

**EMIGRATION FROM THE SCOTTISH CATHOLIC BOUNDS, 1770-1810
AND THE ROLE OF THE CLERGY**

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INTRODUCTION

The extraordinary emigration of Scottish Catholics to Canada, and especially to Prince Edward Island commenced long after Culloden, and was the result of that landlord policy in the west of Scotland, which has led to the crofter disturbances... The simple truth is that about twenty-five years after Culloden a vast number of Scottish Catholics from the Western Highlands were simply hounded out of Scotland, to suit the new ideas of the chiefs or the Southern landlords who had superseded the broken power of the old clan chiefs.¹

In 1802, Edward Fraser of Relig, the Customs collector at Inverness, commented that "Roman Catholics all over the West Coast are ready at a month's notice, if they can prevail on their priest to go".² Thirty years previously, the first of the "Catholic" emigrations from the Clanranald estate left for St. John's Island.

In his account, Fraser attributed the emigration of so many Roman Catholics to:

Religious scruples and differences [which] may produce anxieties; and the disputes between landholders and their Roman Catholic Tenants and Clergy have contributed to ancient and recent Emigrations. The laws of this Country too have at some times, and in some instances, borne against these people with a preponderance.³

In this thesis, I propose to examine the causes of the emigration of the large numbers of Roman Catholics, beginning with the first major removal of people, that from the Clanranald estate in 1772, and culminating with the last of the so-called "voluntary" emigrations, that from Strathglass in 1810. It is not my intention to re-

¹John C. MacMillan, *Early History of the Catholic Church in Prince Edward Island*. (Quebec, 1905), p. 48.

²[Edward S. Fraser of Relig] "On Emigration from the Scottish Highlands and Isles", ca. 1802. NLS. Ms.9646, p. 57.

³Ibid., p. 121.

invent the wheel or beg the question. Emigration of itself is not the focus of this thesis. The subject has been adequately dealt with by a number of writers, especially J.A. Bumsted⁴ and most recently Marianne MacLean⁵, the publication of whose Ph.D. thesis is imminent. They have of necessity included the emigration of Roman Catholics in their general studies. For the purpose of this thesis, however, I plan to concentrate only on the emigrations from the "Catholic Bounds", noting, especially, the causes.

At the same time, I plan to examine the role the clergy played, whether as participants, instigators or onlookers. The attitudes of the church leaders, the bishops, and the priests will become evident through the development of the theme in general. However, a more detailed study will be accorded the careers of those clergymen who actually emigrated, to which end I propose to develop and include the appropriate biographies. The length of each account will be conditioned by the amount of source material available and the actual relative importance of the individual. Alexander Macdonell (1762-1840), for example, has been the subject of a number of full-length studies, one of which, *Alexander Macdonell, the Scottish Years: 1762-1804*, was my master's thesis, McGill University, 1985, subsequently published by the Canadian Catholic Historical Association. To date it is the only source which treats of his

⁴See especially his: "Highland Emigration to the Island of St. John and the Scottish Catholic Church, 1769-1774," *DR* 58 (1978) 511-527; *Land, Settlement and Politics in Eighteenth-century Prince Edward Island*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987; *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America, 1770-1815*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982; "Scottish Emigration to the Maritimes, 1770-1815," *Acadiensis* 10 (1981) 65-85; "Settlement by Chance: Lord Selkirk and Prince Edward Island," *CHR* 59 (1978) 170-88; "Sir James Montgomery and Prince Edward Island, 1767-1803," *Acadiensis* 7 (1978) 170-88.

⁵MacLean, Marianne. "In the New Land a New Glengarry: Migration from the Scottish Highlands to Upper Canada, 1750-1820". Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1982. It is to be published by McGill-Queen's University Press.

Scottish career and information contained therein will form a necessary component in the chapter on Glengarry and Strathglass, 1798 -1810.

These biographies serve a two-fold purpose in that they reveal the motives of the clergy who left Scotland and, as well, provide sketches of the early careers of these Scoto-Canadian Church pioneers. Most existing biographies of the Scottish missionaries to Canada between 1770 and 1810 concentrate on their Canadian endeavours with scant attention paid to their Scottish origin.

The "Catholic Bounds" will be defined in the first section of the thesis, particularly the location of the Roman Catholics and their numbers. The relevant statistics will be discussed in the brief introductory chapter, while the people, clergy and some of the liturgical practices peculiar to the Scottish Highlands, will be addressed in chapters two and three. The chapter titled, "The People", treats of the leading families who were scattered throughout the "Catholic Bounds". It is not intended to be an in depth study, but is included to respond to any doubt which might exist that there were still, even after Culloden, Roman Catholics of some social significance in the Highlands.

The second section of the thesis concerns the emigration of the Catholics, people and clergy, from the Highlands between 1770 and 1810. These years are sometimes referred to as those of the "voluntary emigrations"⁶ and are contrasted with those of subsequent years which occurred more as a response to the massive estate clearances, economic hardship and government-sponsored resettlement outside the United Kingdom. Until about 1810, emigration was viewed as a scourge and those

⁶See especially: J. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America, 1770-1815* (Edinburgh, 1982), passim.

involved in its promotion were regarded with contempt.

Prior to beginning my research, I was inclined to avoid genealogy as much as possible. It soon became obvious that in any attempt at Highland history, genealogy is almost a *sine qua non*. In a culture whose members could recount a family history going back twenty generations, this is virtually the only historical record that matters. As I perused the letters from the Highland Vicars Apostolic or the clergy, I soon became familiar with their style of patronymics or place designations, and indeed found it a boon in the identification of, for example, the myriad Alexander Macdonalds. I have sometimes maintained the technique within the body of the thesis and hope it will not be misleading to the reader.

Another problem, although not serious, encountered in researching or recounting a topic in Highland history is the diverse spellings of personal or place names, usually anglicised forms of the original Gaelic. I have selected a single form of such simple names as Glenalladale, also spelled Glenaladale, or Scotos, also spelled Scotus, Scothouse or Scotas, although they are spelled as written in direct quotations.

A source of some irritation may be the lack of clerical identification in the citations or text which I have employed throughout the thesis. It must be remembered that in Scotland, the Penal Laws against Roman Catholics were in full force until 1793 when they were partially rescinded. It was the custom of the clergy to correspond with each other using no form of address or reference other than the simple "Mr.", e.g., Mr. Daulien was Bp. George Hay, Mr. Tiberiop, Bp. John Macdonald. Simple, and it must be acknowledged, quite obvious code names or

references, were also used, e.g., Hilltown for Rome, labourers for missionaries, etc. In writing the thesis, I have tried to maintain the mood of the period and thus, have kept the then current form. It may be misleading to those familiar with the present terms of address such as "Father " or "Reverend". A rule of thumb to follow, however, is that virtually all of those who corresponded with the bishops were priests. Those who were not are so identified, e.g. John Macdonald of Glenalladale, later Captain John. Because their role was so pivotal and their number so few, I have made the citation of the bishops an exception to the rule, e.g. Bp. George Hay to Bp. John Macdonald, etc.

It would seem only normal that an abundance of primary sources would be contained in the Scottish Catholic Archives, Edinburgh. This, indeed, was the case. Every letter classed in the Blairs and Preshome collections from about 1760 to 1820 was scrutinized for pertinent documentation concerning emigration or biographical material. Some of my research was carried out prior to the renumbering of the letters, but, I was assured, the names of the correspondents and date of the letter provided a sufficient alternative form of identification. The Archives are a rich resource, not only for Catholic Church history, but for social history as well, and it is appropriate that I thank the personnel, Dom Mark Dilworth, who was then the Chief Archivist, and Christine Johnson, his associate, for their assistance to me.

In addition to the Scottish Catholic Archives, I was able to find documentation in various Edinburgh libraries or archives, especially the Scottish Record Office, the National Library of Scotland and Edinburgh University Libraries. I would like to thank the personnel who aided me in retrieving information relative to my research.

Of assistance also were the members of staff of the National Archives of Canada in Ottawa and the Library personnel of St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

I would be very remiss if I were to neglect the following faculty members of Edinburgh University: William Ferguson and John Bannerman of the Department of Scottish History and Ged Martin, from the Centre of Canadian Studies. Each one, in his own way and sphere of influence, helped me press on through the morass of data, documentation and drafts and I trust the final product will not be a disappointment to them.

Finally, I would like to thank McGill University which allowed me a leave of absence to fulfil the three years' residence and research requirements. In particular, I would like to mention Eric Ormsby, the Director of Libraries, McGill University, who supported me not only verbally, but took the time to actually read and comment on some of my chapters.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>CCHA</i>	<i>Canadian Catholic Historical Association</i>
<i>CHR</i>	<i>Canadian Historical Review</i>
<i>DCB</i>	<i>Dictionary of Canadian Biography</i> , vols. 4-6 (1771 - 1835). University of Toronto Press, 1979-1987.
<i>DNB</i>	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i> . 22 vols. London: Oxford University Press, 1921-1922, repr. 1959-1960.
<i>DR</i>	<i>Dalhousie Review</i>
<i>EUL.CW</i>	University of Edinburgh Library. Carmichael-Watson Collection
<i>EUL.L</i>	University of Edinburgh Library. Laing Collection
<i>IR</i>	<i>Innes Review</i>
<i>NLS</i>	National Library of Scotland
<i>NSA</i>	<i>The New Statistical Account of Scotland</i> . vol.14: <i>Inverness, Ross and Cromarty</i> . Edinburgh: Wm. Blackwood, 1845.
<i>OSA</i>	<i>The Statistical Account of Scotland</i> ; ed. Sir John Sinclair. 14 vols. Edinburgh: William Creech, 1791-99.
<i>PACCP</i>	Public Archives of Canada. Chipman Papers
<i>PACSP</i>	Public Archives of Canada. Selkirk Papers
<i>PRO</i>	Public Record Office
<i>PRO AO</i>	Public Record Office. Audit Office
<i>PRO Pris.</i>	Public Record Office. Prisons
<i>PRO WO</i>	Public Record Office. War Office
<i>RSCHS</i>	<i>Records of the Scottish Church History Society</i>
<i>SCA BL</i>	Scottish Catholic Archives. Blairs Letters
<i>SCA ED</i>	Scottish Catholic Archives. Eastern District.
<i>SCA OL</i>	Scottish Catholic Archives. Oban Letters
<i>SCA PL</i>	Scottish Catholic Archives. Preshome Letters
<i>SCA SM</i>	Scottish Catholic Archives. Scottish Mission.
<i>SHR</i>	<i>Scottish Historical Review</i>
<i>SRO</i>	Scottish Record Office
<i>TGSI</i>	<i>Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness</i>

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

In 1802, Edward Fraser of Relig, the Customs Collector in Inverness, commented on the numerous emigrations, especially from the Western Highlands and the Isles, which had taken place from about the year 1770. In his essay, he noted, in particular, the data concerning Roman Catholics who had quit their native soil in numbers far out of proportion to their total within the general population. Fraser suggested as causes: an anti-Catholic bias, conflict between the landowners and the Catholic clergy and the restrictive measures of the Penal Laws.

With the above analysis in mind, this thesis seeks to address the specific issue of Roman Catholic emigration from the area in the Highlands known as the "Catholic Bounds", between 1770 - 1810. The first section of the work delineates the "Catholic Bounds", in a geographical and societal sense, with emphasis placed on the leading Catholic families and the ecclesiastical formation of the Highland Vicariate from 1732.

The second section concerns the various emigrations which took place from 1772 - 1810. For the sake of clarity, these have been arranged chronologically and geographically, the latter reflecting more the contours of the great estates of, for example, Clanranald or Glengarry, where the majority of the Roman Catholics lived, rather than fixed territorial designations. In order to test the accuracy of Fraser's comments, the underlying reasons for each of these mass removals of people will be noted. The role of the clergy is developed by means of biographical sketches of each of the priests who emigrated with their people, and they form a necessary, and

sometimes, a major, component of these chapters. The thesis also seeks to examine the role of the clergy in general, but especially that of the bishops, whether as active participants, instigators or observers.

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify that this is my own work which has not been published previously in the form now presented.

Kathleen Toomey
3 December, 1991

SECTION ONE

THE CATHOLIC BOUNDS

CHAPTER ONE

THE CATHOLIC BOUNDS

All these Countries, viz. Knoydart, the Two Morrirs, Moydart, and Arisaig, are the most Rough Mountainous and impassable parts in all the Highlands of Scotland, and are commonly called by the Inhabitants of the Neighbouring Countries the Highlands of the Highlands... The Inhabitants of this Large Tract of Ground are all popish, Gentlemen and Commons... This Wild Country has been always a Sanctuary and Nursery of Priests... People in general of all Ranks in this barbarous place are much better acquainted with Rome, Madrid and Paris than they are with London or Edinburgh.¹

From the time of the Reformation in 1560² until the Emancipation of 1829, the presence of Catholics in Scotland can be said to have been an enigma. At times, when, perhaps, convenient, they were described as non-existent. At other times, particularly in periods of political crisis, which was more often the case, their numbers were overstated. The exaggerations were doubtless based on assumptions that they were *de facto* traitors and a threat to the security of the state. In the two major eighteenth-century Jacobite rebellions, far more prominence was given to Roman Catholic involvement than was warranted.³ On June 20, 1746, the Synod of Glenelg sent a message of thanks to the Duke of Cumberland, advising him that it was

¹*The Highlands of Scotland in 1750*, ed. Andrew Lang. (Edinburgh: Wm. Blackwood, 1898) p. 67-68.

²In 1560, the Latin Mass and papal supremacy were abolished in Scotland and a reformed *Confession of Faith*, was authorised by Parliament.

³Bruce Lenman, "The Scottish Episcopal Clergy and the Ideology of Jacobitism," in *Ideology and Conspiracy: Aspects of Jacobitism, 1689-1759*. (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1982), p.37.

with a grief of heart [that many]...have been wicked enough to have engaged in the late Insurrection...infatuated men [who] have ever been avowed enemies of the Church of Scotland and under the influence of Popish Emissaries and Non-juring Clergymen...⁴

Some years later, in 1778, the Synod sent a vehement note condemning the proposed Catholic Relief Bill, expressing dismay and alarm at the

progress of the Popish religion...within their bounds, the arts and industry practised by professors of that religion to gain proselytes, the dismal situation into which at different times their audacious attempts brought the nation to the almost utter subversion of our happy constitution both in Church and State together...⁵

In 1714, the priests in Lochaber were described as swarming "like locusts, running from house to house, gaining multitudes to their anti-Christian Idolatry" and the greatest concentration of Catholics noted to be in the presbytery of Lorne: Moidart, Arisaig, Morar and Knoydart, as well as the Isles of Rum, Eigg, Canna and South Uist.⁶

Preachers tended to perceive reports of a Roman Catholic presence or numerical increase as a threat and, especially in the post-Culloden years when one of the settlement clauses specified the Protestantization of the Highlands, they sought to root out popery and thereby remove sedition. On the other hand, there were those who regarded Catholicism as eradicated, and indeed, this was virtually so in most shires of Central and Lowland Scotland.

To ascertain the post-Culloden Catholic population in Scotland, especially in the Highlands, there are three useful sources. The first is the survey conducted by Dr.

⁴Thomas Murchison, "The Synod of Glenelg, 1725-1821," *TGSI* 38 (1937-41) 102.

⁵*Ibid.*, p.83.

⁶Noel Macdonald Wilby, "The 'Encrease of Popery' in the Highlands, 1714-1747," *IR* 17 (1966) p.93.

Alexander Webster, the Moderator of the General Assembly in 1753 and Minister of the Tollbooth in Edinburgh. Every minister, where the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge had set up charity schools was requested to enumerate his parishioners and in areas where none existed, the parish minister was asked to respond to a questionnaire. Scotland was divided into three areas, Highland, Central and Lowland, the Highland district being that area north of the Central. In 1755, the heaviest concentration of Catholics was in Barra (1100), Glenelg (827) South Uist (2020), Ardnamurchan (2300), Kilmonivaig (1400), Inneraven (843) and Rathven (822).⁷

The second source is the census of his vicariate which Bishop Hugh Macdonald conducted in 1764. His report was divided into thirteen stations beginning with the most distant, the Hebridean Isles of Barra and South Uist and the mainland districts, including Braemar and Glengairn. Bishop Hugh noted in addition to the number of souls in each area, to what extent any of the gentry or leading people were Catholics and which missionaries served there.⁸

A controversy exists, however, regarding the manner of his enumeration. James Darragh, writing in 1953, believed that Bishop Hugh used the same criteria as did the Presbyterian clergy, taking account of the communicants only. In order to calculate the total Catholic population between 1750 and 1800, and using the 1779 estimates of Bishop George Hay, Darragh devised a factor of 1.75 to be applied to the numbers of communicants. He estimated that by 1800 the Catholic population had

⁷James G. Kyd, *Scottish Population Statistics...*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1975) p.33-59, *passim*

⁸Roderick Macdonald, "The Highland District in 1764, " *IR* 15 (1964) p.140-150, *passim*

decreased from a high of 50,000 at the time of the 1689 Revolution to about 30,000, and that at the dawn of the 'Forty-five, it was approximately 40,000.⁹ He also pointed out that one must assume Webster's census took into account the adult population only, according to custom, and that since it followed ten years after Culloden, many Catholics were not practising their religion openly or were denied the facilities for doing so.¹⁰ The numbers of Catholics banished or killed was about 1000 and by 1756 some six to seven thousand were in the British army of whom few returned to Britain. Thus in 1764, the total Catholic population in Scotland would have been about 33,000 or 2.6 percent of the total population. Of these about 23,000 were in the Highlands.¹¹

In August, 1783, Bishop Alexander Macdonald reported an increase of 3000 in the number of Catholics in the Highland District from the time of his last visitation, a remarkable increase since he was consecrated bishop in 1780.¹² In 1794, the bishops in their annual report to Rome estimated the total number of Catholics in Scotland to be about 45,000.¹³

The survey compiled by Sir John Sinclair from 1791-1799 provides a third major source. Even though the figures cited are forty years later than Webster's

⁹James Darragh, "The Catholic Population since the Year 1680," *IR* 4 (1953) p.53.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p.54.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p.55. Bp. Hugh Macdonald counted 13,166 to which Darragh applied the factor 1.75. However, Roderick Macdonald, writing in 1964, argues that he counted all Catholics both young and old and that no factor need be applied. Vide: "The Highland District in 1764," p.140.

¹²J.F.S. Gordon, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle for Scotland. v.IV: Journal and Appendix to Scotichronicon and Monasticon.* (Glasgow, 1867) p.230.

¹³*Ibid.*, p.372.

Table 1. A comparison of Roman Catholic population statistics in the Highlands in 1764 and 1791-1799.

Bp. Hugh MacDonald's Survey 7 May 1764		OSA 1791-1799	
District	Population	Western Highlands	Population
Moldart	894	Ardnamurchan	2053
Arisaig	739		
South Morar	318		
North Morar	409		
Knoydart	1000	Knoydart	850
Glengarry	1400	Kilmonivaig	1200
Lochaber	1270	Badenoch	250
Strathglass	1321	Kilmorack (Chiscolm)	700
		Kilmorack (Fraser)	485
Glengairn	612		
Braemar	900	Kintail	186
Barra	1200	Barra	1604
South Uist	2503	South Uist	2950
Canna & Eigg	576		
Rum & Muck	24	Small Isles	540

survey, still apparent are the Catholic bounds as delineated in his census and that of Bishop Hugh Macdonald. The "Old Statistical Account" shows Catholics were still most numerous in the Western Highlands and the Isles, mainly Barra and South Uist, despite the heavy emigration which took place from these districts between 1770 and 1799.¹⁴

This concentration of Catholics remained constant, especially in the Isles. In the *Statistical Account* of 1845, Knoydart and Morar are described as having populations almost entirely Roman Catholic, South Uist, two-thirds the population, Barra "nearly all Roman Catholics...the Protestants mostly strangers from other parts of the Highlands...", the upper district of Kilmorack mostly Roman Catholic, in Kiltarlity, Strathglass nearly half, about 800 and others, about a sixth of the total scattered in other areas of the parish.¹⁵ Even the heavy emigration from Ireland had little effect on the Highland population, for most settled in the Lowlands.

¹⁴J. Sinclair, *The Statistical Account of Scotland*. 14v. (Edinburgh: William Creech, 1791-99) passim

¹⁵*New Statistical Account* (Edinburgh: Blackwood & Sons, 1845), pp. 141,196,210,370,498.



Table 2. Map of the Western Highlands and Isles illustrating the concentration of the Roman Catholic Population.

PLATE

ELG

CHAPTER TWO

THE PEOPLE

Like their non-Catholic neighbours, the majority of Roman Catholics in the Highlands were non-landed tenant farmers and cottars. Few of the leading families, however, professed their creed, for all the great proprietors of the Highlands and many of the tacksmen¹ had become either Presbyterians or Episcopalians, if not prior to mid-century, certainly afterwards. One might posit various reasons for this, but undoubtedly, this group felt directly threatened by that one of the penal laws which concerned the inheritance of property by which terms, only non-Catholics were granted the right to own or inherit property.²

Some of the tacksmen, especially those in the predominantly Catholic areas, retained the old faith. It would be to them that the ordinary people could look for example and guidance and upon whom the clergy might rely for support, especially hospitality in the form of a place to stay when they were travelling on mission. They also provided the most likely source for the recruitment of future clergy. This was

¹The *OED* defines a tacksman as a lessee, especially in the Highlands, a middleman who leases directly from the proprietor of the estate, a large piece of land which he sublets in small farms. Vide: *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933, repr. 1961) vol. 11, p. 21. There were several classes of tacksmen the most powerful of which were the great tacksmen or tenants-in-chief who "supported their kinsmen and followers of their holdings as sub-tenants... This was the custom on all Highland estates where the proprietor was a clan chief... Tacksmen were sometimes functionaries in the chief's service, such as harpers, historians and poets; sometimes heads of allied but unrelated followers; but most were relatives of the chief and heads of lineages or groups of kinsmen tracing their descent from the founder of the clan." Vide: Eric Cregeen, "The Tacksmen and Their Successors", *Scottish Studies* 13 (1969) p.93-94.

²A Bill for the Relief of Roman Catholics in Scotland was given royal assent on 3 June, 1793. "By taking the Oath ... a Catholic was able to acquire, possess and dispose of his real and personal estate in Scotland, as any other subject could." Vide: J.F.S. Gordon, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle for Scotland*. vol. IV: *Journal and Appendix to Scotichronicon and Monasticon* (Glasgow, 1867), p. 343.

also the case with the Presbyterian ministers, both in the Highlands and the Lowlands, for it was in that "class of smaller landed proprietors in whose ranks both Knox and Melville had found some of their boldest supporters."³ In the Highland context, the leaders of the clans, usually referred to as the gentlemen, were those set apart from the ordinary people mainly because of heredity or some wealth. A strict class order within the clan had been established and while one of the stated aims of the post Culloden settlement was to destroy the power of the chiefs by means of breaking down this structure, it was too-well entrenched to disappear completely, especially in so short a time. Other than the clan chief himself and his immediate family those considered in a position of authority were the tacksmen, those who held land of the chief either by right of heredity or in wadset. Wadset was a mortgage of property including the rents and produce obtained therefrom with a conditional right of redemption.⁴ Wadsetting was to some extent an attractive solution for a proprietor of a vast estate who found himself in financial difficulty. But, it was a costly solution, for while immediate funds were forthcoming, the original owner found himself with less in the way of annual remuneration and a dwindling estate. The third quarter of the eighteenth century would witness a concerted effort by estate owners to redeem these wadsets, and offer in lease the same tacks to those who had managed the lands for many years. One of the estates so affected was that of Macdonell of Glengarry, the redemption of whose wadsets, especially under the management of Duncan's wife, Marsali Grant of Dalvey, prompted the emigration of many of the Glengarry

³*Minutes of the Synod of Argyll, 1639-1651*, ed. Duncan McTavish. (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1943) p. xi-xii.

⁴ *The Concise Scots Dictionary*, ed. Mairi Robinson. (Aberdeen University Press) p. 765.

tacksmen and tenants in the last third of the eighteenth century.⁵

This group then, between the chief and the general clansmen, the tacksmen, would be the likely group in which might be found Roman Catholic leaders. Their accurate identification, however, presents a problem. Statements based on what appears to be widely accepted opinions as to religious beliefs are risky indeed. An example of this, albeit true to a point, is the common assumption that the enmity between Campbells and Macdonalds was religious in origin. Again the idea that the Macdonalds were mostly all Catholics has led many to mistakenly conclude that the Macdonalds of Glencoe were "massacred" because of this religious creed. The Macdonalds of Glencoe were not Catholics as is commonly believed, but non-juring Episcopalians, who had run afoul of the Whig government.⁶ Of even greater impact is the example of Skye where one would have been hard pressed to find even one Catholic Macdonald on the Island of Skye despite the island's being partially settled by Sleat Macdonalds. Names are clues fraught with pitfalls.

In a similar sense, one would be deceived if one were to conclude that because a district was found to be totally Catholic by the various eighteenth-century census takers or commentators, that the leading families were so also. Throughout the century Barra was found to be all popish but the gentry, mostly MacNeils, at least after mid-century, were definitely non-Catholic. It was likewise with South Uist, where "in the whole island there are not many Protestants but the Laird and many of

⁵Charles Fraser Mackintosh, *Antiquarian Notes*, 2d. ser.: *Inverness-shire Parish by Parish* (Inverness: A. & W. Mackenzie, 1897), p. 125 and Colin Chisholm, "The Clearance of the Highland Glens," *TGSI* 6 (1876-7), p. 175.

⁶Vide: articles by William Ferguson and John Prebble, Bruce Lenman, etc. Odo Blundell, however, cites a report to Propaganda wherein the Macdonalds of Glencoe are said to have been Catholics.

the gentry are Protestants, almost all the rest are Catholic, to the number, according to the most careful count of 2,503.⁷

One method of ascertaining a person's religious adherence is by consulting parish registers where are listed dates of baptism, confirmation and burial. From these one may conclude that a person, whether he practised throughout his life or not, was born and/or died an adherent of the particular creed. In the case of Roman Catholics, especially in the Highlands of the eighteenth-century, when such records were kept they had little chance to survive. According to the *Statuta Missionis* of 1700, a register of marriages, baptisms, conversions and deaths were to be kept but if there was a danger of their falling into hostile hands, they were to be destroyed.⁸ Given the primitive conditions the clergy endured in the Highlands it is likely that records were not kept at all, at least until the political and social conditions so permitted.

However, there is evidence which indicates the religious persuasion of certain prominent families to be found in the correspondence of the first Vicars Apostolic to the Highland District, and especially that between Bishop John Macdonald and Bishop George Hay until the former's death in 1779. In the letters Bishop John refers to those who received him in their homes as he travelled from mission to mission. In Arisaig, he stayed often with John Macdonald, the tacksman of Duchamiss,⁹ in

⁷Roderick Macdonald, "The Highland District", *IR* 15 (1964) p. 147.

⁸A. Bellesheim, *History of the Catholic Church in Scotland*. 4 vols. (Edinburgh, 1890) vol. 4, p. 171.

⁹Duchamiss, is the form used in the correspondence of the Highland clergy, especially Bishop John Macdonald. It is sometimes spelled Duchames. On the 1750 Dorret map of Scotland, Dow Camess is located just north of the Point of Arasaick, i.e. Arisaig. The name is most likely an anglicization of *Dubh Camus*.

Moydart, with Glenalladale. He also referred to prospective students, such as Angus, Retland's son, or Donald, Irin's son. All these were tacksmen, and in this instance all on the Clanranald estate. But again, caution must be exercised for one cannot positively conclude that either because a clergyman lived with a family or a son was studying at one of the Catholic Colleges, that the family was Catholic. In 1785, Lady Clanranald, widow of Ranald who died in 1776, sent her second son, James, to the Scots College in Paris "with full leave to educate him a Catholic".¹⁰ John Macdonald, who was ordained about 1776 and who was a missionary for so many years in Arisaig until his death in 1834, was sent as a youth to the preparatory school in Buorblach and there converted to Catholicism. Neither of his parents who had moved from Arisaig to Perthshire was Catholic.¹¹

Nevertheless, it is possible to identify as Catholic some of the tacksmen whose names appear in the bishops' correspondence. Others having played a prominent role in the encouragement of their religion in the West Highlands and the Isles during the latter half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries can be readily identified *ipso facto*.

¹⁰Bp. John Geddes to Bp. George Hay 28 October 1785 SCA BL3/440/16 and Alexander Gordon, Principal of the Scots College, Paris to John Macdonald of Clanranald 24 December 1787 SRO GD201/4/94.

¹¹Odo Blundell, *The Catholic Highlands of Scotland*. 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1917) vol. 2, p. 128 and F. Forbes and W.J. Anderson, "Clergy Lists of the Highland District, 1732-1828", *IR* 17 (1966) p. 153.

MACDONALDS OF CLANRANALD

The Family was always Popish and Remarkable for Rapine and Wickedness while they lived on the Continent.¹²

In the seventeenth, and perhaps even more so, in the eighteenth century, an important role in the preservation of Catholicism was played by the Clanranald chiefs and their kin. In the former century, Iain Muideartach, twelfth of Clanranald, can be credited with reviving the old religion within his territories, a tradition which this family maintained until the mid-eighteenth century.¹³ It was he who in 1626 wrote to Pope Urban VIII informing him of the steadfast adherence of his family to the ancient faith.¹⁴ Another member of the family was Ranald MacAllan, first of Benbecula, fl. 1600, who, according to the authors of *Clan Donald*, "became the champion of persecuted Catholicism in order to pay Rome for his numerous divorces [?] from his 'handfasting marriages'".¹⁵ About 1651, Father Dermot Dugan was able to comment to his Superior General, [Saint] Vincent de Paul, on the welcome he received when he went to minister to the Laird of Clanranald... "to whom His Divine Majesty gave the grace of conversion along with his wife, his son, their family and

¹²*The Highlands of Scotland in 1750*, ed. Andrew Lang (Edinburgh: Wm. Blackwood, 1898) p. 42.

¹³Clanranald, elder and younger, were specifically cited as having been perverted by the "preists [who] doe ordinarilie reseid in Uiste, Barra, Mudart, Candort and Arreseg". *Minutes of the Synod of Argyll, 1652-1661*, ed. Duncan McTavish (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1944) p. 122.

¹⁴John Lorne Campbell, "The Letter Sent by Iain Muideartach, Twelfth of Clanranald, to Pope Urban VIII in 1626," *IR* 4 (1953) pp. 110-116.

¹⁵A. and A. Macdonald, *The Clan Donald*. 3 vols. (Inverness: Northern Counties Publishing Company, 1896-1904), vol. 2, p. 347

all the gentry, their vassals."¹⁶ This conversion referred to was not from a non-Catholic creed but was rather an affirmation of the old faith. He wrote with regret of the poor instruction in and knowledge of Christianity but noted that some in Uist had a vague memory of the sacraments, having been ministered to at an earlier time by Franciscans from Ireland. His criticism of the spiritual neglect of these Highlanders would not be the last, nor would its pronouncements issue solely from a Catholic source. In 1727 the last of those descended directly from Iain Muideartach, Allan, died heirless and the chieftainship passed to Donald of Benbecula as head of the senior cadet family.

A second reason for which the Clanranald Macdonalds must be noted, and more pertinent to the eighteenth century, was the appointment of Hugh Macdonald, half-brother to Allan, seventh of Morar, as first Vicar-Apostolic to the Highland District in 1732. It was he who established the fledgling seminary-schools, appointed clergy to their missions and guided the relatively small community through one of its severest periods of repression.

Any definition of Clanranald lands is subject to challenge for they underwent expansion and diminution over the years until the main estate was virtually dissolved in the nineteenth century. Further, some of the leading Clanranald cadet families, such as Kinlochmoidart, had forfeited estates as a result of their participation in the "Forty-five", although the Clanranald family itself retained theirs. Rather than use a strictly territorial approach to identifying the tacksmen, genealogy is a more appropriate method, for the original family connections survive what disruption to the

¹⁶Dermot Dugan to Vincent de Paul, ca.1651, quoted in Odo Blundell, *The Catholic Highlands of Scotland*, vol. 2, p. 1-2.

clan lands has resulted from war, financial transaction and even marriage.

Whatever the situation of Catholicism was within the Clanranald family before Culloden, they had abandoned this creed some time after the 'Forty-five. In 1776 Ranald who had been a captain in the Prince's army and who succeeded his father, Ranald, in 1766, died, leaving a young family, his eldest son John being only eleven. According to the letters among the clergy, there had been rumours that Ranald was about to declare himself publicly to be a Catholic and had sent for the missionary closest to Uist, Mr. James Hugh Macdonald. The priest arrived to find the clan chief in a coma and near death.¹⁷ When his son and heir, John, reached maturity he acted with tolerance and respect towards the Catholic clergy. Bishop Alexander Macdonald, in particular, noted his benevolence, writing in 1786

Our young proprietor who was only of age last March, paid us a visit since, made the set of his mainland estates; to some he gave very easy terms, considering how lands are set in other parts of the Highlands, and none can reasonably complain. I got a long lease of this small farm and paid no augmentation. The young Lord is a person of great affability, sympathy, politeness and condescension.¹⁸

There can be little doubt, though, that he was a non-Catholic, for his two marriages were to non-Catholic women, a fact of itself not a true determinant except that the first was to Catherine MacQueen, daughter of the famed Lord Braxfield, who, as a man not known for his ecumenical spirit, would never have permitted such. His first marriage ended in divorce and if he had been a Catholic and conditions normal,

¹⁷Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 5 December 1776 SCA BL3/289/9 and Hay to John Geddes 20 December 1776 SCA BL3/287/20.

¹⁸Bp. Alexander Macdonald to John Thomson 22 May 1786 SCA BL3/478/14.

a second would have been disallowed. But he did remarry, Jean, daughter of Colin Macdonald, the Laird of Boisdale, the same who had disaffected his Catholic tenants and had thundered against their clergy, especially Matthias Wynne. John died in 1794, aged thirty-nine. The upbringing of his heir, Reginald (Ranald) George, was entrusted to a panel of tutors among whom were Lord Macdonald of Sleat, Hector Macdonald Buchanan,¹⁹ a Writer to the Signet, and Colin Macdonald of Boisdale. The young man was eventually sent to Eton, and, after the fashion of the time, educated to be an English gentleman.

Only one clergyman seems to have come from the Clanranald family, although his biographical sketch in the "Clergy Lists"²⁰ does not indicate whether it was through the paternal or maternal line nor the degree of kinship. This was Allan Macdonald, born about 1696, the son of the Laird of Stoneybridge, referred to as Don Alano or Mr. Ranaldson in clerical correspondence. He had a long and varied career, as a teacher in Bishop Hugh's school at Guidal, about 1738, and later, after his ordination, as Captain Graham in the ranks of the Prince's Clanranald contingent. After a brief imprisonment in London, he made his way to Rome where he was placed in charge of a religious house for converts. He returned to Scotland in 1768 where he maintained a fairly independent but not unuseful existence until his death in 1781.²¹

¹⁹He was the third son of Colin Macdonald, Boisdale and Margaret Campbell of Airds. He was a representative of the Presbytery of Uist in the General Assembly and a friend of Sir Walter Scott. He died in 1835. Vide: *The Clan Donald*, op. cit., vol. 3, p. 294.

²⁰F. Forbes and W.J. Anderson, "Clergy Lists of the Highland District, 1732-1828," *IR* 17 (1966) p. 141.

²¹"Clergy Lists of the Highland District, 1732-1828," p. 139-40 and Alexander MacWilliams, "The Highland Seminaries I," *IR* 19 (1950) p. 137.

If the Clanranald family can be credited with the establishment of and maintenance of Catholicism within their territories in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries,²² it was the cadet families who held fast to and, in their small way, promoted the faith in the period of the penal laws. Of these, the most significant were the families of Glenalladale, Borrodale, Duchamiss and Morar.

From 1768 until the end of 1770, Bp. John Macdonald was a neighbour of John Macdonald of Glenalladale, in Glenfinnan, the site also of Bishop John's first seminary-school.²³ In November of 1770, he had moved to the more propitious area of Buorblach in North Morar but many of his letters, especially those written between 1770 and 1772, the period of the emigration negotiations, were dated at Glenfinnan.

There is little doubt that the Glenalladale Macdonalds were the most influential Catholic family after Culloden and perhaps even prior to that time. It was Alexander who was one of the most faithful of Prince Charles' supporters. He was a constant companion while the Prince was a fugitive after the massacre. His close relationship with the Clanranald chiefs earned him the respect of the clansmen and the fact that he could trace his ancestry directly to Iain Moideartach, eighth of Clanranald was an advantage in a genealogically-conscious Highland community. In addition to the privileged status bestowed on him by his ancestry, he possessed a fine character, which was described in the *Lyon in Mourning*.

²²Mary McHugh credits the members of Clanranald as the "common factor which ensured that not only, Moidart, Arisaig and South Morar, and the islands of South Uist, Benbecula, and Eriskay remained almost exclusively Catholic but that Knoydart also retained a considerable Catholic population. The survival of Catholicism in Lochaber, too, probably owed much to the fact that it bordered Clanranald territory." Vide: Mary McHugh, "The Religious Condition of the Highlands and Islands in the Mid-eighteenth Century," *IR* 35 (1984) p. 18-19.

²³MacWilliams, p. 139.

...the unexpected death of the good and truly worthy man Glenalladale. He died on a remarkable day, the thirtieth of January, and was interred Wednesday last. To sum up his character, with which Mr. Forbes was not unacquainted, he was the HONEST MAN, and few such, if any, remain behind him in that country. ...I know you'll esteem the son for the deserts of the father...²⁴

Alexander married Margaret Macdonell, the daughter of *Domhnall nan Gleann*, younger of Scotos and Ellen Meldrum of Meldrum in 1741.²⁵ The Scotos Macdonells were and remained throughout the eighteenth century the most influential Catholic family in Knoydart, even though its male members married most often with Sleat Macdonalds or MacLeods, the vast majority of whose clan members were definitely non-Catholic.

It was from the Glenalladale family²⁶ that the first native Highland priest ordained for the secular Mission in Scotland came and in 1769 Austin²⁷ Macdonald second or third son of Alexander and Helen returned from Rome to carry out his ministry in Knoydart and Moydart until he emigrated in 1803. In fact, as Dom Odo Blundell has commented, there was hardly a generation from the time when the young laird, Angus, was ordained about 1675, which did not give a priest to the church in Scotland, while of the children and grand-children of John Macdonald, Borrodale and

²⁴[?] Macdonald to Rev. Mr. Forbes 9 February 1761 quoted in the *Lyon in Mourning*, vol. 3, p. 65-66_m.

²⁵Charles Fraser-Mackintosh, "The Macdonells of Scotos", *TGSI* 16 (1889-90) p. 83 and NLS Ms. 1305 ff. 14, 15.

²⁶Angus MacKellaig, "The Faith in the West Highlands," *St. Peter's College Magazine...*, 14 (1939-40) p. 138. According to the article he was Æneas Macdonald (d. 1683) but there is some doubt as to the authenticity of the claim.

²⁷He was known among the clergy as Mr. Austin, signed many of his letters Augustin and in Gaelic was known as Maighstir Huisdean.

Glenalladale, who died in 1830, three were nuns and six priests, of whom three became bishops.²⁸

John Macdonald, the originator of the 1772 emigration to St. John's Island, will be dealt with at greater length in a subsequent chapter. From the time of his succession to the title of Glenalladale in 1761, he became the most important of the Catholic leaders on Clanranald's estate until he himself emigrated in 1773. In that year he sold Glenalladale to Alexander Macdonald, eldest son of Angus of Borrodale and his first cousin.

The Borrodale Macdonalds descended from Angus (ca.1715), second son of John Macdonald of Glenalladale. Like his brother Alexander, he was a staunch Jacobite and was out in the Forty-five. He had at least three sons of whom the most successful was Alexander who had gone to Jamaica and returned wealthy in 1770. It was he who purchased Glenalladale from his cousin John, in 1772.

Ranald, the second son, inherited the Borrodale estate and it was to him that the newly appointed Vicar-Apostolic to the Highland District, Alexander Macdonald of the Bornish family, looked for hospitality when he was on the mainland.²⁹ Ranald had been involved in the uprising and suffered the pecuniary penalties common to most of his fellow Jacobites. Unable to provide for his sons, he advised they emigrate to seek their fortune in America. At least two of them did, including his heir, John. It was he who had set up a fairly successful merchant business in Quebec from where he returned in 1785 to assume the tack of Borrodale. John played a very important

²⁸Odo Blundell, vol. 2, p. 159.

²⁹Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 19 February 1781 SCA BL3/348/6.

role in the encouragement of Catholicism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Judging from some of the surviving correspondence, it was to him that those with problems turned, for he was regarded with respect and trust by John, seventeenth of Clanranald and later, his young heir's tutors. It was through his representation to the tutors, especially to Robert Brown the then factor on the Clanranald estate, that permission was given and a fund granted for the building of a chapel in Arisaig.³⁰ He was one of the most successful of the Clanranald tacksmen, being very much an improver of the various tenancies he acquired until his death in 1830.

Another of Angus of Borrodale's sons was John, sometimes called Iain Frangach, because he had been educated at one of the Scots colleges in France. Like his uncle Alexander, (Glenalladale), he too had married a Glengarry Macdonell, espousing Catherine, daughter of Archibald Macdonell, Barrisdale, and Isobel Mackenzie.³¹ In the period following Culloden, he was living with his father and brother at Borrodale but found the farm too small for them to make a living and in a letter to Clanranald's man of business, John Mackenzie, requested that he intercede on his behalf for another farm. By 1760 he was established on the farm at Duchamiss³² where he seems to have remained for some years for in 1773 his lease for Duchamiss and Torbae was renewed for thirteen years with the curious proviso that he not build a house above the value of £50 or £60.³³

³⁰John Macdonald to Robert Brown 8 February 1805 SRO TD/80/100.

³¹NLS Ms. 1302, ff. 44, 45, 47, 49, 60.

³²NLS Ms. 1302, ff. 43, 49.

³³John Macdonald to Clanranald 16 December 1773 SRO GD201/1/364/19.

John Macdonald of Duchamiss was renowned for his hospitality, generosity and musical proficiency, especially on the fiddle. His home was another of Bishop John's favourites when he was in that area of Arisaig, and, as was to be expected, some of the sons were selected to study for the priesthood.

One of his sons, Alexander, was a student in the Scots College in Rome from 1770 to 1777. About 1775 he showed signs of disaffection with the College and its regulations and in 1777, he decided to leave the institution in Rome, although he did not intend to give up his vocation. Alexander's disaffection with the College came at a time when there were indeed problems within the College itself, especially its administration. However, one of the faults found with Alexander was that he was a "young light-headed lad"³⁴ but "very spirited, extremely clever, but ... not much animated with the Spirit of his calling."³⁵ In a conversation he had with the Scottish agent in Rome, Peter Grant, he allowed that he and his friends were averse to studying at the Schools of Propaganda Fide rather than at the Scots College. Of more significance, perhaps, for him, he had been forbidden to continue with his musical studies

on the flute for which he has great abilities... but as most of the other youngsters availing themselves his example were all beginning to apply to the fiddle, it was most rightly ordered by the Superiors that all kinds of musical instruments should be interdicted them...³⁶

This was, apparently, one of those not infrequent clashes between students or

³⁴Bp. James Grant to Bp. George Hay 10 May 1777 SCA BL3/293/7.

³⁵Peter Grant to Bp. George Hay 17 September 1777 SCA BL3/294/7.

³⁶Peter Grant to Bp. George Hay 15 July 1777 SCA BL3/294/4.

teachers of Highland upbringing and those of other areas, where a more rigid discipline was the norm, and music, considered decidedly frivolous and "incompatible with their serious and proper studies..."³⁷

One of the Duchamiss family was ordained however. James Macdonald, likely the son of Archibald, Iain Frangach's heir, was ordained in 1792 and was sent to teach at Samalaman in 1793. Sometime about 1796 he was sent to Barra and in 1803, while on one of his journeys between there and the mainland, was drowned off the coast of Skye.³⁸

Like his relatives at Borrodale, Duchamiss seems to have held fast to the Catholic tradition which he instilled into his children, even those who were not destined for the church. When the first Catholic Regiment was formed in 1794, the Glengarry Fencibles, one of the first to join, although a Clanranald on his father's side, but a Barrisdale Macdonell on his mother's, was Iain's son John. Lieutenant John was the first of this regiment to die, in May, 1795, albeit not in battle but while the regiment was billeted at Kilmarnock.³⁹

Another of the cadet families in the Clanranald family tree was that of Morar, and in the eighteenth century, this family contributed more to the encouragement of Catholicism in the western Highlands, than did any other at that time. It was one of the major septs of Clanranald Macdonalds, the family having descended from Allan, ca. 1538, the eldest son of Dougall, sixth of Clanranald. There were those who

³⁷Bp. George Hay to Bp. James Grant 24 February 1778 SCA BL3/304/6.

³⁸"Clergy Lists", p. 164; SCA BL4/77/12 and BL4/202/11.

³⁹*Scots Magazine*, 30 May 1795 and SCA BL4/94/13.

believed that the eighteenth-century Morars had a greater claim to the Clanranald title than did the incumbent Benbecula family.⁴⁰ They were definitely Catholic prior to Culloden, for in 1758, Allan, wrote for legal advice regarding the contract in which his son was enfeoffed of the estate, because it was addressed to a Catholic and signed before Catholic witnesses.⁴¹ How the Morar heirs handled their Catholicity when confronted with the terms of the penal laws is of no import in the context of this study for their claim to authority within the Catholic community rested on the efforts of Bishop Hugh, half-brother of Allan Roy, seventh of Morar, and John, the son of his sister Catherine, who became co-adjutor to his uncle. There was also a third Morar in the ranks of the clergy during the eighteenth century. He was Allan, Allan Roy's son, and brother to John who succeeded to the title. He began his ministry in 1767, contributing to the formation and education of the seminarians in Valladolid and in the school at Samalaman.⁴²

During the episcopacies of the uncle and nephew, many of their kin were sent to the continental colleges, although for the most part, they were described as sons whose parents were poor. Both bishops were dead by 1780 and the Catholic tradition of the Morar family left to cadet members or the children of future generations, for although educated in the College at Douai, Simon, from 1775 to 1778 and Coll, from

⁴⁰A reference is made to Captain Alexander and his late brother, Bishop John, having been deprived of a patrimony: "their family having been, a generation or two before, unjustly deprived of an Estate that now yields from one to two thousand pounds sterling a year". John Macdonald [ex Glenalladale] to George Hay 5 December 1781 SCA BL3/364/8. This may be a reference to Donald of Benbecula's assuming the title and lands of Clanranald in 1725 when John Moideartach's direct line became extinct. See *The Clan Donald*, vol. 2, p. 348.

⁴¹Allan Macdonald to John Mackenzie 2 January 1758 NLS Ms.1306 f. 135.

⁴²"Clergy Lists", p. 148.

1779 to 1780, the two sons of John of Morar became Protestant after enlisting in their respective regiments.

Of near kinship to the Morar family was that of Guidal, which tack was first held of Morar by John, a full brother to Bishop Hugh. It was here that the latter established the first seminary-school. John, a captain in the Jacobite ranks, was married to Helen Leslie, the sister of James Leslie the priest-confidant of Alexander Macdonell of Glengarry, the same who, it has been alleged, was "Pickle the Spy".⁴³ One of their children was James Hugh who became a priest in 1770 and, after a difficult ministry of twenty years, emigrated to St. John's Island in 1791.

Like the Morar family, the Kinlochmoidart Macdonalds were prominent Catholics in the first half of the eighteenth century. It was Donald, fourth of Kinlochmoidart, executed at Carlisle in 1747, who, with Bishop Hugh and Alastair MacMhaighsteir Alastair,⁴⁴ appeared before the Presbytery of Mull in 1744 to denounce for "gross immorality" Francis Macdonell who had been a Catholic missionary in Kinlochmoidart until he was dismissed and apostatised in 1743.⁴⁵ A brother Ronald married Marsali Macdonald of the Dalilea family and had twenty-one children, one of whom, Donald, became a priest in 1782. This Ronald was granted the tack of Irine in 1749, where he remained until evicted in 1781. He was known locally as Captain Ranald Macdonald of Irine until his death about 1782.⁴⁶

The disaster, personal and financial, which befell Donald of Kinlochmoidart's

⁴³Andrew Lang, *Pickle the Spy*. (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1897.), esp. p. 161-164.

⁴⁴*DNB*, vol 12, p. 471-3.

⁴⁵"Clergy Lists", p. 137.

⁴⁶Raymond MacLean, ed., *A History of Antigonish*. 2 vols. (Antigonish, 1976), vol. 2, p. 43.

family after his death wrought a permanent change in their attitudes towards their society as represented by government and church. His son and heir, Alexander, had been educated at the Scots College in Paris. He was encouraged, however, to become an Episcopalian in order to win the favour of the government and thereby redeem the family's forfeited estate.⁴⁷ He married Susanna Campbell of Airds, the sister of Margaret, wife of Colin Macdonald of Boisdale, an indication in itself that the Kinlochmoidart family had aligned itself with a decidedly non-Catholic faction. Yet, Susanna was used by Boisdale as an intermediary to appeal to the bishops for their assistance, and by the clergy for their concerns. Alexander served in several regiments, mostly in America, until his death in 1781. In a triplet written in his native Gaelic, he expressed his longing for his native hills, the heather, the refreshing water from the Samhnuich well and a half-hour's conversation with Mr. Austin, brother to Glenalladale and the missionary in Moidart.

Leaba d'on fraoch Torloisc
Deoch a tobar na samhnuich [sic]
S'leth uair do Mhaighstear Uisdean⁴⁸

Some reference has been made to Alexander's brother Angus who became a priest. There was indeed an Angus, son of Donald and Isobel Stewart of Appin who was at Douai in 1769 but in a letter to his mother he advised that he was averse to the ecclesiastical state and wanted to leave the College, as "the study of philosophy is not useful unless a gentleman of fortune"⁴⁹. The Douai College seems to have

⁴⁷Charles Macdonald, *Moidart or Among the Clanranalds*. (Oban: Duncan Cameron, 1889), p. 223-4.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 230.

⁴⁹Angus Macdonald to Mrs. Macdonald of Kinlochmoidart NLS Ms.3945, f. 16.

been a favourite with this family, for Alexander's two sons, John and Donald were also there from 1785 to 1786.

One member of the extended Kinlochmoidart family was a missionary in Knoydart and in latter years, Arisaig, for a little more than fifty years until his death in 1797. He was Alexander, born in 1719, and referred to in clerical correspondence as Mr. Alexander, senior. It was he who corresponded most often with his "cusine", Susanna.

In 1804, Donald, the last surviving male heir died and the estate devolved on his sister, Margaretta who was married to Lieutenant-Colonel Robertson, son of William Robertson, the Principal of Edinburgh University.⁵⁰

There is little reference to the Macdonalds of Dalilea in the ecclesiastical correspondence but their family was far from being unknown. They owe their fame to at least one of their kin, Alastair, the son of the non-juring Episcopalian minister Alastair Macdonald of Ardnamurchan, renowned for his Jacobite verse.⁵¹ It was his brother Angus, referred to most often as Angus Beag, who was the first to adopt Catholicism, and it was through his influence that Alastair MacMhaighsteir Alastair likewise converted. One of Angus' sons, also named Angus, was sent to the Scots College in Rome in 1740. He was ordained in 1752 at which time he returned to take up his ministry on Barra. It was there that he died in 1762 at the age of thirty-

⁵⁰*Moidart or Among the Clanranalds*, p. 231.

⁵¹He held a commission in the Jacobite army under his cousin Charles MacEachainn. After their defeat in 1746, he became a fugitive with his brother Angus. Clanranald made him land-steward of Canna after the Act of Indemnity and later gave him a farm in Glenuig. He died about 1780. Vide: *DNB*, *idem*.

six.⁵²

A daughter of the Ardnamurchan minister is said to have married a Ranald Macdonald, of which marriage at least three sons were born: Donald, Ronald and James who in 1772 was the first Scottish Catholic missionary to emigrate to North America.

Another prominent descendant was Alexander, the banker at Callendar who was married to Flora, sister to John Macdonald of Borrodale.⁵³ It was to him that Lord Selkirk wrote between 1810 and 1818 for advice concerning prospective Highland emigrants, especially those who sought to be leaders.⁵⁴

After Culloden, the only major tacksman on South Uist who remained Catholic was Macdonald of Bornish whose son Alexander returned from Rome in 1765 to take up his ministry on Barra. In 1780 he became the third Vicar-Apostolic to the Highland District until his death in 1791 at the relatively young age of fifty-five. There can be little doubt that at one time the gentry on South Uist were Catholic but even prior to Culloden, the most prominent resident, Alexander Macdonald, the Laird of Boisdale, was identified as a stalwart supporter of the Kirk.⁵⁵

The residents of South Uist were poor and despite their numbers, few

⁵²"Clergy Lists", p. 143.

⁵³*Moidart or Among the Clanranalds*, p. 117.

⁵⁴EUL Laing II. Ms. 202.

⁵⁵Alexander, at the onset of the '45, was against the Stuart invasion, although he befriended the Prince personally, a courtesy for which he was arrested and imprisoned. The Presbytery of Uist sent a testimonial signed by Donald McLeod, the Moderator, in his support, stating among other things that "he never failed to exert himself to the utmost of his power to serve the friends of Government and support the Protestant interest in this corner..." *Clan Donald*, vol. 3, p. 664.

Catholics were able to offer adequate accommodation to the missionaries, especially in the period prior to 1790. It was not one of the most sought after missions, and was especially difficult in the pre-Culloden years for those who came from Banffshire, such as James Leslie and Alexander Paterson, who were unaccustomed to the "alien" culture and primitive conditions which prevailed in the Hebrides.

THE MACDONELLS OF GLENGARRY AND LOCHABER

In 1652 Fathers Francis White and Dermot Dugan, Irish religious of the Vincentian order arrived in Glengarry through the "favour of the chieftain recently converted ... who took us under his protection, and who showed us such great kindness..."⁵⁶ The protector was Angus Macdonell, created Lord Macdonell and Aros after the restoration of Charles II, who had indeed come to the notice of the Synod because his whole "familie is perverted with popperie and himself much suspected though he goes to church..."⁵⁷ White made Invergarry his headquarters, settled there with a schoolmaster, Ewen M'Alaister, who taught in the house of and was supported *in toto* by Lord Macdonell.⁵⁸ Here he had twenty-four scholars with names of Macdonald, Cameron, Macmartin, Fraser, Scott, Stuart and MacIver. They used "heretical" texts such as the Psalter, Book of Proverbs and even a Catechism because there were no others in English.⁵⁹ The school, according to Alexander Winster, had little effect in producing students for the clerical colleges abroad. "In the Highlands", he wrote in 1668,

matters are quite different, for during all those years, of those educated in our school in Glengarry, we could not persuade one single youth to go abroad to study. This

⁵⁶Blundell, vol. 2, p. 161 and *Minutes of the Synod of Argyll, 1652-1661*, p. 121-2. The *Minutes* state that White and Dugan came in 1651 to the Isles with Glengarry and that John Macdonald and James Cumin (?) came in 1656 to reside in Uist, Barra, Moydart, Knoydart and Arasaig. Donald McLean writes it was Donald MacDonell, eighth of Glengarry, who was converted by Fr. Dugan in 1645. Vide: *The Counter-Reformation in Scotland, 1560-1930* (London: J. Clarke, 1931), p. 157.

⁵⁷*Minutes of the Synod of Argyll, 1652-1661*, p. 121.

⁵⁸Blundell, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 165.

is due to the opposition of the parents...[who] consider them sufficiently educated when they have learned the first elements of grammar.⁶⁰

The Glengarry Macdonells were nearly all Catholics but whether their chiefs remained so is another matter. In the late seventeenth century, Lord Macdonell embraced the faith and missionaries remained on his estate into the eighteenth century. In 1679, Mr. Munro, the Minister of Abertarff declared the following tacksmen to be Papists: Allan Macdonald of Kiltrie, his wife and their whole familie; Donald Macdonald of Culachie, his wife, servants and tenants; Allan Macdonald, his whole family except his wife, Mary Fraser; Ranald Macdonald of Pitmean, his wife, children and tenants; John Macdonald of Lick [Leek], his wife and whole family; the tenants of Aberchalder.⁶¹

Mrs. Fraser of Culbokie, née Mary Macdonell of Ardnabi, when questioned about her exceptional scholarship in the Gaelic language and verse, credited her schooling, about the year 1725, to Fr. Peter [Macdonnell?] fl. 1720, the Irish Augustinian whose mission was the Fort William-Abertarff area.⁶²

In the mid-eighteenth century, missionaries were definitely in Glengarry and held the confidence of the chiefs. Alexander Macdonell, alleged to have been "Pickle

⁶⁰Tbid., vol. 2, p. 172.

