THE PRESBYTERIANISM OF SAMUEL RUTHERFORD

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In 1603 James VI of Scotland became also King James I of England. He believed his two kingdoms could be more easily managed if the Church of Scotland and the Church of England had the same form of government. The English bishops seemed to him to be in a position to ensure that the preaching and practice of the clergy encouraged civil obedience and thus assisted national stability. Therefore he sought to restore the same system in the Church of Scotland.

The Church of Scotland had undergone a major reformation in 1560 when the old episcopal system was shattered. John Knox and his associates had to reorganise the Church and their plan was set forth in the First Book of Discipline.[1] Its aim was to provide ministers for the parishes of Scotland. Ten of these ministers would be chosen to be superintendents responsible for placing ministers in parishes and seeing that they did their duty and received a sufficient stipend. Only five superintendents were ever appointed. Two or three of the bishops of the old order were not unwilling to assist in the reorganisation. However, there was no thought of maintaining a continuity from the pre-Reformation episcopate. Both superintendents and co-operating bishops were under the control of the General Assembly and were never dominating figures in its deliberations.

Under the leadership of Andrew Melville the move from episcopal government was accelerated and a thorough presbyterian system was set forth in the Second Book of Discipline.[2] By 1592 this had been adopted as the pattern of government of the Kirk. However, the Regent Morton and the young King James maintained the framework of the old system; they chose titular bishops who would sit in Parliament and draw the revenues of the ancient sees, but the bulk of these revenues would be siphoned off to landowners who kept these spectral bishops under their control. These bishops were not consecrated and were not regarded as bishops by the Church of England; they had thus little status in either Scotland or England. Archibishop James Boyd of Glasgow was indeed sufficiently respected to be chosen as Moderator of the General Assembly in 1574 but he had no effective archiepiscopal jurisdiction.

When James became King of England he set about bringing this shadowy episcopal structure into accord with the English system, and after heavy pressure he succeeded in having three Scottish bishops consecrated in London in 1610 according to the form of the Church of England. They returned to Scotland and consecrated other bishops and thus provided bishops for the whole of Scotland. Bishops now presided at ordinations and in the church courts but they acted with restraint and made no move to require those who had been ordained by presbytery to submit to episcopal ordination; nor did they at first attempt to impose conformity to forms of worship similar to those in use in the Church of England.

It was in this period of transition that Samuel Rutherford was growing up. He was born in Roxburghshire in 1600 and went to school in Jedburgh and then to the University of Edinburgh where he graduated in 1621. He was a distinguished student and he read and assimilated the works of patristic, medieval and reformation writers and he had an extensive knowledge of the writings of Roman Catholic apologists and especially

of the writing of the Jesuits. In his later controversial writings he always marshalled a formidable array of authorities. His academic success was followed by an appointment to be a regent to teach Latin in the University. However, a serious moral lapse led to his resignation but he made amends by marrying the woman he had wronged and he was devoted to her during the later long illness which led to her early death. His whole life was changed and he became a man of intense dedication to Christ. In 1627 he was presented to the parish of Anwoth which lies on the way between Stranraer and Dumfries. Though the extant records do not mention his ordination it is likely that Andrew Lamb who became Bishop of Galloway in 1619 took part in his admission to the parish. Rutherford seems already to have had a distaste for the episcopal system and this became one of the burning convictions of his life but in 1627 he was still able to conform sufficiently to enable him to become a parish minister. Like some Scottish licentiates in Ireland he may have thought that the presence of other ministers along with the bishop at the ordination made the occasion a presbytery ordination while the bishop assumed he was conducting an episcopal ordination.[5]

King James had begun to aggravate the situation by compelling a General Assembly in Perth in 1618 to enact Five Articles requiring that the Sacrament be received kneeling, that the Sacrament could be administered privately to the sick, that Baptism could be administered in private houses in cases of necessity, that children should be confirmed by the bishop at the age of eight, and that the five main Christian festivals should be duly observed.[4] Bishop Lamb did not make a close inquisition into the extent to which these articles were obeyed and so confrontation was avoided in most parishes but the articles were much resented by ministers and people. Rutherford shared that resentment and said that if these requirements had been necessary they would have been specified in the New Testament, but Christ did not 'burden his churches with such dumb and toothless mysteries'.[5] Rutherford did not hide his opposition to the office of bishop or to the increasingly rigid policy of the Scottish bishops and this naturally estranged him from his own bishop who vetoed a proposal that Rutherford be translated to the larger parish of Kirkcudbright.[6] In 1636 Lamb was succeeded by Thomas Sysderf, a much firmer disciplinarian, and Rutherford now made even sharper criticisms of episcopacy. This led to his appearance before the Scottish Court of High Commission; he said the bishops imposed conformity and would have us 'digest it contrary to our stomachs' and would use the weapon of deprivation to 'convert us to the ceremonial faith'.[7] He was sentenced to be banished from Anwoth and sent to Aberdeen.[8]

