

*A Godly Possession?
Margaret Mitchelson and the Performance of
Covenanted Identity¹*

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The history of demonic possession cases in Scotland in which young, often female, adolescents fell into visionary trances, assailed by witches and the devil, is well known, but could there also have been such a thing in Calvinist Scotland as a divine possession where the possessed was believed to be infused by, and in direct contact with, the divine?² What would such a thing have looked like? A possible contender for such a phenomenon were the inspired speeches delivered by a young female prophet of the National Covenant, called Margaret Mitchelson, who opposed the King's Covenant in autumn 1638, helping to stiffen Covenanting resolve at a time when they were moving towards the abolition of episcopacy at the Glasgow Assembly in December 1638. Mitchelson had gained fame for her ecstatic revelations. She operated under the auspices of Henry Rollock, minister of Trinity College parish, Edinburgh, and the Covenanting activist Archibald Johnston of Wariston.³ Given the National Covenant's lack of institutional legitimacy through the usual channels of crown or parliament, continuing public demonstrations of its divine legitimacy at this crucial point were very convenient indeed.⁴

Mitchelson's age is unknown, but if David Stevenson's identification of her as the daughter of James Mitchelson (1585–1625), minister of Yester (or Bothans),

¹ The author would like to thank Professor Elizabeth Ewan for her information on the source material for this chapter. She would also like to thank Professor Julian Goodare, Dr Martha McGill and Mr Ciaran Jones for their comments.

² Brian Levack, 'Demonic Possession in Early Modern Scotland', in *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, ed. Julian Goodare, Lauren Martin and Joyce Miller (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 181.

³ David G. Mullan, 'Mitchel (or Mitchelson), Margaret', in *The New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, ed. Elizabeth Ewan, Rose Pipes, Jane Rendall and Siân Reynolds (Edinburgh, 2018); David Stevenson, 'Mitchelson [Mitchel], Margaret (fl. 1638)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004); Wariston, I, pp. xxiii–iv.

⁴ Laura A. M. Stewart, *Rethinking the Scottish Revolution: Covenanted Scotland, 1637–1651* (Oxford, 2016), p. 102.

a son of the family of Mitchelson of Middleton, is correct then it is possible to say that she could be no younger than thirteen in 1638.⁵ Given her description as a ‘damoiseil’, it is unlikely that she was older than her early twenties. If this is so, then she was an orphan who had lost both parents by 1627. She was not in a totally marginal position, however, as one of her brothers became a merchant burgher of Edinburgh and the tutor to the minor children of the family was her father’s brother Samuel, probably the laird of Middleton.⁶

Margaret Mitchelson was controversial, then and now. According to modern historian David Mullan, her speeches were ‘ravings’, though he wrote more kindly about her in his entry for *The New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, mentioning that Rollock ‘was spellbound by her’ and that ‘some noblemen found Christian conviction in listening to her’.⁷ Indeed, in his chapter in *Women in Scotland, c.1100–1750*, he cites her as an interesting though notorious example of how Christian women ‘had a real impact on other women and on men through their spiritual counsel’, but concludes that she is an example of ‘remarkable circumstances that do not define the role of women in religious life’.⁸ David Stevenson concluded that her ‘brief career as a prophetess’ was ‘influential in stirring up zeal for the covenanters’.⁹

Margaret Mitchelson’s speeches disappeared after her brief career. They are certainly not to be found in the usual places for Covenanting relics. Robert Wodrow, whose collections of manuscripts preserved the accounts of at least four female Covenanting visionaries, some in multiple copies, made no reference to her. It is hard to escape the conclusion that copies of Mitchelson’s speeches were ‘memory-holed’ as an embarrassment to the cause and, if someone had copies c.1700 when Wodrow was collecting, they seemingly did not want to pass them on. However, the silencing of Mitchelson’s inspired tongue has now been ended by Professor Elizabeth Ewan’s studies of the commonplace book of schoolmaster John Bonar of Ayr (b. 1619) in the National Library of New Zealand’s Turnbull Library, which brought to light a copy of one of Mitchelson’s exhortations from 11 September 1638, two days before she met Archibald Johnston of Wariston.¹⁰ We can now attempt to say more about Mitchelson and how we might think of her extraordinary religious performances, reminiscent of someone possessed, yet definitely not a demoniac.

⁵ Stevenson, ‘Mitchelson [Mitchell], Margaret (fl. 1638)’.

⁶ *Ibid.*; Scott, *Fasti*, I, p. 399; F. J. Grant (ed.), *The Register of Apprentices of the City of Edinburgh, 1583–1666*, Scottish Record Society (Edinburgh, 1906), p. 128; Wariston, I, p. 393.

⁷ David G. Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism, 1590–1638* (Oxford, 2000), p. 167; Mullan, ‘Mitchel (or Mitchelson), Margaret’.

⁸ David G. Mullan, ‘Women in Scottish Divinity, c.1590–c.1640’, in *Women in Scotland, c.1100–1750*, ed. Elizabeth Ewan and Maureen M. Meikle (East Linton, 1999), p. 34.

⁹ Stevenson, ‘Mitchelson [Mitchell], Margaret (fl. 1638)’.

¹⁰ John Durkan, *Scottish Schools and Schoolmasters 1560–1633*, ed. Jamie Reid Baxter, Scottish History Society (Edinburgh, 2006), p. 198; NLNZ, MSY 6821, p. 1363.

