
Sir George Maxwell of Pollok (1622-1677) and his personal covenants

MATTHEW A. VOGAN

Introduction

Sir George Maxwell of Pollok (and Auldhouse) was a resolute Covenanter from the late 1640s until his death in 1677. Prominent amongst the nobility and gentry in the area around Glasgow, he took an active role in Church courts and Parliament and was Rector of Glasgow University from 1654 to 1660. During the Restoration he was fined heavily for attending conventicles and absenting himself from the parish church. Comparatively little notice has been taken of his life, however.¹ He was well regarded for his personal godliness during tumultuous times. This article provides a sketch of his life and focuses on his religious experience as recorded in his diaries and especially his personal covenants.

1. Maxwell's early years

George Maxwell was the son of Rev. John Maxwell (d. 1666), 7th of Auldhouse, who was Rector of Glasgow University before him. John Maxwell was minister of the parish of Eastwood about 1620 until 1629 when he moved to St Mungo's, Glasgow (High Kirk, commonly now known as Glasgow Cathedral). He was deposed on 1st May 1639 for declining the jurisdiction of the Glasgow General Assembly of 1638.

John Maxwell appears also to have entered into financial difficulties in 1639 and passed the estate of Auldhouse to his brother William Maxwell who was an advocate.² In 1640 John Maxwell went to Northern Ireland where he ministered and must have conformed to the episcopal regime.³ It appears that George Maxwell also went to Ireland at the same time. He would have been

¹ For an account of Maxwell's life, see William Fraser, *Memoirs of the Maxwells of Pollok* (2 vols., Edinburgh: Privately printed, 1863), Vol. 1, pp. 61–77. See also 'Antiquary: A Transcription from Manuscript of a Sermon on Psalm 2:10–12 by George Gillespie', Introduction by David McKay, Historical Background and Transcription by Chris Coldwell and Matthew Vogan, *The Confessional Presbyterian*, Vol. 14 (2018), pp. 249–262. The sermon notes transcribed were recorded by Maxwell.

² William Fraser, *Memoirs of the Maxwells of Pollok*, Vol. 1, p. 59.

³ See Chris R. Langley, 'Sheltering under the Covenant: The National Covenant, Orthodoxy and the Irish Rebellion, 1638–1644', *Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 96:2, No. 243 (October 2017), pp. 137–160 (p. 148).

seventeen when he graduated MA from Glasgow in 1639 and it is possible that he did not complete the full course. His name 'Georgius Maxuellius' appears in the list of those who graduated 'Extra Ordinum', meaning that the degree was awarded despite the fact that the graduate did not fulfil the normal requirements.⁴ Whether the influence of his father as Rector of the University was helpful in securing this is hard to say. Since the graduation coincided with the year of his father's ecclesiastical and financial trouble, it is possible that these events are linked.

According to Fraser, John Maxwell 'passed over to Ireland, where he was on 28th March 1640'. Fraser says that Maxwell's 'kinsman, the Viscount of Clandeboy, made him parson of Killyleagh, the place of his own residence, where he continued till about the year 1643'.⁵ The statement is curious because there is no clear record of this elsewhere. The first minister of Killyleagh was John Bole (or Boyle) who was blind. In 1639 he was imprisoned for refusing to take the 'black oath' and for preaching against it.⁶ Clandeboye reported that he had forced Bole to take the oath. A new church was erected in 1640. The minister that followed Bole was Thomas Murray who was brutally murdered (indeed literally crucified) at the same time as his sons were butchered in the rebellion of October 1641.⁷ Could Maxwell have followed as minister at this point?

During this period it appears that George Maxwell received episcopal ordination as a deacon, which included the authority to preach.⁸ He fled the rebellion in late 1641 and returned to Scotland. His case came before the Presbytery of Paisley where he insisted that he was 'frie of takeing the [Black] oathe there' and was therefore able to subscribe the National Covenant. Chris Langley notes that 'the Presbytery was unwilling to accept Maxwell's word but was unable to obtain any proof to reject his claim'.⁹ The records of the Presbytery for 8th September 1642 state:

The qlk day Mr george maxwell sonne la[wf]ull to Mr Johne Maxwell sometye Minister within the cittie of glasgowe p[rese]nted his desire to subscribe the Nationall covenant of the Kingdome of Scotland, w[hi]ch the brethre[n] thinking reasonable remitted him for so doeing to the kirk of Eastwood, and that Mr henrie blare, shuld present the same unto him to that effect. And ordeined that the said Mr george should solemnelie cleire that he took not the oath in Ireland.¹⁰

⁴ Cosmo Innes (ed.), *Munimenta Alme Universitatis Glasguensis: Records of the University of Glasgow from its foundation till 1727* (4 vols., Maitland Club, Glasgow, 1854), Vol. 3, pp. 23-24.

⁵ Fraser, *Memoirs of the Maxwells of Pollok*, Vol. 1, pp. 59-60. Maxwell was also distantly related to Robert Maxwell, Dean of Armagh.

⁶ The Black Oath was imposed in 1639 by Thomas Wentworth, Lord Deputy of Ireland. It required the rejection of the Scottish National Covenant.

⁷ See *The Hamilton Manuscripts: containing some account of the settlement of the territories of the upper Clandeboye, Great Ardes, and Dufferin, in the county of Down* (Belfast, 1867), pp. 28-29.

⁸ Hew Scott (ed.), *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae: The Succession of Ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation* (2nd edn., 7 vols., Edinburgh, 1915-1928), Vol. 3, p. 134.

⁹ NRS, CH2/294/2, ff.162-3, cited in Langley, 'Sheltering under the Covenant: The National Covenant, Orthodoxy and the Irish Rebellion, 1638-1644', p. 152.

¹⁰ NRS, CH2/294/2, f.174.

Blair reported to the Presbytery meeting on 8th November 1642 that Maxwell had given due ‘obedience’ (f.178).¹¹ George’s father had also returned and appeared at the same November meeting.¹² He ‘offered his desire to subscribe the Nationall covenant, of the Kingdome of Scotland: w[hi]ch the brethren thinking reasonable remitted him to the kirk of Eastwood for so doing’ (f.179). It was reported on 24th November that John Maxwell has duly subscribed. ‘The said Mr Johne desired the [Presbytery] to advise whether he might be [sufured?] to preach in an church within the [presbyterie?]’. The Presbytery gave this request consideration and appointed him to preach at the next meeting of Presbytery (15th December) on 1 Thessalonians 5:19. His sermon was well received. He administered baptism in Paisley in the absence of the minister in September 1643 (f.197). He was re-admitted minister there in January 1645 (f.216) but demitted his charge in 1651. He died at the age of seventy-seven in 1666 and the title to Auldhouse passed to George.¹³

At the close of 1646, George married Anabella Stewart, daughter of Sir Archibald Stewart of Blackhall. On the death of his grandfather (also Sir George Maxwell of Pollok)¹⁴ the following year, George inherited the estates of Pollok and was knighted by Charles I in 1649.¹⁵ This was in preference to his father John. George Maxwell ‘was young, highly educated, an active man of business, and well qualified to represent the ancient house of Pollok’.¹⁶

It appears that Sir James Maxwell of Calderwood had tried to secure the inheritance of Pollok and, filled with jealousy, attacked Nether-Pollok in November 1647 when George was in Edinburgh on business. Sir James and his party were heavily armed and began to burn the house. George’s wife was heavily pregnant at the time but was unhurt.¹⁷

¹¹ Part of George Maxwell’s purpose in subscribing the Covenant may have been that he was seeking authority to preach. In private correspondence, Chris Langley has commented further on the incident: ‘while the Presbytery had some misgivings about Maxwell’s conduct in Ireland, influential colleagues lobbied to get the Presbytery to allow him to preach at Eastwood/Pollok – his father’s former parish – under the supervision of Henrie Blair’.

¹² Indeed his case is the preceding item in the minutes.

¹³ Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, Vol. 3, p. 133.

¹⁴ The grandfather George Maxwell was minister of Mearns (Presbytery of Paisley), and was not without controversy either; see Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, Vol. 3, p. 133. Maxwell was frequently absent from Presbytery meetings, and in November 1642 the Presbytery admonished him for a lack of diligence in dealing with an accusation of adultery against a parishioner (NRS, CH2/294/2, f.178). In March 1648, the Presbytery asked him: ‘Iff he kneilt doune at the heid of the com[m]unione table, and red a buik prayer at the last celebra[ti]one of the sacrament’. Langley comments: ‘Maxwell admitted his guilt, noting his wish to reform, but died before any decision could be concluded’. NRS, CH2/294/3, ff.17-18; Chris R. Langley, ‘Trouble and Deliverance: Worship in the Kirk of Scotland, 1645-1658’ (PhD thesis, University of Aberdeen, 2012), pp. 79-80.

