

# THE REFORMATION OF DEATH AND GRIEF IN NORTHERN SCOTLAND

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## Abstract

In many ways the Scottish Reformation was a centralised, top-down event, driven by prominent members of the aristocracy, and imposed in stages throughout the country with greater or lesser success. Certain areas, in particular the Highlands and Islands, were harder to reform than other parts of the country, and certain aspects of pre-Reformation religious life were never fully excised from daily practice. This chapter examines the process of reform as applied to death, burial, and the emotions surrounding these events in the Highlands and Islands, in order to determine what aspects of pre-Reformation practice survived intact, which were modified, and which were removed entirely. The chapter investigates the speed of these changes, and the resistance to them, as this will determine the degree to which the reform of death was welcomed in the most remote parts of Scotland. Finally, this paper will briefly compare the practices surrounding death and burial in the Northern Isles with those of other parts of Scotland in order to determine the influence upon these islands from Scotland in comparison to the lingering practices from before they came under Scottish control.

## Keywords

Scotland, Calvinism, Death, Burial, Reformation, Emotion

## Introduction

As it related to death and burial, the Scottish Reformation can hardly be classed as an overnight success. Indeed, depending on how ‘success’ is categorised, it could be argued that the vision of Knox and the other early reformers as to the correct method by which the dead should be buried was not fully realised until the burial of Thomas Chalmers in 1847 (Jupp, Raeburn, et al. 2017, 9-17). That, however, is a subject to be further covered elsewhere.

One of the realities of death which the early Scottish reformers attempted to address, yet subsequently found to be problematic, was the nature of grief. Coming from a Reformed Protestant perspective, the early reformers attempted to standardise the expression of emotion at funerals throughout Scotland. However, as can be seen elsewhere in this volume, Scotland was not a country with one unifying culture, and the north and west of the country differed greatly from the south and east. As such, in these areas there were differing traditions dealing with the expression of emotions, particularly grief, related to a death or burial. This chapter will investigate two of the practices found across northern Scotland, the intended effect the Reformation was to have had upon them, and the importance of them to the communities in which they could be seen.

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As will be seen it was precisely this interaction between the official instructions of the Kirk and the interpretation by the communities in the north and west that led to the resistance to change documented below. The reasons for this were many, but they can largely be said to have stemmed from tensions between the emotional regime in Edinburgh<sup>2</sup> and the emotional communities throughout Scotland.<sup>3</sup>

### Pre-Reformation Scotland

Of course, prior to the Reformation the expression of emotions related to death was not simply a free-for-all, so to speak. There were still constraints upon ‘correct’ emotional expression, and guides could be found in the form of instructional texts such as the *ars moriendi* works of the period. Perhaps the most notable pre-Reformation *ars moriendi* text to be found in Scotland was *The Book Intytulid the Art of Good Lywing & Good Deyng*, originally printed in France in 1504, but in an edition translated into Scots by Thomas Lewington. Of course, as the *ars moriendi* focussed more on the lead up to death, there is less material dealing with grief. However, as will shortly be seen, an important emotional aspect surrounding death involved faith in the resurrection, and the fear that could come through a lack of such faith. Indeed, as noted in the *Art of Good Lywing & Good Deyng*, ‘yt ys impossybyl to pleys god wyth owt fayth’.<sup>4</sup> However, in this work it is made clear that the devil would attempt to exploit a dying individual’s fear that their faith was not strong enough, for if the dying individual ‘beleyffys not in the fayth of god and holy chyrch that he ys damnyt’.<sup>5</sup> The devil must not be allowed to entice the dying individual into embracing this sorrow and fear, as even though ‘yt be so that we haue offencyt the meyrce of god we may be sawyt’.<sup>6</sup>

Fear and sorrow, however, are not the only emotions that the devil would attempt to exploit at the point of death. Pride and vainglory were also considered ripe for exploitation.

