genuine Cameronian, and a good preacher’. He admitted to feeling more comfortable there than he did in the elegant churches in Upper Canada: ‘there, the discourse is divided and subdivided into heads and observes in true covenanting fashion. I felt more at home in this church, the members of which are either Scotch, or generally from the north of Ireland, than I have often done while listening to the splendid eloquence of more fashionable pulpit orators’.⁶⁰ As will be seen, in his struggle for reform, Mackenzie, like so many in Britain, viewed the Covenanters as inspirational.

Marshall Spring Bidwell may have been the leader of the reformers in the House, but Mackenzie was the PR mastermind who mobilised the populace by organising mass meetings and the signing of countless petitions.⁶¹ Mackenzie began the *Colonial Advocate* in 1824 by announcing his attachment to Presbyterian doctrine but also his desire by avoiding sectarianism to appeal to a broad base. Throughout the pre-rebellion era Mackenzie’s papers were careful to take into account the mixed backgrounds of Upper Canada’s population, seeking to draw the support of all dissenters in the province, especially, until Ryerson’s defection, the numerous Methodists, as well as sympathetic Low Church Anglicans. Consequently, Mackenzie preferred to champion the cause of dissent in general rather than the cause of any one denomination.⁶² He was strongly committed to the end of Anglican dominance, petitioning the British government in 1831 as a member of the ‘Friends of Civil and Religious Liberty’,⁶³ and later to the establishment of an elective legislature. He was, perhaps, Strachan’s severest critic, and almost every issue of his newspapers denounced the Archdeacon in no uncertain terms. Strachan was regarded as corrupt, unprincipled and ruthless. The fact that the future Bishop of Toronto was a Scot who had apparently converted to Anglicanism after his arrival in Upper Canada made his elevated position and his conduct even harder to bear. Mackenzie also re-printed reports from the *Colonial Patriot* in Nova Scotia, where as shall be seen, Presbyterian radicals believed they were fighting a similar battle.

Despite his attempt to cater to all, Mackenzie made no effort to hide his commitment to Presbyterianism, and his partiality to the brand of Presbyterianism represented by Proudfoot’s Missionary Synod is evident. Mackenzie was very interested

⁶⁰ William Lyon Mackenzie, *Sketches of Canada and the United States* (London, 1833), p. 8.

⁶¹ Wilton, *Politics*, pp. 55–84.

⁶² On the need of participants in the public sphere to avoid sectarianism, see McNairn, *Capacity*, p. 15.

⁶³ Wilton, *Politics*, p. 60.

in news from his home country and reported on the Edinburgh annuity tax controversy. He also admired the voluntary system in Vermont comparing its virtues with the flaws of the Upper Canadian government and he approved of the system of tithe collection in Lower Canada where Catholic priests were supported voluntarily. After winning his seat in the Assembly in 1828, Mackenzie protested against the existence of an Anglican chaplain in the House and in 1832 the Assembly resolved to do without a chaplain entirely.⁶⁴ He was outraged at the apostasy of Ryerson, a voluntary ally of Mackenzie who apparently changed his position in provincial politics after receiving an endowment.⁶⁵ But in Mackenzie's eyes, the behaviour of the United Synod, which had also quietly applied for state aid, was worse. This was regarded as nothing less than treachery. Mackenzie felt utterly betrayed by his fellow Seceders, proclaiming that they brought shame to the denomination and were not worthy of the name. They were denounced as 'government spies in black coats, a disgrace to the noble and patriotic country of their birth, a clog upon human freedom'.⁶⁶

R.A. Mackay has written that Mackenzie's political ideas are hard to analyse. Ever the journalist, Mackenzie would cut and paste snippets of information from a variety of sources.⁶⁷ It is certainly true that Mackenzie had great admiration for the American Republic. He revered those who had achieved independence for the thirteen colonies and was especially delighted, after discovering a monument to a Scottish General who had helped to secure 'the freedom of America', that 'not all Scotch of 1776 were Tories'.⁶⁸ Mackay declared that Mackenzie's constitution for Upper Canada drafted at the radical convention held prior to the rebellion in 1837 was almost a replica of the Declaration of Independence.⁶⁹ Mackenzie also admired those who were striving to further democratise America's government – although he regarded slavery as a great stain on the country's constitution – and he was impressed by the modesty of Andrew Jackson when he visited him in 1832. As time went on his ideas became more radical, especially once in desperate exile in New York, and he ceased to represent himself as a constitutional reformer. But in early years Mackenzie was a great admirer of Brougham and the Whigs who had achieved

⁶⁴ Mackenzie, *Sketches*, pp. 149, 161–70; Moir, *Church and State*, pp. 155–8.

⁶⁵ Ryerson began to criticise the reformers for their efforts after he visited Britain in order to facilitate union between the Wesleyan and Episcopal Methodists, which brought the latter a share in the Wesleyans' endowment.

⁶⁶ 'Wolves in Sheep's Clothing', *TC*, Sep 28 1836.

⁶⁷ R.A. Mackay, 'The Political Ideas of William Lyon Mackenzie', *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 3 (1937); F.H. Armstrong, 'William Lyon Mackenzie: the persistent hero', *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 6 (1971).

⁶⁸ Mackenzie, *Sketches*, p. 7.

⁶⁹ Rea makes the same observation in 'Jacksonian?', p. 340.

parliamentary reform in Britain. Wilton argues that underpinning Mackenzie's criticism of British society – its lords spiritual, state religions, national debt, and rotten boroughs – was a 'kind of rough-hewn version of British country-party ideology'.⁷⁰ He was, moreover, an admirer of Lafayette, Napoleon and Thomas Paine, inserting excerpts of *Common Sense* in *The Constitution* and printing 1200 copies for circulation, though he criticised Paine's heretical views on revealed religion.⁷¹ Furthermore, he continued to watch closely the development of Chartism in Britain. However, while his influences – American, British, and French – were varied and his ideas subject to change, Presbyterian thought consistently and fundamentally moulded Mackenzie's political vision.

According to Kilbourn, Mackenzie's 'Calvinist training and his knowledge of the Bible were to be important sources of his later liberalism'.⁷² When defending himself in the provincial legislature after being charged with libel, the Bible was one of the many books he took with him to help aid his defence. In a lengthy article of *Mackenzie's Gazette*, printed during his exile and imprisonment in New York, Mackenzie elaborated on the root of his political and social egalitarianism. This anti-clerical article, entitled 'Democracy of Christianity', charged gospel ministers with abandoning their political role as the advocates of the equality of all people: the proper doctrine of Christ. In Mackenzie's view, 'Christianity has concern no less with politics than with theology...whatever relates to forms of government, to state policy, to the actual or possible condition of men...it must concern itself with, as well as with what relates to theological dogmas, or religious rights or ceremonies. It must have instructions for us as statesmen and citizens, as well as church members.' According to the journalist, democracy was naturally associated with Christianity: 'does [Christianity] teach us that the many were created to be used by the few? Was Jesus the prophet of kings, hierarchies, nobilities, the rich, the great, the powerful; or was he the prophet of the democracy, sent from God to teach glad tidings to the poor?' The article proceeded to quote at length the opinion of French radical Abbé de Lamennais, which Mackenzie informed his readers, could be read as his own viewpoint: 'Christianity lays down as the fundamental principle of its doctrine...the equality of men before god, or the equal rights of all the members of the human family...Jesus was, under a political and social aspect, the prophet of the Democracy...before his piercing glance earth-born distinctions vanish, and kings and princes, scribes and Pharisees, chief priests

⁷⁰ Wilton, *Politics*, p. 64.

⁷¹ See e.g., 'Common Sense', *TC*, July 19 1836; Mackenzie, *Sketches*, p. 9.

⁷² Kilbourn, *Firebrand*, p. 14.

and elders sink down below the meanest fishermen, or the vilest slave, and seem to be less worthy to enter the kingdom of heaven than publicans and harlots.’

The article further condemned the attempts of European governments, aided by state churches, to perpetuate absolutism. According to Mackenzie, both institutions, civil and ecclesiastical, would fall together if the church failed to teach the doctrine of liberty; people would rather turn to atheism, preferring its teachings to the doctrine of social distinctions. Mackenzie urged clergymen to preach ‘the kindling doctrine of...the natural equality of man with man, the equal rights of all men, and remind their congregations that all social conditions, social practices, and governmental measures, which strike against the doctrine of equal rights, are as repugnant to Christianity, as they are to Democratic liberty and the true interests of mankind’. According to Mackenzie, preachers spent too much time considering the fate of man in the afterlife instead of focusing on social progress. He asked the church to ‘baptize liberty in the font of holiness’.⁷³

While Mackenzie began his article by informing his readers that he would avoid mentioning a predilection for a particular sect, and referred to Christianity in general, his anti-hierarchical opinions and criticism of despotism were classically Presbyterian. Mackenzie was familiar with, and influenced by, Thomas McCrie’s *Life of Melville*, and he included this quote in an issue of the *Colonial Advocate* in 1831: “Despotism has rarely been established in any country without the subserviency of the ministers of religion. And it nearly concerns the cause of public liberty, that those who ought to be the common instructors, and the faithful and fearless monitors of all classes, should not be converted into the trained sycophants of a corrupt, or the trembling slaves of a tyrannical administration”.⁷⁴ Mackenzie criticised Ryerson for preaching the tenets of divine right, passive obedience and non-resistance; doctrines in direct opposition to Presbyterian contractarian theory. Elsewhere he sang the praises of Presbyterianism and the inspiration it gave to republican government in the civil sphere: ‘Presbyterianism is exceedingly well suited to a republican system, being itself distinguished by a democratic form of church government, and which well accounts for the detestation in which it was always held by the Stuart family when on the throne of England’.⁷⁵ He claimed that the rebels of 1798 in Ireland had been Scotch-Irish, who, ‘inheriting the spirit and tenets of their ancestors the Covenanters, were mostly republicans from principle’.⁷⁶ He praised Knox for his foresight in eradicating hierarchy during the Scottish Reformation. Knox had ‘destroyed the nests,

⁷³ ‘Democracy of Christianity’, *Mackenzie’s Gazette*, Oct 13 1838.

⁷⁴ ‘The Presbyterians and the Kirk’, *CA*, Aug 18 1831.

⁷⁵ Mackenzie, *Sketches*, p. 3.

⁷⁶ ‘Some Passages in the History of Ireland’, *TC*, Nov 29 1837.

lest, if they remained, the rooks and foul birds might return and take possession'.⁷⁷ In later years he expressed his admiration for the Free Church and for the heroes, martyrs and leaders of the Scottish Kirk who had courageously upheld the cause of liberty.⁷⁸

The strain of egalitarian thought propounded by Mackenzie had been advocated by Scottish Presbyterians protesting against lay patronage in the early eighteenth century. John Currie argued in 1720 that 'in the Things of God all are equal, the Rich and Poor stand upon the same Terms and Advantage'.⁷⁹ As a member of the Secession church Mackenzie opposed lay patronage on principle. He declared that the Scots had been betrayed by the imposition of the Patronage Act – the 'death blow to the independence of Scottish ministers' – by which Episcopalian and atheistic patrons 'put high aristocrats and parasites in churches'.⁸⁰ His belief in the democratic right of the entire congregation to nominate its minister is evident from his proposals for the new constitution of St Andrews Presbyterian Church in Toronto. One proposal put forward suggested that ministers should sit for life, and awarded several votes to one individual according to the number of seats purchased by him in the church. Mackenzie objected to this plan and forwarded his own suggestion. This stated that a minister should be elected by a majority of all classes of persons, each holding only one vote. He advocated vote by ballot and declared that ministers should remain only as long as the congregation was satisfied. When the former constitution won the approval of the majority at the meeting, Mackenzie rose and, as reported in the *Colonial Advocate*, declared that 'as there could now be no expectation of anything liberal or fair towards the congregation coming from such a system, he, Mr M. would give up his seat and leave the church'. Mackenzie claimed that Episcopalians and Roman Catholics had attended the meeting and had voted against his motion.⁸¹

It has been argued that Mackenzie was indebted to the example set by the American Revolution and that the resistance and contractarian theory justifying the Revolution of 1688-89 in Britain informed his thought.⁸² However, many Presbyterians regarded the principles propounded during these revolutions as Presbyterian in origin. Several nineteenth-century Scottish historians argued that the Scottish Covenanters had advocated and suffered in the 1670s and 80s for the same principles celebrated only a few years later

⁷⁷ C&A, Aug 6 1835. In 1572, the final year of his life, Knox had actually accepted the revival of episcopacy in the Church of Scotland.

⁷⁸ 'Free General Assembly', *TWM*, June 26 1857.

⁷⁹ [John Currie], *Jus Populi Vindicatum* (1720).

⁸⁰ 'Patronage in Scotland', *Mackenzie's Gazette*, Oct 26 1839.

⁸¹ 'The Scotch Kirk', *CA*, July 12 1834.

⁸² McNairn, *Capacity*, p. 40.

in 1688.⁸³ American Covenanters accused Thomas Jefferson of plagiarism, claiming that the Declaration of Independence was a reproduction of the Mecklenburg Declaration: a Covenanting document printed in 1775.⁸⁴ The *Declaration of the Reformers of the City of Toronto to the People of Upper Canada*, written in August 1837 probably by Mackenzie, is to a degree also an expression of Covenanting political thought: 'government is founded on the authority and is instituted for the benefit of a people; when, therefore, any government long and systematically ceases to answer the great ends of its foundation, the people have a natural right given them by their Creator to seek after and establish such institutions as will yield the greatest happiness to the greatest number'.⁸⁵ Mackenzie interestingly referred to the social contract allegedly broken by the Upper Canadian government as a 'solemn covenant'.⁸⁶ He also interpreted the American Revolution as a struggle for religious liberty: 'The British colonists of '76', he said, 'fought with their Bibles in their knapsacks'; they sought 'the freedom of interpreting the Bible for themselves, and following its precepts.'⁸⁷ In 1837, Mackenzie believed Upper Canadians had a similar battle before them. In a handbill circulated prior to the rebellion he cited Christianity as the justification for revolt. He urged citizens to ignore the doctrine of passive obedience preached by 'reverend sinners' and fight for 'a government founded upon the eternal heaven-born principle of the Lord Jesus Christ, a government bound to enforce the law to do to each other as you would be done by.' To his fellow Canadians he made the following final appeal: 'Put them down in the name of that God who goes forth with the armies of his people, and whose Bible shows us that...you must put down...those governments which...trample on the law and destroy its usefulness...If we move now as one man to crush the tyrant's power, to establish free institutions, founded on God's law, we will prosper, for he who commands the winds and the waves will be with us'.⁸⁸

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⁸³ N. Forsyth, 'Presbyterian historians and the Scottish invention of British liberty', *RSCHS*, 34 (2004).

⁸⁴ William Melancthon Glasgow, *History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America* (Baltimore, 1888), pp. 65–6.

⁸⁵ 'The Declaration of the Reformers of the City of Toronto to their Fellow-reformers in Upper Canada', *C&A*, Aug 2 1837.

⁸⁶ 'To the Convention of farmers, mechanics, labourers and other inhabitants of Toronto, met at the Royal Oak Hotel, to consider of and take measures for the effectually maintaining in this colony a free constitution and democratic form of government', *TC*, Nov 15 1837.

⁸⁷ Mackenzie, *Sketches*, pp. 14–15.

⁸⁸ 'Independence for Canada!', *Mackenzie's Gazette*, Aug 18 1838.

Mackenzie was always careful to cultivate popular support and it seems he was aware of how motivating and emotionally powerful appeals to the Scottish Covenanted past could be. In 1832 he visited Britain in order to drum up support for Upper Canadian reform. Since the British government was putting the finishing touches to its own parliamentary Reform Acts, this was a prime time to visit, although Proudfoot expressed regret at Mackenzie's departure during a critical period on the domestic front; 'the country is suffering', he said, 'from the absence of Mr McKenzie'.⁸⁹ Until his return early in 1833, the *Colonial Advocate* continued to appear, most issues of which contained lengthy letters written by Mackenzie from across the Atlantic. During his visit, Mackenzie travelled round the country and he was greeted most enthusiastically in his hometown of Dundee where, the *St Thomas Liberal* reported, the trades of Forfar 'went in a body unanimously dressed, to meet him, with their colours flying, drums beating, and the bag-pipes playing "Scots wha hae wae Wallace bled."'⁹⁰ The nature of this reception indicates that the British populace was aware, to some degree, of the struggle for reform taking place across the Atlantic.

In June 1832 the *Colonial Advocate* reprinted a snippet from the *London Chronicle*, which recorded the speeches at mass meetings held in Liverpool and Manchester after the House of Lords had refused its assent to the Reform Bill. It was reported that in Manchester, 'Mr Prentice, in a very animated speech, which was repeatedly cheered, reminded the meeting of what the Scottish Covenanters had done, and he hoped Englishmen would not be behind in following their example...the Scottish Covenanters had contrived to do without bishops, and he thought that the English Reformers might consistently follow their example'.⁹¹ A few weeks later the *Advocate* printed Mackenzie's own thoughts on a similar meeting in Birmingham: 'The reform meeting at Birmingham must have been a solemn and affecting scene...the speaker gave out the solemn covenant...and all the people...repeated after him – "with unbroken faith, through every peril and privation, we here devote ourselves and our children to our country's cause." This extraordinary scene reminds me of the Scottish Solemn League and Covenant, into which, in a less enlightened age, the northern part of the island entered. The powerful effects of this measure are on historical record; and had reform failed here, some similar bond might have become essential to the liberal cause in Upper Canada.' At this point Mackenzie was heartily encouraged by the British Whig government and believed Canada's problems

⁸⁹ UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 1, Journal 3, 'Dec 22 1832'.

⁹⁰ *St Thomas Liberal*, Nov 29 1832.

⁹¹ *CA*, June 28 1832.

would be remedied by the imperial legislature. He declared: ‘the example of the reformers in England, and their brilliant success should teach the Upper Canadians to be united as one man in defence of their rights as British freemen’.⁹² However, Mackenzie was to grow increasingly desperate after the arrival in 1836 of Sir Francis Bond Head, the new Lieutenant-Governor, and references to the Covenanting past became more frequent in the rhetoric of the reformers.

The 1836 Election and the Anglican Rectories

Sir Francis Bond Head was another expert manipulator of the popular mind. He appeared to contemplate moderate reform when he included Robert Baldwin and John Rolph in his Council, and he then cleverly represented the reformers as disloyal radicals out to sever the British connection.⁹³ When he refused to pay heed to the wishes of his Council, declaring that it was their duty to serve him as the representative of the British government, and not the people, the Council resigned. Head issued a long critique of responsible government, insinuating that those advocating reform were motivated by self-interest, seeking power for themselves. The Assembly demanded that a responsible executive was necessary to colonial government and proceeded to withhold supplies. After refusing to grant his assent to 162,000 pounds worth of money bills, casting the blame on the Assembly, Head dissolved the house and called an election for the spring of 1836. Determined to secure a tory house, Head employed every weapon at his disposal during his election campaign, including Orange violence.⁹⁴ Acknowledging the importance of popular opinion, he made a long tour of the province, and succeeded in drawing to him an unprecedented number of ‘loyal’ supporters. Times were grave for the reformers and they redoubled their efforts before the all-important election. In an article of the *Correspondent and Advocate* entitled ‘A Plain Dialogue Between John a country farmer, and Andrew, a citizen of Toronto’, the author, probably Mackenzie, appealed to the religious sensitivities of the ordinary colonist by highlighting the persecuting spirit of Anglicanism:

Andrew: ...“Prelacy” has lately raised its brazen head, and altho’ small in numbers, and insignificant as to usefulness has seated herself upon a throne, and insolently tells the churches of purer faith, and far surpassing numbers “Sit thou at my foot stool!” I cannot

⁹² CA, July 19 1832.

⁹³ On the ability of both reformers and tories to utilise ideas of the ancient constitution and mixed monarchy to represent the opposition as disloyal, see McNairn, *Capacity*, pp. 23–62.

⁹⁴ On Francis Bond Head and the 1836 election see Wilton, *Politics*, pp. 168–83.

imagine that the Presbyterians, the Dissenters or the Methodists in the city, in common with their brethren throughout the Province, will degrade themselves by supporting at the coming election any High-Church Tory...

John: Scotchmen must think...of the day when the sword of a Claverhouse was red with the blood of his ancestors; and Dissenters of every name must feel when they recollect, that, even at this day in England and Ireland their brethren are compelled at the point of the bayonet to feed a pampered political, Episcopalian priesthood and the same spirit animates the Tories of Upper Canada as of England.⁹⁵

In a supplement to the *Correspondent and Advocate* produced by Mackenzie and distributed in June before the election, 'A Caledonian' addressed 'the Scottish Presbyterian Ministers and People' directly. Kirkmen were urged to forget their application for a share in the reserves, and the obligation to the government which state aid brought them, and join the reformers:

Dear Friends, Have you already forgotten the Cloud of Witnesses, the Scots Worthies, the strugglings of your forefathers against prelatic intolerance and arbitrary power? Has the few thousand miles of sea which divides you from the graves of the Martyrs of old Scotia, deadened the finer feelings of your nature towards that glorious cause which sheds on Caledonia its brightest lustre? Have you wept in boyhood at the recital of the sufferings and losses of the Scottish Covenanters in the persecutions of 1660 to 1688, and are you now ready to send the Drapers, the Ruttans, the Hagermans, the Joneses, and the Robinsons to the Assembly, to sign, in your name, a deed of apostasy against their testimony?...Shall it be said that the Ministers and people of the Church of Scotland in Canada joined, in 1836, in the cry of "Revolution, Rebellion, and Sedition" against the Reformers because they follow the footsteps of John Knox? Are ye, indeed, prepared to bow the knee to the new courtly creed of Dr. John Strachan? I will not, dare not, cannot believe it!

The correspondent proceeded to point out the absurdity of the establishment principle: 'Was the Church of Scotland established on the pillars of worldly wealth when a Wishart was burnt at the stake-when a Cargill and a Renwick perished on the scaffold-when the glens and mountains echoed the song of praise of champions who fell at Bothwell, to rise and live forever in a better world?...Your Church is not established here and it never will be.' Mackenzie's readers were urged to remember how the 'Heart beats warmly for the honour and glory of the land of our sires' and encouraged to repeat to themselves Burns' *Cotter's Saturday Night*. To further stir the emotions, the author proceeded to print stanzas from a poem on Covenanting days entitled 'The Vision of Ayr's Moss' and referred to the historians who had sketched the 'sufferings and bravery' of the Covenanters 'for the

⁹⁵ 'A Plain Dialogue Between John a country farmer, and Andrew, a citizen of Toronto', *C&A*, June 8 1836. 157

admiration and example of an admiring world'. The article ended by asking, is all 'to be lost upon us in this new country?'⁹⁶

The election was an intense and violent affair in most places. In Galt it was 'unusually turbulent',⁹⁷ while William Bell described the proceedings as they took place in the Perth region: 'the general election...kept the town in an uproar for the next week...at Richmond such was the violence of parties that one man was killed, and several severely hurt. No election here was ever so arduously contested.' Bell and his sons supported their friend Malcolm Cameron, who wore a thistle from Bell's garden, and who was successfully returned for the reformers. Later, their opponents targeted Cameron's camp and Bell's gates were deliberately torn down allowing pigs to wreak havoc in his garden.⁹⁸

In London, where everybody 'was wholly occupied with the approaching elections',⁹⁹ John Talbot anxiously implored Proudfoot to put his preaching abilities to good use: 'could not you use your good office with your people to animate them for the coming important struggle. Every means are being made use of to turn the Scotch around. Murdoch McKenzie been through town – saying that radicals aim at revolution, that British government will put them down and those who show support will lose their lands. If this doctrine has been preached in your neighbourhood it would be charity to counteract it...if we lose this election we are down. You will be still acting in your vocation to say a word for Reform. I trust you will do it.'¹⁰⁰ Whether Proudfoot followed his friend's advice it is impossible to know, but it is clear from evidence that Seceders made up a significant proportion of pro-reform voters in Toronto at least. Here 23 Scottish voters nominated Draper, the tory candidate, while 24 opted for Small, the reformer. While the Church of Scotland vote was divided equally (12/25 voted for reform), two thirds of voting Seceders supported reform (14/21). Paul Romney has concluded that 'considering the ethnic, religious and occupational data discretely, it seems that the voters' denominational affiliation exhibits the strongest correlation with the voting...assuming that the votes were generally speaking uncoerced, religion might be called the "most important" determinant of political preference, with nationality and occupation progressively less so.'¹⁰¹ Later, the Church of Scotland explained that fear of an extremist faction who desired the severance of

⁹⁶ 'To the Scottish Presbyterian Ministers and People', C&A, June 15 1836.

⁹⁷ Young, *Reminiscences*, p. 151.

⁹⁸ QUA, William Bell Papers, 'Life', vol 10, mfm reel 586a, 'June 1836'; vol 11, mfm reel 586a, '1836'.

⁹⁹ UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 5, Journal 25, 'June 23 1836'.

¹⁰⁰ UWO, Gray Papers, Box B4980-3, 'Letters from John Talbot', Jan 15 1836.

¹⁰¹ See P. Romney, 'On the Eve of the Rebellion: Nationality, Religion and Class in the Toronto Election of 1836', in D. Keane & C. Read (eds.), *Old Ontario: Essays in Honour of J.M.S. Careless* (Toronto & Oxford, 1990), pp. 198–9, 209.

the British connection led Kirkmen to give their votes to the tories.¹⁰² The tories thus successfully defeated the reformers and, although the reformers protested, complaining of violent tactics and foul play, their petitions were rejected.

