

ISSN 1753-2396 (Print)  
ISSN 2753-328X (Online)

*Journal of*  
**Irish and Scottish Studies**

Articles

**Exploiting Jurisdictions: Perceptions of Political  
Boundaries in Southwest Scotland and Ulster,  
1688 – 1715**

Author: Kathleen Middleton

Volume 3, Issue 1

Pp: 193-211

2009

Published on: 1st Jan 2009

CC Attribution 4.0

1 4 9 5



**ABERDEEN**  
**UNIVERSITY PRESS**

# Exploiting Jurisdictions: Perceptions of Political Boundaries in Southwest Scotland and Ulster, 1688–1715<sup>1</sup>

Kathleen Middleton

Migration between Lowland Scotland and Ulster is one of the most commonplace patterns of the late seventeenth century and one of the most elusive. The very ease of the short Irish Sea crossing guaranteed frustration for governments then and for historians now, since it was possible to make one journey or many without encountering the restricting or recording efforts of officialdom.<sup>2</sup> At the time of the Revolution of 1688–9, the inhabitants of these two regions were already well aware that the proximity of the two states could be convenient.<sup>3</sup> In the following twenty-five years, migration continued to be used as a means of temporary escape or as a way of bettering individual circumstances, so much so that the unprecedented volume of movement prompted intense debate, at least in Ireland, about its political and economic implications.

Clearly the physical barrier was not very intimidating, and the demarcating channel could indeed double as a nexus of interaction within a single

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Dr Robert Armstrong and my fellow participants in the 'Irish and Scottish Migration and Settlement: Political Frontiers' conference, hosted by the AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies at the University of Aberdeen on 3 May 2008, for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. Research funding from the Centre for Irish, Scottish and Comparative Studies, Trinity College Dublin, and from the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences is also gratefully acknowledged.

<sup>2</sup> The shortest crossing, from Portpatrick to Donaghadee, could be made in two and a half hours in good weather. Alternative 'creeks' could easily be used to avoid customs waiters at these and other ports, but passengers were not generally recorded anyway. John Stevenson, *Two Centuries of Life in Down, 1600–1800* (Dundonald, 1990), 247–54; L.E. Cochran, *Scottish Trade with Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1985), 75, 117–8, 141, 150; T.C. Smout, *Scottish Trade on the Eve of Union 1660–1707* (Edinburgh, 1963), 178–82. On estimating migration between Ulster and Scotland, see below, n. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Raymond Gillespie, *Colonial Ulster: The Settlement of East Ulster 1600–1641* (Cork, 1985), 49–63. For the similar relationship between Ulster and the Western Isles, which is not considered here, see Jane Ohlmeyer, *Civil War and Restoration in the Three Stuart Kingdoms: The Career of Randal MacDonnell, Marquis of Antrim, 1609–1683* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Dublin, 2001); Alan Macinnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart 1603–1788* (East Linton, 1996), 38, 56–68.

cultural region. However, this does not mean that the political boundary was insignificant, but only that contemporaries perceived it in a range of different ways. It was no accident that much of the controversy about migration after the Revolution centred on religion. From 1690, crossing the border also meant encountering a difference in the relationship between Presbyterianism and the state. On the Ulster side, although the legal situation was apparently much less advantageous to Presbyterians than in Scotland, members of Presbyterian communities learned to manipulate a new range of ambiguities in their relationships with neighbours and local authority. In the process they were feeling their way toward a more voluntarist idea of religion.

The first two sections of this paper examine the convenience of the geographical frontier from the perspective of migrants, who are broadly categorised as evasive or opportunistic. The third section considers the political implications of the frontier for Protestant Ireland, particularly the fears about national loyalties which were raised by the permeability of the border. The final section compares the fortunes of organised Presbyterianism in each kingdom in the aftermath of the Revolution settlement. With hindsight this period emerges as part of a chronological frontier, or untidy transition zone, between confessional and voluntarist assumptions about religion.

## I Evasive Migration

After the Revolution the motive of flight from persecuting governments (or from royal justice, depending on one's perspective) became far less common among Presbyterians. The best-known exceptions were two Ulster ministers who refused the oath of abjuration imposed in Ireland in 1703. Even their strategic retreats to Scotland on a series of occasions between 1703 and 1714 were hardly clandestine. The Belfast minister John MacBride took up a temporary but high-profile charge at Glasgow Blackfriars from 1705 to 1709, while his colleague Alexander McCrackan, minister of Lisburn, made several journeys from his alternative base in Kirkcudbrightshire to lobby prominent politicians in London.<sup>4</sup> In 1704, members of McCrackan's Ulster flock were

<sup>4</sup> Hew Scott (ed.), *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* (8 vols, Edinburgh, 1915–50), III, 399; James Seaton Reid, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, edited by W.D. Killen (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 3 vols, Belfast, 1867), III, 2, 13–5, 30–1, 39–40; Thomas McCrie (ed.), *The Correspondence of Robert Wodrow* (3 vols, Edinburgh, 1842–3), I, 163–5, 173–5, 310–5,

criticised for their defiantly public gesture in accompanying him on the first stage of his journey to Scotland. A fellow minister allegedly complained, 'you of Lisburn are a pretty Parcel of People, for such a caballing of you in conveying your Minister to Scotland, which was the worst Sight ever the Ministry of the North of Ireland saw' and claimed 'it made a greater Noise than any Retinue Presbyterian Ministers have had'.<sup>5</sup> As this critique implied, unsympathetic neighbours may have seen the behaviour of the Lisburn congregation both as a tacit boast about the ease of shedding an inconvenient citizenship and as a challenge to the authority of unfriendly magistrates. Admirers of McCrackan and MacBride probably thought their kingdom-hopping conferred a sort of distinction, reminiscent of the heroic era of the 'sufferings'.<sup>6</sup>

Rather than political upheavals directly stimulating migration, a more ordinary impetus may have been the reinvigorated discipline of the Scottish Kirk, now in theory enforced by its ally the Williamite government.<sup>7</sup> Not surprisingly, cases of fleeing sinners were commonly recorded along the Ayrshire coast and near the Clyde ports.<sup>8</sup> Paisley presbytery recorded the departures to Ireland of six adulterers, one incestuous couple and one suspected accessory to murder between 1691 and 1705.<sup>9</sup> This list does not include any of the people accused as witches in the same presbytery between 1695 and 1699, some of whom also escaped in the same direction. In 1699, hoping to obtain a second round of witchcraft trials, the synod of Glasgow and Ayr petitioned the king's advocate 'to discharge the transporting of

---

326, 425–6.