¹⁵ The estates were about three miles from the parish church in Cathcart. Pollok is a well-known area on the south side of Glasgow. The lands are now Pollok Country Park where the Burrell Collection is located; the estate was given to the City of Glasgow in 1966. The present Pollok House dates from 1752 but Haggs Castle (see below) is still standing.

¹⁶ Fraser, *Memoirs of the Maxwells of Pollok*, Vol. 1, p. 56.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 62.

2. Maxwell's activities as a Protester

George Maxwell was a member of the General Assembly which met in July 1648. As one who would later be a Protester, Maxwell opposed the Engagement. He sat as a member for part of the 1648–1649 meeting of the Scottish Parliament, attending sessions 2–5, representing Renfrewshire ('Maxuell of Nethir Pollock', Renfrewshire). Maxwell was also active in matters following the battle of Dunbar. He met with other nobles and some ministers at Kilmarnock where they 'resolved to offer to the Estates to raise at their own charge a large force of horse and foot, amounting at least to 4000 strong'.¹⁸ When Maxwell and others laid this resolution before the Committee of Estates, the offer was accepted and the forces were raised. This would be called the Western Army but it was not a successful venture. Maxwell was called upon to negotiate with both Cromwell and the Committee of Estates.

Maxwell was also the bearer of the Remonstrance that the Western Army presented to the Estates on 22nd October 1650. This objected to the way in which the negotiations with Charles II had taken place and urged that those who were not sincere Covenanters be removed from the army. It 'pledged that they would not fight for the king [Charles II] until he had supplied concrete (sic) evidence of genuine repentance for his past sins and until he abandoned the company and councils of malignants'.¹⁹ The Commission of Assembly in December of that year and the Assembly of St. Andrews and Dundee of July 1651 rejected the course of the Remonstrants and this led to the Protester-Resolutioner split within the Church.

The Scots were exercised about their duties and responsibilities towards Cromwell and his regime whom they regarded as having usurped rule by military force. Maxwell records reflections on 28th January 1653 on the theme of 'living under a conqueror' (i.e. Cromwell). Relevant passages such as Romans chapter 13 are discussed. It is difficult to say whether these reflections are wholly or partly his own since others were clearly discussing the question.²⁰

In 1655, Maxwell and Patrick Gillespie made efforts for the public resolutions division to be healed but they were not successful. Maxwell was Rector of Glasgow University in 1654, where Gillespie was Principal, but he was also on friendly terms with the arch-Resolutioner Robert Baillie who was Principal from 1660-1661. Maxwell was also distantly related to the wives of John Carstares, his parish minister, and James Durham.

3. Maxwell's sufferings during the Restoration

The Protesters were the target of the king's bitter revenge when Charles II resumed the throne in 1660. Argyll, James Guthrie, Wariston, and Rutherford

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 64.

¹⁹ John Roach Young, 'The Scottish Parliament, 1639-1661: a political and constitutional analysis' (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 1993), p. 429. Maxwell later felt compelled to renounce the Remonstrance. Cf. Kyle D. Holfelder, 'Factionalism in the Kirk during the Cromwellian Invasion and Occupation of Scotland, 1650 to 1660: the Protester-Resolutioner Controversy' (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1998), pp. 71, 122.

²⁰ Mitchell Library, Glasgow, T-PM/114/4.

were singled out in particular. Maxwell was accused of having once spoken in favour of Cromwell and against the king but this was not sustained. Nevertheless, he suffered heavy fines. On 9th September 1662, the Scottish Parliament passed the *Act of indemnity and oblivion*. It was a general pardon for what the king regarded as offensive conduct during the Civil War and Interregnum period. An additional *Act containing some exceptions from the act of indemnity* was passed that appointed heavy fines for about seven hundred Covenanters. Maxwell was included within this list and was forced to pay a fine of £4,000 despite efforts at Court on his behalf to get it abated. He was also fined £1,044, 9s. Scots for the damage done to Drumlanrig Castle by forces in 1650, though he was not himself present at the time.

Despite these personal losses, Maxwell looked after the needs of his brother-in-law, Rev. Alexander Jamieson, after his ejection from the parish of Govan and was generous to the widow of Rev. James Guthrie following his execution. Maxwell himself was imprisoned without charge in the beginning of September 1665 and remained in prison at Stirling for many years, being released only in 1670.

He did not escape the eye of the authorities for very long, however. In 1676 Sir George Maxwell, John Maxwell his son, and George Lang, their chaplain, were summoned to appear before the Privy Council at Glasgow on 21st April. He was to answer to the charge of having been present, during the years 1674, 1675, and 1676, at house or field conventicles and of having been absent from the parish church. In particular, John Welsh of Irongray was named as one of the preachers.

Haggs Castle was part of the estates of George Maxwell and a conventicle was held there in 1667. Rev. Alexander Jamieson (Maxwell's brother-in-law) also administered the Lord's Supper at Haggs, assisted by Hew Smith, minister at Eastwood, and others, in 1675.²¹ Personal connections with members of the committee allowed Maxwell to escape being fined, however.²² During a visit to Glasgow, Maxwell fell suddenly and seriously ill experiencing a 'fiery distemper' on the night of 14th October 1676.²³ He was critically ill for several months and died at the end of April 1677.

²¹ Fraser, *Memoirs of the Maxwells of Pollok*, Vol. 1, p. 5.

²² There is a volume of sermon notes in the Mitchell Library, T-PM/114/11 dating from 1673 that records sermons by Mr A. J. (Alexander Jamieson), John Baird (minister at Innerwick, Paisley), and John Stirling (presumably former minister of Kilbarchan). Many of the sermons are recorded as preached at Paisley. There is also a sermon notebook T-PM/114/8 from 1662-1663 containing a sermon by William Guthrie at Fenwick on 5th March 1663 on Matthew 15:21-22.

²³ Fraser, *Memoirs of the Maxwells of Pollok*, Vol. 1, p. 74. The incidents surrounding Maxwell's death have raised the interest of those investigating reports of early modern witchcraft. The events are fully recorded in letters by George Maxwell's eldest son John. These were printed in a book by George Sinclair, *Satan's invisible world discovered, or, A choice collection of modern relations proving evidently against the saducees and atheists of this present age, that there are devils, spirits, witches, and apparitions, from authentick records, attestations of famous witnesses and undoubted verity: to all which is added, that marvellous history of Major Weir, and his sister: with two relations of apparitions at Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1685), pp. 1-18. They involve a dumb girl reporting on individuals using a wax effigy and employing witchcraft to take away Maxwell's life.

4. Maxwell's character and influence

Maxwell was highly regarded for his godly character. Thomas Stewart of Coltness wrote that their 'generation shall not be witness to the loss of such a person in the west country'. Jean, Lady Strathnaver believed his memory ought to be sweet to all virtuous persons that ever knew him. John Carstares wrote to Maxwell's son commending his father 'as a choice, eminently accomplished, and renowned father'.²⁴

Robert Wodrow, later minister of the parish of Pollok or Eastwood, says that the 'good order' preserved in Sir George's house, his good servants, and the regular and unaffected family worship, was the means of the conversion of several parties. He records that the Laird of Camnethan, 'when taken a prisoner, and confined to Sir George's house, by the good order there had convictions raised, and turned serious; and soe young Calderwood declared the same on his death-bed'.²⁵

5. Maxwell's diaries

Maxwell's godliness is witnessed in its most unaffected character in his personal diaries. As Fraser has acknowledged, these are 'remarkable diaries'. There are a total of five volumes, besides several volumes of notes of sermons preached by various ministers such as James Durham, David Dickson, Hew Smith, John Carstares, and others. Fraser said that 'the religious diaries, if they may be so called, are a record of the experiences of an earnest and good man', but he believed that portions which were 'of the nature of private confessions by the writer to himself, of his sins and shortcomings, and were never intended for the eyes of others, should not be published without due consideration'.²⁶

It is worth noting, moreover, that the extensive notes of accounts and other affairs demonstrate Maxwell's significant business concerns. The depth of his self-examination and devotion are remarkable in the light of this. Maxwell's frequent confessions of sin (usually outbursts of anger) are an integral part, however, of the experience he records. Many entries begin, 'a day of much sin ...', before relating the way in which his anger has found an outlet in particular circumstances. He laments other matters frequently, also, such as his slothfulness and failure to meditate with profit on the Word. Besides such confessions, Maxwell records his reflections on Providence and other matters. The diaries provide a relatively detailed insight into the personal experience of a prominent nobleman during the Covenanting period, somewhat comparable to Archibald Johnston of Wariston's diaries. The following extracts are taken from the transcription provided by William Fraser.²⁷

²⁴ Fraser, *Memoirs of the Maxwells of Pollok*, Vol. 1, p. 75.