More difficult for the reformer to stomach than a humiliating election defeat were plans unveiled by the government for the establishment of fifty-seven Anglican rectories. It was understood that each new rector was to possess the same privileges, except the right to levy tithes, accorded to those in England, and according to Lord Durham this was regarded by non-Anglican clergymen as having ‘degraded them to a position of legal inferiority’. Durham reported after the rebellion that ‘in the opinion of many persons, this was the chief pre-disposing cause of the recent insurrection, and it is an abiding and unabated cause of discontent.’¹⁰³ In the region of Galt the reserves and the rectories were regarded as ‘undoubted evidence that the ruling oligarchy was firmly bent on inflicting a State Church upon the country, the danger of which served to render the people of Dumfries more strongly pronounced in their Liberalism than ever’.¹⁰⁴ Solicitor-General Christopher Hagerman defended the policy, and condemned the Church of Scotland’s demand for equal rights and a share in the reserves, with a speech in the Assembly which succeeded in alienating Scottish Presbyterians still further, driving Kirkmen from the government’s side. Mackenzie recorded the infamous speech in *The Constitution*:

I say it publicly as a lawyer, that the ministers of the Church of Scotland are no more established in this Province than the ministers of the Methodists or of the Baptists...if they were to attempt to perform [a marriage] ceremony without a license...if I were the Attorney General I would prosecute them for it!...The Church of England is not only established here, by express enactment, but it is also established in all the colonies which belong to the British Crown, the Church of Scotland being confined to that country only – for when Scotland was united to England by the Act of Union in 1707, it had no dependencies to which to extend their religion!... the object of these resolutions is to give the Clergy of the Church of Scotland what they so much want –and that is to be on a footing of the Church of England, in a Province where they are only recognised as dissenters.

Malcolm Cameron, the member for Perth, responded to Hagerman in the Assembly. He expressed his indignation at the tone in which the Solicitor-General had spoken of his fellow countrymen and co-religionists. He reminded the Assembly of the events of Scotland’s unhappy past and warned that they would not be repeated in Canada: ‘the Church of England and its priesthood, armed with temporal power, pursued with fire,

¹⁰² ‘The Claims and Proceedings of the Presbyterians Vindicated’, *CCEPR*, Mar 1838.

¹⁰³ Coupland (ed.), *Report*, pp. 98–9.

¹⁰⁴ Young, *Reminiscences*, pp. 83–4, 148–51.

sword, fetters, dungeons and death the Scottish people, because they were constant to the faith of their forefathers...it was attempted for nearly a century to force episcopacy on Scotland but it had failed, and it would fail here in Canada.’¹⁰⁵ Hagerman was regarded as expressing the feelings of the Lieutenant-Governor, and his subsequent elevation to the position of Attorney-General was interpreted as signalling Head’s approval of Hagerman’s brash declarations. Moreover, Hagerman now had the power to prosecute Kirkmen; something he had threatened in his speech. In response, the Kirk arranged numerous meetings, including a province-wide conference in Cobourg, formed societies, and sent congregational and synodical protests to the government. Hagerman’s claim that the Kirk was merely a tolerated sect angered Kirkmen to the extreme. A patriotic and rousing address, printed in the *Correspondent and Advocate*, was circulated ‘To Scotchmen in the colonies and at home’ urging them, as British subjects, to stand up for their national rights, inexorably intertwined with the rights of the Kirk: ‘we Scotchmen are told to believe that our Forefathers who resisted to the very death every encroachment on their religious rights, cared not for their descendants; -that when they secured these rights with the words “forever” in the Treaty of Union, they nevertheless meant, that on emigrating to lands conquered by their own arms, under their own banner their sons equal in all inferior rights, should tamely sit down the ecclesiastical serfs of England’. The address called on all Scots and Irish Presbyterians, already ‘too fearfully aroused’, to unite, both in Upper Canada as well as in Britain, where the appeal from across the Atlantic would be heard by the British Parliament, and even by the Church of England, with sympathy: ‘The spirit of our Fathers is extinct neither in Scotland nor here...we ourselves must unite from the Ottawa to the shores of Huron, and we call to join us our Presbyterian brethren, the descendants of our Forefathers, who emigrated to Ireland...[we will not] rest until, *to the last word and letter*, the Treaty of Union is fulfilled, till our Religious and civil rights are respected, restored and secured; till the faction is crouched forever, and the world is taught that we came not to our colonies to be Insulted with impunity.’¹⁰⁶

Bell described this address as a ‘capital production- well fitted to rouse the national spirit.’ 500 copies were printed by the Perth district committee and distributed throughout this settlement alone. In Perth Bell amalgamated his congregation with that of Wilson, the Kirk minister, and a large meeting was held. It requested the removal of Hagerman from the government, declaring his elevation to be insulting ‘and an unequivocal approval of his

¹⁰⁵ ‘The Fifty-Seven Rectories’, *TC*, Feb 15 1837.

¹⁰⁶ ‘To Scotchmen in the Colonies and at Home’, *C&A*, April 5 1837.

conduct, and an avowal of his sentiments on the part of the Colonial Government'.¹⁰⁷ In his memoirs Bell commented thus: '[Hagerman] made use of much abusive and offensive language in reference to the Scotch church, and to Scotchmen in general. This produced great excitement and threw the province into a flame from one end to the other. Meetings were held in all quarters and resolutions passed denouncing him as an enemy.'¹⁰⁸ The Cobourg delegates formulated an address to the crown stating that the 'fundamental principles of the Act of Union, which were guaranteed to us with so much jealousy by our forefathers in perilous times' could not be infringed upon. The rectories further violated the rights of the Church since the incumbents were invested with jurisdiction over all inhabitants of the province regardless of spiritual orientation.¹⁰⁹

The Cobourg meeting was preceded and followed by district meetings throughout the province. There was some objection to the aggressive tone of the protest emanating from Niagara where Presbyterians had apparently charged the Church of England with 'breathing vengeance' and 'vomiting forth threats'. The Rev. Robert McGill insisted that the ire of Niagara was directed at the Governor and his Council, not at the Church of England itself.¹¹⁰ In Hamilton there was a debate over how far the criticism of the Lieutenant-Governor's choice of Attorney-General should extend. One gentleman, arguing that the Scots had been ill paid for their loyalty at the last election, demanded that a resolution against Hagerman pass without amendment. Meanwhile, John McIntyre urged the Presbyterians of Lanark to let it be known that 'we are Scotchmen, the descendants of an ancient and honourable nation of Scottish Presbyterians, and that we are determined to show the world, that we inherit the spirit and feelings of our illustrious forefathers, who held their civil and religious liberties sacred with their lives, and who have left so many glorious examples in the pages of history, that they would sacrifice the one before they would the other.'¹¹¹ Carol Wilton has examined the significance of the numerous public meetings held to raise awareness and mobilise reform support. These meetings held by Scots Presbyterians in the heated months prior to the rebellion have been overlooked by Wilton, and by Gauvreau, but they were no less influential than other reform meetings in activating the discontented or in contributing to the agitated state of the province. A stirring account of the Cobourg meeting was printed and circulated in the legislature in

¹⁰⁷ QUA, William Bell Papers, 'Life', vol 11, mfm reel 586a, 'Mar 1837'; 'Meeting of Presbyterians at Perth', C&A, April 5 1837.

¹⁰⁸ QUA, William Bell Papers, 'Life', vol 11, mfm reel 586a, 'Mar 1837'.

¹⁰⁹ 'Address of the Delegates of the Church of Scotland in Canada to the King, 14 April 1837', in Moir (ed.), *Church and State*, pp. 202–3.

¹¹⁰ 'To the editor', *TC*, Mar 29 1837.

¹¹¹ 'Great Meeting at Lanark', C&A, April 19 1837.

handbill form. This document apparently helped postpone action on the clergy reserves just at the moment Hagerman was advocating their re-investment in the crown.¹¹²

In April, the Hon. William Morris, member of the Assembly and Kirk layman, was sent to London, as a delegate from the Cobourg conference, to lay the grievances of Presbyterians in Upper Canada before the imperial government. Morris passed a copy of the Cobourg proceedings to Lord Glenelg, Colonial Secretary, enabling the minister 'to understand the view which [Scots] take of their constitutional right to enjoy, under the Treaty of Union between the Kingdoms of England and Scotland, equal privileges with their fellow subjects of England in a *British* colony'. He also presented a petition which he hoped would be transmitted to the House of Lords. Morris was pleased to report that Glenelg expressed a desire to see the Churches of England and Scotland placed on an equal footing, and to see the latter Church acquire a share in the reserves. Glenelg also revealed his disapproval of Hagerman's speech. Crucially, he informed the Presbyterian agent that the home government had never sanctioned the establishment of the rectories. According to Morris, Glenelg revealed that 'the Executive Council of Upper Canada had acted on some expression, in a dispatch of Lord Ripon's, which he felt persuaded was never intended to be regarded as authority for that purpose.' Glenelg informed Morris that only the colonial government could settle the reserves question and told him he was unwilling to present a petition to the Lords criticising the government of which he was a member. Even when Morris explained that the petition expressed faith in the home government, Glenelg warned Morris that the present juncture was an inopportune moment to present a Presbyterian petition to the House of Lords. Morris was quite at a loss to understand this hint; Glenelg may have been referring to the heated domestic conflict over patronage currently being fought between the House of Lords and the Church of Scotland. Despite these discouraging remarks, Morris had the satisfaction of reading the despatch to Head, which instructed him to deal fairly with the Presbyterians. The Cobourg petition was also enclosed for the Governor's consideration.

The Presbyterians hoped that Glenelg's instructions would effect some change in the policies of the colonial government, but they were disappointed when the Governor informed them, that rather than be repealed, the rectories policy would now be submitted to the Bishop of Montreal and the Archbishop of York for their professional advice. The government rested its defence of the rectories on outdated instructions received from Earl Bathurst in 1818 and 1825 and implied that the imperial government had sanctioned the

¹¹² 'Presbyterian Meeting at Cobourg', *TC*, Mar 8 1837.

rectories in its recent despatch. On receiving this news the Kirk Synod addressed a memorial to Glenelg reiterating its grievances, complaining of Head's exploits, especially his refusing to grant the Synod a copy of Glenelg's despatch when requested.

Morris's correspondence, containing all of the above detail, appeared in the *Canadian Christian Examiner and Presbyterian Review* – the Kirk's periodical established in 1837 to vindicate the rights of the Church – in the autumn of 1837, and at a later date was published in pamphlet form. It revealed to a portion of the Presbyterian community how a sympathetic home government viewed their predicament and how Head's administration refused to adhere to the wishes of the Colonial Office. As Morris informed Glenelg, Upper Canadian Scots retained their faith in the British authorities and, they insisted, the Church of England in England, but had now lost all confidence in the Anglican regime in Toronto. When the intervention from London failed to achieve any significant results, the frustration of Scots Presbyterians across the province must have reached new heights.¹¹³ Indeed, according to Michael Gauvreau, by this point in 1837, for some Scottish Presbyterians Upper Canada began to resemble Scotland in 1638. Thomas Christie, Seceder minister of West Flamborough, suggested to Proudfoot that a petition be drawn up to be signed by all congregations across the province, as well as those who chose to join with them. Gauvreau sees this as an attempt to form an Upper Canadian-style National Covenant.¹¹⁴

The strategy of the Upper Canadian Kirk, in portraying itself as the representative of the entire Scottish population in the colony, annoyed some voluntary Seceders who desired not that the Kirk should be established on an equal footing with the Anglican Church, but that establishments should be abolished completely. However, after recording Hagerman's speech in his paper, William Lyon Mackenzie admitted that 'it was painful to us to hear Scotland, her institutions, her ministers, and her religion, from which we swerve not, spoken of in such contemptuous terms'.¹¹⁵ He warmed to the Kirk after its congregations began to hold meetings to petition against Hagerman and the rectories, declaring that 'we have no desire to see Kirkmen ride roughshod over other religious societies, but for the sake of those immutable principles of justice for which so many pious men, Caledonia's bravest and brightest ornaments, have bled and died, nobly contending against prelacy and arbitrary power, we hope that Scotsmen and Scotsmen's children will

¹¹³ 'The Correspondence of the Hon. William Morris', *CCEPR*, Oct 1837.

¹¹⁴ Gauvreau, 'Covenanter Democracy', p. 74.

¹¹⁵ 'The Fifty-Seven Rectories', *TC*, Feb 15 1837.

never rest till they wipe away the unmanly stigma of the Governor's representative'.¹¹⁶ 'A Caledonian' wrote another letter to Mackenzie as editor of *The Constitution*, which implored him to forget past squabbles and to help muster a united Presbyterian front:

Forget not as a Scotchman what you owe your native land. Her religion, for which she spilt her best blood...has been insulted and is threatened with degradation. Each son of Scotland is expected to do his duty; and as the Editor of a paper much is expected and much can be done by you. Bury all minor considerations and let us unite like our forefathers to vindicate the honor and purity of our beloved church...not only for ourselves and for our children, but for our countrymen who may come to join us, let us maintain inviolate the religious rights of Scotchmen or perish in the struggle. When our religious rights are impaired our civil rights must be in danger-they must stand or fall together.¹¹⁷

On the eve of the rebellion Mackenzie was aware that Scottish Presbyterians were his best allies, although he was still dedicated to soliciting a diverse army of support, advocating aid to Lower Canada on the basis that 'they are Canadians like ourselves.'¹¹⁸ These pleas notwithstanding, in the last publications before the rebellion, Mackenzie continued to make direct emotional appeals to his fellow Canadian-Scots. The uprising was termed a 'Scotch rebellion',¹¹⁹ and Michael Vance and Mark Stephen suggest that a vast proportion of the rebels were Scottish artisans and tradesmen recently arrived in Upper Canada with experience of political radicalism and industrial disquiet at home. Vance observes that Mackenzie made appeals 'to farmers and mechanics', intimating that occupational status was significant.¹²⁰ However, most of these immigrant rebels must also have been Presbyterian, as they hailed from those lowland areas where the Secession in particular was strongest.¹²¹ Mackenzie was quick to exploit this fact by appealing to his readers' religious sensitivities. In the last issues of *The Constitution* published before the rebellion, Mackenzie printed 'The Scottish Covenanters', a poem by James Linen, which declared 'for a season the murmurs of Freedom be hushed, but its spirit by mortals can never be crush'd. It lives and will live!' He also included an excerpt from Hume's *History of England* on the 'Presbyterians of 1660', about two thousand of whom 'relinquished their cures and to astonishment of court, sacrificed their interest to their religious tenets'.¹²² On November 29th, a few days before the rebellion broke out on December 4th, and several

¹¹⁶ 'The Scottish Synod', *TC*, Mar 8 1837.

¹¹⁷ 'Letter to the editor', *TC*, April 5 1837.

¹¹⁸ 'Look and deeply consider!!!', *TC*, Nov 22 1837

¹¹⁹ Gauvreau, 'Covenanter Democracy', p. 75.

¹²⁰ Vance & Stephen, 'Grits', p. 191.

¹²¹ Gauvreau, 'Covenanter Democracy', p. 64.

¹²² 'The Scottish Covenanters', *TC*, Nov 22 1837 ; 'The Presbyterians of 1660', *TC*, Nov 22 1837.

months after it had first been uttered, Mackenzie cleverly and deliberately printed Hagerman's insulting speech once again.¹²³

The Rebellion and its Aftermath

It is clear, then, that the Covenanting tradition had wide currency in Upper Canada in this period. Kirkmen as well as Seceders were not slow in alluding to the Covenanters and the example set by them when circumstances required it. Bearing in mind the pre-rebellion tactics of Mackenzie and the agitation of Scottish Presbyterians at this time, one might conjecture that the rebel force was predominantly Scottish and Presbyterian in its make-up. Gauvreau observes that historians looking for a socio-economic explanation for the rebellion have been unable to link employment status to participation in the rising and that most rebels were dissenters united under a non-Anglican banner. The Convention held in Toronto on the eve of the rebellion, the aim of which was to draw up a constitution for the province, outlined the aims of the soon-to-be-rebels regarding the secularisation of the reserves and the establishment of voluntarism. Thus, Gauvreau concludes, the rebellion was not a foreign outburst of American republicanism or a protest against socio-economic grievances, but a battle for the end of Anglican dominance in church and state.¹²⁴ Indeed, according to a recent study, the residents of the Kingston region were driven to support the rebellion owing to the elevated position of the Anglican Church.¹²⁵ One speaker at the Toronto Convention believed the origins of liberal and democratic reform in Canada were rooted in the varieties of Protestant politico-religious dissent exported from Europe to North America: 'The fathers of liberty and equality on this continent were Huguenots...insurgent Puritans...They were whigs and covenanters, the enduring and the reasoning of Scotland. They were liberals and martyrs, the unsubdued, the gallant, and the noble of Ireland'.¹²⁶

The radicals conducted their affairs along broad Christian lines, seeking denominational equality and the end of Anglican rule, highlighting that they comprised more than just Scots Presbyterians. However, Presbyterians were certainly suspected by the authorities and Scots were noticeably represented among the rank and file as well as

¹²³ 'The Fifty-Seven Rectories', *TC*, Nov 29 1837.

¹²⁴ Gauvreau, 'Covenanter Democracy', pp. 74–6.

¹²⁵ B.D. Boyce, *The Rebels of Hastings* (Toronto, 1992), pp. 23, 121–2, 133.

¹²⁶ 'The Convention – Third Day', *TC*, Nov 15 1837.

among the leadership of the rebellion.¹²⁷ It was apparently very difficult to recruit ‘loyalist’ volunteers in Galt where, though some residents were not prepared to resort to arms, there was much sympathy for Mackenzie. Mr Absalom Shade, when asked if a militia force could be raised in the region, replied that ‘the inhabitants were mostly Scotch, mostly quiet and inoffensive, but it would be better not to put arms in their hands!’ A petition was later got up in Galt to protest against the execution of the rebels.¹²⁸

The Secession churches attracted much suspicion, perhaps with good reason. Soldiers billeted in Brockville threatened to destroy the houses of suspected rebels including William Smart who protested against the imprisonment of members of his congregation. He wrote to Lord John Russell on behalf of another banished gentleman who was later released.¹²⁹ William Proudfoot was accused of preaching sedition from his pulpit and it was reported that he was to be apprehended as a rebel.¹³⁰ Afraid that his documents would be searched, he dared not write anything potentially incriminating in his journal during the rebellion or in the witch-hunt period afterwards. Only after six months would the minister safely give an overview of past events.¹³¹ In a letter written to the United Secession in Scotland in 1839 Proudfoot explained his position:

a hearer in my church, was kept in jail 11 weeks...Three of my neighbours, Reformers, were incarcerated for 17 weeks...Many wondered how I escaped, seeing the Tory party had me at such ill will. I was constantly watched. Spies came to the church, and when after all they could find nothing, because there was nothing to find, they got into the way of regarding me as a man of the most profound policy, who directed...the Rebellion with such cautious secrecy that it was impossible to find out either my actions or my agents. If any article of more than ordinary ability appeared in the liberal newspapers in this district I was believed to be the author of it.¹³²

Proudfoot was not apprehended but his nephew James Aichison was imprisoned and some of Proudfoot’s friends, including John Talbot, fled to the United States. Proudfoot made no attempt to deny his reformist leanings or his sympathy for the rebels. Indeed, he did everything in his power to free his nephew, including writing to the Colonel whose forces had arrested him and petitioning George Arthur who had arrived to conduct the trials of the accused.¹³³ He also resented the fact that his son was called to join the local militia employed to root out radicals: ‘how indignant I feel’, he wrote, ‘to see one of my family

¹²⁷ Vance & Stephen, ‘Grits’, p. 192.

¹²⁸ Young, *Reminiscences*, pp. 155–64.

¹²⁹ UCA, William Smart Papers, F3195, Box 1, Files 1-6, ‘Biography’.

¹³⁰ UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 5, Journal 28, ‘Dec 19 1837’.

¹³¹ UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 5, Journal 29, ‘Oct 2 1838’.

¹³² UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 2: Correspondence, File 1, ‘Heads of a Letter sent to Rev Mr Peddie (Committee) Aug 1839’.

¹³³ Gill, *Proudfoot*, pp. 98–102.

amongst them, and poor fellow, he feels himself humbled and degraded by his present employment.’¹³⁴ He expressed his abhorrence of the latest oppressive measures he believed were stifling the course of reform and helping to incite rebellion.

In Lower Canada, Scots Presbyterians were also regarded as politically suspect. Dismissing the view that Lower Canadian troubles were sparked by racial tension, Allan Greer has argued that the rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada were part of a single phenomenon. However, Gauvreau believes that by overlooking religious dimensions, Greer misses the crucial aspects of political culture which made the rebellions different.¹³⁵ There were far fewer clergy reserves in Lower Canada and no seigniorial tenure in Upper Canada, and the Scottish Presbyterians in the former province were fewer than in the latter. However, Upper Canadian reformers identified with their fellow activists across the border. Presbyterians in Lower Canada too were critical of Anglican rule. James Geggie, missionary of the Reformed Presbyterian Church working in Megantic County, Lower Canada, wrote home in March 1838 describing events. His prejudice against French Canadians caused him to attribute the rebellion to the ‘troublesome’ French, as well as to American influence, but he personally was far from holding a position of unqualified obedience to the government. A letter from a friend in Scotland brought the following warning and advice at the onset of the rebellion: ‘I am sorry to learn from the Public papers that the province is in a very agitated state. Of course you will require to speak and act with great caution. Were you to say all you believe regarding the British Government you might bring yourself into very great trouble. I hope you will be directed what and when to speak on that subject; and that the truth declared by you will mightily prevail.’ Geggie advised those at home to be thankful for the privileges they enjoyed in Scotland where Covenanters could worship freely without persecution. He bemoaned: ‘I can assure you I earnestly wish to enjoy the freedom I left behind me in the Land of my fathers.’¹³⁶

Moderate Kirkmen in Upper Canada were desperate to distance themselves from the rebels and aware that their petitions and agitation in recent months implicated them, the Synod was quick to declare its loyalty and apologise for the vituperative language which had recently issued forth from congregations. The Synod sent out an address to all members of the Church in which people were reminded that obedience to rulers was one of

¹³⁴ UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 5, Journal 29, ‘Nov 1 1838’.

¹³⁵ A. Greer, ‘1837-38: Rebellion Reconsidered’, *CHR*, 76 (1995); Gauvreau, ‘Covenanter Democracy’, pp. 74–6. On socio-economic grievances in Lower Canada see W.H. Parker, ‘A New Look at Unrest in Lower Canada in the 1830’s’, in J.M. Bumsted (ed.), *Canadian History Before Confederation: Essays and Interpretations* (Georgetown, ON, 1972), pp. 374–83.

¹³⁶ LAC, James Geggie Fonds, MG 24 J11, ‘John Carslaw to James Geggie Jan 1 1838’; ‘James Geggie to John Carslaw Mar 23 1838’; ‘James Geggie to John Carslaw, May 6 1839’.

the Church's main precepts. The Synod was, however, quick to explain that they issued this warning not because anyone had been implicated in the rebellion; rather, the congregations had outdone themselves in their protestations of loyalty and attachment to constitutional principles.¹³⁷ In Lochiel a loyal address was submitted by Highland settlers exonerating Scots from suspected culpability. It was hoped this would be 'sufficient to dispel the apprehensions that were entertained by some, - and even openly expressed, - that the Scottish inhabitants of the Province were principally concerned in the late rebellion. That the Scottish people here have to complain of certain matters and that they do complain is well known; but it is far from their inclination or intention to commit any act that could by the utmost stretch be construed into an open violation of the laws or constitution of the country.'¹³⁸ There was truth to this statement. Robert Thornton, minister in Whitby, expressed in a letter to the United Secession in Scotland, his relief that the province had been purged of its radical faction.¹³⁹ William Bell preached thanks that the rebellion had been kept away from the borders of his settlement.¹⁴⁰ His son Andrew Bell wrote to his brother from Toronto, where he said he had learned nothing of the approaching rebellion until it was upon him. According to Bell there had been no rebels from the United Synod congregations in the Toronto area. Bell declared that had he had the opportunity he would have willingly joined in putting down the rebellion.¹⁴¹

A thanksgiving was appointed to celebrate the end of the troubles. When some ministers scrupled to obey a command from the temporal sphere, they were admonished in *The Scotsman*, a newspaper launched in February 1838 to forward the interests of the Kirk. Abstainers were warned that refusal to do the will of the authorities looked extremely suspicious. William Taylor of Montreal confessed he found it odd that 'in these times' Proudfoot did not 'pray in public for the powers that be'. This of itself, he said, 'is sufficient to cause suspicion. Cannot you pray for a ruler though you do not approve of his measures?' The editors of *The Scotsman*, on being warned that the title of their production might be construed as implying hostility to the British connection, quickly altered its name to the *British Colonist*. The editors hoped this would 'remove the impression, supposed to be entertained, that it ever was our wish or object to maintain distinctions in this country

¹³⁷ 'Address of the Commission of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland, to the Members of that Church', *CCEPR*, Jan 1838.

¹³⁸ 'Lochiel', *The Scotsman*, Feb 1 1838.

¹³⁹ Gill, *Proudfoot*, p. 105.

¹⁴⁰ QUA, William Bell Papers, 'Life', vol 12, mfm reel 586a, 'Feb 1838'.

