

Lay Religiosity, Piety, and Devotion in Scotland c.1300 to c.1450

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In recent Scottish historical research on issues of ecclesiastical renewal and reform, the chief academic focus has rested on three strands: the radical restructuring of the twelfth century, popular devotion in the immediate pre-Reformation period, and the dramatic events of the sixteenth-century Reformation. This does not mean that other aspects of medieval Church history have been neglected, for there has been much new research into its institutions, personnel, and properties. Access to papal records, published as the *Calendars of Papal Letters* and the *Calendars of Scottish Supplications to Rome*, has not only shed light on issues of papal provision to benefices, clerical celibacy, illegitimacy and education, and the continuing role and nature of lay patronage and benefaction of the secular and regular Church but has transformed scholarly understanding of the operation of the secular Church in Scotland, the organization and functioning of its governmental structures, and the exercise of canon law, and has given fresh insight into the influence which the clergy wielded over the lives of the lay population.¹ Research founded on these and earlier papal record sources has borne much fruit in the last twenty years, with major studies of Scoto-papal

1 For papal letters, see Burns, ed., *Calendar of Papal Letters . . . of Clement VII*; McGurk, ed., *Calendar of Papal Letters . . . of Benedict XIII*. The Scottish Supplications to Rome series is continuing to emerge, with five volumes currently published: Lindsay and Cameron, eds., *Calendar of Scottish Supplications to Rome*, vol. 1, 1418-1422; Dunlop, ed., *Calendar of Scottish Supplications to Rome*, vol. 2, 1423-1428; Dunlop and Cowan, eds., *Calendar of Scottish Supplications to Rome*, vol. 3, 1428-1432; Dunlop and MacLauchlan, eds., *Calendar of Scottish Supplications to Rome*, vol. 4, 1433-1447; Kirk, Tanner, and Dunlop, eds., *Calendar of Scottish Supplications to Rome*, vol. 5, 1447-1471.

relations and the government of the Scottish Church by, for example, Paul Ferguson for the pre-1286 period, Andrew Barrell for the mid-fourteenth century, and Donald Watt for the period down to 1472 stimulating a general reassessment of interactions between the Scottish clergy and the papal curia and offering insights into the development and functioning of the legal and judicial structures and mechanisms which characterized the later medieval Church in Scotland.² More recently, both Irene Furneaux's and Jennifer McDonald's doctoral research into the Scottish material in the records of the Sacred Penitentiary has begun to be published.³ The full impact of their research is yet to be felt, but the evidence which they present for the level of ecclesiastical influence on routine aspects of the daily lives of both clerical and lay populations in the period after 1470, the volume of communication between Scotland and the Sacred Penitentiary, and fundamental elements of religious practice and belief will undoubtedly trigger a radical reassessment of sacred and profane behaviour and belief among the lay population and the composition, character, and quality of the clergy.

The monasteries and monastic clergy, male and female, have also witnessed a revival in popularity as research topics. The long fallow period which followed the pioneering studies in the 1950s and early 1960s by Geoffrey Barrow of the impact of the reformed Benedictine monastic orders on the Scottish Church in the twelfth century ended in the 1990s.⁴ Since then, there has been a steady output of published research on the introduction of the reformed orders to Scotland, on relations between those orders and lay rulers and magnates, and on the impact of the new monasteries in spiritual, economic, and environmental terms. Among this new research, Andrew McDonald, Cynthia Neville, Keith Stringer, and Kenneth Veitch have been at the forefront of exploration of the relationship between the Continental reformed orders and native Gaelic lay powers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the progressive acceptance of innovative religious practices by the latter through their relationship with the former.⁵ While the main thrust of their work has been directed towards

2 Ferguson, *Medieval Papal Representatives*; Barrell, *The Papacy, Scotland and Northern England*; Watt, *Medieval Church Councils*.

3 Furneaux, "Pre-Reformation Scottish Marriage Cases"; Jennifer McDonald, "The Papal Penitentiary and Ecclesiastical Careers" (PhD diss.) and her articles "The Application of Canon Law," "Illegitimate Scots," "The Requests of Scottish Clergy," and "The Career Paths."

4 See especially Barrow, "Scottish Rulers and the Religious Orders" and "From Queen Margaret to David I."

5 For example, R. Andrew McDonald, "Scoto-Norse Kings and the Reformed Religious Orders" and *The Kingdom of the Isles*, chap. 7; Neville, *Native Lordship*, chap. 4; Stringer, *Earl David*, chap. 5, "The Early Lords of Lauderdale," and "Reform Monasticism"; Veitch, "Replanting Paradise."

the period before 1300, it has highlighted certain evolutionary trends which formed major components of later medieval lay spirituality in Scotland, particularly issues of clerical intercession, the theory of ‘good works,’ and the rise of *pro anima* grants. Recent studies of Melrose and Dryburgh abbeys demonstrate such lay-ecclesiastical relationships with respect to individual communities over the whole pre-Reformation period and examine changes in attitude towards monasticism on the part of lay patrons and benefactors.⁶ One central dimension of those relationships of great importance to the main theme of this paper, the burial and commemoration of lay patrons at monasteries, has been explored in detail for Scotland in the case of Melrose Abbey by Emilia Jamroziak.⁷ While the spiritual significance of lay nobles’ burial and commemoration within the monasteries which they patronized is widely understood, she has emphasized the less well recognized importance of ‘burial politics’ in forging links between powerful families and religious communities and the maintenance of such bonds into the later Middle Ages when monasteries sought protectors in times of foreign war or domestic political upheaval. Jamroziak’s work recognizes the importance of female lay patrons as well as male, but it is in the research of Kimberley (Perkins) Curran that the female religious and their patrons receive their most detailed modern treatment.⁸ Her doctoral thesis is the most significant advance in scholarly understanding of the organized dimension of Scottish medieval female religiosity and spirituality since the nineteenth century but is as important for its exposure of the continuing lack of knowledge of the non-aristocratic female experience of religion in the Middle Ages as it is for its pioneering analysis of regular sisters. Such studies of individual monasteries and their patrons and of dimensions of popular faith have reinforced many of the arguments put forward by Mark Dilworth for the continuing dynamism of the regular clergy and the monastic Church generally in the late medieval period, arguments which challenged the deeply ingrained post-Reformation perception of the pre-Reformation Church, especially the regular clergy, as utterly corrupt and decadent.⁹ Dilworth’s work articulated a growing trend in research which sought both to overturn the traditional negative portrayal of the late

6 Fawcett and Oram, *Melrose Abbey*; Fawcett and Oram, *Dryburgh Abbey*. Current postgraduate research projects at the universities of Glasgow and Stirling focus on the abbeys of Iona, Kelso, and Scone, and a postdoctoral project at Stirling examines Balmerino.

7 Jamroziak, “Making Friends Beyond the Grave.”

8 Perkins, “Death, Removal and Resignation”; Curran, “Religious Women and Their Communities.”

9 Dilworth, *Scottish Monasteries*.

pre-Reformation Church and also to demonstrate the continuities in aspects of popular piety, devotion, and organized religion in Scotland through and beyond the upheavals of the 1550s and 1560s. More than a decade later, the positive impact of that trend in scholarship can be seen clearly in the historiography.