The idea of godly or divine possession is well established in the scholarship of medieval female piety outside Scotland. Nancy Caciola speaks of the 'divinely possessed laywoman' as a new phenomenon which grew up from the thirteenth century onwards, alongside but quite distinct from demonic possession.¹¹ She defined divine possession as the 'indwelling, penetrative, and unitive character of medieval women's relationship to Christ or the Holy Spirit', including Christ speaking through her, 'self-identity with the spirit of God, as the woman speaks divine prophecies, reads the minds of others, and in a sense becomes part of the Godhead' through a mystical marriage with Christ the bridegroom. Such women showed 'constant contact with God ... being physically and intellectually transformed by this union'. She adds that:

There were moments when their state of possession was particularly overwhelming and intense. It was during these times that the individual entered into trances, witnessed visions, and gained access to prophetic revelations. Indeed, women's claims to be divinely inspired seers were predicated largely on the visions and revelations they reported having received during trances, which represented the apotheosis of their possession. These trances are described as states that transcended bodily boundaries and individual self-consciousness. Either the woman's spirit would leave her body entirely and visit supernatural realms, or it would recede into her deepest depths, relying only on her 'interior senses'.¹²

The individual might become 'rigid, immobile, and insensible' during these trances, as if dead. This state of divine possession was hotly contested by male theologians. Moshe Sluhovsky speaks of the 'muting' of this kind of 'divine possession' as 'a gendered development' aimed at women, arguing that the 'ascendancy and popularity of female mystics between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries compelled the Church to determine who could become a "medium" for divine knowledge, and whether women should or could enjoy this privilege.' He continues:

in the seventeenth century, following the processes of redefinition and the redrawing of boundaries between divine and diabolic possessions, attempts by women (and some men) to gain access to the supernatural by means of transcending the self were deemed demonic, and all forms of ecstatic self-transformation were looked upon with suspicion.¹³

The backdrop to this was the rise of the witch-hunt, in which, as Caciola points out, discussion of female visionaries and their susceptibility (in their great love for God) to being led astray through ecstasies and trances to display symptoms

¹¹ Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY, 2003), p. 56.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹³ Moshe Sluhovsky, 'Spirit Possession as a Self Transformative Experience in Late Medieval Catholic Europe', in *Self and Self-transformation in the History of Religions*, ed. D. Dean Shulman and G. G. Stroumsa (Oxford, 2002), p. 151.

of demonic possession formed a key part of the thinking of the early and influential demonologist John Nider in his *Formicarius*.¹⁴

By the seventeenth century suspicion of divine possession ran so deeply in France that historian Sarah Ferber could write of the 'bleak career option' of 'positive possession' of women, where demonic possession became a kind of a gateway through exorcism for spiritual advancement for women such as Souer Jean des Anges. Such a woman might start off by being demonically possessed, but, once properly exorcised and found not to be a witch, she could be deemed to have a holy possession and could become a living saint, advancing spiritually to holy visions and raptures with stigmata, angels, divine contact and the ability to prophesy and discern spirits.¹⁵ Ferber writes of

a sliding scale of rapture. At one end was the ecstatic spiritual who had surrendered her will to that of God and who was rewarded with ecstasies and insight, and a possible reputation for sanctity. At the other end was the witch, whose renunciation of her will, and her baptism, in exchange for extraordinary powers (or at least a belief that she possessed such powers) aligned her totally with the devil. In between lie the possessed, whose state, unlike ecstasy, always involved the devil, but which, unlike witchcraft, could be turned to good ends.¹⁶

Ferber argues that, looking at this sliding scale in the light of the history of female affective piety, possession was probably a subcategory of 'ecstatic spirituality'.

While Ferber, Caciola and Sluhovsky have predominantly studied Catholic spirituality, this framework is also useful in considering Scottish Calvinist piety. Forms of ecstatic spirituality, both female and male, were well known and attested among radical presbyterians.¹⁷ The Calvinist conversion experience, which released believers from much of their fear of Hell, could be a gateway to rapture for Scotland's saints and a cure for demonic attacks in ways that sound very similar to the possession spectrum delineated by historians of female piety elsewhere in Western Europe.¹⁸ Conversion could show manifestations ranging from divine to demonic, from demoniac to saint. It was a style of piety that could

¹⁴ Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, p. 212.

¹⁵ Sarah Ferber, 'The Medieval Holy Woman as Role Model for the Possessed', in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, ed. Brian Levack (Oxford, 2013), p. 582; Sarah Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France* (London, 2004), p. 8.

¹⁶ Ferber, *Demonic Possession*, p. 115.

¹⁷ Louise Yeoman, 'Away with the Fairies', in *Fantastical Imaginations: The Supernatural in Scottish History*, ed. Lizanne Henderson (Edinburgh 2009), pp. 29–46; Louise Yeoman, 'Heart-work: Emotion, Empowerment and Authority in Covenanting Times' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, 1991), pp. 24–6, 184, 191–3, 263–6, 268–71; Louise Yeoman, 'Archie's Invisible Worlds Discovered: Spirituality, Madness and Johnston of Wariston's Family', *RSCHS*, 27 (1997), 161–3, 172–3; Louise Yeoman, 'The Devil as Doctor: Witchcraft, Wodrow and the Wider World', *Scottish Archives*, 1 (1995), 95–9.

¹⁸ For example, in resolving the terrors of the demonically possessed Christian Shaw. See Yeoman, 'The Devil as Doctor'.

produce marked somatic and mental manifestations of anxiety and joy – fainting, weeping, sobbing, falling down as if struck dead, falling into trances – and it was intimately connected with supernatural encounters, both divine and demonic.

Michelle Brock has noted the important presence of the demonic in the affective conversion-centred piety of Scottish Calvinism in her book *Satan and the Scots*, and considered it in terms of Scotland's puzzling history of recording so few demonic possession cases until the very late part of the witch hunt in the 1690s and early 1700s. 'For much of the early modern period', she points out, 'outward physical possession did not have a place in the cultural script in Scotland. Due to the emphasis on innate depravity and the belief in predestined reprobation, demonic possession was, in a subtle, spiritually intrinsic sense, a constant component of Reformed Protestantism.'¹⁹ Roark Atkinson went further in his article about the Satanic encounters of believers in the 1740s revival at Cambuslang, which he considered in the light of the end of the witch hunts, speaking of understanding 'the vigorous efforts ministers made to ween people off of witchcraft accusations' by 'focusing on the conversion experience, which essentially worked as a form of exorcism'.²⁰ Martha McGill's recent discussion of spiritual discernment develops this type of thinking further, noting that if Calvinists could experience divine possession 'it (probably) did not entail rapturous visions of the Catholic tradition, but once one was possessed by the Holy Spirit, discernment became straightforward ... To recognize angels, the optimal technique was to become one.'²¹

David Mullan has written extensively on the range of experiences connected with this kind of affective conversion-centred piety. He too has noted the occurrence of both the demonic and raptures in his *Narratives of the Religious Self in Early Modern Scotland*; however, he preferred to characterise visionary or rapturous experiences, especially of women, as 'visualization of scripture' in the 'imaginative spaces generated by the Bible where a number of women carried on their religious quest'.²² However, his discussion of visions did not focus on women whose narratives might be candidates for cases of 'godly possession' or 'folk trance' (such as Barbara Peebles or Janet Fraser, or the child visionary Donald McGrigor's daughter). He focuses on other examples, such as Grizell Love (who exceptionally insisted that her remarkable visions were not a trance), characterising her as 'really visualizing Scriptures' with which she was 'familiar'.²³

¹⁹ Michelle D. Brock, *Satan and the Scots: The Devil in Post-Reformation Scotland c.1560–1700* (Abingdon, 2016), p. 233.