¹⁴¹ Archives of Ontario, Bell Family Papers, AI Family Correspondence 1827-1979, 'Andrew Bell to his brother Jan 16 1838'

arising out of National origin.’¹⁴² In order, perhaps, to limit the support of the rebels, an address to the Presbytery of Kingston encouraging members to remain loyal, elaborated on the supposed aim of the rebels to dissolve the British connection. Obviously, despite what it claimed, the Kirk was not convinced that its members had played, or would play, no part in the rebellion.¹⁴³

Historians have often dismissed the rebellion in Upper Canada as an insignificant skirmish by a marginal radical faction easily quashed by the authorities and a loyal, conservative populace. In the end constitutional reform rather than physical force was the favoured option of the majority of reformers, but those who rebelled and those who preferred quieter protest were motivated by the same grievances. Neither Smart nor Proudfoot were involved in open warfare against the government and as public figures Presbyterian ministers were unlikely to bear arms. Nevertheless, the association of the Seceders with the reform agitation which had preceded and triggered the rebellion was openly avowed and continued in the years following the rebellion. In 1841, Proudfoot was still advocating a general pardon for those involved in the uprising. While distancing itself from armed rebellion, the Kirk, like the Secession, also refused entirely to condemn its demonstrations against the regime. A Kirk spokesman defended the actions of his colleagues against the charges of Dr. Strachan, who in January 1838 launched an offensive against the Church of Scotland in the form of published letters. The Kirk justified the spirited defence of its rights denounced by Strachan as agitation designed to aid the ‘stirring up of evil passions’.¹⁴⁴ A petition from the Kirk despatched by Sir George Arthur, Head’s successor, included a note from the Executive Council, complaining of its hostile tone. The Council accused the Kirk of raking up the ‘ashes of war’ in order to rekindle past animosity between Scotland and England.¹⁴⁵

Thus, many Upper Canadian Presbyterians remained committed to political reform during the witch-hunt period and after. Indeed, Mackenzie was still playing on Scottish Presbyterian emotions from New York in 1841 when he made appeals on behalf of the radicals. He addressed the 93rd Highland Scotch regiment stationed in Niagara to repel any attack by American sympathisers coming to aid the Canadian cause, in the following terms:

¹⁴² ‘Editorial’, *The Scotsman*, Feb 15 1838.

¹⁴³ ‘Address to the People comprising the several congregations under the superintendence of the Presbytery of Kingston’, *CCEPR*, Feb 1838.

¹⁴⁴ ‘Dr Strachan’s Charges Against the Presbyterians of Canada Examined’, *CCEPR*, Jan 1838; ‘The Claims and Proceedings of the Presbyterians Vindicated’, *CCEPR*, Mar 1838.

¹⁴⁵ ‘Minute of the Executive Council of Upper Canada, 9 August 1838’, Moir (ed.), *Church and State*, pp. 210–11.

Language would fail me to express the sorrow I feel at seeing you placed in military array on the banks of the Niagara, in 1841, to uphold that government which deluged Scotland with the blood of her noblest sons in two persecutions previous to 1688, for the degradation of the presbyterian religion, and the substitution in its place of prelacy, because it was believed to be a more suitable prop for an iron despotism...Scotland stood firm to the republican faith of her ancestors, and the good broadswords of her gallant sons secured for their country at the revolution the religion of their choice, and to our God-fearing ancestors, in each of old Scotland's thousand parishes, the choice of a minister.

Recalling those accounts of Restoration period episcopal tyranny related in *Scots Worthies*, and a *Cloud of Witnesses*, Mackenzie warned that the curates installed by Strachan in illegal rectories in Upper Canada, paid to keep watch on Canadian and American farmers, were akin to those employed by Claverhouse as spies for the government two centuries before. Mackenzie beseeched the regiment he addressed not to 'defend prelacy in America...bishoprics, arch-deaconries, rectories, and curacies, established in Canada, in spite of its people'.¹⁴⁶

The Union of the Canadas and Responsible Government

Gauvreau argues that channelled through Presbyterian dissent, ideas of responsible government gained popular currency into the 1840s becoming inseparably linked with voluntarism. Indeed, 'the Presbyterian conception of voluntarism', Gauvreau writes, 'interwove religious and political democracy by affirming the right of the people directly to control church government and, by extension, the institutions of the state.'¹⁴⁷ Political reform continued to retain its religious flavour. Many Upper Canadians expressed their desire for constitutional reform at the 'Durham meetings'; meetings in support of Durham's Report – which advocated responsible government and the union of Upper and Lower Canada – held throughout the province in 1839. During this time Robert Baldwin and Francis Hincks came to the fore of the reform movement.¹⁴⁸ One of the first Durham meetings took place in the Scottish settlement of Galt, where residents agitated for the secularisation of the reserves.¹⁴⁹

The 1840s also saw the rise of George Brown and his father Peter, immigrants from Edinburgh who championed democratic reform and religious voluntarism. Peter Brown

¹⁴⁶ 'Hints to the Scots – Spies in America', *Rochester Volunteer*, May 15 1841.

¹⁴⁷ Gauvreau, 'Covenanter Democracy', p. 82.

¹⁴⁸ On the Durham meetings see Wilton, *Politics*, chap 7.

¹⁴⁹ Young, *Reminiscences*, p. 168.

had been an ally of the Whig party in Edinburgh and was a strident evangelical. Initially the Browns had been establishmentarians who had denounced the law of patronage and championed non-intrusion in the pages of their New York-based *British Chronicle*, and, after their migration to Canada, the Toronto *Banner*. The Browns' criticism of the Canadian government was inspired by their desire to safeguard the rights of the Free Church – which separated from the Kirk Synod in Canada in 1844 – by resisting the dominance of Anglicanism and the dangerous influence of Catholicism represented by French Lower Canada as well as by Anglican Tractarianism. Peter Brown described the Tractarians as an 'episcopo-papist party' who were 'enemies of liberal civil government'. The Browns were influenced by the Presbyterian historical narrative which depicted the Reformation as the triumph of liberty over tyranny.¹⁵⁰ In a speech denouncing American slavery, George Brown championed the right of resistance and celebrated the 1688 revolution which had destroyed the principle of divine right to govern wrong.¹⁵¹ Indeed, that revolution had 'incorporated into the sacred ark of the British constitution', the principle that 'all power is derived under God from the people, and to be used for their good.' Responsible government was, according to the Browns, a principle of the Presbyterian church.¹⁵² As Gauvreau has discovered, their library held the works of Knox and McCrie as well as popular histories of the Covenanters.¹⁵³ *The Banner* also included articles on the Solemn League and Covenant, James Renwick and the poetry of Samuel Rutherford.¹⁵⁴

Concern over the financing of Maynooth and the British government's apparent 'pro-Catholic' policies, led Peter Brown first to articulate the old light religious whiggism of McCrie and then to accept the ideas of Andrew Marshall. A 'sincere believer in Scripture', he had initially said, 'who sits in Parliament, must first determine the question – whether consistency of conduct in reference to the political machinery which has been

¹⁵⁰ See for example, 'The Toronto "Patriot"' in *TB*, Aug 8 1845. For Peter Brown's critical opinion of the Church of England, see Peter Brown, *The Fame and the Glory of England Vindicated* (New York & London, 1842), pp. 179–81. For his prejudice against Episcopalians and Catholics on board the ship transporting Peter and George from Scotland to New York in 1837, see also J.M.S. Careless (ed.), 'The Diary of Peter Brown', *OH*, 42 (1950), pp. 130, 135, 139, 141, 144. See also J.M.S. Careless, *Brown of the Globe* (2 vols., Toronto, 1959), II, p. 8.

¹⁵¹ LAC, George Brown Papers, MG 24 B40, Vol. 22, 'The American War and Slavery. Speech of the Hon. George Brown at the Anniversary Meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada, held at Toronto, on Wed, Feb 3, 1863'.

¹⁵² 'The Church's View of Responsible Government', *TB*, Sep 1 1843.

¹⁵³ See LAC, George Brown Papers, MG 24 B 40, Vol. 25, 'Catalogue of Books in Library of Lambton Lodge'.

¹⁵⁴ 'Poetry – Samuel Rutherford', *TB*, Aug 25 1843; 'The Solemn League and Covenant', *TB*, Sep 22 1843; 'Life of the Rev. James Renwick', *TB*, Nov 17 1843. See also poem on 'Rullion Green', in issue for Feb 9 1844.

adopted in Great Britain is inconsistent with the Word of God.’¹⁵⁵ However, in Canada the conflict over the clergy reserves and the union of 1840, which gave a significant number of Quebecois Catholics control over the affairs of Upper Canada, or Canada West as it was now called, drove the Browns firmly into the voluntary camp. Their belief in state control of education and poor relief, as well as their opinions on the intolerant and oppressive nature of church establishments in the past, no doubt made their conversion to voluntaryism easier.¹⁵⁶ Numerous articles on the apparent rise in popularity of Tractarianism and Catholicism appeared in *The Banner* and in *The Globe* – *The Banner*’s sister paper – which tended to dwell on the tyrannous nature of both ecclesiastical systems.¹⁵⁷ Also controversial was the settlement of the reserves which divided the sales of the lands between several churches including the Catholic Church. The Church of England retained around 42 per cent of the total, thus safeguarding its dominant position in the colony.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, it seemed that Governor Charles Metcalfe supported the attempt of the Anglican Church to control education and to establish a system of management over the reserve lands. A university bill introduced in 1843 called for the re-institution of King’s College as a non-denominational university with separate affiliated divinity halls. Peter Brown spoke against Anglican control of the university at a meeting of reformers in Toronto in 1846 and he warned that the establishment of an Anglican landlord system would result in the creation of an oppressive aristocratic hierarchy.¹⁵⁹

Meanwhile, though the Durham Report had recognised the principle of responsible government, the machinery of government had little changed after 1840. The Legislative Council was composed of twenty life members and the Governor retained the right to appoint and dismiss his Executive Council. In November 1843 Baldwin, Lafontaine and Hincks resigned from the Executive Council after Governor Metcalfe sought to appoint his own choice of candidate to the speakership of the Legislative Council. The Assembly voted confidence in the ministers and Metcalfe prorogued the session. The Browns saw disestablishment as a means to ensure responsible democratic rule in Canada and to limit

¹⁵⁵ Gauvreau, ‘Reluctant’, p. 154. For their increasing acceptance of voluntaryism see ‘Letters from Rev. Messrs Jennings and Barry’, *TB*, Jun 19 1846.

¹⁵⁶ On the Browns’ views on poor relief and education, see Gauvreau, ‘Reluctant’, pp. 145–6. For evidence of Peter Brown’s views on the abusive aspect of church establishments, see Brown, *Fame*, p. 177.

¹⁵⁷ Puseyism was discussed in almost every issue of *The Banner*. See for example, ‘Religious Department’, Aug 18 1843. See also the issues of *TG* for April 18 1849 and April 21 1849.

¹⁵⁸ J.S. Moir, ‘The Settlement of the Clergy Reserves, 1840–1855’, *CHR*, 37 (1956).

¹⁵⁹ The 1843 university bill was rejected. Another bill introduced in 1847 gave the Church of England a disproportionate share in the government of the college. George Brown apparently approved of the eventual university act in 1849 since it embodied the principle of disestablishment. For the furore over King’s College, see e.g., ‘King’s College – Great Public Meeting’, *TB*, Oct 6 1843; Careless, *Brown*, pp. 69, 71, 87. On the reserves see e.g., *TG*, Aug 19 1845.

the influence of the Catholic and Anglican Churches. Prior to the elections which secured the formation of the Baldwin-Lafontaine coalition government, *The Banner* proclaimed its support for the reformers. Only with the establishment of responsible government, the paper declared, would it be possible to secure equal rights for all denominations.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, the Browns believed, in the words of Gavureau, that ‘only voluntaryism was consistent with political democracy, because only disestablishment protected liberty of conscience from the will of the legislative majority.’¹⁶¹

In *The Banner* and then independently in *The Globe*, George Brown superseded his father as a strident advocate for democratic reform and disestablishment. In public speeches and then as a member of the Assembly, he railed against the dominance of an eastern minority which controlled the public affairs of the western province.¹⁶² He also contended for denominational equality. In Scotland the Brown family had enjoyed friendly relations with ministers of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, one of whom, the Rev. Joseph Henderson, emigrated to Hamilton, Canada West, in the early 1850s. There he preached to an RP congregation and he wrote to Brown in 1853, congratulating him on his political stance and on his efforts to defend the rights of religious dissenters in his recent marriage bill: ‘I am proud to observe’, he said, ‘the honourable position in which you stand as a member of the Legislature in this country; and pleased to see that you carry with you the indomitable spirit of a true Scotch Presbyterian.’ He asked the politician to include the members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the provisions of the bill, since, Henderson observed, Brown was ‘not ignorant of their history and character; nor of the moral worth of the ministers and leading members of the community’.¹⁶³

The views of the Browns were shared by others. William Proudfoot continued to write to John Talbot who was now exiled in the United States, complaining of Charles Metcalfe’s conservatism. He supported reform candidates, expressing his hope during the elections in 1844, that responsible government would soon be ‘placed beyond the reach of doubt.’¹⁶⁴ Proudfoot was also friendly with Brown and attended a reform meeting in the western district chaired by him which resolved to get up petitions on the clergy reserves

¹⁶⁰ ‘To the Readers of the Banner’, *TB*, Dec 17 1847.

¹⁶¹ Gauvreau, ‘Reluctant’, p. 157.

¹⁶² LAC, George Brown Papers, MG 24 B40, Vol. 22, ‘The American War and Slavery. Speech of the Hon. George Brown at the Anniversary Meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society of Canada, held at Toronto, on Wed, Feb 3, 1863’.

¹⁶³ LAC, George Brown Papers, MG 24 B40, Vol. 1, ‘Rev Joseph Henderson, Hamilton, to George Brown’, May 1853.

¹⁶⁴ UWO, Gray Papers, B4980-3, Letters from John Talbot, ‘July 8 1844’; UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 6, Journal 31, ‘Jan1st 1844’.

and King's College and to diffuse information by means of *The Globe*.¹⁶⁵ William Barrie, voluntary Seceder in Eramosa, wrote in favour of Durham's scheme of responsible government and Canadian union to the United Secession in Scotland in 1843. He declared the principle of responsible government introduced by the late Lord Sydenham to be a 'very promising' one. However, Barrie's optimism soon dissolved as he denounced the continued interference of the now Puseyite-influenced Strachan who remained determined to assert the Church of England's right to control education. Moreover, though the family compact had lost some of its power, the principle of reformed government had yet fully to be established. The actions of Strachan and his 'minions', as well as the 'retrograde movement of the Governor-General towards to the old irresponsible mode of governing', would, Barrie predicted, keep the colony in a state of perpetual agitation.¹⁶⁶

Prior to the Baldwin-Lafontaine coalition in 1848, several meetings were held in the Galt area to protest in favour of an elected Legislative Council and against the constitution of King's College. George Brown was invited to speak there in 1853. The people of Galt thanked Brown, so his *Globe* reported, for his 'masterly defence of the principle of a voluntary support of the gospel' and his 'withering exposition of its opposite, the compulsory principle of church and state'.¹⁶⁷ Brown was apparently popular among the Scotch settlement of Lake St Clair in Essex County, where the majority were Presbyterian in religion, liberal in politics and 'faithful readers of the *Globe*'.¹⁶⁸ Into the 1850s, the *Bathurst Courier* reported on meetings held to agitate for the complete secularisation of the reserves and disestablishment. At one meeting, the Rev. Climie cited the examples of Laud and Claverhouse to illustrate how the nursing father role had been corrupted.¹⁶⁹

Brown became involved with the Clear Grit party, though he had previously denounced the group for its extremism and apparent American annexationist sympathies. The Grits were a radical political group formed in 1849 who advocated universal suffrage and vote by ballot. The Grits have been described as concerning themselves more with the disestablishment of the Church and with the spectre of French Catholicism, than with anything else, and it may be possible to discern the influence on their activity of Presbyterian voluntarism.¹⁷⁰ William Lyon Mackenzie, who returned to Canada and

¹⁶⁵ UWO, William Proudfoot Papers, Series 1, File 6, Journal 31, 'Jan 23 1845', 'Feb 3 1845', and 'Aug 3 1850'.

¹⁶⁶ *USM*, July 1843; *Quarterly Record of the Missions in Connexion with the United Secession Church*, July 1844.

¹⁶⁷ 'The Galt Demonstration', *TG*, Jan 29 1853; Young, *Reminiscences*, pp. 222-4, 248-9.

¹⁶⁸ M. Wallace, 'Pioneers of the Scotch Settlement on the Shore of Lake St. Clair', *OH*, 41 (1949), p. 179.

¹⁶⁹ *Bathurst Courier*, Nov 2 1849.

¹⁷⁰ M. Fry, *The Scottish Empire* (Edinburgh, 2001), p. 210.

continued to rail against the influence of Strachan,¹⁷¹ had ties to the party, though his relationship with the Grits was rather contentious at times, and one of its core members was James Lesslie, also from Dundee and son of Mackenzie's former business partner, Edward Lesslie. Charles Lindsey, Mackenzie's son-in-law, was likewise a member. Michael Vance has drawn attention to the impact on the Grits of Scottish Chartism, a movement which, as has been seen, was heavily indebted to voluntaryist ideas and the political heritage of Scottish Presbyterianism. The Chartist church movement in particular, which denounced the establishment of state churches, would have helped inspire support for the secularisation of the clergy reserves. The Grit leadership was, moreover, composed of dissenters who would naturally have resented the elevation of the Anglican Church. Malcolm Cameron was a Presbyterian and founding member of the Anti-Clergy Reserves Association in 1850; David Christie was a Seceder, and Lesslie was a Scotch Baptist.¹⁷² The group agitated for universal suffrage on the grounds that it would limit the influence in the union parliament of Canada East, which had a smaller population.¹⁷³ At the Markham reform meeting in 1850 when the Grit platform was outlined by Peter Perry, he insisted that Jesus Christ had been put to death owing to his opposition to an established church.¹⁷⁴

The Toronto *Examiner* edited first by Francis Hincks and then after 1842 by Clear Grit James Lesslie, advocated 'responsible government and the voluntary principle'. Though Lesslie resented George Brown, his paper echoed some of Brown's sentiment. The paper congratulated the Free Church for its separation from the establishment but criticised its unwillingness to adopt voluntaryism; 'we regret', the paper proclaimed, 'that their secession from the old Kirk has not been upon broad and scriptural grounds'. Under Lesslie's editorship the *Examiner* reported on the agitation surrounding the clergy reserves and King's College and concluded that political unrest in Canada had in general been intertwined with the voluntary question: 'the question of a Church Establishment or no Church Establishment has formed the principal distinction between political parties in the Province. Opposition to the Church has been denounced as treason to the State. The Clergy Reserves question, King's College question, with all the moral and political corruption which they disclose, all the enmity and bad feeling which they have engendered, are only the fruits of an attempt to secure what is styled a Protestant ascendancy (which means

¹⁷¹ 'Strachan, Creen, the Globe and the Pope', *TWM*, Mar 6 1857.

¹⁷² Vance, 'Chartism', pp. 76–8; Vance & Stephen, 'Grits', pp. 194–203. For the Grits' preoccupation with the reserves issue, see Charles Lindsey's history of the debate published in 1851: Charles Lindsey, *The Clergy Reserves: Their History and Present Position* (Toronto, 1851).

¹⁷³ Vance sees this agenda as evidence of anti-Quebecois sentiment on the grounds of racial discrimination. I would argue that fear of the influence of the Catholic Church also inspired this attitude. Vance, 'Chartism', pp. 73–4.

¹⁷⁴ 'Reform Meeting in the Village of Markham', *Bathurst Courier*, Mar 29 1850.

Episcopal supremacy) in the colony in opposition to popular opinion.¹⁷⁵ In 1877, Charles Lindsey, employed by Lesslie on the *Examiner* in 1846, continued to express his fear of the dictatorial influence of the Catholic hierarchy on Quebecois voting behaviour and Canadian politics.¹⁷⁶

The *North American* newspaper, founded by William McDougall as the organ of the Grit party, expatiated on the connection between priestcraft and statecraft, and denounced episcopal and Catholic hierarchy which had corrupted the republican nature of Christ's voluntary church. It advocated religious equality and the secularisation of the reserves. Only a reform of government, the paper asserted, would result in the proper settlement of the reserves and rectories question. Church establishments were condemned on account of their political role and on the basis that they represented an affront to Christian principle; indeed, 'the influence of religious establishments upon the political, social, intellectual, and moral condition of a people', the paper proclaimed, 'makes this a subject of the most momentous importance to the statesman'.¹⁷⁷

Conclusion

The impact of Presbyterian ideas on Upper Canadian political radicalism in the first half of the nineteenth century was fundamentally significant. Many Scottish immigrants, both voluntaryist dissenters and establishmentarians, struggled to protect their religious rights and in so doing galvanised a movement for political reform, helping to incite a rebellion. Indeed, Presbyterian values continued to have a political impact after the period considered in this dissertation. As Gauvreau implies, it may be possible to demonstrate the legacy of Presbyterian voluntaryist democracy in 'home rule' agitation and in the drive towards Canadian confederation. The Browns saw Metcalfe's attempt to consolidate the power of the Anglican establishment and to undermine responsible government as a means to strengthen imperial ties.¹⁷⁸ Proudfoot asserted that the connection between Canada and Britain could only last so long and that the course of events in Canada pointed to 'separation from the mother country'.¹⁷⁹ Proudfoot's desire to achieve popular autonomy in matters of church and state inevitably led to increasing detachment from the institutions of

¹⁷⁵ 'The Free Church of Scotland', *Toronto Examiner*, April 17 1844; 'Grant to Maynooth College', *Toronto Examiner*, May 21 1845.

¹⁷⁶ Charles Lindsey, *Rome in Canada: the ultramontane struggle for supremacy over the civil authority* (Toronto, 1877).

¹⁷⁷ 'The Papacy in England – Church Establishments', *The North American*, Dec 13 1850.

¹⁷⁸ Gauvreau, 'Reluctant', p. 156.

¹⁷⁹ Gauvreau, 'Covenanter Democracy', p. 81.

Britain. With regard to the church he declared, 'we are too Scotch', and welcomed the evolution of a Canadian brand of Presbyterianism that encompassed Scottish, Irish, Dutch, American and other national traditions. The confederation of Canada allowed the various churches in the dominion to unite and become a national Canadian church.¹⁸⁰ The impact of Scots Presbyterian political values on Upper Canadian culture was thus undeniably profound. The next chapter will examine whether in Nova Scotia Scottish Presbyterianism had a similar legacy.

¹⁸⁰ Fry, *Scottish Empire*, p. 216.

3. Nova Scotia

Compared to the wealth of material on the Canadian provinces, little has been written on the political and cultural history of the Maritime colonies. Still fewer works have been produced which provide a comprehensive survey of British North America before Confederation. Scholars have tended to consider each region in isolation and have failed to notice the existence of a common political culture. While it is important to appreciate the differentiating characteristics of each colony and the immediate context of political reform, much can be gained from a comparative analysis. Aspects of Upper Canadian political culture delineated by historians – the tendency of reformers to appeal to the idea of an ancient constitution for example – can be discerned in the early nineteenth-century rhetoric of Nova Scotian reformers,¹ and it would seem likely that Presbyterian political values were as instrumental in this region of British North America as in Upper Canada. William Lyon Mackenzie believed that the political crisis in Nova Scotia mirrored the Upper Canadian situation almost exactly. Both colonies were similarly demographically composed, shared a similar style of government, were subject to the same British colonial policy and were ruled by the same officials. Lord Dalhousie was Lieutenant-Governor in Nova Scotia before he was transferred to Quebec as Governor-General, and Sir Peregrine Maitland enjoyed a spell as Governor in Nova Scotia on his retirement from Toronto. Thus, colonists in both regions complained of similar grievances. It is of no surprise that their respective reform movements were mutually inspiring. This chapter will examine whether, as in Upper Canada, Presbyterian values had a political impact.

Most studies of Nova Scotian political history before Confederation have tended to dwell on the career of Joseph Howe; the man credited with achieving responsible government for the province in 1848. Moreover, much of what has been written on the political culture of this area has concentrated on the day to day business of the provincial legislature in Halifax and on the office-seeking behaviour of the family compacts.² Though Brian Cuthbertson rightly draws attention to the increasing influence of the press,

¹ See J.M. Bumsted, 'The Consolidation of British North America, 1783–1860', in P. Buckner (ed.), *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford, 2008), p. 55.

² See e.g., W.R. Livingston, *Responsible Government and Nova Scotia: A Study of the Constitutional Beginnings of the British Commonwealth* (Iowa, 1930); J.M. Beck, *Joseph Howe Volume One: Conservative Reformer 1804-1848* (Montreal & Kingston, 1982); J.M. Beck, *Politics of Nova Scotia: Volume One 1710-1896* (Tantallon, NS, 1985); B.C.U. Cuthbertson, 'Place Politics and the Brandy Election of 1830', *CNSHS*, 41 (1982).

popular opinion has been largely left out of the analysis.³ Here it will be argued that to some extent Wilton's thesis, and McNairn's, can be applied to Nova Scotia. As in Upper Canada, in Nova Scotia the tendency of both government supporters as well as reformers to use pamphleteering and the press, signals the increasing development of the public sphere; religion was a significant factor in this process.⁴ Norah Story and William Hamilton have both investigated the extent to which the dominance of the Anglican Church, including its monopoly of higher education, incited political agitation, especially among the Scottish population, but the effect of a transported Scottish Presbyterian political philosophy has yet fully to be explored.⁵

It may be argued that, as in Upper Canada, political dissent in Nova Scotia was organised along religious lines. John Moir maintains that there was no 'serious church-state controversy' in the Maritimes to rival the clergy reserves debate of the Canadas. He contends that Nova Scotians were generally happy to elevate the Church of England to a position of superiority; that the established Church chose not to exert pressure on dissenters and that the existence of dissenters in the Assembly and in the Council meant that Anglican exclusivity did not characterise the government.⁶ But although Nova Scotians had no clergy reserves over which to quarrel, the Pictou Academy caused a significant amount of discord and hostility. The Pictou Academy controversy ignited popular protest and reform agitation, which, though it reached its height in 1830, arguably impacted on Nova Scotian politics until the institution of responsible government in 1848. The supporters of the Academy were Presbyterian Seceders who believed they were waging war against religious as well as political privilege. The church question was as relevant in Nova Scotia as it was elsewhere and the colony and its legislature were plagued by denominational and ecclesiological disputes. An exported Scottish Covenanting tradition in Nova Scotia had a significant influence on religious and political life. Indeed, Joseph Howe reputedly remarked that he 'owed to the Anti-burghers all that he was'.⁷

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³ See Cuthbertson's psephological study *Johnny Bluenose at the Polls: Epic Nova Scotian Election Battles 1758-1848* (Halifax, 1994).

