

‘That ye may judge for yourselves’¹:
The contribution of Scottish Presbyterianism towards the
emergence of political awareness amongst ordinary
people in Scotland between 1746 and 1792.

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¹ John Adamson, *A Sermon Preached on the 5th day of November 1788, being the secular anniversary of the Revolution* (Edinburgh, 1789), p.16.

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by myself. The work it embodies has been undertaken by me alone, and has not been included in any other thesis.

Signed:

Date:

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Abstract

This thesis offers a new interpretation of the origins of eighteenth-century popular political consciousness in Scotland during the second half of the eighteenth century by considering the relationship between Presbyterianism, literacy and political activity, and it examines the long-standing enmity to the authority of the elite expressed through patronage disputes, the burgh reform movement and opposition to Catholic relief. In particular it discusses the ongoing debate over lay ecclesiastical patronage arguing that religious dispute was a major stimulus to the process of politicising ordinary people. This process was aided by the inherent radicalism within Presbyterianism which was egalitarian and anti-hierarchical, and which was used to justify inclusion in the political process. It also emphasises the continuing relevance of Scotland's Covenanted tradition for people from all walks of life who engaged with ideas predominantly through polemical religious books, particularly Covenanted theology and history, and it argues that the clergy provided a crucial link between the general populace and the issues of the day through their ability to draw people into contemporary debate as a result of their preaching and publications.

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Chapter One

'Talk o' *patronage an' priests*'

Introduction

They lay aside their private cares,
To mind the Kirk and State affairs;
They'll talk o' patronage an' priests,
Wi' kindling fury i' their breasts,
Or tell what new taxation's comin,
An' ferlie at the folk in Lon'on.²

The purpose of this thesis is to suggest a new explanation of the origins of eighteenth-century popular political consciousness in Scotland during the second half of the eighteenth century. It argues that Presbyterianism was vital to the emergence of political awareness amongst ordinary people. During the eighteenth century there was an extensive debate about patronage and theological conformity, and the language of these religious disputes formed the basis of the language of political opposition. This thesis argues that religious dispute was therefore a major stimulus to the process of politicising ordinary people who exhibited their concern about issues of liberty and authority by using Scotland's Covenanted heritage to support their beliefs and challenge authority throughout the eighteenth century.³ The period after the Jacobite rising of 1745 saw Scottish society encountering rapid economic change which impinged on the relationship between the lower, middling and elite orders. It also encompassed the era of the American crisis, as well as campaigns for political reform, making this period of

² Robert Burns, 'The Twa Dogs (1785), James A. Mackay (ed.), *The Complete Works of Robert Burns* (Ayr, 1986), p.143.

³ The issues of patronage, theological orthodoxy and the Scots Covenanted tradition will be discussed in chapter two. The Covenanted heritage was not merely theological. It included the history, biography and mythology of the Covenanters.

particular interest in any explanation of the development of popular political awareness prior to the 1790s.

When political reform societies emerged in numerous Scottish towns and cities in 1792 their primary objective was parliamentary reform, but by early 1793, after most of the middle-class leadership of the Scottish Friends of the People had dissociated themselves from the movement, this aim widened to include universal male suffrage. These radical societies did not simply spring up fully formed from nowhere, and this thesis aims to explain why ordinary people were so quickly swept up in a radical movement by arguing that there had been a long-standing opposition to the authority of the elite expressed through patronage disputes, burgh reform and opposition to Catholic relief, which could be readily tapped by the new democratic societies. This was aided by the inherent radicalism within Presbyterianism which was egalitarian and anti-hierarchical, and which was used to justify inclusion in the political process. Hence, Patrick Bannerman (1715-98), Church of Scotland minister at Saltoun and writer on religious and civil liberties, could argue that ‘the constitution of your church is republican. Presbytery is formed on the model of a commonwealth; patronage favours arbitrary government’.⁴

Furthermore, the exercise of choice in determining a minister was according to Bannerman ‘almost the only point wherein our commons have known liberty, and which our Presbyterian government has indulged and tutored them to exercise’.⁵ Within and beyond the Established Church the rise of evangelicalism offered a challenge to Church and state, as some individuals started to exercise control over their own religious experiences and in so doing

⁴ Patrick Bannerman, *An Address To The People Of Scotland On Ecclesiastical And Civil Liberty* (Edinburgh, 1782), p.9.

⁵ *Tracts Concerning Patronage, by some eminent hands* (Edinburgh, 1770), p.183.

diminished the authority of the clergy. The hegemony of the elite was challenged because the Church was a major means of maintaining social control, and the influence of the elite was flouted with every contested patronage settlement. In addition, the Secession and Relief Churches offered Presbyterian alternatives, which of itself was a challenge, because those unhappy within the Established Church had other options. Many of those who were most concerned by these issues were ordinary working people. Hence, the ‘fury’ of Robert Burns’ ‘poor-folk’, and others not so poor, after the restoration of lay ecclesiastical patronage in 1712.⁶

A number of key factors contribute to this argument including the Presbyterian drive for literacy, which was an essential component in enabling ordinary people to gain access to ideas. That literacy extended to the lower orders of society caused no little stir for English visitors. Daniel Defoe commented on Scottish congregations

That in a whole church full of people, not one shall be seen without a Bible... If you shut your eyes when the minister names any text of scripture, you shall hear a little rustling noise over the whole place, made by turning the leaves of the Bible.⁷

Similarly George Whitefield (1714-70), Methodist minister, preaching at Ralph Erskine’s (1686-1752), meeting-house at Dunfermline in 1741, wrote of his surprise at the sound of the ‘rustling made by opening the Bibles ... a scene I never was witness to before’.⁸ Scottish Calvinism also had the potential to encourage the development of a questioning attitude through the insistence that individuals should engage with their hearing and reading in a spirit of enquiry, not

⁶ Burns, ‘Twa Dogs’.

⁷ Daniel Defoe, *Memoirs of the Church of Scotland* (1717) (Edinburgh, 1844), p.106, cited in Arthur Fawcett, *The Cambuslang Revival: The Scottish Evangelical Revival of the eighteenth century* (Edinburgh, 1971), pp.80-81.

⁸ Fawcett, *ibid.*, p.81.

just simple acceptance. This helps to set in context, how, by November 1792, when Norman Macleod wrote to Charles Grey about the proclamation against seditious writing, he could observe:

The Proclamation acted like an Electric shock! it set people of all ranks a-reading and as everybody in this Country can read, the people are already astonishingly informed. Farmers, ploughmen, peasants, manufacturers, artificers, shopkeepers, sailors, merchants are all employed in studying and reasoning on the nature of Society and Government.... The people are everywhere associating, reading, deliberating and corresponding: they do not appear to be under the influence of leaders nor are they easily led. They are thinking for themselves.⁹

The clergy, Moderate, Popular and from the Secession Churches, advocated reading and serious engagement with Scripture, essentially as means of guiding their flocks to salvation, but in so doing they opened the door to literacy, and the possibility of alternative viewpoints. The clergy also provided a crucial link between the general populace and the issues of the day through their ability to draw people into contemporary debate as a result of their preaching and publications. They involved themselves in the patronage issue, the American crisis, the anti-Catholic relief campaign, the campaign for political reform, and the anti-slavery campaign, using their pulpits and publications to offer opinions on these issues. Iain Whyte maintains that Scottish ministers ‘fulfilled a key role in mobilising public support against the slave trade between 1788 and 1792’.¹⁰ Furthermore, as Karen Bowie has highlighted in the pre-Union period, there was already ‘an expanding presence of political communication’, which was aided by a relaxation of state censorship and a growing book trade.¹¹ Although the number and circulation of newspapers in Scotland lagged behind the English press, Bob

⁹ Edward Hughes, ‘The Scottish Reform Movement and Charles Grey 1792-94: Some Fresh Correspondence’, *Scottish Historical Review* [SHR], Vol. 35 No. 1 (1956), pp.31-32.

¹⁰ Iain Whyte, *Scotland and the Abolition of Black Slavery, 1756-1838* (Edinburgh, 2006), p.71.

¹¹ Karen Bowie, ‘Public opinion, popular politics and the union of 1707’, *SHR*, Vol. 82 No. 214 (2003), p.228. See also A. J. Mann, *The Scottish Book Trade 1500-1720: Print Commerce and Print Control in Early Modern Scotland* (East Linton, 2000).

Harris argues that by mid century the Scottish press showed a growing interest in political affairs, and by the 1770s increasing numbers of artisans had access to newspapers.¹²

The rise of Moderatism within the Church of Scotland brought the Enlightenment into the Church, but resulted in a serious division between Moderates and those who retained their commitment to orthodox Calvinism sustained by the Covenanting tradition. The divisions between Popular and Moderate clergy had significant repercussions in Scottish society, helping to maintain popular opposition to patronage. Despite Richard Sher's assertion, that the Moderate *literati* 'employed their institutional authority and intellectual talents to make the ideals and values of Moderatism pre-eminent in the Scotland of their day', their success can be questioned, as many ordinary Scots remained deeply hostile to Moderatism, regarding it as a regime which was inimical to popular rights, and one trying to impose an unwanted theology while denigrating Scotland's Covenanting heritage.¹³

A further highly significant factor was that people from all walks of life engaged with ideas through book buying and borrowing. They did this by reading predominantly polemical religious works, particularly Covenanting theology and history. This can be demonstrated from the evidence of subscription lists for books whose publication costs had been paid for in advance. These lists are hugely important as they provide access to a wealth of largely untapped material relating to over 47,000 subscribers. They provide detailed information about the

¹² Bob Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press: Britain and France, 1620-1800* (London, New York, 1996), pp.11, 21, 28; idem, 'Scotland's Newspapers, the French Revolution and Domestic Radicalism (c.1789-1794)', *SHR*, Vol. 84 No. 1 (2005), pp.38-62; idem, 'Parliamentary Legislation, Lobbying and the Press in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', *Parliamentary History*, Vol. 26 No. 1 (2007), pp.76-95.

¹³ R. B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh* (Princeton and Edinburgh, 1985), p.14.

subscribers, not only giving the names of the individuals who bought books in this way, but also their genders, locations and occupations, as well as the details of the books themselves, including the number of copies purchased. The subscription lists and the works they relate to are the major source of information for this thesis and provide the backbone of new research material for this study. In addition to this material Mark Towsey's work on Enlightenment books and their readers in provincial Scotland, which uses information from library catalogues, has demonstrated that readers, predominantly from the middle and upper echelons of society, but also including some from much lower down the social scale, had some awareness of Enlightenment texts through increasing access to circulating and subscription libraries.¹⁴ There was also fairly extensive informal book borrowing through friends, neighbours, estate owners and the clergy, and a growing number of reading societies which were known to have been developing in towns such as Paisley and Glasgow.

Finally, the importance of Presbyterianism to the development of political consciousness may also be determined by the 'political' activity, in a broad sense, in which people involved themselves long before the emergence of any democratic reform movements. This was mainly expressed through opposition to lay ecclesiastical patronage. Patronage disputes were widespread across eighteenth-century Scotland and were significant in part because they displayed clear opposition to the elite and to government policy. They were also significant because they involved whole communities, with opposition from heritors, elders, and heads of families, essentially including people from every stratum of society. It will be demonstrated in this thesis that heads of families were employed in

¹⁴ Mark R. M. Towsey, *Reading The Scottish Enlightenment: Books and their Readers in Provincial Scotland, 1750-1820* (Leiden, 2010).

every type of occupation, and every walk of life, and hence patronage disputes offer an important view of ordinary people's involvement in a widespread public debate. Although patronage disputes were numerous they were not the only area of involvement, and ordinary people were also prominent in the Catholic relief campaign and the burgh reform movement. However, even these should not be viewed in isolation, as such disputes were far from the only form of protest in which Scots engaged. There were meal mobs, customs riots, and election riots, as well as the growth of trades associations whose members increasingly resorted to strikes.¹⁵ Hence by the 1790s many ordinary Scots were already well schooled in protest.

Who were these ordinary people? They were the 'non-entities in the political state', predominantly artisans and tradesmen, people who had no formal political voice in Scotland but who none the less made up the vast majority of the population.¹⁶ In this study social status has been derived from the occupations on book subscription lists. These lists specified 423 occupations, and these have been divided into three broad groups, which have been used to categorise the subscribers' social standing.¹⁷ 'Artisans, servants and lower orders' were predominantly employed in occupations requiring practical skills or physical effort, such as day-labourers, shoemakers, weavers, and pitch boilers. The 'middling orders and professionals' category includes dealers in goods and

¹⁵ S. G. E. Lythe, 'The Tayside Meal Mobs 1772-3', *SHR*, Vol. 46 No. 1 (1967), pp.26-36; R. K. Donovan, *No Popery and Radicalism: Opposition to Roman Catholic Relief in Scotland 1778-1782* (New York, London, 1987); Kenneth J. Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland 1780-1815* (Edinburgh, 1979); A. Murdoch, 'Politics and the People in the Burgh of Dumfries, 1758-1760', *SHR*, Vol. 70 No. 2 (1991), pp.151-171; W. Hamish Fraser, *Conflict and Class: Scottish Workers 1700-1838* (Edinburgh, 1988).

¹⁶ National Archives of Scotland [NAS], High Court of Justiciary processes, Loose Papers, JC26/280, draft Address to the Public from the Friends of the People.

¹⁷ Occupational status has been divided into three groups based broadly on definitions used in previous studies. See David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order* (Cambridge, 1980), pp.118-141; Stana Nenadic, 'The Rise of the Urban Middle Class', in Devine and Mitchison (eds), *People and society in Scotland 1760-1830*, pp.109-126.

services, such as merchants, manufacturers, and teachers. The ‘elite’ category includes aristocrats, heritors, lairds, life renters, judges and portioners - the people who had a political voice.

However, defining who ‘ordinary people’ were can be problematic. As Stana Nenadic has observed, there is the difficulty of the ‘blurring’ of distinctions between the middling and lower orders, because certain groups, such as the ‘labour aristocracy’ or merchants, moved across such boundaries.¹⁸ In addition, certain occupational terms, such as ‘merchant’, ‘portioner’ or ‘bookseller’, can describe individuals who came from widely differing social levels. For example, in this study the description bookseller denotes both an itinerant hawker/bookseller, such as Peter Craig from Perth, who was also known for his connection to the Friends of the People and the Pike Plot of 1794, and an individual of considerable standing such as William Creech, who had a bookshop in the High Street in Edinburgh and was also a hugely successful publisher of Enlightenment works, including *The Statistical Account of Scotland* (1791-99).¹⁹ The distinction between the two indicates the difference in social standing which such terms may encompass.

This thesis will suggest that those involved in popular protests such as patronage disputes which long pre-date the reform movements of the 1780s and 1790s predominantly involved ordinary artisans and tradesmen, the type of people

¹⁸ Nenadic, *ibid.*, p.110.

¹⁹ For Creech and his publishing connections to the Enlightenment see Richard B. Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors & Their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, & America* (Chicago and London, 2006), pp.401-440. For Craig see Edinburgh University Library [EUL], Laing MSS, Division ii, 500-501, no. 1736, William Scott to the Lord Advocate, 3 Dec. 1797; NAS, Home Office: Correspondence, Letters and Papers, Scotland, RH2/4/73, ff.228-230, ‘List of those who have called on [Thomas Fyssh] Palmer since his confinement with the date of each call, 14th. September-November 1793’; RH2/4/75, ff.375-376, Report by J.B., 18 Apr. 1794; T. J. Howell, *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason and other Crimes and Misdemeanours from the Earliest Period to the Year 1783, with Notes and Other Illustrations*, 33 Vols (London, 1817-19), Vol. 23, col. 1218.

with which this study is mainly concerned. In addition, it will demonstrate that types of protest, such as burgh and parliamentary reform in the 1780s, which have in the past been viewed as the activities exclusively of the middling orders, included a wide range of ‘artisans, servants and lower orders’. Furthermore, the evidence from subscription lists which will be presented in this thesis also reveals an interest in issues of liberty and authority from men and women who were bakers, shoemakers, weavers, miners, printers, smiths and tanners, none of whom had direct access to political power because in eighteenth-century Scotland the aristocratic, landed elite maintained a strangle-hold on political life. The Scottish county franchise was so restricted that a study of voters in 1788 listed just 2,662 individuals, and it was estimated, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, that 1,200 of those voters were believed to have been fictitious, from a total Scottish population of approximately 1,500,000.²⁰ The situation in the burghs was even less representative, with a burgh M.P. chosen by delegates from a group of town councils, which could amount to as few as four individuals.²¹ Across the eighteenth century ‘ordinary people’ were well aware of this lack of access.

I

After 1745 Scotland was a society where new economic and agrarian ventures were forcing the pace of change and the economic impact of the Union

²⁰ Charles Adam, *View of the political state of Scotland in the last century: a confidential report on the political opinions, family connections, or personal circumstances of the 2662 county voters in 1788* (Edinburgh, 1887). The report was originally compiled to assist William Adam and Henry Erskine manage the interests of the Whig Opposition in Scotland at the 1790 general election, but it was not published until a century later; E. and A. G. Porritt, *The Unreformed House of Commons: Parliamentary Representation Before 1832*, 2 Vols (Cambridge 1903), Vol. 2, p.84. Landowners could create fictitious voters by subdividing parcels of land and the new titleholder would vote according to the wishes of the original landowner.

²¹ Porritt, *ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp.115-142. There were fifteen burgh M.P.s. Edinburgh had a sole representative and the remaining burghs were divided into fourteen groups. For example, Perth, Dundee, Cupar, Forfar and St. Andrews each elected a delegate to the burgh convention, and these five delegates then chose the M.P.

was beginning to be felt. In the second half of the eighteenth-century Scotland experienced almost the fastest rate of urban growth in Europe.²² The growth of commercial society played its part in engaging people's minds to the changing reality of their productive and social relationships, because changing forms of economic activity had an impact on ordinary people as they were increasingly drawn into a wider circle of commercial relationships.

In towns in Lowland Scotland workers were experiencing rapid changes from mid-century which saw an increasing dependence on wage-earning and a move away from self-reliance. Changes to working practices, particularly specialisation and the division of labour which increasing commercialisation brought, produced a process of de-skilling workers which had a profound impact on the individual's sense of being an independent artisan, and caused serious friction within the workplace.²³ This encroached on the commercial relationship between worker and owner and helped to fuel the tensions within eighteenth-century Scottish society.²⁴ As the new regularised world of work impinged on greater numbers of people, so commercialisation placed a new value on the citizen through work, and changing economic relationships in urban society were demonstrated in an elite view of workers as 'idle', 'rogues' and 'vagabonds' because they were reluctant to embrace 'regular, closely monitored and often centralised work'.²⁵ In Scotland such changes were probably more dramatic than

²² R. A. Houston, 'The Demographic Regime', in T. M. Devine and R. Mitchison (eds), *People and society in Scotland 1760-1830* Vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1988), p.22.

²³ Christopher A. Whatley, 'Roots of 1790s Radicalism: Reviewing the Economic and Social Background', in Bob Harris (ed.), *Scotland in the Age of the French Revolution* (Edinburgh, 2005), pp.23-48.

²⁴ Christopher A. Whatley, 'The Experience of Work', in Devine and Mitchison (eds), *People and society in Scotland 1760-1830*, pp.227-251; idem, *Scottish Society 1707-1830: Beyond Jacobitism, towards industrialisation* (Manchester and New York, 2000), Chs 5 and 6; Fraser, *Conflict and Class*, idem, *Scottish Popular Politics From Radicalism to Labour* (Edinburgh, 2000), Chs 1 and 2.

²⁵ Whatley, 'Experience of Work', p.228.

for their English counterparts because the pace of change was faster and took place over a shorter period of time.

In the countryside practical agricultural ‘improvements’ also affected the patterns of rural life and transformed social relations engendering resentment.²⁶ This occurred through the implementation of enclosures, the amalgamation of farms to create more commercially viable, single-tenant holdings, and by curtailing traditional practices such as the right of the poor to glean unharvested crops. In addition, there were tensions created by an aristocracy criticised by William Thom (1710-90), Popular minister at Govan, for ‘the screwing of land-rent’ from tenants unable to pay, and also criticised by the Revd Archibald Bruce (bap.1748-1816), Anti-burgher minister at Whitburn, for abandoning ‘the cause of popular liberty and reformation, in opposition to the tyranny of the crown and church united’, when they had previously joined with ordinary folk in a common Covenanted cause.²⁷ Hence, by 1794 Bruce maintained that the elite’s ‘rigorous exercise of ecclesiastical patronage’, had resulted in ‘the burden of the struggle for liberty and reform ... [being] wholly devolved on the inferior and poorer sort of people, with whom the former or higher class, have now completely lost their credit and influence’.²⁸ Unease with rural change had been foreshadowed by the earlier grievances of the ‘Galloway Levellers’ of the 1720s, who combined social

²⁶ Whatley, *Scottish Society 1707-1830*, Ch. 4; idem, ‘Roots of 1790s Radicalism’, pp.28-29; T. M. Devine, *The Transformation of Rural Scotland: Social Change and Agrarian Development, 1660-1815* (Edinburgh, 1994), p.165; Malcolm Gray, ‘The Social Impact of Agrarian Change in the Rural Lowlands’, in Devine and Mitchison (eds), *People and society in Scotland 1760-1830*, p.60; T. M. Devine, ‘Social Responses To Agrarian ‘Improvement’: The Highland And Lowland Clearances In Scotland’, in R. A. Houston and I. D. Whyte, *Scottish Society 1500-1800* (New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney, 1989), pp.148-168; P. Clapham, ‘Agricultural Change and its Impact on Tenancy: The Evidence of Angus Rentals and Tacks, c.1760-1850’, in A. J. G. Cummings and T. M. Devine (eds), *Industry, Business & Society in Scotland since 1700* (Edinburgh, 1994), pp.144-163.

²⁷ [William Thom], *A Candid Enquiry into the Causes of the late and the Intended Migrations from Scotland* (Glasgow, [1771]), p.28; Archibald Bruce, *Reflections on Freedom of Writing* (Edinburgh, 1794), p.88.

²⁸ Bruce, *ibid.*

and religious protest, drawing on the Covenanting tradition.²⁹ This was a tradition, which, this thesis argues, remained a powerful inspiration for protest across the century. In addition, changes in agricultural production forced many rural labourers to uproot and move to the towns to find work, where an increasing number of displaced farm workers added to the growing urban population of those dependent on wages.

In both town and country such changes produced significant tensions. Urban growth led to disputes between landowners over boundaries and common land, and also to a growing segregation by social status. For example, it became less and less common to find the hotchpotch of living conditions described in Edinburgh in 1773, where the aristocracy lived in the same buildings as tradesmen and artisans.

[E]ntered by a common stair ... *First door upstairs*, Mr Stirling, fishmonger; *Second door*, Mrs Urquhart, who kept a lodging-house ... *Third flat*, the Dowager Countess of Balcarres ... *Fourth flat*, Mrs Buchan of Kelly ... *Fifth flat*, the Misses Elliotts, then milliners and mantuamakers ... *Garrets*, a great variety of tailors and other tradesmen.³⁰

Similarly, in a smaller town such as Perth, those who moved out of the older city properties into new developments were exhibiting a growing ‘class’ awareness, as demonstrated in the town council’s stipulations for the use of the land around their new homes. The land was not to be used ‘for the making of soap or candles, glass

²⁹ Callum Brown, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland Since 1730* (London and New York, 1987), pp.15-16; Valerie Wallace, ‘Presbyterian Moral Economy: The Covenanting Tradition and Popular Protest in Lowland Scotland, 1707-c.1746’, *SHR*, Vol. 89 No. 1 (2010), pp.59-62. The Levellers’ revolt took place in 1724, and continued for over a year. Their grievance was about enclosures, and they complained of the unfairness ‘that whole *Baronies* and *Country-sides* should be laid waste, for the private Interest of some particular Men’. *An Account of the reasons of some people in Galloway, their meetings anent publick grievances through inclosures* ([Edinburgh], 1724), p.2.

³⁰ Robert Chambers, *Reekiana or Minor antiquities of Edinburgh*, (Edinburgh, 1833), p.228, cited in T. C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People 1560–1830* (1969: London, 1998 edn), p.346.

or vitriol, nor for boiling yarn, slaughtering or coppersmithing nor for a chemistry laboratory, nor for any purpose which might give offence to neighbours'.³¹

These conditions illustrated the changing customs, manners and living conditions by which the new middling order sought to divorce itself from the lower orders. So too did other changes, such as the erection of 'laird's lofts', and 'pewing', whereby heritors (landowners) appropriated parts of the ground floor of the parish church to reflect the valuation of their landholdings in the parish. This led to the erection of fixed pews, replacing the stools that people had previously brought to church, and congregations that were segregated by status. Although tradesmen and tenants had accepted pewing from its introduction after 1720, it became increasingly divisive because people were still paying directly to the Church, for example, for the upkeep of the poor, but had less and less say in its government as patrons increasingly exercised their right to select a minister.³² This was still problematic by the 1790s, although by this time it could incorporate an overtly political aspect. For example, when members of the Shoemakers Incorporation of Perth proposed in 1794, that their seats in church might be rented out to the poor, it was asserted by opposing members, that this was because those individuals were political radicals: 'some of those who give their sanction [are] well known to be tinctured with principles which tend to create an innovation in more important matters'.³³

³¹ Perth & Kinross Council Archives [P&KCA], Perth Burgh Records, PE15 Bundle 302 Memorandum of terms and conditions as to the building of Rose Terrace, 1795.

³² C. G. Brown, 'Protest in the Pews: Interpreting Presbyterianism and Society in Fracture During the Scottish Economic Revolution', in T. M. Devine (ed.), *Conflict and Stability in Scottish Society 1700-1850* (Edinburgh, 1990), pp.91-92; Brown, *Social History of Religion in Scotland Since 1730*, pp.102-103; idem, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707* (Edinburgh, 1997), pp.76-77.

³³ P&KCA, Perth Burgh Records, MS 156, Shoemaker Incorporation of Perth, Minutes 23 April 1794.

The growth of commercial society also saw political challenges from trades incorporations to the dominance of self-perpetuating, often corrupt, town councils in the burghs, as merchants and tradesmen demanded changes to towns' setts (constitutions), in order to obtain a wider and freer representation on local councils. The only opportunity for ordinary people to gain access to some kind of political power was when the guilds and trades incorporations voted for their representatives for seats on the council, although, as burgh councils had the right of veto through the leeting process, which allowed the council to choose the representative from a list of proposed candidates, it was a very limited form of popular power. At Edinburgh, for example, there had been long-standing disputes between the trades' and merchants' sides of the council over voting rights, and in 1721 an action had been taken to the Court of Session to resolve the issue.³⁴ However, by the end of the century such disputes were still a source of friction.³⁵

These challenges brought conflict, and, while some historians have argued that eighteenth-century Scottish society was largely tranquil, and Lowland Scots were an essentially deferential and docile people, more recently this view has been challenged.³⁶ Christopher Whatley's research into popular protest highlights numerous instances of food and excise riots, and he suggests that 'disturbances, in which the concepts of deference and respect for the law were mocked, were endemic in Scotland'.³⁷ Valerie Wallace has argued that, in the first half of the

³⁴ Hugo Arnot, *The History Of Edinburgh from the Earliest Accounts to the year 1780* (Edinburgh, 1779), pp.397-398.

³⁵ Sir John Sinclair (ed.), *The Statistical Account for Scotland 1791-1799 [OSA]*, 21 Vols (Wakefield, 1975), Vol. 5, p.534 (Glasgow).

³⁶ Smout, *History of the Scottish People 1560-1830*, pp.412-416; T. M. Devine, 'The Failure of Radical Reform in Scotland in the late Eighteenth Century: The Social and Economic Context', in Devine (ed.), *Conflict and Stability in Scottish Society 1700-1850*, pp.51-64.

³⁷ Whatley, *Scottish Society 1707-1830*, pp.171-174, 188-91, 195-209; idem, 'How tame were the Scottish Lowlanders during the Eighteenth Century?', in Devine (ed.), *Conflict and Stability in Scottish Society 1700-1850*, pp.1-30; Christopher A. Whatley, 'The Union of 1707, Integration and the Scottish Burghs: The Case of the 1720 Food Riots', *SHR*, Vol. 78 No. 2 (1999), pp.192-218.

eighteenth century, a Covenanting ideology conflated notions of economic justice with criticism of an illegitimate state, and provided justification for taking part in grain riots, customs disputes and smuggling, based on arguments about the legitimacy of an un-covenanted monarchy and an erastian British state.³⁸ She has also ascertained the continuity of radical protest and the Covenanting legacy into the nineteenth century, both within Scotland, and in the transatlantic community.³⁹ W. Hamish Fraser has demonstrated the range of artisans' associations which developed from the beginning of the eighteenth century and how their involvement in combinations and strikes became commonplace, one group 'learning from another'.⁴⁰ In addition, the work of historians such as William Ferguson, R. A. Houston, Alexander Murdoch and Richard Sher, who have brought to light political activity in Scottish burghs, suggests that eighteenth-century Scots were less compliant than is sometimes believed.⁴¹ If one also considers the numerous disputes occasioned by 'intruded' ministers, and a conservative estimate suggests that from 1712 to 1874 between one third and one half of Scotland's parishes had a contested settlement, and if one also includes the activities of anti-Catholic relief campaigners, burgh reformers, and the Friends of

³⁸ Wallace, 'Presbyterian Moral Economy', pp.59-68.

³⁹ Valerie Wallace, *Exporting Radicalism within the Empire: Scots Presbyterian Political Values in Scotland and British North America, c.1815-c.1850*, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of Glasgow, 2009).

⁴⁰ Fraser, *Conflict and Class*; idem, 'The Scottish Context of Chartism', in Terry Brotherstone (ed.), *Covenant, Charter and Party: Traditions of Revolt and Protest in Modern Scottish History* (Aberdeen, 1989), p.64.

⁴¹ A. Murdoch, 'The Importance of Being Edinburgh: Management and opposition in Edinburgh Politics, 1746-1784', *SHR*, Vol. 62 No. 1 (1983), pp.1-16; Murdoch, 'Politics and the People in the Burgh of Dumfries, 1758-1760'; W. Ferguson, 'Dingwall Burgh Politics and the Parliamentary Franchise in the Eighteenth Century', *SHR*, Vol. 38 No. 2 (1959), pp.89-108; W. L. Burn, 'The General Election of 1761 at Ayr', *The English Historical Review [EHR]*, Vol. 52 No. 1 (1937), pp.103-109; R. A. Houston, 'Popular Politics in the Reign of George II: The Edinburgh Cordiners', *SHR*, Vol. 72 No. 2 (1993), pp.167-189; R. B. Sher, 'Moderates, Managers and Popular Politics in Mid-Eighteenth Century Edinburgh: The Drysdale 'Bustle' of the 1760s', in J. Dwyer, R. A. Mason and A. Murdoch (eds), *New Perspectives on the Politics and Culture of Early Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1982), pp.179-209; W. Brydon, 'Politics, Government and Society in Edinburgh, 1780-1833', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of Wales, Bangor 1989).

the People, it can be seen that such activity intertwines to create a picture of a populace that was far from docile or deferential.⁴²

II

For historians of a previous generation, such as Henry Meikle and William Mathieson, the last two decades of the eighteenth century were deemed the point at which ordinary people in Scotland had a political ‘awakening’.⁴³ In the 1980s John Brims suggested that the origin of the radicalism of the 1790s was to be found in the failure of the burgh reform movement.⁴⁴ More recently, Bob Harris has argued that the roots of Scottish ‘Jacobin’ politics may be found earlier than this in the rise of religious dissent, along with the growth of manufacturing villages in Lowland Scotland, which helped to weaken traditional social controls, and in conjunction with factors such as the growth of public debate in the press.⁴⁵ Robert Kent Donovan maintained that the anti-Catholic relief campaign of 1778 to 1782 brought political awareness to large numbers of Scotsmen for the first time.⁴⁶

This thesis will suggest that religious dispute and debate was central to arousing political awareness, and that the roots of dissent can be discerned well before the 1780s. Historians such as Alasdair Raffe, Karen Bowie and Jeffrey Stephen have demonstrated how religious controversy during the seventeenth century and at the beginning of the eighteenth century in Scotland saw the

⁴² Brown, ‘Protest in the Pews’, pp.97-99.

⁴³ William Law Mathieson, *The Awakening Of Scotland: A History From 1747 To 1797* (Glasgow, 1910), pp.92-144; Henry Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution* (Edinburgh, 1912), pp.1-40.

⁴⁴ John Brims, ‘From Reformers to ‘Jacobins’: The Scottish Association of the Friends of the People’, in Devine (ed.), *Conflict and Stability in Scottish Society 1700-1850*, pp.31-50.

⁴⁵ Bob Harris, *The Scottish People and the French Revolution* (London, 2008).

⁴⁶ Donovan, *No Popery and Radicalism*.

significant involvement of ordinary people.⁴⁷ It appears improbable that such people should have retreated into silence until their ‘awakening’ in the last decade of the eighteenth century, and this study aims to demonstrate that this was far from the case and that ordinary people were neither quiet nor acquiescent.

In Michael Walzer’s study of Calvinist politics during the hundred years before the English Revolution, he has argued that radicalism was probably first expressed through the medium of religious aspiration, and that Calvinism provided the ideological system.⁴⁸ Walzer maintained that Calvinism rejected passivity and was committed to reform, while emphasising organization, discipline, obedience and activity. Through this, he has suggested, Calvinism produced individuals confident both in attacking the hierarchies of the old social order and in engaging in the reformation of society, which gave rise to a new order, and sustained people for a new political role. He regarded Calvinism as neither theology nor philosophy, but as an ideology, which ‘activated its adherents to change the world’.⁴⁹ While Walzer was concerned largely with the early political development of English Puritanism, his contention that Calvinism enabled people to claim the right of participation in politics suggests parallels with eighteenth-century Scots Presbyterians and their struggles initially against patronage, and latterly in their overt commitment to political radicalism by the early 1790s.

However, in an assertion diametrically opposed to Walzer’s, T. C. Smout maintained that for those who did not succeed in the new economic conditions

⁴⁷ Alasdair Raffe, ‘Religious Controversy and Scottish Society, c.1679-1714’, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of Edinburgh, 2007); Jeffrey Stephen *Scottish Presbyterians and the Act of Union 1707* (Edinburgh, 2007); Bowie, ‘Public opinion, popular politics and the union of 1707’, pp.226-260.

⁴⁸ Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (London, 1966), pp.19-27.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.27.

created by ‘improvement’, Calvinism not only provided the solace of an, ‘everlasting’ rather than a worldly reward, it engendered a fatalism that made opposition pointless. He suggested that the ‘passivity’ expressed in the writing of ministers such as Ralph Erskine or Thomas Boston, when they preached that ‘God and the world cannot be served by one and the same man’, was rejected by those who responded to new economic opportunities, while, for those who did not succeed, such sentiments helped them to keep their self-respect.⁵⁰ Smout maintained that, as

All wealth was spurious; rich and poor were equally sinful; earthly life was a brief spasm in existence; everlasting rewards came later to the patient, the humble, and the penitent elect. In this way rural Calvinism worked against Radicalism. How could there conceivably be any point in protest or revolt? If there were to be rewards they would come in God’s good time.⁵¹

Or, as R. H. Campbell has suggested in his discussion of the influence of the Enlightenment on the Scottish economy: ‘The acceptance of a divinely ordained natural order led to a resigned acceptance of existing practices, in economic as in other aspects of life’.⁵² However, Campbell also maintained that the real question, *vis-à-vis* religion, was ‘not whether there was a socially disruptive challenge to the existing order from the religious thought of the time, but whether its disruptive elements were potentially conducive to economic growth?’⁵³ He concluded that it was possible for the motivation derived from strong personal faith to result in a socially stable environment, which encouraged economic prosperity. Despite his agreement with Henry Buckle’s observation that through the Church ‘the Scotch always had one direction in which they could speak and act with unrestrained liberty’, his argument underplayed the impact of

⁵⁰ Smout, *History of the Scottish People 1560-1830*, p.309.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.309.

⁵² R. H. Campbell, ‘The Enlightenment and the Economy’, in R. H. Campbell and Andrew Skinner (eds), *The Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1982), p.13.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.15.

religion in political terms.⁵⁴ In addition, neither Campbell nor Smout's views can be reconciled with the evidence, which will be offered in this thesis, which demonstrates that Calvinism, far from inculcating resignation, was central to the development of popular political awareness.

The views of Campbell and Smout are in stark contrast to Callum Brown who has taken issue with both, maintaining that they attributed to Calvinism the suppression of 'Scottish plebeian revolt against the injustices of capitalist advance', while disregarding the fact that the commonest forms of social protest in eighteenth and nineteenth century Scotland were disputes in the Kirk mostly over patronage.⁵⁵ Brown has argued that it was through the Church that class identity emerged within popular culture. He also maintained that the Covenanters were the precursors of modern Presbyterian dissent, channelling social divisions into the religious sphere, and that in the eighteenth century, within the context of economic changes, social aspirations which were identified with Presbyterian freedoms brought schisms, which translated the seventeenth-century Presbyterian struggle into a vocabulary of general resistance to authority.⁵⁶ Brown's argument is much closer to the one offered in this thesis, but while he briefly discussed the late eighteenth century, his predominant interest was in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nevertheless, he is virtually a lone voice in addressing the patronage issue both from the perspective of the non-elite layman, and in arguing for its connection to democratic politics.

Ned Landsman's work was largely concerned with the transatlantic evangelical community and relations between Scotland and America, suggesting

⁵⁴ H. J. Hanham (ed.), Henry Thomas Buckle, *On Scotland and the Scotch Intellect*, (Chicago and London, 1970), p.234.

⁵⁵ Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707*, p.179. See also Brown, 'Protest in the Pews', pp.83-105.

⁵⁶ Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707*, pp.16, 77.

that there was a ‘popular enlightenment’ in the west of Scotland in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁵⁷ However, aspects of his research have particular significance for this thesis, particularly his contention that the weaving community in Glasgow encouraged literacy and religious study, and that weavers were responsible for making a wide range of religious materials available to the reading public. In addition, he has demonstrated the importance of the Popular clergy who saw the ‘call’ as a means of instilling a spirit of liberty in congregations, and who also encouraged a culture of participation, education and self-improvement in the city. However, this thesis while supporting these arguments will demonstrate that both the book culture and opposition to patronage were considerably more widespread than the weaving community and Glasgow, although Glasgow was a very significant centre for Calvinist theology and the Covenanted tradition.

Colin Kidd has argued that the Covenanted past provided inspiration for Scottish popular protest in the late eighteenth century, and that the Covenanted debate between adherents of the Secession and Relief Churches alerted a ‘newer breed of radicals who emerged in the wake of the French Revolution to a deep-laid indigenous critique of the British state’.⁵⁸ His conclusions are significant

⁵⁷ Ned Landsman, ‘Evangelists and Their Hearers: Popular Interpretation of Revivalist Preaching in Eighteenth-Century Scotland’, *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 28 No. 2 (1989), pp.120-149; idem, ‘Liberty, Piety and Patronage: The Social Context of Contested Clerical Calls in Eighteenth-Century Glasgow’, in A. Hook and R B Sher, *The Glasgow Enlightenment* (East Linton, 1995), pp.214-226; idem, ‘Presbyterians and Provincial Society: The Evangelical Enlightenment in the West of Scotland, 1740-1775’, in John Dwyer and Richard B. Sher (eds), *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp.194-209; idem, ‘Witherspoon and the Problem of Provincial Identity in Scottish Evangelical Culture’, in Richard B. Sher and Jeffrey R. Smitten (eds), *Scotland & America in the age of the enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1990), pp.29-45; idem, ‘The Provinces and the Empire: Scotland, the American colonies and the development of British provincial identity’, in Lawrence Stone (ed.), *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London; New York, 1994), pp.258-287.

⁵⁸ Colin Kidd, ‘Conditional Britons: The Scots Covenanted Tradition and the Eighteenth-century British State’, *EHR*, Vol. 117 No. 5 (2002), pp.1147-1176; idem, ‘Constructing a civil religion: Scots Presbyterians and the eighteenth-century British state’, in James Kirk (ed.), *The Scottish Churches and the Union Parliament 1707-1999* (Edinburgh, 2001), pp.1-21.

emphasizing the continuing value of the Covenanting tradition, and recognizing that its importance was not just in terms of the theological debate but also in its history and mythology which made that tradition so potent for many ordinary people. There are parallels to the Scottish experience.⁵⁹ For example, Kidd's exploration of this topic is similar to Ian McBride's work tracing the roots of eighteenth-century Ulster Presbyterian radicalism. McBride has suggested that the 'intellectual inheritance of the Scottish Reformation offered a rich and complex legacy of resistance and radicalism', which was shared by Presbyterians of all theological preferences and may have 'predisposed the adherents of Presbyterianism in Ireland towards democratic politics'.⁶⁰ He discussed the varying types of Presbyterianism present in late eighteenth-century Ireland, and the links between social groups and theological ideas, and he emphasized the importance of the Presbyterian polity, the 'insistence on Christ's headship of the Church', and 'on the supremacy of individual conscience over received authority'.⁶¹ He also highlighted the importance of the American Revolution in radicalizing sections of Irish society, and how political notions of citizenship were diffused to those who previously had been excluded from political activity. The influence of America can also be seen in Scotland where it is likely that its impact

⁵⁹ There is a substantial literature on religion and the American Revolution. See, for example, Carl Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptres Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities, and Politics* (New York, 1962); Perry Miller, 'From Covenant to Revival', in James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison (eds), *Religion in American Life* (Princeton, 1961), pp.322-360; Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind from the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Harvard, 1966); John M. Murrin, 'No Awakening, No Revolution? More Counterfactual Speculation', *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 11 No. 2 (1983), pp.161-171.

⁶⁰ I. R. McBride, *Scripture Politics: Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998), pp.91, 109.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp.92, 110.

was expressed through the development of a movement for parliamentary and burgh reform from 1782 onwards.⁶²

One English study was James Bradley's case for the origins of 'radical political disaffection', which he argued were found in religious dissent.⁶³ He located the early roots of English radicalism in the ejection of nonconformists in 1662, and the causes of political disaffection principally in a commitment to individualism and self-government. He maintained that the common theology of various forms of religious dissent was an important cause of civil disaffection, but that these theological principles were introduced into the civil realm through the experience of social alienation. He argued that 'the right of private judgment in the individual nurtured an egalitarian, independent disposition', and the right of congregations to choose their ministers betrayed an affinity for self-government that 'held significant promise for democracy'.⁶⁴ He believed that the political disaffection of English dissenters was found in the theory of dissent – the right of private judgment, congregational polity, the 'evil' alliance of church and state – reinforced by the formation of churches around covenants and choosing ministers.

Such studies indicate the important links between religious dispute and political awareness, and this thesis proposes to argue a similar case for Scottish plebian politics and religious dispute in the second half of the eighteenth century. It will consider how the catalysing effects of events over the course of the eighteenth century combined with a sense of democratic Presbyterianism to

⁶² Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution*, pp.14-15; D. I. Fagerstrom, 'The American Revolutionary Movement in Scottish Opinion 1763-1783', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of Edinburgh, 1951), pp.105-119; idem, 'Scottish Opinion and the American Revolution', *The William and Mary Quarterly [WMQ]*, 3rd Series, Vol. 11 No. 2, Scotland and America (1954), pp.252-275.

⁶³ J. Bradley, 'The Religious Origins of Radical Politics in England, Scotland, and Ireland', in Bradley and Van Kley (eds), *Religion and Politics in Enlightenment Europe* (Indiana, 2001), pp.187-253. See also James Bradley, *Religion, Revolution and English Radicalism: Non-conformity in Eighteenth-Century Politics and Society* (Cambridge, 1990).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p.195.

encourage a wider political engagement. In chapter two the response of Moderate and Popular clergy to Enlightenment thinking within the Church, and the controversy that this entailed will be considered. Chapter three discusses the importance of literacy and how ordinary people could gain access to ideas. Chapter four assesses the material from subscription lists. Chapter five will discuss the extent of the clergy's involvement in debate through the use of the pulpit, pamphlets and the press. Chapter six looks at the types of 'political' activity in which ordinary people involved themselves.

III

The sources which have been used in this study are predominantly published pamphlets, books and sermons, as well as a small number of contemporary histories, newspapers, some manuscript sources, and subscription lists for books. A search of the *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* catalogue yielded 89 subscription lists for books published in Scotland between 1746 and 1792. Works published outside of Scotland have been excluded for three reasons. Firstly, and most importantly, because subscribers to works published in this way tended to belong to the locality where the book was published, therefore subscription lists for works published elsewhere generally do not contain information relating to Scottish subscribers. Secondly, for a study which is interested particularly in the lower and middling orders it is impossible to make any assessment relating to social status if the subscription lists do not contain information about occupations. After a random sampling of subscribed books published in various English locations it became clear that those lists rarely provided details beyond the subscriber's name, locations were given on some, but

there were very few occupations listed.⁶⁵ Thirdly, the volume of material which the inclusion of works published outside of Scotland would have produced would have been completely unmanageable and much of this information is available through the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Project for Historical Bibliography.

The subscription lists that were used were for books written mainly by Scottish Presbyterian ministers, a large number of which were reprints of seventeenth-century works by Covenanters. There were also books by seventeenth-century dissenting English clergy and contemporary works by ministers of the Scottish Secession Churches. For this study 64 subscription lists from 1746 to 1792 have been included in a database containing all of the information provided by the subscribers. In addition, a simple count of the subscriber's occupations from the other 25 lists, have been included as a table divided into the three categories which have been used to denote social standing. This more limited information has not been included in the database. The 25 lists have been considered separately because they contain relatively few subscribers from the lower orders. As this study is predominantly concerned with the lower orders, and while elite and middling order subscribers would be expected to have been book buyers, the decision was taken to exclude these lists from the database. Consequently this has resulted in all non-religious works being excluded. The 64 lists which have been included in full in the database, provide information on 47,751 individuals, who bought 60,156 copies of the books.⁶⁶ This is a considerable cache of evidence, although these figures are still only a small proportion of the Scottish population as a whole. However, as P. J. Wallis

⁶⁵ This is a common feature of English lists. See P. J. Wallis, 'Book Subscription Lists', *The Library*, Fifth Series, Vol. 29 No. 3 (1974), p.265. Wallis was Reader in the Historical Bibliography of Education at Newcastle University and directed the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Project for Historical Bibliography, which commenced in 1972.

⁶⁶ The database has been included on C.D.

acknowledged in relation to subscription list data used for the Newcastle project, which referred to about one per cent of the whole population, ‘While this may seem a small proportion, is there any other comparable historical record with anything like the same coverage?’⁶⁷

The purpose of the database constructed for this study was to organise this very large quantity of information. The lists gave the subscribers’ names, genders, locations and occupations, as well as the book details - author, title, place of publication, and number of copies purchased. This allowed various questions to be asked, such as, which social ‘class’ did the subscribers come from, where did they live and were some areas of the country more significant than others, in which occupations were they employed and were there differences between the type of male and female employment, what type of books were ordinary people buying, how many copies, what was the background of the authors, and did the number of publications and subscribers change over time?

One thing which the lists do not reveal, is the specific religious affiliations of the subscribers. There is no way of knowing whether an individual was a member of the Established Church or of the Secession or Relief Churches. However, given that the majority of subscribers came from the ‘artisans, servants and lower orders’ category, it is fairly certain that they were predominantly Presbyterian, as individual titles were most likely to have been bought by those for whom the works carried the greatest significance.⁶⁸ This is also suggested by the notable difference in the social status of subscribers for ‘Episcopalian’ works, for which the largest number of subscribers came from the ‘elite’ category. Episcopalian works also had the smallest number of subscribers from the lower

⁶⁷ Wallis, ‘Book Subscription Lists’, pp.272-273.

⁶⁸ See chapter four.

orders – 60 from of a total of 1,323 subscribers. The elite subscribers for these works included M.P.s, Senators of the College of Justice, Bishops, and barons of exchequer, individuals not found on the other subscription lists, and while this is clearly not definitive it is suggestive in terms of religious attachment, because a significant number of the landed elite were Episcopalian. In total only 105 elite individuals subscribed to Covenanting works from a total of 19,094 subscribers.

Of the other sources used two were of particular importance to this study: the *Statistical Account of Scotland* (1791-99) and the 1834 *Report from the Select Committee on Church Patronage, (Scotland)*. Apart from the minutes of evidence, the *Report* includes source material from presbyteries relating to the original patronage disputes. In making use of the *Report* there has been no intensive search of presbytery records as the material related there is corroborated by Morren's *Annals of the General Assembly* (1838-40), which also provides considerable information on this subject. The *Statistical Account of Scotland*, although dating from the 1790s, was a vital source of information relating to occupations and social status, demonstrating the range of occupations in which heads of families were employed in villages and towns throughout Scotland in the last decade of the eighteenth century. In addition, it provides information about place names/locations which appear on the subscription lists, some of which cannot be traced through any other source.

This wealth of material suggests that ordinary people's involvement in political activity was enabled by the coincidence of widespread literacy encouraged by a Calvinist education, from which they had not only gained the skill of reading, but the ability to reflect, form opinions, and question authority, capacities which could be brought to bear in the wider context of assessing their

position in Scottish society. It was abetted by the books which informed their thinking and sustained by their Covenanting heritage. The continuing power of this heritage was one which Robert Burns acknowledged in his poem *The Solemn League and Covenant* (1794), and in his pride in coming from ‘a country where civil, and particularly religious Liberty have ever found their first support, and their last asylum’.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Burns, ‘The Solemn League and Covenant’, in Mackay (ed.), *Complete Works of Robert Burns*, p.560; ‘First Commonplace Book of Robert Burns, August 1785’, cited in James Mackay, *Burns: A Biography of Robert Burns* (Edinburgh, 1992, pbk. ed. 2004), p.156.

Chapter Two

‘A rational Sort of Religion’⁷⁰

Dissent in the Church

This chapter aims to demonstrate how the Scottish Enlightenment may have helped to provide a stimulus to the political consciousness of some ordinary people. However, this study does not suggest that there is a direct causal link between the Enlightenment and the upsurge of political activity in the 1790s; the relationship is more subtle, because for the majority of Scots the most significant expression of the Enlightenment in Scotland was the rise of Moderatism within the Church of Scotland, and the dissension and division which this entailed. Central to this issue was the continuous opposition to the Moderates inside the Church and the fact that this opposition spread out into wider society through the clergy’s sermons and publications.

This chapter therefore argues that the divisions that emerged in the Church from early in the century, and the mid-century battle between evangelicals and Moderates in the General Assembly, had the potential to engage large sections of society in this debate. By introducing the main areas of difference between the Moderate and Popular parties, it argues that it was the introduction of Enlightenment thinking into the Church, and its application to key aspects of Church policy, particularly its impact on the issue of ecclesiastical patronage which caused the division between the two parties. It highlights the opposition to Moderate theology, emphasising the continuing strength of the Covenanting

⁷⁰ Thomas Halyburton, *Memoirs of the life of the Reverend Mr. Thomas Halyburton, Professor of Divinity in the University of St. Andrews* (Edinburgh, 1714), p.199.

tradition, and suggests that, despite attacks on orthodox Calvinism from early in the century, this still maintained strong support from both ministry and laity.

This chapter also discusses how the Moderates achieved control of the Church courts, but failed to consolidate this at local level by being unable to successfully repudiate arguments about the right to exercise liberty of conscience above authority. It also considers the main arguments put forward in opposition to patronage. Lastly, it demonstrates how both Moderates and evangelicals used their pulpits and publications to expound their beliefs, arguing that this was an essential element in bringing ordinary people into public debate. By examining the long-lasting division between theologically liberal Moderates and theologically conservative evangelicals, this chapter develops the first strand of this thesis, arguing that the impact of the Enlightenment on Moderatism was a very significant step towards the development of political awareness amongst ordinary people and helping to explain how, by the 1790s, some had attained a fully-fledged radicalism.

I

The Enlightenment in the Church was dominated intellectually by William Robertson (1721-93), principal of Edinburgh University (1762-93) and Moderator of the General Assembly (1763-64), and other literary clergymen, such as Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), professor of natural philosophy at Edinburgh, Hugh Blair (1718-1800), Church of Scotland minister at Edinburgh and literary critic, and John Home (1722-1808), Church of Scotland minister and playwright. These young ministers, among others, achieved positions of dominance within the Church by gaining control of the General Assembly in the early 1750s. Their

debating skills and social networks, along with the patronage of the political power-brokers of the day, such as Lord Islay (1682-1761), thereafter ensured Moderate control of the Church courts. The centres of Enlightenment thinking were to be found predominantly around the universities in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen, with an occasional flowering in St. Andrews and Perth.⁷¹ However, it has been argued that enlightened ideas did not remain enclosed within the culture of the universities or philosophical tracts; they filtered into the wider popular domain. Donald Withrington has suggested that the distinctive mark of the Enlightenment in Scotland was that ‘its ideas and ideals were very widely diffused in all areas and among a very wide span of social groups’, permeating sermons, periodicals and pamphlets, and thus reaching out to ‘a remarkably well-educated and highly-literate population’ in country and town.⁷²

The speculative foundation of the Enlightenment was a belief in progress. Virtually all of its leading lights conceived stadial theses of some kind. Their common understanding of history was one in which societies advanced from barbarism to refinement, and this encompassed a ‘natural progress from ignorance to knowledge, and from rude to civilized manners’, a progress that did not exclude religion.⁷³ For William Robertson religion divested of superstition was ‘the offspring of reason, cherished by science and attains to its highest perfection in an age of light and improvement’.⁷⁴ This was a sentiment in line with his feelings on

⁷¹ Roger Emerson, ‘The contexts of the Scottish Enlightenment’, in Alexander Broadie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2003), p.24.

⁷² Donald J. Withrington, ‘What was Distinctive about the Scottish Enlightenment?’, in Jennifer J. Carter and Joan H. Pittock (eds), *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment: Proceedings of a conference held at the University of Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1987), p.15.

⁷³ Christopher J. Berry, ‘Rude religion: the psychology of polytheism in the Scottish Enlightenment’, in P. Wood (ed.), *The Scottish Enlightenment: essays in reinterpretation* (Rochester, New York, 2000), pp.315-334. See also Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1997), pp.166-184.

⁷⁴ William Robertson, *An Historical Disquisition concerning Ancient India* (1791), cited in Berry, *Social Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment*, p.170.

ecclesiastical patronage, which in Robertson's view, freed the Church from its Covenanting inheritance – the theological conservatism of doctrinaire Calvinism and the fanaticism of an unenlightened and puritanical clergy - allowing instead the light of reason, and moderation to hold sway. He believed that this would enhance the profile of the Church, encouraging the adoption of Enlightenment thinking with regard to politeness, sociability and the education of the clergy, and allow a close association between the Church and the political power of the day. The Moderate party which Robertson led consisted of those ministers within the Church who, according to Morren, had come to terms with patronage, ordering 'the settlement of every presentee without respect either to the signatures at the call, or to the scruples of a reluctant Presbytery'.⁷⁵

Richard Sher has defined the ideology of the Moderates as a blend of 'Presbyterianism, Scottish nationalism, Stoicism, civic humanism, conservatism and enlightenment', and characterized them as supportive of law and order, the Hanoverian regime and ecclesiastical patronage.⁷⁶ Moderates saw themselves as attempting to fit men 'for all the duties of the present life' by appealing to reason and rationality.⁷⁷ Popular ministers, conversely, were believed by Moderates to encourage theological dispute and division, rather than guiding their

⁷⁵ N. Morren, *Annals of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, from the Final Secession in 1739, to the Origin of the Relief in 1752* (Edinburgh, 1838), p.iv. For discussion of the Moderates see I. D. L. Clark, 'From Protest to Reaction: The Moderate Regime in the Church of Scotland, 1752-1805', in N. T. Phillipson and R. Mitchison (eds), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement* (Edinburgh, 1970), pp.213-214, 222; Sher, *Church and University*, passim. For an alternative reading of the Moderate agenda see Luke G. Brekke, "'In An Age So Enlightened, Enthusiasm So Extravagant'": Popular Religion In Enlightenment Scotland, 1712-1791', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of Minnesota, 2009), pp.331-334. The 'call' was the means by which a congregation chose a minister. When a parish became vacant, a new minister was presented by his patron. It was customary for the presentee to conduct worship in the church, and thereafter, if the congregation approved, a call was signed by them and presented to the presbytery, they then sustained the call and inducted the nominee. A. L. Drummond and J. Bulloch, *The Scottish Church 1688-1843: The Age of the Moderates* (Edinburgh, 1973), p.222.

⁷⁶ Sher, *Church and University*, pp.54, 324.

⁷⁷ Alexander Gerard, 'The influence of piety on the public good', in *The Scotch Preacher*, 4 Vols (Edinburgh, 1789), Vol. 2, p.311.

congregations towards the practical duties of Christian life. Moderates were theologically liberal, but in their political outlook much less so, and while by the 1760s some Popular ministers were becoming liberal politically, Moderates became increasingly conservative by the end of the century.⁷⁸ Evangelicals in contrast were theologically conservative, maintaining their belief in orthodox Calvinism, but they were prominent in encouraging the individual to consider conscience above authority, which had implications for wider society.

However, the intellectual influence of the Enlightenment could be as significant for evangelical ministers as for their Moderate counterparts.⁷⁹ Jonathan Yeager, in his study of John Erskine (1721-1803), the leader of the Popular party, has argued that he integrated the style and moral teachings of the Moderate Enlightenment into his sermons while keeping his theology always within the parameters of orthodox Calvinism.⁸⁰ Erskine believed that Christians had no need to deny a rigorous intellectual pursuit of knowledge, because God had given humanity the ability to reason. Hence, Yeager saw Erskine as a ‘propagator of Moderate Enlightenment thought’.⁸¹ Similarly, John Witherspoon remained firm in his Presbyterian orthodoxy, yet ‘adopted many of the same concepts and values as more ‘enlightened’ opponents’.⁸² None the less, when Enlightenment thought, which was taken up enthusiastically by Moderates, was applied to particular aspects of Church policy, such as patronage, it encroached on evangelicals’ beliefs and was rejected by them.

⁷⁸ For a discussion of changing Moderate political views see Clark, ‘From Protest to Reaction’.

⁷⁹ See Jonathan Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism: The Life and Thought of John Erskine* (Oxford, 2011).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.202-207.

⁸¹ “Notes from Lectures”, John Erskine’s Essay for John Stevenson, 30 Apr., 1737, EUL, Dc.4.54, cited in *ibid.*, p.31.

⁸² Landsman, ‘Witherspoon and the Problem of Provincial Identity in Scottish Evangelical Culture’, p.30. See also the several other essays in this collection relating to Witherspoon; *idem*, ‘Presbyterians and Provincial Society’, pp.194-209; Sher, *Church and University*, pp.160-161.

The essential divisions in the Church were contested over doctrine, authority and patronage. For Moderates, the authority of Church courts was paramount: ecclesiastical patronage was endorsed, and the role of personal morality was emphasised in their preaching. By comparison, Popular ministers believed that Church authority had to bow to conscience: patronage was abhorred, and pulpit preaching was concerned with salvation. Both groups also differed in their reactions to the American crisis and toleration for Roman Catholics, and it was in part through ministers' views on contentious issues that ordinary people were brought into the realms of political awareness and debate.⁸³

In matters of doctrine evangelicals maintained a firm adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith, with many also retaining strong emotional links to the doctrinal standards of their Covenanting forebears, and, for those ministers who seceded or were deposed from their pulpits and forced by conscience to form or join dissenting congregations, the commitment to covenant theology and the Covenanting legacy held even greater force.⁸⁴ In comparison the Moderates were regarded by them as worldly, and were frequently accused by their opponents of impiety. This division was echoed in local parishes and there were numerous congregations that were opposed to the influence of the Moderates, unhappy with deviations from orthodox Calvinism. Hence the ongoing protests against 'intruded' ministers. The divisions between Moderate and Popular ministers in the

⁸³ Moderate and Popular ministers' views about the American crisis and Catholic toleration will be discussed in chapter five.

⁸⁴ For discussion of Moderate adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith, see Sher, *Church and University*, p.35; Clark, 'From Protest to Reaction'; Colin Kidd, 'Subscription, the Scottish Enlightenment and the Moderate Interpretation of History', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 55 No. 3 (July 2004), pp.502-519; Stewart J. Brown, 'William Robertson (1721-1793) and the Scottish Enlightenment', in Stewart J. Brown (ed.), *William Robertson and the Expansion of Empire* (Cambridge, 1997), pp.31-32.

General Assembly were repeated again and again at local level, providing endless opportunities for ordinary people actively to participate in a public debate.⁸⁵

William Robertson and his circle also believed that ministers should mix freely in polite society, thereby encouraging connections to political patrons. Their evangelical counterparts tended to be critical of this viewpoint, particularly in its implications for the exercise of ecclesiastical patronage, but also in relation to secular appointments. Thus John Willison (1680-1750), minister at Dundee, and on the Popular side of this argument, inveighed against lay patronage given to ‘Masters of Colleges or Professors of Divinity’ by ‘*Statesmen, Magistrates, or Regent*’.⁸⁶ John Kay’s caricature ‘Faithful Service Rewarded’ (1793), in which Alexander Carlyle (1722-1805), and Henry Grieve (d.1810), both Moderate ministers, charge Henry Dundas (1742-1811), Secretary of State, with ‘ingratitude’ to those who ‘had even risked the friendship of their flocks, and their own usefulness as pastors’, in their efforts to serve government, highlights the Popular view of the Moderates.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ See chapter six.

⁸⁶ John Willison, *A Fair and Impartial Testimony, essayed in name of a number of ministers, elders, and Christian people of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1744), p.x. Italics in the original. For discussion of political patronage and control in the Church and universities, see R. L. Emerson, ‘Politics and the Glasgow Professors, 1690-1800’, in Hook and Sher (eds), *Glasgow Enlightenment*; idem, *Professors, Patronage and Politics: The Aberdeen Universities in the Eighteenth Century* (Aberdeen, 1992); Sher, *Church and University*; M. Fry, *The Dundas Despotism* (Edinburgh, 1992).

⁸⁷ John Kay, ‘Faithful Service Rewarded’ (1793): reprinted in John Kay, *A Series of Original Portraits and Caricature Etchings*, 2 Vols (1799) (Edinburgh, 1877), Vol. 2, p.119. Carlyle complains, “Have we not served thee in Religion & Politics?” and Grieve adds “Lo, are we not

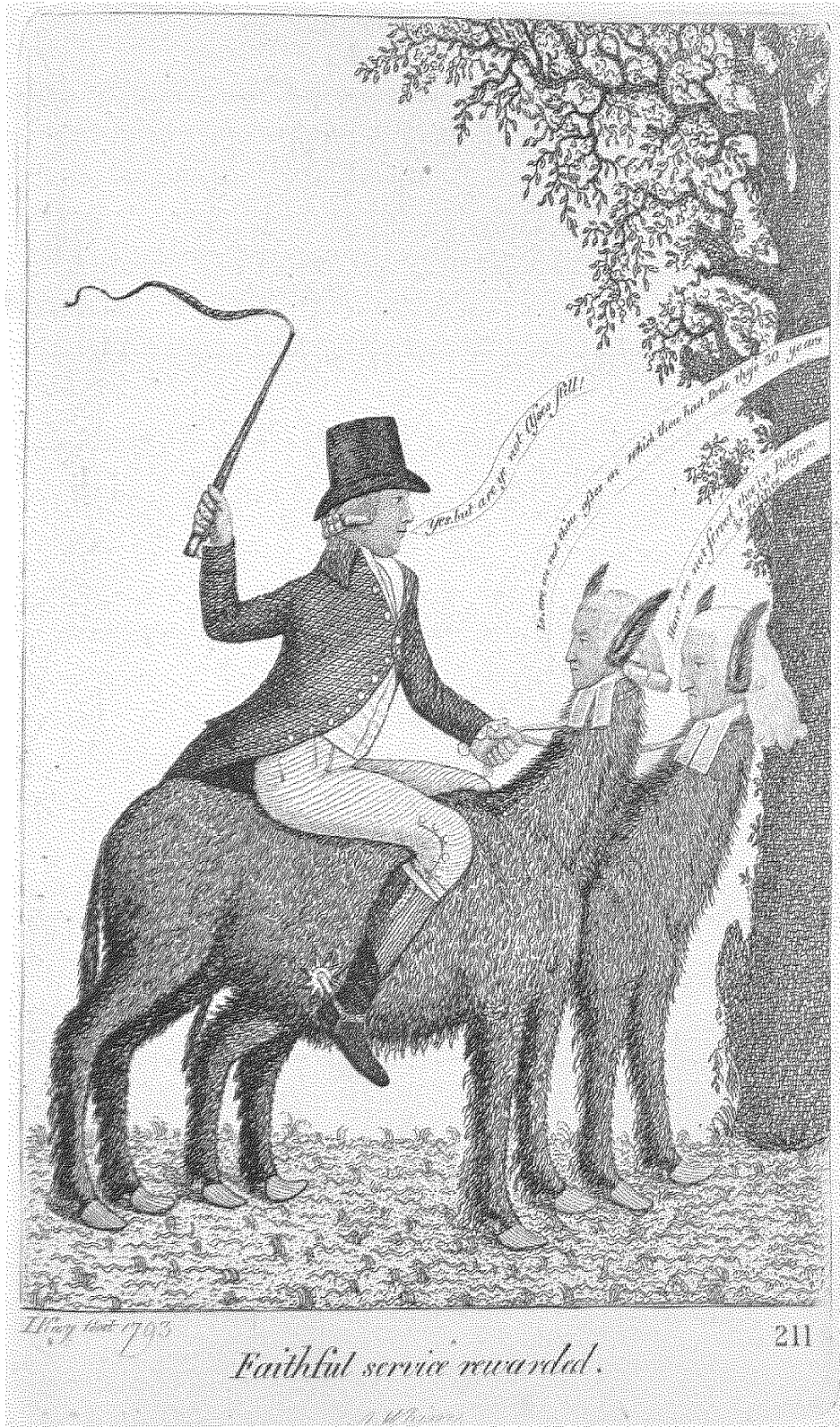


Illustration 1.

However, for the Moderates it was important to cultivate the esteem of those with the greatest power and patronage, such as the Duke of Argyll (1678-1743), his brother Lord Islay, and later Henry Dundas. Ian Clark has argued that this was not merely to serve their own interests. Rather, the Moderates were determined to keep the Church free from ‘interference’ by either political managers or sectional interests. Clark maintained that the Moderates were reacting against the interference by political managers of an earlier generation, and they wished ideally for co-operation with the political regime, ‘on equal terms’, but did not tolerate ‘open meddling by Ministers of State’.⁸⁸ He suggested that it was William Robertson’s refusal to abandon his political independence that led him to withdraw from the leadership of the party in 1780.

Nevertheless, at a personal and secular level, the cultivation of patronage was important. Robertson, for example, had acquired his first parish at Gladsmuir in East Lothian in 1744, under the patronage of Robert Dundas, Lord Arniston (1713-87). He was transferred to Lady Yester’s Chapel in Edinburgh in 1758, owing to the political influence of his cousin John Nisbet who was a member of Edinburgh’s town council, and then to Old Greyfriars Church in 1761, again under the auspices of the Edinburgh council. With the backing of the third earl of Bute (1713-92), who was himself on the verge of becoming Prime Minister, William Robertson was selected as principal of Edinburgh University in 1762, followed by an appointment in 1763 as Historiographer Royal for Scotland.⁸⁹ Robertson’s political connections were therefore vital to achieving such success but they also highlight what many evangelicals regarded as an overly worldly

thine asses on which thou hast Rode these 30 years?”, Dundas replies “Yes but are ye not Asses still!”.

⁸⁸ Clark, ‘From Protest to Reaction’, pp.209-211.

⁸⁹ Jeffrey R. Smitten, ‘William Robertson’, *ODNB*; Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment*, pp.25, 97.

view of religion and a complete disregard for the popular voice, arguments that emerged time and again during the patronage debate.

Moderates were committed to Enlightenment values such as politeness, tolerance, genteel manners, and admiration for literary and scientific endeavours. Through their sermons they endeavoured to instil such values by attempting to substitute a religion based on divine revelation through Scripture with one based on a moral sense. This can be observed in the work of Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow University, who exemplified according to Sher the 'enlightened Presbyterian clergyman-academic'.⁹⁰ Hutcheson has often been considered to be the 'father' of the Enlightenment, and his teaching and writing conveyed a vision of enlightened sociability combined with the duties of citizenship.⁹¹ However, his importance also lay in his moral philosophy, which informed the views of a rising generation of Moderates, and helped to set the terms of the debate within the Church of Scotland, where politeness and morality were emphasised at the expense of preaching the gospel.

From early in the century it was clear that a diversity of opinion was held within the Church. This was reflected in the reaction to the case of John Simson (1667-1740), professor of divinity at Glasgow University, who was tried twice for heresy, first in 1714 and again in 1726.⁹² The accusations made against Simson were part of the Church's reaction to the emergence of Deism.⁹³ Simson had been

⁹⁰ Sher, *ibid.*, p.69.

⁹¹ T. D. Campbell, 'Francis Hutcheson: 'Father' of the Scottish Enlightenment', in Campbell and Skinner (eds), *Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment*, pp.167-185; Michael Brown, *Francis Hutcheson in Dublin, 1719-30: The Crucible of his Thought* (Dublin, 2002), p.176.

⁹² Anne Skoczylas, *Mr Simson's Knotty Case: Divinity, Politics, and Due Process in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (London, 2001), pp. 345-349.

⁹³ Deism is the belief that reason and observation of the natural world are sufficient to determine the existence of a creator, along with the rejection of revelation and authority as a source of religious knowledge.

accused of Socinianism and Arminianism,⁹⁴ although his real offence may have been that he advocated a spirit of enquiry, characterised by James Erskine of Grange (bap.1679-1754), as ‘the art of teaching heresy orthodoxly’.⁹⁵ Simson had read John Locke and was considered to have attributed ‘too much to natural reason and the power of corrupt nature, to the disparagement of revelation and efficacious free grace’.⁹⁶ He maintained that the truths of his faith were unalterable, denying that he had suggested anything ‘contrary to our *Confession* and *Catechisms*’, but, as an academic theologian, he believed that the way these were explained and defended should be ‘by such methods, as I found in Experience and Observation had been most effectual’.⁹⁷ Simson wanted to encourage his students to question their beliefs and he wished them to use their powers of reason ‘to choose ... as they found most convincing’.⁹⁸ What this demonstrates is that other views were already being voiced within Presbyterianism, that diversity of opinion could not be quashed, and despite the accusations of heresy Simson was able to keep his university post until his death, although without exercising his office after 1729.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Socinianism rejected the views of orthodox Christian theology on the doctrine of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. Arminianism denied the belief that God through the Holy Spirit works to bring salvation of individuals through spiritual regeneration, and asserts that salvation involves some form of cooperation between divine grace and human freedom.

⁹⁵ N. M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History & Theology* (Edinburgh, 1993), p.775; J. Coutts, *A History of the University of Glasgow, from its Foundation in 1451 to 1909* (Glasgow, 1909), p.211.

⁹⁶ ‘Act for maintaining the Purity of the Doctrine of this Church, and determining the Process, Mr James Webster against Mr John Simson’, May 13, 1717, Church Law Society (eds), *Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 1638-1842* (Edinburgh, 1843); Drummond and Bulloch, *Scottish Church 1688-1843*, pp.32-35.

⁹⁷ John Simson, *The Case of Mr. John Simson Professor of Divinity in the University of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1715), pp.63-64.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.62.

⁹⁹ For a discussion of the theological controversy at this time see, Stewart Mechie, ‘The Theological Climate in Early Eighteenth Century Scotland’, in Duncan Shaw (ed.), *Reformation and Revolution: essays presented to the Very Reverend Principal Emeritus Hugh Watt, D.D., D.Litt. on the sixtieth anniversary of his ordination* (Edinburgh, 1967), pp.258-272.

In 1738 Simson's pupil, Francis Hutcheson, also had to defend himself against charges of teaching doctrines contrary to religion and morality when he was prosecuted by the Presbytery of Glasgow, for 'teaching to his students in contravention to the Westminster Confession that the standard of moral goodness was the promotion of happiness of others; and second that we could have knowledge of good and evil, without, and prior to a knowledge of God'.¹⁰⁰

Hutcheson introduced his students to his belief that

If God therefore was originally wise and good, he must necessarily have preferred the present constitution of our sense approving all kindness and beneficence, to any contrary one; and the nature of virtue is thus as immutable as the divine Wisdom and Goodness.¹⁰¹

Hutcheson's teaching emphasised tolerance, reason, benevolence and morality, and Alexander Carlyle described the impact of this new style of teaching:

It was owing to Hutcheson and him [William Leechman] that a new school was formed in the western provinces of Scotland, where the clergy till that period were narrow and bigoted, and had never ventured to range in their mind beyond the bounds of strict orthodoxy. For though neither of these professors taught any heresy, yet they opened and enlarged the minds of the students, which soon gave them a turn for free inquiry; the result of which was, candour and liberality of sentiment.¹⁰²

Hutcheson's emphasis on morality influenced his students, thereby helping to disseminate Enlightenment values in both the Church and wider society, and the teaching of individuals such as Hutcheson and William Leechman (1706-85), Church of Scotland minister and principal of Glasgow University (1761-85), became highly influential.

This move from orthodox Calvinist thinking and preaching drew down the invective of individuals such as John Witherspoon (1723-94), Popular minister at

¹⁰⁰ Cited in William Robert Scott, *Francis Hutcheson: His life, Teaching and Position in the History of Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1900), pp.83-84.

¹⁰¹ Francis Hutcheson, *A short introduction to moral philosophy, in three books* (Glasgow, 1747), p.21.

¹⁰² John Hill Burton (ed.), *The Autobiography of Dr Alexander Carlyle of Inveresk 1722-1805* (London, 1910), p.70.

Paisley and one of the Moderates' most influential opponents. In his *Ecclesiastical Characteristics* (1755), Witherspoon satirized Moderate politics and preaching, and he singled out Francis Hutcheson:

It is not only unnecessary for a moderate man to have much learning, but he ought to be filled with a contempt of all kinds of learning but one, which is to understand Leibnitz's scheme well, the chief parts of which are so beautifully painted and so harmoniously sung by Lord Shaftesbury, and which has been so well licked into form and method by the late immortal Mr H....n.¹⁰³

Witherspoon also delivered a number of maxims which he contended were the normal practice of Moderate clergy, criticizing them for their 'moral' preaching which made 'very little use of scripture', and highlighting the 'contempt' shown by Moderate ministers to the Confession of Faith. He was particularly scathing with regard to lay patronage where 'the only thing to be regarded, is, who the patron, and the great and noble heritors are for; the inclinations of the common people are to be utterly despised', and he defined the Moderate minister as having to be 'very unacceptable to the common people'.¹⁰⁴

However, Witherspoon was no backwoods zealot. His outraged Calvinist principles aside, he shared a similar background to, and was a contemporary of, William Robertson and Hugh Blair, alongside whom he had attended Edinburgh University. He eventually emigrated to America to become president of the College of New Jersey at Princeton (1768-92). Witherspoon was dismayed by the Moderates' support for patronage, and concerned that their aspirations to join polite society would be detrimental to their ability to minister to their congregations, but he judged their moral preaching and laxness of doctrine to be

¹⁰³ John Witherspoon, *Ecclesiastical Characteristics: or, the arcana of church policy* (Glasgow, 1755), pp.38-39.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.17-47.

by far their most serious failing.¹⁰⁵ In addition, he was disturbed by the treatment of his colleague Thomas Gillespie at the hands of the Moderates when they forced his deposition from the Church in 1752 because of his opposition to patronage, and his refusal to deny his conscience, and bow to Moderate authority in the Church courts.

Religion based on a moral sense rather than divine revelation, was anathema to many in the Church and this division over doctrine became a battleground between Moderate and Popular ministers, and the difference between these two positions did not end with their views on earthly existence; the contrast continued beyond the gates of heaven. For the Moderates, even heaven would be ordered according to rank, with the scions of ‘enlightenment’ and ‘improvement’ taking precedence. Hence, John Drysdale preached that ‘according to the different means of experience they shall enjoy, and the different opportunities they shall have of improvement. This must occasion different degrees of rank and eminence among the inhabitants of heaven’.¹⁰⁶ Enlightenment thinking in the Church, represented by the Moderates, was in direct opposition to those who remained deeply committed to Calvinist orthodoxy, and the divisions between the two encompassed not just theology but their view of wider society.

The inroads made into Calvinist orthodoxy have engendered the belief that the Scottish Enlightenment was to all intents and purposes simply ‘a reaction against the theological spirit which predominated during the seventeenth century’,

¹⁰⁵ Landsman, ‘Witherspoon and the Problem of Provincial Identity in Scottish Evangelical Culture’, pp.29-45.

¹⁰⁶ John Drysdale, ‘On the Immortality of the Soul’, in *Sermons, by the late Reverend John Drysdale*, 2 Vols (Edinburgh, 1793), Vol. 2, p.329. For discussion of Moderate views on heaven, see John Dwyer, ‘The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Divines’, in Dwyer, Mason and Murdoch (eds), *New Perspectives on the Politics and Culture of Early Modern Scotland*, pp.291-318.

and that this alone accounts for the rise of Moderatism in the Church.¹⁰⁷ Yet the Enlightenment in Scotland was ‘largely an ecclesiastical and academic phenomenon’, as opposed to Peter Gay’s interpretation of the French Enlightenment as scientific and anti-religious.¹⁰⁸ The French Enlightenment was distinct from its Scottish counterpart in its confrontational opposition to religion. James Cameron has argued that the ‘reaction’ viewpoint ignores the part played by the theological controversy of the early eighteenth century in creating a more enlightened outlook within certain sections of the Church, as well as in academic circles. He maintained that the challenges which proponents of this progressive outlook addressed to the Church helped ‘to create a liberalising atmosphere in which the spirit of enlightenment could thrive’.¹⁰⁹

Mid-century Moderatism was in part an openness to new currents of thought, and Moderate theology had developed owing to a step-change within the Church by members of the clergy who, in the wake of the Revolution Settlement (1689), had begun to question orthodox thinking by challenging ‘the certainty and authority of Scripture revelation’, and who also brought forth a flow of new ideas by propounding the argument that there must be ‘evidence for each purpose, before we can be obliged to assent to any proposition thereanent, and that natural

¹⁰⁷ Hanham (ed.), H. T. Buckle, *On Scotland and the Scottish Intellect*, p.235, cited in James K. Cameron, ‘Theological Controversy: A Factor in the Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment’, in Campbell and Skinner (eds), *Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment*, p.122.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (New York, 1967). For discussion of the origins of the Scottish Enlightenment, see also David Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1993); Anand Chitnis, *The Scottish Enlightenment: A Social History* (London, 1976); Nicholas Phillipson, ‘The Scottish Enlightenment’, in R. Porter and M. Teich (eds), *The Enlightenment in its National Context* (Cambridge, 1981), pp.19-40; Withrington, ‘What was Distinctive about the Scottish Enlightenment?’ in Carter and Pittock (eds), *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment*, pp.9-19pp.

