DEATH PRACTICES AND BURIAL RITES IN SCOTLAND FROM THE LATTER MEDIEVAL PERIOD TO 1780: WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE INFLUENCE OF THEOLOGY

By Roland S. Fredericks


Quotations are used profusely to support accuracy, and to transmit the contemporary flavor of each period.

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Medieval Period to 1780: with Particular Reference to the Influence of
Theology.

Before the Reformation, an intricate, syncretistic response to
death played a dominating role in Scottish culture. Blatant death,
often sudden or premature, was an inescapable fact of human experience;
and a death consciousness permeated the medieval mind and emotions. In
a monolithic society it was the Roman Catholic Church which accentuated
and shaped the response to death by providing a ministry of rituals for
the dying, ceremonies immediately after death, and a complex of post-
burial obsequies. Since all of these observances were ordinarily per-
formed in proximity to the body, the place of burial was supremely
important. This total response (supported by fear of the hereafter)
commanded much of the Church's energy and provided abundant endowments.

After 1560, the theology which guided the Reformation also in-
formed a new response to death. The reformers' attention to Biblical
teachings brought an immediate confrontation with medieval practices.
The Lollards, precursors of the new age, renounced the Church's claim
that its rituals influenced the destiny of a man's soul. Likewise,
many of Luther's Ninety-five Theses were written to contest the doc-
trines by which the Church supported its rituals and practices in be-
half of the dead. In subsequent writings Luther intensified this
concern; and he was joined by Calvin who found in the Word of God no
basis for the entire structure on which the Roman practices were
built - supererogation, the intercession of the saints, the validity of
the mass, the existence of purgatory, and the validity of prayers
for the dead. Teachings concerning the dead were among those respon-
sible for the martyrdom of Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart, and
were also some of the first emphases of John Knox as a reformer.

The Book of Common Order and The First Book of Discipline
defined a new response to death appropriate to the new Church. It was
to be devoid of clerical ritualism, but nevertheless a profoundly re-
ligious expression of the people of God as the congregation reverently
and unceremoniously executed the burial of one of its members. The
reformers worked for and achieved a sense of community at the time of
death by congregational attendance at the burial, the use of a common
coffin, mortcloth, and deadbell, and by an insistence upon a common
burial ground for all. Stressing the need for restraint and simplicity,
the reformers succeeded remarkably well in suppressing the intricate
Roman system of death rituals. But appendages of the ancient response
stubbornly persisted; especially the lykewake, the elaborate procession,
and burial inside church buildings.

After 1638, death practices gradually yielded to secularity as
a partially devitalized Church confronted a dynamic Scottish culture.
Statements in the Westminster Directory supported this decline. The
force of the Christian community at funerals was eclipsed by the force
of the civil community: the use of the parish mortcloth, coffin, and
deadbell decreased; and the Church expediently bowed to aristocratic
pressures in permitting class distinctions to determine the place of
burial and the nature of memorials. Likewise, as the Church gradually
relaxed the effort to achieve restraint, new secular extravagances
emerged. The burial "refreshment" became the focal activity of the
death ceremonial, while the lykewake, the "dergie," and sometimes the

Use other side if necessary.
"coffining" were almost equally indispensible. Processions, dictated by or in imitation of heraldry, became more and more elaborate, especially as economic standards improved, and as the wheeled vehicle was utilized. By 1780, it was no longer the Church, but social compulsion which largely determined the nature of society's response to death.
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PART ONE

PRE-FORMATION PRACTICES

(before 1560)
PRE-REFORMATION PRACTICES

A specific tradition of burial rituals and death practices had become firmly entrenched in Scotland by the time of the Reformation. This tradition had evolved from the process of Christian history through fifteen centuries, first on the Continent, and then in Britain. Its essential components were evident by A. D. 800; with significant refinements developing until 1350. From then until 1560 there followed a period of immutation during which both these components and their refinements were woven into Scottish culture. We shall discover that two characteristics largely dominated this tradition: a. Its intricacy, and b. Its syncretistic nature.

(a) There is a paradoxical contrast between the intricacy of medieval death practices and the simplicity of medieval life. Austere and uncertain existence tended to balance the scale of concern in favor of the life to come; with the result that death played a dominant role in the emotional and mental life of medieval people. The encounter with inevitable death was accentuated by its frequency in an age when medicine was helpless before everyday sicknesses and communicable diseases; when mannutrition, primitive gynaecology, and civil violence could be only patiently endured; and periodic wars ravished the burghs and the countryside. In this society violent death was
not uncommon, and untimely death was the rule.

Death's impact, when it did occur, was profound. The simplicity of organization of family and community life made death an intense and dramatic event. Family life was both intimate and interdependent. In an agrarian society, and frequently in burgh life too, the family was an economic as well as a social unit. The breaking of the family circle brought not only sorrow, but often left the bereaved family faced with practical problems of existence. Death outside the family was also consequential in the personal relationships which characterized medieval society whether in the country, the burgh, or the religious house. Death's reality was immediately felt by those closest to the deceased; for, there being no guild of undertakers to care for the body, this grim responsibility fell on family and neighbors.

In this rustic setting the pre-Reformation Church developed its intricate system of rituals and traditions to express its interpretation of a Christian response to naked death. It was a comprehensive system, with death as its fulcrum. It took into account the whole journey of a man's soul through the perils of this life; the crisis of the deathbed, death, the assignment to purgatory; the release to Heaven; and, if it be the soul of a saint, his ministry in behalf of those on earth. For each milestone of the soul's journey there was an appropriate ritual, perhaps several, enacted whenever possible in proximity to the body, whether living or dead. The progress of time gave a natural limit to the number of ritualistic acts which could be
performed before death, but after death the possibilities were inexhaustible. This fact, coupled with the belief that ritualistic observances determined the destiny of the deceased's soul, explains the vast and disproportionate amount of energy thus expended by the church.

(b) Though the intricacy of death observances was cumulative until the Reformation, their syncretistic nature was constant from the early centuries of Christian history. The process of synthesis, already under way in the second century,\(^1\) was accelerated during Constantine's reign (A.D. 306 - 337), when Christianity became lawful and there was a new influx into the Church. Creedal formulations were not immediately changed, but they could not contend against the popular practices of primitive folk religion and Gallo-Roman polytheism. The Christianity which emerged during the next four centuries was one partially subdued by the most popular and spontaneous practices of the pagan religions. Much of the pre-Reformation tradition of death practices was structured on the accretions of this period.

(1) The cult of the saints was one of the most determinative accretions, coming to Christianity from the pagan cult of the dead. The new Christians, both before and after Constantine, brought with them into the Church a lively sense of the influence of the dead upon the living, and of spirits hovering around tombs. From the natural reverence of Christians for the memory of the

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\(^1\) As early as A.D. 156 the martyrdom of Polycarp was celebrated in Smyrna, and marked the beginning of the cult of the martyrs. Hans Lietzman, A History of the Early Church, (Tr.) Bertrand Lee Wolf (London, 1960), Vol. II, p. 138.
martyrs, there developed the desire to worship at their shrines. Then prayers addressed to God at the tombs of the martyrs were soon being addressed to the saints who were believed to aid the living by their intercession. For the most part, the Church Fathers: Origen, Cyprian, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ephraem Syrus, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil, Jerome, Chryssostom, Augustine, and many others, confirmed and encouraged the view that the intercession of the saints was efficacious. Popular practices developed intercession into a lively cult in which the heroic dead were sought out to cure the sick, raise the dead, protect the land from invasion, and drive off demons; and as the doctrine of purgatory evolved, the saints' efforts in behalf of the soul were solicited. A few theologians, who at first attempted to discourage the cult of the saints, discovered that they could not stem the tide of popular feeling, especially after miracles began to occur at their shrines. So, popular practices, supported by the doctrines of intercession, made it inevitable that the dead were to play a dominant role in the Church's life.

(2) Closely associated with the cult of the saints, but growing out of a primitive animism, was the acceptance by the Church of the value of relics. The belief that the body, its members, its dust, or that which had contacted it, possessed a kind of spiritual power was to have a profound influence on burial. The church as a sacred place for burial did not originate, as might be expected, from the belief that the Church is the House

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of God and to be buried there is to rest in His safety. The early Christians were not inclined so to limit the Divine presence. Rather, burial in churches derives from an extraneous belief that the bones of the saints and martyrs made sacred the house of God. Christian churches were built, whenever possible, over the graves of the saints and martyrs, or at the place of their martyrdom. But when not possible, the Church possessed no new architecture to create in the building an ethos, an atmosphere of devotion which would distinguish it for its new use. Whether the Christian Church had appropriated for worship an ancient pillared temple, or whether it had built a new structure, it was soon found advantageous to make it a storehouse for the relics of martyrs, and surround it with the graves of the faithful departed. It is revealing that the word "sanctuary" in its early English usage referred to the burial place, as when John Myrc uses "senytwary" interchangeably with "churchyard." Developments from this expediency not only reinforced the characteristic longing to be buried in proximity to the bones of the saints at the altar, but also gave support to the cult of the saints which was to plague Christianity for subsequent centuries.

(3) Unlike the cult of the saints, and the employment of

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2 John Myrc, Instructions for Parish Priests. (Early English Text Society, London, 1868) p. 11, lines 330 - 339. Editorial note, Edward Peacock, "The name of sanctuary is now given to that part of the choir or chancel of a church where the altar stands. In medieval documents belonging to this country, Sanctuarium and its equivalents in English always mean 'churchyard.'" p. 75.
relics, purgatory was an accretion which did not come from an external source, but grew from within the Roman system of thought and practice. By the beginning of the fifth century St. Augustine clearly taught a belief in an intermediate period of cleansing between death and the final judgment:

Temporary punishments are suffered by some in this life only, by others after death, by others both now and then; but of all of them before that last and strictest judgment. But of those who suffer temporary punishments after death, all are not doomed to those everlasting pains which are to follow that judgment; but to some, as we have already said, what is not remitted in this world is remitted in the next; that is, they are not punished with the eternal punishment of the world to come.¹

In developing his concept, Augustine used the terms "purgatorial torments" and "purgatorial pains" to contrast with eternal punishment.² As the Church developed its doctrine of the future life, this intermediate state loomed larger and larger in its formulations. Many writers contributed to the evolution of thought about purgatory, but Gregory the Great (d. 604) was the first pope to propound the doctrine.³ It is significant that at the same time he proclaimed intercessory prayer and masses for the dead to be means of escape from purgatory.⁴

(4) Evidence of coalescence of Christian and pagan elements is also seen in the development of funeral ceremonial.

²Ibid., pp. 573 - 74.
The procession, a spectacular feature of the medieval funeral, had derived from pagan festivals in which images or pictures of the local God were ceremoniously paraded through the community and re-enthroned in a local shrine. Christians utilized the excitement and drama of the procession, substituting the cross for the representation of a pagan deity, and employing the relics of a local saint as a symbol of spiritual power. The procession was used to attain particular goals: to end drought, achieve military victory, or procure fruitfulness. Adamnan (c. 10th century) reports the use of St. Columba's tunic and books to produce rain; the tunic shaken as it was paraded around a field, and the books opened and read on the hillock where angels had once descended on him.\(^1\) The hillock, Sithean Mor, was known as a fairy hill. The procession was much the same as in a pagan ritual, but now the objects of S. Columba were substituted for the divine images. Popular piety saw the whole meaning of the Church as the battle of God against the devil, led by God's deputies (the priests in their colorful robes) who conquered the enemy in the mass and led their people into the eternal Fatherland.\(^2\) The ornate funeral procession was the march to that consecrated place where ultimate victory was claimed.

Another example of the fusing of Christian and pagan ceremonial is found in the development of the funeral feast from the ancients' sacrificial meal at the tombs of the dead. Fustel de Coulanges has shown that this ceremony played an important

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role in the pre-Christian era; and the Christian agape retained some of its characteristics.\(^1\) However, when the Eucharist began to replace the agape, it revived several of the major elements of the pagan rite: it was a sacrifice in which the participants did not eat a common meal; it was usually administered at the altar, the burial place of a saint; and it was experienced as a mystery. The common meal, the outward expression of the agape, was driven from its holy precincts; but it survived through the centuries as a kind of secular death ritual.

THE HOUR BEFORE DEATH

The Medieval Death Crisis

Mankind has always faced imminent death with bewilderment, but medieval men faced it with foreboding. To the usual uncertainties which accompany death were added those distinctive attributes of medieval culture which served to make the hour of death a time of crisis.

During his lifetime the doomed person had been saturated with the death consciousness of medievalism. The death fact was proclaimed by the ringing of the passing bell as the bellman carried it throughout the community. For subsequent days the great bell of the church was tolled. In the larger communities the ringing of the bells was almost a daily occurrence. Death was made visual by the funeral processions which led from the home of the deceased to the church, and the next day from the church to the place of burial. The same death incident was

recalled over and over in the ever recurring anniversaries. It was clearly the subject of much conversation. Superstitions and legends concerning the dead passed from generation to generation and from house to house.¹

To his natural perplexity concerning death were added those tensions which ensued from his indoctrination as a child of the Church. The terrors of hell below, and the hope of heaven above were as real to him as his cellar and his ceiling.² But unless he had taken the cowl, heaven was not an immediate possibility, for it was assumed by the Church that all laymen must undergo the therapeutic sufferings of purgatory. The best he could hope for was the avoidance of hell, and an early release from purgatory's torments. Expectation that these lesser hopes might be fulfilled was promised only upon conformity to the Church's demands, while the alternative was clearly taught and vividly pictured. The Biblia Pauperum, a fifteenth century pictorial Bible used by the Church for evangelization, portrayed hell with the wicked bound in one vast bundle, descending naked amid flames to the abyss. Six frightful demons kept them in their suffering with blows and insults. This caption accompanied the painting:

With pains like these are they afflicted
To evil ways who are addicted.³

Such pictures as this he may also have seen in his parish Church, and they must certainly have haunted the mind of the condemned man as he endured his last hours. The Church's view of this outlook on death was expressed by John Myrc (c. 1450), "It is good for thee to kiss the earth and look on dead men's bones, and think of the pains of hell and Christ's passion." One of the "good" results of the Church sought from the contemplation of hell was a forthright confession before death. After being bound for his execution (1485), Sir James Liddale confessed that his lands of Creich had been conquered by his predecessors from the Foules family, "Wherefore the said James asked pardon of the said James Foules." When John Watson was in extremis laborans (1488), he publicly declared that he was responsible for an affray with George Guld at Canonmillis, "therefore the said John asked pardon from Almighty God and forgave the said George."

The nature of the Church's demands at the time of death, supported by its claim to determine the destiny of the soul, heightened the climax of death by its insistence that certain ritualistic acts be performed before the soul's departure. Equally important, in the popular mind these necessities led to

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1At Rowdill, Harris, a sculptured panel at the back of a recessed arch depicts St. Michael weighing souls, with the devil standing by and "evidently taking a practical interest in the operation." Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries, (1884-85), Vol. XIX, p. 124.


the belief that after the reception of the sacraments the believer must maintain perfection until he dies. Thus the very last moments of earthly life, between the time of the reception of the sacraments and death, determined the soul's destiny forever. Devout believers who were able to do so took strong measures to assure their security in these moments. Sir William Turro, Vicar of the Church of Manor, made a notarized deathbed statement (August, 1557) renouncing:

all warldlie riches, honour, and earthly pleasure; the devill, his angells, and all his works; making it known he and his angels were ready at all times to induce in the time of the latter hour of one's death, to trouble the mind, the reason, the spirit. But protesting that whatever temptations the said Enemy and his angels should induce in this time, hour and article of death, should not be prejudicial to his Soul in the time of the departing thereof from the body, furth of this Vale of Misery, nor should the Devil have the power to stop his Soul from the heritage of Heaven, but that the Soul be gladly received by the Angels of God into the bosom of Abraham; just as the Soul of the poor man Lazarus was received, when the Rich Man was repelled.¹

Another method of assuring spiritual security through the death crisis was the donning of the monk's frock and cowl at the conclusion of life, being received in the last days or hours into a religious order as a monk ad succurrendum. Along with the special value attributed to the sanctity of the monastery was added a reverence for the habit which the monk was required to wear in life and in death. Religious orders commonly taught that their members were bound for heaven; and since their monks were seen exclusively in their particular garb, it was concluded that

¹Dr. Gunn. The Church and Monastery of the Holy Cross of Peebles. (Peebles, 1909), pp. 36 - 37.
this was the apparel of salvation.¹ Joannes Grossus, a White Friar, wrote in 1430 of St. Simon Stock's vision of the Virgin Mary in which she appeared with a multitude of angels, holding in her hand the scapular of the Order, and saying: "This shall be a privilege for thee and all the Carmelites, he who dieth in this habit shall be saved."² Two centuries earlier (1232), when Patrick the fifth earl of Dunbar was stricken after a Yule festival, he summoned the Abbot of Melrose and "received extreme unction and the dress of monk at his hands; and thus, bidding a last farewell to all, he died . . ."³

Another expression of the death crisis is found in the custom of dying recumbent on sackcloth and ashes. This first originated with S. Martin, Bishop of Tours, who at the point of death lay down on sackcloth and ashes and received thusly the sacraments of the Church. The custom developed among the pious, laymen and clergy alike. It may have made some progress in Scotland during subsequent centuries, through the Cistercian order, as the Customary of the monks of Cluny made it a rule of their order:

The servants of God, the monks of Cluny, when they perceive the hour of their departure is at hand, spread out a piece of haircloth, over which they sprinkle ashes, and lifting the sick monk out of bed, they lay him down on the ashes.  

It is evident from the urgent attention given to the proper manner of death that the medieval mind would be possessed by a dread of sudden death, forcing the believer to die unfortified by the last rites of the Church, and without the support of the prayers which were thought necessary to insure a happy destiny for the soul.  A third and practical concern was the fear of dying intestate.  As only a few were literate and able to file a legal will, the majority dictated their last wills and testaments to the priests from their deathbeds.  

The terror of sudden death is evidenced both in literature and folklore.  John Myrc cites among the benefits of receiving Holy Communion that the recipient will not fall by sudden death:

That day that thow sayst goddes body,  
These benefyces schalt thou haue sycurly;  
Soden deth that ylke day,  
The dar not drede withowte may.

The postcommunion prayer in the office for the dead petitions "that the sacrament which we have received may wipe away all of our sins, and drive far from us all wickedness, both visible


3Myrc, op. cit., p. 10.
and invisible, and sickness, and sudden death...\(^1\) But the
Sacrament was not left to perform its function unaided; certain
appropriate saints were invoked to protect the devout against
the dread enemy. St. Christopher, who watched over travellers,
was especially important in an age of perilous journeys. The
plague was the most frequent cause of sudden death; and as wide-
spread belief traced it and other sickness to the invisible
arrows of gods, spirits and sorcerers, martyrs, like St.
Sabastian, who themselves had been slain by arrows, were called
upon for protection.\(^2\) Others, like St. Rock, developed special
reputations as advocates for the sick.\(^3\)

**Extreme Uction**

The sacrament of unction, used in the ancient Church as
a means of healing, had by the Middle Ages evolved into the
sacrament of extreme unction to be used only in the case of
critical illness when there is reasonable expectation of death.
It was administered, sometimes before or after the Eucharist and
sometimes in the same rite, to support the dying in their
critical hour.

The oil employed had been consecrated by the bishop on
Thursday of Holy Week,\(^4\) and was reverently borne by the parish

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\(^1\)Frederick E. Warren, *Sarum Missal in English*, (London,

\(^2\)The Book of Saints, compiled by the Benedictine Monks
of St. Augustine’s Abbey, Ramsgate (London, 1931), p. 239.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 231

\(^4\)Services of the Church with Rubrical Directions According
Illustrious Church of Sarum, Third Edition (London, n.d.),
p. 425.
priest to those "in whatever sickness fear of death is entertained."\(^1\) The recipient was seated or knelt if strength permitted. Previous to the anointing, unless it followed the receiving of the Eucharist, an examination and confession was in order. The Lansdowne Manuscript (c. 1470) contained seven exacting questions to be put by the priests and answered by the dying. Beginning with the question of his adherence to the orthodox Catholic faith, these questions proceeded through admission of sin against God, the desire to amend, the forgiveness of enemies, willingness to make satisfaction, and the putting of final confidence in Christ the Savior.\(^2\)

Prayer, said by the sick man if possible, usually followed the confession and preceded the anointing. The form of anointing varied somewhat according to the necessities of a particular sickness and considerations of modesty; but in medieval times anointing normally meant the anointing of the entire body. The eyes, (beginning with the right eye), the ears, the lips, the nostrils, the hands, the feet and the breast were touched with the oil which the priest had applied to his thumb by dipping.\(^3\) After each anointing he, or an attendant, wiped away the oil with cotton or with bread. With each anointing the priest

\(^{1}\)Aberdeen Synodal Statutes of the Thirteenth Century, Statutes of the Scottish Church, (Tr.) David Patrick, (Edinburgh, 1907), Statute 62, p. 36.


\(^{3}\)Services of the Church, Sarum, op. cit., pp. 451 - 52.
said, "By this anointing and of His merciful loving-kindness, the Lord forgive thee the offences thou hast committed by the sense of sight, hearing, etc."\(^1\)

Though the sacrament must have brought solace to many, a statute of the Diocese of Aberdeen betrays the reluctance of some to receive extreme unction. It was necessary for the priests to encourage its use: "Let priests diligently exhort sick parishioners from the age of fourteen years and upwards to extreme unction."\(^2\) One reason for lay resistance was the payment which priests had sometimes demanded: "Let them administer this sacrament gratis and freely to all who ask it and are penitent."

Furthermore, a pious tradition had developed that those who received the sacrament but survived their illness were forbidden conjugal intercourse as husband and wife, the eating of flesh, or walking on bare feet.\(^3\) Such a belief, accompanied with the view that extreme unction, like baptism, could be received but once in one's life, discouraged its being received until all hope of life was gone. The Aberdeen Statute exhorted parish priests "to explain to them that this sacrament may be repeated...and that after this sacrament it is lawful to return to the conjugal relation and to other lawful acts as before."\(^4\)

The Viaticum

There is little suspicion that the reluctance of some

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\(^{1}\)Ibid.

\(^{2}\)Aberdeen Synodal Statutes of the Thirteenth Century, Statutes of the Scottish Church, op. cit., p. 62.

\(^{3}\)Pelliccia, op. cit., p. 546.

\(^{4}\)Aberdeen Statutes, Statutes of the Scottish Church, op. cit., p. 36.
medieval Christians to receive extreme unction was paralleled in their response to the Eucharist. On the contrary, the concern of fourteenth century statutes of the Scottish Church is not to maintain a continuing willingness to receive the sacrament, but rather to raise the standards for its administration: "Let the most excellent sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord be handled with reverence, devoutness, and honour." A deeply ingrained desire for the Eucharist was especially evident on the deathbed, even during the period of pre-Reformation spiritual decline.

In the early medieval period the viaticum had been brought to the bedside by relatives and neighbors; the priests, not feeling it necessary to go themselves, reserved the Lord's Body from the Sunday mass. The sacrament was so important in the popular mind it was administered to infants and even to the dead. After the ninth century, when the priests were enjoined to administer it themselves, taking the Sacrament to the sick and dying became a major pastoral responsibility. The priests' neglect in taking the Sacrament to the dying was of such seriousness as to call for the personal chastisement by His Holiness.3

1Ibid., p. 34.
Precise procedure was given for the priest's procession to the home of a sick parishioner, and for his administration there. The priest was to proceed to the home carrying the Eucharist in a clean burse encased in a pyx and covered with a clean linen cloth. He is to be vested in his surplice, and preceded by an attendant carrying a lighted lantern and ringing a bell "at whose sound the devotion of the faithful may be awakened." He is to bear the Lord's body reverently in front of his breast. After hearing the confession of the dying man and giving him the Eucharist, he is to present the sick person with the water in which he (the priest) has laved his thumb and first finger. He is to carry a special vessel of silver or pewter for this purpose.¹

Almost the precise directions are given two centuries later in the Synodical Constitution of Archbishop Andrew, of the Diocese of St. Andrews (1516 - 1521); but now they are preceded by a reprimand for the casualness of the clergy and the pronouncement of a heavy penalty for its continuance.²

The Passing Bell

The "passing bell" was rung at the climax of mortal illness to announce to the parish that the soul of the sinner, about to depart, was enduring its final conflict. Its name implied its avowed purpose, to pray for the dying rather than for the dead. It originated in the early medieval period when the

²Synodical Constitutions (St. Andrews), ibid., p. 272, 273.
critical hour of death required the support of the prayers of the faithful that the soul may not falter in its last earthly trial. The Venerable Bede, in relating the death of S. Hilda at Whitby (A.D. 680), tells us that S. Bees (Begu) heard the well-known sound of a bell at the moment of S. Hilda's departure, such as was "used to call them to prayers when anyone of them was taken out of this world."¹ The custom grew during the next centuries, as a strong belief in the doctrine of purgatory and in the power of prayer, especially at the hour of death, was a major characteristic of medieval piety.²

The term "passing bell" usually refers to the occasion of a bell's use rather than to a particular instrument. Even the larger churches, like Holy Trinity in St. Andrews, St. John's in Ayr, and St. Giles in Edinburgh, dedicated one of their bells (usually the tenor) as the "dead bell"; and used it as the passing bell, the tolling bell, and the signal for the beginning of funeral and obit obsequies. The inscription on the bell in St. Giles church, Tyninghame, shows the extent to which it was considered of importance to the dead (1460): "Defunctos plango, vivos voco, fulmina frange", or "I mourn the dead, I call the living (to Prayer), I dispel the thunder."³ The majority of churches had no


large bell, and employed the humble hand bell (used for all community announcements) as the "passing bell." Usually crude, it had been hammered into a form resembling the Greek cross, the sides bent together and riveted. A lapper was added by a contrivance secured by the same piece of wood which formed the handle. Ringing this humble instrument as he walked through the town "at every land end and every ward end," the bellman announced the urgency of prayer for one at the point of death.

Apart from its particular purpose, the ringing of the passing bell could not be disassociated in the minds of medieval people from their total response to bells. Bells were an important means of unifying the life of a community, both secular and religious. The ringing of the hours bells became a signal for the work schedules of the guilds and trades. These church bells were usually the only clock the common people knew. The burgh council of Maestricht (1282) declared that owners of the great tithes must provide a bell that would be heard throughout the town.

A superstitious reverence for bells came to be the dominating medieval response. It was believed that bells could drive away evil spirits, could stop pestilences and plagues, and control the weather. Excommunication was by "bell, book, and candle," and oaths were taken on the bell as an object more sacred than the Gospels. For the ceremony of anointing of bells; exorcisms, water

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and salt, andunctions were applied with holy oils. Each bell was given a name, suggested, for ceremonial purposes, by its "Godfather." The five great bells in the Tower at King's College were named Trinitas, Maria, Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Although bells were not baptized, the ceremony performed over the bell appeared to the popular mind as the sacrament performed for an infant. An ancient document complained:

Bells are not only conjured and hallowed, but are also baptismed: and have approgated for them godfathers, which hold the rope (wherein they are tied) in their handes and doe answere and say, "Amen", too that which the Suffrrange or Bishop doth speake or demaund of the Bell.

Such reverence made it appropriate for magnificent ornamented shrines, like that of the Kilmichael Glaessary in Argyllshire, to be built to encase the sacred objects. Sacred bells added immensely to the income of their owners, whether they were the property of the institution or of an individual. In Dunfermline St. Margaret's bell was divided between two owners, and one of the owners subsequently contracted to give the bell's services for one day of the week in return for an anniversary mass in

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2 Ibid.
behalf of himself and his wife.\footnote{Ibid. Section 154.}

This veneration, in addition to the associations which came from the ringing of the bell at the time of birth and marriage, and at the mass, would insure that the ringing of the passing bell could not be understood as an isolated event, but was charged with powerful religious responses.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the use of the passing bell before death was being replaced by the ringing of the dead bell, or the soul bell, to announce the death and insure the prayers of the faithful during the spirit's journey. There appears no clear distinction between the two traditions, but practical considerations seem to have given favour to the latter practice. It may also indicate some diminishing of the death crisis itself, and a reduced importance of prayers said at the moment of death which gave way to the Church's emphasis on prayers said after death. As communities grew and the number of deaths multiplied, the proper timing of the passing bell would have become increasingly difficult.

CEREMONIES AT THE TIME OF DEATH

Ecclesiastical rituals at the time of death varied considerably according to the wealth and status of the deceased, the customs and mores of a particular area, the liturgical emphasis of a diocese, and the immediate circumstances of death. It is possible, however, to define a measure of uniformity because of the general acceptance in Scotland of the Use of Sarum. Queen Margaret (1070 - 1093) had succeeded in introducing the Scottish Church to certain Latin practices which paved the way for its orientation to Rome
and the Continent. With the Romanizing of the Church of Scotland the Sarum Office, as used by St. Osmund (d. 1099) in the Cathedral of Salisbury, came more and more into use.¹ Liturgical manuscripts used in Scotland for two centuries before the Reformation give witness to a general Anglicanization of the Scottish Church. The Culross Psalter (late medieval) mentions but a few Scottish saints.² The Perth Psalter (c.1475) contains litanies which are identical with those in the Sarum books, and the Kalendar is the same as Sarum's except for a few insignificant omissions replaced by Scottish saints.³

The Church, which gave specific directions for procedures before death, was usually precise in prescribing obsequies which followed death. When the Church did not define procedure, necessity and folk custom filled the void.

**Body Preparation and Lykewake**

The body was washed after death and, unless the deceased had been a person of high station or in holy orders, the corpse was wrapped within a plain white linen winding sheet. Members of religious houses coveted the privilege of burial in the habit of their order. Knights were buried honorably in their armour, and royalty in princely robes.⁴


It is difficult to establish clearly how long the body ordinarily remained in the home. The Sarum Manual implies that it was taken immediately to the Church, but we know that quite frequently it remained in the home until the time of burial. The presence of the body in the home is suggested by an apparent reference in the Aberdeen Statutes to the festivities of the wake to which the Church was opposed:

Likewise at the funerals and exequies of deceased lay persons, we forbid singing and dancing to take place; since it does not become us to laugh at the weeping of others; but in a case of this kind rather to grieve as they do.

Further evidence that these objectionable celebrations took place in the home is found in the anniversary observance of the dergen, at which time those close to the deceased gathered in the home on the night before the anniversary mass and joined in uttering words of lamentation. Since the anniversary attempted to re-enact the time of death and burial, and since it did not utilize a new liturgy for this purpose, it would appear that the dergen was the unofficial and voluntary use of Dirige at the lykewake. Somewhat later, when the main social event at the time of death followed the funeral, it was referred to as the dergie, "an

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1Ibid., p 378.
2The Super Cathedram issued in 1299 by Boniface VIII, gave friars the right to bury in the conventional cemeteries processing directly from the home without taking the body to the parish church or performing any part of the funeral ceremony there. W. Noir Bryce, The Scottish Grey Friars, (Edinburgh, 1909), Vol. I, p. 431.
3Statutes of the Scottish Church, op. cit., p. 42.
entertainment or drink given after a funeral."^1

The Procession

Designed to achieve more than its utilitarian goal, the procession was one of the most dramatic events of medieval society. As it proceeded either from the house of the deceased to the church, or from the church to the cemetery, it fully utilized both eye and ear appeal for a great ecclesiastical display.

No color is named in the Sarum books for the offices of the dead, but black appears frequently in inventories of church goods.² Black became the most common color both because of the frequent celebrations of the requiem, and because of the preponderance of chaplains and other priests whose only duty was to celebrate post-burial obsequies.³ In Crail, the skull was embroidered on the black velvet cross adorning the black worsted chasuble.⁴ Still, other colors were used and acceptable. Colored vestments were worn on Sundays and feast days; and in small or poor parishes which had but a few vestments, the Lenten red with its somber orphreys were used, and white was always worn at the funeral of a child under seven years old.⁵

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³Denis A. McKay, The Office of the Parish Clerk in the Scottish Church Between 1450 and 1560, (University of London Library: 1960), p. 128.
⁴Charles Rogers, Register of the Collegiate Church of Crail, (London, 1877), p. 64.
⁵Morse, loc. cit.
At the head of the procession was a cross bearer accompanied by a boy in surplice\(^1\) and carrying holy water. These were followed by two acolytes with lighted tapers in their candlesticks; behind them the sexton and the clers two and two. The officiating priest followed vested in alb and almuce. Following him came the choir-boys, choir men, and assistant clergy.\(^2\) Then came the corpse, carried on a bier and surrounded by friends bearing torches and wax-lights. Behind processed the chief mourners dressed in black cloaks and hoods.\(^3\)

When the corpse present was an animal, e.g. the "kirk cow", it frequently joined the procession, taking its place immediately before the corpse and following the officiating priest.\(^4\) This placing of the mortuary gift had legal significance. The *Regiam Maiestatem* (c. 1400) states:

\begin{quote}
If a priest, challenged for anything, says that he received it as a mortuary he ought to prove it by good men of the parish who saw the dead banners carried before the body of the deceased.\(^5\)
\end{quote}

To this impressive sight was added the intermittent ringing of the dead bell by the sexton, inviting all within hearing to say a prayer for the dead; and the voices of the


\(^{2}\)Morse, *op. cit.*, p. 122.


clerks singing psalms 114, 115, and 25 as they processed.\(^1\)

The procession concluded either within the church, or at the grave. In the church the bier was placed according to the deceased's station in life. The body of an ecclesiastic or noble was taken into the choir and placed in a hearse, a permanent or portable enclosure for the coffin with receptacles for the processional lights. But most bodies remained outside the choir, and were placed in the nave, either in a hearse or on the floor with feet toward the high altar, in the direction they were afterward to be buried. A large black pall,\(^2\) with a wide white cross running through the entire length and width, covered the body. Sarum use required that at least four candles, one at each corner of the bier, be kept burning the entire time the corpse was in the church.\(^3\)

Though in the details of practice there were countless variations, the lights placed around the corpse were indispensable. Special provision was made that the very poor might have lighted tapers at their funerals. As for royalty, traces of the six sockets used for tapers around Queen Margaret's bier in the then new choir at Dunfermline are still evident, the same number as are found at the great feretory of the proto-martyr of England

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\(^2\)The pall was frequently supplied by a trade guild, e.g. the hammermen of Edinburgh possessed an elaborate one. J. Smith, The Hammermen of Edinburgh, p. lvi. They were sometimes cared for by the town council as in Dundee as early as 1442, Alexander Maxwell, Old Dundee, (Dundee: 1891), p. 9.

\(^3\)Morse, op. cit., p. 123.
at St. Albans.1 "St. Margaret's Lichts" were always kept burning and are prominent in the burgh records of Dunfermline as well as on the burgh seal.2 In St. Giles Church the rental of the "foure Grete Goldin Candilstikks" and "the Candillstikis that standis in the Queir and about the beir" was a significant means of income before the Reformation.3 In some churches, the four candles placed about the corpse were received by the officiating clergyman as part of his payment.4

Placebo, Dirige, and Requiem

Whereas the mass was the one indispensable funeral ritual, two choral rituals, one for vespers and one for matins, were included in Sarum's office for the dead and were ordinarily employed in the larger towns and burghs.

Placebo was the name commonly given to even-song or vespers for the dead, taken from the first word of the first antiphon, "Placebo Domino in regione vivorum" (Psalm 114:9, Vulgate edition). If the body were brought to the church on the afternoon of the day preceding burial, Placebo was the first office to be sung.5 In contrast to the mass in the office for the dead, Placebo and Dirige were choral services with special

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2 Michael Barrett, Scottish Monasteries of Old, (Edinburgh, 1913), p. 36, 37.
3 City of Edinburgh old Accounts, 1552 - 1567 (Edinburgh, 1899), p. 84.
5 McKay, op. cit., p. 111.
books provided for laymen. Placebo included several antiphons: the chanting of Psalms 116:1-8, and Psalm 146 in monotone; the Magnificat; the Lord's Prayer and the Ave Maria said inaudibly; and a prayer for the souls of the departed that they may obtain pardon "through devout supplications." The officiating clergyman was directed not to leave his stall, or change his vestments; but some drama was added when the office was said solemniter by the entrance of two candle-bearers who placed their candles before the altar at the beginning of the Magnificat, and remained standing until the conclusion of the next antiphon, when they knelt in their places until the end of the service.

Dirige was the name given to a similar choral office, Mattins and Lauds of the Dead. The name was taken from the first word of the first antiphon, "Dirige, Domine, Deus meus, in conspectu tuo viam meam," (Psalm 5:8, Vulgate Edition). This was followed by the offering of nine penitential lessons, the scripture selections varying somewhat in different editions. Dirige was properly sung at dawn, preceding the mass, the two services being referred in common-speech as the "Dirge!" As late

1"The Deputy Book of Hours" now in the Advocates' Library, is a fifteenth century, illuminated manuscript containing these services for the choir. W. K. Dickson, P.S.A.S., Vol. L, p. 174.


3Ibid., p. 125.


5Ibid., p. 129 (n.)
as 1525 the burgh council in Aberdeen agreed that when any of the town's officers died the sacrist must see that the bell "sall ring all that nicht and till his dirige." 1 But it is probable that for ordinary citizens Dirige, if observed, was sung the previous evening immediately following Placebo. The typical mention of these choir services in the records of anniversary endowments assumes that they are sung at the same sitting, with mass the following morning.

The Requiem, or Solemn High Mass also received its name from the first words of the introit, which began "Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine." Its efficacy as a funeral rite depended first on its efficacy as a mass by which the priest as an instrument of the Church was enabled to produce a miraculous act acceptable to God as a sacrifice. This sacrifice in the view of Albertus Magnus is not mere representatio, but immolatio vera. As the priest exercises the power of the keys, so also he produces the mystery, and thereby, like Christ, in whose person he operates, becomes a mediator between God and man. 2

The Requiem Mass is then a Holy Sacrifice in behalf of souls. It is the same sacrifice as in every other mass, but the Collect, the Secret, and the Postcommunion prayers direct its benefits to the dead. The Postcommunion prayer for the day of burial expresses this purpose:

Grant, we beseech thee, O Lord, that the soul of thy

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servant, for whose body we this day perform the duty of humanity, having been cleansed by this sacrifice, may give thanks to thee for the perpetual gift of thy salvation. Through etc.

The same responsibility of the mass for the deceased's welfare is found in the Secret offered at the mass "For One Overtaken by Sudden death";

We beseech thee, O Lord, that the offering of this present sacrifice may make satisfaction unto thee for the soul of they servant, that he may find that pardon of sins which he sought; and that though he cannot fulfil it with the voice of his lips, by thy kindness he may receive the fruits of that penitence which he desired. Through etc.

Because it was a worthy deed, a pious act merely to look upon the mysterium tremendum as it took place in the requiem mass, attendance at funerals was of utmost importance. The church bell was rung not only in tribute to the dead person, but for the practical purpose of summoning the faithful to the services scheduled for his soul's well-being. In Dundee the burgh council charged forty pence for "the gret bells to be rung for either saul mess or dirige." In Glasgow the St. Mungo bell was to "be turyst ryngand throwch the toune, the nicht befoir and the morne the tyme of the missis be the belman, and he to half thairfor fowls pennies." The Guild of Merchants of Berwick stimulated the good work of attendance by enacting an ordinance: "If any of the brethern of the Guild, being in the town, shall not come to the burial of his


2Ibid., p. 189.

3From manuscript in Burgh Archives, quoted in Alexander Maxwell, Old Dundee, op. cit., p. 42.

brother, he shall forfeit one boll of barley malt. This regulation was one among others adopted generally by the burghs of Scotland in the middle of the thirteenth century.

The sacrifice of the requiem mass differed from other masses in its purpose, but the mass itself was very similar in ceremonial. The sequences were precisely the same, although all Scripture readings, the Epistles, the Lessons, and the Gospels were appropriately selected, as was the gradual and the tract. These selections, in turn, were the same on the day of burial as those used in masses for the dead throughout the year.

The one striking ceremonial difference in the mass for the day of burial was the censing of the corpse. This was to be done by a deacon at three places in the mass: the beginning of mass after the censing of the altar, before the Gospel while the Tract is being sung, and after the priest had censed the sacrifice. The deacon was to refrain from going around the bier, but was to cense on both sides each time, "beginning from the head, and censing unceasingly."  

The Committal

Apart from Manuale Sarum, there are but few records which describe the ceremonies at the grave or tomb in Scotland. Those still extant recount the burials of royalty, nobility, or high ecclesiastics, whose wealth provided unusual ostentation and whose


2 Warren, op. cit., p. 175, 176.
prestige permitted considerable license. ¹

When the Sarum rite was followed, the priest left the church at the beginning of the funeral mass (while the choir chanted The Commendation of Souls) and proceeded to the cemetery. There, with a spade, he marked the place and size of the grave by digging the shape of the cross upon the ground. After returning to the church and completing the mass, the company proceeded to the place of burial while the clergy chanted a psalm. As the grave was being dug, all joined in singing Psalm 117, followed by an antiphon and two collects. The priest then blessed, incensed, and sprinkled the grave, and the body was lowered as the clerks sang Psalm 41. There followed a prayer for forgiveness of the departed, and the Absolution, which was read from a parchment scroll before placing it upon the breast of the corpse. ² The body was then sprinkled again with holy water, and censed. The 131st Psalm was recited, with antiphon, followed by a prayer for mercy toward the dead. Then the priest strewed some earth over the corpse so as to form a cross; and the grave was filled up, to the singing of Psalm 138. After another prayer in behalf of the deceased the procession returned to the church singing the seven

¹Even the rubrics of Sarum prepare the way for this license, as they are sometimes qualified for the benefit of the privileged: e. g., the prohibition on censing the corpse at Vespers and Mattins, "unless it should be the corpse of a king, a bishop, earl or baron." Ibid., p. 176.

penetential Psalms, or De profundis only.¹

It would appear quite unrealistic not to recognize the many circumstances which may have made adherence to this exacting ritual all but impossible. When the cemetery was some distance from the church the priest could not mark the grave at the beginning of requiem mass and return in time to officiate.² The two verses which comprise Psalm 117, to be sung during the digging of the grave would become monotonously repetitious even under the most favorable geological conditions. In many areas the low rate of literacy among the clergy and laity alike, and the limitation of manuscripts, too, would have handicapped the singing of numerous psalms. We know also that for burials performed in cemeteries of monasteries or convents, the service in a parish church could be bi-passed completely and all the obsequies were held at the grave.³ During plagues many preferred ways were dispensed with. In 1499 the burgh council of Edinburgh appointed "carriers and buriers of the dead in times of pest" simply to

¹This paragraph is a composite summary of the most important aspects of the interment ceremonial as agreed upon by F. E. Brightman in The English Rite (London: 1915), vol. I, p. cxxvi.; and Rock, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 382 - 388. There were many minute variations among the thirty-three editions of the Sarum Manual published between 1497 and 1558.

²Though it was customary to place burial grounds near the church, exceptions were not uncommon. For example, pre-Reformation "resting stones" for coffins on their long journey to the grave can be found at Cleish in Kinross-shire, and also nearby at Orwell. Rogers, Social Life in Scotland, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 167.

³Bryce, op. cit., P. 21.
POST-BURIAL RITES

A Complex of Obits

Though the offices performed at the time of death were intricate and thorough, they commonly represented but a small proportion of the total ritualistic service offered in behalf of the deceased. All of the offices except the actual burial could be repeated; and by means of the division of the body or disinterment, even burial was sometimes re-enacted. The repetitious use of the offices for the dead became one of the characteristic aspects of medieval culture, both reflecting and increasing the people's pre-occupation with death; and exacting a costly expenditure of the Church's energies.

By the time of the Reformation in Scotland, the labyrinth of post-burial offices for the dead had become entrenched through nine centuries of papal sanction. The Council of Trent had clearly affirmed the doctrine that the mass is a means of procuring relief for the souls in purgatory; and in Scotland the Church supported and encouraged this view uncompromisingly through the very eve of the Reformation. In the face of opposition to the doctrine of purgatory the "Provincial Council of the Clergy for the whole realm of Scotland" declared in 1558 - 1559:

We most firmly believe that after this life there is a purgatory for souls, in which is paid the penalty still due for their sins; who are nevertheless succoured by the good works of the living, so that thereby they are

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more speedily released.  

The good works referred to included masses, prayers, and alms.  
The same Council was equally uncompromising concerning the benefit of the mass to the dead:

The sacrifice of the mass, being instituted in commemoration of Christ's passion, benefits both the living and the dead by the efficacy of his passion. 2

That the good works of the living could succour the pains of the dead was accepted even in courts of law. In 1533 Elphinstone of Glack, who had killed a poor woman's husband, pleaded the right to have his crime remitted by his making pilgrimages to the three leading shrines of Scotland, there to do penance and to offer "masses and suffrages for the soul" of the slaughtered man, 3

In 1554, the prayers of Lord Borthwick for a slain man were accepted as satisfaction by John Steward of Traquair, who had taken legal action against him. 4

A society which believed in the efficacy of prayers and masses in behalf of the dead, and accepted the need of these works because of the dire condition of souls in purgatory, looked for a means by which these could be extended. The result was a vast complex of obits, or post-burial observances for the dead. A change in the meaning of the word obit took place during this period. Originally it had referred only to a person's death

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1 Statutes of the Scottish Church, 1225 - 1559. op. cit., p. 174.

2 Ibid., p. 175.


(Latin, obitus, and French, obire, to go to meet, to die), but in
medieval times obit came more frequently to refer to "a service
in behalf of a deceased person on the anniversary of his death."¹
Through the obit a person's death became a continuing experience
in the affection, memory, and concern of his family and his church.
It was appropriate that no new liturgy was provided for obit
observances, but the offices said, and the ceremonies performed
at the time of death and burial were repeated with the slightest
adjustments. Placebo and Dirige were sung exactly as at the time
of death. The anniversary mass was the requiem used on the day
of burial; but now the tomb, or a catafalque, or a "mort stool"
substituted for the bier in the ceremony of censing.² The clerk
carefully placed the mort-stool in the position in which the body
had rested for the funeral, covered it with the mortcloth, and
arranged candles at either end to simulate their original function.³
The procession was also re-enacted, even when the body of the
person being commemorated was not buried in the church or church-
yard where the obit was observed. At Cullen, the obit of Arch-
deacon Dick, who was buried at Innerboyndie, was followed by a
solemn procession in surplices round the font and back to the
altar where holy water was spread.⁴

¹Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, (New York, 1955),
p. 579.
²Warren, Sarum Missal, op. cit., p. 175, 176.
³Burgh Records of Dunfermline, (ed.) Erskine Beveridge,
(Edinburgh: 1917), p. 264 and XIV; and Glasgow Protocols, op. cit.,
Vol. IV, p. 119.
⁴Cramond: Church and Churchyard of Cullen, op. cit., p. 24.
The Church developed a number of devices which helped to systematize the multiplication of obits demanded by medieval piety. We find that these plans also assisted in promoting post-burial services because they provided for a large or an indefinite number by a single arrangement.

The Trental

Also known as the tricennale, tricenarium or tricintale; the trental was an office of thirty masses, usually said for the dead. Trentals could be directed to other causes, as when the monks at the Church of St. John the Baptist, Ayr, were paid 20 s. for thirty masses to be said in behalf of King James IV (1497). But the frequency with which it was employed for the dead caused the trental to be popularly thought of as a means of serving souls.

Both Roman Catholic and Reformation sources indicate the importance of trentals to the memorial structure. In the Use of Sarum, the necessity of holding trental masses took precedence over the usual ruling that there were to be no masses for the dead in chapter on any weekday in Easter-tide. Reformation writings show that the trental was sufficiently popular to be considered a serious abuse. Alexander Scott, a legitimated son of a prebendary of the Chapel Royal of Sterling, wrote in 1562:

Thay tryit God with tryfillis tume trentalis,
And daifit himwith (thair) daylie dargeis;

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1James Paterson, (Tr.) The Obit Book of the Church of John the Baptist, Ayr, (Edinburgh, 1848), p. viii.
With owkle Obitis, to augment thair rentalis,
Mantand mort-mumlingis, mixt with monye leis.  

The thirty masses ordinarily began on the day of death
and continued each day for a month. The name "Month's Mind"
suggested its noble purpose as the pastor and the bereaved
family joined each day in offering of sacrifices and prayers in
behalf of the beloved. Such a trental in Dunkeld Cathedral is
referred to in the account of the Rural Dean (1506 - 1508):

Delivered to my Lord,........to those celebrating a golden
trental (urum trigintale aureum) in Perth for the soul of
Elizabeth Brown, Lady of Cowtry, my Lord's sister, 30 s.  

Another pattern, not unusual in a great parish church,
was to execute the thirty masses in a single day, thirty priests
serving at as many altars. An account of the Granitar of Dunkeld
(1514 - 1515) records payment to the canons and chaplains of the
cathedral church "coming at the time of my Lord's obit pro
processione trigentali." It was an elaborate procession with
Gregorian chanting, and climaxed in the saying of thirty masses.  
This movement of the trental away from the purpose of the "Month's
Mind" was also found in St. Andrews Cathedral; and in Glasgow
Cathedral where thirty-six masses were said annually on the obit
day of Sir Mark Jamieson.  

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1 Ancient Scottish Poems, published from the MS of George
Bannatyne, 1568. (Edinburgh, 1770), "Ane New Yere Gift, to the
Quene", p. 197.

2 Robert Kerr Hannay, (Tr.) Rentale Dunkeldence.

3 Ibid., p. 148.


5 Protocols of the Town Clerks of Glasgow, op. cit., Vol.IV,
p. 118.
The Anniversary

No development in the Church did more to make medieval culture death conscious than the anniversary obit. By this means a person's life, his death, and his probable plight in purgatory could be recalled periodically by his survivors, and by subsequent generations as well. A profusion of masses for the dead was inevitable from the tradition of celebrating at the time of death or burial; on the third, seventh, thirteenth, and thirtieth days after death, and All Saints Day; but the proliferation which took place could only be the product of the anniversary system.

The founding of an anniversary was usually recorded in a document of legal character, an agreement between the church and the donor.

A typical obit contract would include these essential provisions: (a) The soul or souls to be remembered, usually beginning with the particular names of the immediate family, and concluding with groups such as "those I have wronged," "all the souls whose bodies lie buried in St. Andrews," "all of my predecessors and successors." (b) The dates to be observed in the anniversary - "the day of the death of the said..." or "on the afternoon of the nativity of St. Andrew." In semi-annual celebrations, the day of death and a particular saint's day were customary. A widower might stipulate the day of his wife's death, transferring later to the day of his own death.¹ (c) The altar or altars to be used. (d) The officiating clergy and his assistants, and their vestments. (e) The offices to be sung.

¹The Obit of Patrick Ker, Obit Book, Ayr, op. cit., p. 45.
These were sometimes exactly listed and sometimes summarized as "a general obit," or "according to custom." In Dundee, Sir Thomas Maul of Panmure, left with his anniversary endowment a record of what was assumed as "a general obit": The priests to sing annually "one general obit - viz. a Placebo and Dirige; and on the morrow a mass of requiem... with tolling bells, and the bell-ringer going through town according to usage."¹

(f) Particular provisions for the conduct of the ceremony, especially for honor to be paid at the tomb or grave, or their symbolic representation, during or after the mass. (g) Directions for alms giving in the name of the deceased. (h) Time, method and conditions of payment. (i) Notary, or list of witnesses.

Terms of these agreements with the dates of the benefactor's death, and calendar of services to be performed, were diligently compiled and preserved in an "Obituary" or "Obit Book." Every properly administered religious house or parish church possessed such a record. Though many obit books have been lost in the course of the centuries, and others destroyed by the Lords of the Congregation in their effort to efface all evidence of Popery, a number remain in whole or part. From these, along with chantry and collegiate church charters, we have a clear indication of the mind which made the anniversary so important to

¹ Registrum de Panmure, I xxvi, quoted in Maxwell, Old Dundee, op. cit., p. 61.
medieval life, and of the numerous motives which inspired the foundations.

Beneath the stated reasons for providing services in behalf of the dead there must usually have been a genuine, orthodox, Roman Catholic piety which accepted the doctrine of the Church and felt compelled to act appropriately. In the charter elevating St. Mary's Church at Biggar to the status of a collegiate church (1545 - 1546), Lord Fleming gave expression to his pious motives:

My sincere belief persuades me that the power of the Catholic faith is such, that the mass can snatch the souls of the faithful departed from the pains of purgatory, and bring them to the full enjoyment of the blessed glory.¹

In the same spirit Sir William Myrton endowed the college at Crail because "he was inflamed somewhat with devout zeal, and trusting by religious supplications not to let the merciful Redeemer wholly go and also to assuage and terminate the pains of purgatory."² Without this conviction on the part of donors, the entire anniversary system would have been not only farcical but it would have been impossible. It joined with the most profound human experiences to produce a labyrinth of anniversary obits throughout Scotland.

The most striking of these experiences was filial devotion. When obits were in memory of more than one person they

¹David Rutherford, Biggar, St. Mary's A Medieval College Kirk, (Biggar, 1946), p. 28.
²Register of the Collegiate Church of Crail, op. cit., p. 31.
almost always mentioned the founder's father and mother, and these were found first in the list. The Office for the Dead provided a special Collect, Secret, and Postcommunion prayer in the mass "For a Father and Mother" preceded in the Sarum Missal only by the prayers for clergy and benefactors. Donors commonly reflect their intention of pleasing their deceased parents in every detail of the arrangements made for the obit. Mr. George Lockert, Dean of Glasgow, who himself was to celebrate the obit which he founded for his parents at the Church of St. John the Baptist, Ayr, gave precise directions as to how the chaplains of St. John's were to succeed him in this function after his death.

During the same office of the dead, with the mass, they shall place beside the tomb of the parents a footstool decently covered, with two lighted tapers - the chaplains not in ordinary singing the office of the dead privately by themselves or reading with their brethren; and after the placebo and dirige, and mass, they shall walk in procession to the tomb, and there, standing round it, chant the psalm 'De profundis'. The whole being properly celebrated, holy water shall be sprinkled round about.

Similar family affection is found in the obit agreements of widows and widowers as they memorialize husband or wife; and of both parents as they remember a son or daughter. A time of plague, or of particularly disastrous battle like Flodden, was followed by a marked increase in the number of endowments. The Battle of Harlaw (1411) left its tragic story in the obit records:

It would almost seem as if the widespread wall over the dead who fell at Harlow affected the sentiment of the

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2Obit Book, op. cit., p. 47.
whole generation that lived after the battle. The records of the time speak more of mortuary settlements and masses for the dead, than of almost all other business.¹

Isabel Mortimer, the lady of Balquhain, lost all of her six sons in the battle, and assuaged her grief by endowing perpetual obits for them at Inverure.²

The awareness of personal guilt has sometimes been one of the motives for establishing obits. Not infrequently the souls to be helped by prayers and masses, along with those especially named, are "the souls of all of those whom I have in any wise injured in this life, and for whom I am in any way responsible."³

The expression of sensitivity to guilt seems to predominate in particular geographical areas (e.g. Dumfriesshire), and may be largely due to the influence of the individuals advising the donors. Contrariwise, an occasional statement of this kind bears the marks of genuine regret and the desire to make compensation. Such is the confession of Lord Fleming whose endowment was in behalf of the souls of himself, his wife, his parents, benefactors, friends, relatives, predecessors and successors, and "especially for the souls of those from whom I have taken goods unjustly, or to whom I have caused loss or injury, and have not yet made recompense or satisfaction by prayers or payment."⁴

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² Ibid.
⁴ David S. Rutherford, op. cit., p. 27.
In contrast, a number of endowments reflect the sorrow of self-concern. Katrine Thomsone states her purpose directly, "for the safety of her soul."¹ William Forbes, Provost of the Collegiate Church of St. Giles, in 1477 - 1478, granted to the church a portion of his yards to establish a cemetery, and this without recompense. But nineteen years later, and nineteen years closer to his own death, he granted an extension to the cemetery on condition that those responsible "are held bound to cause to be celebrated annually in the choir of the said church and at the high altar of the same, on the day of decease of me, the afore-said Provost when it shall happen, an obit ..."² King James V solemnly concluded a charter granting benefices to the altar of Saint Michael the Archangel, in Sterling, in behalf of many souls with this stipulation: "Further strickly charging the said perpetual chaplain once every year to make an anniversary to be celebrated by the whole choir of the foresaid parish church, at his expense, for the soul of the granter."³

The desire to enlist the prayers of the poor, accompanied perhaps by the desire to assist them, is a prominent feature of some anniversary arrangements. Sir James Douglas made a bequest to Newbattle Abbey on condition that the monks should sing mass yearly at St. Bridget's altar upon her feast day, for evermore,

¹Ibid.
³Burgh of Sterling, Charters and Documents, 1124-1705, (Glasgow, 1884), p. 196.
and on the same day feed thirteen poor folk in honor of the saint so that she might specially intercede for the donor.\(^1\) Rolland Blacader's obit arrangement with the Glasgow Cathedral provided for sixty poor "having hearth and household in Glasgow," to pray for the souls of his parents and himself, for which they were to receive 8d. each.\(^2\) In Ayr, John Brown and his wife Mariote Petheid were exceedingly explicit in their provisions for an annual distribution to the unfortunate (1524). The bell ringers were to go through town:

requiring and urging, with a loud intelligible voice, all the poor, through each street of the said burgh, to come to the obit mass of the same, and receive alms for praying for the said John and Mariote, his spouse, before the altar of St. Peter... to which poor, namely, to the appointed old leprous scholars, daily occupied and exercised in poor schools, and other debilitated poor, obscured by property, shall be given and distributed twelve shillings and fourpence of the said money as follows: Six shillings and eightpence in bread; and to each old person a cake of the value of a penny, and in like manner, to poor scholars, and to other poor a cake of a penny between two poor shall be distributed, until the exhaustion of the said six shillings and eightpence; and the founder himself also wishes that these be bought venison to the extent of thirty-two pence, and administered and given only to the old poor and leprous; also ordains that they buy a hard cheese, and that the remaining sum shall be disposed of in fresh fish.\(^3\)

Though provisions for the poor, the sick, or the aged are quite frequently found in obit records, it is certain that they were not sufficiently numerous in any community to change the

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\(^1\) Register, p. XL, Bannatyne Club, quoted in Scottish Monasteries of Old, Newbattle, Barrett, op. cit., p. 149.


\(^3\) Obit Book, Ayr, op. cit., p. 58 - 59.
condition of these unfortunate people. The distributions were annual or semi-annual, and in Scotland were almost never weekly. It is clear that their primary purpose was to enlist the help of those whose sufferings were believed to make their prayers particularly efficacious, and whose lowly condition permitted the privileged to employ them as recipients of their good works.

The Chantry
Concomitant with the trental and the anniversary, the chantry was a necessary development for the fullest employment of prayers for the dead. A chantry is an altar, usually placed at the focal point of a small chapel, and dedicated to the exclusive purpose of offering masses for the dead. The founder of a chantry arranged for the building and equipping of an altar, dedicated it to a particular saint, selected a priest to officiate, and provided an endowment intended to perpetuate masses "forever". Additional endowments could be made to the same altar providing its chaplain were not already committed to daily masses, or another priest were available to celebrate on the appointed days.

Since a large endowment was required to sustain a chantry, its founding was a luxury of only the privileged royalty and

1 Mortmain licenses for the establishment of chantries in England indicate that weekly distributions were "extremely rare". Wood-Legh, K.L., Studies of Church Life in England under Edward III, (Cambridge, 1934), p. 117.

2 It was not lawful for any priest to celebrate mass twice on the same day except on urgent necessity. Constitutions of Bishop David, Statute 115, Statutes of the Scottish Church, op. cit., p. 61.
nobility. In 1481, Beatrice Douglas, Countess dowager of Errol, paid one hundred pounds to the impoverished Gray Friars of Dundee to found and perpetuate "The Countess Mass" at the convent. Usually the payment was in lands, as that granted by charter of James V to the Altar of Saint Michael the Archangel in the Church of the Holy Cross at Sterling; or the charter of mortification granted by William Cunyngham to the Altar of Holy Blood at the church in Dumfries. The indenture stipulated the souls to be prayed for, the hour and frequency of requiem mass, qualifications of the chaplain, the method of payment, and the plan for presentation in the event of vacancy. An elaborate agreement might also arrange for the chaplain to be instituted and inducted "by the delivery of the chalice, book, and other ornaments of the altar, together with the horns of the same."

To accommodate the development of chantries it was customary to divide the aisles of the larger parish churches and cathedrals by wooden or stone partitions. This formed a bay for

1Altars of crafts and guilds are sometimes called chantries, but do not conform to accurate definition as they were not erected "for the weal of souls" but to "the Glory of God" and for the whole spiritual life of the particular craft or guild.