⁴ Jerry Bannister has traced the development of a public sphere and its impact on political culture in Newfoundland. See J. Bannister, 'The Campaign for Representative Government in Newfoundland', *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, 5 (1994), pp. 27-9.

⁵ W. Hamilton, 'Thomas McCulloch, Education and Political Reform', *Canadian Society of Presbyterian History Papers* (2003); W. Hamilton, *Education, Politics and Reform in Nova Scotia, 1800-1848* (University of Western Ontario Ph.D. Thesis, 1970); N. Story, 'The Church and State "Party" in Nova Scotia, 1749-1851', *CNSHS*, 27 (1947).

⁶ J.S. Moir (ed.), *Church and State in Canada 1627-1867: Basic Documents* (Toronto, 1967), p. 35.

⁷ W. McCulloch, *Life of Thomas McCulloch D.D.* (n.p., 1920), p. 125.

Anglicanism was established in Nova Scotia by an act of Assembly in 1758. In 1787 Charles Inglis, a loyalist pastor from New York, was appointed first colonial Bishop in the British empire with a jurisdiction which covered Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Cape Breton, Newfoundland, Bermuda, and, until the appointment of Jacob Mountain as Bishop of the Canadas, Quebec. The Church in Nova Scotia was primarily financed by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, but partial funding was acquired through glebe lands. Royal instructions to Lieutenant-Governor John Parr in 1783 assigned 1000 acres of land in each township for a parish church and school. These lands proved difficult for the Church to claim since no title deeds were provided and dissenters often took possession of them. Underlining the link between church and state, the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia retained the right to grant marriage licenses to clergymen. Only Anglican ministers were allowed to obtain marriage licenses and conduct ceremonies according to the Book of Common Prayer. Given the meagre number of missionaries in the colony, justices of the peace and dissenting clergymen, though deprived the right of a license, were allowed to sanctify marriages. Charles Inglis resisted Governor Wentworth's plan to grant licenses to all, regarding the measure as an assault on the establishment and as tending to 'increase the levelling spirit which is already too prevalent'.⁸

It was widely assumed that the lack of a proper Church of England establishment in the thirteen colonies had produced a spirit of disaffection nursed within non-Anglican churches. Some feared that Nova Scotia's proximity to the republican United States and the migration of Congregationalists north of the border might result in an unruly province difficult to govern. Dissenters were regarded by some of the Anglican elite as posing a threat to the political status quo and the colony's connection with Britain. To Inglis, the French Revolution had provided further proof that irreligious radicalism led to the overthrow of church and state and thus he was suspicious of the dissenting churches. In 1811 he wrote of the danger inherent in the evangelical revival in Nova Scotia: 'I shudder at the probable consequences of such a state of things', he declared, 'I see in their embryo, the same state which produced the subversion of Church and State in the time of Charles I'.⁹ In 1804 the Bishop resisted proposals to pay government stipends to Presbyterian ministers. He authored a few loyalist pamphlets and conservative sermons which

⁸ Moir (ed.), *Church and State*, p. 61.

⁹ J. Fingard, *The Anglican Design in Loyalist Nova Scotia, 1783-1816* (London, 1972), p. 31.

emphasised divine right and passive obedience, and the importance of maintaining the connection between church and state to safeguard against revolution and republicanism.¹⁰

To prevent colonists from educating their children in the United States, where they might imbibe disloyal principles, an institution of higher learning, King's College, was established in the colony at Windsor. Since no permanent source of funding was discovered, the College continued to be financed by the British Parliament, as well as the colonial legislature, until 1835. Modelled on Oxford University, the college's statutes drawn up in 1803 were exclusive in nature. The College was intended to be first and foremost an Anglican seminary and thus, two professorships and the office of president were confined to members of the Church of England. This was to prevent the college being converted into a seminary for dissenters, Inglis declared, 'a seminary of Jacobinism for disseminating the most pernicious principles.' Only those who subscribed to the 39 articles of the Anglican faith were admitted and the attendance of students at dissenting places of worship was strictly forbidden, as was being present at seditious and rebellious meetings; thus, the charter equated religious dissent with political radicalism.¹¹ At a later date these regulations were amended. Subscription to the 39 articles was still required but now only at graduation, though worship in dissenting churches continued to be prohibited. Not until 1821 were the reformed statutes circulated in the province and the college was regarded as an exclusively Anglican institution. It was the only college of higher learning until the establishment of Pictou Academy in 1818. The Church also had control over many of the common schools established by the Grammar School Act of 1811 as well as the College's feeder grammar school in Windsor and the fee-paying Halifax Grammar School.

In spite of its privileged position, the Church excited comparatively little resentment in the early years of the province owing perhaps to its lack of missionary zeal, disorganised structure, and the absence of tithes. In time however, the establishment's dominance of religious, political and social life became a source of discontent. Anglicanism was always a minority sect in Nova Scotia which was ethnically diverse and religiously pluralistic. According to William Gregg, historian of Canadian Presbyterianism, in 1817 there was a population of 160,000 in the Maritime region and this was composed

¹⁰ Charles Inglis, *Steadfastness in Religion and Loyalty Recommended* (Halifax, 1793). In neighbouring New Brunswick sermons by members of the established Church, which extolled the virtues of the British constitution, were often printed. Dissenting ministers were obliged to swear oaths of allegiance which were, according to Ross Hebb, designed as a check on republicanism. R.N. Hebb, *The Church of England in Loyalist New Brunswick, 1783–1825* (Madison & Teaneck, 2004), pp. 60, 70.

¹¹ James Robertson, *History of the Mission of the Secession Church to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island from its Commencement in 1765* (Edinburgh, 1847), pp. 220–1.

of 42,000 Presbyterians, 32,000 Anglicans, 26,000 Baptists and 13,000 Methodists.¹² As a consequence, resentment at the Church of England's superior position occasionally surfaced. In 1792 there occurred a dispute in New Brunswick when the Church tried to reclaim land already settled by dissenters and Inglis opposed the grant of a glebe to Presbyterian ministers in Pictou.¹³ Nova Scotia's Legislative Assembly, popularly elected by its land-holding population, most of which possessed the forty shilling freehold needed to qualify for the vote, included several dissenters from the established Church. The suggestion of Sir George Prevost in 1811, that the quit rents be abolished in place of a grant to the Church of England, was poorly received in the Assembly. The quit rent was a levy on a portion of each land grant which, though in reality never collected, was meant for the use of the crown. A committee of the Assembly declared that 'if the Assembly should make provision for the support of the Clergy of that Church at the expense of the Province, jealousies and discontents would be created amongst the various descriptions of Christians, tending to the...destruction of that harmony which we are anxiously desirous of preserving.'¹⁴ According to Inglis, the strength of dissent in the Assembly had caused the proposed measure to fail. In 1826, Bishop John Inglis and Governor James Kempt rejected Earl Bathurst's plan to establish clergy reserves in the region. It was felt that the scheme would excite controversy in a colony where four fifths of the population were dissenters.

William Cottnam Tonge

Though the first decades of the nineteenth century were comparatively quiet there was latent tension in the province of Nova Scotia when naval officer William Cottnam Tonge initiated early efforts at political reform, similar to those instigated by James Glenie in New Brunswick.¹⁵ Elected to the assembly in 1792 and fuelled by personal animosity to Governor Wentworth, Tonge criticised the Council faction, a nominated body appointed by the Governor, for misapplying government funds. These sessions of the legislature saw the widening of a division that existed between the Haligonian merchant elite, many of whom had seats on the Council, and the rural community represented in the Assembly. Merchants inevitably sought the reduction of customs duties – from which the province accumulated most of its revenue – while those with a stake in outer-lying regions desired the

¹² William Gregg, *History of the Presbyterian Church in the Dominion of Canada from the Earliest Times to 1834* (Toronto, 1885), p. 138.

¹³ Robertson, *Mission*, pp. 127–8.

¹⁴ Fingard, *Anglican Design*, pp. 108–9.

¹⁵ On Glenie see S.D. Clark, *Movements of Political Protest in Canada, 1640-1840* (Toronto, 1959), pp. 158–67; G.F.G. Stanley, 'James Glenie, A Study in Early Colonial Radicalism', *CNSHS*, 25 (1940).

construction and improvement of roads to facilitate travel to markets and create the need for road commissioners.¹⁶ This issue came to a head when Wentworth specified the amount which would be allocated to roads and claimed his right to appoint commissioners. This conflict between the two branches of the legislature and the two sections of society continued to dominate legislative proceedings for many years. Control of road monies raised the wider constitutional question of the Assembly's right to hold the purse strings, an issue which resurfaced time and time again.

Before the momentous election of 1799, Tonge allied himself with Edward Mortimer, a Scottish immigrant and successful Pictou merchant, and James Fulton, an Ulster-Scots immigrant in Londonderry and judge of the Inferior Court of Common Pleas. Around this time the residents of Pictou, a mainly Scottish settlement in the northwest of the province on the Northumberland Strait, demanded the appointment of their own representative to the Assembly and peripatetic polling. Until 1835 Pictou was included in the Halifax County electoral region where the merchant interest usually dominated. Owing to the credit system in the province, Haligonian merchants were able to command considerable allegiance. Mortimer and Fulton were encouraged to stand for Halifax County on behalf of Pictou and Colchester and thus end the monopoly of the Halifax elite and the dominance in Pictou of Michael Wallace, provincial treasurer. But the division between town and country and between Council and Assembly was to some extent also a division between dissenting church and establishment. S.E. McMullin contends that the 1799 election saw the development of party lines; political philosophy now 'tended to coincide with religious differences.'¹⁷ According to George Patterson, minister and resident of Pictou, 'from the first settlement of Halifax, society embraced churchmen and dissenters, and thus contained all the material for Whig and tory parties.' In Patterson's view, high churchmen, both Anglican and their Kirk allies, strengthened the hands of power.¹⁸ This is, of course, to simplify the political divisions which existed at the time. As Cuthbertson points out, there was no voting along religious lines until the 1840s and the Anglican Church 'never formed a bloc to forward interests of the church'.¹⁹ Nevertheless, especially in the Pictou region, denominational disputes plagued provincial politics for some time.

¹⁶ Beamish Murdoch, *History of Nova Scotia, or Acadie* (3 vols., Halifax, 1865-67), III, p. 291.

¹⁷ S.E. McMullin, *Thomas McCulloch: the Evolution of a Liberal Mind* (Dalhousie University Ph.D. Thesis, 1975), p. 104.

¹⁸ George Patterson, *A History of the County of Pictou* (Montreal, 1877), p. 193.

¹⁹ Tonge himself was an Anglican and many of his supporters in the Assembly were also members of the Church of England. As Neil MacKinnon has observed, this fact 'upsets the image of the Anglican MLA as an establishment figure'. N. MacKinnon, "'Loyal to His Earthly Sovereign": Anglicans in the Nova Scotia Assembly During the Wentworth Years, 1793-1808', *JCHS*, xxxvii (1995), p. 80.

Wallace was an adherent of the Kirk and a tory in politics who believed in upholding the establishment. He is an example of a high Kirkman who desired a closer alliance of the Church of Scotland with its sister establishment in England. He owned pews in the Anglican Churches of Halifax and Dartmouth and educated his sons at King's College.²⁰ A contemporary newspaper apparently expressed this opinion of Wallace: 'he is one of those who think the King can do no wrong, that the British constitution is the most perfect fabric the world ever saw'.²¹ Mortimer, on the other hand, was an ally of the Seceders and became one the most determined defenders of dissenters' rights in disputes over marriage licenses and education. Mortimer helped fund the Pictou Academy and was president of the Pictou branch of the British and Foreign Bible Society, regarded by some in the Church of England as a subversive organisation which undermined the efforts of the SPCK. The Mortimer-Tonge faction also acquired the support of the Rev. James MacGregor who helped the candidates during their Pictou election campaign in 1799.²² According to Susan Buggey, Wallace and Mortimer 'clashed especially over issues of government appropriations, local patronage, and religious privilege'.²³ Patterson testified to the religious sectarianism which characterised even this early division in Nova Scotian politics: 'from an early period an ecclesiastical element mingled with the personal and political feelings then excited. Mortimer was most friendly with the Secession ministers, while Wallace and the official party regarded a dissenter as a rebel, or worse, if such could be'. Mortimer topped the Pictou poll with Fulton and Tonge placing second and third. Tonge gained most votes in the election over all and Wallace came in fifth. Furious at the result, Wallace allegedly waged war against the Seceder population of Pictou from the Council, to which he was nominated in 1801.²⁴

Tonge's protest and the 1799 disputed election in Pictou saw the beginning of a feud between the Seceders and the establishment which would endure for decades. Nevertheless, Bishop Charles Inglis was no John Strachan. A conciliatory man, he shelved plans to pass an act asserting the exclusive rights of the Church of England. Dissenting denominations were placated by periodic grants from the government and Inglis also tactfully declined a seat on the Council until 1809; once he became a member, he attended infrequently. As scholars have noticed, Nova Scotia was a relatively peaceful province at

²⁰ D.A. Sutherland, 'Wallace, Michael', in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* <<http://www.biographi.ca>>.

²¹ Patterson, *Pictou*, p. 195.

²² United Church in Canada Maritime Conference Archives [MCA], James MacGregor Fonds, F&I 54, 023/3, 'Edward Mortimer to MacGregor 5th Dec 1799'.

²³ S. Buggey, *Churchmen and Dissenters: Religious Toleration in Nova Scotia 1758-1835* (Dalhousie University M.A. Thesis, 1981).

²⁴ Patterson, *Pictou*, pp. 197, 316.

the turn of the century with little political controversy. The colony enjoyed economic prosperity during the Napoleonic wars, immigration was less pronounced and so religious divisions were less significant, while a spirit of reform had yet completely to burgeon in Britain. The dominance of the Church did not produce a significant amount of unrest until the arrival in the province of the third Bishop of Nova Scotia, John Inglis – a less diplomatic man than his father Charles – as well as an increasing number of non-Anglican immigrants who were influenced by the reformist ideas of the mother country. The Church's finances, exclusive right to lands and marriage licenses, but especially its monopoly of higher education, became contentious issues. The power of a nominated Council which supported the Church's rights, and thus the nature of colonial government in general, increasingly came under attack.

Thomas McCulloch

One immigrant to cause a stir in the province was the Rev. Thomas McCulloch who arrived in Pictou in 1803. He came as a missionary from the Antiburgher denomination of Seceders and struck up a close friendship and working relationship with James MacGregor whom he looked up to as a father. McCulloch helped consolidate the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia (PCNS) and became a leading figure in the province battling to achieve equal rights for dissenters. S.D. Clark has written that radical Presbyterianism did not take hold in the Canadian provinces, as it had done in New England, and that the Church of Scotland became a conservative bastion of loyalty.²⁵ It seems this was true to some extent in Nova Scotia – if not in Upper Canada – where the Kirk, guided by Lord Dalhousie and Michael Wallace, seemed bent on allying itself with the Anglican Church. However, Clark's assessment, and Moir's, who argues that other denominations were content to see Anglicanism elevated, fails to take into account the activity of the Seceder-dominated PCNS. The Scottish and Presbyterian community in Nova Scotia was not homogenous, but divided between those more familiar with the lowland-based Secession, and those, including many Highlanders, who preferred the established Church of Scotland. The rivalry in Scotland between the Kirk and dissenters, which reached its height during the voluntary controversy, was exported to Nova Scotia. A tradition of resistance to the encroachments of an established church was nursed within the Secession, and the church had much experience of challenging authority. As McMullin observes, Presbyterians had

²⁵ Clark, *Movements*, p. 120.
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‘a tradition of refusing to bow to authority especially when it resided within an English hierarchy’. In Nova Scotia, ‘elements of the Scottish Secessionist Church led by the astute and learned Dr. McCulloch...instigated liberal reform in education and politics.’²⁶ McCulloch and his allies attempted to galvanise the populace by organising petitions and pressure groups, and most significantly, by utilising the press.

Recognising the importance of education to the development of a native-born ministry, and to the burgeoning colony generally, McCulloch sought to establish an institution which would act as a seminary for the PCNS and a college of higher learning for the portion of the community excluded from King’s.²⁷ In 1815 McCulloch sought approval from the legislature to establish Pictou Academy which opened its doors in 1818. The Academy was feared by many. John Inglis and some in the Anglican Church regarded it as a dangerous institution which would disseminate seditious principles and lead to the downfall of King’s College and ultimately to the Church of England establishment. Bishop Inglis declared that the Academy was ‘likely to rise or decay as the college at Windsor [was] depressed or advanced.’²⁸ Some in the Kirk, including Wallace, likewise agreed that Windsor adequately met the needs of the provincial population. Others in the Church of Scotland, including some associates of the Glasgow Colonial Society, regarded the institution of a provincial Presbyterian seminary, especially one administered by Seceders, as unnecessary. The GCS dispatched only Kirk ministers to the colonies and it was felt that only those trained in Scotland were properly educated and properly respectable.

There was opposition to McCulloch’s educational efforts from the beginning. In 1806 the minister had established a school which was granted financial aid according to the terms of the Grammar School Act in 1811. In 1814 this log school house was burnt to the ground, which McCulloch apparently believed was an act of arson. On a visit to Pictou in 1809, Governor George Prevost had been warned of McCulloch’s disloyalty and a threatening letter addressed to the minister advised him to leave the province. McCulloch wrote to the Governor insisting that his status as a Seceder did not incline him to disloyalty.²⁹ He again angered those in power however, when he defended the Royal Acadian School, a non-denominational institution founded by Walter Bromley. Though an early committee to forward the interests of the school had initially included the Bishop and Governor Wentworth, in 1813 Alexander Croke, judge of the vice-admiralty court and

²⁶ McMullin, *Thomas McCulloch*, pp. 8–9.

²⁷ See Thomas McCulloch, *The Nature and Uses of a Liberal Education Illustrated* (Halifax, 1819).

²⁸ Hamilton, *Education*, p. 135.

²⁹ Public Archives of Nova Scotia [PANS], Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 554, File 3, ‘Letters to Lieutenant-Governor’; McCulloch, *Life*, p. 33.

staunch defender of the Anglican establishment, attacked the school claiming it was an attempt of ‘that clan of people to undermine the Church of England in all her colonies’. McCulloch, described by Judith Fingard as the ‘sire of militant Presbyterianism’, responded to Croke in the *Acadian Recorder*, claiming it was unjust to expect dissenters to use the Book of Common Prayer in a non-denominational school. Croke accused McCulloch of being a trouble-maker, deliberately organising all dissenters against the established Church.³⁰

The Assembly happily granted academy status to McCulloch’s school in 1815 but the Council passed the act with the proviso that the trustees of the Academy swear an oath adhering to either the Church of England or the Church of Scotland. Though accepted as a temporary and expedient measure at the time, McCulloch later insisted that the Academy was never meant to be exclusive, that its doors were open to dissenters of every persuasion and that theological teaching only took place after hours to students who voluntarily chose to attend. The Academy’s opponents, however, argued that the institution was not a non-denominational centre at all, but an exclusive Presbyterian seminary. Another obstacle to the Academy’s success was the foundation of Dalhousie College – modelled on Edinburgh University – by Lord Dalhousie, patron of the GCS and staunch Kirkman, who believed in the institution of a centre of higher learning in Nova Scotia open to Presbyterians but one affiliated with the establishment. The Kirk believed that as an established church it should have official status in the colony and sought the amalgamation of Dalhousie, the cornerstone of which was laid in May 1820, with King’s College.³¹ The Seceder origins of the PCNS and its Academy were distasteful to some Kirkmen who hankered after a position of eminence. A battle ensued between the Assembly, which represented dissenters and liberal Anglicans, and the Council, headed by the Bishop, over a bill to award the Academy a permanent grant, a non-denominational constitution and degree-granting status. Petitions were sent to forward the interests of the Academy and McCulloch attended the legislature in person to give evidence in favour of the institution. From 1819 until 1825 the legislature awarded the Academy a £400 annual grant but efforts to achieve anything further were thwarted by the Council.

Keen to present a united front, McCulloch appealed to other dissenters in the province hoping to solicit their support for the Academy. In 1818 he presented a petition signed by clergymen from a variety of denominations to the Assembly seeking the right for dissenters to marry by license. McCulloch defended their claim in the *Acadian Recorder*.

³⁰ Fingard, *Anglican Design*, pp. 139–47.

³¹ Hamilton, *Education*, pp. 115–23, 228–41.

He insisted that the Church of England in England had no spiritual jurisdiction in the colonies where the Anglican Church had corporate existence by an act of the colonial legislature and not by the British Parliament. McCulloch threatened that there would be ‘no lack of petitions from every part of the province’ until this issue was resolved.³² According to Thomas Chandler Haliburton’s historical account published in 1829, there had been ‘general harmony’ between the establishment and dissenters until this issue had arisen.³³ In March 1818 Edward Mortimer championed the cause in the Assembly with a speech which, according to Beamish Murdoch, a lawyer and contemporary historian, bitterly complained about the dominant position of the Anglican Church: ‘if religious restrictions did continue’, Mortimer was reported to have said, ‘it might bring about consequences of a very unpleasant nature, but he hoped he should never live to see a rebellion in Nova Scotia’.³⁴ In 1821 the Colonial Office disallowed a bill which granted the right to marry by license to all clergymen. Marriage by license did not exist in Scotland where the proclamation of banns was custom, and in the eyes of Earl Bathurst, it seemed pointless to extend this right to Scottish immigrants in Nova Scotia.³⁵ In 1825 there were plans to establish an interdenominational board – a pressure group to defend the interests of dissenters – and marriage licenses became a significant issue once more. The legislatures of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick finally granted right to marry by license to all denominations in 1834.

McCulloch used this issue, which was doubtless felt to be less of a burden than it might have been had marriage licenses been a Scottish custom, to rally the support of other denominations and put pressure on the government. Meanwhile, his letters in the *Recorder* began to focus on the corrupt nature of the government, which was keeping the Academy from flourishing and the dissenting population oppressed. McCulloch criticised the heavy customs duties, a common complaint of those outside the Halifax merchant elite, and the corrupt behaviour of the appointed customs officials who were not accountable to the Assembly. ‘Published it must be whatever the consequences’, he wrote to George Smith, Assemblyman for Pictou, with regard to a printed letter he had authored: ‘I am willing to be quiet, but it is on other terms than those on which Dissenters in this Province have been forced to live’.³⁶

³² ‘To editor’, *AR*, Jan 20 1821.

³³ Thomas Chandler Haliburton, *An Historical and Statistical Account of Nova Scotia* (2 Vols., Halifax, 1829), II, p. 301.

³⁴ Murdoch, *History*, III, p. 414.

³⁵ Murdoch, *History*, III, p. 441.

³⁶ McCulloch, *Life*, pp. 71–2.

After McCulloch's visit to Scotland to generate support for Pictou in 1825, he and his supporters renewed their efforts to achieve official status for the Academy. Sixteen petitions from various parts of the province were sent in to the legislature on its behalf and 5000 pounds were raised in the Pictou area for the Academy's support.³⁷ The Presbyterian congregation at New Annan declared that 'any attempt to destroy [the Academy's] constitution or to exclude it from the patronage of Government is an injury to the rights of the freeholders and other inhabitants of this country'. They requested that the county's representatives use their influence in the Assembly to further the Academy's interest. The congregations of Tatamagouche and Musquodoboit passed similar resolutions.³⁸ In 1827 the trustees drafted and published the New Year's Resolutions, which demanded that Pictou be treated as an equal to King's. The Kirk, however, also voiced its protest, laying a petition against the Academy before the Assembly every year from 1828 until 1832. Protesters demanded the removal of McCulloch from the board of trustees and the reduction of the Academy to grammar school status. Every attempt to gain recognition of the institution was thwarted by the Council which rejected seven bills for a permanent grant sent up by the Assembly between 1825 and 1830. It was discovered by a committee of Assembly in 1826 that the Bishop had cast the deciding vote. According to Haliburton, the Pictou Academy had always 'enjoyed the decided approbation of the representatives of the people'.³⁹ Thus, the dispute again raised questions about the Council's constitutional right to veto money bills and it became another element of the regional battle between town and country, though it was, of course, also an ecclesiastical and, arguably, an ecclesiological clash, which cut across territorial lines. As George Patterson later wrote, 'the discussions on the Pictou Academy raised the whole question of the Council's constitutional rights...the temper too of both the House and country was being roused, by the manner in which the Council had exercised their powers, and men were now found boldly to cry out to have the whole concern swept away, or its Constitution radically changed'.⁴⁰

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³⁷ See e.g., PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 554, File 81, '12 Feb 1829 Petition of the Freeholders and other Inhabitants of the Township of Onslow regarding Pictou Academy'. See also Hamilton, *Education*, pp. 137, 171–2.

³⁸ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 554, File 82 'Minutes of congregation meeting at New Annan' and Files 84–5, 'Minutes of the congregations of Tatamagouche and Musquodoboit'.

³⁹ Haliburton, *Account*, p. 53.

⁴⁰ Patterson, *Pictou*, p. 350.

Born near Paisley in 1776, McCulloch was the son of a master block-printer. In the opinion of a recent biographer, the radicalism of Paisley's literate and politicised weaving community left an imprint on McCulloch's mind.⁴¹ Paisley was, of course, also a bastion of Presbyterianism and, according to his son, McCulloch claimed to be the direct descendant of a Covenanter who had fallen at Bothwell Bridge. While there has been some scholarly interest in Thomas McCulloch, especially with regard to his literary and scientific career, less has been written on the origins of his political radicalism. Like William Proudfoot, McCulloch was a devout Scottish Seceder and the embodiment of Presbyterian political tradition. Indeed, McCulloch's career is another perfect case study of the exportation of the Covenanting tradition to the British colonies.

