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PRESBYTERIAN WORSHIP IN ULSTER PRIOR TO THE  
INTRODUCTION OF THE WESTMINSTER DIRECTORY IN 1647.

W.D. Bailie.

I

Presbyterianism owes its inception in Ulster to the arrival of Scottish planters and colonists towards the end of the first decade of the seventeenth century. These settlers were soon joined by ministers from their native land at the invitation of the new landlords, who held the advowsons of the parish churches in their territories. The number of these ministers was considerably increased from 1621 onwards with the imposition by Parliament of the Five Articles of Perth (1618)<sup>2</sup> upon a reluctant Church of Scotland. Ministers and probationers because of their refusal to comply with what they considered were Anglican practices were forced to seek asylum elsewhere, and for some the place of refuge was among their fellow-Scots in the newly created plantation of Ulster.

The ecclesiastical situation in Ireland was such that the Presbyterian ministers, if not actually welcomed by the bishops of the established Church in Ireland, were at least tolerated,<sup>3</sup> because of a shortage of adequately trained English clergy, and inducted to vacant charges, principally in the dioceses of Down, Connor and Derry. The Scots claim to have been ordained or installed more presbyteriano,<sup>4</sup> although there is still some controversy on this point. But concerning one matter there can be no dispute - the fact that these early Presbyterian ministers refused to countenance the use of the English Book of Common Prayer in their conduct of Public Worship and other Ceremonies of the Church.

The Rev. Robert Blair, who came to Ulster in 1623 at the instigation of Lord Clondeboy, patron of the Kirk at Bangor, and was appointed to the cure there, states "Lord Viscount Clondeboy...informed the Bishop Echlin(Down) how opposite I was to Episcopacy and their Liturgy;"<sup>5</sup> and John Livingstone, minister of Killinchy (1630-35) declares that "he had scruple against Episcopacie and ceremonies".<sup>6</sup>

Their objection to, and disregard of, the Book of Common Prayer is testified to by bishop John Bramhall of Derry

(1634-1661). In a letter to archbishop William Laud of Canterbury in 1634, he informs His Grace that all the resident ministers in the dioceses of Down and Connor were "absolute irregulars, the very ebullition of Scotland" and that "it would trouble a man to find twelve common Prayer-books in all their churches and these onely not cast behind the altar, because they have none." The bishop of Down and Connor, Henry Leslie (1635-61) in his polemical work A Treatise of the Authority of the Church, originally delivered as a sermon in Belfast at a Visitation of his diocese on 10 August 1636, to try and bring the "Presbyteriall Dictators" and "new Gospellers", as he calls them, to heel; and published in 1637 together with an Answer to certaine Objections made against the Orders of our Church, especially kneeling at the Communion - two valuable documents for assessing what was the norm of worship among the early Presbyterians in Ulster - gives a much fuller picture of the Presbyterian dislike of the rules and ceremonies of the Prayer-book, and at the same time endeavours to controvert their objections.

The bishop writes of the Presbyterians as follows: They doe not onely oppose the Ceremonies, but the whole Liturgie of the Church, wherein the soule of Gods publicke worship doth consist. Besides their doctrine is not sound; for they have taught that the Order of Bishops is Antichristian, which we know to be Apostolicke: That our Ceremonies are damnable, which wee can prove to bee both lawfull and decent: that our Service-booke is a heap of errors, which we can justifie to be the most absolute Liturgie, that any Church in the world hath: That the sign of the Crosse in Baptisme, and kneeling in the act of receiving the Communion, is plaine idolatry, then (sic) which Hell itselfe could not have devised a more shamelesse calumnie: That the Eucharist being a Supper and a Feast, no gesture should be used at it, but a table gesture, to expresse our coheirship and equality with Christ, which if it smell not strong of Arrianisme, I have lost my sent (sic): That all festival dayes, besides

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the Lords day, and all set fasts are Jewish, and contrary to our Christian liberty, which is the condemned heresie of Aerius. They have cried downe the most wholesome orders of the Church, as Popish superstitions, namely confirmation of children, absolution of penitents private baptisme of children in case of necessity, the Communion of the sicke, and almost whatsoever hath any conformity with the Ancient Church".<sup>8</sup>

Up to the autumn of 1631 the Presbyterian ministers were able, in the words of one of their number, to conduct public worship and administer the sacraments "free of any inventions of men".<sup>9</sup> But with the advent of Laudian High Church reform their non-conformity with the Prayer-book was, as already noted, frowned upon by the bishops and the most refractory of the ministers were suspended from office in 1631; and while they were reinstated for brief periods during the years of 1632-34, were finally deposed and excommunicated because of their presistent refusal to accept the Irish Canons, drawn up by Convocation in 1634.<sup>10</sup>

During the periods of their suspension and even after their final deposition, some of these ministers continued to preach and care for the souls of their flocks, convening meetings for worship where possible 11 in churches, but more often in barns and private houses.

