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Pulpit polemics and 'damnable doctrine' in early modern Scotland

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The *First Book of Discipline* (1560) established the confutation of erroneous doctrine as an integral aspect of Scottish ministers’ responsibilities in the pulpit. This article explores this key facet of early modern Scottish preaching. It begins by sketching out the main contours of polemical preaching, examining how Reformed Scots addressed theological ideas with which they disagreed (especially Catholicism). It then briefly outlines Scottish ministers’ engagement with antinomianism in the 1640s. Having laid this twin foundation, James Fergusson’s 1652 sermons against antinomianism are considered in detail. This article aims to shed light on how Scottish ministers used the pulpit to alert their hearers to, and gird them against, the dangers posed by often-subtle deviations from Reformed orthodoxy. It argues that preachers often provided their most forensic critique of doctrine when they were addressing theological errors that were considered to be spiritually dangerous but less familiar to their hearers.

Keywords: sermons, preaching, reformed, anti-Catholicism, antinomianism, Scotland

Introduction

In a series of manuscript sermons held in the National Library of Scotland, a ‘Scots Minister’ dismissed antinomianism as ‘damnable doctrine’.¹ The preacher, almost certainly James Fergusson, minister at Kilwinning in Irvine Presbytery from 1643 until his death in 1667, probably delivered the sermons in 1652.² They appeared alongside sermons addressing several other theological ‘errors’ that were deemed to be particular

issues in the mid-seventeenth century, including toleration, erastianism, independency, separation, lay preaching, and Anabaptism.³ Fergusson's pulpit critiques of the first four issues were published posthumously in *A Brief Refutation of the Errors* (1692), but his sermons against antinomianism (which he dedicated more time to than any other issue), along with those against lay preaching and Anabaptism, were never published.⁴

Though long unfashionable, the twenty-first century has witnessed a slow but steady increase in scholarly interest in early modern Scottish preaching.⁵ David Mullan's chapter on 'A Ministry of the Word' in *Scottish Puritanism* (2000) emphasised the importance of preaching as 'the *sine qua non* of the pastor's labour'.⁶ Margo Todd highlighted the centrality of sermons in her magisterial *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (2002), emphasising how they were heard and responded to, noting that congregational response to preaching 'seems to have been acceptable, even encouraged'.⁷ In 2011, Crawford Gribben drew attention to the homiletical norms adopted in early modern Scotland, while also observing noteworthy shifts away from the ramist method.⁸ In 2015, Alasdair Raffe highlighted the increasing prominence of preaching in the mid-seventeenth century, arguing that bible reading gave way to lecturing in the 1640s, effectively introducing a second sermon into the service.⁹ L. Charles Jackson and Alexander Campbell's biographies of Alexander Henderson and Robert Baillie each included chapters dedicated to their respective subject's preaching, adding texture to our understanding of early modern sermon culture.¹⁰ More recently, David Whitla and Crawford Gribben have argued that the covenant theology found in many Scottish sermons demonstrates that the pulpit functioned 'as a critical filter for the dogmas of the Reformation', while Michelle Brock has shown that ministers used the pulpit to communicate their views of the 'ideal minister' to their hearers.¹¹ Collectively, these studies have enriched our understanding of the context, content, shape, and reception of sermons in early modern Scotland. Nonetheless preaching remains, as Gribben put it, 'one of the most significant and surprising lacunae in the study of the history, literature, and religious culture of early modern Scotland'.¹² In particular, there has been little discussion of theological polemics in preaching, which is striking given the often combative tone of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scottish preaching.

This article aims to explore how ministers in early modern Scotland used the pulpit to address their theological opponents, with a particular eye to the issue of antinomianism. The article begins by sketching out the contours of Scottish polemical preaching in general, examining the theory and practice of Scottish preachers' responses to theological ideas with which they disagreed (especially Catholicism), before tracing briefly the rise in Scots' concerns about antinomianism in the mid-seventeenth century. Having laid this foundation, James Fergusson's polemical preaching against antinomianism will be considered in detail. In doing so, this article aims to shed light on how Scottish ministers used the pulpit to alert their hearers to, and gird them against, the dangers posed by often-subtle deviations from Reformed orthodoxy. It argues that preachers often provided a more forensic critique of doctrine when they were addressing theological errors that would have been less familiar, but still spiritually dangerous, to their hearers.

Polemical Preaching in Scotland

James Fergusson's dismissal of antinomianism as 'damnable doctrine' in 1652 did not come out of the blue. Polemics were part of the parcel of Scottish preaching from the Reformed kirk's outset. The *First Book of Discipline* (1560) instructed that 'it is necessary that his Gospell be truely and openly preached in every Church and Assembly of this realme, and that *all doctrine repugnant to the same, be utterly repressed as damnable* to mans salvation.'¹³ Of course the 'six Johns', authors of the *First Book of Discipline*, had Roman Catholicism in mind when they wrote this, as is clear from the fuller explanation that followed:

By contrary doctrine we understand whatsoever men by lawes, counsells, or constitutions have imposed upon the consciences of men, without the expressed commandment of Gods word, such as be the vowes of chastitie, forswearing of marriage, binding of men and women to several and disguised apparrells, to the superstitious observation of fasting dayes, difference of meat for conscience sake, prayer for the dead, and keeping of holy dayes of certaine Saints commanded by man, such as be all those that the Papists have invented, as the feasts (as they terme them) of the Apostles, Martyres, Virgines, of Christmasse, Circumcision, Epiphanie, Purification, and other fond feastes of our Ladie: which things because in Gods scriptures they neither have commandement nor assurance, we judge them utterly to be abolished from this Realme ...¹⁴

This explication gives no indication that Protestant errors — the sorts of issues that Fergusson was responding to — had even occurred to the six Johns. They were resolutely focused on combatting Roman Catholicism. Nonetheless, the *First Book of Discipline* did establish two important principles. First, polemical preaching was an integral part of the Reformed minister's role: he had a duty to combat and repress false teaching through preaching. Second, scripture was to provide the standard by which teaching was measured as true or false.

Though the extant corpus of John Knox's sermons is extremely limited, his exposition of Isaiah 26:13-21, preached on 19 August 1565 and then written down 'so far as memory would serve', offers valuable insights into early Scottish Reformed polemics.¹⁵ In particular, it shows that polemical preaching was usually not aimed at the propagators of false teaching but at congregants, reminding hearers of what they risked if they neglected their Christian duty. Expounding Isaiah 26:13 — 'O Lord our God, other lordes beside thee have ruled us; but we will remember thee onely, and thy name' — Knox sought to translate the temptations that Israel faced during their captivity in Babylon into terms that his hearers would recognise so that 'we may the better fele it in our selves'.¹⁶ He told his Edinburgh congregation that it was 'as if God shuld utterly destroy al order and policy that is today within his Church, that the true preaching of the worde should be suppressed; the right use of sacraments abolished; idolatry and papistical abomination erected up again', and continued by exhorting his hearers that if

they were to avoid this scenario then they must 'Subject thou thyself to the Lorde thy God, obey his commaundements, and magnifie thou that word calleth unto thee, "This is the way, walke into it,"'.¹⁷ In other words, Knox used the spectre of Roman Catholicism to help drive his hearers towards obedience, godliness, and unity. His allusion to Roman Catholicism offers an insight into what might be described as indirect pulpit polemics, where preachers reminded their Protestant hearers and readers of the ever-present threat of a Catholic resurgence but did not seek to tackle its doctrines or practices head on.