Educated at the University of Glasgow, McCulloch entered the Antiburgher Divinity Hall at Whitburn in 1792. Here he was tutored by the incomparable Archibald Bruce, the old school Seceder and political radical, around the time Bruce published his forthright politico-ecclesiastical writings on his own printing press. Bruce's particular teachings on British history and constitutional thought, as well as theology, McCulloch seems to have taken to heart. Bruce, who glorified the Covenanters, advocated religious and political liberty for Protestants while believing Catholicism posed a threat to human freedom. William McCulloch comments in the biography of his father that through Bruce's teachings his father became 'thoroughly acquainted with the principles of the British Constitution, especially in their bearing upon the rapidly rising questions of the civil and religious rights of citizenship.'⁴² Although an old man who complained of rheumatism, Bruce kept up correspondence with McCulloch and MacGregor, whose second wife was Bruce's niece. In one letter Bruce related his opinions on European events and the threat of popery, irrevocably linked with despotism, which he believed existed as much as it ever had done: 'Superstition', he said, 'as well as some degree of the old tyranny, has gained more strength...by the restoration of the Bourbon families, and of the Italian pontiff... The reckoning with the antichristian kingdoms', he declared, 'is not yet over.'⁴³ Bruce's views had evidently changed little over the years and it seems safe to assume that his opinions were to some extent shared by his adoring acolytes.

Indeed, McCulloch exhibited his own veneration for the Covenanters and his suspicion of popery and hierarchy at many points in his career. Soon after his arrival in Nova Scotia he was called on by Charles Inglis to champion the cause of Protestantism in a

⁴¹ M. Whitelaw, *Thomas McCulloch: His Life and Times* (Halifax, 1985), pp. 5, 26.

⁴¹ McCulloch, *Life*, p. 9.

⁴² McCulloch, *Life*, p. 9.

⁴³ MCA, James McGregor Fonds, F&I 54, Box A0173/17, 'Letter to McGregor from A. Bruce, March 1815'.
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pamphlet war with Edmund Burke, Catholic scholar and priest in Halifax. In *Popery Condemned* and *Popery Again Condemned* – pamphlets which, it will be recalled, influenced William McGavin – McCulloch displayed Bruce’s influence by outlining the traditional Presbyterian view of Catholicism. According to McCulloch, papal supremacy still represented a threat to temporal power and the independence and freedom of the church. The Church of Rome, whose ‘principles...necessarily tended to intolerance and persecution’ had ‘ruled the western world with tyrannic sway’. However, where the Protestant Reformation had been introduced, it had, in McCulloch’s eyes, ‘corrected the views of society, and carried with it a degree of civil and religious liberty, to which our ancestors were entire strangers.’⁴⁴ According to Marjorie Whitelaw, McCulloch’s view of Catholicism is at odds with his otherwise liberal perspective, while S.E. McMullin writes that McCulloch’s ‘liberalism remained obscured behind the traditional Protestant responses to a Roman Catholic foe.’⁴⁵ But like Bruce, McCulloch regarded Catholicism as the antithesis to civil and religious liberty. Liberty for McCulloch meant freedom from a state church exerting religious and political supremacy. Protestant Britain was held up by McCulloch as the ‘bulwark of liberty, and the refuge of oppressed nations’.⁴⁶ McCulloch’s liberalism, then, like his mentor’s, belonged to an older Presbyterian tradition, particularly strong in the Secession, which criticised the British state while seeking to remain a part of it. As in Upper Canada, Ireland and Scotland, Presbyterian reformers in Nova Scotia were supporters of the British connection, but they engaged with ideas of conditional allegiance.⁴⁷

Like Bruce, McCulloch regarded the Second Reformation as the high point of religious purity when the Covenanters had achieved spiritual independence for Scotland. The Restoration Covenanters were celebrated as martyrs to the cause of civil and religious liberty who had battled against Anglican supremacy; dominant episcopacy was, in McCulloch’s eyes, almost as much of a threat to freedom as Catholicism. The ‘history of the church’, he wrote, ‘has amply shown that diocesan episcopacy instead of counteracting disorders which might have been rectified by scriptural means vastly increased their

⁴⁴ Thomas McCulloch, *Popery Again Condemned by Scripture and the Fathers* (Edinburgh, 1810); Thomas McCulloch, *Popery Condemned by Scripture and the Fathers* (Edinburgh, 1808).

⁴⁵ Whitelaw, *McCulloch*, p. 30; McMullin, *Thomas McCulloch*, p. 14.

⁴⁶ Thomas McCulloch, *The Prosperity of the Church in Troublous Times. A Sermon Preached at Pictou, Friday, Feb 25th 1814* (New Glasgow, NS, 1882).

⁴⁷ S.E. McMullin argues that rejecting both French and American republicanism, McCulloch held ‘firmly with British tradition’. However, McMullin has failed to notice the extent to which McCulloch held to the Covenanting tradition of qualified allegiance. See McMullin, *Thomas McCulloch*, p. 132.

amount'.⁴⁸ In an unpublished history of the Restoration, McCulloch represented the Episcopal establishment as an arm of an aggressive, persecuting government which deprived citizens of the right to worship freely. His interpretation of the past vindicated the Covenanters, even justifying to a degree the assassination of Archbishop Sharp: 'When Charles the Second introduced episcopacy into Scotland he treated the nation as if royal authority was the sole regulator of religious belief...a small party...resorted to arms for the recovery of their rights...such an attempt on the part of the Covenanters...was not likely to be overlooked by the unrelenting persecutors who, at that period, controlled the nation. Their measures of vengeance overflowed with a reckless disregard of justice and human suffering.' The Episcopalian clergy had become, according to McCulloch, 'the vindictive prompters to cruelty', none of whom 'evinced such utter disregard of human misery as Sharp of St Andrews'. Sharp had 'sacrificed the religion of Scotland; and to the altar of his vengeance, he had dragged its liberties: and such were the merciless cravings of his cruelty, that even despotism became reluctant to supply him with victims'. Indeed, McCulloch continued, 'to many of the suffering Covenanters, it must have frequently occurred that the death of the primate would prove a national deliverance...the alarm, that a man was murdered was quickly allayed by the remark that it was only a bishop'.⁴⁹

McCulloch's interpretation of Scottish history was closer to Thomas McCrie's than to Walter Scott's, and, like many of his Presbyterian contemporaries, the minister was desperate to vindicate his heroes. In a letter to his friend James Mitchell, McCulloch asked him to pass on a manuscript of *Auld Eppie's Tales* – a fictional account of an unprincipled sixteenth-century Abbot of Paisley and a justification of the Reformation – to William Blackwood, publisher. McCulloch remarked to Mitchell that 'if I could write anything which would procure additional regard for Scotch worthies and their general principles it would be well spent labour'.⁵⁰ Blackwood responded negatively, rejecting both *Auld Eppie* and what became the *Mephibosheth Stepsure Letters*. He informed Mitchell that his friend's work had a 'tendency to coarseness in the humour' which would not be well received by a refined Scottish audience. Furthermore, while Blackwood acknowledged McCulloch's obvious talent, he added that as his work 'penetrated as it were into Scott's field', it was required 'to be done with exquisite skill'. McCulloch insisted that he had 'never intended to be an imitator of Sir Walter.' 'I have', he said, 'neither his knowledge

⁴⁸ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 555, File 31, 'a section on religious education and a criticism of episcopacy'.

⁴⁹ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 557, Files 1-2, 'an account of the religious affairs in Restoration Scotland'.

⁵⁰ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 556, Files 1–16, 'Auld Eppie's Tales'. See also Vol 553, File 37, 'letter to James Mitchell Dec 29 1828'.

nor talents. But on the other hand I conceived that the kind of information and humour which I possess would have enabled me to vindicate where he has misrepresented and also to render contemptible and ludicrous what he has laboured to dignify'.⁵¹

McCulloch's fictional works were moralising tales which celebrated the Scottish Covenanters and encouraged colonial settlers to be frugal, hard-working and god-fearing. McCulloch's most famous work, *The Mephibosheth Stepsure Letters*, though not published by Blackwood, was serialised in the *Acadian Recorder* from 1821 to 1822. Immediately the *Letters* were a huge hit with Nova Scotians gathering in shops to read the latest issues.⁵² The *Letters* chronicled life in an early Nova Scotian town – modelled on Pictou – and, while highly amusing in places, aimed at encouraging settlers to lead a moral life. While those residents tempted by sin are ruined, the character Saunders Scantocreesh is held up as an example of pious virtue. Described as 'too rare a character in Nova Scotia', Scantocreesh scorns the upstart evangelical preachers, Howl and Yelvit, and their alleged converts, Mrs Sham and Miss Clippit, preferring to attend the services of the classically trained Presbyterian minister.⁵³ Scantocreesh's heroes are the same as McCulloch's: the Scottish Covenanters. On the death of two town residents, Scantocreesh remarks to his neighbours that they should be glad their friends had not been obliged 'like the Scots Worthies to wander among moors and mosses; and at last been taken up by some of the Highland Host or of Claverhouse's dragoons, who would have shot them or hanged them'.⁵⁴

Colonial Gleanings: William and Melville, a volume of two complementary narratives by McCulloch, written for colonial settlers and potential immigrants, and anonymously published in Edinburgh in 1826, is a warning about the wasting influence on the lives of early Nova Scotians, of the neglect of religious duty and the sins of alcohol and gambling. The great-grandfather of William had been, like McCulloch's own ancestor, one of the original Covenanting martyrs 'taken, to cement with his blood, in the Grassmarket of Edinburgh, that noble structure of civil and religious privilege which is the glory of Scotland'. William, a devout man himself, vows on his arrival in Halifax not to forget the example set by his great-grandfather, and to lead a pious life. However, the vices of the colony's dissipated metropolis gradually corrupt William who learns that his great-

⁵¹ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 553, File 40, 'Letter to James Mitchell May 18 1829'.

⁵² McCulloch, *Life*, p. 73.

⁵³ Thomas McCulloch, *The Mephibosheth Stepsure Letters*, G. Davies ed. (Ottawa, 1990), pp. 114–18, 170.

⁵⁴ McCulloch, *Stepsure*, p. 58.

grandfather's house, from which he had been 'dragged...and persecuted to the death, for the testimony of Jesus', is crumbling: a symbol of William's own internal decay.⁵⁵

The second story of the volume focuses on Melville, a near neighbour of William's, from the region of Scotland populated by the descendants of the 'suffering remnant'. As the narrator explains: '[this struggling band] in times of persecution and martyrdom, loved not their lives unto the death... They have themselves assumed the name of the "Reformed Presbytery;" and, perhaps, of all the religious parties in Scotland, they exhibit the most striking example of the beneficial influence of Presbyterian government upon the religion and good order of mankind.' Melville is descended from an Episcopalian laird who had reluctantly obeyed the orders of the Restoration government, resulting in the death of some Presbyterian neighbours. Owing to his Episcopalian background, we are told, Melville is less than devout and owns no Bible, but on immigrating to Nova Scotia, he meets a pious Scotsman who encourages him to reform. While visiting his new Presbyterian friend, Melville reluctantly stays to hear the renowned Rev. Dr MacGregor. Melville is taken with MacGregor's sermon, though he still argues with the minister over points of controversy. Later, Elizabeth, the daughter of his friend, refuses to marry Melville owing to their religious differences and he moves to the West Indies where he lives a poverty-stricken and unhappy life. On returning to Nova Scotia he learns of his old love's imminent death. Melville moves into the cottage after her demise where, from Elizabeth's Bible and her father's companionship, he eventually finds solace in the face of death. Melville's story is a criticism of Episcopalian splendour, decadence, superficiality and impiety; a celebration of Presbyterian steadfastness and a salute to McCulloch's mentor, James MacGregor.⁵⁶

The plot of an unpublished story by McCulloch, entitled *Robert and Morton* – echoing Scott in *Old Mortality* – closely resembles that of *William and Melville*. Morton is a Scottish emigrant to Nova Scotia, who, originally a pious man, begins to neglect his Bible study after his Halifax colleagues mock him. Morton goes to Pictou for lumber work and meets Robert, a staunch Presbyterian who takes him to a communion meeting where the Rev. MacGregor is preaching. Morton's reaction is described in the following terms: 'as he stood upon the summit of the bank and surveyed the scene it was with feelings which an acquaintance with Halifax had estranged from his mind. He remembered the land of his fathers...but his musings were interrupted by the appearance of a soldier...It was a Covenanter's scene and reminded Morton of those times when the intrusions of cruelty interrupted the outpourings of mercy. But there was neither the sound of the trumpet or the

⁵⁵ [Thomas McCulloch], *Colonial Gleanings: William and Melville* (Edinburgh, 1826), pp. 16–18.

⁵⁶ [McCulloch], *Gleanings*.

alarm of war: there was no Claverhouse to stain the beauty of holiness with the blood of the saints.’ Morton is affected by MacGregor’s preaching and encouraged to return to the holy path.⁵⁷

Through his writings, then, McCulloch warns his readers and fellow Scottish immigrants, not to forget the Covenanting tradition of resistance to Anglican supremacy. To McCulloch, the Covenanting tradition was still relevant in nineteenth-century Nova Scotia. Owing to his Presbyterian ideology, he viewed the battle for Pictou Academy as a struggle for religious and civil liberty against a domineering Anglican establishment, describing it as the ‘cause of Christ’;⁵⁸ though in reality a minority of Anglican Council members did record their support of the Academy. The institution of an established church in the British colonies, where non-Anglicans were unjustly regarded as disloyal, had been, according to McCulloch, the cause of much friction in the past, resulting in the loss of the thirteen colonies.⁵⁹ McCulloch’s son shared the same view of colonial conflict as his father: ‘the United States’, he said, ‘is today the outcome of a policy which placed the bishop on a level with the king.’ According to William McCulloch, in Nova Scotia where government had been dominated by Anglican supremacists and their Church of Scotland allies, there had been the same ‘supercilious contempt for the “commonalty”’.⁶⁰

The United Secession Church and the dissenting interest in Scotland viewed the struggle in a similar vein. Comparing the struggles in Nova Scotia to the Covenanting times, an article in the *Scots Times* encouraged readers to support the Pictou cause: ‘[Scotland] ought not to forget, and she does not forget, how narrowly she escaped from Episcopalian ascendancy, how much she owes to the struggles of the Reformers, and how well therefore, it becomes her to sympathise with her fellow subjects who are subjected in a certain degree to similar oppressions.’⁶¹ In 1825 McCulloch went to Scotland where he intended to drum up support for the Academy. A memorial on behalf of the institution was signed by leading figures in Scottish ecclesiastical and public life from across the Presbyterian spectrum, including Francis Jeffrey; the Lord Provost of Edinburgh William Trotter; several professors from both Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities; Kirk ministers Henry Moncreiff Wellwood and Andrew Thomson; Antiburgher minister Thomas McCrie;

⁵⁷ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 555, Files 78-81, ‘Robert and Morton’.

⁵⁸ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 553, File 40, ‘Letter to James Mitchell May 18 1829’.

⁵⁹ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 555, Files 78-81, ‘Robert and Morton’.

⁶⁰ McCulloch, *Life*, pp. 5–6.

⁶¹ ‘Editorial’, *CP*, Jan 23 1830; see also ‘To “a Pictonian”, *CP*, April 23 1828.

United Seceders, James Peddie, John Brown, and John Ritchie; and Independent ministers, Robert and James Haldane and Ralph Wardlaw.⁶²

The bulk of support came from dissenting Seceders who regarded the struggle as a battle for civil and religious liberty against tyrannical hierarchy. McCulloch spoke at meetings of the United Secession Church which organised 'The Glasgow Society for Promoting the Interests of Religion and Liberal Education in the North American Colonies' whose aim was to sponsor Pictou Academy. Moreover, each congregation of the church was instructed to collect money on the Academy's behalf and a statement was read from every pulpit.⁶³ Students at the church's seminary raised £400 and articles in support of the Academy and the plight of dissenters in Nova Scotia also appeared in the church's periodical.⁶⁴ In December 1828 a meeting on behalf of the Academy was held in the apparently crowded Trades Hall in Glasgow. Describing the cause as 'deserving of the warmest sympathy of Scotsmen', a spokesman at the meeting insisted that settlers should make the tyrannous nature of colonial clergymen widely known. Comparing the Bishop of Nova Scotia to Archdeacon Strachan, this speaker expressed his confidence that 'the maternal Government will not suffer the affection of her colonial children to be alienated by the fantastic tricks of a few pampered minions of a dominant Hierarchy.'⁶⁵

The Chignecto Covenanters

As might be expected, McCulloch's views also found favour with the Reformed Presbyterian Church which had established itself in the Chignecto region of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Numerous praying societies were scattered across this area, as well as formally organised congregations ministered to by the Rev. Alexander Clarke in Amherst, and the Rev. William Sommerville in Lower Horton (Grand Pré). The Antiburgher Seceders enjoyed a harmonious relationship with the RPs in Scotland, and given McCulloch's outlook and effort to establish a comprehensive Presbyterian church, one would expect his relations with the Chignecto Covenanters to be friendly. Indeed, McCulloch was in contact with Alexander Clarke, who worked relatively close to

⁶² PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 554, File 29, 'Memorial on behalf of the literary and philosophic institute at Pictou, Nova Scotia (1825)'; Vol. 554, File 36, 'Lord Jeffrey to McCulloch 1826'.

⁶³ The Bridge-End Congregation Bible and Missionary Society collected money for the United Secession missions and the Pictou Academy in April 1829. See *USM*, July 1835.

⁶⁴ 'Letter to Moderator and Members of United Presbyterian Synod of Nova Scotia', *USM*, Dec 1837.

⁶⁵ For the Scottish protest see *Second Report of the Glasgow Society for Promoting the Interests of Religion and Liberal Education Among the Settlers in the North American Provinces* (Glasgow, 1830); 'Resolution and Statement of the Secession Students in behalf of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia and the Seminary of Pictou', *CP*, Jan 21 1829.

McCulloch geographically and he invited the RP minister to attend the meeting of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia in 1831. Although Clarke was prevented from attending on this occasion, it seems he had visited Pictou before. He informed McCulloch that he would ‘endeavour again to visit Pictou’ and that it was his ‘sincere desire that sacred harmony and Christian fellowship may abound between the religious bodies to which we respectively belong’. Indeed, Clarke was thankful for the attention he had received from the Secession church after his arrival in the colony. He generously informed McCulloch that he would contribute anything he could to the museum at Pictou Academy and assured him that ‘I shall...look to the ministers of the Secession Church as my brethren in the Lord.’⁶⁶

As has been seen, the principles and traditions of the Covenanters were strictly upheld in the Chignecto region. The Reformed Presbyterians in this area occupied a position of political dissent from the British government, and, like their counterparts elsewhere in the world, they exhibited this by refusing to vote at elections. The Covenants were renewed here in 1843, and in their pamphlets and lectures they insisted on the enduring relevance of the Covenants even in the British colonies; on the necessity of purging episcopacy and popery from the land, and of maintaining a position of dissent from society until these ends had been achieved. ‘The doctrine that one is bound to bear true allegiance to any government that happens to be set up’, the Rev. James Reid Lawson explained, ‘is wholly inconsistent with reason, and the great principles of the Bible’.⁶⁷ Though they rejected republicanism, or so they claimed, and insisted that they belonged to ‘no secret revolutionary society’, like their brethren in Scotland and Ireland, the Chignecto Covenanters maintained that civil government was a divine and popular institution. Thus, people had a duty to keep abreast of public affairs, and to resist government if required.⁶⁸ William Sommerville, who like McCulloch criticised Scott’s interpretation of the seventeenth-century Covenanters, perceived in the Queensferry Paper and Sanquhar Declaration, the ‘small germ out of which arose British Liberty’.⁶⁹ An article published in the *Monthly Advocate*, a Chignecto RP periodical published from 1880, outlined the traditional Covenanter stance on conditional allegiance:

⁶⁶ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 550, File 61, ‘Letter from A. Clarke to McCulloch June 1831’

⁶⁷ James Reid Lawson, *Solemn League and Covenant: A Lecture* (St John, NB, 1868), p. 19.

⁶⁸ James Reid Lawson, *Elective Franchise; Or, Why Reformed Presbyterians do not vote at Parliamentary or Municipal Elections: A Discourse* (Barnesville, NB, 1878), pp. 6–7.

⁶⁹ William Sommerville, *The Social Position of Reformed Presbyterians or Cameronians* (Londonderry, Nova Scotia, 1869).

Were the persecuted sons of the Covenanters justifiable in offering armed resistance to the civil power?...are a people justified in taking up arms at any time for the defence of their civil rights? That they may do so is the voice of scripture, of reason, of history. If men may contend for their *civil* rights, who then will say that they may not contend for their *religious* rights?...were Cameron, Cargill, and Renwick, and their followers justifiable in ultimately renouncing the authority of the king?...in every constitutional monarchy there is a contract between the king and the people...there is the coronation oath on the one side, and a constitutional pledge on the other...if the king violate his pledge, the people are ipso facto freed from theirs.⁷⁰

It would seem likely that the Covenanters who subscribed to these ideas would lend their support to McCulloch's cause, and that their ethos would help to generate a spirit of disaffection. Indeed, Clarke did approve of McCulloch's efforts to achieve religious and political liberty and he expressed his favourable opinion of McCulloch's radical newspaper the *Colonial Patriot* (see below) in his letter to the Pictou principal: 'of the Patriot itself I have only to add that I hope it will continue to sound the trumpet of genuine liberty...the continuance of your correspondence will be esteemed an honour of no ordinary kind and to hear of your success in the cause of truth will always afford much pleasure'. Friendly relations with the Covenanters appear to have continued throughout McCulloch's life and he assisted William Sommerville at his communion service in 1843.⁷¹ As shall be seen, the Chignecto Covenanters continued to testify against the British government in later years.

Pictou Radicalism and the *Colonial Patriot*

By 1830 Pictou had become a centre of radicalism where Presbyterian inspired ideas of religious and political liberty were diffused from the Academy, the churches, and propagated in literature. Described as a 'Presbyterian and liberal county',⁷² it was a thriving and important commercial hub with around 1500 residents and 300 houses. The following sketch by William Moorsom, a military man who published a travel account of the province, provides a picture of the town's Scottish character and the violent nature of its political disputes: 'The air of the place strikes a stranger's eye as peculiarly Scotch...I believe, all the feuds of all the Macs from A to Z, throughout the Scottish alphabet, have emigrated their violence within the precincts of Pictou...Pity it is, that a little population which has plenty of forest to clear, and of land to cultivate within its township, should

⁷⁰ 'The Burning Bush', *Monthly Advocate*, July 1880.

⁷¹ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 550, File 61, 'Letter from A. Clarke to McCulloch June 1831'; McCulloch, *Life*, p.190.

⁷² McCulloch, *Life*, p. 30.

distract its brain with political arguments upon abstract questions of privilege, and party squabbles for sectarian aggrandizement.’⁷³ These political arguments were espoused in the colony’s first radical newspaper, the *Colonial Patriot*, launched in Pictou in 1827 by Jotham Blanchard, a lawyer born in New Hampshire, who had been educated by McCulloch at the Academy and who had evidently imbibed his principles. The credit for developing the role of the press in Nova Scotia has generally been attributed to Joseph Howe, but it was Blanchard and his associates who first utilised the newspaper to forward their political agenda. During the eventful 1830 session of the legislature, copies of the *Patriot* were deposited at the Assembly.⁷⁴ Though despised by many, the paper was sustained for around five years through public subscription, and was popular among a section of the Pictou community who gathered in groups to hear the paper read aloud.⁷⁵ According to D.C. Harvey, the *Patriot* ‘gave voice to the Scottish radicalism of the province, and played no small part in the initiation of reform’.⁷⁶

Like its Upper Canadian counterpart the *Colonial Advocate*, the *Patriot* began publication without divulging the religious tenets of its editor. It was hoped that by avoiding theological controversy the paper might appeal to a wide range of dissenters. Blanchard declared that the paper stood for religious freedom and civil equality for dissenters in general and attacked the Bishop and his allies in no uncertain terms. It defended dissenters’ rights to marriage licenses and called on dissenters in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island – where the Anglican monopoly of glebe and school lands had angered the dissenting population including many Presbyterians – and New Brunswick, to unite in their efforts to achieve civil equality: ‘the degradation...in which Dissenters are still kept’, one correspondent wrote, ‘with respect to marriage licenses, by the conduct of his Majesty’s Council, is strongly felt and reprobated’.⁷⁷ It also reported on the Upper and Lower Canadian political struggle where it was observed dissenters were fighting a similar battle. The editor hoped that Nova Scotians ‘may be as ready to support each other and to defend their rights, as are the Canadians’.⁷⁸ Referring to the difficulties involved in securing glebe lands, it was observed that ‘there are also extensive Clergy Reserves in this

⁷³ William Moorsom, *Letters from Nova Scotia; comprising Sketches of a Young Country* (London, 1830), pp. 352–4.

⁷⁴ The conservative *Free Press* was sent to all the magistrates before the brandy election. Cuthbertson, *Bluenose*, pp. 56, 320. William Hamilton also highlights the role of the *Patriot* in arousing the populace. Hamilton, *Education*, p. 203.

⁷⁵ ‘Letter to Editor’, *CP*, Mar 28, 1828.

⁷⁶ D.C. Harvey, ‘The Intellectual Awakening of Nova Scotia’, in G.A. Rawlyk (ed.), *Historical Essays on the Atlantic Provinces* (Toronto, 1967), p. 117.

⁷⁷ ‘To editors’, *CP*, Feb 29 1828; ‘To editor’, *CP*, May 28 1828.