⁶¹NLS Ms.15169 f. 42.

⁶²Her scholarship came to the fore during the Ossian controversy at which time Sir John Sinclair tried to amass every document available to support his side of the issue. One of those contacted was Bishop John Chisholm who, as a native of Strathglass, had known her personally, and who referred to a manuscript of poetry which had been "collected by Fr. John Farquharson in Strathglass...and was much assisted...by the Lady you mentioned who was for her time an extraordinary woman in point of education." Bp. John Chisholm to Bp. Alexander Cameron 23 April 1806 SCA BL4/263/3. Alexander MacWilliams identifies the priest as Peter Macdonald, the Augustinian... Vide: "A Highland Mission: Strathglass 1671-1777," *IR* 24 (1973), p. 93.

the Spy", who became chief in 1751, is reported to have had as his advisor during the Jacobite rebellion and its aftermath, the Aberdeenshire-born missionary, and according to Lang, traitor, James Leslie.⁶³

However, in the latter third of the eighteenth century, the family adopted a non-Catholic creed, most likely of an episcopal nature. Alexander Ranaldson, well-known for his mercurial temperament, succeeded to the title in 1788. It was his habit to lash out, when he felt aggrieved, at his adversaries of whom at least two were Roman Catholic clergy. In 1803 he and the ex-chaplain of the Glengarry Fencible Regiment were involved in a lawsuit, initiated by the chaplain, Alexander Macdonell. In retaliation, Glengarry threatened to withdraw "his former friendship towards the Catholics" if Bp. John Chisholm did not suspend the missionary immediately upon receipt of his ultimatum.⁶⁴

Of the main Macdonell of Glengarry branches, that is, Scotos, Barrisdale and Lochgarry, the family which consistently maintained the Catholic faith was that of Scotos.⁶⁵

The description of Knoydart which the unknown author of *The Highlands of Scotland in 1750* bequeathed to posterity was that it was a "perfect den of thieves and robbers."⁶⁶ Both Barrisdale and Lochgarry were included in the defamation, although Andrew Lang defended the latter for lack of evidence. But, as Lang wrote,

⁶³Andrew Lang, *Pickle the Spy*, p. 161.

⁶⁴Kathleen Toomey, *Alexander Macdonell: the Scottish Years, 1762-1804*. (Toronto: Canadian Catholic Historical Association, 1985) p. 155.

⁶⁵Also spelled Scotus and Scothouse.

⁶⁶*The Highlands...in 1750*, p. 59.

the "reputation of Scotos is beyond attack even by our not unprejudiced author, and is pleasingly confirmed by the Chevalier Johnstone."⁶⁷

Here lives also McDonald of Scotas, a near Relation if not uncle to the present Glengarry. His eldest son [Donald] who carried fifty Men to the Battle of Culloden and was reckoned the most Valiant man of all the McDonalds, together with his Lieutenant, Ensign, a Serjeant and Corporal and eighteen Privates were all killed upon the Spot. I could not find that this man or his Father tho' Bigotted Papists were in the Least concerned in Thieving.⁶⁸

The area of Knoydart, consistently described as Catholic, seems to have provided only two of the secular clergy, both from the Scotos family, despite the fact that many of the sons studied at the continental colleges, especially those at Rome and Douai. Besides the Scotos family itself who provided the two clergymen, the sons of John Macdonell of Crowlin and John Macdonell, Sandaig, studied in Rome. Of the above the most famous was "Spanish John", Crowlin's son, who gained fame as a military adventurer, first on the Spanish side in the Spanish-Austrian war before he was sixteen years of age, then in the post-Culloden Highlands and lastly as a supporter of the British side in the American Revolutionary War.⁶⁹ In the mid-1780's, two of Ranald's, fifth of Scotos, sons, Charles and Donald, were at the Douai college, but left after about a year's residence in order to pursue military careers. Indeed, the accusation laid by Alexander Winster in the late seventeenth century that the Glengarry parents chose not to send their sons to the colleges most likely had

⁶⁷Idem.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 64-65.

⁶⁹A.G. Morice, "A Canadian Pioneer: Spanish John," *CHR* 10 (1929) p. 214-222.

more to do with the sons' preference for a soldier's life than, as he suggested, it did the parents' acceptance of a rudimentary education as adequate. Throughout the latter eighteenth century, father and son alike besought those charged to raise regiments for commissions. Such were perceived as honourable, and were as well immediate financial solutions to their ever poor state and were usually an opening to a better way of life.

One family which does not receive much attention in the bishops' correspondence is that of the Keppoch Macdonells, although Bishop John Geddes commented that the "missions [had] great obligations to that Family..."⁷⁰ There can be no doubt that they had been Catholic, for Tiendrish proclaimed this openly in his pre-execution address to those assembled for the gruesome spectacle at Carlisle. Angus, twentieth of Keppoch, and according to family correspondence, a Protestant, had a numerous family, one of whom, Frances, became an abbess of a religious order on the Continent.⁷¹ Maria, the eldest daughter was educated by nuns at Liège.⁷² In 1783, Bishop Alexander Macdonald was under some pressure to keep a promise made to Captain Alexander to send his son to the College in Paris, then in a state of internal turmoil.⁷³

This same Captain Alexander seems to have been locally quite prominent and a good host. In 1791, Bp. Alexander Macdonald wrote to his colleague in Edinburgh apprising him of the kind reception he received while at Captain Alexander Keppoch's

⁷⁰Bp. John Geddes to John Thomson 30 October 1789 SCA BL4/5/19.

⁷¹[Keppoch Family history] January, 1894. SRO GD128/49/8/2.

⁷²Mary [Macdonell] Chichester to Bp. George Hay 13 January 1799 SCA BL4/129/14.

⁷³Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 14 December 1783 SCA BL3/387/14.

where

there were a numerous Club of gentlemen besides the Marquis of Huntly and Mr. Tod [his factor]. Success to the Catholic Chapel of Fort William was drunk... Lady Chichester has already sent to Fort William her bill of £20 sterling as her contribution...⁷⁴

The Mrs. Chichester referred to was Mary, daughter of Tiendrish, who had married and was living in Arlington, in the south of England.⁷⁵

⁷⁴Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 5 September 1791 SCA BL3/.

⁷⁵Bp. John Geddes to John Thomson 30 October 1789 SCA BL4/5/19.

THE CHISHOLMS, FRASERS AND MACDONELLS OF STRATHGLASS

To the north of Glengarry, above Glenmoriston, is found Strathglass, an area known, even then, for its natural beauty, the richness of its forest and, in the valley, the fertility of its soil. In the eighteenth century the ownership of the land area was divided between Fraser of Lovat and the Chisholm. In the mid-seventeenth century, the Chisholm, while visiting Rome, promised the pope that he would allow Catholic missionaries in Strathglass. His son, Colin, became Catholic and founded the branch of the family Knockfin which produced the two bishops, John and Æneas Chisholm. In Strathglass, the earliest missions were at Knockfin and Clachan near Eskadale.⁷⁶ At the time of Culloden, the Chisholm and his children were Protestant but his Clan were "Popish except a very few".⁷⁷

The relationship of the Frasers to Catholicism is much more complicated. Critics of Simon Fraser of Lovat, beheaded in London in 1747, maintain he had always been a Catholic, and therefore a threat to the establishment, but he admitted himself to having converted while he was in France. Whether it was because of his reputed ruthlessness and dishonesty or simply a lack of interest, he seems to have had little moral suasion with the members of his clan, for there were few among them who acknowledged themselves to be Catholic. About 1800, Catholics in the Aird and Strathglass received a boost in their morale when one of the Catholic Frasers of Strichen became the chief of the clan. Throughout the eighteenth century, however,

⁷⁶Odo Blundell, *Ancient Catholic Homes of Scotland*. (London: Burns & Oates, 1907), p. 113.

⁷⁷*The Highlands in 1750*, p. 30.

there was at least one exception to the general pattern. The family of Fraser of Culbokie, whose estate in the eighteenth century was at Guisachan in Strathglass, was staunchly Catholic, although they were mistakenly included with the Protestants of the Aird who "hated the non-jurant Clergy and Popish priests".⁷⁸ It was in this very area that a modest chapel was built at *Ach na-h-eaglais* in 1709.⁷⁹ In the mid-seventeenth century, Hugh Fraser who was Protestant, sent his sons Hugh and Alexander to the Scots College at Douai. Alexander became a Catholic and remained so all his life. It was he who inherited the Kinerras estate, and later succeeded his brother Hugh, about 1670, to the Culbokie title. It was probably he who brought his former classmate, Robert Munro, as a missionary to Strathglass.⁸⁰ It is likely that the marriage of William, eighth of Culbokie, with Mary Macdonell, daughter of Macdonell of Ardnabi and Mary Macdonell, Glengarry's daughter, in the eighteenth century would have assured a Catholic presence for at least one generation. That and the Catholic aspect of Strathglass in general would have allowed the parents to rear the children in the Catholic faith. By the end of the eighteenth century, Bp. John Chisholm informed Bishop Hay concerning his visit to Strathglass because of a

matrimonial connexion that took place between an uncle's [Knockfin] son...and a daughter of Culbokie [Jean] in which affair Culbokie took it in his head to do nothing unless I took a concern and were present at the whole of the contract and marriage of which ... three priests and I were witnesses...⁸¹

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 114-5.

⁷⁹Alexander MacWilliams, "A Highland Mission...", p. 89.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 78.

⁸¹Bp. John Chisholm to Bp. George Hay 13 October 1792 SCA BL4/57/11.

There can be little doubt that the clergy who served the Strathglass mission counted on the friendship of this family. Yet, although William sent at least one of his sons, Alexander, to the school at Scalan, not one of the immediate family ever became a clergyman. The sons of William sought military appointments and several served in regiments sent to North America, the Far East and even Africa. Of these, John Fraser became a judge in the Court of Common Pleas in Montreal in 1764 and was able to assist cousins and in-laws who emigrated within the next three decades. Several others chose to be adventurers in the West Indies. In the last decade of the eighteenth century, the four Fraser brothers, grandsons of William, eighth Culbokie, sought their fortune in the West Indies, especially the Island of Dominica. Only one survived beyond 1804.

As has been noted earlier, the two leading families in the Strathglass area were the Frasers and Chisholms. Among the family groups of the latter, that of Knockfin, although not as wealthy nor as influential within the community as Fraser of Culbokie, played a greater and more direct role within the Catholic community. Valentine Chisholm who resided at Inchullie, the seventh son of Colin, third of Knockfin was the father of the bishops John⁸² and Æneas⁸³. The return of these two as missionaries to Strathglass saw an increase in ecclesiastical vocations in general, and from this family in particular. After the turn of the century there were several Chisholms and Chisholm-Frasers serving in the Highlands. It should be remembered that the Strathglass mission was primarily served by members of the Jesuit Order

⁸²He was bishop from 1792 to 1814.

⁸³He was consecrated co-adjutor to his brother in 1805, succeeded him as Vicar-Apostolic in 1814, which title he retained until his death in 1818.

prior to its dissolution in 1773, a fact which no doubt contributed to the lack of secular clergy recruited from the area prior to that date.

Another district served by the secular clergy, notably in the latter years of the eighteenth century, was Kintail, from where had come Robert Munro, one of the first missionaries to work in the Highlands. He entered the Douai College in 1663 and was brought to Strathglass after ordination by an alumnus, Alexander Fraser of Kinerras. In the eighteenth century, however, Catholicism in Kintail owed its survival to the family of Alexander Macrae of Ardintoul and his brother, John Og, the last episcopalian minister of Kintail, who had been converted to Catholicism by a kinsman, the Jesuit Alexander Macrae who was active at the beginning of the eighteenth century.⁸⁴ In 1787, Christopher Macrae returned from Valladolid to begin his ministry in Kintail which mission he served for fifty-five years.⁸⁵

Clearly, then, there were families of some means situated in almost every mission area served by the Catholic clergy who would be able to offer hospitality and some financial assistance. One of the greatest hazards to the missionary was to be stranded in an area where there was neither shelter nor sustenance. This was the sad fate of Angus Macdonald of the Retland family who died aged about twenty-seven "in a poor hut within a couple of miles of Fort Augustus...his death seems to have been the result of fatigue, cold and other distresses he met with in the Mission..."⁸⁶

When the emigrations from the western Highlands began to multiply they were

⁸⁴"Clergy Lists...", p. 160.

⁸⁵Idem.

⁸⁶John Chisholm to Bp. John Geddes 3 May 1784 SCA BL3/401/41.

decried by the clergy who saw not just their congregations dwindling but the very group upon whom they depended, the tacksmen, in the vanguard. Bishop Macdonald in informing the Scottish agent in Rome about Roderick Macdonell's emigration to Canada remarked that

Ronald McDonell...is now stationed in place of Mr. Roderick, where he has much to do and will undoubtedly be difficulted to live ... for about six weeks ago upwards of 200 Catholics and these the principal tenants emigrated from that part [Glengarry] to America...⁸⁷

This was in 1785. Much emigration had already taken place but it was only a taste of what was to come. Between 1784 and 1793 no fewer than 6000 left the north of Scotland⁸⁸ but of these more than a third were Roman Catholics, a ratio far out of proportion to their actual numbers within the general population. The clergy would feel its effect and not simply as helpless bystanders. To the chagrin of their superiors many of their number would themselves choose to join the masses sailing west to America.

⁸⁷Bp. Alexander Macdonald to John Thomson 5 August 1785 SCA BL3/449/11.

⁸⁸Michael Flinn, ed. *Scottish Population History from the Seventeenth Century to the 1930's*. (Cambridge University Press, 1977) p. 443.

Scotland

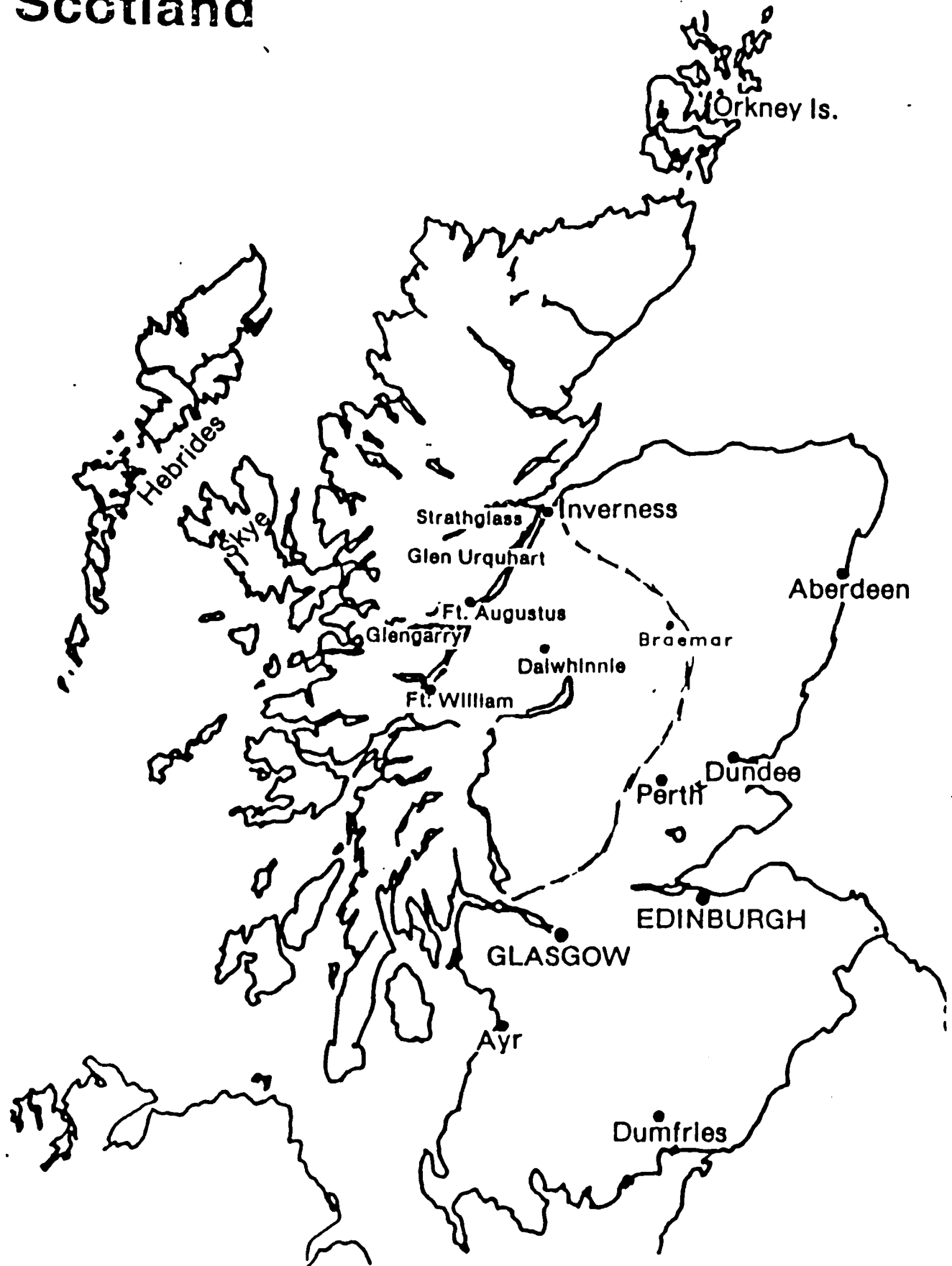


Table 3.

Ecclesiastical Division of Scotland Into the Highland and Lowland, Vicariates

1731 - 1828

CHAPTER THREE

THE CLERGY

...ministerial duties which at this day are not so much as named in the Western Hebrides; except indeed among the Catholic clergy, who are very assiduous in the discharge of their religious functions, and therefore much beloved by the people; among whom their influence and authority is every day increasing.¹

In 1694, Thomas Nicolson was consecrated bishop and appointed as the first Vicar-Apostolic for Scotland.² Almost forty years later, Scotland was divided into two districts. The Lowland Vicariate comprised an area east of a boundary running south from Inverness, Braemar, Perth and Glasgow, and the borders, while the Highland Vicariate encompassed the territory, virtually a totally Gaelic-speaking area, west of the Inverness - Glasgow boundary and the Isles.³ Hugh Macdonald, son of Alexander, sixth of Morar by his second marriage, was named as the first Vicar-Apostolic to the Highland District. After his consecration as bishop in 1731, one of his first and most important duties was to provide clergy for the district. Prior to this date, Gaelic-speaking clergy had ministered in the Highlands, but especially in the seventeenth century, few had been native to the western Highlands or the Isles, but

¹John Lanne Buchanan, *Travels in the Western Hebrides from 1782-1790*. (London, 1793), p. 219.

²Christine Johnson, *Developments of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland 1789-1829*. (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1983), p. 34. Although a bishop, a Vicar-Apostolic differed from a titular bishop, e.g., Bishop of Paris, Bishop of Madrid, etc., in that the former had no diocesan jurisdiction. He could exercise spiritual powers as vested in him by papal authority, and thus, could ordain priests, consecrate chapels, and confer the sacrament of confirmation. Early in the seventeenth century, the Congregation *de Propaganda Fide* was made responsible for missionary activity throughout the world and one of its first tasks was to recommend Vicars Apostolic for the Protestant countries.

³See Table III

had come from Ireland or were Gaelic speakers from the eastern Highlands. Priests from the colleges abroad, however, were often unwilling to go these, the "rough bounds" except as a refuge from persecution.⁴

True, religious orders sent members of their communities to minister in Scotland, some of whom attended the Gaelic-speaking Highlanders, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1703, for example, there were nine Jesuits, who tended to act as chaplains to the landed families, four Benedictines and five Irish Franciscans in Scotland. At the suppression of the Order of Jesus in 1773 its members, four of whom were serving in the Highlands, agreeably transferred to the secular mission.⁵ Even though united in a common cause, there was a rift between the administrators of the secular clergy and the Jesuits, who had charge of three of the four continental Scots seminaries. It was felt that they tended to attract to their Order the best of the students intended for the Scottish mission and although some of them did return to Scotland, others were sent to houses in Germany, France and eastern Europe, thereby depriving the Scottish mission of sorely needed clergy.⁶

It was Bishop Hugh's prime concern to make the Highlands self-sufficient as far as native clergy were concerned. His goal was to establish a school similar to that which existed for the Lowland District where boys were given a foundation for the more advanced study in their seminaries on the Continent. In the Highland school, Gaelic would not be neglected but rather encouraged as the language of mission, for

⁴Peter F. Anson, *The Catholic Church in Modern Scotland, 1560-1937*, (London: Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1937), p. 35.

⁵Christine Johnson, p. 35.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 34.

it was the great hardship of both clergy and people in the Highlands that either one or the other could not communicate effectively.

To begin the task, he established a school for boys who were considered potential candidates for the secular clergy. Here, those between the ages of twelve and eighteen received the rudiments of their education in spiritual as well as secular matters as a preparation for the advanced study they would pursue in the Continental colleges.

The first of the Highland schools was established at Guidal or Gaoideil, a tack of land between Rhu and Borrodale, on the shores of Loch nam Uamh, which was held of the Laird of Morar and was at the time in the possession of John, Bishop Hugh's full brother.⁷ In 1738, he had as master Allan Macdonald of Stoneybridge, a Clanranald cadet, who had returned from Rome in 1721 after abandoning his studies but who after several attempts at readmission in Rome and Madrid, was finally ordained a deacon at Scalan and a priest about 1742.⁸ The school apparently functioned fairly well although their alumni were not numerous. Alexander Macdonell, the son of Ranald Macdonell of the Scotos family,⁹ born about 1725 and John Macdonald, born 1727, the future bishop were the only two to have studied there who went on to take orders. The school had a brief life for the events of 1745-

⁷Alexander MacWilliams, "The Highland Seminaries I", *St. Peter's College Magazine* 19 (1950) p. 137-139, passim.

⁸F. Forbes and W.J. Anderson, "Clergy Lists of the Highland District, 1732-1828," *IR* 17 (1966), p. 139-40.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 144. Forbes and Anderson name him as a son of Ranald Macdonell of Scotos. *Burke's* cites Alastair (d. 1724) as the first son of Ranald, second of Scotos and tenth Glengarry, who married and had by his second wife, Lady Mary Mackenzie, his fourth son, Alexander. Vide: *Burke's Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry*. 18th ed. (London: Burke's Peerage, 1972), vol. 3, p. 573.

46 put an end to all such activity in the area for a number of years and Bishop Hugh himself was forced to flee the country. Some twenty-five years after Culloden, Bishop John Macdonald tried to establish a school, first at Glenfinnan and later in Buorblach. Not too much is known about the Glenfinnan school except for a reference to it on the part of Bishop Grant who lamented the great sums which had been spent on it, only to see the project abandoned in favour of the more commodious and better situated establishment at Buorblach. By 1772 there were twelve boys in the house.¹⁰

For the more advanced studies, the boys were sent to the colleges on the Continent. Of the four, three were run by the Jesuits: Rome, Madrid and Douai but by 1773, after the total suppression of the Order, all four were in the hands of the secular clergy. Paris, the fourth college, famous for its Jacobite sympathies, and in the first half of the eighteenth century, known as a centre of Jansenism, was always controlled by the secular clergy. In 1770 John Geddes, the future bishop, was sent to Madrid to arrange the affairs of the Scottish College which had been usurped by Irish clerics. It was he who sold the Madrid property and purchased the buildings in Valladolid for the College.

It was expected that the scholars were to prepare themselves for ordination, following a curriculum of studies consisting mainly of three years in philosophy and four in divinity, concurrent with which would be an intense and fairly rigorous

¹⁰Alexander MacWilliams, "The Highland Seminaries II," *St. Peter's College Magazine* 20 (1951) p. 20.

spiritual formation.¹¹ Prior to the suppression of the Jesuits, one of the great drawbacks to the secular missions in Scotland was the likelihood of the students entering the Order. "There was no prohibition against the students entering the Religious Orders and owing to the severe privations and dangers which then awaited a native Missionary on his return to Scotland and the total want of provision for him in his probable exile, in sickness and declining health, the Religious Orders held out inducements..."¹²

In 1732 there were eight missionaries serving the Highland District, including Bishop Hugh himself, and of those, six were of the western Highlands or Isles. Two others, Alexander Paterson, born at Tynet in 1686 and James Leslie, born in Aberdeenshire, worked in Uist, Morar and Glengarry but detested their stations and requested to be transferred to the Lowland District.¹³

Between 1733 and 1746 eight priests were ordained and of these, five were from the Highland District. There were three Clanranald Macdonalds and Francis Macdonell, a Glengarry native.¹⁴ However, between 1746 and 1752, the years subsequent to the failure of the Jacobite uprising, Bp. Hugh Macdonald spent much of his time as a fugitive. Even as late as 1770, two-and-a-half years before his death, he related to Bishop Hay his difficulties at having been named, unknowingly, as cautioner for his half-brother Allan's debts and since the latter's death, to pay the

¹¹J.F.S. Gordon, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle for Scotland*. vol. IV: *Journal and Appendix to Scotichronicon and Monasticon*. (Glasgow, 1867), p. 193.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 194.

¹³"Clergy Lists ...", p. 133-34.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 137-42.

same plus thirty-years' interest. He described his condition as desperate and he felt it useless to appear before the courts. "It is easie", he wrote, "to apprehend a person who is already obnoxious to the law".¹⁵ The post-Culloden difficulties notwithstanding, Angus Macdonald of Dalelea, the son of Angus Beag brother to the famed Alastair MacMhaighsteir Alastair, and cadet of Clanranald, was ordained in 1752, but survived only ten years after. From 1752 until Bishop Hugh's death in 1773, ten native Highlanders were ordained: six Clanranald Macdonalds and two Macdonells of the Scotos (Glengarry) family. In 1753 the Bishop's nephew John, son of his sister Catherine and Donald Macdonald of Ardnamurchan, was ordained a priest and James Macdonald, of the Dalelea/ Borrodale family and Alexander Macdonald, son of the laird of Bornish in South Uist, in 1765; Austin Macdonald, ordained in 1769, was the son of Alexander Macdonald of Glenalladale. In 1770, James Hugh Macdonald, the son of the laird of Guidal, the nephew of Bishop Hugh and a first cousin of Bishop John Macdonald, became a priest. The Macdonells of Scotos were Alexander, born about 1725, the son of Ranald, and Alexander, born about 1742, the son of Æneas, third of Scotos. All were related in some way to the respective clan chiefs, the Macdonells being nearest in degree of kinship, and were of the tacksman class. In 1780, Bishop Hay, lamenting the paucity of clerical candidates pointed out the "difficulty of obtaining students for the Church from two classes, which at an earlier period of the Mission had contributed many valuable Priests: the Gentry and their tenant farmers of the first class, who had formerly inter-married" with them. At this time their principal hope seemed to rest on the lowest

¹⁵Bp. Hugh Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 6 November 1770 SCA BL3/221/12.

class of farmer, "including those who laboured with their own hands on their Farms", but he felt they could expect nothing from the tradesman class.¹⁶

Under the first three Highland bishops, all MacDonalds, forty-four priests began training. Of these no fewer than thirty were MacDonalds. Of the remaining fourteen, three were MacEachans... In 1792 the third Macdonald bishop died. He was succeeded in turn by John and Angus Chisholm from Strathglass. The two Chisholms seem to have been the only Strathglass students to have trained for the priesthood during the MacDonald episcopacies. Of the first eight priests to start their training under the Chisholm bishops, five, including the only MacDonald, were from Strathglass. By 1803, much of Strathglass had been cleared of its people to make way for sheep, as had many areas in the West Highlands and Islands. Of the priests who started their training after about 1807, only three were MacDonalds, two of whom were from Lochaber...¹⁷

This was correct, for the most part, except that some of the Macdonalds were Macdonells a clan different from the Clanranald Macdonalds. The Macdonells were mostly of the extended Glengarry family, whose members resided in geographical areas as far north as Strathglass, viz. Alexander Macdonell, ordained in 1787, as far east as Leek, viz. Roderick Macdonell of the Glengarry cadet family of Leek (Lick), ordained in 1775 and as far west as Scotus in Knoydart, viz. Alexander Macdonell (Scotos) who was ordained in 1767.

The method of selecting likely candidates seems to have been one formed on personal acquaintance and therefore scrutiny as to ability and potential, rather than

¹⁶ *Scotichronicon*, p. 266.

¹⁷Christine Johnson, p. 42. The MacEachens, mainly from South Uist, were a sept of the Clanranald Macdonalds and were descended from Eachuinn (Hector), the second son of Roderick MacDonalld, the third of Moidart and Clanranald. Vide: J. L. MacDougall, "Clann Eachuinn" or "The Sons of Hector", in *A History of Inverness County, Nova Scotia* (n.p., ca. 1922) p. 227.

of favouritism towards the Macdonalds. It was hardly the fault of the Macdonald bishops that most of their Highland flock happened to have adopted the surname of Macdonald or Macdonell. Further, it must be remembered that the Strathglass Mission had been cared for by Jesuit missionaries and it was to this Order that potential clergy were attracted. It was while serving in that Mission that the Jesuit John Farquharson, an outstanding Gaelic scholar, was taught to read and write, and probably speak, Gaelic by Mary Macdonell, wife of William Fraser, eighth of Culbokie and Guisachan and foremost Gaelic scholar in Strathglass at that time. Indeed, had it not been for the suppression of the Order in 1773, both John and Angus Chisholm, who had begun their ecclesiastical formation in the Jesuit house at Tournai, would have remained members of that Order. It was John's hope until his death in 1814 to see it reestablished and himself a member once more. His poorly-camouflaged feelings caused Bp. Alexander Cameron, who himself had been encouraged by his Jesuit masters while he was a student in Rome to join them, to distrust the Highland bishop, especially in financial matters.

The essential act of public worship in the Catholic Church is the Mass and attendance when possible was obligatory on Sundays and designated feast days. Other public functions might include prayers and readings from the scriptures which often were conducted by laymen. In Glasgow, for example, before a missionary was settled there permanently in 1792, a number varying from 12 to 30 would meet in the home of one of the congregation for prayers. When a missionary visited Glasgow, he would conduct services in the same home.

In the more populous Catholic districts, such as South Uist and Barra, to

which missionaries were specifically appointed, the practice was to move from place to place, hold public worship and administer the sacraments, especially baptism. Meeting houses were almost non-existent until the 1790's when the relaxation of the penal laws and a more tolerant spirit on the part of the populace in general allowed for the construction of such. Congregations met in whatever building was large enough to hold the group, usually a barn, or attended services held in the open. Evidence of this latter custom has been demonstrated through the discovery of "Mass stones" which were used as altars, a practice believed to have been introduced in the seventeenth-century by Irish missionaries who used boulders or flat stones the surfaces of which served as altars. Near Invergarry, for example, one finds the *allt na h-aifrin*, the Mass burn or brook, and the *creag an t-sagairt*, the priest's rock. It was part of the missionary's burden to carry with him all the implements necessary for the celebration of Mass, including wheaten bread, a rare commodity in the Highlands, wine, a chalice, some altar cards and a crucifix. Candles and vestments were not a problem for they could be made and kept locally.¹⁸

Austin Macdonald is known to have conducted services in the open air and in buildings chosen specifically for the purpose. In 1774, he was very ill "by his own imprudence in officiating frequently in the open air in the month of March last when the weather was sharp, on account of the narrowness of the houses in the Isles".¹⁹ Ten years later, he was confronted with the Arisaig parson, Mr. Fraser, as he was

¹⁸A. Macdonell and D. McRoberts, "The Mass Stones of Lochaber", *IR* 17 (1966) pp. 72-76, *passim*.

¹⁹Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 25 October 1774 SCA BL3/269/3.

about to begin the Sunday service in a "central place in Ardnamurchan".²⁰ From his recounting of the incident, the building described was one commodious enough to accommodate Mr. Austin's congregation and those who accompanied the parson, with at least two entry/exit points.

However they conducted the services, whether in simple buildings, rude huts or in the open, there is no doubt that the conditions were poor. Neither cleric nor layman had any expectation that it could be otherwise. Even when the situation changed, and, to some extent, radically, as when the Highlanders began to settle in an alien clime, they continued to hold services as they had done previously. In 1812, Bishop Joseph-Octave Plessis made a pastoral visit to the parishes of his far flung diocese, one area of which was Prince Edward Island, formerly St. John's Island, the first area settled by Catholic emigrants from the Highlands. The first thing to give the Bishop an unfavourable impression of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward island was the poverty of the churches. Having left Quebec City where ecclesiastical affairs were in a flourishing condition, he was astonished and even shocked at the utter destitution that prevailed in this part of his jurisdiction, noting that "only a priest brought up in Scotland would ever think of saying Mass in the like..."²¹ The bishop owed their acceptance of these conditions to the effects of religious persecution, that they had

²⁰Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 3 April 1784 SCA BL3/419/8.

²¹A. A. Johnston, *A History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia*. 2 vols. (Antigonish: St. Francis Xavier University Press, 1960) vol. 1, p. 230. One of the customs which scandalized the bishop was that the Scots allowed their dogs within the church. What he did not realize was that Highlanders were accustomed to have their dogs accompany them wherever they went and that keeping them at their side within the church was a precaution against fights which might break out amongst dogs left free to roam outwith the building. An anecdote exists concerning a Highland priest whose sermon was interrupted by the growls and snarls of two dogs which escaped from their owners. No matter how hard the priest tried to speak over the fray he came out second best. In desperation, finally, he looked at the two and then placed a wager on the black one.

"brought the same customs" to the land of their adoption, and that it was "almost impossible to make them understand that more solemnity and decorum are really obligatory in a country where freedom of worship prevails."²²

Although an extensive comparison between the old and the new worlds, and between Quebec and the British settlements is not appropriate within the context of this thesis, it must be acknowledged that Scottish Catholic settlements, in each continent, never experienced the financial or moral support which the French enjoyed. Prior to the termination of the Seven Years' War, those areas colonized by France were evangelized by Catholic missionaries, the Church having received the protection and support of the Court of Versailles. Further, tithing was a common feature in France and her colonies so that the local *curé* always had some money with which to build and keep up the ecclesiastical buildings. Thus, the relative luxurious appearance of the churches of the Bishop's immediate diocese, some of which would have been built in the century prior to the arrival of the Scots in 1772, as compared with those built in areas newly established under a British and, at times, hostile government.

One of the areas which seems to have been directly influenced by the discipline of the Kirk was that of public atonement for sins, usually of a scandalous nature. This type of penitential satisfaction did not originate with Calvinist teaching, but in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it had become an established practice. In Scotland the summoning of miscreants before the congregations and their public humiliation was used to control a multitude of vices, adultery, being the most common.

²²John C. MacMillan, *Early History of the Catholic Church in Prince Edward Island*. (Quebec, 1905) pp. 156-57.

Catholic practice focused on the sacrament of penance, which was private and its validity conditioned by a purpose of amendment. Penances assigned within the sacrament were also private, although they could have societal implications, such as giving alms to the poor. A "public sinner" could be denounced from the pulpit but as a rule the person was seldom there to hear it, and it was seldom that anything as "harmless" as adultery could evince such.

In Scotland, even in the more tolerant Highlands, the Clergy seem to have adopted the practice of their Protestant brethren. In 1784, Bishop Hay advised the missionary at Preshome, John Reid, that he could marry a couple who had lived in an "unsanctioned state" only after they had given satisfaction for their scandalous behaviour.

It will be necessary when you see him that you show him the unhappy state in which he has for some time been living in a state of fornication in the sight of God; then show him the necessity of not cohabiting with the woman, till he has performed his public penance and got his marriage validated before you. When you speak to him from the altar, represent to the whole Congregation the nature of his crime and the consequence of it both before God and in the Eye of the Church, and what else you judge proper for the occasion that all may have a just sense of it; and when all this is done, let them come to you and be married before two witnesses, on which conditions I grant the necessary dispensation.²³

Given the role the church has always played in the regulation of society, one can appreciate the attempt of the clergy to openly sanction and preserve marriage and the family.

However, in 1789, John Chisholm, the future bishop, was the centre of a

²³Bp. George Hay to John Reid 12 March 1784 SCA BL3/413/16.

controversy which seemingly owed to his publicly humiliating one of his hearers, not for having indulged in so serious a matter as adultery but for having caused scandal by having repaired the Protestant meeting house at Glenstrathfarrar. For this seemingly innocent act "he not only scolded him for having done amiss but ordered him to fall down on all fours at a certain distance from the door of his meeting House and crawl like a dog till he reprimanded him".²⁴ The above description was written in a letter of complaint to various Frasers, including Lord Lovat, by the incumbent minister Malcolm Nicolson, who also decried Chisholm for invading his territory and perverting his people.²⁵ One can only speculate to what extent his annoyance with Chisholm affected his embellishment of the story, but, although Chisholm said it was "a great lie",²⁶ it is probable that the man was required to make public satisfaction for having scandalized his neighbours.

Allan Macdonell, the controversial missionary on Barra, was another who earned some notoriety for requiring public penances. His case must be treated with some caution, however, for he and the proprietor on Barra, Roderick McNeil, referred to sometimes as the King of Barra, were not on the best of terms, and he openly mistreated the priest. A second reason for caution owes to the fact that Allan, the brother of Alexander Macdonell, the writer in Inverness and himself a fine scholar, was known to be very scrupulous. After his removal from Barra he began to show signs of irrationality and eventually was confined because of mental illness.

²⁴Malcolm Nicolson, Minister of Kiltarlity to William Fraser of Culbokie 1789 SCA BL4/15/16.

²⁵Idem.

²⁶(Copy) John Chisholm to Malcolm Nicolson 15 May 1789 SCA BL4/2/13.

As far back as 1792, the Laird had shown his displeasure with Mr. Allan²⁷ but in 1799, he had threatened the clergyman with physical violence and the burning of his house. Besides the animosity which had developed between them, the reason for this latest outburst was said to have been his treatment of one of his parishioners whom he had "reprehended warmly... in full congregation, for some immorality" ...after which "the poor man was so much ashamed of himself and so penitent, that of his own accord he put himself in what Mr. McNeil calls the Jugs."²⁸

Perhaps the most vexatious, though seemingly innocent, of the Catholic liturgical practices was the celebration of holydays. This was particularly so in the Highlands where the holydays were more likely to be regarded as holidays, especially by the managers of the labour-intensive kelp-producing estates one of whom was Colin Macdonald of Boisdale. He described them as setting "a whole country idle... especially when they make the worst use of it, drinking, etc."²⁹ In 1777, Bp. John Macdonald, in an attempt to have his colleagues reconsider the rules regarding the observance of holydays, noted that

we have sometimes a good deal of difficulty in some parts of this District both by reason of our people engaged in their service, and the necessities common to them and us in certain Seasons. Some of these

²⁷Alexander Macdonald, ^{sr} to Bp. George Hay 26 March 1792 SCA BL4/64/11.

²⁸(Copy) Bp. John Chisholm's answer against accusations made against Allan Macdonell in Barra by McNeil of Barra 9 March 1799 SCA BL4/130/7.

²⁹Quoted in a letter Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 13 September 1789 SCA BL4/11/8. There were two factors which made necessary a large labour force: the brevity of the kelping season, given the variable weather conditions, and the quantities of kelp which had to be harvested. A fully loaded horse cart could carry about 1000 pounds of wet weed, which when reduced, produced only fifty pounds of the finished product. Vide: J.M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America, 1770-1815* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982), p. 87.

Gentlemen find that by keeping Holydays from work they often incur a very great loss perhaps upwards of £100 in one day when the Seasons are precarious. This happens particularly in summer when kelp is made, which is often one of the most pressing kinds of business in the world, when the loss of one good day might very easily occasion the loss I have mentioned to one who employs as many hands as Clanranald or Boysdale... It might also occasion great dammage [sic] in corn and hay when weather is so foul that a fair day is very rarely seen...³⁰

In the late 1760's, the same Colin Macdonald was accused of having mistreated his Catholic tenants. There is little doubt but that he did abuse them verbally and physically, using eviction as one of his many dire threats. The events reached the ears of Bishop Hay who by appealing to Bishop Challoner in London and various of the notables in Rome and London created a minor *cause célèbre*. The events have been credited as having led to the first emigration from South Uist in 1772. What has been overlooked in the various accounts regarding Boisdale and the subsequent emigrations is the reasons for his behaviour, other than a bad temper which he seemingly inherited from his father, Alexander.

The occasion which gave rise to the altercations between Colin and the missionary Matthias Wynne was said to have been the priest's denouncing Boisdale for not permitting his tenants to observe the Michaelmas holydays. In South Uist, a week's festivities occurring at the end of September coincided with those of the final days of the harvest. It is not unreasonable to speculate that a week of celebration

³⁰Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 15 September 1777 SCA BL3/297/15. A different problem arose from the keeping of fasts on the vigils of the holydays or in Lent. The scarcity of food made a fast or abstinence from flesh a hardship. Bishop Macdonald wished to have this practice altered or removed, as had been done in England, but Bishops James Grant and George Hay, without informing the Highland bishop, informed Peter Grant, their agent in Rome, that they did not want a similar dispensation. Vide: Bp. George Hay to Peter Grant 28 September 1777 SCA BL3/296/16.

would have interfered with last-minute kelp and produce harvesting, the possible negative effect of which would have frustrated the profit-minded laird. Some ten years later, Susanna Campbell of Airds, the wife of Alexander Macdonald of Kinlochmoidart and Colin's sister-in-law, supported this view, commenting that

in South Uist ever since the principle Gentlemen have conform'd to the established Religion of the Nation, there has been disagreeable altercations between them, and their tenants... The Landlords insist upon the Commoners working every Harvest Day, Sundays accepted [sic] which was refused with equal obstinacy...³¹

This viewpoint was expressed by the Vicar-Apostolic to the Highland District in a letter to John Geddes a year later, writing that the Gentlemen in South Uist consider the observance of the remaining Holydays in force...as a very great grievance especially the few which fall in summer and autumn...³²

The altercations between Boisdale and his tenants were responsible for the emigration of some of his tenants in 1772. Of more importance, as far as the clergy were concerned, they were also the cause, even if indirectly, of the emigration of the first of the Roman Catholic priests from the Highlands. If the Church looked with dismay at the emigration of its clergy towards the end of the eighteenth century, it had also to regard itself as somewhat responsible, for it had implanted the idea into what was to become a very attentive and receptive audience.

When John Macdonald of Glenalladale was in the process of planning the settlement of his 20,000 acres in St. John's Island, he was most desirous of bringing in

³¹Mrs. Susanna Macdonald of Kinlochmoydart to Bp. John Geddes 8 May 1788 SCA BL3/529/15.

³²Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 13 September 1789 SCA BL4/11/8.

addition to the artisans and farmers who were vital for the welfare of the fledgling colony, a clergyman and a schoolmaster. It was to Bishops John Macdonald and George Hay that he turned for help in acquiring a suitable missionary. The bishops played not only a role in securing a clergyman but were active in the effectualization of the emigration scheme itself, and their motives for doing so will be examined in a separate chapter. Their initial efforts were directed to obtaining a clergyman other than a Highlander, for native Gaelic-speaking priests were scarce and sorely needed in the Highland Vicariate.

The language criteria the prospective candidate needed to meet were not easy, for besides a fluency in Gaelic and English, the ardent solicitations on behalf of the Acadian population from a Presbyterian minister on St. John's Island to Bishop Hay, made French necessary. The rector of the Douai College, Robert Grant, was asked to look for a suitable clergyman in his "domain", and by February of 1771, he had suggested Patrick Mackiernan, a multilingual Irish clergyman who was living at the time in Boulogne³³. After much ado concerning permission from his superior and his willingness to leave for America, Mackiernan was finally pronounced by Bp. John Macdonald, to be unsuitable as he was "the most worthless person I ever knew, only Francis excepted".³⁴ Whatever the reasons were for this episcopal disdain, Mackier-

³³Robert Grant to Bp. George Hay 21 February 1771 SCA BL3/230/2.

³⁴Bp. John Macdonald to Charles Cruickshank 23 April 1772 SCA BL3/247/7. The Francis referred to was Francis Macdonell, a priest whose immorality had led to his suspension, and later, after he had embraced the Kirk, to his denouncement before the Presbytery of Mull in 1744. It is unlikely that the bishop knew the man personally as he was only ordained in 1752, but there is little doubt that he learned of the case from his uncle, Hugh Macdonald who, along with Macdonald of Kinlochmoidart, was slandered by the miscreant. For an amplification of the case see: William Ferguson, "The Problems of the Established Church in the West Highlands and Islands in the Eighteenth Century," *RSCHS* 17 (1969) 15-31.

nan's candidacy was no longer entertained and it became clear that one of the Highland clergymen would have to accompany the emigrants to St. John's Island. Indeed when Glenalladale suggested that perhaps the Jesuits might consider sending some of their French priests, he met with a retort from Bp. John to the effect that he "should always depend on the secular clergy of this Mission to furnish us always the necessary missionaries."³⁵ His response of 1771 was well-intentioned but it would come to haunt his successors within the next three decades. It was only a matter of time before the thirty-two-year-old missionary from Drummond, James Macdonald, nephew of the bard, Alastair MacMhaighsteir Alastair, who had indicated from the beginning that he wished to accompany his brothers to St. John's Island, was given permission to leave the Scottish Mission. James' emigration was the first of a series of Scottish Catholic priests, virtually all Highlanders, who would leave, mostly for British North America within the next forty years. His inclination to leave the Mission was fostered by family concerns, as his brothers were among the two hundred bound for St. John's Island. Perhaps there was a touch of the adventurer in his blood, for reports from many of the Highlanders who had settled in "America", especially after the successful termination of the Seven Years War, were an impetus for many to try their fortune there. Within the next few decades, other clergymen would leave the western coast for America, some for reasons becoming their state of life, others, for not so becoming a reason. Others, like the members of their congregations, would leave because of economic conditions. An examination of the careers of those who did emigrate will reveal the motives which prompted them to

³⁵John Macdonald (Glenalladale) to Bp. George Hay 6 July 1771 SCA BL3/233/18.

leave Scotland, and indeed will add more to the understanding of the Church's involvement in, compliance with, and finally revulsion at emigration itself.

If emigration was perceived as a solution to their problems by the ordinary people, it was no less so by the Catholic missionaries who lived and worked amongst them. Theirs was not the lot of their brethren of the Established Kirk whose duly appointed ministers received financial and other support from the SPCK and local heritors. Rather did they depend on private income from family when possible and from the salaries paid out of funds controlled by the Vicars Apostolic, especially those in the Lowland District.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the salaries allotted to missionaries were never handsome amounts. At the best of times they sufficed to keep the individual clothed, housed and fed and enabled some to support needy relatives and parishioners. Even Bishop Alexander Macdonald, whose brother was the laird of Bornish in South Uist, complained of his pitiful condition "without farm, school or house [and] under the necessity hitherto to live upon my friends..."³⁶ There were two regular sources of income: the *Propaganda Fide* in Rome and interest made on small investments in Rome and Paris. By the end of the century both sources had disappeared because of the political turmoil in France and Rome respectively. Of all the foreign investments, only that placed in the *Luoghi di Monti* survived with its annual yield reduced from that of the 1740 rate of £23 to its 1800 level of £17.³⁷

The decline in revenue could not have come at a more inopportune time as far

³⁶Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 8 September 1780 SCA BL3/335/19.

³⁷'Scotus' [pseud], "Post Reformation Clerical Livelihood," *St. Peter's College Magazine* 16 (1943-44) p. 12.

as the Scottish mission was concerned, especially in the Highlands, for the missionaries were being entreated to leave with the numerous groups emigrating to British North America. There were always promises made of relatively good salaries to be paid the emigrant missionary whereas the Vicars Apostolic could only provide such as would maintain subsistence level.

An example of the hardship can be evinced from the correspondence between Austin Macdonald and Bishops Hay or Geddes. Austin was born a gentleman, being of the Glenalladale family. Nevertheless, his expectations were not unreasonable. He was described as a "truely primitive, and able Missionary"³⁸, and his living quarters, for which he was getting into debt, as a "very good house".³⁹ About 1782 Austin began to entreat the Bishops to intercede with his brother John for money to help defray his expenses. This was the same John Macdonald, Glenalladale, who had emigrated to St. John's Island in 1773 and, who, as heritor of the Glenalladale estate had some responsibility for the members of the family. It is likely he had been charged with a special responsibility to look out for his brother who was not in a position to amass a great deal of money. John had run into a series of misfortunes beginning with the bankruptcy of the Bank of Ayr, because of which he lost a good deal of money with which he was to finance his emigration project. Shortly after his arrival in St. John's Island early in 1774, he was caught up in the American Revolutionary War. Almost simultaneously he had his lands in St. John's threatened with seizure for non-payment of taxes while he was serving with the 84th Regiment.

³⁸Bp. Alexander Macdonald to John Thomson 5 August 1785 SCA BL3/449/11.

³⁹Idem.

It was for this reason and regimental business that he was to be in London for about ten years beginning in 1782. Austin used Bishop Geddes who had been corresponding with Glenalladale to intercede with his brother for £30 sterling to help him furnish his house and a meeting house and to help him pay his rent on the land he had taken to keep two or three cows. John, he noted, was his only possible source of support, for all his other friends and cousins were not in a position to do so having numerous families themselves.⁴⁰

This same year, the bishops had devised a plan to augment by five pounds per annum the salaries of each missionary beginning with Paul MacPherson and Charles Maxwell and two in Glenlivet. The Highlanders were to be excluded until the Lowland mission had been provided for.⁴¹ Whether the motivation for this division was unreasonable or petty is of little import, but it did reflect an attitude which did not take into account the true situation of the Highland resident. Because these missions were in the remotest and sometimes, the most inaccessible areas, the prices of imported commodities were higher than elsewhere, the Lowlands in particular. In years of dearth, the price and quality of meal, for example, was greater in Strathglass or Lochaber than it would have been in Edinburgh or Aberdeen.

Two years later, Austin wrote again to Geddes, this time to chastise the bishop as "he did not see proper to allow ...the six pounds ... as particularly my Brother writes me he cannot furnish me for the present which two disappointments affects me

⁴⁰Austin Macdonald to John Geddes 25 May 1782 SCA BL3/363/13

⁴¹Charles Maxwell to Paul MacPherson 11 October 1794 quoted in *Scotichronicon*, p. 373.

much. I am still twenty four pounds in debt".⁴²

In 1788, the quotas established for "country" missionaries was set at £12 and £18 for the urban ones.⁴³ That same year the missionary from Gairnside, Lachlan MacIntosh, advised that in their negotiations with the government regarding the relaxation of the penal laws, the bishops should suggest that they be permitted to collect tithes from the few Catholics among them. "Indeed", he wrote, " unless you make some provision or other, secular clergy will not be able to live here, where the people's poverty can afford no assistance."⁴⁴

In 1789, Austin, who had been at the July 31st meeting the year previous, requested an annual salary of £18 sterling per year from the leading Catholics in Knoydart, as well as four or five pounds for a catechist, adding that this did not seem extravagant since he served a congregation of some 900 souls. Ranald Macdonell, the Laird of Scotos and head of the foremost Catholic family in Knoydart, considered his request "an enormous extortion" but because of the great increase in prices he had to do something to increase his stipend.⁴⁵

One would think that those served by the missionaries would have contributed willingly to their support but there was a reluctance on the part of the missionaries to ask for such, especially in the Highlands where money was scarce. Yet, in 1769,

⁴²Austin Macdonald to Geddes 3 November 1784 SCA BL3/420/16.

⁴³[Minutes of the Annual Meeting] 31 July 1788 SCA SM46/11

⁴⁴MacIntosh to Geddes 16 May 1788 SCA BL3/530/18.

⁴⁵Macdonald to John Geddes 3 November 1784 SCA BL3/420/16.

they took the initiative in the matter.⁴⁶ Bishop Hay was well into his ministry as Vicar-Apostolic before he could convince the Catholics of the Lowland district to do likewise.⁴⁷ Even in the Highlands, this practice was not general. It was more than likely established within the Clanranald bounds in 1769 for the two bishops active at that time in the Highland district were both of the Morar family. Certainly it was not common in Strathglass, perhaps because it had been served by regular clergy who were maintained by their religious communities, for John Chisholm had great difficulty in implementing the directive from Hay to ask money from the people.⁴⁸

If the financial situation during the early years of the 1790's can be described as static, the latter years of the decade were to prove disastrous. At their annual meeting in 1797, the books were opened to reveal a deficit of £100 per annum, primarily because of a decline in revenue due to the loss of the properties in France and almost nothing of an income from Rome. The yearly quotas, already barely enough to provide a subsistence level, were reduced to allow £15 for those in the towns and £10 for the others per annum.⁴⁹ When another reduction became necessary, the bishops issued a pastoral letter, albeit, directed more to the urban congregations, appealing that they support their clergy in addition to the seat rents

⁴⁶[Scotus] "Post Reformation Clerical Livelihood," *St. Peter's College Magazine* 16 (1943-44) p. 13.

⁴⁷Idem.

⁴⁸This was the case as far as stipends or living expenses were concerned. He was not reticent about requesting funds for his school on Lismore, nor did his solicitations escape the scrutiny of some of the proprietors. Vide: Chapter Eight, part I.

⁴⁹[Minutes of the annual meeting] 17 August 1797 SCA SM5/3/6

and voluntary subscriptions.⁵⁰ There should have been no objection to the clergy trying to obtain such financial support but there was and in the very areas where it was most needed - the Highlands.

In 1794, the young chief of Clanranald died leaving a very young family and an estate in the hands of a panel of tutors, who were somewhat hostile to Catholics and did not approve of their religious practices nor were they inclined to see the needs pertaining thereto provided. It should not have come as a surprise then that when the clergy on South Uist and Benbecula began to solicit contributions from their hearers, the Tutors raised a cry of alarm for "collecting subscriptions from the Tenants of that persuasion without assigning to the Proprietor of the lands the cause of the subscription or to what purpose the money collected was to be applied". Both Macdonald of Boisdale and McNeil of Barra had put a stop to the collections so that the Tutors concluded they were not to the advantage of the estate or country at large. They instructed Robert Brown, the then factor, to look into "this extraordinary proceeding of the Roman Catholic Clergy unprecedented and unauthorized" and if he found the subscription thus set on foot to be for any other purpose than to be presented to Government for the good of the state that Mr. Brown take all prudent measures for stopping them... Further, they added, it could be regarded as "to the prejudice of the minor as the money subscribed ought to pay the landlord's rent because of their arrears, etc."⁵¹ In 1798, while Britain was at war with France and Ireland was in full rebellion, the government found itself in a rather vulnerable

⁵⁰(Copy) Pastoral letter undated SCA SM5/3/7

⁵¹Minutes sederunt 6 May 1799 SRO GD201/5/1233/32.

position as far as manpower for the armed forces was concerned, and in addition it perceived itself undermined by seditious principles, gleaned from the two recent successful revolutions in the name of democracy. Amongst those most active in proclaiming this perceived sedition were itinerant preachers, especially in the Highlands.⁵²

Although they were few in number, Catholics loomed important at this time for two reasons. Their greatest concentration in Scotland was in the Highlands, the nursery of men for many of the regiments which were then being formed. Secondly, the authoritarian influence of the clergy, who were perceived to be conservative and therefore likely to promote the *status quo*, upon their people was deemed as necessary to countermand the seditious sentiment of these preachers⁵³. It was not a coincidence that the bishops, especially Hay, and the government, mainly through the auspices of Sir John Hippisley⁵⁴ were negotiating for a sum of money to be paid annually for the support of the clergy.

"It is singular that the strong point in favour of subsidizing the Catholic Clergy in Scotland was felt to be the desirableness of keeping them, and through them, their

⁵²Many of these were members of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Home, a body of itinerant lay preachers founded by James Haldane. In 1796, acting upon the advice of William Wilberforce that he begin his mission in a remote area, he conducted a tour through the Highlands where he and an English ecclesiastic distributed evangelisation pamphlets. In 1797, accompanied by John Campbell, the founder of an independently run Sunday School, he travelled to the west of Scotland with the purpose of establishing more of these schools. For an amplification of the spread and influence of independent church activity at this time, see Henry W. Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution*. (Glasgow: James Maclehose, 1912), especially, Chapter X: "The Church and the French Revolution", pp. 194-213.

⁵³This was not a universal attitude, for some of the priests in the Isles were suspected to be anti-government. One such was Allan Macdonell, banished from Barra by Roderick McNeil, who was "suspected ... of disloyal and Rebellious practices". Ranald MacEachen, priest at Drimore, to Robert Brown, Clanranald's factor 10 July 1800 SRO TD80/100/4/1508.