More balanced views of the Church and the health of popular faith and religion in medieval Scotland have emerged in the early twenty-first century. David Ditchburn and Alastair Macdonald's survey of medieval Scotland from 1100 to 1560 offers one of the clearest overviews of the new historiography.¹⁰ In particular, their survey of "Devotion and Dissent" raises questions concerning the notions of any significant disjuncture in popular religious belief at any stage across the period and, indeed, points to the parallels between core tenets of the eleventh- and twelfth-century Gregorian reform and Protestant wishes in the sixteenth century.¹¹ Their argument for continuities through and beyond 1560, coupled with the re-evaluation of the institutional health of the pre-Reformation Church, appears in mature, integrated form in the work of Alec Ryrie. His analysis of the origins of the Scottish Reformation presents a systematic rebuttal of traditional perceptions of clerical corruption and institutional decadence and of ecclesiastical and lay responses to recognized clerical weaknesses from within and outside the Church, alongside a very positive assessment of the health of popular piety across the century before 1560.¹² While it is not an unequivocal endorsement of the pre-Reformation Scottish Church, it articulates clearly a view that the traditional religious devotions, expressions of piety, and displays of religiosity available to the Scottish laity in the century before 1560 appear to have been sufficient to meet the spiritual needs of the majority of the people. Indeed, as Ryrie, Ditchburn and Macdonald, and, earlier, Michael Lynch have demonstrated, not only was provision at least adequate but it was also flexible enough to develop new devotional expressions to accommodate the changing expectations and needs of the laity during periods of profound social and economic upheaval.¹³

As positive as this surge in research into aspects of the pre-Reformation Church in Scotland is, enthusiasm should still be tempered with caution: research remains heavily skewed in its chronological focus towards the post-1450 period and in its thematic focus towards either the roots of Protestantism in Scotland and the origins

10 Ditchburn and Macdonald, "Medieval Scotland."

11 Ditchburn and Macdonald, "Medieval Scotland," 122-27 at 127.

12 Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, chap. 1.

13 Lynch, *Scotland: A New History*, 107-110.

of the Scottish Reformation or issues of the vibrancy or decadence of the pre-Reformation ecclesiastical regime. The dichotomy between the era of reform and revival in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the late pre-Reformation period is revealed sharply in Ditchburn and Macdonald's synthesis of research down to 2000 as more of a trichotomy, with the central period being far less studied than the eras which flank it: the 150-year-period before 1450 remains very much an under-researched era. In general, while the institutional history of the later medieval Church has been explored, understanding of its social role and of attendant issues like royal, noble, or popular piety and devotion in the period from c.1300 to c.1450 have, with a few notable exceptions, developed scarcely at all.¹⁴ While the late Audrey-Beth Fitch made huge advances in research into popular religion, and in particular female devotion in Scotland in the period c.1480-1560, the preceding period, especially the era following the Black Death, still lacks a detailed analysis of the subject.¹⁵

The discussion so far has emphasized the volume of research produced over the last twenty-five years which has focused principally on matters of religion in medieval Scotland. That output, however, needs to be set into the context of wider Scottish medieval historiography. The most striking aspect of that historiography remains its strongly secular and political emphasis, typified by the 'St Andrews School' studies in Crown-magnate relations.¹⁶ In these, significant examination of religious matters is

14 See the important comments by Boardman and Lynch, "State of Late Medieval and Early Modern Scottish History," 49-53. Some of the most significant new research with regard to royal religiosity has been undertaken by Michael Penman concerning the religious devotion of the Bruce kings and their inner circle; see Penman, "Christian Days and Knights."

15 Fitch, "The Search for Salvation" and "Power through Purity." While the Women's History Scotland group has, among its diverse projects, been active in promoting and undertaking a reassessment of aspects of late medieval Scottish popular devotion, often with a strongly gendered approach, this work has focused almost entirely on the century preceding the Scottish Reformation. This focus on late 15th- and earlier 16th-century ecclesiastical topics has also seen PhD studies of, for example, the Dominicans in Scotland (Foggie, "The Dominicans in Scotland"), education and social networks among aspirant clerics (Williamson, "Scottish Benefices and Clergy"), and evangelical theology (Dotterweich, "The Emergence of Evangelical Theology"). There has not, however, been any similar development of research on the 1300-1450 period in Scotland at British universities, with no current History theses on religious issues being researched and none completed in the last ten years, while only a handful examine aspects of the Scottish Church in the context of papal relations etc. It also has to be said that in the same period there have only been two theses on the Scottish Church before 1300.

16 For example, Penman, *David II*; Boardman, *Early Stewart Kings*; Brown, *James I*; McGladdery, *James II*; Macdougall, *James III*; Macdougall, *James IV*; Cameron, *James V*.

often made only with respect to the political relationship between the Crown, the lay nobility, and major benefice holders. Royal religiosity is commonly discussed in terms of ‘policy’ and there is a tendency to dismiss matters of faith with the sweeping label of “conventionally religious.”¹⁷ The discussion often concentrates on the apparently cynical exploitation of the Church as a source of patronage or finance.¹⁸ Similarly, most magnate studies fail to engage with religious issues, limiting discussion to patronage and the exploitation of property.¹⁹ What results in many of these studies is a manufactured image of a lay elite to whom religion, or more specifically personal belief and devotion, mattered little.²⁰ Later medieval religiosity in Scotland is depicted in terms of ostentatious but ultimately superficial public displays of piety and devotion, constituting an uninspiring trough between the radicalism of the Gregorian reforms and the intensity of the religious experience of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. An inevitable concomitant of this portrayal is a reinforcement, in political histories, of the post-Reformation view of Scottish religiosity in this period as characterized by stagnation and decay, increasingly detached from the spiritual needs of the lay population, which is inconsistent with the results of more recent research specifically concerned with Scottish Church history.

That being said, there is also something of a lingering negativism in the discussion of later thirteenth-century ecclesiastical history. Evidence for slackening enthusiasm, if not a slip into stagnation, has been read into the changing character of large-scale religious benefaction after the mid-thirteenth century. The pace of new religious foundations in Scotland did decelerate rapidly after 1200, the last major royal monastic foundation being Pluscarden, founded in 1230, with monarchs subsequently turning to the mendicant orders. There was, however, also a marked decline in mendicant foundations after 1300, with only six endowments in the century and a half down to c.1460, before a fresh phase of foundations began c.1490.²¹ Aristocratic patronage

17 Barrell, *Medieval Scotland*, 186.

18 As suggested in the chapter title “Piety and Politics,” Macdougall, *James IV*, chap. 8.

19 Michael Brown’s discussion of the religious activities of the Black Douglases in the 14th and 15th centuries is a significant departure from this traditional presentation; Brown, *The Black Douglases*, chap. 9.

20 Boardman and Lynch, “The State of Late Medieval and Early Modern Scottish History,” 52. Cp. Richmond, “Religion,” for the view that it indeed mattered little to the Scottish nobility’s English counterparts.

21 Fawcett, *Scottish Abbeys and Priories*, 75–76 and 82. The six foundations were Cupar (Dominican), Lanark (Franciscan), and Banff, Irvine, Linlithgow, and Luffness (Carmelite).

saw a similar shift, with Sweetheart's foundation in 1273 marking the end of an era of monastic expansion.²² After c.1300, there were only four new monastic foundations, St. Fillan's in 1317, Pittenweem before c.1318, Oronsay before c.1340, and, the last medieval monastic foundation in Scotland, Perth Charterhouse, founded in 1429.²³ It appears an unimpressive tally, but the direction of the patronage within the trend has been overlooked. Three of these new foundations were Augustinian, an order that has received scant attention in recent Scottish academic research and whose spiritual relevance has often been considered as being replaced from the thirteenth century onwards by the mendicants. The canons' fourteenth-century popularity is not simply a Scottish phenomenon; nine new Augustinian communities were founded in England between 1326 and 1435, in addition to three Premonstratensian and Gilbertine houses. The reasons for this popularity are unclear but may include the attraction of their priestly function at a time when the emphasis in devotional acts was on the intercessory role of priests through the mass. This brief flurry of foundations apart, however, the trend was steadily downwards, a trajectory which begs an explanation.