⁷⁸ ‘Editorial’, *CP*, April 11 1828.

province, and it is for our legislators to consider, whether it would not be advisable for them to take similar precautions with the Upper Canadians.’⁷⁹ The *Patriot* re-printed articles from the *Colonial Advocate*, which attacked Strachan and the ascendancy of Anglicanism.⁸⁰ Meanwhile, the Kirk in Nova Scotia was condemned for its slavish support of the ‘domination of the Church of England’.⁸¹

Despite the attempt of the *Patriot* to present itself as the mouthpiece of the dissenting cause generally, the influence of McCulloch and the Seceder inheritance in Pictou is demonstrable. Gene Morison describes the tone of the paper as ‘the politico-ecclesiastical radicalism of McCulloch’.⁸² The *Patriot*’s main agenda was to forward the interests of Pictou Academy, as was outlined in its first editorial: ‘education we account the very foundation of all social order, rational happiness and pure religion; we cannot, therefore, consider any sacrifices too great to be made in its behalf.’⁸³ Revealing the origins of the Pictou Seceders’ liberal political theory, the paper defended its right to criticise the actions of the government with reference to the Covenanters: ‘we are sure no Scotsman acquainted with the sufferings of the noble army of martyrs, who resisted unto death the tyrannical attempts of Charles II to establish Episcopacy in Scotland, will dare to hold up his voice against a constitutional opposition’.⁸⁴ The paper printed the Kirk’s pastoral letter from Montreal’s *Canadian Miscellany* which defended the resistance shown by Presbyterians in the past.⁸⁵ Indeed, the tone of the publication caused many to assume that McCulloch was its anonymous editor. The clergyman vociferously denied this in a letter in the *Acadian Recorder*.⁸⁶ However, in a private letter to a friend he admitted to having greatly contributed to the paper. In November 1829 he remarked that for almost a year he had ‘written a weekly editorial in the Colonial Patriot which our Council anticipated with dread’.⁸⁷

More evidence of the influence of Presbyterian political theory on the radicalism of Pictou is the *Colonial Patriot*’s support for the voluntarist theory of the separation of church and state. New light ideas which were mutating into voluntarism in Scotland were

⁷⁹ ‘Editorial’, *CP*, July 9 1828.

⁸⁰ See e.g., ‘Education’, *CP*, April 2 1831; ‘Upper Canada’, *CP*, April 16 1831.

⁸¹ ‘To editors’, *CP*, Feb 29 1828.

⁸² G. Morison, ‘The Brandy Election of 1830’, *CNSHS*, 30 (1954), p. 164. I part company with J. Murray Beck on this issue who claims that McCulloch’s influence was negligible and that the paper did not support the Academy in an extravagant fashion. See Beck, *Howe*, I, p. 48

⁸³ ‘Editorial’, *CP*, Dec 7 1827.

⁸⁴ ‘Editorial’, *CP*, Dec 14 1827.

⁸⁵ ‘The Canadian Miscellany’, *CP*, July 2 1828.

⁸⁶ ‘Extract from Dr McCulloch’s Letter to the Editor of the Nova Scotian in the Acadian Recorder’, *CP*, Feb 8 1828.

⁸⁷ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 553, File 45, ‘Letter to James Mitchell Nov 21 1829’.

obviously influential in Nova Scotia where the two bodies of Seceders united in 1817 to form the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia. The union allowed considerable latitude regarding interpretation of the Westminster Confession of Faith. It was agreed that a formula asking for subscription to the Confession should be devised, but with an addendum declaring that the church gave no decision on the magistrate's power to suppress heresy. The addendum also clarified that notwithstanding the wording of the Confession, which underlined the magistrate's right to call and be present at synods, the church held that spiritual rulers had the authority to convene when they so desired. According to James Robertson, author of a history of the church in 1847, the desire to accomplish a comprehensive union accounts for the 'forbearance manifested' towards the Confession's doctrines. An official formula requesting subscription was only properly devised in 1846.⁸⁸ Though McCulloch had been educated in the Scottish Antiburgher synod by Bruce who became an old light at the split of 1806, it seems McCulloch and the PCNS came to sympathise and communicate more with the new light and Burgher wings. Indeed, the Antiburghers in Scotland declared that they had 'some serious difficulties' with the wording of the Nova Scotia formula.⁸⁹ The reality of inhabiting a newly settled and pluralistic colony encouraged MacGregor and McCulloch to reject a strict Antiburgher position and adopt measures to establish a comprehensive church. In 1819 McCulloch complained that the Antiburghers in Scotland 'expended so much energy upon testimony bearing that they exemplified a deficiency of catholic charity'. He justified the exclusion of an article on Covenanting from the PCNS formula. It was thought prudent, since the practice of Covenanting was generally jeered in Nova Scotia, to exclude from the formula principles which would only be derided.⁹⁰ The PCNS union inspired the new light bodies in Scotland to settle their differences and unite in 1820 to form the United Secession Church. The PCNS retained links with the USC and was regarded by the Scottish church as an unofficial associate body.⁹¹ McCulloch's best friends in Scotland and chief correspondents were father and son James and John Mitchell, leading ministers in the USC, from whom McCulloch received religious publications printed in Scotland.

⁸⁸ Robertson, *Mission*, pp. 208, 213.

⁸⁹ John McKerrow, *History of the Foreign Missions of the Secession and United Secession Church* (Edinburgh, 1867), p. 77.

⁹⁰ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 553, File 7, 'Letter to John Mitchell May 29 1819'. This did not stop the Chignecto Covenanters, who rejected voluntaryism, from renewing the Covenants. Moreover, while the process of public covenanting may have been derided, the Covenanting tradition in general was influential.

⁹¹ *The Report of a Committee, Appointed by the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia, to Prepare a Statement of Means for Promoting Religion in the Church, Securing the Permanence of the Church, and Enlarging its Bounds* (Glasgow, 1819). The union of the Secession in Scotland was reported in the *Acadian Recorder* on March 10 1821.

However, a broad church, the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia was not uniformly voluntaryistic. The Rev. John Sprott, originally from Wigtownshire, was an adherent of the establishment principle. Sprott, who emigrated to the Maritime region in 1818, was a member of the PCNS, but enjoyed a friendly relationship with George and Robert Burns and expressed his approval of the Glasgow Colonial Society. In a letter to Robert Burns in 1838 he acknowledged the influence of voluntary ideas in Nova Scotia but condemned the principle and praised the Kirk for its stand against it: ‘we had a sprinkling of Voluntaryism in Nova Scotia. But it has no charm for ministers. It is no favourite with us. We are too well acquainted with its weakness and worthlessness.’ According to Sprott, the knowledge of Dr Ritchie’s defeat by Dr Cook, at their great debate in Ulster in 1836 ‘delighted many firesides in Nova Scotia’. Ritchie and Cooke had discussed the state of voluntaryism in Canada as well as at home.⁹² Sprott also expressed his approval of the *Church of Scotland Magazine*, which the minister had received as a gift. He obtained pamphlets which championed the establishment, and other pro-Kirk tracts for distribution from his brother-in-law, Thomas Neilson. He criticised his colleague the Rev. Andrew Kerr, who at the jubilee for John Brown in Londonderry, Nova Scotia, preached on voluntary principles: ‘this is not the time for pulling down churches’, Sprott declared; ‘I would like to see every decayed or unsound timber removed from the Church of Scotland, but have no wish to see her destroyed.’ Though he had been educated in the Reformed Presbyterian Divinity Hall, Sprott had been brought up in the Church of Scotland and retained a reverence for the dignity of establishment. He insisted to Burns that his church ‘was firmly attached to the British crown’ and implied that the PCNS did not rest on a voluntarist bottom. He frequently prayed for Great Britain and ‘our National Zion’. His son and biographer, George W. Sprott, remarked that while he had always believed that his father had prayed for the Kirk, a friend had suggested that Sprott referred to the Church of England, established by the legislature in Nova Scotia. ‘Considering his ecclesiastical views’, George wrote, ‘this is quite probable’.⁹³ Nevertheless, despite Sprott’s personal inclinations, it is clear that voluntaryism made some headway in Nova Scotia, at least with a branch of the PCNS, if not with the entire body of clergy. Nova Scotia-born William Fraser, missionary in Upper Canada and associate of voluntary Seceder William Proudfoot, was educated at Pictou Academy. He expressed his dissatisfaction with the establishmentarian theory of church and state still propounded by Antiburgher Seceders.⁹⁴

⁹² *The Voluntaries in Belfast* (3rd ed., Edinburgh, 1836), p. 61.

⁹³ G.W. Sprott (ed.), *Memorials of the Rev. John Sprott* (Edinburgh, 1906), pp. xv–xvi.

⁹⁴ See previous chapter, p. 146.

In his *History* of 1847, moreover, James Robertson recorded that the PCNS ministers had now all given up farming, recognising and acting ‘upon the voluntary principle’.⁹⁵

Furthermore, Blanchard and McCulloch explicitly championed voluntarism in the pages of the *Colonial Patriot*. Readers were encouraged to subscribe to the Edinburgh-based *Scotsman*, a voluntary-inclined newspaper. The editor declared that if residents felt they could not afford the subscription fee, he would pay for a copy on their behalf and feel ‘abundantly repaid in the enlightened principles which will be thereby disseminated’.⁹⁶ The paper re-printed articles from the *Scotsman* and the *Scots Times* which endorsed the views of Andrew Marshall and voluntary theory.⁹⁷ Later it recorded the progress of the Scottish voluntaries and recommended for purchase the *Voluntary Church Magazine*. Blanchard, it will be recalled, also proposed that Nova Scotia establish itinerating libraries and acquired the works of Marshall and Wardlaw for distribution.⁹⁸ In April 1831, the editor announced that the paper would be pleased to receive articles discussing the nature of ecclesiastical establishments and then proceeded to outline his own thoughts on the topic. Like the voluntaries in Scotland, the *Patriot* declared establishments to be persecuting, inequitable, and impolitic: ‘Where the law forces the subject to give either countenance or support to a church with which he cannot unite, there is as direct persecution, as if he himself were consigned to the flames. The only difference is, that the law seizes in the one case the property, in the other the person’. Establishments were, moreover, condemned as unscriptural, flouting the two-kingdoms ecclesiology of Scottish Presbyterianism: ‘a church supported by legal sanctions, has admitted into its constitution an authority which religion declaims: and wherever it uses this authority either to enforce its principles or to ensure its support, it acts in direct opposition to the injunction of Christ.’⁹⁹

Voluntarism, a development of Presbyterian two-kingdoms ecclesiology, was a challenge to Anglican supremacy and the church-state government which existed in Britain and in the colonies. In Scotland voluntarist Presbyterians supported political reform as a means to offset the influence of Episcopal hierarchy in Parliament and ultimately to secure the disestablishment of the Churches of England and Scotland. In the eyes of voluntaries, established churches had become political tools of the state, used to oppress the community and implement despotism. Thus, the voluntary-inspired Seceders of Pictou denounced the

⁹⁵ Robertson, *Mission*, pp. 47–8.

⁹⁶ ‘Editorial’, *CP*, Nov 25 1829.

⁹⁷ ‘On the Use and Abuse of Literary and Ecclesiastical Endowments by Thomas Chalmers [*The Scotsman*]’, *CP*, May 21 1828; ‘Ecclesiastical Establishments [*Scots Times*]’, *CP*, Sep 9 1829; ‘Oppression of Dissenters in Nova Scotia [*Scots Times*]’, *CP*, April 24 1830; ‘Ecclesiastical Establishments [*Scots Times*]’, *CP*, June 19 1830.

⁹⁸ ‘Itinerating Libraries’, *CP*, Aug 11 1832, ‘Voluntary Church Magazine’, *CP*, July 2 1833.

⁹⁹ ‘Editorial’, *CP*, April 16 1831. See also ‘Editorial’, *CP*, April 30 1831.

establishment in Nova Scotia as tyrannous in both church and state: ‘The miserable system of exclusion and misrepresentation’, the paper warned, which has ‘been so long practised by cunning and designing Churchmen on their inoffensive dissenting brethren, and which has rendered the words dissenter and disloyalty nearly synonymous terms, will not long be borne with by his Majesty’s subjects in these colonies, while so large a majority of them are of the latter description’.¹⁰⁰ The paper proclaimed established hierarchies to be the ‘natural enemies of liberty all the world over’ and declared its support for the efforts of Upper Canadian reformers to secularise the reserves and institute voluntarism.¹⁰¹

The paper moved from a defence of the Academy and dissenters’ rights to a critique of the corrupt nature of colonial government. It charted the progress of the successive Academy money bills in the legislature and denounced the Anglican and Kirk-influenced Council for its unconstitutional obstruction of the Assembly’s wishes.¹⁰² Increasingly the *Patriot* advocated far-reaching reform of the legislature in order to achieve a more accountable government. In response to the editor of the *Acadian Recorder*, who had praised the liberal nature of Nova Scotia’s system of government, the *Patriot* exclaimed:

until we obtained a more equitable system of representation; - until the Lord Bishop vacated his seat in the Council, and thus ceased to exercise his political influence...until the hierarchy over which he presides, ceased to draw on the Civil List, and the Revenue of this province...to support a system not suited to the genius of this people; until he ceased to make a monopoly of marriage Licenses; and until Grammar Schools, and seminaries of learning were better and more equitably provided for...every thinking man will hold in utter contempt, those statements set forth by the Editor of the *Acadian*.¹⁰³

The paper endorsed measures in the interests of the rural community and criticised those that benefited the Haligonian elite. It opposed the proposed appropriation of the quit rents, supported plans to develop the Pictou harbour, and advocated electoral reform to secure better representation of the regions of Pictou and Cape Breton.¹⁰⁴ The mighty salaries of customs officials, appointed by the Crown, were also made the subject of attack, as was the

¹⁰⁰ ‘Editorial’, *CP*, July 9 1828.

¹⁰¹ ‘Editorial’, *CP*, Jan 9 1830; ‘Editorial’, *CP*, Oct 7 1829.

¹⁰² ‘Editorial’, *CP*, Feb 25 1829.

¹⁰³ ‘Editorial’, *CP*, Jan 14 1829.

¹⁰⁴ The *Patriot* condemned the appropriation of the quit rents as against the interests of the poverty-stricken land-holding population. The paper also suggested that the Bishop might encourage the executive to use the funds thus acquired to aid the Anglican Church. ‘Quit Rents’, *CP*, Feb 15, 1828; ‘Editorial’, *CP*, May 1 1830. On the *Patriot*’s support for a Pictou harbour see ‘Editorial’, *CP*, Jan 18 1828. On electoral reform see ‘Editorial’, *CP*, Mar 6 1830.

existence of these officials in the Council.¹⁰⁵ As the Council dispensed patronage, the *Patriot* observed, the people's representatives were discouraged from making appeals on the province's behalf, lest the Council refuse to grant road money, a source of employment for many inhabitants. 'The whole power', the paper declared, 'temporal and spiritual of the province, is concentrated into one focus, for the suppression of every particle of freedom, of thought and conduct.'¹⁰⁶

As in Scotland, the Kirk in Nova Scotia denounced the principles of the Seceders as seditious. The struggle between the Seceders and the Kirk was one founded on differences in ecclesiology rather than in theology, though in Nova Scotia ethnic prejudice also had a part to play. The Rev. John McKerrow claimed that the Kirk in Nova Scotia and the PCNS clashed because the former body contended for the 'honour of Establishment' while the latter strove for the 'free operation of the voluntary principle'.¹⁰⁷ Historians have failed to notice these ecclesiological differences, and have been unable properly to account for the feud between the two bodies of Presbyterians in Nova Scotia. They have likewise failed to attribute Nova Scotia's radicalism to the influence of voluntarism. With McCulloch's visit to Scotland, the Pictou Academy dispute widened into a transatlantic battle between establishmentarian Kirkmen and voluntarist dissenters. Though McCulloch had sought the support of all in the Presbyterian community, his vitriolic attack on the Glasgow Colonial Society and the unfavourable reports which flowed from Kirk representatives, lost him the backing of influential Kirk members in Scotland. Following a meeting with Robert Burns, the secretary of the GCS, McCulloch published his *Memorial* which accused the GCS of undermining the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia and of deliberately trying to poach its parishioners. McCulloch's opinion of the GCS was influenced by the apparently partisan behaviour of the society's agents in Nova Scotia, including the Rev. Kenneth McKenzie, and their ally in the government, Michael Wallace, who had intentionally thwarted McCulloch's efforts and represented the PCNS as a seditious body. With little knowledge of these local troubles Burns was naturally sympathetic to his own agents and he responded to McCulloch in print. Thus began a war of words which was transferred to the colonial press where McKenzie championed the GCS. The debate became a transatlantic one, widening divisions between establishmentarians and voluntaries both in Scotland and in the colonies. Petitions were drawn up and funds provided by Kirk

¹⁰⁵ 'Editorial', *CP*, Feb 11 1829.

¹⁰⁶ 'Editorial', *CP*, Sep 3 1829.

¹⁰⁷ McKerrow, *History*, p. 87.

congregations to defray the expenses of Kenneth McKenzie who travelled to Halifax to oppose the Academy.¹⁰⁸

During a debate in the legislative assembly, the differences between the loyal Church of Scotland and the subversive Secession were underlined by Kirk layman John Young, member for Sydney, who declared that Seceders objected to the presence of the King's Commissioner in the General Assembly, and insisted that the 'Lord of the universe is head of the church'. Alexander Stewart, member for Cumberland, supporting the member for Sydney in the debate, attributed the radical political ideas of the *Patriot* to these very Presbyterian principles:

Mr Stewart said he knew nothing of the republican nature of the system of the Seceders from the Kirk of Scotland as it was depicted by the hon. Member from Sydney. But there were certainly some very singular coincidences. From the place where they flourished proceeded doctrines subversive of our constitution. In the Pictou Patriot, a paper recently established there, amongst other pernicious doctrines, it had been proposed that the President should be elected by the people... he would not say that those who were connected with the Academy were the authors of those libels and democratical sentiments, because he would not assert what he did not know, but that was it not true that the Friends of the Seminary were invariably lauded and its opposers vilified by that paper?

Mr Young agreed. He drew a distinction between the Kirk whose ministers were appointed by royal and aristocratic patrons, and thus the 'steadfast friends of tranquillity and order', and the Secession, whose system of government was republican, its ministers chosen by the congregations. As a consequence, the Secession was more 'liable to catch any popular contagion of sentiments or opinion, than the established clergy, who feel and acknowledge the ascendancy of the civil power.' Moreover, the Scottish dissenters acknowledged 'no earthly head' and stood 'totally disconnected from the State.'¹⁰⁹ Richard John Uniacke proclaimed that if Antiburghers were 'a class of persons who disclaimed all ecclesiastical and civil supremacy', as the Member for Sydney had defined them, then they were a portion of society which 'ought to be watched'.¹¹⁰ In the *Colonial Patriot*, an 'Antiburgher' correspondent declared that while the term Antiburgher was irrelevant in the colony where the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia had united in one body, it was true

¹⁰⁸ 'To editor', *CP*, Mar 4 1829. On the debate and friction between the Glasgow Colonial Society and the PCNS, see Thomas McCulloch, *A Memorial from the Committee of Missions of the Presbyterian Church in Nova Scotia to the Glasgow Society for Promoting the Religious Interests of the Scottish Settlers in British North America* (Edinburgh, 1826); *Supplement to the First Annual Report of the Society in Glasgow for Promoting the Religious Interests of Scottish Settlers in British North America: containing a Reply to the Memorial of Dr Macculloch, and accompanying papers* (Glasgow, 1826). This debate was also reported in the *Edinburgh Star*, the *Edinburgh Christian Instructor* and the *United Secession Magazine*.

¹⁰⁹ 'House of Assembly', *CP*, Mar 25 1829.

¹¹⁰ 'Pictou Academy', *CP*, Jan 28 1829.

that the Church subscribed to the principle outlined in the Assembly. Indeed, the correspondent expressed his hope ‘that neither earthly power nor empty grandeur will alienate them from those doctrines, which their ancestors sealed with their blood’.¹¹¹

Thus, Presbyterian ecclesiology, and voluntarism in particular, were perceived by some to be at the root of the province’s political radicalism. One correspondent wrote to *The Novascotian* that these principles would ‘in their development most assuredly disturb our tranquillity’.¹¹² In the Assembly the *Patriot* was described as a ‘receptacle of filth’ and ‘Antiburgher’ became a term of reproach used to signify a disloyal radical.¹¹³ On his entering Pictou in February 1830, Joseph Howe recorded the following feelings: ‘Into Pictou!...that abode of patriots and den of radicalism – that nook where the spirit of party sits, nursing her wrath to keep it warm, during ten months of the year, in order to disturb the Legislature all the other two. Into Pictou, that cradle of liberty...The Lord only knows whether we may ever live to come out, but here we go merrily in – we may be burned by the Antiburghers, or eaten without salt by the Highlanders’.¹¹⁴

Frustrated at the unceasing and rancorous debates in the legislature on the future of the Academy, and on the Council’s rejection for the seventh time a bill for a permanent grant, Thomas Chandler Haliburton, a liberal Anglican and long-time supporter of the Academy, suggested that the legislature convene a committee on the General State of the Province and compose an address to the King, asking for a reform of the system of government. Haliburton desired either the removal from the Council of public officers or the establishment of a Legislative Council independent of the executive. He stated that the Council’s continued hostility to Pictou Academy, and the influence of the Bishop as a member of it, required a reform of the colony’s institutions.¹¹⁵ The *Patriot* went further than Haliburton in its demands. With the British constitution as its model, the *Patriot* claimed that the Council, like its counterpart the House of Lords, had no right to alter money bills.¹¹⁶ Council members, the paper insisted, who, unlike the Lords, possessed the elective franchise, were represented in the Assembly along with the rest of the population, and thus their role as councillors was simply to assent to the legislation passed in the Assembly. The fact that the Council’s assent was required to pass a bill into law was irrelevant, ‘since the Council itself, as a branch of the legislature, was originally instituted

¹¹¹ ‘To Richard John Uniacke’, *CP*, April 18 1828.

¹¹² ‘Letter to editor’, *CP*, Feb 1 1828.

¹¹³ See e.g., ‘to editor’, *CP*, July 16 1828; ‘to editor’, *CP*, Aug 13 1828.

¹¹⁴ Joseph Howe, *Western and Eastern Rambles: Travel Sketches of Nova Scotia*, M.G. Parks ed. (Toronto, 1973), p. 146.

¹¹⁵ ‘House of Assembly’, *CP*, April 1 1829.

¹¹⁶ ‘Editorial’, *CP*, Feb 8 1828. See ‘Editorial’, *CP*, June 17 1829; ‘Editorial’, *CP*, June 24 1829.

by the source of all authority, namely, the people, with the full intent that its assent should not be withheld'.¹¹⁷

Brenton Halliburton countered these attacks by maintaining that the Council remained ultimately responsible to His Majesty's government. The government of the colony was founded on royal instructions to the Governor and not on a written constitution. The powers of the Council might be slightly different in Nova Scotia but this was essential, Halliburton maintained, in order for the balance of power to be preserved.¹¹⁸ The *Patriot*, however, suggested that not only should the Legislative Council be independent from the executive, it should be independent of the Governor, and composed of Nova Scotians acquainted with the province from 'actual experience'. Declaring the Council's actions illegal, the paper proclaimed that the attempt to aggrandise a particular church had irritated the general mind.¹¹⁹ Doubtless influenced by Presbyterian theory of popular sovereignty, the *Patriot* contended that His Majesty's councillors, like the King himself, ruled on behalf of the community, receiving their powers from the people. The colony, the paper declared, was beginning to reject the theory of passive obedience, which had too long held sway; now 'the community will not be put down: it has passed the days in which loyalty claiming its rights, quailed in the presence of prelacy and arbitrary power'.¹²⁰ Indeed, though the Pictou radicals insisted that they did not desire the severance of the British connection, they warned the British government that without a reform of the system of colonial rule, Nova Scotia was likely to secede from the empire, as the United States had done not long before: 'in the mass of the community, there is a souring of spirit, which the conduct of his Majesty's Council in general, and of our Lord Bishop in particular, is urging into dissatisfaction to existing rule...Loyalty once influenced Nova Scotians to forsake the States: oppression is now exciting in them feelings which loyalty cannot always resist'. To some extent, therefore, the Pictou Academy debate and the protest of its supporters increasingly brought the two branches of the legislature into conflict with each other. The brandy affair then brought matters to a head.

¹¹⁷ 'Editorial', *CP*, Feb 15 1828.

¹¹⁸ Brenton Halliburton, *Observations Upon the Doctrine Lately Advanced That His Majesty's Council have no Constitutional Power to Control Individual Appropriations* (Halifax, 1828). Though Halliburton had supported the Academy in its early days, he was wary of extremism and condemned some of the resolutions passed by its trustees. See G.W. Hill, *Memoir of Sir Brenton Halliburton Late Chief Justice of the Province of Nova Scotia* (Halifax, 1864), pp. 110, 120.

¹¹⁹ 'Editorial', *CP*, April 1 1829; 'Editorial', *CP*, June 3 1829; 'Editorial', *CP*, Feb 16 1828.

¹²⁰ On the *Patriot's* belief in popular sovereignty as opposed to 'divine right' and 'holy alliances', see also 'Editorial', *CP*, May 21 1831.

The Brandy Election and its Aftermath

The brandy tax issue led to a violent election battle and demands from the *Patriot* for the institution of a more responsible government. When the revenue laws were revised in 1826, the Assembly had intended to impose an added 1s 4d on foreign brandy in addition to the 1s already applied. For three years the additional 1s 4d had been ignored by customs collectors, owing to the imposition of 1s on foreign spirits according to an imperial statute, making 2s the total amount levied on brandy. In April 1830 the Assembly decided that the extra 4d should be collected and sent up a bill to that effect for the Council's assent. On its rejection the Assembly drafted another bill to which the Council objected as an irregular act. A debate then ensued on the right of the Assembly to control the colony's expenditure. S.G.W. Archibald, a trustee of Pictou Academy, descended from his Speaker's chair to declare that by the British constitution and Nova Scotian practice, only the people's representatives in the Legislative Assembly had the right to originate money bills. Though the Council could reject a bill, it could not amend one, as it appeared now to be doing.