⁵⁴Sir John Coxe Hippisley (1748-1825) was a staunch supporter of Roman Catholic emancipation. In this cause he was a valuable ally because of his experience as a diplomat in Rome between 1779 and 1780, and as a negotiator with the Vatican from 1792 to 1796. Vide: *DNB*, vol. 9, p. 904.

people at home, and thus preventing emigration"⁵⁵. This had been bishop Hay's response to the Trustees on the Clanranald estate who had appealed to him to try to curb the emigration-minded clergy from that area, who not only talked openly of going themselves but were accused of encouraging others to go, that "nothing but distress could prompt either Clergy or People to Emigrate and that ... the only way to keep them at home would be to improve their condition".⁵⁶ A year earlier, Hay had used this same argument, suggesting that the government subsidize the Catholic clergy to the extent that a salary of £50 for each bishop and £10 for each priest be possible.⁵⁷

Some of the promised money was given to the Mission by 1800 but instead of sensing an overwhelming relief, complaints from the missionaries were the result. John Farquharson who was stationed in Glasgow, a mission made all the more difficult because of the large numbers of dispossessed Highlanders, the influx of Irish and in 1800 companies of militia stationed on the west coast among whom were Catholics, and, added to all that, he was responsible for the 700 Catholics in and about Ayr and Girvan, complained about its hardship and isolation and the inadequacy of the pay which had been augmented by a mere 40 shillings. He was not at all happy with the disbursement of the government money as applied by the bishops: £600 per annum for the two seminaries; £500 for the use of the bishops, and £1200 for the

⁵⁵*Scotichronicon*, p. 409.

⁵⁶George Hay to Sir John Hippisley 4 January 1799 quoted in *Scotichronicon*, p. 410.

⁵⁷*Scotichronicon*, p. 409.

chapel in Edinburgh.⁵⁸

John Farquharson was not alone in his distress. A petition had been formed by a group of the discontent in the north-eastern missions, asking that Bishop Hay mediate with their congregations in order to increase their income, but because of the real distress of the people, the petition was considered to be unseasonable, and, as Hay commented, seemed to be an effect of "Jacobinism coming too near the altar".⁵⁹

Farquharson's work situation did not improve much within the next few year's and his health began to deteriorate. By 1805, in his fifty-seventh year, he began seriously to consider emigration as a solution. "My sole desire", he wrote, "consists in being sent and employed where there is most prospect of being of service: I prefer Rome to Scotland, and America to both. It is only of late...in consequence of my despairing of the French and continental affairs of ours that my fluctuating thoughts have tended to, if not centred in the New World."⁶⁰ Farquharson had had some first hand experience with emigration schemes and emigrant groups for it was he who replaced as pastor of the Glasgow mission, the enterprising Alexander Macdonell who emigrated himself in 1804. Further, the missionaries, whether in the Highlands or elsewhere, were aware of the need for clergy in the colonies. By December he informed his superior that he had approached Captain John Macdonald, ex-Glenalladale, who was then in London and had been active in trying to solicit some clergy for

⁵⁸Farquharson to Paul MacPherson 1 May 1800 & 7 May 1800 SCA BL4/147/1 & SCA BL4/147/2.

⁵⁹Bp. John Chisholm to Charles Maxwell 23 July 1800 SCA BL4/146/7.

⁶⁰Farquharson to Bp. Alexander Cameron 17 October 1805 SCA BL4/243/15.

his settlement in Prince Edward Island.⁶¹

As offers of a good salary, land and accommodation which were used to lure missionaries to North America became more numerous, it became more difficult with those feeling the hardship of the Scottish mission to remain aloof. Between 1790 and 1802 nearly everyone of those on mission in the Isles had contemplated leaving Scotland and most had broached the idea to colleagues and superiors.⁶²

As was the case with the laymen under their charge, the thought of owning their own land and of being financially solvent, if not independent, was most attractive. The missionaries were not supplied with a manse or chapel but were expected to fend for themselves from their salaries and the assistance of family or connections.

Between 1745 and 1800, but especially between 1745 and 1785, most missionaries were itinerant. The post-Culloden period, because of the hue and cry raised against Catholics and especially priests, made any other method of life practically impossible. When Bishop Hugh Macdonald died in 1773 it was either in Glengarry House or the house of Macdonell of Aberchalder that he spent his last hours. He had intended to take up residence with Bishop Hay in Edinburgh but just never took time to leave the Highlands. His nephew and co-adjutor, Bp. John Macdonald, did establish a residence and school on the farm of Buorblach in North Morar which he held in tack of General Simon Fraser, the Master of Lovat, but

⁶¹John Farquharson to Bp. Alexander Cameron 26 December 1805 SCA BL4/243/17.

⁶²This was especially true in 1803, after the emigration of Alexander Macdonell, "Chlianaig" the previous year. See SCA Blairs Letters, especially John Farquharson, Charles Maxwell correspondence, October 1802 to June 1803. This was also the year that Alexander Macdonell, the ex-Chaplain of the Glengarry Fencibles, was himself recruiting emigrants for the Glengarry settlement in Upper Canada.

shortly after his death, the house and farm buildings upon which they had spent a fair amount of money, were lost to the Mission when the tack was leased to others.

If the missionary had family connections he might have had some property, a farm and a house. This certainly applied to Alexander Macdonell of the Scotos family. But, on the long journeys between settlements, the missionary had no place to reside except the private homes of his parishioners. This indeed was a problem for few of the Catholic parishioners were wealthy enough to own homes commodious enough to accommodate a missionary. Further, a host might be harassed by unfriendly neighbours or irate ministers. Archibald MacRa[e],

a respectable tenant-farmer in Kintail, residing on the estate of Lord Fortrose, was much harassed... by the Presbyterian ministers in his neighbourhood. He happened to be the only Catholic in that wide district who possessed a house in which a Missionary Priest could find a night's lodging, when he came twice or thrice a year to visit... Not content to turn him out of his Farm, they lodged frequent accusations against him with the Law Officers of the Crown in Edinburgh, and nothing but Bishop Hay's prudent interpositions could have saved him from a Criminal Prosecution.⁶³

These journeys were frequent and long. For example, Angus Macdonald of the Retland family, after returning from Valladolid, was assigned a mission comprising Kintail in the West, Glenmoriston in the East, an area of about thirty-two miles in length over rough and mostly desolate country. He had little choice as to a place to spend the night. At best he might reside in the home of a tacksman who might have a separate room for him. At worst, it might be a barn or the cramped hovel of a poor crofter, or in the worst of events, no shelter at all. Angus died only

⁶³*Scotichronicon*, p. 140.

two years after his return from Spain, aged about twenty-seven, described as having been worn-out from the hardship he encountered.

Another aspect of this state of uncertainty was the deteriorating effect it had on the missionaries. In 1781 a scandal concerning the young missionary Alexander Macdonald, a full first cousin to Morar and nephew of the late Bishop Hugh Macdonald, became rife in Uist. He was accused of having fathered two children one of whom was murdered by the midwife with the complicity of the mother. Alexander who had been sent to Uist in 1775 when he was about twenty-five years of age, consistently denied the charges but was censured by his superiors and eventually, at the young man's request, was sent to live out his days in the Benedictine monastery in Würzburg where he became renowned as a botanist. The tragedy, according to Bishop Alexander Macdonald, was that the young man who had been so promising as a student in Douai and had accomplished so much in the short time he was in Uist, had been the victim of the isolation, loneliness, overwork and lack of direction which was common to all the missionaries in the Highlands.

...his ordinary avocations obliged him sometimes to omit his practices of piety and devotion, led him to a distracted dissipated way of living by being too often in Company and by being too often in Company with time turned too fond of it and consequently a transit from such a regular way of living to a downfall was both easy, and in a manner natural.⁶⁴

Austin Macdonald, brother of Capt. John, ex-Glenalladale, gave it as his opinion that his "irretention in drink in Company" and his having to seek accommodation where he could, which meant the proximity of young females "in one

⁶⁴Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 22 November 1781 SCA BL3/348/9.

chamber with him" was too much temptation.⁶⁵

After the relaxation of the penal laws in 1793, it became easier to build meeting houses or residences but for many of the missionaries it was too late, and because of the shortage of funds, it was almost impossible. In 1809, a chapel "of very fine workmanship" was built in Arisaig at the expense of Clanranald whose generosity was unexpected and surprised "those of the established persuasion [who] were fully persuaded that we were to be extirpated from the estate on his succession to it."⁶⁶ John Macdonald's gratitude was well meant and was rightly placed. But, the Clanranald generosity came at a time when both emigration and the demand for kelp were at their peak. The young proprietor was reacting to the intercession of John Macdonald, Borrodale, that a chapel for his Catholic tenants might encourage them to remain, and thereby add to the numbers required to work the kelp beds.⁶⁷

⁶⁵Austin Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 11 January 1782 SCA BL3/363/11.

⁶⁶John Macdonald, missionary in Arasaig to Charles Maxwell 27 November 1809 SCA PL3/16/3.

⁶⁷Clanranald Papers. Minutes Sederunt. 17 January 1806 SRO GD201/5/1233/42.

SECTION TWO

EMIGRATION: 1770 - 1810

CHAPTER FOUR

FAIR WIND FROM FOUL

It is difficult for Americans, north or south, to accept the fact that for a century after Columbus' discovery the ordinary sort of European had to be bribed, drugged or beaten to go out to this 'land of promise' unless to fish.¹

Although the century subsequent to 1770 is readily acknowledged to be the period of the great migrations, successful and furtive attempts at overseas settlement had occurred during the previous two hundred years. Early colonization was more often than not identified with forced embarkation, either through kidnapping or transportation, which aspect rendered emigration as repugnant.² If voluntary, emigration was for the adventurer or the desperate, the place of debarkation usually determining which. The West Indies, for example, were regarded as a destination where great fortunes could be made in the quickest possible time.

Exploration of the great land mass to the north of the Caribbean Islands was a major concern of four European nations: Spain, France, England, and Holland. All were aware of the strategic value and actual or potential wealth contained in the coastal waters, the forests that lined the shores and the rich soil which was found especially on the north eastern seaboard. Colonization in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was attempted by Spain and France, the latter having sent by

¹S.E. Morison quoted in D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America*. 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) vol. 1, p. 33.

²Margaret Adam, "The Causes of the Highland Emigrations, 1783-1803," *SHR* 17 (1920), p. 76. Her description of the categories of emigrants include "sturdy vagabonds, religious refugees, political offenders, voluntary emigrants, prisoners from the Tolbooth or unconvicted criminals ... and any deficiency in numbers made up by persons kidnapped for the purpose."

1759, some 10,000 emigrants. Of these, 4000 were indentured servants, 3500 released soldiers, 1000 exiled prisoners and 1000 women, *Les Filles du Roi*, shipped over to become wives.³

Exploration and settlement in North America by England was slower and later than that by France which by 1540 had sent three exploratory missions to the Gulf of the St. Lawrence and up river as far as present-day Montreal. In the sixteenth century, Sir Humphrey Gilbert had suggested that colonies be established, for example, to accommodate disaffected English Roman Catholics, an idea rejected by Queen Elizabeth. Settlement was attempted in 1597 when a group of non-conforming Separatists tried to establish a colony in the Magdalen Islands but they were harassed by rival fishing fleets until they returned to an exile in Holland. Unhappy there, the group returned in 1620 to establish a colony on Cape Cod,⁴ an event which marked the beginning of a steady stream of emigrant groups, mostly all dissenters from the Church of England. The general pattern of voluntary emigration from Britain, especially in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, was that of an individual nature, some families and only a few as cohesive congregations.⁵

Scots, especially after 1707, though far fewer in number than the English or the Irish, were represented in various colonies. In the West Indies they served with the military, or as planters or the employees of planters, managers, attorneys and

³Meinig, p. 115-16.

⁴Ibid., p. 37.

⁵Ibid., p. 222.

bookkeepers.⁶ By 1740 they had settled in North America, again in positions similar to those they occupied in the West Indies, mostly in the south, that is, present-day North and South Carolina and Georgia; by the 1750's, they were prominent in Virginia.⁷ Though fewer in number than their Lowland countrymen, Presbyterian Gaelic-speaking Highlanders were among the early emigrants. Some of those who had left Skye at the urging of Norman MacLeod in 1739⁸ settled on a land grant along the Upper Cape Fear River in North Carolina. In subsequent years, many more would leave Skye and Argyllshire for the Carolinas and Georgia. Writing of the Skye estate, Thomas Pennant cited "depression of spirit" as the prevalent cause of the emigrations which since the year 1750 had seen the population reduced from 15000 to between 12000 and 13000: "one thousand having crossed the Atlantic, others sunk beneath poverty, or in despair..."⁹ Few of these pre-1760 emigrants were from the Clanranald or Glengarry estates and virtually none of the Highland emigrants was Roman Catholic. Of the entire colony of British settlements, only Maryland, Pennsylvania and Newfoundland granted them any sort of toleration, the first having been established as a refuge for English Catholics by the first Lord Baltimore,¹⁰ and the third, because of the great numbers of Irish servants and labourers who by 1750 comprised

⁶Frank Innes, "Scottish Participation in the West Indian Plantership: the Balcarres Estate in Jamaica", *Proceedings of the 6th and 7th Colloquia on Scottish Studies*, 1973, p. 18.

⁷Meinig, p. 157 and [216].

⁸Ibid., p. 180.

⁹Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland, 1772*. Part II (Chester, 1776), p. 306.

¹⁰Meinig, p. 152.

two-thirds of the island's total population.¹¹

The rivalry between France and Britain over their colonies in North America was resolved in favour of Britain in 1763 and it was this occasion which gave impetus to the periods of massive emigration from the Highlands. The battle for supremacy between the French, who controlled an area similar to that of present-day Quebec and Ontario, as well as much of the interior as far south as the mouth of the Mississippi, and Britain, whose territories comprised the eastern seaboard from Newfoundland to Florida, had lasted for seven years. Regiments were shipped to support the British forces and among these were several from the Highlands which were reported to have provided half of the 20,000 troops.¹² At the end of the war, many of these remained in North America, to settle, depending usually on their previous background or rank, as *entrepreneurs*, professionals, or land holders. It was this group which paved the way for so many of their kin and friends to follow in the next decades. The news of, and from, sons and brothers, and perhaps even fathers, who were prospering, was very enticing to those faced with the probability of eviction, if not immediately, then at some future date. "When these people write to their friends," a correspondent to the *Scots Magazine* wrote on May 10, 1771,

I dare say we will have more sent over, as we are told they are oppressed by their lairds; and there they will be lairds themselves. We are a distinct government, tax ourselves and make our own laws. Our Governor a good sort of man, the Lieutenant-Governor soon expected, with about 200 from Londonderry; but we like

¹¹Ibid., p. 97.

¹²*Scots Magazine* 37 (1775), p. 536.

the Scots much better.¹³

One such was John Fraser, son of William Fraser of Culbokie and Margaret Macdonell, Ardnabi, who had been with the 78th Regiment, Fraser's Highlanders. After the Peace of Paris, he received an offer from General Murray to be Deputy Paymaster General. When the government was changed from military to civil, he was appointed head of the Commission of Peace, *Custos Rotulorum*, and in Montreal, August, 1764, Sir Guy Carleton named him a judge of the Court of Common Pleas. He had remained in Canada because of debts he had incurred and because the cost of living was so high, his salary had been insufficient to pay them.¹⁴ Others from this regiment, such as Hugh Fraser, settled on the lands of Sir William Johnson in the Mohawk Valley and in 1764 Fraser was bringing colonists to Johnson's lands.¹⁵

The Seven Years War (1756-1763) with France forced the British to take their North American colonies more seriously, and to assure their security they set out to settle them with loyal British subjects. Previously, in 1755, the French-speaking Acadians, all of whom were Roman Catholics, had been expelled from Nova Scotia and a project to recolonize and develop the area was begun in 1758. Despite their virtual decimation in Nova Scotia, a distrust of the French-speaking Acadians, especially the priests, was maintained.

In every phase of their life, temporal and political as well as spiritual, they were, like most Catholic peasants, completely under the domination of their

¹³*Scots Magazine* 33 (July 1771), p.399.

¹⁴John Fraser to William Fraser 16 August 1766 SCA PL2/1/9.

¹⁵William Johnson to Lt. Gov. Cadwallader Colden 15 August 1765 *The Papers of Sir William Johnson* (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1921-1965), vol.4, p. 833-4.

priests. These men acting under instructions from their superiors in Canada and Cape Breton, used their influential position for political ends... To this end [the recapture of Nova Scotia by France] the priests carried on their propaganda, instilling into the minds of the simple Acadians a hatred and distrust of the English that even "the Sweets of English government" could not wipe out.¹⁶

Crown lands were in the hands of favourites and officials and those sought as settlers reflected the interests of this group who were primarily Protestant in creed and sympathetic to the British. Dissenters were tolerated but Catholics were not welcome.¹⁷ Despite this, the original Acadians began to trickle back, first as labourers, and then as colonists, to reclaim land from the salt marshes of *L'Acadie* as their ancestors had done a century earlier.

The settlement of Halifax was begun in 1749, and on March 7 of that year, a notice appeared in the *London Gazette* offering land in Nova Scotia to officers of the army and navy, to artificers, craftsmen and farmers, with or without families. Emigration conditions included free passage, provisions for the voyage and one year after arrival, arms and ammunition for defence, farm tools, and lands granted at a shilling per annum for every fifty acres ten years after the date of grant. The quantity of land granted was relative to a strict military hierarchy.¹⁸ Edward Cornwallis, the new governor, sailed with about 2550 emigrants, mostly English and a few Swiss, all of whom were Protestant. Of these, about 1000 left immediately upon arrival despite

¹⁶Katherine R. Williams "Social Conditions in Nova Scotia, 1749-1783," M.A. dissertation, McGill University, 1936, p. 13.

¹⁷Meinig, p. 272-3.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 29.

the penalties for so doing. The Governor described them, with 200 excepted, as

poor idle worthless vagabonds;... troublesome and mutinous, for whom the new colony had held a desirable prospect of glamorous adventure, escape from debt and free meals for a year, with the option of slipping off to New England if things became uncomfortable"... The military were wild and undisciplined and given to the excessive drinking of rum.¹⁹

By 1760, Roman Catholics, virtually all Irish, comprised almost one-third the population of Halifax, despite an overt animosity directed towards them. The south-eastern end of Nova Scotia was settled by Lowland Scots and because of their adherence to a Presbyterian creed, they were excluded from the civil and military offices under the Crown and marriages by their clergy were not valid till 1782.²⁰

In 1767, plans were set afoot by the Philadelphia Company to colonize Nova Scotia, especially the Pictou area. The chief promoters were John Pagan, a merchant from Greenock, and John Witherspoon²¹ whose advertisements for colonists received little response other than from Scotland, and it was here that they concentrated their efforts. The first group of emigrants to sail aboard their transport ship, the *Hector*, were sent to Boston in 1770 but from then on, Pictou, Nova Scotia, was the area proposed for debarkation and settlement²² and on September 15, 1773, some 200 emigrants from Scotland landed there. By 1783, despite efforts to discourage

¹⁹Quoted in Meinig, p. 36.

²⁰Ibid., p. 70.

²¹John Witherspoon (1723-1794) was born in Gifford, East Lothian and was the minister of Beith and later, Paisley. He emigrated to America where in 1768 he became the President of Princeton College, New Jersey. He supported the Revolutionary cause and contributed to the formulation of the Constitution. Vide: *DNB*, vol. 21, p. 742-44.

²²D. Campbell and R.A. MacLean, *Beyond the Atlantic Roar* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 36.

emigration to Witherspoon's colony, the tiny Pictou settlement numbered 200 to 300, most of whom were Highlanders.²³

Ile St-Jean which became St. John's Island, and still later, in 1798, Prince Edward Island, was placed under the jurisdiction of the government of Nova Scotia in 1763 and was surveyed by Captain Samuel Holland in 1764 for the Lords Commissioner for Trade and Plantation. At that date only thirty families "extremely poor, living in cabins or huts in the woods..." were on the Island. There had been a sizeable population who, like their Acadian kin, were expelled because they were French, though "an inoffensive people, [who] had molested no one, either by themselves or in conjunction with the Indians...[who] also kept their hands free from blood".²⁴ The Island was divided into sixty-seven lots of 20,000 acres, a capital and two other county towns, all of which were allocated by a lottery on July 23, 1767 in London. Amongst the seven petitioners selected was Sir James Montgomery, the Lord Advocate in Scotland. The conditions specified that within ten years at least 100 persons, European and Protestant, had to be settled on the lot of 20,000 acres and of that number at least a third had to be in place within four years. A quitrent of £20 to £60 per annum was also established.²⁵

²³Ibid., p. 38. A letter to the *Caledonian Mercury* quoted in the *Scots Magazine* 34 (1772), p. 587, condemns the sentiments expressed by such critics as self serving in that they dreaded the loss of their farmers and mechanics by means of their emigration and another criticized Witherspoon and Pagan for selling lands at 6d per acre without the means to survive the first year and without means to return to Scotland if dissatisfied. *Scots Magazine* 34 (Oct., 1772), p. 483.

²⁴Andrew MacPhail, "The History of Prince Edward Island" in *Canada and Its Provinces*, vol. 13 (Toronto, 1913), p. 335 and J.M. Bumsted, *Land, Settlement, and Politics on Eighteenth-Century Prince Edward Island* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), pp. 10-11.

²⁵MacPhail, p. 336-37. Bumsted notes the quitrents were to be "proportional to the value of the lands" as assessed in the Holland survey. Vide: J.M. Bumsted, *Land, Settlement, ...*, p. 25.

Following the defeat of the French at Quebec in 1759, provisioning of troops stationed there and elsewhere gave rise to a lucrative trade between Britain and her now extended colonies. Between 1759 and 1761, twenty-three full ship loads of provisions for the British armies sailed from Greenock alone and many of the Scottish merchants engaged in this trade remained after the Peace was signed in 1763.²⁶ In addition to enjoying the business opportunities presented by their circumstances, they seemed to have been preferred for office by the Governor-in-Chief at Quebec, General Murray, as was so sarcastically remarked to Sir William Johnson:

General Murray has named eight of the Council and Burton and Bruire laugh at the thoughts of their being asked... when he has secured so great a Majority of Scotch and them of the low'r sort; in short from the Porter to his Excellency all are his abject Slaves, so little you see do our great Folks at home study the true Interest of the Colony's...²⁷

Another to resent his apparent favouritism was Daniel Claus, Johnson's son-in-law and his agent in Montreal:

Mr. Murray being published Governor-in-chief of Quebec Province ... has played all his cards as well as to carry all before him as far as his Civil Commission

²⁶David Macmillan, "The Role of the Scots in Early Canadian Economic Development, 1680-1850," *Proceedings of the 6th-7th Colloquia on Scottish Studies*, University of Guelph, 1973, p. 55.

²⁷John Ormsby Donnellan at Quebec to Sir William Johnson 22 August 1764 *Papers of Sir William Johnson*, vol. 11, p. 334-5. The regiments in America 1756-1763 were: 42d Royal Highland Regiment; the Black Watch; 77th Montgomery's Highlanders; 78th Fraser's Highlanders. From 1749-1756, the Black Watch were in Ireland and were basically Campbells, Grahams, etc. Montgomery's was named after its commander Archibald Montgomery, son of the Earl of Eglinton. The 78th Frasers formed 5 January 1757, by Simon Fraser, son of Lord Lovat included Donald Macdonald, a captain and brother to Clanranald, who was killed in 1758; John Macdonell, Lochgarry; Thomas Fraser, Struy; Alex. Fraser, Culduthel; James Fraser, Belladrum; Ronald Macdonell, son of Keppoch; Charles Macdonell of Glengarry; William Macdonell; John Fraser, Balnain; Hector Macdonald, brother of Boisdale; Allan Stewart son of Innernaheil; John Fraser, Alexr. Macdonald, son of Boisdale; John Macdonell of Leek; David Baillie; etc. They were quartered between Canada & Nova Scotia. J.P. MacLean. *An Historical Account of the Settlements of Scotch Highlanders in America prior to the Peace of 1783*. (Glasgow: John Mackay, 1900), p. 252.

will admit of... I am told he would give the direction of Indian Affairs to one Fraser, a Half-pay Captain in the 78th Regiment as he thought it too good an Employment for any but Scotsmen to enjoy.²⁸

In 1763, the British reorganized trade throughout the newly acquired colony, opening up markets hitherto restricted by and for the French. Investment opportunities abounded and the wealth of the interior, especially fur, was made available to those able to take advantage of the situation - mostly English and Irish but especially Scots. Because of its strategic position, Montreal became the trade centre.²⁹

In 1774, the Quebec Act, George III c.83, which was largely the work of Sir Guy Carleton, later Lord Dorchester, restored many of the rights which the French had enjoyed prior to their defeat and to a great extent reversed the Anglicization policy of 1763. Among these was a toleration of the Roman Catholic church. Carleton went so far as to permit Catholics to hold public office and he recognized the Church's accustomed rights, including that of collecting tithes; rather than suppress the Jesuits in Canada, he sought to continue them in their work there.³⁰ Although his spirit of *largesse* towards the French Canadians was viewed negatively by some, it most probably secured the acquiescence of the Catholic hierarchy.

²⁸Daniel Claus at Montreal to Sir William Johnson 30 August 1764 *Johnson Papers* vol.11, p. 341-2.

²⁹One who typified the successful Scots was William Grant of the Blairfindy family who in 1759, at the age of fifteen, was sent by his kinsman Robert Grant to represent their London-based firm in Quebec. William, the nephew of the brothers Robert, Rector of the Scots College at Douai and Peter Grant, the agent for the Scottish Mission in Rome, was fluent in French and was engaged to negotiate loans to those whose businesses had been destroyed during the War. By 1766 he had become one of the leading British merchants at Quebec and had become the "principal support of all his poor friends and relations". *DCB*, vol. 5, p. 367-76, *passim* and *SCA Blairs Letters*, especially Robert Grant to Peter Grant 7 July 1776 *SCA BL3/286/12*.

³⁰*DCB*, vol. 5, p. 145. The entire Order of the Society of Jesus was suppressed by the Pope in 1773.

Thus, by 1770, Britain's most northern colonies in America: Nova Scotia, St. John's Island, and Canada, were trying to attract suitable immigrants and although Roman Catholics were officially unwelcome, they were settled in Nova Scotia, and although French-speaking, formed the majority population in Quebec.

One of the conditions of a land grant was that the holder settle and develop his holding within a specified time period. Thus, from the late 1760's onwards, emigration agents were active, especially in the areas of social unrest, in drumming up recruits for their land-owning masters. One of the most successful of the land speculators at this time was Sir William Johnson, born about 1715 near Dunshaughlin, County Meath, of a respectable but not wealthy family. His mother's brother was Vice-Admiral Peter Warren and it was to oversee his uncle's estate near Fort Hunter in the Mohawk Valley, New York that Johnson emigrated in 1738. Within a decade he was the most substantial business man on the Mohawk River, employing both white indentured labourers and black slaves.³¹ His land holdings were vast and colonists too few to undertake the task of settlement, cultivation and eventual profit for the land holder. The Peace of Paris, 1763 provided a ready supply of willing colonists: infantry men disbanded from the various regiments, the 78th Fraser's Highlanders in particular.

One who had purchased land from Johnson was Lord Adam Gordon³² who wrote that he was grateful to Sir William for keeping 10,000 acres near the Mohawk

³¹*DCB*, vol. 4, p. 394-8, passim.

³²Born 1726, he was the fourth son of Alexander, the second Duke of Gordon. Later, in 1782, he was appointed the commander of the forces in Scotland (North Britain) and was known to be sympathetic to the Highlanders. Vide: *DNB*, vol. 8, p. 158.

River for him, half the cost of which was to be paid by the Duke of Atholl. "We are determined to sett about settling it immediately, either by appointing an agent there and granting it out to those who desire to be our tenants; or by sending out to it some people from Scotland, Ireland and Germany as we can get them."³³ Only Protestants were to be considered as emigration candidates, and in the case of the Johnson estate, there was a definite preference for Episcopalians.

Thus, between 1765 and 1770, the plans to settle the embryonic colonies to the north of Boston and New York had been set in motion. Coincidentally, in the Highlands of Scotland, changes in land management produced a dissatisfied tenantry who, when faced with what loomed as a bleak future, were only too willing to remove to what was presented as a better life.

Much has been written about the effects on Highland society by the defeat of the Jacobites in 1746. It is now almost axiomatic to note the destruction of the clan system and the resultant alienation of chief from his clansmen whom Alexander Irvine described in 1802 as

being at first undermined and ultimately extinguished by the progress of society, the fortunes of the chiefs, and policy of government, the Highlander, released from its influence, conceived a dislike to his country, lost his activity, became disheartened and felt himself injured, because no longer flattered, caressed and feasted... he leaves his country with less reluctance, and is in some measure indifferent whether he shall ever return.³⁴

Buchanan during his travels in the western Highlands and Isles noted the

³³Lord Adam Gordon to Sir William Johnson 10 January 1767 in *Johnson Papers*, vol. 13, p. 251.

³⁴Alexander Irvine. *An Inquiry into the Cause and Effects of Emigration from the Highlands and Western Islands of Scotland...* (Edinburgh, 1802), p. 6-7.

change on an interpersonal level. "Formerly, he wrote, "a Highlander would have drawn his dirk against even a laird, if he had subjected him to the indignity of a blow; at present, any tyrannical tacksman, in the absence of the laird or lord, whose presence alone can enforce good order and justice, may strike a scallag, and even a subtenant with perfect impunity."³⁵ Men, once considered by the chiefs and tacksmen as vital for military purposes, were perceived as a superfluous and undesirable population on lands which could be made more profitable if cleared for cattle, sheep or deer.³⁶ Granted, emigrations had taken place prior to Culloden and from the Highlands, especially Argyllshire, and one can speculate upon the inevitability of the mass movements of peoples occurring despite the latter-eighteenth century societal changes.

The cause of emigration most often cited was the great rise in rents on the Highland estates which applied not only to the ordinary tenant but to the wealthier tacksmen class as well.³⁷ If a tenant could not or would not pay the rent asked, then he was evicted. His was the choice, albeit, perhaps an empty one. This practice contrasts with the forced evictions practised especially on the Sutherland estates, and later, throughout the Highlands³⁸. These latter removals, or "Highland Clearances,"

³⁵John Lanne Buchanan, *Travels in the Western Hebrides from 1782-1790* (London, 1793), p. 50-51.

³⁶*The Highlands of Scotland in 1750*, ed. Andrew Lang. (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1898) p. xlii.

³⁷*Scots Magazine* 33 (Sept., 1771) p. 500.

³⁸Ninety families in the parishes of Farr and Lairg were removed at Whitsun, 1807. This was the first major clearance on the Stafford estates in Sutherland. Vide: John Prebble, *The Highland Clearances* (Penguin Books, 1969), p. 61. Evictions occurred in Ross in 1820; in Glenelg in 1849; in 1851, Colonel Gordon of Cluny initiated mass evictions in South Uist and Barra and, in 1853, Lord Macdonald cleared the last of the people from Boreraig and Suishnish, Skye. Prebble, p. 308-309.

as they were to be known, were characterized by the physical and, at times, brutal ejection of the total population from an entire area.

The beginning of large-scale sheep farming in the Highlands may be said to date from 1762, when some sheep farmers from Armadale took leases of land in the upper parts of Perthshire. Usually the introduction of sheep-farming meant the migration of a south-country storemaster, with south-country shepherd, sheep and dogs. They came from Clydesdale, Tweeddale and Nithsdale and by 1770, Central Perthshire had been reached and Inverness-shire shortly after. In 1792, Sir John Sinclair introduced blackface sheep into Caithness and the last county on the mainland to be affected was Sutherland.³⁹

Seemingly overlooked in the emphasis on the expansion of sheep has been the importance of cattle to proprietor and tenant alike, as the surest, and sometimes, only source of a cash income. A man's wealth and social status more often than not reflected not the number of acres in his possession nor his cash assets, but the number of cattle he owned. Indeed, prior to the mid-eighteenth century, this notion engendered the gainful, albeit, unlawful, business of cattle thieving, especially in the remote Highlands. "Nothing measured better the health of Highland society than the state of its cattle stocks."⁴⁰ So long as a tenant had land on which to graze his cattle, and providing the weather remained favourable for the growth of pasture crops, the Highlander could meet the terms of his lease, even the inordinate increases in rents demanded by the proprietors, for the cash income from the sale of cattle, rose

³⁹Donald F. Macdonald, *Scotland's Shifting Population, 1770-1850* (Glasgow: Jackson, Son & Co., 1937), p. 36.

⁴⁰Malcolm Gray, *The Highland Economy, 1750-1815*. (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1957), p. 37.

steadily from mid-century until 1815, when the demand for cattle fell drastically. Yet, these very two conditions so necessary for a "healthy Highland economy" were threatened by the consolidation of land-holdings in order to provide extensive sheep pasture and, during the latter half of the eighteenth century, by several periods of crop failures, which saw a heavy mortality in cattle.⁴¹ When the opportunity arose, the money earned from the sale of cattle was the principal means by which possessors raised the capital for emigration.⁴²

Nearly all those concerned with, and alarmed at, the mounting emigration totals blamed the Highland proprietors for their greed and for not knowing the true value of their lands.⁴³ Along with the proprietors, the tacksmen were the next to share in this opprobrium, for they were seen as profiting from their long leases and cheaply rented farms for which they in turn demanded much higher rates. Even in 1772, strangers from the south were blamed for bidding at such high rates as to make it impossible for the proprietors to refuse them or enable the local residents to compete with them.⁴⁴

In the latter decades of the eighteenth century, the tacksmen were targeted as useless and expensive middlemen who served themselves lavishly while paying a pittance to the proprietors according to the terms of leases, some of which had been

⁴¹For examples of this, see pp. 90-92 and Chapter VII, p. 142.

⁴²J. M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance, 1770-1815*. (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1982), p. 40. In 1803, drovers moved into the Isles and north-west coast of the Highlands in great numbers to purchase the animals of departing emigrants. To the consternation of the lairds, the increase in supply did not decrease the price paid, and many were enabled to pay their passage. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁴³*Scots Magazine* 34 (Dec., 1772), p. 699-700; 35 (Sept., 1773) p. 557

⁴⁴Letter of 31 December 1772 in the *Scots Magazine, Appendix* (1772) p. 698.

set for decades, and at the same time exacting stiff rents from the ordinary tenants.⁴⁵ This was especially true of the tacksmen who were wadsetters, that is, those who held land of the chief as mortgage for money lent to him. It was particularly of this type of tacksman that the author of the *Highlands in 1750...* could write that "by lavish subletting... a tacksman might live rent free, while the proprietor could only look on and see his estate reduced to beggary..."⁴⁶ This was precisely the case on the Glengarry estate and was the chief cause of the evictions of the tacksmen/wadsetters under Duncan Macdonell, fourteenth Glengarry, and his wife, Marjory, i.e. Marsalaidh, Grant of Dalvey, who through the systematic redemption of the wadsets began to regain the control of the estate. The same author echoed the spirit of the time when he stated that "the Highlands could not be improved until the tacksmen either were deprived of their power of subsetting or held it under conditions which would protect the under tenants... or were allowed to keep such land as they were able to cultivate."⁴⁷ The tacksmen ceased to form a special and privileged class, although four decades after Culloden, John Lane Buchanan noted that those who rented large districts from the great proprietors were able to rank with gentlemen of from two to three hundred pounds to a thousand pounds per annum.⁴⁸ For most, however, their status was lowered as that of the subtenants was raised. Tacksmen, after the middle of the century, found themselves "faced with the prospect of

⁴⁵Margaret Adam, "The Highland Emigration of 1770," *SHR* 16 (1919), p. 288.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 287-8.

⁴⁷*Idem.*

⁴⁸John Lanne Buchanan, *Travels...*, p. 38.

heightened rents and lowered social position."⁴⁹ One of the many southern travellers to the Highlands, noted that many of the greater tack[s]men were of the same blood as their chieftains from whom they felt the first act of oppression, "as Caesar did the wound from his beloved Brutus", and he claimed that it was their resentment against this cavalier treatment which drove many across the Atlantic.⁵⁰

A correspondent to the *Scots Magazine* suggested that the tacksmen encouraged emigration from two motives: that of revenge against their chiefs by leading their tenants away, or, by remaining themselves, to get the vacated farms cheaper.⁵¹ It is likely that the writer was referring to the 1769 emigration from Skye when several of Lord Macdonald's tacksmen, offended at the increase in rent demanded of them, banded together to purchase 100,000 acres in South Carolina which they thought to colonize with as many as would leave the Sleat estate.⁵² The revenge motive does not seem to apply to the 1773 emigration from the Glengarry estate which was led by the three Macdonell cousins and tacksmen, although there can be little doubt that they too had been aggrieved by Glengarry.⁵³

As far back as 1737, the Duke of Argyll's factor, Duncan Forbes, Culloden,

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 290-91. It is possible the wealth and social position of the tacksmen has been exaggerated, for one writer has described them as "aristocrats by blood and training, [who] lived sometimes in the meanest of houses". Vide: Malcolm Gray, *The Highland Economy...*, p. 16.

⁵⁰Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland, 1772*. Part II (Chester, 1776), p. 307.

⁵¹Idem.

⁵²Roderick C. MacLeod, "The Western Highlands in the Eighteenth Century", *SHR* 19 (1922), p. 33.

⁵³The deep sense of hurt was felt by the tacksmen and those of lower status very keenly, for they seemed to share a like devotion to their chief, as can be illustrated by their reaction to the financial distress of the MacLeod. In 1777, even though the landlords had ceased to live permanently on their Highland estates and had somewhat forsaken their clansmen, the tacksmen and some thirty-six tenants sought to help their chief by offering to pay an increase in rent for three years. Ibid., p. 38.

induced the sub-tenants on Mull and Tiree to bid for leases in defiance of the tacksmen.⁵⁴ Perhaps the gradual northwards progress of agricultural reform and better estate management would have seen the gradual removal of tacksmen but the sudden introduction of southern manners, methods and ideas, luring the chiefs away from their people, contributed in no small measure to their demise. The tacksmen were aware of the change in attitude and, considering their positions precarious, sought to establish themselves elsewhere. Emigration, because of other contemporary events, was a likely solution. However, they were leaders, not followers, and it would be as leaders that they would leave their native soil. Had they been at a loss to find recruits previously, they were not so now, for large numbers had begun to view emigration in a more positive light. In the 1770's, the tacksmen were regarded by their contemporaries as the principal instigators of emigration.⁵⁵

As if the conditions imposed by the proprietors were not difficult enough, climatic distress proved at times an even greater incentive for removing from the Highlands. The weather was severe in the autumn of 1771 and late frosts delayed sowing in 1772, a combination which resulted in a scarcity of food and greatly inflated prices for that which could be found. Pennant reported starvation in the Small Isles in 1772, a fact he noted contributed to emigration from that area.⁵⁶ His findings were corroborated by Bishop John Macdonald who wrote of the western Highlands and Isles noting that there was

⁵⁴Eric Cregeen, "The Tacksmen and Their Successors," *Scottish Studies* 13 (1969), p. 99.

⁵⁵J. M. Bumsted, p. 34.

⁵⁶T.M. Devine, "Highland Migration, 1760-1860," *SHR* 62 (1983), p. 146.

a great loss of Cattle and the prospect of great dearth of provisions everywhere in the Highlands, which will probably forward some thousands more to America. Tho' our Superiors affect not to believe it, yet it is very probable in a few years there shall be no men here.⁵⁷

Two years previous to that Bishop Hay had informed John Geddes who was on his way to the College in Madrid that there had been a great and long storm that spring in the North. "In many places of the Highlands", he wrote, "their cattle are almost all dead for want of food and I am informed that there are many who were substantial farmers who are quite ruined."⁵⁸

When harvests were poor, the people had to be supplied with meal in order to survive till the next year's harvest. Their cattle seldom did, unless given fodder brought from afar. Such was the state of affairs in the north of Scotland in the spring of 1772, as recounted by Bishop Hay:

...we have had a most severe winter here; the consequences of which is that numbers of families in the North and Highlands are reduced to beggary, especially by the death of their cattle; and numbers, finding no compassion or indulgence from the unrelenting hearts of their cruel masters, are flocking over to America. A most dismal sight we had in this Town, about two weeks ago; one and twenty families from Sutherland being turned adrift, came up here in a body...[with] the resolution to go to America...Collections were made here for them... The scarcity and dearth ...were...attended with a great sickness and mortality, particularly about Drummond, Lochaber, Glengarry, Badenoch and are now come to Strathdown...⁵⁹

That the peasantry survived earlier famines owed in part to the social role

⁵⁷Bp. John Macdonald to Charles Cruickshank 23 April 1772 SCA B13/247/7.

⁵⁸Bp. George Hay to John Geddes 28 May 1770 SCA BL3/219/2.

⁵⁹Bp. George Hay to John Geddes 12 June 1772, quoted in *Scotichronicon*, p. 102-03.

played by the clan chiefs. It was their responsibility to see that by purchasing and providing meal, their tenants and as many of the cattle as possible survived the years of dearth. In the post-Culloden years, however two societal changes militated against this practice. The chiefs, no longer needing their tenants as formerly, were less inclined to sustain them and, in fact, regarded them as a burden. Proprietors were blamed for being only too willing to see their dependants leave, especially in or immediately after a year of dearth. The second change owed to the reform of the tenant-owner relationship and the rise of rents. The period from 1770 on was one of inflated rents. In years of dearth, and there were at least six severe periods between 1770 and 1800, many of the cattle died. Aside from fishing and the harvesting of kelp, the sale of cattle was the greatest source of income for many Highlanders. Thus, in addition to a prospect of starvation, the average tenant faced eviction from his holding because of his inability to pay the rent. By 1772, southerners had arrived in the Highlands and were bidding for farms at rates far beyond the ability of the local residents, so that many Highlanders lost their tacks and were left stranded. It should not be surprising that the plums of land-ownership, independence from a proprietor, and a good living in America, enticed many of the disheartened or disgruntled.

Even though Protestants were preferred, and in some cases, the only settlers officially permitted in the British North American Colonies, Catholics from the Highlands did emigrate there and in numbers far out of proportion to their total within the general population. It is with their emigration, their motives for leaving and the involvement, whether as participants or supporters, of their clergy, that this

section is concerned, beginning with the earliest and most controversial, that of John Macdonald of Glenalladale's settlement in St. John's Island.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SOUTH UIST EMIGRATION OF 1772

Mr. Dianen [i.e. Bishop Hugh Macdonald], is gone just now to the Highlands to see if he can get things settled there as to be up before winter... he has a very troublesome affair on hand there, viz. a violent persecution raised against us in the Isles.¹

Thus did Bishop George Hay begin his recounting of the episode which was eventually to lead to the emigration in 1772 of some 210 Highlanders, 100 of whom were from South Uist. The violent persecution referred to various methods employed by Colin Macdonald, Second of Boisdale,² to turn his tenants from their adherence to Roman Catholicism. He was a very powerful laird, a cousin to Ranald Macdonald, sixteenth of Clanranald, his father, Alexander, having been a half-brother to the previous chief. It was Alexander, in fact, who was granted South Uist as a tack by his brother Ranald in 1734 and Boisdale and other areas in 1741. Alexander was renowned for his prodigious physical strength and Colin for his autocratic manner and intemperate behaviour. It was for these traits rather than the physical prowess he inherited from his father that Colin was feared by the tacksmen on the Clanranald estates.³ In the decade previous to 1772, he too like his tenants had been a Catholic.⁴

¹Bp. George Hay to John Geddes 16 August 1770 SCA BL3/219/8.

²Boisdale is located at the southeast end of South Uist.

³A. Macdonald and A. Macdonald, *The Clan Donald*, vol.3 (Inverness, 1904) p. 291-296 and Iain McKay, "Glenalladale's Settlement, P.E.I.," *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 10 (1965) p. 17.

⁴Most of the Catholic sources claim Colin had been raised a Catholic. His father, Alexander, at the onset of the '45, was against the Stuart landing, although he befriended the Prince personally, a courtesy for which he was arrested and imprisoned. The Presbytery of Uist sent a testimonial signed by Donald McLeod, the Moderator, in his support, stating among other things that "he never failed

Blundell refers to an incident concerning a Laird of Boisdale, either Colin or his father Alexander, which might explain his attack on the Church through his tenants.⁵

The laird arrived on a Sunday morning to attend the service and was ordered out of the church by the priest for his having forced his tenants to work on Michaelmas, i.e. September 29. This day was to be observed as Sunday which, in the Church discipline of the time, included a ban on servile or laborious work. For his disregard of the ecclesiastical injunction, Boisdale was ordered from the church. Not only did he not return the following Sunday, he never set foot inside the church again.

There is good reason to believe that the priest involved was the missionary on South Uist from 1766, Matthias Wynne, an Irish Dominican. In a letter to his colleague, Bishop John Macdonald suggested there were bad feelings between Colin and Mr. Wynne to the effect that when the latter sent information that he would not return to Scotland, the Co-adjutor to the Highland District wrote that it were better [he] "had never come to us, for it is generally believed his inconsiderate behaviour

to exert himself to the utmost of his power to serve the friends of Government and support the Protestant interest in this corner..." *Clan Donald*, vol. 3, p. 664. If Colin was a Catholic when he inherited the Boisdale estate in 1768, it is likely that his religious leanings were tenuous at best.

⁵Odo Blundell, *The Catholic Highlands of Scotland*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Sands and Co., 1909-1917), vol. 2, p. 31. Blundell recounts the incident, without reference to sources, ascribing it to Alexander, first of Boisdale although he later suggests it was more likely to have been his son and heir, Colin. "It appears that the laird of Boisdale, Alasdair Mor Macdonald, was publicly censured by the priest because he had compelled his people to work on St. Michael's Day... The *Directory* of 1851, however states that it was Mr. Wynne who rebuked Boisdale... "between 1715 and 1730"...[but] Mr. Wynne was priest in Uist between 1766 and 1770... Certain it is that [Colin] Boisdale, who in earlier years had been a Catholic, began about 1768 violently to persecute his former co-religionists."

Mr. Wynne's behaviour subsequent to his withdrawal from Uist suggests that he had become somewhat faulty or unrealistic in his ability to judge situations, a fact which lends further credence to his being involved in the humiliation of the laird. After his return to Ireland in June 1770, he had written that he was successfully raising money in the West to help the beleaguered South Uist tenants. In a later letter, he advised he had been promised assistance and he himself wanted to be settled in Dublin and wanted the Scottish bishops to use their influence in getting him such plus an annual allowance of £100 from Rome in order to act as the agent for the projected 150 families. The bishops themselves did not receive such a sum and were not appreciative of his rather bold suggestion. Bp. George Hay to Peter Grant 20 December 1770 SCA BL3/220/13.

gave occasion to the storm raised in Uist."⁶

It is not difficult to imagine the humiliation the laird of Boisdale suffered in being ordered from the church on "his" island by a priest who was a foreigner. This would be reason enough for a retort in kind, but the attack on Catholic practice could very well have owed its inspiration to the agricultural reform of the day and the drive towards greater yield and income. One of the criticisms levied against the Highland tenants by landowners and factors at times was that they were inclined to be lazy. The Clanranald factor, albeit writing some thirty years later, summarizes this attitude:

In place of a gang of idle menials, which his ex-sublimity kept about his person, and of lazy, slovenly tenants, who in place of cultivating, wholly neglected the land, the new proprietor excites and liberally rewards useful industry.⁷

The celebration of Michaelmas, which in the case of South Uist whose patron St. Michael was, would have lasted a week and could very easily have led to an interpretation that the tenants were, if not lazy, perhaps uncaring, for it might well have made some difference to the harvest yield at a very critical time of year. Both lairds of Boisdale, Alexander and Colin, were well-known for their outstanding abilities and active business habits, and were concerned with agricultural and other improvements.⁸ It was Colin's father, Alexander, who realized the potential profit which could be gained from the massive kelp beds which flourished on the coasts of the Clanranald estate; for this reason, about the year 1754, he brought men from

⁶Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 27 November 1770 SCA BL3/222/7.

⁷Robert Brown, *Strictures on the Earl of Selkirk's Observations on the Present State of the Highlands of Scotland*. (Edinburgh, 1806), p. 15.

⁸*The Clan Donald*, vol. 3, p. 293.

Ireland to instruct the natives of Uist in the manufacture of kelp.⁹ Anything, then, that might have interfered with the work and production schedules, including the Church festivals, would have proved a source of irritation or anxiety, and might have prompted his forbidding his tenants the luxury of a week's holidays or even a day-off. Colin himself described them as setting "a whole country idle..."¹⁰

It is likely this was the incident which sparked Boisdale's row with the Church for his reaction was directed at Mr. Wynne in particular and towards his tenants' Catholicism in general, for which reformation of religion he was extended a "letter of thanks for the zeal he shews in that laudable Cause" by the Presbytery of Uist.¹¹ When the time came to renew the leases, usually around Michaelmas, to take effect the following Whitsunday, ie. about September 29, 1769 for May 15, 1770,

he summoned his tenants to the number of 1000 souls to inform them that unless they renounced their religion and swore an oath never to communicate with a Priest again, they would lose their houses on the Island; and those who did not eat meat in Lent were scourged.¹²

The people refused to acquiesce and let him know that they would rather beg than remain as tenants under those conditions. Boisdale relented when he saw their intent and renewed their leases unconditionally for a year at rates three to four times

⁹James Anderson, *An Account of the Present State of the Hebrides and Western Coasts of Scotland* (Edinburgh: C. Elliot, 1785), p. 151.

¹⁰Quoted in a letter from Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 13 September 1789 SCA BL4/11/8. This attitude is discussed more fully in section one, chapter 3.

¹¹Presbytery of Uist Minute Book 5 December 1770 SRO CH2/361/1, p. 11-12.

¹²Bp. Hugh Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 7 June 1770 SCA BL3/221/9; J.F.S. Gordon, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle for Scotland*. 4 vols.: *Journal and Appendix to Scotichronicon and Monasticon* (Glasgow, 1867) vol 4, p. 79.

their previous value. But he never forgot his original demands and kept after

his tenants and because he had a monopoly of trade he was able to arrange the internal economy of the island so that his tenants were kept poor and unable to leave.¹³

If he gave up, temporarily at least, on the older generation, he regarded the younger with greater optimism. To achieve his purpose, he established a school under the charge of a

violent bitter body for a Schoolmaster who set himself to corrupt all the young children that went to him, so far as to force them to eat flesh in Lent and to give them most blasphemous sentences for their copies in writing...¹⁴

The parents, whose children were beaten if they did not comply with the schoolmaster's instructions, took alarm and consulted their priest, Mr. Wynne, who advised them to remove the children from the school. Boisdale was enraged at this clerical interference and about June 1770, wrote letters to the two missionaries then on South Uist, although his main concern was Mr. Wynne:

He has sent threatening letters to Mr. Wynne and Mr. Forrester inviting them to leave the Island entirely or he will call in the military to take them up and swearing if Mr. Wynne comes in his way he will twist his head from his shoulders.¹⁵

The affair in South Uist was bad enough but other landowners began to imitate Boisdale's action. On the Island of Muck, the missionary Alexander Kennedy was arrested and held in custody, until he could be removed to the mainland, at the

¹³Idem.

¹⁴Bp. George Hay to John Geddes, Ibid.

¹⁵Hay to Geddes, *ibid.* Alexander Forrester, b. 1701, was resident in South Uist but was in ill health and not active as a missionary in 1770.

express order of Mrs. MacLean, the wife of the Proprietor. The reason she gave when asked was that she was simply following Boisdale's example.¹⁶

That the situation in the Isles should have held the place of prominence on the agenda for the annual meeting of the Roman Catholic clergy which occurred at Preshome¹⁷ in July, 1770, could not have been unexpected. Bishop John Macdonald presented his colleagues with a plan to relieve the unhappy Catholics on the Boisdale estate. It was a plan proposed by John Macdonald, seventh of Glenalladale, and one of Clanranald's chief tacksmen.¹⁸ It was made clear to the bishops that Glenalladale's solution was emigration.

Honest worthy Glenaladale is of opinion that the only remedy to the Evils that seem to threaten Religion in that Country will be to make Emigration to America; he is sensible this would require a good deal of money. He hopes Catholics in other Countries would not refuse to assist that way, and that for his part, he is ready to sell his all for so laudable a purpose and go himself to conduct them.¹⁹

What should have been surprising, considering Boisdale's last outburst against Mr. Wynne and the tenants occurred in May and June of 1770, was that Glenalladale's proposal should be tabled at the Bishops' meeting the very next month. That it was developed and defended to such a degree as later events would show, suggests that Glenalladale had been considering emigration for some time.

John Macdonald (1742-1811) was the eldest son and heir of Alexander Mac-

¹⁶Hay to Geddes, *ibid.* and *Scotichronicon*, p. 79.

¹⁷Located in the Enzie on the Duke of Gordon's estate, this was the most significant Roman Catholic mission in the Lowland District until the beginning of the nineteenth century.

¹⁸J.M. Bumsted, "The Highland Emigration to the Island of St. John and the Scottish Catholic Church, 1769-1774," *Dalhousie Review* 58 (1978) p. 515.

¹⁹Bp. George Hay to John Geddes, *ibid.*

donald, who belonged to the senior cadet branch of the Clan Donald of Clanranald, and Margaret Macdonell (Scotos). His family were strong Jacobites and staunchly supported the Stuart cause in 1745-46. It was on their estate at Glenfinnan that the Jacobite standard was raised on August 19, 1745.²⁰

When he was fourteen, he left to study in the Scottish Benedictine school in Ratisbon, Germany, where he received an education which left him, among other things, with an ability to speak, read and write seven languages.²¹ He also retained from his youth a sympathy for the Stuarts and a fervent and knowledgeable appreciation of his Catholic faith. In 1763, he inherited the title and estate of Glenalladale.

The Glenalladale estate was held as a tack of Clanranald and until shortly before leaving for St. John's Island, John Macdonald was his cousin's factor. In the Islands, from about 1760, the trend had been towards land improvement and where land was inadequate for such, owners relied on the sea for fish and kelp. It was a period of increased rents and short leases and one which saw the unsettling of the traditional land uses and leasing patterns between landlords and tenants, usually their own kin. Whereas family ties had at one time assured a member of the clan of consideration by the Proprietor, this was no longer the case. The tacksmen themselves were being replaced by men experienced in the new methods of agriculture, animal breeding and estate management. As early as 1737 in Argyll, the system of great

²⁰*The Clan Donald*, vol. 3, p. 265-266.

²¹Allan F. Macdonald, "Captain John Macdonald, Glenaladale," *CCHA Report* (1964) p. 23.

tacksmen was being abolished under the guidance of the factor, Duncan Forbes, Culloden.²²

Given the date of Glenalladale's emigration scheme presented at Preshome and the amount of time required for the preparations prior to emigration, it is likely Glenalladale had begun to consider it seriously as a possible solution for himself and his family, but for reasons other than a religious persecution on Uist. It is certain that he was personally unhappy with the current attitudes towards land lease, reflected in his comment that "emigrations were like to demolish the Highland Lairds, & very deservedly";²³ like the Macdonell tacksmen who would lead a large emigration from the Glengarry estate in 1773, he felt that opportunity for men of ability lay elsewhere. He wrote to his cousin, Alexander Macdonald, Borrodale, of his malaise just prior to the departure of the *Alexander* for St. John's Island in March, 1772, stating he was going to leave because of the "terror of the times". He had a quarrel with Lady Clanranald which led to problems of land tenure and although the issue had been resolved he foresaw an uncertain future, and not just for himself, for the "whole tribe of us Macien oigs are going off at this time to a man excepting your two Brothers & old Lochans and his Son Donald."²⁴ Glenalladale did not leave with the emigrants

²²Eric Cregeen, "The Tacksmen and their Successors," *Scottish Studies* 13 (1969) p. 94.

²³Iain R. Mackay, "Glenalladale's Settlement, Prince Edward Island", *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 10 (1965) p. 19.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17 & 19. In the letter, he mentions he had agreed to "accept the Farm of Keppoch", which decision was misrepresented "by designing people to Lady Clanranald ... & upon the whole alienated My Mind from the Factory or any Dependence on that Family." Vide: pp. 17-18. His reference to the emigration of the "whole tribe of us Macien oigs" is a good example of the withdrawal of a whole "family", an oft-suggested reason given for the depopulation of whole areas of the Highlands at this time. The "Macien oigs" were the members of his own extended family, i.e. all those who had descended from John Og, first of Glenalladale (*fl.* 1566), the son of John Moidartach, VII of Clanranald by Mary, daughter of Allan Macdonald of Knoydart. Vide: *The Clan Donald*, vol. 3, p. 263.

but returned to the Glenalladale estate to arrange matters before he himself left in 1773.

