

THE COLONSAY CATECHIST

JAMES MOORE, CATECHIST AT COLONSAY 1728-36

by

Dr. Domhnall Uilleam Stiubhart

Dedicated by the author to

Mrs Flora MacNeill and the children of Colonsay School

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FOREWORD

I would like to thank the staff of Edinburgh University Library, the National Library of Scotland, and above all the National Archives of Scotland for all the help and patience they showed to me during my research. This article could not have been written without the groundwork laid down in two masterly and exceptionally important local history books: De Vere Loder's classic "Colonsay and Oronsay in the Isles of Argyll: their history, flora, fauna and topography" (Edinburgh, 1935: reprinted Colonsay, 1995), and the new study by Peter Youngson, "Jura: Island of Deer" (Edinburgh, 2000). I apologize for including footnotes, and ask the reader's indulgence and forbearance: I hope that they show just how rich and varied are the archival sources for the study of Colonsay during this fascinating period. Unless indicated otherwise, all manuscript references are to the National Archives of Scotland in Edinburgh.

A few definitions may be of help for overseas readers who might be unfamiliar with the workings of the presbyterian Church of Scotland. In the church hierarchy, a presbytery is the court above the kirk session, where each parish in the presbyterial bounds is represented by its minister and an elder; it usually meets once a month. A synod is the next step up, a (generally) annual court made up of all members of the constituent presbyteries. The General Assembly is the supreme court of the Church of Scotland, composed of commissioners (ministers and elders) appointed by all the presbyteries in the country; it meets each May in Edinburgh. Heritors are the parish landowners responsible for the upkeep of the local church and the supplying of a manse and glebe for the local minister.

Domhnall Uilleam Stiubhart

THE COLONSAY CATECHIST: Part 1

Having recently spent a most enjoyable few days organising a small Gaelic féis with the children at Kilchattan School, I thought that Colbhasaich at home and away might be interested in a little study of the first schoolteachers and catechists we know about in any detail who taught in Colonsay. These were James Moore (whose surname generally appears in contemporary documents, though not in his own signature, as "Muir") who taught from 1728 – at least – until 1736; and his successor, and indeed briefly his predecessor, Donald MacLean. Although I had intended at first just to present a mere list of names and a couple of letters, I soon found that there was a great deal of information hidden away in the archives about both these men, information which might be of some interest to the people of Colonsay, and maybe even of some use in contributing to the history of the island and perhaps further afield.

Through looking at the vagaries of the catechists' careers – and their careers were nothing if not volatile – I hope that we might come to a better understanding not only of the different pressures and interests which affected and shaped the history of Colonsay during the eighteenth century, but also of the two bodies which funded these schoolmasters: the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, known as the SSPCK; and the Royal Bounty Committee. The papers of these two rather amorphous organisations, especially those of the latter, form a largely unindexed treasure trove for the historian of the early modern Gàidhealtachd. Owing perhaps primarily to the basic difficulty of retrieving the documents from storage for research, studies of these exceptionally important organisations are few and far between. What studies have been written are generally made from the top down. Maybe greater attention has been paid to "mission statements" and policies than to how these organisations actually functioned.

However, through studying how the SSPCK and the Royal Bounty Committee funded and administered the post of catechist-schoolmaster in a small and, even then, relatively remote island such as Colonsay, I hope that we might come to a better understanding of how they operated "on the ground". Of course, as far as the ministers meeting at Edinburgh were concerned, Colonsay was not high on the list of areas which needed urgent assistance: there were no Catholics on the island, certainly no missionary priests, nor was it a hotbed of jacobitism. We cannot make any claims that the experience of the Colonsay catechists was at all typical of their colleagues elsewhere. In the correspondence and committee minutes which relate to them, however, we can see clearly how supposedly clearly delineated, closely regulated methods of management and supervision were altered and at times thwarted by the various tensions, suspicions and basic misunderstandings which constantly coloured relations between centre and periphery.

In order better to understand the experiences of the first catechist in Colonsay, it might be helpful to take a look at the background, both local and national, to his story. With regard to the national context, we will briefly examine the origins of the Royal Bounty scheme which organised and financed the nationwide, and indeed subsequently international, teaching programme James Moore was involved in. First of all, however, I should like to consider the character of the Rev. Neill Campbell

(1677-1757), the minister of Jura and Colonsay in the first half of the eighteenth century, and the problems he faced in administering his vast and scattered parish.

The Rev. John MacSween, the previous minister of the parish, had enjoyed somewhat fraught relations with his colleagues in the Presbytery of Kintyre, as suggested by the name under which he is recorded, perhaps rather tongue in cheek, in their minutes: "McSwine". MacSween not only remained an episcopalian after the introduction of presbyterianism to the Church of Scotland in 1690, he also remained in possession of his parish. This stubbornness, as well as the fact that MacSween appears by repute to have been an accomplished drinker, may go some way to explain the presbytery's consistent hostility to him. We should also note just how zealously presbyterian, and indeed fervently anti-episcopalian, some members of the Presbytery of Kintyre were. The father of the Rev. David Simson, minister of Kilarrow and Kilchoman, had been minister of Southend, but was now in exile over the ocean in New Jersey because of his religious allegiance. The Rev. Robert Duncanson, minister of the Highland Kirk in Campbeltown, who died in February 1697, had been ordained as a member of the earlier presbyterian Synod of Argyll during the Cromwellian era. Imprisoned in 1685 because of his presbyterian faith, he was later described by the Rev. Robert Wodrow as "a man of rare gifts and parts and a *Malleus episcopaliū*."¹ We should also remember that the majority of the Lowlanders who had been involved in the Kintyre plantation in the second half of the seventeenth century came from staunch Ayrshire covenanting stock.² Just a few years before, in May 1685, a great number of these presbyterian Lowland colonists had risen up with Archibald Campbell, ninth earl of Argyll, their erstwhile patron and benefactor, as part of his ill-fated rebellion against James VII; after its collapse, many of them had been deported overseas, mostly to the Jamaican plantations.³ The campaign to depose the recalcitrant episcopal minister of Jura was thus also a chance to settle some old scores.

John MacSween appeared before a meeting of the presbytery appointed by the Synod of Argyll in November 1697, a show trial at which he was presented with a lengthy list alleging consistent negligence of duty. MacSween denied the charges, but nevertheless was suspended from office at the next meeting of the Synod of Argyll. Rather to his credit, MacSween ignored all charges and carried on at his post. It would be a full six years before the presbytery deposed him, in February 1703.⁴

Two months later, the young Neill Campbell was appointed as MacSween's replacement. This was largely thanks to the efforts of John Campbell of Sannaig, baillie of Jura, who represented to the Presbytery of Kintyre on 26 June 1704 "that he has been at no small expences in attending sundry of the presbytries and synods in pursuance of several Calls to probationers in order to get a minister settled in the Isles of Jura and Colonsa particularly Mr Neill Campbel their present Minister of which expences he had not been hitherto reimbursed by the other heritors concerned in the said Isles tho he acted by their Commission."⁵ Donald MacNeill of Crear and his son Malcolm, who had just acquired the island of Colonsay, were present at the same

¹ *Fasti* iv, 49, 66, 73.

² Andrew McKerral, *Kintyre in the seventeenth century* (Edinburgh, 1948), 80-109.

³ Paul Hopkins, *Glencoe and the end of the Highland war* (Edinburgh, 1998), 95-103.

⁴ Loder, *Colonsay*, 150 – 1; Youngson, *Jura*, 183 – 95; cf. also CH2/557/3, 160, 187, 206; /4, 5, 82

⁵ CH2/1153/1 fo.158v.

meeting, and voiced the same complaint. It was hardly an auspicious beginning to Campbell's career.

It was not long before further problems arose. Traditionally the minister of Jura and Colonsay had the island of Oronsay as a glebe. Malcolm MacNeill of Colonsay refused to give Campbell the farm unless the baillie of Jura contributed as well. At a meeting the following year, on 30 July 1705, the two heritors fell out with each other.⁶ The presbytery continued to attempt to hammer out terms with the heritors, but no manse, glebe or indeed increase of stipend was forthcoming. The most the local landowners would allow Campbell was free transport between the many islands in his new parish. But even this promise does not appear to have been honoured. For the next four years Neill Campbell complained to the presbytery that he was unable to obtain a parish glebe. In September 1707, evidently fed up with the stalemate, the minister requested a transfer to another parish. The fact that he was shortly to marry Florence, daughter of Donald MacNeill of Tarbet on the island of Gigha, may have contributed to his eagerness to leave for a more lucrative position. Indeed, Campbell could not even guarantee a jointure for his new wife; that had to be done on his behalf by his brother Patrick and a friend. In fact, it would be another forty three years before Neill Campbell demitted his charge.⁷

Campbell's difficulties were not just due to the heritors' reluctance to finance his ministry. There may have been deeper hostility towards him from the people, if not from the heritors themselves, as a presbyterian and thus the representative of an alien and still unpopular denomination. In addition, he was the replacement for the disgraced John MacSween, who, as we have seen, may have been more popular in the parish than the allegations worked up against him by the Presbytery of Kintyre might otherwise suggest; indeed, he was still living on the island in 1706.⁸ It is noteworthy that Neill Campbell nominated John Campbell, baillie of Jura as his accompanying elder to the Synod of Argyll in 1711 and 1712, while the Duncan MacKellar nominated in 1716 would appear to be the same as the only Jura man called to witness against MacSween in 1697.⁹ In passing, we might note that MacSween's daughter was married to Archibald Campbell, second son of Duncan Campbell of Sannaig, previous baillie of Jura, despite (or maybe because of) the fact that her father once in prayer "did Imprecat destruction on the Ballie of Jura his famely and Children".¹⁰

As will be seen later in the article, even after a generation the Rev. Neill Campbell had made little progress with his parishioners. Certainly they would have little interest in having to submit their problems to outside decisions. Martin Martin's account of Colonsay, probably compiled as a result of a visit at the very end of the seventeenth century, mentions the women of the island still keeping the feast of the Blessed Virgin, and relates an instance of the bible being used as a healing charm. This rather suggests that the people there, if not in Jura, remained strongly wedded to popular

⁶ CH2/1153/1 fos. 167r.-v.

⁷ Loder, *Colonsay*, 151-2; Youngson, *Jura*, 196-9; Henry Paton (ed.), *The Clan Campbell: abstracts of entries relating to Campbells in the Sheriff Court Books of Argyll at Inveraray* (Edinburgh, 1913), 132-3, 147.

⁸ Youngson, summing up MacSween's character, has "a suspicion that he may well have been a most likeable rascal": *Jura* 195; also 248

⁹ CH2/557/5, 117, 129, 186, 314; CH2/1153/1 fo.72; also 167v.

¹⁰ CH2/1153/1 fo.72; Youngson, *Jura*, 194

rites and beliefs which may have been reinforced by the teachings of the Franciscan missionaries who ministered to the Colbhasaich as far back as the 1620s.¹¹ As we shall see, in 1727 Campbell, explaining why he had never administered communion to his parishioners, replied that "He was discouraged from attempting such a work in regard he found little appearance of the reality of Religion amongst them".¹² What the people of the parish did expect from their clergyman was that he baptise their children, and this, of course, he appears to have done conscientiously, although it is most unfortunate for later Colbhasaich genealogists that it is only the Jura records which have survived.¹³

Campbell does seem to have had a brief moment of success at the beginning of 1712. It is clear that, doubtless with the support of sympathetic ministers and other landowners, he had taken the heritors of the parish to court. In fact, he had dragged the case through the Commissary Court of the Isles, then down to the Court of Session in Edinburgh. At Edinburgh on 11 January 1712 Donald MacLean of Tarbert in Jura promised to pay the minister his share of the money owed for the parish manse and glebe, as well as compensation for the expenses of the case.¹⁴ Neill Campbell was not picking on MacLean because he was the smallest and thus the least powerful landowner in the parish. Donald MacLean had just inherited the estate of Torloisk after the death of his cousin Alexander, a captain in the Scots Guards who had been mortally wounded at the battle of Brihuega in Spain on 9 December 1710. With his new estate in north-west Mull, Tarbert was now in a position to pay his dues, and it was surely expected that the other heritors would follow suit. Sophisticated and cultured, hereditary tutors to the family of their chiefs, the MacLeans of Duart, the MacLeans of Torloisk are an exceptionally important family in the history of Mull. Donald MacLean of Tarbert, a man "noted for his kindness and refinement of manners", will appear again later in this article.¹⁵

While the minister and Donald MacLean hammered out an agreement in Edinburgh, it seems that John Campbell of Sannaig, the baillie of Jura, had in fact paid the entire expenses due to Neill Campbell on behalf of the other heritors. A letter of 22 January to Campbell of Sannaig from Murdoch MacLaine of Lochbuie, at that time the owner of the Ardlussa estate in the north of Jura, thanks him for the trouble he has taken, promises to reimburse him for his pains, and also alludes to a planned meeting of himself, the baillie, Tarbert and Archibald Campbell of Crackaig at Kinuachdrach at the very northern tip of Jura. Rather ominously, Lochbuie promises that he will do his utmost "to defend ous in time coming in just proportion".¹⁶ Despite his little victory, then, Campbell's problems with his refractory heritors appear to have continued unabated.

¹¹ Martin Martin, *A description of the Western Isles of Scotland* (London, 1703), 246-9; Cathaldus Giblin, *Irish Franciscan mission to Scotland 1619-1646* (Dublin, 1964), 24, 34-5, 41-4, 53, 61-2, 81, 121, 122, 124, 125, 131, 137, 149; Kevin Byrne, *Colkitto!: A celebration of Clan Donald of Colonsay (1570-1647)* (Colonsay, 1997), 105-10, 217-24.

¹² CH2/1153/3, 59

¹³ Youngson, *Jura*, 237-53.

¹⁴ CS271/22, 801

¹⁵ Alexander Maclean Sinclair, *The Clan Gillean* (Charlottetown, 1892), 459-60; Jo Currie, *Mull: an island and its people* (Edinburgh, 2000), 145, 173, 443.

¹⁶ GD64/1/131

Loder makes much of the difficulties faced by Campbell in his struggle against both the local landowners and indeed the unforgiving geography of his parish: "such were the difficulties with which he had to contend that, combined with indifferent health, they caused him to lapse into cantankerous negligence long before the end of his time."¹⁷ Youngson, in his book on Jura, comes to much the same conclusion. Contemporaries, however, may have been more sympathetic, while fully recognising his unfitness for his post. The Rev. James Boes or Bowes of the Lowland Charge in Campbeltown, writing in June 1729 to Nicol Spence, agent of the Church of Scotland, describes John Campbell, the minister of Kilcalmonell in north Kintyre as "an utter Invalid, both in body & mind", and goes on to say that "Jura [is] little better, tho otherwise a worthy man".¹⁸ But it seems that within a few years of taking up his parish Campbell's spirit was broken. He averaged barely one attendance every two years at the monthly presbytery meetings, excusing himself both because of the bad weather and his own chronic bad health.¹⁹

In terms of comparative attendance, Neill Campbell was more assiduous visiting the yearly meetings of the Synod of Argyll at Inveraray. Indeed, his habit was to attend meetings of the Presbytery of Kintyre not in Campbeltown, but rather when his colleagues were present at the gathering of the entire synod. Obviously, the burgh was a place where the minister could transact business and meet with old friends. Synod records, however, also suggest that Campbell had more allies there than at the presbytery meetings in Campbeltown, fellow ministers who could better appreciate the burdens he laboured under in trying to supervise the different islands which made up his scattered parish. It was through the synod, at the urging of the heritor Malcolm MacNeill of Taynish, that the island of Gigha was eventually legally separated from Campbell's parish (although in fact it had been administered from the parish of Killean since 1698). We should of course note once again that Neill Campbell's wife Florence was the daughter of Donald MacNeill of Tarbet on that island.²⁰

It was through the synod also that Neill Campbell mooted a radical new proposal in August 1716. Together with another Rev. John Campbell, this time the minister of Killarrow in Islay and thus the closest neighbouring clergyman, he suggested that the parish of Jura and Colonsay might be split in two. Although it is not actually stated, it is obvious that he meant that the two islands should be erected into two separate parishes. The proposal would be partly paid for, according to the ministers, by appropriating the local revenues of the old episcopal Bishop of the Isles. Theoretically, this was feasible: after the presbyterian ascendancy in 1690, the moneys originally due each year to the Bishop of the Isles had been awarded to the Synod of Argyll for ecclesiastical and educational purposes. Unfortunately, the synod would or could do nothing without the assent of the local heritors:

The Synod therefore desired the said two Bretheren to aquaint the Heritors of these Isles That the Synod would be very ready to go into any reasonable measures for advancing so good a work and to

¹⁷ Loder, *Colonsay*, 151

¹⁸ CH1/2/59 fo.199; on 8 March 1732 the Rev. John Campbell was deposed from his parish for drunkenness: *Fasti* iv, 58.

¹⁹ Loder, *Colonsay*, 152; Youngson, *Jura*, 198-200

²⁰ CH2/557/3, 206; /4, 26-7, 93, 257-8; /5, 178-9, 196, 242-3, 259-60, 267; CH2/1153/1 fos.144, 145, 161v., 162.

encourage them to meet with the next Synod here in Summer, And in the meantyme they Recommend to the sd Mr Neil Campbell to take special care of the small Isles belonging to his Charge.²¹

The ministers' proposal might have been better timed. Made in the immediate aftermath of the Jacobite rising of 1716, the local landowners probably had enough financial troubles of their own without adding to them by paying church dues, possibly twice over, which they badly needed themselves. Neill Campbell did not attend the synod meeting of 1717. The heritors must have made their displeasure felt, and it would be some years before the proposal was raised again, this time in very different political circumstances.

It is probably safe to say that the ministers on mainland Argyll would not have been well acquainted with the spiritual welfare of the people of Colonsay. They would have been more aware of what was happening on Scarba and the other islands to the north of Jura, hence the special admonition to Neill Campbell to look after the islanders there. Indeed, for at least some years afterwards the people of these small islands were regularly served by the Rev. Daniel Morison, minister of Kilbrandon and Kilchattan, the mainland parish opposite, and, although the proposal came to nothing, it was later suggested that they should in fact be disjoined from Campbell's parish and annexed thereto.²²

By the 1720s it looks as if the Rev. Neill Campbell and the Presbytery of Kintyre had reached a *modus vivendi*. Every so often the presbytery would urge that the recalcitrant minister appear more regularly; Campbell would thereupon, for appearances' sake, tender the usual excuses of bad weather and indifferent health. This long-standing tacit agreement would be disrupted by the intrusion of the representatives of the west-coast presbyteries who made up the Synod of Argyll, themselves impelled by the great plans and projects for the church taking shape further north. As the Gaelic proverb says, '*S e farmad a nì treabhadh* – it is envy that makes the ploughing. It was from the mid-1720s, a time of astonishing upheaval in the administrative framework of the church in the western Gàidhealtachd, that the synod would give the greatest assistance to Neill Campbell, through colleagues, auxiliary ministers and indeed money. It is then that the difference between their zealotry and the comparative dilatoriness of the Presbytery of Kintyre comes through most clearly. First of all, however, we have to turn to the wider picture, and look at the nature and origins of these extraordinary innovations introduced in a space of barely three years.

²¹ CH2/557/5, 196

²² CH2/557/5, 226, 238, 249, 269, 278, 280, 310.

THE COLONSAY CATECHIST: Part 2 – The Royal Bounty

Once more, I would like to ask your forbearance. I had intended this week to take a brief look at how the yearly grant of a thousand pounds from the government to the Church of Scotland – the so-called Royal Bounty – came to be during the mid-1720s. It was, after all, the reason why our catechists were employed in the first place; usually it paid half their salaries, with the SSPCK paying the remainder. However, as this particular story has never really been looked at before, my research grew and grew, taking me through all sorts of official letters and church records. So I will have to ask for your patience and forgiveness – the following couple of articles will see us altering the focus of our historical telescope and training our gaze on the middle distance, on the national scene, rather than on Colonsay. When we do at last turn to the Colonsay catechist, however, I hope that we will understand better the difficulties the poor man found himself in when he fell foul of his employers in Edinburgh. Finally, I hope that the rather obscure political background in this piece doesn't prove too indigestible.

i The Royal Bounty

Since its foundation in 1709, the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, the evangelical charitable incorporation known as the SSPCK, had been paying the salaries of schoolteachers scattered throughout the Gàidhealtachd. However, it was not until the late 1720s that the scheme really took off, with a massive increase in the number of schools financed by that body. This expansion was to a great degree enabled by the new Committee for the Reformation of the Highlands which, under the auspices of the Church of Scotland, distributed an annual grant from the civil list of one thousand pounds known as the Royal Bounty, money which would pay for itinerant ministers and catechists in the many parishes, above all in Roman Catholic areas of the Gàidhealtachd, which were too large and scattered to be supervised effectively by a single clergyman. Although the two bodies operated largely separately from one another for the first few years following the initial grant of the Royal Bounty in 1725, it was not long before they began an informal partnership by which many SSPCK schoolteachers also worked as Royal Bounty catechists. As we shall see later, this rather uneasy arrangement could lead to some potentially awkward situations.

This new religious and educational initiative was, of course, an "incorporative drive" designed to encourage Gaels to be loyal to the presbyterian church, to the government, and to the Hanoverian succession, by weaning them away from the ever-present dangers of Catholicism and jacobitism. Although primarily aimed at the younger generation, it was hoped that the lessons learnt would percolate upwards to parents, older siblings and neighbours. The project was also intended to enable a systematic exploitation of the commercial opportunities of the land they lived in. Gaels would thus become useful and obedient subjects of the British state. The

SSPCK, whose leading members had thought hard and lobbied long on this issue, had a clear, confident and, most importantly, politically enticing end in view:

The most Proper remedy of these Evills appears to be a carefull Instructing of that Poor people in the Principles of True Religion which are the ffirmest pledges of subjects obedience to Lawfull authority, ffor when the Judgment & Conscience is rightly informed these people will throw off their Slavery to these who using au[thori]tie over ym, especially when they find protection & Countenance from the best of Kings, and by the Blessing of God upon these means the Inhabitants of the fors[ai]d Countries who are not hurtfull to the Comon wealth will become usefull Members yrof, and a farder Strength to it; And that Vast Country, which Ly uncultivat may be improven to great advantage when its Inhabitants shall be Instructed in religion and Vertue, yr being not only great tracts of ground to work upon, But also many Excellent places ffor Erecting ffisheries in And great Numbers of people in those parts who with a mixture of Strangers which may be set among them, may be imployed to good purposes

that peoples want of the knoledge of the Christian Religion and of their retaining the Irish Tongue is the great Occasion of their continuancy in the unhappy dependance and alliance above mentioned so nothing can have a more Immediat & obvious tendancie to bring ym under the strictest allegiance to our Gracious King and Protestant Succession in his Royal family, And into a good Correspondence and understanding with his Majesties Loyal Subjects and to a peaceable way of Living with their Nighbours than Instructing ym in the methodes afors[ai]d...²³

As we shall see, the original Royal Bounty grant was more to do with preventing renewed jacobite activity and curbing resurgent Catholicism in the Gàidhealtachd. It was soon recognized, however, that the project would be most effective if it paid for community schoolteachers as well as for itinerant preachers and catechists. Once this step was taken, it was inevitable that the SSPCK, with its strong motivation, its zealously held beliefs, and some twenty years' experience in the field, would become involved. The Society had definite teaching methods, and a specific vision behind them, a vision worked out through numerous memorials and petitions, in which Gaelic language and culture would be completely extirpated from the Gàidhealtachd. Instead of having to rely upon the donations of well-wishers and its own stock, the SSPCK could now employ state resources as well, and so its influence was extended much more widely than beforehand.