¹⁰⁹ Cameron, ‘Theological Controversy’, pp.116-130. See also Anne Skoczylas, ‘Archibald Campbell’s *Enquiry into the Original of Moral Virtue*, Presbyterian Orthodoxy, and the Scottish Enlightenment’, *SHR*, Vol. 87 No. 1 (2008), pp.68-100; Henry Sefton, ‘Neu-lights and preachers legall’: some observations on the beginnings of moderatism in the Church of Scotland’, in N. Macdougall (ed.), *Church, Politics and Society Scotland 1408-1929*, pp.186-196.

light is sufficient to salvation'.¹¹⁰ The Moderates conceived of a broadly based Church with the General Assembly serving as the focus for all aspects of national life, what Ian Clark has described as 'the peculiarly Scottish version of the Enlightenment'.¹¹¹ While Moderatism was undoubtedly 'reacting' against religious enthusiasm, to recognise only this is to fail to acknowledge the stimulus given to Moderate thinking by Calvinism, because Calvinism itself stimulated interest in moral and philosophical questions.¹¹² At the centre of the Enlightenment in Scotland was a Moderate theology, dominated largely by literary clergymen who were part of that Calvinist tradition, but who also adopted new currents of thought.

J. G. A. Pocock contended that the Enlightenment in England was above all a means of preserving society from a resurgence of religious 'enthusiasm', a hedge against evangelical Protestantism and Counter-reformation Catholicism, and he argued that England was dominated by a conservative clerical Enlightenment and that the modernising drive associated with this was integral to the preservation of the establishment in Church and state.¹¹³ While this in many respects is similar to the Scottish experience, during the eighteenth century Church and state in Scotland were often in opposition, particularly at a parish level, and, despite the desires of Moderate ministers, when contentious issues came to the fore ordinary people took a robust, participatory role, often actively

¹¹⁰ 'Act against the Atheistical Opinions of the Deists, and for establishing the Confession of Faith', 4 January 1696, Church Law Society (eds), *Acts of the General Assembly 1638-1842*.

¹¹¹ Clark, 'From Protest to Reaction', p.222.

¹¹² Ronald G. Cant, 'Origins of the Enlightenment in Scotland: the Universities', pp.42-64; Christine M. Shepherd, 'Newtonianism in Scottish Universities in the Seventeenth Century', pp.65-85; Cameron, 'Theological Controversy', pp.116-130, all in Campbell and Skinner (eds), *Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment*. See also Roger Emerson, 'Calvinism and the Scottish Enlightenment', in Horst W. Drescher, Joachim Schwend, Susanne Hagemann and Hermann Volkel (eds), *Literature in context* (Frankfurt, 1992), pp.19-28.

¹¹³ J. G. A. Pocock, 'Clergy and Commerce, the Conservative Enlightenment in England', in R. Ajello (ed.), *L'età dei Lumi: Studi Storici sul Settecento Europa in Onore de Franco Venturi* (Naples, 1985), pp.524-562.

encouraged by Secession and Popular clergy.¹¹⁴ The Enlightenment in Scotland therefore encompassed the theological debate that had emerged at the beginning of the eighteenth century when religion became subject to rational enquiry. Significant divisions became apparent between moderate and orthodox Calvinists, and Moderate theology, which was at the centre of the Enlightenment in Scotland, proved to be hugely divisive for both the eighteenth-century Church and wider society.

II

Orthodox Calvinists both within the Established and Secession Churches refused to accept Moderate theology and they continued to oppose the Moderates throughout the eighteenth century, many steadfastly retaining links to the strict theology of the seventeenth-century Covenanters. By highlighting the continuing power of this tradition within Presbyterianism, and the opposition to Moderatism, this section argues that despite attacks on orthodox Calvinism from early in the century, it maintained strong support from both ministers and congregations. The antipathy between orthodox and moderate Calvinism was echoed in the wider community in defence of Presbyterian polity and popular rights, with the roots of the division between the Popular party and the Moderates stemming in part from the turbulent history of the Church. The Revolution Settlement of 1689 had seen parliament abolish episcopacy, and in 1690 the Act of Settlement brought about the restoration of Presbyterian Church government in Scotland. The Presbyterian Church 'by law established' once again became the national Church recognised by government and king, if not by all Scots. The Cameronians, for example,

¹¹⁴ The participation of ordinary people will be discussed in chapter six.

remained outside the Establishment.¹¹⁵ Although established the Church found itself under attack both from within and without throughout the eighteenth century. Within the Church, Moderates battled with evangelicals over patronage, while dissenters broke with the Church and robbed it of its followers.¹¹⁶

Almost immediately after the Revolution Settlement the Church had found itself under pressure from the spread of Deism. So seriously was the attack on ‘the certainty and authority of Scripture revelation’ perceived, that an *Act against the Atheistical Opinions of the Deists and for establishing the Confession of Faith* was passed by the 1696 General Assembly, and it included an admonition to ‘all ministers, and other members of this Church’ not to ‘publish or vent, either by speaking, writing, printing, teaching, or preaching any doctrine, tenet, or opinion contrary unto, or inconsistent with, the Confession of Faith of this Church’.¹¹⁷ Thus, in order to establish its authority after the turmoil of the preceding decades, the Church attempted to impose a doctrinally authoritarian regime, with the aim of keeping theological debate within the parameters of the Westminster Confession.¹¹⁸ Thomas Halyburton (1674-1712), Church of Scotland minister and theologian, had been greatly concerned by the advance of rational religion, and his work became central to this debate.

I dread mightily that a rational Sort of Religion is coming in among us; I mean by it, a Religion that consists in bare Attendance on outward Duties and Ordinances without the Power of Godliness; and thence the people shall fall into a Way of serving god which is meer (*sic*) Deism, having no Relation to CHRIST JESUS and the Spirit of God.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Cameronians were Scottish Covenanters who followed the teachings of Richard Cameron, and were largely those who had signed the Sanquhar Declaration in 1680. They became a separate church after the religious settlement of 1690, and became the Reformed Presbyterian Church in 1743.

¹¹⁶ Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707*, p.16.

¹¹⁷ ‘Act against the Atheistical Opinions’.

¹¹⁸ Cameron, ‘Theological Controversy’, p.116-130.

¹¹⁹ Halyburton, *Memoirs of the life of the Reverend Mr. Thomas Halyburton*, p.199.

However, William Wishart (elder) (1660-1729), Church of Scotland minister and principal of Edinburgh University, maintained that it was legitimate to invoke reason because, ‘Unless we firmly believe *that God is*, how can we believe any Revelation from him?’, which has subsequently been interpreted as a ‘slight thawing’ of the Calvinist hard line.¹²⁰ This new emphasis was certainly not welcomed by all. For example, Robert Wodrow (1679-1734), Church of Scotland minister and ecclesiastical historian, disapproved of divinity students at Glasgow University who were openly opposing the Confession of Faith and reading Deist tracts, and he was also highly critical of those who by 1724 were beginning in their clubs to discuss questions such as the ‘role of moral goodness’.¹²¹ This debate was an early attack on Calvinist orthodoxy, subjecting it to rational inquiry, and it set the scene for much of the disagreement within the Church of Scotland during the eighteenth century. The divisions over doctrine foreshadowed the discord that enveloped the Church in the middle of the century, and the views of individuals such as Francis Hutcheson had antecedents in this theological debate. The pursuit of ideological purity was in part the cause of the various secessions during the eighteenth century.

The rise of rationalism, which had been highlighted by the case of John Simson, was untenable for ministers such as Thomas Boston (1676-1732), at Ettrick, and the relative leniency of Simson’s treatment was regarded as dishonouring to Christ. The disapproval of this perceived leniency set the tone for the divisions within the Church that followed. The ‘Marrow’ controversy (c.1717-

¹²⁰ William Wishart, *Theologia*, 2 Vols (Paisley, 1787), Vol. 1, p.77; M. A. Stewart, ‘Religion and Rational Theology’, in Broadie (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, pp.31-59.

¹²¹ Robert Wodrow, *Analecta: or, Materials for a history of remarkable providences; mostly relating to Scotch ministers and Christians*, 4 Vols (Edinburgh, 1842-3), Vol. 3, p.183, cited in John Clive, ‘The Social Background of the Scottish Renaissance’, in Phillipson and Mitchison (eds), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement*, p.234.

22) was central to this disagreement. It resulted from the 1717 General Assembly Act condemning the ‘Auchterarder Creed’ but also from the controversy surrounding Simson’s ‘heresy’.¹²² During the 1717 Assembly, Thomas Boston had recommended Edward Fisher’s *Marrow of Modern Divinity* to one of the members of the Presbytery of Auchterarder.¹²³ Boston believed that the denial of the beliefs in this book, which emphasized the work of God’s grace, as opposed to any human action that might be performed in order to attain salvation, indicated that the teaching of the Gospel was being corrupted by the introduction of a more rational type of religion, where morality was valued over the grace of God.

At the 1720 General Assembly, the book was condemned and all ministers were required to warn people against it.¹²⁴ As a result, a number of ministers including Boston, Ebenezer Erskine (1680-1754), and Ralph Erskine, drafted a complaint to the 1721 Assembly arguing that, in condemning the *Marrow*, the 1720 Assembly had condemned ‘precious gospel truths’.¹²⁵ The Marrow Brethren, as they became known, refused to submit to this and continued to teach these doctrines. The popularity of their belief can also be attested to by the 19 subsequent editions of the *Marrow* that were printed, including four editions in 1771, three in 1781, and two in 1789, suggesting that demand for this work increased over time, and that its readership had also declined to accept the

¹²² The ‘Auchterarder Creed’ was a series of propositions which the Presbytery of Auchterarder required all candidates for the ministry to sign. One of the propositions was ‘It is not sound and orthodox to teach that we must forsake sin in order to our coming to Christ, and instating us in covenant with God’, which was condemned by the General Assembly as ‘unsound and most detestable’ doctrine. Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History*, p.45.

¹²³ *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* was basically a compilation of extracts from Luther, Calvin, and some of the English Puritans. It was a series of dialogues between a young Christian, his minister, a legalist, and an antinomian. It sought to deal with questions such as the relationship between Law and the Gospel, and the relationship of the Ten Commandments to God’s people - their significance, and how they relate to sanctification.

¹²⁴ ‘Act concerning a Book, entitled, The Marrow of Modern Divinity’, May 20, 1720, Church Law Society (eds), *Acts of the General Assembly 1638-1842*.

¹²⁵ Cited in Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History*, p.547.

‘authority’ of the Church.¹²⁶ What can be detected from this debate about the narrowness of doctrine within the Church of Scotland was the emergence of an enlightened Moderate stance and a determination to impose this, which was also one of the reasons for the first Secession from the Church in 1733. As a later observer noted, people seceded ‘not from the constitution of the church of Scotland, but from the *prevailing party in her judicatures*’.¹²⁷

However, another significant reason for the Secession lay in the belief that the Church should be free from state interference, and it was in the ‘intrusion’ of ministers that such ‘interference’ was largely signified, because the crown and the aristocracy held the largest number of Church benefices. The Scottish Church, which had been formed by the Reformation in opposition to the crown, had been subsequently shaped by the struggles of the seventeenth-century Covenanters.¹²⁸ Their primary motivation had been the preservation of Reformed religion, particularly the spiritual independence of the Church, against interference by the crown. Covenanting ideology had reordered the relationship between God, the crown and the Scottish people and had set limits on the king’s prerogative. Presbyterianism emphasised spiritual egalitarianism. Thus, in spiritual terms, the king was simply a member of the church, and the ‘doctrine of the two kingdoms’, where ‘civil power is called the power of the sword and the other the power of the keys’, stressed that the king and magistrates had power in civil affairs only.¹²⁹ The

¹²⁶ British Library, English Short Title Catalogue - *The Marrow*, was reprinted twice in 1718, once in 1721, 1726, 1743, 1745, 1752, 1759, 1760 and 1766, four times in 1771, three in 1781, and twice in 1789, <<http://estc.bl.uk>>. [Accessed 10/01/2011].

¹²⁷ John Brown, *An Historical Account of the Seceders* (Edinburgh, 1766), p.25. Italics in the original.

¹²⁸ The Covenanters had been the supporters of the National Covenant (1638) and the Solemn League and Covenant (1643).

¹²⁹ *The Second Book of Discipline* (1578). Melville described the king thus: ‘Sirrah, ye are *God’s* silly vassal; there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland: there is king James, the head of the commonwealth; and there is Christ Jesus, the king of the Church, whose subject James the Sixth is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, not a lord, not a head, but a member’.

clergy held the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and the king was a member of the Church, not its head as in England. Hence the clear injunction in the *Scots Confession* (1560), that resistance to magistrates was only forbidden conditionally: ‘sik as resist the supreme power, doing that thing quhilk appertains to his charge, do resist Goddis ordinance ... quhiles the Princes and Rulers vigilantly travell in execution of their office’.¹³⁰ This ensured that any interference by the civil authorities in the ecclesiastical government of the Church was seen as an invasion of the prerogatives of Christ, the only head of the Church, and the combination of the theories of George Buchanan on popular sovereignty, contract and resistance, along with the theological thought of John Knox and Andrew Melville, encouraged a tradition of ecclesiastical independence from civil magistrates.¹³¹

While the Scottish Church was committed to a partnership with the state, this was on the basis of its own independence. When the Church believed that the state had failed to answer to the community, as in 1638 and 1688, the Scots had overturned episcopacy and over-mighty monarchist regimes.¹³² Although still dependent on the state, the Church continued to enjoy considerable autonomy, and the headship of the Church was one of the few undisputed areas of church life; hence, William Robertson could concur with his evangelical brethren that no civil power was higher than the authority of God.

[T]he wisdom of God manifest[s] the Christian revelation to the world, not to re-establish virtue upon the same insecure foundation of civil government, but to

¹³⁰ *The Scots Confession of Faith* (1560).

¹³¹ R. A. Mason and M. S. Smith, *A Dialogue on the Law of Kingship among the Scots: A Critical Edition and Translation of George Buchanan's De Iure Regni apud Scotos Dialogus* (Aldershot, 2004), pp.23, 25, 35, 137, 153.

¹³² Ronald G. Cant, ‘Scottish and American Presbyterianism: Their Relations in the Revolutionary Age’, in Owen Dudley Edwards and George Shepperson (eds), *Scotland, Europe and the American Revolution* (Edinburgh, 1976), pp.89-91.

erect it upon the eternal and immoveable basis of religion, which teacheth righteousness by the authority of God.¹³³

Despite Moderate and Popular concurrence on this, the potency of the Covenanting tradition engendered intense opposition to Moderatism, and produced clear divisions within the Church and the wider community.

Covenant theology was an organizing principle for Christian truth which Calvin had integrated extensively into his theological system. James Torrance has described Covenant theology as ‘federal Calvinism’, a theology of politics easily grasped by ordinary people.¹³⁴ He has suggested that, while the idea of a social contract was developed by Hobbes and Locke, the counterpart of this doctrine in Scotland was the concept of a covenanted nation under God, but, that behind both forms of this doctrine lay a deep concern for the defence of liberty and justice. He maintained that it was in the acknowledgement of the limitation of power under God and the law that Scottish Covenanters found biblical warrant for the notion of a contract of government allowing them to attempt to democratize the concept of kingship in Scotland.¹³⁵ The Covenanters had appealed to the Old Testament notion of Israel as a covenanted nation, and of a king in covenant with God and his people in defence of the true religion. They had not denied the authority of the king – indeed they had sworn to uphold ‘his Majesty’s authority, with our best counsel, our bodies, means, and whole power, against all sorts of persons whatsoever’.¹³⁶ However, there was no exclusion of the king from those against whom action might be taken. Thus, for example, Alexander Shields’ *A Hind Let*

¹³³ William Robertson, *The Situation of the World at the Time of Christ’s Appearance, and its Connection with the Success of his Religion, considered* (Edinburgh, 1755), p.23.

¹³⁴ Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History*, pp.214-218; James B. Torrance, ‘The Covenant Concept In Scottish Theology And Politics And Its Legacy’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 34 No. 3 (1981), p.228.

¹³⁵ Torrance, *ibid.*, pp.225-243.

¹³⁶ *The National Covenant*, <<http://www.constitution.org>>. [Accessed 28/02/2007].

Loose (1687), Sir James Stewart and James Stirling's *Naphtali* (1667), and Samuel Rutherford's, *Lex, Rex, or the Law and the Prince* (1644), became the political manifestos of the Covenanters, addressing the issue of the prerogatives of king and people.

That power which is obliged to command and rule justly and religiously for the good of the subjects, and is only set over the people on these conditions, and not absolutely, cannot tie the people to subjection without resistance, when the power is abused to the destruction of laws, religion, and the subjects.¹³⁷

Works such as these remained popular throughout the eighteenth century, in part because covenant theology was deeply important to many people, particularly in the Secession Churches but also within the Church of Scotland, and in part because the belief in liberty of conscience and private judgement came to represent the language of opposition. It was 'the duty of every Christian to *judge for himself*, in matters of religion', a necessity which could be extended into the civil sphere.¹³⁸ Hence, one lay opponent of patronage commented that while those who 'deprecate the vulgar, may continue to deprive them of their right in chusing (*sic*) their pastors, they cannot yet deprive them of their Bibles, and their right of private judgement'.¹³⁹

The Covenanting tradition within Presbyterianism retained much of its force until late in the eighteenth century, although the focus of the ideology changed, from the seventeenth-century resistance to religious persecution, to an on-going debate about the limits of loyalty to the Hanoverian state, and a more general disquiet with eighteenth-century society.¹⁴⁰ The strength of this tradition

¹³⁷ Samuel Rutherford, *Lex, rex: the law and the prince, a dispute for the just prerogative of king and people* (London, 1644), p.261.

¹³⁸ Patrick Hutchison, *A Compendious View of the Religious System, Maintained by the Synod of Relief* (Falkirk, 1779), p.16.

¹³⁹ Linen manufacturer, *A Brief and Simple Narrative of the Rise, Progress, and Effects of Patronage* (Glasgow, 1782), p.24.

¹⁴⁰ Kidd, 'Conditional Britons'; Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707*, pp.15-16.

may in part be determined by the foundation of the Secession and Relief Churches in 1733 and 1761, and in the significant numbers joining them and leaving the Established Church.¹⁴¹ By 1765 there were estimated to have been 120 dissenting meeting-houses in Scotland with over 100,000 adherents.¹⁴² This was mainly over the issue of patronage but it included significant disagreement about doctrine and the necessity of renewing the Covenants, and both the Secession and Relief maintained a varying commitment to covenanting.¹⁴³

Even though the Moderates tried to distance eighteenth-century Presbyterianism from the Covenanting tradition, a dynamic Covenanting identity prevailed within the realms of popular culture, and its mythology was essentially ‘the people’s cause in opposition to a corrupt aristocracy’.¹⁴⁴ For example, anecdotes of the Covenanting past kept alive a tradition of opposition to oppression and persecution for the sake of conscience, and ordinary people often kept a small stock of Covenanting books, including works such as Shields’ *Hind Let Loose*.¹⁴⁵ One memorialist observed that farmers in the Lothians in the 1760s, were nearly all ‘the descendants of the more ancient covenanters ... Hence their books were all of that cast ... stories about ... Roslin-Muir, and Pentland-Hills,

See also Kidd, ‘Constructing a civil religion’, pp.1-21.

¹⁴¹ N. Morren, *Annals of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, from the Origin of the Relief in 1752 to the Rejection of the Overture on Schism in 1766* (Edinburgh, 1840), p.306; Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707*, p.20. For a similar pattern in Ireland and a discussion of Scottish popular religion, see David W. Miller, ‘Presbyterianism and “Modernization” in Ulster’, *Past & Present [P&P]*, No. 80 (1978), pp.66-90.

¹⁴² Morren, *ibid.*, p.306.

¹⁴³ The Seceders renewed the Covenants in 1742 and made covenanting a condition of communion in 1744. John McKerrow, *The History of the Secession Church*, 2 Vols (Edinburgh, 1839), Vol. 1, p.249. For discussion of the debates on this issue between Secession and Relief, see Kidd, ‘Conditional Britons’.

¹⁴⁴ David Stevenson, *The Covenanters: The National Covenant and Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp.75-76.

¹⁴⁵ John Mitchell, ‘Memories of Ayrshire about 1780’, *Scottish History Society*, Vol. 6 (Edinburgh, 1939), pp.280-281; George Robertson, *Rural Recollections; or, the Progress of Improvement in Agriculture and Rural Affairs* (Irvine, 1829), pp.98-100. See also Edward J. Cowan, ‘The Covenanting Tradition in Scottish History’, in Edward J. Cowan and Richard Finlay (eds), *Scottish History: The Power of the Past* (Edinburgh, 2002), pp.121-145.

and Drumclog, and Bothwell-Brig, and Sheriff-Muir'.¹⁴⁶ The Revd James Muirhead, minister at Urr in Kirkudbrightshire, noted that even 100 years after the 'persecution' of the Covenanters, the memory lingered.¹⁴⁷

For many Scots, regardless of whether they remained within the Church or seceded, disputes over doctrine and liberty of conscience echoed the persecutions of the Covenanting past and the belief that 'God only by a divine law can lay a band of subjection on the conscience'.¹⁴⁸ Thus, the failure of the Church, under Moderate control, to adhere to the doctrinal standards of its Covenanting forebears, and the ongoing protests from those who found themselves in opposition over the patronage issue, brought people back to the writings of individuals who had held firm in the past. Hence the popularity of Covenanting works such as Patrick Walker's *Life and death of Mr. Alexander Peden* which ran to 16 editions between 1724 and 1794, or *Faithful witness-bearing* or *Faithful Contendings*, evidence of which can be found in the book purchases made by thousands of ordinary individuals, which will be discussed in chapter four.¹⁴⁹

In the debates in the General Assembly in the early 1750s, and in the pamphlet literature, the anti-patronage argument was frequently discussed in terms of liberty of conscience. For example, William Wishart (younger) (1691/2-1753), although on the Moderate side within the Church, aligned himself on the Popular side over patronage maintaining that, 'Religion, from its Nature, must be free from the *Commandments of Men* ... God alone is Lord of the Conscience'.¹⁵⁰ Similarly John Adams (c.1714-68), Popular minister at Falkirk, argued that

¹⁴⁶ Robertson, *Rural Recollections*, pp.98-99.

¹⁴⁷ *OSA*, Vol. 11, p.64 (Urr, Kirkudbrightshire).

¹⁴⁸ Rutherford, *Lex, Rex*, p.1.

¹⁴⁹ British Library, English Short Title Catalogue, <<http://estc.bl.uk>>. [Accessed 10/01/2011].

¹⁵⁰ William Wishart, *Publick Virtue Recommended* (Edinburgh, 1746), pp.8, 15.

the essence of religious acts ... consists in their being done out of regard to the authority of God alone ... It cannot therefore be supposed that God has given to any man, or society of men, an authority which shall bind the conscience of others.¹⁵¹

The wider social ramifications of this controversy, particularly the friction caused in parishes where unpopular ministers were forced on unwilling congregations was also problematic.¹⁵² It gave people opportunities to see that there was more than just one way of thinking, and suggested that they could choose an alternative route to the one being pressed by the traditional authorities. Hence, Robert Wallace (1697-1771), Church of Scotland minister at Edinburgh, when preaching on divine revelation, recognized the right of people to ‘a sober and free Inquiry into the Grounds of Religion’.¹⁵³ His position was similar to William Wishart (younger) - both were theologically early moderates but opposed to patronage and concerned for private judgment and liberty of conscience. Wallace argued:

[L]et us not knock down our Adversary at every turn with Arguments from Authority, and think it sufficient to answer all Objections by this, that we are on the side of the Establishment ... that any Forms are established, is no sure Argument that they are good.¹⁵⁴

The language of liberty of conscience became the language of political dissent, and its very familiarity ensured that political debates could be readily understood by the weavers, tailors and shoemakers of the eighteenth century.

¹⁵¹ John Adams, *An Inquiry into the Powers Committed to the General Assemblies of this Church, and the Nature of Deposition from the Holy Ministry, Occasioned by the Conduct and Procedure of the Assembly 1752* (Glasgow, 1754), p.19.

¹⁵² See chapter six.

¹⁵³ Robert Wallace, *The Regard Due to Divine Revelation* (London, 1733), p.61.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.34-35.

III

The restoration of lay ecclesiastical patronage, and the long-term opposition which it engendered in Scotland, suggests that it is highly probable that this issue was a major stimulus to the process of politicising ordinary people. Therefore some of the ramifications of patronage, and the opposition that it engendered will be considered in this section. Although the supreme authority of the Church lay with Christ, the authority to dispose of ecclesiastical benefices had been returned to landowners by the Patronage Act of 1712. Prior to this, by the Act of 1690, the right to supply a minister to a vacant parish had been given to the 'heritors of the said parish (being Protestants) and the elders are to name and propose the person to the whole congregation to be either approved or disapproved by them'.¹⁵⁵ If the congregation disapproved, the final judgement rested with the presbytery. Historically, it had been asserted in the *First Book of Discipline* (1560), that 'it appertained to the people, and to every several congregation, to elect their minister', while the *Second Book of Discipline* (1578) had redefined this as election by the judgement of the elders and the consent of the congregation, emphasizing that 'na person be intrusit in ony of the offices of the kirk contrar to the will of the congregation'.¹⁵⁶ In the following century, Samuel Rutherford (c.1600-61), a leading minister and Covenanter, had again asserted that the selection of a minister should reside in 'the body of the people'.¹⁵⁷ Despite these injunctions the right of patronage had been restored to lay patrons and consequently the rights of congregations were diminished.

¹⁵⁵ 'Act concerning patronages, 19 July 1690', Records of the Parliament of Scotland, <<http://www.rps.ac.uk/trans/1690/4/114>>. [Accessed 10/06/2010].

¹⁵⁶ Church of Scotland, *The Books of Discipline, and of Common Order; The directory for family worship; The form of process; and The order of election of superintendents, ministers, elders, and deacons* (Edinburgh, 1836), p.104.

¹⁵⁷ Robert Baillie, *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie, 1637-62*, 3 Vols (Edinburgh, 1842), Vol. 3, p.94, cited in Walter Makey, *The Church of the Covenant 1637-1651* (Edinburgh, 1979), p.79.

Ecclesiastical patronage dominated Church and lay politics in the eighteenth century because the reinstatement of patronage had allowed lay patrons to appoint ministers, often against the wishes of the congregation. This was a key issue both within the Church and in the wider community, and opposition to it increased across the century, despite the best efforts of the Moderate clergy, because congregations believed that they had a right to be involved in the election of ministers and elders, and because in Lowland Scotland the laity at all levels were largely literate and aware of Church history. This conviction about the right to be included in decision-making, or at least to be consulted, may have given ordinary folk a sense of their own worth, both within the Kirk and their community, thereby helping to encourage a democratic sensibility.

There were 970 parishes in Scotland and those holding the right of patronage to them included the crown, the aristocracy, the landed gentry, the burghs, the universities, and heritors and elders. Objections to patronage arose for a number of reasons. They could arise from the very fact of presentation itself by those who opposed the right of patrons to dispense patronage because it contradicted the belief that all were equal before God. Opposition could also emerge from those who linked the right of presentation to political corruption when the prospect of a lucrative presentation could be used to influence support at elections. Opposition could come from congregations who objected to parish heritors appointing ministers without allowing a congregational call, but opposition also arose in parishes where heritors sided with the elders and the congregation against aristocratic patrons. Additionally ministers who accepted a presentation, and thus displayed support for a system to which many were utterly opposed, often faced enmity, firstly because they had accepted, and secondly

because they were perceived to be too materialistic in pursuit of larger stipends. Objections also arose when congregations disliked the minister's style of preaching, but particularly when they objected to his theology.

The 1712 Act was quite probably the single most contentious piece of legislation passed for eighteenth-century Scotland because its impact was divisive and long-term, and it was the source of often violent disturbances in numerous parishes. In the early years of the eighteenth century it had been common to find elders consulting with the congregation over the call of a new minister. For example, in 1717 at Dreghorn the elders insisted on consulting with the parish before giving an opinion on a candidate. At Irvine they 'could come to no resolution ... till they try the minds of the people and if the people consent to it, they shall be content'. At Blantyre in 1721 the elders went through the parish 'to try the inclinations of the people'.¹⁵⁸ Thus, the laity played an active part in Church government, and because of Presbyterianism's democratic structure, they had access to presbyteries, kirk sessions, regional synods and the General Assembly.¹⁵⁹

Initially, after 1712, ecclesiastical patronage had been exercised with some respect for popular opinion but after 1725 with the ascendancy of the Earl of Islay secular and ecclesiastical patronage became intricately linked and controlled by

¹⁵⁸ NAS, Records of the Presbytery of Irvine, CH2/197/3, Minutes 1710-1730; Records of the Presbytery of Hamilton, CH2/393/3, Minutes 1719-1757, cited in Brekke, "In An Age So Enlightened, Enthusiasm So Extravagant", p.78.

¹⁵⁹ The kirk session was the governing body of the congregation in a parish, and Scotland had approximately 970 parishes. Kirk sessions were made up of minister, elders and deacons, the number of elders ranging from one to twelve. In rural parishes the session shared authority with the heritors, and in the burghs with the burgh council. Presbyteries stood between the kirk session and the synod, and covered a geographical area. They oversaw congregations, judged the 'call' of a minister and also nominated candidates for the ministry. There were approximately 70 presbyteries. There were 16 synods consisting of ministers, plus elders from three or four parishes, generally situated adjacent to each other, which normally met twice a year. The synods were used to consider appeals against decisions made by presbyteries before transmitting them to the General Assembly. The General Assembly is the supreme court of the national Church, consisting of ministers and elders from every presbytery, meeting in Edinburgh once a year in May. Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History*, pp. 353-354, 461, 676, 809.

political managers.¹⁶⁰ It was doubtless this type of manoeuvring that John Willison had in mind when he claimed that the motivation for the opposition to Popular efforts to eradicate ecclesiastical patronage was political, because of ‘the mighty Opposition of *great Men*, Ruling Elders, who had a strong Party in the House [General Assembly] to support them’.¹⁶¹

When in 1731 the General Assembly manipulated the way the choice of minister should be made, by further restricting the will of congregations the divisions within the Church intensified and produced the first Secession led by Ebenezer Erskine.¹⁶² He set the stage for his defection, in his address as Moderator to the Synod of Perth and Stirling in 1732, when he made an unequivocal attack on that decision.¹⁶³ For Erskine, patronage belonged to the populace: ‘the manner of electing ministers and other officers in the church, is not left to a patron, a presbytery, or to men that are heritors in this world; no, but it is a privilege that belongs unto the subjects of Christ’s kingdom’.¹⁶⁴ This split in 1733 from the Established Church also engendered a break with the conventions of social control, which challenged the authority of the ruling elite, because the Church was the central institution in Scotland charged with maintaining control. Dissenting congregations were no longer within the bounds of establishment authority, which is not to assert that individuals were subject to a loosening of control, but the Secession and Relief Churches did provide an alternative.

¹⁶⁰ John Stuart Shaw, *The Management of Scottish Society 1707-1764: Power, Nobles, Lawyers, Edinburgh Agents and English Influence* (Edinburgh, 1983), pp.101-102.

¹⁶¹ Willison, *Fair and Impartial Testimony*, p.76.

¹⁶² In 1731 the General Assembly had proposed that in cases where a patron failed to exercise his right of patronage within six months, the choice should be made by the elders and heritors in country parishes and by the elders and town council in the burghs. Only six presbyteries accepted this, thirty-one rejected the proposal, twelve accepted it with modifications, and eighteen did not reply, but were presumed to be in favour, and the Moderates in the General Assembly claimed it as a victory.

¹⁶³ Drummond and Bulloch, *Scottish Church 1688-1843*, pp.40-41.

¹⁶⁴ Ebenezer Erskine, *The Whole Works of the Rev. Mr. Ebenezer Erskine*, 2 Vols (Falkirk, 1791), Vol. 2, p.853.

For those who controlled the General Assembly at this time, the rise of evangelicalism brought unwanted controversy, with Popular ministers who were held to be disputatious, encouraging their congregations towards theological debate and division.¹⁶⁵ This helped to create not only a Moderate/Popular divide within the Assembly, but a noticeable divide within the laity as Popular ministers found strong support amongst ordinary parishioners and virtually none amongst the landowners who held the right of patronage, a situation which caused increasing friction throughout the eighteenth century owing to unpopular presentations.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, the rise of evangelicalism as exhibited in the revivals at Cambuslang, Kilsyth and beyond in the 1740s offered yet another disturbing challenge to Church and state because the ‘awakenings’ presaged congregations that did not necessarily need or want the lead or support of a minister. People interpreted their own religious experiences and they were more likely to seek the advice of lay leaders and to reflect on the Bible for themselves without ministers to mediate between themselves and God, which suggests that some individuals were no longer unquestionably willing to submit to the authority of the clergy.¹⁶⁷

Patronage was a source of continuing disturbance in wider social terms, and it was of fundamental importance to ordinary people not just theologically, but because the cost of maintaining the minister generally fell on the poorest members of the community through, for example, taxes on harvests, rents for pews and charges for marriages and baptisms.¹⁶⁸ Callum Brown has demonstrated

¹⁶⁵ Drummond and Bulloch, *Scottish Church 1688-1843*, p.37.

¹⁶⁶ This will be discussed in chapter six.

¹⁶⁷ Landsman, ‘Evangelists and Their Hearers’, pp.120-149; idem, ‘Presbyterians and Provincial Society’, pp.194-209; T. C. Smout, ‘Born again at Cambuslang: new evidence on popular religion and literacy in eighteenth-century Scotland’, *P&P*, No. 97 (1982), pp.114-127.

¹⁶⁸ Callum G. Brown and W. Hamish Fraser, *Britain since 1707* (Harlow, 2010), pp.46-47.

the significance of this economic relationship between community and church. The landowners formed the board of heritors in each parish and were legally responsible for providing the minister's stipend, the church, the manse and glebe (land) and the school. The minister's salary was paid from the teinds, a local tax due to the landowner, usually equal to one fifth of the agricultural rental value of the parish. Heritors almost inevitably ensured that these costs were passed on to the poorer members of the parish. Tenants were made responsible for paying their portion of the teinds, which were generally paid in produce. They also undertook to provide services, such as bringing in the harvest from the minister's glebe. This work was in turn passed on to farm servants and labourers, so that most of the work was carried out by the poorest sections of society. Harvesting the minister's crops took up several days each year and was done before attending to their own, which added to people's sense of grievance, because ministers and heritors were jointly the source of a hefty financial burden.¹⁶⁹

The relationship between minister and congregation was thus central to the community in religious and economic terms. When, in addition to this financial burden, a minister who had not been called by the congregation, and with whom they were ideologically at odds, was imposed through the patronage of the landowner, the situation became even more intolerable, and hence the bitterness of many patronage disputes across the century. As Thomas Gillespie described it opposition to patronage could contain an element of class hostility against 'patrons, heritors, town-councilors, tutors or curators of minors, factors, presbyteries, or other persons whose station or office afford them weight or

¹⁶⁹ Brown, *Social History of Religion in Scotland Since 1730*, pp.90-93; idem, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707*, p.69.

influence in the settlement of ministers'.¹⁷⁰ Thus, for example, a dissent over a call, presented to the General Assembly of 1781 and signed by 50 ministers and elders, propounded their belief that 'the sentiments of gentlemen of landed property will be more regarded than those of the meanest of the people', and as such should not have been sanctioned within a Presbyterian Church.¹⁷¹ In fact this was a central reason put forward as a defence of patronage, because those who sought to abolish it were

angry Men, Men of rankled and exasperated Spirits, fierce and ungovernable Men ... [who] fill your Minds with Prejudices against all Ranks and Orders of Men, against the Nobility, the Gentry, the Ministers, and all Magistrates, supreme and subordinate; and all this under an Appearance of great Zeal for God and Religion.¹⁷²

Patronage disputes therefore could encompass issues of theology, economics and class antagonism.

A further indication of the importance attached to the patronage issue can be deduced from the fears aroused by any possible defeat of the Moderates in the General Assembly. For example, the Government was warned in June 1783 of the dangers associated with such a defeat: 'The point on which the Common People of Scotland are maddest is that of patronage ... The ministers who command them always touch this *Key*, and some Liberty-mad people touch it too because they say that it is the only key on which they can be touched'.¹⁷³ Clearly there were

¹⁷⁰ Thomas Gillespie, *A Treatise on Temptation, being an inquiry why folly, wickedness, and misery, appear, and prevail, in different forms, among various classes of men* (Edinburgh, 1774), p.145.

¹⁷¹ *Scots Magazine* [*Scots Mag.*], May 1781, p.277.

¹⁷² *A Friendly Admonition to such well-meaning and conscientious persons as have already joined, or incline to join the Secession from the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1753), p.24.

¹⁷³ NAS, Home Office: Correspondence, Letters and Papers, Scotland, RH2/4/55, 27 June 1782-30 June 1783, cited in Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution*, pp.37-38. This had come about because, in preparation for an application to Parliament to abolish patronage, there had been a motion asking synods to report their objections to this issue, and the motion had only been defeated in the Assembly by nine votes. The fear was that such a motion would be carried at the next Assembly. Therefore consideration was given to a scheme which would have added £20 to the stipends of two Crown presentees in each county, placing 60 ministers firmly under

political concerns over the Moderates domination of the Assembly, and continued support for the government. The narrow defeat of William Porteous's alternative address to the King in 1782 also attests to this.¹⁷⁴

Although the patronage debate occupied centre stage until 1784, it suffered a tactical defeat that year in the General Assembly, and the issue lost much of its intensity, largely owing to the anti-patronage leadership, particularly the burgh elders, turning their attention to an overtly political issue, the campaign for burgh reform.¹⁷⁵ For example, Archibald Fletcher (1746-1828), Whig advocate, elder and burgh reformer, wrote his *Inquiry in to the Principles of Ecclesiastical Patronage and Presentation* (1783), in which his argument equated ecclesiastical and political liberty.¹⁷⁶ However, opposition to patronage did remain a live issue, and at the third Convention of the Friends of the People in Edinburgh in 1793, it was still being cited 'as inimical to the natural rights of man'.¹⁷⁷

In the pamphlet war waged over patronage the Popular clergy were generally portrayed by Moderates as wild or enthusiastic, and their congregations as 'low and illiterate mechanics and farmers', who already enjoyed 'all the power and privilege with which they are fit to be entrusted'.¹⁷⁸ By contrast, Moderates

government influence.

¹⁷⁴ See pp.242-243.

¹⁷⁵ David. J. Brown, 'The Government Response to Scottish Radicalism, 1792-1802', in Harris (ed.), *Scotland in the Age of the French Revolution*, pp.99-124.

¹⁷⁶ [Archibald Fletcher] *An inquiry into the principles of ecclesiastical patronage and presentation, in which are contained, views of the influence of this species of patronage, on the manners and character of the people* (Edinburgh, 1783). The attribution to Fletcher comes from a citation for this pamphlet from the Signet Library in P. Bono, *Radicals And Reformers In Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland, an annotated checklist of pamphlets and documents printed in Scotland 1775-1800* (Rome, 1980), p.55. Also cited as Fletcher's work in Fraser, *Scottish Popular Politics From Radicalism to Labour*, p.23; *Autobiography of Mrs. Fletcher, with letters and other family memorials edited by the survivor of her family* (Edinburgh, 1875), p.45.

¹⁷⁷ NAS, Home Office: Correspondence Letters and Papers, Scotland, 3 Aug. 1793-20 Nov. 1793, RH2/4/72, f.167, Report by J.B. to William Scott on the proceedings of the Third Convention.

¹⁷⁸ *The Case of Patronage Stated, according to the laws, civil and ecclesiastical, of the realm of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1782), p.30.

saw themselves upholding the values of education and culture.¹⁷⁹ Despite their apparent differences, in reality neither Moderate nor Popular clergy wished to see a truly democratic ministerial selection, but the Popular clergy were ‘popular’ in the sense of supporting the right of congregations to participate in the process of choosing their minister.¹⁸⁰ It was mainly left to the Seceders to promote the sole right of congregations to call a minister. Moderates, on the other hand, not only objected to the freedom of the call, but they also accused their Popular brethren of encouraging the people to believe that Moderate ministers consorted with lay patrons to ensure that ordinary folk were deprived of their right to participate.

[T]he majority of the clergy ... are in league with the lay patrons, for oppressing the *Christian people*, and depriving them of their gospel rights and liberties. This sophistical and pernicious argument, which has been, for so many years, trumpeted in the ears of the ignorant populace, both from the pulpits and in the ecclesiastical courts; and which the people, having so often heard from their ministers, have, at last, begun to believe.¹⁸¹

Notwithstanding the pressure from the Moderates, the debate over patronage continued to be expounded long after they had achieved control in the General Assembly in 1752, and not just by the Secession Churches, but by those within the Church of Scotland, and, much to the consternation of some from within the Church, their arguments issued directly from the pulpit. The Synod of Glasgow and Ayr objected to ‘ministers introducing into the *public prayers* and *religious service* of God’s people, matters of doubtful disputation’, arguing that ministers who did so ‘either in their public discourses, or by their writings or private conversation ... act a part very unbecoming the ministers of Christ’.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Alexander Carlyle, *The Usefulness and Necessity of a Liberal Education for Clergymen* (Edinburgh, 1793), p.23.

¹⁸⁰ See R. Sher and A. Murdoch, ‘Patronage and Party in the Church of Scotland, 1750-1800’, in N. Macdougall (ed.), *Church, Politics and Society Scotland 1408-1929* (Edinburgh, 1983), pp.206-208; Landsman, ‘Liberty, Piety and Patronage’, p.220.

¹⁸¹ *Case of Patronage Stated*, p.48.

¹⁸² Overture from the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, 10 Apr. 1753, cited in Morren, *Annals 1752-*

Ministers were also taken to task for, ‘entering themselves into *associations, and holding public conventions*’, in order to strengthen the opposition to decisions given in the Church courts. It was argued that such activity was ‘factious’, and would tend to ‘alarm and infuse unwarrantable jealousies into the minds of the people’.¹⁸³

However, attempts to silence their opponents proved futile because the patronage issue remained very much alive and, regardless of condemnation for bringing this issue into their pulpits, many chose to preach on just this subject. John Witherspoon argued in support of the call, explicitly congratulating the minister at whose ordination Witherspoon was preaching, on the ‘unanimous call you have received’.¹⁸⁴ He defended the liberty of conscience of those who were represented as ‘troublesome’ by others in the ministry.¹⁸⁵ In addition, he criticized the temerity of those who overstepped their authority - by implication, the Moderates.

[M]any if not most, of the schisms and divisions that have fallen out in the Christian church, have arisen from the rigorous impositions of usurped authority.... a faithful minister, who openly dares to bear witness against the apostacy of others, is traduced and slandered.¹⁸⁶

He also took to task those who

love their worldly ease, and have more pleasure in the possession of their benefice, than the exercise of their office ... fawning and servility hath been the road, in which ambitious and corrupt churchmen have travelled to preferment, in every age.¹⁸⁷

implying that this was the inevitable outcome of the patronage system. He reflected that ‘when any one, either among the clergy, or laity, was bold enough to

1766, p.3.

¹⁸³ Ibid. Italics in the original.

¹⁸⁴ John Witherspoon, *The Charge of Sedition and Faction Against Good Men* (Belfast, 1759), p.29.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p.15.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p.17.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., pp.13, 35.

reprove the errors in doctrine, or the ambition, luxury, and worldly lives of his contemporaries, he was immediately branded as a factious and disorderly person'.¹⁸⁸ Witherspoon, who became one of the signatories to the American Declaration of Independence, extolled the importance of civil as well as religious liberty: 'There is not a single instance in history in which civil liberty was lost, and religious liberty preserved entire. If therefore we yield up our temporal property, we at the same time deliver the conscience to bondage'.¹⁸⁹ The criticism of churchmen who were more concerned with the acquisition of material gains than with saving souls, was a recurring theme throughout the eighteenth century. For example, Archibald Bruce, Anti-burgher minister, also castigated the Moderate clergy and the iniquity of patronage, which in Bruce's view had produced a church that served the interests of the patrons and ignored the rights of the poor.¹⁹⁰

As pressure for some modification of the Patronage Act increased its opponents became more optimistic about its redress owing to the change of government in the 1760s. The first Rockingham administration (1765-66) gave the Duke of Grafton (1735-1811), responsibility for crown patronage in Scotland. He had professed a desire 'to consult the wishes of the parishioners' who influenced the viewpoint of members of the presbyteries and synods.¹⁹¹ This more liberal attitude by government encouraged even those with moderate views to comment directly on the issue. Thus, the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale included in their address to the king in November 1765, 'their sense of the happiness they enjoy

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p.9.

¹⁸⁹ John Witherspoon, *The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of men* (Philadelphia, 1776), pp.40-41.

¹⁹⁰ Archibald Bruce, *The Kirkiad; or, golden age of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1774).

¹⁹¹ Morren, *Annals 1752-1766*, p.vii.

under his Majesty's mild and gentle exercise of the hard law of Patronage'.¹⁹² William Robertson certainly believed that the new administration was unsupportive of the Moderates and expressed his condemnation of those who apparently courted government ministers 'perhaps as one ministry or another prevails at Court'.¹⁹³

The restoration of lay patronage caused deep discontent in Scotland, and this issue has to be considered as a major factor in helping to politicise ordinary people through its widespread impact as a result of the intensity of debate from pulpits and publications, and, as will be demonstrated in chapter six, the overt involvement of ordinary people in these disputed settlements. In addition, patronage, and its opponents' appeals to liberty of conscience, became the key issues for the Moderates when they mounted their challenge to gain control of the General Assembly.

IV

The lines of division within the Church were drawn up between Moderates and evangelicals when leading Moderates forced through measures over the control of the General Assembly and the lesser Church courts. The Moderates were determined to restore the authority of the Church courts, and this had a major impact on the direction that the Church took from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. The Moderates were convinced that the 'Anarchy and Confusion' in the Church created by disputes over issues of doctrine, choice, and liberty of conscience, and particularly by patronage, would be resolved only by

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

firm management in Moderate hands.¹⁹⁴ As Moderate dominance in the General Assembly grew, so too did the seceding congregations of the Secession and Relief Churches, and opposition also continued within the Church, from adherents of the Popular party. However, opposition to Moderate policies was not merely a divide between clergymen; it also proved to have wide support at parish level, where Moderate control was much less certain throughout most of the eighteenth century.

Although the essential division between the Popular party and the Moderates lay in the patronage problem, one of the key issues for the Moderates in the Assembly debates was about the authority of the Church above liberty of conscience. The adherents of the Popular party believed that secular assumptions about authority did not apply within the Church.¹⁹⁵ For the Moderates the position was quite the reverse. As individuals, men were free to be governed by their consciences, but, in order to ensure good order in society, there had to be limits on individual freedom, and the *Reasons of Dissent from the Sentence and Resolution of the Commission of the General Assembly*, published by William Robertson and his associates in 1752, and sometimes described as the ‘Manifesto of the Moderate Party’, set out their thinking.¹⁹⁶

When Men are considered as Individuals, we acknowledge that they have no Guide but their own Understanding, and no Judge but their own Conscience: But we hold it for an undeniable Principle, that as Members of Society, they are bound ... to follow the Judgement of the Society.... [and that] Judgement must necessarily be absolute, and final ... we do conceive, that no Church or Ecclesiastical Society can exist, without Obedience required from its Members, and enforced by proper Sanctions.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ *Reasons of Dissent from the Sentence and Resolution of the Commission of the General Assembly, met at Edinburgh March 11 1752, concerning the conduct of the presbytery of Dunfermline* (Edinburgh, 1752), p.9.

¹⁹⁵ Adams, *Inquiry into the Powers Committed to the General Assemblies of this Church*, p.19.

¹⁹⁶ Morren, *Annals 1739-1752*, p.231.

¹⁹⁷ *Reasons of dissent, March 11 1752*, p.4.

For Popular ministers this was an overt and utterly unacceptable attack on a treasured principle, which was not easily relinquished.

[A]ll was to be sacrificed at once to this single principle, submission to authority ... That conscience has no concern in the orders of our superiors, but in obliging to obey them ... that the rights of private judgement have no place here.¹⁹⁸

Popular ministers had no doubt that, without the right to liberty of conscience there was no liberty. They accused the Moderates of aggrandizing power by claiming a right that was due only to God.¹⁹⁹ This issue of authority over conscience was not just debated in the General Assembly. Ministers continued the debate from their pulpits. They argued for their beliefs and in so doing they engaged not just their immediate congregations but also a wider public through publications and the press. The Moderates had intended to put an end to claims of conscience and establish their dominance in the management of the Church. However, some, following the dictates of conscience, had of course already caused the first secession in 1733, and that was to be far from the only division in the eighteenth-century Scottish Church.

The opening salvoes in the Moderate campaign for dominance of the General Assembly came in 1751 when William Robertson, together with Hugh Blair, John Home, Alexander Carlyle and several lay elders, moved to re-establish the authority of the Assembly to resolve patronage disputes.²⁰⁰ The pretext was the continuing refusal by the Presbytery of Linlithgow to accept the judgement of the Assemblies of 1749 and 1750, and ordain a new minister at Torphichen, and by 1751 the Assembly had appointed a riding committee to carry out the

¹⁹⁸ Speech ascribed to Mr Adams of Falkirk and reported in the *Scots Mag.*, March 1752, cited in Morren, *Annals 1739-1752*, pp.203-204.

¹⁹⁹ Morren, *ibid.*, pp.204-205.

²⁰⁰ Burton (ed.), *Autobiography of Dr Alexander Carlyle*, p.246.

settlement.²⁰¹ The vacancy had occurred because of the death of the previous incumbent, the Revd John Bonar (1671-1747), one of the original *Marrow* men.²⁰² The Presbytery of Linlithgow justified its actions on the grounds of strong opposition in the parish to the settlement, but also because it believed that Church authority should be exercised with due regard to conscience. It was, they said,

agreeable to Presbyterian Government, and the Constitution of this Church, that the Authority of all its Judicatures should always be exercised in Subordination to the absolute Authority of Jesus Christ ... and with a tender Regard to Conscience, of which God alone is Lord.²⁰³

After much debate the 1752 Assembly voted to censure the presbytery. The Moderates had in fact pressed for suspension rather than censure, but that had been defeated, and on this occasion the Moderates failed. However, another opportunity arose soon after, when the Presbytery of Dunfermline refused to appoint a new minister at Inverkeithing. By taking issue with the decision of the Commission of the General Assembly, which had voted against censuring the Dunfermline Presbytery, the Moderates were intent on establishing order and discipline in the Church. They argued that inconsistency in applying discipline was leading the Church towards disaster and it was therefore essential to address this by ensuring the acquiescence of all ministers and subordinate courts to the authority of the Assembly.²⁰⁴ They maintained that if this was not achieved the constitution of the Church would be completely undermined.

The opposition of Popular ministers was intense, arguing that authority had never taken precedence over conscience within the Church, and they

²⁰¹ Riding committees were so called because the committee had to ride to the parish from outwith the bounds of the presbytery, but their use was in violation of Church law which stipulated that the settlement of a minister should be carried out by the presbytery.

²⁰² Morren, *Annals 1739-1752*, p.157.

²⁰³ *Reasons of Dissent from the Sentence of the General Assembly May 15 1751* (Edinburgh, 1751); Morren, *ibid.*, p.231.

²⁰⁴ *Reasons of Dissent, March 11 1752*, p.10.

reminded their opponents that, unlike in earlier eras the Secession Church now ‘opened a door of relief to parishes who think themselves oppressed’.²⁰⁵ With this in mind, they urged their opponents to reflect on how dangerous this situation could become for the Church if deference to authority should result in having ‘no subjects but one another to exercise it upon’.²⁰⁶ When the debate was finally put to a vote the Moderates won by 102 votes to 56, and the Presbytery of Dunfermline was again ordered to induct the presentee. However, because some of the ministers in the presbytery still declined to admit the new minister on grounds of conscience, the Assembly voted to depose one of them, Thomas Gillespie (1708-74), minister at Carnock, in a demonstration of its new-found authority.²⁰⁷

Although the Moderates won in the Inverkeithing case, and over the subsequent deposition of Gillespie, when the Assembly voted in 1753 on the issue of re-instating him, the Moderates carried the day by only three votes.²⁰⁸ Thus, while the Moderates had fairly quickly claimed success by establishing their dominance in the General Assembly, they were faced with ‘perpetual opposition’ from individuals from the Popular party, including Robert Dick (1722-82), professor of natural philosophy at Glasgow University, Daniel MacQueen (bap.1714-77), minister at Stirling and Edinburgh, John Erskine, minister at Edinburgh, and Andrew Crosbie (1736-85), advocate.²⁰⁹

The Moderates dominated the Assembly but the issue remained a central grievance and Popular ministers took every opportunity to bring it to the fore. As

²⁰⁵ Speech by John Adams, cited in Morren, *Annals 1739-1752*, pp.200-202. For the complete Popular reply to the Moderates see *Answers to the Reasons of Dissent from the Sentence of the Reverend Commission in the case of Inverkeithing, March 11, 1752* (Edinburgh, 1752).

²⁰⁶ Morren, *Annals 1739-1752*, p.201.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.262-8. Gillespie subsequently became a co-founder of the Relief Church in 1761.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.268-278.

²⁰⁹ Henry Moncreiff Wellwood, *Account of the life and Writings of John Erskine, D. D. Late one of the Ministers of Edinburgh* (London, 1818), p.465.

Assembly debates were always reported in the press it was therefore constantly in the public domain.²¹⁰ When in 1765 the Popular party succeeded in having one of their own, the Revd Dr James Oswald, Popular minister at Methven, elected as Moderator, the opportunity arose once again to mount an attack on Moderate control. The Moderator was elected by the members of the Assembly, and, in the period leading up to the 1765 Assembly, the Moderates had lost some of their influence after the fall of political patrons such as Lord Bute. They were also considered to have been protecting ‘scandalous’ ministers from censure.²¹¹ In this atmosphere the Popular party were able to secure the office of Moderator. This attack on the Moderates was a consequence of the significant increase in disputed settlements that had resulted since the establishment of the Relief Church in 1761.

Patrick Bannerman introduced the Schism Overture calling for an inquiry into the cause of secessions from the Church.²¹² He pointed the finger at the ‘servility and despotic principles of those they call moderate men’, whom he blamed for the decline in church membership:

Scarce does an Assembly rise without driving from the church several thousands of her members ... your clergymen in Scotland have become the tools of your enemies - to them they have sold you; the price is those emoluments they have so carefully monopolized.²¹³

During the debate Oswald took the opportunity to claim that patronage had been abused, not only by patrons, but also by the Church courts, again making a direct

²¹⁰ The General Assembly was held every year in May and its debates were always reported in the *Scots Magazine* and usually in the *Caledonian Mercury*. When there was a particularly contentious debate, for example, over the American crisis or the St. Ninian affair, reports could be found in both the Scottish and English press. See *Scots Mag.*, May 1769, p.226; *Edinburgh Magazine and Review [EMR]*, July 1775, *Caledonian Mercury [Cal. Merc.]*, 29 May, 1 June, 3 June, 1782. Also *London Chronicle*, *London Magazine*, *Public Advertiser*, *Parker's General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*, and *Whitehall Evening Post*.

²¹¹ Morren, *Annals 1752-1766*, pp.v-vi; John Cunningham, *The Church History of Scotland from the Commencement of the Christian era to the present century*, 2 Vols (Edinburgh, 1859), Vol. 2, p.530.

²¹² Thomas Somerville, *My Own Life and Times* (Edinburgh, 1861), p.85; Morren, *ibid.*, pp.305-308; *Scots Mag.*, May 1765, pp.277-278.

²¹³ Bannerman, *Address To The People Of Scotland On Ecclesiastical And Civil Liberty*, pp.7-12.

attack on Moderate control.²¹⁴ However, by the end of the debate the Moderates had managed to contain the opposition, mustering enough support to defeat the proposals by 99 votes to 85, but once more the issues of authority and liberty of conscience had been brought into the spotlight, and ministers on both sides of the debate continued to do battle in the wider public sphere.²¹⁵

The Moderates secured their victories partly owing to their organisational and debating skills, partly owing to the divisions within the Popular party as to the best alternative to patronage, and partly owing to the way the Assembly was organised. Most presbyteries used a system of rotation when distributing seats in the Assembly. This resulted in Assemblies comprised of parish ministers and lay elders, most of whom had not attended the previous Assembly and who would not attend the following one.²¹⁶ Additionally, although the rejection of ecclesiastical hierarchy gave Presbyterian Church government a democratic ethos, in practice, attendance at the Assembly could be manipulated through the selection of ruling elders who, unlike ministers, were elected as representatives of the burghs, universities and presbyteries. This proved to be an area in which the Moderates' talent for discipline and management outshone their Popular brethren, and one that offered another source of grievance to those in the Popular party.

Popular ministers in their conduct of the debates were less well organized than their Moderate counterparts, and less well connected to the lawyers who generally made up the bulk of the Assembly's eldership. In an effort to counter this, the Popular party even issued a pamphlet to warn presbyters to be wary of 'persons of quality, or high rank' but particularly 'lawyers' when electing elders to the Assembly, as these had been the Church's 'inveterate and most dangerous

²¹⁴ Morren, *Annals 1752-1766*, p.330.

²¹⁵ Cunningham, *Church History of Scotland*, Vol. 2, p.530.

²¹⁶ See Sher, *Church and University*, pp.45-50.

foes'.²¹⁷ Nevertheless, individual lawyers, not under the sway of wealthy patrons, such as Andrew Crosbie and Thomas Muir, who both advocated a greater degree of ecclesiastical and political liberty, could be found sitting as elders in support of the Popular party in the Assembly.²¹⁸ In addition, there was the practical problem of attending General Assemblies, which impinged more on Popular ministers, because of the difficulty of travelling to Edinburgh. Livings in and around Edinburgh held a cachet for those who wished to rise socially and in ecclesiastical politics, and they therefore tended to be dominated by Moderate ministers, which again afforded the opportunity for those who held them, to acquire control over the Assembly.

The Moderates may have predominated in the Assembly owing to their 'superior management of the eldership', but the Popular party maintained their dominance at local level.²¹⁹ This was essentially owing to the Moderate stance on patronage which led to increasing strife in local communities, and between 1752 and 1805 the Moderates rarely had a dependable majority in the presbyteries. For example, in the Presbytery of Ayr, which tended to align itself with the Moderate position, in 1780 only twelve out of twenty-nine clergy were active supporters, and even in Moderate-dominated Edinburgh, the Popular party defeated them by four votes on a motion on patronage in 1784.²²⁰ The Moderates, despite their victory in gaining control of the Church courts, were unable to silence the opposition arguments either in the Assembly or amongst local congregations, and the battles over doctrine, choice, and liberty of conscience reverberated across Scotland as the

²¹⁷ John Snodgrass, *An Effectual Method for Recovering our Religious Liberties Addressed to the Elders of the Church of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1770), p.14.

²¹⁸ Muir, prior to his involvement in the 1790s in the Friends of the People, had been an elder of the church at Cadder in Lanarkshire. H. T. Dickinson, 'Thomas Muir', *ODNB*.

²¹⁹ For a discussion of Moderate management of Assembly debates, see Sher, *Church and University*, pp.52-56, 124-134.

²²⁰ Clark, 'From Protest to Reaction', pp.213-214.

debate spilled out into the wider society through ministers' sermons, their publications and the press.

V

The divide between the Popular and Moderate parties engendered considerable debate and ongoing opposition in wider society. Ordinary people were drawn into this debate because ministers on both sides of the issue wrote and preached about it. Additionally, ordinary people, who sided with the Popular party viewpoint on liberty of conscience, expressed their belief through the books that they chose to buy, many of which were seventeenth-century Covenanting works that emphasised the importance of liberty of conscience above claims to authority.²²¹ It was in part through the actions of the clergy that people encountered such ideas and were drawn into contemporary debate, an endeavour not universally admired: 'Everyone who is versant in the principles of human nature, or the history of mankind, must know what notable materials the rabble are in the hands of the clergy'.²²² However, from a somewhat different perspective John Erskine was in no doubt about the importance and influence of ministers 'publicly instructing others by their sermons or expositions of scripture', and helping to improve 'the intellectual abilities of that respectable class of men, who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow'.²²³ This section will demonstrate how both Moderates and evangelicals used their pulpits and publications to expound their beliefs, arguing that this was an essential element in bringing ordinary people into public debates.

²²¹ See chapter four.

²²² Arnot, *History Of Edinburgh from the Earliest Accounts to the year 1780*, p.221.

²²³ John Erskine, 'The Blessing of Christian Teachers', in *Doctrinal and occasional sermons* (Edinburgh, [1800]), pp.87-88.

In the aftermath of the Moderates' victory in the Assembly debates in 1752-53, there was a flurry of publications from both sides.²²⁴ Not for the first time, and certainly not for the last, ministers used both publication and their pulpits to argue for their beliefs. Hence, Thomas Gillespie's personal vindication, contained within one anonymous pamphlet, entreated that, 'If the Venerable Assembly shall, on this Account, judge us guilty of such criminal Disobedience, as to deserve their Censures; we trust they will, at least, allow that we have acted as honest Men, willing to forgo every secular Advantage for Conscience Sake.'²²⁵

The pamphlet's author continued:

[T]he Publick (*sic*) may expect at least, that CONSCIENCE will be no more talk'd of, as a mere Pretext; when we have seen, not only Mr. *Gillespie*, but also so many of his Brethren, greatly pleading, what they apprehend to be the Cause of Almighty God, the Interests of Jesus, and Liberty of Conscience.²²⁶

Despite Moderate control in the Assembly the dispute about Church authority above conscience was not easily quashed, and numerous pamphlets and sermons marked out this battleground, with the often re-stated appeal to liberty of conscience.

John Maclaurin (1693-1754), Popular minister at Glasgow, regarded the actions of the Moderates as 'tyrannical Impositions upon Conscience, rebuking,

²²⁴ In defence of the Assembly - *Some Thoughts Relating to that Submission and Obedience Due to the Authority and Decisions of the Supreme Judicatories of the Church* (Edinburgh, 1753); John Hyndman, *A just view of the constitution of the Church of Scotland, and of the proceedings of the last General Assembly in relation to the deposition of Mr Gillespie* (Edinburgh, 1753); John Nasmyth, *The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland Vindicated* (Edinburgh, 1753). In opposition – *A letter from a gentleman in town to his friend in the country* (Edinburgh, 1752); *A letter from Several Elders, Lovers of Peace and Moderation, to their Brethren of the Same Principles* (Edinburgh, 1752); Timotheus, *Private judgment defended; or, the lawfulness and duty of refusing obedience to the highest of church judicatures, when their Commands are judged unlawful, asserted and vindicated* (Edinburgh, 1752); *A juster view of the constitution of this Church* (Edinburgh, 1753); John Maclaurin, *A Loud Cry for Help to the Struggling Church of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1753); Thomas Walker, *The terms of ministerial and Christian communion imposed on the Church of Scotland by a prevailing party in the General Assembly* (Glasgow, 1753); Adams, *Inquiry into the Powers Committed to the General Assemblies of this Church*; John Maclaurin, *The nature of ecclesiastic government, and of the constitution of the Church of Scotland illustrated* (Glasgow, 1754).

²²⁵ *Letter from a gentleman in town to his friend in the country*, p.8.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.14.

suspending and deposing Ministers for not doing what appears to them to be plainly sinful'.²²⁷ Daniel MacQueen, writing in 1756, claimed that 'a slavish subjection to the dictates of men in matters of religion [was] wholly inconsistent with the spirit of Protestantism [and] equally so with the principles of the clearest reason, and with the natural rights of mankind', and he asserted 'the right of private judgement, in the most important of all concerns, *Religion*', because Protestantism was unwavering in its dedication to 'the rights of conscience'.²²⁸ Michael Boston (1747-85), minister of the Relief Church at Falkirk, reasoned that:

[T]rue Christian liberty consists in that right which every man has to judge for himself in matters of religion ... as he is to answer for himself so he ought to judge for himself ... a right to judge for himself in matters of religion, is bequeathed to every man ... It is the distinguishing characteristic of our holy religion, that it secures this right.²²⁹

John Witherspoon also defended those castigated as troublemakers by the Moderates because 'they will not comply with the sinful commandments of men'.²³⁰ He too insisted that 'Every man hath a natural right ... to judge for himself in everything that regards religion, and to adhere to any minister he pleases, on the establishment, or in opposition to it'.²³¹

Many clergy were deeply concerned that congregations would turn their back on the national Church and follow the Seceders, something that John Maclaurin had suggested they should do; if people were 'not satisfied with the Doctrine or Ministry of any Men in the Establishment, we may go to another either in or out of the Establishment. When we use this Liberty, according to the

²²⁷ Maclaurin, *Loud Cry for Help*, p.7.

²²⁸ Daniel MacQueen, *Letters on Mr. Hume's History of Great Britain* (Edinburgh, 1756), pp. 54-55, 67.

²²⁹ Michael Boston, *The nature of Christian liberty explained* (Edinburgh, 1777), pp.7-8,16-17,28.

²³⁰ Witherspoon, *Charge of Sedition and Faction*, p.15.

²³¹ John Witherspoon, *A serious apology for the Ecclesiastical characteristics* (Edinburgh, 1763), p.38.

best of our *own* Judgment, we do not sin against God'.²³² He recognized that 'no Man has any Right in calling a Minister upon an Establishment, excepting those to whom the Law gives it. But ... as Men, Christians, Protestants, and Presbyterians, we have a Right to judge for ourselves in all Matters concerning Religion'.²³³ For men like Maclaurin, liberty signified political freedom from arbitrary authority in the civil realm and freedom from state control in the church, and on this issue of lay patronage there was a direct threat to Presbyterian autonomy and the debt owed to the struggle of the Covenanters.²³⁴ Maclaurin's fears were clearly echoed among the wider reading public which can be witnessed by the large number of Covenanting books that were bought by subscription, and whose central theme was persecution for the sake of conscience.²³⁵

Although liberty of conscience remained central to the anti-patronage argument, publications on this issue did reflect other considerations, and some pamphleteers could couch their argument in quite democratic terms.

Membership in any free society necessarily implies a right unto all the immunities and privileges that attend the society; and particularly unto a vote in whatever concerns the public weal of the society, as in the choice of officers; *for what concerns all, ought to be transacted by all*.... Is not the church of Christ a voluntary society---a free community? Are not the Christian people, high and low, noble and ignoble, indiscriminately members of it? And is it not essentially necessary unto the being of every free society, that the several members be allowed to vote in what concerns the whole and every part?²³⁶

William Thom warned that patronage was in opposition to liberty, and could destroy the 'democratical power' in the Church while it could promote the power of the crown; a traditional Whig concern about arbitrary authority. He argued the anti-patronage cause in *A Short History of the Late General Assembly* (1766),

²³² Maclaurin, *Loud Cry for Help*, p.7. Italics in original.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p.7.

²³⁴ Landsman, 'Provinces and the Empire Scotland, the American colonies and the development of British provincial identity', pp.268-269.

²³⁵ See chapter four.

²³⁶ William Graham, *An attempt to prove, that every species of patronage is foreign to the nature of the Church* (Edinburgh, 1768), p.58. Italics in the original.

maintaining that ‘regard should be had to the elders and residing heritors in settling a vacant parish’ but not as ‘some warm ministers and elders’ sought, through popular elections, because he also believed that election by a majority of heads of families would ‘introduce a weaker set of clergy’.²³⁷

Thom’s arguments echoed that of his tutor Francis Hutcheson. Hutcheson’s pamphlet about patronage had been written in 1735, in the wake of the first Secession. It was republished in 1774 with some additions concerning the state of the secession and its financial cost to the country, in particular to landholders. Hutcheson had feared that the indifference of the Scottish gentry would result in ministers whose sole recommendation was their political allegiance

Instead of studying sobriety of manners, piety, diligence or literature, one or other of which qualities are now to recommend the candidates to the favour of heritors, elders, or presbytery, the candidates sole study will be to stand right in *politics*, to make his zeal for the *ministry of state* conspicuous, or by all servile compliance with ... some great lord.²³⁸

He accused both king and ministry of a breach of faith over the articles of Union, and argued that the choice of a minister was concluded by ‘*secret Contracts*’ or through the ‘Interests in a Burrough’ without regard to merit, and worse still that presentations might be bought and sold like commodities.²³⁹ In this he anticipated such cases as Marykirk in Aberdeenshire in 1773, and St. Ninians in Stirlingshire in 1787, where the right of patronage was advertised for sale.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ [William Thom], *A Short History of the Late General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, shewing the Rise and Progress of the Schism Overture, the Reasonableness or Necessity that some Restriction be put on the Exercise of the Patronage Act, and the Means which the Church hath in its own Power to mitigate or remove that Grievance* (Glasgow, 1766), pp.30-31, cited in R. K. Donovan, ‘Evangelical Civic Humanism in Glasgow: The American War Sermons of William Thom’, in Hook and Sher (eds), *Glasgow Enlightenment*, p.244.

²³⁸ Francis Hutcheson, *Considerations on Patronages Addressed to the Gentlemen of Scotland* (London, 1774), p.6.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.10.

²⁴⁰ Marykirk - *London Magazine*, Apr., May, June, July 1773; St. Ninians - *Cal. Merc.*, 14 May 1787.

However, Hutcheson believed that ‘If Ministers are to be chosen by the Men of Property in the Parishes, in conjunction with the Elders as Representatives of the People’, there would be little opportunity for the election of either the placeman or the zealot.²⁴¹ Hutcheson opposed the selection of ministers by the populace chiefly on the grounds that they tended to choose the most ardent preachers and those who ‘declaim most against Superiors in Church and State’; but he warned those in power against ‘continual ferments ... among the People, when unrestrained by a Clergy grown despicable to them’.²⁴²

John Adams linked the intrusion of ministers with the threat to ‘alienate the affections of the people’ from the civil constitution. He also connected the growth of dissent with a possible loss of income to landlords when Seceders eventually built their own churches, which would greatly reduce money available to pay for rents or land improvement.²⁴³ This argument had been reiterated during the General Assembly debate on the Schism Overture in 1766.

[T]he present method of planting churches is ... contrary to the civil interest of the country, and the revenue of the gentlemen of property.... where men are in earnest about religion, they spare no cost to obtain the means of it. This will exhaust the lower class of people, and render them less able to pay rents, or to advance them higher; so that every new establishment of that kind is ultimately a tax upon land.²⁴⁴

Economic arguments were also brought to the fore by William Thom, who, like Adams, believed that heritors would be adversely affected financially by dissent.²⁴⁵ Andrew Crosbie, too, used the economic argument to link ecclesiastical and political reform. He believed that if whole parishes were alienated from

²⁴¹ Hutcheson, *Considerations on Patronages*, p.11.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, pp.16-17.

²⁴³ Adams, *Inquiry into the Powers Committed to the General Assemblies of this Church*, pp.36-37.

²⁴⁴ Morren, *Annals 1752-1766*, p.342.

²⁴⁵ [Thom], *Short History of the Late General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, cited in Donovan, ‘Evangelical Civic Humanism in Glasgow’, p.244.

presentees the result would be ‘schism’, which, quite apart from its religious consequences, would be the ‘ruin and impoverishment of the lower class of people ... the discouragement of industry and the improvement of the country’, as they would incur ‘very considerable expence (*sic*)’ by having to build meeting-houses and bear the cost of maintaining seceding ministers.²⁴⁶ Thus, ministers were taking their arguments beyond the religious and into the secular realm, highlighting the importance of religion to national prosperity and arguing that the failure to address the problem of patronage would bring continuing division, discontent, and serious economic consequences for society, turning ‘fruitful fields’ into ‘a howling wilderness’.²⁴⁷ For example, this type of argument led to the town council of Paisley purchasing the right of patronage for the town’s churches from the patron in 1758, in order that ‘piety and industry might go hand in hand’.²⁴⁸

As Enlightenment values spread, Lord Dreghorn, one of the senators of the College of Justice, observed a noticeable change in the ‘style, manners, sentiments, and sermons of the clergy’.²⁴⁹ Ministers were ‘more learned, more philosophic, and more celebrated in the republic of letters’. Dreghorn was unimpressed by these changes. He believed that the clergy were ‘not inclined to preach on subjects agreeable to the people’, and the younger clergy had become

²⁴⁶ Crosbie, *Thoughts of a Layman Concerning Patronage and Presentation*, p.240.

²⁴⁷ [Patrick Nisbet], *A Seasonable Address to the Citizens of Glasgow, upon the present important question, whether the churches of that city shall continue free, or be enslaved to patronage?* ([Glasgow], 1762), p.12. When Nisbet wrote this he was a merchant in Glasgow, he was ordained a minister in 1766. Nisbet’s authorship is cited in Hew Scott, *The Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae: The Succession of Ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation*, 8 Vols (Edinburgh, 1915-20), Vol. 2, p.206.

²⁴⁸ *Case of the Magistrates and Town-Council of Paisley, the Minister and Session of the Laigh Church, and the Minister of the High Church at that Town, Appellants* [Edinburgh, 1758], cited in Landsman, ‘Liberty, Piety and Patronage’, p.220.

²⁴⁹ John Maclaurin, Lord Dreghorn, ‘Thoughts on the Right of Patronage’ (1766), in *The works of the late John Maclaurin*, 2 Vols (Edinburgh, 1798), Vol. 2, p.250.

‘peculiarly disagreeable to the people’.²⁵⁰ One who sympathised with this view was Walter Scott’s mother, a member of the congregation at Old Greyfriars, in Edinburgh, a charge shared by John Erskine and William Robertson. She ‘liked Dr Erskine’s sermons; but was not fond of Principal [Robertson’s], however rational, eloquent, and well composed’.²⁵¹ Her view exemplified that of many ordinary parishioners who refused to acquiesce with Moderate theology.

Archibald Bruce also attacked what he described as the ‘faults and ridiculous foibles of *modern clergymen*’, as well as their worldly concerns.²⁵² In the *Patron’s A, B, C* (1771), a parody of the catechism, he observed that ‘the chief end of a *modern clergyman*’ was ‘to serve the Patron, and his friends that he may in due time be found worthy to receive and enjoy a *benefice*, or be advanced to a better *place* through his favour’.²⁵³ John Erskine certainly recognised the value of those who ‘refine the taste, improve the genius, civilize the manners, and promote the literary pursuits of a nation. The advantages of this kind derived from their labours ... are yet important enough to demand our grateful notice and acknowledgement’.²⁵⁴ However, he remained unconvinced by the preaching of morality over doctrine. In a pamphlet published in 1783, recommending the ‘method, style & delivery in preaching’, he maintained that evangelical ministers should neither be ashamed of preaching what they believed, nor acquiesce with the ‘moralists’ by trying to accommodate their style of preaching.

Be not ashamed to teach the doctrines you believe in ... Detest the character of a TRIMMER ... Some ... may think it the duty ... to TEMPORIZE, and by preaching the gospel ... in a mere rational or legal form, to bring it down as near as may be to their science ... But I am rather of opinion, that we should ... stand up for the defence of the gospel in the full glory of its most important doctrines,

²⁵⁰ Ibid., p.251.

²⁵¹ John Gibson Lockhart, *The Life of Sir Walter Scott*, 5 Vols (Edinburgh, 1902), Vol. 1, p.117, cited in Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism*, p.9.

²⁵² Archibald Bruce, *The patron's A, B, C* (Glasgow, 1771), p.2.

²⁵³ Ibid., p.5.

²⁵⁴ Erskine, ‘The Blessing of Christian Teachers’, p.86.

and in the full freedom of its grace; and that we should preach it in its divinest and most evangelical form.²⁵⁵

While evangelicals preached salvation, Moderate ministers used their pulpits to make a case for enlightened Moderate Presbyterianism, and to emphasise morality over religious doctrine. John Logan (1748-88), minister at Leith, preached to his congregation that ‘We have improved upon our ancestors in humanity, charity and benevolence ... we are better members of society, better neighbours, better friends than our ancestors were’.²⁵⁶ William Leechman’s sermons illustrated the importance of religion, but also emphasized the benefits of morality and virtue to society. Thus, Jesus Christ was ‘the great light which enlightens the world’, and the truths that he taught were ‘the truths which respect mankind in their highest capacity, as the creatures of God, as the rational and immortal subjects of his moral kingdom’.²⁵⁷ There were however, other truths, ‘relative to the prosperity, the grandeur, the elegance of civil society, and to the rights or privileges of the several members of it... which may be highly useful to improve and embellish human life and human society.’²⁵⁸

The sermons of Hugh Blair were redolent of Enlightenment values and expressed the virtues of polite Moderatism in subject matter that would never have found its way into orthodox Calvinist sermons, such as John Maclaurin’s *Glorying in the cross of Christ* (1755) or *The Sins of MEN not chargeable on GOD* (1755).²⁵⁹ Instead, Blair called attention to the ‘degree of importance [that] must be allowed to the comforts of health, to the innocent gratifications of sense,

²⁵⁵ John Erskine, *Simplicity recommended to ministers of the Gospel* (London, 1783), pp.10-11.

²⁵⁶ John Logan, ‘Fervent in spirit; serving the Lord’, in *Sermons by the late Reverend John Logan* (Edinburgh, 1790), p.25.

²⁵⁷ William Leechman, ‘Jesus Christ full of truth’, in *Sermons, by William Leechman, 2 Vols* (London, 1789) Vol. 2, p.103

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.91.

²⁵⁹ John Maclaurin, *Sermons and essays* (Glasgow, 1755).

and to the entertainment afforded us by all the beautiful scenes of nature'.²⁶⁰

Moreover, he highlighted the importance of a moderate, polite and enlightened sort of religion as a force for cultivation and improvement:

[R]eligious Knowledge has a *direct* Tendency to improve the social Intercourse of Men, and to assist them in co-operating for common Good.... It *forms* them for Society. It *civilizes* Mankind. It tames the Fierceness of their Passions, and wears off the Barbarity of their Manners.²⁶¹

William Robertson preached that Christianity was 'Rational and sublime in its doctrines, humane and beneficent in its precepts, pure and simple in its worship; no religion was ever so well calculated to repress the inroads of superstition ... It not only sanctifies our souls, but refines our manners'.²⁶²

Robertson also set out his case for enlightened Presbyterianism in his *History of Scotland* (1759), emphasising the historical context of Scotland's Reformation, which, Colin Kidd has argued, allowed Robertson to maintain links to his own religious heritage and the values of Knox and Melville, in an effort to reconcile 'the principles of the Enlightenment with those of the Scottish Presbyterian heritage'.²⁶³ He was keen to shed Scotland's martial past to accommodate her new, enlightened condition, and he attempted to undermine Scotland's position as a nation bound to the Covenants of 1638 and 1643. He accepted the necessity of the Covenants in an historical context but he attacked the actions of the Covenanters for their violence and lawlessness.²⁶⁴

²⁶⁰ Hugh Blair, 'On the Proper Estimate of Human Life', in *Sermons by Hugh Blair* (London, 1784), p.340.

²⁶¹ Hugh Blair, *The Importance of Religious Knowledge to the Happiness of Mankind* (Edinburgh, 1750), pp.23-25. Italics in the original.

²⁶² Robertson, *Situation of the World at the Time of Christ's Appearance*, pp.26, 41.

²⁶³ Colin Kidd, 'The ideological significance of Robertson's *History of Scotland*', in Brown (ed.), *William Robertson and the expansion of empire*, p.142; Sher, *Church and University*, p.106.

²⁶⁴ Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's past: Scottish whig historians and the creation of an Anglo-British identity, 1689-c.1833* (Cambridge, 1993), p.194.

