INTRODUCTION

Prayer, study and preaching were the three most important occupations of the late medieval Dominicans, no less in Scotland than anywhere else. Of the first there is little trace, of the second and third there is less evidence than one might expect. The study of the order is formed and moulded by the documentary evidence left for the modern scholar to muse upon. It does not necessarily represent the priorities, values or ideology of the friars when they were alive, but rather it is a distillation of what may be known combined with an informed estimation of what has been lost. Sensitivity to the kind of men the friars were, educated, religiously motivated, celibate, and living in community together, must always underlie the analysis of the court cases, the property transactions and the literary stereotypes which remain in the written sources. Neither denigration nor romanticisation will help the picture become clearer, and judgements by the standards of our age are no more relevant to the early modern friars than their values are today.

The sources for the study of the late medieval and early modern church in Scotland are in print, in substantial amounts. Documents relating to the friars of Ayr, Glasgow and Perth have been gathered into three separate volumes. These collections are supplemented by unpublished manuscripts relating to Aberdeen, in Aberdeen University Special Collections, and the chartulary of the Elgin convent, housed in the National Library of Scotland. For the other houses the material is more sparse and disparate. Two collections of manuscripts, the Laing Charters and the Feu Charters of Kirklands, provided additional material, especially for Edinburgh and St Andrews. The finances of the friars may be further elucidated by the records of the exchequer and the accounts of the royal treasury. The records of the burgh courts, the commissary courts and the huge volume of manuscript sources relating to the Court of Session have also revealed information relating to the Dominicans. The Vatican Archives were also used, in the Vatican and through the collections of material relating to Scotland held in the University of Glasgow and the University of Dundee. This abundant primary material was complemented by items gifted to the National Archives of Scotland from
private collections. In the National Library of Scotland are further
manuscripts and also the papers of Lt. General Hutton, a nineteenth
century antiquarian who made transcripts of large amounts of mate-
rial, some of which is now lost.

The content of most of this material is concerned with the prop-
erty holdings of the friars, whether it be land transactions, court
cases, or the inheritances of individual friars. There remains very lit-
tle material which belonged to the friars themselves. A fraction of
their printed books remain. There are also three rentals, one obit
calendar and two compilations of charters which they had drawn up
for their own use. There are no sermons, no school texts, no pen-
itentials, no records of the provincial chapter and no records of con-
ventual chapters.

Despite these difficulties with sources, the end of the late medieval
and beginning of the early modern periods are not studied enough.
The fact that this current study in many ways complements the work
of William Moir Bryce on the Franciscan order, which was published
in 1909 and which has not been superseded, is further evidence of
just how long the new ground broken in this work has lain fallow.

All too often the period 1450–1560 simply serves as an opening
chapter in works focusing on the Scottish Reformation and the post-
Reformation church.¹ In the work of Ian Cowan the emphasis is on
a non-partisan approach to the history of the Reformation and con-
sequently his account contains a balance between the faults and
virtues of the church. Even so, the period is given inadequate con-
sideration when it is consigned to setting the scene for, and demon-
strating the causes of, the events of 1560. This is not a study of the
Scottish Reformation, but rather an examination of the friars and
so, the whole life of the Friars Preachers is to be unfolded, rather
than simply being presented as a tool in the search for the causes
of the Reformation. Each important event is placed in its context
and in its time to give the friars their place within the wider his-
tory of their age.² This approach throws new light on some of the
assumptions made by post-Reformation scholars concerning the early
modern church in Scotland.

¹ I.B. Cowan, The Scottish Reformation: Church and Society in sixteenth century Scotland
(London, 1982); G. Donaldson, The Scottish Reformation (Cambridge, 1960); M.H.B.
Sanderson, Ayrshire and the Reformation (East Linton, 1997).
² A biographical appendix has been given at the end to provide the individual
life stories of the friars, as well as their general history and it is hoped that this
will provide balance between the seascape and the waves, see p. 253ff.
Recently, the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries have proved fruitful research fields for political historians as the works of Michael Brown, Jamie Cameron, Norman Macdougall, Christine McGladdery and Jenny Wormald demonstrate. These historians have tended to be rather less concerned with the ecclesiastical history of their periods than the Stewart kings whom they studied were with their church. The student of church history in this period must work from an eclectic range of articles in order to examine the relationship between the Scottish church and nationalism, the primacy of the church and the church’s relationship with the papacy. The universities have been the subject of study with ecclesiastical relevance by Ronald Cant and John Durkan. Leslie Macfarlane’s study of William Elphinstone (1483–1514) clearly develops the field of church history and the history of the University of Aberdeen.