After an abortive attempt to reach New England in the ship Eagle Wing in 1636, some of the ministers and people decided to return to their native land of Scotland.<sup>12</sup> In this way they probably escaped being slain in the Irish Rebellion of 1641.<sup>13</sup> Those who remained in Ulster, in the words of Principal Robert Baillie, "Did absteene much from the publick worship; and in privatt, among themselves, their ministers being all banished, did in that place and tyme of persecution, comfort themselves with prayer and reading, and uther exercises of religion, whiles in the night, whiles in the day, as they had occasion".<sup>14</sup> Blair and Livingstone both record in 1637,

when they were celebrating communion at a church in Irvine on the west coast of Scotland, many of their former parishoners from Bangor and Killinchy braved the seas to be present with their wives and elder children.<sup>15</sup> In these ways they kept alight the torch of Presbyterianism in Ulster until a better day dawned with the arrival of the Scottish forces in 1642 to help quell the Irish Rebellion; and the setting up of the first Presbytery at Carrickfergus, by the Scottish chaplains and officer elders in June the same year.<sup>16</sup>

## II

The norm of worship in Scotland from the Reformation there in 1560 to the acceptance by the General Assembly in 1645 of the Westminster Directory for Public Worship was the Book of Common Order (1564) or John Knox's Liturgy as it is popularly called; but there were variations in practice during this period as the ministers were not tied to a literal fulfilment of every rubric contained therein.<sup>17</sup> In view of the latitude allowed to ministers it is too much to expect that the early Presbyterian ministers in Ulster followed the Book of Common Order closely. G.W. Spratt claims that some of those who opposed the Articles of Perth (and the majority of the Ulster Presbyterian ministers were of this school) used the Book of Common Order as a Directory rather than a liturgy.<sup>18</sup> In fact there is no direct reference to the use of the Book of Common Order in any of the contemporary writings of these Ulster Presbyterians; although copies of the book were in the land at time, for bishop Leslie - the chief upholder of Anglican rites in Ulster - refers to the "Psalmes booke", which was the usual designation for the Book of Common Order in Scotland in his visitation address of 1636.<sup>19</sup>

It is known that on the second day of the Visitation in Belfast on 11 August 1636 the leader of the Presbyterian ministers - James Hamilton of Ballywalter - in his disputation with the bishop displayed no preference

for the Book of Common Order. When the bishop explained that the third Canon meant that they were not to use any other forms of liturgy than the Book of Common Prayer, Hamilton simply said, "We consent to use no other liturgy".<sup>20</sup> Yet at the same time neither Hamilton nor his companions were prepared to use the Book of Common Prayer.

Notwithstanding their seeming indifference to the Book of Common Order an investigation of the worship of the early Presbyterian party in Ulster, as disclosed from a study of the writings of the Presbyterian ministers and the letters and published works of their opponents bishops Leslie, Bramhall and Echlin, shows that much of the worship and many practices of the Ulster-Scots were in accord with current trends in Scotland, although there is evidence also from other sources of an assimilation of some of the distinctive elements of English Puritan worship. This, however, is not surprising as there was a considerable amount of commingling between the Scots and Presbyterian and English Puritan settlers, especially in the territory of the Clotworthies of South Antrim, where a great monthly Lecture meeting was held from Friday to Monday, and at which there was much public preaching,<sup>21</sup> and many private meetings for prayer and edification.

A description of the worship and practices of the Presbyterian party in Ulster may be conveniently dealt with as follows: Public Worship, Sermons and Catechising; Communion; Baptism; Fasts and Days of Humiliation; Marriage; Visitation of the Sick and Burial of the Dead; Holy Days and Festivals; Excommunication and Reception of Penitents and the Pulpit Dress of Ministers.

#### Public Worship, Sermons and Catechising

It was usual for these Presbyterian ministers to hold two services on the Lord's day. One in the fore-noon at which the majority of the members of the congregation was present; a second service which took the same form as the morning service, was held in the afternoon, but

as some people lived a considerable distance from the Church they went home after the first service. In Scotland it was customary to catechise the congregation at some period during the afternoon service; although Alexander Henderson states in 1641 that "this manner of Catechising is not general, but it is more ordinary now to appoint a week-day for catechising".<sup>22</sup> Blair at the beginning of his ministry at Bangor referring to public catechising declares that it was a mockery to examine people without prior instruction; consequently he spent at least one day in the week visiting and instructing the people.<sup>23</sup> In addition to the Sunday services these early Presbyterians often preached as many as four or five times in the course of the week.<sup>24</sup>

The Scottish custom of the time was for the minister to preach what was called an "ordinary". A passage of Scripture or book of Scripture was selected and this formed the basis of the teaching from Sunday to Sunday over a considerable period. Blair records that during his first year in Ulster he broke with this tradition. "In the first year of my ministry I resolved not to pitch upon a book or chapter to go through it but made a choice of such passages as held forth fundamentals (most material and important points of religion)."<sup>25</sup> Later in his ministry Blair, however, seems to have followed the usual Scottish practice at what was his weekly sermon day; for it is stated in Row's Supplement to Blair's Life, that on Tuesday, 20th March 1632, part of his text was Romans xv.23; and on the following Tuesday, his text was Romans xv.30-31.<sup>26</sup>

In Scotland prior to 1600 the usual preaching days were Wednesday and Friday, but at the instance of King James, the preaching day was changed to a Tuesday from that date. The change was generally acquiesced in;<sup>27</sup> and as Blair had been brought up in this Jacobean tradition he made the Tuesday his regular preaching day in Ulster.<sup>28</sup>