2Maxwell, Old Dundee, op. cit., p. 59.

3Burgh of Sterling, Charters and Documents, 1124-1705, (Glasgow, 1884), p. 195.


5Burgh of Sterling, op. cit., p. 196.
each altar, and sometimes for the bodies or effigies of the founder and his family. Chantries were subordinate to the high altar in the center, which was always dedicated to the same saint as the church itself. In the apse behind the high altar was frequently located another, dedicated to the Holy Virgin and commonly known as the Lady Altar. Chantry masses could be celebrated concurrently; but none were permitted when the high altar was in use, at which time the vicar celebrated and the chantry priests were expected to be in full canonical vestments to discharge their duties as choristers. The numerical dominance of the altars dedicated to the souls of the dead, and the presence of the bodies of many, gave a sombre aura to the place of worship.

Motives for the establishment of a chantry paralleled those which inspired endowment of anniversary obits. Filial devotion and concern for one's own soul were primary. The desire to assist a particular church or religious house sometimes played a part. Patriotism and affection for members of the royal family is also evident, not unmixed, at times, with political expediency. The first chantry in St. Mary's Church, Biggar, was founded as a legal settlement by the family responsible for the slaughter of John, Lord Fleming, and in behalf of his soul.

The Collegiate Church

The **Ecclesia Collegiata** was not, per se an institution dedicated

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1. This custom was enforced in Linlithgow by the magistrates. John Ferguson, *Ecclesia Antiqua, The Story of St. Michaels, Linlithgow*, op. cit., p. 141.

to the welfare of souls; but a typical collegiate church charter reveals masses for the dead as its major function. Secondary responsibilities, i.e. the care of the poor, the school, and the cure of souls, were among the good works which alleviated the torment of the souls of those in whose names the collegiate church or its altars were endowed. Most of the forty collegiate churches in Scotland had previously been parish churches enjoying the services of a number of chantry priests. The erection of these churches to a higher status was but a natural development for the achievement of their purpose. Dowden asserts, "The collegiate churches may be regarded as dignified chantries for the souls of those who had founded and enriched them."¹

The prebendary in a collegiate church enjoyed a greater prestige and a more ordered life than the chantry priest. The chantry chaplain lived and worked quite independently, and on a comparatively low economic and social level. But the prebendaries, living and working together under the administration of a provost (or dean), formed a corporation or chapter. Each chapter had its common seal, its chapter meetings, its sharing in the services of the canonical hours. This systematic and dignified functioning gave the church a rank second only to that of the cathedral and sometimes approximating it.

It was frequently the purpose of a noble family to add to its own prestige by endowing a collegiate church. Having become disillusioned with the degeneration evident in monastic houses,

and questioning the special efficacy of the prayers of the monks, a lord may have felt it to his advantage to establish an impressive ecclesiastical center in his own domain. The magistrates of large burghs felt likewise, as illustrated by one of the stated purposes for the erection of St. Giles, Edinburgh, into a collegiate church, "for the ornament and decoration of the said town." With the new honor and prestige came additional endowments for the elaboration and multiplication of services for the dead. The fact that nine of these churches were founded in the sixteenth century indicates that confidence in prayers and good works in behalf of the dead did not diminish among the faithful on the eve of the Reformation.

THE PLACE OF BURIAL

The Importance of the Place of Burial

The medieval mind was both saturated with thoughts of death and indoctrinated with the need of continuing within the Church's care after death. To a man's normal desire for a "decent" burial was added the urgency of burial in a consecrated place, a place made holy by the bishop's affirmation of God's sovereignty as he processed around the borders of the newly hallowed ground. Bishop Edyndon explained in 1348:

The Catholic Church spread over the world believes in the resurrection of the bodies of the dead. These have been sanctified by the reception of the Sacraments, and are consequently buried, not in profane places, but in specially enclosed and consecrated cemeteries, or in

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1 Charters Relating to the City of Edinburgh, 1143-1540, op. cit., p. 132.

2 Laing, Registrum Domus de Soltre, dates of founding as quoted in Cramond, The Church and Churchyard in Cullen, op. cit., p. 21.
churches, where with due reverence they are kept, like the relics of the saints, till the day of resurrection. ¹

To be buried here was not only to be given the dignity of a human being, or to join one's family or ancestors, but above all it was to be among those for whom masses and prayers would be offered throughout all time. A postcommunion prayer in the Office for the Dead requests God to "grant unto thy servants and handmaidens, whose bodies here and everywhere are at rest in Christ, a place of refreshment, a blessed rest, and a clear light." ²

In anniversary, chantry, and in collegiate endowments it was quite usual for the donor to stipulate that the gift was also in behalf of the weal of the souls of those whose bodies lay in a particular burial place.

The desire of an individual to receive Christian burial gave the Church an effective leverage over him until the very end of life. The Church's power was sometimes exercised for the individual's spiritual welfare, and sometimes for its own temporal prosperity. A priest was to be suspended for a year if he "admit to his churchyard anyone who may have elected to be buried there whom he knows to have in life been excommunicated by canon law." ³ Likewise the concubines of priests, "if they remain in the priests' houses till their death, let them be refused Christian burial." ⁴

³St. Andrew's Statutes, Statutes of the Scottish Church, op. cit., p. 73.
⁴Constitutions of Bishop David, Statutes of the Scottish Church, ibid., p. 60.
Contestants slain in tournaments were denied burial because of their pride in participating, and their disobedience to the prohibition of the Holy Church. Suicides were forbidden Christian burial. Formal charges were brought against William Wischiart, the vicar of Carnvathe in Lanarkshire (1447), because he was said to have buried a suicide in his cemetry without consulting his diocesan. Since victims of sudden death were accepted for Christian burial, it is significant that as late as 1242 the Constitutions of Bishop David found clarification necessary:

If anyone have been overtaken by sudden death he shall not lack Christian burial, unless he have died an excommunicated person or have been killed in some deed in which he commits mortal sin. For with whom in life we are in communion, with him also in death ought we to be in communion.

Evidence of the expedient use of the refusal of Christian burial was common. All of the three great Lateran Councils of the twelfth century (A.D. 1123, 1139, and 1179) declared it illegal for one layman to transfer tithes to another: "If the receiver give them not up to the bishop, let him be denied Christian burial."

The mouldering body of William Tyndale was exhumed from an ecclesiastical cemetery and burned (1535), after he had been declared

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3 Statutes of the Scottish Church, op. cit., p. 63.

excommunicate because of refusal to leave a mortuary gift in his will.¹

Burial in Ecclesiastical Buildings

By A. D. 1250, burial within the safety and dignity of ecclesiastical buildings was generally sought by all who dared to hope for the privilege. Two movements had converged to form a single cultural pattern: 1. Ecclesiastics had encouraged the building of churches at the tombs of the saints and the burying of the saints in churches in order to sanctify the place of worship.²

2. Those of high standing coveted the security and honor which came to them when awarded sepulchre in the church or minster.³

Both of these interests were united in the person of Queen Margaret who was sainted in 1249. In 1250 her relics were transferred to the new choir in Dunfermline, probably built to receive her remains.⁴ Containing the relics of royalty and sainthood, Margaret's tomb was destined to become a great national shrine and place of pilgrimage for centuries. Her tomb was only incidentally, but significantly, a symbol of a concept of burial in medieval Scotland.

(1) The early and middle medieval period might be thought of as


²Supra, p. 4.

³The Emperor Constantine (d. 337) had begun this tradition among the great by being buried in the vestibule of the Church of the Apostles in Constantinople. A similar privilege was granted to his successors and extended to other princes, nobility and ecclesiastics.

⁴Barrett, op. cit., p. 30.
the period of aristocratic monopoly of the privilege of burial in churchly edifices. Until the beginning of the fifteenth century, there were few records of any receiving this benefit except royalty, nobility, bishops and abbots. The Church had encouraged the burial of the saints and martyrs within its buildings, and had countenanced the extension of this policy to include a number of other notables, both ecclesiastical and temporal. But as the people's enthusiasm for church or minster burial grew, it became necessary to define a limit. In 1180 it was decreed: "In our churches let none be buried but kings, queens, - reginas - and bishops; in our chapter-houses abbots, or the afore-said if they prefer it."\(^1\)

In this period those who were received for burial within the building usually rested in the choir, as near to the high altar as possible. Since burial was highly restricted, room would ordinarily be available. It was understood that the degree of honor was in direct proportion to the proximity to the altar. Saints and martyrs were to lie to the east of the high altar, and elevated above the ground in proportion to their acknowledged sanctity, while the uncanonized were to be buried at the level of the ground.\(^2\) But considerable license was taken, as in the burial (1241) at Newbattle Abbey of Mary, the second wife of Alexander II, whose tomb was "in the midst of the church...supported on six


\(^2\)Leopold Wagner, *Manners, Customs and Observances*, (London, 1910), pp. 120, 121.
lions of marble. 1

Instead of resting by the high altar, the founder of a chantry was buried beneath or near the altar he had endowed, in proximity to the prayers and masses offered in his behalf. 2 That this was no dishonor even to a king is shown by the placing of the tomb of Edward III (d. 1377) in the chantry chapel at the Irthlingborough Collegiate Church, Northamptonshire. In order that his tomb may not be isolated from the high altar, the wall of the chapel is pierced by a hagioscope providing a direct view from one to the other. This device is not unusual and is also found in the collegiate churches at Bothwell and Dunglass. 3

The effigy, or recumbent figure placed above the tomb, was one of the characteristic embellishments of the sepulchre-sanctuary in this period. It was, in fact, during the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries that the purity of sculptor's art reached its peak; giving more attention later to detail than to general effect. 4 Like burial in the church or minster, the effigy was itself a symbol of distinction and was a luxury which only the most privileged could afford. According to canon law and the Rituale, an effigial monument in honour of the deceased might only be erected in a church when the person had the right

of sepulchre within the building and was actually entombed there.¹

Most of the thirteenth and fourteenth century effigies have disappeared through losses due to wars, vengeance taken among nobles, the destructive march of Cromwell's troops, and long neglect by churches and abbeys. There are many vacant recesses, but effigies and fragments remaining from this period witness to the aristocracy or spiritual distinction of their owners. What is believed to be a fourteenth century effigy of St. Kessog rests in the Luss Parish, a representation created eight hundred years after his martyrdom. In the belief that St. Kessog was buried in the Luss church, Robert I confirmed a charter (1308) and several years later granted sanctuary within a three mile radius of the shrine.² At Inchmahome priory are preserved the rent remains of the carved effigies of the Earl and Countess of Menteith.³ The damaged effigy of Alexander Stewart, Earl of Buchan and Lord of Badenoch, lies in Dunkeld cathedral on a large chest upheld by twenty-two armoured weepers.⁴ A prone figure, removed from the Isle of Cullen to the Fife Mausoleum, is dressed in long robes, with an Eastern cap on his head, a sword by his side, and a belt with buckles around his waist (dated 1404).⁵ In Dalkieth's

²D. A. Lacaille, op. cit., p. 108.
St. Nicholas church, are two recumbent figures believed to represent either the first or the third earl of Morton and his lady (c. 1500). The only remains of royal effigies are a fragment of the coffin-lid of William the Lion in Abroath, an altar tomb with the figure of Marjorie Bruce (daughter of Robert Bruce) in Paisley, and an unidentified Stewart of Bute.

The period of aristocratic monopoly of the privilege of burial was coeval with the era in which monastic prestige and wealth reached its summit. The superiority of the "religious" life was generally accepted, its disciplines and denials regarded as the zenith of sanctity. Many devout had entered the religious life because of their concern for their own souls, and their collective life demonstrated their desire to help ease the pains of purgatory for one another, both inside and outside the particular establishment. Each morning they processed slowly from the matins service to the place of burial where, amidst the bodies of their own dead, they lifted psalms and prayers in their behalf. In the evening too, the attention of the religious house was called to the claims of the dead upon their members. A charter granted by the provost of Lincluden provided for the nightly

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1Donald Ferguson, Six Centuries in and around the Church of St. Nicholas, Dalkeith, (n. p., 1951), p.16.


3Brydall, loc. cit.

ringing of the bell at the eight hour, for a quarter of an hour, "with three strokes at the end, so that between each stroke there may be said a Pater Noster, Ave Maria, and Credo in Deum, for the souls of all and sundry predecessors, founders, and of all others dead and living."¹ The chapters also entered into formal agreement with other religious houses to pray for one another. To facilitate this, a "rollbearer" was periodically sent from monastery to monastery to carry the "Death-bill", the list of those newly deceased whose names were qualified to receive the benefits of prayers and masses.²

Out of these monasteries, too, came legendary tales of miracles affected by the saintly buried therein. Frequently the authenticity of the pious was evidenced by pleasant odors which ensued from their tombs, or from the retarded decomposition of their bodies. Joscelin of Furness, biographer of Waltheof, second abbot of Melrose, related that his body was said to be found incorrupt twelve years after death, and again, almost fifty years after death.³ The burial place of St. Milburga, patron saint of Wenloc, was lost until a boy accidentally trod on her tomb causing balsamic exhalations to reveal its location.⁴

¹Chronicles of Lincluden, (Edinburgh: 1866), p. 117.
²Ibid., pp. 281 - 286.
³Barrett, op. cit., p. 136.
When St. Margaret's bones and remains were removed for their shrine in the new choir at Dunfermline, "from her earlier tomb was given out a most sweet smell, so that one would have thought the whole place was strewed with flowers and spicy balms." The power of the holy queen was still present, for after the bishop and abbots had moved the remains,

lo!, suddenly the arms of the bearers became powerless so that they were unable to move the bier with the holy relics away from the spot until it was revealed by a sign that the holy queen would have the same honor paid to her husband since they were one flesh in the world. After his tomb was opened and the relics taken up both biers moved to the appointed place without effort.

This medieval credulity, combined with admiration for the genuine piety of the religious house, caused the devout layman to believe in the special efficacy of monastic rituals and to desire for his corpse the benefit of their proximity. Time and time again a great noble family founded a monastery, or became the chief patron of one already established, in consequence of which members of the family were received within for burial. Only eight years after Walter Fitz Allan had brought thirteen monks from Wenlock to establish a Cluniac monastery in Paisley (1169), an additional charter issued by Eschina, his wife, provides a new grant of land "for the soul of my daughter Margaret, who lies buried in the chapter house at Paisley." Alan, the son of

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2 Ibid., p. 32.

Walter made further gifts and was buried in 1204 in front of the high altar in the church of the priory. Throughout Scotland noble families such as this attached themselves for generations to a particular monastery. Sometimes the donor's generosity was expressed in his will. The form used by Sir. James Douglas of Dalkeith was frequent: after a generous bequest to Newbattle Abbey the donor commended "his soul to God and his body to be buried at the abbey by his late companion, Agnes of Dunbar, his first wife."\(^1\)

The esteem in which the monastery was held, and the urgency of the desire to participate in its spiritual benefits, were demonstrated by ingenious arrangements to accomplish this end. Members of the nobility sometimes made agreements by which they and members of their families were admitted into the religious house. Reginald, the son of the mighty Somerled, Lord of the Isles, bargained to be admitted as a brother at Paisley, along with his wife and his sister that they might have "in life a quiet retreat and in death a consecrated resting place."\(^2\)

John, the Earl of Ross, also became a monk at the abbey where he died and was buried in the choir.

A more common method of receiving the benefits of the religious life was to be admitted to fraternitas without actually taking vows or entering a monastery. The emergence of this arrangement can be seen at Coupar Angus, beginning in the thir-

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\(^1\) Register de S. Marie de Neubotle, p. xli, Barrett, op. cit., p. 150.

\(^2\) Metcalfe, op. cit., p. 22.
teenth century and culminating in the fourteenth. In 1232 Malcolm, Son of Eugenius of Dunkeld, made a donation of "a third of a third part of his substance in moveables," his body to be buried in the abbey, and indicates a desire to be thought of as a virtual member of the fraternity.¹ The first explicit record of a grant of fraternity at Coupar Angus was in the charter of William de Hay, Lord of Aithmuir (1305):

Moreover, since the monks have granted me, as a brother of their chapter in my life as in my death, a full share freely in all their masses and prayers, likewise in all good spiritual works, I, William de Hay, hale in body and sound in mind, appoint and, binding myself to it by these presents, bequeath my body to be buried in the chapter-house of the self-same monks of Coupar, wherever on the north side of Forth death shall have closed my last day.²

Soon after, Henry de Inchmartin made a similar donation and was received into the order. A hundred years later, a similar relationship is spoken of as "confraternity" in a charter of Thomas Stewart of Grandtully.³

(2) The later medieval period is characterized by the extension of the privilege of burial in ecclesiastical buildings. After A.D. 1400, though they never became inclusive, such burials began to extend beyond the aristocratic limits of royalty, nobility, and important churchmen.

As might be expected, the relaxed policy of receiving less distinguished corpses first took place in the parish churches

²Ibid., p. 180.
³Red Book of Grandtully, 1, p. 11, cited in Charters of the Abbey of Coupar Angus, ibid., p. xxxi.
rather than in the monasteries. As late as the beginning of the sixteenth century the religious houses were attempting to maintain their exclusiveness, with the support of some of the nobility. The foundation charter of a chantry at Cambuskenneth (A.D. 1507), given by the Lady of Arringrook, betrays the mutual effort of donor and recipient to stem the tide of more inclusive burial policies:

Because we have thus, by God's grace, augmented divine worship in the said church of Arringrook and have chosen our own sepulture therin, therefore the said Abbot Alexander and his convent, by unanimous consent, have granted the whole choir as a free burying-place for use of our heirs and successors, and the whole family, on condition that it shall not be lawful for any parishioners or other persons to be buried in the said choir, unless it be the Abbot or one of the brethren, or some honorable servant or friend of the Abbot who might chance to die in the Abbey or to choose his sepulture there.

A century previous, parish churches had begun to extend the right of sepulchre with less regard to status. The policies of burgh churches in particular were frequently controlled by town councils which had experienced a degree of power and seemed less enthralled by the aristocratic tradition. While these councils were never above the granting of very special burial privileges in return for large donations, they also made provision for ordinary burgers and members of their families to be received for burial within the church. In St. Nicholas Church, Aberdeen, a formula of moderate charges for church lairs was agreed upon by the town council "with the consent of the community" as early as 1401:

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Boys under five years of age, 5 s.; those between the ages of seven and fifteen years 6 s. 8d.; all others of whatever age, 10 s....but boys dying possessed of property, heirs of law, to be charged 10 s. notwithstanding their age.

We do not know when this policy was adopted in St. Giles, Edinburgh, but it had apparently been routine for some time by 1552-1553, when the Dean of Guild's fiscal account lists thirteen charges for "penetrating" the kirk floor for burial. The standard charge was 6 s. 8d.²

The movement from exclusivism in church burial is vividly revealed in an agreement made at St. John's Church, Perth, (in 1440), and confirmed by Pope Eugenius IV in 1442. The Abbot of Dunfermline and the convent released their right of burial in the choir of St. John's to the magistrates, represented by Patrick Charteris, Provost of Perth, and the Bailies. The magistrates, who already exercised the right of burial under the nave, now accepted the new privilege along with the teinds of the parish, and obligation to undertake certain renovation and continuous care.³ While making a major compromise in the right of burial, the Abbot and Convent reserved to themselves special funeral emoluments, offerings of wax, money, horses, and other mortuaries.⁴

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² Edinburgh Records, 1403-1589, op. cit., p. 166.
As the control of burial in burgh churches passed to town councils, we find their assignment of lairs continues as an important expression of patronage, a patronage now extended on a new political basis. The privilege of church burial was generally extended to guilds and crafts. In St. John's Church, South Leith, each incorporation which had provided an altar was permitted to bury its members and their families in that area of the church in which their respective altar was located. This new democracy quite rapidly expended available space, and members then buried their dead in the churchyard adjacent to their own chantry. Thus, there were contiguous areas inside and outside the church for the use of craftsmen, cordiners, maltmen, hammermen, tailors, wrights, bakers, etc.¹ The change in the personnel now wielding the power of patronage was vividly demonstrated by the Burgh Council in Aberdeen which, having formerly warned the chantry chaplains to be more ardent in the performance of their duties, now commend them and reward them -

> in hope of gude continuation has graantit to the said vicar and chaplany that continues divyne service that they shall haue thair laires quhen thai discisses free in qhton place of the kirk it plesis them to ly of thair devotion.²

At other times councils awarded lairs within the church in return for donations of lime or lead, or for the donation of skilled craftsmenship for repairing the choir. But even in this new era it was still possible for the wealthy to assure a special

¹David Robertson, South Leith Records, (Edinburgh, 1911), Part II, p. 175.

place of honor by a generous gift. In 1495 George Spalding gave to the Altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Dundee a number of silver furnishings and vestments, to which gift the council responded by agreeing that George and his wife shall "have their lairs in the queir of the Kirk under the farrest gree (outmost step) before the Hye Altar."

**Burial in Cemeteries**

Although burial in a cemetery rather than in an ecclesiastical building would normally be a second choice for the medieval Christian, it was a reality he would probably face unless he were a person of privilege. If he was one of that countless number whose abject life was to contribute to the well being of the few, it was not surprising that his final resting place should be equally common and perhaps even sordid. If he could not be buried within the sight of the high altar, as a Christian of his time he was at least grateful to lie within hearing of the church bell, and not too far removed from the relics of the saints. He was within that consecrated place to which the benefit of prayers and masses from the altar could extend. If his resting place was too far from the church, perhaps he would still be fortunate enough to be in proximity to a chantry chapel erected in the cemetery in behalf of all who lay therein. The

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cemetery was usually adjacent to the church, not only for spiritual but for highly practical reasons as well. Using the churchyard for burial permitted a single grant of land to serve two purposes. This location was convenient for priestly services, and if the church were well placed in the parish, the churchyard was equally accessible for the congregation. Above all, the location of the cemetery in the churchyard offered the greatest possible protection against robbery, wanton destruction, or desecration.

Most of the medieval churches in Scotland avoided the use of the yard immediately north of the church. Burials were made only in those sections of the churchyard which are south, east, or west of the building. This was not in the Celtic tradition, for in Ireland cemeteries were often established on the north side of the church. The custom is apparently due to an ancient superstition that the north side of the churchyard belongs to the evil one, a superstition which came to Scotland through the introduction of the Latin branch of the faith,¹ and led to the reserving of the north side for the unbaptized and the excommunicated. The Church attempted to discourage the superstition in 1552 when Archbishop Hamilton's Catechism said that it was a breach of the First Commandment to claim that "thair is mair halynes or vertew on the South syde than on the North."²

The cemetery could not be easily identified except for the wall which was supposed to be built around it, and a towering cross prominently placed to proclaim that this is consecrated ground. The cross was of wrought stone and sometimes sculptured. Such a consecration cross at Foulis Easter is prominently placed on the south side of the Church, about thirty feet from the dyke, where no one entering the area could fail to observe it. It stands six feet and three inches above the ground, with either arm extending fourteen inches. In Glasgow, a cross "cut by quarries from a block of stone of wondrous size" was marvelously rolled to the cemetery at St. Kentigern's. The cross never from that time lacked great virtue, seeing that many maniacs and those vexed with unclean spirits are used to be tied, of a Sunday night, to the cross, and in the morning they are found restored, freed and cleansed, though oftentimes they are found dead or at the point of death.

Individual grave markers were very rarely used in cemeteries. Cross slabs which have been discovered in various areas from this period were probably used outside of consecrated burial places. The one great cross was sufficient to mark the cemetery in order to protect it from desecration. In 1267, Bishop Quevil ordered: "All church cemeteries must be guarded from all defilement both because they are holy, and because they are made holy by

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1 Dalgetty, Arthur B., History of the Church of Foulis Easter, (Dundee: 1933), p. 35.
3 Two excellent examples of these were found at Fowlis Wester, in restoration of a pre-Reformation Church. P.S.A.S., Vol. LXVI, pp. 97-98.
the relics of saints. The cemetery was a place particularly appropriate for prayer; and the Encheiridion (a Sarum book of private devotions) provided special petitions "For the Faithful Departed" to be offered up in the churchyard. A sin committed there must be especially confessed; and it is the duty of the priest to discover if the offense occurred "In holy place or no. A mon synneth sarre (sore) in seyntwary thenne in any other place by."

This sacredness was little understood and constantly violated by a rustic people. The problem of farm animals grazing and rooting in the cemetery was chronic. Such entries as this were entered frequently in burgh records:

The quhylk day, the inquest ordanyt that the perysch clerk suld tak or hors, chep, or nowt, that war fwndyn in the kyrk yard lllj d. for ilk tym that he fendis tham thar, and swyn to be slayne.

Individuals also trespassed, dumping refuse, appropriating the crop of grass, or, like Andrew Brown of Dundee, winnowing his malt in the churchyard without permission. The churchyard,

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3 Myrc, op. cit., p. 48.


5 Alexander Maxwell, op. cit., p. 305.
being the only public land in any community, was the scene of events which did not become its hallowed purpose: secular courts, wrestling matches, village fairs and markets, pagan dances practiced on Christian festivals,\(^1\) and even bull-baiting.\(^2\) Parliament itself enacted a statute providing that there was to be archery practice every Sunday at every parish church.\(^3\) Some of the activity inappropriate for the burial ground was under church sponsorship, such as the church ales, the casting of bells, and the playing of "Robin Hude and Litill Jolne."\(^4\) At Inverkeithing in Fife, it was the parish priest who led in the churchyard obscenities.\(^5\)

Ecclesiastical and parliamentary statutes reflect the concern of Church and government for a proper cemetery. A problem through the centuries was that of building and maintaining an effective dyke around the cemetery. The Diocese of Aberdeen rules in a synodical statute, "We ordain that churchyards be decently enclosed round about, so that there be no access for unclean animals and brute beasts."\(^6\) At about the same time:


\(^2\) In the churchyard at Kirkcudbright, St. Cuthbert's Day, 1146, John Dowden, *The Medieval Church in Scotland*, op. cit., p. 45.


time the diocese of St. Andrews faced the same problem and explained the reason for its importance (1242):

We decree that ... it be seen that churchyards be suitably enclosed all the way round, so that no access be open to unclean and brutish beasts; for sacred places should be kept clean and such as have been duly consecrated to God by bishops.¹

Among a long list of items in the church fabric which needed attention, it mentioned first the churchyard dyke, and defined responsibility for its care:

We decree further that round about, as far as the chancels extend, churchyards be enclosed by the rectors, the remaining portion by the parishioners, unless the custom prevails that the whole of the churchyard be enclosed by the parishioners.²

No temporal law supported these ecclesiastical enactments until 1597 when the Scottish Parliament found it necessary to require parishioners to build the dykes to the height of two ells.³

Church and government statutes gave mutual support to the maintenance of the cemetery's rightful sanctity and dignity. The diocese of Aberdeen was especially opposed to certain kinds of recreation and certain kinds of trials:

We ordain that no dances or low and indecent pastimes such as provoke to lasciviousness take place in churches or churchyards; and let no secular causes be conducted in them, particularly any in which a judgment of blood is involved.⁴

¹ Constitution of Bishop David, Statutes of the Scottish Church, ibid., p. 57.
² Ibid.
⁴ Aberdeen Statutes, Statutes of the Scottish Church, op. cit., p. 40.
Excommunication was pronounced *ipso facto* upon anyone who pol-
luted the sanctuary of God (i.e., the Church or cemetery) by the
shedding of blood;\(^1\) hence the special precaution against trials
which could culminate in a sentence of life or limb. Also, the
consecrated place profaned by the shedding of blood or sexual
seed had to be reconciled.\(^2\) But all use of the churchyard for
the holding of court was considered inappropriate by the Church,
and a civil act in the *Fragmenta Collecta* declares it illegal to
hold court in any consecrated place.\(^3\) In its attitude to spor-
tive activities in the churchyard the church became increasingly
restrictive. A fourteenth century synodal statute of St. Andrew's
diocese reflected the determination to reform:

> We interdict, under pain of excommunication in force from
this time forth, any one from daring in the future to
have dances, or to hold wrestling matches, or to hold or
engage in any other kind of unseemly sports in churches
or in churchyards at any festivals or seasons whatsoever,
since the occasion of profaning churches or churchyards
has been wont to arise from such causes.\(^4\)

But fairs and markets became more numerous in the fifteenth and
sixteenth century and the quiet and sanctity of the cemetery
were correspondingly threatened. An act of Parliament in 1503
ruled that -

\(^1\) *Synodical Constitutions*, *ibid.*., p. 271.

\(^2\) *St. Andrews Statutes*, *ibid.*., p. 76.

\(^3\) *Fragmento Collecta*, *Acts of Parliaments, op. cit.*,
 pp. 752, 20.

\(^4\) *St. Andrews Statutes*, *Statutes of the Scottish Church*
*ibid., p. 77.*
Dismemberment, Evisceration, and Heart Burial

Division of the body was not a common occurrence in medieval Scotland. Nevertheless, because of the prominence of those whose bodies were so mutilated, and because of the light the practice cast on the thinking of that period, it cannot be considered insignificant.

Dismemberment of the corpse was the least practiced form of body division, being known in Scotland only through the possession and display of the relics of the saints. There was a conscious effort to make sacred a place of worship by acquiring real or purported relics of the saints. Such an effort provided a ready market for relics, a market sometimes supplied for financial reasons and sometimes because of the desire of the adherents to spread the saint’s influence. In the latter case, dismemberment of the saint’s body was considered most worthy.

The armbone of "Sanct Geill" was bequeathed to the community of Edinburgh by Sir William Prestoun in 1454, who had procured it from King Charles VII of France. The Magistrates expressed extreme delight in the acquisition, and promised to build an aisle forth from Our Lady Aisle with a suitable inscription in brass and stone. A chaplain was assigned to sing at the new altar, and an annual procession was held on September 1 with the armbone in


2City of Edinburgh, Old Accounts, 1552 - 1557.

op. cit., p. ix.
veneration. It was also exhibited on Relic Sunday and on St. Giles day for a small charge.

Evisceration was practiced for several distinct reasons. It permitted those whose loyalties were torn between two places of sepulchre to be buried in both; and offered the additional asset of being prayed for in both. The removed abdominal organs were placed in an urn or vase and treated with the same reverence as the entire body. Monks sometimes wished to be buried in the monastery with their brothers, yet they longed to rest among their ancestors. People in high station also had loyalties divided between their families and society at large, and chose this solution. The "interiora" of Robert Bruce's queen was buried in the church of Cullen and the Fifth Prebend was endowed by the King for ten merks annually to pray for her soul. On the day he died, the viscera of Stephen Gardiner, the bishop of Winchester, were removed and placed before the high altar during the dirige and the mass; probably to join the burial place of his ancestors later, while the rest of his body was placed in Winchester. The Papacy permitted such body division for privileged people. In 1345, Clement VI granted to Queen Isabella an indul "that after her death, her body may be divided and buried in three places"; and seven years later Mary

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de Sancto Paulo, countess of Pembroke, was given permission to have her heart removed and buried in a place separate from her body.¹

Evisceration was also practiced to facilitate the handling of the body. It was necessary to prevent the pollution of the atmosphere when the remains were to rest in a sacred building.² Sometimes when a person died at a distance from his home, evisceration made it possible for his body to be returned. When Lord Douglas was killed in Spain, on his way to bury Bruce's heart in the Holy Land, he was "debowillit," and all of his flesh was removed in order that his bones might be returned to Scotland.³

Heart burial was occasioned by many of the same situations as produced evisceration; but it had the advantage of being less complex and possessing a higher dignity since the heart was considered to be the "center of religion and the seat of natural affections."⁴ The practice increased during the crusades when the hearts of the dead were removed and sent in both directions. Princes and nobles who were unable to be crusaders wanted their hearts buried in the Holy Land, and those who died on crusades frequently desired that their hearts be returned to the homeland.

¹Ibid., p. 458.
The diminutive effigies of knights in mail, often found in churches, probably covered the hearts of crusaders.¹ Some records of heart burials are still extant, especially those of royalty. St. Margaret's Convent, Edinburgh, has preserved the heart of King Henry II (d. 1189).² Sweetheart abbey in Kirkcudbright was built in 1269 to enshrine the heart of John Balliol.³ The resting place of the famous heart of Robert Bruce is not definitely established, but it is known that at his request it was removed and began a journey to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Likewise, the heart of James I was removed and carried on a pilgrimage to the East.⁴

The division of bodies was generally tolerated by the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church until the end of the thirteenth century. In 1299, Pope Boniface III, in the bull Detestandae feritatis, called the practice "most abominable in the face of God's majesty, but even vehemently abhorrent in the sight of men."⁵ Penalty for those who perpetrate such a deed was excommunication ipso facto, from which absolution could be obtained only at the moment of death and then by grant of the Apostolic See. The

²Ibid., p. 16.
mutilated body was to be denied ecclesiastical burial.

This bull, altered by Benedict XI, was practically abrogated by John XXII (1313-1334) who provided for exceptions through the issuing of indults which permitted the division of the body on certain conditions.¹ One of these conditions was the payment of a fee. The "abominable" practice was to continue throughout Roman Catholic Christendom for many generations.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

The number and intricacy of services rendered by the Church in behalf of the dying and the dead had inevitable economic implications. Against the background of medieval simplicity these services were exceedingly elaborate, and for a vast citizenry who lived in poverty or near its edge, they were costly. This is not to conclude that the cost of death was considered inordinate; the medieval mind may have considered it in proportion to the importance of services rendered. The teaching of the Roman Catholic monolithic society had defined both the problem of death and its solution; so there were few persons before the sixteenth century who questioned that the cost was but the price of eternal bliss.

Extreme Unction and Testamentaries

Extreme unction, commonly accompanied with the recording of a will by the priest, offered leverage to the church for pecuniary gain. First, the priest could withhold the sacrament itself which, because of the religious training of the dying man, was his most urgent need. Sometimes the sacrament was denied because of the

¹ Bradford, op. cit., p. 48.
refusal of the dying man to bestow to the priest the sheets used on the death-bed, or the twelve candles used in the ceremony.¹

The threat to withhold extreme unction gave the priest an opportunity to bargain for burial arrangements which were to his liking. Parish priests used this strategy to preserve their privilege of burying against intrusion by the Franciscans.²

For the less scrupulous priest the duty of writing the wills of those in extremity of death offered occasion for exploitation in the name of the Church. The priest was admonished "if haply after his confession is heard he desire to make his will, let him diligently advise and persuade to remember, according to his means, the cathedral Church..."³ The names of all who die, testate or intestate, were to be reported to the bishop that "thereby we may learn how the last wills of deceased persons, and especially in respect of their bequests to religious purposes, are having due effect given to them by the executors."⁴ Bishops were to confirm the wills and to appoint executors to those who die intestate, and to sequester the good of all who die until their wills were presented to the ordinaries and their lawfulness confirmed.⁵ Excommunication four times a year was pronounced on

¹Pelliccia, op. cit., p. 546.


³Aberdeen Statutes, Statutes of the Scottish Church, op. cit., p. 41.

⁴St. Andrews Statutes, Statutes of the Scottish Church, op. cit., p. 75.

⁵Declaration of the Provincial Synod, 1420, Statutes of the Scottish Church, op. cit., p. 81.
"those who raised malicious obstacles to wills lawfully made." ¹

These enactments combined to leave a large measure of the control of inheritance in the hands of the clergy. We cannot know to what extent ecclesiastical pressures were responsible for action by the burghs of Scotland (before 1150) to prevent the mortification of their lands. The Leges Borgorum stipulated that no burgess, while on his deathbed, could give or sell, or in any way alienate from his heir, any lands in the burgh acquired by succession or conquest, unless under the pressure of absolute necessity. ²

The Mortuary

The mortuary, or "corpse present," was the most controversial of the imposts exacted by the Church. Before it became a legal obligation, the mortuary was justified by the Church as a necessary payment to compensate, in behalf of the deceased, for any possible unpaid obligation to the Church; for the withholding of even the slightest part of the tithe constituted a mortal sin. ³

By long continuous use it became in the thirteenth century a legal obligation, precisely defined, and protected against any possible effort at evasion:

As to the mortuary from an intestate estate, that having been received which was already owing to the church, a third part of the third part is (still) due to the church.

¹Aberdeen Statutes, Statutes of the Scottish Church, op. cit., p. 69.

²Ancient Laws and Customs of the Burghs of Scotland, op. cit., p. 49.

³Coulton, Ten Medieval Studies, op. cit., p. 126.
From an estate disposed of by will, temporal debts being first proved and deducted, let the disposable property be divided in three parts; if the dead's part exceeds (...?), let a cow be given to the church of the parish. If it is said that the defunct has nothing, let it be believed on the oath of two neighbors, and let the biggest and best coverlet be given up. And if any one dies without bequeathable property, let the heirs... be compelled to pay the debt to the church on his behalf. And when infants die let their debts to the church be paid from any inheritance to which they would have been entitled. And for infants whose mothers die, let them pay to the church not less than the parents would do. ...If the defunct choose a special place of sepulture, let him in the first place be carried to the church of his parish, and, the dues being paid there, let him then be conveyed to the place he has chosen.1

This statute gave official recognition to the two most common corpse presents, the "Kirk Cow" and the "umest claith." The cow was not necessarily the best animal in the estate, for that was due to the landowner as the "herezeld" from tenants who used no less than any eighth part of a davoch.2 However, that the Church claimed the best animal when not claimed by the landlord was clarified in a subsequent action:

We decree that the most valuable animal of the defunct be paid as mortuary to the church of the parish. And as to the goods of one dying intestate, let the prelate of the church dispose of them as in God's sight.3

The "umest claith" was usually interpreted in Scotland as the outmost cloth, a cover of the bed, or a coat, rather than the best cloth.

1 Ecclesiastical Statutes, Statutes of the Scottish Church, op. cit., p. 46.

2 Acts of Parliaments, I, 655, cl7. An ecclesiastical institution might also be the landlord, e.g. the brethern of Coupar Angus claimed in their leases the right to herezeld "of each pleucht gang."

3 Ecclesiastical Statutes, Statutes of the Scottish Church, op. cit., p. 50.
The mortuary was important to the support of the parish priest, and frequently a burden to the bereaved family. When a vicar was appointed at Linlithgow, an appropriated church of the Priory of St. Andrews, he was to receive all the oblations of the dead except when the mortuary was a living animal, in which case the "kirk cow" was to go to the canons of St. Andrews.¹ Litigations over mortuary settlements were not uncommon. In 1147, an agreement was reached between the Bishop of St. Andrews and the Abbot of Dunfermline concerning the mortuary rights of the parish church of Eccles and the Chapel of the Royal Castle of Sterling.²

The one hundred shilling mortuary of Tristram of Gorthy was the object of a lawsuit between the vicar of Fowlis and Inchaffray Abbey, (1454).³ In Glasgow John Curry protested against paying of mortuary dues (1503), in an action against his vicar.⁴ But since laymen were quite helpless before clerical demands, the most common litigations were between the parish priests and the monks, and sometimes between the monks and the friars.

Dissatisfaction with the mortuary system increased in the fifteenth century and became a ground for frequent complaint in the sixteenth. In Sir David Lindesay's Satyre of the thrie Estaitis, Pauper, one of the dramatis personae, relates "how I am brocht into this miserie." The death of his father, his mother,

³ Charters of Inchaffray Abbey, Lindsay, W. A. Dowden, John and Thompson, J.M. (eds.), S.H.S. (Edinburgh: 1908),
and his wife resulted in the loss of his horse as a herezeld, and his three cows as mortuaries, and then -

Thair umest clayis, that was of rapploch gray,
The Vikar gart his Clark bear them away.

The satire was played with King James' approval, and in his presence in 1540. Five years before, the King had urged the clergy to abandon their insistence on these mortuary gifts. The Supplication of the Lords and Barons, which in 1558-1559, was forwarded to the Provincial Council by the Queen Regent, urged the abolition of "the corpse-presentes, kow, and vmest claiith." Limited action was belatedly taken by the Provincial Council of 1559, "for relief of the poor, and to put an end to the clamour and murmurs of grumblers at mortuaries." The new statute clearly retained the mortuary principle, insisting on the ancient usage in the death of barons and burgesses, but providing for others a scale of payments according to the size of the estate. Those of less than twenty shillings were to pay nothing.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which marked the golden age of monasticism in Scotland, marked also that period when services for the dead were purchased at the highest price. The foundation of new monastic houses by King David (A.D. 1124-

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3 Ibid.
4 General Statutes of 1559, Statutes of the Scottish Church, op. cit., p. 178-179.
1153) was intended to "gain advantage from the prayers of holy men, not only for his kingdom and government, but for the souls of himself and his kindred and friends." Their charters systematically mention the names of those whose souls are benefited. The individualistic aristocracy of feudalism desired particular prayers and masses for the welfare of each soul and in the presence of the body. Those who could afford to claim so high a privilege made contract for these services in anticipation of death, or their families did so at the time of death. Sir Allan Mortimer paid the price of one half of his estate to be buried in the Augustinian Abbey at Inchcolm. The wife of Alexander II, in the anxiety of expecting childbirth (1235), bequeathed her body to be buried at Newbattle Abbey, and gifted the whole of the vale of Lethan and all of the streams that flow from it. Thomas de Galweia, the earl of Athole, granted the whole land of Tholaw to the monks of Coupar Angus, along with his body to be buried in the Abbey. The lands of Ledmacduvegil were deeded to Dunfermline Abbey on the day of King David's burial there, and King William had made similar grants to the abbey on the burial day of King Malcolm.

4 *Charters of Coupar Angus*, op. cit., XXII, p. 49.
David's reign these monasteries received the adulation and generosity of royalty and nobility. But the steady accumulation of property and privileges began to taper off by the early fourteenth century. The monasteries were no longer the acme of sanctity, and the privileged increasingly looked for sepulchre and soul security to the chantries in parish churches, the collegiate churches, and the friaries of Mendicant Orders.

The establishment of the Mendicant Orders in Scotland gave rise to bitter clash between them and the parish churches. Waged throughout Christendom, the controversy vividly demonstrated the importance of mortuary fees to both parties. The mendicants considered themselves Religiosi, and therefore thought it indecent for them to be buried in the churches or cemeteries of the secular clergy. Their solution was to establish burial places of their own. When the Franciscans, who had come to Roxburgh in 1232, made plans for a cemetery, the monks of the abbey of Kelso, to which the parish church of Roxburgh was appropriated, objected and appealed. The Bishop of Glasgow heard the case, decided in favor of the friars' right to have their cemetery, and consecrated it with the usual saving clause, that the parish churches should suffer no prejudice thereby. Put into practice, this usually meant that the body must be carried to the parish church for mass, and for the collection of mortuary fees before the friars were free to proceed with their rites. In 1250, Innocent IV granted full indulgence to Franciscans to admit any member of the laity in their cemeteries:

Henceforth nothing shall stand in the way of the last
wishes of the devout who have expressed their desire to be buried there, saving always the rights of those churches in which the deceased would otherwise have been buried.\textsuperscript{1}

This indulgence served only to confuse the issues. The churchmen now insisted on the right to perform the burial rites in the friary churches and receive the mortuary dues, even after Alexander IV forbade them to do so without the goodwill of the friary (1256). Bitter contention ensued for forty years. In 1299 Boniface III issued the Super cathedram which reconfirmed the friaries' privilege of admitting laymen to burial; but the friary was to remit to the parish priest the fourth, or portio canonica, of all that had been received in respect of burial. Details established in a subsequent document, the Inter dilectos filias (1303) gave the friars complete independence in the performance of burial obsequies.\textsuperscript{2} It was unnecessary for the body to be carried to the parish church, or to perform any part of the funeral service there. The funeral procession, headed by the cross of the friary, was to proceed directly to the friary cemetery where the friar was to read the office of the dead, chant the psalms, and carry the thurible and blessed water. The parish clergy were permitted to join in the procession and carry the parish cross if they wished.

The struggle between the friars and the parish clergy continued until the Council of Trent,\textsuperscript{3} but the Super Cathedram

\textsuperscript{1}Cum a nobis. 25 Feb., 1250, quoted by Bryce, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 419.
\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., Vol. I, p. 430.
\textsuperscript{3}T.S.E.S., Vol. III, p. 48.
had cleared the way for the Franciscans and the Dominicans to participate fully in the competition for burial exactions. Through all of the regular methods, and the receiving of benefactors into fraternity and confraternity, they were able to obtain their share. Mortuary greed had measurably assisted the debasement of their original purpose.

Post-Burial Observances

The trental, anniversary, and chantry endowments differed fundamentally from other pre-death and death exactions in that they professed to be offered on a purely voluntary basis. The anniversary and chantry were voluntary, unless it be said that the use of fear as a motivation for their endowment sometimes made it almost impossible for the ignorant or sensitive to resist them. The trental was usually voluntary, but some references to mortuary settlements assume that it is to be rendered and paid for along with the funeral rites.

In-so-far as post-burial services were earnestly desired and freely arranged, they are the result of a contract between the deceased (or his heirs) and the priest. Whether the contract is informal or written, supported by honor or notarized, it is an agreement by the priest to perform certain desired services for certain payment. The cool legal nature of some of these agreements is revealing. In 1402 the parents of the murdered Duke of Rothesay made a chantry endowment for his soul, and the souls of certain others. They instructed the recipients "to see that the soul of our son and the souls of those for whose weal we have
offered be not defrauded of due service."

The conscientious fulfillment of the contract was, in fact, the central problem of post-burial rites. The family was sometimes present for anniversary observances, and perhaps for many of the trental masses, but the chantry priests were under constant temptation to lighten their routine burdens. In Abroath, the principal chaplain served as "Collector of the Choir"; and as such was responsible both for receiving and paying monies due the chaplains, and for imposing fines on them for absence from duty. The obit of Mr. Duncan Pethede, formerly rector of Ayr, and Mr. Richard Pethede, canon of Ross, was written with a suspicion which may have come from professional experience. The chaplains were to:

assemble yearly in surplices, and not in albs; if otherwise appearing they shall be considered as absent. And they shall celebrate placebo and dirigé, with nine psalms, nine lessions and lauds in chant, on the tenth day of the month in January...but nothing shall be given to the absentees. And if it happen that anyone is absent from placebo or dirigé, he shall lose fourpence...

Similar evidence of unhappy experience is seen in the effort of William Myrtoun, founder of the collegiate church at Crail, to improve the work of the prebendaries. Thirteen years after its founding, Sir William issued certain new "statutes, ordinances, and charitable exhortations" which were to be regarded as part of the original statutes. They reveal his profound dissatisfaction

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1 Hay's Charters of the Burgh, p. 15, quoted in Alexander Maxwell, Old Dundee, op. cit., p. 21.
3 Paterson, Obit Book, Ayr, op. cit., p. 42.
with the pretendaries' casualness in the mass: irreverence in posture, restlessness, listlessness, poor enunciation, careless timing of chants, etc. He courteously suggests that their spirit of disinterest will not achieve the goal of "kindling in the hearers love of the celestial country."\(^1\)

There is a considerable body of evidence that morale was low among those priests whose duty it was to please the living by serving the dead. Some priests who lacked vocational satisfaction looked for consolation in pecuniary reward by seeking out post-burial contracts. The statutes of St. Andrews forbade any regular arrangement which called for the saying of more than one mass per day "inasmuch as certain priests, looking more to gain than to piety, appropriate to themselves the salaries of many."\(^2\)

The obit system offered a special temptation to the parish priest to supplement his meagre income, since service to the dead was generally more remunerative than service to the living. As early as 1242 the Constitutions of Bishop David ruled, "Let the parish priest not celebrate masses for the dead on receipt of or in hope of payment." If a priest accepted a responsibility for obit masses which would normally be said by another priest, he was not supposed to receive pay.\(^3\) The eagerness of parish priests to accept the greater security of the chantry chaplaincy threatened a drain on the leadership in

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\(^2\)Statutes of the Scottish Church, op. cit., p. 69.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 61.
regular parish life from poorer parochial livings and chaplaincies with the cure of souls. Bishop David attempted to bring this under control by forbidding a priest to begin a new work until he had made his canonical obedience.

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2 *Statutes of the Scottish Church*, op. cit., p. 66.
PART TWO

THE REFORMATION PROCESS

(1560-1638)
Section One

THE RELEVANCE OF REFORMATION THEOLOGY

As we trace the development of burial rites and death practices in Scotland after 1560, we shall discover that the staid and entrenched patterns of Medieval times faced epochal changes. Some of these changes were profound and some were superficial; some were almost immediate and others took generations to effect. Nevertheless, the total impact of the Reformation on subsequent funerary observances was sizable; unprecedented, perhaps, in the history of Christianity.

Practices which had taken place for generations were replaced, altered, or completely abandoned. The more immediate and dramatic changes were made in the ceremonial rites connected with the death incident: the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, choral services for the dead, the funeral mass, the rite of interment, trentals and death anniversaries. These were ordinances provided by the pre-Reformation Church and directly under her control. They were withheld or provided according to her theology, her ecclesiastical regulations, and her economic policies. The reformed churches at first exercised a comparable control over her death rituals, and promptly effected dramatic changes.

Not as readily controllable were the time-worn death customs of secular origin, but practiced throughout generations alongside the sacred ceremonials. Some of these were the direct result of Roman Catholic theology; some of sheer superstition; and still others could be understood simply as folk developments.
The ringing of the Dead Bell originated from the Roman Catholic need to summon worshippers immediately on the decease of a believer in order to pray for his soul. Yet, the Dead Bell, shorn of its first intent, continued long after the Reformation and even into the nineteenth century. The lykewake, a ceremonious and usually festive staying awake with the body, issued from a superstitious fear of leaving the body unattended, but remained after the Reformation as a major death tradition. The custom of burying inside churches developed from a Medieval syncretistic faith, but was a problem of the Church of Scotland's General Assemblies for generations. Other practices, whose vestiges were not readily removed, were the avoidance of the north side of the cemetery, the spectacular procession to the grave, and the placing of memorials inside the church building. Equally significant was the elaboration of secular death rites which followed the Reformed Church's restrictions on religious ceremonial: the return of the pagan death feast as the burial "service," the change of the dirige from an ecclesiastical to a social function, and the emergence of the "coffining."

Whether its particular expressions were rapid or retarded, and whether they were progressive or retrogressive, this process of change was essentially initiated and informed by Reformation theology. There were, of course, simultaneous influences at work, both to make possible the Reformation and to implement its practical application. The neatly stacked intellectual systems of the

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1 Supra, pp. 18-19.
2 Infra, pp. 296-97.
scholastics, with their firm limit to freedom of thought, had begun to tumble down. The new view of the universe, which followed Copernicus's discoveries, opened up vistas of expectation in the natural world; no longer could creation appear so static and fixed. The artistic developments of the Renaissance contributed by substituting a more sensitive aesthetic awareness of the rather bald crudeness which had characterized the culture of the Middle Ages. That the Reformation took place during a period of political and economic upheaval helped to dislodge and replace practices which may not have been reformed on theological grounds alone. Intellectual, cultural and social forces had begun to drive a wedge of change into the seasoned block of a tightly bound ecclesiastical society. But because these simultaneous influences contributed to the reforming rather than to the rejecting of a religious view of life, it was the task of theology to give a direction to this period of upheaval.

The primacy of theology as the determiner of mortuary practices can be traced to three inter-related facts which we shall investigate: 1. Eschatological thought comprises a major portion of the content of Biblical faith and is essential to the wholeness of its structure. 2. The reforming fathers, concerned with the re-discovery of and obedience to this Biblical faith, pronounced profoundly and with a large measure of unity on eschatological matters. 3. This solid content of Reformed thought

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took root in Scotland and brought an immediate effort to conform mortuary practice to itself.

I. The Importance of Eschatology in Biblical Thought

In its original and literal sense eschatology is the study of the last things; that is, of death, resurrection, and the final judgment. But in the Christian religion these experiences cannot be isolated from the "previous things"; from God's plan of salvation for man, from the rebirth of the Spirit before physical death, and from the entire life of faith into which the Christian is born. Though he continues to live in temporality he has also begun to live in that realm to which all temporalities are not subject. For this reason eschatology breaks through its narrower definition to include all of those events by which the Divine plan of salvation is mediated to us.\(^1\) Used in this broad sense it will be shown that eschatology is a major subject of Biblical content.

The framework of Biblical faith may be thus summarized. The transcendent God is Lord of Heaven and earth; He it is who, transcending time and space, is the Lord of all life and of all history. He is fulfilling His will in a process to culminate in an ultimate Event. In the Old Testament the events of history are hastening toward that Event. In the New Testament the long predicted Eschaton has arrived in the person of Jesus Christ.

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\(^1\) Rudolph Bultman champions such a comprehensive definition: "The content of the divine counsel is the eschatological events which have begun to happen with the incarnation of Christ, with His crucifixion, resurrection and glorification, and which continue to happen with the conversion of the Gentiles and the constitution of the Church as the body of Christ, and which will reach their end in the expected last things." *History and Eschatology*, (Edinburgh, 1957), p. 35.
His death, resurrection, and ascension (making possible the descent of the Holy Spirit to the Church) are both the sign of the new age and the actual inauguration of the time of the End. Christians are now, therefore, already within the New Age. The time of the End has provided the character of the New Age, but its complete substance, its fullness, has not yet come. The foundation stone of the new Creation has come into position (Acts 4:11, 12 and First Corinthians 3:11), and now, within this age God's final purpose is to be brought to pass. The Age will culminate in the Parousia, the Second Advent, when Christ will return and the earthly scene of His humiliation will become the scene of His glory and final reign, when He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. Eternal punishment shall be inflicted upon the lost, and eternal blessedness shall be the reward of the just.¹

Though Scripture is replete with passages which relate to the future fulfillment and hope, the importance of eschatology is not thereby established. Its importance is in relation to the whole of faith which the Christian places in the Eternal. Emil Brunner reminds us, "The hope of eternal life is not just a part of the faith, the final section, called eschatology; it is rather the point at issue in the faith as a whole, without which therefore it would not simply be minus something, but without which it would utterly cease to exist."² The significance of this area of faith is for the entire structure of Christian belief. St. Paul saw that

¹This summary omits Millenarianism since it was never the catholic faith.
the resurrection of Jesus spoke not only to the end of life, but to its entirety; "If Christ be not risen then is your faith vain and ye are yet in your sins." Without this hope, the Christian religion loses the wholeness which has given it identity through the centuries. In the words of John Baillie, "It would not indeed, I believe, be true to say that nothing at all would be left of the Christian system if eternal life were denied; but what would be left would certainly not be Christianity."¹

II. The Importance of Eschatology in Reformation Thought

It may be said of the reforming fathers that their concerns were rarely on the periphery of the Christian Gospel. Innumerable schismatic and heretical groups have sprung up before and since the Reformation, but seldom did their leaders give attention to the essence or to the whole of the catholic faith. The great reformers, on the other hand, put their minds to the entire breadth and depth of God's revelation in Christ. To seek the truth in Scripture was to expose oneself to the vast dimensions of the living Word. It is not surprising that the product of their search is not an amputated theology, but one reflecting the full magnitude of the revelation. Eschatological concern among the reforming fathers is consequently in proportion to eschatological concern in the Bible.

This is not to say that the reformers have formalized their eschatology with equal diligence. Luther, for instance, was not a systematic theologian in the formal sense. His theology

sprang forth from a vivid personal experience of the grace of God which always remained the center of his thought; the other aspects of truth forming around it like the petals of a flower. Calvin's disciplined mind, on the other hand, systematized a wide scope of Christian thought before he was thirty, and he recorded this in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. His work has been compared to a large scale ordnance map covering the entire territory inch by inch.¹

This difference in approach to theological formulation has left a vast difference in the nature of the documents containing the thought of the two men, and must not mislead us into believing that the theologies themselves are equally divergent. Their differences on such vital matters as the doctrine of Church and State and the meaning of the Lord's Supper are clearly sharp. Less convincing, however, are the differences which supposedly follow from Luther's emphasis on the doctrine of justification by faith alone and Calvin's emphasis on the sovereignty of God; since justification means little unless it be in the heart of a sovereign God, and sovereignty means little unless it be the sovereignty of a God who justifies. In comparing the writings of Luther and Calvin, what is much more striking than their differences or their contrasting emphases, is the large and significant body of thought which they hold in common: their acceptance of Scripture as the Word of God and insistence that it be the final authority for faith; their own of the theology and practices of the Roman Church and their refusal to be drawn into

subtle compromise with it; and (most important of all), the central place they give to the evangelical doctrines of the Gospel, so inextricably interwoven with eschatology.

This bond of unity between Luther and Calvin gave a degree of definition to the reform movement on the Continent. In Scotland the common denominator was more vividly demonstrated; for here the movement which began under the influence of Lutheranism reached its climax under Calvinism with no sense of reversal and little of contradiction. Patrick Hamilton's "Patrick's Places," the earliest doctrinal work of the Scottish Reformation, was Lutheran both in soteriology and piety. The early Protestant influences which were brought to Scotland by tradesmen, men-at-arms, French officials,¹ and imported pamphlets during the 1520's were distinctly of Lutheran origin. For the next three decades Acts of Parliament and of the Provincial Council equate heresy with Lutheranism, and the earlier martyrs of the period died for Luther's teachings. George Wishart proved to be the bridge from Lutheranism to Calvinism, as he embraced first the former, then the latter. He prepared the way for John Knox's acceptance by Scotland as its Reformation leader. This acceptance gave witness to a fundamental oneness in the two great Protestant systems.

III. Doctrinal Basis for the Reform of Death Rites

A. Martin Luther

It was Luther's doctrine of salvation which from the beginning of

the Reformation made the death practices of the Roman Church a vital issue. The young monk had forged from his own tumultous, but profound religious experiences a fundamental Christian truth: God alone pardons man of his sin and saves him from eternal damnation.

When in 1515 he was made responsible for eleven monasteries, he found that this compelling conviction about the way of salvation was pertinent to the whole life of the Church, and to his own administrative and pastoral duties. He had previously considered it his mission to "explain the Scripture to all the world,"¹ but now he was faced with the tension between Scriptural teaching to which he was committed and ecclesiastical practice for which he was responsible. With the non-restraint which characterized Luther's temperament, he broke through this tension by the posting of the Ninety-five Theses. Intended to be a basis for theological debate, the Theses proved to be (though much more also) a declaration of war against prevailing death practices. Their very unsystematic nature reflects something of the urgency of the issues Luther raised. Spread among the Theses will be found these continuing themes:

1. He affirmed the sovereignty of God over the destiny of man's soul. The Pope has no power to remit any penalties except those he himself has imposed. He has no power to remit guilt "except by declaring and warranting it to have been remitted by God."² Nor


can Papal influence reach into eternity: "The penitential canons are imposed only on the living, and no burdens ought to be imposed on the dying, according to them,"¹ since "the dying pay all penalties by death, and are already dead to the canon laws, and are rightly relieved from them."² It is God, not the Pope, in whose judgment the believer stands: "Christians should be taught that he who sees anyone in need, and passing him by, gives money for pardons, is not purchasing for himself the indulgences of the Pope, but the anger of God."³

2. He questioned the efficacy of any merit except that of Jesus Christ. Luther slyly suggests that the treasury of merits, supposedly accumulated by the saints, is "not like temporal treasure or it would not be so readily lavished, but only accumulated, by many of the preachers."⁴ But there is a treasure - "We are not speaking rashly when we say that the hope of the Church, bestowed through the merits of Christ are that treasure."⁵ "The true treasure of the Church is the Holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God."⁶ "Why does not the Pope empty purgatory for the sake of most holy charity and of the supreme necessity of souls - this being the most just of all reasons?"⁷

¹Ibid., Thesis 76, p. 11.
²Ibid., Thesis 8, p. 7.
³Ibid., Thesis 13, p. 7.
⁴Ibid., Thesis 45, p. 9.
⁵Ibid., Thesis 56, p. 10.
⁶Ibid., Thesis 60, p. 11.
⁷Ibid., Thesis 67, p. 11.
3. He called Christians to repentance instead of trusting in the penitential canons. The beginning of the Theses is this call: "Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ in saying 'repent ye' etc. intended that the whole life of believers should be penitence."¹ This is not sacramental and merely outward, nor is it merely inward. In earlier centuries canonical penalties served a worthy purpose since they were imposed before absolution, as tests of true contrition.² Now, since the institution of penance has become a Sacrament, penalties were to be carried out after absolution, thus easing the outward form and seeming to grant forgiveness without actual repentance. "Hence the greater part of the people must needs be deceived by the indiscriminate and high sounding promise of release from penalties."³ "What is this new kindness of God and the Pope, in that, for money's sake, they permit an impious man and an enemy of God to redeem a pious soul which loves God, and yet do not redeem that same pious and beloved soul, out of free charity, out of his own need?"⁴

4. He asserts that the truly penitent receive remission of sins without the Church's ritual of forgiveness. "Every Christian who feels true compunction has of right plenary remission of pain and guilt, even without letters of pardon," and "every

¹Ibid., Thesis 82, p. 12.
²Ibid., Thesis 1, p. 6.
³Ibid., Thesis 12, p. 7.
⁴Ibid., Thesis 24, p. 8.
true Christian, whether living or dead, has a share in all the benefits of Christ and of the Church, given him by God, even without letters of pardon." In that case the most numerous and popular masses of the church are unnecessary. "Why do funeral masses and anniversary masses for the deceased continue, and why does not the Pope return, or permit the withdrawal of the funds bequeathed for this purpose, since it is wrong to pray for those who are already redeemed?"  