In contrast, Robert Rollock's *Lectures upon the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*, published posthumously in 1603, offer an example of a more assertive kind of pulpit polemic. Rollock vigorously opposed Roman Catholicism, adopting a three-fold attack that came to typify much of the polemical discourse in early modern Scottish preaching. First, he directly criticised aspects of Roman Catholic doctrine: 'The free-will of the Papists, that poysoned doctrine of theirs, that a man hath some grace by nature (howbeit unable to receive grace of God) will never stand in the day of the Lord'.¹⁸ By drawing attention to particular Roman Catholic doctrines in this way — ranging from their views on grace, to martyrs' suffering, to purgatory — Rollock attempted to pinpoint problematic doctrines with the aim of undermining his opponents' theological credibility. Second, he made direct slurs against Roman Catholics: 'A Papists heart hath no stedfastnes nor stabilitie, because it is grounded on the wrong place; it is founded upon Antichrist'.¹⁹ Accusations like this undoubtedly reflected Reformed views about the need for the heart to be grounded in God, but when expressed concisely like this they primarily served as a rhetorical tool to reinforce long-standing and deep-seated prejudices against Rollock's Catholic opponents by emphasising their connections to Antichrist. Third, he gave direct warnings about the dangers of Catholicism to his hearers:

wouldest thou not be a pray to a false teacher? keep thee from his deceit, keepe thee from the Papists traditions, mens Philosophie. For all their religion is meere peltrie [i.e. rubbish]. I say to thee their Philosophie, that is their deceit, and vanitie in doctrine, is more to be feared then their violence and power, because by it onely they get their pray: if thou keepe thee from their deceit, they shall not bee able to take thee as a pray.²⁰

Ministers, like Rollock, sought to warn their congregations about the threat that Catholicism posed to their soul and to instruct them on how to ensure that they avoided its snare. By using these approaches, Rollock did far more than just invoke the spectre of Catholicism as a simple reminder to spur his hearers onto godliness. He adopted a sharper focus on key theological issues, even if these were often coupled together with (or even drowned out by) anti-Catholic tropes. In so doing, Rollock sought to alert his hearers to the spectrum of false doctrines that Catholics were propagating, as well as to the reality (as he saw it) of their diabolical allegiances, so that his hearers might be girded against their spiritual dangers. In this respect, pulpit polemics were often deeply pastoral.

The broad contours of Rollock's approach seem to have been shared by early seventeenth-century ministers like William Struther (1578–1633), minister at

Edinburgh from 1626 until 1633. In *A Looking Glasse for Princes and People* (1632), an expanded version of a sermon he preached to mark the birth of Prince Charles, Struther disparaged the Jesuits, claiming that 'all these Warres in Europe, since their rysing, and this fearefull combustion these last twelve yeares, are of their plotting.'²¹ More significantly though, Struther sought to alert his hearers (or at least his readers) to what he perceived to be the most dangerous of all of Roman Catholicism's errors, adding a level of specificity not found in Rollock's warnings against 'Papists traditions':

Many inquire what is the greatest controversie that holds us and Papists at odds, & some think idolatrie, others the Masse or Transubstantiation. Some free-will, Merite, Justification, Purgatorie, &c. But this is the greatest, even the Popes Monarchie: For if Protestants would acknowledge him to bee a Spirituall and Temporall Monarch, I make no question but hee would subscribe other controverted points.²²

This statement underscores the pastoral concern that lay at the heart of early modern Scottish polemics. While Struther sought to attack and denounce his opponents, he was primarily concerned to ensure that his Protestant audience were alert to, what he saw as, the most dangerous aspect of Catholic teaching — Papal authority — which he believed posed a significant spiritual threat.

Just over a decade later, on 28 February 1644, Robert Baillie (1602–62), delivered a fast sermon at the House of Commons on Zechariah 3:1-2 that was also infused with anti-Catholic rhetoric. Expounding his text, Baillie drew out the following point of doctrine: 'in all our approaches to God we must stand before the Angel, Christ the Angel of the covenant must be interposed betwixt God and the soul ... he is the only door', stressing that 'by a wrong door or a right door if fast locked there is no entrance'.²³ Building on this doctrinal basis, Baillie invoked a series of Roman Catholic errors that would thwart entry by the 'right door'. These included 'that Idolatry of the Papists, in their standing before Angels and Saints for intercession, before images for adoration';²⁴ 'that old fundamental error of the Papists, justification by works, and inherent righteousness';²⁵ and 'that grossest abomination of Popery, the unbloudy sacrifice of the Masse.'²⁶ It is absolutely clear from Baillie's language of 'idolatry', 'error', and 'abomination' that these positions were to be rejected, but it is also striking that he did not dissect these doctrines in detail: mere mention of them was evidently deemed sufficient to remind his hearers of the dangers posed by Roman Catholicism. While there tended to be a concerted effort to focus on doctrine, anti-Catholic pulpit polemics often lacked the forensic analysis of doctrine that might be expected given the supposed spiritual gravity of these teachings.²⁷ This may be because sermons simply did not offer sufficient scope for preachers to dissect doctrinal errors in this way. Alternatively, it might be because Protestant critiques of these doctrines were already so well known and deeply ingrained by the seventeenth century that fuller explanation was rendered unnecessary for a Protestant audience. In all likelihood, it was a combination of the two.

Focusing on the substance of a doctrinal error was, however, viewed as the ideal, even if other polemical tactics often proved necessary in practice. In *A Plain Platform for Preaching* (1658), a posthumously published preaching manual, Alexander Simson (1570–1639) developed fuller guidance than the *First Book of Discipline* on how

preachers were to engage in the task of repressing damnable doctrine. Like others in early modern Scotland, Simson favoured the doctrinal method of preaching and thought that ‘confutation of a false opinion’ was one of the primary ‘uses’ of the doctrines drawn out from the text.²⁸ In fact, Simson thought that the preacher could adopt three approaches to confute ‘false opinion’, which were as follows:

1. By a plain narration and description of the error to be refuted, and that as near as may be in the very words used by the adversary.
2. By shewing how contrary the Doctrine in hand, and the point to be confuted are to each other, and how they cannot stand together.
3. By taking away such idle distinctions as the Adversary haply doth or may use to reconcile them. Or if no shift be, yet by a concession, that if it were as they say and think, yet that would not follow which they intend.²⁹

Simson thought that Reformed preachers could counter false teaching simply by describing its errors accurately, highlighting its incompatibility with the doctrine being expounded, removing false distinctions, and challenging unjustified conclusions. In short, he encouraged his readers to counter false teaching through a forensic critique of doctrine. As has been observed though, Simson’s methodology was not necessarily the norm for Scottish preachers. In practice, detailed criticism of doctrine often gave way to slightly more rudimentary forms of pulpit polemics. Simson was no doubt aware of this tendency and may have even made these comments in order to try and encourage his fellow preachers out of the polemical gutter and towards a more careful critique of theological error.

