
The writings of John Willison published in his lifetime

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John Willison (1680–1750) published a substantial number of works in his lifetime – between the years 1712 and 1747. Several of these works had similar titles, and some of them were very popular and ran through numerous editions. Often, he revised them, sometimes enlarging an appendix from one work and issuing it as a separate publication. In a few cases, earlier editions have become exceedingly rare, or perished entirely, and there is even uncertainty about when certain items were originally published.

Much of the work on Willison's writings has already been done – in the helpful essay that William Hetherington prefixed to his *Practical Works of John Willison* (1844) and in the PhD theses of Webb Pomeroy (1953) and Ian MacLeod (1994).¹ Electronic resources, however, mean that better information is now easily available, and there are a number of corrections that need to be made.²

Our purpose here is to try to identify the date of publication, and the earliest surviving edition, of Willison's various works. Willison was good at providing publication information in the prefaces of subsequent editions; and the publishers' numbering of later editions (as, say, 'the fourth edition') can also be helpful, though such statements are necessarily limited by the publishers' own knowledge. Our interest in this subject is not purely

¹ W.M. Hetherington (ed.), *The Practical Works of John Willison* (Glasgow, [1844]), pp. vii–xxii; W.D. Pomeroy, 'John Willison of Dundee, 1680–1750' (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1953); I. MacLeod, 'The sacramental theology and practice of the Reverend John Willison (1680–1750)' (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 1994).

² Against this, it has to be said that the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) has been unavailable since 28th October 2023 because of a cyber-attack. Furthermore, we shall see that MacLeod cites at least one item which is not recorded on online catalogues, raising a question about the completeness of these electronic resources.

bibliographical – the dates of Willison’s publications often help to clarify his involvement in the various religious controversies which he took up.

I. Willison’s works published in his lifetime

1. *Queries to the Scots Innovators in Divine Service and particularly to the Liturgical party in the Shire of Angus and places adjacent thereto* (n.p., 1712), 32 pages.

This work is not mentioned by Hetherington but is usefully discussed by Pomeroy and MacLeod.³ There seems no doubt that Willison was the author. It was particularly aimed at Gideon Guthrie (1663–1732) who was the Episcopalian incumbent in Fetteresso from 1703–9, and then in Brechin from 1709–16.⁴ Willison says in his *Letter from a Parochial Bishop to a Prelatical Gentleman* (1714) that ‘it [the *Queries*] hath now stood these two years without any shadow of answer’ (p. 140).

2. *A Letter from a Parochial Bishop to a Prelatical Gentleman in Scotland, Concerning the Government of the Church* (Edinburgh: James M’Euen, 1714), 146 pages.

This is briefly discussed in Hetherington.⁵ It includes a 5-page appendix with a hostile review of James Small’s work on the Sabbath: J.S., *The fourth command of the Decalogue considered, and its moral and perpetual obligation asserted and vindicated, from the cavils of Philip Limborch*. (Edinburgh: Robert Freebairn, 1713), 16 pages. James Small (c. 1650–c. 1730) had been minister or incumbent of Forfar since 1687. He was a zealous Episcopalian but had been allowed to continue in occupation of the Brechin charge by the restored Presbyterian Church of Scotland. His work was written against Philipp van Limborch (1633–1712), a Dutch rational theologian whose *Institutiones Theologiae Christianae* (1686) had been translated into English in 1702 under the title *A Complete System or Body of Divinity*. Small says that Limborch’s anti-Sabbatarian arguments were doing harm in his Forfar congregation.

Small replied to Willison’s *Letter from a Parochial Bishop* in two separate publications. To the body of the work, against Episcopalianism, he responded with a learned defence of that system entitled *Answer to a Book called ‘A Letter from a Parochial Bishop to a Prelatical Gentleman’*.⁶

³ Pomeroy, pp. 26–30; MacLeod, pp. 23–24.

⁴ See D. M. Bertie, *Scottish Episcopal Clergy, 1689–2000* (Edinburgh, 2000), p. 58; *Queries to the Scots Innovators*, p. 8.

⁵ Hetherington, pp. viii–ix.

⁶ A Lover of the Truth and Order of the Church, *An Answer to a Book called ‘A Letter from a Parochial Bishop to a Prelatical Gentleman’, Wherein the Presbyterians of Scotland are*

To the appendix, he responded with an interesting 8-page pamphlet: *A short and sober answer to a malicious and calumnious libel, (Being the postscript to a book published by Mr. Willison, one of the Presbyterian preachers at Brechin, called 'A Letter from a Parochial Bishop to a Prelatical Gentleman, &c.')* Or *A vindication of the discourse upon the fourth commandment, published by J.S. a presbyter of the Episcopal Church of Scotland* (n.p, n.d. [1715]).⁷

3. *A Treatise Concerning the Sanctifying of the Lord's Day, and Particularly the right improvement of a Communion Sabbath* (Edinburgh: James M'Euen, 1716), 456 pages. Further editions in 1722 and 1745.

This was Willison's response to Small's *Short and Sober answer* above. Hetherington suggested that the first edition of this work 'was published about the year 1712 or 1713', and in this he has been followed, somewhat hesitantly, by later writers.⁸ This suggestion is incorrect, however. Hetherington thought that James Small's *Fourth command of the Decalogue considered* (1713) was a rejoinder to Willison's *Treatise Concerning the Sanctifying of the Lord's Day*, but we have seen that this was not so. An advertisement at the end of *Five Sermons* (1722) refers to the *Treatise Concerning the Sanctifying of the Lord's Day* and says that 'the first impression of this book being sold off, there is in the press a second edition with great improvements and amendments.' The edition 'in the press' was that of 1722 (Edinburgh: James M'Euen) – substantially revised and with a 'Dedication to the Magistrates of Dundee', pp. iii-xix – and the edition of 1716 must therefore have been the first. There was a subsequent edition of 1745 (Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson), which had been 'corrected by the author'. In 1756, Willison's son Samuel published a further edition of the work (see below), and probably it was this latter edition that was reprinted in Hetherington (pp. 1-126), although Hetherington himself may have made some editorial changes.