The sermon was the most important part of public worship; the prayers and Scripture reading(s) occupying a subsidiary place in the service in the eyes of many of the

congregation, if not of the ministers. This reflects the attitude of many of those who frequented the churches where the Book of Common Prayer was read. Accordingly bishop Leslie at the Visitation held at Lisnagarvie (Lisburn) on 26 September 1638, deplores the fact that "the laity...will hear no prayer at all while divine Service is reading, they walke in the Churchyard, and when prayer is ended, they come rushing into the Church, as it were into a Play-house to hear a Sermon."<sup>29</sup> Addressing the ministers the bishop informs them that "Preaching... is grown to such esteem that it hath shuffled out of the Church, both the publique prayers which is the immediate worship of God, and this duty of Catechising: and is now accounted the sole and only service of God, the very Consummatum est of all Christianity, as if all Religion consisted in the hearing of a Sermon"<sup>30</sup> It is not recorded that those who attended the diets of worship presided over by Presbyterian ministers were loath to enter Church till time of sermon but there seems little doubt that that Scots like their English Puritan fellow settlers had a predilection for the preaching of the word than for prayers.

A practice of the Scots settlers of the time was for the men to cover the head during the proclamation of the word and a common posture during worship was "the lifting of the eyes to Heaven, the spreading out of the hands, the knocking of the breast, sighing and groaning..." which ceremony, according to bishop Leslie was "used by none so much as by" Presbyterians.<sup>31</sup>

Generally speaking the sermons were long and the entire service lasted from 2 - 3 hours. Blair states that during a Communion Sabbath at Bangor "when I began the sermon I was so deserted for half an hour that I was like to leave the pulpit, and desert the work of that day; but the Lord great in mercy helped me".<sup>32</sup> As well as giving some indication of the length of the sermon this account also suggests that sermons were delivered without manuscript. John Livingstone, minister at Killinchy (1630-35)



although he preached on occasion for an hour and a half and more, did not approve of long sermons and gave it as a rule "Ordinarily goe not beyond the hour".<sup>33</sup> Sermons were prepared with much heart-searching and meditation but extempore preaching was not unknown to Blair on occasion.<sup>34</sup>

The use of instrumental music in church services was uncommon outside the city of Dublin, although Sir William Brereton states that in the chapel of the Lord Primate Ussher's palace at Drogheda there was "a little pair of organs herein".<sup>35</sup> Blair records that a precentor was one of the church officials in the Kirk at Bangor, his duty being to lead the congregation in singing the psalms.<sup>36</sup> The first Scottish Psalm book of 1564 contained proper tunes, that is, there was a different tune for every one of the 150 psalms. But as many of the congregation found it difficult, if not impossible, to make themselves familiar with so many tunes, from the 1615 edition of the book onwards, a number of common tunes were introduced, making it necessary to employ names to identify them. Examples are, Abbey, Caithness, Duke's, Dundee, Elgin, French, Martyrs, New London, York and Dunfermline. The Ulster presbyterians, it may be conjectured, also make use of these common tunes, raising their voices in praise to God, "to Dundee's wild warbling measure, plaintive Martyrs worthy of the name and noble Elgin, sweetest far of Scotia's lays".

None of the contemporary writings of the period gives any account of the actual Order of Public worship. (It is a matter for regret that Sir William Brereton who has given excellent descriptions of worship in the Church of Scotland should have been so meagre in his accounts of church services when he visited Ireland in 1635, at least so far as the Northern part of the country is concerned). It may be assumed that the Order of public worship as conducted by the Scottish Presbyterian ministers in Ulster approximated to that given in the Book of Common Order. Notice, however, should be attached to bishop Leslie's question to the non-conformist preachers

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during his Belfast visitation sermon of 1636, he asks, "What particular direction have ye for the order of God's service, as when you are assembled, whether the Minister should begin with praying, or preaching with reading or singing of Psalme....". All these things, he contends, "are ordered by your owne discretion, and that diversely in diverse congregations, according to the humor(sic) of the Minister", whom, he castigates, "as a Pope in his owne Parish".<sup>37</sup>

Neither Blair nor Livingstone makes any reference to the Book of Common Order in their writings and any references that are given to pulpit prayers suggests that these were not taken verbatim from it but were of a conceived or even extempore nature.<sup>38</sup> The fact that these ministers and others with many of their people returned to Scotland circa. 1636 and were later charged with the introduction of harmful innovations into the worship of the Church of Scotland <sup>39</sup> making for the abandoning of set prayers, including the Lord's prayer, the omission of the Doxology, the abolition of private prayer in the pulpit by the minister, and the disuse of the Creed at the administration of the Sacraments - all of which were equally abhorrent to the English Puritan party in Ulster - implies that these early Presbyterian ministers had been leavened by the English Puritan dislike for any ceremony however simple.