Fyrst for so mooch that by thys ma[n] ys mayd lyk to the Dewyl. For by pryd so mooch oonly was oon angel mayd oon Dewyl. Segundly by so mych that wayngloyr ys oon maynar of blasphemynge for thys that he gheuys to hym self the honowr the qwich he shoold gheue to god.<sup>7</sup>

Through emphasising the virtues and good works of the dying individual the devil could potentially insinuate the belief that good works could overcome faith, and thereby prevent

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<sup>2</sup> William Reddy has dealt with the notion of emotional regimes, in which some form of authority, be that the State or the Church, attempted to shape, manage, or guide the emotions of a population or group. Cf. Reddy 2001, 122-130.

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Rosenwein has written about emotional communities and their reactions to death in the medieval period, and in some instances this may be applied to the early modern period as well. Cf. Rosenwein 2006, 58-77.

<sup>4</sup> Lewington 1504, STC-791, sig. o ii<sup>v</sup>. [It is impossible to please God without faith.]

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. [Believes not in the faith of God and Holy Church then he is damned.]

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., sig. p i<sup>r</sup>. [It be so that we have offended the mercy of God we may be saved.]

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., sig. q v<sup>r</sup>. [First, for so much that by this man is made like the Devil. For only by so much pride was an angel made a Devil. Secondly, by so much that vainglory is a manner of blaspheming, for this is giving to himself the honour which he should give to God.]

the dying man or woman from holding fast to that necessary faith. ‘Qwen ony in hys parso[n] gloryfys hym self et alefiys hym by ony good that he has doyn he fallys i[n] depnymys anens god qwych ys actor of humylyte’.<sup>8</sup> As such, although the fear of death should itself be controlled, the fear of God was necessary for salvation. As the work goes on to stress, ‘weritably the dreyd of god chassys et puttys forth the syn of owr saowlis. For be the qwych shalbe wyth owt Dreyd of god may not be iustfyed’.<sup>9</sup> Death was natural and should not be feared, but without a fear of God driving one to live correctly, and have the necessary faith, then it was still entirely possible, for Lewington and the author of this work at least, not to receive salvation. The good works of a lifetime would avail the dead of nothing. Interestingly enough, this would become a central tenet of Reformed Protestantism.

Clearly, in pre-Reformation Scotland a fine line had to be negotiated when it came to the emotions surrounding death. Fear was not to be embraced fully, yet should not be ignored. And the same can be said for public displays of grief during the period.<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere it has been suggested that crying at death was a learned behaviour that served both to express and inspire feeling. Weeping in public was assumed to be a necessary practice in order to display the correct emotional response to a death to God and to society. Doing so reinforced that the individual in question was a true Christian (Christian, Jr. 2004, 33). In the Catholic world, and therefore Scotland prior to 1560, the emotion displayed by people could be used as a test for their spiritual condition. Emotions, and particularly the meaning behind them, were important for those actively seeking holiness (ibid., 39). When faced with a death it was therefore important that an individual or a community was seen to be experiencing certain emotions. This, however, was not to remain the case following the Reformation. Indeed, the opposite attitude was to become prevalent, particularly in Reformed Protestantism. It was now to be the case that the true Christian displayed only moderate grief on the occasion of a death. Excessive grief displayed a lack of faith.

### **Rewriting Death in Early Modern Scotland**

One of the first Reformed Protestant works circulated in Scotland that dealt with death and burial was Knox’s *Forme of Prayers and Ministration of the Sacraments*, produced in Geneva in 1556. Neither this work’s section on burial, nor that found in the *Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1541 from Geneva, which heavily influenced *the forme of prayers*, deal explicitly with emotional responses to death at the time of the funeral. The text of *the forme of prayers* reads:

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., sig. q v<sup>v</sup>. [When any in his person glorifies himself and uplifts him by any good that he has done he falls in shame before God, who is the author of humility.]

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., sig. r iii<sup>r</sup>. [Truly the fear of God chases and puts forth the sin from our souls. As such those who are without the fear of God will not be justified.]