²⁵ Robert Wodrow, *Analecta: or materials for a history of remarkable providences mostly relating to Scotch ministers and Christians* (4 vols., Maitland Club, Edinburgh, 1842- 43), Vol. 2, p. 62.

²⁶ Fraser, *Memoirs of the Maxwells of Pollok*, Vol. 1, p. vii.

²⁷ *Ibid.* Vol. 1, pp. 358-371.

Diary, No. 2²⁸*Monday, 10 January 1652*

Two thingis, it seemes, would heer be looked to: — 1. How the dispensation doth represent itselfe. 2. What maybe the duetie. In the first of these, three things cheifely ar to be regarded: 1. Touching the dispensation itselfe. 2. The circumstances of it. 3. The frame of the hearte within.

1. The dispensation strikes much at the O, which is my idol! ‘For the iniquitie of his covetousenes was I wroth.’

2. It is to be feared if this be not the tyme of the Lordis controuersie becaus of personall guilte, and of the iniquitie of my fatheris familie²⁹ and the familie I now represent. One drop may swell the cup to the brim that it run over: And God hath his appointed tymes and seasonis for temporall roddes.

Falkirk, February 8, 1654

So also after I found, as I thought, som nearenes with God, som oathes did in passion escape. On the backe of this followed a mightie indisposition in prayer, withall a feare of Godis displeasur, which smelled mightily also of a base selfe love.

Edinburgh, 12 February 1654

Experiences. — I finde this servill feare (Feb. 8) weake as to the restraint of sin. Feb. 12. Transgressed in immoderat mirth, in takeing mor wine than was fitting, quherby it seemes I am not yet without the reache of being intemperat.

Glasgow, Feb. 27, 1654

Some sad convictions wer these dayes past on my spirit upon the death of my son William; and som directions wrytt to my wyffe, on which I am yet to looke; and to be mourned that no remembrance was had of it. Angous busienes was right guided, and my feare disappointed.

26th July 1655

My son George saved from a perill of breakeing his leg.

Diary, No. 3*Pollok, Wed., 23 Apr. 1656³⁰*

This is a day of much sin; falling into a greivous passion with my wiffe and proudly iustifying my sin. So that ther is a concurrencie of atheism, pride, hypocrisie. It is the more remarkeable...becaus yesterday my soul was under the meditation of its immortalitie, and the certaintie of ane uncertain deathe.

Pollok, Sabbath, 11 May 1656

My leanenes under the word is ane abideing complainte, yet it is no wonder if it be reflected on, 1. That God’s faithfulness is not to be expected in any other channell than that of his own promise: Now the promise lieth not in the way of lazienes, sleepeing, and indifferencie, but in the way of diligence, prayer, vvatchfulness, etc.; and let but my soull answer to God upon these articles. 2. Consider

²⁸ T-PM/114/4.

²⁹ Perhaps Maxwell is referring to the events of ten years earlier, relating to his father.

³⁰ This entry is transcribed from the original diary; Fraser omits it in the published extracts.

whether I be not in a case of backslideing in the use of all these exercises named; for backslideing must be accompted from the first verticall declineing. If I be any thing mor negligent now than ever I was, then am I ane backslider. 3. Am I not short in my vowes in myndeing God of this improfitableness under the word? 4. What may be the late and neerer causes of the faileings of this day? 1. I have observed that this while past, since I began the purpose of this diarie, God hath never let me goe with any wilfull neglect of examination, and such ther was yester night. 2. Ther hath been laid asyde all inspection of the familie this while past; therfor God seemes to withhold from me, becaus I doe withhold from them: Besides which rod ther is also another, that is, sad ignorance seen this night (som of them not knowing the Godhead or eternitie of Christ, and otheris not knowing what is sin, or what the law of God), beside other profanitie of manneris.

It wold be essayed if that may not be ane helpful remedie to mak that the subject of the following weeke's meditation, which was the subject of the dayes heareing.

Pollok, Tuesday, 13 May 1656

Praise ane edifieing exercise and a helpe to prayer.

Prayer begun with restraint, and ending in som measure of libertie. Sins of the day: Hearte at a distance from God when I was walkeing and travelling out the way; not profiteing in the house of mourneing (beeing to-day at the buriall of John Hamilton in Paislay); discourse not edifieing; discovering needelesslie, and without a Christian end, the faillings of my neighbour.

Pollok, Thursday, 15 May 1656

Inordinat passion to-day: Causes appeareing to me, 1. Faintenes or partialitie in my office of ane Justice of Peace, cedeing to lay aside for a tym the tryall of ane publick offence. 2. Prayer with my wiffe neglected. 3. Forgetting in prayer the remembrance of som illis detected; aggravation of the sin, besides my ordinarie frequencie, in circumspection, and inadvertencie; bold adventuring on tentation and snares on which I have formerlie splitted upon.

Pollok, Thursday, 22 May 1656

My little daughter afflicted with sickness; God not seen nor owned therin. Myselpe also under a bodily distemper, and the like distance from God.

Pollok, Thursday, 4 November 1656

I cam this day home from Edinburgh, meeteing by the way with the information of my brother Blackhallis deathe. The dispensation speakes home to me as a man, as a Christian, as a freind. As a man, its language is 'memento mori', as a Christian, 'number thy dayes and applie', as a freinde, 'lover and freinde doth he put far away, and acquaintance into darknes.'

Diary, No. 4

Pollok, Tuesday, 16 December (1656)

Yesternight I studied arithmetick som short tyme: thereafter practyseing it in the computation of the lives of the patriarches before the flood.³¹

³¹ This is recorded in the reverse of T-PM/114/1 (see Appendix 2). The front of the volume consists of sermon notes from 1648 and demonstrates Maxwell's knowledge of Hebrew.

Ther is a holy arithmetick recommended to us: 1. The number of our dayes: 2. Dueties: 3. Sins: 4. Mercies. Number dayes; add dayes till they swell into weekes; multiplie weekes till yow extract yeeris; substract from theme what of our dayes must be necessarily allowed to sleepe, to diet; what unnecessarily trifled away; and see how short is that hand bredth of our age, and how litle of that hand bredth is under our disposeall. Divide one of these dayes in houris, and that in all the severall periods therof, and the product shall prove how fluide a thing tyme is.

Dueties have ther oun order and classes, superiorities and subordinations: first God, then our selves, last our neighbour: and to set eache in its own place is a parte of ane holy arithmetick.

Both sinis and mercies ar innumerable. Dueties ar comprehensive and short; but numberlessly innumerable ar sins: Mercies cannot be reckoned up in order (and the ordering of them is ane greate parte of this holy arithmetick). 'If I should reckon them in order.' And as to sinis, the number of them is to be endeavoured, though they be mor than the hairis of our heade.

Mr John Rae, a preface to a sermon. Many things have ther rise and fall from love, stabilitie, tendernes, mortification, Sabbath dayes, dueties, hope, diligence, meditation, longeing for Christ his comeing.

Examination. — Passion stirred to-day befor I went forth to sermon: No wonder if ther was no profiteing by it.

I was present at a marieage to-day: This ordinance was honored by Christ, but I do not reape any benefite of the meditation therof. After this I was employed about affairis relateing to the payment of some debtis. My sin in this is not observeing with thankfulnes Godis preventeing of that marke of the wicked man, who borroweth and payeth not againe. 2. Comparing my advantage besides many of the most considerable families of the land. 3. Not engaging mysef upon this experience to be less anxious about the thingis of this life.

A sin hath been also in not beareing with som litle erroris and infirmities of : Not pondering how much ther was in these of ane just rebuke, which, if it wer at this present innocently charged, hath been deserved at annother season.

Pollok, Friday, 19 December (1656)

Examination. — My morneing sin hath beene lazienes ; slothfull slumbereing upon my bed. It appeares a verie peccadilio, yet yow may judge a serpent from its progenie: see what good turnes have lien behinde the hand. 2. What hath the pilgrim to doe to rest in the wilderness, especieallie towardis the declineing of the day? 3. It speakes forth how contentedly I would sit down under the shadow of the bramble, and forget the delightfull shade and fruite of the aple tree. 4. Satisfaction and contentment is so greate in a good warme nest which wee budde our selves on high, as it is no greate difficultie to finde out the grunde of that disquietnes that falselie pretendes oft tymes to be the streame of a sweeter fountaine.