The development of the Scottish Renaissance has now been accepted and brought to the fore in studies of architecture, Scottish libraries, court culture, humanist thinkers and the ideas of the Reformation. The work was begun for the history of the Scottish church by David McRoberts, whose volume *Essays on the Scottish Reformation* has not been superseded since its publication in 1962. The Dominican scholar, the late Anthony Ross, wrote ‘Some Notes on the Religious Orders’ for that volume and continued the work with his article on the libraries of the Dominicans in Scotland. In those essays, he showed the Dominicans to have been aware of the humanist developments current in European theology and to have had wide-ranging theological interests. An essay in McRoberts’ volume on the cultural background to the Scottish Reformation, by John Durkan, has a similar theme although a much wider remit. The work on the ideas of Catholic

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reform by James K. Cameron has also added to this picture.\(^7\) The intellectual background examined in these essays has been placed in the context of the ecclesiastical and political background by the historical biographies of two of the most prominent churchmen of their times, William Elphinstone, bishop of Aberdeen and David, cardinal Beaton, archbishop of St Andrews (1494–1546).\(^8\) In the earlier part of the period 1450–1560, the provincial councils of the Scottish church held before the foundation of an archbishopric have been comprehensively studied by Donald Watt.\(^9\) The piecemeal nature of this historiography is exacerbated by the lack of a recent scholarly work to cover the general church history of the period. The picture of the Scottish church during the Renaissance must be slowly pieced together from these various sources in order to provide the general background to the life and work of the Friars Preachers.\(^10\)

The burghs, the base from which the Dominicans worked, have also been the subject of some recent research. The collected volume of essays, *The Early Modern Town in Scotland* contains work by Mary Verschuur whose unpublished thesis on Perth and the Reformation contains much that is useful. She examined the local kin networks in Perth and analysed the financial standing of many of the people involved in the Reformation there. Michael Lynch’s book *Edinburgh and the Reformation* is the most useful early modern urban study available, although the majority of the book focuses on the post-Reformation period.\(^11\) Margaret Sanderson’s *Ayrshire and the Reformation* adds to this scholarship, although again her focus is on the Protestant reformers, and subsequently on the post-Reformation church. Ian Cowan’s work on Scottish medieval parishes provided a much needed list of the parishes of Scotland and the status of their incumbents.\(^12\) This work was never complemented with analysis of parochial religious tradi-

\(^7\) J.K. Cameron, “Catholic Reform” in Germany and in the Pre-1560 Church in Scotland,” in *RSCHS*, xx (1979), 105–117.


\(^10\) See chapter three, pp. 79–80.


tions. There is still lacking a study of the urban religious traditions of Scotland in the late medieval and early modern periods which is not a study of the Reformation. An analysis of the Scottish urban parishes, prayers for the dead, feast days and saints’ days, and other features of civic religion is long overdue. This gap is partly filled by the research presented here, but this is by no means sufficient.

The historiography of the religious orders is more healthy than that of urban religion. The work of William Moir Bryce on the Franciscans is still very useful, although 88 years old. Also of use is his article on the Friars Preachers of Edinburgh which was written in 1910. The lack of any thorough examination of patronage of the monastic houses in general, or indeed of monastic income, makes comparative work in this field impracticable. More recently, Mark Dilworth, in *Scottish Monasteries in the Late Middle Ages*, describes his studies of monasticism in the early modern period as being very much pioneering work in its field. This slim volume included canons regular, but not friars, ‘since the constitutional status of friars, their way of life, their ethos—in fact almost everything about them—made them radically different from monks and regular canons.’ It seems that this work on the Order of Friars Preachers is long overdue. It complements work done on the Renaissance and the Scottish church while standing with them in the relatively empty field of late medieval and early modern urban religion.

The first list of Dominican houses in Scotland dates from 7 March 1297. It was drawn up by the English government during their occupation of Scotland and ordained payments to be made to the Friars Preachers from burgh revenues. There were eleven houses recorded in that list: Aberdeen, Ayr, Berwick, Edinburgh, Elgin, Glasgow, Inverness, Montrose, Perth, Stirling, and Wigtown. The foundation of Montrose was attributed to Sir Alan Durward, who died in 1275, and that of Wigtown to Devorguilla who was the mother of John Balliol, king of Scots (1291–1296). She died in early 1290 and Spottiswoode, a seventeenth-century historian, gave the date of the foundation as 1267.