The Royal Bounty project could only be effective if preachers, catechists and teachers were closely supervised by local presbyteries. This was only possible because of the extraordinary transformation of the structure of the Church of Scotland in the Gàidhealtachd in the mid-1720s. This alteration, and indeed the lobbying which led to the granting of the Royal Bounty, were set in motion because both ministers and, no doubt, the politicians and gentry who as church elders accompanied so many of them to the General Assembly and served on church committees, had begun to take a much

²³ GD95/10/77; cf. GD95/1/2, 234-40; 2/3, 159-65.

closer interest in Highland affairs. Far-reaching changes were taking place in government policy towards Scotland, and indeed in the way Scotland was governed. Recent jacobite scares had made the political establishment nervous about the apparently increasing numbers of Catholics in the Gàidhealtachd. I would like here to take a look at these momentous events.

Within three years, between 1724 and 1727, the framework of church government on the west coast of the Gàidhealtachd was altered out of all recognition. In the far north, a new presbytery of Tongue was carved out of the presbyteries of Caithness and Dornoch. Further to the south another new presbytery, Gairloch, was detached from that of Dingwall, while across the Minch to the west the Outer Hebrides, now separated from the Presbytery of Skye, was erected into the Presbytery of Long Island. In the heart of the Gàidhealtachd yet another two new presbyteries were created, disjoined from the sprawling Presbytery of Lorn: around Lochaber, the Presbytery of Abertarff; while, as well as the island itself, the new Presbytery of Mull took in the Rough Bounds, Coll and Tiree. With the exception of that of Mull, all these new presbyteries were placed under the pastoral care of the newly-created Synod of Glenelg. It was the biggest shakeup in church government for three generations.

The impulse for such changes appears to come primarily through the efforts of the Presbytery of Skye. Following the failures of the jacobite risings of 1715 and 1719, the exile of Uilleam Dubh Mackenzie, Lord Seaforth, the major jacobite landowner in the area, and the death of Sir Domhnall MacDonald of Sleat, the jacobite estates in their area were eventually forfeited and placed under official administration. The presbytery was thus presented with a great opportunity. Their greatest enemies had at last been worsted. Now that their estates were under government control, the chance offered itself for the presbytery to reclaim the teinds and stipends due to them, revenues which had usually been withheld by the previous episcopalian or Catholic landlords. These ecclesiastical dues could be used to set up new parishes, finance new ministers and build new churches. The very real possibility that the estates might soon be auctioned off to jacobite sympathisers, proxies for their erstwhile owners, added fresh impetus to the struggle to recover these dues. To accomplish such a task required energy, patience, skill, skilful lobbying of the central authorities, and sheer dogged perseverance.

The achievements of the Presbytery of Skye are as follows. On 19 December 1722 two new parishes were created on the Island of Lewis. In a meeting of the General Assembly on 19 May 1724 the new presbyteries of Long Island, Abertarff and Gairloch were created; these, with the original Presbytery of Skye, were to be overseen by the new Synod of Glenelg. Nearly two years later, on 16 February 1726, the plan was further refined when three new parishes were disjoined in Skye and the Small Isles.²⁴

The ministers of the Presbytery of Skye were, however, not the only evangelical reformers in the Gàidhealtachd at this time. In north-west Sutherland Lord Reay had taken it upon himself to lobby on behalf of the minister of Durness and the impossible burden he had to bear in administering the huge parish. What was originally an appeal

²⁴ CH1/1/29, 26-32, 162-6, 276-8, 354-5, 418-24, 432-3.

for collections from throughout the country turned into a more ambitious plan, eventually resulting in a general reorganisation of the church in the far north. Most of this scheme, with the new Presbytery of Tongue as its centrepiece, was authorized at a General Assembly meeting of 11 May 1726.²⁵ We should also note that other parts of the Gàidhealtachd and indeed the Northern Isles shared in such reorganisation: in 1725 new synods of Caithness and Orkney were created, while, in the eastern Gàidhealtachd, the Presbytery of Abernethy was refounded six years after its original dissolution. Meanwhile, on 12 May 1726, the Synod of Mull had taken unilateral action in creating a new Presbytery of Mull out of the western parishes of the Presbytery of Lorn, a step taken without the permission of the General Assembly, and only discovered, much to their disapproval, when the synod record book was examined two years later.²⁶

The long-term effect of this transformation cannot be underestimated. From the fledgling presbyteries, and the new Synod of Glenelg, the church could receive a constant flow of information about the state of religion on the west coast. It could thus direct and intensify its missionary efforts where they were most needed, and supervise the evangelization of the west coast and the islands much more closely. Local ministers, and indeed their congregations, could no longer expect to get away without regular inspection of their life and work. Above all, it was hoped that this new structure would allow the church to combat a seemingly resurgent and successful Roman Catholic missionary effort, both through vigorous sermonizing and keeping a watchful eye on the priests and their helpers. But these changes did not take place in a vacuum; rather, they should be related to the far-reaching political changes then reshaping the government of Scotland and state policies towards the Gàidhealtachd.²⁷

ii The political background

In the aftermath of the union of parliaments in 1707, power and patronage in Scottish politics were bitterly fought over by two groupings of whig politicians: on the one hand, the so-called Argathelians under the leadership of John Campbell, second duke of Argyll, and his brother Archibald, earl of Ilay; and on the other, the set of politicians nicknamed the Squadrone, under John Ker, first duke of Roxburgh. The Argathelians were in the ascendancy at the time of the 1715 jacobite rising, but the leniency Argyll, as commander-in-chief of the forces in Scotland, showed towards the defeated jacobites, his reluctance to wreak vengeance upon them, proved to be the downfall of his interest. Such policies may have been popular in Scotland, but they allowed his political enemies in London to accuse him of cowardice and even of covertly favouring the Stuart cause. Although these charges were of course quite unjust, they had the desired effect: Argyll, after falling out with the king himself, was

²⁵ CH1/1/29, 128-32, 253, 357, 405-6, 513-14, 554; CH1/1/31, 47-9.

²⁶ CH1/1/31, 439.

²⁷ The following paragraphs owe much to the following studies: Rosalind Mitchison, “*The government and the Highlands, 1707-1745*” in N.T. Phillipson and Rosalind Mitchison (eds.), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement* (Edinburgh, 1996 [1970]), 24 - 46; P.W.J. Riley, *The English Ministers and Scotland 1707-1727* (London, 1964); Richard H. Scott, “*The politics and administration of Scotland 1725-48*” (University of Edinburgh Ph.D., 1981); John Stuart Shaw, *The management of Scottish society 1707-1764* (Edinburgh 1983); John M. Simpson, “*Who steered the gravy train, 1707 – 1766?*” in Phillipson and Mitchison, 47 – 72; Eric G. Wehrli, “*Scottish Politics in the age of Walpole*”, (University of Chicago Ph.D., 1983).

disgraced and, together with his brother, stripped of official posts. The Squadrone, meanwhile, had backed the punitive measures taken against the rebels by the English ministry, and so Roxburgh, with the favour of George I, became Secretary of State for Scotland.²⁸

It was not long, however, before the tide began to turn against the Squadrone, primarily because of a contest for power between English whig ministers. At the same time as Argyll and Ilay had fallen, the earls of Stanhope and Sunderland had succeeded in winning the king's favour and so ousting from power their rivals Robert Walpole and viscount Townshend. Their ascendancy, however, was to be but short-lived. The collapse of the South Sea Bubble, an ill-advised scheme to finance the National Debt, devastated public and private finances alike. With his government beset by accusations of corruption and mismanagement, Stanhope was under such strain that in February 1721 he died. He was replaced as Secretary of State by his rival Townshend. Two months later his colleague Sunderland was forced to resign from the Treasury, making way for Robert Walpole. Perhaps inevitably, in the wake of these major changes of government in London the structure, administration, personnel and policies of the Scottish political world would be transformed as well.²⁹

English politicians had, of course, two main expectations of the Scots who managed the country for them. First of all, the people had to be tranquil and obedient. As they were well aware, there were still large sections of the population, especially north of the River Tay, who remained disaffected to the government, indeed to the very idea of Hanoverian rule from London. Indeed, it was not only the politicians in London who tended to overreact to the slightest rumour of jacobite activity in the north; many isolated clergymen and government employees in the north were still extremely nervous about continuing support for the Stuart monarchy, and indeed an apparent ongoing revival of Roman Catholicism, in certain areas of the Gàidhealtachd.

Secondly, all English politicians were agreed on one thing: that Scotland had to pay its way. Smuggling and corruption should be stamped out, new taxes should be introduced, and government revenue collection should be made more efficient. Measures should be introduced to encourage the development of trades and the fishing industry. Scotland would thus no longer be a dead weight on the United Kingdom, a drain on resources, but rather a commercial partner, albeit a junior one, of her richer English neighbour. The best way of fulfilling this aim, it appeared, was to try to bring Scottish administration and patronage into a closer union with those of England.³⁰

In order to govern Scotland more efficiently and to stimulate her economy, the long-term policy of Walpole and Townshend was to take the distribution of official Scottish patronage into their own hands and, indeed, to impose direct rule as far as possible, in effect to integrate the country's government with that of England. The first fruits of this policy was the amalgamation, following the report of a specially-

²⁸ Riley, *English ministers and Scotland*, 263-7; Scott, "Politics and administration of Scotland", 305-6; Wehrli, "Scottish politics", 14, 109-12, 125, 130, 174, 178-81.

²⁹ Ragnhild Hatton, *George I: elector and king* (London, 1978), 247-56; Riley, *English ministers and Scotland*, 269-70; Wehrli, "Scottish politics", 15.

³⁰ Wehrli, "Scottish politics", 86-9.

constituted commission, of the Scottish and English Customs Boards in 1723.³¹ However, such measures depended, of course, upon the support of Scottish politicians. As we have seen, the most popular grouping in Scotland was not Roxburgh's Squadrone, but rather Argyll's Argathelians, who were widely perceived as being the patriotic party prepared to defend Scotland's interests. The duke's personal support among Scottish MP's - those men bound to him by ties of blood, friendship and patronage - was an impressive one.³² It thus made political sense for Walpole and Townshend to court the Argathelians rather than rely upon the Squadrone who had of course benefited from the patronage of their rivals. This change of power, however, did not happen overnight.

As long as he had the favour of the king, Roxburgh remained a formidable figure, who did his best to resist the leaching away of patronage and administrative posts to his rivals. Towards the end of 1723, though, with George I absent in Hanover, Walpole and Townshend took their chance. A struggle ensued, but by the end of the following year Roxburgh was effectively sidelined from Scottish politics. His most important Squadrone allies were stripped of their positions at the end of May 1725, while he himself was dismissed from his post in August 1725. In their place were introduced Argathelian supporters. However, Walpole and Townshend had no intention of setting up Argyll as new master of Scotland in place of Roxburgh. Rather, through patronage, adoption of Argathelian policies, especially towards the Gàidhealtachd, and adroit outmanoeuvring of the duke of Argyll, they made themselves effective leaders of the grouping. The introduction of a highly unpopular tax on malt in 1725 proved to be the undoing of both Roxburgh and Argyll. Argyll, boxed in, felt unable to support the tax and thus compromise his personal popularity in Scotland, while Roxburgh and his allies, by encouraging resistance to the measure, ensured their own political destruction.³³ "By 1725 the Scottish parties and the issues which sustained them were virtually eliminated, the English ministers completely victorious, and the prospect of a new political order opened for Scotland."³⁴ Henceforth, Scotland would be managed, if not necessarily run, by Archibald Campbell, earl of Ilay, with the help of his protege Andrew Fletcher, Lord Milton.

In the aftermath of the 1715 rising Roxburgh and the Squadrone had supported heavy-handed reprisals by the government against the jacobite clans. Highlanders were to be disarmed, and the Independent Highland Companies, effectively a police force for the region, were disbanded in 1717. This measure may have deprived Argyll of opportunities for patronage among his Highland allies, but also led to further disorder in the region, disorder already exacerbated by the "monumental blunder" of the scrapping of the principal Scottish executive body, the Privy Council, in 1708. The troops from England brought in as replacements proved themselves quite inadequate in the mountains, and were regarded as nothing more than an occupying force. Following another jacobite rising in 1719, violent resistance to government troops on the forfeited Seaforth estate in Wester Ross, and a series of depredations culminating in the murder of fourteen soldiers in Lochaber in November 1720, it appears that

³¹ Scott, *"Politics and administration of Scotland"*, 2-4, 13-124, 318-25; Wehrli, *"Scottish politics"*, 7-8, 73-7.

³² Scott, *"Politics and administration of Scotland"*, 301; Wehrli, *"Scottish politics"*, 106-13, 150-4.

³³ Scott, *"Politics and administration of Scotland"*, 325-57, 359, 367; Wehrli, *"Scottish politics"*, 46, 78-9, 167-73, 212-17.

³⁴ Wehrli, *"Scottish politics"*, 143.

Roxburgh attempted to resurrect the Highland Companies, but the government in London, embroiled in financial chaos in the wake of the South Sea Bubble, would have nothing to do with the proposal.³⁵

Indeed, with the exception of John, earl of Sutherland, very few of the major adherents of the Squadrone came from the Gàidhealtachd. This might be most clearly seen in the fact that during the early 1720s the earl held the post of lord-lieutenant of five counties in the north: Cromartyshire, Nairnshire, Inverness-shire, Ross-shire and Orkney and Shetland.³⁶ Instead, the region was dominated by the duke of Argyll and his interest, especially after the failure of the jacobite risings of 1715 and 1719. Roxburgh's continuing aggressive, if ineffective, stance towards jacobites in the region was thus also a challenge to the Argathelians who, as we have seen, pursued a relatively lenient policy towards erstwhile rebels. It is clear that Walpole and Townshend soon came to be convinced that the best way to ensure long-term security in the Gàidhealtachd was to follow a proactive policy, to engage with its people - with a firm hand, of course - through launching and supporting a range of political, military, commercial, ecclesiastical and educational initiatives in order to integrate the region with the rest of the country. Such an approach, of course, appealed to Argathelian politicians, especially to those with estates in the Gàidhealtachd who stood to profit from such projects, and the prolonged peace and patronage which would surely follow in their wake. It was, indeed, partly due to their advocacy of such very policies that the duke and his supporters had fallen from grace in 1716.³⁷

³⁵ Allan I. Macinnes, *Clanship, commerce, and the House of Stuart, 1603-1788* (East Linton, 1996), 193-7; Mitchison, *The government and the Highlands*, 31-2; Wehrli, *Scottish politics*, 47-50, 111-12.

³⁶ Wehrli, *Scottish politics*, 30, 41

³⁷ Wehrli, *Scottish politics*, 67-73, 170.

THE COLONSAY CATECHIST: Part 3 – The Church of Scotland

This week I'll take a brief look at the difficulties faced by the Church of Scotland and its ministers in the Gàidhealtachd during the 1720s. The Rev. Neil Campbell of Jura and Colonsay was certainly not alone in the troubles he faced, and I hope that we might understand his grievances better if we put them in a wider context. Next time I hope to look at how the Royal Bounty of one thousand pounds for preachers and catechists came to be given to the Church of Scotland in 1725, before returning to Colonsay and its schoolmaster James Moore.

iii The Church of Scotland

It was now over thirty years since the church had reverted to presbyterianism in 1690. At that time the vast majority of clergy who accepted the new presbyterian establishment were to be found south of the Tay; many ministers further to the north still adhered to the previous episcopal establishment. A new generation of native Gaelic presbyterians were gradually coming through the ranks, but the numbers, especially in the north-west Gàidhealtachd, were still pitifully small. I should like here to discuss the difficulties these ministers faced in fulfilling their office, attending to their flocks, and spreading the presbyterian gospel throughout their parishes.

The most common difficulty facing ministers from the Gàidhealtachd was the sheer unwieldiness of their parishes, many of which had remained largely unchanged since the medieval era. Although the presbyterian Synod of Argyll had undertaken some boundary reforms during the late 1650s, these were promptly reversed when episcopalianism was reintroduced after the Restoration. Larger parishes, with the widely scattered population typical of the Gàidhealtachd of that time, would have several different places of worship, sometimes as many as four or five. These might be well-nigh inaccessible in winter, when the minister would be forced to struggle there on foot, on rugged tracks through mountains, moorland and rivers in spate. If and when he reached his destination, he would generally have to preach outside; even the main church of the parish itself might be little more than a neglected and roofless ruin. We should remember just how disjointed many mainland parishes were, with portions and pendicles scattered often at some distance from the principal seat of worship. In many districts the neat and orderly consolidation carried out in the Victorian era, as presented even in scholarly histories, has obscured the crazy patchwork of earlier times, a seemingly haphazard arrangement rooted in the old medieval estates.

If the mainland parish was all too often an enormous, mountainous and disjointed tract of land, the Hebridean parishes off the west coast were generally even worse. The conscientious minister would visit each of the several islands in his charge, having to pay dear, of course, for the various ferry and accommodation charges he would incur. The seas, treacherous enough in summer, were often quite unnavigable during winter, from October until April. A Highland ministry was thus an extraordinarily demanding one, and the sheer strain of the task soon told upon the clergy.

The obvious and ideal solution, of course, would be to split the larger parishes and to erect new ones. However, a variety of obstacles stood in the way. The fundamental

stumbling-block was the objections of local heritors to any such scheme. By law parish landowners had to provide and maintain church, manse, glebe (four "soums" capable of supporting four cows or forty sheep), grass (to support the minister's horse and two cows) as well as communion elements. They had also to pay the minister's stipend – his living allowance – out of the teinds, a levy on crops and other farm produce. Not only were most landowners unwilling to pay the extra – often quite considerable – expense, often, given the poor quality of their estates, it was difficult enough for them to pay for the minister they had, let alone pay for an extra one in a new parish. To make matters worse, a clause inserted into an act of parliament of 1696 stated that parishes could not be split without the consent of three-quarters of the heritors. Across vast tracts of the Gàidhealtachd, this measure effectively blocked any further reorganisation of the parish system. Recalcitrant heritors could have other more subtle weapons up their sleeves too: when a new cadre of ministers were settled in Wester Ross in the late 1720s, we see the local landowners refusing to pay the stipends due themselves, but laying the onus of collecting what was due from their tenantry upon the ministers themselves, thereby putting the clergy in a very awkward situation indeed.

It is notable that the only parishes in the Gàidhealtachd which were eventually divided up during the early eighteenth century were either those on land forfeited from their previous episcopal or Catholic owners and run by government officials, or else, very infrequently, where the land was owned outright by zealous heritors. The new parishes erected in Lewis in 1722, in Skye and the Small Isles in 1726, and in Wester Ross in 1727, could only be created because they were situated on the forfeited estates of Mackenzie of Seaforth, MacDonald of Sleat, MacDonald of Clan Ranald and Mackinnon of Strath, all of which were being administered for the government by the Barons of the Exchequer. Even then, the barons were far from happy with seeing what must have been a handy source of private revenue being creamed off by the church. With possible restoration of the estates to agents of the original owners looming, the church had to threaten legal action before the later batches of reorganisation were carried out. On the other hand, the extensive reorganisation of the parishes on Lord Reay's estate in the far north-west, or Dùthaich MhicAoidh, was solely due to Reay's enthusiasm for the presbyterian church, and his fervent and tireless lobbying of the commission of the General Assembly year after year.

Most Highland landowners, however, were less than enthusiastic about having to pay for new ministers. On the other hand, the church, both at local and national level, was often not particularly keen on antagonising the leading men in the district, especially given that these men often served as the ruling elders who accompanied their ministers to the General Assembly every May, and so had an important voice in deciding church policy. The situation was even more tricky on the west coast, because the Synod of Argyll was permitted by acts of parliament of 1690 and 1696 to keep the monies due to ministers of unplanted parishes there – the "vacant stipends" – for its own use. Rather extraordinarily, it was thus in the synod's financial interest to keep these parishes without ministers, a fact which led to more than one clash with zealous local presbyteries.

Last week we saw how a new "super-synod", the Synod of Glenelg, was created in the north-west in 1724. The major alterations in presbytery and synod boundaries around this time were in effect a second-best solution. They allowed the church to intensify

its missionary efforts across the western seaboard, without the inconvenience and expense of having to create new parishes. It was evidently intended that these new, more localized church courts would permit more frequent meetings of local ministers, and would also ensure that the General Assembly would be able to supervise the ministers much more closely. However, the basic problem remained: how to ensure the church's message was heard in vast, widely-scattered and isolated parishes, above all where these parishioners were already being ministered to by local Catholic missionary priests.

Another problem was increasingly preoccupying the church during the 1720s: the sheer lack of Gaelic-speaking clergy in the Gàidhealtachd. Few families in the region were able to send their sons to university, let alone to study divinity. The church tried to get round this problem by trying to rustle up bursaries for any promising young Gaels – "diverse hopeful youths", as they are described in its minutes –and demanded that presbyteries, Lowland as well as Highlands, used what educational bursaries they had to train Gaelic-speaking ministers. Lowland presbyteries were understandably rather slow to pay for Gaels rather than their own sons. After a few years the bursary system was full up.