Yet, although Robertson, Blair and others expounded the value of rational religion as an aid to ‘improving’, ‘civilizing’, and ‘refining’ the manners of mankind, and presented themselves as exemplars of these enlightened values, there were in reality many similarities between Moderate and evangelical ministers, in their background and education, and in the society they kept. Henry Cockburn described the Moderates Hugh Blair and William Robertson, as well as the Popular ministers John Erskine and Sir Henry Moncreiff Wellwood, as ‘all literary and agreeable gentlemen, the delights of all society’.²⁶⁵ While some evangelicals undoubtedly exemplified the traditional view of eighteenth-century Scottish ultra-dogmatic orthodoxy, with an unbending subscription to archaic religious tenets, others embraced Enlightenment thinking with the same respect for learning and the role of reason, as their Moderate colleagues. Men such as John Erskine, John Maclaurin, John Gillies (1712-96), Popular minister, William Leechman, and John Hamilton, (c.1713-80), Popular minister and Moderator of the General Assembly in 1766, could frequently be found in each other’s company, and they were described as ‘united, not only in the same love of literature, and in the same studies, but in the same general views, of pastoral duty, and in the same active solicitude to promote the best interests of mankind’.²⁶⁶ Nevertheless, despite their personal qualities and friendships, their differing beliefs with regard to conscience, authority and the right to popular involvement in the call for a minister as well as their different theological emphases, put them clearly on opposite sides in the General Assembly debates, as well as in their preaching and publications. However, whether they were evangelical ministers, emphasising liberty of conscience and the freedom to judge, or Moderates

²⁶⁵ Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of his Time* (Edinburgh, 1856), p.227.

²⁶⁶ Wellwood, *Account of the life and Writings of John Erskine*, pp.85-86.

emphasising morality and good works, they all had the potential to bring ordinary people into this debate through their sermons and pamphlets.

The Moderate ‘manifesto’ also established their view of civil society, where ‘Subordination’ and ‘Obedience’ were essential ‘to the Being of all Constitutions and Forms of Government whatever, whether Ecclesiastical or Civil’.²⁶⁷ It was a deeply conservative social stance but one to which few in society would have taken exception. It was rare to find members of the social elite who believed that ordinary people should have any kind of political voice. John Millar (1735-1801), professor of law at Glasgow University, did support widening the franchise, although he did not consider universal suffrage viable because the ‘lowest of the people’ could never be ‘independent in their circumstances, or so enlightened as to prefer the public good to their immediate pecuniary interest’.²⁶⁸ He believed that, with the expansion of commerce, the definition of citizenship needed to be broadened because ‘the effects of opulence and refinement ... have also a tendency to inspire the people with notions of liberty and independence’.²⁶⁹ However, Millar’s was a lone voice. The view of Adam Ferguson, was much more representative of this social group. Ferguson completely dismissed the notion that the lower ranks should have *any* voice in governing the country, regarding the ordinary man as ‘unfit to command’.²⁷⁰ William Robertson believed that there was no innate quality that could set one man apart from another, only unequal circumstances: ‘the talents he may afterwards acquire, as well as the virtues he may be rendered capable of exercising, depend, in a great measure,

²⁶⁷ *Reasons of dissent, March 11 1752*, p.iv.

²⁶⁸ John Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (1771) (Indianapolis, 2006), pp.62-64.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.240.

²⁷⁰ Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) (Edinburgh, 2007), p.177.

upon the state of society in which he is placed'.²⁷¹ He recognized that human beings were not inherently unequal; rather, they were made so by birth.

However, if circumstance directed the course of an individual's life, then improvement of that life could only come about through *improved* circumstances, and, to eighteenth-century reformers, that improvement would be attained only by political change. Hence, Patrick Bannerman could ask of enlightened, reasoning Scotland, in 1782:

Is it rational ... that the great body of the people, those of most respect and usefulness in the commonwealth, shall have no representation, no protection of their rights, no liberty ... Is freedom circumscribed by titles and by birth? Are the great the only wise and worthy citizens? Is merit necessarily connected with fortune? And have all learning, penetration, sagacity, and virtue of human nature taken up their residence with wealth and honours?²⁷²

Not all ministers were as contentious as Bannerman was in this pamphlet, but a number of eighteenth-century churchmen, from various theological viewpoints, took the opportunity of using their pulpits to express their views on contemporary society and its failings. For example, William Wishart (younger) defined true love of country as a 'Concern for its real Welfare' under 'Laws formed for the Welfare of every Person'.²⁷³ Wishart's belief stemmed from his conception of an egalitarian system of Church government, which included the right of congregations to call the minister of their choice.

Ministers felt duty bound to speak out on moral issues and they took the opportunity to castigate the lifestyle and influence of the elite. John Warden (c.1708-64), Church of Scotland minister at Perth, preached that 'vice becomes fashionable, and is kept in Countenance by the Example of the Great'.²⁷⁴ John Love (1757-1825), Popular minister at Glasgow, also believed that 'the detestable

²⁷¹ Robertson, *Situation of the World at the Time of Christ's Appearance*, p.401.

²⁷² Bannerman, *Address To The People Of Scotland On Ecclesiastical And Civil Liberty*, pp.20-21.

²⁷³ Wishart, *Publick Virtue Recommended*, pp.5-6.

²⁷⁴ John Warden, *The happiness of Britain illustrated* (Edinburgh, 1749), p.56.

vices, which the great and the wealthy have long exemplified, are now diffused through all the inferior orders of Society'.²⁷⁵ The Revd Andrew Greenfield (1750-88), preaching in the New English Church at Edinburgh, lectured that the 'cause of national calamity' lay in the 'prevalence of public depravity and corruption' and the fall of empires was 'preceded by dissolute manners which weakened and wasted the constitution of the state' while 'the fire which, in the last century, preyed on the vitals of the constitution ... is not extinguished. It has lately broken out beyond the Atlantic ... and sparks of it are appearing in the British isles, which opportunity would blow into a flame'.²⁷⁶ Hugh Blair preached, on more than one occasion, warning society against the 'Luxury and Corruption of Manners' and the 'thoughtless indulgence of pleasure'.²⁷⁷

Preaching about the failings of society that emanated from the moral laxity of the elite were common themes, certainly not unusual as a discourse, but could this barrage of criticism have engaged some of the non-elite hearers and readers of such sermons? Might an emphasis on divisions and inequalities have struck a deeper chord in a society where many ordinary people were antagonised by an elite who burdened them with unwanted ministers? After all, such sermons did not just reach the ears of the immediate congregation. They were published and therefore available to all who could read, and, as chapter four will demonstrate, this was a significant cross-section of the public.

These criticisms from the pulpit echoed the sentiments of the enlightened *literati*, and the jurist Lord Kames (1696-1782), exemplified their views:

²⁷⁵ John Love, *The radical cause of national calamity* (London, 1794), p.26.

²⁷⁶ Andrew Greenfield, *The Cause and Cure of National Distress* (Edinburgh, 1779), pp.8-9, 17. Greenfield entered into orders in the Church of England, and was Rector of Moira in Ireland.

²⁷⁷ Hugh Blair, *The wrath of man praising God* (Edinburgh, 1746), p.31; idem, *Sermons*, Vol. 4, p.133.

In all times luxury has been the ruin of every state where it prevailed. Nations originally are poor and virtuous. They advance to industry, commerce, and perhaps to conquest and empire. But this state is never permanent: great opulence opens a wide door to indolence, sensuality, corruption, prostitution, perdition.²⁷⁸

The assertion, from the pulpit and elsewhere, that contemporary society was lax and corrupt, highlighted the need for a reformation in manners, but also offered parallels with other situations such as the wider need for a reform in local and national politics. Hence John Snodgrass (1744-97), Popular minister at Dundee, contended:

[I]s there not a spirit of dissipation, of luxury, of impiety, baneful in its influence, both upon the present and the future, that has pervaded every rank ... where is now that love of liberty, that true patriotism, that fortitude and magnanimity in the defence of our civil and religious privileges, for which our fathers were so remarkably distinguished?²⁷⁹

In addition, Snodgrass took the opportunity to comment on those who believed that they would find 'salvation' through 'the virtues of a well spent life'.²⁸⁰ The philosophers of the Enlightenment regarded luxury as the ruin of the state, while Whigs feared the increasing power and corruption of the offices of state through the distribution of patronage and pensions, and, as the century progressed, the Popular party became increasingly aligned with the Whig opposition. Hence the division within the Church between Moderates and evangelicals about authority over conscience, and morality over doctrine, extended into the public sphere as ministers published their sermons and used their pulpits to expound their beliefs.

The patronage debate was able to engage the public because ministers, regardless of their theological positions, wrote and preached on this subject year after year. The clergy brought their immediate congregations into the debate by

²⁷⁸ Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Sketches of the History of Man*, 3 Vols (1778) (Indianapolis, 2007), Vol. 1, p.333.

²⁷⁹ John Snodgrass, *The Means of Preserving the Life and Power of Religion in a Time of General Corruption* (Dundee, 1781), pp.14, 37.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.14.

making appeals from their pulpits, and laymen and ministers published again and again on this issue. The individuals who involved themselves in the pamphlet debate wished to ensure that their arguments were spread as widely as possible. Hence one author wrote to ensure that his pamphlet ‘may fall into several hands who have no opportunity of seeing the Newspapers’.²⁸¹ Over 80 pamphlets, on patronage alone, were published between 1730 and 1790, many using liberty of conscience as their central argument.²⁸² The books that ordinary people bought indicates the level of engagement with this issue as many of the works to which they subscribed also resonated with arguments couched in similar terms. The emphasis on authority above conscience was a position which had wider ramifications, as numerous members of the clergy continued to act on, and preach about, the importance of conscience, thus continually emphasising a viewpoint which ordinary people understood because it was expressed in familiar language, and which they could adapt to their own needs when defining their position in a changing society. These pamphlets and books were available to any literate individual who could afford their price, and as chapter four will demonstrate, there were many thousands of literate book-buying Scots men and women.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown the divisions that emerged within the Church throughout the century. It has also demonstrated the battle between the Popular party and the Moderates over issues of authority above conscience and morality over doctrine. These were crucial issues for eighteenth-century church and laymen and they did not disappear with the conclusion of an Assembly debate; they were

²⁸¹ Linen manufacturer, *Brief and Simple Narrative of the Rise, Progress, and Effects of Patronage*, p.4.

²⁸² Sher and Murdoch, ‘Patronage and Party in the Church of Scotland’, p.201.

addressed again and again in print by clergymen from all sides, and, because of this, the struggle between evangelicals and Moderates over these issues had the potential to engage large sections of society. Just how ministers may have been able to encourage people, deliberately or otherwise, to participate in issues such as these will be considered in chapter five.

The importance of the patronage debate cannot be overstated as it is highly probable that it played a central part in helping some individuals to develop a wider political awareness, while the egalitarian ethos of Presbyterianism, which was central to its structure, actively encouraged the participation of ordinary people through kirk sessions and presbyteries, and may also have helped to encourage the development of a democratic consciousness. The patronage issue was at the forefront of debate in many communities, and, as individuals wrestled with their consciences over this, some may have begun to recognise the wider political implications of this issue. Significantly, although the Moderates fairly quickly claimed success by establishing their dominance in the Assembly, at parish level their control was much less certain throughout most of the eighteenth century, and this will be considered in chapter six, with regard to the kinds of activity in which ordinary people involved themselves.

Moderates were faced with continuing opposition from Popular ministers within the Church, and it was as a result of the dissension that this caused that the impact of the Enlightenment was felt by most ordinary people in eighteenth-century Scotland. The controversy aroused by these issues, with their potential to bring ordinary folk into the debates, may well have been the first steps towards encouraging people to become involved in controversy, and may also have helped

them to develop the political awareness which by the 1790s, had progressed in some to a commitment to radical political action.

Chapter Three

‘Blessed is he that readeth’²⁸³

Calvinism, literacy and education

Literacy allowed access to ideas and provided a major stimulus to the political consciousness of the population, whether at the level of the university educated elite or the village shoemaker. This chapter argues that Scottish Calvinism’s emphasis on literacy had the potential to influence ordinary people by helping them to develop a questioning attitude, which encouraged some to independent thought, and drew some towards democratic politics in the 1790s. The intention in this chapter therefore is to demonstrate the importance of the Presbyterian drive for literacy which enabled ordinary people to follow the debates discussed in chapter two. It will show that the push for literacy by the Church was mirrored in the desire for education by ordinary people, and that both the clergy and ‘enlightened’ philosophers believed that access to education was essential to ordinary people’s development. It will also discuss how people could gain access to ideas, through sermons, pamphlets, newspapers, public lectures and libraries. This chapter argues that regardless of whether ministers were Popular, Moderate, or from the Secession Churches, they all advocated reading and serious engagement with Scripture, and because this encouraged literacy, the clergy had the means to influence ordinary people and draw them into contemporary debates. This chapter therefore develops the second strand of this thesis, arguing that access to education and ideas was an essential stimulus to political awareness for

²⁸³ Revelation 1:3.

ordinary Scots, and may help to explain how, by the 1790s, some ordinary people had become radicalized.

I

The necessity to engage personally with the Bible was central to the development of independent thinking, and for some Presbyterians, this presaged an involvement with democratic politics. Liam McIlvanney has argued, in his study of Robert Burns, that the Presbyterian ideal of the active layman examining Scripture for himself, and relating to other Christians on terms of equality, underwrote a participatory political ethic of active citizenship.²⁸⁴ David Allan has also suggested that Scottish susceptibility to French arguments for equality and fraternity was reinforced by the populist suspicion of hierarchical authority that was part of Scotland's religious heritage.²⁸⁵ This chapter aims to add weight to this line of reasoning by developing the argument that Presbyterianism and Scotland's Covenanting legacy were vital to the emergence of political awareness amongst ordinary people.

For ordinary folk, access to political ideas was fostered by Calvinism because Calvinism necessitated the ability to read and encouraged the individual to question. From its beginnings in the sixteenth century Scotland's Protestant Reformation instituted a religion based on the 'word', that is the Word of God, or Scripture, and the Calvinist tradition was responsible for the destruction of image and ritual in favour of book and sermon.²⁸⁶ As Kevin Sharpe has commented in relation to England, 'the Protestant emphasis on individual conscience and

²⁸⁴ Liam McIlvanney, *Burns the Radical: Poetry and Politics in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (East Linton, 2002), pp.22-23.

²⁸⁵ David Allan, *Scotland in the Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 2002), p.30.

²⁸⁶ M. Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (Yale, 2002), pp.1-23.

personal scripturalism, on each godly man's reading and wrestling with Scripture, ultimately democratized the word'.²⁸⁷ Calvinist theology embraced original sin, limited atonement, justification by faith alone, predestination and the inspiration of Scripture. The *Scots Confession*, drawn up by John Knox and five other Scottish reformers in 1560, followed Calvin in denying that the Bible owed its authority to the Church; the Scriptures were 'sufficient to instruct and make the man of God perfite', and contained 'all thingis necessary to be beleaved for the salvation of mankinde'.²⁸⁸ Calvin required that people understood what they were doing. Calvinism therefore was an empowering theology that demanded that everyone understood Scripture for themselves. People had to be taught to read and understand the Bible because to 'attain to God the Creator, it is needful to have the scripture to be our guide ... the true Creator and governor of the world cannot perfectly be known without the word, which God hath used from the beginning to instruct his people'.²⁸⁹

Although the preaching of the clergy was important, Calvinism emphasised the need for people to interrogate Scripture without anyone intervening between the individual and the word of God, and it was this which could help to develop a questioning attitude. This basic tenet of Calvinism was supported by orthodox Calvinists as well as those from a more 'enlightened' theological perspective. For example, Robert Wallace, preached in 1729, exhorting people to consider the 'ancient Canon of Scripture' but, in so doing, he encouraged the use of rational enquiry, asking them not to

²⁸⁷ Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (eds), *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2003), p.4.

²⁸⁸ *Scots Confession of Faith*. Other ministers involved in drawing up the *Confession* were John Winram, John Spottiswoode, John Willock, John Douglas and John Row.

²⁸⁹ Jean Calvin, *The Institution Of The Christian Religion* (1536) (Glasgow, 1762), p.16.

*[R]eject without Examination the Interpretations of this Canon delivered by your Teachers, nor the newer Revelations of your own times; but give every thing that has any reasonable pretence to divine Revelation a fair hearing, examine and ... use your Reason freely and impartially ... let us never ... pretend that Men have not a Right to examine what is proposed.*²⁹⁰

This can be compared with Daniel MacQueen's stricture that Protestantism had 'asserted the right of private judgement' and was committed to 'freedom of enquiry and the rights of conscience'.²⁹¹ MacQueen's comments had arisen over certain passages on the Reformation in the work of the philosopher and historian David Hume (1711-76), whose *History of England* (1754-62) had remarked on the excessive enthusiasm of the Protestant Reformations, describing the reformers as religious fanatics. MacQueen was an orthodox Calvinist and a leading member of the Popular grouping within the Assembly. He was known for his condemnation of scepticism, Deism, and the corruption of religious principles by the intellect.²⁹² Wallace was an early example of the Moderate tendency within the Church, expressed through his emphasis on reason. However, he too was an opponent of patronage and on a number of occasions found himself in political opposition.²⁹³ Paradoxically, he opposed the revivalism of the 1740s because he believed that such preaching gave unscrupulous men too much influence over the lower orders.²⁹⁴ Despite representing differing theological standpoints, both encouraged a questioning attitude and both respected freedom of conscience.

The commitment of the Presbyterian Church to the goal of universal literacy, in order that everyone would be able to read the Bible, had instigated the requirement of a school in every parish, available to the whole community. By the end of the eighteenth century, a system of national education had in many respects

²⁹⁰ Wallace, *Regard Due to Divine Revelation*, pp.32, 61. Italics in the original.

²⁹¹ MacQueen, *Letters on Mr. Hume's History of Great Britain*, p.54-55.

²⁹² Richard B. Sher, 'Daniel MacQueen', *ODNB*.

²⁹³ See p.234.

²⁹⁴ B. Barnett Cochran, 'Robert Wallace', *ODNB*.

come close to realisation through a network of Lowland parish and burgh schools which offered education to the poor and the wealthy alike, although in the Highlands the situation was considerably more variable.²⁹⁵

Ministers on both sides of the Popular/Moderate debate advocated education for all. Thus, Robert Wallace, a supporter of education for the poor, believed that because God had imbued man with reason it was inexcusable to suggest that he should remain ignorant: 'Clear and extensive Knowledge is the Glory of Men, as rational Creatures'.²⁹⁶ In a sermon preached in Edinburgh in 1746 he specifically attacked the theories of Bernard de Mandeville, who considered that education for the poor was 'pernicious'.²⁹⁷ For Wallace this was an incomprehensible line of reasoning. He believed that the education of the poor encouraged industriousness, which materially enriched society.²⁹⁸ Similarly Patrick Bannerman endorsed the view of Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun (c.1653-1716), who had also recommended that 'all mankind' should have an education provided by parish schools, where those who could pay would, while those who could not, 'ought to be taught freely, be cloathed (*sic*), maintained, and helped according to the several degrees of their wants'. In addition they should 'learn to read all sorts of different writings' and they should be encouraged in

²⁹⁵ R. A. Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity: Illiteracy and society in Scotland and northern England, 1600-1800* (Cambridge, 1985); D. J. Withrington, 'The S.P.C.K. and Highland Schools in Mid-Eighteenth Century', *SHR*, Vol. 61 No. 2 (1962), pp.89-99; idem, 'Schooling, Literacy and Society', in Devine and Mitchison (eds), *People and society in Scotland 1760-1830*, pp.163-187.

²⁹⁶ Robert Wallace, *Ignorance and Superstition a Source of Violence and Cruelty, and in particular the cause of the present rebellion* (Edinburgh, 1746), p.19.

²⁹⁷ Bernard de Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees* (London, 1724), p.328. Mandeville's work was published twice in Edinburgh in 1755 and again in 1772. In addition *Two letters, written by a minister of the Gospel to a gentleman, concerning professor Campbell's divinity Letter*, which included his answer to the author of the fable of the bees was published in Edinburgh in 1731, while Francis Hutcheson's *Thoughts on laughter and observations on the fable of the bees* was published in Glasgow in 1758.

²⁹⁸ Wallace, *Ignorance and Superstition a Source of Violence and Cruelty*, p.22.

‘conversation ... wherein they should be taught to express their thoughts properly and plainly’.²⁹⁹

Scottish Enlightenment thinkers also endorsed the value of education for ordinary people. They regarded it as a means of encouraging individual rationality and reason, central virtues of the Enlightenment, believing that it was a way to improve both the individual and society by elevating the minds of ordinary people to a level where they would share the attitudes of their betters. Enlightenment philosophers encouraged their students to think and to question, and this questioning attitude could be imparted to a wider audience when those students became teachers or clergymen living and working in Scotland. Although not all of the enlightened elite saw the education of ordinary people as either necessary or important, some, such as Adam Smith, maintained that ‘The education of the common people requires ... the attention of the public more than that of people of rank and fortune’.³⁰⁰ He acknowledged the difficulty of reconciling the desire to educate the lower orders with the needs of commercial society, and he believed that the superior education of the lower orders in Scotland was due to the relatively backward state of the economy. ‘In this country indeed, where the division of labour is not so far advanced, even the meanest porter can read and write, because the price of education is cheap, and because a parent can employ his child no other way at 6 or 7 years of age’.³⁰¹ However, he argued that improving the circumstances of the poor would be advantageous because it would be equitable and it would improve society.

²⁹⁹ Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, cited in Patrick Bannerman, *Letters containing a plan of education for rural academies* (Edinburgh, 1773), pp.112-115.

³⁰⁰ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of The Wealth of Nations*, 2 Vols (1776) (London, 1999), Vol. 2, p.370.

³⁰¹ Adam Smith, ‘Lectures On Jurisprudence’, (1762), R. L. Meek, D. D. Raphael and P. G. Stein (eds), *Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, 6 Vols (Indianapolis, 1982), Vol. 5, Chapter: Of Police, <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/>>. [Accessed 02/02/2009].

No society can surely be flourishing and happy of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable. It is but equity ... that they who feed cloath (*sic*) and lodge the whole body of the people, should have such a share of the produce of their own labour as to be themselves tolerably well fed, cloathed (*sic*) and lodged.³⁰²

Smith's case was not merely altruistic as he saw the importance of education for 'this rank of people' as a means of ensuring that the lower orders were instructed in 'geometry and mechanics', the 'most useful sciences', rather than the less useful 'little smattering of Latin, which the children of the common people are sometimes taught and which can scarce ever be of any use to them'.³⁰³ Nevertheless, he did recognise the value of educating the lower orders, and cited Scotland as an example where the establishment of parish schools 'has taught almost the whole common people to read, and a very great proportion to write and account'.³⁰⁴

The education which low people's children receive is not indeed at any rate considerable; however, it does them an immense deal of service, and the want of it is certainly one of their greatest misfortunes. By it they learn to read, and this gives them the benefit of religion, which is a great advantage, not only considered in a pious sense, but as it affords them subject for thought and speculation. From this we may observe the benefit of country schools, and, however much neglected, must acknowledge them to be an excellent institution.³⁰⁵

John Millar, too, was ardent in his belief in education for all. He regarded Britain as a civilized and cultivated society where 'the progress of science and literature and of the liberal arts, among the higher classes, must ... contribute to enlighten the common people, and to spread a degree of the same improvements over the whole community'.³⁰⁶ He believed, that 'the accomplishments of reading, writing, and accounting, are usually communicated at such easy rates, as to be

³⁰² Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Vol. 1, p.181.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p.372.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ Meek, Raphael and Stein (eds), Smith, *Lectures On Jurisprudence*, Vol. 5, Chapter: Of Police.

³⁰⁶ John Millar, *An Historical View of the English Government From the Settlement of the Saxons in Britain to the Revolution in 1688* (1787) (Indianapolis, 2006), p.733.

within the reach of the lower orders’, and he also regarded book publishing as affording ‘another medium for the circulation of knowledge, the benefit of which must extend, in some degree, to every member of the community’.³⁰⁷ He maintained that, from the Reformation onwards, Scots had been disposed,

to embrace no tenets without examination. The energy requisite for the accomplishment of the reformation, and the impulse which that event gave to the minds of men, continued after the new system was established; and produced a boldness and activity, not only in examining religious opinions, which were of great extent, but in the general investigation of truth. Even the common mass of the people took an interest in the various points of theological controversy; became conversant in many abstract disquisitions connected with them; and were led to acquire a sort of literary curiosity.³⁰⁸

This, he argued, had been brought about by the establishment of public schools in every parish, which were ‘regarded as the cause of the diffusion of knowledge among the lower classes in Scotland’.³⁰⁹ He was therefore greatly concerned about the need to educate all classes including the poorest, and, while he recognised that Scotland’s parish schools had their limitations, they offered at least some kind of education accessible to the poor. Thus, writing from different viewpoints regarding the necessity of education, many clergymen and some Enlightenment philosophers agreed on one thing, that the establishment of parish schools, however ‘ill calculated for the purpose’, was vital to ensuring a literate population.³¹⁰ Access to education was therefore regarded as essential to the development of ordinary people both by the intellectual elite, and the Church, if for somewhat different reasons.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., p.481.

³¹⁰ Ibid., p.739.

II

Margaret Todd has argued that in sixteenth-century Scotland the ordinary people who accomplished the Reformation did not simply accept instruction, they adjusted Protestantism to the demands of their own lives, keeping and modifying what they found useful, resisting or ignoring what they did not. She maintained that the Reformation Church was intrusive, rigorous and demanding, yet it succeeded in establishing itself as the national Church because it campaigned to provide an educated clergy and to establish a literate and theologically informed laity, through catechism, examination, sermons, enforced family exercises and the founding of schools, but principally through the word which defined the culture of Protestantism.³¹¹ The emphasis in the immediate Post-reformation period had been on conversion. Thus hearing and understanding a sermon were paramount, and as a result new habits developed within congregations, which included timekeeping, attentiveness, sobriety and quiet, each of which was equally essential to developing the skills of the reader.

Within eighteenth-century Presbyterianism knowledge was insisted upon; knowledge of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. Adam Gib (1714-88), Anti-burgher minister at Edinburgh, commented from the pulpit 'It is an unspeakable mercy, that Bibles are now so common,- and that people are so commonly taught to read them'.³¹² Although the necessity for independent reading was recognised, it was not always supported by the clergy particularly if they considered that their parishioners were reading beyond Scripture. For example, the Revd Mr Gabriel Scott, minister at Kirkpatrick-Juxta in Dumfriesshire, thought that his parishioners were over-fond of books about 'controversial

³¹¹ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland*, p.20.

³¹² Adam Gib, *Christ has other sheep, whom he must bring* (Edinburgh, 1783), p.32.

divinity'.³¹³ Nevertheless, that it was common for people to be able to read can be attested by the shame felt by those who could not, hence, one of those 'awakened' at Cambuslang, Margaret Clark, confessed that she 'was much ashamed that I could not make use of the Bible in the Kirk, as others about me did', and she thereafter took steps to learn to read.³¹⁴

The emphasis of the catechisms was on reading Scripture in order to find salvation and to inspire individuals to a greater dedication to God.³¹⁵ However, this Calvinist attention to reading also included the view that reading should be approached in a spirit of enquiry, not merely acceptance. Hence, John Dun (1723/4-92), Moderate minister at Auchinleck, who sided with the Popular party over patronage, emphasized the need for personal understanding and judgment.³¹⁶

[M]inisters ... do not affect a dominion over the faith of the laity; they do not pretend to lord it over God's heritage; to dictate doctrines to which the people are bound to give an implicit consent, or precepts to which they are to yield a blind submission. They send you "to the law and to the testimony" they exhort you to search the holy Scriptures ... to make a diligent and impartial inquiry ... into the truth of what they themselves deliver; they invite you to see with your own eyes, and to judge with your own understandings.³¹⁷

Similarly people used their familiarity with Scripture to distinguish between good or bad preaching, 'every one who is in use to read the scriptures, and has long been an attentive and serious hearer of discourses from the pulpit must ... measure the usefulness of every sermon, by comparing it with them'.³¹⁸

In addition to individual engagement with Scripture, ministers held exercises of instruction and examination in the catechism for their congregations,

³¹³ OSA, Vol. 4, p.524 (Kirkpatrick-Juxta, Dumfriesshire).

³¹⁴ William McCulloch, *Autobiographical Accounts of Persons Under Spiritual Concern at Cambuslang (Glasgow) during the Revival of 1741-1743*, 2 Vols (Oswestry, 2008), Vol. 2, p.183.

³¹⁵ Church of Scotland, *The Confession of Faith, the larger and shorter catechisms, with the Scripture-Proofs at Large* (Glasgow, 1757), pp.312-314, 388-9.

³¹⁶ Richard B. Sher, 'John Dun', *ODNB*.

³¹⁷ John Dun, *Sermons*, 2 Vols (Kilmarnock, 1790), Vol. 2, p.50.

³¹⁸ *Answers to the Reasons of Appeal From a Sentence of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, with respect to the settlement of the vacant Parish of Cambuslang, of date the 14th of April 1773* ([Edinburgh], 1773), p.3.

and religious instruction was chiefly attempted through this.³¹⁹ In Perth, for example, the Revd James Scott ran classes in the evening in his home, he gave each youth a book to take home to read, upon which they were examined at their next meeting.³²⁰ Family worship, including Scripture reading, was encouraged by the Church, as was note taking from sermons, and fellowship meetings for prayer were also common.³²¹ For example, George Penny, a Perth journalist, commented that in the mid-eighteenth century

The attendance of the family at church was regular; and in the evening, the whole family, servants and apprentices, assembled in the parlour, and engaged in reading the scriptures, gave notes of sermons they had heard during the day, and were examined from the catechism.³²²

An Ayrshire memorialist also observed that parents addressed themselves to

the process of religious instruction ... encircling the common hearth they spent much of their time on the evening of the Sabbath, in hearing Catechism rehearsed, in calling to remembrance the discourses which had been delivered, in reciting the chief parts of the illustrations, in making remarks upon them.³²³

Penny also noted that ministers regularly held public examinations in the Church about the state of their parishioners' religious knowledge, and he commented that 'The shrewdness and extent of their ... knowledge of divine truth ... was remarkable', with members of the community often objecting over 'some point of doctrine', which suggests that many individuals had, not only a strong grasp of doctrine, but also the ability and confidence to engage in debate.³²⁴ Such exercises in instruction and examination were common and widespread. One representative of the Synod of Argyll complained that ministers had been 'brought

³¹⁹ G. D. Henderson *The Burning Bush* (Edinburgh, 1957), p.29.

³²⁰ George Penny, *Traditions of Perth, Containing Sketches of the Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants, and Notices of Public Occurrences, During the Last Century* (Perth, 1836), p.169.

³²¹ Henderson, *Burning Bush*, pp.57-59.

³²² Penny, *Traditions of Perth*, pp.36-38.

³²³ Mitchell, 'Memories of Ayrshire about 1780', p.276.

³²⁴ Penny, *Traditions of Perth*, pp.36-38.

to an untimely death, or greatly broken in their health, by their private labour in preaching, or in visiting and catechising'.³²⁵

While Post-reformation Scotland had to overcome the problems of establishing Presbyterianism in a largely illiterate society, by the eighteenth century many of Scotland's Presbyterian laity were particularly well versed in Bible, catechism, and sermon, and were more than able to interrogate and interpret the written word for themselves. Praying societies held fellowship meetings where people studied the Bible and discussed theology among other things. However, such meetings did not always meet with support by the clergy. For example, in Dornoch in Sutherland, in the 1750s, an appeal was taken before the General Assembly by four ministers and the 'body of elders and communicants', that is, those who took communion as members of the congregation.³²⁶ They had appealed against a sentence of the synod, which had supported another group of ministers who, 'without consulting their sessions, or knowing the sentiments of the people', had curtailed the usual fast day arrangements. Thursday had been the fast day, Friday was 'usually employed by them in some more or less public act of devotion'. It had been customary in many parishes in the area to 'hold a public *fellowship meeting* on the Friday before the Sacrament; at which elders and other laymen "speak to the question," in theology or Christian experience, that may be proposed'.³²⁷ Some clergy regarded such meetings as 'pernicious' and hence the attempt to remove the fast day, but the General Assembly reversed the synod's decision.

However, in 1756 the synod again forbade the Friday fellowship meetings and again there were protests from the parishioners, who asserted that 'It is not

³²⁵ Morren, *Annals 1752-1766*, p.110.

³²⁶ Morren, *Annals 1739-1752*, pp.212-213.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.213.

past memory of man since Presbyterians looked upon it as an intolerable grievance to be hindered from meeting together for religious worship ... by such as were adversaries to our ecclesiastical constitution' and found themselves opposed by the 'judicatures of our own Church'.³²⁸ The synod countered by alleging that 'an humour of disputing, was too much encouraged in those meetings' and, 'that in some of them speeches were made as long as any of those made in that house [the General Assembly] *and questions put which all that house could not answer.*' In the end the meetings were allowed to continue.³²⁹

This illustrates a number of points. Firstly, that, fellowship meetings were open to all members of the congregation. Ministers attended rarely, but the elders and any other lay members of the congregation who wished, could be present. Secondly, those who went to the meetings were well versed in doctrine, able to debate and clearly not afraid of contention. This does not suggest an ill-educated rabble, as attested by the 'reverend member' who had charged those attending with lengthy disputation and putting difficult questions to the assembled company. Thirdly, these rights were clearly cherished by the congregation and they were quick to defend them, comparing the actions of the synod with those who had opposed the establishment of Presbyterianism and thus drawing on the Covenanting tradition and linking contemporary issues to the Covenanting past. This activity highlights the belief in popular participation. 'The people' believed that they had a legitimate right to be included in decision-making, and that their 'sentiments' were important. It also illustrates the potential involvement of all sections of the community, including the lower orders because the appeal was brought by ministers, elders and communicants, and it demonstrates that they

³²⁸ Morren, *Annals 1752-1766*, p.111.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.111-112. Italics in the original.

were well able to debate at length on controversial topics which they would have been hard pressed to do without the Calvinist emphasis placed on reading, and the push for literacy by the Church.

Given that all had to read to find salvation, understanding the written word was an important part of the education of every Scots Presbyterian, regardless of social status. As the Confession of John Knox's Geneva congregation had stated

The worde of God conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament which, as it is above the autoritie of the same Church, and onely sufficient to instruct us in all thinges concernynge salvation, so it is left for all degrees of men to reade and understand.³³⁰

This also emphasises that 'the parish church belonged to the people, and that it was everyone's concern', and ordinary people took a deep interest in the affairs of the Church, and in theological books.³³¹ Hence, the minister at Auchterderran in Fife, the Revd Andrew Murray, commented that, 'Puritanic and abstruse divinity come in for a sufficient share in their little stock of books ... They likewise read, occasionally, a variety of other books unconnected with such subjects'.³³²

In West Monkland, Lanarkshire, the Revd John Bower, noted that 'The people are very fond of controversial Divinity', while the Revd John Brymer, in Marykirk in Kincardineshire, described the 'less cultivated part of the inhabitants of this parish' as displaying 'An extreme fondness for religious disputations'.³³³ The minister at Campbelton in Argyll, the Revd Dr John Smith, lamented the fact that 'Books of controversy ... are read with such avidity by the common people

³³⁰ John Knox, *The liturgy of John Knox: received by the Church of Scotland in 1564*, (Glasgow, 1886), pp.12-13.

³³¹ Hugh McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-century Britain* (London, 1984), p.36.

³³² *OSA*, Vol. 1, p.457 (Auchterderran, Fife). Rev. Murray, was himself the presentee of Claud Boswell esq., of Balmuto, patron of the Parish of Auchterderran. A. M. Houston, *Auchterderran, Fife: a parish history* (Paisley, 1924), Ch.10.

³³³ *OSA*, Vol. 7, p.377 (West Monkland, Lanarkshire); Vol. 18, p.637 (Marykirk, Kincardineshire).

in Scotland’, wryly observing that the ‘ancient martyr said, he could either live or die for Christ, but could not dispute for him. In our times the reverse of this is more commonly the case’.³³⁴ However, while the Revd Gabriel Scott observed that it was ‘common through a great part of Scotland’ that ordinary people could ‘all read pretty well’, he was less happy about their choice of reading matter because he believed their taste in reading was promoted by ‘the Dissenters’, with ‘The vulgar read[ing] almost nothing but books on religious subjects’.³³⁵

The disquiet of some clergy in the 1790s highlights concerns expressed by a previous generation of ministers, such as Thomas Halyburton and James Durham, who had implicitly recognized the problem that once the individual had mastered the skill of reading there was a danger that what they read could not be limited.³³⁶ Ministers’ comments are also indicative of how common the practice of reading and book buying was for many ordinary people, as well as suggesting that by the final decade of the century it was beyond the power of the clergy to control such activity, and therefore somewhat disturbing, as ministers recognized that their influence over people’s lives and activities was not as complete as it had once perhaps been, particularly if that minister was of a Moderate predisposition amongst a Popular flock.

Furthermore, control over the laity, exercised through the kirk session could also be far from complete. While instances of refusal to accept the discipline of the session were rare, they did occur. For example, Betthia Gray from Cumbernauld, who had given birth to an illegitimate child, was quite prepared to argue with the session: ‘she owned herself a Sinner but was as good a

³³⁴ *OSA*, Vol. 10, pp.561-562 (Campbelton, Argyleshire).

³³⁵ *OSA*, Vol. 4, p.524 (Kirkpatrick-Juxta, Dumfriesshire).

³³⁶ Thomas Halyburton, *The Great Concern of Salvation* (Glasgow, 1751), p.376; James Durham, *A Learned and Complete Commentary upon the book of the Revelation* (1658) (Glasgow, 1788), p.81.

Christian as her Neighbours, & that there needed to be no such Dinn about her, for she knows the Session are but Men & the Scriptures saith to them, Judge not lest ye be judged'.³³⁷ What this illustrates, apart from her cheek and her ability to read, is that individuals might have accepted the right of the Church to comment on their behaviour, but did not necessarily simply accept either judgement or punishment. Similarly the constant references in session records to sexual offences, and the frequency of irregular marriages also attest to a level of refusal to accept authority.³³⁸ In 1756 a servant, Marion Gow, even challenged the legality of the session's methods in forcing individuals to attend church, by taking her case to the Court of Session, after members of the session had broken into her room.³³⁹

Revivalism, which tended to stress the autonomy of the individual, also created a distance between minister and congregation. The actions of converts during the evangelical revival at Cambuslang in 1742 highlighted how many people accorded ministers little influence in their conversion, instead they discussed this with family, friends and lay leaders in the community, reflecting on the Bible for themselves rather than allowing ministers to mediate between them and the word of God.³⁴⁰ In smaller ways too a lessening of deference was evident; for example, Anti-burghers were the first to avoid the habit of lifting their hats to the gentry.³⁴¹ Deference was not universal.

³³⁷ NAS, Cumbernauld Kirk Session Register CH2/79/1/9-11, cited in Brekke, "In An Age So Enlightened, Enthusiasm So Extravagant", p.45.

³³⁸ See R. Mitchison and L. Leneman, *Girls in trouble: Sexuality and social control in rural Scotland, 1660-1780* (Edinburgh, 1998); R. Mitchison and L. Leneman, *Sin in the city: Sexuality and social control in urban Scotland 1660-1780* (Edinburgh, 1998).

³³⁹ Signet Library, Court of Session Papers, CSP 20:9, 'Petition of Marion Gow', 1756, cited in Christopher Whatley, *Scottish Society 1707-1830*, p.165.

³⁴⁰ Landsman, 'Evangelists and Their Hearers', p.130.

³⁴¹ Smout, *History of the Scottish People 1560-1830*, p.308.

The comments of the clergy clearly suggest a concern that people who could read would also acquire confidence in their ability to think for themselves, which could consequently alert individuals to the possibility of different viewpoints which they might consider, enabling them to question what was preached or written, regardless of the author or speaker. Thus the Calvinist stress on reading and understanding the Bible for themselves may well have encouraged individuals to defy or ignore those with whom they disagreed. The patronage disputes and the various secessions may provide evidence for this. Equally the line of causation could have gone in both directions. Reading could have fanned the flames of church disputes, but the disputes may also have encouraged individuals to engage with reading.

Nevertheless, published sermons by ministers from all strands of Presbyterian opinion generally exhorted their congregations to read, examine and understand Scripture, and these ranged from Hugh Blair, Moderate minister at Edinburgh, to Ralph Erskine, minister of the Secession Church at Dunfermline. Knowledge and understanding were insisted upon, and were vital to, the active participation of the laity within the Presbyterian Church. Blair, for example, stressed that

Knowledge of the Lord ... teaches Men to think for themselves, to form their Principles upon a fair Inquiry unto the Word of God; and not to resign their Consciences implicitly to Men. Hence, it is strongly connected with a Detestation of Oppression of every kind; and forms a Taste for *Liberty* and *Laws*.³⁴²

James Fordyce (1720-96), Church of Scotland minister at Brechin, in a sermon preached in 1752, advised his congregation and his wider reading public, that ‘you must read, hear, and meditate upon the word of God ... you must

³⁴² Blair, *Importance of Religious Knowledge to the Happiness of Mankind*, pp.25-26.

catechise, correct, and reprove your children, commit them to God, teach them to read and pray'.³⁴³ John Willison, exhorted his readers to examine and discuss the scriptures for themselves. He maintained that it was a 'duty' to 'read the scriptures'.³⁴⁴ James Fisher (1697-1775), Burgher minister at Glasgow, preached to his congregation that 'The other outer door of the heart, is the eye of the body; which is calculated for reading the scriptures ... hence are they pronounced blessed who read the word'.³⁴⁵ Robert Shirra (1724-1803), Burgher minister at Kirkcaldy, urged his congregation not only to read, but to keep diaries of what they had read.

*Read frequently the good Book ... And as ye read other books, observe in them every thing that tends to explain the Bible ... let these be your favourite books; such as a sound exposition of the book of Inspiration; and the lives of godly persons: sacred biography is very upstirring to the godly reader. If your time and capacity will admit, keep a diary, a day-book, noting down therein what passes betwixt God and your souls.*³⁴⁶

Again and again ministers extolled the virtues of reading. Joseph Neil (1727/8-75), minister of the Relief church at Anderston in Glasgow, preached that 'Reading the sacred scriptures frequently is another duty we should be employed in'.³⁴⁷ Ralph Erskine told his hearers to 'search the Scripture ... that God by his Word may discover you to yourselves'.³⁴⁸ John Adamson (1741-1808), Church of Scotland minister at St. Andrews, also reminded his hearers that 'Ye have the liberty of reading and "searching the scriptures," that ye may judge for

³⁴³ James Fordyce, *The Eloquence of the Pulpit, an Ordination Sermon* (Aberdeen, 1752), p.56.

³⁴⁴ John Willison, *A Treatise Concerning the Sanctification of the Lord's Day* (Aberdeen, 1781), pp.134-135, 143.

³⁴⁵ James Fisher, *Christ the Sole and Wonderful Doer, in the Work of Man's Redemption* (Glasgow, 1755), p.7.

³⁴⁶ Robert Shirra, *God's Plantation Thriving* (Glasgow, 1767), p.47.

³⁴⁷ Joseph Neil, *Twenty-three Sermons on the most Important and Interesting Doctrines of Christianity* (Glasgow, 1776), p.10.

³⁴⁸ Ralph Erskine, *Clean Water - or, the pure and precious blood of Christ, for the cleansing of polluted sinners* (Glasgow, 1747), p.48.

yourselves'.³⁴⁹ What all of these ministers, Popular and Moderate, Established or Secession, did was to emphasise the importance of reading and forming judgements and by so doing, whether intentionally or otherwise, they opened up another way for ordinary people to access ideas and engage with contemporary debates. In addition, through their publications they spread their beliefs and concerns beyond their immediate congregations.

This stress on reading may also have encouraged people to enquire beyond just the Scriptures. Although ministers advocated serious study and engagement with Scripture by 'all degrees of men', the intention of most was simply to stimulate the individual to greater devotion to God and to their Bible, but as with any message, the outcome may belie the intention. Thus, James Durham (1622-58), Church of Scotland minister and Covenanting divine, in his *Commentary upon the book of Revelation* (1658), included a section 'Of Reading and Hearing'. In particular he addressed his readers' attention to Revelation 1:3:

Blessed is he that readeth ... It is a good thing to be studying the scripture: it is a mark of the blessed man. It makes the man of God wise to salvation ... and particularly, it is good to be reading, and hearing this book read: those that are fitted for reading, let them use it well.³⁵⁰

It is true that Durham believed that the reader should limit himself to

[S]uch books as judicious tender Christians have found good of before, or shall commend to them ... [and] Where books and authors are both unknown, we conceive, that it is more safe for private persons for a time to abstain the reading of them, until it be found what they are by some others, who may more judiciously discern the same.³⁵¹

However, he was also explicit in instructing the reader not to simply accept what was written by anyone, and to approach every work with discernment, regardless of the reputation of the author: 'no man's name ought to

³⁴⁹ Adamson, *Sermon Preached on the 5th day of November 1788*, p.16.

³⁵⁰ Durham, *Learned and Complete Commentary*, pp.17-19.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.81.

bear such sway with any, as to make them digest any thing without trial because it cometh from him'.³⁵² One is therefore tempted to ask whether any of the 1,952 artisans who subscribed to reprints of Durham's *Commentary*, in 1764 and 1788, took him at his word. May not these have been just the type of men – the weavers, shoemakers, masons and smiths, who were involved with the reform movement and radical politics a few years later? As chapter four will demonstrate, Durham's work was by no means the only text to which large numbers of ordinary people subscribed across the eighteenth century. A substantial number of works were printed specifically for those who were very far from the contemporary idea of the 'political' nation.

The encouragement of literacy opened up the possibility of enquiry into other areas, beyond the control of the clergy, and allowed the possibility of debate and disagreement. If, as Catherine Bell has argued, any ideology, including religion, is always in dialogue with, and therefore shaped and constrained by, other ideas and influences, then even when people agree, it does not follow that they will passively obey. Instead, she maintained that, they 'appropriate, negotiate, qualify'.³⁵³ This accords with Margaret Todd's contention that the ordinary people who brought the Reformation to fruition required the new faith to adjust to the demands of their lives 'receiving and ... resisting ... creatively modifying'.³⁵⁴ The eighteenth-century reader of a seventeenth-century text may well have 'appropriated' that text to bolster their beliefs and actions in opposition to issues such as ecclesiastical patronage.

Although many ministers encouraged the reading of Scripture by their congregations, generally they never intended that their parishioners should

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford, 1992), pp.191-192.

³⁵⁴ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland*, p.20.

venture beyond their Bible or catechism. Yet, largely owing to the efforts of the Church, ordinary people had within their power both the means of embracing a wider range of works and ideas, as well as the opportunity to reinterpret the works they read in the light of the changing circumstances of late eighteenth-century life. Thus, Presbyterianism, in conjunction with the influence of the Enlightenment, in terms of its associational aspects, and the application of reason, rationality and the pursuit of knowledge through books for self-improvement, became essential components in the creation of independent judgement, political awareness and potentially political involvement by ordinary people.

III

The need for each individual to come to terms directly with God through Scripture reinforced the need for literacy, and incidentally increased the possibility of exposure to a wider literary output. Jonathan Rose has argued that even the Bible alone offered plebeian readers considerable latitude for individual interpretation and social criticism, because it allowed ‘ordinary people to enter into theological debates once reserved for an elite’, which left a legacy of intellectual freedom that extended to all people.³⁵⁵ However, R. A. Houston has attached little weight to the view of the ‘democratizing or intellectually liberating effects of literacy’.³⁵⁶ He suggested that ‘if literacy did liberate the mind this was a process quite incidental to the aims of formal educators’, because ‘secular and ecclesiastical authorities never encouraged education except as a means of preparing people for the messages about order and godliness’.³⁵⁷ He maintained

³⁵⁵ Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven and London, 2001), p.15.

³⁵⁶ Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity*, p.226.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.228.

that ‘a central aim of eighteenth-century education was to ensure ideological conformity among the population and to alter undesirable attitudes manifested by the lower classes’.³⁵⁸ He has also asserted that ‘schooling’ was a ‘means to accustom people in youth to boring toil’, while the ‘provision of mass education ... proved valuable in making Scotland a more docile society’.³⁵⁹

While this may have been the intention, literacy could have unintended consequences, as this thesis argues. Houston has undervalued the possibility that ordinary people may have taken anything from their schooling beyond what was intended by the ruling elite.³⁶⁰ In addition, his approach suggests that literacy is premised on the ability to sign one’s name, and as, T. C. Smout, for example, has argued in relation to the converts at Cambuslang, the evidence there suggests a ‘population universally able to read, but with a substantial minority unable to write’.³⁶¹ In addition, people did not just read passively, they engaged with the text, considered the works they read and made judgements. In doing this they also associated together and discussed their reading, thereby combining the educational thrust of Calvinism with the associational values of the Enlightenment. As the minister at Auchterderran in Fife, commented

The people are not illiterate. In common with the rest of Scotland, the vulgar are, for their station, literate, perhaps, beyond all other nations.... they endeavour to form opinions, by reading, as well as by frequent conversation, on some very metaphysical points connected with religion, and on the deeper doctrines of Christianity.³⁶²

³⁵⁸ Ibid., p.221.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., p.222.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., p.228.

³⁶¹ Smout, ‘Born again at Cambuslang’, p.122. See also Alexander Murdoch, ‘Literacy’ in Stephen W. Brown and Warren McDougall (eds), *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland: Enlightenment and Expansion*, 4 Vols (Edinburgh, 2011), Vol. 2, pp.287-296; Margaret Spufford, ‘First Steps in Literacy: The Reading and Writing Experiences of the Humblest Seventeenth-Century Spiritual Autobiographers’, *Social History*, Vol. 4 No. 3 (1979), pp.407-435. Houston’s more recent work suggests that Scottish literacy was remarkable by the mid-eighteenth century. See R. A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe* (Harlow, 2002).

³⁶² OSA, Vol. 1, p.457 (Auchterderran, Fife).

Similarly an Ayrshire writer observed that people,

actuated by the pride of understanding, discussed abstruse & knotty questions in Divinity, reasoning [on] 'Fate' & 'Freewill'. Urged by curiosity of temperament ... convening from time to time at each other's houses for neighbourly chat, they communicated reciprocally & freely their information about such matters. And there also they discussed questions of politics, of religious controversy.³⁶³

The push for literacy by the Church was mirrored by the desire for education among the lower orders. While the Reformation had promulgated the ideal of a school in every parish, the eighteenth-century provision in reality was more patchy, but in addition to parish and burgh schools, and the new academies from the 1760s, there was a range of options. Private teachers operated 'adventure' and 'subscription' schools, women ran 'dame' schools, in remote areas itinerant teachers boarded with families to provide some basic teaching, and there were also trades, guildry, and charity schools.³⁶⁴ All of these independent initiatives suggest a strong popular desire for education. The Revd John Burns noted that 'parents are exceedingly anxious to have their children instructed in reading. They often cheerfully deny themselves many of the comforts of life to give their children education'.³⁶⁵

The parish ministers in the *Statistical Account of Scotland* offered numerous examples of parents' ambitions for their children's education. At Cleish in Kinross, 'The people are very desirous of giving their children an education. There is scarcely a child of 8 or 9 years of age, that cannot read pretty distinctly'.³⁶⁶ At Kingsbarns in Fife, the kirk session

pay the schoolmaster for teaching their children reading, writing, and the common rules of arithmetic ... children have an opportunity of attending the

³⁶³ Mitchell, 'Memories of Ayrshire about 1780', p.281.

³⁶⁴ R. A. Anderson, *Scottish Education Since The Reformation* (Dundee, 1997), pp.4-6; Penny, *Traditions of Perth*, p.192.

³⁶⁵ OSA, Vol. 12, p.122 (Barony of Glasgow, Lanarkshire).

³⁶⁶ OSA, Vol. 3, p.559 (Cleish, Kinross-shire).

Sunday's school ... where the young ones are instructed in the principles of the Christian faith, and are taught to read and write.³⁶⁷

At Dailly in Ayrshire, 'there is a regular parochial school in the village, in which are taught English, Latin, French, writing, arithmetic, and book-keeping'.³⁶⁸ However, the minister at Dunino in Fife, commented on the difficulty that some poor families encountered over paying school fees, despite their desire to educate their children. 'Most of the people have a laudable ambition to have their children educated; and the payment of the quarter fees is scarcely ever grudged, though often paid with a good degree of tardiness, arising from the actual penury of some of the parents'.³⁶⁹ At St Quivox in Ayrshire, the minister commented that, 'Day-labourers live comfortably upon 1s. a day ... and almost without exception, their children are taught to read and write'.³⁷⁰ At Walston in Lanarkshire, 'The wages which the common labourer receives, together with his wife's industry, enable him not only to bring up a family, but also to give them an education. They are all taught to read and write and many of them to keep accounts'.³⁷¹

In addition to a shortage of money for school fees there was the problem of actually getting children to school when it was some distance away. Thus at Kells in Kirkcudbrightshire,

There is a public school It can only serve New Galloway and that part of the parish that is within three miles of it. Such as are further distant, hire young lads into their families, that have been bred at the public school, to teach their children English, and the first principles of writing and arithmetic ... when 4 or 5 families lie contiguous to one another, they hire a teacher among them ... and by this means all the children in the parish are taught to read and write.³⁷²

³⁶⁷ *OSA*, Vol. 4, p.257 (Kingsbarns, Fife).

³⁶⁸ *OSA*, Vol. 10, p.53 (Dailly, Ayrshire).

³⁶⁹ *OSA*, Vol. 11, p.364 (Dunino, Fife).

³⁷⁰ *OSA*, Vol. 7, p.360 (St Quivox, Ayrshire).

³⁷¹ *OSA*, Vol. 7, p.121 (Walston, Lanarkshire).

³⁷² *OSA*, Vol. 4, p.269 (Kells, Kirkcudbright).

At Megget in Peeblesshire, the minister noted that ‘There is no school of any kind nearer to it, than that of Yarrow, which is 8 or 9 miles distant’.³⁷³ Such examples highlight the desire and determination that all children should have been educated, at least at a basic level, and they echoed the requirements of Calvinism for a literate population.

Conversely, the criticism expressed about the poor conditions for teachers at Pencaitland in Haddington was illustrative of quite a different attitude among landowners who were reluctant to bear the cost of parish schools and teachers:

[I]n this county ... opposition originated, against the request of the schoolmasters of Scotland, for some small addition to their salaries.... Such landholders as are averse from this measure, are still, it seems, to be informed of the good consequences, that have followed from the education which the common people have received at their parish schools; otherwise they would not, probably, hesitate to raise these useful members of society to a situation as lucrative, at least, as that of a ploughman.³⁷⁴

The minister at Cadder in Lanarkshire reflected on a further argument commonly used, which exemplified elite fears that the education of the poor was at best misguided, as it would not equip them for their station in life, and at worst posed an actual threat to society at a time of immense social upheaval in Europe.

When an attempt was made, some time ago, to have the condition of the schoolmasters of this country somewhat bettered, the argument, by which some lords and gentlemen opposed it, was, that “they wished parish schools were suppressed altogether, because their servants were corrupted, by being taught to read and write: That they would be more obedient and dutiful, were they more ignorant, and had no education”.³⁷⁵

This fear was further highlighted when Sunday schools, which had been introduced into Scotland in the 1780s, were strongly opposed in the 1790s precisely because they taught people to read, and were thus regarded as hotbeds of

³⁷³ OSA, Vol. 12, p.565 (Megget, Peeblesshire).

³⁷⁴ OSA, Vol. 17, p.42 (Haddington, East Lothian). In 1748 the average master's salary has been estimated at £11, and in 1782 it was £13. George S. Pryde, *Scotland from 1603 to the Present Day* (London, 1962), p.162. Schoolteachers had been petitioning since 1749 to have their stipends increased. Withrington, ‘Schooling, Literacy and Society’, p.163.

³⁷⁵ OSA, Vol. 8, p.481 (Cadder, Lanarkshire).

disaffection and sedition. The Moderates in the Church of Scotland objected to Sunday schools, and the General Assembly's 'Pastoral Admonition' of 1799 described their organizers as 'persons notoriously disaffected to the Constitution'.³⁷⁶ An illustration of this can be seen in John Kay's caricature of the Revd William Moodie (1759–1812), professor of oriental languages and Moderate minister of St Andrew's Church, Edinburgh, dismissing a Sabbath School.³⁷⁷ Kay's depiction of 'Modern Moderation Strikingly Displayed or A Ministerial Visitation of A Sabbath Evening School' (1799), suggested that ministers like Moodie were out of touch. The caption had Moodie saying 'Dismiss, I order every one of you go home and desire your Parents teach you I have a right to be heard I say go Home', while the teacher observed, 'Sir some of them have no Parents'. As the title of the caricature suggested there was little in the way of 'moderation' in his actions. Kay commented that Dr Moodie was asked by the teachers to visit the Sunday School in the hope of 'securing his approbation' for the enterprise, but without examining the pupils, or inquiring into the motives of the teachers, he 'instantly commanded the scholars to disperse'.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁶ Kay, *Original Portraits*, Vol. 1, p.357; Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History*, p.806.

³⁷⁷ 'Modern Moderation Strikingly Displayed or A Ministerial Visitation of A Sabbath Evening School', Kay, *ibid.*, Vol. 1, p.357.

³⁷⁸ Kay, *Original Portraits*, Vol. 1, p.357.



Illustration 2.

Although the popular desire for education was clear, for many people even in the Lowlands, formal education was often fairly limited. In his autobiography John Younger (1785–1860), a shoemaker and writer, wrote of his education at the local school in Longnewton in Roxburghshire, which he had attended intermittently, and his account clearly corroborated the difficulties observed by parish ministers.

My scholastic education was limited, our distance being above three miles of bad roads from the parish school: we had a teacher on a small scale in our village ... I was kept in willing attendance at this school occasionally from the age of five till nine, from which, deducting broken time through ague, measles, smallpox, autumn vacations, and other intervening hindrances, there might be left fully two years of school attendance; in which time I acquired education enough to read and con³⁷⁹ parts of Scripture and Church of Scotland Catechisms, our only school books, with the addition of a small manual, called Mason's Spelling Book ... At the age of nine ... I was set down to learn my father's craft of a shoemaker, my mother mean-time contriving how she should get me to school again by-and-by, to learn arithmetic, &c.³⁸⁰

As this extract describes, the formal schooling that individuals received may have been no more than two or three years, often limited by the demands of the working seasons. However, people also had access to an informal education through reading.

How widespread this informal reading was is uncertain; the information comes from anecdotal evidence. For example, Janet Jackson, a weaver's daughter from Cambuslang, recalled being taught 'to read my Bible by my parents at home'. She also 'took pleasure in reading [the] minister's sermons, and the weekly history after it was published'.³⁸¹ Michael Thomson, a boy of sixteen, recalled his schooling, and he had also read Durham on the Song of Solomon.³⁸²

³⁷⁹ To learn or commit to memory.

³⁸⁰ John Younger, *The Light of the Week: or the Temporal Advantages of the Sabbath Considered in Relation to the Working Classes* (London, 1849), pp.22-27.

³⁸¹ McCulloch, *Autobiographical Accounts of Persons Under Spiritual Concern at Cambuslang*, Vol. 1, pp.33, 35.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p.312.

[I] learned my Catechism and Bible and any other common English books, and got my Catechism by heart and some of the proofs, which I still retain, and have frequently read over the Westminster and Geneva Confessions of Faith.³⁸³

The Cambuslang converts offered many testimonies from those well able to read.³⁸⁴ A reminiscence of the home life of weaver's children at the beginning of the nineteenth century described

Books ... scattered over every available spot in the large kitchen, and in great demand after the day's labour. Milton, Burns, Shakspeare (*sic*), and volumes of the *Spectator* might be found mixed in admirable confusion with *Brown's Commentary and Concordance*, Bunyan, Bibles, and *The Questions*.³⁸⁵

Yet, ordinary people did not just acquire knowledge at home, or in school or church, as the minister of Minnigaff in Kirkcudbrightshire observed: 'The lower classes possess a degree of information which is unusual among peasants. While engaged in tending their sheep they have long intervals of leisure. Many of them fill up these with reading and reflection'.³⁸⁶

By the end of the century Highland schooling still fared badly by comparison with Lowland parishes, although Donald Withrington has argued that there was greater access to some type of education in Highland parishes than has generally been acknowledged by historians.³⁸⁷ However, in the Highlands religious difference was important in terms of access to education.³⁸⁸ Episcopalianism had remained a strong religious presence, as had Roman Catholicism, because Presbyterianism did not finally 'triumph' until the late

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p.304.

³⁸⁴ See McCulloch, *ibid.*; Smout, 'Born again at Cambuslang'.

³⁸⁵ David Gilmour, *Reminiscences of the 'Pen' Folk: Paisley Weavers of Other Days* (Paisley, 1871), p.36.

³⁸⁶ *OSA*, Vol. 7, pp.59-60 (Minnigaff, Kirkcudbright).

³⁸⁷ Withrington, 'S.P.C.K. and Highland Schools in Mid-Eighteenth Century', pp.89-99; *idem*, 'Schooling, Literacy and Society', pp.163-187.

³⁸⁸ William Ferguson, 'The Problem of the Established Church in the West Highlands and Islands in the Eighteenth Century', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 17 (1969); John MacInnes, *The Evangelical Movement in the Highlands of Scotland 1688-1800* (Aberdeen, 1951).

eighteenth or early nineteenth century.³⁸⁹ This was significant because of Presbyterianism's potential to influence ordinary people's engagement with politics. By 1760, when Drs Hyndman and Dick reported on the Highlands and Islands, they noted that only twenty-three parishes out of fifty-two had legal parish schools.³⁹⁰ Withrington has argued that there were other local schools, which were simply not accounted for because they did not fit the criteria used to define a 'legal' parochial school. However, the accessibility of education in the Highlands is still a matter of debate.³⁹¹

One of the central problems was language as many Highland areas contained exclusively Gaelic-speaking populations. The insistence on using only English in schools until 1767, under the aegis of the Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, was a major drawback. Victor Durkacz has argued that, despite the hostility of the Church of Scotland towards Gaelic, it was ambivalent in its language policy. It was insistent on the use of English in education, in order to serve the long-term aim of 'civilising' the Highlands, but accepted the use of Gaelic in order to ensure meaningful worship. Durkacz believed that the Church's 'pragmatic' attitude paid dividends.³⁹² This may have been true in the longer term, but the Kirk's endeavours to fill Highland pulpits with Gaelic speakers proved problematic. At the 1755 General Assembly, the

³⁸⁹ For the debate over the decline of Episcopalianism, see Rowan Strong, *Episcopalianism in Nineteenth-Century Scotland: Religious Responses to a Modernising Society* (Oxford, 2002). For Catholicism, see Bruce Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings in Britain 1689-1746* (1980) (Dalkeith, 2004), pp.228-229; T. M. Devine, *Clanship to Crofters' War: The social transformation of the Scottish Highlands* (Manchester and New York, 1994), pp.100-109; Mary McHugh, 'The Religious Condition of the Highlands and Islands in the Mid-Eighteenth Century', *Innes Review*, Vol. 35 (1984), pp.12-20.

³⁹⁰ 'The Report of Drs Hyndman and Dick as appointed by the General Assembly, 1760, to visit the Highlands and Islands, and the places where itinerants and catechists are Employed', cited in Douglas Ansdell, *The People of the Great Faith: The Highland Church 1690-1900* (Stornoway, 1998), p.91.

³⁹¹ Withrington, 'S.P.C.K. and Highland Schools in Mid-Eighteenth Century'.

³⁹² Victor E. Durkacz, 'The Church of Scotland's Eighteenth-Century Attitude to Gaelic Preaching', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, Vol. 13 No. 2 (1981), pp.145-158.

committee for managing the royal bounty commented on the ‘scarcity of students having the *Irish language*’ and by 1756, after the Presbyteries of Skye and Uist bemoaned the ‘want of preachers who have the Irish tongue’, the General Assembly had to revive its policy of giving bursaries to divinity students who could speak Gaelic.³⁹³

The determination to enforce the use of English was a significant disadvantage for the education of Gaelic speakers, because children who were mainly learning by rote in a foreign language were likely to lack any depth of understanding. There was also the additional problem that few books were printed in Gaelic: even as late as 1850 only about 350 titles had been printed in the language, and 80% of these appeared after 1800.³⁹⁴ Thus literacy levels remained low. For example, in Aberdeenshire the percentage of children attending school by the 1790s was only 3.3%, although this varied in different parishes, ranging from 1.3% at New Deer to 9.7% at Kinnellar.³⁹⁵ An illustration of the Highland/Lowland divide relating to illiteracy is that, of the 22,501 people living in seven west-Highland parishes in the early nineteenth century, 86% could read neither Gaelic nor English.³⁹⁶ This can be compared to an overall figure for Scotland a century earlier that estimated about 75% male literacy by the beginning of the eighteenth century.³⁹⁷

³⁹³ Morren, *Annals 1752-1766*, pp.54, 80; ‘Act and Recommendation of the General Assembly respecting Irish Bursaries, 31 May, 1756’, Church Law Society (eds), *Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland 1638-1842*. The Committee for the Reforming of the Highlands and Islands and the Management of the King’s Royal Bounty administered funds essentially intended for the conversion of Catholics and Episcopalians to Presbyterianism, working alongside the S.S.P.C.K.

³⁹⁴ Ian R. M. Mowat, ‘Literacy, libraries and literature in 18th and 19th century Easter Ross’, *Library History [LH]*, Vol. 5 No. 1 (1979), pp.1-10.

³⁹⁵ R. A. Houston and R. E. Tyson, ‘The Geography of literacy in Aberdeenshire in the early eighteenth century’, *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 17 No. 2 (1991), pp.135-145.

³⁹⁶ V. E. Durkacz, *The decline of the Celtic languages* (Edinburgh, 1983), p.123.

³⁹⁷ R. A. Houston, ‘The Literacy Myth?: Illiteracy in Scotland 1630-1760’, *P&P*, No. 96 (1982), p.90; idem, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity*, p.33.

Apart from the language difficulties and shortage of books, the sheer size and lack of accessibility of Highland parishes was problematic. Some were forty or fifty miles long, and where the parish included the islands the problem was exacerbated for both clergy and laity.³⁹⁸ In 1767 Alexander Hosack, minister of a scattered parish which included the islands of Jura, Oronsay, Gigha, and Scarba among others, petitioned the General Assembly for financial assistance to help tend to his parish, describing its inaccessibility:

[T]he island of Jura is 24 miles long and 7 broad, and in many places not ridable (*sic*) with rocks, mosses and 13 rapid waters. It is 20 miles by sea distant from Colonsay, which is 8 miles long and 5 broad, on the north Jura is 4 miles distant from Scarba, the most dangerous gulf in Scotland called Coirraverackan (*sic*).³⁹⁹

Even by the 1790s some parishioners still had great difficulty attending services, and the minister of Lochbroom in Ross-shire commented, that ‘in their present state many of them do not hear so much as one sermon a year’.⁴⁰⁰ However, access to education in the Highlands was even more limited for Roman Catholic children. Although both Catholics and Protestants considered that religious instruction was of singular importance, much more so than secular knowledge, the fundamental difference between them was that for Protestants literacy was part of religious instruction. This was not so for Roman Catholics and the universal provision of education was not a priority for them because literacy was not regarded as essential to the preservation of their faith.⁴⁰¹

The relative failure of the Established Church to consolidate its position in the Highlands and Islands as it had in Lowland Scotland is of significance,

³⁹⁸ Ansdell, *People of the Great Faith*, pp.19-22.

³⁹⁹ NAS, Records of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, General Assembly Papers, Main Series CH1/2/108, ff.139-40, 1767, Petition of Alexander Hosack, minister of Jura, Colonsay, Scarba.

⁴⁰⁰ OSA, Vol. 10, p.471 (Lochbroom, Ross-shire).

⁴⁰¹ Clotilde Prunier, ‘“They must have their children educated some way’: the education of Catholics in eighteenth-century Scotland’, *The Innes Review*, Vol. 60 No. 1 (2009), pp.22-40.

because Presbyterianism had the potential to influence ordinary people's engagement with politics. The lack of education, limited literacy and access to books, coincided with a failure to relate to the political movements of the last decade of the eighteenth century. The north-east was almost totally unfriendly towards political radicalism. Only two Societies of the Friends of the People were established, one in Wick in November 1792, and one in Aberdeen by December 1792, but neither society existed for long, while a Universal Liberty Club established at Portsoy in January 1792, had ceased to exist by June of that year. These were the only known radical societies in the Highlands.⁴⁰² This suggests that one reason for the failure to stimulate plebeian political activity in the late eighteenth century, in areas not dominated by Presbyterianism, may have been the inevitable exclusion of individuals from the motivating power of Calvinism to encourage reading.

IV

The desire to read could encourage ordinary people to find other ways to gain access to ideas and the eighteenth century saw the origin of public libraries in Scotland.⁴⁰³ John Millar believed that libraries were highly beneficial to working people, not only in terms of 'enlarging the intellectual powers of the rising generation', but more particularly in the furtherance of political reform.⁴⁰⁴ William Ogilvie (1736-1819), professor of humanities at Aberdeen, also believed in their value, and he published a pamphlet in 1764, to encourage the establishment of

⁴⁰² J. D. Brims, 'The Scottish Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of Edinburgh, 1983), pp.193-198.

⁴⁰³ J. Crawford, 'The Community Library in Scottish History', *International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions*, 68th. Council and General Conference 18-24 Aug. 2002, pp.1-13; idem, 'The origins and development of societal library activity in Scotland', unpublished M.A. Thesis (University of Strathclyde, 1981).

⁴⁰⁴ [John Millar], 'Citizen of Glasgow', *Scots Chronicle*, 25 Oct. 1796; idem, 10 Feb. 1797.

public libraries available to everyone, ‘even the Tallow-Chandler and Pin-Maker’.⁴⁰⁵ Libraries could achieve what the poor individual could not:

One working man ... cannot have a library of his own; but a number of such men united may, if they choose, soon have one among them; by their mutual concurrence and co-operation ... proper books may be purchased and all partners may be enlightened and improved by the reading of them, at a comparatively trifling expense to each.⁴⁰⁶

Early eighteenth-century circulating and subscription libraries catered predominantly to the middling orders and before 1801 twenty-eight Scottish circulating libraries had been established in thirteen towns and cities.⁴⁰⁷ Some proprietors combined their craft with book lending. For example, George Caldwell, who had moved to Paisley in 1760 to learn his trade as a silk weaver, set up a circulating library there. Using his savings he had acquired a personal library of considerable size, and he converted it into a public circulating library that occupied the front of his premises while he worked at his loom in the back.⁴⁰⁸ Generally subscribers paid 9/- per annum or 1/6d. per month or 1d. per night.⁴⁰⁹ For those who could not afford a subscription individual benefactors could

⁴⁰⁵ William Ogilvie, *Proposals for a publick library at Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1764).

⁴⁰⁶ ‘Catalogue of Renton Library’, cited in Mark Towsey, ‘“All Partners May Be Enlightened and Improved By Reading Them”: The Distribution Of Enlightenment Books In Scottish Subscription Library Catalogues, 1750-c.1820’, *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*[*JSHS*], Vol. 28, No. 1 (2008), p.23.

⁴⁰⁷ Crawford, ‘Origins and development of societal library activity in Scotland’, pp.79-87. These were Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Dunbar, Dundee, Banff, Elgin, Inverness, Leith, Paisley, Peebles, Perth and Peterhead. Circulating libraries were commercial ventures, generally operated by a book-seller where books could be borrowed for a price. They charged anywhere between £3 and 3/6d. for a year’s subscription but alternatively books could be borrowed for 6d. monthly, or a 1d. a night, without an annual subscription. P. Kaufman, ‘The Rise of Community Libraries in Scotland’, *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, Vol. 59 (1965), pp.233-294; W. R. McDonald, ‘Circulating libraries in the north-east of Scotland in the eighteenth century’, *Bibliotek*, Vol. 5 (1967-70), pp.119-137. Subscription libraries differed from circulating libraries, as they were owned by their membership as shareholders. The cost of a share varied: founders might pay £10 with an annual fee of 10/- at Kelso, while at Duns shares were £2 plus 6/- per year. K. A. Manley, ‘Scottish Circulating and Subscription Libraries as Community Libraries’, *LH*, Vol. 19 (Nov. 2003), pp.185-194. However, societies such as Paisley Trades’ Library charged just 1/- entry fee. Crawford, ‘Origins and development of societal library activity in Scotland’, p.226.

⁴⁰⁸ Robert Brown, *Paisley Poets, with Brief Memoirs of them, and Selections from their Poetry*, 2 Vols (Paisley, 1890), Vol. 1, p.369.

⁴⁰⁹ K. A. Manley, ‘Subscription and Circulating Libraries’ in, *Edinburgh History of the Book*, Vol. 2, p.341.

provide access to books. For example, at Logie in Fife, in c.1750 one local laird had made his library available for the use of the male members of the parish.⁴¹⁰

The first 'working-class' subscription library was founded at Leadhills in Lanarkshire in 1741, and its aim was 'mutual Improvement'.⁴¹¹ Although the original subscribers appear to have been mainly the mine manager and his friends, by 1749 borrowers of much humbler origin appeared on the lists, such as a blacksmith and a leadwasher.⁴¹² A second 'working-class' subscription library was established, again for a mining community, at Wanlockhead in Dumfriesshire in 1756. By 1786 lead miners near Tyndrum in Stirlingshire had also started a library with a stock of around 800 volumes, and in c.1790 two more libraries had been founded at Cambusnethan in Lanarkshire and Methven in Perthshire.⁴¹³ Yet another miners' library was founded in 1792 at Westerkirk in Dumfriesshire. In order to encourage the miners to read, the company that owned the antimony mines gave the miners some books and built a school for the education of their children.⁴¹⁴ Links between these early libraries and books bought by subscription can also be observed. For example, between 1748 and 1780, there were 18 subscribers from Leadhills and 61 from Wanlockhead, and almost all were in occupations directly related to the mines such as miners, smelters and washers.⁴¹⁵

Two early free public libraries provide further evidence about the status of the people who were actually borrowing books. At the Innerpefferay library near Crieff in Perthshire, the borrowers' ledgers, which ran from 1747-1800, identified

⁴¹⁰ Manley, 'Scottish Circulating and Subscription Libraries as Community Libraries', p.189.

⁴¹¹ J. Crawford, 'Leadhills Library and a wider world', *Library Review*, Vol. 46 No. 8 (1997), p.545.

⁴¹² Crawford, 'Community Library'; idem, 'Reading and book use in 18th-century Scotland', *The Bibliothek*, Vol. 19 (1994), pp.23-43; idem, 'Leadhills Library', p.543.

⁴¹³ John C. Crawford and Stuart James, *The Society for Purchasing Books in Wanlockhead, 1756-1979* (Glasgow, 1981); Manley, 'Subscription and Circulating Libraries', p.341.

⁴¹⁴ *OSA*, Vol. 11, p.527 (Westerkirk, Dumfriesshire).

⁴¹⁵ For a discussion of book subscribers see chapter four.

287 individuals whose occupations included barbers, coopers, dyers, farmers, flax dressers, gardeners, glovers, masons, millers, quarriers, servants, shoemakers, smiths, tailors, weavers, and wrights.⁴¹⁶ In Haddington in East Lothian, the social class of the library's borrowers between the 1730s and 1750s was divided between professionals (57%), merchants (19%), and artisans (18%).⁴¹⁷ Between the 1760s and 1780s this began to change as the proportion of professionals decreased, to 43% while artisans increased to 31%, and by the early nineteenth century the proportion of artisans had risen to 42%. This increasing pattern of borrowers from the lower orders echoed their growing numbers as book buyers.⁴¹⁸

In addition to libraries people could borrow books from each other, and private book borrowing was also carried out across the social spectrum. For example, tenant farmers in the Lothians borrowed copies of Wodrow's *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* (1721-2) from their neighbours.⁴¹⁹ At a higher social level, Dr George Lawson (1749-1820), the Burgher professor of divinity had his own library of more than 2,000 volumes, from which he allowed students, friends, and neighbours to borrow, even lending to French officers on 'parole' during the French wars.⁴²⁰ Members of landed families were also involved in informal book lending. For example, Thomas Crawford Bt of Cartburn, lent to the local schoolmaster, the carpenter, the wigmaker and the barber, while others

⁴¹⁶ P. Kaufman, 'A Unique Record of a People's Reading', *Libri*, Vol. 14 No. 3 (1964), p.231. In total Kaufman identified twenty-seven trades or vocations. Unfortunately Kaufman provides little detail related to social status beyond these occupations, and therefore there is no equivalent comparison of proportional change in social status of borrowers as at Haddington. See also Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity*, pp.174-179.

⁴¹⁷ V. Dunstan, 'Glimpses Into A Town's Reading Habits In Enlightenment Scotland: Analysing The Borrowings Of Gray Library, Haddington, 1732-1816', *JSHS*, Vol. 26 (2006), pp.42-59. Professionals included solicitors, ministers, schoolmasters, surgeons, and lawyers. Merchants included small-scale shopkeepers, richer traders and gentry. Artisans included brewers, shoemakers, watchmakers and glovers. See also idem, *Reading Habits in Scotland circa 1750-1820*, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of Dundee, 2010).

⁴¹⁸ See chapter four.

⁴¹⁹ Robertson, *Rural Recollections*, p.98.

⁴²⁰ J. MacFarlane, *The Life and Times of George Lawson, D.D., Selkirk, professor of theology for the Associate Synod* (Edinburgh, 1862), pp.219-220.

lent to their gardeners and estate workers.⁴²¹ R.A. Houston has suggested that informal book borrowing was on an extensive but unquantifiable scale.⁴²² This type of borrowing therefore increased ordinary people's access to a range of books and ideas as it allowed those who were not able to buy books, either because of the cost or the difficulty in getting to book suppliers, to borrow them.

It has also been demonstrated that Scottish Enlightenment works were widely accessible in provincial Scotland and were readily available to, and assimilated by, readers from quite far down the social scale.⁴²³ Thus, for example, at Haddington library, as well as the local ministers and community leaders, John Affleck, a nurseryman, borrowed works by William Robertson, Robert Burns and Hugh Blair; Peter Dodds, also a nurseryman, borrowed Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. James Nisbet, a butcher, borrowed Robertson's *History of Scotland*, but also George Buchanan's *History of Scotland*. William Dudgeon, a tailor, and John Anderson, a shoemaker, both borrowed Hume's *History of England*.⁴²⁴ At Innerpefferay, as well as a continuing interest in religious works, Enlightenment authors were also borrowed, with Robertson's *Charles V* the most regularly borrowed title across the period.⁴²⁵ As Anand Chitnis has observed, 'If William Robertson ... was regularly read by artisans in Perthshire, the intellectual elite of Scotland were not operating in a sphere totally above that of their fellow countrymen'.⁴²⁶ However, it should be noted that while ordinary people were taking advantage of access to Enlightenment works they were still

⁴²¹ Towsey, *Reading The Scottish Enlightenment*, p.51.

⁴²² Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe*, p.210.

⁴²³ Towsey, *Reading The Scottish Enlightenment*; idem, 'Reading the Scottish Enlightenment: Libraries, Readers and Intellectual Culture in Provincial Scotland c.1750-c.1820', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of St. Andrews, 2007).

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.154.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.132-134, 140

⁴²⁶ Chitnis, *Scottish Enlightenment*, p.19.

predominantly borrowing and buying religious books. Thus, for example, at Innerpefferay, of the 370 titles borrowed, the single largest category of loans was 'religion', with 171 titles or 46%, of the total, while the next largest category, 'history, law and politics', had only half that number, 85 titles or 23%.⁴²⁷ Nevertheless, these early libraries do highlight the dissemination of Enlightenment texts to a wider spectrum of society, and they also illustrate the Enlightenment concept of associating for mutual improvement, something in which ordinary folk were increasingly taking part.