This was a severe restraint. Although he was not kept in close confinement he was frowned upon by Dr. Barron, the Professor of Divinity in Marischal College, and by other Aberdeen ministers who did not share his outlook. He was prevented from preaching and this was for him a great deprivation as he had proved to be an influential preacher in Anwoth where many came long distances to hear him. Many had also sought his counsel on their problems and on the way of salvation. He was now bereft of what, he said, was his only joy, 'the poor man's one ewe that had no more';'my dumb sabbaths are festering wounds'.[8] To some extent he found redress through his correspondence and for the two years of his banishment he wrote to many in Galloway and especially to high-born ladies

of his acquaintance. His letters, especially those from this period had a wide influence and after being collated and published in later times they gained a lasting place in the literature of spiritual counsel. Some have even gone to the length of putting them alongside Augustine's Confessions and à Kempis's Imitation of Christ. Alexander Whyte said there was 'sweetness and strength and ecstasy enough for ten men in any one of Rutherford's inebriated letters'.[9] They still have readers and they bear resemblance to medieval mystical writings[10] with their thought woven around the imagery of the Song of Solomon. Rutherford indulges in rapturous sensual language and luxuriates in the thought of the believer being ravished by the loving Saviour and much of his thought could be summed up in the imagery of the hymn,'Safe in the arms of Jesus', a hymn now generally out of favour and also out of tune with the robust call of the New Testament to be mature in understanding and ready for resolute wrestling with the baffling decisions which have to be made in daily life. One of his correspondents was Lady Kenmure, the sister of the Marquis of Argyll; her coarse and cruel husband had recently died and this was a great relief to her, and Rutherford assured her she was now free to be the bride of Christ, the bride of 'that soul-delighting lovely bridegroom, your sweet, sweet Jesus'.[11] Even more effusive messages strew the letters and they tend to pall and repel, but at other times the letters reveal a man of strong convictions and sturdy faith. 'The Lord liveth; trust in him, although he slay you; faith is exceeding charitable and believeth no evil of God'; thus he wrote to one lady, and he also told Lady Kenmure to 'be content to wade through the waters betwixt you and glory with him, holding fast his hand, for he knoweth all the fords'.[12]

The letters also reveal the serenity with which he faced his own trials in Aberdeen 'I know Christ shall make Aberdeen my garden of delights'. 'Christ hath so handsomely fitted for my shoulders this rough tree of the cross as it hurteth no ways'. 'Grace tried is better than grace and it is more than grace: it is glory in its infancy'.[13] Yet, the trials were severe; writing to Marion McNaught, a niece of Lord Kenmure, he said, 'My life is bitter unto me, and I fear the Lord be my contrair party... It is hard to keep sight of God in a storm, especially when he hides himself for the trial of his children'.[14] Writing to Lady Kenmure, he asked, 'When authority, king, court and churchmen oppose the truth, what other armour have we but prayer and faith?'[15]

Rutherford's resentment against the policies of the authorities in Church and State were shared by many Scots and came to the boil in 1637 when a new Service Book modelled on the English Book of Common Prayer was produced and ordered to be used in all the parishes of the land. This led to violent protests in St. Giles' Cathedral and elsewhere and then to the signing of the National Covenant in 1638. This Covenant was widely approved and was the expression of a national resentment against English attempts to remould the Scottish Church; it rejected the Service Book and vowed to resist any further innovations made without the consent of Parliament and the General Assembly.