To begin with, there is a basic economic observation: the rate and scale of foundation of earlier centuries was unsustainable. Linked to that point are the economic and demographic consequences of recurrent environmental crises after c.1280. Population contraction brought a decline in seigneurial revenues, exacerbated by successive outbreaks of the plague from 1349 onwards.²⁴ These natural factors must be seen in the context of Anglo-Scottish warfare after 1296. Under such conditions, it has been argued, resources were too scarce throughout the fourteenth century for new building work at existing monasteries or for many new foundations.²⁵ In the sixty years after 1296, Scotland was at war with England for fifty-four, and it seems a *prima facie* case that war-ravaged Scotland had no resources to lavish on religion — that it was too preoccupied with the cause of national survival to devote significant time, revenue, or energy to spiritual matters. War and political turmoil, it is argued, finally halted a period of ecclesiastical growth which had already been stalling in the face of “the generally lower esteem in which the religious orders had come to be held.”²⁶

22 Webster, ed., *Acts of David II*, no. 235.

23 Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 80 and 83; Fawcett, *Scottish Abbeys and Priories*, 75-76, 82, 128, and 137.

24 Jillings, *Scotland's Black Death*, chap. 2.

25 Fawcett, *Scottish Abbeys and Priories*, 75.

26 Fawcett, *Scottish Abbeys and Priories*, 75.

This premise appears unassailable, but perhaps such a reading of the evidence is distorted, and the assumption of economic and political instability may be flawed. Warfare within Scotland was sporadic and localized. From 1312 onwards, it was carried into northern England, resulting in a net influx of bullion to Scotland from ransoms, blackmail payments, and plunder.²⁷ Far from being financially exhausted, Scotland was cash rich, and it is against this background that Robert I's generosity towards the Church should be viewed. It was the quarter century after 1332 that saw extensive economic and social dislocation, but, despite onerous ransom payments after 1357, David II's fiscal policies revived royal revenues and revealed the general resilience of the economy. Furthermore, far from being introspective and war-exhausted, later fourteenth-century Scotland, it has been argued, was confident, stable, aggressive, and prosperous — despite the renewal of warfare in the 1380s.²⁸

The scant notice taken of ecclesiastical matters in research into this period has indirectly reinforced the notion of institutions held in low esteem and falling into uncontrolled decline. Again, these are questionable premises, for they are diametrically opposed to the central role of the Scottish clergy in the national cause after 1296. That role has been presented commonly in terms of political, material, and intellectual support, but this presentation fails to recognize the spiritual aid given to the Bruce cause.²⁹ Clerical backing meant more than moral support, for it provided Robert I with spiritual protection in the face of ecclesiastical censure and excommunication. For Robert, the Church formed a vital weapon in his arsenal — as well as providing a comforting salve for a tortured conscience.

Thus, there is clearly a need for closer examination of religious endowment in the period from 1300 to 1450 and of its stated purpose. These are vast topics and neither can be adequately addressed here, but some general observations can be advanced. The first, stimulated by the detailed reappraisals offered for the position in the last century before the Protestant Reformation, is a challenge to the notion of declining esteem of and support for the Church in lay society. At a fundamental level, the flow of endowments continued. There are a number of aspects to be considered here. That which has received most consideration is the extent to which royal patronage after 1306

27 McNamee, *The Wars of the Bruces*, chap. 3.

28 Macdonald, *Border Bloodshed*, chap. 2.

29 For example, as presented in the 1310 "Declaration of Clergy"; in Donaldson, ed., *Scottish Historical Documents*, 48-50. Of course, the first manifestation of this support was Robert I's absolution for his murder of John Comyn in 1306.

reflected the Bruces' effort to establish their legitimacy and to secure the Crown's traditional role as protector of the ecclesiastical estate. Its chief manifestation is in Robert I's assumption of a patronal role, most visible with regard to the *Königsklöster* of the Canmores, like Dunfermline and Melrose, which received substantial grants towards rebuilding costs after 1314.³⁰ Similar motives can be seen in his brother's patronage of Whithorn Priory, whose influence in western Galloway was vital for Bruce control of the region.³¹

Such material support could be dismissed as cynically populist or as the *quid pro quo* for earlier ecclesiastical backing, but more pious motives are also evident; indeed, examination of royal religious patronage after 1306 reveals deep personal religious motivations and new forms of expression for that religiosity. The wording of foundation or endowment charters which reflect the personal motives of the donors are not merely exercises in spiritual lip service but display considerable religious sophistication and personal understanding of complex theological matters. The clearest indication of this is seen with regard to eleemosynary grants made *pro anima*. Michael Lynch rightly cautioned against placing too heavy an emphasis on the later medieval development of the mass as essentially a mass for the dead, and drew attention to the growth of other devotional forms.³² Equally, however, the concentration on purgation and salvation that lies at the heart of all these trends should not be downplayed.³³ War, famine, and plague — the circumstances under which the *pro anima* element re-emerged as an inspiration for acts of devotion — confronted fourteenth-century Europe with an eschatological vision whose impact on Scotland has scarcely been considered yet.³⁴

Royal devotional acts of this period fall into two categories. There are general confirmations of earlier grants which are more than simply devices to protect ecclesiastical properties in politically uncertain times. Most are given with the purpose of safeguarding resources allocated in free alms for the salvation of souls. They

30 Duncan, ed., *The Acts of Robert I*, nos. 43, 44, 125, 188, 206, 406, 407, 411, 413 for Dunfermline, and nos. 64, 65, 96, 169, 180, 201, 269, 308, 379, 380, 385, 408, 412 for Melrose. No. 269, the grant of £2,000 from royal casualties in Roxburghshire towards the rebuilding of Melrose, is the largest single award.

31 Duncan, ed., *The Acts of Robert I*, no. 275; Oram, *A Monastery and Its Landscape*, 2-3; Oram et al., *Whithorn*.

32 Lynch, *Scotland: A New History*, 108.

33 For a detailed discussion of these developments in a Western Christian context, see Binski, *Medieval Death*.

34 See, for example, Jillings, *Scotland's Black Death*, chap. 3.

underscore a continuing personal commitment to the spiritual functions of priests charged with the cure of souls. The second category — fresh grants — is more personal. In the case of Robert I, they are made for various reasons, ranging from thanksgiving for political and military triumph, to atonement for the means by which he secured victory, and to the search for a cure from disease.³⁵ The main ones, however, are *pro anima* grants, often for the salvation of the souls of family members and friends who died in the war.³⁶ David II's grants follow a similar pattern: confirmations and inspections of earlier endowments; *pro anima* awards for the welfare of family and friends;³⁷ and new foundations, still made *pro anima*.³⁸

Under Robert II, there is an apparent falling away in such acts of personal religiosity, which may support arguments for a general religious decline, but the evidence is not clear-cut and perhaps points to personal inclination. Robert was no significant patron of the Church before his accession in 1371, even with respect to the family monastery at Paisley.³⁹ Following his accession, apart from the usual confirmations, it is not until 1380 that a private act of spiritual endowment, of a chaplainry at Cambuslang, is recorded.⁴⁰ It was a minor act, and the next instance of his ecclesiastical patronage is equally trivial: a *pro anima* grant to Crosskirk at Peebles of a meadow.⁴¹ A third instance confirms the impression that for Robert II spiritual matters had low priority. His grant to Coupar Angus Abbey of the hospital of Turriff, in royal hands since the forfeiture of the Comyns by Robert I,⁴² appears to typify the image of a recycling of old endowments where generosity can be publicly displayed but at minimal cost to the donor. Support for the image of cynical exploitation of the Church, furthermore, appears to be provided by Robert II's systematic use at the

35 Duncan, ed., *The Acts of Robert I*, no. 49, confirming Deer Abbey's rights, is a good example. Made for the weal of the king's soul and those of his ancestors and successors, in recompense for war damage inflicted during the 1308 campaigns in Buchan, it confirms all earlier grants in free alms to the monks and carefully enunciates their exemption from all secular exactions.