Although access to books through libraries was clearly growing across all levels of Lowland society, for Gaelic speakers in the Highlands and Islands there were again some fundamental problems. A study of Easter Ross has concluded that, even by the nineteenth-century, where libraries existed, they mainly benefited the English-speaking middle class, while Gaelic speakers had little access.⁴²⁸ This is very similar to the difficulties encountered in accessing education. By comparison, in the central Lowlands, ten 'working-class' libraries and 52 temporary reading societies had been founded before 1800, which also reflected the predominant locations for those named on subscription lists as book buyers.⁴²⁹ These reading societies met monthly in a room where the books were kept and members gave 6d. or 9d. at each meeting, and voted on which books to purchase. The societies in Paisley, for example, had 30 to 40 members each. Half

⁴²⁷ Kaufman, 'Unique Record of a People's Reading', p.228.

⁴²⁸ Mowat, 'Literacy, libraries and literature in 18th and 19th century Easter Ross', pp.1-10.

⁴²⁹ The libraries were located in Leadhills founded in 1741; Wanlockhead founded in 1756; Tyndrum founded in 1786; 2 Cambusnethan subscription libraries founded c.1790; Methven founded in 1790; Westerkirk founded in 1792; Tillicoultry founded in 1793; Langloan founded in 1794; Inshewan reading society founded in 1796; Bothwell parish library founded in 1798. The temporary reading societies were located in Glasgow (14); Renfrewshire (14); Paisley (12); Ayr (8); Dumbarton (5); Stirling (2); Dumfries (2); Bute (1); Clackmannan (1); Edinburgh (1); Lanark (1); Roxburgh (1); Selkirk (1); West Lothian (1), Crawford, 'Origins and development of societal library activity in Scotland', pp.207, 210-213.

of the 52 temporary reading societies were in Glasgow and Paisley, and overall, weaving communities provided the main base for such societies.⁴³⁰

The founders of ‘working-class’ libraries were, according to Crawford, ‘small masters, aspiring professional men, shopkeepers, tradesmen, skilled artisans and workmen’ which again bears a strong similarity to the many thousands of individuals on the subscription lists.⁴³¹ The description is also strikingly similar to many of those involved in directly ‘political’ activity in the burgh reform movement, the campaign against Catholic relief, or the Friends of the People, all of which included hammermen, potters, millers, bonnet makers, stay makers, ‘shopkeepers of a very inferior order’, ‘weavers and shoemakers’, ‘operative people’, or ‘journeymen and apprentices’, the ‘lower classes of citizens’.⁴³² On occasion the founders of libraries caused some disquiet, as at Bothwell, where some among them were said to have been ‘tainted with Paine’s principles’.⁴³³ The founding and growth of libraries and reading clubs suggests a clear desire for access to books and ideas, a demand which pre-dated the founding of libraries, as the evidence from book subscription lists in the following chapter will demonstrate.

Mark Towsey, in his study of reading during the Enlightenment, examined the record of borrowing by local ministers and schoolmasters. One example among many was the Dumfries Presbytery Library, where the catalogue from 1784 identified fifty-seven ministers, seven preachers, twenty-seven students

⁴³⁰ Ibid., pp.204-205.

⁴³¹ Ibid., p.234.

⁴³² P&KCA, Perth Burgh Records, B59/34/83, ‘Names subscribed to the Petition of the Burgesses, Heritors & Traders or manufacturers of the Royal burgh of Perth in that part of Great Britain called Scotland’, Oct. 1788; NAS, Home Office: Correspondence, Letters and Papers, Scotland, RH2/4/65, f.86, David Smyth, Sheriff of Perth to Henry Dundas, 24 Nov. 1792; Penny, *Traditions of Perth*, p.69; OSA, Vol. 15, pp.380-381 (Campsie, Lanarkshire); NAS, Home Office: Correspondence (Scotland), RH2/4/64, f.341, anon. letter to the Lord Advocate, Oct. 1792.

⁴³³ *New Statistical Account*, (Edinburgh, 1834-5), Vol. 6, p.802 (Bothwell, Lanarkshire).

(mostly of divinity), and six schoolmasters. They borrowed titles that included Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, David Hume's *History* and Lord Kames' *Elements of Criticism*. In addition the library included William Robertson's *History of Scotland*, *History of America* and *Charles V*, Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, and Francis Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy*.⁴³⁴ Towsey's emphasis was on gauging the reception and diffusion of Enlightenment works in provincial Scotland, but, more interestingly for this study, his work has offered another possible route for disseminating ideas, via graduates, to those to whom they later ministered or taught. The identification of such a relationship has also been discussed by Andrew Noble, who suggested that the values taught by Francis Hutcheson at Glasgow percolated down to Robert Burns through his connection to Glasgow-trained New Licht clergy in Ayrshire.⁴³⁵

The concerns of the Enlightenment philosophers, and their position within the universities ensured the dissemination of their ideas, as almost all of the Enlightenment's leading lights held professorships. Furthermore, some of the most important published works of Hutcheson, Millar and Smith started life as lecture notes. For example, Francis Hutcheson's *Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy* (1747), or Adam Smith's 'Lectures On Jurisprudence' (1762), were written for their students and subsequently published within larger works.⁴³⁶ Millar's 'Lectures on Government' were the source of the *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* and *Historical View of the English Government*.⁴³⁷

Although the ideas of Enlightenment philosophers were directly available to many within the middling ranks of society, as well as some further down the

⁴³⁴ Towsey, 'Reading the Scottish Enlightenment', p.128.

⁴³⁵ Noble and Hogg (eds), *Canongate Burns*, p.xxxviii.

⁴³⁶ Hutcheson, *Short introduction to moral philosophy*; Smith, 'Lectures On Jurisprudence', (1762).

⁴³⁷ Millar, *Origin of the Distinction of Ranks*, pp.288-290.

social scale, through the increasing availability of books and libraries, their views circulated predominantly amongst the educated urban elite. At this elite level ideas could be transmitted through a network of personal relationships and through the associational aspects of Enlightenment culture. For the philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment who taught, wrote and preached in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen this was certainly so, and the liberal Whig politics of John Millar or William Ogilvie may have inspired some sympathy for reformist and even radical politics.

This elite network can be simply demonstrated. One of William Ogilvie's pupils, James Mackintosh (1765-1832), was the author of *Vindiciae Gallicae*, and initially an ardent supporter of the French Revolution.⁴³⁸ Although his sympathy with the revolution ebbed, he remained a liberal reformer thereafter. John Millar taught, among others, the political reformer David Steuart Erskine (1742-1829), the politician and political economist James Maitland, eighth Earl of Lauderdale (1759-1839), as well as the advocate, Thomas Muir (1765-99). The latter two were leading members of the Edinburgh Association of the Friends of the People, while Maitland's position as one of the financiers of the *Scots Chronicle*, the opposition Whig newspaper, gave Millar a platform for his reformist political views in the 1790s. Millar had been a tutor to Lord Kames' son, and Kames had been a patron to Adam Smith at the outset of his career. Millar himself had been the pupil of Adam Smith, who in turn had been taught by Francis Hutcheson. Hutcheson had been a tutor to both the English radical reformer Thomas Brand Hollis (c.1719-1804), and Dunbar Hamilton Douglas, 4th Earl of Selkirk (1722-99). Selkirk, among many other causes, was highly critical of the government's

⁴³⁸ James Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gallicae*, published in 1791, was a contribution to the debate on the Revolution in France.

policies toward the American colonies.⁴³⁹ Hutcheson had also taught Richard Baron, who published on the reform of Parliament, and the Revd William Thom, Popular party minister in Govan, who was a vehement opponent of patronage and supporter of the American colonists. One of Hutcheson's closest friends was the Irishman Tom Drennan (1696-1768), who assisted him in running a private academy for Protestant dissenters in Dublin.⁴⁴⁰ Tom Drennan was the father of William Drennan (1754-1820), who graduated from Glasgow University in 1772, and was a founder member of the Society of United Irishmen, where his prominence in the society saw him tried for seditious libel in 1794.

These examples illustrate the type of connections that existed amongst the educated elite, and they suggest how ideas could have circulated and may even have encouraged some of these individuals to become directly involved in political activity. As Caroline Robbins has noted, many reformers in the age of George III spent some of their formative years under teachers at Glasgow University, while Elaine McFarland has demonstrated, in relation to the Irish Rebellion of 1798, that of those Presbyterian ministers who were implicated and whose educational background is known, twenty were educated at Glasgow, two 'in Scotland' and one at Edinburgh.⁴⁴¹

The educated elite were the leaders and teachers in society and they had the opportunity to communicate their ideas and mediate their spread to the wider population both through their writing and their students. Access to ideas by this

⁴³⁹ Hutcheson too had been an early critic. See C. Robbins, "'When It Is That Colonies May Turn Independent.'" An Analysis of the Environment and Politics of Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746)', *WMQ*, 3rd Series, Vol. 11 No. 2, Scotland and America (1954), pp.214-251.

⁴⁴⁰ I. R. McBride, 'Francis Hutcheson', *ODNB*.

⁴⁴¹ Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman: Studies in the Transition, Development, and Circumstance of English Liberal Thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the War with the Thirteen Colonies* (Cambridge Massachusetts, 1959), p.4; E. W. McFarland, *Ireland and Scotland in the Age of Revolution: Planting the Green Bough* (Edinburgh, 1994), p.20.

route may also have been enhanced by the widening access to a university education that was available to some from further down the social scale. For example, a study of the social origins of students at Glasgow University has shown that there were a significant number of students from the lower ranks of society because poorer students had been able to take advantage of the low cost of attendance.⁴⁴² Between 1740 and 1749 students from the middling orders dominated at 96.2%, but their relative importance had halved to 48% by the 1790s, while students from the lower orders increased from 1.9% to 47.9% over the same period. These were mostly the sons of skilled artisans and small master craftsmen, a literate and informed stratum of eighteenth-century Scottish society.

Ordinary people could gain access to ideas through public lectures, which were also widely available. For example, there were sixty-four notices for lectures or classes in geography alone, placed in the Scottish press between 1708 and 1830.⁴⁴³ Robert Dick, professor of natural philosophy at Glasgow had offered courses in physics and astronomy to the townsfolk.⁴⁴⁴ There were also lectures on medicine at Edinburgh.⁴⁴⁵ In Glasgow, Francis Hutcheson had provided Sunday lectures on religion, where he had ‘many, not scholars, in the rest of his classes ... several tradesmen and youths in the town’.⁴⁴⁶ His teaching reached a wide audience through these lectures and they were praised by William Thom. Alexander Carlyle commented that Hutcheson

⁴⁴² W. M. Mathew, ‘The Origins and Occupations of Glasgow Students, 1740-1839’, *P&P*, No. 33 (1966), pp.74-94; D. J. Withrington, ‘Education and Society in the Eighteenth Century’, in Phillipson and Mitchison (eds), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement*, p.172.

⁴⁴³ Charles W. J. Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity: Scotland since 1520* (Cambridge, 2001), p.119, cited in Bob Harris, ‘Communicating’, in Elizabeth Foyster and Christopher A. Whatley (eds), *A History of Everyday Life in Scotland, 1600 to 1800* (Edinburgh, 2010), p.169.

⁴⁴⁴ Tom Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700-2007* (London, 2006), p.79.

⁴⁴⁵ Helen M. Dingwall ‘To be insert in the *Mercury*’: Medical Practitioners and the Press in Eighteenth-Century Edinburgh’, *Social History of Medicine*, Vol. 13 No. 1 (2000), pp.30-31.

⁴⁴⁶ Wodrow, *Analecta*, Vol. 4, p.185.

open'd his class-room to whoever chose to attend, when he delivered a set of lectures on *Grotius de veritate Religionis Christianae*, which though learned and ingenious were adapted to every capacity; for on that evening he expected to be attended not only by students, but by many of the people of the city; and he was not disappointed, for this free lecture always drew crowds of attendants.⁴⁴⁷

Thus, ordinary people from well down the social order had a variety of ways to encounter ideas through the growth of libraries, informal lectures and widening access to higher education.

V

People could also gain access to ideas through newspapers, and the readership for each copy of a paper could be quite extensive as it was unlikely to be limited to just the individual who purchased it.⁴⁴⁸ Bob Harris has judged that the circulation figures for most eighteenth-century Scottish papers were only in the hundreds and that readership of the Scottish press was much more 'socially restricted' than in England. However, by the last quarter of the century he has suggested that increasing numbers of 'artisans, mechanics and apprentices' had access to newspapers, and that their political role in Scotland had been strengthening from the 1770s.⁴⁴⁹ He has also asserted that the Scottish press provided opportunities to engage with political debate, for those from quite far

⁴⁴⁷ Burton (ed.), *Autobiography of Dr Alexander Carlyle*, p.70.

⁴⁴⁸ Letter from the Town Clerk at Tiverton, Devon, to the Hon. Dudley Ryder, 2 April 1799, cited in E. S. Chalk, 'Circulation of XVIII-Century Newspapers', *Notes and Queries*, (Nov. 1935), p.336. The Town Clerk of Tiverton in Devon highlights the circulation of a single copy of one newspaper. It was passed from the surgeon, to the minister, to the druggist, to the parson, to the school master, to a sergemaker, and then it was passed around among the common people. The circulation of a second copy went through fifteen pairs of hands and there were several such papers sent into the country. This was brought to my attention by Sheena Bedborough at Stirling University.

⁴⁴⁹ Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press*, pp.11, 21, 28; idem, 'Scotland's Newspapers, the French Revolution and Domestic Radicalism', pp.38-62; See also Fagerstrom, 'Scottish Opinion and the American Revolution', pp.272-273.

down the social scale, and ‘certainly encompassed artisans and lesser tradesmen’.⁴⁵⁰

The press offered a means by which various groups could gain access to and debate specific issues. Newspapers were part of what Jürgen Habermas has defined as the developing ‘public sphere’, which also included the world of letters and clubs.⁴⁵¹ This was a middle ground between the private sphere of the family, and the public sphere of the state, a space in which people could debate public matters. The press provided a means for people to express their grievances and gain the attention of a wider public. For example, in the 1780s Scottish newspapers carried notices of the Glasgow weavers’ petition to parliament, which complained about tax preference given to imported cloth, and notices such as these were also reprinted in English newspapers.⁴⁵²

The press could be used to highlight important questions. For example, in January 1782 the Pantheon Society in Edinburgh, which offered a forum for debate, advertised a forthcoming political topic, ‘*Ought the present Ministry to be dismissed [from] his Majesty’s councils?*’⁴⁵³ The following week their discussion centred on, ‘*Should the American war be IMMEDIATELY terminated?*’⁴⁵⁴ The same edition of the paper also carried a report of John Witherspoon’s speech to Congress. America, and its political affairs, was the subject of three debates in six months in the Society, with a further debate in December 1782.⁴⁵⁵ In June the Society considered another contentious issue: ‘*Would the proposed ABOLITION*

⁴⁵⁰ Harris, *Scottish People and the French Revolution*, pp.32, 40-44.

⁴⁵¹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, 1989), p.30.

⁴⁵² *Cal. Merc.*, 9 Feb., 27 Apr. 1785; *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 5 Feb. 1785; *Whitehall Evening Post*, 31 May 1785.

⁴⁵³ *Cal. Merc.*, 5 Jan. 1782.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 12 Jan. 1782.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 13 July 1782.

*of Patronage be of advantage to Scotland?*⁴⁵⁶ Later in the month it was reported in the *Caledonian Mercury* that,

At a meeting held ... for the purpose of signing an Address to his Majesty, upon the late Change of *Men* and *Measures*, some then present seemed dissatisfied that they were not permitted to deliver their sentiments, either upon the propriety or impropriety of the measure:- The Society, therefore, in compliance with the wishes of such, has agreed that the ... question be the subject of debate *tomorrow* evening.⁴⁵⁷

This issue too was debated three times and as usual there was ‘a most numerous company’.⁴⁵⁸ The General Assembly debates on this subject were also reported widely.⁴⁵⁹ Commenting on political affairs had become such a regular pursuit that the Pantheon Society advertised again in August 1782, to try to give other non-political questions an airing.

As the fluctuating situation of public affairs has led the Society, for some time past, to dwell much upon questions of a political nature, they are desirous of giving an opportunity to those who incline to speak upon subjects which affect society at large.⁴⁶⁰

The Pantheon debates were clearly popular in terms of the numbers in attendance, ranging from 100 to 300 at the fortnightly meetings.⁴⁶¹ On one occasion a notice in the press commented that:

we are persuaded there never was seen such a crowded house, as at last meeting of the Pantheon Great numbers of Ladies and gentlemen visitors, as well as some of the members themselves, could not get access. It was even with difficulty that the President and Judges could get forward.⁴⁶²

On other occasions references were made to the ‘crowded (*sic*) audience’ and the ‘very numerous’ company.⁴⁶³ Although the society had a membership, the debates were open to the public. The references in the press to those in attendance usually

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 June 1782.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 26 June 1782.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 6 and 10 July 1782

⁴⁵⁹ See chapter five.

⁴⁶⁰ *Cal. Merc.*, 7 Aug. 1782.

⁴⁶¹ *The Book of the Old Edinburgh Club* (Edinburgh, 1908) p.54.

⁴⁶² *Cal. Merc.*, 8 Jan. 1780.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, Jan. 29 and Oct. 28 1780; Jan. 18 1783; Jan. 26 1789; Feb. 21 1789; Nov. 28 1789.

described them as ‘ladies and gentlemen’ or ‘genteel’, suggesting that they were predominantly from the middling orders or above.⁴⁶⁴ However, James Boswell, who made a speech in 1775, noted ‘I got applause enough from the company, about 100 Writers, Wrights, etc., etc.’, which suggest that some in the audience may have been less ‘genteel’. Boswell also complained that the Pantheon debates were too ‘crowded’.⁴⁶⁵ Apart from involvement in the debates themselves, the regular use of the press to advertise the questions to be debated doubtless brought these issues to the attention of the wider populace.

Interest in current affairs was widespread. For example, at Perth, by the early 1790s, ‘A large hall ... was fitted up as a coffee room by the democratic party ... in this room, the party newspapers and pamphlets were read with extraordinary avidity’.⁴⁶⁶ At Little Dunkeld in Perthshire, the local minister commented that the people were ‘firmly attached to their rights, both civil and religious’, and he also observed their interest in newspapers and the development of reading clubs.

Newspapers and other periodical publications find their way to every corner of the parish... they are soon interested by any public affairs in which they apprehend the general welfare of their country to be materially concerned. This disposition shewed (*sic*) itself remarkably during the American war. Then attention is much roused by the momentuous (*sic*) transactions which are just now taking place on the continent of Europe.⁴⁶⁷

This illustrates that interest in current affairs was not simply a product of the 1790s but had developed at least as early as the American crisis.⁴⁶⁸ At West Monkland in Lanarkshire, the minister noted that ‘knowledge of every kind is

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Jan. 26 1782.

⁴⁶⁵ Geoffrey Scott (ed.), *Private Papers of James Boswell from Malahide Castle* Vol. 11, p.17, cited in Davis D. McElroy, *Scotland's Age of Improvement: A Survey of Eighteenth-Century Literary Clubs and Societies* (Washington, 1969), p.93.

⁴⁶⁶ Penny, *Traditions of Perth*, pp.67-68.

⁴⁶⁷ *OSA*, Vol. 6, pp.369-370 (Little Dunkeld, Perthshire).

⁴⁶⁸ For the impact of the American crisis in Scotland, see Fagerstrom, ‘American Revolutionary Movement in Scottish Opinion 1763-1783’; *idem*, ‘Scottish Opinion and the American Revolution’.

universally diffused; and there is scarcely a family that does not regularly read the newspapers', while at Wigton the Revd Andrew Duncan noted that,

An attention to publick (*sic*) affairs, a thing formerly unknown among the lower ranks, pretty generally prevails now. Not only the farmers, but many of the tradesmen, read the newspapers, and take an interest in the measures of government.⁴⁶⁹

The Revd John Bruce remarked that, in Forfar,

A spirit of enquiry and a taste for reading is springing up ... The subscriptions to the Encyclopedia Britannica, the Bee, and several periodical and other publications, scientific, religious, moral and political, are more numerous of late.⁴⁷⁰

Robert Heron, in his travels around Scotland in 1792, observed that the inhabitants of Kilbarchan in Renfrewshire, 'were not uninformed. Newspapers and other periodical publications circulate among them, and are eagerly read'.⁴⁷¹

Newspapers certainly provided access to debate and they were used quite intentionally, by groups and individuals, to engage with other like-minded people who were involved in anti-patronage disputes, the burgh reform movement, the anti-Catholic relief organisations, those following the escalating American crisis, as well as the various societies established for political reform in the 1790s. They also provided a forum for the contentious to attack each other.⁴⁷² Newspapers provided a means of declaring political sensibility and allegiance to a specific cause. For example, the protests of incipient burgh reformers in the 1780s, in the

⁴⁶⁹ OSA, Vol. 7, p.377 (Old or West Monkland, Lanarkshire); Vol. 14, p.483 (Wigton, Wigtonshire).

⁴⁷⁰ OSA, Vol. 6, p.534 (Forfar, Angus).

⁴⁷¹ Robert Heron, *Observations made in a Journey through the Western Counties of Scotland*, 2 Vols (Perth, 1793), Vol. 2, p.393.

⁴⁷² See for example Robert Kerr (ed.), *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, & Correspondence of William Smellie*, 2 Vols (Edinburgh, 1811), Vol. 1, pp.441-498; *EMR*, July, August, September, 1775. There was a virulent correspondence in the press between the Revd Charles Nisbet, minister at Montrose, and William Smellie, editor of the *Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, which began as a rebuke by Smellie over Nisbet's conduct in the General Assembly about the St. Ninian case but among other things took Nisbet's political principles to task criticizing him as a supporter of the 'rebellion in America', and suggesting that Nisbet should emigrate to America where he could 'bellow sedition ... into the ears of a deluded people'.

Caledonian Mercury, encouraged the establishment of a committee of reform in Edinburgh, which in turn developed into a nationwide movement, with reforming societies in virtually all the burghs in Scotland. Advertisements were also placed in newspapers to alert readers to books that would be published by subscription.⁴⁷³

Information in the press included correspondence from supportive individuals, such as the philosopher and political reformer Richard Price (1723-91), applauding the ‘civil liberty’ that was ‘animating Scotland’, over burgh reform.⁴⁷⁴ There were also extracts of pamphlets such as Andrew Crosbie’s, *Thoughts of a layman concerning patronage and presentation*, in 1769 and Richard Price’s *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty*, in 1776, material that ordinary Scots were well able to read and consider for themselves.⁴⁷⁵ Hence, the Revd Andrew Murray at Auchterderran in Fife, commented ‘Although the parish consists wholly of the poorer ranks of society, newspapers are very generally read and attended to: The desire of them increases’.⁴⁷⁶ He added somewhat superciliously, that his parishioners seemed ‘in some degree capable of reflecting on the advantages of government’.

From the 1770s onwards, as the debates on patronage, America and reform intensified, both the clergy and laity increasingly used pamphlets, the press and pulpits to contest these issues, which allowed as wide an audience as possible to participate. From early in the century ministers had been well aware of the usefulness of the press. For example, during the evangelical revival in the 1740s, newspapers were established specifically to spread the news about the revivals in

⁴⁷³ See *Cal. Merc.*, 12 Aug. 1782.

⁴⁷⁴ Letter from the Rev. Dr Richard Price, to the Secretary of the Committee of Citizens of Edinburgh, *Scots Mag.*, April 1784, pp.179-180.

⁴⁷⁵ Crosbie, *Scots Mag.*, Feb. 1769, pp.70-75, Apr. 1769, pp.177-181, May 1769, pp.233-235; Price, Feb. 1776 pp.100-104.

⁴⁷⁶ *OSA*, Vol. 1, p.457 (Auchterderran, Fife).

Britain and America. John Balfour, minister at Nigg in Ross-shire regarded this as ‘a choice Means to promote the Communion of Saints upon Earth’, while in New Hampshire, Nicholas Gilman read to his parishioners from the *Glasgow Weekly History*.⁴⁷⁷ It should therefore come as no surprise that ministers made increasing use of the press, and for issues other than just religion.

There was a constant flow of advertising, letters and discussion in the press, and one series of letters that had been printed in the *Caledonian Mercury* on patronage were added to and published as a collection in pamphlet form. Writing under pseudonyms, ministers brought two contentious issues together – patronage and political reform.⁴⁷⁸ Ecclesiastical and civil reform were linked, suggesting that the impact of a reform of civil politics would bring about a much-needed reform of patronage.

[A]s to the boroughs, at least where the right of presentation is vested in the Town-council, should the proposed reformation as to the election of their Magistracy and their Representatives in Parliament take effect, it will go well nigh to remove the corruptions in their ecclesiastical state also.⁴⁷⁹

The writer recognised that popular elections for ministers might not resolve all dissension within the Church as this could still result in some leaving it ‘because they got not out their will in these elections’. In addition, he thought there might be the continuing problem of pressure from social superiors: owing to ‘the dependence of one part of the community upon the other, elections, especially in country parishes, would often be much influenced still by people in higher life.’ He also believed that ‘in many places the people are very unfit to make a proper use of this right’. Nevertheless, he publicly concluded that ‘I must give my voice

⁴⁷⁷James Robe (ed.), *Christian Monthly History or an Account of the Revival and Progress of Religion Abroad and at Home*, 2 Vols (Edinburgh, 1743), Vol. 1, No. 4, cited in Susan O’Brien, ‘A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735-1755’, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 91 No. 4 (1986), p.828.

⁴⁷⁸ ‘Letter Fourteen’, in *A collection of letters on patronage and popular election* (Edinburgh, 1783), p.71.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.71.

in favour of popular election'.⁴⁸⁰ This letter, which argued that people had a right to elect their ministers, had already been printed in the newspaper and therefore reasonably widely circulated.

Furthermore, in Edinburgh groups of 'citizens' also met to discuss the abolition of patronage and once more the role of the press was important with advertisements inserted in newspapers highlighting pamphlets for sale on the subject, as well as publicising the societies which had been established.⁴⁸¹ For example, the *Caledonian Mercury* advertised a *Treatise on Patronage* 'just published' and 'drawn up at the desire of the Committee appointed at Edinburgh to procure the abolition of patronage'.⁴⁸² William Muir, the secretary of the new Glasgow Constitutional Society, included a recommendation for a pamphlet on the subject, *Inquiry into the Principles of Ecclesiastical Patronage and Presentation*, giving its price and where it could be purchased.⁴⁸³ In another advertisement, the president of the Glasgow Constitutional Society, William Cuthbertson, acknowledged the 'several towns, parishes, &c. who have published their sentiments ... in news-papers'. He also drew on the Covenanting past, asking his readers 'Whether we deserve to be accounted the descendents of our renowned ancestors, who handed down our privileges at the expence (*sic*) of all that was dear to them in this world, life not excepted'.⁴⁸⁴ Clearly these organisations and individuals were making good use of the press to promote their cause. The numerous advertisements and correspondence demonstrates the increasing use of the press and hence a widening of access to include ordinary people. This type of activity on the part of both clergy and layman does not suggest an acquiescent or

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.1.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.71; *Cal. Merc.*, 1 May 1782.

⁴⁸² *Cal. Merc.*, 21 May 1783.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*, 6 Oct. 1784.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 12 Aug. 1782.

ignorant populace, and, given the links being made between ecclesiastical and civil liberty, neither does it suggest a lack of engagement with contemporary debate.

Conclusion

What this chapter has demonstrated is that engagement with a wider debate was stimulated through the use of the press, which became progressively more available, and was increasingly used by campaigners from about the 1760s onwards to promote participation in their causes. It has also suggested that Calvinism's requirement for literacy could encourage a questioning attitude, which may have guided some to independent thought, and helped to provide a stimulus to the political awareness of the population. This may have predisposed some of its adherents towards an engagement with democratic politics. The push towards literacy was enhanced by the development of libraries and informal borrowing. This chapter has shown that many ministers, Popular or Moderate within the Church of Scotland, as well as those in the Secession Churches, exhorted their congregations to read and engage with the written word. Both ministers and the enlightened *litterati* saw access to education as essential to the development of ordinary people. There is evidence of the overwhelming desire amongst the lower orders to acquire an education for themselves, but even more so for their children, and, by the last quarter of the century this was becoming increasingly available, at least in Lowland Scotland. In addition, the personal networks of the university educated elite offered further conduits for the spread of ideas into communities. Presbyterianism was central to providing the tools that enabled people to become involved in political activities, and it therefore had a

profound impact on shaping political awareness among all orders of society in eighteenth-century Scotland, and may help to explain how, by the 1790s, some ordinary people had become involved in radical activities.

Chapter Four

‘That ye may judge for yourselves’⁴⁸⁵

Book subscribers

Chapter three discussed how ordinary people could gain access to ideas. This chapter will consider how they may have engaged with them. This will be assessed by evaluating the information gleaned from a substantial number of book subscription lists. Subscription lists contain the names of the individuals who bought books by paying in advance to have them printed. This was a common method of book buying and allowed wider access to reading material, particularly for those who did not live in areas where bookshops were easily accessible. Building on the discussion in chapter three this chapter argues that increasing literacy and the greater availability of books combined with Calvinism to encourage a wider political engagement for some, because people had not only gained the skill of reading, but were able to reflect, form opinions, and question, capacities which could be brought to bear in a wider context.

Ned Landsman has asserted that the laity involved in the revival at Cambuslang, had a ‘remarkable capacity to integrate seemingly disparate beliefs and actively forge their own understandings of the delivered message’.⁴⁸⁶ This chapter suggests that nowhere can this capacity be more clearly demonstrated than through the books bought by very ordinary people, such as weavers, miners, hammermen, or skimmers, and overall this thesis argues that such individuals were quite capable of interpreting, not just their reading material, but their social, economic and political situation within Scottish society. Calvinist teaching

⁴⁸⁵ Adamson, *Sermon Preached on the 5th day of November 1788*, p.16.

⁴⁸⁶ Landsman, ‘Evangelists and Their Hearers’, p.121.

encouraged people to think for themselves and may have given some the confidence to challenge their superiors, for, as one commentator in the early 1790s observed, ‘religious zeal’ had been the basis for ordinary people to extend their interests into the political sphere.

[T]he mutual emulation of different religions, are apt to extend their operation beyond their proper sphere, and to blend themselves with political, no less than with religious, prejudices. And these have undoubtedly had their share in promoting that desire of reforming the state which seems to be at present, felt with such violence by great numbers of the citizens of Perth.⁴⁸⁷

In addition, this chapter will demonstrate the literacy of a very wide cross-section of Scottish society in the second half of the eighteenth century. It gauges the physical location of those who bought books by subscription, as well as their social status defined by their occupation, and it highlights the continuing strength of Covenanting convictions, through the literature that a significant number of ordinary people bought. It discusses the importance of such material for this reading public, and argues that individuals drew strength from these works to sustain their opposition, particularly to patronage. It also suggests that the purchase of this material could in itself be regarded as an expression of defiance as individuals refused to accept polite Moderate thinking in the Church. It may be in part, as David Miller has suggested, that in the Scots ‘obsession’ with doctrine and polity, people were taking their stand against ‘tendencies towards toleration, Erastianism and worldly indulgence on the part of the wealthier classes’, and at the same time ‘keeping the Kirk true to her standards’, through social criticism.⁴⁸⁸

This chapter will provide a substantial picture of book-ownership and reading matter in eighteenth-century Scotland, emphasising the value of such

⁴⁸⁷ Heron, *Observations made in a Journey through the Western Counties of Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp.148-149.

⁴⁸⁸ Miller, ‘Presbyterianism and “Modernization” in Ulster’, p.72.

material to the emergence of popular political awareness and suggesting how this can be linked to a broader definition of ‘political’ activity.⁴⁸⁹ Through this the chapter develops the third strand of this thesis, arguing that an engagement with predominantly religious works, and particularly Covenanting theology and history, offered a major stimulus to developing political awareness among ordinary people, helping to explain how, by the 1790s, some individuals had achieved a radical political viewpoint.

I

The books discussed here were subscribed to by tens of thousands of ordinary people and it is important to understand the type of material and a little of the background of the authors, in order to recognize the significance of how, in a broad sense, such works may have helped to develop the political awareness of their eighteenth-century readership. Notably for this study, the subscription lists indicate the widespread availability of books, and highlight the literacy of non-elite groups in eighteenth-century Scotland, thereby supporting R. A. Houston’s contention that Scotland had a ‘population with remarkable, if not total, literacy by the mid-eighteenth century’.⁴⁹⁰

Three previous small studies have looked at a total of eleven eighteenth-century subscription lists. The first, by Peter Laslett, identified two lists, on which weavers predominated.⁴⁹¹ However, Laslett suggested that some subscribers may not have been able to read, and that the books were ‘possessions to be proud of

⁴⁸⁹ This chapter is concerned exclusively with religious works. For a discussion of Enlightenment works and readership see Towsey, *Reading The Scottish Enlightenment*.

⁴⁹⁰ Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe*, p.45.

⁴⁹¹ Peter Laslett, ‘Scottish Weavers, Cobblers, And Miners Who Bought Books In The 1750s’, *Local Population Studies*, No. 3 (Autumn 1969), pp.7-15.

and show off, or even venerate for religious reasons'.⁴⁹² While this is certainly possible, it seems highly improbable, given the Calvinist emphasis on reading, and the high levels of literacy in eighteenth-century Scotland, neither does it equate with the numerous subscription lists which have been identified in this thesis. As John Wesley commented, books 'to be of value have to be read; and ... people would read books for which they paid - however small the price'.⁴⁹³ The second study, by R. H. Carnie, which used evidence from three subscription lists, contended that there was a substantial number of tradesmen and labourers living in Scotland in the second half of the eighteenth-century who both bought and read books, over and above chapbooks, ballads, magazines and newspapers.⁴⁹⁴ He identified 'number' books, that is, serially published works, as catering for a distinctively 'working-class' Scottish clientele that was mainly based in the Lowlands. Lastly, R. E. Jones looked at a group of six subscriber lists attached to books edited by John Howie of Lochgoin between 1775 and 1793, identifying that the majority of the subscribers were artisans.⁴⁹⁵

These three studies suggested the need for further inquiry, and, from an inspection of the *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* catalogue, searching by 'subscribers' plus individual Scottish place names, 89 lists for the period between 1746 and 1792 have been found for books published in this way in Scotland. In total a further 20 lists were found for works from 1708 to 1742, and eight from 1793 to 1798. These are outwith the period of this thesis and they have not been included in the database. Furthermore, as this thesis is concerned with the

⁴⁹² Laslett, *ibid.*, p.11.

⁴⁹³ Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Ohio, 1957, 2nd ed. 1998), p.36.

⁴⁹⁴ R. H. Carnie, 'Working Class Readers in Eighteenth Century Scotland: The Evidence From Subscription Lists', *Scottish Tradition*, Vol. 8 (1978), pp.77-94.

⁴⁹⁵ R. E. Jones, 'Book Owners In Eighteenth Century Scotland: A Note On Subscription Lists In Books Edited By John Howie', *Local Population Studies*, No. 23 (Autumn 1979), pp.33-37.

involvement of people from the lower and middling orders, and because elite and middling order subscribers would be expected to have been book buyers, where lists had few subscribers from the lower orders they have not been included. This resulted in the exclusion of 25 lists and consequently in the exclusion of all non-religious works. Overall the 25 excluded lists either contained very little information about occupations, or where this information was available there were few subscribers from the ‘artisans, servants and lower orders’ category. Three lists for non-religious books did have a combined total of 612 ‘artisans’ from a total of 1,781 subscribers. However, as this thesis is concerned with the contribution of Presbyterianism to popular political consciousness these three lists have been excluded along with the other non-religious lists. Within this group of excluded lists there were also three for religious books. These had a total of 3,053 subscribers, of which 2,833 (93%) were of unknown occupation. Of the remainder, only eight were ‘artisans’. In total the 25 lists contained 11,978 subscribers, of whom only 1,005 (7%) were from the ‘artisans, servants and lower orders’ category (see table 1). However, this excluded material, in fact, demonstrates an important point – during this period the vast majority of ordinary book subscribers did not buy non-religious works. Some accessed such works from other sources, but most chose to spend their wages on religious books.

Non-Religious Works	Total subscribers	Unknown	Artisans, servants, lower orders	Middling & professionals	Elite
1792 Practical Expositor	969	966	1	2	0
1792 Songs and Poems	913	486	282	138	7
1792 Contemplations	116	24	3	56	33
1791 Poems	104	11	72	18	3
1790 William Wallace	117	63	2	11	40
1789 Practical Figurer	308	96	84	106	22
1788 Agriculture	563	69	33	214	247
1787 Collection Hymns	1920	1786	7	127	0
1787 Office, powers ...	235	9	0	22	204
1787 Poems	1489	700	21	198	570
1785 Nat. improvements	307	34	14	99	170
1785 Trifles in verse	619	179	1	73	366
1783 Course of lectures	736	338	0	120	278
1782 History Renfrew	373	24	151	126	72
1782 East coast Scot.	424	38	22	188	176
1776 Select sermons	164	81	0	8	75
1775 Treatise on trees	442	3	17	27	395
1770 Travels Voyages	237	89	56	79	13
1766 Poems	495	204	179	112	0
1765 Account passages	181	178	0	3	0
1763 Travels Petersburg	516	13	2	95	406
1755 Moral Philosophy	401	49	0	133	219
1755 Peter the Great	115	1	3	28	83
1753 Rural muse	203	11	50	95	47
1748 History Douglas	31	1	5	26	23
Totals	11978	5453	1005	2104	3449

Table 1.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁶ *The Practical Expositor* (Glasgow, 1792); John Craik, *Songs and Poems* (Dundee, 1792); Sir Matthew Hale, *Contemplations moral and divine* (Edinburgh, 1792); John Burness, *Poems, Chiefly in the Scotch Dialect* (Dundee, 1791); Henry, the Minstrel, *Metrical history of Sir William Wallace* (Perth, 1790); William Halbert, *The Practical Figurer* (Paisley, 1789); David Young, *Agriculture, the primary interest of Great Britain* (Edinburgh, 1788); James Fordyce, *Collection of Hymns and Sacred Poems* (Aberdeen, 1787); Robert Boyd, *Office, powers, and jurisdiction, of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace, and Commissioners of Supply, for Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1787); Robert Burns, *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect* (Edinburgh, 1787); David Young, *National improvements upon agriculture* (Edinburgh, 1785); Rest Knipe, *A course of lectures* (Edinburgh, 1783); John Marjoribanks, *Trifles in verse* (Kelso, 1785); George Crawford, *History of the Shire of Renfrew* (Paisley, 1782); Francis Douglas, *A general description of the east coast of Scotland* (Paisley, 1782); Hugh Knox, *Select sermons on interesting subjects* (1776); William Boutcher, *A treatise on forest-trees* (Edinburgh, 1775); William Lithgow, *Travels and Voyages, Through Europe, Asia, and Africa* (Edinburgh, 1770); Alexander Cuthbertson, *Poems on Various Subjects* (Glasgow, 1766); *An Account of some remarkable passages in the life of a private gentleman* (Glasgow, 1765); John Bell, *Travels from St. Petersburg in Russia, to diverse parts of Asia* (Glasgow, 1763); Francis Hutcheson, *System of Moral Philosophy* (Glasgow, 1755); Alexander Gordon, *History of Peter the Great* (Aberdeen, 1755); Alexander Nicol, *Rural muse* (Edinburgh, 1753); David Hume, *History of the House and Race of Douglas and Angus* (Edinburgh, 1748).

Tables 2 and 3 demonstrate the split between the three social ranks and highlight the changing proportions of book subscribers between 1746 and 1792. Table 2 contains information from the 64 lists included in the database, and table 3 includes information from all 89 lists. The difference for the lower and middling orders is relatively small, but there is a significant difference for the elite category which demonstrates that they were the predominant purchasers of non-religious books.

	Artisans, servants, lower orders	Middling & professionals	Elite
1740s	399	267	309
1750s	4278	1637	80
1760s	6012	1975	194
1770s	2834	1213	265
1780s	11277	2213	98
1790s	2288	256	46

Table 2.

	Artisans, servants, lower orders	Middling & professionals	Elite
1740s	404	293	332
1750s	4331	1893	429
1760s	6193	2185	600
1770s	2907	1327	748
1780s	11610	3486	2203
1790s	2648	581	129

Table 3.

The 64 subscription lists provide information about 47,751 subscribers who bought a total of 60,156 copies of these books. The lists included 423 occupations, plus the largest single category of subscribers (12,014), who were of 'unknown' occupation. The occupations have been divided into three broad

groups, which have been used to categorise each subscriber's social status. These are, 'artisans, servants and lower orders', 'middling and professionals', and 'elite'. The latter group includes aristocrats, heritors and lairds, that is, the people who had a political voice.⁴⁹⁷ However, most subscribers were from the middling or lower orders, and these were the people who were allowed no formal political role in the nation. Within these two groups the vast majority of subscribers were from the lower orders. Some occupations, such as bookseller, could be placed in either category, but as most cannot be specifically identified, for the purposes of this thesis, they have been placed in the middling orders, although it is quite possible that many were from the lower rather than the middling orders. This has been done because the overall percentages show that the vast majority of subscribers were from the lower orders, and it therefore seems advisable to err on the side of caution when attributing social status.

The 'middling and professionals' include dealers in goods and services, merchants and professionals.⁴⁹⁸ Also included in this group are portioners, that is,

⁴⁹⁷ Charles Adam, *View of the political state of Scotland in the last century: a confidential report on the political opinions, family connections, or personal circumstances of the 2662 county voters in 1788* (Edinburgh, 1887). This source provides a detailed report of county voters, thereby highlighting the social standing of particular occupations. **Elite:** advocate; archdeacon; aristocrat; banker; baron of exchequer; bishop; castle governor; dean of the faculty of advocates; deans; judge; landowner; life renter; lord advocate; lord of session; lord provost; m.p.; naval officer; officer (military); privy councillor; professor; senator of the college of justice; sheriff; sheriff-depute; treasurer of the bank of scotland; university principals; writer.

⁴⁹⁸ **Middling orders and professionals:** abolitionist; accountant; admiral; annexed estates officer; apothecary; architect; arithmetician; armourer; attendant; auctioneer; bailie; bailiff; banker; bedal; bookseller; botanist; broker; burgess; chamberlain; chandler; chemist; kirk officer; clerk; clockmaker; coal griever; coalmaster; collector of excise; convener of customs; dancingmaster; dean of guild; doctor; dresser; elder; engineer; factor; farmer; feuar; foreman; freeholder; governess; griever; horse hirer; indweller; inn-keeper; insurance officer; jeweller; justice of the peace; labritory; land surveyor; land waiter; landsman; letter man; letter-founder; lime master; linen officer; macer; manager; manufacturer; master of arts; master of work; mathematician; merchant; merchant baillie; merchant traveller; messenger at arms; mill master; minister; officer (non-military); overseer; pensioner; poet; portioner; postmaster; precentor; principal; probationer; proprietor; provost; rector; residenter; rope-master; salt officer; session clerk; sheriff; sheriff-clerk; sheriff-substitute; ship captain; shore master; stampmaster; steward; student; sugar house master; supervisor; supervisor of excise; surgeon; surveyor of the customhouse; tacksman; teacher; tender officer; town clerk; town officer; town treasurer; translator; treasurer of the navy; vintner; wood master.

joint proprietors of land that had been divided amongst co-heirs. These have all been included in the ‘middling’ category for the same reason as booksellers, although again many may have owned very little land with proportionately small incomes.⁴⁹⁹ Those described as ‘artisans, servants & lower orders’ were predominantly in occupations requiring practical skills or physical effort.⁵⁰⁰

This analysis of these 64 book subscription lists greatly enhances the work begun by the previous studies, and adds considerable weight to claims of extensive literacy in eighteenth-century Scotland. In addition it provides a clear indication of the type of books on which artisans, tradesmen and labourers were willing to spend their hard-earned wages. It should also be noted that, in addition

⁴⁹⁹ For discussion of ‘middle class’, see Nenadic, ‘Rise of the Urban Middle Class’, pp.109-126.

⁵⁰⁰ **Artisans, servants and lower orders:** apprentice; attendant; baker; banks-man; barber; billot master; bleacher; blunker; boatman; bobbin maker; boiler; bonnet maker; bookbinder; bottle blower; brazier; breeches maker; brewer; bricklayer; brick maker; bridge keeper; brush maker; builder; burnbearer; butcher; butler; button maker; cabinet maker; callenderer; candle maker; cap maker; carman; carpet maker; carrier; carter; cartwright; causayer; carver; cattleman; chairman; chambermaid; chapman; cheese monger; chimneysweep; china mender; cleeksman; cloth lapper; cloth shearer; clothier; clover; club maker; coach maker; coachman; coal carrier; cobbler; colour maker; comb maker; confectioner; constable; convener; cook; cooper; copperman; cottar; cotton man; cotton spinner; creelman; currier; cutler; cutter; dairy maid; day labourer; deacon; distiller; ditcher; draper; drawbridge; drawer; driver; drummer; dryster; dyer; dyke builder; edge-tool maker; engine keeper; engine-man; engraver; farrier; fell monger; fireman; fish seller; fisherman; flax dresser; flax raiser; forgerman; forrester; founder; fowler; framesmith; fringe maker; gardener; gilder; gin boy; glass grinder; glass house man; glass maker; glazier; glover; grafter; grazier; grinder; grocer; groom; grover; gun maker; gun stocker; gunborer; hairdresser; hammerman; harness maker; harston; hat maker; heckle maker; heckler; heddle maker; hedger; heel maker; herd; hillman; hinge maker; hinger; hook maker; hooper; horner; horse keeper; hosier; hostler; housekeeper; ironmonger; jailor; janitor; keelman; land labourer; landsman; lapper; last maker; leadminder; lime worker; linen draper; linen printer; lint knocker; lint miller; looking glass maker; lormer; machine maker; maltman; mason; meal maker; measurer of grain; messenger; mill man; miller; milliner; millwright; minder; miner; moulder; moulterer; mule-yarnuke; musical instrument maker; musician; nailer; oil leather dresser; ostler; painter; papermaker; pasturer; penciler; peuterer; pilot; pin seller; pipe maker; pitch boiler; plasterer; plater; ploughman; plumber; pocket-book maker; port maker; porter; post-rider; pot maker; pot painter; potter; press-driver; print seller; printer; quarrier; quartermaster; quill dresser; quill-maker; red-marker; reedmaker; refiner; rope maker; saddle tree maker; saddler; sail maker; sailor; saltwaiter; sawer; seedman; servant; sewer; shanker; shepherd; shipwright; shipbuilder; shoemaker; shopkeeper; shop-man; sickle maker; side head; sievewright; silk scourer; silk dresser; sinker; skinner; slater; smelter; smith; soap maker; soldier; spinner; spoilsman; spoon maker; stabler; starch maker; stationer; stay maker; stocking needle maker; stocking maker; stone cutter; stone dresser; sugar boiler; sugar house man; sugar refiner; tanner; tailor; teaser; tenant; thatcher; thread maker; tiler; tinman; tinplate worker; tobacco spinner; tobacconist; toll keeper; toolman; trunk maker; turner; type founder; typographer; undertaker; upholsterer; victualler; waggoner; watchman; walker; warper; washer; weaver; weigher; weigh-house man; wheel-woman; wheelwright; wig maker; wood man; wood mill; wood cutter; wood sorter; woolcomber; workman; wright; yarn washer.

to those books printed by subscription, many other works were published, and many of the books mentioned here were reprinted several times during the eighteenth century but not by subscription. For example, James Stewart and James Stirling's *Naphtali* (1667) was republished twice, once by subscription, while William Crookshank's *History of the State and Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* (1749) was republished four times by subscription. James Durham's *Clavis Cantici* (1668) was also republished four times, but only once by subscription, as was Samuel Rutherford's *Joshua Redivivus* (1664). Thomas Halyburton's *Great Concern of Salvation* (1717) was republished five times, but only once by subscription while Thomas Watson's *Body of Practical Divinity* (1692), was republished five times, four by subscription.⁵⁰¹ This suggests that these and similar works were widely available to ordinary Scots, whether bought from a bookshop or by subscribing.

In addition, as Mark Towsey and others have shown, libraries stocked works by Adam Smith, David Hume, William Robertson, Lord Kames, Hugh Blair, Thomas Reid, John Millar, James Steuart, and Francis Hutcheson, and ordinary people such as butchers, tailors and shoemakers borrowed Enlightenment texts.⁵⁰² Based on the borrowing records from a number of Scottish subscription libraries, Towsey has suggested that the picture of almost solely traditional religious and devotional reading matter holding sway over most ordinary readers in provincial Scotland is not a true one.⁵⁰³ However, this needs to be qualified by the evidence from subscription lists, where the number of book

⁵⁰¹ Thomas Watson, *A Body of Practical Divinity* (Glasgow, 1741, 1759, 1782).

⁵⁰² Towsey, *Reading The Scottish Enlightenment*. See also David Allan, 'Provincial Readers and Book Culture in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Perth Library, 1784-c.1800', *The Library*, Vol. 3 No. 4 (2002), pp.367-389; Dunstan, 'Glimpses Into A Town's Reading Habits In Enlightenment Scotland', pp.42-59.

⁵⁰³ Towsey, *Reading The Scottish Enlightenment*, p.89.

buyers ran into tens of thousands across eighteenth-century Scotland, the vast majority of whom were purchasing religious material. Although access to books was available through a range of outlets including subscribing to a work, as a direct comparison there is just one subscriber list for an Enlightenment text, Francis Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy* (1755). This had 401 subscribers – 133 were 'middling and professionals', 219 were 'elite' and 49 were of unknown occupation. There were no subscribers from the 'artisans, servants and lower orders' category.

Those from the middling orders had greater disposable incomes and possibly easier access to other means of buying or borrowing books, but, while 16% of the total subscribers were from this social category, 57% were from the lower orders. Thus, from the available evidence, a much greater number were choosing, when buying, to purchase polemical religious works, not Enlightenment texts. These religious books were the titles that ordinary people wanted to keep, which suggests that what they chose to spend their wages on were the texts closest to their religious convictions and those of greatest significance to them.

The cost of books printed by subscription varied. For example, in 1753 John Wood, an Edinburgh bookseller was selling copies of Thomas Boston's *Fourfold State and Covenant* at 1/6d on coarse paper 2/- on fine paper.⁵⁰⁴ In 1791 William Baynes, a bookseller in London was offering a range of books at various prices: 3d. for *Christian Memoirs*, 5/- for a 'best edition' of Thomas Boston's *Covenant of Grace*, 8/- for *The Select Works of John Witherspoon*, and £1 8/- for

⁵⁰⁴ Advertisement inside Thomas Boston's *Human Nature in its Fourfold State* (Edinburgh, 1753).

William Gurnall's *Christian in Complete Armour*.⁵⁰⁵ The price of books purchased over the counter in 1791 ranged from 3/6d for *A Treatise on the Digestion of Food* to £2 8/- for *The Life of Samuel Johnson*.⁵⁰⁶ As a comparison typical wage rates were about £14 a year for a day-labourer; 1s. a day for ditchers; 6 to 9 guineas per year for ploughmen, with board and washing; house-carpenters 1s. 2d. a day; wrights 1s.; masons 1s. 8d.; a shoemaker 8d. a day; and tailors ranged from 5d.-1s. per day.⁵⁰⁷ The cost of such publications alone might suggest their importance to the subscribers who were predominantly from the lower orders.

The number of individual subscribers per volume ranged from 85 for John Dun's *Sermons* (1791), to 2,443 for John Howie's edited *Collection of Lectures and Sermons* (1779). Seventeen works sold fewer than 500 copies, 20 sold between 500 and 1,000 copies, 24 sold between 1,000 and 2,000 copies, and three sold over 2,000 copies. These figures may be compared with the print runs for a selection of titles printed in 1793 by the bookseller Thomas Cadell (1742-1802), one of the most successful booksellers in the eighteenth century, whose books were not sold by subscription. The smallest print run was 500 copies, for [C. F. Lindenau], *Extracts from Colonel Tempelhoffe's History of the Seven Years War*, and the largest was 5,000 copies of Richard Burn's *Justice of the Peace*. All other titles listed sold between 1,000 and 2,500 copies, including Adam Ferguson's *Essay on Civil Society* (1,000 copies), Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (2,500 copies), and David Hume's *History of England* (2,000 copies).⁵⁰⁸ This comparison

⁵⁰⁵ Advertisement inside John Owen's *Two discourses concerning the Holy Spirit and his work* (Glasgow, 1791).

⁵⁰⁶ Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, pp.674-676.

⁵⁰⁷ *OSA*, Vol. 13, p.370 (Carmichael, Lanarkshire); Vol. 5, p.93 (Gordon, Berwickshire); Vol. 3, p.433 (Arrochar, Dunbartonshire); Vol. 11, p.495 (Carnock, Fife); Vol. 1, p.67 (Sprouston, Roxburghshire). See also Valerie Morgan, 'Wage Rates in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland', *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 24 No. 2 (May 1971), p.185.

⁵⁰⁸ Sher, *Enlightenment and the Book*, pp. 86-87, 705.

suggests that a number of the volumes published by subscription had a similar number of purchasers to those on Cadell's list, although many were significantly smaller.

The individual titles discussed in this chapter provide an insight into the material that many ordinary people were reading. These were not simply devotional religious works, they were often lengthy and demanding theological polemics, not for the fainthearted, suggesting not only a significant level of literacy, but, a considerable depth of comprehension including the ability to independently reason, reflect and question – the essentials derived from a Calvinist education. Thus, greater literacy and availability of books could combine with that Calvinist education to encourage political engagement for some as they reacted to contemporary events.

II

In order to analyse this very large quantity of information fully, the subscriber details, that is the name, gender, occupation and geographical location of the buyers, along with the author, title and type of book, place and year of publication and the number of copies purchased, have been entered into a database, allowing retrieval of the material in a number of ways. The works have been grouped into six categories: 'Covenanting' (which includes theology, history and biography); 'Secession'; 'Scottish Presbyterian (non-Covenanting)'; 'Dissenting English Clergy'; 'Episcopalian'; and 'Other Religious' (such as works on church government and discipline, as well as those by Calvin, Luther and Knox). Tags, based on the background of the authors, have been added to allow the material to be searched by these categories. The largest number of

subscriptions was for works written mainly by Scottish Presbyterian ministers. Many of these works were reprints of seventeenth-century books by authors who had either been Covenanters or who were discussing covenant theology, but there were contemporary works by ministers of the Scottish Secession Churches who also continued to write on Covenanting themes. In addition there were eleven works chiefly by seventeenth-century dissenting English clergy. 23 of the lists were by authors in the ‘Covenanting’ category, and made up 19,094 (40%) of total subscribers. Books by ‘Dissenting English clergy’ had 8,792 (18%) subscribers; ‘Presbyterian (non-Covenanting)’ authors had 3,375 (7%) subscribers; ‘Secession’ authors had 5,079 (11%) subscribers; ‘Episcopalian’ authors had 1,323 (3%) subscribers; and ‘Other Religious’ authors had 10,088 (21%) subscribers. This makes ‘Covenanting’ works the category with by far the largest number of subscriptions, as illustrated in figure 1. The purpose of this section is to discuss the titles in these six categories.

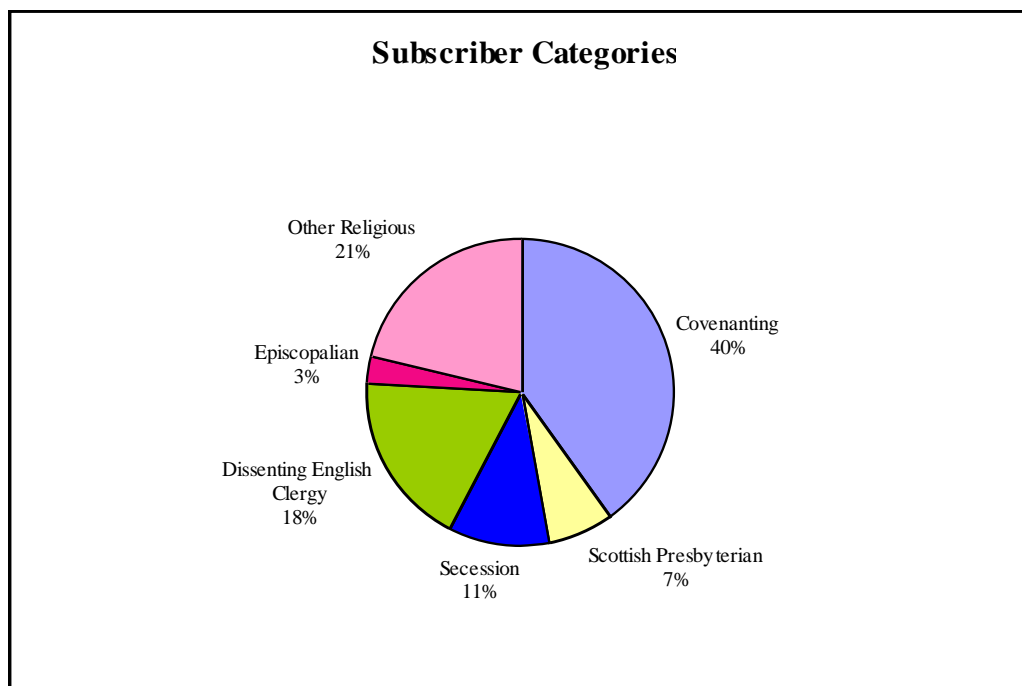


Figure 1.

1. Covenanting

Many of the works within the Covenanting category may have provided a buttress to opposition, and a connection to a dissenting past, given the substantial sales of these books. Their overarching theme was persecution and the reconciliation of conscience, subjects which resonated strongly with those who found themselves at odds with the Church and beyond in eighteenth-century Scotland. As discussed in chapter two, the anti-patronage viewpoint was frequently expressed in terms of liberty of conscience. The failure of the Church, under Moderate control, to adhere to the doctrinal standards of its Covenanting forebears, and the ongoing protests from those who found themselves in opposition over the patronage issue, may have brought people back to the writing of those who had held firm in the past, and hence the popularity of Covenanting works which will be demonstrated in this section.

If some people were engaging with these works as a way of strengthening their beliefs they also had the opportunity to range beyond the specific text and reinterpret these works in relation to contemporary concerns. Such books may have sustained individuals who were struggling with the imposition of unwanted ministers, who were often the Moderate, establishment representatives of a divided Church. These texts could of course also provide ammunition for those who supported the Moderate line, by suggesting the ‘fanaticism’ of text and reader, just as Alexander Carlyle exemplified the Moderate disdain for the Popular clergy by characterising them as having ‘narrow principles and [an] illiberal spirit’.⁵⁰⁹ Clearly it is impossible to know the individual motivation for the purchase of a book, but it is possible to speculate based on the evidence from the

⁵⁰⁹ Carlyle, *Usefulness and Necessity of a Liberal Education*, pp.37-39.

subscription lists. The number of books, the choice of authors, the predominantly lower social status of the subscribers from the late 1740s, onwards and the consideration that these were the books which ordinary people wanted to buy and keep, suggest that such texts had a particular relevance for the ordinary eighteenth-century reader: in the context of ongoing patronage disputes, in opposition to Catholic relief or from the perspective of developing notions of civil political reform.

The earliest work published by subscription in the ‘Covenanting’ category was John Nevay’s *Nature, Properties, Blessings, and Saving Graces, of the Covenant of Faith* in 1748, which consisted of 52 sermons.⁵¹⁰ Nevay (c.1606-71/2), was a Church of Scotland minister and a Covenanter, who had opposed all forms of set prayer in public worship. He had been active in raising the western army, which was defeated by Cromwell at Dunbar in 1650, and had sided with the ‘protesting’ minority in 1651.⁵¹¹

William Crookshank’s *History of the State and Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* was published five times during the eighteenth century in 1749, 1751, 1762, 1771 and 1789. Only the 1771 edition was not published by subscription.⁵¹² Crookshank (c.1712-69) was minister of the Scots congregation in Westminster and the purpose of the publication was to provide a history of the church in the Covenanting period. It emulated Robert Wodrow’s *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* (1721-2) but aimed to provide a smaller and therefore cheaper

⁵¹⁰ John Nevay, *The Nature, Properties, Blessings, and Saving Graces, of the Covenant of Grace* (Glasgow, 1748).

⁵¹¹ Vaughan T. Wells, ‘John Nevay’, *ODNB*.

⁵¹² William Crookshank, *The History of the State and Sufferings of the Church of Scotland, from the Restoration to the Revolution*, 2 Vols (Edinburgh, 1751).

volume that would be available to a larger number of people.⁵¹³ Ordinary people had previously had to borrow copies of Wodrow's work because it was 'bulky and expensive'.⁵¹⁴

Naphtali, which was first published anonymously by Sir James Stewart and James Stirling in 1667 was republished by subscription in 1761, and was a review of the persecution of Presbyterians since the Restoration. Stirling, a Covenanting minister, wrote the narrative; Stewart wrote the legal sections. Stewart (1635-1713), who had been a staunch Covenanter, revived and enhanced George Buchanan's theory of resistance to kings who betrayed the people's faith. His argument, regarding the concept of rule by consent only and with the emphasis on the contractual nature of the relationship between the ruler and subjects, was the political doctrine of the Covenanters in their opposition to the divine right of kings. However, Stewart extended this to include 'the people's representatives', Parliament.⁵¹⁵ This line of reasoning related directly to concerns central to eighteenth-century reformers, and it can also be found within contemporary publications such as the Reformed Presbytery's *Act, Declaration, and Testimony* of 1761, which reaffirmed the Reformed Presbytery's adherence to the Covenanting tradition, maintaining that

the constituting of the relation betwixt rulers and ruled, is voluntary and mutual; and that the lawful constitution of civil magistrates, is, by the mutual election of the people, (in whom is the radical right or intermediate voice of God of choosing and appointing such as are to sway the sceptre of government over them) and consent of those that are elected and chosen for the exercise of that office.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹³ Wodrow's work was also published by subscription. The majority of the subscribers were 'middling and professionals' (378) or 'elite' (148). There were only 27 'artisans'.

⁵¹⁴ Robertson, *Rural Recollections*, pp.98-100.

⁵¹⁵ Sir James Stewart and James Stirling, *Naphtali; or, a true and short deduction of the wrestlings of the Church of Scotland for the Kingdom of Christ* (Edinburgh, 1761), pp.386-388.

⁵¹⁶ Reformed Presbyterian Church, *Act, Declaration, and Testimony, for the whole of our Covenanted Reformation, as attained to, and established in Britain and Ireland* (Edinburgh, 1777), p.193.

Stewart emphasised the right of individuals to follow their own consciences, and, for those troubled by the issue of patronage, this text spoke directly to the heart of the matter, emphasising the people's entitlement to 'call their own lawful pastors', which, in the light of both the ongoing patronage dispute and the resulting secessions would have made this text resonate strongly with the reader.⁵¹⁷ The assertion of the right to bring conscience to bear was highlighted again and again in the works purchased by subscription. Although there were only 264 subscribers to *Naphtali* - 194 'artisans', 37 'middling and professionals', 33 unknown, and no known elite subscribers - compared with, for example, 1,777 subscribers for Durham's *Learned Commentary*, it highlights what the overall evidence from the subscription lists demonstrates, that the people who were buying and reading these highly polemical works were ordinary people, overwhelmingly from the lower orders. The importance of such reading matter is that these books were in the hands of bakers, bookbinders, candle makers, carters, dyers, flax dressers, hammermen, day labourers, porters, servants, stay makers, tailors, weavers and wrights, and, in conjunction with the debate from pulpit and press, this begins to create a picture of just how accessible 'political' debate was to ordinary Scottish folk, both in terms of patronage and with regard to wider issues.⁵¹⁸

James Durham's *Learned and Complete Commentary Upon the Book of the Revelation* (1658), was republished by subscription in 1764 and again in 1788.⁵¹⁹ Durham had been a Covenanted minister who had served as a captain in the Covenanted army during the civil war, although he was a moderate during the

⁵¹⁷ Stewart, *Naphtali*, p.385.

⁵¹⁸ Sermons and the press will be further discussed in chapter five.

⁵¹⁹ Durham, *Commentary upon the book of the Revelation* (Glasgow, 1739, 1764, 1788).

Protester-Resolutioner controversy that divided the Kirk in the 1650s.⁵²⁰ In the *Commentary* Durham considered questions and controversies which included church government and discipline, ministerial qualifications, the idolatry of the Roman Catholic Church, the difficulty of salvation under Popery, and the way of covenanting with, and obtaining justification before, God. Durham also addressed reading but encouraged his readers to be discerning, instructing them to question, rather than simply accept what was written. 1788 also saw the re-publication by subscription of his *Clavis Cantici* (1668). It had previously been published in 1723, 1724 and 1767 but this was the first edition published by subscription. It was an explanation of the Song of Solomon, or, as its introduction by the English Independent minister, John Owen, described it, ‘an enquiry after the mind of God and into the sacred truths in this part of scripture’.⁵²¹ Durham was providing an allegorical interpretation of the Song of Solomon, as the spiritual union between Christ and the Church, which for him was the only acceptable interpretation.

Andrew Gray’s *Select Sermons* was republished in 1765 and again in 1792.⁵²² In 1789 an edition of *The Works of the Reverend and Pious Mr Andrew Gray* was also published by subscription.⁵²³ Gray (1633-56), was a Church of Scotland minister, and a supporter of the National Covenant who strongly regretted what he considered to be Scotland’s backsliding in failing to uphold it.

⁵²⁰ K. D. Holfelder, ‘James Durham’, *ODNB*; Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History*, pp.681, 710. In 1647 Charles I had been promised support by the Scots on condition of his sanctioning the Solemn League and Covenant and pledging to set up a church according to the Confession of Faith. This was protested against by the assembly; and from this came the Act of Classes, by which the Covenanters disqualified for public office and even for military service, all who had been parties to the Engagement. The rescinding of this Act in 1651 led to a serious breach in the ranks of the Scottish clergy. The Resolutioners, or supporters of the resolution to rescind that Act, were opposed by the Protesters, the rigid adherents to the strictest interpretation of the Covenant. The Protesters objected to the hasty admission of Charles II to the Covenants.

⁵²¹ James Durham, *Clavis Cantici: or, an exposition of the Song of Solomon* (Glasgow, 1788), p.14.

⁵²² Andrew Gray, *Select sermons by the late Reverend, learned, and pious Mr Andrew Gray, Minister of the Gospel at Glasgow* (Edinburgh, 1765), (Falkirk, 1792).

⁵²³ Andrew Gray, *The whole works of the Reverend and pious Mr. Andrew Gray, late minister of the Gospel in Glasgow* (Falkirk, 1789).

His sermons provided access through the written word to a style of preaching which, according to James Durham, ‘could make men’s hair stand on end’.⁵²⁴

Samuel Rutherford’s *Joshua Redivivus*, or Rutherford’s letters, was republished four times during the eighteenth century in 1709, 1783, 1796, and once by subscription in 1765.⁵²⁵ Rutherford, a Church of Scotland minister, had also been a leading theorist of the Covenanters, and always on the militant wing of the movement. He had defended conventicles and, as a protester, fuelled controversy in the Kirk, but was regarded as a prime defender of Scottish Presbyterianism. He became known as the ‘Saint of the Covenant’.⁵²⁶ Rutherford’s most famous text, *Lex, Rex*, was a discourse on limited government and constitutionalism, which, like Stewart’s *Naphtali*, justified popular resistance, not only to kings but to parliaments which betrayed the trust of the people. While this has not been discovered among the subscription lists, Rutherford’s works were a central part of what Colin Kidd describes as the ‘canon of radical covenanting political theory’, works which, notably, were widely available to ordinary people.⁵²⁷

Some of the most popular subscribed works were those published by John Howie, and they provided a ready means to reconnect with the Covenanting period by offering narratives of those who had defended their beliefs at much cost to themselves. His *Biographia Scoticana*, commonly known as the ‘*Scots Worthies*’, was published in 1775, and an enlarged second edition appeared in

⁵²⁴ A. S. Wayne Pearce, ‘Andrew Gray’, *ODNB*.

⁵²⁵ Samuel Rutherford, *Joshua redivivus: or, three hundred and fifty-two religious letters, by the late eminently pious Mr. Samuel Rutherford, Professor of Divinity, at St. Andrews* (Glasgow, 1765).

⁵²⁶ John Coffey, ‘Samuel Rutherford’, *ODNB*.

⁵²⁷ Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s past*, p.54; Robertson, *Rural Recollections*, p.98.

1781.⁵²⁸ Howie (1735-93), was an historian and biographer, whose grandparents and great-grandparents had suffered persecution as Cameronians.⁵²⁹ The *Biographia Scotiana* was an account of eminent sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scots, many of whom had been prominent on the Covenanting side during the religious struggles of the seventeenth century.⁵³⁰ Such was the popularity of Howie's *Scots Worthies* that Edward Cowan, historian of the Covenanting period, maintained that 'At a popular level his book probably had a greater impact in the shorter term than all the works of Enlightenment philosophers put together'.⁵³¹

Howie also edited a *Collection of Lectures and Sermons* (1779), which included works by William Guthrie, Michael Bruce, John Welwood, Richard Cameron, Donald Cargill, Alexander Peden and Alexander Shields, all of whom were prominent Covenanters.⁵³² In 1780 he edited an edition of Michael Shields' *Faithful Contendings Displayed*, which was a history of the Church of Scotland from 1681 to 1691, and included a work by James Guthrie, and a collection of sermons by other Covenanting preachers.⁵³³ In 1782 the new appendix to the *Biographia Scotiana, Judgment and Justice of God Exemplified* was published by subscription, as a separate pamphlet, and covered the lives of the reformers' chief persecutors.⁵³⁴

In 1783 Howie edited *Faithful Witness-bearing Exemplified*, which was a collection of works by Hugh Binning (1627-53) and John Brown (c.1610-79),

⁵²⁸ John Howie, *Biographia Scotiana: or a brief historical account of the lives, characters, and memorable transactions of the most eminent Scots worthies* (Glasgow, 1775, 1781).

⁵²⁹ Cameronians were hard-line Covenanters mostly from south-western Scotland.

⁵³⁰ Alexander Du Toit, 'John Howie', *ODNB*.

⁵³¹ Cowan, 'The Covenanting Tradition in Scottish History', p.126.

⁵³² *A Collection of lectures and sermons, preached upon several subjects, mostly in the time of the late persecution* (Glasgow, 1779).

⁵³³ *Faithful contendings displayed: being an historical relation of the state and actings of the suffering remnant in the church of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1780).

⁵³⁴ *The judgment and justice of God exemplified* (Glasgow, 1782).

who had both been Church of Scotland ministers.⁵³⁵ Binning's work warned against joining with known enemies of truth and was written to expose the purpose of the Resolutioners.⁵³⁶ He had argued that the Covenanters were not justified in fighting for Charles I, without additional security being provided for the maintenance of their religious privileges, and unless some restraint was imposed upon the exercise of royal authority. Brown's essay was critical of indulgences, measures introduced in Scotland in the 1660s and 1670s with the aim of tempting moderate Presbyterians back to the Established Episcopal church.⁵³⁷ Binning and Brown were both on the protester side of the Protester-Resolutioner controversy of the 1650s.

In 1787 Howie also edited *Reformation Principles*, a collection on the National Covenant and Solemn League and Covenant, together with principles concerning civil government, the difference between reformation and revolution principles, and 'reasons for Presbyterians dissenting from the revolution-church in Scotland'.⁵³⁸ The titles alone might suggest the appeal for ordinary people – the allusion to holding true to one's beliefs no matter the disapproval encountered must have resonated with those at odds over the eighteenth-century Church's direction.

James Renwick's *Collection of Lectures, and Sermons*, was published in 1776 and again in 1777.⁵³⁹ Renwick (1662-88) was a Cameronian, and one of those who had posted the Lanark declaration of 1682, renouncing allegiance to the

⁵³⁵ *Faithful witness-bearing exemplified* (Kilmarnock, 1783).

⁵³⁶ See fn. 520 for Protester-Resolutioner controversy.

⁵³⁷ Ginny Gardner, 'John Brown', *ODNB*.

⁵³⁸ *Reformation principles* (Glasgow, 1787). The *Reasons for Dissent* have been taken from Andrew Clarkson, *Plain reasons for presbyterians dissenting from the Revolution-Church in Scotland* ([Edinburgh], 1731).

⁵³⁹ James Renwick, *A Choice Collection of Very Valuable Prefaces, Lectures, and Sermons, Preached upon the mountains and muirs, &c. of Scotland, in the hottest time of the late persecution* (Glasgow, 1776, 1777).

king.⁵⁴⁰ In 1787 William Wishart's *Theologia*, (1716), was re-published in two volumes.⁵⁴¹ Wishart (1660-1729), was a Church of Scotland minister and principal of Edinburgh University. He had Covenanting sympathies and had been imprisoned for denying the authority of James VII & II. Wishart was an early proponent of the use of natural reason. Unfortunately, only the first two pages of the subscription list for this work remain, hence a substantial number of the subscribers are unknown.

These 23 works of Covenanting theology, history and biography were subscribed to by 19,094 individuals, who between them, bought 22,017 copies. Of the total subscribers 11,222 (58.8%) were 'artisans, servants and lower orders', 2,655 (13.9%), were from the 'middling and professionals', 105 (0.5%) were 'elite' and, 5,112 (26.8%), were of unknown occupation. These books represent the largest number of subscribed works in any of the six categories. Given that there were so few subscribers from the landed elite, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the majority of 'unknown' subscribers would also have been from the same social background as the known subscribers. While the vast majority were male, 758 (3.96%) women also bought these works but occupations were recorded for only eighty-one of them: thirty-six servants; six aristocrats; seven merchants; six weavers; four bleachers; four indwellers (inhabitants); two grocers; two inn keepers; two shopkeepers; one landowner; one chambermaid; one glover; one life renter; one milliner; one penciler; one pin seller; one portioner; one sewster (mantuamaker); one vintner; one wheel-woman; and the widow of a dyer. More significantly, 58.8% of the subscribers were from the lower orders. Hence, these works were, predominantly, being read by people very far down the social

⁵⁴⁰ D. F. Wright, 'James Renwick', *ODNB*.

⁵⁴¹ Wishart, *Theologia*; Michael Jenkins, 'William Wishart', *ODNB*.

scale who had no direct access to an exclusive political realm. A breakdown of the social status of subscribers by individual book is provided in figure 2 and table 4.

It is clear from the subscriber numbers that weaving was by far the largest single occupation, representing 3,705 (19.4%) of the total subscribers for ‘Covenanting’ works. Weavers in Scotland were considered to be amongst the most literate group of Scottish working people, sending their children to school, using book clubs, and reading newspapers and pamphlets. As a result, this tradition of literacy and learning within weaving communities has often been highlighted.⁵⁴² One writer, William Jolly, a school inspector, commenting on the early life of John Duncan (1794-1881), weaver and botanist, observed that weavers were:

[A] remarkable class of men intelligent, and observant of the progress of events at home and abroad; devoted to politics, strongly or wildly radical, if not tainted with revolutionary sentiments, after the intoxication of the first French Revolution great talkers when they gathered in the street or public house, during the intervals of work; intensely theological, often religious, well versed in all the intricacies of Calvinism, severest critics of the minister’s discourses, and keenest of heresy-hunters, scenting it from afar, in phrase or smile, herein only being strong conservatives in a word, general guardians of the Church, reformers of the state, and proud patrons of learning.⁵⁴³

However, weavers were far from the only people who were reading these texts as the combined total for those classed as ‘artisans, servants and lower orders’ – excluding weavers – was more than double the figure for weavers at 7,517 (39.36%). The remaining subscribers in this category came from a range of occupations that included wrights, smiths, masons, miners, labourers, nailers, coopers, dyers, and sawers among many others.

⁵⁴² N. Murray, *Scottish Handloom Weavers 1790-1850* (Edinburgh, 1978), pp.208-236.

⁵⁴³ William Jolly, *The Life of John Duncan, Scotch Weaver and Botanist* (London, 1883), pp.23-24. The author, William Jolly, was a government inspector of schools in Inverness, he was also the founder, in 1875, of the Inverness Scientific Society and Field Club. He contributed articles to the *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society* and the *Geological Magazine*. His interest in John Duncan was due to Duncan’s botanical pursuits. Although this book was published in 1884 Jolly is referring to the weaving community in which Duncan was apprenticed in 1809.

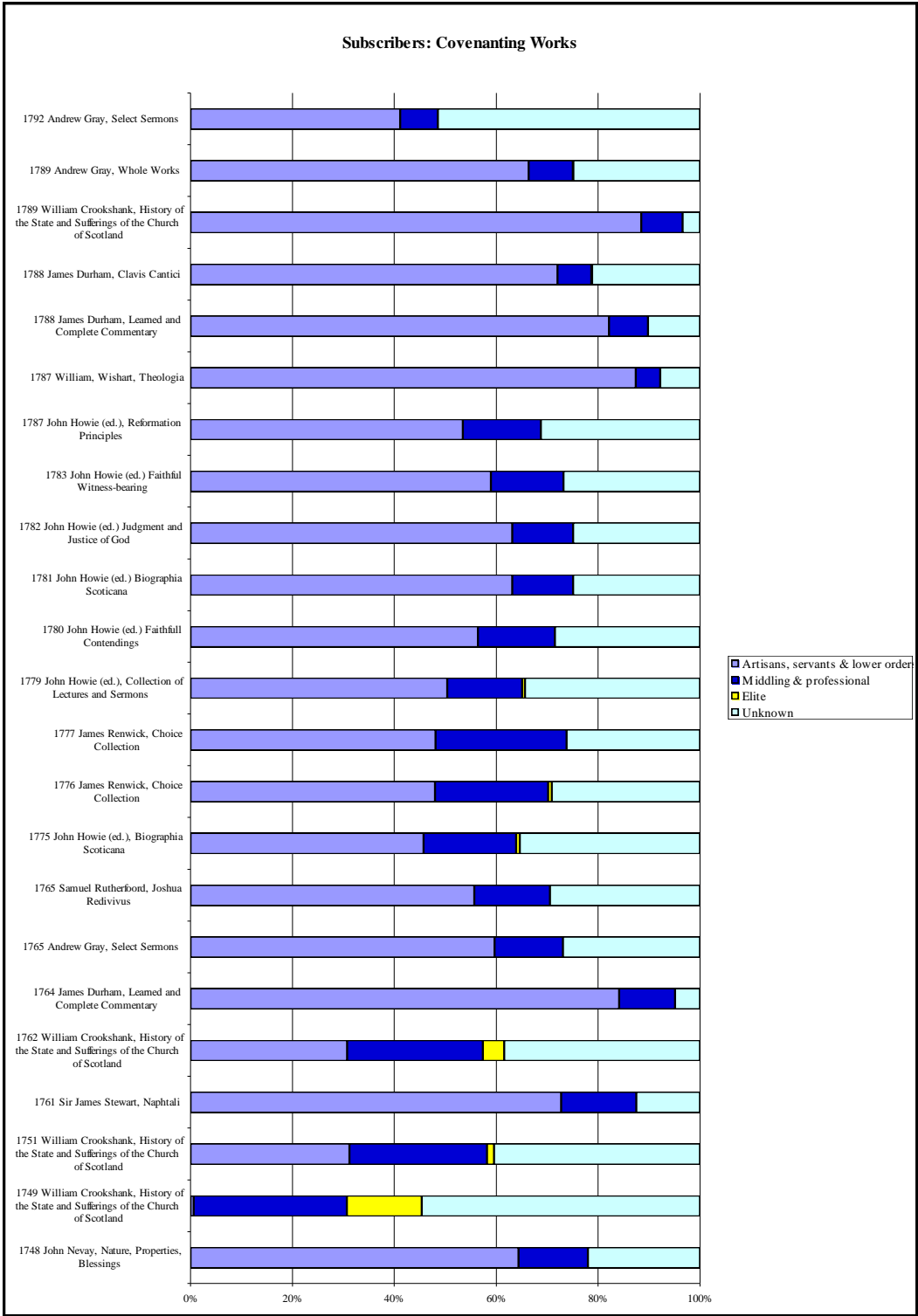


Figure 2.