### Communion

"The Supper of the Lord", and "The Lord's Supper" are the usual designations given to the sacrament by the early Ulster Presbyterians, and invariably the word <sup>40</sup> "celebrate" is used in connexion with the sacred rite. The sacrament was celebrated from two to four times per year in each congregation.<sup>41</sup> The communion address was described as the "action sermon".<sup>42</sup> to distinguish it from any preparatory sermon. A practice soon developed of having a number of neighbouring congregations meet together for Communion. Blair of Bangor and Robert

Cunningham of Holywood assisted at each others Communion services and the "proficients in both did communicate together" on eight occasions in the year.<sup>43</sup> Bishop Leslie testifies also to this practice when he says to the Presbyterian ministers: "Christ was the sole minister of the Sacrament: you commonly have one to assist you".<sup>44</sup> Livingstone shows that inter-communion among parishes was in vogue in 1631. "We needed", he says, "not to have the communion ofter, for there were some nine or ten paroches within the bounds of some twenty myles or little more, wherein there were godly ministers that kepted ane society together, and every one of them had communion twice in the year, and that at different times, and had two or three of the neighbouring ministers to help therat, and most of the religious people of each paroch used to resort to the communions of the rest of the Paroches".<sup>45</sup>

Unlike the present day system of receiving communion in the pews the seventeenth century Ulster Presbyterians took their places at long tables which were set in the nave of the church, in the belief that in so doing they were following the exact procedure of our Lord and His disciples in the Upper Room.<sup>46</sup> Bishop Bramhall, in somewhat cynical fashion, states that instead of an altar in the churches staffed by non-conformist preachers there was a "table ten yards long where they sat and received the Sacrament like good fellows"<sup>47</sup> drinking their pots of ale. As the whole congregation could not be accommodated at one sitting the people went up in relays to the Table. After each group had communicated there was an exhortation given by the minister. Livingstone tells how at a Communion Sabbath in Killinchy in December 1634, where he was assisted by John McClelland<sup>48</sup> of Newtownards, there were five tables and "the Lord gave me lively exhortations to them all".<sup>49</sup>

This reference to "five tables and exhortations" suggests that "table-addresses" were part

of the Communion services in Ulster as early as 1634. Some Scottish liturgiologists maintain that prior to 1645 table-addresses were unknown in Scotland.<sup>50</sup> In that year the General Assembly enjoined a short address or exhortation at each table as a substitute for a reading of the Passion story.<sup>51</sup> The introduction of the table-address in Scotland is generally held to be the work of Protesters who became the dominant party in the Church after the revolution.<sup>52</sup> John Livingstone became one of the Protesters and it may well be that the innovation of the table-addresses in Scotland owe their introduction to the return of some of the Ulster Presbyterians there during the period of religious persecution under Wentworth in the years 1636-40.

"Prefacing" is one of the features of the Communion Order mentioned by Livingstone at Killinchy<sup>53</sup> and by Blair at the Monday Thanksgiving service after Communion at Antrim.<sup>54</sup> In Scotland it seems that ministers "prefaced" at all Sunday services. Alexander Henderson in his description of the Scottish service circa. 1640 says that it was the custom of ministers to "preface a little for the quickening and up-lifting of the hearts of the people" before the prayer of confession and thanksgiving.<sup>55</sup> Doubtless a similar practice was continued in Ulster. This "prefacing" W.M. Millan suggests, was a short address on something like the lines of the Exhortation before the Confession in the Book of Common Prayer.<sup>56</sup> Blair sums up his "preface" at the Antrim Communion Thanksgiving thus: "I promised a blessing from God unto them that would seek it, and open their hearts unto it, seeing neither art nor industry had any place or part in this work". Blair also explains that he had to preach extempore on this occasion because of the non-arrival of Robert Bryce minister of Broadisland (Ballycarry).<sup>57</sup>

Bishop Leslie records that these early Presbyterians celebrated the Sacrament in the morning, that they used leavened bread and did not have a double consecration of the elements.<sup>58</sup> A double consecration of the bread and wine was an English Puritan or Independent innovation

which Robert Baillie asserts they inherited from the Brownists, and was based on the precedent of our Lord at the Last Supper, when He blessed both bread and wine.<sup>59</sup>

Blair at the commencement of his ministry in Ulster had some difficulty with his patron, Lord Clandeboy, who wished, following the practice of the established church in Ireland, to receive the elements kneeling. Blair fresh from Scotland and with Presbyterian objections to the Five Articles of Perth - especially that of kneeling at the reception of the bread and wine - uppermost in his mind, refused to countenance this. In fact, objection to kneeling at the act of reception of the wafer and cup was the chief disputing point between bishop and the early Scots ministers as indicated by Leslie's polemical pamphlet, An Answer to Certain objections made against the Orders of our Church, Especially Kneeling at the Communion". As Clandeboy's pew joined to the upper end of the Table, he offered not to kneel if permitted to receive the elements in his pew. To this compromise Blair agreed although he soon regretted his decision.<sup>60</sup> It is often stated that Dr. Chalmers of the Free Church of Scotland was the first to introduce the practice of receiving communion in the pews to Presbyterians, in the year 1819.<sup>61</sup> Here is an isolated case of it happening in Ulster in 1623.

The early Presbyterian ministers in Ulster followed the the lead of the Reformed Church on the continent and the Church of Scotland in their method of partaking of the sacred elements, i.e., the minister first partook of the bread and wine<sup>62</sup> then passed the elements to the next person seated at the Table. This is demonstrably clear from Livingstone's statement concerning a celebration of Communion at Killinchy in December 1634. "I had forgott to communicate myself till the last table was was almost ended, and I thought it a great mercy of God that that put me in remembrance, whereas I had forgotten it so long".<sup>63</sup> This contrasts with the present practice where the people are served first, then the elders, and the

minister last, the underlying idea of this seems to be in 'honour preferring one another'.