<sup>5</sup> *Records of the General Synod of Ulster* (3 vols, Belfast, 1890–8), I, 84–5.

<sup>6</sup> The 'sufferings' era was defined in Robert Wodrow, *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1721–2).

<sup>7</sup> Several historians have stressed that discipline at the parish level was not necessarily interrupted by the reintroduction of bishops at the Restoration. Rosalind Mitchison and Leah Leneman, *Girls in Trouble: Sexuality and Social Control in Rural Scotland 1660–1780* (Edinburgh, 1998), 11; Alison Hanham, *The Sinners of Cramond: The Struggle to Impose Godly Behaviour on a Scottish Community, 1651–1851* (Edinburgh, 2005), 43–65; Walter Roland Foster, *Bishop and Presbytery: The Church of Scotland 1661–1688* (London, 1958), 60–88; Tristram N. Clarke, *The Scottish Episcopalians 1688–1720* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1987), 2–4. However, practical continuity was arguably weakest in the region of this study, where the episcopal regime was most seriously challenged.

<sup>8</sup> Almost no registers of the three Galloway presbyteries of Kirkcudbright, Stranraer and Wigton have survived for the 1690s. Some Dumfries offenders went to Ireland, while others preferred to cross the border into England.

<sup>9</sup> Paisley Presbytery Registers 1660–99 and 1699–1707, National Archives of Scotland (hereafter NAS), CH2/294/4 and CH2/294/6.

any out of the kingdome to Ireland or other places without testimonials', and to instruct the magistrates of Renfrewshire, Ayrshire and the south of Clydesdale to detain any suspects 'to prevent their runing away, as som of them have already don'.<sup>10</sup>

Both saints and sinners were well aware of this utility of the border, which for Lowlanders dated at least as far back as the union of crowns and suited a wide range of predicaments.<sup>11</sup> Rumour sometimes placed elusive offenders in Ireland when, in fact, they had merely left the parish. For instance, in 1698 the Lochwinnoch session informed the presbytery concerning Margaret Braidon, who was suspected of adultery, that 'it was reported she was lurking in the bounds & not fled to [Ireland] as was formerly represented'.<sup>12</sup> A stubborn fornicator, called in by Irvine presbytery to explain why he had not satisfied the session, angrily retorted that 'he would leave Scotland before he appeared in the place of repentance', but two months later had resigned himself to the usual series of public appearances.<sup>13</sup> The stereotypical flight from justice might even appear in insults. Witnesses in a Dumfries slander case confirmed that William Charters had called his neighbour's wife 'a filthy Hostler Bitch, a Beggar, a Theif and come of Theives'. According to Charters' own account, he had then declared that 'her Grandfather fled to Ireland for thift'.<sup>14</sup>

The apparent finality of the common phrase 'gone out of the kingdom' often proved deceptive. Unfortunately for runaways, Ulster Presbyterian congregations had taken the Revolution as a signal to exercise discipline more openly and systematically. The system of testificates, by which newcomers to any congregation were required to furnish references from their previous ministers, could function quite efficiently on both sides of the Irish Sea, though it was hardly infallible.<sup>15</sup> A Scottish Presbyterian wishing to vanish

<sup>10</sup> Glasgow and Ayr Synod Register 1687–1704, 5 April 1699, NAS, CH2/464/1, 217.

<sup>11</sup> For Ireland as a destination for ruffraff under James VI/I and Charles I, see Michael Perceval–Maxwell, *Scottish Migration to Ulster in the Reign of James I* (reprint ed., Belfast, 1990), 23–5; Andrew Stewart, 'History of the Church in Ireland Since the Scots were Naturalised', appendix to Patrick Adair, *A True Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, edited by W.D. Killen (Belfast, 1866), 313–4. For Scots irregular marriages in Ireland and England, see Mitchison and Leneman, *Girls in Trouble*, 55–7.

<sup>12</sup> Paisley Presbytery Register, 26 October 1698, NAS, CH2/294/4, 318 (pagination of digital version).

<sup>13</sup> Irvine Presbytery Register 1687–1699, 6 June 1694, NAS, CH2/197/2, 175.

<sup>14</sup> Dumfries Presbytery Register 1695–1703, 31 March 1696, Dumfries and Galloway Archive (hereafter DGA), CH2/1284/3, 23.

<sup>15</sup> On testificates see Mitchison and Leneman, *Girls in Trouble*, 15; R.A. Houston, *Social Change in the Age of Enlightenment: Edinburgh 1660–1760* (Oxford, 1994), 153; G.D.

completely in Ireland would thus have been well advised to avoid the lure of the familiar, in the shape of cross-channel kinship networks and organised congregations. Of the nine Renfrewshire offenders mentioned above, only three seem to have disappeared without trace. Three more were located in Ireland and then were pursued with bad references and warnings of impending excommunication. Two others returned after several years, more or less voluntarily, to do penance. The last man made no secret of his emigration in the first place, but asked his presbytery for a testimonial to an Irish congregation. Because his reputation was ambiguous—he was popularly believed to have been accessory to a murder although civil charges had been dropped—the document was granted with some qualifications.<sup>16</sup> As easy as it might have been in practical terms to abandon one legal system for another, the gravitational field of religious culture was harder to escape.

Miscreants might flee in either direction, so that in Irish Presbyterian communities, too, the stereotypical attempt to outrun scandal could be deliberately invoked either to strengthen evidence of guilt or to lend plausibility to a smear campaign. A servant in Burt, Donegal, anxious to prove that her master had raped her, quoted his supposed advice when she became pregnant: ‘go over the water till she should see what god would do with her’.<sup>17</sup> Vague allegations of misdeeds during a past residence in the other kingdom could serve the same purposes as a formal process. Richard Berry, a young layman who had returned to Burt after several years at the university in Glasgow, was so concerned about the effect of such a rumour on his reputation that he pestered his session to hear evidence about ‘that business he should have done in Scotland’. The session book does not disclose the nature of the charge, although the elders’ reaction was rather noncommittal: ‘seeing no body prosecuted him for it they did not condemn him’, but if Berry really intended ‘instantly going abroad’ he would have to do so without a testimonial. As this incident followed unsuccessful attempts by a rival family to have Berry prosecuted for duelling, drunkenness and sexual perversion, the whispers of unsavoury deeds across the sea probably had been strategically deployed.<sup>18</sup>

---

Henderson, *The Scottish Ruling Elder* (London, 1935), 57, 135.

