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The SCOTTISH REFORMATION...

1

Religious and Secular Influences in Pre-Reformation Scotland

By the sixteenth century the church in Scotland had a well-defined organization governed by a hierarchy that included two archbishops and eleven bishops. Under their authority, or in the case of the religious orders, that of their superiors, a host of well-organized clerics, both regular and secular, numbering in total some 3,000 in a population of about 800,000 or 900,000, purported to serve the religious needs of the nation. On the organizational side so much is clear and well attested. What is less certain, however, is how the church affected men's lives. In theory church and society were seen acting in concert. Nevertheless, while at certain levels it can be demonstrated that there was no sharp division between the workings of the church on one hand and the social and economic life of the laity on the other, this identity of interest could be minimal. Lay participation in the working of the church was only evident in a few peripheral areas: the occasional clerk or lawyer might appear in his professional capacity in synods or other ecclesiastical bodies; parish clerks might be elected by local landowners; and the exercise of lay patronage, which was in itself restricted, might give to the laity some voice in appointment to benefices. The church for its part, however, claimed a much wider jurisdiction over the lives of the laity.[1]

In essence this claim stemmed from the fundamental duty of the church to act as the custodian of the nation's spiritual welfare. In this respect the church fulfilled its role in a variety of ways. Services could be magnificent occasions, and the Aberdeen breviary compiled under the supervision of William Elphinstone, bishop of Aberdeen (1483–1514), not only gives an indication of the complicated nature of certain services and of the wide variety of saints who were honoured, but also illustrates that music was an integral part of such services. Of the various service books used in church, the most important were the missal and the breviary. The *Missale*

was strictly a book of public worship and contained the service of the mass; along with the ordinary and the canon, or the fixed and invariable part of every mass, daily recited, were a number of *Missae* or Offices, with collects, epistles, gospels, graduals and sequences, proper to each Sunday or solemn feast and other special occasions. The Breviary was a work of more general complexion and excepting the daily service of the mass contained the entire offices throughout the year. It had been compiled in the eleventh century from several books of divine offices – the *Psalterium*, *Antiphonarium*, *Hymnarium* and *Martyrologium* – and contained the canonical hours, the prayers, hymns and lessons ordained to be sung at certain hours of the day and night. For convenience it was frequently divided into two parts, the one for the summer and the other for the winter half of the year. Unlike the canon of the mass, which was carefully protected from alterations, additions and omissions, the breviary, in virtue of the power vested in every diocesan bishop to accommodate the rites of the church to their particular needs, incorporated a variety of usages. Distinctive versions that had adapted the arrangement of the psalms, a selection of lessons and the reading of the gospels to local festivals were in use at cathedrals such as York, Hereford and Lincoln. The Scots had chosen to follow the custom of Sarum or Salisbury with perhaps one or two saints added to adapt the books to some restricted locality. The Aberdeen Breviary, however, changed the situation vastly. More than seventy Scottish saints, drawn from every district of Scotland, and all provided with historical lessons and their own feast days, appear. This was clearly meant to supplant the Sarum use in Scotland and appeal directly to the people as a national liturgy. Any doubts on this score were removed by an edict of James IV in 1507. He not only recommended that books of devotion should henceforward be 'eftir our awin Scottis use and with legendis of Scottis sanctis' but positively ordered that 'na maner of sic bukis of Salusbury use be brocht to be sauld within our realme in tym cuming'.[2]

Only cathedrals, collegiate churches and large burgh churches had the resources for the most impressive services, the most solemn of which were marked by the lighting of extra candles in the church. The day's liturgy began with 'morrow mass' and thereafter mass might be celebrated hourly up to the time of the 'high mass' which was a sung mass with organ, celebrated by the parish

priest and attended by all the chaplains of the choir and of the nave. Vespers were said or sung, possibly with organ, some time in the afternoon between two and five o'clock, and were followed by compline.[3]

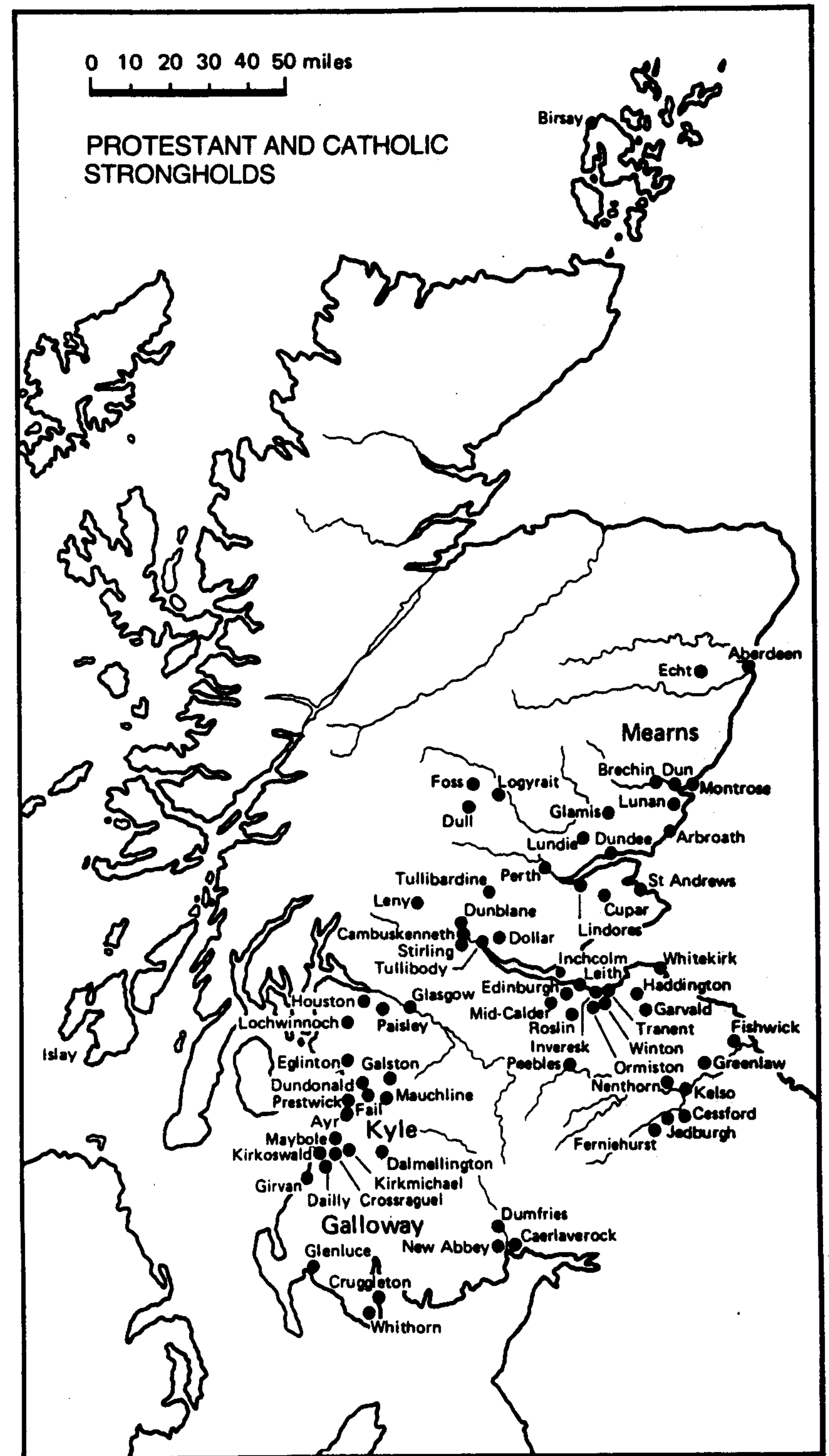
Spiritual services were not confined to the saying of the mass, however. The sacraments that accompanied birth, marriage and death were all of extreme importance, as was the hearing of confession and the granting of dispensations of all kinds. Baptism was normally carried out in the parish church. The font, made of wood or stone with an inset basin of lead, usually stood at the door. The child was often immersed; the priest held it with its face towards the east and dipped it first on the right side, then on the left and then face downwards. After baptism the child was lifted from the font by one of the sponsors. In Scotland this was known as 'heaving' and there are a number of references to James IV 'heving' infants at the font. Baptism by affusion of water also seems to have been practised and in this instance a sponsor often held the child during the ceremony. Either way priesthood and laity were united in their participation in this ceremony.