Glenalladale's interest in St. John's Island was aroused by letters received from early Scottish settlers, a party of the disbanded Fraser's Highlanders who had settled there about 1760.²⁵ Like their comrades-in-arms in Canada and elsewhere, they were urging their kith and kin to join them, giving glowing accounts of the benefits that awaited the enterprising and hard-working emigrant.

St. John's Island had attracted the interest of another person at this time. The Lord Advocate, James Montgomery, had purchased 80,000 acres of good land on the Island with a view to establishing a colony there but he was unhappy with its progress and the cost incurred:

In my last I exhibited a kind of justification as to my conduct with regard to the Island of St. John's. But if I had known the state of the expense, attending the expenditure of my white negroes [the party of indentured emigrants from Perthshire led by David Lawson] as you call them, I had not been so forward in the matter. In short, I am exceedingly out of humour with that transaction. The expense is enormous and above double what it should have been.²⁶

It was the colonial policy in Nova Scotia and St. John's Island at this time to seek foreign Protestants or British who had been resident in North America for two years so that Roman Catholic Highlanders failed to fill the requirements of the land grants to proprietors on two counts: they did not have the residence in North America

²⁵Ada McLeod, "The Glenaladale Pioneers," *Dalhousie Review* 11 (1931/32) p. 316.

²⁶James Montgomery to Mr. Riddell 14 April 1770 NLS. Ms.1399, ff.70 and Montgomery to John Mackenzie 24 April 1770 NLS. Ms.1399, ff.72.

nor did they profess the creed required.²⁷

Glenalladale learned of the Lord Advocate's concern with his colony and of his possible desire to part with a portion of it. In August or September, 1770, William Macdonald (Ryneton), Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh and Clanranald's business manager, wrote to the Lord Advocate to inquire if he would be willing to accept the Glenalladale emigrants and upon what terms. Montgomery was deemed a very good associate for it would be in his power to facilitate the transportation of the emigrants and to assure the procurement of provisions when they arrived.²⁸

One question that arises in the development of the emigration story is that of the timing of Glenalladale's involvement with the Uist people. There is no indication that he had made plans to form an emigration party prior to the outbreak of violence on Uist and it may be asked if he did not take advantage of the situation in order to enlist the support of the Church and also to establish a colony rather than merely to emigrate himself with his immediate family. The possibility of maintaining land in British North America was much brighter if colonists had been enlisted specifically to settle and cultivate the numerous acres. It was, then, doubly to his advantage to associate his project with the distressed Uist people and through them to gain the support of the Church, for as Bishop John wrote later in 1771, it was only Boisdale's severity towards his tenants which would induce them to leave their homes and thereby provide "a good harvest there for his colony."²⁹

²⁷J.M. Bumsted, "Scottish Emigration to the Maritimes, 1770-1815," *Acadiensis* 7 (1978) p. 84.

²⁸Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 14 September 1770 SCA BL3/222/6.

²⁹Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 30 June 1771 SCA BL3/233/11.

Thus in July, 1770, the bishops were presented with Glenalladale's plan of an emigration to St. John's Island, to land probably acquired from the Lord Advocate. Only Bishop John Macdonald, who was far from passive in the enterprise, saw the emigration as something likely to occur. He supported the scheme, believing quite sincerely that the tenants were in danger and that, since Boisdale remained obstinate, they had no other option but to leave his estate.

I cannot consider their situation without the greatest apprehension and of the utmost danger to them all in general, unless it may be possible to provide a retreat for them and to induce them to accept it.³⁰

The other bishops, Hugh Macdonald, James Grant and George Hay, really believed that the rumours of the intended emigration would have a sobering effect on Boisdale, which in turn would engender a more tolerant attitude on his part, thus making the actual emigration unnecessary. This was their hope, also, for they considered its actually taking place as an odious alternative. They therefore determined to seek the advice of their venerable colleague in London, Bishop Richard Challoner. The year previous they had sent a Memorial advising him of the financial plight of the Scottish Mission. He had been enabled by a quirk of circumstance to send them via Bishop Hay a draft for £1000.³¹ A strong rapport existed between the London Bishop and his colleagues in Scotland. Just prior to taking up a position as a ship's surgeon, George Hay met Challoner and it was through his influence that the future

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Edwin Burton, *The Life and Times of Bishop Challoner*. vol. 2 (London: Longmans, Green, 1909) p. 152. The money was given as an *in memoriam* of Robert Jacobo. Burton speculates that the request for prayers, etc. came from the son and heir of Robert James, 8th Baron Petre who had died in 1742.

Vicar-Apostolic in Scotland went to study for the priesthood in Rome. They retained a great respect for each other and a fast friendship.³²

Challoner's response was quick and his advice very practical, stating frankly that they should consider other alternatives to emigration. He suggested that Glenalladale should seek legal redress in Edinburgh and in order to put pressure on those who took an unjust advantage of their dependants, that persons in high places should be made aware of the situation. Bishop Grant's first thought was of the Scottish Agent in Rome, Peter Grant who was acquainted with the Earl of Bute and his brother, and a letter was despatched.³³ Within the year, letters asking for financial as well as moral support would be sent to Mr. Geddes³⁴ in Madrid, to Mr. Robert Grant³⁵ in Douai, to Cardinals Albani³⁶ and Castelli, via the Abate Peter,³⁷ Challoner himself promised to make the international Catholic community aware of the situation through those embassies which would be sympathetic to them. Even the

³²*Scotichronicon*, p. 19.

³³Bp. James Grant to Bp. George Hay 12 September 1770 SCA BL3/215/6.

³⁴In 1770, John Geddes had been sent to arrange for the recovery of the Scots College, then at Madrid, following the suppression of the Jesuits in Spain. In 1780, he was named as co-adjutor to Bishop Hay for the Lowland District and consecrated Bishop of Morocco, 30 November, 1780. Vide: Christine Johnson, "Secular Clergy of the Lowland District, 1732-1829," *IR* 34 (1983) p. 71.

³⁵Robert Grant, born at Blairfindy in Glenlivet, was ordained in Rome in 1748. In 1765, he was named the first secular rector of the Scots College at Douai. Vide: "Secular Clergy...", p. 74.

³⁶He was appointed the Cardinal Protector of the Scots College, Rome in 1780. Vide: Christine Johnson, *Developments in the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland, 1789-1829* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1983), p. 50.

³⁷Peter Grant, the brother of Robert (see above), was ordained in Rome, 1735. As a Gaelic speaker, he was stationed in Glengarry where he remained until 1737. That year he was sent to Rome as the agent for the Scottish Mission in which capacity he remained until his death in 1784. Vide: F. Forbes & W.J. Anderson, "Clergy Lists of the Highland District, 1732-1828," *IR* 17 (1966) p. 136.

Pope himself appealed to the Duke of Gloucester³⁸ "with whom he is on the best of terms" to look into the Uist affair.³⁹

At least one response, that from the Cardinal Protector of the *Propaganda Fide*, Castelli, questioned the viability of the Emigration Scheme:

Of this his Eminence wanted an account from you, being anxious to know if you approved of a project which appeared to him to be equally romantick [as Wynne's] and extravagant Since he could not think it probable that a poor man in his situation should have sufficient credit to find settlement in another kingdom for such a multitude of people.⁴⁰

Castelli's intuitive feelings, expressed almost a year after the fact, were correct, for when confronted with the enormity of the undertaking, Glenalladale began to realize he would need to raise about £2000, to which end he considered a loan, using his estate as security.⁴¹ The person to whom he turned was his staunch ally, Bishop John Macdonald, who continued to promote the project without the official consent of his superior.⁴² One must not judge the younger man as being malicious or devious for Bishop Hugh Macdonald was distressed by several problems not the least of which was the infirmity of age and a failing memory. His assistant was striving at this time to deal with the many difficulties which beset the Highland

³⁸William Henry, 1st Duke of Gloucester (1743-1805). He had lived in Italy in the 1770's. Vide: *DNB*, vol. 21, p. 348-49.

³⁹Bp. George Hay to Bp. James Grant 2 May 1772 SCA BL3/244/3.

⁴⁰Peter Grant to Bp. James Grant 28 August 1771 SCA BL3/229/6.

⁴¹Bp. George Hay to Bp. James Grant 31 August 1770 SCA BL3/219/10.

⁴²Bp. Hugh Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 1 October 1770 SCA BL3/221/10. Bp. Hugh, who was in his 73rd year and in failing health (he died on 12 March 1773), found out when the priest in Glengarry, Mr. Angus McGillis, asked his opinion of Bp. John's request that he act as administrator for Glenalladale's borrowing £2000 from the church funds.

District in order to spare him.

The only method we could expect to try with any hopes of success is to provide dwelling for them in America where they would be unmolested and would be settled in a solid footing free of any apprehension of this kind in the future.⁴³

Bishop Grant was very averse to the suggestion of what he called the "wretched Emigration Scheme".

I'm really extremely surprised to see our Friends in the West still continuing to talk of an Emigration, the mentioning and giving out such a thing with a view to bring[ing] our Persecutors to a more sober way of thinking, and allowing us peace to follow the dictates of our conscience, was indeed an advisable, prudent measure; but their insisting seriously on it and determining resolutely, as they seem to do, to put such a scheme into execution, is a thing I cannot comprehend.⁴⁴

He doubted that one half the poor people affected would choose to emigrate and thus leave family, friends and their native country to the very remote prospect of bettering their circumstances on the other side of the globe. What of those left behind? Would the departure of kin bring down the wrath and vindictiveness of their enemy? "Besides," he continued:

when we consider the little agreement that has been for some time past between our colonies and the mother country, there appears to be great reason to doubt whether it would be agreeable to the Government that a set of Highlanders looked upon as disaffected and Jacobites should go to these parts with a design, as might be alledged [sic], to augment disturbances.⁴⁵

⁴³Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 14 September 1770 SCA BL3/222/6.

⁴⁴Bp. James Grant to Bp. George Hay 30 October 1770 SCA BL3/215/10.

⁴⁵Idem.

In November, 1770, Glenalladale was in Edinburgh to draw up the agreement concerning the purchase and transfer of land on St. John's Island, despite the alternatives suggested. Accordingly, Montgomery sold Lot 36, a twenty-thousand-acre property, considered one of the best, for £600, asking no initial deposit and granting easy terms of repayment.⁴⁶

It would appear ... that his agreement with Lord Advocate as either finally concluded already or on the brink of being so...[Bishop Hugh Macdonald] is not a whit better pleased with the Emigration scheme than I am, though it must be owned that honest Glen says a great many very plausible things for it.⁴⁷

Indeed, even cautious Bishop Hay was impressed, especially with the attitude of the Lord Advocate, for he wrote that though he was a man "so much of the Government" he was most willing to give them all encouragement and "their being Roman Catholics is far from being an objection with him".⁴⁸ He also gave Hay to understand that he was glad Glenalladale's project made reference to the inclusion of a churchman who would be able to serve the French-speaking Catholics who had settled the Island prior to the coming of the British.⁴⁹

At this stage, Bishop Hay was hesitant concerning the scheme not because it

⁴⁶J.M. Bumsted, "The Highland Emigration...", p. 516.

⁴⁷Bp. James Grant to Bp. George Hay 20 November 1770 SCA BL3/215/13.

⁴⁸Bp. George Hay to Bp. James Grant 17 November 1770 SCA BL3/220/8.

⁴⁹Tbid. After the capture of Port Royal in 1710, Acadians began to move to Île St-Jean which had been excepted from British control according to terms in the Treaty of Utrecht, 1713. In 1758, after the outbreak of the Seven Years War, three ships of war with 500 men aboard were sent to evacuate the entire island - the native Micmacs, as well as Acadians. Some managed to elude the British, escaping to nearby islands, and others remained in hiding. This latter group was the nucleus of the subsequent French population on the Island. Vide: J.M. Bumsted, *Land, Settlement, and Politics in Eighteenth-century Prince Edward Island*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), pp. 4-11.

involved emigration, but because he was afraid the church would be asked to support it financially.

I certainly do not approve of it for many reasons and think upon his [Glenalladale's] heritable Security he could have no difficulty to get the loan of that sum from the Bank. We are not masters of our funds and must not lay out any of them where there may be a hazard.⁵⁰

The role of Bishop Hay after expressing his initial misgivings about Glenalladale's project turned more and more towards that of its supporter. By October, he admitted to his friend John Geddes that he had been looking for ways by which the Uist people might obtain settlement in America.⁵¹ What he had been doing was looking for means to lend Glenalladale the money, for as Procurator of the Scottish Mission, he administered the finances. He was soliciting the opinions of the missionaries, especially those in the Highland District, as to the viability of the "Company's" lending the money. One such was William Harrison who had been active in the West Highlands since 1737. It is very likely that Harrison's brother, a monk in Ratisbon, had taught Glenalladale, so that he was more than a mere acquaintance to the old priest. His concern was not with the honesty of the borrower but with the amount borrowed but since

he has moderated his demand to the rate of 6 or 5 hundred pds....How can a like sum be denied... to a Domestic of faith and responsible Benefactor too, for to open a door of refuge to people in danger of being perverted for want of lands to support them.⁵²

⁵⁰Bp. George Hay to Bp. James Grant 31 August 1770 SCA BL3/219/10.

⁵¹Bp. George Hay to John Geddes 12 October 1770 SCA BL3/220/2.

⁵²William Harrison to Bp. George Hay 25 September 1770 SCA BL3/217/2.

About the same time, he received a letter from the aged Bishop Hugh Macdonald who advised caution against compromising any of the money belonging to the Scottish Mission, for, as he said, he

had not that regard for my cousin Glenalladale, or any friend in the world as to be putting the whole funds of poor Company in danger. I do not think that Administrators [the missionaries] will be for it, at least Mr. McGillis seems to be entirely against it.⁵³

In mid-November, Hay decided to let his superior know that he had decided to lend Glenalladale £500 at 4½ per cent with William Macdonald (Ryneton) conjunct with him in the bond. He also mentioned that he had been trying to procure a missionary for St. John's Island through Robert Grant in Douai. A friend of his, a Presbyterian minister, had written him concerning the pitiful conditions of the French-speaking Catholics who were resident there, and who were willing to pay the passage of a missionary and to give him £50 per annum for his maintenance. To conclude, Hay indicated that he had finally decided to give his wholehearted support to Glenalladale's scheme despite any criticism which might ensue.

As for the propriety of the measure I shall not take upon me to determine, but by what I can understand a great number who have some little substance will undoubtedly adopt them, from other views besides Religion and even many Protestants themselves: which being the Case if any Remedy could be got to the sufferings of those poor people in Uist, by the same means, I cannot say I could be greatly against it.⁵⁴

With Bishop Hay committed to the cause, it was virtually assured of success, although the two senior prelates were still negative. He made several different

⁵³Bp. Hugh Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 24 October 1770 SCA BL3/221/22.

⁵⁴Bp. George Hay to Bp. James Grant 17 November 1770 SCA BL3/220/8.

attempts to raise the money for Glenalladale, appealing for assistance to colleagues and friends on the Continent, especially to John Geddes in Spain where he knew there were wealthy Catholics. He even suggested granting a mortgage to a third party for a house in Aberdeen which they could then use as collateral in raising the £600 themselves for Glenalladale.⁵⁵

For a brief period, the churchmen thought that the emigration of the Uist people might be unnecessary, for the missionary on Barra, Alexander Macdonald, had written that the persecution seemed to have ended.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, the silence had been due to the absence of Colin Macdonald in Edinburgh where he had spent the winter. According to Mr. Forrester on Uist, the laird renewed hostilities after returning to the Island with his young wife.⁵⁷

Glenalladale must have been quite confident that money would be forthcoming for in March, 1771, his brother Donald and thirty persons sailed to St. John's Island in order to take stock of the site and prepare accommodation for the emigration party which was scheduled to sail in the spring of 1772. If he had had doubts about the interest of colonists these must have been allayed, for the spring of 1771 saw many leaseholders in dire straits.

All the tacks, or at least the greatest part of them in Ardnamurchan are out this year and the new Proprietor is so extravagant in his demands that the most of that people are determined to leave the country and many of them have already engaged with Glen[alladale] to go

⁵⁵Bp. George Hay to Bp. James Grant 14 January 1771 SCA BL3/231/1.

⁵⁶Bp. George Hay to Peter Grant 22 May 1771 SCA BL3/231/16. Alexander Macdonald would succeed John Macdonald as Vicar-Apostolic to the Highland District in 1780.

⁵⁷Bp. George Hay to John Geddes 24 June 1771 SCA BL3/231/18.

with Donald next summer.⁵⁸

In the plans for his settlement, Glenalladale had included a place for a clergyman, a Catholic priest, and a schoolmaster. Indeed, as Bishop Hay explained to the agent in Rome

the plan proposed is to make an entire Catholic Colony to keep up a constant Intercourse with this Country, to have schools there in common for boys from this [vineyard] which plan if it could be brought to bear might turn out to our great mutual advantage and it would be a constant asylum for all our distressed people but for this it would be necessary that our people in that Colony should be subject to V.V [Vicars-Apostolic] here;...⁵⁹

Earlier in 1770, Hay had been enquiring about the possibility of a missionary for the French-speaking Catholics on St. John's Island and as the year passed its midpoint, the added ability to speak English and Gaelic looked like an ever more likely requirement. In February, 1771, Robert Grant, the Rector of the Scots College in Douai advised Hay that he had secured the interest of an Irish Franciscan named Patrick Mackiernan. The priest, to all appearances, was exactly the man needed for the Island, for his linguistic skills included the ability to converse in French, Italian, English and Irish.⁶⁰

In July, Glenalladale wrote to Hay concerning the supply of a clergyman for the Island. He had discussed the idea of applying to the Jesuits for some of their French priests, but Bishop John Macdonald had preferred they depend on the secular

⁵⁸Bp. George Hay to John Geddes 19 April 1771 SCA BL3/231/10.

⁵⁹Bp. George Hay to Peter Grant 25 November 1771 SCA BL3/232/16.

⁶⁰Robert Grant to Bp. George Hay 21 February 1771 SCA BL3/230/2.

clergy of the Scottish Mission.⁶¹ With that in mind, Glenalladale informed Bishop Hay that a relative of his, Mr. James Macdonald,⁶² a graduate of the Scots College in Rome, had expressed a keen desire to go along with another clergyman. His brothers had already signed up to go in 1772 and both Highland bishops had given their consent.⁶³ James Macdonald was then serving at Drummond which was in the jurisdiction of the Lowland Vicariate. Thus, Glenalladale consulted Hay. However, the Vicar-Apostolic to the Lowland District was still James Grant and a missionary could leave only with his permission; this was borne out in December when Glenalladale complained that Grant was dragging his heels with regard to giving the missionary permission to leave.⁶⁴ That nearly all the problems and difficulties of the entire Mission were directed to him for solution indicates the status Hay had assumed since becoming a bishop in 1769.

Mr. Mackiernan arrived in Glenfinnan in July 1771 and the organizers of the emigration scheme decided to try him before accepting him into the official party. By

⁶¹Glenalladale to Bp. George Hay 6 July 1771 SCA BL3/233/18. The Society of Jesus had been suppressed in France in 1764 and within the universal church in 1773.

⁶²James is said to have been a nephew of the renowned eighteenth-century Gaelic bard, Alastair MacMhaighsteir Alastair, through his mother, who married Ranald Macdonald, a first cousin of John Macdonald of Glenalladale. She had three sons: Donald, Ranald and James, the priest who went with Glenalladale's brother in 1772. Donald and Ronald were the progenitors of the Tracadie Macdonalds. Vide: Iain Mackay, "Clanranald's Tacksmen of the late 18th century," *TGSI* 44 (1964-66) pp. 63-4. He was not the only priest related to the bard. Angus (Beag), Alastair's brother, had a son Angus who was ordained in Rome in 1752. He was sent to Barra where he died, aged thirty-six, in 1762. Vide: "Clergy Lists...", p. 143. Another was Donald, the son of Angus' daughter, Marsalaidh, who married Ranald Macdonald of Kinlochmoidart. It was this Ranald who was credited with having tossed his bonnet while aboard the *Doutelle*, which gesture was taken as the signal for the raising of the clans in support for the Jacobite uprising of 1745-46. Donald was ordained at Douai in 1782, and died at Samalaman in 1785. Vide: Raymond A. MacLean, *History of Antigonish*. 2 vols. (Antigonish, N.S., 1976), vol.2, p. 44.

⁶³Glenalladale to Bp. George Hay 8 November 1771 SCA BL3/233/19.

⁶⁴Glenalladale to Bp. George Hay 18 December 1771 SCA BL3/233/20.

October, Bishop John Macdonald had decided that Mackiernan was unsuitable and he admitted to Hay that he realized the Franciscan did not have his superior's permission anyway.

Glenalladale had taken a very special interest in the establishment of a church mission for St. John's, providing as he did the very expensive accoutrements such as liturgical vestments, vessels, books of sermons, bibles, etc. He too was dissatisfied with Mr. Mackiernan because he was "Irish and temperamental" and "not reserved like the Scots". He therefore begged Bishop Hay to spare Mr. James.⁶⁵ This eventuality put the churchmen in a difficult position, as Bishop John Macdonald expressed it

This makes it absolutely necessary to send a more trusty person along with our colony if it were possible to spare any. I know not which most to regret, whether parting with anyone of our small number and thereby encreasing our difficulties, which are already too great, or allowing such a number of our people to go to a distant country destitute of every spiritual succour. It was this consideration that gave occasion to the first mention of sending Mr. James thither together with his own willingness for that undertaking which seemed otherwise not proportional to his weak state of health.⁶⁶

There seemed to be no doubt that "Little James", as he was known, would go to St. John's Island and so the ecclesiastical machinery was put in motion to obtain faculties for the emigrant priest in America. Perhaps for the first time in this rather protracted enterprise, Bishop John Macdonald came to realize that a number of his people were about to disappear from his world and that he would no longer have a

⁶⁵Glenalladale to Bp. George Hay 8 November 1771, *ibid.*

⁶⁶Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 29 October 1771 SCA BL3/233/16.

say in their spiritual or material welfare. In his letter to Hay he poignantly, if furtively, speculated that his ecclesiastical jurisdiction, his Province, might extend beyond the Atlantic.⁶⁷

Even Glenalladale pursued the thought of an extended Scottish Mission, informing Hay that he had discovered the means whereby the Scottish episcopate might claim St. John's Island as part of their See. He mentioned having heard of an Irish priest-imposter in the Magdalene Islands who had caused some trouble. "At any rate", he wrote

I think the Bishop of Canada has lost his jurisdiction, and that it belongs to you or Dr. Challoner; to either of you we are willing to be subject.⁶⁸

But these were musings based on an unfamiliarity with the situation in North America. The jurisdiction of the Bishop of Quebec had been established from the seventeenth century and the contemporary incumbent, Mgr. Jean-Olivier Briand⁶⁹, the first to hold office since the hiatus of 1760-1766 following the defeat of the French in 1759, was fighting to retain what he could of the original ecclesiastical province. Early in 1772, word came from Rome that James Macdonald was permitted to transfer from the Scottish Mission to that of Quebec, and was granted special temporary faculties until he could obtain them permanently from his future superior,

⁶⁷Idem.

⁶⁸Glenalladale to Bp. George Hay 21 December 1771 SCA BL3/233/21.

⁶⁹He was consecrated as Bishop of Quebec while on a visit to his native France in 1766. He resigned his office on 29 November 29, 1784, ten years prior to his death. Vide *DCB* vol. 4, esp. pp. 98-104.

Bishop Briand in Quebec.⁷⁰

Although the problems concerning a missionary had been settled, there was still that of the money needed to support the enterprise itself. In November 1771, Bishop Hay appealed to Richard Challoner once again, this time including a Memorial describing the situation of the Catholics on Uist. To his letter was added a postscript describing the wretched conditions which then prevailed throughout the Highlands and the areas bordering them because of bad weather, poor harvests and oppressive landlords. This, Hay noted, had caused many poor families to seek respite in Edinburgh, where they were reduced to begging for their bread.⁷¹ In another letter, he mentioned the people in Braelochaber having suffered because the snow and frost had come before the corn was half-cut.⁷² Richard Challoner did not look to other alternatives but caused Hay's Memorial to be printed and circulated within the English Catholic community.

For some time Bishop Hay had been planning a trip to visit the Scotch College in Douai and on January 23, 1772, he set out for London en route, leaving the missionary from Traquair, Mr. Charles Cruickshank, to take care of affairs in Edinburgh during his absence. On January 28, he called on Bishop Challoner who presented him with money collected for the Uist people and also a sum of money for his own use. It was with a sense of relief that he was able to write to his substitute in Edinburgh that if £400 were needed for the emigrants it would be provided, and,

⁷⁰Charles Cruickshank to Robert Grant 5 March 1772 SCA BL3/237/18. A copy of the notification is included in the letter and was dated 11 January 1772.

⁷¹*Scotichronicon*, p. 81.

⁷²Bp. George Hay to John Geddes 19 December 1771 SCA BL3/232/19.

he added,

I beg of him [Bishop John Macdonald] and of Glenaladale to use all their endeavours to keep the poor people to their Resolution now being the time of making themselves and families happy and independent and if this be lost it is never to be expected again.⁷³

In November, 1771, Glenalladale informed Hay that there were thirty-six families on Boisdale's estate, those most in distress who wished to emigrate and, he reckoned, £200 would be sufficient for their passage. He mentioned having collected £38 from the district parishes and £50 from his own pocket. This left £142 which he hoped Hay could raise. Glenalladale was obviously regretting his having involved himself with the Uist poor, for he noted,

I declare if Boisdale and they were to make it up and that they could stay with safety in his hands, I could think myself free of a very troublesome job, which as matters stand my conscience and peace of mind will never allow me to refuse.⁷⁴

He had had ample offers from people who were willing and able to pay their passage and the initial expenses so that the distressed from Uist had become a burden. Just how much of a burden would not be evident until the following February when he and Bishop John travelled to Uist to prepare those who had indicated their willingness to leave. The involvement of the Church was to be kept secret and if aid were granted it was to be seen as coming from Glenalladale.⁷⁵ They hoped that those taking money would sign an obligation to repay it in due course and by this means

⁷³Bp. George Hay to Charles Cruickshank 30 January 1772 SCA BL3/243/2.

⁷⁴Glenalladale to Bp. George Hay 8 November 1771, *ibid.*

⁷⁵Charles Cruickshank to Bp. George Hay 18 February 1772 SCA BL3/237/3.

to keep some Memorial money for emergencies.

However, Glenalladale had been advised by his brother, Donald, not to accept anyone with a family who could not pay their way and maintain them for a year, as the law of the Colony demanded.

It is what terrifies me in the affair of the Uist people, many of whom are poor, and if there is any surplus in the contributions, it will need be allowed to go to support them.⁷⁶

Apparently, they had forgotten the original purpose of the Memorial money which Hay put right within the week, despite the fact that he was still away from Edinburgh.

...let Glen and Mr. Tiberiop know that all those who cannot transport themselves must be taken, families and all, as far as the Money will go.⁷⁷

All thought of saving money was soon to be shattered for when Glenalladale and Bishop John arrived in Uist, they found the material state of the distressed far worse than they had anticipated.

...how was I astonished to find the people whom while I resided among them I knew to be in affluence as highland farmers, now reduced to an almost extremity of indigence! ...By which you may judge how much we were misinformed when we were told that one half of them could pay their passage and subsist themselves for some time after their arrival...none of them can pay the freight alone for himself and family, to say nothing of what remains to be done thereafter.⁷⁸

⁷⁶Tbid.

⁷⁷Bp. George Hay to Charles Cruickshank 24 February 1772 SCA BL3/243/10. Mr. Tiberiop was Bishop John Macdonald, the Bishop of Tiberiopolis. Tiberiop was a quasi-code name used in the ecclesiastical correspondence.

⁷⁸Charles Cruickshank to Bp. George Hay 28 February 1772 SCA BL3/237/7.

But a more serious disappointment awaited the bishops. Of the original thirty-six families who had indicated a willingness to emigrate, about twelve had signed leases for 1772 with Boisdale, having been prevailed upon by their wives and daughters to renew their leases. When confronted with their decision, they replied the women had been convinced they would be sold into slavery and they absolutely refused to emigrate.

However, sixteen families remained steadfast in their decision and signed up with Glenalladale to leave in April or May. Although Boisdale gave the impression of imperturbability, he was clearly annoyed with the interference on his estate and again vented his wrath on a churchman, this time Bishop John:

he sent expressly to tell me that he would sooner or later be even with me; but he did not think it safe enough to say so much to my fellow traveller, tho he could not be less offended at him.⁷⁹

It was fortunate that Bishop Hay was still in Douai for he was required to confine his anger and disappointment to a written form of expression. In a rather subdued tone he wrote of his regret "at the backdrawing of the Uist people" and then, in the admonishing fashion which became typical in his dealings with those who irritated him, he continued:

You must inform those concerned that whatever of the contribution money is needed for those that go shall be given, but that the rest must lye till others go, for that I never will engage in an application of that kind again, as I shall be greatly affronted if they do not go after all I have done for them...⁸⁰

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Bp. George Hay to Charles Cruickshank 11 March 1772 SCA BL3/243/14.

The lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Uist people proved a great embarrassment to the bishops, especially as the plea for assistance had been public. It could very easily have been interpreted that the situation had been manufactured in order to acquire charity, since there were those on the Island who were so satisfied with their lot that they renewed their leases with Boisdale. Bishop Grant, never in favour of the emigration scheme, wanted to withdraw the Church's support entirely.⁸¹

But, the emigration took place as scheduled, with Donald, Glenalladale's younger brother, as leader. Accompanied by his sisters Helen and Margaret, they left aboard the *Alexander* early in May, 1772.⁸² The total cost of the expedition was £1500: freight, £600, a year's provisions, £500 and clothing, £400. Half the amount was borne by the Scottish Church, in loans and grants to Glenalladale, the rest, by those paying their own way. The expenses for the eleven Uist families were paid for *in toto* by the Church.⁸³

The effect the bishops had hoped to see in the summer of 1770 was finally realized after the departure of the emigrants. Clanranald had been angered at the prospect of losing tenants and had blamed Glenalladale for setting the area in a commotion. This was in November, 1771. To this charge Glenalladale replied that it was Boisdale's intolerance which was the cause.⁸⁴ Clanranald was not the only Proprietor to take alarm at the emigration. Those in neighbouring areas improved

⁸¹Charles Cruickshank to Bp. George Hay 26 March 1772 SCA BL3/237/15.

⁸²J.M. Bumsted, "The Highland Emigration...", p. 522.

⁸³Bp. George Hay to John Geddes 20 April 1772 SCA BL3/244/2; J.M. Bumsted, "The Highland Emigration...", p. 521.

⁸⁴Glenalladale to Bp. George Hay 8 November 1771, *ibid.*

their leasing terms and working conditions temporarily and finally Clanranald himself took Boisdale in hand, exacting from him a promise not to molest his Catholic tenants and to allow them freedom of religion.⁸⁵

If the bishops thought they were finished with emigration and emigration schemes, they were mistaken. John Geddes' lament, echoed by Bishop James Grant, to the effect that they were losing a loyal and steadfast group from the relatively small number of Catholics in Scotland, was a sentiment which would be expressed in various ways within the next four decades.⁸⁶ As Bishop John Macdonald commented so often in the period 1770-1773, the whole of that part of the Highlands was in a state of unrest and dissatisfaction, with emigration the solution proffered and pursued.

However, almost overlooked in the drawn-out episode of Glenalladale's enterprise was the one incident which was to have a serious impact on the Roman Catholic Church, especially in the Highlands, and this was permitting James Macdonald to leave the Mission in order to serve the emigrants in St. John's Island. He was the first secular Scottish priest to take the westward route over the Atlantic and he became a model for others to emulate within the next thirty years.

⁸⁵William Harrison to Bp. George Hay 12 August 1772 SCA BL3/242/17. In the same letter, Harrison quotes a request from Clanranald to the effect that if Hay "has any money of company unsettled on land security... Clan begs the favour of Mr. Hay to be so good as to lend the same to him..."

⁸⁶Bp. James Grant to Bp. George Hay 5 March 1771 SCA BL3/227/5.

CHAPTER SIX

THE GLENGARRY EMIGRATION OF 1773

By Letters from Scotland it appears that the Lower Class of People are generally discontented and the Spirit of Emigration prevails greatly... I have reason to think Some Hundreds of families will soon follow.¹

Unlike that from South Uist, it is virtually certain that the emigration from the Catholic bounds to the Mohawk Valley did not occur because of a perceived religious persecution, nor did the Catholic Church play any role in it, other than that the majority of the emigrants were Catholic and they were accompanied by their thirty-three year old priest, the Irish-born John MacKenna. Rather, they were going to an area where anti-Catholic sentiment was more pervasive than what it had been in Knoydart and Strathglass, despite occasional anti-papist outbursts from local or itinerant parsons in those Highland districts.

Much of the correspondence in which religion is mentioned indicates that the landed proprietor, Sir William Johnson, favoured the Episcopal [Anglican] form of worship and that Roman Catholics, the French in particular, were considered as potential enemies. Shortly before his death he commented that the religion, government and genius of the French conspired to render them dangerous, just as their enterprising disposition and plausible manner lulled their foes into a false security, in "which capacity", he said, "the Canadians exceed the native French."²

¹Reverend Harry Munro, Rector of St. Peter's Church, Albany to Sir William Johnson 21 May 1773, *The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, 14 vols. (Albany: The University of the State of New York, 1921-1965), vol. 12, p. 1023-4.

²Sir William Johnson to the Earl of Dartmouth 2 May 1774 *Papers ...*, vol. 8, p. 1142.

A year after the Peace of Paris, William Eyre warned Johnson that there would be a constant threat of uprisings until the French Inhabitants and Jesuits were removed; their lands, he thought, might very well be appropriated to the king's use. "I dare say", he wrote, "they would be sufficient to endow a Bishoprick in Canada, and for good Missionaries, and I imagine, an Episcopal foundation in that Country would greatly contribute to bring over the French and make good subjects of them in time."³ In 1774, Sir William died and the Reverend Richard Mosley lamented his death as a loss to the Established Church:

I presume you have heard of Sir William Johnson's death... The Church will want a good friend in Johnstown now that he is gone. It is doubtful to me whether they will not follow their own Religion, R. C-----k. A number of the Inhabitants are Irish and all of that opinion, But Sir William would not permit them.⁴

The cause of this emigration owed to the attempt by Duncan Macdonell and his business-minded wife, Marsalaidh Grant of Dalvey, to reclaim the wadsets held by various tacksmen. One of the recommendations of the post-Culloden Highland land reform was that wadsets should be repurchased and the practice stopped, one reason being that the value of many of the estates was dwindling because of the indebtedness of their owners. After a wadset had been redeemed, that is, the borrowed amount repaid, the land was once more in the hands of the original owner and borrower, and he then offered this land in lease to the now tacksmen-tenant, usually at a much higher rate.

This was galling to many of the tacksmen who were near relations of the Highland chiefs for, traditionally, when needed for military or other causes, they had

³William Eyre to Sir William Johnson 29 January 1764 *Papers...*, vol. 11, p. 23.

⁴Reverend Richard Mosley to Dr. Richard Hind 25 July 1774 *Papers ...*, vol. 8, p. 1195.

served their clan leaders well. As early as 1770, the three Macdonell cousins were planning to emigrate because

the oppressing of masters have put people upon that view thro' the whole Highlands... This effect in other countries has stirred up the same spirit among our friends and several Gentlemen from Glengarry who have been here since I came to stay here have told me that as everything has the most gloomy aspect with them, they want nothing but a proper opportunity to go to America.⁵

Thus, when the opportunity came, and recognizing the spirit of the times, the three Macdonell cousins gathered about 300 to 400 of their countrymen and sailed on 20 August 1773 to settle lands in the Mohawk Valley near Albany, New York. As early as February of that year Bishop John Macdonald had informed his colleague in Edinburgh that "a considerable part of the Glengarry people and that the best, are to emigrate to America ...You'll find occasion enough there for it," (that is the Memorial money which had been raised to support the indigent emigrants from South Uist), "and probably much more in time coming for I see a great number of our People [Catholics] hereabouts...much make their escape to some part of the world for their Subsistence, as I see nothing among them but misery."⁶

Not all approved of these emigrations. John Geddes, the then rector of the Valladolid College, commented that he never could

help looking upon the emigration of Catholics as a rooting out of Catholicity in Scotland - instead of hearing of the Departure of Catholics out of our Country, I would wish to see them flocking to it from

⁵Bp. John Macdonald quoted in a letter Bp. George Hay to Bp. James Grant 17 November 1770 SCA BL3/220/8.

⁶Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. Hay 10 February 1773 SCA BL3/258/12.

every part of the globe: however, it seems Emigrations are unavoidable and there is nothing for it but Patience. Better surely to go to America than apostatize or starve or even beg at home as there is free exercise of Religion in some of these Plantations; a thought has come into my head, that we may one day have Schools and Colleges there.⁷

Bishop Geddes' somewhat idealistic attitude of keeping their people in Scotland was well-meant, but perhaps because he was so far removed from the situation, he failed to recognize a more serious effect which was making itself apparent to those directly involved. The dwindling congregations left such as Bishop John Macdonald in "still greater straits, which are still increased by an Emigration from Glengarry, mostly all Catholics and the principal Gentlemen of the Country".⁸ He was not alone in his distress. Cries of alarm came from all over the Highlands and were echoed in the popular press of the major Lowland cities. One correspondent to the *Scots Magazine* described the 425 who left Knoydart, Lochaber, Appin and Mammore on 1 September, 1773, as the "finest set of fellows in the Highlands", and perhaps more significantly, "they carried at least £6000 sterling in ready cash with them; so that by this emigration, the country is not only deprived of its men, but likewise of its wealth. The extravagant rents exacted by the landlords is the sole cause given..."⁹ A letter was written by a gentleman in Strathspey to the publisher of the *Aberdeen Journal* warning of the spread of emigration and noting that 250 had sailed from Fort George, 308 Macdonalds of Glengarry from Fort William and... 840 from

⁷John Geddes to Bp. George Hay 15 March 1773 SCA BL3/251/6.

⁸Bp. George Hay to John Geddes 13 August 1773 SCA BL3/251/19.

⁹*Scots Magazine* 35 (September, 1773) p. 557.

Lewis.¹⁰ From Moray, Ross, Sutherland and Caithness and some from Orkney sailed for New York in 1773.¹¹

While the rise in rents might have influenced some of the Glengarry emigrants to leave, it is more likely that the prospect of future evictions, the influence of the tacksmen and the exhortation of the agents, such as Hugh Fraser for Sir William Johnson, played a more significant role. As was noted previously, Sir William did not court the settlement of Roman Catholics, although one historian has noted that

in order to secure the greatest obedience he deemed it necessary to secure such tenants as differed from the people near him in manners, language and religion, and that class trained to whom the strictest personal dependence was perfectly familiar. He turned his eyes to the Highlands of Scotland, and without trouble, owing to the dissatisfaction of the people, and their desire to emigrate, he secured as many colonists as he desired, all of whom were of the Roman Catholic faith.¹²

While it would have been impossible for the average emigrant to compare with Sir William in manners and wealth, there was at least one who accompanied the Glengarry emigrants who shared with the landowner the influence and memory of the same native soil, although they did differ as far as religion was concerned. The priest who accompanied the emigrants to Sir William's estate, the Irish-born John MacKenna, was from the diocese of Meath, the same county as was Sir William.¹³

¹⁰*Edinburgh Evening Courant* (29 September, 1773).

¹¹*Scots Magazine* (October, 1773).

¹²J.P. MacLean, *An Historical Account of the Settlements of Scotch Highlanders in America prior to the Peace of 1783*. (Glasgow: John Mackay, 1900), p. 196-7.

¹³Testimonial letter issued by H. De Bruigen, President of the Diocesan seminary of Antwerp in favour of John Mackenna legitimately born in St. Mary's parish, diocese of Meath, Ireland, bapt. on 15 July 1740, i.e. 27 July. Item 44B Missioni 51 30 October 1767 Antwerp, in Charles Burns "Additions to the Fondo Missioni Handlist", *IR* 33 (1982) p. 34

John MacKenna was born in Brownston, St. Mary's Parish, and was baptized on 15 July [o.c.], 1740. He was sent from Ireland to complete his studies in the diocesan seminary in Antwerp where he arrived on 19 December 1765. In response to numerous pleas to *Propaganda Fide* for missionaries to be sent to help augment the inadequate number working in the Highlands of Scotland, he was selected to go, because "he had a sufficient command of the Scots tongue", that is, the Gaelic language. On 30 October 1767, he left Antwerp and in 1768, he was ordained in Scotland for the Highland District by Bishop John Macdonald.¹⁴

He began to work immediately in Lochaber where he was described as "helping the people".¹⁵ Despite his short stay in Lochaber, his name became legendary in the Highlands because of his "gigantic stature and prodigious strength", which attributes were considered to be

exactly suited to the times and the kind of people with whom he had to deal; for if any dared to show him any want of respect or to disobey his spiritual authority, such a one was sure, in case other arguments failed to produce their effect, to feel the weight of his powerful arm.¹⁶

While the substance of the legend may indeed be accurate, correspondence amongst the clergy reveals that within a year, MacKenna was in trouble with his superiors apparently because of rumours regarding his behaviour. "Mr. MacKenna is left in Brealochaber [sic] but I fear he will not do for that Nation, and I wish he

¹⁴Idem. and F. Forbes & W.J. Anderson, "Clergy Lists of the Highland District 1732-1828," *IR* 17 (1966) p. 149.

¹⁵Bp. Hugh Macdonald to George Hay 23 January 1769 SCA BL3/208/2.

¹⁶Odo Blundell, *The Catholic Highlands of Scotland*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1909), vol. 1, p. 182.

may do for any, for he fears to be thought less..."¹⁷ What these rumours concerned can be matter for speculation only, for there is no reference to actual incidents. Perhaps this was a case of resentment against an overbearing foreigner. Matthias Wynne, another Irishman, because of thoughtless and tactless behaviour, had so angered the Laird of Boisdale that he became vehemently anti-Catholic. Nevertheless, he retained the support of the people. On the other hand, MacKenna seems to have lost face with some of his congregation and was in trouble with the bishops. In the summer of 1771, Bishop John wrote that the rumours were still flying and "even though false", MacKenna would suffer from it. As it was, he was disturbed and discouraged and had consulted his superior for advice regarding a lawsuit against the author of the rumour. Later, that year, however, Bishop John informed Hay that despite all his warnings and advice, he still feared MacKenna's "forward wild way of living".¹⁸ The people agreed he was hardworking but did "not at all please them" and by Christmas of 1772, because of "very bad hints" he had received privately, Bishop John was on the point of dismissing MacKenna, despite the need for a missionary for his district which was as extensive as "Glenlivet, Strathavin and Cabrach, and almost the whole people Catholics".¹⁹

Thus, by January of 1773, the thirty-two year-old Irish-born missionary found himself at odds with some of his congregation and in trouble with his ecclesiastical superiors. It had been his inclination to clear his name from the rumours, to re-

¹⁷Bp. Hugh Macdonald to Bp. James Grant 7 March 1769 SCA BL3/208/4.

¹⁸Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 27 October 1771 SCA BL3/233/8.

¹⁹Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 20 December 1772 SCA BL3/247/14.

establish his reputation with the people and to convince the bishops of his value to the mission. The decision to dismiss him shattered his plans to remain in Lochaber and it was unlikely another congregation would be found for him in the Highland District. As subsequent action would show, it also left him resentful of the treatment he had received from his superiors.

On the Glengarry estate, the spring and summer of 1773 witnessed the usual preparations for emigration: the selling of all the immoveables and stock in order to raise money necessary for the payment of passage and settlement in a new land. With this activity all around him, implying as it did a cut with the past and the promise of a better way of life, emigration seemed an ideal solution to the dilemma in which MacKenna found himself and in August of that year Bishop Hay informed his friend and colleague in Spain that the Lochaber missionary was going to America with the Glengarry emigrants.²⁰ In contrast to the Glenalladale emigration, no clergyman was sought for the Glengarry group and it is doubtful that any attempt had been made for the transfer of faculties. Within a few months of arriving in the Albany area, MacKenna applied for such to Bishop Challoner in London.²¹ This gesture left Bishop John Macdonald in a quandary. He regarded the Highlanders as still under his jurisdiction, even though they were residents of the Mohawk Valley in New York, at this time an ecclesiastical province of the London Bishop. Many of the Highlanders had removed to Canada, to the neighbourhood of Montreal, but for the sake of those

²⁰Bp. George Hay to John Geddes 13 August 1773 SCA BL3/256/20.

²¹MacKenna was correct in applying to the London bishop, for at this time the Mohawk Valley area in New York was under his jurisdiction. In 1789, after America had become independent of Britain, Baltimore was established as the Roman Catholic See. As he had in 1772 in the case of Fr. James Macdonald's going to St. John's Island, Bp. John Macdonald, mistakenly, had felt it incumbent on him to grant the faculties to those ministering to Highlanders.

who remained, the Vicar-Apostolic to the Highland District felt he should send MacKenna the ecclesiastical faculties anyway.²²

MacKenna's decision to leave the Scottish Mission cannot be described as having been of a skulking nature. The Macdonell tacksmen who were Catholic, like all the others in the group, would have wanted to have a minister of their religion accompany them, as had those who had left for St. John's Island the previous year, and certainly, the terms they offered MacKenna were difficult to resist. Compared with his living conditions in the Highlands and the way in which he was treated by the bishops and by some of the people, the "back settlements in the Province of New York" appear to have been very handsome: £46 per annum paid by his congregation, a good house, rent-free, and 100 acres of land at Johnstown for himself and his successors.²³ In fact, he estimated later that his losses resulting from the Revolutionary War had been £292 at Johnstown and £139 on the expedition to Fort Stanwix.²⁴

It was very unfortunate that within a year of having left the Highlands, those who had located in the Mohawk Valley found themselves in the worst possible situation for permanent settlement. They were opening up an area vastly different from what they had been used to, in topographical as well as societal terms. The task was made all the more difficult because the emigrants were the targets of conflicting and, at times, intimidating campaigns, urging either rebellion or loyalty. Then, in July of 1774, the death of their patron, Sir William Johnson, whose estate was

²²Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 19 July 1774 SCA BL3/269/2.

²³"The Memorial of John McKenna to the Commission Appointed by the Act of Parliament...American Loyalists" (undated) PROAO 12/24 pp. 243-6.

²⁴Ibid.

eventually destroyed by the rebels, rendered settlement in the Mohawk Valley very precarious. In fact, Captain Alexander Macdonald, the brother of Bishop John Macdonald, in a letter to Sir William Howe dated Halifax, 30 November 1775, was able to advise him that since he had left his home in Staten Island a year to the day, he had travelled to the Mohawk river where two hundred men of his own name had announced their willingness to support the government.²⁵

Despite the insecurity of the times, the news that reached the Highlands was that of a successful landing and settlement in New York and it was widely publicized. Bishop John Macdonald feared, correctly, that the consequences of this would mean that numbers more would "go off next year, who only waited accounts of their success to follow their example".²⁶ And so it happened. In February, 1775, he wrote of an emigration which would "leave this country waste and the good landlord would apply no remedy."²⁷

In March, according to a report in the *Scots Magazine*, "a considerable number of labourers and useful mechanics from Monteith, Kippen, etc. some of them members of the Perth Sterling Company are gone to Greenock...for North

²⁵J.P. MacLean, p. 312-313. These, the Mohawk Valley Loyalists, were very harshly treated by the American "patriots" who regarded "them with greater aversion than they did the English... At the end of the hostilities, they had no intention of honouring the articles of the Peace Treaty and those who returned under the Treaty of Peace were insulted, tarred and feathered and whipped, etc... They lost the vote, debts owed them were cancelled... The proportion of loyalists who emigrated from the counties above New York City, as contrasted with those in the southern part, was 439 to 27." Alexander C. Flick, *Loyalism in New York during the American Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1901), p. 162-166.

²⁶Bp. John Macdonald quoted in Bp. Hay to John Geddes 28 January 1774 SCA BL3/267/2.

²⁷Bp. John Macdonald, at Fachem in Glengarry to Bp. George Hay 25 February 1775 SCA BL3/279/11.

America".²⁸ "I fear this countrey [sic] is soon to be a thorough desert", wrote Bishop John, "and our Morar likewise, owing to the unaccountable conduct of our Superiors, who will never resolve to come to any agreement with their tenants. They think it worse than death to diminish their rent one farthing, or give a settlement of any considerable duration because this would hinder them from screwing up, if time and Seasons should at any time seem to bear it." In addition, he added that the factor, Mr. Hall, was dealing very slowly with himself although they felt his "presence in the area would induce others to come to terms" and as his project of establishing his school had come to nought, he feared "all would come to a resolution of leaving the country."²⁹ About the end of May, four vessels with about 700 emigrants sailed for America from Port Glasgow and Greenock, most of them from the North Highlands³⁰ and at the beginning of June, 1775, two ships, the *Albion* and the *Favourite* sailed from Whitehaven for New York; amongst them were several people of property as well as different sorts of tradesmen.³¹ Even as late as September 1775, there were several sailings for North America. Two hundred, who had come from Appin in Argyllshire, claimed to be loyalists who would take up arms for the government if necessary. They had considered it "better to confront an enemy in the wildest desert in the country than live to be beggars in their native land"³². They left aboard the *Jupiter* for North Carolina and among their number were "many of ... the

²⁸*Scots Magazine* 37 (March 1775) p. 165

²⁹Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 12 May 1775 SCA BL3/279/15.

³⁰*Scots Magazine* 37 (June 1775) p. 340 & *Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle* 45 (1775) p. 303.

³¹*Idem.*

³²*Scots Magazine* 37 (Sept. 1775) p. 690.

best in circumstances..."³³ On 4 September, the ship *Glasgow* left for New York taking emigrants removed from their lands because of sheep graziers from the south and because of the exactions of landlords. On 27 September, the *Marlborough* left from Stromness for Georgia carrying emigrants from Orkney and Caithness.³⁴

One contributor, in a letter dated at Perthshire, 31 October 1775, to the *Scots Magazine*, suggested that the public in general outside of the Highlands was unaware of the depopulation of the Highlands because of "sheepwalks", especially in Perthshire, from where several hundred families had removed, and many more in Argyllshire. This correspondent lamented the loss of men for positions of service, manufactures, the army and navy which the Highlanders had filled for so long. An example of this was the number of troops they had supplied for the Seven Years War, which he estimated at 10,000 of 20,000, though only a tenth of the population of Scotland. He mentioned the benefit of the "great numbers that every year pour down from the Highlands to supply the south country with servants of all kinds ... though it be well known that ... their harvests would not be got cut down, were it not for the labour of these useful, these necessary, though despised hands". He insisted that a stop be put to the depopulation for the sake of public good, that agriculture was much better for society than pasture for sheep, for tillage could support ten times as many people as pasture and he noted that 100 or 200 acres of arable land in the Highlands converted into pasture dispossessed twenty to forty families.³⁵

³³Idem.

³⁴Idem.

³⁵*Scots Magazine* 37 (1775) p. 53.

When caution or fear failed to stop the emigrations, the government decided to act. Alarmed at the loss of so many able-bodied men and aware that an all-out war was about to ensue in America, Henry Dundas, lord Advocate for Scotland, at the beginning of September, 1775, urged the Board of Customs to issue orders to all inferior custom houses enjoining them "to grant no clearances for America of any ship which had more than the common complement of hands on board"³⁶ and resolutions to employ every legal measure to prevent emigration were sent to every parish minister in the County of Inverness.³⁷ If vessels managed to elude the customs officials, they were at times boarded while at sea; it was not unknown that Highland emigrants on their way from Scotland were sometimes interrupted by man-of-war vessels and when they arrived, were induced by persuasion, and sometimes by threats, to enlist. Promises of land and provisions and that their debts would be paid, enticed many to enlist.³⁸

Thus, by 1776, emigration to North America had come to a halt. Unfortunately, matters in the Highlands did not change for the better. Bishop Hay advised the agent for the Scottish Mission in Rome, Peter Grant, that the Landlords had returned to their former oppressive measures. This had obliged great numbers to leave the Highlands and to flock to the capital with their families where they worked as day-labourers, or at carrying chairs or any other way by which they could "earn a mouthful of bread to themselves and families." Virtually all were monolingual

³⁶J.P. MacLean, p. 304.

³⁷James Grant (Corrymony) to Sir James Grant of Grant September 1775 SRO GD248/52/1/23.

³⁸J.P. MacLean, *Idem*.

Gaelic speakers among whom were many Catholics.³⁹ When Hay took a census of his congregation in February 1777, he discovered that in Edinburgh alone an addition of four hundred had been made to the Catholic body by Highland emigration.⁴⁰

The raising of several Highland regiments helped relieve the unemployment situation in the Highlands, for as Bishop Hay commented, everybody was "caught with the military spirit. Many of our people from the Highlands are enlisting, Morar and Keppoch and several others of their Country having got commissions."⁴¹ In 1777 Maj. John Macdonell of Lochgarry was appointed Lieutenant-colonel of a regiment in the 76th Macdonald Highlanders which numbered 1086 men, 750 of whom were Highlanders, mostly from the Glengarry property.⁴² At the same time, Simon Fraser of Lovat was recruiting troops for the 71st, or Fraser's Highlanders, which included men mostly from his own estate as well as those of Chisholm and Glengarry. Lochgarry, who had been taken prisoner on his way back to Britain prior to taking up his post as Lieutenant- colonel of the 76th, was Major in the 1st battalion. At the conclusion of hostilities, the 71st was released, ordered to Scotland and discharged in Perth in 1783.⁴³

Taking their cue from the spirit of the times, as it were, several prominent Catholics, from the Lowlands as well as the Highlands, attempted to form a regiment

³⁹Bp. George Hay to Peter Grant 14 March 1777 SCA BL3/296/5.

⁴⁰J.F.S. Gordon, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle for Scotland*. vol. IV: *Journal and Appendix to Scotichronicon and Monasticon*. (Glasgow, 1867), p. 136.

⁴¹J.P. MacLean, p. 368.

⁴²Alexander Mackenzie, *The History of the Highland Clearances* (Stirling: Eneas Mackay, 1914) p. 171.

⁴³J.P. MacLean, *Idem*.

officially identified as Roman Catholic, to which end a meeting was held in Edinburgh in September of 1778.⁴⁴ The strongest support came from the gentlemen of the Glengarry estate, primarily Ranald Macdonell of Scotos, and his cousins of the Sandaig branch. Lord Linton, the son and heir to Lord Traquair, was the person regarded as the leader, because of his social position and because his family was viewed as the first among the Scottish Roman Catholics. Duncan Macdonell, Glengarry, despite his misgivings about the success of the Regiment's formation because of the rigidity of the government, asked that he be second or third in command.⁴⁵ Bishop John Macdonald himself was supportive of the endeavour, favouring the enlisting of men for the army, whether in a Catholic regiment or not, "not from any political principle, but from a Religious one..." He believed there was an unlikelihood the Army would pervert them in their religion and morals.

In regard to the former I had no scruple [sic] because I was sure enough they would not be molested on that Score. But in regard to the later [sic] there is certainly more to fear; Tho' I have found by experience that all of our people in the Army who had any solidity (and they were very numerous) retained their principles steadily and continued freer of immorality. Not so those who went to sea, of whom also there was a great number, which makes me wish every one of them to go rather to the Army than to Sea; for, except the people of Jamaica and a few more of the West India Islands, there is not on the face of the earth a more abandoned set of people than British sailors.⁴⁶

⁴⁴SCA SM4/15/16. Scottish Roman Catholics were heartened in 1778 by the news that a Bill to the British Parliament for the relief of English Catholics from the Act of Parliament passed in the 11th and 12th Year, William III, received Royal Assent on 3 June 1778. However, some non-Catholics in Scotland were so alarmed by the same news that anti-popery riots broke out in many of the cities and towns, and the Bill for the Relief of Scottish Catholics was temporarily dropped. Vide: *Scotichronicon* pp. 147-8, 161.

⁴⁵Glengarry to Bp. John Macdonald 7 September 1778 SCA BL3/

⁴⁶Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 2 March 1778 SCA BL3/306/6.