<sup>16</sup> Paisley Presbytery Registers, 8 May 1695–25 July 1705, NAS, CH2/294/4, 181–362; 294/6, 1–256.

<sup>17</sup> Burt Session Book, 26 May 1710, Union College, Belfast (pagination is inconsistent).

<sup>18</sup> Burt Session Book, 3 October 1712, Union College, Belfast. Background events from 27 December 1711.

## II Opportunistic Migration

For the majority of migrants, those who were not running away from the bailie, from political reversals or from their own damaged reputations, it is not nearly so easy to determine how individuals viewed the transfer from Scotland to Ireland or vice versa. In the southwest of Scotland between 1689 and 1690, contact with crowds of refugees from Ulster and with regiments passing through to join Schomberg's army in Ireland intensified interest in the dramatic events leading up to the Battle of the Boyne.<sup>19</sup> The Revolution was a moment when common danger briefly blurred boundaries among the three kingdoms and highlighted their interdependence. Williamite accounts constantly reiterated, for instance, that the resistance of Derry had prevented a Jacobite invasion of Scotland, and by extension England.<sup>20</sup>

Wartime publicity generated after the relief of Derry, as the main theatre of conflict moved south, may have helped to heighten awareness of Ireland as a place of relative economic opportunity. Certainly there were already worries in late 1691 about population loss from Scotland. In November the magistrates of Stranraer pleaded that the financial position of the burgh 'is now become more insupportable by the withdrawing of many persones to Ireland'.<sup>21</sup> The Privy Council complained to the Irish Lords Justices about 'those who run away from their landlords without giving satisfacione for what they are due to them ... and are received to duell and take land ther to the great prejudice of this kingdome'.<sup>22</sup> The Scottish government may have regretted its role in peddling propaganda about Ulster, like the following excerpt from an August 1689 newsletter published in London for a British audience:

<sup>19</sup> The siege of Londonderry was followed with special interest. John R. Young, 'The Scottish Response to the Siege of Londonderry' in William Kelly (ed.), *The Sieges of Derry* (Dublin, 2001), 53–74.

<sup>20</sup> Some examples are John Mackenzie, *A True Narrative of the Siege of London-Derry* (London, 1689), preface; [Anon.], *A True Account of the Present State of Ireland* (London, 1689), 13; [George Story], *A True and Impartial History of the Most Material Occurrences in the Kingdom of Ireland* (London, 1691), 5; [Anon.], *Some Reflections on a Pamphlet Entitled, A Faithful History of the Northern-Affairs of Ireland* (Dublin, 1691), 6–8; [Anon.], *Ireland's Lamentation* (London, 1689), 30; [George] P[hillips], *The Second Apology for the Protestants of Ireland* (London, 1690), 4, 8.

<sup>21</sup> P. Hume Brown (ed.), *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* (hereafter *RPCS*), 3<sup>rd</sup> series, vol. 16 (1691) (Edinburgh, 1970), 596–7.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 651–2.

That the Countrey was not near in so bad a condition as was reported... That the Corn was all standing, and great Plenty of Forage; the Countrey bringing in all sorts of fresh Provisions. The hearing of so agreeable Tidings, encourages all the British Protestants who fled hither for Shelter and Relief to hasten their return thither again in great multitudes.<sup>23</sup>

This Scottish exodus was only the beginning of a phenomenon that would continue throughout the decade and perhaps into the following one, driven partly by famine and economic crisis. Contemporary estimates varied widely, as more recent ones still do.<sup>24</sup> In 1698 an anonymous pamphlet claimed that eighty thousand families had arrived since the Boyne, while Tobias Pullen, bishop of Dromore, contented himself with a reference to ‘many Thousand Families’ between 1692 and 1697.<sup>25</sup> Another Anglo-Irish estimate from around the same time may be considered fairly conservative, ‘That the last yeares want of corne in Scotland brought over not lesse than 20 thousand poore, & not lesse than 30 thous[an]d before, since the Revolution’.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> This referred to Down, and probably reflected official concern for army provisioning. E.W.M. Balfour-Melville (ed.), *An Account of the Proceedings of the Estates in Scotland 1689–1690* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1954–5), I, 210. This source is not an official register, but a series of newsletters sympathetic to the new Williamite regime in Scotland, written by someone with access to the Estates’ proceedings and published weekly in London by the well-known bookseller Richard Chiswell.

<sup>24</sup> On migration in the 1690s, see L.M. Cullen, ‘Population Trends in Seventeenth-Century Ireland’, *Economic and Social Review*, 6 (1975), 149–65; David Dickson, Cormac Ó Gráda and S. Daultrey, ‘Hearth Tax, Household Size and Irish Population Change 1672–1821’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, C series, 82 (1982), 159–64; William Macafee and Valerie Morgan, ‘Population in Ulster, 1660–1760’ in Peter Roebuck (ed.), *Plantation to Partition: Essays in Ulster History in Honour of J.L. McCracken* (Belfast, 1981), 56–61; T.C. Smout, Ned Landsman and T.M. Devine, ‘Scottish Emigration in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries’ in Nicholas Canny (ed.), *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1500–1800* (Oxford, 1994), 86–8; Patrick Fitzgerald, ‘“Black ’97”: Reconsidering Scottish Migration to Ireland in the Seventeenth Century and the Scotch-Irish in America’ in William Kelly and John R. Young (eds), *Ulster and Scotland* (Dublin, 2004), 77–8; Karen Cullen, *Famine in Scotland in the 1690s: Causes and Consequences* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Dundee, 2004), 280–304.

<sup>25</sup> [Anon.], *A Discourse Concerning Ireland and the Different Interests Thereof* (London, 1697/8), 34; [Tobias Pullen], *A Defense of the Answer to a Paper Intituled, The Case of the Dissenting Protestants of Ireland* (n.p., 1697), 8.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Q[ue]ry if true’, unsigned memorandum, British Library (hereafter BL), Sloane MSS 2902, f. 218.