Rather puzzlingly, James Small replied to Willison's *Treatise* in *Some Reflections upon the Preface, and some Paragraphs of a Book printed for Mr. James Mc Euen at Edinburgh, 1716; called, 'A Treatise concerning the Sanctifying of the Lord's Day'. Together with an exact Answer to its Postscript. Wherein the 'Answer to the Parochial Bishop's Letter' is vindicated, the primitive Government of the Church by Bishops is farther established, and the Presbyterians in Scotland are plainly proved to be a Schismatick*

proved to be a Schismatick Party, and the Primitive Government of the Church by Bishops is vindicated, and the Substance of that which the Parochial Bishop says against it, is answered and refuted in very few words (Edinburgh: Robert Freebairn, 1715), 64 pages.

⁷ For further comments on James Small, see Appendix below.

⁸ Hetherington, p. ix; Pomeroy, p. 30; MacLeod, p. 24.

Party, and consequently that their Communion is unlawful (n.p., 1717), 92 pages. The puzzling thing is that surviving institutional copies of the 1716 edition of Willison's *Treatise* lack both the preface and the postscript of which Small was complaining. Small's *Reflections*, however, give a very full account of the offending preface and postscript, often quoting them verbatim, before answering them.⁹

4. *A Sacramental Directory* (Edinburgh: James M'Euen, 1716). This was the second part of the *Treatise Concerning the Sanctifying of the Lord's Day* above (pp. 243-389). Separate and revised editions were issued in 1726 and 1741.

The so-called 'second edition' – actually the first separate edition – was in 1726. An 'advertisement' in the 1722 edition of *Treatise Concerning the Sanctifying of the Lord's Day* (p. xxx) indicates that Willison was intending to enlarge the 'Sacramental Directory' material from the 1716 publication and publish it separately. There is no copy of the 1726 edition listed in institutional holdings, so we have not been able to examine the changes that he made.¹⁰ The third edition was in 1741 (Edinburgh: Lumisden and Robertson for Gideon Crawford). The preface to the third edition is dated 30th September 1740 and refers to previous editions of 1716 and 1726.¹¹ What describes itself as the fourth edition – apparently correctly – was published by Willison's son Samuel in 1755.

5. *An Apology for the Church of Scotland Against the Accusations of Prelatists and Jacobites, and particularly the Reflections of J.S., late Incumbent at Forfar* (Edinburgh: James M'Euen, 1719), 146 pages.

This was an answer to the Jacobite propaganda around the 1715 rebellion, and particularly to James Small's *Reflections* (1717). It was answered by Small in his *An Apology for the True Church of Scotland; being a short reply to a book published by J. W. (of late Presbyterian Preacher at Brechin, but now at Dundee) called, 'An Apology for the Church of Scotland, against the accusations of prelatists and Jacobites; and particularly the reflections of J. S. late Incumbent at Forfar'. Whereby the hainous and unchurching Crime of Schism is farther fixed upon the Presbyterian Party in Scotland, and the ancient and Apostolick Government of the Church by Bishops is farther confirmed* (Edinburgh, 1719), 62 pages.

⁹ Pomeroy, p. 34.

¹⁰ MacLeod (p. 55) gives a quotation with page-number from the 1726 edition.

¹¹ Pomeroy (p. 124) and MacLeod (pp. 60, 284) refer to an Edinburgh edition of 1740, but this may be the same as the edition of 1741.

6. *A Sacramental Catechism; Or, a Familiar Instructor for Young Communicants* (Edinburgh: James M'Euen, 1720), xxiv+358 pages. Many subsequent editions from 1734 onwards.

This is an entirely separate publication from the *Treatise Concerning the Sanctifying of the Lord's Day*, and the *Sacramental Directory* that developed from that.¹² There were subsequent editions in 1734 (Glasgow: Alex Carmichael, Alex Millar, Ja. and Jo. Broun); 1735; 1736 (Edinburgh: John Paton); 1743 (Glasgow: William Duncan); 1744 (Belfast); 1748 (Glasgow: John Hall), which calls itself the 7th edition; and 1752 (Glasgow), which calls itself the 9th edition. There is no appearance of any major revision from the first edition.¹³

7. *Mother's Catechism. Being a preparatory help for the young and ignorant, to their easier understanding the Assembly's Shorter Catechism* (c. 1721).

Like the *Sacramental Directory*, this grew from the 1716 *Treatise Concerning the Sanctifying of the Lord's Day*, appearing there in less developed form as 'Some Short Questions and Answers proper for the Instruction of Children', pp. 450-456.¹⁴ It had been issued as a separate publication by 1722 when it is referred to in an advertisement at the end of *Five Sermons* (1722). The earliest surviving separate edition in institutional libraries is the 15th which came out in 1735 (London: printed for Alexander Cruden).¹⁵ Other surviving pre-1750 editions are the 17th (Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1743); the 20th (Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1747); and a 1749 edition (Aberdeen: James Chalmers). The 1747 edition contains a note by Willison saying that the prayers have been shortened 'in this edition', but this note may have been carried over from a previous edition. The earliest Gaelic edition seems to have been that of 1752.

8. *Five Sermons Preached Before and After the Celebration of the Lord's Supper* (Edinburgh: James M'Euen, 1722), 139 pages. Further editions in 1739 and 1745.

¹² For an account of Willison's interest in the Lord's Supper, see M. Vogan, 'The origins of John Willison's emphasis on the Lord's Supper', *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal*, Vol. 7 (2017), pp. 105-138.

¹³ MacLeod (pp. 53-54) cites a passage which he says was aimed at the Marrowmen and was added in the preface to the 1734 edition. But in fact, this identical passage already occurs in the preface to the 1720 edition (pp. xxi-xxiii). Nevertheless, Willison clearly was aiming the passage against the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*.

¹⁴ This point is noted by MacLeod, p. 26.

¹⁵ Cruden was a correspondent of Willison's; see, e.g., A. Cruden, *History of Richard Potter* (London, 1763), pp. 66-67.