Marriage, if accompanied by the sacrament, was likewise held in church after the calling of the banns on three separate occasions in the parish churches of both parties. The regularization of situations that might otherwise have prevented the solemnization of marriage might also be the feature of a pre-nuptial ceremony. An example of the latter process occurred in St Michael's, Dumfries, on 6 August 1550, where Herbert Maxwell of Kirkconnell and his wife Janet, daughter of George Maxwell, burgess of Dumfries, delivered to William Gordon, dean of Dunblane, letters executorial dated Rome, 28 November 1549, under the seal of the penitentiary, giving communion to absolve and dispense the petitioners for marrying within the fourth degree of affinity and kinship and legitimizing any children. Absolution was duly given whereupon the couple took legal instruments to protect their further interests. Such dispensations could be expensive and it is clear from a somewhat earlier agreement that the cost of obtaining the necessary dispensation might be shared between the groom and his prospective father-in-law. Formal betrothal often preceded marriage by many years but could in some instances be agreed a relatively short time beforehand. The betrothal of David Bothwell and Janet Hamilton, daughter of the late James, earl of Arran,

which took place before the parish priest of Linlithgow at 8 a.m. on 13 February 1532 to be followed by the marriage at 4 a.m. on the following day was, however, clearly irregular in so far as the banns had not been read on the requisite number of occasions. This ceremony, unlike many Scottish weddings in the middle ages, was at least in church, for in many instances before the Reformation a simple affirmation of marriage between the contracting parties was all that was legally required. Death was another matter and the solemn dirge was constantly being celebrated in parish churches. On the vigil of a requiem mass, the common bellman would traverse a burgh calling out the names of the departed and exhorting the faithful to pray for their souls and requesting them to attend the solemn dirge the following afternoon. This memorial service - the Placebo and Dirge - consisted of vespers and matins for the dead and was performed when the body was brought to the church and placed before the altar. Burials of the more socially important were carried out in the church, the most popular spot being within the choir as near the high altar as possible.[4]

Every effort was made to maintain the sanctity of the churchyard, but it is obvious that as a public meeting place it might be used for markets and fairs, bear-baiting and wrestling. Such abuses inevitably reflected on the parish priest. He might already be the subject of criticism as a pluralist, for many of the 1,100 odd parishes in the country were held by non-residents who might engage underpaid curates to carry out parochial functions. These weaknesses may, however, have been more than offset by frequent contact between layman and priest. The rural priest who farmed his glebe would be integrated both socially and economically with the populace which he served; the chaplin who served in a lord's chapel might also act as tutor to his children; likewise in urban areas the clergy and in particular chaplains in burgh churches maintained a close relationship with the guilds and fraternities whose altars they served. Increased rapacity by both vicars and curates may have jeopardized this relationship in the sixteenth century, but in many instances the priesthood was still admirably placed to serve the society in which its members lived and worked.

The impact of the church depended, however, upon its own vitality as an institution and as the immediate post-Reformation period has frequently been treated as a period of decline in the



fortunes of the Scottish church, the continuing contributions of the church have often been overlooked. The vitality inherent in both monastic and secular clergy was not inconsiderable and this was manifest not only in the continuing organization of the church but in the role that the church still played in the life of medieval society. This duality was present in the religious processions and the other holy day celebrations held in honour of the particular patron saint of a craft guild within a burgh. These were specially associated with the religious life of the citizens, but the secular side was also provided for by the holding of *Wappinschaws* (weapon displays) and sports. The major processions took place at Candlemas and Corpus Christi and both at Aberdeen, where all the guilds of the town went in procession before the blessed sacrament, and at Edinburgh, where a band of musicians led the way, the spectacle must have been imposing. Religious objects or relics were frequently carried on such occasions and at Edinburgh on 1 September each year, St Giles day, a statue of the saint led by 'tabors and trumpets, banners and bagpipes' was borne through the burgh. How far such manifestations encouraged popular religious fervour is uncertain, but the efforts made later by the reformed church to ensure their suppression would indicate that the enthusiasm engendered was not inconsiderable. Closely associated with these processions were the plays and pageants; little is known about them but they represented in dramatic form a variety of spiritual subjects which were first acted in churches and afterwards in the streets on a moveable stage. In addition there were playfields (open spaces for the public performance of plays) attached to all the leading burghs. Taking themes such as the creation and the fall of man, these plays were enacted annually at Perth from the late fifteenth century to the Reformation. At Aberdeen the first association of the crafts with the Corpus Christi celebrations occurs in a statute of 1513 ordaining the provision of torches for religious processions. It is not, however, until 1530 that pageants were maintained in connection with the Corpus Christi procession. Further enactments show that such pageants were strictly regulated by the bailies and that the crafts jealously guarded their respective positions or 'roumes' in the procession before the sacrament. The deacons or masters of the crafts were held responsible for furnishing the pageants in the years between 1530 and 1551; a defaulting craft was liable to a fine. This, coupled with a re-

enactment in 1531 of a statute of 1510, calling on all the crafts to maintain the processions and prescribing fines and even banishment for failure to do so, suggests that resistance to such occasions was not unknown, but whether on religious or financial grounds cannot be ascertained. The uncertain relationship between such pageants and devotion is also to be seen at Haddington, for although there are references to a cycle of craft pageants between 1530 and 1552, the town council in 1537 ordered the crafts to play their pageant for that year on Midsummer Day instead of at Corpus Christi. Changes are also evident at Edinburgh where the play produced by the hammermen for over a decade after 1505 had King Herod as its subject, but by 1553 reference is made to municipal plays. These were mostly of an allegorical nature and could not be compared with the older dramas founded on religious themes. Financial and secular considerations had become paramount and their religious impact considerably less.[5]