The concern of the Ulster General Synod to distance itself from nominally Presbyterian vagrants indicates both that rising immigration was not purely a figment of Scotophobic imaginations, and that not all the new arrivals were notably pious. In 1701 it was proposed that all ministers collect handwriting samples from their colleagues in order to prevent the use of forged testificates. As late as 1705 the Synod discussed an overture ‘That those who come among us, [and] profess to be of our Communion, give Account of themselves by their Testimonials’; otherwise ‘these in the Bounds whither they came are prudently to apply to the civil Magistrate to relieve the place of such Vagrants ... they who entertain such Vagrants shall be judg’d disorderly’.<sup>27</sup>

### III Perceptions of National Identity

Although migration diluted cultural distinctions, contemporary language often suggests a border which had not, after all, conceptually disappeared. Scottish attempts at labelling their Ulster cousins show that the difference was not necessarily ignored. The university categories of *Hibernus*, *Scoto-Hibernus* and *Anglo-Hibernus* are well known, though they were sometimes applied rather erratically.<sup>28</sup> Local discussions in Scotland of relief for refugees during the Revolution usually settled for the less elegant ‘Ireland people’, while Privy Council documents and pamphlet accounts preferred ‘Irish Protestants’ or ‘British Protestants’—both better suited to the fashionable myth of Protestant solidarity.<sup>29</sup> In a petition by William Ainslie of Blackhill about his property dispute with Thomas Harvie, a minister recently arrived from Ulster, Blackhill remarked that Harvie’s behaviour was only understandable through his ‘being a stranger and not knowing the custom of the nation’.<sup>30</sup> Yet Harvie

<sup>27</sup> *General Synod of Ulster*, I, 49–50, 100.

<sup>28</sup> In matriculations and laureations at Glasgow, the same person can occasionally be found with two different labels. Cosmo Innes (ed.), *Munimenta Alme Universitatis Glasguensis: Records of the University of Glasgow from its Foundation until 1727* (3 vols, Glasgow, 1854), III.

<sup>29</sup> For ‘Ireland people’ see Paisley Presbytery Register, 22 August 1689 and 15 January 1690, NAS, CH2/294/4, 29, 32–3. For ‘British Protestants’ see quotation above at n. 23 and Balfour-Melville (ed.), *Proceedings of the Estates*, I, 170. ‘Irish Protestants’ is the usual phrase in references to the collection for the 1689 refugees (who were religiously mixed), e.g. in Henry Paton (ed.), *RPCS*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, vol. 14 (August–December 1689) (Edinburgh, 1933), passim.

<sup>30</sup> Paton (ed.), *RPCS*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, vol. 14 (August–December 1689), 338–9.

had inherited his claim because of his kinship ties to Scotland. Did it follow that Scots moving into Ireland automatically added a new layer of national identity?<sup>31</sup>

The views of Ulster Presbyterians themselves on the nature of national membership are rarely recorded in any detail, particularly in the case of the non-elites and laity who made up the majority. One of their better-documented spokesmen is the Belfast minister John MacBride, who argued strenuously against Pullen and his fellow bishop Anthony Dopping of Meath that Presbyterians, far from constituting a competing third interest, were an integral part of 'the Nation', clearly referring to Protestant Ireland. The 'experience of the whole Nation' during the Revolution had demonstrated that dissenters 'maintained no separated Interest from the common; for as our Civil Interests are embarked in the common, so we cannot desert the one, without destroying the other'.<sup>32</sup>

MacBride's claim to be a committed stakeholder in one kingdom cannot be seen as any kind of disavowal of the legacy of the other, especially considering that significant stretches of his own career were spent in Scotland.<sup>33</sup> In a later exchange with the Belfast vicar William Tisdall about the political reliability of Ulster Presbyterians, he made no attempt to disentangle their story from Scottish covenanting history, but rather chose to answer every charge his opponent had levelled against Presbyterians (and even their Puritan predecessors) in all three kingdoms. The result was a massive tome full of lengthy explanations of past events in Scotland and even in England.<sup>34</sup> On the

<sup>31</sup> 'Identity' is used somewhat reluctantly here on the assumption that identities of migrants were multiple and to some degree fluid, rather than composed of a static collection of characteristics; cp. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging The Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven, 1992), 5–7; Patrick Griffin, *The People with No Name: Ireland's Ulster Scots, America's Scots Irish and the Creation of a British Atlantic World, 1689–1764* (Princeton, 2001), 1–8.

<sup>32</sup> John MacBride, *Animadversions on the Defense of the Answer to a Paper, Intituled, The Case of the Dissenting Protestants of Ireland* (n.p., 1697), 21.

<sup>33</sup> In addition to the time he spent at Glasgow between 1703 and 1714, MacBride served as minister of Borgue, Kirkcudbright, under a temporary arrangement in 1689–92. Galloway Synod Register 1689–1712, 14 May 1689 and 19 April 1692, NAS, CH2/165/2, 1, 19–20.

<sup>34</sup> John MacBride, *A Sample of Jet-Black Pr\_\_\_\_tic Calumny* (Glasgow, 1713). The simpler strategy of narrowing the debate to events in Ulster had been followed by Daniel Defoe, *The Paral[le]l: or Persecution of Protestants the Shortest Way to Prevent the Growth of Popery in Ireland* (Dublin, 1705), 9–14, and challenged in William Tisdall, *A Sample of Tren-Blew Presbyterian-Loyalty in all Changes and Turns of Government* (Dublin, 1709), the work to which MacBride was replying.

most controversial episodes, like the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 or the General Assembly's denunciation of the 1648 Engagement, MacBride made some effort to historicize the Kirk's actions, but stopped short of admitting that covenanting leaders had overstepped the proper limits of ecclesiastical authority.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, he stoutly defended the most recent Scottish religious settlement, which had re-established Presbyterianism without doing much to broaden its appeal. For him, the Scottish role in the settlement of Ulster and in the extension of Presbyterianism to Ireland was cause for unqualified celebration.<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, MacBride's account of Ulster Presbyterianism did not portray a subordinate branch of the Scottish Kirk. On this point he seems to have shared the views of many of his colleagues. The Irish ministers who took refuge in Scotland between 1688 and 1691 were exceedingly careful to maintain their own status as representatives of an autonomous jurisdiction. They held separate meetings as a body, though they also attended Scottish presbyteries and synods, and as a rule they would only accept temporary Scottish charges after recording disclaimers about their prior commitments to the Irish church.<sup>37</sup> One such disclaimer was worded '*salvo jure Ecclesiae Hibernicae*', terminology consistent with references by the Antrim meeting to the (Presbyterian) 'Church of Ireland'.<sup>38</sup>

Well before the unexpected reversal of 1688–9 and more openly thereafter, several Ulster ministers were at work framing narratives of Presbyterian progress in Ireland which were more or less deliberate exercises in collective self-definition.<sup>39</sup> In an account written before 1671, Andrew Stewart, minister

<sup>35</sup> MacBride, *Sample*, 25–35, 145–6, 211–3; idem, *Animadversions*, 34.