Even when Gaelic-speaking ministers did minister in Gaelic-speaking parishes, there was the problem of ensuring that they stayed there. Some Gàidhealtachd parishes, especially the many smaller parishes in Argyll, were certainly more appealing than others. There are a number of cases during this time when presbyteries complained that long-suffering ministers in the most demanding parishes in their bounds were – no doubt most willingly – poached by friends and sympathetic acquaintances in neighbouring presbyteries, and settled with easier flocks to care for.

The troubles faced by the Church of Scotland in the Gàidhealtachd were certainly pressing. What made them a matter of national concern was a matter which had been identified with the region for some time now. Nearly every year the church would hear memorials from Highland presbyteries and synods bewailing their grievances, their vast parishes, their unsympathetic heritors, but there was one particular complaint which was guaranteed an audience at the General Assembly, a complaint which increasingly preoccupied the church's councils, and would soon, for a brief while at least, focus the attention of the state as well. This was the problem of the increase in Roman Catholicism, or, as it was known to protestant contemporaries, the "growth of popery".

It is perhaps difficult for us nowadays to understand just how wide-spread, indeed universal, anti-Catholicism was in the English-speaking areas of the United Kingdom during the early modern period and beyond. Speaking of England itself, Eamon Duffy describes it as "as integral a part of the nation's self-awareness as beer and roast-beef, and equally above reason"³⁸; to Linda Colley, anti-Catholicism was "a powerful cement between the English, the Welsh and the Scots, particularly lower down the

³⁸ Eamon Duffy, "“Poor protestant flies”: conversions to Catholicism in early eighteenth-century England" in Derek Baker (ed.), *Religious motivation: biographical and sociological problems for the church historian* (Studies in Church History xv, Oxford, 1978), 289-90.

social scale."³⁹ The church records of the time are crammed with references to the dangers of "swarms of trafficking priests" and "popish emissaries".

Periodic bursts of panic about the growth of popery were all too common in the early eighteenth century. Whether they were justified in a purely religious sense is another matter. There certainly was some increase in the number of Roman Catholics in Scotland during this period; indeed, the numbers may have doubled. However, the actual figures involved were extremely small, possibly from some six thousand at the end of the seventeenth century to over sixteen thousand in 1763 – still a mere two per cent of the Scottish population at the time.⁴⁰ But such statistics tend to hide the facts, firstly, that the growth was overwhelmingly in one region – the Gàidhealtachd; and secondly, that rather than being a slow curve upwards, such increases inevitably took place in short bursts as priests and other missionaries entered new areas and began to win over followers. The early 1720s saw just such a phase, and to local presbyterians it must have appeared as if the world was turning upside down.

Under the dynamic leadership of Bishop James Gordon the Catholic mission to the Highlands was revitalized, especially in the 1720s. Under the patronage of Alexander, second duke of Gordon, from 1716 onwards boys were trained up for the priesthood in the remote seminary of Scalán in Gaelic-speaking Banffshire. Now, for the first time, there was a substantial number of local priests operating in the Gàidhealtachd, able to use local knowledge and family networks to win converts at all levels of society. With the help of Catholic sympathizers among the local gentry, the priests were holding their own in areas on the western seaboard such as the Rough Bounds, Uist and Barra, areas of Catholic religion since the earlier seventeenth century. On the other hand, there were new successful mission fields, such as Lochaber, and the areas bordering Catholic Strathglass. The priests' task was perhaps made easier by the dying off of the final generation of the old episcopal ministers. Many of the new generation of episcopal preachers, indeed, saw Catholics as allies against an encroaching presbyterianism. This was the more so because both denominations were strongly linked with the jacobite cause.

Catholicism and jacobitism were interchangeable in the eyes of the presbyterian church: "'Tis needless to observe that to make one a Papist, is to make him also a Jacobite." James VII had been exiled for his championing of the catholic cause, and his son, the titular James VIII, held to his father's religion. The catholics in Scotland, it must be said, were hardly blameless in their political views. They were imbued with jacobitism; Bishop Gordon had encouraged James VIII to launch the 1715 rising; his Highland successor Bishop Hugh MacDonald was to welcome Prince Charles Edward Stuart in 1745. Catholics were estranged from the protestant establishment, and the Church of Scotland was all too willing to stress this in their official memorials to the government. The growth of Roman Catholicism in the Gàidhealtachd was not just a threat to the church, it was also a threat to the entire British state. The Presbytery of Lorn, in a memorial of 1722, appealed to the General Assembly thus:

³⁹ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the nation 1707-1837* (London, 1992), 23.

⁴⁰ Daniel Szechi, "Defending the True Faith: kirk, state, and Catholic missionaries in Scotland, 1653-1755", *Catholic Historical Review* 82 (1996), 399.

We have long lyen under personal grievances but now the growth of Popery is like to turn dangerous to state & church it being certain that every one that is brought over to Popery, is at the same time brought over to be an enemy to His Majesty King George, and the protestant succession in his royal family, upon the security whereof depends under God our most valuable libertys and privileges, sacred & civil.

To the church at this time, Catholicism "appears to diffuse and spread itself so exceedingly, that if it be not timeously and effectually presented, threatens the apostatizing of many unto Popery, to the great disturbance and danger of this National Church and the Protestant Succession".

Whether the government was prepared to do anything about it is another matter. Following the failure of the 1715 jacobite rising, the Gàidhealtachd had been left as something of a power vacuum. The Independent Companies had been disbanded, and the legal apparatus of the region placed in the hands of Squadron supporters. Despite the constant demands of the Church of Scotland that action be taken against the growth of popery, the authorities were as a rule unwilling to put the penal laws into effect, and make matters worse for them in an already somewhat lawless region. Priests were thus still allowed to preach and convert, while Catholic heirs could be educated in the faith of their father, and succeed to his estate. The situation was especially difficult for presbyterian clergy who ministered in areas dominated by local Catholic magnates, above all in the great swathes of country where the duke of Gordon was superior; or else lived far from legal authorities who could perhaps be persuaded into taking action against local Catholics.

There is a basic problem when we discuss such phenomena as "the growth of popery" – or the survival of episcopalianism or indeed the growth of presbyterianism itself during this period. The simple question is, what exactly did such ideological commitment mean to the people of the Gàidhealtachd in the early eighteenth century? As we have seen, there was a tiny number of clergy of all denominations ministering across a huge area to a scattered population. In the absence of a settled local ministry and a comprehensive system of church schools and catechists, most people were simply not exposed to matters of dogma, and didn't particularly care about them either.

In fact, what most people wanted of a clergyman seems to have been that he marry them, bury them, and, above all, that he baptize their children, so that if a child died early, he or she could be buried with a name in a churchyard. It was not overly important who carried this out, as long as he was a man of God. Judging from the church records of the time, most people were prepared to pray with priests and ministers alike. Neither side, of course, could let this state of affairs continue. The Church of Scotland, as we shall see, laid increasing stress on catechizing and educating the people of the Gàidhealtachd in the presbyterian faith, reaching out to a new generation. Although it is not so well documented, it is clear that there was a similar drive among Catholic priests to bring up young people in their own faith. There was a polarizing of religion during this period, but for most people during the early eighteenth century we might be permitted to wonder just how strong confessional allegiances were – as long, of course, as they remained detached from political and clan loyalties.

THE COLONSAY CATECHIST: Part 4

This piece is about how the Church of Scotland came to be given one thousand pounds sterling every year by the government to pay for preachers and catechists in the Gàidhealtachd. I've included some chunks of eighteenth-century prose to give a flavour of the times. In the next instalment I shall talk about the various problems which faced the committee which administered the grant – then at last I shall return to the Colonsay catechists!

THE FOUNDING OF THE ROYAL BOUNTY GRANT

Introduction:

We have seen the atrocious conditions under which many Church of Scotland ministers in the Gàidhealtachd laboured in the early eighteenth century. Every year the General Assembly or the Commission of the Church of Scotland would received a fresh crop of representations and petitions from Highland presbyteries, complaining about their sufferings, as well as drawing attention to what they saw as the dangerous growth in Roman Catholicism. Now, the Church certainly sympathized with its ministers' problems, and persistently lobbied the government for help with pages of memorials. But it was not until 1723 that they began to take matters in hand with any degree of urgency. What caused this change in attitude appears to have been the discovery of the Atterbury plot the year before.

The Atterbury Plot and its aftermath:

In 1722 British politics was convulsed by the discovery of the jacobite Atterbury Plot, so-called because of the key rôle played in it by Francis Atterbury, the bishop of Rochester. King George I was to be murdered as he travelled from London to his native Hanover. At the same time, an invasion of Britain was to be launched, led by exiled Irish officers in the French service, either under the jacobite hero James Butler, duke of Ormonde, or else under the naturalized French general Arthur Dillon. Government ministers were to be arrested and held in the Tower, while the jacobites would seize the Bank of England and the Royal Exchange. However, with the help of the French government the plot was discovered and its progress monitored by Robert Walpole's extensive spy network. Certain coded letters referred to a lame spotted dog called Harlequin. The dog really existed, was owned by Atterbury, and so the conspiracy was revealed.

Although only one person was executed after the plot was discovered – Atterbury himself spent the rest of his life in exile – it had clearly rattled the political establishment. Habeas Corpus was suspended. The Roman Catholics of England were made scapegoats, and a swingeing £10,000 fine was laid upon the entire English Catholic community. The discovery of the conspiracy affected North Britain as well.

The Commission of the Church of Scotland, made up of all ministers and ruling elders who were able to attend, met every quarter. If we want to understand how Church policy came to be formulated, we have to pore over its records as well as those of the annual General Assembly. At their November sitting the Commission composed an address to the king "upon occasion of the happie discovery of the Late wicked Conspiracy against His Royal Person and Family". Hardly coincidentally, the following day letters were composed to Roxburgh and the Lord Advocate, reminding them of the address of the previous General Assembly to the king and the memorials therewith concerning the growth of popery. Finally, a letter to the king himself was written, in which the Church rather sleekitly prided itself on not having any disaffected persons in its midst – unlike the suspect Church of England.

The General Assembly of 1723 and its plans:

The King's address to the General Assembly of May 1723, delivered by his representative the Lord High Commissioner, was full of references to "the late horrid Conspiracy" against himself and the protestant religion. Only providence, it seemed, had saved the House of Hanover and the political establishment from disaster. The speeches by the moderator and the Commissioner himself were of the same tenor. That year – at the very same time as a parliamentary bill was being passed against Atterbury in London – the ministers and elders of the Church of Scotland passed a whole raft of anti-Catholic measures, and renewed the acts against popery passed by previous assemblies. A commission was to be appointed to work with the Lord Advocate and others in government to consider best how to prosecute priests and other "emissaries of Rome"; and measures were passed against illegal meeting houses and popish schools. There is no doubt, then, but that the discovery of the nefarious Atterbury Plot spurred the Church to take specific steps to combat Catholicism throughout Scotland, above all in the Gàidhealtachd.

On the 20 May 1723 the General Assembly considered a new proposal: the creation of a new Synod of Glenelg which would take up much of the north-west seaboard, the northern Hebrides and Lochaber. The reasons given for doing so were as follows: "the Greatness of Ministerial Charges in diverse places, the Want of Schools, the long Vacancy of some Churches, And the vast distance that Ministers have to travel to Synods and Presbyteries, whereby when they do attend the same, they are much diverted from their parochial Work and from watching over their flocks, and guarding their people against the poisonous influence of Popish Emissaries and other persons disaffected to Our happie Establishment". The neighbouring presbyteries and synods were asked to send in their own ideas, and the Commission was asked to prepare a report for the next year's assembly. Now, it's very interesting that this plan appears to have been drawn up on the hoof, as it were, during the General Assembly itself: it was not tabled by either the Commission or the presbyteries, though we might imagine that the energetic ministers of the Presbytery of Skye might well have had a hand in it.

But the General Assembly was considering other ambitious schemes as well. The committee appointed to consider the growth of popery were particularly referred "to pitch upon fit persons to travel as Preachers and Catechists in the Bounds of the Presbytery of Strathbogie, Abernethie and Lorn And to address the Government for a suitable Fund yearly during His Majestie's pleasure for maintaining Preachers and Catechists in Countreys where Popery abounds". In addition, they were to try to raise

money for defraying the cost of creating new parishes. Bursaries were finally fixed for Gaelic-speaking students, although there were soon problems with the students who applied: the synod of James Anderson, schoolmaster in Hawick, preferred to keep him in his present employment, as he had "such an Aversion to, and unfitness for performing in publick, as seem'd to them to be very inherent in his temper and constitution"; on the other hand, the bursary of Aeneas Sage from Easter Ross was promptly stopped after it was discovered that he did "head a furious Jacobite Mob in the College of Aberdeen" during the 1715 rising.

The General Assembly of 1724 – old plans realized and new plans in view:

In March 1724 the large committee appointed the previous year to consider ways of stopping the growth of popery had compiled their report. They had one major recommendation: that a suitable annual fund should be supplied "for maintaining Preachers and Catechists in Countreys where Popery abounds and defraying the Charges of Processes that may be needful for suppressing Popery and preventing the Growth thereof". An address to the king was prepared, and it was requested that His Majesty might condescend to grant such a fund from out of the Royal Bounty (the Civil List) "Toward the Assisiting the Ministers of this Church in instructing the People in the Knowledge of the Protestant Religion, Preventing the Growth of Popery and Recovering such as have been misled by Popish Emissaries and for maintaining more Preachers and Catechists to travel Through the foresaid Countreys where Popery so much prevails, And for defraying the expences of Processes that may be needful toward the Suppressing of Popery and preventing the further Growth thereof." In other words, the monies would be used first of all to pay the salaries of preachers and catechists to help the hard-pressed ministers of the Gàidhealtachd, and secondly to pay for whatever legal costs might be involved in adopting a new hard line against the Catholic clergy.

The General Assembly of May 1724 put into operation the far-reaching changes to the framework of church government which had been suggested the year before: as had been planned, three new presbyteries were created, and a new Synod of Glenelg erected to oversee the entire north-west coast and northern Hebrides. It is clear from the letters written by the earl of Findlater, the King's Commissioner (and thus the representative of the government) that year, to his masters in London that the Church were already lobbying for the new fund even before the General Assembly had begun. On 7 May, Findlater tells Walpole in his rather crabbed handwriting how:

the Moderator and several Ministers of the Commission of the Last Assembly did this day deliver me a copie of the adress the Commissioners presented to the King by the D. of Roxbrugh by which they desir His Majesty may alou a soum of money yearly out of the fonds of the Civil List here for providing Ministers they think it necessary to be sent to assist in the Large parishes in the Highlands and Islands Where there are great numbers of papists and Popish priests if I could obtain a favourable ansuer it woud pleas them very much they say the Kings Advocat hes spoak of this to Mr Walpole and that He finds him inclined to favour them in it I promised to apply to Your Lo and Mr Walpole and I have also writt a short Letter to him they will belive me negligent if neither Your Lop or he acknoledge that I have

made this application and it would give me interest with them if they succeed the sum they propose is five hundred pound Yearly I beg pardon for this trouble...

The commissioners had realized that new synods and presbyteries on their own would not be sufficient. The problem lay at parish level. The parishes were too vast and scattered, and their ministers would require assistant preachers to share the workload.

The ministers were playing it safe. They had already presented their petition to the duke of Roxburgh, the "Scottish" Secretary of State, leader of the Squadrone, and the most powerful magnate in Scotland at the time. Since last year's General Assembly, however, Roxburgh had fallen from grace. They therefore presented the petition once again, this time to the earl of Findlater for him to forward to the men who now controlled the administration of the country, namely Townshend and Walpole. In it they stressed the continuing growth of Roman Catholicism in certain districts of the Gàidhealtachd, where "in some Parishes, for every Protestant Teacher there are six Popish Traffickers practicing incessantly amongst them". This growing evil, the ministers wrote, represented a danger to "our Holy Religion, and the Protestant Succession in Your Royal Family, upon which, under God, the Security of our Religion, and of all our other valuable Interests does depend". The efforts of the Church and the SSPCK (the charity-school organization), though heartfelt, were all in vain: "all these helps come far short of what is necessary for preserving and recovering that People from the Contagion of Popery and Jacobitism with which they are infected." As we have seen, the ministers were asking for money:

A suitable Fund yearly During Your Majestie's pleasure Toward the Assisting the Ministers of this Church in instructing the People in the Knowledge of the Protestant Religion, preventing the Growth of Popery and recovering such as have been misled by Popish Emissaries, And for maintaining more Preachers and Catechists to travel through the foresaid Countries where Popery so much prevails, And for defraying the Expences of Processes that may be needful toward the Suppressing of Popery and preventing the further Growth thereof.

As well as stressing the political dangers of the situation, the proposal had at the same time to appear reasonable and practical. An official report on the Gàidhealtachd had been compiled in the aftermath of the 1715 rising, which stated "that were the Inhabitants of those Countries, who are now dangerous and hurtful to the Nation, taught the Principles of Religion and Virtue, they would become useful and profitable Members of the Commonwealth." The report went on to recommend that "a great many Schools will be necessary to be established": 151, to be exact. With each schoolteacher paid a salary of £20, the entire scheme would cost the gigantic sum of £3020 sterling. Given the great cost of the project, then, and the fact that London politicians in 1716 would rather punish the Gaels than give them vast amounts of money, it is hardly surprising that the report was never seriously considered, if it was even read at all, and quietly shelved. Eight years later, five hundred pounds per annum was the sum the moderator and the ministers privately requested: a much more reasonable amount to ask for, surely. Rather astonishingly, given the eternal parsimoniousness of all governments, they would in fact be awarded twice that sum.

The earl of Findlater had a difficult General Assembly in May 1724. His political enemy Roxburgh refused point-blank to correspond with him, and, as the earl rather peevishly noted to Townshend, he was given no help whatsoever by the duke's Squadrone allies in Edinburgh. He therefore had to act on his own, helping to ensure the election of the Argathelian candidate William Wishart, principal of the University of Edinburgh, as moderator, against his rival William Hamilton, the Professor of Divinity there.

On 18 May 1724 the Presbytery of Skye presented a fresh petition to the General Assembly, informing them that the new parishes were going well, and requesting the continued help of the Church against their enemies. The presbytery also informed the assembly of a number of "diverse very hopeful Youths amongst them past their Course at College who incline to follow the Study of Divinity, besides tuo entering upon trials". The Assembly not only promised further encouragement and assistance, but recommended that financial support be given to Gaelic-speaking students "And that Enquiry be made for some who have attended the Profession of Divinity a competent time in order to be entered on trials, that when licensed they may be sent to the foresaid Countries to preach." A committee was to be set up to give further consideration to matters raised by the presbytery, among whose members were the arch-Argathelians Sir James Campbell of Ardkinglass, Alexander Campbell the advocate, and George Drummond. On the same day it was stated that the neighbouring presbyteries approved of the scheme for the new Synod of Glenelg. Its progress would be closely monitored by the neighbouring church courts. On 19 May the new synod and the new presbyteries within it were formally constituted.

The General Assembly of 1724 discussed a number of other measures relating to the Gàidhealtachd. On the final day of the assembly, on the 27 May, the Church took the step of recommending that preachers and catechists be recruited and sent to the presbyteries of Strathbogie, Abernethy and Lorn, all areas where Roman Catholicism was strong. They were to be paid salaries of 400 merks a year out of the Church's money. The Church evidently considered it to be a matter of the greatest importance: these salaries were to be the very first drawn out of all ecclesiastical accounts, apart from the annual charges of the Church itself. What is happening here, then, is that the Church is saying in code to the government: "We're willing to shoulder our share of the burden: we expect you to do the same". In his closing speech, the moderator made the pointed recommendation to the Lord High Commissioner, the earl of Findlater, "That effectual methods, which His Majesty in His Great Wisdom will find out, may be taken for suppressing the Great and Lamentable Growth of Popery". In his reply, the earl promised to take the Church's recommendations into account.

The government listens:

By the end of the Assembly the poor earl of Findlater was exhausted. Using an amanuensis, he wrote to Townshend: "I hope you'll pardon me for not using my own hand because my eyes can scarcely support me in doeing of it after the fatigue I have" His work was not over, however. At the beginning of June he again received a deputation of ministers. Once more the request for funding was made:

What they chiefly desire is ane additional fond for sending assistance to thos pariochins [*i.e.* parishes] in the North and Hylands Wher

poperie abounds and prevails and they are content that What His Majestie gives may be appropriat in the strictest maner for that use...

The earl of Findlater sent the request to secretary of state Charles Townshend. Townshend was obviously interested in the matter, and asked the lawyer Lord Grange – later to win infamy by having his wife kidnapped and despatched to St Kilda – to compile a report on the situation in the Highlands. However, for the rest of the year Grange was too caught up with legal business to comply. But it was not long before another somewhat sinister figure had already presented his own report on the Gàidhealtachd.

Simon Fraser Lord Lovat had a rather racketsy career, ending with his execution on Tower Hill for supporting Prince Charlie and the jacobites in the Forty-Five. In the 1720s, however, he had weaselled his way into government favour, and to the chieftom of his own clan, as a result of his strong stand for the government during the 1715 rising. Given what we know of Lovat, it is likely that he compiled his own report fairly speedily, whether because of what he had heard about the General Assembly's plans, or of rumours that the government in London were becoming increasingly interested in what was going on in the north of Scotland. His report, recommending various legal and military schemes, was fairly brief and to the point – by Lovat's standards at least. It evidently attracted government attention. At any rate, on 3 July 1724 the government despatched Major-General George Wade to Scotland, supposedly to inspect the military state of the Gàidhealtachd. In actual fact Wade was on a secret mission to see how far Lovat's report tallied with reality.

General Wade's mission:

Wade spent the rest of 1724 travelling around the region, and compiling his own report on what he observed. It was ready on 10 December. In it the general, back in London, discussed clanship, the methods and various causes of cattle-thieving, and the need for the government to extend the system of state justice into the Highlands. The Independent Companies – the local police (and spy) forces – should be re-established; the people of the Highlands should be disarmed; the series of barracks through the Great Glen, at Inverness, Killiehuimen (Fort Augustus) and Fort William, should be strengthened; and a system of roads and bridges should be constructed to allow regular troops easier access into the heart of the Gàidhealtachd. The government evidently approved of Wade's ideas, and a fortnight later he was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the army in Scotland. He continued to refine his plans, and eventually left London for Scotland in June 1725.

The year 1724, then, sees the beginnings of an active and interventionist government policy towards the Gàidhealtachd. Now, one way of understanding this new course of action is by looking at the contemporary political background. As we have seen, during this period Walpole and Townshend were in the process of taking over the administration of Scotland. In doing so, however, they relied upon the support of the Argathelian block of Scottish politicians – those led by the duke of Argyll and his brother the earl of Ilay. The English politicians were certainly adopting an active policy towards the Gàidhealtachd, a policy which would certainly please the many Argathelians who had Highlands estates and interests.