²⁰ Roark Atkinson, 'Satan in the Pulpit: Popular Christianity during the Scottish Great Awakening, 1680–1750', *Journal of Social History*, 47 (2013), 43, 364.

²¹ Martha McGill, 'Angels, Devils, and Discernment in Early Modern Scotland', in *Knowing Demons, Knowing Spirits in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Michelle D. Brock, Richard Raiswell and David Winter (Cham, 2018), p. 261.

²² David G. Mullan, *Narratives of the Religious Self in Early Modern Scotland* (Burlington, 2010), p. 125; though Barbara Peebles is mentioned in another context on p. 273.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 121–6.

While this is an important observation and the scriptural content of most of these visions or raptures was high (and one would expect it to have been so in women and girls steeped in the Bible), it leaves out elements that certainly did not come from scripture, such as witches coming into the bedroom and dancing, in the case of Grizell Love, Satan making a noise like a pistol shot near her, Donald MacGrigor's ten-year-old daughter hearing a cry like an owl, and then seeing witches, the devil appearing to her in the shape of a black man and an ox, or the devil appearing to Janet Fraser in the form of a bee and a black man and a bony hand.²⁴ 'Visualisation' can imply deliberateness or conscious production, yet Barbara Peebles spoke of how 'all the power went out of my body'. She also talked of 'falling dead', 'speechlesse' and 'dumb', and later fell dumb for four days. Donald McGrigor's daughter suffered what were described as 'fitts', while the later Cameronian visionary Janet Fraser lay for hours at a time motionless, as if dead.²⁵

There was a potential role here for godly women to fall into trances, to see visions, to utter inspired speeches and prophecies or to act as one taken over by the spirit, which could perform a legitimating function, showing that God was raising up the weak against the strong, giving a direct message that he was on-side with what the rebellious godly party was doing.²⁶ However, it was a role that walked a perilous tightrope, precisely because of beliefs that 'women made better targets for the devil', who, as any well-informed seventeenth-century person would know, liked to manifest himself as an angel of light.²⁷ Despite this potential vulnerability, at crucial political stages for the National Covenanting movement, female Covenanting ecstasies stepped up to prophesy on the basis of raptures. The first and most important of these cases, and the only one that fully went public, involved a young woman, Margaret Mitchelson, as the star performer.

Piety and Covenanting Legitimacy

Margaret Mitchelson's brief public career began with a man who came late to the cause of opposing the Scottish Prayer Book: Henry Rollock, the minister of Trinity College, Edinburgh. According to David Mullan, Rollock was a very late convert to the anti-prayer book cause, a convinced episcopal minister who had nearly become a bishop and who stood out in favour of the prayer book almost until the last minute before flipping sides to the movement which became the

²⁴ NLS, Wodrow Quarto, LXXII, fols 108r-108v; EUL, DC.8.110, fols 3r-3v; NRS, GD157/1880.

²⁵ NLS, Wodrow Quarto, XXVI, fols 283v-6v; EUL, DC.8.110, fol. 4r; NRS, GD157/1880.

²⁶ McGill, 'Angels, Devils, and Discernment', pp. 257-8.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 262; 2 Corinthians 11:14 'And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.'

Covenanters.²⁸ From as early as 1634, Rollock had an important admirer of his preaching: the future co-author of the National Covenant and exemplar of affective presbyterian piety, Archibald Johnston of Wariston.²⁹ But after Rollock changed sides in 1637 and joined the movement against the service book in the run-up to the National Covenant, Wariston found something else to admire in him – a new and enthralling talent in emotional prayer of the sort that was to become a ‘growing preference’ of Covenanter ministers.³⁰ Wariston was quickly impressed when Rollock told him of the ‘wonderful work of God with ane poore damaseil’ called Margaret Mitchelson and offered to introduce them on 13 September 1638. Wariston described how her:

saule was full to the brim and to the overflowing of the most sensible conceptions and expressions of the greatnes, goodnes, and glorious excellency of King Jesus; it was admirable to hear and see the varietie of hir expressions and conceptions on that subject, with the continuat benseil³¹ and combined concurrence of al the faculties of hir saule and affections of hir heart, in every conception and expression, quhilk sundry tymes cust hir in great soundings, reboundings, and suerfings.³²

Recollecting it the next day, Wariston elaborated that these were ‘strainge, lyvly, pouerful expressions and meditations of Chrysts might, sueatnes, and excellencie’.³³ This was quite a performance of inventive speech, fainting, reverberations in the body and sobbing. Mitchelson’s utter intensity was focused on the wonderfulness of Jesus, reminding everyone that Jesus was the king who mattered (a clear, yet unspoken, contrast with Charles I). Wariston took it as an omen that God was with the Covenanters and recorded in his diary that ‘The sight of hir ... wes the best prognostication we could learne for our busines.’³⁴

In the absence of authorisation from the king, parliament or General Assembly, the Covenant had to derive its legitimacy from other sources. Laura Stewart notes how these sources involved a ‘context of mass petitioning, crowd actions, political performances, oppositionist sermons, and the circulation of print and scribal polemic’, which were all part of ‘a specific crisis’ that ‘turned the people into a public’, producing ‘a set of spaces in which people from across the social spectrum were able to take part in debate and, at some level, critically assess competing claims about who or what best represented the common good’.³⁵ The Covenanters had to engage with different audiences by ‘the skilled and creative use of these different forms of media’ to create ‘spaces in which

²⁸ Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, p. 76.

²⁹ Wariston, I, pp. 201–2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 306; Brian Spinks, ‘The Origins of the Antipathy to Set Liturgical Forms in the English-Speaking Reformed Tradition’, in *Christian Worship in Reformed Churches Past and Present*, ed. Lukas Vischer (Grand Rapids, MI, 2003), p. 78.

³¹ A state of mental tension, excitement or eagerness.