<sup>36</sup> MacBride, *Sample*, 11–6, 174–8.

<sup>37</sup> On the meeting of 'Ireland ministers', see Dumfries Presbytery Register 1687–1695, 28 August and 10 September 1689, DGA, CH2/1284/2, 37, 39; Minutes of the Antrim Meeting, 5 November 1689 and n.d. June 1690, Presbyterian Historical Society, Belfast (hereafter PHS) typescript, 463, 481; 'Letter of the G[eneral] Session to the Min[iste]rs of Ireland about Mr[s] Craighead & Kennedy', n.d. c.1689, National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), Wodrow Collection, quarto xxviii, no. 27, f. 77. On reserving the claims of Irish congregations, see Ayr Presbytery Register 1687–1705, 17 and 24 September 1689, NAS, CH2/532/2, 22; Galloway Synod Register, 14 May 1689, NAS, CH2/165/2, 1; Paisley Presbytery Register, 22 August 1689, NAS, CH2/294/4, 32.

<sup>38</sup> Paisley Presbytery Register, 22 August 1689, NAS, CH2/294/4, 32; Minutes of the Antrim Meeting, 10 January 1687/8, PHS typescript, 381–2.

<sup>39</sup> Adair, *True Narrative*; Andrew Stewart, 'A Short Account of the Church of Christ', NLS, Wodrow Collection, quarto lxxv; James Kirkpatrick, *An Historical Essay upon the Loyalty of Presbyterians in Great Britain and Ireland from the Reformation to this Present*

of Donaghadee, drew on elements of the work of James Ussher and David Buchanan in order to incorporate St Patrick, St Bridget and Irish monastic missionaries into a distinctly Presbyterian story, just as MacBride later appropriated the Irish saints Colman, Finian and Aidan as ‘Scots Presbyters’.<sup>40</sup> This way of structuring the Irish past explains the otherwise ill-assorted trio of books that MacBride donated to the College library at Glasgow, no doubt with a view to the instruction of Ulster divinity students. These were his own un-ecumenically titled *A Sample of Jet-Black Prelatic Calumny* (1713), the churchman Sir James Ware’s *Antiquities & History of Ireland* (English translation, Dublin, 1704), and the Franciscan John Colgan’s two volumes on Irish saints, *Acta Sanctorum Veteris et Majoris Scotiae seu Hiberniae Sanctorum Insulae* (1645) and *Vitas et Acta Divorum Patricii Columbae et Brigidae* (1647).<sup>41</sup> The inclusion of Ware and Colgan would not have seemed incongruous to those Presbyterians who saw themselves as heirs of a *de jure* national church in Ireland, just as Scottish Presbyterians saw no irony in appropriating the culdees.

For many of the Irish Anglican elite, however, any Presbyterian identification with Ireland was negligible. Citing the efficiency of inter-kingdom trade and communication networks, as well as similarities in religious culture on both sides of the Irish Sea, a number of hostile writers assumed that the Scottish-Irish boundary was more or less missing from the mental furniture of Scots Presbyterians. As one pamphlet put it, ‘in their Interests, ’tis plain, they are link’d with their Friends in Scotland... whom they imitate both in their Ecclesiastical and Civil Affairs, and from thence they take all their Measures which concern either Religion or Commerce’.<sup>42</sup> Others reiterated the two main spheres of perceived rivalry, trade and religion. Broadly speaking, churchmen favoured language that targeted a dissenting party or interest, while some political economy writers were more prone to fret about national cliquishness

---

*Year 1713* ([Belfast], 1713); also, of course, MacBride’s *Sample*. The authors of the first two had some input from fellow ministers: Kirkpatrick, *Loyalty of Presbyterians*, 165–7; W.D. Killen, ‘Prefatory Notice’ in Adair, *True Narrative*, 308–9.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Armstrong, ‘Of Stories and Sermons: Nationality and Spirituality in Presbyterian Ulster in the Later Seventeenth Century’ in Robert Armstrong and Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin (eds), *Community in Early Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), 217–22; MacBride, *Sample*, 60.

<sup>41</sup> Innes (ed.), *Munimenta* (Glasgow, 1854), III, 448. Ware’s book was originally published in Latin in 1654. Colgan was born in Donagh parish, Donegal, and may have studied law at Glasgow; Mihail Dafydd Evans, ‘Colgan, John (1592?–1658)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5902>, accessed 13 September 2008.

<sup>42</sup> [Anon.], *Discourse Concerning Ireland*, 33.

among Scots. However, this was by no means a tidy distinction. Instead, the dual themes of Presbyterian loyalties and Scottish loyalties were blended in different proportions according to the needs of the lobbyist and the moment.

During the late 1690s controversy over restrictions on Ireland's wool trade, several pamphleteers for the Irish lobby argued that to forbid the export of their woollen manufactures would weaken the position of sheep-raising Englishmen in relation to the linen-weaving Scots.<sup>43</sup> An anonymous letter-writer warned his English correspondent of imminent commercial disaster if such a policy were followed:

In short the whole Bulk of the Trade of Ireland is gotten into the hands of Scotch Merchants, who joyne with those that drive on the Affrican & Indian designe of their owne Countrey by the New Act. They reckon that they have 10000 Seamen in the shippes of England, and not fewer in those of Holland and France, besides what they have yet at home. And if halfe they say be true, yett with such hands & the Com[m]odities of Ireland, they may doubtlesse make pretty worke. Nay even the English here will be apt enough to piece in with them to gett a Penny, if they find England to treat them as Enemies.<sup>44</sup>

These were partly scare tactics, of course, intended to turn English annoyance over the fledgling Company of Scotland to the advantage of Anglo-Irish wool merchants. This strategy highlights the writer's confidence that his portrayal of interlinked Scots unfazed by other nations' boundaries was a credible one. Such people, in supposedly single-minded pursuit of a Greater Scotland, could hardly be expected to have any regard for an Irish commonwealth, especially one defined in relation to an English metropolis.