Pilgrimages, which had figured equally prominently as an outward expression of popular piety, also became less common in the sixteenth century. Changing religious attitudes may have hastened this decline, but political and later religious upheavals in various parts of Europe undoubtedly also played a part. Nevertheless, Scottish pilgrims continued to visit Compostella, Rome and the Holy Land. A departing pilgrim wearing his pilgrim's badge, cloak and cap and bearing his pilgrim's staff and wallet was still not an unknown sight. One of the more illustrious Scottish pilgrims of the early sixteenth century was Archbishop Blacader of Glasgow who, having already journeyed to Rome in 1504, set out once again in 1508 bound on this occasion for the Holy Land. Blacader left Scotland in early February intending in the manner of many pilgrims before and since to spend Easter in Rome. By mid-May he was in Venice where on 1 June 1508 he took part in the traditional ceremony of blessing the sea and, having remained there until later that month, he embarked on a ship for the long sail to Jaffa. Like so many pilgrims before him, he failed to survive the journey, dying en route on 28 July. Of the thirty-six companions with whom he had set out from Venice, only nine survived. Whether better fortune attended a more humble pilgrim, Patrik Gilleis of Glenkirk, bailie of Peebles who received a royal letter of protection before setting out on his pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the

following year cannot be ascertained. In the years thereafter Scottish pilgrims to the Holy Land grew fewer and fewer, but the hermit John Scott who was living near Jedburgh, *c.* 1535 had pilgrimaged there and had returned with 'some date-tree leaves and a pocke full of stones which he fained were taken out of the piller to which Christ was bound when he was scourged'. In 1550 a lay-brother called Thomas, a Scotsman by birth, was reported in Brussels to have spent many years in Jerusalem. Contact between Scotland and the east was far from extinguished in the sixteenth century and in 1520 a monk of St Catherine's monastery of Mount Sinai actually visited Edinburgh to enrol the faithful in the confraternity of St Catherine and receive from them alms for the up-keep of her shrine.[6]

Other pilgrims were less adventuresome and visited pilgrimage centres nearer home; Sir James Sandilands was licensed in 1526 to pass to Rome in penance for the crime of murder and John Erskine of Dun, who had killed a priest in the belfry of the parish church of Montrose, was licensed in 1537 to pass to France. If overseas pilgrimages diminished in importance, Scottish devotional centres remained in vogue. Among the most popular of the Scottish shrines were those at Tain, Whithorn, St Andrews and Glasgow, whose cathedral was described in 1449 as 'the most stately among cathedrals in Scotland in which the bodies of many saints especially St Kentigern repose'. Traditionally, however, 'the four heid pilgrimages of Scotland' were Paisley, Melrose, Scone and Dundee. Smaller pilgrimage centres were no less favoured; James IV, a frequent pilgrim to Tain and Whithorn, also visited the relics at Kilwinning in Ayrshire in 1508, and paid several visits to the shrine of St Adrian on the Isle of May where seafowl shooting provided an additional attraction. In August 1536, James V made a pilgrimage on foot from Stirling castle to the Loretto chapel in Musselburgh after the failure of his first attempt to sail to France for his marriage to the daughter of the French king. This chapel, which stemmed from increased devotion for Marian shrines, was founded in 1534, some six years after the inception of a similar shrine at Perth. Not everyone approved of such pilgrimages and undoubtedly the crowds of genuine pilgrims attracted not only many undesirables, but also encouraged the fabrication of false relics and bogus miracles. Sir David Lindsay in his *Dialog betuix Experience and ane Courtear*' writes:

I have sene pass one mervellous multytude
  Young men and women, flyngand on ther feit,
Under the forme of feyrit sanctytude,
  For tyll adore one image in Loreit

Quhy thole ye under your dominioun
  Ane craftye preist or fenyeit fals armeit
Abuse the people of this regioun
  Onely for thare particular profeit
  And speciallye that Heremeit of Lawreit
He pat the comoun peeple in beleve
  That Blynd gat seycht and crukit gat thare feit
The quhilk that palyard ne way can appreve.

Nevertheless, if the relics exhibited at some of these shrines were less than authentic few of the more blatant frauds which were perpetuated both in England and continental Europe appear to have been attempted in Scotland. The pardoner with his collection of false relics so vividly portrayed by Sir David Lindsay in the *Satire of the Three Estates* is not entirely a literary fiction, but in general, it is significant that protestant historians like Knox who would almost certainly have seized upon such activities with relish, are remarkably silent on the subject.[7]

If the church could not satisfy popular religious aspirations by encouraging pilgrimages and pageants, it might still hope to do so by enabling its adherents to worship in surroundings that encouraged genuine devotion. In this respect churches were not only to be functional but also beautiful and meaningful. This was achieved by the encouragement of the arts of stone-carving, wood-carving and painting, the major inspiration for which was undoubtedly of French and Flemish origin. Even though there was an unquestionable deterioration of style in ecclesiastical architecture during the first half of the sixteenth century, constructions such as that of the east end or choir of the parish church of Stirling were completed during this period. The initiative was taken by the town council which declared in 1507 that they had 'takin apon hand to big and compleitlie edifye, and end ane gud and sufficient queyr confor-mand to the body of the peroch kirk of the said burgt' and entered into an agreement to this effect with the abbey of Dunfermline to which the church was appropriated. A service was held in the reconstructed choir in 1520, but it does not seem to have been completed at that date and payment for timber for the choir was

still being made in 1523. The building of collegiate churches also continued. At Biggar, which was cruciform in plan, the work commenced by the founder in 1545/6 was continued by his son until the intervention of the Reformation; while at Seton which had become collegiate in 1493 the widow of George, third lord Seton who was killed at Flodden:

> Biggit the northomoss yll of the College kirk of Seton and took down the yll biggit be Dame Katherine Sinclair on the south side of it, the said college kirk, because the syde of it stood to the syde of the kirk, to mack it a parfacte and a proper cornet and cross kirk and biggit up the steeple as ye see it now to one grit high swa that it wants little of compleiting.