³² Wariston, I, pp. 384–5.

³³ Sweetness.

³⁴ Wariston, I, p. 385.

³⁵ Laura A. M. Stewart, ‘Authority, Agency and the Reception of the Scottish National

debate could occur and thereby began the process of forming a “public”.³⁶ Part of this had been the religious theatre of swearing and signing the Covenant itself, which also involved women.³⁷ This produced the emotional and revivalistic scenes so well described by Nathan Hood.³⁸ The experience of swearing the Covenant could recapitulate or initiate the experience of conversion in the hands of a minister steeped in affective piety. Audiences could experience involuntary communal outbursts of groaning, sobbing and weeping, seen as clear manifestations of the work of the Holy Spirit in softening and regenerating hearts.

It is in this context of affective piety that Wariston and Rollock’s ‘discovery’ of Mitchelson and her role as a public performer should be seen. The fullest description of her performances, given by a hostile source, states that she was laid in a large bedchamber that was always crowded to the doors and, ‘when her fitts came upon her, she was ordinarily throwne upon a downe bedd, and, ther prostrate, with her face downwards, spocke’.³⁹ This narrative perhaps attempted to cast Mitchelson as the false prophetess Jezebel of the Book of Revelation, making her a tool of Antichrist, as opposed to her filling the role of the godly prophetess Hulda associated with the doctrine of national covenanting in the Old Testament under King Josiah.⁴⁰ The latter was probably much more what Wariston and Rollock had in mind: a modern-day Hulda to validate the National Covenant in its hour of need before a General Assembly could ratify it.

The spectacle of Mitchelson’s prophesying was immensely popular. Even hostile witnesses agreed that ‘Great numbers of all rankes of people wer her dayly hearers’ and that ‘befor she beganne to speacke it was made knowne through Edinburgh’, and that ‘she was spoken of as a person inspired of God, and her words were recited as oracles’. People of the best quality came to see her and were deeply moved by her performance. The hostile *Large Declaration* described how ‘The joy which her auditors conceived for the comfort of such a messenger from Heaven and such messages as she delivered from thence, was many times expressed by them in teares.’⁴¹ Mitchelson’s spirit-filled performances perhaps allowed listeners to relive the excitement and sense of Covenanting purpose: being convulsed with godly sorrow for sin and overwhelmed by God’s astonishing mercy to the sinner, displaying through tears the Holy Spirit at work in the soul, participating in godly repentance for being led astray by the Five Articles of Perth and

Covenant of 1638’, in *Insular Christianity: Alternative Models of the Church in Britain and Ireland, c.1570–1700*, ed. Robert Armstrong and Tadhg Ó hAnnaracháin (Manchester, 2013), p. 98.

³⁶ Stewart, *Rethinking*, pp. 2, 8, 90–1.

³⁷ Stewart, ‘Authority’, pp. 90–1, 96.

³⁸ See Chapter 1.

³⁹ James Gordon, *History of Scots Affairs, From MDCXXXVII to MDCXLI*, ed. Joseph Robertson and George Grub, 3 vols (Aberdeen, 1841), pp. 131–2.

⁴⁰ Kings 22:14; 2 Chron. 34:22. See also Yeoman, ‘Away with the Fairies’, p. 37.

⁴¹ Gordon, *History of Scots Affairs*, pp. 131–2.

other formalities in worship. It was more evidence that God was at work and accepting the contrition of the Covenanters.

Royalist commentators perceived Mitchelson as at best mentally disturbed and at worst a fraud, and were keen to discredit her speeches. According to James Gordon, author of the *History of Scots Affairs*, Mitchelson had fits of distraction 'which savoured at best but of sencelesse simplicitie', while Walter Balcanquhall's *Large Declaration* framed her actions as feigned, as 'she hath been for many yeeres distracted by fits', and 'the crying up of this Maid, did look something like a Romish imposture'.⁴² Balcanquhall sneered that 'shee was well skilled in the phrases of the scripture, and had a good memorie, so that shee could remember the bitter invectives, which both in the Pulpits and elsewhere shee had heard made against the Bishops and the Service-booke'.⁴³ Further, opponents criticised her form of expression, claiming that it was 'holy tautologicall nonsense ... impertinent repetitions of Scripture sentences, mixed with some new phrases that wer not Scripture language'.⁴⁴ It is true that what she said was not extraordinary or unique, and that her metaphors about the greatness of God, such as 'O that evrie hair of my head wer mightie [to] praise thee, tho I schould seim a wonder, a wonder to the world I cair not for that seing I may [praise?] thee my love', were the kind of expression that might be expected in *ex tempore* prayer from an adherent of presbyterian affective piety, which would not be to the taste of those who shunned such forms of worship.⁴⁵ However, her enemies also, quite reasonably from their point of view, objected to Mitchelson's message 'when shee spake of Christ, she ordinarily called him by the name of Covenanting Jesus: The summe of her speeches for the most part was, that it was revealed unto her from God, that their Covenant was approved and ratified in Heaven.' By contrast, Mitchelson's expressions of piety condemned the rival King's Covenant as 'an invention of Sathan'.⁴⁶

Mitchelson's public display of emotive piety involved her falling into insensible trances, after which she spoke of what she had experienced. Wariston described her as being 'transported in heavenly raptures', but, unlike other contemporary mystics, who focused on describing visits to Heaven, Mitchelson is not recorded as referencing any divine meetings or angelic intermediaries. Rather, Mitchelson's raptures contained a recurring focus on the wonder and loveliness of Jesus with frequent references to heaven. Whether she was speaking to Jesus, as later visionary Barbara Peebles did, or having visions of heaven, is not made clear.⁴⁷

Mitchelson's raptures were made all the more emphatic by the ways in

⁴² Gordon, *History of Scots Affairs*, pp. 131–2, Balcanquhall, *Large Declaration*, pp. 226–7.

⁴³ Balcanquhall, *Large Declaration*, pp. 226–7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 226–7.

⁴⁵ NLNZ, MSY 6821; Spinks, 'The Origins of the Antipathy', pp. 77–8.

⁴⁶ Balcanquhall, *Large Declaration*, pp. 226–7.