During this time of turmoil Rutherford slipped away from Aberdeen and made his way back to Anwoth. The presbytery of Kirkcudbright appointed him to be one of its commissioners to the General Assembly in Glasgow in November 1638. This was the famous Assembly which swept away episcopacy,

the Service Book, the Book of Canons and the Five Articles of Perth, and it also appointed Rutherford to be the Professor of Divinity at St. Mary's College in St. Andrews. Very reluctantly and against the wishes of the people of Anwoth he accepted the appointment but his new position gave him a platform from which to voice his opposition to the offending forms and ceremonies. He now sympathized with those who took their aversion to such forms far further than had been common in Scotland. He approved their excision of the Gloria and the Lord's Prayer from public worship and thus helped on its way a trend which for generations cut the Scottish Church off from much of the heritage of Christian worship.[16] His advocacy of presbyterian church government took strident form in his Plea for Presbytery published in 1642 and this was followed by other verbose and learned treatises making exclusive claims for presbytery as the only tolerable form of church government and also abusing in rancorous language all other forms.

The upheaval in the General Assembly led to war with the King who was also at loggerheads with his English Parliament. The Scots now found a common interest with the English Parliament in opposing the King and this led to the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643 by which, in return for Scottish military aid, the English Parliament covenanted to reform the Church of England so that there might be a common structure of the Church throughout Britain. The reform was to be in a form agreeable to the Word of God and the Scots assumed this would prove to be presbyterian but the definition of what was agreeable to the Word of God proved to a matter of acute debate.

The details of the reform were to be worked out by an Assembly of Divines at Westminster to which the Scots would send commissioners. Three elders and five ministers were sent to the Assembly and Rutherford was one of the ministers. He was not eager to go and he said he would have been content to be 'a common barrowman at Anwoth' and not a mason laying the foundations of a reform to last for many generations and building 'the waste places of Zion in another kingdom' and having 'a hand or finger in that carved work on the cedar and almug trees in that new temple'.[17] Nevertheless, he went to the Assembly and was a strong supporter of the Covenant. Like John Knox, he was no defender of the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings and he made his position clear in Lex Rex: The Law and the Prince. In that work he challenged the policy of Charles I and asked for 'a warrant in nature's law or in God's Word' for submitting to a regime which imperilled Protestantism in England, Scotland and Ireland.[18] God gave to kings no unlimited power to act above the law and people had a right of 'self-preservation';[19] there was no ordinance of God against 'defending our own life against tyrannical power'.[20] Rutherford based this claim on the principle that while kings reign by the authority of God that authority is transmitted through the people who have the right to recall that authority if the king betrays the trust reposed in him.[21] Though Samuel picked out and anointed both Saul and David it was the people who made them kings; God inclined them to choose but this implies that it was they who made the choice.[22] Rutherford claimed that Charles I had misused his power and though he had done so by following the advice of 'deluded counsellors' he had no transcendent and boundless power to make a law contrary to the law.[23]

It was in this mood that Rutherford went to the Assembly. The Assembly plodded on its way for over four years and the Scots did not find its work as constructive as they had hoped.[24] Rutherford wrote: 'There is nothing here but divisions in the Church and Assembly, for beside the Brownists and Independents (who, of all that differ from us, come nearest to walkers with God) there are many other sects here of Anabaptists, Libertines - who are for all opinions in religion - fleshly and abominable Antinomians, and Seekers who are for no Church ordinances but expect apostles to come to reform churches, and a world of others, all against the government of presbyters'. He found the discussion of church government both important and wearisome and he hoped for an early conclusion so that he might be 'delivered from this prison'.[25] Two months later he said they were still 'debating with much contention of disputes for the just measures of the Lord's temple' and 'even gracious men(so I conceive them) do not a little hinder the work'; Independents were 'mighty opposites to presbyterial government'. Though the Scottish commissioners had persisted in pushing through 'some propositions for the Scripture right of presbytery' and had proved that single congregations had not the right to ordain pastors or to excommunicate members this had been done in the face of heavy opposition: 'for my part, I often despair of the reformation of this land'.[26] He admitted there were some zealous, learned and faithful ministers in the Assembly and many sound Christians in London, but he had not come across them any more easily 'than if I were in Spain', and, as for the House of Lords, they are 'rotten men and hate our commissioners and our cause'. There were some who thought 'the land is near a deliverance, but I rather desire it than believe it'.[27]