However, we also have to consider the international situation. In early 1725, Britain was in the midst of a war scare. Her erstwhile ally France had fallen out with Spain; on 29 April a treaty was signed at Vienna between Spain and the Hapsburgs. A new jacobite invasion was being mooted; if it were to take place, inevitably it would sail to the Scottish Highlands. The various schemes for the Gàidhealtachd planned by General Wade and others during 1724 and 1725 were not just to win over Scottish politicians; they were designed to impose military and legal authority on a region which was once more threatened – for the third time in a decade – with foreign invasion. We can see from Wade's report, from the stress he laid upon the construction of roads and bridges, that the authorities were not just considering short-term measures to keep the region peaceful. They had a longer-term goal in mind as well: the pacification of the Gaels, and the incorporation of the Gàidhealtachd into the British state. However, such reform as they envisaged was not to be accomplished through military and legal measures alone. The process would have an ideological side to it as well, through which the authorities could reach out to hearts and minds. By careful and persistent lobbying, the Church of Scotland persuaded the government that it could play a crucial rôle.

The General Assembly of 1725 – the granting of the Royal Bounty:

In March 1725 the Commission of the Church received a letter from Principal Wishart, then in London, "Shewing that the Earl of Findlater and he had been using their endeavours for procuring an Allowance from the Government for maintainance of Ministers, Preachers and Catechists, to be employ'd in parishes in the Highlands and Islands where Popery does most prevail; And that he is hopeful the same may be obtain'd, And that some account thereof may be laid before the next Assembly". This is indeed what happened.

The King's Commissioner at the 1725 General Assembly was another prominent Argathelian, the earl of Loudon. His opening speech on 6 May contained as its centrepiece a major policy initiative which had been officially approved on the 26 April. I shall quote the relevant passage in full:

There having been Representations made to His Majesty by former Assemblies and their Commissions, Setting forth, That Popery and Ignorance do increase & prevail in the Highlands and Islands, And that One of the principal Causes thereof, is, The large extent of the parishes in those parts, Whereby the Ministers of those parishes find themselves unable to visite their Parishioners in their several bounds as they ought, and give them such Instruction as is necessary to enlighten them, and Arm them against the Practices of many Popish Priests that resort thither, in order to pervert and seduce them from the Profession and Principles of the Reform'd Religion, And that the Most probable means to prevent those Practices, would be to give some proper encouragement to Itinerant Preachers and Catechists to go in to these Parts, and be assisting to the Ministers established there. His Majesty has impowered me to inform you, That he is firmly resolved to promote and encourage as much as in him lyes, so good & pious a design, And is therefore to order the Sum of One thousand Pounds yearly to be appointed during His Royal pleasure and apply'd solely

for the Provision and Entertainment of such Itinerant Ministers & Catechists as shall be employ'd in those Parts for the purposes abovementioned, And that it is His Royal Will & Pleasure That the said Sum of One thousand Pounds be distributed and apply'd by this and Succeeding Assemblies or such persons as they shall authorize & Appoint for the end aforesaid, And that a due State of the Distribution be annually laid before the Lord High Treasurer Or the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury for the time being, That His Majesty may give such further directions as he shall think most proper for the ends abovementioned. The Steps His Majesty is taking for the Peace and Tranquillity of the Highlands will facilitate your doing of your Duty in this important matter, And give you an opportunity by the ways of Example, Persuasion, and Conviction to put some stop to the spreading Ignorance and Profanness on the One hand, and the trafficking of Popish Priests and Emissaries on the other, in the Highlands and Islands. I know you will receive this great and fresh Mark of His Majestie's favour with all imaginable Gratitude, And that you will take particular care of the Application of His Majestie's Royal Bounty to the pious ends for which it is design'd.

The representatives of the Church were indeed grateful for their new grant. Here is part of the Moderator's reply to the Commissioner:

May it please Your Grace. The mournful Ignorance and Profaneness, and the Growth of Popery, especially in the remoter parts of this Land, the Church of Scotland hath long complain'd of, with deep regrete; and her Assemblies and Commissions have thought themselves obliged to lay several Representations thereof before His Majesty; And His great Goodness in bestowing so liberal A fund, as what Your Grace hath Just now mentioned, for the encouragment of Ministers, Preachers, and Catechists to instruct the people in these Parts, And to prevent their being seduced and ruin'd by trafficking Priests and Popish Emissaries gives us a surprizing Joy, beyond what we can express. And such a liberal and well contrived Charity to Souls, We are persuaded, will be graciously and bountifully rewarded by the God of Heaven, upon His Majesty and His Royal Offspring, will make a Glorious and Shining Part of His Majestie's Illustrious character while he lives, and will be remembered to the Honour of his Memory in after-ages. And we hope, His Royal Bounty shall be managed by this and subsequent General Assemblies in such a manner as to make it answer as far as possible, His Majestie's excellent and Christian design.

It is clear that the Church authorities thought long and hard about the grant; two days later, in his reply to the king's letter, the Moderator chose to stress the political benefits which were like to flow from His Majesty's gift:

it does afford us the greatest pleasure and encouragment to consider, that by the Blessing of God on our endeavours, the same methods that contribute to remove the Ignorance and Superstition of the rude Inhabitants of those remote places, and to defeat the Attempts of

Popish Emissaries, must necessarily tend to impress them with Sentiments of Loyalty towards Your Majesty, to promote the Interest of your happy Government and Royal Family, and dispose them to give a due & cheerful Obedience to Your Majesty, and the Just Laws, to which all your Subjects ought to conform themselves.

On the 12 May there was read another petition from the Presbytery of Skye, a progress report on the same theme as the previous year: although the new system of organization was going well, the ministers were of course at loggerheads with their Catholic rivals. It was suggested that General Wade might wish to give them some military protection while they went about their business in Catholic areas. Nevertheless, the ministers had been putting up a fight:

Yea the Priests have had the Boldness to send Challenges to Protestant Ministers to dispute with them, And a Reverend Brother in their bounds had a long and publick debate with one of them lately, And the said Debate was written, And it is thought well worth Printing. And if done, would be very useful in their Country, many of the people desiring it, And it were a Pity that the said Reverend Brother were not enabled to print the same.

The presbytery further requested that the Church allow that preachers and catechists be appointed to travel to the Catholic islands in the Hebrides, and that they be given an allowance to enable them to do so – in the same way as similar help had been given to the Presbyteries of Strathbogie, Abernethy and Lorn the previous year. This time, however, the General Assembly had a fresh card up their sleeves. The Presbytery of Skye's request was forwarded to a new committee, that for the Management of His Majesty's Royal Bounty:

And appoints them to take in the same at their first diet, And to do what they Judge proper for the encouragment of the Synod of Glenelg, and Presbyteries and Brethren in the bounds thereof, and for suppressing Popery, And impowers the said Committee to grant an Allowance to Ministers, Preachers and Catechists to travel in the foresaid bounds.

On the same day another petition was read from the ministers of the Outer Hebrides, the new Presbytery of Long Island. The ministers were suffering: "the Health of Ministers is frequently impair'd ... Our number being small and all sickly because of their extraordinary toil and fatigue within our own bounds". They thus requested travel expenses to pay for them to travel to Edinburgh. This too was referred to the new Royal Bounty Committee: the General Assembly finally, then, had somewhere to send troublesome Highland petitions. It is to this Committee, and how it wrestled with the problems of administering the annual grant of one thousand pounds, that I shall turn to for the next instalment.

THE COLONSAY CATECHIST: Part 5

This issue I will be taking a closer look at the rather chaotic first year of the Royal Bounty Committee. As ever, the material seems to expand and fill up all available space, but I hope that it will be of some interest to readers. More to follow!

The first attempts at administering the Royal Bounty

1725: too much too soon

On 18 May 1725, the day after the end of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Committee for the Reforming of the Highlands and Islands and the Management of the King's Royal Bounty had its first meeting. Their task was as follows:

to Appoint Itinerant Preachers and Catechists to go to the proper places designed in His Majestie's Warrant; And for that end they are carefully to inform themselves of the fit places where the said Itinerant Preachers are to be sent and employ'd, And of persons duly qualify'd for that Service, of good Abilities for the same, of a pious Life & Conversation, Prudent, of undoubted Loyalty to His Majesty, and competently skill'd in the Principles of Divinity, And in Popish Controversies.

The committee was to cooperate with local presbyteries, who would be responsible for certifying and supervising the catechists, and with the committee of the SSPCK, many of whom, crucially, would be the most assiduous attenders of the meetings of the Royal Bounty Committee. The preachers' duties were as much political as religious:

And the said Preachers are also appointed to catechize, And both they and the Catechists to instruct the people from house to house, and visit the Sick, and in all their labours among the people to be careful to teach them the Principles and Duties of the true Christian Protestant Religion, And the Obligation they are under to Duty & Loyalty to Our Sovereign King George, and Obedience to the Laws; And the Committee are empowered to give them such Instructions as to their Work and Behavior, as they shall Judge meet, And they are appointed to obey the same.

The allowances for the missionaries were remarkably generous by later standards: a preacher would earn up to £40 a year – an average salary for a minister – while a catechist could expect up to £25, although special circumstances could push his salary yet higher. The fund could also pay at the most £4 a month to ministers to go to areas where they would baptize and marry. A subcommittee, which would meet every week, was appointed to prepare a relevant report. Like the Commission of the Church of Scotland, this particular subcommittee would meet in the hall of the SSPCK.

The subcommittee worked speedily, and three days later it presented the report. Its members had read over the various presbyterial petitions and representations handed in to previous General Assemblies and Commissions. They also drew upon the 1716 Register of Royal Commission which had been appointed by George I to enquire into establishing schools in the Highlands, a hugely ambitious report which contained a description of the region and its population, "Shewing where there are Papists and the greatest Ignorance." The subcommittee listed the various Roman Catholic areas of the Gàidhealtachd, and also stressed the importance of "Abertarff and the vast bounds of the Presbytery of Gairloch [which] have very few Ministers, and Ignorance and Barbarity abound therein". After the relevant areas had been enumerated, the subcommittee turned to nominating the missionaries themselves.

As well as the rather generous salaries it awarded, the first year of the Royal Bounty administration is striking for the sheer confusion of its organisation, and its rather hopeful and overambitious arrangements. The very first missionary scheme illustrates this very well.

The Revs. Archibald MacLean in Mull and John Skeldoch of Kilmonivaig were to go to supply the Garbh-Chriochan, the Rough Bounds, before the 1 August 1725. Each minister was to stay there for three months, being paid the regular £4 a month. While they were absent, their parishes would be supplied by two probationers in Argyllshire, Robert Fullartoun and James Campbell. After his three months were up, the Rev. Archibald MacLean was to be succeeded in the Rough Bounds by the Rev. James Gilchrist of Kilmallie, who would in turn stay there another three months, on the same salary. The probationer Robert Fullartoun was thereupon to supply Kilmallie. The Rev. John Skeldoch would be replaced in Ardnamurchan by the probationer James Campbell, who was to remain there for three months, at the end of which he would once more exchange posts with Skeldoch, and thus to continue for the remainder of the year, unless the committee were to order otherwise. The Rev. John Skeldoch, who had no stipend, nor any expectation of one in the near future, was to be given £24 as a half year's advance to enable him to undertake his mission. Again, a student of divinity, Alexander Shaw, was to preach an entire year in the Rough Bounds, for £18 salary.

A fortnight later, after further representations, the committee decided to send the unfortunate James Campbell to Appin and Glencoe as well as to Kilmonivaig. The Presbytery of Gairloch, meanwhile, was to be supplied by a catechist, two itinerant ministers and three parish ministers from the neighbouring Presbyteries of Ross and Dornoch. The ministers were to travel to the west coast before the 1 July – giving them about a month's notice – and to remain there for three months, each receiving £4 a month as salary. In the ministers' absence, their parishes were to be supplied by their presbyterial colleagues. After they had finished, two Skye ministers were to carry out the same mission, under the same terms. If such arrangements proved impossible, then the presbyteries themselves had the duty to supply replacement missionaries. In addition, it was expected that all preachers and catechists were to be equipped with two testimonials for the presbyteries they were sent to: "a Certificate upon trial, from a Presbytery of this National Church, Of their Orthodoxy, Piety, Literature, Prudence and other necessary Qualifications for the Work they are respective called unto; As also An Authentick Certificate from a proper Judge of their Loyalty to His Majesty

King George and good Affection to His Royal Family and Protestant Succession therein".

Of course, the system was totally unworkable. As soon as the news about the Royal Bounty spread, a flood of petitions came in from synods, presbyteries, and individual ministers, each claiming a share of the grant. However, the money was already divided up; the funds could bear no more. To make matters worse, the notoriously rapacious Barons of the Exchequer who were responsible for granting the Royal Bounty decided to deduct a tax of 6d. in the pound. By August, barely three months into the scheme, the committee were already thinking about shortening the times allotted to their missionaries. Demand for their services was just too high.

There was one major problem with the scheme: many of the missionaries nominated were either unwilling or unable to bid farewell to their homes and families and spend months travelling through rugged, unknown territory, among disaffected, hostile and even dangerous inhabitants. It only needed one missionary to refuse his call for an entire mission scheme to break down. For instance, the Rev. Walter Ross minister of Creich informed the committee that a local student Murdo MacDonald was "very averse from going in Mission to the Presbytery of Gairloch, for which he is appointed". MacDonald asked to be excused, or else that a certain Andrew Robertson probationer in Caithness might be named in his place (for which Robertson must have been heartily grateful), or, otherwise, that he only preach in Coigeach and Assynt, immediately to the west of what must have been his native parish of Creich.

The Presbytery of Lorn had even worse luck. By August, and then again in October, it was enquiring why not one of the missionaries appointed for the Rough Bounds had yet arrived. The Rev. John Skeldoch of Kilmonivaig replied that he couldn't leave his parish because those appointed to supply him had not arrived. Alexander Shaw, the probationer who had been appointed to preach in the Rough Bounds for a year, said that as neither the ministers nor the probationer who had been ordered to go to the region had gone, "he did not think it safe for him alone to go there, And besides he Judged the Allowance granted him is not sufficient for his going to that Place". Shaw was nevertheless ordered to repair forthwith to the bounds of the Presbytery of Lorn.

For those ministers and catechists who did go to preach, it was all too often a dispiriting experience. A slightly later letter, written at Kenmore in Lochaber on 22 July 1726 by James Murray, is an excellent account of the difficulties the poor missionaries, used to more comfortable lives in the low-lying Gàidhealtachd peripheries, or in the Lowland university towns, faced on their travels:

I must go wth a hired Sernt to carry My Cloaths viz shirts and Blankets to lie in for here I must not expect to get bedcloaths, or bed in every house I come to (though I find the people abundantly kind, as yet, according to their ability) but they have for the most pt neither beds nor bed-cloaths to themselves, except one plaid and one pair of blanckets that the good-man & Good-wife have for their own bed wch is a Sorry hand-full of Straw; heather, or fearns, shaken on the floor, for none of the Common people have any bed-steeds of Timber or feather or Chaff beds served up in Eeiking or Coars harn. I shall endeavour to stay here as a Catechist, for one quarter, if the Lords be

pleased to spare me health and strength, though I should spend 6 lib. ster: but I assure I will not continue any longer unless my allowance be Augmented, for Mr Balladine, who was an Appointed Catechist for the paroch of Kilmaly, only had 18 lib ster:

I cannot say that in weaty weather when I am treavling from town to town in Winter that my foot will be drie from time that I rise and go out in the morning, till I go to bed at night, for I have been so seall days already in this Countrie, besides the weading of waters daily if I treavel one mile of way, for there are no Bridges upon their Watters here, and how it will agree with me every Cold, frosty, Snowy & weaty night in the winter time ~~it will agree with me every day to be~~ changinge my quarters, and every night my bed; and to lie in my own Cloaths, which sometimes will be Weat and Cold, on a Sorry pickle of neasty fearns &c – or handfull of Straw or heather time must determine. I find that that the Common people here have, or at least seem to have a great desire after, and a love to Spirituall things, and wish well to King George and the Government for their bounty, and they say that yr was never a King on the Throne yt showed such favour to the Hillands.

Other missionaries were not only uncomfortable, but were in danger of their very lives. In a letter of February 1726, Murdo MacLeod minister of Glenelg told how "Fire was in the Night time set to the House where Mr Archibald McQueen & Mr Norman McCleod Ministers sent in Mission were lodged, And that if by the Good Providence of God, it had not been timeously discovered, they might have perished in the Flames". The following year the unfortunate James Johnston, a catechist in the bounds of the north-east Presbytery of Alford, sent a letter to the committee "Shewing that he had got an house in that Country with great Difficulty, But that in his Absence Some People had taken off the Roof thereof, and he Craves advice What to do thereanent". The Committee kept their distance and "Left him to pursue these Who had done the Injury as Law directs."

Meanwhile, other young ministers on probation who had begun to preach were immediately snapped up by the presbyteries to whose bounds they had been sent, a turn of events which had been foreseen by the Royal Bounty Committee from the beginning: "the Committee's Appointment shall be no impediment to their accepting thereof, And that thereupon they are free to leave the Places they are sent to". The best-qualified and most able employees of the Royal Bounty scheme had thus to be replaced by inferior catechists. It is hardly surprising then that by November Archibald Bannatyne, a very able young man who was serving as a catechist in Lochaber, was pressing for a pet scheme of his, a two-tier scheme of catechists, "that some of smaller Abilities may serve in that place to go from house to house to learn the people the Ten Commands and first Principles of Religion, and the Catechism by heart, to prepare them for others of greater Abilities, And that such may be had for Fourty, Fifty or Sixty Pounds scots yearly, who may be maintain'd as to their diet in the families they come to". Twelve pounds Scots, incidentally, was the equivalent of only one pound sterling.

By November the Royal Bounty Committee, "finding that diverse of the Missioners have not as yet obey'd, that some of them are otherways disposed of, and cannot obey, And that others who have gone to the Places design'd have not stay'd out their full time", decided to grant no further allowances in advance.

The system was evidently in trouble, nowhere more so than in the Presbytery of Gairloch, taking in the troubled districts of Wester Ross, Lochalsh and Kintail, a Jacobite heartland many of whose inhabitants had taken part in the Risings of 1715 and 1719, and had still been in open rebellion against crown representatives barely four years previously.

Local problems:

If the establishing of the Presbytery of Gairloch in 1724 was meant to increase the authority of the church on Wester Ross, it appeared to be tending to exactly the opposite result. At the General Assembly of 1725, the Synod of Ross and Sutherland presented a petition. In it, they described how they "were inclined cheerfully to acquiesce in the Erection of the New Synod of Glenelg", expecting "that in this Country we would be freed of the disturbing Opposition, Influence and Power of those in these Parts, who have signalized themselves by their Disaffection to Our happy Constitution in Church and State". Instead, the weakness of and the hardships suffered by the two ministers who constituted the new presbytery to the west, "And the encouragement taken from the Impunity of those who do oppose them, does increase Opposition and Disaffection within the bounds of this Synod, and Grievances insupportable are thrown upon such of our Members as are upon their Confines". In other words, the Presbytery of Gairloch was quite inadequate, was unable to exert its authority, and the resulting disturbances in its bounds were now spilling over into the parishes on its eastern border as well. In addition, the Rev. James Smith, minister of Gairloch, had been threatening for two years to leave his parish, given his mere 600 merks stipend, and his total lack of a manse, glebe, or roofed kirk.

Something would obviously have to be done, but the preachers who were ordained as new ministers for the presbytery, Archibald Bannatyne in Lochbroom and Aeneas Sage in Lochcarron, were soon caught up in their own struggles for stipends and other ministerial dues from the recalcitrant heritors. Although the Presbytery of Gairloch, and indeed the Synod of Glenelg as a whole, was supposedly the focus of the Royal Bounty Committee's efforts, the understandable reluctance of preachers to travel there, and the slow and tedious legal processes the church was forced to go through in order to obtain their stipends, led to increasing tensions with Edinburgh, tensions which would eventually flare up into open disagreement.

If some preachers were extremely unwilling to undertake their mission, others were much more aggressive. The most gung-ho of them all was the Presbytery of Strathbogie in the north-east, whose ministers had been prosecuting a long and bitter feud with Alexander, second duke of Gordon, the most influential Scots Catholic of the day. Thanks to the huge and scattered estates he either owned or of which he was the superior, the duke of Gordon was able to promote Catholicism across great swathes of the country, from the Spey right through Badenoch to Lochaber. The duke protected the priests who worked on his estates, and was patron of the Catholic

seminary at the Scalán in Glenlivet. The local presbyterian ministers had long chafed at his open support for Roman Catholicism. The Royal Bounty gave them the opportunity and the excuse to take their struggle almost right into the duke's own household.

At the beginning of September 1725 two men employed by the Royal Bounty Committee, the Rev. Walter Morison and the catechist Patrick Duncan, began to preach in St. Ninian's, the duke of Gordon's private chapel, near Fochabers. This evidently created a great stir in the neighbourhood, for a couple of days later the earl of Findlater sent a letter post-haste to the duke, sympathising with him and pledging his support in trying to prevent a similar occurrence the following Sunday. Findlater had been the King's Commissioner to the General Assembly the previous year, where he had been urged to take action against popery; however, he was also sheriff of Banffshire, and public order was evidently uppermost in his mind:

I am extremely concerned that Your Grace meets with any trouble of this kind I did tell Mr Kerr that You would not allow them to come there again and advised them not to attempt it He said He did not know what they would do, all I wish is that in defending Your Grace's possession there may be as little violence and disorder as possible this is all I know, and the sooner You acquaint them of Your resolutions it is the better

The draft of Gordon's reply is somewhat ominous:

I was in hopes as Sheriff you would allow No Riots But since your Authority is Not thought sufficient I will give a little Necessary Concurrence but shall take care it be legal I shall not trouble Mr Gilchrist with any Demands of liberty to protect my own property Since No Necessity Nor I hope Never will to cringe in the least to any such.