⁴⁷ Yeoman, 'Away with the Fairies', pp. 29–46.

which they were delivered. In particular, her rhythmic repetition of certain phrases gave her words greater emotional emphasis. The fragment which has survived begins:

Margaret Mitchel ... being wakened out of a transe, upon the ii of September 1638, uttered these words, at 2 houres in the morning:

'The Spiritual Pharaohes gotten the foil, the valiant conquerour hes win the victorie praise, praise, praise to his name now and ever' with that she ceaset a while and begin'th after this manner.

'Praise, praise, praise, for choosing such ane kirk for thy bryde, Lord put on the garments, that belongs to the bryd of such ane gloriouse king, and deck thy spouse, thy self. For the smel of thy oyntments is sweet to me.'⁴⁸

The 'spiritual pharaoh' is an expression found in a contemporary books of godly sermons.⁴⁹ It normally refers to the pope, equating the Reformation with Moses bringing the people out of Egypt and paganism to the reformed promised land of proper worship, but at the height of the propaganda war between Covenanters and Charles I, where he was being charged with leading the nation back into popish captivity, it could equally well be applied to Charles being thwarted in his designs over the prayer book.⁵⁰

The writing of the early presbyterian minister and pioneer of this kind of affective piety, James Melville, contains a poem suffused with imagery of the Song of Songs about the Kirk of Scotland as Christ's bride, often seeing her as a fallen woman losing her purity to idolatrous ceremonies.⁵¹ Nathan Hood's chapter in this volume draws attention to Mitchelson's original patron, Henry Rollock, who at the swearing of the Covenant at Trinity Kirk, mentioned above, used a similar image from Jeremiah 3, where he conceived of the city of Edinburgh as 'the adulterous wife of God ... whom through the Covenant God was reclaiming'.⁵² Mitchelson drew further on the Song of Songs in a common trope of affective piety where Jesus was seen as the bridegroom and the worshipper, who has fallen in love with him and sees her/himself as his bride, must be purged by godly sorrow and repentance for sin, praising and longing for him.⁵³

⁴⁸ NLNZ, MSY 6821.

⁴⁹ For instance, in Richard Sibbes 'The Saint's Safety in Evil Times', printed in *The Saint's Cordials*, second edition 1637 in Alexander Balloch Grosart (ed.) *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes*, I (Edinburgh, 1862), p. 310.

⁵⁰ Randall Martin (ed.), *Women Writers in Renaissance England: An Annotated Anthology* (Abingdon, 2014), p. 52.

⁵¹ Louise Yeoman, 'James Melville and the Covenant of Grace', in *Older Scots Literature*, ed. Sally Mapstone (Edinburgh, 2005), pp. 574–83; see his poems 'The Reliefe of the Longing Soule', 'The Black Bastel' and 'David's Tragique Fall'.

⁵² Hood, 'Corporate Conversion Ceremonies'.

⁵³ See Mullan, *Narratives of the Religious Self*, pp. 317–8. See also the poems of Elizabeth

Praise, praise, praise. I am black my Love, I am black my Lord, I am black wash, washe, washe me in the fountain, O to be weighted, weighted, weighted, with the sweet name of King Jesus.

Thow art incomprehensible my Love. Lord give give thou us apprehensive knowledg, my dove, my Love, my fair one come away. Praise, praise, praise, for that ever I knew thee my Love, for the thornie way that thow hes brocht [me?] to thee for now I sie they were bot all consolations.

She also touches on the bridal joy of forgetting ‘the formalitie of my fathers house’, presumably a reference to the Church before the Covenant and the Five Articles when compared with the pure worship of ‘thy [Jesus’s] fathers kingdome’. Mitchelson explicitly prays for conversions, hoping that the Lord would ‘mak many new births to praise’. This suggests that Margaret’s Mitchelson’s debt to Rollock and his preaching needs to be acknowledged. She was his gifted young protege, riffing on the same themes that he used in the swearing of the National Covenant.

Her meditations also drew on other scriptural images such as Isaiah 40, underlining the amazingness of God and his mercy and how we ought to compulsively praise him with all our might:

O that evrie member of my bodie wer ane mouth to praise the, O that evrie pickel of the sand of the sea were a nation to praise the, O King creat many nations to praise thy name.

O Lord wil thow creat thousands of nations to praise thee my Love.

O that evrie drop of the ocean were a nation to praise the Lord, Lord wil thow creat thowsand, thousands to praise thee.⁵⁴

O my Love the heavn of heavns is not able to contain the praise.

O that evrie hair of my head wer mightie to praise thee, tho I schould seim a wonder, a wonder to the world I cair not for that seing I may praise thee my love.⁵⁵

Even if Rollock may have been an exemplar, Mitchelson’s performances were powerful enough in their own right that they inspired devotion to her and imitation in others. One of Margaret’s male observers, Johnston of Wariston, was impressed enough with her talent in this respect that he tried one of her

Melville Lady Culross as discussed by Jamie Reid Baxter (ed.), *Poems of Elizabeth Melville, Lady Culross: Unpublished Work from Manuscript with ‘Ane Godlie Dreame’* (Edinburgh, 2010), p. 111: Jamie Reid Baxter, ‘Elizabeth Melville, Lady Culross: New Light from Fife’, *Innes Review*, 68 (2017), 55–6. Nathan Hood has drawn attention to the importance of godly sorrow as an emotion associated with swearing the Covenant: Hood, ‘Corporate Conversion Ceremonies’.

⁵⁴ Compare Isaiah 40 and Psalm 139.

⁵⁵ NLNZ, MSY 6821.

meditations at home a few days after meeting her. Wariston's diary entry is worth rehearsing at length:

At night about six hours ... I cust by my book, begoud to walk, and, upon the remembrance of the damasels strainge, lyvly, pouerful expressions and meditations of Chrysts might, sueatnes, and excellencie, I resolved to try the sam meditation; and, evin at the entreie of plunging my thoughts and bending my sprit fixedly thairupon, I was drowned in a bottomles deep. I got the world (me thought) and al that thairin is, evin the heavins and al creaturs, fadamed about as ane globe glasped within my thoughts, quhilk ranged about al the circumference thair of, height, deipth, lenth, and breadth; bot, quhen from the work I begoud to circle my thoughts about a Deytie quhos workmanship it was and a keiking glasse of his pouer, wysdome, greatnes, and gloriousnes, heir my sprit sunk and evanished quhen I thought of the Lords creating, preserving, ruling all and ten thousand alls mor if thair wer, only and soly from his auin will and pleasure, be comunication of his being and subsistence ... In every thought I plumbed ane unsearchable deip.⁵⁶