A publisher's advertisement at the end lists five works by Willison available from James M'Euen : 1. *Letter from a Parochial Bishop*; 2. *Sacramental Catechism*; 3. *Apology for the Church of Scotland*; 4. *Mother's Catechism*; 5. *Treatise concerning the Sanctifying of the Lord's Day* ('second edition with great improvements and amendments'). The *Five Sermons* were reprinted in 1739 (London: John Oswald) and in 1745 (Glasgow: Robert Smith and Alexander Hutcheson) (along with *Balm of Gilead*), and often thereafter.

9. *The Afflicted Man's Companion* (1727). Further editions in 1741 (probably) and 1744.

The date of the first edition is usually given as 1737, but 1727 is correct. The earliest surviving edition in institutional libraries is that of 1744 (Belfast: Samuel Wilson and James Magee). The preface to this is dated 'Dundee, 5th June 1741', presumably indicating the existence of a 1741 edition that has not survived. The first part of the preface, however, carries the date '27th May 1727'; and that this was the original year of publication is confirmed by John Glas's reference to the work in 1728:

Mr Willison has had the Confidence to tell the World, in the Preface of his late Book, That our worthy Reformers and Ancestors, who fram'd and took the Covenants, or dy'd adhering to them, are reflected upon as unenlightned.¹⁶

The next edition was in 1752 (Glasgow). There is also an edition carrying the erroneous date '1743' (Edinburgh: Printed in assignment from Samuel Willison, son to the Reverend Author, by E. and J. Robertsons), but which must in fact have been published after 1750 (probably in 1763), because it contains Willison's 'Dying Words' (see below).

10. *A Defence of National Churches: And particularly of the national constitution of the Church of Scotland, and the conduct of our reforming ancestors, against the cavils of independents. With a confutation of independency, and several new opinions vented in some late pamphlets, intituled, A narrative of the rise and progress, &c. An explication of a proposition, &c. A letter from a lover of Zion, &c.* (Edinburgh: James M'Euen, 1729), viii+232 pages.

The three pamphlets to which Willison was responding all appeared in 1728: *A Narrative of the rise and progress of the controversy about the National Covenants*; *A Letter from a lover of Zion*; and *An explication of*

¹⁶ John Glas, *A Narrative of the rise and progress of the controversy about the National Covenants* (Edinburgh, 1728), p. 57. Willison's statement can be found in the first part of the preface to the 1744 edition, p. v.

that proposition contain'd in Mr. Glass's answers to the Synod's queries.
They are all by John Glas or attributed to him.

11. *Looking unto Jesus* (Boston: Printed for Benjamin Gray, no. 2 at the head of the Town-Town [i.e. Town-Dock], 1731).

This is Direction 10 of the *Sacramental Directory* printed as a tract (see Hetherington, pp. 179-186). There were further Boston editions in 1733 (Benjamin Gray), 1741 (Printed by S. Kneeland and T. Green for D. Henchman), 1743 (D. Henchman), and later.

12. *The Church's Danger and the Minister's Duty* (Glasgow: James Duncan, 1733), 72 pages.

This was a sermon on Joel 2:17 preached before the Synod of Angus and Mearns at Montrose on 16th October 1733. Willison took up a number of points including patronage, infrequent communion, and the need for an educated ministry (see p. 41). John Glas replied on 8th January following in a *Letter to Mr John Willison on a Passage in his Synodical Sermon concerning illiterate ministers* (Edinburgh: James Davidson, 1734), 31 pages.

13. *A Sermon Preached Before the General Assembly* (Edinburgh: T. Lumisden and J. Robertson, 1734), 63 pages.

The text was Acts 2:1-2. The sermon occupies pp. 5-23, and the rest is an Appendix, 'Containing some plain thoughts concerning the present divisions and dangers of this Church, and what is incumbent upon parties for healing divisions, and obtaining union'. This item was not included in Hetherington's *Practical Works of John Willison* (1844).

14. *The Young Communicant's Catechism* (Edinburgh: T. Lumisden and J. Robertson, 1734), 64 pages. 6th edition 1750 (Edinburgh: T. Lumisden).

In later editions, the preface is dated March 1734, but curiously this date is not present in the original 1734 edition. The preface begins: 'About fourteen years ago, I published a large *Sacramental Catechism*, for instructing Communicants in the Nature of the Sacraments, especially of the Lord's Supper, and the Work of Communicating. But the Questions therein being numerous, and the Answers large and too burdensom to the Memory, and the Book itself become scarce, I have compiled this short Catechism for young Communicants.' The National Library of Scotland has a copy dated '1731', but the preface is the same as in other editions, and part of the date on this copy appears to have been inserted by hand.

15. *An Example of Plain Catechising* (Edinburgh; Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1737), xxiv+327 pages. 3rd edition 1752 (Glasgow).

According to the preface, this was written in response to *The Assembly's Shorter Catechism revised, and render'd fitter for general use* (London: Richard Ford, 1735), said to have been composed by James Strong (d. 1738), a minister in Ilminster. The preface is dated 12th April 1737.¹⁷ Alexander Cruden received a copy – 'just published' – from Willison on 14th April 1738.¹⁸ An edition issued in Glasgow in 1752 described itself as the '3rd edition'. We have not traced any copies, or found the date, of the second edition. Rather puzzlingly, MacLeod refers to a 1734 edition; but the existence of such an edition must be doubtful. MacLeod draws attention to a footnote in the section on Q. XX which was absent in the 1737 edition but present by 1752.¹⁹ Presumably it was added in the (non-extant) second edition.

16. *Some Meditations and Materials for Prayer, proper for communicants before partaking of the Lord's-Supper* (Boston: Printed by T. Fleet, for D. Henchman, in Cornhill, 1741), 35 pages. [Not seen].

This is presumably an extract of the section with this title from the *Sacramental Catechism* (see Hetherington, pp. 545-552).

17. *Balm of Gilead* (London: J. Oswald, 1742), xii+208 pages. Further edition in 1745.