The 1698 pamphlet *A Discourse Concerning Ireland and the Different Interests Thereof* employed the same basic framework: Scots Presbyterians constituted

<sup>43</sup> E.g. [John Hovell], *A Discourse on the Woollen Manufactory of Ireland* (Dublin, 1698), 10–13. [Anon.], *Some Thoughts on the Bill Depending Before the Right Honourable the House of Lords* (Dublin, 1698), 12–13, modifies the scenario slightly, projecting that the Scots will profit by smuggling wool to France. At least one English respondent was not convinced, remarking in a recapitulation of the debate, 'And then again, the Bugbears of *Scotland* and *France* are set up'. [Anon.], *The Substance of the Arguments For and Against the Bill* (London, 1698), 5. Tisdall later claimed that the dire predictions had been fulfilled; [William Tisdall], *The Conduct of the Dissenters of Ireland, with Respect both to Church and State* (Dublin, 1712), 17–18.

<sup>44</sup> Extract of a letter from Dublin, 17 April 1697, BL, Sloane MSS 2902, f. 138.

a third interest in Ireland, or alternatively, one of 'three several kinds of People', set against both the native Irish (portrayed as pro-French) and the Anglo-Irish settlers. Though ostensibly contributing to the trade debate, this writer was keen to highlight the implications for the established church. At one point he described a Belfast scene in which a 'parcel of Demi-Tarrs in blue Bonnets', having just landed for a market visit, felt enough at home to 'belch out, I know not how many Scotch Curses and opprobrious words' in public after a passing army chaplain, 'not considering that they were not in Scotland' where such behaviour had become usual.<sup>45</sup> More seriously, he tried to demonstrate the eagerness of Ulster Presbyterians to duplicate the Scottish religious revolution. Not to recognise that they would gladly do so, should the opportunity arise, 'would be as unreasonable as to imagine, that off-sets will not bear the same Flowers with the main Roots, from whence they are divided, or that Trees will produce Fruit of a different Species, by being transplanted from one soil to another'.<sup>46</sup>

A variation on the organic metaphor appears in Tobias Pullen's argument for the sacramental test.<sup>47</sup> Asserting that many recent Scottish immigrants were Cameronian extremists who had rejected even the post-Revolution Kirk as hopelessly moderate and erastian, Pullen asked, 'Can we Reasonably expect... that by their being Transplanted into another Soil, and by a kind and Indulgent Cultivation of them, we may gather Figs off this sharpest sort of Thistles?'<sup>48</sup> The double connotation of the thistle here, heraldic as well as biblical, is surely not simply fortuitous. The intense suspicion which the sacramental test debate brought to the surface generally found expression, with monotonous predictability, in reflections on the Solemn League and Covenant—not merely as an event some fifty years past, but as shorthand for one very memorable way of defining the Scottish nation in relation to the neighbouring kingdoms.<sup>49</sup> For

<sup>45</sup> [Anon.], *Discourse Concerning Ireland*, 26.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>47</sup> The relationship between Scots immigration and the sacramental test debate has been well recognised. See S.J. Conolly, *Religion, Law and Power: The Making of Protestant Ireland 1660–1760* (reprint edition, Oxford, 2002), 161–70; Griffin, *People with No Name*, 18–24; D.W. Hayton, 'The Williamite Revolution in Ireland, 1688–91' in Jonathan I. Israel (ed.), *The Anglo-Dutch Moment* (Cambridge, 1991), 112–3.

<sup>48</sup> [Tobias Pullen], *An Answer to a Paper Entituled, The Case of the Protestant Dissenters of Ireland* (Dublin, 1695), 2. The biblical reference is to Matthew 7:16, 'Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?'

<sup>49</sup> On the post-Revolution survival of the covenanting tradition in Scotland, see Colin Kidd, 'Conditional Britons: The Scots Covenanting Tradition and the Eighteenth-Century British State', *English Historical Review*, 117 (2002), 1147–63.

Pullen and his fellow clergymen Anthony Dopping, Edward Synge and William Tisdall, there could be little doubt that the religious revolution in Scotland represented a worrying resurgence of covenanting expansionism.<sup>50</sup> From these nervous outsiders' viewpoint, the most fanatical Presbyterians could be taken, quite logically, as the most aggressively 'national' of the Scots.

#### IV The Revolution and Diverging Church-State Relationships

The more paranoid clergy of the established church in Ireland might not have been surprised to learn that their rivals had designs on St Patrick himself. Fears that the Presbyterians' ultimate objective in Ulster was not merely legal toleration, but some form of establishment, surfaced more than once during the reigns of William III and Anne.<sup>51</sup> Above all, it was the dramatic turn taken by the Revolution ecclesiastical settlement in Scotland that made anything seem possible. An Irish observer had only to look across the channel for a vision of how Ulster might appear, were the roles of state church and dissenting sect to be reversed.

For many of the religiously committed in western and southwestern Scotland the recapture of establishment status was a providential signal to resume an experiment broken off in 1661: namely, enlisting state authority to help create a uniformly godly nation. Although obstacles to this project were almost immediately apparent elsewhere in Scotland, it proved more successful in the Presbyterian heartland where ministers and sympathetic local authorities were relatively abundant. In many parishes there, sessions enjoyed close collaboration with burgh magistrates or rural heritors. Recalcitrant sinners could be imprisoned until a confession was forthcoming, or summoned by the sheriff to give bonds for their future cooperation.<sup>52</sup> Even at the national level the Kirk very often got the official action it

<sup>50</sup> [Anthony Dopping], *The Case of the Dissenters of Ireland Consider'd, in Reference to the Sacramental Test* (Dublin, 1695), 1–3; [Pullen], *Defense of the Answer*, 8–9, 24; [Edward Synge], *A Peaceable and Friendly Address to the Non-Conformists* (Dublin, 1697), 8–10; [Tisdall], *Conduct of the Dissenters*, 2, 23.

<sup>51</sup> [Pullen], *Defense of the Answer*, 8, 19; [Tisdall], *Conduct of the Dissenters*, 23, 45–6; Kirkpatrick, *Loyalty of Presbyterians*, 404–6. For a modern argument that hopes of establishment were not abandoned until later, see Raymond Gillespie, 'Dissenters and Nonconformists 1661–1700' in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), *The Irish Dissenting Tradition 1650–1750* (Dublin, 1995), 11–28.