The second list of Dominican houses to survive is in a manuscript in the archive at Bordeaux.\(^\text{16}\) It was written by Bernard Gui OP (1261–1331) and has 13 houses in the list but these are actually the same eleven as recorded in 1297, once the errors have been corrected. The list is equally interesting for the annotations made by John Hunter, the last prior of the Glasgow house, who fled Scotland after the Reformation. He wrote at the foot of the list that he was a doctor of theology, ‘alumnus’ of the Glasgow convent and in his seventies when he made the note, in 1596. Gui counts Perth twice, first as ‘Perfh’ and the second time as *Orti Regii*. The Latin name was given to the Perth house because it was built on the site of royal gardens. These gardens were on the banks of the river Tay and the land was given to the friars when the Perth house was founded by Alexander II. The same piece of ground was the subject of litigation in the early sixteenth century and it was then referred to as the ‘gilten arbour’. The Latin name must have fallen out of use by John Hunter’s time as he did not spot Gui’s error. By Gui’s time, Berwick was in the hands of the English and should not be in his list. Wigtown and *Candida Casa* must be the same house. It is in the same diocese as Whithorn (*Candida Casa*) but the convent was not at Whithorn itself. Gui’s list is given verbatim as follows, my corrections being in square brackets: Bevici [Berwick—English]; Perfh [Perth, also known as *Orti Regii*]; Castri puellarum [Edinburgh]; Are [Ayr]; Glasgu [Glasgow]; Vigtone [Wigtown]; Strenelyn [Stirling]; *Montis rosarum* [Montrose, the Latin is entirely fanciful]; Aberden [Aberdeen]; Invernis [Inverness]; *Orti Regii* [see Perth]; *Candida casa* (sic) [see Wigtown]; *Morauensis* [Elgin, in the diocese of Moray]. John Hunter added St Andrews, Dundee and St Monans. The only house missing was Cupar which was erected in 1348 by Duncan, earl of Fife. It is not surprising that John Hunter missed it out of his annotations because it had been suppressed in favour of St Andrews, as was St Monans. Dundee was founded in the sixteenth century, an initial petition to the Pope being dated 16 September 1517, and the foundation, in place by 1521, being funded by Andrew Abercromby, a burgess of Dundee.\(^\text{17}\)

This list was not known to Ian Cowan when he revised David Easson’s volume on Scottish religious houses. He provided a table

\(^\text{16}\) I am grateful to Simon Tugwell OP for bringing this list to my attention; Bibliothèque de Bordeaux, MS 780 fo. 42r; Dominican History Newsletter, iv, 1996, 111.
in that book of the houses named in the five lists known to him. The most complete list given by Easson was that provided by Andrew Leys OP, an old man of 80 years in 1564, when he related a very brief summary of the history of his order. Leys’ list begins with the early foundations of Berwick, Perth, Ayr, Stirling, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Inverness and Elgin which were in the time of Alexander II. The next houses which he recorded were Glasgow, Montrose (once founded by Alan Durward then re-founded by Patrick Paniter, royal secretary to James IV), Cupar, St Andrews, St Ninians (St Monans) and lastly Dundee. Andrew Leys did not mention the suppression of St Monans and Cupar by John Adamson. This list probably represents the full number of houses of Dominicans in Scotland. The one possible addition is Haddington, which is mentioned in the exchequer rolls in 1489–90. This could be a mistake for the Franciscan house there which is a more likely supposition than that there was a Dominican foundation in Haddington very briefly. One possible source of the confusion surrounding Haddington could be the Dominican involvement in the hospital of St Laurence in the town, the revenues of which were given to the sisters of Sciennes, the house of Dominican nuns in Edinburgh founded in 1517. Berwick is also a difficult case as the town was not in Scottish territory for most of the period. It was under Scottish control from 1461 to 1482 and there were gifts from the Scottish crown to the friars of Berwick during that period. There were, therefore, ten houses of Dominicans in Scotland in 1450: Aberdeen, Ayr, Cupar, Edinburgh, Elgin, Glasgow, Inverness, Perth, Stirling and Wigtown. To that number was added Berwick for twenty years; St Monans was founded by James III; Montrose was resurrected in the sixteenth century by Patrick Paniter; and St Andrews began in 1464 as a place or locus and was erected into a convent in 1517 when St Monans and Cupar were suppressed. By 1560, there were 12 houses, Dundee, Montrose and St Andrews having been added to, and Cupar having been taken away from, the 1450 list.