Stone carving exemplified infinite attention to detail and in this respect elaborately carved sacrament houses not only illustrate the intricacies of the craft but also illustrate the same intense popular devotion to the Blessed Sacrament that was widespread in the Low Countries and Germany. Wood-carving was an equally important outlet for religious expression, but the surviving examples such as the Ochiltree Stalls in Dunblane cathedral and the rood screen with its magnificent oak door in the parish church of Foulis-Easter are of late fifteenth rather than of sixteenth century origin. So too with religious paintings, of which the best Scottish examples are four large pre-Reformation paintings on oak panels at Foulis Easter and the superb panels, attributed to the Flemish artist Hugo van der Goes, which were painted for the collegiate church of the Holy Trinity Edinburgh shortly after 1469. Similar paintings must have been evident in other large Scottish churches and one of immediate pre-Reformation provenance that was hung above the altar of the incorporation of glovers in the parish church of Perth depicts their patron, St Bartholomew, holding a flaying knife.[8]

Of all the arts fostered by the church, the music that formed an integral part of its devotions was one of the most favoured and the flowering of the art of composition following the erection of the Chapel Royal at Stirling in 1501 owed much to religious inspiration. Little of the repertoire survived the Reformation but there is enough extant to prove that a rich store of polyphonic music existed in Scotland before that event. Most of the surviving pieces are by sixteenth-century composers and are included in three main

collections, all of ecclesiastical origin: the Scone Antiphonary, the Dunkeld Music Book and the St Andrews Music Books. The latter collection appears to be the earliest of the three and its pieces may not be of Scottish composition. The Dunkeld collection on the other hand, which contains motets and antiphons but only one complete mass for five parts, undoubtedly contains some compositions of Scottish origin although others are Flemish. So too in the Scone Antiphonary in which, however, at least seven works – five masses and two motets – are attributable to Robert Carver, canon of Scone. Born in 1487, Carver entered religious life in 1503 and was composing by the age of twenty-two. His nineteen-part motet for four sopranos, two altos, ten tenors and three basses has led to his description as a 'composer gifted with a high degree of musical imagination and sensitivity'. An experienced and competent choir would have been required to perform such a work and it may be doubted whether the abbey of Scone, which only possessed about sixteen canons in the period of the Reformation, could have provided the expertise required for its performance. Nevertheless, the foundation of collegiate churches and the song schools associated with them undoubtedly stimulated musical studies.

At the cathedrals too, music was encouraged and provision for choristers was a significant feature in most constitutions. At Kirkwall Bishop Reid, in reviewing the statutes in 1544, provided that the chanter who was to be instructed in at least the Gregorian chant should be bound to raise and terminate the singing in the choir, to regulate the singers and the celebration of divine service on Sundays and to admit boys to the choir. His deputy the sub-chanter was to be well instructed in both kinds of song, and was especially to be a skilled player upon the organ. Every Sunday and feast days during the first and second vespers, high mass, and in the time of the more solemn feasts he was obliged to play upon the organ the *Te Deum Laudamus* and the *Benedictus*. Provision was also made for six choristers who were to be candle-bearers and were to sing the responses and versicles and other things, as dictated by custom in the choir. At Aberdeen, Bishop Elphinstone's statutes of 1506 decreed that the cathedral should support eleven boy choristers and twenty singing priests, while at Dunkeld the endowment of four additional vicars' choral in 1446 and the institution shortly after that date of six choir boys appears to have had the

desired effect; in the early sixteenth century members of the choir could be described in one case as 'highly trained in the theory of music as well as the art of singing', in another as 'steady in the chant', and in yet another as 'sublime in musical theory and in organ playing'. This latter accomplishment was very important as the organ occupied a central part in church music, and masses and motets frequently incorporated a solo part for the organ which in turn blended with the singers. Organs were being installed in all major churches by the early sixteenth century; a canon of Holyrood was paid seven pounds in 1506 for repairing the 'organis in Strivelin' and in 1511 one 'Gilleam' described as 'organist makar of the kingis' was given eight pounds three shillings 'for expensis maid be him on the said organis in gait skynnis and parchment for the bellis [bellows], in nailles and sprentis of irne, in glew, papir, candill. . . .' A monk of Kilwinning built the organ in the parish church of Ayr in 1536 and became responsible for its maintenance thereafter. Town councils in particular were especially attentive to the standard of music attained; chaplains whom they employed were expected not only to be 'plain' singers, that is, to sing a Gregorian melody in unison, but also to be able to sing 'pricket' song, that is to sing one of the countermelodies pricked or set down against a Gregorian melody. At Holy Trinity, St Andrews, an agreement was reached in 1527 that no priest was to be granted an altar in the church unless competent in 'playnsong pricket song and descant'. Standards were rigorously maintained and at Aberdeen in 1540 the magistrates dismissed the entire choir, with the exception of one old man, and enrolled a new one. The mastership of the burgh song school was an important post and in this respect councils vied with one another to engage the finest musicians. The services of John Fethy, one of the most accomplished musicians of his day, who was responsible for introducing into Scotland 'the curius new fingering and playing on organs' – a technique involving the use of the thumbs as well as the fingers – were much sought after. Fethy, who had studied in Flanders, served in turn as organist at Dundee in 1531, St Nicholas, Aberdeen, in 1544 and in Edinburgh where he was allowed twenty shillings on appointment for 'tonying of the organis' from 1551. He was also an accomplished composer, although only one of his works, a setting of 'O God Above' survives in the Scottish Psalter of 1566.[9]

Most Scottish musicians had been trained in Flanders. Fethy and

his fellow composer Thomas Inglis both left Scotland in 1498 to study music there. In 1512 'foure scolaris, menstrallis' were sent to Flanders at the king's command to buy musical instruments, and in 1553, Edinburgh town council allowed a chaplain of St Giles a year's leave of absence to visit England and France to 'get better eruditioun in musik and playing' on the organs.[10]

In its encouragement of music and the visual arts the church was fulfilling both the spiritual and temporal aspirations of contemporary society. This is also evident in the church's interest in education, where theoretical concern for knowledge in its own right is matched with the very practical need for an educated priesthood. Education was primarily the concern of the church. Universities were founded by bishops and, if by the sixteenth century secular interest was more apparent and the foundation and patronage of schools was no longer an exclusively ecclesiastical function, teachers almost without exception were churchmen. Schools fell into two categories; at an elementary level the song schools and reading schools, which can be corporately termed little schools, and at a more advanced level grammar or high schools. In theory there should have been a song school in every parish but in practice provision tended to be restricted to cathedrals and other important churches including invariably those with collegiate status. Authority over song schools in a diocese was nominally vested in the chapter or precentor of the cathedral, but in practice this dignitary did not exercise jurisdiction outside his own cathedral. The principal concern of song schools attached to institutions was to train choristers in music and at least the rudiments of Latin in order that the services of the choir could be fittingly maintained. The main grammar school aim was the acquisition of Latin and it was through study in both schools, coupled with practical service in the church, that young clerics studied for promotion to the priesthood. In Aberdeen in 1503 a choir boy appointed one of his fellow choristers who had already qualified in the song school to deputize for him in the choir while he studied in the little school and the grammar school. In 1531 the provost and town council engaged another chorister to sing in the choir until he was promoted to the order of priesthood.[11]