However, whatever measures the duke planned taking, it is unlikely that he approved of the full-scale riot which took place the following Sunday. Morison, Duncan and the local SSPCK schoolmaster William Scobie were ambushed at the chapel by a sizeable mob. According to the Committee's report, they badly beat the preachers and those in the congregation:

with great clamour, rage, and fury to the Effusion of the Blood, and Danger of the Lives of many of them, Uttering many execrable Oaths, and cursing the foresaid Preacher and his Congregation, and reproaching Our Holy Religion, and swearing it shall never get footing there, And after they had violently dispersed the people who came to hear the Word, they did pursue the Preacher and them with the foresaid Weapons for near a mile of Way, through the several roads by which they were oblig'd to flee to save their Lives, And while the said Mr Archibald Anderson and others of the persons abovenamed and complained upon, were in pursuit of the said Mr Walter and the other persons who came to the foresaid place for Worship, they cry'd after them, Saying Dogs, Dogs you shall die this minute

The "rabbling" at St Ninian's became something of a cause célèbre among church circles. Representations concerning the riot were presented at the very highest level of government in London, and eventually five of the rioters were charged in Edinburgh. However, only one of them was actually convicted, and that probably more for his position as the duke's man rather than for any actual involvement in the affray. The authorities were prepared to make an example of one man as a warning, but it is clear that they were not prepared to encourage the local church authorities to carry out further provocations. By spring 1727, the other rioters, after lying low for a while, "do notwithstanding live and reside in Safety in the forsaid Country, going to Mercats, and other publick places avowedly".

The St Ninian's riot is merely the most notable and spectacular of a number of Catholic actions taken in response to what might be described as the more proactive policy taken by the missionaries of the Royal Bounty. Church documents of this period are crammed with references to growing "popish insolence" from the Catholic population they were trying to convert. The Catholic population, of course, saw things rather differently. What is clear that during these years both sides, and indeed the episcopalian church too, were intensifying their missionary efforts. To a large degree this escalation was as a response to their rivals. The process of "confessionalization", through whatever denomination, was spreading to all parts of the Gàidhealtachd. Like it or not, everyone was being forced to take sides.

The most spectacular protestant coup of this time was the conversion of the people of the Island of Rum by its then landlord Hector MacLean younger of Coll. The Rev. Daniel MacAulay, the very competent minister of Bracadale in Skye, had been sent as a missionary to the Small Isles by the Royal Bounty Committee. He reported as follows:

as to the Isles of Cana and Roum to which he was sent, He represented that he had no Access in Cana to deal with the people, Because they would not hear him, being under the Influence of Priests and Popish Managers and dare not hear a Protestant Minister preach or pray; But in the Isle of Roum, the Reformation goes on successfully by the Zeal of their Worthy Superior Hector McLean of Coll, which should be duly noticed by the Church and other good friends of the Government to encourage others to follow his laudable Example; For about three years ago there were few Protestants in the Isle of Roum And new there is only One little Family and some silly Women there continuing under Antichristian Delusion.

This was what was later described to Dr. Samuel Johnson as *creideamh a' bhata bhuidhe*, the religion of the yellow cane. Whether Hector MacLean did indeed drive the entire population with a gold-topped cane to listen to the minister, or whether he in fact just used his stick to beat a single zealous Catholic, the laird of Coll nevertheless became something of a hero to the church authorities. In the absence of support from distant local magistrates, Hector MacLean was a beacon of support. He had shown what could be achieved by a well-affected and none too scrupulous landowner, indeed – perhaps – how easy it would be to convert erstwhile Catholic Gaels as long as their papist superiors could be got disposed of. MacAulay and other ministers encouraged the committee in fantasies that they might, with suitable legal

support, be rid of Catholic heritors and thus spread the Reformation in earnest. There was, however, a great deal of difference between the relatively small, isolated island of Rum, and the wider and wealthier estates of Clan Ranald, for instance. Despite official support from the earl of Ilay himself, early eighteenth-century realpolitik meant that such a project was bound to come to nothing. Hector MacLean, however, must have had an enjoyable few years, being invited to the General Assembly to tell his story, and being sent as a ruling elder to the Synod of Glenelg to encourage them in their labours.

The Royal Bounty Committee and the SSPCK

We have already seen how SSPCK schoolteacher William Scobie was present at the St Ninian's rabbling, and indeed how the Royal Bounty Committee shared many, perhaps a majority of its members with the charity-school organisation. The Society in Scotland for the Propagating of Christian Knowledge was a joint-stock charity whose task was to set up charity schools in the Highlands. Founded in 1709 following the jacobite invasion scare of the previous year, the society was a zealous and extremely well-motivated organization, which over a decade and a half had developed sophisticated techniques for raising donations. The 1714 *Account of the rise, constitution and management, of the Society in Scotland, for Propagating Christian Knowledge* is a good case in point. Not only does the little booklet give potential donors an instant guide to the constitution, aims and successes of the organization, it also by way of thanks and encouragement lists those who have already given money.

Just as the Church of Scotland had passed a whole raft of anti-Catholic measures as a result of the Atterbury Plot, the SSPCK used it as an opportunity to try to attract more money, lobbying the government in an attempt – unsuccessfully as it turns out – to secure the grant of the up to £20,000 it felt it was due from income from the Forfeited Estates. A memorial concerning the state of the Highlands was composed and printed in 1723, luridly warning that:

untill methods be fallen upon to Civilize and Instruct them, and extirpate the Irish Language from amongst them that Great Britain will always be in most evident danger, ffor as these people will never fail to Join with fforeign popish powers, to advance the Interests they have espoused, So they always have been, and infallible will be Instruments and Tools in the hands of those who have a design to enslave or embroil the British nation.

Force would be no use; rather the government should persist in

the instructing and training up of that poor, Ignorant and deluded people in the knowledge of the Principles of the Reformed Protestant Religion and of vertue ffor were their Judgement and Consciences rightly informed, those people would soon throw off the yokes which those who now usurp unlimited authoritie over them, have Laid upon them, especially when they shall come to deserve and feel the benefite of Protection from the Government.

At the same time, the society was refining its management methods: its meetings were to be more streamlined, while inspection and surveillance of its schools was to be stepped up, with the use of English being encouraged. They themselves began lobby operations to identify potential donors in London, suggested that well-wishers might donate shares in the projected new fishery company, and indeed approached the government, unsuccessfully as it turned out, for a yearly fund out of the Royal Bounty.

Three weeks after the Bounty Committee was established, the SSPCK nominated a group of four of their members who also sat on the church committee to act as go-betweens; two months later, they presented a memorial to their colleagues. Crucially, the committee of the society had decided to follow the example of the Royal Bounty in redistributing its schools, informing them on 13 August 1725 that:

Bearing that there are many more Places needing and craving Schools, And that the Society being desirous to make the benefite of their Funds as extensive as they could, had been obliged upon the Death or Removal of Schoolmasters to diminish the Salaries formerly in use to be paid, in order to have the more Schools, And also to remove the Masters from place to place, after they have been three or more years therein, And yet they are not in case to answer all the Demands that are made; But having had Information concerning the State of the Parishes of Kilmanivaig, Gairloch and South Uist, With the Isles of Coll, Tirree, Egg, Roum, Muck and Canan and Country of Glenstrafarer, And being informed That there is a mixture of Protestants in South Uist, Kilmanivaig, Glenstrafarer, and in the Isles of Muck, Roum, Egg and Cana, And that now Southuist has given a Call to One to be their Minister, That one is lately settled in Kilmanivaig, And that these of the foresaid four Isles are about calling One, As likewise that Preachers and Catechists are sent to these Places, The Committee of the said Society Judged this a proper Season of sending Schoolmasters thither, Seeing Ministers, Preachers & Catechists may very much encourage the Schools, And have therefore under consideration the providing of these Places with Schoolmasters and Books, tho' they should sink their Schools in other places where they are not so needful

In other words, the SSPCK was altering its scheme in order to collaborate with that of the Royal Bounty Committee (rather ironically, given that in four years' time the Royal Bounty Committee would eventually alter their own scheme to accommodate that of the SSPCK). Perhaps an idea of the society's eventual aim is hinted at in the request which follows:

And the said Committee of the Society Shew'd That they had laterly settled One Mr John Ewing in the Country of Ranoch, and allow'd him One hundred Merks, And the Lady Weem out of her Concern for the Good of that Country had agreed to give him Fifty Merks, But he having a numerous family cannot live upon so small An Allowance in that place, And the Society are not now in case to give him more, unless they disappoint one of the Popish Places abovementioned, wherein they design to settle Schools; And seeing the said Mr John

Ewing is willing upon the Saturdays afternoon, And upon the Lord's Days to travel from house to house as a Catechist in that Country, And in Summer to go the Shields, And may be very useful therein, the parish being very wide, It is craved He may on that Account have Ten Pounds Sterling more allow'd him for his further encouragment, And there was produced a Letter from Doctor Dundas Præses of the said Committee, Also A Memorial from Sir Robert Menzies of Weem to the same purpose, And a Representation from the Presbytery of Dunkeld, Giving an Account of the State of Ranoch and other Places in their bounds

Given the stress they put on the fact that they had backing from both local church and local landowner, the Society appear to have been rather nervous about making their proposal. Nevertheless, it was accepted by the Royal Bounty Committee, and thus John Ewing became the first, but by no means the last, schoolteacher-catechist jointly employed by both organizations. But no general principle was set down: during the first few years of its operation the Royal Bounty Committee viewed the SSPCK schoolmasters as being complementary to the catechists rather than possibly one and the same. For instance, on the very same day as the SSPCK memorial was read, the Presbytery of Kincardine O'Neil's application for additional missionaries was turned down because "the Society for Christian knowledge have three Charity Schools therein." As for the wild country of Rannoch, John Ewing did not even last a year there, demitting his post in the summer of 1726.

THE COLONSAY CATECHIST: Part 6

The Royal Bounty 1726-1728: trouble on the horizon

The second year of the Royal Bounty Committee saw a general hardening of attitudes among both committee members and those clergymen who served "on the front line", as it were. The conversion of Catholics and indeed Episcopalians to Presbyterianism was by no means as easy a matter as had been imagined. At the same time, the church in the Gàidhealtachd began to work ever more closely with the new army garrisons under General Wade. Continuing "insolence" from papists in the Rough Bounds, for instance, led the Presbytery of Lorn to lobby the church for official support for plans to settle entire military garrisons in their territory, in order to protect projected plantations of Protestants.

At the same time, the question of stipends – ministerial salaries – became ever more acute. Several of the newly-planted ministers in the western Gàidhealtachd owed their position to having been sent up in the first place as Royal Bounty missionaries. They found themselves serving in parishes where they were quite devoid of any financial support, and naturally turned to their erstwhile sponsors, the Royal Bounty Committee, for assistance. Ironically, they had been better off before, as mere salaried preachers. In this regard, we should remember that one of the reasons the bounty was requested in the first place was to help to pay for ministers' stipends and for the creation of new parishes. To be fair, the Royal Bounty Committee did what it could, but was in no position to speed up the painfully slow processes against recalcitrant heritors. The committee's refusal to bend its rules meant that they had constantly to turn down requests for money. At the same time, the exasperated ministers saw that those missionaries who had been despatched to help them simply did not turn up.

Finally, the Royal Bounty Committee were now receiving reports about how their missionaries were performing. For example, Alexander Leask had been a missionary in the Presbytery of Turriff from June to October 1726. But having received a letter and a certificate from him, the committee:

did take Notice that there was nothing in the forsaid Letter or Certificate of Mr Leask's Visiting families or Catechising, Nor Dealling with Papists for their Conversion, But only of his Preaching, which Seems not fully to Answer the Design of His Majestie's Grant, Nor Acts of the General Assembly made thereanent; And Finding that other Certificates Bear nothing of Visiting Families and Catechising. The Committee Appointed that Letters be wrote to the Presbyteries Concern'd, To which Missionaries are Sent, Acquainting them of this, And that it is not the Design of His Majestie's Gift to Ease Ministers of their work, But that all Missionaries, Ministers and Probationers should travel from House to House, visiting and Catechising; And Presbyteries are to Enquire if they do so, And Certifie them as it shall be found they Deserve.

At the next meeting Aeneas Sage on behalf of the Presbytery of Gairloch complained "that the Probationers formerly there, were very Slight in their work, never having Catechised among the People, which should have been a great part of their Work, And it is Proposed that no Money be given to Probationers, But such as are attested to be Qualified According to Law".

The committee was not only cracking down on catechists, but also on any presbyteries who certified catechists without its permission in the first place. Immediately after reading Leask's letter, the members:

Finding that Diverse Presbyterys having Employed Catechists without any Warrant from this Committee, And then Demanding Allowance from the time of their Entry, when the Committee have already Exhausted the Grant by their own Appointments, Do Therefore order that Letters be wrote to the Presbyterys Concern'd, Acquainting them, That the Committee will grant no Salaries Nor Allowances to any, But such as Serve upon the Committee's orders, and only for that time, According to their own Regulations.

The rules were to be tightened up: presbytery certificates, it was decided, were now to "Bear a Clause that the Missionaries Do Catechise the People, going from House to House for that end, And that they are Qualified to the Government." It is important to note that the committee itself was trying to set its own house in order, especially through trying to put its chaotic accounts in order by making it a rule that all salaries should now commence on the 1 November.

More conscientious missionaries, however, were refining their own techniques, with favourable results. For instance, it is clear that Walter Morison, who we have met already being rabbled after preaching at St Ninian's Chapel, was learning caution. In a letter of 7 December 1726 the Rev. James Lautie, moderator of the Presbytery of Fordyce praised him "As a Person with whose Abilities, Managment and Prudent Behaviour, They own themselves to be more and more Satisfied, Yea even the Generality of the Dissaffected in that Country, Are obliged to give him a good testimony, And he has been already Instrumental in Reclaiming Severals from the Popish Errors, And Engadgeing some Disaffected Persons to Attend Gospel Ordinances". Morison was thereupon given a rise in salary for his pains. In a later letter, written on 19 October 1727, he describes his methods. They are worth quoting in full for the details they give about how the cunning catechist went about his business:

Shewing that he had for sometime past been making as Narrow Observation in travelling among that People, as he could, and can say, with Confidence, Blessed be God, that matters begin to mend somewhat, tho' it's true there are not many reclaim'd from Popery, not above Nine, Since he came to that Place, Yet Apostacy is not now frequent, there not having been any Save One, and that ane Heretor agaisnt whom (after he would no ways hearken to, Yea not hear of Instruction, or Argument on that Point) Process is going on, That he the said Mr Morison in his last Travells ffound some more Success, ffor he had Access to Seven or Eight ffamilies of the Papists, who

Joined in Prayer with Considerable Insinuations of Kindness, The Method he took, was not so much Directly to Attack their Errors by running them down as Errors, As by insisting on the Truths of the Christian Religion, where he had Sufficient Occasion in another form to do it, and by this way of doing, he found most of the Common People turning really Protestants in Many Points of our ffaith, and even those which are most ffundamental. Another way he used which he ffound very taking both with the Prelatical ffamilies and with Papists, was to take a Zealous Concern about their Children at Schools, and otherways by frequent Examining them there, and reporting to their Parents, By letting Pennys fall to the Young ones, and Complementing them with little Books, which for Ordinary he does, and hears them read, Examines them, and prescribes them Tasks of the Catechism, By which Means, there is Even an Emulation rising among Several of the Young People And our Catechism comes to be read, and Mandate by many Young ones, and old People hears it, and delights to hear their Children so perform, and ffinding this a very successful Mean, he inclines to improve it more and more, though it be with some Expences, He shews that there are many of the Common People Papists on the Confines where the throng of the Papists are, who plainly own it was the great distance from the Church, that made them take the Nearest, Thus the Priests have improven Mightily, For to the two Priests and their Catechists who have for a Long time lived in good dwellings on the Confines of the said Parishes, another Priest from Fochabers is come, and taken up another house, upon another part of the Extremitys of these parishes, And that it is Lamentable that there they should have their Abodes, and that he has none, But is Obligated to travel at such a distance When Severals do declare that had they a near Occasion of a Protestant Kirk they would attend it

Meanwhile, under rather trying circumstances, the newly ordained Rev. Archibald Bannatyne in Lochbroom had been doing his best:

to Reduce that People to order: And Besides the Catechist he had from the Committee, he had sent out other three to teach the People the Creed, the ten Commands, and some of the Questions of the Catechism; That he had got some stop to the Setting of Netts, Carrying of Loads, and travelling on the Lord's Day, Had prevailed with some Selected Persons in the Remote Corners of the Parish to Read the Scriptures, and tell the People the History of the Bible by way of Tale to their Neighbours upon Winter nights and Sabbath Days, and had Convinced the People how much it is their Duty and Interest to Attend thereunto; And he writes that he is hopefull that the good effect thereof may be Seen in a Competent time, But wanting a Maintainance he would be obliged to Raise a process, which he is affraid will Spoill all, and Living is dear in that Country, So that he is a very great object of Pity as now Stated .

In its report to the General Assembly of May 1727, the committee stressed how it was necessary for it to keep a close eye on the missionaries it employed. Many of the

itinerant ministers who had been sent out had been called to parishes, so it was increasingly having to rely upon untried probationers and catechists. Especially recommended for support were the "front-line" Presbyteries of Gairloch, Abertarff and Lorn. The resistance which the clergy was encountering from priests and Catholic heritors led the committee to take an even harder line than before, not only in urging legal action against papists, but in taking up the Presbytery of Lorn's recommendation for military garrisons to protect projected new Protestant colonies. A special plea was made "That Persons well Acquainted with the Popish Controversies be named to go to these Countries where Popery does abound, both Ministers, Probationers and well Qualified Catechists, to Remain for some time among them, To Instruct them in the Principles of the true Religion" Meanwhile:

some of the Missionaries give it as their Opinion, That their Staying too short a time in One place, seems not so well to answer the design, But that Catechists especially should remain in one place till they had learn'd a competent number of the people therein, to repeat the Shorter Catechism, and to understand it in some measure, And that being done, One in a Family may help to learn another, which will make way for Ministers and Preachers doing the more good when they come to visite, Catechise and preach, And Ministers to baptise or perform other Duties of their Function; For it is not to be expected, that Ministers can stay so long in a family as to learn the people therein, the whole Catechism, But the Catechists may do it, And the longer they remain among a people, And the more intimate and familiar they are with them, They, if prudent have the better Access to do good, And thus in Winter Nights in houses, And in Summer in the Shealls, the people may be receiving Instruction with little diversion from their work, And so when the poor people can repeat part of the Catechism, and answer some Questions therein, it encourages both themselves and others to appear before the Minister, whereas when they can not do so, they are ashamed to attend, And if they do, and can say nothing, they are dash'd, and it discourages them & others present from attending the Means of Instruction.

During the latter half of 1727 the Royal Bounty Committee continued to have problems with recruiting qualified missionaries for the project. They were having to fall back upon catechists, yet at the same time they had greatly overstretched the funds. Certainly, they had boasted at that year's General Assembly that they had been able to reduce many catechists' salaries. The consequence was, however, that it was growing ever harder to recruit suitable young men, many with families, who were willing to undergo the trials and tribulations of working in rough country among a hostile population, and – most crucially of all – were sufficiently qualified to pass the high standards of the Royal Bounty Committee. In a letter of 19 August 1727 the Rev. Donald MacLeod moderator of the Presbytery of Long Island represented "that it was impracticable to find out in that Country persons every way Qualified according to the Committee's regulations to Serve for so small Sallarys as what is allowed this Year". At the same meeting a letter of 4 October from Charles Stewart Clerk to the Presbytery of Kintyre was read, "Shewing that they have no Probationers in the Bounds of their Synod which makes them almost despair of getting one to send to Jura, And therefore proposing that Catechists may be sent upon the ffund designed for

Probationers". On 26 October the Presbytery of Dornoch wrote that they were very disappointed that the catechist of Clyne and Kildonan was not receiving £10 any more, "and how much the poor man formerly Employ'd is discouraged being deprived of Bread for himself and ffamily without timeous Advertisement, and that none can serve for ffour or ffive Pound Sterling there". There were certainly a dozen young students with Gaelic who were applying for bursaries at this time, but although the General Assembly made up a list of the bursaries which were then operative, very few were available.

The most pressing problem was continuing dissatisfaction among the ministers of the Synod of Glenelg. At the General Assembly of 1727, on the day following the nomination of a new Royal Bounty Committee, the Presbytery of Gairloch had handed in a complaint, saying that they had scarcely any help from the Royal Bounty missionaries, that those who had had barely been paid because of the great distance from Edinburgh, that it was difficult to get the relevant legal testificates for their choice of missionaries, and that they had become objects of derision among their own parishioners. Despite the great majority vote of the commission of the church to transport the Rev. Donald MacLeod from Contin to Lochalsh in the presbytery, even at the risk of offending Colin Mackenzie of Coul, one of the most staunch supporters of the presbyterian church in Wester Ross, the ministers of the Presbytery of Gairloch continued to complain that the Edinburgh authorities were doing little or nothing to expedite the legal processes for their stipends. The situation was worsened by the "Vigorous Attempt made to pervert the Protestants in Kintail by Mr Alexander McCraw a Popish Priest who Resides in Straglass, where he has perverted upwards of Six hundred People". Alexander MacRae was ideal for the Catholic cause in Kintail, being a member of the dominant MacRae kindred there, and, according to a letter from the Synod of Glenelg of 11 July 1727, it was not long before he had won:

An Auditory of some Scores of People in that Parish, and had baptised several Children according to the Rites of the Church of Rome, And that there are Several Families transported from Straglass a Popish Country to Kintail, And that if some stop be not put thereto, This Jesuit and his Abettors will in a short time diffuse the Poison of his Idolatrous Religion, through the bounds of the Presb of Gairloch, where the people are generally very ignorant

As well as MacRae, the Presbytery of Gairloch were also under threat from renewed episcopalian missionary work, led by the old rogue and character the Rev. Angus Morison, brother of the famous poet An Clàrsair Dall, the Blind Harper.

The constant barrage of letters from the Synod of Glenelg concerning the lack of support they felt from the Royal Bounty certainly had an effect on the committee. By April 1728 the members were recommending in their report to the General Assembly the following month that preachers and catechists should be withdrawn from small parishes with few Roman Catholics in their bounds, "and that a Special Regard be had To the Bounds of the New Synod of Glenelg, Where Parishes are very Large, and Severals of them Vacant, and Where Popery and Ignorance does most abound, and Ministers have Small Stipends and Want Parochial Schools, and are under many Grievances and great discouragments". This "Special consideration" was agreed in the Royal Bounty scheme for 1728 drawn up on 22 May: an entire day was spent on the

demands of the Synod of Glenelg. So much money was given to them that "there will be a Necessity to Reduce part of what was granted formerly to some places, and withdraw wholly what was given to some others." However, within barely six months the committee and the Synod of Glenelg would be almost at daggers drawn.