The final number of houses being established, it is important to examine the general structure of the order. The election of the
master general of the Order of Friars Preachers was conducted by the general chapter of that order. It was a free vote. Two *scrutatores* recorded each vote, a clear majority of over fifty per cent being required for a final result. The chapter itself was made up of diffinitors, who were elected by their province, each one having a *socius* or companion who was also present. Each elected diffinitor could hold office for one year and new elections were held the next year by the provincial council. Every third year the provincial prior (often a post held for life) would represent his province. The general chapter and the provincial chapters were peripatetic as the holding of a council was very expensive for the host house, even though both were limited in time to one week. For reasons of expense and logistics the order began to hold the general chapter less frequently. By 1450, it was held roughly every third year.

The provincial chapter was composed of the prior from each convent in that province and a *socius*, who held the important documents for that house and copied any *acta* passed by that chapter. The preachers general (all of whom were licensed to preach anywhere in the province) were also represented at the chapter. The provincial chapter was, therefore, too large a body to handle competently all the business before it in the time allowed. The election of four diffinitors who were to aid the provincial in the making of decisions and of judges who were to solve disputes between convents and between friars was both prudent and useful. The four diffinitors were elected by the whole chapter, probably at a meeting the night before business was formally opened. There was also the vote for the diffinitor to the general chapter to be taken, unless it was a year when the provincial was to attend the chapter. Through the year the four diffinitors and provincial acted as a standing committee of the provincial chapter and could make any necessary decisions on its behalf.

Each convent elected its prior, who was not necessarily a member of the convent. The election was, again, conducted by the writing down of each vote by two *scrutatores* and when the majority of votes was secured for one candidate the custom was for those who had voted against to accept the new prior thus giving a pseudo-unanimous vote. The list of votes was then sent to the provincial for confirmation and, if the election was of someone from another convent, for permission to transfer him to the new house. This electoral system within the Dominican order and the rule of the diffinitors, the provincial chapters and the conventual chapters balanced the
control of the order by priors, provincials and masters general. If there was a vacancy, whether through death or absence, the order would appoint a vicar, provincial vicar or vicar-general for each post respectively.\textsuperscript{22} The prior held the conventual chapter meetings, for business, for prayers and also the chapter of confession where the friars were free to stand up and confess their faults publicly, or to accuse and be accused publicly by their fellow friars. This was known as the \textit{capitulum culparum}, and was held weekly in each house.

In order to qualify as a convent, a Dominican house had to have twelve friars. If a house was referred to as a \textit{locus} or place, then it had no prior and no representation at the provincial chapter. The Friars Preachers did not use a system of mother and daughter houses. Once a place had twelve men it could gain conventual status and had equal rights with even the most senior convents there. The conventual priors, however, sat in order of seniority of house in the provincial chapters, with the oldest houses sitting nearest to the provincial and thus most able to catch his eye. From conventual chapter to general chapter no friar was allowed to speak unless the chairman, whether prior, provincial or master general, had given him permission so to do, or had asked him a direct question. It is to be assumed that life in the Dominican houses of early fifteenth-century Scotland was settled and well-ordered.

The fifteenth century was a time of rising confidence for the Scottish church and the order was to reflect the new nationalism in the foundation of the Scottish province in 1481. The beginnings of St Andrews University in 1411, followed by Glasgow in 1451, and Aberdeen in 1495, were very important to the order in Scotland. The Friars Preachers were naturally attracted to St Andrews because of the university and a small oratory or hospice was set up by the order; it is recorded as having a prior in 1464 and was given sanction by a bull of Pope Sixtus IV, on 18 March 1477. When Glasgow University was founded, the friars' buildings became the core of the university on the High Street. The universities in Scotland opened up the academic life of the friars as opportunities for teaching and learning readily presented themselves.