Evidently the meeting did not impress Alexander Gordon, the rector of the Scots College in Paris, who wrote caustically that there had been no man of sense among them but one. The gentlemen from the Lowland District: Bowers from Dundee, Maxwell of Munches and Glendenning of Parton, Menzies of Pitfoddels and Inneray soon abandoned the plan. The Highlanders, McNab of Inshewan, Fletcher, the younger of Dunans, Bishop John Macdonald and Alexander Macdonell, the priest from Knoydart, "made a better stand... but were full of doubts."⁴⁷

By January, 1779, Bishop John felt the plan was floundering, although he still retained some hopes. The only enthusiast was Ranald Macdonell of Scotos.⁴⁸ The Macdonald brothers, Duchamiss and Borrodale, on the Clanranald estate "could do nothing for want of money, despite Lord Linton's promises, for they felt the expenses would far outweigh any amount Linton might give them. Morar, on the other hand, was willing to undertake a Lieutenant's and an Ensign's complement, though he doubted the Government would agree to the plan."⁴⁹

For the next month, Bishop John was still confident the regiment might be formed for "circumstances... tho' not desirable in themselves", could promote the affair and with encouragement from Lord Linton, some 500 could be recruited from the Highland District, including Innerey and Dunans. He suggested also that success would be guaranteed if John Macdonald, ex-Glenalladale, would return from St.

⁴⁷Alexander Gordon (Paris) to John Reid (Preshome) 26 September 1778 SCA BL3/301/4.

⁴⁸He had a long association with the military, having fought when a youth with Loudon's forces in 1746 against his father the renowned Jacobite, *Domhnall nan Gleann* who was killed on Culloden Moor. Fifty years later, he enlisted with the Glengarry Fencible Regiment which saw service in Ireland during the 1798 rebellion.

⁴⁹Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 9 January 1779 SCA BL3/321/11.

John's Island to take command. Even Colin Macdonald, the Laird of Boisdale in South Uist had promised to provide for his two brothers in the projected corps.⁵⁰ However, as had been anticipated, the Government rejected Lord Linton's proposal in early 1779. The enterprising Bishop John Macdonald suggested that Lord Linton and "some of the most respectable Catholics would try to make up a Corps for service in North America".⁵¹ Then, quite unexpectedly, Bishop John Macdonald died on 9 May, 1779 and all thought of forming a Catholic Regiment was put aside until 1793 when war with France was declared.⁵²

From 1779 until the end of hostilities in North America, all talk of emigration ceased save for a curious scheme to settle a group of Scots Catholics in Spain. The proposal was occasioned by the anti-Catholic repercussions of 1778 and was encouraged by friends of the Scottish clergy well-placed at the Court of Spain. The promoter and person most anxious to see the plan effected was none other than Lord Traquair whose finances had fallen on hard times and who saw emigration and settlement as a solution, a factor which became more obvious as time passed. Of the clergy, Bishop Hay seemed most anxious to concur with the plan, although not as an active participant; in correspondence with the government, he used it as a ploy to apply pressure to bring about better conditions for Catholics in Scotland, just as he

⁵⁰Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 4 January [i.e. February] 1779 SCA BL3/321/10.

⁵¹Bp. John Macdonald quoted in a letter John Thomson to Bp. George Hay 22 April 1779 SCA BL3/325/4.

⁵²In 1793 Alexander Macdonell, the Catholic missionary then resident in Glasgow and Alexander Ranaldson Macdonell, Glengarry, undertook to form a Regiment of Roman Catholic Highlanders and on this occasion there was a successful outcome. Letters of service were issued on 14 August 1794 and by a "singular evasion of the existing law", Alexander Macdonell was named a chaplain. Vide: Kathleen Toomey, *Alexander Macdonell: the Scottish Years, 1762-1804*. (Toronto: Canadian Catholic Historical Association, 1985) pp. 107-113.

had used the Uist emigration to curtail Boisdale's ill-treatment of his Catholic tenants. In this instance, perhaps because of the preposterous nature of the scheme, no such response was forthcoming.

Emigration was effectively halted, but not the conditions which prompted its consideration. For example, removals were still continued on some of the Highland estates. Clanranald, through his tutors, sent writs of removal against fourteen of his tenants in Ardnafuaran in March of 1780.⁵³

At the conclusion of the hostilities, the 71st or Fraser's Highlanders was released, ordered to Scotland and discharged in Perth in 1783.⁵⁴ Similarly, other regiments returned to Scotland and, as had been the case twenty years earlier, many of the officers and men retained a taste for the world from which they had just withdrawn. An uneasy border had been established between the fledgling American republic and the British colonies in North America. While thousands of loyalists who had been forced to flee their homesteads in America had been granted lands primarily in Nova Scotia and Canada⁵⁵, pressure to protect and maintain the colony was placed on the home and colonial governments. An obvious solution was to populate the sparsely settled districts with loyal colonists. That they be Protestant was no longer of prime concern. The loyalty of the French Catholics of Quebec and Catholics elsewhere, Irish and Scots Highlanders, rendered offensive the discriminatory laws against them. In Nova Scotia, hitherto officially hostile to all but Anglicans, a more

⁵³Removals 2 March 1780 SRO GD128/49/2/40.

⁵⁴J. P. MacLean, *Idem*.

⁵⁵As early as July, 1775, the Governor of Halifax had been directed to offer grants to all persons who sought shelter in Nova Scotia. In 1783, 32000 refugees arrived in Nova Scotia and thousands more went to Quebec, Halifax, Sorel and Montreal. Vide: Meinig, p. 325.

acceptable oath of allegiance was prepared for Roman Catholics in 1784 and in 1786, and they were given the right to have their own schools and schoolmasters.⁵⁶

With the cessation of hostilities between Britain and the United States in 1783, the shipping lanes were reopened for normal transatlantic traffic. Interest in emigration would be renewed in the Highlands of Scotland and for reasons similar to those which had prompted the removals of 1772-73. Added, however, at this time, was a concerted effort to settle loyal colonists. Some of those most active in the recruiting efforts were those Highlanders who had emigrated in the previous decade.

⁵⁶J. M. Bumsted, "Church and State in Maritime Canada, 1749-1807," in *Canadian History Before Confederation: Essays and Interpretations*, ed. J.M. Bumsted, 2d. ed. (Georgetown, Ont.: Irwin-Dorsey Limited, 1979), p. 190.

CHAPTER SEVEN - EMIGRATION: 1783-1797

I. GLENGARRY

Besides marking the end of hostilities between the United States of America and Britain, the spring of 1783 knew one of the worst famines of the eighteenth century in the Scottish Highlands. Witnesses reported that the season of 1782 was cold, the harvest late, with a severe frost occurring at the beginning of November. There was little produce from corn and in the north of Scotland, most people could not afford paying for imported goods without assistance. The subsequent distress was regarded as an indicator that the tendency to emigrate would be widespread.¹ Robert Grant, the rector of the Scots College in Douai, noted that, in his native Blairfindy, the summer of 1783 had seen the worst famine since 1740 but that there seemed to be some hope for the crop maturing just then.² A year later, the missionary on Eigg, James Hugh Macdonald, reported a great loss of cattle, great scarcity of the necessaries of life and great preparations for emigrating. The people had used their crops in an effort to keep their cattle alive, and lost. "So that now, they have neither cattle or bread".³ An amount of £17,709 was paid in 1783 and 1784 for relief in the northern areas of Scotland and the Isles, but it came too late to prevent a heavy mortality.⁴

In 1783, Major John Macdonell of Leek was in Scotland, visiting his kindred and recruiting colonists for the Loyalist settlements in what is now eastern Ontario.

¹Great Britain. Parliamentary Papers, 1846. "Report on Distress in Scotland, 1783, p. 2.

²Robert Grant to John Thomson 28 July 1783 SCA BL3/381/7.

³James Hugh Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 24 June 1784 SCA BL3/421/1.

⁴Michael Flinn, ed. *Scottish Population History from the 17th Century to the 1930's* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 234.

Among those eager to emigrate was his brother Roderick, the missionary stationed in Glengarry and Lochaber, for even prior to his ordination as a priest, he had taken the oath to serve the Scottish mission with a *proviso* that he might be free to join his relatives who had emigrated previously.⁵

Roderick Macdonell was born in 1750, the seventh son of Angus Macdonell of Leek.⁶ His father and at least two of his brothers had fought under the Stuart banner in the Forty-five and fifteen years later, two fought under the command of General Wolfe at the siege of Quebec.⁷ After some preparatory schooling in the Highlands, he was sent to the Scots College at Douai to study for the priesthood where he seems not to have impressed his teachers for in 1774, a year prior to his ordination, Fr. Andrew Oliver described him as "not capable and it would even be dangerous to trust him with the care of souls as poor man he is not blessed with a great stock of prudence [sic] or common sense..."⁸ Six months later Oliver, after having tried unsuccessfully to convince Roderick to take the Oath of Obligation to

⁵Among those who had emigrated were his three brothers all of whom had served as Loyalists under Sir John Johnson, the son of Sir William Johnson.

⁶SCA BL3/258/15-16 and Ewen J. Macdonald, "Father Roderick Macdonell, Missionary at St. Regis and the Glengarry Catholics", *The Catholic Historical Review* 19 (1933), p. 270. A.C. Morice "A Canadian Pioneer: Spanish John", *Canadian Historical Review* 10 (1929), p. 212-35 mistakenly identifies Roderick as of the Scotus family citing a letter from John Macdonell, Spanish John, to his son dated 7 March 1802, wherein he refers to the latter's grand uncle "who has had different disputes with his flock". The clergyman referred to was Alexander Macdonell, who emigrated in 1786 and died in Lachine, near Montreal, in 1803. He was a half-brother to John Macdonell of Crowlin, Spanish John's father.

⁷Ewen J. Macdonald, *ibid.*, p.270. The Muster Roll of the Macdonells of Glengarry shows a Captain John Macdonell of Leek and his brothers, Captain Allan, Lieutenants Alexander and Ranald. No mention is made of an Angus Macdonell, Leek. Norman, H. Macdonald, *Muster Roll 1745-46*, p.149-150.

⁸Oliver to George Hay 28 April 1774 SCA BL3/270/3. Shortly after he was ordained, Bp. John Macdonald described him as a "plain, simple lad without any duplicity". Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 10 October 1775 SCA BL3/279/17.

serve the Scottish Mission, described him as "suspicious, vain, obstinate and a very moderate scholar and very deffective [sic] in mother wit"... but that he would "make a very good missionary; the genius [sic] of his country and family [sic] excuse him in a great measure...[as does]...the education he got in his youth."⁹ It is obvious from the above quotation that Oliver did not rate his pupil very highly but his justification for such introduces a degree of uncertainty about the quality of his judgement. Oliver, a native of Tweedale and a convert, was of the Lowland Vicariate whose clergy tended to a prejudice against their financially poorer and culturally different brethren in the Highlands. What experience he had had of the Macdonell of Leek family, upon which to form an opinion of its genius, could only have been from hearsay or speculation for they had all left their native Glengarry in 1773 for the Mohawk Valley in New York. They were tacksmen and had been Jacobites, neither of which gained them much merit in Lowland eyes.¹⁰ A more apparent reason for Oliver's opinion was rather as a reaction to his failure to convince Roderick, who was only a year from his ordination to the priesthood, to take the Oath to serve the Scottish Mission; the young man consistently indicated that he would serve the Mission as long as he was able but if he perceived a need or a possibility to leave the Highland Vicariate to join his family in North America, he would do so. Around Christmas of 1774, he took the Mission Oath with the above-mentioned *proviso* and at the end of April, 1775, he and Alexander Macdonald, a nephew of the deceased

⁹Oliver to Bp. George Hay 24 November 1774 SCA BL3/270/6 .

¹⁰Oliver ran afoul of Bishop Hay and in 1782 he was granted his dismissorials from the Scottish Mission on the grounds of "poor health". He retired to a religious house in Bruges where he remained until his death in 1812. Christine Johnson, "Secular Clergy of the Lowland District, 1732-1829, *IR* 34 (1983) p. 77 and correspondence of Bishop Hay and Andrew Oliver in SCA BL3/ 1781-1782.

Bishop Hugh, were ordained in a private ceremony by the Bishop of Arras.¹¹ In June he was sent from Douai to assist the elderly Angus McGillis in his native Glengarry.

His introduction to life as a missionary began with a disappointment. He and his colleague, as alumni of the Douai college, previously under the control of the recently suppressed Jesuit Order¹², had been led to believe that they were to have an income of £24 per annum from funds pertaining to that house, as had the previous Jesuit missionary-graduates. Such was neither the wish of the Scottish hierarchy nor was it in fact possible for them to do so, for the transition of control from the Jesuits to the secular clergy had not been smooth, the entitlement of funds and property being very much a contentious issue.¹³ This was more than a mere disappointment, for Roderick was in great financial difficulty. His closest kin were in America and he had no personal income other than the salary he earned as a missionary. So poor was he that, according to the Highland bishop, he could not afford to pay board for a simple lodging, and he suggested the Mission spend £20 to £30 to purchase and stock a small farm for him.¹⁴ Less than a week after the bishop's suggestion, Angus MacGillis died and Roderick's subsistence problems were solved, for he took over the elder

¹¹Robert Grant to Bp. George Hay 11 January 1775 SCA BL3/276/1 and Oliver to Hay 17 April 1775 SCA BL3/280/1.

¹²In 1764, a royal edict confirmed the abolition of the Society of Jesus in France and the confiscation of its property by the Crown. This was repeated in Spain in 1767 and, in 1773, the entire Order was suppressed by the Pope.

¹³Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 10 October 1775 SCA BL3/279/17 and 11 December 1775 SCA BL3/279/18.

¹⁴Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 4 August 1776 SCA BL3/289/6.

missionary's house, holding and income.¹⁵

For the next three years, the young missionary, still not yet thirty years of age, carried out his duties, ministering to some 1640 Catholics¹⁶ in the mountainous district of Glengarry, where he was "very much troubled by frequent calls and long journeys" and his constitution was "much failed".¹⁷ His life was uneventful until the spring of 1779, when the relative calm was suddenly interrupted by the death of Bishop John Macdonald. For the next eighteen months, the Highland Vicariate was disrupted by the squabbling over the selection of his successor. Roderick, as a Macdonell, was drawn in by Ranald Macdonell of Scotos¹⁸ to supply information that would support the cause of his uncle Alexander, the missionary in Knoydart. Roderick, however, elected to support the choice of Alexander Macdonald, a native of Bornish on South Uist, as one "decreed or ordained by the church".¹⁹

Just about the same time, a scandal in which Roderick's fellow ordinand Alexander Macdonald was implicated, broke out on the Island of South Uist. The case, which involved infanticide, was kept before the public until the women cited for the murder were tried in Inverness, where they were found guilty and sentenced to be transported. The priest accused of fathering the child, although he plead his innocence, was summarily dismissed and an injunction carrying a penalty of excommunication was placed on anyone who would shelter or support him until he

¹⁵Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 11 August 1776 SCA BL3/289/6.

¹⁶Odo Blundell, *The Catholic Highlands of Scotland*. 2 vols. Edinburgh, 1909-1917, v.2, p. 185.

¹⁷Roderick Macdonell to Bp. George Hay 16 April 1778 SCA BL3/306/13.

¹⁸Ranald Macdonell of Scotos to Roderick Macdonell 28 August 1780 SCA BL3/336/13.

¹⁹Roderick Macdonell to Bp. George Hay 17 February 1780 SCA BL3/336/6.

presented himself to the bishop.

If Roderick Macdonell was disheartened in any way by the social pressure exerted by Scotos or by his classmate's disgrace, he kept it from his superiors. However, in 1783, negotiations relevant to the end of the American Revolutionary War were taking place in London, and among those in the capital was one of Roderick's brothers who had fought on the British side. By December of that year, Roderick had let it be known that he was determined to accompany some of the emigrants who were planning to leave Glengarry the next year, in order to "join his connections there, severals of whom are in a very good way...and who importune him much to cross the Atlantic Ocean".²⁰

The overall impression of this, the first post-Revolutionary War emigration from Glengarry, was that it was as a response to the recruiting efforts of the agents rather than a reaction to maltreatment by the landowners, although Glengarry and his wife had turned over Glen Quoich to the Low Country shepherds Thomas Gillespie and Henry Gibson in 1782.²¹ For example, promises of land in a more temperate climate could not help but influence those who had experienced the 1782-83 famine and were still financially able to leave the Highlands. In August, 1784, about three hundred Catholics from Glengarry's lands left to settle on the banks of the St. Lawrence, just above Montreal.²²

²⁰Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 14 December 1783 SCA BL3/387/14.

²¹Marianne MacLean, "In the New Land a New Glengarry: Migration from the Scottish Highlands to Upper Canada, 1750-1820". Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1982, p.111; Colin Chisholm, "The Clearance of the Highland Glens," *TGSI* 6 (1876-7) p. 175.

²²Roderick Macdonell to Bp. John Geddes 9 June 1784 SCA BL3/321/14; Bp. John Geddes to John Thomson 5 August 1784 SCA BL3/408/7.

Roderick Macdonell did not leave with the 1784 emigrants but remained in the Highlands to await his brother Captain [Archibald], whom he had not seen for twenty-five years. The former tacksman's son arrived in Glengarry early in March 1785 and remained there until mid-April at which time he and his youngest brother, Roderick, left for Edinburgh to prepare for their departure for Canada aboard the *Ranger* on August 2, 1785. His exit from his mission in Lochaber and Glengarry left the Highland District in "as distressed a situation for want of hands, as it was this long time".²³ However, the news of his safe arrival and a description of his mission which numbered 800 or 900 Highlanders, who had been "remarkably backward in going to their Duties", enabled the bishops to come to terms with the loss of the missionary.²⁴

While there might have been few evictions from the Glengarry estate in 1784, that was the year Cheviots were stocked on the Scotos estate in Knoydart, and three farms were forced into vacancy. It was the signal for what would follow in 1785, when the north side of Knoydart was cleared of tenants, and removals were made from farms along the twelve-mile length of the River Garry. In all about five hundred people were removed, and of these two hundred emigrated.²⁵

About this time, another former tacksman, Captain John Macdonald, ex-Glenalladale, was in London with some of the officers from the 84th Foot, the Royal Highland Emigrants. In addition to some post-war regimental business, he was trying

²³Bp. Alexander Macdonald to [John Thomson] 15 May 1785 SCA BL3/449/8.

²⁴Bp. John Geddes to John Thomson 2 January 1786 SCA BL3/469/2; Geddes to Bp. George Hay 17 January 1786 SCA BL3/469/1.

²⁵SRO GD128/65/12 and Marianne MacLean, p. 111-112, 170.

to have a policy overturned which had seen many of the St. John-Island lots in the possession of landlords absent either because of non-residence on the Island, or as was the case with himself, because of their participation in military affairs, sold because of non-payment of taxes.²⁶ He wrote to his sisters who had remained on the Island, that he had been pressed by many unhappy Highlanders to arrange for their emigration to his vast estate but because of the uncertainty of his plans, he had dissuaded them.²⁷ Yet, however reluctant he was to sponsor or encourage emigrants to his estate, within the next few years he was to influence the emigration of at least two more of the Highland clergy.

There can be little doubt the emigration of 1786 was in response to the exactions of the landlords, primarily Macdonell of Glengarry. Two hundred left Glengarry and nearly a hundred, Glenmoriston. In July of that year, the third emigration from Knoydart and North Morar took place with 500 on board the *MacDonald* bound for Quebec City where they arrived on 7 September 1786.²⁸ The devastation of the 1784-1786 emigrations was described by Jean, the wife of Captain James Macdonell of Glenmeddle²⁹, a near relation of Glengarry.

²⁶Capt. John Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 3 September 1783 SCA BL3/389/2.

²⁷Capt. John Macdonald to his sisters 29 June 1785 quoted in J. Bumsted, *Land, Settlement and Politics in Eighteenth-century Prince Edward Island* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), p. 166. From the beginning, Macdonald ran into a series of misfortunes all of which affected the success of his plans for St. John's Island, and there can be little doubt that he was discouraged. In a letter to Lord Selkirk in 1810, he mentioned that he had wanted to get rid of his property and had actually tried to do so "some years back". Vide: John Macdonald to Lord Selkirk 23 April 1810 PACSP, vol. 53, p. 14985.

²⁸Marianne MacLean, pp. 168 and 180.

²⁹Captain James was the son of John, eleventh of Glengarry by his second wife, Helen, daughter of John Gordon, Glenbucket. Archibald Macdonald and Alexander Macdonald. *The Clan Donald*. 3 vols. (Inverness: Northern Counties Publishing Co., 1896-1904), vol. 3, p. 313.

Mr.---had been at Greenock to engage a transport to carry the Knoydart people to Canada: there are already 300 passengers engaged; Vessel *Isle of Ormsay*. It is thought the country will be converted into a sheep walk... I fear all the sheep that can be introduced and reared will form a sorry defence against our enemies. Knoydart is now verily a sheep walk and I well recollect the last and worst of the Knoydart evictions.³⁰

Nor was she alone in her misgivings. Bishop Alexander Macdonald informed their agent in Rome, John Thomson, that his congregations were leaving "in great Colonies".

The hardships they suffer under their squeezing and unfeeling masters oblige them to look for an asylum in distant Regions; Last year upward of 300 souls left Glengarry and its neighbourhood almost all Roman Catholics and settled in Canada above Mount-Real, where were already settled about 800 Highlanders, who had emigrated to America before the commencement of the last war; and are doing exceedingly well. To serve those people, and because his own numerous Relations were of the number, Mr. Roderick MacDonald, an excellent missionary went to America last year likewise. There is just now a numerous emigration ready to take shipping in Knoydart of upwards of 500 souls all Catholics; These my friend Mr. Alex^r. Scothouse is, right or wrong, determined to accompany especially as a Brother of his other connections in a great way there promises him a handsome appointment.³¹

The Mr. Alexander referred to was the Knoydart missionary who has been identified as one of the emigration promoters.³² As a clergyman he was undoubtedly respected and regarded as a man in authority and he along with his nephew Angus

³⁰Letter of Jean Macdonell of Glenmeddle, dated June, 1788 quoted in Charles Fraser-Mackintosh, *Letters of Two Centuries* (Inverness: A & M Mackenzie, 1890), p. 312.

³¹Bp. Alexander Macdonald to John Thomson 22 May 1786 SCA BL3/478/14.

³²Charles Fraser-Mackintosh, "Inverness-shire Parish by Parish," *Antiquarian Notes*. 2d. ser. (Inverness: A & W Mackenzie, 1897), p. 128; Marianne MacLean, p. 180-1.

Macdonell, of the Sandaig family, were selected by the emigrants to act on their behalf to procure a ship and make some of the actual emigration arrangements,³³ but his role in the actual emigration scheme was more that of a follower than a leader. It was rather Angus who had served with the 71st Regiment, Fraser's Highlanders,³⁴ during the American Revolutionary War, who was the driving force behind the emigration scheme.

Alexander Macdonell was the son of Æneas Macdonell, third of Scotos, by his second wife, Katherine MacLeod.³⁵ Prior to his father's death in 1751, he was endowed with the lands of Inveriebeg.³⁶ In 1759 he was admitted to the Scots College in Rome where he was ordained in 1767.³⁷ Upon his return to Scotland in 1767, he was invited to the Preshome mission where he stayed with John Geddes for six months in order to prepare himself for the missionary life.³⁸ His experience there

³³ G. S. Macdonald, "Notes on Family History and the History of Glengarry", 1883-1886. Ms. PAC. MC.C29.

³⁴He is listed as an ensign with the First Battalion in David Stewart, *Sketches of the Highlanders of Scotland*. 2nd. ed. 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1822, repr. Edinburgh: John Donald, 1977), vol.2, p. 45.

³⁵There seems to be some confusion as to the identity of his mother who is most often cited as Catherine MacLeod, the daughter of Sir Norman MacLeod of Berneray and Catherine Macdonald, eldest daughter of Sir James Macdonald, second Baronet Sleat, who married as her first husband, Alexander MacLeod, ninth of Raasay and as her second husband, Æneas Macdonell, third of Scotos. (*Clan Donald*, vol.3, p. 321) By her first marriage, she bore a son, Malcolm and, if she was also the mother of Donald, d. 1746 at Culloden, it is highly unlikely she was also the mother of Alexander who was born about 1742. The deed of annuity dated 1751 names Alexander as the youngest and only son of Æneas by his second wife, Katherine, "his mother and present spouse". (SRO Register of Sasines. Inverness. RS 38, f.187) Alexander, writing to Bp. Geddes in 1786, asks his help in assuring that his mother's marriage contract be registered in Edinburgh under the name of MacSween or MacLeod, an indication that she had married for a third (?) time. Vide: Macdonell to Geddes 21 June 1786 SCA BL3/480/3.

³⁶SRO. RS 38, f.187.

³⁷F. Forbes and W.J. Anderson, "Clergy Lists of the Highland District 1732-1828," *IR* 17 (1966), p. 148.

³⁸John Geddes to Peter Grant 17 November 1779 SCA BL3/312/19.

contributed to his being considered as a candidate to replace Geddes early in 1770, even though it was a mission under the jurisdiction of the Lowland District. His candidature did not please Bishop James Grant, the Vicar Apostolic to the Lowland District, whether from a personal dislike of the Highland gentleman or because he had a poor opinion of the Highlanders in general. On more than one occasion he had expressed a desire to have the two districts kept apart as much as was possible. At this time, however, the Lowland District was desperate for lack of qualified clergy, and his options were not so obvious.

Tis a matter of extraordinary surprise how they ever should have picked on such a young raw lad as Mr. Alex^r McDonell of Scothouse for such an affair; I all along rather thought Mr. Al: McDonald Sen^r ... had been the person, at least this last had experience and a greater knowledge of the work to recommend him but the former does not appear to me to be in any respect hitherto qualified for that purpose so whatever be the fate of this affair, I'm persuaded his refusal to undertake it will be no loss to the publick welfare.³⁹

Bishop Grant seems not to have been very impressed with Scotos for in a later letter, he compared him with one of his colleagues who had been ordained two years previous to Macdonell. "James Macdonald", he wrote, "is an excellent young man, if ever he should recover his health, he has an extreme good heart which is more for our purpose than all your shining abilities and [I] am persuaded would be agreeable to the people almost in any place."⁴⁰ As it turned out, the decision to send him to Preshome from the Highland District arrived too late, for John Reid was appointed

³⁹Bp. James Grant to Bp. George Hay 17 January 1770 SCA BL3/211.

⁴⁰Bp. James Grant to Bp. George Hay 1 March 1770 SCA BL3/214/10.

to take charge of this important mission.⁴¹ One of the objections Grant had towards Scotos was that he had intended bringing his mother, who was not a Catholic, to stay with him.

...his bringing down his mother to such a place would be extremely inconvenient in many respects, even tho' she were Cath: it would be very improper, but as she is not, and perhaps never will be, you see all at once what bad consequences her living in such a house might occasion...⁴²

Grant's attitude deserves some consideration for it seems to have been a problem in the Lowland District more so than in the Highland, and in this case, the Preshome mission was singled out for its probable sensitivity to the issue. Grant was not totally against Scotos working in the Lowland District for he concluded his letter to Hay in March 1770, by stating he was overjoyed that the Highland bishops would send one of their clergy to their relief and that "Mr. McDonell is most heartily welcome and will be most agreeable to all concerned that we have plenty of places standing in need of his assistance."⁴³ The Preshome mission in the Enzie, on the Duke of Gordon's estate, was one of the most important because of its influence within a community which counted the largest numbers of Catholics in the Lowland District, and as such was conspicuous and open to criticism. It is likely Grant thought that placing a "foreigner" there might court hostility from the locals, whether from the Gordons, some of whom were still Catholic, or from their tenants.

As his first mission, Alexander Macdonell was appointed to the predominantly

⁴¹Bp. James Grant to Bp. George Hay 25 March 1770 SCA BL3/214/12.

⁴²Tbid.

⁴³Tbid.

Catholic island of South Uist which had been troubled recently by the friction between the laird, Colin Macdonald of Boisdale and the Irish Dominican missionary, Matthias Wynne.⁴⁴ It is likely he was sent there because of his social background, being the son of Scotos, and uncle to the then incumbent, Ranald, which relationship of itself entitled him to courtesy and respect from such as Boisdale. Further, it would have been the choice of the Vicar-Apostolic to send a missionary to a locale other than his home. However, he was not happy in Uist and indeed was often ill "by weakness of stomach and frequent vomiting, so that he must be recalled from the Isles as soon as it can be done."⁴⁵ So much did he desire to leave Uist that according to Bishop Hugh, he left about Easter in 1771 "without giving the people the necessary duties, especially being in good health", and leaving none but the ailing Mr. Forrester to take care of the mission.⁴⁶

Upon his return to the mainland, he stayed on his tack at Inveriebeg with his mother where, because he was "the very first of his cloth that recommended in our parts submission to our happy constitution and attachment to the illustrious House of Hanover" he was given the nickname of the Whiggish Priest.⁴⁷ There is every indication that, unlike most of his ecclesiastical colleagues, he lived in comfortable circumstances. In 1772, he mentioned, for example, receiving a damask silk gown

⁴⁴See: Chapter Five.

⁴⁵Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 27 November 1770 in "Clapperton Memoirs", vol.4, p.2732. SCA Ms.CC15.

⁴⁶Idem.

⁴⁷Ranald Macdonell of Scotos to Peter Grant 2 August 1779 SCA BL3/322/3.

from his mother with which to make vestments.⁴⁸ He was amongst his kin, honoured by his nephew Ranald, who was his senior by at least a dozen years, and at ease in the company of his cousins from Glengarry, Skye or Glenelg, connections described by Ranald as "many of the most powerful chiefs of familys in this part of the Kingdom, both Catholics and Protestants, Severals of whom are members in the British Parliament"⁴⁹ and by Austin Macdonald of Glenalladale, himself related to the Scotos Macdonells through his mother, Margaret, the only child of *Domhnall nan Gleann* by his first marriage, as being "generally among our Enemies whom no consideration will bring to doe any favour."⁵⁰ From there he acted as chaplain on the Knoydart estate and on occasion travelled as far north as Kintail, where in 1777 there were some sixty converts, besides children. It was in Ardintoul in 1778 that he experienced some trouble from the local minister for having celebrated Mass on the shore where numbers of fishermen, Catholic and non-Catholic, had set up camp. He further annoyed the Protestant clergy by officiating at a marriage which as Bishop John wrote "nothing is ever more common here. There are even many instances of Ministers assisting at Marriages, Christenings, etc... performed by the Priests."⁵¹ What had startled Alexander was that complaints against him had been lodged with Lord Seaforth and the Lord Advocate, and a local parson had requested that the Catholics be evicted.⁵² However, after a cursory exchange of letters, the matter was

⁴⁸Alexander Macdonell (Scotos) to Bp. George Hay 26 August 1772 SCA BL3/248/8.

⁴⁹Ranald Macdonell of Scotos to Cardinal Castelli 29 October 1779 SCA BL3/322/6.

⁵⁰Austin Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 22 December 1779 SCA BL3/321/2.

⁵¹Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 7 April 1778 SCA BL3/306/8.

⁵²Idem.

quickly forgotten.

Among those who left in 1773 with the first of the Glengarry emigrants were a number of families from the Knoydart area, including Alexander's half-brothers John of Crowlin, Spanish John, and Allan Ardnaslishnish as well as some of his nieces and nephews. These went to the Johnson estates in the Mohawk Valley and eventually, about 1783, some removed to the new Glengarry settlement in Canada and to Montreal. Despite this, there was no indication in Scotos' correspondence, either with his superiors or his colleagues, that he entertained any thought of joining his relatives. Aside from the unpleasantness in Kintail, Mr. Alexander enjoyed a relatively easy incumbency in Knoydart where he was described to have "lorded over his native country"⁵³ and acted as "King, Priest and Prophet".⁵⁴

In 1779, however, the sudden death of Bishop John Macdonald created a situation which left Scotos almost totally disaffected with the Scots Mission. The bishop had died without a co-adjutor or having named or even commented on a likely successor. The Pro-Vicar for the Highland District, Alexander Macdonald of the Kinlochmoidart family, took a poll of the thirteen missionaries then active in the Highlands. The results were sent to Bishop Hay, then the only Roman Catholic bishop in Scotland, and were said to have been evenly divided, the six senior clergy having voted for Alexander Macdonald, missionary on Barra and brother of the tacksman in Bornish, South Uist, and the six junior clergy, for Alexander Macdonell, the son of Scotos and the missionary in Knoydart, and there was one vote for Allan Macdonald,

⁵³Bp. Alexander Macdonald to John Thomson 5 August 1785 SCA BL3/449/11.

⁵⁴John Thomson to Bp. George Hay 22 July 1786 SCA BL3/488/8.

of the Morar family. Bishop Hay communicated the results to Rome and in order to break the tie added as his choice "his old fellow-student", Alexander Macdonald. Rome concurred with this choice and the native of South Uist was consecrated by Hay as Bishop of Polemon on March 12, 1780.⁵⁵

The result of this 'election' gave great umbrage to Alexander Macdonell, Scotos, who felt he had been cheated of the mitre. He suspected that the election had been engineered by Bishop Hay. It was not so much a case of a few weeks' irritation but rather the issue was kept current in private and in public for at least eighteen months. He believed he had received seven votes and had inquired personally of his grand-nephew, Austin Macdonald, Glenalladale, and his kin, Allan Macdonald, Morar, to know their votes and he asked that they write a note of protest to Rome.⁵⁶ One of his friends, John Reid, the missionary at Preshome,⁵⁷ fuelled the fire by telling his colleague about Hay's role, and, according to the missionary in Arisaig, it was he who gave Scotos the idea that Allan Macdonald of the Morar family had actually received three votes, and not one, which would have meant that Scotos would

⁵⁵J.F.S. Gordon, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle for Scotland*. vol. IV: *Journal and Appendix to Scotchchronicon and Monasticon*. (Glasgow, 1867), p. 179. In the official documents, the Papal Bulls, his See, Polemon, would have been described as *in partibus infidelium*, and would have been a site located within the realm of the early church. The normal practice is to name a bishop to a specific see or diocese, e.g., Rome, Paris, Madrid, etc. Other bishops active in the same diocese are co-adjutors and are given dioceses *in partibus infidelium*. Prior to the restoration of the Roman Catholic episcopacy in Scotland in 1878, all of the bishops active in Scotland including the Vicars-Apostolic, were nominated to such dioceses.

⁵⁶Alexander Macdonald, Sr. to Bp. George Hay 8 November 1779 SCA BL3/320/8.

⁵⁷There seems to have been some rivalry between John Reid and Bishop Hay, partly because the former was missionary at Preshome, an area which Hay regarded as pivotal. Hay was not the easiest person to deal with and his career is marked by quarrels with various clergymen, one of whom was John Reid. In the early 1780's, there was a virtual paper war going on between them. It would not have been out of character then, that Reid inform his colleague in the western Highlands about Hay's interference.

have had a clear majority.⁵⁸

Although Scotos' vehement reaction eventually cost him the allegiance of most of his colleagues, he did have his supporters. One of these was the urbane rector of the Scots College in Valladolid, John Geddes, who wrote to Hay and also to Peter Grant, their agent in Rome, that he knew several persons who would have preferred Scotos but that he accepted the decision as having come from the "oldest and most respectable" of the missionaries.⁵⁹ Another supporter was the wry *protégé* of the Jesuits, Alexander Cameron⁶⁰, who wrote that he had withheld his opinion and the reasons for it from Scotos out of "respect for superiors".⁶¹

One of those who did not want to see "Sandy Scothouse" succeed was Alexander Gordon, the principal of the Scots College in Paris, because he had a "material objection to him".⁶² By January 1780, after he had heard of Scotos' reaction, he relented a little, hoping that he "would come to himself in time," and that there would not be a paper war. "It is surely a dismal case," he wrote "that there should be any quarrels among ourselves when we have so many enemies and so few

⁵⁸Alexander Macdonald, Sr. to Bp. George Hay 31 August 1780 SCA BL3/335/12. This information was subsequently used by the family to influence certain persons on their behalf. Their statistics showed that there had been 6 votes for Scotus, 3 for "Barra" and 3 for Allan, Morar and that Mr. Ranaldson, i.e. Alexander Macdonald, of the Stoneybridge, South Uist family, who was unqualified to vote, having been inactive in the Scottish Mission since 1745, had been canvassed, as well as two others, by Hay in favour of Barra. Vide: John Thomson to Hay 11 January 1780 SCA BL3/338/1.

⁵⁹John Geddes to Bp. George Hay 8 November 1779 SCA BL3/312/18, and Geddes to Peter Grant 17 November 1779 SCA BL3/312/19.

⁶⁰He succeeded John Geddes as rector of the Scots College in Valladolid in 1780 and became the Vicar-Apostolic to the Lowland District in 1811. Vide: Christine Johnson, "Secular Clergy of the Lowland District, 1732-1829," *IR* 34 (1983), p. 69.

⁶¹Alexander Cameron to Bp. John Geddes 26 February 1786 SCA BL3/462/6.

⁶²Alexander Gordon to Bp. George Hay 7 June 1779 SCA BL3/313/7.

friends among our countrymen."⁶³ Strange words from a person who was to engage in one of the lengthiest and most vitriolic of the many paper wars into which Hay was inclined to be drawn! Yet, even stranger was his letter to Hay in April, 1780, accusing him of having been too precipitate in his consecration of "Barra" and of arbitrarily nominating the missionary from Barra to succeed Bishop John Macdonald.

...the letters from Scalan with the votes for the two candidates reached Paris in the beginning of September 1779 the day after the Roman post was gone and as it goes only once a week they stay here a whole week... it was about the 14th they were sent off. Now, it is equally certain that Polemon's Bulls⁶⁴ came here from Rome the later days of September and must have been sent from Rome before the letters with the votes reached that place. So that the choice of Bp. Macdonald was determined at Hilton [Rome] before any vote was known to have been given in his favour. Nay, Mr. P[eter] Grant wrote me in the beginning of July that the matter was finished there and that the necessary papers were to be expedited immediately. His brother at Douay [Robert Grant] had an early intelligence if not earlier of this choice, which Mr. Peter wrote me was made at your earnest desire...⁶⁵

It is probable that Hay did want "Barra" as his counterpart in the Highland District, for not only had they been classmates in Rome, but, since his return to the Scottish Mission, in 1765, Alexander Macdonald had gained the attention of the bishops because of his assiduous attention to duty and also, and of more importance, because he had shown an interest in and ability for administration.⁶⁶ Whether or not

⁶³Alexander Gordon to Bp. George Hay 1 January 1780 SCA BL3/329/1.

⁶⁴The order that Alexander Macdonald had been appointed Bishop of Polemon.

⁶⁵Alexander Gordon to Bp. George Hay 12 April 1780 SCA BL3/329/6.

⁶⁶Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 19 July 1774 SCA BL3/269/2. He described the then missionary on Barra as having "a tincture of ambition ... always desirous of being in administration, coming to meetings, etc..."

Hay "managed" the votes to produce a tie, and thereby enable himself to cast the deciding vote, or, as Gordon suggests, sent in the votes after the decision had already been taken, made little difference to Scotos. He felt cheated and was prepared to let all and sundry know. He and his nephew Ranald,⁶⁷ began a campaign to have the election declared invalid. Representation was made to Cardinal Castelli in Rome, although "only one letter was received but well after all was concluded".⁶⁸ Letters were sent to the Regent, MacLeod of MacLeod, since Alexander's mother was a MacLeod, in order as Ranald said "to get the affair canvassed to the bottom in a formal and regular tryal, that your [Hay's] innocence may appear the more conspicuous".⁶⁹ His brother, Sandaig, appealed to Mrs. Macdonell, Glenmeddle, to represent the case in Edinburgh in order to get a court order preventing Hay from acting on the Papal Bulls until representation on Scotos' behalf could be made in Rome. John Thomson, who was then in Edinburgh while Hay was at Aberdeen, added that the Earl of Denbigh and Duke of Buccleuch had each signified that he was prepared to support the petition.⁷⁰

As early as May, 1784, Scotos had been searching for a way to extricate himself from the Scots Mission and had been considering a move to Halifax in Nova Scotia. Geddes would know this because he corresponded with both Alexander Scotos

⁶⁷ Ranald must have been Alexander's senior by at least ten years for he was an ensign in Loudon's forces at the time of the 1745 rebellion. Despite Hay's attempt to downplay the role played by Ranald, he was dismayed enough to advise *Propaganda* of his innocence and that he had been the victim of calumny and threats by the Scothouse family and that he had been sent letters of support from all the Highland missionaries. Bp. George Hay to *Propaganda* in Blundell, vol. 2, p. 70-72.

⁶⁸Peter Grant to Bp. George Hay 4 May 1780 SCA BL3/331/10.

⁶⁹Ranald Macdonell of Scotus to Bp. George Hay 25 March 1780 SCA BL3/336/12.

⁷⁰John Thomson to Bp. George Hay 11 January 1780 SCA BL3/338/1.

and John Macdonald, ex-Glenalladale, who was then in London and was probably the contact for Scotos. When the Abbé Peter Grant died in 1784, Alexander Geddes suggested that "Sandy Scotos who is heartily disgusted with both VVA [the Vicars Apostolic] and wishes to leave the Mission, if he had an opportunity", might be a good replacement.⁷¹ If he had needed another reason for breaking with his past, it came with part with the Scottish Mission, he was among those mentioned in the 1784 Knoydart removals was Alexander Macdonell, priest from Inveriebeg.⁷²

Just prior to the spring of 1785, he informed John Geddes that he had some "plans, wild ones, but all in the embryonic stage."⁷³ Later, he and his mother moved from Inveriebeg to Sandfield where he took great interest in his new farm: repairing a hut, building a new one, fitting it out for next year and paying out £12 to the former occupiers of others. Everything signified a fair cash outlay but unfortunately, he was disappointed in the yield.⁷⁴ He had not given up his still undefined scheme for he had had to wait for another session of Parliament. "Ay, do smile," he wrote, "and shake your head. Yet, I assure you mine is not turned: whatever success may attend my project".⁷⁵

What these mysterious plans were, though still a matter for conjecture since there is little evidence upon which to base a conclusion, probably concerned his emigration. He was exasperated with his situation within the Scottish Mission and in

⁷¹Alexander Geddes to Bp. John Geddes 14 May 1784 SCA BL3/404/14.

⁷²Fraser-Mackintosh Papers. SRO GD128/8/2/38.

⁷³Alexander Macdonell to Bp. John Geddes 21 February 1785 SCA BL3/452/1.

⁷⁴Alexander Macdonell to Bp. John Geddes 6 October 1785 SCA BL3/452/4.

⁷⁵Alexander Macdonell to Bp. John Geddes 14 July 1785 SCA BL3/452/3.

addition he was burdened by an accumulation of debts. As early as 1780, it was known that Ranald of Scotos was in financial trouble and Mr. Alexander was also in debt "through head and ears by his too high management altho he had more money than any missionary in the Highlands."⁷⁶ It was suggested at that time that this was his main purpose in seeking the episcopal administration.⁷⁷ In a letter to John Thomson who was then acting as the procurator in Edinburgh, he expressed his appreciation for Thomson's having advanced him money to pay for his mother's cloak and that what was left over from his Martinmas quota should go to Angus Macdonell, a merchant, in the Lawnmarket. "I owe him more than can be cleared in the first term:," he wrote, "but you can assure him that you are required to pay him off at Whitsunday..."⁷⁸

By November of that year, word had got around that he was determined to go to America "to serve an Indian Village, for which he is made to expect a £100. salary from Government".⁷⁹ Bishop Alexander Macdonald however, was astonished to receive a letter from Scotos asking that he concur with the wishes of his colleague in Edinburgh, Bishop John Geddes. Scotos gave his superior to understand that the coadjutor in the Lowland District favoured his being dispensed from his vows to serve the Scottish Mission. It would allow him to leave for Canada post-haste where "friends were to procure a more comfortable living for him in ...a Gallo-Indian

⁷⁶Alexander Macdonald *sr.* to Bp. George Hay 3 February 1780 SCA BL3/335/5.

⁷⁷Idem.

⁷⁸Alexander Macdonell (Scotus) to John Thomson 22 October 1780 SCA BL3/336/9.

⁷⁹Ranald Macdonald (Missionary in Glengarry) to [unspecified] 24 November 1785 SCA BL3/451/18.

Village..." This evidently was Macdonell's total explanation and he stated further that he was determined to accept the offer despite every obstacle put in his way. Bishop Macdonald's reply was predictable. Even if the Vicar-Apostolic to the Highland District had been willing to part with another of his clergymen, the devious manner in which Scotos had tried to manoeuvre his superior's consent and the impertinent tone of his request militated against a positive response. Bishop Alexander Macdonald replied that he could not accept his request in good conscience.⁸⁰ Others raised a cry of dismay, noting that if he went, "Knoydart and Kintail must be destitute".⁸¹

The bishop however, relented because Macdonell had taken "measures so far before he spoke of it ... that he saw it would be in vain to oppose it and might have had consequences; so he gave his consent and dismissorials.",⁸² In July, the Vicars Apostolic took advantage of their annual meeting to compose a letter to Rome requesting the necessary dispensation.⁸³ Thus, having been granted his superior's permission, Alexander Macdonell, the Knoydart missionary, and five hundred of his congregation sailed aboard the *MacDonald* for Quebec where they arrived on 7

⁸⁰Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 25 November 1785 SCA BL3/449/15.

⁸¹Alexander Macdonald, Sr. to Bp. John Geddes 30 November 1785 SCA BL3/450/8.

⁸²Bp. George Hay to John Thomson 28 July 1786 SCA BL3/476/1.

⁸³(Copy) Vicars Apostolic to Cardinal Antonelli, Prefect of Propaganda 28 July 1786 SCA BL3/475/16. "Ex Missionariis nostris unus D. Alex^s. Macdonell in eam America Septentrionalis partem quo Canada vocatur una cum quingentis [quincentis?] ex nostris Catholicis supernavigavit. Hujus a nobis discessus Polemonionsi Episcopo suo minime probabatur, sed permissionem ab eo ferme extorsit. Ideo autem discedere cupiebat quod rei pecuniaria difficultate premeretur & meliorem in America conditionem expectaret et quamvis nonnihil veremur ne similis expectatio alios deinde a nobis abstrahat necesse tamen est ut dispensationem huic a juramento quo se Scotio Missionibus per totam vitam obstrinxerat petamus."

September 1786.⁸⁴

Bishop Alexander's statement that a "Brother of his other connections in a great way there promises him a handsome appointment⁸⁵ reflects more the Knoydart Missionary's motives than does that of his leadership of the scheme. His account is interesting in that it illustrates the case of a clergyman who emigrated for precisely the same reasons as did many of his kindred. He had lost his farm, was in financial difficulty, had been disappointed and somewhat disillusioned by his superiors and was lured by the offer of a well-paid position and security in Canada. Unlike Roderick Macdonell or James Macdonald who had emigrated with the 1772 emigrants to St. John's Island, Scotos' reasons for leaving the Scottish Mission were purely personal.

Unfortunately, Angus Macdonell's negotiations on behalf of the emigrants were not as straightforward or as firm as might have been wished for shortly after their arrival at Quebec City in September, 1786, a curt note was sent to Stephen Delancey.⁸⁶ John Craigie, originally from Kilgraston, the private secretary to Brigadier General Henry Hope and Storekeeper General, suggested that the Government "at home" had from "various motives ... connived at their departure. "It cannot be supposed that any Encouragement was intended to be given to Persons emigrating from the Mother Country", he wrote, and he recommended that no help

⁸⁴Marianne MacLean, p. 180.

⁸⁵Bp. Alexander Macdonald to John Thomson 22 May 1786 SCA BL3/478/14.

⁸⁶Stephen Delancey was a New York Loyalist. He was Clerk of the city and county of Albany in 1785 [i.e. 1775?] and a Lieutenant-Colonel in the 1st New Jersey Loyal Volunteers in 1782. Vide: *DNB*, vol. 5, p. 754. A reference is made to him in the *DCB*, vol. 5, but there are no specific details concerning his career.

be given them.⁸⁷ By the end of the month, Henry Hope,⁸⁸ the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec, had written Angus Macdonell that he had been apprehensive of his emigration scheme and of their friends "on whose invitations they had emigrated, being unable to provide for their maintenance during the Winter". He had agreed to supply and to transport them to the Rivière aux Raisins district to be with their kinsmen, but he was holding Angus as well as others of the principal emigrants, responsible for repayment of the costs incurred.⁸⁹

Within a short time of his arrival Fr. Alexander realized he had been misled with regard to the promised position and salary in Canada and he reacted with an anger and peevishness reminiscent of his behaviour between 1779 and 1781. Roderick Macdonell, the missionary who had emigrated in 1785, remarked that although Scotos had been more than a year in the Country, he was living in Quebec and refused to minister to the emigrants with whom he had travelled from Knoydart. "I have the charge of his flock as well as my own; he is quite disappointed as Government will do nothing for him and his Knoydart friends will do very little; but I hope he will soon join his ship crew who stand much in need of him."⁹⁰

The Canadian Clergy, "who at first seemed much inclined to serve him", were soon alienated because of his inactivity. He tended rather to rely on his recommendations to "some great persons there, through whose interest, he flatters himself, he will

⁸⁷(Copy) John Craigie to Stephen Delancey 4 September 1786 PAC Microfilm C-3001.

⁸⁸He was the grandson of the first Earl of Hopetown. *DCB*. Vol. 4, p.366-367.

⁸⁹(Copy) Brigadier General Henry Hope to Lieutenant Angus Macdonell 25 September 1786 PAC Microfilm C-3001.

⁹⁰Roderick Macdonell to Bp. John Geddes ca. September or October 1787 SCA BL3/506/14.

be put in possession of some lucrative parish".⁹¹ But, as Angus Macdonell, Sandaig, his nephew, wrote, "it were much surer of him to court the esteem of the Bishop and Clergy, who are very rich and were greatly inclined to serve him... but prudence never seemed to be one of Mr. Alexr's virtues."⁹² Finally, two years after his arrival in the New World, and having secured an appointment of £25 a year from the Bishop of Quebec, he went to minister to the emigrants from Glengarry⁹³ and there he remained until his death in May, 1803.

The emigrations of 1784-1786 caused considerable alarm throughout the Highlands and in contrast to its former official reaction, this time the government sponsored studies and schemes which sought to alleviate the plight of the dispossessed Highlanders. Nearly all, like James Anderson,⁹⁴ concentrated on the coastal areas, leaving the Central Highlands to the sheep. That notwithstanding, he, like the Highland Society, was very much against emigration for he considered it to weaken the fabric of society, to cause economic distress, loss of markets, and in the most direct manner, it tended to diminish employment. He saw emigration as a check to population which he thought, unlike many of his contemporaries, needed to be encouraged.

The want of people, therefore, occasioned by the emigrations, cannot be made up by the rapid increase of

⁹¹Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 13 February 1788 SCA BL3/528/2.

⁹²Idem.

⁹³Austin Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 17 October 1788 SCA BL3/529/4.

⁹⁴James Anderson (1739-1808) was an agriculturalist and economist. In 1784, he was employed by William Pitt to survey the fisheries in the north of Britain. He published his findings in *An Account of the Present State of the Hebrides and Western Coasts of Scotland*. (Edinburgh: C. Elliot, 1785). Vide: *DNB*, vol. 1, p. 381-2.

this class of citizens; but on the contrary, the decrease in the population of this class, must be added to the number of emigrants who have gone away; both which deficiencies must be made up by the more rapid increase of some other class of citizen. National security weakened; too much money spent on the colonies.⁹⁵

The Highland Society, many of whose most prominent members had a vested interest in keeping their tenants from leaving, suggested plans similar to Anderson's in 1786.⁹⁶ The Highland Society in general, the Earl of Breadalbane, its president that year, and Glengarry, from whose estate five hundred were preparing to emigrate, were chastised *in perpetuo*, as it were, through the pen of Robert Burns, for attempting to keep their tenants from emigrating.⁹⁷

In the spring of 1788 some sixty to eighty families were removed from Glengarry and a further thirty families from Knoydart and more were evicted by 1790. Some emigrated, although in fewer numbers, for many of the dispossessed Highlanders were removing to cities such as Edinburgh and especially Glasgow. Ranald Macdonell,⁹⁸ the missionary in Lochaber and Glengarry informed his bishop

⁹⁵James Anderson, *op. cit.*, p.xci-xcii and cxiv.

⁹⁶*Caledonian Mercury*, 3 June 1786.

⁹⁷Robert Burns, "Address of Beelzebub to the President of the Highland Society", in *The Kilmarnock Edition of the Poetical Works of Robert Burns*, ed. William Scott Douglas. 9 ed., 2 vols. in 1. (Edinburgh: John Menzies, 1893), vol. 2, p. 297-299.

⁹⁸He was born in Edinburgh of a Lochaber family and in his early correspondence signed himself as Macdonell. While he was stationed on South Uist, he seems to have espoused the Macdonald spelling. He was considered by his friends to be ingenious, whereas his opponents thought him conceited and meddling. In 1802, at the request of Glengarry who had evicted him from his holding on the estate, he was removed by Bishop John Chisholm from the Glengarry mission and was transferred to South Uist. In 1820, he was named the vicar apostolic to the Highland District. Vide: Forbes, F. & Anderson, W.J. "Clergy Lists of the Highland District 1732-1828," *IR* 17 (1966) p. 157, (Copy) Capt. Grant to Alexander Macdonell, W.S. 26 December 1801 GD128/7/5/40 and Selkirk's Diary, p. 350-51.

about the depopulation of the entire country as well as about the chief's methods to force those he considered to be undesirable to leave, by which he had "got rid of the last of the gentlemen and such as could oppose his manoeuvres, or at least cause their voice to be heard..."⁹⁹

The reduction in numbers of Catholics, especially those in a position to afford the missionaries hospitality or an allowance, was very worrisome to the bishops. As Bishop Alexander Macdonald informed their agent in Rome it was nigh impossible to live on their trifling income "among such indigent people, who can not afford one night's lodging much less assist them in any other way at a time, when every individual article of the necessaries of life is sold at an exorbitant price".¹⁰⁰ A more ominous comment, though, concerned the missionaries themselves who "desire to be changed, [or] threaten to go to America..."¹⁰¹

If the decade ended on a somewhat apathetic note, its successor certainly was the reverse. John Macdonald, Clanranald, because of family problems¹⁰² and his absence from the estate, left much of its control to managers, who carried on with evictions. In 1794, he died, at the age of twenty-nine, leaving his estate in the

⁹⁹Bishop Alexander Macdonald to Bishop John Geddes 11 July 1788 SCA BL3/528/5. There was at least one prominent tacksman remaining on the estate, namely Alexander Macdonell of Greenfield, the grandson of Donald Macdonell, Lochgarry. He, his son and his brother were removed from the Greenfield tack in 1790. Vide: David McRoberts, "Ambula Coram Deo: the Journal of Bishop Geddes for the Year 1790," *IR* 6 (1955), p. 138. In 1792, Greenfield and a number of other Macdonells emigrated to Upper Canada where his brother-in-law, John Macdonell, ex-Aberchalder, was the Speaker of the first House of Assembly, being the member for Glengarry in Upper Canada. Vide: J.A. Macdonell, *Sketches Illustrating the Early Settlement and History of Glengarry in Canada* (Montreal: Wm. Foster, Brown & Co., 1898), p. 131-2.

¹⁰⁰Bp. Alexander Macdonald to John Thomson 7 August 1788 SCA BL3/528/8.

¹⁰¹Idem.

¹⁰²His first marriage with Catherine MacQueen, the daughter of Lord Braxfield, ended in divorce.

complete control of a panel of tutors. Alexander Ranaldson Macdonell, young Glengarry, upon coming of age, assumed the title and the absolute control of the estate in 1792. Emigration from these two tracts of land in particular was so great during the latter years of the century that as a countermeasure, and acting on the counsel of the estate owners, the government implemented the Emigration Act of 1803.