36 For example, Duncan, ed., *The Acts of Robert I*, no. 356, to the hospital of Turriff, to pay for a chaplain to say masses for the soul of Neil Bruce.

37 Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 1, app. i, no. 118.

38 Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 1, no. 304; Penman, *David II*, 261–64. For a detailed discussion of David II's religious devotions, see Penman, "Christian Days and Knights."

39 *Registrum Monasterii de Passelet*, nos. 32, 34, 58, 59. Webster, ed., *Acts of David II*, nos. 112, 298.

40 Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 1, no. 645.

41 Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 1, no. 775.

42 Burns, ed., *Calendar of Papal Letters . . . of Clement VII*, 80.

same time of his influence over patronage in order to provide for loyal clerical servants and his bastard sons. James IV and James V have been criticized for such manipulation in the supposedly more secularized sixteenth century, but Robert II was employing the same methods more than a century earlier. Even approaching death did not stimulate major preparatory acts of insurance for the welfare of his soul, Robert's chief recorded grant being of an annual £8 given to the chaplain of St. Margaret's chapel in Edinburgh Castle, for the souls of the king, Queen Euphemia, Robert I, and David II, all his ancestors and successors, and all the faithful dead.⁴³

In the case of Robert II, it appears that this lack of concern for his spiritual welfare was a personal decision, for his son and successor, Robert III (1390-1406), took the opposite view. Alongside confirmations of eleemosynary awards, he made several new gifts, including the endowment of a chaplainry at Dundee for the soul of his faithful retainer Patrick de Innerpeffer.⁴⁴ One of his most revealing acts, however, was that which in March 1391 transferred the endowments of the Cistercian nunnery of Berwick-upon-Tweed to the canons of Dryburgh.⁴⁵ This act turned on the claim that the rich endowments showered on the convent in the past had been diverted to illicit ends by the nuns, whose numbers had fallen disastrously low. As a result, with the assent of the bishop of St Andrews, the king used his position as successor to the founding patron to reassign its entire endowment for the rebuilding of Dryburgh.

Although the dispossession of the Berwick nuns can be read as a political act which took property in Scotland from a community in English and, at that date, schismatic hands, the subsequent process of litigation, counter-litigation, and assignment of the disputed property to religious rather than lay uses does imply that the claimed religious motives were of at least as great significance to the Scots as were the

43 Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 1, no. 826.

44 Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 1, no. 831.

45 Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 1, no. 832. For a detailed discussion of this act and its ramifications, see Oram, "Dividing the Spoils." The treatment of the nuns of Berwick-upon-Tweed (or 'Southberwick' as it was called to distinguish it from the Cistercian nunnery of North Berwick in East Lothian) should be seen in the context of the increasingly strident nationalism of late 14th-century Scotland, perhaps best represented by the long-running disputes surrounding Coldingham Priory, a cell of the Benedictine priory of Durham, where the prior, William Drax, was an Englishman overseeing a community that was otherwise Scottish in terms of its members and landed interests. For Coldingham, see Alfred Brown, "The Priory of Coldingham," and Dobson, "The Last English Monks." For the Crown's later 15th-century interest in the priory, see Macdougall, "Crown *versus* Nobility."

more mundane anti-English imperatives. King Robert's charter stated clearly his intention to fulfill the wishes of the original benefactors that their gifts should be used to advance the cause of religion, and stipulated that in return the canons would offer one mass daily for the salvation of the souls of the king and his ancestors and successors. Religion and politics were inextricably bound together here, but the intention was to ensure that the pious gifts of past generations were put to proper use. Again, a clear understanding of the intercessory role of the clergy and of the reciprocal principle at the heart of *pro anima* grants is evident.

James I's association with ecclesiastical reform has long been recognized, yet the most recent reassessment paints an unattractive portrait of him.⁴⁶ Its analysis of his relations with his magnates produces an image characterized by cynicism, deviousness, and ruthlessness, with every action stimulated by an underlying agenda — the construction of a new style of monarchy, with the king as the hub of the life of the kingdom. Physical manifestations of this image can be seen in Linlithgow Palace especially,⁴⁷ but it was perhaps also the motive for the most significant display of royal ecclesiastical patronage since 1230, the foundation of Perth Charterhouse in 1429.⁴⁸ James's choice of Carthusians may have been derivative, based on the example of his long-term host in England, Henry V, who in 1414 had founded the Charterhouse at Sheen adjacent to the palace that symbolized the authority of the Lancastrian monarchy. But in both monarchs, patronage of an order of monks who still enjoyed a high reputation for austerity and spirituality speaks of personal identification with the reformist principle within orthodox Christianity.⁴⁹ Again, a broader exploration of James I's religious policies and personal attitudes extends beyond the purpose of this paper, but it can be suggested that the cynical modern views of his role as a religious reformer offer too bleak a picture. The contrast between his political and religious personae may clash too much for modern tastes, but there seems to have been a comfortable cohabitation in the one man of attitudes and behaviour which may now be considered incompatible.

46 Brown, *James I*, chap. 9.

47 Campbell, "Linlithgow's 'Princely Palace'."

48 Brown, *James I*, 116-17.

49 Allmand, *Henry V*, 272-79. Allmand highlights the popularity of this especially austere order with the military elite of the age, but James I seems to have been attracted more by the Carthusians' reputation as followers of a purer form of the monastic life and, therefore, as closer to God in their prayers.

Turning from Crown to nobility, there is likewise continuity in the patterns of religious devotion but also innovation as new means of expressing individual faith and providing for the spiritual needs of the wider community was embraced, too. The Black Douglases provide a good test case for the traditional model of cynicism and manipulation of the Church for secular political ends. Considerable evidence survives of the activities in the religious sphere of the Douglas family, who were the dominant political power and possessed the largest reserve of patronage below the Crown in southern Scotland from the 1370s onwards. Most of this evidence, however, relates to the political use of that patronage, and consequently this skewing has produced some imbalance in the analysis of religious behaviour and has coloured interpretations of more clearly spiritual activity on the part of the Douglas earls.

That Black Douglas influence within the Church in Scotland was always simply a cynical exercise in patronage and in the manipulation of power is debatable. Likewise, it is questionable whether this cynicism was characteristic of the Scottish nobility in general. Archibald, 3rd earl of Douglas from 1388 to 1400, provides a key example. His re-foundation of Lincluden nunnery, in eastern Galloway, as a collegiate church on 7 May 1389 signals a new direction in his family's ecclesiastical patronage.⁵⁰ His act, which has been read in different ways, is symbolic in both religious and political respects. The date of the foundation, for example, may be highly significant. Although Archibald had been lord of eastern Galloway since September 1369 and gained control of the earldom of Wigtown in 1372,⁵¹ it was with the death in 1388 of his cousin James, 2nd earl of Douglas, that he succeeded to the Douglas earldom. His succession to the title was challenged, and it was only in April 1389 that his inheritance was confirmed.⁵² The establishment of the collegiate church, therefore, came just one month after his succession had been acknowledged.

Were his motives, then, ones of thanksgiving for this striking success, or was he perhaps driven to make a gesture commensurate with his new status? Collegiate churches were not new phenomena in fourteenth-century Scotland, but they were uncommon. The first fourteenth-century foundation was Dunbar, established by

50 Neither the foundation charter itself nor Archibald's petition to the pope survives in its original form, but the tenor is evident in the petition in support of the re-foundation submitted in 1389 to Clement VII by Walter Wardlaw, bishop of Glasgow; Burns, ed., *Calendar of Papal Letters . . . of Clement VII*, 145.

51 Webster, ed., *Acts of David II*, no. 451; Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 1, no. 507; Brown, *The Black Douglases*, 60-68.