19 December (1656)

Observations on Providence. — Being this day lookeing out some paperis for assisteance of the Earl of Nidisdaillis pursuite against Bacleugh, it is not to be

passed by what doth appeare from the inspection of adventures and transactionis relateing to that familie, old and late: Promotion cam neither from the easte, nor from the west, nor from the south. How terrible is God in his displeasure, when he cutteth of the spirit of princes! How eminent hath that familie been which is now so verie low! Also, I have reason to suspect the inducement of that hath given occasion to som of those burdenis that now afflict my familie, hath beene somewhat of ane hope of my predecessoris to succeed to that familie : which doth plainely teache and speake aloud the vanitie of deepe projectings about the world, and how much mor preferable it is to quietly submit unto the good providence of God, the issue wherof is alwayes above all our designes.

Pollok, Saturday, 20 December (1656)

Begun with prayer.

Examination. — Immediatelie upon the back of this fell out a most greivous passion with : so much the mor hainous as that it was upon the back of ane sweete fellowship with Christ in prayer. I think the cause; one cause at least, was the adventuring rashelie on som tentation that gave the occasion.

This use, I judge, ought to be made of it: 1. Not to judge a not stirring sin to be a mortified sin. 2. Not to judge a tyme of communion with God a tyme free of tentation. 3. Neither yet a tyme of good purposes (such a tyme this was) to be a tyme free from the like hazard. 4. To look upon this as a rod for sinis of the sam kynde. 5. To look upon this as a rebuke for forgetting of that which was noted 3 dayes since, 16 December. To remember that guilte may be in former tymes, though innocence may be as to that quherin wee ar rebuked, and to remember the sinis of youth and secret sinis.

Pollok, Wednesday, 24 December (1656)

This day attended the burieall of Blackhall younger.

Pollok, Wednesday, 24 December (1656)

Reade Psalmes 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, and Samuel, i. Beeing this day abroad upon occasion of the burieall of Blackhall younger, I have not had any serious meditation on the Word; onely it is remarkeable in the 1 Samuel toucheing the returne of prayer. — Examination. My spirit not affected with the thoghtis of deathe, nor this occasion weel emproven, nor care taken to regaine lost tyme.

Pollok, Sabbath, 28 December (1656)

I have beene detained by sleepe in the morneing, after I had profitably watched in the night, from followeing the dueties of the day.

Wandring also was, in tyme of prayer with my wiffe. Add to this that, dureing all this weeke last past, ther hath not been any reveiw of my way, prayer for the pardon of the sinis of the former weeke, and for sanctifieing this day by ane holy rest from the sins of the former weeke, and from that unfixednes of mynde that may be contracted from my sinfull intermedleing in the affairis of this life. In prayer not countenanced of God.

Pollok, Thursday, 1 January (1657)

Morneing. — Reade the first 5 Psalmes, and 1 Samuel xiii. Samuellis oration to the people befor his deathe, toucheing the change of government from a

democracie to a monarchie. He first vindicates his own government, 2. takes of the pretext of his sonis naughtienes to be the true cause of the change, but an ambitious affectation of conformitie to the nationis, and feare of the Ammonites invasion. What followes is remarkable, both of the evidence of Godis displeasure with the change, and the certaintie of Godis respect to his people. A notable and remarkeable place.

Note. — I am exceedingly moved at present to know Godis mynde in the particular of the division of Mearnes Muirs. Things ar marred befor they be put in God's hands: At first it was but the formalitie of seekeing his counsell: Now that opposition is given to my designe wher so litle was expected, and considereing how readie such a meane may be of hazard to me by God's just judgement, I am the mor moved.

Haveing upon this emergent prayed with my wiffe, I am convinced of this followeing duetie: First, not to designe the right of any of the fewaris but in a fair way. Next, not to wearie in any essay of peace. 3. To continue to deliver him that without cause is mine enemy. (It is the word of a Psalme reade to-day.) 4. If provoked to essay ane legall decision, then not to feare or distrust oft experienced providence.

Pollok, Friday, 2 January (1657)

Begun the day, after prayer, with a mightie passion: occasion with – about the enterness of J. M.; I intendeing a greater ease than was advised.

Ther is, I verelie thinke, a good intent; but ther apperes the following sinfull erroris : — 1. It is not a zeale for a Christian duetie, but pride, that loves not to be crossed. If the principle wer pure respect for conscience' sake to a poor man, ther should be a chaine of graces like ane ornament about my necke; mor of patience, mor of humilitie, mor of compassion, mor of zeale to gaine a consent from –; wheras now, my vertew becomes my sin, and ther is a chaine of vices which is ane disgrace and shame to me; passion, rashe and unadvised speakeing and acteing, contention with – , the spirit disposed to ane hastie humorousnes throughout the day. 2. Beeing moved about so poore a trifle speaketh forth the eminent degree of this sin: Strong and readie acting proves a deepe and rooted habite. 3. Ther is somewhat of ane impure principle in the occasion mixed in with a better; that is, love and respect to applause.

Edinburgh, 19 January (1657)

Robert Andrewes related that the shoure of blood, som 18 drops therof, wer founde on cloathes in his garden the last Tuesday of October (1656); and befor that, a greater quantitie in the governor of Perth's garden, that sam day fortnight befor.

Edinburgh, Tuesday, 27 January (1657)

Dr. Colquhoun married to Mr. William Maxwellis daughter.

Edinburgh, Tuesday, 27 January (1657)

Attended a marieage of Mr. William Maxwellis daughter with Dr. Colquhoun. And litle of a right emprovement of such ane occasion. My hearte hath been somewhat under the thoghtis of Godis soveraigntie, that restrained for a litle tyme vaine thoghtis, yet not long till I was engaged in idle triffleing of tyme.

Ardgowan, Saturday, 21 February (1657)

Attended the burieall of Barochanis son.

Duchall, Tuesday, 24 February (1657)

Robert Widdrow in Daffe fined by the Justice of Peace for fornication, drunkenness, and resett of Egiptianis, 40 marks; to be payed to William Addam within 20 dayes, with ane 5 the part mor in caiee of undue payment.

Duchallis man, for killing the dog of Alexander Maxwellis tennant, etc., to pay 40 s. to the pairtie skaithed, and 40 s. to Alexander Sinclar, constable, to be given in to the thesaurer.

Pollok, Wednesday, 25 February (1657)

Providence in saveing me in ane fall from a horse.

A sad occurrent of the Millar of Seedlemilne grinded to deathe by the wheelles of the milne.

Pollok, Wednesday, 4 March (1657)

Received my paperis, my contract of marieage, and paperis relateing to my wiffe's securitie.

Thursday, 5 March (1657)

Gone to Glasgow on my Lord Montgomeries behalfe. On Saturday 27 February generall Major Montgomerie and the Lord Kinnoull escaped out of the castell of Edinburgh.

8 March (1657)

The reveiw of my wayes referred till to-morrow. My wiffe much sick. My son George also.

Munday, 12 September 1659

This day I rode to Edinburgh, and was at night in Falkirk, and at Edinburgh on Tuesday and Wednesday 13 and 14 September; at Lithgow on Thursday 15 September, and at Pollok on Friday 16 September.

Pollok, Saturday 17 September 1659

Reflection made on my way these dayes past, wherein I finde myselve to have consumed idly my tyme, and to have misemproven good oportunities of Christian fellowship and societie; neither to have rested on God in the prosecution of my cheife busienes, which was my oune and my wiffe's healthe with a phisician. And this day I have slept, or rather foolishly spent my tyme in vaine solitarie museing, not fervent in prayer, nor prepareing for the Sabath. My departure from God hath indisposed to actis of worship.

Pollok, Sabbath, 18 September 1659

Albeit the Lord hath not remedied fully my wandring mynd, with other sinis of worship, yet hath he tenderly vouchsafed to set som of them befor mine eyes, and also to mak som sweete revelation of his merciefull, compassionat, and tender heart to sinneris: That is all the ground of my hope, both for pardon and for sanctification.

Pollok, Munday, 19 September 1659

Sins are not mortified, but easiely provoked. Prayer and meditation, with other actis of worship, difficult. Scripture not serieously reade.

Pollok, Munday, 10 October 1659. Mane [morning]

No sooner was prayer ended with my [], but streight needeless passion and discontentment did arise, which evidences pride to be my sin. And now is he not a good God that permittes me to pray, and doth not presently shew his displeasure? My question is, whether I may presently beleeve pardon of this sin when yet my hand is smoakeing with mine iniquitie? Heer also is matter for repentance all the day long. Farder, my sin is sinfull conjunction in prayer, which is in parte a cause of this passion; ane ill that I wold faine know in the rise, and be helped to reforme.