In spite of their disorganization and their limitations as theological statements, the Ninety-five Theses clearly heralded the ideas fundamental to the reform of death rites. The Theses undercut Medieval practices by questioning or denying a large part of the theological structure on which they rested. Funeral masses, anniversary masses for the dead, indulgences for the release of souls from purgatory - all were inappropriate if the deceased were already numbered among the redeemed. If not, all were in vain since the soul's destiny, never dependent upon ritualistic acts of man, had been determined by God. 

By a few years later Luther had become more specific and bolder. Writing in 1525 to console Bartholomew van Staremburg on the death of his wife he insisted:

"... especially I ask you to leave off the Masses and vigils for her soul, for they are unChristian practices which greatly anger God. Anyone can see that there is neither earnestness nor faith in vigils, but only useless mummary. We are to pray quite differently if we are to be heard by God. Such vigils are a mockery of God. Moreover, inasmuch as He instituted the Mass to be a

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1Ibid., Thesis 36 and 37, p. 9.
sacrament for the living and not an offering for the dead, it is a shameful and terrible thing that men should change this and other institutions of God from a sacrament for the living into a good work and a sacrifice for the dead. . . Beware of this. Do not be a participant in the horrible error which priests and monks have invented for the sake of their bellies. A Christian should do nothing unless he knows that God has commanded it. The clergy have no such command concerning Masses and Vigils.¹

These practices were objectionable because they were inconsistent with two particular truths which Luther had come to apprehend in his own experience of Grace:

1. They assumed that God deals with men as a magistrate assessing their just deserts rather than as a true Father who considers not what his children deserve, but what they need and what He can do for their good. Writing to his dying mother, Luther reminds her to be thankful that God has released them from papal error in which they thought of -

    Our Saviour, not as a comforter, but as a severe judge and tyrant, so that we could only flee from Him to Mary and the saints and not expect of Him any grace or comfort, but now we know differently about the unfathomable goodness and mercy of our Heavenly Father; that Jesus Christ is our mediator, our throne of grace, and our bishop before God in heaven.²

2. They deny the completeness of the satisfaction made by Christ in man's behalf. It is the glory of God's divinity to be able and to wish to bestow His gifts on His children. It is more than presumptuous to believe that we can become God's creditors; it is idolatrous; for to trust in a work is to give glory to oneself and to take it from God:

² Ibid., p. 35.
For God giveth His gifts freely unto all men, and that is the glory of His divinity. But the justiciaries and merit-mongers will not receive grace and everlasting life of Him freely, but will deserve the same by their own works. Thus they would utterly take from Him the glory of His divinity.

Luther's Doctrine of the Last Things

Luther's doctrine of salvation was a more radical departure from Roman Catholic teaching than his doctrine of the last things. In essence he accepted the framework of traditional eschatology; the second advent of Christ, the resurrection of the body, the Judgment by which men's destinies in heaven or hell are pronounced. It was inevitable, however, that his emphasis on Scriptural authority and his personal experience of grace would cause him to depart from some of the teachings essential to the Medieval Roman system. Several of these departures had important bearing on death rites and burial practices.

1. Heaven and Hell.

Considering the fact that Luther was a product of the late Medieval period and one who was never happy about Copernicus' revolutionary discovery, he achieved a concept of Heaven and Hell which was somewhat emancipated from the limitations of the cosmology then current. Like many theologians, he sometimes slips into speaking of Heaven or Hell as places, but when he tries to describe either he seems to think of them as spiritual states.

Since he frequently imagines the conflict between good and evil as a vivid struggle between Christ and the Devil, so he thinks of Heaven as that state achieved when the soul through

Christ's power has overcome the power of evil. Such a person is kindled with love, and to such a person the Holy Spirit is given. By the fire of this grace, Luther himself had become a new man and had entered through what he considered the very doors of Paradise. "If we draw near to God," he said, "are we not in fact in heaven? For why should I be anxious about heaven, since I behold the God of heaven now, and since I am brought to heaven now? As Christ said, 'We will come unto him and make our abode with him.'"\(^1\) The possibility of experiencing something of the nature of heaven on earth was not remote but immediate; not a figure of speech but an actuality. From Luther's belief in the omnipresence of both natures of Christ, that He is not only "in heaven" or only "on earth," he developed a doctrine largely freed from the limitations of cosmology in which God is imagined as being "above."

2. Purgatory.

One of the most persistent remnants of Roman Catholicism in Luther's thought was the belief in purgatory. Four years after he posted his "Ninety-five Theses" he was ready to insist that no one is bound to believe in purgatory and that many Bible passages quoted in support of purgatory are "ridiculous"; but at the same time he wrote, "I have never yet denied that there is a purgatory and I still hold that there is, as I have many times written and confessed, though I have no way of proving it incontrovertibly, either by Scripture or reason."\(^2\) This clinging


to the doctrine of purgatory is the more remarkable, since by this time he had denounced the distinction between venial and mortal sin because such distinction implied that man is not totally damned and in need of total redemption. In Roman Catholic theology purgatory was a necessary place for those guilty of venial sin.

Yet, by 1538, Luther had conformed his thought about purgatory to Scripture. Never willing to accept the authority of the Church Fathers when they were unsupported by Scripture, Luther found considerable encouragement for discontinuing a belief in purgatory’s existence by claiming that Augustine, Ambrose and Jerome “held nothing at all of purgatory; Gregory, being in the nighttime deceived by a vision, taught something of purgatory.”¹ He concluded that the Roman doctrine added only confusion to the clear Biblical alternatives; of faith leading to salvation, or unbelief to damnation:

As for purgatory, no place in Scripture makes mention thereof, neither must we any way allow it; for it darkens and undervalues the grace, benefits, and merits of our blessed sweet Savior, Christ Jesus. The bounds of purgatory extend not beyond this world; for here in this life the upright, good, and godly Christians are well and soundly scourged and purged.²

B. John Calvin

Luther’s soteriology had immediately and boldly focused the attention of the Reformation on these issues. To Calvin too,

¹In this view Luther misjudged Augustine. See supra, p. 6.

²Table Talk, A Compend of Luther’s Theology, H.T. Kerr, (Philadelphia, 1943), II, p. 243.
the doctrine of salvation was crucial; yet his thought was best presented and understood in a more inclusive concept of the Word of God.

Teachings which had already become dominant in the Medieval Roman Church before they were given formal expression in the Council of Trent, had accentuated the flaws of medieval religious syncretism. Aquinas' doctrine of revelation provided an opening for an acceptance of natural revelation. He taught that the knowledge of God is principally received by revelation because of the darkness which surrounds our natural capacities, yet this is not the sole way of knowing Him: "As we do not know what God is, instead of proceeding according to the definition of His being, we begin with His effects, both natural and supernatural, in order to attain His knowledge."¹ Though St. Thomas does not equate the two sources of divine knowledge, and though he confesses that our human capacity severely limits the way of reason as a means of knowing God; yet his ultimate presupposition is that revelation depends on the way of nature and the way of grace. Since grace perfects nature rather than destroys it, nature is thereby elevated as a means of knowing God and needs only to be corrected by grace to bring man to that life for which God created him.

This view logically culminated in an optimistic view of man's capacities. It made man partially responsible for his salvation for he contributed to it his good works of masses, prayers, pilgrimages, and sacrifices in the purchase of indul-

gences. Through the narrow opening in the doctrine of revelation, the Roman Church, supported by popular superstition and encouraged by worldly gain, was able to countenance if not justify its practices.

In contrast, John Calvin ruled out the slightest possibility of finding in nature a basis of revelation. Our sinfulness has so radically distorted our capacities that we can not receive a knowledge of God in nature. In his Brief Confession of Faith Calvin says,

I confess that in original sin are included blindness of mind and perverseness of heart, so that we are utterly spoiled and destitute of those things which relate to eternal life, and even all natural gifts in us are tainted and depraved... I therefore protest against those who attribute to us some degree of free-will, by which we can prepare ourselves for receiving the grace of God, or as it were, of ourselves cooperate with the power which is given us by the Holy Spirit.¹

The author of these words perceived that underlying the Roman dualism is an unjustified assumption of man's present likeness to his creator, the analogy of being; and an acknowledgement of the freedom of the will which attributes to man a certain natural capacity. Whereas Thomas' thought claimed that human nature is only sick, Calvin would say that it is in fact dead, for all of the sons of Adam are dead and remain so unless God choose to give them life.² There is a possibility of the knowledge of God in nature since the creation is the work of the Creator, but man's blindness makes him incapable of profiting by it. This under-


standing of man's nature means that the embryo of religion which is in all men does not lead to the knowledge and service of the true God, but rather, "They worship the dreams and imaginings of their own heart in the place of God."¹ Man is ever trying to make gods of his own fashioning instead of seeking the knowledge of the Father which He has made available; and the inevitable result is failure and despair. If his misery is sufficient it might serve the good office of making him despise confidence in his own virtue, might rob him of all expectation of life, and he might learn at last to look to Him who is the author and finisher of man's salvation. So, "We must turn to the Word of God where God describes His works in order that we may estimate them, not according to the perversity of our own judgment, but by the rule of eternal truth."² Our only hope is in the Word which alone can convict us of sin and restore us to our true destiny.

This incisive understanding of how we know God delimited the Thomistic practices which had been known to the pre-Reformation society, and sharply defined what was permissible and appropriate to those who had received the Word. We shall consider five particular areas in which the Word was effectively brought to bear.

A. Masses for the Dead.

Calvin reserved his most vivid language and his bitterest


²Ibid.
attacks against the Roman system for his many discussions of the mass. Over and over he is constrained to show how the mass differs from the Lord's supper; so much so that it cannot be understood as the Supper, but as only an odious distortion of that which it pretends to be. The differences he cites are: (1) The mass claims to re-enact the sacrifice of Christ "as being a meritorious oblation to obtain pardon and grace as well to the dead as to the living," but "the Scripture teaches that our Lord Jesus Christ, by one only sacrifice, purchased perpetual redemption for us." Once only He offered His body as the price and satisfaction of our sins, and it is unlawful to reiterate such a sacrifice. God had ordered Christ to be the sole and perpetual priest after the order of Melchisedec. (2) The Lord's Supper is "nothing else than a sacrament in which all Christians partake together of the body and blood of Jesus Christ." It is therefore an abuse and an intolerable corruption to have masses in which none communicate. "It is notorious, that in the ancient Church there were no private masses, no foundations, and that the Sacrament was used for communicating; whereas in the present day masses are purchased as satisfactions, to obtain acquittal with God, and each individual has them apart at will. Such merchandise cannot cloak itself under the ancient

2Ibid., Section 29.
3E.g., chantries, collegiate churches, etc., endowed for the saying of masses for the dead.
practice of the Church."\textsuperscript{1}

(3) At the Supper our Lord presents to us in the symbols of bread and wine His body and His blood, and we are spiritually fed upon them. But in the mass "the people communicate only in half of the Supper, while one solitary priest receives the sacrament. It is distinctly said - drink all of His cup. (Matt. XXVI. 27) What God has joined men may not put asunder."\textsuperscript{2}

(4) In the Supper "our Lord wished to be understood by His disciples when He said - Take, eat, this is my body, &c; and these words are addressed to the Church." But the mass is celebrated in an unknown tongue. "It is therefore mockery of the Sacrament when the priest mutters over the bread and over the cup, and no one understands what he is about."\textsuperscript{3}

(5) In the Supper the bread and the wine remain as "the sign and the pledge to testify to us that the flesh of Jesus Christ is our heavenly bread and His blood our true drink."\textsuperscript{4} But in the mass, the doctrine of transubstantiation as interpreted at the Council of Tours, implies "that we chew with our teeth and swallow the body of Christ."\textsuperscript{5} In his letter to the Duchess of Ferrara, he calls this transubstantiation "the crowning desecration . . . the idolatry which they perpetuate by adoring a creature instead of

\textsuperscript{1} Tracts and Treatises, op. cit., Section 27.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., Section 30.
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., Section 35.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.
Then he asks why we should not be reproved for consenting to such iniquities, since we receive them with greater honour and reverence than we do the Word of God.\(^1\)

**B. Intercession of the Saints**

Calvin recognized realistically that the custom of praying to the saints and martyrs during the Eucharist had a history of many centuries. But this is not to endow it with a sacred halo, for "in religion, whose only foundation is the eternal truth of Christ, length of years ought not to have much weight."\(^3\) Then he proceeded to show that this particular tradition has no weight at all when balanced against the Word of God: "The whole Scripture enjoins us to bring no other mediator before God than Jesus Christ alone, and teaches us that there is no other on whose patronage and merits we can depend in order to come boldly before the throne of God."\(^4\) To make any other approach in prayer is to be discontented with the patronage of Christ. We must be wary, lest seeking several intercessors, we shut the only door by which we have access to God.

Furthermore, the Works of Supererogation, which are supposedly filling the storehouse of merit from the saints' oversupply of good works, are themselves impossible. Though one should sell all that he has, or practice perpetual virginity, or spend labor in preaching gratuitously, he has not thereby stored

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up merit. Though he has chosen to do certain things which he believes will please God, he has not yet done more than is required by God; in fact, he has not done all that God requires, "For we are there ordered to love the Lord with all our heart. What man goes beyond this goal with his perfection?" Even St. Paul, Calvin argues, in refusing stipend was doing no more than he ought to have done, and no more than God prescribed for him.

Still, among the various objections to praying to the saints there recurs one which appears to carry the greatest conviction for Calvin: the practice is innately profane. It is not only profane because it is in violation of God's word, but because it takes from God the honor due Him. There is no reason to believe that God does not visit man with his favor to the thousandth generation, but the teaching of the Merits of the Saints is concerned not with God's infinite favor, but with man's. "To transfer the least part of this praise from the goodness of God to the merits of men is impious and blasphemous malignity." It is better to "die a hundred times" than to allow such profanation to creep in upon the supper of Christ.

In a statement of his reactions to the first seven sessions of the Council of Trent, Calvin asks whether we impair the honor of the saints by forbidding idols to be made of them. "Is it honor to the saints to rob God of His honour and transfer it to them, that they may be worshipped promiscuously with God?"

1Ibid., p. 319.

2"Antidote to Prefatory Discourse," Tracts and Treatises, Ibid., pp. 46 - 47.
The Roman distinction between *dulia* and *latria*, which attempts to justify the practice, he compares to two horses in a stall kept separate by their tethers. The saints and God are worshipped indifferently, and the Papists outdo the Israelites against whom the prophets judged. Just how profaneness excelled in the worship of the dead was vividly described:

They kindle lamps and tapers at the dead images of the dead, sprinkle incense, celebrate their memory in solemn feasts, place them on altars, undertake long pilgrimages to visit them, bow down before them and pray to them. Nay, illiterate females and almost all the peasantry, in praying to Hugo and Lubin, use the very form of prayer which was given us by the Son of God. Thus a block of wood will be our Father in heaven.

Such a view of saint worship was bound to carry with it the condemnation of the Saints Days and Feast Days. Calvin called upon the prophetic voice to sound again as did Jeremiah (2:28), "According to the number of thy cities are thy gods." If Apostles and Prophets alone were to be so honored, it would be necessary to interpose and prevent these holy servants from becoming idols. But absurdity is added to impiety; and patrons have feast days assigned to them in utter disregard of their character or piety. The list includes, as well, fictitious names, legendary monsters, and animals.

C. Prayers for the Dead

In presenting his reasons for opposing prayers for the dead the Genevan Reformer appears to have a more difficult task than in pronouncing against intercession to the saints. Both practices were equally prevalent, but the argument against praying for the

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1 Ibid.
dead was more subtle, and therefore more difficult for the common mind. It was the popular belief in these prayers, and the acceptance of what the Roman Church taught about the intermediate state of the soul after death, which filled the indulgence chests and built cathedrals.

In his treatise on "The True Method of Giving Peace and Reforming the Church," Calvin spent several pages patiently showing that the tradition of the Church fathers in praying for the dead was not apostolic. But then he asks, what difference does it make? "We have the Writings of the Apostles copiously and plainly detailing everything necessary to be known in the doctrine of godliness. Nay, they sometimes speak professedly of the dead. Nowhere do they command us to pray for them." He cites situation after situation in the New Testament where prayer for the dead might have been recommended had it been approved. "But Scripture, while it accurately related the mourning and burial, and other matters apparently minute, says not a word of prayers." He asks why it is that there is not a single allusion in all of the prophets and Apostles to praying for the dead? And what of Christ Himself who delivered a certain rule for prayer? "We held by it; we think it unlawful to deviate from it one nail's breadth." 

Holding firmly to this view, we are not surprised to find Calvin, when he responds to Somerset's request for his view of their new Book of Common Prayer of Edward VI, giving general

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1Ibid., p. 323.
2Ibid.
approval, but adding that the prayers for the dead included in the Communion Service were "reprehensible."¹ The prayer was the ancient Memento, which corresponded to the prayer Calvin was opposing in Continental churches.²

An additional theological reason for opposing prayers for the dead is stated in the Confession of Faith of the Reformed Churches of France: Such prayer presupposes that there is a purgatory in which souls are punished for the faults they have committed. To believe in purgatory is to believe that the redemption made by Jesus Christ is not complete; His death has procured only a partial acquittal. Thus man's presumptuous prayers would usurp the office of Christ and claim to complete His work.

A further objection to the doctrine of purgatory is given in the creed, and is boldly spoken by Calvin elsewhere - purgatory is a device cruelly employed to exact from the poor, and others as well. In his reply to Cardinal Sadolet (1539), Calvin vividly portrays his view of the wreckage wrought by this false teaching:

As yet (in ancient times) the architects were unborn, by whom that purgatory of yours was built, and who afterwards enlarged it so greatly and raised it so high that it now forms the strongest pillar of your Kingdom. You yourself know what a hydra of errors then emerged; you know what tricks superstition has spontaneously devised with which to play; you know how many impostures avarice fabricated, in order to bleed men of every class; you know how great detriment it has done to piety. For not to mention how greatly true worship has in consequence decayed, the worst result certainly was that, while without any command from God everyone competed with each other in helping the dead,

they utterly neglected the proper offices of charity which are so strongly enjoined.\(^1\)

For the continuing evil, Calvin was not content to blame only the Roman clergy. The traffic of indulgences was also made possible by the customer. He said he could not accept the excuse commonly made, "that just as wild beasts are calmed by throwing offal to them, so the rage of Priestlings is to be softened by throwing them a few coins, or occasionally bestowing upon them a large sum of money, seeing that where lucre is in question, they gape over their prey and are more ravenous than a hungry lion."\(^2\) This cooperation with clerical avarice is inexcusable, for in return for his money the buyer carries off indulgences "full of anathema and deserving the utmost execration." If the purchaser would thoroughly examine his purchase, he would find Christ and his cross to be systematically insulted.

D. Extreme Unction

Again on Scriptural grounds, and almost with vehemence, Calvin opposed the Roman Catholic claim that Extreme Unction is to be administered to the dying, and that this use of oil can be declared a Sacrament. Unction is not a Sacrament since only Baptism and the Lord's Supper have been so designated by the Word of God. Nor is Unction to be administered to those who are incapable of recovery, since the New Testament employs it for precisely the opposite use, as an agent of healing (James 5:4). The Romans caution their priests not to apply the oil till death is evidently

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\(^1\) *Library of Christian Classics*, op. cit. Vol. XXII, p. 239.

\(^2\) "*The Unlawful Rites of the Ungodly,*" *Tracts and Treatises*, op. cit., p. 380.
approaching. Ironically, if the recipient recovers they feel that the unction has been profaned; but this is exactly the purpose for which it is used in the New Testament, as a means of receiving healing from God.

Because Extreme Uction contradicts the Word, it is no more to be touched than the venom of a serpent. The believer sins grievously when he offers all the parts of his body to be "be-smeared ... in what they call Extreme Uction," claiming that sins are remitted by oil! Calvin thought it was especially indecent for the bodies destined for the incorruption of the Kingdom of Heaven to be so defiled on the day they shall stand before God. He concluded that even though Uction is mentioned in Scripture, it should not be received at all since it could not be received without the appendages abhorrent to the believer.

Though not by oil, Calvin counselled that God's people would be solaced in death by a greater consolation. When the believer faces death, he need have no dread of its curse if he acknowledges Christ as his leader, and beholds Christ's death sanctifying his own. All of the evangelists carefully relate Christ's death because from it comes our trust of life; and also, a secure triumphing over death, for the Son of God has endured it in our place and emerged triumphant from it:

All the Godly who die with Christ shall commit themselves to the guardianship of God, who is faithful and will not suffer to perish what He has undertaken to preserve. There is this difference between the dying of the children of God and the reprobate, that the reprobate breathe out their souls unthinkingly, but the believers

1The Institutes of the Christian Religion, op. cit., Chapter XXV, Sec. 7, p. 999.
commit it as a precious trust to God's protecting, who
will faithful guard it till the day of resurrection.¹

E. A Theology of Burial

John Calvin discerned an important theological meaning in
burial itself; an insight which springs from his fidelity to
Biblical truth. In the Institutes he asks, "Why the sacred and
inviolable custom of burial but as an earnest of new life?"² In
Calvin's argument, God willed the observance of burial rites both
among the Patriarchs and among the Gentiles, that the image of
the resurrection would be set before them and alert them to man's
eternal destiny. Before the time of Christ, the act of burial
was a "weighty refutation of unbelief that all together professed
what no one believed!" Although the ceremony of burial was not
profitable to the Patriarchs because of their limited revelation,
yet it is useful to us if we wisely look to its purpose. A kind
of intuition caused men in pre-Christian times to sense the truth
which had not yet been revealed; and to bury their dead as though
in anticipation of a resurrection. After the revelation, men
came to know that the body will rise again, "That God will keep
their bodies as well as their souls and spirits sound until the
day of Christ."³ God's renewal of man includes the restoration
of his body: "If Death, which takes its origin from the fall of
man, is accidental, the restoration which Christ has brought
belongs to that self-same body which began to be mortal."

¹Ibid., p. 999.
²Ibid.
³Ibid., p. 1002.
Today, Calvin believes, as recipients of the new life, we can understand that burial rites developed to let men know that a new life was prepared for their bodies which were laid away. Spices and other symbols of immortality were previously used for the same purpose, to mitigate the obscurity of teaching under the law. The Spirit inspired these observances, being no less "attentive" to burial rites than to the chief mysteries of the faith. Christ recognized the importance of these symbols when He commended the woman who poured ointment over Him saying, "For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial." (Matt. 26, 12) And why did He honor the burial custom? "Surely for no other reason than that it raises our eyes from gazing upon a grave that corrupts and effaces everything to the vision of renewal."¹

He also saw in the careful observance of burial customs from ancient times, as among the Patriarchs, the proof that it was a rare and precious aid to faith. Abraham took such meticulous care about his wife's tomb (Gen. 23:4, 19) because a higher value than this world, an eternal significance, had been set before his eyes. "By adorning his wife's dead body with the signs of the resurrection, he might strengthen his own faith and that of his household."²

C. The New Theology in Scotland

A. The Lollards

Though the Reformation in Scotland occurred more than a

¹Ibid.
²Ibid.
generation later than that on the Continent, there was a measure of harmony between it and its precursor, the Lollard Movement. The Lollards shared with the Reformers a conviction of the necessity of the supreme authority of the Scripture, which gave the two groups a harmony of interest, including their vigorous opposition to mortuary practices which had grown out of Roman tradition: the worship of the saints, the adoration of relics, and the invoking of prayers for the dead. But unlike that of the Reformers, Lollard theology emphasized the obligations of the evangelical law as in the Gospels, while omitting the emphases of St. Paul's teachings.

Despite a correspondence of interests, the historical importance of Lollardy in the Scottish Reformation is all but negligible. Before academic Lollardy in England was forced into submission by Archbishop William Courtenay (1382), no Scottish student at Oxford is known to have returned to give forceful leadership to the new teaching. The scanty evidence of its progress is almost entirely in the records of efforts to suppress it. In 1406, James Resby was condemned to the stake at Perth, and in 1415, an act of Parliament "anentis heretikis and lollardis" charged bishops to make inquisition against them.

Much later, in 1494, about thirty suspects known as "the Lollards of Kyle" were tried before the Great Council and acquitted; but eight of the charges brought against them foreshadow the theological issues which were to change so radically the mortuary patterns of their land:

II. That the Reliques of Sanctes are not to be wirschepped.
XIII. That the Pape deceavis the people by his Bulles and his Indulgenses.

XIV. That the Messe profitith not the soules that are in purgatorye.

XV. That the Pape and the bischoppis deceave the people by thare pardonis.

XVIII. That the Pape can nott remitt the panes of purgatorye.

XX. That the excommunicacions of the Kyrk is not to be feared.

XXVI. That the Pape forgiveis not synnes, but only God.

XXXI. That such as wishep the Sacrament of the Kyrk committis idolatrie.¹

Whatever impact John Wyclif's followers may have had seems to have merged after 1517, with the more dynamic roots of the Reformation.

E. Patrick Hamilton

Like Luther in Germany, Patrick Hamilton in Scotland drew early attention to theological issues involved in death practices. These issues were dramatically highlighted when, in 1528, he became the first Scottish martyr of the Reformation; and they were systematically treated in his "Patrick Places," the earliest Reformation treatise of Scottish origin.

Though Hamilton's orientation to reforming thought was purely Lutheran, his doctrine might rather be characterized as intensely evangelical. His brief treatise is a carefully reasoned disputation on certain evangelical ideas, replete with Scripture references. Much of this thought could be understood as a contrasting of the law and the Gospel, which results in the freeing of grace from the claims of human merit. It is essential "to know when the law speaketh, and when the Gospel speaketh, and to

¹These "articles of Kyle" are reported by John Knox to be from the Register of Glasgow. David Laing, The Works of John Knox, (Edinburgh, 1864), Vol. 1, pp. 8-10.
discern the voice of the one from the voice of the other." When the voice of the Gospel is clearly heard, then it will be understood that "the promise of life and salvation is offered unto us freely, without all our merits, and simply, without any condition annexed of any, law, either natural, or ceremonial, or moral."^1

Because the Church of Rome fails to make this clear distinction between law and Gospel, it has fallen into fifteen "errors and absurdities" which Hamilton lists. Two of these speak to the doctrine of the merit of the saints, and the efficacy of masses for the dead:

XIII. They err, in thinking it not only to be in man's power to keep the law of God, but also to perform more perfect works than be in God's law commanded; and these they call the works of perfection. And hereof rise the works of supererogation, . . . to store up the treasurehouse of the pope's church, to be sold out to the people for money.

XV. They err most horribly in this, that where the free promise of God ascribeth our salvation only to our faith in Christ, excluding works; they, on the contrary, ascribe salvation only, or principally, to works and merits, excluding faith: whereupon ariseth the application of the sacrifice of the mass, 'ex opere operato', for the quick and the dead . . .

The application of these doctrines played a prominent part in Hamilton's trial immediately before his martyrdom. When his interrogator, Friar Alexander Campbell, accused him of teaching against praying to the saints he answered, "I say with Paul, there is no mediator betwixt God and man, but Christ Jesus his Son, and whatsoever they be who call or pray to any saint departed, they


^2 Ibid.
spoil Christ Jesus of his office. When accused of opposition to soul-masses, and the singing of psalms and diriges for the relaxation of souls in purgatory he replied,

Brother, I have never read in the Scripture of God of such a place as purgatory, nor yet believe I that there is anything that may purge the souls of men but the blood of Jesus Christ, which ransom standeth in no earthly thing, nor in soul-mass, nor dirige, nor in gold, nor silver, but only by repentance of sins, and faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.

C. George Wishart

In George Wishart we have the underpinnings of a bridge over which Scotland moved from Lutheranism to Calvinism. When in 1539, Henry VIII's Six Articles forced Wishart into exile, he chose to go to Strasburg, Basel, and Zurich for refuge and study. The Swiss Reformers' First Helvetic Confession had been rejected by Luther, but made a deep impression on Wishart who translated it into English. The trace of its influence on Wishart is found in his subsequent preaching and teaching. The priority which he gave to the Word of God as the legitimate source and standard of Christian truth corresponds precisely to that of the Swiss Confession. Likewise, his understanding of the Sacraments reveals that this distinctly Calvinistic viewpoint was the culmination of his search. In the future, Wishart's Helvetic view, as distinguished from German and Lutheran doctrine, was to make an important imprint on the confessional characteristics of the Reformed Scottish Church.

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1 Ibid., p. 576.
3 Lorimer, ibid., p. 97.
Yet Wishart's bridge to Calvinism carried with it a theology of mortuary practices which was common to both systems. There is no record of his specific opposition to indulgences, but there is ample evidence of his opposition to the teachings on which their exploitation rested. Characteristically a positive thinker, his denials took the form of an affirmation of opposite truth. He countered the fear of hell and the certainty of purgatory with a strong confidence in the Word and the will of God.

Knox reports that his preaching to the plague-stricken people of Dundee brought great consolation to a people who "ceased to fear death."¹ He set forth the great happiness of God's people whom He takes from the misery of earth, and the people resigned themselves to the will of God either for life or death. Such a presentation of the Word was bound to undermine the Roman system of salvation and deliverance.

At his trial for heresy he made specific denial of the value of praying to and honoring the saints. The doubt rested not on the issue of whether or not the saints hear, which should be gravely questioned, but rather on the First Commandment that "Thou shalt only worship and honour the Lord thy God, with all thy heart." "I exhorted all men equally in my doctrine, that they should leave the unsure way, and follow that way which was taught us by our master Christ. He is our only mediator, and maketh intercession for us to God His Father."²

When accused of denying the existence of purgatory he

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answered, "I have oft and divers times read over the Bible, and yet such a term found I never, nor yet any place of Scripture applicable thereunto. Therefore I was ashamed ever to teach of that thing which I could not find in the Scripture." ¹

By his teaching and his martyrdom George Wishart had begun a process of Calvinizing Scotland which was to impress deeply his contemporaries. Adam Wallace's martyrdom soon followed (1550), after his denial of the efficacy of the mass with its direct threat to the entire system of Roman rites for the dead. ² The theology underlying Sir David Lindsay's "Monarchies," published in 1554, and the nature of concerns expressed in subsequent works, reveal that schoolmaster Wishart was becoming a schoolmaster to Scotland. When Wishart's mantle fell on John Knox, the bridge from Lutheranism to the Reformed faith was soon to be completed.

D. John Knox

Before 1560, John Knox's theology had become thoroughly Calvinistic. The Genevan Reformer had given Knox not only his personal interest, but a system of Christian thought reflected in Knox's thorough acquaintance with the Institutes, and with the early creeds of the Reformed Churches. Knox was the leading figure in the creation of the Reformation standard, "The Scots Confession," which was accurately appraised as "a compendium of Calvinistic theology in the fully developed form of Calvin's latter days."³

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¹Ibid., pp. 632 - 33.
²Ibid., pp. 636 - 641.
In one respect only was his theology more like Luther's than Calvin's: its framework was more historical than dogmatic. Though not without his own gifts in theological formulation, Knox was especially instrumental in appropriating the genius of the Genevan Reformer to the exigencies of the Scottish Church. His keen intellect and iron will guided the application of Calvin's theology to the epochal events of the Reformation in Scotland.

Since Knox's theological system brought boldly to bear the Word of God upon the whole of life, we find that it strikes at the doctrinal basis of Roman Catholic practice, and suggests specific burial policies for the renewed Church. The complex of death practices by which Scottish medieval society was debased was to Knox but the inevitable consequence of the long reign of the anti-Christ in Rome. Knox seems not have doubted that the Word of God could or would cast out this evil.

Medieval death practices were the more detestable to Knox because they perverted the doctrine of the resurrection which he called "the chief article of our faith."¹ Like Calvin, he found the theological symbolism of burial the reason Christian burial is important. He claimed, "it has always been holden in estimation to signify that the same body which was committed to the earth should not utterly perish, but should rise again, and the same we would have kept within this realm."² But, he continues, burial has been prostituted in Scotland by "superstition.

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¹ "A Sermon on Isaiah XXVI," Select Writings of John Knox, (Edinburgh, 1845), Free Church of Scotland, p. 299.
idolatry, and whatsoever hath proceeded of a false opinion, and for advantage sake, as singing of mass, *placebo* and *dirige*, and other prayers over or for the dead, which are not only superstitious and vain, but also are idolatry, and do repugn to the plain Scriptures of God."  

Knox does not imply that the practices to which he so strenuously objects are evil *per se*, but they are evil because they are blatant denials of the Word of God. In his pre-Calvinistic days, his thought was influenced by the Puritan principle that man may neither make nor devise a religion that is acceptable to God, but is bound to accept and keep the religion received from God. This view, which has some kinship to the teachings of the Lollards of Kyle, later flowered into a broader Calvinistic view of revelation; but vestiges of his early Puritanism still remained. We shall consider his view of the death practices which Knox said "do expressly repugn to the manifest Scriptures."  

**A. Masses for the Dead**

As early as 1547, in discussions with John Wynram and Friar Arbuckle, he called the mass "abominable idolatry, blasphemous to the death of Christ, and a prefuction of the Lord's Supper." In 1550, addressing the Council of the North at Newcastle, he presented the *syllogismus* which proved to be of consequent importance to the Reformation debate:

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
All worshipping, honouring or service invented by the brain of man in the religion of God, without express commandment, is idolatry; the mass is invented by the brain of man without any commandment of God, therefore it is idolatry. . . . All honouring or service of God, whereunto is added a wicked opinion, is abomination; unto the mass is added a wicked opinion (that the mass is a sacrifice and oblation for the sins of the living and the dead); therefore it is an abomination.1

With pointed sarcasm Knox listed a number of purposes to which the mass is prostituted:

Sum for the synnis of the quick and the dead . . . sum for peace in tyme of war; sum for raine, sum for fair weather; yea, and (allace, my hart abhorreth sic abomination!) sum for sickness of bestiall.2

But his criticism had special relevance to masses for the dead, because in sixteenth century Scotland, "For one mass proper to the day said at the high altar of a parish church there might be as many as thirty requiems celebrated at the side altar."3

E. Intercession of Saints

Praying to the saints was objectionable to Knox for more than pragmatic reasons:

It is plain, that suche as hais callit, or calleth presentlie unto God by any uther name then by Jesus Chrysallone, doith nothing regarde Godis will, but obstenalie prevaricateth, and doith agains his commandementis. And thairfoir, obtene not thair petitionis, nether gif half entress to his mercie.4

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2. Ibid., p. 36.
It is impossible for man of himself to establish amity with the offended God. The mediator must be one who has the trust and favor of both the offended and the offender; and yet he himself must be innocent of the offence. The infinite goodness and mercy of God could not suffer the perpetual loss and repudiation of His creatures,

and theirfor his eternall wisdome provydit sic a Mediatour, having whairwith to satisfie the justice of God: differing also frome the Godheid; his onlie Sone, clad in the nature of a manheid, who interponit himself a Mediatour, not as man onlie. 1

The saints cannot usurp the office of mediator which the Father has given to Christ only, for they possess neither of the requirements of that office; they are not Godhead equal with the Father, nor are they humanity without sin.

C. Prayers for the Dead

Knox held that prayers to the dead are idolatry because they elevate human beings to the status of Christ. But prayers for the dead he saw as superstitious and vain, in violation of Scriptural truth. Those who have died in unbelief shall never see life, but the wrath of God already abides with them. Those who die in faith in Christ Jesus rest in their labors and from death go to everlasting life. In either case, at death, God has already determined the destiny of the departed soul, so prayer for the dead is contrary to the Christian's revelation of God.

As for the "intermediate state" of the soul between death and the Judgment, Knox had very early come to disbelieve in the existence of purgatory. His 1547 debates with John Wynram and

1Ibid., p. 96.
Friar Arbuckle included the article: "There is no purgatory, in which the souls of men can either be pined or purged after this life. But heaven resteth to the faithful, and hell to the reprobate and unfaithful." Knox rejoiced in what he considered his victory in the dispute, as the friar could find no better proof of purgatory than the authority of Virgil.

Unlike earlier reformers, Knox had never wavered in his denial of purgatory. Just before the Reformation climax, Knox authored the "Supplication" of 1560 which called for many doctrinal changes, including those doctrines supporting purgatory, pilgrimages, indulgences, and prayers for the saints. Also by 1560, he had clearly opposed the Lutheran view that the soul "sleeps" after death, and staunchly defended Calvin's teaching that after death there is no oblivion or loss of consciousness awaiting the Judgment.

4. Application of Theology to Burial Practices

We have seen that John Knox was a convinced disciple of Calvin in his theological orientation, but a disciple who fused with Calvinism his own early Puritan influence, and brought both to bear in the historical drama of his time. Concerned as he was to apply the Word of God to the daily walk of the Christian, and upon the whole life of the Christian community, Knox was instrumental in assuring that the First Book of Discipline (1560),

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1 Knox, History of the Reformation, op. cit., p. 103.
2 Ibid., p. 105.
interpreted creed to produce acceptable practice. The chapter "Of Burial" is specific in its directives and firmly restrictive. In addition to condemning masses, prayers for the dead and placebo and dirige, it recommends that all other ritual or ceremony at the time of burial be dispensed with:

We think it most expedient, that the dead be conveyed to the place of burial with some honest company of the kirk, without either singing or reading; yea without all kind of ceremony hitherto used, other than that the dead be committed to the grave, with such gravity and sobriety as those that be present may seem to fear the judgments of God, and to hate sin which is the cause of death.¹

Knox and his colleagues seem to realize that their counsel of such stark restraint requires some explanation, and this they proceed to give. Singing and Scripture reading are ill advised. "For albeit the things sung and read may admonish some of the living to prepare themselves for death, yet shall some superstitious think, that singing, and reading of the living may profit the dead."²

Likewise, there are those who feel the need of a sermon to put the living in mind that they are mortal. "But let these men understand, that the sermons which are daily made, serve for that use, which if men despise, the funeral sermons shall rather nourish superstition, and a false opinion, as before is said, than that they shall bring such persons to a godly consideration of their own state." An expedient reason for omitting the sermon at funerals is added: either the minister will spend too much of

²Ibid.
his time with funeral sermons, or he will be tempted to choose to preach only at funerals of the rich and honorable.

The Book of Discipline deals with one last practical problem concerning burial, the inconveniences which accompany the tradition of burying within the church building: "We think it neither seemly that the kirk appointed to preaching and ministration of the Sacraments shall be made a place of burial." A secluded and convenient place should be designated, "lying in the most free air, . . . which place ought to be walled and fenced about, and kept from that use only."¹ This advice, motivated by spiritual sensitivity and supported by utilitarian wisdom, ignited a long and heated controversy.

We find then, from the very inception of the Reformation, that eschatological thought played a vital part in moulding the reformer's response to death. The Lollards, Luther, Calvin, and Knox were vehemently opposed to those death practices which contradicted their understanding of the Word of God. Their determination to conform this Word to daily life forced an immediate confrontation with the medieval tradition.

¹Ibid., p. 508.
Section Two

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REFORMATION THEOLOGY

The climactic events of 1559-60 signalled the beginning of a process which was to shatter the ancient medieval response to death and replace it with one appropriate to the new era. Immediately the new response, conceived by Reformation theology and born of social revolution, was marked with the characteristics of its begetters. These it retained throughout the decades of its maturation, in spite of ecclesiastical and political efforts to manipulate it. Long after 1560, when the response itself had become a firm tradition, its distinguishing marks were identifiable with the religious precepts and social aspirations of the Reformation upheaval. Two profound and persistent characteristics are evident in the post-Reformation response to death:

(a) An intrinsic restraint. In the thinking of the Reformers, the Word of God could not be heard through the Latin "mutterings" of the priests, nor could it be communicated in their ceremonial. Reformed theology required a drastic change in some medieval practices, and the utter abolition of others. In confronting the intricate traditions of the centuries, the reformed Church's efforts must have first appeared quite negative to all but the most rigorous churchmen. Instead of the viaticum and extreme unction for the dying, it provided the solace of unadorned prayer. It ruled out the use of Placebo, Dirige, and Requiem, and considered it unnecessary to put anything in their places. For the dramatic processional and the complicated rituals at the
graveside the new Church substituted merely the bearing of the corpse to the grave followed by unceremonious burial, and sometimes "a comfortable exhortation to the people, touching death and resurrection." In the place of the trental, the anniversary, and the whole scheme of devices previously provided to expedite the soul's release from purgatory and absolve the consciences of the living, the reformed Church offered nothing. For the distinction and shelter of burial in the sanctuary the new Church substituted only an ordinary burial "in a secluded and convenient place."\(^1\)

Though reformed restraint has in latter times been wrongly characterized as pure negativism, this must have been an aspect of its image as it confronted sixteenth century ceremonialism. The new severity was contrary to the conditioning of a people who had found (at the very least) an emotional release from the activity and excitement which followed bereavement. The Church's demand for restraint now burdened its task, but this neither discouraged nor ultimately defeated those who aspired to the single objective of obedience to the Word of God.

(b) A sense of community. The Reformers saw the Church, not as an hierarchical structure of authority, but as the "Congregation" of God's elect to whom were entrusted the benefits and responsibilities of His Word. The brief statement of the First Band and Covenant reflects the Reformers' view of themselves when it charges the Antichrist with seeking to destroy the "evangel of Christ, and His Congregatione." It employs the first person

\(^{1}\) Ibid.
plural fifteen times in reference to the Congregation.\(^1\) The Scots Confession reinforced this view of the Church, and while it affirmed the catholicity of the Church, it strengthened the sense of community within the parish by emphasizing the cohesive power of the spiritual experience shared by God's elect. Where the preaching of the Word and the right administration of the Sacraments are sealed and confirmed in men's hearts, there "is the trew Kirk of Christ . . . not the universal . . . but particulare; sick as was in Corinthus, Galatia, Ephesus, and utheris places."\(^2\) Equally important was the fact that the early reformed congregations, first, Knox's Genevan parish, and the house congregations in Scotland, were comprised of intimate groups of believers such as were described in the Scots Confession. These were people who shared a common faith, and sometimes a common suffering for their beliefs. When death visited such a congregation, it was the concern and responsibility of all. The death response of the Scottish reformers attempted, consciously and unconsciously, to express this concern. The First Book of Discipline and the Book of Common Order, both instructive documents in the reforming of the Church, implemented this sense of community in their recommendations for burial. Despite the details on which the two books disagreed, both clearly pictured Christian burial not as priestly ritualism, but as congregational service to a fellow believer.


The priest in medieval times was the indispensable functionary at burial because he represented hierarchical authority. But now the minister may be absent if he chooses, not only because the ritual was undesirable, but also because the Christian community, "some honest company of the Church," were authenticated representatives of the Church.

This new awareness of community expanded beyond the burial ritual to many of the necessities it incurred. The bellman had been previously associated with Roman tradition; but his office was retained, expanded, and dignified because of his importance in rallying the community to bury its dead. The common bier and the parish mortcloth were not unknown in medieval times, but after the Reformation they were regularly used to dignify burial and to diminish economic and social distinctions. These became important symbols of community as eventually each of the faithful was to be carried by the Congregation on the same bier, and beneath the same mortcloth. Perhaps as important as any expression of community was the common burial ground itself. The long struggle of the reformed Church to end "kirk-buriall" was waged for theological and sanitary reasons, but it received considerable support from an emerging awareness of community. To "rest among the faithful" no longer implied an advantage to the soul, but it was an important symbol of participation in the community of saints.

Such profound changes as these in the funerary practices of a society could only be the result of a long process. The early years after 1560 witnessed a remarkable success in displacing the old response, but it required decades for a new response
to mature into a permanent aspect of Scottish life. Two processes were taking place:

(a) Political and ecclesiastical clarification. The need for the reformation of religion united leaders whose general purpose was the same, but whose particular goals were diverse. A considerable body of support came from those whose interests were largely secular. These were unconcerned with many of the difficult problems of conforming the common life to Biblical truth. The "Reformation Parliament" adjourned in August, 1560, after having created a Church with a creed, but lacking a precise government, a means of material support, and a discipline. The First Book of Discipline made a courageous effort to define an appropriate Protestant response to death, but the book never received official endorsement because of what John Knox called the "worldlings" refusal.1 Likewise, among those whose interests were religious, there was little unanimity concerning the liturgical practices of the newly reformed Church. As the ecclesiastical policies of the early Reformation years represented the views of the more thorough-going reformers, these policies received only partial support from other parties. The General Assembly attempted to achieve a measure of uniformity in the worship and ordinances of the Church by adopting the "Book of Common Order called the Order of Geneva" (Dec., 1562). Yet this gave only limited direction to the burial practices of Church; and the freedom it allowed led to considerable diversity. The reformed tradition, far from being defined in 1562, had to grow

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out of this diversity.

(b) A re-direction of religious energies. Decades of interplay among cultural forces were required for the development of a new Christian worldliness. Medieval death consciousness had been accompanied with powerful emotions which helped to obscure the necessity for a new tradition. The ideological force of the Reformation in Scotland could not destroy a thousand years of tradition in a single blow; nor could the statutory efforts of General Assemblies and Parliaments. While the former supplied the dynamic of change, and the latter usually cooperated to enforce it, the new tradition had to be the result of a cultural transition which could only take place amongst the populace. It required a new orientation to life itself in which temporal existence was given its proper importance. Man's spiritual aspirations were to be re-directed to that for which he knew he was responsible in this life; and his faith was to be placed in God's providential care for that which man could not effect in the life to come.
THE HOUR BEFORE DEATH

The Death Crisis Alleviated

The reformed Christian, like his medieval predecessor, lived in a society where death was his constant companion. His era ushered in a period of greater political stability achieved by the English alliance, and with it some decline in violent death through warfare. But death, as the result of natural causes, primitive medicine, droughts, and plagues, continued as before. Likewise, society was still characteristically agrarian and intimate. Economic interdependence within the community and within the family made the passing of an individual a practical, as well as a personal loss. The incidence of death and the importance of its occurrence had changed but little in the post-Reformation years.

Yet, the medieval community's former somber atmosphere of death was abating, even in the first decades of the Reformation era. The reformed Church was firmly set against those practices which had created and continued a death consciousness. In the reformed community the dead bell penetrated the air less frequently, for now it was used only to announce a burial, and never as a call to prayers for the dead.¹ The procession of the priest and his aides with the viaticum for the dying was no longer seen, nor was the ornate demonstration of the funeral procession itself. The ringing of the bell and the coming and going for Placebo.

¹Infra., pp. 151-52.
Dirige, and Requiem disappeared. So did the chantries with their visual witness to man's insecurity after death. The priests who had stood before chantry altars were gone too, unless they had avowed the Biblical faith. Some religious houses remained, but they no longer continued to symbolize to society man's compelling fear of the consequences of death.

The most important change was in the mind of the reformed Christian as he faced death. Much of the death-bed tension which his ancestors had suffered because of their Church's doctrine was alleviated for him. The fear of the trials of purgatory was removed from his mind with the denial of its existence. This also relieved him of the fear that he might not have made adequate preparation for masses and prayers for his soul's release. He was no longer concerned about dying without receiving the holy unction or the viaticum, without bequeathing something to the Church, or without any other particular act; for he understood his salvation to depend only on his faith in Christ. Like his medieval predecessor, he too made his death-bed bequests; but now the gift was bestowed "so that the good affection and name of the giver that is wt God may be acceptable to ye spectatouris thereof."¹ Since the receiving of the sacraments on his death-bed was unnecessary, there was no dread of a spiritual relapse between that time and the moment of death. For him, as for all men, the hour of death was crucial, but some of its burden had been removed. All of these changed circumstances combined to create a new vocabulary to

¹The bequest of Vice-Admiral Richard Clark, "in his last moments," to the Church of St. John, Montrose. James G. Low, Memorials of the Church of St. John, Montrose, 1891.
describe the dying: Alexander Lauder, "departit this lyff, and steipit maist sweetlie in the Lord."\(^1\) John Durie, "departed this lyff; wha, as he leived happielie, walking with God in prayer day and night, so he died, glorifieing God with grait joy and assurance of everlasting lyff and weillfear."\(^2\)

**Visitation of the Dying**

Though the Book of Common Order said nothing about a ministry to the dying, the omission appears to betray the actual intent and practice of the reformed Church. Sparse but apparently representative references to this ministry in session minutes indicate that it was taken with utmost seriousness. Furthermore, what is said in the Book of Common Order about "The Visitation of the Sick" is most appropriate to the visitation of the dying. From this it appears to receive much of its urgency when it begins, "The visitation of the sick is a thing very necessary."\(^3\)

Perhaps the terminology of the title was deliberately chosen to avoid identification with the "Romish" death-bed crisis. Then too, in the thinking of its authors, the title may well have included the dying, for in their time illness was much more frequently the prelude to death than it is today.

The "godly and prudent" minister is to use his own discretion in the conduct of the visit, "as a skilful physician.

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\(^2\) *Autobiography and Diary of Mr. James Melvill*, (ed.) Robert Citaillm, Wodrow Society, (Edinburgh, 184\textsuperscript{4}), p. 462.

framing his medicine according as the disease requireth.\(^1\) If the patient needs assurance he should be given "the sweet promises of God's mercy through Christ;" but if he be unrepentant, the minister should "beat him down with God's justice." He is also to provide for the sick man's necessities, make himself available as his pastor whenever needed, and commend serious illness to the prayers of the congregation.\(^2\)

The Book of Common Order added to this section from the Book of Geneva a long and cumbrous prayer which included the hope of recovery, but focused on the strong possibility of death. Its petitions show that the dying are foremost in the mind of its author:

> Have pity upon this Thy poor creature whom Thou hast, as it were, bound and tied to the bed by most grievous sickness, and brought to great extremity by the heaviness of Thine hand. O Lord, enter not into account with him, to render reward due unto his works; but through Thine infinite mercy remit all his faults . . . That thou mayest receive this sick person to Thy mercy, qualifying all the troubles which his sins, the horror of death, and dreadful fear of the same, may bring to his weak conscience . . . \(^3\)

Though the prayer probed relentlessly into the soul of the dying man, yet with evangelical warmth it was designed to comfort him:

> If the time by Thee appointed, be come that he shall depart from us unto Thee, make him to feel in his conscience, 0 Lord, the fruit and strength of Thy grace, that thereby he may have a new taste of Thy Fatherly care over him from the beginning of his life unto the very end of the same.

\(^1\)Ibid.
\(^2\)Ibid.
\(^3\)Ibid., pp. 72, 73.
for the love of Thy dear son, Jesus Christ our Lord.¹

This purposeful visitation, with a prayer to help the sick man face eternity, comprised the entire ministry to the dying as recommended by the Church. The offering of Communion, so important to the medieval Christian, was abruptly discontinued by the Scottish reformers. They objected to the private administration of the sacraments because the priest-parish relationship was considered an inadequate expression of corporate Church life.² Before 1560, when they had no church buildings in which to meet, John Knox and Paul Methven had ministered Communion regularly in houses;³ but this was a sacrament for the gathered congregation, and not in any sense a private service. This refusal of Communion to the sick was one of the points on which Ninian Winzet challenged the Scottish reformers when he asked, "Why neglect ze to ministrat this haly sacrement to the sick, afoir thair departing of this lyfe . . .?"⁴

John Calvin also disagreed with the policy of the Church of which he was the spiritual father. In a letter to Zulger (1558) he confessed,

¹Ibid., pp. 75, 76.

²John Durkan states that the reformers' objection was not only that "the sacrament was not received, but because nobody preached." True, they did not separate the Word and the Sacrament, but this objection they could have easily corrected if they had approved of private communion. Durkan is cited in "The Cultural Background in Sixteenth Century Scotland," McRoberts (ed.) Essays on the Scottish Reformation, op. cit., p. 311.


That the Communion is not distributed to the Sick, also displeases me; and it is not on my account that this consolation has not been accorded to those who are quitting this life. But because a different custom has prevailed, and because a change could not be brought about without great discussion... I have preferred peace... I should have wished, however, to witness to those who will come after us, what I should have desired.

There must have been infractions of the Scottish prohibition of private Communion, for it is again forbidden in an Act of Assembly of 1581; but the reformed use of the sacrament for public celebration only was generally understood and upheld in the first half century of the Reformation. In 1618, King James VI pressed his effort to Anglicize the Scottish Church by devising the Five Articles, one of which would legalize the private administration of Communion to the sick. The service agreed upon in negotiations prior to the General Assembly was not entirely "private" as James desired, nor "congregational" as the reformers had insisted, but required the attendance of "three or four of good religion and conversation." The Assembly also insisted upon use of the entire form of administration instead of the hurried receiving of reserved elements. The Articles were passed by the General Assembly at Perth, but the vote was taken under extreme royal pressure. Though private communion to the sick was now permitted, and clergy of Episcopal sympathies exercised the privilege, the unpopularity of the Five Articles among most Presbyterian divines prevented a general deviation from the Scottish reformed practice.

2 Grub, op. cit., p. 317.
In order to perform their service of visitation effectively, some kirk sessions organized their parishes into zones which were assigned to particular laymen. As early as May 1564, the Canongate Church, Edinburgh, was divided into four quarters, with two elders and two deacons working in each quarter. ¹ The Burgh Council in Aberdeen divided the parish into four "congregations" to keep the church in touch with pastoral needs including "the comfort of the sick and relief of the pure."² The parish at St. Andrews was divided into nineteen zones with an elder assigned to each. The family of the sick person was to notify the elder of sickness within twenty-four hours in order that the minister may -

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- cum and confort thame with hold admonitioun, and that under 
pain of public humiliatione; and if the elder be adver-
tesit and signifieis not to the minister, he sall also mak 
public humiliatione; and this to be under pane of ten s. 
to be upliftit upon ilk persgne transgresand; and this to 
be publicit sonyday nixtocum.³
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This efficient lay information service, however, accumulated visiting assignments for the minister which must have been difficult to fulfill in a large parish. A minute recorded by the St. Andrews session in May 1596, thanks God for their minister, Robert Wallace, but "desyrit of him that he may be mair diligent and cairfull . . . in visiting of the sick."⁴

⁴Ibid., p. 816.
In some large parishes the ministers and elders seem to have been dismally out of touch with their dying parishioners. In Stirling, because of negligence in reporting deaths, the minister and reader found themselves praying for the dead in public services, believing them to be alive still. Solution to the problem was not sought in charging the minister, reader, or elders with greater diligence, but in announcing that the names of those to be prayed for must be submitted by members of the congregation on sermon day. It is revealing, that in this parish, death occurring without the minister's knowledge was accepted as routine.

Despite the difficulty of providing a sufficient ministry to the dying, it was generally considered an extremely serious responsibility. In Elgin, the failure of a family to notify the minister, reader, or an elder of mortal illness would mean that the deceased—

sall want the convey of the faithfull to thair buriaill ... and forbidde the belman to knell the hand bell for thame or any uther bell.

The Presbytery of Dunkeld was so concerned that the sick "be nocht defrauid of the confort to be ministered vnto thame in the tyme of thair desease," that it inflicted stern penalties on elders or deacons who did not report illness; and ministers who failed to call were subject to suspension.

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This stern penalty reveals the place of importance the Elgin session gave to attendance on the dying. In this attitude it was representative of most reformed parishes throughout Scotland.

CEREMONIES AT THE TIME OF DEATH

The Preparation of the Body and the Lykewake

The First Book of Discipline provided no guidance for body preparation or secular death observances which might be appropriate to the reformed faith. Since it was quite precise concerning burial itself, its authors apparently saw little that needed changing in this aspect of the medieval tradition, or little which seemed (at that time) to be within the Church's sphere of influence. However, the Reformation fostered a general restraint in the response to death which bore upon these social customs; sometimes in the direction of corresponding simplicity, and sometimes stimulating a reaction of extravagance.

After the Reformation as before, the body of an ordinary citizen was prepared for burial by washing and wrapping in a white winding sheet. Social distinctions continued to play an important part in the method of preserving and dressing the body. In 1606, William Birnie, then Moderator of the Presbytery of Lanark, preached and wrote against the superstitious extravagance of the rich who outdid previous cultures in attempting to preserve the body.

on whom after Anatomicall exinteration, Apothetincary applica-
cations are so excessively employed, that oft times such prodigall profusion of arromaticall gummies (if they were otherwise charitably bestowed) might make sundry poore indifferently rich.1

Death festivities of primitive origin also continued to plague parishes long after the Reformation. The reforming Fathers had taken no stand against lykewakes or funeral feasts. In the new era these persisted with the same frequency as in the past, and continued to suffer the excesses to which they had always been prone. The kirk-sessions seem to have been too occupied with other matters to deal with these improprieties during the first decades after 1560, and when they did occur, the lykewake itself was not questioned. In 1575-76, a certain Mage Moreson was fined by the session in Aberdeen for "abusing of his selff in claything of his with mennesclayes at the like of George Elmistyes wife."¹ But it was her behavior rather than the lyke-wake which disturbed the session, for the reformers considered it a serious crime to dress in the clothes of the opposite sex.

By the turn of the century, kirk-sessions began to become aware of a relationship between death celebrations and the evils they abhorred. Adam Dick was accused by the session of Cross Church, Peebles, of "profaning the burial and abusing of the dead."² His offense was considered serious enough to be brought before the presbytery. "Insolence" and "profanity" are used to describe various kinds of misbehavior which followed inebriety. In 1613, the session in South Leith found Janet Porteus to have "committed insolence at ane lyke-waik on ye sabothe day" and


ordered her to make public confession. But the church officers understood this to be but part of a continuing problem and took firmer action for the future:

Ye sessioune beinge informit of sum insolence at lykewakes committed laitlie, they have ordained, yt quhosoever sall comit suche lyk in any tyme cuminge sall be wairded of yair persoone as also sall pay ane penuniall soume accordinge to their habilite . . .

The kirk-session in Aberdeen was not only prepared to recognize the problem of lykewakes, but as early as 1606 attempted to abolish them altogether. We cannot know from the record whether the epidemic was a major reason for the prohibition, or whether it was cited to gain support for an unpopular action:

Considering the gryt and manifold abuses quhilk fallis out at the lykis of defunct persones within this burt, and in respect of the dangir may enswe be publicht conventioun and meeting of people of all sortis thairat now in this dangerous tyme of the plague thairfor be advyse of the magistrattis dischargis all keeping of lykis in tyme cumming.