According to Brian Cuthbertson, Archibald's behaviour at this point was not ideologically driven, but motivated by disappointment and frustration experienced during a battle for office with members of the Council.¹²¹ As his near contemporary biographer observes, Archibald's defence of the Pictou cause is inconsistent with his behaviour as Chief Justice of Prince Edward Island, where he defended the privileges of the Council. Nevertheless, Archibald was to an extent evidently committed to the Pictou and Presbyterian cause. Of Ulster-Scots origin, his grandfather was first elder of the Presbyterian church in Nova Scotia.¹²² A faithful defender of Pictou Academy, McCulloch informed Mitchell that Archibald had proven himself to be the 'pillar of Presbyterians'.¹²³ In any event, even if he or other politicians were ideologically bankrupt during this debate, there were evidently others, both in the legislature and outside it, motivated by radical beliefs rooted in Presbyterian theory. Reiterating its arguments with regard to the Council's unconstitutional interference in the passing of money bills, the *Patriot* now demanded the complete abolition of the present Council and the institution of an elected chamber.¹²⁴ According to the *Patriot*, the Council aimed at enforcing the appropriation of the quit rents, as an alternative to the impost on brandy, a measure almost universally opposed by the landowning portion of society. Had the proposal affected a tax on a necessary article then

¹²¹ Cuthbertson, 'Place Politics'.

¹²² See Israel Longworth, *Life of S.G.W. Archibald* (Halifax, 1881), pp. 2–3, 9, 20, 91–7, 172, 176–7.

¹²³ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 553, File 19, 'Letter to John Mitchell May 31 1824'.

¹²⁴ 'Editorial', *CP*, April 17 1830; 'Legislative Council', *CP*, June 12 1830.

the reduction would have been welcomed, but, as the *Patriot* claimed, the poorer and pious section of the community rarely drank brandy, the chief consumers of which were the councillors themselves. Moreover, the reduction of the brandy duty would be unpopular in Britain where Parliament continued to fund Nova Scotia's Episcopalian clergy and civil list.¹²⁵ The Academy controversy had, the *Patriot* claimed, as much as the brandy dispute, excited the province's wrath to the point where people were prepared to agitate *against* the reduction of taxes: 'from what we know of the Presbyterian nerve, we rather suspect that the Academy Question may produce results, which the Governor of this province will contemplate with just as little satisfaction, as the effects of Council's speculation in brandy...we have not like the Boston folks, shown an abhorrence of tea: we have made a beginning only with brandy. But when a whole Province, as one man, are in a mood to quarrel with a Council for letting them purchase their brandy too cheaply, there is no saying where or what may be the ending'.¹²⁶

Voluntaries in Scotland likewise attributed the political deadlock in the colony to the existence of an Anglican church-state. Letters to *The Scotsman* in January and February 1831 asserted that Nova Scotia was accelerating towards a crisis owing to the establishment of a minority church and the existence of placemen and friends of the Bishop in the Council. As in the Canadas, the Nova Scotian Assembly was rendered a nullity. The Rev. Hugh Heugh advised Bishop Inglis, who had succeeded in crushing Pictou, to take heed of the progress of reform in Britain where the populace was resisting the power of the spiritual lords. 'The interweaving of Episcopacy in the texture of our colonial polity,' one commentator declared, 'is doubtless the prime cause of that fearful spirit of discontent which is abroad over the whole extent of Canada'. The representatives of the Glasgow Colonial Society, an organisation described as an 'ambidextrous engine for subjugating the transatlantic churches to the ecclesiastical courts of this country', had, according to Scottish voluntaries obsessed with condemning their Kirk enemies, sown the 'seeds of contention' and scattered the 'firebrands of discord', by helping 'to graft the exclusive principles of our church establishment on a people who dislike them'. Since colonists were lightly taxed it was clear that the burden of an establishment was the real grievance and

¹²⁵ 'To all the Representatives of the Province, now at Halifax, except messrs Uniacke, Hartshorne and Barry', *CP*, April 17 1830.

¹²⁶ 'Editorial', *CP*, June 19 1830.

instigator of protest. The ‘primary cause of all this evil’, was, in the opinion of *The Scotsman*’s correspondent, ‘the wicked ambition of a mitred priest’.¹²⁷

The Nova Scotian community at large was to a great extent evidently motivated by a desire to see Pictou Academy succeed and the influence of the established Church reduced. In June 1830 McCulloch reported to his friends in Scotland, ‘except the Kirk clergy in Pictou and their highland flocks the province is almost as one man against the Council....the Academy question is generally reported to be the source of rupture between the Council and the Assembly. That it is one cause is certain but many others cooperate.’¹²⁸ The 1830 session of the Assembly was prorogued and then dissolved after the death of George IV. During the general election which followed, the issue principally discussed on the hustings, along with expenditure on roads and bridges, was the Academy. In Halifax County, John Leander Starr, Lawrence Hartshorne, John Barry and Henry Blackadder were opposed by S.G.W. Archibald, William Lawson, George Smith and standing for the first time, Jotham Blanchard. Starr, who denounced the Council but refused to support Pictou, received very few votes. At Truro, Hartshorne asserted he would vote for a permanent grant for the Academy only if it was brought under the control of the executive. Barry proclaimed he was opposed to permanent grants and the type of education which placed ‘the dregs of the people on a level with the highest in the land.’ Archibald declared Pictou Academy to be only part of the wider question of constitutional rights and privileges of Englishmen; while Blanchard gained the support of the crowd by highlighting that he was one of the dregs to which Barry alluded. Indeed, Blanchard declared, ‘that I now stand before you is owing to the instructions received at the Pictou Academy; and while I breathe, it shall be my strongest wish to bring the same advantages within the reach of all.’¹²⁹

In an editorial of *The Novascotian*, Howe – on a ramble around the province – provided an eyewitness report of the violent election battle in Pictou. Hartshorne, Barry, Starr and Blackadder apparently sported Scotch bonnets, while their supporters, mostly composed of Highland residents in the town, armed themselves with sticks and other weapons. A party of sailors with some others marched to the open house in support of Blanchard, where they broke the windows and vandalised a flag with Blanchard’s name on it. In the commotion one man was killed. Though he had formerly attempted to stay neutral

¹²⁷ ‘Affairs of Nova Scotia’, *The Scotsman*, Jan 26 1831; ‘Affairs of Nova Scotia’, *The Scotsman*, Feb 2 1831; ‘British North American Colonies’, *The Scotsman*, June 10 1829; ‘Nova Scotia’, *The Scotsman*, June 24 1829.

¹²⁸ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 553, File 49, ‘Letter to James Mitchell June 1 1830’.

¹²⁹ ‘Election Speeches at Truro’, *TN*, Sep 30 1830. See also ‘Election Speeches’, *CP*, Oct 2 1830.

in the contest between the two warring sides, Howe declared that a sense of duty now obliged him openly to condemn the behaviour of the ministers of the Kirk and their encouragement of violence. Blanchard's supporters had been unarmed, Howe insisted, while the Kirkmen were undoubtedly the aggressors: 'Will it be believed, that three or four clergymen, belonging to the Church of Scotland, were mounted upon the hustings, or on a wall adjoining, and haranguing the people...Let these men assemble their congregations upon the hill tops-and let them expound to them the oracles of the living God, but let them not make such disgusting exhibitions as we witnessed during the past week, where we could neither revere them as Priests, nor trust them as politicians.'¹³⁰

There was a riot in Pictou every night during the election, though the unrest was not, Howe maintained, instigated by Blanchard's party. Archibald and Blanchard insisted that they were not enemies to the Kirk; they had in fact both been brought up to adhere to its principles. Condemning the attempt of his opponents to manipulate Scottish emotion by wearing bonnets, Blanchard insisted that he felt an affinity with Highlanders, and stressed that his efforts on behalf of the Academy were made for the town of Pictou as a whole.¹³¹ In the end the four reformers were voted in; Hartshorne was the most successful of the Council candidates, but he remained 200 votes behind Blanchard, a newcomer, and less well known outside Pictou, who polled the lowest number of votes of the four reformers. Overall, the election was a ringing endorsement for the Pictou cause.¹³²

Protest regarding the Academy and political reform continued after the brandy election. Blanchard was burnt in effigy in Pictou in February 1831.¹³³ In March he travelled to Britain armed with a memorial and petition to the King, testimonies from the Methodist and Baptist denominations in the province, and a certificate signed by 29 members of the Assembly.¹³⁴ He went first to Scotland where he convened with the Mitchells and called on Thomas McCrie who read the petition and provided him with a letter for Lord Brougham.¹³⁵ A meeting was arranged – attended by leading voluntaries and reported in the *Scots Times* and the *Patriot* – at which Blanchard championed the cause of Pictou Academy and political reform, and denounced the adverse influence of church

¹³⁰ 'The County Elections', *TN*, Oct 7 1830.

¹³¹ Beck, *Howe*, I, pp. 77–9; 'The County Elections', *TN*, Oct 7 1830; 'The County Election', *TN*, Oct 13 1830.

¹³² Cuthbertson, *Bluenose*, p. 59.

¹³³ 'Effigy Burning', *CP*, Feb 19 1831.

¹³⁴ For the petition see PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 554, File 93 '1831 Petition to the King of the Trustees of Pictou Academy'.

¹³⁵ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 553, File 89, 'Blanchard to McCulloch, April 29 1831'. He must also have met with William McGavin, Hugh Heugh, Ralph Wardlaw and Andrew Marshall who all gave Blanchard books for an itinerating library in Nova Scotia.

establishments.¹³⁶ Blanchard delivered the petition to Lord Goderich, colonial secretary, and revealed his intention to hold public meetings in England and in Scotland on behalf of the Pictou cause if the petition to Goderich should fall on deaf ears.¹³⁷ Like William Lyon Mackenzie, Blanchard was doubtless inspired by the many meetings being held to protest for the Reform Bill. He informed McCulloch of a ‘holy league’ formed in Worcester resolved to resist taxation until the Reform Bill was secured, and of the violent reaction against the influence of the Bishops in the House of Lords. The political days of the Bishops are over he told McCulloch; Blanchard was convinced that these developments would galvanise the Nova Scotian public to ‘wipe from their Statute books even the name of the Establishment’. He informed McCulloch that he would send him the British papers and that Brougham’s speech ought to be printed in the *Patriot*. It was too good, Blanchard remarked, ‘not to be scattered over Nova Scotia’.¹³⁸

He met up with George Ryerson also in Britain to protest against, amongst other things, the Anglican monopoly of education in Upper Canada. Joseph Hume championed Ryerson and Blanchard’s cause in the House of Commons proposing parliamentary representation for the Maritime and Canadian colonies in a reformed Parliament.¹³⁹ In July 1831 Hume and Henry Warburton advised the House against the establishment of Anglicanism, which, they said, was alienating colonists; Warburton objected to the exclusive Anglican nature of the King’s Colleges in Nova Scotia and Upper Canada.¹⁴⁰ Later, George Robinson MP declared that distinctions on account of religious belief were impolitic in a colony flooded by immigrants from Scotland and Ireland. James E. Gordon, the active defender of scriptural education and church establishments, insisted that Anglicanism was an integral part of the constitution.¹⁴¹

Meanwhile, Brenton Halliburton travelled to Britain to counter the efforts of Blanchard and Archibald, who had also made the trip across the Atlantic. He wrote home to his friend, son-in-law and Council member Enos Collins, on the worrying progress of reform and the Whiggish principles of free trade. In a meeting with Bishop Inglis, who was also in Britain, Archibald and R.W. Hay, the Under Secretary for the Colonies, Halliburton defended the actions of the Council. He informed Collins of his fear that there were ‘some

¹³⁶ ‘Mr Blanchard and the Pictou Academy [*Scots Times*]’, *CP*, Jan 21 1832.

¹³⁷ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 553, File 97, ‘Blanchard to McCulloch, July 6th 1831’.

¹³⁸ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG 1 Vol. 553, File 106, ‘Blanchard to McCulloch, Oct 12th 1831’.

On the *Patriot*’s support of the Reform Bill in Britain, the defeat of High Tory principles and the consequent cleansing of the Church, see ‘Editorial’, *CP*, June 11 1831; ‘Editorial’, *CP*, Aug 20 1831. Brougham’s speech was printed in the paper on 3rd, 10th and 17th of December 1831.

¹³⁹ Hansard HC Debs., 3rd series, Vol. VI, Aug 16 1832, col., 115.

¹⁴⁰ Hansard HC Debs., 3rd series, Vol. V, July 25-6 1831, cols., 282, 383.

¹⁴¹ Hansard HC Debs., 3rd series, Vol. VIII, Oct 14 1832, cols., 767–81.

persons at work to induce the Government here to interfere in such a way as to give them a triumph over their opponents in Nova Scotia' and notified Collins of the 'Ambassador from Pictou's' visit to the Glasgow Seceders in Scotland, where the 'Pictou People' had 'some how or other made a strong impression'. He resolved to remain in London to observe any parliamentary activity regarding the colonies and to keep an eye on Archibald.¹⁴²

In the end Blanchard's mission to Britain achieved little on behalf of the Academy and colonial political reform. Hume and Warburton's efforts failed¹⁴³ while Lord Goderich advised Governor Maitland in vague terms to attempt to satisfy the dispute in a way satisfactory to both parties. Colonial legislation reduced the Academy to a grammar school in 1832 and allowed the Governor a say in the composition of the board of trustees. Kenneth McKenzie and his colleague were appointed to the board and intense hostility between the Kirk and Secession camps, and continued popular political pressure from Kirk supporters in the Pictou region, made it impossible for the Academy properly to function.

The *Patriot* kept up its campaign for another two years. In March 1832 it begged the mother country to 'shear bishops of all their political power'. In successive issues Blanchard and his associates published excerpts from the life of Thomas Muir to encourage all the 'haters of tyranny' to resist oppression. The paper also encouraged the residents of Prince Edward Island to ignore the principle of passive obedience and agitate to secure land reform.¹⁴⁴ It tracked the development of the voluntary controversy in Scotland, reporting on the formation of the Glasgow Voluntary Church Association, supporting the resistance to the annuity tax, and defending the principles of Andrew Marshall and Hugh Heugh. It recommended the *Voluntary Church Magazine*, and copied its editor's address into the *Patriot*. The *Patriot* insisted that the Nova Scotian establishment should share the same fate as the British churches. The paper also continued to champion the cause of the Canadian reformers, heartily praising William Lyon Mackenzie, whose *Sketches* it also recommended to readers. Like Mackenzie it vehemently

¹⁴² C.B. Fergusson (ed.), 'Letters and Papers of Hon. Enos Collins', *Bulletin of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia*, 13 (Halifax, 1959), pp. 28–34. Fergusson believes that the Pictou Ambassador denoted Archibald; but Halliburton could also have been referring to Blanchard.

¹⁴³ On the Reform Act's wider imperial implications see M. Taylor, 'Empire and parliamentary reform: the 1832 Act revisited', in A. Burns & J. Innes (eds.), *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780-1850* (Cambridge, 2003). Taylor argues that though the Bill brought temporary stability to the British mainland, in the colonies it contributed to political and social unrest.

¹⁴⁴ 'Bishops', *CP*, Mar 3 1832; 'Thomas Muir', *CP*, Aug 18 1832; 'Prince Edward Island', *CP*, Oct 6 1832. 214

condemned the apostasy of the United Synod of Seceders in Upper Canada who by seeking state aid had apparently abandoned scriptural conviction.¹⁴⁵

Meanwhile the Kirk in Nova Scotia had established its own publication, apparently influenced by the tone of the *Church of Scotland Magazine*. The use of the press and petitioning and appeals to public opinion were as important to the opponents of Pictou Academy as they were to its supporters; and religious principle was no less important in inspiring and legitimating this effort. The *Pictou Observer and Eastern Advertiser*, edited by the Rev. Kenneth McKenzie initially to offset the impact of the *Colonial Patriot*, espoused the twin cause of establishments and political conservatism. The Pictou Academy was denounced as an ‘antiburgher nursery’ which ‘smelt rank of disloyalty and republicanism’. In response to Blanchard’s apparent accusation that Nova Scotian Kirkmen desired the institution of an ecclesiastical establishment, the *Observer* replied that, as opposed to the disloyal sentiment nursed within the Academy, a church establishment would teach the people ‘that His Majesty’s Representative is something more than a King Log’. The paper printed a notice of John Inglis’s *Vindication of Ecclesiastical Establishments* and praised the ‘talent and ability’ displayed in the *Church of Scotland Magazine*. It defended the Patronage Act and condemned the alleged attempt of political radicals to expropriate church revenue. In August 1834, the *Observer* printed a speech from the ‘Grand Conservative Dinner at Glasgow’ which denounced the ‘wave of democracy’ threatening the established Church. The assault on the Church, the paper claimed, was not to be regarded ‘as a mere isolated menace on a detached interest in the State. It is a direct attack on the whole interests of society – the first of a series of measures by which the nobility, the throne, the funds, the great estates, will be destroyed.’ The Reform Bill and Catholic emancipation were censured, as were the assaults on the Council’s privileges in Nova Scotia and the attempt of Newfoundlanders to acquire a representative legislature. However, establishmentarian beliefs did not completely preclude support for political reform; the *Observer* advocated reform of electoral districts in Nova Scotia to ensure better representation of Pictou in the future. It was felt that in the struggle over the Academy, the views of the Kirk camp had to some degree gone unheard.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ ‘Edinburgh Clergy’, *CP*, June 16 1832; ‘Notice of Formation of Glasgow Voluntary Church Association’, *CP*, Jan 5 1833; ‘Voluntary Church Magazine’, *CP*, July 2 1833; ‘Clerical Apostasy’, *CP*, Aug 6 1833; ‘Dr Heugh, Mr Marshall and the Scottish Guardian’, *CP*, Sep 17 1833; ‘Editorial’, *CP*, Oct 15 1833.

¹⁴⁶ On the *Observer*’s support for church establishments and political conservatism in general, and its defence of His Majesty’s Council and criticism of the Pictou Academy supporters in particular, see, ‘Grand Conservative Dinner at Glasgow’, *PO*, Aug 12 1834; ‘Prosperity of the Province’, *PO*, Aug 3 1831; ‘Signs of the Times’, *PO*, Feb 22 1832; ‘Pictou Academy’, *PO*, Mar 7 1832; ‘Reform’, *PO*, Mar 28 1832; ‘Newfoundland Legislature’, *PO*, Sep 26 1832; ‘Literary Notices’, *PO*, July 30 1833; ‘Church Patronage’, *PO*, June 10 1834; ‘England etc.’, *PO*, July 8 1834. For its advocacy of reform of Nova Scotia’s

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However, Pictou radicalism lost some of its intensity owing to Blanchard's increasing ill-health and then premature death in 1839, the cessation of the *Colonial Patriot* in 1834 and the eventual closure of the Academy in 1842. A weary McCulloch was encouraged by his friends to accept the offer from Dalhousie College to become its first principal when the institution became properly functional in 1838. Though he ultimately accepted the offer, he recorded his reservations at crossing the threshold of former enemies and ceasing to campaign for his beloved Academy. 'The idea of its going down', he said to John Mitchell in June 1838, 'has cost me some poor prayers and some salt tears and at my time of life tears are not easily found... to be in the hot bed of toryism a presbyterian among church bigots and a Seceder among Kirk bigots is not an enviable position. But they all know pretty well that I am not easily turned aside from my purpose nor willing to be quietly trod under foot.'¹⁴⁷ However, in Halifax McCulloch kept his distance from political controversy and he died in 1843.

The Advent of Responsible Government

Most work on Nova Scotia's political history has focused on the career of one man: Joseph Howe. If scholars have noticed Pictou radicalism at all, it has generally been to debate whether it had any impact on Howe or whether it can be directly linked to his campaign for responsible government in the 1840s. J. Murray Beck has claimed that any link between the Pictou reformers and the movement for responsible government is a tenuous one, and thus the significance of Pictou radicalism, and of Presbyterian political theory, has often been discounted. Though the radicalism of the 1820s and early 1830s remains a fascinating moment in the province's history worthy of study in itself, it is possible, this thesis argues, to discern the movement's legacy, and the Presbyterian principles which underpinned it, in the politics of later years, not just in the career of Joseph Howe, but in popular politics and the wider social context of the Assembly's debates on political reform. Presbyterian voluntarism, for example, continued to be influential and Pictou remained an important centre of political agitation. The politicised Chignecto Covenanters continued to testify against the government, advocating political reform along scriptural lines. Indeed, Howe was aware and perhaps influenced by both phenomena.

representation see, 'On the Necessity for Reform in Nova Scotia', *PO*, Sep 21 1831; 'Pictou Academy – Division of the County', *PO*, Mar 14 1832.

¹⁴⁷ PANS, Thomas McCulloch Papers, MG1 Vol. 553, File 70, 'Letter to John Mitchell June 1838'.

Increasingly Howe assumed the mantle of leading reformer, campaigning to achieve a more accountable government. *The Novascotian* under his editorship supported the Reform Acts in Britain, advocated vote by ballot and critically examined the banking issue which had led to depreciation in currency. He encouraged Assemblymen to challenge the Council, which, in spite of the brandy affair, continued to retain considerable power.¹⁴⁸ Looking more and more to the general populace for support, he objected to the inflated salaries of government officials and resisted the proposal to collect the quit rents.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, while he condemned the violence of the rebellions in the Canadas, he heartily recommended Durham's Report, the main text of which was published in *The Novascotian*, and which he advised every person to read.¹⁵⁰ At first he advocated an elective Legislative Council and then the separation of the executive and legislative powers, which did occur in 1838. Disillusioned with the realities of government in the 1840s, over which the Governor and his Council retained great control, Howe was by 1847 campaigning for a fully responsible government along the lines of Baldwin's scheme.

As Beck has acknowledged, 'Blanchard and the Scribblers had forced [Howe] to peer into the motive forces of Nova Scotia society and the more deeply he peered the less he liked what he saw.'¹⁵¹ Howe admitted that his visit to Pictou during the brandy election and his observations of the feuds there had caused him to abandon his neutrality. Blanchard and Howe had previously warred over the alleged radical tone of Blanchard's letter in support of Papineau printed in the Montreal-based *Canadian Spectator*; but now Howe enjoyed friendly conversations with McCulloch and Blanchard; he wrote to his wife that Blanchard had 'held out the olive branch of peace'.¹⁵² It seems probable that the Pictou radicals developed his ideas to some degree, as in later years Howe repeated some of their demands.

According to Beck it is extremely difficult to discern any ideological basis to Howe's political vision; his ideas were primarily formed as a result of observation. Howe was profoundly influenced by his father's quiet loyalism and he made frequent reference in his early days to the beauty of Britain's constitution which incorporated checks and balances. This was a common feature of political rhetoric at this time. Besides these influences and the example set by Blanchard and McCulloch, Howe's religious background probably helped shape his thoughts. Beck suggests that the disgust Howe felt

¹⁴⁸ 'Editorial', *TN*, Nov 16 1831; Beck, *Howe*, I, pp. 112–19.

¹⁴⁹ Beck, *Howe*, I, pp. 122–6, 198.

¹⁵⁰ Hamilton, *Education*, p. 274; Beck, *Howe*, I, p. 196.

¹⁵¹ Beck, *Politics*, p. 107.

¹⁵² Beck, *Howe*, I, p. 87.

at the behaviour of the Kirk clergymen during the brandy election reflected his suspicion of organised religions and their ministers.¹⁵³ Like his father, Howe was a member of the Sandemanian sect in Halifax. According to some scholars, Sandemanianism, which, it will be recalled, originated in Scotland – a brand of Presbyterian-inflected dissent – and which attracted an affluent section of society once exported to New England, encouraged loyalism.¹⁵⁴ John Howe, Joseph's father, who had been a member of the Sandemanian church in Boston, was a loyalist exile in Nova Scotia who held government offices.¹⁵⁵ But, as has been seen in an earlier chapter, the Sandemanian church was a voluntarist sect whose members were suspicious and critical of established churches. His Sandemanian background may have led Howe to sympathise with the plight of dissenters and encouraged him in his future campaign for non-denominational education and political reform.

After being elected to the Assembly in 1837 Howe protested against the reappointment of the Rev. R.F. Uniacke as Anglican chaplain to the House.¹⁵⁶ According to Howe, references to the old establishments of the mother country were no longer relevant. His Twelve Resolutions of 1837, which demanded a more accountable government, insisted that the composition and operation of a Council which included eight members of the established Church had prevented the Assembly from governing effectively. Indeed, Howe claimed that the dominance of the Church had led to 'a general and injurious system of favouritism and monopoly...creating invidious distinctions and jealous discontent.'¹⁵⁷ He had earlier in 1830 condemned the presence of the Bishop in the Council.¹⁵⁸ As a result of these declarations, Howe was compared by his enemies to Papineau and William Lyon Mackenzie.¹⁵⁹

Contemporaries continued to attribute the development of political reform to the influence of Presbyterian voluntarism. In 1838 a Nova Scotian correspondent in the rabidly establishmentarian *Church of Scotland Magazine* observed that copies of the publication had found their way to the villages of the province. This is borne out by John Sprott who informed Robert Burns in 1838 that he was delighted with the *Magazine* whose

¹⁵³ Beck, *Howe*, I, p. 78.

¹⁵⁴ J.H. Smith, "'Sober Dissent" and "Spirited Conduct": The Sandemanians and the American Revolution, 1765-1781', *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, 28-29 (2000-2001); C. St. C. Stayner, 'The Sandemanian Loyalists', *CNSHS*, 29 (1951).

¹⁵⁵ Beck, *Howe*, I, p. 8.