Reformed Scots did engage in more in-depth analyses of their theological opponents’ views, but the venue was not typically the pulpit. Instead, in-depth refutations tended to be restricted to polemical tracts. In 1627, for example, William Guild (1586–1657), minister at King-Edward in Turriff Presbytery, penned *A Compend of the Controversies*, which responded systematically to different aspects of Roman Catholic teaching that he saw as contrary to Reformed orthodoxy, including issues such as the papacy, clerical marriage, and justification.³⁰ Guild, whose approach was far from unique, sought to counter Roman Catholic teaching by appealing to a combination of the ‘Authoritie of Scripture’, the ‘Witnessing of Antiquitie’, and the ‘Confession of Partie’.³¹ In the first chapter alone, which focused on the doctrine of scripture, Guild responded to points concerning the Apocrypha, vernacular translations, and God’s voice in the Word, as well as to issues relating to the sufficiency, perspicuity, and infallibility of scripture.³² In each case, Guild sought to mount a compelling case based on biblical and patristic evidence, which he supplemented with Catholics’ own statements, especially those of the Jesuit theologian Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621), to underscore the validity of his arguments. Works like *A Compend of the Controversies* had much in common with pulpit polemics, including the proclivity to emphasise the Papacy’s link with Antichrist.³³ Moreover, like polemical sermons, this work seems to have been written primarily for Protestant consumption: Guild admitted that one of his key aims was the ‘further establishing and confirmation’ of the ‘Chylde of the Trueth.’³⁴ However, such works still differed from sermonic polemics in important respects. Most notably, while Guild’s arguments were deliberately brief — or as he put it, ‘plaine, pithie, and pertinent’ —

they still represent a far more in-depth handling of Catholic doctrine than normally characterised sixteenth or seventeenth-century Scottish sermons.³⁵ Pulpit polemics were often, of necessity, concise. Preachers had to convince their hearers of the errors and dangers posed by their theological opponents within the time constraints of a sermon and could only do so once they had drawn their doctrines from the biblical text. Moreover, their efforts to combat error were constrained by the standard practice of expounding scripture sequentially.³⁶ While polemical tracts were arranged systematically around contentious doctrines, sermonic polemics tended to be dictated by the particular emphases of the biblical passage being expounded, thereby constraining (at least to some degree) the scope of the preacher's attacks.

It is beyond question that polemical preaching in early modern Scotland was targeted primarily at Roman Catholicism. G. D. Henderson rightly described this controversy as being of 'first importance in seventeenth-century thought'.³⁷ By the mid-seventeenth century though, the range of errors being denounced by Scottish preachers had diversified somewhat. As already noted, Baillie's fast sermon in February 1644 contained much anti-Catholic rhetoric, but his primary polemical focus was actually a slew of other theological positions that had emerged and were jostling for acceptance at this time. Baillie claimed that the Arminians 'remove [Christ] from the hearts of the people, putting free-will in the place of grace'.³⁸ He charged the Socinians with 'blaspheming the Trinity'.³⁹ And he opposed episcopacy on the grounds that it 'puts all the Ecclesiastick Jurisdiction of a whole diocesse in the hand of one man', whereas Christ 'gives it to many'.⁴⁰ These attacks reflected some of the key points of theological disagreement in the first half of the seventeenth century. Though one would not describe Baillie's treatments of these issues as in-depth, it is clear that he felt that points of substance needed to be raised about each of these doctrines. The constraints of a one-off sermon prohibited comprehensive examination of the issues, but it is telling that Baillie did not merely name-check them. He sought, albeit briefly, to draw attention to their central theological errors. His approach equates closely with the first of Simson's three strategies for confuting error: 'a plain narration and description of the error to be refuted'.⁴¹ Baillie almost certainly adopted this approach because these positions were simultaneously less well understood and posed a nearer threat to Protestantism than those of the Roman Catholic Church. In his polemics against Socinianism, for example, he not only attacked the Socinians' most controversial doctrinal emphases — 'denying the Angel of our Text to be Christ, because he had no being before his conception; denying his Incarnation, abolishing his divine nature, blaspheming the Trinity' — but also made reference to their political manoeuvres: 'they become bold now to speak of petitioning authority for a toleration, that so this poor kingdome, not onely in these times of confusion, but for ever should be to them all a place of quiet habitation'.⁴² As new theological challenges reared their head and increased in popularity, Scottish preachers clearly felt a duty to provide longer and more focused refutations of such 'errors' from the pulpit.

For much of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, pulpit polemics were centred on Roman Catholicism, only gradually expanding to encompass theological positions that emerged from the soil of Protestantism. In theory, polemical preaching was supposed to focus on doctrinal issues, though in practice early modern preachers often utilised less sophisticated forms of attack. Slurs and accusations, designed to reinforce preconceptions about opponents, were commonplace. Likewise, theological errors were sometimes simply named to remind hearers of the dangers they posed and the necessity of living godlier lives (a tendency epitomised in the National Covenant).

Even when doctrinal issues were in view, preachers did not usually provide extensive critiques: fuller expositions of theological error tended to be restricted to printed tracts. It is also clear that the target audience for these polemical attacks were Protestants, rather than those whose views were under attack, ensuring that there was often a strong pastoral dimension to polemical preaching.

Scottish Commissioners and Antinomianism

Though there were more contentious theological issues in seventeenth-century Scotland, there were those who voiced their concerns about antinomianism, both in and out of the pulpit. Antinomianism, which called into question the place of the moral law in the life of the Christian, had risen in prominence in England in the 1630s.⁴³ Chief among the Scots who spoke out against this teaching were Robert Baillie and Samuel Rutherford (c. 1600–1661). Given that antinomianism was one of the major issues addressed by the Westminster Assembly, and both men were commissioners to the Assembly, it should not surprise us that they should have been among the most vocal Scottish critics of this teaching.⁴⁴

In his February 1644 fast sermon, delivered at the House of Commons a few months after his arrival at the Westminster Assembly, Baillie mentioned antinomianism amongst the issues that he saw as a threat to the church. He spoke of ‘a multitude of Sects, Anabaptists, *Antinomians*, Separatists, and others’ who were among their opponents, claiming that they were ‘pushed on by a deluded conscience, to oppose with all their skill, with all their might, all solid Reformation’.⁴⁵ He also spoke of a ‘mighty faction of lawlesse men’, which was probably an allusion to the antinomians.⁴⁶ Baillie clearly felt that this was a pressing issue and that he had a duty to speak out against it. Earlier in the sermon he addressed antinomian doctrine and practice in more detail:

There is a generation of people who under the colour of magnifying the free grace of God, of setting Christ in his Throne, of advancing a Gospel way, of crying down nature, and legall righteousness: with these glorious shows, and pleasant words they are misled by a spirit of delusion to patronize profanity, to grieve and extinguish the Spirit of grace, to scoffe at repentance and sorrow for sinne, to foster the fruits of the flesh ...⁴⁷

Baillie’s comments show that he was attuned to the central issues surrounding the antinomian controversy and thought that the error needed to be addressed meaningfully. It is important to note, however, that he continued by imploring his hearers to pursue an on-going life of repentance: ‘Separate not faith from repentance dash out none of thy Lords commandements so long as thou livest; wert thou never so holy, thou hast need from thy heart to beg pardon for thy sins: whosoever will neglect repentance must perish’.⁴⁸ This sermonic plea highlights how the concern about antinomianism was deeply pastoral: ministers like Baillie were concerned, first and foremost, that the antinomians’ ‘pleasant words’ could easily lead some to neglect on-going repentance, thereby depriving themselves of spiritual assurance.⁴⁹