THE COLONSAY CATECHIST: Part 7

Crisis and Co-operation: the Royal Bounty 1728-9

A partnership with the SSPCK?

The latter half of 1728 saw further tightening up of the rules of the Royal Bounty Committee. To a large extent this was due to the fright the committee got when they handed in the 1727 accounts to the government auditors, the Barons of the Exchequer. The barons promptly and rather maliciously – for the first time ever – refused to ratify them, on the grounds that the committee had (mis)used some of the Royal Bounty to pay retainers to the clerk, the doorkeeper, and for stationery expenses. In some confusion, the committee decided to try to draw these personal payments out of an already existing £500 church fund, an attempt which was successful the following year. The committee were obviously rather rattled about the state of their accounts, however, and stressed to presbyteries that the relevant certificates and receipts must be received before the 1 December 1728, "Seing at that time The Committee's Accounts to be Revised and Errors therein or Mismanagement may Reflect on the Church, and be the Occasion of Withdrawing this ffund."

While the delegation from the committee argued their case with the Barons of Exchequer, the latter made a rather crucial suggestion: that "also it might be humbly desired, that his Majesty would allow some part of this ffund of One Thousand Pounds Sterling, to be bestowed for Charity Schools, which was formerly Demanded." The committee were certainly not averse to considering such a suggestion. Most of them were members of the SSPCK as well, and thus committed to the charity school movement, and convinced of its value. Ever since the very first year of the Royal Bounty, there had been some degree of co-operation with the SSPCK, with certain of the latter's schoolmasters being paid to catechize for the Bounty on weekends. Because the 1728 scheme had spent much of the Royal Bounty upon the Synod of Glenelg, new corners had to be cut in other areas of the Gàidhealtachd. One way of getting around this problem was to try to make the local SSPCK schoolmasters do the catechizing for them, a patently unsatisfactory solution nevertheless resorted to in the schemes for presbyteries of Kincardine O'Neil, Fordyce, Aberlour and Abernethy.

The Royal Bounty Committee composed a memorial to the Barons of the Exchequer, in which the members requested that the barons try to secure a change in the terms of the royal grant. The language used, and the anti-Gaelic ideology lying behind it, is not at all what we might expect of the committee; it is, however, most typical of the SSPCK:

And because it is Evident that the teaching the People in the highlands and Islands to read the Scriptures in the English Language is the only solid Foundation of all ffuture Instruction in Christian Knowledge and will tend to Extirpate the Irish Language, which much Obstructs the Civilizing of that People Therefore the Committee also begs, that Your Lordships will be Pleas'd to Procure, That the Maintaining of Charity

Schools in the Highlands and Islands, and furnishing Necessary Books for Teaching them to read the Scriptures, and understand the Principles of the Protestant Reform'd Religion, may be Added to the Purposes for which the said Royal Bounty is bestow'd

The barons replied on 12 July 1728. It was not for them, they said, to apply for changes in the terms of the grant; rather, it was a matter for the Church of Scotland, to be discussed either at its quarterly Commission, or at the annual General Assembly. After lengthy discussion, the committee decided not to apply for an alteration in the grant; nonetheless, they began to make moves towards an even closer rapprochement with the SSPCK:

And that as to maintaining of Schools in the Highlands and Islands the places most needing the same this Committee shall keep a Correspondence thereanent with the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, and their Committee and Concert Measures, about their Schoolmasters being employed as Catechists upon the Saturdays & Lord's Day and other times when their Scholars are not at School and that this Committee Grant some Allowance to them, upon that head.

In a memorial to General Wade composed in August 1728, requesting military help to capture Catholic priests, and asking for his help in strengthening government authority in the Gàidhealtachd, the Royal Bounty Committee closely followed the line of the SSPCK; indeed, the society was given paeans of praise:

The Abovementioned Society have now for Near twenty Years past had many Schools Scattered in the Most Barbarous Corners, which have had Desireable Success in teaching the Rising Generation Reading, Writing, Arithmetick, and the Principles of Religion, Virtue and Loyalty, and likewise to Speak the English Language; great Care is taken by them, that such as they Employ to teach, be well Affected to his Majesty, and his Illustrious Royal Protestant ffamily. The Judicatorys likewise of this Church, have very Carefully Laboured to Procure Legal Schools to be Erected in many Parishes of the Highlands, where there were never any Schools before, and are still going on, to obtain More, But the Reforming and Civilizing the Highlands and Islands, will be a Work of time, It is now happily begun, and if the helps already Afforded be continued and some other things that are hereafter humbly Propos'd be granted, it will make a Remarkable tho' Gradual Progress to the Strengthening of his Majesty's Govt Notwithstanding the Restless Endeavours of it's Enemies who deall in their Power to Oppose and Retard it. These Schools, and other Means of Instruction spoken of, will through the Blessing of God in Due time Remove the Ignorance & Barbarity of the Poorer Sort, But it is a Loss that for furdur improving these of a higher Rank and of more than Ordinary pregnant Spirits, there are not some few Grammar Schools set up, in the most Populous Places.

The committee were not the only ones, however, who were planning to make new changes in the rules of the Royal Bounty Committee. At that very same meeting the

members received a seemingly innocent letter from Rev. Donald MacLeod moderator of the Synod of Glenelg. The minister requested that a copy of the original Royal Grant and the committee's rules be sent to them as soon as possible. Suspecting nothing, the committee complied with MacLeod's request.

Double dealing by the Synod of Glenelg

In fact, for some time the Synod of Glenelg had been running out of patience with the Royal Bounty Committee. The first hint that its attitude to the committee was fast deteriorating comes in a rather cantankerous letter written by the Rev. Aeneas Sage to Professor Hamilton – and pointedly not to the committee – on 6 September 1728. In the letter Sage once more complained about the unpaid ministerial stipends owed to him, but this time hinted that the reason that legal pressure was not being brought to bear upon the recalcitrant heritors – the local landlords who should have been paying Sage's salary – was that the agent of the church, Nicol Spence, was simply not doing his job. Spence defended himself spiritedly, alleging that to some extent it was Sage's own unreasonable desire to push back the augmentation of his stipend right to the date of his admission which was to blame for the delay. There were only two Barons of Exchequer in Scotland all last winter, meaning that they were not quorate to grant petitions, while the process was now being considered by the Lord Advocate "As his other Weighty Affairs will Allow". All of Sage's process was being paid for out of the public purse, even the minister's own travelling expenses, a sum amounting to nearly £200.

Later on during the same meeting, on 15 November 1728, the committee were presented with some rather surprising information, namely "that the Synod of Glenelg hath a Strong Inclination, to have the Kings Bounty turned out of the Present Channel and Apply'd for Annual New Erections [of parishes] and that a Memorial was given to General Wade at Fort William to Procure Countenance to it at Court". The committee were obviously quite astonished that the synod had been going behind its back. An emergency meeting was called for three days later; all lawyers on the committee were urged to attend. The committee were far from happy with the synod's little project, and "Did judge that Motion very improper, and Unseasonable, and also Disrespectful to the General Assembly, it's Commission and Committees, who Petition'd for that Bounty to be employ'd in the Manner it now is, and that they should have been Acquainted before any such Motion had been made". Not only was the motion disrespectful, it showed "a Dissatisfaction with the Method Graciously Propos'd in his Majestys Royal Grant, after it was sought in that Manner by this Church, and may have a Tendence to Withdraw the same." Ten days later, the subcommittee brought in a draft of a letter to the synod, recalling that they had asked for a copy of the Royal Grant, and wherein they thought it "Exceeding Strange that You did not Judge it proper to Communicate Your Design to them, who (by Delegation from the General Assembly of this Church Your Superior Judicatory are intrusted with the Managment of that Bounty) before You made an Attempt to introduce so great an Alteration in a Matter that Nearly Concerns the Interest of Religion, Regard to his Majesty, and the Honour of this Whole Church." The committee, obviously in high dudgeon, was quite merciless to the Synod of Glenelg, bringing the full weight of its authority to bear upon them:

It was a great Adventure, and a most improper and unseasonable one in so small a Number as your Synod Consists of, or in their Committee, or any Presbytery in Your Bounds, to take upon them to Counterwork the General Assembly and their Commission, to the Prejudice of other Eight Synods as Considerable as you, who have an Interest in the Matter. When the Committee have Weighed the many bad Consequences that must Necessarily Attend this New Project, They have Reason to think that the first Movers thereof, are either not friendly to this Glorious Work, and judge this a likely Way to Marr it, and no doubt it will prove so, Or if friendly, they have not duly Considered all the disadvantages of that Proposal

The committee's letter was accompanied by another memorial to General Wade, urging him of the necessity to carry on the Royal Bounty scheme as it now was, given the scattered nature of the population, and the impossibilities of carrying the heritors along with such a scheme.

Yet the idea of the synod's scheme had in the first place come from the heritors themselves. Also, it should be remembered that the use of Royal Bounty funds to pay parish stipends had in fact been mooted in the original lobbying for the scheme. The Synod of Glenelg had first floated the idea the previous year, when it was suggested that half the fund be reallocated to pay for the splitting of large, unwieldy parishes into more manageable units. At their annual meeting, on 19 June 1728, the synod had appointed a committee to draw up a scheme for the better employing of the Royal Bounty, and to correspond with other neighbouring synods on the subject – evidently this was how it leaked to the Royal Bounty Committee in Edinburgh. In January it came out that the author of the report was Rev. James Gilchrist of Kilmallie; the committee record that he wrote a letter to them on 4 April 1729, in which he defends himself:

He says it was no Application to the Government, Only an Unsign'd Memorial, giving the General a thought, which Perhaps might be new, and which he was to make, what use of he Pleas'd, And the said Mr Gilchrist owns he was the Writer thereof, and, except that that Scheme is Agreeable to his Own Sentiments, the Writing of that Paper, is all the hand he had in it. It was at the Desire of a Certain Gentleman that he wrote it

Whatever support the Synod's idea might have had among local landowners, the government were firmly on the side of the Royal Bounty Committee. The upshot was that relations between the committee and the various presbyteries in the Synod of Glenelg – supposedly their greatest beneficiaries – became positively glacial, the more so in that the committee, evidently set on pursuing their grudge to the bitter end, insisted on taking the affair before the General Assembly of 1729. The Assembly disapproved of the synod's memorial, and that was an end to the matter, at least as far as the committee was concerned.

A solution to the crisis?

Nevertheless, the affair of the Synod of Glenelg had clearly shown up the inadequacy of the Royal Bounty scheme as it was then being administered. Despite their rather desperate circumstances, the Presbyteries of Gairloch and Abertarff had received little or no support from the fund; despite all the good intentions, ministers and catechists were simply not willing to come to preach in their bounds. Both sides, the synod and the committee, saw the need to encourage resident preachers and catechists in the community. Yet a scheme by which itinerant preachers were ordered to leave their home for an uncertain, uncomfortable and even dangerous three months among hostile strangers was obviously totally unsatisfactory. Something had to be done. The Synod of Glenelg had proposed using the Royal Bounty to increase the number of resident ministers; the Royal Bounty Committee, on the other hand, was enthusiastic about using the SSPCK schoolteachers as part-time catechists. General Wade's opinion, expressed in a letter of 16 November the previous year, was that an annual bounty scheme could not be used to employ full-time established teachers. Nevertheless, at the 1729 General Assembly the committee pursued this aim, asking – as it was rather coyly put – "the Addition only of dispersing Books & Encouraging Schools." The General Assembly agreed to allow the Royal Bounty Committee for 1729 to make its own decisions, and after that matters moved very quickly.

On 29 May 1729 the subcommittee decided that seeing demand for the Royal Bounty was so high, they should correspond with the SSPCK and bring in a report accordingly. A month later, the report was ready. It recommended that:

the Committee should Resolve in Concert with the said Society, to give Commissions to several of the Masters settled in the said Schools, to be Catechists for Catechising the People in these Places upon three Days of the Week, namely Each Lord's Day, Each Saturday and each Munday, both forenoon and Afternoon, and to allow such Catechists for their Annual Service this say a Sum not exceeding Ten Pounds Sterling Per Annum to be paid to the said Schoolmasters at two Terms of the Year Vizt Whitsunday and Martinmass, beginning the first Term's Payment at Whitsunday 1730 for the half Year Preceeding

On their part, the SSPCK were willing and ready to settle schools in proper and needful places according to the committee's desire. Their own committee was ordered to work together with the Royal Bounty Committee as soon as possible to work out suitable places and candidates:

When the said Society and this Committee have Agreed upon a Certain Number of Wel Qualified Persons to be their Respective Schoolmasters and Catechists and Concerted the Proper Places of their Settlements That the said Persons should for Distinction's sake be thus Design'd in the several Minutes of Register Vizt The Catechists jointly employ'd by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge and this Committee.

The jointly employed catechist-schoolmaster, receiving half his salary from the SSPCK as a schoolmaster, and the other half from the Royal Bounty Committee as a

catechist, was not a new creation in 1729; there had been isolated examples beforehand. But 1729 was the first year that this job share, as it were, was officially recognised. The category of catechist-schoolmaster was by no means the largest in the 1729 Royal Bounty scheme: 46 of them to 60 of the older itinerant preacher types. However, there was no doubt which group was the more cost-effective: 46 catechists, whose salary was shared with the SSPCK, cost only £249; 60 missionaries, on the other hand, cost £818. When it was found that some £59 was left over from the previous year, the Royal Bounty Committee, tellingly, chose to fund 11 joint catechist-schoolmasters.

Conclusion

Thus it was that the two bodies, the SSPCK and the Royal Bounty Committee, had to begin to work together, in an alliance which lasted some forty years. As we shall see, it was by no means an easy partnership: communication channels could be confused, and the charitable SSPCK in particular had to be ready to defer to the official committee whenever tensions arose. Nevertheless, through cooperation with the Royal Bounty the SSPCK were able to spread their influence and their ideology far and wide, much more so than they would have done had they to rely upon their own resources alone. Granted, many, indeed most members of the Royal Bounty Committee also attended meetings of the SSPCK; but the Royal Bounty funds were not originally to be used – overtly at least – towards well-defined ideological ends, other than the basics of preaching the gospel, encouraging loyalty, and combating Roman Catholicism and Episcopalianism. The SSPCK, on the other hand, had over their twenty years' existence evolved a very specific picture of their ideal Gàidhealtachd: it goes without saying that goodwill towards Gaelic language and culture was not exactly a crucial part of the society's vision. The SSPCK had a cultural as well as a religious and political agenda, and this would henceforth be prosecuted throughout the region with the assistance of official funds.

At the same time, the cooperation between Royal Bounty and SSPCK meant a great extension in the missionary effort. For one thing, the society's network of schoolteachers, now enjoying a hefty injection of official funds, had already spread far outwith the borders of the Gàidhealtachd. Then again, by working together and effectively halving their costs, the two bodies were able to fund posts in much smaller, isolated communities than previously. Among these new placements would be the island of Colonsay.

THE COLONSAY CATECHIST: Part 8

Now, at last, we can turn back to Colonsay. You might remember the many problems of the parish of Jura and Colonsay at the beginning of the eighteenth century: the overwhelming size and unwieldiness of the parish itself, and indeed its presbytery, that of Kintyre; the reluctance of the local landowners, the heritors, to pay for any fresh expenses to do with the church; the uninspiring character of the local minister, the Rev. Neill Campbell, whose first few years in the parish had possibly broken him; and maybe rivalries within the presbytery itself. The parish may have been well worthy of official support; but the shortcomings of both local gentry and local clergy meant that that support would not be immediately forthcoming.

A schoolteacher in Colonsay

As we have seen, the Synod of Argyll, although the main church court in the region, did not provide the impetus for the extension of ecclesiastical authority which had so transformed the organisation of the presbyterian Church of Scotland – and indeed the lives of the inhabitants – on the west coast during the 1720s. Rather, such demands tended to come as a result of local presbyterial initiatives. However, the synod did play a crucial rôle in making them happen. Again, we have seen that most missionary activity was undertaken on the forfeited estates in the north-west mainland and also in the staunchly Catholic eastern Highlands. The parish of Jura and Colonsay, with neither island an obvious hotbed of jacobite sympathy, nor threatened by the inroads of Catholic priests, was hardly an immediate priority. However, there is some evidence to show that the Synod of Argyll was trying to ease the minister's plight.

Edinburgh lawyers had long been suspicious – not to say jealous – of the vast independent legal powers wielded by the duke of Argyll through his heritable jurisdiction over much of the western seaboard of the Gàidhealtachd. In much the same way, the Synod of Argyll was able to operate as a church court largely independent of the central Church of Scotland. A 1690 act of parliament had allowed them the vacant benefices and stipends in their area for their own uses, while five years later they were awarded the Bishops' Rents of Argyll and the Isles, monies which the crown was finding too difficult to collect. It was widely believed – incorrectly – that the synod was supposed to use the income for maintaining schools. In fact, it could also be employed "for other pious uses that shall occur within the bounds of the said synod, there being now more than ever in that place great need of preachers". Whatever the case, many Scottish clergy were rather unhappy about spending church money for educational purposes within the bounds of the Synod of Argyll.

We are fortunate that the Barons of the Exchequer shared these suspicions. In 1730 they demanded that the Synod forward accounts to Edinburgh of how the monies had been put to use since 1705. The synod not only sent them the relevant documents, but rather cheekily recorded that it had "superexpended" £722.16s.4d. It noted that a further £1,745.6s.8d., money no longer received as rent from the various new parishes

erected during the 1720s, should also be counted as credit. Perhaps we need not have too much sympathy with the synod: it had, after all, spent £3,750 as salaries to the trustees for the rents. Some things never change: a huge sum – £2,984.13s.10d. – had been expended on lawyers' fees. For our purposes, however, these accounts are primarily of interest because they show the synod was at last using money out of the Bishops' Rents for the people of Colonsay.

As we have seen, there were no funds to help pay the Rev. Neill Campbell's salary, even though a stipend of £100 Scots out of the Bishops' Rents was being paid for Gigha from 1717, while three years later the new parish of Torosay on Mull was granted an annual stipend of £300 Scots. We might note that the Rev. John Campbell, minister of Kilarrow in Islay, who recommended in 1716 that Campbell be encouraged out of the same fund, was himself the beneficiary of £466.13s.4d. Scots every year. The minister of Jura and Colonsay, then, did not receive any aid; however, the island of Colonsay did: for three years, from 1722 to 1724, £16 per annum was paid to an unnamed schoolteacher there. It was doubtless at the same time that £80 – not an especially large sum by any means – was spent "Building a Meeting house in Collonsay & for a Schooll". Clearly, the Synod of Argyll was trying to help. However, the long-term problem was the size and shape of the parish. Ideally, it should be split in two.

The report of 1724

The main impetus for reforming the parish, however, came neither from the Synod of Argyll nor from the Presbytery of Kintyre. Rather, it came about because of one individual: the Rev. Neil Simson of Gigha (1690-1756). Although Simson had effectively been minister of the island since 1717 (with £100 Scots annually from the Bishops' Rents), his charge was still officially part of its original parish – that is, Jura and Colonsay. Simson wanted his own parish, and was not slow to make his complaints known to the highest officials in the Church. As he came from a distinguished dynasty of Kintyre ministers – both his father and his grandfather had been staunch presbyterians and had suffered accordingly during the episcopalian ascendancy – he had the confidence and the contacts to make himself heard. Crucially, he won the support of Nicol Spence, agent of the Church, one of the most important men in Scotland of his time. On 15 September 1724 the Presbytery read a letter from Spence, wherein he stated that he had received from Simson an account that three quarters of the heritors of the parish had now consented to the creation of a new parish in Gigha and Cara. In other words, Simson had told Spence that a sufficient number of local landowners had given their assent for the Church to go ahead in dividing the parish. Summons were to be sent to all concerned; in addition, Spence "also desires that the Presbytery meet and appoint a Committee to perambulat the Bounds of the S[ai]ds Isles". The Presbytery decided "that this was an affair of such consequence" that it was to be obeyed at once.

The ministers certainly did not procrastinate. For the first time in a generation a deputation – including, of course, the Rev. Neil Campbell himself and Malcolm MacNeill of Colonsay – was sent to tour the bounds of the parish of Jura and Colonsay. The journey was already underway in the middle of October, there having been a delay because Campbell was "wind-bound in Collonsa". Ready on 2

December, the report made depressing reading. Here is the section concerning Colonsay:

West from Jura in the main Ocean, Lye the Isles of Collonsay & Orronsay, at the Distance of Seven Leagues from the place of Landing, This Dangerous Sea is called the Linne Tarshin. Their two Isles are divided by a small Sound, the Length of Both Eight miles, the Breadth two Miles and an half, the Catechiseable Persons four hundred, One Place of worship in the Center, the Heritor Malcom M^cNeil of Collonsay, The Rent Sixteen hundred Pounds Scots money Teinds included, which are two hundred and Eighty pound money fores^d of which two hundred Pound paid to the minister and Eighty to the Bishop

The committee summed up the parish as follows:

this Large Tract under the Inspection of the Min^r of Jura of about forty Miles Length and thirty in Breadth is an Intollerable Charge for one Min^r, who in passing & Repassing between the Islands is put to insupportable Charges and frequently wind Bound for ten and Twenty days, Yea sometimes for a Month or Six weeks, and for the most part miserably accomodate to the great prejudice of his health, from all qch it appears that even this Charge cannot in any tolerable manner be supply'd without two Min^{rs} One in Jura & another in Collonsay & Orronsay, and the small Islands in the North & Norwest of Jura to be Annexed to the Parish of Luing & Saoil in the Presbytery of Lorn to which they Ly most Contiguous.

There are many such parish descriptions dating from the 1720s, a time when strenuous efforts were being made to extend the authority of church and state over the entire country, thereby to integrate even the most outlying districts into the ecclesiastical and political framework of Scotland, and, through educational and commercial initiatives, to make the land and people into useful additions to the British state.

The report of the parish of Jura and Colonsay was approved by the presbytery, and it was noted that "the greatest part of the Heritors" agreed with the proposal. However, it was recommended that the situation in Jura should continue as before "till some Method be fallen upon for a Disjunction as is a[bove]express^t". The presbytery was under no illusions that it would be a simple task to split the parish of Jura and Colonsay. Nevertheless, the report was sent to Nicol Spence in Edinburgh, and also recommended to the Lords for Plantation of Churches. But no further steps were taken. The minutes of the Commission of the Church of Scotland for 11 March 1725 explain why. The presbytery had in fact been either misinformed or too optimistic about the local heritors. A number of requests had been received to erect new parishes: Gigha, Jura and Colonsay, Coll and Tiree, and others. Although the local landowners had been asked to appear:

But the consent of some Heretors not being as yet obtain'd, And they being Members of Parliament, and not in Scotland, these processes

could not hitherto be insisted in, The Commission renews the former Appointments in these matters.