CHAPTER SEVEN: EMIGRATION 1783-1797

II. CLANRANALD

Most of the Highlands are on the eve of being entirely laid waste to the irretrievable loss of Britain which had no better nursery of men for sea and land than the Highlands. Were the smallest part of the treatment they receive from their little tyrants made known, it would undoubtedly raise the indignation of Government who would find it serviceable abroad by reinforcing our Colonies since it is out of our power to be serviceable at home.¹

The latter years of the seventeen-eighties and the first of the nineties saw the locus of emigration from the Catholic Bounds shift from Glengarry to the Clanranald territories. Before the American War of Independence, large numbers had emigrated from the Hebrides and some of the coastal communities in Moidart and Ardnamurchan. The Clanranald estate was quite different in its topography compared with that of Glengarry, although some of it was indeed mountainous, and offered little land suitable for tillage. Much of the settled areas, however, comprised the coastal waters of Moidart and Arisaig, South Uist and several of the Small Isles. In these waters fish were plentiful and kelp grew in great quantities. Not only could the fishing and kelp industry sustain a growing population but the profits realized, especially from the labour-intensive harvesting, drying and burning of the kelp, rendered such desirable. Evictions from the estate, usually for non-payment of rents or the disaffection of the chief or his tacksmen, had occurred, some as far back as the 1760's. They were, however, the exception on the Clanranald estate, rather than the norm. In 1770, Colin Macdonald, the laird of Boisdale, had used the threat of

¹Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 11 July 1788 SCA BL3/528/5.

eviction to intimidate his tenants. Two years after, at the insistence of Ranald Macdonald of Clanranald, he not only ceased his threats but lowered his rents in order to keep his tenants from leaving.² Clanranald himself was considered to have been so averse to emigration schemes that he would have taken "it highly amiss that such a thing were even begun in his neighbourhood."³ Ranald Macdonald died in 1776 and the management of the estate was taken over by a panel of tutors whose prime task was to keep the estate solvent. As was the case on most of the other Highland estates, they sought to increase capital by granting leases at much higher rates. Those unwilling or unable to pay were evicted. Thus, in 1780, during the war between Britain and her thirteen American Colonies, writs of removal were issued against fourteen of the tenants in Ardnafuaran.⁴ However, with the cessation of hostilities came the resumption of transatlantic shipping and disgruntled or apprehensive tenants were no longer forced to pay the increased rates in order to remain in place.

About this time, Austin Macdonald, the missionary in Moydart and brother of John Macdonald, formerly Glenalladale, found himself in financial difficulty. In 1784, for example, he was twenty-four pounds in debt, an amount at least double his annual salary.⁵ He had repeatedly sought assistance from Bishop Geddes and had sent messages asking that his brother be informed of his situation. Added to his fiscal malaise, was an uneasiness engendered by several unpleasant and intimidating

²Bp. George Hay to Peter Grant 28 August 1772 SCA BL3/245/1.

³Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 14 February 1772 SCA BL3/247/1.

⁴Removals 2 March 1780 SRO GD128/49/2/40.

⁵Austin Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 3 November 1784 SCA BL3/420/16.

encounters with several of the local parsons⁶ and an unfortunate confrontation with his superiors. In 1785, while attending the annual meeting, Bishops Hay and Geddes had charged him with having acted in a manner inappropriate to his station, thereby leaving himself open to criticism.⁷ Austin, in his letter to Bishop John Geddes, admitted he had kept company with some ordinary people of good character, something he considered not inapplicable to his vocation. He was a conscientious, correct clergyman and his lengthy letter of self-vindication shows to what extent the rebuke of the bishops bothered him.⁸ It was with a sense of chagrin and a desire to escape his problems that he sought to join his brother⁹ and sisters on St. John's Island and in 1786 he attempted to organize an emigration from Moydart,¹⁰ although it came to naught.

Evidently, he was not alone in trying to leave, as the bishops were only too well aware. At least three other clergymen were known to have been interested, if not engaged, in emigrating themselves or encouraging others to do so: James Hugh

⁶He had had trouble with a Mr. Skinner in March, 1784, and Dugald Campbell in June, 1784. For an account of such, as well as comments regarding his poverty, see SCA BL3/420/13-14 and 16.

⁷It should be remembered that the bishops who were always extremely sensitive to public opinion were even more so at this time because of the implication of the missionary on South Uist in a notorious scandal (1780-1782).

⁸Austin Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 25 November 1785 SCA BL3/450/16.

⁹John Macdonald was in London and did not return to St. John's Island until 1792.

¹⁰Austin Macdonald to his sister 29 June 1786 PAPEI 2664 quoted in J.M. Bumsted, *Land, Settlement and Politics in Eighteenth-century Prince Edward Island*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), p. 166. He probably changed his mind when his relatives in Knoydart, Ranald Macdonell of Scotos and John Macdonell, Sandaig, enticed him, with a promise of a good salary and living conditions, to replace Alexander Macdonell, Scotos, who emigrated in July, 1786. Within two years, however, he was again in difficulty. Vide: Austin Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 23 November 1789 SCA BL4/12/3.

Macdonald, the missionary in the Small Isles, Mr. Ranald¹¹ and Alexander Macdonell, a cadet of Keppoch and a missionary in South Uist.¹²

In 1788, Bishop Alexander Macdonald advised John Thomson in Rome that "fifteen hundred souls on Clanranald's territories of the mainland and Small Isles" would be homeless for their lands had been taken by "an unfeeling set of gentlemen".¹³ His dismay at the numbers of the dispossessed and the eventual consequence was echoed by John Buchanan who, after completing a tour of the Hebrides, commented that it was not Clanranald himself

but a set of interested and artful men, operating on his disposition to conviviality and facility of temper, [who] have unfortunately led him to turn several hundreds of souls... out of their possessions, and bestowed their farms, by large tracts of country, on a few favourites.¹⁴

Yet, the increase in emigration from the Clanranald estate about the year 1790 was not occasioned solely by evictions but rather it was more a response to the promises of a better life, mostly in America, proffered by emigration agents. These plied their trade throughout the Highlands, but were active especially on the western coast and the Isles and the insecurity wrought by the evictions of the seventeenth-eighties prepared a ready and willing audience for their presentations. Those who

¹¹This was most likely Ranald MacEachan who was the missionary stationed at Benbecula. Within the next decade, he would express an intention to emigrate, but any plans he had were foiled by his sudden death in 1803.

¹²Austin Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 17 October 1788 SCA BL3/529/4.

¹³Bp. Alexander Macdonald to John Thomson 7 August 1788 SCA BL3/528/8.

¹⁴John L. Buchanan, *Travels in the Western Hebrides from 1782-1790*. (London, 1793), p. 28-29. John Macdonald, XVII Clanranald, was only eleven years old when his father died in 1776 and his estate was managed by a panel of tutors including Flora, his mother and Colin Macdonald, Boisdale, until he came of age in March, 1786.

emigrated were, according to John Buchanan, "substantial farmers who were not crushed by extreme poverty and had the means of transporting themselves and families to other countries. The notion that the poorest emigrate and therefore can be regretted less is a great mistake".¹⁵

Nearly all the emigrants from Clanranald's estate went either to St. John's Island or Nova Scotia. Of these the Catholics tended to prefer the former since most of their kin who had emigrated previously had settled there. They continued to do so despite the fact that their clansman, Father James Macdonald who had left with the emigrants of 1772, died in March, 1785, leaving the Catholic outpost bereft of a pastor. News of his death reached the Scottish Mission within a few months, and plans about replacing him were immediately set in motion.¹⁶ One of those writing to advise the Scottish bishops was Captain John Macdonald, the former Glenalladale. "We must apply to the Mother Mission," he wrote,

the requisites are the Gaelic and a tolerable knowledge of the french with an exemplary life and a necessary share of that prudence which will restrain from meddling in any degree with whatever may happen to occur in the country foreign to his own immediate duty. The latter will give satisfaction to the Inhabitants of every denomination and conciliate indulgence and esteem when perhaps more brilliant abilities might fall short.¹⁷

Petitions on behalf of the 600 Catholics, French-speaking as well as Highlanders, had been sent to Bishop Alexander Macdonald also, but the small number of

¹⁵Idem.

¹⁶Angus McGillis to Bp. John Geddes 20 October 1785 SCA BL3/452/10 and Bp. John Geddes to John Thomson 2 January 1786 SCA BL3/469/2.

¹⁷Capt. John Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 1 December 1785 SCA BL3/451/12.

missionaries active in his Vicariate made him reluctant to part with any more. Roderick Macdonell had already left for Canada in 1785 and he was aware that Alexander Macdonell, Scotos, was arranging for his departure that summer.¹⁸ Circumstances would oblige him to alter his plans, and the missionary who would be responsible for his doing so was, in terms of experience, still a novice.

Angus Bernard MacEachern was born at Kinlochmoidart on February 8, 1759, the son of Hugh (Ban) MacEachern, the gardener to the Laird of Kinlochmoidart.¹⁹ In 1772 he had been placed in the care of Bishop John Macdonald when his parents and six of their eight children sailed for St. John's Island with the Glenalladale group.²⁰ He thus became one of the first successful students in the bishop's Buorblach school,²¹ from whence, in 1777, he and a nephew of Bishop John Macdonald were selected²² to go to the Scots Colleges at Valladolid and Douai

¹⁸Bp. Alexander Macdonald to John Thomson 22 May 1786 SCA BL3/478/14.

¹⁹John C. Macmillan, *A History of the Catholic Church in P.E.I.* (Quebec, 1905), p. 51. In his correspondence, MacEachern often referred to himself as a "son of Morvern" rather than as being a "true" native of Moidart. Colin Macdonald suggests they were originally MacLeans from Kingearloch, in Morvern. By 1748-49, the MacEacherns or MacEachens were in Arasaig. Vide: Colin Macdonald, "The Clanranald Macdonalds of Moidart," (Microfilm of the typescript, School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, 1955), p. 37.

²⁰They went with the Uist emigrants but, being of independent means, they chose to settle in Savage Harbour and not on the Glenalladale estate. Vide: John C. Macmillan, *The History of the Catholic Church in P.E.I.*, p. 51. A comment from Capt. John Macdonald in 1782 indicated just how insufficient for emigration purposes was the capital possessed by those of "independent means". Writing of the welfare of Angus MacEachern's family, he noted they were "all very well as to their health. Tho their property was quite exhausted before their landing in St. John's and ... they were for some time thereafter supported at our Expenditure, which as well was the like on the part of others, remains as yet in Statu quo, yet they are now above it and are by every account much better than they have ever been in their former country." John Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 24 April 1782 SCA BL3/364/1.

²¹A. A. Johnston, *A History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia* (Antigonish: St. Francis Xavier University Press, 1960), vol. 2, p. 134. Only Angus and a married sister remained in the Highlands.

²²Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 27 April 1777 SCA BL3/297/12.

respectively. Upon the completion of his formal education, he was ordained a priest and on 20 August 1787,²³ he began the long trip from Spain to Scotland via London. It was there that MacEachern and his travelling companion, Alexander Macdonell,²⁴ met Captain John Macdonald.²⁵ What conversations passed between the son of Angus Ban MacEachern and the man most closely associated with the St. John's Island settlement can only be imagined. The Captain was concerned about his colony and had been petitioning the bishops in Scotland for a clergyman to replace the deceased James Macdonald. The newly-ordained priest, separated from his family fifteen years previously, was anxious to hear of their welfare. The St. John's Island settlement was undoubtedly foremost in the mind of each.

In the autumn of 1787, after a visit with Bishop Geddes in Edinburgh, MacEachern was sent by Bishop Alexander Macdonald to the Small Isles. By late November he had begun his ministry there only to discover that the people "had not been at their duties since lent was a year."²⁶ Within six months of his return, MacEachern had become fully aware of the dreadful living conditions in which his hearers found themselves and he lost no time in so informing his colleagues and superiors. In writing to Bishop John Geddes in Edinburgh he suggested that the

²³Maurice Taylor, *The Scots College in Spain* (Valladolid, 1971), p. 321-22.

²⁴They remained life-long friends. In time each man was to emigrate and would become instrumental in the establishment of Catholicism in the Maritimes and Ontario, respectively.

²⁵Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 13 February 1788 SCA BL3/528/2. Bp. Macdonald refers to an anecdote which MacEachern had heard from Margaret Gordon, Lady Beldorny, the Captain's mother-in-law. She lived in London and often entertained the Captain and other Scots whether residents or visitors.

²⁶Angus MacEachern to Bp. John Geddes 16 December 1787 SCA BL3/506/14. He was then on the Isle of Eigg.

bishop alert the Antiquarians Society of which he was a member.

Please let me know what your society can do for the distressed inhabitants of Canna and Eigg: or if a petition to the Government could avail them anything. For I saw in the Almanack a paragraph which tells that your antiquarians²⁷ are desirous of knowing the number of inhabitants in the isles and their circumstances. Those of the people of Eigg and Canna are such as you know already. If the spirit of the society be patriotic perhaps the present members never had a fairer opportunity of shewing their patriotism than on the present occasion."²⁸

MacEachern was also aware of the activities of emigration agents. He expected the arrival of "Mr. Macdonell of Crowlin", Miles Macdonell, the son of *Spanish John*. He had been in Knoydart on family business and, while in the Highlands, he had acted as an emigration agent for the fledgling settlements in Canada. As of March 1790, he had signed up 88 on the Island of Eigg alone.²⁹

There is no evidence that the diminution of his congregation discouraged the young priest, for his thoughts were focused on America also, especially the need for a clergyman to be settled amongst his own kin. In a letter to Bishop Geddes in 1789, he recalled how he and his companion, Sandy Macdonald, who died while at the Douai College, had both been left by their parents with the express purpose of following them upon completion of their studies to minister to them in St. John's. In

²⁷He was referring to the Society of Antiquaries founded in 1780 for the investigation of the antiquities and history of Scotland. Geddes became a member in 1782. Vide: *Scotichronicon*, p. 225.

²⁸Angus MacEachern (North Lorne) to Bp. John Geddes 24 May 1788 SCA BL3/530/14.

²⁹Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 5 March 1790 SCA BL4/31/10. Some years later, Lord Selkirk commented that Captain Miles returned from Scotland in 1790 with some indentured men bound for four years "but they became so discontented and troublesome that he gave them up most of their time..." *Lord Selkirk's Diary 1803-04: a Journal of his Travels in British North America and the North Eastern United States*. Edited by Patrick C.T. White. (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1958), p. 192-4.

an emotional appeal, he reminded the Edinburgh bishop of the role played by the late Highland bishop, John Macdonald, in setting the emigration from Uist in motion, noting that "those of the main land, who were in ample circumstances at home, would never have risked their religion upon any earthly consideration, had they not been persuaded and repeatedly assured that timely supplies would have been sent to them from Scotland."³⁰ "I do not petition being sent to St. John's," he wrote,

only that I believe the repeated promises made by Bp. John might bind his successor, and that you would condescend to write to him and to Capt. John [Macdonald] upon that score and see if anything can be done for them.³¹

Within the year, he himself had received the necessary permission from Bishop Alexander Macdonald, who, in addition to the entreaties from afar, had been importuned by those about to emigrate in 1790, to allow the "valuable young man", to leave the Scottish Mission for St. John's Island.³² When informed of his superior's decision, MacEachern was given to understand that it had been the bishop's constant intention to supply a clergyman but he had wished the colonists "to feel the want of" him.³³ He had little time to prepare himself prior to leaving about the first of July and he hoped the people in St. John's had sent money to Capt. John Macdonald that he might equip himself for his new mission.³⁴

There can be little doubt that MacEachern's emigration owed directly to his

³⁰Angus MacEachern to Bp. John Geddes 20 July 1789 SCA BL4/13/11.

³¹Idem.

³²Bp. Alexander Macdonald to John Thomson 12 September 1790 SCA BL4/31/18.

³³Angus MacEachern to Bp. John Geddes 3 June 1790 SCA BL4/33/10.

³⁴Idem.

concern for the spiritual welfare of his kin and countrymen in North America. His motivation for leaving the Scottish Mission was almost identical to that of Roderick Macdonell who left for Canada in 1785. Each had virtually no family remaining in Scotland and each had taken the mission oath with an understanding that he be allowed to serve family and kindred in the new world if needed. Neither had run afoul of his superior or had in any way irritated laird or congregation. Roderick Macdonell was described as a simple, devoted clergyman; Angus MacEachern, hardly three years from his ordination, had already given evidence of an energetic and indefatigable approach to his work which would characterize his ministry until his death in 1835. His zeal and dedication caused his superior in Quebec to write in 1809, "M. MacEachern n'est pas homme du monde, mais je le crois homme de Dieu."³⁵

In the years 1788 and 1790, 238 left the Small Isles, of which total 176 were from Eigg alone. Of those only fifty-five went to the mainland of Scotland, while the rest emigrated to America. The cause was ascribed to overpopulation on the islands and a redivision of the farms amongst eight principal tacksmen.³⁶ At this time, overpopulation was used more and more as an excuse to justify the estate evictions, a facile explanation, perhaps, for ensconcing a few desirable tenants in larger tacks.

³⁵Bp. Joseph-Octave Plessis to Father Edmund Burke 24 October 1809, In *Rapport de l'archiviste de la Province de Québec*, (Quebec, 1927-28), p. 269. In 1817, Bp. Octave Plessis was asked for his opinion concerning MacEachern's qualifications for a possible appointment as bishop of a new diocese, probably centred in Prince Edward Island. Plessis recommended him and suggested Charlottetown be the see of the projected diocese. MacEachern was appointed the titular Bishop of Rosea, and was named vicar general for the district of Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and the Magdalene Islands. Vide: A. A. Johnston, vol. 1, p. 410.

³⁶John Sinclair, *The Statistical Account of Scotland*. 14 vols. (Edinburgh: William Creech, 1791-99), vol. 17 (1796), p. 281-2.

Yet, population density was a problem, especially in areas where farming was the sole source of income. Austin Macdonald observed that after the 1786 emigration from Knoydart when some 600 had left for Canada, he was able to minister to over 500 who remained. Even though his livelihood depended to some extent on sizeable numbers, he acknowledged the overpopulation of the district and considered it, "together with the oppression of the landlords ... the principle causes of the departure of so many, not only among the Catholics, but also among the Protestants."³⁷ His sentiments were corroborated by no less a person than Mr. Kemp, the Secretary of the S.P.C.K., who had been on an investigative tour of the western Highlands and the Isles in 1791. He concurred with the usual reasons given but found the "great cause of emigration is that in comparison of the means of subsistence which they afford, these countries are greatly overstocked with inhabitants."³⁸ He deemed that the population, which he found to be very prolific because of early marriages and many children, had previously been kept in check through internecine warfare and feuds which had been halted with the establishment of law in the post-Culloden Highlands.

In 1790 and 1791 over two thousand Catholics emigrated from the west coast and the Isles.³⁹ Of those, 500 had emigrated to St. John's Island and to Quebec in

³⁷Austin Macdonald to Cardinal [Antonelli] 6 April 1787 quoted in Odo Blundell, *The Catholic Highlands of Scotland*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1909-1917) vol. 2, p. 145.

³⁸"An Account of Mr. Kemp's Tour to the Highlands and Hebrides in Summer 1791", *Scots Magazine* 44 (1792), p. 56-57.

³⁹J.F.S. Gordon, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle for Scotland*. vol. IV: *Journal and Appendix to Scotichronicon and Monasticon*, (Glasgow, 1867), p. 316.

1790,⁴⁰ and in the autumn of that year Bishop Alexander Macdonald informed the agent for the Scottish Mission in Rome, John Thomson, that there were "no less than 600 souls all Roman Catholics already subscribed in South Uist for emigrating" the following spring. "If we are allowed to judge present appearances," he wrote,

with time we shall have only a few hard-hearted Gentlemen and some Strangers. The Situation of some of my Churchmen is truly distressing by reason that those, who could be of any service or support to them have gone to America or are to go - notwithstanding this there are still a great number of poor Catholics and a few Gentlemen in every Parish, serving whom will give employment enough to a poor churchman without being much the better of them. Mr. Norman Macdonald from Propaganda, a deserving Clergyman [originally sent to Propa[ganda] by Capt. Macdonald for St. J[ohn's]-I[sland] has his mother, sister and a niece besides himself and Boy; and since the most substantial of his Flock have gone last summer to America, I see nothing worth mentioning he and they have to live upon but his £12. And what renders the situation of our Clergy in the West Highlands still more pinching is that every article of living and clothing is become extravagantly high by the introduction of sheep to our West Coast.⁴¹

His apprehensions were borne out as early as March, 1791, when approximately 300 persons, "all the lower class of people", who were able to pay their passage, had signed up to leave for America,⁴² and, according to the missionary in Arisaig, Norman Macdonald, an emigration agent was canvassing for 300 to 400 others in Uist. "A third emigration is talked of for next year which will undoubtedly take place also, if the present emigrants will give such flattering encouragement as

⁴⁰Tbid., p. 305.

⁴¹Bp. Alexander Macdonald to John Thomson 12 September 1790 SCA BL4/31/18.

⁴²Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 12 March 1791 SCA BL4/49/13.

the last gave", he continued, for "the spirit of migration so universally pervaded [pervaded] the minds of the lower classes here, that by all appearance, in a few years hence very little labour will be left for us in this corner of the vineyard, insomuch that at last, some of us for want of subsistence, will be obliged to turn adventurers like several of the Irish priests".⁴³ Despite his misgivings, he acknowledged he was happy to see his congregation seek "an asylum where Providence seems to have opened it for them...", since they could not abide the "oppressive weight of the rents lately laid on them."⁴⁴

Oppression, too, played a role in the emigration of the second clergyman from the Clanranald estate, but it was not fiscal in nature. He was not a newly-ordained priest but rather was the man most closely associated with the establishment of the Catholic Church in the Highlands, James Hugh Macdonald, the nephew of Bishop Hugh Macdonald, and his departure from the Scottish Mission was even more precipitate than was that of Scotos in 1786.

James Hugh [Huisdean] Macdonald was born about 1745, the son of John Og Macdonald⁴⁵, tacksman of Guidal [Ghaodail] and Helen Leslie, the sister of James Leslie, the same who was implicated by Andrew Lang with "Pickle the Spy".⁴⁶ At an early age he was sent to the Scots College at Paris where he was ordained in 1770. His health had never been too robust and in 1770, shortly after returning from the

⁴³Norman Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 23 April 1791 SCA BL4/51/3.

⁴⁴Idem.

⁴⁵He was the son of Allan Macdonald, VI of Morar, and Mary, the daughter of Ranald Macdonald of Kinlochmoidart, and a full brother of Bp. Hugh Macdonald.

⁴⁶Andrew Lang, *Pickle the Spy*. (London: Longmans, Green & Co.), 1897.

Continent, he remained with Bishop Hay in Edinburgh in order to recover his strength. Despite the doctor's injunction against ever sending him to the Highlands again,⁴⁷ his uncle Hugh wrote repeatedly that he be sent as quickly as possible, for the Highland District was desperate for clergy.⁴⁸

When he did return, he was appointed to the difficult mission on South Uist, the site of the recent altercation between the Laird, Colin Macdonald of Boisdale and the missionary, Matthias Wynne, which had led to a "persecution" of the Catholics. This was a risky move, for although his lineage from the house of Morar would command respect from Boisdale, his youth, inexperience and the physical difficulty of the mission were bound to take its toll on his somewhat fragile constitution. Within a year he was complaining of the heavy responsibilities with which he had been charged⁴⁹ and in 1775 he left the island abruptly for the mainland, much to the annoyance of Bishop John Macdonald, his cousin and superior. It was during this period of absence from his mission that he first indicated an interest in removing himself from the jurisdiction of the Scottish bishops. Alexander Gordon, who would become the Rector of the Scots College in Paris in 1777, was visiting Scotland and James took the opportunity to visit him at Drummond.⁵⁰ While there, he inquired about the allegiance of those trained in the Paris College, their status within the Scottish Mission, and especially the authority of the bishops over them. This was neither a simple nor a whimsical inquiry, for the Paris College differed from the

⁴⁷Bp. George Hay to Bp. James Grant 22 March 1770 SCA BL3/215/15.

⁴⁸Bp. Hugh Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 17 August 1771 SCA BL3/233/7.

⁴⁹Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 20 April 1773 SCA BL3/258/14.

⁵⁰Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 10 October 1775 SCA BL3/279/17.

other Scots Colleges in several ways. In this instance, the most important variation was that its constitution of 1688 had been drawn up before vicars apostolic, i.e. bishops, had been appointed in Scotland. Overall control of the College and its students was assigned to the Prior of the Carthusians in Paris. No change was made to the Constitution after the vicars apostolic were appointed, so that they had no official authority over the College. It was obviously James' hope that the Prior's authority was extended to those trained in the College, ordained and on mission in Scotland.⁵¹

For a time he assisted Alexander Macdonald, known among the clergy as Mr. Alexander, Senior, in Moidart and Knoydart. In 1776, the Bishop suggested that he take up a teaching position in his Seminary-school at Buorblach, which James Hugh reluctantly accepted. By January, 1777, Bishop John realized his cousin was very unhappy, not so much because of his work but because of the living conditions in Buorblach, the farm which he had in lease from General Simon Fraser via his factor, John Macdonell of Sandaig, a near kin of the Scotos family. Unfortunately, Fraser had promised to continue the incumbent tenants in the tack adjacent to that of Bishop John and they felt they could insult him and Mr. James with impunity.⁵² James Hugh resumed his missionary activities, mostly in the Small Isles, when, at the end of

⁵¹Christine Johnson, *Developments in the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland, 1789-1829* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1983), p. 53-54.

⁵²A solution to the conflict was had when Bp. John Macdonald died suddenly in 1779, for as his cousin wrote, "he was scarce under ground when application and high offers were made not only for the farm of which he was in possession but likewise for the one contiguous to it, which he always wished to have." They lost the farm and received no remuneration for the buildings they had erected or improved. The person behind this harsh treatment was Sandaig, half-brother to Alexander Macdonell, the Knoydart missionary who had been disappointed in his bid for mitre. Sandaig made it no secret that he leased the farms to others to thwart those who he believed had contrived to deny his cousin. Vide: James Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 30 August 1779 SCA BL3/321/7.

1777, Austin Macdonald from the College at Valladolid, and as yet unordained, was returned to Scotland to replace him as a master.⁵³

During the commotion caused by Alexander Macdonell, Scotos' campaign for the mitre in 1779-1780, James enjoyed the approbation of his superiors for his support of Alexander Macdonald from Bornish as vicar-apostolic to the Highland District. However, he never gave any indication that he was happy with his situation in general.

With normal shipping about to resume in 1783 and the prospect of an increase in the activity of emigration agents, the vicars-apostolic became apprehensive that some of their missionaries might be enticed to emigrate and they took measures to assure their presence in Scotland. One of the steps taken was to have the graduates of the Paris College take an oath to "continue missionaries in Scotland during their whole lives" unless called to be one of the superiors of the College where educated, or leave the Mission with the Bishop's consent and approbation. Among those signing at the meeting held at Scalan on 19 August 1782, was James Hugh Macdonald.⁵⁴

Early in 1783, the war between Britain and her former American colonies had terminated and one of those involved in the end-of-war negotiations was Captain John Macdonald, formerly Glenalladale. Despite some nasty regimental business⁵⁵ into

⁵³Bp. George Hay to Bp. John Geddes 24 November 1777 SCA BL3/296/20.

⁵⁴Attestation of the Grisey Elèves to serve the Mission, 1782-1788. SCA SM4 4/20/13.

⁵⁵He found himself in the middle of court proceedings involving Colonel John Small, and other officers of the 84th Regiment, the Royal Highland Emigrants, and Alexander Macdonald, the brother of his closest associate in the Highlands, the deceased Bishop John Macdonald. Alexander Macdonald had been the regimental paymaster and had been asked to account for a shortfall in the funds, and was subsequently accused of forgery. At first he was indignant, feeling his character had been maligned and had lodged a lawsuit for £1333 against Small, but with a more serious charge facing him, he launched a torrent of reproaches and counter-accusations. He expressed his resentment of Captain

which he was drawn, his estate and colony on St. John's Island was his foremost concern. He made representation to the Highland vicar-apostolic for clergy to be sent to minister to the expatriate Highlanders and other residents. He evidently had several candidates in mind, for in the correspondence between bishops Hay and Macdonald, reference was made to a Mr. Ranald⁵⁶ with whom the Highland bishop would not part. The other person mentioned was James Macdonald who possessed the qualifications specified, and Bishop Hay believed his superior could be convinced to part with him.⁵⁷ An indication of James' relationship with his superiors was reflected in a letter Bishop Hay wrote to the Prior of the Carthusians in Paris, who was responsible for the Paris College where James had studied and was ordained.

M. Jacques Macdonald au commencement s'est comporté si peu en Missione, que son Evêque s'est trouvé obligé de l'enlever de sa première charge et le tenir plus proche à soi même, où après quelques brouilleries il s'est enfin revenu, et se comporte à

John's behaviour in the matter, especially his support of Col. Small. "It is enough for you that Col. Small with his usual hypocrisy and fulsome flattery will say in your presence and hearing," he wrote, "why does not Major Macdonald take the advice of his relation Captain John Macdonald, that worthy man, that honest man, that virtuous man, that sensible man, that learned man, etc... Were it to your father or Grandfather [*Domhnall nan Gleann*] by your Mother's side both as compleat Gentlemen as was reckoned to be in the Highlands of Scotland for their knowledge, manners, courage and conduct...[were] Mr. Small to presume to pour out such fulsome stuff as he does to you, they would spit in his face for endeavouring to get the better of their understanding... I have seen the time when every relation you have in the world would cane you where ever they met you for the Vilenys [sic] of your conduct and it is a hundred to one but it will be the case before you die..." Major Alexander Macdonald at no.17 Sloane St., [London?] to Capt. John Macdonald 26 April 1787 SCA OL6/1/3 See also: SRO GD174/1387/4-5, 7-8,10-12; GD174/2192.

⁵⁶This was Ranald MacEachen who, on his return from Valladolid, had met Capt. John Macdonald in London. Bishop Alexander Macdonald had placed him in the difficult South Uist mission where he was "well known and well connected there, and ... well calculated for that place" and he considered it would be "the height of imprudence ... to call him so soon out of that Country." Vide: Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 14 December 1783 SCA BL3/387/14.

⁵⁷Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 14 December 1783 SCA BL3/387/14 and Hay to [Bp. John Geddes] 13 January 1784 SCA BL3/413/3.

présent sans querelle.⁵⁸

James had an obvious difficulty in subjecting himself to the bishops' authority. His was an self-sufficient disposition and in 1780, he had become independent of the mission financially. That year, he received, as a legacy, an annuity from his late uncle, James Leslie, the only condition being that he remain in the Scottish Mission.⁵⁹ He was also irascible in nature, a trait exploited by the Principal of the Paris College, Alexander Gordon, to foster discontent between James and Bishop Hay. Gordon, himself engaged in a bitter dispute with the Vicar-Apostolic to the Lowland District, informed the former Paris student of the less than laudatory letters Hay had written to the Prior of the Carthusians. The result was predictable. James became involved in a verbal imbroglio with Bishop Hay, and his resentment was never quashed. The matter was brought to a head in 1785 at the annual meeting, when the Lowland bishop apologized to his counterpart for not consulting with him but no offer of reconciliation was extended to Mr. James. By the early spring of 1786, his had become a *cause célèbre* throughout the Highland Vicariate. He and his own bishop were very much at odds, the latter having been obliged to "discover his mind freely ...[and]...to make Mr. James repent of his rash and injurious treatment..."⁶⁰ It was not too long before talk of his emigration to St. John's Island was being projected "but this cannot possibly take place for this year, as our people at home are already in a very distressing way for want of a sufficient number of

⁵⁸Bp. George Hay to the Prior of the Carthusians (Paris) 27 January 1784 SCA BL3/413/6.

⁵⁹James Young to Bp. John Geddes 19 August 1784 SCA BL3/430/18.

⁶⁰Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 13 January 1786 SCA BL3/478/9.

labourers."⁶¹

Nothing became of his intention to leave for St. John's Island, perhaps because he was confronted with a heavy responsibility when his brother died unexpectedly in June of 1787, and his widow, Mary MacLeod, in childbed, shortly after.⁶² His health, never too robust, also began to give him trouble and in 1788, he came near to death, and as Alexander Macdonald, the missionary in Keppoch, reported, "is not yet recovered and ... never will. He lingered out some time but never will be fit for any service."⁶³ He remained on the Island of Eigg, although not fully recovered from his illness and in 1790, was able to report of the dreadful weather conditions with the resultant poor harvests.

...everything here wears a dismal aspect on account of the continual storms and rains we have had during the whole season. Our oats and barley have not ripened to any purpose and such of them as have been cut are still in the fields exposed to the inclemency of the weather. There is scarce any hay secured, our Potatoes are good for nothing: in a word there is all the appearance of a real scarcity if not a famine. A number of my poor parishioners in Eigg who were obliged for want of lands to dispose of all they had in the world, such as cattle, crop, houses, furniture, etc. made ready to go for America and paid at the beginning of last summer half freight and were all ready to embark with great cheerfulness; not that they wanted to leave their native Country for which they have here (especially the commonalty) a blind attachment, but they were overjoyed at the thought that providence would procure for them in another corner of the world, that relief and help, that was refused to them in their own Country. But at the information of some malicious people, a

⁶¹Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 2 April 1786 SCA BL3/478/11.

⁶²Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 13 February 1788 SCA BL3/528/2.

⁶³Alexander Macdonald, S^r. to Bp. John Geddes 13 September 1788 SCA BL3/528/17.

King's Ship was ordered to the Coast at the time of Emigration to impress every one fit for Service. This frightened the emigrants so much that few of them went off. Such as were afraid of being impressed were loath to run [sic] the risk of being obliged to part with their families, so that after losing the half of their freight and some of them more, they remained in the country without Lands, Cattle, Crop, houses, firing or even work... They are a sett of very honest people.⁶⁴

The spring of 1791 saw much activity on the Clanranald estate as, according to Father James Hugh, "more than 3000" were "to emigrate...besides what numbers" were "to emigrate from Appin, Sky, etc."⁶⁵ Among those leaving were John Og, James "aged father" and the missionary himself. His decision to leave seems to have been quite precipitate, for he had not his letter of dismissal from the Scottish Mission from his bishop and it was late in April, 1791, that he wrote to Paris for his letters of ordination as well as his diplomas from the University of Paris.⁶⁶ After his arrival in St. John's Island he wrote to Bishop Jean-François Hubert of Quebec that he had left the Highlands when he saw "that there were practically no people left in the parish... and ... no way of ... making a living [and] ... wanted to go to America since almost all my relatives had gone there already, principally to St. John's Island."⁶⁷ James' reasons for emigrating resemble those of Alexander Macdonell, Scotos: disappointment with the Scottish Mission and the removal of the remaining members of his family to join relatives, in this case, in St. John's Island or Nova

⁶⁴James Hugh Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 12 October 1790 SCA BL4/32/10.

⁶⁵James Hugh Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 27 April 1791 SCA BL4/51/1.

⁶⁶Idem.

⁶⁷James Hugh Macdonald to Bp. Jean-François Hubert 27 April 1793 quoted in translation from the French In A.A. Johnston, *A History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia*. 2 vols. (Antigonish, N.S.: St. Francis Xavier University Press, 1960), vol. 1, p. 143.

Scotia.

Although Bishop Alexander had promised him a letter of consent, he had not received it from him before he sailed in July, 1791, and unfortunately, his former superior died in September of that year. The lack of the required documentation was to prove troublesome to the emigrant clergyman. Despite a joyful welcome from his ex-patriate countrymen, the Vicar-General in Halifax, Father James Jones, an Irish Capuchin, would not grant him the faculties to minister to them. It was only in July, 1793, after consulting Father Angus MacEachern, James' colleague who had left Scotland the year previous to himself, that Father Jones was satisfied with Mr. James' credentials and appointed him the pastor of the Scots of Meragomiche, Miramichi and Pictou. It was the first parish settled by Catholic Highlanders in Nova Scotia and was described as of some 70 or 80 miles extent.⁶⁸

In 1793, after having lost two of his clergymen in the previous two years, Bishop John Chisholm advised his colleague in Edinburgh that there were yet three more who were positively going to America but he denied his having granted them his permission.⁶⁹

As to the missionaries that talk of going to America, I never gave them to understand that I would agree to their proposal. I only told one of them that when his place would be supplied he would be the first that would be dismissed. I certainly would prefer their going anywhere in their native country to their going to

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 157. He was not able to minister for any length of time in his new mission for in December 1797, after having travelled some thirty miles on foot to minister to a dying parishioner, he caught a severe chill from the effects of which he never recovered. He was received in the General Hospital in Quebec City in June, 1801, totally incapacitated, and he died there on 15 February 1807. Ibid., p. 158-159.

⁶⁹Bp. George Hay to Bp. John Geddes 1 April 1793 SCA BL4/73/15.

America...⁷⁰

Two missionaries had repeatedly expressed a desire to leave their Mission. Austin Macdonald, the brother of Captain John Macdonald, the former Glenalladale, had actually tried to organize a party of emigrants in 1786 and Alexander Macdonell on South Uist, unhappy so far from his native Lochaber, had expressed an interest in leaving also. Once again, however, war put an end to emigration and many men from the Highlands enlisted in various regiments. Talk of leaving for America would be stilled for at least another six years. When it was resumed, large numbers again considered emigration as an option. Not only would this involve the Clanranald lands, but neighbouring Barra as well, where the circumstances would be reminiscent of the "persecutions" on South Uist prior to 1772.

⁷⁰Bp. John Chisholm to Bp. George Hay 29 May 1793 SCA BL4/69/7.

CHAPTER EIGHT - EMIGRATION: 1798 - 1810

I. BARRA AND CLANRANALD

Whatever happens you may rest sure of one thing, the emigration here will not hurt us in the least.¹

The war with France which had begun in 1793 was brought to a formal conclusion by the signing of the Peace of Amiens on 27 March 1802. As was the case following the American Revolutionary War, activities halted temporarily were about to resume. Two of the most important factors which would play a role in the next few years were the reopening up of the shipping routes and the return of thousands of men from disbanded regiments to the Highlands.

As early as 1796, talk of emigration had been prevalent in Strathglass and South Uist and people waited only for a termination of the war in order to set their plans in motion, and according to Bishop John Chisholm, some of the churchmen were as keen as the people to try their fortunes in America.² The Clanranald estate had been placed under the management of a panel of tutors after the death of John Macdonald, seventeenth Clanranald, in 1794. Economic conditions were unstable, and because of a series of bad harvests, many of the tenants were unable to pay their rents, let alone bid on tacks at higher levels. Even though manpower was scarce because of the numbers enrolled in the Highland regiments, evictions of tenants, especially in the farming areas of Arisaig and Moidart, had continued. In 1797, at the behest of the Clanranald Tutors, Hector Macdonald Buchanan was directed to issue

¹(Copy) Robert Brown to Hector Macdonald Buchanan 28 July 1801 SRO Lennoxlove Muniments. Brown Papers.

²Bp. John Chisholm to Bp. George Hay 8 February 1796 SCA BL4/104/12.

notices of removal of tenants whose leases were about to expire. He was then expected to take offers at a higher rate for those vacated, a likely outcome given the intense competition for farms. For the small estate of Sandaig in Arisaig, for example, Hector MacNeil of Canna offered double what the incumbent, Duncan Campbell was paying.³

In 1798, tenants in Arisaig and Moydart whose lands were out of lease, were evicted, as was Angus Macdonald⁴ of Milton in South Uist. However, the newly appointed factor, Robert Brown, noted the tenants in Polness who were universally poor had petitioned for a reduction in rent for farms which were amongst the worst. He was authorized to take such rents from them as he thought they were able to pay. He suggested that leases of different periods be applied because when this was the case "there would be less danger of emigrations or Cabals among the tenants and a better chance of competition for the farms to be set." He felt the Moidart tenants could bear very little augmentation in rent, and he suggested the tenants be allowed to remain another year. He reported also that the aged and infirm residents of Moidart and Arisaig had suffered considerable hardship since Clanranald's death, for he had

³Clanranald Papers. Minutes sederunt 26 June 1797 SRO GD201/5/1233/25. Duncan Campbell was removed in 1798. Vide: Clanranald Papers. Minutes sederunt. 15 March 1798 SRO GD201/5/1233/27. The Tutors obviously wanted greater rents but not a depopulated estate. Those unwilling or unable to pay were evicted from their holdings but were expected somehow not to leave the estate or the country. At the beginning of 1797, the Tutors determined to make a public show of support for a number of emigrants who had been disappointed by Heeming and Company of Greenock and their agents a few years previously. The Emigrants had brought cause before the Court of Session and won, but the defenders had appealed to the House of Lords, an expense, which the Tutors believed the poor emigrants could not afford. "It was ... stated that it might be of service in preventing further emigration from the Estate to support these Emigrants in their present plea..." Clanranald Papers. Minutes sederunt. 12 January 1797 SRO/GD201/5/1233/23.

⁴This was probably Capt. Angus Macdonald, 4th of Milton, the nephew of the famed Flora Macdonald. He was married to Margaret, a daughter of Colin Macdonald of Boisdale and a full sister to Hector Macdonald Buchanan. Vide: A. Macdonald and A. Macdonald, *The Clan Donald*. 3 vols. (Inverness: Northern Counties Publishing Co., 1896-1904.), vol. 3, p. 295.

granted them allowances of meal and money. Fortunately, he was instructed to give the allowance which had been expected in 1797 and to continue the same for 1798 if he deemed it necessary.⁵ Clearly, the removals, the poor yields and the increase in rents would tend to an insecurity amongst the tenants, especially in Arisaig and Moidart, which, given the frustrating restrictions on shipping imposed by the war with France, could result only in grumbling and rumours of emigration.

The financial situation for the Catholic clergy was no less serious. In 1797, the total annual revenue was insufficient to prevent a deficit, even though a relatively small sum, of £100. The yearly quotas paid to the missionaries, already barely enough to provide a subsistence level, were reduced to allow an annual income of £15 for those in the towns and £10 for the others.⁶ When another reduction became necessary, the bishops issued a pastoral letter, albeit, directed more to the urban congregations, appealing that they support their clergy in addition to the seat rents and voluntary subscriptions.⁷ There should have been no objection to the clergy trying to obtain such financial support but there was and in the very areas where it was most needed - the Highlands.

Among others who were reluctant to ask their congregations for money was the Vicar-Apostolic to the Highland District, Bishop John Chisholm, for it had never been the custom to do so there. Tacksmen or those in a financial position to support a clergyman had done so, or, as had been the case in Strathglass which had been

⁵Clanranald Papers. Minutes sederunt. 15 March 1798 SRO GD201/5/1233/27.

⁶[Minutes of the annual meeting] 17 August 1797 SCA SM5/3/6.

⁷(Copy) Pastoral letter undated SCA SM5/3/7.

served by Jesuits, the religious order had paid for the support of its clergy. Ten years previously, Ranald Macdonell of Scotos had taken up a subscription to support Austin Macdonald.⁸ However, when Chisholm decided to purchase the Lismore estate to be used primarily as a preparatory school for potential clerical aspirants, he sought financial support from the Highland congregations. On the Clanranald estate, the tutors took great alarm for they had been informed

concerning Roman Catholic Clergymen in South Uist and Benbecula in setting on foot and collecting subscriptions from the Tenants of that persuasion without assigning to the Proprietor of the lands the cause of the subscription or to what purpose the money collected was to be applied...⁹

Macdonald of Boisdale and McNeil of the nearby Barra estate had put a stop on their properties to similar collections and the Tutors asked the estate factor, Robert Brown to look into "this extraordinary proceeding of the Roman Catholic Clergy unprecedented and unauthorized and if he finds the subscription thus set on foot is for any other purpose than to be presented to Government for the good of the state... that he take all prudent measure for stopping them." They also felt that the collecting of funds might be taken as "to the prejudice of the minor as the money subscribed ought to pay the landlord's rent because of their arrears etc".¹⁰ Two of the informants were Patrick Nicolson at Tirlum [Torlum] and Donald Ferguson in Benbecula.¹¹ In

⁸Austin Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 23 November 1789 SCA B14/12/4.

⁹Clanranald Papers. Minutes sederunt 6 May 1799 SRO GD201/5/1233/32.

¹⁰Idem.

¹¹The extent to which Nicolson carried his "investigations" is reflected in the following letter: "Since my last the Priest has [been] very successful in making up a Collection for their College. I took a Ride yesterday the Length of Ard found out the Priest Secrets. There was upwards of £60 subscribed Sunday in this Island. He expects more than the above Sum - Still in Benbecula the people of Icharr

addition to the accusation of collecting money for an unwarranted cause, the Tutors were also given to understand that a "spirit of disorder and opposition," supposedly instigated and occasioned by the priests, had shown itself various parts of that country.¹²

The decline in revenue could not have come at a more inopportune time as far as the Scottish mission was concerned, especially in the Highlands, for the missionaries were being entreated to leave with the numerous groups emigrating to British North America. There were always promises made of relatively good salaries to be paid the emigrant missionary whereas the Vicars Apostolic could only provide such as would maintain subsistence level. The Clanranald Tutors had applied to Bishop Hay to dissuade the Clergy, and by implication, their congregations, in that part of the Country from their resolution to emigrate. The Bishop replied that the only way to keep them at home, would be to improve their condition."¹³ It was a solid argument and Hay did not hesitate to use it to convince Sir John Hippisley of the need for a government subsidy for the clergy.

subscribed £50 at the first Meeting. A third of his hearers the other Side of the Fi[o]rd was not present the Priest expects to make from 3 to 400 £Sterling of his District. This a laudable way of spiriting away the Money of the Country - the lowest subscription was 10/6 some 20/ some 30/. Don^d McKay Baloannich now is Bankrupt to Clan^d 3 Guineas. Truly my friend the Priest Carries his Priestcraft Beyond credibility - you [know] that these Poor deluded People are Deeply in Arrears to Clan^d and others many of them if every person had his not worth as much as they Subscribed to the Priest - this is the Real Fact - and the Proprietor and others stand want - the Priest will have money and every [thing] they can command - if the managers mean to take any step in the affair they need not be intimidated in the least by their num's as the people of Consequence are Protestants... I met Severals of Cland's Tenants yesterday... the[y] owned freely that they had subscribed 10/6 each. I told them that I hoped that they would give Clan^d a great aug[mentatio]n of Rents as the[y] had so much money to spirit away." Patrick Nicolson to Robert Brown 23 March 1799 SRO TD/80/100/4 Bdle. 1501.

¹²Minutes sederunt 6 May 1799.

¹³J.F.S. Gordon, *Ecclesiastical Chronicle for Scotland*. Vol. IV: *Journal and Appendix to Scotichronicon and Monasticon*. (Glasgow, 1867), p. 410.

In 1798, the year the uprisings in Ireland evolved into a full-scale rebellion, there were rumours of emigration from the Hebrides, Barra, in particular. Between 1760 and 1790, there had been emigrants from Barra who had joined other parties from either South Uist or the mainland.¹⁴ In 1791, encouraged by "promises of the undisturbed possession of their religion ... and of free property for themselves and their offspring forever," extended by the emigration agent, Major Fraser, two hundred had left for St. John's Island and Nova Scotia.¹⁵ A number of the people who had chosen to emigrate got as far as Glasgow where they decided to accept of David Dale's offer of employment. However, they were soon disappointed for, in 1793, the mills began to fail and they were soon idle. The extent to which Barra needed his tenants can be illustrated from his behaviour to those who returned. According to Edward MacQueen, the minister who provided Sir John Sinclair with the information in 1793, MacNeil gave them land and money enough to purchase a new stock of cattle and other implements necessary for farming.¹⁶

The chief sources of income on Barra were fishing, agriculture and the highly remunerative kelp industry. The latter was introduced on the island in 1765 and, by 1794, MacNeil was paying his tenants the highest price in the Highlands.¹⁷ As was the case in all the other areas where earnings from the kelp were high, the lairds were loath to lose any of their tenants. As he had shown earlier, MacNeil was no

¹⁴John Lorne Campbell, *The Book of Barra*. (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1936), p. 151.

¹⁵John Sinclair, *The Statistical Account of Scotland, 1791-1799*. new ed. vol. 20: *The Western Isles*. (n.p.: E.P. Publishing, 1983), p. 140.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹⁷*The Book of Barra*, p. 153-4.

exception; yet, in 1798 and 1799, he himself was the reported cause of a revived spirit of emigration.

Roderick McNeil, or as he was known, the "King of Barra",¹⁸ had turned his predominantly Roman Catholic¹⁹ tenants against himself when he and the resident Catholic clergyman, Allan Macdonell, engaged in a bitter conflict. In 1799 he had publicly humiliated Macdonell, the brother of Alexander, the Writer to the Signet in Inverness. He had threatened him with physical abuse and the burning of his house²⁰ and had informed the Lord Advocate concerning the priest's behaviour, stating that he wished to be free of "such a nuisance". He made known his feelings regarding Catholics in general noting that

though the indulgences of Government to these people were the effect of the liberal sentiments of the nation, I doubt how far they are disposed to make a good use of them. At least those who have opportunities of observing them most closely are very sensible of a great change in their conduct, and had it been possible that matters had taken a wrong turn in Irland [sic], however impotent, they might have shown themselves in their true colours.²¹

Patrick Nicolson, at Tirlum, informed the Clanranald factor that MacNeil was proceeding "with spirit" in his dealings with his tenants and that he had removed the Priest and those most attached to him from his estate, "tho they are all Roman

¹⁸He was so called because of his reputation as being vain, haughty and ruling his estate in a fairly despotic manner.

¹⁹John Sinclair, *op. cit.*, p. 140-1. In 1794 there were 1524 and only 80 non-Catholics.

²⁰(Copy) Bishop John Chisholm. "Answer against accusations made against Allan Macdonell in Barra by McNeil of Barra" 9 March 1799 SCA BL4/130/7.

²¹(Copy) Roderick McNeil of Barra to the Lord Advocate 10 January 1799 SCA BL4/140/13.

Catholics."²² When he put a halt to the building of a chapel, his tenants threatened emigration.²³

MacNeil was not unaware of a more general interest in emigration. He warned the Clanranald tutors to choose carefully an estate factor to replace Henry Butter, noting they should avoid selecting a "stranger ignorant of the customs and language. Amongst other consequences of any imprudent measures," he wrote, "might be a general emigration ... as such a spirit is very general [which is] kept up and fomented at home by those who are discontented ..."²⁴ He feared the most wealthy would lead the way and would carry all able to pay, leaving only the poor and indigent behind, a threat not only to Uist but to his own property as well. As an afterthought, he noted the influence of the priest "on the South end of the estate" who was a "determined Advocate for Emigration".²⁵

There were two priests on mission in South Uist at this time and both were interested in emigration, but in 1798, the priest at the southern end of the island was Alexander Macdonell who was born in December, 1753, at Clianaig, Glen Spean, Lochaber, the son of Archibald Macdonell, fourth of Clianaig, a cadet of the Keppoch family.²⁶ He was educated first at the Scots College, Paris, and then, at Valladolid where he was ordained in 1777. When he returned to Scotland, he was sent on

²²Patrick Nicolson to Robert Brown.

²³Bp. John Chisholm, "Answer..."

²⁴(Copy) Roderick McNeil to the Tutors of Clanranald 28 March 1798 SRO GD201/5/1233/28.

²⁵Idem.

²⁶A.A. Johnston, p. 200. After his emigration to Nova Scotia, he met Bishop Plessis of Quebec who described him ... as "a tall powerfully built man". Johnston, op.cit.. p. 199.

mission to his native Lochaber, to help Angus MacGillis, who, according to Bishop John Macdonald, would not last long unassisted, despite his being about five years Alexander's senior.²⁷ It was here that, because of his stature, he became known as "Maighstir Alasdair Mor Chlianaig".²⁸ He remained in Lochaber until 1782 when he was appointed to minister to the Catholics at the southern end of Uist. He was accompanied by the newly ordained Ranald MacEachen who was to reside in Benbecula. Bishop Alexander Macdonald was very pleased with the duo who behaved "with as much propriety in every respect as not only to justify the choice, which has been made of them for this distracted country but moreover they seem both well calculated to please Protestants as well as Catholics."²⁹ He described Macdonell as "edifying in his comportment and therefore agreeable to all his people; matters go on very well now".³⁰ But all was not so well as far as Macdonell was concerned, for he had been given to understand that he would be able to return to Lochaber the following year. His discontent was with his living conditions, for, as he wrote, "all the time I have been in that Island I always enjoyed a good state of health, I met with all the civility and kindness imaginable from the people there, Protestants as well as Catholics...", but his greatest hardship was the lack of a house. His great fear was

²⁷Bp. John Macdonald to Bp. George Hay 16 June 1777 SCA BL3/297/14. Their concern for the health of the missionaries was not unwarranted. Within a year of his return to Lochaber, Alexander had come down with a fever and had been prepared for death. Vide: Bp. John Macdonald to John Geddes 15 September 1778 SCA BL3/306/11.

²⁸F. Forbes & W.J. Anderson, "Clergy Lists of the Highland District 1732-1828," *IR* 17 (1966), p. 154 and A.A. Johnston, *A History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia*. 2 vols. (Antigonish: St. Francis-Xavier University Press, 1960), vol. 1, p. 200.

²⁹Bp. Alexander Macdonald to Bp. John Geddes 9 January 1783 SCA BL3/387/5.

³⁰Bp. Alexander Macdonald to John Thomson 5 August 1785 SCA BL3/449/11.

that he would be "continually exposed to a life of dissipation going from place to place..."³¹ This was not a capricious notion. In 1781, Alexander Macdonald, a nephew of Bishop Hugh Macdonald and a missionary in South Uist, was suspended because of his involvement in a notorious scandal, an indirect cause of which was, according to Bishop Alexander, the lack of an adequate dwelling.

As time passed, it became more evident that Macdonell was unhappy. In 1790, he wrote that he was enjoying "a tolerable degree of health, notwithstanding the toil that must necessarily attend a Mission Consisting of two thousand souls; I must own however, that I would not be displeased if another had his own turn of these parts and that I had an easier footing once more on what we call here the Continent or Mainland."³² In 1791, Bishop Macdonald died and was replaced by John Chisholm from Strathglass. Within the year he had become aware of Mr. Alexander's malaise, and had tried to have him moved to be with John Geddes in Edinburgh "and the Highlander there in his place".³³

Despite his constant application to be removed from South Uist, which he now described as a "remote and very disagreeable quarter", he was still there in 1795. He requested he be moved to Lochaber again and this time he informed Bishop Hay just how difficult it was becoming for him financially, noting it was impossible, especially because of the high cost of living on the island, to exist on his small salary and the pittance he received from his parishioners. At least he had a house which he had built

³¹Alexander Macdonell to Bp. John Geddes 8 July 1783 SCA BL3/389/3.

³²Alexander Macdonell (Bornish, S. Uist) to Bp. John Geddes 12 January 1790 SCA BL4/33/2.

³³Bp. John Chisholm to Bp. John Geddes 13 October 1792 SCA BL4/57/11. The missionary referred to was another Alexander Macdonald, ordained in Rome in 1782, a Gaelic speaker who belonged to the Lowland District. Vide: F. Forbes & W.J. Anderson, "Clergy Lists...", p. 156-57.

at his own expense but found he could not afford it. He was desirous, especially if he left the Island, of selling it for £40 or £50 to the Mission or to John Macdonald, the tacksman of Bornish and brother of the late Bishop Alexander, on whose property it was located.³⁴

In 1798, Bishop John Chisholm considered moving Macdonell to Balloch where the incumbent missionary, Alexander Macdonald, was having problems with "backbiting, gossip, etc. ... but am of opinion he would not answer in the place equally well with the one who is there already."³⁵ In addition to finding a suitable candidate for the Balloch mission, Bishop Chisholm was being pressured to find a suitable clergyman for Nova Scotia.³⁶

Alexander Macdonell's main concern was to leave South Uist in order, he hoped, to return to his native Lochaber. Since by 1798 this did not seem a likely eventuality, his thoughts might have turned to emigration from the Mission entirely.³⁷ Given the cautionary letter of MacNeil of Barra to the Clanranald Tutors, it is probable he made known his intention to quit Scotland. Yet, it was not until 1802 that he actually did leave with a large number of emigrants, 370 of whom were from

³⁴Alexander Macdonell at Bornish to Bp. George Hay 4 September 1795 SCA BL4/101/1.

³⁵Bp. John Chisholm to Bp. George Hay 17 April 1798 SCA BL4/120/14.

³⁶Bp. John Chisholm to Bp. George Hay 15 January 1799 SCA BL4/130/4.

³⁷Macdonell's penchant for emigration might have been encouraged by his relatives in Lochaber. He was a cadet of the Keppoch family, one of whose gentlemen, Major Alexander Macdonell, was an emigration agent for Lord Selkirk, although, not actively so until 1802. It was not opportunism which turned the "Big Major" towards emigration, for, as early as 1775, his brother, Ranald, had informed General Simon Fraser of Alexander's wishes to emigrate to America but that it had been frustrated by the outbreak of the War. His wish to emigrate was intensified later when he was deprived of his lands by the Duke of Gordon. Vide: Ranald Macdonell (at Keppoch) to General Fraser 13 November 1775 EUL Laing II. 506; J.M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America, 1770-1815* (Edinburgh, 1982), p. 116.

the Island of Barra. Since they had been accustomed to the fisheries, Governor Wentworth of Nova Scotia located them for a time on Pictou Island, and the shores adjacent, but they all moved away eastward to Antigonish or Cape Breton.³⁸

His preparations for leaving indicate his was not a hasty departure. From Charles Maxwell, the Procurator of the Scottish Mission in Edinburgh, he requested a list of liturgical items including a complete set of silk vestments, a missal, a new breviary, the latest edition of the Old and New Testaments, in English, some smaller catechisms and Manuals, a chalice, paten, crucifix, altar stone, etc.³⁹ Macdonell had given notice of his willingness to leave in 1801 with a party of emigrants who had petitioned Bishop Chisholm for his permission. Indeed, in the summer of 1801, Bishop Chisholm had informed Father Angus MacEachern in St. John's Island, that he would send one or two clergymen for Nova Scotia and Cape Breton the following spring.⁴⁰ He had consented, as he wrote, because of their "urgent demands".⁴¹ Prior to leaving, Macdonell visited Lochaber in order to bid farewell to family and friends, "painting Nova Scotia as a terrestrial paradise",⁴² in the process. There was absolutely no indication that Macdonell had run afoul of his superiors nor his fellow clergymen. His superior, John Chisholm, was reluctant to part with him and his

³⁸A. A. Johnston, vol. 1, p. 197.