52 Brown, *The Black Douglases*, 86.

Patrick, earl of Dunbar, in 1342.⁵³ This example was not followed until c.1380, when Sir John Kennedy of Dunure founded a college of priests at Maybole.⁵⁴ Earl Archibald's foundation at Lincluden represented only the fifth such institution in Scotland, but when he followed it in February 1398 with the foundation of a second collegiate church at Bothwell,⁵⁵ a new trend in religious endowment was set. From 1406, when Archibald's kinsman Sir James Douglas erected the parish church of Dalkeith into a college, until Lord Fleming's endowment of Biggar in 1546, twenty-nine such establishments were founded by royal or magnate patrons in Scotland.⁵⁶ Taken together, these institutions represent the most significant episode of lay endowment of the Church in Scotland since the 1230s.

This trend may have been simply a new fashion, or it may reflect the continuation of a deep personal piety and high degree of spiritual sophistication on the part of the ruling elites of later medieval Scotland.⁵⁷ It has been commented that "Like many of his contemporaries, Archibald sought to limit the costs of his piety by building on existing structures, turning churches into colleges of priests."⁵⁸ To some extent, this may be true at Lincluden, where the nunnery estate provided the founding endowment of the collegiate church. Furthermore, the nuns' former property was significantly extended by the addition of the resources allocated by Edward Bruce, brother of Robert I, for the foundation of a hospital attached to nearby Holywood Abbey. Bruce's pious provision may never have been fully instituted, and in June 1372, Robert II confirmed Archibald's re-foundation of the hospital as successor to Bruce as patron and founder.⁵⁹ The hospital also received a substantial landed endowment. At a superficial level, therefore, the appropriation of these two pieces of ecclesiastical property to fund the foundation of a 'new' collegiate church cost Archibald little.

However, this interpretation raises the question why he chose to demonstrate his piety in this particular way. The enactment of the original founder's wishes with respect to Holywood fifty-four years after his death suggests more pious motives at work and points towards a strong religious belief on the part of a man

53 Easson, "The Foundation Charter of the Collegiate Church of Dunbar," 81-112.

54 Watt, ed., *Fasti*, 366; Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 1, nos. 378 and 428, set out the foundation of the chapel which preceded the collegiate institution.

55 Watt, ed., *Fasti*, 344.

56 Watt, ed., *Fasti*, 342 and 351.

57 Boardman and Lynch, "The State of Late Medieval and Early Modern Scottish History," 51.

58 Brown, *The Black Douglases*, 192.

59 Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 1, no. 483.

who is traditionally viewed as an unprincipled politician. There is far more to this act than simply a desire on Archibald's part "to show [his] worth as [a] secular [lord] and a desire to cleanse [a] deeply besmirched soul."⁶⁰ In the first place, he had no vested spiritual interest in effecting a grant made by Edward Bruce, a man with no living descendants. Secondly, there was no pressure being exerted on him to realize Edward's wishes: neither the male Bruces down to 1371 nor their Stewart kinsmen had shown any interest in the foundation. But the act was clearly of great importance to Archibald, who probably issued his confirmation of Edward Bruce's charter soon after the death of David II in February 1371, only seventeen months after he had received lordship over eastern Galloway and at a time when he was still consolidating his lordship there. Certainly, there is a political statement in the act, which proclaims Archibald's loyalty to the memory of the Bruce family, with no *pro anima* provision for the new king, Robert II.⁶¹ Archibald owed his status to the patronage of David II and was a long-standing opponent of Robert Stewart. But the key to this document is the emphasis placed on its *pro anima* character.

Charter scholars stress the extent to which the wording of non-eleemosynary grants in secular contexts reflects the intentions of the donors. However, the expression of the donors' wishes in eleemosynary charters and the significance of their wording has not yet been fully considered for the later medieval period.⁶² Indeed, it is common to see grants in free alms interpreted as representing simply an inchoate wish to support the Church. The *pro anima* clauses, however, reveal that the granters had specific and spiritually sophisticated aims in mind, and demonstrate donors' belief in and understanding of the theological principles of salvation, redemption, and purgation. In essence, they are reciprocal arrangements whereby, in return for a gift of property to support specified clergy, those clergy would offer masses and prayers in perpetuity for the souls' weal of designated individuals or groups. To further emphasize the special nature of such grants, the donors often carefully enunciate the exemption of the property conveyed by their deed from all future secular exactions whereby the efficacy of the gift might be diminished. These features are all present in Archibald's foundation charter for Holywood. It appears fairly straightforward in its pious phraseology, but its superficial piety masks a deeper spiritual awareness. In

60 Brown, *The Black Douglases*, 183.

61 Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 1, no. 483.

62 For an excellent analysis of spiritual motivations for eleemosynary awards in the 12th and 13th centuries, see Stringer, "Reform Monasticism," 140-46.

the first place, there is a recognition of the intentions of the original donor and an understanding of the fact that the failure to realize those intentions had placed Edward Bruce's soul in jeopardy. This settling of spiritual debts displays both a conscious awareness on Archibald's part of the concept of Purgatory and his personal understanding of his obligation, as a Christian, to the salvation of redeemable Christian souls. This salvation, moreover, was to be achieved through a further theological principle, the undertaking of good works, in this case through the care of the eighteen paupers housed in the hospital. The wording of the charter makes it explicit that Archibald's actions were driven by personal religious belief.

Despite that, however, modern commentators might choose to suspect less pious motives. After all, why otherwise would such a politically aware warlord waste his energies on a worldly and corrupt Church? With regard to the foundation of Lincluden a similar cynicism concerning the piety of his motives dominates modern historiography. The timing of the nunnery's suppression and the re-employment of its resources to endow the new foundation has already been noticed, but was this business simply a cheap mechanism by which a conspicuous act of piety could be made at minimal cost to revenue while boosting a new magnate's prestige and influence in a public broadcast of his power and status? Certainly, the route taken cost little and gained much. The nunnery, moreover, was a soft target. This last point, however, has been overstated, with the charges of indecent and ungodly lifestyle that Archibald used in his argument in favour of suppression being presented commonly as the libelling of a group of weak and defenceless women in the same manner as the nuns of Berwick were disparaged in Robert III's almost contemporary act of suppression. Such a perception is aided by the fact that the documentation, as it survives, offers a one-sided version of events: no record exists of the nuns' defence.

Closer examination of the papal letter that rehearses Archibald's charges, however, reveals a significantly different background and points to different motivations. Pope Clement VII's letter comprises a series of statements drawn from a petition presented at Avignon on Archibald's behalf.⁶³ It opens with the declaration that Archibald's predecessors had founded Lincluden for the good of their souls and the souls of their ancestors, that it had been amply endowed with the means of support for eight or nine nuns, ruled by a prioress, and that the patronage remained with the lords of Galloway. It then details the charges, namely, that the present nuns, "living dissolute and

63 Burns, ed., *Calendar of Papal Letters . . . of Clement VII*, 145.

scandalous lives,” had negligently permitted the buildings to fall into ruin, lavishing the nunnery’s wealth instead on their bastard children. Their number, moreover, had fallen to only four, including the prioress. All failed to observe routine divine offices, and mass was celebrated on their behalf only once weekly. Instead, the sisters indulged in worldly pursuits, producing wool and frequenting a local ‘house’ in pursuit of trade and to satisfy their carnal desires. This is fairly innocuous by the standards of the satirical treatment of such topics in late medieval European literature, certainly as compared with Boccaccio’s visions of the moral corruption of the female religious, and could be dismissed as sensationalism intended to secure a damning verdict. However, the records also indicate that a former diocesan, Cardinal Walter Wardlaw, bishop of Glasgow, had attempted but failed to reform the convent. It is unlikely that this was a false claim, for the pope’s judges-delegate had access to diocesan records. It appears that the spiritual life of the nunnery was indeed a source of scandal. Significantly, however, what was considered most scandalous was the failure of the remaining nuns to honour the founders’ wishes and their neglect of divine office, in particular the masses that were, after all, to be said for the souls’ ease of former lords of Galloway. Just like the Foolish Virgins, the nuns were wasting the pious gifts of their original benefactors and patrons.