Given the political crisis convulsing Scotland at the time, the major landowners had more important things to worry about than creating new parishes in the western Highlands. Nevertheless, as a result of the intervention of the Synod of Argyll, the relationship between the Presbytery of Kintyre and Neil Campbell was transformed.

The report of 1726

On 30 July 1725 the synod recommended their presbyteries to take advantage of the forthcoming Royal Bounty scheme. Government funds were now available in order to sponsor itinerant ministers and catechists who would "fill in the gaps" in the still patchy ecclesiastical framework in the Gàidhealtachd. The synod therefore advised them:

to meet as soon as they can, and draw up a state of their bounds, and send in the same to the Agent for the Church, to be Laid before the Committee appointed by the Assembly for Reformation of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and for Management of the King's bounty for that end...

It is very interesting that the synod specifically takes up the case of the parishes under the Presbytery of Kintyre. The Rev. Neil Campbell's charge heads the list:

the Synod hereby earnestly entreats the said Committee to have a special regard to the state of the united parishes of Jura and Collonsay and united parishes of Killean Kilchenzie Saddell and Caradell In the Distribution of the Kings bounty.

The presbytery did as they were bidden, and put together another representation on behalf of their colleague. However, this time they were rather tardy: it was not until a year later, at a meeting on 6 August 1726, that the account appears to have been compiled. In forceful, dramatic, even poetic terms, it describes the extreme difficulties the minister faced in carrying out his duties. This is the presbytery's description of Colonsay. Given that it is apparently more geographically accurate than the 1724 report, one might wonder whether the earlier perambulation had indeed visited the island, or had just relied on the Rev. Neill Campbell's own estimations. The report states:

That the Island of Collonsay Lyes ffive Leagues and upwards of a very dangerous sea with strong Currents and Confluences of seas off the Gulph of Corivrekane north west of the said Island of Jura which Island of Collonsay is above six Myles In Length and three Myles broad, and by reason of the dangerous seas foresaid The Minister will be for severall weekes stormstayed or windbound before he can have passage from the one Island to the other especially when the wind blowes from the East or Northeast their being no Lands to the West or southwest of the said Island of Collonsay but the open Western ocean

In to which the said Minister hes been often In danger of being driven...

Evidently they had had a rough time of the crossing. The representation concludes with a wonderful melodramatic crescendo:

And seing Notwithstanding of the Largeness of this Charge Yet the stipend is very Inconsiderable not exceeding ffyve hundered pounds Scots whereof a good part must of Necessity be expended and Debursd by the Minister in fferying from one Island to another In order to Discharge his Ministeriall ffunction In the said Islands, And That there are no manner of ffree Teinds unaffected within the said Islands or any other ffunds whereby the said stipend can be Augmented (the whole Inhabitants being very poor) And That Lykewayes the Minister hes neither Manse or Gleib Therefore the said Presbyterie of Kintyre Do hereby earnestly Recommend to the said Committee ffor Manadging of his Majesties Bounty That they have Speciall regaird to the Clamant Circumstances of the said parish the Lyke whereof Cannot be paraleal'd In the whole Highlands of Scotland nor perhaps In any part of the Christian world And humbly suppose that such a proportion of his Majesties bounty Cannot be better employed than In provyding ane assistant ffor the service of the said parish

The Presbytery had put together an impressive plea on the Rev. Neil Campbell's behalf. However, in return they expected the minister of Jura to make amends for his negligent behaviour in the past. Although his colleagues still sympathised with his difficulties, they were no longer prepared to be so lenient as before. Campbell's usual excuses no longer sufficed:

he being remov'd, the s[ai]d Excuses were Considerd, and the Pres^y could not but Sympathise with him under his insupportable Grievances in his Charge, but in the mean time could not be satisfied with his Constant Absence And his having the [preaching] Exercise so Long on his hands.

The representation of the state of the parish of Jura and Colonsay, along with requests for an assistant from the united parish of Killean, Kilchenzie and Saddell, was sent to the Synod of Argyll, who forwarded them with a covering letter to the Royal Bounty Committee. The request was duly considered on 12 October 1726, and obviously made an impression:

The Clerk presented a Representation of the Presbytery of Kintyre to the Committee, Shewing that Mr Neil Campbell Minister has under his Charge the Isles of Juray, Collonsay, Scaraba and Lunga, Garvellich, Elachanive and Belnahnay [*recte* Belnahuay], That Juray is Twenty four miles in length, and Six in Breadth, in which there are two places for publick worship, That Collonsay Lyes five leagues therefrom, and is Six miles in length And three in Breadth, That Scaraba is Three miles in length, and three in Breadth, That Lunga is Two miles in length, And the other Islands abovenamed are also Inhabited, And that

there are Strong Currents of Sea Interjected, which makes passage uncertain dangerous and Expensive, And the Minister long detained in some of them, when his presence in the rest is most necessary, And that his Stipend is only about Five hundred pound Scots, and no free Teinds Unaffected in these Islands; and Therefore Craving some Allowance for an Assistant, And this is Recommended by a Letter from the Synod of Argyle dated the Eight day of August last Signed by Mr Dugald Campbell Moderator.

Unfortunately, the Royal Bounty Committee was unable to help. The representations had come in too late in the year. Although they

Do Find the Circumstances of the forsaid Parishes very Clamant, But the forsaid Representations not having been Presented before Distribution of the Kings Bounty after the Late General Assembly, and this years Allowance being already Destinated, and places and Persons having thereby obtained a Right, This Committee cannot make any Alteration therein without the Consent of these concerned, And so Cannot at present Answer the Desire of the forsaid Representations and Letter, And though they had money, can only grant Annual Allowances to Missionaries, But not Settled allowances to Assisstants, And therefore orders that a Letter be wrote to the said Presbytery, Intimating this to them, and Desireing that they may Apply more timously next year.

Evidently, the Synod also requested once more that the parish be split. Once more, however, they ran up against landed interests – in this case "Great" Daniel Campbell of Shawfield, successful tobacco and indeed slave merchant, collector of Customs and financier who had become Member of Parliament for the Glasgow burghs in 1716, after having earlier represented Inveraray. His zeal as a collector made him an unpopular figure in the town. Because of his support for the Malt Tax of 1725, an angry mob ransacked his mansion, Shawfield House, and destroyed its interior. Suspecting the town council of conniving with the rioters, Shawfield called in a loan of £4,500 he had previously made to them. It was doubtless this money, and the £6,080 which the government awarded him as compensation (out of Glasgow council coffers), which enabled him to buy Islay and much of Jura in 1726. Shawfield had already been leasing these estates from the previous owner, John Campbell of Cawdor, since 1723. Although he would soon be a staunch supporter of the church on his estates, at the time of purchase he was evidently rather unwilling, and probably unable, to bear much of the expense of splitting the parish. Indeed, he had to sell Shawfield House in 1727. As appears from the minutes of the Commission of the Church for 8 March of that year, Shawfield withheld his consent.

A catechist for Colonsay at last

Although the committee had no money resting from the 1726 scheme to pay for catechists, in May 1727 they were able to allow £22 sterling "and some odd money" for an itinerant minister to help Campbell in Jura. On 5 August the Presbytery of Kintyre again summoned him to their meeting. If the minister of Jura and Colonsay were to receive official support, if an outsider with an official salary were to work

alongside him, then it was absolutely imperative that he be seen to be a worthy recipient, not a disgrace to the presbytery. This time they not only complained about his absences, but also enquired into his administration of the parish. What they found shocked them. Campbell had never administered communion to his parishioners:

To which He answered that he was discouraged from attempting such a Work in regard He found little appearance of the reality of Religion amongst them, and that He has no constitute Eldership in his parish.

Not only was the minister failing in his duties, he was clearly estranged from his flock. Hardly surprisingly, the presbytery registered that it was "very much dissatisfied" with their colleague. Campbell, however, must have expected trouble; he had come to the meeting prepared. To prove his commitment to the ongoing evangelizing of his charge:

Mr Neill Campbell brought from the parish of Colonsay Donald MacLean a young man, whom He recommended as qualified for the office of Catechist. He being called in was Examined & approven.

It is likely that this Donald MacLean was the son of John MacLean, who with Donald MacPherson was one of "the two Catechists who have been Lately Employed in ye Isles of Colonsa and Jura" who complained in August 1703 that they were "not yet payed for yr pains and diligence among ye people of the s[ai]d Isles". We might also suggest that John MacLean was the church officer who delivered the Presbytery of Kintyre's summons to the recalcitrant Rev. John MacSween, Campbell's episcopalian predecessor, in 1700. MacLean would not last long at his first stint as catechist. However, he would return to his post, and would be responsible for the education of nearly three generations of Colbhasaich.

THE COLONSAY CATECHIST: Part 9

The following piece deals with the breakdown in communications which could occur between the authorities and the islands at a time when transport was slow and erratic, and the post none too trustworthy. The attempt by local ministers to cover up any problems from an official authority obsessed with ensuring that its monies were used conscientiously, only caused them more trouble. The real sufferer, however, was the innocent catechist stuck in the middle.

Supervising the catechists

Donald MacLean, the new catechist for Colonsay, was presented by his minister the Rev. Neill Campbell to the Presbytery of Kintyre on 5 August 1727. It is most unfortunate that there is a gap in the presbytery records between that month and February 1732, but it is clear that MacLean was swiftly recommended to the Royal Bounty Committee in Edinburgh. Charles Stewart, clerk to the Presbytery, wrote to the Committee on the 4 October 1727. His message was that it was impossible for it to send any probationer minister to Jura, given that there was none in the bounds of the presbytery. He proposed that instead of paying for a probationer, the Committee might want to use the salary to pay for catechists instead. This is probably the reason why "Donald McLean in Colonsay" appears on the roll of Royal Bounty catechists for November of that year. He was to be paid £5 for a year's work – evidently what the presbytery had requested.

On 2 January 1728 MacLean braved the winter storms to cross the sea to Campbeltown, a journey which one suspects would not normally be undertaken except in dire necessity. The reason for this unwonted excursion is to be found in the rules of the Royal Bounty Committee, which required that all preachers and catechists:

produce to the Presbyteries they come to, before they be employ'd a Certificate upon trial, from a Presbytery of this National Church, Of their Orthodoxy, Piety, Literature, Prudence and other necessary Qualifications for the Work they are respective called unto; As also An Authentick Certificate from a proper Judge of their Loyalty to His Majesty King George and good Affection to His Royal Family and Protestant Succession therein

Without the necessary certificates, the catechist would not be registered and would not receive any salary. Thus it was that at Campbeltown MacLean stood before David Campbell, baillie of Kintyre and the local Justice of the Peace. Together with the other catechists in the presbytery, he proved that he was a loyal subject of King George by taking "the Oaths appointed by Law to be taken by all persons in publick Trust namely the Oaths of Allegiance & Abjuration and Signing of the Oath of Assurance". However, MacLean would not remain long at his post.

The Royal Bounty Committee expected that its catechists "teach according to the Scriptures of Truth, the Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms the

Standards of the Doctrine of this Church, and keep close thereby". Not only were they to instruct their neighbours; their bearing and conduct was expected to be exemplary. The Committee urged its employees:

that in the prosecution of this good and great design, you may act conscientiously Depending upon God for Counsel, Strength, furniture and Success, Be much in Prayer to God, and be resign'd to His Will, Let His Glory and the Good of Precious Souls be your chief Motive, Lay your Account with opposition, Study Humility, Self denial, Patience, Forebearance and Prudence, And carry with Meekness and Love, Let your Department and Managment be such as that these with whom you have to do, may see that you seek their Good, And take the most gaining methods with them, Be always affraid, lest this Excellent design suffer through your fault.

The Committee was setting high standards. If the intention was to impose discipline upon individual behaviour throughout the Highlands, they had to begin with their own. As we have seen, the Committee was obsessed with closely scrutinizing its employees. Each and every catechist was:

to return the Committee An authentick Testimonial from the Presbytery in whose bounds they serve, Bearing their Production of the foresaid Certificates, the time they laboured there, how many Lord's Days these Minsters and Probationers did preach among them, and where, And giving Account of their Diligence and good Behaviour, And they are not to get payment of the last Moyetie of their foresaid Allowances till the said Testimonial be produced.

Each year the work of every minister and catechist in the service of the Royal Bounty Committee was to be assessed. The entire ongoing process of evangelization was to be firmly regulated by the authorities in Edinburgh. It was not long, however, before it became clear that such a minute and careful control of remote and often inaccessible islands was quite impracticable. The Committee recognised this with a notable lack of grace. Nevertheless, it expected that the Presbytery of Kintyre regularly send the required certificates to Edinburgh, testifying that the catechists in their pay had in fact been carrying out their duties. Until these credentials were received, no salaries would be allowed.

Communication problems

However, for whatever reason, the Presbytery of Kintyre neglected to send the relevant certificates to Edinburgh. Inclement weather, or indeed his own fecklessness, may have prevented the Rev. Neill Campbell from reporting to his fellow ministers how the catechists were faring. Then again, as we shall see, Campbell may well have been having problems with his new assistant. At the end of 1728 the Committee in Edinburgh sent them a letter, evidently wondering just what was going on. The presbytery would take over two months to reply.

In a covering letter on 5 March 1729 to Nicol Spence, the agent for the church, together with the certificates of Donald MacLean and his fellow catechists, the presbytery excused themselves as follows:

Sir

We receiv'd a Letter from the Revd & Honble Comittee for the royal Bounty of the 26th Decr last, to which it was not practicable for us to give an Answer sooner, & were the state of our Bounds & the vast distance that our Members are at from this Country, where our Meetings for ordinary are, well known to the Comittee, there wou'd be no Exception taken at some little informalities, much less so far as to deprive some of our remote Isles of what they thought themselves so well entitled to, not only by the Grant of the Comittee but by their own most clamant circumstances. There are even in the Rules of the Comittee Exceptions of remote corners & none have better ground to plead the benefit of these, than the vast and insupportable Charge of Jura, Colinsay & adjacent Islands, all under one Ministers Inspection...

The presbytery went on to stress that, as a result of the Royal Bounty Committee's fastidiousness in not paying their employees without having received their certificates, the catechists had suffered badly that winter:

The Catechists have been so restricted to their Office that they could use no other Shift for their own Subsistence, which in this hard & straitning Year puts them in danger of Starving if they get not their Sallaries We entreat that the Money be paid to Mr David Campbell Bailie of Kintyre who will take care to deliver it to the respective Catechists.

At a meeting of 22 May 1729, having read the letter, the Committee recognised the difficulty faced by members of the clergy in Islay, Jura and Colonsay:

to keep a Correspondence with the Comittee it being Seldom the Ministers of these Islands can attend their own Presbyterys by reason of their great Distance therefrom, and Dangerous Seas Interjected, The Comittee having Considered the Case did Appoint the Cashier to pay the whole Catechists named by them for those places according to their Certificates, of what is resting, ever since the time their Salaries were Appointed, But it is hereby Declared, this is not to be a Precedent, and in time Coming the Rules are to be observed.

This time the Committee had relented. It would not do so again. Subsequent events, however, were to suggest that the problems with the Colonsay catechist was rather more serious than just a breakdown in communications.

A new catechist for Colonsay

Scarcely had one problem been laid to rest than another appeared. On the 25 October 1729 the Presbytery of Kintyre sent another letter to Nicol Spence. The Presbytery of

Kintyre had sponsored Donald MacLean as a catechist for the year 1728-9; at last, he had received his salary. But all was not well: in fact, MacLean had not been at his post at all that year:

Sir

We did the last Year give you the Trouble of representing the clamant Circumstances of Ila, Jura & the other adjacent Islands and did beg the favour of you to lay the same before the Reverend & Honourable Committee entrusted with the managem[en]t of the Royal Bounty & we do now return you our hearty thanks for your good Offices. We are now obliged in pursuance of what was then granted to inform you that Donald McLean then nominated Catechist for Colonsay for the current Year was otherwise preingag'd before Yours came to hand, & there being none found fitter to officiate in that Station than James Muir School Master there who hath since November last taught the Children to read the Scriptures & the Elder People the principles of Religion, He being employed by the Minister & his Session in that work, of which we were only of late appriz'd, they lying at such a distance from us, as we formerly told you, that we can but seldom have communication with them. And they having sent up the said James Muir now to be examin'd by the Presbytry, we can upon good grounds attest, that after examining of him, we judge him a person that may be very useful in that remote corner. And He having qualified as the Law directs, we entreat you may be pleas'd to use your Influence with the Rev'd & Honble Committee to procure him payment of the five Pounds Str allowed by them the current Year for the said Isle. We have got no particular Accott of what Allowance the Revd & Honble Committee made of the Royal Bounty for our Bounds the ensuing Year....

Donald MacLean had left his job, doubtless scunnered by the non-payment of his already low salary. Later on we shall see that it is likely that he left to work with his brother Gilbert, a local merchant.

Apparently, however, there was already another teacher on Colonsay. As we have seen earlier, the Synod of Argyll had paid for a schoolhouse on the island, as well as a salary for a schoolmaster there between 1722 and 1724. That teacher may well have been James Moore. Subsequently, it appears from the letter, he was employed by the minister and the kirk session. In this case, however, the "Session" probably means one man only, namely Malcolm MacNeill of Colonsay. Indeed, given his name, Moore may well have been called over by MacNeill from Kintyre for that very purpose.

Originally from Ayrshire, and of strong covenanting sympathies, a number of Muirs had been taken over as tacksmen, and indeed as officers, as part of the Lowland plantation of Kintyre by the marquis of Argyll in the middle of the seventeenth century. Although the new catechist is almost always referred to as "Muir" in official papers, in certificates he spells his own name after the somewhat high-falutin' anglicizing eighteenth-century fashion, "Moore". As we shall see, subsequent events suggest that Malcolm MacNeill of Colonsay held Moore in high regard, and was prepared to take some pains to retain him in his post.

"James Moor catechist in Colonsay" had already taken the oaths required of him at Campbeltown on the 8 October 1729. The presbytery were in effect presenting the Royal Bounty Committee with a *fait accompli*; they had a catechist ready in place of Donald MacLean. It is interesting that the ministers wrote to Nicol Spence – a possible ally? – rather than risk writing straight to the committee itself.

Problems with the pay rise

The presbytery blamed the Rev. Neil Campbell, his (possibly non-existent) kirk session, and the remoteness of the parish. However, it did not look at all good, the more so because on 30 October 1729, while the letter was still making its way to Edinburgh, Donald MacLean had been given a pay rise, and a second set of employers. His salary was now eight pounds sterling, paid jointly out of the funds of the Royal Bounty and the SSPCK – in effect a saving of one pound by the committee, compared to the five pounds they had allowed MacLean previously. Yet Donald MacLean was no longer catechist in Colonsay. Indeed, he may well have left the country.

Disastrously, the Committee's letter to the Presbytery of Kintyre informing them of MacLean's pay rise crossed over the presbytery's letter informing them that the catechist was no longer at his post. Having heard of the Committee's decision, the presbytery had no option but to write another letter, on 12 December 1729, this time to the Royal Bounty Committee itself, informing them again about their new employee in Colonsay:

We receiv'd Yours of Octr 30th & in answer thereto, the Presby is fully satisfied with the Persons you have nominated for Catechists the ensuing Year for our bounds, & with the particular Proportions of Sallery allowed to each of them, only as to Donald McLean in Colonsay, as we wrote in our last, He is otherwise employed, but one James Muir School Master there has been officiating the bygone [*supra*: half] Year & now being examined by the Presby is found sufficiently qualified for that Work, And if the Rev'd & Honble Comittee, please to allow him to succeed in that office, we shall send him, according to your Instructions, an Extract of your Letter for his Commission...

The little alteration of James Moore's time in office from a year to half a year is telling; the presbytery are trying to make out that Donald MacLean was in his post for at least some of the time he received his salary, that the Committee had not wasted five pounds on a non-existent catechist. In addition, Moore had only taken the official oaths of allegiance, abjuration and assurance on 8 September 1729; before then he was strictly speaking not legally qualified to work for the Royal Bounty Committee. The letter, before the "half" was added, suggested that Donald MacLean had left employment around the end of 1728.

The Royal Bounty Committee accepted the new candidate, but of course not without certain reservations, demanding "that the said Presbytery be wrote to, to inform the Committee more Particularly where and what way the said Donald McLean is Employ'd". Moore was to be paid the same amount as MacLean for one year, but only

from the beginning of the previous month, "with a Salary of Eight Pounds Sterling whereof the one half to be paid by the Treasurer of the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge (as Appears by a Resolution of their Committee produced this Day) And the other half by the Cashier of this Committee".

The presbytery has to come clean

Three months later, however, the Presbytery of Kintyre made a major blunder. On the 19 March 1730 they wrote another letter, asking that, because Donald MacLean had "left these bounds" about Martinmas (1 November) 1728, that the salary awarded to MacLean after that time – a full year's payment – should be given to Moore instead.

We can now understand why the minister and presbytery were so reluctant, or perhaps unable, to send the Committee the necessary certificates of Donald MacLean's "Diligence and good Behaviour" towards the end of 1728. He was in fact no longer working for them. It looks as if ever since then they had been quietly employing James Moore in an unofficial capacity, perhaps in the expectation that Donald MacLean would eventually return to his post. We might suspect that now Moore was agitating to be paid for all his work: that is, ever since he had taken over in November 1728. The Royal Bounty Committee, however, would only pay him for the time he had been officially employed: in other words, since the beginning of their current "financial year" in November 1729. The presbytery eventually had to come clean about their – or most probably the Rev. Neill Campbell's – clumsy stratagem. It had blown up in their faces.

Once more a letter was sent not to the Royal Bounty Committee, but to Nicol Spence. It apparently was an attempt by the presbytery to have Spence use his personal influence with the committee in order to try to have it pay Moore the five pounds contribution which should have been due to MacLean. Nevertheless, the letter found itself in the hands of the Royal Bounty Committee, and it was not best impressed by the presbytery's apparent subterfuge. Moore's business was discussed on 30 April 1730. The committee refused point-blank to backdate his claim:

the said James Muir is Appointed to be Catechist Jointly Employ'd in Collonsay for one Year after Martinmass last, with a Salary near twice as much as what was formerly allowed to the forsaid Donald McLean, and that for this and other Reasons the Committee Can allow no Salary to the above Mure for any service preceeding Martinmass last.