<sup>10</sup> Of course, some occasions allowed for outwardly intense expressions of grief and sorrow, such as the death of James V in 1542. Holinshed noted that for some time after his death ‘there was great lamentation and mone made for his death throughout all parts of his realme, for he was verie well-beloued among his subjects’. (Holinshed 1808, 528).

The corps is reuerently brought to the graue, accompagnied with the congregatio[n], with owte any further ceremonies, which beyng buriede, the minister goeth to the churche, if it be not farre of, and maketh some comfortable exhortacion to the people, towchyng deathe, and resurrection. (*The forme of prayers and ministracion...* 1556, 88)

While the text of the *Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances* reads:

The dead are to be buried decently in the place appointed. The attendance and company are left to each man's discretion.

It will be good that the carriers be warned by us to discourage all superstitions contrary to the Word of God, not to do duty at too late an hour, and to make a report in the case of sudden death, in order to obviate all inconvenience that might thereby arise.

Moreover they are to do duty not earlier than twelve hours after death, and not later than twenty-four. (Reid 2006, 68)

Interestingly, although neither refer specifically to emotional displays, they do both refer to the removal of superstitious practices and intercessory acts, which will be seen to be important later.<sup>11</sup>

Following on from *the forme of prayers* was the less widely circulated *First Book of Discipline* which, as James Cameron has noted, had a somewhat complicated genesis, being commissioned in 1560 by the Great Council of the Realm, and hastily assembled by six now unknown ministers, although it is likely that Knox was amongst them. The work was then revised to the point that it is impossible to know when the various sections were actually drawn up, although Cameron does suggest that the section on burial was probably not a product of revision, and as such is likely to have been composed in 1560. The section of this work concerning burial is far longer and more explicit than that of the *forme of prayers*, and addresses many more aspects of the ideal Reformed Protestant burial in Scotland. The first paragraph ends by stating:

we think it most expedient, that the dead be conveyed to the place of buriall with some honest company of the Kirk, without either singing or reading; yea, without all kind of ceremony heretofore used, other then that the dead be committed to the grave, with such gravity and sobriety, as those that be present may seeme to

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<sup>11</sup> As a brief aside, the passage concerning burial in *the forme of prayers* was translated into Gaelic verbatim by John Carswell, and printed in 1567, although it is unclear how widely this was disseminated. Cf. Thompson 1970. Carswell was an important figure for the Reformation in the Highlands, which would have been much less successful without him. He was the bishop of the Isles, the abbot of Iona, and personal chaplain to the fifth Earl of Argyll, Archibald Campbell. Carswell's translation of *The forme of prayers* had been commissioned by the Kirk in order to aid the Reformation in the Highlands. Cf. Spratt 1901, xv.

feare the judgements of God, and to hate sinne which is the cause of death.  
(Cameron 1972, 200).

Again, although not mentioning emotional responses to death explicitly, the text does make it clear that ideally burials should be accompanied by gravity and sobriety.<sup>12</sup>

Of course, displays of emotion themselves were not forbidden in Reformed Protestantism. As the Swiss reformer Pierre Viret had stated, ‘the grief of those who are witness to death must be able to express itself, but not to excess’ (Roussel 2002, 198). Indeed, in the *Institutes* Calvin stated that ‘you see that to bear the cross patiently is not to have your feelings altogether blunted, and to be absolutely insensible to pain’ (Calvin 1961, 3.8.9). It seems clear that for some prominent early Reformed Protestants emotions had their place at a funeral, but that these emotions should not be allowed to become excessive.<sup>13</sup> As will now be seen, that was not necessarily an opinion shared by the northern laity.