It is the charge of neglect of spiritual obligations that damned them most. As a consequence, with papal support, Archibald exercised his right as patron to intervene in order to ensure that his predecessors’ spiritual investment was not further squandered. In this, he again demonstrated personal understanding of the eternal reciprocity — property in return for salvific prayers and masses — which underlay the original foundation. Modern scholars are too prone to viewing eleemosynary gifts as ‘something for nothing,’ with the clergy effectively receiving a service-free grant of property, but as Archibald’s actions emphasize, donors and their successors most definitely did expect service and regarded their gifts as real investments whose dividends would return to them for eternity. As the successor to the rights of the original founder, a status that is carefully and deliberately enunciated in the petition, Archibald had a right and an obligation to protect that investment when the spiritual authorities failed to do so. Archibald’s intervention, therefore, appears to have been driven by the pious motive of ensuring that the resources allocated for the cultivation of religion by past lords seeking spiritual redemption were properly utilized and, indeed, developed.

It is the pursuit of this further development of spiritual provision for the welfare of the dead that appears to be the motivating force behind Archibald’s petition, as is

clearly set out in the second part of the papal letter. Having stated his case against the nuns, Archibald's petition moves on to a proposal that represented a better use of spiritual resources, an argument that would be repeated by the king in respect of Berwick the following year. Turning to the hospital at Holywood, he proposed the nuns' dispersal to other monasteries and the merging of the convent's endowment with that of the hospital. In place of the nunnery, he would establish a provostship and eight secular priesthoods at Lincluden, to where the hospital function would also be removed. Instead of the eighteen paupers at Holywood, the enhanced resources of the collegiate church would permit the care of twenty-four. The right of presentation of the clergy to the collegiate church would remain with Archibald and his successors. That may seem like a powerful incentive for a family faced with the need to reward clerical servants, but this aspect must be balanced by the emphasis placed on proper provision for divine service and the furtherance of good works within Archibald's petition. Spiritual resources which had been squandered through the laxity of the nuns would again support the cultivation of religion. Indeed, the return on the investment was to be increased by the replacement of the nine nuns by nine priests performing divine services on a daily basis, as opposed to the once weekly mass offered by the nuns' chaplain. The function of the priests was again primarily as intercessors for the souls of the dead, fulfilling the wishes of the original founder and his successors. It was an arrangement that underscored Archibald's personal understanding of the reciprocity that was central to eleemosynary awards.

Archibald's piety is further underlined by his second collegiate foundation at Bothwell.⁶⁴ Here, in the parish church, he established a provostry with six chaplains, later increased to eight.⁶⁵ Unlike at Lincluden, there was no pre-existing community other than the parish kirk of Bothwell to be subsumed into the new foundation, and the endowment of the community constituted a significant investment in financial terms. Taken together, these two foundations constitute the single most significant act of spiritual patronage since the foundation of Sweetheart Abbey in 1273 and were not surpassed until James I's foundation of Perth Charterhouse.⁶⁶

What sets Archibald apart from his contemporaries is the scale of his benefactions. Although Lincluden largely represents a 'recycling' of endowments, both there and at

64 McGurk, ed., *Calendar of Papal Letters . . . of Benedict XIII*, 83; Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 1, app. ii, no. 1862.

65 Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 2, no. 1784.

66 Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 2, no. 347 (confirmation charter of James II).

Bothwell a sizeable capital investment went into the reconstruction of the buildings. At Lincluden, the result was one of the most sumptuous examples of medieval architecture in Scotland, the cost of which probably far exceeded even the generous revenues with which the college was endowed.⁶⁷ This was no cost-trimming exercise in religious patronage, nor was rebuilding simply a matter of providing splendid settings for the elaborate choir arrangements of the college of priests: it symbolized in a very material way the commitment of Archibald and his family to the process of renewal. Unquestionably, as in contemporary England and France, the buildings had a function that went beyond the religious. Although the nave at Bothwell continued to serve as the parish church, and masses and prayers were offered for the spiritual weal of all the Christian faithful, both establishments were basically private chapels dedicated to the spiritual welfare of the Douglas earls. To a large extent, they are elaborate examples of the chantries that were already proliferating in later medieval Scotland. Indeed, that role is underscored by the manner in which the tomb at Lincluden intended for the 4th earl of Douglas and his wife formed an integral part of the architecture and decoration of the choir.⁶⁸

The proliferation of discrete chantry chapels as a feature of Scottish churches was not linked solely to a desire for self-glorification. Certainly, there was a significant commemorative element in their construction, for the act of keeping the memory of the benefactor alive was part of the process of securing eternal salvation; indeed, almost the entire structure and furnishings served as memorials to prick the conscience of future generations. But as indicated above, the chapels had a wider function. They were part of a pan-European phenomenon that saw a proliferation of altars and chapels within monastic and parish churches, and a commensurate increase in the number of celebrants to attend them. Two unusual examples relate to foundations made, *pro anima*, for noble casualties of the Bruce coup of 1306. The first, a chapel dedicated to the Holy Cross, was founded by Robert I's sister Christina, at the site near Dumfries where her husband, Christopher Seton, one of Robert's earliest adherents, was executed in 1306. The building was both a monument to Seton and to the manner of his death — emphasized furthermore by the chapel's dedication — and as a location where masses and prayers could be offered in perpetuity for his soul's weal.⁶⁹ A more elaborate

67 MacGibbon and Ross, *The Five Great Churches of Galloway*, 99-167.

68 Fawcett, *Scottish Medieval Churches*, 316.

69 Duncan, ed., *The Acts of Robert I*, no. 262, where the king, "for the goodwill and love/affection" (*propter benevolentiam et affectionem*) he bore his late brother-in-law, endowed the chapel with £5 annual rent from Caerlaverock, for the soul of Christopher and of all the faithful dead.

endowment was made in 1321 by William, earl of Ross, who provided £20 annually to pay for six chaplains at Tain to say masses for the souls of Alexander III, of John, earl of Atholl, whom William had seized out of sanctuary there and handed over to be hanged by the English in 1306, and of all the faithful dead.⁷⁰ More typical were endowments like Malcolm Fleming, earl of Wigtown's 1344 grant of an annual payment of 6 merks to the Dominicans of Ayr, to provide for a priest to celebrate mass in a chapel of St. Mary in their church that he had already built, for the salvation of his own soul and for the souls of his ancestors, or William Haliburton's 1389 payment for the soul's ease of his grandfather to provide an altar dedicated to St. John the Baptist in the nave of the Franciscan church at Haddington.⁷¹ Probably shortly before his death, Fleming made a second bequest of an annual rent of 100s to pay for another priest to celebrate in the chapel, described on this occasion as built "for our soul, the souls of our ancestors and successors, and for the souls of all the faithful departed" ("per nos constructa pro anima nostra et animabus parentum nostrorum antecessorum et successorum et pro animabus omnium fidelium defunctorum").⁷² It was perhaps intended as his mausoleum, but that was not its sole function for, like all chaplainries, it constituted a spiritual generator of masses and prayers intended for the benefit of all Christians.

Below the magnate level it becomes harder to trace evidence in pre-1450 Scotland for acts of popular personal piety and devotion comparable to those in other parts of Europe. There is, for example, little indication of an outpouring of patronage stimulated by the Great Mortality and subsequent epidemics. In large part, this is a consequence of the nature of the Scottish Reformation, which witnessed a destruction of the monuments of the medieval Church more thorough than that initiated by Henry VIII's ministers in England. Michael Lynch has drawn attention to the rich but fragmentary legacy of pre-Reformation Scottish religious life, its integration into lay society, and its diversity of expression, but only one aspect of it will be explored here.⁷³ Burgess pride, rivalry between the major burghs, and also rivalry between craft guilds, it has been suggested, were responsible for the great enlargement of the

70 Duncan, ed., *The Acts of Robert I*, no. 196.

71 *Charters of the Friars Preachers of Ayr*, no. 8; National Register of Archives for Scotland, NRAS3503/1/368/1.