The committee had other suspicions too, as can be seen from the second point made in its reply. It is clear from the note that "It does not Yet Appear to the Committee but the above Donald McLean may be presently in the Committee's Service Elsewhere"; that is, that it was suspected that the Presbytery of Kintyre had quietly made a deal with the Presbytery of Skye to transfer Donald MacLean to Earlesbeg in that island, where a catechist of the same name had begun employment on 1 August 1728. The fact that the moderator of the presbytery was himself a MacLean may have further increased the Royal Bounty Committee's misgivings. Henceforth, the Presbytery of Kintyre were ordered to send all letters concerning catechists to the moderator of the Royal Bounty Committee (in other words, not to their friend Nicol Spence); they were to supply full explanations for any catechists who left their posts; and they were

immediately to send a letter back acknowledging receipt of these orders.. The presbytery had attempted to pull the wool over the eyes of the authorities in Edinburgh, and had been given a sharp slap on the wrist for its pains. A suspicious and rather frosty relationship ensued.

The Committee take their revenge

That September Moore was again allowed eight pounds sterling from the Royal Bounty Committee and the SSPCK. On 14 October 1730 the Rev. Neil Campbell wrote a letter to the SSPCK:

With a List of Scholars at the School of Collonsay James Muir Master Consisting of Sixteen Boys One Girl, But giving no account of their Learning, Neither is the List subscrib'd, And also A Receipt by the Minister of the Books sent to the School was produced; The said Letter represents the need the Isle of Collonsay & other Isles adjacent to it, are in, of more Schools & Catechists; The Committee appointed That the Minister & Schoolmaster be desired to have the said School visited & a regular Report sent, And found That the Society's funds cannot allow of more Schools to the foresaid Isles.

Campbell's letter was evidently neither informative nor written according to the proper form, did not reach Edinburgh until nearly a full six months after it was (apparently) written, and may have done more harm than good, increasing the authorities' suspicions that there was something wrong with the school at Colonsay. On 16 August 1731, the following resolution was passed by a rather vengeful Royal Bounty Committee:

That James Muir Jointly Employed in the Island of Colonsay, in the paroch of Jura and Colonsay and presbyterie of Kintyre, who has had Annually Eight pounds Sterling for this and the preceeding year, Which is Annually Three pounds more than what the said presbytrie Craved for him; Therefore the said James Muir is now continued, Dito place another year, after November next, With Six pounds Sterling, whereof the one half to be paid by the forsaid Society, And the other half by this Committee.

Thus, in one stroke, the unfortunate James Moore lost one quarter of his salary. The Committee deftly put the blame on the Presbytery of Kintyre, who had requested only five pounds for the previous catechist four years previously. The matter, of course, would not be allowed to rest there.

THE COLONSAY CATECHIST: Part 10

Malcolm MacNeill of Colonsay

At this point in our story, a new actor appears on the scene. Malcolm MacNeill, the eldest son of Donald MacNeill of Crear in Knapdale, had obtained the islands of Colonsay and Oronsay, partly through payment and partly through an exchange of lands, from the earl of Argyll in 1701. At first sight, MacNeill does not appear to be much of a friend of the church. Supposedly, he demolished an old ecclesiastical building – tradition says that it was a monastery – and used the material to build Colonsay House in 1722. As we have seen, he was most reluctant to pay the Rev. Neil Campbell the stipend due to him and to restore the church glebe of Oronsay. In this case, however, first impressions would be mistaken. As we shall see, Malcolm MacNeill was determined to spread the evangelical religion on Colonsay. He very much wanted a catechist ministering to the Colbhasaich.

From the evidence we have, it appears that Malcolm MacNeill represented a type hardly uncommon in the eighteenth century and beyond: a vigorous and ambitious entrepreneur driven by business acumen and religious enthusiasm. As with many members and supporters of the SSPCK, he was a firm believer in the twin gospels of evangelical religion and hard work. Ever since the covenanting era in the middle of the previous century, many parishes in Argyllshire had been ministered to by committed presbyterian or crypto-presbyterian clergy under Campbell patronage. This evangelical influence was perhaps strongest in Kintyre, reinforced as it was by the presence of many planted Lowland families – including the Muirs or Moores – who were originally from the south-west of Scotland, and doubtless retained family ties with this strongly covenanting region. And, of course, Ulster, that hotbed of presbyterianism, was not even a day's sail away. It is hardly surprising, then, that the laird of Colonsay – as well as other members of his clan – supported such reforming initiatives. Indeed, as we have seen, Malcolm MacNeill had probably recruited James Moore to the island in the first place.

MacNeill's attempts to save Moore's salary

We can imagine that in MacNeill's eyes, a schoolteacher-catechist would be a very beneficial addition indeed to Colonsay. The teaching of English and other apparently useful skills would increase his social control of the people and wean them from superstition (we might surmise that it was MacNeill's hostility to the old religion and its customs which made him demolish the "monastery"). It would orient them to the encroaching commercial world outside. Indeed, it might even save their souls. Business and religious benefits would accrue together. However, as we have seen, thanks in part to the incompetence of the Presbytery of Kintyre, the Colonsay catechist's yearly salary had been reduced by a quarter. He was obviously now considering his options. Given that the Rev. Neil Campbell would be no use whatsoever in asking for Moore's salary to be restored, Malcolm MacNeill would have to take the initiative on his own. On 13 January 1732 the laird of Colonsay appeared in person before the SSPCK in Edinburgh:

And represented that James Muir Schoolmaster, jointly employ'd in the Isle of Collonsay, his Salary which last year was four pound sterling from each of the two Funds, being reduced to Three pound each from November last, He could not Subsist thereon, Unless it be at least Augmented to what it was formerly: Which being considered by the Committee, They remitted the Case to the Committee for managing the Royal Bounty; With their Opinion That If the said Committee thinks fit, the said Salary may be made up, as it was the former Year.

It is noteworthy that the voluntary organisation of the SSPCK deferred to the official church authority of the Royal Bounty Committee in such matters.

MacNeill's request was thus forwarded to the committee. In the Royal Bounty papers there is preserved a wonderful letter of 22 September 1729 from the Rev. John MacVicar of Kilarrow, Kilmeny and Kilchoman in Islay to his brother the Rev. Neil MacVicar of the West Kirk in Edinburgh. The latter had been transferred to Edinburgh from Fort William in 1704, with the special duty of taking care of the many Gaels who were now living in the capital. He was now a very influential figure indeed in the capital. In the letter his brother requested him to take care of one particular Highlander, the son of Malcolm MacNeill of Colonsay who, after a time in Glasgow University, was now going to study law at Edinburgh. I suspect that the letter found itself into the hands of the Royal Bounty Committee as a character reference for the laird, and was presented together with the petition for his catechist:

The Bearer hereof Malcolm McNeil of Colonsay designing to goe to Edenburgh with his son, who has past his Course at the Colledge of Glasgow, in order to leave him there for further Degrees of Education is desireous to make him acquainted with you Hopeing that your Inspection and advice may be of use to him in that place of much temptation to youth. And at his desire I write you this begging you may not be found wanting to doe the Gentleman all the service you can his way. He is a very discreet civil Gentleman and a Kind ffriend I doubt not but you knew his ffather Donald McNeil of Creir who was as pertinent and sagacious a Gentleman as was of his station in our Country. The young man is a Lad of pregnant parts and has as I am Informed Improven his time to good advantage hitherto and being to goe in there now as I suppose to attend the Latteron [i.e. study law] His ffather is very anxious about him fearing he may be any way carried away by the Influence of Bad Company.

MacVicar's pleading had no effect on the Royal Bounty Committee. They rejected MacNeill's request. Indeed, now that the case of the Colonsay catechist had been brought to their attention once more, they noticed that his school was not being inspected as it should have been. On the 3 February the clerk of the SSPCK reported back:

That the Case of James Muir Jointly Employ'd as Schoolmaster and Catechist in the Isle of Colonsay being laid before the Committee for managing the Royal Bounty, They Refused to grant any Augmentation of his Salary for this Year. This Committee do likewise Continue his

Salary as settled in September last without any Addition, And appointed that a Letter be written to the said James Muir, taking notice of his not sending to the Society An Account of the State of his School.

At a meeting on 18 July 1732, the usually sluggish Presbytery of Kintyre acted with remarkable swiftness – to try to divest themselves of all responsibilities whatsoever for supervising the school in Colonsay:

The Committee for propagating Christian knowledge having sent a letter to the Presbytery anent the deficiencies in their contributions & appointing the Charity School in Colonsay to be visited, the Presby delay the consideration of the deficiencies till a more full meeting; They agree that the clerk write to Mr Niel Campbell minr. & the Laird of Colonsay, that they visit the school and send in a report to the presby by the first. As also that the clerk write to the society apprising them of this appointment of the Presby, and that if they please they may fix the minr. & Colonsay for their correspondents anent the school because of the distance of the island.

For the past three years, the Colonsay catechist had caused nothing but trouble for the Presbytery of Kintyre. Henceforth the school would be the responsibility of Malcolm MacNeill and the Rev. Neil Campbell. They visited the school on the 7 September.

Although unfortunately we do not have the actual assessment made by the minister and the laird, it is clear that, as we might expect, it was favourable. A letter containing the "full representation" made by Campbell and MacNeill of the school at Colonsay was sent to the clerk of the presbytery, who, interestingly enough, only showed it to the local ministers before sending it to the clerk of the SSPCK. The society was pleased with the account, and, although it would not allow Moore any extra money that year, it nevertheless gave the go-ahead to the presbytery to apply for a rise in the catechist's salary for the following one:

he shewed the letter to the ministers of Campbelton & by their advice sent it & the account of their visitation to Mr Spence to be presented to the Society.

Mr Nicol Spence sent a letter to the Presby advising that he presented the Presby's letter to the society & that the society was pretty well satisfied with the state of the school in Colonsay and give allowance to apply to them for an augmentation of sallery for the school master there against the first of August next.

However, James Moore's troubles were not over just yet. As advised, the Presbytery of Kintyre wrote a letter on the 9 July 1733 to the SSPCK, asking them for an augmentation in Moore's salary. However, as before, the society hesitated to take action on its own. Once again, it passed over the application to the Royal Bounty Committee.

After what must have been a rather nerve-racking delay for the catechist, long after the 1 August deadline, on 4 October 1733, the SSPCK agreed to give Moore an

augmentation. Unfortunately, both bodies, the society and the Royal Bounty Committee, only agreed to allow him an extra pound sterling between them. His salary was thus now seven pounds, still a pound less than he was earning four years earlier. Moore must have been disappointed with his pay rise, because once more Malcolm MacNeill of Colonsay took up his pen on his behalf. It is clear that he immediately organised a visitation to the school at Colonsay, and sent the (evidently glowing) report together with a rather astonishing covering letter to the relevant authorities in Edinburgh – again, not to the Royal Bounty Committee, but to the SSPCK. As before, he asked for an increase in Moore's pay, but this time he offered some rather more concrete encouragement. The letter was sent on the 29 October 1733, but MacNeill's representation was not discussed until 2 February the next year:

Presented a Report of the Visitation of the School at Collonsay with a List of Scholars thereat Which the Committee found Satisfying, and Appointed to be insert in the List of Schools for this Year, and grant Warrant for Payment of the Schoolmasters Salary resting Preceding the first of November last.

A Letter from Malcolm McNeil of Colonsay dated twenty ninth of October last Complaining of the Diminution of the Schoolmaster at Collonsay his Salary, and Craving the same be Augmented to Eight pounds Sterling per Annum, the said Letter sets furth the State of that Country, & Contains Proposals for maintaining Missionary Ministers therein and Obtaining New Erection of Parishes, and the Letter further Bears that the said Laird of Collonsay has sent hither Ten pounds Sterling as his Donation towards the Societys Stock. The Committee having heard the said Letter read Appoint a Letter of thanks to be wrote to the said Laird of Colonsay for his forsaid Donations and other his good Offices and Encouragmt given for promoting Christian Knowledge in that Country, and the Committee Resolve at making up next Year's Scheme to Augment James Muir Schoolmaster there his Salary to Eight pounds Sterling as formerly he had. But as to the proposals for new Erections and maintaining Missionary Ministers, the Committee find it not Competent for the Society to meddle therein.

In other words, Malcolm MacNeill secured an increase in salary for his Colonsay catechist – at least in part – by offering a ten pounds bribe to the SSPCK.

This might seem rather typical of an energetic and artful entrepreneur who was willing to use quite blatantly unprincipled methods to get his own way. At the same time, we should note that MacNeill had taken the time to put together an account of the island for the society, including suggestions both for deploying lay ministers and indeed for splitting the unwieldy parish, doubtless with a view to creating a new parish of Colonsay. It is clear that MacNeill was not acting alone.

THE COLONSAY CATECHIST: Part 11

Daniel Campbell of Shawfield

Reading the records of the Presbytery of Kintyre, we can see that Daniel Campbell of Shawfield, who at that time owned much of Jura, had been keen for some time to rehabilitate the parish. As we have seen, in 1726 Shawfield had bought the Islay estates previously owned by the Campbells of Cawdor, estates which also included much of Jura as well. Like Malcolm MacNeill, he not only envisaged a new commercial order on these estates; he also intended to rework his tenants' hearts, minds and souls. One way to do this was to support the Presbytery of Kintyre's requests for catechists for their bounds. Thus it was that on 12 June 1729 he wrote a letter to the Royal Bounty Committee, promoting the presbytery's plans for catechists:

particularly to Ilay, Jura, Scaraby and Colonsay very much needing the same, and Shewing his Purpose to do something in Places where he has Interest, in Order to a more Plentiful Dispensation of Gospel Ordinances.

It is clear from a letter written on the 25 June to Nicol Spence by the Rev. James Boes or Boas of the Lowland Charge in Campbeltown that if the catechists were indeed supplied in the relevant islands, then Shawfield would be encouraged:

to go on in that laudable design he hath in a more comfortable & full ~~satisfying~~ planting of Jura & Yla wt more min[iste]rs in these 2 Islands at least one in each such a valuable design I hope will be encouraged by the Reverend Committy

As we saw previously, because of administrative incompetence on the part of the Presbytery of Kintyre, the existing local catechists had still not received their salaries for the previous year – indeed, Donald MacLean in Colonsay had already, unbeknown to the authorities, left his position. The Royal Bounty Committee was impressed by Shawfield's promises, and recommended that the catechists' salaries were to be continued:

The Committee having Considered this Letter did Referr it to their Subcommittee to take Care that in the Scheme they are to bring in, the forsaied Islands be Competently Provided with Missionaries out of the Royal Bounty, and appoints that a Letter of Thanks be wrote to Shawfield, taking Notice of his Purpose abovementioned & intreating him to Prosecute the same.

In 1730 the Synod of Argyll instructed the Presbytery of Kintyre to write to Shawfield concerning their attempt to split the parish of Jura, an injunction repeated twice over the next two years. However, no immediate progress was made, possibly because Shawfield had other more pressing matters to worry about: he was then preoccupied with building the north wing of Islay House near Bridgend to accommodate his large

family. Meanwhile, the Rev. Neill Campbell renewed his complaints, sending an "Address and Representation" to the Synod showing:

his very great and greivous burden under so heavy, large and vastly Discontiguous a Charge together with his Decay of Strength Occationed throw his continual Toyll and fatigue both by Sea and Land and his utter inability at any time of his Life or in the best circumstances of his health to Discharge the Duty of a Pastor to the said Parishes..

The Synod requested that the £27 sterling which had been granted by the Royal Bounty Committee for a preaching catechist in Jura be renewed:

there being no parish in Scotland Equal to it for Extent of bounds and Discontiguity nor any within our Synod encompassed with such Dangerous seas and rapid Currents so that tho the Minister who for the greater part of the year lives in Colonsay were never so healthy and strong yet for most of the winter and spring quarters he can hardly sett out with a boat nor tho he shoud now then be in capacity to come to Jura is he able now to travel any other way than by mantaining a boat and shippage which tho all other things answered (the smalness of his stipends being litle more than 700 mrks) will not allow.

A new attempt to split the parish

Eventually the presbytery appealed to a higher authority: on 19 May 1735 it gave in a petition to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland asking for legal assistance in order to secure a manse, glebe and assistant for the minister of Jura and Colonsay. The affair was put into the hands of Nicol Spence, the legal agent for the church, who sent the Synod of Argyll a paper for the Presbytery of Kintyre; this paper was to be subscribed to by the local heritors in order, finally, to split the parish in two.

It seems that later that year the Presbytery of Kintyre once more wrote to Nicol Spence about the possibility of the new parish, sending with it a copy of their original 1724 report. In his reply, produced at a presbyterial meeting of 25 February 1736, he asks for more up-to-date information about the rents, further details about the heritors, and praises Shawfield for having "shown a good example to the rest of the heretors". Malcolm MacNeill had hardly proved himself a particularly good landlord to the Rev. Neill Campbell in the past, refusing to supply him with manse, glebe, increase of stipend or even free transport to and from Colonsay. It was probably at the urging of Daniel Campbell of Shawfield that he changed his tune.

Despite the long-standing problems the minister had with his local heritors, it seemed that these two entrepreneurial landowners par excellence were willing to adopt a more positive approach. Partly, we might expect, their newfound enthusiasm for fulfilling their ecclesiastical duties arose from the realisation that otherwise it would be exceptionally difficult for them to secure a successor for the ageing Rev. Neill Campbell. At the same time, we should never forget the close relation between material and spiritual progress in the eyes of many eighteenth-century improvers – a relation which comes through clearly in the records of the SSPCK.

The willingness of Campbell of Shawfield to allocate a glebe and manse for the Rev. Neill Campbell, at long last, might explain the minister's finally appearing before the presbytery on 21 April 1736. For at least a decade the presbytery had been attempting to make the Rev. Neill deliver an exercise, in other words to expound a set text before his colleagues: a *viva*, or perhaps a punishment, for apparently negligent ministers. One and a half years after promising to deliver his exercise in six months time, the Rev. Neill Campbell finally appeared, and – doubtless an example of dry ministerial humour – was made to give a sermon on Romans 8:35: "Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"

A new landlord for Jura

Whatever ambitions MacNeill of Colonsay and Campbell of Shawfield had for the parish of Jura, they were never to come to fruition. At a meeting of the presbytery on 20 April 1737, to which we shall return, the minister of Jura asked for his colleagues' help as follows:

Mr. Niel also represented that Shawfield as proprietor of a part of Jura sometime ago, signified his willingness, that a place should be designed for a manse & Glebe, & that the last time he was in the Island he was displeas'd it was not done, & Craved the Presbyteries advice.

In other words, the baillie of the island, Archibald Campbell of Sannaig, had done nothing to obey his master's orders and select a location for a manse and glebe in Jura. The presbytery agreed to ask Shawfield for permission to make a visitation to the island to search for a suitable site themselves. But whatever they might have done, they were too late.

The previous year Archibald Campbell of Sannaig had succeeded his father, the ninety-five year old John Campbell, inheriting his wadsets and his position as baillie and forester of Jura under Daniel Campbell of Shawfield. Although, of course, he had probably been acting baillie in place of his father for several decades, it may well be that it was only now that he was able fully to put into practice his own ideas for the island, introducing more commercially-oriented methods of running the estate. In 1739 Archibald Campbell bought the Shawfield estates in Jura. The Campbells of Sannaig thus became the Campbells of Jura; their estates now had to pay their way. Great changes were looming on the horizon. Desire to avoid the troubles and stress of a regime under a landowner they knew only too well may explain why a good number of Diùraich, both tenants and tacksmen, were willing to leave the island in the two major emigrations of 1739 and 1754. As we have seen, the church seems to have little place in Archibald Campbell's plans for Jura, and once more the parish lapsed into neglect.

The death of the catechist

James Moore, however, continued to receive eight pounds a year. Malcolm MacNeill of Colonsay continued, of course, to look after his catechist, as can be seen from the Royal Bounty Committee records from 28 November 1734, the first year he was allowed his full salary once more:

James Muir Catechist at Colonsay, having drawn Bills for his Salary for the year past, but sent no Certificate of his Service, being at a great distance from the presbyterie Seat; The Committee granted warrand for payment of his Salary resting, upon an obligation by Mr. McNiel son to the Laird of Colonsay to procure proper Certificates.

However, Moore was to enjoy his full pay for scarcely two more years.

The Presbytery of Kintyre held a meeting in Campbeltown on 20 April 1737. After they had finished, they were surprised by the hasty arrival of a colleague they had not seen for a whole year. He had some sad news:

Mr. Niel Campbell having come to the place, it not being possible for him to arrive sooner by reason of contrary winds, desired a Presby to be called. The Presby being met he he [sic] represented to them, that Mr John Logan preaching Catechist appointed by the Committee, Died about the Close of March last, & that James Muir Catechist in Colonsay died upon the 19th Decr. last; He further represented that Mr. Logan had appropriated the money owing him by the committee to pay his board, Funeral Charges & other Debts to Donald Campbell of Ardmenish.

The Presby appoints a letter to be written to the Committee apprising them of Mr Logan's death, bearing the time of this service, Diligence & success & the money Due to Donald Campbell as also of James Muir's death.

John Logan had just arrived from Rannoch for a six-month stint supplying Jura when he died. It was intended that he take up another post in the Isle of Harris after he finished; but he never made it. As a replacement for Moore, Campbell suggested none other than the previous catechist who had deserted his post nearly a decade earlier:

Mr Niel Campbell also represented that Donald Maclean formerly examined by the presby & found qualified, is a proper person to succeed [sic] the said James Muir, & that the people are desirous to have him, and craves that the presbytery would write to the Committee to this effect; which they agreed to do.

SSPCK records, however, tell us that somebody else taught in Moore's stead until MacLean took over. On the 19 October 1737 a letter was read from the Presbytery of Kintyre:

craving payment for Donald MacLean & also some allowance for one Archibald McDuffie one of the schoolers in the said school who kept up the said school from the time of James Muirs death till forsaied 1st May last.

For replacing Moore, Donald MacLean was awarded six months of Moore's salary: two pounds from the SSPCK, which would recommend that the Royal Bounty

THE COLONSAY CATECHIST - JAMES MOORE, CATECHIST AT COLONSAY 1728-36

Committee give the same. For his trouble, the society gave Archibald McDuffie twenty shillings sterling.