He poured out his objections to the Independent position in his Due Right of Presbyteries, a long and repetitive work which he produced in 1644 while he was at the Assembly. He maintained there was a catholic and visible Church inclusive of many local congregations. Elders had 'the keys of the kingdom' and had authority from Christ to order the affairs of the Church. By elders he meant primarily the pastors who were bishops in the New Testament sense, but ruling elders were associated with them in presbyteries. When they met in ecumenical councils or in presbyteries the Holy Spirit was present and they had divine authorization to decide doctrinal matters and to discipline, and, if need be, excommunicate members of the Church, and, on proof of repentance, restore them to membership. Autonomous local churches, as found in New England and as described by John Robinson, the chaplain to the Pilgrim Fathers, were not churches in the New Testament sense and they had no right to ordain their own ministers if they wished to be faithful to New Testament guidance. The wider Church had to be involved since 'the established and settled order of calling of pastors is by succession of pastors to pastors'. This had been maintained through the centuries, even under the papacy: 'though Luther and Zwingli had their whole calling from the Pope and his clergy, yet think we not that calling no calling, but that it hath that which essentially constituteth a minister'.[28] Rutherford was one of the few Scottish leaders of his time who spelt out so clearly a doctrine of ministerial succession from apostolic times.

All the efforts of the Assembly seemed to be wasted as Cromwell rose to power and crushed any hope of imposing a national presbyterian system or

of forcing all citizens to conform to it. In Scottish eyes the Covenant was being betrayed and the Scots were further disturbed by the treatment meted out to their king who was in the custody of the English army. Some Scots entered into an Engagement with the king whereby in return for support in regaining his authority he would subscribe to the Covenant and give Presbyterianism a three-year trial in England. Other Scots, including Rutherford, did not trust the king's word and the General Assembly gave no support to the Engagement. However, an army of Engagers, led by the Marquis of Hamilton, invaded England, but it was ill-prepared and was easily crushed by Cromwell at Preston in 1648. The English Parliament was now dominated by Cromwell and it decided to eliminate the king as a possible focus of rebellion; he was executed in 1649.

This further angered the Scots and they invited his son who had been proclaimed in Holland as Charles II to come to Scotland. He arrived and was widely welcomed. During his stay he visited St. Andrews and listened to a Latin oration on the duty of kings. This was delivered by Rutherford who was now the Rector of the University, having turned down two offers of a professorship on the continent. The welcome given to Charles was a challenge to England, and Cromwell lost no time in leading an army into Scotland where he defeated a Covenanting army at Dunbar on 3 September 1650. The Scots regrouped further north and Charles was crowned at Scone in 1651. Many of the Scots now felt that the issue was no longer the defence of the Covenant but was a struggle for national survival and any Scot who was willing to fight for his country should be enlisted in the army whether or not he had taken the Covenant. This caused a rift among the Scots. Those who were resolved to see the issue as a national struggle were the large majority and are known as Resolutioners. The minority of Protesters held that an army fighting for the high principle of the Covenant had good right to expect far more divine support than could a motley array of all citizens. Rutherford was a leading Protester but he was the only member of the presbytery of St. Andrews to make a public declaration to that effect. The Resolutioners raised an army and invaded England in an attempt to regain the English throne for their king but they were defeated by Cromwell at the battle of Worcester on 3 September 1651. Cromwell regarded this as God's crowning mercy and it was followed by the flight of the king and by the conquest of Scotland by General Monk.

Cromwell set about reorganizing the Church of England. He planned to establish a system wherein there would be room for ministers of good repute and preaching ability regardless of their denominational allegiance. A company of Approvers allocated men of wide diversity of outlook to the pulpits of England and Wales; Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists passed through the approving filter, as did hundreds of episcopal clergy who managed to be allowed to stay in their parishes. Eventually a similar method was applied to Scotland where its main effect was that ministers were allowed to remain in their parishes and preach to any who freely resorted unto them. Independent ministers were free to preach and to gather congregations of people who were willing to follow them.
Rutherford was angry with those ministers who held on to their parishes 'for the sake of maintenance upon the land'; he also scorned 'the

promiscuous generality' who supported these ministers as they had supported 'the prelatic conformists' in the past. Rutherford noted that these ministers declaimed in pulpits and presbyteries against him and his supporters as 'implacable and separatists'.[29]