### **The Survival of the *Coronach***

In certain areas within the Highlands and Western Isles, traditionally Gaelic parts of Scotland, a death would occasionally result in the performance of the *coronach*, the ritualised shrieking and wailing of older woman at certain times during a funeral.<sup>14</sup> As noted elsewhere, this was not a practice limited to Scotland, and similar practices could be found in the *caoineadh* in Ireland, and a practice banned in the Basque regions of Spain in 1526 (Lysaght 1997, 66; McCoy 2012, 615-24; Goldie, 1991, 52; Raeburn 2016, 44). Surviving records from Scotland in Scots or English are few, although several of the more formal ancient Gaelic laments, specifically those related to the deaths of famous figures, real or otherwise, have been preserved (McLauchlan 1862), lxxxiv, 3, 100, 101, 131). The *coronach* was certainly extant in the seventeenth century, however, as several records attest. In 1635 David Person, a Lowland Scot, wrote of a similar practice in Turkish controlled parts of Greece wherein ‘all the women thereabouts after their old heathen custome, meete together about the house of the deceased’, and ‘make lamentable howlings and cries; weeping and tearing the haire from their heads, beating their teats and breasts, with their nailes, defacing their cheekes and faces’, and ending his passage by noting, ‘*Aëtius* an ancient Historian of our Country observeth to have beene used of Old amongst our British, and yet in our Highlands is observed’ (Person 1635, 160-161). Almost a decade later, in 1642 the Synod of Argyll was moved to note:

Because it is a commoun custome in some of the remottest pairts within this province of ignorant poore women to howle their dead unto the graves, which commonly is called the *corronach*, a thing unseemely to be used in any true

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<sup>12</sup> For a more detailed analysis of these texts and their development see Raeburn 2016, 255-261.

<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, following the death of John Knox’s wife in 1561, Calvin wrote to Christopher Goodman: ‘Though I am not a little grieved to hear that our brother Knox has been bereaved of his affectionate wife, I rejoyce nevertheless that he has so far mastered his affliction as not to suffer it to prevent him from strenuously discharging his duty to Christ and the church’ (Calvin 1972, 186).

<sup>14</sup> From the Gaelic *corranach* or *coranach*, a dirge, a lament, a funeral-cry.

Christian kirk, where there is preacheing and profession of the comfortable resurrection of the dead, Wherefor for the restraineing thereof it is ordained that every minister both in preacheing and catechiseing endeavore to inform them how unseemely to Christians, and offensive to God, and scandalouse to others the lyke practice and careage must be. (MacTavish 1943, 61)

And the *coronach* was not limited to the mainland. Martin Martin, writing of St Kilda in 1698 noted that the inhabitants ‘bewail the Death of their Relations excessively’ (Martin 1698, 112). He also noted of St Kilda that sometimes when a man died ‘Their wives on such occasions make doleful songs, which they call lamentations. The chief topics are their courage, their dexterity in climbing, and their great affection which they showed to their wives and children’ (Ibid., 316). The practice is also known to have survived in Scotland until at least 1745, and possibly longer in the more remote areas of the country (Raeburn 2016, 44-45). Indeed, Thomas Pennant claimed the practice still occurred as late as 1769, noting:

The Coranich, or singing at funerals, is still in use in some places: the songs are generally in praise of the deceased; or a recital of the valiant deeds of him or his ancestors. I had not the fortune to be present at any in North Britain, but formerly assisted at one in the South of Ireland, where it was performed in the fullness of horror. (Pennant 1776, 112-113)<sup>15</sup>

Regarding the record from 1642, Argyll was actually somewhat of a success story for the Reformation in the Highlands and Islands (Cf. Dawson 1996, 247). It is particularly interesting, then, that the *coronach* survived for so long, when other pre-Reformation practices died out over time. But why should this be the case? For the Synod of Argyll the practice was one of ignorance, and a lack of faith in the resurrection, and as such the result of uncontrolled emotion in the face of death, such as was warned against by Calvinist ministers and the *ars moriendi* texts of the time. For these ministers it was clear that because these communities did not fully comprehend the doctrine of election or the resurrection of the dead they mourned them excessively, fearing for the ultimate fate of their loved ones. This fear would then drive these communities to attempt at intercession with God on behalf of the dead, as if they could show God how important the deceased had been through such excessive displays of emotion, and listing the good deeds the deceased had performed in life, which, as seen above, was problematic in Scotland even before the Reformation. Clearly, for the Protestant ministers in the Highlands and Islands the *coronach* was an example of lingering superstition, ignorance, intercession, and fear of death, and as such it was to have been stopped immediately.