The preface is dated 20th January 1742 and makes reference to the fact that the sermons were being published outside Scotland.²⁰ The London publisher, John Oswald published many evangelical Scottish works between 1723 and 1754, and was probably from Scotland. He owned the house in which Alexander Cruden lodged in the 1730s. Another edition appeared in 1745 (Glasgow: Robert Smith and Alexander Hutcheson) (along with the *Five Sermons*), and many editions thereafter.

18. *Letter from Mr John Willison, Minister at Dundee, to Mr James Fisher, Minister at Glasgow, Containing Serious Expostulations with him concerning his Unfair dealing in his Review of Mr Robe's Preface etc. And Several suitable Advices to him and others* (Edinburgh: T. Lumisden and

¹⁷ The background, and the work itself, are discussed in MacLeod, pp. 159-167.

¹⁸ A. Cruden, 'The London-Citizen Exceedingly Injured, 1739', in A. Ingram (ed.), *Voices of Madness* (Sutton Publishing, 1997), p. 39.

¹⁹ MacLeod, pp. 55-56, 285.

²⁰ MacLeod gives (Edinburgh, 1742) as the publication details for the first edition (pp. 10, 286) but there is no copy of such a work in institutional holdings.

J. Robertson, 1743), 47 pages. A second ‘corrected’ edition came out in the same year.

This was partly provoked by Fisher’s criticism of a comment made by Willison in a letter, supportive of the Cambuslang work, which had been published in the *Weekly History* (see Pomeroy, p. 180 and Appendix). Pomeroy summarises the last part of Willison’s pamphlet:

The pamphlet is concluded with several ‘advices’ to Fisher and the other Seceders, which [Willison] offers as being from ‘one long on the stage’, and who ‘may never write to you more’. He urges them to assume a more loving spirit, to use only fair and honest means in controversy, to ‘cease passing harsh sentences upon the awakened’, and finally he says, ‘Fall in love with a more open, generous, Christian and self-denied temper of spirit’.²¹

19. *Duty and Advantage of Religious Societies ... in Two Letters*, with John Bonar (Edinburgh: T. Lumisden and J. Robertson, 1743), 42 pages.

The two letters, from Willison and Bonar, are dated 1740, but in a note on p. 28, Willison says that he has ‘revised and enlarged’ his letter for the present publication. MacLeod cites an earlier Dundee edition of 1740, which would be remarkable if it is correct.²² The National Library of Scotland website says that:

printing in Dundee may have started as early as 1547, but no evidence survives to prove this. The first item known to have been printed in Dundee was the newspaper *The Dundee Advertiser*. It was launched by Henry Galbraith in 1755, but soon failed. The earliest surviving item which names Dundee as the place of printing and Henry Galbraith as the printer dates from 1757.²³

There was a further edition of the *Duty and Advantage of Religious Societies* in 1770, and others thereafter.

20. *A Fair and Impartial Testimony, Essayed in the Name of a Number of Ministers, Elders and Christian People of the Church of Scotland, unto the laudable Principles, Wrestlings and Attainments of that Church: and against the Backslidings, Corruptions, Divisions and Prevailing Evils, both of Former and Present Times. And namely, the defections of the Established Church, of the Nobility, Gentry, Commons, Seceders, Episcopalians etc. etc.*

²¹ Pomeroy, p. 183.

²² MacLeod, p. 87.

²³ <https://digital.nls.uk/printing/title/74482494>. One early Dundee item is an edition of Willison’s *Mother’s Catechism*, printed by Henry Galbraith in 1759.

Containing a Brief Historical Deduction of the Chief Occurrences in this Church, from the beginnings to the Year 1744, with remarks, and Humble Pleadings with our Mother Church to exert Herself to stop Defection, and promote Reformation (Edinburgh: T. Lumisden and J. Robertson, 1744), xx+138 pages.

The 'Postscript' is dated 9th July 1744. There was a second edition in 1765.

21. *Popery Another Gospel* (Edinburgh: Thomas Lumisden and John Robertson, 1746), xvi+65 pages.

This consists of six sermons on Gal. 1:18 preached during the 1745 rebellion. There was a second edition in 1779 (Falkirk: Daniel Reid), at the time of the extensive agitation surrounding the 1778 'Act for relieving His Majesty's subjects professing the popish religion from certain penalties and disabilities'. The publisher of the second edition was described as 'W. Burns, preacher' – presumably William Burns (1744–1826), minister of Minto.

22. *Sacramental Meditations and Advices ... to which is added, A Short Christian Directory; Consisting of Forty Scripture Directions, with Scripture Songs for Zion's Travellers In their Way to Heaven* (Edinburgh: Thomas Lumsden, 1747), xiv+284+78 pages.

The preface is dated August 1747. The *Short Christian Directory ... with Scripture Songs for Zion's Travellers* has a separate title-page, pagination, and register but there is a common title-page for the whole work. There was also an Aberdeen edition (James Murray) of 1747 [not seen]. The next edition was in 1756 (Edinburgh: Samuel Willison).

23. *One Hundred Gospel-Hymns* (Edinburgh, 1747), xv+168 pages.

This has a preface arguing against Exclusive Psalmody. There was a later edition in 1768.

Attributed

Letter to an English Member of Parliament from a Gentleman in Scotland, Concerning the Slavish Dependencies, which a great Part of that Nation is still kept under, by Superiorities, Wards, Reliefs, and other remains of the Feudal Law, and by Clanships and Tithes (Edinburgh: J. M'Euen, 1721), 39 pages.

This was published anonymously in 1721. It is often attributed to Willison,²⁴ but its authorship is uncertain. An entirely rewritten version of it, using

²⁴ E.g., by Hetherington, p. xiii; Pomeroy, pp. 50-53; MacLeod, p. 285.

basically the same material, appeared in 1733 under the name William Logan of Logan, *A View of the Present State of Scotland, In regard to the tenures and slavish dependencies of the subjects of that part of North Britain* (London: Printed for J. Wilford at the Three Flower de Lucies behind the Chapter-House, near St. Paul's, 1733), 24 pages. The 'Bookseller's Advertisement to the Reader' stated that the 'Memorial' had accidentally fallen into his hands. William Logan of Logan was the elder brother of Allan Logan, minister of Torryburn. William had died in March 1727, and had been succeeded as clan chief by Allan.²⁵ William must therefore have written *A View of the Present State of Scotland* before 1727, but whether he was rewriting his own work from 1721, or someone else's, is not obvious.