³⁹Alexander Macdonell to Charles Maxwell 31 March 1802 SCA BL4/187/9.

⁴⁰Angus MacEachern to Bp. Joseph-Octave Plessis 9 September 1801 in A.A. Johnston, vol. 1, p. 196. As early as 1797, the Scots of St. John's Island had collected £29 and those in Nova Scotia, £30, to defray the transportation costs of a future missionary. *Idem*.

⁴¹Bp. John Chisholm to Charles Maxwell 3 April 1802 SCA BL4/175/4.

⁴²James MacDonald to Charles Maxwell 23 June 1802 SCA BL4/187/18. James Macdonald was the son of Archibald, tacksman of Duchamiss. He studied at the Douai College and was ordained in 1792. He was drowned off Skye in 1803. Vide: SCA BL4/77/12; BL4/104/11; BL4/159/10; BL4/202/11.

colleague James Macdonald thought him "a good, honest fellow" and he regretted his leaving.⁴³ When he left he "carried a box of vestments, gold seal and unconsecrated chalice and his Whitsunday quota along with him", much to the chagrin of Ranald MacEachen, his colleague in Benbecula.⁴⁴ In addition, Bishop John Chisholm assigned him the £30 which the Highlanders of the Nova-Scotian mainland had contributed for his travelling expenses. Another sum of £30 was subscribed by the emigrants who came with him on the same vessel, and still a third sum of the same amount by the people who were awaiting his arrival.⁴⁵

That same summer, Austin Macdonald, the brother of Captain John, sailed for Prince Edward Island to join his brother and sisters there. He was fifty-eight years of age and had, for several years previously, shown an unhappiness and dissatisfaction with his situation in the Highlands. He never recovered from the debts he had incurred when he moved to Knoydart in 1786. In 1794, he was given

six pounds ... but poor man has been very ill and unable to attend his charge since I left Moydart till I returned to it. The pain in his foot diminished but an eruption took place which made it necessary to change his bed-cloths very often and if not properly attended his life was thought in danger. He consulted Physicians and had some assistance from such as are in the vicinity. He is I believe as proper a subject to

⁴³Idem.

⁴⁴Ranald MacEachen to Charles Maxwell 8 October 1802 SCA BL4/188/2. MacEachen's chagrin owed to more than a mere fit of pique. Evidently, he had thought he might have been considered to fill the long-vacated post of co-adjutor to the Highland Vicar-Apostolic but was unsuccessful. "You wish me to bide farewell to the dignity of coadjutor", he wrote. "I shall follow your advice most cheerfully and from this moment I am determined to resign my pretension to it. I have another plan in my head, and it is this, to begin to lead an emigration: I am sure once I begin a great many people shall follow me. This is a very lucrative job, besides the glory of being the leader of a mighty people". Idem.

⁴⁵A.A. Johnston, vol. 1, p. 198.

recommend to the Hospitium money as most of people that have received any temporary relief from that fund... he is in great need.⁴⁶

The problem with his ankle made his work in the Highlands very difficult, especially in the winter and spring. As early as 1791 he had considered being moved to the Lowland District and had applied to Bishop John Geddes for his approval of a project which would see him residing in Edinburgh or at Scalan.⁴⁷ At the time Austin had implied that if neither scheme worked out, then a third possibility was likely to present itself, for, "it shall be very probable if there will be emigrations here next year which 'tis very like there will, as I am much solicited, I may next Spring itself God Sparing me take my chance amongst with them to America."⁴⁸ His schemes, evidently, proved futile but Macdonald was determined to be moved from the Highlands, a sentiment he must have expressed to Bp. John Chisholm. The latter, seemingly exasperated, agreed he be transferred to the Lowland District. The Vicar-Apostolic to the Lowland District, George Hay, suggested Austin should stay with him at Scalan temporarily "to see if he can be brought to proper measures and then if all were willing to let him come to the other chappel here", rather than he leave the Mission entirely.⁴⁹

Nothing came of these plans and the outbreak of war with France in 1793 put an end to any emigration plans which Austin might have entertained. So he remained

⁴⁶Bp. John Chisholm to Bp. George Hay 10 November 1794 SCA BL4/81/12.

⁴⁷Austin MacDonald to Bp. John Geddes 11 July 1791 SCA BL4/50/8. Austin's letters do not reveal much about his plans but reference is made to Scalan and Edinburgh in the letters of Bishop Geddes in 1790 and 1791.

⁴⁸Idem.

⁴⁹Bp. George Hay to Bp. John Geddes 21 February 1792 SCA BL4/62/7.

on the west coast where Bishop Chisholm let him do as he wished. "He has no charge," he wrote, "says Mass where and when he pleases, appears intimately convinced of the propriety of his conduct in all he does and any deviation from the common rule of conduct is the result, in his eyes, of mere necessity."⁵⁰ Bishop Chisholm was convinced that he had to be given up for the good of the mission.⁵¹

On the west coast, talk of emigration resumed in 1798 and 1799, and once again, Austin himself began to consider leaving the Highlands. The Scottish Mission was in strained circumstances and there was a rumour that the missionary's quota would be reduced from £10 to £8. Austin implied that if this were to occur, he would go to America and at the expense of the Scottish Mission.⁵² But, as Bishop Chisholm reflected, Austin seemed in no hurry to leave the Highlands. It was not until 1801 that Austin and other missionaries were actually in a favourable position to leave, because of the numbers who were emigrating the following year. In 1802, two vessels left, one from the west coast and the other from Barra and each wished to have a churchman aboard. According to Bishop Chisholm,

Mr. Austin has almost put himself in auction between them. He will make something of it though not with grace. He tells them they should give him £100 and a free passage that they would pay that much for any Doctor that would go along with them...⁵³

Austin was in an enviable position to negotiate a good arrangement for himself for even though he was given a three-year quota from the mission, £35. from the

⁵⁰Bp. John Chisholm to Bp. George Hay 8 February 1796 SCA BL4/104/12.

⁵¹Idem.

⁵²Bp. John Chisholm to Bp. George Hay 25 February 1799 SCA BL4/130.5.

⁵³Bp. John Chisholm to Charles Maxwell 3 April 1802 SCA BL4/175/4.

Knoydart emigrants, a free cabin passage, and a sizeable amount for the storage of his baggage, he refused to board the ship because he had not a stateroom to himself.⁵⁴ But, sail he did, whether in a stateroom or not. He was embittered when he left, and his anger hardly abated after his arrival on Prince Edward Island. Within a year he was writing for his pension to which he felt he was entitled. "I know none will oppose it", he wrote,

but Bishop Chisholm. I know he will trie all the art his vulpin disposition will lead him to disappoint me but all in vain. The Bishop of Quebec and Clergy here french and Scotch will join me and we will write to Rome about it... The Certificate Bishop Chisholm against his grain gave me will make it good for me... I served [the mission] while I was able, my obligations ended then. When Bishop John detained me from following my friends when they first came out to America I stayed behind at his desire and my coming out last year was also by Bishop Chisholm's order and motion. I did not plead for nor wish to come out. His letters here will show it... Bishop Chisholm to appoint a chaplain to my Brother is beyond his power; his authority does not extend here. These are vulpin evasions... I trust in you as a friend... But for him I always found him a Cloaked underhand enemy. You see'd so much at the last meeting and so did I tho I held my peace. Bishop Hay gave his assent but not Chisholm but he had the impudence to write to my Brother he was my only friend. But my Brother felt the scent of the fox...⁵⁵

Austin seemingly had no response from the Scottish Mission and was again corresponding with the procurator and the recently appointed co-adjutor to Bishop Hay, Alexander Cameron.⁵⁶ Finally he received news that Bishop Cameron had

⁵⁴James Macdonald at Arisaig to Charles Maxwell 23 June 1802 SCA BL4/187/18.

⁵⁵Austin Macdonald to Charles Maxwell 4 May 1803 SCA BL4/209/12.

⁵⁶Alexander Cameron was born in Auchindryne, Braemar, 28 July 1747. He received his initial education at Scalan, the school in Glenlivet established for the preparation of boys for further clerical studies, and later was sent to the Scots College in Rome where he was ordained in 1772. In 1780 he

consented but he was far from content. "Mr. Alex^r. saying so is no security for me...", he wrote and asked for an official document so he could draw money upon it, and threatened to return to Scotland unless it was forthcoming.⁵⁷ This was no idle threat, for Austin had approached Lord Selkirk with an offer of going to Scotland to recruit emigrants, although he did not carry through with his proposal.⁵⁸ Within two years, Austin Macdonald was dead "after a short illness brought on by careless bloodletting".⁵⁹

His account was not typical of the emigrating clergyman, although his story does resemble that of James Hugh Macdonald who left in 1791. It may be concluded simply that he retired from the mission in the Highlands to spend the remaining years of his life with his family on Prince Edward Island. Nevertheless, when Bishop John Chisholm tallied the number of missionaries active in his vicariate, listed among those who had left a vacuum by their emigration was Austin Macdonald.⁶⁰

One of the first tasks the Clanranald tutors sought to accomplish when they

replaced John Geddes at Valladolid where he remained until he was named as co-adjutor to Bishop Hay. On October 28, 1798, he was consecrated Bishop of Maximianopolis in Madrid but did not return to Scotland until 1802. He succeeded Bishop Hay as Vicar-Apostolic to the Lowland District in 1811. He died in Edinburgh on 7 February 1828. Vide: Christine Johnson, *Lowland District Clergy, 1732-1829*, IR 34 (1983), p. 69.

⁵⁷Austin Macdonald to Charles Maxwell 20 July 1804 SCA BL4/229/5.

⁵⁸... Oct. 17, 1804 ... Revd. Augustus McDonald made offer to bring out settlers,... he going to Scotland on his own business... proposed I should pay passage out and back and expenses in the Highlands for which he would exert himself to get 50 families and if got 100 fas. conditioned that I should pay £60 due him in Edin^r. ... if more to be ... considered, I offered to advance 50 gs. for Passage home on his Bill and also 20 gs. for expenses in Highlands free... He declined my proposal and nothing was agreed on... *Lord Selkirk's Diary 1803-04: a Journal of his Travels in British North America and the North Eastern United States*. Edited by Patrick C.T. White. (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1958), p. 351.

⁵⁹A.A. Johnston, vol. 1, p. 200.

⁶⁰Bp. John Chisholm to Bp. Alexander Cameron 5 June 1804 SCA B14/220/16.

assumed responsibility for the estate was to improve its financial situation. A new manager, Robert Brown, was employed to reorganize it and he proved to be very capable. He had shown himself to be realistic regarding the ability of tenants to pay their rents and in 1800 and 1801, he undertook to revitalize the manufacture of kelp.⁶¹ He proceeded with caution in dealing with the small tenants because "a pretty general emigration is about to take place from our Mainland Estate and some of the neighbouring Countrys."⁶² In June, 1801, he reported that there were about 1000 emigrants who were about to sail. "Our mainland small tenants will attempt to go abroad next spring. I am making myself master of their plans and shall in a day or two communicate my intention to you in order that you may lay the matter before the Tutors, as it is a matter that will require their consideration."⁶³ In fact, he mused that if the emigration were partial, Moidart and Arisaig would profit by it and he noted that "a large body of men" was of "more value to the proprietor than a flock of sheep."⁶⁴ Uist, however, was a different matter, for "emigration would injure the interest of the landlord and must be guarded against." The manufacture of kelp was given the highest priority.⁶⁵ Try as he would, however, he could not prevent the waves of emigration from the Clanranald estate which were about to begin, for

⁶¹J.M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance*, p. 86.

⁶²(Copy) Robert Brown at Benbecula to Hector Macdonald Buchanan 6 April 1801 SRO
Lennoxlove Muniments. Brown Papers.

⁶³(Copy) Robert Brown at Fort William to Hector Macdonald Buchanan 10 June 1801 SRO
Lennoxlove Muniments.

⁶⁴Clanranald Papers Minutes sederunt. 1 July 1801 SRO/GD201/5/1233/37.

⁶⁵Idem.

"people have been busy amongst our people here" ...⁶⁶

The people Brown was referring to were the emigration agents. A decade earlier, these had been fairly active but their numbers were fewer then and their influence with the tenants less. Towards the end of the century, a new type of agent appeared. He was usually a half-pay officer who had seen service in various war arenas, the most important of which was that in America, for it provided an immediate experience of life there. Another factor these agents had in common was that they were themselves Highlanders who held no grief for the old ways. Some, such as Maj. Alexander Macdonell,⁶⁷ the Big Major, who acted on behalf of the Earl of Selkirk, had been evicted from his tack in Lochaber by the Duke of Gordon, and Angus Macdonell, formerly of Greenfield, evicted along with his father by Lady Glengarry in 1790, were busy recruiting colonists for St. John's Island, Nova Scotia and Canada. Donald Macdonell, who had been the colonel of the Glengarry Fencible Regiment and was still in active service, was engaged by the Earl of Selkirk to look for colonists. In the first instance, he was instructed to find out the situation and numbers of emigrants from the South and west of Ireland who had settled in Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, etc.; to ascertain if their situation had improved, if any had farms, landed property, what their wages were and if they were "industrious, well-behaved or retain their habits of idleness and dissipation and lawlessness". He was also asked to see if they had clergy settled amongst them "correcting their manners

⁶⁶(Copy) Robert Brown to Hector Macdonald Buchanan 28 July 1801 SRO Lennoxlove Muniments. Brown Papers.

⁶⁷(Copy) Memorandum to Major MacDonell from the Earl of Selkirk 13 August 1802 PACSP, vol. 76, pp. 19982-84.

and principles or guiding their conduct, and he added "it will deserve attention if any means can be thought of for gaining the clergy into the plan".⁶⁸

Selkirk had even approached Bishop John Chisholm to cooperate with him on a matter "that his Ldship. did not communicate to me but he affirms that they are of importance and concern my flock."⁶⁹ Chisholm was uneasy about the plan and asked Charles Maxwell who was in Edinburgh to find out as much as he could regarding Selkirk's plans, suspecting he "might want to keep his views secret as he has not been explicit in this letter".⁷⁰ Chisholm never did have a meeting with Selkirk, nor were the Earl's plans made explicit to him, despite a regular correspondence.⁷¹ Given the period of this exchange of letters, it is likely Selkirk was about to ask Chisholm to permit some of the Highland clergy to emigrate with those leaving in 1802.⁷²

Thomas Douglas, the fifth Earl of Selkirk, was the fifth and youngest son who unexpectedly came to the title in 1799, his four unmarried brothers having predeceased him. He attended the University of Edinburgh where he met and was influenced by Dugald Stewart who had succeeded Adam Ferguson as professor of moral philosophy in 1785. Stewart cautioned Selkirk against involving himself in

⁶⁸Instructions to Colonel Macdonell from the Earl of Selkirk. [ca. March, 1803] PACSP, vol. 76. p. 19972-74.

⁶⁹Bp. John Chisholm to Charles Maxwell 20 November 1801 SCA BL4/159/16.

⁷⁰Idem.

⁷¹Bp. John Chisholm to Charles Maxwell 25 January 1802 SCA BL4/175/1.

⁷²Selkirk consistently maintained the need for clergy to be settled amongst the colonists. In his plan which he presented to Pitt in 1805, he advocated that a "few clergymen from the Highlands both of the Church of Scotland and Roman Catholics should be established in this district [the western part of Upper Canada] and an allowance made by Government for some years. After a little time the burthen may be borne by the Settlers". Vide: "Outlines of a Plan for the Settlement and Security of Canada Presented to Mr. Pitt", 29 July 1805 by Lord Selkirk. PACSP vol. 52, p. 13919-26.

emigration or the cause of the evicted Highlanders.

The first aspect which your proceedings will exhibit to the world cannot possibly suggest the idea of any other motive on your part, than a wish to encourage emigrations from the Highlands of Scotland an idea which will at once render your conduct obnoxious to Government and odious to the Gentlemen connected with that part of the Island. How far such emigrations are really hurtful to the Country is a very different question; but I know from the most undoubted authority, the alarm they have already excited...

Stewart believed it was foolhardy for a man of Selkirk's rank and status to interfere in the concerns of the Highland proprietors and their tenants. The respected academician refused to comment on Selkirk's plan for emigration and settlement and strongly advised the Earl to visit the colonial sites for first-hand knowledge, and above all, to keep the government on his side. Care was of the utmost necessity, for, he reminded Selkirk, his family had been very nearly ruined once before.⁷³

In addition to the consolidated and improved Selkirk estate, Thomas Douglas inherited a large tract of land in the Genesee area of New York state which his family had purchased in 1795.⁷⁴ It was likely this association with America which interested the Earl in settlement and colonization, but not on the family estate. Selkirk came into his inheritance in 1799, a year after the rebellion had broken out in Ireland. It was to Ireland he looked when he first began to consider acquiring and colonizing lands in North America, for he planned to do so with Irish settlers. In a letter to Lord

⁷³Observations on his American Plan by Dug[ald] Stewart, 1802 Selkirk Papers, vol. 52, p.13904-906. The family were known to have been sympathetic to the aims of the French Revolution and his brother Basil, an associate and friend of Earl Grey, had been an advocate of parliamentary reform.

⁷⁴J. M. Bumsted, "Settlement by Chance: Lord Selkirk and Prince Edward Island," *CHR* 59 (1978), p. 173.

Pelham, he pointed out the advantages to Britain in settling Irish Catholics in North America where everything could be arranged to suit their "national and religious prejudices".

If the landed interest of Ireland were induced to encourage Manufacturers from the North and Farmers from England and Scotland to form settlements in the South West on a regular and systematic plan, from these a Protestant population would gradually spread through the Country and by its natural increase soon fill up any void which the emigration of Catholics might leave...⁷⁵

However, in his negotiations concerning possible land grants, he was cautioned by the Colonial Secretary, Lord Hobart,⁷⁶ not to engage "a large number of Irish settlers at the commencement, that it would be advisable ... to engage Scotch and German families in the undertaking."⁷⁷ Thus did a senior government official unwittingly shift Selkirk's focus to acquiring Scottish settlers. The young Earl readily acquiesced to Hobart's suggestion that the Settlement should be founded upon a people more tractable than the Irish. His hopes lay in the numbers of Scots, great numbers of whom, he wrote, were "about to emigrate from the Highlands", and he noted with regret that many had already left for "Carolina and other parts of the United States and that more are preparing to follow". It was his hope, he informed Hobart, to convince some of these to prefer Canada. He noted that chances of success would be greater if he were to acquire the grant of minerals, for he could "offer them

⁷⁵Selkirk to Lord Pelham 4 April 1802 PACSP, vol. 52, pp. 13910-912.

⁷⁶Robert Hobart, fourth Baron Hobart and fourth Earl of Buckinghamshire (1760-1816). He was appointed Colonial Secretary in 1801 by Henry Addington, and resigned from that office in 1804. He tried to frustrate the liberal policies of Pitt and Dundas and was, in particular, opposed to Catholic emancipation. Vide: *DNB*, vol. 9, pp. 928-29.

⁷⁷Lord Hobart to Selkirk 30 July 1802 PACSP, vol. 52, p.13852.

such superior terms as I think can scarcely fail to retain these valuable people in his Majesty's Dominions..."⁷⁸

Selkirk needed many emigrants for his colonies, to secure which he had agents scattered throughout the western Highlands, and especially the Isles. In the autumn of 1802, he even approached William Porter, the British Fishery Society's agent at Lochbay to ask his assistance in convincing those who had already signed to go to the United States to volunteer to go to Canada with his group.⁷⁹ For his proposed settlement at the Falls of St. Mary's, in Upper Canada, he needed 800 persons from the Highlands and the Isles. His terms were generous and always better than his competitors, especially those offered by Major Simon Fraser.⁸⁰ For example, he offered the emigrants from Skye

going ... to settle in the West of Canada near Lake Huron... land as cheap as in Carolina or any part of the U.S. not to exceed \$1. per acre; passage to cost the same as they have agreed on already; provisions of corn meal, etc. until they can provide for themselves. Every person at the end of two years who is dissatisfied shall be carried at Lord Selkirk's expense to Carolina or wherever he chooses; he will be repaid for his land and its improvement... will provide employment for those who wish to work at wages; credit offered to purchase cattle, etc.⁸¹

⁷⁸Selkirk to Hobart 21 August 1802 PACSP, vol. 52, p. 13842-44.

⁷⁹William Porter at Lochbay to John Mackenzie, Secretary, British Society, London 27 December 1802 British Fishery Society Papers SRO GD9/166/23 & 23A. It is interesting to note that although anti-emigration himself, Porter was impressed by Selkirk's sincerity. "...I did not wish to meddle", he wrote, "altho I was made sensible of his Lordship's pure intentions...". Idem.

⁸⁰(Copy) Memorandum Selkirk to Major Macdonell (Keppoch) 13 August 1802 PACSP, vol. 76, p. 19982-84. The price of the passage was to be £1 per head less than that taken by Major Fraser and no other transport costs. Those on lease were to travel at £1 per head less than the others and £2 less than that demanded by Major Fraser.

⁸¹Lord Selkirk's Terms offered to Emigrants from Skye 3 August 1802 PACSP, vol. 76, p. 19980-81.

Only fifty indentured emigrants were to be carried over the first year, but artisans and experienced ploughmen were to be preferred and would receive extra wages. Gentlemen, particularly officers of Highland Regiments, willing to join the settlement to assist in the management and superintendence of it were to have lots of land free and be supplied with indentured servants. Those having sufficient influence to bring fifty families with him will have the same allotment as a captain; for thirty families, a Lieutenants's, the servants to be supplied by degrees. Selkirk was willing to treat with fifteen or twenty gentlemen on these terms.⁸² The first ship, carrying only able bodied men to prepare the settlement and to try to produce a first crop, was to sail about February, 1803. The terms were sent to various gentlemen in the area such as Angus McAulay, John Cameron & James Macdonald (Scamadale).⁸³

Selkirk was aided by nature in his campaign to recruit emigrants for his North American colony, for the winter of 1801-1802 was severe. On Skye, the snow had been "uncommonly deep even to preclude the possibility of pedestrian travelling for several days" and there were great preparations for emigration.⁸⁴ Uist suffered from the bad weather also, especially from the lack of meal and potatoes. Emigration was perceived as the solution and in this case, the tenants from Lower Bornish, Ormiclete, Milton and the estates of Boisdale and Barra signed with Roderick McLellan, who had "his cargo" ...⁸⁵

⁸²(Copy) Memorandum Selkirk to Major Macdonell 13 August 1802 PACSP, vol. 76, p. 19982-84.

⁸³Ibid., p. 19990.

⁸⁴William Porter to John Mackenzie 18 January 1802 SRO GD9/166/2.

⁸⁵Capt. James Macdonald (Askernish) to Robert Brown 25 March 1803 SRO TD80/100/4 Bdle. 1516.

By early January, Selkirk had engaged a sufficient number of emigrants,⁸⁶ but public opinion forced Hobart to rescind his offer of lands in Upper Canada. Already committed to the emigrants, Selkirk negotiated for other property and was granted land in Prince Edward Island,⁸⁷ although the emigrants from Mull who had signed up with him were sufficiently dissatisfied to take legal action against him.⁸⁸ Undaunted, Selkirk continued to negotiate for lands, but this experience with the Skye emigrants was the first of a series of setbacks which culminated with the failure of his Red River settlement between 1815 and 1816. His westernmost colony became the focus of an intense and costly quarrel between the Hudson Bay Company, in which he had a vested interest, and its rival, the Northwest Company. Disillusioned and exhausted from his struggles in Canada, he took ill and died in Scotland in 1818, leaving an almost bankrupt estate.

Moidart and Arisaig were not immune to the allure of the promises made by the emigration agents, especially Major Simon Fraser, "their popular leader".⁸⁹ In the spring of 1802, two of the Clanranald tacksmen, Andrew Macdonald⁹⁰ of Islandshona in Moidart and Angus Macdonald, son to the tacksman of Laig, Ranald

⁸⁶Selkirk, at London to James Stewart, late Fraser Fencible Regt. 7 January 1803 Fraser-Mackintosh Papers SRO GD128/36/4/74.

⁸⁷Formerly St. John's Island or Île St-Jean, it was renamed in 1798.

⁸⁸Hector Macdonald Buchanan to Robert Brown 30 May 1803 SRO TD80/100/4 Bdle. 1517.

⁸⁹Alexander Macdonald of Dalilea to Robert Brown 8 May 1803 SRO TD80/100/4 Bdle. 1517.

⁹⁰His son John had studied for the priesthood at the Scots College in Valladolid from 1785-1796, but had to abandon his studies because of poor health. Vide: Maurice Taylor, *The Scots College in Spain* (Valladolid, 1971) no. 46, and John Macdonald to Bp. Alexander Cameron 8 August 1805 SCA BL4/248/10. By 1805, his father had purchased some 7000 to 8000 acres in the area of Three Rivers, Prince Edward Island, where the entire family was to settle. It was John's hope to teach there and perhaps practice medicine. Vide: John Macdonald to Bp. Alexander Cameron 19 March 1805 SCA BL4/248/8.

Macdonald, organized an emigration to Prince Edward Island, with another of the enterprising agents, Hugh Denoon.⁹¹ Commenting on the impending departure,

Robert Brown, the Clanranald factor, noted that the

Roman Catholic Clergy appear also to be no ways averse to this general spirit as they hope by means of it to found a Colony abroad of their own persuasion or reduce the landlords to the necessity of calling for their aid in retaining the people at home. Nor do the principle tacksmen of the Country appear to discourage the measure because they foresee that if the small tenants are out of the way they will have the less competition for their farms at a new set.⁹²

Towards the end of June in 1803, the emigrants who had signed with Major Fraser waited impatiently for their ship, for news had spread that the Passenger Bill had been given royal assent. Angus Macdonald, albeit from a not unselfish motive, sought Robert Brown's support for those about to emigrate noting that

Fraser's ship for the Emigrants is soon expected and I really think as you will be secured in this year rent you ought allow the Laggan Tenants to go as they are in with Fraser for the freight which will ruin them if they remain in the Country. If you give them their liberty like others, write me if you will allow [sic] me take possession & I shall secure this years rent... Please write me on receipt as I do not wish to be in suspense with the people and it would be an act of Charity to allow them go Quickly without showing a Countenance to the Business as this will at any rate be the last Emigration from this part of the Highlands."⁹³

If the kelping lairds were disturbed because of the loss of labourers, so too

⁹¹Clanranald Papers. Minutes sederunt. 1 July 1801 SRO GD201/5/1233/37.

⁹²Idem.

⁹³Angus Macdonald, Kenachreggan to Robert Brown 24 June 1803 SRO TD80/100/4 Bdle. 1518.

were the bishops. Alexander Macdonell had left South Uist and Austin Macdonald, Knoydart, in 1802. In addition, two of the Highland missionaries died unexpectedly in 1803: Ranald MacEachen who had been in Benbecula and James Macdonald, who had been on Barra. A third, Alexander Macdonell, the recently discharged chaplain of the Glengarry Fencible Regiment, was in the process of planning his leave for Canada. Bishop Chisholm described his vicariate as having "two thousand Catholics destitute of any churchman at all".⁹⁴ South Uist received unexpected assistance from the emigré Bishop of Rodez, Mgr. Seignelay de Cuthbert, and even he had thoughts of leading an emigration party across the Atlantic.⁹⁵

Because of the great numbers emigrating, especially in 1801 and 1802, cries for government action to control the overseas traffic were voiced in public and private. The most influential and vociferous of the active groups was the Highland Society whose president at this time was the Duke of Argyll. Once before, in 1775, in response to the cry of alarm over the numbers who were emigrating to America, Henry Dundas, the Lord Advocate for Scotland, had issued orders that customs houses grant no clearance to vessels carrying more than the required number of hands on board. War intervened making commercial shipping precarious at best and the

⁹⁴Bp. John Chisholm to Bp. Alexander Cameron 5 June 1804 SCA BL4/220/16.

⁹⁵He was the grandson of John Cuthbert, 8th Laird of Castlehill, who had married Jean Hay of Dalgetty, the only daughter of William Hay, episcopalian bishop of Moray. When her son died she arranged that her grandchildren be placed with relatives, the future bishop with the Abbé Alexander Colbert who sent the young boy to the College in Paris. He studied at a number of French seminaries, became grand Vicar of Toulouse and Bishop of Rodez in 1781. He had been a member of the first National Assembly but refused to take the Constitutional Oath; in 1791, he retired. He sought refuge in Britain where he became a thorn in the side of the vicars apostolic both in England and Scotland by granting faculties to exiled French priests. "Apparently without the authority of Bp. Chisholm...he extended his travels to the Western Isles, with the vague idea of leading colonies of emigrants to Canada." He died in London in 1813. Vide: Peter F. Anson, *Underground Catholicism in Scotland, 1622-1878*, (Montrose: Standard Press, 1970), p. 205-222. *passim*.

enforcement of the directive unnecessary. The Clanranald tutors were particularly interested in obtaining some relief from the government as were all the other kelping lairds. Hector Macdonald Buchanan, one of the Clanranald tutors and their legal advisor, had made representation to the Lord Advocate but was disappointed with his response that the administrators had taken no notice of his remonstrances. He was further instructed not to interfere and suggested that tenants be retained by longer leases.⁹⁶

Pressure was applied in a more public manner also. A letter, evidently sympathetic to the plight of the landed gentry, from J.A. Constable in Edinburgh, was sent to Robert Brown with a suggestion that he might give him an article for the *Scots Magazine*.

...it is a matter of such national importance that I think every means ought to be taken to awaken the highland lairds and government to put some immediate and Salutary Stop to its progress and as the *Scots Magazine* has now a very good circulation a few good papers on that Subject, in it might do no harm... I was very happy to understand that your good conduct had prevented a very great Emigration from Clanranald's Estate - the effects which must be highly beneficial to the property...⁹⁷

The pressure on the government was having an effect however, and an act

⁹⁶Hector Macdonald Buchanan to Robert Brown 7 June 1802 SRO TD80/100/4 Bdle. 1512.

⁹⁷J[?] A[?] Constable at Edinburgh to Robert Brown 4 September 1802 SRO TD80/100/4 Bdle. 1514. At least one article did appear in the *Scots Magazine* in 1802. It not only decried the depopulation of the Highlands and Isles but the North of Ireland as well, and it called for the "Legislature to act". However, further sentiments reflecting on the causes of the emigrations make it highly unlikely that Brown was the author. "If this emigration were a mere matter of choice", wrote the unnamed author, "such reasoning might be very plausible. But he who supposes that a Scots Highlander would, without any cause, leave in his old age, or with a growing family, those valleys and cottages, where his forefathers have for ages lived and died, is little acquainted with the sentiments of that people." Vide: *Scots Magazine* 64 (1802), p. 705-706.

ostensibly to regulate shipping and thereby prevent the abuse of emigrants by disreputable agents or vessel owners, was drawn up and passed in 1803.⁹⁸ The effect was immediate. Emigration agents were hard-pressed to find ships which adequately satisfied the regulations with regard to capacity and on-board accommodations. For this reason, the numbers travelling at a time had to be reduced and the cost of the transatlantic voyage rose sharply. The result was predictable. The agents were thrown into confusion and the prospective emigrants were left, in some cases, homeless.

Major Fraser has at long last written to Mr. Fraser and to Kenechreggan intimating that he cannot procure a vessel on the terms agreed on with the people owing to the terms of the late Act of Parliament. He will refund their cash and will procure a vessel in August according to the new regulations if they choose to go then ... they begin to be sick of the business... The confounded pack have thrown themselves considerably behind by their preparations and put others into some Confusion and inconveniences. The tenants of Laggan have behaved ill in a particular manner, made several attempts to disburse their Lands and Effects even Since you was here and did absolutely conclude a bargain as I am well inform'd notwithstanding the arrangement made with you under my Guarantee. They are now glad to have their Lands & Possessions as formerly - much more than their conduct deserves... Upon the whole, the People on this Estate are happy, fortunate and comfortable, when compared to those on other Estates, who in a similar situation threw themselves out of Lands and their possessions since disposed of to others... Not a single Family, Tenant or Crofter will be unprovided for here ... unsteady, unthankful and ungrateful as our people are, their Situation is justly envied by others... The Emigration agents who were really a pest, are I hope completely dirk'd and kick'd out of that trade for at least one generation. Many complain of the Severity of the Act; but it meets my most hearty concurrence...

⁹⁸43 George III cap. 56. "An Act for regulating the Vessels carrying Passengers from the United Kingdom to his Majesty's Plantations and Settlements abroad, or to Foreign Parts, with respect to the Number of such Passengers."

the whole Country round is one continued smoke of
Kelp burning - they will do well this year... "99

Emigration from the Clanranald estate did not come to a complete halt because of the Emigration Act of 1803, but it was slowed temporarily. Some of the Highland development projects advocated in the preceding years were put into effect and Highlanders found employment in such as the construction of roads. This type of work could last only as long as there was money to sponsor it and in general, the results were disappointing. The British Fisheries Society's plans for the development of the west coast came to nought when a quirk of nature saw the herring shoals deviate from the west to the east coast.¹⁰⁰

Between 1805 and 1815, emigration continued on vessels especially chartered for the voyages or on ships which returned with North American products, primarily wood. However, no Roman Catholic clergyman emigrated from the Clanranald or Barra estates after 1803.

⁹⁹John Macdonald (Borrodale) to Robert Brown 12 July 1803 SRO TD80/100/4 Bdle. 1518.

¹⁰⁰J.M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance...*, p. 190.

CHAPTER EIGHT - EMIGRATION: 1798 - 1810

II. GLENGARRY AND STRATHGLASS

Emigration to America was one solution open to tenants evicted from their holdings, but it was for those who had the ability to pay for passage and the initial costs of settlement or who would risk going as indentured settlers. Others who had left the Highlands between 1770 and 1790 had sought employment in the urban centres, especially Glasgow and Edinburgh. Bishop Hay, in his 1777 census of the Edinburgh Catholic congregation, had noted a sizeable increase which owed directly to their influx.¹ The Gaelic-speaking Catholics in Edinburgh were fortunate in that Robert Menzies, a native of Aberfeldy and the author of a Gaelic catechism printed in 1781 and translator of the *Imitation of Christ*, published in 1785,² was able to minister to them in their native tongue until his death in 1791. Many of these Highlanders had sought employment as daylabourers or servants, but in the latter decades of the century, Highlanders had been encouraged by promises of employment in the mills, to migrate to the cities and towns. David Dale, for example, had established his first cotton mill in 1786 and, by 1793, had four in the New Lanark area alone. Indeed, the *Caledonian Mercury* noted he had employed 1700 hands and 800 weavers who had been unable to earn a living previously. "Were the clergymen

¹Gordon, J.F.S. *Ecclesiastical Chronicle for Scotland*. vol. IV: *Journal and Appendix to Scotichronicon and Monasticon*. Glasgow, 1867, p. 136.

²Illustrations of the title pages are found in F. Forbes and W. J Anderson, "Clergy Lists of the Highland District" (*JR*) 17 (1966), p. 132-33. He conducted services in the "Highland Chapel" in Blackfriars Wynd, opposite that serving the non-Gaelic-speaking Catholics. It was completely renovated in 1785 and served the congregation for another two decades. Vide: Christine Johnson, *Developments of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland 1789-1829*. (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1983), p. 153-154.

in the North of Scotland," it stated,

to recommend their parishioners, instead of emigrating to foreign countries, to settle where manufactories are established, they would greatly benefit the Kingdom, and the poor people would soon get into easy and affluent circumstances.³

By 1790, the Gaelic-speaking Catholic population in Glasgow and its environs was large enough to bring Bishops Hay and Geddes to consider appointing a Gaelic-speaking missionary to serve this population, as well as the hundred or so non-Gaelic speakers who had formed the nucleus of the Glasgow congregation. For this task, the attention of the Lowland bishops focused on a man who had already given evidence of the ability and talent which would see him become an outstanding leader amongst the Highlanders on both sides of the Atlantic.

Alexander Macdonell was born on July 17, 1762, in Inchlaggan, the son of Angus Macdonell, a kinsman of the tacksman of Ardnabi, and Margaret or Marsali Cameron, from Erracht. Tradition says his father died when Alexander was about ten years of age, but that it was his wish he study for the priesthood. He was fortunate in his early education for he was tutored with his cousins, the Frasers of Culbokie, and remembered well into advanced-age, the kindness and culture of Mary Macdonell, the Gaelic scholar and poetess and wife of William Fraser, eighth of Culbokie.

...the lady's residence being between my father's house and the school where I used to attend with her grandchildren at her son Culbokie's house. By way of coaxing me to remain on cold nights at her own house, she, being cousin to my father, used to take up *Am Bolg*

³*Caledonian Mercury*, 2 August 1792.

Sollair and read pieces of it to me.⁴

When he was about sixteen, Alexander was sent by Bishop John Macdonald to the Scots College at Valladolid for the intensive training prior to his ordination, some nine years later. Here, he managed to maintain an adequate record of scholarship, impressing his superiors and colleagues more with his height which was calculated eventually at six feet four inches and earned him the name of "Sandy Mor" or "Big Sandy". His stature, great as it was, and in the latter years of his life, he was described as being as broad as he was high, was matched by a disposition which Bishop Hay was to describe as forward and intrepid.⁵

After his ordination in 1787, he returned to Scotland where he was appointed by Bp. Alexander Macdonald as the resident missionary in the physically demanding districts of Lochaber and Badenoch. Here he carried out his ministry with great energy and zeal, and, as well, soon gave evidence of a preference for the company of the gentlemen of the clan or military men, a propensity which would be to his advantage within a decade or so.⁶

⁴PAC MG24.J13, p. 36. She was evidently a woman about whom legends are formed. Not only was she a poetess and scholar but was also renowned as a great beauty. Three of the most eligible bachelors vied for her hand. Coll Macdonell of Barrisdale, "Colla Bàn", one of the handsomest of men in the Highlands, whom she favoured, and Colin Chisholm of Knockfin, the favourite of the family nurse, fought a duel with claymores, ostensibly to win her hand. William Fraser of Culbokie, who was favoured by her father because he was the richest, succeeded. Vide: Alexander Mackenzie, *The History of the Chisholms*. (Inverness: A & W Mackenzie, 1890), p. 157-158.

⁵Bp. George Hay to Bp. John Geddes 17 December 1792 SCA BL4.

⁶There are at least two written accounts which reveal this trait, both in Macdonell's own hand. In September, 1791, he referred to a gathering at "Capt. Alex [Macdonell] Keppoch's after dinner where there was a numerous Club of gentlemen besides the Marquis of Huntly and Mr. Tod [his factor]. Vide: Alexander Macdonell to Bp. John Geddes 5 September 1791 SCA BL4/; earlier, he had sent Geddes an account of the Marquis of Huntly's birthday party which he had wished to have inserted in the *Edinburgh Advertiser*. "Both gentlemen and commoners seemed to vie with one another in protestations of regard and attachment to their young Lord," he wrote. Vide: Alexander Macdonell to Bp. John Geddes 5 February 1791 SCA BL4.

In January and February of 1792, at the very time the bishops were considering the appointment of a clergyman to the Glasgow mission, Alexander Macdonell was in Edinburgh assisting Bishop Hay with the Highland migrants who had suffered the loss of their pastor, Robert Menzies, the previous October. He was given the opportunity of negotiating with those concerned in establishing the mission in Glasgow, and the results impressed Bishop Hay in no small manner.

He went to see our friends at Glasgow and found great numbers around Levin Water... went to see Mr. Dale, told him who he was and said he would concur with his ideas if religion could be accommodated ... next to Professor Anderson and was introduced by him to others who want workers... Mr. Alex. has shown a great deal of prudence and zeal in this affair and both Mr. [John] Chisholm and I are of the opinion that he is the fittest hand to be settled there and finish the work he has so happily begun.⁷

Within weeks he had been appointed as the first resident Catholic clergyman in Glasgow since the Reformation. His task was to gather together the Gaelic-speaking Catholics who were working there, especially in the mills. He negotiated terms with David Dale and within a short time, had a hall large enough to serve as a chapel, a house and a couple to act as caretakers. Prior to actually taking up residence in Glasgow, Macdonell escorted two of Keppoch's daughters, cousins of Mary Macdonell, Lady Chichester to a convent in Liège. He was in no apparent hurry to return to the Glasgow mission, for even after returning to British soil, he lingered in the south long enough to visit Bishop Geddes, who was then in London, and several members of the Glengarry family who were in Oxford. However, upon receiving an insistent summons from Bishop Hay, he returned to Glasgow in July,

⁷Bp. George Hay to Bp. John Geddes 21 February 1792 SCA BL4.

1792. He remained there but a month whence he left for Strathglass to visit his cousins and did not return until the end of October. Upon his return he gave himself fully to the task of building up his mission, but, because war on France had been declared in 1793, he could not have begun at a more inauspicious time. Commerce was halted, and employment in the mills greatly reduced. Once again, the Highlanders were in the ranks of the distressed. Within the confines of the Glasgow mission, Macdonell counted

upward of six hundred Catholics, men, women and children from various parts of the Highlands spread over the whole face of this country in quest of a scanty subsistence and all of them doomed to this hard fate by the cruel avarice of this inhuman oppression. A recital of the sufferings of these miserable people since the fatal stagnation took place in trade would rake up your very soul. I have at this very instant a list of scores of them unable to get labour and destitute of every necessity of life - at the next stage to starvation one of what I can do for them myself or procure from others. Some of them tell me they pass whole days without nourishment.⁸

In the autumn Macdonell set out for Strathglass, this time to assist his cousin who was very ill. He remained in the area of Strathglass until November, taking the opportunity to renew acquaintances with the Highland Vicar-Apostolic, John Chisholm, the Chief of Glengarry, Alexander Ranaldson Macdonell and Colonel Cameron of Erracht, with whom he resided in Fort William. Although his absence from Glasgow caused some anxiety, it was to prove quite useful. His experience while there encouraged the enterprising priest to formulate a plan whereby some of his Glasgow parishioners, as well as some of the landless still resident in the Highlands, could be extricated from their distress.

⁸Alexander Macdonell to Bp. George Hay 12 February 1794 SCA BL4.

The war with France provided the opportunity for the founding of many regiments. It was Macdonell's fascination with the military and the respect he had for his young chief, Alexander Ranaldson of Glengarry, which inclined him to co-operate in, if not suggest, the formation of a fencible regiment, constituted specifically of Roman Catholics.⁹ He saw no hazard to the morals or well-being of the men fighting for a cause. "I dare say," he wrote,

allow that neither the spiritual or natural life of our gentlemen's sons would not be in greater danger by fighting against the enemies of their country than by fighting against the noxious climates of the East and West Indies; within these few years I have known about a score of young gentlemen of our persuasion resort thither. Near half the number is no more and I fear still fewer will ever afford much joy to their longing friends upon their return to their native lands. Would it not be an alleviation of their grief to the disconsolate parents of such that their children supplied with the ordinary means of salvation had fallen in defence of their country and of their religion. The melancholy death of one of my congregation on his voyage to Jamaica a few weeks ago gave me a very great uneasiness as I had a very sincere regard and esteem for him and the death of a brother and four cousins german should make me no friend to the too daring spirit of our young adventurers.¹⁰

The West Indies notwithstanding, Macdonell reserved his greatest criticism for the Highland lairds whom he described as self-serving, and the immediate cause of

⁹This was not the first time such a regiment had been suggested. In 1778, a group of Catholics in the western Highlands, led by Ranald Macdonell of Scotos and Bp. John Macdonald presented a plan to raise a regiment specifically of Roman Catholics to the government. Duncan Macdonell of Glengarry, Alexander Ranaldson's father, supported the idea even though, given the prevalent anti-Catholic attitude, he believed it would not be accepted. See also: Chapter Six.

¹⁰Alexander Macdonell to Bp. George Hay 12 February 1794 SCA BL4. His anxiety concerning the dangers of the West Indies was well-founded for within a few years of writing this letter, he would learn of the deaths of another brother, four of the five Fraser brothers and his cousins, and two of the four Chisholm brothers, either in the West Indies directly, or because of illness contracted there.

the departure of so many of his countrymen from their native glens.

Our Highland lairds are more, I do believe than any other set of men upon the face of the earth actuated by self interest; as long as they found that interest to depend upon their followers they spared no expense to increase their number and make them live comfortably, but the moment they found their consequence to rise in the estimation of the world in proportion to the number of their pence, they immediately turned their backs on their tenantry as useless encumbrances, ejected them by mere force out of their lands to bring in south country shepherds because these strangers could afford to give more rent for a whole country divided between three or four of them than as many hundreds of small tenants... [they] are in the hands of shepherds of gentlemen who are always in preparation as their own stocks increase to engross the lands of the tenants, remove them a pace only with this reserve that as long as those poor creatures have any subject, their humane masters lesson [sic] every year their holds, increase their rents and multiply their servitude. A few years reduce the most opulent ones to beggary... This Sir is the cause of all the emigration that has taken place for twenty years past and this has filled all the cotton mills and manufactures throughout this and the two neighbouring shires, with wandering Highlanders. Since I came to Glasgow I have seen upward of six hundred Catholics, men, women and children from various parts of the Highlands, spread over the whole face of this country in quest of a scanty subsistence and all of them doomed to this hard fate by the cruel avarice of this inhuman oppression. A recital of the suffering of these miserable people since the fatal stagnation took place in trade would rake up your very soul. I have at this very instant a list of scores of them unable to get labour and destitute of every necessity of life - at the next stage to starvation ene of what I can do for them myself or procure from others. Some of them tell me they pass whole days without nourishment.¹¹

Following the meeting held to determine the composition of the Glengarry regiment at Fort Augustus on February 26, 1794, Macdonell dedicated himself to its

¹¹Idem.

success. On March 3, 1794, he and Glengarry left for London to present their plan to the London officials. They remained in London the better part of six months and when John Farquharson¹² arrived in Glasgow to officiate during the Easter period, he found the people had turned against their absent pastor and when Macdonell finally returned in November, 1794, it was to a hostile congregation who wanted him to be replaced.¹³ He had received his letter of service, dated August 14, 1794, and had made known his decision to leave the Glasgow mission to become the chaplain of the Glengarry Regiment, by a "singular evasion of the existing law".¹⁴ Even so, some of his congregation remained hostile, especially when asked for money with which to pay the rent for the chapel. "One gentleman," he wrote,

who deems himself the highest pillar of the congregation would not pay a sixpence because I had been so long absent and persuaded as many as he could to follow his example. When I mentioned that it was with the consent of my superiors I went away he gave it his opinion that those superiors should be made to pay

¹²He was born in 1748 in Glenconglas, Strathavon. He saw service in Douai, Scalau, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Elgin and Ayr. He died in Paris in 1817. Farquharson, discouraged by the hardship of the Scottish missions, toyed with the idea of emigrating to America. Vide: Christine Johnson, "Secular Clergy of the Lowland District, 1732-1829," *IR* (1983), p. 70. In 1808, when he was sixty years of age, he was corresponding with Bp. Plessis concerning an appointment in Lower Canada, although it came to naught. Vide: Bp. Joseph-Octave Plessis to Fr. John Farquharson 25 August 1808 in *Rapport de l'Archiviste de la Province de Québec* (1927-28), p. 261.

¹³Bp. George Hay to Bp. John Geddes 5 May 1794 SCA BL4. Macdonell himself acknowledged that he had not served the Glasgow congregation very well, and on November 3, 1794, he agreed to serve the Mission at his own expense since he was about to have an income independent of the Mission funds. However, his good intentions were rebuffed by an uncompromising congregation who sensed neglect, for, of the thirty-eight months from his appointment to the Glasgow Mission in February-March, 1792 until his departure to join the Glengarry Fencibles in May-June, 1795, Macdonell was absent half that time. Vide: Kathleen M. Toomey, *Alexander Macdonell: The Scottish Years, 1762-1804*. (Toronto: The Canadian Catholic Historical Association, 1985), pp. 96-97.

¹⁴*Scotichronicon*, p. 367 and PRO WO2/37, p. 213.

it.¹⁵

Macdonell hoped that the regiment would provide employment for many of his own congregation as also numbers who were still in the Highlands. He believed further that Glengarry intended to reinstate those of his tenants who had been evicted previously but who would enlist in the Glengarry regiment.

A man of Glengarry's property whose determined resolution is to get his country re-peopled is the most calculated [?] person to step forward to the assistance of those poor objects and offer protection to such as would incline to their native countries. That a great deal is in his power you'll easily grant when you attest upon the two Regts. you saw his grandfather bring to meet the Prince in the year 45. The nursery of all that number of brave men is now occupied by five or six strange individuals but most of their leases will be out in a year or two when Glengarry might provide lands for every man in the Regiment and as soon as he has it in his power he says he'll show to the whole world that he prefers men to sheep. All the men that are with him in the Fencibles rest perfectly satisfied that he'll make good his promise to see them comfortably settled in Glengarry.¹⁶

He should have been more circumspect. Glengarry was extremely capricious for within months of Macdonell's having written Hay to convince the bishop of the young chief's devotion to his tenants, Alexander Ranaldson had issued directions to his agent in Scamadale that the tenants and especially the cottars who had refused to "serve" him, that is, join the regiment, be turned off his property.¹⁷

At the beginning of April, 1795, Glengarry apologized to Henry Dundas for

¹⁵Alexander Macdonell to Bp. George Hay 20 November 1794 SCA BL4.

¹⁶Alexander Macdonell to Bp. George Hay 12 February 1794 SCA BL4.

¹⁷Charles Fraser-Mackintosh, *Letters of Two Centuries*. (Inverness: A & M Mackenzie, 1890), p. 328-29.

not having kept his promise to raise a truly Highland regiment, although some 550 of the men were Highlanders, the rest being recruits from the west country, but no English nor Irish.¹⁸ Of the Highlanders, most were Macdonells or Macdonalds from the Glasgow region or from the Glengarry estate. The Regiment was billeted at Kilmarnock in May, 1795, and even though the young chief had announced that his recruits would serve anywhere they were sent, they were named for garrison duty on Guernsey in September.

The Lieutenant Governor of the Island at this time was Major General Henry Dalrymple, a rather irascible person who took every occasion to vent his displeasure with the quality of the regiments supplied by the War Office. The chaplain, Alexander Macdonell, noted he had expressed his anger "against every individual of the Regiment and had often descended into mean and low, dirty, ill-natured instances."¹⁹ The acting Colonel, Donald Macdonell, complained to Henry Dundas, the Secretary of War, and at the same time, reminded him that the men had asked to be posted anywhere in His Majesty's Dominions more immediately in danger and where active service might be most required.²⁰ In May, 1797, he applied to the Ministry for a transfer from Guernsey, a request which was granted almost a year to the day. Uprisings in Wexford and a general unrest throughout Ireland saw a call for the reinforcement of troops, despite a warning from the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Charles Cornwallis²¹ against escalating the situation.²² One of the regiments sent

¹⁸Glengarry to Henry Dundas 4 April 1795 SRO GD51/1/6/189/1.

¹⁹Alexander Macdonell to Margaret Fraser 8 November 1796 SCA/PL2/15/4.

²⁰Col. Donald Macdonell to Henry Dundas 11 May 1797 SRO GD51/1/886.

²¹Charles Cornwallis, first Marquis and second Earl Cornwallis, 1738-1805.

²²Cornwallis to Henry Dundas 29 January 1798 SRO GD51/1/331/1.

to augment the numbers of British troops in Ireland was the Glengarry Fencibles who arrived in Waterford about the third week of June, 1798.²³

If the men of the Glengarry Fencibles had suffered from the *ennui* of inaction on Guernsey, the transfer to Ireland brought it to an abrupt end, for within a week of landing there, they were sent to relieve the beleaguered forces in New Ross. Alexander Macdonell, the chaplain, marched with the troops at their head and not as custom would have it in black attire, but in the regimental plaid of the Macdonells.²⁴ Macdonell was not unaware of the effects of rebellion or war. Even though born in 1762, he had witnessed the post-Culloden effects in his native Highlands, and had tasted the disquieting turmoil of pre-Revolutionary Paris. Yet, it was not to the bloodshed to which he referred in his correspondence, nor even in his memoirs written so many years later, but to the condition of the prisoners whom he found to have been ill-treated and totally neglected. It was through his solicitation that the regimental surgeon was sent to the gaols to assist the wounded.²⁵ Within the next few months, the regiment was kept on the march. In July they were in Kilkenny and Hacketstown; in August, they were part of Sir Charles Asgill's force in the Shlievenamon mountains prior to the attack on Callan. In the autumn, they set out

²³*Edinburgh Advertiser*, 26 June 1798, p.406.

²⁴Simon Fraser to Margaret Fraser 22 June 1795 SCA PL2/13/3. In his letter, Simon, the youngest son of William Fraser of Culbokie and then the regimental pay master, advised his sister that he was sending "six yards of the Regimental tartan which was part of a web Mr. Alexander (the chaplain) had made for himself - very fine." A resident of Gort, many years after, recalled the "Glengarry Fencibles marching in with their priest at their head". See: An annotation by Maj. I.H. Scobie in Bernard Kelly, *Glengarry Highland Fencible Corps or the Regiment of the Macdonells*. (Dublin: James Duffy, 1905), p. 40, and housed in the United Services Museum, Edinburgh. "In 1852 the author of *Memoir of a Quiet Life...* was on detachment at Gort where the landlady of the inn remembered the Glengarry Fencibles marching in with their priest at their head in '98."

²⁵Andrew Macdonell, "The Glengarry Fencibles," *TGSI* 26 (1904-07), p. 347.

under General Lake, who had devastated the rebel forces at Vinegar Hill, for County Wicklow. It was here, that the regiment earned the reputation as the "Devil's Bloodhounds"²⁶ because of their ability to pursue the rebels in the mountains. The Irish, unencumbered by rigid uniforms and accustomed to the rigours of climbing or descending the difficult terrain, used the hills as a locale from which to launch their attacks and as a refuge for retreat. They were at an advantage until they encountered the men of the Highland regiments who were born and raised in the hills of north-western Scotland whose uniforms were the free-flowing kilt and plaid.

Early in 1799, the Regiment was in pursuit of Michael Dwyer near Rathvely. Dwyer and some of his men were trapped in a house which the troops set on fire but Dwyer escaped. The incident was a minor one but the attack, especially by the Macdonells was deemed treacherous and the disgust of a partisan press committed its feelings in poetry.

But the kilted foes around them set
 And fired the house of Connel
 Those hungry Scots, the hounds of death
 Ah, shame on you Macdonell!
 Spirits of the dead, the butchered of Glencoe
 Look down with vengeful ire
 On you, degenerate sons, the murdering crew
 That sought the life of Dwyer,
 Of the freedom-loving Dwyer. ²⁷

Whatever the rebels thought of the Highlanders, they appear to have been appreciated by the "peaceable inhabitants", who Macdonell informed his cousin Margaret Fraser, "found from them the support and protection which they sought in vain from other regiments. "The barbarous conduct", he continued,

²⁶Norman H. Macdonald, *The Clan Donald of Knoydart and Glengarry: a History of the Macdonalds or Macdonells of Glengarry*. (Edinburgh: the Author, 1979), p. 139.

²⁷Bernard W. Kelly, *The Fate of Glengarry*. (Dublin: James Duffy, 1905), p. 42.

of the soldiery in general towards the wretched people of that unfortunate country exceeds belief. There is no species of cruelty but they exercise on the unhappy victims of their fury. Neither age nor sex was respected...²⁸

Macdonell's good opinion of the regiment may have been somewhat biased but it was supported by no less a person than the Lord Lieutenant and Commander in Chief, Charles Cornwallis. "The English Fencibles", he wrote

with the exception of Lord Grey de Viller's Corps are in general bad trash and the Scotch Fencibles, although they behave in the most orderly manner in their Quarters and have been of great service in tranquillizing the country are for the most part of so diminutive a size and the respective corps so weak in numbers that they would not be capable of any great exertions in the field, they form the force however upon which we can principally rely.²⁹

Nine months later, he wrote again, deploring the state to which the "British infantry... by various causes [had been] reduced to a state" which he was ashamed to mention.³⁰

The success in winning over the Irish citizenry was due in no small measure to the influence of the chaplain himself. Early in the campaign, he had sought aid for the suffering prisoners and, as they went from one engagement to another, he did what he could to alleviate the conditions which confronted them. Often, for example, the troops found Roman Catholic chapels which had been desecrated and turned into stables by the yeomanry. He had these restored and then invited the native population to attend services over which he presided. This was not an insignificant gesture, for

²⁸Alexander Macdonell to Margaret Fraser 16 February 1799 SCA PL2/22/4.