As the Westminster Assembly progressed, Baillie appears to have placed yet more stress on antinomianism. The seriousness with which he treated the issue is clear from *A Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time* (1645), where he set out a hierarchy of errors which ‘divert from the high, open, and straight way of the Reformed Churches’:

The Brownists, or rigid Separatists, are the first who break off at a side: The Independents, their Children, go on with them for a time; but, wearied with the widenesse of their Parents wandring, professe to come in again towards the rode way, yet not so closely, but still they keep a path of their own. How much neerer these men professe to draw towards us then their Fathers, so much the farther their other Brethren run from us; for, the Anabaptists go beyond the Brownists in wandring; the Antinomians are beyond the Anabaptists, and the Seekers beyond them all.⁵⁰

That Baillie saw the antinomians as being worse than the Anabaptists — whose reputation had long been tainted by events in sixteenth-century Münster — only serves to highlight how great a danger antinomianism was perceived to be. He highlighted four of their theological errors, which he believed had spread to the New England independents: ‘That no sin must trouble any childe of God’; ‘That all trouble of conscience for any sin, demonstrates a man subject to the Covenant of Works, but a stranger to the Covenant of Grace’; ‘That no Christian is bound to look upon the Law as a rule of his conversation’; and ‘That no Christian should be prest to any duty of holinesse’.⁵¹ Though Baillie was undoubtedly concerned about the theological veracity of antinomianism, the practical implications of its teaching for the Christian life seem to have been his main worry. By 1647, influenced by Thomas Edward’s *Gangraena* (1646), Baillie was not only providing more specific accounts of antinomian beliefs — ‘though a beleever should commit as great sins as David, murther, and adultery, there was no need for him to repent, and that sin was no sin to him, but a failing’ — but he was also identifying individual proponents of antinomianism, such as ‘M. Sympson’.⁵² These developments reflect both a heightened awareness of antinomianism and a desire to alert readers to specific ministers’ errors.

Samuel Rutherford was even more outspoken against antinomianism. In a fast day sermon delivered before the House of Commons in January 1644, Rutherford attacked the antinomian position on sanctification — prompted by Tobias Crisp’s sermons, *Christ Alone Exalted* (1643) — claiming that the ‘Antinomian is the Golden white Devill; a spirit of Hell cloathed with all Heaven, and the notions of Free Grace’ who teaches that ‘inherent qualifications and all workes of sanctification are but doubtfull evidences to us of our interest in Christ, or that wee are in the state of grace.’⁵³ Rutherford thought that sanctification, as well as justification, was necessary for spiritual assurance because works of sanctification provided objective evidence of grace in the life of a Christian. For him, this was the crucial issue and he pressed it relentlessly, claiming that ‘if workes of sanctification be not marks intelligible’ then ‘joy and rejoycing that wee have in the ... testimony of a good conscience ... must be a dream’.⁵⁴ He told his hearers that it is by ‘works of sanctification’ that ‘we have evidence that we have interest in Christ’.⁵⁵ He also turned the antinomians’ rejection of sanctification as marks of faith against them, claiming that their argument undermined their emphasis on

justification. It is worth quoting Rutherford's argument in full as it illustrates how sermon rhetoric and doctrinal critiques could be blended in the pulpit:

If workes of sanctification be no sure markes of my interest in Christ, because sinne adhereth to them, and the sinne adhering to them, involveth me in condemnation; then neither can faith in Christ be a sure marke of my interest in Christ, because faith is alwayes mixed with sinfull doubting: for I do not thinke that Antinomians do beleeve with all their heart; and sinne of unbeleefe adhering to our faith no lesse involveth the sinner in a curse, being commited against the Gospel, then sinnes against the Law. And therefore as faith justifieth, not because great and perfect, but because lively & true, as the palsie hand of a man may receive a summe of gold, no lesse then a strong and healthy arme; so also doe our inherent workes of sanctification give us evidences that we are in Christ, and so lead us to the promises of the Gospel, as signes, not causes of our interest in Christ, and that under this notion; because they are sincerely performed, not because they are perfect and without all contagion of sin cleaving to them.⁵⁶

Rutherford's polemical preaching against antinomianism is noteworthy for two reasons. First, it represents one of the most forensic analyses of their doctrine by a Scottish preacher, highlighting the seriousness with which this issue was treated. Second, it is important to recognise that although the sermon was preached in London, it was printed in Edinburgh as well, indicating that Rutherford's critiques of antinomianism may have been delivered with a Scottish audience in mind.

Nor was this an issue that Rutherford felt could be addressed just once or superficially. In sermons on John 12:27-33, published as *Christ Dying and Drawing Sinners to Himselfe* in 1647, Rutherford examined antinomianism again in great detail, claiming that antinomians teach that sanctification 'is so farre from evidencing a good estate, that it darkens it rather; and a man may more clearly see Christ, when hee seeth no sanctification, then when hee sees it'.⁵⁷ Moreover, he expanded his critiques to encompass antinomian assumptions about justification as well:

To Antinomians ... to be justified by Faith ... and to come to the sense and knowledge of justification, which either was from eternitie, as some say; or when Christ dyed on the Crosse, as others; or when we first take life in the wombe, as a third sort dreame: And ... to be assured of our justification, are all one.⁵⁸

Rutherford not only prodded at antinomian ideas about eternal justification, but sought to challenge the underlying assumption that Christians would experience immediate assurance of salvation. The fact that Rutherford devoted a significant proportion of

these sermons to antinomianism suggests that he was highly aware of this teaching's growing popularity and thought it needed to be addressed. The Westminster Assembly's discussions about antinomianism no doubt pushed this higher up his agenda. Yet the fact that he examined antinomian doctrine so closely also suggests that there might have been a relatively poor level of understanding of what antinomians actually believed. In this instance, Rutherford's polemical preaching appears to have been largely instructive. He did not simply mock or slander the antinomians, as in much anti-Catholic polemic, but sought to explain to his hearers and readers what the antinomians believed and why their positions were incompatible with Reformed orthodoxy.

Rutherford and Baillie's responses to antinomianism are important because they represent two significant Scottish figures addressing this theological issue, both in and out of the pulpit. However, we should not overlook the fact that their presence in England in the mid-1640s did much to precipitate their concern about this issue. Antinomianism does not appear to have been nearly as prominent an issue in Scotland at this stage, as evidenced by the general dearth of works written by Scots or printed in Scotland addressing this issue in the 1640s.⁵⁹ Indeed, Stephen Myers has argued that it was the Scottish Commissioners' involvement in the debates at the Westminster Assembly that led to an awareness of antinomianism in Scotland.⁶⁰

Combatting Antinomianism in Scotland

James Fergusson's manuscript sermons against antinomianism, first delivered in 1652, are a rare example of preaching against this doctrine originating from a Scottish pulpit, at least prior to the *Marrow* Controversy in the early eighteenth century.⁶¹