At some centres, however, the education provided by such schools reached a wider circle of pupils and even though many of those students may have been destined for an ecclesiastical career,

others were not. At Kirkwall, the cathedral school founded by Bishop Reid in 1544 had two chaplains attached to it. One was to teach in the song school and was to be a doctor in both kinds of song and the other, who was to teach in the grammar school, was to be a master of arts and an erudite grammarian. These two masters were not only to teach all the boys of the choir, but also any poor people who were willing to be taught. The cathedral school founded at Elgin by the chapter in 1489 was also a 'general school' for the burgh and was to provide instruction in music and reading to all who came to it. Such steps were not uncommon for by this period many of the schools that had originated as church schools had become the concern of the burgh. Thus at Linlithgow the bailies appointed a chaplain to teach in the song school and 'leir all bairnis that will cum thereto'. In 1539 at Inverness, the clerk presented by the town council to the bishop was 'to rule the school, to instruct and teach the chaplains and scholars coming thereto in the art of music, not only in chant but in organ playing'. At Ayr in 1551, the parish clerk was licensed by the burgh to hold a song school for the neighbour's children. Most teachers were churchmen and although a few married men are occasionally found as schoolmasters, theoretically all teachers were clerics. In practice most were chaplains who were hoping for further preferment in the church. Appointments were usually of a temporary nature and the rapid turnover in schoolmasters underlines the point that those men were generally poorly-paid hirelings who, but for the addition of a chaplaincy or some other living, such as that of parish clerk, could not have subsisted. Lack of a schoolhouse and accommodation for the master was another problem which may have encouraged mobility and for this reason the schoolmaster was often chaplain of a hospital. At Glasgow, the schoolmaster was also chaplain of the leper hospital of St Ninian beyond Glasgow bridge. He lived at the hospital and so also did twenty-four poor scholars. Provision for poor scholars was fairly common; a minimum of fifteen was thought desirable at Old Aberdeen in 1544, but how far such schemes were put into effect is more difficult to judge. In theory at any rate no-one was to be denied an opportunity of serving in the church because of poverty.[12]

Such schooling was essentially urban. Little is known of rural education and the only positive provision for it on record appears to be the endowment of a chaplaincy at Carmyllie in Angus in

1500, where in addition to the normal religious stipulations the chaplain was instructed to hold at the chapel 'a school for the instruction of the young'. There are some indications that this was not unique. In one unidentified parish in St Andrews diocese the parishioners expressed a desire to found a chaplaincy of the Holy Rood at which the chaplain was to be obliged to hold a public song school in the church for the teaching of scholars in Gregorian chant, the organ and descant. Such developments, however, by their very nature must have been extremely limited, and it seems much more likely that such pupils were educated either by boarding them in burgh grammar schools, a practice for which there is ample evidence in the early sixteenth century, or by utilizing the services of the many private chaplains attached to even the smallest households. The results of such an education might go no further than acquiring the ability to read and write, but the large number of well educated notaries who came from remote country areas and had presumably obtained their education in this manner, would argue for the efficiency of the system. A growing tendency to board pupils in burgh grammar schools may have achieved more in this respect than the Education Act of 1496 which ordained that all barons and householders should send their eldest sons to grammar schools at eight or nine years of age and to keep them there till they have 'perfyte latyne'. Insofar as the intention behind this act was to serve the ends of justice it was perhaps doomed to failure; education in sixteenth-century Scotland was still fostered by the church to subserve the church's ends. Nevertheless, involvement of the municipalities ensured that some of the benefits were increasingly conveyed to other sections of society and this in turn found expression in the provision of a higher form of education through the universities.[13]

No fewer than three Scottish universities - St Andrews in 1412, Glasgow in 1451 and Aberdeen in 1495 - were founded in the course of the fifteenth century when the intellectual stimulation brought about by the revival of learning was reflected in the foundation of many European universities. Each of the universities attempted to strengthen its organization during the following century. A refoundation at King's College, Aberdeen on 17 September 1505, proposed a college of thirty-six persons. Less success attended efforts at Glasgow to make the original college fully collegiate but major developments were recorded at St Andrews.

Attempts to reorganize the Pedagogy and St Johns College which was virtually annexed to it failed in 1512, thwarted by the foundation in the same year of the college of St Leonard by Alexander Stewart, archbishop of St Andrews and John Hepburn, prior of St Andrews, who elevated the hospital and church of St Leonard into 'the college of poor clerks of the church of St Andrews'. Attempts to reorganize the Pedagogy were revived in 1523, but not brought to fruition until 12 February 1537/8 when a scheme of 1525 to found a college under the patronage of St Mary of the Assumption to teach theology, canon and civil law, physics, medicine and the other liberal disciplines was revived. This more than absorbed all the Pedagogy area schools; and the ancient church of St John was to be absorbed, re-dedicated and given collegiate standing. If Archbishop Beaton hoped for royal confirmation for his foundations, personal difficulties with James v and not merely episcopal procrastination held it up. Beaton later revived the scheme, the bull of foundation being dated 12 February 1537/8. The 'New College' was placed in the Old Pedagogy and the assimilation of that institution was completed on 7 February 1538/9 when the principal of the Pedagogy became first principal of St Mary's. There is, however, evidence of some continuing uncertainty on Beaton's part in documents issued within a few days of each other in February 1538/9. Following a further petition from John Hamilton, archbishop of St Andrews, on 26 August 1552, a further revision of the constitution was approved, and this was completed by the issue of a new charter in 1554.[14]

In these ways the church through its teaching (and all university teachers were churchmen) proposed to provide a service for the community at large. In practice, however, the return to society was less than it might have been. Arts alone of all the faculties consistently attempted to fulfil its obligations in all three universities. The provision of a grammarian for the teaching of Latin at Aberdeen was undoubtedly an attempt to raise standards, and it was paralleled at St Andrews in 1495 and 1516 when the Faculty of Arts raised its entrance requirements in grammar. In terms of university teaching no statutes relating to grammar have survived for St Salvator's, but in the case of St Leonard's it was stipulated that 'thrice in the week after dinner a competent lesson should be held in Grammar, Verse, Rhetoric or out of the books of Solomon'. It was also laid down that scholars who presented themselves

between Easter and the end of September in any year should become grammar students in preparation for the following session. The appointment of a grammarian at St Mary's College provided for further instruction in grammar; teaching would have been based on the standard texts, such as the 'Old Grammar' of Donatus or the 'New Grammar' of Alexandre Villedieu, in both of which the lessons were graded to the age and talents of the pupils.[15]