Further editions of the two versions of the work appeared after the 1745 rebellion. The 1721 version was reprinted with its original title (London: M. Cooper, 1746), 32 pages and again (London: M. Cooper, 1747), 39 pages; while the 1733 version was reprinted under the title *Superiorities display'd: or, Scotland's Grievance, By reason of the slavish Dependence of the People upon their great men; upon account of holdings or tenures Of their Lands, And of the Many and the Hereditary Jurisdictions over them. Wherein is shewn, That these have been the Handles of rebellion in preceeding Ages, especially in the Year 1715: And that, upon their Removal; and putting the People of Scotland on the Footing of those in England, the Seeds of Rebellion will be plucked up for ever* (Edinburgh: R. Fleming, 1746), 24 pages. This latter work carried a preface – stating that it had first been printed in 1716 – and a new appendix, said to have been written by 'A Friend of the Author'. Remarkably, this latter work was judged worthy of a rebuttal by no less a legal authority than Andrew Macdowall (1685–1760),²⁶ soon to become the institutional writer Lord Bankton: *An Essay upon Feudal Holdings, Superiorities, and Hereditary Jurisdictions, in Scotland. Shewing, I. The Nature of Feudal Holdings, Superiorities and Jurisdictions, with the Casualties and Forfeitures incident thereto. II. The Errors and gross Misrepresentations, touching the same, in a late Pamphlet, entituled, Superiorities display'd, or Scotland's Grievance on account of Holdings and Hereditary Jurisdictions, &c. III. That these Holdings, Superiorities and Jurisdictions have not been any of the Causes of the Rebellions 1715, or 1745. IV. That the infringing the same may be dangerous to our happy Constitution* (London: Printed for R. Lee, at the Dove in Fleet-Street, 1747), 59 pages.

²⁵ Hew Scott (ed.), *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* (2nd edn., 8 vols., Edinburgh, 1915–1950), Vol. 5 p. 17 (cited hereafter as *Fasti*).

²⁶ Macdowall's *Institute of the Laws of Scotland in Civil Rights* appeared in three volumes from 1751 to 1753. He became Lord Bankton in 1755.

II. Works published by Samuel Willison

Willison's son Samuel published several of his father's works after the latter's death in 1750, including some material which had not previously appeared. Before listing this material, it will be useful to summarise some information about Willison's family. This is taken from a carefully researched internet source, from which the next few paragraphs have been abridged.²⁷

John Willison was born in 1680 in Stirlingshire and was ordained minister of the first charge at Brechin on 3rd December 1703. He married Margaret Arrott [Arrat(t), Arrot(t)], daughter of the William Arrott of Dumbarrow, minister of the first charge of Montrose, on 4th December 1704. Willison remained at Brechin until 1716, when he was translated to the second charge in Dundee.

John and Margaret had six children in Brechin:

- John, baptised 9th September 1705
- James, baptised 4th March 1708, Montrose
- Andrew, baptised 7th December 1709; married 1738 Isobel Maxwell
- Robert, baptised 22nd August 1711
- David, baptised 4th March 1713
- Magdalene, baptised 23rd April 1715; died young

Four further children were born in Dundee:

- Margaret, baptised 22nd November 1716
- Bethia, b. 22nd December 1719; baptised 29th December 1719; married 1746 William Bell, minister of Benholm, later of Arbroath; died 18th June 1778
- Samuel, baptised 3rd March 1724; died 3rd September 1762 in Edinburgh
- Magdalene, baptised 28th December 1725

Some of the children remained in Dundee, including Andrew, who became a doctor, while at least two – David and Samuel – moved to Edinburgh. David became a 'druggist' or 'apothecary' in Craig's Close, and Samuel was apprenticed to the Edinburgh printer and publisher, Thomas Lumisden, on 15th November 1738. In the 1750s, Samuel set up an independent printing

²⁷ http://www.ancestor.abel.co.uk/George_Willison.html

house, also in Craig's Close. By 1762, he had moved to Turk's Close, and his former premises in Craig's Close were occupied by another printer, John Bruce. Bruce died in 1769, and his printing business was carried on by his son-in-law, also called David Willison. Much is known about the parentage of this second David Willison, but any connection with John Willison and his family is too remote to have been uncovered so far. The identity of names has caused confusion, however, with people assuming that David Willison, printer, was the son of John Willison, and then puzzling over the fact that he was still alive in 1821.

Samuel Willison's publishing activities occurred in two phases. The first lasted from 1755 to 1756 when he published six items, and the second from 1761 onwards when he printed or published five further items, including two 'by assignment' after his death. The first six items were as follows.

1. *The Afflicted Man's Companion ... To which are added the Dying Words of the author, written by himself* (Edinburgh: Printed by Samuel Willison and Company: and sold at their Printing-house in Craig's Close, and by the Booksellers of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth and Stirling, 1755), 259 pages. The 'Dying Words' are on pp. 251-259.

The back of the title-page carries the warning: 'Samuel Willison, Son to the Author; so that if any Persons presume to print the same, they will be prosecute in terms of Law.' The manuscript with the 'Dying Words' was in the hands of Samuel Willison's brother-in-law, 'Mr Bell, minister at Aberbrothock', and this was the first time that this additional material had been published.

2. *A Sacramental Directory ... To which are added (by Way of Appendix) Meditations and Ejaculations proper for Communicants before, in Time of, and after partaking of the holy Sacrament, found among the Author's Papers, and never before published* (Edinburgh: Samuel Willison, 1755), xliii+311 pages. The 'Appendix' occupies pp. 293-311.