While the sermons were clearly edited in preparation for publication — indeed, the manuscript is divided by eleven distinct doctrinal refutations, rather than by breaks between sermons — it is still possible to spot the tell-tale signs of this manuscript's sermonic origins. For example, Fergusson began his refutation of the 'fourth antinomian error' saying: 'Haveing refuted severalls of the most dangerous errors of the tym we come (*the last day we spock from this place*) to bring the antinomian errors to the touchstone and the tryell of the word.'⁶² Likewise, the sixth area of refutation opens: 'Yee remember the last day we did clear that poynt' and the eighth: 'The last occasion we schew'.⁶³ These examples make it clear that Fergusson originally delivered his polemical attacks orally, whether in a sermon or lecture, handling groups of doctrinal errors together. There are no obvious sermonic divisions after this point, but it seems highly unlikely that Fergusson would have preached through the remaining four errors (totalling almost 16,500 words) together, or at least not in the form that they appear in manuscript. Either the signs of the original sermonic divisions were removed in preparation for publication or Fergusson significantly expanded the refutation of the final four errors during the editorial process. Setting aside the final four errors due to their combined length for a moment, Fergusson's polemical sermons against antinomianism seem to have ranged from around 5,000 to 6,300 words.⁶⁴ Assuming that his sermons were reasonably consistent in length, and that the manuscript was not expanded too extensively for publication, then it would seem plausible that the final four errors might have been handled in three sermons, which would mean that Fergusson dedicated a total of six sermons to refuting antinomianism.⁶⁵

Another sign that these manuscript sermons resemble those originally delivered from the pulpit is the presence of practical applications at various points throughout. At the conclusion of the first doctrinal error, for example, Fergusson states:

The use is this ... the error quhilk they mantean here is the highway to loosnes & profanitie quhich all ther other errors tend to; It sayeth expresslie god is alsweell pleased with men quhen they are unconverted as converted, quhen they sinne meikle [i.e. greatly] as quhen they sinne litle, and if that be not a rod to mak men ly still in wickednes let anie judge ...⁶⁶

In other words, Fergusson was adhering to the typical expectations of early modern preaching by endeavouring to apply his refutation of antinomian doctrine directly to his hearers. In this instance, he was concerned to ensure that his hearers were not deceived into believing that their own piety was somehow unimportant. Similarly, Fergusson concludes his exposition of the eighth antinomian error — ‘That persones Justified are not to aske pardone’ — by addressing the importance of his doctrine directly to the lives of those ‘quho knowes yee ar Justified’, telling them: ‘it is true your out breakings [of sin] will not abrogat your right to heavne, bot they will have other fearfull effects, a peece of a temporarie hell cast in the conscience’ and that ‘thow will get no comfort from thy right till thow Repent, flee to chryst, and beleive.’⁶⁷ Seventeenth-century Scots were certainly not immune from temptations to downplay the need for personal sanctification. James Mitchell of Dykes, in the nearby parish of Ardrossan, reported that after receiving a ‘glorious sense and feeling of God’s reconciled face and favour in Christ’ in July 1624, he soon became convinced that ‘sin had gotten a dead stroke and should never have revived again ... I thought I was clean of all sin, and had nothing to confess to God’.⁶⁸ Mitchell’s experience may have only been temporary, and does not necessarily suggest a widespread acceptance of antinomian doctrine, but it does represent how easily such views could grow up from the soil of Reformed Protestantism.⁶⁹ No doubt ministers like Fergusson would have been attuned to such proclivities when he delivered these sermons. Thus, as with other examples of early modern polemical sermons, it is clear that Fergusson’s preaching against antinomianism was largely pastoral in its aims.

In spite of the pastoral concern that is self-evident in these sermons, the tone does not suggest that antinomian theology was actually causing much of a stir in mid-seventeenth-century Scotland. Fergusson began these sermons by stating that the antinomians derived their name from ‘a greek word that signifies als much as men contrarie to the law’, and continued by explaining that ‘they have ther name from ther cheiff error, and that quhilk is indeed the scope of all ther errors to abolish the holie law of god from beeing ther rule of a christian mans life.’⁷⁰ Fergusson’s introduction signals that he thought antinomianism was an important issue that he wanted his hearers to be informed about, but it also gives the impression that it was not a particularly pressing issue in his own congregation. This stands in contrast to the beginning of Fergusson’s refutations of independency and lay preaching, which he described respectively as ‘the Error whereby the most part of those that hath fallen from the way of Truth these years by past, have been first hooked’ and a ‘doctrine of much confusion to the kirk of god’.⁷¹ Fergusson’s tone gives the impression that both these issues had been more pressing in the Scottish kirk than antinomianism.

Given Fergusson's comparatively restrained tone it may seem unusual that he should have addressed this issue at all from the pulpit, let alone devote so much attention to it. Yet it is less surprising when we consider that Fergusson's predecessor at Kilwinning was Robert Baillie and that they were in contact with one another. Several of Baillie's letters from the early 1650s mentioned Fergusson, suggesting that he was in regular contact with him around the time that he preached his sermons against antinomianism.⁷² A letter dated 10 December 1652 makes it clear, for example, that they were in the same room: Baillie recorded meeting in 'Mr. John Carstair's chamber' with James Fergusson and several others.⁷³ Baillie also described Fergusson as being of 'our mind' and as 'our brethren', a reflection of the fact that they were both Resolutioners.⁷⁴ Letters written to Baillie also suggest that they were in close contact. Robert Blair's letter to him on 23 March 1652 concluded: 'I remember my love Mr. James Fergusone, and communicate my mind herein to him.'⁷⁵ If Baillie were not in regular contact with Fergusson, such a remark would be decidedly odd. Given this connection it seems plausible, even likely, that Baillie directly influenced Fergusson's preaching against antinomianism. In other words, Fergusson did not preach against antinomianism because there was a strong Scottish presence of antinomians, but because it had been such a prominent issue at the Westminster Assembly. This chimes with Myers' assessment that there was not a 'significant indigenous antinomian movement' in Scotland and that 'the Scottish sensitivity to antinomianism seems attributable to the fact that the flowering of the English antinomian movement coincided temporally with the Westminster Assembly'.⁷⁶ Although Myers claimed that the Scottish Commissioners 'brought that concern back into Scottish theology through their writings', there is no reason to doubt that they would have passed their concerns on interpersonally too.⁷⁷ Thanks to Baillie, Fergusson would have been highly attuned to how antinomianism had flourished in England and, while this theological position may not have presented a major threat to Reformed orthodoxy in Scotland at this point, he seems to have been intent on girding his hearers against this teaching before it spread north of the border.⁷⁸

Fergusson's response to antinomianism was structured around two doctrinal flashpoints: justification and sanctification. Though he does not identify specific antinomian opponents, or quote from their publications verbatim, it seems likely that he was aware of works by the likes of Tobias Crisp.⁷⁹ On the doctrine of justification, Fergusson saw the antinomians as being as mistaken as the Roman Catholics, albeit in different directions. He declared that since justification is so foundational to the church 'the devill by all meanes hes laboured to corrupt this trueth ... by the papists on the left, and the antinomians on the right'. He argued that the Catholics so exalted 'workes in the matter of Justification that they abuse christ and free grace', while the antinomians so exalted 'chryst and free grace that they make the law as to all purposes useless'.⁸⁰ It is telling that eight of the eleven antinomian errors that Fergusson identified were dedicated to justification. He criticised the antinomians' views on eternal justification;⁸¹ the role of faith in justification;⁸² the act of faith in justification;⁸³ and the total removal of sin in the justified person.⁸⁴ He attacked their claims that God does not see or correct sin in the justified person.⁸⁵ Similarly, he challenged the view that the justified person has no need to mourn sin or ask for pardon for it.⁸⁶ In short, Fergusson's refutation of the antinomians' view of justification was comprehensive: it not only dealt with the more philosophical aspects of the doctrine, but also its practical implications for the Christian. He offered a similarly wide-ranging critique of the antinomian doctrine of sanctification, despite only examining it under three heads. First, he attacked their understanding of the nature of sanctification.⁸⁷ Second, he criticised their view on the

role of the moral law in the life of the believer.⁸⁸ Third, he challenged their belief that sanctification does not offer evidence of the believer's salvation.⁸⁹ In *Christ and the Law*, Whitney Gamble argued that the 'key issues of disagreement between antinomians and the Westminster Assembly' were 'whether the moral law still bound believers to obedience, the nature of the structure of biblical redemption, and whether believers were required to show humiliation and repent for sin.'⁹⁰ Though there are differences in the precise framing, it is clear that the Westminster Assembly's concerns informed, and resounded in, Fergusson's pulpit critiques of the antinomian views of justification and sanctification.⁹¹