¹⁵⁶ After a period of debate Howe managed to carry a motion which allowed clergymen of the five leading denominations to serve as chaplains on rotation.

¹⁵⁷ Beck, *Howe*, I, pp. 158-9, 162.

¹⁵⁸ J.M. Beck (ed.), *Joseph Howe: Voice of Nova Scotia* (Ottawa, 1969), p. 40.

¹⁵⁹ Beck, *Howe*, I, p. 171.

editor had sent him copies from its commencement.¹⁶⁰ This ‘able and spirited’ magazine was described as a good weapon against the colony’s voluntaries who had lately ‘got their foot on the floor of our new House of Assembly’. This was an allusion to Howe and his colleagues who had, the letter informed readers, begun their work of reform by dispensing with a chaplain and public prayers. Equating voluntarism with political radicalism, this correspondent insisted that forty years ago the Friends of the People had found few supporters among the Scottish Presbyterian peasantry – even the Cameronians – who had always defended the church establishment. This was, of course, a false statement. The author condemned the voluntary system as unworkable in the province and praised the efforts of the Church of England which had, in his opinion, provided much of Nova Scotia’s spiritual instruction.¹⁶¹

Howe also campaigned for a single non-denominational college which could meet the needs of the entire provincial population. He objected to the establishment of Catholic and Methodist colleges in 1838 and 1843 and succeeded in altering the composition of the board of Dalhousie in order to ensure that all denominations were represented. He observed that Pictou Academy had ‘kept the eastern counties in hot water for sixteen years’; there was no sectarianism, he said in the legislature in 1843, in the ‘works of Providence.’¹⁶² He also insisted that the unused school lands claimed by the Anglican Church should be utilised in order to provide education for all.¹⁶³ He toured the province in 1843 holding public meetings to protest in favour of secular education as opposed to the policy of his political rival, conservative-inclined Baptist, J.W. Johnston. According to William Hamilton, Johnston’s close alliance with Governor Lord Falkland, and his significant control over the Council and colonial affairs, encouraged Howe to champion the cause of responsible government, which was achieved after a momentous election in 1847. In 1848 the permanent grant to King’s College was withdrawn. Bishop Inglis died in 1850 and his successor was informed that he would not receive an appointment to the Council.¹⁶⁴

Howe and the reform campaign enjoyed the support of the Presbyterian population in Nova Scotia, including the Covenanting region of Chignecto, and Musquodoboit, where local minister John Sprott was a political ally.¹⁶⁵ Pictou also remained a centre of political

¹⁶⁰ Sprott (ed.), *Memorials*, p. 36.

¹⁶¹ ‘Letter from Nova Scotia’, *CSM*, Jan 1838.

¹⁶² Beck (ed.), *Voice*, pp. 93–4.

¹⁶³ Beck, *Howe*, I, p. 192.

¹⁶⁴ Hamilton, *Education*, p. 306.

¹⁶⁵ Sprott, though conservative in the matter of church establishments, was nevertheless profoundly influenced by the Covenanting tradition and backed Howe’s reform measures. Sprott (ed.), *Memorials*, p. 219

radicalism as protest continued to be channelled through *The Bee* newspaper, a publication evidently influenced by its predecessor the *Patriot*. *The Bee* was edited by James Dawson, a bookseller who in 1837 advertised that he had a shipment of books from Greenock for sale in his shop at a low price. These included Howie's *Scotch Worthies*; 'Bibles, Prayer Books and Testaments all sizes and bindings'; McCulloch's *William and Melville*, and the *Secession Magazine*. Though some Nova Scotian residents condemned the rebellions in Upper Canada and held loyalist meetings, *The Bee* printed excerpts from *The Scotsman*, and from Upper Canada's radical *Correspondent and Advocate* which championed the causes for which the rebels had fought. Significantly, the paper endorsed the voluntary campaign to secularise the clergy reserves in Upper Canada, remove the bishops from the House of Lords in Britain, and expressed sympathy for the Lower Canadian reformers. It denounced the corruption evident in the 1836 election in Upper Canada, and insisted that further reform of the Nova Scotian government was urgently required. Though the Council was divided into legislative and executive bodies in 1838 and its judicial element removed, *The Bee* insisted that anti-reform sentiment was still prevalent. This would only be rectified, the editor implied, by making the Legislative Council an elective rather than an appointed chamber.¹⁶⁶

Pictou remained an area characterised by its politico-religious disputes, and after the brandy affair, elections were still fought along religious lines, especially in 1838 when the Rev. Kenneth McKenzie stood for the conservative side. As Brian Cuthbertson has observed, three-fifths of the population, most of which adhered to the Kirk, were mostly all tories, whereas the rest were Seceders and reformers.¹⁶⁷ The 1843 election was a violent affair during which the conservative candidate, Lewis Morris Wilkins, editor of the *Pictou Observer* and an Anglican, was accused of attempting to restore the Church of England to its 'former tyrannical dominion'. However, the Disruption of the Kirk, which brought about considerable change in Nova Scotia's Kirk ministry after many clergymen returned to fill vacant posts in Scotland, complicated the political scene and rendered the Church a weaker body. The Free Church and the PCNS eventually united in 1860 and in later years Pictou was no longer the centre of radical protest that it had once been.¹⁶⁸ Evidently however, the principles of voluntaryism continued to have an impact on political culture, at

203. As might be expected from one with a bias towards the Kirk and a Covenanting upbringing, he was not, however, in favour of the complete secularisation of education.

¹⁶⁶ 'Canada', *The Bee*, April 12 1837; 'Editorial', *The Bee*, April 19 1837; 'New Books and Stationary', *The Bee*, May 24 1837; 'Colonial', *The Bee*, June 28 1837; 'Editorial', *The Bee*, Dec 27 1837; 'Editorial', *The Bee*, Jan 24 1838.

¹⁶⁷ One exception was George Renny Young, reformer and Kirk adherent, who came from Halifax to represent Pictou in 1843.

¹⁶⁸ Cuthbertson, *Bluenose*, pp. 250–8.

least until 1848. Howe and his supporters in Pictou and elsewhere were arguably influenced by its tenets. It is certainly possible to discern the legacy of the Academy war.

Elsewhere, the Chignecto Covenanters, some of whom can be linked with Howe, continued to advocate political reform along Covenanting lines. The Rev. Alexander Clarke broke his Covenanting pledge by voting in the 1836 election in favour of Alexander Stewart and against the reform candidates Andrew McKim and Gaus Lewis. Stewart, who had previously supported reformist measures, became increasingly conservative and converted from Presbyterianism to Anglicanism around the time he became an executive councillor in 1840.¹⁶⁹ Stewart vehemently opposed Pictou Academy and was detested by McCulloch.¹⁷⁰ Thus, it may seem strange that Clarke, who had supported the Pictou cause in 1831, was prepared to vote for Stewart in 1836. However, McKim – Stewart’s opponent – was a Scotch Baptist and a lay preacher who seems to have offended the classically trained clergymen of the area. Moreover, Clarke’s anti-Catholic prejudices may have led him to sympathise with the tories in the province who propagated the idea of a liberal-Catholic alliance, uttering familiar cries of ‘no-popery’. Robert McGowan Dickey, elected to the Assembly as a tory member in 1836, was also politically conservative. He was the Rev. William Sommerville’s father-in-law and was closely tied to the Covenanters.¹⁷¹ However, Covenanting radicalism defies easy categorisation. Other Chignecto Covenanters, including the Logan and Brownell families, were adamant reformers. The Rev. Joseph Howe Brownell, a Covenanter minister in the later nineteenth century, was named after the great champion of responsible government.¹⁷² Some members of William Sommerville’s Covenanter congregation in Lower Horton kept abreast of colonial politics and expressed their frustration at the Anglican regime. Elihu Woodworth, deacon of the Covenanter Church, recorded in his diary in February 1835 that he had ‘spent the evening in reading the speeches of the House of Assembly.’ Commenting on a remark of a Mr Young’s, Woodworth expressed his satisfaction that the people of Nova Scotia did not have to contribute directly to the upkeep of the unpopular Bishop. Woodworth also complained about the postal service after a packet of letters addressed to him was seemingly torn open in order that the magistrate might read the contents. According to

¹⁶⁹ J.M. Beck, ‘Stewart, Alexander’, in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <<http://www.biographi.ca>>.

¹⁷⁰ Cuthbertson, *Bluenose*, p. 223.

¹⁷¹ Dickey seems to have been something of an anomaly. As Brian Cuthbertson has observed, Dickey, ‘in total contradiction to his Covenanter beliefs, was as High Church in his politics as the Anglican Bishop John Inglis could have desired.’ He supported a motion to restrict the House chaplaincy to Anglican clergymen. Cuthbertson, *Bluenose*, p. 233.

¹⁷² Hay, *Chignecto*, pp. 53–60, 92.

Woodworth this proved what ‘a deplorable situation we are in, when such examples are set by the guardians of our rights and privileges.’¹⁷³

Moreover, the Rev. William Sommerville wrote to Howe congratulating him on his honourable political stance. It seems Sommerville had acquired a copy of Howe’s address to the people of Nova Scotia at his local post office and he expressed his approval of the principle of ‘the responsibility of the executive to the legislator, and of the legislator to the people’, which, he said, he ‘liked much’. Probably written after Howe’s break with the Catholic interest in Nova Scotia, owing to a dispute over the Crimean war, he also admired Howe’s desire to ‘occupy higher ground as a politician than formerly’, for though Howe’s political principles were to a degree estimable, in Sommerville’s opinion they had not, thus far, been based firmly enough on a scriptural foundation. Like his brethren in Scotland and in the United States, Sommerville insisted that the Bible should form the basis of Nova Scotia’s – and the British – government. Citing evidence from the *Belfast Weekly News*, he argued that social and political superiority were directly attributable to Protestant institutions and insisted that the ‘aggressive spirit of the Papacy’, which could be discovered in ‘every part of the British Empire’ including Nova Scotia and Britain, must be defeated. Espousing the traditional Presbyterian view of the link between Protestantism and political liberty, Sommerville claimed that ‘our own personal and social safety depends upon our union and cooperation, in opposition to that spirit of despotism, that dictates the Popes bull and guides the Priests bludgeon.’ He suggested to Howe that, since newspapers were often lost amid piles of wastepaper, he distribute brief tracts outlining the threat of Catholicism to ‘freedom and social prosperity’. He ended by ensuring Howe that though he could not claim to be his ‘obedient servant’, Howe could always rely on Covenanting support, though not directly at the polls: ‘you cannot have from me or mine a vote at the hustings or the more efficient support which the possession of office would enable us to give, but you may count unhesitating upon any extent of cooperation which I can afford consistently with my standing as a Reformed Pres. Minister, my abilities and opportunities’.¹⁷⁴ In the early 1880s the orthodox branch of the Chignecto Covenanters continued to protest in favour of ‘the Bible in parliament’. It continued to rail against popery, backed the National Reform campaign in the United States, and celebrated the seventeenth century when the Covenants regulated national affairs by ‘the higher law’.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ F.I. Woodworth & W. Kirkconnell (trans. & ed.), *The Diary of Deacon Elihu Woodworth 1835-1836* (Wolfville, NS, 1972), pp. 4, 10.

¹⁷⁴ PANS, Joseph Howe Fonds, mfm reel 10328, ‘letter from William Sommerville 1857’.

¹⁷⁵ ‘Scotland Two Hundred Years Ago’, *Monthly Advocate*, June 1880; ‘The Nation a Moral Person and Christ the King’, *Monthly Advocate*, Nov 1881.

Conclusion

As the above discussion suggests, Presbyterian political values were as instrumental in Nova Scotia as in Upper Canada. The Covenanting tradition was exported to and disseminated within the colony by missionaries and Ulster-Scots and Scots immigrants whose ecclesiological divisions plagued the political scene. The Presbyterian conception of liberty – freedom from Anglican supremacy – motivated political reformers to challenge the colonial government and demand the institution of a more accountable regime. Both Scottish voluntarism and more traditional Covenanting ideals were influential, and underpinned the political vision of many colonists – and many in Britain – who regarded Nova Scotia's government as a tyrannous establishment. Establishmentarian views, propounded in particular by Church of Scotland ministers in the colony, were likewise instrumental in shaping political views – generally conservative ones – and in instigating violent popular political protest. Though Presbyterian radicalism reached its peak around 1830, the legacy of this movement and the principles which underpinned it, can be discerned in Nova Scotian political culture at least until the middle of the century.

Conclusion and Epilogue: Presbyterianism, Radicalism and Reform in a Global Context

As this thesis has shown, Presbyterian political values continued to underpin political reform movements in Scotland and British North America at least until 1850. As in the democratic age of the 1790s, political radicals and reformers in Scotland viewed the British state as an oppressive Anglican regime. Several Presbyterian ministers and ordinary people sought political reform in a bid to limit Anglican influence, to further the interests of the various Presbyterian churches, and to institute a more representative system of civil government in line with their vision of democratic church government. As has been shown, some remained committed to, and were motivated by, the aims enshrined in the national Covenants of 1638 and 1643; others were inspired by the seventeenth-century Covenanted age and the example set by its martyrs who had resisted the Stuart government to protect, as was widely thought, civil and religious liberty. The more general aim to achieve religious uniformity and a godly commonwealth inspired yet more people to support or resist political and constitutional change. Many saw Catholic emancipation as a threat to civil liberty, while support for the Reform Bill was justified according to Presbyterian conceptions of popular sovereignty and two kingdoms ecclesiology. At many times this agenda caused significant extra-parliamentary agitation and popular unrest. To a certain extent the most significant debate in this period concerned the future of the national Churches and the religious foundation to society. Views on questions of political reform were shaped by ideological beliefs regarding the disestablishment or maintenance of a state church. Many saw the Reform Bill as the means to effect a moral reformation in government and society; to ensure the representation of Scottish Presbyterian interests in Parliament, and to strengthen the Kirk. Others saw parliamentary and burgh reform as another step towards overturning a persecuting church-state which deprived religious dissenters of their civil and religious liberties. Indeed, a form of radicalism emerged in Scotland as a consequence of this church question. Religious voluntaries who desired disestablishment and wider parliamentary suffrage – interlinked aims – were denounced, or celebrated, as radicals. Chartism in Scotland was indebted to this voluntary radicalism but was also supported by strict Reformed Presbyterians who believed democratic reform would lead to a Covenanted revolution. Thus, to a certain degree, political reform cannot be divorced from religious reform in this period. The Covenanted tradition survived into the Victorian age.

Indeed, the seventeenth-century Covenanters, represented by some as proto-socialists, continued to inspire radical protest into the twentieth century.¹ Though a majority in the Reformed Presbyterian Church allowed its members to vote and hold public office after 1863, a minority still refused to incorporate with the body politic or join the Free Church in 1876. Moreover, as Ian Machin has observed, voluntaryism, boosted by the union of the Relief and United Secession Churches in 1847 and by the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, ‘seemed to be on an encouraging course by the later 1840s...established as a significant section of radical and democratic opinion’. As Machin points out, many Free Churchmen came to advocate voluntaryism after their withdrawal from the Kirk in 1843, though they had earlier insisted that the Disruption involved no endorsement of the principle of voluntaryism. Thus, the disestablishment campaign gained momentum in the second half of the century, upheld by many in the Liberal party and bolstered by the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1868 which widened the franchise once more. However, after Irish Home Rule divided the Liberals, moves to unite Presbyterians in a spiritually independent Church replaced demands for voluntaryism. Though some Labour supporters and trade union activists supported disestablishment, Machin declares, the issue ‘did not gain a secure or permanent hold in either the parliamentary or the trade union wing of the twentieth-century Labour movement’. Voluntaryism thus lost its political force.²

Across the Atlantic in Upper Canada and Nova Scotia, Presbyterian values transmitted by missionaries and emigrants from Scotland and Ireland also underpinned reformist politics. In particular, as this thesis has shown, the voluntary strand of Scottish Presbyterian political theory motivated political reformers in both colonies, including Seceder missionaries the Rev. William Proudfoot and the Rev. Thomas McCulloch, as well as politicians and journalists like William Lyon Mackenzie, Jotham Blanchard and George Brown. The governments of Upper Canada and Nova Scotia were represented as tyrannous Anglican church-states similar to the Stuart regimes of the seventeenth century, and references to the Covenanters pervaded radical propaganda. Many Presbyterian dissenters in British North America – though some steadfastly defended the establishment and the British connection – called for disestablishment and political reform to bring an end to Anglican dominance, and, after the union of the Canadas, Quebecois Catholicism. Others, including a minority group of Covenanters in the Chignecto region of New

¹ C. Harvie, ‘The Covenanting Tradition’, in G. Walker & T. Gallagher (eds.), *Sermons and Battle Hymns: Protestant Popular Culture in Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1990).

² I. Machin, ‘Disestablishment and democracy, c.1840-1930’, in E.F. Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and Community: liberals, radicals, and collective identities in the British Isles, 1865-1931* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 131–3, 137–9.

Brunswick and Nova Scotia, remained steadfastly committed to the establishment of a Covenanting government in the British colonies. In general the Covenanting tradition helped to incite a rebellion in Upper Canada as well as more peaceful protest in both colonies, the legacy of which can be discerned in the campaigns for responsible government in the 1840s. Furthermore, Scots Presbyterian protest contributed to the development of a public sphere and to the evolution of a common political culture in British North America. The reform movements in Upper Canada and Nova Scotia were mutually inspiring: both Mackenzie and Blanchard cited each other's work in their respective newspapers and viewed the circumstances in each colony in a similar light. Both men visited Britain in 1831-2 and each of them was impressed by the huge meetings being held there to campaign for the Reform Bill.

Indeed, to a certain extent this political culture was common within the broader Atlantic world: in Upper Canada, Nova Scotia and Scotland, as well as in Ulster – where the Covenanting tradition was also thriving – and perhaps also in Lower Canada, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. There existed a transatlantic Presbyterian community in which common ideas circulated and were discussed. The voluntary controversy had international significance but also underlay local political contests which, in turn, had transatlantic relevance. Scottish ideas were exported to British North America, but in Scotland, the political scene was also affected by events in the colonies. Blanchard and Mackenzie convened with prominent Presbyterian clergymen as well as with cabinet ministers and politicians in Westminster who represented the cause of both colonies in Parliament. Presbyterian struggles in British North America fuelled animosities at home, widening divisions between Church and dissent, and encouraging political protest. In 1831 meetings were held in Scotland in support of both Canadian and British domestic reform; articles in the Scottish press, and, as has been seen, speeches by voluntary activists like the Rev. Hugh Heugh, condemned the nature of episcopal rule throughout the British empire. Later, Presbyterian immigrants in Canada, inspired by Scottish Chartism, championed democratic reform and disestablishment; in Scotland, Chartists, including the Presbyterian radicals of Fenwick, defended the Canadian rebellions and advocated voluntaryism. Is it then, more appropriate to regard Scots Presbyterian-inflected radicalism in this period as a North Atlantic phenomenon? Indeed, did these values have an even wider impact than this thesis has been able to delineate?

Presbyterian ecclesiology and the Covenanting tradition may likewise have had a bearing on nineteenth-century reformist culture elsewhere in the Scots Presbyterian spiritual empire. Cliff Cumming has highlighted the radical political activities of Scottish

immigrants in the Port Phillip settlement in Australia, who protested against the Tory-Anglican regime of Superintendent Charles LaTrobe. For example, William Kerr, in his newspapers the *Port Phillip Patriot*, the *Melbourne Courier* and the *Argus*, campaigned for a popularly elected government in Port Phillip, separate from that of Sydney. Kerr was a Presbyterian originally from the former Covenanting stronghold of Wigtownshire, who was apparently influenced by the principles of Chartism, which – as has been shown in this dissertation – were, in the Scottish context, indebted to Presbyterian political values.³ Significantly, Kerr was an associate of the Rev. John Dunmore Lang, a strident Presbyterian minister in Sydney who campaigned for a Presbyterian college, for democratic political reform and later for republican government. Lang, who also hailed from southwest Scotland, traced his ancestry back to the Covenanters, and in his political rhetoric he railed against the alleged tyranny and persecution of the Anglican-dominated government in Australia. Lang began to champion voluntary ideas and his writings were somewhat inspirational in the voluntary churches in Scotland. Lang seems also to have been influenced by the protest in Canada against the dominance of Anglicanism.⁴ It may be that Lang's career represents the extent to which Scottish voluntarism had become a global movement.

In New Zealand, moreover, Scottish Presbyterians in Auckland voiced similar grievances to those of Lang. They petitioned against the principle of Anglican exclusivity embodied in marriage and education legislation and their cause was championed in the *Southern Cross* newspaper by journalist and magistrate, Samuel McDonald Martin. Martin, who had campaigned in favour of the 1832 Reform Act while a student in Glasgow, wrote in favour of representative government in New Zealand.⁵ Indeed, it may be possible to trace the legacy of Scottish Covenanting radicalism in New Zealand into the twentieth century. New Zealand MP, George Fowlds, who was Minister for Education and Public Health from 1902 to 1911, was the son of Seceder and political radical Matthew Fowlds, who, it will be recalled, was a weaver from the village of Fenwick. George Fowlds was a

³ C. Cumming, 'Scots Radicals in Port Phillip 1838-1851', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 37 (1991); C. Cumming, 'Covenant and Identity: Scots Presbyterians in Port Phillip, 1838-51', *Journal of Religious History*, 16 (1990).

⁴ John Dunmore Lang, *John Dunmore Lang: chiefly autobiographical, 1799-1878*, A. Gilchrist ed. (2 Vols., Melbourne, 1951).

⁵ John Dickson, *History of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand* (Dunedin, 1899), pp. 40-2; K.A. Simpson, 'Martin, Samuel McDonald 1805-1810?-1848', in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 22 June 2007, <<http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>>.

liberal and a reformer whose political vision was, according to one biographer, rooted in his religious beliefs.⁶

Elsewhere, in the Cape Colony, a network of Scots including journalists Thomas Pringle and John Fairbairn, Presbyterians from lowland Scotland, and Dr John Philip, a Congregationalist and Superintendent of the London Missionary Society, were involved in political agitation. They warred with Governor Lord Charles Somerset over the freedom of the press and, during the period of Reform Bill agitation in Europe, Fairbairn protested in favour of representative colonial government. Somerset apparently called Pringle an 'arrant Dissenter' and described the school established by Pringle and Fairbairn as a seminary of sedition.⁷ This is reminiscent of the protest against Pictou Academy, the Presbyterian institution in Nova Scotia, and perhaps similar to that against Lang's Australian college. This seems to underline the interconnected nature of the nineteenth-century world and the wider imperial significance of Scots Presbyterian political values.

Furthermore, as this thesis has hinted, the Covenanting tradition was also thriving in the United States, where Reformed Presbyterians reported on British and Irish politics and where Scottish periodicals and the works of Bruce and the early Covenanters were available from the press. The American RPs were outspoken advocates of republicanism and democracy who condemned the American government on account of the alleged immoral basis of its constitution. They were at the forefront of protest in favour of slavery abolition.⁸ Across the Pacific, doubtless inspired by this American campaign, Reformed Presbyterian missionaries of the New Hebrides vocally protested against the indentured labour of Pacific islanders on plantations in Fiji and Queensland, denouncing the trade as legalised slavery. The missionaries were intent on establishing scriptural magistracy in the islands and on resisting French annexation. This protest was inspired by archaic Presbyterian fears of the Catholic religion and by desires to establish moral government within British bounds.⁹ The New Hebrides mission was supported by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland and the Presbyterian churches in Australia, New Zealand and Nova Scotia. One of the New Hebrides missionaries, John Geddie, born in Scotland and raised in Prince Edward Island, had been taught by the Rev. Thomas McCulloch at Pictou Academy. The Covenanting legacy was thus exported from Scotland to the South

⁶ F. Rogers, 'Fowlds, George 1860–1934', in *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 22 June 2007, <<http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>>.

⁷ J. MacKenzie, *The Scots in South Africa: Ethnicity, Identity, Gender and Race, 1772-1914* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 64–88.

⁸ See e.g., Gilbert McMaster, *The Moral Character of Civil Government, Considered with reference to the Political Institutions of the United States, in four letters* (Schenectady, 1832).

⁹ See e.g., *The Slave Trade in the New Hebrides* (Edinburgh, 1872); J.H. Proctor, 'Scottish Missionaries and the Governance of the New Hebrides', *Journal of Church and State*, 41 (1999).

Pacific via Nova Scotia.¹⁰ The mission symbolises the globalisation of radical Scots Presbyterianism.

In conclusion therefore, it seems fair to say that this thesis sketches only one section of a much larger picture. Scots Presbyterian political values were exported not just to British North America, but elsewhere in the world contributing to the evolution of a Presbyterian spiritual empire – a radical empire – which challenged national and colonial governments and undermined the formal political structure of British imperialism. At its First International Convention in 1896, the Reformed Presbyterian Church underlined its global agenda and the worldwide political significance of the Scottish Covenanting tradition: our aim, it was declared, is ‘to carry higher the banner for Christ and His truth, “finish” the testimony of Reformers and Martyrs by its application universally and secure that all the Powers of the world – individual, social, and national – render full allegiance to Him who is Lord of all’. The struggle for the ‘Crown-rights of King Jesus’, it was said, ‘must not be relinquished till the world of imperial politics be rescued from principles whose tendency is towards anarchy and disaster, and placed under the sway of the sceptre of righteousness in the hands of the Prince of Peace.’¹¹

¹⁰ S.D. Gill, ‘John Geddie: The Canadian-Australian Connection’, in C.H.H. Scobie & G.A. Rawlyk (eds.), *The Contribution of Presbyterianism to the Maritime Provinces of Canada* (Montreal & Kingston, 1997).

¹¹ *First International Convention of Reformed Presbyterian Churches. Scotland, June 27-July 3, 1896* (Glasgow, 1896), pp. 7–8.

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