Covenanting Works	Total subscribers	Artisans, servants & lower orders	Middling & professionals	Elite	Unknown
1792 Gray	379	156	28	0	195
1789 Gray	1673	1110	145	2	416
1789 Crookshank	234	207	19	0	8
1788 Durham	1777	1280	118	3	376
1788 Durham	352	289	27	0	36
1787 Wishart	230	201	11	0	18
1787 Howie	1059	566	162	0	331
1783 Howie	791	466	113	0	212
1782 Howie	1256	793	150	0	313
1781 Howie	1256	793	150	0	313
1780 Howie	1631	920	246	1	464
1779 Howie	2443	1232	357	14	840
1777 Renwick	744	358	191	0	195
1776 Renwick	1277	613	283	9	372
1775 Howie	695	318	126	5	246
1765 Rutherford	580	323	86	0	171
1765 Gray	431	257	58	0	116
1764 Durham	799	672	88	0	39
1762 Crookshank	143	44	38	6	55
1761 Stewart	264	192	39	0	33
1751 Crookshank	141	44	38	2	57
1749 Crookshank	339	2	100	63	174
1748 Nevay	600	386	82	0	132
Totals	19094	11222	2655	105	5112

Table 4.

Thus, a large number of people in ordinary occupations were buying and reading polemical works, and, unlike the weavers who could quite probably read at their looms, many were in occupations which did not readily allow for reading while working, so they were making a deliberate effort to read.

Of the 17,985 subscribers whose location is known for these works, 15,120 (84%) were from just five counties: Ayrshire, Dunbartonshire, Lanarkshire (including 3,076 from Glasgow alone compared with just 198 from Edinburgh), Renfrewshire and Stirlingshire (see figure 3). These were not only areas with strong links to the Covenanting past, they were also areas where access to

education through the network of Lowland parish schools was widespread, and they were areas where the patronage dispute and dissenting congregations were extensive.⁵⁴⁴ The huge disparity between Glasgow and Edinburgh is notable because it emphasises the continuing importance of Glasgow’s Covenanted tradition and it also highlights the strength of Popular support in Glasgow, compared to Moderate dominated Edinburgh. While Edinburgh’s pulpits were divided between Moderate and Popular clergy, in Glasgow the Popular party held sway, and, despite a brief victory for the Moderates in planting one of their own into the North Wynd Church in Glasgow in 1762, the victory was short-lived as subsequent ministers were Popular by conviction.⁵⁴⁵

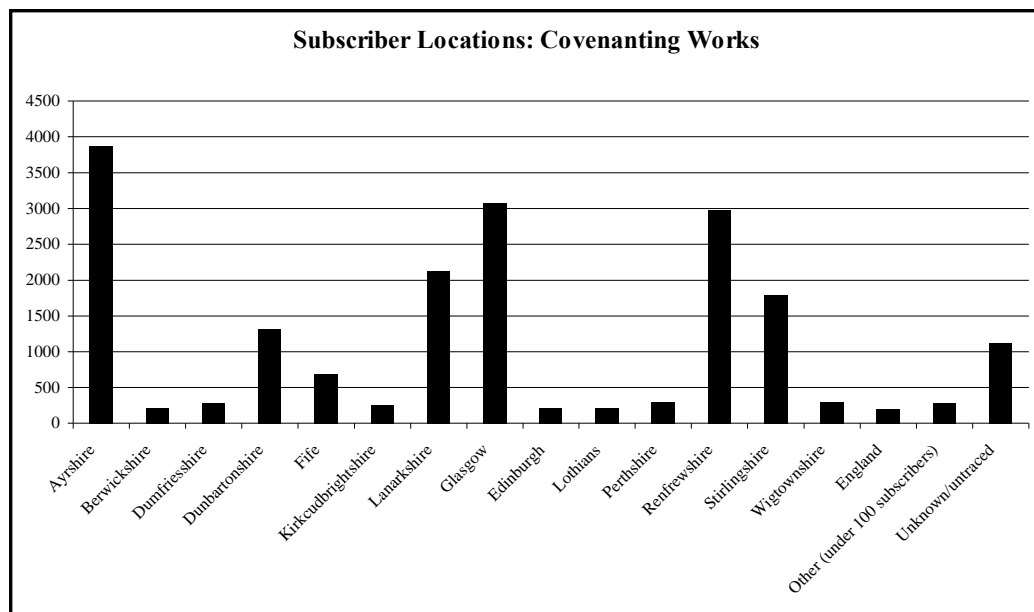


Figure 3.

In addition, Glasgow’s trading links with America allowed some of its inhabitants to engage with American views on civil and religious liberty

⁵⁴⁴ Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707*, pp.19-23.

⁵⁴⁵ Landsman, ‘Liberty, Piety and Patronage’, pp.214-226.

underlining a shared evangelical sympathy with America. These figures also highlight the Highland/Lowland divide relating to literacy and the impact of Presbyterianism. Areas which retained stronger links to Episcopalianism or Roman Catholicism, such as Banffshire, Caithness, Nairnshire, Orkney, Shetland and Sutherland did not appear at all on these subscription lists, neither did they engage with the political movements of the 1790s. This lack of engagement helps to call attention to the potential link between the egalitarian and anti-hierarchical nature of Presbyterianism and Calvinism's capacity to encourage enquiry, and the possibility that these might help to draw ordinary people towards democratic politics.

2. Scottish Presbyterian (non-Covenanting)

This category has five works by Scottish Presbyterian ministers which were published or republished by subscription between 1751 and 1790, and whose works again may have afforded support to contemporary readers, particularly on the patronage issue. Thomas Halyburton was a deeply orthodox Calvinist, whose work became central to the eighteenth-century debate on rational religion because of his criticism of English Deists whom he believed took an overly philosophical approach to theology.⁵⁴⁶ *The Great Concern of Salvation* (1717), was republished five times during the eighteenth century in 1721, 1722, 1751, 1770, 1797. However, only the 1751 edition was published by subscription. In this work Halyburton, who was a Church of Scotland minister and theologian, provided an

⁵⁴⁶ Stewart, 'Religion and rational theology', p.34.

exposition of the orthodox view of sin and redemption.⁵⁴⁷ In addition, he exhorted his readers to read and understand:

Such of you as will not be at pains to learn to read the word of God, I can scarce think you are in earnest concerned about salvation, since ye neglect so necessary a mean; at least I think ye have need to be very sure of the grounds ye lean upon, if ye do conclude yourselves really concerned about it, while ye neglect this duty. When people are not at pains to read, or take not care to get the scripture read to them ... it is a sad sign of want of concern about salvation.... Do you take heed to what you read? ... do ye endeavour to understand what ye read? ... You that can read the Bible or the Catechism, read them.⁵⁴⁸

It is clear that Halyburton was scandalised by the idea of the faithful neglecting to read because this was the way to salvation. Throughout the book he emphasised the need for his readers to understand what they were reading, and he charged them to ‘see what the argument is ... How it is expressed ... Why it is so expressed’, clear instructions to engage with the text - to question and reflect.⁵⁴⁹

Halyburton’s concern about reading had a straightforward intention, to encourage it solely as a means to guide his flock to salvation, but, as with other ministers, such as James Durham who had expressed similar sentiments, he was clearly well aware of the dangers of reading works other than the Scriptures. Hence the strictures of both - Halyburton cautioned his readers to ‘take care before ye read, that you go and pray to God, that he ... make you understand what you read’, while Durham advised his readers to read only ‘such books as judicious tender Christians have found good of before’.⁵⁵⁰ Such admonitions simply underlined the risk that, once the pupil had mastered the skill, reading could not be restricted to Scripture. When the individual could read, other works became accessible and other ideas and interpretations could be grappled with.

⁵⁴⁷ M. A. Stewart, ‘Thomas Halyburton’, *ODNB*.

⁵⁴⁸ Halyburton, *Great Concern of Salvation*, pp.94, 179-180.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.376.

⁵⁵⁰ Durham, *Learned and Complete Commentary*, p.81.

The Saint's Recreation Upon the Estate of Grace (1683), was a volume of pious verse by William Geddes (c.1630-94).⁵⁵¹ He was a Church of Scotland minister who had refused to take the Test in 1682 and resigned from his parish.⁵⁵² Following the re-establishment of Presbyterianism within the Church of Scotland, he was readmitted to Wick in 1692.⁵⁵³ This work delineated a Christian's progress, privileges and duties in spiritual hymns and songs. It was republished by subscription in 1753 and again in 1758. The book's concentration on the importance of Scripture, offering explanations of the text and references back to the Scriptures, again highlights the importance of reading and the centrality of individual engagement with Scripture for Calvinists.

In 1765 John Willison's *Fair and Impartial Testimony* (1744) was republished. In this book Willison took issue with the defections by Seceders from the Established Church as well as with what he interpreted as the Church's adoption of Roman Catholic liturgical practices.⁵⁵⁴ This work remonstrated with those causing divisions within the church, and took issue with the defections from it. Willison was a proponent of evangelicalism and he admired the Seceders for their opposition to patronage.⁵⁵⁵ In this text Willison argued for reformation within the Church in order to stop such defections, but also to resist the Moderate agenda, making it a significant book for those struggling with the issue of patronage. Willison also specifically invoked the testimony of Covenanting

⁵⁵¹ William Geddes, *The saint's recreation upon the estate of grace* (Glasgow, 1753).

⁵⁵² The Test Act (1681) Required every office holder to swear that he admitted to the Protestant religion as set forth in the Confession of 1567 and acknowledged the supremacy of the king in all causes. James Hastings and John A. Selbie (eds), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 12 Vols (New York, Edinburgh, 1908-1926) Vol. 7, p.215.

⁵⁵³ Stuart Handley, 'William Geddes', *ODNB*.

⁵⁵⁴ Willison, *Fair and Impartial Testimony*.

⁵⁵⁵ Michael Jenkins, 'John Willison', *ODNB*.

ministers such as Rutherford, Wedderburn, Guthrie, Moncrieff and Lundie to add weight to his argument.⁵⁵⁶

In 1789 *The Whole Works of the Reverend Robert Millar* was published in eight volumes.⁵⁵⁷ Millar (1672-1752) was a Church of Scotland minister and historian, whose writing aimed to stimulate thankfulness to God for delivering Christians from ‘miserable Darkness and Idolatry’, tracing the history of the propagation of Christianity and inciting Christians with missionary ‘Fervour and Zeal’. His work, like Halyburton’s, was a defence of Christianity directed against English Deists.⁵⁵⁸

In 1790 John Dun, a Church of Scotland minister, had his *Sermons* published in two volumes.⁵⁵⁹ This work was a combination of political, religious, and literary writing published by subscription with the assistance of James Boswell, to whom he had been a tutor. Dun was a Whig in secular and ecclesiastical politics. He was a theological moderate, but, like Willison, he sided with the Popular Party on the issue of patronage and his speech in the General Assembly of 1784 was published as a pamphlet, *The Law of Patronage in Scotland an Unjust Law*.⁵⁶⁰

This group of works had a total of 3,375 subscribers, of which 46 (1.36%) were ‘elite’, 445 (13.18%) were ‘middling and professionals’, 829 (24.56%) were of unknown occupation and, as with the ‘Covenanting’ group, the largest category of subscribers was ‘artisans, servants and lower orders’, with a total of 2,055 (60.9%). A breakdown of the social status of subscribers by individual book is provided in figure 4 and table 5. There were 120 (3.6%) female subscribers,

⁵⁵⁶ Willison, *Fair and Impartial Testimony*, p.viii.

⁵⁵⁷ Robert Millar, *The Whole Works of the Reverend Robert Millar*, 8 Vols (Paisley, 1789).

⁵⁵⁸ Richard B. Sher, ‘Robert Millar’, *ODNB*.

⁵⁵⁹ Dun, *Sermons*.

⁵⁶⁰ Sher, ‘John Dun’, *ODNB*.

although only eight have a stated occupation: one vintner; one weaver; one harston; one merchant; one residenter; one servant; one teacher; and seven aristocrats. There were 787 (23.3%) weavers, with the remaining ‘artisan’ occupations providing 1,268 (37.6%) subscribers, emphasising again the much wider spread of occupational groups, beyond weavers, that were involved in book buying and reading.

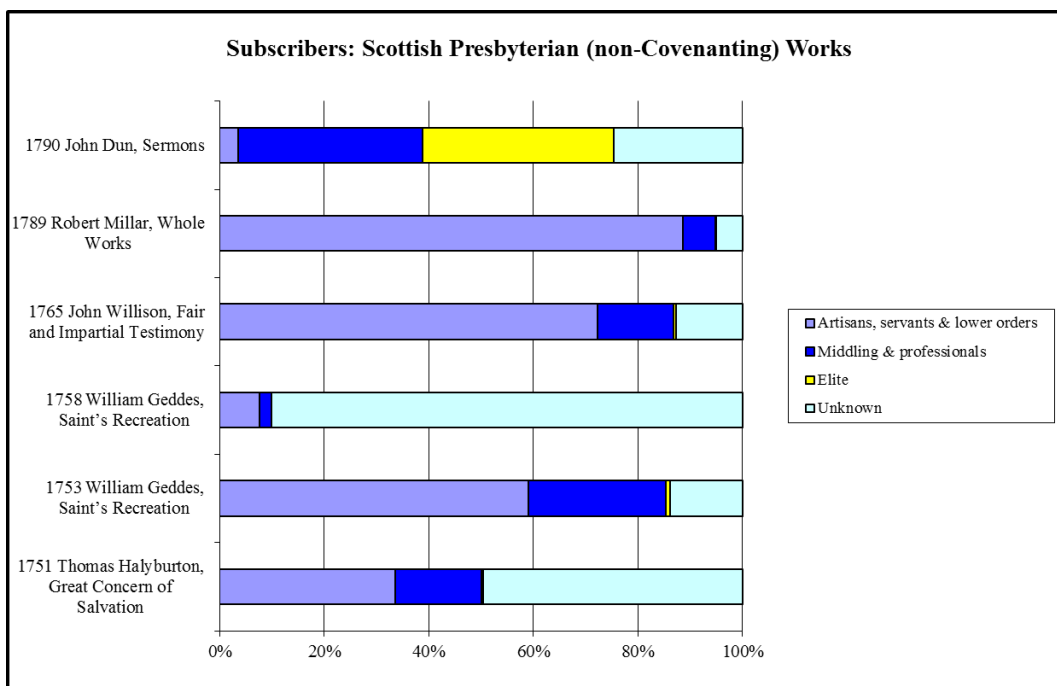


Figure 4.

Scottish Presbytn. Works	Total subscribers	Artisans, servants & lower orders	Middling & professionals	Elite	Unknown
1790 Dun	85	3	27	34	21
1789 Millar	1295	1147	80	3	65
1765 Willison	426	308	62	2	54
1758 Geddes	223	17	5	0	201
1753 Geddes	503	297	132	4	70
1751 Halyburton	843	283	139	3	418
Totals	3375	2055	445	46	829

Table 5.

As with the subscribers in the ‘Covenanting’ category, where the location is known, the majority were from five counties: Ayrshire, Dumfriesshire, Lanarkshire, (including 876 from Glasgow alone), Renfrewshire and Stirlingshire. In areas such as Banffshire, Caithness, Inverness-shire, Morayshire, Nairnshire, Orkney or Shetland there were no subscribers (see figure 5). This again is suggestive of the Highland/Lowland divide relating to literacy and the impact of Presbyterianism.

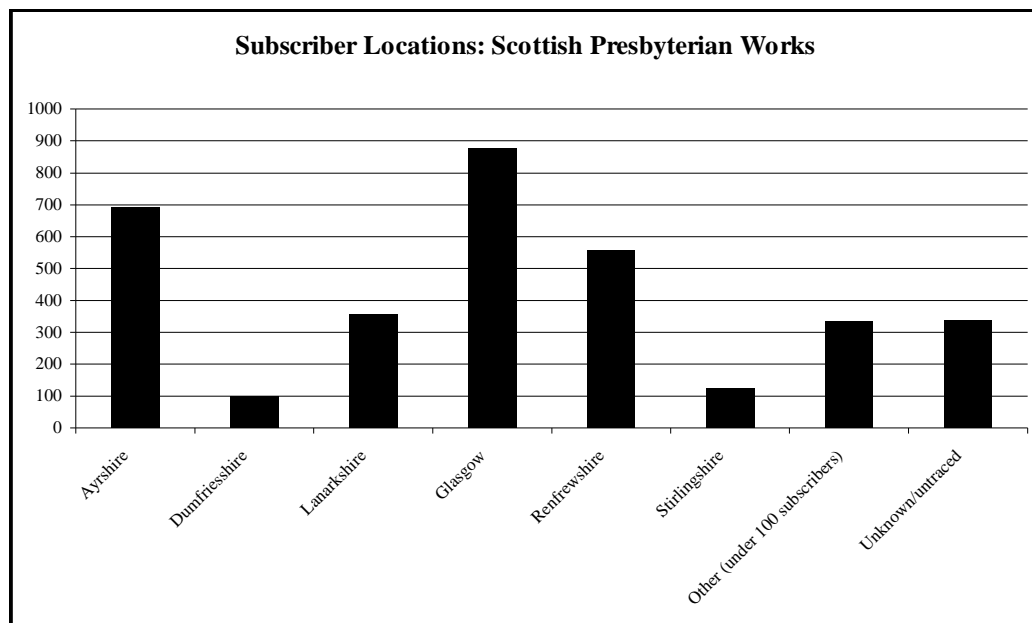


Figure 5.

3. Secession

Within this category seven subscriber lists have been found for works by Secession ministers. Ebenezer Erskine was one of the founders of the Associate Presbytery in 1733. Having previously taken an active part in the *Marrow* controversy, he had also expressed strong opposition to the Patronage Act of

1712.⁵⁶¹ He regularly encouraged his congregation to take notes on his sermons, the earliest of which were published during the controversy of the 1730s, to allow the public to judge the justice of the charges made against him by the Church courts.⁵⁶² Erskine's *Collection of Sermons*, was published by subscription in 1755, and his *Whole Works*, in 1791.⁵⁶³ These sermons, mostly preached at sacramental occasions, were about sin and salvation and he used Bible stories to illustrate his points.

Ralph Erskine's *Sermons and Other Practical Works* were published by subscription in two volumes in 1764-65 and again in ten volumes in 1777.⁵⁶⁴ Ralph Erskine was also a minister of the Secession who had refused to take the Oath of Abjuration (1712) because he believed it obligated an endorsement of the Anglican Church. He too had been involved in the *Marrow* controversy and he had joined the Associate Presbytery in 1737, which led to his deposition in 1740, at which time most of his elders and congregation also seceded from the Church of Scotland.⁵⁶⁵

John Jamieson's, *Sermons on the Heart* was published in two volumes by subscription in 1789. Jamieson (1759-1838) was an Anti-burgher minister at Forfar and Glasgow, and he was also involved in the anti-slavery campaign, publishing a pamphlet on that subject. His aim was to make his sermons as easily accessible as possible to the reader and almost all of the sermons had been delivered in the course of his ordinary preaching.

⁵⁶¹ See chapter two.

⁵⁶² David C. Lachman, 'Ebenezer Erskine', *ODNB*.

⁵⁶³ Ebenezer Erskine, *A Collection of Sermons, mostly preached at sacramental occasions*, 2 Vols (Edinburgh, 1755).

⁵⁶⁴ Ralph Erskine, *The sermons, and other practical works, of the late Reverend and learned Mr. Ralph Erskine* (Glasgow, 1764-65, 1777).

⁵⁶⁵ David C. Lachman, 'Ralph Erskine', *ODNB*.

Two works by ministers of the Relief Church were published in the 1780s. The Relief was popular across a wider social spectrum than the Secession because it was considered to be more respectable, attracting textile workers, businessmen and tradesmen.⁵⁶⁶ It also endorsed a more liberal theology and unlike the Secession did not require a binding obligation to the Covenants.⁵⁶⁷ Its ministers preached the liberality of the grace of God, and expressed Enlightenment concepts of toleration and freedom.⁵⁶⁸ None the less, John Muirhead (d.1797), minister of the Relief Church at Kelso, published his *Dissertations on the Foederal Transactions Between God and His Church*, in 1782, which was a stout defence of covenanted testimony ending with a dissertation on the renovation of the Covenants in Muirhead's time.⁵⁶⁹ Federal or covenant theology uses the concept of the covenant as an organizing principle for Christian theology, structured around three covenants, one of works, one of redemption and one of grace. In his preface to the work Muirhead was very clear that he wanted it to be as accessible to people as possible: 'it was deemed proper to prefer order and perspicuity to elegance; as divisions of discourses render them more memorable and plain to some sorts of readers'.⁵⁷⁰ He concluded the volume by expressing his support for the Associate Presbytery and ministers like Ebenezer Erskine, in their continuing 'reverence' for the covenants, and he took issue with preachers such as George Whitefield because he abjured the Solemn League and Covenant and had 'discarded the plan of a Covenanted Reformation'.⁵⁷¹ In a later pamphlet Muirhead

⁵⁶⁶ Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707*, pp.24-25.

⁵⁶⁷ Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History*, p.702.

⁵⁶⁸ Kenneth B. E. Roxburgh, 'Thomas Boston', *ODNB*.

⁵⁶⁹ John Muirhead, *Dissertations on the foederal transactions between God and his church, both before and since the canon of scripture was completed* (Kelso, 1782). Such works have not been included in the 'Covenanting' category because the books have been divided according to the background of the author. Muirhead was a minister of the Relief Church.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.v.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp.664-669.

also took issue with John Young, the Anti-burgher minister at Hawick, over Young's attacks on Seceders' involvement with the politically radical Friends of the People and opposition to government.⁵⁷²

In 1787 Michael Boston's *Discourses* was published.⁵⁷³ Boston had been a minister at Falkirk and Alnwick, and was the son of Thomas Boston, one of the founders of the Relief Church. His grandfather, Thomas Boston, had become a national figure through his involvement in the *Marrow* controversy. Michael Boston believed that 'Religion (was) founded ... In the very nature and reason of things ... and in the relation which man bears with God'. He also believed in freedom of conscience, that 'every man has an unalienable right to judge for himself in matters of religion. One man has no right to dictate to another'.⁵⁷⁴ He was described as 'an Enthusiast for ... RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL LIBERTY'.⁵⁷⁵

The works in this category were published between 1755 and 1791, with a total of 5,079 subscribers. There were 1,260 (24.8%) subscribers from the 'middling and professionals', 116 (2.3%) 'elite' and 1,780 (35%) had no occupation listed. However, the largest group was 'artisans, servants and lower orders', with a total of 1,923 (37.9%) subscribers. A breakdown of the social status of subscribers by individual book is provided in figure 6 and table 6. There were large numbers of merchants (360), ministers (282) and farmers (272) in this category, which had a noticeably higher proportion of 'middling order' subscribers than either the 'Covenanting' or 'Scottish Presbyterian' categories.

⁵⁷² John Muirhead, *Observations on Dr. Young's Essays on government* (Edinburgh, [1795]).

⁵⁷³ Michael Boston, *Discourses on important subjects of the Gospel* (Edinburgh, 1787).

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.244.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.xxxv.

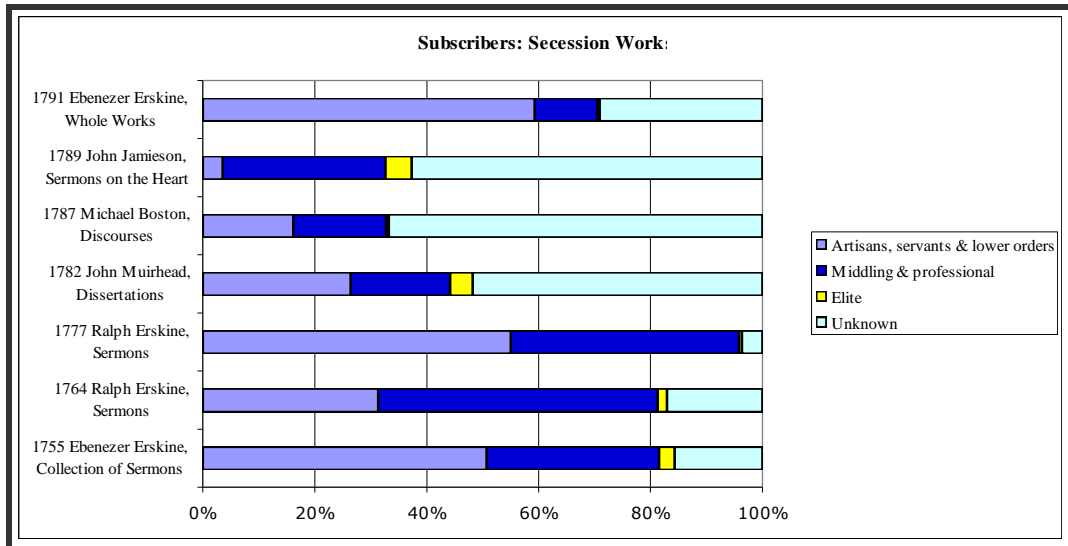


Figure 6.

Secession Works	Total subscribers	Artisans, servants & lower orders	Middling & professionals	Elite	Unknown
1791 Erskine	1554	921	175	6	452
1789 Jamieson	1134	40	330	53	711
1787 Boston	229	37	38	1	153
1782 Muirhead	394	104	70	16	204
1777 Erskine	191	105	78	1	7
1764 Erskine	428	134	214	7	73
1755 Erskine	1149	582	355	32	180
Totals	5079	1923	1260	116	1780

Table 6.

This may have been due to the belief that the Relief Church was more respectable, which may have influenced some from the middling orders, although most of the works in this category were by ministers of the Secession, only Muirhead and Boston were Relief ministers. Yet again the largest single occupational group was weavers, with 618 (12.16%) subscribers, while the combined total for all other ‘artisan’ occupations, apart from weaving, was 1,305 (25.7%). This once more emphasises the diversity of readers’ occupations beyond weaving. Included in

these numbers were 247 (4.86%) female subscribers, but only 37 gave occupations: nine aristocrats; nine merchants; six servants; five indwellers; one baker; one confectioner; one dyer; one grocer; one residenter; one schoolmistress; one tenant and one weaver. The rest were unknown.

According to Callum Brown, the Secession in the 1730s had been strongest initially in Fife, Stirlingshire and Perthshire, including a significant influx of old Covenanting societies in the central and south-western counties. Between the 1750s and 1780s adherents came mainly from existing Covenanting societies and while the Secession had a strong presence in towns, from the 1760s to the 1780s its largest area of growth was in rural Lowland parishes.⁵⁷⁶ The 4,411 subscribers whose location is known certainly follow a similar pattern to the one suggested by Brown, with the largest number of subscribers in Stirlingshire, Perthshire, Fife, and Lanarkshire (including Glasgow), followed by the Lothians (including Edinburgh) (see figure 7). For these works there were also 431 subscribers from England. There were no subscribers from Banffshire, Caithness, Nairnshire, Orkney, Shetland, Sutherland, or Wigtownshire.

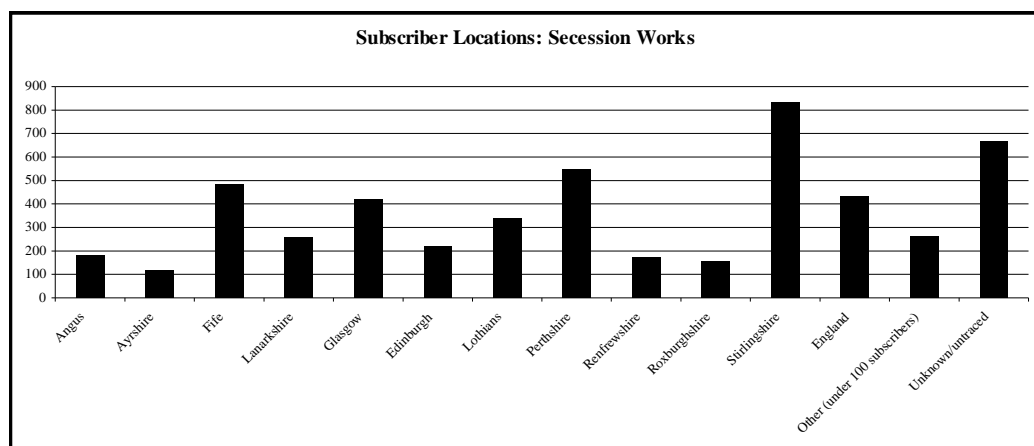


Figure 7.

⁵⁷⁶ Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707*, p.23; Brown, *Social History of Religion in Scotland Since 1730*, pp.34-35.

4. Dissenting English Clergy

This category had eleven works published by subscription, in various editions, between 1751 and 1792. The earliest of these works was by Thomas Gouge (1605-81), an ejected puritan minister, who endorsed Presbyterian polity and the Solemn League and Covenant.⁵⁷⁷ Gouge's *Works* was published by subscription in 1751. This was a collection of his most important works including *A Word to Sinners, and a Word to Saints* (1668); *The Christian Householder* (1663); *The Young Man's Guide* (1669); *The Principles of Christian Religion* (1672); and *The Surest and Safest Way of Thriving* (1674). He wished his work to be available to all, exhorting his readers 'That you would not lock it up in your closets suffer it to ly in your houses, where your children and servants may peruse it as they find opportunity'.⁵⁷⁸

John Owen (1616-83), was a leading English puritan theologian and Independent minister, who had adopted Presbyterian views. Two books by Owen were published by subscription in 1756 and 1757. The first, *Phronema Tou Pneumatou or, the Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually-minded* (1681), was concerned with nonconformist spiritual experience. The second, *Christologia or, A Declaration of the Glorious Mystery of the Person of Christ, God and Man* (1677), was a treatise on the person of Christ, including the union of the divine and human in one person.⁵⁷⁹ Owen had been an adviser to Cromwell and the expression of his most radical views emerged in his sermon preached to the Commons on the day after the execution of Charles I. He believed that God always had instruments to destroy his enemies and deliver his church from

⁵⁷⁷ Richard L. Greaves, 'Thomas Gouge', *ODNB*.

⁵⁷⁸ Thomas Gouge, *The works of the late Reverend and pious Mr. Thomas Gouge* (Glasgow, 1751), p.xii.

⁵⁷⁹ John Owen, *Phronema tou pneumatou* (Glasgow, 1757).

oppression and thus viewed the execution as an example of this judgment.⁵⁸⁰ Owen's writing was well known in Scotland and 33 works in various editions were published there between 1737 and 1799, although only the two mentioned above are known to have been published by subscription. His work was popular at least in part because of he extolled the virtue of Presbyterian Church government, having declared that 'He could readily join with Presbytery as it was exercised in Scotland'.⁵⁸¹

Isaac Ambrose (bap.1604-64), was a Church of England clergyman and ejected minister, who was unwaveringly Calvinist and had played a prominent part in the establishment of Presbyterianism in Lancashire in the 1640s.⁵⁸² His books were also popular, and there were 53 editions of various works by him published during the eighteenth century, of which 26 were published in Scotland. His *Compleat Works* was published by subscription in 1759 and again in 1768, and was concerned with the doctrine of regeneration, a godly life, redemption and salvation.⁵⁸³

Thomas Watson (d.1686), was another ejected English puritan minister who was prosecuted for holding conventicles. His *Body of Practical Divinity* (1692), was republished five times during the eighteenth century in 1734, 1741, 1759, 1782 and 1795. Only the 1734 edition was not published by subscription. This was a huge volume of sermons on the shorter catechism of the Westminster

⁵⁸⁰ Richard L. Greaves, 'John Owen', *ODNB*.

⁵⁸¹ Owen, *Phronema tou pneumatos*, p.456.

⁵⁸² Roger Pooley, 'Isaac Ambrose', *ODNB*.

⁵⁸³ Isaac Ambrose, *The compleat works of that eminent minister of God's word Mr. Isaac Ambrose, consisting of these following treatises, viz. Prima, media, et ultima* (Dundee, 1759), (Glasgow, 1768).

assembly. Watson addressed the questions of those who doubted their salvation and feared for the strength of their faith.⁵⁸⁴

John Collinges' *Weavers Pocket-book* (1675), was republished by subscription in 1723 and again in 1766. Collinges (1623/4-91) was an English Presbyterian theologian, ejected minister, and writer who was well known for his 'ill-affections to the Crown' and for nonconformity and preaching in conventicles'.⁵⁸⁵ His book was intended for the weavers of Norwich, and in it he discoursed on the spiritual meaning to be found in everyday activities. Included in his observations were his comments on the weavers' need to judge, compare, and examine, and he was adamant that individuals should inquire for themselves rather than accepting what was 'told' to them by others.

Judgment is that which makes a Man *excel* ... there are some Christians, who either have not or will not use their Powers in *searching out Truth, comparing spiritual Things with spiritual*, but take it to be enough for them, *To believe as the Church believeth*, and to do what the Church bids them do; having no Regard to the Apostle commanding them, *To prove all Things, and hold fast that which is Good* ... But now there are others who ... are inquisitive after Truth, and will Examine all their Principles and Practices ... these alone [know that] ... The Promise of Improvement in the Knowledge and Fear of the Lord, is not made to dull Souls, that believe all that is told them, and imposed by confident Persons upon them; but to him that *Examines, seeks, proves, etc.*⁵⁸⁶

Collinges' work once again reiterates the emphasis of many of these subscribed works by stressing the importance of the individual's judgement and enquiry after truth, and not simply believing what they had been told or were expected to believe. It is his emphasis on the individual's engagement with God through Scripture, which embraced part of the spirit of Calvinism. The 1766 edition had 595 subscribers, of whom 568 were weavers.

⁵⁸⁴ Barry Till, 'Thomas Watson', *ODNB*.

⁵⁸⁵ Stephen Wright, 'John Collinges', *ODNB*. Ejected ministers were those who were ejected from or resigned their livings as a consequence of the Act of Uniformity 1662, when adherence to this was required in order to hold any office in government or the church. Act of Uniformity 1662, National Archives, <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/aep/Cha2/14/4/contents>>. [Accessed 22/02/2012].

⁵⁸⁶ John Collinges, *The weavers pocket-book* (Edinburgh, 1723), pp.128-131. Italics in the original.

A volume of lectures by English ministers *An Antidote Against Popery* (1687) was re-published by subscription in 1779.⁵⁸⁷ Another pamphlet collection, *A Defence of Some Important Doctrines of the Gospel Which Were Preached at Lime-Street* (1732), was re-published by subscription in 1791.⁵⁸⁸ This was a volume containing the weekly lectures that had been given between November 1730 and April 1731 in defence of Calvinism by several dissenting English Calvinist preachers. All of the contributors were staunch defenders of Calvinist orthodoxy.⁵⁸⁹ The last work in this category was Samuel Hayward's *Seventeen Sermons on various important subjects* (1758). Hayward (1718-57), was a dissenting minister and his sermons were on subjects including original sin, the trinity, justification by Christ's righteousness and the nature and use of faith. His sermons were aimed at encouraging young people towards a godly life.⁵⁹⁰

As with the 'Covenanting' works and those by Scottish Presbyterians, these English dissenters shared a hard-line orthodox Calvinist faith, and again people may well have used these works to sustain and reinforce their beliefs. In addition, such works, highlighting as they did the divisions of a previous era, may have helped their readers to draw parallels between such struggles and the wider contemporary concerns and challenges of eighteenth-century life. Drawing on these texts, some ordinary people may have found support from them as the world

⁵⁸⁷ *An antidote against popery: or, The principal errors of the Church of Rome detected and confuted*, 2 Vols (Edinburgh, 1779).

⁵⁸⁸ *A defence of some important doctrines of the gospel, which were preached at Lime-Street lecture* (Glasgow, 1791).

⁵⁸⁹ The contributors were: Robert Bragge (1665-1738), *Holy Spirit's standard lifted up and Sinner's justification before God*; Abraham Taylor (fl.1727-1740), *Insufficiency of natural religion, Doctrine of man's salvation and Decay of practical religion*; John Sladen (1687?-1733), *Doctrine of particular election*; Peter Goodwin (c.1684-1747), *Doctrine of original sin*; John Hurrion (1675/6-1731), *Doctrine of particular redemption*; Thomas Bradbury (1677-1759), *Doctrine of Christ's sufferings*; Samuel Wilson (1702-1750); *Doctrine of efficacious grace*; Thomas Hall (1687-1762), *Doctrine of perseverance in grace*; and John Gill (1697-1771), *Doctrine of the resurrection*.

⁵⁹⁰ Samuel Hayward, *Seventeen Sermons on various important subjects* (Ayr, 1792).

of work became more regulated and restrictive, and as local religious and political struggles increasingly impinged upon them.

Of the 8,792 subscribers, 5,705 (65%) were ‘artisans, servants and lower orders’, 1,199 (13.6%) were ‘middling and professionals’, 31 (0.4%) were ‘elite’ and, 1,857 (21%) were of unknown occupation. A breakdown of the social status of subscribers by individual book is provided in figure 8 and table 7. Once again, the vast majority of subscribers were male, but 302 (3.4%) women also purchased copies: one baker; one cotton spinner; one milliner; one portioner; one shewster; one tenant; two aristocrats; two bleachers; two farmers; two merchants; two pin sellers; four indwellers; four inn-keepers; four shopkeepers; five weavers; and eight servants; but for the remaining 261 no occupation was given. For male subscribers, weavers were again the largest occupational group, at 2,667 (30.33%) of the total, although this figure was boosted by the inclusion of John Collinges’ book addressed specifically to weavers. Without this work the percentage of weavers drops to 23.19%. However, the combined total for all artisan groups, excluding weavers, was 3,038 (34.55%), which was a fairly similar proportion to subscribers in the ‘Covenanting’ category. Farmers were the second largest occupational group at 478 (5.43%).

As with the previous categories, where the location is known, almost 67% were from just four counties: Ayrshire, Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and Stirlingshire, and again Glasgow had the largest number of subscribers for these works (see figure 9). There were no subscribers from Banffshire, Caithness, Nairnshire, Orkney, Shetland or Sutherland, and despite Presbyterians living in these counties there is no evidence from the subscription lists that they were

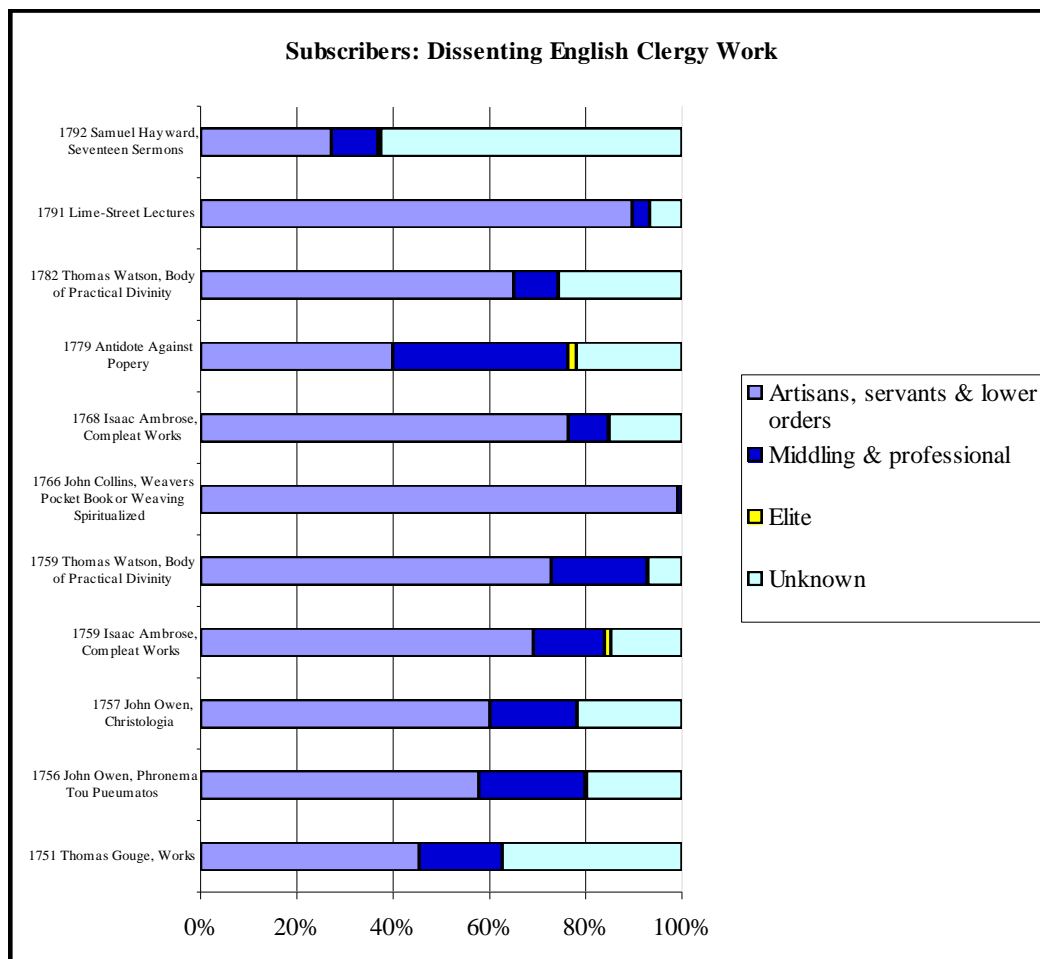


Figure 8.

Dissenting English Clergy Works	Total subscribers	Artisans, servants & lower orders	Middling & professionals	Elite	Unknown
1792 Hayward	906	246	87	6	567
1791 Lime street	1073	962	39	0	72
1782 Watson	711	462	66	1	182
1779 Antidote	173	69	63	3	38
1768 Ambrose	516	394	43	1	78
1766 Collins	595	590	5	0	0
1759 Watson	607	442	121	1	43
1759 Ambrose	959	663	142	12	142
1757 Owen	1732	1040	313	2	377
1756 Owen	1194	689	264	5	236
1751 Gouge	326	148	56	0	122
Totals	8792	5705	1199	31	1857

Table 7.

engaging with debate through purchasing polemical texts. However, this did not exclude Presbyterians in some of these areas from active involvement in debate, as the evidence from Dornoch in Sutherland in the 1750s has helped to demonstrate.⁵⁹¹ Nevertheless, these counties were significantly quiet in terms of book buying by subscription and in involvement in political activity in the last quarter of the century, and when in the early 1790s Central and Lowland Scotland was caught up in a ferment of political activity, the north-east remained largely aloof. This is also indicative of the Highland/Lowland divide relating to literacy, but it is suggestive of the potential that Presbyterianism had to draw people towards an engagement in political debate, and how without this significant element there was a failure to do so.

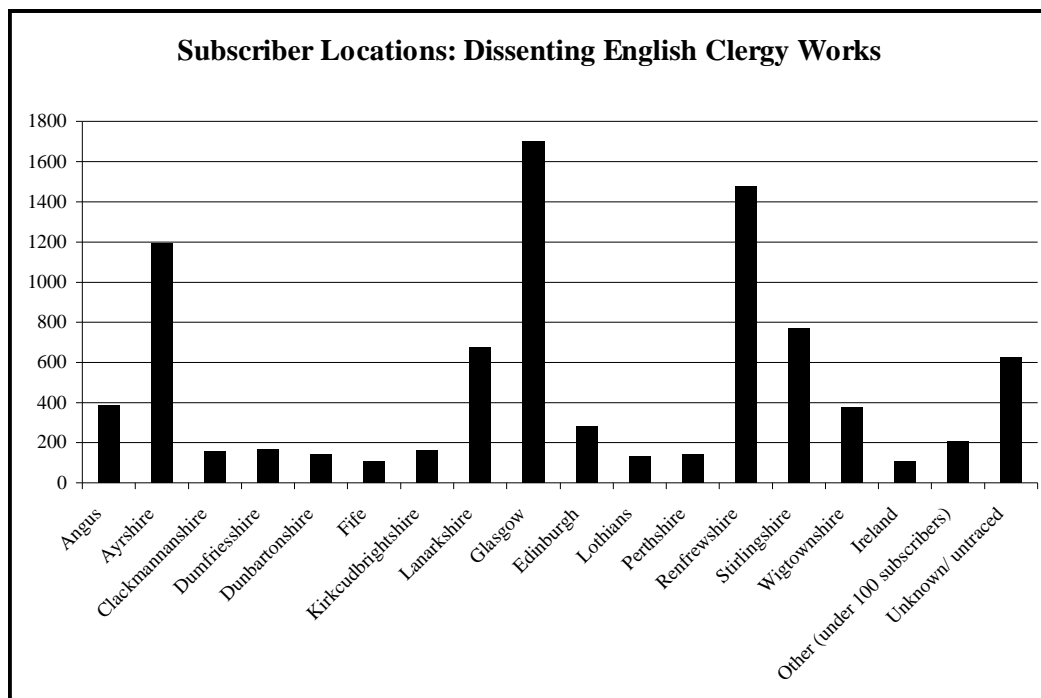


Figure 9.

⁵⁹¹ See chapter three.

5. Episcopalian

Within this category only three subscription lists have been found. One was for Robert Keith's *History of the Affairs of Church and State in Scotland*, which was published for a second time by subscription in 1748.⁵⁹² Keith (1681-1757) was a Scottish Episcopal bishop and historian.⁵⁹³ This work, which was in part significant because it was based on original research, covered the Church's history from the Reformation to the flight of Mary Queen of Scots into England, and contained an account of the struggle between the members of the Catholic Church and the Reformers. The majority of subscribers were 'elite' or 'middling and professionals'. There were just 22 in the 'artisans, servants and lower orders' category from a total of 702 subscribers. The elite included admirals, judges, Deans of the Faculty of Advocates, barons of exchequer, aristocrats, landowners, M.P.s, Senators of the College of Justice, and treasurers of the Bank of Scotland.

The second work was by Robert Calder (1658-1723), a Scottish Episcopal clergyman and writer, who had been deprived of his ministry in Berwickshire for failing to read the proclamation of William and Mary, or publicly praying for them. He had been accused of publishing pamphlets against the Established Church and the government, and for the restoration of episcopacy, and was known for his anti-Presbyterian pamphlets.⁵⁹⁴ He mainly published polemics, which expounded the superiority of the Episcopalians' claims to scriptural and historical authority for their government and worship, such as *The Lawfulness and Expediency of Set Forms of Prayer* (1705), which was republished by subscription

⁵⁹² Robert Keith, *The History of the Affairs of Church and State in Scotland, from the beginning of the Reformation in the reign of King James V. to the retreat of Queen Mary into England* (Edinburgh, 1748)

⁵⁹³ Gerald M. D. Howat, 'Robert Keith', *ODNB*.

⁵⁹⁴ Tristram Clarke, 'Robert Calder', *ODNB*.

in 1766.⁵⁹⁵ Calder's subscribers included the only individual to subscribe to any work by an Episcopalian author, from that most literate section of the artisan community, the weavers. The majority of the subscribers to this work were from the middling orders.

The last work in this group was George Carr's *Sermons*, published in 1777.⁵⁹⁶ Carr (1705-76) was a senior minister of the English Episcopal Congregation in Edinburgh. This work had the largest number of subscribers, although most of them had no stated occupation. There was only one 'artisan'. The elite, like those on the subscriber list for Keith's works included an Archdeacon, the Bishops of Durham and Winchester, the Deans of Rippon and Winchester, a judge, the Lord Advocate, aristocrats, landowners, the principals of Aberdeen and Edinburgh universities, and eight professors.

The total number of subscribers to these works was 1,323, of whom 503 (38%) were of unknown occupation; 476 (36%) were 'elite'; 284 (21.5%) were 'middling and professionals'; and only 60 (4.5%) were 'artisans, servants and lower orders'. There were also 157 (11.9%) female subscribers: 41 aristocrats, and one upholsterer. The remaining 115 had no stated occupation. The larger percentage of women in this category is probably owing to their greater financial means, which would have enabled more women in this category to purchase books. A breakdown of the social status of subscribers by individual book is contained in and figure 10 and table 8.

⁵⁹⁵ Robert Calder, *The Lawfulness and Expediency of set forms of prayer, maintained* (Leith, 1766).

⁵⁹⁶ George Carr, *Sermons By the late Reverend George Carr* (Edinburgh, 1777).

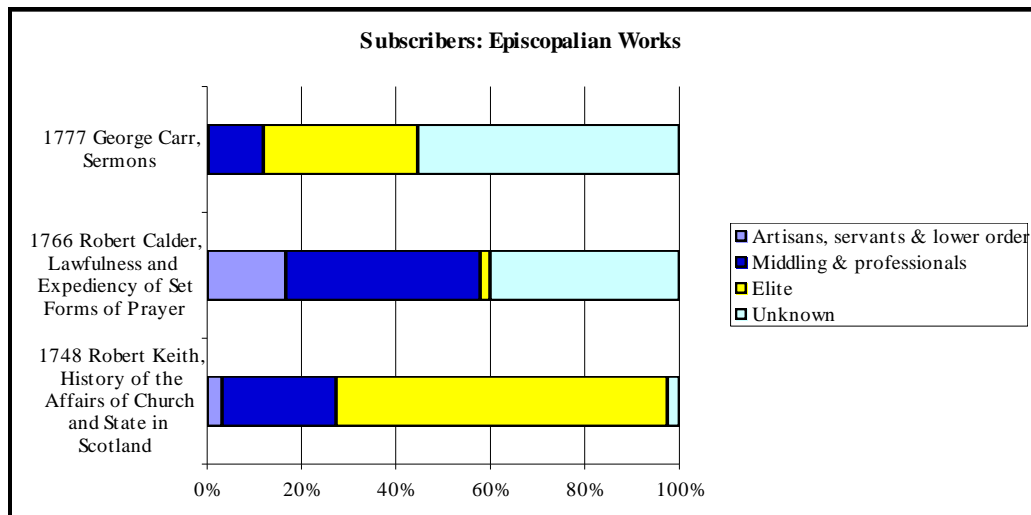


Figure 10.

Episcopalian Works	Total subscribers	Artisans, servants & lower orders	Middling & professionals	Elite	Unknown
1777 Carr	685	1	81	224	379
1766 Calder	287	48	118	6	115
1748 Keith	351	11	85	246	9
Totals	1323	60	284	476	503

Table 8.

The subscribers to these books, although a fairly limited sample, are noticeably different in the distribution of social status when compared to the other works, and this helps to highlight the deep religious and social divide between the Scottish elite and the rest of the population, both middling and lower orders. Figures 11, 12 and 13 illustrate the division clearly. It is not being suggested that only Episcopalians bought these books and only Presbyterians bought other works, but it would seem safe to assume that a majority of the works were bought by members of those religious groups, for whom the books held the greatest importance. A nineteenth-century estimate of the social status of members of the Scottish Episcopal Church maintained that 86% of the nobility were members and

as much as two-thirds of the landowning classes.⁵⁹⁷ In Scotland Episcopalianism was regarded as being on the Catholic side of the Protestant-Catholic divide, and it was associated with Jacobitism, which engendered mistrust among the wider population.⁵⁹⁸ It should also be borne in mind that many of those who held the right to appoint a minister were Episcopalian, while congregations were Presbyterian, with the result that congregations were frequently at odds with the patron. For example, in the disputed settlement at St. Ninians in Stirlingshire the heritors in favour of the settlement were Episcopalians.⁵⁹⁹

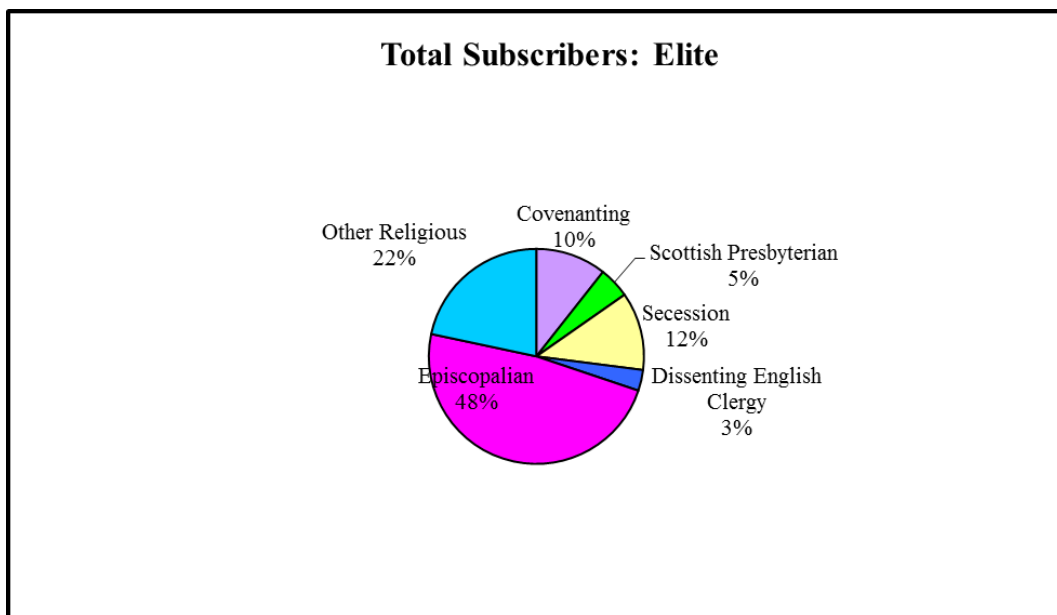


Figure 11.

⁵⁹⁷ J. P. Lawson, *History of the Scottish Episcopal Church* (Edinburgh, 1843), p.432, cited in Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707*, p.34.

⁵⁹⁸ Brown, *ibid.*, p.35.

⁵⁹⁹ *Scots Mag.*, May 1769, p.226; William Mackelvie, *Annals and statistics of the United Presbyterian Church* (Edinburgh, 1873), p.644; John Struthers, *The History of Scotland from the Union to the Abolition of the Heritable Jurisdictions*, 2 Vols (Glasgow, 1828), Vol. 2, p.609. See also Brown, *Social History of Religion in Scotland Since 1730*, p.51.

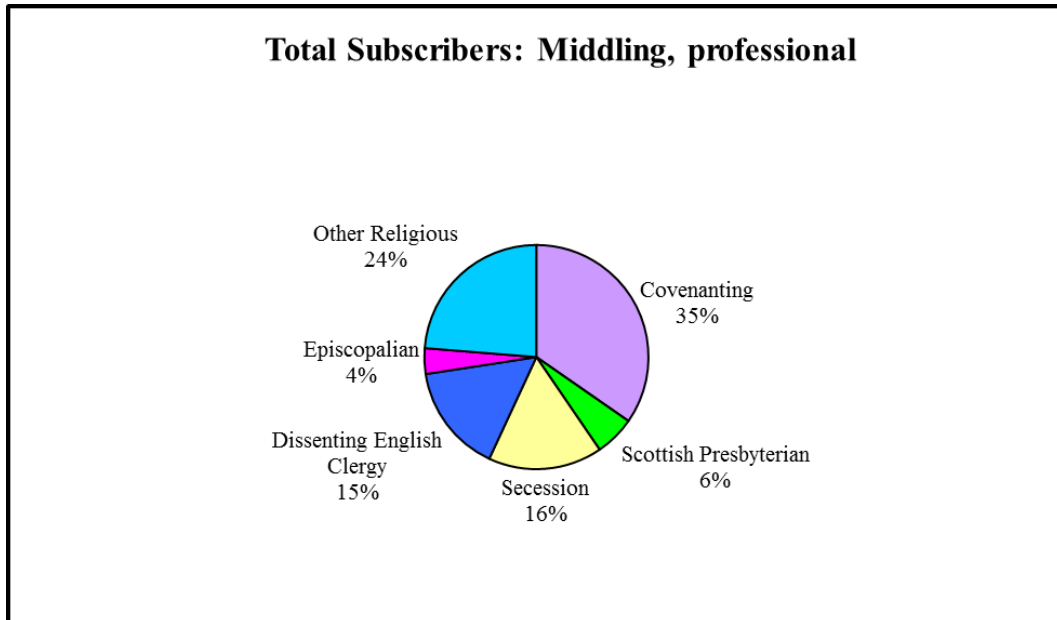


Figure 12.

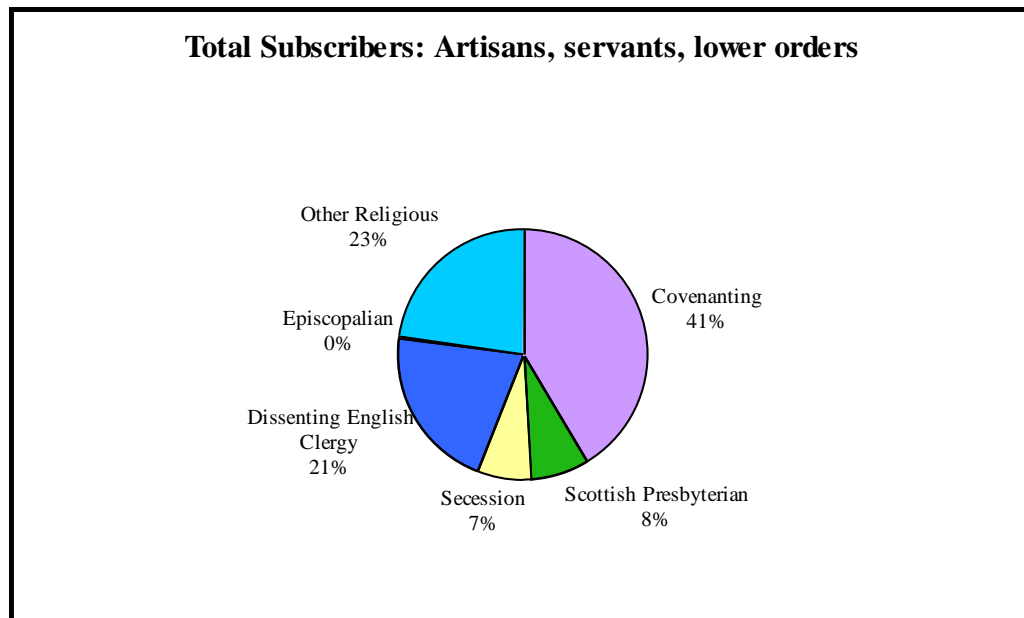


Figure 13.

Locations are known for 911 subscribers and again in contrast to all of the other categories the areas with the largest numbers were: Edinburgh (245); England (213); and Aberdeenshire (109). There were only six subscribers from Glasgow (see figure 11).

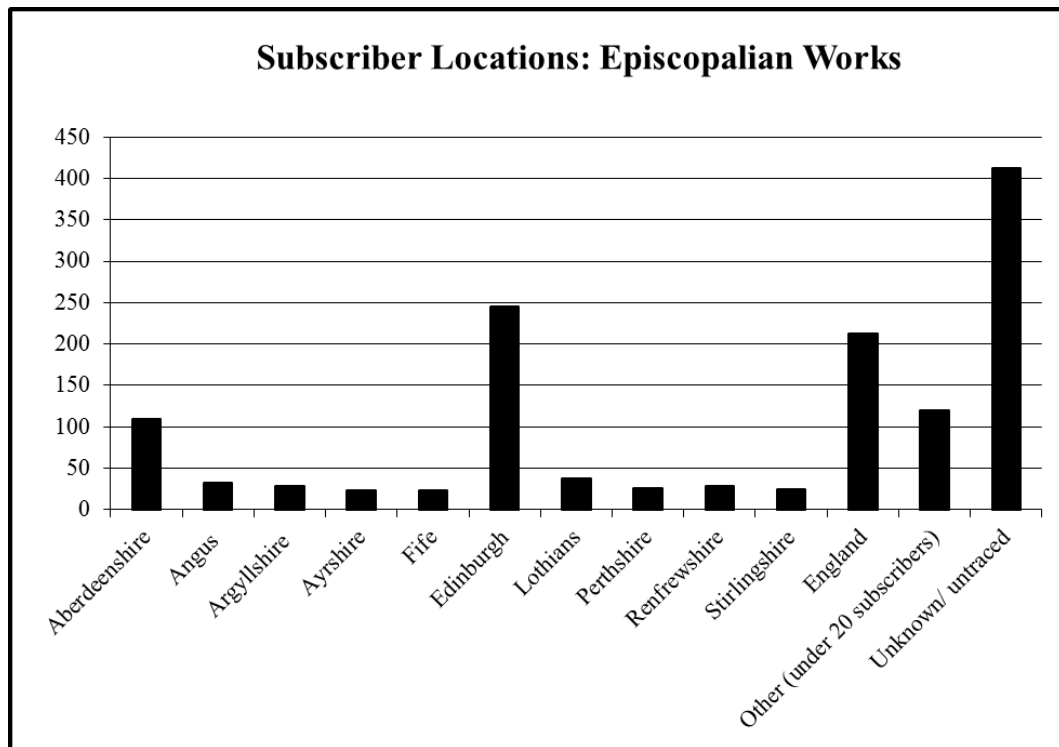


Figure 14.

6. Other Religious Works

A variety of religious works, which do not fall into any of the previous categories were also published by subscription. In 1750-51 an edition of the works of a first-century Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus (AD37-c.100) was published.⁶⁰⁰ This offered a record of some of the earliest history of Christ outside of the gospels. There were also works by three major figures of the Reformation: Jean Calvin, Martin Luther and John Knox. Knox's *History of the Reformation* (1587) was republished in 1761, and provided a narrative justifying the Protestant cause.⁶⁰¹ Jean Calvin's *Institution of the Christian Religion* (1536) was republished in 1762, and was a defence of his faith and an attack on the teachings

⁶⁰⁰ Flavius Josephus, *The works of Flavius Josephus* (Edinburgh, 1750-51).

⁶⁰¹ John Knox, *The History of the Reformation of Religion within the realm of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1761).

of those he considered unorthodox, particularly Roman Catholics.⁶⁰² Calvin's teaching was, of course, central to Scottish Presbyterianism.⁶⁰³ These works were republished at a time when the issue of patronage had brought heightened concerns about the growing number of defections from the Church, and also when some within the Popular party had become more open to participation in civil political concerns. This re-engagement with the works of the founding fathers of Protestantism may have signified a growing need by individuals for support to sustain their beliefs at a time of intensifying opposition to patronage.

Also published in the 1760s was John Foxe's *History of the Ten Persecutions in the Primitive Church*, (1761), which was a small selection from *Acts and Monuments*, better known as Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1563).⁶⁰⁴ This work recounted the persecutions of early Christians by pagans and, later, of non-Catholic Christians by Catholic Christians.

The Church of Scotland's *Confessions of Faith* (1761), originally published in 1725, was about authority within the church, its government, discipline and doctrine.⁶⁰⁵ It included a lengthy history of the 1638 Assemblies and the swearing of the Solemn League and Covenant. In 1763 the *Form of Process in the Judicatories of the Church of Scotland* was published, and this also related to matters of church government and discipline.⁶⁰⁶ Thomas Stackhouse's *New History of the Holy Bible from the Beginning of the World to the Establishment of*

⁶⁰² Calvin, *Institution of the Christian religion* (Glasgow, 1762).

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.340.

⁶⁰⁴ John Foxe, *The History of the Ten Persecutions in the Primitive Church* (Edinburgh, 1761).

⁶⁰⁵ Church of Scotland, *Confessions of Faith, Catechisms, directories, form of church-government, discipline* (Glasgow, 1761).

⁶⁰⁶ Church of Scotland, *The form of process in the judicatories of the Church of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1763).

Christianity (1733) was published by subscription in 1765.⁶⁰⁷ Stackhouse (1681/2-1752) was a religious writer and controversialist.⁶⁰⁸

In 1767 William Gurnall's *Christian in Compleat Armour* (1655-62) was re-published.⁶⁰⁹ Gurnall (bap.1616-79) was a Church of England clergyman, who, at the Restoration, signed the declaration required by the Act of Uniformity (1662). He came under attack because of this in a pamphlet entitled, *Covenant-Renouncers, Desperate Apostates* (1665).⁶¹⁰ Although a puritan in doctrine, he adhered to the Church of England and for this reason Gurnall has been included in this category. Gurnall's work consists of sermons or lectures delivered during his ministry. In 1772 *He Probole Tes Aletheias: or, the Bulwark of Truth* (1657), by the seventeenth-century physician, Robert Bayfield (bap.1629), was republished by subscription. Little is known about him apart from his occupation and publications.⁶¹¹

In the 1780s five further works were published by subscription, *The Chrsitian [sic] Oeconomy* (1780), concerning divine grace and redemption, and a *Select Number of Spiritual Hymns* (1781) by David Mitchell, which were texts taken from the Old and New Testaments with the meaning at the beginning of each hymn and which had the intention of showing what the Christian was 'by Nature, and what by Grace'.⁶¹² Martin Luther's *Commentary upon the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians* (1539) was republished in 1786, for those who

⁶⁰⁷ Thomas Stackhouse, *New History of the Holy Bible from the Beginning of the World to the Establishment of Christianity* (Kilmarnock, 1765).

⁶⁰⁸ Scott Mandelbrote 'Thomas Stackhouse' *ODNB*.

⁶⁰⁹ William Gurnall, *The Christian in compleat armour* (Glasgow, 1767). This was originally published in three volumes in 1655, 1658 and 1662.

⁶¹⁰ J. M. Blatchly, 'William Gurnall' *ODNB*.

⁶¹¹ Robert Bayfield, *He Probole Tes Aletheias: or, the Bulwark of Truth* (Glasgow, 1772); Michael Bevan, 'Robert Bayfield', *ODNB*.

⁶¹² *The Chrsitian [sic] oeconomy* (Perth, 1780). David Mitchell, *A select number of spiritual hymns, taken from the most strong, plain, and suitable texts in the Old and New Testament* (Glasgow, 1781).

were ‘grieved in Conscience’.⁶¹³ In 1786 the *Dove’s Flight to a Thicket* by George Frazer, was published by subscription.⁶¹⁴ Frazer was a failed farmer who penned a number of poems on Scripture in the hope that it would be ‘better attended to’ by the young.⁶¹⁵ Finally John Butterworth’s *Concordance and Dictionary* was published in 1789.⁶¹⁶

From the 1760s the patronage dispute became increasingly bitter and there was therefore a likelihood that interest in works which related to church government and discipline might be stimulated. In addition, the Relief Church was founded in 1761 with growing numbers seceding from the Church of Scotland. The subscription to works by eminent church figures suggests that people may have been going back to the foundation of their faith, to the principal figures of the Reformation, and looking for support to sustain their right of individual conscience and their opposition to patronage.

The works in this group had a total of 10,088 subscribers. 6,124 (61%) were ‘artisans, servants and lower orders’, 1,818 (18%) were ‘middling and professionals’, 213 (2%) were ‘elite’ and 1,933 (19%) were of unknown occupation. 2,784 (28%) were weavers, while 3,340 (33%) were ‘artisans’ in other occupations. A breakdown of the social status of subscribers by individual book is provided in figure 15 and table 9. There were 218 (2%) female subscribers: one bookseller; one chambermaid; one cook-maid; one housekeeper; one inn-keeper; one portioner; one vintner; two dairy maids; two merchants; two

⁶¹³ Martin Luther, *A commentary upon the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians* (Paisley, 1786).

⁶¹⁴ George Frazer, *The Dove's Flight to a Thicket for her life; An emblem of sinners sheltering themselves under the wings of Christ* ([Falkirk], 1786).

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.xvii.

⁶¹⁶ John Butterworth, *A Concordance and Dictionary to the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament* (Dundee, 1789).

shopkeepers; two weavers; four indwellers; nine servants; ten aristocrats; eleven spinsters; thirty-one residenters; while the remaining 138 gave no occupation.

The locations are known for 9,023 of the subscribers in this category, and

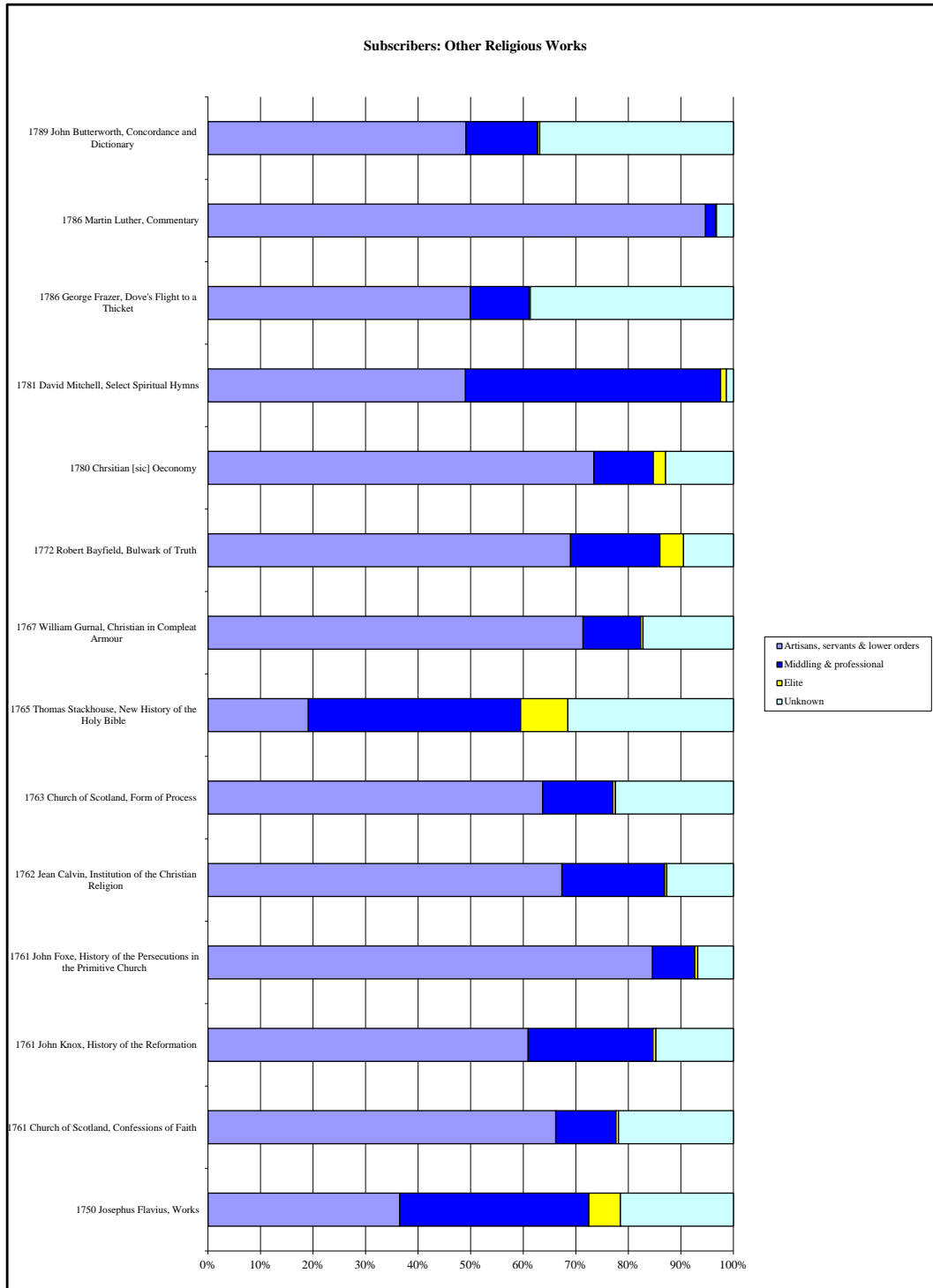


Figure 15.

they were once more predominantly from Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire, with Glasgow again having the largest number of subscribers (see figure 16). There were also 436 American subscribers.

Other Religious Works	Total subscribers	Artisans, servants & lower orders	Middling & professionals	Elite	Unknown
1789 Butterworth	768	377	105	3	283
1786 Luther	1716	1625	34	2	55
1786 Frazer	903	451	101	2	349
1781 Mitchell	451	221	219	5	6
1780 Christian	256	188	29	6	33
1772 Bayfield	202	138	34	9	21
1767 Gurnall	657	469	72	3	113
1765 Stackhouse	1623	310	656	146	511
1763 Church of Scot	797	508	106	4	179
1762 Calvin	481	324	94	2	61
1761 Foxe	708	599	57	4	48
1761 Knox	699	426	166	11	96
1761 Church of Scot	627	415	72	3	137
1750 Flavius	200	73	72	14	41
Totals	10088	6124	1817	214	1933

Table 9.

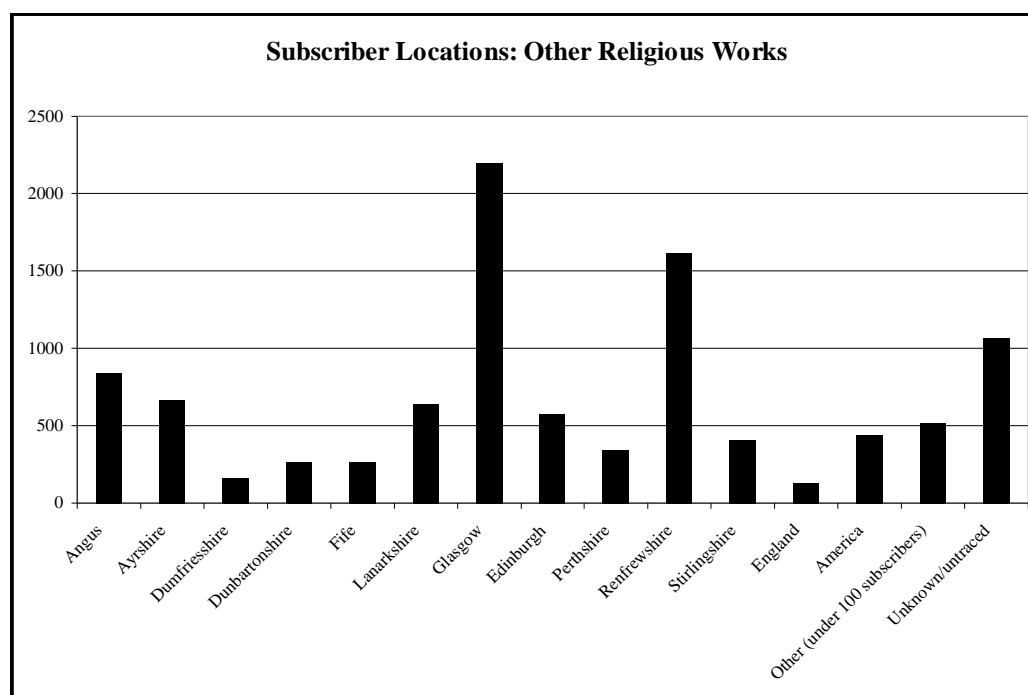


Figure 16.

III

The wealth of religious texts as well as Enlightenment works, accessible to thousands of readers from the lower orders, provides a clear picture, not only of the material available, but also of how this section of society could have engaged directly with books and ideas. The diversity of occupation emphasises that access to knowledge was increasingly within the grasp of ordinary people whose Calvinism had ensured their ability to read, question and reflect. The overwhelming emphasis on Calvinist religious works is of paramount interest to this study because these texts offer evidence of more than just the literacy of the subscribers. They also provide an insight into the importance of theological discourse for substantial numbers of ordinary people.

Notwithstanding the availability of Enlightenment works, most ordinary readers demonstrated a strong desire to maintain a connection with their religious heritage. During a century of division within the Kirk such works may have provided strength and support for those who found themselves alienated from the Established Church, whether they remained within its bounds or joined the Secession Churches. They may have strengthened people's resolve to oppose patronage, and as the system of patronage allowed the elite to control presentations, this could also have encompassed an element of class hostility towards them. In so doing, some ordinary people may have been drawn towards an engagement with wider concerns, while the egalitarian nature of Presbyterian polity may have encouraged a more democratic viewpoint. The evidence from the subscriber lists certainly testifies to a religious/class difference between the elite and the rest of Scottish society.

In total 47,751, subscribers bought 60,125 copies of these books (see table 10). A number of individuals bought between two and 300 copies. Some of these book buyers were merchants, booksellers and bookbinders, but not all. For example, one individual who bought multiple copies of one title was Alex Gilles, a bricklayer in Glasgow, who purchased 72 copies of John Willison's *Fair and Impartial Testimony* in 1765. This was at the time of the 'Schism Overture' in the General Assembly, when the Popular party, having secured the Moderator's chair for one of their own, introduced a debate relating to the large number of defections from the Church, which also provided an opportunity to attack the Moderates. Willison's republished book took issue with those causing divisions within the Established Church, and argued for reformation from within, in order to stop such defections, by resisting the Moderate agenda. It would seem probable that the reason for buying multiple copies of a text, for people who were not part of the book trade, would have been to proselytize because the book was saying something that resonated strongly with the reader.

All Works	Total subs	Total copies bought	Artisans, servants & lower orders	Mid & profs	Elite	Unknown
Covenanting	19094	22017	11222	2655	105	5112
Scot. Prsbyt'n	3375	5018	2055	445	46	829
Secession	5079	8407	1923	1260	116	1780
Dissent'g Eng.	8792	10774	5705	1199	31	1857
Episcopalian	1323	1414	60	284	476	503
Other Relig's.	10088	12526	6124	1817	214	1933
TOTALS	47751	60125	27089	7660	988	12014

Table 10.

The subscribers' occupations allow them to be broken down by social status (see figure 17).

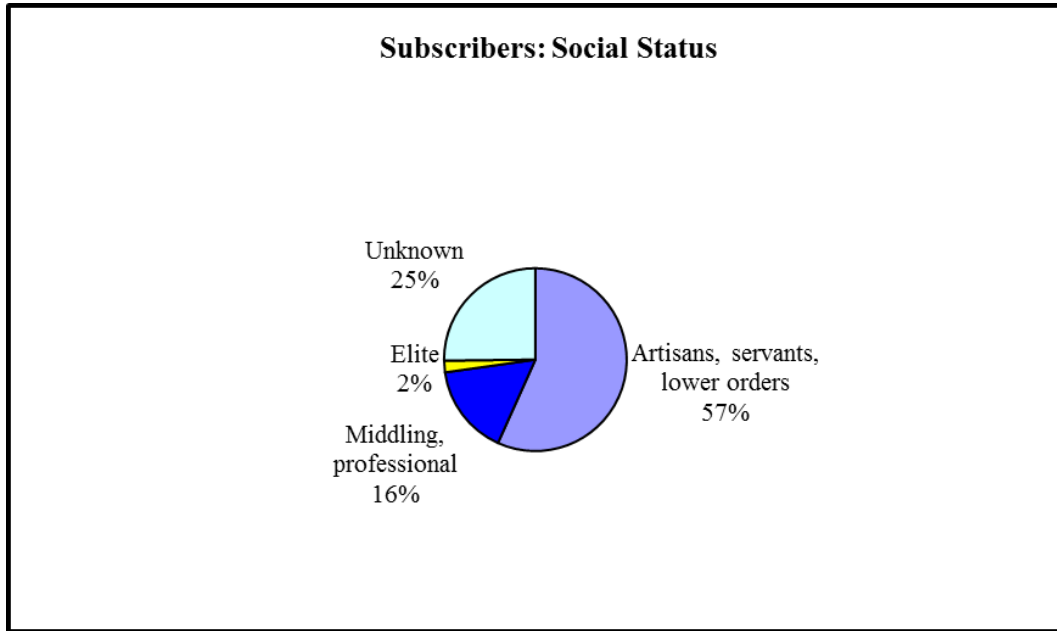


Figure 17.