In connexion with the Communion season there was a service of Preparation on the Saturday afternoon.<sup>64</sup> The Saturday "sermon" was also the occasion on which those who were under discipline of the Kirk-session were called upon "to confess their scandells before the congregation and being penitent were then admitted to Communion".<sup>65</sup>

On the afternoon of the Communion Sabbath it was customary to hold a service of Thanksgiving.<sup>66</sup> Soon it also became common to hold a service of Thanksgiving on the Monday following. The explanation for for the start of the Monday service is this. The great monthly meeting held at Antrim after the Sixmilewater revival of 1625, began on the Friday with a series of sermons and lectures on biblical subjects and continued on Saturday, culminating with the celebration of the sacrament on the Sunday; but because of the reluctance of the people to leave for home after the Sunday services the innovation of an extra service of Thanksgiving on Monday morning was begun. From Blair's autobiography the following outline of the service may be given: Prefacing; Prayer; Scripture Reading; Sermon, Prayer.<sup>67</sup> Henderson states in his description of Communion services in Scotland circa. 1640 that after the Thanksgiving on the Sunday afternoon the congregation "doe return according to advertisement the next Monday morning, to another sermon so that so solemn an action may be as solemnly concluded".<sup>68</sup> The first mention of such a service occurs at Kirk of Shotts in June 1630, when a vast concord of people was so thrilled with the preaching of John Livingstone that they, as in the case of their brethren at Antrim, continued their devotions throughout the Sunday night and requested Livingstone to preach to them again on the Monday. Blair was also present at this Communion season and with the experience of the Antrim communions behind him may well have prevailed upon Livingstone to agree to the crowd's demands for another service..<sup>69</sup>

Fasting before Communion was quite customary among the early Ulster presbyterians, and it was neither specifically affirmed nor denied by the Reformers, by the Book of Common Order or Acts of Assembly. Blair notes that in 1604 as a young man he attended at Communion service at Irvine, and desired to communicate but was unwilling to do so because "having gotten my breakfast I durst not, for it was the generally received opinion, that the Sacrament behoved to be received fasting".<sup>70</sup> Bishop Leslie in his description of the practices of the non-conforming clergy in his diocese questions their scriptural authority for coming fasting to Communion.<sup>71</sup> Livingstone makes it quite plain that fasting was a common practice among those who frequented the great monthly meeting at Antrim.<sup>72</sup>

### Baptism

Indiscriminate baptism is not a charge which can be levelled at the early Presbyterian ministers in Ulster. Prior to the baptism the parents of the child were conferred with, exhorted and instructed as the situation demanded.<sup>73</sup> The usual practice was for baptism to be administered in church after the sermon, and generally on the first Sunday after the birth of the child,<sup>74</sup> although bishop Leslie claims that the place of baptism before or after sermon was left to the decision of each individual minister.<sup>75</sup> After their deposition by the bishops in 1632 the Presbyterian ministers continued to preach and administer the sacraments in private houses and barns. A son born to the Livingstones on 30 June 1636 was baptised the next day, after sermon, by Blair, in the home of Livingstone's mother-in-law at Malone (Belfast).<sup>76</sup> Here it should be noted that it was the circumstances of the time which forced the ministers to resort to "private" baptism and that it was after service of worship, which included an exposition of the word, that the rite was administered. Their objection to private baptism of children in cases of necessity was commented upon by bishop Leslie in his Visitation

strictures.<sup>77</sup> As might be expected there is not direct reference to the Order of Baptism as set forth in the Book of Common Order (1564), in the writings of the early Presbyterian ministers. From bishop Leslie it is learned that they did not use the sign of the Cross and that baptism was by aspersion (sprinkling).<sup>78</sup>

### Fasts and Days of Humiliation

Fasting was regarded by the early Reformers as an authorised feature of congregational life and as a lawful means of profitable discipline,<sup>79</sup> and later editions of the Book of Common Order contain an Order for a General Fast. These fasts and days of humiliation were held at times of national anxiety or when a local calamity happened. Blair reports that there was a period of unfavourable weather for harvesting in 1624 and that the rains threatened to ruin the whole harvest of cereal crops. "Whereupon we resolved solemnly, by humiliation and fasting a whole day, to seek His face to avert the threatened famine". The days following the fast the weather cleared and for two whole days the people laboured without intermission to save the crops. During which time Blair and two neighbouring ministers continued their supplications.<sup>80</sup>

### Marriage

Robert Blair got married during his sojourn in Ulster and while he and his fellow ministers must have officiated at the marriages of members of their flocks there is no mention of marriage ceremonies in their writings. The Scottish custom was for marriages to take place always in church and generally on the Sunday. Bishop Leslie's remarks in his tract shows that such was also the practice of these Presbyterians in Ulster. The bishop charges the Presbyterians with making use of the ceremony of joining hands in marriage and the pronouncing of words not commanded in Holy Scripture, adding that it was left to the discretion of the local minister whether the marriage ceremony was performed before or after sermon.<sup>81</sup>



Here the Presbyterians were going beyond the Order of the Book of Common Order which limits the celebration of marriage to before sermon and does not contain a rubric to the effect that the bride and groom were to join hands at the taking of the vows, nor any reference of a declaration that the couple are now man and wife. W. McMillan, however, has pointed out that in Scotland it was customary for the parties being married to join hands.<sup>82</sup> The absence of the declaration may be explained by the fact that "consent makes the marriage" and it is simply the duty of the church to bless the marriage.<sup>83</sup>

### Visitation of the Sick

Blair gives the following account of his visitation of the Sick. One evening "I began with prayer, and thereafter expounded the doctrine of Christ's temptations, closing with prayer and singing of a psalm, and after that did the like upon another passage of Scripture, and after that another, still intermixing prayer and singing till towards the morning".<sup>84</sup> Blair also states that in such visitation he offered prayer upon his knees.<sup>85</sup>

### Burial of the Dead

There is no information available as to what happened at the burial of the dead in either the works of the Presbyterian ministers or of the writings of their prelatist opponents. But it may be assumed that the directions of the Book of Common Order were generally followed: "The corpse is reverently brought to the grave, accompanied with the congregation without any further ceremonies, which being buried the minister - if he be present, and required - goeth to the church, if it be not far off, and maketh some comfortable exhortation to the people touching death, and resurrection".