The back of the title-page carries the same warning as above. The 'Meditations' in the Appendix are different from those in the *Sacramental Catechism*, and were not included by Hetherington in his *Practical Works of John Willison*.

3. *A Sacramental Catechism ... To which are added, An Action Sermon on Rev. xxii. 17. and Sacramental Speeches before, at, and after serving the Tables; taken from the Author's Manuscripts, and never before published*

(Edinburgh: Samuel Willison, 1756), xxvi+390 pages. The 'Appendix' occupies pp. 337-390.

The back of the title-page carries the same warning as above. The additional material is in Hetherington, pp. 557-576.

4. *A Treatise concerning the Sanctification of the Lord's day* (Edinburgh: Samuel Willison, 1756). [Not seen].

It is likely that this, too, contains material not previously published, including, presumably the six 'Mediations for the Sabbath' added as an appendix in Hetherington, pp. 115-126.

5. *Sacramental Meditations and Advices, grounded upon scripture-texts, proper for communicants: To prepare their hearts, excite their affections, quicken their graces, and enliven their devotions on sacramental occasions: and likewise useful to promote gracious dispositions and resolutions in Christians, at all times, upon the remembrance of a crucified Jesus. Together with a short Christian directory, consisting of forty scripture directions, proper for all Christians intending heaven: and a variety of scripture-songs for Zion's Travellers in their way thither. To which are added (by way of appendix) I. A lecture concerning the institution of the Lord's supper, on I Cor. xi. 17. to the end. II. A preparation sermon from Josh. iii. 5. III. An action sermon from Cant. ii. 4. All taken from the author's manuscripts, and never before published* (Edinburgh: Samuel Willison, 1756), x+361 pages.

The additional material mentioned in the title is in Hetherington, pp. 290-309.

6. *Reasons of dissent by Mr Thomas Mair, minister of the Gospel at Orwell: from the Act of the Associate Synod anent doctrine, April 18th, 1754; together with a summary review of the procedure of Synod, and remarks of their committee, to whom the publication of the said procedure was committed* (Edinburgh: Printed by S. Willison and Company: sold at their printing-house in Craig's Close, and by the booksellers in town and country, 1756), 122 pages. [not seen]

It is not clear why Samuel Willison should have printed this. It is the only work that he printed that was not written by his father.

Samuel Willison's second publishing spell commenced in 1761, with five further items:

7. *A Sacramental Directory ... To which are added (by Way of Appendix) Meditations and Ejaculations proper for Communicants before, in Time of,*

and after partaking of the holy Sacrament, found among the Author's Papers (Edinburgh: Printed by Sam. Willison and Matt. Jarvie. For Alexander Donaldson, 1761), xliii+311 pages.

This has the same warning and contents as the 1755 edition, though it has been re-typeset.

8. *Sacramental Meditations and Advices, grounded upon scripture-texts, proper for communicants ... To which are added (by way of appendix) I. A lecture concerning the institution of the Lord's supper, on I Cor. xi. 17. to the end. II. A preparation sermon from Josh. iii. 5. III. An action sermon from Cant. ii. 4. All taken from the author's manuscripts, and never before published* (Edinburgh: printed by S. Willison and M. Jarvie, for G. Crawford and A. Donaldson 1761), x+361 pages. [not seen].

Presumably re-typeset from the 1756 edition.

9. *A Sacramental Catechism ... To which are added, An Action Sermon on Rev. xxii. 17. and Sacramental Speeches before, at, and after serving the Tables; taken from the Author's Manuscripts, since his death* (Edinburgh: Printed by Samuel Willison: and sold at his printing-house in Turk's Close, and by the booksellers of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee, &c., 1762), xxvi+390 pages.

This has the same warning and contents as the 1756 edition, though it has been re-typeset.

Samuel Willison died on 3rd September 1762, but two more items appeared:

10. *The Afflicted Man's Companion ... To which are added, the Dying Words of the author* (Edinburgh: printed, in assignment from Samuel Willison, son to the Reverend author, by E. and J Robertsons; and sold at their shop in the Parliament-close. MDCCXLIII [1743, i.e. 1763]), xviii+244 pages.

Several features, such as the inclusion of the 'Dying Words', show that the date of 'MDCCXLIII' [1743] on the title-page is wrong; and 'MDCCLXIII' [1763] is the obvious correction. Presumably, Samuel Willison arranged for the publication before his death.

11. *The Nature, Guilt and Danger of Unworthy Communicating, Salvation from Wrath through Jesus Christ, The Heinous Sin and Inevitable Punishment of Slighting the Gospel, Being the Substance of Three Sermons. By the Late Reverend Mr. John Willison, minister of the Gospel at Dundee. (Never before*

published.) (Edinburgh: Printed, per assignment, by E. and J. Robertson and sold at their Shop in the Parliament-close, 1763), 74 pages.

Three unpublished sermons by Willison on 1 Cor. 11:27; Rom. 5:9; and Heb. 2:2-3. These are not in Hetherington. The word 'assignment' presumably indicates that Samuel Willison arranged for the publication before his death.²⁸

III. Summary and conclusion

The main conclusion is that three of Willison's writings are commonly misdated:

- The first edition of *A Treatise Concerning the Sanctifying of the Lord's Day* should be dated 1716 (rather than c. 1713).
- The first separate edition of the *Mother's Catechism* was c. 1721 (rather than 1731, as often given).
- The first edition of *The Afflicted Man's Companion* was 1727 (not 1737).

There is, therefore, no 'missing first edition' of *A Treatise Concerning the Sanctifying of the Lord's Day*, but there are many missing editions of the *Mother's Catechism* between about 1721 and the earliest extant edition of 1735; and probably two missing editions of *The Afflicted Man's Companion* (1727, 1740) before the earliest extant edition of 1744. Also missing is the second edition of *An Example of Plain Catechising* (sometime between 1737 and 1752). It is likely that some of these 'missing editions' will turn up in private holdings.