Yet was this how the communities themselves perceived the practice? As suggested elsewhere, it may well have been that there were indeed superstitious or intercessory elements to the *coronach* (Raeburn 2016, 45). This, however, does not mean that there was no other reason for its continued existence. There was a clear emotional element to the *coronach*, and in smaller, more isolated locations such as St Kilda it was performed

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<sup>15</sup>As will be seen further below, Pennant was not shy when it came to editorialising his accounts in such a fashion as this.

by women who had known the deceased, women who had been their wives or relations. There is evidence from Ireland and the continent that on occasion these practices were performed by professional women who received a payment of some form or other, but in Scotland there is no evidence of this before the nineteenth century, and the evidence we do have suggests smaller, more intimate communities (Burt, 1822, 108; Karant-Nunn 1997, 192; Lysaght 2003, 406; Raeburn 2016, 44-45).<sup>16</sup> As such, these women will very likely have been displaying their own emotional reactions to the death. They were part of an emotional community that held on to traditional methods to express and process grief, and by so doing, to come to terms with the death of an individual they had known and loved. In smaller, more tightly-knit communities such as these the death of an individual was a larger event, as each individual had a larger place within the community. As such the grief and anger would have been more immediate than in larger communities where not everyone was known to each other. These deaths became public events that needed to be marked through the public expression of grief. What would it have said about that community had they not marked the passing of one of their own?

Elsewhere it has been noted that women involved in keening laments took steps to show themselves as remote from mundane society, such as baring their breasts, disheveling their hair, and perhaps even drinking the blood of the dead, although that is highly likely to be a somewhat sensationalist exaggeration. By acting as if they had gone insane they could stand apart from the community and therefore express anger and pain without restraint (Newton 2000, 202). Interestingly, Martin makes no note of this on St Kilda, and perhaps this is due to the aforementioned small size of that community limiting the ability to step outside of it when expressing grief. Yet in communities where this occurred it was still done on behalf of the community. The grief and anger of these women was the grief and anger of the community, channelled through them.

### **Early Modern Scottish Wakes**

Throughout the whole of Scotland the practice of ‘watching’ the corpse was known as the late-wake or lyke-wake. As early as the thirteenth century the Church disapproved of aspects of the practice, and it was stated in the Aberdeen Statutes that:

Likewise at the funerals and exequies of deceased lay persons, we forbid singing and dancing to take place; since it does not become us to laugh at the weeping others, but in a case of the kind rather to grieve as they do. (Patrick 1907, 42).

It is unsurprising that following the Reformation the wake was also particularly unpopular with the various Kirk Sessions, Presbyteries, and Synods in the Highlands, as in these regions the practice was considered to be even more barbaric than its southern variants. Thomas Pennant, writing of a later example of a Highland wake, stated:

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<sup>16</sup> It has been suggested that some communities kept a *bean-tuirim*, a professional mourning woman to perform the *coronach*, but this seems not to have been the norm throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Cf. Stiùbhart 1999, 240.