Holy Days and Festivals

According to bishop Leslie the Presbyterian ministers in Ulster were utterly opposed to Holy Days and Saints Days.<sup>86</sup> James Hamilton probably expressed the attitude of all his Presbyterian brethren to such days when disputing with the bishop concerning the Collect in the Prayer Book for Christmas Day, he said, "It were better not to observe a day which hath been superstitiously doted upon for many years, yea, regarded more than God's Sabbath, than to say expressly in our book, this day was Christ born."<sup>87</sup>

The Order for Excommunication  
and Public Repentance

The Book of Common Order contains Orders for Excommunication and Public Repentance. The Order for Public Repentance was meant for those who though not excommunicated had given offence to the Church. The Order required the supplicant to be admitted to public repentance by the minister and elders and to confess his crimes before the congregation. Blair, describes such an instance - one of many - which took place in the Kirk at Bangor in 1624. "He came to me confessing his sin with many tears, and desired to be admitted to the public professing of his repentance. The elders, being acquainted with this, required him to appear, which he did, sore weeping, several days, to the great edification of the whole congregation".<sup>88</sup> Later a young man not being amenable to the discipline of the Bangor Kirk Session appealed to bishop Echlin and this brought the Session's discipline to naught.<sup>89</sup>

Livingstone records that the Killinchy Kirk-Session met weekly and dealt with people who "fell into notorious publick scandals", and that both in "private and public" prevailed upon them to confess their scandals before the congregation, at the Saturday sermon before communion, after which they were admitted to the Sacrament.<sup>90</sup> Livingstone goes on to state that the Session's method of dealing with those who would not come before the

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Session, or those who having come, refused to confess their faults before the congregation, was to read their names and scandal and impenitency out before the congregation, and to debar them from communion.<sup>91</sup> It is quite likely that the Order for Excommunication used by Livingstone was based on the Book of Common Order. Bishop Leslie writing in 1637 seems to imply that this aspect of Presbyterian discipline was no longer enforced, for he says "You used to injoyne penance and to receive penitents in a white sheet", the use of the white sheet he argues is as much a ceremony as the Anglican wearing of a surplice by the clergyman.<sup>92</sup>

### The Pulpit Dress of Ministers

By order of the Lord Deputy, Wentworth, on 28th November 1633, the "Dean, Dignatories, and Prebendaries of the Church were ordered to wear "surplices, and hoods, according to their various degrees, during service and sermons".<sup>93</sup> That the Presbyterian ministers in the North of Ireland wore gowns for the conduct of public worship is revealed in the remarks of Lady Clondeboy at a service in Bangor where she heard James Hamilton preach for the first time. After the service her Ladyship was pleased to compliment him thus: "James, I think your gown and pulpit become you well; I will bestow the gown and my Lord (if he will be advised by me shall bestow the pulpit". Both of which were soon performed by his settlement in the parish of Ballywalter.<sup>94</sup> Evidence that this was a black Geneva preaching gown and not a surplice may be drawn from bishop Leslie's comment that the Kingdom of God consists not in whether the congregation sits or kneels at Communion or whether it is a "white garment or black"<sup>95</sup> one that is worn. The implication being that Presbyterians contended for sitting at Communion and the wearing of a black gown, while the Anglican custom was that of kneeling at Communion and the wearing of a white surplice.

III

Within a few months of the first meeting of the Presbytery at Carrickfergus in 1642, requests came pouring in from Scots residing in Ballymena, Antrim, Carncastle, Templepatrick, Carrickfergus, Larne and Belfast in the diocese of Connor for the formation of Kirk-sessions; and from Ballywalter, Bangor, Holywood, Donaghadee, Newtownards Killyleagh and Comber in the diocese of Down. In these and other areas where the Presbytery's writ did run, conformist clergy who insisted on celebrating the sacraments according to the English Prayer-book and administered private baptisms and performed private marriages were reprov'd; and if recalcitrant silenced.<sup>96</sup>

This aversion on the part of Presbyterians in Ulster to the English Prayer-book and its ceremonies and dislike of detailed liturgical worship was something they had in common with some Scottish Presbyterians and English Puritans and which it may be said, crystallised in the issue by the Westminster Divines in 1644, on the authority of the English parliament of a Directory for the Public Worship of God. The Directory which contented itself with giving general directions for worship, was drawn up with the express intention of superceding the Prayer-book and designed for use in all churches throughout the three kingdoms. All of which being acceptable to the Ulster Presbyterians set the scene for the introduction and acceptance of the Directory by the Presbytery in 1647.<sup>97</sup>