A similar trend is discernible at Glasgow, where the appointment in 1501 of a chaplain, with the duty of residing daily in the Pedagogy and teaching grammar to the students every day, marks a distinct attempt to improve the standard of university Latin. The masters of the city grammar school were closely associated with the university from the early sixteenth century to the Reformation and this may have been reflected in higher standards. Efforts in this direction also involved giving more status to rhetoric as a university subject, a measure that seems to have met no objections from scholastic logicians unless it threatened the basic philosophical character of the university course. Such attempts to raise the standard of arts courses were not, however, too successful. Part of the difficulty stemmed from the limitation of the arts curriculum, which resulted in the arts courses being viewed either as a preliminary to further vocational study or as an extension of a general education which might be terminated long before graduation. This latter category of short-time students included the sons of magnates, lairds and burgesses who, at St Andrews in particular, attended in small but increasing numbers during the first half of the sixteenth century. These few may not have quite measured up to the hopes of the 1496 act which stated that the eldest sons of barons and freeholders having mastered Latin at their grammar school should be sent to study arts and law at the university, but it no doubt ensured a higher measure of efficiency in some local courts and in a few instances may also have promoted the growth of commercial enterprise.[16]

Thus through the arts the church served the needs of the community; and in theory at least the other university faculties strove to do the same. In reality the situation was, however, very different. Medicine if it was taught at all before the appointment of a mediciner at Aberdeen shortly after 1505 was not regarded as a serious vocational study, and even there it appears to have been short lived. At St Andrews, William Manderston, doctor of med-

icine, was incorporated in the university in 1528; a graduate in medicine from Paris, he was rector of the university in 1530 when Patrick Arbuthnot, master of arts and medicine, and royal physician, was incorporated in the university. On 28 February 1535/6 he is described as one of the 'maisters and actuall lectourers' and three years later he was commended as one of the 'daly teachers' who worked for the 'commoun weill'. The inclusion of a mediciner in one of Archbishop Beaton's proposed curricula for St Mary's College in 1537/8 may reflect Arbuthnot's influence, and also explain the disappearance of these proposals from the revised constitution of 1554. By this date Glasgow too seems to have been devoid of medicinal teaching for although an ex-Carthusian Englishman could write in 1536 'I am now in Skotland, in a lytle unyversyte or study named Glasgo, wher I study and practyse Physyk ... for the sustentacyn and my lyvyng', there appears to be little substance to his claim. Exponents of civil law may have been received from time to time in very much the same manner, but in neither of the two older universities is there much indication of the teaching of civil law. At Glasgow a succession of possible teachers of civil law can be established only as far as 1472. A movement towards a revival of civil law at St Andrews followed the education act of 1496, but efforts towards this end were not too successful and if in practice the dividing line between canon and civil law was frequently overstepped, it was not until the foundation of St Mary's College that provision was formally made for the teaching of canon and civil law and degrees were awarded in each category in the 1540s. The appointment of a civilist and a canonist at Aberdeen in terms of the constitution of 1505 might have anticipated this development, but whatever the immediate effect of the proposals, neither of these teachers were present during the course of a rectorial visitation of 1549 which seems to suggest that the faculty of law was moribund.

The scarcity of theology students is more explicable. Stress was laid upon theological studies in the foundation of St Salvator's College and at Glasgow, but as the requirements for even the baccalaureate in theology were stringent in terms of both age of the entrant and the years of study required, only advanced scholars of considerable ability were likely to embark on such a course. Consequently while there was some theological teaching at Glasgow, students were few and far between. In 1507 it is noted:

> Master Patrick Coventry, henceforward bachelor in the Bible, having previously finished the requisite lectures and disputations according to the use and custom of our university, under the presidency of the distinguished man, Mr. William Cadzow, professor of sacred theology, was, in the presence of several prelates, lords and masters, in our greater schools, lawfully pronounced bachelor of sacred theology by the said Mr William and acquired justly and lawfully confirmation of the said degree of bachelor as aforesaid

but little development appears to have taken place thereafter until the arrival of John Mair as principal in 1518. His policy appears to have been to promote the study of theology at the expense of canon law and to this end he sought the collaboration of Aberdeen-trained friars to help its revival. Some success seems to have attended his efforts; a few monks appear to have studied theology at this time and at least two secular priests appear to have continued their studies during the period of Mair's principalship. Thereafter theological studies languished and although John Davidson who became principal in 1556 was a trained theologian and may have been anxious to promote such studies, his arrival came too late to make any discernible impact. So too at Aberdeen, for although theology figured prominently in the 1505 constitution and the principal in 1531 was expected to lecture on the subject daily, a report of 1549 claimed that the students in theology were not working, were failing to take holy orders and were improperly dressed, sporting long hair and beards. No such charges arise at St Andrews where the faculties of arts and theology appear to have been closely connected, but the emphasis must always have been on quality rather than quantity and many of the students appear to have come from religious houses, including the Augustinian priory of St Andrews, which in turn also provided many of the teachers.

In career terms, theology was not the most important subject an ambitious secular clerk could pursue; canon law provided a much more attractive prospect and this may explain why, of all the faculties other than arts, that of canon law proved initially to be the most successful. At Glasgow, however, early success proved transitory and the buildings in which canon law was taught were in disrepair by 1483 and few graduates appeared thereafter. When the principal John Mair supported the abolition of courses in canon law in order to promote the study of theology, the subject received

a blow from which it apparently never recovered. So too at Aberdeen in which law students were few and the canonist absent in 1549. But at St Andrews where practical training in the courts seems to have been given greater weight than theory canon law did flourish. The foundation charters of St Salvators made no provision for a lawyer, but a chaplaincy was established in 1500 in favour of a bachelor of canon law who should lecture three times a week. A similar trend is seen at St Leonard's College where, although founded expressly for the study of arts and theology, six years later two of its leading theologians were described as 'professors of canon law in the Church of St Andrews'. With the recognition of the teaching of civil and canon law at St Mary's college in 1537/8, the process of encouraging legal studies was complete. The reward to society was impressive and many of the earliest senators of the College of Justice including from the clergy Gavin Dunbar, archbishop of Glasgow, and Alexander Durie, bishop of Galloway, and from the laity Henry Balnaves of Halhill and James McGill of Rankeillor, were law graduates of St Andrews.[17]