²⁹Cornwallis to Henry Dundas 19 August 1799 SRO GD51/1/331/19.

³⁰Cornwallis to Henry Dundas 16 May 1800 SRO GD51/1/331/27.

a population which had experienced contempt for years, was ministered to by a man, dressed in the garb of the enemy, who spoke their native language and practised their creed. His effect on the people has been described as "almost magical".³¹

While chaplain of the Regiment, Macdonell learned of the "sudden and violent" death in Jamaica of "his favourite brother who would have been a credit to his name."³² This was the second of Macdonell's brothers to die in the West Indies and the only members of his immediate family, a half-brother Allan, and a sister, Margaret, were in Canada, having emigrated there prior to his return from Valladolid in 1787.³³

On October 12, 1798, Simon Fraser, the youngest of the Culbokie sons, died in Bermuda. As a youth, Simon had been sent from Guisachan in Strathglass to attend school at Dalchulie, and while there he was placed under Macdonell's supervision. The youth admired his cousin and confided to him his ideas and plans regarding a career. However, he informed neither Macdonell nor his family when he joined the Glengarry Fencibles, a deed for which Macdonell was blamed by the family in Strathglass. While the Regiment was stationed on Guernsey, and at the behest of his oldest brother William, Simon surrendered his commission and left to join him and his other brothers John and Alexander in Saint Vincent in the West Indies.³⁴ Unfortunately, a misunderstanding had occurred between Simon and his former

³¹Bernard Kelly, *Ibid.*, p. 40-41.

³²Alexander Macdonell to Margaret Fraser 6 May 1798 SCA PL2/20/8.

³³Alexander Macdonell to Bp. George Hay 12 February 1794 SCA BL4. He mentions "the death of a brother and four cousins german".

³⁴William Fraser to Margaret Fraser 13 January 1799 SCA PL2/21/6.

mentor and he left the Regiment, as he himself called it, in a "pet".³⁵

These were particularly trying times for the chaplain of the Glengarry Fencibles but a more painful experience was about to befall him. If the deaths of his kin inclined him to reflect on those who were yet alive in Canada, the behaviour of the one person he most admired towards him was the determining factor which convinced him to leave his native land to join his relatives and clansmen in British North America.

The strategic threat which a rebellious Ireland imposed on war-torn Britain was lessened with the signing of the Peace of Amiens early in 1802. The Glengarry Fencible Regiment was removed from the Military Establishment in February 1802 and was ordered to return to Scotland.³⁶ Most of the officers had been given commissions in the regular regiments of the line but for the 570 infantrymen who arrived at Greenock in April, 1802,³⁷ the future was bleak.

The war had come to an end. It should have been a time for rejoicing and a return to hearth and kin. However, the very problem which faced the men was that of a home. The entrepreneurial climate in Glasgow had changed prior to the onset of the war with France in 1793. Despite the optimism which the reopening of the trade routes engendered, those who had enticed the Highlanders to Glasgow, as had David Dale, for example, had sold their businesses. The one hope of the rank-and-file Highlanders resided in the possibility of new leases in their former tenancies, the

³⁵Simon Fraser to Margaret Fraser 29 April 1798 SCA PL2/18/9.

³⁶PRO WO8/9, p. 744 and PRO WO35/21, p. 92.

³⁷*Edinburgh Evening Courant* 22 April 1802.

promise Glengarry had made in 1794.³⁸ By 1802, however, most of the estate was in the hands of the Gillespie brothers, south-country shepherds whose main concern was the turning of the property into a profitable sheep-run.

Alexander Macdonell's prospects were not as grim as those of the fighting men. He knew he would be welcomed back to the Scottish Mission from which he had never been released totally. It was a different Mission, certainly. Bishop Geddes had died in 1799 and in his place was Macdonell's former rector from Valladolid, the aloof and taciturn Alexander Cameron. His cousin, John Chisholm, was the Vicar-Apostolic to the Highland District and his immediate superior. The family at Guisachan had broken up, through the deaths of several of the Frasers and the estrangement wrought by Simon's defection to the West Indies and subsequent death there had never really healed. The only remaining members of his immediate family were in Canada. After almost eight years a chaplain in the military, could he adjust to the Scottish Mission? Where would he be appointed? Did he, too, place his confidence in the word of Glengarry that the farms of Lochaber and Glengarry would once again be in the hands of Macdonells and perhaps see himself as their missionary in the repopulated hills? Whether he was aware of it or not, the determining force was not in the episcopal offices in Edinburgh nor in Fasnakyle, nor in Invergarry nor in Glasgow. The setting was to be London and its circumstances born of betrayal and contempt.

The Regiment, unaccompanied by their chaplain, was disbanded at Ayr in

³⁸In 1801, despite the fact that Glengarry had offered tenancies on his newly surveyed estate, at ten percent below the market price, the prospect of emigration seemed more attractive. Vide: J. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America, 1770-1815*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982), p. 97.

April 1802. Indeed, no word was heard from or about him until July of that year when he began to correspond with some of his ecclesiastical colleagues, and even later, with his relatives and friends. His cousin, for example, Margaret Fraser received a lengthy letter of explanation in August, 1803, more than a year after his return to Britain.

At the time I wrote you last, one of those officers had brought out a writ of arrest against me in London... and another had brought out the same against the Adjutant in Ireland, who could make no exertion of any kind in his own defence, so that the whole burden lay upon my shoulders. Having got bail for myself in London I proceeded with all possible speed to Dublin to defend the Adjutant, but on arrival there was actually arrested myself and detained for some time in close confinement but brought cause before the Lord Chancellor of Ireland...³⁹

Macdonell rejoined the Regiment in time to officiate at the 1803 Easter ceremonies, whence he found letters from Glengarry's solicitor, Alexander Fraser of Lincoln's Inn, summoning him to London immediately. On 21 June, not long after his arrival in the capital, he was arrested by the Sheriff of Middlesex, Robert Albion, under a writ of *Capias ad Satisfaciendum* to appear in court to face charges brought against him by Ranald Macdonell for £2000 debt plus another £300 for damages and costs.⁴⁰

How could the chaplain of the Glengarry Fencible Regiment have found himself in such a predicament? It all owed to an incident some five years previous to the litigation. "You would probably have heard," he wrote to Margaret,

³⁹Alexander Macdonell to Margaret Fraser 26 August 1803 SCA PL2/29/6.

⁴⁰PRO Pris.1/19, p.278, case 9755.

in the year 1797 that your uncle the Major, Mr. MacDonell, Shian, the Adjutant of the Regiment and I had prevented Glengarry from being brought to a general Court Martial by some of his officers but before we could succeed were obliged to give them our own obligations to see ample justice done to them in their charges against their Colonel provided those charges were substantiated in a private manner by competent judges mutually chosen by both parties. In pursuance to this obligation those gentlemen prosecuted their claims and obtained a decision against us for upwards of a thousand pounds sterling. Our constituent [Glengarry] did not consider himself altogether obliged to support. However I with some difficulty obtained a letter of Relief from him for us all three yet he did not pay the smallest attention either to that or to a still more binding obligation, his honor.⁴¹

When he appeared before Mr. Justice Rooke he found himself bereft of any support from Glengarry whatsoever, and he felt, the protagonists brought the full weight of the law against a priest in order to force Glengarry to treat with them, from embarrassment, if nothing else. Macdonell had no means to pay the debt and on 3 July, 1802, he was brought to the Fleet prison.⁴² He spent the next three months in confinement, either in the gaol or in "lock-up houses".⁴³

Macdonell was humiliated and badly hurt by the cavalier and uncaring attitude with which Glengarry treated him. He was well acquainted with Glengarry's inconsistent and mercurial behaviour. Indeed, he had been summoned to London from Ireland in order to assist his Chief and "cousin" who had become quite deranged

⁴¹Macdonell to Fraser, Idem.

⁴²PRO Pris.1/19, p.278, case 9755 and PRO Pris.2/no. 86.

⁴³Macdonell to Fraser, Idem.

while travelling on the Continent.⁴⁴ Despite this knowledge, he was not prepared for Glengarry's behaviour. Thus, when he was discharged on 4 January, 1803,⁴⁵ he was so "indignant at the ingratitude of Glengarry ... and so mortified at the conduct of [his] friends" that he wished to return to Scotland only to recover from Glengarry the money paid by the Major and his friend. True to his word, upon his return to Edinburgh about mid-March 1803, he had the matter brought before the Court of Session.⁴⁶

Macdonell believed emigration was a solution open to the poor Highlanders, many of whom had been disbanded from various regiments and he felt betrayed by the man for whom he had the deepest loyalty and wanted to put all behind him to begin anew. The grounds for his detention in London and the length of the delay provided Macdonell with the motive and opportunity to turn his thoughts away from his native land, and to promote his ideas in the most propitious arena, the very halls of an imperial government. His words were more succinct. "Government has put in my power the means of being useful to such of the poor Highlanders as are necessitated to leave their own country ... while the conduct of one man has given

⁴⁴The incident occurred while Glengarry was travelling from Italy to Vienna in 1800. He was so violent that when he reached Vienna, Lord Minto, who was in residence there, forbade his travelling any further unaccompanied. By September, he was placed under arrest and housed in a lunatic asylum. After some hasty correspondence amongst Glengarry's legal advisors and friends, it was decided that Macdonell, the chaplain, "one of his nearest relations and [who] enjoys his entire confidence", should travel to Vienna to escort him home. Vide: Lord Minto to A. Macdonald 18 August 1800 NLS.MS.11254, f.172; Minto to Macdonald 29 September 1800 NLS MS.11254; Col. Donald Macdonell to Lord Minto 4 November 1800 NLS. MS.11263, f.69.

⁴⁵PRO Pris.3/8 [1803]. Macdonell remained in prison, despite Glengarry's promise not to let him be the loser, until a friend of his in London, but not one of his "own brethren" paid his portion of the debt which had been reduced by a partial payment from Margaret Fraser's uncle, the Major. Vide: Macdonell to Margaret Fraser, *Idem*.

⁴⁶Macdonell to Margaret Fraser, *idem*.

me a complete disgust of this country."⁴⁷

How and exactly when Macdonell became involved in emigration can only be a matter for speculation. He had a first-hand knowledge of the plight of the evicted, landless Highlanders. He could hardly have remained unaware of the activities of the numerous emigration agents, especially such as Major Macdonell of Keppoch, formerly of the Glengarry regiment and one of Selkirk's emigration representatives. Macdonell's interest as a Catholic priest would have been aroused, for members from his former congregations were being canvassed for colonies where no clergymen resided. Selkirk had advertised especially for half-pay officers and soldiers,⁴⁸ and notices had been posted on the doors of the Catholic chapels in the Highlands, advertising special rates of passage.⁴⁹

In February, 1803, shortly after his release from confinement, Macdonell met Capt. Archibald Macdonell, formerly of Leek, and brother of the Reverend Roderick Macdonell who had emigrated to Canada in 1785. There can be little doubt that they talked of Macdonell's nearest kin and discussed the viability of the settlement in Canada which had been formed about 1783. The representative of the young colony exhorted the disenchanted clergyman to act quickly so that they might travel overseas together that very summer.⁵⁰

Another who admired the enterprising clergyman was none other than Lord Selkirk himself. It is likely that they met each other, probably in London, for the Earl

⁴⁷Macdonell to Fraser, Idem.

⁴⁸Highland Society of Scotland. Second Report, 28 June 1802. SRO GD51/5/52/5.

⁴⁹Highland Society of Scotland. First Report, 12 January 1802 SRO GD51/5/52/1.

⁵⁰Alexander Macdonell to Bp. Alexander Cameron 10 February 1803 SCA BL4.

tried very hard to recruit the former chaplain for his settlement between Lakes Huron and Superior. Macdonell refused giving as an excuse that private business in London would detain him for some time. Certainly, Macdonell was occupied with his lawsuit to recover from Glengarry the money paid by others to secure his release, and, interestingly enough, the "Earl offered him an order of £2000 upon his agent as an indemnification for any loss or inconvenience he might incur by leaving so suddenly,"⁵¹ the exact amount for which he had been sued by Capt. Ranald Macdonell. Macdonell, however, was an innovator and a leader, not a follower, and it was as such that he determined to treat with the government for lands and settlement conditions for himself and those who would emigrate with him.

Macdonell's negotiations with no less a person than Henry Addington, the then prime minister, if cordial, were not easy. Macdonell was speaking with the families of the Glengarry Highlanders in mind, and foremost in his thoughts were their near kin who had emigrated during the previous two decades and were now all located in Canada. Addington's offer was generous:

80 acres of land to every head of family together with as much money as would suffice to place four slaves upon every farm, to send a physician and schoolmaster to the new colony and to provide the colonists for a period of three years with as much wine as the doctor should consider necessary for the preservation of their health, and further to bestow upon Mr. Macdonell and also upon a few of his friends, such salaries as would make them independent in their circumstances.⁵²

But, the colony Addington had in mind was Trinidad, where the British government

⁵¹J. A. Macdonell, *Sketches Illustrating the Early Settlement and History of Glengarry in Canada*. (Montreal: Wm. Foster, Brown & Co., 1898), p. 146.

⁵²Alexander Macdonell, *A Short Account of the Emigrations from the Highlands of Scotland to North America and the Establishment of the Catholic Diocese of Upper Canada*. (Kingston, U.C., 1839), p. 9-10.

intended to establish a model settlement "in the healthiest situation".⁵³ Addington's suggestion could not have been worse. Ten years previously Macdonell had written to Bishop Hay about the perils of the West Indies and the grief he had come to experience because of them. No matter how much the conditions were improved, Macdonell could not be convinced. Coastal lands in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were proposed, because the government considered the expenditure of public funds in Upper Canada as too risky.⁵⁴ Macdonell countered with an argument which may have been originally his but which was oft-repeated in the years to come. He pointed out that it was to the young colony's advantage, always potentially threatened by a seditious or military onslaught from the United States, to settle the discharged infantrymen there.⁵⁵ He was finally successful and the Prime Minister who "regretted so many were reduced to quitting the country forever," agreed that he should direct those willing to follow him to Upper Canada.⁵⁶ And so, according to Bishop Cameron's assistant in Edinburgh,

near 20,000 are ready to emigrate this summer among them Mr. McDonell the chaplain of the late Glengarry Regiment [who] has obtained from our Government a grant of land in Canada: 1200 acres for himself and 200

⁵³Alexander Macdonell, "A Page from the History of the Glengarry Highlanders," *Canadian Literary Magazine* 1 (1833), p. 107.

⁵⁴Idem.

⁵⁵Lord Selkirk and Thomas Talbot urged the government to direct enough Highlanders into Upper Canada to form a bulwark against the Americans. Highlanders were considered an ideal choice for such because their societal characteristics and language made them less likely to be subverted by the rebels. Vide: Norman Macdonald, *Canada, 1763-1841. Immigration and Settlement: the Administration of the Imperial Land Regulations*. (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1939), p. 55.

⁵⁶Idem.

acres for every family that goes with him.⁵⁷

However, it was unusual that a Catholic priest should not be simply entertaining thoughts of emigration, but that he was actively involved with other agents and was personally recruiting settlers for Canada. It was not lost on that element of society which was hostile to emigration, especially in his native Highlands. Bp. John Chisholm was particularly sensitive about his adventurous "military cousin" and advised the procurator of the Scottish Mission in Edinburgh to:

Tell Bishop Cameron *inter nos*, I have thoughts of suspending him on account of the odium he draws upon us by his emigration schemes and infidelity relative to his obligations to the mission.⁵⁸

Unfortunately for the Highland vicar-apostolic, his admonition was too late. Macdonell had already informed his counterpart in the Lowland district, Alexander Cameron, that his Majesty's commands had been laid on him "to convey to the Province of Upper Canada such of the Roman Catholics as may determine to emigrate from Scotland."⁵⁹

Macdonell, however, should have realized he was not free to leave the Scottish Mission, at least not until he had been released by his bishop, and he exhibited no concern in the matter. In fact, he irritated his superiors by announcing his emigration as a *fait accompli*, in much the same way as he had informed them about his being appointed chaplain of the Glengarry Fencibles. It was not simply a matter of

⁵⁷Charles Maxwell to Paul MacPherson 8 June 1803 SCA BL4/211/7. The land grants were the usual amounts: 1200 acres to officers, and 200 acres to enlisted men.

⁵⁸Bp. John Chisholm to Charles Maxwell 12 April 1803 SCA BL4/200/14.

⁵⁹Alexander Macdonell to Bp. Alexander Cameron 7 March 1803 SCA BL4/209/18.

insubordination, because he had scandalized some of the emigrating soldiers by indicating he was leaving the mission with or without permission,⁶⁰ but the Highland mission needed him desperately. As early as 1802, Bishop Chisholm had expressed his anxiety about Macdonell's delay in London. "I wish matters may be all right with him," he wrote. "He is the only one that I could in the present circumstances spare for Glasgow."⁶¹ Finally after a protracted stay in London, Macdonell informed Bishop Cameron that he had received his papers of dismissal from his solicitor, Mr. Fraser, and that he was about to leave for Edinburgh.⁶²

Macdonell could not have looked forward to his reunion with his superiors, given his involvement in emigration, but emanating from London had spread the rumours of a more serious scandal.

I am very sorry to inform you that a too well grounded report is current, that the late unhappy Chaplain of the Glengarry fencibles is upon the point of bringing infamy on himself and shame on us all. It appears he marries a young girl, who he assured he was under no engagement incompatible with marriage. The girl's father is by this time, informed of the contrary, but I am afraid she is already too much deluded to draw back.⁶³

The rumour was evidently an effort on the part of Glengarry to besmirch Macdonell's character and thereby redeem his own.⁶⁴ However, Macdonell's behaviour on other occasions had been singular enough to have given the bishops

⁶⁰Bp. John Chisholm to Bp. Alexander Cameron 5 June 1803 SCA BL4/200/15.

⁶¹Bp. John Chisholm to Charles Maxwell 9 July 1802 SCA BL4/175/6.

⁶²Alexander Macdonell to Bp. Alexander Cameron 7 March 1803 SCA BL4/209/18.

⁶³Bp. Alexander Cameron to Bp. George Hay 2 February 1803 SCA BL4/199/4.

⁶⁴Christine Johnson, Review of *The People's Clearance* by J. Bumsted, *IR* 34 (1983), p. 46-7.

some cause for thought. "I am not without strong suspicions that she is not the first he has deceived," Cameron continued,

... many hints, which I had formerly despised, upon the character he bore amongst those and so ought to know him, recur to me now and confirm my suspicions.⁶⁵

Bishop Cameron may have been disturbed by the rumours but he was not about to give up on his former pupil,⁶⁶ and if he could not prevent his emigrating to Canada, he determined to rekindle in him the spirit of his vocation before he left the country.

It was with a conciliatory spirit that Cameron advised his colleague in the Highlands that they should concentrate on the chaplain's qualities, to which entreaty Bishop Chisholm was unequivocal.

All you say relative to the Chaplain are extremely agreeable to the feelings of my heart; but from what I conceive to be my knowledge of him for some time past, I cannot say the whole is so to the conception of my head. His having written to some of this coast of late that he was going to America without asking leave, his having signified to some of the Catholic soldiers that he did not mind whether he got leave or not has given a great scandal to his brethren and others. I have no great expectation from what he is either willing or able to do in the wilds of Canada among frost and snow and extreme heat which they have by turns and for which he has no constitution... You desire me in your last not to embarrass him if your company has not changed him. It is my opinion my military cousin would not be much embarrassed by anything I could write him provided

⁶⁵Bp. Alexander Cameron to Bp. George Hay, Idem. It is not clear whether Cameron meant that Macdonell had convinced other women that he was an eligible bachelor or if he meant Macdonell had pretended to be other than he was - a Catholic priest bound by a sacred oath to serve the Scottish Mission. There is no indication in works about Macdonell or in his own letters, either in Scotland or in Canada that he was ever romantically involved.

⁶⁶Cameron was the rector of the Scots College in Valladolid from 1780 until 1798.

other circumstances smiled upon him (all this inter nos).⁶⁷

Bishop Cameron did not divulge how he was going to reorient Macdonell. He simply stated he was going to renew their old acquaintance as master and student. His first task, however, was to distract Macdonell's attention from his secular affairs, a rather difficult task given the priest's preoccupation with his lawsuit and his impatience to leave for Canada. In February, however, Macdonell, in a rather dejected mood, had written a letter to Cameron in which he indicated a ready willingness to talk and listen.

Long and ardently have I wished to meet a friend into whose bosom I could pour my soul with confidence. Of that treasure I have been deprived since I lost poor McEachran,⁶⁸ but now I trust and I expect that you will supply the place of a friend and a father to me.⁶⁹

Macdonell, unknowingly, was fortunate in that Glengarry's agents had been instructed to delay the proceedings as much as they could in order to exhaust his opponent. This tactic kept Macdonell in Edinburgh long enough for him to recapture the spirit of the Scottish Mission, so that when the bishop was required to travel to Aberdeen, he thought enough of the ex-chaplain to charge him with some of his duties.

One of the duties Macdonell had to perform and seemingly painful to him, was that of asking from his superior, Bp. John Chisholm, permission to quit the Scottish Mission in order to emigrate to Canada. In October, 1803, he set out for Lismore to

⁶⁷Bp. John Chisholm to Bp. Alexander Cameron 5 June 1803 SCA BL4/200/15.

⁶⁸Angus MacEachern, his classmate and fellow ordinand, who emigrated to St. John's Island in 1790.

⁶⁹Alexander Macdonell to Bp. Alexander Cameron 10 February 1803 SCA BL4/209/17.

meet with the bishop and while on the way, he determined to visit his former congregation in Glasgow. Only twenty Highlanders attended the service though he had given his successor, John Farquharson, a list of some 500 names in 1794.⁷⁰ Upon his arrival in Lismore, he found a letter advising his immediate return to Edinburgh in order to prevent Glengarry's taking advantage of his absence.⁷¹ Although Macdonell managed to request the necessary leave from the Mission, his superior requested he postpone this demand until he had concluded his business with Glengarry. He even suggested that he take up the vacant position on Barra. Seemingly, the bishop had not fully comprehended the extent to which Macdonell had carried through with his emigration plans, for he again cautioned him against his becoming involved in such a disreputable undertaking.

Not only did Macdonell not take his superior's advice, he stepped up his activities, soliciting in writing, various of the Highland families. The bishop was so upset that he advised his colleague in Edinburgh that if Macdonell meddled any further with emigration he could:

ask leave to go to America from any other... such as choose to emigrate may manage their own affairs and let him attend to his spiritual duties... am perfectly convinced this is the best line of conduct he can follow however good his intentions and views may be in acting in a different capacity which experience might have

⁷⁰Alexander Macdonell (at Greenock) to Bp. Alexander Cameron 24 October 1803 SCA BL4/. In Greenock also, where there were upwards of 200 Catholics, he was informed that few attended Mass. Indeed, at the service he conducted that Sunday, only four Highlanders and a score of Irish attended. He discovered that there were neither vestments nor a chalice belonging to the Mission. Implied in his letter is the opinion that the Highlanders who remained in Glasgow and its vicinity had become apathetic, perhaps because of neglect.

⁷¹Alexander Macdonell to Margaret Fraser 5 November 1803 SCA PL2/29/8.

taught him before he began his emigration scheme.⁷²

Chisholm's annoyance must be considered in conjunction with an ultimatum he had just received from Glengarry who warned the prelate that he "would do well to weigh the justness of his demand with the consequences that [might] follow a refusal."⁷³ Chisholm, who had received a written account of the case, which made "very coolly and deliberately a most detestable character of Glengarry", did not succumb to the Chieftain's intimidation. He did, however, suggest that Macdonell be favourable to Glengarry after he had paid his creditors.⁷⁴

As the summer of 1804 approached, Macdonell became more and more restless. Many of the families who had wanted to emigrate with him had gone the previous year. The Bishop of Quebec had personally requested that he hasten his emigration plans for the Gaelic-speaking colonists of Upper Canada had been:

already upwards of a twelvemonth without a pastor; there are four hundred Catholic families in one parish, all emigrants and so impatient are they become for a clergyman, that they deputed two of their number down to Montreal to know from Captain Macdonell Lich [Leek] and other of my friends there with whom I used to correspond whether they could depend on my being out this season... from Montreal they went to see the Bishop of Quebec and he has promised to pay passage there this season.⁷⁵

Macdonell's legal proceedings against Glengarry, although seemingly at

⁷²Bp. John Chisholm to Bp. Alexander Cameron 26 December 1803 SCA BL4/200/17.

⁷³Idem.

⁷⁴Idem.

⁷⁵Alexander Macdonell to Anna Fraser Macdonell 16 July 1804 SCA PL2/31/15. Alexander Macdonell, Scotos, who had emigrated in 1786 and was ministering to the Highlanders in Glengarry, Upper Canada, had died on 19 May, 1803. Roderick Macdonell, who was active in the present-day Cornwall, Ontario region, survived him but three years.

arbitration,⁷⁶ were still being prolonged. In December, 1803, five months after he had agreed to settle the case amicably, Dalness, Glengarry's solicitor, stalled the proceedings once again, claiming he had found an obstacle to the settlement.⁷⁷ However, Macdonell's restlessness and the pressure from Quebec inclined the clergyman to consider well the possibilities of emigration that year. Crossings of the north Atlantic tapered as autumn approached and Macdonell knew his chances were few if he did not act soon. Then, quite unexpectedly, a chance to sail for Quebec presented itself at the end of August. Macdonell received permission from the Arbiter to leave the country without prejudice to his case⁷⁸ and from Bishop Cameron who was in Aberdeen, came the necessary release from the Scottish mission. He and his cousin, Bp. John Chisholm, never reconciled their differences, although Macdonell promised Cameron he would try to heal the rift.⁷⁹

To his cousin, Margaret, he confided some of his aspirations, given a new chance at being a missionary, this time in the New World:

the reflection of having been myself for so many years wasting my time in occupations not quite congenial to the spirit of my vocation added much weight to this last consideration... making every idea of interest, of inclination or natural feeling, yield to what I conceive to be my bounden duty in bringing with all possible speed, spiritual relief to the heavy charge which is now

⁷⁶Macdonell, with the consent of his advisor, Mr. Rolland, had agreed to a settlement of his case against Glengarry by arbitration. Vide: Alexander Macdonell to Bp. Alexander Cameron 16 July 1803 SCA BL4/209/19.

⁷⁷Alexander Macdonell to Anna Fraser Macdonell 9 December 1803 SCA PL2/29/9.

⁷⁸Even as late as 1807, his business with Glengarry was not yet settled, to which end he was advised to return to Scotland to bring it to a close. Vide: Alexander Macdonell to Bp. Alexander Cameron 22 April 1807 SCA BL4/288/9.

⁷⁹Alexander Macdonell to Bp. Alexander Cameron 29 August 1804 SCA BL4/.

committed to my care.⁸⁰

Macdonell set sail aboard the *Caledonia* on 31 August, 1804, but the ship was forced to turn back because the vessel was taking on too much water. After a short delay, he resumed his voyage, "in very comfortable quarters".⁸¹ Bishop Cameron could not change his former pupil's intention to emigrate, nor, as far as one can surmise, did he try very hard to do so. It no doubt gave him a great deal of satisfaction, mixed with some regret no doubt, to send a competent and well-formed missionary priest, as a pastor to the Highlanders, but this time, in Canada.

Macdonell had obtained land grants for those of the Glengarry Fencibles who had wished to emigrate upon the disbanding of the Regiment in 1802. The soldiers, as Glengarry himself had pointed out, were mostly Macdonells from his own estate. However, in 1801, while the Regiment was still on active duty in Ireland, the first of the great emigrations from the glen of Macdonell's youth took place.

To this point there had been little emigration from Strathglass. Individuals had joined parties leaving from the neighbouring Knoydart estate but, as early as 1793, Bishop John Chisholm had expressed some foreboding when William succeeded his half-brother Alexander to the Chisholm estate. "I fear", he wrote, "London clubs have spoiled him".⁸² Within the year, he had sought advice from James Grant, Corriemony, concerning the procedures of breaking with impunity, the eighteen-year leases recently agreed to by his deceased brother.⁸³ Five years later, Chisholm's

⁸⁰Alexander Macdonell to Margaret Fraser 30 August 1804 SCA PL2/31/16.

⁸¹Alexander Macdonell to Bp. Alexander Cameron 3 September 1804 SCA BL4/230/9.

⁸²Bp. John Chisholm to Bp. John Geddes 19 March 1793 SCA BL4/69/3.

⁸³Iain R. Mackay, "The Davoch of Clachan", *TGSI* 45 (1967-68), p. 398-99.

fears were seen to have been well-founded. "I am truly affected", he wrote,

with the Prospect that threatens the poor tenants of Strathglass from my Cousin and Chief. I wish they may not be driven to America. They are the greatest support I have for the College in contemplation except yourself. I wish you would take the trouble to wait on Mrs. Chisholm⁸⁴ to learn all you can concerning the matter in question to see if there be any possible means to wave the blow intended. I do believe if the leases granted by her Husband are reduced the Tenants may have recourse upon her and Daughter for damages but I thought it indelicate to tell her so.⁸⁵

This period was not an easy one in which to be informed of higher rents or receive a writ of eviction. Some of the tenants had joined either the Glengarry Fencibles or the Fraser regiment and were secure temporarily. In 1801, as the war with France neared its end, the first of the mass emigrations from Strathglass took place, and owed directly to a clearance instigated by Elizabeth Macdonell, the Chisholm's wife and the sister of Alexander Ranaldson, Glengarry.

Fortunately, for some of those evicted, the transatlantic shipping lanes had been reopened and the emigration agents were once again plying their trade. One such was Hugh Denoon,⁸⁶ the brother of David Denoon, the minister at Killearnan. At an early age, he had gone with the British troops to put down the rebellious colonists in America but, after the war had run its course, he found himself settling in loyalist territory, near Pictou, Nova Scotia. Within a decade, he had become a judge in the

⁸⁴Elizabeth Wilson Chisholm, the widow of Alexander who had died in 1793. She protected her tenants in Balnahaun, which property she had selected to provide an annuity, until her death in 1826, at which time the complete Chisholm estate reverted to William's heir. Vide: Alexander Mackenzie, *The History of the Highland Clearances*, (Stirling: Eneas Mackay, 1914), p. 188 and Iain R. Mackay, "Davoch . . .", p. 400.

⁸⁵Bp. John Chisholm to Bp. George Hay 30 January 1798 SCA BL4/120/11.

⁸⁶Also spelled Dunoon.

Court of Common Pleas, a successful merchant and landowner. It was in this latter capacity that he became aware of the need for settlers and it was to his native soil that he returned for such.⁸⁷ In 1801, alone, Denoon's two ships the *Sarah* and the *Pigeon* conveyed some 799 emigrants from Strathglass, the Aird and Glen Urquhart for Pictou, Antigonish and Cape Breton.⁸⁸ As was the case on the Clanranald estate, it was not emigration as such which bothered the proprietors and factors but that the better sort chose to leave the country. "No doubt they will carry stock and all the money they can out of the country", lamented Duncan Grant.⁸⁹

Grant suggested the high price and scarcity of food was the cause of the emigration. Yet, the feelings of those who were forced to leave were summed up by Donald Chisholm, known as *Domhnall Gobha*, an elderly bard,

An t-uachdaran a tha 'nar ceann
 Tha mì 'n duil gun chaill e dhaimh
 'S fhearr leis caoirich chur ri gleann
 Na fir an camp le feileadh⁹⁰

⁸⁷J. M. Bumsted, *Ibid.*, p. 88 and *DCB*, vol. 7, p. 244-46.

⁸⁸Alexander Mackenzie, *The History ...*, p. 187. The non-Catholics tended to settle in the Pictou area; the Roman Catholics were usually met by Father Angus MacEachern who, according to the resident Scottish minister, the Rev. Dr. James D. MacGregor, advised them to settle with their co-religionists in Antigonish and Cape Breton. Vide: A.A. Johnston, *A History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nova Scotia*. (Antigonish, N.S.: St. Francis Xavier University Press, 1960), vol.1, p. 136. An emigration agent named George Denoon is mentioned in Great Britain. *Parliamentary Papers*. "A Survey and Report of the Coasts and Central Highlands of Scotland, 5 April 1803", p. 12. He was also referred to as a contractor who arranged sailings from Fort William & Isle Martin in 1801. Vide: *Scots Magazine* (1806), p.260. I have not found any biographical information for a George Denoon and assume he was either a relative of Hugh or Hugh himself, mistakenly identified as George.

⁸⁹Duncan Grant, factor of Urquhart at Inverness to Sir James Grant 21 March 1801 SRO GD248/3410/10/11. One report suggested they took £100,000 sterling out of the Country "lost to it forever". Vide: "Report from the Committee on the Survey of the Coasts...", *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁹⁰I am afraid the Chief who is now our head has lost his sense of kinship; He prefers to put sheep in the glen to a kilted retinue. Mackay, Iain R., "The Davoch ...", p. 399.

Clearly he saw the clearance of the glen as the cause.

None of the missionaries active in the Strathglass area, i.e the Chisholm brothers and Austin Macdonald who was ordained in 1793, sought to leave with the emigrants. Yet, according to Fraser of Relig, from about 1797 on, the Catholics of Strathglass had made "large offers of an annual salary by contribution among themselves if he [their priest] would attend them to emigrate."⁹¹ Both Bishops Chisholm, John and Æneas, however, had received repeated requests for a clergyman or two to minister to the Highlanders settled, especially in Nova Scotia. In 1809, Edmund Burke, then Vicar-General of the Quebec diocese in Halifax, appealed to Bp. Alexander Cameron in Edinburgh, because he had received no reply from the Chisholm bishops.

Endeavour to strike on some plan to provide for the Missions before the people turn Methodists or heathens. I have built a large and commodious house there for a public school but I have not yet been able to procure a clergyman to superintend it. I could get one from Ireland. Can I from Scotland? There are more Scotch in my district than Irish. The Scotch therefore ought to attend to the Missions with more zeal than the Irish. Be that as it will I must recommend them to your serious thoughts...⁹²

Perhaps it was the challenge to Scottish pride which aroused Æneas Chisholm, but within a few months he was able to report to Charles Maxwell, Bishop Cameron's assistant in Edinburgh, that he had convinced his brother to respond positively to Burke's entreaties. "I believe young Mr. Alex^r. McDonell from Lismore now in this

⁹¹[Edward Fraser of Relig] "On Emigration from the Scottish Highlands and Isles", ca. 1802. NLS MS9646, p. 194.

⁹²Edmund Burke, Vicar General of Quebec at Halifax to Bp. Alexander Cameron 25 July 1809 SCA PL3/10/16.

country is to be the lucky person. I think he may do as well there as here."⁹³

Alexander Macdonell, who was born in 1782 in Strathglass, was the son of Hugh Macdonell and Mary Chisholm.⁹⁴ He studied at the fledgling seminary Bp. Chisholm had established at Lismore and was ordained in 1808. According to Bp. Æneas Chisholm, "after having crossed a third of the Atlantic in order to assist his distressed countrymen in Nova Scotia ... he gloriously returned along with the rest of the passengers..."⁹⁵ Because it was so late in the year, he went to Lismore where he resided with Bp. John Chisholm until he took ship for Nova Scotia the following season.⁹⁶ It is likely that many of his kin in Strathglass had emigrated and the young man felt an inclination to follow them, but another reason for his emigration has been attributed to ill-health.⁹⁷ Upon his arrival in Nova Scotia, his formal training for the priesthood was found to be somewhat deficient and the Bishop of Quebec ordered that it be corrected as quickly as possible. That and uncertain health notwithstanding, he carried out his ministry in Nova Scotia until his death in 1841.

There were further evictions and emigration sailings in 1802 and 1803, prior to the enforcement of the Emigration Act. In three years, commencing with 1801, over 5000 had been driven from Strathglass, most of whom crossed the Atlantic,⁹⁸ most sailing for Pictou. As was the case throughout the Highlands, emigration slowed

⁹³Bp. Æneas Chisholm to Charles Maxwell 14 December 1809 SCA PL3/11/17.

⁹⁴A.A. Johnston, *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 220.

⁹⁵Bp. Æneas Chisholm to Charles Maxwell 9 November 1810 SCA BL4/342/9.

⁹⁶Bp. John Chisholm to Charles Maxwell (?) November 1810 SCA BL4/342/18.

⁹⁷*Idem.*

⁹⁸Alexander Mackenzie, *The History ...*, p. 187.

after the implementation of the Emigration Act of 1803. However, evictions continued apace, and even those mostly closely related to the proprietor himself were not immune. In 1810, Iain Bàn Chisholm of Knockfin⁹⁹ was removed and replaced by the Lowland farmers Bryden and Laidlaw. Allan of Muckerach, a cousin of Knockfin and his brother Duncan were removed from Muckerach in Glencannich. The rent of Fasnakyle trebled from £105 to £315. Bishop Angus Chisholm wrote to Alexander's widow, Elizabeth, lamenting the deprivation of Knockfin who was not even asked whether he would pay more or not. "Allan and his brother Duncan were driven from Muckerach for a vile fellow and sixteen good fellows driven out of their places (at Clachan and Kerrow) to make room for them."¹⁰⁰ That very year, John Macdonald, formerly Glenalladale, died at his home on Prince Edward Island. Almost four decades earlier, he had forsaken his native shores because of the "terror of the times".¹⁰¹

⁹⁹Colin, the first of the line, was the second son of Alexander Chisholm, XVII of Strathglass. The removal of Knockfin from his holdings was a blow to bishops John and Æneas Chisholm whose grandfather was Colin, third of Knockfin. It was John, the fifth of Knockfin, b. 2 January 1762, who was removed in 1810. After the Chisholm, he was considered the most influential of that family. He lived but a year after his eviction. Vide: Alexander Mackenzie, *The History...*, p. 148, 162-63; Iain R. Mackay, "The Davoch...", p. 403.

¹⁰⁰Iain R. Mackay, p. 401.

¹⁰¹Iain R. Mackay, "Glenalladale's Settlement, Prince Edward Island," *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 10 (1965), p. 19.

CONCLUSION

Between 1770 and 1810, approximately one-third of the Roman Catholic population¹ in the Scottish Highlands sailed from the western Highlands and the Isles. With them travelled or followed eleven of the clergy from the Highland Vicariate, not a great number, but in proportion to the total active in the Highlands, sufficient to alarm both the ecclesiastical and indirectly, the civil authorities.

If there was a common denominator to each of the waves of emigration, it was that people left because they were distressed or unsettled and chose to try their fortunes where the prospect of a better life seemed likely. It is as simple as that. What differences there may have been lay in the type of the perceived oppression, sense of aggrievement or inducement to emigrate pertinent to each departure.

The first of the emigrations took place from South Uist in 1772 and was ostensibly a reaction to the Laird of Boisdale's mistreatment of his Catholic tenants. There can be little doubt that Boisdale did abuse his tenants, who all happened to be Catholic - if they had been non-Catholic and the reasons for his dissatisfaction the same, his reaction would have been just as vehement. Boisdale believed the traditional religious practices of his tenants detrimentally interfered with their working habits and therefore the success of his estate. Even Bp. John Macdonald understood Boisdale's anxiety and he sought, on several occasions to alter the church practice, especially that concerning holy days, in order to accommodate the situation.

¹Based on a total population of ±27,000 and estimated from the numbers reported to have sailed in 1772-73 (800); 1784-93 (2200); 1801-1803 (5000). The emigration statistics are probably lower than the actual numbers who sailed because of incomplete or non-existent port documentation.

Only sixteen of the South Uist families who had been affected by Boisdale's intolerance actually emigrated. The others who came from the mainland were all fairly comfortable, if uneasy, tenants from the Clanranald estate, who, like the promoter of the scheme, John Macdonald of Glenalladale, sensed a period of instability from which they sought to escape while it was still feasible.

Their foreboding was not a figment of their imaginations. The Clanranald and Glengarry estates were not separated by a great distance and there was some intermarriage between the Macdonalds and Macdonells. It would seem quite normal, then, that the tacksmen on Clanranald's estate were quite aware of the disruption caused by the redeeming of the wadsetts and their being leased subsequently at higher rates. This phenomenon gave rise to the first of the several mass emigrations from the Glengarry estate in 1773. It was simply a matter of better business practice on the part of Glengarry, but as far as the Macdonells were concerned, especially the tacksmen brothers who engineered the emigration, the proposal of "pay and stay" was an intolerable affront. These near relations of the chief chose to leave rather than be treated as common tenants.

In the case of the tacksmen and tenants who left in 1772 and 1773, they were presented with options of leasing their tacks at higher rates or relinquishing the farms to others. They opted to settle where, their advance scouts had so informed them, there was land enough for all and plenty of chance to succeed.

In 1783, following the termination of the American Revolutionary War, emigration was possible once again, but this time it was no longer an unknown or totally risky experiment. Settlements had been established and, although the work

required was demanding, the prospect of success beckoned those willing to take on the responsibility. Several of the ex-tacksmen from the Clanranald and Glengarry estates who had joined the British Colonial regiments were in the Highlands, promoting their colonies and recruiting settlers, who were needed now not only to cultivate and develop the areas but to become defenders of the fledgling colony against the attacks of a hostile neighbour. Doubtless they brought with them news of relatives who had left the Highlands the previous decade. Thus began the "pull" towards North America. All that was needed was a push.

An unforeseen, if unwelcome, abettor in the scheme of things arrived in 1782-1783 when nature herself provided an additional incentive. The autumn, winter and spring of 1782-83 witnessed the harshest weather in the Highlands, with the resultant crop failure responsible for widespread famine and starvation. In 1790 and 1801 there were similar disasters in the Highlands, and these also contributed to augment the numbers leaving the western Highlands and the Isles.

During the period from 1784-1790, the first true clearances occurred from within the Catholic Bounds, the Glengarry estate specifically. The clearances differed from evictions in both degree and manner. The result was the same, for entire families were removed. In the former case, however, there was no option to pay a higher rent and entire areas were depopulated, not individual farms. This was the real "terror of the times", but compared with the later variety, it was only in its infancy.

It was also during this period that overpopulation began to be considered as a cause of the emigrations. This may have been true but only in some areas and certainly not on the estates which supported labour-intensive work, such as the

harvesting, drying and transformation of kelp into ash.

The period 1798 - 1810 can be described as the one in which the proverbial lid blew off the kettle. Emigration was rampant from within the "Catholic Bounds", as well as without, and this time, large contingents from Barra and Strathglass sailed westwards. As previously, the underlying reason was the treatment of their tenants by the landowners. The Chisholm began his estate clearances about 1801 and there was no option for those removed but to leave, either, for employment elsewhere in Scotland, or as the now more numerous emigration agents informed them, for a better life in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island or Canada.

The emigration from Barra was totally different. The Laird, Roderick MacNeil, did not want to lose his tenants. His estate was one of the most efficient in the manufacture of kelp, so that not only did he want to keep as many tenants as he could, he paid the highest rates to employ them. However, MacNeil did mistreat and publicly humiliated Allan Macdonell, the priest who served the Barra mission and there can be little doubt he mistrusted the Roman Catholic clergy in general. His tenants were in a stronger bargaining position than he and it is quite probable they used emigration as a means to secure a more conciliatory attitude towards their clergy and religious practices. When he tried to prevent their building a chapel, many signed up to emigrate and carried through with their intention. This was not the first instance that the Barra tenants had done so. In 1790, many had been lured to the settlements in Nova Scotia and St. John's Island where they had been promised freedom of worship. When Allan Macdonell was removed from Barra, tension between the Church and the Laird was somewhat alleviated. What effect this had in preventing

emigration is somewhat unclear for although it did slow down, it owed more to the implementation of the Emigration Act of 1803 more than anything else.

If religious intolerance was the only reason for the emigrations from South Uist and Barra, then the partial rescinding of the Penal Laws in 1793 should have curbed any future departures. The opposite was the case. The tenants were reacting to the intimidation and abuse of the proprietor, just as had others in Glengarry, Moidart, Arisaig, and Knoydart. They were not willing to put up with bullying, whether religious in nature or other, such as threats of eviction, rack-renting, etc.

It should not be surprising that the clergy emigrated for virtually the same reasons as did their people: dissatisfaction with the *status quo*, encouragement from family and friends who had already emigrated or from those who were about to emigrate, a desire to set out for "greener pastures", escape from "oppression", albeit usually in the form of ecclesiastical authority, and debts. Of the nine Roman Catholic priests who actually emigrated between the years 1770 and 1810, James Macdonald, Roderick Macdonell and Angus MacEachern were the ones who most fulfilled the conventional perception of the altruistic missionary: concern for the spiritual and material welfare of others, in this case, their own kin. Of these, James Macdonald, the nephew of Alasdair MacMhaigsteir Alasdair, who prepared the way for the others, was the true adventurer. He, as a priest, was virtually on his own from the time he left the west coast of Scotland until his death in 1785, except for the infrequent visits he made to Quebec or Nova Scotia.

Alexander Macdonell of the Scotos family and James Hugh Macdonald, Guidal, were quite the opposite, although circumstances, perhaps, played a major role

in so determining their attitudes. Each one, being of a decidedly independent temperament, a trait made possible because at one time they were probably among the most financially self-sufficient in the entire Scottish Catholic Mission, had had trouble with his superiors. By the mid-1780's, each had started to suffer from the financial distress which was afflicting his neighbours. Alexander Macdonell, Scotos, left in 1786 mostly because he was in debt, but also because he had never quite recovered from the disappointment and bitterness he experienced as a result of not being chosen as the Vicar-Apostolic to the Highland District in 1779-80. James Hugh, on the other hand, managed to remain in Eigg until 1791 when death claimed the closest members of his family, apart from his aged father who emigrated also. That each was desperate to leave was borne out by the manner in which he obtained the necessary permission, at the last minute, so that as a *fait accompli*, it could not be denied.

In 1801-1802, Alexander Macdonell, Clianaig, and Austin Macdonald, the brother of John Macdonald, ex-Glenalladale, both emigrated to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island respectively. They were as different as night and day, as were their reasons for leaving, although each one shared a similar desire to be reunited with family and kin. The former was sent with the permission of Bp. Alexander Macdonald and was fully equipped for the voyage and mission he was about to embrace. Austin, on the other hand, resembled more Alexander Macdonell, Scotos, in that he had run afoul of his superior, Bp. John Chisholm, and had got himself into debt from which he could not extricate himself. Although disgruntled, he was a dedicated priest and, despite his advanced age, he saw as his only hope the reunion

with his brother and sisters on their estate at Scotchfort on Prince Edward Island.

Perhaps the most intriguing account of the priests who emigrated to Canada belongs to that of Alexander Macdonell who sailed in 1804. Described as of a forward and intrepid disposition, he accomplished much for himself and for those whom he befriended. These traits, however, also earned him a few enemies, some in very powerful places. Macdonell was a very enterprising individual and it is likely he would have succeeded just as well in Scotland as he was to do in Canada. He had given evidence of the organizational and political ability, so necessary for the success of any public enterprise, from the moment he returned from the College at Valladolid, but more so when he was appointed to the newly established Glasgow mission. There can be no doubt that he did take a concern for his fellow Highlanders, and that, personal ambition notwithstanding, he sought relief for them, first in the Glasgow mills, and then in the Glengarry Fencible Regiment. When the Peace of Amiens was signed in 1802, he again sought to secure for them a decent future, but this time, emigration was the solution. Whether Macdonell would have emigrated himself or not, had Glengarry not abused him, is a subject for conjecture, but there can be little doubt that, given the circumstances of the lawsuit, debtors' prison and finally the malicious gossip, Macdonell wanted to get away, begin life anew and be reunited with the only remaining members of his family in Canada. There was a hint of self-serving in what he did, but his thoughts were also with those whom he induced to leave their native hills, an example of which was to surface not long after his arrival in Canada. With the ever-present memory of the evicted and landless tenants before him, one of the first tasks he accomplished was to have registered officially

every holding allotted to the settlers.

If there was a priest who had a role to play in the emigration process, it was Alexander Macdonell. Threatened with suspension by his superior Bp. John Chisholm for not only supporting emigration but actually recruiting settlers for "his" colony, he remained an energetic agent and not just until his departure in 1804. In 1840, he died in Dumfries, while on a visit to make representation on behalf of the colonies established in Upper Canada.

There is no documentary evidence to support the contention that, other than Alexander Macdonell, the ex-Chaplain, individual priests actually encouraged the Highlanders to emigrate. What they said or did privately is another matter. It would be difficult to believe that those leaving their native soil would be reluctant to encourage others to do so, although, as Fraser of Relig asserted, they were more prevailed upon to leave with their people. However, only Alexander Macdonell, "Big Sandy", was ever singled out for his behaviour in this matter. Reference was made to one, perhaps both of the priests on South Uist in 1798, as being supporters of emigration but none of this is revealed in their letters nor in correspondence concerning them.

In July, 1801, Robert Brown, the Clanranald factor, commented that the Roman Catholic Clergy hoped to found a colony abroad and to force the landowners to call on their assistance in preventing emigration.² The first part of Brown's comment is reminiscent of Bishop Hay's musings written to Peter Grant in Rome in

²See Chapter Eight, I, p. 216.

1771.³ However, like many of Hay's ideas, they were quite unrealistic. The priests of the Highland Vicariate were too few in number to effect such an enterprise. Very few were those who sailed the Atlantic with the bishop's total approval. Even as late as 1810, when there were more clergy ministering in the Highlands than had been when the population was greatest, it took the barbed wit of an Irish priest named Edmund Burke to embarrass the Highland bishop into sending a priest for the Gaelic-speaking congregations in Nova Scotia. Bp. John Macdonald's reference to James Macdonald's emigration to St. John's Island as a quasi-extension of the Highland Vicariate was ill-founded fancy, if for no other reason than it was firmly under the control of the Bishop of Quebec.

The latter part of his comment, though, was not far off the mark. Three times Bp. George Hay used emigration as a bargaining tool. In 1772 and 1773, he cited the Uist persecution and the subsequent emigration to St. John's Island, to persuade the government to rescue Boisdale's tenants. The solicitations made, not only within the British borders, but even in Rome, had the desired effect, for Colin Macdonald, the laird of Boisdale, never again harassed his tenants as he had done prior to 1772. With more than a little hindsight, the bishops, also, were very prudent in selecting future missionaries for South Uist.

Disappointed with the response from the "persecuted" tenants to Glenalladale's plan, Bp. Hay vowed he would never become involved in emigration schemes again. However, about seven years later, alarmed and disgusted by the anti-Catholic demonstrations pursuant to the introduction of the Catholic Relief Bill, Bishop Hay

³See Chapter Five, p. 112.

found himself intrigued by another emigration proposal. Sponsored by Lord Traquair, it was not of Highland origin and its locale was to be in Spain. As he had done earlier, Hay used the possibility of emigration from Scotland, albeit of Catholics, to persuade the government to rescind the restrictions imposed by the Penal Laws and ameliorate their social conditions, in general. This time he received a curt reply to the effect that if Catholics wished to emigrate, they should do so.

Hay's final attempt at using emigration as an effective agent occurred just about the time Robert Brown wrote his comments. The period, 1796-1799, was one of great financial distress within the ecclesiastical institution. The Scottish Church funds had been cut off because of the war in France and Italy and the living expenses afforded the clergy had been reduced to bare subsistence level. At least three of the missionaries who had emigrated had complained of lack of money and many more were threatening to leave for the same reason, and not only from the Highlands. Hay negotiated with Sir John Hippisley to obtain from the government funds enough to assure the salaries of the clergy, especially. This measure, he assured Hippisley, would keep the clergy from emigrating and thereby, their people at home. He was successful, but for a very short period only.

Even though Hay made use of the threat of emigration for his own purposes, the bishops, in general opposed it. Bishops Hugh Macdonald and James Grant, in 1772, denounced Glenalladale's scheme as folly; Bp. Alexander Macdonald lamented the loss of so many of his clergy and people, to the detriment of his Vicariate, and Bp. John Geddes, ever solicitous for the welfare of "Glen and our people", only reluctantly approved of what he thought was a better opportunity for them.

The most vehement reaction, however, belonged to Bp. John Chisholm, perhaps because he witnessed so many of his congregations leaving from Barra, Strathglass and the Clanranald estate. At a time when there was a powerful anti-emigration movement emanating from the Highlands, he was extremely disturbed and irritated by the fact that one of his own clergymen was very prominent in its encouragement.

It is interesting to note that in his comments on emigration, Fraser of Relig, in 1802, suggested that the clergy be encouraged to remain in the Highlands and, for the very same reason as had Bishop Hay to Hippiisley, and latterly, to the Clanranald Tutors. There is a chance that Relig had heard of Hay's response to the Tutors, which Robert Brown, the Clanranald factor, echoed in 1801. That each, even if under different circumstances, should have promoted this same solution to the emigration of the Roman Catholics from the western Highlands and the Isles, indicates that, indeed, the Roman Catholic clergy were perceived to play, and in fact, did play a role in emigration, even if it was, at times, unintentional and indirect.

APPENDIX A

ADDRESS OF BEELZEBUB

TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE HIGHLAND SOCIETY.

To the Right Honourable the Earl of Breadalbane, President of the Right Honourable and Honourable the Highland Society, which met on the 23rd of May last at the Shakspeare, Covent Garden, to concert ways and means to frustrate the designs of five hundred Highlanders, who, as the society were informed by Mr. Mackenzie of Applecross, were so audacious as to attempt an escape from their lawful lords and masters, whose property they were, by emigrating from the lands of Mr. McDonald of Glengarry to the wilds of Canada, in search of that fantastic thing—LIBERTY.

June 1, anno mundi 5790

LONG life, my lord, an' health be yours,
Unskait'h'd by hunger'd Highlan' boors;
Lord, grant nae duddie, desperate beggar,
Wi' durk, claymore, or rusty trigger,
May twin auld Scotland o' a life
She likes—as *butchers* like a *knife!**

Faith, you and Applecross were right
To keep the Highland hounds in sight;
I doubt na, they wad bid nae better
Than, let them ance out owre the water;
Then up amang thae lakes and seas,
They'll mak' what rules an' laws they please;
Some daring Hancock, or a Franklin,
May set their Highlan' blude a-ranklin';
Some Washington again may head them,
Or some Montgomery, fearless, lead them;
Till God knows what may be effected,
When by such heads an' hearts directed;
Poor dunghill sons of dirt and mire
May to Patrician rights aspire!
Nae sage North, now, nor sager Sackville,
To watch and premier o'er the pack vile!
An' whare will ye get Howes and Clintons,
To bring them to a right repentance?—
To cove the rebel generation,
And save the *honour* o' the nation!

They!—they be d——d! what right hae they
To meat, or sleep, or light o' day?—
Far less to riches, pow'r, or freedom,
But what your lordship's pleased to gie them!

But hear, my lord! Glengarry, hear!
Your *hand's owre light* on them, I fear;
Your factors, grieves, trustees, and bailies,
I canna say but they do gaylies;
They lay aside a' tender mercies,
An' tirl the hallions to the birses;
Yet, while they're only poin'd and herriet,
They'll keep their stubborn Highland spirit;
But smash them! crash them a' to spails!
And rot the dyvors i' the jails!
The young dogs—swinge them to the labour—
Let wark and hunger mak' them sober!
The hizzies, if they're oughtlins fawsont,
Let them in Drury Lane be lesson'd!
An' if the wives an' dirty brats
Come thiggan at your doors an' yetts,
Flaffan wi' duds, an' gray wi' beas',
Frightin' awa' your ducks and geese—
Get out a horsewhip, or a jowler—
The langest thong, the fiercest growler—
And gar the tatter'd gypsies pack,
Wi' a' their bastards on their back!
Go on, my lord! I lang to meet you,
And in my *house at hame* to greet you;

Wi' common lords ye shanna mingle,
The benmost neuk beside the ingle,
At my right-hand assign'd your seat,
"Tween Herod's hip an' Polycrate;
Or, if ye on your station tarrow,
Between Almagro an' Pizarro;
A seat, I'm sure ye're weel deservin't;
An' till ye come—Your humble servant,

BEELZEBUB.

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