Pollok, Saturday, 5 November (1659)

This day the morneing was spent in sleepe excessively; and the exercise of the day suiteth not with the present sad tyme, and the tentationis and snares that ar therin. The Lord seemeth still veiled, and in the meane tyme I am stupide above measure. The Lord hath delivered from a sad accident of fire.

Pollok, Saturday, 12th November (1659)

This day I slepted immoderately, and did not at all regaine my loss by any diligence. It is good for me to be seriously affected with my sin as becomes. Furthermor, I was assistant at the burieall of my servant, Q. L., and have not anything mor minded my mortalitie.

Pollok, Munday, 19 December 1659

This day spent in sport at the ice. These rules I have transgressed which ought to be observed in the use of this parte of Christian libertie: viz., 1. Heerby to enable me with mor cheerfulness to Godis service. 2. To avoid heerin passion and lightnes. 3. To intermixe therin prayer, as in all other actionis: All which, less or mor, I have transgressed. The Lord hath been putting me mor in mynde of judgment. He hath also preserved me from a manifest danger of ane fall on the ice.

Pollok, Friday, 6 January 1660

This day usuall passion hath accompanied me. The Lord hath also given prooffe how it was in his power to have destroyed me, but hath showne himselfe to be the preserver of man and of beaste, when my horse did fall in the bridge twixt Paislay, neere Hillington. My sin is that, doe the Lord what he will, my hearte comes never to be kindelily affected with his love.

6. Maxwell's personal covenants

One interesting feature of Maxwell's diary is the record of a personal covenant that he entered into in 1656 which was renewed before his death in 1677. David G. Mullan seeks to trace the origins of personal covenanting.³² There were precedents in the idea of partaking of the Lord's Supper as a form of

³² For Mullan's extensive investigation of personal covenanting, see his *Narratives of the Religious Self in Early- Modern Scotland* (Ashgate, 2010), pp. 318-43.

covenanting with God.³³ A formal written personal covenant appears to have become a more common practice in the 1630s in the experience of some, such as Robert Blair.³⁴

Undoubtedly the renewal of the National Covenant and the principle of personal as well as national reformation influenced greater emphasis on personal covenanting. Some, such as the Edinburgh burgess George Leslie, took the personal dimension of the National Covenant very seriously. As Laura Stewart notes:

he bound his printed copy of the Covenant in a little book embossed with his initials...Leslie added a record, in his own hand, of the date on which he had subscribed them...This was Leslie's reminder that he had entered into solemn obligations 'with my heart and hand'.³⁵

Formal personal covenanting seems to have gained particular momentum during the 1650s especially amongst the Protesters. Archibald Johnston of Wariston records formal covenants in his diary in 1650.³⁶ Wariston seems to have developed a paper of his own on the subject and shared it with Alexander Brodie who was closely associated with the Protesters. On 29th May 1653, Brodie's diary reads:

This day he read Waristoun's paper about Soul-covenanting with God, and desired to yield up his spirit and soul, mind, conscience, and affections to the Lord, to be his in a perpetual covenant and donation thro' Jesus Christ, as being not his own, but his, and therefore should (as he desires grace to do it) live to the Lord.³⁷

This evening his soul found something of the vertue of the covenant, encouraging and confirming in the faith of these things he prayed for; and he renewed his acknowledgements and engagements to the Lord. He found, in the trial of his interest in the Lord, that there was no question of the interest and covenant-right to him, in regard to his frequent, renewed, reiterated promises, dedication and oblation of himself, and all that he is, to the Lord; if there were any question or unclearness, it was in the Lord's being and becoming his, even his God.³⁸

Two days later (1st June 1653) Brodie records a conversation with Wariston about personal covenanting. Wariston related 'what witness was born to his spirit, that his people in Scotland were approven of him as Philadelphia'. One of the evidences Wariston gave for this was that 'they were about the duty of soul-covenanting with God'.³⁹ On 1st July 1653 Brodie's son also renewed 'the covenant betwixt the Lord and his soul'.

³³ Mullan cites James Caldwell, *The Countess of Marre's Arcadia or Sanctuarie* (Edinburgh, 1625), last page.

³⁴ T. M'Crie (ed.), *Life of Robert Blair* (Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1848), p. 130.

³⁵ L.A.M. Stewart, *Rethinking the Scottish Revolution: Covenanted Scotland, 1637-1651* (Oxford, 2016), p. 117.

³⁶ David G. Mullan, *Protestant Piety in Early-Modern Scotland: Letters, Lives and Covenants, 1650-1712* (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 2008), p. 31.

³⁷ D. Laing (ed.), *The Diary of Alexander Brodie of Brodie MDCLII-MDCLXXX. and of his son, James Brodie of Brodie MDCLXXX-MDCLXXXV.* (Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1863), p. 44.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

Later in the year Wariston was in the company of men from the Borders, encouraging them to enter into a formal personal covenant. This seems to have influenced David Hume to engage in personal covenanting. As John Semple records, Wariston was also reading aloud from the extensive paper that he had written on soul-covenanting.⁴⁰

On 31st January 1654 Brodie entered into a covenant with a number of local Christians on the occasion of ‘the solemn Humiliation at Leathen’. The terms of this covenant were evidently not identical to the National Covenant or the Solemn League and Covenant. Following prayer and preaching Brodie says that:

We closed the exercise with a solemn engagement of ourselves to God, and did come under a new, firm, inviolable Covenant with God, that we should be his, and he should be ours. We gave up and surrendered our soul, body, estates, lands, rents, houses, families, wives, children, servants, wit, parts, endowments, friends, wealth, and all that we had, or ever should have or attain unto in this world, to be the Lord’s for ever; that he might call for, make use and dispose of it, and mark it as his own.⁴¹

Wariston was still eagerly encouraging the practice of personal covenanting. On 3rd May 1654 he speaks of success in these activities.

I got a notable incouragment from Whvtbank shewing to me the Lord’s sensible assistance, and blissing to him my exhortations, in soule covenanting, and blissing him in the act and exercise with a discoverye of many Gospel treuths; and as he desyred me to blisse God so I got som liberty to spread that letter before God with teares and cryes.⁴²

Then on 8th May 1654 he further records: ‘I got a notable letter from young [Alexander Pringle] Whytbank of al the passages of his soul covenanting with God, wherin their was many wonderful demonstrations of the hand of God dryving him to it.’⁴³ In between, he had received a letter from Colonel Ker speaking ‘much of his awen heavy condition and struglings about soul covenanting’.⁴⁴ He was in correspondence with William Guthrie during the same month as well as on 14th June and may have dealt with this subject.⁴⁵ On 26th June Wariston writes that Guthrie ‘promised me his tractat about the Covenant’.⁴⁶ This was evidently a forerunner of the relevant section of Guthrie’s famous *The Christians great interest, or, A short treatise, divided into two parts the first whereof containeth, the tryal of a saving interest in Christ, the second, pointeth forth plainly, the way how to attain it: wherein somewhat is likewise spoken to the manner of expresse covenanting with God* (Edinburgh, 1659). On Thursday, 6th July Wariston records:

⁴⁰ Mullan, *Narratives*, p. 324.

⁴¹ *The Diary of Alexander Brodie*, p. 113.

⁴² David Hay Fleming (ed.), *Diary of Sir Archibald Johnston of Wariston, Vol. II, 1650-54* (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1919), p. 248.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 250. Letter received 5th May 1654.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

At night I got M. W. Guth[rie's] tractat anent personal formal soule covenanting, and adored and blisshed God when I read it that ever God putt that busines in my heart, and maid me communicate and presse it on uthers, as a greater favor nor if the Lord had given to me the ownarship [?] of the whol earth. I praye the Lord to blisse that tractat and exercise to many of His in thir sad tymes...⁴⁷

On 25th July he writes to Samuel Rutherford 'about M. W. G. tractat anent personal covenanting'.⁴⁸ Guthrie uses the term 'expres covenanting with God'. Frequently this means vocal as well as written covenanting. He says: 'they *expresly, explicitely, by word of mouth and viva voce; And formally close with Christ Jesus, and accept Gods offer of salvation through him, and so make a Covenant with God. And this, by Gods blessing may contribute not a little for establishing them about their saving interest in God*'. He qualifies that this is not something essential for salvation and in no way different from engaging with the terms of the Covenant of Grace. It is no replacement for heart covenanting and will not guarantee assurance. He does recommend written covenants, however:

Oh shall men study to be express, explicite, plain and peremptory in all their other great businesses, because they are such, and shall they not much more be peremptory and express in this, which doth most concern them? I wonder that many not only do not speak it with their mouth, but that they do not swear, and subscribe it with their hand, and do not every thing for securing of God to themselves in Christ; and themselves unto God, which the Scripture doth warrant, *Isa. 44. 5*.⁴⁹

Guthrie also recommends renewing the covenant at times. Not only *may*, and *should*, people thus expresly close with God in Christ for fixing their heart; but they may, upon some occasions, renew this verbal transacting with God". This will often be at the Lord's Supper. Guthrie warns, however:

Only there is hazzard, that by too frequent express covenanting with God, men turn too formal in it; Therefore, it is not so fit that people should cordially at full length renew that explicite transacting with God, but rather to declare unto God, that they *adhere* unto the Covenant made with him.⁵⁰

Although Guthrie provides a template covenant (see Appendix 1), he does not tie anyone to using these exact words. He does, however, indicate what a covenant ought to contain:

Let People Covenant with God in fewer or more words, as the Lord shall dispose them; for we intend no Platform of words for any person; Only it were fitting that men should, before the Lord acknowledge their lost state in themselves, and the relief that is by Christ, and that they do declare that they accept of the same, as it is offered in the Gospel, and do thankfully rest satisfied

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 280.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 288.