The 'elite' subscribers were exactly that - bishops, barons, MPs, aristocrats - people of the highest social standing (see figure 18). However, what is abundantly clear is the divide between this stratum of eighteenth-century society and the rest of the Scottish population, and this is demonstrated in their book choice. Elite subscribers play a minimal part in the overall figures, only standing out through their purchases of works by Episcopalian authors and non-religious texts. Only 60 'artisans' appear on Episcopalian subscriber lists, but for every other category of book they make up a clear majority of subscribers. The elite made up only 2% (988) of the total subscribers. The 'middling and professionals' category comprised almost 16% (7,660) of total subscribers. When this category is broken

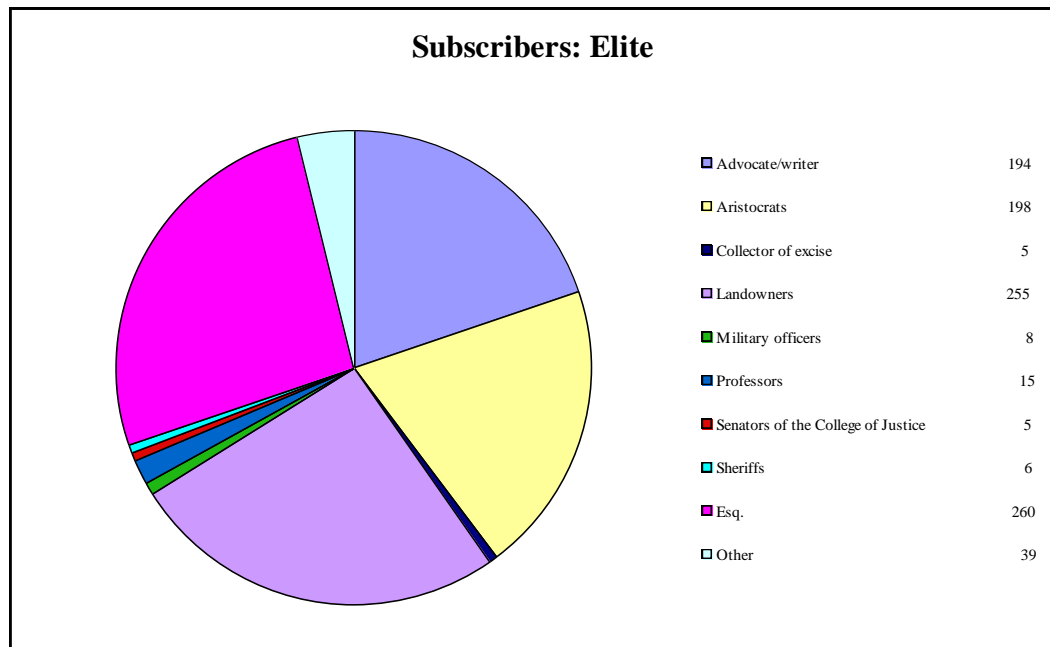


Figure 18.

down the largest occupational group was farmers 2,290 (30%), followed by merchants 1,743 (23%), ministers 807 (10%), portioners 601 (8%), and teachers 365 (5%), which together accounted for 76% of the subscribers for this category (see figure 19.)

The ‘artisan, servants & lower orders’ category made up over 57% (27,089), of the overall total. The largest single occupational group was weaver, which, at 10,563 was 39% of the subscribers in this category, and over 22% of the overall subscribers. These figures clearly validate the weavers’ epithet as ‘proud patrons of learning’, the most literate group amongst ordinary working people in Scottish society.⁶¹⁷ Murray estimates that in the 1780s there were approximately 35,000 weavers in Scotland, rising to around 45,000 by 1790.⁶¹⁸ However, it is

⁶¹⁷ Jolly, *Life of John Duncan*, p.24.

⁶¹⁸ Murray, *Scottish Handloom Weavers*, p.19. The Scottish population as a whole was estimated at 1.25 million in 1755, rising to 1.6 million by 1801. Houston, ‘Demographic Regime’, p.12.

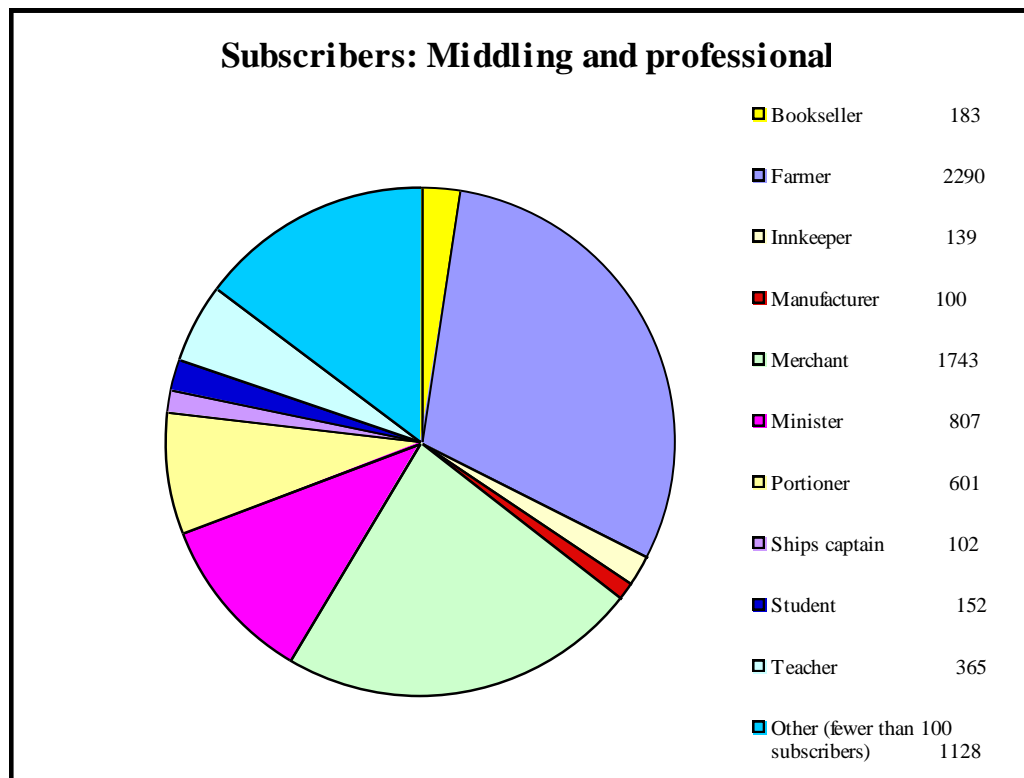


Figure 19.

clear from this study that, while weavers were the largest group, they were far from the only people who were reading. The combined total for those classed as ‘artisans, servants and lower orders’ – excluding weavers – was 16,526 or 61% of the total in this category, and almost 35% of the overall subscribers. This group was comprised of a very wide range of occupations, including shoemakers, wrights, tailors, printers, smiths, masons, miners, labourers, servants, nailers, coopers, dyers, bakers, sawers and bleachers, among many others (see figure 20). Thus, for example, the names of 631 miners were found on these subscription lists, yet this was an occupation not readily associated with a tradition of education and learning. However, as Christopher Whatley has commented, finding their names on ‘lists for books on divinity demonstrates that there were amongst their number those who were prepared to go to some trouble to acquire

expensive and demanding literature'.⁶¹⁹ Notably, four of the earliest libraries that were established for ordinary people were for miners, at Leadhills (1741), Wanlockhead (1756), Tyndrum (1786), and Westerkirk (1792).

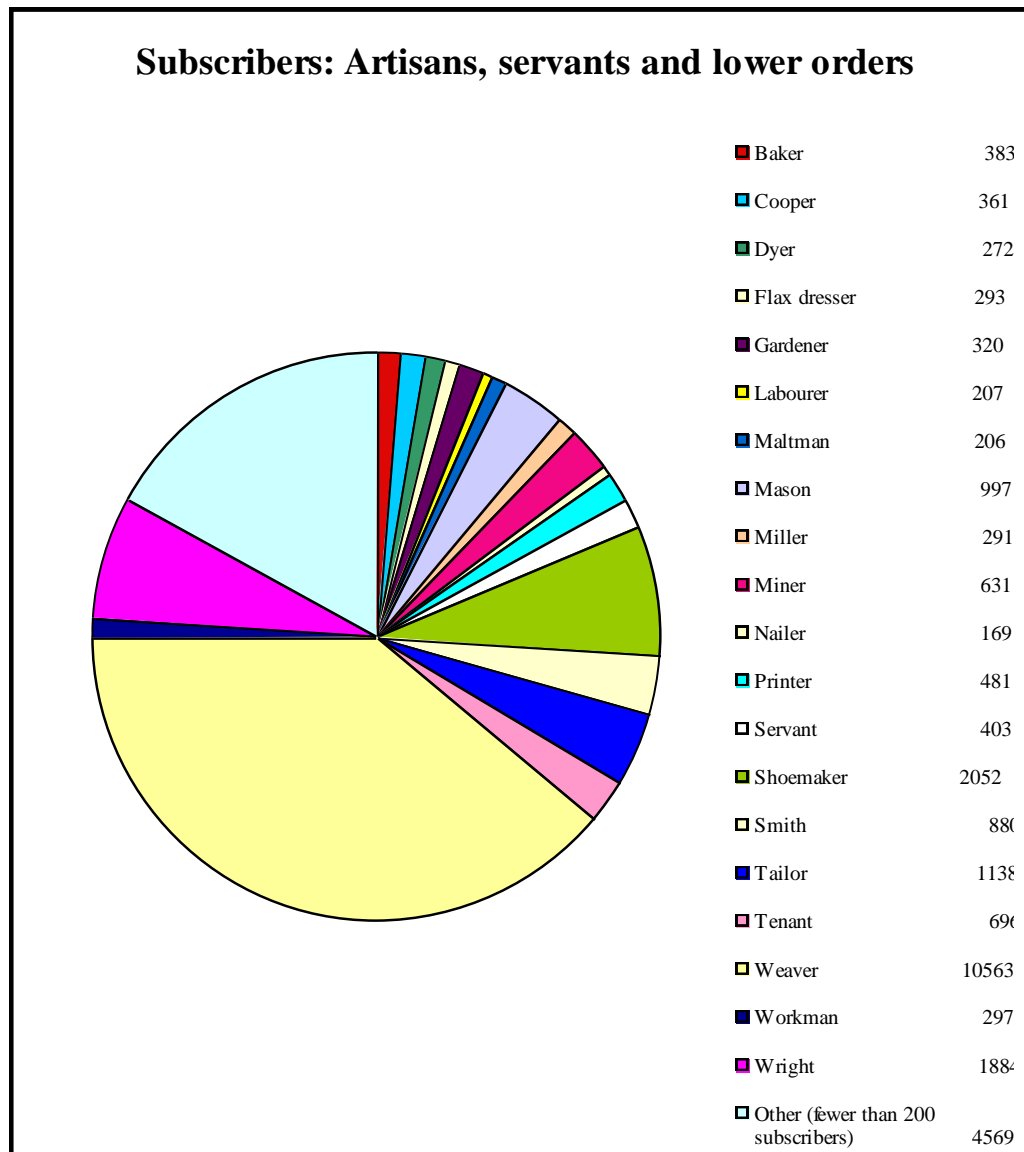


Figure 20.

⁶¹⁹ Christopher A. Whatley, 'Scottish "Collier Serfs," British Coal Workers? Aspects of Scottish Collier Society In The Eighteenth Century,' *Labour History Review*, Vol. 60 No. 2 (1995), pp. 66-79.

In a study of radical shoemakers, Eric Hobsbawm and Joan Scott attempted to explain the ‘literacy and fondness for reading’ in the cobbler’s trade, suggesting a number of contributory factors, such as the sedentary nature of the work, which allowed time for thinking and discussion; the isolation in working hours, which made shoemakers intellectually resourceful; and their movement around the country, which exposed them to the culture and politics of the wider world. In addition, where shoemakers did work together in workshops they developed the tradition of someone reading aloud.⁶²⁰ The notion of sedentary work providing the chance for reading was commented on by a contemporary observer in Perth. He suggested that it gave weavers, ‘opportunities of frequent social converse’, which in turn resulted in an intense interest in

the course of public affairs: and in this manner, an inquisitive spirit, arising from the peculiar circumstances of social and sedentary labour, combines with the spirit of turbulent independence produced by weekly freedom and opulence, to render even the labouring artisans of Perth ardent and active politicians.⁶²¹

However, as Hobsbawm and Scott have commented, such opportunities did not exist for the blacksmiths or the wheelwrights. Clearly, the evidence provided by these subscription lists demonstrates that Scottish book culture went considerably beyond those who might have been able to read while they worked, and, although Scottish weavers may well have found their working situation similar to Hobsbawm and Scott’s shoemakers, this was not the case for miners, smiths, masons, farmers, labourers or wrights. Such people were evidently making time and a conscious effort to read, and, given the nature of their choice of books, it is probable that a significant factor in their choice was their Calvinist upbringing and

⁶²⁰ E. J. Hobsbawm and Joan Wallach Scott, ‘Political Shoemakers’, *P&P*, No. 89 (1980), pp.86-114.

⁶²¹ Heron, *Observations made in a Journey through the Western Counties of Scotland*, Vol. 1, p.148.

education that had equipped and motivated them not only to read but also to engage with the text and debate with each other.

In addition to providing an occupational breakdown for men, the subscription lists offer some insight into female subscribers. The vast majority of subscribers were men but there were 1,802 women. Unfortunately, 1,508 of these gave no occupation. However, of the remaining 294, 120 were from the lower orders, 80 were from the elite category and 98 were from the middling orders. There were seventy-four aristocrats; sixty servants; thirty-three residenters; twenty-one merchants; seventeen indwellers; fifteen weavers; eleven spinsters; eight shopkeepers; seven inn-keepers; six bleachers; three grocers; three pin sellers; three portioners; three vintners; two bakers; two chambermaids; two dairy maids; two farmers; two landowners; two milliners; two teachers; two tenants; one bookseller; one confectioner; one cook-maid; one cotton spinner; one dyer; one glover; one harston; one housekeeper; one life renter; one penciler; one sewster; one shewster; one upholsterer; and one wheel-woman. This suggests that women who subscribed to the publication of books may have been engaged in much the same range of occupations as men, even if they did not subscribe in the same numbers and were a much lower percentage of the known working population. Overall 758 women bought 'Covenanting' works, 302 'Dissenting English clergy', 157 'Episcopalian', 218 'Other Religious', 120 'Scottish Presbyterian', and 247 'Secession' works. There was a noticeably larger percentage of female subscribers to 'Episcopalian' works – 12% compared with 2% 'Other Religious'; 3% 'Dissenting English'; 3.5% 'Presbyterian'; 4% 'Covenanting'; and 5% 'Secession'. This is probably owing to the mainly 'elite' status of the subscribers to these books and their greater financial means.

The largest number of works published by subscription dealt with Covenanting themes, and a total of 23 editions of works in this category were published across this period, with a spate of Covenanting titles appearing between 1779 and 1789. In addition, works by Secession ministers such as John Muirhead were also published in this period, endorsing the renovation of the Covenants. Covenanting works appeared in every decade, but in the 1780s alone, 50% of the works published by subscription were concerned with Covenanting. This flurry of publishing may have been related to the anti-Catholic relief campaign of the late 1770s and early 1780s.⁶²²

Locations have been identified for all but 4,218 individuals, or 9% of the total. There were subscribers from every Scottish county, although a number of counties, predominantly in the Highlands and Islands, had very few subscribers: one from Caithness; one from Shetland; two from Sutherland; three from Orkney; eleven from Nairnshire; twenty-one from Ross-shire; twenty-five from Selkirkshire; thirty-four from Morayshire; thirty-seven from Kincardineshire; forty-five from Inverness-shire; sixty-four from Kinross-shire. However, 80% of subscribers were from just nine counties: Lanarkshire (including Glasgow) 26%; Ayrshire 14%; Renfrewshire 14%; Stirlingshire 8%; Lothians (including Edinburgh) 5%; Dunbartonshire 4%; Fife 3%; Perthshire 3%; and Angus 3% and 7% were scattered across the remaining counties (see figure 21).

There were 1,622 subscribers from outside Scotland: 1,000 from England; 441 from America; 164 from Ireland; 10 from Holland; 3 from France; 2 from Sweden; 1 from Canada; and 1 from Jamaica. Of the English subscribers 449 were from Northumberland, and 361 were from London, with a smattering of

⁶²² It is beyond the scope of this study to determine whether the alteration to copyright law, which was challenged in the *Donaldson v. Becket* case in 1774, had any impact on subscription publishing at this time. See Altick, *The English Common Reader*, pp.53-54.

subscribers beyond these locations. Although small in number the links to north-east England may well have had a connection to the religious dissent in that area where, for example, Presbyterian ministers such as James Murray (1732–82), had congregations. Murray, a graduate of Edinburgh University, was descended from a Covenanter family, and had moved to Newcastle in 1764.⁶²³ He was also a pro-American who considered the American conflict not as a war fought by rebels, but by those who were resisting the imposition of an, ‘era of slavery to both them and us’.⁶²⁴ He gave public lectures to educate people on their civil and religious rights, and used his pulpit to speak out against government policy.⁶²⁵

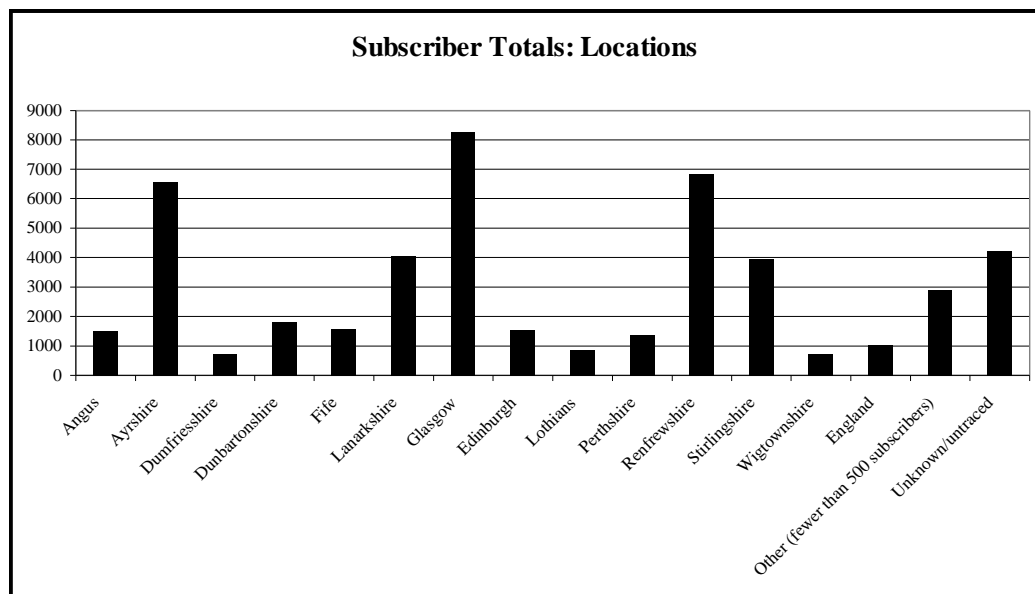


Figure 21.

⁶²³ J. C. D. Clark, *The Language of Liberty 1660-1832: Political discourse and social dynamics in the Anglo-American world* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.330-331; Kenneth B. E. Roxburgh, ‘James Murray’, *ODNB*.

⁶²⁴ James Murray, *An Impartial History of the Present War in America* (London, 1778), p.587.

⁶²⁵ Bradley, *Religion, Revolution and English Radicalism*, pp.128-130. One member of Murray’s Newcastle congregation, who was greatly influenced by him, was the future radical polemicist Thomas Spence. Alexander Murdoch, ‘Scotland and the Idea of Britain in the Eighteenth Century’, in T. M. Devine and J. R. Young (eds) *Eighteenth Century Scotland: New Perspectives* (East Lothian, 1999), p.109.

The location which stands out above all others was the city of Glasgow, with 8,272 subscribers. Despite the established clergy's tendency to blame Seceding ministers for encouraging the lower orders to read 'controversial divinity', in Glasgow it would appear that the established clergy themselves were a key factor. The depth of this Calvinist book culture in Glasgow adds weight to Ned Landsman's contention that arguments in opposition to patronage in the city had developed to include a culture of participation, education and self-improvement.⁶²⁶

There was a marked disparity between the number of subscribers in Glasgow (8,272) or 17% of total subscribers compared with Edinburgh (1,527) or 3% of total subscribers. Scotland's population as a whole has been estimated at 1,265,380 in 1755, growing to 1,608,420 by 1801.⁶²⁷ Glasgow's estimated population in 1755, including suburbs, was 23,546. By 1791 it had grown to an estimated 61,945 or 3.85% of Scotland's total population.⁶²⁸ Edinburgh's estimated population in 1755, including suburbs, was 57,195. By 1791 it had grown to an estimated 84,886 or 5.28% of Scotland's total population.⁶²⁹ This makes the disparity in the number of subscribers from each city even more striking, given that Glasgow amounted to less than 4% of the country's population. It accounted for over 17% of subscribers across this period. It should also be noted that locations have been allocated according to eighteenth-century boundaries where known. Areas such as Govan or Cathcart, which are now part of

⁶²⁶ Landsman, 'Liberty, Piety and Patronage', pp.214-226; idem, 'Presbyterians and Provincial Society', pp.194-209.

⁶²⁷ UK and Ireland Genealogical Information Service, <<http://www.genuki.org.uk>>. [Accessed 22/02/2012]. See also Houston, 'Demographic Regime', p.12.

⁶²⁸ *OSA*, Vol. 6, pp.562-563 (Edinburgh).

⁶²⁹ *OSA*, Vol. 5, p.511 (Glasgow).

Glasgow, were located in Renfrewshire in the eighteenth century. If these had been allocated to Glasgow the numbers for the city would have been even greater.

These figures emphasise the continuing importance of Glasgow's Covenanted heritage and the engagement, of some of the city's inhabitants, with the American debate on civil and religious liberty. However, the strongest factor in producing this book ethos in Glasgow was most likely to have been the preponderance of Popular ministers in the city who may have encouraged participation in religious debate. These included individuals such as John Maclaurin, who was deeply opposed to ecclesiastical patronage, and later in the century William Thom, John Gillies and William Porteous (1735–1812), who were unequivocal, not just in their opposition to patronage, but who also took a stand against the government's position on the American crisis, preaching their contentious views from the pulpit, and making them available in pamphlets and in the press. In addition, it was in Glasgow that the Constitutional societies, in opposition to patronage, were set up, again by Popular party ministers.

Overall the areas with the largest number of subscribers were mainly in Lowland Scotland. These were places where Presbyterianism of one kind or another was predominant, and significantly they were areas with deep-rooted links to the Covenanted struggles of the seventeenth century, noticeably in Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, Ayrshire and Stirlingshire. The development of the school system was at its strongest in Lowland areas, and libraries for the lower orders had started to emerge there, which were in addition to the circulating and subscription libraries frequented mostly by the middling orders, and which had also been developing since the middle of the century.

In addition, wage rates tended to be higher around the main urban centres, with wages decreasing the further one moved from the central Lowlands. In the Highlands rates could be as much as 50% lower.⁶³⁰ This may well have had an impact on the ability of those living in the Highlands and Islands to afford to buy books, although factors discussed previously were probably as significant if not more so. The areas with the fewest subscribers were those which had retained much stronger links to Roman Catholicism and Episcopalianism, and where the school system was at its weakest, despite the efforts of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge. What this has highlighted was the Highland/Lowland divide in terms of literacy, the availability of education, access to books, the language gap between Gaelic and English and the much less certain hold of Presbyterianism in the Highlands and Islands. Significantly, the areas where the greatest upsurge of radical activity was seen in the 1790s was in places with the greatest number of subscribers to religious, and particularly Covenanted works - Lanarkshire, Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, Stirlingshire, Dunbartonshire, Angus, Perthshire, Fife and the Lothians - while those areas with no or few subscribers barely involved themselves in those political protests.

IV

It can be argued that the evidence from the subscription lists in this chapter, and the political activity in which ordinary people engaged, which will be discussed in chapter six, suggests that many late eighteenth-century Scots could be regarded as very much in line with a tradition of revolt and Presbyterian

⁶³⁰ Morgan, 'Wage Rates in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland', p.185.

opposition.⁶³¹ This can be traced from the seventeenth-century Covenanters themselves through to the nineteenth-century reform movements and the dawn of Scotland's Labour Party. Gordon Pentland has demonstrated that the Covenanting past was often revived during reform agitation in early nineteenth-century Scotland. He has suggested that the association of the Covenanting tradition, by using symbols such as a blood-stained flag and swords from the battles of Bothwell Brig and Drumclog in 1679, which were carried at political reform processions, helped to make Covenanting an effective means of mass mobilization.⁶³² Hence, at the first Chartist procession in Glasgow in May 1838 marchers from Strathaven carried a flag from the Battle of Drumclog, while in 1843 Feargus O'Connor wrote, 'I am now about to enter into a reacknowledgement of a Solemn League and Covenant with the working classes'.⁶³³ Covenanting mythology came to symbolise resistance, and by the early twentieth century Ramsay MacDonald, writing about Keir Hardie, commented that, 'If Hardie had ever written a historical introduction to a history of the Labour Movement, he would ... have begun with Airds Moss, the Declaration of Sanquhar'.⁶³⁴ The leadership of the Scottish Independent Labour Party of the 1920s referred to themselves as the twentieth century embodiment of the spirit of the Covenanters.⁶³⁵ This tradition also invariably concentrated its opposition on

⁶³¹ Brotherstone (ed.), *Covenant, Charter and Party*, *passim*.

⁶³² Gordon Pentland, 'Scotland and the Creation of a National Reform Movement, 1830-1832', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (Dec., 2005), pp.999-1023; idem, "Betrayed By Infamous Spies"? The Commemoration of Scotland's 'Radical War' of 1820', *P&P*, No. 201 (2008), pp.141-173; idem, *Spirit of the Union*, (London, 2011), pp.25, 69, 134.

⁶³³ *Glasgow Saturday Post*, 5 Sept. 1846, cited in Pentland, "Betrayed By Infamous Spies"?, p.159; *Northern Star*, 16 Sept. 1843.

⁶³⁴ MacDonald, cited in Stevenson, *Covenanters*, p.81. For a discussion of the use of the Covenanting tradition in nineteenth-century history writing see Neil Forsyth, 'Presbyterian historians and the Scottish invention of British liberty', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 34 (2004), pp.91-110.

⁶³⁵ William Knox, 'The Red Clydesiders and the Scottish Political Tradition' in Brotherstone (ed.), *Covenant, Charter and Party*, p.95.

the landed aristocratic elite. Just as Patrick Bannerman wrote in 1782, of an aristocracy ‘already too powerful’, so too the nineteenth-century Scottish campaigners against the Corn Laws continued to focus on ‘oppressive laws and iniquitous monopolies ... maintained by the aristocracy’.⁶³⁶

Covenanting works clearly predominated amongst subscription book buyers because Covenanting theology and mythology retained their force for contemporary readers who faced not only issues such as ecclesiastical patronage, but also new economic challenges. Hence, on occasion, ordinary people clung to Covenanting ideology, as in the 1720s, when the Galloway Levellers renewed the Solemn League and Covenant as part of their protest over economic grievances, an action, which T. C. Smout has described as, ‘the first instance in Scottish history of a popular rural movement with the character of class war’.⁶³⁷ The connection between Covenanting radicalism and popular participation has also been suggested by Ian McBride, in his work on Ulster, where he has argued, that Cameronian radicalism was at the root of the ‘Oakboys’ and ‘Steelboys’ risings during the 1760s and 1770s, and where the local dissenters were described by the rector of Killeeshil in County Tyrone, as ‘the spawn of Scottish covenanters’.⁶³⁸ In Scotland, the Cameronians, who in 1743 became the Reformed Presbyterian Church, maintained throughout the eighteenth century their rejection of any supremacy of the state in church matters.

The survival of Covenanting convictions among many sections of Scottish society can also be demonstrated by the widespread outcry that emerged in 1779 over Catholic relief. In the popular consciousness Catholicism equalled arbitrary

⁶³⁶ Bannerman, *Address To The People Of Scotland On Ecclesiastical And Civil Liberty*, p.15; *Scots Times* (1840), cited in Fraser, ‘Scottish Context of Chartism’, p.72.

⁶³⁷ Wallace, ‘Presbyterian Moral Economy’, pp.59-62; Smout, *History of the Scottish People 1560-1830*, p.304.

⁶³⁸ McBride, *Scripture Politics*, p.79.

authority, which in turn was linked to the problem of lay patronage. The issue of Catholic relief will be discussed in chapter six, but the continuing power of this line of reasoning can be seen in the popularity of not just Covenanting works reprinted by subscription during the eighteenth century, but in those by dissenting English and Scottish non-Covenanting Presbyterian clergy. Despite the Moderates' attempts to liberalise attitudes towards toleration, their viewpoint lacked widespread support amongst ordinary people. Most still harked back to the sentiments of the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, which had pledged to 'endeavour the extirpation of Popery' throughout Britain.⁶³⁹ Richard Finlay maintained that a plausible reason for the intensity of the anti-Catholic riots was because ordinary Scots felt betrayed by the Moderate leadership of the Church when they supported Catholic toleration and thereby violated traditional concepts of liberty.⁶⁴⁰

There is a wealth of evidence both from subscription lists and the memoirs of contemporaries, to testify to the popularity of Covenanting ideology within the various strata of society. One Ayrshire commentator noted that in the 1780s 'the family library' of lairds and farmers generally consisted of the Bible, *Cloud of Witnesses*, the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* or *Holy War*, Flavel's *Husbandry Spiritualised*, Boston's *Fourfold State*, Rutherford's *Letters*, Ralph Erskine's *Gospel Sonnets*, Knox's *History of the Reformation* and Calderwood's *History of the Kirk of Scotland*.⁶⁴¹ In the 1760s tenant farmers of Covenanting descent in the Lothians were described as

⁶³⁹ *Solemn League and Covenant* (Edinburgh, 1643), Constitution Society, <<http://www.constitution.org>>. [Accessed 28/02/2007].

⁶⁴⁰ R. Finlay, 'Keeping the Covenant: Scottish National Identity', in T. M. Devine and J. R. Young (eds), *Eighteenth-Century Scotland: New Perspectives* (Edinburgh, 1999), pp.121-133.

⁶⁴¹ Mitchell, 'Memories of Ayrshire', p.282.

actuated by similar principles, and with a veneration for their [Covenanters'] practices. Hence their books were all of that cast: such as the works of Sir David Lindsay, of Buchanan, of Knox, of Rutherford, of Bunyan, and of Boston; and of Wodrow too.⁶⁴²

At the same time cottars had similar reading material available to them, and they also were

aware of a covenanting descent, and had books of a similar tendency with those of their masters, but on a lesser scale, being usually pamphlets, or religious tracts: such as *Christian Ker*, *Elizabeth West*, Peden's *Prophecies*, *The Hind let loose*, and *The Holy War*, purchased from travelling chapmen at a cheap rate.⁶⁴³

Among these books, *Cloud of Witnesses*, *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*, Rutherford's *Letters*, Wodrow's *Sufferings of the Church of Scotland*, Peden's *Prophecies* and Shields' *Hind let loose* all fall within the scope of 'Covenanting' works. Some of the authors mentioned in the extract above, George Buchanan, Samuel Rutherford and Alexander Shields, were the authors of radical political texts justifying popular resistance to kings and parliaments that betrayed the people's trust. These works were readily available to tenants and cottars, weavers and labourers who could buy cheap reprints. Some works were printed and sold with the aim of reaching as much of the rural market as possible. For example, a 1720 edition of William Guthrie's *Christians Great Interest* (1668) was 'sold at the Booksellers Shops in Edinburgh and Glasgow, so as Chapmen may sell a single Copy unto Country People for Half a Merk Scots'.⁶⁴⁴

Much of this reading matter emphasised the need to engage personal judgment and private conscience, which also suggests a powerful stimulus to developing the questioning attitude which might have encouraged wider political awareness in the ordinary reader. In addition, the essentially egalitarian structure

⁶⁴² Robertson, *Rural Recollections*, p.98.

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.100.

⁶⁴⁴ Note at the back of William Guthrie, *Christians Great Interest*, cited in Brekke, "In An Age So Enlightened, Enthusiasm So Extravagant", p.63. Half a Merk Scots is equivalent to about 6d.

of Church government, and a conviction grounded in the Calvinist belief in the equal importance of all labour, that ‘there shall be no work so filthy and vile ... but it shineth and is most precious in the sight of God’, could also guide ordinary people when they considered their position in the state.⁶⁴⁵

It was not just through polemical texts that the Covenanting tradition was maintained. Within popular culture memories of this heritage were kept alive through religious debate and the folk mythology passed on from one generation to the next. For example, Liam McIlvanney has argued that Robert Burns was exposed, through his mother, to an oral culture, which ‘celebrated the memory of the seventeenth-century Covenanters’.⁶⁴⁶ Her grandfather had been shot at Airds Moss and she had lived for a time with her grandmother. McIlvanney emphasised Burns’ recognition of the emotional appeal of the Covenanters and their cause. Another contemporary testimony from the 1780s recalled that anecdotes were told, ‘by the old, in the audience of the young’, of how the Covenanters had opposed ‘the agents of oppression ... thus creating, or deepening a salutary horror of persecution for conscience sake, as well as strong prepossessions in favour of true religion, of holy courage, and of steadfast suffering for the sake of righteousness’.⁶⁴⁷ This combination of history, theology, folk memory and mythology offered a powerful reference point for ordinary people beginning to connect to contemporary politics.

The Covenanting tradition also held particular fears for the elite. These fears were in part the legacy of the history of the Covenanters themselves, but were also due to Episcopalian propaganda from the post-1690 settlement period,

⁶⁴⁵ Calvin, *Institution of the Christian religion*, Book 3, p.340.

⁶⁴⁶ Liam McIlvanney, “‘Sacred Freedom’: Presbyterianism Radicalism and the Politics of Robert Burns”, in Kenneth Simpson (ed.), *Love & Liberty: Robert Burns A Bicentenary Celebration* (East Linton, 1997), pp.168-182.

⁶⁴⁷ Mitchell, ‘Memories of Ayrshire’, pp.280-281.

which had implied that the political republicanism of the Cameronians had been absorbed into the now Presbyterian Church of Scotland.⁶⁴⁸ Furthermore, many in polite society had a long-standing and strong distaste for the Popular clergy within the Established Church, and for ministers of the Secession Churches, a number of whom were viewed as ill-educated and lacking respect for social rank and, who were condemned as fanatical rabble-rousers, who led the lowest sections of society astray, being ‘*well known to teach wild and pernicious principles of government, as they do of religion*’.⁶⁴⁹ This was demonstrated in particular by ordinary people’s responses to ‘intruded’ ministers throughout the eighteenth century, and even by the 1790s the issue of patronage had not disappeared. It remained a grievance in need of redress by the Friends of the People.⁶⁵⁰ Patronage stirred up such widespread public disaffection that anyone could take advantage of it in order to pursue a wider design, and just as the original Covenanters had allied nobility, lairds, ministers and common folk, who did not share the same agenda, so opposition to patronage could encompass issues of economics and class, as well as religion.⁶⁵¹

The ruling elite were therefore, faced with the dilemma that some members of the lower orders may have been awakened to new ideas. The Ayrshire author of the *Annals of the Parish* (1821), John Galt (1779-1839), recalled his outrage at learning that certain works by the author Thomas Holcroft and the philosopher William Godwin, both of whom were political radicals, had

⁶⁴⁸ Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s past*, pp.53-58.

⁶⁴⁹ Speech ascribed to Mr Adams of Falkirk, cited in Morren, *Annals 1739-1752*, p.206. Italics in the original.

⁶⁵⁰ NAS, Home Office: Correspondence, Letters and Papers, Scotland, 3 Aug. 1793-20 Nov. 1793, RH2/4/72, f.167.

⁶⁵¹ For a discussion of the disparate alliances of the Covenanted period, see Roger Mason, ‘The Aristocracy, Episcopacy, and the Revolution of 1638’, pp.7-24 and V. G. Kiernan, ‘A Banner With A Strange Device: The Later Covenanters’, pp.25-49, both in Brotherstone (ed.), *Covenant, Charter and Party*.

been removed from the Greenock Subscription Library.⁶⁵² ‘During the French Revolution, when party spirit ran high ... the library was purged ... of tainted authors ... From this unheard-of proceeding in a Protestant land, great wrath was nursed in the bosoms of the young men connected with the library’.⁶⁵³ The danger of books was also commented on by Sir John Sinclair, the compiler of the *Statistical Account of Scotland*, who summed up the problem thus: ‘a great number of cheap religious and political tracts, of a pernicious kind, may be disseminated, and ... the great mass of people may thus be infected with principles destructive to the church and state’.⁶⁵⁴ Sinclair’s comment illustrates elite fears about the potential inflammability of the lower orders, a reason, as Christopher Whatley has suggested, for ensuring that the bonds of paternalism remained strong in Scotland, in order to counter such potential.⁶⁵⁵ Hence, the desire of the elite to ensure that lay ecclesiastical patronage held sway by attempting to exclude those who were more zealous in their preaching, and who might encourage disaffection because they emphasised the importance of liberty of conscience above claims to authority, as did Covenanting works.

John Brims maintained that, while some supporters of political reform, such as Archibald Bruce, incorporated the ideology of the Covenanting tradition into their pamphlets this was not reflected in the publications emanating from the Friends of the People. He argued that, in the early 1790s, the Society avoided any direct appeal to the Covenanting past, partly to avoid sectarian divisions within the Association, and partly because the movement sought to present itself as seeking reform along strictly constitutional lines which could not have included

⁶⁵² *OSA*, Vol. 5, p.583 (Greenock, Renfrewshire).

⁶⁵³ John Galt, *Autobiography of John Galt*, 2 Vols (Philadelphia, 1834), Vol. 1, pp.27-28.

⁶⁵⁴ Sir John Sinclair, *Analysis of the Statistical Account of Scotland*, 2 Vols (London, 1826), Vol. 2, p.72.

⁶⁵⁵ Whatley, *Scottish Society 1707-1830*, p.205.

any appeal to a Covenanting tradition which exemplified rebellion and the establishment of a revolutionary government.⁶⁵⁶ Reformers wished to hide any overt divisions over religion or the extent of the reform agenda, in order to avoid anything that might cause strife and divert them from their goal. The early leadership of the movement, the Edinburgh-centred Foxite Whigs, were certainly moderate, comprised of people such as James Maitland, the eighth Earl of Lauderdale, Lord Daer, Lt. Col. Dalrymple, Hugh Bell, John Millar, John Morthland and Richard Fowler, but all of these individuals and many more besides had left the movement by early April 1793. By November of that year, when the radicals held their third Convention in Edinburgh, the delegates were almost exclusively from the lower orders. Given the social make-up of the early Edinburgh leadership and the desire to appear moderate in their demands to government, it is unsurprising that the Association's pamphlets gave no hint of any connection to a radical Covenanting past with its support for rebellion and antipathy to kingship. However, some individuals, such as William Skirving, the Edinburgh secretary to the Society of the Friends of the People, and a Burgher member of the Secession Church who had been training for the ministry prior to his connection with the Society, argued that members of the British Convention and the 'societies should subscribe a solemn league and covenant'.⁶⁵⁷ In addition, when reform took on a more radical character, some within the movement did justify their activities in the language of their Covenanting forebears.⁶⁵⁸

James Bradley has taken issue with Brims, suggesting that he has conflated the Covenanting tradition with the various forms of secession, which, Bradley has

⁶⁵⁶ J. Brims, 'The Covenanting Tradition and Scottish Radicalism in the 1790s', in Brotherstone (ed.), *Covenant, Charter and Party*, p.58.

⁶⁵⁷ Howell, *State Trials*, Vol. 23, col. 438, cited in Brims, *ibid.*, p.57.

⁶⁵⁸ Brims *ibid.*, p.59.

argued, distanced themselves from each other.⁶⁵⁹ Although Bradley conceded that covenant theology influenced all the varieties of Secession, he maintained that the Covenancing tradition had little to offer the study of late-eighteenth-century radicalism.⁶⁶⁰ However, his conclusion, that the Seceders and adherents of the Popular party were the ‘major players’ in Scottish radical politics, would tend to support the contention of this thesis, that Presbyterianism, including its Covenancing history, was a major contributory factor in encouraging ordinary people to develop a questioning attitude and in enabling some to become involved in political activity.⁶⁶¹ Despite his conclusion Bradley appears to have ignored the substantial source material which explicitly linked ‘liberty of conscience’ to the arguments posited during the patronage debate, and he has asserted that ‘matters of private judgment never came to the fore’ as it did among English dissenters.⁶⁶² Moreover, Bradley’s view of the Covenancing tradition appears to be limited to a strict theological interpretation, which ignores its continuing and very strong presence, not just in polemical writing, but in folklore and history and therefore the Covenancing past’s ability to contribute towards political consciousness, something which has been suggested by the evidence offered in this chapter.

Colin Kidd has highlighted the eighteenth-century debate about the Covenancing legacy, and the conditional and limited loyalty to the Hanoverian monarchy of Seceders, Cameronians and various other sects, based on their continuing equivocation over issues such as the Union of 1707, the payment of taxes, oath taking, and the reaffirmation of the Covenants.⁶⁶³ He maintained that,

⁶⁵⁹ Bradley, ‘Religious Origins of Radical Politics in England, Scotland, and Ireland’, pp.187-253.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.206.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.222.

⁶⁶² *Ibid.*, p.234.

⁶⁶³ *The national covenant, and solemn league and covenant with the acknowledgement of sins, and engagement to duties: as they were renewed at Douglas July 24th 1712. With Accommodation to*

in the second half of the eighteenth century, the Covenanting debate about allegiance to king, constitution and state, alerted a ‘newer breed of radicals who emerged in the wake of the French Revolution to a deep-laid indigenous critique of the British state’, based on the publications of Burgher, Anti-burgher and Reformed Presbyterian ministers.⁶⁶⁴ Although he considered it unlikely that there were strong ideological continuities between Covenanting radicalism and ‘Jacobinism’, he believed that the Covenanting past provided inspiration for Scottish popular protest in the late eighteenth century: ‘the debates which raged over the authority of the civil magistrate in Scotland during the 1790s owed less to the examples of the American and French Revolutions than to the covenanting inheritance of the seventeenth century’.⁶⁶⁵ The argument of this thesis, that the strength of popular interest in Covenanting theology and history which can be identified through people’s choice of reading and book buying, does suggest a lasting inspiration for reformers and also adds support to Kidd’s conclusion.

the Present Times ([Edinburgh], 1712); *Act, declaration, and testimony, for the whole of our covenanted Reformation, as attained to, and established in Britain and Ireland*, (Glasgow, 1761); *The re-exhibition of the testimony: or, a connected view of those principles, upon which a secession from the judicatories of the Church of Scotland was stated, by several ministers of the gospel, in 1733; and, since that time, maintained by the Associate Synod* (Glasgow, 1779), cited in Kidd, ‘Conditional Britons’, pp.1155, 1162, 1169.

⁶⁶⁴ Kidd, *ibid.*, pp.1168-1176.

⁶⁶⁵ John Goodlet, *A Vindication of the Associate Synod, upon the Head of their Principles about the present Civil Government* (Edinburgh, 1764); John Thomson, *The Presbyterian Covenanter Displayed, in his political principles* (Dublin, 1765); John Fairly, *An Humble Attempt in Defence of Reformation Principles; particularly on the Head of the Civil Magistrate* (Edinburgh, 1770); John Thorburn, *Vindiciae Magistratus: or the Divine Institution and Right of the Civil Magistrate Vindicated* (Edinburgh, 1773); John Macmillan, *A letter, addressed to the Rev. Messrs. John Belfrage, William Arnot, and Robert Campbell, the surviving members of that committee, appointed by the burgher-associate synod, to revise, and publish the papers contained in the re-exhibition of the testimony* (Glasgow, 1781); William Fletcher, *The Scripture-Loyalist* (Falkirk, 1789); William Steven, *Answers to Twelve Queries, Proposed to the Serious Consideration of the Reformed Presbytery, and their followers* ([Kilmarnock], 1794); *idem*, *The Scripture-Loyalist Defended* (Falkirk, 1795); Archibald Bruce, *The Principal Difference between the Religious Principles of those commonly called the Anti-Government Party, and of other Presbyterians, especially those of the Secession in Scotland; on the Head of Magistracy, briefly stated* (Edinburgh, 1797); William Steven, *Letter second to the Reverend William Fletcher* (Glasgow, 1798); John Reid, *Truth no enemy to peace* (Falkirk, 1799), cited in Kidd, ‘Conditional Britons’, pp.1168-1174.

Conclusion

A number of factors conspired to produce a picture of a highly literate population at all levels of society. There is the evidence from book subscription lists detailing book-ownership and reading, which also highlight the significance of predominantly polemical religious material for ordinary people, and provides evidence of strong links to the Covenanting tradition. However, this needs to be seen in context, because, while 47,741 subscribers and 60,156 books purchased is a substantial cache of evidence, these figures still only represent a small proportion of the Scottish population as a whole. Nevertheless, they are a significant indicator of both literacy and religious commitment.

There is also the climate of popular associational activity that reflected Enlightenment thinking on reading and book use. In addition, there is the evidence of private book borrowing, including works by major Enlightenment authors, and there is the evidence of an increasing number of libraries directly accessible to the middling and lower orders. Thus, the picture that emerges is one of ordinary people embracing their past and retaining a religious heritage and culture which was deeply important to them. It was not the received culture of deference and politeness disseminated by the landed elite or their close friends the Moderates, but one that spoke to ordinary folk's needs and uncertainties in a rapidly changing world. Increasing literacy and availability of books, in conjunction with the impact of events across the eighteenth century, combined with Calvinism to encourage a wider political engagement for some, because people could not only read, but were able to reflect, form opinions, and question, capacities which could be brought to bear beyond a religious context. Hence, one can begin to see how the egalitarian ethos of Presbyterianism, and the Calvinist emphasis on reading,

enquiry, and understanding, could encourage their adherents to speculate on matters considered quite beyond ordinary people's accepted sphere of interest. One can also begin to appreciate how this questioning attitude may have encouraged independent thought and even predisposed some people towards democratic politics. However, in order to fully appreciate the significance of this book-buying culture, it must be considered in the light of some ordinary people being drawn into religious and social debate, abetted by ministers who were actively engaging with 'political' matters.

Chapter Five

‘Oratories of Party and Faction’⁶⁶⁶

Preaching, publishing and the press

This chapter will consider some of the issues which, in addition to patronage, engaged ministers and elders, and it will discuss how their preaching and writing had the potential to bring ordinary people into public debates. It will demonstrate the extent of the clergy’s involvement in debate, both religious and political, and suggest that ministers could be a conduit for ordinary people to engage with these issues. Much of the dissension in the Church had a political aspect at one level or another, and politics was regularly brought into the pulpit. As one Glasgow merchant commented in 1725, ‘the *Temples of the living God* were made the *Oratories of Party and Faction*, and some weak Brain’d Zelots choos’d (*sic*) rather in the Pulpit to sound the Trumpet of their Party, than preach Faith and Repentance’, which was just one early allegation that ministers used their pulpits to propound a political viewpoint in eighteenth-century Scotland.⁶⁶⁷

This chapter will argue that, regardless of theological differences, Moderate, Popular and Secession ministers involved themselves in contemporary issues and used not only their pulpits, but also pamphlets and the press to declaim on these, and in so doing they made direct and explicit appeals to their congregations and beyond, exposing them to and involving them in these issues. The pulpit, after all, provided a regular means of disseminating a political agenda. For example, during the ’45 uprising the Commission of the General Assembly issued ‘A Seasonable Warning to the People Concerning the Danger of Popery

⁶⁶⁶ [William Tennoch], *A Seasonable Advice to All Lovers of their Country* (Edinburgh, 1725), p.3.

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

and Subversion of our happy Constitution in Church & State’, which was to be read from the pulpit.⁶⁶⁸ By determining how religious and sometimes civil controversy, which was in part mediated through the clergy, could promote public involvement in debate, this chapter will develop the fourth strand of this thesis, arguing that the influence of the clergy was a vital factor in the emergence of political awareness amongst ordinary people, and thereby helping to explain how, by the 1790s, some ordinary people had become radicals.

I

When ministers used their pulpits or publications to discuss politics they mainly sided with the establishment, but not so infrequently they adopted and transmitted a liberal agenda. Popular party ministers certainly believed that the Church had a right to comment on the affairs of government, and not necessarily in support, as normally evinced by ‘loyal addresses’ or fast day sermons.⁶⁶⁹ However, regardless of the views being articulated or the intentions of the clergy, the open expression of ‘political’ concerns from the pulpit may have encouraged some people to become involved in contemporary debates, so much so that in 1724 ministers were warned by the General Assembly to desist from expressing support from their pulpits for the Galloway Levellers.⁶⁷⁰ In 1734 Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine used their pulpits to preach in support of the election to parliament of James Erskine of Grange, Ralph in particular giving ‘very broad hints in the

⁶⁶⁸ NAS, Records of the Commission of the General Assembly, 1739-48, Registers of Acts of the Commission of the General Assembly, CH1/3/24, ff.402-403, 406-414, cited in Bob Harris, *Politics and the Nation: Britain in the Mid-Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2002), p.155.

⁶⁶⁹ For example, during the General Assembly debate on the American crisis. *Scots Mag.*, June 1782, p.328.

⁶⁷⁰ Wallace, ‘Presbyterian Moral Economy’, p.61.

Pulpit'.⁶⁷¹ In 1736 Ebenezer Erskine involved himself directly in burgh council affairs at Stirling, accusing Bailie James Alexander of making a personal profit from the purchase of a piece of the town's Common land from the council, and causing complaints from Alexander about his 'meddling' in such matters.⁶⁷²

On occasion, ministers were also condemned as the instigators of sedition. For example, during the proposals for Union in 1706, the clergy were accused of exploiting people's fears, and one correspondent commented on his shock at the sermons which were preached in Glasgow. 'I could not have believed such expressions should drop from one man's mouth, far less from a minister's in the pulpit'.⁶⁷³ Some ministers were even accused of joining with the 'mob' and rebuking people for not turning out in greater numbers, which, as Jeffrey Stephen has suggested, was hardly surprising, given the Covenanting tradition of resistance in the west of Scotland.⁶⁷⁴ Similar charges were made in the wake of the Porteous riots in Edinburgh in 1736, when the clergy were again accused of involvement through their preaching. The Duke of Argyll impugned 'fanatical preachers lately started up' - in other words, Secession ministers, who had instilled notions 'inconsistent with all government, by making sedition and rebellion a principle of their religion'.⁶⁷⁵ After the passing of the Porteous Act in 1737, which was required to be read in all churches every month for a year, a significant number of ministers refused, because they believed they would have

⁶⁷¹ NLS, Yester MS 7044, James Erskine of Grange to Lord Tweeddale, 28 Jan. 1734, cited in Ronald Sunter, *Patronage and Politics in Scotland, 1707-1832* (Edinburgh, 1986), pp.212-215, 219.

⁶⁷² A. T. N. Muirhead, 'A Secession Congregation in its Community: The Stirling Congregation of the Rev. Ebenezer Erskine, 1731-1754', *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 22 (1986), pp.215-218.

⁶⁷³ MS Murray 650/651, Vol. I, No. 86, Unsigned letter to John Stirling, 2 Dec. 1706, cited in Jeffrey Stephen, *Scottish Presbyterians and the Act of Union 1707* (Edinburgh, 2007), p.149.

⁶⁷⁴ Stephen, *ibid.*, p.154.

⁶⁷⁵ Robert Campbell, *The life of the most illustrious prince, John, duke of Argyle and Greenwich* (London, 1745), p.317; Struthers, *History of Scotland from the Union to the Abolition of the Heritable Jurisdictions*, Vol. 2, p.87.

been acquiescing in the principle of state interference in the Church.⁶⁷⁶ Robert Wallace was the leader of one group of Edinburgh ministers who successfully resisted complying with the Act, while other members of the clergy also subverted it by giving their congregations a hint, which allowed them to leave the Church before it was read out.⁶⁷⁷

In 1740 Robert Wallace again preached against the government when he suggested that Robert Walpole was managing British involvement in the War of the Austrian Succession in accord with his own private interests rather than those of Britain.⁶⁷⁸ He also opposed an attempt to circumvent the General Session in the case of John Drysdale's appointment to Lady Yester's Church in Edinburgh in the 1760s. In 1759 a number of Edinburgh ministers involved themselves in local politics, when they contributed to a pamphlet protesting about the town council's actions in appropriating lands belonging to George Heriot's hospital.⁶⁷⁹ The ministers concerned included Robert Dick, at that time a Moderate, Robert Wallace, also a Moderate, and John Erskine and Robert Walker (1716-83), both Popular ministers and strict Calvinists. They represented a range of ecclesiastical orthodoxy within the Church, yet they were equally willing to interfere in local civil and political matters by speaking out and publishing.

Direct comment on political affairs from the pulpit was fairly rare, but it did take place. For example, Mr Thomson, minister of the Old Church at

⁶⁷⁶ The Porteous Act was passed in the wake of the riots in Edinburgh in 1736 when Captain John Porteous, (c.1695-1736), Captain of the City Guard, was lynched by a mob for his part in the killing of civilians after ordering his men to quell a disturbance during a public hanging. The Act included the offer of a reward for information leading to the arrest of the murderers of Captain Porteous, and was required to be read out from the pulpit in all churches every month for a year.

⁶⁷⁷ McKerrow, *History of the Secession Church*, Vol. 1, pp.137-142.

⁶⁷⁸ B. Barnett Cochran, 'Robert Wallace', *ODNB*.

⁶⁷⁹ *Reasons of dissent and protest by Mess. John Glen, Robert Wallace, George Kay, Robert Walker, Henry Lundie, John Erskine, and Robert Dick, ministers of Edinburgh, and administrators of George Heriot's hospital, against an act of the Council of the said Hospital, of the 14th of December 1759, granting the feu of certain lands mentioned in the said act to the magistrates and town-council of the city of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1760).

Dunfermline, delivered a sermon in 1774 on parliamentary elections, and from his pulpit accused a member of his congregation of political corruption through lying and bribery, to which the accused retaliated, resulting in ‘an altercation in the face of the congregation’.⁶⁸⁰ In addition, the whole proceedings were noted, copies passed from hand to hand and the entire affair printed in the press. Thomson may have been, as one Court of Session judge suggested, making a general attack on corruption, rather than a ‘party political point’, but, his sermon was overtly political in its subject, his hearers interpreted it in relation to the election and it was reported as such in the press.⁶⁸¹ Thus, ministers were involving themselves directly in local and parliamentary politics from their pulpits, which may have encouraged ordinary people to consider these issues.

It had been by the express recommendation of the General Assembly that all ministers were asked to make sure that, at least four times a year, they were ‘diligent in instructing the people ... in the principles on which the late *glorious Revolution* and our present happy establishment are founded’.⁶⁸² Thus, on official thanksgivings or national fast-days, Scottish Presbyterian ministers, like their Anglican counterparts in England, extolled the virtues of the civil authority, the superiority of Britain’s constitution, the benefits of the rule of law and the dangers of popular tumult. For example, Hugh Blair preached a sermon in 1746 to the General Assembly which gave thanks for deliverance from the Jacobite rebellion. It was also a panegyric on the benefits of Protestant Hanoverian rule: ‘publick (*sic*) *Liberty* to a People, wise *Government*, good *Order*, and lasting *Peace* ... a determined Stand against encroaching *Tyranny* ... gave Birth to that *free* and *legal*

⁶⁸⁰ *Scots Mag.*, Nov. 1774, p.620-621; Dec.1778, p.721.

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Dec.1775, p.694.

⁶⁸² Morren, *Annals 1739-1752*, p.132.

Establishment, with which we at this Day are blessed'.⁶⁸³ However, he maintained that the rebellion had served a divine purpose to 'call us forth to the most conspicuous and Distinguished exercise of *active* Virtue', and in the midst of this eulogy to the Hanoverian regime, he suggested that this had also afforded the nation the opportunity of putting its political house in order as people had become complacent. Furthermore, the rebellion had demonstrated 'a more wonderful Prospect of Divine Government, than if all its Subjects were loyal, and willingly obedient', by reminding the nation of its '*true Interests*'.⁶⁸⁴ Although Blair stressed the blessings of the regime, and his sermon certainly extolled the value of wise government and good order, he was not wholly uncritical.

William Halyburton, minister at Inveresk, also preached on the rebellion. He too emphasized the blessings of a balanced constitution, and highlighted the fear that the Pretender's claim of hereditary right to the British throne would have turned 'a free People' into 'Bond-slaves' who 'must forever renounce all these Principles upon which their Fathers acted at the Revolution'. Instead, the nation would have been forced to return to:

Those obsolete, long-lost Sounds of Passive Obedience and Non-resistance ... now must we be taught once more implicitly to believe, that a King derives his Commission from God alone, and cannot be accountable in the least to the People.⁶⁸⁵

While both Blair and Halyburton expressed relief that the nation had been saved from a Catholic king, clearly demonstrating good Revolution principles, they each took the opportunity to deliver sermons that offered more than a simplistic and repressive loyalist message. Halyburton's sermon was more overtly loyalist than Blair's, but although he clearly equated Catholicism with tyranny and

⁶⁸³ Blair, *Wrath of man praising God*, pp.19-20. Italics in original.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.20-21.

⁶⁸⁵ William Halyburton, *Love to our country: a sermon on Romans IX.3* (Edinburgh, [1746]), p.18.

emphasised the loss of liberty under a Catholic king, he too digressed from the central message by emphasising the belief that kings must be accountable to the people. Given the political circumstances Blair and Halyburton placed a perhaps surprising emphasis on liberty, even if it was somewhat constrained by comparison with the reformers of the 1790s.

John Warden also preached a thanksgiving sermon in 1749, and he too highlighted the excellence of the constitution and the blessings enjoyed under the king noting, that

The Sovereign Power is so settled, that the Monarch is then, only, great and happy, while he maintains the Laws, and the Rights of the People. The Subjects, on the other Hand, are bound by no Law, and subject to no Duty, but what they themselves enact or consent to, by their Representatives in Parliament.⁶⁸⁶

However, he devoted much of his sermon to a catalogue of oppression. Commenting that from Mary Queen of Scots to Charles I and James VII & II, ‘Our Sovereigns, who ought to have been Protectors, became Invaders of the Peoples Rights’.⁶⁸⁷ He also emphasised that the Covenanters who took up arms had not been engaged in ‘*Rebellion*’ but were ‘oppressed People’ demanding an ‘unalienable and indefeasible ... Right of thinking for themselves, and worshipping God according to their own Consciences’.⁶⁸⁸ While Warden, like Blair and Halyburton, was preaching in favour of king, constitution and order, he too was happy to digress and equally happy to exploit the Covenanting tradition.

The Revd John Bonar (1722-61), in 1760 took the opportunity to preach that the Presbyterian Church structure was to be praised for its tendency to support ecclesiastical and civil liberty. His emphasis on the equality within the

⁶⁸⁶ Warden, *Happiness of Britain illustrated*, pp.20-28.

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.20.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.25 . Italics in the original.

government of the Church included a belief that this was the antidote to tyranny because,

the clergy, by the constitution of the church of Scotland, have, in all these courts, admitted a very large proportion of the laity to an equal judgment with themselves ... where the power is not lodged in a single hand, but in many, and so less liable to abuse.⁶⁸⁹

John Baillie (1741-1806) a minister of the Secession Church, in a sermon published in 1772, also highlighted the egalitarian nature of Presbyterianism.

The radical court in presbytery is the session, consisting of the minister ... and the elders who had been invested with their office, in consequence of the choice of the people ... The justice and equity in the constitution of this court evidently appears from this, that every member of the society is tried by his peers or equals whom he himself had nominated to a share in the government in the church.⁶⁹⁰

He went on to compare this with the civil government, but stressed that a session was only legal 'where the whole body have been the constituents, and no otherwise', and emphasised that the same must apply to Parliament. He also took the opportunity to attack lay patronage.

Admittedly some of these sermons were preached on quite rarefied occasions, but they were also all published, making them available to anyone who could read and afford to buy them or otherwise gain access to them. They addressed the themes of liberty and equality, and they could hardly fail to lodge themselves in the consciousness of those who heard them or read them. From there it was only a small step to applying such concepts to the wider world of work, social relationships and the recognition of a complete lack of access to any kind of political voice, be it through trades organisations, guilds, local councils or parliament. The clergy certainly had the potential to have a huge influence over their immediate congregations, but they had access to an even wider public

⁶⁸⁹ John Bonar, *The nature and tendency of the ecclesiastic constitution in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1760), pp.26-28.

⁶⁹⁰ John Baillie, *The influence of a crucified saviour* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1772), p.4.

through their writing because so many of their sermons, such as those just mentioned, were published and therefore available to almost everyone.

Most ministers were conservative and supportive of the state and constitution, and some may have been published with only other ministers in mind.⁶⁹¹ Others may have underestimated the ability or interest of the lower orders in debate, whether religious or political, but some clearly recognised it and were concerned by publication because such writing had the potential to reach a large audience, and explored contentious issues. By the early 1790s some ministers were writing explicitly about political ideas. For example, the Revd William Dunn (1745-98), Church of Scotland minister in Kirkintilloch, had published his *Sermon, preached at the opening of the Synod of Glasgow and Air* (1792) with a dedication to 'THE FRIENDS OF THE CONSTITUTION IN CHURCH AND STATE, AND OF THE PEOPLE'.⁶⁹² In it he argued that the people had never been able to gain any liberty without recourse to force.⁶⁹³

Dunn was immediately taken to task in print by his fellow minister, William Moodie, and condemned for using sermons to advocate political reform or radicalism.⁶⁹⁴ Regardless of this, in the following year Dunn published an *Address by a Scotsman, to his countrymen and fellow citizens, respecting the situation of public affairs, the reform, and the war impending from France* (1793). In March of that year he was tried for sedition and sentenced to three month's imprisonment in Edinburgh Tolbooth for having torn three leaves out of a book which contained minutes of the Kirkintilloch Society of the Friends of the

⁶⁹¹ For discussion of the conservative nature of the clergy see Emma Vincent, 'The Responses of Scottish Churchmen to the French Revolution, 1789-1802', *SHR*, Vol. 73 No. 2 (1994), pp.191-215.

⁶⁹² William Dunn, *A sermon, preached at the opening of the Synod of Glasgow and Air* (Glasgow, 1792).

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp.14-15.

⁶⁹⁴ William Moodie, *Political preaching* (Glasgow, 1792).

People, 'at a time when the sheriffs of Lanark and Dumbarton shires were making investigation to obtain that book'.⁶⁹⁵ There were also suspicions about his political connections to the radical leader Thomas Muir. The Revd Dr John Erskine wrote to the Revd Charles Nisbet 'I believe some passages of his Synod Sermon ... were thought to favour sedition'.⁶⁹⁶ Some ministers were clearly making people aware of contemporary issues and discussing specifically 'political' subjects. As these subjects were also broadcast more extensively through publication as pamphlets and in the newspapers, this also increased the possibility of a wider public gaining access to ideas and becoming engaged by political debate.

II

The American crisis was another issue that brought ministers into contemporary debate and engendered a substantial outpouring of political pamphleteering and preaching on both sides. Once again this had the potential to alert people to the possibility of divergent arguments which they could consider. Significantly many of the sermons and pamphlets were couched in the language of liberty and conscience and the right to choose, a language utterly familiar to any Presbyterian congregation, thereby making the debate immediately accessible to ordinary people.

The Scots recognized similarities with America, in language, in a still predominantly pre-industrial society, in the trading links between the two countries, and in their consciousness of Scotland's provincial status in relation to

⁶⁹⁵ Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 3, p.483.

⁶⁹⁶ Letter from Rev. John Erskine to Rev. Charles Nisbet, Edinburgh, August 12, 1793, cited in S. Miller, *Memoir of the Rev. Charles Nisbet, D.D.: late president of Dickinson college, Carlisle* (New York, 1840), p.233.

England.⁶⁹⁷ They were, more importantly, strongly linked by the bonds of a shared evangelical faith, which encouraged compelling sentiments of support from many within the Popular party. Scots were already acquainted with America through the evangelical revivals of the 1740s when a number of Scots began publishing and reading about American affairs in newspapers.⁶⁹⁸ For example, after appeals for fundraising for the College of New Jersey (Princeton), collections were taken at every Scottish church door in 1754.⁶⁹⁹ In addition there was a strong communication network between ministers in both countries. John Erskine, for example, maintained a lifelong correspondence with many American clergymen, as well as providing a constant supply of books to his correspondents.⁷⁰⁰ There were family ties due to emigration, and educational links with America. For example, at Irvine, where ‘many young men from that country ... were sent here for their education ... the rector had frequently 20 to 26 boarders in his house’.⁷⁰¹ Furthermore, from the beginning of the American crisis there had been increasing correspondence in the Scottish papers about the course of the war and American affairs in general.⁷⁰²

America influenced many Scots, challenging their beliefs about the British constitution and social organisation, and Scotland, including Scottish Presbyterianism, had a considerable impact on the development of an independent

⁶⁹⁷ J. Clive and B. Bailyn, ‘England’s Cultural Provinces: Scotland and America’, *WMQ* 3rd. Series Vol. 11 No. 2 Scotland and America (1954), pp.200-213; Donovan, ‘Evangelical Civic Humanism in Glasgow’, pp.227-245. See also Robert Kent Donovan, ‘The Popular Party of the Church of Scotland and the American Revolution’, in Sher and Smitten (eds), *Scotland & America in the Age of the Enlightenment*, pp.81-99; Andrew Hook, *Scotland and America 1750-1835* (Glasgow and London, 1975); Alexander Murdoch, *Scotland and America, c.1600-c.1800* (Basingstoke, 2010).

⁶⁹⁸ Landsman, ‘Witherspoon and the Problem of Provincial Identity’, pp.33-34. See also Landsman, ‘Provinces and the Empire Scotland, the American colonies and the development of British provincial identity’.

⁶⁹⁹ Morren, *Annals 1752-1766*, p.51. See also Hook, *Scotland and America*, pp.26-30.

⁷⁰⁰ Yeager, *Enlightened Evangelicalism*, pp.165-197; See also O’Brien, ‘A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735-1755’.

⁷⁰¹ *OSA*, Vol. 7, p.179 (Irvine, Ayrshire).

⁷⁰² Fagerstrom, ‘American Revolutionary Movement in Scottish Opinion’; idem, ‘Scottish Opinion and the American Revolution’, p.272.

America.⁷⁰³ Richard Sher and Andrew Hook have suggested that Enlightenment values had trickled down into the Glaswegian professional and mercantile middle class by the time of the American crisis, ensuring that the larger political, ideological and philosophical issues associated with the American cause were not ignored, even if the initial concern was economic self-interest.⁷⁰⁴ However, given the sentiments of leading Popular ministers in the city on the American issue, their preaching was significant.⁷⁰⁵

Moderates and evangelicals held opposing positions on the American crisis, and American affairs helped to shape the thinking of Popular ministers, bringing to the fore a more liberal ideology. They wholeheartedly supported the colonists, while the Moderates opposed the American ‘rebels’.⁷⁰⁶ Yet regardless of their political position ministers who wrote or preached on the subject of the American crisis brought politics into the pulpit. Alexander Carlyle spoke for many on the Moderate side when he preached that war with America was a righteous cause that should be prosecuted ‘with vigour’.⁷⁰⁷ George Campbell (1719-96), Church of Scotland minister and principal of Marischal College, in a fast day sermon on *The Nature, Extent, and Importance, of the Duty of Allegiance* (1776) argued against excessive republicanism both in Britain and the colonies.⁷⁰⁸ He also suggested that to defeat the spread of republicanism, people had to recognize the

⁷⁰³ H. P. Ippel, ‘British Sermons and the American Revolution’, *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 12 No. 2 (1982), pp.191-205; Richard B. Sher, ‘Introduction: Scottish-American Cultural Studies, Past and Present’, in Sher and Smitten (eds), *Scotland & America in the Age of the Enlightenment*, p.7.

⁷⁰⁴ R. B. Sher and A. Hook, ‘Introduction: Glasgow and the Enlightenment’, in Sher and Hook, *Glasgow Enlightenment*, p.8.

⁷⁰⁵ For example, John Gillies, John Maclaurin, William Porteous and William Thom were all supporters of the American cause and critical of government.

⁷⁰⁶ Sher, *Church and University*, pp.155-160.

⁷⁰⁷ Alexander Carlyle, *The justice and necessity of the war with our American colonies examined* (Edinburgh, 1777), p.49.

⁷⁰⁸ George Campbell, *The nature, extent, and importance, of the duty of allegiance: a sermon preached at Aberdeen, December 12, 1776, being the fast day appointed by the King, on account of the rebellion in America* (Aberdeen, 1777), p.vi.

real meaning of the right to resist authority, because resistance was only justified ‘by the greatness of the provocation’, and when regarded as important by the ‘whole community’.⁷⁰⁹ Campbell believed that nothing in the American situation justified resistance to the British government because there was no important distinction between actual and virtual representation in Britain, and therefore the colonists were not discriminated against.⁷¹⁰

In opposition, John Erskine was the best known evangelical sympathiser with the colonists, re-publishing his 1769 pamphlet, *Shall I go to war with my American Brethren?*, in 1776.⁷¹¹ He recognized that the colonists had justifiable claims, although he expressed profound concerns about the possibility and consequences of war, hoping that some form of conciliation could be reached, and he argued for better political representation for the colonies.⁷¹² On the eve of war he was still of the opinion that the colonists’ claims were well founded. However, Erskine’s pamphlet was attacked as ‘poisonous’ in a review in the *Edinburgh Magazine*, and the reviewer also condemned the ‘wild divisions of the Scottish clergy’ for failing to ‘offer prayers for our most gracious sovereign’. Worse still, the reviewer claimed that there were others that ‘actually prostitute their pulpits by railings against government, and invoking the Almighty to crown with success the American arms’.⁷¹³ David Grant (1750-91), Popular minister at Edinburgh, who preached a fast day sermon in 1779, would doubtless have roused the reviewer’s ire. Grant censured the administration, commenting that Britain had experienced

⁷⁰⁹ Ibid., p.12.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid., pp.22-23.

⁷¹¹ Ned C. Landsman, ‘John Erskine’, *ODNB*.

⁷¹² John Erskine, *Reflections on the rise, progress, and probable consequences of the present contentions with the colonies* (Edinburgh, 1776), pp.29-38.

⁷¹³ *EMR*, June 1776.

Disappointment, where we expected success; loss, where we expected gain; shame where we expected honour. Anxiety in every breast at home; rage and resentment abroad; poverty and decline of trade; property in a sinking, staggering and fluctuating condition, all proclaim aloud the judgements of heaven.⁷¹⁴

William Thom, the Popular party minister at Govan was another outspoken supporter of the colonists during the American crisis. He was highly critical of the British government for their pursuit of the war and he, like Erskine, favoured conciliation with the colonists. He preached a number of sermons in favour of America which explicitly addressed the folly of the British government in prosecuting the war. He castigated the ministry for perpetuating an extravagant and preventable war, and in 1783 he repeated John Dunning's 1780 resolution on the influence of the crown.⁷¹⁵ Thom's expression of support for this resolution, made from his pulpit, was an overtly political statement which sent out a clear message to his parishioners about corruption in politics and brought political debate into the midst of his congregation. He even speculated that government ministers were deliberately prolonging the war in order to enrich themselves.

It is strange that any people should expect or dare to pray for success, whilst the end they aim at is wrong, and the conduct they pursue obviously criminal... it is possible there may be in high life some persons ... so far debased as to wish for success in the war, that they may get more gold and silver to consume in luxury ... they may with heavier hand bear down and oppress their dependents abroad and at home ... a ministerial party, who, by a revenue squeezed from America, mean to create new offices, new posts, new pensions, greater bribes, in order ... to establish and ascertain a system of despotic power ... we need not wonder that a wise and gracious God hath not yet granted a success which would be grievous to the people abroad, and, in its issue, lamentably hurtful to most of those at home.⁷¹⁶

⁷¹⁴ David Grant, *The living manners of the times, and their consequences; together with the motives to reformation* (Edinburgh, 1779), p.19.

⁷¹⁵ William Thom, *A Letter to the Author of a Case of Patronage, Stated according to the Laws, Civil and Ecclesiastical, of the Realm of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1783), p.10 cited in Donovan, 'Evangelical Civic Humanism', p.238. Dunning's resolution in the House of Commons was 'that the influence of the crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished', William Cobbett, *The parliamentary history of England, from the earliest period to the year 1803*, 36 Vols (London, 1814), Vol. 21, col. 347, <<http://www2.odl.ox.ac.uk>>. [Accessed 11/04/2012].

⁷¹⁶ William Thom, *From Whence Come Wars? An enquiry into the origin, with a view of the progress and effects, of war* (Glasgow, 1782), pp.34, 37-38.

He also regarded the ruling oligarchy as agents of tyranny and identified the remedy as ‘the people’.

[E]ven in the most despotic government, the last appeal is to the people; the people may, by their cries and endeavours, find means to remove the patrons and tools of corruption from about the throne ... and even oblige the Statesman to shake his hand from holding of bribes.⁷¹⁷

In a city like Glasgow, where Scots merchants had well-developed and major trading links to America, Thom’s sermons in favour of America, which addressed issues of taxation, representation and resistance, had strong resonances, not simply because of trade, but also in the parallels which could be drawn by those in the city who had no representation, despite being tax-payers themselves.

He observed that

there was a great outcry in British America, because the colonies there were taxed by the British parliament where they have no representative; in fact the lower classes of the people of North Britain, who pay a greater proportion of all the taxes imposed on the nation, are as really without representatives in parliament as the British colonies in North America.... The common people of Scotland ... have sense enough to perceive that the political constitution of the nation bears extremely hard upon them.⁷¹⁸

Thom, moreover, did not confine his thoughts to America. He speculated about extending the domestic franchise to include the middling rank, and he defended the anti-patronage associations organized by the Popular party.⁷¹⁹ He also addressed his concerns about corruption among the nation’s upper class, contrasting this with the poverty of farmers which he believed had resulted from the Union, which had encouraged landlords to raise rents beyond tenants’ means, and he was therefore forced to, ‘commiserate the visible distress of his flock’.⁷²⁰

He continued by comparing the Scots with their English counterparts and

⁷¹⁷ William Thom, *Achan’s Trespass in the Accursed Thing Considered* (Glasgow, 1778), p.23.

⁷¹⁸ [Thom], *Candid Enquiry into the causes of the Late and the Intended Migrations from Scotland*, pp.21-22.

⁷¹⁹ Donovan, ‘Evangelical Civic Humanism’, pp.236-237.

⁷²⁰ William Thom, *The works of the Rev. William Thom, Late Minister of Govan* (Glasgow, 1799), pp.159-161.

concluded that ‘the free-spirited English farmer [who] breathes the air of liberty would sooner go to the farthest parts of the world than starve themselves ... whilst all the profits of their labour accrued to greedy landlords’.⁷²¹

Yet another Popular party supporter of the American cause, as well as an opponent of patronage, was John Erskine’s friend and colleague, the Revd Charles Nisbet (1736-1804), Popular minister at Montrose. In 1780 he was taken to task by the town’s councillors, for preaching ‘in a seditious manner evidently ... to mislead and, pervert the Minds of the people against his Majesty’s person and Government’ and for ‘willfully (*sic*) neglecting ... to implore the Divine Blessing on the arms of our King and Country against our combined Foes’.⁷²² Nisbet preached against the policy of the British government, both for their conduct towards America and towards the mass of people in Britain, maintaining that the legislature had no right to tax the people until they were represented in Parliament. He so exasperated the local councillors that they rose and left the church, to Nisbet’s comment that ‘The wicked flee when no man pursueth’.⁷²³ Nisbet believed that the views of the ‘people of fashion’ on the conflict with America were quite opposite to those of the ‘common people, who rejoice in that liberty which they are sensible they want, and which they hope to share’.⁷²⁴ On another occasion, the magistrates reported his conduct to government, resulting in him being held until his friends among the higher ranks of the community were able to intervene.⁷²⁵ Nisbet described himself as a ‘persecuted ... friend of

⁷²¹ *Ibid.*, pp.166-167.

⁷²² Angus Archives, M1/1/9 Montrose Town Council Minutes 1771-1794, 22 March 1780.

⁷²³ Proverbs 28:1; Miller, *Memoir of the Rev. Charles Nisbet*, pp.74-77; D. P. Davidson, (ed.) *Montrosiana: A Collection Of Local Anecdotes And Sketches From The Lives OF Prominent Montrosians* (Montrose, n. d.), pp.28-29.

⁷²⁴ W. J. T. Bell, Jr., ‘Scottish Emmigration to America: A Letter of Dr. Charles Nisbet to Dr. John Witherspoon, 1784’, *WMQ*, 3rd. Series Vol. 2 No. 2 Scotland and America (1954), p.286.

⁷²⁵ Davidson, (ed.) *Montrosiana*, pp.28-29.

America during the war ... reproach(ed) as a seditious person in the British House of Lords, for my attachment to America'.⁷²⁶

The American crisis was also the source of contentious debates in the General Assembly. In 1776, a dispute over the loyal address to the king was only narrowly avoided, many ministers having favoured an address asking for the recall of troops from America and for 'an end to so unnatural a war'.⁷²⁷ The Assembly itself was reported never to have been so full. In 1782 William Porteous, Popular minister at Glasgow, proposed an alternative address to the King, expressing acclaim for the appointment of the second Rockingham administration.⁷²⁸ This suggested to his Moderate opponents that the Church was casting doubt on the previous administration's handling of the American War: 'your Majesty has taken into your immediate service men of the highest abilities, and possessing the confidence of the people'. Porteous continued by asserting that 'The late change of the ministry was a great event – it was brought about at the desire of the people in parliament assembled ... That we had now got a ministry who listened to the voice of the people, and acted upon constitutional principles'. Those in favour of the address contended that the General Assembly had a right to comment on 'public affairs'. As individuals, and 'As citizens interested in the fate of their country, it was their duty to express their sentiments upon the late memorable changes of his Majesty's council'. Moreover,

as Presbyterians, and as holding their most sacred and civil rights under the sanction of the principles established at the glorious Revolution, and at the settlement of the Crown on the illustrious house of Hanover, [we] cannot, with propriety, express a doubt, that the voice of the people ought to have its full weight in the government of the British realm⁷²⁹

⁷²⁶ Bell, 'Scottish Emigration to America', pp.276-289.

⁷²⁷ *Scots Mag.*, May, 1776, p.271.

⁷²⁸ *Ibid.*, June 1782, pp.326-328.