With a sufficient body of qualified lawyers within its ranks, it is clear that one of the major services that the church could offer to the community at large was its legal expertise. As an institution the church's jurisdiction covered many fields. As a body responsible for faith and morals the competence of its courts covered a variety of matrimonial cases including actions over legitimacy, dowries and actions for annulment. Transactions made under oath, whether secular or spiritual, fell under its control as did the confirmation of testaments. Disputes concerning churchmen alone, especially relating to the acquisition of benefices and their fruits, were dealt with by church courts, but the laity also frequently preferred to have their cases heard before ecclesiastical courts which were often deemed more efficient than corresponding civil courts. The constitution of such courts varied. On occasion the pope might appoint judges delegate, usually three in number, to hear appeals and cases in the first instance. Most cases, by virtue of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction vested in a bishop were, however, heard by his principal judicial officer called the official who by the sixteenth century usually had lesser officials under him. By that time, moreover, commissaries of varying nomenclatures and competence began to appear with their courts

which possessed co-extensive jurisdiction with the existing diocesan courts.[18]

The type of cases heard before the courts varied greatly and the extant sixteenth-century records suggest that executry cases, followed by cases arising from failure to honour contracts under oath together with actions over the payment of teinds (tithes) and other ecclesiastical dues, predominated over a lesser volume of business relating to matrimony, defamation and benefice disputes. Most such disputes, however, went to Rome before one of the supreme tribunals of the church - the Sacred Roman Rota - sometimes an appeal but more often as a case of first instance and in this respect the number of cases heard in Scotland was only a fraction of the total. The bulk of actions before the Rota were of a beneficial nature, but a few cases relating to matrimonial affairs also found their way to Rome. Such cases only touched a minority of the population, but at a lower level every diocesan archdeacon possessed his court to deal with breaches of discipline by clergy and laity alike. These could also be dealt with by the dean of Christianity who could also confirm minor testaments of less than £40 value. No records of such courts are extant, but glimpses of the quality of justice exercised in ecclesiastical courts are seen in Myln's description of his diocesan colleagues at Dunkeld in the early sixteenth century, in which he notes of Walter Brown, official of Dunkeld in the late fifteenth century, and for whom Myln acted as clerk and notary for three years, that he possessed a 'remarkable knowledge of canon law and a strong sense of justice'.[19]

Because of their training such priests were able to perform a variety of legal functions, one of the most important of these being that of notary public, a position initially held only by priests - it was not until the 1540s that the lay notary began to appear. Notaries, who usually held a chaplaincy or some other ecclesiastical benefice in addition to their legal office, were enrolled by a protonotary apostolic and were then authorized to authenticate legal acts. Such acts were engrossed in their protocol books, or register of deeds, by the addition of their docquet and sign manual (endorsement and signature). Notaries made out instruments on marriage, admissions of parish clergy and registered protests against various actions. Such duties performed by a priest for members of the laity cemented the bond between them, and this

affinity was frequently strengthened by the clergy acting as agents in a burgh court, witnessing laymen's wills and acting as their scribes. The vast majority of their deeds were, however, evidence of title, many of them recording the leasing and feuing of church lands, a process illustrating the non-religious side of the relationship between laymen and the clergy.[20]

For many people the most important aspect of this relationship was on an economic plane. This was evident at two levels; the legal obligation of all landowners and their tenants to pay teind and the requirement of all tenants to pay rent. In the matter of the first it is clear that by the early sixteenth century many parishioners resented paying teind. Litigation over the non-payment of teind became a standard feature of processes in the civil courts during this period and did much to cause friction between churchmen and the laity. On the other hand it is equally evident that arrears of rent were uncommon, not only because the consequences of non-payment might mean eviction, but also because the church as landlord appears to have acted fairly towards its tenants. Leases were sometimes granted for life and were nearly always of at least five years' duration. Evictions at the end of such a period were uncommon, the tenants themselves frequently changing their lands not under pressure, but of their own free will. Relations between tenants and the laymen appointed by ecclesiastical superiors as bailies and chamberlains appear to have been harmonious and created a measure of continuous lay participation in the temporal affairs of the church. Nevertheless, the characteristic continuity of tenure and security of tenure of the many thousands of tenants who lived on the ecclesiastical estates was under threat in the early sixteenth century, not only through the appointment of lay commendators, but also through the growing proprietary attitude of churchmen. In consequence the close links that had existed between ecclesiastical superiors and their tenants came increasingly under threat. If the actual negotiations with tenants remained in the hands of officers and sergeants appointed by the bailies and chamberlains, the frequent absence of commendators from their benefices meant that chapters no longer played a part in decision making, but were expected to rubber-stamp decisions made by the commendators and their deputies. Changes of commendator also tended to be more disruptive than that occasioned by the appointment of a new abbot and might lead in turn to a

struggle over the appointment of deputies. At one stage no fewer than three separate rental books for Melrose were said to be in existence; one in the possession of the chapter, another, compiled by a former chamberlain, was in unknown hands and a third had been retained by a relation of the previous commendator. In such circumstances friction between tenants and their superior was almost inevitable.[21]

If goodwill between kirkmen and their tenants was slowly being eroded in this period, the interaction that had previously characterized their relationship was not entirely at an end. The commendator of Kilwinning personally wrote out a tenant's rental; Bishop George Browne of Dunkeld listened to tenants' complaints as he inspected his episcopal estates and David Beaton as commendator of Arbroath presided over regality courts in the 1520s. Though gradually such occurrences became more rare, the compensating factor for many tenants was the fact that secular and financial considerations encouraged most commendators to feu rather than lease the land at their disposal. In consequence the influence of the church diminished even further, while the spread of feu-ferme tenure brought for some new and probably more exacting landlords, and for others a heritable tenure of their holding. Those fortunate enough to receive feus emerged from the turmoil in a position of economic strength but those who remained as tenants had reason to mourn the passing of the old order, as the new lay landlords upset the existing pattern of leaseholding and insisted upon short leases which could be revised to their own advantage at regular intervals.[22]