72 *Charters of the Friars Preachers of Ayr*, no. 6. The charter is internally dated to 1336, but Fleming was not created Earl of Wigtown until 1342. The dating is probably a scribal error, with "millesimi ccc tricesimi sexti" given instead of "quadragiesimi" or "quingiesimi."

73 Lynch, *Scotland: A New History*, 107-110.

parish kirks of most of Scotland's burghs in the later Middle Ages, represented by the surviving great medieval burgh churches in Edinburgh, Haddington, Linlithgow, Perth, and Stirling, and the more fragmentary but still impressive remains of the two largest examples, St. Mary's in Dundee and St. Nicholas' in Aberdeen. It is a moot point, however, whether structural enlargement was a cause or effect of the proliferation of altars and chaplainries in the churches. Indeed, it has been noted that in England extension was often consequent to the steady spillage of the focus of devotions out of chancels into the naves and aisles.⁷⁴ Available public space was squeezed to a minimum as the pious faithful filled the buildings with chantries and monuments, and paid for new altars in chapels partitioned from the main body of the church.

The proliferation of altars was in train in the 1320s, when Thomas Baxter, burgess of Irvine, established a chaplainry in the burgh's kirk.⁷⁵ In Edinburgh, expansion of St. Giles' began c.1358, when Roger Hog, burgess of Edinburgh, and his wife, endowed the altar of St. Katherine for masses for their souls; expansion advanced significantly in 1387, when the provost and burgesses of Edinburgh contracted three masons to build five chapels along the south aisle of the nave.⁷⁶ By c.1450, there were already about twenty altars in the church, reaching around double that number by 1560.⁷⁷ Similar developments can be seen in Perth, Stirling, Dundee, Haddington, and Aberdeen, in smaller burghs, such as Irvine, Peebles, Dalkeith, and Inverkeithing, and in rural parishes, such as Glamis and Largo, where a new aisle to house two altars was built.⁷⁸

74 Richmond, "Religion," 185-86.

75 *Muniments of the Royal Burgh of Irvine*, 1:123-24.

76 National Archives of Scotland GD103/2/4/17; *Registrum Cartarum Ecclesie Sancti Egidii de Edinburgh*, no. 18.

77 *Registrum Cartarum Ecclesie Sancti Egidii de Edinburgh*, app. III.

78 **Perth:** NAS GD79/4/57; GD79/4/63; GD79/4/64. **Stirling:** Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 1, nos. 380, 430, 755, 760; app. ii, 1914; Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 2, nos. 1072, 2325, 2627, 2916, 3754. **Dundee:** NAS GD137/3719; GD137/3726; GD137/3728; Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 1, nos. 831, 877-880, 916; Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 2, nos. 95, 873, 1081, 1339, 1456, 1935, 1970, 2112, 2317, 2446, 2538, 3650, 3861. **Haddington:** Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 2, nos. 1215, 1333, 2005, 2941. **Aberdeen:** Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 2, nos. 1484, 3681. **Irvine:** Lindsay and Cameron, eds., *Calendar of Scottish Supplications to Rome*, vol. 1, 1418-1422, 165; *Muniments of the Royal Burgh of Irvine*, 1:125-29. **Peebles:** NAS BS58/18/8; BS58/18/9; BS58/18/12; BS58/18/13; BS58/18/16. **Dalkeith:** Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 2, no. 2789. **Inverkeithing:** Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 1, no. 888. **Glamis:** Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 2, nos. 2158, 2223. **Largo:** Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 2, nos. 2342, 2733, 2825.

This proliferation of altars alone is a manifestation of the dynamics for change and internal renewal within the later medieval Church. These new altars are evidence for the vigorous expansion of the cult of saints, whose perceived role as intercessors developed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁷⁹ In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, dedications to Christ, the Holy Trinity, and, especially, the Virgin Mary were the most common. By the late Middle Ages an exotic pantheon of saints had joined them as patrons and intercessors as Scotland participated in the development of new pan-European cults. The cult of the Holy Blood, for example, which developed rapidly in the British Isles after 1270, was established in Edinburgh before 1450.⁸⁰ However, there was also a fresh development of older cults, such as those of the Holy Trinity, with a new altar established at Edinburgh in 1439;⁸¹ of the Holy Rude or Cross at Aberdeen in 1357, Dumbarton by 1384, Irvine in 1418-20, Edinburgh by 1428, Montrose before 1441, and Dundee before 1446;⁸² of St. John the Baptist at Haddington in 1389, Linlithgow in 1431, and Inverkeithing in 1453;⁸³ and especially of the Virgin Mary, at, for example, Brechin, Dundee, Edinburgh, Maybole, St. Bothans, and Stirling between c.1360 and 1450.⁸⁴

Most of these new endowments were *pro anima* gifts from of the emerging burghs elites and the minor gentry. Personal salvation appears to have been the primary concern of Scottish donors, just as it motivated pious benefactors in England and on the Continent.⁸⁵ Commemoration of the dead, and especially the securing for them of a place in the memory of participants in masses offered at altars established by the

79 Understanding of the development of cults and the popularity of particular saints is considerably enhanced by the *Database of Dedications to Saints in Medieval Scotland* project at the University of Edinburgh, whose results are searchable online at <http://webdb.ucs.ed.ac.uk/saints>.

80 *Registrum Cartarum Ecclesie Sancti Egidii de Edinburgh*, no. 68.

81 Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 2, no. 616.

82 *Cartularium Ecclesie Sancti Nicholai Aberdonensis*, 1:17; Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 1, no. 760; Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 2, nos. 116, 1081, 2695; Lindsay and Cameron, eds., *Calendar of Scottish Supplications to Rome*, vol. 1, 1418-1422, no. 165; Dunlop and MacLauchlan, eds., *Calendar of Scottish Supplications to Rome*, vol. 4, 1433-1447, nos. 837 and 1267.

83 NRAS3503/1/368/1; Dunlop and Cowan, eds., *Calendar of Scottish Supplications to Rome*, vol. 3, 1428-1432, no. 176; NAS GD1/224/1.

84 Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 1, nos. 201, 378, 760; app. ii, no. 1364; Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 2, no. 322; NAS GD1/111/1.

85 Binski, *Medieval Death*, 71-72, 74, 76-77, 89-91, and 115-22; Cohn, "The Place of the Dead in Flanders and Tuscany"; Burgess, "Longing to be prayed for."

deceased, was stimulated by the desire to speed the souls of the dead through Purgatory to Heaven. Two examples from St. Nicholas' Church, Aberdeen, illustrate this point. In 1350, Thomas Mercer, Aberdeen's alderman in 1343 and 1360, presented a tabernacle containing a representation of the Passion to the high altar, while in 1401 the burgess William de Strabrok founded an altar of St. James the Apostle in the westernmost bay of the nave north aisle, providing it with an image of the saint, mass vestments, a gilt chalice, breviary, missal, and other paraphernalia for the mass.⁸⁶ Both men were subsequently buried in front of the altars which they had endowed, thereby deriving maximum *post mortem* benefits from their spiritual investment. Similar placement of graves within churches, either in purpose-built private chantry chapels or in privileged locations within existing structures, can be identified throughout Scotland. While such endowments were primarily making provision for personal salvation, to avoid the risk of sinful self-glorification — *superbia* — the spiritual benefits from the offering were also carefully stipulated as applying to all the Christian dead. Nevertheless, it is clear that a view that 'all the dead are equal, but some are more equal than others' operated in these individual acts.