An exception was to be made when not more than five or six "friends" wished to gather quietly in the home; but they were to be occupied in "praying God be singing of psalms and reding sum partis of scripture." The sessions' effort was a dismal failure, for lykewakes continued; and the singing of psalms and reading of scriptures do not appear to have been their dominant activity. In 1612, the burgh council joined in the effort to control the festivities by ruling "that no desert suld be from thyme furth, at any lykewakes in this burght, of whatsomevir ranck or degrle the


2 Ibid.

3 Aberdeen Ecclesiastical Records, op. cit., p. 54.
Defunct be of, but onlie bread, drink, and cheiss.¹ In 1620, three widows were prosecuted and fined twenty pounds each because "everie ane of thame at the lykewakis of thair husbandis had succoris and desert, contrar the tenour of the said act."² A decade later it was the "insolencie of scholares at nicht-walkis" which disturbed the council. After 1631, only four scholars were permitted to attend the master of the music school, who led the singing or read the chapters.³

Occasional references to informal religious rites at the lykewake indicate that this was a common practice. Prayer was not considered appropriate, but the singing of psalms and reading from the Bible were acceptable. When burial did not take place on the day of death, those close to the deceased felt the need to fill the waiting time with some activity. Perhaps more then they realized, the reformed congregations chose to do something similar to the Placebo and Dirige they had abandoned. As in the Roman rites, they chose to sing psalms and read "chapters." Either unaware or tolerant of their Roman Catholic origin, the Aberdeen session specifically required these observances at lykewakes.⁴ The kirk-session in Elgin was of the same mind, and acted in 1625 to preserve a sense of reverence during the time of reading and singing at lykewakes:

¹Aberdeen Records, op. cit., p. 369.
²Ibid.
⁴Supra, p. 149.
All these that come to any lykewake to use any prophanatioun in tyme of reading chapteris or singing of psalmes are actit (legally required) fourtie schillingis except they be send for be the maister af the familie.¹

In Perth (1631), the session met with the council "anent sobriety and godly exercises to be used at lykewakes"; hoping to overcome the nuisance of lykewake revellers who maliciously awakened strangers in the night.²

In the meantime, even the Scottish Parliament had joined in the effort to reduce debauchery at burial feasts and lykewakes. In 1621, an act was passed attempting to encourage temperance by limiting the amounts which the hosts, the family of the deceased, could serve the guests. It provided

that no persoun of wha thatseuir use anye feasting at burial-lis or offer of vther meatis except breid and drink as lyikwayis no persoun use anye eating or drinking at night wakingsis or lyikwaikingis vnder be payne of ane thousand merkis toties quoties.³

The Deadbell

The reformers were not opposed to the use of bells, but they were aware of the superstitious meaning frequently associated with them. Their personification was usually discontinued in reformed churches, since in medieval times this had given support to a belief in their magical powers. No longer were bells for reformed Church use given Christian names. However, when George, the Fifth Earl of Seton, and a staunch Roman Catholic,

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¹Records of Elgin, 1234-1800, op. cit., p. 191.
purchased a new bell for the Seton Chapel, he had it inscribed, "Jacob eis myen naem ghegoten van Adriaen Steylaert int i aer m c c c c c l x x v i i."¹ In reformed communities, the "de-personalized" bell was intended simply as a means or aid to communication, as indicated frequently in records by the directive to "publish by the bell."

Just as the bell had lost its mystical powers, so it lost one of its previous functions— to communicate the need to pray for the dying or the dead. Now the "dead bell" served the simple function of publicizing the death and the burial arrangements. The bellman passed through the community ringing the bell, and pausing to announce the name of the deceased and the time of burial. The bellman also frequently led the company of the faithful as they proceeded from the home of the deceased to the cemetery. Neither practical purpose nor theological justification can account for this vestige of medievalism.

Though the hand bell was so employed, the Reformation silenced the tolling of the dead with the large tower bells, since this too originally signalled the need to pray for souls. Even the ringing of the bell at the time of burial was officially discouraged, though there are indications of its persistence as a popular tradition. In South Leith the bellman was not ordinarily to ring the bell for funerals, "bot he gat licence to ring the bell at tua efternoone for ane buriall gif the friendes of any defunct re quyred the same."² The town council in Haddington

² Robertson, op. cit., p. 5.
forbade Maislet, the bell ringer, from ringing any of the tol-
booth bells at the burial of anyone whatsoever without express
command and license from the provost or one of the baillies. 1

The curtailment of tolling was assisted in some communities by
the lack of a bell. Many large bells, such as those in the
cathedrals at Elgin and at Aberdeen, had been dismantled and
shipped abroad. 2 Like the leaden roofs of some cathedrals, they
suffered from the guilt of association with Romanism, and from
possessing a considerable economic value. At St. Giles, Edin-
burgh, the "Marie Bell" and the brazen pillars were ordered by
the burgh council to be taken down and "maid in artalere for the
townis use"; but that this was primarily a matter of expediency
was shown by its leaving in operation the prayer bell, the clock
bell, and the "common bell." 3 Large bells, wherever they were
available, continued to be used for secular and ecclesiastical
purposes; and some reformed parishes acquired new bells when they
could afford them. In 1591, when the Abbot of Ferne was planning
to sell the abbey's bells, the Presbytery of Tayne and the commis-
sioners of Ross successfully petitioned the King that the bells
might be used in the churches of Tarbett and Nig. 4

1 Alexander Montgomerie, "The Bells of Haddington," in
Transactions of the East Lothian Antiquarian Society, (Haddington:
1955), Vol. VI, p. 2

2 David McRoberts, "Material Destruction Caused by the
Scottish Reformation," in Essays on the Scottish Reformation, op.
cit., p. 444 n.


Church in Glasgow was presented a new bell in 1594, the inscription read:

In the year of Grace MDXCIV, Marcus Knox, a merchant in Glasgow, zealous for the interest of the Reformed religion, caused me to be fabricated in Holland.  

More commonly, the new bells expressed their "reformation" from superstitious use by the inscription, "Soli Deo Gloria."  

Most reformed parishes were not as fortunate as these, and had to content themselves with simple hand bells of which a large number are still intact, many inscribed with dates between 1600 and 1625. The adaptation of the bell to Protestant purposes is memorialized in the deadbell of the Newbattle parish which is inscribed, "1616 - James Aird minister."  

Like the bell itself, the office of "bellman" continued after the Reformation as an important function. Every parish appointed its bellman with care, for his responsibilities connected with death alone were quite exacting. He rang the deadbell to announce the death, and to lead the cortege; also he prepared the graves, cared for the cemetery, and dispensed the mort-cloth. In St. Giles, Edinburgh, the bellman must have been a man of considerable ability, as in 1597, he was required to "keip ane register of all persons deceissand in the pestilence."  

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1Glasgow Records, 1781-1795, op. cit., p. 371 (n.).
2e.g., the bell in Glencairn, John Corrie, Glencairn, Annals of an Inland Parish, op. cit., p. 1611; and in Spynie, Robert Young, The Parish of Spynie, (Elgin, 1871), p. 140.
burgh records in 1604 mention, "Symon Stewart servand to the belman." In Glasgow (1612) the bellman, Thomas Kilmawris, was commended by the burgh council "for his aptness and sufficiency in office of the mortbell," and in the future he was to "cleith him self in blak apparell, as is requirit in him in respect of the nature of his office." As a public figure, the bellman had frequently to satisfy both the kirk-session and the burgh council; and some councils assumed the right to appoint him. The Presbytery of Glasgow was sufficiently disturbed by this development to make a public declaration in 1594 concerning the Church's privilege:

Office of the ringing of the bell of the Deid ecclesiasticall. Quhilk daye the presbiterie declaris the office of the ringing of the bell to the buriall of the deid to be ecclesiasticall, and that the election of the persone to the ringing of the said bell belongis to the kirk, according to the auncient canonis and discipline of the reformit kirk.

The Reformed Burial Service
A) The Guiding Documents

The newly reformed Church made a prompt and bold effort to replace the Roman Catholic Office for the Dead. Its austere recommendations for burial were expressed in the Book of Geneva in a mere forty-three words; and could be considered a "rite" only in the broadest sense, that it was to be a devout act performed by God's faithful people. It stipulated that,

\[1\] Ibid.
The corps is reverently brought to the grave, accompanied with the Congregatioun, withowte any further ceremonies; which beyng buriede, the minister goeth to the church, if it be not farre of, and maketh some comfortable exhortacion to the people, towchyng deathe and resurrection. 

This instruction for the burial originated in a manuscript which John Knox and four other staunch Calvinists had prepared for the English congregation at Frankfurt (1555). However, Anglican influence in Frankfurt caused the rejection of the proposed service book, and led to the dismissal of Knox from Frankfurt. Knox then proceeded to Geneva where he served the English Protestant congregation and successfully introduced the use of the Frankfurt manuscript. Known as the "Book of Geneva," it was imported and used by the Lords of the Congregation in Scotland even before Knox returned there in 1559. It gained official status in the whole Church in 1562 when the General Assembly ruled:

It is concluidit, that ane uniform ordour salbe takin or kepit in administratioon of the Sacraments, and the solemnization of mariages and burialls of the dead, according to the Booke of Geneva.

Thus, seven years after the burial service had been prepared for a particular congregation in Frankfurt, it was authorized for use throughout Scotland.

The section on burial in the First Book of Discipline generally conformed to the viewpoint of the Book of Geneva. Both

2 Maxwell, op. cit., p. 8.
books called for an austere burial rite that would shed forever the superstitious faith in rituals as means of salvation. Both emphasized the importance of burial as an act of the Christian community. These similarities can be explained by the common theology on which both were based; the influence in Scotland of the Genevan order; the leadership of Knox, who was the only reformer to collaborate in the production of both documents. While the Book of Discipline did not become law, its more lengthy apologetic for the restraint of the reformed burial practices gave needed support to the directives of the Genevan service book.¹

Still, there were serious discrepancies in the burial recommendations of these two Reformed documents. They were equally firm or permissive; but unfortunately, in different places. The first difference concerned the use in the service of prayers, scripture reading, and singing. The Book of Geneva prescribed burial "withowte any further ceremonies," and suggested no alternative. The Book of Discipline made the same recommendation, and supported its viewpoint with logical reasons for the omission of these elements. But then, in the oldest edition of the Book of Discipline which is available to us, that of John Knox, a limited, but important freedom was allowed to the local churches:

And yet, notwithstanding, we are not so precise but that we are content that particular Kirkis use thame in that behalf, wyth the consent of the Ministrie of the same, as thei

¹Concerning this aspect of the Church's life the Second Book of Discipline said nothing; thus the First Book of Discipline remained a creative and determining force in the concept of burial.
will answer to God, and Assemblie of the Universal Kirk gathered within the Realme.¹

Since some clergy were of episcopal sympathies, and some Presbyterian divines less staunch than the Founding Fathers, it was inevitable that this freedom to use prayer, scripture reading and singing, would lure a number away from the rubrics of the Book of Geneva.

A second discrepancy concerned funeral sermons. The Book of Geneva advised that following the burial the minister may make "some comfortable exhortation to the people, touching death and resurrection." The Book of Discipline, on the other hand, warned against funeral sermons, explaining that they nourished superstition and tempted the minister to show partiality towards certain members of the congregation.² As this warning follows the general statement on other freedoms allowable, there is no implication that it is intended to apply to the right of the minister to preach a sermon if he chooses. John Knox was the only reformer to assist in the writing of both of these documents; and since he preached at least one funeral sermon after 1560,³ it appears that the men who helped him create the First Book of Discipline were the instigators of the new recommendation. The influence of this

¹Laing, op. cit., Vol. II., pp. 250, 51.
²Supra., pp. 131-32.
³At the funeral of the Regent Moray, Knox preached a sermon from the text: "Blessed are they that die in the Lord." He moved three thousand persons to shed tears for the losse of such a good and godlie Governour." from John Phillip, "The Compt of Geir Furnisit to my L. Buriall," Society of Antiquaries, Vol. VI., op. cit., p. 49.
more restrictive Protestant view is evidenced in 1564, when the first edition of the Book of Common Order was published. It copied word for word the burial rite of the Book of Geneva; but by inserting a brief conditional clause, it radically changed the intention of the original authors. It advised that the minister was to give the "comfortable exhortation" only "if he be present, and required."¹ This gave the minister freedom to absent himself from the burial if he pleased, or to attend without clerical responsibility. Thus the recommendation of the Book of Common Order constituted a revision of the Book of Geneva in the direction of the First Book of Discipline. But there remained a considerable discrepancy between the two. The Book of Common Order reluctantly permitted the sermon which the Book of Discipline discouraged.²

The Book of Common Order was in use until it was replaced by the Directory for Publick Worship in 1645. The First Book of Discipline always retained a measure of authority as an ideological guide for the Church of Scotland. Out of both unity and diversity these two books directed the development of the Reformation burial tradition. Their common goals, however, were determinative in producing the two major characteristics of the new tradition: 1. an unprecedented restraint; and 2. a renewed sense

¹Knox's Liturgy, op. cit., p. 78.
²William Scott, Minister of Cupar (1603-43), an ardent spokesman for Presbyterianism wrote: "The reasons alleged in the First Book of Discipline are so forcible to prove the inconvenience of funerall sermons that there needed no further doubt to be made of the matter." Apologetic Narration of the State of the Kirk of Scotland, Wodrow Society, (Edinburgh: 1846), pp. 3, 4.
of the Christian community.

B) The Procession and Its Trappings

It was the ambitious goal of the reformers to reduce the medieval funeral procession to nothing more than the reverant convoying of the dead to the grave. They were helped toward this purpose by some concomitant changes which rendered the traditional procession impossible: the dis-establishment of the clergy who had provided the chanting and much of the color for the spectacle; the discontinuance of the use of holy water, incense, wax tapers, and other trappings of worship; and the abandonment of the Church's right to a mortuary gift. Contesting against the reformed goal were the tenacity of social custom, and the human predilection for ostentation.

The record of the Church's vigilance in restraining the traditional procession begins in 1579, when the General Assembly appointed three commissioners to investigate reports of the intention to use superstitious practices at the burial of the Earl of Atholl, in St. Giles, Edinburgh. It had been reported that there were prepared a "whyte crosse in the mort claith, lang gownes with stroupes," and torches." The use of torches proved to be only rumor, but

The kirk thought the crosse and the stroupes superstitious and ethnick (heathen), and deyftit them to remove the same; quno returnit with anser, That the Lords soould cause cover the mort claith with black velvett, and the stroupes soould be removit.\textsuperscript{2}


\textsuperscript{2}\textit{B. U. K.}, op. cit., p. 43.
Exactly a generation after 1560, there appears a determined resurgence of longing for the ancient processional. Growing prosperity enabled its expression; and some of the new generation were unaware of the processional's theological meaning. In 1590, the Edinburgh council, responding to a request of a kirk-session, reprimanded Thomas Murray for organizing a children's procession, "ane thing uncomelie in ane reformit toun."¹ The burgh council in Aberdeen witnessed that same year an increase in display at funerals such as had been unknown in reformed kirks since the Reformation. "All and sundry" followed the example of "Princes and bryt personages" in bearing of gumphiones² before the dead. It was therefore thought appropriate

That in tyme comming thair no sic gumphiounis arms nor blak claythis borne afoir persones departit quhilkis sall happin to be bureit within the paroche kirk of this burt nor hung in the samen the tyme of their buriall, nor thairefter, except it be at the buriall of sic persones as an erlis, lordis, and men of hech rank and as estate, or sic as hec borne the office of Provostrie of this burt, and nane vtheris.³

The problem must have continued and expanded, since twelve years later the Presbytery of Aberdeen took a similar action. It provided penalties for the carrying of gumphiones or the display of draperies at burials.⁴

¹ Edinburgh Records, 1589 - 1603, op. cit., p. 18.
² Gumphiones - funeral banners, usually heraldic arms draped in black.
⁴ Aberdeen Ecclesiastical Records, op. cit., p. 190.
The Rev. William Birnie also protested against this loss of reformed simplicity. His description testifies to the worst of abuses during this period of resurgence, especially among the rich:

Although the death by all men should be thought to be a kynde of defeat from God, yet our Heroik burials are oft led lyke a martiaall triumph, the toutting of trumpets, trampling of steades, and trouping of men ranking themselfs vnnder stately standerts, and punicall pinsels (streamers), displayed for whivering in the winde . . . as if by an undantoned courage they would quarrelously demand the combate in reuenge of the dead: and as if the worme (man) were able to stand out against the thunderbolts of death delashed by God.  

Certainly Birnie was not inclined to understatement; but in 1621, an Act of Parliament to limit the right of funeral display supported the accuracy of his description more than it supported his cry for reform. It provided that the number who were permitted to wear duleweeds 2 was to be limited according to the status of the deceased: twenty-four for an earl or countess, sixteen for a lord or his lady, and for other privileged persons not more than twelve. Further -

That nane except the privilegit persoues have any honoures cariet and these according to their qualities and that no duilweiddis be given to herauldis, trumpetois or saullies 3 Except by the Earlis and Lordis and their wyffes And the number of the saullies to be according to the number of duilweiddis. . 4

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1 Birnie, op. cit., chap. vii.

2 "Duleweeds" - mourning clothes. Birnie shared with the English Puritans the dislike of duleweeds. He declared, "heires or widowes never dallies more nor vnnder their duiles." ibid.

3 "Saullies" - hired mourners who walk in procession.

This statute reveals a parliament more concerned with preserving the privileges of nobility than with the need to simplify the burial ceremony. It may have helped to inhibit extremes among the increasing number of prosperous persons, especially burgesses. At the same time, it continued the medieval pattern of giving nobility license to be extravagant, thereby adding social status to undesirable practices. It was to the benefit of reformed ideals that few could claim nobility, and only a small proportion could afford a luxurious convoy to the grave.

Since the Church was only moderately effective in maintaining simplicity as the mourners walked to the cemetery, it was more successful in eradicating those customs which were distinctively "popish." The carrying of the crucifix or of an image before the corpse was the most persistent vestige of the Roman Catholic processional. Though it occurred quite infrequently, the General Assembly in 1597, made this an offense by ruling: "It is ordanit, that no pictures, or images be caried about in burials, vnder the paine of the censures of the Kirk."

Seven years after the General Assembly's action, a blatant infraction of the new prohibition was prosecuted by combined efforts of a presbytery, a synod, and the Throne. In May 1604, within days after the burial of Lady Geycht, the kirk-session in Aberdeen found John Melvill guilty of "paynting of a crucifix to the buriall of the ladye of Gicht, quhilk wes borne at hir buriall in the moneth of May instant." The offense was serious because of

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its "being the ground and occasion of the fostering of idolatrie and superstition, and introducing ane dangerous exampl and preparative thairanent."¹ Melvill confessed that he was guilty of nothing more than following his vocation. Charges were dropped without payment of a fine when he produced a letter from the Laird of Geycht requesting him to paint the idolatrous item. But this proved to be only the beginning of the case. In Feb. 1606, the Synod of Aberdeen wrote to King James concerning the miserable "confusion" of the kirk in the northern part of his realm where Romish practices continued openly. The letter charged "that the Lairdis of Gicht and Newton, excommunicant papist, cheiff mantenaris of these things, are sufferit, and no ordour tane with them."² King James was anxious to suppress the powerful Roman Catholic families in the North of Scotland, and immediately recommended that "exact tryall be taikin of these two verie heynous offenceis,"³ having discovered that a crucifix was carried again in 1605 at the burial of William Gordon. The King's Advocate pressed charges against George Gordon, who had ordered the carrying of "ane crucifix upoun ane speir immediatelie before the corps," the said George being present on both occasions and assisting at this "superstitious and popische custome."⁴ George Gordon was summoned to answer these charges. After non-appearance he was

¹Aberdeen Ecclesiastical Records, op. cit., pp. 33-34.
³Privy Council, op. cit., p. 299.
⁴Ibid., p. 345.
considered guilty and ordered to enter ward in Edinburgh Castle within fifteen days, under pain of rebellion.

At Aberdeen in 1618, the similar carrying of a painted crucifix in the funeral of Richard Irwing was "stayit and inter¬ruptit by authorities of the magistrat." Accused of painting the crucifix, Alexander Pantoun pleaded before the kirk-session that he was not a painter, but simply helped the son of the deceased as a friend without suspecting that what he did would be offensive. He was admonished and released.¹

The paucity of records of such prosecutions, either civil or ecclesiastical, indicates that "superstitious and popische" funeral processions were rare in Reformed communities. It would indicate a greater success in suppressing popery than in suppressing the desire for worldly display.

C) The Components of the Ritual

The only burial "ritual" on which the Book of Discipline and the Book of Common Order agreed was "that the dead be comit¬ted to the grave" by a company of the Church. To the books' authors, the blatant necessity of death made burial an act of Christian love, to be performed for the believer by the Church. The congregation's knowledge of God, and its faith in Him, would sanctify the occasion without the need of churchly formalities. The act of burial was in itself a ceremony to be accomplished "with suche gravitie and sobrietie, as those that be present may seame to fear the judgmentis of God, and to hate synne, whiche is

¹Aberdeen Ecclesiastical Records, op. cit., p. 86.
the cause of death."\(^1\) The congregation was to enact a ceremony of hand and heart in place of the priest's prim ceremoniousness.

This frugal rite became the most common, and perhaps even the standard burial practice. A semantic change which took place in the word "burial" gives witness to its general acceptance. Before 1560, it was impossible to compress the events and ceremonies on the day of the funeral into a single term; so "burial" then referred to the actual interment. But after 1560, whatever events or ceremonies took place were centered around the interment; so "the burial" came to mean both the committal and any other obsequies which were subsequently accepted. Records regularly referred to events at the home, or in the procession, or in the church following interment, as "the burial."

This insistence on the interment as the central rite has given the funeral service of the Church of Scotland its basic character. The cynical author of "The Satire Against Scotland" cannot be trusted for his insight, but may have conveyed a reliable observation of the frugality of burial custom in 1617. He said the Scots "cristen without the cross, marrie without a ring, receive the sacrament without reverence, die without repentance, and burie without divine service."\(^2\) Even when elements other than mere burial were added to the committal "ritual," these were interpreted as supplementary; and those which were allowed were not sufficiently ceremonious to distort the tradition of frugality.


The intrenchment of this tradition was evident in 1616, when King James attempted to unite the English and Scottish liturgies. The proposed new order did not "disapprove" of the use at burials of scripture, psalms, and prayer, "but our Church, not being accustomed therewith, doth leave it to the discretion of the Minister." So, fifty years after the Reformation, the Scottish Church was still prepared only to tolerate the addition of scripture, psalms, and prayer to its burial rite; it was not ready to show enthusiasm for them. At the same time, it was vigilant in guarding against reverting to those practices which had never been acceptable.

This was illustrated by an incident which took place during the 1617 visit to Edinburgh of King James VI and his retinue. A letter of a London gossip commented -

Our churchmen and ceremonies are not well allowed of: the rather by an incident that fell out at the burial of one of the guard who died there, and was buried after the English fashion; when the dean of St. Paul's, preaching, desired all the assembly to recommend with him the soul of their deceased brother to Almighty God, - which was so ill taken that he was driven to retract it openly, and to confess he did it in a kind of civility, rather than according to the perfect rule of divinity. Another exception was taken to Dr. Laud's putting on a surplice when the corpse was to be laid in the ground.

Still, an accurate picture cannot omit the not infrequent use of other elements in addition to the rite of interment. Scottish burial services were shaped not only by the directives of the Book of Common Worship and the First Book of Discipline, but also by the freedom both books reluctantly allowed. It was inevitable

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2 *Nichols's Progresses*, iii, p. 355, in *Privy Council, op. cit.*, pp. 147, 48 (n.).
that those who found the burial service to be overly austere found in the Book of Common Worship the freedom to add a sermon. In the First Book of Discipline they sought justification for using prayer, psalms, and scripture "as they will answer to God and Assemblie of the Universal Kirk gathered within the Realme." 

The sermon was undoubtedly the most common component supplementing the committal rite. Though researchers could compile a long list of sermons preached by reformed ministers at burials, there appears to be no records of a minister being reprimanded for preaching a funeral sermon. In 1602, preaching at funerals was sufficiently general in the Presbytery of Aberdeen for the Presbytery to be concerned, not about the preaching, but about the length of the sermons. The Presbytery ruled -

That burialis stay nocht the minister to continew his preaching, bot keip his hour preciselie, so that, gif he exceed his glasse, he sall be censurit in penaltie of geir. 

The liturgy proposed in 1616, guarded though it was, gave the sermon a greater place of importance than had the Book of Common Order. It said that the minister, if he be present at the burial, and required, "ought not to refuse" the comfortable exhortation.

Prayer, psalms, or scripture reading were not included in the burial rite as frequently as the sermon; but the precise extent of their use is not known. Documents which might have told us what order was used by particular ministers or congregations are

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1 The First Book of Discipline, loc. cit.
2 Aberdeen Ecclesiastical Records, op. cit., p. 190.
no longer extant; with one fortunate exception, "The Forme and Manner of Buriall used in the Kirk of Montrois."¹ This singular discovery was found hand written on the fly leaves of a manuscript copy of the Regiam Majestatem. It was a form developed quite soon after the Reformation, as its reference to the duties of the "redare" shows that it antedated the General Assembly's act of 1581 discontinuing that office.

The introduction in the Montrose order corresponds to a rubric in the Book of Common Order: "The Bodeye being reverentlye brocht to the graiff, accompaneit with the Congregationn ..." Here is retained the Reformed sense of corporate responsibility for Christian burial. Then follow three well considered additions to the interment rite: 1. A Sermon (to be given at the grave). It is a Calvinistic exhortation, designed to comfort the bereaved by Biblical exegesis. 2. A Prayer. This is a variation of the prayer from the burial service of the (English) Book of Common Prayer of 1552. The choice appears to be deliberate, as the particular version differs from the version of 1549, and from the First Prayer-book of Edward VI, chiefly in the exclusion of all supplications for the souls of the departed. 3. A Hymn. The first eight stanzas can be traced to a funeral hymn of the Bohemian Church.² It was translated into the Scottish venacular, and expanded to twelve stanzas by John Wedderburn, one of the distinguished members of a family of reformed leaders from Dundee.

The Forme expresses much of the richness of Biblical Protestantism, and retained the simplicity of reformed worship. It adhered to the theology and general restraint of the Scottish Church, but took the liberty of asserting that "the burial" is an appropriate time for worship. We do not know how many other congregations or ministers may have been sympathetic toward this view and developed their own forms. But even if supplementary forms of worship were used extensively, it would not alter the fact that a vast change had taken place in burial rituals since the Reformation. The vestiges of medievalism which clung to the reformed funeral procession, and which could be identified in the lykewake, were not found in the new burial services. Reformed clergy and congregation were quite content to abandon the Requiem and the complex committal of the ancient Kirk for the simple acts which they chose to consider appropriate for Christian burial.

D) Attendance

The Reformation affected the attendance pattern at burials but did not radically alter it. Despite the religious nature of the obsequies both before and after the Reformation, the composition of the main body of attendance was determined by primary relationships outside the orbit of direct religious influence. The core of those present was composed of the immediate family and relatives of the deceased, neighbors, and close friends. This core continued unchanged, but there was ordinarily an additional group in attendance whose size and composition depended on social custom and personal motivation. This latter group was variable and
potentially amenable to religious influences.

The Reformation did not measurably change the size of this secondary attendance group since it encouraged the absence of some and the presence of others. Among those who were no longer seen at burials were the strangers who always responded to the dead bell because it announced the community's most exciting event. The reformed burial lacked the drama which had swelled the numbers of miscellaneous attenders. The gathering of the poor at graveside was also discouraged, since the reformers did not consider this a proper occasion for the distribution of alms, and the deceased could not be helped by their prayers. Still another small group would be missed, that inevitable little assemblage of pious who appeared whenever mass was to be sung, trusting that their good work would accrue to their merit.

These losses in attendance were compensated by comparable gains from a general congregational participation, a consequence of the reformed sense of Christian community. Since burial was made a Christian act through the offices of a congregation rather than of a cleric, vigilance was required to assure its involvement. The functioning of the parish system required the cooperation both of the family of the deceased and of the congregation at large. The family was encouraged, and sometimes required, to look to its own parish church for the burial of its dead. With mortuary payments discontinued, such fidelity to the parish no

1In Melrose it was "statute and ordainte that na persone indeuillez in the Heland in Melroseland .. burreis any deid out of Melrose under pane of xl s." Charles S. Romanes (ed.), Selections from the Records of the Regality of Melrose, (Edinburgh: 1914), Vol. I, p. 77.
longer had economic importance; but was utterly essential if the "company of the faithful" were to be composed of other than a few hired strangers.

Equally important was the response of the congregation to the publicizing of the death and burial, intimately referred to in Edinburgh (1563) as "vertesing of the bretherne with the bell." In theory, if not always in practice, the bellman's objective was the bringing together of God's faithful people for the burial of one of their number. This is the reason the Presbytery of Glasgow insisted that the ringing of the dead-bell was an ecclesiastical function. The clerk of the session in Tyningham recorded the working of the plan with satisfaction:

The sevint day of Februar, 1621, Jhone Lauder . . . slepit maist sweetlie in the Lord . . . and was buryit on Friday next in the kirkyaird, many peple being at the said buryiall. 3

Consistently, the reformers withheld the benefits of Christian community from the deceased who had been excommunicated "from the society of Christ's Church, that their impiety may be holden in greater horror." The faithful were forbidden to associate with an excommunicated person while he was living, or to number themselves among the mourners after his death. In Elgin the kirk-session ruled (1592) -

It is appointit that the handbell go through the town

1 Edinburgh Records, 1557 - 1571, op. cit., p. 171.
2 Supra., p. 155.
4 Sprott and Leishman, op. cit., p. 32.
inhibiting all and sundrie the parochionaris of Elgin to Accompany the corps of any excommunicat persoun to buriell vnder the pain of x lib. and making of thair repentance publicltlie thairfoir.¹

This action was repeated again in 1596, and supported by an immediate prosecution of an offender. Alexander Boynd was accused of accompanying the corpse of an excommunicate person; claiming that he had done so "accidentally," he was required "to stand in his awin habit and in his awin place and confess his fault."²

On the death of other unfortunates, however, the Church's problem was the opposite: to recruit community support for the burials of the poor or the friendless. In 1563, the General Assembly ruled:

Touching the burial of the poore in every parochin to landwart it is ordainit that . . . (the) village or house wher the dead lyes, with the nixt house adjacent thereto, or a certain number of every house, sall convey the dead to the buriall . . . .³

The care with which the General Assembly outlined the execution of this plan through the lairds and barons suggests that the problem of the respectable burial of the poor was widespread. Closely allied was the problem of burials in the larger burghs where less personal relationships sometimes handicapped attendance, especially when the deceased had not been a member of a trade or craft guild. In St. Andrews it became necessary in 1595 to specify the particular responsibility of church officers

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³ B. U. K., op. cit., p. 43.
for the burial of a neighbor:

For convoying the deid to burial, alseveill puir as riche, it is statut that al inhabitantis of this cite, specialie in that quarter quhair the persone is departit, thai, with the elderis and deaconis of that quarter, with thair wyffis, convoy the deid to burial.

The Elgin session faced the same problem, and ruled that the "adiacent nichbouris" must convoy the corpse, and those shirking this obligation were to be fined twenty shillings.  

The guilds' tradition of responsibility for its dead survived the Reformation and contributed to attendance at burial. As early as 1249, the Statua Guildae had penalized guild members for absenting themselves from the funerals of poor brethren. 

Since then, a consistent emphasis on the guild as a vocational community found particular expression at the time of death. Guilds commonly reiterated acts "anent absents frae burialls," and found it necessary to become increasingly firm in imposing and enforcing penalties for non-attendance. In 1619, the Maltmen of Glasgow reprimanded their members for failure to observe the act of 1605 by not being at "Burialls of their Breyren, their wyves, and bairnnis, being wairrent be the officer to that effect," and again in 1622, they called attention to "ye evill order usit in tyme byepast in absenting yame selfiss fra convoying of ye

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corpse of those departed this lyiff," and resolved to enforce the four shilling penalty.¹ In Aberdeen the Deacon-Conveener Court imposed a fine of forty shillings Scots on those who attempted to inhibit the guild officer from penalizing absentees.² But in spite of the negative means employed to enlist burial attendance, a solid representation of the brethren was ordinarily present. In this respect, the guilds' exercise of community in Scotland first antedated and then paralleled that of the Church.

It is significant that, except during plagues, the effort to achieve restraint at burials focused entirely on ritual rather than on attendance; even when the sense of Christian community played little part in the vast attendance recorded at the burials of royalty, statesmen, and nobility. The three thousand who were present at the burial of the Regent Moray, ³ and the five thousand who attended the funeral of James VI were representative of the working of political and social forces as determiners of custom. In the Highlands, similar values brought together vast aggregations for the burials of chiefs and their families. In 1576, upwards of two thousand men convoyed the remains of Lord Hugh Fraser to Inverness, ⁴ and more than five thousand were said to

¹Ibid.
³Supra., p.158 (n.).
⁵Chronicles of the Frazers, Master James Fraser, (ed.) MS by W. Mackay, (Edinburgh: 1905), p. 175.
have attended the burial of Lord Simon Fraser in 1633. Such numbers were to continue and increase as chiefs vied with one another in a show of friendship or strength by recruiting their liegemen for the occasion of burial.

A solitary objection to large funerals, because of their effect on the scholarship at the college, was raised before the Edinburgh council where it was asserted that "the scollers within the colledge ar much withdrawin frome their studies be invita-tiousness to burialles to thair gritt prejudice in thair advance-ment in learning." The principal was charged not to permit students to attend burials except those of extraordinary person-ages. The Church, on the other hand, not only expressed no objection to these vast conclaves, but gave positive support to many lesser, but still large burial attendances. Though it took place in London, the burial of the Edinburgh minister, James Lawson, was attended by more than five hundred friends. The willingness of presbyteries and sessions to adjourn in order that their members might be numbered among the mourners is sometimes recorded as in this minute of the Presbytery of Ellon:

August 10, 1603. The brethern convening at Ellon, and the hail honest men in the cuntrie for the maist pairt being at the burial of the Lady Tibbertie of guid memory qullcther

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1 Ibid., p. 252.
3 "An Account of the Death and Funeral of Mr. James Lawson, Minister of Edinburgh" (1584), Miscellany of the Wodrow Society, op. cit., p. 451, 52.
the brethren repairit. 1

The kirk-session in Elgin had a similar policy:

Aug. 19, 1622 - No conventiun becaus of the buriall of Jean Lealy, Collectit 51 s. 2

The plague presented a serious challenge to the reformed concept of Christian burial, for while before the Reformation a devoted cleric may have attended plague victims to the grave, now the prohibition on congregational attendance reduced the burial to mere expediency. As "the inconvenients of the pest" began to take its toll in each successive siege, firm measures were taken to prevent its spread. The dead were buried immediately and privately, and the place of death was decontaminated. "Clengers of the burial" were recruited for these tasks, as volunteers or as employees. In Edinburgh, 1584, the bellman was forbidden to ring the dead bell to announce a burial until the baillie in the district had ascertained the cause of death, "and thairafter the corps to be burlet and the bell to gang throw the toun and na vtherways." 3 During such periods of emergency, indignities toward the dead were commonplace. Rude employees performed their duties for meagre pay, and without the safeguard of the public eye. In 1585, the Edinburgh council was forced to transfer all burials to the "netheryard" of St. Giles "considerand the evill bruit (rumour) of ane misbehaviour toward the deid committet daylie be the buriares, quhome the bailyes can nocht oversie

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1 Thomas Mair, Records of the Presbytery of Ellon (1597 - 1800), (Ellon: 1898), p. 40.
without grett daynger."

Intense and tragic though they were, the visitations of the plague and their concomitant degradation of burial seem not to have had any permanent effect on the attendance pattern of the reformed burial tradition.

E) The Bier, Kist, and Mortcloth

Early in the Reformation period the parishes began to improve or acquire the modest equipage necessary for respectable burial. Since the winding sheet was generally used, major attention was given to dignifying the conveyance of the corpse from the house of death to the cemetery. This required, in its simplest form, a bier or litter on which the corpse was placed; and, when prosperity permitted, a coffin or "mort-kist" shaped and proportioned for the human body and carried on wooden spokes extending from either side. Simultaneous with these was the use of the "mortcloth" to cover either the shrouded body or the kist.

It is revealing that the reformed parishes, which owned very little property, and practically nothing for individual use, accepted the responsibility of providing the bier, the mort-kist, and the mortcloth. They clearly saw the burial as a community service and the gear which it required was commonly owned. The decades following 1560 witnessed a progression in community responsibility for these aids to dignified burial: parishes extended their provision for biers to coffins and mortcloths, and they extended the availability of these to all classes within the congregations.

The new Church's initiation of this process began promptly;

\[1\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp. 434 - 35.}\]
for in December 1563, the General Assembly ruled: "Touching the burial of the poor in every parochin to landwart, it is ordainit that a beere be made in every paroch to carrie the dead corpses to burial." ¹ By this time most parishes in the burghs had provided themselves with biers, but in the country parishes improvised devices were used, or the bodies were rudely carried on the backs or in the arms of the bearers. ² These indignities must have gradually disappeared, as the Assembly does not again refer to the problem; and subsequent rural church records begin to speak of biers, and later of common kists and even mortcloths. Certainly the bier, and its successor the kist, were not long thought of as being for the use of the poor only. As early as 1563, Edinburgh’s council had a standard charge for delivering the bier to the home of the deceased, and offered at different rates a choice of a bier covered with "fyne Frenche blak" or one with "grosser claith." ³ In 1585, the council ordered a new bier built for use in its burial place in the moor, and a lightweight inexpensive one for "infictit persons." ⁴

The common bier was still in use in the smaller commu-

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¹ E. U. K., op. cit., p. 43.

² In Edinburgh, during the plague of 1585, this had to be forbidden by the burgh council which required "that nane be buriet in the mwre (Boroughmuir) bot be the beir and nocht carlet mennis bakis or seldis for sweirness (laziness) of the buriars." Edinburgh Records, 1573–89, p. 415.

³ Ibid., 1557–71, p. 171.

⁴ Ibid., 1573–89, p. 430.
nities in the fore-part of the seventeenth century; but by the end of the sixteenth century we find the process of refinement in the larger burghs gradually exchanging the use of the bier for the mort-kist. None of these early kists are extant, but since they were used over and over again for transporting the bodies to the kirkyard, they were probably constructed for easy removal of the body at the grave. Later mort-kists were hinged either on the top or on the bottom for this purpose. When hinged on the bottom, the kist was placed over the open grave and rods removed to allow the shrouded body to fall.

Mort-kists were first provided for the use of the ordinary members of the congregation, and then made available to the poor. In 1596, a parish coffin was ordered by the kirk-session in Glasgow, and in 1598, another was ordered and the "old one mended." In 1602, the session ordered the Master of the hospital with diligence "cause make ane common mort-kist, whereby the dead corpses of the poor ones may be honestly carried unto the burial." If, as this minute indicates, the poor did not enjoy the luxury of a kist until a special one was provided for their use, we have a clear indication that the concept of the common kist was extended to the poor instead of from the poor. The same development took place in Ayr where the general use of the mort-kist in the "pest

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3 Ibid.
tyme" of 1608-09 necessitated its repainting, but it was not until 1623-24, that the Dean of Guild reported: "To James M. Quhill, wright, for making two mort kistis for the poor 1 pound, 13 s., 4 d."2

While the communal kist continued in general use, the seventeenth century ushered in a marked increase in the use of the private kist which was interred with the corpse. This luxury, long indulged in by aristocracy and nobility only, began to extend to privileged freemen in the burghs. The guilds took some leadership in this development, making certain their brothers were buried in a style worthy of the guild reputation. In December 1605, the Trades House of Glasgow not only spent xxiiij s. for William Clogies winding sheet, but added to this the expenditure of xxix s. for a kist.3 Private kists were again purchased from guild funds in 1622, when the Hammermen of Cannongate responded to a double tragedy by ordering "the bokis maister William Smithe to gif three pundis to bye ane kist and ane winding sheit to his Vyf furnatur and to the said Gilbert Holliday furnatur immediatelie threttie shillings for ane kist."4 There was at first no professional group responsible for burial, so the initiative for

2Ibid., p. 281.
preparing private kists had to be taken by the guild or family who found a wright and smith able to produce the coffin and its hardware. In Kirkcudbright (1616), a suit was brought by Herbert Heuchane against John Muir for "a pair soillis price vij s. quhilk he promissit for his wyfes deid kist." ¹

In Edinburgh, and probably in other large communities as well, private kists were coming into such extensive use that they intensified the problem of burial space. The Edinburgh Council in 1597 "ordainis in respect the little roume in their commoun buriall, that nane deceissiand in the pest be bureyit thairin with ane kist." ² But in 1618, though it was not a time of plague, limitations of space required the council to "dischargis any aickyn (oak) kists to be maid for buriall of the deceist persones within this burgh in the buriall place thereof." ³ We are not told whether kists of less durable woods were permitted, or whether all kists were then made of oak, in which case this would be a prohibition on the interment of coffins. By 1635, the problem of crowding in Grayfriar's kirkyard was so intense as to cause the council to take desperate action:

considering that thair is no uther plaice for the burials within this burgh: thairfore statuttis and ordains that no wainscott kistis be brocht within the said burial plaice with certificatium that such as sall present thair deid in the saids kistis to be bureyet in the said plaice salbe forced to tak bak thair deid and dischairgit of the benefite of the said plaice . . ⁴

² Edinburgh Records, 1589, 1603. op. cit., p. 196.
³ Ibid., 1604-26, p. 182.
⁴ Ibid., 1626-1641, p. 155.
The mortcloth, though of less practical utility than either the bier or the mort-kist, became after the Reformation the most important item of burial equipment. It was a symbol of the dignity of a human being; and its communal ownership and usage made it a pioneer leveller in a class-conscious society. For three centuries Scottish people of all social classes were willing to pay the considerable costs of having their shrouds or coffins draped with its fine black cloth; and because they were, the mortcloth became a major economic factor in burial. The guilds, the parish kirks, and the burgh councils vied with one another for its ownership and rental privileges.

An exceedingly high standard of design, craftsmanship, and materials for mortcloths had been determined before the Reformation by competition among various crafts for possession of the most exquisite creation. Materials were often imported to order, and foreign craftsmen in Scotland were employed to do the tailoring.\(^1\) This tradition persisted among guilds and was imitated by the burgh councils. It made the post-Reformation mortcloth a conspicuous burial extravagance, climbing in cost to sixty, eighty, and a hundred pounds. The burgh council of Paisley ordered (1608) "ane mortclaith bocht of the finest black that can be gottin."\(^2\) In 1615, the Deacon Convener of the Trade House of Glasgow personally gave one hundred pounds for a velvet mort-

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\(^1\) Gerrard de Haustin was hired in 1497 by the Hammermen to sew their mortcloth, the cost of which required dipping into the cash-box. John Smith, The Hammermen of Edinburgh, (Edinburgh: 1906), p. lix.

cloth, "in remembrance of his preservatioun at Godis pleasure of his awin and his wyfes seikines."¹ The quality of a mortcloth which could be purchased for this amount may be known from the description of one procured by the burgh council of Aberdeen which in 1604 authorized the payment of eighty-four pounds for -

[Description of mortcloth: ane Mortclaith of blak Velvet freigngiet with silk lynit with Bukasie and haveing two mort heidis braidirit thairon in quhyte satine, and bereand this reasone, Memento Mori. The vther reasone, Spes altera vite.²]

The purchase, upkeep, and replacement of such magnificent mortcloths were financed by council levies among the burgesses; or by "mortclaith money" paid as entrance fees when new members joined a guild.³ The parish kirks enjoyed no similar sources of revenue and rarely were their mortcloths of comparable quality. However, both town and guild mortcloth rental charges were fixed to assure a sufficient return on their investments. The Trades House (Glasgow) charge was 40 s., and the Aberdeen Council exacted four pounds for burgesses, and ten merks for gentlemen not burgesses.

Since the majority of citizens could not afford these amounts, the burgh councils offered another mortcloth of plain material; or the old one which had been replaced was provided at a nominal fee. As early as 1563, the Edinburgh council had

¹ Records of the Trades House of Glasgow, op. cit., p. 38.
² Council Register of Aberdeen, Scottish Notes and Queries, op. cit., p. 38.
³ In Nov., 1605, the Glasgow Maltmen recorded: "This said day resaivit be ye Visitour, fra Thomas Wyning, of mortclaith silver, 10 s." Wyning had paid his other entrance fees at the previous meeting. Douie, op. cit., p. 67.
provided different biers for people of large or small means; now, as mortcloths came into general use, the same provision was regularly made. In 1608, the Paisley council not only ordered a luxurious cloth, but also "ane uthir mortclaith of substantious blak for the common sort." ¹ Aberdeen likewise provided a second grade cloth for the use of the poorer burgesses.² This policy, though seeming to reduce the levelling influence accompanying the use of mortcloths, at least recognized the common humanity of the less privileged, and added dignity to their burial.

The parish kirks also played an important part in providing modest mortcloths, sometimes in a conscious effort to reduce expensive ostentation. In 1621, the Falkirk kirk-session observed that "in tymes bypast some of the better sort had been extortionally charged" for mortcloths which they had rented elsewhere; while others of the "poorer sort" were forced to cover their coffins "unseemlie and uncevilie, with playdis and suche lyk other claithis. In consideration thereof the Sessioun hes providid a remedie by making up of ane honnest comolie mort-claith for the common use of all." The price was "to the inferior sort to be onlie twell schilings; to strangers and those of other paroches thretie schilings."³

¹ Charters, Documents and Extracts of the Burgh of Paisley, op. cit., p. 284.
² Council Register of Aberdeen, op. cit., p. 38.
With or without exorbitant charges, the well managed use of mortcloths could, and frequently did, become a lucrative enterprise. In 1593, the Edinburgh council casually involved itself in a service for ordinary citizens:

Thinks expedient that archibald Roger, belman, causmak ane sufficient mortclayth of fyne balk and that he tak fra the nychtbouris that gettis the use thairof half ane merk and of the strayngers ane merk ilk tyme, provyding always that nane be oblist or astristet (bound) bot at thair awin pleasure to tak his mortclayth.¹

As profits from these moderate charges began to accrue the service was able to expand. In 1603, the mortcloth income was allocated to the Trinity Hospital, which was also entrusted with overseeing the rental service. By 1609, there were four full-sized velvet cloths, two full sized plain cloths, and two velvet ones for children.² The allocation of income became increasingly important, so the council

Having ane speciall cair and regaird that the yowth may be instructet and brocht up in godlynes and lerning in the college, laitlie planet be the gude toun in the Kirk of Feyld, and for helping ane competent rent to be provydet to the intertenement, use and foderance of that gude purpose and to gif others occasioung to do the lyke thay may the yeirly proffet and casualties of the publict mortclaythis . . . gottin fra sic persouns as requyris the same to thair burialles to the use intertenement of the said college and members thairof in all tyme cuming . . .³

The incorporated trades, in burghs throughout Scotland, also maintained stocks of mortcloths which they hired out to the community at large. The Maltmen of Glasgow maintained a dozen

¹Edinburgh Records, 1589-1603., op. cit., p. 86.
²Ibid., 1604-26, p. 49.
³Ibid.
cloths of various sizes which they kept in their mortcloth kist, each carefully stored in a separate "wallet." Their original intention was to provide mortcloths "but for Bureing off the Deid within the Body of the Vocatioune, vizt, the Guidman of the Famelie, his Wyffe, or Childreene"; but they could not withstand the temptations of an alternative policy. The lucrative business prospered in the name of charity, as its profits were generally used for the support or burial of their particular poor. Guilds customarily drew rental fees from the general public, but used them only within the vocational community.

Profits from parish owned mortcloths were also used for the poor; but rarely could these cloths call forth the sizable fees which were paid to the guilds. Conversely, the kirk's poor-box, in-so-far as its contents permitted, was available for all of the needy of the parish. Since their funds were for public use, we discover both the parishes and the burgh councils attempting to overcome their disadvantage over the guilds by insisting on the exclusive use of their own mortcloths. In 1623, the kirk-session of Falkirk, after condemning excessive charges for mortcloths, ordered that no one in the parish was to use any other than that provided by the church, and none were to be admitted to burial without it. Similarly, the Edinburgh council, which in 1593 had ruled that "nane be oblist ... but at their awin

2Douie, op. cit., p. 69.
3Murray, op. cit., p. 41.
plesure" to use the burgh's mortcloth, found it necessary in 1614 to protect the public interest by forbidding -

any persons in this burgh to half or use within this burgh any mortclay this of velvott but the toune mortclay th of velvott allanerlie and in speciall ordanis the deykin and trether of the chirurgeanes to desist and cease fra using any mortclay th bot the touns . . .

Competition for the income from mortcloth rentals was to intensify before the seventeenth century concluded.

Responsibility for the Poor

The existence of a number of desperate poor in each parish was bound to play a part in the burial tradition. Authors of the First Book of Discipline saw that the poor, "so earnestlie commended in our cayre, ar universallie so contempned and dispysed" that "every severall Kirk must provide for the poore within the self." Of these unfortunates "God commandeth his pepill to be cairfull." The poor were not necessarily numbered among God's people, but the burial tradition came to include them in the congregation's concern, both before and after their death.

From pre-Reformation times there persisted the memory of spiritual benefits ensuing from kindness to the poor; of bedesmen praying for souls; and of the hungry and helpless receiving alms at burials. The reformers vehemently opposed the view that good works in behalf of or by the poor could determine the soul's destiny, but their understanding of God's command made them no

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less anxious to serve the poor. There appeared to be an almost universal desire to benefit the poor by the financial profits of burial. Except for the incorporated trades, which sometimes designated their absence fees and mortcloth fees "to be employit to ye commone use of ye vocationne,"¹ all other institutions, both secular and ecclesiastical, dedicated their burial incomes to help the distressed. Lairs in churches were regularly sold to add to the poor fund, and where burial in churches was increasingly discouraged, permission was often granted on payment of an adequate "legacy to the poor."² When the placing of troughstones and headstones began to be practiced, the poor were usually the beneficiaries of the fees. The reformers also saw in the correcting of ancient funeral traditions the opportunity to aid the unfortunate. One of the reasons the Aberdeen council opposed the bearing of gumphiones and other extravagances at burials was that these superfluous expenses "micht be bestowit on ye hospital of this burt and aid of the puir."³ The St. Andrews kirk-session was determined to break the time-worn, paternalistic tradition of distributing to the poor at graveyards, but wished at the same time to strengthen systematic giving in their behalf. In 1598, they decided -

¹This and similar phrases are frequent in Chronicles of the Maltmen Craft in Glasgow, op. cit., p. 68, etc.

²Burial permission was granted in St. Giles after a 100 merk legacie was promised. Edinburgh Records, 1589-1603. op. cit., p. 415.

³Council Register, Vol. XXXIII, Northern Notes and Queries, loc. cit., p. 994.
that na almous be gevin or distributit heireafter, be na person nor personis, kynesfolk or bairis of defunct personis, the tyme of thair burialis, to the puir of this citie, but the samin salbe gevin to the theasaurar of the pure for the tyme, that the samin almous may be distributit, at the sicht of the elderis and the pure of this citie with the rest of the pure almous.¹

In death, as well as in life, the poor were recipients of burial benefits. The General Assembly had taken early leadership in assigning to the parishes responsibility for their burial,² and ever-recurring references in kirk-session minutes witness to the churches' acceptance of this assignment. Such entries as these are especially numerous after 1610:

1616 - Ordins Androw Arnand to gif xs. to burie ane puir man.³
1617 - Delyverit xxs. to ane bairne quhais thie is brokin, item, vis. to ane puir bairne to burie him.⁴
1620 - Given out of the box, for ane winding sheitt to ane deid corpis qk came in on the sands of Aldhame.⁵
1628 - George Imloche, vricht, is ordanit to get ten markis for making ane bear to the puir folkis.

Two kirk-sessions are on record for protecting the poor against exploitation by the church officers. In Falkirk, John Dun, the church officer, was accused of refusing to make the grave for poor folk until he had been paid for doing so. He was required to

¹St. Andrews Kirk-Session Register, op. cit., p. 883.
²Supra, pp.
³Cramond, Extracts from the Elgin Kirk Session Records, op. cit., p. 150.
⁵Tyninghame Session Records, Ritchie, op. cit., p. 188.
beg forgiveness on his knees before the offended parties, and ordered "that he sall exact no farther heirefter of anie personne whatsumever rank or estait, except they give it of their own voluntar will and liberallitie, under pain of deprivatioun." In Elgin, James Layny and James Johnstoun were likewise accused, this time for trying to collect for the burial of a poor man's child. The session ordered them "to tak nothing fra such persons, bot the Sessioun sall pay them therfor," and if "suche lyk compleant cum to our ears againe vpon any of them they salbe depreyved of ther office." The attitude of most kirk-sessions is reflected in the schedule of charges agreed upon by the elders in Dundee:

for ane man's grave twelve pennies, for ane bairn's grave ane plack, and for puir creatures that hes na thing - na thing."

In the burghs, where responsibility for burial of the poor could be a major drain on the kirk's poor box, we could rather expect sessions to solicit the aid of others, especially of the solidly financed incorporated trades. In 1610, the South Leith session exacted a promise from the Maltmen who were elders that the trade would pay for the burial of poor servants or those recently in their service. The Maltmen agreed to "furnische all things necessar for thair buriall, Provyding that wther callings

1 Murray, op. cit., p. 40.
2 Records of Elgin, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 239.
do the lyke."¹ Five years later a penalty imposed on one body of workmen shows that most of the incorporations had complied, or this firm measure would not have been in order. It was

concludit in respect ye workmen of yis Toun most stubbornly hithertill haue refusit to set vp yair box for ye suppoirt of ye selk and decayinge nybors and for ye honor of yr buryall. That the said workmen sall be depreyved of all benefit of ye Kirk vis. of Communion, baptyme, marriage, and buryall wtin ye kirkyard.²

THE PLACE OF BURIAL

Reformed restraint and community again played a part as they helped to determine the final resting place of the deceased. The restraint was primarily operative in preventing the profanation of burial in the house of God; and the communion of saints was expressed in the sharing of a common sepulchre within the kirkyard dykes. This double objective was set forth in a single sentence in the First Book of Discipline:

In respect of diverse inconvenientis, we think it neither seamlie that the Churche appointed to Preaching and ministraitoun of the Sacramentis shal be maid a place of Buriall; but that some other secret and convenient place, lying in the most free air, be appointed for that use; the whiche place ought to be weill walled and fensed about, and keppe for that use onlie.³

Underlying this statement were implications which were not frequently mentioned or defined in the records, but which were sufficiently understood and accepted by the reformers to guide a consistent course of action. Three principles directed its unfolding:

¹Robertson, op. cit., p. 8.
²Ibid., pp. 13, 14.
³The Works of John Knox, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 27.
1. Holiness proceeds only from God. The reformers rejected the view that any outward (human) ceremony of consecration, or the presence of "sacred" relics, could make holy the place of burial. Holiness was in human life only through the activity of God with His Congregation. So, says William Birnie, instead of being concerned to rest in a consecrated place, men should give attention to "how they may be gathered up aright to their grandsirs in God," for

As sound doe they sleepe by the mure edge that are folded vp in the favour of God (though it were by the Pest) as in the most stately tombe. Foras fishe in euery sea is at home, so we in euery earth, if we be the Lord's, to whom the earthe and her implements do all appertaine.1

The act of consecration of a burial ground was inconsistent with the Scottish reformers' understanding of a sovereign God who makes claim to all of His creation. Man must not presume to allot to Him certain patches on the earth's surface.

2. The place of burial is therefore unrelated to the welfare of the soul. It is both profane and futile to crave burial near the "holy" altar, in a consecrated place. Convenience and practicality alone should determine its location. To the parishes this meant the increased establishment of cemeteries in open areas separated from the church building. To individuals it meant freedom from compulsion to bring a corpse from afar for burial; and to society it meant release from the anomalies of evisceration and heart burial. Birnie said that the disbelief in the prerogative of certain "sepulchrall places" now made unnecessary "these farland conuoyences of the dead to their homed tombes,

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1 Birnie, op. cit., chap. viii.
defrauding the weary corps of the desired rest."\(^1\)

3. The place of burial has religious importance only as a symbol of the departed's participation in the communion of the saints. The early reformers worked to make the burial ground itself a community, and attempted to destroy all the sepulchral barriers which divided it. The most conspicuous barrier was the church wall which differentiated between the elite who were permitted to rest within, and the other members of the congregation who were not. Tombs and memorial markers were also considered obstacles to community, and were opposed by the majority of reformers until the end of the century. The community of the deceased was guarded against the unworthy when William Pary, who had committed suicide in the Water of Tay, was denied burial in Greyfriars (Perth) because it was "the burial appointed for the faithful that depart in the fear of God."\(^2\) The goal of the Church was to have its people conceive of their own sepulchre as did John Johnson, the Laird of Caskieben, who

sick in body, but whole in spirit, assured of salvation in the merits of Jesus Christ only, and attending for his last delivery out of this mortal life, commands his body to be buried among the faithful at Monkegy.\(^3\)

Dislodging the Ancient Tradition

The reformed Church's view of the proper place for burial

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\(^1\) Ibid.


was no more revolutionary than its other burial recommendations, yet it was to exceed all of the other burial issues in fermenting long continued and violent strife. In their determination to discontinue all burial in church buildings, the reformers stood in opposition not only to ancient custom, but also to aristocratic pride, lawful rights, and profound familial emotions.

The General Assembly took no action against kirk-burial until an incident reported to it in 1573 crystallized its opinion. On Sunday afternoon, August 3, when the elders of the church at Mauchline were meeting between communion services, a group of about two hundred persons arrived at the church with the body of Sir William Hamilton of Sanquhar, which they intended to bury within the church. Finding the doors locked, and being denied admission, they brake the doors of the kirk... brought in the said corps, overthrew and brake down their table boards, whereupon the blessed Sacrament was ministred the same day, and in place thereof buried the said corps, notwithstanding the said Sir William was, at the time of his departure, a parochimer of another paroch; so that it behoved them to rise from the Session, to depart out of the church, and give place to their rage and fury.

The General Assembly instituted proceedings against the offenders, and recommended that "ane article be formed and given in at the Parliament, for a law to be made against such persons as make common burialall places of the paroch kirks, being commanded by the contrary." This was the first of a series of efforts by the Assembly to have kirk-burial outlawed. Undaunted by its failure,

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2Ibid., p. 378.
the Assembly in 1576 proceeded to act without parliamentary support, invoking penalties within its own jurisdiction. It resolved:

Whither if burialls sould be in the kirk or not: Ansuerit, Not; and that the contraveiners be suspendit fra the benefites of the Kirk, quhill they make publick repentance.¹

There followed immediately the beginning of the long and painful process of enforcement. The Church's efforts were repeatedly obstructed by two particular groups, the burgh councils and the lairds. Sometimes plotting together, sometimes independently, they openly defied the Church's purpose and exploited its helplessness. Since in the larger communities the burgh councils usually controlled burial, and since kirk-burial was not a civil offense, the Church often found it impossible to proceed against them. This was illustrated in the first two cases of violation to come before the Assembly. In 1577, a complaint was made against the Clerk of Register and the young Laird of Rossyth because of the burial of the late Laird of Rossyth in the Church of Dunfermline. The Clerk, who answered in the Assembly for the accused, declared

That the Provest and Baliy of Dunfermline aggret to burie the Laird of Rossyth in the Kirk, and that he was not the cause thereof; submittand hemselfe alwayes to the judgment of the Kirk, if any offense be found done by him.²

Similarly, in 1580, the St. Andrews kirk-session received a complaint from Mr. Thomas Buchannan, Commissioner of Fyfe, "concerning the buriall off certen personis maid off lait within the parroche kirk." The session denied responsibility for the offense.

¹Ibid., p. 280.
²Ibid., p. 390.
and claimed it was "necessar to be intreatit befoir the Provest and counsell of this citie."¹ The following year the General Assembly appointed Mr. Patrick Adamson to prosecute the St. Andrews offenders.² A year later (1582), it was still waiting for Adamson "to put the commissiougn givin to him in the last Assemblie, to dew execution in all points, after the tenour thereof, vnder the pain of dissobedience."³

Already, in 1582, the difficulty of enforcing an ecclesiastical prohibition without civil support had been vividly demonstrated. The Assembly attempted to remedy this by including among the "articles to be proponed to the King and Counsell," Article 19, that "a penaltie be put vpon such as burie in Kirks."⁴ King James, who continued always to be disinterested in the problem of kirk-burial, was not now in a mood to comply with a request from the same Assembly which had approved the "Ruthven Raid." Again in 1588, the Assembly appealed to the King, this time extending its request to additional restraints on burials which would especially effect the privileged:

that ane ordinance may passe be his Hienes and Counsell, discharging the said buriall within kirks, and sicklyke erecting of tombis, and laying of troughes in Kirkyards, under such apines as his hienes and Counsell pleases to devyse.⁵

¹St. Andrews Kirk Session Register, op. cit., p. 453.
²E. U. K., op. cit., p. 539.
³Ibid., p. 566.
⁵E. U. K., op. cit. 733.
The plea received the usual inattention, but was renewed still again in 1598.¹ When the long awaited response finally came, it betrayed the vast differences in the viewpoints of the King and the Church. James not only disregarded the appeal for penalties against kirk-burial, but his recommendation for a solution was directly contrary to the Assembly's 1588 plea that the erecting of tombs be forbidden. He answered that he would "Give ane Overture to the nixt parliament that everie Noblemen big a buriall place for himselfe."² This solution would provide an alternative to sepulchre in the place of worship, but would not diminish the tradition of social exclusiveness in death.