Notes

1. Sir Jas Hamilton "made it his business to bring very learned and pious ministers out of Scotland and planted all the parishes of his estate (which were six) with such; communicated with them, maintained them liberally; received even their reproofs submissively." The six parishes referred to were Killyleagh, Bangor, Killinchy, Craigavad, Holywood, Ballyhalbert and Dundonald. Hamilton manuscripts, ed. T.K. Lowry, 34-5; Belfast 1867. Sir Hugh Montgomery of the Ards "brought over at first two or three chaplains with him" for the parishes of Newtownards, Greyabbey and Donaghadee; Montgomery Manuscripts ed. G. Hill Belfast 1969, 55,61. Lord Ochiltree brought over a minister with him as early as 1611, to his estate in Co. Tyrone; Carew manuscripts, 1603-24, London 1867-73, 77. Sir Hugh Clotworthy of Antrim is also attributed with having brought ministers from England and Scotland; History of the Church of Ireland, ed.W.A. Phillips, Oxford,
2. The articles of Perth prescribed (1) Kneeling at Communion; (2) Private Communion for the Sick; (3) Private Baptism where necessary; (4) General Observance of Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension and Whitsunday; (5) Confirmation by Bishops; All these were common practices in use in the Church of England and the established Church in Ireland.
3. Bishop Echlin, in a self-exculpatory letter to the Lord Justices, April 1632, on the issue of nonconformity in his diocese (though he suspected the Scots ministers of nonconformity) maintains "I did not remove them as they were preaching to large congregations, and for little money; besides, I hoped to reform them." Calendar of State Papers, Ireland 1625-30,661-2
4. Robert Blair of Bangor states that Bishop Echlin, knowing of his antipathy to episcopacy, said on the matter of his ordination, "Whatever you account of episcopacy, yet I know you account a presbyter to have divine warrant; will you not receive ordination from Mr Cunningham (Holywood) and the adjacent brethren, and let me come in amongst you in no other relation than a presbyter." "This", adds Blair, "I could not refuse, and so the matter was performed." R. Blair, Autobiography , ed.T. McCrie, Wodrow Socy 1848, 58-9. Bishop Echlin, for his part, states that there was no sign of nonconformity in Blair when he was ordained deacon and presbyter in 1623, Cal.S.P. Ire. 1625-30,661-2. John Livingstone of Killinchy records in 1630 when he came to Ulster that Bishop Echlin was unwilling to ordain him and he was ordained at Rathmullan, Donegal, by a number of neighbouring ministers by imposition of hands, Bishop Knox being present; and in the Service book used ( The Book of Common Prayer), all the passages which he might have questioned, had already been marked out by others; R. Wodrow, Select Biographies, ed. W.K. Tweedie (Wodrow Society, 1945-47), I.141. The most that can be said is that the form of Ordination used satisfied both the bishops and the Scottish Presbyterian ministers.
- 5 Blair, op.cit. 51
6. Wodrow Biographies,51
6. Cal,S,P, Ire. 1633-17, 87

8. H. Leslie, A Treatise of the Authority of the Church... Together with an Answer to certain Objections made against the Orders of our Church, espec. kneeling at Communion, Dublin 1637, 87-8
9. Wodrow, Biographies, I:147
10. Blair, Livingstone, Geo. Dunbar and Josias Welsh were suspended in 1631; reinstated almost immediately, suspended in 1632 and reinstated for sixmonths in 1634. Welsh died in June 1634, and Livingstone was silenced in May 1635. Jas Cunningham, John Ridge, John McClelland, David Kennedy, Edward Brice and Henry Calvert were deposed in 1636-8
11. "We went on teaching the people; only propter famam, I went not up to the pulpit, but stood by the precentor." Blair, op.cit.98
12. Blair, Livingstone and other ministers with members of their flocks sailed from Carrickfergus for America on 5 Sept 1636. Bishop Leslie knew of their intention to leave Ulster for the New World. In his sermon at the visitation of his diocese in Belfast, 10 August 1636.. he refers to the impending departure of the Presbyterians thus: "It is said that when Cain was cast out from the presence of God (that is, from his Church, and the place of his worship), he went and dwelt in the land of Nod; so you, when you are cast out of the Church, are preparing to go and dwell in the land of Noddies, and it is strange if the sides of the ship can contayne them; who cannot be kept within the pale of the Church." Leslie, Treatise, 106. J.S. Reid explains the meaning of the bishop's allusion to the land of Noddies thus: "Noddy is an old word for simpletons, so the bishop's wretched witticism 'the land of Noddies', is not very complimentary to his native country." Reid takes 'Noddies' to refer to Bishop Leslie's native land of Scotland, but by the "land of Noddies" he is implying the land of America! (History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Belfast 1867, I .195)
- Bishop Bramhall's comment on the Presbyterians' attempts to reach the New World is even more caustic: "The ring leaders of our non-conformists were all embarked for New England, but their faith not being answer to their zeal, they returned and are now in Scotland." (Letter to Archbishop Laud, June 7, 1637; Cal.S.P.Ire., 1633-47, 160)
13. John Livingstone writes: "in Oct 1641, the Rebellion broke out in Ireland. Many of the religious people in the North of Ireland had left it in the year 1637, when the deposed ministers were forced out of it by persevents sent out to apprehend them. Others left it in the year 1639 when the Deputy (Wentworth) urged upon all the Scots in Ireland an oath abjuring the National Covenant of Scotland and so they were free of that stroak of the rebellion. Many of those that took the oath weremurthered by the rebels." (Wodrow, op.cit., I.165
14. R. Baillie, Letters and Journals, ed.D. 15. Blair, op.cit.148; Wodrow Lainq (Bannatyne Club 1841-2), I.249 Biographies. I.158
16. P. Adair, A True Narrative of the Rise & Progress of the Pres.Church in Ireland, ed. W.D. Killen, Belfast 1866, 93.
17. Many examples of such variations are given in W. McMillan, The Worship of the Scottish Reformed Church 1550-1638, Dunfermilne 1831 passim
18. G.W. Sprott, The Worship of the Church during the Covenanting Period 1631-61, Edinburgh 1893, 6
19. Leslie, op.cit., 90; the Psalm Book was the usual designation for the