A new type of corporate benefactor, however, also emerged in the late 1300s, the trade and craft guilds. In the activities of these organizations, we can see an enthusiastic response to the charismatic forms of religion that swept later medieval Europe. The guilds had two interlinked roles: one, commercial and regulatory, seeking to safeguard the interests of their members, and the other largely charitable and concerned with their spiritual and physical needs. This dual role manifests itself in the guilds' payment for the foundation of chaplainries for the cult of their patronal saints and in their participation in the elaborate public ceremonial processions that were a growing characteristic of late medieval religion, the best recorded in Scotland being the procession in which the image of St. Giles was borne through the streets of Edinburgh. As in much of the rest of Europe, the guilds were also responsible for organizing religious pageants and plays, although in Scotland it was the existing trade and craft associations which appear to have performed this function rather than specially organized religious confraternities and guilds like the Corpus Christi and Pater Noster guilds at York.⁸⁷ There is, indeed, no clear evidence for the organization of such purely religious lay groupings in Scotland in this period. At Aberdeen, the Guild

86 *Cartularium Ecclesiae Sancti Nicholai Aberdonensis*, 1:15.

87 Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 66-68.

Court records for 1442 detail the characters, personnel, and equipment provided by nine different trade and craft guild groups for the staging of a pageant in honour of Our Lady at Candlemas (2 February, the Feast of Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary).⁸⁸ Rather than simply providing a spectacle for the entertainment of the townsfolk, such performances, based largely on events from the Gospels, had the far more significant spiritual purpose of education and example for the illiterate, instructing them in the elements of the faith.

Most of the surviving evidence for the religious activity of the burgh guilds in Scotland in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries relates to their construction of chapels or endowment of new chaplainries at altars, specifically for the provision of masses and prayers on behalf of guild brethren and their families. The wool guilds, for example, endowed altars dedicated to their patron, St. Blase, at Dundee, Edinburgh, Haddington, and Perth;⁸⁹ the skimmers did the same for St. Christopher in Edinburgh and St. Bartholomew in Perth;⁹⁰ the masons and wrights had the chapel of SS. John the Baptist and John the Evangelist in Edinburgh;⁹¹ and the metalworkers endowed chapels dedicated to St. Eloi in Dundee, Edinburgh, and Perth.⁹² While pragmatism may have been an undercurrent in the considerations which drove this wave of endowment, personal piety on the part of guild members who saw in their patronal saints intercessors who could work on their behalf both to secure their safety and success on earth and their salvation in the hereafter was probably the more powerful imperative.

The expansion of many Scottish parish churches of the later Middle Ages was not limited solely to increasing the provision for altars. The spread of foci for devotion from the chancel into the public areas of church buildings encroached on space needed for other purposes. The loss of public meeting areas — used for settling contracts governed by canon law, for the holding of courts of various sorts, and for clerical colloquies — required alternative arrangements. The primary response was to build elaborate porches, occasionally of two storeys, usually again as acts of beneficence by individuals, families, or guilds.⁹³ The 1387 extension of the nave at St. Giles,

⁸⁸ Gemmill, *Aberdeen Guild Court Records*, 68-69.

⁸⁹ Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 2, nos. 1333, 1655, 2041, 2112.

⁹⁰ *Registrum Cartarum Ecclesie Sancti Egidii de Edinburgh*, app. I, no. 2; Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 2, no. 1648.

⁹¹ *Registrum Cartarum Ecclesie Sancti Egidii de Edinburgh*, app. I, no. 3.

⁹² Thomson et al., eds., *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, vol. 2, nos. 197, 1498, 2014.

⁹³ Fawcett, *Scottish Medieval Churches*, 86-87.

for example, included a porch with an upper chamber which served as a vestry and, above that, a room which perhaps functioned as a treasury.⁹⁴ The rebuilding of St. Michael's, Linlithgow, after 1425 included, in the nave, an ornate two-storey south porch whose upper floor served as a treasury, as well as a separate sacristy opening from the north side of the chancel.⁹⁵ At Perth, a two-storey north porch was added to the nave in the later fifteenth century, the upper floor again serving as a vestry and treasury.⁹⁶

The provision of the vestries or treasuries on the upper floors of porches in Scotland has passed largely without comment, but they are an important indicator of another flow of endowments to churches. They are, in effect, strong-rooms where valuables could be stored safely. At Linlithgow, this function is indicated by the three presses set into the walls of the upper chamber.⁹⁷ It was not simply altars that proliferated, for the pious faithful provided the altar cloths, chalices and plate, crucifixes, candlesticks, lecterns, and mass vestments for the celebrants. In late fourteenth-century Aberdeen, for example, individuals made pious gifts to the burgh's parish church, including bells to summon the faithful to services, didactic mural paintings, painted glass windows, and tiled pavements as well as the more common priests' vestments, altar cloths, chalices, and mass-books.⁹⁸ Devotion was made manifest in the material trappings of the divine cult, not just through the award of revenues. From the great to the socially humble, the Church received tangible evidence for the vitality of popular faith. Through acts that displayed intense levels of individual and collective spiritual commitment, the pious faithful in Scotland safeguarded the energy and regeneration of the Church.

This overview of some aspects of the surviving evidence suggests that the traditional image of the Scottish Church in the period from 1300 to 1450 as being characterized by stagnation and plummeting esteem in the eyes of the lay population of all classes is too generalized. This image jars strikingly with the radical alternative view, revealed by modern research, of the dynamism of popular religion in the post-1480 period — a clash which shows the religious activity of the late pre-Reformation period to be all the more vibrant and responsive to popular needs. Indeed, there has

94 *Registrum Cartarum Ecclesie Sancti Egidii de Edinburgh*, no. 18.

95 MacGibbon and Ross, *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland*, 2:460.

96 Simpson, *A History of St. John's Kirk, Perth*, 22, 33, and 37-38.

97 MacGibbon and Ross, *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland*, 2:460.

98 See *Cartularium Ecclesiae Sancti Nicholai Aberdonensis*, 1:14-18.

been very little movement towards a reappraisal of fourteenth- and earlier fifteenth-century piety and devotional behaviour which would enable scholars to address this contradiction; moreover, the current strongly secular bias in pre-1450 research has fixed into position a traditional but outdated model of Scottish religion. The failure to recognize the emergence, in late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Scotland, of changing patterns of endowment and of shifts in the manner of expression of religious devotion which were common to much of the rest of western Christendom has been a consequence of recent historiographical trends, where secular politics has been the primary focus. Yet, as this present study has sought to demonstrate, there is ample evidence for full Scottish acceptance of and support for these changing forms of devotion and religious expression. To an extent, however, this position is more an issue of balance in the analysis and presentation of data than of lack of evidence. In particular, the strongly secular tradition in Scottish scholarship of the later Middle Ages has produced a historiography of the Scottish Church and State in this critical period which spans the Wars of Independence, the Black Death and its aftermath, the Great Schism, and the Conciliar movement, in which neither faith nor people play any significant part. The architecture, art, and literature of medieval religion all carried profound statements of belief and devotion that must be viewed as part of a composite whole, not compartmentalized into the component disciplines or rigid time frames. Taken together, these pieces of evidence provide us with a bridge that links the world of Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis of Assisi, and Dominic with the supposedly newly charismatic faith of the Observantine Franciscans and the Contarini and their ilk. A state of continuing development, “always reforming” (*semper reformanda*), was a characteristic of the Church throughout the Middle Ages as it sought to respond to changing popular needs and to accommodate new expressions of faith wherever possible. Stagnation leads to ossification and, ultimately, to fossilization, characteristics not evident in the Scottish Church, which responded to the changing spiritual needs of the lay population in a century and a half wracked by profound and prolonged social, political, economic, and spiritual upheaval.

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