The evening after the death of any person, the relations and friends of the deceased meet at the house, attended by bagpipe or fiddle; the nearest of kin, be it wife, son, or daughter, opens a melancholy ball, dancing and greeting, i.e. crying violently at the same time; and this continues till day-light; but with such gambols and frolicks among the younger part of the company, that the loss which occasioned them is often more than supplied by the consequences of that night. If the corps remains unburied for two nights, the same rites are renewed. Thus, *Scythian*-like, they rejoice at the deliverance of their friends out of this life of misery (Pennant 1776, 112).<sup>17</sup>

Pennant's account of the behaviour seen at wakes, particularly by those of the younger generations, suggests that in his interpretation the members of this community were not truly affected by grief, or at least not in any profound way, and this is very interesting in the context of this chapter. He claimed that the younger generation viewed wakes as an opportunity for procreation, and that the conception of new life functioned as some sort of zero-sum practice, in that the community had lost a member, but would in due course gain several more. As such, the melancholy display of the older members of the community is shown in bright contrast: the older generation mourns while the younger plays. This is, of course, a highly editorialised account, and actually more of an expression of the commonly held view of Highlanders as barbaric. Their emotions were perceived as less subtle than those of the sophisticated Lowlanders and English who observed them, and possibly even as not truly Christian, as suggested by the comparison to the Scythians, another 'barbaric' people.<sup>18</sup> The older members of the community were so overwhelmed by grief in that moment that they could do nothing but moan and cry, and the younger were so controlled by their passions that they could not fail to enjoy life.

Elsewhere Walter Dennison, writing of the Orkney Islands, which had only been a part of Scotland for approximately a century by the Reformation, and a land where most of the inhabitants still spoke Norn, noted that there the 'leek-wak' also displayed a variety of emotional practices, ranging from sombre to frivolous. He noted:

The glamour of superstitious fear, induced by the proximity of the dead, seems to have added zest to the jokes, often practical, the telling of stories, and drinking of ale. As night wore on, and some of the party were overpowered by sleep and ale, a favourite trick was practiced on one of the sleepers, by pinning a corner of the sheet lying over the corpse to the dress of the sleeper. By a sudden noise the sleeper was then startled from his slumbers, when springing to his feet, he generally brought the salt plate with a clatter to the floor, and finding himself

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<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, Pennant claims the wake as an ancient English or Saxon custom, mentioned by Chaucer in the *Knight's Tale*, and banned by the Synod of Worcester in 1240, due to the development of excessive behaviour, such as he described in Scotland. Citing Olaus Magnus, Pennant suggests that the behaviour of the young on this occasion is said to come from an older practice handed down from their 'Northern ancestors'. Cf. Magnus 1555, 116.

<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, Edmund Spenser, in his 1596 work *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, also relying heavily upon Olaus Magnus, compared the Irish (and the Scottish) to the Scythians, due in part to the Irish practising burial lamentations of the sort described above. Cf. Grosart 1882-4, 91.



held by something apparently coming from the corpse, he would roar in mortal terror. During his agony of fear, his struggles to disengage himself would sometimes bring the dead body to the floor. (Dennison 1995, 150).

Dennison goes on to note, however, that such unseemly pranks were not always harmless, through the retelling of the story of a young woman who, having been the butt of such a joke, was rendered insane by her fear (ibid.). As with Pennant's account, there is here the suggestion that the grief displayed was very transitory in nature, and that as the night went on, and the drink flowed, the normal cheerful disposition of the community would reassert itself. For the outside observers of these far-flung communities they were clearly less sophisticated than those from the civilized south.

However, not all observers of northern wakes reported instances of such frivolous behaviour. Writing of the Western Hebrides, John Lane Buchanan stated that:

They seldom display much mirth at late-wakes, as they do in many parts of Scotland; but sit down with great composure, and rehearse the good qualities of their departed friend or neighbour. Their grief soon subsides after they are buried; and many have speedily replaced a lost wife by some of their former acquaintance (Buchanan 1793, 170).

Of course, as with Pennant's account, Buchanan was very clear that this was an unsophisticated population observing a traditional response to death. There was no laughing or joking on this occasion, it was a very sombre affair, but that does not mean that it was not still less sophisticated than would be found further south. In this account Buchanan displayed the common attitude of travellers to the Highlands and Islands that these were simple, perhaps even barbaric people, as seen through their overt emotional displays. The grief on display was as simple as the people themselves, and again, incredibly short lived, as seen by the speedy replacement, as he puts it, of the lost spouse.<sup>19</sup> This, however, is more likely the result of a fundamental misunderstanding of the emotional language of another culture, and the difference between communal and private expressions of grief. Grief not publicly expressed is not necessarily absent, after all.