⁷²⁹ *Ibid.*

The clergy's involvement in political questions often had a public focus that was wider than individual congregations or Assembly debates, because their views were reported in the press and their sermons were published as pamphlets. This particular Assembly debate was reported widely in the *Scots Magazine* and several times in the *Caledonian Mercury* as well as being reported in several London newspapers.⁷³⁰

Essentially many Popular ministers and elders believed they had a right to comment on government and specifically on bad government when it affected 'public welfare', and those supporting Porteous included John Erskine, his cousin Henry Erskine (1746–1817), lawyer and politician, John Gillies and Andrew Crosbie.⁷³¹ John Erskine maintained that 'to study politics, and to write of them, is the right of every freeborn Briton'.⁷³² Popular and Moderate clergy in both town and countryside were expressing forthright political opinions, some in opposition to government, and they were doing so from their pulpits, in pamphlets, and in the press, bringing their congregations and readers into this debate, and clearly offering alternative views of American affairs. The ordinary people who heard them or read their published tracts could be in no doubt that there were divergent viewpoints on this issue and that such views had more legitimacy because they issued from the clergy. Scots were vitally interested in the American crisis and once again the clergy were using their pulpits to propagate their viewpoints, and in so doing, encouraging their congregations to participate in the debate.

⁷³⁰ *Cal. Merc.*, 29 May, 1, 3 June 1782; *London Chronicle*, 28-30 May 1782; *Public Advertiser*, 17 May, 5, 10, 14 June, 20 July 1782; *Parker's General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*, 23 July 1782; *Whitehall Evening Post*, 28-30 May 1782.

⁷³¹ *Scots Mag.*, June 1782, pp.326-327.

⁷³² John Erskine, *Shall I go to war with my American brethren?* (London, 1769), p.5.

III

America was far from the only issue to stir clergy and laymen into print. The anticipated passing of a simple piece of legislation, the Roman Catholic Relief Bill, which had already been introduced in England in 1778, caused a storm of protest in Scotland. Apart from the actual riots that ensued, it also resulted in a proliferation of pamphlets and sermons, this time against ‘Popery’.⁷³³ Once again they were rich in the language of ‘persecution’ and ‘liberty of conscience’. For example, the minister at Sanquhar preached about the ‘terrors of persecution’, and how ‘liberty of conscience ... raises its tremendous voice’.⁷³⁴ In a letter from Sir James Oughton, the Commander in Chief of the forces in Scotland, to Lord Weymouth, Secretary of State for the Northern Department, Oughton had expressed his concerns about the ability of ministers to rouse their congregations: ‘Great Numbers of the dissenting Ministers, and several of the Established Clergy are avowedly Republicans and Americans; the Popery Bill gave these People an Handle to inflame the Minds of the Populace’.⁷³⁵ He had some justification. Patrick Bannerman, for example, argued that ‘patronage ... is a relic of Popery. It is congenial to the hierarchy of the Romish church, and breathes the spirit of despotism. Diametrically opposite to a republican constitution, it unhinges the whole frame of Presbyterian government’.⁷³⁶ This was similar to the sentiments of Archibald Bruce, where ‘Infallibility’ was ‘Wrapt up with *Patronage* from *Rome*’.⁷³⁷

⁷³³ For a discussion of the anti-Catholic riots in Scotland, see Donovan, *No Popery and Radicalism* and chapter 6.

⁷³⁴ John Thomson, *National Calamity the Consequence of National Guilt* (Glasgow, 1779), pp.23, 43-49.

⁷³⁵ Letter from Sir James Adolphus Oughton, Commander in Chief of the forces in Scotland to Lord Weymouth, Oct. 9 1779, cited in Donovan, *No Popery and Radicalism*, p.209.

⁷³⁶ Bannerman, *Address To The People Of Scotland On Ecclesiastical And Civil Liberty*, p.17.

⁷³⁷ Bruce, *Kirkiad*, p.37.

As a result of the Quebec Act of 1774, which had confirmed some civil and ecclesiastical privileges for Canada's Catholics, John Erskine had voiced strong opposition to toleration for Catholics in Canada and Britain. For Erskine, the concept of liberty included opposition to Catholicism because Catholicism represented arbitrary authority. Thus Erskine argued that 'Popery' was an 'implacable enemy to the general liberties of mankind' and therefore 'can claim no constitutional rights from government, because they cannot give government constitutional security, that they will not disturb it'.⁷³⁸ This discussion of the potential threat from Catholicism to the political constitution had re-emerged during the General Assembly debates in 1779 on the proposed Act for Catholic toleration, and Erskine thereafter had published his pamphlet *Reflections on the Rise, Progress, and Probable Consequences of the Present Contentions with the Colonies* (1776), just one of dozens of publications on this subject.⁷³⁹ In a similar vein, William Porteous preached to his Glasgow congregation that 'we can have no security from men, who cannot be bound by the strongest obligations of conscience', but 'THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION WILL TOLERATE THEM ALL, provided they teach no opinions which are destructive to the state'.⁷⁴⁰ It was therefore not Catholicism as a religion that could not be tolerated, because both Porteous and Erskine believed that the state was quite secure enough to grant toleration. Rather they contended that Catholics undermined the liberty of the state by their loyalty to the Pope in opposition to Britain's civil and religious constitution.

⁷³⁸ Erskine, *Reflections on the Rise, Progress, and Probable Consequences of the Present Contentions with the Colonies*, pp.3, 27.

⁷³⁹ For the range of arguments presented in the General Assembly, see *A Narrative of the Debate in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, May 25 1779. Occasioned by apprehensions of an intended repeal of the penal statutes against papists* (Edinburgh, 1780).

⁷⁴⁰ William Porteous, *The doctrine of toleration, applied to the present times* (Glasgow, 1778), pp.10, 13.

On this issue the Popular party and the Moderates were again on opposite sides, with the Popular party clergy utterly opposed to Catholic relief. Some Popular ministers were even arrested for their involvement in a campaign which had drawn on the support of thousands of ordinary people. One was David Grant, because he and another Popular clergyman, Ralph Bowie, were believed by the authorities to have been involved in anti-government activities. When Lord George Gordon (1751-93) political and religious agitator, and instigator of the eponymous riots in London, had proposed to Grant the ‘establishment of a Congress; or, Political Presbytery’, Grant admitted that he had written to sympathisers about ‘the good old cause’, a commonwealth government.⁷⁴¹ A letter to Lord Suffolk, who was responsible for Scottish affairs at this time, illustrates the fear of the clergy’s involvement in this debate:

The Pulpits, Presbyteries, Synods, Burgess meetings, and Associations all speak the same language expressive of their fears, and declarative of their Resolutions to oppose by all legal and constitutional means - Terms too often employed to cloak the worst of Purposes. The most moderate of the Clergy of the Established Church are obliged, for their own sakes to join in the Cry; all the enthusiastick (*sic*) Preachers, Non-jurors, and Republicans of all Denominations labour assiduously to spread the alarm.⁷⁴²

Although opposition to Catholic relief was expressed by some ministers in political terms as detrimental to the constitution, it had once again raised the spectre of the Covenanting struggle of the previous century, and the popular outcry demonstrated the continuing strength of that tradition for many in Scotland. It was a tradition kept very much alive by congregations who were literate, who had access to the press and pamphlets and who indulged in private reading of serious polemical Covenanting works.

⁷⁴¹ Cited in Donovan, *No Popery and Radicalism*, pp.280-281. For a range of anti-Catholic pamphlets and published sermons, see Donovan pp.326-340.

⁷⁴² Letter from Sir James Adolphous Oughton, cited in *ibid.*, p.23.

IV

The debate about liberty of conscience in religion, which was discussed in chapter two, increasingly became synonymous with civil and political liberty, and the language in which such matters were discussed emulated the patronage debate by using the language of liberty and conscience. Those involved in the pamphlet debate entwined religious and civil complaints and the language of the patronage dispute became the language of political grievance, a language already quite familiar to ordinary people. Hence, concern for reform in political matters, could be readily assimilated by them because it was couched in terms which were immediately understood, and which had emerged from religious concerns. For example, during a dispute over patronage between the magistrates and the session in Glasgow in 1762, one writer had warned that the attack on their religious rights would not end there; civil liberties would be next: ‘Just now, the privileges of the church, and the rights of the Christian people are going to be invaded: by and by, your civil rights, and the immunities and privileges of your corporations may be struck at’.⁷⁴³ He maintained that this was a contest between ‘the cause of Religion and Liberty’ and ‘the shackles and fetters of Patronage’, and he believed that the only antidote to such attacks was greater involvement by the inhabitants of the city: ‘a popular appearance, and a popular subscription, and the election of trusty commissioners to manage the affair’.⁷⁴⁴

The link between secular and ecclesiastical politics has been noted in the General Assembly debate in 1782, over America and the change of ministry, where those supporting the address included not only the clergy but Henry

⁷⁴³ Nisbet, *Seasonable Address to the Citizens of Glasgow*, p.13.

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.14, 26.

Erskine, the leader of the independent Scottish Whigs.⁷⁴⁵ Hence, analogies from the contemporary political situation were brought to the forefront of the argument and a number of anti-patronage pamphlets brought ecclesiastical and political reform together. One pamphlet was written by Andrew Crosbie, who in 1760, had been in charge of a legal challenge to the magistrates in Dumfries, after a popular protest had erupted in the burgh in the late 1750s over the issue of the closed nature of council elections.⁷⁴⁶ In *Thoughts of a Layman Concerning Patronage and Presentations* (1769), Crosbie maintained that the best way to select a minister was by the election of the people. Although the practice of the call might produce some ‘little stir’, this had beneficial results because it was in the freedom of exercising the right to the call that ‘we owe chiefly those ideas of liberty that the lower class of mankind in Scotland feel’.⁷⁴⁷ He believed that the existing voting system in county, burgh and parliamentary elections deprived

the lower class of people of every feeling of liberty. But in the call and election of ministers, the people felt their own weight; and the little struggles and disputes that happened on those occasions tended to rouse and excite some sense of liberty, and spirit for preserving it.⁷⁴⁸

He attributed this to the system of Presbyterian Church government, which ‘tends to excite ideas of liberty, and to animate men with affection for it ... Every struggle for liberty in Scotland since the Reformation has been by Presbyterians’, which alluded not only to the opposition to Jacobitism, but also to the legacy of the Covenanters.⁷⁴⁹

Crosbie also identified where he believed that the power of patronage lay.

Of the benefices of the Established Church, the vast majority resided with the

⁷⁴⁵ *Scots Mag.*, June 1782, pp.326-328; Michael Fry ‘Henry Erskine’ *ODNB*.

⁷⁴⁶ Murdoch, ‘Politics and the People in the Burgh of Dumfries’, p.155; Donovan, *No Popery and Radicalism*, p.16.

⁷⁴⁷ Crosbie, *Thoughts of a layman*, p.26.

⁷⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.27-28

⁷⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

crown, nobility, and landed gentry, and the remainder with the burghs, universities and colleges, with only three in the hands of heritors and elders. From this, he expounded the potential for corruption:

If ... the right of presentation may be perverted, so as to answer political purposes, what a fund of corruption in election-matters may be found in patronage, according to this state? ... Presentations have been given to the friends and relations of electors of members of parliament, to influence their votes in elections ... When it appears, that the great weight of this influence over the election of members of the house of Commons is in the hands of the crown, and of the nobility, the idea of settlements by presentations alone lays open to our view a political evil of a very serious nature.⁷⁵⁰

Crosbie had no doubt that patronage and political corruption went hand in hand. As did William Graham (1737–1801), Anti-burgher minister at Whitehaven, who maintained that without redress of the patronage laws the Church would ‘find pulpits filled with men who have purchased a recommendation unto their own benefices, by good deeds done, or to be done by them, or their friends, unto the patron, or his friends’. He compared this with the venality of parliamentary elections: ‘How often has a good word spoken in my lord’s ear, in favour of an hungry expectant, procured a vote for a member of parliament’.⁷⁵¹

Thomas Hardy (1748-98), Moderate minister at Ballingry, also commented on the link between ecclesiastical and secular politics. In a pamphlet concerning proposals to grant vacant stipends to patrons, he hoped that his proposal would ‘totally break the ruinous system, of making the settlement of ministers subservient to election-politics in the counties and boroughs of the kingdom ... when the church of Christ is made the football of worldly politics, or the prop of

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid., pp.35-37.

⁷⁵¹ Graham, *Attempt to prove, that every species of patronage is foreign to the nature of the Church*, p.116. Graham was a Scot, born in West Lothian, who joined the Secession church largely due to his opposition to patronage. Kenneth B. E. Roxburgh ‘William Graham’ *ODNB*.

secular ambition'.⁷⁵² Fears that church patronage served political ends were justified. For example, George Dempster (1732-1818), M.P., a man considered to be one of Scotland's most independent and upstanding eighteenth-century politicians, wrote that his election in the 1762 campaign would, 'certainly turn on a single vote unless I am able to provide a Councillor's son in a Kirk'.⁷⁵³

Archibald Fletcher was a Whig advocate who, a year before joining the burgh reform movement in Edinburgh, had written a pamphlet in which he put forward a case for much more than just the election of the clergy.⁷⁵⁴ His argument was couched in explicitly political language, equating ecclesiastical with political liberty, while also attacking corruption in government. He maintained that it was 'the indispensable duty of every good citizen ... to stem that torrent of variegated corruption, which has entered every department of the state'.⁷⁵⁵ He also discussed the 'deformities' in the constitution, remarking that 'the whole body of the common people of Scotland, are totally excluded from enjoying the smallest share in power, with regard to the direction or administration of public affairs', and over and over again Fletcher emphasised this point.⁷⁵⁶ Fletcher's pamphlet preceded his involvement in burgh reform, and his political inspiration clearly stemmed from his religious belief and his adherence to the Popular cause as an elder in the General Assembly. His pamphlet was even recommended to opponents of

⁷⁵² Thomas Hardy, *The principles of moderation, addressed to the clergy of the popular interest in the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1782), p.65.

⁷⁵³ NAS, Papers of the Maule Family, Earls of Dalhousie, GD45/14/431, George Dempster of Dunichen to Lord Panmure, 20 June 1762, cited in Sunter, *Patronage and Politics in Scotland*, p.69.

⁷⁵⁴ [Fletcher] *Inquiry into the principles of ecclesiastical patronage and presentation*.

⁷⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.22, 85.

⁷⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.13.

patronage by the secretary of the new Glasgow Constitutional Society, William Muir.⁷⁵⁷

Fletcher did not advocate political rights across all sections of society, but he clearly addressed the problem of a nation in which political rights were denied to virtually all, and he emphasised the necessity of abolishing patronage as a means of ensuring the political awareness and the conscious exercise of the right of freedom by the majority of the people. He contended that the only notion of liberty which most people enjoyed, came from their right to elect a minister of their choice.

[T]he whole common people of Scotland, are, from the necessary operation of political causes, in such a condition, that they can have no just conceptions or impressions of the nature or extent of political liberty, except alone, what ideas of freedom may arise from the enjoyment of their spiritual or ecclesiastical rights.⁷⁵⁸

Furthermore, Fletcher argued that parliamentary offices were filled through nepotism and friendship by

men, who, however respectable in point of rank ... possess no title from their abilities, love of the public, application to business, to govern our provinces, to lead our armies, to command our fleets, and to fill the benches of our courts of justice.⁷⁵⁹

With regard to ecclesiastical patronage, he urged that ‘the right and power of election should be vested in the people, at large; by which is meant at least the heritors, elders, and heads of families, in every parish’.⁷⁶⁰ Thus Fletcher was suggesting a significant cross-section of Scottish society, because heads of families encompassed a very wide range of people. He also ridiculed the double standard adopted by those who argued that popular elections were ‘pernicious’ because the people were incapable of judging the proper qualifications of those

⁷⁵⁷ *Cal. Merc.*, 6 Oct. 1784.

⁷⁵⁸ [Fletcher], *Inquiry into the principles of ecclesiastical patronage and presentation*, p.14.

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.138.

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.2.

who would be their ministers. To his mind people who had been taught religion from the cradle and were considered able to judge ‘doctrines and morals’, should be able to judge the qualifications of their minister; if not, then theology, ‘though continually taught, is forever to remain unintelligible’.⁷⁶¹ The validity of this comment is also supported by the range of polemical theological books which were bought in substantial numbers by the lower orders.

Fletcher believed that the right to ‘call’ a minister was the means by which the ordinary people of Scotland would achieve a sense of ‘self-estimation’, raising their ‘sentiments’ and ‘manners’, and thus inculcating the ‘advantages of political liberty ... without the enjoyment of which, by the people, freedom can, scarcely, be said to exist, in the constitution’.⁷⁶² He could not emphasise strongly enough that

in impairing and defacing the ideas and impressions of liberty from the minds of the people, in introducing those of slavery in their place, and in concurring with the civil institutions of the country, to cause a total extinction of the sense and spirit of liberty, among the great body of the people; the laws of patronage are, in a free government, unquestionably, inconsistent with public utility.⁷⁶³

Patrick Bannerman, in his *Address to the People of Scotland, on Ecclesiastical and Civil Liberty* (1782), while also politically radical in arguing for the rights of merchants, tradesmen, farmers and clergy, clearly did not extend the concept as far as Fletcher.⁷⁶⁴ However, he did question why

a mean fellow in a trifling burgh shall be entitled to vote ... while a gentleman ... is unqualified [and why] the great body of the people, those of most respect and usefulness in the commonwealth, shall have no representation, no protection of their rights, no liberty!⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., pp.147-148.

⁷⁶² Ibid., pp.69, 79.

⁷⁶³ Ibid., p.97.

⁷⁶⁴ Bannerman, *Address To The People Of Scotland On Ecclesiastical And Civil Liberty*, p.9.

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid., p.20.

He exhorted his fellow Scots to emulate America and Ireland by ‘set[ting] bounds to arbitrary power’, and he was exceedingly hopeful that the newly elected Whig administration would support ‘civil [and] ecclesiastical liberty’. In a nod to John Dunning’s parliamentary motion in 1780 against the increasing power of the crown he expressed, in traditional Whig sentiments, concerns about the political corruption that ensued from patronage.

[P]atronage had in Scotland been applied by the servants of the Crown to no other purpose than to promote the interest of the Court in Parliament; that it has been a powerful engine of corruption, and destroyed that freedom of Parliament which is so essential to political liberty.... if no check is given to the aristocracy which hath governed this country, neither this, nor any other branch of political liberty, will be reserved to us.... It is but the recovery of an unalienable right that is requested by the great body of the nation.⁷⁶⁶

He also gave a stark warning that patronage served only to ‘increase the power of an aristocracy already too powerful, and to add to that system of corruption become already far too prevalent’.⁷⁶⁷ Hence ‘the middle and lower ranks of this country have hardly been able to taste the sweets of freedom’.⁷⁶⁸ He raised the spectre of a people who recognised ‘their own powers’ and whose ‘Inalienable rights will not always continue to be invaded with impunity’, thereby linking religious freedom with civil and political liberty.⁷⁶⁹ Thus pamphlets on religious freedom were also engaging with notions of political corruption and reform, and the arguments were quite comprehensible to readers at the bottom of the social scale because they already had a long-standing familiarity with debates based on liberty and conscience through their reading on religious matters and their involvement in the patronage issue.

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid., pp.13-14.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid., p.15.

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid., p.20.

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid., p.15.

V

As well as preaching and writing, ministers and elders also actively involved themselves in ‘Constitutional’ societies in an effort to eradicate patronage. While the ‘Constitutional’ societies were new, the precedent of commenting on and opposing government policy by ministers was not. Robert Wodrow had described ‘Praying Societies’, which, during the controversy over the Oath of Abjuration in 1712, were ‘very plain’ in their opposition to government.⁷⁷⁰ In Glasgow a Constitutional Society of Correspondence for Abolishing Patronage, had been founded in 1771. It consisted ‘chiefly of the ministers and elders of the city, with some other hearty friends’ and was still in existence after a ‘New Constitutional Society’ was established c.1782.⁷⁷¹ The president of the ‘old’ society was John Gillies, a Popular party minister at Glasgow. The ‘old’ society had wanted to see the right of patronage restored to the Act of 1690 with the power of presentation in the hands of heritors and elders in each parish. However, the ‘new’ society favoured ‘pure popular elections without any presentation’.⁷⁷²

The ‘old’ society had corresponded with other ministers ‘from time to time’, sending ‘pamphlets gratis to all corners of Scotland’ attempting to encourage them to join with its members and vote at the General Assembly to confound the Moderates.⁷⁷³ However, Gillies was concerned that ministers should provide a united front at the next Assembly debate in May 1784, rather than focussing on the different objectives of the two societies: the choice of a minister

⁷⁷⁰ Wodrow, *Analecta*, Vol. 2, p.55.

⁷⁷¹ Patrick Wodrow, *Copy of a printed letter, signed John Gillies* (Edinburgh, 1784), p.14; *Cal. Merc.*, 12 Aug. 1782.

⁷⁷² *A speech, addressed to the provincial synod of Glasgow and Ayr, met at Ayr, 14th April 1784, by one of the members of that court, upon patronage* (Edinburgh, 1784), p.11.

⁷⁷³ ‘Letter of the Old Constitutional Society in Glasgow by John Gillies, President’ 16 Sept. 1783 in the appendix to *ibid.*, pp.36-41.

either by presentation or call. Prior to this, in 1782, the old Glasgow society had ‘dispersed eleven hundred circular letters through Scotland’.⁷⁷⁴ In 1783 a letter was issued which included detailed tactics on how to oppose ‘the friends of tyranny’, as well as recommending John Snodgrass’s pamphlet, *An Effectual Method for Recovering our Religious Liberties Addressed to the Elders of the Church of Scotland* (1770).⁷⁷⁵ In 1771 the ‘old’ society had already sent copies of this to every parish in Scotland. This type of activity emphasises another way in which ordinary people could be pulled into this debate by ministers and elders, and as one pamphleteer commented in 1784:

[T]he inflammatory pamphlets, publications in the newspapers, and printed letters from contending societies at Glasgow, relating to the subject of patronage, have ... introduced faction and disorder into all quarters of our extensive Synod [Ayr].... This epidemical spiritual disease, taking hold of the weaknesses, prejudices, and passions, of too many of the lower class of elders, the infection hath naturally ... spread among the people.⁷⁷⁶

By 1789 the Glasgow Committee was still advertising in the press and giving thanks to the 300 parishes who had supported the Committee in its endeavours, as well as the ‘*Presbyteries and parishes*’, which had already collected money to allow delegates to be sent to London to seek out Members of Parliament who might present a petition. They also wished to encourage a further 500 parishes to collect money to pay for the cost of employing legal counsel, and they emphasised that the only ‘mode of settling Ministers [was by] POPULAR ELECTION (our *unalienable right*)’. The Committee was determined that this information should be dispersed as widely as possible and the advertisement was to be ‘inserted in all the Scotch newspapers; and our friends in towns, &c. who read newspapers regularly; will please be so good as send copies of it to their

⁷⁷⁴ *Cal. Merc.*, 12 Aug. 1782.

⁷⁷⁵ ‘Letter of the Old Constitutional Society in Glasgow’, pp.36-41.

⁷⁷⁶ Wodrow, *Copy of a printed letter*, p.17.

neighbouring parishes who may not constantly peruse these means of intelligence'.⁷⁷⁷ What this also highlights, apart from the actual involvement of ministers in these societies, is how ably the opponents of patronage were using the press and publications to keep this issue at the forefront of people's minds.

Ministers' involvement in such societies also foreshadowed the activities of several Scottish ministers who became actively involved in reform politics in the 1790s. Individuals such as John Wilson (1733-1803), Anti-burgher minister at Methven, and son of William Wilson, one of the founders of the Associate Presbytery, was one of the 'leading men' in the Perth Friends of the People, a delegate to the first Edinburgh Convention, and was thought 'to be the author of all the inflammatory & seditious libels which appear in ... Perth'.⁷⁷⁸ Jedidiah Aikman, the assistant New Licht Burgher minister at Perth, was prominent in the reform movement and 'a staunch democrat'.⁷⁷⁹ David Sangster (d.1806), the minister of the Relief Church in Perth, was denounced for his extreme views, while the Relief Church in Perth was used as a meeting place to elect weaver delegates to one of the Conventions of the Friends of the People.⁷⁸⁰ James Robertson (1750-1811), Anti-burgher minister at Kilmarnock and Frederick McFarlane, Anti-burgher minister at Montrose, were both delegates to the second Convention, and Ebenezer Hislop (1746-1831), Burgher minister at Shotts, was a delegate to the first Convention.⁷⁸¹ James McEwan, Anti-burgher minister at

⁷⁷⁷ *Cal. Merc.*, 6 Aug. 1789.

⁷⁷⁸ Morren, *Annals 1739-1752*, p.358; NAS, Home Office: Correspondence, Letters and Papers, Scotland 18 Jun. 1792-30 Oct. 1792, RH2/4/64, f.341, anon. letter to the Lord Advocate; 1 Dec. 1792-16 Dec. 1792, RH2/4/66, ff.342-370, spy's Reports of the Minutes of the Proceedings of the First General Convention of the Delegates from the Societies of the Friends of the People Throughout Scotland'; 16 Jan. 1793-26 Feb. 1793, RH2/4/69, f.231, letter from Pat Moir.

⁷⁷⁹ Penny, *Traditions of Perth*, p.174.

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.68; Small, *Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p.556. The Relief Church had a significant element from the lower orders, eleven out of fourteen names on the title deeds were weavers.

⁷⁸¹ Brims, 'The Covenanting Tradition and Scottish Radicalism in the 1790s', pp.53-54.

Dundee, attended a meeting of the Society for Constitutional Information in London in April 1794, and around the same time was elected by Dundee Friends of Liberty as delegate to a proposed second British Convention.⁷⁸² James Donaldson (1751-1824), the Berean minister at Dundee and Neil Douglas (1750-1823), a minister of the Relief Church were both connected to radical politics, and Douglas was a delegate to the third Convention in 1793.⁷⁸³ His *Monitory Address to Great Britain* (1792) observed that many of the decrees of the National Assembly in France ‘would do immortal honour to a British Parliament’.⁷⁸⁴ In 1816 Douglas was tried for sedition for slanderous comments from his pulpit on King and government.⁷⁸⁵ William Dunn, Church of Scotland minister at Kirkintilloch, wrote and preached in favour of reform and was tried for sedition in 1793.⁷⁸⁶ Thomas Fyshe Palmer (1747-1802), the Unitarian minister at Dundee was tried for sedition and sentenced to seven years transportation. Thus, some ministers regularly involved themselves in political issues, not only through preaching and publishing, but by actively involving themselves in reforming societies.

Conclusion

From the time when Ebenezer Erskine defended the right of congregations to choose their own ministers in 1732, through to the 1790s when ministers in Perth were accused of ‘preaching politics’ from their pulpits, the clergy had been

⁷⁸² Brims, ‘Scottish Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution’, pp.106-107.

⁷⁸³ Bob Harris, ‘Popular politics in Angus and Perthshire in the seventeen-nineties’, *Historical Research*, Vol. 80 No. 210 (2007), pp.552-553.

⁷⁸⁴ Neil Douglas, *A monitory address to Great Britain; a poem in six parts* (Edinburgh, 1792), p.185.

⁷⁸⁵ Joan Christodoulou, ‘The Glasgow Universalist Church and Scottish Radicalism from the French Revolution to Chartism: A Theology of Liberation’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 43, No. 4, (1992), pp.611-613.

⁷⁸⁶ Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 3, p.483.

making direct and explicit appeals to their congregations, exposing them to the arguments and involving them in the debate.⁷⁸⁷ What this chapter has demonstrated is how important the influence of the clergy was in bringing ordinary people within the sphere of debate. Members of the clergy and elders had involved themselves in the major issues of the times: Catholic relief; the American crisis; patronage; civil reform; they had organised constitutional societies; censured government from the pulpit or in writing; and by the 1790s some had joined radical associations.⁷⁸⁸ It therefore cannot be denied that ministers consistently brought political issues within the sphere of their congregations, offering direct access to political debate in language which every member of their congregations could comprehend, and often drawing analogies from a familiar Covenanted past. The debates were carried to the public through pulpit sermons, books, pamphlets and the press, and ordinary people had the means to engage with them because they were increasingly literate.

The people who actively opposed patronage in the eighteenth century were part of a tradition bequeathed by their Covenanted forebears. They were the same type of people described by Gilbert Burnet, professor of divinity at Glasgow, who in 1670 had written of his amazement:

to see a poor commonalty so capable of arguing upon points of government, and on the bounds to be set to the power of princes in matters of religion: upon all these topics they had texts of scripture at hand, and were ready with their answers to any thing that was said to them. This measure of knowledge was spread even among the meanest of them, their cottagers, and their servants.⁷⁸⁹

⁷⁸⁷ R. Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church from 1733 to 1900*, 2 Vols (Edinburgh, 1904), Vol. 2, pp.552-553. Small noted that, in '1796 Mr Jervie was commended in the Old Statistical History by a minister of the Established Church for his zeal in opposing French principles. But there was more of this than some of his people cared for'.

⁷⁸⁸ *Narrative of the debate in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, May 25 1779*.

⁷⁸⁹ Gilbert Burnet, quoted in W.R. Foster, *Bishop and Presbytery: The Church of Scotland, 1661-1688* (London, 1958), p.118, cited in Alasdair Raffé, 'Religious Controversy and Scottish Society, c.1679-1714', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of Edinburgh, 2007), p.5.

In the 1670s there had been widespread participation by ordinary men and women in religious controversy, and they had been encouraged to involve themselves through debate, through pamphlet literature and through the preaching of their ministers.⁷⁹⁰ A century later their descendants involved themselves in the patronage debate, the American crisis and reform movements in a very similar fashion. From the 1760s the language of debate embraced civil concerns, but continued to draw on the Covenanting past, by expressing the debate in terms of liberty and conscience. There was a continuous involvement of Church and ministry in ecclesiastical and civil affairs. Ministers wrote and preached about these matters with both conservative and radical agendas, which, in conjunction with a highly literate population, may have encouraged some of Presbyterianism's adherents to speculate on matters generally considered outwith their accepted sphere of interest. Presbyterianism lent itself to this development; in fact, given the history of Church and state since the Reformation, it was impossible that the Church should excuse itself from the affairs that concerned society. The Church was integral to daily life and ministers actively engaged with 'political' matters, helping to bring ordinary people into the realm of debate, which may begin to explain how, by the 1790s, some ordinary people had achieved a radical perspective.

⁷⁹⁰ Raffe, *ibid.*, pp.3-6.

Chapter Six

'To rouse the latent powers of man'⁷⁹¹

Patronage and reform

As earlier chapters have argued Calvinism had necessitated the ability to read and also encouraged debate enabling some people to become involved in political activities - or, as Michael Walzer has commented, 'Calvinism taught previously passive men the styles and methods of political activity and enabled them successfully to claim the right of participation in ... the state'.⁷⁹² This chapter will consider the types of 'political' activity, in its broadest sense, in which ordinary people involved themselves. It will demonstrate that people were engaged in 'political' activities long before the emergence of reform movements in the 1780s or 1790s. It will also highlight the similarity of occupational background of those involved in various political activities and those subscribing in substantial numbers to polemical religious texts. This chapter will suggest that, regardless of the cause, essentially such involvement was about the right to make choices, and to be recognised as having a claim to be included in the decisions that affected the lives of ordinary people.

The extent to which ministers involved themselves in politics, both civil and ecclesiastical, from the pulpit and through books and pamphlets, has suggested how ordinary working people could be engaged by public debates. In addition, the climate of popular associational activity through libraries, clubs and societies which reflected Enlightenment thinking, as well as the use of books for mutual improvement offered a further path towards political awareness. This

⁷⁹¹ Thomas Crichton 'The Library: a Poem', cited in Brown, *Paisley Poets*, Vol. 1, p.38.

⁷⁹² Walzer, *Revolution of the Saints*, p.18.

chapter will consider ordinary people's participation in the patronage issue, the anti-Catholic relief campaign, the burgh reform campaign, and the American crisis. Some of these issues allowed them to voice their opposition to the *status quo* and in the process acquire practical skills that were used in the 1790s to pursue the goals of an extended franchise and parliamentary reform. These debates also provided a means of expressing the belief that ordinary people should be included in the decision making process. This chapter will therefore provide the final strand of this thesis by demonstrating that the involvement of ordinary people in such activity was of long standing and displayed the beginnings of their wider political awareness, helping to explain how, by the 1790s, some people had been radicalised to the extent of joining overtly political associations.

I

Historians have considered various aspects of people's involvement in specific political activities, yet there has been a tendency to regard these as discrete areas, and to view their involvement as either 'mob' activity or manipulation by an elite; as Christopher Whatley has observed 'the people are invariably relegated to a watching role'.⁷⁹³ Whatley's own research has looked at the nature of protests made by ordinary people in numerous instances of food and excise riots, although his area of interest is predominantly in socio-economic matters rather than politics.⁷⁹⁴ Kenneth Logue has documented a number of instances of food, militia, patronage, taxation, anti-recruitment and political

⁷⁹³ Whatley, *Scottish Society 1707-1830*, p.9. See, for example, Murdoch's comments on elite manipulation in 'Importance of Being Edinburgh'.

⁷⁹⁴ Whatley, *ibid.*, pp.171-174, 188-191, 195-209; *idem*, 'The Union of 1707, Integration and the Scottish Burghs', pp.192-218.

protests but not until after 1780.⁷⁹⁵ S. G. E. Lythe has looked at the Tayside meal mobs of 1772-3.⁷⁹⁶ W. Hamish Fraser has demonstrated the growing industrial unrest among craft and trades groups across the century, and Robert Kent Donovan has delineated the anti-Catholic relief protests of 1778-82.⁷⁹⁷ However, Gordon Pentland has argued, that ‘attempts to compartmentalize protest and to separate the “economic” from the “political” are unsustainable’.⁷⁹⁸ This thesis would extend this argument into the religious sphere also, but, while recognizing that the involvement of individuals in activities such as patronage disputes or burgh reform associations was the result of a number of factors – economic, political and religious – argues that the link between Presbyterianism and political awareness was deeply significant.

Historians have demonstrated how religious controversy during the seventeenth century, and at the beginning of the eighteenth century significantly involved ordinary people.⁷⁹⁹ This thesis argues that such involvement continued throughout the eighteenth century, and that the issue which overwhelmingly engaged them was lay patronage. Nowhere was the assertion of a community’s right to choose and to have that right recognised by those in authority more evident. In addition to disputes over an individual presentee, patronage cases could incorporate broader questions encompassing civil as well as ecclesiastical issues. Thus patronage was the most persistent thorn in the Church’s flesh because it raised divisions within the Established Church and in local communities across Scotland. Ordinary people would not allow obnoxious heritors, Episcopalian

⁷⁹⁵ Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland 1780-1815*.

⁷⁹⁶ Lythe, ‘The Tayside Meal Mobs 1772-3’.

⁷⁹⁷ Fraser, *Conflict and Class*; Donovan, *No Popery and Radicalism*.

⁷⁹⁸ Pentland, *Spirit of the Union*, p.13.

⁷⁹⁹ Alasdair Raffae, ‘Religious Controversy and Scottish Society, c.1679-1714’; Jeffrey Stephen, *Scottish Presbyterians and the Act of Union 1707*; Bowie, ‘Public opinion, popular politics and the union of 1707’, pp.226-260.

landlords or non-resident aristocrats to impose a minister who was not of the congregation's choosing.

The Presbyterian laity was important because they believed that they should play an active part in church government, not least in the election of ministers and elders. The *Second Book of Discipline* had asserted that neither ministers nor elders should be chosen contrary to the will of the congregation.⁸⁰⁰ Hence, the belief that congregations should have approval over the choice of ministers and elders may have given ordinary people a sense of their value, both within the community of the Kirk and the community at large, which could have helped to promote a democratic sensibility. Given the long-standing erosion of people's right to 'call' the minister of their choice, and the changing economic relationship between worker and employer by the last decade of the century, where artisans, such as weavers, were losing their ability to control the pace of their working lives, some individuals may well have come to reflect more on their position in society.

In their continuing, and at times violent, opposition to patronage, ordinary working people could demonstrate a desire to be taken notice of, a desire for a political voice even if they were not always conscious of their own nascent political activity. Thus, in Scotland, by encouraging people to read, to think and to judge for themselves, Calvinism plus the egalitarian structure of Presbyterian Church government ensured that the Kirk was always vulnerable to dissent and division in a way that the Anglican Church, for example, never was. The Church was at the heart of Scottish communities and any division within it held the possibility of encouraging wider speculation and discontent. Although there was

⁸⁰⁰ *Second Book of Discipline*; Cameron (ed.), *Dictionary of Scottish Church History*, p.287.

little in the way of real democracy in the Church of Scotland, lay opinion was not excluded, and there was the potential for a representative system of government. More radically, James Kirkpatrick (c.1676-1743), a Scottish minister in Belfast, maintained that the structure of the Presbyterian Church actively encouraged individuals to be critical of the political regime.

The Ecclesiastical Constitution of Presbytery does provide such Effectual Remedies against the Usurpations and Ambition of the Clergy, and lays such Foundations for the Liberty of the Subject in Church Matters: that it naturally creates in People an Aversion from all Tyranny and Oppression in the *State* also.⁸⁰¹

Opposition to settlements could arise with no other obvious grievance than that the minister in question had agreed to the settlement as, for example, at Bowden in Roxburghshire in 1741, where the objection to the minister was ‘purely that he had accepted a presentation’.⁸⁰² As John Willison maintained, ‘The Acceptor makes himself directly a Partner with the Patron in his sinful Usurpation over the Church of God’, and he argued that the acceptance of a presentation could lead to schism and was a ‘great discredit of religion, and reproach of the ministerial character’.⁸⁰³ Thus, for some parishioners and clergy, the very act of acceptance could mean that this was an individual who, regardless of experience or qualifications, was unfit to be a minister because he had a patron and had therefore accepted a system which was inimical to their beliefs. In such disputes there was a strong link to the Covenanting era, as congregations refused to relinquish what they regarded as a basic tenet of Presbyterianism, and many congregations seceded from the Established Church rather than disobey their

⁸⁰¹ James Kirkpatrick, *An historical essay upon the loyalty of Presbyterians in Great-Britain and Ireland from the Reformation to this present year 1713* ([Belfast], 1713), p.152; A. D. G. Steers, ‘James Kirkpatrick’, *ODNB*. Kirkpatrick matriculated at Glasgow University in 1691. Italics in the original.

⁸⁰² Morren, *Annals 1739-1752*, p.353.

⁸⁰³ Willison, *A fair and impartial testimony*, pp.x, 49.

consciences. This link is also evident through the books that ordinary people were buying.

Ian McBride has suggested, in relation to Irish Presbyterianism, that the self-governing, representative organization of the Kirk encouraged Presbyterians to adopt a critical stance towards the oligarchic political structures of the state, but R. H. Campbell has argued that in Scotland ‘religious issues did not disrupt the general fabric of society in the eighteenth century’.⁸⁰⁴ Views such as Campbell’s have to be challenged, because disputes over ‘intruded’ ministers produced a significant number of disturbances in local communities. By 1750 there had been 65 disputed settlements and between 1751 and 1800 the number of such disputes has been estimated at 104.⁸⁰⁵ These ranged from petitioning the General Assembly to violent protests which had to be quelled by troops of dragoons.

Historians who have considered patronage have discussed certain facets of the debate, offering insights into this issue and some of its ramifications, but what has not been addressed, thus far, is what may have encouraged ordinary people to participate in these disputes. Neither has there been any full-length study of the significance of patronage as a factor in the creation of political awareness amongst ordinary people. One historian who has considered this issue to be important for

⁸⁰⁴ McBride, *Scripture Politics*, p.92; R. H. Campbell, ‘The Influence of Religion on Economic Growth in Scotland in the Eighteenth Century’, in T. M. Devine and D. Dickinson (eds), *Ireland and Scotland 1600-1850* (Edinburgh, 1983), p.232.

⁸⁰⁵ Morren, *Annals 1739-1752*; Sher and Murdoch, ‘Patronage and Party in the Church of Scotland’, p.200. Much of the source material for this section comes from Morren’s *Annals of the General Assembly* and the *Scots Magazine*, which offer detailed accounts of eighteenth-century patronage disputes. The two volumes of the *Annals* were compiled from original church records, including the *Acts and Proceedings of the Generals Assembly*, and also reports from the *Scots Magazine* and other contemporary newspapers. After 1766 information from the *Scots Magazine* provides the main source for the proceedings of the annual meeting of the General Assembly at Edinburgh. These sources, together with the *OSA* are of major importance to this chapter, providing much of the evidence to sustain the argument made in this section. The 1834 *Report from the Select Committee on Church Patronage, (Scotland)* also provides corroboration for much of this material. The discussion of the patronage issue in eighteenth-century Scotland rests largely on these sources together with contemporary pamphlets and nineteenth century histories of the Secession Churches.

the development of ‘class identity’ is Callum Brown, who regards patronage as ‘by far the most important spark to religious dispute’.⁸⁰⁶ He has argued that patronage disputes reveal a social ‘fracture’ in Scotland’s parishes, and that along with other areas of conflict over pew-renting, contributions towards the poor fund, and ‘reading the line’, maintains that these disputes were protests against elites ‘usurping the people’s place in the kirk’.⁸⁰⁷

Richard Sher and Alexander Murdoch have offered an examination of the ideology of both Popular and Moderate clergymen, considering the divisions on both sides of the patronage argument. However, their concern was mainly to discern the division of ideology among Popular party ministers, with little consideration of the people below. They argued that the dominant ideology within the Popular party was not democratic, particularly with regard to finding a more desirable alternative to patronage. They also regarded the Moderates’ pro-patronage stance as largely a means of getting the nobility and government to serve their interests, and they concluded overall that both Popular and Moderate clergy were predominantly elitist.⁸⁰⁸

In a similar area of study, John McIntosh, while arguing that the key area of dispute between Moderate and Popular churchmen in the latter half of the eighteenth century was *not* patronage but rather the growth of evangelicalism, has considered the issue but he was predominantly concerned with the theological beliefs of Popular clergymen involved in the debates in the General Assembly.⁸⁰⁹ In two separate articles, Ned Landsman and Richard Sher have discussed the attempt by the town councils of Glasgow and Edinburgh respectively, to subvert

⁸⁰⁶ Brown, ‘Protest in the Pews’, pp.97-99.

⁸⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.99.

⁸⁰⁸ Sher and Murdoch, ‘Patronage and Party in the Church of Scotland’, pp.197-220.

⁸⁰⁹ J. R. McIntosh, *Church and Theology in Enlightenment Scotland: The Popular Party, 1740-1800* (East Linton, 1998).

the accepted method of calling a new minister by excluding the General Session, resulting in major disputes in both cities.⁸¹⁰ While both articles allude to the involvement of the wider populace, again the predominant interest was in the machinations of the ‘people above’.

Hence, historians have considered certain aspects of this issue but, Callum Brown apart, there has been no significant discussion of patronage as an important factor in the creation of a political consciousness amongst the lower orders. As argued in earlier chapters, religious controversies had an impact on the development of popular political thinking, and, through the sanction of Popular and Seceding ministers, many ordinary people became involved in the patronage debate, an engagement which has also been suggested through the books that they bought. Therefore, while this issue was itself central to the lives of many ordinary folk, it may also have provided a stepping-stone towards the creation of a democratic consciousness.

Popular ministers opposed lay patronage, but they largely supported parishioners’ rights as represented by the heritors, elders and heads of families acting in the name of the people. Generally it was left to the Seceding clergy to promote the involvement of the entire congregation. From contemporary newspaper accounts of disputed settlements, as well as the evidence presented in the 1834 *Report from the Select Committee on Church Patronage, (Scotland)*, what has become clear is that the opposition to patronage during the eighteenth century is recorded as coming from these groups – the heritors, elders and heads of families.⁸¹¹ For example, in 1781 the Duke of Queensberry’s presentee to

⁸¹⁰ Landsman, ‘Liberty, Piety and Patronage’, pp.214-226; Sher, ‘Moderates, Managers and Popular Politics in Mid-Eighteenth Century Edinburgh’, pp.179-209.

⁸¹¹ House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, *Report from Select Committee on Church Patronage, (Scotland) with the minutes of evidence, appendix and index* (London, 1834).

Terregles Parish in Kirkcudbrightshire was opposed by a heritor and three others who represented themselves as ‘commissioners of 48 heads of families’.⁸¹² In the same year, at Carsphairn in Kirkcudbrightshire, opposition to the presentee came from seven heritors, six elders and eighty heads of families.⁸¹³ Heads of families were the representatives of the congregations – hence disputes could involve everybody, although individual disputes could involve different sections of the community depending on the local circumstances.

In terms of social status heritors were landowners, elders could range from landowners and merchants to artisans and labourers, while heads of families were found in every type of occupation. The *Statistical Account of Scotland* [OSA] provides considerable information specifically about the occupations of heads of families, and from this their social standing, and the status of those involved in patronage disputes, can be inferred. Although it has not been possible to link the occupations of heads of families in parishes with the actual heads of families who were active in patronage disputes, the evidence from the OSA, the *Report*, and the press, suggests that the individuals involved were predominantly ordinary working people. Furthermore by comparing the occupations in the OSA with the occupations on subscription lists it is evident that the types of occupation followed by heads of families had not changed over the century. Therefore, using the occupations of heads of families provides a very clear guide to the kind of people who were at the heart of eighteenth-century patronage disputes. For example, at Campsie in Stirlingshire, where there was a disputed presentation in 1784, there were ninety-six heads of families: twenty-eight were feuers who farmed their own lands, fifty were tenants, seven of whom were chiefly employed in grazing, and

⁸¹² *Scots Mag.*, May 1781, p.271.

⁸¹³ *Ibid.*

the remaining eighteen were masons, carriers or road makers.⁸¹⁴ At Clackmannan in Clackmannanshire, which saw a disputed presentation in 1790, the heads of families in 1794 included one hundred and sixteen colliers, four bakers, eleven tailors, twelve shoemakers, twenty-three wrights, ten masons, fifteen smiths, twenty-three weavers, seven butchers, two millers, one hundred and fourteen day labourers, one glazier, two distillers, twenty-three ale and whiskey sellers, ten carters, ten gardeners, two coopers, two cadgers (fish-carriers), three coal grieves, six miners and seven sailors.⁸¹⁵

At Kilmaurs in Ayrshire, the heads of families again represented the wellspring of opposition.⁸¹⁶ The specific occupations of the one hundred and ninety-five heads of families were not listed during the original presentation dispute in 1739. However, in 1787 a further dispute occurred at Kilmaurs, and the Earl of Eglinton's presentee found, on more than one occasion, that the doors to the church had been barricaded and a hostile mob assembled.⁸¹⁷ Information from the *OSA* report on Kilmaurs from the early 1790s provides details of the occupations of the inhabitants of the parish and town.⁸¹⁸ These included twenty-seven day labourers, three millers, fifteen weavers, eight masons, four wrights, three smiths, two waulk millers, one gardener, two house-keepers, two ministers, three colliers, eighty-one servants, one tanner, one chaise driver, one kirk officer, twenty-four gentlemen, and two hundred and forty-nine farmers.

One further example, for Crieff in Perthshire, delineating the specific occupations of the heads of families there, helps to pinpoint the social standing of

⁸¹⁴ Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p.156; *OSA*, Vol. 15, pp.339-340 (Campsie, Stirlingshire).

⁸¹⁵ Small *ibid.*, p.702; *OSA*, Vol. 14, pp.628-629 (Clackmannan, Clackmannanshire).

⁸¹⁶ Morren, *Annals 1739-1752*, pp.11-14; *Report from Select Committee on Church Patronage*, Appendix 2, pp.20-22.

⁸¹⁷ *Report*, *ibid.*, Appendix 2, pp.74-77.

⁸¹⁸ *OSA*, Vol. 9, pp.355-356 (Kilmaurs, Ayrshire).

the type of people who participated in patronage disputes. The Revd Robert Stirling, compiler of the report noted that, among the ‘whole 711 heads of families in 1792’, there were one hundred and twenty-four widows, fifty-five maids, ‘old and young’, and sixty-nine bachelors, four apothecaries, physicians and surgeons, eleven mantua makers or sewsters, four bakers, fifteen masons, one slater, two barbers, forty-nine merchants or shopkeepers (including nineteen tea retailers), eight butchers, nine carriers, twenty-nine carters, two messengers, three clergymen, four midwives, four clockmakers, three millers, four coopers, two saddlers, four dyers, six schoolmasters and school mistresses, three distillers and brewers, three excise-officers, twenty-nine shoemakers, forty farmers, eight smiths, one hundred and fifty-nine spinsters, six stocking makers, two fiddlers, thirty tailors, two gardeners, ninety-two weavers, eleven gentry, twenty wrights, seven hecklers, one writer and notary public, seventeen inn-keepers, one hundred and eleven labourers, and six manufacturers.⁸¹⁹

The very ordinariness of petitioners was a cause for complaint. At Kilmoronock in Dunbartonshire, those who opposed the patron’s presentee were derided as people ‘of the lowest ranks, chiefly blacksmiths, weavers,

⁸¹⁹ OSA, Vol. 9, p.588-589 (Crieff, Perthshire). See also Vol. 2, p.508 (Kirkden, Angus) - ‘In this parish there are 133 families; 17 of which, consist, but of two persons each; and 2 or 3 solitary individuals. Of the above there are 4 residing heritors, 33 farmers, 26 weavers, 5 wrights, 4 taylors (*sic*), 2 masons, 2 cadgers, 4 blacksmiths, 3 shoemakers, 6 millers, 2 creamers, and 19 labourers. The above are all heads of families’. Vol. 8, p.283 (Stirling, Stirlingshire) – eight clergymen, 68 weavers, three physicians, thirteen hammermen, three surgeons, two skinners, eighteen writers, two butchers, 30 merchants, fourteen tailors, twelve bakers and eighteen shoemakers); Vol. 18, pp.261-3 (Kilsyth, Stirlingshire) - 902 heads of families - 400 weavers, 280 tambourers, one clock-maker, four Chelsea pensioners, fifteen tailors, twelve publicans, ten masons, 24 labourers, twelve wrights, 23 grocers, two coopers, six coalliers, five carters, 40 miners, four flax-dressers, one excise-officer, three gardeners, three sheriff-officers, two nailers, seven stocking makers, ten smiths, two bakers, three wheel-wrights, two surgeons, five butchers, four seamstresses, twelve shoemakers, one drummer, five millers, one stampmaster, one toll-keeper, two carriers, six sickle-makers, five teachers, six students.

horsecoupers, and distillers of whisky'.⁸²⁰ It was individuals from this socio-economic stratum who were participating in disputes that affected their local communities and they were doing so from early in the century. This makes it abundantly clear that, based on their occupations, the majority of people who were involved in these disputes were ordinary working folk, which correlates with the evidence in chapter four relating to book buyers where 57% were from the 'artisans, servants and lower orders' category. Disputed presentations also occurred across Scotland, from Dumfriesshire in the south to Ross-shire in the north and there were few localities where a patronage dispute, or news of one, would have been unfamiliar by the 1790s.

The ordinary people involved in such disputes did not just make up numbers in a crowd. For example, in 1739, when Lord Dupplin, as patron of Maderty in Perthshire, exercised his right of presentation, in opposition to the elders and heads of families (the heritors supported Lord Dupplin's presentation), the Presbytery of Auchterarder and Synod of Perth and Stirling refused to induct his choice and instead appealed to the Commission of the General Assembly.⁸²¹ The two 'Commissioners for the parish', representing it before the Commission, were Robert Hawley, a weaver, and John Gray, a mason, referred to as 'poor labouring men', which could suggest that they were ordinary representatives of their trades rather than masters.⁸²² The term of course may have been more patronising than descriptive, but it indicates a lower social level than the lawyers who normally argued such cases, as does the representative for the opposition at

⁸²⁰ *The case of the parish of Kilmarnock: Archibald Campbell of Stonefield, Esq; patron of the parish of Kilmarnock, who has presented Mr James Adie preacher, to be minister of the said parish* ([Edinburgh], 1771), p.2.

⁸²¹ The Commission of the Assembly was the means of controlling presbyteries which refused to induct unwanted ministers. Drummond and Bulloch, *Scottish Church 1688-1843*, p.38.

⁸²² Morren, *Annals 1739-1752*, p.345.

Bowden, near Galashiels, who in a similar dispute in 1741, was described as Walter Heatley, ‘the millar of Bowden’s man’.⁸²³

In the Maderty case, the two men argued, among other things, that Lord Dupplin’s presentee was ‘the more disagreeable’ because the ‘tenour (*sic*) of his acceptance of a presentation’ had challenged the relationship between minister and parish, and ‘if he was settled, vast numbers would secede’. In addition, his conduct in a neighbouring parish had given ‘no small umbrage to the sincere and godly’, and he had also been ‘rebuked’ by the Presbytery of Edinburgh for having preached a sermon ‘in favour of the stage’.⁸²⁴ Despite this, when the Commission suggested that Lord Dupplin waive his right of presentation, he refused. The Commission then, recognizing, on the one hand that only the legal presentee could be settled (because if the Church intervened the incumbent would have no stipend), but, on the other hand, fearing that the parish would go over to the Seceders, asked the presbytery to moderate the call for Lord Dupplin’s choice. In the end the presbytery continued to disobey this injunction and the dispute was only settled in the following year when Lord Dupplin’s choice of minister, Mr Blaikie, was ‘called’ to America. His successor, Andrew Ramsay (1741-83) was also presented by Lord Dupplin but there is no recorded protest over this presentation and he settled in the parish without incident until his death.⁸²⁵ This implies that he was acceptable to the congregation, although it may simply have been that the protestors had exhausted their ability to continue to challenge the patron. However, given the protracted time scale of many of the challenges to presentations this seems unlikely, and it is more probable that Ramsay’s theology was acceptable, which suggests that getting a minister with the right theological

⁸²³ Ibid., p.352.

⁸²⁴ Ibid., p.345.

⁸²⁵ Ibid., p.345-346; Scott, *Fasti*, Vol. 3, p.278.

views was at least as important as an acknowledgement of the right to participate in his call.

Presbyteries such as Auchterarder were responsible for judging the call for a minister. They also brought disputes before the General Assembly, and in the hierarchy of Church courts they stood between the kirk session and the synod. It could therefore be argued that opposition from presbyteries did not represent the views of ordinary people because presbyteries consisted of the minister and an elder from each parish within the presbytery's boundaries, and historically elders had been recruited from the ranks of the nobility, professions and burgesses. However, from early in the eighteenth century this was changing and the eldership was beginning to incorporate a wider social base. For example, in Edinburgh, by mid-century none of the elders or deacons who comprised the General Session came from the ranks of the gentry or nobility. A small number were from the professions, but the majority were merchants and tradesmen.⁸²⁶ Similarly, in and around Glasgow weavers had started to dominate the kirk sessions.⁸²⁷

The particular social standing of individual elders within their communities may have varied from one church to another, but again this can be deduced to some extent from their occupations. For example, in 1716 the eldership of the Kilmarnock session was made up of two merchants, two weavers, an apothecary and a bonnet maker. The 1730 Cumbernauld session included a mason, a cooper, a glover and three weavers. In 1742 the Cambuslang session included three weavers and a shoemaker, while in the same year at Greenock the eldership included a surgeon and three merchants, but also a hammerman, a tailor,

⁸²⁶ Sher, 'Moderates, Managers and Popular Politics in Mid-Eighteenth Century Edinburgh', pp.181-182.

⁸²⁷ Landsman, 'Evangelists and Their Hearers', p.131.

a maltman, a joiner, and two shoemakers.⁸²⁸ At Blair Atholl and Fossaway in Perthshire, the session elders were rarely landowners or members of the elite and in the early part of the century few of them spoke English, which Leah Leneman argues indicates they were part of their community rather than standing above it.⁸²⁹

The make-up of the sessions had altered by the middle of the eighteenth century to include a larger proportion of artisans, which suggests that at least some sessions were becoming more democratic in their composition. This was even more pronounced in the Secession Churches where the elders were chosen by popular election by the congregation. For example, at Irvine Relief Church in the late 1770s, the elders included a tailor, a merchant, a lawyer, several stocking makers, a wright, a labourer, a mason, a shoemaker and a weaver. At Paisley Relief Church in the 1780s the session was made up almost entirely of weavers.⁸³⁰

If the eldership had remained exclusively elitist, this begs the question, why would a weaver and a mason have been chosen to represent the parish before the Commission of the Assembly? However, as the objection came from the ‘elders and heads of families’ it would seem reasonable to assume that Hawley and Gray, as representatives of the Maderty parish, were exactly that – ordinary members of the community involved in everyday trades. Clearly Hawley and Gray had some education, because they were described as: ‘acquitt[ing] themselves to the admiration of all present by their eloquence [and] knowledge of the constitution, forms and discipline of the Church, advancing nothing without

⁸²⁸ Brekke, “‘In An Age So Enlightened, Enthusiasm So Extravagant’”, pp.51-52.

⁸²⁹ Leah Leneman, ‘The study of illegitimacy from Kirk session records: two eighteenth-century Perthshire parishes’, *Local Population Studies*, No. 31 (Autumn 1983), p.29.

⁸³⁰ Irvine Relief Church Session Minutes, CH3/409/1, p.1; Paisley Canal St. Relief Church Session Minutes, CH3/254/1, pp.41-42, cited in Brekke, “‘In An Age So Enlightened, Enthusiasm So Extravagant’”, p.262.

proper quotations'.⁸³¹ This suggests that, even at this fairly early period both men had a reasonable degree of literacy as well as a conversancy with the 'abstruse divinity' so prevalent in ordinary folk later in the century.⁸³² They had probably supported their argument by quoting from texts such as *The Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* and *The form of process, in the judicatories of the Church of Scotland*, copies of which had been available since at least 1707.⁸³³ It is also reminiscent of those common folk 70 years earlier who could 'argue upon points of government', with 'texts of scripture at hand' and 'answers to anything that was said to them'.⁸³⁴

What is interesting here is the choice in 1739 of a mason and a weaver, ordinary parishioners, to act as spokesmen for the congregation, suggesting that they represented the majority opinion and that the other parishioners were confident in the ability of these men to present their case regardless of their social status. Unfortunately, it is difficult to know how typical these types of representatives were because, in most cases, delegates to the Commission were specified by name rather than occupation, and generally the only occupation reported was that of lawyer, the traditional office used to present a case in such disputes. It may be that the occupations of these individuals appeared in the newspaper report because it was unusual. Nevertheless, this does illustrate that it was quite possible, even at this early date, for local communities to be represented by individuals who were much further down the social scale than lawyers, and that ordinary people were actively involved in local disputes as more than just members of a crowd.

⁸³¹ Morren, *Annals 1739-1752*, p.345.

⁸³² *OSA*, Vol. 1, p.457 (Auchterderran, Fife). See p.105.

⁸³³ See ESTC. See also page 196.

⁸³⁴ See page 258.

If appeals to the General Assembly such as this finally failed, congregations often joined, or established, seceding churches. For example, in 1739, in Kilmaurs in Ayrshire, a decision in favour of the call to Mr William Coates was upheld by the General Assembly, but, ‘Such was the dissatisfaction, that it was deemed expedient to escort Mr Coates to the pulpit by a party of soldiers on the first Sabbath after his ordination’.⁸³⁵ A petition was taken before the 1739 Assembly, when the presbytery appealed against a sentence passed by the Commission in 1738, which had affirmed the call and appointed the Presbytery of Irvine, ‘*or such of them as shall be willing*’, to induct him. The presbytery argued that they were ‘obliged in conscience’ not to ordain him, and explained that they had tried for ‘more than two years’ to get the parish to accept him, but to no avail.

[A]ppointing Mr. Coates to be ordained minister of Kilmaurs, is directly in opposition to the will of that congregation; for if by congregation be meant heads of families then there are only twenty-two for him and against him ... one hundred and seventy three ... if by congregation be meant heritors and elders ... there are of heritors ... for Mr. Coates thirty-seven ... and against him ... sixty-five ... and all the elders save one.⁸³⁶

In the Kilmaurs case the presbytery also demanded to know the point of consulting the congregation but then imposing another minister regardless of their feelings, and they concluded that this method of settling ministers merely tended ‘to raise and foment division’.⁸³⁷ They maintained that the congregation’s ‘invincible aversion’ to the settlement was likely to result in this congregation, and possibly those of other nearby parishes separating from the Established Church.

⁸³⁵ Mackelvie, *Annals and statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, pp.11, 400.

⁸³⁶ ‘Extract from the Records of the Presbytery of Irvine (1739)’, cited in *Report from Select Committee on Church Patronage*, Appendix 1, p.22.

⁸³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.22.

[T]he settlement of Kilmaurs ... has fired many of the people of the parishes around, many of whom have espoused the quarrel, looking on it as a common cause, which they know not how soon it may become their own. It has not only driven the bulk of the parish of Kilmaurs, in a kind of desperation to think of, and threaten a total separation from this church, and to invite and join with seceding preachers of late frequently visiting within the bounds; but they are joined therein by multitudes in many parishes, several of whom have actually seceded from their own ministers.... So as schism now spreads and grows with us apace, and is like to overrun not a little of this country.⁸³⁸

This exemplifies two points; firstly, the overwhelming fear on the part of those within the Established Church, that the imposition of unwanted ministers would drive individuals and possibly whole communities to secede. In this instance this fear was more than justified as the people of Kilmaurs established an Associate congregation: ‘The Magistrates, Town Council, and Kirk Session of Kilmaurs ... and the great body of the people, acceded to the Associate Presbytery in March 1739’.⁸³⁹ Secondly, it illustrates that this issue was of major concern to ordinary parishioners, and that without it people might have remained relatively passive. This suggests just how important the patronage issue was in drawing people into areas of dispute and forcing them to take a stance, which may then have encouraged awareness of other issues that impacted on their lives. As well as illustrating the strength of opposition to patronage, it demonstrates that virtually an entire community, when thwarted in its choice, would take decisive action, suggesting that not only did quite ordinary people believe that they had the right to be involved in the choice of minister but that, based on the evidence of the book subscription lists, they also had the ability to make informed choices.

There are numerous examples of such activity across the eighteenth century. In 1755, the majority of the parish of Jedburgh wished Thomas Boston to become their minister, and the elders entered into a written compact:

⁸³⁸ Ibid., pp.21-23.

⁸³⁹ Mackelvie, *Annals and statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, pp.10, 400.

[T]o stand and fall together in the election or voice of a minister for this parish, against all solicitations, threats, or bribes whatsoever, or from whomsoever, and against all intrusion that may be attempted on said parish by any minister whatsoever.⁸⁴⁰

They were determined to prevent, in this instance, the Crown's presentation of the Revd John Bonar because they were equally determined to have Boston as their minister. Although the elders and congregation had no personal animosity towards Bonar they were offended that he had accepted the charge when he had previously expressed his opposition to violent settlements.⁸⁴¹ Bonar was translated to Perth instead, and another minister, Mr Douglas, was appointed, but, while the principal heritors, the provost, and most of the councillors had adhered to the call for Bonar, 'the presbytery of Jedburgh, the magistrates of the town, and the whole parish except 'five' openly declared against Douglas'.⁸⁴² The result was a mass defection from the Established Church. A new church was built to accommodate the change, and 'The magistrates and council ... walked in procession to the meeting-house, at least two thousand people were present', when in 1757, Thomas Boston finally became minister to the congregation at Jedburgh.⁸⁴³

In 1762 the Duke of Hamilton forced the parish of Bothwell to accept his presentee, the Revd James Baillie, despite only eight individuals having signed his call. Baillie was a Moderate, but notwithstanding the reluctance of most parishioners to leave the Established Church, the intrusion resulted in a large proportion of Bothwell parish joining the Relief Presbytery and building a separate church in 1763.⁸⁴⁴ In this instance many in the parish were offended by

⁸⁴⁰ *Scots Mag.*, 18 May 1756, p.247.

⁸⁴¹ Gavin Struthers, *The history of the rise, progress, and principles of the Relief Church, embracing notices of the other religious denominations in Scotland* (Glasgow, 1843), pp.137-138.

⁸⁴² *Ibid.*, p.139.

⁸⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.147.

⁸⁴⁴ Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p.222; Struthers, *ibid.*, pp.192-193.

the presbytery's acceptance of the presentee despite the presbytery's professed opposition to intruded ministers. In addition, opponents were convinced that the new minister's acceptance of the presentation was solely owing to Baillie's desire for a larger stipend.⁸⁴⁵

Between 1767 and 1773, at St. Ninians in Stirlingshire, there had been an infamous and often documented eight-year presentation dispute.⁸⁴⁶ Opposition to the Revd David Thomson, the presentee, was led by 600 heads of families, more than 50 heritors (those in favour of the settlement were Episcopalians), all of the elders of the parish except one, and included almost the entire population of over 7,000 people.⁸⁴⁷ The original dispute was eventually decided in favour of the patron, which forced the majority of the congregation to leave the church and join the Relief Presbytery. The St. Ninians case caused huge consternation within the Established Church because it eventually involved the right of patronage being put up for sale.⁸⁴⁸ What is considerably less well known is that, when the creditors of the patron, Sir John Stewart, advertised the sale in May 1787, the community took matters into their own hands and by 1788 had raised contributions to buy this right for themselves.⁸⁴⁹ The right of presentation was then lodged with a committee of nine: three elders, three heritors, and three heads of families, who were chosen by the people. The committee had to present the candidate who was recommended to them by a majority of votes and every head of a family had a right to vote in the election of a minister.⁸⁵⁰ This had come about because, in 1787,

⁸⁴⁵ *A Loud cry from the parish of B-----l, addressed to the Presbytery of H-----n, against the settlement carried on in that parish, September 2d, 1762* ([Edinburgh], 1762).

⁸⁴⁶ Struthers, *History of the rise, progress, and principles of the Relief Church*, p.609.

⁸⁴⁷ *Scots Mag.*, May 1769, p.226; Mackelvie, *Annals and statistics of the United Presbyterian Church*, p.644; Struthers, *History of Scotland from the union to the abolition of the heritable jurisdictions*, Vol. 2, p.609.

⁸⁴⁸ *Cal. Merc.*, 14 May 1787, p.3; *Scots Mag.*, May 1787, p.256.

⁸⁴⁹ *OSA*, Vol. 18, p.402 (St. Ninians, Stirlingshire).

⁸⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

the year before Mr Thomson died, ‘his hearers were indulged with the choice of the assistant preacher’, after which people started to return to the Established Church. Such a return was a fairly common occurrence, as Callum Brown has observed, because dissatisfied congregations often joined the Relief as a temporary protest over disputed presentations.⁸⁵¹

The disaffection engendered in communities by disputed presentations throughout the eighteenth, and into the nineteenth century, suggests that this issue remained acutely important to ordinary parishioners, and by taking action they were employing what they regarded as their right of conscience to object to unwanted ministers, a right which was informed and supported by their reading, and by the impetus given to these disputes by ministers themselves. Given the evidence presented in previous chapters it would seem strange if their views on religion and their choice of reading matter were unconnected and had no impact on the actions taken by those involved in these disputes. What such disputes demonstrate is the centrality of the belief held by ordinary people that they had a right to exercise choice. It also demonstrates an, albeit sometimes limited, democratic impulse, that this right should be dispersed among parishioners rather than being held by just one individual: the patron. Thus time and again the patronage issue encompassed ideas about who should hold and exercise power.

On a number of occasions disputed settlements induced violence from the authorities and from parishioners. For example, at the ‘intrusion’ of a minister at Bathgate in 1717 the officials involved called in a ‘troop of dragoons’ to guard ‘the minister into the church, riding and striking, with their naked swords, at the

⁸⁵¹ Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707*, pp.24-25.

women and others'.⁸⁵² Often the hostility came from the congregation, as in Dingwall in Ross-shire in 1740, where there had been strong opposition to the settlement of a minister, because the people of the town objected to the patron's nomination of his son's tutor. The patron was Sir Robert Munro and the people's objection had been greatly increased as a result of Munro's manipulation of the town council, in order to assure his choice in the election of the burgh's M.P. The burgh election had resulted in serious rioting and loss of life.⁸⁵³

In 1740 William Wilson, who had been a Church of Scotland minister at Perth, but had left the Church along with Ebenezer Erskine in 1733, became the first minister of the Perth (Associate) Church, after being 'debarred from his pulpit by order of the town magistrates of Perth'.⁸⁵⁴ The minister appointed to formally suspend Wilson had to be accompanied by several armed men who were 'severely cudgeled and obliged to retire'.⁸⁵⁵ Prior to being excluded from his church there had been a 'rupture' in the Perth Session over the contested 'intrusion' of a new minister, Mr. David Black, who had been the choice of the magistrates and council of Perth, although he had been opposed by the session and the majority of the heads of families.⁸⁵⁶ Despite the opposition of the majority of the congregation, Black was ordained in June 1737, but when his name was

⁸⁵² McKerrow, *History of the Secession Church*, Vol. 1, p.44.

⁸⁵³ Morren, *Annals 1739-1752*, pp.18-19, 351-352. For a description of the political events in Dingwall, see Ferguson, 'Dingwall Burgh Politics', pp.89-108.

⁸⁵⁴ Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p.544; McKerrow, *History of the Secession Church*, Vol. 1, pp.179-182. Wilson was deprived of his pulpit having first been deposed from the Established Church in the same manner as Ebenezer Erskine.

⁸⁵⁵ *Cal. Merc.*, 2 Apr. 1734, cited in Muirhead, 'Secession Congregation in its Community', p.216.

⁸⁵⁶ McKerrow, *History of the Secession Church*, Vol. 1, p.149.

entered on the roll of session fourteen members protested, left the meeting and seceded with William Wilson.⁸⁵⁷

At Logie in Fife, in 1750, a call was due to be moderated by the presbytery, but, ‘stones having been thrown at the electors’, it was delayed.⁸⁵⁸ This was mild by comparison with the proceedings at Alloa in Clackmannanshire in the same year, when Mr. Warden, on behalf of the presbytery, attempted to serve the edict of ordination on James Syme. Warden was ‘made prisoner’ by the mob while some of his attendants were ‘beat and bruised’.⁸⁵⁹ On the day fixed for the settlement of the minister, ‘The colliers of that and two or three adjacent parishes, assembled riotously to prevent it, rung the church-bell from morning to night, and in the afternoon displayed a flag from the steeple in token victory, none offering to oppose them’.⁸⁶⁰ Others involved on this occasion included a shoemaker, three weavers, a coal-hewer, a baxter and the wife of a maltman. To ensure there was no recurrence when the ordination was once again due to proceed, ‘four companies of soldiers were stationed in the town’.⁸⁶¹ The severe punishments that were handed out, including banishment to the plantations for seven years, had little effect in quelling the anger felt by congregations when ministers were foisted upon them and it certainly did not stop them expressing that anger.

In 1766 the presentee to Eaglesham, in Glasgow, Mr Thomas Clark, and the ministers who accompanied him, including William Leechman the Principal of Glasgow University, had threats made against their lives, and when attempting to attend the church were pelted with ‘stones, dung and garbage’ until they left the

⁸⁵⁷ Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p.544. Wilson’s son John Wilson, a minister like his father, became a leading member of the Perth Friends of the People.

⁸⁵⁸ Morren, *Annals 1739-1752*, p.366.

⁸⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.365.

⁸⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.185.

⁸⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp.185-186.

parish.⁸⁶² Pressure from patrons in order to ensure their presentee could also include violence and threats of eviction. For example, at Lintrathen in Angus, in 1771, when the presentation dispute was brought before the Assembly, the vote resulted in a dissent by several ministers, because the call

is not signed by the elders ... nor by any considerable number of heads of families, but only a few persons wholly dependant on the pretended patron, several of whom have given it under their hands that they were concuss'd and terrified by the agent of the pretended patron, to subscribe said pretended call, and threatened with summonses of removal in case they did not.⁸⁶³

When, in 1785, the Revd Thomas Stewart, the new presentee at Newburgh in Fife went to preach, he found that the church door had been locked against him. Subsequently when the Revd Dr Greenlaw attempted to announce Stewart's induction, he discovered that the pulpit and pews had been covered in human excrement. A few days later, 'by repeatedly huzzaing in the Church ... and ... by striking and beating with sticks or with their feet and hands, upon the seats of the Church', the congregation prevented Greenlaw from being heard. On leaving the church Greenlaw and others were attacked by a crowd throwing stones.⁸⁶⁴

At Saltcoats in 1788, the presentee, the Revd John Duncan, was prevented on two occasions from preaching by a mob and 'was met with insults and opprobrious language'.⁸⁶⁵ Later that year four men and twelve women were charged with 'violently assaulting, invading, and attacking the members of the Presbytery of Irvine' when they inspected the Saltcoats schoolhouse because it was believed that members of the presbytery had been engaged in some activity favourable to the minister and were attacked as a result. One man and two women

⁸⁶² *Report from Select Committee on Church Patronage*, Appendix 2, p.140.

⁸⁶³ NAS, General Assembly Papers, Main Series CH1/2/113, ff.106-110.

⁸⁶⁴ Cited in Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland 1780-1815*, pp.169-176.

⁸⁶⁵ *Report from Select Committee on Church Patronage*, Appendix 2, p.72.

were outlawed for not appearing in court, while four women were found guilty.⁸⁶⁶ Opposition could be violent but it could also take petty forms. For example, at Lanark in 1750, having failed to stop the presentation of an unwanted minister a local man obstructed the tilling of the minister's glebe by letting loose the horses.⁸⁶⁷ This was after mobs in the town had rioted on several occasions in order to hinder the minister's ordination. By one means or another resistance was pursued.

Disputed calls were rarely settled quickly. For example, at Shotts in Lanarkshire a presentation made in 1762 by the Duke of Hamilton took six years to resolve. The parish was finally forced to accept the unwanted minister, the Revd Laurence Wells, but not without many lengthy and acrimonious clashes between the presbytery and the General Assembly, owing to the 'universal opposition to the presentee by all ranks and orders of men in the parish'.⁸⁶⁸ When the time finally arrived for his ordination in May of 1768, it was halted on this occasion by a 'riotous mob, who denied them access both to the church and church-yard', while a second attempt a week later was cancelled, again because of fear of the popular reaction. By June the Sheriff-depute of the county had been informed that troops were to be sent from Glasgow and Hamilton to 'protect the ministers concerned' in the ordination.⁸⁶⁹ In the end, in August 1768, the presentee had to be inducted at the presbytery at Hamilton because it was considered too unsafe to try again at Shotts. Most of the congregation then left the Established Church and formed a second Seceding Burgher congregation, and by the 1790s only 122 out of 518 families in the parish remained attached to the Established

⁸⁶⁶ Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland 1780-1815*, p.171; Small, *History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p.307.

⁸⁶⁷ Morren, *Annals 1739-1752*, pp.170-179.

⁸⁶⁸ *Report from Select Committee on Church Patronage*, Appendix 2, pp.148-155.

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.155.

Church.⁸⁷⁰ Similarly, at Fenwick in Ayrshire, it took two years before the new minister, Mr William Boyd was finally ordained in 1782. Even then, the ordination had to be carried out at Irvine owing to the continuing bad feeling in the parish. Previous attempts by Boyd to preach had been thwarted by people putting stones in the church door locks, the beadle refusing to ring the bell to signal the service, nobody turning up at the church to hear him preach, and on occasion Boyd being pelted with stones and dirt.⁸⁷¹

This catalogue of resistance emphasises the strength of opposition to patronage, but it also highlights the importance that communities placed on popular choice. It suggests that disputes such as these were not just about the choice of an individual minister but could be informed by local power struggles over who had the right to be involved in decision making, and who should wield power. Despite the violence of some disputes, to suggest that those involved were merely an ignorant or uneducated rabble would be quite wrong. As Kenneth Logue has concluded from his study of popular disturbances, based on the occupations of those involved in various incidents, the people involved were ‘not the ‘dregs of society’ but a cross-section of the working community’.⁸⁷² Logue found that over 65% of those involved came from his ‘skilled manual’ group, which included tenant farmers, weavers, shoemakers, wrights, masons, smiths and tailors.⁸⁷³ These findings are very similar to the evidence from the subscription lists which clearly demonstrate that over 57% were ‘artisans, servants and lower orders’.

⁸⁷⁰ OSA, Vol. 15, pp.55, 58 (Shotts, Lanarkshire); Brown, ‘Protest in the Pews’, p.98.

⁸⁷¹ *Report from Select Committee on Church Patronage*, Appendix 2, pp.87-92.

⁸⁷² Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland 1780-1815*, p.191. See also George Rudé, *Paris and London in the Eighteenth Century: studies in popular protest* (London, 1970), pp.298-299; Fraser, *Conflict and Class*.

⁸⁷³ Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland 1780-1815*, pp.191-193.

People took their religious beliefs extremely seriously, and ‘riot’ was a means of venting frustration and almost the only way of expressing the popular will. It also emphasises the extent to which people believed that they had a duty firstly to follow their consciences, and secondly to defend what they regarded as their traditional right to be included in the choice of their minister. They were, as E. P. Thompson has argued, ‘defending traditional rights or customs’.⁸⁷⁴ Although the actors in these disputes were normally denigrated as a ‘mob’ by contemporaries, this could also be a way for those in authority to imply that there was no validity in such protests. For example, the Revd William McGill of Ayr, dismissed some of his parishioners as unthinking ‘bigots’, because they had brought a prosecution against him for his anti-Trinitarian views. The four in question were a shoemaker, a farmer, a weaver and a linen-printer, who had independently raised the money for the prosecution, and brought the charge in the first place.⁸⁷⁵ The people who played a part in patronage disputes could include members of the community from almost all social levels, but they were predominantly from that stratum of society which encompassed labourers, colliers, shoemakers and weavers, the ordinary working men and women of the kind who also bought polemical religious works in their thousands.

These encounters not only demonstrated people’s hostility to ‘intrusion’, but also allowed them to encompass a wider protest over the relationship between religious and civil authority, and, by the last quarter of the century, civil and ecclesiastical reform were often explicitly linked. In Glasgow, in 1762, when an appointment was to be made to the Wynd Church, the town council attempted to

⁸⁷⁴ E. P. Thompson, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century’, *P&P*, No. 50 (1971), p.78.

⁸⁷⁵ Cited in Brekke, “‘In An Age So Enlightened, Enthusiasm So Extravagant’”, pp.342-343; idem, ‘Heretics in the Pulpit, Inquisitors in the Pews: The Long Reformation and The Scottish Enlightenment’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 44 No. 1 (2010), pp.79-98.

implement a new 'model' for appointing ministers to the town's churches by taking the lead in nominating the new minister. The usual method had been for elders of the vacant parish to nominate the new minister, which then had to be approved by the ministers and the town council, and then by the heads of families in the parish. Thereafter the nomination had to be approved by the General Session, and finally the presbytery moderated the 'call' in a general meeting of the magistrates and town council, the General Session and the particular kirk session.⁸⁷⁶ There was opposition from council members, including the new lord provost, Archibald Ingram, as well as from groups of tradesmen and Seceders.⁸⁷⁷ Central to Ingram's opposition was his argument that this new process was inconsistent with liberty. It was being pushed through 'in the name of the community when the very party's (*sic*) opposing them are the members, nay almost every inferior society of which that community is composed'.⁸⁷⁸ There was also opposition from some who not only objected to the council's plans, but also to the claim that the General Session, which was composed only of ministers and elders, could represent the public interest when they had been given no express popular authority to do so.⁸⁷⁹

In Edinburgh too there had been a history of criticism of the way in which the Council conducted its business. The 'intrusion' of John Drysdale into Lady Yester's Church in the 1760s, was similar to the problem in Glasgow. The council had asserted its right to present a minister without consulting the General Session of Edinburgh, provoking popular opposition. Religious, ideological and political

⁸⁷⁶ *Copy of the petition presented to the very reverend the presbytery of Glasgow, upon the seventh day of April 1762, by the ministers and elders, members of the general session of the city of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1762), pp.3-4.