Fergusson's refutation of antinomianism is, in many ways, a model example of how Simson's trifold pattern for confuting false teaching could be enacted in practice. Simson had encouraged preachers to confute doctrinal error by setting out 'a plain narration and description of the error to be refuted, and that as near as may be in the very words used by the adversary', and Fergusson seems to have adopted this approach.⁹² In his refutation of the antinomian view that Christians are justified from Christ's death on the cross, if not from eternity, Fergusson set out the antinomian position. He explained that the antinomians supported their position with appeals to Isaiah 53:6 — 'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all' — and argued that they believed that 'we must reckon the tyme of our being freed of sinne from the tyme that our sinne was laid on chryst'.⁹³ This position seems to reflect the views of antinomian preachers like Tobias Crisp. In one of his sermons, which commented on Isaiah 53:6, Crisp rejected the idea that 'there must be a believing, before there can be a discharge from sin', insisting that this verse taught that 'there is a consideration of people before they are believing people, even while they are a people going astray'.⁹⁴ Though he did not quote Crisp verbatim, Fergusson provided a fair summary of his position, which suggests that description was not only an essential component of his strategy for countering antinomianism, but that he was familiar with antinomian arguments (though it is less clear if he learnt these directly from reading antinomian works or indirectly from other opponents of their doctrines).

Simson had also instructed preachers to show 'how contrary the Doctrine in hand, and the point to be confuted are to each other, and how they cannot stand together.'⁹⁵ This methodology is apparent in Fergusson's refutation of the antinomian doctrine of sanctification, which began by defining sanctification as a

weakening of the power of sinne in the dealing of our desires & affections ...
a reall change wrought in the man, some holy vertues begine in him quihilk
before was not, some corruptions subdued aither in whole in part quich
befor was reigning in him.⁹⁶

Having defined sanctification in this way, Fergusson then proceeded to attack the antinomian position, claiming that they 'deny that Sanctification quhich is properlie and reallie soe befor god doeth consist aither in subdueing of sinne in us, or in our personall holie walking'.⁹⁷ Instead, he argued that, for antinomians, sanctification was believing that 'chryst did these things for us ... that chryst slew sinne in the crosse ... wes chast in his owne persone ... that he mourned, that he prayed, that he watched, that he went about other holie duties for us' and that 'the fruits of these ... is our chastitie, our

repentance and Sanctification, quhilk, and *onlie quhilk* is requyred in the sight of god'.⁹⁸ By setting out his understanding of sanctification side-by-side with that of the antinomians, Fergusson was able to highlight the fundamental incompatibility of their respective positions. The fact that he used this approach underscores how his polemical preaching against antinomianism was, at its heart, intended to be instructive for his Reformed hearers.

Finally, Simson had encouraged preachers to take away 'such idle distinctions as the Adversary haply doth or may use to reconcile them. Or if no shift be, yet by a concession, that if it were as they say and think, yet that would not follow which they intend.'⁹⁹ Again, evidence of this approach can be detected in Fergusson's sermons. He sought to unpick the antinomian view that 'Beleivers are not under the law, and so cannot break it', by showing how this position was nonsensical:

Bot can anie think that persones Justified are soe freed from sinne, that the sinne ceases to be sinne, or that Justification can make that quhilk is sinne in others be no sinne. Can we think that Cains killing of another is Murther but in david it is not: May we think the denying of chryst in Judas is indeed a sinne bot in peter not: it is absurde.¹⁰⁰

Fergusson combined theological analysis with *reductio ad absurdum* to make his case against antinomianism. Fergusson almost certainly mischaracterised the antinomian belief that, as Theodore Bozeman put it, 'Christian morality is virtually automatic' for the justified believer.¹⁰¹ Nonetheless, this form of pulpit polemics represents one of Fergusson's most interesting critiques of antinomianism because it demonstrates how preachers could use rhetoric effectively to refute an idea even if they were primarily aiming to inform their hearers about the nature and dangers of particular doctrinal errors.

The overriding objective of Fergusson's sermons seems to have been to alert his hearers about the dangers of antinomianism. In this regard, they shared the pastoral flavour of much early modern polemical preaching in Scotland. Yet the tone of these sermons is distinct from many other cases of theological disagreement uttered in the pulpit over the preceding century. Among the most striking features of these sermons is the relative absence of the shorthand rhetorical slurs that had characterised Scots' preaching against Roman Catholicism. Fergusson did, of course, dismiss antinomianism as 'damnable doctrine', but this remark came near the end of his eighth, and final, critique of the antinomians' doctrine of justification.¹⁰² In other words, this more rudimentary form of polemical rhetoric played a less pronounced role in his preaching against antinomianism and was subservient to a more doctrinal form of critique. Part of the reason for this was that antinomianism was simply less well understood, so preachers could not rely on these shorthand critiques designed to reinforce their views. However, it might also be a response to the apparent plausibility and reasonableness of antinomian doctrine. As Jerald Brauer observed, those inclined to the 'evangelical dimension' of puritan piety were often accused of antinomianism, even when they did uphold the importance of the moral law and Christian obedience.¹⁰³ To guard against the lure of this teaching, to which some of his Protestant hearers might have been susceptible, Fergusson sought to treat the error seriously, rather than flippantly.

However, this in turn created the impression that antinomianism was a rather more serious issue in Kilwinning than it probably was in reality.

Conclusion

Fergusson's sermons against antinomianism helpfully illustrate the nature of pulpit polemics in early modern Scotland. First, they highlight how polemical sermons were not necessarily inspired by a looming presence of a particular theological error in the preacher's own area, but by a sense that it could pose a threat to the Church. Fergusson's concern about antinomianism does not appear to have been driven by a sudden outburst of 'lawless' teaching in Kilwinning, but by his connection to Robert Baillie who had encountered antinomianism first hand at the Westminster Assembly. While individuals like James Mitchell could be susceptible to practical antinomianism, the impetus for such a thorough sermonic refutation seems to have been events in England. Second, they show how polemical sermons tended to be aimed towards insiders, rather than those whose doctrine was being refuted. The overarching aim of these sermons was clearly to be instructive. Fergusson's primary aim was to ensure that his hearers understood the dangers of antinomian doctrine, rather than to convince antinomians of their errors. Third, polemical sermons were deeply pastoral in tone: they not only sought to raise awareness of false teaching amongst Protestant audiences but to gird them spiritually against such doctrines. Whether addressing well known errors like Catholicism, or less well known ones like antinomianism, this appears to have been one of the most persistent underlying objectives of polemical preaching. Fourth, Fergusson's sermons on antinomianism demonstrate that the level of theological engagement in polemical sermons correlated with how well or little the error was understood. The less an error was understood, the more doctrinal engagement was required. The more it was understood, the more the preacher could rely on short hand allusions and rhetorical slurs.