⁴⁹ William Guthrie, *The Christians great interest, or, A short treatise, divided into two parts the first whereof containeth, the tryal of a saving interest in Christ, the second, pointeth forth plainly, the way how to attain it: wherein somewhat is likewise spoken to the manner of expresse covenanting with God* (London, 1681), pp. 112-114.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 117-118.

with it, intrusting themselves henceforth wholly unto God to be saved in his way, for which they according to his faithfulness.⁵¹

In Edinburgh on the 18th September 1655 Brodie again ‘did again enter in Covenant solemnlie, and gav in my nam, consent, subscription, and acceptanc of the Lord Jesus to be my head, lord, husband, guid, my al in all’. In some way Andrew Gray the minister of Glasgow appears to have been instrumental.

Being required by Mr. Andro Gray, in the Lord’s nam, to declair iff I would refus or not? I said, Befor the Lord I could not refus, but with my hart gave over my self, poor, miserable, sinful, weak, ignorant, as I am, to God in Christ, to be His. Litl use can he maak off me; but if he can, His am I, and shall I be totalli, perpetualie, throghlie, if he wil be at the charge to maintein, confirm, mak good, and perfeit his work in me.⁵²

Wariston was corresponding with him on the matter so that by the 28th of the same month Brodie records. ‘I read Waristoun’s letter for covenanting, and desired to lay this befor the Lord, even the motives, and objects, that I be not found against the Lord’.⁵³ Wariston notes correspondence and meetings with Sir George Maxwell in June 1654 so it seems likely that he would have had opportunity to press the matter of personal covenanting on him as well as others. Maxwell also met with Brodie in 1655, indeed the latter stayed at Pollok for a few days during the summer of that year.⁵⁴

This was the context within which Maxwell was moving at this time and it seems plausible that his various connections with Protester ministers around Glasgow may have further contributed to his appreciation of this duty. One particular connection was with Patrick Gillespie at Glasgow University during this period. In 1661 Gillespie published *The Ark of the Testament opened, or, The secret of the Lord’s Covenant unsealed, in A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace. Wherein an essay is made for the promoving and increase of knowledge, in the mysterie of the Gospel-covenant, which hath been hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to the saints* (London, 1661). The eighth chapter of that book deals extensively with personal covenanting.

In any case Maxwell decided to subscribe a formal personal covenanting in July 1656. It seems to have been the day previous to the communion being administered at Cathcart (Saturday 19th). He notes in his diary that the Thursday 17th should have been a time set apart for self-examination before the communion day of fastings. This seems to imply that the Friday or else Saturday was kept as a fast rather than the Thursday. He records his endeavour on Friday 18th July to ‘search and examine my ways’.⁵⁵ Maxwell evidently decided to supplement the text on the Monday following partaking of the Lord’s Supper. This appears to reflect resolutions and meditations of the previous day. The additional text begins with the phrase: ‘This day also a postscript hath been added to the former...’

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 123.

⁵² *The Diary of Alexander Brodie*, p. 155.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 159.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 147, 149.

⁵⁵ T-PM/114/5.

7. The original personal covenant of 1656

Munday, 21 Julij 1656. Mane. [morning]

I have been upon this occasion of the communion constrained to renew (shall I say renew, or first enter) into covenant with Christ, somewhat beeing discovered off sin with the unavoideable wrath of God followeing theron. Albeit I did not feell any distraction through the terroris of the Almighty, nor yet any deepe running sorow; yet the remedie of a Saviour was embraced as necessar, pleaseing, and accepteable, mor than all the earthe besides. When I considered the termes of the offer, and looked back upon former practises, I was (as weel I pleased with the embracing of his righteousnes insteade of mine owne) so much puzzled with the promise and vow of new obedience, not as if I reckoned it not his desert and my duetie, but that I feared breache in the issue.

But againe, when I began to reflect upon my wishes and desyres, oh to be in covenant with Christ! Oh to be willing for him! Oh to live to his praise!

These ar not sufficient, but a bargaine must needes pass *per verba de presenti*. I doe take Christ for myne: I vow myselfe his: I promise to walk in all weell pleaseing to him. And againe, I considered what is my vow is his promise. I say, I have at last entered with feare in covenant with Jesus Christ to this purpose: It is a day much to be remembered to the Lord, and it is a vow much to be remembered to the Lord, and therfor I will set down the verie engagement or covenant itselfe, as it was concluded at Pollok, on Saturday, the 19 of July 1656, in the litle rounde of my bed chamber, after supper, it beeing to this purpose, breifely.

I beeing convinced of my present lost condition (haveing heer particularly amplified the confession of original sin, the sins of my youth, the sins of my hearte, the sins of my vowes, the particular breache of eache command so far as came to my knowledge), doe, with thankefull and praiseing hearte and lips, accept Jesus Christ a Saviour and Redeemer, and doe lay hold on his blood as a ransom for all these my abominations. And from the sense I have of sin as disconformeable to the righteous law of the righteous God, who loveth righteousnes, and of the wrath due to it, in part alreadie inflicted on my selfe; I doe heerby henceforth separate myselfe to the Lord, and devote myselfe to his feare, promiseing to forsake, renounce, quitt, and abjure my lusts and old loveris (particularly condiscending on som, with a clause of all other that shall come henceforth to my knowledge), and that onely upon the termes of Christ his beeing suretie for me in that which is good. And it is upon these termes that the sealles of the Covenant in the communion have beene by me intermedled with.

This day also a postscript hath been added to the former, viz., that all my work and service shall be gone about in love to Christ, who loved me, and who gave himselfe for me.

The particulars that at present ar to be remembered toucheing this vow now made to the Most High is, that I shall give myself mor to the meditation and praise of him, with prayer to him; depend upon him for all his faithfulness; subject my selfe to the word of his command; trust to the word of his promise; submitt without murmuring to his free disposeall of me.

That I shall particularly endeavour the mortification of pride, passion, my own carnall pleasures and delights; that I shall endeavour the reformation of the sins of my relations; as a husband, to love and cherish my wiffe, and beare with her infirmities, respecting the oathe of God to the wiffe of my bosom, and together with her endeavour the honor of God by jointe prayer and other dueties; as a master of a familie, to endeavour the instruction, edification, and wise correction of these under my charge; as a son, to love and honor my

parents; as a father, to love, pray, instruct, correct, and provide for my children; and shall, in the relation of my power and authoritie, either in the house of God or in civill trustes, set myselfe impartiallie for his honor: That I shall endeavour contentednes with my oune lot, and depend upon him diligently in the affairs of my calling, estate, and interest, without oppression, fraud, or covetousnes.

That I shall not causelessly nor incompassionately discover the nakednes of my brother, but shall with love cover offences, yet so as not to hate him in my heart, but in any wise to rebuke sin with the observation of the rules of love and Christian wisdom.

I doe profess I have no reason to boaste or confide in my oun strength (the treacherie of my oun hearte beeing of unfrequent experience), but that which hath induced me to come under this formall engagement is,

1. Becaus as the conviction of the bountieful nature of Christ towards sinners, or the longeing desyre to be under covenant with him, is not sufficient, but ther is a formall, direct, explicite embracing of Christ required; so answereably, ther is on the part of the beleever required a formall, direct, and explicite promise, vow, and engagement.
2. The vow of baptism made in my name is such.
3. The sealles of the sacrament ar the sealles of a formall covenant.
4. The covenant on the part of Christ is such, and ought on our part to be mutuall.
5. I look upon this vow as one of the bonds of God on my soull.
6. I look upon it as a meane for strength to be derived from Christ.