In observing Wariston, we get some idea of Mitchelson's methods. Here, her male social superior was impressed by her affective piety and tried to learn from her.⁵⁷ He was also captivated by where this sort of affective piety took him in terms of spiritual joy:

I thought upon the infinit love of God in redeeming som of lost mankind ... Heir my heart failed me and my apprehension fell schort quhen I thought ... of the just reason of the saints continual prayses in heavin ... and reflects upon thair present injoying eternallie the kingdome of heavin, and doeth perpetually admire and adore the love of that infinit God, quhos unities in trinitie and trinitie in unities is a mysterie possessing my thoughts, as also the reasons of thair bended prayings of the Lord in this earth upon the Sprits testifying to thair consciences that thair aeternal election, as nou to Margret Mitchel.⁵⁸

This is the kind of piety that both Wariston and Mitchelson shared with Elizabeth Melville Lady Culross.⁵⁹ It is quite possible that Lady Culross was known to Wariston or an influence on him through her connection with his grandmother Rachel Arnot, whom Wariston noted as having been a key influence on his precocious piety.⁶⁰ However, it was Mitchelson's communication of her experience, not through poetry but through rapturous speeches and taught visualisation, that had the most significant impact on Wariston.

The visualisation began to produce somatisation when Wariston compared his sinful deservings to this magnificent and comforting God:

my body quailed and trimbled al for feare, with ane cold schuddring through al my body especyally at the roots of my haire, til it was setled againe by ane new intimation

⁵⁶ Wariston, I, pp. 386–7.

⁵⁷ Mullan, *Narratives of the Religious Self*, p. 125.

⁵⁸ Wariston, I, pp. 386–7.

⁵⁹ Reid Baxter, *Poems of Elizabeth Melville*, p. 111.

⁶⁰ Reid Baxter, 'New Light from Fife', 49: NLS, MS. 6248, pp. 35–9.

of reconciliation from above quhilk maid me with great libertie and assurance cust saule, body, etc. the good cause al over upon my Lord Jesus and in his airmes ... Al this tyme for ane long houre and ane half I got ane great libertie and motion; blissed be the naime of the Lord for it.⁶¹

Wariston, recollecting his experience in the tranquillity of his writing, was able to give a more eloquent account of his meditation than Mitchelson's amanuensis provided of her speeches, but his bodily manifestations show how what began as a voluntary exercise could produce involuntary results. The impact of Wariston's rapture went beyond a voluntarily assumed bodily posture or gesture such as kneeling, and became far more extreme.⁶²

There is an even more striking parallel to Mitchelson and her visualisations and raptures in Wariston's piety that predates his first meetings with her. A year before his first encounter with Margaret, on 23 April 1637, he recorded in his diary an experience labelled 'ane extasie':

Sunday, 23 Apryle, Betuixt 3 hours and six at night in my auin chalmer, quhyle I was walking al alone and meditating on the nature, essence, naimes, attributs, words, works of a Deitie, my quhol body took a schuddring, and extream coldnes seased on al my joints especyaly on the roots of my haire quhilk stood al steave, bent up fra the croun of my head; my eies stood brent open, never closing albeit rivers of tears ran doun my scheaks; my tounge strokin dumb; my hands at will nou reached out as it wer to receive a Deitie, nou gasped in as it wer to inclose and imbraice a Deitie received; this was the temper of my body, quhyl in al this tyme my saul was transported out of myselth and fixed upon the immediat vision and fruition of ane incomprehensible Deitie, lyk lightnings glauncing in at a windou; first his nature in general, then the Unitie in Trinitie, Trinitie in Unitie, then his attributs of justice, mercie, pouer, presence, wysdom, treuth, then his works... then the application of al to my auin saul ... At the glaunce of every on after another the schuddring wakned, my haire bended and a neu rusch of tears gushed out; thir glaunces wer presented, and went by lyk spectacles on a theatre quhyl my saul was crying without utterance, Deitie, Deitie, I adore, I adore, I adore.⁶³

Wariston used spiritual visualisations and the thoughts they produced to arouse his emotions to such a pitch that bodily manifestations over which he had no control followed: 'I thought at this tyme that my Jesus took my heart in his hand and knet it and wrapped it within the heart of God, so that I found God as it wer within my heart possessing and filling al the hirnes and holes thair of.'⁶⁴ There is little difference in Wariston's form of affective piety and Mitchelson's practices a year later, except that she fell insensible before waking and delivering her speeches and that she managed to put in longer shifts of inspired prayer even than Wariston, sometimes from two in the afternoon to three

⁶¹ Wariston, I, pp. 386–7.

⁶² On postures and gestures at swearing the National Covenant, see Hood, 'Corporate Conversion Ceremonies'.

⁶³ Wariston, I, pp. 252–3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

o'clock in the morning.⁶⁵ Even so, her practices were not so far removed from Wariston's own habits. According to his nephew, Gilbert Burnet, Wariston 'went into very high notions of lengthened devotions, in which he continued many hours a day. He would often pray in his family two hours at a time, and had an unexhausted copiousness that way.'⁶⁶ In a significant way, Wariston and Mitchelson were soul mates.

Gendered Piety

But there was one vital difference. Wariston could loose his tongue and feel his soul transported, but this was not a public performance. As an early modern man of the landed classes, Wariston could keep his most extreme performances of affective piety in his closet or private prayer group, or safely written down in a diary for circulation to select friends, and then act and speak publicly in a variety of forums to further his cause. He did not need to make a public spectacle to get a hearing. No doubt if Wariston had thought publicly exhibiting himself falling into ecstasies would have furthered the cause of the National Covenant he would and could have done it: as we have seen, he knew how to work himself up into a possession-like state where involuntary experience takes over from the directed and voluntary. Instead, this role fell to a young woman, and that might be because for a woman to be heard speaking publicly and to be taken seriously politically as a spiritual leader was a much harder thing.