This system with its inbuilt permission of variety of forms of government and worship was obnoxious to Rutherford who held there was 'a perfect platform of discipline' laid down in the Bible and it ought to be imposed by Church and State upon all citizens; all should be brought forcibly if necessary, within the sound of the Gospel message. He set out his position in A Free Disputation against pretended Liberty of Conscience, published in 1649. This is perhaps the sternest of all his writings. He admitted that conscience was indeed like 'a chip and a beam of God' but it was so polluted that it could not be a reliable guide. God, however, had provided guidance in his Word and there was no need to rely on conscience. When the Church assembled in council and, after deliberation on the scriptural position, came to a decision on a matter of doctrine or practice, that was a definition binding on all. In a country with a Christian magistrate all citizens ought to be required to assent to the decision, but even in a country where the magistrate was not a Christian it could properly be expected that rules on outward behaviour should be enforced; for example, compulsory attendance at church might not be worship of God but it was good for society.[30] Rutherford rejected the right to dissent; those who claimed that right made a god of their conscience, and to deify conscience was to leave people at the mercy of fallible opinions and lead to scepticism,'sailing about the coasts of truth all our life and dying in no belief at all'.[31] He denied that this was to claim for the Church what had been claimed for the Church of Rome and which had been the basis of that Church's abuses and tyranny. In his view, the Church as he defined it and the truth which it proclaimed were not tainted with the arrogance of Rome. He also dismissed the argument of Jeremy Taylor in his Liberty of Prophesying that Scripture at many points was not sufficiently explicit to produce doctrinal definitions which could be imposed upon all. Moreover, according to Taylor, the knowledge and presuppositions of commentators and of church councils were not so correct and balanced as to produce infallible doctrinal statements. Rutherford replied that the earthen Church was indeed fallible but, being organized as the New Testament prescribed, it contained precious jewels and had been promised guidance to 'determine infallible points'.[32] He admitted that some doctrines were more fundamental than others and that a person was a true Christian if he could simply say he believed in Christ even if he was ignorant of other doctrines, but this was no reason for allowing dissent from these other doctrines. If a 'brotherly indulgence' was accorded to varying views this would 'suffer millions to perish through silence and merciless condolency'.[33] It could also lead to schism and this would be intolerable. Paul had not countenanced the setting up of rival churches in Corinth. Truth could be known; heresy could be detected, and the persistent dissenter was perverse and not heroic.[34]

Under effective enforced conformity there could be no gathered church of only proved believers; there could be no sifting of the wheat from the tares to secure a pure church. This troubled many preachers whose sermons included pleas for a free decision but Rutherford does not seem to have been so troubled. He opposed any attempt to sift the wheat from

from the tares. Any exclusion of 'non- converts' would only leave them open to the lures of 'seminary priests' and others who were trying to win adherents in Scotland.[35] If they were not forced to hear the Gospel they would be left to 'embrace what religion is most suitable to corrupt nature'. He said it was not scriptural to 'excommunicate from the visible Church (which is the office-house of the free grace of Christ and his draw-net) all the multitudes of non-converts, baptized and visibly within the covenant of grace, which are in Great Britain and all the reformed churches and so shut the gates of the Lord's gracious calling upon all these (because they are not in your judgement chosen to salvation) when once you are within yourselves'.[36] 'This is downright Anabaptism that no visible churches are on earth but such as consist of real saints only'.[37] How could the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of Christ' if you number infants (as many do) and all such as your charity cannot judge converts (as others do) among heathens and pagans who have not a visible claim or interest in Christ? The candlestick is not yours nor the house'. Rutherford looked upon the obligatory and inclusive 'visible church, though black and spotted, as the hospital and guest-house of sick, halt, maimed, withered over which Christ is Lord, Physician and Master, and we would wait upon those that are not yet in Christ, as our Lord waited upon us and you both'.[38]

This emphasis upon an inclusive Church lies uneasily alongside other passages where Rutherford deals at length with the Church's right to excommunicate, but both emphases arose out of his own experience. The emphasis upon an inclusive Church arose in reaction to the attitude of some ministers who had been ejected for their nonconformity in their Irish parishes and then returned to Scotland and favoured the setting up of gathered conventicles,[39] and the emphasis upon the Church's right of excommunication arose in reaction to the Erastians in the Westminster Assembly who insisted that the civil magistrate should be involved in any decision to excommunicate.[40]

Rutherford's experiences in the Westminster Assembly stiffened his position on almost every issue of polity and theology and this came out in all his treatises. He was not unaware of his combative nature: 'My mother hath borne me a man of contention and one that striveth with the whole earth';[41] 'I have a fire within me; I defy all the devils in hell and all the prelates in Scotland to cast water upon it'.[42] Even one of his finest works with the seemingly straightforward title, The Trial and Triumph of Faith, was strewn with sharp attacks upon any deviations from what he regarded as the self-evident truth of the Gospel. In this work he rhapsodizes upon the grace of Christ who 'stoops so low as to take to himself man's will, to stoop to God and law'; 'Oh, so little and low as great Jesus Christ is!'[43] The gift of grace is the faith which is not 'a flower that groweth out of such sour and cold ground as nature; it is a stem and birth of heaven'.[44] The incarnation of Christ was an incalculable grace; it alone could break the stony heart which contains a stony will: 'There is no goodness in our will now but what it hath from grace' and where grace is 'it cannot be bid'; 'grace, first and last, was all our happiness'.[45]