The Rev. William Birnie was undaunted by the Church's repeated failure to achieve a civil statute against burial in churches. In 1606, he addressed his book, The Blame of Kirk-Burial, to the King, and concluded his reasoning with a request for a law to combat the "clubb-law" of those who break down church doors, knowing no other argument:

to refute a reason so rough, since it doeth passe our pastorall reach, in humble reuerence we remitte the same to the ciuile power, as by right appertaines. That they who by calling should be the foster-fathers of the Kirk, Isa. 49. may by the rod of their charge, represse such unreasonable insolence, as they will answere to him who set them in ranks . . . I do present this petition on the knees of the Kirk to his Highnesse selfe . . . that he would procure an enacted law to beem fill the Kirk acts against kirk-buriall.³

¹B. U. K., p. 937.
²Row, op. cit., p. 447.
³Birnie, op. cit., chap. xix.
Once more the King's response was silence, and therefore rejection. Though Birnie's attempt was as an individual, it was made in the same year in which he became the perpetual moderator of the Presbytery of Lanark.¹ His willingness to accept this office, and his appointment in 1610 to the Court of High Commission,² show that he was not an ardent Presbyterian, but one willing to co-operate with James' episcopal views. Birnie was also quite ready to sacrifice the "levelling" influence of common burial and accept the building of tombs and aisles.³ The rejection of the moderate Birnie's plea only gave further witness to the profound gulf between the Church and the Crown in this issue. The recommendation that the nobility build special tombs for themselves and their families was the only assistance James was to give; there was never to be a civil statute to forbid kirk-burial.⁴

In spite of its long pursuit of civil assistance, the Church directed its major effort to suppress kirk-burial toward its own judicatories. In 1588, the General Assembly reiterated the prohibition, boldly stating that every party to the offense was subject to penalty:

Forsamikle as in no countrey quher any religioun is allowed, it is permitted that the deid be buried in the kirks, and albeit inhibitioun hes been diverse tymes made for avoyding of that abuse, yet the acts and constitutions of the Kirk

³Birnie, op. cit., chap. xix.
are daylie brockin; Thefor the Kirk inhibites in tyme coming, that any persons be buried in the kirk and that no Ministers give consent thereto, but directlie oppone thereto; certifeing such persons as salbe the authors and inbringers of the died into the kirk, they salbe suspendit from the benefites of the kirk, quhill they make publick repentance therefor; and the Minister that gives his consent, and discharges not his conscience in opponeing thereto, salbe suspendit from his function in the Ministrie.¹

Now the Church had made it clear that among laymen both "authors" and "inbringers," those who plotted kirk-burial and those who executed their plans, were subject to ecclesiastical penalty. But it was the attributing of responsibility to the ministers which gave the act its striking impact. It charged sympathetic ministers with a moral obligation, while it brought others within reach of the presbytery's authority. After 1588, a considerable new zeal to suppress burial in churches was evidenced by the increased incidence of adjudications before presbyteries and civil courts. It was also indicated by a comparable increase in the granting by kirk-sessions and burgh councils of permission for burial in the churches, carefully recorded along with the justification thereof.

An analysis of the stated or implied reasons for the granting of permission shows heritable right as by far the most prevalent. The force of this right, legal and moral, was well expressed by Adame Menzels of Enoche when he presented the Privy Council with his claim to burial privilege in the church at Durisdeir:

The said Adam hes the landis and barony of Enoch, togidder with ane distinct ile at his paroche kirk of durisdeir, callit "Meinzeis Ile," oouthwith the body of the kirk or

¹B. U. K., op. cit., p. 733.
quier, foundit and upholdin this ten aigeis bigane upoun the said Adam and his predecessouris onlie chairgeis, quhais names, airmes and ditoun (motto) ar, for ane gritter testi-
monie of their titlis, ingraved upoun ane little dure and foure uther severall pairtis of the said ile, and on nawyse reipairt be the common text of the said paroche, bot is an ile per se for heiring of the Word and serving of God, solemlie dedicat to that service, and to the burement of the deid bodyis thairin of the house of Enoche in all aigeis bigane . . . 1

Like Adame Menzeis, the nobles enjoyed not only a legal claim to the right of kirk-burial, but impressive visual evidences of this right in the form of aisles, coffin alcoves, or at least prominent burial markers in the choir areas. Their furnishing and maintenance of the sepulchres added further to their prerogative. It is not surprising therefore, to find burgh councils and kirk-
sessions most reluctant to contest this right. The Arch bishop of St. Andrews, in his visitation to Linlithgow in 1611, attempted to circumvent disputes and reduce kirk burial by requiring all who alleged that they had "insestmentis of buriall" to produce evidence of their rights at the following Synod. 2

Until 1588, the Edinburgh council seemed to consider the burial of nobility in St. Giles an asset to the city. Even the General Assembly either cared not or dared not to question the burial there of the earl of Atholl when it investigated other superstitious rites connected with the burial. 3 The only detectable change in the attitude of the council after 1576, is the desire

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3 E. U. K., op. cit., p. 430.
to justify its permissiveness with precise statements of the reasons for the license. The Countess of Argyle was granted sepulchre in St. Giles "at the desyr of the kin and freynds . . . and for the luif (love) and favour thai buir to hir umquhill first husband the Erle of Murray, Regent for the tyme."¹ Six explanations of this type accompany permissions by the council between 1584 and 1588.²

The other major reason for granting burial within churches was financial gain. An avaricious exploitation of death, similar to that of pre-Reformation times, began to emerge in about 1580, and fifty years later was playing an important role in shaping the "reformed" tradition. In 1581, the burgh council of Aberdeen ruled

that in tyme cuming na personis salbe bureit within the parroche kirk of Abirdene, without payment of xxx s. of ilk person for his lair silvir, except onlie sic personis as he foundationis in the said parroche kirk fundit be thair parentis of the samyn blude notourlie knawin.³

The council revealed a dominating interest in the economics of burial by its disregard of the General Assembly's ban, and by its warning to the master of the kirk work to "tak no cautiuon or souertye (security) for payment of the said lair silvir, bot onlie hand payment." Four laters later, other pragmatic problems received the council's attention. The "pavement of the fluir of thair paroche kirk is offt tymes opinit and brokin threw the

¹Edinburgh Records, 1573-89. op. cit., p. 525.
²Ibid., pp. 348-525.
³Aberdeen Records, op. cit., p. 44.
burial, to the gryt expenses of the reformatioun thairof," and also, "because of the multitude of deid bodeis bureit thairin few places is to be fund thairuntill but grein gravis, abbeit the kirkyard be an honorabill place of buriall gif thai wald content thairwitht." The happy solution to both of these problems was the doubling of the charge for burial, bringing the cost to three pounds for adults and twenty shillings for children.

When conducted by the parishes, the lair trade rarely operated with such open contempt of the General Assembly's ban; but a device developed which permitted the appearance of co-operation while it brought in a satisfactory amount of "lair silver." This was accomplished by banning kirk-burial, levying fines as penalties, and collecting these routinely as burial fees. It may have appeared to be a minor change to exact money from offenders instead of denying them the benefits of the Church as recommended by the General Assembly. This policy had parallels in medieval Church practice and climaxed in similar avarice. As the "penalties" became fees they were levied according to the ability to pay. In the church at Forgan, it was agreed that

Buriall dischargeit within the kirk vnder pane of xl lib. Bot only such as have ane ile of thair awin, the gentlemen, in caice thai burie, sall pay xl lib; the meaner sort, as huiband men that are nocht worth, tg pay x lib, or mair, at the discretion of the Sessioun.

2 Ibid.
In 1623, the town council of Sterling and kirk-session agreed together on a scale of license fees "for the avoyding of the great abuse and prophanatioun of God his hous in burying of deid corps within the samyn." But these fees to end abuse assured satisfaction by offering the buyer a selection of locations in the church, varying in cost from ten to an hundred merks.\(^1\) In the same year the Alyth parish provided its earliest record of deaths in the "compt of lair silver of buriell within the kirk." It begins with the payment by James Ronaulzeonn of "ane ten merk pece of gold for his motheris burial all . . . the first imposition into ye box."\(^2\) In 1625, "John Sowtar in Alyth had ane woman chyld buried in the kirk and payed fyve merks," and Alex. Forrester had "ane oy boried in the Kirk for which John Sowtar received 5 merks."\(^3\) The Kinghorn kirk-session was equally direct in its statement of policy. Robert Cunningham, baillie, was charged five merks for his child's burial in the church, and thereafter all were to pay likewise or no license would be granted.\(^4\) In Inverness the penalty for burial in the Snow Kirk was determined by the amount of space occupied, "above xv yeiris auld


\(^3\) William Cramond (ed.), "Extracts from the Records of the Kirk-Session of Alyth," in Scottish Notes and Queries, Vol. 12, op. cit., p. 44.

\(^4\) John Crawford, A Selection of Extracts from the Ancient Minutes of the Kirk-Session of Kinghorn, (Kirkcaldy, 1863), p. 23.
to pay fourtie s. and betuixt xv and ten xxvj (s) viij d. and within xx s.\(^1\) By 1618, the church in Dysart had reached medie-

teval degredation when the baillies recorded -
The silver tass laid in pawn by Agnes Balkheid, relick of the late John Wemyss, the silver tass laid in pawn by Emily Brown, relick of the late Walter Mitchell, and the gold ring laid in pawn by the relick of the late William Strachan, to the ministers and session of Dysart, for the liberty and privilege granted to them for burying of their said late husbands in the kirk of the said burgh, as by appruit by them, for payment and satisfaction to the said ministers and Session ilk one of them for privilege granted to them and every one of them thereanent.\(^2\)

In South Leith (1637), similar benefits were exchanged when Lord Ruthven presented silver and gold communion ware to the parish, with the request that he might be granted a seat in the kirk, and "that qu it sall please ye Lord God to call him from this lyfe that his corpes may be interred thair." The session "willinglie granted his petitione and promised those two things suld be pro-

vysed."\(^3\)

The most perplexing fact about the penalty-fee was that it was sometimes encouraged by the higher judicatories which appeared to be either insensitive or calloused to its abuse. In 1600, the Presbytery of Ellon ordered "That lair silver be taen for burials within the kirk, vix., every bairn within and under 5 yearis 20 sh., within 15, . . . 40 sh. and without 3 librs., and


\[^3\] Robertson, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 27.
being a stranger 4 libs.  

The Presbytery's visitation to Crudens in 1617, charges the minister "that he not intromit wit the penalties and burial silver except by advice of the session," and in 1620 admonished him to receive payment for kirk-burial "before the eird be brokin." The Synod of Fife, in its 1611 visitation to the churches, consistently ordered each parish to establish a penalty for kirk-burial of not less than ten libs. It did, however, order an investigation of abuses in Linlithgow. These judicatories seem to have considered penalties a deterrent to kirk-burial, even though individual churches turned them to financial advantage.

While hereditary right and financial gain account for most kirk-burials, a number of other reasons are cited in the records. Public servants in burgh government, the Church, and in education, were routinely honored by a lair in the parish church. Also, the benefits of royal favor sometimes extended beyond this life. Thomas Gordoun was buried in St. Giles in 1584, with the

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burgh council's approval because of their "obedience to the
King's Maiesties lettre," as was Creychtoun, the Bishop of
Dunkeld, in the following year. For the great favors which
King James had bestowed on the Burgh of Dundee through the of¬
fices of one of his ushers, the council in 1603 "grantit license
to lay the said Alexander (Young) in the new Croce Kirk without
payment of ony duty therefor, nochtwithstanding it be provydid
be the acts that na person sall be buried without payment of ane
hundred pounds." In 1587, George Strachen was permitted to
rest in the parish church of Dysart where he had been the last
Roman Catholic vicar. In 1602, Marjorye Vrquhart, an aged
woman in Aberdeen, petitioned the burgh council to have "hir
bodye and banes bureit within the sowth yle of the new kirk
thairoff, and that frelie of thair guidnes, becaus hir execu-
touris wald nocht have mekill geir to pay hir buriall." This
supplication "they found ressonabill."

The ability to enforce the General Assembly's restric¬
tion on kirk-burial was tested before ecclesiastical and civil
courts. Extant evidence of ten adjudications between 1590 and
1630, show nine of these arising in the geographical area of four
neighboring presbyteries: Lanark, Peebles, Dunfries, and Glasgow.

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2 Ibid.
4 Muir, op. cit., p. 41.
Since all of the civil cases were reported by national bodies, i.e., the Privy Council or the Convention of Royal Burghs, it appears that the area of Scotland which is south of the Forth and the Clyde suppressed the "profanation" of kirk-burial with the greater determination.

Each of the four ecclesiastical decisions upheld the restriction on burial within the churches. In 1592, the Presbytery of Dunblane found that James Alexander of Menstrie had "prophanit his paroch kirk of Logy be caswing the corps of vmy Margaret Alexander" to be buried therein; and during the next seven months it prosecuted a case against him and also against the ten elders and deacons who had consented to the burial. In January 1624, the Presbytery of Lanark summoned John Chancellor of Shieldhill to answer to charges of burying within the kirk of Quothan. In June, it was reported that the Laird "hes promised to gif satisfactioune to ye Session of Quothquan, and to find cawtione to abstain from Kirk Burial in all tyme coming." The next year the Laird of Ancistoun was summoned before the same Presbytery, and "confesit his fault both in taking the key of the Kirk doore of Symington frome the minister thereof as also in burying his father within the samyn." He was dismissed with the

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admonition "to abstein from all Kirk burial in tyme coming." \(^1\)

Again, one year later, James Lindsay of Belstane was censored by the Presbytery "for burying his chyld within the kirk of Carluik," and he pledged himself "to build an yle for his awin buryall." \(^2\)

Though ecclesiastical support might be expected within a presbytery which was also the plaintiff, secular justice would more accurately reflect the state of public opinion. Of the six cases which were brought before the Privy Council of Scotland, or the Convention of Royal Burghs, three were favorable to the enforcement of kirk-burial restriction, two were unfavorable, and one was indecisive. In 1602, the Privy Council was sympathetic to the Church when it penalized James Weir, Agnes Lyndsay, Lady Belstane, and Alexander Levingstoun one hundred merks each for the burial of Wier's child in Carluke; and charged each one to answer to the King and the Secret Council for slandering the moderator and ministers of the Presbytery of Lanark. \(^3\) Again, in 1605, the Privy Council required the Laird of Badinhaith to demolish the tomb he had erected in the aisle of the kirk of Lenzie, under the pain of excommunication. \(^4\) The third favorable civil decision was rendered by the Convention of Royal Burghs of Scotland, following inaction of the Privy Council on an appeal from the parish of Dunfreis (July, 1607). Insolent and lawless persons

\[^1\] Ibid., p. 3.
\[^2\] Ibid., p. 4.
\[^3\] Privy Council, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 742.
\[^4\] Haddington MS., ibid., p. 60.
had forcibly buried a corpse in the Dunfreis kirk, only to be followed by another such burial; and still later by the attempt of James Foirsyth to dis-inter his father's body from the churchyard and place it inside the church.¹ There is no record that the request to the Council for a summons against these offenders was honored; but a year later, after hearing Mr. Thomas Ramsay's report of the disturbances, the Convention of Royal Burghs agreed to

inhombine and dischargis the burgessis and inhabitantis of the said brugh of all making of thair burialis within the wallis of the said kirk, and ordanis the magistratis of the said brugh to stop and impeid the doaris thairof in all tyme cumming.²

Both of the decisions of the Privy Council which contravened the churchmen were explained as necessary because of the ministers' procedural errors. In 1607, Adam Menzeis' claim to the right of burial in his aisle in the kirk of Durisdeir³ was upheld because the minister and his friends had twice dis-interred the body of Menzeis' son, when they should rather have taken the matter to a local court. This was "ane verie grete offence" to "punischt the corps of the deid for the offends of the father."⁴ The father was granted the right to raise the body, if he pleased, and return it to the aisle. The apparent objectivity of this decision was supported by a subsequent one in which the Council upheld the Presbytery's demand that Menzeis appear before it to

³Supra., pp. 200-201.
make confession of faith, and that he attend church services.  

Another legal defeat was faced this time by the Presbytery of Peebles in April 1608, when Alexander Tait of Prin, complained to the Privy Council of his threatened excommunication by the Presbytery because he refused to "raise the corpse of the late George Tait . . . which had been buried six weeks previously in the church of Innerleithen." Tait claimed to have had no part in the burial arrangements; that it was against Christian charity to raise a body six weeks in the grave; and that Alexander Tait's many friends would not suffer his body to be removed. Since the Presbytery did not appear in answer to the complaint, it was forbidden to pursue proceedings against the plaintiff.  

New Sepulchral Developments

A) Cemeteries

The choices of burial places which were made soon after the Reformation reflect aspects of both medieval and reformed burial concepts. On August 17, 1562, the Edinburgh council applied to Queen Mary for the use of the Greyfriars' yards "to mak ane buriale place of to burie and eird the personis decessand," and received permission the very same day on the back of the application. Two years later a request was made by the council of the Burgh of Dundee to use the yards of the Grey

1 Ibid., pp. 337-8.
Cordeliers Friars as a cemetery, and this time a formal license was granted by Queen Mary.¹ In 1580, still another Greyfriars' yard was appropriated for burial; this time the yards of the razed monastery in Perth were so designated by the Kirk-session as Hospital Managers.²

The choice of these friary grounds as cemeteries might be thought of as sheer expediency, the utilization of wasted land for the public good. Yet there was then no shortage of land, and the reformers put no restriction except convenience on the distance to a place of burial. With many alternatives, the selection of friary lands in each of these instances would be quite coincidental were not other factors at work. Perhaps it was a subconscious memory, or a vague sentimentality which led the authorities to designate cemeteries in yards already set apart and consecrated for religious purposes. At the time these new cemeteries were established the only burial grounds the authorities knew had been consecrated. In Edinburgh, there were seven such holy places of sepulchre: in the shadows of St. Giles, Holyrood Abbey, Blackfriars' Monastery, Trinity College, Kirk of Field, St. Rogue's Chapel, and (probably) Greyfriars.³

In spite of subtle medieval influences still at work, there was an expressed effort to conform to the Book of Disci-

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² R. Scott Fittis, op. cit., p. 269.
pline's recommendation of a "convenient place, lying in the most free air." This conformity required a willingness to forego the security of burial in or near the place of worship (where this persisted), but was aided by the practical consideration of overcrowding in ancient burial grounds at burgh centers. In April 1561, the Edinburgh council recommended that a place such as Greyfriars yard be prepared as a burial place because it is thocht gude that thair be na buriell within the kirk, and that the kirk yard is nocht of sufficient rowme for bureing of the deid, and for eschewing of the savour and inconvenientis that may follow thairupoun in the heit of somer, it wald be providit that ane buriall place be maid fra the myddis of the town . . .

In its application to the Queen for the use of Greyfriars the council made no mention of restricting burial in the church, but set forth only the sanitary advantage "becaus our said toun is populus . . . that thairthrow the aire within our said toun may be the mair pure ane clene." The council in Dundee presented the same argument in its appeal to Queen Mary. The Queen's observations in France had brought her to uncommon agreement with the reformers on this subject. In her statement granting permission to the town of Dundee she accepts its claim that burial in the center of town is both unpleasant and hazardous, and continues:

In France and other foreign places there are no dead buried inside the burgh and great towns, but they have their burial places outside for avoiding contagious sickness. A more descent policy may be had. Therferit, for other reasonable

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1 Edinburih Records, 1557-71, op. cit., p. 106.
2 Ibid., p. 146.
causes, licence granted.¹

B) Stone Grave Markers

The post-Reformation period marked the beginning of a return to individual grave markers. The upright cross slabs of the Dark and early Middle Ages had gone out of use by the thirteenth century, except in the Western Highlands and certain islands. After centuries of disuse, the individual marker appeared again in the latter half of the sixteenth century, but then in several purely secular forms. The earliest of these was the recumbent slab known as the throughstone;² followed soon after by the mural memorial, and then the head-stone. The throughstone was placed directly over the corpse, marking its exact position, and lending some protection.

Because it was considered a violation of parity in death, and was, in fact, an expression of privilege, the Church was opposed to the use of the throughstone in the early decades of its appearance. In 1588, the General Assembly, after prohibiting church burials, made supplication

to his Majestie that ane ordinance may passe be his hienes and Counsell, discharging the said buriall within kirks, and sicklyke erecting of tombis, and laying of troghes in Kirkyeards.³


²"Throughstone" was the name given to "a stone placed so as to extend through the thickness of a wall" (Oxford English Dictionary). Because of its dimensions, it was well adapted to utilization as a horizontal memorial.

³E. U. K., op. cit., p. 733.
Two presbytery actions supported the General Assembly's effort. The Presbytery of Edinburgh in 1598 ruled that all "troches" be removed from the kirkyard in Leith;\(^1\) and in 1620, the Presbytery of Glasgow declared

that it shall not be lawfull to everie man, nether brugh nor landward, to bring in ane troughstone to the kirk yaird without licence, and that he shall paye ane sowme of money for the privilege and licence to good and godlie uses.\(^2\)

In local parishes the problem met with varied treatment. The Edinburgh council (1603) "Fynds that na staynes aucht to be infixet or sett at ony graiffes in the buriall yaird . . . and ordainis the baillies to caus remove the samyn."\(^3\) The kirk-session in Sterling (1623) issued the executors of the late Robert Robertson a license "to lay a hewn stone upon his corps buriet in the kirk yaird for payment ad pios uses of xx merk money."\(^4\) The church of Whittinghame used a throughstone to mark the grave of its minister: "John Manuell, Minister, who died 17th day of October, the Zeir of God 1611."\(^5\) In Elgin, the liberal acceptance of individual markers must have been belatedly regretted. In 1614, the session agreed "to summond the baksters again

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\(^3\) Edinburgh Records, 1589-1603, op. cit., p. 324.

\(^4\) Register of the Kirk Session of Sterling, op. cit., p. 466.

Tuesday next for raising the steanes of the graves to build their oynes (ovens). ¹ The next year they warned James Kinnerd against taking the stones of the kirkyard to build his part of the dyke. ² In 1628, they ordered the yard keepers that "they raise nocht an stane that hes been vpon ancient burialls to gif any to put above ther corpses." ³

Three other types of individual grave markers came into limited use during this period: 1. The decorated wall monument, or mural panel (attached to the kirk-yard wall, the church, or a tomb), occurred with about half the frequency of the throughstone. ⁴ There is no evidence of ecclesiastical opposition to the mural panel, as permission for its use involved the prior consideration of the appropriateness of distinguished burial. If a tomb or a burial place adjacent to a wall were authorized, it was assumed that the grave would be identified. 2. The table tomb, with vertical supports upholding a large horizontal slab, appeared infrequently between 1570 and 1670; after which its use increased. It may be that time and decay have transformed some table tombs into throughstones. Church records make no mention of this marker. 3. The headstone, destined to become the standard grave identification.

¹ William Cramond, Extracts from the Elgin Kirk-Session Records, op. cit., p. 140.
² Ibid., p. 144.
tion in a much later period, made its first appearances in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. In 1606-7, the session of the West Kirk, Edinburgh, brought charges against the widow of their late minister, Robert Pont, for removing and replacing the grave marker with epitaphs which "wes set at the heid of the said burial place."\(^1\) This was the earliest reference to the headstone in Scottish history, and extant headstones are dated in the following decade.

C) The Tomb and the Laird's Loft

The place of burial for the privileged became a controversial issue from which emerged the increasing construction of tombs, and a re-adaptation of the pre-Reformation aisle. Both of these developments represent a triumph of the nobility's influence within the reformed Church, supported by the episcopal party. The presbyterian party was opposed to any provision for distinction in burial; and in 1588, not only proposed to the King a prohibition of kirk-burial and the use of throughstones, but also of "sicklyke erecting of tombis."\(^2\) The King's response, ten years later, that he "would recommend to the Parliament that everie Nobleman big a buriall place for himselfe,"\(^3\) assisted and anticipated the victory of the episcopal view.

William Birnie was an ardent opponent of kirk-burial, yet he departed from the presbyterian refusal to permit privileged

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\(^1\)Privy Council, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 381.

\(^2\)B. U. K., op. cit., p. 733

\(^3\)Row, part II, op. cit., p. 447.
burial. He had no patience with those who insisted in "bowing their knee no where else byt on their forbeers bellies."\(^1\)

He even rejected the claim of hereditary right to kirk-burial by asking, "For what is it else, to dedicate the same thing a Kirk, and yet deteen it a buriall, but to giue with the one hand, and grippe againe with the other?"\(^2\) But the solution to the problem he found demonstrated in Biblical history:

So then seeing our Nobles now may be as of olde they were then so honourable eased, with ones princely Iles or tombes, why should they wilfully incurrre vnnecessary profanation, by burying in Kirks?\(^3\)

The 1588 General Assembly ban on kirk-burial was supported by both presbyterian and episcopal parties; but the waning of presbyterian influence at the turn of the century left the solutions to be sought under episcopal rationale and with royal backing. Then emerged the additions to church buildings known as "Laird's Lofts," and the more general building of tombs.

The Laird's Loft was the Protestant counterpart of the medieval chantry chapel. It preserved the social prestige of distinguished burial in a section of the church building; the security of sepulchre within an enclosure; and the association of burial with a holy place. It differed from the medieval chantry in its exclusion from the main sanctuary, and in its lack of a special priesthood. The family, as laymen worshipping among ancestral remains, may have represented this vestige of medieval

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\(^1\) Birnie, op. cit., chapter xi.

\(^2\) Ibid., chapter xix.

\(^3\) Ibid., chapter viii.
piety.

Structurally, the loft followed a sufficiently standardized pattern to be identified in churches throughout Scotland. Built either in a chancel,¹ or in a quasi-transept to the left or right of the chancel,² the loft consists of several elevated pews beneath which, on the level below, is the family burial vault. One or more retiring rooms, for the convenience of the noble and his family, are usually found on the loft level. It was then a compact suite for privacy, worship, and burial. It is noteworthy that the loft itself was built in recognition of the importance of the sermon to Protestant worship; perhaps out of the necessity of the renewed vigor of worship, or sometimes in condensation to the noble's pride and prosperity. But, whatever its motivation, the essentially Protestant purpose of the loft above was contradicted by the remnants of medievalism below.³

Though the origin of the laird's loft is found in this period, they do not begin to be numerous before 1620 when economic conditions permitted the increase in general building and church

¹ George Hay has pointed out that chancel lofts were built following the Act of Annexation when chancels became the property of lay superiors who already had burial rights in them: e.g., Abecorn, Bowden, Drumdzier, Falkirk, Inverkeilor, Tenegles, and Wemyss. The Architecture of the Scottish Post-Reformation Churches, (1560-1843), (Oxford: 1957), p. 20.

² Transceptal aisles are found in Badie, Dalmeny, Duddingston, Foulis Wester, Monymusk, Pencaitland, Stobo, Uphall, and many others. Ibid., p. 29.

³ Yet such lofts were built by ardant reformer families; e.g., in Glengarnock (1597) a loft was built by the daughter of the Earl of Glencarn, friend and supporter of John Knox, Prof. James Cooper, "The Church of Kilbirnie," Transactions of the Scottish Ecclesiastical Society, Vol. II, p. 183.
The construction of tombs in kirk-yards or adjacent to the church was stimulated after 1600 by ecclesiastical policy. In Edinburgh, a new long range policy seems to have been anticipated, and reflected in the terms stipulated by the council for the erecting of tombs. The council made certain that the new tombs were built to permit order in their arrangement and economy in the use of space. In 1606, the first permission was given to John Jackson, younger, to build a tomb “provyding the same be maid alangs and upoun the wall of the said buriall.”

Seven such permissions are recorded between 1606 and 1613; four of which are for tombs to give sepulchre to public figures - two deans of guild, one treasurer, and one royal surgeon. Since men of this status were previously buried in St. Giles, a profound change of policy was evidently taking place. Furthermore, instructions for planning and building of the tombs show the council's concern for the future. In 1611, it voted that those who had built tombs are to connect them with adjacent ones by constructing a walk of "aisler wark," formed of square-hewn stones; and new tombs were to be built "close to the next tomb without any waist plaice betwix thame." By 1613, in addition to forbidding builders to cut


3 Ibid., pp. 20, 55, 64, 92 and 95.

4 Ibid., p. 72.
trees and to hew stones in the kirk-yard, it was necessary to require them to "make the owtter wallis thairof gud and sufficient new wallis fra the grund," in order that the kirk-yard be not damaged.  

With Edinburgh taking the lead, there are at least a few other evidences of parishes substituting tombs for kirk-burial. In 1612, the South Leith session granted to Sir Andrew Logan of Coatfield —

libertie to bige ane tombe ye bried of four kists of ye wall, and not to be ane proper place to any wther but only to be ane heritable buriall place to him and his prosteritie in all tyme cominge and give to ye poore the soume of . . .

Here the tomb of nobility was to be among others of lesser rank as similar permissions had been granted to un-titled persons.  

In 1614, William Arnot, the Laird of Cockburnspath relinquished his claim to kirk-burial when he built himself a mausoleum at the east end of the church in Cockburnspath.  

The Continuing Quest of "Seemliness"

The year 1560 found many of the kirk-yards in an unprecedented state of dis-repair. To their long neglect preceding 1560 were added the damage and desecration which accompanied the English Raids, and further destruction from the Scottish secular-religious campaign to cast down the objects of idolatry. When

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1 Ibid., p. 107.  
2 Robertson, op. cit., p. 10.  
3 Ibid., p. 3.  
4 Transactions of the East Lothian Antiquarian and Field Naturalists Society, op. cit., p. 150.
the church, or its ornaments, was the objective of the English or Scottish raiders, the cemetery clustered around the building was apt to share its ravishment. In Dundee, after the English burned St. Mary's Church, the gates and walls were broken down and the kirk yard was used for the disposal of rubbish, the storage of timber and stones, and the winnowing of malt. Sometimes the tombs and graves themselves were marked for destruction because they contained the revered relics. Referring to an English raid on Holyrood Abbey, Ninian Winzet asks why Protestants

Dishonorit sua the bodyis and sepulturis of the Princis of Scotland . . . and wrappit thair banis shamefullie furth of their sepulturis, and maid also a filthy stable of belsis to strangearis ypone our maist excellent Kings body, quha last decessit?

Recovery from a state of dilapidation, wanton destruction, or both, was an arduous task delayed by the process of transferring responsibility for burial grounds from the Roman Catholic clergy to the heritors. Prior to the Reformation, the clergy provided burial grounds and recouped their costs out of the burial fees. This responsibility was nebulous for a considerable time after the dismissal of the priests, and finally came to be regarded as one ejusdem generis with the providing of church, manse,

1 Alexander Maxwell, op. cit., p. 75.


and glebe. The obligation of the heritors was never imposed by statute, but came to be accepted by them, and recognized by the court as binding.¹ The heritors could, and usually did, assign the management of the burial ground to the session. An evidence of this interim period is indicated by the town council of Inverness when it attempted to remedy the burial ground condition with no greater power than that of example. It voted in 1543-63 to build a section of the kirk-yard wall with stone sufficient for "stopping of horses and bestiall, and the toune to begin their paert with all diligence to gif examplll to vtheris of the parochin."² It was not until about 1580, that efforts to improve the condition of burial grounds begin to become general, by which time responsibility was becoming quite definitely fixed. In 1598-9, the Glasgow council, on recommendation of the common procurator, required certain heritors properly to enclose doors, windows, stairs, and passages in the Blackfriars Kirk-yard.³

When, after 1580, the records define the difficulties in kirk-yard maintenance, we discover that the problems are almost precisely the same as those before the Reformation. "Nowt, hors, and scheipe" grazed unrestrained at St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh;⁴

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² William Mackay and Herbert Cameron Boyd, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 115.
⁴ Until the dyke was repaired in 1598, James Balfour Paul, (ed.) Monumental Inscriptions in St. Cuthbert's Churchyard, (Edinburgh: 1915), p. iii.
and were confiscated in default of a ten pound fine in Aberdeen. The minister's cattle and horse were the offenders in Cruden, and the open range to the kirk-yard in Tarves gave freedom to the "Cattill and hors of the toun of Tarves that cam in and eat ye gires thairof." 2 "Beggars and bairns" were the most frequent human trespassers, the former threatened with loss of license if they failed to stay outside the kirk-yard dyke; 3 while parents and schoolmasters were disciplined by sessions for failure to keep out their charges. 4 Youth enjoyed haunting the kirk-yards during "Yool"; and sessions, sensitive to superstitious celebrations, passed annual bans on their frequenting the kirk-yard between the December session meeting and January 10. 5 In spite of Queen Mary's effort in 1564 to enforce the 1503 parliamentary prohibition of Kirk-yard markets, 6 it was necessary to make another public proclamation to this effect in 1569, because the


4 Between 1589 and 1599, the St. Andrews' kirk-session took four separate actions to control the use of the yard by the poor, and by children. St. Andrews Kirk-Session Register, op. cit., pp. 682, 809, 879, 908.

5 The Elgin session was equally ardent in its January meetings to list the offenders and their penalties. William Cramond, Extracts from the Elgin Kirk-Session Records, op. cit., pp. 27 ff., and 140.

"malice and obstinancy of the people continuëwis in their wonted disordour."¹ Nevertheless, a market for tools, straw, and hay was established in the New Kirkyard in Glasgow in 1577;² and another for agricultural products in the Nether Kirkyard in Edinburgh (1587),³ soon to be extended as a "victuall merkett" (1601),⁴ and again as a beer market (1627).⁵ An ever recurring problem was the secretive burial of illegitimate infants, as that revealed by the bellman in Perth, who when "making John Killoch's grave found ane dead new-born bairn yearded not ane handbreadth under the earth."⁶ A list of miscellaneous trespasses in the kirkyard would include its use in Edinburgh as a place for disposal of debris and manure;⁷ in Falkirk for the furtive tethering of a horse after sunset;⁸ and in Aberdeen for the "bigging and erecting of ane little house . . . under silence of nicht."⁹

¹Ibid., p. 688.
⁴Ibid., 1589-1603, p. 289.
⁵Ibid., 1626-41, p. 20.
⁶Extracts from the Kirk-Session Register of Perth, op. cit., p. 245.
⁷Edinburgh Records, 1589-1603, p. 44.
⁸George Murray, Records of Falkirk, op. cit., p. 29.
This constant assult on kirk-yard decency contributed inevitably to a low standard of physical maintenance. In 1582, William Lamb, the first reformed minister of the parish Church of Coldingham, commended in his will "his spirit to God, his bodie to be erdit in the kirkyaird of Coldingham, willing and beseking the parochinaris thairof to ordoure that place to be mair cumlie and decentlie kept then it hes been in tyme bygane." There is no evidence that this testament fails to speak for most kirk-yards of that period, or that there was any considerable change after the turn of the century. In 1616, William Birnie saw the disgraceful condition of cemeteries as a major argument in support of those who favored burial in church buildings. He urged ministers to effect their reparation "so our common burials becomming seemely ceriteres, our Kirk buryers may be deprueed of the pretence of their insesibility and profanation." Though he favored simple burial, he could not countenance that

our Kirk-courtes or yardes, are become more lyke pwind-folds nor burials: as being ordinarily bedunged by pestring and pasturing brute. Not far from subscryuing the desperat legacy of some that can be content to bestow their bowke to the burroughmure, if God wold take the soule.

Scattered exceptions to this general appraisal were to be found, especially in the more prosperous burghs. The Perth town council in 1579 contracted with John Richardson "concerning walls


2Birnie, op. cit. chapter vi.

3Ibid.
of Burying-ground for three years.\textsuperscript{1} In Elgin, certain townsmen promised to build the dyke, accepting responsibility for a specified number of feet. The volunteers required constant prodding, but their work was largely completed in 1599 when only four men are reminded to fulfill their obligation.\textsuperscript{2} In the meantime, the Parliament had called for similar efforts throughout the country. An act in 1597 provided that all parochineris of euerie paroche kirk within this realme Build and repair the kirkyard dyikis of thair awin paroche kirk with stane and mortour to the heiche of twa ellis And to mak sufficient stillis and enteres in the saidis dyikis to pas to the kirk and kirkyard thairoff And ordanis the lorids of the sessioun to direct and gif lettres and chargis than vpoune in forme as efferis.\textsuperscript{3}

Burial ground grooming also began to receive serious attention in some burghs. In 1578, the Glasgow burgh council contracted with John Pantoun to care for the dyke and yard in return for the grass he cut within it.\textsuperscript{4} Edinburgh, three years later, hired a yard keeper, dignified him with the title of "Master of the Buriâle Place," and forbade the bellman or others to break the earth or cut the grass, except under his direction. The Master was given an assistant in 1583-84 whose orders were to: 1. Make graves of sufficient depth, 2. Even and fill graves as they settled, 3. Collect and bury "all deid menis baynes," 4. To take the stones to one place, 5. To follow the rules of the family in making

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} R. Scott Fittis, op. cit., p. 127.
\item \textsuperscript{2} Records of Elgin, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 42, 74.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Parliaments of Scotland, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 131.
\item \textsuperscript{4} Glasgow Records, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 68.
\end{itemize}
of new graves, and 6. to keep openings and path free from all debris.

Only a very few such kirk-yards enjoyed the benefit of a keeper who was paid either with money, or with the grass from the burial ground. In most parishes the grass was an important part of the minister’s compensation, to which he had the harvest right, although he could not pasture his animals there. Usually, whatever was done to dignify the kirk-yard was performed by the clerk, or bellman, or beadle, as a supplementary responsibility to the church. To this he gave minimum time, and for it only meagre equipment was provided. A minute of the St. Baldred session betrays a typical and necessary frugality:

James Buccan, clerk, desyrit als muche money as to buy ane schoole and spaide to maik the graifs thairwt, and the schoole and spaide suld stand in the stepill qtinuallie, and suld be onlie appointed for that use; qrto the session grantit and gave him 24 s., and the spaide and schoole to be bocht at Hadinton, the 2nd of this instand.3

POST-BURIAL OBSEQUIES

The Vestiges and Their Suppression

The Reformation dealt uniquely with the post-burial obsequies of the Roman Catholic tradition. Whereas its effort was to alter radically the ancient pre-death and burial practices, its intention for post-burial observances was to obliterate them completely. The reformers were opposed to trentals, death anniversaries, chantries, and college churches, because they did not

3Ritchie, op. cit., p. 211.
accept what this complex of ecclesiastical claimed to accomplish; and, more importantly, they rejected the need to accomplish it. Therefore, all post-burial rites were superfluous; and since they were based on the corruption of the Word of God, they were profane as well. As reformed churchmen looked at this system of rites, their single purpose was to remove it from the Church and from Scotland. Their comparatively facile achievement of this goal was due to the breakdown of the ecclesiastical structure on which the post-burial obsequies depended, and to the loss of conviction among the populous that masses and prayers for the dead could determine the destiny of souls.

The rapid disintegration of the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical structure after the Reformation climax of 1559-60 brought with it an incomplete, but prompt, disruption of the complex of rites for the dead. The three essentials for these rites - the mass, the altar, and the priest, - were each affected immediately by Reformation events. In August 1560, an act of Parliament made the saying or hearing of mass a criminal offense, thereby outlawing the central act of all post-burial observances. The altars at which masses were said in behalf of the dead were destroyed, some before and many after 1560, when the First Book of Discipline demanded the "suppression" of the monuments of idolatry. It enumerated specifically those places where post-burial rites abounded, "Abbayes, monkeries, faeireis, nunreis, chapellis, chantreis, . . colleges."¹ Though the extent to which this injunction was executed is disputable, altars at which masses and prayers for

¹Laing, The Works of John Knox, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 188.
the dead were offered were drastically reduced.

Likewise, the supply of priests to celebrate rites for the dead was depleted by the dis-establishment of their Church. Though parish priests were permitted to hold their benefices, they were not allowed to perform ecclesiastical functions. They, along with monks and friars, retired or fled; or chose between a fugitive ministry in Scotland or recantation to serve the new establishment. In renouncing their faith, they were sometimes required to include their doctrine of prayer and the future life. Friar Johannes Gersone, in his recantation in St. Andrews (1559), affirmed the Reformation doctrine that "We haif no command of God biddand we pray to any sanctis at are departed butt onlie to him quhai is Sanct of all Sanctis vis. Christi Jesu . . . I grant that we haif na command to pray for them that are departed."¹ John Wilson, vicar of Kingorne asserted, "I renounce all veneration of Santes and purgatorie repugnant . . . to Christi's death and passioun."²

So, with masses illegal, altars and shrines destroyed, and the numbers of priests in Scotland depleted, there remained only the opportunity for clandestine obsequies in the privacy of religious houses which were still intact, and in those parishes where Romanism was persistent. Certainly this "profanation" continued, but no longer as a significant expression of the national religion. Irregular and scattered prosecution of offenses

²Ibid., p. 215-16.
indicates that they were never more than occasional and sectional threats to orthodoxy. Also, the usual policy of continuing to pay altar endowments to their former chaplains until their death, suggests that the chaplains were generally cooperative in conforming to their changed status.

Accompanying the breakdown of the old ecclesiastical structure was the remarkable willingness of the populace to dispense with the ancient obsequies. A continuing desire for them was almost negligible. The General Assembly found it necessary to be vigilant in the search for "superstitious" practices, especially pilgrimages and processions, but made no mention of the persistence of rites for the souls of the dead. This issue rarely came before presbyteries or kirk-session, in spite of their constant effort to maintain the purity of the faith. In each of five recorded cases of heresy, the offense was a seemingly innocuous expression of individual belief or feeling. In 1572, Walter Thomson was summoned before the General Kirk of Edinburgh for affirming the necessity of prayers for the dead, basing his claim on the fact that Judas Maccabaeus had sent silver to Jerusalem to buy prayers for the dead. After being informed that the reference was from the Apocrypha, and not inspired by the Spirit of God, Thomson confessed that he was satisfied and would not "believe that prayer for the deid is necessar, nather yit wald he efferme any Purgatorie to be."¹ In 1597, Janet Warden of Elgin, on being accused of being in the Channonrie Kirk on a Sunday, answered that "scho mon ga thair to

pray for her freindis departit."¹ The Channonrie Kirk was not then used for worship, but only as a place of burial. It was twenty-eight years before the Elgin kirk-session recorded a similar offense; this time it summoned William Nauchie for his rumored "going to Doles or Carmichell kirk for superstitioum to seik help at santis."² In 1599, the minister of Monyaburgh accused Alexander Master, a bookseller, of saying that men ought to pray to saints. He was dismissed when Adame Gaif swore that Master had really said that men ought to pray to angels because they are more familiar with God than men are.³ An isolated case of heresy, but one suggesting profound conviction, was brought before the presbytery of Paisley in 1631. Mr. John Crighton, minister in Paisley, was charged by members of the congregation with holding episcopal views and "he mentioned that prayer for the dead was a laudable and commendable custom in the Church for the space of 1200 years, and affirmed that it was in all the liturgies of the Church since that time."⁴

By 1638, the reformed Church had been more successful in breaking away from its inheritance of post-burial obsequies than from any other aspect of the burial tradition. The ancient services for the dead had appeared to be an integral expression of

¹Cramond, Extracts from the Elgin Kirk-Session Records, op. cit., p. 35.
²Records of Elgin, op. cit., p. 191.
³Registers of the Presbytery of Glasgow, op. cit., p. 95.
the Christian faith; but at least by 1560, they had become little more than an institutional embellishment with which the people readily dispensed.

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PART THREE

THE ADVANCE OF SECULARISM

(1638-1780)
THE ADVANCE OF SECULARISM

By 1638, the general character of the Reformed response to death was well defined, and its usages had forged a bold new tradition. Important changes were to occur in this tradition during the next century and a half; changes in which its central ideals and its highest values yielded to secularity. This decline was a consequence of the confrontation between a dynamic Scottish culture and a party devitalized Church. The principles guiding Reformation death practices were not explicitly disavowed by the Church, nor by society at large; they were simply submerged in the stronger currents which affected the whole of Scottish culture. The Reformation had stripped to a minimum the outward aspects of death response, but what remained was infused with profound religious meaning. However, this meaning became increasingly elusive as a volatile culture bore upon it; and in turn, secular society developed its own rituals which served further to obscure a spiritual interpretation of death. The period from 1638 to 1780 witnessed a subtle reversal in the development of the two fundamental characteristics of the Reformed death tradition:

(a) From the Christian community to the civil community. The Church gradually lost the vision of itself as a distinctive Christian community responding to the death of its members. Ceremonies which had been understood as Christian because they were discharged by the congregation became civil ceremonies discharged by the community at large. At the same time, the equipage for burial and the place of burial no longer represented the unity of the household of faith, but came to reflect the classes
of secular society.

From the lykewake to the "dergie," attendance and participation in death observances came to have little relationship to the self-conscious Christian community. Kirk-sessions had previously attempted to make the lykewake an opportunity for spiritual devotion; but now they were content to prevent "enormities" when the entire public was welcomed in the house of the dead. The same change is seen in the excessively large funeral attendances of this period, which ordinarily were completely unrelated to the fellowship of the Church. They were rather the consequence of kinship loyalties, political expediency, vocational pride, and social propriety. In very small communities the body of attendance was composed of almost the entire population, and in the remainder, of a representative cross-section.

It was therefore not as the Church that the assorted guests gathered at the house of the dead for the funeral "entertainment," or "service." The communal meal had its traditional rituals and its acceptable elements of food and drink, but it was not the Sacrament; it was another manifestation of the pre-Christian tribal feast with the dead. And when the sacrifice had been offered, and it was time for "the lifting," this group, so recruited and so fortified, did not suddenly become the Church to fulfill Knox's hope that the dead would be "reverently brought to the grave accompanied by the Congregation." The burial was a civil event respectfully performed by the community for one of its citizens.

The advance of dynamic secularism not only affected the meaning of burial ceremonies, but it partitioned the household of
faith by inflicting on it the divisiveness of the civil community. Funeral sermons came more and more to be the prerogative of the privileged; and, remarkably, a distinguished symbol of status. Conceivably the private burial might have been used to assure the Christian character of the event, but its popularity was due rather to the desire to exclude the poor and the socially unacceptable, and to compliment the privileged. The use of burial letters to insure exclusiveness therefore became a means of breaching, rather than of building the Christian community; and the concomitant discontinuance of the dead-bell witnessed to the lessened cohesiveness of the secular community.

Burial gear also reflected the decline of the self-conscious Christian community. Improved economic conditions made the common bier obsolete, except during plagues; and a little later the common coffin suffered the same fate. This represented a gain to the material aspect of burial, but it was a severe loss of significant symbols of equality and unity. It was followed by a greater individualism and some competition in the procurement of burial equipage. Mortcloths continued to be communally owned throughout the period; but the fact that so many were the property of guilds and crafts, rather than of the parish churches, betrayed the extent of secular influence. In burghs throughout Scotland the mortcloths of the trades were widely employed. While the preference of a mortcloth other than that of one's parish kirk did not imply disloyalty to the Church, it must have indicated the institution to which a family gave prior importance.

In its administration of the place of burial, the Church
finally bowed to the standards of secular society which recognized in death the distinctions of rank or wealth honored by the living. At the pinnacle of Puritan influence there was an initial resurgence of effort to abolish kirk-burial, but it soon capitulated to aristocratic pressure and monetary reward, as did the placing of memorials or honors in the church building. Kirk-burial ultimately ended because it became a practical impossibility rather than because it violated the Church's sense of community. In a similar way the Church tried during the 1640's to maintain the cemetery as a symbol of equality by controlling the erection of tombstones. Again, it compromised as it discovered the financial benefits of turning the burial place into a memorial ground; and the kirkyard became a place to display the dominance of the privileged, even in death.

(b) From religious restraint to secular extravagance. As the civil community came to determine the nature of the death response, the Church's restraint was eclipsed by society's latitude. The Church's controls had never been popular to the extent to which they were heeded, so an effervescent culture welcomed each new opportunity to elaborate the old responses and to create new ones. The process of accession continued through the decades until the intricacy of observances exceeded those of the medieval period; and ordinarily included the lykewake, the "coffining," the funeral "entertainment," the civil processional, and the "dergie."

It is revealing that these profuse developments show no hint of reversion to pre-Reformation religious rites. There was no desire to return to the Requiem mass, Placebo, and Dirige, the
religious burial procession, the post-burial system of obsequies; or to any possible substitutes for these which might have been acceptable to the Reformed faith. What was sought was stark secularity. When old rituals were utilized, all religious ceremonies were extracted from them. The lykewake became an indispensable ritual of the dead, but not until the Church no longer demanded that it be a time for reading of "chapters" or singing of Psalms. Although it was observed according to sectional traditions, the lykewake's liberation from religion was nation-wide. The "dergie" was also cleansed of its medieval religious taint, for as a post-burial feast it was devoid of any similarity to the Roman pre-burial rite. The refreshment served before or after the medieval Dirige was all that survived in the seventeenth century festivity, and was probably the connecting link from which it received its name. The processional had long before shed its religious garb, but the civil burial more than compensated for the loss with numerous and elaborate entries which proclaimed the glory of man. It was prompt too, to utilize the wheeled vehicle to the same end as soon as economic conditions permitted. The two new observances, the "entertainment" and the "coffining," required no purging of religion, since they were the shameless products of the civil community: the former of social convention, and the latter of Parliamentary law.

This complex system of events did not hamper the intensity with which each event could be executed. The coffining and the dergie enjoyed some measure of control, since they were usually private or semi-private occasions; but the lykewake, funeral
entertainment, and processional were community events which often realized their proneness to excess. The civil community, having freed itself from much of the restraint which characterized the early Reformed Church, now found itself with no standard of judgment for these observances, except propriety. "All things proper and suitable to a nicety" was the description of his father-in-law's funeral by Walter Scott of Kelso (1714),¹ and it was a summary as well of the public's basis for appraisal of most funerals. For the wealthy, fastidious conventionality determined the general pattern and the most minute details of the death response; and others of the community imitated the rich within or beyond their particular capacity. Social compulsions at the time of death were so intense that provisions for the lykewakes and burial entertainment for the poor were regularly regarded by kirk-sessions as of the same importance as the coffin and the winding sheet. Propriety proved to be a pampering judge; one incapable of distinguishing between hospitality and indulgence, or between decency and extravagance.

When seen in isolation, these death observances grievously belied the authentic religious life of the period. This advance of secularism was paradoxical in an era of sturdy ecclesiastical allegiance and much godly devotion. It was in such a time that the Scottish society departed from all of the centuries of Christian history by separating its death ceremonials from its religion. This radical departure can only be understood as the result of the

interaction of several historical circumstances:

(a) Ecclesiastical Instability. In the seventeenth century, the Church suffered constant subjection to English monarchs or the Cromwells, and alternated between presbyterianism and episcopacy. There was a fundamental difference in the presbyterian and episcopal views concerning the use of the Holy Communion with the dying, and the ritual appropriate for the burial service; and there were lesser issues concerning the place of burial. This disparity hampered a firm Church policy, as either party faced potential opposition from a strong minority. Still more pertinent is the fact that the vacillating and preoccupied Church could afford little attention to such peripheral matters as burial. After 1690, when the Church enjoyed greater stability, it was then inclined to direct its efforts inward rather than to its function in society. There is no indication that the eighteenth century factions within the Church, including the Seceders, were concerned to return religious death rituals to their former importance. Thus, for an extended period, the force of secularism was not seriously opposed by the Church.

(b) Lack of Authoritative Documents. Throughout the century and a half there emerged no sufficient document to guide the Church's death tradition. Consequently, if there were recommendations, they proceeded only from the immediacy of the situation. The years 1559-60 had produced a spiritual and intellectual awakening which had structured every aspect of the Church's life on Reformed creedal foundations; and the First Book of Discipline had given penetrating guidance for Christian burial. In contrast, the
politico-religious events of 1637-38 were limited in the area of concern, and incapable of producing documents for the Church's permanent guidance. The Directory for Worship's brief section on burial was even more limited in concept than in content; and it was no misfortune for Christian burial that the Act Rescissory annulled the Directory's authority in 1661, and the Scottish Church looked again to the Book of Common Order and the First Book of Discipline. The Church then suffered the anomaly of an episcopal government which it did not choose and a presbyterian discipline which it had superseded. Though the return to Reformation documents were constructive, the confusion caused the Church to speak rarely, and then with uncertain voice.

(c) The Influence of Devout Secularists. During this era there was always a considerable number in the Church who were notable for their pious religious pursuits—Puritans, Covenanters, and Evangelicals; yet these were also participants in the process of secularization, and sometimes they were, in fact, its chief sponsors. These groups had in common an intense dislike of religious ceremoniousness, always associated with Romanism and usually with episcopacy; and were much more afraid of the perversion of public worship than of its privation. This led to the paradoxical position of their favoring civil rather than ecclesiastical services. At the same time, the profound religious experience of the devout fostered an individualism which was inclined to underestimate the role of the Church in society, and which readily accepted the Directory for Worship's omission of the "Congregation" from its burial service. Consistent with their under-
standing of the Church, these devoted Christians made their one constructive contribution to the death response in the only aspect in which it was private - in their manner of dying.

THE HOUR BEFORE DEATH

The Fear of Death Minimized

The fear of death, which had haunted medieval society, began to be alleviated in the first decades after 1560; but it required generations of Reformation teaching to emancipate the people from its tenacious hold. This steady progress continued after 1638 into a period marked by an intense concern with death; first manifested among the Puritans and Covenanters, and later among Evangelicals. These groups possessed an uncommonly serious view of life which inevitably included the life hereafter. That life was never beyond their purview, and to it they were determined to give daily witness. As a view of Christianity it was neither "worldly" nor "other-worldly," but it saw the redeemed's life with God as a part of a single experience, either before or after physical death. This two-world inclusiveness of faith permeated much of the life of the Church of Scotland until the ascendance of moderatism.

It is paradoxical that this period in which death was so openly considered, and hell sometimes vividly portrayed, has left evidence that its faithful died more confidently than in any previous age in Scottish history. The doctrine of a literal and physical hell, which was sometimes bluntly proclaimed during this era, failed to recall the horror of death suffered in medieval
times. The geography and climate of Satan's realm never succeeded in becoming a dominant theme in the Church. Even among the more extreme evangelicals the proclamation of God's loving plan to save His people outweighed the pronouncements of His judgment. The Reverend Thomas Boston was peculiarly adept at describing the horrors of the fiery furnace as -

the Fire makes its way into the very Bowels, and leaves no Member untouched . . . There will their Bodies be tormented and scorched for ever . . . The Damned shall be ever under the deepest impressions of God's indifferent Justice against them; and this Fire will melt their Souls, within them, like Wax.

But the purpose of Boston's preaching about hell was to set forth the importance of Christ's saving act:

Fear not, for Christ died. His precious soul and body were parted. So he orders us to tread no path but such as he has trod before us. By his death he had destroyed death; he has unstinged it to the believer. Then fear it not, it can do you no harm.

Because Christ endured the punishment for us, Boston taught, He has been entrusted with the keys of heaven and hell. Therefore, there is no need to fear: "Though Satan be the jailor of hell, yet he keeps not the keys; they hang, believer, at the girdle of your best friend." Ralph Erskine, who like his brother Ebenezer, said less than Boston about the physical aspects of hell, did not doubt the certainty of the Day of Judgment. However, Christ "hath the Keys of Hell and Death; and therefore Death shall be swallowed up

1 Thomas Boston, Human Nature in Its Fourfold State, (Edinburgh, 1720), pp. 589, 90.
2 Thomas Boston, Primitiae Ultima, (Edinburgh, 1800), p. 27.
3 Ibid., p. 29.
in Victory."¹ Ebenezer Erskine's sermons on "Christ the Resurrection and the Life," preached at the celebration of the Lord's Supper at Burntisland in 1738, presents a comprehensive view of the plan of salvation without any reference to hell as a place of physical torment. He rather speaks of "The Law of Sin and Death" from which the believer is released by Christ.² Still another Erskine, John, perhaps the most representative evangelical in the latter half of the eighteenth century, preached a hearty, but comfortable, doctrine of the hereafter.³

The writings of the devout leave little evidence of a continuing fear of hell, but on the contrary, reveal that their confrontation with the fact of death was rewarded by a firm assurance. A powerful sense of God's sovereignty enabled them to look strait into the face of death. Sir Archibald Johnston of Wariston refers to "Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday sermon being about death," and during the same week he was reading Mr. Struther's "Resolution to Death, a treatise of a dying man to assure all who live of the righteous that they shall die the death of the righteous."⁴ Andrew Hay recorded in his diary that on Sunday evening, after two church services that day, he "read a sermon on

death be M. And. Gray... I found this a prettie confortable
day, especiallie at night."\(^1\) To such men the thought of death
brought serenity rather than alarm. Robert Wodrow wrote to George
Ridpath, "Our friends are fast hasting home, and its confortable
within a little we shall get to them."\(^2\) They had no objection to
using the word "death," but they found it inadequate; and there¬
fore substituted a whole series of expressions to interpret their
understanding of the experience. Wodrow said that Mr. Pont had
"gote home to glory"; Mr. Christy "is now entered to his Master's
joy";\(^3\) and Mr. Pat Flenderleith (who desired singing at the time
of his death), was "longing to be where the song would be uninter¬
rupted."\(^4\) Harry Dow of Arinhall, left an endowment to the poor,
waiting for the time when God "shalbe pleasit to mak the seper¬
atioun."\(^5\) On the day that his daughter Anna died, Archibald
Johnston recorded in his diary, "It pleased (Him) this day that
He took my daughter."\(^6\)

To less believing generations this terminology for death

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\(^1\) \textit{Diary of Andrew Hay}, (ed.) Alexander George Reid, Scott¬

\(^2\) \textit{Early Letters of Robert Wodrow, 1698-1707}, (ed.) L. W.

\(^3\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 281, \& p. 2.

\(^4\) \textit{The Correspondence of the Rev. Robert Wodrow}, (ed.)

\(^5\) "The Kirk Session of Sterling," in \textit{Maitland Miscellany},

\(^6\) \textit{Johnston Diary}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 166.
may appear to be simply a matter of words, but its authenticity is evidenced by the way its authors faced their bereavements and their deaths. For them the hour of death may have been a physical ordeal, but it was not a spiritual crisis since all of their lives were in preparation. To be a mature Christian, was among other things to be one ready to die - one who did not forget that he was mortal. In 1658, John Lamont recorded the death of a friend, and concluded with the puritan exhortation, "God teach vs to mynde our latter end." ¹ The use of each occurrence of death as a lesson in mortality was characteristic of Alexander Brodie who, on learning of the death of the Earl of Seaforth, meditated:

I desired to consider this, and to be instructed. Vain is the glori of man; pleasur of sin short, and the end bitter. The fear of God is sound wisdom, and to live ever as expecting death and fitting for it, and for our appearance befor God. Oh! to see the vanity of greatnes, lands, possessions, wealth, Alace! so deceitful. Lord! work the faith of this. ²

The necessity of learning from death was passed into the eighteenth century by George Brodie who wrote to Sir Hugh Campbell of Brodie's death and added, "I wish we may learne to draw near to him, that our end may be also blest in the Lord as his was." ³

This preparation for death provided the faithful bereaved with an assurance that their loss was within the plan of God. They could therefore believe that it "pleased God," and if it


pleased Him, they claimed for themselves no right to be displeased. When Archibald Johnston and his wife were told of the death of their son James—

Immediately thereafter in my chalmer schoe and I fell on our knees, confess our sins acknowledged all his mercies, and blessed his name for all the footsteps of his indulgent providence in all the alterations that ever had befallen us together or apart. We acknowledged Gods good providence against our wills... At night we begged from the Lord as freedom from all natural passion or worldly grief.¹

Elizabeth Brodie, wife of James Nimmo, recalled her mother's acceptance of God's providence. Having heard of her husband's critical illness she returned home from Elgin and asked, "with a smile, if the Lord's work was perfected. I told her it was. She only said, 'Well, He can do nothing wrong who has done it.' And when she entered the room where he lay, she fell down on her knees at the bedside, and blessed God."² Fifteen years later, in the midst of bereavement, James Brodie wrote that his little son, Alexander, "fell sick and sweetlie depairted this life the 15 of March 1695, and the Lord made that sweet to me, this is a pairt of your first fruits to the Lord."³ The episcopal merchant, John Steuart of Inverness, expressed the same kind of certainty when he learned of his son's death at sea: "I desire to see it as from the hand of God... to Looke on this smashing stroke as the dispensation of a wise providence."⁴

¹Johnston Diary, op. cit., p. 325-26.
³Ibid., p. 101.
Not only from the bereaved, but from the dying also came witness to the authenticity of the age's pious nomenclature. Among the devout the death-bed was not a place of foreboding, but an exciting and sometimes even happy port of embarkation. Before the departure there was faith to share, gifts to bestow, testimonies to be recorded. Robert Wodrow was a representative Presbyterian of his time when, in 1701, he wrote to congratulate a friend on his privilege of attending the Rev. Mr. Chartres at his death:

I count you extremly happy that enjoyed the benefite of the last and best hours of soe extraordinary and excellent (a) person. The very company, behaviour, and air of such persons, especially quhen near death, quhen the high and heven born soul is upon its wing homward, has something thats more edifying and convincing then any thing else that I know.1

This last opportunity of bear testimony by word and exemplary confidence was highly cherished. When Lady Anne Elcho had completed her death-bed prayer, she turned to her minister and asked if there was anything which she must do before dying. He replied, "Madam, there are two things that are the greatest Business and Concernment of a dying Christian: one is, to give Testimony to the Godness of God's Ways; the other is to make their own Interest sure."2 Her death-bed testimony was published fifty-one years later as "an Account of her Behaviour in that Situation, and the many pious Speeches, Ejaculations, etc., that dropt from her Mouth before her Death."3 A similar pamphlet was published in

3Ibid., p. 1.
1737 containing "The Last Speech and Dying Words of Margaret Eliot." More commonly, the witness of Christian dying was extended when a small company of believers were added to the family circle for the occasion. The manner of dying was of import to the Christian community which considered a sense of well-being and composure an important gift of the Spirit. "Death in a most peaceable manner" was often recorded with commendation by Archibald Johnston; and Robert Wodrow gives an account of three such deaths in a single letter. The deceased's last words of confidence were prized and preserved in the family treasury of memories. With understandable satisfaction, James Nimmo's daughter recalled her father's buoyant spirit during the agony of his mortal illness (1709):

> When anyone asked him how he was, he said, "I am a ship at anchor, blow the wind as it will, I am safe, because I am on the rock, Christ; so, whether death or life, it is all one. The morning before he died he said, "It is a rough sea, but a smooth harbour, the landing is safe and sure."  