⁸⁷⁷ Landsman, 'Liberty, Piety and Patronage', pp.214-226.

⁸⁷⁸ Robert Renwick (ed.), *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Glasgow, 1760-1780* (Glasgow, 1912), Vol. 7, pp.119-124, cited in Landsman, *ibid.*, p.217.

⁸⁷⁹ Landsman, *ibid.*, p.222.

factions joined together as the focus shifted from the disputed settlement of a minister, to the need for a reform of the town council, which came under attack from those who were excluded from the political process.⁸⁸⁰ Those involved in the Edinburgh dispute included the deacons and elders who comprised the General Session. The General Session was dominated numerically by wrights, weavers, tailors, tanners, barbers, brewers, saddlers, smiths, bakers and bonnet-makers, which, as Richard Sher has argued, made the General Session as representative an institution as any contemporary body because the majority of Edinburgh's population belonged to the Established Church and each church was equally represented in the session.⁸⁸¹ Thus, the citizenry of Glasgow and Edinburgh were involving themselves in disputes that were both civil and religious. By using the patronage issue as a lever ordinary people were expressing their belief that they should have a right to be included in areas of decision making which affected their everyday lives, and not just within the religious sphere. As Callum Brown has suggested, 'urban patronage disputes of the 1750s and 1760s were one of the first stages in the challenge for democratisation'.⁸⁸²

Ordinary people became involved in the debate on patronage through various avenues: hearing sermons preached from the pulpit; reading the abundant pamphlet literature; buying books which addressed this issue; and by being directly involved as actors in local disputes, either simply as members of the congregation or sometimes as members of the Church courts. Those involved in the opposition to 'intrusions' were predominantly ordinary artisans, the same kind of people who bought their books by subscription and the same sort of people who

⁸⁸⁰ Sher, 'Moderates, Managers and Popular Politics in Mid-Eighteenth Century Edinburgh', p.196.

⁸⁸¹ Ibid., pp.179-209.

⁸⁸² Brown, 'Protest in the Pews', p.100.

involved themselves in the anti-Catholic relief campaign, the burgh reform movement and the radicalism of the 1790s, as this chapter will now demonstrate. They were deeply engaged by their religious convictions and they displayed their ability to argue a case and make judgements. They had been encouraged to interrogate the Scriptures and to develop a questioning attitude, habits shaped by their Calvinist faith, which contributed to developing their political awareness, and they were thus enabled to speculate on matters considered by the elite to be beyond their normal sphere of interest.

Furthermore, involvement in one issue could lead to involvement in another. In the parish of St. Ninians, which, in 1782, had already published its desire to join with other societies to press for reform of patronage, a notice was advertised in the press in 1785, that funds collected for one cause, to ‘oppose Popery’, and which were no longer needed, would be used to appoint ‘an Anti-patronage Committee in their stead’.⁸⁸³ Similarly involvement between one issue and another can also be glimpsed among individuals. For example, people who had been active in the burgh reform movement and were leaders of the Friends of the People in Perth, such as David Johnstone, William Bisset and Robert Hepburn, remained committed to reform. In 1814 when the council was challenged over the election of the dean of guild, the challenge was brought by Robert Hepburn, supported by David Johnstone, and proposed William Bisset as an elected dean of guild.⁸⁸⁴ David Johnstone also assisted Major Cartwright on his tour of Scotland in 1815 in support of universal suffrage and annual parliaments.⁸⁸⁵ Archibald Hastie, a leader of the Paisley Friends of the People was

⁸⁸³ *Cal. Merc.*, 19 Mar. 1785.

⁸⁸⁴ Val Honeyman, ‘A Very Dangerous Place’?: Radicalism in Perth in the 1790s’, *SHR*, Vol. 87 No. 2 (2008), pp.278-305.

⁸⁸⁵ W. M. Roach, ‘Radical Reform Movements in Scotland from 1815 to 1822 with particular

still pressing for parliamentary reform in 1815.⁸⁸⁶ Others, such as James Wilson, a member of the Strathaven Friends of the People, was hanged in 1820 for his part in the 'Radical War'.⁸⁸⁷

II

Nowhere was the link between Presbyterianism and popular awareness demonstrated more overtly than during the campaign against toleration for Catholics. The gap between the thinking and beliefs of the elite and the population at large was once again demonstrated, this time with some ferocity, during the disturbances in Scotland between 1778 and 1782. The popular outcry was overwhelming, and it produced a campaign of public protest that successfully resulted in the withdrawal of the legislation from the government's programme. The authorities were deeply concerned at the involvement of thousands of ordinary people in a concerted political campaign, particularly as arguments against Catholic relief could also be used to link patronage to arbitrary power in the civil realm, where patronage was regarded as a 'a relic of Popery' because it represented arbitrary authority.⁸⁸⁸ The anti-Catholic protests were another key factor contributing towards the development of the political consciousness of ordinary people in Scotland, and the campaign allowed them to develop practical organisational skills and to use their ability to make judgements on particular issues.

reference to events in the West of Scotland', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of Glasgow, 1970), cited in Brims, *Scottish Democratic Movement*, p. 577.

⁸⁸⁶ Pentland, *Spirit of the Union*, p.14; Fraser, *Scottish Popular Politics From Radicalism to Labour*, p.30.

⁸⁸⁷ Pentland, *ibid.*, pp.109-130.

⁸⁸⁸ Bannerman, *Address To The People Of Scotland On Ecclesiastical And Civil Liberty*, p.17.

What makes this issue of interest to this study, which is concerned with the contribution that Presbyterianism made towards the development of political consciousness, is the type of people who were involved in the agitation. They were clearly literate and engaged by the issue, even if deeply hostile to the proposed reform; and they were certainly not as Daniel Defoe had once described their English counterparts, as ‘stout Fellows, who would spend the last Drop of their Blood against Popery ... not know[ing] whether it be a Man or a Horse’.⁸⁸⁹ The strength of the opposition to this reform expressed how attached ordinary people were to their Calvinist faith and the resentment which the proposal caused suggests a strong link to the Covenanting era of a century earlier, which was kept very much alive in the Secession Churches and through the religious works that were still widely read.

The protest arose in response to proposals for Catholic relief in Scotland, following the successful and low-key adoption of similar legislation for England in 1778. This had removed certain disabilities from the statute book and allowed Roman Catholics to own property, inherit land, and join the army. However, in Scotland there was widespread popular involvement in an opposition campaign, which, Robert Donovan has suggested, had its basis as much in local political manoeuvring, as in its professed religious cause.⁸⁹⁰ Donovan has commented on the ability of religious prejudice to influence the growth of a wider interest in politics, and which saw the ‘adoption of new techniques of democratic organization’. He argues that the ‘outcry against the government’s Roman

⁸⁸⁹ Daniel Defoe, *The behaviour of servants in England inquired into* (London, [1726]), p.20.

⁸⁹⁰ Donovan, *No Popery and Radicalism*, pp.216-217.

Catholic relief program brought active, long-lived political awareness to large numbers of Scotsmen *for the first time*' (my emphasis).⁸⁹¹

However, while agreeing in part with Donovan's argument, this thesis takes issue with the idea that this campaign instigated political awareness, particularly as anti-patronage disputes had long predated the anti-Catholic relief campaign. In addition, while the campaign encouraged organisation and association, these skills were not necessarily new. The craft incorporations of the burghs were well used to electing their representatives within their own organisations, and then to the local council, and artisans had long been organizing themselves through friendly societies and trades organisations within their crafts. Thus, the anti-Catholic relief protest was an important part of the ongoing development of ordinary Scots' political awareness, but only a part. Political awareness had its roots in their Presbyterianism.

One of the most important sources relating to the anti-Catholic relief campaign is *Scotland's Opposition to the Popish Bill*, published in 1780, which provides a list of the groups involved.⁸⁹² These groups conducted public meetings, organised committees of correspondence and petitioned parliament. They also used the press to promote their beliefs and advertise their campaign, publishing declarations and resolutions in various newspapers. For example, the 'Incorporation of Wrights, Gardeners, Tailors, Shoemakers, Fishermen, Plowmen, (*sic*) and Weavers' of Musselburgh inserted a notice in the *Caledonian Mercury*, and in the same edition the president of the Falkirk Society for the Protestant

⁸⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁸⁹² *Scotland's Opposition to the Popish Bill* (Edinburgh, 1780), p.vi.

Interest, John Russel, expressed the desire of the ‘inhabitants’ of the burgh to ‘declare their adherence to ... the resolution against the toleration of Popery’.⁸⁹³

The extensive publications on this issue were a potent weapon in the campaign, but they only held this potential because of the widespread literacy in Scotland at all levels of society. Those involved in the campaign included the ecclesiastical courts, the heritors, burgesses, heads of families and general inhabitants, as well as various private societies in towns, burghs and parishes; even the Pantheon Society produced a resolution in opposition.⁸⁹⁴ Also included were many trades incorporations, involving numerous shoemakers, weavers, hammermen, potters, bakers, smiths, tailors, millers, wrights, cooper, fleshers, bonnet makers, dyers, bookbinders, candle makers, chairmen, mechanics, cabinet makers, coach makers, flax dressers, stay makers, waukers, hatters, ploughmen, porters, masons, fishermen, stocking makers, coal hewers and gardeners. The Lord Justice Clerk noted in 1781 ‘the Enthusiastic zeal of Thousands of the Common People, associated to support the Protestant Religion’.⁸⁹⁵ The president of the Eighty-five Glasgow Societies, for example, was a grocer, and the treasurer was a barber.⁸⁹⁶ The Eighty-five societies were existing, charitable associations which had met together, having been given instructions from their respective societies, to oppose toleration for Catholics.⁸⁹⁷ They represented more than 12,000 members in Glasgow including chapmen, cowfeeders, journeymen hammermen, musicians, tobacconists, old men, widows and orphans.⁸⁹⁸ Members of the

⁸⁹³ *Cal. Merc.*, 12 Feb. 1781.

⁸⁹⁴ *Scotland's Opposition to the Popish Bill*, p.198-199.

⁸⁹⁵ Letter from Thomas Miller, the Lord Justice Clerk of Scotland, to Viscount Stormont, 29 January 1781, cited in Donovan, *No Popery and Radicalism*, p.46.

⁸⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.222-223.

⁸⁹⁷ *Scotland's Opposition to the Popish Bill*, p.49.

⁸⁹⁸ Eugene Charlton Black, *The Association: British Extraparliamentary political organization 1769-1793* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1963), p.140.

Protestant Committee in Edinburgh included a dyer and a glover.⁸⁹⁹ The rank and file were predominantly artisans and tradesmen from the lower orders, who were regarded as people with ‘neither Rank, Learning, nor Authority to recommend them’.⁹⁰⁰

As a result there was opposition to people with such lowly social status expressing views on this subject. One letter in the *Caledonian Mercury* was clear that ordinary people should not rise above their ‘humble sphere’.

The members of the several Protestant Associations, considered as manufacturers and mechanics, are highly to be respected.... But when not content with the humble sphere in which they were designed to move, they force themselves forward into public view, and deciding on the most abstruse points of religious controversy, pretend to censure the resolve of Parliament, their conduct appears in a very unfavourable light.⁹⁰¹

This engendered a reply:

This picture ... drawn by the pencil of despotism and passive obedience.... is saying, in plain language, that they ought to surrender their reason and judgement entirely to the direction of others [but] surely no person can be insensible to the utility of civil and religious liberty ... How much pain, then must it give us to observe, that Popery and civil liberty are incompatible? This is no abstruse point of religious controversy; here a person in a very humble sphere, may give a decided opinion, it is a fact established by history, and the uniform experience of former times.⁹⁰²

This protest again emphasises how important the freedom to follow one’s conscience was for Presbyterians and displays clear opposition, not simply to a local dispute, but to government policy. Most of the people involved in this campaign were ordinary working people, the type of people listed in their thousands as book subscribers. They were also very similar in occupation to those involved in patronage disputes, the burgh reform movement and in radical politics by the 1790s. Opposition to Catholic relief may have included local political

⁸⁹⁹ Donovan, *No Popery and Radicalism*, pp.222-223.

⁹⁰⁰ Bishop George Hay, ‘A Memorial to the Public in Behalf of the Catholics of Edinburgh and Glasgow’, cited in *ibid.*, p.54.

⁹⁰¹ *Cal. Merc.*, 12 Feb. 1781.

⁹⁰² *Ibid.*, 5 Mar. 1781.

manoeuvring, but, based on the evidence of declarations such as the one by the ‘Inhabitants and parish of Whitburn’ it had its roots in Presbyterianism and at least partly in the Covenanting past:

We also feel the weight of the obligation of our national covenant, wherein we, in our fathers, did most solemnly renounce the abominations of Popery and bound ourselves to oppose these. We heartily concur with our patriotic ancestors, who even refused to acknowledge their deliverers, under God, William and Mary, king and queen, till their Claim of Right and the penal laws against Papists were fully settled.⁹⁰³

In addition, it was no accident that sermons, such as one by the minister at Sanquhar in Dumfriesshire, John Thomson, began to be published, addressing ‘the danger to which our CIVIL and RELIGIOUS INTERESTS are just now exposed by the public encouragement given to POPERY’, and there was a spate of publications after 1779 when Covenanting works were re-published, almost certainly reflecting a renewed awareness of such material because of the anti-Catholic relief campaign.⁹⁰⁴

Geographically, the campaign found support in most areas of Scotland, although the strength of support varied greatly. For example, in Aberdeenshire the only protest came from the Presbytery of Aberdeen, while in Glasgow, the area with the strongest support for the campaign, 185 protests were lodged by various parishes, associations, societies and trades incorporations. The areas offering the greatest support were in the central belt: Lanarkshire (including Glasgow), Renfrewshire and Stirlingshire; the Lothians (including Edinburgh), and Peeblesshire; Fife, Angus and Perthshire; and Ayrshire. Notably, the counties most strongly involved in the anti-Catholic relief campaign, with the exception of Peeblesshire, were also those with the largest numbers of book subscribers. This

⁹⁰³ *Scotland's Opposition to the Popish Bill*, p.235.

⁹⁰⁴ Thomson, *National Calamity the Consequence of National Guilt*, pp.23, 43-49.

campaign certainly reflected the bigotry of the age, but it also illustrated the determination of thousands of ordinary Scots to defy government and follow their conscience in defence of their religious beliefs. Once again, ordinary people were demonstrating that they believed they were entitled to be included in decision-making and they were intent on making their views heard.

III

The participation of ordinary people in political activity can also be demonstrated through their involvement with the burgh reform movement of the 1780s. However, given their prior involvement in the patronage and anti-Catholic relief protests, burgh reform needs to be viewed in context. It was another important aspect of popular protest, and particularly significant as a form of overtly 'political' protest. It was not, as historians such as William Mathieson and Henry Meikle suggested, Scotland's 'political awakening'.⁹⁰⁵ Burgh reform was clearly not the point at which Scottish popular consciousness was awoken, although it was certainly one factor, which helped to stimulate the desire for political reform which was developed by the formation of Scotland's Friends of the People societies in 1792.⁹⁰⁶

A decade before the emergence of the Friends of the People, burgh councils came under attack because they had long been justly regarded as self-selecting oligarchies. Council 'elections' were predominantly the preserve of the select few, and only an outgoing council had the right to elect its successor. Therefore councillors had both the power and the means to run their towns as

⁹⁰⁵ Mathieson, *Awakening Of Scotland*; Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution*.

⁹⁰⁶ Brims, 'From Reformers to "Jacobins"', p.31.

The Provosts Choice or – Adam Tempted



Illustration 3.

personal fiefdoms, unaccountable to anyone outside their circle and in many instances in the pocket of a particular ‘interest’, often the largest landholder or a political manager such as the Duke of Argyll or Henry Dundas. Possessed of considerable patronage, councillors controlled a town’s commercial activities, exercised judicial power and administered burgh property. They also elected the burgh’s representative in parliament, another source of corruption as a contemporary print from the 1790 Montrose election illustrates (see Figure 3).

At Montrose the general election of 1790 was highly controversial. The Town Council had promised to support the existing M.P. Sir David Carnegie. However, eleven of the nineteen councillors failed to do so and David Scott was elected MP instead. The print implies that Provost Adam Glegg, the Commissioner appointed to vote for the burgh, accepted a bribe to vote for a different candidate.⁹⁰⁷ The inhabitants of the burghs had virtually no means of bringing their local councils to account and this system prevailed across Scotland, although interested parties could protest at burgh council actions by disrupting the election of trade deacons, publishing pamphlets and rioting.⁹⁰⁸

The need for burgh reform was highlighted nationally by a series of letters printed in the Edinburgh papers in 1782 and 1783.⁹⁰⁹ As with other political issues, pamphlets and the press provided an opportunity to communicate more widely. As one writer on reform commented, ‘What is written is permanent, and spreads itself further by far ... than the voice can reach. The pen ... speaks to many thousands

⁹⁰⁷ In figure 3 Angus Archives, MS/13, 1790. The devil is David Scott, director and chairman of the East India Company, who had the backing of Henry Dundas. Scot had played a part in having the duties on coastal coal carriers repealed. In the middle is the Provost, Adam Glegg, and on the right is the Sir David Carnegie. Scott is promising places for Glegg’s sons in India and a substantial cash bribe for Glegg. Carnegie holds a copy of the promises made by the council. At Glegg’s feet are ‘truth’, ‘honesty’ and ‘consistency’.

⁹⁰⁸ Murdoch, ‘Importance of Being Edinburgh’, p.7.

⁹⁰⁹ Archibald Fletcher, *A Memoir concerning the origin and progress of the reform proposed in the internal government of the Royal Burghs of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1819), p.13.

at once ... A man's writing may preach when he cannot'.⁹¹⁰ Following the newspaper correspondence, a committee of Edinburgh citizens was formed to provide encouragement to other burghs to emulate Edinburgh in pressing for reform, and in total fifty-two out of sixty-six royal burghs eventually became involved in the reform movement. Most information about the organization comes from contemporary newspaper reports, which predominantly relate to the Edinburgh committee. The activities of the local burgh reform associations appear to have left little trace, and very little subsequently has been written about the reform movement in any depth, apart from Archibald Fletcher's *Memoir*, published in 1819, although the broad outline of the burgh reform campaign is referred to briefly in most scholarly work as a curtain-raiser for political activity in the 1790s.

From early 1783 inhabitants of the various Scottish burghs created reform associations, attracting interest across the country from Annan in Dumfriesshire in the south-west to Wick in Caithness in the north-east. In March 1784 the burgh reformers held their first general Convention in Edinburgh, and a standing committee was set up, comprised of members of Edinburgh's legal establishment, including Archibald Fletcher. The committee sent letters to burgh reform groups requesting information about the abuse of the system within each locality. Despite numerous petitions to Parliament, and four bills for the reform of the Scottish burghs between 1787 and 1791, the movement achieved nothing. However, the widespread opposition to the closed nature of burgh politics brought demands for reform from local reform societies. For example, in Perth in 1784 a 'committee of

⁹¹⁰ Richard Warren, *Speculum ruris, urbis & aulae: or, The looking-glass, representing to town, court, and country, the much need of reform...* (Edinburgh, 1785), p.v.

citizens' had demanded access to the 'set (*sic*) of the Burgh & of the stent & cess rolls'.⁹¹¹

The reformers garnered support from local burgesses, heritors, guild members, trades' incorporations and other inhabitants in the burghs. Between 1784 and 1787, the incorporation of weavers from Dunfermline joined, along with the eight incorporated trades of Perth, the six incorporated trades of Irvine, the incorporated trades of Lanark, Aberdeen and Inverness, the Edinburgh incorporation of hammermen, and also the Edinburgh corporations of skimmers and furriers, and the Edinburgh incorporation of websters, the trades of Kirkwall and Inverkeithing, the nine incorporated trades of Ayr, the five incorporated trades of Dumbarton and the incorporated trades of Arbroath.⁹¹² The incorporations may have joined the reformers owing to the many long-standing disputes between themselves and local councils, when the incorporations attempted to change the eligibility of those who could stand for election, as well as the method of electing officials. The involvement of trades' incorporations certainly lent the weight of existing legitimate local bodies to this campaign.

In some cases, even individuals who already had a seat on a council wanted reform. For example, at Montrose in Angus, in 1787 five councillors voted for reform, including William Ross, who thought such a reform 'very necessary'.⁹¹³ At Annan in Dumfriesshire, eight of the Town Council favoured reform and several of them had signed the burgh reform petition.⁹¹⁴ At

⁹¹¹ P&KCA, Perth Burgh Records, B59/24/1/49, James Chalmers to Patrick Miller, town clerk, Perth, 20 Feb. 1784.

⁹¹² *Cal. Merc.*, 24 Jan. 1784 (Dunfermline Perth); 31 Jan. 1784 (Irvine); 15 Mar. 1784 (Aberdeen, Aberbrothick, Lanark); 20 Oct. 1784 (Inverness); 29 Nov. 1784 (Edinburgh hammermen); 1 Dec. 1784 (Edinburgh Skimmers and Furriers); 11 Dec. 1784 (Websters); 31 Jan. 1785 (Kirkwall); 26 Mar. 1785 (Inverkeithing); 1 Nov. 1786 (Ayr); 7 Apr. 1787 (Dumbarton); 15 Mar. 1784 (Arbroath).

⁹¹³ *Ibid.*, 19 Apr. 1787.

⁹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3 May 1787.

neighbouring Lochmaben, six councillors declared ‘that they thought the Reform proposed a very expedient and necessary measure’.⁹¹⁵ The trades incorporations and guilds also used the press to advertise their support and to communicate with others in opposition to the closed nature of burgh politics. The use of the press provided the means of broadcasting their opposition and widening the audience for their argument. These bodies and individuals were associating in order to express their support for political reform, and their opposition to power entrenched in the hands of a few individuals. They wished to extend people’s involvement in burgh affairs and allow an, albeit limited, increase in the franchise and a more democratic form of election.

Once again, involvement in one issue could lead to involvement in another. The Nine Incorporated Trades of Dundee, which had been advocating change over the patronage issue, extended their opposition to the wider object of political reform and passed two resolutions at the same meeting in 1783, one about electoral reform in the burghs and one about patronage. However, their grievance over patronage had clearly been revitalized by their new cause, and, having dismissed the possibility of finding redress through the Church courts, they instead appealed ‘to those principles of liberty, and regard to the rights of men, which actuate the breasts of many of our representatives in parliament’.⁹¹⁶ This suggests an increasing politicisation of the debate and also highlights the influence of new factors such as the development of an overtly political cause in burgh reform, which influenced the thinking of those pressing for change over patronage. Hence, by 1792 when the Convention of Burgh Reformers met in July, some of the delegates argued for the movement to unite with the Friends of the

⁹¹⁵ Ibid.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid., 26 Feb. 1783.

People.⁹¹⁷ Although this was rejected some individuals did join the movement and the speed with which the Friends of the People established themselves over the summer and early autumn of 1792 suggests that in many areas this was aided by a pre-existing burgh reform movement and its supporters.

In most towns in Scotland, opposition to the sett (constitution) provided the main focus for a challenge to council power and privilege. For example, in Glasgow,

[S]ome of the more ambitious wish for some more political consequence, than they at present enjoy, under the laws of the Scottish burghs; which they consider as confining the presentation of ministers, and the power of election and offices to a few, in exclusion of the rest, and these they wish to have put on a broader bottom.⁹¹⁸

The Drysdale dispute in Edinburgh in 1762 had included pressure for alterations to Edinburgh's sett by giving control of the selection of trade deacons to the incorporated trades.⁹¹⁹ In Perth in 1790, 'Under the specious colour of reformation attempt[ing] to overturn the established Sett, and Constitution of the Burgh, An Innovation is to be attempted of the usual mode of Election of these office bearers in the Burgh, by those styling themselves Reformers'.⁹²⁰ Members of the guildry had wished to assert the right of direct election of the dean of guild, rather than follow the accepted practice of providing a leet from which the Council could choose.⁹²¹ Clashes such as these, between the trades and burgh councils were of long standing and predated any involvement in reformist politics. For example, in 1721 at Edinburgh there had been a dispute involving the trades' and merchants'

⁹¹⁷ Hughes, 'Scottish Reform Movement and Charles Grey', p.29.

⁹¹⁸ OSA, Vol. 5, p.534 (Glasgow).

⁹¹⁹ See Sher, 'Moderates, Managers and Popular Politics in Mid-Eighteenth Century Edinburgh', pp.179-209.

⁹²⁰ P&KCA, Perth Council MSS, PE15 Bundle 324, *Copy Bill Of Suspension, For The Magistrates and Town Council of Perth*, 1794; PE15 Bundle 324, 'Case with respect to the Election of the Dean of Guild of Perth and his Council', 1790.

⁹²¹ The election of the dean of guild proved to be a persistent irritant, and by 1794 the council had applied to the Court of Session for a Bill of Suspension. Although this resolved the matter in the council's favour the issue refused to go away and resurfaced again in 1814.

sides of the council over voting rights, which would have meant altering the sett of the burgh, and which resulted in an action being brought before the Court of Session to resolve the issue.⁹²² Disputes between these two groups produced changes to Edinburgh's sett in 1683, 1729, and 1763.⁹²³

In 1741, an action had been brought before the Court of Session over the means of electing the magistrates in Perth. They had been accused of combining to control the nomination of magistrates and consequently control of the burgh's affairs.⁹²⁴ In 1776 the trades incorporations in Edinburgh were again in opposition over the shortening of the leets, which once more resulted in legal action.⁹²⁵ They had wished to elect their deacons to the town council without being subject to the leet system whereby the council could reduce the list of candidates for the office of deacon.⁹²⁶ The opposition to this system was even taken up as a topic in the Pantheon Society debates in 1782, after the society had been repeatedly asked by citizens to consider this issue: *'Would it be for the INTEREST of the INCORPORATIONS of this city, that the practice of SHORTENING their LEETS, in the ELECTION OF DEACONS, should be abolished?'*⁹²⁷

Similar struggles had also occurred in other burghs, for example, at Arbroath in 1768, an attempt was made to change the method of administering the funds of the burgh and the mode of electing the dean of guild. Those pressing for change wished the election of the dean to be by 'an annual Poll of the whole

⁹²² Arnot, *History Of Edinburgh*, pp.397-398.

⁹²³ Houston, 'Popular Politics in the Reign of George II', p.168.

⁹²⁴ *Substance of the Reports Transmitted by the Committees of Burgesses of Different Boroughs, in answer to the General Instructions Transmitted by the Committee of Convention at Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1789), p.30.

⁹²⁵ Arnot, *History Of Edinburgh*, pp.399-400.

⁹²⁶ Murdoch, 'Importance of Being Edinburgh', p.8.

⁹²⁷ *Cal. Merc.*, 4 Sept. 1782.

inhabitants of the Town'.⁹²⁸ At Stirling in 1773, three members of the council made a pact to keep themselves and their friends perpetually in office by managing the elections of the burgh for their mutual interest and giving their vote for an M.P. only to one acceptable to themselves.⁹²⁹ When this pact was discovered it was brought before the Court of Session and the council was disenfranchised until a new sett was drawn up 1781. In St. Andrews in 1780 the deacon of the weavers petitioned the Convener Court against members of the trade who wished to introduce a different mode of election, which would have cancelled the practice of the deacon giving out the leet, and replaced it by votes from the trade at large.⁹³⁰

In the burgh of Kilrenny in Fife the council consisted of a total of fifteen members: three bailies, a treasurer and eleven burgesses 'without distinction of merchants and tradesmen'.⁹³¹ The old council elected the new council. The three bailies made out a leet of nine, including themselves, the treasurer made a leet of three including himself, and from these leets the three bailies and the treasurer for the ensuing year were elected by the bailies, council, and 'all qualified burgesses'.⁹³² In this respect, by the inclusion of qualified burgesses Kilrenny was a more open council than most, at least in respect of the election of the three bailies and the treasurer. Nevertheless, in 1784 a petition was raised in protest at

⁹²⁸ *Replies for James Butchart provost, and others, magistrates, and town-council, of the burgh of Aberbrothock* (Edinburgh, 1768), p.8.

⁹²⁹ J. Shirra, *Notes and Gleaned Statistics in connection with The Burgh & County of Stirling* (Stirling, [1870]), pp.10-11.

⁹³⁰ St. Andrews University Archives [SAUA], B65/17/1, Convener's Book of the Seven Trades, 1594-1817, 8 Sept. 1780.

⁹³¹ Abstract of the Sett of Kilrenny in, 'Report From the Committee, to whom the several Petitions presented to the House of Commons from the Royal Burghs of *Scotland*, together with the several Accounts and Papers, relating to the internal Government of the said Royal Burghs, were referred. Reported by Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Esquire, 17th June 1793.' House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, *Reports from Committees of the House of Commons 1715-1801*, Vol. 14, p.345.

⁹³² *Ibid.*

the election to Parliament of John Anstruther, the sitting M.P. for the burgh grouping of Crail, Kilrenny, Anstruther Easter, Anstruther Wester and Pittenweem. John Anstruther had been re-elected in April, but a number of Kilrenny burgesses and heritors had objected to his support for Charles James Fox, and more particularly to

the object of his family these seventeen years past to exclude the lawful voters of our Burgh and to confine the Franchises thereof to themselves, and certain of their dependants, regardless of the interest of their Constituents except the individual few employed to keep us in Thrawldom (*sic*).⁹³³

This group wished to be represented in Parliament by Colonel James Moncrief of Airdrie. Moncrief's father had purchased the estate of Airdrie near Crail, but at the 1784 election only Crail's councillors had voted for him, despite Moncrief having had the support of Henry Dundas, Scotland's political 'manager'.⁹³⁴ The petitioners, only some of whom had the right to vote at the election, included tailors, sailors, wrights, brewers, shoemakers, tenant farmers, labourers, weavers, malt sellers, carpenters, masons and coopers.⁹³⁵

There were other popular political disturbances that occurred in several Scottish towns, including those at Dingwall in 1740, which related to both the council elections and the patronage issue. There were disputes over the election and control of the councils at Dumfries in 1760 and Ayr in 1761, and there had been ongoing opposition to the ruling clique in Edinburgh from at least the 1720s.⁹³⁶ At Dumfries, for example, the opposition to aristocratic influence and the merchant oligarchy included weavers, smiths, tailors, butchers, joiners and

⁹³³ SAUA, B3/5/3 Kilrenny, Town Council Minutes 1746-1805, 'Petition of the Body of Burgesses and Heritors of Kilrenny' Apr. 1784.

⁹³⁴ John Brooke, *The House of Commons, 1754-1790*, 3 Vols (London, 1964), Vol. 1, pp.498-500.

⁹³⁵ SAUA, B3/5/3 Kilrenny, Town Council Minutes 1746-1805 'Poll for Bailies and Treasurer for Kilrenny' 16 Sept. 1784.

⁹³⁶ Ferguson, 'Dingwall Burgh Politics', pp.89-108; Burn, 'General Election of 1761 at Ayr', pp.103-109; Murdoch, 'Importance of Being Edinburgh', pp.1-16; Houston, 'Popular Politics in the Reign of George II', pp.167-189; Brydon, 'Politics, Government and Society in Edinburgh', pp.79-105.

shoemakers.⁹³⁷ This type of opposition to often corrupt burgh councils and political ‘managers’ again highlights that ordinary people from a variety of backgrounds were beginning to demand a political voice. Once again, as was the case with ecclesiastical patronage, some people now wanted the right to choose their representatives and to be recognised as having a claim to be included in decision making.

As part of the burgh reform campaign numerous petitions were signed by reformers across Scotland and sent to Parliament between 1783 and 1789. These petitions included two from Dumbarton, one in May 1783 with 240 signatures and another in April 1787 with 273 signatures; one from Irvine in April 1787 with 184 signatures; one from Glasgow in June 1787 with 1500 signatures; and two from Inverness, one in April 1785 and another in March 1786, with 500 and 400 signatures respectively.⁹³⁸ The guild brethren, merchants, burgesses of Arbroath, and the incorporated trades all signed the petition.⁹³⁹ In addition the nine incorporated trades and the three united trades of the masons, wrights and slaters of Dundee, and also ‘almost every Burgess’ of that town had subscribed their petition.⁹⁴⁰ In 1788 petitions from forty-three royal burghs were received by parliament.⁹⁴¹ The 1789 petitions, presented to the House of Commons by Richard Sheridan, contained a total of 9,000 signatures from fifty-two burghs.⁹⁴²

⁹³⁷ Murdoch, ‘Politics and the People in the Burgh of Dumfries’, p.151.

⁹³⁸ *Cal. Merc.*, 8 May 1783, 7 Apr. 1787 (Dumbarton); 14 Apr. 1787 (Irvine); 2 June 1787 (Glasgow); 27 Apr. 1785, 29 Mar. 1786 (Inverness).

⁹³⁹ *Glasgow Mercury*, 8 May 1783.

⁹⁴⁰ *Cal. Merc.*, 9 Feb. 1784 (Dundee); Letter to the council 22 Jan. 1789, Dundee City Archives, Dundee Council Minute Books, 1 Nov. 1779-24 Jan. 1793.

⁹⁴¹ The petitions came from Aberdeen, Annan, Anstruther Easter, Anstruther Wester, Arbroath, Ayr, Banff, Brechin, Campbeltown, Crail, Cupar, Dumbarton, Dumfries, Dunbar, Dundee, Dunfermline, Dysart, Elgin, Forfar, Forres, Glasgow, Haddington, Inverkeithing, Inverness, Inverurie, Irvine, Kilrenny, Kinghorn, Kirkcaldy, Kirkcudbright, Lanark, Lochmaben, Linlithgow, Montrose, Nairn, Peebles, Perth, Pittenweem, Rothsey, Sanquhar, Stranraer, Whitehorn, Wigton.

⁹⁴² House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, *Sixteenth Parliament of Great Britain: sixth session* (4 Dec.-1 Aug. 1789) Debate on burgh reform, 6 Jul. 1789, pp.349-350.

Although the leaders of the reform movement in Edinburgh were drawn from the respectable middling orders and the delegates to the first Convention of burgh reformers ‘consisted chiefly of wealthy and respectable burgesses’, many of the reform’s supporters were derided as ‘insignificant in numbers, respectability, and property’. They were considered to be, ‘in general of the lowest class and many of them [had] no concern or real interest in the burghs’.⁹⁴³ The leadership of the Edinburgh committee, as with the other reform societies, was predominantly made up of lawyers and other professionals, but this belies the much wider social range that the movement encompassed. Even an individual such as John Ewen, who was a prominent figure in the Aberdeen society, writing in the press as *Civis*, had come from humble beginnings. His father was described as a wandering tinker, and Ewen himself started life as a packman, selling buckles, sleeve-buttons and penknives.⁹⁴⁴

An illustration of the social status of some of the reformers can be seen from a petition, sent from Perth in 1788, which had been subscribed by 379 of the town’s ‘Burgesses, Heritors & Traders or manufacturers’, and petitions like this were signed by reform groups across Scotland.⁹⁴⁵ Perth’s councillors were dismissive of the social standing of most of those who had signed the petition, describing most of them as ‘low in point of station’ because ‘out of 380 subscribers to the petition, there are only 185 of them that pay cess or stent or bear any other financial burden’.⁹⁴⁶ Yet these were the type of people which Archibald

⁹⁴³ Fletcher, *Memoir*, pp.15-26.

⁹⁴⁴ William Walker, *The Bards of Bon-Accord, 1375-1860* (Aberdeen 1887), p.330.

⁹⁴⁵ P&KCA, Perth Burgh Records, B59/34/83, ‘Names subscribed to the Petition of the Burgesses, Heritors & Traders or manufacturers of the Royal burgh of Perth in that part of Great Britain called Scotland’, Oct. 1788. See also Honeyman, ‘Very Dangerous Place??’, pp.278-305.

⁹⁴⁶ P&KCA, Perth Burgh Records, B59/34/82, ‘Observations on the subscribers to the Petition presented to Parliament from the Town of Perth for reform of burgh government’, Oct. 1788. Cess was a local tax or rate, stent was a contribution to national taxation. Although the councillors refer

Fletcher had envisaged when he wrote his pamphlet on reform.⁹⁴⁷ Perth's councillors were particularly dismissive of the 'considerable number of weavers' who had subscribed. However, in total in 1788, only 479 Perth inhabitants were assessed to pay stent, and almost 40% of those had signed in favour of reform.⁹⁴⁸ Although Perth's councillors may have been dismissive of the social standing of the petitioners, what is abundantly clear from this petition is that, while some of the weavers, shoemakers and glovers paid stent and/or cess, the council was correct to state that 194, more than half the petitioners, earned too little to pay either. Thus, while some of the signatories were contributing towards 'the financial burden' of the community, a larger number were not tax-payers of any kind, because they did not own property and were too poor to be assessed for cess, suggesting that they were at the lower end of the social scale, but still desirous of a political voice.

Of the 379 petitioners, 56.47% (214) were artisans and 36.14% (137) were from the middling orders or above and the remaining 7.39% (28) were of unknown occupation. Within the middling category the largest number were merchants, although the title could include those of very humble status as well as the very wealthy. For example, in eighteenth-century Glasgow the most prosperous merchants were involved in overseas trade while other 'merchants' could be living on the margins of poverty.⁹⁴⁹ Similarly, in seventeenth-century Edinburgh, where there were merchants who at one end of the spectrum encompassed large business empires involved in foreign trade, and at the other

to 380 petitioners there were actually only 379 names on the list.

⁹⁴⁷ [Fletcher] *Inquiry into the principles of ecclesiastical patronage and presentation*, p.2.

⁹⁴⁸ P&KCA, Perth Burgh Records, B59/21/58, 'Personal Stent Roll', 1788.

⁹⁴⁹ See Nenadic, 'Rise of the Urban Middle Class', pp.113

end were luckenbooth (lockable booth or covered stall) keepers and pedlars pushing small handcarts.⁹⁵⁰

Regardless of whether they were merchant or weaver, none had a right to vote. However, at least in Perth, ordinary people were clearly involved in the movement and supportive of reform, once again demonstrating that they wanted to exercise what they regarded as their right to choose their representatives, and it is likely that a similar pattern was found elsewhere.⁹⁵¹ The actions of reformers were not always as peaceable as petitioning. For example, at Aberdeen in 1785 there was ‘mobbing’ with ‘many thousands’ on the streets, the council-house was attacked and the riot lasted for two days.⁹⁵² George Forbes, advocate and procurator fiscal for the burgh, accused the convenor of the Incorporated Trades of using Trades funds to defend the ‘rioters’, and named an apprentice at the *Aberdeen Journal* as one of those involved. Through actions like this pressure for reform would become linked with direct popular action.⁹⁵³

IV

These campaigns and the people involved in them should not be viewed in isolation from other areas of Scottish life. The growth of commercial society played its part in encouraging people to consider the changing reality of their productive and social dealings. Commercialisation changed relationships in urban society, while the implementation of agricultural ‘improvements’ affected rural

⁹⁵⁰ Helen M. Dingwall, *Late Seventeenth-Century Edinburgh: A Demographic Study* (Aldershot, 1994), p.129.

⁹⁵¹ The Perth petition appears to be the only extant petition. While it seems probable that similar petitions would provide further evidence of this wider range of support, unfortunately, despite an intensive archival search, no copies of reform petitions from other burghs have been found, and the House of Commons fire of 1834 destroyed the original petitions which were sent to parliament.

⁹⁵² *Scots Mag.*, Oct.1785, p.509; *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*, Oct. 27 1785.

⁹⁵³ David Findlay and Alexander Murdoch, ‘Revolution to Reform: Eighteenth-century Politics, c.1690-1800’, in E. Patricia Dennison, David Ditchburn and Michael Lynch (eds), *Aberdeen Before 1800: A New History* (East Linton, 2002), pp.282-283.

workers. Changing forms of economic activity also had an impact encroaching on the commercial relationship between worker and owner and causing friction within eighteenth-century Scottish society.⁹⁵⁴ Weavers, for example, by the early 1790s were losing the status of independent artisans as practices altered and long-standing rights came under attack, and they were less able to control the manner and pace of work.⁹⁵⁵ Increasingly, they were spending longer hours at their looms to offset cutbacks in their living standards, as piece rates fell.⁹⁵⁶ There were also major changes in the countryside that transformed social relations, such as enclosures and the amalgamation of farms, which engendered resentment and brought protest.⁹⁵⁷ For example, in 1786 landowners and farmers in the Carse of Gowrie were so disturbed by the ‘Insolence’ and ‘Disobedience’ of their servants that they petitioned the Justices of the Peace in Perth.⁹⁵⁸ It was in changes such as these that ordinary people felt the impact of the Enlightenment beyond the Church as enlightened ideas were put into practice, particularly in agriculture. In both town and countryside changes produced significant tensions within Scottish society, which were reflected in increasing separation by social status, which could be seen

⁹⁵⁴ Whatley, ‘Experience of Work’, pp.227-251; idem, *Scottish Society 1707-1830*, Chs 5 and 6; idem, ‘Roots of 1790s Radicalism’, pp.227-247; Fraser, *Conflict and Class*, idem, *Scottish Popular Politics From Radicalism to Labour*, Chs 1 and 2.

⁹⁵⁵ Whatley, ‘Roots of 1790s Radicalism’, p.152.

⁹⁵⁶ Murray, *Scottish Handloom Weavers*, p.152. Wage rates varied across the country. In Glasgow in 1791 the average wage for weavers was about 12/- per week, while in Perth it averaged 15s 4d per fortnight. Select Committee on Journeymen Weavers’ Petitions, Parliamentary Papers, 1810-11, (232), II, pp.4-5; Select Committee on Manufactures, Commerce and Shipping, Parliamentary Papers, 1833, (690), VI, p.695, q.11679, cited in Murray, p.141.

⁹⁵⁷ Whatley, *Scottish Society 1707-1830*, Ch. 4; idem, ‘Roots of 1790s Radicalism’, pp.28-9; Devine, *Transformation of Rural Scotland*, p.165; Gray, ‘Social Impact of Agrarian Change in the Rural Lowlands’, p.60; Devine, ‘Social Responses To Agrarian ‘Improvement’’, pp.148-168; Clapham, ‘Agricultural Change and its Impact on Tenancy’, pp.144-163.

⁹⁵⁸ P&KCA, Perth Burgh Records, B59/31/80/1, Petition of the Gentlemen Landholders, and the Farmers in the Carse of Gowrie to the Justices of the Peace, 3 Oct. 1786.

in activities such as ‘pewing’, and in the construction of Edinburgh’s New Town and similar, smaller developments in Glasgow, Aberdeen, Perth and Dundee.⁹⁵⁹

W. Hamish Fraser has provided detailed information about the collectivisation of the workforce across the century. For example, from the beginning of the eighteenth century there were associations of tailors, skimmers and shoemakers in Edinburgh, whose accumulation of independent ‘charitable boxes’, that is, funds collected independently of masters organisations, instilled the fear that such funds ‘could become the focus of industrial organisations and centres of discontent’, and he has demonstrated that artisanal involvement in combinations, and strikes became increasingly commonplace.⁹⁶⁰ For example, the woolcombers of Aberdeen joined together in 1755 for mutual co-operation and protection in their struggles for control in the workplace.⁹⁶¹ In 1785 George Dempster presented a petition to parliament purportedly signed by thousands of Glasgow weavers, protesting against the tax preference given to imports by the East India Company.⁹⁶² By 1787 antagonism over wage cuts for the Glasgow weavers resulted in a riot that ended with troops killing eight weavers from Calton. Fraser documents numerous other disputes, illustrating the rising tension between worker and employer, exacerbated by changed working conditions, reduced wages and loss of autonomy. He also maintains that the constant recourse to the courts, which was evident in industrial relations, could also encourage the development of organisational skills, as did the day to day running of such societies, and links which had been formed in friendly societies led to

⁹⁵⁹ Brown, ‘Protest in the Pews’, pp.91-92; Fraser, *Scottish Popular Politics From Radicalism to Labour*, p.3.

⁹⁶⁰ Fraser, *Conflict and Class*, p.41.

⁹⁶¹ Fraser, *ibid.*, pp.47-48.

⁹⁶² House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, *Sixteenth Parliament of Great Britain: second session* (25 January-2 August 1785) Petition of the Operative Weavers of Glasgow, 4 Feb. 1785, pp.484-485; Fraser, *Conflict and Class*, p.61.

collaboration on industrial action, which Fraser argued could also be viewed as demonstrating a ‘political’ stance.⁹⁶³

For many Scots, association occurred, as it had in the past, through trades incorporations and guilds.⁹⁶⁴ For others, association was to be found through the increasing number of friendly societies, the emergence of which, Fraser has suggested, was a function of the growing separation of master and journeyman and the transition to employer and worker.⁹⁶⁵ There are instances of such societies across Scotland. For example, from at least the last quarter of the century

[T]here [were] in Glasgow a number of societies, known by the name of Friendly Societies, instituted for the purpose of supporting their members when in distress. These arose with the manufactures, and have advanced and increased along with them; and in these, we may trace with pleasure, the various connections of society, leading men into the field of benevolence, and engaging in a mutual insurance against poverty.⁹⁶⁶

Some societies not only provided for their members in times of distress, but offered a way of supplying ‘coals and meal’ at cheaper rates. For example, at Dunning in Perthshire, both the weavers’ and masons’ societies bought in bulk at times when goods were cheap and sold them on at a little under the market price to their members and to the poor, while the St. Vigeans Weaver Society carried out the same function but also allowed their members three to four months credit.⁹⁶⁷ The Fenwick weavers, who had formed themselves into a society in 1761, organised the co-operative buying of foodstuffs as a hedge against rising costs, while the historian of the Fenwick society maintained that the society was inspired by Covenanted values.⁹⁶⁸ The Brechin Weavers’ Incorporation and the

⁹⁶³ Fraser, *ibid.*, pp.55-56.

⁹⁶⁴ Houston, ‘Popular Politics in the Reign of George II’.

⁹⁶⁵ Fraser, *Conflict and Class*, p.54; *idem*, ‘Scottish Context of Chartism’, pp.63-75.

⁹⁶⁶ *OSA*, Vol. 5, pp.525-526 (Glasgow).

⁹⁶⁷ *OSA*, Vol. 19, p.439 (Dunning, Perthshire); Vol. 12, pp.175-176 (St Vigeans, Angus).

⁹⁶⁸ Fenwick Weavers, Book of Records, 9 November 1769, cited in Fraser, *Conflict and Class*, pp.60-61; J. Kirkwood Fairlie (ed.), *Matthew Fowlds: Centenarian Weaver 1806–1907 and Other Fenwick Worthies* (Kilmarnock, 1910), p.96.

trades incorporation of Dundee also practised co-operative buying.⁹⁶⁹ The growth of workers' societies during the course of the eighteenth century allowed ordinary people not only a means of assisting each other at times of crisis, or in support of strikes, but also offered a space in which to meet and debate. Hence, struggle for control in the workplace was yet another area where the issues of choice and control come to the fore, and where Whatley, Fraser and others who have explored this area in previous works have argued that there was a link between socio-economic developments, protest and political activism.⁹⁷⁰

V

During the course of the eighteenth century the Enlightenment concept of association for mutual improvement, became an increasingly significant aspect of cultural life at all levels, and the spread of improving societies and scientific clubs illustrated the practical application of Enlightenment thinking.⁹⁷¹ One early association was the Honourable Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland, founded in 1723, which was comprised predominantly of Scotland's aristocratic elite. However, it also had gardeners and an engineer among its membership as the rules of the society included free membership to craftsmen in exchange for their practical advice.

Farmers and gardeners who shall desire to be Members, be received in *gratis* ... that Advertisement be given to such Workmen as please ... as offer their Service, to the end that the Society may from thence learn how to be supplied

⁹⁶⁹ Court of Session Papers Vol. 93, No. 20; Vol. 143, No. 19; Vol. 164, No. 7; Minutes of the Trades House, 9 Dec. 1769, cited in Fraser, *ibid.*, p.61.

⁹⁷⁰ For a discussion of economic developments as a cause of popular political protest see: Whatley, *Scottish Society 1707-1830*; Fraser, *Conflict and Class*; *idem*, *Scottish Popular Politics From Radicalism to Labour*; Murray, *Scottish Handloom Weavers*.

⁹⁷¹ Campbell, 'Enlightenment and the Economy', p.11. T. C. Smout, 'A New Look at the Scottish Improvers', *SHR*, Vol. 91 No. 1 (2012), pp.125-149.

with such Workmen as may be qualified for the several Purposes for which they may be wanted.⁹⁷²

Even at this early date, because of the intense interest in improving Scotland's agriculture, elite bodies such as this were bringing in ordinary men to explain their crafts, pass on their skills, and engage in the application of improving scientific ideas. By 1755 the Edinburgh Society for Encouraging Arts, Sciences, Manufactures, and Agriculture in Scotland had also been established. The Society met once a month, and its membership was composed of the nobility and gentry, but, in order to make its meetings more effective, it too passed a resolution in 1756 to admit practical farmers.⁹⁷³ By 1765 the Kilbarchan Farmer Society had been founded and by the latter part of the century several clubs such as this had been established. For example, by the 1780s the 'Clackmannanshire Farmers Club for promoting the purposes of agriculture' had been founded, and by 1790 there were farmers' clubs at Tarbolton in Ayrshire, Ormiston in East Lothian, and at New Kilpatrick in Dunbartonshire.⁹⁷⁴

The growth in associational activity, and the development of clubs and societies also provided the opportunity for individuals to meet and debate.⁹⁷⁵ William Smellie (1740-95), printer and journalist, in an essay submitted to the Select Society in 1760, observed that:

Nothing can contribute more effectually to promote public advantage, than the erection of societies for propagating and encouraging arts, sciences and manufactures [and] To see men of the greatest opulence and distinction ... forming themselves into societies, contributing large sums of money, and

⁹⁷² Honourable the Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland, *Select transactions of the Honourable the Society of improvers in the knowledge of agriculture in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1743), pp.5-6.

⁹⁷³ John Rae, *Life of Adam Smith* (London, 1895), p.115.

⁹⁷⁴ David Semple, *The Poems and Songs and Correspondence of Robert Tannahill with life and notes* (Paisley, 1876), p.xxxiv; *OSA*, Vol. 14, p.618 (Clackmannan, Clackmannanshire); Vol. 19, p.454 (Torbolton, Ayrshire); Vol. 9, p.282 (Ormiston, East Lothian); Vol. 7, p.102 (New Kilpatrick, Dunbartonshire).

⁹⁷⁵ Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associated World* (Oxford, 2000).

bestowing both their labour and time, in order to induce men of inferior ranks to improve their own branches of business etc.⁹⁷⁶

For the Enlightenment elite, clubs and societies were a significant part of their cultural activity.⁹⁷⁷

Clubs, such as the Pantheon Society of Edinburgh, established in 1773, offered venues for public debate, and although the society had a membership its debates were open to non-members. Glasgow had a Friendly debating Society for Scottish and Irish Covenanting students from the 1770s.⁹⁷⁸ Clubs and societies also sprang up in many smaller towns, for example, the Perth Miscellaneous Club was established in 1773 while, by the 1790s, Forfar was described, as ‘the place of resort for the free-holders, not only for transacting the business of the country, but for the enjoyment of society in clubs, assemblies, &c.’⁹⁷⁹ At Montrose ‘The gentlemen [held] a monthly club, which [was] well attended by persons of distinction, both in the town and neighbourhood’.⁹⁸⁰ While at Inverness it was noted that ‘In the town and country parish’ there were ‘several convivial clubs. Their meetings [were] frequent’.⁹⁸¹

Such societies were numerous and varied, although they were predominantly available to the middling orders and above. However, some societies were starting to be established with a wider social mix. This included the Cape Club (1764), in Edinburgh, which was dedicated to sociability and conviviality. It was headed by a ‘Sovereign of the Cape’, who was elected by the members every six months. In 1769 the Sovereign was an upholsterer, in 1781 a

⁹⁷⁶ William Smellie, *Literary and characteristical lives of John Gregory, M.D. Henry Home, Lord Kames* (Edinburgh, 1800), p.386.

⁹⁷⁷ For a discussion of some Scottish clubs and societies see McElroy, *Scotland's Age of Improvement*, although he concentrates almost exclusively on those with an elite membership.

⁹⁷⁸ Cited in McFarland, *Ireland and Scotland in the Age of Revolution*, p.21.

⁹⁷⁹ *OSA*, Vol. 6, p.522 (Forfar, Angus).

⁹⁸⁰ *OSA*, Vol. 5, p.48 (Montrose, Angus).

⁹⁸¹ *OSA*, Vol. 9, p.630 (Inverness, Inverness-shire).

hatter, and in 1785 a candle maker.⁹⁸² It had a considerable membership, the majority of whom were shoemakers, tailors, glove makers, smiths, saddlers, marble-cutters, barbers and brewers but also included advocates, writers to the signet, surgeons, doctors, ship-owners, naval officers, one student of divinity, and also painters, actors and poets, including the shoemaker poet Gavin Wilson.⁹⁸³ A Cape Club was also founded in Glasgow in 1771.⁹⁸⁴ Around 1774 the Speculative Society of Dundee opened its doors and was immediately involved in controversy as its membership was open, not only to men from the middling orders and below, but also to women.⁹⁸⁵ Other examples include the clubs associated with Robert Burns: the Bachelor's Club of Tarbolton (1783); the Monkland Friendly Society; and the Mauchline Debating Society (1786-97). This club also used the fines for non-attendance to set up a library.⁹⁸⁶ There was considerable popular interest in public affairs, and, while most clubs were not political associations it would be surprising if there had been no discussion of political affairs when people were brought together.

Some working men also established their own associational clubs outside of work, such as the Encyclopaedia Club of Paisley, so called because its collection of books included a set of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. It was founded in the 1770s, and continued until at least 1797. It was one of a number of

⁹⁸² National Library of Scotland, MS 2004, Cape Club Sederunt Book, Cape Sovereigns and other Officers, cited in Brydon, *Politics, Government and Society in Edinburgh*, pp.43-44.

⁹⁸³ David Herd, *Songs from David Herd's manuscripts* (Edinburgh, 1904), p.38; John Goodridge (ed.), *Bibliographical Database of British and Irish Labouring-Class Poets 1700-1900* (Nottingham Trent University, 2008) <<http://human.ntu.ac.uk/research/labouringclasswriters>>. [Accessed 01/04/2011].

⁹⁸⁴ Daniel Wilson, *Memorials of Edinburgh in the Olden Time* (Edinburgh, 1872), p.237; John Strang, *Glasgow and its Clubs: Or Glimpses of Conditions, Manners, Characters and Oddities of the City* (London and Glasgow, 1856), p.561.

⁹⁸⁵ McElroy, *Scotland's Age of Improvement*, pp.89-98; Bob Harris, 'Merchants, the Middling Sort, and Cultural Life in Georgian Dundee', in Charles McKean, Bob Harris and Christopher A. Whatley (eds), *Dundee Renaissance To Enlightenment* (Dundee, 2009), p.258.

⁹⁸⁶ McElroy, *ibid.*, pp.89-98.

such clubs in Paisley where societies purchased different types of books for circulation among their members, but also exchanged books between societies allowing everyone the opportunity of accessing the stock of each club.⁹⁸⁷ The Encyclopaedia Club had a membership that included a blacksmith, who was president, a barber and a weaver, and which provided an opportunity for tradesmen to meet together to debate on politics, current affairs, and modern inventions.⁹⁸⁸ At Little Dunkeld in Perthshire, several reading clubs had been formed, and by the early 1790s, the minister at Campsie was complaining that many of the young men in the district had formed themselves into Jacobin societies - 'young people at the different printfields; men, who have abundance of time in the evenings to cabal together'.⁹⁸⁹ However, even before the formation of overtly political societies, such was the lure of associating freely, particularly as such meetings often took place in taverns, that some people were accused of 'being too ready to leave their loom, or their work-shop, to meet in companies, or in clubs, in the ale-houses'.⁹⁹⁰

In addition to clubs and societies, Freemasonry was another associational activity that was popular in Scotland during the eighteenth century, with lodges spread across a wide geographical area.⁹⁹¹ Peter Clark has suggested that in England Freemasonry had moved towards greater elitism, and David Stevenson has commented that English Freemasons had little interest in associating with working men.⁹⁹² By contrast, Lisa Kahler, in her study of nine Masonic Lodges in

⁹⁸⁷ Semple, *Poems and Songs and Correspondence of Robert Tannahill*, p.xxxvii.

⁹⁸⁸ John Urie, *Reminiscences of eighty years* (Paisley, 1908), pp.27-29.

⁹⁸⁹ *OSA*, Vol. 6, pp.369-370 (Little Dunkeld, Perthshire); Vol. 15, p.381 (Campsie, Stirlingshire).

⁹⁹⁰ *OSA*, Vol. 18, p.524 (Perth, Perthshire).

⁹⁹¹ Mark C. Wallace, 'Scottish Freemasonry 1725-1810: Progress, Power, and Politics', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of St. Andrews, 2007), pp.10, 20.

⁹⁹² Clark, *British Clubs and Societies*, pp.320-323; David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century 1590-1710* (Cambridge, 1988), p.216.

Edinburgh between 1721 and 1746, concluded that men from all walks of life were members regardless of class or wealth.⁹⁹³ In Dundee, between 1745 and 1770, the membership was predominantly made up of tradesmen, and Mark Wallace's study 'Scottish Freemasonry 1725-1810', also suggested that there was considerably less social and class segregation in Scotland compared to the elitism present among English lodges.⁹⁹⁴ Wallace maintained that this may, at least in part, be attributable to a trend of societies moving away from major commercial centres to industrializing cities which influenced membership, but it was also contingent on how occupation specific a lodge was. Regional evidence suggested that the lodges were artisan in nature, and that membership characteristics were more a product of geography and the social composition of towns rather than a recruitment bias. They did not exclude members based on cultural or economic standing, whereas in London lodges, after 1768, there was a steady rise of gentlemen and landowners.⁹⁹⁵ Given that Scottish lodges appear to have embraced a wider social mix than their English counterparts this offered yet another means of associating and disseminating ideas from one social group to another, and, although Freemasons generally avoided overt political activity, the lodges provided an opportunity for individuals to meet and engage in discussion.

However, by the 1790s politics *had* found its way into the society, as lodge minutes attest to the increase in political discussions and ideas, and some Scottish lodges became associated with radical societies. Several lodges in Edinburgh were apparently involved with the Friends of the People. In November 1793, the Grand Lodge of Scotland met and Thomas Hay, the Substitute Grand

⁹⁹³ Lisa Kahler, 'Freemasonry in Edinburgh 1721-1746: Institutions and Context', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of St. Andrews, 1998), pp.248-294.

⁹⁹⁴ Wallace, 'Scottish Freemasonry' pp.58-62.

⁹⁹⁵ *Ibid.* pp.91-98.

Master of Scotland, intimated that: ‘Lodges in and about this City had been in the practice of allowing certain persons styling themselves “The Friends of the People” to assemble in their Lodges’.⁹⁹⁶ One Edinburgh lodge continued to rent its premises to the Friends of the People, but when a meeting took place on 5 December 1793, it was disbanded by the Lord Provost.⁹⁹⁷ In addition, individual masons were also associated with radicalism, such as George Mealmaker (1768-1808), a weaver and leader of the United Scotsmen, and James Yeoman, a baker, who were both members of the Dundee Friends of Liberty, and William Bisset, a Perth delegate to the first Convention of the Friends of the People, who were all members of St David’s Lodge in Dundee. James Callender (1758-1803), political pamphleteer, radical and member of the Canongate Friends of the People, was a member of Leith and Canongate Lodge.⁹⁹⁸

Associational activities, such as the development of reading and book clubs which were promoted by the Enlightenment, as well as Masonic Lodges and workers’ associations all provided opportunities for individuals to meet and mix with people from a range of occupational backgrounds, as well as offering places where ideas could be discussed and exchanged. Significantly this was not just at the level of the elite or middling orders. Ordinary working people also established their own clubs and met extensively, to the point of being accused by their betters of being overly ready to commit to such activities, suggesting both a degree of apprehension by those higher up the social scale that the lower orders were indulging in such activities, and also reflecting the extent of associational activity and the opportunity for discussion and debate.

⁹⁹⁶ The Grand Lodge of Scotland Minutes, 4 November 1793, cited in Wallace, ‘Scottish Freemasonry’ pp.146-152.

⁹⁹⁷ Ibid., p.152.

⁹⁹⁸ Ibid., p.153.

One issue, which produced considerable debate and a significant stir in both pulpit and press, was the American crisis, where there was a constant flow of publications, sermons, and letters to the press. The American issue may have been a further stimulus to people's political awareness because the subject was almost unavoidable and Scots exhibited keen interest in it in the press. The issue of 'taxation without representation' certainly echoed with the experience of the majority of the population in Scotland and fed into the desire for political reform. While there is no evidence of the American crisis producing an active political movement either in opposition to or in support of the colonists in Scotland, it is highly probable that the impact of the public debate was expressed through the movement for burgh reform from 1782 onwards. The flow of ideas generally between Scotland and America may also have had an impact on popular awareness. In addition, as the crisis escalated there were an increasing number of letters about America from Scottish correspondents in the newspapers, as well as a constant stream of news from America which kept Scots abreast of American affairs and the course of the war. Also, as noted in chapter three, America, the handling of the war and the conduct of government ministers made America a prominent topic in Edinburgh's debating societies.⁹⁹⁹ Dalphy Fagerstrom has argued that there was significant Scottish opposition to government policy on America and he comments on the substantial amount of space given to news and to discussion of the conflict with America and hence the interest displayed by the Scottish public in American affairs. He maintains that the influence of American

⁹⁹⁹ See pp.136-137.

affairs had an impact on Scots who began to pursue reform in burgh, county and national politics.¹⁰⁰⁰

The American crisis allowed analogies to be drawn with local politics; for example, in 1776 the trades' incorporations in Edinburgh once again attempted to have the sett of the burgh altered and they published resolutions in support of changing the mode of electing councillors. Letters to the newspapers regarding this suggested similarities between the reform bodies and colonial rebels. One address likened the meeting of the delegates appointed to consider the revision of Edinburgh's sett, to a 'Congress', and the signatory of the publications of the delegates was described as 'the redoubtable HANCOCK of the Brotherhood'. The delegates of the incorporations were reported to be as busy as the 'Congress' in framing minutes and resolutions.¹⁰⁰¹ As discussed in chapter five, ministers brought this debate into the pulpit, engaging both their parishioners and a wider audience through their publications. American affairs acquired prominence in the news, and the debate engendered during the crisis, and the arguments proffered, whether pro or con, may have provided a major stimulus to political awareness in Scotland, helping to prepare the way for demands for political reform by questioning the existing political order. As Adam Ferguson observed, 'in these times even old Women & Children can speak of nothing but politics'.¹⁰⁰²

Conclusion

The people involved in the patronage issue, the anti-Catholic relief campaign and the burgh reform movement were not just actors in a crowd, and

¹⁰⁰⁰ Fagerstrom, 'Scottish Opinion and the American Revolution', pp.252-275.

¹⁰⁰¹ Fagerstrom, 'American Revolutionary Movement in Scottish Opinion', p.118. John Hancock was the president of the colonial Continental Congress.

¹⁰⁰² Adam Ferguson to John Macpherson, Edinburgh, 18 Dec. 1779, cited in Fagerstrom, *ibid.*, p.304.

while the image of the mob appears from time to time, the activities in which ordinary people were involved were not the actions of the ignorant or illiterate. They pleaded cases before the Commission of the General Assembly, and organised themselves into craft and trade organisations, building up funds which allowed them to exercise some control over their working lives. They joined associations for burgh reform, involving themselves in local politics in opposition to burgh councils, and they set up organisations to oppose Catholic relief. They also concerned themselves with the issues of liberty, taxation and representation, which informed the American crisis. Such activities enabled them to develop their organisational skills by conducting public meetings, organizing committees of correspondence and petitioning parliament. They also published declarations and resolutions in newspapers, thereby demonstrating that they had learned to make use of the press to communicate their beliefs to a wider audience. They were literate and well versed in religious and increasingly civil political debates, and were drawn into these through the clergy, the press and their own reading.

This thesis has argued that these activities were in part rooted in their Calvinist faith, with its insistence on knowledge and understanding, and in an attachment to an egalitarian sense derived from their Presbyterianism. For many people, the importance of exercising choice, informed by conscience, was expressed through these issues and was also strongly linked to Scotland's Covenanted heritage through the books that many thousands of people bought. People drew predominantly on their Presbyterianism, but also on the associational aspects of the Enlightenment which had helped to create a climate that enabled some to become involved in such activities, and which contributed to the development of their wider political consciousness, helping to explain how, by the

1790s, some ordinary working people had acquired a fully developed radical awareness.

Chapter Seven

'Non-entities in the political state'¹⁰⁰³

Conclusion

This thesis has tried to suggest the relationship between Presbyterianism, literacy and political consciousness among ordinary people during the second half of the eighteenth century, and by so doing offer a new explanation of the origins of eighteenth-century popular political awareness in Scotland. It has argued that religious dispute was a major stimulus to the process of politicising ordinary people who demonstrated their concern about issues of liberty and authority by using Scotland's Covenanted heritage to support their beliefs and challenge authority throughout the eighteenth century. Significantly the language in which such debates was couched was predominantly the language of conscience and the right to choose for one's self, which was intimately linked with the Covenanted legacy, and in terms of political dispute, provided a language with which ordinary people were completely familiar, thereby making political debate immediately accessible to ordinary people. The Scottish Enlightenment helped to provide a stimulus to political consciousness through the rise of Moderatism in the Church of Scotland. This proved to be intensely divisive, creating not only an almost permanent opposition between Moderates and members of the Popular party within the Church, but also by spreading dissension widely throughout Scottish society. The essential opposition between these two parties was highlighted particularly in the debate over lay ecclesiastical patronage, which resulted from key differences in theological orthodoxy, as well as the debt owed to Scotland's

¹⁰⁰³ NAS, High Court of Justiciary processes, Loose Papers JC26/280, draft Address to the Public from the Friends of the People.

Covenanting heritage. Despite successfully gaining control in the Church courts, the Moderates never achieved a similar dominance at parish level, where the Presbyterian laity retained support for Popular ministers and orthodox theology. Furthermore, when such disputes could not be resolved they led to secession from the Established Church and the creation of the Secession and Relief Churches which continued to draw on the Covenanting legacy.

It has also been argued that the involvement of the clergy was a vital link in the process of engaging ordinary folk in the issues of the day. Ministers through their preaching, writing, publications and use of the press had the potential to bring people into public debates as the clergy involved themselves in religious and political disputes. Such disputes also implicitly demanded the recognition that ordinary people had a claim to be included in the decisions that affected ‘common life’.¹⁰⁰⁴ The involvement of ordinary people in patronage disputes, the Catholic relief campaign, and the burgh reform movement demonstrates that they were taking part in ‘political’ activity long before the emergence of the democratic reform movement of the 1790s.

What has also become strikingly apparent is the similarity of occupational background of those involved in such activities with the individuals who subscribed to religious books. Ordinary working people subscribed to polemical religious works in their tens of thousands. They were reading Covenant theology which was underlaid with a deep concern for the defence of liberty and justice, and they retained strong emotional links to the doctrinal standards of their Covenanting forebears. Furthermore, the location of those subscribers was significant as areas which had notably few subscribers, were also those areas

¹⁰⁰⁴ [Fletcher], *Inquiry into the principles of ecclesiastical patronage and presentation*, p.68.

which showed little or no engagement with the political ferment of the 1790s. This is indicative of the potential that Presbyterianism had to draw people towards political debate, and how without this important factor there was a general failure to do so.

This thesis has argued extensively that without the Presbyterian drive for literacy ordinary people would not have been able to participate in the various issues and debates which occurred in eighteenth-century Scotland. Literacy allowed access to ideas and Scottish Calvinism's emphasis on literacy encouraged some to enquiry and independent thought, and helped to draw people towards democratic politics in the 1790s. Ordinary people could engage with ideas through reading and book buying which has been suggested by the evidence from the book subscription lists. It could be argued that such lists merely provide evidence of book purchase, not reading, and even less about engagement with ideas. However, this study maintains that there is a significant correlation between reading theological polemics, Presbyterianism, and ordinary people's involvement in patronage disputes, the Catholic relief campaign, and the campaigns for burgh and parliamentary reform. It may be argued that some individuals bought books without the intention or capacity to read them, and if the evidence rested on a handful of individual book purchases this would indeed hold weight. It seems somewhat less likely given the quantitative evidence of thousands upon thousands of book purchases over a considerable period of time. Furthermore some ordinary people also gained access to a broader range of material, including Enlightenment texts as demonstrated by Mark Towsey, although the overwhelming evidence from both subscription lists and records of library borrowing suggests that religious works still clearly dominated the reading matter of the lower orders.

Although we cannot know with certainty about the relationship between people and ideas or between beliefs and actions, we can at least occasionally glimpse some of the individuals who were connected to these activities because their names appear on book subscription lists. Individuals who were involved in the anti-Catholic relief campaign included the Revd John Adam and the Revd Colin Gillies from Greenock, who both subscribed to James Renwick's *Choice Collection*. Daniel Kennedy, the deacon of the Incorporation of Gardener's at Glasgow subscribed to James Durham's *Clavis Cantici*. Robert Brown, a weaver at Pollockshaws in Glasgow subscribed to William Wishart's *Theologia*. William Barbour a portioner at Stewarton subscribed to Howie's *Collection of Lectures and Sermons*. James Paterson, a weaver at Gorbals in Glasgow subscribed to James Durham's *Learned and Complete Commentary*. James Grieg, minister of the Associate Congregation at New-mills in Ayrshire subscribed to Howie's *Collection of Lectures and Sermons* and *Biographia Scoticana*. William Ferguson a weaver at Dunfermline subscribed to Andrew Gray and Ebenezer Erskine's *Whole Works*, and Thomas Gibson minister at Kirkurd in Peeblesshire subscribed to John Owen's *Christologia*.¹⁰⁰⁵

William Henderson, a weaver at Perth and Thomas Pender, a shoemaker at Lanark, were both members of their local Burgh Reform Committees.¹⁰⁰⁶ Pender was a subscriber to James Renwick's *Choice Collection* and Andrew Grey's *Whole Works*, and Henderson subscribed to the *Chrsitian [sic] Oeconomy*. There were a number of others from Perth who were both book buyers, and subscribers

¹⁰⁰⁵ All of these individuals are named in *Scotland's Opposition to the Popish Bill*, pp.13, 34, 63, 125, 166, 184, 244.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Sources for these individuals are - NAS, Home Office Correspondence (Scotland); British Sessional Papers, House of Commons 1731-1800; EUL, Laing MSS Division II; P&KCA, Perth Burgh Records, B59/34/83 'Names subscribed to the Petition of the Burgesses Heritors & Tradesmen or manufacturers being Inhabitants of the Royal burgh of Perth in that part of Great Britain called Scotland' (1788).

to the 1788 Burgh Reform Petition: Joseph Allan, weaver; William Baxter, shoemaker; William Henderson, weaver; Alexander Lenie, weaver; Andrew Miller, mason; George Mitchell, merchant; David Morison, merchant; David Rintoul, merchant; Hugh Robertson, weaver; James Young, weaver; James Duncan, weaver; Peter Whytock, weaver; David Robertson, weaver; David Anderson, glover; John Anderson, merchant; William Barland, shoemaker; Charles Bell, shoemaker; George Brown, merchant; John Cree, merchant; Andrew Cuthbert, weaver; Ninian Hepburn, occupation unknown; David Kettle, weaver; George Knox, stay maker; Andrew Meliss, merchant;¹⁰⁰⁷ John Pirie, glover; Laurence Reid, maltman; James Taylor, weaver; Walter Whytock, weaver; Alexander Wilson, weaver; and John Wilson, weaver.¹⁰⁰⁸ James Muir of Huntershill, the father of the radical Thomas Muir, appears on a subscriber list of 1786 purchasing two copies of the *Dove's Flight to a Thicket*.

Known members of the Friends of the People also appear on the subscription lists. Archibald Hastie, a baker, and a delegate to the 1793 Convention, subscribed to John Jamieson's *Sermons on the Heart*, and *The Whole*

¹⁰⁰⁷ Andrew Mellis was the father of George Meliss, also a burgh reformer, who gave evidence to the House of Commons, and was a leading man in the Perth Friends of the People Society.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Joseph Allan, William Baxter, William Henderson, Alexander Lenie, Andrew Miller, George Mitchell, David Morison, David Rintoul, Hugh Robertson, James Young, James Duncan, Peter Whytock and David Robertson subscribed to the *Chrsitian [sic] Oeconomy*. James Young, James Duncan, George Brown, Andrew Cuthbert, David Kettle, George Knox, and John Wilson subscribed to the Ebenezer Erskine's *Whole Works*. Peter Whytock, George Brown, James Taylor, Alexander Wilson, and John Wilson subscribed to the *Biographia Scoticana*. Peter Whytock, George Brown, James Taylor, Alexander Wilson, and John Wilson subscribed to Howie's *Judgment and Justice of God*. David Robertson and Walter Whytock subscribed to Howie's *Faithfull Contendings*. David Anderson and John Pirie subscribed to Ralph Erskine's *Sermons*. John Anderson subscribed to Howie's *Collection of Lectures and Sermons*. William Barland, Charles Bell, Ninian Hepburn, Andrew Meliss, and Laurence Reid subscribed to Ebenezer Erskine's *Collection of Sermons*. Charles Bell subscribed to Ralph Erskine's *Sermons*. George Brown subscribed to James Renwick's *Choice Collection*. John Cree subscribed to William Gurnal's *Christian in Compleat Armour*. George Knox subscribed to John Jamieson's *Sermons on the Heart*.

Works of Robert Millar.¹⁰⁰⁹ A leader of the Dunfermline Association, James Boyd, a journeyman weaver, subscribed to *Faithfull Contendings*. Two of the Glasgow leaders, John Auchincloss, a saddletree maker, and John Sinclair, a reedmaker were also subscribers. Auchincloss subscribed to Luther's *Commentary*, and the *Lime-Street Lectures*, and Sinclair subscribed to *The Whole Works of Robert Millar*. A leader of the Kirkintilloch Association, Robert Waddell, weaver, subscribed to *The Whole works of Andrew Gray*. The Revd John Wilson, minister of the Anti-burgher Church at Methven, who was a leading man in the Perth Friends of the People, and a delegate to the first Convention, subscribed to the *Chrstitian [sic] Oeconomy*, Jamieson's *Sermons on the Heart*, and an *Antidote Against Popery*. Two other members of the Perth Association, Alexander Moncrieff and John Whytock, both weavers were also subscribers.¹⁰¹⁰ Moncrieff subscribed to Ebenezer Erskine's *Whole Works*, and Whytock to Howie's *Biographia Scoticana* and the *Judgment and Justice of God*.

Two individuals are believed to have been members of the United Scotsmen, and they were also signatories to a letter to the landholders of Perth in April 1794. The letter had offered to raise an armed volunteer corps composed of ordinary working men, it also conveyed a sense of class antagonism: '[We] offer of our services to assist in protecting the Liberties of the People from...either hostile invaders, or more dangerous internal Foes, pledging...to crush and subdue every unlawful Combination of the Rich against the Poor'.¹⁰¹¹ One was Robert

¹⁰⁰⁹ Richard G. Gallin, 'Scottish Radicalism 1792-1794', unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (Columbia University, 1979) pp.248-253. Hastie is mentioned in Gilmour's *Reminiscences of the 'Pen' Folk*, p.53. Gilmour's father had been a 'black-neb' democrat along with Hastie in 1793, that is a sympathizer with the French Revolution. The Pen-folk were a very small religious sect of Baptist principles – this group separated in 1798 due to one side regarding the other to be 'tainted with the heresy o' free will'.

¹⁰¹⁰ Whytock had also been a subscriber to the Perth Burgh Reform petition in 1788.

¹⁰¹¹ British Sessional Papers, House of Commons 1731-1800, Reports Vol. 1, xxviii, Appendix to the Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy 6 June 1794, Vol. xiv, Appendix A, No.2 .

Henderson, a shoemaker, who subscribed to the *Chrstitian [sic] Oeconomy*, and other was David Smith, a weaver, who subscribed to the *Biographia Scoticana*, and the *Judgment and Justice of God*.

The names and occupations of two other men, John Burges, a weaver and Peter Craig, a bookseller or hawker, also appear on the subscription lists. Burges was a member of the Perth Society for Parliamentary Reform, and was also associated with the Perth Friends of the People. He was eventually arrested in 1797, under suspicion of being a member of the United Scotsmen. Peter Craig was employed by Robert Watt's Committee of Ways and Means and sent around the country to collect information relating to Scotland's readiness for insurrection. He too was suspected of being a United Scotsman and was eventually imprisoned in 1797. Both men subscribed to Ebenezer Erskine's *Whole works*.

Although specific conclusions cannot be drawn from this, and we do not know with certainty if reading and enquiry derived from a Calvinist upbringing did encourage an involvement in political activity, it is suggestive. As James Callender commented he had been 'bred up' in the Presbyterian faith which was a major force in his life, particularly in relation to his political radicalism.¹⁰¹² Certainly, by the early 1790s ordinary people had involved themselves in political associations with the aim of achieving parliamentary reform, and notably a number of ministers had also joined radical societies or expressed radical views.¹⁰¹³

Extracts from a Letter to the Landowners of Perth, 11 Apr. 1794. The signatories to the letter were, Mathew Calderwood, James Hakstoun, Robert Henderson, John Johnston, Andrew Pitkethly, David Smith and Robert Sands.

¹⁰¹² Newspaper interview with Callender, cited in Michael Durey, *With the Hammer of Truth: James Thomson Callender and America's Early National Heroes* (Charlottesville and London, 1990), pp.2-3.

¹⁰¹³ See chapter five.

What has become apparent from this study is that the issues involved in the campaigns with which ordinary people involved themselves were at heart about the right to make choices and to be recognised as having a claim to be included in the decisions which affected their everyday lives. The social status of those involved in patronage disputes, the anti-Catholic relief campaign, and the burgh reform movement, which can be denoted by their occupations, was identical to that of the occupational groups who subscribed in their thousands to polemical theological works and those who also gained access to a range of Enlightenment texts through libraries and private borrowing. They were also the same kind of individuals who joined political societies in the 1790s, and who were described by William Skirving, as ‘the lower classes of citizens who have hitherto been non-entities in the political state’.¹⁰¹⁴ In voicing their opposition to the *status quo* it can only be concluded that ordinary people could, and increasingly did, exhibit their political awareness in eighteenth-century Scotland.

¹⁰¹⁴ NAS, High Court of Justiciary processes, Loose Papers JC26/280, draft Address to the Public from the Friends of the People.

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A letter from Several Elders, Lovers of Peace and Moderation, to their Brethren of the Same Principles (Edinburgh, 1752).

A Loud cry from the parish of B-----l, addressed to the Presbytery of H-----n, against the settlement carried on in that parish, September 2d, 1762 ([Edinburgh], 1762).

A Narrative of the debate in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, May 25. 1779. Occasioned by apprehensions of an intended repeal of the penal statutes against papists (Edinburgh, 1780).

The National Covenant (1638).

The Practical Expositor: or, An exposition of the New Testament, in the form of a paraphrase; with occasional notes in their proper places for further explication, and serious recollections at the close of every chapter, 6 Vols (Glasgow, 1792).

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Reasons of Dissent from the Sentence of the General Assembly May 15. 1751 (Edinburgh, 1751).

Reasons of Dissent from the sentence and resolution of the Commission of the General Assembly, met at Edinburgh March 11. 1752, concerning the conduct of the presbytery of Dunfermline (Edinburgh, 1752).

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