In the century following the Reformation, refuting theological error was an integral part of Scottish preaching. The *First Book of Discipline* made it clear that 'all doctrine repugnant' to the gospel was to be 'utterly repressed as damnable to mans salvation.'¹⁰⁴ While the six Johns had envisioned this as entailing a refutation of Roman Catholic doctrine and practice, later generations of Scottish ministers expanded the scope of this charge. In order to preserve the purity of the Reformed kirk, ministers took to their pulpits to combat a variety of theological errors with the aim of girding their hearers against 'damnable doctrine', regardless of whether they were particularly aware of such errors or not.

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Notes

¹ NLS, “Sermons 1644”, MS 153, fo. 71v.

² This seems the most probable preacher and date. The author of the manuscript sermons is not identified and the title page suggests that they were delivered in 1644. However, the sermons contain a direct reference to the thirty-seventh question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, published in 1647, so these sermons cannot have been preached before this date (or were heavily edited in light of the doctrinal formulations that emerged from the Westminster Assembly). Several of the sermons in the manuscript were published in the late seventeenth century and attributed to James Fergusson. Since the introductory sermon, which appears in both manuscript and print, clearly indicates that one individual delivered the sermons against antinomianism, as well as the issues addressed in print, there is no reason to doubt that Fergusson was the preacher in question. The printed text claims that the sermons were first preached in 1652. While we cannot be certain of this fact, the date seems plausible given both the themes explored within the manuscript and the fact that they must date from after 1647. See: Fergusson, *Brief Refutation*.

³ NLS, “Sermons 1644”, MS 153.

⁴ NLS, “Sermons 1644”, MS 153, fo. 57r-81v. Almost a fifth (19.4 per cent) of the total number of folios in the manuscript are dedicated to this issue. By comparison, only 30.6 per cent of the folios are dedicated to toleration, erastianism, independency, and separation combined (the sermon refutations that were subsequently published in 1692).

⁵ For a long time, the main study covering the subject was Blaikie’s *The Preachers of Scotland* (1888). A monograph exploring sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scottish preaching is much needed.

⁶ Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism, 1590–1638*, 45-84, at 57.

⁷ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 24-83, at 54. Arnold Hunt’s work on how English preaching pursued this line of enquiry more fully, albeit in a different context, and has probably done as much as any study to stimulate further interest in early modern Scottish preaching. See: Hunt, *Art of Hearing*.

⁸ Gribben, ‘Preaching the Scottish Reformation’, 280-1.

⁹ Raffe, ‘Preaching, Reading, and Publishing’, 326-9.

- ¹⁰ Jackson, *Alexander Henderson*, 93-136; Campbell, *Robert Baillie*, 171-96.
- ¹¹ Whitla and Gribben, "Preaching and Sermons". Brock, "Exhortations and Expectations". For further work on Scottish preaching and sermon-going also see: Brock, "Plague, Covenants, and Confession", 129-52; Brock, "Fallen Spirits". I am grateful to Crawford Gribben and Michelle Brock for sharing their work with me in advance of its publication.
- ¹² Gribben, "Preaching the Scottish Reformation", 275.
- ¹³ Cameron (ed.), *First Book of Discipline*, 87 (emphasis mine).
- ¹⁴ Cameron (ed.), *First Book of Discipline*, 88-9.
- ¹⁵ Knox, *Works*, vi. 273.
- ¹⁶ Knox, *Works*, vi. 239.
- ¹⁷ Knox, *Works*, vi. 239, 241.
- ¹⁸ Rollock, *Colossians*, 30.
- ¹⁹ Rollock, *Colossians*, 149.
- ²⁰ Rollock, *Colossians*, 152.
- ²¹ Struther, *Looking Glasse*, 132-3.
- ²² Struther, *Looking Glasse*, 132-3.
- ²³ Baillie, *Satan the Leader*, 23.
- ²⁴ Baillie, *Satan the Leader*, 26.
- ²⁵ Baillie, *Satan the Leader*, 26.
- ²⁶ Baillie, *Satan the Leader*, 26.
- ²⁷ There are, of course, exceptions to this general trend. One might consider, for example, Robert Bruce's *Sermons Upon the Sacrament of the Lords Supper* (1591), which more directly engages with the Roman Catholic understanding of the Mass in the third sermon.
- ²⁸ Simson, *Plain Platform for Preaching*, 10. For another example of a Scottish preacher who favoured doctrinal preaching see: NLS, "Copy of a 1644 Treatise on Preaching (1660) by Ja Mitchell of Dykes", Wod. MSS 4, fo. 2r.
- ²⁹ Simson, *Plain Platform for Preaching*, 12-13.
- ³⁰ Guild, *Compend of the Controversies*. For more on William Guild see: Newton, *William Guild*; Newton, "Wielding the brazen serpent". For further discussion of efforts to combat Catholicism in North East Scotland see: Thompson, "History and Catholicity", 67-82.

- ³¹ Guild, *Compend of the Controversies*. These headings appear repeatedly as Guild articulates a Reformed response to various Catholic doctrines.
- ³² Guild, *Compend of the Controversies*, 13-30.
- ³³ Guild, *Compend of the Controversies*, 199.
- ³⁴ Guild, *Compend of the Controversies*, 12.
- ³⁵ Guild, *Compend of the Controversies*, 10.
- ³⁶ Newton, "Ministers and the Bible".
- ³⁷ Henderson, *Religious Life*, 14.
- ³⁸ Baillie, *Satan the Leader*, 26.
- ³⁹ Baillie, *Satan the Leader*, 26.
- ⁴⁰ Baillie, *Satan the Leader*, 27.
- ⁴¹ Simson, *Plain Platform for Preaching*, 12.
- ⁴² Baillie, *Satan the Leader*, 26.
- ⁴³ On the history of the antinomian controversy in the 1630s see: Como, *Blown by the Spirit*; Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain*.
- ⁴⁴ For a recent discussion of the Westminster Assembly's response to antinomianism see: Gamble, *Christ and the Law*.
- ⁴⁵ Baillie, *Satan the Leader*, 46 (emphasis mine).
- ⁴⁶ Baillie, *Satan the Leader*, 47.
- ⁴⁷ Baillie, *Satan the Leader*, 25.
- ⁴⁸ Baillie, *Satan the Leader*, 25-6.
- ⁴⁹ Alec Ryrie noted that in Reformation Britain tears were commonly viewed as 'a sign of grace, from which the weeper could draw comfort'. See: Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 194. Viewed from this perspective, mourning over and repentance for sin were integral for true spiritual assurance. To neglect the use such 'signs of grace' was, in Baillie's view, spiritually perilous.
- ⁵⁰ Baillie, *Dissuasive from the Errours*, 6.
- ⁵¹ Baillie, *Dissuasive from the Errours*, 61.
- ⁵² Baillie, *Anabaptism, the True Fountaine*, 68. For a detailed discussion of Edwards' *Gangraena* see: Hughes, *Gangraena*.
- ⁵³ Rutherford, *Sermon Preached*, 32. Whitney Gamble described Crisp as the 'second most influential antinomian after John Eaton'. See: Gamble, *Christ and the Law*, 42.
- ⁵⁴ Rutherford, *Sermon Preached*, 32-3.