Death-bed testimonies consistently stated that Christ alone was the ground of hope in the life to come. As if to avoid implying that his gift to the Spitallis Hospital in Sterling would assist his salvation, the dying Harry Dow attributed the praise for the gift to God, and for mercy and the remission of his sins he looked to "the righteous merites of his blessed son

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1 Anon., n. p.; National Library of Scotland.

2 E.g., "the death of my Kynd good-brother, Mr. John Baye," Johnston Diary, op. cit., p. 282.


4 Narrative of Mr. James Nimmo, op. cit., p. xxii.
Jesus Christ my onlie Saviour." ¹ James, Duke of Hamilton, asked the physician attending his death (1651) to tell his family in Scotland that he died placing his hope in "the Merits of the Mediator the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord his Righteousness." ² Mr. David Williamson, while awaiting death, refused to receive the commendation of friends and admirers, protesting that he "desired only to lean to the righteousness of Christ, which he wonderfully extolled." ³ Wodrow also emphasized this necessity in his pastoral ministry. When calling on a dying girl who had enjoyed the ecstasy of a mystical experience, he advised her to place no faith in it, but to put her confidence in Christ only. ⁴

In some instances the testimony of the dying related to politico-religious affairs, and was honored as a final opportunity for one of the Church's servants to express his wisdom and exert his influence. Mr. George Gillespie, who had preached boldly against "associations with the enemies of truth and godliness," dictated a death-bed testimony which was read before the Commission of the General Assembly (Jan. 5, 1649) and ordered by it to be printed. The statement warned Godfearing people not "to be insnared in that great and dangerous sin of conjunction or com-

¹ "Kirk Session of Sterling," op. cit., p. 482.


³ Wodrow Correspondence, loc. cit.

pliance with Malignant or prophane enemies of the truth, vnder quhatsoever prudentiall considerations it may be vernishit over.\textsuperscript{1} Lady Anne Elcho had been a convert to presybyterianism shortly before her critical accident, and her testimony confirmed, "It was long ere I came to it, but now I die in the firm Conviction and Persuasion, that the Presbytery Church is the true Church of God."\textsuperscript{2} Though illustrations are uncommon, this type of witness was sufficiently frequent for churchmen to anticipate it from their staunch colleagues. In 1714, Wodrow wrote to John Williamson:

\begin{quote}
Mr. Wylie is now got safe beyond all the reproach of tongues ... For anything I can learn, he said nothing as to the public (cause) but that our Hazard was like to flow from ourselves, as still it has done.\textsuperscript{3}
\end{quote}

The Visitation of the Dying

The Christian community which gave death such importance, gave a corresponding place to the needs of the dying. A high standard of pastoral care at the conclusion of life was written into the Directory for Worship. The minister was exhorted not only to help his people prepare for death in the time of health, but -

Times of sickness and affliction are special opportunities put into his hand by God to minister a word in season to weary souls: because then the consciences of men are or should be more awakened to bethink themselves of their


\textsuperscript{2}Lady Elcho's Death, op. cit., p. 2.

\textsuperscript{3}Wodrow Correspondence, op. cit., p. 22.
spiritual estates for eternity; and Satan also takes advantage then to load them more with sore and heavy temptations; Therefore the Minister, being sent for, and repairing to the sick, is to apply himself, with all tenderness and love, to administer some spiritual good to his soul.

This definition of the minister's duty, in spite of differences in its execution, was generally accepted by episcopalian, evangelicals, and moderates alike; certifying a serious pastoral concern for the dying as a firm tradition of the Church in Scotland.

Responsibility to the dying took priority over the minister's other duties. In 1654, the session clerk in Humble recorded: "Nov. 26 - The which day there was no session, the minister being sent for to see the Ladie Keith, then dying." During the Second Episcopacy, Bishop Leighton urged the ministers not to wait until the sick send for them, but "to make enquiry and the rather prevent them sending, because they commonly defer that until it can be of little or no use to them." When a visitation of the Presbytery of Dunkeld inquired about the minister's diligence, he answered "that he went to visit the sick when called, though it had been att midnight." In New Monkland

1 Knox's Liturgy, op. cit., p. 315.
2 "Register of the Kirk Session of Humble," Maitland Miscellany I., op. cit., p. 443.
(1700), the minister was actually investigated by the presbytery for his failure to pray with the dying spouse of Francis Gibson. Later, in the eighteenth century, even the moderate George Ridpath, who rarely speaks of the nature of his pastoral services, expressed regret for the failure of his effort to arrive at the home of Alexander Wilson before Wilson's child had died.

There was little difference in the concept of care for the dying among the various presbyterian parties, but the disagreement continued between the presbyterians and the episcopalian. These took divergent views on the death-bed use of formalized prayers, and over the providing of the Lord's Supper. Each attempted to enforce its particular practices on the Church when they were in a position to do so.

Within the presbyterian party there had long been a faction which considered written prayers too stereotyped to allow for either the need of the individual or the leading of the Holy Spirit. At the time of the Covenants this view became dominant. The General Assembly of 1638, in a list of animadversions on the 1637 Service Book complained, "In visiting the Sick, one forme of prayer, consolation, exhortatione, is prescribed for the use of all the sick, without any distinctione." Even Knox's Book of Common Order had offered a prescribed prayer for the minister's

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1 John MacArthur, New Monkland Parish, (Glasgow, 1890), p. 79.


3 James Gordon, History of Scots Affairs, 1637-1641, (Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1841), Vol. II. p. 68.
use at the death-bed, but this "fault" was removed in 1645, when
the Directory for Worship provided only suggestions for the proper
content of such prayer. The prayer was to follow a grave and
individualized consultation with the dying in regard to this
spiritual state, and as such its precise direction could not be
prescribed. In this, as in other occasions for prayer, the
majority of the ministers in Scotland came to regard highly their
particular skill, under God's guidance, in bringing before Him
the needs of their people. During generations of the Church of
Scotland's history, the use of a considered but impromptu form of
prayer was one of the hallmarks of her ministry. Archibald John-
ston commented, on the night his daughter died, that the attend-
ing minister might be a good man to serve the Curry kirk, as "he
prayed weal that night." In 1773, Ralph Erskine wrote, "being
called to see John Black, our precentor's son . . I was helped
and quickened in prayer for the child. My heart was kindly en-
gaged to look to the Lord in behalf of the child." The episcopal
party held firmly to the benefits of private communion for the
dying; and it encountered increasing objection to its use. The
Scottish Liturgy of 1637 included an order for the communion of

2 Ibid., pp. 315-17.

3 Diary of Sir Archibald Johnston of Wariston, (1550-1654),
ed.) David Hay Fleming, (Vol. II, S. H. S., Edinburgh, 1919),
p. 166.
4 Donald Fraser, The Life and Diary of the Reverend Ralph
the sick "to the intent that they may be always in readiness to
die whencesoever it shall please Almighty God to call them."¹ In
contrast, the Westminster Confession directed the minister to
give the sacramental elements to "none who are not then present
in the Congregation,"² and the practice of reserving the elements
for private administration was "contrary to the nature of this
Sacrament, and to the institution of Christ."³ Thus, by the time
of the Restoration and the return of episcopacy, the presbyterian
view had become more rigorous and was more specifically defined.
The Scottish bishops made no attempt to revive the Prayer Book of
1637, and the modest changes they attempted to enforce had little
effect on this aspect of pastoral ministry. It appears that the
Synod of Aberdeen was the only synod to encourage the use of the
sacrament with the dying.⁴ In 1662, it recommended —

That private communione be not denied by any minister within
this diocle at what tyme they shalbe earnestlie desyred to
give the samyne, and that tuo or thrie shalbe delt uithall
and exhorted to pertak of the Holy Sacrament of the Lordis
Supper uith the persone desyring the same.⁵

The fact that the initiative for the sacrament was to be taken by
the sick person, and that two or three others should receive with

¹The Book of Common Prayer, etc., Commonly Known as Laud's
Liturgy (1637), (ed.) James Cooper, (Edinburgh and London, 1904),
p. 175.
²The Confession of Faith, etc., (London, 1658), Chapter
XXIX, sec. liii, p. 108.
³Ibid., sec. iv., p. 109.
⁴William D. Maxwell, A History of Worship in the Church
⁵Aberdeen Ecclesiastical Records, op. cit., p. 264.
film, betrays the presbyterian influence at work in the stronghold of episcopacy. It is quite unlikely that communion to the dying became popular or prevalent here or anywhere in the Church following the Restoration. After the Revolution there is evidence of its continuing scattered use. In 1710, Bishops Ross, Fullerton, and Duncan attended the dying Countess of Dundonald, and "designed to have given her the sacrament but she fell insensible." 1 Wodrow reported a still less happy incident in 1713, soon after the Act of Toleration had freed the episcopalian to pursue their practices. A shoemaker had joined himself to the "protected meeting"; and when his wife was mortally ill, he asked the episcopal minister to visit her. At first she declined the sacrament, but finally "the husband's minister prevailed, and the poor woman, against her mind, took it, and presently fell into great remorse... and died distracted, still crying she had eat and drunk her own damnation." 2 Although the incident is reported unsympathetically, it points to the beginning of a pluralistic society in which episcopalian would receive the sacrament unhampered. The Scottish episcopal clergy had no official ritual to guide them at this time, but their tradition of taking Communion to the dying was firmly established, and supported by the Prayer Book of 1637. This was further bolstered by the authority they gave to the English non-jurors' book of 1718, which provided for reserved elements to be

2 Ibid., pp. 400-401.
consecrated for the use of the sick.¹

Though presbyterianism emerged victorious in the issues of formalized prayer and death-bed communion, the presbyterian concept of community had suffered by moving in the direction of clericalism. The Scottish reformers' objection to private communion rested on their belief that the minister-parishioner relationship did not adequately symbolize the Church.² Yet, in practice, the minister came to represent precisely this: when a man died without the clergy's presence it was felt that he had died without the Church. The Form of Government adopted by the Westminster Assembly stated that it was the pastor's office to pray for the sick in private, "to which a blessing is especially promised."³ This distinction between pastor and layman so distinguished the office of the minister in the care of the dying that the minister became the necessary representative of the congregation. Perhaps unavoidably, but actually, clericalism then eclipsed the reformers' concept of community. The eldership continued to be a "spiritual" office, but the layman could not attain the status of the minister as a representative of the congregation or as an intercessor before the Eternal. Archibald Johnston's concern for the dying could rarely be equalled by any

¹ F. C. Eeles, Traditional Ceremonial and Customs Connected with the Scottish Liturgy, (London, 1900), pp. 90-91.
² Supra, p. 143.
³ Propositions Concerning Church-Government and Ordination of Ministers (by the Westminster Assembly of Divines), printed by Evan Tyler, Printer to the Kings most Excellent Majesty, (Edinburgh: 1647), p. 5.
minister; he sometimes counselled and prayed with several on the same day. Yet, he himself, did not consider his service sufficient when he lamented that the dying Lord Craighall "called no minister to be with him."¹ For a century following the Covenants, certain laymen took spiritual leadership at the death-bed; but their services were not considered an adequate substitute for the ministers¹. Parishes were still zoned for elders' responsibilities, but an increasing importance was put on their function as officers of surveillance of public and private morals. Patrolling his neighborhood for evidence of Sabbath breaking, fornication, intemperance, witchcraft, etc., was more within the capacity of the average elder than bringing spiritual aid to the dying. Even in the eighteenth century, the Edinburgh presbytery visitation inquired, "Have you an eldership ... and have they more particular bounds assigned them for their more particular inspection?"²

Some approximation to the Reformers' community ideal may have been attained in a death-bed practice of the mid-eighteenth century. In Perth, when death was imminent, invitations to be present were sent to relatives, neighbors, and all who had visited during the illness.³ The same custom prevailed in Hawick where the gathered company sang psalms at the time of dying, and following the death, a hymn of praise and triumph.⁴

¹Johnston Diary, II. op. cit., p. 242.
²George Lorimer, Leaves from the Buik of the West Kirk, (Edinburgh, 1885), p. 59.
³George Penny, Traditions of Perth, (Perth, 1836), p. 32.
The Preparation of the Body

Of all death practices in Christian Scotland, the method of preparing the body for burial was the most resistant to change. Immediately after death, the body was lifted from the bed and stretched, an important procedure to permit proper winding, and for fitting to the closely measured coffin. Janet Gaffaw, although mentally deficient, prepared her mother's corpse for burial and "got the body straightened in a wonderful decent manner." Washing and wrapping of the corpse, with the addition of aromatic spices and preservatives, when they could be afforded, continued to be standard procedures throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Deviations from this standard are recorded in times of epidemics, and in the extremes of poverty and wealth. But the usual method of preparation was given increased attention on each social level, and was accompanied by corresponding expenditures. These costs, rather than religious influences, became the more important determiners of custom: improving economic conditions stimulated and enabled the increased expenditures, and theological and religious views were conformed to them. James Brodie, recording the meticulous care given his father's body before burial explains -

The bodie was the cask which keipt a nobl jewal; the bodi is united to Christ; there is hop of a resurrection; therfor


we tak car for the bodie, which sal rise again in glorie, tho' sown in corruption. 1

Except for the very wealthy, the winding sheet was the major expenditure in body preparation. Its economic importance to the country was demonstrated in 1686, when Parliament passed an act against burying in foreign linen. It provided that

hereafter no Corpse of any Person or persons shall be buried in any shirt sheet or any thing else except in plaine linen cloath of hards made and spun within the Kingdom without lace or poynt Dischargeing from hencefurth the making use of Holland or other linen cloath made in other Kingdomes all silke hair or wollen gold or silver or any other stuff whatsoever then what is made of flax or hands spunn and wrought within the kingdome . . . 2

Severe penalties were imposed for violation of this act, and the fines were to be divided between the poor of the parish and the informant; a device which made contravention difficult. Within eight days after burial, a certificate stating that the law had been complied with had to be signed by witnesses and filed with the minister, or the goods of the deceased could be forfeited. Even the minister was liable to pay a fine if he failed to pursue the violators. 3

This, and subsequent acts of Parliament, were destined to bring a new ceremony to Scotland's death tradition. Formerly the placing of a corpse in the coffin had been done with reverence, but privately; as Alexander Brodie records in 1680, the simple incident, "My dear father was this afternoon putt in his coffin." 4

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1 Brodie Diary, op. cit., p. 427.
3 Ibid., p. 599.
4 Brodie Diary, op. cit., p. 428.
But after 1686, the legal necessity of witnessing the death clothes turned the event into a semi-public occasion, "the cofferning." Two "famous persons" were first required to be present, but since these persons sometimes proved to be irresponsible, the act was modified in 1695 to require "the nearest elder or Deacon of the Paroch with one neighbour or two be called be the persons concerned and present to the putting of the dead corps in the Coffin, that they may see the same done."¹ The Edinburgh council appointed the elders and deacons to take up the lists of all persons who transgressed the act of Parliament, and the kirk treasurers were to pursue those who were liable.² Not by law, but by custom, the minister also came to be included among the witnesses; and in some areas the cofferning was deemed an appropriate occasion for prayer. In 1717, it was the woolen industry which needed governmental support, and Parliament then changed the act of 1686 to forbid the use of linen in burial, and required that all bodies be wrapped only in plain woolen cloth; but the same method of witnessing and the same penalties applied.³ By these laws, what had been a simple, but necessary, chore became a rather important social custom in which family, neighbors, church officers, and the minister joined. As early as 1707, Sir John Foulis of Ravelston recorded in his account a sum "to pay to the coach doune and up when lissie's mother was kisted."⁴ The dismal event, born of

economic expedience, was to continue for generations.

In much less spectacular ways the winding sheet played an important part in the lives of individuals and parishes. As four yards of linen was a minimum requirement for an adult, it was no small expense for an average citizen. Yet, the provident preparation of a winding sheet for oneself and for each member of the family was considered a sacred duty among the Scottish peasantry. Writing in 1726, Edward Burt reported that the newly married woman immediately set herself to spinning her winding sheet, a duty which was given additional urgency by the hazards of childbirth. A husband who sold or pawned the sheet was considered most profligate. The custom endured into the nineteenth century when single women setting up housekeeping made the same prudent preparation.

There was much evidence of self-reliance in providing the sheets, but kirk-session records are replete with evidence that many poor could not provide their own. Usually the churches helped by supplying cash to the relatives making preparation; but they quite frequently bestowed their used communion cloths for the cause. J. M. McPherson has cited seven parishes in the north-east which, between 1681 and 1736, appropriated their communion table

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1Four eln (37 inches per eln) was the amount granted to a poor woman "yt cam from Aberdine here and dyed." Alexander Mitchell, Inverness Kirk-Session Records, (Inverness, 1902), p. 39.


3Ibid., p. 107. (n.).
cloths as grave clothes. The communion cloth at Auchterless was 24 ells long, and when given to the poor should have been adequate to provide six winding sheets for adults. Because of the infrequency of Holy Communion, some parishes purchased their Communion linen with the intention of adapting it for winding sheets immediately after the celebration of the Sacrament. In New Monkland, the treasurer recorded an expenditure "for 8 ells of liene for table cloth afterwards disposed of for winding sheets." The great majority of winding sheets were similar in design and material, but there were some variations used by the privileged. The cerecloth was similar to the common type, but it was impregnated with wax or glutinous matter which acted as a sealer and preservative. In 1680, Alexander Brodie wrote, "I put the bodie of my dear father in his cerecloth, and caus anoint with oyls, and pouders, and spices." When Francis Masterton wrote down his burial wishes for his wife's later reference he asked, "Let me be kept but on night; for I have no share cloath." But Sir Hugh Campbell of Calder, who died March 11, 1716,

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2 Ibid., p. 142.
3 John Macarthur, op. cit., p. 82.
4 Brodie Diary, op. cit., p. 427.
was wrapped in a cerecloth and buried eighteen days later.\(^1\)

There is some hint of a decorative variation in the winding sheet used among the elite in the Highlands. The "Sons of Macgregor na Raura" laments that the deceased (probably of the Montrose period), could not receive the honor of proper grave clothes:

\[
\text{Thou, alas! art in a narrow shroud of thin linen;}
\text{Without silk or fitting ornament.}
\text{Thou soughest not, to adorn thy funeral weeds,}
\text{The high-born dames of thy country.}
\]

An anonymous author (1811) asserts that in the seventeenth century all needle-work was peculiar to educated persons, and the ladies of a district used to meet together to sew the grave clothes of distinguished persons.\(^3\)

Though the vast majority were willing to expect and accept the rapid, natural decomposition of the body, an effort to retard this process is found among the wealthy. Some, like Alexander and James Brodie, cared for their loved ones and applied the preservatives themselves; but others, for want of professional undertakers, made use of surgeons and apothecaries. A surgeon was employed to prepare the body of Sir Hugh Campbell, though this involved only the external application of "oyls, a sear cloth, and frankincense and other necessars."\(^4\) For embalming, some special-

\(^1\) Thanes of Cawdor, op. cit., p. 416.


\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^4\) Thanes of Cawdor, loc. cit.
ized knowledge was required, and the physician who attended the dying man during his illness often served in this capacity also. John Gourlay, an apothecary, embalmed the body of the young Lord Balcarres (1662), and the boy's physician assisted to discover the cause of death.\(^1\) Gourlay must have been considered a part-time undertaker; two years later he was employed to embalm the body of John Lundy. That there were some very skilled specialists in the art of body preservation is indicated by the discovery in 1795 of the body of Lady Dundee, who had been accidentally killed in Holland (c. 1700). Almost a century after death, her countenance and color were as in life. The body had been embalmed, and when her tomb was opened "it was filled with most delightful and odoriferous perfumes." Because her mortal wound was on the temple, the brain had been removed, and a silk patch had been placed neatly over the blemish.\(^2\)

Except for the evisceration necessitated by embalming, body division had practically disappeared in the seventeenth century. A notable exception is that of John Lauderdale, whose brain and viscera were deposited in a large, square vase placed near his coffin in the Church at Haddington. A plaque on the vase, inscribed in Latin, provided this information: "In this vase is deposited all the intestines, except the heart, of John Lauderdale who died on the 24th of August, A. D. 1682."\(^3\)

\(^{1}\) Lamont Diary, op. cit., p. 156.


\(^{3}\) A. Thompson, Lauder and Lauderdale, (Galashiels, n.d.), p. 162.
The Kirk as a Mortuary

In about 1650, a unique practice began to develop in which the church buildings were utilized for the keeping of the corpse, and sometimes for burial preparation. The Church commendably adjusted to this timely need in serving the community at large; yet, it is paradoxical that this lowly service should have been welcomed in the house of worship where the burial ceremony was excluded.

The travel which accompanied increased commerce and social intercourse resulted in more and more persons dying away from their homes; and the church was frequently the only public building in which these bodies could be placed while arrangements were made for their return. The body of James Lundy, en-route from Ramungo to Largo, was "brought to Straerly upon the Sabeth, in the afternoone, and sett without doores ther all night." But increasingly the church doors were opened, and hospitality extended - especially of churches located in vital commercial centers. The families of the deceased usually acknowledged this benefit by quite sizeable contributions to the churches. In South Leith, the treasurer reported these gifts in appreciation of the use of the church building:

Sept., 1666 - 60 pounds for keeping the corpse of the Mayor of Hull, "Within the bodie of our church."  

April, 1667 - 11 pounds "for Sir James Hoom of Echills his corpse, standing in the Kirk one night."  

1 Lamont Diary, op. cit., p. 140.  
3 Ibid., p. 122.
Sept., 1674 - 26 pounds for "the Lady Marquess of Douglas
corps lying in the session house."\(^1\)
Auf., 1719 - 100 merks for "the Laird of Grant . . . his
corpse lying in the Session house."\(^2\)

In 1720, the beadle was reprimanded by the session for opening the
church doors without authorization to "permit dressing the corps
of two Pirates that were hanged the 14th instand."\(^3\) Since the
treasurer was one of the authorizing agents named, a financial
motive is implied for the censuring. The emerging use of the
churches as mortuaries was potentially beneficial to any church.
In 1737, the parish of Inchinnan received a payment for its hospi-
tality when a traveller died enroute from Glasgow to Greenock.\(^4\)

Another kind of circumstance in which the church served
as a mortuary was for the accommodation of the landed gentry who
lived outside the larger burghs, but desired to bury within them.
Quite frequently, these families chose not to endure the long
processional from their country manors to the towns, but took the
body to the church where it remained until the time of burial.
In Edinburgh, the beadles had been cooperating with these fami-
lies and receiving honoraria for their courtesy; but in 1665, the
burgh council directed these payments to the poor by requiring
church treasurers to

| exact uplift and receive from such persones who seik the |

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\(^1\)Ibid., p. 129.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 35.
\(^3\)Ibid., p. 38.
\(^4\)Robert McClelland, *The Church and Parish of Inchinnan,*
(Paisley, 1905), p. 23.
benefite of the use of the kirks for keipung of Corps to burlalls twentie merks scotts for persones of qualitie and better sort and fen merks scotts at least for persones of meiner qualitie.¹

Like other burial charges, this fee rose to twenty-nine pounds by 1696, when Lady Grisell Baillie's mother died.² In Aberdeen, (1670), the council became aware that bodies in the Castlehill Chapel and Greyfriars Church had been brought "from the contrie and keepit there for ane nights tyme, which did tend greatlie to accommodatione of them that ware concerneit in the said defunct persons, and the toun nowayes benefited therby." Ten merks was levied for the privilege, the payment to be dedicated to the maintenance of the buildings.³ Guards from the militia had been provided gratis for watching the bodies overnight, but in 1681, the employer was required to pay for this service.⁴ Inverness likewise charged for this use of its facilities, a half dollar to be paid to the kirk officers for their "attendance upon the said corpse and friends therein concerned."⁵

The Lykewake

The lykewake was a spontaneous tribal vestige which asserted

³Aberdeen Records, op. cit., p. 262.
⁴Ibid., p. 301.
itself in striking antithesis to the Puritan-Covenanter serious view of life and death. For a century following 1638, the Church and civil powers allied themselves to suppress or regulate it, but the forces which called the lykewake into being and determined its nature were generally beyond the reach of statutory control.

The Puritan state-of-mind had sufficient acceptance in the Scotland of 1645-46 to effect the passage of two national enactments which attempted to abolish lykewakes altogether. In 1645, the General Assembly agreed that

Whereas the corrupt Custome of Lykewakes hath fostered both Superstition and Profanitie through the Land This present Assembly Discharges the same in time comming, And appoints Presbyteries to take speciall care fo trying and censuring the Transgressors of this Act within their several Bounds.

This action, seemingly fortuitous, received little support from the presbyteries and parishes where the force of the lykewake as a social institution was more realistically faced. In 1644, the Presbytery of St. Andrews had appointed a committee to study the problem, but a month later it had recommended controls rather than abolition of lykewakes. Only the Scottish Parliament appears to have agreed with the General Assembly. In 1646, it voted to "inhibite heireftir and discharge all persones of whatsoever qualitie to have Lykewakes and tha vnder the pane of Tuentie pundis. . .".

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Subsequent years revealed these prohibitions of Church and state as ineffective because local bodies were not as unrealistic as to believe they could be enforced. In Tyninghame, the General Assembly's action was acknowledged (1645), but the session was content with the lykewake, provided it did not get out of hand. The Falkirk session was comfortably evasive (1647), by ordering that lykewakes be "put down." In South Leith, the kirk-session weakly recommended that there be no lykewakes "speciall now in tyme qn ye plague is beginning to break out agane." The Dumfries session took no action until it was informed that a wright had "profaned by conveining a number of people together at the Laikweak of his chyld."

Soon after lykewakes had been forbidden by national bodies, it was clear that their actions would have little or no effect on their frequency of occurrence. Much more significant was the protracted effort of concerned churchmen and laymen throughout Scotland, presbyterians and episcopalians alike, to pass and enforce controls. Though referred to in such general terms as "prophane," "superstitious," "heathenish," and "scandalous"; the specific nature of what was considered abuses is plain:

(a) As the Church understood it, the most persistent

3 D. Robertson, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 82.
problem of lykewakes was the "Ordinairie crowding (of a) multitude of profane and Idle persones,"¹ which made for disorder, revelry, and immorality. A continuing effort was made to reduce attendance and assure a selective guest list. In 1644, St. Andrews Presbytery required that the host families -

hold there doores close . . and that they give no entrance to the confused multitude quho frequent such occasions; and lykewise ordaines such as goe to the place where the dead are, not being invited by the friends of the dead, to be censured by Sessions as disorderlie walkers . . ²

Crowding was aggravated by the fact that one's attendance at the wake of a casual acquaintance or even a stranger was socially acceptable. In 1709, the Town Council of Culross, in imitation of the "loudable customs of other burghs, particularlie the niboring burgh of Dundermpling," forbade all burgesses to enter into the hous or housses wher the corps of any deceissand person is laying, or unto thois convened ther in any truble, or furnishing of them drink, or tobaco, except they be friends and relations to the defunct, and particularie inveitted thereto.³

Two special groups are discovered among the multitude looking for excitement and free refreshments. The town council of Lanark found young people especially anxious to enjoy the social opportunities of the lykewake,⁴ and John Galt implies the same tradi-

¹William Mackay, Presbytery of Inverness and Dingwall, op. cit., p. 121, (n.).

²St. Andrews and Cupar, op. cit., p. 20.


⁴Records of Lanark, op. cit., p. 93.
tion in Ayrshire.¹ In the Highlands, Thomas Pennant reported that lykewakes were accompanied "with such gambols and frolicks among the younger part of the company, that the loss which occasioned them is often more than supplied by the consequence of that night."² But the more surprising exploitation was by the burgh magistrates who were pleased to consider their attendance a civic duty. In 1658, the council of Aberdeen renewed a former ruling that "magistrates, as magistrates" were not to attend lykewakes, but only if they were also relatives or neighbors of the deceased.³ At Inverkeithing (1713), the council decided that all councillors and magistrates should absent themselves "from the house or housses whar the corps lye because of the expense and inconveny formerly sustained by the friends in such cases."⁴

(b) The activities of the lykewake were also a frequent target of censure, especially in the North of Scotland. Watching the corpse was not necessarily a tedious obligation, but one which could be solaced with lively recreation. Dancing, singing, piping and fiddling were the standard diversions against which presbyteries and local churches took consistent action. The master of music in Aberdeen was twice forbidden to sing at lyke-

¹John Galt, op. cit., p. 93.
wakes.\(^1\) In 1675, the Synod of Moray forbade "lyksongs, fidling, and dancing";\(^2\) and the presbytery of Inverness made this a major matter of inquiry in its visitations in Moy, Boleskin, and Dores.\(^3\) The General Assembly in 1701 "revived" its act of 1645 against lykewakes and its act of 1649 against "promiscuous dancing,"\(^4\) but the renewed prohibitions met with no greater success than the previous ones. Among the rare incidents of prosecution was one for dancing at a lykewake in Lairg (1717),\(^5\) and another in Elgin for dancing and fiddling (1737).\(^6\) The reporting of the incident in Kingussie (1728), exposed the helplessness of the Church. The session had summoned three who were responsible for fiddling at a lykewake, but only one appeared. The accused confessed he had permitted a fiddler in his house, "but said he did not think it a sin, it being so long a custom in this country." The kirk-session, "finding that it is not easy to rout out so prevailing a custom," decided to have the minister pronounce against it from the pulpit and to pursue the enforcement of civil penalties.\(^7\)

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\(^1\) In 1643 and 1658, Aberdeen Records, op. cit., p. 6 and p. 174.

\(^2\) William Mackay, loc. cit.

\(^3\) Ibid., pp. 53-55.


\(^5\) Donald Macrae, Notes on the History of the Parish of Lairg, (Wick, 1898), p. 31.


\(^7\) Kirk-session Records, quoted by Alexander Macpherson, Glimpses of Church and Social Life, (Edinburgh, 1893), pp. 33-34.
The effectiveness of these efforts to restrict music and dancing is all but indiscernible. Other social forces built the enduring tradition in the Highlands described by Edward Burt in the second quarter of the eighteenth century:

They dance, as if it were at a wedding, till the next morning, though all the time the corpse lies before them in the same room. If the deceased be a woman, the widower leads up the first dance; if a man, the widow. In some districts, dancing around the corpse, accompanied by a solemn strain called the "lament," was begun on the evening of death and continued night and day until burial.

Games and athletic contests were also accepted forms of recreation at Highland lykewakes. The Synod of Moray "strickly" discharged all lascivious exercises and sports in 1675, but the hearty highlander did not refrain from testing his skill against his neighbor. When the three sons of Jean Campbell had assembled their respective followers at their mother's lykewake, the time was used for foot racing, sword-exercise, fencing, wrestling, tossing the caber, and throwing the hammer. Rivalry was so sharply matched that Robert of Glenlyon sent off in the night for one of his shepherds, a famous athlete, who walked fifteen miles to the scene of the festivities and succeeded in winning the stone throwing contest for Glenlyon. Robert was so overjoyed "as to give the gullies a double allowance of whisky, and the mirth waxed so fast and furious, that the purpose of their meeting was

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2 Ibid. (n.)
3 William Mackay, op. cit., p. 121.
nearly forgotten, and the interment allowed to lie over for another day."

Such energetic death celebrations are not numerous in contemporary records, but it must be acknowledged that the activities of Highland wakes reflect a greater vigor and abandon than those in other parts of Scotland. Temperamental independence, an intense sense of kinship, and geographical isolation combined to make the highland lykewake distinctive. Friends and relatives came from vast distances, and they frequently came to remain until after the burial. Thus, the death provided the occasion, and the burial arrangements provided the time for a memorable social event.

(c) A third group of restraints on lykewakes, limited in number and scope, were those which attempted to control the extravagant use of food, alcohol, and tobacco. Superfluous spending for desserts and confections was forbidden by the burgh council of Aberdeen in 1638, and again in 1658. The Presbytery of St. Andrews (1644), reminded those professing godliness that the lykewake was not a "tyme of eating or drinking, or making merrie after a worldly manner." Yet the tradition in Scotland developed into precisely that, a time of eating and drinking, plus smoking, with slight and ineffective opposition from the Church.

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1 Duncan Campbell, The Lairds of Glenlyon, (Perth, 1886), pp. 78-79.
2 Aberdeen Records, op. cit., p. 123.
3 Ibid., p. 174
4 St. Andrews and Cupar, op. cit., p. 20.
One of the family's first concerns when death occurred (in the same order of priority as the preparation of the body) was the laying in of provisions for the lykewake. On the death of Sir James Hamilton, a buyer was promptly dispatched on horseback "to Edinburgh and back again for bringing home necessars."¹ Expense accounts listing these "necessars" make clear what custom dictated. For the burial of Sir Donald Campbell of Ardnamurchan, (1651), fifty gallons of ale were ordered.² The account at the death of Col. John Erskine (1743), lists the provisions delivered on each day between his death and his burial; and the item for "ten pounds of wax lights" leave little doubt about how the daily deliveries of claret, Lesbon, Madiera, biscuit, seed and plum cake, etc., were used.³ So the account of Robert Dunbar of Newton lists eight different orders of claret on the four days between his death and burial, along with "13 loads of peats to the funeral house," and "five pounds moulded candles."⁴ The relentless responsibility of entertaining in the house of mourning is witnessed in a record following the death of Sir Hugh Campbell (1716), "To malt brewed from Sir Hugh's death to the interment, sixteen bolls and ane half . . . £88."⁵

² Thanes of Cawdor, op. cit., p. 310.
⁵ Thanes of Cawdor, op. cit., p. 416.
Since provision for smoking was as necessary as that for food and drink, tobacco and pipes are inevitable items in listings of expenses. Sir Hugh's lykewake required six dozen pipes and three pounds of cut tobacco.\(^1\) The bill for Sir Donald Campbell's last honors included two incongruous necessities in a single item:

Given for sevein ells lining to be winding sheitt to umquhill Sir Donald his corpis, price the ell 16s; also for fyve pound of tobakgow, so the lining and tobakgow extendis to £ 6 3s.\(^2\)

Most private records of lykewake expenses were left by the privileged; but there is ample evidence that a supply of beverages and tobacco was socially obligatory for the lykewakes of the poor. A payment by the session in Hawick for "John Cavers for 2 sheets for ym, also tobacco and pipes," registers the same combination of necessities as for Sir Donald Campbell.\(^3\) Included in the expenses of Betie Haye's burial were items for tobacco and pipes, and for a quart of ale.\(^4\) A poor widow in Peterculter submitted her husband's burial expenses to the session, including the costs of ten pints of ale, two mutchkins of spirits, pipes, tobacco, and a candle.\(^5\) Sometimes the necessities for the poor were privately financed. The Countess of Mar assumed the burial

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\(^1\) Ibid.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 310.
\(^3\) J. J. Vernon, *The Parish of Hawick*, (Hawick, 1900), p. 70.
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 70.
expenses of Catherine Ramsay, whose coffin cost only twenty shillings; but this did not prevent the purchase of "two half pounds of tobacco and eighteen pipes spent at her lykewake . . 21 s."\(^1\)
The Aberdeen Shipmaster's Society insured a respectable farewell for one of their brothers when they appropriated sixteen shillings, "for drink to ye Lyk, for pyps and tobacco."\(^2\) Since the lykewakes of the poor received such benefits from public and private charity, it seems most probable that a large portion of the population above this economic level, and of whom we have little record, also considered a supply of beverages and tobacco the bare necessities of their lykewakes.

**The Deadbell and the Steeple Bell**

Following 1638, the policies which directed the use of bells at the time of death betray a marked deterioration in the influence of theology. During the high-water mark of Puritan prestige, there were scattered efforts, as in Aberdeen, to "discharge the tolling and ringing of belles, and other superstitious rites vseit at funeralls."\(^3\) But the tide rapidly ebbed, and subsequent decisions about the use of bells were based on expediency alone. That the Reformed Church could forget the origin of its practices is illustrated by the staunch Protestant, Sir John Lauder. Visiting France in 1666, Lauder was much impressed by the

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\(^2\)Alexander Clark, _A Short History of the Shipmaster's Society_, (Aberdeen, 1911), p. 44.

\(^3\)Aberdeen Records, _op. cit._, p. 5.
ringing of l'agonie from a convent, calling the friends of the
dying to assist with their prayers. He commented, "this surely
seemes to be wery laudable, and it may not be amiss that it ware
in custome at us." The Reformed Church did not return to this
"custome," but with a similar contempt for its heritage it drifted
into other practices in the use of bells which betrayed the reform-
ers' purpose. The first of these was the return to a form of toll-
ing for the dead; the second was the decline of the dead-bell as
an agent of community.

The ringing of the steeple bell for burials had been gener-
2 ally discouraged by the early reformers; but during the second
part of the seventeenth century, it was officially approved in
church after church, and became an accepted practice in the Pro-
estant tradition. Its acceptance without controversy was a major
ecclesiastical concession to the human longing for ceremony; for
its resurgence in the Protestant era can be explained as nothing
other than a way of honoring the dead. It did not serve the
religious purpose of reminding the living to pray for the dead,
for this was now accepted as unnecessary. Nor did it serve the
utilitarian purpose of calling the congregation together for the
burial: this was accomplished by the then universal use of the
dead-bell proclamation.

The bereaved's desire to honor loved ones by the tolling
of the bell found ready response from beadles, kirk-sessions, and
burgh councils who eagerly accepted financial benefits. In 1607,

1 Donald Crawford, Journals of Sir John Lauder, Lord Fount-
2 Supra, pp. 152-53.
the South Leith session had permitted the ringing of the bell for burials only when required, but in 1646, the bellman's wage was supplemented by "all ye commoditie he can reep for ringing ye steiple bell to ye burialls," an arrangement which was mutually beneficial.\(^1\) By 1681, the South Leith session was willing that the bellman ring all three bells; small, middle sized, and large, provided a payment was made for the use of the poor.\(^2\) The Aberdeen council, in 1666, reversed its former ruling against tolling and ordered "the haille bells in the toune to be rung and tollit in ane mourneing sound befor, at, and after interring the corps" of its provost;\(^3\) and later that year, it approved a general fee for "good considerations moveing them," whenever the bells were used at funerals.\(^4\) The session at Innerask decided in 1674 to aid its exhausted poorbox by charging for the ringing of the bell at funerals, as was done in other parishes.\(^5\) In Edinburgh (1683), the council purchased a special bell to be put in the steeple of Grayfrier's Kirk for the purpose of ringing at funerals.\(^6\) The Hawick Town Council established an intricate schedule of fees "for bells tolling at the burial," the amounts being determined

\(^1\)David Robertson, I, op. cit., p. 72.
\(^2\)Ibid., p. 139.
\(^3\)Aberdeen Records, op. cit., p. 204.
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 229.
\(^6\)Edinburgh Records, 1665-80, op. cit., p. 95.
by the deceased's age, place of residence, and social status. In Longierait, it was the minister's desire for monetary return which determined the policy for the use of bells. When a motion was made to permit the tolling of the bell, he opposed it unless the users "pay in to the Session six shillin Scot for every burial at which it will ring: this was acquisced in." 

There was no standardization of a schedule for tolling, but the records imply that for each death, the bell was rung extensively. Burgh councils and sessions expressed concern for the burden of bell repair which resulted from tolling the dead. The Council of the Chanonry of Ross levied a charge of twelve shillings for the use of the bell, "taking to their consideration the great abuse done by ringing...at every occasion of mortality." At Monymusk, the kirk-session took measures to protect the kirk bell from overuse: "her being frequently disordered, thought fitt that she should be tolled thrice or four times at most att every burial." The ringing continued for a full hour before burials in South Leith; but the session feared that the clock hammers striking at the same time might damage the bell, and ordered that the tolling not begin "till the appointed hour for interring was stroke on the clock." In the parish of Alyth, each burial

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1 J. J. Vernon, _op. cit._, pp. 198-99, 205.
3 C. G. Macdowell, _The Chanonry of Ross_, (Fortose, 1963), p. 158.
4 J. M. McPherson, _op. cit._, p. 79.
5 David Robertson, _op. cit._, p. 26.
customarily called for tolling of the bell at three different times; when the funeral began, when the procession went forth from the house, and as it entered the cemetery. But the session, "considering the failing of the place qron the bell hings to be sore worn and weak," ordered that it be used only for the beginning of the burial.\(^1\) Numerous controls of this kind certify to the existence of a tradition which employed the steeple or town bell at several different times on the day of burial, and the ringing for each of these times could be extensive.

The second change in the use of bells was the gradual decline of the dead-bell as a symbol of the unity of the congregation. Fortunately, the decline did not begin until the last quarter of the seventeenth century, and it proceeded so slowly that the tinkle of the dead-bell was a familiar sound in many communities through most of the eighteenth century. The Reformed Church had given the ringer of the dead-bell an honored and established place; a place which neither he nor the community was anxious to relinquish.

Contemporary sources between 1661 and 1725 describe in some detail the bellman's work, showing that there was no discernible change during this period; and probably for a considerable time before and after these dates. When someone died, the bellman "goeth about the streets with a small Bell, which he tinkleth all along as he goeth, and now and then he makes a stand and proclaims who is dead and invites the people to come to the funeral


\(^{2}\) Supra, pp. 154-55.
at such an hour."¹ Thomas Morer said that when the ringing ceased the announcement was made "at the most convenient places of the Town."² That these places were long established in each community is indicated by a petition of two weavers to the burgh council in Stirling (1720) -

"that the beddell . . . when he cryes the dead, to do the same in the Castlehill in the usual manner ascryed at other parts within the burgh, at the tenement or house at the top of the brae belonging to John Robertson, Cordiner.³"

Brevity and dignity were assured in the proclamation by a stipulated form which was recorded by Morer in 1690, and almost precisely duplicated by Edward Burt (after 1725), as the form used in both "Low and High country":

Faithful Brethren and Sisters, I let you to wot, that there is a Faithful Brother (or sister) departed, as it hath pleased Almighty God. He (or She) was called. (so names him) and lived in. (so gives his Dwelling).⁴

Since it was considered essential that the bellman proceed promptly after death to "cry" the intimation,⁵ he needed to repeat the same circuit a day or two later to announce the time and place of burial, and to invite attendance.⁶

Thus, for many generations the dead-bell served its

¹Andrew MacGeorge, Old Glasgow, (Glasgow: 1888), p. 283.
⁴Burt, op. cit., p. 217.
⁵Morer, op. cit., p. 67.
⁷Morer, loc. cit.
purpose both by transmitting important information, and by unifying the community in response to the loss of one of its members. Its service was utilized by every level of society: the wealthy lairds who entered the "cryer's" modest fees in their accounts, the paupers whose fees were paid by the kirk-sessions, and by all of those who were neither rich nor poor. The universal use in Hawick is evidenced in a town council ruling "that the Dead Bell stand constantly in the tresaurer's house to the effect he may know and marke down every Invididuall Buriall, and be countable therefor."¹ A singular suggestion that there may have been some class distinction in the method of sounding the dead-bell is given by Archibald Johnston as he assured a dying youth that he should be happy to have a burgess ticket to heaven, "as deid-bell distinguisheth dyers in Edinburgh, burgesses or inhabitants."² This assertion of status in the use of the dead-bell must have been exceedingly rare; and even then it was out-balanced by the community's recognition of the importance of a human life.

The very gradual decline in the use of the dead-bell was anticipated in urban areas by the end of the seventeenth century. The sense of community was increasingly difficult to maintain where populations were large and expanding; and prosperous burgesses were becoming less willing to accept the right of all of the inhabitants to join with them in their death ceremonies. As private funerals emerged, the bell-man found himself no longer wanted. In 1676, the Edinburgh council found it necessary to

¹Vernon, op. cit., p. 199.
²Johnston Diary, op. cit., p. 235.
require that those who did not employ the deadbell must pay three dollars to the poor before ground would be broken for burial.¹

In Aberdeen, the council recognized that the "touns bellman is much slighted and neglected of late by peoples not employing him to goe throw the toun for ther deceast relations, to the hurt and prejudic of his tack, and the decency used formerly in this burgh and other burghs of this kingdome." The distressed council attempted to enforce the use of the dead-bell by forbidding the kirk officers to open ground until the town's bellman had been employed.² After the turn of the century, the problem accelerated. South Leith went almost a full year without a bellman until Alexander Goodale was appointed to "the Dead Bellmanship."³ In Glasgow, the bellmen petitioned the council for help because "from many that have private burialls they gett nothing,"⁴ and after three years' delay, the council voted to require them to be paid for each burial whether or not their services were desired.⁵ In 1704, and again in 1732, the magistrates of Banff compelled the hand-bell to be paid for every time the tower bells were rung for burials.⁶ In Stirling, "private buryings without previous

¹Edinburgh Records, 1665-80, op. cit., p. 263-64.
⁴Glasgow Records, 1691-1717, op. cit., p. 494.
⁵Ibid., p. 601.
intimation by the bell through the town" were much in fashion by 1741, when the council granted the bellman the usual fee for services whether rendered or not. Slowly, but steadily, the desire for greater exclusiveness in death observances was creeping into Scottish culture. However, the dead-bell persisted stubbornly: Stirling found itself in need of a new one in 1747; and in smaller communities it tottered through the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth.

Burial Letters

Coming into general use at about the same time as private funerals, burial letters were an aid to exclusiveness and an opportunity to display refinement. They originated in the simple need to inform those living at a distance of a particular death and the arrangements for the burial. Since seventeenth century lairds enjoyed the luxury of literacy and the means of posting, they regularly used letters to invite the nobility from near and far to attend the obsequies for their loved ones. An item "for peaper and the buriall letters" was reckoned among the expenses of the burial of John Lundy in 1664; and the day after his father's death, Alexander Brodie wrote in his diary, "We were this day ordouring the dispatch of letters for the burial."

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1 Stirling Records, op. cit., pp. 258-59.
2 Ibid., p. 286.
3 Sommerville, op. cit., p. 367.
4 Lamont Diary, op. cit., p. 175.
5 Brodie Diary, op. cit., p. 427.
the dispatch was a regular and considerable item among burial expenses.\(^1\) An important refinement was the sealing of the letters with the family coat of arms; so we find "two sticks of black wax,"\(^2\) and "black wax and a quair of mourning paper,"\(^3\) listed in the burial accounts. An employee of the Laird of Barmucktie, immediately after the death of the Laird's wife, wrote an agent requesting him to order "a stealall, and cause cut his name and airmes thereon" for funeral letters.\(^4\)

This aristocratic tradition, which had developed from the social requirements of the nobility, was readily imitated by well-to-do commoners. Fashionable burial letters not only suggested gentility, but flattered the recipients with special attention, and permitted the family of the deceased to determine the social level of those in attendance at the funeral. Foolscap letter paper, i.e., 15-17 x 12-13\(\frac{1}{2}\) inches was most often used;\(^5\) and this was itself an extravagant display considering the brevity of the message it conveyed. The paper was edged in black,\(^6\) and may also have been decorated with the death symbols popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The message, usually formal was

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1\ e.g., \textit{Baillie Household Book, loc. cit.}, and "Orbiston's Buriall," \textit{op. cit.}, p. 400.
2\ \textit{Foulis Accounts, op. cit.}, p. 344.
3\ \textit{Ibid.}, p. 468.
4\ \textit{Dunbar, op. cit.}, p. 280.
5\ \textit{Ibid.}, p. 279.
6\ \textit{Ibid.}
similar in wording and sequence to that used in 1699 at the
death of an Edinburgh merchant's widow:

Sir, the favour of your presence to accompany the corps of
my sister Anna relick of Ja. Wilson mert. in Edr. from her
dwelling house in Blackfrier Wynd to her burial place in
the Greyfrier Church yard on Monday ye 15 instant at seven
o'clock at night is earnestly entreated. Coaches shall
attend you.1

By 1699, burial letters were in sufficiently general use
to achieve commercial importance. James Donaldson had "fallen
upon a device for printing or stamping in a fine qryt character
after another manner then is commonly used." The printing method
was especially adaptable -

for burial letters for the diverse conpelations, Titular
words, names and persons, and places from whence and to
whence the corpses are to be transported, may be changed
to the Employers satisfaction; by this device the leidges
may be more chaeper and sooner served then ordinar. Buriall
Letters being oft times in haste, besides the decencie and
ornament of a border of skeletons, mortheads, and other
emblems of mortality, which the Petitioner hath so continued
that it may be added or abstracted at pleasure.2

Donaldson was granted a royal patent with the sole right to use
this method of printing burial letters, but the increase in the
demand for them brought inevitable infringement on his monopoly.3

Through the whole of the two subsequent centuries, letters
were employed to assure the presence of desirable guests at bur¬
ials. Printed, or in longhand, they were signed by the nearest

1 Scottish Historical Review, Vol. 6, (Glasgow, 1909), p. 140.

2 "Documents Relative to the Printing of Some Early
Scottish Newspapers, etc." Maitland Miscellany, Vol. II, (Edin¬
burgh, 1890), p. 234.

3 Ibid., pp. 251, 253.
of blood relations,\(^1\) which custom also supported the image of
gentility. Contemporary writers testify to their use, almost
exclusively, by the privileged. In 1725, Edward Burt wrote that
"people in some circumstance" send burial letters;\(^2\) and John
Campbell agreed in 1752, that they were dispatched "when any
Person of Distinction dies."\(^3\) As late as 1824, it was "the more
respectable classes, from a worldly point of view" who used them.\(^4\)

**Attendance**

The emphasis on large burial attendances which followed
the Reformation continued and expanded to an inordinate degree
during the seventeenth century. In many areas, society was still
sufficiently intimate for the sense of community to elicit a
hearty response from the neighbors of the defunct. George Rid-
path, attending the burial of William Dickson, observed the
mourners as "the throngest, notwithstanding the badness of the day,
that I have seen, a very proper return on the part of his friends
and neighbors to a man who wished them all well, and lived amongst
them a long and very inoffensive life."\(^5\) But increasingly, such
response was not so much a spontaneous outpouring of affection for

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\(^1\) Thomas Hamilton, *The Youth and Manhood of Cyril Thornton*,


\(^3\) John Campbell, *A Full and Particular Description of the


\(^5\) Ridpath Diary, *op. cit.* , p. 347.
the deceased as it was the result of a variety of subtle and open promotional efforts. The family of the deceased, the civil government, the guilds and crafts, and the Church, cooperated as if in an un-written pact to produce an impressive aggregation at the burial. For each of these institutions, the achievement of this goal was apt to be socially opportune or politically expedient.

The family usually favored a large burial attendance, since this served as a tribute to a loved one, a support in its sorrow, and above all, a demonstration of the family unity and continuity. The standard of attendance for all funerals was influenced by those for heads of families, especially among the nobility. These exceedingly large funerals can not be understood as sheer vainglorious display, although pride played its part; they were also spectacular representations of the organized family at the solemn moment when the authority passed from the deceased leader to a new head. In the heraldic funeral, amorial bearings exhibited this family organization supported by the symbols of authority; and lesser funerals imitated this display as much as possible. In either case, the new head of the family enjoyed a favored position in each aspect of the ceremonies; and the attendance of neighboring families or clans was an acknowledgement of his authority. We therefore find throughout Scotland a great importance given to the presence at burials of the neighboring heads of families; and in the Highlands their authority was in turn asserted by their bringing to the burial as large a following

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of lieges as could be mustered. A representative attitude in the Highlands, during the seventeenth century, was expressed by William Mackay who had great regard for a chief's ability to recruit an impressive showing at burials. Mackay observed that at the funeral of the Laird of Foules (1667), the Rosses appeared in a body of a thousand foot — under the conduct of Ross of Inercharran and very well appointed. The Monroes would be 600. Seaforth came there accompanied with a few horse, and no foote at all; and it is a thing I wonder off that nobleman he makes no figure at any time at burials.¹

This custom led to such vast conclaves in both the North and South, that the burial could be exploited as a subterfuge for military action. In 1643, the Duke of Hamilton plotted with his friends to muster a great force at the Lady Roxburgh's funeral, "as if their numerous Meeting had been only for gathering a great Company to solemnize it with the more Pomp, according to the ceremony used at Burials in Scotland." But, disappointed that there were only a thousand horses, and uncertain of the loyalty of some present, and who should lead, they parted without risking an encounter.² When Campbell of Lochnell died (1714), his son, who had recently become a Jacobite —

long did delay the interment of his father's corps, so long that he might have occasion to draw together such a disaffected portion of the Highland clans as laid next him, and others upon the contrarie lay under the skulk of a funeral solemnnitie did goe to be a check upon the Jacobites; in short, there were upwards of 2,500 men in arms well appoindted; thirteen pypers, a pair of colours belonging to Bradalbin, and out of his lands five hundred men commanded by

¹MS by William Mackay, Chronicles of the Frasers, (ed.), James Fraser, (Edinburgh, 1905), p. 496.

²Gilbert Burnet, op. cit., p. 250.
Robert M'Gregor, a bankrupt Jacobite.¹

The demonstration of a change of family authority at burials gave a great importance to the presence of one's neighbors; an influence which could be seen among prominent and humble families alike. It meant that one's presence at a burial, and in some areas the presence of one's tenants as well, was considered a reciprocal service which could not ordinarily be denied. Burt observed that "It is esteemed very slighting, and scarcely ever to be forgiven, not to attend after invitation, if you are in health; the only means to escape resentment is to send a letter, in answer, with some reasonable excuse."² William Forbes sent such an excuse to Archbishop Dunbar of Duffas (1742), pleading to be understood:

... I told you I could not doe myself the honour to witness the interment of your worthy father. This is to tell you that I have been drinking, this whole day, with our Magistrates and Town Council (God bless them), and am, just now, almost unfit for your conversation; and therefore choose to goe home rather than expose myself; which I hope you will approve off. I hope you will ever believe that I am, with the greatest faith and truth, my dear Sir, yours to serve you ...³

That the force of convention made the burial invitation a summons is implied in Brodie's diary entry: "This day was for the burial of the bishop's wife, but I was not call'd to it."⁴ Powerful families were able to issue "invitations" to civic authorities with the assurance that they would receive cooperation. The Aberdeen

²Burt, op. cit., p. 218.
³Dunbar, op. cit., p. 283.
⁴Brodie Diary, op. cit., p. 353.
burgh council was requested to attend the burial of William Earle Marischell (1671), and on accepting the request invited the entire inhabitants to join them.\(^1\) The next year the same council, on the invitation of the Earl of Erroll, agreed to convoy his father's corpse and to recruit a number of persons from each quarter, as well as deacons of the trades, and others.\(^2\) Preceding the great funeral of Archbishop James Sharp, the magistrates of Kirkcaldy received an invitation from William Sharpe, the deceased's son, to attend; and another request from the Lord Chancellor, to the same effect. They agreed -

> In obedience quhairunto, it is resolved that thair be fourteen horse - six for the guildie and eight for the trades - and that upon the common expense of this burgh; and what personses shall be lawfullie warned and failzie to compeir the said day to attend the Magistrats to the said burial shall be fined ten pounds.\(^3\)

Two years later, the same magistrates received a similar letter "direct fra the Erle of Hadington inveiting them to the buriell of the Diuk of Rothes, his father-in-law"; and considering the benefits the burgh had received from the Duke's favor, they complied wholeheartedly.\(^4\)

Quite apart from aristocratic pressures, burgh officers were clearly on record as favoring large burial attendance. It was to be expected that they would pay extravagant tribute to their

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\(^1\) *Aberdeen Records, op. cit.*, p. 276.


\(^3\) L. Macbean, *The Kirkcaldy Burgh Records*, (Kirkcaldy, 1908), p. 207.

deceased provosts;¹ but the councils went far beyond this, when they stipulated certain compulsory attendance at the burials of burgesses;² paid the expenses for magistrates to travel to other districts for burials;³ and readily cancelled their stated meetings to enable their own presence.⁴ The Kirkcaldy magistrates probably spoke for many communities when they said that public attendance at burials was to "the honor of this Burghe";⁵ and the sending of burgh delegations to distant funerals was designed to woo the favor of prominent and powerful families.

The guilds and crafts eagerly joined in the burgh's recruitment policy. They found the burial an opportunity for them to display their size, importance, and community spirit; and they too were interested in cultivating the good-will of the nobility. To make their presence felt at burials within the burgh, they usually met at a pre-arranged place and attended the master or deacon-conveener "in a body" to the house of the dead. Their dress was stipulated as when they were "acquainted to be in the mournings,"⁶

¹ e.g., Aberdeen Records, op. cit., pp. 204, 244; Edinburgh Records, (1642-55), op. cit., p. 33.
⁵ Macbean, op. cit., p. 206.
or "with hat, at least those who in use to wear hats."\(^1\) A continuing problem among the guilds and crafts was that "some gang pairt of the road and then turn back,"\(^2\) making it necessary to define the destination; as did the Maltmen of Glasgow who required members to "attend the samine from the Buriall House to the Hyndheid, under the pain of 4 s. Scots to be paid without forgiveness."\(^3\) Expenses for attending outside the burghs were sometimes entered in the accounts. They show that a delegate was sent to the burials of members who had moved away;\(^4\) and delegations of several on horseback were dispatched to the funerals of the noted.\(^5\)

By the latter half of the seventeenth century the Church not only forsook its previous occasional efforts to maintain simplicity and restraint at burials, but it collaborated actively with the family, the burgh, and the gilds and crafts, in assuring a large attendance. Presbyteries did not hesitate to arrange their meetings in the churches of deceased ministers before or after their funerals.\(^6\) In 1661, the Presbytery of Elgin cancelled

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\(^4\) Thompson, op. cit., p. 98.


\(^6\) e.g., Vernon, op. cit., p. 163.
its regular meeting because of the burial of Sheriff Murray; and it recommended the postponement of the meeting of a special commission which was supposed on that day to consider the problem of witchcraft.¹ In the Elgin church, burials regularly took precedence over session meetings, and even worship services.² The Commissions of the General Assemblies likewise were willing to adjourn their meeting until the afternoon because of the burial of Mr. Alexander Henderson (1646);³ and in 1649, it attended in a body the burial of Lord Balmerino.⁴ Perhaps an unusual example of Church support for funerals, but one which reveals how far it had moved from the goals of the first reformers, was supplied by the Archbishop of St. Andrews who, in 1671, attended the burial of Lord David Elcho with a cavalcade of five hundred horses.⁵

Funeral Entertainment

In the latter half of the seventeenth century, and throughout the eighteenth, the serving of food and drink at burials was practically universal. The custom had its roots in the pre-Christian practice of funeral feasting in the company of the dead before the corpse, or at the grave. Though vestiges persisted after

¹Cramond, Records of Elgin, op. cit., p. 370.
⁵Frodie Diary, op. cit., p. 322.
specifically Christian ceremonial was introduced, these were supplementary rather than central until the Reformation. After the Reformation, the suppression of liturgical rites was followed by a gradual resurgence of funeral feasting as a primary ritual for the dead. This ritual came to include conventions from daily social life, e.g., the extension of hospitality to neighbors, and the drinking of toasts; but it was essentially a death ceremony and its ritualistic nature is found in all parts of Scotland.