Rutherford then moves on to link the gift of grace to the doctrine of election. God's gracious favour is only given to those whom he chooses to receive it. None can know in advance if they are among the chosen nor can they cause the winds of grace to blow but they may pray for the

gifts of grace; such prayers will need to be more vehement and urgent than printed prayers which, in his view, 'must be toothless and spiritless talk'.[46] Rutherford takes the view that Christ does not claim one in a hundred; he may pick one out of a family and leave the rest to the devil: 'there be many common stones, not many pearls'.[47] 'He offereth life to all, so they believe', yet he 'intendeth to bestow life on a few only'. However, even with this dark prospect, none need be so disheartened 'as they are to believe their own impossibility to be saved'.[48] Furthermore, even when God gives grace and calls a person to believe, the way is hazardous: 'Saints go to heaven halting and carrying their bolts and fetters in indwelling sin through the field of free grace, even to the gates of glory, Christ daily washing and renewing pardons, we daily defiling, to the end that grace may be grace'. Sin still has house-room in the believer, but its power is broken, and 'God takes time to perfect his saints'.[49] Moreover, there are great differences between believers; 'grace worketh suitable to the nature of the patients' and there are 'renewed acts of free grace on the way'. There are 'children and dogs in our Father's house, yet dogs which the Lord of the house owneth'; some get bread from the high table, while others are under the table 'waiting to receive the little drops of the great honeycomb of rich grace that falleth from him'.[50]

In this book Rutherford wrestles with the truth contained in the assertion that Christ died for our sins. He says that only the work of Christ as our Mediator could remedy our sinful condition. All have done evil and are under God's condemnation but Christ has become our surety; he was made sin itself and we are made righteousness in him.[51] Rutherford is troubled by this claim. He insists that Christ never became a sinner as we are sinners; he was never a thief or a false witness and yet he took upon him the sins of the thief and the false witness. Christ did not commit the sins which were done by those whom he redeemed and they were still the persons who had committed the sins: 'There was no fundamental guilt nor any bad deserving in Christ'.[52] Paul in the letter to the Galatians said Christ 'became a curse for us' but 'God is never said to hate his Son, Jesus Christ, as he doth hate sin'.[53] Rutherford concludes that what Christ has done was to 'bear the debt and punishment due to sinners: 'My friend and surety hath done all and paid all for me and that is as good, in the court of justice, as if I had paid in my own person all'. Christ relieves the believer of the punishment and condemnation due to sin, but sin itself has to be removed by sanctification and by degrees.[54]

Rutherford himself found the way of sanctification a rough and uphill road and he was probably uneasy at times because of the tensions within his own mind. Much of what he advocated proved unpalatable even in his own age when it was usual to have firm beliefs and strong opinions. His advocacy of his form of Presbyterianism as the only possible scriptural form of church government proved to be unacceptable to most of his presbyterian contemporaries in Scotland and his demand for its forcible imposition upon all the people of Britain without regard for any dissent on grounds of conscience met with a cool response from those who found justification for Protestantism in the conscientious rejection of the abuses which had marred the doctrine and practice of the Church of Rome. His rejection of the public use of the Lord's Prayer

and of the Church's prayers was a great impoverishment of worship. A man of sanctity as he was often seen to be in his writings and by wide repute, he could also sink to repellent arrogance and bitter intolerance which could see no virtue in positions other than his own. His inflexibility, especially on his exposition of the central doctrines of the incarnation and of redemption, is still much esteemed by those who are drawn to him as their mentor. It can also repel, as it repelled Dr. Helen Waddell when she read The Trial and Triumph of Faith.[55]

Rutherford and the other Protesters were a minority in the 1650's. They were distressed by the policy imposed by the Cromwell regime and also dismayed by the readiness of so many to accommodate themselves to that situation, and they were unable to arouse any fervent opposition to the government. Their successors under Charles II and James VII became the heroic remnant of Covenanters which endured great hardships in 'the Killing Time' and whose faithfulness, sometimes unto death, is held in honoured memory by the Scots. The accession of William of Orange came as a great relief but his insistence upon a measure of toleration was a great disappointment to the Covenanters. Most Scots were content in the end to accept the new arrangement which was not overthrown by the efforts of either the Old or the Young Pretender. The toleration made possible the later secessions and disruption which marked presbyterian history in Scotland and spilled over into Ireland. Seceders sometimes referred with respect to Rutherford, yet he had opposed both toleration and secession!