<sup>52</sup> Dumfries Presbytery Register 1687–1695, 5 January 1692, DGA, CH2/1284/2, 128; Hamilton Presbytery Register 1695–1719, 23 May 1699, NAS, CH2/393/2, 111–2.



wanted, such as the series of laws against profaneness, stronger regulations about schools and poor relief, regular proclamations of fasts, and more infamously, the prosecutions of Thomas Aikenhead for blasphemy in 1697 and of several dozen people accused of witchcraft in Renfrewshire between 1696 and 1700. Aikenhead and seven of the alleged witches were actually executed.<sup>53</sup> Ulster ministers might well have envied this level of secular support. Ironically, a group of them who had fled to Galloway in 1689 constituted a majority at the first, rather informal meeting of the revived Presbyterian synod of Galloway, which called for a return to ‘imposing of Civil mulcts and bodily punishments’ on the scandalous.<sup>54</sup> This was a luxury to which Scottish ministers quickly became accustomed. Some years later the future historian Robert Wodrow, newly ordained in Renfrewshire, sent a fellow minister in Down a rather wide-eyed inquiry about ‘quhat you doe with your delinquents, since I suppose you have no legall establishment to oblige them to compear’.<sup>55</sup>

Regardless of inclination, the Scots in Ulster after 1690 were not in a position to translate their ‘measures which concern religion’ wholesale from the mother country, as one pamphleteer alleged that they did.<sup>56</sup> This was one sense in which the political boundary did undoubtedly matter. Whatever legal position they had envisioned immediately after their ‘late glorious deliverance’, it was not the precarious status they eventually acquired—a position contemporaries called ‘a mere connivance’.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Michael F. Graham, *The Blasphemies of Thomas Aikenhead: Boundaries of Belief on the Eve of the Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 2008); Michael Wasser, ‘The Western Witch-Hunt of 1697–1700’ in Julian Goodare (ed.), *The Scottish Witch-Hunt in Context* (Manchester, 2002), 146–65; Julian Goodare et al., ‘Survey of Scottish Witchcraft Database’, *The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft*, <http://webdb.ucl.ac.uk/witches/>, archived January 2003, accessed 3 May 2009.

<sup>54</sup> This meeting was recorded at the beginning of the post-Revolution register, though with a disclaimer that in the absence of ruling elders those present did not officially constitute a synod. Galloway Synod Register, 14 May 1689, NAS, CH2/165/2, 2. The episcopalian synod of Galloway, if it still existed in theory, seems to have ceased to meet by this time.

<sup>55</sup> Robert Wodrow to George Lang, 7 September 1705, in L. Sharp (ed.), *Early Letters of Robert Wodrow 1698–1709*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, vol. 24 (Edinburgh, 1937), 280.

<sup>56</sup> [Anon.], *Discourse Concerning Ireland*, 33; fuller quotation above at n. 42.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Inconveniences of the Abjuration Oath’, 19 April 1712, in McCrie (ed.), *Wodrow Correspondence*, I, 255. The same term appears in [Tisdall], *Conduct of the Dissenters*, 24. On disappointed expectations, see Patrick Griffin, ‘Defining the Limits of Britishness: The “New” British History and the Meaning of the Revolution Settlement in Ireland for Ulster’s Presbyterians’, *Journal of British Studies*, 39 (2000), 263–87.



Still, until near the end of Queen Anne's reign in 1714 the lack of official toleration did little to hinder the planting of new congregations and the growth of existing ones, or to prevent presbyteries' and synods' increasingly efficient supervision of discipline and finances. The impressive burst of energy in activities which remained technically illegal under the Elizabethan Act for Uniformity alarmed Church of Ireland leaders and led to a few highly politicised clashes.<sup>58</sup> Such events, like the harassment of supply ministers at Drogheda in 1708–9 and the arrest of the whole Monaghan presbytery for attempting to settle a minister at Belturbet, Cavan, in 1712, have provided the outline for a traditional history of Presbyterianism in Ulster largely structured around the toleration debate.<sup>59</sup> Institutional developments such as the creation of a more efficient governing structure and the improvement of record-keeping have also attracted attention.<sup>60</sup>

However, it is possible that outside the elite group of ministers and the more ideologically-orientated of the elders and gentry, most Ulster Presbyterians were normally more concerned with the functions their church filled within the community than with denominational disputes and structural evolution.<sup>61</sup> The exclusively 'Scottish' cultural world that Anglican polemic claimed they inhabited was not so impermeable in reality. Baptism or marriage in the familiar form of their own communion was far preferable, but if a shortcut was wanted or parents disapproved, there was also the option of going to a clergyman of the established church or even to a Catholic priest. Multiple cases of marriages by priests appear in all the surviving session minutes from Ulster, often, but by no means always, involving one partner who was native Irish.<sup>62</sup> Attempts to resolve disputes and scandals sometimes revealed

<sup>58</sup> 'An Act for the Uniformitie of Common Prayer and Service in the Church, and the Administration of the Sacraments', 2 Eliz. I, c. 2 [Ire.] (1560).

<sup>59</sup> Classic examples are Reid, *History*, II, 399–538, III, 1–56; J.C. Beckett, *Protestant Dissent in Ireland, 1687–1780* (London, 1948).

<sup>60</sup> Raymond Gillespie, 'The Presbyterian Revolution in Ulster, 1660–1690' in W.J. Sheil and Diana Wood (eds), *The Churches, Ireland and the Irish* (Oxford, 1989), 159–70; Richard L. Greaves, *God's Other Children: Protestant Nonconformists and the Emergence of Denominational Churches in Ireland, 1660–1700* (Stanford, 1997), 159–200.

<sup>61</sup> Gillespie, 'Presbyterian Revolution', 161–4. For a similar analysis of religion in early modern Ireland generally, see idem, *Devoted People: Belief and Religion in Early Modern Ireland* (Manchester, 1997), chapters 1–2.