Like the sacrament of Communion, the death feast had its acceptable elements which always included both food and drink, and in various parts of Scotland there developed approved forms for the dispensing of these elements. In Campsie, a particular sequence of food and drink was referred to as "the service."¹ Beneath these formalities of eating and drinking was the sense of association with the dead who was the host. In writing a request for his funeral arrangements, Francis Masterton asked his wife to provide abundant fare as "I desyre you to doe nothing for me, but what I would do myself for you."² In 1728, Lord Huntley wrote from Gordon Castle to request the use of a house in Elgin belonging to the Laird of Thundertoun, "to entertain the company of my father, the late Duke of Gordon's burial."³

Though there were countless sectional variations in the food provided, the ritual could be generally classified as either

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²Masterton Papers, op. cit., p. 487.
³Dunbar, op. cit., p. 489.
low feast, or high feast. The low feast made no pretense of being a sumptuous meal, but provided generous portions of bread and cheese, or cakes, biscuits, and sweetmeats, along with beverages. Over a long period of time, seed and plum cakes were especially popular for funerals. Their economic importance in Stirling is seen when the council found it necessary to restrain a school mistress from encroaching on the baxters by "baking seed and plumb cakes to funeralls." ¹ Though the menu for the low feast was simple, it required "pyramids" of provisions to serve an entire parish as was frequently done.² The mourners gathered before the house of the dead, and were admitted in groups which could be contained within, and "when all have their tour, they accompany the corpse to the grave."³ Such feasting would ordinarily continue for about two hours,⁴ but it could consume all of the day.⁵

The high feast was a luxurious meal which could be provided only by the wealthy. The guests were sometimes limited to an invitation list, as at the burial of the Laird of Lundy where the "nobilitie and gentrie, both of Fyffe, Lowthian, and Carse ... dyned all before the corps was lifted."⁶ Laird's accounts

¹ Stirling Records, op. cit., p. 154.
² Burt, op. cit., p. 219.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ridpath Diary, op. cit., p. 105.
⁶ Lamont Diary, op. cit., p. 174.
give many evidences that this was customary. An item for the burial of Sir Hugh Campbell shows the same carpenter's bill, including the costs for making two coffins and some tables.¹

Most frequent are the accounts of hiring baxters, cooks, and servers.² In the Highlands and Western Isles, where travel was especially difficult and guests frequently remained over several nights, hospitality, family pride, and primitive death ceremonies combined to make the funeral feasts the greatest festivals of the age. Samuel Johnson reported that at the burial of the Laird of Col (1775), "were killed thirty cows, and about fifty sheep. The number of cows is positively told, and we most suppose other vitals in like proportion."³

The other element of the burial feast, the beverage, was no less essential to the ceremonial than food; and its liberal consumption caused it to play the more important part in determining the character and mood of the death rites. In Scotland, spirituous drinks were used to mark every significant occasion in personal and civic life: baptism, marriage, birth, kirking, bargain making, coronations, anniversaries, and many others. Death, the ultimate event, was no exception, but was rather observed by a consumption appropriate to its importance. Drinking at funerals was ostensibly a social grace in honor of the dead, and to the health of the bereaved. However, there is ample

¹Thanes of Cawdor, op. cit., p. 416.
²e.g., "Ane Compt of money, etc.," loc. cit.
³Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland, (London, 1775), p. 308.
evidence that the quantity of consumption was increased by the fatigue and thirst of travel, sheer delight in the beverage, and the inevitable accretion of guests whose acquaintance with the dead was not as well established as their acquaintance with the refreshments. A more subtle encouragement to the liberal dispensing of beverages was the general acceptance of the notion that the confrontation with death required this tranquilizing aid. Robert m'Kamie, summoned before the Kingarth Session for drunkenness (1683), confessed and explained that "his aggorvatioun was that it was on the day Ambrismore last was buried." Members of the Glasgow burgh council assaughed their sorrow for the loss of King William, thirty-three years after his death, by the use of five dozen bottles of the best claret, purchased at public expense. The kirk-session in Peterculter also accepted the sedative values of spirits when it paid six shillings to those who handled the body of a poor lad; the money going "for brandy the corpse being spoiled." In Speymouth, the session paid 15s. for liquor for those who washed and guarded the body of a murdered child.

This intrenched association of drinking with death resulted in much attention being given to the preparation for the serving of beverages in the sorrowing household. Glasses were

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3 McPherson, op. cit., p. 147.
4 Ibid.
ordered in quantity,\(^1\) large barrels were set up for ale,\(^2\) and someone was appointed to officiate as "server." Serving trays, or "salvers," were needed; and the town council in Paisley found this so general a requirement that it purchased six to be retained in the custody of the mortcloth keeper and to be rented out for funerals at two shillings per salver.\(^3\) The ordering of beverages in quantity demanded prompt attention, for propriety provided "plenty of eall, and wiskie, and brandie,"\(^4\) or "ale and aquavitae to the full."\(^5\) That burials provided an important market for brewers is indicated by the Inverness merchant, John Steuart's good news to James Cuming in Edinburgh (1720):

I have sold about half of your butt of Cherie to the Laird of Grant and Strathnavers funeralls at 30 d. pr pynt. Do expect no money for it untill Mertimas. I most sell the rest of it considerable cheaper, to be rid of it, which is the best I can doe.\(^6\)

At the burial of Alexander Campbell of Calder, the claret, wine and brandy cost £ 247, 13 s. 4d.; and the malt and aquavita were £ 346, 6s.\(^7\) The quality of beverages served at aristocratic

\(^1\)Scott-Moncrieff, loc. cit.

\(^2\)Four "stenges" were ordered for the burial of Col. Erskine in 1743, Walter Macloed, Journal of Hon. John Erskine of Carnock, op. cit., p. 239.

\(^3\)W.M. Metcalfe, The History of Paisley, op. cit., p. 328.


\(^5\)Masterton Papers, op. cit., p. 489.

\(^6\)William McKay, op. cit., p. 117.

\(^7\)Thanes of Cawdor, op. cit., p. 390.
funerals may have been a luxury; but an adequate quantity was never so considered - it was as essential as the winding sheet. The ceremonial assumed that for the deceased to have his friends and neighbors drink to his memory, was the prerogative of human dignity. In the eighteenth century throughout Scotland, kirk-sessions purchased ale for the poor's burial without questioning its indispensability. In Arbuthnott the treasurer reported, "Paid for some spirits and ale needed at the burial of Mary Fettus . . 2. 12. 00."¹ Priorities are selected in a similar report in the parish of Inchinnan, where eighteen shillings were paid to Walter Paterson for "cofin, spirits, and Mort-cloth."² In Glencairn, the session specified a regular amount to be spent for ale on the death of any of the parish poor;³ and in Peterculter, when a funeral bill was submitted to the session by a widow left destitute with four children, it included the cost of ten pints of ale.⁴

The fact of the liberal use of spirituous beverages is readily established by the records, but the precise influence of drinking on the solemnity of the burial occasion is somewhat obscure. There are very few indications of the disapproval of the Church: most infrequently is an offender brought before the

¹ George Henderson, The Kirk of St. Ternan, Arbuthnott, op. cit., p. 236.
² McClelland, op. cit., p. 123.
⁴ McPherson, op. cit., p. 145.
sessions for drunkeness at burials, and church judicatories rarely cite this as a problem. In 1645, the Presbytery of St. Andrews took singular action in disciplining the Laird of Bamuto for drinking at a funeral to the health of Sir Marmaduke Langdell, the Captain of Atholl; but its censure seems to be based on political, rather than moral grounds. Three months later, the same presbytery exhorted its ministers to witness to their faith by "not only forbearing to drink healths (Satans snare leading to excesses) but reproving it in others." This statement, coming as it did at the peak of Puritan influence, was uncharacteristically restrained and fails to convey even then a determination to resist this work of Satan. After this, the Church yielded completely in the acceptance of both the elements of the burial feast - as witnessed by its silence, by its providing of ale for the poor's funerals, and by the blessing of these elements at the burial house.

In spite of the Church's acquiescence and continuing silence, there is some substance to the many legends of immoderation at burials of the eighteenth century. Multiple service of ale, rum, whisky, and wine became the custom in most sections of the country. That the serving of beverages changed the mood of

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2Ibid., p. 31.
3Infra, p. 305.
the burial was mentioned frequently by contemporary observers.
Edward Burt wrote (d. 1726), that the guests "sit like Quakers
at a silent meeting, in a dumb show of sorrow; but in time the
bottle is introduced, and the ceremony quite reversed." 1 Thomas
Hamilton described a similar transformation of mood when the
funeral guest on arrival "walked as if treading on eggs . . .
all eyes were bent on the ground, and not a wimper of conversa-
tion was suffered." But, after the wine, whisky, and biscuits
were circulated suddenly -

the stillness which had reigned till now was changed into
a clamour and vociferation. "Mr. Spreull, your good health"-
"Your good health, Mr. Thornton," burst from a hundred voices
at once. "Drumshlnty, here's to ye," "Garscud, your health,"
"Glencadden, better health to your wife." 2

Thus providing of multiple drinks in a single serving
inevitably led many to a comfortable state of grief; and accounts
for a number of narratives which claim that the indecorous pro-
cession arrived at the cemetery without the corpse. 3 Some of
these accounts may be legendary; but whether or not they are,
there is little doubt that Scottish burials in the eighteenth
century could be notably relaxed. At the burial of the Laird of
Abbotshough, some English dragoons, who were quartered at Falkirk,
observed the rosy company in the churchyard and said one to anoth-
er, "Jolly dogs! A Scot's burial is merrier than our weddings." 4

1 Burt, op. cit., p. 218.
3 e.g., Graham, op. cit., p. 54; and Thomas Eric Niven,
East Kilbride, (Glasgow, 1965), p. 175.
The exaggerated emphasis on refreshments at burials was destined to diminish and disappear, but not before it had made one last contribution to the Scottish funeral tradition. In a slow process of development, a grace, which was said in gratitude for the food and drink evolved into a time of prayer; and the prayer eventually expanded into a simple religious service. As this was a folk rather than an ecclesiastical development, the records of its precise emergence are scanty. However, many writers in the fore part of the nineteenth century recall the importance of "the blessing" as it was used in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Thomas Hamilton reported that the silence of the funeral gathering at the home was broken by "ane of the undertaker's men who entered and pronounced in a sonorous voice, 'The Rev. Dr. M'Craik of Auchtenfechan will ask a blessing,' This call was obeyed, and a long prayer repeated by the Doctor, after which wine, whisky, and biscuits were circulated round the apartment by the servants." At the conclusion of the serving, another minister was called on for a final blessing.¹ George Penny recalled that in Perth the blessing was given by anyone who was understood to have the gift of prayer, and not necessarily a minister. By Penny's time, the prayer was more than a token, it was known to extend to a half of an hour.² As the century advanced, the minister was increasingly present at burials and the blessing became more elaborate and might be more accurately

¹Hamilton, op. cit., p. 173.
²Penny, op. cit., p. 34.
called a devotional exercise. ¹ When at last the funeral repasts disappeared, there remained a religious service in the home, and over the dead body. This observance, ushered in as a social nicety, the formulators of the Westminster Directory would have vehemently opposed.

The Westminster Assembly's Directory for Burial

In February 1654, the Directory for Worship, formulated by the Westminster Divines, was adopted by the General Assembly to guide the public worship of the Church of Scotland. Both because of its Puritan influence, and because it was the result of a collaborative effort with the English churchmen, the Directory departed significantly from the ideals of the first Scottish Reformers. We shall see that the understanding of burial as an act of the congregation of God, in behalf of one of its members, is completely ignored; and that the restraint which the early Reformers applied to the entire obsequies, the Westminster Divines specifically applied to the religious ceremonies only. By thus undervaluing the importance of the Church, and by circumscribing the area of its attention to religious ceremonial, the Westminster Assembly's recommendations for burial proved to be a boon to secularism.

The directive, "Concerning Burial of the Dead," was accepted by the Westminster Assembly following debates which took place from December 3 to December 9, 1644. Major issues of contention arose between the radical-puritan and the moderate-

¹Graham, op. cit., p. 300.
²Infra., pp. 310-11
ecclesiastical, as well as between the English and the Scottish traditions. Because of the firm persistence of a few ecclesiastics, the Assembly was saved from dominance by the puritanical stance that the Directory for Worship should make no mention of burial. Wilson argued to this effect during the first report of the Committee about Burial. He was supported by Samuel Rutherford who thought that "there is no more reason for any part of worship to be at the going of a person out of the world, than at his birth." Whitakers, who spoke for a more churchly view, retorted that at birth the Church relates itself through baptism, and the minister stands in such a relationship to a congregation that "to be sensible of the death of his people is his duty." Though Rutherford's view did not prevail, when the Assembly proceeded to discuss a directory for burial, its Puritan approach was evident. Palmer (of Ashwell Herts) spoke against a negative handling of the subject of Christian burial, "I do not thinke a dumbe show becomes Christians." Nevertheless, the mind of the Assembly was to "begin first with a negative against superstition, and then to fall upon some affirmative rule." The commissioners proved to be in a greater agreement on what they opposed than on

3 Ibid., session 334.
what they favored. First, they had hoped to censure specifically all of the superstitions which must be suppressed; but Lightfoot reported that these were innumerable, so for fear of omitting some, "we fixed only against reading, praying, and singing."\(^1\) This must have pleased the Scottish divines whose General Assembly in 1638 had listed among its animadversions on the 1637 Service Book that "At burialls there is reading, praying and singing."\(^2\) The rigidity of the statement against these "superstitious" religious ceremonies denotes the common mind of the Assembly:

Because the custom of kneeling down, and praying by or towards the dead corpse, and other such usages, in the place where it lies before it be carried to Burial, are superstitious; and for that praying, reading, and singing, both in going to and at the grave, have been grossly abused, are no way beneficial to the dead, and have proved many ways hurtful to the living; therefore let all such things be laid aside.\(^3\)

By contrast, the affirmative recommendation for burial, which dealt with the funeral exhortation, was the weak and ambiguous product of an attempt to reconcile uncompromising viewpoints. In 1638, the Scottish General Assembly had discharged all funeral sermons as savouring of superstition, and for a brief period of time its churchmen doggedly upheld this proscription. Baillie expressed the view of the Scottish delegation to the Westminster

\(^1\)Ibid.


\(^3\)Sprott and Leishman, op. cit., p 318.

Assembly when he reported why they did not attend the funeral of Mr. Pym: "Marshall had a most eloquent and pertinent funerall sermon - which we would not hear, for funerall sermons we must have away, with the rest." However, the English were equally firm in their claim that Scripture does not forbid funeral sermons, and that the discontinuance of them would cause great disruption.  

Robert Baillie, writing to William Spang on one of the days of the debate, boldly asserted:

As it has been here and everywhere preached, it is nothing but an abuse of preaching, to serve the humours only of rich people for a reward; our Church expresslie has discharged (them) on many good reasons: it's here a good part of the ministers livlyhood; therefore they will not gutt it.  

This divergence was aired during the discussions of four separate sessions between December 3 and 9, and culminated on the last day in a "great controversy." The Scottish view of funeral sermons did not prevail, but an effort was made to accommodate it without altering the English practice. The result was a confusing statement which was generally interpreted to be permissive:

We judge it convenient that the Christian friends which accompany the dead body . . . do apply themselves to meditations and conferences suitable to the occasion; and that the Minister, as upon other occasions, so at this time, if he be present, may put them in remembrance of their duty.

A final paragraph of the directory for burial was accepted

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3 Laing, op. cit., p. 245.
4 Assembly of Divines, op. cit., sessions 333, 334, 337, (f8-9, f9b, f10b, and f10).
5 Pitman, loc. cit.
6 Sprott and Leishman, op. cit., p. 319.
without debate; and its inclusion betrays the state of mind which informed the whole. Speaking of the restrictiveness of the directory's recommendations, it made it clear "That this shall not extend to any civil respects or differences at the Burial, suitable to the rank and condition of the party deceased while he was living." Here license was given, not to the congregation of the faithful to order the burial in accordance with Christian ideals, but to mundane society to continue its profane practices and social distinctions. The Puritan mind contradicted the first Scottish Reformers by holding that burial was essentially a civil rather than a religious action; so it had little interest in what happened at the funeral outside the sphere of religious ceremony. Thus, the burial rite which the Puritan sought was burdened with religious restrictions, while profane influences remained unhindered.

The Processional

The Westminster Assembly of Divines, not entirely with conscious intent, bequeathed a secularized directive for the burial processional which accurately betokened an impending decline from the ideals of the early Reformers. The First Book of Discipline had been austere in its recommendation that "the corpse is reverently brought to the grave, accompanied with the Congregation." But it had at least guarded the essential devotional character of the act, and it had insisted that it be a

1 Sprott and Leishman, op. cit., p. 58.
2 Ibid., p. 318.
ritual performed by the Church. However, the Directory for Worship, disregarding both of these safeguards, recommended that "the dead body, upon the day of burial, be decently attended from the house to the place appointed for public burial." The new standard by which the processional was to be valued was "decency" rather than reverence; and though it was to end in a place of "public burial," there is no suggestion that the procession was to be performed by the Congregation of God's people. This failure to define it as a specifically religious ritual enacted by a company of believers was not so much a cause of decline, as it was a witness to some declension from the early Reformer's understanding of the Church. The Church was generally calloused to secular forces remolding the processional, and helpless in those rare instances where its leaders were concerned. We have seen how small a part was played by the Church in determining the attendance at burials, a factor which made it almost impossible for the procession to be thought of as a procession of God's people. But other influences were at work to replace "reverence" with "decency": (a) The acceptance of the concept of mourning and punctilious attention to mourning dress. (b) Conformity to the standards of heraldry. (c) The utilization of the wheeled vehicle for processional grandeur, and (d) The exercise of practices peculiar to various segments of Scottish society.

(a) Mourning. Neither by its statutes, nor by its local practices did the Church of Scotland show objection to secular mourning customs. Churches routinely observed deaths in the

Ibid., p. 318
royal family by placing "mournings" on the pulpit, the readers desk, the magistrate's seats, and, where designated, the King's seat or the Queen's seat. More frequent and more significant, was the use throughout Scotland of mourning clothes. Alexander Brodie spoke for a small minority in the Church, when he reacted to the news that several "honest men did put on mourning" at a burial: "My hart did rise at it, and I purposed to lay asid all outward show of mourning at burials, for I sie it prostitut."\(^1\) Joined with this little group of pietistic Christians were the Quakers who, at their yearly meeting in 1724, "Advised against vain customs of wearing or giving mourning, and all extravagant expenses about the interment of the dead."\(^2\) But these religious minorities made little impression on the total culture which appeared to be slavishly subject to the "outward show" of mourning.

In the burghs, the councils became the chief promoters of mourning clothes for burial processions. Edinburgh had procured a stock of red gowns and black gowns, and when the Provost died in 1643, it was ordered that the entire council accompany the corpse to Grayfriars' Kirkyard, "the baillies deane of gild and tresaurer with red gowns and the rest of the counsell with blak gowns and to returne from thence in doll clocks."\(^3\) For the burial procession of the Marqeiis of Montrose (1661), the whole

\(^1\) Brodie Diary, op. cit., p. 33.


council and the former magistrates appeared in duleweeds. 1 Aberdeen had the same policy, 2 but went much further when, in 1668, it provided eight mourning cloaks for rental to the general public at a charge of ten shillings per cloak for each twenty-four hours. 3 The council in Kirkcaldy paid the rental charge for thirty mourning cloaks from Edinburgh that they might decently attend the burial of the Earl of Haddington. 4 By 1681, the costs of mourning garb was cited by Parliament as contributing to the "superfluous expense bestowed at Marriages, Baptisms and Burials," and the use of mourning cloaks at burials or any other time was forbidden. 5 Respect for this act did not necessarily mean that the burgh officers gave up their distinctive places and dress at burials. In 1703, the council in Stirling appointed the treasurer to "buye four mourning strings to the toune officers against Satur¬day next, which they are to wear above their belts that day" for their provost's funeral. 6 As late as 1751, the burgh council of Elgin decided to "employ six able bodied men for supporting and carrying the corps and that there shall be provided for them black gowns. . ." 7

In the rural districts it was the nobles and gentlemen who set the standard for mourning attire; and where evidence is avail-

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2 Aberdeen Records, op. cit., p. 244.
3 Ibid., pp. 248, 289.
4 Macbean, op. cit., p. 209.
able, it is clear that they were servile to that period's sense of propriety. After his wife's death in 1700, the Laird of Bar-
muckatie wrote immediately to inquire of the "fashion of linings proper to be worn, with the fashion of the holster and topes, and hous."¹ Seventeen years before they were needed, Francis Masterton left instructions that in the event of his death his children should purchase black cloth, crape, stockings and gloves as they returned from their boarding schools to his burial.² This attention to every detail of mourning apparel is evidenced in burial expense records. Payments to tailors for new black suits is ever recurrent; and in the precise accounts of Sir John Foulis, we find these appropriately complemented by black mourning shoes,³ black mourning gloves,⁴ silk loping for his hat,⁵ black buckles,⁶ and black buttons and thread.⁷ Proximity to Edinburgh may have made Foulis more sophisticated than other lairds who had no com-
punction about borrowing their mourning clothes. Andrew Hay made his available to James Creighton;⁸ and in 1701, a servant wrote a neighbor of the Laird of Thunderton, "The Laird is gone to my Lord Balantirs burial this morning, and your black cloaths ar on

¹ Dunbar, op. cit., p. 280.
² Masterton Papers, op. cit., p. 490.
³ Hallen, Foulis Account Book, op. cit., p. 344.
⁴ Ibid., p. 147.
⁵ Ibid., p. 316.
⁶ Ibid., p. 344.
⁷ Ibid., p. 119.
him as yet, but you will have them tomorrows morning be seven a clock."\(^1\) Other lairds were able to provide their mourning clothes, and went to the expense of providing it for their servants too.\(^2\)

(b) Heraldry. The heraldric funeral procession had a profound influence on the concept of burial in Scotland; not because the majority had the right or the means of indulging in it, but because its extravagance became a standard toward which most men aspired. It was designed for the glorification of the accomplishments of the defunct, and to promote an awareness of the greatness and continuity of his family. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the heraldic funeral procession revived the glamour of the medieval religious procession, but it proposed to witness to the glory of nobility rather than to the glory of the Church. After 1662, heirs of titles paid from three hundred to six hundred pounds Scots, according to their rank, for the registering of particular family arms and the privilege of displaying them.\(^3\) Whenever a deceased person was entitled to armorial bearings, it was rare indeed if these were not profusely displayed throughout the procession. At the funeral of the Duke of Rothes (1681), nine different groups of men carried armorial banners in various sections of the procession.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) Dunbar, op. cit., p. 281.
\(^2\) Thanes of Cawdor, op. cit., p. 390.
\(^4\) Alexander Nisbet, A System of Heraldry, (Edinburgh, 1816), pp. 147-149.
largest of these contained sixteen men, two by two, carrying eight coats of arms which represented four generations of his mother's family, and four of his father's. Though this was an unusual funeral, lesser extravagances were sufficiently common for Parliament to rule in the same year that there was to be "using or carrying of any pencils. Banners and other Honours at Burials, except only the Eight Branches to be upon the Pale, or upon the Coffin where there is no Pale."  

Most common of these heraldic displays was the funeral escutcheon, or hatchment, which exhibited the armorial bearings of the deceased. Small escutcheons were dispersed in various parts of the procession, as on each of eight branches of the hearse, or draped on either side of a horse, or carried by individual pursuivants on foot. But the feature of funeral heraldry was the major escutcheon, carried majestically before or over the coffin. It was a banner of calico or silk, six feet, two inches square, and displayed in the form of a lozenge. In the center were symbolized the complete achievements of the deceased. Around this highlighted center were painted on the four borders the genealogical arms of the deceased's ancestors on both his father's and mother's sides. At least four generations

1 Ibid., p. 148.
3 Lamont Diary, op. cit., p. 175.
4 Ibid.
5 Thanes of Cawdor, op. cit., p. 417.
6 Nisbet, op. cit., p. 147.
entitled to the use of arms were required; but eight and even sixteen genealogical arms were frequently used. Additional embellishments were not out of order, as on an escutcheon for the funeral of John, the Duke of Athol, where mortheads were placed on each of the four corners, and the figures and symbols were interspersed with tears. Because the accomplishments and the family arms were different for each titled personage, the escutcheon had to be custom painted, with painstaking care, between the time of death and the time of burial. Burial expenses therefore reveal sizeable amounts paid to herald painters: at the death of John Lundy (1664), the four heralds and the herald painter received 800 merks "for their pains." Lady Grisell Baillie paid 210 pounds (1696), to the heralds for "souchens and horsemunting"; and an hundred pounds each was paid for two escutcheons used at the funeral of Hugh Campbell of Cawdor (1716).

While the escutcheon blazoned the honor and glory of nobility, other aspects of the great heraldic procession spared little expense in support of its claim. Numerous groups took their places in the convoy: groups of nobles, officials, military men, ceremonial poor, clergy, educators, jurists, household

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3 Lament Diary, op. cit., p. 175.
4 Scott-Moncrieff, op. cit., p. 268.
5 Thanes of Cawdor, loc. cit.
servants, and mourners. These were interspersed with additional symbols of the deceased's greatness which included the ceremonial display of his helmet, wreath, coronet, sword, gauntlets, corslet, shield, and robe. Each of these groups and mementos offered opportunity for the introduction of ushers, trumpeters, batonmen, heralds, pursuivants, lackeys and mutes. Finally, to distinguish the burial procession from other processions, symbols of mourning were lavishly flaunted throughout: conductors in mourning attire, gumpheons, the winged hour glass, mortheads, mourning pencels, the deceased's horse and other horses in mourning; and the pièce de resistance - the COFFIN, beneath a richly decorated mortcloth or canopy, or both, and followed by the chief mourners in hoods and gowns.\(^1\) It is not surprising that such intricacies of heraldic display required professional direction from royal heralds and pursuivants who were hired not only to process, but also to superintend the formation of the procession.\(^2\)

The burial procession for the average noble or gentleman was necessarily less extravagant than this, but it conformed to heraldic rather than ecclesiastical concepts. Paul lists the five places in the cortege where heraldry would ordinarily be displayed: 1. The little gumpheon with a morthead painted on it. 2. As many poor men or "saulies" as corresponded with the number

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\(^1\)This composite summary is based on the orders of the funeral processions of Archbishop James Sharp (1679), John, Duke of Rothes (1681), and Alexander Kincaid Esq. (1777), as listed from the Lyon's Register of Processions, MSS, Lyon Office, H.M.R.H., Edinburgh; quoted in Hugo Arnot, History of Edinburgh, (Edinburgh 1779), pp. 608-610, 611-616, and 649-650.

\(^2\) James Balfour Paul, Heraldry in Relation to Scottish History and Art, (Edinburgh, 1900), p. 96.
of years of the defunct; each carrying small flags with the family arms painted on them. 3. A servant with a banner or the livery colors; and another with a large standard bearing his master's full armorial achievement. 4. Another morthead, called the "honorable gumphoon," and 5. The arms of the defunct's ancestry carried by eight gentlemen, four representing the paternal line, and four the maternal line. 1 Few burial expense accounts would support the claim that all of these heraldic practices were usually used in a particular procession, but most accounts show at least one or more practices adhered to. In addition to escutcheons, the most common embellishments were ushers, trumpeters, heralds, and batonmen. Three noble funerals were sufficiently unadorned to please Alexander Brodie who reported on these occasions that the "action was done peaceabli," or "caried on quietlie." 3 The fact that in each of these cases the defunct were women, suggests that perhaps the male heads of these same households might have been buried with more acclaim.

We cannot avoid the conclusion that, though heraldry did not determine the fundamental nature of most funeral processions among the nobility and gentry, its social force contended boldly for expenditure, ostentation, and the assertion of human pride in contrast to the simplicity and sense of community which the

1Ibid., pp. 100-101.

2E.g., Lemont Diary, loc. cit.; Macleod, op. cit., p. 239; and Foulis Account, op. cit., p. 125; Fraser, op. cit., pp. 348, 484.

reformers cherished. More important still, its values filtered down to all levels of society:

The necessity of having as grand a funeral as possible was one which took deep hold of the minds of all classes of people in Scotland. No one who professed the least respect for their relatives ever thought of consigning their remains to the dust without making it an occasion for as much display as their means permitted, and often more.¹

Just as the medieval procession had claimed its consecrated destination for God,² so the heraldic procession claimed for the defunct a kind of sovereignty over the place of his burial by establishing there the family coat of arms and other emblems of distinction. Shakespeare expressed a medieval view in regretting that a man should have "no trophy, sword, or hatchment o'er his bones,"³ but the reformed Church came to see this use of the church building as man's unwarranted imposition of himself. Official action of the General Assembly against the placing of armorial bearings in the church originated after a controversy in the Church of Scotland congregation at Veere, Holland. On the Death of Elizabeth Cant, mistress of the Conciergerie House (1643), the Rev. William Spang, minister at Veere, refused her two sons the privilege of placing the family coat of arms over her lair in the church. Though they knew of his disapproval, the sons returned speedily to the church after dismissing the funeral guests "to maintain with force the erecting of the arms."⁴ The kirk-

¹Paul, op. cit., p. 100.
²Supra, p. 7.
session agreed with Mr. Spang's attitude, and were encouraged by further support from neighboring ministers. A Dutch clergyman said it was unseemly that the house appointed for public prayer and other ordinances should have its walls covered with badges of pride. A divinity professor at Leyden agreed that "thus by erecting memorial stones on the walls of churches on which the ten commandments were also inscribed, the school of humility and submission was turned into a monument of pride." The English churches in Holland also subscribed to this viewpoint and expressed admiration for the zeal of the Scottish church in opposing the hanging of memorials. Heartened by sympathetic advisors, the session submitted the problem to the General Assembly. In October (1643), the session at Veere received full confirmation by the General Assembly of its course of action, and an order to "prosecute the said matter until the removal of the scandalous monuments." Enclosed with the directive was a copy of the Assembly's new "Act against Burials and hinging of Honours, &c. in Kirks," which the Veere controversy had instigated.¹ The act forbade kirk-burial and

als inhibites them to hing Pensils or Brods, to affixe Honours or Arms, or to make any such like Monuments, to the honour or remembrance of any deceased person upon walls, or other places within the Kirk, where the publick worship of God is exercised, as said is.²

Though the Veere session had won its case, General Assembly's action seems to have had little effect. Aberdeen was one

¹Ibid., pp. 294-99.
²A True Copy of the whole printed Acts of General Assemblies, etc., op. cit., p. 171.
of the very few places which gave civil support to the act when in 1647, the council called the whole inhabitants together by "tuck of drum" to proclaim it in force, and to announce the new conditions of burial in the churchyard.\textsuperscript{1} But it appears that even there the General Assembly's prohibitions were used to bolster the higher charges for burial outside the church. In general, enforcement throughout Scotland was half-hearted and short-lived as aristocratic families continued to claim their sovereignty over the church. Four metal escutcheons, each with two branches bearing the arms of the Laird of Lundy, were placed after his burial in the church of Largo (1664).\textsuperscript{2} A herald at the burial of Dame Katherine Campbell (1752), explained how it was his duty to take the escutcheon from outside the church at Bothwell and "place it in a convenient place within the kirk. The pheons which were on the hearse were placed around it."\textsuperscript{3} In the Banff church (1784), the grave of Thomas Innes of Rosieburn was marked with a flag and two pieces of freestone.\textsuperscript{4} Writing in 1816, the herald painter, Roderick Chalmers, mentions the many kinds of banners, pennants, standards, etc., on which the arms of the deceased were displayed, as well as the many kinds of badges of honor carried at funerals, "which, after the interment, used to be hung on walls or pillars near the grave, as may be seen in most of our churches."\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{1}Aberdeen Records, 1643-1747, op. cit., p. 79.
\textsuperscript{2}Lament Diary, op. cit., p. 175.
\textsuperscript{3}Paul, op. cit., p. 100.
\textsuperscript{4}William Cramond, Annals of Banff, op. cit., p. 293.
\textsuperscript{5}Nisbet, op. cit. II, p. 145.
(c) The Hearse. The improvement and increased use of roads in the seventeenth century enabled the employment of the wheeled vehicle as a conveyance for the dead. This utilization was at first purely practical; as when a noble's body was returned by coach from a distant place of death; or a country gentleman discovered that his new-fangled farm cart could serve in necessity as a litter. But such practical use was followed almost immediately by the exploitation of the wheeled vehicle for ceremonial display. The ownership of a coach or cart was itself a mark of distinction; and so the inclusion in the procession of either could be considered an asset to the prestige of the funeral. Furthermore, the inclusion of a vehicle added vastly to the display potential. Not only could the conveyance be lavishly decorated, but so could the horses, their drivers, and attendants. Interspersed with the footmen, the vehicles also added a pleasing variety.

One of the earliest recorded instances of the ceremonial use of a wheeled conveyance was at the burial of Lady Mary Weymes (1654), who was "caried on a letter, with two horses in black, and a blacke velvet pale was caried over hir corps . . . they that caried the pale went on foot and relieued one another." The novelty of this method of convoy is witnessed by John Lamont's surprise that it proceeded "all the way to the church dore." A decade later, Lamont reported that the Laird of Lundy was "caried to the church in the same coach that the Er. of Leuen was caried

1 Lamont Diary, op. cit., p. 123.
2 Ibid.
"in," drawn by six horses, and that both the coachmen and Mr. Waters who "dressed the coach" received seven dollars in payment. Since borrowing for funeral display was conventional, the dimensions or design of this coach may have made it particularly adaptable to its use as a hearse.

It was yet another decade (1672), before we find the first usage of the word "herse" as a burial conveyance rather than as a standard for candles about the corpse. This is in reference to the burial of Sir John Scougall of Whytkirk, whose procession to Grayfriars was "in great pomp, his gown being carried before the herse." In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, the word comes into general use in the Edinburgh area and clearly refers to a particular conveyance built and set apart for carrying the dead. A "hearse" was used for the funeral procession of the Duke of Lauderdale (1682), of the wife of Sir John Foulis (1690), and of Foulis of Ratto (1692). By 1700, the hearse had become a conventional device for a proper "elite" burial. Twice in 1700, and again in 1722, Sir John Clark sent to Edinburgh for a hearse and six coaches to convey the bodies of his loved ones the short distance from his home to the burial place in Penicuik. The advantage of using a hearse for an impressive processional is shown by the expense account of Sir Hugh Campbell's burial (1716): "eight

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1 Ibid., pp. 174-75.
2 Crawford, op. cit., p. 219.
3 A. Thompson, op. cit., p. 162.
4 Foulis Account, op. cit., p. 125.
5 Ibid., p. 147.
little escutheons for the horse," pennants or "thanes," for the horses' heads, and two dozen ornamental knobs or "knops colored and gilded."¹ For ceremonial purposes only, six horses were commonly used to draw the hearse,² and another six might be used for special coaches.³

The use of the hearse by the aristocracy was promptly imitated by the commonality. Throughout the eighteenth century, we find communities acquiring for their use a hearse or horse, or both, and renting these for a fixed charge. One of the earliest of these was the Burgh of Lanark which was renting a litter and horsecloth in 1675.⁴ In 1705, the kirk-session at Linton decided that "a hearse was to be obtained for the use of the parish, to be drawn by one horse," and the beadle was designated as the official driver.⁵ The service seems to have prospered, for an inventory in 1722 listed church properties including "cloths for the hearse and for one horse, and a coat for the man that drives the hearse."⁶ A gift of money to the kirk-session in Crieff (1711), sparked its decision "to have a Litter and horse-furniture for funerals."⁷ In Hawick, sometime before 1722, the

¹Thanes of Cawdor, op. cit., p. 417.
²e.g., the funeral of Elizabeth Dunbar, (1732), Dunbar, op. cit., p. 274.
³e.g., the funeral of Dame Katherine Campbell, Paul, op. cit., p. 99.
⁴Lenark Records, op. cit., p. 198.
⁵Dr. Gunn, The Book of Linton Church, op. cit., p. 88.
⁶Ibid., p. 114.
⁷Porteous, op. cit., p. 119.
town council provided a hearse, but the kirk-session owned the horse to draw it, and rented out its horsecloth along with its mortcloths.¹ This explains the unique entry of the treasurer's receipt of £ 4 10s. from "Mrs. Scott the best cloath wt the hors clos for her husband."² Profits accruing from the use of the kirk's hearse, horse, or horsecloth, were usually dedicated to the poor; as was customary with the benefits of the church's other equippage for burial. The Forfar session "unanimously resolv'd and enacted that the horse litter, which belongs to this church, shall pay two shillings St., one to the box, the other to the officer."³ In 1782, the Session at Logie purchased a hearse after it had directed those who "collected in opposition to the Popish bill to canvass the Subscribers for that purpose if it would be agreeable to them to appropriate that Money to the purchase of a Hearse, which shall become the sole Property of the Poor of the Parish."⁴

(d) Special practices of cultural segments. In the Highlands, in the burghs, and among those preferring a high ritual, there were distinctive practices of secular origin which were considered essential to decent burial by those who celebrated them.

Rituals peculiar to the Highlands dominated the character

¹ Vernon, op. cit., p. 210 and 190.
² Ibid., p. 60.
³ John Stirton, Glamis, A Parish History. (Forfar, 1913), p. 98.
of Highland burial processionals. Foremost of these was the coronach, a funeral song, lamentation, or intermittent outcry which burst forth from the hired women mourners on the way to the grave. Its name came from the Gaelic Corranach; formed of the words comh, "together," and ranach, "outcry," i.e., "shouting together." The Rev. John Fraser described it as "fearfull owleing, screeching, and crying, with bitter lamentation, and a compleat narratione of the descent of the dead person, the valorous acts of himself and his preydeceossors, sung with tune in measure." Observers reported variations in the methods of expressing sorrow. Edward Burt saw the women cover their heads with a small piece of cloth, mostly green, "and every now and then break out into a hideous howl and Ho-bo-bo-bo-bo-boo." Ochtertyre reported that as soon as the corpse was brought out of the door of the deceased's house, it was laid on two stools and the "women flocked around it, clapping their hands and raising hideous cries. And many of them tore their hair or head-dress, and shed tears plentifully." Regardless of these differences in practice, it is agreed that the women were hired for the occasion, and some of them were professional. In the Western Highlands, each township maintained a midwife and a mourning woman (bean-tuirim) by the leading inhabitants taking turns in supplying them with summer grass and winter fodder

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3 Burt, op. cit., p. 108.
4 Allardyce, op. cit., p. 429.
for their beasts.¹

The coronach was rooted in Celtic folk ways, and had no connection with either Roman or Reformed Christianity.² Its subject matter was consistently devoid of religious content: it disregarded the greatness of God and sang of the greatness of the deceased; and it bemoaned the end of earthly life, while it omitted mention of future hope. This blatantly pagan ritual was not censured by the General Assembly, but its escape from national strictures was due to its sectional occurrence. In 1642, the Synod of Argyll made a bold attempt to suppress it:

Because it is a common custome in some of the remottest pairts within this province of ignorant, poore women to howle their dead unto the graves, which commonly is called the corronach, a thing unseemely to be used in any true Christian Kirk, where there is preaching and profession of the comfortable resurrection of the dead, Wherefor for the restraining thereof it is ordained that every minister both in preaching and catechising endeavore to inform them how unseemely to Christians, and offensive to God, and scandalouse to others the lyke practice and careage must be . . .³

Penalties were prescribed for the offender who was to "stand on Sunday" for the first offense, be "jogged" for the second, and suffer civil punishment for the third. In 1658, the synod made another effort, recommending to the presbyteries that they suppress "the abuse of corronaching or crying at burials."⁴ But ecclesiastical influence could have had no more than slight


²Allardyce, op. cit., p. 431.
³Mactavish, op. cit., p. 61.
⁴Ibid., 1652-1661, op. cit., p. 175.
effect, as the process of discontinuance required more than a century. According to Ochtertyre, it had disappeared from the East Highlands a century before he wrote (1813), and from the Western coast only forty years earlier; except in Mull, Skye, and St. Kilda where a vestige was seen in the recitation by the female relatives who remained in the house during the procession.¹ Samuel Johnson confirmed this opinion when he wrote from the Western Islands in 1775, that "singers are no longer hired to attend the procession."²

The coronach was coincident with, and superseded by the pibroch,³ a melody associated with familiar words and played by a piper.⁴ The bagpipe was never played indoors, and was peculiarly adapted to military marching or burial processing as it permitted the musician to progress with the assembled group. For funerals, the bier was carried on the shoulders of four bearers, followed by the piper (or a number of pipers) playing a melancholy tune all of the way to the grave. Though the words of the tunes were not sung, they were well known and the melody conveyed the emotions of the lament. Every clan had tunes peculiar to itself which were calculated to arouse particular emotions, and served to strengthen the powerful ties that bound together the decendants

²Johnson, op. cit., p. 308.
³Pibroch is from the Gaelic pibaireachd, "the pipe music," from pib - "a pipe." Jamison Dictionary.
⁴Rogers, op. cit., p. 162.
of a common father. At the beginning of the processional the chief's march was played, and at the cemetery the plaintive tune, called Cha till mi tullich, "In peace nor war shalt thou ever return." The pibroch dwindled in importance, but continued to be piped even in the forepart of the nineteenth century in both the Western and Eastern Highlands.

A second distinctive Highland custom was the use of resting cairns along the route of the procession. The Celtic peoples' high regard for stone memorials had long found expression in the pyramids of stones which were built over graves in memory of the dead. Edward Burt observed that "these loose stones are more religiously preserved among them than, with us, the costly monuments in Westminster Abbey." The resting cairns combined this regard for memorials with the drama of the processional, and erected a pyramid of stones wherever the coffin had rested on its journey to the grave. Perhaps it developed as an extension of the practice of raising heaps of stones wherever the body had fallen in sudden death: e.g., in Oliver's Fort, no sooner was an officer's body removed from the place where he fell in a duel than a heap of stones marked the spot. The extension of such

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1 Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders, etc., op. cit., p. 205.
2 Allardyce, op. cit., p. 430.
5 Ibid., p. 100.
markings to the seemingly unimportant spots where the coffin was temporarily placed, indicates the great importance of the burial procession to the Highlander. Evidence of its general use can still be found in Skye, Lochaber, and the Long Island where resting cairns along the routes to burial places remain. Because of the migration of Highlanders, they are also found as far south as East Kilbride.

Another segment of Scottish society, the burghs, used military regalia and ceremonies to aggrandize their burial processions. Aberdeen was particularly prone to processional formality, and made grand occasions of the burials of several of its provosts. When Provost William Gray died (1662), the council ordered "ane hundreth and fiftie men of the inhabitants, to be in arms for convoying the said corps, and that they discharge thrie tyms at interring the corps." For the burial of Provost Gilbert Gray (1667), fifty men of each quarter were to be in arms, "and four cannon to be dischargit, tuo at the uptaking of the corps and tuo at the interment thereof, and them in armes to give vol¬lies according to use and wont in the lyke." Even for the burial of the captain of the Crooked quarter, the sensible men were to be in arms "and convoy him in that postur therunto." Edinburgh was less enamored by military display at funerals, but not

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1 Grant, op. cit., p. 369.
3 Aberdeen Records, 1643-1747, op. cit., p. 204.
4 Ibid., p. 244.
5 Ibid., p. 288.
adverse to it. The council's order in 1664, betrays a routine procedure: "Ordaines proclamation to pas throw this Brugh to towk of drum to be in armes the morne the 28 Julij instant to attend the several captaine and commanders at the buriell of the lait Lord Chancellor the Earle of Glencairne."¹ More than a century later, the Society of Captains met in full regalia to accompany the burial procession of Alexander Kincaid, Provost of Edinburgh, to the Grayfriar's Churchyard, and marched back to the council chambers in formation.² In Inverkeithing, it was the custom to carry halberts³ at the burials of great personages, and the magistrates were jealous of their prerogative to grant the privilege.

Finally, a small but significant segment of Scottish society favored torch-lighted processions in the night. By and large, this group represented those sympathetic to a high ritual,⁵ and those who preferred burial promptly after death. Lodivick Drummond, the day after his death, "was buried with a number of torches accompanied with the neibours about."⁶ John Lamont wrote

³ Halberts - combined spear and battle axe.
that after the death of Lord Coluen, of Crummy, he "was interred ther that same very night with torch,"\(^1\) as was the wife of William Sandilens.\(^2\) Even for a renowned person such as viscount Stair, the torch burial took place only three days following his death.\(^3\) Though torch burial processions could be quite ornate, the effect of the torches themselves made other elements of ostenta-
tion less important. Two hundred torches were used for the con-
voy of James Somerville's bier to Holyrood in 1677;\(^4\) and for vis-
count Stair's procession the great company of nobility and gentrie were "surroundit on each syd of the strat with numerous torches."\(^5\) At the burial of Alexander, the Tutor of Lovat, links\(^6\) were used, as well as torches. The distance required their being carried in three relays, "the first course of the numerous links and torches, kindled at the house, convoyed the corpse to the river; the next course, kindled at the river bank, convoyed him to the church; and the third course at the interment."\(^7\) The financial account of the Earl of Sutherland (1733), includes the expenditure for a more representative torchlight procession: £13 2s 6d for "forty-
eight flambeaus furnished at Elgin for his grandfather's funerals.

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1 Lamont Diary, op. cit., p. 154.
2 Ibid., p. 166.
3 James Grant, Seafield Correspondence, from 1685 to 1708, (S.R.S. Vol III 2nd Ser., Edinburgh, 1912), p. 175.
5 Grant, op. cit., p. 175.
6 Link - a division of peat-stack, Gall., Jamieson Dict.
7 Fraser, op. cit., p. 496.
weighing eighty-seven and a half pounds, and appreciate by Bail-\linebreak lie Mackenzie, apothecary, and Ludowick Gordon, merchant in Elgin."

Ritual - the Persistence of Simplicity

Despite the Puritan and English elements underlying the
guidance of the Directory for Worship, its recommended rituals
could be and were interpreted in Scotland as permission to con-
tinue in the established tradition. The Directory's prohibition
of singing, reading, and praying was a more precise statement
than that of the Book of Common Order; but the Scottish temper-
ament and indigenous Scottish puritanism had already moved the
Church toward greater restraint. Neither did the new freedom
to preach funeral sermons divert the Church of Scotland from its
own sense of appropriateness in their use. This tradition also
survived the changes which accompanied the coming and going of
the Second Episcopacy. The Act Recissory (1661), annulled the
Parliamentary legislation of 1645, which had authorized the Dir-
ectory for Worship, but no liturgy was officially endorsed to
replace it. Much of the Church then reverted to the previously
authorized Book of Common Order. Most significant was the fact
that for subsequent generations no service book was set forth to
alter the simple burial rituals of the Church of Scotland.

Except for the sermon, the components of a ritual in
Church of Scotland burial services were practically non-existent

1 Dunbar, op. cit., p. 274.
3 e.g., Meeting of the Exercise of Alford, (ed.) Thomas
Bell, New Spalding Club, (Aberdeen, 1897), p. xxxii.
between the years 1645 and 1780. There are no references in the records to singing of hymns or psalms, or the reading of the scriptures; and prayers only latterly edged their way into usage as a blessing of the refreshments. The minister's presence was an optional matter determined by local custom or circumstances, but generally increasing after 1700. In 1706, Thomas Morer reported: "Burials are made without a Minister, whom they will have so far from Popery concerning the Dead, that he must not be concern'd in interring the Corps, and is seldom seen at their most Solemn Funerals."¹ However, two decades later, Edward Burt observed that "The minister, who is always invited, performs no kind of funereal service for those of any rank whatever, but most commonly is one of the last that leaves the place of burial."² Between 1755 and 1761, the Rev. George Ridpath "attended" funeral after funeral, but there is no hint that his purpose was to perform a ministerial function.³

Following the Westminster Assembly, the funeral sermon was the single religious observance which was recognized as acceptable. The Book of Discipline had opposed funeral sermons for fear that the minister might be inclined to partiality toward certain members of the congregation; and the occasions of their presentation following 1645, vindicated this judgment.

¹ Morer, op. cit., p. 67.
⁴ Supra, p. 158.
Allowing for the probability that the funeral sermon for the prominent deceased is more apt to be recorded, there remains ample evidence that the Church practiced a policy of preferment. The Directory for Worship had safeguarded the right of favoritism at funerals, by concluding with a statement that none of its directives were intended to limit civil respects for the deceased which were suitable to his rank. The funeral sermon came to be regarded as one of these respects which should be paid to the nobility, the clergy, and those holding high public office. The Puritans supported this development, as it was their accepted practice to deliver an exhortation in which a portion was devoted to the finer qualities of the deceased, both for his honor and as an example to the living. If the defunct was a prominent person, the sermon offered the minister an opportunity to exhibit his learning and his eloquence before a massive audience; at the same time, it sorely tempted him to prudent flattery. For some ministers, the only claim to the attention of posterity they could make was through the publication of a funeral sermon proudly published by a wealthy family. This provided a printed memorial which witnessed to the family's continuing devotion to the departed, to its religious faith, and (more subtly) to its prestige. It was a Protestant alternative to medieval post-burial obsequies purchased by the privileged.

1 Supra, p. 310.
3 Ibid., p. 127.
Whereas there is no indication that sermons were preached at the funerals of ordinary citizens or members of the congregation, there is considerable evidence that special personages were honored by this symbol of status. Alexander Brodie's diary mentions his attendance at six burials where sermons were given, and all were for nobility or clergy: "Mr. Tailour," "Sir Wm. Waller's ladie," "Ep. Monk," "the Bishop of Rochester," "Bishop Mill," and "the Erle's funeral." Clergy of the established churches preached at each of these funerals, except that of Mr. Taylor, where the eminent William Twisse, Nonconformist, brought the sermon. John Lamont's diary reflects a similar picture of exclusiveness in the use of sermons at burials. The sermon at the funeral of the Earl of Leven (1664) "was the first funerall sermon in Fyffe that hath beine preacht these 24 yeirs last past, or more," but within a year he reports the use of funeral sermons in honor of the Bishop of Dunkel (George Haliburton), Doctor Colvill, the Principle of New College of St. Andrews, and of Lady Morton, the eldest daughter of Lord Middleton. In this manner, throughout Scotland, funeral sermons for the elite came into fashion. They were preached by both presbyterians and episcopalian; though they reached a peak of popularity during the

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1 Brodie Diary, op. cit., pp. (respectively) 213, 230, 234, 250, 364, 408.
2 Lamont Diary, op. cit., p. 171.
3 Ibid., p. 177.
5 Ibid., p. 186.
Second Episcopacy. The extent to which the sermon was an "honor" to the deceased, purchased by good works, it betrayed in an action of the Presbytery of Inverness:

... the breyren declared that they were several times importuned to preach funerall sermons when persons were buried who had left no monument of their charitie to the poor, or other necessarie works, notwithstanding of their abilitie. Therfor they desired that my Lord B. and the ensuing Sinod might be consulted thereanent, whether or not such persons should have the honor of a funerall sermon.  

The established Church in Scotland seemed to be well pleased with its uniquely meagre burial ritual; but this satisfaction was not universal, and in the eighteenth century the Church found it necessary to defend its tradition. An event reported by Thomas Morer (1690), foreshadowed a controversy soon to take place when episcopal rituals could be openly performed. As an English military chaplain, Morer was conducting a service in the church at Dalkeith at the burial of a military officer: "Twas done by the Liturgy, which being delivered by heart, so well satisfied many of the Scotch of that Town, they they could not forbear calling it a Christian Burial, and said that theirs was like the Burial of a Dog in comparison of the Other." The Scottish people were soon to have more opportunities to compare the two burial services, for after the union of Parliaments (1707), the English Liturgy increasingly became the model for the worship of the Episcopal Church of Scotland. Its clergy subsequently

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1 Presbyteries of Inverness and Dingwall, op. cit., p. 118.
2 Morer, op. cit., p. 68.
3 John Parker Lawson, History of the Scottish Episcopal Church, (Edinburgh, 1843), p. 190.
read the Office for the Dead at episcopal interments. In 1709, the Rev. Hugh Maxwell wrote to Robert Wodrow, expressing concern for the reaction of the gentry who had admired the episcopal rituals at the burial of Lord Glamis, including the use of canonical gowns.¹ Wodrow responded: "Their English burials are but a further step in the prosecution of the Service, and these gentlemen will not be consistent with themselves if they stop at anything down of English bishops, (which is) the pegg to popery."² A little later, Wodrow reported that the episcopal missions in Angus were growing, and that the nobility and gentry there too were fond of "these new fashions" in burial liturgy and habit.³ Also, in 1709, the Presbytery of Perth formally charged Mr. William Smyth, an episcopal incumbent, who had been the constant moderator of the same presbytery, with performing burial rites and ceremonies "condemned by the Constitutions of this Church in the First Book of Policie." Witnesses against Smyth included the bellman and the grave maker who gave evidence that "In the previous November, Smyth, robed in a black gown, had conducted the service at the burial of Mr. Patrick Strachan, after the English form, that is in accordance with the order of the Book of Common Prayer."⁴ Two years later, the Presbytery of Perth brought charges against Henry Murray, a discharged minister of Dunkeld, for

¹ Wodrow Correspondence, op. cit., p. 79.
² Ibid., p. 32.
³ Ibid., p. 77.
using the Book of Common Prayer and its ceremonies in the burial place of the burgh of Perth. By 1712, soon after the passing of the Toleration Act, the problem came to Wodrow's own parish in Eastwood, where a soldier was buried in the High Churchyard with the episcopal minister officiating. Wodrow especially noted and objected to the wearing of a gown, the use of prayer, and the fact that the ritual was received by the spectators with their heads uncovered; and he wondered if the "Toleration Act allows the protected to bury *ala mode d'Angleterre."  

The purpose of the Toleration Act was to insure the freedom of Episcopalians to gather "in their Meetings and Assemblies for the Worship of God, held in any Town or Place, except in Parish Churches." While the Act specifically mentioned the right to celebrate marriages the baptisms according to the episcopal ritual, it omitted any reference to the reading of the Office for the Dead, or of the right to assemble in churchyards. If some Presbyterians entertained the hope that the Book of Common Prayer would be banned from the churchyards of parish churches, their hopes were in vain; for following the passage of the Act, there was little contention over this issue. A late exception occurred when the minister of the parish church of Montrose petitioned the provost to put an end to the reading of the Office

2 Wodrow Correspondence, op. cit., p. 77.
in the churchyard. The provost wrote the episcopal minister, citing the Toleration Act and interpreting it to mean that the use of the episcopal service in the public burial place must cease.¹ Since there is no record of the outcome, it is probable that the provost's demands could not be enforced.

In spite of what it considered threats to its burial service, the established Church was in little danger of ritualism in burial. John Wesley, who visited Scotland twenty-two times between 1751 and 1790, observed:

The English does honour to human nature; and even to the poor remains that were once a temple of the Holy Ghost. But when I see in Scotland a coffin put in the earth and covered up without a word spoken, it reminds me of what was spoken concerning Jehoiakim, "He shall be buried with the burial of an ass."²

The actual interment blatantly focused attention on the paucity of religious rites; and an instinctive awareness of the solemnity of the event encouraged the development of secular ceremonies to fill the breach. The carrying of the dead around the church, on arrival at the churchyard, was forbidden by the Synod of Fife in 1641;³ but a version of the custom remained in the Highlands where the body was carried deisell around the spot chosen for burial.⁴ Incongruous with the austere rite though it was, incense and perfume were burned in Aberdeen as late as 1705,

¹J. C. Glow, Memorials of the Parish Church of Montrose, (Montrose, 1890), p. 171, 172.
³Synod of Fife, 1611-1687, op. cit., p. 256, 36.
⁴Allardyce, op. cit., p. 431.
when the burgh council exacted a charge for the exercise of the privilege, either in the church or in the churchyard.\(^1\) Most widely observed of all committal ceremonies was the removal of hats as the coffin was lowered into place, while the entire company stood in silence as if to bid a solemn adieu to the departed. In Ayrshire, the cue for this was the dropping of the funeral strings upon the coffin, and the signal was given by the chief mourner.\(^2\) In the North, the assemblage stood uncovered while the "death music . . . of the clods rattling on the coffin, broke harshly the surrounding silence."\(^3\) Scottish usage did not accept what the Westminster divines granted as the right of the minister to utter words of committal; \(^4\) but at the funeral of Alexander Kincaid (1777), the senior herald broke the provost's rod of office over the coffin as he said, "Thus hath it pleased Almighty God to remove from this life to a better, our worthy Chief Magistrate, the Right Honor. Alex. Kincaid, Lord Provost of this city, representative of the family of Bantaskine."\(^5\) With such punc¬tilios as these the secular burial attempted to minimize the stark reality of a human body returned to dust.

**The Coffin and the Mortcloth**

Gradual economic improvement in Scotland brought with it a

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corresponding expenditure for the equipage of burial. The use of the common kist became the exception rather than the rule; individual coffins were more refined; and mortcloths came to be employed by the remotest parishes, while their quality was being continuously upgraded.

The increasing use of individual coffins for burial was evidenced in the latter half of the seventeenth century by the extent to which these were provided for the poor. Though there were exceptions, most parishes had discontinued the regular use of the common bier or coffin for the poor, and were undergoing the expense of individual coffins.\(^1\) In 1693, the New Monkland kirk-session expressed the attitude which had come to be accepted in most of Scotland. When it learned that a poor stranger had been buried without either a coffin or winding sheet, "to the scandal and offence of many good people," it ruled "that in all time coming no person be buried in this kirk without coffin and winding sheet."\(^2\)

During certain emergencies, the accepted policy of paying for individual coffins could rapidly exhaust the poor-box, and had to be temporarily interrupted. In the plague of 1654, the South Leith session managed to pay for the kists of forty-two persons who were unable to supply their own; but it was forced then to rule that "none be giat dead kysts but those who are able to pay for ym."\(^3\) The deaths which resulted from the food shortages of 1695-1700 caused the South Leith session to depart from

\(^1\)McPherson, op. cit. p. 142.
\(^2\)Macarthur, op. cit., p. 63.
\(^3\)Robertson, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 59-60.
its usual practice, ruling in 1695, that the common bier be used for burying both the poor of the parish and the stranger poor.\textsuperscript{1} Two years later, several of their poor were dying each day; and the treasurer was forbidden to buy coffins for any but exceptional persons, in order that funds might be retained for the urgent needs of the living.\textsuperscript{2} Many parishes found themselves burdened with the task of interring the starving victims of the famine wherever their wanderings ended, and were under necessity of doing this as inexpensively as possible. In Arbuthnott, so many strangers were dying within the parish, that the poor fund was much depleted, and the session "condescended . . that Mr. William Wright should cause ane bier to be made for carrying of such strangers to their grave."\textsuperscript{3} In 1699, the Broughton Kirk-session acquiesced to the same burial policy for its stranger poor and ordered a common kist.\textsuperscript{4} In Cullen it was required that neither coffin nor winding sheet was to be provided for the poor without vote of session; and the beadle was paid fifteen shillings "for burying severall poor who dyed through famine, and were brought dead into the churchyard."\textsuperscript{5} The session at Rothesay (1700), replaced its outworn common coffin with one sufficiently

\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., p. 178
\item Ibid., p. 182.
\item Henderson, The Kirk of St. Ternan, Arbuthnott, op. cit. p. 166.
\item Baird, op. cit., p. 297.
\item Cramond, The Church and Churchyard of Cullen, op. cit. p. 38.
\end{enumerate}
sturdy to perform its task: it had "double dales all over with all the iron bands and cleiks ans other furniture requisite for the same."  

When the famine ended, the parishes promptly returned to their former burial standard. In 1699, the parish of Logie had paid only 7s. 2d. for the coffinless burial of "poor folk that came in the parish seiking their meat and dyed"; but by 1714, it was regularly paying £2 8s. for the coffin alone for each poor. The treasurers of Penningham kirk-session, whose regularity of reporting is unique among session records, give account of payments for sixty-four coffins between the years 1701 and 1749. Though not necessarily a large investment, the cost of coffins over a period of time was considerable, and could mount rapidly in a particular year. To overcome this threat to the poor fund, the parishes frequently purchased stands of trees to supply the timber, and contracted with wrights to make the chests. Between 1735 and 1765, the burgh of Glasgow also engaged certain wrights to supply all of the poor’s coffins at set prices.