Education was not the only area of ecclesiastical expansion. The foundation of collegiate churches burgeoned in the fifteenth century and continued into the sixteenth. The emphasis on prayers for the

\textsuperscript{22} Galbraith, \textit{Constitution}, 145.
dead and the availability of salvation through purgatory led to a rising investment in the church and church buildings. The livings of churchmen multiplied as priests were required to say obit masses daily as well as the anniversary services which were set up by clerics and laymen to commemorate their deceased relatives, and to aid their souls’ journeys through purgatory. The foundation of new altars, whether in convents, collegiate churches or existing parish churches may well have fuelled the renewed interest in Scottish saints. The laity had other devotional attachments to certain saints, for example St Giles was patron of the burgh of Edinburgh and St Michael of Linlithgow. There was a growing corporate aspect to religious affiliation in this period and processions, such as the Corpus Christi procession held in June, demonstrated the position of the craft guilds in the towns as well as the position of the faithful in the Church. There was more emphasis on the Virgin Mary and on the life of Christ and his sufferings. Veneration of cults such as the Five Wounds of Christ or the Holy Blood gave focus to religious devotion and contemplation.

The probable outcome of the rising nationalism in the Scottish church in the fifteenth century was a better-educated and more self-aware clergy. This new awareness of Scottish identity was built upon the experiences of the Scottish ecclesiastics who had attended the Council of Basle, and who had made valuable contributions to the work of that council. In 1472, the crown finally achieved the internal and external rationalisation of the kingdom. Politically the crown gained control of Orkney and Shetland by marriage alliance. The king then managed to obtain from the papacy three new dioceses, Galloway (previously under York), the Isles (also known as Sodor) and Orkney, the latter two being procured from Trondheim in Norway in a bull of erection which raised St Andrews to an archbishopric.

With the confirmation by the Pope of Patrick Graham as the first archbishop of St Andrews, the Scottish church conformed to the pattern of other national churches. After the death of James III in 1488, James IV resented the incumbent archbishop, bequeathed to him by his father. He subsequently sought papal approval for the foundation of the archbishopric of Glasgow in 1492. The competition

25 Watt, 'The Papacy and Scotland in the Fifteenth Century', 123.
between the two archbishops may have complicated the political balance of the church but it does not appear to have held back the liturgical movement towards indigenous saints which complemented the new status of the national church. The culmination of the move back to venerating saints of Scottish origin was the compilation of the Aberdeen Breviary. This was intended to supplant the Sarum use on which the Scottish church had previously relied, breaking another tie with England.  

These changes form a pattern of continual reform and change in the Scottish church in the later medieval and early modern period. By the turn of the fifteenth century the church had a greatly increased number of collegiate churches and chaplainries and it had two archbishops, raising the status of St Andrews and Glasgow as ecclesiastical centres. An exceptional contribution was made to the church by William Elphinstone, bishop of Aberdeen, who was instrumental in the foundation of the university in that city and who engineered the Breviary project and saw it through to publication. In the early sixteenth century the patronage of the church by James IV saw the blossoming of Franciscan Observance and five new Observant houses were founded during his reign. In 1513 the Scottish church survived the defeat at the hands of the English at Flodden, although many of its clergy did not. Once the vacant benefices were filled, the church continued without hindrance, despite the events on the continent, until the wars of the 1540s with the English. These wars, the ‘Rough Wooings’ are also the subject of recent revision by Marcus Merriman, who bound church and politics together in his analysis.

The subject of reform became one of fierce debate and, indeed, bloodshed. The majority of the church, cleric and lay, probably continued as normal. The great wave of foundations of collegiate churches drew to a close in 1546 with the foundation of Biggar by Malcolm, Lord Fleming. The provincial councils of 1549 to 1559, held in the Dominican church in Edinburgh and attended by many of the order’s most dedicated reformers, owed something of their content to Trent, and something to German Catholic reform. They demonstrated an awareness among the higher clergy that there was a need to change,

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26 David McRoberts, ‘The Scottish Church and Nationalism’ in IR, xviii (1968), 7.
even if that change was slow.\textsuperscript{29} The universities became focuses for the discussion of new ideas and the possible types of reform. In those debates, the Dominicans were often called to judge when the desire for reforms overstepped the boundaries of legitimate concerns and became a matter of heresy.

This overview, although very brief, gives the flavour of the church during the 110 years from 1450 to 1560. The level of piety, in either the clergy or the laity, can never be measured. Religious traditions, however, can be examined within their historical context. The corporate Christianity of craft guilds and civic ceremonies, as it developed, must have provided many opportunities for the friars to preach. In the sixteenth century the desire for change in the church pushed the Dominicans forward, although, as is to be seen, not always in the direction of the Observance on which their province was supposed to be founded. The Dominicans were part of the changing church in the early modern period, affecting its course and being altered by it.