Mitchelson could not pursue a public calling in the ministry, nor did she have the resources to become an important female patron to ministers, meaning that she was left with something akin to Ferber's 'bleak career option' for women of 'positive possession'. Despite its peril for the female reputation, such a route might give meaning and purpose, especially for someone who was (very probably) an unmarried orphan wielding little social power, even in godly circles.⁶⁷ Even her social betters found their public role as females to be circumscribed. No less a person than Elizabeth Melville Lady Culross, poet, writer and eminent activist in the presbyterian resistance to James VI's Five Articles of Perth, could not speak publicly or pray publicly to give guidance to the resistance movement. At the Kirk of Shotts revival of 1630

She went into the bed, and drew the curtains, that she might set herself to prayer. William Ridge of Adderny coming into the room, and hearing her have great motion upon her, although she spake not out, he desired her to speak out, saying, that there was none in the room but him and her woman, as at that time there was no other. She

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 384–5.

⁶⁶ Mullan, *Narratives of the Religious Self*, p. 248.

⁶⁷ Ferber, 'The Medieval Holy Woman', p. 582.

did soe, and the door being opened, the room filled full. She continued in prayer, with wonderfull assistance, for large three hours' time.⁶⁸

This was an incredibly eminent, talented, mature and powerful woman, yet she could rarely speak or pray publicly. Praying publicly with Mitchelson may likewise have been problematic for men. James Gordon recounted a hostile anecdote in which Rollock, 'who often came to see her, said that he thought it was not good manners to speacke whilst his Maister [Jesus or the Holy Spirit] was speacking'.⁶⁹ Gordon may be hinting that this was a cunning way to avoid the scandal of joining in prayer with her in public. The key as to why this might have been scandalous probably lies in Bryan Spinks's deduction that 'conceived or free prayer was regarded as a ministerial gift, not a general one. Lay-led worship could, and should, use set prayers.'⁷⁰ This was perilously close to treating a woman as a minister and acknowledging that a female could have the cherished gift of *ex tempore* prayer, which was becoming almost a *sine qua non* for radical Covenanter ministers such as Rollock,⁷¹ who was noted for his gifts in this matter.⁷²

How was Mitchelson able to get a powerful public platform from her bedroom 'pulpit'? Young women or girls, by dint of having little expected of them intellectually, could sometimes excuse their words as not being theirs but being direct supernatural inspiration, because it was thought they would not be capable of such conceptions unaided. Emilia Geddie (1665–81) was noted for her preternatural godly abilities of pious sayings, having the ability to rebuke adults and confer with ministers from the age of three to her death at sixteen.⁷³ In 1697 eleven-year-old demoniac Christian Shaw suddenly turned from victim of possession to supposedly being able to publicly preach as she confounded the invisible 'witch' Katie Campbell with scriptural reasoning and exhortation.⁷⁴ Donald McGrigor's ten-year-old daughter, after falling into trances and having visions, could suddenly talk about the test acts, indulgences, conformity and whether unbaptised children go to heaven.⁷⁵ Being young and female could lead to a presumption of direct supernatural inspiration.

⁶⁸ W. K. Tweedie (ed.), *Select Biographies*, Wodrow Society, I (Edinburgh, 1845), pp. 346–7.

⁶⁹ Gordon, *History of Scots Affairs*, p. 132.

⁷⁰ Spinks, *Christian Worship*, p. 79.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁷² Wariston, I, p. 306.

⁷³ Louise Yeoman, 'Geddie, Emilia [Emilia]', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

⁷⁴ Yeoman, 'The Devil as Doctor', pp. 95–9. Professor Julian Goodare is editing documents on Christian Shaw's case, including *A True Narrative of the Sufferings and Relief of a Young Girle* (1698) and the 'Bargarran Witches Manuscript' in the Mitchell Library in Glasgow, which represents an earlier recension of the 'narrative'. He has pointed out to me that the earlier version omits the confrontations between Shaw and Katie Campbell. However, the printed edition was 'gathered' from multiple hands and this may simply have been on a separate piece of paper now lost.

⁷⁵ EUL, Dc.8.110, fol. 8v.

In Margaret's case, if we judge from the way Wariston was able to emulate her exercises and produce physical manifestations and raptures, we observe how possessions were a mixture of the voluntary and the involuntary, with strong emotions producing cathartic speech and bodily manifestations that were interpreted as preternatural. Surrounded by advocates including a radical and respected Covenanter minister and the most prominent lay Covenanting activist, who interpreted the Spirit as speaking through her, Mitchelson became a Scottish version of a 'divinely possessed laywoman', drawing on her matrimonial and mystical union with Christ to speak with authority in a Church that had closed that public role off from women.

The Glasgow Assembly

The manuscript fragment of Mitchelson's speech from September shows her cheering on Covenanters who must have realised, as the autumn of 1638 drew on, that war with Charles I could not be too far away. She reassured them that they followed:

King Jesus, that victorise captaine, he that never tint a battel, O that conquerour in the tribe of Judah, the lord of hoasts ... stand stil and sie the salvation of the Lord, What wald thow doe and thow had the battel to fight when thow is fainting come to, stand [stil?] and behold it, faint not Sion: thy captane is the valiant conquerour, the Lord of hoasts is his name, praise to thee my lord the captane.⁷⁶

We have seen already that Charles I was being inveighed against as 'The Spiritual Pharaoh' and that the King's Covenant was probably being described as an 'invention of Sathan'. According to Wariston, Mitchelson also spoke

strainge things for the happy succes of Gods cause and Chryst croune in this kingdome quhilk was already inacted in heavin and this in the audience and to the astonishment of many thousand quherby our noblemen, especyaly som doubtsome of befor, wer strongly confirmed and encouraged to had hand to this great work of God.⁷⁷

At this point in late October 1638, as the crucial Glasgow Assembly approached, Wariston brought Mitchelson into his own house and invited prominent Covenanters to speak and to pose questions to her.⁷⁸ He recorded how she held forth before the marquis of Argyll and other Covenanting nobles, such as the earl of Rothes, Glencairn, Lords Yester, Balmerino and Kilpont, the laird of Dun, prominent judges lords Craighall and Durie and the Lord Advocate. He described Mitchelson as expressing herself 'pouerfully and pertinently' to this audience and noted with satisfaction: 'My heart prayed at thair incoming that

⁷⁶ NLNZ, MSY 6821.

⁷⁷ Wariston, I, p. 393.