However, by the time of William, Rutherford had long passed from the earthly scene. When Charles II was restored in 1660 Rutherford was in danger because of his record of agitation against episcopacy and against the divine right of kings. His book, Lex Rex, laid him open to the charge of treason but he died before he could answer the summons to face the charge. He died in March 1661.

He can be remembered as a man of faith, courage and great learning, but his story is also a cautionary tale pointing out the perils of his controversies where the fires of abuse were continually stoked and were in danger of consuming the causes which he defended. It is good to be able to end with his last words which are inscribed on a plaque on the ruins of the old church at Anwoth where hundreds once heard his message:

'Glory, Glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land.' 56

R. Buick Knox.

NOTES:

1. The First Book of Discipline, ed. J.K. Cameron (Edinburgh, 1972)
2. The Second Book of Discipline, ed. J.Kirk (Edinburgh, 1980)
3. For Lives of Rutherford see DNB and Hew Scott, Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae, Vol. VII, 418; also introduction to various editions of his Letters, especially the edition of A.A. Bonar (2 Vol., 1863)
4. J.H.S. Burleigh, A Church History of Scotland (O.U.P., 1960), chapter III

5. The Divine Right of Church Government (1646), 23 & 28
6. Letters (ed. Bonar, I, 131
7. Ibid., I. 153, 156.
8. Ibid., I. 221
9. A. Whyte, Samuel Rutherford and some of his Correspondents (Edinburgh, 1894), 8.
10. J. Pelikan, Jesus through the Centuries (Yale U.P., 1985), ch. 10. Pelikan says that in medieval times the Song of Solomon was the book most read and commented upon in the cloister, more even than the four Gospels.
11. Letters, I. 91; even more lush examples on 52, 117.
12. Ibid., I. 78
13. Ibid., I. 164, 173, 195.
14. Ibid., I. 50
15. Ibid., I. 110
16. Ibid., I. 304. W.D. Maxwell, An Outline of Christian Worship (O.U.P., 1939), 131
17. Letters, II, 309 (20/10/1643)
18. Lex Rex (1644), 160
19. Ibid., 99
20. Ibid., 157
21. Ibid., 101-102
22. Ibid., 8-13
23. Ibid., 108, 138
24. R.S. Paul, The Assembly of the Lord (Edinburgh, 1985)
25. Letters, II, 311-12(4/3/44)
26. Ibid., II, 313
27. Ibid., II, 315(25/5/44)
28. The Due Right of Presbyteries (1644), 237. The matters raised in this paragraph are treated in detail on pp. 150, 187, 274-84, 289-98, 304-10, 355
29. Letters, II, 392.
30. A Free Disputation against Pretended Liberty of Conscience(1649),52
31. Ibid., 120, 28
32. Ibid., 24,35,36. Jeremy Taylor became Bishop of Down and Connor and dealt harshly with the Presbyterians in his diocese which was increased by the addition of Dromore in 1661.
33. Ibid., address to the Reader
34. Ibid., 101, 106, 108, 240.
35. Ibid., 238-40. Letters, II, 423.
36. Letters, II, 423-4. See also The Due Right of Presbyteries,242-3,
37. The Due Right of Presbyteries, 268. 258-67.
38. Letters, II, 423-4. See also The Due Right of Presbyteries,78ff.
39. The Due Right of Presbyteries, 73.
40. The Divine Right of Church Government and Excommunication.
41. Letters, I. 204(3/1/37); 42. Letters, I.309;
43. The Trial and Triumph of Faith, 30; 44. Ibid., 62;
45. Ibid., 31, 75; 46. ibid 308 47. ibid 41
48. Ibid., 129, 131; 49. ibid 196,202 50. ibid 204,265
51. Ibid., 219; 52. ibid 230-34 53. ibid 238; Gal.3.13
54. Ibid., 242-4; 55. D. Felicitas Corrigan, Helen Waddell (London,
56. These words became the basis of the hymn, 1986) 53,56; 'The sands of time are sinking'