Maxwell mentions some of the areas in which he was conscious of particular struggles. The foregoing diary extracts give a flavour of them. While the exercise was no doubt helpful it was not an infallible preservative against failings. On 2nd August Maxwell candidly bemoans loss of ‘tenderness of frame’ and negligence in the duties of worship and ‘breach of vow’.⁵⁶ The benefit of the exercise and the importance placed on it may be gathered from the fact that, just before his death, Maxwell decided to renew the covenant. He wanted it formally witnessed and recorded. While broadly the same, there are certain additions compared with the original covenant. The following is a transcription from the holograph copy written out by Maxwell’s eldest son John on a large sheet of paper (roughly equivalent to A3 size) on 13th April 1677.⁵⁷ The words printed in bold are written in a larger and bolder hand on the manuscript. It is signed by Sir George with the shaky hand of an evidently ill man. One notable addition is made at the end. It is very relevant to the time of persecution which prevailed in the 1670s.

And now being near unto death I doe firmlyly adhere to the forsd covenant & vowe in all the heids & articles therof as also I doe heirby declare my adhering to and owning of the doctrine & Covenanted reformation of the Church of Scotland.

8. The renewed personal covenant of 1677

Coppie of the covenante ingagement of Sir George Maxwell of Neather:pollok privately entered into with his god on the twenty one day of july jajviC fifty

⁵⁶ Mitchell Library, Glasgow, T-PM/114/5.

⁵⁷ Mitchell Library, Glasgow, T-PM/114/12.

six yeares all written with his owne hand in a litle diarie of his oune and now subscribed with his owne hand a litle before his death wherof ye tenour followes.

At Neather: pollok munday the twenty one day of july jajviC fyfty six yeares I have been upon this occasion of the communion constraied to renew (shall I say renew, or first enter) into covenant with Christ, somewhat beeing discovered off sin with the unavoideable wrath of God followeing; theron albeit I did not feell any distraction through the terrors of the almighty nor yet any deep running sorrow, yet the remedy of a Saviour was imbraced as necessar, pleasing & acceptable mor then all the earth besyde. when I considered the termes and looked back on former practices, I was (as weell pleased with the embraceing of his righteousnes in stead of myne oune) so much puzled with the promise and vow of new obedience, not as if I reckoned it not his desert and my duetie, but that I feared a breach in the issue.

But againe, when I began to reflect upon my wishes and desyres, O to be in covenant with Chryst. O to be **in Chryst. willing for him. O to live to his praise.** These ar not sufficient, but a bargaine must needes pass *per verba de presenti*. I doe take Christ for myne I vowe my self his I promise to walk in all weell pleaseing to him. And againe I considered what is my vow is his promise. I say, I have at last entered with fear in covenant with Jesus Christ to this purpose. It is a day much to be remembered to the Lord, and it is a vow much to be remembered to the Lord. And therfor I will set down the very ingagement or covenant it self, as it was concluded at pollok, on Saturday, the nynteen day of July jajviC fyftie six, in the litle rounde of my bed chamber, after supper, it beeing to this purpose, breifly. I being convinced of my present lost condition (haveing heir particularly amplified the confession of originall sin, the sins of my youth, the sins of my hearte, the sins of my vowes, the particular breache of eache command so far as came to my knowledge), doe with a thankefull and praising hearte & lipps accept Jesus Chryst a Saviour and redeemer: and doe lay hold on his blood as a ransom for all these my abominations: and from the sense I have of sin as disconformeable to the righteouse law of the righteous god, who loveth righteousness: and of the wrath due to it in part already inflicted on my self: I doe herby henceforth separate my self to the Lord and devote my self to his fear, promiseing to forsake, renounce, quyte, and abjure my lusts and old lovers (particularly condescending on some, with a clause of all other that shall come henceforth to my knowledge) and that only upon the termes of Chryst his being suretie for me in that which is good And it is upon these termes that the sealles of the covenant in the Communion have been by me intermedled with.

This day also a postscript hath been added to the former, viz: that all my worke and service shall be gone about in love to Chryst, who loved me, and who gave himself for me. The particulars that at present ar to be remembered toucheing this vowe now made to the most hie: is That I shall give my self more to the meditation and praise of him, with prayer to him depend upon him for all his faithfulness, subject my self, to the word of his comand trust to the word of his promise; submitt without murmureing to his free disposeall of me that I shall particularly endeavour the mortification of pryde, passion, my oune carnall pleasures & delightes That I shall endeavour the reformation of the sins of my relations; as a husband to love and cherish my wyfe, & bear with her infirmities,

respecting the oath of God to the wyfe of my bosom, and together with her endeavour the honour of God by joynt prayer and other dueties. As a Master of a familie, to endeavour the instruction, edification, and wyse correction of these under my charge. As a son, to love and honour my parents. As a father, to love, pray, instruct, correct, and provyde for my children. And shall, in the relation of my power and authoritie, aither in the house of God or in civill trustes, set my self impartiallie for his honour: That I shall endeavour contentednes with my oune lott, and depend upon him diligently in the affaires of my calling, estate, and interest, without oppression fraud, or covetousnes. That I shall not causlesly nor incompassionatly discover the nakednes of my brother, but shall with love cover offences, yet so as not to hate him in my heart, but in any wise to rebuke sin with the observation of the rules of love and Christian wisdom.

I doe profess I have noe reason to boast of nor confide in my owne strength (the treacherie of my oune hearte being of unfrequent experience), But that which hath induced me to come under this formall ingagement is first because as the conviction of the bountifull nature of Chryst towards sinners, of the longing desyre to be under covenant with him, is not sufficient, but ther is a formall direct explicit imbracing of Chryst requyred; so ansuerably, ther is on the part of the beleever requyred a formall direct, and explicit promise vowe and ingagement. 2dly the vowe of baptisme made in my name is such. 3dly the seales of the sacrament are the seales of a formall covenant. 4thly the covenant on the part of Chryst is such, and ought on our part to be mutuall. 5thly I looke upon this vowe as one of the bonds of God on my soull. 6thly I looke upon it as a meane for strength to be deryved from Chryst.

And now being near unto death I doe firmly adhere to the forsd covenant & vowe in all the heids & articles therof as also I doe heirby declare my adhering to and owning of the doctrine & Covenanted reformation of the Church of Scotland In testimonie wherof in the sight of god, and befor these witnesses James Sterwart of Rosyth Mr Mathew Craufurd preacher Mr Archibald Mclaine minister of Glen daruell & John Maxwell my sone wryter therof I have subsc at nether =Pollock the thirteen day of Apryll jajviC seventy seven years

Geo: Maxwell of Polloke

Ja: Stewart of Rosyth wittnes⁵⁸

Jo: Maxwell witness

MR Mclaine wittnes⁵⁹

Matt: Crauford witness⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Sir James Stewart, 14th laird of Rosyth, was son-in-law to Sir George, having married his daughter Maria or Marion in December 1674. It is possible that he is the James Stewart who was indicted for the damage at Drumlanrig along with Maxwell (see section 3 above).

⁵⁹ Archibald McLean was the minister of Kilmodan or Glendaruel in the Cowal peninsula of Argyll. He was ordained in 1645 and served charges in Kingarth and Row before being translated to Glendaruel on 24th October 1651. He was deprived of his charge in 1662. He returned to his parish at the Toleration of 1687 but died in the end of March 1690, 'an old man', See Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae*, Vol. 3, p. 30; Duncan C. Mactavish (ed.), *Minutes of the Synod of Argyll, 1649-51* (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1943), p. 95.

⁶⁰ Matthew Craufurd was born in Greenock about 1640 and graduated M.A. at Edinburgh University on 31st July 1662. He studied also at Utrecht, where he was a friend of William Carstares. He was licensed at Glasgow at a private meeting in 1671. In October 1674 he

9. Conclusion

George Maxwell's diaries and personal covenants provide an additional perspective on the piety of the influential men who supported the Covenanting movement. Together with the diaries of Wariston and Brodie and the narratives of Walter Pringle and others, we have a composite picture of the depth of their spiritual experience. It involved Christ-centred devotion, extensive Scripture reading (Maxwell often records reading half a dozen chapters in a morning), fervent prayer, meditation on sermons, as well as self-examination and repentance. The piety of these men was focussed on family and national as well as personal reformation. There was a strong covenantal emphasis on engaging with the terms of the Covenant of Grace, as seen in the terms outlined in personal covenants which were frequently renewed around the time of partaking of the Lord's Supper. This brief study has sought to establish the growing popularity of the practice in the 1650s. This firm emphasis on personal covenanting would continue through the rest of the seventeenth century into the eighteenth century in notable examples such as Thomas Boston.