⁷⁸ Wariston speaks of bringing Margaret into his family on 23 October 1638. See Wariston, I, p. 395.

the Lord wald speak appositly in hir to them, and I sau my petition heard.⁷⁹ She spoke to them ‘anent bischops, neu covenant, the halving and pairting the chyld of Gods treuth, the mainteaners or dissemblers with the disturbers of the peace of Zion, of the perfection of this reformation of the land both inwardly and outwardly’.⁸⁰ Mitchelson’s outpourings may have referred to the growing tensions over the role of episcopacy in the Church of Scotland and perfecting the outward reformation of the land promised in the National Covenant. As the General Assembly approached, Mitchelson’s was a message against compromise and a warning against backing down in God’s cause.

That Wariston was willing to introduce Mitchelson to the leadership at this crucial juncture reflects the importance he placed on her.⁸¹ His confidence was such that he not only conversed with her and rehearsed sermons he had heard to her, but listened to her when he had failed to attend sermons in person. On 12 November 1638, having written all Sunday instead of going to church, Wariston notes how ‘Upon Mononday night, to suply my want of Sundays sermons ... the Lord loosed again Margret Mitchels tounge to speak straingly fra 2 afternoone til 3 hours in the morning.’⁸² Mitchelson’s expressions clearly provided a huge personal comfort to him. Just prior to the Assembly’s opening, Wariston recorded how ‘this night I thought the Lord had need to suply the deficiencies of his servants quho cannot get tyme or leasure to studie at al, and that the Lord wald contineu Margrets raptures and expressions til this great busines wer settled’.⁸³

As the Assembly neared, Mitchelson’s influence started to recede from view, finally disappearing altogether. Wariston claimed he was too busy to write his diary and there is a gap from 21 November until 20 January 1639, during which time Mitchelson becomes invisible. It is impossible to be sure that Mitchelson went to the Assembly, because Wariston’s references to her are ambiguous: on 6 November, as he busied himself with preparations for the Assembly, he ‘recomended Margret to the Lords direction, bot my heart wised and prayed for hir staye’. On his return, he noted ‘schoe had spokin sundry tymes during the Assemblee, and once after our coming Home’.⁸⁴ There is no record that Mitchelson spoke in Glasgow during the Assembly’s sitting and Wariston’s account of what he did there fails to mention her.⁸⁵ In the period after the Glasgow Assembly we learn that on 7 January 1639 Mitchelson had gone to the country to see her ‘guidame’ and that later, when Helen Hay, Wariston’s wife, was delivered of a son and in poor health, Margaret ‘fel seik

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 396.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 384–5.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 395, 399.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 397.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

⁸⁵ Wariston’s new female praying partners were Lady Loudoun and her daughter. See *ibid.*, pp. 39, 399, 406.

for greif of my wyfes seaknes'; finally, on 1 February, she had fallen 'extream seak', and then the references stop.⁸⁶

Only one member of the Johnston of Wariston family ever spoke of Mitchelson again – Gilbert Burnet, Wariston's nephew who became a bishop. Though born in 1643, he was in a position to speak to close family members who were deeply involved at the time, including Wariston himself, whom he accompanied to the scaffold. Writing in the 1670s, his theory was that Mitchelson had 'the vapours':

She was called an impostress by many, but those who understood nature better, knew the root of her distemper, which to have called so at that time had met with a high censure: though, it afterwards abating, they were willing to defend it under that notion, and counted them favourable who believed no worse of it.⁸⁷

This is not too surprising, as Burnet was writing in a different age, when 'Episcopalians increasingly distanced themselves from this style of emotional piety, denigrating what they saw as dangerous enthusiasm'; however, the sudden cessation of Mitchelson's usefulness coinciding so closely with the Glasgow Assembly may also point to similar fault lines within the presbyterian party; possibly someone like the more conservative Covenanter minister Robert Baillie, who continually fretted about 'Brounisme' and later about private meetings for prayer, may have reined Wariston and Rollock in.⁸⁸

Conclusion

The routes that were open to Wariston and Rollock to exercise their gifts were not available to women such as Margaret Mitchelson. Men too had spiritual gifts of inspired speech and rapture that were not meant to be under their control, but in public they were still expected to manifest those divine gifts on cue in the correct settings – the pulpit, the prayer meeting, the communion table – and they learned that through example and training. Women, however, could legitimately manifest their charismatic gifts only at home or in private. Men could be 'beyond themselves', be 'transportit' and have 'strange motions' upon them in public settings, but they were still allowed to be upright and conscious. A woman, however, needed to be more noteworthy to gain a similar hearing,

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 409, 410.

⁸⁷ Gilbert Burnet, *The Memoirs of the Lives and Actions of James and William, Dukes of Hamilton and Castle-Herald* (Oxford, 1852), p. 83, my emphasis.

⁸⁸ Alasdair Raffe, 'Female Authority and Lay Activism in Scottish Presbyterianism, 1660–1740', in *Religion and Women in Britain, c.1660–1760*, ed. Sarah Apetrei and Hannah Smith (Farnham, 2014), p. 62; Alexander Campbell, *The Life and Works of Robert Baillie (1602–1662)* (Woodbridge, 2017), pp. 101, 103; Bryan Spinks, *Sacraments, Ceremonies, and the Stuart Divines: Sacramental Theology and Liturgy in England and Scotland, 1603–1662* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 165–6.

leaving those who were not of very high status to seek more questionable routes to a public hearing through ecstatic display or visions, which could lead to accusations of mental illness, of feigning their gifts or of being possessed. Sarah Ferber contends that 'possession was arguably a subcategory of ecstatic spirituality' and that 'performances of the possessed as demons under exorcism were the functional equivalent of the raptures of ecstasies' and were characterised by similar symptoms.⁸⁹ The two phenomena lie close to one another.

This may have been a traditional way for ecstatically gifted women to get a public hearing. In the Covenanting world it may not have been so far removed from the kind of renowned godly minister who could publicly manifest public displays of affective piety, but no woman, not even Lady Culross earlier in the century, could be allowed that role of more controlled, conscious, directed public raptures. The mode of female affective piety was different and took more extreme forms: falling down, uttering inspired speeches and having visions. In time, Mitchelson's audience and promoters seem to have tired of this sacred drama, perhaps because it had accomplished its end. The great aim of Wariston and his Covenanting colleagues to call a General Assembly and abolish episcopacy was achieved and Margaret, and her form of ecstatic female piety, largely disappeared from the Covenanting leadership.

⁸⁹ Ferber, *Demonic Possession*, p. 115.