In many ways the wake was a far more complicated practice than the *coronach*, and this can be seen from the Kirk's attitude towards it. Unlike the *coronach*, which was to be stopped outright, the wake was merely to be reformed. This ultimately stemmed from the fact that, at its core, the wake was fundamentally practical. It was a period of time during which the deceased could be observed to ensure they were actually deceased.<sup>20</sup> The Kirk, however, did not approve of the clearly superstitious elements, the probable

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<sup>19</sup> Ralph Houlbrooke noted that in the early modern period 'to weep Irish' meant to display feigned sorrow, bespeaking inconstancy and instability in those who grieved excessively. Cf. Houlbrooke 1998, 225. This is clearly in reference to the *coronach* and its variants, but is equally applicable to the comments made by Pennant, Buchanan, and others concerning the wake. Interestingly, Scottish Highlanders and Islanders were frequently referred to as Irish during this time, and little distinction was made between the two.

<sup>20</sup> Rumours of the dead returning to life at wakes during this period can be found from the south-west of Scotland. Cf. Wood 1911, 219.

intercessory aspects, or the unrestrained emotion and inappropriate behaviour (Raeburn 2016, 43-44). As with other practices concerning death in early modern Scotland, the wake was understandably an emotional event for the family and community of the deceased, and this was respected by the Kirk, but again, that emotion was to be constrained. The barbaric practices of the north and west were to be brought in line with those of the south.

### **Emotional Communities and Emotional Regimes**

When addressing emotions and emotionality in the early modern world it is important to consider the wider structures of a given society. In many instances the State or, more often, the Church, would attempt to govern the emotional lives of the populace, and this can be seen above both in the *ars moriendi* works, and in the works produced following the Reformation. These works aimed to instruct the laity how a good Christian should act in every aspect of their lives, and, as seen above, even their deaths. Both before and after the Reformation emotional responses to death were to be controlled tightly, and released only in the perceived 'correct' fashion. This is a very clear example of the Church in Scotland acting as an emotional regime (Reddy 2001, 122-130). How the laity expressed emotions was to be controlled from the top levels of society, for the perceived betterment of the common man and woman, in this life and the next.

The problem with such a model, however, is that it is not always particularly easy to govern people's emotions, especially in far flung corners of a country, such as the Highlands and Islands, or the Northern Isles. In these instances the local communities themselves dictated how emotions were publicly to be expressed. As such the *coronach* and the wakes can be said to be examples of the practices of emotional communities (Rosenwein 2006, 58-77; Rosenwein 2015, 3-10). In a country such as Scotland, with diverse cultural populations, this ultimately resulted in levels of tension between the regime and the communities. These emotional communities had set forms of emotional expression, particularly on the occasion of a death, in which the grief of the community itself could be processed. Yet even these smaller communities had systems of governance in place, no matter how informal. It is almost certain that there was an expectation of participation in these events, probably universally so in the case of smaller communities. Strictures for noncompliance in such events can be seen from descriptions of other so called 'primitive' societies throughout the world, such as the ostracization of an individual or family (Durkheim 1965, 443-443). And what those accounts have in common with those from early modern Scotland seen above is that they are filtered through the impressions of an outsider, who viewed themselves as more civilized, and therefore inherently superior to those being observed, the 'barbaric' people of the Gaelic north and west, or the Nordic descended people of the far north. These observers were not of the community, and as such could not fully comprehend its emotional rules.