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2 Fergusson, op. cit., p. 322.
3 Ibid., p. 330.
5 e.g., at Chapel, and Tarland, see McPherson, op. cit., p. 144.
6 e.g., Henderson, op. cit., p. 236, and Fergusson, op. cit., p. 189.
When the community at large showed this consideration for the kists of the poor, it was to be expected that those who composed the core of society had an equal interest in their own coffins. It was not unusual for a gentleman to prepare his coffin long in advance of its need. When Sir James Hamilton died (1665), his burial account included payment "for twa coffines, one to my Lord, and one to Sir James."1 Again, following the death of Sir Hugh Campbell, the bill included an "Item to the carpenters for making two coffins."2 After the funeral of Sir John Clerk, a letter containing his burial requests was discovered in a cedar chest in the library. These requests indicated that the chest in which they were discovered, having been used as furniture for twenty-five years, had been intended by Sir John for his coffin.3 Less provident citizens, however, comprised the majority whose regard for the coffin was shown by the precise workmanship they were willing to pay for. When the Canongate wrights explained their work to the Privy Council, they pointed out the necessity of first measuring the corpse, then building the coffin to order, dressing the wood, and finishing it.4 Even for the poor, this customing was not neglected: coffins were built to fit a crippled leg,5 a swollen body,6 and a body "large and of a

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1 "Ane Compt of money deburssed by me at Orbiston's death and burial," loc. cit.
2 Thanes of Cawdor, op. cit., p. 416.
3 Gray., op. cit., p. 110.
5 Cramond, The Church and Churchyard of Cullen, op. cit., p. 151.
peculiar shape." This is not to suggest that the average coffin was an elegant product of craftsmanship. Costs for the poor's coffins, paid by the kirk-sessions and the burghs, were determined by necessity rather than tastes; and ranged from one to four pounds. It is probable that most families which paid for their loved ones' coffins were able to spend a little more, and the product corresponded to the price. In 1658, a complaint was registered before the Edinburgh council against the wrights: nails carelessly protruding from their coffins were responsible for tearing the mortcloths which were draped over them. These coffins could be covered with woven material, but were more commonly "painted and cyphered with black." As hardware for carrying them was not common, the usual method continued to be with spokes or "staffs." In 1701, the session in Rothesay considered the putting of iron handles on its common kist as a uniquely progressive innovation. They desired -

Ane engyne to convey the coffin convenientlie into the grave with the corps, therefore they have appointed John M'Neill, thesaurer, to agree with a smith to make and joyn to the said chist a loose iron cleik fit for receiving a mans hand, one at everie end. . . .

Most innovation and leadership in luxury is found on the coffins built for Scottish gentlemen. Mourning cords with silk tassels,

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1 McPherson, op. cit., p. 145.
2 Edinburgh Records (1655-65), op. cit., p. 92.
3 From a description of coffins built for three men executed as traitors in 1684. The Privy Council objected to their decent burial, and prosecuted the wright and painter for their cooperation. Privy Council, op. cit., Vol. X, p. 35; and Erskine Journal, op. cit., p. 95.
4 Paton, Session Book of Rothesay, op. cit. p. 139.
i.e., decorative ropes for the chief mourners to carry in procession, were attached to some coffins. 1 Highly polished iron work and shining brass were used both for strengthening and for decoration. The entire coffin may have been upholstered on the outside with black cloth, edged with lace, and fastened with embellished tacks. 2 Both the crown of the arched lid and its base were sometimes bordered with black silk fringes. 3 The inside of the coffin was "waxed green" 4 or lined with waxed cloth. 5 Still more luxurious were the leaden coffins, such as those used to contain the remains of the Duke of Lauderdale and of the wife of Sir John Clerk. 6

Greater expenditures for coffins brought increasing competition among the wrights; and those who succeeded as specialists in coffin making became the forerunners of the vocation of undertaking. The intensive efforts of the Edinburgh wrights to exploit the financial potential of coffin making had been evidenced as early as 1623, when they forcibly took kists from Canongate wrights who were attempting to make deliveries within Edinburgh. 8 The privilege of the Canongate craftsmen to make deliveries within

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1 Expense account for the funeral of Elizabeth Dunbar, cited by Dunbar, op. cit., p. 274.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Dunbar, loc. cit.
6 A. Thompson, op. cit., p. 162.
7 Gray, op. cit., p. 109.
Edinburgh was upheld by the Privy Council in 1632; but offenses were still continuing in 1641, when the Parliament endorsed the action of the Council and affirmed the franchise of the Canongate wrights to make coffins and deliver them to Edinburgh gentlemen, burgesses, and others. In 1673, the Dean of Guild in Edinburgh reported to the council a "great grudgeing of the neighbours upon the accompt of the exhorbitant pryces takine be the wrights of this burgh for mortkists even sex tymes the vallow of the same." The clamour continued in 1674, and the council appointed a committee to summon the corporation of wrights and state to them that a fair price must be put on coffins. Overcharging was more than a local issue, as Parliament decreed in 1686, that "no wooden Coffins shall exceed ane hundred merks Scots as the highest rate for Persones of the greatest quality and see proportionally for Persones of meaner qualitie." It appears that the wrights found coffin building a lucrative and dependable vocation; and some of them extended this area of their vocation to include other burial arrangements. In 1723, John Underwood, a wright in Stitchill, was ordered to be paid a delinquent bill for "an coffine, Bell, (and) graff-making."

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1 Ibid.
3 Edinburgh Records, 1665-80, op. cit., p. 147.
4 Ibid., p. 172.
5 Parliaments of Scotland, op. cit., Vol. VIII, p. 599.
A wright, James Hunter, submitted the complete expense account for the burial of John Erskine (1743); and it included such diverse items as the charge for the coffin, a warrant for burial, the mortcloth, the bellmen, the ushers, and payments to the poor.\(^1\)

In Glasgow, the Incorporation of Wrights had special responsibility for funerals after 1774. In that year, the Tailors, Weavers and Wrights entered into an association by which all of their fifty-seven mortcloths were dispensed from a common warehouse. When mortcloths were needed, the members of the Incorporation of Wrights acted as undertakers. They made the selections at the warehouse, and at the end of the year each wright paid to the association the sums which he had received from his clients.\(^2\)

In this respect, at least, the Wrights acted for the family of the deceased as funeral managers.

While the coffin became increasingly a private aspect of burial gear, the mortcloth retained its role as a symbol of community. Only a very few were owned by lairds for family use, and fewer still were kept and rented by enterprising business men who knew how to gain profit from disgruntled parishioners. The great majority of mortcloths were the property of parishes and burghs, or of trades and crafts; thus, they were the subject of much public attention. Whenever these institutions owned and managed a mortcloth service, we find their minutes replete with actions for its administration. These included the raising of funds for the

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\(^1\)Erskine Journal, op. cit., p. 239.

\(^2\)James Cleland, The Rise and Progress of the City of Glasgow, (Glasgow, 1820), p. 226.
original purchase of mortcloths, the commissioning of buyers, the approval of purchases and payment of expenses; the setting and adjusting of rental prices; the designation of a place of storage; the hiring and guidance of the mortcloth keeper and carrier; the problems of collection of fees; the investment of mortcloth monies to produce more profit; the upkeep and repair; decisions of supplementing and replacing; the foregoing of charges for public servants; vigilance to assure a continuing market; and the ultimate reward - the determination of the cause, or causes, to which mortcloth profits would be allocated.

During the century and a half following 1638, mortcloth usage was at its highest level. The councils and parishes in the burghs had taken leadership in providing mortcloths; and from them the wish to be buried with this standard of dignity spread into every community in Scotland. In Tyningham, this wish was expressed when "The elders desyrit ane Mortcloth to be gotten for furrialis; and the minister promesit to use diligence for obteining ane mortcloth."¹ So, throughout this period, the parishes struggled to achieve this goal, canvassed the community for financial support;² or, like Tulliallan, "wholly resolved to imploy their box-money for buying thereof."³ Other parishes, such as Belhelvie (1656), Kemnay (1682), Birse (1683), Duffus (1698), and Kintore (1740), received bequests of mortcloths from those who wished to

¹ Waddell, op. cit., p. 67.
² e.g., see James Hardy, The Session Book of Bonckle, (Alnick, 1899), p. 63.
use this means of benefiting the poor. Some of these parishes, in turn, became centers for a wide circulation of their mortcloths. The Alyth parish obtained its first mortcloth in 1670, and soon after, its church officer was receiving special compensation "for being in the highland with the mortcloth and his son waiting upon his chair," and later his son was rewarded two shillings "for waiting upon his father's chair while he returned out of Atholl with the mortcloth." The fixing of "Landwart" charges and the conditions of rental beyond the parish was a routine aspect of administration.

Meanwhile, as the mortcloth came to be used in almost every parish, hamlet, and grange, in the burghs the owners were constantly repairing, replacing, and supplementing their supply. The Kirkcudbright council ordered three new mortcloths when in 1655, they came to realize that they had "not sufficient mort-claith to cover ther deid and being willing that the samyne be honestlie suppliet in tyme coming . . ." With population growth, there was need for a greater number of mortcloths; but there is no indication that a serious shortage ever developed, as public taste guaranteed a sure market and enterprising institutions knew how to profit from it. The problem, in fact, was quite the reverse. During this period of its maximum usage, the mortcloth was an extremely lucrative investment which caused inevitable conflict among the investors. The burgh councils and kirk-

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1 McPherson, op. cit., pp. 69-70.
2 Meikle, op. cit., p. 155.
sessions were especially jealous of their right to conduct the mortcloth services in their own areas; and though they usually had a mutual understanding with one another, both sponsors found themselves in competition with the crafts and guilds, and sometimes with other owners as well. Because the burghs and the kirk sessions were especially jealous of their right to conduct the mortcloth services in their own areas; and though they usually had a mutual understanding with one another, both sponsors found themselves in competition with the crafts and guilds, and sometimes with other owners as well. Because the burghs and the kirk sessions dedicated mortcloth income to the public good, i.e., the care of the poor, education, etc., competition from those who served only themselves was a threat to community welfare. This problem had simmered somewhat earlier, but it came to an intensive climax in the middle of the seventeenth century. The crafts and guilds obstinately asserted their right to rent mortcloths to the general public, but they ultimately discovered that both the burgh councils and the kirk-sessions possessed weapons they could not match.

The council's weapon was the control of local government, permitting it to make the decision against practices which were not for the common good. In 1643, the treasurer of the College in Edinburgh, to which burgh mortcloth income was allocated, complained against the Hammermen for making two new velvet mortcloths, and lending them to their craft, contrary to the council's act of 1614. The council ordered the Hammermen to discontinue this, and ratified its former act prohibiting it. Again in 1649, the College complained against the use of craft mortcloths, and again the council prohibited the practice, and

1 Supra, pp. 187-88.
ratified its former acts of 1614 and 1643. In 1658, the Edinburgh council took more drastic action when it imprisoned James Thomson for refusing to release to it the custody of mortcloths belonging to the hatmakers.\(^1\) In Aberdeen, there had long been contention with the crafts, which had separated "themseffis from the brethorn of gild and remnant inhabitantis of this burgh in not making vse of the common mortclothes of the toune, and intending to have ane mortcloth of thair awin." But an amiable settlement was arranged in 1649 by which the crafts were granted lower burial and mortcloth fees in return for their presenting their mortcloths to the town.\(^2\) The tradesmen in Lanark were not so easily mollified. In 1645, the Lanark council had required them to deliver their mortcloths to the burgh treasurer, "for the publict vse of the burgh in all yime cuming"; and the treasurer was to pay for them within a year and a day after appraisal. This was done; but immediately afterward the tradesmen procured new mortcloths, and withheld them from the burgh. In 1655, the matter was taken to the Convention of Royal Burghs which ruled that the latter mortcloths must likewise be delivered to the burgh treasurer, "and dischairges the sadis treadsmen ever to have any mortclaithes heirefter."\(^3\) The burgh of Elgin faced the problem of the trades' mortcloth (1695), with imagination: because the Trades' mortcloth was being used "to the great prejudice of the community by taking away the casualties of the tounes

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 93  
\(^2\)Aberdeen Records, 1643-1747, op. cit., p. 110.  
mortcloath . . the counsell statuts and appoints that the said mortcloath be not given to any but such as are objects of char-
ity."

Unlike the burghs, the kirk-sessions lacked statutory support to maintain their monopoly on mortcloath rentals until 1718; but they applied other strategies with marked success. The session's invaluable weapon was the control of the kirk-
yards, delegated to it by the heritors, and with it the right to deny burial. Since the funeral could proceed without the min-
ister, the right to refuse interment (implied or expressed) was the Church's only means of controlling it. The kirk-sessions
were not hesitant to wield this authority; and with it they were usually able to achieve the disposition of rival mortcloaths, or at least a compensatory payment. In one of the earliest tests of this kind (1641), the session of the Canongate attempted to force the Hammermen to discontinue their mortcloath service which was reducing the income from the burgh mortcloaths. Perhaps because the burgh was unwilling to press the issue, the session was only partially successful. The Hammermen retained their cloths, and "to avoid dissension" made contributions to compensate the burgh's poor fund. The Culross session (1646), levied an additional charge, to be paid to the church, on all who used the Smith's mortcloath. A bitter conflict arose in Aberdour when the people of

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1 Records of Elgin, op. cit., p. 356.
2 Margaret Wood, The Hammermen of the Canongate, Old Edin-
3 Beveridge, op. cit., p. 154.
the parish protested the session's high rental fees for mortcloths, and proceeded to make one of their own. The session managed to get control of the new one, but the people retaliated by borrowing from a neighboring parish. The session then ruled that no grave could be dug until the parish mortcloth was hired. "Foreign" mortcloths were the bane of the local session's poor fund: in Falkirk the session not only required the use of its own mortcloth, but decided that "in the event of the relatives of a deceased person belonging to another parish using the mortcloth of that parish, it was ordained that they should be charged the same rate for burial as if they had used the Falkirk mortcloth." The parishes surrounding Bonckle probably owned inexpensive mortcloths since the elders forbade the people "to make use of any forreign mortcloath in the parish, unless of velvet.""  

With the coming of the eighteenth century, we find kirk-sessions increasingly determined to benefit from mortcloth income. In 1701, the session of St. Cuthbert's, Edinburgh, decided to supplement its poor fund by purchasing and renting the mortcloths then belonging to the trades within the parish (Portsburgh). When the trades resisted, the session threatened to present the issue to the Privy Council. The trades then made an offer to sell; but the price was too high, and the session

1 J.H. Macadam, The Baxter Books of St. Andrews. (Leith, 1903), p. 84 (n.).
2 George Murray, Records of Falkirk Parish. op. cit., p. 219.
3 Hardy, op. cit., p. 64.
threatened to buy new mortcloths and to refuse burial to any who failed to use them. Finally, the trades capitulated, selling at a price which proved to be a very good investment for the kirk-session. The session's legal right to rent mortcloths for the benefit of the poor fund was finally established in 1718, when a dispute between the kirk-session and the trades of Kilwinning came before the Court of Session. The Lords found that the kirk-session possessed the "sole power of lending out of mortcloths upon hire for the benefit of the poor." The Court acknowledged the right of private persons to make use of their own mortcloths, but not the "lending out the same for money, or otherways, to others thro' the said parish, or any part thereof in time coming." This verdict certified that while the kirk-session had the right to the financial benefits deriving from mortcloths, it could not prevent organizations within the parish from using their own, providing they did not charge for them. The trade or guild member was free until the day of his burial to identify himself with his vocational community rather than with the community of believers. This was the choice of the Dunfermline Hammermen, the Trades of Perth, the Merchants of Stirling, and many others.

2 Decisions of the Court of Session, 1752-1756, Faculty of Advocates, (Edinburgh, 1760), (n.), p. 313.
3 Thompson, op. cit., pp. 242, 243.
5 Stirling, op. cit., p. 112.
throughout Scotland.

The Kilwinning decision did not appear in any printed collection, but was used as evidence in a subsequent case which came before the Court of Session in 1756. It was a contest between the established church and a seceding congregation within the parish of Kippen. The Seceders had purchased mortcloths and were renting them out to their own congregation. The kirk-session of the established church brought a process of damage against them for diminishing the produce of its own mortcloths. Consistent with a long tradition that mortcloth benefits should be used for the poor, the Lords decided:

That the kirk-session had the sole right of keeping and letting for hire, for the use of the poor, mortcloths within the bounds of the parish, and that the Defenders have no right to keep mort-cloths, and give the same out to hire, or even to lend the same gratuitously for burying any of the dead within the same parish, with certification that they shall be accountable to the Kirk-Session, for the ordinary dues of their mort-cloths in the like cases.¹

Cemetery Progress and Regress

The Directory for Worship failed to offer a single word to guide the choice, administration, or disposal of burial places. Its silence suggested that the burial place was a civil matter; and, as with its brief directions for funeral procedure, the Directory offered no resistance to a creeping secularism which tended to divorce this aspect of burial from religious considerations.

The particular way in which new burial places were

¹The Case of Mr. Andrew Turnbull, Minister and Kirk Session of Kippen, vs. John M’Claws and others. Decisions of the Court of Session, loc. cit.
established makes it difficult to know what factors determined their location. As populations grew, the old parishes simply crowded their grave-yards,\(^1\) or extended them when conditions had become intolerable; therefore, most of the new cemeteries before the nineteenth century were those built around new or formerly existing parish churches.\(^2\) Conceivably, these new cemeteries could have been set apart in "a secluded and convenient place," as John Knox had recommended. Whether they were located adjacent to parish churches for religious or for practical reasons is not evident. Certainly it simplified the purchase, building, and overseeing of cemeteries; yet, the regular designation of the cemetery in the shadow of the church seems to have been assumed. It appears that even yet there lingered in the popular mind an association between place of worship and the place of burial. More than two centuries after the Reformation (1779), Hugo Arnot suggested that the yard of the Chapel of St. Roque be used to alleviate the cemetery crowding in Edinburgh, because "it will be accommodated to the prejudices of those who incline to have their ashes deposited in the consecrated ground."\(^3\) It is revealing too, that it was the trades which established one of the first public burial places apart from a church; the Old

\(^1\) Infra, pp. 369-73.

\(^2\) E.g., In the Glasgow are new burial grounds were built on the sites of parish churches at St. Rollocks (1665), Charters and Documents of the City of Glasgow, op. cit., Vol I, p. 342; Fort Glasgow (1718), and Ramshorn Church (1768), Glasgow Records, 1718-38, p. 12, 1760-80, p. 268.

Calton Graveyard, built in 1718 by the Trades of Calton on property purchased from Lord Balmerino.

While sub-conscious religious memory may have played a part in the establishment of new cemeteries, it seems to have had little or nothing to do with their disposal. Since the cemetery was not consecrated, and since no one possessed in it a permanent legal right, it could be sold as any other real estate. In 1754, the Glasgow council sold the Little St. Mongo burial yard without mentioning the disposition of its human remains. The council's sole interest seemed to be that the structure to be erected on the site must be a community asset. According to the terms, it was to be "a commodious and convenient inn, extending in length in front about 100 foot . . . all of good hewn stone, three stories high, with sufficient slated roof and with all other conveniences and accommodations proper to an inn." With the same practicality, Sir James Hall of Dunglass, after he had acquired the ancient estate of the Home family, turned the old burial place into a stable, and stored hay in the aisle where his own first lady and his only son were buried. The grave stones in the burial place outside the chapel were removed to permit cultivation. Wodrow reported this simply as "a piece of bad taste," and not as a sacrilege.

The protracted effort to achieve orderliness, decency and

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1 Robertson, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 50.
perhaps beauty at the burial ground met with limited success; but the achievement was often fleeting, and as frequently offset by new obstacles. Consequently, some general improvement in Scottish cemeteries is discernible, but exceptions were numerous. A proper resting place for the dead was not the result of a single effort, but required the constant attention of the administering authorities, adequate resources for repair, and the co-operation of the public. Lacking any of these, deterioration was rapid. Since most cemeteries periodically suffered from the want of one of these requisites, their advance toward acceptable standards was spasmodic. It is difficult in our time to imagine the appearance and operation of the seventeenth and eighteenth century cemetery. The reading of memorial markers from that period in modern graveyards leads us to visualize these stones in the ordered and groomed environs in which we may now find them; but the records indicate that these stones more frequently projected in jumbled disorder from the irregular terrain of burial mounds and sunken graves, partially hidden by an overgrowth of grass and weeds.

The perennial problem was that of building and maintaining the kirk-yard dyke to assure decent conditions within it. In the latter half of the seventeenth century, many parishes still lacked walls around their burial places, as this was an expensive investment and neither Church nor state persevered in achieving this seemliness. The Largo parish, in 1657, received a gift of a stone dyke around its churchyard from a benevolent courtier, John Wood;\(^1\) but most parishes had to find means of distributing the respon-

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\(^1\) Lamont Diary, op. cit., p. 99.
sibility as fairly as possible by assigning portions of the wall to be erected by the heritors, or by levying a stent. In Peebles (1652), the Cross Kirk required all to contribute: those who owned one horse or more were to deliver six loads of clay for the dyke for each horse they possessed, and those who owned no horse were to carry stones for three hours. Likewise in Alyth, in 1683, the session placed a stent upon the plows of the parish, requiring "that evrie pleugh bring six load of stons for the churche yeard dyke."

The building of the wall was only the beginning of a perpetual problem of repair, as a single breach rendered the dyke practically useless. The dykes suffered both from the deterioration of nature, and from mutilation by human hands. Most common was the appropriation by some of the dyke stones for private use; but more enterprising householders constructed their dwellings against the dyke to obviate the building of four walls. The stones of the South Leith kirkyard dyke were used for fortifying the community following the 1637 riot at St. Giles. In Penninghame (1700), the fate of the dyke was recorded by the parish treasurer who reported an expenditure "for building the church—

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1 Cramond, Annals of Banff, op. cit., pp. 149, 156.
3 Meikle, op. cit., p. 227
5 Robertson, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 36.
yard dyke thrown down at the communion."¹

Whether or not the dykes were whole, the cemetery continued to be the object of abuse; though this was not as blatant as in former periods. Its use for court and civil elections was diminished, but, in 1646, the inhabitants of Hawick were still gathering in the parish church and churchyard to elect their bailies.² Athletic events were no longer commonly held in the kirkyard. This may have been partially due to a greater sense of appropriateness; but the utilization of a larger portion of most cemeteries for interment, the unevenness of the terrain because of sunken graves, and the placing of memorial stones made the burial ground less attractive as an athletic field. Still, spirited youth was not always deterred: it is significant that in 1649, the elders in Elgin agreed to inspect the Chanrie kirkyard every Lord's day for violations of their strict Sabbath code.³ As late as 1750, the session in Montrose appealed to the Town Council to stop the football matches in the churchyard between the town boys and the soldiery.⁴ A growing threat to cemetery grooming was the drawing in with horses of large tombstones, and the dressing of these stones inside the walls without removing the remnants.⁵

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³ Cramond, Extracts from the Elgin Kirk-Session Records, op. cit., p. 261.
⁴ James G. Low, Memorials of the Church of St. John, op. cit., p. 172.
Leith, the "resurrectionists" were stealing bodies in 1721, long before the days of Burke and Hare; and for decades the session had to deal not only with them, but with the unruly guards who were hired to "watch the corpse." There continued, of course the inevitable instances of sheer disrespect. In Edinburgh, a meeting of the Five Sessions (1657), asked for the help of the council to control the Grayfriars Kirkyard which they considered, "shamefully abused, and made little better than a Jaques." The council responded sympathetically, but thought "the English Officers should be got to restrain their soldiers." In Keith, the session sealed the cemetery dykes when it observed that both people and beasts were making it a dunghill.

While most abuses gradually waned through the decades, there emerged a persistent offender against cemetery propriety - the parish minister. His right to cut the cemetery grass was unchallenged; and if properly executed, would have benefited the place of burial. But in many communities, the ministers callously grazed their animals on the graves of their deceased parishioners, resulting in both desecration and destruction. As the improvement of kirkyard dykes gradually restrained other's animals, the minister's assumption of privilege became more valuable to him, and more evident to his parishioners; and at the

1 Robertson, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 38, 46, 55, 57, 63, 81.

2 James G. Low, Memorials of the Church of St., John, op. cit., p. 172.

3 The Scottish Antiquary, or Northern Notes and Queries, XIII, (Edinburgh, 1889), p. 36.
same time the greater use of memorials and turfing increased the potential for destruction. In 1649, an elder in Grange reported to the Presbytery of Strathbogie that his minister tethered his horse and cattle in the churchyard, "till it is worse than a taxfold." The intensity of feeling which the issue could arouse is shown by an action of the council at Stirling (1696), which concluded that in spite of all the fair means which the magistrates had previously used -

yet Mr. Rule hes not only rejected all fair meanes but also in contempt of the authority in this place, hes most unwarrantable broken up the lockes and doores of the said church and church yaird, and still keeps his kyne in the said church yaird, which being considered by the councill they recommend to the magistrates to take all farder allowable methods for securing the church yaird and keeping the said kyne furth their of.

In Kirkcaldy, where the minister's cow was long the subject of contention in the burgh council, the minister was accused before presbytery of the indecency of "abusing and tirring of the graves, particularly of the grave of the deceast Mr. Wm Jackson and some others." The Peebles town council suffered the same difficulty with successive ministers. In 1733, having undergone great expense to build a stone and lime dyke around the old church yard, "for defending their monuments upon their dead, . . Mr. Hay, minister, had this summer put his horses in the said church-yard, whereby several of their monuments are wronged." He was ordered not to pasture "his horses, kine or sheep in their burial place

1 Presbytery Book of Strathbogie, op. cit., p. 132.
2 Stirling Records, 1667-1752, op. cit., p. 80.
hereafter . . . under the penalty of ten pounds Scots; and in the meantime allows him to cut or shear the grass for the use of his beasts."¹ In 1773, the council required the Rev. Dr. W. Dalglish to desist from the same practice, and voted to exclude him with a new gate lock.² The South Leith session attempted a constructive solution to the problem in 1752, by deciding to pay forty shillings to the minister for his right to the churchyard grass, and then making arrangement themselves for cutting it.³ However, in 1755, a bitter dispute arose when a different minister would not concede his right of grazing cattle, while the session unitedly insisted that the practice was "improper and indecent."⁴

Standards for Gravemaking

The quality of gravemaking had an important effect on the service of burial, and subsequently on the ability to maintain a proper burial ground. In the middle of the seventeenth century, we discover some rude practices which did not become the burial tradition, but which were largely surmounted within a century. The men who were employed to make the graves were usually limited in background and incapable of working steadily in more lucrative vocations. In burgh parishes, a distinction was made between the cemetery keeper and the grave maker; and in rural parishes the church officer or beadle was frequently unwilling to perform this

¹William Chambers, op. cit., p. 223.
²Ibid., p. 266.
³Robertson, op. cit., II, p. 66.
⁴Ibid., pp. 79-80.
task. Compensation for menial labor sometimes included a pair of work shoes;¹ and we find the grave digger in Tynlingham being reprimanded for using his shoes at other times.² The gravedigger's tools may also have been rustic and neglected: in 1778, the spades and dales which belonged to the Ramshorn churchyard in Glasgow had remained for ten years un-sheltered from the elements.³

The medieval custom of digging the grave during the burial service vanished rapidly in most of Scotland; but it continued in remote parts until the end of the eighteenth century, and vestiges remained in other areas. The disorganization which marked a percentage of burials among people of the lowest cultural level reduced the interment to the mere physical act of burying. Anyone dug the grave, and since there was no ceremony to be delayed, the simplest time to prepare it was after the body had been carried to the burial ground. In 1660, the kirk-session in Rothesay required the grave to be prepared before the funeral procession, "considering the unseemly custom of bringing the corpse to the churchyard before the grave be digged and the lying thereof in the kirk-yard whill the grave is a diggill."⁴ It was not until 1701, that the Rothesay session granted the sole right of digging graves to the church officer; and it disregarded its former action in 1716, when it purchased a new spade and two new shovels "for the common use

¹Cramond, The Church and Churchyard of Cullen, op. cit., p. 125.
²Ritchie, op. cit., p. 71.
³Glasgow Records, 1760-80, op. cit., p. 533.
in the churchyard.1 Digging the grave during the burial was found in the North and Western Isles during most of the century. Ochtertyre reported that in the Highlands two men were dispatched to run ahead to mark out the place of burial so the body could be carried around it, but the grave was not prepared until the cortege arrived.2 In 1775, James Boswell observed the people at the burial alternately assisting in digging the grave; however, he was told that the grave was ordinarily prepared in advance.3

The offensiveness of too shallow graves was not uncommon before, and not unknown after the eighteenth century. Sir James Hope recorded in his diary one of his father's burial wishes: "He desyred to be layed in such a place as that his bonnes might not exhumat," whereupon he was buried in Grayfriars, Edinburgh, close by his son Kerse but deeper "by the thickenesse of my fath¬er's wholle chest, for so deepe caused I his grave to be digged expresslie to satisfie . . . his lettre will."4 The father's fears were not unbased, as shown by the Edinburgh treasurer's account of 1650-51, which included: "Item for covering some foull graves in Grayfriar yaird which were brokin upe be the Inglis sojors. I 16s."5 At Wigtown in 1721, the minister was most dissatisfied with the gravemaker, because after the coffins

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1Ibid., p. 312.
2Allardyce, op. cit., p. 431.
were covered they were only a foot or less from the surface of
the earth. A heated dispute resulted when the minister refused
a burial until the grave was made deeper. The kirk-session up¬
held the minister's view and required "that all graves be made
4 foot deep and these for children 3 foot deep at least, and
that where the ground is very hard his employers allow him some¬
what above the ordinary, and that a pick be provided for that end
and kept allenarly for that use."1

Shallow burial waned during the eighteenth century, but
the equally disagreeable problem of cemetery over crowding kept
pace with the continuing increase in population. Theoretically
at least, cemetery space might have expanded in proportion to the
population; but the Scottish concept of burial, supported by the
need for land economy, ruled out such an effort. The accepted
view that the grave was not inviolable, but could be used again
after decomposition of the body, was recognized in practice as
well as in law.2 This meant that a grave could be used success¬
ively over and over, with the cycle of time required before
another interment depending on conditions of soil and climate.
Therefore, when a body was placed in a parish church or church¬
yard, the grave was not considered to be private property. In
1640, the kirk-session in Stirling ordered the owners of head and
foot stones to remove them, because "in proce of tyme they and

1Paton, Session Book of Wigtown, op. cit., pp. 274-76.
thairs may apprehend themselves to have one property."¹ Eight years later, the Edinburgh council required removal of all carved head stones, not only because they took up needed space, but also because they "may breed contest heirefter."²

The major difficulty with the successive use of a lair was the inability to know when decomposition was complete. Even if an arbitrary time were set for re-use, there were few records to supply the date and precise place of the previous burial. In 1655, the Penicuik kirk-session required that no ground be broken for graves until it had been "sighted by two of the most aged of the elders or inhabitants of the parish, that contention may be avoided."³ The South Leith session appointed an assistant to work with its infirm gravedigger (1713), in order that the gravedigger's successor may not be ignorant of burial places and "fall into mistakes by opening unripe graves and other ways."⁴ Not until 1760, did it abandon dependence on the memory of the gravedigger for a written record made by the clerk, and for which he was paid sixpence per grave.⁵ The consequences of the extensive dependence on the gravedigger's memory could be barbarous. In South Leith a new gravedigger continued his digging after coming upon a coffin so new it still retained its paint.

¹ "Kirk Session of Sterling," Maitland Miscellany, I, op. cit., p. 158.
² Edinburgh Records, 1642-55, op. cit., p. 158.
⁴ Robertson, op. cit., II, p. 27.
⁵ Ibid., p. 75.
Yet he brock the coffin and although he saw the Corps not fully consumed, he did not sist but thow out the parts that were not consumed and when the corpse which was to be interred were put in the Grave, the people who were standing about saw part of the Intreells and felsch of the corpse that he had thrown out.

When James Herron from Grange of Cree complained to the session about the opening of his father's grave, the grave digger testified that "quhen he opend the said grave the coffin was whole, but that after he broke it he found that he had seen as unripe grave opened but that it was not so ripe as ordinary, and that there was hair upon the head which went off quhenever it was stir'd."²

Fortunately, incidents such as these were not frequent; but the crowded cemetry usually had unpleasant aspects which none could fail to observe. Since the poor were unable to pay for their lairs or the digging of them, the gravemaker was tempted to put two bodies in one grave.³ Memorial stones both increased the problem of crowding, and witnessed to it. In Glasgow's Hie Kirk-yaird they were so close together "that quhen any corps ar to be interred it is verie hard to get them carried therthrow to their buriell places without hazard to the persones who caries them."⁴ Human bones were often in evidence as graves were considered to be "ripe" while the skeleton was still intact.

A public announcement was made in Rothesay (1659), reminding the

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¹Ibid., pp. 26-27.
²Paton, The Session Book of Penninghame, op. cit., p. 3.
³Meikle, op. cit., p. 223.
⁴Glasgow Records, 1663-90, op. cit., p. 224.
congregation that "quhen ane grave is hocked that the old bones be covered." This was necessary considering "the vnseemly cusetome of leaveing above ground the bones quhilk they dig vp when they hock the grave." These bones were sometimes audible as well as visible when the grave was being covered.

A more lasting result of the successive burial scheme used in Scotland was the gradual change in the level of the burial ground, due to the accumulations from the decomposed coffins and their contents. This caused the floor level of the church in Crieff to be more than three feet below the sole of the door. The higher level was most pronounced around the church buildings and along the dykes, since these areas were sought out for avoiding traffic, and for placing of memorial plaques. These choice places in the churchyard brought a double price in Aberdeen after 1657, when the council attempted to reduce burial there because they had "becum wereie full . . . and by process of tyme by multopleing burialles aboue others they will be so hie that the samen will surmount the walls." The Glasgow council followed the same policy of a double charge for wall lairs. The Grayfriars cemetery in Edinburgh was an example of the extreme overuse of burial space, since though it was the principal cemetery in the city, yet it was only slightly expanded during a period of great population.

2 Supra, p. 342.
4 Aberdeen Recores, 1643-1747, op. cit., p. 165.
5 Glasgow Records, 1760-80, op. cit., p. 268.
growth. Arnot Hugo, writing in 1779, described the problems there which could be found to a lesser extent in much of Scotland:

Such multitudes have been interred in the Gray-friars Churchyard it is equally humiliating and disgusting to behold its surface raised so much beyond the level of the adjacent ground, merely by what was once the organs of rational beings, and susceptible of pleasure and pain. . . The graves are so crowded upon each other, that the sectons frequently cannot avoid, in opening a ripe grave, encroaching upon one not fit to be touched.¹

**Memorial Markers**

The ideology of the early reformers had made a profound impact on the Church's attitude toward tombstones; but following 1638, there was no remembrance of their guiding principles to produce an equivalent effect. The puritan pinnacle of the sixteen-forties brought with it an abstemious view toward almost every aspect of private and communal life, sometimes including the use of churchyard memorials. For a very brief time their use was influenced by religious attitudes; but within a dozen years after 1638, practical considerations and secular tastes were the sole determiners of the nature of memorial markers and the privilege of placing them.

Glimpses of puritanism can be seen in the effort to remove memorials from the place of worship, where they were considered an irreverent intrusion of human vanity, and an ornamentation savouring of Popery. In 1642, the Synod of Argyll decided that "sepulchres and troughstains should be removed out of the body of

¹Arnot, op. cit., p. 273.
the kirk to the churchyard," and it ordered its presbytery to execute this in their parish visitations.\(^1\) Several years later, the presbytery visiting the kirk at Kilmorie, discovered that the throughstones which had been removed according to order, had been "put in againe in the tyme of the rebellion," and ordered "the said staines to be put out againe betwixt (then) and candlemes next under the paine of breaking of them."\(^2\) During this decade too, there was some effort to attain simplicity in memorials which were placed in the churchyard. A widow in South Leith petitioned the session for the privilege of placing a hewn headstone at her husband's grave (1646), but "ye Sessione in no wayes would grant hir petition to hir becaus everie ane would strife to have ye like favor therfor it was not grantit but absolutilie refusd to hir and all uyrss."\(^3\) In Edinburgh, when the council wished to limit the use of memorials, it was the carved stones which were prohibited.\(^4\)

Such attitudes were sparse and short-lived. By mid-century, churches and councils had begun to see and exploit the financial possibilities of the burial place serving as a memorial ground. In Aberdeen (1640), the council reserved the right to determine the prices for the setting of tombstones "as occasion and the quality of the persons shall require."\(^5\)

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\(^3\) Robertson, *op. cit.*, I, p. 71.
\(^4\) *Supra*, p. 370.
council in 1657, set a charge of an hundred pounds Scots to any who wished to place throughstones in the aisle of the High Kirk. The South Leith session (1667), reversed its policy of 1646, and granted a widow's application to place a hewn headstone on her husband's grave, for the payment of £33 16s. 2 The same session bargained with the school master, granting him the right to place a headstone in return for his services as assistant precentor; and suggested to a widower with a similar request that "he speak to the theasaurer." 3 For erecting a throughstone, the Inverkeithing session set a regular charge of one dollar, and £2 18s. for a headstone. 4 So, in communities large and small, "throughstone money" and "headstone money" became periodic items in treasurers' reports throughout Scotland.

This acceptance of the principle of an additional charge for placing a memorial was a subtle abnegation of the Reformed ideal. The burial place was to be no longer a common ground where the equality of the saints before God was visualized; but it was to become a field of competition where the privileged and the proud were permitted to assert in death the prerogative they had enjoyed in life. Even in the Highlands (by 1726), "handsome and costly" monuments stood out among the simple markers and the unmarked graves. 5

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2 Robertson, op. cit., I, p. 122.
3 Ibid., pp. 128, 136.
4 Stephen, op. cit., p. 461.
As memorial markers were accepted because of pecuniary rather than theological considerations, so was their design devoid of religious influence. The throughstone, of purely secular origin,1 increased its incidence of usage until 1690, when it began to be supplanted by the headstone. The latter form of grave marker enjoyed a number of practical advantages over the recumbent stone: it permitted additional burials in the same grave without removing the stone; its inscriptions were more easily read and less easily defaced. Also, unless a very heavy throughstone were used, the headstone more accurately indicated the exact place and position of the burial. The employment of the headstone was therefore encouraged by the ever increasing need to re-use the grave; the rise in literacy, and the desire to memorialize one's loved ones in words; and by the increasing difficulty in identifying the location of burial.

Though the development of the throughstone and the headstone was quite independent of theological influence, these markers offered ample opportunity for religious expression - an opportunity sometimes accepted and sometimes rejected. A number of seventeenth century memorials bore no inscription whatsoever, not even the name of the deceased. In Innerask, it was a special privilege to erect a stone "with lettering", for which an additional charge was made.2 In Alyth, the minister was "extreamly troubled anent debetable burial stons in the Church zeard," and

1 Supra, p. 214.
2 Stirling, op. cit., p.
the session ordered names be put on them on threat of removal. 1
A legal trial concerning the ownership of two headstones in
Stitchill made it clear that these were unidentified. 2 There
must have been many unlettered throughstones in Glasgow, for
there the council took steps to control their re-sale. 3

When stones were lettered or ornamented, religious ideas
or representations were not universal, but took their places
among other themes. Those who were qualified, consistently used
heraldic decoration on their memorials; this form of adornment
achieved its richest expressions during the seventeenth century.
By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the ever increasing
proportion of those able to afford sculptured stones were ineligible
for heraldic decoration, and had to be content with imitating
the general appearance of the aristocratic memorials. They
utilized the mortality symbols so characteristic of eighteenth
century stones: the skull and cross bones accompanied by the
legend, "Momento Mori," the hour-glass with its "Fugit Hora," the
skeleton or sarcophagus, and the mirror. Vocational representa-
tions too, were common: the carpenter's square, the mason's
trowel, the tailor's scissors, the wright's hammer, etc. Relig-
ious themes, which were sometimes used separately, but more often

2 George Gunn, op. cit., p. 159.
in conjunction with others, included the Resurrection cherubs, winged cherub-heads, palm branches, trumpeters, the circle of eternity, the words of Scripture. Imaginative sculptors attempted to balance the hope of immortality against the fact of death by combining mortality and religious symbols: e.g., on a Peebles headstone the cherubs stand on a platform of mort-heads as they trumpet the Resurrection victory.¹

While there was no general effort to use memorial stones as vehicles of religious expression, ardent Presbyterianism appropriated them for its cause. The efforts of Graham of Claverhouse to suppress the Covenanters resulted in the martyrdom of heroic figures whose graves were clearly marked for the strengthening of the cause. The markers were sometimes ornate, but more frequently not; for their purpose was to witness to the nobility and injustice of the martyrs' deaths. The message was sometimes conveyed in epitaphs like this one found on a tombstone in a field near Moniaive:

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HERE LYETH WILLIAM
SMITH SON TO WILLIAM
SMITH IN HILL WHO FOR
HIS ADHERING TO THE COVE
NANTED WORK OF REFOR
MATION WAS SHOT AT
MINNYHIVE MOSS THE 29TH
DAY OF MARCH 1685 HIS AGE
19 YEARS. THIS DEED WAS
NOT DONE BY A COUNCIL
OF WAR BUT BY COUNTRYMEN
WITHOUT SYSE (assize)²
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¹Illustrated, Fig. 7, Alan Reid, "Churchyard Memorials of Peebles, Stobo, Lyne, West Linton, and Newlands," Society of Antiquaries, Vol. XLVII, p. 137.

Such tombstone testimonies dotted the Covenanter country, and must have played a significant part in perpetuating the views and intransigence of the Covenanters. Robert Paterson (1715-1801), a tombstone sculptor from the parish of Morton, was an ardent Cameronian who made the gravestone witness his life's mission; and whose career inspired the theme of Sir Walter Scott's novel, "Old Mortality." Paterson sought out the burial slabs of the martyrs in order to re-cut the letters of their testimonials; and he erected memorials at graves which had not been properly marked, carrying the freestone from his leased quarry at Gate-lawbrigg. Significantly, his work was inspired by religious conviction, but made no use of religious symbols: he sculptured only the conventional representations of death. Paterson's determined purpose to use the tombstone for partisan promotion was not unknown to previous adherents to Presbyterianism. In 1691, the kirk-session in Arbuthnott granted permission to the family of a late incumbent minister to erect a monument to his memory on condition that the inscription contain nothing derogatory to the present government. Robert Wodrow noted (1726), that the inscription on Mr. Alexander Henderson's monument belied the rumor that Henderson had made a deathbed statement against Presbyterian government.

3 George Henderson, op. cit., p. 270.
Kirk Burial

The resurgence of religious zeal which followed the National Covenant brought with it a renewed effort to suppress kirk-burial. In 1638, the General Assembly called attention to the act of 1588, discharging kirk-burial, and referred it to the care of the presbyteries. The Presbytery of Kirkcaldy accepted its assignment earnestly, as we find it reporting after its visitation at Ballingrie, "Thair is no kirk-buriall heir at all." Furthermore, the Presbytery sent a reference to the Synod of Fife (March, 1640), requesting that "There be ane general act maid for the restraining of Kirk burials"; and the Synod responded (April, 1640), by referring it "to the General Assemblie there determination, and everie Presbyterie within there owne bounds, to try what they could gett done in that matter." Before the General Assembly responded, however, both the presbytery and the synod were prosecuting offenders.

When the problem did return to the agenda of the General Assembly, it was not because of overtures from within Scotland:

2 Presbyterie Booke of Kirkcaldie, op. cit., p. 171.
3 Ibid., p. 169.
4 Synod of Fife, op. cit., p. 121.
5 The accused was the Laird of Strathenrie, for breaking down the church door at Leslie to bury his sister. Presbyterie Booke of Kirkcaldie, op. cit., p. 252.
6 The accused were the heritors of the Kirk of Darsie, Synod of Fife, op. cit., p. 129.
it issued rather from the controversy over the placing of memorials referred to the Assembly by Mr. William Spang and the Kirk-session of Veere.¹ Robert Baillie wrote to Spang (Sept. 22, 1643), reporting the Assembly's debate on August 11; "Your affair spent the most of that day."² The Veere issue had enlarged to a consideration of the more fundamental question, the propriety of kirk-burial. When a firm restriction on burial within the church was suggested, opposition came from predictable sources:

For the generall, sundrie noblemen, especially Eglintoun, were not content to be excluded from the burialls of their fathers in the Church; yet their respect to the preference of strangers (English visitors), and Argyle shewing his burying of his father in the Churchyard, and offering himself to be laid any where, when he were dead, rather than to trouble the Church when he was living, made them in silence let the Act go against them.³

The act, so reluctantly approved, asserted that the place of public worship had long been abused by burial in spite of the Church's prohibitions; and that because of this toleration, other abuses such as the hanging of pencells, brods, honours, and arms, "and such like scandalous Monuments" had crept in. It therefore forbade the use of these memorials in the church, "And inhibites and discharges all persons of whatsoever qualitie, to bury any deceased person within the body of the Kirk, where the people meet for hearing of the Word, and the administration of the Sacraments."⁴

Two years later, the Westminster Assembly offered no

¹ Supra, pp. 320-21.
³ Ibid.
support to the resurgent Scottish effort to suppress kirk-burial. The question came before it, and a motion was made to prohibit burial in the church; "but Mr. Vines, Mr. Marshall, and divers others, were of another mind; but it was thought fit not to meddle with this." The Directory of Worship therefore provided no guidance about the place of interment. It was assumed that the English would continue in their intrenched custom of burying within the churches. Unlike the Scots, the English had no background of ardent opposition to kirk-burial, and the English Puritans were largely unconcerned about it. Long after the Westminster Assembly (1726), an English clergyman wrote a book entitled "Churches no Charnel-Houses: being An Enquiry into the Profaneness, Indecency, and Pernicious Consequences to the Liveing, of Burying the Dead in Churches and Churchyards." This book was most anxious about the sanitary aspect of burial in the church, and was therefore a striking contrast to William Birnie's theologically oriented, "The Blame of Kirk-Burial." About the same time as the publication of the English treatise against kirk-burial, Edward Burt wrote back to a London friend his observation that the Scots "have the good sense not to suffer dead bodies to be buried in their churches." English indifference did not diminish the Scottish desire to prevent kirk-burial; but after the decision in 1643, there was

2Thomas Lewis, Churches No Charnel-Houses, Etc. (London, 1726.)
3Burt, op. cit., p. 55.
a new burst of effort against the ancient abomination. Earlier in the century it had been the presbyteries south of the Forth and Clyde which had worked most ardently to end it,¹ now it was the northern presbyteries which had particularly offended, and which attempted to comply. In 1644, the Presbytery of Strathbogie sought the help of the Provincial Assembly; and by 1648, it was able to report that it was prosecuting the act against kirk-burial.² The Presbytery of St. Andrews not only refused the privilege of burial in the aisle of the Carnbee kirk, but in a subsequent meeting it exacted a confession from the minister of that church for raising the question.³ Between 1643 and 1656, the Presbyteries of Perth,⁴ Elgin,⁵ Dingwall,⁶ and Kirkcaldie,⁷ as well as the Synod of Argyll and the Commissions of the General Assembly were all on record for taking firm action against offenders. These ecclesiastical efforts were supported in the burgh of Aberdeen (1647), when the council endorsed the General Assembly's 1643 ban of kirk-burial, and required that thereafter all burials be in St. Nicholas' Kirkyard.⁸ Two years later, the same

¹ Supra, p. 207.
² Presbytery Book of Strathbogie, op. cit., pp. 52, 88, 89.
³ St. Andrews and Cupar, op. cit., p. 23.
⁷ Presbyterie Booke of Kirkcaldie, op. cit., pp. 276, 290.
⁸ Aberdeen Records, 1643-1747, op. cit., p. 78.
council agreed with the crafts on new burial rates in the churchyard, "Foresomeikle as by Act of Generall Assembly and the laudable practice of this kingdom the burying within the kirk is now abolished, and persons of all sorts and ranks are buried in the kirkyards." ¹

These concerted efforts were soon to recede as once more expediency over-ruled principle. Only six years after the Aberdeen council had banned kirk-burial, it reversed its policy and fixed a schedule of charges for burial in the church.² In 1670 it responded to violence at an evening burial in the church by ruling that all burials in the church or churchyard must be during daylight.³ So, in the presbyteries after 1656, prohibition of kirk-burial disappears from their minutes. About the same time, sessions and councils show their willingness to open the church doors to burials for a fee. The Glasgow council seems to have thought the support of worthy causes justified its policy of charging twenty pounds, directing the fee to "pay for (a) foster mother for a child,"⁴ to a maltman "to help to buy him ane kart and hors,"⁵ to Jonat Geddes and ane poore mane, Mathow Currie quha is havilie trublit with the gravell,"⁶ and "for divers good causes known to the magistrates and counsallers."⁷ The school-

¹ Bain, op. cit., pp. 70-71.
³ Ibid., p. 268.
⁴ Glasgow Records, 1630-62, op. cit., p. 311.
⁵ Ibid., p. 316.
⁶ Ibid., p. 353.
⁷ Ibid., p. 370.
master in Alyth (1661), received 13 s. 4 d. for the kirk-burial of each parishioner, and twice that sum for outsiders.\(^1\) New church buildings offered opportunity for a different policy, but in Banff (1673), lairs were sold throughout the new structure,\(^2\) and in Coupar-Angus (1695), prices were set for burial "within the midle of the said church from the on end to the other."\(^3\) In South Leith a standard charge of one hundred merks was determined in 1697;\(^4\) and when thirty years later a merchant attempted to buy a church lair for only fifty merks, the offer was rejected as "it may prove a bad precedent to break the custom and rule."\(^5\) A prudent business sense also prompted the council in Stirling which complained that it was often asked to grant burial in the West Church "without any gratification made on that account"; and it decided that the family of the deceased must "satisfy the council before the kirk floor could be broken."\(^6\)

While the church was made available as a sepulchre for those who could afford it, the heritors and nobility continued to claim and avail themselves of the same privilege without payment. After 1638, this right was rarely contested; and when it was, the ancient noble privilege prevailed. In 1645, the daughter of Sir Thomas Hope was refused burial in the church at Falkirk; but the

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5 Ibid., Vol. II, p. 49.
Secret Council found the burial allowable since it was not in an area of the kirk used for the hearing of the word or the receiving of the sacraments. In Dunfermline (1661), after a violent company of friends had buried the Laird of Rosyth in the church at 5:00 A. M., the ministers of the church did not press the matter in court, but notarized a statement which established their effort to prevent the offense, and their helplessness in it. In 1664, the Exercise of Alford consulted with the synod concerning the refusal of some heritors to make payment for burial in the church. These heritors claimed that they were not liable for burial charges, since they paid for the building's upkeep; their right to bury in the church, however, was assumed. It had become a regular practice in setting rates for burial in the churches to state that these charges were to "those who are not heritors, or the children of such," or to whoever "hath not a legal title to bury in the church." This assertion of the privilege of burial was also evident when expanding congregations required additional pews. In Kilmarnock, the kirk-session, before it was permitted to build new pews, was required to agree to remove and replace them again when certain families wished to bury

1 Murray, Records of Falkirk Parish, op. cit., p. 137.
3 Exercise of Alford, op. cit., p. 41.
4 Cramond, The Church of Keith, op. cit., p. 22.
5 Arthur B. Dalgetty, The Church and Parish of Liff, (Dundee, 1940), p. 11.
beneath the kirk floor.¹ The Duke of Buccleuch granted a warrant to the Hawick kirk-session to erect seats, "reserving to himself the right to give liberty for burying in the area of the church to such parties as he and his successors may think fit," (1735).² Sometimes, too, burial rights were stipulated in the transfer of property in the church building, or of real property outside. In 1709, Alexander Leslie disposed of his desk in the Banff church "together with lairs underneath the same."³ When George Carnegie bought the Pitarrow estates (1767), the purchase included the rights to the burial place and loft in the kirk.⁴

While it is impossible to know the percentage of burials which took place within the churches before 1780, we are certain that in most areas kirk-burial continued as a symbol of privilege, either inherited or purchased. In some churches in the North, the number of burials was of serious physical consequence. The minister of Boleskine wrote (1684), to the Presbytery of Inverness complaining of the practice of indiscriminate burying within his church, "so that several coffines were hardly under ground, which was like to be very dangerous and noisome to the hearers of the word within the said church."⁵ In 1709, the Presbytery of Dunoon, considering the unpleasantness inside the church of Kilmun, ordered the entire floor "to be overlaid at least two feet deep

¹Andrews, op. cit. p. 244.
²Vernon, op. cit., p. 118.
³Cramond, Annals of Banff, op. cit., II, p. 78.
⁴Cramond, Annals of Fordoun, op. cit., p. 69.
⁵Presbyteries of Inverness and Dingwall, op. cit., p. 118.
with new earth for levelling the said floor and removing the offensive, unwholesome smell.¹

The ultimate disappearance of kirk-burial was less the result of ecclesiastical effort than of hygienic necessity and cultural refinement. Burial without coffins was no longer acceptable, and growing populations made it impossible for even a small portion of a community to find sepulchre within the church without disturbing "green" graves. At the same time, the continuing construction of pews made kirk-burial extremely inconvenient. The burgh of Glasgow maintained an accurate record of interments after 1783, showing that in 1815 its twelve burial places provided 2717 interments.² Even in a small community, the problem of space becomes evident if the number of deaths per annum is multiplied by a single decade. The reality which John Knox clearly understood in 1560, the church in Kippen finally accepted in 1777. After redecorating the old kirk, the heritors agreed with the session that it was time to discontinue burials there.³ It was not until 1817, however, that the case of Hamilton vs. the Heritors of Linlithgow disclosed the uncertain statutory status of kirk-burial and made it clear that it could not

³William Crystal, The Kingdom of Kippen, (Stirling, 1903), p. 117.
be regarded as legal.¹

POST-BURIAL OBSEQUIES

The Dirgie

The dirgie became a conspicuous example of the secularization of death; after 1638, nothing remained of its religious origin except its name. The reading of Scripture and the singing of psalms at the lykewake, which had been considered an acceptable Reformed practice in spite of its similarity to the Roman dirige, had now completely disappeared. There remained only a special gathering of an intimate group of people after the burial: a gathering which had feasting as its single activity.

The dirgie served a variety of practical and social needs: the recognition of the new head of the family; the bringing of solace to the bereaved; the supplying of hospitality to guests who had travelled a distance; an opportunity for an inner circle of guests to conduct necessary business; and most important of all, the sheer necessity of emotional release from the tensions of death and bereavement. One or more of these needs may have been served by a particular dirgie; but the achievement of emotional release was always evident, and this determined the general character of the event. Quite apart from the dirgie, we find various kinds of social intercourse being arranged following the burial obsequies. On the day of his father's funeral,

Alexander Brodie wrote: "After the burial some friends came to the house with us. We began not at worshiping God. We took some refreshment." Sir John Foulis' accounts record that after burials he regularly joined with a few friends for refreshments at country inns; and seventy years later, George Ridpath indulged in the same convention. In Glasgow (1665), the bellman announced that after the burial of one of their brothers, the Maltmen planned a horse race for which they were offering a prize of a saddle.

In the dirgie we find an outlet for this need conventionized by a social occasion in which the family of the deceased acted as host, either in the home or in a public-house. Walter Scott of Kelso described a decorous dirgie when he wrote to his wife about her father's obsequies (1714):

After the funerall, there was prepared in the large room of the Coffee house a very handsome and genteele treat, to which the Magistrates and Gentlemen and friends were invited. The treat consisted of confections, sweet breads, and bisket of divers sorts, very fine and well done, and wines.

A half century later, a similar picture was presented in a letter from the son of the deceased to his brother: "There was 36 or 37 men at (the) Dargie, besides about a Dozen wemon, and was all gentilly served."

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1 Brodie Diary, op. cit., p. 429.
2 Foulis Accounts, op. cit., pp. 119, 125.
3 Ridpath Diary, op. cit., pp. 274, 312.
4 Douie, op. cit., p. 71.
5 Robert Chambers, Domestic Annals, op. cit., III, p. 388.
6 Reprinted from Glasgow Herald, see Henderson, op. cit., p. 476.
While dirgies such as these were agreeable occasions, the records leave no doubt that, of all burial observances, the dirgie was most susceptible to deterioration. In 1664, the Presbytery of St. Andrews was "verie sensible of the great abuses within these bounds at lykewakes and burialls, especially by drinking after the same," and appointed a committee to study the problem. ¹ A month later it agreed to abolish the "the heathnish custome, vnder a popish name, of drinking dirgies after the corpes are interred,"² and a decade later it was still attempting this impossible task.³ Though the effort of suppression was typical of that puritan decade, the presbytery's recognition of the dirgie as the burial custom most subject to abuses was an accurate judgment: for it is clear that emotional "release" frequently knew little bounds. In 1649, when four people were disciplined by the Culross session for indulgence at "James Dobbie's wyf's dregie," one of the accused was James Dobbie, who was "sharply rebuked in pulbick for his miscarriage at such a tyme, who should have been humbled for this visitation in his familie."⁴ When an elder in the church of Urquhart was reprimanded for drunkenness, he explained, "I only went immediatelie after the buriall of Jhone Innes wife . . . with the rest according to the custom and gott my part of the buriall aill." A week later, the Urquhart session forbade "all drinking in taverne houses immediatelie after burials."⁵ In Glasgow (1664),

² Ibid., p. 20.
³ Ibid., p. 68.
⁴ Beveridge, op. cit., pp. 234-35.
⁵ Cramond, The Church and Priory of Urquhart, op. cit. p. 39.
post-burial drinking appears to have been the custom when the burgh discharged the grave maker because he "wrongs many poor people in going to their houssis after the corps ar buried, and does there miscarie himselfe shamfullie."¹

Records of the eighteenth century evidence the continuance of the dirgie, and suggest that its excesses were characteristic. Edward Burt's report of the burial concluded with the company's return from the cemetery, when "a part of them are selected to go back to the house, where all sorrow seems to be immediately banished, and the wine is filled about as fast as it can go round, till there is hardly a sober person among them."² Thomas Hamilton wrote an even more dismal picture of a Highland dirgie which began with great ceremony, and declined into an all night orgy. He asserted that this was customary, for -

A funeral in the less populous districts of Scotland, is always followed by a feast, and the walls, which in the morning heard only the voice of grief and wailing, at evening generally echo the sounds of Bacchanalian merriment.³

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¹ Glasgow Records, 1663-90. op. cit., pp. 44-45.
² Burt, op. cit., p. 219.
³ Hamilton, op. cit., p. 178.
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ABBREVIATIONS

Where long titles or names frequently recur, the following abbreviations are used after the first citation:

Aberdeen Ecclesiastical Records - Selections from the Records of the Kirk Session, Presbytery, and Synod of Aberdeen, 1562-1681

Aberdeen Records - Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen

Acts of Parliaments - The Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland

Baillie Household Book - Household Book of Lady Grisell Baillie 1692-1733

Baillie Letters - The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie

Brodie Diary - The Diary of Alexander Brodie of Brodie and His Son James Brodie of Brodie

E. U. K. - The Book of the Universal Kirk

Cal. Pap. Reg. - Calendar of the Entries of the Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland

Convention of Royal Burghs - Extracts from the Records of the Convention Royal Burghs of Scotland

Edinburgh Records - Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh


Exercise of Alford - Records of the Meeting of the Exercise of Alford

Foulis Accounts - Account Book of Sir John Foulis of Ravelston, 1671-1707

Glasgow Records - Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Glasgow

H. M. G. R. H. - His (Her) Majesty's General Register House

Johnston Diary - The Diary of Sir Archibald Johnston of Wariston
Lady Eloho's Death - A Short Account of Lady Anne Eloho's Death, Feb. 21, 1700

Lamont Diary - The Diary of Mr. John Lamont of Newton, 1649 - 1671

Obit Book, Ayr - Obit Book of the Church of St. John the Baptist, Ayr

Old Dundee - Old Dundee, Ecclesiastical, Burghal and Social, Prior to the Reformation

Privy Council - The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland

P.S.A.S. - Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland

Ridpath Diary - Diary of George Ridpath, Minister of Stichel, 1755-1761

St. Andrews and Coupar - Selections from the Minutes of the Presbyteries of St. Andrews and Coupar

S. E. R. S. - Scottish Burgh Record Society

S. H. S. - Scottish History Society

S. R. S. - Scottish Record Society

Source Book - A Source Book of Scottish History

Stirling Records - Extracts from the Records of the Merchant's Guild of Stirling, Glasgow, and Sons of the Rock Society

Synod of Fife - Selections from the Minutes of the Synod of Fife

Thanes of Cawdor - The Book of Thanes of Cawdor, 1236-1742

T.S.E.S. - Transactions of the Scottish Ecclesiological Society

Wodrow Correspondence - The Correspondence of the Rev. Robert Wodrow