Appendix 1: William Guthrie's 'Template' Personal Covenant

Then let me beseech you who desire to be established in the matter of your interest in God, that with all conveniency you set apart a piece of time for Prayer before God, and labouring to work up your heart to seriousness, affection, and the faith of the duty, to make a Covenant, and to transact with God by express words after this manner:

O Lord, I am a lost and broken Creature by Nature, and by innumerable actual transgressions which I do confess particularly before thee this day; And although, being born within the visible Christ, I was from the womb in Covenant with thee, and had the same sealed unto me in baptism; Yet for a long time I have lived without God in the world, senseless and ignorant of my Obligation, by vertue of that Covenant. Thou hast (at length) discovered unto me, and bound upon my heart, my miserable state in my self, and hast made manifest unto my heart the satisfying relief thou hast provided by Christ Jesus, offering the same freely unto me, upon condition that I would accept of the same, and would close with thee as my God in Christ, warranting and commanding me upon my utmost peril, to accept of this offer, and to flee unto Christ Jesus: Yea, to my apprehension, now thou hast Sovereignly determined my heart, and shaped it for Christ Jesus, leading it out after him in the offer of the Gospel, causing me to approach unto the living God, to close so with him, and to acquiesce in his offer, without any known guile; And that I may come up to that establishment of Spirit in this matter, which

was reported for attending conventicles, and on 6th April 1676 he was denounced rebel by the Glasgow Committee of the Privy Council. Though searched for, he was not arrested. Being called by the parishioners of Eastwood, with the consent of Sir John Maxwell, he was privately ordained at Paisley in 1679. He was a member of Assembly in 1690, and took a somewhat prominent part. He died in December 1700. He wrote various treatises and left in manuscript a 'History of the Church of Scotland from the Introduction of Christianity to the end of 1680', 2 vols., folio (1400 pages).

should be to my comfort, and the praise of thy glorious Grace; Therefore, I am here this day to put this matter out of question, by express words before thee, according to thy will: And now I, unworthy as I am, do declare, that I believe, that Christ Jesus, who was slain at *Jerusalem*, was the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World; I do believe that record, that there is life eternal for men in him, and in him only; I do this day in my heart, plead and acquiesce in that device of saving sinners by him, and do interest my soul unto him; I do accept of reconciliation with God through him, and do close with thee as my God in him; I chuse him in all that he is, and all that may follow him, and do resign up my self, and what I am, or have, unto thee, desiring to be divorced from every thing hateful unto thee, and that without exception, or reservation of any thing (consistent with my knowledge) or intended reversion; Here I give the hand to thee, and do take all things about me witnesses, that I, whatever I be, or have hitherto been, do accept so Gods offer of peace through Christ, and do make a sure Covenant with thee this day never to be reversed, hoping that thou wilt make all things forth-coming, both on thy part and mine, seriously begging (as I desire to be saved) that my corruptions may be subdued, and my Neck brought unto thy sweet yoke in all things, and my heart made chearfully to acquiesce in whatsoever thou dost unto me, or with me, in order to these ends.

Now, glory be unto thee, O Father, who devised such a Salvation, and gave the Son to accomplish it; Glory be to Christ Jesus, who at so dear a rate, did purchase the out-letting of that love from the Fathers bosome, and through whom alone this access is granted, and in whom I am reconciled unto God, and honorably united unto him, and am no more an Enemy or Stranger: Glory be to the Holy Ghost, who did alarm me when I was destroying my self: and who did not only convince me of my hazzard, but did also open my eyes to behold the relief provided in Christ; yea, and did perswade and determine my wild heart to fall in love with Christ, as the enriching treasure; and this day doth teach me how to Covenant with God, and how to impropriate to my self all the sure Mercies of *David*, and blessings of *Abraham*, and to secure to my self the favour and friendship of God for ever. Now with my soul, heart, head, and whole man; as I can, I do acquiesce in my choice this day, henceforth resolving not to be my own, but thine; And that the care of whatsoever concerns me shall be on thee, as my Head and Lord, protesting humbly that failings on my part, (against which I resolve thou knowest) shall not make void this Covenant; for so hast thou said, which I intend not to abuse, but so much the more to cleave close unto thee, and I must have liberty to renew, ratifie, and draw extracts of this transaction, as often as shall be found needful. Now I know thy consent to this bargain, stands recorded in Scripture, so as I need no new signification of it; and I, having accepted of thy offer upon thy own terms, will henceforth wait for what is good, and for thy salvation in the end; As thou art faithful, pardon what is amiss in my way of doing the thing, and accept me in my sweet Lord Jesus, in whom I only desire pardon: And in testimony hereof, I set to my Seal, that God is True, and in declaring him a competent Saviour.⁶¹

⁶¹ Guthrie, *The Christians Great Interest*, pp. 120-123.

Appendix 2: Maxwell's Papers at the Mitchell Library, Glasgow

This list is partly based on information provided from the catalogues of the Mitchell Library. Nos. 1-11 are in the hand of Sir George Maxwell of Pollok.

Ref_No	Title	Description	Date
T-PM/ 114/1	Summaries of sermons at Cathcart (by John Carstares), Glasgow, and elsewhere: Patrick Gillespie, David Dickson, James Durham, George Gillespie (see footnote 1 above), John Nevay.	10 th Aug. 1647 (?) – 31 st December 1648; in reverse, notes on Genesis, chapters 1-31.	c. 1647-1648
T-PM/ 114/2	Diary entries.	In reverse, memoranda, 1650. (For extracts, see Fraser, <i>Memoirs of the Maxwells of Pollok</i> , Vol. 1, pp. 349-358.)	28 th April 1649-19 th April 1650
T-PM/ 114/3	Sermon and lecture notes. Preachers such as Hugh Binning, George Hutcheson, Hew Mackail, David Veitch, and Patrick Gillespie	Largely from 1652.	c. 1652-1656
T-PM/ 114/4	Sermon and lecture notes by David Dickson, James Durham, Hew Smith, Patrick Gillespie, Robert Douglas, Robert Blair, Alexander Guthrie. Also some meditations.	In reverse, financial memoranda. (For extracts, see Fraser, <i>Memoirs of the Maxwells of Pollok</i> , Vol. 1, pp. 358-359.)	28 th March 1652-January 1660
T-PM/ 114/5	Diary entries and notes of Hew Smith sermons preached at Cathcart from 1656.	In reverse, miscellaneous accounts and memoranda, 23 rd April – 27 th November 1656. (For extracts, see Fraser, <i>Memoirs of the Maxwells of Pollok</i> , Vol. 1, pp. 359-363.)	23 rd April-15 th December 1656

Ref_No	Title	Description	Date
T-PM/ 114/6	Diary entries and notes of sermons by David Dickson and Robert Douglas.	In reverse, memoranda and accounts covering roughly the same period. (For extracts, see Fraser, <i>Memoirs of the Maxwells of Pollok</i> , Vol. 1, pp. 363-370.)	15 th December 1656-19 th March 1657
T-PM/ 114/7	Notes on a sermon at Eastwood (presumably by Hew Smith) on Revelation 3:1-2.		27 th March or November? 1659
T-PM/ 114/8	Sermon notes of preachers such as Alexander Jamieson, Alexander Dunlop, Hew Smith, William Houston, Patrick Symson, Alexander Kinneire, Ralph Rogers, and William Guthrie.		12 th April 1662-28 th August 1664
T-PM/ 114/9	Memoranda.		18 th April 1667-14 th September 1668
T-PM/ 114/10	Diary entries and notes of expenditure.	In reverse, similar entries covering roughly the same period. (For extracts, see Fraser, <i>Memoirs of the Maxwells of Pollok</i> , Vol. 1, p. 371.)	19 th February 1672-5 th June 1674
T-PM/ 114/11	Sermon notes.	In reverse, verses in the hand of Archibald Dunbar, n.d.	23 rd March-8 th June 1673
T-PM/ 114/12	Covenant of Sir George Maxwell of Nether Pollok with God, being a copy of a covenant entered in his diary in 1656 and renewed on 13 th April 1677.		1656-13 th April 1677

Ref_No	Title	Description	Date
T-PM/ 114/13	Financial and other memoranda.	(For extracts, see Fraser, <i>Memoirs of the Maxwells of Pollok</i> , Vol. 1, pp. 371-372.	12 th July 1674 – 19 th May 1680
T-PM/ 114/14	Notes on a sermon on Jonah 2:4 at Biggar by Mr William ?		n.d.
T-PM/ 114/15	Sermon notes of Matthew Craufurd.		8 th July 1688-17 th March 1689
T-PM/ 114/16	Sermon notes of Matthew Craufurd including some on sermons by Robert Wodrow.		c. 1700