<sup>62</sup> A few examples are in Carnmoney Session Book 1686–1715, 4 January 1698, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (hereafter PRONI), MIC 1P/37/4, 39; Templepatrick Session Book, 25 January 1704, PRONI, CR 4/12B/1, 207; Lisburn Session Book 1688–1709, 2 October 1692, PRONI, MIC 1P/159/6–10; Dawson's Bridge Session Book 1703–29, 23 June 1704, PRONI, MIC 1P/450C/1, 11;

equally casual attitudes to confessional boundaries. In the absence of clear evidence, the session could accept an oath as proof, but usually only as a last resort after several exhortations about the peril of perjury.<sup>63</sup> William Johnson from Carnmoney, Antrim, like others of his co-religionists, discovered that a bishop's court would administer an appropriately impressive oath without taking so long to deliberate over the danger to the swearer's soul. To Johnson, the theological point about the authority of bishops was less urgent than the need to clear his reputation.<sup>64</sup>

Interaction with secular authorities could also take unpredictable turns. Scots Calvinist tradition distinguished between ecclesiastical offences, defined by the scandal caused among one's fellow believers, and civil offences, which were the province of the magistrate.<sup>65</sup> A single action, such as theft, might well be both; hence the ideal of close cooperation between church and state. In Ulster, however, most magistrates belonged to a rival confession and laws against nonconformity remained on the statute books. Nonetheless, local cooperation might still be possible. The earl of Donegall's factor was happy to leave a case of attempted abduction of a bride to be resolved by Burt session, assuring the elders that should their arbitration succeed, he would not prosecute the offender in the manorial court.<sup>66</sup>

The fact remained that ministers and sessions had to avoid contradicting secular verdicts if they wished to prevent potential awkwardness. Members learned that, effectively, one chose to acknowledge the jurisdiction or combination of jurisdictions likely to produce the best result. James Russell, an elder in a thorough mood, had two men who accused him of stealing a heifer 'apprehended & taken to the County Gaole and put them to considerable expence' on defamation charges, and then hauled them before the session in order to have them repent publicly as well.<sup>67</sup> Sometimes a strategy like this backfired. James O'Diny decided to take revenge on his neighbour Henry

---

Aghadowey Session Book 1702–61, 10 August 1703, PHS; Burt Session Book, 1 November 1697, Union College, Belfast.

<sup>63</sup> In one such incident, a man who offered to swear to his innocence still had not been given the oath over eighteen months later. Templepatrick Session Book, 13 April 1711 and 9 November 1712, PRONI, CR 4/12B/1.

<sup>64</sup> Carnmoney Session Book, 11 January 1707, PRONI, MIC 1P/37/4.

<sup>65</sup> For one explanation of the civil/spiritual demarcation see *First Book of Discipline*, reprinted in *The First and Second Booke of Discipline* (n.p., 1621), 23–70, sect. vii, 50–4. For a session's refusal to consider a complaint classified as 'civil', see Burt Session Book, 24 October 1700, Union College, Belfast.

<sup>66</sup> Burt Session Book, 24 February and 9 March 1707/8, Union College, Belfast.

<sup>67</sup> Carnmoney Session Book, 15 May 1707, PRONI, MIC 1P/37/4.

Wark by describing to the elders Wark's suspicious activities with a girl under a bush during afternoon sermon. After months of hearings, the session was about to discipline Wark when O'Diny went to the Lifford assizes and swore to an even more lurid statement about the same incident. In the end Wark got off without punishment because the two stories contradicted one another.<sup>68</sup>

Is there anything remarkable in this kind of petty manoeuvring? After all, some degree of adaptation to a new environment with different power structures was no more than might be expected. Going to the competition, whether secular, Church of Ireland, or Catholic, was not so much a vote against a Scots Presbyterian culture or system as a lever for making the system work the way the members expected that it should. When Margaret Campbell asked for a testimonial to which she did not quite have a right, mentioning in passing that otherwise she could get one from an 'Episcopall' employer, her session explicitly acknowledged this leverage. They gave her what she wanted, 'not being willing to disown her, she [being] professedly of our Communion and not willing to give her any [rea]son to withdraw from us she being bread up' as a Presbyterian.<sup>69</sup>

Yet in spite of the lack of innovative intent behind them, in these small, everyday concessions to plurality there were the beginnings of a transition. Soon, views like those expressed by the second-generation Scottish immigrant James Trail would become far more common. Trail described his choice, on coming of age, between his mother's Presbyterianism and his father's adherence to the Church of Ireland: 'I then joined to the Society of the Dissenters, the true Cause of my leaving one society of Christians & joining w[i]th another I can not give a rational acc[oun]t of for I was very much a stranger to the principles of Either the one or the other ... the greatest motive to my conduct at th[a]t time was the great Esteem I had to the young Lady above named'. He remarked almost as an afterthought that this decision was 'possibly Contrary to my worldly Interist' because of the sacramental test, 'a most Iniquitous Law'. As for the theological issues, 'though I by no means like the form of admission of Clergy into the Church, used among Discenters yet I think the form used in the Established Church is by much worse', and he personally preferred the Presbyterian form of worship despite its 'Inconvenien[c]es', 'absurdities' and 'Imperfections'.<sup>70</sup> Trail's church, as far as he was concerned, was a voluntary organisation that had no need to monopolise kingdoms or even ethnic groups.

<sup>68</sup> Burt Session Book, 31 July, 27 August and 13 December 1711, Union College, Belfast.

<sup>69</sup> Carnmoney Session Book, 20 February 1711, PRONI, MIC 1P/37/4.

<sup>70</sup> Autobiography of James Trail, PRONI, D/1460/1, written between 1718 and c.1735.

The contrast between this development and the simultaneous trajectory of Presbyterianism in Scotland should not be overstated. With hindsight, the national reform programme of the Kirk after the Revolution is easy to dismiss as having been doomed to fail spectacularly, despite the best efforts of a dedicated minority to stamp out swearing, Sunday wife-beating and drinking after nine o'clock at night. Even in the west and southwest, the confessional state model was compromised by the persistence of radical dissenting groups, not to mention episcopalian concentrations elsewhere.<sup>71</sup> Social and economic conditions also undermined discipline, as the pressure of famine and military disbandment increased the numbers of poor and vagrants around the turn of the seventeenth century. In such circumstances both geographical and mental alternatives demanded consideration. Ulster offered a contiguous identification that was reassuringly familiar, while almost imperceptibly different.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the inhabitants of Ulster and the southwestern shires of Scotland had become accustomed to the inconsistencies produced by a highly permeable political frontier. The boundary between Ireland and Scotland sometimes seemed a rather theoretical one. It had never done much to restrict migration, with the result that in terms of religious culture, the political border cut through the middle of one cultural region rather than separating two. At the same time, it was just this situation that gave this political frontier its significance. The rapid expansion of the Scots community in Ulster after the Revolution raised vital questions about what constituted membership of the nation, and whether state authority could coexist with religious plurality.

*Trinity College, Dublin*

---

<sup>71</sup> Colin Kidd, 'Religious Realignment Between the Revolution and Union' in John Robertson (ed.), *A Union for Empire: Political Thought and the British Union of 1707* (Cambridge, 1995), 145–68.