We have noted that some of the bibliographic references in Ian MacLeod's PhD thesis seem to be incorrect, but on at least one occasion, he gives an explicit page reference and quotation from an edition of Willison's works – the 1726 edition of *A Sacramental Directory* – which is not currently recorded in online catalogues. Presumably this was in an Edinburgh or Glasgow institutional libraries. It would seem, therefore, that these online catalogues are not yet a wholly reliable guide to the full holdings of these institutions.

Finally, we have seen that there were a few 'Practical Writings' by Willison which were published after his death by his son Samuel Willison,

²⁸ MacLeod (pp. 181, 287) dates the item to 1743 but we presume that this was a typo or an oversight.

and which were overlooked or omitted by Hetherington in his *Practical Works of John Willison* (1844).

Appendix: James Small

The entry on James Small in the *Fasti* reads as follows:

JAMES SMALL of Quarrell-hill, born about 1650, son of Thomas Small, minister of this parish [Forfar]; M.A. (St Andrews, 26th July 1670); passed trials before the Presbytery and recommended for licence 5th January 1678, and for ordination 10th September 1679; ordained to Cortachy before 5th October 1679; presented by James VII. 23rd May 1687; translated and admitted that year. About 1716 it is recorded that he was ‘driven from his church without so much as a shadow of sentence against him’. He was alive 17th December 1729. He married (1) 23rd February 1675, Margaret, second daughter of Alexander Pierson of Balmadies, and had issue —Patrick; Katherine: (2) October 1707, Christian Mitchellhill. Publication: ‘Letter to Bishop Rose of Edinburgh’, in John Skinner, *Annals of Scottish Episcopacy, 1788–1816* (Edinburgh, 1818), pp. 238–240. — [Case of Mr Greenshields (Edinburgh, 1710), p. 59].²⁹

The *Fasti* entry for James’s father Thomas gives the dates of the latter as (c. 1620–1687) and says that he was the son of George Small of Foveran.³⁰ Foveran (Aberdeenshire) is a mistake for Fotherance or Fodderance (parish of Kettins, Angus), as we shall see in a moment. The entry for James Small in Bertie’s *Scottish Episcopal Clergy* is based on that in the *Fasti*, though it adds some further information.³¹ Neither the *Fasti* nor Bertie take any notice of James Small’s publications,³² of which there were five, as we have seen:

J.S. [i.e. James Small], *The fourth command of the Decalogue considered, and its moral and perpetual obligation asserted and vindicated, from the cavils of Philip Limborch*. (Edinburgh: Robert Freebairn, 1713), 16 pages [not seen].

A Lover of the Truth and Order of the Church, *An Answer to a Book called ‘A Letter from a Parochial Bishop to a Prelatical Gentleman’, Wherein the Presbyterians of Scotland are proved to be a Schismatick Party, and the*

²⁹ *Fasti*, Vol. 5, p. 286 (we have expanded the abbreviations).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 285.

³¹ Bertie, *Scottish Episcopal Clergy*, p. 131.

³² The ‘Letter to Bishop Rose of Edinburgh’ was a private letter written in 1717, which Skinner happened to have in his possession.

Primitive Government of the Church by Bishops is vindicated, and the Substance of that which the Parochial Bishop says against it, is answered and refuted in very few words (Edinburgh: Robert Freebairn, 1715), 64 pages.

A Short and sober answer to a malicious and calumnious libel, (Being the postscript to a book published by Mr. Willison, one of the Presbyterian preachers at Brechin, called 'A Letter from a Parochial Bishop to a Prelatical Gentleman, &c.') Or *A vindication of the discourse upon the fourth commandment, published by J.S. a presbyter of the Episcopal Church of Scotland* (n.p., n.d. [1715]), 8 pages.

Some Reflections upon the Preface, and some Paragraphs of a Book printed for Mr. James Mc Euen at Edinburgh, 1716; called, 'A Treatise concerning the Sanctifying of the Lord's Day'. Together with an exact Answer to its Postscript. Wherein the 'Answer to the Parochial Bishop's Letter' is vindicated, the primitive Government of the Church by Bishops is farther established, and the Presbyterians in Scotland are plainly proved to be a Schismatick Party, and consequently that their Communion is unlawful (n.p., 1717), 92 pages.

An Apology for the True Church of Scotland; being a short reply to a book published by J. W. (of late Presbyterian Preacher at Brechin, but now at Dundee) called, 'An Apology for the Church of Scotland, against the accusations of prelatists and Jacobites; and particularly the reflections of J. S. late Incumbent at Forfar'. Whereby the hainous and unchurching Crime of Schism is farther fixed upon the Presbyterian Party in Scotland, and the ancient and Apostolick Government of the Church by Bishops is farther confirmed (Edinburgh, 1719), 62 pages.

Small's publications display considerable ability, and it is surprising that he should have been in his sixties before he commenced writing. He had a good grasp of the Episcopal controversy, but this – in its most recent outbreak – had already been raging for some time, and he was not pretending to add anything original.

A few interesting points emerge from his publications, which we discuss below. They mainly arise from his *Short and sober answer to a malicious and calumnious libel*.

1. His name and family

In his 'Postscript' to his *Letter from a Parochial Bishop to a Prelatical Gentleman*, Willison had twitted Small over his name, 'telling that my Name is *Small*, and that accordingly I will be esteemed *Small* by the lovers of the Sabbath'. To this, Small replied that:

One of my Forefathers having assumed the Name of *Small* unto himself, and exchanged one of the most topping [distinguished] Sirnames in the Kingdom for it, that he might thereby not only lurk the better under some difficult circumstances, but also signify the change which Providence had made in his worldly condition³³

It is not evident what this original illustrious surname was to which Small refers, but the change had occurred many generations previously.