- B.C.O. Alexander Henderson refers to "our Psalme Book, penned by our great divine Reformers and declines to set down any other forms of prayer than those contained therein." Baillie, op.cit.II.2
20. Reid, op.cit. I.527            21. Blair, op.cit.71; Wodrow, op.cit; W.D. Baillie, Six Mile Water Revival of 1625, Newcastle 1976, 14-16
22. A. Henderson, Govt & Order of the Church of Scotland, 1641, note 14
23. Blair, op.cit. 59            24. ibid            25 ibid            26 ibid,130
27. W.McMillan, op.cit.,14    28. Blair, op.cit. 132
29. H. Leslie, A speech Delivered at the Visitation of Downe & Connor, held at Lisnagarvey the 26th Sept 1638, London 1639,4
30. Leslie, ibid 2; the bishop here charges the Presbyterian ministers neglecting to catechise. This can only mean that they refused to use the Catechism of the episcopal church.
31. Leslie, op.cit. 76-7; the bishop may here be referring to what happened at some places during the Six Mile Water Revival of 1625. The Presbyterian ministers also refer to the phenomem occurring among the worshippers.
32. Blair, op.cit., 61            33. Woodrow, Biographies, I.289
34. Blair, op.cit., 85
35. W. Brereton, "Travels of Sir Wm Brereton in Ireland, 1635" in Illustrations of Irish History and Topography, mainly of the 17th centyr, London 1904, ed. C. Litton Falkiner
36. Blair, 98            37. Leslie, 40. The word "humor" has changed its meaning since 17th century when it meant "whim"
38. Blair, 133 writes "O what melting in the prayer with great length and liberty"
39. McMillan, op.cit. 71; Baillie, op.cit. I. 249
40. Blair 61,64,99,101; Wodrow, I.143, 166            41. Blair 64; Wodrow 143
42. Blair 61            43. ibid 64            44. Leslie, op.cit. 69
45. Wodrow, op.cit. I.143            46. McMillan, op.cit., 163
47. Cal.S.P. Ire 1633-47, 87
48. John McClelland, a schoolmaster at Newtownards, "being approven by the honest ministers in the Countie of Down, preached oft publically in their Kirks"; Wodrow, op.cit. I.331            Bishop Leslie in his Visitation address in 1636, complained that "Some dominees here amongst you, who having no ordination to our calling, have taken upon themselves to preach, and preach I know not what, even the foolish visions of their owne heart." op.cit., 23
49. Wodrow, I.283            50. G.B. Burnett, Holy Communion in the Reformed Church of Scotland, Edinburgh 1960, 130
51. A. Peterkin, Book of the Universal Kirk, Edinburgh 1838, 421
52. Burnett, op.cit. 130            53 Wodrow, I.283            5 $\frac{3}{4}$  Blair, 85
55. Henderson, op.cit., 12            56. McMillan, op.cit, 124
57. Blair 85            58. Leslie, 69
59. Cf H. Davies, The Worship of the English Puritans, Westminster 1948

60. Blair 61. 61. Burnett, op.cit 269 62 Henderson 18.  
63. Wodrow 283 64. ibid 285 65. ibid 142 66. Blair, 84  
67. ibid 85 68. Henderson, op.cit 20 69. Blair 90  
70. Ibid 7. Blair was twelve years of age when he became a communicant and John Livingstone was under 14 when he received his first and trembling communion from Patrick Simpson of Stirling; Wodrow op.cit I.132  
71. Leslie 69. 72. Wodrow I.143  
73. Blair 66: "I baptized none till I first conferred with the father, and exhorted and instructed him, as need required."  
74. Wodrow, I.154; Henderson, Op.cit. 14 75. Leslie 40  
76. Wodrow I,154 77. Leslie 88 78. ibid 87 79. Calvin:Inst. II, 461  
80. Blair 69 81. Leslie 76 82. McMillan, op.cit.267  
83. ibid 84. Blair 68 85. Leslie 87 87 Reid, op.cit I.528  
88. Blair 68 89. ibid 69 90. Wodrow I.142 91. ibid  
92. Leslie 76. 93. Cal.S.P. Ire 133-47 32  
94. Hamilton Manuscripts 74 95. Leslie 190  
96. Adair, Narrative, Leslie (J.B.) and Swanzy (H.B.), Biographical Succession lists of the Clergy of the Diocese of Down, Enniskillen 1936, 183; Bishops Leslie & Bramhall escaped possible censure by Presbytery as they had left for England shortly after the onset of the Irish Rebellion 1641  
97. ibid 137

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