Tenants and others caught at a disadvantage amid the economic upheavals of the period might suffer social distress and in this respect the sixteenth-century church could still demonstrate its concern. Some of the social services provided by the church were institutionalized, others of a more individual nature. Of the former, hospitals, which could often be more accurately described as almshouses, even though founded in many cases by laymen, were ecclesiastical institutions. Many of the earlier foundations had certainly fallen into decay or were on their way to becoming secularized. Others were burned during the English invasions of the 1540s and were apparently never rebuilt. Concern for the poor was by no means at an end, however, and at least twelve new hospitals were founded before the Reformation while many others

appear on record for the first time. A few of those were in rural areas; a new almshouse was founded at Biggar in 1546; the provost of the collegiate church of Methven founded a hospital there for five sick and aged poor in 1549/50 and, at North Berwick, a hospital was established for poor brethren in 1541/2. The majority of the new foundations were, however, in burghs: thus at Aberdeen, a hospital was founded for twelve old men in 1531/2; a hospital attached to the collegiate church of Kirk o' Field, Edinburgh, was instituted *c.* 1510, but a more prestigious hospital was founded there in 1541 for two chaplains and seven bedesmen. The hospital suffered severe damage shortly after its foundation as all the manses and chambers founded near the monastery were destroyed by the English in 1544 and it was not until 1558 that repairs were being contemplated. A much more ambitious seven-year project for a hospital in the burgh with a priest, mediciner and forty beds was planned in 1552, but as finance for this was to be obtained from a levy on householders, it came to nought. More success attended the establishment of a hospital for seamen by the corporation of the shipmasters and mariners of Leith in 1555. Wayfarers were also catered for at Perth with the erection of a hospital for poor travellers. Little information is forthcoming about the running of such hospitals, but some details are recorded about the day-to-day life of the hospital founded near the Stablegreen of Glasgow in 1524/5 by Roland Blacader, sub-dean of the cathedral. This hospital was to have six beds and was to be looked after by a keeper and his wife chosen by the chaplain. Provision for the care of the poor is carefully stipulated; the six beds were to be furnished with coverlets and pillows and the diet of the poor is equally explicitly stated. Vegetables and herbs supplied from the keeper's garden were to be supplemented by lentils to the value of forty shillings bought in winter by the chaplain and the keeper between the feasts of saints Martin and Andrew. These were to be cooked with green vegetables and herbs every evening for the feeding and nourishment of the poor; and when herbs failed, the keeper was to cook white gruel from the lentils, properly prepared, for the hospital's inmates. For fear of misappropriation the lentils were to be kept in a locked chest and only issued by the chaplain as and when required. The chaplain was also to provide an iron pot of two quarts capacity for cooking gruel and vegetables and a cauldron of the same capacity for washing the feet of the poor.

For their comfort in winter the chaplain was also to supply an iron grate for making a fireplace and to buy three pounds worth of coal which was to be stored in the 'coyl hows'. Similar provision was also made for the keeper and his wife who were to have bedding and a fire provided; the chaplain too was to be allowed twenty shillings for coals to be bought for himself.[23]

Such provision was simple but by the standards of the day adequate for those fortunate enough to obtain shelter in such institutions. Overall provision was, however, far from satisfactory. The northern dioceses of Argyll, Caithness, Dunkeld, Moray, Ross and the Isles, all of which lay either wholly or partly in the Highland area, possessed at best five small hospitals in the sixteenth century and most of these had only a shadowy existence. Inadequate endowment meant they were always subject to decay and although Bishop Browne of Dunkeld (1484–1515) revived and augmented an earlier foundation, the hospital of St George providing only for a master and only seven poor folk, served to highlight the inadequacy of institutional care for the poor within this area. The bonds of kinship may have provided an adequate substitute, and individual churchmen were certainly not unmindful of their obligations in this direction as exemplified by George Hepburn, dean of Dunkeld (1497–1527), who not only provided a weekly 'boll of meal for certain decrepit poor folk in the city', but also ordered porridge to be supplied every day when there was a dearth in the country.[24]

Outdoor relief of this kind was provided by both the church and burgh authorities, but the conscientiousness of both in this respect is debatable. At Perth, even after the Reformation, alms were only dispensed to those 'that held the Holy Lamb, the tounis mark and takin on their breistis'; the friaries for their part appear to have reduced their charity to a routine in which 'one penny or one piece of breade anis in the oulk [week]' was deemed sufficient concern for the poor. From time to time, however, outside relief of another kind was available through the good offices of the church. Requiem masses were one of the most constant features of the day to day round in any parish church and the founders of such masses, in order to ensure the attendance of some participants, were frequently prepared to pay for the privilege. In founding his hospital near the Stablegreen at Glasgow, Roland Blacader also made arrangements for his own obit (memorial service) and

that of his parents; he instructed the chaplain to choose sixty honest poor people possessing hearth, house and home in the city of Glasgow who should attend church at the time of the celebration of his obits and pray for his soul, and the souls of his parents and of all the faithful dead. On the morning after these ceremonies eight pennies were to be paid to each of them; in this act of charity religious observance and social welfare imperceptibly merged.[25]

Even by this date, however, the church's role in society was under challenge; education and provision for the poor were being increasingly sustained by town councils and although priests might still teach in schools and oversee almshouses, the church had no longer the dominant voice in such appointments. The institutionalization of the Court of Session as the College of Justice in 1532 and the provision of more efficient royal courts attracted a growing number of lay advocates and after 1540 lay notaries also became more numerous. Even culturally the church's role as patron of the arts was being successfully challenged by a development of secular architecture patronized by crown and magistrates. Faced with this challenge to its role in society the church's answer should have lain in its religious ministrations. Unfortunately for the future welfare of the church, however, the service which had been increasingly overlooked amid its myriad interests was the administration of the sacraments and the promotion of vernacular preaching as a means of explaining the Christian message to an increasingly literate populace. The church in the early sixteenth century was aware of its dilemma, but resolution of its problem depended upon the ability of the church, both monastic and secular, to meet the challenge of the changing circumstances of the times.[26]

2
The Monastic Ideal

The impact of the church upon society was dependent upon its own vitality as an institution. In this respect the fifteenth century has frequently been treated as a period of decline in the fortunes of the Scottish church, and failure to arrest this decline led inexorably and inevitably to the demise of that church and all it stood for at the Scottish Reformation of 1559/60. It is, however, open to question whether the church in this period was faltering in its purpose. It was clearly not without faults, but their magnitude and the part that they played in the making of the Reformation in Scotland can only be assessed when ranged alongside its continuing and not inconsiderable contribution to Scottish life and society.

Monasticism was apparently out of favour, and several of the smaller houses such as Saddell in Kintyre, which was suppressed in the early sixteenth century, and Urquhart in Moray which was united to Pluscardine in 1454, were in very serious difficulties. At the larger houses the situation was not much more promising, but the number of religious appears to have been stable and much rebuilding took place at many sites. At Cambuskenneth an extensive scheme of reconstruction which led to a rededication of the church, buildings and burial ground on 11 July 1521 seems to have been carried out in late medieval times and a new abbot's hall is mentioned in 1520. At a somewhat earlier date reconstruction work at the abbey of Melrose which probably commenced shortly after its destruction in 1385 proceeded for much of the following century and entailed a complete alteration in the character of the lay-out. The impoverishment of the community in the early sixteenth century may have prevented its completion according to original plans, but the rebuilt abbey church with its rich carvings detail is quite exceptional by Scottish standards. Elsewhere rebuilding was of a more traditional nature, but remains of late medieval work at Paisley, Crossraguel, Iona and Arbroath all testify to