Small also refers to an uncle belonging to the Small family who was mentioned in Bishop Guthry's *Memoirs*. The uncle, disguised as a beggar, had carried a packet of letters from London to the Marquis of Montrose somewhere in the north of Scotland. On his way back, however, he been caught by the Covenanters and summarily executed at the Cross in Edinburgh. On turning up the reference in Bishop Guthry, one finds that the execution occurred on 1st May 1645, and that the uncle in question was the son of the laird of Fotherance (Fodderance), who had sold his land to George Haliburton, Lord Fodderance, one of the Senators of the College of Justice.³⁴ The family of Small of Fodderance has been researched and can be traced back as far as Robert Small who had the tack of the lands of Fodderance in 1491. The estate of Fodderance was indeed sold to George Haliburton in 1622.³⁵

The Christian name of the 'martyred' uncle is not entirely clear. Bishop Guthry gives it as 'James', and this receives confirmation from the mention of 'James Small' in Montrose's reply to a letter that he had received, dated 20th April 1645. Small, however, is adamant that Guthry was wrong, and that the uncle's name was 'George'.³⁶

2. His age and the respect due

In his 'Postscript' to his *Letter from a Parochial Bishop to a Prelatical Gentleman*, Willison had referred to the fact that Small was an 'old Man, with one Foot in the Grave'. Small responded as follows:

³³ Willison, *Letter from a Parochial Bishop to a Prelatical Gentleman*, p. 144; Small, *A Short and sober answer to a malicious and calumnious libel*, p. 7.

³⁴ Small, *A Short and sober answer to a malicious and calumnious libel*, p. 7; Henry Guthry, *Memoirs* (London, 1702), pp. 146-7; *ibid.* (Glasgow, 1747), pp. 185-6. Fodderance (now called Lintrose House) is just south of Coupar Angus.

³⁵ Gordon MacGregor (ed.), *Red Book of Scotland* (2024 edn.), Vol. 15, pp. 488-9.

³⁶ George Wishart, *Memoirs of James, Marquis of Montrose, 1639-1650*, trans. A.D. Murdoch and H.F. Morland Simpson (London, 1893), p. 501; Small, *An Apology for the True Church of Scotland*, pp. 31-32.

Moreover, having thus far carried on his Accusation, he pretends to wish that I, who am an Old Man, and have one Foot in the Grave, would bethink myself, and lay to heart what I have done, etc. *Answer.* I know very well, that I am an Old Man, and being sensible what the infirmities of my declining Age call for at my hands, I hope God will give me Grace to bear a mind willing to lay down this Tabernacle, and give both my Feet to be laid in the Grave, whensoever it shall please him to call me unto it. But as it is hard to fay, but Mr. *Willison's* Foot (though in the strength and Vigour of his Youth) may be as soon in the Grave as mine.³⁷

In fact, Small was to live for at least another fourteen years after this exchange. The reference to his age put Small in mind of the respect due to him in that regard. At the time, he was aged about 65 and Willison about 35:

I must say, that the mentioning my Age is an accusing himself of something that I am not very Willing to name; seeing a Young Man, such as he is, should have had respect to my Gray Hairs, and long standing in the Office of the Sacred Ministry.³⁸

It is difficult not to have some sympathy with Small on this point.

3. His regard for Turretin

The execution of James Small's uncle in 1645 occurred before James was born, but it doubtless meant that he was brought up from his earliest days with a bitterness against Presbyterians and Presbyterianism. This frequently betrays itself in his writings, and it is a pleasant surprise, therefore, to come across a reference to Francis Turretin indicating that he was capable of a more balanced outlook. He is disagreeing with Turretin on the point in question (Episcopalianism), but he nevertheless expresses a high regard for him:

... though I acknowledge Mr Turretine to be both a very judicious and learned Writer, and accordingly have a very considerable Regard for him, because of his learned Defence of the true Reformed Christian Religion against most of all its Enemies ...³⁹

³⁷ Willison, *Letter from a Parochial Bishop to a Prelatical Gentleman*, p. 145; Small, *A Short and sober answer to a malicious and calumnious libel*, p. 7.

³⁸ Small, *A Short and sober answer to a malicious and calumnious libel*, p. 7.

³⁹ *An Answer to a Book called 'A Letter from a Parochial Bishop to a Prelatical Gentleman', Wherein the Presbyterians of Scotland are proved to be a Schismatick Party, etc.*, p. 49.

Small was not a supporter of the Revolution of 1689; but given his regard for Turretin – and therefore presumably his opposition to Romanism – one would like to know how he viewed James VII's re-establishment of Romanism in Edinburgh, with the Jesuit school and the printing-press, in 1687? Did the more Protestant Scottish Episcopalians actively oppose this development?

4. His views on the Sabbath

Although Willison takes Small to task for his views on the Sabbath, it is not clear that Small's views on the Sabbath were particularly defective, and certainly they were by no means as bad as Willison had supposed. Small cared enough about the Sabbath to attack Limborch's position, because of the effect that it was having in his own congregation. He had taken up the cudgels, he says, only because no Presbyterian writer had engaged with Limborch, and he was had not expecting a counter-attack on the subject from the Presbyterians.

The main issue between Willison and Small was Small's statement that it was 'lawful to refresh ourselves by moderate and decent recreation' on the Sabbath. Among these recreations, Small mentions 'walking in the fields' and 'cheerful and mutual conversation together in their houses.' Willison identifies the latter of these with 'their taking their Bottle together', a suggestion which Small indignantly repudiates. With regard to walking in the fields, Small argued that it was hypocritical for Presbyterians to object to others walking in the fields and then 'to ride many Miles to break up Church Doors with Mechanick Tools, that they might Preach to the walls, when they knew that they were not to expect any other hearers, but those whom they brought with them'.⁴⁰ Willison replied at great length in his *Treatise Concerning the Sanctifying of the Lord's Day* (1716).⁴¹

⁴⁰ Willison, *Letter from a Parochial Bishop to a Prelatical Gentleman*, p. 144; Small, *A Short and sober answer to a malicious and calumnious libel*, p. 7.

⁴¹ Willison, *Letter from a Parochial Bishop to a Prelatical Gentleman*, p. 144; Small, *A Short and sober answer to a malicious and calumnious libel*, p. 7; Willison, *Treatise Concerning the Sanctifying of the Lord's Day* (1716), esp. pp. 41-73.