Yet the emotional regime and the various emotional communities in early modern Scotland did have common ground, in that there was an expectation of compliance with approved emotional behaviour. The individual was expected to conform. This is seen clearly in that in all of the accounts and printed works investigated above, there is no mention of the individual and how they should process grief, just how it should be

displayed. And this is unfortunately compounded by the fact that the Highlands and Islands in particular was a largely oral culture. Few if any written records of the approach to individual grief were produced or have survived. This is problematic not only for the historical record, but for enabling a certain amount of romanticisation when dealing with the emotional culture of early modern northern Scotland. The Highlands and Islands subsequently become a mystical place where people are perceived as grieving communally, rather than mourning individually. This risks allowing notions of emotional regimes and emotional communities to deflect from the fact that grief, then as now, was an intensely private affair, even when publicly displayed. The Church could not control what people felt, only what they believed and displayed.

### **Conclusion**

As seen throughout this chapter, early modern Scotland was not a land with a unified culture or a monolithic attitude toward death. However, prior to the Reformation there were, of course, traditions that were practised at funerals throughout the country, regardless of the geographical area, that were to be discontinued following 1560. The most common of these were the graveside prayers and funeral services for the deceased, as these were seen to be intercessory in nature. These intercessory prayers, however, also contained an emotional element, in that they were considered to be a comfort for the friends and family of the deceased. Ralph Houlbrooke has noted that, in Reformation England, the abandonment of intercessory acts by the reformers ultimately deprived the relatives of the deceased of a crucial method by which grief could be dealt with; namely, channelling that grief into actions, and the same can be said of Scotland (Houlbrooke 1998, 228). Communities across the country were faced with the forced removal of traditional channels for grief, and as such did not let these practices go easily. What was viewed by Calvinist church authorities as intercessory, superstitious, or even barbaric, was the only way these communities knew of dealing with grief.

And it is not too difficult to see how this stripping away of emotional expression could be viewed by the laity, who were unlikely to have had the theological knowledge of the early reformers. To Catholic eyes the reserved nature of Protestant funerals seemed alien, as if the lack of emotion was inhuman, as can be seen from Florimond de Raemond's testimony concerning Huguenot funerals in France. He stated:

The entire group moves in silence, for no one would dare even to mutter a prayer to God, lest he or she be taken for a papist. You see how far their impiety extends. It is certainly tearful to see, along with this miserable treatment of the dead, the loss of their souls. (Roussel 2002, 200).

In light of this it is perhaps more understandable that certain pre-Reformation practices survived for so long after the Reformation. Indeed, Bruce Gordon notes that when Zwingli in Switzerland eradicated Catholic burial traditions he too encountered lingering adherence to the old ways, because 'the old rites offered a great deal of pastoral comfort and simply to abolish them left a terrible void' (Gordon 2002, 273-274).

But perhaps not all of the reformers were blind to these distinctions. Concerning emotions generally, Calvin noted that ‘our feelings are sinful because they rush on unrestrainedly and immoderately; but in Christ they were composed and regulated in obedience to God and were completely free from sin’ (Calvin 1961, 12). Jesus may well have wept at the death of Lazarus, but his weeping was not the weeping performed by humanity. And here lies the crux of the matter. Emotions in and of themselves are understandable and even expected. They should, however, be released in a fashion that attempts to emulate the restraint shown by Jesus. Humanity should not shriek or wail, but express grief in a dignified manner. As Calvin concluded:

Thus Paul does not demand of us a stony numbness, but tells us to grieve in moderation, and not abandon ourselves to grief like unbelievers who have no hope (1 Thess. 4.13). For Christ also took our emotions into Himself, so that by His power we may subdue whatever is sinful in them. (Ibid., 13).

However, as has been suggested elsewhere, the official position of the Church concerning emotions and emotionality was occasionally very different to the actual experiences of the laity (Corrigan 2004, 19). And when the regime attempting to enact such change was from a different cultural background, and openly perceived the remote communities as barbaric, this difference in experience would have been greater still. It seems fair to suggest that in early modern Scotland the communities in the north and west certainly found this to be the case, and as such it is far easier to understand why they were so hesitant to abandon their traditional methods of channelling grief, leading to the tensions between emotional regimes and emotional communities seen throughout this chapter.

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