- ⁵⁵ Rutherford, *Sermon Preached*, 34.
- ⁵⁶ Rutherford, *Sermon Preached*, 36.
- ⁵⁷ Rutherford, *Christ Dying*, 80. Rutherford also responded to antinomianism in detail in *A Survey of the Spirituall Antichrist* (1648).
- ⁵⁸ Rutherford, *Christ Dying*, 110.
- ⁵⁹ Aside from Rutherford and Baillie, the only other Scot who appears to have addressed antinomianism in print in the 1640s was their fellow commissioner at the Westminster Assembly, George Gillespie (1613–48).
- ⁶⁰ Myers, *Scottish Federalism and Covenantalism*, 30. I am grateful to Chun Tse for bringing this work to my attention.
- ⁶¹ The *Marrow* Controversy engulfed the Scottish Kirk in the early eighteenth century, centring on differing interpretations of Edward Fisher’s 1645 work, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, which was republished in Edinburgh in 1718. The republication of the *Marrow*, which had originally been printed in London at the time of the Westminster Assembly, brought debates about antinomianism to the fore within the eighteenth-century Kirk. The General Assembly officially condemned the work in 1720, confirming its decision in 1722, while the ‘Marrow Brethren’ defended it. For a concise summary of the controversy see: Lachman, “The Marrow Controversy”, 546-8. For a more recent analysis of the theological roots of this controversy see: Myers, “The *Marrow* Controversy”, i. 342-58.
- ⁶² NLS, “Sermons 1644”, MS 153, fo. 61v (emphasis mine).
- ⁶³ NLS, “Sermons 1644”, MS 153, fo. 65v, 69v.
- ⁶⁴ Based on the BBC speaking time of 120 words per minute, cited by Max Engammare in his discussion of John Calvin’s sermons, these sermons would have been approximately forty-two to fifty-three minutes in length. See Engammare, *Time, Punctuality, and Discipline*, 66. If a slightly slower speaking speed of 100 words per minute were assumed, to account for speaking to a congregation without amplification, the sermons would have ranged from fifty to sixty-three minutes in length.
- ⁶⁵ It seems unlikely that Fergusson could have addressed the last four antinomian errors in less than two sermons, unless he added the vast majority of his material at a later point, so he must have preached at least five sermons against antinomianism.
- ⁶⁶ NLS, “Sermons 1644”, MS 153, fo. 59r.
- ⁶⁷ NLS, “Sermons 1644”, MS 153, fo. 69v, 71v.

- ⁶⁸ Mitchell, *Memoirs*, 7. I am grateful to Nathan Hood for drawing this case to my attention.
- ⁶⁹ There is no suggestion in his *Memoirs* that Mitchell spread these views further. Since he quickly fell prey to ‘carelessness, ease and security’ and felt ‘the subtle devil sliding me away from God’, he soon lamented his position. However, it is also clear that such views could be derived from conventional Reformed theology. Indeed, Mitchell reported experiencing his initial ‘glorious sense and feeling of God’s reconciled face and favour’ as a result of a conversation with David Dickson, in which Dickson expounded the Protestant doctrine of justification from Romans. See Mitchell, *Memoirs*, 1-7.
- ⁷⁰ NLS, “‘Sermons 1644’”, MS 153, fo. 57r.
- ⁷¹ Fergusson, *Brief Refutation*, 125; NLS, “‘Sermons 1644’”, MS 153, fo. 53r.
- ⁷² Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, iii. 134, 140, 142-3, 168, 199, 210.
- ⁷³ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, iii. 199-200.
- ⁷⁴ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, iii. 199, 210.
- ⁷⁵ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, iii. 175.
- ⁷⁶ Myers, *Scottish Federalism and Covenantalism*, 30.
- ⁷⁷ Myers, *Scottish Federalism and Covenantalism*, 30.
- ⁷⁸ Indeed, ministers in seventeenth-century Scotland were generally concerned to ensure that the doctrines that surrounded antinomianism, such as justification and sanctification (discussed below), were understood correctly, even if they were not responding specifically to antinomian teaching.
- ⁷⁹ For evidence of this claim, see the next paragraph.
- ⁸⁰ NLS, “‘Sermons 1644’”, MS 153, fo. 57r.
- ⁸¹ NLS, “‘Sermons 1644’”, MS 153, fo. 57r-59r. For a detailed analysis of the place of eternal justification in antinomian thought see: McKelvey, “Eternal Justification”, 223-62.
- ⁸² NLS, “‘Sermons 1644’”, MS 153, fo. 59r-60r.
- ⁸³ NLS, “‘Sermons 1644’”, MS 153, fo. 60r-61v.
- ⁸⁴ NLS, “‘Sermons 1644’”, MS 153, fo. 61v-64v.
- ⁸⁵ NLS, “‘Sermons 1644’”, MS 153, fo. 64v-68r.
- ⁸⁶ NLS, “‘Sermons 1644’”, MS 153, fo. 68r-72r.
- ⁸⁷ NLS, “‘Sermons 1644’”, MS 153, fo. 72r-74v.
- ⁸⁸ NLS, “‘Sermons 1644’”, MS 153, fo. 74v-78r.

- ⁸⁹ NLS, “Sermons 1644”, MS 153, fo. 78v-81v.
- ⁹⁰ Gamble, *Christ and the Law*, 59.
- ⁹¹ Gamble has argued that ‘fidelity to the Westminster Standards would prove to be the litmus test for those accused of antinomianism’ in Scotland during the *Marrow* Controversy, but Fergusson’s manuscript sermons show that Scottish preachers aligned themselves with the Westminster Assembly’s responses to antinomianism as early as the 1650s. See Gamble, “Westminster Confession”, i. 268.
- ⁹² Simson, *Plain Platform for Preaching*, 12.
- ⁹³ NLS, “Sermons 1644”, MS 153, fo. 58r.
- ⁹⁴ Crisp, *Christ Alone Exalted*, 229. In a work with a similar title — *Christ Alone Exalted; In Seventeene Sermons* (London, 1643) — Crisp dedicated fifteen sermons to expounding Isaiah 53:6 in detail.
- ⁹⁵ Simson, *Plain Platform for Preaching*, 12-13.
- ⁹⁶ NLS, “Sermons 1644”, MS 153, fo. 72r.
- ⁹⁷ NLS, “Sermons 1644”, MS 153, fo. 72v.
- ⁹⁸ NLS, “Sermons 1644”, MS 153, fo. 72v (emphasis mine).
- ⁹⁹ Simson, *Plain Platform for Preaching*, 13.
- ¹⁰⁰ NLS, “Sermons 1644”, MS 153, fo. 65r.
- ¹⁰¹ Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain*, 195.
- ¹⁰² NLS, “Sermons 1644”, MS 153, fo. 71v.
- ¹⁰³ Brauer, “Types of Puritan Piety”, 47.
- ¹⁰⁴ Cameron (ed.), *First Book of Discipline*, 87.

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